Thayae Mon Songs in a Contemporary Dimension: Musical Creation for Promoting Cultural Tourism

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ABSTRACT:
The findings revealed that Thayae Mon music is a form of folk performing art of the Mon people with distinctive identities in melody, rhythm, tonal system, performance style, musical instruments, and expressive character. Its important musical characteristics include repetitive melodic patterns, stepwise melodic movement, clear rhythmic patterns, and ensemble performance. The researcher applied the musical identities of this folk performance and integrated them with modern musical elements. Local community members participated by presenting ideas for creative development in various dimensions. The created works were evaluated and revised based on suggestions from experts and qualified specialists. The songs were then disseminated through various media channels as public relations tools to promote cultural tourism. The research results indicate that the creative development of folk music in a contemporary form can serve as an important mechanism for preserving, transmitting, developing, and promoting local culture. Moreover, it can effectively support the enhancement of cultural tourism.

Keywords: Thayae Mon songs, contemporary music, musical creation, cultural tourism, Mon culture, Pathum Thani Province.

1. Introduction

Pathum Thani Province is an important area in the central region of Thailand with diverse cultures, especially the Mon culture, which has been settled in the area for a long time. The Mon people in Pathum Thani play a significant role in preserving and passing on their customs, traditions, language, food, rituals, and folk performing arts. They live according to the Thai-Raman way of life, with ancient customs, traditions, and culture. The Mon community in Pathum Thani is mentioned as a local community with a unique and ancient Mon ethnic identity. Originally, this area was inhabited by Thai people, but later, Mon people continuously migrated and settled there. This aligns with the observation by Sukkhert et al. (2022) that the Mon people were one of the most prosperous ethnic groups in Southeast Asia in terms of arts and culture, possessing their own civilization and language since ancient times. The Mon Kingdom was located east of the Irrawaddy River, currently in lower Myanmar. During its 700 years of existence, the Mon Kingdom was constantly unstable, both from Burmese invasions and internal power struggles, which eventually led to its collapse. Today, the Mon people are just one ethnic group among many in Southeast Asia. The

majority of the Mon people remain in lower Myanmar, while another portion has settled in central Thailand (Riewtrakulpaiboon, 2014). Both ethnic groups coexist peacefully under the umbrella of Buddhism. Furthermore, Pathum Thani province is one of Thailand's important archaeological sites, with discovered evidence including temples, kilns, pottery, earthenware, Sam Khok jars, rice-soaking pots, and Mon bricks indicating an industrial area (Thongwan et al., 2025). These elements reflect the community's identity and constitute cultural capital that can be used to develop the creative economy and cultural tourism. This aligns with Nilwanich's (2020) recognition that Thailand's tourism industry is a prominent economic driving force in recent years, with success stemming from the combined efforts of both grassroots and top-level stakeholders who continuously propel this industry forward.

One of the important folk performing arts of the Mon people is Thaya Mon, a performance consisting of music, singing, and dancing with unique characteristics in terms of melody, rhythm, sound system, musical instruments, and performance style. Thaya Mon music is often found in religious ceremonies, traditional events, festivals, and cultural activities of the Mon community, serving as entertainment, a space to express identity, and a tool for transmitting culture from generation to generation. This aligns with the findings of Sukkhert et al. (2022), who stated that Thaya Mon songs, with their two-beat rhythm, have evidence of originating since the Ayutthaya period. Later, they were expanded and shortened to complete suites. Old Thaya Mon songs with their two-beat rhythm are highly regarded as being very important, as they are used in Khon and Lakhon performances, especially in the processions of important characters.

However, in the current social context, changes in the economy, society, technology, and musical tastes of listeners have led to a decline in the role of many types of folk music, especially among young people and younger listeners who tend to be more interested in contemporary or popular music. It can be seen that today, we must acknowledge that soft power plays a significant role in driving the nation's tourism and economy effectively. Soft power is a subtle form of cultural influence embedded in traditions such as music, art, theater, or even influential figures who promote positive values to create a positive national image. This soft power can persuade and influence minds to cultivate virtuous values (Sutthadaanantaphokin et al., 2025; Mohammad et al., 2025; Srisakorn et al., 2026; Channuwong et al., 2018). This is evident in the Mon tradition of Pathum Thani, specifically the "Thaya Mon" singing style. This involves courtship songs similar to Thai folk songs, commonly performed at various events such as Kathin, Pha Pa, New Year, Songkran, and Loy Krathong. It can be performed on land or on boats, relying primarily on call-and-response singing. The accompanying music is typically string instruments. This important annual tradition presents a significant challenge: maintaining its original identity while adapting to the contemporary social context. Without appropriate development and innovation, Thaya Mon may be confined to a narrow circle of knowledgeable individuals and its role may diminish in contemporary culture.

Creating Mon folk songs with contemporary music ensembles is one approach that appropriately bridges conservation and development. This involves blending traditional musical elements such as repetitive melodies, Mon drum rhythms, folk sound systems, Mon flutes, Mon gongs, cymbals, and gongs with Western instruments like keyboards, electric guitars, bass, drum sets, and violins. The result is a contemporary musical sound that appeals to younger audiences and can be used in performances to promote cultural tourism. This aligns with Nilwanich (2020), who stated that creating songs incorporating modern or contemporary music aims to stimulate local awareness and promote cultural tourism, disseminate information to target groups, and convey stories through music. Furthermore, Saengthong (2014) Ebekozien et al. (2025) noted that social power influences musical activities, which not only control social isolation but also serve as a cultural medium reflecting the history,

beliefs, unity, and way of life of the Mon people. Mon folk songs possess unique characteristics in terms of melody, rhythm, instruments, and performance style. In particular, the use of Mon flutes, Mon drums, Mon gongs, cymbals, and gongs together creates a unique sonic vibrancy.

Furthermore, Pathum Thani province has potential in cultural tourism, especially in Mon communities, Mon temples, Mon cuisine, Mon traditions, and community cultural activities. Using contemporary Mon folk songs as a promotional tool can help create a cultural image, increase the attractiveness of tourist attractions, and stimulate people to appreciate the value of Mon cultural heritage even more. Therefore, research on creating Mon folk songs with contemporary music to promote cultural tourism in Pathum Thani province is important from academic, musical creation, cultural preservation, and tourism development perspectives. Developing songs from the community's cultural capital is crucial for artistic, creative economic, and cultural heritage conservation.

2. Research Objectives

1. To study and analyze the musical elements of Mon folk songs that can be used to create contemporary music.

2. To create contemporary versions of Mon folk songs to promote cultural tourism.

3. To disseminate the songs to target groups and relevant public relations media.

3. Research Methods

Concepts, theories, and related research.

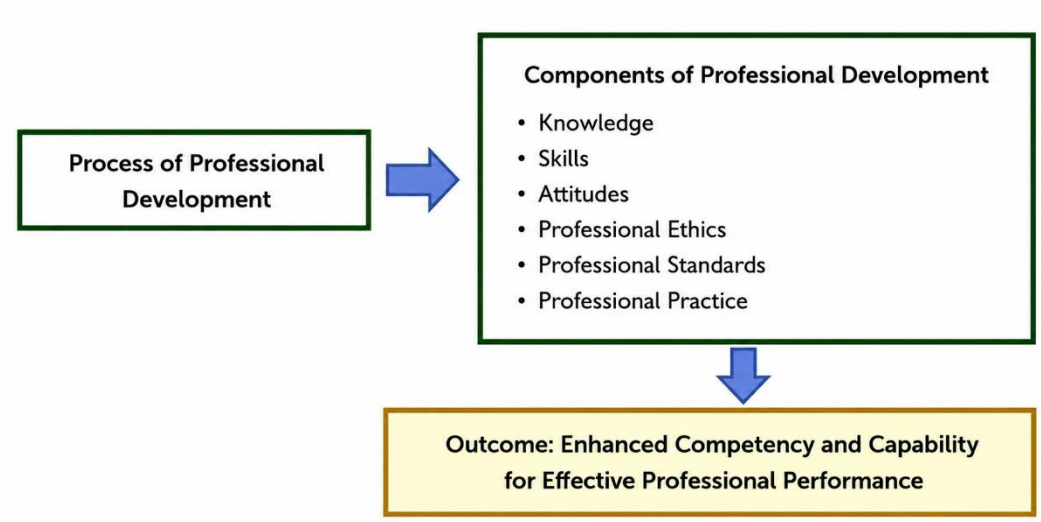

Figure 1. Diagram showing related concepts, theories, and research.

(Source: Researcher, 2026)

The Identity Study Process

The identity study process, which is the starting point of the research, aims to examine the unique characteristics of Thaya Mon songs as a cultural heritage of the Mon community. This includes their history, social context, beliefs, way of life, and the artistic and cultural values embedded in the songs. The goal of this study is to deeply understand the identity of Thaya Mon songs before moving on to the analysis of their musical elements and the creation of new works. In other words, this step is about discovering the fundamental foundations of Thaya Mon songs: what makes this type of music distinctive, different, and clearly reflects the identity of the Mon community?

In the past, the study of local culture has continuously received attention from scholars because it is a crucial process in understanding the wisdom, way of life, beliefs, and performing arts of a community. Such studies can be described as an identity study process, aiming to discover and analyze the unique characteristics of local culture to synthesize knowledge and create works that are relevant to the contemporary context. In particular, Thaya Mon songs can utilize knowledge of melody, rhythm, sound systems, performance styles, and musical instruments to develop creative works that promote cultural tourism in a valuable way.

However, in the context of globalization, Western culture and mainstream culture have a widespread influence on the lifestyles, thoughts, and tastes of people in society. This has resulted in some local or traditional cultures having a diminished role. Adaptation or gradual fading: This concept can explain the changes and loss of traditional culture as not solely due to a lack of transmission, but also to the pressure from external cultures and modern media that continuously influence local communities (Du et al., 2025; Channuwong & Kantatian, 2012).

Conversely, while cultural blending can create new forms of creativity and help local cultures adapt to contemporary contexts, if such blending lacks an understanding of the original cultural foundations or focuses only on novelty and consumer popularity, it can become a factor that destroys the original values of local culture. That is, local culture may be devalued, modified to the point of losing its unique characteristics, or presented in a form that is inconsistent with the social and spiritual context of the community. Such a situation may cause the community to lose its social identity, which reflects the shared self, memories, and pride of the local people. When original cultural elements are replaced by new forms that lack connection to their roots, that culture may gradually diminish in the community's way of life and, in the long run, may lead to its fading or disappearance from daily practice (Siliang et al., 2025).

The Wisdom and Knowledge of Thaya Mon Music

The concept of the wisdom and knowledge of Thaya Mon music is an approach to understanding Thaya Mon as a cultural knowledge system stemming from community experience. It is not merely singing or performing for entertainment, but rather an artistic process that integrates music, language, performance, beliefs, and social relationships. Thaya Mon reflects the community's ability to use music and singing as tools to communicate feelings, thoughts, and social values through call-and-response singing, specific cultural melodies and rhythms, the use of accompanying instruments, and performance styles relevant to the community context. Therefore, this concept views Thaya Mon as cultural capital that can be studied, analyzed, and further developed into contemporary works. These five areas of knowledge are considered the core of the wisdom of Thaya Mon music, serving as crucial data for developing or creating contemporary musical works. In other words, contemporary Thaya Mon music does not arise in isolation from its original cultural roots, but is the result of systematically studying its identity and synthesizing this wisdom, then developing it into creative works that can be preserved, passed on, and further developed to promote cultural tourism in a valuable way.

Scope of Research

This research, "Thaya Mon Music in Contemporary Dimensions: Creating Music to Promote Cultural Tourism," is a qualitative research study. The process involves studying existing knowledge, analyzing musical elements, designing song concepts, creating songs, and evaluating the quality of the work. This method ensures that the research goes beyond merely describing Thaya Mon music and can lead to the creation of new, practically useful works.

Informant Groups

The informant groups in this research consisted of four main groups:

1. Experts in Mon music.

2. Local scholars or Mon community leaders.

3. Mon musicians or performers.

4. Individuals involved in cultural tourism in Pathum Thani Province.

These informants play a role in providing information about the cultural context, history, musical elements, performance characteristics, and contemporary applications of Thaya Mon music, considering their experience, knowledge, connection to Thaya Mon, and their role in preserving or developing Mon art and culture.

4. Research methodology

This research employs a qualitative research approach, suitable for studies involving both cultural knowledge and artistic creation processes. The researcher did not focus solely on documentary data but also developed the collected information into actual songs, demonstrating how folk music knowledge can be further developed.

Data collection tools included: 1. Semi-structured interview questionnaires, 2. Musical composition analysis questionnaires, and 3. Song quality evaluation questionnaires.

Data collection methods included field notes and document analysis. Data was gathered through observation, listening, sound recording, and relevant document review.

Qualitative data from document review, interviews, and observations were analyzed using content analysis. Data from the song quality evaluation questionnaires were analyzed using mean values and interpretations of appropriateness levels. Expert feedback was incorporated to improve the creative concepts and presentation of the works.

5. Research Results

1. From the analysis of the identity of the folk performance, it was found that the Thaya Mon has a distinct musical identity, which can be classified into 5 important aspects: melody, rhythm, sound system, performance style, and instruments. The analysis focuses on the key aspects that are prominent in each community and can promote cultural tourism, weaving them together with elegant local language that is easily accessible to the audience, as follows:

1.1 Melody: It was found that the melodies of Thaya Mon are repetitive, easy to remember, and have relatively simple sound movements. The repetition of the melody helps listeners remember it easily and is conducive to dance that requires continuity of rhythm and melody.

Room	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Notes	Sol La Sol Mi	Sol La Sol Mi	Re Mi Sol La	Sol Mi Re Do

The melody is characterized by the use of short phrases and continuous repetition of musical sentences. The melodic progression is simple and uncomplicated, yet captivating through vocal embellishments, emphasis, and connections to the lyrics. This characteristic makes the melody easily memorable for singers and facilitates call-and-response singing, a key feature of the Thaya Mon performance.

1.2 Rhythm: Rhythm is a very important element, as it determines the movements of the performers. The Mon drum controls the main rhythm, while the cymbals and gongs add secondary rhythms and emphasize important points of the music. Therefore, the rhythm of the Mon drum is clear, continuous, and creates a feeling of joy and excitement.

Musical Instruments	1	and	2	and	3	and	4	and
Mon Drum	Tum	-	tak	-	Tum	-	tak	-
Ching-	Ching	-	chab	-	Ching-	-	chab	-
ฉาบ	-	-	chaeng	-	-	-	chaeng	-

Or, it can be read as a rhythmic sound:

Tum – tak– |Tum – tak –
Ching– chab – |Ching– chab –
– – chaeng– | – – chaeng–

The rhythm of the Mon drum is characterized by the coordinated roles of the percussion instruments. The Mon drum controls the main rhythm, the cymbals set the secondary rhythms, and the large cymbals emphasize important points of the song. This arrangement results in a continuous, clear rhythm that appropriately accommodates the performers' movements, creating a lively and cheerful atmosphere in the performance.

1.3 In terms of sound system, the sound system of the Mon folk music is found to be similar to the sound systems of folk music in Southeast Asia. The concept of the pentatonic scale can be applied to analyze and create new melodies.

Room	1	2	3	4
Notes	Mi Sol La Sol	Mi Re Do-	Re Mi Sol Mi	Re Do - -

In summary, the sound system of Tha Ya Mon can be described using the pentatonic scale, as it employs relatively simple tones and resembles folk music in Southeast Asia. Applying this sound system in creative composition allows new songs to retain the essence of traditional music while simultaneously appealing to contemporary audiences and supporting cultural tourism.

1.4 In terms of performance style, the Mon ensemble performance reflects the systematic coordination of the roles of each instrument. Each instrument does not function in isolation but works in conjunction to create a complete sound, rhythm, and melody. The Mon oboe (pi mon) leads the main melody, the Mon drum controls the rhythm and adds energy to the music, the Mon gong reinforces the melody and adds depth to the musical texture, while the cymbals (ching and chab) maintain rhythmic continuity and provide clarity to the overall performance.

1.5 Regarding musical instruments, the main instruments used in the performance of Thaya Mon are the Mon oboe, Mon drum, Mon gong, cymbals, and chimes. Each instrument plays a crucial role in creating the sound structure, melody, and rhythm of the performance. Specifically, the Mon oboe leads the melody, the Mon drum controls the rhythm, the Mon gong reinforces the melody, and the cymbals help maintain rhythmic continuity and completeness. Furthermore, these instruments are not only important in the musical dimension but also reflect the identity, beliefs, and cultural heritage of the Mon community that have been passed down for a long time.

2. **The Cultural Role of Thaya Mon**

Thaya Mon plays a significant role as a cultural medium within the Mon community, appearing in the context of traditional ceremonies, religious festivals, and various community activities. This performance serves as a link, bringing people together in the same social space, and acts as a channel for transmitting knowledge, wisdom, values, and cultural identity from one generation to another. Furthermore, Thaya Mon reflects the Mon way of life, beliefs, and value systems through a performance style that emphasizes harmony, enjoyment, and the relationship between performers and audience. This

demonstrates that Thaya Mon is not merely music or entertainment, but a cultural space meaningful to the community's existence, the preservation of its identity, and the continuous transmission of the Mon cultural heritage.

3. **Guidelines for Applying Mon-Thai Music to Contemporary Songs**

Analysis reveals that the creation of contemporary Mon-Thai music should adhere to the principle of "preserving the essence, adding new forms." That is, adapting Mon-Thai music to the modern era requires maintaining key elements reflecting Mon musical identity, namely melody, Mon drum rhythms, the role of the Mon flute, and the distinctive harmonic characteristics of traditional instruments. Simultaneously, the integration of Western harmonic arrangements and instruments can be incorporated to expand the sonic dimensions and cater to contemporary listeners. Appropriately used Western instruments include keyboards, electric guitars, bass, drums, and violins. Keyboards can create harmony and atmosphere; electric guitars add color and power; bass strengthens the rhythmic structure; drums connect traditional rhythms with modern musical styles; and violins enhance melodies, making them more beautiful, sweet, and emotionally resonant. However, the integration of Western instruments should be done carefully, ensuring that their sound does not overpower the unique characteristics of Mon instruments, especially the Mon flute and Mon drums, which should retain their core melody and rhythmic elements. To ensure that listeners can still clearly perceive the cultural roots and identity of Tanya Mon music, this creative approach is not about altering the folk music to the point of losing its unique character, but rather about building upon this cultural heritage so that it can endure and communicate with contemporary society in a valuable way.

4. **Contemporary Mon Thayam Music in Cultural Tourism**

Contemporary Mon Thayam music can be used in various ways as a tool to promote cultural tourism. Because these songs are rooted in the musical identity, lifestyle, and cultural heritage of the Mon community, adapting them into a tourism context creates cultural experiences for tourists. This goes beyond simply enjoying performances for entertainment; it also allows for learning about the stories, history, beliefs, and wisdom of the Mon community in Pathum Thani Province. Several ways can be implemented in cultural tourism, such as using them as background music for welcoming tourists, presenting them at cultural festivals, local traditional events, or activities promoting the province's identity, using them as audio material for provincial promotional materials, and organizing Mon music learning activities for tourists. These could include instrument demonstrations, Mon drumming workshops, learning basic rhythms, or explaining the roles of the Mon flute, Mon drums, Mon gongs, cymbals, and gongs in the Thayam ensemble. These activities will help tourists engage more with local culture. However, the use of contemporary Mon Thayam music in a tourism context should consider a balance between artistic value, cultural accuracy, and appropriateness for contemporary audiences. That is, the songs should be of suitable length, have a clear musical structure, have an accessible rhythm, and be presented in an engaging way. However, it still retains the accent, melody, rhythm, and unique identity of Mon music as its core. Furthermore, the performance should be linked to the stories of the Mon community in Pathum Thani province so that tourists can understand the meaning of the songs and appreciate the cultural heritage behind the performance. Therefore, contemporary Mon folk songs play a role not only as musical creations but can also serve as a medium for promoting community identity, boosting the cultural economy, and fostering pride among local people, especially when presented appropriately within the context of cultural tourism in Pathum Thani province.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

The researchers used data from studying various contexts of the area and the musical identity of related folk performances to create these songs.

The research results reflect that Taya Mon is a valuable cultural heritage, both musically and socially. The musical elements of Taya Mon do not arise in isolation but are intertwined with the community context, beliefs, rituals, and way of life of the Mon people. Understanding Taya Mon therefore requires studying it as music within a culture, not merely analyzing its sound from a technical perspective. Adapting Taya Mon to contemporary musical ensembles is a creative process that requires a balance between tradition and modernity. Over-emphasis on contemporary elements might diminish the Mon musical identity, while adhering entirely to the traditional form might make it difficult to reach younger audiences. Therefore, the appropriate approach is to preserve the core structure of Taya Mon and use Western instruments as supplements to enhance its sonic dimensions. In the context of cultural tourism, contemporary Taya Mon songs can serve as a bridge between the community and tourists, as music is a universal language capable of creating impressions and stimulating interest in local culture. Using contemporary folk music is one way to add value to tourist destinations and create cultural experiences that are more meaningful than superficial viewing.

Qualitative research on creating contemporary Mon folk songs with contemporary music to promote cultural tourism in Pathum Thani Province reveals that Mon folk songs are a culturally valuable performing art with a distinct musical identity in terms of melody, rhythm, instruments, and performance style. Applying these elements with Western instruments can create contemporary songs that preserve the Mon cultural foundations while simultaneously increasing appeal to younger audiences and tourists. Therefore, contemporary Mon folk songs are not merely musical creations but cultural tools that can help conserve, perpetuate, develop, and enhance cultural tourism in Pathum Thani Province in a valuable and sustainable manner.

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