

Musical Analysis of Chanting Melodies in the Teochew Chinese Yoga Tantra Ritual in Thailand

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Abstract

This study explores the musical elements of the Dharma Sankhita chants in the Mahayana Teochew Chinese Yoga Tantra ritual at Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, Bangkok, Thailand. It examines the ritual's background and musical analysis. Practiced by both Teochew and Cantonese Chinese, the ritual known in Teochew as “Bang Iem Kao” is a profound act of filial piety and ancestor veneration, rooted in the Eight Cardinal Virtues of Chinese ethics. The ceremony is held to dedicate merit to deceased ancestors and preserve cultural traditions. It can be performed at both family and community levels, encouraging intergenerational participation and solidarity. The ritual typically takes place during the seventh lunar month and includes mournful, intense chanting in harmony with the meanings of sacred mantras. The chants are categorized into four rhythmic groups: Jang, Jiu, Gi, and Bung, each with distinct tempos. This musical tradition reflects the deep spiritual beliefs and rich cultural heritage of the Teochew Chinese community.

Keywords: *Teochew Chinese, Yoga Tantra Ritual, Dharma Sankhita Chanting, Ritual Music Analysis, Ancestor Veneration, Thailand*

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Introduction

Buddhism originated in India around 550 BC and has spread over the following 2,000 years to East and Southeast Asia. The Silk Road facilitated its expansion northward into Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan (mostly following beliefs later labeled as Mahayana Buddhism), and it also traveled south to Sri Lanka... and then through the Silk Road to Myanmar, Siam, Malaysia, and Indonesia (as Theravada Buddhism). Both sects share core principles based on the Buddha's teachings, including the five precepts, concentrations, and imparted wisdom, with some regional variations in beliefs, values, and traditions (Pothinantha, 1989:1-15).

Siam and predecessor kingdoms in the region now called Thailand has been ruled by kings for nearly 700 years. Since these earliest times, most of the Thai kings and citizens have adhered to the Theravada of Buddhism. The arrival of Theravada Buddhism into Thailand and related exchanges of culture can be traced to the nation's long history of generally friendly relations with China, which was often based on trade. Indeed, even today many Thai people, including royal family members and commoners, have mixed Thai and Chinese ancestry, and have comingled religious traditions and rituals. One particular belief that Thailand and China have in common revolves around great reverence to one's elders and ancestors, often extended to teachers and monks. Therefore, Chinese-Thai have a ceremony to worship their ancestors every year, when making merit to their dead ancestors is the central focus (Puangphit, 1983:40-43).

As one of the most notable examples of how closely Thai and Chinese people are connected, His Majesty King Rama I, the first king of the Chakri Dynasty, had Chinese ancestry. Moreover, since King Rama IV graciously allowed it, a combination of Buddhist ceremonies – Chinese Mahayana along with Thai traditional ceremonies – have been openly practiced in Thailand. Notable examples include the royal ceremony paying homage to the Buddha image on Chinese New Year, and Kongtek ceremonies, which are the highly ritualized cremation ceremonies honoring royal family members, even a Thai King or Queen.

Mahayana Buddhism was established in mainland China, where the Buddha was the central revered figure, but the traditions and ceremonies varied greatly depending on the community and locality of residence, especially for Chinese people in the three southern regions – Chaozhou, Hainan, and Guangdong. Over the past 200-300 years, many Chinese people from these regions in particular have migrated to Siam, took Thai names, married Thai people, established families, and eventually became deeply integrated into Thai society.

The three groups of Mahayana Buddhist traditions from China differ somewhat in their ritual practices and beliefs. What is most evident is respect and reverence for things that cannot be seen, including spirits, ancestral ghosts, animal ghosts, and many other types of ghosts. Ceremonies, prayers, and things that are respected differ according to their status and the related beliefs. Therefore, although Buddhist worship has evolved and organized in a systematic way, the prayers, chants, and related melodies may not be the same since they are inherited from different ethnic language groups. The Chinese popularly perform the Yoga Tantra ritual to express filial piety for a wide range of purposes, from family-level

observances to community-wide collaborations, all aimed at dedicating merit to ancestors and other spirits, so that they may jointly receive the benefits of the good deeds, in accordance with Chinese beliefs.

Historical evidence indicates that the Yoga Tantra ritual began during the reign of King Rama IV, most notably as one of the rituals performed in 1852 during the Kongtek ceremony, the cremation of King Rama III (Yumangmee, 2017:106). Later, during the reign of King Rama V, Chinese Mahayana monks traveled to spread Buddhism for the first time in the Kingdom of Siam known as Phra Vajrajan Sok Heng. Adhering to the strict and long-respected practices of Dharma, Chinese Buddhists living in Thailand joined together to build a temple to serve as a residence for traveling Chinese monks. When the temple was completed, it was given a royal name in Thai, “Wat Bamphen Chin Phrot,” as well as a name in Teochew, “Yong Hok Yi Temple.” Increasing numbers of Chinese monks from the Guangdong Province traveled to Thailand to perform religious activities. This led to construction of Wat Mangkon Kamalawat, also known as Leng Noei Yi Temple, established by King Rama V. The Chinese monk, Sak Heng, was appointed as the head monk of the Chinese sect, and named Phra Vajrajan Chin Wang Sasamativat (Chinese Sangha Sect, 2008:53-54). Many other monks from Chaozhou Province, China, also traveled to Thailand seeking to spread Buddhism, but they stayed at other shrines or monasteries, where Teochew Chinese monks practiced Dharma, particularly at Leng Hua Huek Ka Xia Monastery and Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery (覺園唸佛林), also known as Mokkhapalaram Monastery and Neiguang Monastery, as well as other locations (Sek Pung Chong, 2018).

This history of how Chinese-based Buddhist traditions arrived and spread in Thailand helps to explain how two related but different religious practices developed. Notably, the chanting of Dharma Sankhita and the performance of various other ceremonies are divided into two main forms: Cantonese and Teochew. The Cantonese Yoga Tantra ritual is still done in various Chinese temples in Thailand, but the Teochew Yoga Tantra ritual can still be seen only at the Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery. The researcher’s interest in studying the Teochew Yoga Tantra ritual led to his participation in the ceremony at this monastery in 2016, and prompted this research project.

Objectives

To study the musical value and Buddhist value in the Teochew Yoga Tantra ritual.

Background

The Teochew Yoga Tantra ritual was originally called the Yoga Tantra Pretaphli ritual, also known as “Ullambana Sutram” in Sanskrit and “Bang Iem Kao” in Teochew. Chinese people who adhere to these precepts engage in this ritual by giving alms to the departed souls in the Three Realms of Miserable Existence, according to the beliefs of Mahayana Buddhism: 1. The realm of hell – a place of torture for evil spirits; 2. The realm of hungry ghosts – a world full of hunger and suffering of people who have done many bad deeds physically, verbally, and mentally when they were alive, so that when they die their spirits will be stuck and unable to escape from this world; and 3. The realm of animals – the realm of general beasts that need to rely on the merit of the Lord Buddha and Bodhisattva. Yoga Tantra is considered as a Mahayana Buddhist ritual with high sacredness and great merit. In practice, this ritual can be performed on both auspicious and inauspicious occasions.

Hungry ghosts (Pret) in Mahayana Buddhism is a type of hell creature, which must suffer repeatedly as a result of bad karma caused by greed, anger, and delusion... until the karma is freed. Hiuen-Tsang translated the message about hungry ghosts in the Abhidhamma Pitaka. Hungry ghosts are due to acts of evil, vengeance, jealousy, and bad words by people when they were alive, which caused others to suffer and created a lot of bad karma. These ghosts have hideous appearances: some are as tall as a palm tree, with a mouth shaped like hole of a needle; some are rotten-headed ghosts with a belly as big as a barn; and some ghosts eat feces – these tormented hungry ghosts cannot receive merit from anyone. The ghosts live in the world of ghosts called Pretavisaibhumi (Realm of Hungry Ghosts) ... a world of hunger, thirst, and suffering. They have no place to stay and experience never-ending suffering (Photinantha, 1969:3). Based on the Mahayana Buddhist beliefs, in order to help these hungry ghosts and demons, it is necessary to perform a ritual called Yoga Tantra, which is followed to dedicate merit on behalf of the tormented demons, consistent with the legend and traditions of the ritual.

Yoga Tantra ritual in Thailand is often called the “Basket Throwing Ceremony” with the same purpose as expressed in Teochew Chinese. The full-scale Kongtek ceremony first took place in 1852, during the reign of King Rama IV, as part of the royal cremation ceremony honoring King Rama III. The full-scale ceremony lasted seven days and seven nights, according to the Rattanakosin Chronicles of King Rama IV (Figure1) (Yumangmee, 2017:106-121).

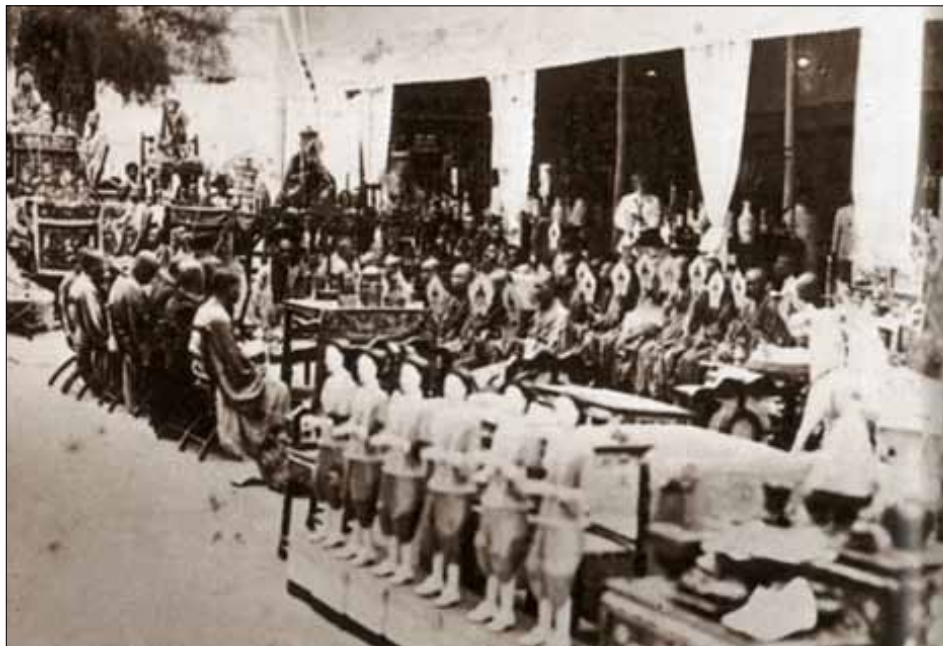


Figure 1. Kongtek ceremony at the Royal Cremation Ceremony of Her Royal Highness Princess Sripacharinthra, the Queen Mother (Image from the National Library) from the Arts and Culture Journal (November 2016 issue).

The Yoga Tantra Ritual, as performed during the Kongtek ceremony, is popular and may be followed by the general public, but it is done on a smaller scale compared to the royal ceremonies; the scale and duration of the ceremony varies depending on the status of the person being honored. Those wishing to perform the Kongtek ceremony and Yoga Tantra

Ceremony often choose to perform a combined ritual at the Chinese Hungry Ghost Festival, which takes place in the seventh Chinese lunar month.

Methodology

The researcher undertook an ethnographic study, studied relevant research documents, and interviewed experts. Data and rituals were arranged into categories and analyzed in terms of their general context, focusing on the methods observed during the Yoga Tantra ritual, using Western music scores, and presented for descriptive analysis.

The methods adopted were:

1. Study of the Yoga Tantra ritual using both Thai and foreign language texts for basic
2. Study of the Yoga Tantra ritual of Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, Soi Man Si 1, Bamrung Mueang Road, Bangkok, from two monks: Phra Vajrajan Sek Pueng Chong and Phra Vajrajan Sek Ao Heng
3. Study of the actual rules for performing rituals focusing on the following details:
 - Relevant information regarding religious beliefs, format of chant melodies, ritual music as well as issues of music education and other related details
 - Animated images of the Teochew Yoga Tantra ritual
 - Photographs
 - Audio information [Interview] of people knowledgeable about the Yoga Tantra ritual

Findings

Ritual Format

According to Phra Vajrajarn Sek Pueng Chong (Abbot of Kak Hang Niam Huek Lim Monastery), the practice of Yoga Tantra ritual was inherited from Dharma Master Sek Kuang Qi of the Yuan Jia Yi Monastery, Huilai District, Chaozhou City (Guangdong Province). Modernly, the rules and content of the Sutra have been shortened from the original, as the original full-scale ritual took a long time to perform and required many personnel.

The melodies and chants in the Yoga Tantra ritual of the Teochew Chinese monks are divided into two main melodies: The Xiang Hong Bang melody, developed from the chants of Taoist monks in Chaozhou, China, is no longer used in Yoga Tantra rituals in Thailand. However, the Hiang Hua Bang melody, developed from the chants of Hakka Chinese monks in Chaozhou, is still used in Thailand for Yoga Tantra rituals, most notably at Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery (Sek Pung Chong, 2018). Chants of the Hiang Hua Bang melody changes rhythm and tone to aid pronunciation and understanding, and to maintain the intended meaning of the scripture. The chants and sound patterns, which are unique and beautiful, use high and low tones, short and long sounds, and loud and soft volumes, often accompanied by musical instruments.

The study of the Yoga Tantra ritual, as performed at the Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, revealed that the format of the ritual involves three main elements:

1. The ritual's main practitioners are divided into three groups. The first group, Phra Vajrajan (上師- siang se) is responsible for leading the chant. The second group involves monks who participate in the ritual by playing musical instruments and accompanying the rhythm and chant, all done in accordance with the Sutra. The third group include laymen, who also participate by playing musical instruments (Figure 2).

2. The ceremonial area is divided into two main types: A temporary ceremonial area (during Kongtek ceremonies) and a permanent ceremonial area (at Chinese temples and monasteries). Both of these areas include sub-ceremonial areas: for the Buddha, Bodhisattava,

and Dharmapala; for Phra Vajrajan to perform the Amartaraja Bohhisattava ritual; and for all spirits (Figure 3).

3. Ritual equipment which includes a Buddha image (placed in front of Phra Vajrajan's altar), Thai food offerings (vegetarian food and fruit), flowers and coins, rice, holy water, rosary beads, scriptures, and rhythmic instruments; and various musical instruments, including a dulcimer, large cymbals, and a big drum with an attached, hanging bell.



Figure 2. Phra Vajrajan leading the chant; participating monks play musical instruments that accompany the rhythm, while chanting mantras according to the Sutra. Photograph by Rachan Sornchai (2016).



Figure 3. Monks performing the ritual at the front of the ceremonial area along with ritual participants; laymen performing on musical instruments, located on the left side of the ritual in this photo. Photograph by Rachan Sornchai (2016).

Yoga Tantra Ritual Rules and Performance Protocols

There must be at least three monks to perform the ritual. Conducting rituals in a monastery requires the presence of a knowledgeable and senior monk, referred to as “Phra Vajra-jan” who presides over the ritual. This senior monk leads while conducting several important activities, such as leading mudra postures and the verbal recitation of mantras, while monks concentrate in their minds to create a vision.

Phra Vajrajan first receives the scripture from a senior monk and then leads the ritual’s practices, including chanting the Dharani and various Buddhist mantras and scriptural verses. The assistant monks help with the chant in response to Phra Vajrajan, specifically by chanting various mantras according to the Sutra, and playing musical instruments to accompany the rhythm. Chanting is performed following a specific melody, and mudra postures (hand signal codes) must fluently comply with the ritual’s regiments. At the same time, musicians play musical instruments following the main melody that Phra Vajrajan simultaneously chants. The chant accompanying the Yoga Tantra is known as “You kae yiam khao xi jiae yiao jib-瑜伽焰口施食要集” an abbreviated version of the Dharani chant, which has 119 short and long Dharma Sankhita chapters altogether; it takes 3 to 4 hours to fully perform the ritual (Kak Hueng Niam Huk Lim, 2018). The place set up to worship the Buddha must consist of various important Bohhisattava and set up Thai offerings for all the animals that will receive merit from this ritual. All food offerings must be distributed as alms after the completion of this ritual. The steps of the Yoga Tantra ritual describing the sequence and ceremonial actions performed to complete the ritual are presented in Figure 4.

Compositions and melodies that appear in the Yoga Tantra Sutra

The compositions of the Yoga Tantra Sutra are considered important works of literature that have been refined over the past hundreds of years. Indeed, over the many years the ceremonial aspects of the ritual have continuously undergone changes (modifications, additions, or reductions) as deemed appropriate by Phra Vajrajan, but it has consistently maintained the same Sanskrit mantra and pronunciations. The essence of the Yoga Tantra Sutra is based on different temples. For this reason, musical melodies have changed or improved, as it passed down through the different temples. However, the core content is divided into two main sections, each comprising “Jang,” “Jiu,” “Ki,” and “Bung” verses, totaling 119 chapters in all.

Section 1 is a chant with melodies and mudra postures used to invite the Buddha, the Bodhisattva, and Dharmapala from the ten directions. The verses of the Lord Buddha, Bodhisattva, and Dharmapala from the ten directions are chanted using an ancient Sanskrit mantra to purify the ceremonial area.

Section 2 is a chant in ancient Sanskrit language to summon the spirits of ghosts, hungry ghosts, and asuras, and with spells to exorcise and subdue evil ghosts, demons, and pagan devils; sermons on ghosts, hungry ghosts, and asuras; and Dhamma incantations, which are magical medicines to allow ghosts, hungry ghosts, and asuras a chance to listen to and practice Dharma in order to be freed from the cycles of suffering and hardship and traveling to Sukhavati.

Sequence of the ritual	Officiant	Rite	Background music	Meaning
1. Open the ritual	-	-	A big drum and a dulcimer are played at the beginning of the ritual.	It is a signal to start the ritual.
2. Start performing the ritual	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Pay respect to the Buddha image and chant to praise the Buddha's virtues in Lo Hiang Jang, Kai Tia Jin Hiang, Buang Tek Jang, etc.	A big drum and a dulcimer are played as background music for Kai Tia Jin Hiang Jang and Buang Tek Jang.	Praise the Buddha and Bodhisattva
3. Message reading ceremony	Phra Vajrajan	Read the verses and read the Lord Buddha's message	There is no melody.	Read the message, describe the steps in performing the ritual and invite the Buddha
4. Worship ceremony at different altars	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Chant the Buddha's name in a short musical melody	A big drum and a dulcimer are played along with the melody, including the melody of the Nam Mo Oni Tohook.	Commemorate the Buddha and Bodhisattva
5. Ceremony to praise the ceremonial area	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Chant the verses in praise of the ceremonial area	There is no melody.	Invite the Buddha and Bodhisattva to come to the ceremonial area
6. Ceremony to invite Phra Vajrajan to perform the ritual.	Monks	Chant the verses to invite Phra Vajrajan	There is no melody.	Invite Phra Vajrajan to perform the ritual
7. Start of the ritual	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Phra Vajrajan performs various mudras and commences the ritual according to the Yoga Tantra ritual. The core content is divided into two main sections, each comprising "Jang", "Jiu", "Ki", and "Bung" verses, totaling 119 chapters in all.	A big drum and a dulcimer are played as background music for Thian Siang Thian Hia Jang melody, Yiang Ki Jang melody, Huk Ming Jang melody, Kong Yiang Jang melody, etc.	Praise the virtue of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva, and invite hungry ghosts to receive the merit from the ritual
8. Ritual in the Sutra is completed	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Phra Vajrajan finishes reciting the rituals in the Sutra.	A big drum and a dulcimer are played as background music for the mantra. The melodies are Jap Po Ueng Jang and Huai Hiang Kee.	In compliance with the Sutra, when the ritual is completed the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are sent back to their palaces.
9. Ritual in the Sutra is completed	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Phra Vajrajan comes down from the ceremonial altar.	A big drum and a dulcimer are played as a short musical melody while waiting for the chanting.	-
10. Ceremony of chanting and praising Dharmapala	Phra Vajrajan and monks	Phra Vajrajan chants praises to Dharmapala.	A big drum and a dulcimer are played as background music for the mantra.	It is to praise and worship Dharmapala who protects and preserves Buddhism.

Figure 4. Sequence and key ceremonial actions performed during the Yoga Tantra ritual.

The chanting melody of the Teochew Chinese is short and remains consistent throughout the recitation. The vocal range used in chanting is limited; a higher vocal register, similar

to that used in performance singing, is not employed. Instead, the chanting voice is kept at a moderate level, maintaining a harmonious tone and unified direction throughout the ritual. The compositions used in the two main parts of the Yoga Tantra Sutra comprise a total of 119 chapters. These compositions and their associated melodic chants can be categorized into four distinct groups:

1. **The Jang** (讚) is a chant with a specific and clear melody used to praise Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. During the chant, instrumental music is often mixed with the melodies to create a melodious sound, including Luo Heiangzang, Kai Tiejin Heiangzang, Buang Tek Jang.
2. **The Jiu** (咒) is an ancient Sanskrit mantra. In this verse, Phra Vajrajan reads the Sutra and voiced a drawn-out sound to create a melody. Other participants in the ritual give readings which are intermittently performed, with and without instrumental music; the readings include the six-letter mantra of Rajadharani, the Mahakaruna Dharani Sutra, the Ten Bhumi mantras, and the Chundi Maha Bodhisattva mantra.
3. **The Ki** (偈) is a chant written in the form of a descriptive poem, based on stories narrating the kindness of the Buddha and Bodhisattva and describing the suffering of ghosts, hungry ghosts, and asuras. It can be chanted in the form of a reading, with a melody. The chant may or may not include instrumental music. The text of the readings includes the invocation of the Triple Gem, the verse of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and the verse of the opening ceremony.
4. **The Bung** (文) consists of spoken words with no accompanying music; the content often includes messages or sermons about ghosts, hungry ghosts, and asuras – used to preach and teach, encouraging people to do only good deeds.

Musical and Religious Instruments

The monks who perform the ritual use musical instruments to create rhythms throughout the chant. Various rhythmic instruments are used to create background music (Figure 5):

- The **Bak Hue** is a fish-shaped wooden bamboo musical instrument that is hit with a stick, emitting a hard beat aligned with the sound of the prayer. Sometimes, the beat rhythm might be changed to signal the monks to speed up the melody to proceed to another part or alter the melody to become faster.
- The **Ing Kheng** is a small bell with a handle and a stick that makes a small, sharp sound. The monks beat the rhythm to keep the chants aligned with the melody.
- The **Tong** is a circular bell which is hit by a stick alternating with the Bak Hue to be aligned with the melody or the mantras, or hit against the rhythm to create enjoyment, in a rhythm called "Sikchae."
- The **Kheng** is an inverted bowl-shaped bell, which is hit with a stick when monks begin or end chanting mantras, or before changing mantras as a signal for worshipping the Buddha and Bodhisattva in rituals.
- The **Khandha Bell** is a bell with a pointed top, similar in shape to a dagger, with the function of giving signals – rung when monks summon spirits and for some Sanskrit chants. Sometimes, the bell is rung in time with the tune being used for reading various verses.



Figure 5. Monks' rhythmic instruments (left to right): Bak Hue, Ing Kheng, Tong, Kheng, Khantha bell. Photo by Rachan Sornchai (2022).

In addition to the musical instruments used in the ritual, there are also religious instrument implements that serve as symbolic components of the ritual. The Vajra is a dagger with a pointed top, which the Phra Vajrajan holds while chanting, used to make symbolic hand gestures as signals inviting Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to perform the ritual (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The Vajra dagger, which has a pointed top that the Phra Vajrajan can hold. Photo by Rachan Sornchai (2022).

Throughout the ritual, laymen play musical instruments often, Chinese folk instruments, such as a Chinese dulcimer (揚琴 - iang kim) and Chinese fiddle (二胡- ri hu) that carry the melody of the chants with either slow or fast rhythms (Figure 7-8). The music is aligned with the monks' chants, which elevates the beauty of the mantras. A ceremonial drum (a large drum set on a trestle with a small bell hanging at the end of its trestle) is used to direct the chanting from beginning to end of the ceremony. To play the drum, the musician must kneel or sit; the drum head or hanging bell is struck with two wooden sticks, consistent with an ancient rhythm, called the Seven Star Rhythm. In addition to the drumming, large cymbals are played to accentuate the main rhythm and sub-rhythm. (Chongsanguan, 2014).



Figure 7. Musical instruments played by laymen include large cymbals, and a big drum with an attached hanging small bell, used to make melodies. Photograph by Rachan Sornchai (2022).



Figure 8. Laymen playing musical instruments, including a fiddle and a Chinese dulcimer. Photograph by Rachan Sornchai (2022).

Teochew Chinese Chanting Melody Characteristics

In Chinese musical systems, the Teochew chanting style predominantly uses ancient Chinese scales. These include the pentatonic scale (five main notes) and the heptatonic scale

(seven main notes). Additional notes can be raised or lowered as appropriate for the melody. (Pikulski, 1997:69-73.) However, in the case of Teochew Chinese Yoga Tantra ritual music in Thailand, another phenomenon occurs due to varying pitch levels in the chanting, based on the main melody of each sutra. Fundamentally, the structure of the pentatonic and heptatonic scales used remains the same. The changing pitch levels and melodies significantly impact the emotional expression of the music. The use of these primary scale groups involves melodic variations while preserving the traditional five-note and seven-note scale structures of ancient China. These melodies can be categorized to convey different emotions. Combined with accompanying instruments, the music evokes feelings of elegance, vibrancy, sorrow, and delight.

Knowledge of Yoka Tantra Ritual Melodies

To fully analyze and appreciate the details of ceremonial music, it is necessary to consider the text and music together. Both of these structures are an important part of Mahayana Buddhism, and are used to promote a better understanding. Here, Western musical notation symbols and the text are written in English to provide clearer explanations; however, in a chant, the pitch of sounds is much different than the pitch of spoken language, particularly because a different tone of voice can be used to make the chant more melodious. To provide a clearer description of the musical context, selected chant examples from the Jang, Jiu, and Gi categories, as utilized in the ritual, have been presented. In contrast, the Bung chants exhibit a distinct characteristic: they are consistently interspersed within the Jang, Jiu, and Ki sections. The performance of Bung chants strictly adheres to recitation of the Yoka Tantra sutras verbatim, without any melodic ornamentation, vocal chanting, or instrumental accompaniment. Consequently, Bung chants have been excluded from the scope of this musical analysis. Examples of the chants used in the rituals studied include:

Example 1. Luo Hieng Jang Chant

The meaning of the Luo Hieng Jang chant, which represents an important hymn of praise from the "Jang" category is as follows:

"Incense is burned in a hot stove. The fragrant aroma spreads throughout the Dharmadhatu, inviting all the Buddhas to come to join, creating clouds of auspiciousness everywhere. Please concentrate and pray for the Buddha to appear and invite the Bodhisattva Mahasattva to come above the fragrant clouds..."

The Luo Hieng Jang is the first mantra chanted in order to worship the Triple Gem. The chant notation is shown in Figure 9. It is also a basic mantra used by monks to practice chanting. The chant is divided into two parts: a verse of praise, and a worship called "Pu Sag To-菩薩陀," which is done three times. In this particular section, all poetic verses and melodies are entirely in the Jang style. The monastic assembly chants this section together, with the Phra Vajrajan leading the opening chant. Other monks provide rhythmic accompaniment on their instruments. Lay musicians play the dulcimer and drums, accompanying the ritual. Their instrumental performance follows the pitch of the monks' chanting precisely, using the monastics' vocal tones as the guiding reference for their playing. In the basic Teochew chant, which has a unique melody and composition, led by Phra Vajrajan, the chanters must be precise in the structure of the melody, and also control the chant using high and low voices.

Luo Hieng Jang

♩ = 75

lou hiang za ruah huab gai mong hang zu hug hai hue seg iao bhung

11 ♩ = 85

sui cu gig siang hung seng i Huang heng zu hug

21

hiang chang sing hiang hung gai pu sag pu sag nam mo mo ho sag nam mo

30 ♩ = 95

hiang hung gai pu sag pu sag nam mo mo ho sag nam mo

37 ♩ = 75

hiang hiang heng gai pu sag pu sag mo sag

Figure 9. The Luo Hieng Jang chant notation by Phra Vajrajan Sek Ao Heng, Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, Bangkok (Author's transcript, 2017). The red box indicated a short, drawn-out sound within a chant. The yellow and green sections displayed distinct melodies, yet these were played continuously without pause, seamlessly intertwining within a single chant.

Scales:

The major scale for the Lou Hieng Jang chant is a heptatonic (7-note) scale, consisting of C, D, E, F, G, A and B. Notes A and D typically appear in prescribed melodic embellishments. While C often functions as a passing tone. In reference to the Chinese musical system, this aligns with the Kung Mode. All notes are used in rotation, clearly adhering to the Chinese scale structure. The sounds that are used less often are drawn-out, and stretch across each paragraph of the chant, as it has such a short melody (Figure 9) Notably, the F note is predominantly found in scales for Teochew Chinese opera performances. In this particular chant, its presence emphasizes the pronunciation of Teochew Chinese words. This melodic structure can also accommodate numerous other hymns of praise.

Rhythm:

The Luo Hieng Jang chant is characterized by a moderate rhythm. The melody can be arranged using the 2/4 Time Signature, which creates a fuller texture according to the melody. Musicians play instruments and provide harmony, using a moderate rhythm.

Melody:

The Luo Hieng Jang chant clearly features two distinct melodic texture (Homophonic texture) (Figure 9). It emphasizes continuous chanting of these two melodies without pause, highlighting a synchronized delivery to foster concentration and convey the sacredness inherent in describing the Triple Gem. The melodic range typically moves smoothly with

conjunct motion. There are melodic embellishments that bridge phrases within the chant, as well as at the end of each line, connecting it to the next section of the recitation. During the final round of worship the tempo quickens, signaling the completion of the last recitation and the conclusion of the chant.

Example 2. Chab Dou Ying Chant

The Chab Dou Ying, the 14th of 119 chants, is recited in Sanskrit. Its meaning references the opening the ten realms, and it is considered a mystical and sacred chant. This chant represents an important hymn of praise from the "Jiu" category. Transliterated from ancient Sanskrit, it is intended for melodic recitation. This chant is performed solely through intoned recitation and has no instrumental accompaniment. The chant's musical notation is shown in Figure 10.



Figure 10. Chab Dou Ying chant notation by Phra Vajrajan Sek Ao Heng, Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, Bangkok (Author's transcript, 2017).

Scales:

The Chab Dou Ying chant utilizes a heptatonic (7-note) scale. Its entire melody features drawn-out, embellished recitation, with only the beginning and end of the final melodic phrase being articulated with a distinct, emphasized vocalization. Therefore, the melody is specifically a recitative style that corresponds to the Chinese modal system's "Shang Mode." This mode comprises the notes D, E, F, G, A, B, and C within the Chinese 7-note scale system. However, the note A does not appear in this particular chant, and it is also observed that notes C and G are used infrequently.

Rhythm:

The rhythm of Chap Dou Ying starts out slow and gradually speeds up.

Melody:

The chant of Chap Dou Ying has a distinctive single melodic shape (Monophonic texture), emphasizing a prescribed melodic recitation. It is characterized by its vocal delivery, incorporating melodic embellishments at both the beginning and end of phrases, used particularly when reciting chants derived from Sanskrit. The melodic range generally moves smoothly with conjunct motion, avoiding extreme high or low pitches. Infrequently used notes are sustained as elongated passing tones between each chanted phrase. The presence of F# and B specifically facilitates word pronunciation. In the final phrase, the Phra Vajrajan recitation includes an emphasized, percussive vocalization, and the tempo quickens, signaling the conclusion of the final round of the chant.

Example 3. Pi Lu Ru Lai Chant

The Pi Lu Ru Lai chant, which represents an important hymn of praise from the "Ki" category. The meaning of the quoted verse praising the "Vairocana Buddha," who is considered the primordial Buddha in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism (Sek Ao Heng, 2018)

"Phra Vairocana Buddha who has great wisdom."

The verse praising the Vairocana Buddha is the 23rd of 119 chants. The chant notation is shown in Figure 11. It is a significant short poetic verse found in the Yoga Tantra Sutra.

Pi Lu Ru Lai



Figure 11. Pi Lu Ru Lai chant notation by Phra Vajrajan Sek Ao Heng, Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, Bangkok (Author's transcript, 2017). The yellow and green sections display two parts; the Phra Vajrajan leads the chant (yellow section) and the monks then following (green section).

Scales:

The Pi Lu Ru Lai chant utilizes a pentatonic (5-note) scale. However, only three main notes Eb, F, and G are primarily used, appearing in the "Chu mode." This mode is particularly suited for chanted recitation, focusing mainly on F and Eb to help the monastic assembly follow along.

Rhythm:

The rhythm of the verse praising of Vairocana Buddha is slow, allowing for elongated, embellished vocalizations.

Melody:

Phra Vajrajan leads the chant in the first verse, which the monks then follow (Figure 10).

The melody is characterized by a recitative style with embellishments, specifically using an embellished vocalization at the beginning of phrases. The end of phrases involves a drawn-out, descending vocalization. The chanting method is as follows:

Part 1: The Phra Vajrajan leads the chant. This initial section states the name of Vairocana Buddha (yellow section in Figure 10). In Western music, this is comparable to an Antecedent phrase, which often feels incomplete or acts like a "question" seeking a response.

Part 2: The monks then follow (green section in Figure 10). This is a hymn of praise to Vairocana Buddha, which, in Western music, is akin to a Consequent phrase that acts as an "answer" or completion to the Antecedent phrase, providing a sense of resolution and finality.

Example 4. Ki Siew Cundi Chant

The meaning of the Ki Siew Cundi chant, which represents an important hymn of praise from the "Jang" and "Jiu" category is as follows:

"I worship Phra Cundi, my refuge, with immeasurable respect. With my praise, may Phra Cundi protect us all"

The Ki Siew Cundi is the 22nd of 119 chants for worshiping the Cundi Bodhisattva according to the Sutra. It is divided into two main parts: The hymn of praise (Jang) and the Sanskrit mantra worship (Jiu), which must be recited three times. Phra Vajrajan leads the chant, and the musicians play music following Phra Vajrajan's leading chant, with subsequent chanting by the monks. The chant notation is shown in Figure 12.

Ki Siew Cundi

♩ = 120

The musical notation is presented in a series of staves, each with a measure number on the left. The notes are written on a treble clef staff with a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes. The notation is divided into two main sections: a yellow section (Jang style) and a green section (Jiu style).

Yellow Section (Jang style):

- Measure 12: gi siu gui i su seg di tao ming deng
- Measure 24: loi cig gi zhi ngo gim ceng zan dai zhun ti
- Measure 36: rui nguang ce bui chui gia hu
- Measure 48: num mho sab do nam sam mieu sam pu to
- Measure 60: gi zhi nam dan zhi tuo an zhi
- Measure 68: li zu li zhun ti so po ho ho

Green Section (Jiu style):

- Measure 12: ho
- Measure 24: ho
- Measure 36: ho

Figure 12. Ki Siew Cundi notation by Phra Vajrajan Sek Ao Heng, Kak Hang Niam Huk Lim Monastery, Bangkok (Author's transcript, 2017). The praise chant is divided into two parts: the yellow section is a hymn of praise in the "Jang" style, and the green section is a Sanskrit poetic verse in the "Jiu" style.

Scales:

The major scale for the Ki Siew Cundi chant is a heptatonic (7-note) scale, consisting of C, D, E, F, G, A and B, with E and F as drawn-out sounds at the end of “Jang” to connect the melody to the “Jiu” Sanskrit poetic verse, which also uses a drawn-out sound three times at the end. Both the text and the drawn-out sounds are compulsory and cannot be changed to another form. The sound system most clearly matches the Chinese sound mode system, specifically the Kung Mode. The sound can be passed to the secondary sounds D E F A (B). The musicians primarily play music following the melody set by Phra Vajrajan and the monks.

Rhythm:

The Ki Siew Cundi chant is characterized by a moderate rhythm. The melody can be arranged using the 2/4 Time Signature.

Melody:

The Ki Siew Cundi chant clearly features two distinct melodic texture (Homophonic texture). The chanting is prescribed, emphasizing a synchronized performance. The melodic range generally moves smoothly with conjunct motion, without pauses. The Phra Vajrajan employs a distinct, percussive vocalization in the adoration section. Melodic embellishments are used within the phrases, and short embellished endings connect the verses. In the adoration section, the tempo quickens before concluding.

Discussion

This study based on examples of chants and melodies that occur in the Yoga Tantra ritual has shown the influence music has on rituals. Important rhythms and melodies are played in unison, without a chorus that distinguishes a chant from general performance music. In traditional Chinese music, the scale system differs from the Western major/minor scale system. These scales are referred to as “modes,” each named after its fundamental tone. The main mode names are: Kung (C), Shang (D), Chu (E), Bian Zhi (F), Zhi (G), Yu (A), and Bian Gong (B) (Pikulsri, 1997:69-73). Chinese scales can be constructed as either pentatonic (five-note) or heptatonic (seven-note) scales. Other notes can serve as embellishments, enhancing the musicality, and can transition smoothly into other melodies, adding complexity to the musical texture.

The playing of rhythmic instruments during the ritual accentuates emotional imageries. The aesthetics of sweet, melodious melodies, often with a moderate rhythm, connote the worship of Buddha and Bodhisattva. The main musical instruments most often used are a dulcimer and a fiddle during the fast-chant melody, with an emphasis on a heavy sound, or chanting Sanskrit mantras, with heavy rhythms created by using a big drum and large cymbals to communicate the suffering of hungry ghosts. The melody, which uses a sorrowful chant to describe the suffering of the hungry ghosts, may be accompanied by bell-ringing and a sermon to communicate to the spirits, seeking to free them from suffering (Pikulsri, 1997:69-73).

Some parts of the chanting melodies used in the ritual have been adapted and refined from their original forms passed down by previous Phra Vajrajan. These adjustments are made by the Phra Vajrajan to suit the timing and context of modern-day ceremonies, while

the essential and sacred parts of the melodies remain unchanged to preserve the ritual's identity and spiritual core in the Mahayana tradition. Although the text of the Sutra still follows traditional conventions, certain sections of the chant have been modified – such as using shorter and faster melodies to reduce the overall duration. These musical and vocal elements are carefully crafted in harmony with the meaning and rhythm of the chants. In analyzing the music of the ritual, it is essential to consider both the text and melody together, as they are key to deepening the understanding of Mahayana Buddhist teachings. In some cases, Western musical notation and English transliteration are used for clarity, especially when demonstrating how the chanting differs from ordinary speech and includes shifts in pitch and tone for expressive and spiritual purposes (Sek Pung Chong, 2018).

Overall, these observations are consistent with the philosophical observations made by Augustus Comte, a French sociologist, who proposed his ideas regarding socio-cultural theories and social-cultural evolution, which divided society into two parts: social statics and social dynamics. The first presents the idea that the structure of society is a holistic, yet consisting of distinctive institutions or parts of society. Each part of the institution performs its own duties, but in coordination with other parts ... acting in different ways but simultaneously supporting each other and depending on each other. It is this kind of order or consistency of various conditions that allows humans to live in society normally. When one part of society changes, it will have an impact on other parts, which must be adjusted accordingly. Once adjusted harmoniously, society can continue (Comte, 1988:9-15).

In Mahayana Buddhism, the reason monastics are permitted to engage with music without violating monastic discipline is found in the *The Lotus of The True Law* (妙法蓮華經). This text states that even a single short Dharma song can lead the chanter to attain Nirvana (Sek Pung Chong, 2018). This stands in contrast to the ancient tradition upheld by Theravada monks, who believe that music impedes the attainment of Nirvana. This is reflected in the seventh precept for Theravada monastics, which prohibits monks from playing musical instruments, dancing, singing, or performing music. Engaging in these activities incurs a minor offense (dukkata), and even observing them is an offense for a monk (Wannapok, 2018).

Indeed, Mahachati Preaching is a form of sermon delivered with melodic intonation by the preaching monk, without musical accompaniment during the sermon itself. Music played by lay practitioners follows only after the sermon concludes. This is not considered an offense because the chanting serves as a lesson to make listeners aware of both benefits and harm, and to encourage giving, upholding precepts, and developing meditation. Furthermore, it serves to praise the virtues of Prince Vessantara, who was a Bodhisattva in his final incarnation before attaining enlightenment as a Buddha (Inthaniwat, 2021:164-168:).

Conclusion

The principles of the ritual are stated as follows: A religious prophet is a person who preaches moral and ethical teachings, establishes precepts for Buddhists to realize what behavior is appropriate and what is not, and teaches people about good and evil... those who do bad things will go to hell while those who do good will go to heaven when they die. Rituals are therefore important to release the suffering souls to heaven according to the principles of Mahayana Buddhism, by relying on the virtues of the Buddha in the past,

present, and future, and the Bodhisattva who is full of compassion for all beings. Faith and belief in the afterlife are very much evident as reflected in the performance of the Yoga Tantra Yoga ritual. The role of the temple in teaching Buddhism and ensuring its sustainability emphasizes various Dharma principles, such as the eight cardinal virtues: diligence, frugality, honesty, discipline, politeness, cleanliness, unity, and generosity. These virtues are transmitted through rituals. Temples and monks also serve as central hubs for communicating with Buddhists, reflecting the long-standing practice of filial piety towards Chinese ancestors, which fosters unity among Chinese communities, from families to the wider community, who jointly perform the rituals.

In conclusion, the Yoga Tantra ritual is carefully completed by the Phra Vajrajan, who leads the ritual and serves as the focal point. Assistant monks help by chanting and playing rhythmic instruments, aligned with the Sutra. Laymen, playing musical instruments that carry out a harmonious melody aligned with the monks' chants, express or accentuate emotions conveyed by the chants. Combined together, they create imagery and aesthetics according to the meanings found in the scriptures. Finally, what is indispensable in this analysis is the central belief that all has been passed down from many previous generations.

Recommendations

To ensure the preservation of the original Teochew chanting styles, it is important that the rituals and chant are further studied from the perspective of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. The hope is that if the currently missing Teochew Chinese melodies are meticulously compiled, analyzed, and developed according to proper ethnomusicological principles, then this invaluable knowledge and pure melodies will continue to be transmitted to future generations.

Even as contemporary society emphasizes scientific and technological advancement, often at the expense of spiritual development, the continued existence of the pure art of the Yoga Tantra ritual will maintain its beauty in Thai society. It will foster spiritual prosperity and encourage Thai people of Teochew descent to uphold strong moral values. Continuing to perform and study the Yoga Tantra ritual will preserve Teochew traditions, philology, and cultures, and promote the benefits gained from Buddhist philosophy and ethnomusicology to future generations.

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