
Communication through Melody and Lyrics: Cultural Identity of the Moklen

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find foundational information for the restoration and preservation of Moklen music. Qualitative research was used with analyses of data from conversations and related documents.

The study found that *Moklen* musical culture in the present day does not aim primarily to be used in rituals, but instead, for *Rong Ngeng* dance, festival and fun fair. Today the unique music of *Moklen* is *Rong Ngeng* music. The music uses preplanned or improvised lyrics with the same basic melody. Percussion instruments are used in the ensemble without any melody instrument. The vocal form has a distinguished prosodic pattern. The *Moklen* have their own musical culture of the renewal process for singing and dancing. Anyway their instrument have to restore for their music.

Keywords

Communication, Melody, Lyrics, Cultural identity, Moklen

Introduction: general background

Southern Thailand is home to people of diverse cultures especially along the Andaman coast with a group of islands lived by a distinctive tribe with excellent skills in maritime livelihood and a nomadic way of life known as the *Chao Lay* or Sea Gypsies. Not only do their lifestyles differ from those on-land people, but also their languages and cultures differ from the majority of Thai society. There are 3 groups of *Chao Lay* in Thailand. They call themselves Moken, *Moklen*, and *Uruk Lawoi* (Arunothai, 2003, p.7)

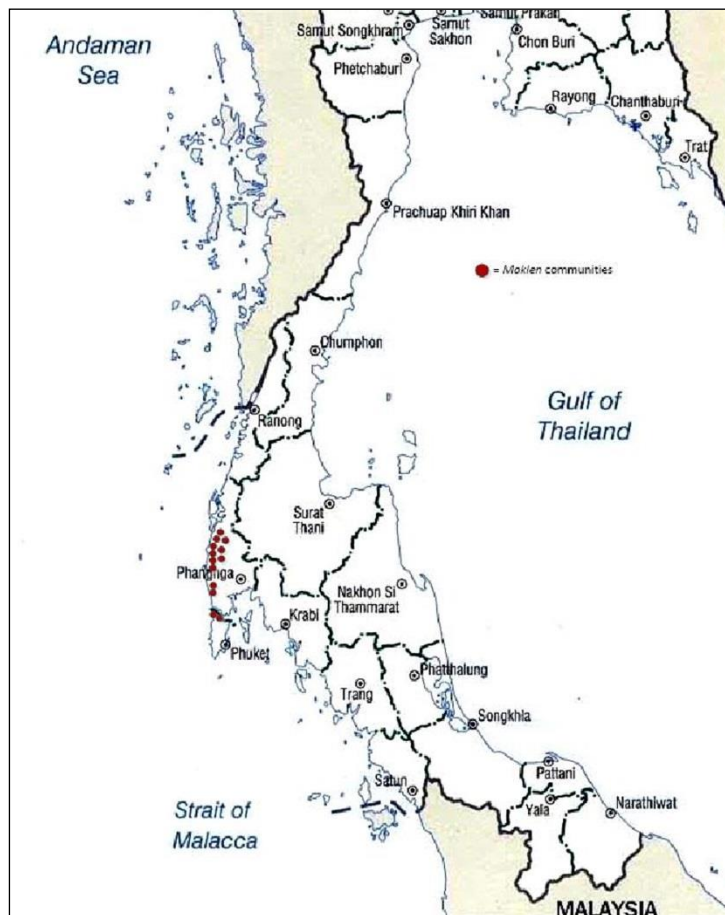


Figure 1 The map shows *Moklen* communities in Southern Thailand

The three groups of *Chao Lay* in Thailand have different languages. The *Moklen* language differs from the other 2 groups. They also adhere to different traditional rites. However, they share common traditional maritime ways of life especially in the area of Andaman Sea coast of Thailand (Bellwood, Fox, & Tryon, 2006; Ivanoff, 1997). Here there are 2 groups of *Chao Lay* often misunderstood by outsiders for their names and habitats, namely the *Moklen* and the *Moken*.

Unlike the other 2 groups of Chao Lay, the *Moklen* have stayed on land for a longer period of time. It was said that “*Moklen* people have settled permanently along the coast for more than 100 years, they thus have been much more integrated into Thai language and culture, and they hold Thai citizenship which is sometimes called “*Thai Mai*” (New Thai). Children go to local Thai schools. Many of them have adopted Buddhism but still maintain their belief in ancestor spirits and organize big celebrations in *Bangsak* of *Phang-nga* every year.”¹

After the tsunami in 2004, a number of researches had explored changes among *Chao Lay* and found some changes in their living caused by the government and private sectors as well as tourists (see Choeychuenjit, 2008; Choeychuenjit & Tolang, 2008) . Despite their changing lifestyles, *Chao Lay* do not leave their traditional cultures and beliefs and each group still adheres to its traditional beliefs and rites but with potential alteration upon changing situations including the musical culture of the *Moklen*.

Increased attention has been paid to study Chao Lay music since the tsunami. Music is part of culture and the way of life of people in society. Musical culture of the *Moklen* is presumed to be inherited and transferred in several forms. Since there is very little information and documentation of the *Moklen* music, it is thus assumed that *Moklen* music might have experienced a less thriving state. This situation has led to further exploration in this research.

The current research aimed to explore the ritual music of *Moklen* people who reside in the upper part of Andaman Coast in Southern Thailand particularly in which ways their music is used, the melodies and lyrics, and how it functions. This will serve to connect problems to solutions. The researcher hypothesized from a preliminary documentary study in combination with field data to identify ways for the preservation and restoration of ritual music of this specific ethnic group of *Chao Lay Moklen*.

This study employed a qualitative research method aiming to investigate and collect information on music and musical culture of the ethnic group of *Chao Lay Moklen* in Thailand. It also seeks to find ways for preservation and restoration of ritual music from the *Moklen* living in the upper part of Andaman coastline. It is built on the theories of musicology and ethnomusicology.² The study used a combination of historical background and data on the present reality. The researcher carried out a preliminary documentary study, followed by a

¹.-Background information of Surin islands and Moken.” In *Andaman pilot project*, 2008, <http://www.andaman.cusri.chula.ac.th/article.data/1.0007.html>, accessed on 15 August 2014.

² Ethnomusicologists often apply theories and methods from cultural anthropology, cultural studies and sociology as well as other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. In *Ethnomusicology*, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnomusicology>, accessed on 31 August 2016.

field study using open ended interviews with *Moklen* musicians, actors and community/ spiritual leaders; observed various musical activities, and recorded still and motion pictures. The information was brought to examination based on the ethnographic research method by analysing, describing and discussing in order to provide the whole picture.

Research results

The *Moklen* are an ethnic group currently settled in different districts including *Kuraburi*, *Takoapa*, and *Taimueng* in *Phang-nga* province. Some of them live in the same area together with the *Uruk Lawoi* at *Baan Rawai* and *Bann Laemlah* in Phuket province (Ungpho, 2013, p. 26). The *Moklen* are often misunderstood to be the same group of the *Moken* due to their very similar pronunciation of names. Moreover, the *Moken* are known among Thai people/the media, and hence the *Moklen* have assimilated with the *Moken*. In fact, the *Moklen* or *Moklan* were originally sea nomads but today they have settled down on-land and assimilated with the on-land lifestyles and cultures and hence look no difference from the local people of the mainland. In particular, the new generation of the *Moklen* are educated and use Thai language to communicate with the outsiders of their culture, and thus makes it difficult to distinguish and recognize who the *Moklen* are through a superficial conversation with them.

Many of the *Moklen* regard themselves as “*Chao Bok*” (on-land people) since they are no longer sea nomads as the *Moken* (see Hope, 2000; Nawichai, 2008). Some of them believe that their ancestors had once inhabited the area of *Baan Mokhlan* in Ta Sala district of *Nakon Sithammarat* province. *Orawan Hantalay* (*Ying*) restated the trace of such belief with the legend of elder *Sampan*, the significant ancestor of *Moklen*. The story of elder *Sampan* is also documented in the *Moklen* Cultural Center at *Tabtawan*, as quoted below

The initiation of the segregated *Moklen* group in the past took place around 150 years ago when the ancestors of the *Moklen* were recruited to work in eastern Malay Peninsula as carrying labourers along the route across the strait and to build a large temple in *Lakon* city (*Nakon Sithammarat*). The event agreed to a legend being recounted that the brave *Ta Sampan* together with *Khru Hor*, *Ta Mhor* and around 3,000 soldiers had journeyed to the land of horizon in *Himmaphan*. This is because *Mae Yaichao*, the younger sister of *Ta Sampan*, was married to King *Ong-Dam*, the ruler of *Lakon* city, but the king disliked *Ta Sampan* so he tried to find a means to get rid of *Ta Sampan* by asking *Ta sampan* to bring him the lion skin and *Amphun* tree from *Himmaphan* to cure his illness.

Ta Sampan thus volunteered to fulfil such request and he then built 3 ships and led 3,000 soldiers towards the land of horizon in *Himmaphan*. During the journey they saw *Maccaree*, the tree bearing fruit as beautiful naked girls. The

soldiers were fascinated with the tree and they all jumped into the sea but finally became victims of sharks and only *Ta Sampan*, *Khru Hor* and *Ta Mhor* survived to reach *Himmaphan*. They can get *Amphun* tree. On their way back, the storm attacked, the ship sink but with the whale's rescue taking them from the sea to the seashore of *Baangsak*. However with extreme exhaust they all passed away. The death of *Ta Sampan* since then brought the *Moklen* into the state of chaos and separation to live in many places somewhere else. The elder *Thani* who were respected among the *Moklen* had seek to find their offspring to reunite but failed due to being attacked to death. The area around *Baangsak* seashore is deemed very important for the hero of the *Moklen* as in the legend being told. Their offspring in the next generation thus considered *Baangsak* the site for posting up a spirit house and for important annual ceremonies up until now.

(The *Moklen* Cultural Center at *Tabtawan*, 2012)

It is noted that the English name used by the *Moklen* themselves spelled as “*Moklan*” pronounced as “*Mo – Klaen*”³ may not be grammatically correct but spelled in similar to “*Moklan*” pronounced a “*Mok – Khlan*”.⁴ Also, the legend does not indicate where the *Moklen* came from but only implies that the *Moklen* might have been on land for a long period of time and before that they had lived in the area along the Andaman sea coast (the west coast of Thailand). The *Moklen* might have previously lived along the coast of the gulf of Thailand but without clear evidence. Only this story is available, however further evidence may include the issue of the origin of the *Moklen*.

The hanging ways of life for the Moklen

Today the *Moklen*'s way of life differs from that of their ancestors. *Gimton Klatalay*, alsoknown as “*Aunt Ton*” said the following about the original boat of the *Moklen* =:

Today only *Mai-dan* (wood board)⁵ boats are there but formerly they were made of *Mai-kam* (zalacca palm) that are not allowed to cut now. Previously we can cut zalacca palm, shape them and dry in sunlight for a few days, then ready for insertion, and the boat won't sink. Brings zalacca, clears out thorns and leaves, dries in sunlight, crushes them and binds them tightly with rattan, allowing no water in. A boat lasts for 6 months, then after 6 months we cut zalacca and make new boats, it takes at least

³ Using the Royal Institute's system in transcription.

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⁵ *Mai-dan* or wood board in here means hardwood or wood pallets used to build a boat.

15 days. If the boat sinks no one dies because we float on zalacca palm unlike that of wood.

Gimton Klatalay (personal communication, August 10, 2014)

Gimton Klatalay also talked about the site formerly lived in by the *Moklen* “Any places they live, any coasts without waves and winds, they will be there” (personal communication, August 10, 2014).

Moklen who are over 40 years old still mention zalacca boat and marine life. It might be memories from what they have been told or some might have had a chance to see the boats and traditional ways of life. However, these memories have become a narrative to be overridden by new ways of living. The *Moklen* adjusted to their current livelihood. Their sailing can somewhat still be seen but the boat material has changed into wood board to endure waves and winds and for longer use.

At present, the *Moklen* mainly stay on shore. Initially they remained in search of sea products for sale and peddled their goods. Later they began to work as hired labor, in farming and trade, with similar ways of life as the on-land Thai people. However, the *Moklen* remain in groups, using the *Moklen* language to communicate, and Southern Thai and Thai languages in contact with Thais. The original *Moklen* gave respect to their ancestors’ spirits and sacred things in nature especially the sea. At present, many of the *Moklen* have adopted Buddhism but have kept the traditional ancestor ceremony that they person every year and makes their culture unique.

Important ceremonies of the Moklen

1) Traditional custom of the fourth month grandparent’s ceremony and the fifth month singing ceremony.

The ancestor homage tradition is particularly important for the *Moklen* and has long been practiced. It is meant to give respect to their patrons and relies on their virtue for self-protection. The ceremony may be different among the *Moklen* living in different places. The following are the ancestors being respected by the majority of the *Moklen*.

1.1) *Por Ta Sampan* The homage ceremony for *Por Ta Sampan* is a big one organized at *Baangsak* beach in *Takuapa* district of *Phang-nga* province. Since *Por Ta Sampan* is regarded as the forefather of the *Moklen* in Thailand, the *Moklen* people around the area including *Baan Tabtawan* and *Baan Baangsak* and other places come to help organize and participate in the ceremony. Normally, the ceremony is held around the fourth month or the date is set by *Khru Mor* or a senior respected by *Moklen* people. Usually, they pick an auspicious day, and the ceremony is carried out in 1 day. The following days the *Moklen* people will have a homage ceremony for their own ancestors which circulates between homes, one day for one house or one family until all houses are finished. This normally takes more than 1 month to finish.

1.2) *Por Ta Luang Juck* The homage ceremony for *Por Ta Luang Juck* is held at *Baan Lumpee* village in *Taimuang* district of *Phang-nga* province. The attendants are *Moklen* people living at *Baan Lumpee*, *Baan Toongwah*, *Nangniang*, and other places nearby or those interested in joining the ceremony. Mostly the event takes place during the fifth month, but it depends on the date set by the person being honored by the *Moklen*. It may not be the homage ceremony directly offered to the *Moklen*'s ancestors but to the local sanctities and the *Moklen* also take this occasion to recall their ancestors as well.

1.3) Last respect group of *Moklen* is sanctities of the people in community where the *Moklen* live such as in Phuket province where the *Moklen* also perform ancestor homage ceremonies with the *Urak Rawoi* in that area.

The sequences of procedures of ancestor homage ceremonies might be slightly different across villages or communities. Typically, the *Moklen* perform homage to their ancestors in the jungle or an open area before they do the ceremony at home.

2) The *Moklen*'s New Year festival

The New Year festival of the *Moklen* is considered a contemporary tradition organized along the universal calendar. It is sometimes called "Boat Floating Ceremony" but here there are no floating boat just as in other Chao Lay groups, rather it is a festive occasion for the *Moklen* to sing and celebrate, and meet with people as well as socialize with their offspring.

3) The tenth month merit festival

The tenth month merit festival is coherent with the tenth month merit tradition of the southern people. They share common purposes but differ in practices. The *Moklen* receive merit from those coming to make merit at the temple so they take the merit to their ancestors. Later at home, *Moklen* people are supposed to bring the merit they received at the temple to perform a merit offering to their ancestors. It is believed that if they fail to do so, their ancestors will never receive merit and that is bad for them.

4) Lay down on the beach tradition

This is an ancient tradition that has long been practiced up until today. The event takes place during the period of 13th -15th day of the waxing moon in the third month for the *Moklen* people to make a votive offering with possibly a hidden purpose for the *Moklen* to get together and share about happiness and suffering among relatives from different communities. In the past communication was not as convenient as it is today, so their meeting during this event allowed them the opportunity and time to talk and consult with each other. The tradition of sleeping on the beach was set only for the *Baan Hin Lookdeow* community of Phuket province since their ancestor's time, and that its villagers have acted as the hosts since then. The *Moklen* believe that the beach and the sea are regarded as sacred,

a source of sanctities, food, and it gives life to the *Moklen* people. Therefore, if all through the year they need to rely on sanctities, the *Moklen* will make a votive offering to sanctities and ancestors at this event.

The Moklen music

In the past, *Moklen* music was used as accompaniment for performances and *Phleng-Bok*,⁶ a cultural practice similar to southern folk performance. The *Moklen*'s performances in the past included *Marorah* dance,⁷ *Rong Ngeng*,⁸ and singing *Phleng Bok*, but today only singing *Rong Ngeng* remains a unique melody of the *Moklen*. It may somewhat vary in details from area to area in terms of the way notes are drawn out. In different areas, existing knowledge on *Rong Ngeng* melody may not be the same; some communities can sing only 1 melody while others can perform many of them, and some know a lot of melodies but can neither recall or sing them. However, it is noted that there are hundreds of lyrics for *Rong Ngeng* but with only 1 melody, the lyrics can be altered in varying situations.



Figure 2: The instruments for *Moklen* performances (photo by author).

⁶ *Phleng-Bok* is a folk singing style of Southern Thailand. The singing group includes a leader of singer and 4-6 of chorus.

⁷ *Marorah* dance is a folk dance in Southern Thailand, also practiced in the northern states of Malaysia. The performance includes dance master, lyrics and rhyme. The ensemble consists of *Klong* (drum), a pair of *Thap* (a pair of a goblet drum), *Ching* (a pair of hand cymbals), *Mhong* (a gong), *Pi Chawa* (a reed instrument) and *Krap* (a pair of wooden sticks).

⁸ *Rong Ngeng* is a type of dance which performs most in Southern Thailand, northern states of Malaysia and Indonesia.

The musical instruments currently used by the *Moklen* as accompaniment are *Khlong Rammana*, *Khong Khu*, and *Ching*⁹ as percussion instruments similar to those for *Rong Ngeng* in general. In particular performances, only *Khlong Rammana*, *Khong Khu*, and *Ching*, or all of the 3 instruments can be included in an ensemble depending on the readiness of each performance. The melody instrument does not appear in the present *Moklen*'s musical instruments. It is inferred that in the past the melody instrument might have existed as a string instrument like a fiddle or similar to the "*Ka Ting*"¹⁰ of the *Moken* which can still be seen. As time went by, it may be without inheritor, coupled with the *Moklen* culture of burying their dead together with their beloved things, so the music instrument might have been buried with their ancestors and no one seeks to reinvent it. As a result, the new generation of *Moklen* knows percussion instruments more than melody instruments.

Occasionally, musical instruments of southern Thai *Rong Ngeng* are used in making videos about the *Moklen* or in sound recordings of their singing *Rong Ngeng* in order to create a sense of aesthetic while listening to them. In this way, the accordion is played as accompaniment. This possibly is the trend of *Moklen* music in the next era in which accordion or violin will be added in the ensemble as accompaniment for the *Moklen*'s performance of *Rong Ngeng*.

Life songs

The *Moklen*'s *Rong Ngeng* takes the form of both the improvisation and pre-composition of lyrics which are accordingly adjusted for certain situations. Currently, however, the lyrics are often pre-composed before an actual to prevent any mistakes and also to serve the situation and the message intended to be conveyed.

The lyrics of *Rong Ngeng* can always be adjusted and changed. The lyrics sung during the *Moklen* today typically reflect their way of life which can be categorized into 4 groups including the lyrics reflecting the *Moklen*'s way of life; lyrics reflecting the *Moklen*'s life and Thai society; lyrics reflecting the *Moklen*'s life and struggle in society, and lyrics to educate *Moklen* people.

1) Lyrics reflecting the *Moklen*'s ways of life. Generally during the festive or auspicious events, the *Moklen* sing *Rong Ngeng* with lyrics about love and concern for the family, and caring for one's husband and children. The lyrics of *Rong Ngeng* often insert stories about *Moklen* livelihood. Here are examples of messages in this category.

- Messages about love/courtship of man-woman

⁹ *Khlong Rammana* is a frame drum, *Khong Khu* is a pair of small knobbed gongs and *Ching* is a pair of hand cymbals.

¹⁰ *Ka Ting* is presented in *Moken* music. The instrument is a kind of two-string fiddle which make from Bamboo (see Netti and Stone, 2000; Sachs, 1940).

- Messages about the *Moklen*'s ways of life and habitat, reflecting *Chao Lay*'s simple way of living
- Messages about love, concern and the connection with respected ancestors, i.e. "*Por Ta Sampan*", whom the *Moklen* believe will protect and keep them safe.

The above messages of *Rong Ngeng* indicate that the *Moklen*'s respect their ancestors, regard them as sacred, worship/inform them when any affairs take place, and beg or request them to help produce intended results.

2) Lyrics reflecting the *Moklen*'s life and Thai society. The *Moklen* adults and elderly can still recall the poor feelings they felt from being insulted because they were *Moklen*. The lyrics mention the sense of separation from the majority of people and the overall Thai society as if they were a small ethnic group or dependent. The following are examples of messages in this category.

- Messages to provide understanding, value and dignity of the *Moklen*
- Messages to encourage unity and strength, for the *Moklen*-ness to protect themselves from being insulted by outsiders of their culture.

These messages reflect their efforts to recreate an accurate understanding that empowers the *Moklen* and reflects the struggle for the *Moklen* to be accepted, and to fight and strengthen the *Moklen*'s self-reliance. However, more of the new generation of *Moklen* have now become educated, and are less socially separated from society. The *Moklen* people can work in hotels and go to public schools just like general people. Previous social problems have decreased as well. Nonetheless, those memories are still there among the *Moklen*'s adults but they will possibly fade away if they receive fair treatment from society.

3) Lyrics reflecting the *Moklen*'s life and struggle in society. In addition to the social separation experienced by the *Moklen* in the past, they had also been exploited legally because they are not allowed to have ID cards. At present, the *Moklen* people can have ID cards but they are still illiterate in law and language, hence making it difficult for them to live their lives. These messages are also contained in *Rong Ngeng* lyrics.

- Messages about exploitation on land
- Messages about being cheated, people using their illiteracy and suffering as a way to cheat them

Rong Ngeng lyrics of this type reflect external society of the *Moklen* and the opportunists as those with more education and knowledge. The lyrics not only reflect the *Moklen*'s thought but also the society surrounding them.

4) Lyrics to educate *Moklen* people. These discuss various problems caused by the external society, economics, and their lack of knowledge. The government thus seeks to educate them by using lead singers to connect *Moklen* people with knowledge through *Rong Ngeng* lyrics. The examples below are lyrics suggesting that if experiencing or witnessing domestic violence, one must notify officials so they can be protected. Notification can be

made by various channels such as words, letter and electronics. The following is an example of *Moklen Rong Ngeng* lyrics which provide education on sexual practices including sexual harassment, abuse, obscenities, taking pornographic pictures, forced sexual intercourse or forced sexual relations with one's wife.

Ton Oei Ton Yong Yong Rai Bang Nor Yong Ni Lae Ton Khi Tai
Yha Ma Khomheng Kan Ngai Ngai Tha Rao Mai Hai Ya Khomkhuen kan
Cha Phut Hai Fang Yang Mi Kotmai Chai Kap Phua Chairai Thi Dai Khomkhuen
Thamhai Phuying Klamkluen Fuen Chai Chon Tai

Other lyrics are still sung by the *Moklen* people in various occasions such as singing for entertainment, casual singing, singing to the *Moklen* people themselves, etc. The 3 types of life songs that have started to be sung more frequently, reflect the ongoing society and what the *Moklen* have experienced in their current ways of life.

The 4 categories of lyrics are interrelated in terms of the *Moklen's* ways of life. Later, the lyrics are intended to educate the *Moklen* people in order to prevent them from being exploited, and raise their awareness for self-protection. Since the new generation of *Moklen* are educated and literate, fights for justice and legitimacy are increasingly found. Today, the *Moklen* are better known in society and have community representatives in a number of conferences on several topics of the country.

Melody and song

The *Moklen's* songs are currently found only in singing *Rong Ngeng* for entertainment. The melody is short and sung repeatedly over and over. In each area the notes are similarly expressed but different in details for some parts such as with restatement and their unique pattern of note expression. The sequence of singing notes and lyrics differs with some communities singing notes before lyrics but it is vice-versa in others. The melody *Ta Lok Tok Tak* is known in some communities but it is not commonly sung. The melody is generally known and sung and is regarded as a unique melody of the *Moklen*. The well-known melody is appeared in the figure 3 (the name of melody is unknown). In each community, however, the structure of a melody that is sung in *Moklen* style is often the same but with some differences as shown in the following example.

The figure displays three musical staves, each with lyrics in Thai script. The first staff is labeled 'Ton Tor Sai' and the second and third are labeled 'Ton Palm'. The lyrics are: 'Ton Oe Ton Yang Yang Rai Phung Oei Yung Ton Ton... Nae Lai Yang Ton...'. The musical notation shows differences in the melody between the sections, with circles and arrows highlighting specific points of variation.

Figure 3: Differences in the *Rong Ngeng* melodies of 3 verses, i.e. 1 verse of *Ton Tor Sai* Song of *Baan Toongwah* and 2 verses of *Ton Palm* Song of *Baan Tabtawan*.

According to the examples in figure 3, there are 3 points of differences as discussed below.

Point 1 is that the melody in bar 5 of *Ton Tor Sai* Song did not appear in *Ton Palm* Song. It can be observed in the lyrics that the lyrics and melodies were sung repeatedly by the backing group in general folk songs. Such repetition of melody in the first stanza or *Tanyong* was sung mostly around *Baan Toongwah*, but singing without repetition at the end of the first stanza was used at *Baan Tabtawan*.

The melody in bar 5 of Ton Tor Sai

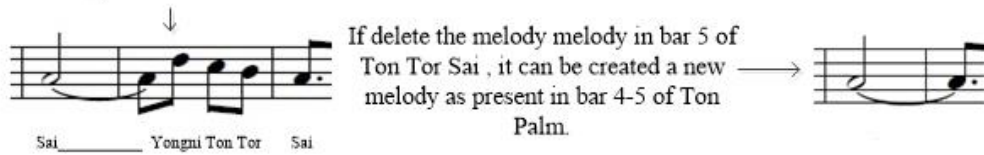


Figure 4: Differences of melodies of *Ton Tor Sai* Song in bars 4- 5 (Point 1)

Point 2 involves the melodies at the end of the song without lyrics but the melody was sung as “Noy” along the same melodies since the beginning of the song. The tone expressed as “Noy” is different because the singer may put the fine adlibs which is unique depending on the individual or area. This form also appeared in point 3 of the same song but is sung by different singers.

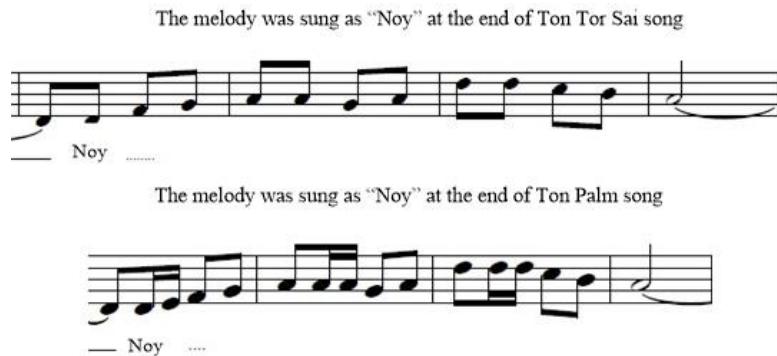


Figure 5: Differences in melodies of *Ton Tor Sai* Song in point 2

In figure 5, the fineness of the adlib differs in both songs but their melody structures are the same, the tones in the strong beat are the same, the directions of the melody are the same, and their intro and outro are in the same melody.

Versification of Rong Ngeng Song

Versification used in *Rong Ngeng* lyrics is of variation in the number of words with the rhyme posed in 3 – 4 places also in variation as follows.



Figure 6: Example of the rhyme in the lyrics of *Ton Diplee* Song

1) The song's intro in line 1 is supposed to begin with "*Ton Oei Ton Yong*" in stanza 1st. Stanza 2 is contained 4 – 5 words using the 2nd or 3rd personal pronoun depending on the singer's call or refer to such as "*Yong Rai Pinong Oei*" "*Yong Rai Bang Nor*" "*Yong Rai Bang Oei*" or "*Yong Rai La Nong*". Stanza 3 is imposed with the rhyme in assonance to the words in the next stanza beginning with "*Yong Nee Ton...*" and ending with the name of a tree with the sound assonant to the last syllable in the next stanza as in "*Yong Nee Ton Tor Sai*" "*Yong Nee Ton Diplee*" "*Yong Nee Ton Sai*", for instance. An example of rhyme is shown in the lyrics of *Ton Diplee*.

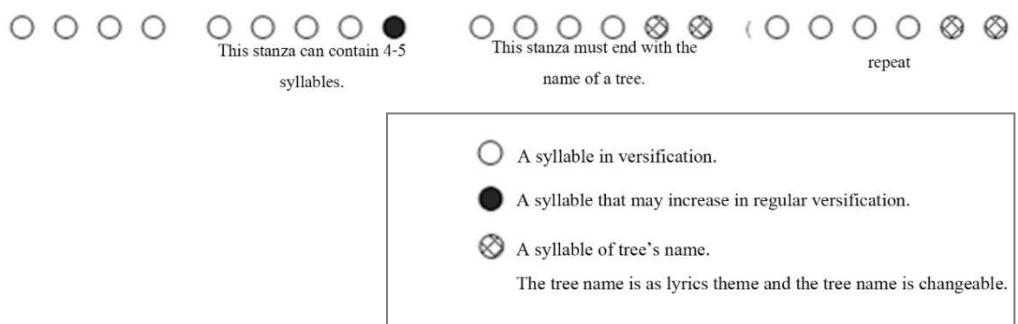


Figure 7: Example of versification in line 1

2) Line 2 or the stanza next to the name of the tree chosen by the singer. It contains the lyrics of 7-8 syllables with the last one using the vowel assonant to the vowel of the tree's name in line 1 such as "*Ton Diplee*" is assonant to "*Wan Nee*" and "*Sawasdee*" (Example in figure 6), and the last vowel in this stanza has to be assonant to syllables 3, 4, or 5 in the next stanza which can contain 7 – 9 syllables, as in the diagram below.

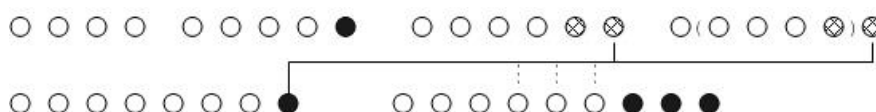


Figure 8: Example of versification in lines 1 - 2

3) Line 3 can be in 2 forms, i.e. with or without rhyme depending on what way the composer prefers but mostly the rhyme is preferred. However, in cases having many verses, the rhyme may or may not appear in some of them. The versification in stanza 1 is comprised 4 – 5 syllables with the last one may be assonant to syllables 4 – 5 of the next stanza containing 7 – 9 syllables.

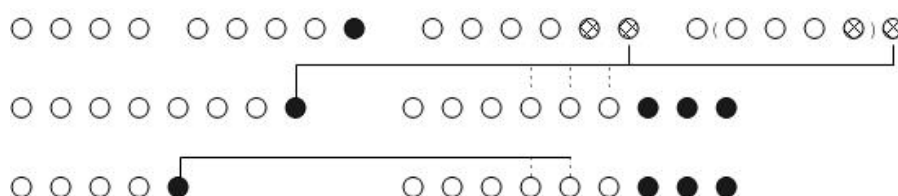


Figure 9: Example of versification in lines 1 – 3

4) Line 4 as the last line includes 2 stanzas each with 7 syllables. Sometimes the composer uses a total repetition of words of one stanza for another stanza or composes another new one, with both stanzas having the assonance in syllables 3 – 4, as shown in the following.

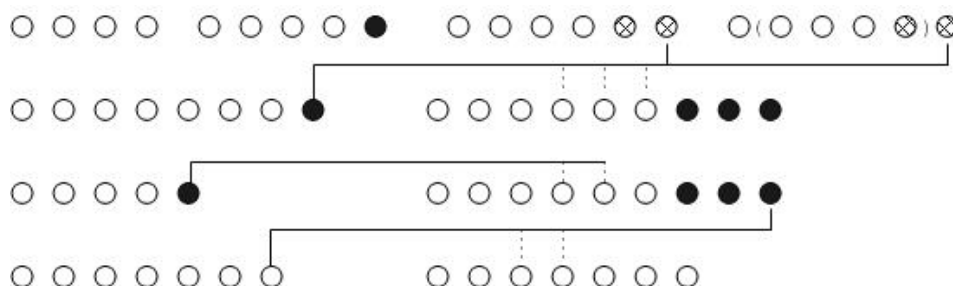


Figure 10: Example of versification in lines 1-4

The versification of Lyrics in the *Moklen's Rong Ngeng* song provides systemic rhyme with suitable movement of rhyme just as those lyrics in Thai folk songs. Moreover, repetition of lines in the same melody is possible depending on the singer's preference.

Preservation and Restoration of the Moklen's Cultural Music

Ways of change

With changing ways of life, the *Moklen* need to adjust themselves to society. Natural ways of livelihood for food and consumption hardly exist now. The *Moklen* need to follow new ways of life with permanent settlement and improved security. However, the *Moklen* people still prefer their wooden houses with their floors raised high above the ground. Only small groups of *Moklen* have single story houses built with bricks and cement without raised floors. They make a living mainly as wage workers and search for sea products to sale and use the money to exchange other things as the on land people.

The new generation enters public schools. The *Moklen* people are able to speak *Moklen*, Thai, and local southern languages which may include other languages such as English. Some of them even attained higher education and work in both government and private agencies. The *Moklen* people are still trusted for their marine skills and are thus hired to work as boat drivers in the tourism industry or as general wage workers.

Although the *Moklen's* ways of life has been altered and they tend to make a living in new ways and use money to exchange things, foods and services, they still seek to preserve their traditions and culture. However, they need to adjust and change as necessary. Normally, major ceremonies of the *Moklen* are not required to have music, so the initial function of music is as accompaniment for entertainment and performances. Later when the situation changed, the *Moklen's* ways of life also changed with increased social struggle. The *Moklen* used music partly to demonstrate their social power and for social empowerment. Music remains a function to communicate with people in society, for group gatherings, education, disseminating information, and so on. Moreover, the *Moklen* people also perform *Rong Ngeng* to earn a living either in tourist areas or during special events for Thai people. The *Moklen's* singing of *Rong Ngeng* therefore clearly represents their group's identity and uniqueness.

Preservation

The traditional style of *Rong Ngeng* singing is male-female retortion in the call and response manner without pre-composition but with the so-called "improvisation". At present, the body of knowledge on *Rong Ngeng* melodies exists only in particular groups of *Moklen* people who live scattering across many *Moklen* villages.

- *Baan Toongwah* community, *Kuek-Kuck* sub district in *Takuapa* district of *Pangnga* province. In this community, the lead singer or main supporter is *Gimton Klatalay*. There is a gathering of female singers of *Rong Ngeng* within the community and from other communities such as *Baan Koh-Nok* and *Baan*

Lumpi. The transfer of *Rong Ngeng* singing to the new generation remains subjective but there are efforts to make it objective.

- *Baan Tappla* community, *Kaen* sub-district in *Tai-Muang* district of *Pang-nga* province and nearby areas. In this community, singing *Phleng Bok* can still be found. For *Rong Ngeng*, *Aunt Noy* is the key person for the succession of *Rong Ngeng*. *Kanyanee Sangsema*, a Thai teacher from *Thai Mai School* (*Dome Thaksin Anusorn School*) is aware of the value of *Rong Ngeng* and has made an effort for more than 20 years to help preserve the art of *Rong Ngeng* singing. This is to carry on *Rong Ngeng* for the *Moklen* children to become its successors themselves. *Thai Mai School* led by Teacher *Kanyanee* has developed a project to carry on *Chao Lay* culture at *Baan Tappla*. This school has thus become a core leader in restoration and preservation of the *Chao lay's* way of life.
- *Baan Tabtawan* community, *Bangmuang* sub-district in *Takuapa* district of *Phang-nga* province. The lead singers have passed away. At present, a group of *Moklen* students aged 13 – 17 years is the core *Rong Ngeng* group, and *Chantakarn Hantalay* (currently aged 15) is the lead singer of the group. This group has frequently been hired by the local hotel to perform *Rong Ngeng*. This community also has strong leaders who appreciate the *Moklen* culture and are ready to help preserve it. Accordingly, the new generation of *Moklen* at *Baan Tabtawan* are encouraged to promote and appreciate their own culture.

The above suggests that at present the core persons of *Rong Ngeng* among the *Moklen* include the lead singers from both the old and young generations. Preservation and succession of *Rong Ngeng* may differ from area to area. The proportion may be still be low for the core leaders and active performers to total population. However, there is commitment and determination to preserve *Rong Ngeng* among the *Moklen* people in certain areas, while efforts are still there to find ways to preserve their own culture.

Restoration process

It can be claimed that the *Moklen* people in each community know and understand the characteristics and role of *Rong Ngeng* culture, while the young generation, their appreciation and concern of *Rong Ngeng* songs are not in much extent. However, it can be assumed that the *Moklen* people have the process to restore their own culture by themselves without regarding any theories. The following phenomena are observed.

- There are efforts to promote the *Moklen's* performing arts among the young generation and outsiders especially the *Rong Ngeng*, considering from the “*Chao Lay Reunion*” event that aimed to strengthen *Chao Lay* networks and create collaborative partnerships. The event also intended to communicate the

problems faced by *Chao Lay* to the public and find the ways to solving their problems at policy level. Finally, it aimed to support the restoration of the *Moklen's* traditions and ways of life, and to sustain cultural diversity. During the event, each group of *Chao Lay* will present their performances which imply to keeping their knowledge by singers and transfer the knowledge to people in the community at the same time, and motivates these people to appreciate the value and liveliness of *Moklen's Rong Ngeng*.

- The networking of this ethnic group is considered a collaboration to strengthen the cultures of every group of *Chao Lay*. Moreover, there exists a *Moklen* cultural center in each *Moklen* community, allowing the *Moklen* people to take part in management of their culture, selection and making choice of performances to represent their uniqueness.
- In the *Ban Tabtawan* community, a new generation of *Moklen* is encouraged to take action in preserving their culture by themselves. They also take jobs from the private sector for extra income. This situation is considered in one way the success in restoration and preservation of *Rong Ngeng* culture.
- Promotion from individuals and organizations in the government sector is evident by an example of a project to carry on *Chao Lay* culture at *Baan Tappla* of *Thai Mai* School led by teacher *Kanyanee Sangsema*. It is counted as the restoration and support from external agency, implying the recognition and appreciation of the value of *Moklen's Rong Ngeng* culture at another level.

Restoration was observed only in the *Moklen's* art of *Rong Ngeng* performance and singing not in melody instruments or other *Rong Ngeng* melodies being sung in the past.

Conclusion and discussion

The *Moklen's* performing arts currently include the *Rong Ngeng*, specifically *Rong Ngeng* songs. The melodies may partly vary in detail across the *Moklen* communities or their knowledge resources on melodies may not be at the same level. However, the preservation of the art of *Rong Ngeng* singing is not extent. Guidelines for restoration and support of *Moklen's Rong Ngeng* music should focus on the following matters.

- 1) There should be policy supporting the education of a new generation of *Moklen* in school systems that includes the versification and melodies of *Rong Ngeng* songs.
- 2) Restoration should include musical instruments as accompaniment for *Rong Ngeng* performances, and *Rong Ngeneg* melodies rarely sung by people.
- 3) Management the creation of leaning, documentation of knowledge, or exchange of knowledge in various activities should potentially attract *Moklen* adolescents or school age children outside of the *Moklen*. Examples include *Rong Ngeng* singing contests, compositions of *Rong Ngeng* lyrics contests, etc.
- 4) Seeking opportunities to allow for performances more relevant to their ways of life.

5) There should be knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer of *Rong Ngeng* melodies to objectively promoting its diversity, value, and significance.

6) Using music, performance, and musical instruments to represent the *Moklen's* uniqueness.

There still exists the knowledge base of the culture of *Rong Ngeng* songs and melodies. Many of the *Moklen* core leaders value their culture and this serves as a basis for operating the restoration. It can be concluded that existing bodies of knowledge and human resources should be improved for development outcomes, and extended for the sustainment of the *Moklen* communities, and to make known *Rong Ngeng* culture to external community.

The current restoration is brought about by the *Moklen* themselves as well as by external support. Overall, a certain level of strength is observed but it requires continuous adaptation to challenge the new social trends, new ideas and beliefs of a new generation of the *Moklen*. Whether or not the restoration of the art of *Rong Ngeng* performance can extend toward success depends particularly on this new generation.

Recommendations

1) To restore the *Moklen's Rong Ngeng* culture, the government sector should support them in terms of policy and guidelines for practice.

2) There should be a process for the evidential transfer and succession of *Moklen's Rong Ngeng* in *Moklen Cultural Center*.

3) The new *Moklen* generation should restore their melody instruments.

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