

## **The Impact of Globalization Upon Pleng Luok-toong in Thailand and Pleng Luok-toong Banna in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)**

**Thanapon Teerachat**

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, 25/25 Kantarawichai District, Maha Sarakham,  
44150 Thailand

Email: thanapon.teerachat.msu@hotmail.com

Tel: 66-43-754385

**Sangkom Pumipuntu**

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, 25/25 Kantarawichai District, Maha Sarakham,  
44150 Thailand

Tel: 66-43-754385

**Chaloey Puminpuntu**

College of Music, Mahasarakham University, 25/25 Kantarawichai District, Maha Sarakham,  
44150 Thailand

Tel: 66-43-754385

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### **Abstract**

Pleng Luok-toong (Thai country music) and Pleng Luok-toong Banna (Lao country music) are the most appreciate form of music because they use simple lyrics, easy listening, straightforward and are unique in portraying the various aspects of society. The consequences of globalization have benefited both Pleng Luok-toong in Thailand and Pleng Luok-toong Banna in Laos. Individuals and music entrepreneurs are provided with a higher opportunity in their roles in the music industry. Entrepreneurs and music enthusiast can create and express their artistic forms and creations. Immunization guidelines and development of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna requires the participation from all parties involved in the music industry, government and private organizations and from the general public. Music artists should adhere to professional ethics and audiences should have knowledge and understand the meaning of the music and choose appropriateness instead of fashionable and choose music that conforms to their national culture. Psychological and intellectual development in artists, producers and audiences

should emphasize on their cultural strength and governments should provide a solid foundation in the conservation of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna.

**Keywords:** Pleng Luok-toong, Banna, Thailand, Lao, Country Music, Development

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Cultural music plays an important role and is related to the livelihood of all humans which is passed on from generation to generation. It reflects the identity of each social group and is unique to each community where it is appreciated and celebrated. Various songs are played as singles and others require an ensemble. Folk music influences many other types of musical culture within the community which was derived mostly from long verse poems and rhymes depicting the daily activities during festivals, farming, harvesting and activities during the monsoon (Patrachai, 1988). Music and songs are a part of human culture created by each ethnic group to fulfill their desires and inspiration that they have received from their social environment (Damrongloet, 2008). The songs and music of Pleng Luok-toong in Thailand and Pleng Luok-toong Banna in Lao PDR are unique within themselves and continue to share a close relationship with the people of Thailand and Lao PDR. Both types of music share similarity and are a valuable cultural heritage to both nations.

## **2. RESEARCH AREA and METHODOLOGY**

This research is a qualitative research with aims to 1) Study the history and development of Pleng Luok-toong of Thailand and Pleng Luok-toong Banna of Lao PDR, 2) Study the significance of globalization to Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna and 3) Study on creating a guideline to create immunization and development for Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna. The research was conducted through document analysis from related research papers, documents, literature and from field data which utilized survey forms, observation forms, interview forms and focus group discussions from the sampling group of informants. Key informants include national artists, writers and music scholars. Casual informants included song writers, musicians and music entrepreneurs. General informants included the general public who are Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna audiences. The field research was conducted between April 2010 and December 2012 and the research results presented via descriptive analysis.

## **3. RESULTS**

### *3.1 History and Origin of Pleng Luok-toong of Thailand and Pleng Luok-toong Banna of Lao PDR*

Western music influence first entered Thailand during the reign of King Rama IV through western style military brass bands which accompanied military activities which introduced Thais to western music culture. Thai music and songs received influenced from early military brass bands and were called Pleng Thai Sakon (New Thai style song) which was highly popular and was widely received by Thai audiences. During this period, many forms of Pleng Thai Sakon deviated and become known as Pleng Luok-toong or Luk Thung (Thai country music).

Pleng Luok-toong was originally developed from lyrics of Klon Paet (Thai Octometer Poem) where the rhythms was mostly comprised from traditional and previous style of Thai music and were mostly folk dance rhythms. Most early Pleng Luok-toong music was developed from brass bands that performed in motion picture theatres and music accompanying Like (Thai traditional dramatic performance) performances and eventually transformed into its own unique style. Contemporary Pleng Luok-toong bands or ensembles have integrated western musical instruments and have compilations that are an articulate mix between Thai and western music.

The Laos People Democratic Republic is a country rich in cultural heritage and shares it culture with many neighboring countries in Southeast Asia such as Thailand. Many cultural traditions and rituals are very similar to Thailand and others have been influenced by Vietnam, China and Myanmar. Laotians have adapted and survived since historic times through many political changes since absolute monarchy, imperialism and socialism. During each era, the people of Laos have adapted their art, music, songs and culture to coexist with all eras of political changes. Each format and every type of musical culture in each political period is an unambiguous reflection of the social status during that moment (Pikul Sri, 2008). The fundamental of musical culture and songs in Laos comes from ethnic diversity, language, customs, traditions and richness of natural resources which have provided the inspiration and stimulated creative ideas in the form of art, literature, dance, songs, music, and primary musical instruments such as the Khene mouth organ and Pleng Luok-toong Banna.

Lao PDR history of development of Pleng Luok-toong Banna music was derived from traditional Lao music before political change and before imperialism. Pleng Luok-toong was influenced by the social diffusion of western music and initial Lao western music or Lao new age music was created in 1960 where the songs were composed by using folk dances which was popular with Laotians. The development of Lao western style music continued with innovations but was prominently persuaded by neighboring countries such as Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia and developed finally into contemporary Pleng Luok-toong Banna.

Pleng Luok-toong (Thai country music) and Pleng Luok-toong Banna (Lao country music) are the most appreciate form of music because they use simple lyrics, the songs are easy listening, straightforward and is unique in the fact that the songs reflect and portray the various aspects of society. Pleng Luok-toong also informs on the daily livelihood and tribulations of citizens of the era. This is consistent with Yaikoom (2004) where entertainment is not the only function of Pleng Luok-toong music but it is also a reflection of the livelihood of Thai society, also consistent with Chantanasut (2006) which revealed that Pleng Luok-toong lyrics were written from observing the economic and community of Thai society. Other innovations such as compositions and examples from contemporary western music were utilized as guidelines to maximize the audience's satisfaction. Consistent with Chatthong (2007) where the social status of Thai communities in each era can be studied from the context of Pleng Luok-toong.

During 1976-1984, many Luok-toong (country) and Luok-krung (urban) artists in Thailand were created resulting in a high competition for audiences. Luok-toong music contests were frequently organized and judged on the choreography and the dancers' costumes. More and more Luok-toong bands were embracing capitalism which provided the opportunity for further development and created the unique identity of quality Luok-toong music up to modern times. Ever since 1984, Pleng Luok-toong concerts were very popular

with the masses which is consistent with Kropthong (2004) in which capitalism became the primary administrative system and ushered in the trend of contemporary Thai music which was fresh, fashionable and modern.

The majority of Pleng Luok-toong Banna had the rhythm of classic Lao folk dance music because folk dances provided entertainment which was highly popular with local citizens. Folk dances in Laos were usually allowed during certain traditions and rituals such as Bun Huean (House merit ritual), Bun Ban (Village merit ritual), Bun Wat (Temple merit ritual) and other merit making traditions allowed in Laos. During French colonization, western culture was imported by the French authorities in the form of bars, entertainment bazaars and dance halls which only played western music while Laotians were permitted to patriotic music such as the Lao national anthem and nominal folk dances. Pleng Luok-toong Banna in Lao PDR received high popularity after the decline of revolutionary, folk and Mawlum (Indigenous Folk Opera) songs. The decline of the classic forms of music during socialism revitalized Pleng Luok-toong Banna artists, composers and created a new generation of contemporary Pleng Luok-toong Banna artists and music. This is due to the innovative development policies initiated after 1990 where Lao PDR opened up to modern economic reforms which allowed previously restricted music during the last 15 years to become available and broadcasted to the general public. The music during this period is known as the "Open Era Music" and reintroduced Pleng Luok-toong Banna, creating many new music artists, composers, private businesses and music entrepreneurs.

### *3.2 Globalization*

Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna has benefited from the trend of globalization where it has assisted in the expansion of media outlets for the public to choose from such as radio, television, satellite, internet and telephone. Individuals in the music business can easily access modern technology and music composers and song writers are provided with numerous and diverse sources of information and content. Globalization has also contributed to singers, artists and music labels where they can access, purchase, manufacture and redistribute music swiftly and straightforward. This is consistent with Hongladarom (2005) where computer assisted communication didn't eliminate Thai culture through globalization. The effects were contradictory, where the Thai cultural identity and globalization coexisted through innovative administration and cultural adaptation. The consequence of globalization to Pleng Luok-toong Banna in Lao PDR is the creation and expansion of music related businesses from the influx of modern music recordings, advanced recording technologies, efficient manufacturing processes, lower cost and increased consumption of foreign media which has greatly expanded the Lao music industry. Lao music artists have also increased in numbers and continue to create and produce music through their experiences and information gained from listening to radio, TV, multimedia from local and foreign sources. All these factors are the benefits due to globalization which has influenced Pleng Luok-toong Banna. Another important factor is the material compensation and profits generated from commercial entertainment which is the direct result of an enhanced economic policy which has relaxed the strict economic, social and political regulation from socialism together with the love of Lao cultural heritage and traditions resulting in contemporary Lao music that has been developed and embraced by all Laotians today.

### *3.3 Guideline for Creating Immunization and Development of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna*

Technology is an important factor in the alteration of Pleng Luok-toong in the initial eras because during the early period, music reproduction production and manufacturing process was primarily done through vinyl records which were expensive to record and reproduce. The introductions of cassette tapes in the music business lowered the costs of music production and have been transformed to modern multimedia formats such as CD's, DVD's and digital recordings. The cost and price of modern media has greatly been reduced through advanced manufacturing techniques, mass production, efficient process and are of higher quality than the past. Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna must also adopt these efficient processes and standardization in their compilation, ensure quality content and work together. This is consistent with Chotechuang (2009) where globalization will not only bring nations together, but it will also connect individuals from all countries through the advancements of communications. Globalization promotes the national development of each country to global standards which provides the opportunity for commercial competition where there is an equal chance for success and failure.

Creating an immunization for Pleng Luok-toong Banna requires nurturing of ethics which is an alternative measure that can help Pleng Luok-toong Banna's conservation, development and sustain the public's support. This is practical because most Lao PDR youths have been raised with good ethics and live a sustainable simple lifestyle. Lao youths are nurtured with ethics at an early age such as good and obedient students receive recognition for their good conduct in the form of scarf which symbolizes their excellent accomplishments and merits. The fostering of patriotism, modernization and social acceptance has always been a key principle in the livelihood of all Laotians. This is essential because no matter how modernized the world will become, it will always be mostly material progress. Goodness will continue be created if people continue to develop their intellect and follow their cultural ethics. This is consistent with the role of Pleng Luok-toong Banna which provides society with entertainment, ethics, knowledge and guidance which can be practically applied in their daily life. Creating occupations for Pleng Luok-toong artists will create unity and love of their cultural heritage.

Development guideline for Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna requires sincere support from government offices through direct and indirect measures. Direct measures include contracting music professionals with practical and theoretical music knowledge and enforce them with the responsibility in the administration and development of music. Indirect measures include supporting exceptional musicians and individuals who can develop into a role model for music apprentices so that they are provided with knowledge and skills that will sustain their professions. Talented and fabulous musicians should be acknowledged and rewarded for their skills and knowledge. The recognition of extinguished artists and music scholars should be prompt and equivalent with the growth and prosperity of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna. This is consistent with Phlangwan (1988) where the role of Pleng Luok-toong Banna is united with the livelihood of people in Laos PDR and that government and private agencies in Laos has provided support and promotion of quality Pleng Luok-toong Banna to sustain and promote a pleasant and peaceful society.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The consequences of globalization have benefited both Pleng Luok-toong in Thailand and Pleng Luok-toong Banna in Laos. Individuals and music entrepreneurs are provided with a higher opportunity in their roles in the music industry. Entrepreneurs and music enthusiasts can create and express their artistic forms and creations. Chronicles about society, nature, settings, events and feelings that are incorporated into the lyrics are still a unique identity and charm for Pleng Luok-toong from past to present. But there are occasions that globalization has detrimental effects such as the contents of various songs conflict with ethics, patriotism, pride and conservation of beautiful Lao heritage.

Immunization guidelines and development of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna requires the participation from all parties involved in the music industry, government and private organizations and from the general public. Music artists should adhere to professional ethics and audiences should have knowledge and understand the meaning of the music and choose appropriateness instead of fashionable and choose music that conforms to their national culture. Psychological and intellectual development in artists, producers and audiences should emphasize on their cultural strength and governments should provide a solid foundation in the conservation of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna which are valuable cultural identities of Thailand and Lao PDR.

## **5. SUGGESTIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

Individuals should give importance to education and seek knowledge about the history and origin of their ethnic origin which will create pride and awareness of their cultural heritage. Musicians and music related individuals should study, learn and make understanding of certified and acknowledged Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna music which will facilitate the promotion, awareness and support of the cultural identity of both nations. Government and private organizations that are entailed with Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna should seriously support the diffusion and promotion of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna. A tangible development guideline and practical planning should be laid out and should include the participation of experts, professionals such as national artists, music scholars with outstanding knowledge in Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna. The development should always be consistent and sustainable. Government offices that are responsible for the oversight of music institutions, The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Commerce and other direct and indirect divisions should acknowledge the value and importance of the progression of producing, presenting and performance of music such as Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna for the purpose of conservation, revitalization and development of cultural music at national and international levels.

Future research studies should include topics such as the musical aspects of Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna which reveals the culture of the nation and the format of contemporary Pleng Luok-toong and Pleng Luok-toong Banna.

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