Music for the Few: Nationalism and Thai Royal Authority
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Music for the Few: Nationalism and Thai Royal Authority

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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in

Music

by

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Dedication

In memory of my family who let me choose my own path away from home. And to Chris, who walks with me.
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Music for the Few: Nationalism and Thai Royal Authority

by

Supeena Insee Adler

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, June 2014
Dr. Deborah Wong, Chairperson

The *khrueang* *sai pii chawaa* (“Thai stringed instruments with Javanese oboe”) ensemble in central Thailand is a unique and highly-regarded ensemble known for its repertoire, idiosyncratic tuning, high level of technical difficulty, and exceptionable virtuosity. *Khrueang* *sai pii chawaa* is reserved for very special royal functions including processions and dramatic performances of royal literature. Royal authority indirectly controls the performance and transmission of the ensemble and its repertoire, which is now maintained professionally only by the Fine Arts Department of the Thai government. At present only a few musicians are capable of performing or teaching the repertoire and performance style for this ensemble. The selection of new students is competitive and politicized. The *khrueang* *sai pii chawaa* ensemble is rare and kept largely outside of the gaze of ordinary spectators in Thai society. Nonetheless, a few individuals in institutions outside of Bangkok have tried to build *khrueang* *sai pii chawaa* ensembles, challenging the limits of authority and exposing tensions within the musical community. I argue that royal authority functions to keep this musical ensemble endangered by design, so that those chosen to participate maintain a powerful control over the tradition and repertoire and thereby preserve their unique social status.
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Names of individuals follow their own preferred spelling unless they have none, in which case I employ this system. Place names are spelled as they are in Thailand. For all other vocabulary, I use Mary Haas’ system modified to convey pronunciation as accurately as possible. Long vowels are distinguished from short vowels by doubling the Roman vowel only when the vowel sound can be represented by a single letter.

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Glossary of Frequently Used Thai Terms

baan - home/home; also refers to a Thai musicians’ house where musicians train with a teacher

baramii - spiritual power that only a respected authority could bring

baromakhruu or khruu phuu yai - a term used to refer to a great old teacher who has higher authority than the speaker

bot khoon - texts for masked dance performance

bot lakhaun - texts for performance on stage

bun - merit

chaat-saatsanaa-phramahaakasat - nation-religion-monarch or nation-religion-king

Chabap Luang or Chabap Hausamut - Royal Publication

chonnabot - countryside where is far from the center

dontrii thai doem - (dontrii, ‘music’; doem, ‘original’) Thai traditional music

Dontrii Thai Udomsueksaa - University Thai Music Festival, hosted annually by universities in Thailand

ekkhalak khaung chaat - Thai identity

hau samut - library

hua mueang - city under the authority of the mueang luang

Inao - Thai royal literature influenced by the Javanese epic, Punji

jakhee - Thai three strings zither shaped like crocodile

jao mueang - governor

kaa lau - oboe, drum and gong ensemble commonly used for funerals in the south of
Thailand

*kathin* - ceremony changing the Buddha statue’s robes, and monks receiving cloth from the king and royal palaces

*khao phansaa* - monks entering Buddhist Lent

*khlui lip or khlui liip* - Thai wooden flute with high pitch

*khoon luang* - royal masked dance drama

*krueangsaï* - stringed instrument ensemble

*krueangsaï phasom* - the string ensemble combined with Western instruments

*krueangsaï pii chawaa* or KSPC - the string ensemble combined with Javanese oboe ensemble

*Khruu* - teacher

*krap* - percussion instrument with two pieces of hard wood struck together

Krom Mahorasop - Fine Arts Department

Krom Sinlapakorn - Fine Arts Department

*lakhaun luang* - non-masked court dance drama

*lakhaun* - non-masked dance

*mauradok khaung chaat* - national heritage

*mueang luang* - royal capital city

*pii khlaung* - oboe and drums ensemble

*piiphaat* - Thai traditional music ensemble used to accompany *khoon, lakhaun, or seephaa* and for ritual music

*piiphaat duwikdamban* - a Javanese gamelan-inspired ensemble
piiphaat pralaung phleeng - piiphaat competition

Playnern - Thai Royal Princess’s palace, which houses the musical ensemble Ban Plai Noen Band

Ramakian - Thai version of the Hindu epic Ramayana

ramwong - Thai circle dance

ranaat eek - Thai xylophone

rap maup - receiving permission to teach music to others

Ratthaniyom - cultural mandates

Roongrian Mahaadlek Luang - Royal Soldier School

sakkawaa - short poetry for used for sung conversation between males and females or between groups, accompanied by music

Samnakkaan Sangkhiit - Thai Music Division of the Fine Arts Department

Sanaam Luang - the royal central park in Bangkok or Royal Field

sangkha - the state-organized institution of Buddhist monks

Saramaa - special drum pattern that used for signaling king’s arrival, accompanying kickboxing, and for the royal barge ceremony, and also performed with KPSC

sau duang - two-string fiddle with snakeskin

sau uu - two-string fiddle with coconut shell body

seephaa - stories about particular people and their activities, sung accompanied by krap

sombat khaung chaat - national heritage

Sorn Thaung - Golden Arrow, which refers to Khruu Luang Pradit Phairau
thaang - variation of music
thaö - three-variation form
trae-sang - straight valveless trumpet and conch shell ensemble used to accompany Brahmin rituals
wai khruu - ritual for paying respect to the teachers
wihaan - large Buddha statue hall
Wittayalai Nattasin - Dramatic Arts College
wong - ensemble
Chapter 1

Introduction

My research concerns the presentation of a Thai Royal ensembles, *khruangsai piit chawaa* (“Thai stringed instruments with Javanese oboe”, which I refer to as ‘KSPC’ from this point on), its repertoire, and contemporary cultural context in central Thai society. The ensemble formally emerged during Thai nation building in the early twentieth century after musicians moved out from royal palaces to work under Thai government control in institutions and schools. However, the transmission of knowledge of this ensemble has been limited to those with direct contact to teachers who play in the ensemble and their carefully chosen students.

The name KSPC refers to several different things, including a group of musicians, the set of instruments, the style of performance, selected repertoire, and the lineage of teachers and students who play in the ensemble. The KSPC ensemble is the combination of two ensembles, *piit klaung* (oboe and drums) and *khruangsai* (string ensemble). The *piit klaung* ensemble has a special place in Thai society because, when performed by royal musicians, the ritual music serves to represent royalty and royal authority. There are only a few musicians who are able to perform in this special ensemble in public due to the difficulty and access of repertoire. In contrast, the *khruangsai* ensemble provides entertainment inside the royal palace and is also played for common people, and usually accompanies singing. I will argue that the first director of the Thai Music Division, and his colleagues at the Fine Arts Department of the Culture Ministry of the Royal Thai
Government created KSPC to represent musicians’ power in their newly established institution.

Figure 1. The first generation of musicians from the Fine Arts Department to perform the *khruangsai pîi chawaa* ensemble, including four musicians who feature prominently in this dissertation: Pravet Kumoot (front row, left), Luang Phairau Siangsau (back row, second from left), Thiap Khonglaythong (back row, third from left), and Montri Tramote (back row, fourth from left). (Photograph from the personal collection of Anant Nakkong, used by permission).

The repertoire for this ensemble is very difficult and requires musicians of the highest skill. Only a handful of professional musicians in the Fine Arts Department still preserve the knowledge of this ensemble, and they tightly control who will be allowed to learn and perform KSPC. Knowledge about this ensemble circulates mostly within the
Fine Arts Department and the College of Dramatic Arts, and it is only selected master musicians from these institutions who have access to the ensemble and its repertoire. As a result, the number of musicians who know and perform KSPC is kept very low.

In addition, KSPC is performed only on very selected occasions, such as on orders from the royal palace, for funerals to honor master musicians who used to play KSPC, and to accompany selected dance-dramas based on royal literature. There are also very few documents, scholarly writing or other publications about KSPC.

I argue that the musicians from the Fine Arts Department keep this ensemble exclusive to honor their teachers and protect their power over this tradition and their status in Thai music society. The musicians greatly value the prestige that comes with participating in such an exclusive royally-affiliated ensemble. They regard the invitation to participate in KSPC as symbolic recognition of their superior musical ability. The musicians are not obliged to participate, nor are they paid extra; the primary benefits are personal satisfaction and a higher social status. During the reigns of Kings Rama V and VI, honorary royal titles were conferred on selected musicians and dancers, including the founders of KSPC, and these carried social significance as well as financial awards, including land and salary. The awarding of titles ended, however, with King Rama VI when musicians were relocated out of royal palaces and into government institutions. Even though musicians today cannot receive royal titles, honoring the lineage of the founders of KSPC keeps them close to royalty and the prestige of past teachers from the royal palaces.
The status of musicians who hold knowledge of KSPC is similar to that of the Javanese shadow puppeteer (dhalang). As Ward Keeler explains, the puppeteer commands the ability to memorize stories in old Javanese language, and to perform day and night while playing other musical instruments. The power and social status of the puppeteer comes from his ability and is recognized by villagers or sponsor his performances. In this case, his individual knowledge and ability is the key to his fame and power, which then brings financial reward to the performers.¹

But in the case of KSPC, individual knowledge and ability is realized through institutional affiliation. The musicians, working as a group under the auspices of a government institution and often in service of royalty, do not perform KSPC for money but as an expression of their elite status. The complex sound of KPSC in which each musical instrument plays simultaneously with fast and intricate musical phrases makes the music difficult to follow or appreciate for those unfamiliar with the tradition. The limited audience of knowledgeable listeners recognizes and respects KPSC musicians because of their exceptional ability and prestigious affiliations. While the Javanese puppeteer conveys a story to entertain a sponsor and a general audience, performing in exchange for food and money, the KSPC musicians in Thailand only perform for special occasion, often in private settings. They believe this secretiveness and exclusivity makes them and their tradition even more valuable.

Because of the small number of musicians who carry the knowledge of this ensemble, I will also consider whether it represents an endangered tradition. Due to the

¹ Keeler 1987, 4-7.
demand of one on one transmission from teacher to student in the process of learning the special and difficult repertoire for KSPC, and without any written material on KSPC, few recordings, and without teachers who are willing to teach, there is a risk that the knowledge of KSPC may not continue into the future.

This concern speaks to a growing interest in music and sustainability by ethnomusicologists. For example, for her Ph.D. dissertation, Catherine Fiona Grant engages in applied ethnomusicological research on music sustainability by employing the strategy for maintaining endangered languages developed by linguists and recognized by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.\(^2\) The 2009 issue of *World of Music* on the theme of “Music and Sustainability” edited by Jeff Todd Titon surveys diverse ways in which “sustainability” is used in applied ethnomusicology. He argues for a role of ethnomusicological scholarship in the development of cultural policy that will better help music makers revitalize their local heritage.\(^3\)

In contrast to these studies about music sustainability where the idea of saving music from disappearing comes through collaboration between local culture bearers and cultural institutions, I am studying a case of an institutionally-supported context for music that is nonetheless intentionally endangered by its practitioners.

KSPC is a relatively new ensemble in the Thai music tradition, and authority over its transmission is tightly controlled by just a few individuals. At present, this ensemble is

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\(^2\) Grant 2012.

\(^3\) Titon 2009.
maintained at the Fine Arts Department Bangkok for performing on special occasions only, and the musicians there are not obligated to teach the knowledge of this ensemble at all. Over a ninety-year history, the number of musicians in the ensemble has been kept very small, not significantly more than the first generation to have performed it. So, this ensemble could be considered sustainable because it is neither growing nor diminishing. However, I will argue that the knowledge of this ensemble is endangered not because only the small number of musicians who could perform in it, but because the strong sense of lineage that holds just one person in each generation as a master over each instrumental part. So much power resides with each individual, who may decline to teach much of his repertoire to any students, that the tradition is constantly at risk of being lost.

I study of the presentation of the Thai traditional music ensemble KSPC, its performance forms, and the function of the KSPC ensemble in the performance of national literature, which relates to royal authority and nationalism. This includes the study of selected song texts, music repertoire, the history of the musical instruments and ensemble, and the beliefs and values held by the musicians and participants in this special musical ensemble in traditional and contemporary contexts.

Thai musicians and Thai music teachers consistently refer to the better and higher status of musicians in the palaces. They often imagine themselves as elite as those who lived in the palaces and were supported by princes and kings, even though this was now three generations ago. Their main duties were to play music for the kings in the palaces, instead of being outside of the palace, in government schools, working for money and having less of a sense of value in their lives. They believe that their lives in the past
were much better than what they face at present. Pamela Myers-Moro, an ethnomusicologist who has researched Thai music and musicians in central Thailand, wrote, “They are nostalgic for a past when their profession was esteemed and classical music thrived”.4 To illustrate, Thai musicians criticize the modern way of learning Thai music in the school system, in which teachers and students have limited time to teach and learn and even less time to practice because students have to study other subjects besides music. They are nostalgic for the past when teacher and student were very close and basically lived together and worked together for a long period of time like parents and children. Thai musicians were not generally in favor of writing about music and the way to play Thai music, so in order to learn Thai music, students needed to come and prove themselves to the teacher and it was only the teacher who could make decisions about who they would teach. In the last century and half, this musical tradition and this way of thinking about learning Thai music have been changing, and many musicians now need to teach in the institutions and give private lessons for income instead of practicing and performing for the king or for the deity of music himself.

Modernization in Thailand suggest often refers specifically to Western influences in Thailand since the period King Rama V (r. 1868-1910), who protected Siam from colonization by developing transportation, architecture, communication, public health, public education, ending slavery and adopting certain features of Western culture including fashion and public behaviors in order to make Thailand appear civilized to

4 Myers-Moro 1989, 190.
European colonizers. Thongchai Winichakul explains the complicated situation of people and the nation they live in.

In Thailand today there is a widespread assumption that there is such a thing as a common Thai nature or identity; khwampenthai (Thainess). It is believed to have existed for a long time, and all Thai are supposed to be well aware of its virtue. The essence of Thainess has been preserved up to present time despite the fact that Siam has transformed greatly toward modernization in the past hundred years. Like other nationalist discourses, it presumes that the great leaders (in this case monarchs) selectively adopted only good things from the West for the country while preserving the traditional values at their best. Although a skeptic might doubt the validity of such a view, the notion prevails even among scholars.

The reigns of Kings Rama V and VI were periods of musical innovation. A number of different musical ensembles were created, including KSPC, with influences from neighboring countries as well as the West. But these were created by adapting older traditions, and so were understood as continuing older traditions and carrying forward values of traditional culture. This reflects Eric Hobsbawm’s notion of an “invented tradition” which he developed in his study of the British monarchy.

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms.

5 Peleggi, 14.
6 Winichakul, 3.
of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with suitable historical past.\textsuperscript{7}

The musicians who perform Thai traditional musics, including those created during Rama V and VI, feel strongly connected to the past and believe they carry a long tradition. In the KSPC ensemble, the inclusion of oboe and drums symbolizes continuity with an older tradition of oboe and drums serving a ritual function in royal ceremonies and processions. Also, the use of the literary text \textit{Inao} which dates back to the Ayuthaya period, ties performance to more ancient traditions. Furthermore, I will reveal that musicians have imagined KSPC has a history dating back to the period of Rama IV, despite a complete lack of evidence that it existed before the period of Rama VI.

At present, most of the musicians whom I interviewed fear being blamed for the loss of tradition or for damaging the old traditions. To protect themselves from any criticism, they therefore claim to carry on the teachings of their old teachers. It is unusual for musicians to compose Thai traditional music at present because many musicians believe that the older musicians who have already passed away created many pieces that could still be learned and performed. Attempting to create something new often invites criticism and questioning of the status of the musicians who tries.

Furthermore, compositions can disappear from the repertoire, as revealed in a conversation between a composer and a Thai musician/composer. Bruce Gaston is an American-born composer who has been involved for almost fifty years in Thai traditional music and in the Thai education system as a musician and composer. He studied with the

\textsuperscript{7} Hobsbawm, 1.
well-known musician and pui player Khruu Boonyong Gatekong. Khruu Boonyong studied with his father and in the Sinlapabanleng school which has had a very significant influence in teaching Thai music in the public education system. Gaston’s article recounts their conversations about how to compose Thai music. Khruu Boonyong said that some Thai music students just want to compose songs without first having a deep understanding the complexity of Thai music itself, and that if such students came to him asking for the tricks to compose the songs, he does not teach them. He is willing to let the knowledge of music die with him because he strongly believes that music composers need to know enough before they can compose. They must be very good musicians, know all kinds of songs and their functions in Thai society, and gain respect and authority from society, and only then they would know they are ready to compose new songs.

As a result, there have been no new compositions for the KSPC ensemble after the first generation of musicians that founded it passed away in the mid-twentieth century. Musicians at present who play KSPC only try to mimic the distinctive style of those teachers and repeat the same repertoire to preserve the value of the ensemble and closely associate themselves back to when the ensemble was established and the reputation that it can only be played by the best of the best musicians of the time.

When the KSPC ensemble accompanies singing or dance drama, the singers perform selected texts from royal literature and newly composed texts by their own teachers for special occasions. The texts were composed by royalty and royal attendants, and contribute to the close association between KSPC and royalty. The song texts usually

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8 A ‘school’ of music refers to places where music is taught according to one style or lineage in particular.
depict the king’s voice, speaking to his loved ones in private settings not meant for anyone else to hear.

The KSPC ensemble is a special place where highly skilled musicians come together to perform for only very special occasions in Thai music society. In return, these musicians gain recognition and higher status than others who are not part of the ensemble. The overall number of musicians for this ensemble is kept small and at present, all of the musicians who play KSPC are related through lineage and studied directly with musicians from the Fine Arts Department where the ensemble inaugurated.
My background and research methods

I have played Thai stringed instruments since I was young and wanted to study KSPC for many years but did not have the chance to do so until conducting the research for this dissertation. Many music teachers told me while I was in Thailand that it would be too hard to do research on this topic because too few know about it.

I was born in Sisaket Province, Northeast Thailand, which is on the border with Cambodia, where most of the population is culturally Lao and Khmer, and our native language is Lao. My elementary school music teacher came from Bangkok. I joined a Thai music club in which we practiced Thai classical music, playing three-string zither (jakhee) and other stringed instruments. One of my mentors was accepted into the music department at the very prestigious Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, which inspired me to work to attain the same level. We travelled to a wai khruu ceremony to honor teachers at the College of Dramatic Arts in nearby Roi Et province, and I felt honored to participate in classical music culture and tradition, in contrast to my friends who played folk and pop music. Although I hoped to attend the College of Dramatic Arts at the high school level, my family did not agree. Later, I applied to the music department at Chulalongkorn University but was not accepted. Instead, I chose to attend Mahasarakham University where I was able to study classical music with teachers who had graduated from Chulalongkorn University. I learned from one of those teachers that the hardest string instrument repertoire came from a rare ensemble called khrueangsai pii chawaa. That teacher took me to a funeral ceremony in Nakhon Pathom Province for Khruu Boonyong Gatekong, and that is where I first encountered the pii klaung ensemble.
I received my B.A. in Thai Music Performance from Mahasarakham University and attended the College of Music at Mahidol University in Bangkok for coursework in Musicology before moving to the United States in 2003. While at Mahidol University I studied jakhee with Khruu Saharat Chanchalerm who had played KSPC. Although he did not teach me repertoire or variations for KSPC, he would become an important contact for me during my research, and being his student helped me to gain the trust and respect of many of the musicians who I interviewed for this dissertation.

I taught Thai music at a Thai temple in Escondido, California for several years while studying English at San Diego City College. For four months before entering the University of California, Riverside in 2008, I conducted preliminary research on KSPC in the hope of establishing the first steps for obtaining information for my dissertation research. This was the first time that I began to collect materials about KSPC. I sought all the books that mentioned KSPC, although not many of them provided any details about the ensemble except for listing musical instruments. I also found a Master’s thesis by Puangpen Rakthong from Mahidol University about this ensemble. I also met with Dr. Phoonphit Amatayakul and his research assistant, who had been Puangpen’s advisor. He provided me with a copy of a tape recording that he used for a radio program on the KSPC ensemble.

After expressing my interest to Thai musicians and music scholars in Bangkok for several months, and with special help from some of my teachers, I was able to connect with a few musicians who play KSPC in Bangkok. During this four-month pilot research period in 2008, I was very fortunate to have a chance to study sau uuw (fiddle) with one of
the professional musicians at the Fine Arts Department, Khruu Lerkiat Mahavinijchaimontri who plays KSPC. His teacher, Khruu Thiira Phumanii, also performed in the KSPC ensemble at the Fine Arts Department and after Khruu Thiira passed away, Khruu Lerkiat became an official member of the KSPC ensemble at the institution. He taught me some techniques that he uses when performing KSPC. Besides working as a musician at the Fine Arts Department, he teaches privately at several schools and performs with other non-government ensembles. I traveled from my apartment to one of the schools where he taught music and had lessons with him after he finished teaching his high school students.

Before I could learn about KSPC, I had to gradually develop a closer relationship with this teacher. To avoid traffic, I arrived around lunchtime, had lunch with the high school students and had some time to practice by myself while waiting for the teacher to come. When he came to teach his high school students, I would often peek into the music room to listen and watch him and his students. He introduced me to his students and many of them have consequently become my friends. By the time the teacher finished teaching his students, it was usually about 4 or 5 p.m. and he would spend some time teaching me in the hall. The lessons were not only about music performance but also music theory. A group of us—my teacher, his high school students, and a few of his students from Chulalongkorn University—would often go to dinner together afterward. From him I learned that the requirements for musicians to access KSPC are very high—so high, this musician told me, that this kind of music will be performed only in the front
of the king in the past, so the musicians must have the very highest skills, unlike ordinary music ensembles that one can find easily.

During the weekend, I also studied *khaung wong yai* (gong circle) at the Navy Music Division where I learned two of the compositions that are played by KSPC, and I studied *khim* (hammer dulcimer) at the music section in the Central Pinklow Department Store in order to keep in touch with the Thai music industry (for recordings and instruments) and to find people who are interested in learning and listening to Thai music outside of the schools. Learning Thai music at a Department store is a relatively recent way of learning Thai traditional music in Thailand. It is more common for students to take private lessons on Western instruments at the mall. This form of public instruction is making music education more widely available and providing employment opportunities for younger musicians. I always asked people if they knew about KSPC and most said, “no.” This musical ensemble has existed in the past and is still performed in the present, but not many people know about it. Knowledge of this ensemble remains a closely held secret.

In 2009, I met with Khruu Peep Khonglaythong, the director of the KSPC ensemble at the Fine Arts Department, and Director of the Thai Music Division, who would become a central figure in my research. He directed me to the library at Chulalongkorn University where I was able to access copies of recorded performances of KSPC. I continued to connect to people in Thailand after returning to the U.S. and when one of my teachers came to perform Thai music in San Francisco in 2010, he gave me a copy of a KSPC recording made in 1973 at Mahidol University.
In 2012, I conducted my most intensive fieldwork and gave a presentation related to my dissertation at Chulalongkorn University where I received good feedback on one aspect of my argument. I knew at least one KSPC performance was planned for the year of 2012. Ordinarily, performances of KSPC are not publicly announced or widely known, and I already knew it was generally performed less than once per year. I had surprisingly good fortune that 2012 turned out to be an extremely exceptional year for KSPC, with eight performances of KSPC, six of which I was able to witness in person.

The performances took place in Bangkok and the performers were the musicians from the Fine Arts Department, and for two performances, those musicians joined with a few master teachers from other institutions who were invited to perform KSPC in Bangkok. In addition, there was an unprecedented KSPC workshop that took place in the south of Thailand that I was able to attend, document, and participate in by learning two KSPC songs. There, I also interviewed Puangpen Rakthong, the music teacher who had written a Master thesis’s on KSPC.

I was in Thailand for ten months in 2012, and I traveled to many places to research KSPC. I went to three Wittayalai Nattasin (College of Dramatic Arts), one in Chanthaburi province and one in Roi Et province, where a few musicians play KSPC. I interviewed two musicians at Chanthaburi and two musicians and six music students at Roi Et. In Bangkok, I also interviewed a string musician who used to teach KSPC at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai. I also participated in a KSPC workshop at College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat located in the south of Thailand—the first and so far only such workshop ever conducted.
I visited music libraries at Mahidol and Chulalongkorn where I found two more Master’s theses that analyzed compositions used for KSPC, but they did not offer much information about the cultural context of KSPC. I attended two KSPC performances at funerals and recorded them. At the end of my fieldwork, I met with Mr. Sathian Duangchantip, a research assistant for Dr. Phoonphit Amatayalul at the Mahidol University College of Music.

In 2013, I went to Laos to research the connection of the KSPC ensemble in Thailand to Laos based on a name of the Lao city in the past, “mueang chawaa” before it was changed to Luang Prabang. I met with several Lao musicians who still play traditional music at the National Theatre, and I later met with the Director of National Heritage of Laos and interviewed him. He granted me a private meeting and lectured on the history of Lao in his office, explaining that the name Chawaa was much older and did not have any connection to the instrument piê chawaa or to the ensemble. I also interviewed the Director of Cultural Management to see if they had any information about KSPC. In his office, he has a full ensemble of traditional music instruments. I mentioned to him that I could play music and he asked if I would like to play his instruments. However, his instruments were not under proper care and could not make any sound. He later told me that the musician who is in charge of music radio was out of town for six month and could not meet with me. He also told me that he had never seen any ensemble in Laos similar to KSPC that I described and showed pictures to him. I later met with one of the staff there and she suggested a Lao history book that she could obtain, so I gave her some money to buy those books for me and she later left the books
for me at my hotel in Luang Prabang with a letter. During my research in Laos I found no evidence to show any connection of Lao traditional music to the KSPC ensemble in Thailand. So, I concluded that the KSPC ensemble was created in Thailand and was not being influenced by Lao musical culture. The word “chawaa” in Lao which was the old name of the capital city, Luang Prabang, also has nothing to do with the word chawaa or pii chawaa in KSPC ensemble in Thailand.

Here I explain some of my methods for conducting my fieldwork in Thailand. I usually introduced myself by email, or by phone, addressing my interest and asking my informants for their time for an interview for one or two hours. If they agreed to meet with me, I sent them some questions ahead of time when possible. For example, I asked for their biography; what they knew about KSPC ensemble; how they became involved with KSPC; who they studied with, where and how they studied; whether they had ever performed KSPC; which songs they learned and performed; what the rules for teachers and students are; whether they had any tapes, CDs, or DVDs of KSPC; whether they could name any other musicians who played KSPC; what they think will happen with KSPC in the future; and who I should contact next.

I often interviewed two people at a time so that they would help to fill in each other’s ideas and make the interview go more smoothly. In return, I brought them gifts and sometimes took them out for lunch or dinner for their generosity, which is customary in Thai society.

I told all of my informants up front that I was not doing this research to become a KSPC musician, but because I am interested in the musicians and their experiences
playing KSPC, and that my work would be publicly available in the U.S. in the form of a dissertation. Pursuing an advanced degree in the U.S. granted me greater respect and status from these musicians. Most of them asked me, “how much does it cost to study in the U.S.?” With official Human Research Review Board (HRRB) paperwork from UCR, many of the musicians trusted me a bit more.

In 2012, I conducted ethnography within the communities of musicians who perform KSPC in Bangkok and those outside of Bangkok. I researched historical publications at the Thai National Library and Damrong Rajanuphap Library, a royal archive. It was very challenging for me to obtain some of the rare documents from these libraries due to the fragility of the documents themselves.

In 2013, I traveled to Washington, DC to meet with Khruu Peep Khonglaythong and his wife, Khruu Tanyatip Khonglaythong. They came with a group of sixty-one performers from the Fine Arts Department and from the Joe Louis Theatre to perform Thai music, dance, and a puppet show with support from the Thai Embassy. I spent five days travelling with them and conducting additional interviews.

Given my background in Thai music, and having studied Thai music with many music teachers in Thailand for many years, I was able to build relationships with the musicians quickly. While in the field, I also studied music on instruments that I play at an accomplished level. I conducted interviews, recorded music in rehearsal and performances, transcribed music, and analyzed texts. I also helped translate interviews for an Australian music researcher at both the Fine Arts Department and at the Royal Navy Music Division. The musicians saw what I was capable of and one of them admired me,
he said. “you are just a true country girl, I did not think that you could go this far!!”

He had seen and taught me music at the Royal Navy Music Division when I was an intern and again in 2008 during my preliminary research into KSPC. I went back for the annual wai khruu ceremony there as often as I could to meet and pay respect to my other string teacher. They were always very welcoming to me. In 2012, as part of another project on military musicians, I interviewed several musicians and the Director at the Royal Navy Music Division and the former Director of the Royal Air Force Music Division. Even though these Thai musicians work at different institutions, most of them are related and know each other very well.

Thai musicians are not generally interested in written work. They believe that musicians gain their knowledge only through practicing and performing music. So, it was initially difficult for me to explain what I wanted to get from them. Many of them said to me, humbly, “I only play music, I do not know much about other things.” I told them I was interested in the stories of musicians who play music and I wanted to make connections among those musicians and to know how these musicians carry the knowledge of music together, and why they still perform music. They often looked at me with puzzlement. One said to me, “Of course we have to play music, we are musicians.”

Situating myself both as insider and outsider put me in a special position for interviews. With my experience as a Thai musician, I understand the Thai traditional music terms, special techniques for each musical instrument, and some metaphors that musicians use, all of which made our conversations proceed smoothly. As an outsider,
both as an international researcher and a musician not able to play KSPC, I was able to prepare questions that these musicians have never been asked before. For instance, when I asked them, “why it is important to you to play music?,” they were stuck for a bit and really had to think hard about it. I interviewed the same musicians two or three times when possible. Most of them were very friendly and cooperative and a few of them became very close and talked to me about many things. For example, one musician who later became a close friend to me called at night and wanted to talk about his personal life. I went out and just listened to him talk for several hours.

After interviewing most of the musicians who perform KSPC at the Fine Arts Department, one of them told me that they were scheduled to go to a royal palace to practice KSPC and that I could come and watch. I was so happy to have this opportunity that only a few people could have. I went twice to the palace to see KSPC rehearsals. The good thing about interviewing musicians who play KSPC is that they all know each other very well. Each time I finished interviewing one or two musicians, I would already know who the next person was that I needed to contact. They were all so close that when mentioning other musicians’ names they referred to them informally by their nicknames or first name only.

While conducting interviews, I recorded both video and audio and also took photographs before and after. Most of the musicians were shy in front of the video without their musical instruments. To avoid this problem, I put the video camera to the side and I sat opposite of them and talked to them face-to-face, which helped them feel more comfortable. I wrote down names and songs that interviewees referred to in my
notebook. I told them what I had collected and asked for more suggestions. After recording their performances on KSPC, I gave them copies.

To meet with musicians, I attended many events and performances in Bangkok and outside of Bangkok, especially wai khruu ceremonies where music teachers and students came together to pay respect to their music teachers by performing the ritual. I took photographs and made recordings and gave my recordings to the institution as a way to thank them for letting me participate in their ritual. I found out more about other music events and musicians’ connection from these events.

For interviews, I prepared my questions in print, a few blank sheets of paper, my notebook, and multiple color pens and pencils. While setting up equipment, I gave my interviewees the HRRB form. I first followed my prepared question guidelines and later let the conversation go on for thirty minutes to an hour at a time before pausing or stopping, to avoid getting too tired. The interviews were often followed by lunch or dinner, where I did not record conversation but still learned much more about the musicians’ personal lives. I did not give any money to any musicians because I did not want to give any impression that their knowledge is for sale. Instead, I brought them small gifts to say thanks and I often paid for lunch or dinner.

Two real disadvantages in the field were that I did not drink alcohol, and I conducted my fieldwork alone. The musical world of KSPC is profoundly masculine. Many male musicians like to drink and talk with their friends, where they share personal stories. However, there were some places I could not go with musicians, such as bars, karaoke or nightclubs, or the musicians’ houses, where those kinds of conversation might
take place. One of my teachers told me to have a male musician friend go with me when I interviewed, but unfortunately due to my unpredictable schedule each day, none of my friends could accompany me. A few male musicians liked to go for a late movie, and I could join them because I stayed in a condominium within walking distance to a movie theater and shopping mall.

Being with musicians is very necessary to build close relationships with them. For example, I went to the house of a musical instrument maker and later bought one instrument. I also went to a private music school and watched a musician teach his students after school. I went to many lunches and dinners with musicians even when they did not talk about music. Another way in which I developed trust and relationships was to give formal presentations in Thai academic institutions. I gave a lecture to Masters-level students at Silpakorn University about ethnomusicology in the U.S., and I also gave a presentation about Chulalongkorn University exploring whether or not KSPC is an endangered music in Thailand.

I made many appointments with many music scholars whom I had never met, and luckily most of them were kind and allowed me to meet and interview them, some at their own homes. I often asked musicians for information about performances and made myself available to travel when events happened outside of Bangkok. In addition, I always carried one extra black shirt and a small towel in my backpack, just in case I would have to attend a funeral—since musicians frequently perform at funerals—and did not have a chance to go back to my apartment to change clothes.
After physically leaving the field, I have kept in contact with most of the musicians via Facebook and Skype. I often call and chat about music events in Thailand. I have also called to ask questions and for clarifications about information I recorded while in the field. I sometimes recorded these interviews by Tascam as well.

**Chapter summaries**

In this dissertation, I address the history of KSPC and its ethnographic present.

In Chapter 2, I address the relationships between power, literature and the Thai nation. I draw on theoretical work by Clifford Geertz, Benedict Anderson, Charles Keyes, and Maurizio Peleggi to describe the situation of the KSPC ensemble in Thai music society. I draw on Clifford Geertz’s description of the ‘theater state’ (negara) to understand the symbols of power, religious aspects, theories of ritual, performance, and cultural coherence in traditional Southeast Asian states. Geertz describes a pattern of politics and social control and how power operates between the center and the periphery. This distinction applies throughout my work, and especially in Chapter 6 concerning the creation of KSPC ensembles in the periphery. In that chapter, I also discuss how the relationship of Thai royalty to music, especially during the reigns of King Rama V and VI when several new music ensembles were created.

Royalty composed the literary texts that are performed with the KSPC ensemble and I provide brief summaries of all the relevant literature. These stories mostly concern kings and those directly related to them, except *Ngau Pua*, which is about an indigenous ethnic group. The passages of the texts that are selected to be sung in musical performance are not about how great the kings are, but rather depict the intimate
personal interactions between the king himself and his loved one, or depict people teaching one another how to behave towards the king. The music thus works to deliver a private message that only a few could hear. Most of the texts concern lonely moments or critical moments in life where the king or a commoner needs to make a difficult decision. The emotional reflection is something that the kings would not normally share in public. I explain the status of the king in these stories and suggest that the king is an icon in the story, and that people learn about the king’s life by watching this story in musical and theatrical performance. The power of the king as expressed in the literature, and the fact that the king or royalty wrote the royal literature make the texts more powerful and effective for the audience. Using the texts that directly relate to the king links musicians and the performance of KSPC directly to royal power.

Similar to nineteenth century Bali as described by Geertz, Thai music plays a significant role in royal rituals and ceremonies. Thai musicians have the responsibility to maintain the customs and perform music in rituals and ceremonies and to provide entertainment for the king and the royal family. The musicians thereby become socially close to the king’s power. They gain a high social status and special titles for their position in the court. At present, many musicians still work for royalty by performing music to accompany their arrival and their activities. Power is located in the center but knowledge spreads out through musicians and music educators who teach music to students outside of the court. The KSPC ensemble and its repertoires are closely related to ritual events as when the ensemble performs on the royal barge to announce the king’s arrival by boat.
from his palace to the temples when he goes to make merit. The music also accompanies martial arts, special funerals, and dance drama performances of royal literature.

In Chapter 3, I focus on musical instruments, ensembles and repertoire, and the origins, history and foundation of the KSPC ensemble. I argue that the KSPC ensemble was officially formed in twentieth century and that there is no evidence supporting the claim made by many musicians, following what their teachers told them, that the ensemble is older. KSPC is an innovative combination of two ensembles, piāi klaung and khrueangsai, which became a stable and fixed tradition after the first generation of innovators. The main source for written materials from this early period is the Thai musician and scholar Khruu Montri Tramote. In the mid-twentieth century, Khruu Montri Tramote and Luang Pradit Phairau10 borrowed ideas and introduced musical instruments from neighboring countries and cultures, such as the khim from China and the angkalung from Indonesia, and incorporated them into Thai music culture. I review the other main ensembles that are now commonly performed in Thai music culture, including as piiphaat and mahoorii. I also explain a new musical ensemble called khrueangsai phasom that was influenced by Western music during the reign of King Rama VI. I argue that the KSPC ensemble was invented during the reign of King Rama VI when the King and government were in favor of modernization in all aspects of culture, including the arts, contrary to the beliefs of many musicians that it was invented earlier. At the end of this chapter, I describe the modern KSPC ensemble, review its entire repertoire, and identify the three generations of musicians who have created and performed it. I also argue that

10 Luang Pradit Phairau, 1881-1954, was a very well-known musician and composer who specialized in ranaad ek (xylophone) and who also was a royal musician in the Buraphaaphirom palace.
because the *khrueangsaï* (string ensemble) instruments must be retuned in order to play with the *pii klaung* (oboe and drums) ensemble, the KSPC ensemble that combines these symbolized people changing their identity under royal authority, in the context of an emerging Thai nation. The instrumental part of my study is similar to the case shown by Anthony L. Brown who wrote a doctoral dissertation on the development of the jazz trap set in 1940-1950.\(^{11}\) He reviews the development and changing role of drums played in jazz ensembles from first accompanying dance to becoming a solo instrument. Here an African American drumming tradition became the rhythmic foundation for an American popular music. Likewise, the drums and *pii* changed their role from signaling the king’s arrival, accompanying martial arts and dance, to being an interactive participant with the string ensemble when combined as KSPC. The history of the KSPC ensemble also reflects efforts to combine multiple music cultures, a practice that is common in central Thai music.

In Chapter 4, I explain what it means to be a professional royal musician who works for government and royalty in Bangkok today. I introduce the individual musicians who work at the Fine Arts Department and discuss their roles, drawing on their personal stories. I describe their responsibilities to perform music in order to preserve and carry on musical knowledge as traditional intangible national heritage. These musicians have studied and performed music for many years and some of them come from long lines of musical families who once worked inside palaces for kings and royalty. In return for that

\(^{11}\) Brown 1997.
work, these musicians received higher social status, and they feel honored to work for their county.

Only selected musicians from this institution perform KSPC when they are ordered. Each has studied directly with musicians who played KSPC. Even though the KSPC ensemble is not considered to be one of the five official music ensembles at the Fine Arts Department, it has a special place for only the most highly skilled and experienced musicians. Not all of the musicians who work at the institution are able to be part of the KSPC ensemble. Those select few musicians who are members of the KSPC ensemble at the Fine Arts Department are proud of their elite status and know that the ensemble consists of only the greatest musicians of the country and that it enjoys the support of government and royalty, especially the royal Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. For special events, they are often ordered to practice music with the Princess at her palace. Most importantly, only the Fine Arts Department has a complete professional musician ensemble able to perform KSPC whenever ordered.

In Chapter 5, I examine the social context of KSPC in Bangkok, focusing on the Fine Arts Department. I discuss the transmission of KSPC from one generation to the next, including how teachers choose their students to represent their knowledge and what a student must do to become part of the ensemble. The teachers are very selective and this limits access to the ensemble. I will argue that they do this intentionally in order to keep the ensemble rare and to protect the status of those who perform it. Musicians exist in a hierarchical social system and are respectful of their place within it. At present, Khruu Peep controls the KSPC ensemble because he is the son of a musician from the first
generation who played and invented KSPC. He and his institution have considerable power over other musicians in Bangkok and beyond.

I also discuss social dynamics in the Fine Arts Department, including how musicians interact with each other on and off stage, who gives orders to other musicians, and how the institution works to elevate the social status of musicians. All the power held by individuals and the institution can be traced to royal power where they are supported with gifts, money, honesty, and social status.

Another role for musicians who play KSPC is at Chulalongkorn University where some teachers have taught their students basic knowledge of KSPC but they have been unable to maintain KSPC ensemble without relying on the Fine Arts Department musicians for help. This relationship preserves the close connection between the two institutions and the royalty.

Outside of Bangkok, some Thai music teachers for the KSPC ensemble have considered loosening the traditional restrictions for students because they must now exist in a changing contemporary system for music education. In Chapter 6, I focus on Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom from the Roi Et branch of the College of Dramatic Arts who has sought to build a KSPC ensemble outside of Bangkok. He studied KSPC and used to work at the Thai Music Division of the Fine Arts Department before being ordered by his music teacher to build a new branch of the College of Dramatic Arts in the northeast of Thailand. Recently, he has begun to teach his students repertoire for the KSPC ensemble. With the help of teachers who play pïi and drums, the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et was able to present a student performance of KSPC in Bangkok for a wai khruu ceremony.
and for the funeral of a musician who used to play KSPC. While other attempts to create KSPC ensembles have not succeeded, Jeeraphon challenges the authority of the center over this tradition.

I also discuss the unique workshop on KSPC held in Nakhon Si Thammarat, southern Thailand, where Jeeraphon and teachers from the Fine Arts Department came together to begin to train a new generation of KSPC musicians. While it appears to represent a greater openness towards access to this ensemble, I show how the event itself continued to assert the authority of the center over the tradition.

This dissertation offers insight into the ways that an elite music functions and has been passed from generation to generation under tight control by a very small group of musicians. The community of musicians who perform in this ensemble is closely associated to the royal power through the founders of the ensemble, whose status rest on having worked inside royal palaces performing music for royalty. The close association to royal authority is further expressed through the literary texts performed with the ensemble.

Yet, even the tightly-controlled elite KSPC is not immune to change. Today, a few music teachers who used to play KSPC in the center have started teaching their colleagues and their students to perform KSPC. The ideal of power situated in the center is now being challenged by some who used to be part of the center and want to build their own ensembles outside without help from the center, while still symbolically associating with the center to convey a higher status for themselves. The musicians in the center who hold the power try to constrain this process of creation beyond the scope of
their approval so that the power would remain with them as long as possible. With so much power resting with so few people, one of whom has chosen to withhold his teaching, and the specter of just one sudden and unexpected death that disrupted the lineage of transmission, I consider KSPC to be a remarkable case of a tradition rendered endangered by its own practitioners.
Chapter 2

Nationalism, Royal Authority, and Literature for Khrueangsai Pii Chawaa

In this chapter I summarize and apply several theories from cultural anthropologists and historians such as Clifford Geertz, Benedict Anderson, Charles Keyes, and Maurizio Peleggi to develop a perspective on the situation of Thai traditional music (dontrii thai duem) in Thai society. In addition I will review the relationship between royalty and literature with a focus on the texts that are used in KPSC.

In Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali, Clifford Geertz explains the term negara to be a city center with deep significance about ideas of place and where power and civilization is centered. In the center, rituals express ideas from traditional, pre-colonial Indonesia representing an idealized time when people were happy spiritually, economically and rarely fighting amongst each other. In the past, negara meant ‘palace’ and in modern Indonesia this word means state, country or land. Geertz specifically studied power in Balinese culture in the 19th-century, before the Dutch took political control of Bali and before the Japanese subsequently occupied the island during World War II. In nineteenth century Bali, the negara was an imagined place and an idea that had the power to hold society together through a structure of building temples and palaces reproducing the high culture of the center of the kingdom. Power came from the center

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1 Geertz 1980, 4.
2 Ibid., 138.
3 Ibid., 138.
in the form of patron-client relationships creating a traditional state structure. According to Geertz, it is more important to focus on the idea of power in the negara and not an actual geographic place, but what he calls “general phases of sociocultural development”. He explains that negara is a political idea directly related to power, and he uses Bali as an example to show how social power was organized with the king at a center. In reality, there were people who managed the natural resources to make sure there was enough for everyone. But those who controlled the natural resources were not necessarily those with power.

They were many negara in Bali both on the top of hills or mountains, and also near the sea where people participated in a form of market exchange. But the most powerful negara in Bali was Budung where the royalty lived and held mass rituals and temple activities as a form state theater. The periphery of a negara, which Geertz calls the desa, was spatially far from the center and the place with the least political significance, but also where most ordinary people lived and conducted their daily lives. Each Balinese negara shared common ways of organizing the people’s conceptions of politics and social control.

The hierarchy of temples between negara and desa existed in tension. Those on the periphery imitated the rituals of the powerful negara, conveying to local people the impression that the center is perfect. Those who participated in the mass rituals received titles and status in the society and were happy to be a part of the ritual. Meanwhile, the

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4 Ibid., 199.
5 Ibid., 5.
6 Ibid., 199.
local leaders who carried out the rituals brought power to themselves in the process. The negara thus functioned to make sure that this locally-accumulated power at the periphery did not result in political opposition by performing ever more spectacular rituals to seduce people’s imaginations and keep their notion of civilization and political authority focused on the center.

Hindu priests conducted rituals about agriculture, irrigation, tooth filing ceremonies, and cremations. The center gained human power to build temples and places, and to conduct these rituals. So, no matter where people came from, they learned about the politics of state through rituals that called upon them to work together, and in which they would emulate the social structures modeled by their leaders. Geertz calls this the “theatre state.”

Ideas were more important than material resources in the great show of power that took place in mass rituals. The Hindu priests with spiritual authority and the power to deliver messages to their listeners worked for religious purposes and to serve the king’s continuing power. The royally-centered institution of the negara situated the king as a perfect divinity above criticism, and people were obliged to thank him for their existence. The king sat at the center of a static and utopian social structure. As Geertz puts it,

The king was also, however, a political actor, power among powers as well as sign among signs. It was the king’s cult that created him, raised him from lord to icon; for, without the dreams of the theatre state, the image of composed divinity could not even take form.

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7 Ibid., 19.
8 Ibid., 131.
It is necessary to note here that the king’s cult kept the king in power, and at the same time, power circulated among both the ruler and the ruled. When people followed the king’s orders, society remained at peace. All of this happened and was maintained through performance. As Geertz famously writes, “It was a theatre state in which kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, and the peasants the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience”.9 The priests recited stories about fighting and gathering people together, and the kings who had power above all. People learned that, because of royal power, ordinary people were able to have happiness and peace, and if people want to keep their happiness, they needed to support their leaders by imitating the high culture of the negara.

In Thailand, a very similar notion of contrasting places of power is still very important. The concept of the negara is similar to the Thai word mueang luang (royal capital) which refers to the capital where the power is centered and where the king is physically located. In the context of modern Thailand, belief in the god-king (devaraja or theswaraachaa) is still alive and well. The king is believed to have the most baramii (spiritual power) of anyone in the society, and this justifies his authority and commands absolute loyalty.

Geertz’s term desa is similar to the Thai hua mueang (‘city’, understood to be under control of the royal capital) or chonnabot (‘countryside’) that are the places under control and governed politically by the royal capital. The royal capital in Thailand is a pre-

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9 Ibid., 13.
modern state concept, but the word is still used in the present day to refer to the center of the capital of the country, Bangkok. Another meaning of the word *mueang luang* is places of historical significance, old towns with historical buildings mostly related to religion and where the king and royalty went (or still goes) to pray and make merit. Historically, *mueang luang* also referred to the kingdoms in the past that were Siam. The royal capital included Sukhothai (1240s-1438), Ayudhya (1351-1767), Thonburi (late 1767-1782), where kingdoms were centered, and Bangkok (1782-present) where the current king resides.

The king was and still is symbolically the key figure to bring people together. The *sangkha* (the state-organized institution of Buddhist monks), government employees and the military all work to support and promote the power of the king. The king and royal family conduct religious rites rituals at the royal temples and sometimes at community temples. The most common ritual activities that the king and royal family attend are an annual agricultural ceremony, Buddhist life cycle ceremonies, ceremonies to change the robes on royal Buddha statues, offerings of robes to monks, and funerals for royalty and royal monks. These ceremonies take place in temples, royal palaces, on the public *Sanaam Luang* (the Royal Ground) where common people are able to witness them. In addition, these ceremonies are televised for the entire county. Through these activities, the king is portrayed as an exceptional Buddhist, possessing the greatest merit of any individual in the entire kingdom.

An example of the role of power between the royal capital and cities can be seen during the reigns of Kings Rama IV and V (1851-1910), which is about the same period that Geertz describes in Bali. In Thailand, then known as Siam, groups of leaders or *jao*
mueang (‘governors’) were sent out from the royal capital to politically control and be leaders of cities throughout the kingdom, according to orders from the center. The king and royal family who were educated in the royal capital had authority most of these leaders. Taxes and other goods were sent inward to the royal capital in exchange for protection, peace, stability, and the maintenance of good relations with the center. To avoid conflict, often when the king sent his relatives out to the cities, the local people would greet them and conduct rituals and entertainment for them, including music and dance. Because the leaders were seen as symbols of the king’s power, paying respect to the leader was a symbolic way of paying respect to the king himself. Locals who worked for the governors would receive titles, wealth, and higher status in the local community, and also have a chance to send their descendants to be educated in the royal capital. This relationship is similar to “clientship” that Geertz describes in the Balinese theater state, operating in various ways among the ruling class, and between the ruling class, priests and merchants. Geertz writes, “Clientship provided a way in which to forge ties across the fixed boundaries of status and consanguinity as well as to realign relationship with them”10. The second and third generation of descendants of the local leaders later became leaders of other cities themselves. These descendants were not normally assigned to work in the same place where they were born or where their families were in power. Instead, they were sent out to other areas to work for the king as government employees. This policy worked against the formation of local power centers, keeping political power centered at the royal capital and with the king.

10 Ibid., 34-39.
In contrast to the disruption of the *negara* system in Bali by colonization, Thailand was not formally colonized by Westerners and many Thai people believe that was because of the skills of kings and a royal monk\(^{11}\) who worked to keep the country safe from being colonized, in part by giving up some of the country’s lands and manpower to adjacent colonial powers, and in part by engaging in a campaign of cultural Westernization.\(^{12}\)

King Rama V introduced aspects of Western civilization into the kingdom such as providing public education and health care, developing transportation and gradually ending slavery. After his death, he was made into a national symbol because he helped the country survive colonialism by supporting Westerners in their military conflicts, making many treaties, and by giving up neighboring territories in Laos, Burma, Cambodia, and Malaysia to colonial powers. Today, the symbol of King Rama V is still used to bring people together to remind them of how far Thailand has come and how the country was not colonized by Westerners thanks to his vision to adapt and develop the country. At the same time, King Rama V abolished slavery in Thailand which gradually undermined the economy of local governors, and eventually led to a movement for democratic revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy in 1932 and later changed the name of kingdom from Siam to Thailand in 1939.

After King Rama V passed away, one of his sons, Vajiravudh, took his place as King Rama VI (r.1910-25). As Wyatt argues, “[H]e had a great deal to do with breathing

\(^{11}\) Somdej Toh (1788-1872).

\(^{12}\) Peleggi, 14.
life in to Chulalongkorn’s state and giving it a consciousness of itself as a nation, at least at an elite level,”

13 during the nation-building period. In contrast to Rama V, Rama VI appointed many of his own family members to civil service and military positions.14 Vajiravudh introduced the ideological slogan ‘nation-religion-monarch’ (chaaat-saatsanaa-phramahaakasat), “a trinitarian mystery in which all three elements were inextricably bound together.”

15 He created a hierarchical structure similar to that in nineteenth-century Bali. In Siam, Wyatt notes, “the structure Vajiravudh erected in support of the nation was hierarchical, involving obedience to all higher authorities in the name of triune authority at the top.”

16 Rama VI significantly expanded the military, drawing partly on the population of former slaves that had been freed by Rama V, appointing them defenders of nation-religion-monarch, with clientship serving to direct power and respect towards the king in exchange for a higher social status and steady employment. He likewise developed other civil service institutions under the same ideology, including the Fine Arts Department and universities. At present, these three types of institutions—the military, the Fine Arts Department, and public universities—are where traditional Thai music is maintained.

Lunag Wichit Wathakan (1898-1962) was one of several people who worked to create and promote nationalism in Thailand. He was a diplomat, state minister and

13 Wyatt 1984, 224.

14 Ibid., 225.

15 Ibid., 229.

16 Ibid., 229.
director of the Fine Arts Department until 1934. He wrote many books and articles, and as Peleggi writes,

started composing historical plays that lionized the Thais as a martial and freedom-loving nation and were staged to great acclaim in the department’s theatre. Wichit’s hugely popular plays and musically Westernized songs, such as *Luat Thai* (‘Thai’s blood’, 1938), played a fundamental role in the construction of a national identity.\(^\text{17}\)

Even though the kingdom has faced many political changes in the 20\(^{th}\) century, the function of the Fine Arts Department has not changed much since King Rama VI established the institution. Today, the Fine Arts Department has twelve regional campuses across the country that teach and perform Thai traditional music and dance and work to promote Thai culture and nationalism. The main office of the Fine Arts Department is still in the capital, very near the current and former royal palaces. The Fine Arts Department has two separate parts; the training section for students called a ‘school’ and the performing section called ‘musicians and dancers’ who receive a salary from the government. Skilled students who complete their training at the school are selected to go outside of Bangkok to teach in other branches. At present, there are twelve of these schools outside of the capital where they train students dance and music following the curriculum used at the center. Because the teachers mostly come directly from the Fine Arts Department, the students who study music and dance with them are automatically linked to the teachers in the center even if they have never met in person.

\(^{17}\) Peleggi, 121.
The students are told that they are linked to those musicians in the center and furthermore to the musicians who used to work inside the palace since King Rama V.

While political messages are projected through the media, television, radio stations, and newspapers, functioning according to Benedict Anderson’s theory of imagined communities, knowledge about Thai traditional music and dance are mainly transmitted orally just as it was during King Rama V when skilled musicians were brought to the palaces to perform for king and royal family.

There is a long tradition of performing music and dance for the king, and at present this is also done on stage for the public. But, the most important part of training in the Fine Arts Department is the secret repertoire that students learn and which is kept very similar or identical to the repertoire that their teachers have learned. Teaching is done orally, and breaking tradition by not following the teacher’s instructions is uncommon in the field of traditional music and dance. They believe that they are keeping the Thai identity and nation alive.

Ideas of nation-building and the unity of the Thai people, expressed in the slogan ‘nation-religion-king’ still circulate among people through national ceremonies such as kathin (changing the Buddha statue’s robes, and monks receiving cloth from the king and royal palaces), religious ceremonies such as khao phansa (monks entering lent), national holidays, and the king’s and queens’ birthdays. The state education system all over the country in Thailand supports performances inside and outside the royal capital for these events. Governors offer flower wreaths, and various kinds of performances given in the provincial centers are meant show their loyalty to the nation-religion-king and to connect
local people in the countryside (*chon nab*) to the royal capital. As a music student in a local school in northeast Thailand in the 1990s, I was ordered to perform Thai traditional music for the king’s mother’s funeral at the government building in my hometown. In addition, I was ordered to performed Thai traditional music at a university for the Royal Princess’ arrival for graduation day.

After the period of decline in the monarchy, when King Rama VII abdicated and later when a constitutional monarchy was established, the Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat, extensively promoted the idea of king, religion, and national development, associating the symbolic power of royalty from Rama VI’s nation-religion-king slogan with civilian political power. Stanley J. Tambiah explains the structural continuity in Thailand that persisted through the change to constitutional monarchy and the temporary abdication of King Rama VII. The monarchy and government institutions are the core of the country and that where power is concentrated. “Bureaucracy served as the most meaningful framework of those segments of Thai society standing between king and peasant; that its dominant feature was its hierarchical aspect; that the behavioral accompaniments of this overriding political definition of status were expectations of royalty and diffuse relationship between superior and inferior.”18 Those who worked in civil service, and therefore for the king, receive pride and social status. So while the 20th century experienced frequent political changes, including many coups-d’etat, the civil institutions associated with the king remained stable and provided cultural continuity centered on the veneration of the king.

18 Tambiah, 490.
To help understand the connectedness of the traditional musical community in Thailand, I draw on Benedict Anderson’s construct of ‘imagined communities’. He focuses on “printed society” in which printed media help to create a new sense of community even when people were not facing each other in real life. He explains that in colonial Southeast Asia, reading the same printed news in national languages helped people to feel that they belonged to one national community.

In Thailand, people learn about Thai traditional music not from books but by being taught by their teachers who link the teacher’s knowledge to their lineage of teachers and pass this link on to their students. Even never having met their teacher’s teachers, they learn that it is a sign of respect to the teacher to pass those ideas along and being careful not to change them. This faith also creates a stronger feeling of belonging to older generations of teachers. It does not matter which teacher that one studies with, “we belong to the same music culture” is a phrase that is often used among Thai musicians. For example, when musicians in Thailand asked me who I studied with, I responded with the name of my music teachers and often they would reply that “we are in the same line”, which meant that we had the same teachers, even though the ones who asked did not yet know my skill level. Most music teachers and musicians frequently refer back to master music teachers of the royal palaces when they were at the highest points in their careers. The notion of belonging to one school or one music teacher’s lineage creates a musical


20 คนดนตรีด้วยกัน สายเดียวกัน (khon dontrii duay kan sai dieo kan).
community that out from the palace, and a new generation of musicians who support the
king as their teachers did, and thereby support the nation.

Sarun Krittikarn proposes the term “entertainment nationalism” to describe the
present day relationship between the King Rama IX in Thailand and Thai citizens. The
image of the king himself is now widely disseminated, and gazing through media such as
Television and daily newspapers makes people feel a sense of belonging to the nation.21 He
argues that this entertainment has become necessary in order to maintain nationalism.22
What he adds to Benedict Anderson’s theory is that while the print-society created a
feeling of belonging, in the modern era of entertainment nationalism, the consumption of
the image becomes more important than the expression of nationalist ideology.23

But in the case of Thai traditional music and dance in Thailand, I suggest that the
theater state model by Geertz remains more relevant, because in the Thai traditional
music and dance community knowledge is transmitted orally and a structure of carefully
controlled patron-client relationships between the royal family and musicians is apparent.
The king support his artists for performing rituals and entertainment, and the musicians
and dancers gain individual status through their closer connection to the royal family, and
this brings them happiness and personal pride, and a sense of exclusivity from the rest of
the populace.

Musicians and dancers in Thailand who perform for the king and royal family are
highly skilled and have trained in institutions such as the Fine Arts Department or

21 Krittikarn, 62-63.

22 Ibid., 63.

23 Ibid., 81.
universities, or with well-known private music teachers in their home (baan). These musicians and dancers work in the government institution at present known as the Fine Arts Department, which was officially established in 1912 under King Rama VI. Most of the dancers and musicians had worked in the court’s inner palaces since King Rama IV. But at present, most of the musicians who work directly for the king are no longer related by blood to the king, but they work very closely to the king and come to feel a sense of belonging to the king’s descendants, and this is a form of power that they gain and then later pass on to their own students.

Geertz argues that people in Bali believed in the power of myth, the kings, and kinship organizations. The king acted almost not at all, but his status stood as a symbol of the state and he had helpers to work for him to assure his power and their power as well. The king also associated his own power with the power of religion and spirits. Music and dance were like the king’s jewelry and functioned to support the king’s power. In Bali, the musicians had the responsibility to maintain the costumes and by performing music in ritual, ceremonies, and entertainment for the king and royal family, and so the musicians were socially close to the king’s power. This is very similar to Thai musicians who perform for the king in his court, and to musicians in other royal institutions such as the military and Fine Arts Department. Royal power is located in the center and is disseminated by musicians and music educators. Literature performed in musical theater, such as the epic stories Ramakian and Inao, recounts the power of the king and his accomplishments and ends happily. These works of national literature are about kings who wander the world, their religious beliefs, wars, loves, and finally their return to their
palace to keep peace in their kingdom. Functioning like a theater state, music and dance performances convey the ideal relationship between the court and the people to support the power of nation and the king.

I witnessed such a public association of musical performance with royalty at the Thailand Cultural Center in Bangkok where selected senior musicians came together to perform with and for Princess Sirindhon to show the close relationship between the performers and the royalty. The musicians had come from the Fine Arts Department, the Playnern royal palace, and three different universities. One of them, Chulalongkorn University, is where the princess studied music, including stringed instruments and singing. In addition, there were palace musicians who were permanent members of the Ban Plai Noen Band. The musicians enhance their status through public performance of their close relationship with the royalty, while the public display of loyalty enhances the public authority of the Princess and of royalty in general. A few musicians who were part of this spectacular performance also perform in the KSPC ensemble.

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24 The Ban Plai Noen Band (with “band” borrowed from English), is the resident palace ensemble of the Playern Palace.
Figure 2. Musicians the Fine Arts Department, Playnern royal palace, and selected universities, performing with Princess Sirindhon in 2012 at the Thailand Cultural Center in Bangkok.

Music teachers in Thai music society therefore are very powerful institutions in their own right, as Deborah Wong has shown in her research on the *wai khruu* ceremony (paying respect to the teachers). She shows the strong and deep connections between the teachers and students expressed through a form of performance in Thai music society. All over the country, music students are reminded annually of the central authority through this *wai khruu* ceremony. Only the very few teachers who have received royal authority are able to conduct this ritual. Each year, these few teachers conduct the *wai khruu* ritual at schools inside and outside of the royal capital. For example, the twelve

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branches of the Dramatic Arts College where students are trained in music and dance all over the country, have an annual *wai khruu* event to pay respect to their spirit teachers and human teachers. Special repertoire is performed only for this special event, dedicated to non-human teachers, mythical characters of the Indian epic Ramayana, and Hindu gods who gave them music knowledge. Musicians from Bangkok perform sacred repertoire in the ceremony, symbolically ensuring the power of the lineage of teachers including those promoted by kings in their palaces. Only kings or those who receive authority from the king can grant authority to another to conduct the ceremony. Power is transferred from teachers to selected students who later will become the highly regarded music teachers in their lineage. The *wai khruu* ceremony ensures that the power of a lineage stays in place forever, even after the death. When a teacher passes away, their students include the teacher’s picture onto the *wai khruu* altar, symbolizing the inclusion of their teacher into their lineage. The *wai khruu* ceremony reinforces an imagined relationship to the community of music teachers who perform for the king and royal family.

**History and cultural context of royalty and music**

Since Rama I, the first king of the current Chakri Dynasty (1782-present), the Thai kings have had the obligation to manage the kingdom, and to build palaces and temples that serve as symbols of the community and to support the power of royal authority. Building palaces for royalty and temples for Buddhist monks and the community required a lot of money, labor, and the *baramii*, or spiritual power that only a respected authority could bring. These buildings were tangible symbols of the king’s power.
These palaces and temples were the places where music and dance were performed for ritual and entertainment. For example, inside the palace, musicians performed to entertain kings and royalty, even for mundane activities such as helping the king go to sleep. Many of the king’s wives maintained their own music and dance ensembles. Palace musicians also performed outside of the palace, such as the ปั๊ก คลาวง (obo and drums) ensemble that performs on the royal barge when the king travels from palaces to the temples to make merit. Military bands also perform for the king and royalty outside of their palaces. This music serves to accompany the king’s arrival. Specific repertoire has been composed by Thais and Westerners for each of these purposes.

During King Rama IV (r.1851-1868), the country began to have much more contact with foreigners, mainly for commercial trade. This contact began to have an influence in music theater during Kings Rama V (r.1868-1910) and VI (r.1910-1925). Many palaces, each controlled by different members of the extended royal family, maintained their own musical ensemble and theater troupe.

Skilled musicians who were commoners were invited to perform and teach music at the palaces for the royalty. The musicians played ritual music to accompany religious activities and played to accompany theater and dance performances. Being invited to work in the palace was a great honor, giving the artists a high social status and the opportunity to make a living by practicing their art. Performing music is a special service to entertain and glorify the king and very few commoners would have a chance to be so close to the royalty. Working in the palaces as musicians and dancers constituted a patron-client relationship or patronage system where the king and royalty were the
providers for their entertainment troupes, who receive a place to stay, food, clothing, and titles for the musicians with high skills.

During the reigns of King Rama V and VI, royal musicians lived permanently inside the palace and were provided food and money. Their job was to perform music on demand for the royalty and their guests. These musicians also participated in competitions between palaces in a name of their own princes. The winners received recognition, money and fame. It was important for the royalty to show off their best musicians as a display of their power from palace to palace. If their musicians won the competitions, they themselves and their patrons also won pride from the society and gain more respect as well. Musical competition was a kind of combat without bloodshed.

A high point for musicians and dancers was during the reign of King Rama VI when many of them received honorary titles, land, money, and places to work, and they were widely respected. Many of the musicians from this period who worked in the palace are still recognized as the great musicians of Thai music history. For example, when I attended the *wai khruu* ritual at the Fine Arts Department in the Small Hall of the National Theatre on August 9, 2012, the music director *Khruu* Peep Khonglaythong was the officiant for the ritual. On the altar there were many framed black-and-white paintings of old music teachers who had worked inside the palace during King Rama V and VI. These were presented below the dance masks to represent the spirits of the teachers and their power in the ritual. People who attended the ritual knew that these paintings represented music teachers who all used to work at the same institution. Seeing these pictures and remembering that their teachers sometimes told them about these
great music teachers reminds them that they have to pay respect to these teachers as well as to the spirit teachers.

When the Roongrian Mahaadlek Luang (Royal Soldier School) was established by King Rama V inside the palace for young soldiers who served closely to the king, musicians for Thai and Western ensembles were included in this special unit.\textsuperscript{26} In addition, many new music ensembles were invented during this time and with royal support, at least two musical ensembles were established as part of the tradition: khrueangsaï phasom or the stringed ensemble combined with Western instruments and piiphaat dukdumban, a Javanese gamelan-inspired ensemble. Rama VI helped to create new genres of theater that were inspired by Western theater, with shorter performance times and with new scenery for the stage. He also translated many foreign literary works and made Thai theatrical versions (lakhaun) of them. He had his own group of private servants who helped to practice these theatrical performances with him inside the palace. It was also during his reign that musicians and dancers moved out from the palaces to work at a new governmental institution known as Krom Mahorasop, established in 1912, and that later became the Krom Sinlapakorn (Fine Arts Department). The performing office known at present as Samnakkaan Sangkhiit (Thai Music Division) where musicians and dancers are paid a salary, but still are on demand to perform for royalty and for other government activities. Their duties were largely the same every year, but there was less competition since most of the artists were assembled into one institution. Still, at temple festivals and other religious activities, music ensembles would compete with each other. In addition to

\textsuperscript{26} Phoonphit 2007, 10.
these competitions, they gave public performances where common people had the opportunity to hear the court musical tradition.

There were also musicians and dancers who did not work at the Fine Arts Department Thai Music Division, but they worked within other institutions such as the military. Each branch of the Thai military has a Thai music division with professional musicians and a school for training students. They also serve to perform music for the royalty, for military activities and on orders from the government. Although the Thai military music divisions are an important part of the Thai musical tradition, they do not maintain khrueangsaai pi chawaa (KSPC) ensembles and so will not be further discussed in this dissertation.

Today, the Thai Music Division of the Fine Arts Department still provides music for the royalty, for governmental events, and for religious rituals and funerals conducted by monks where the royalty requires music to be performed. For example, the Fine Arts Department provides a piiphaat ensemble to perform in the public Ploughing Ritual on the Sanaam Luang (Royal Ground) held in May of every year. The King is present to plant the first rice crop for the country.

The musicians at the Fine Arts Department work as government employees and can retire at the age of sixty with life benefits. There are five permanent ensembles that serve any musical need for the king, royalty or government events. The musicians have more freedom than in the past because they do not belong to and live in any one palace. However, there is still one ensemble that practices in the palace of Princess Sirindhon, know as Playnern palace. Here musicians from several institutions join with permanent
palace musicians to practice together. This is also where the Princess herself learns and practices music, from the Dean of the Fine Arts Department and several teachers from other institutions. The Princess plays *ramaad ek* (xylophone), *sau duang* (fiddle) and sings. These musicians from the Playnern palace rarely perform in public and only perform with the Princess herself. The musicians of Playnern palace do not practice for competition. They practice and perform Thai music in order to keep the tradition alive with the support of the royalty.

On several occasions, I observed a KSPC ensemble practicing at Playnern palace due to an order from the Princess who wished to sing with this ensemble to honor her teacher who had passed away, and who had once sung with the KSPC ensemble. The musicians who performed KSPC came from the Fine Arts Department. They stayed at the palace as long as the Princess desired. While musicians practiced in a room upstairs, the palace provided lunch for them to eat there, but they were not otherwise compensated because this was considered one of their normal duties.

The Princess also supports a project called *Dontrii Thai Udom Sueksaa* (University Thai Music Festival) where she performs in a selective ensemble of university music students at an annual festival. Thai music departments from around the country bring their ensembles to participate in this project, which takes place at a different university each year. This event celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2013 where the event took place during November 29 to December 1, 2013 at the College of Music at Mahasarakham University in Northeast Thailand. I had participated in this project for four years playing string instruments when I was in an undergraduate. In addition to
sending an ensemble from one institution to perform at the event, each university can send only one student from their institution to perform in this ensemble with the Princess. Not surprisingly, there is a high expectation for the institution and the student to prepare well. Other students perform with many other ensembles, which take the stage at different times throughout the festival. Students are often grouped by region to perform onstage for other students, and they have to incorporate some music from their own region to represent where they are coming from. There is a competition for students, mainly from central Thailand, *piiphaat pralaung phleeng* (*piiphaat* competition) hosted by Bangkok Bank and *Sorn Thong* (Golden Arrow), and organization named after *Khruu* Luang Pradit Phairau who once worked inside the palace. After finishing the competitions, students who win receive a their special prize from the Princess who supported the competitions. It is a modern version of patronage.

Another occasion where Thai music explicitly connects to royalty is in performances and recordings for the King’s and Queen’s birthday celebrations. When I was an undergraduate music student, the ensemble I played in was required to practice a special song with lyrics about the king and prosperity. We practiced for months before going to a television station to perform and record our performance, which was later sent to central Thailand to be televised during a special program on the King’s and Queen’s birthday program. This was also done by students in high school and at other levels. Some teachers trained their students to perform for the royalty by having them perform in front of pictures of the royalty placed on stage at their school or in public. It is a sign of
paying respect to the leaders of the country. Sometimes students have a chance to perform in public for the King and Queen in person.

The Fine Arts Department has their own training school known as Witthiyalai Natthasin (College of Dramatic Arts) with twelve branches all over the country, seven in central Thailand. The school offers instruction up to eight years at the pre-college level, and four years the college level. Very recently they have begun to offer graduate degrees as well. The students of the College of Dramatic Arts learn with many musicians from the Fine Arts Department, and most of the musicians now working at the Fine Arts Department have come from the College of Dramatic Arts. In addition, many public schools, college and universities offer Thai music clubs, classes, and some have majors in Thai traditional music. Some universities offer a Ph.D. in Thai music.

Outside of these institutions, there are still musicians who maintain the traditional way of studying Thai music known as baan (house) where a hereditary line of Thai music teachers has taught from generation to generation. The famous Thai musician and composer Luang Pradit Phairau established a baan in Bangkok where his descendants and other teachers teach Thai music to children. Outside of Bangkok, several teachers have their own ensemble and teach music in their own homes. Students come from everywhere, and some even stay at the house and help out with the teacher’s housework and learn music in return. Most of these teachers know each other very well, mainly because they have learned music from the same teachers in the past or by performing together. This traditional system is still highly respected among serious musicians.
Despite all these places where traditional music is taught, the KSPC ensemble is now maintained only at the Fine Arts Department. Only there do they have a complete ensemble with musicians of sufficiently high skill ready to perform at any time. In the 1960s, the well-known KSPC ensemble from the Fine Arts Department contained both male and female musicians, including Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong (male, played pii, oboe), Khruu Luang Phayrau Siangsau (male, played sau uu, fiddle), Khruu Montri Tramote (male, khlui lip, flute), Khruu Pravate Kumoot (male, sau duang, fiddle), Khruu Pring Dontriirod (male, drums), Khruu Lamead Jittasawii (female, jakhee, zither) and Khruu Lamom Duurayachiiwin (female, singer). These musicians have now all passed away. However, those of their students who had a chance to learn KSPC with them still perform in this special ensemble for special occasions today.

Musicians who learned KSPC but do not work at the Fine Arts Department now have very limited opportunities to perform in it as a complete ensemble. In later chapters, I discuss in detail the musicians who currently play in KSPC ensembles.

Thai literature and traditional music ensembles

Since the Ayutthaya period, much literature was composed by Thai kings, members of the royal family, and their close servants. Until King Rama V, there was no clear system for collecting and publishing them. Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, Prince Narissara Nuwattiwong and their colleagues helped to collect, re-organize and publish royal literature in a collection called Royal Publications (Chabap Luang or Chabap

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Hausamut). The versions of stories in this collection became the most well-known in the
country. In 1905, the National Library opened to the public and many books and
compilations papers on various subjects were moved into it from the personal collection
of the royal family. There are now at least three main libraries in Bangkok that contain
royal publications: the Wachirayaan Library, where mainly religious books are kept; the
Damrong Rachanuphap Library, which has a collection related specifically to Prince
Damrong Rachanuphap; and the National Library, which was built and opened to the
public during the reign of King Rama VI.

Here, I focus on selected literary works that were used for music performances
and were composed by kings, their relatives, or servants, in some cases including servants
captured from other kingdoms during wars. Many compositions were lost and what is left
is collected in many editions in the National Library.

Several kinds of texts are used for performances of sakkawaa (short poetry used for
sung conversation between males and females or among groups, focused on the singers
and accompanied by music) and seephaa (stories about particular people and their
activities, sung accompanied by krap, two pieces of hard wood truck together). These are
texts for music (not theater) where music plays between verses when the singer takes a
break. During the reigns of Kings Rama V and VI, the musical sections were expanded
in between short sections for poetry. The singers are the only performers; they could also
play little music while singing and dance or move their body a bit while singing, but the
focus is on the story they are telling.
Staged dance drama performances during the reign of King Rama V used *bot lakhaun*, texts for performance on stage both inside and outside the palace, that the on-stage performers sing by themselves, and *bot khoon*, texts for masked dance performance (*khoon*) where the dancers do not sing and there is a set of singers and musicians who perform while they are dancing on stage.

Texts and music were selected differently. Most of the texts that were used for performances had already been composed, and accompanying music was selected to suit the emotion of the texts. The same music could be used to set different texts that convey the same emotion. For example, the song *Khaum Klaum Luuk* has been set to at least four different texts such as from national literature such as *Inao, Phra Lau, Raosuu*, which composed by kings and royalty, and a text composed by the commoner Nai Wimon. Another example is the song *Kheak Maun Bangkhunprom* that has been set to three different texts from *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* literature.

In addition, new texts can be composed for specific performances. The composer and musician Montri Tramote (1900-1995) arranged an older composition *Mahaakaan* into three-part *thao* form and wrote new texts to perform for the Princess’ birthday. After that, it became more acceptable for common people to compose new texts for existing music.

The great Hindu epic from India *Ramayana* is an important set of texts in Thailand. The *Ramayana* (Rama’s journey) was originally written in Sanskrit to tell the story of Rama who was believed to be the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu reborn on earth to stop Ravanna (the evil one). Rama is exiled from his palace for fourteen years
because his brother’s mother wanted her son to become king instead of Rama. While Rama, Sita and Rama’s younger brother Lakshmana are in the forest, Ravanna abducts Sita to Lanka kingdom. The monkey king Hanuman helps Rama to rescue Sita and finally Rama kills Ravanna. But then, Rama mistrusts Sita and asks her to walk in fire to prove her purity, which she does, but then she goes into the underworld.

The Thai king is a human being who is considered a god-king, believed to be the righteous one who has made enough merit for his life and for his subjects, and who has Brahmin priests who give him advice about how to rule the kingdom. The advisors also make sure that the king does not use his power in incorrect ways. Through Brahmin rituals, the king is associated with supernatural power, to be loved and to be respected. To maintain the king’s power, the Brahmins must perform many rituals. One of the rituals is a dance and music offering to worship the god-king.

The Thai version of the Ramayana, *Ramakian*, was recomposed by the king Rama I (1782-1802), and later Rama II (1809-1824), Rama V (1868-1910), and Rama VI (1880-1925) for three purposes. First was to support his own power as a king, by linking his kingship to that of Rama and those of his ancestors in the Ayutthaya period. King Rama I brought arts and entertainment back to the kingdom after a devastating war with Burma, and moved the center of the kingdom from Ayutthaya to Bangkok where he built a new capital. The second reason was to collect all the local Ramayana versions into one complete version. And lastly, the epic was the primary narrative basis for *khoon*, the royal masked dance drama that includes poetry recitation, dance, music and story telling, performed exclusively for the royalty until the reign of King Rama V.
King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r.1910-1925), former Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkram (1897-1964) and Luang Wichit Wathakarn (1898-1962) helped to create the modern Thai nation in different ways. King Rama VI established schools for royalty and he had been the Minister of Education and of the Interior. He had also been a Director of the National Library. He composed many books and supported publications, and he collected, transcribed and described literary materials, including many versions of the Ramayana story.

Prime Minister Pleak Phibunsongkram contributed to Thai nationalism through ratthaniyom or ‘cultural mandates’, which were laws that reformed Thai customs such as fashion, public behavior, and arts to emulate Western models. According to Craig J. Reynolds, “the impulse of the ruling elite [was] to prescribe cultural norms and to set guidelines if not fix the conventions for artistic creation was a deep-seated one during the absolute monarchy, especially during the four decades or so preceding 1932 when printing technology encouraged cultural production outside of the court’s prerogative to validate that production.”28 In music, Prime Minister Pleak Phibunsongkram created ramwong (a Thai circle dance) and chose the modern Thai national anthem.

Luang Wichit Wathakarn was involved in writing books on various subjects for the nation. The main purpose of publication during those times was to create and unite Thai identity. Books and articles about politics, the nation, national culture, traditional culture, Thai language, and heroic literature were produced prolifically during this period of time, to unite Thais people together under the watch of the Prime Minister, who

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28 Reynolds 2002, 4-5.
served also as the President of the Literature Association. Luang Wichit sought to bring people together in one nation through literature because—the reasoning went—literature is good for the people’s minds and good language is good for the people’s behavior, so it is extremely important to use literature and language as tools to shape people’s minds and behavior. What Luang Wichit did was to create a cultural bridge between the official realm and the public realm.29

The Ramakian is now found everywhere in Thailand: in the palaces, in the temples, in schools, in homes, and in all the branches of the military who perform for the king when he travels anywhere near the bases. As result of this education, many people in Thailand know most of the Ramakian epic by heart. I was trained in a music department and in the military, and I learned the Ramakien as a model for government during my first year at school. Rama is the king, Lakshmana is his helper just like government employees, and Ravana (in Thai, Thotsakan) is the evil one who the king needs to stop. Good people should help the moral leader and in the Ramayana epic, that is Rama.

Reading and understanding the Ramakian helps people support and understand the king’s power. Performances show what it takes to become a king, not just to be born into the role but to fight for it. They show what people should expect from their king, and what their obligations to their king should be. They both help each other to support and protect one another following the ideals from the Ramakian. By watching or being a part of the rituals and performances, people understand their role in society by identifying with characters from the story.

29 Chai-anan, 60-61.
Performances of *khoon* are accompanied by the *piiphaat* ensemble. Despite the cultural preeminence of the Ramakien, the *khrueang sai pui chawaa* ensemble does not, surprisingly, use those texts: instead, two other epic stories are used. One, *Inao* concerns royalty, and the other, *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*, concerns common people.

**The literature for KSPC**

The stories that are used in performances accompanied by the KSPC ensemble mostly concern kings and those directly related to them, except *Ngau Paa*, which is about an ethnic group. *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* is about commoners who worked for kings and therefore were considered to be of a high social class. These two stories are about love between one woman and two men in the same town, and both stories end with death. Many parts from the story *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* show how the misuse of royal power affects the lives of common people. While *Inao*, *Rachathirach* and *Sakuntalaa* directly concern to the king himself or his loved ones. In all three stories, the king is represented as always right and powerful, even when the king misbehaves or acts unethically to others. There is no criticism of the king, nor does the king ever die. At the end of the story, the king is always right.

The story *Inao* came from Indonesia and was adapted by the Thais during the Ayuthaya period. Many members of the royal family since King Rama V have had close relations to Java, which started when he traveled to Java by ship with musicians and
returned to Thailand with a gamelan ensemble. Other members of the royal family have resided in Bandung, Indonesia and kept a royal palace there. Many musicians associate the \textit{p}i\textit{i} chawaa with the south and Indonesia, and consider KSPC especially appropriate for performing the Inao story. \textit{Inao} not only relates to royalty but also has a long and complicated connection to Thai society through music and dance performances. Here I provide a history of the story, review the main characters, and briefly summarize of the plot.

\textit{Inao} is one of many Thai national literary works that were composed by Thai kings, and it won a prize for being the most aesthetic poetic composition for performance. This expanded story came from the south of Thailand, the region known expansively as chawaa, referring not only to the island of Java in Indonesia but to the whole Malay world. The story was strongly influenced by the Malaysian and Indonesia \textit{Panji} story and the Balinese \textit{Malad} story, both of which are about a young king wandering through his kingdom, his political struggles, and his unexpectedly complicated love life.

The \textit{Inao} epic poem is an anonymous work with origins preceding the modern Chakri dynasty, the current royal house of the kingdom of Thailand which has ruled since 1782. The epic was closely associated with the power of royalty and was exclusively performed in the court until the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1932. In

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\textsuperscript{30} King Rama V traveled to Java three times, in 1870, 1896 and 1901, for both political business and leisure. When he and his followers reached Bandung, the politicians there provided them hospitality and entertainment, including performances of the \textit{Panji} story which reminded the King of \textit{Inao Yai} from the Ayutthaya period (Aimitip, 71-72). Due to the political situation in Thailand after 1932, Prince Boriphat Sukhumpan (1881-1944), one of King Rama V’s sons, was exiled to Bandung and lived there until his death. Prince Boriphat was a musician, arranger, and composer and he had his own Thai music ensemble at Bangkhumphrom Palace which was known for hosting Thai music competitions during Kings Rama VI and VII. While he was in Bandung, he translated \textit{Inao: Hikajat Panji Simelan} into Thai. He also composed several Thai traditional songs for \textit{piiphaat mai khaeng} ensemble (Rachabanthittayasathaan 2006, 77-80). \textsuperscript{31} Muulanithi Somdet Phrathep Rattana Rachasudaa 2005, 674.
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contrast to the Ramakien, Inao concerns the everyday lives of royalty and is easily understood by common people.

The Inao narrative depicts at length how King Inao came into power, his journeys through the jungles, his extensive and selfish love life, the role of women in power, wars between relatives, the orders given to the king by his parents, and establishing kingdoms. The Inao epic is a symbol of the Thai king, and the musical ensemble that performs for the king is not only a group of musical instruments nor those who play them, but also a symbol of the royalty. Through performance, the audience learns about the Thai king, the musicians, the dancers, and the royal story Inao and the ways that each of these serves to support the king’s power.

During the golden era of classical dance-drama, King Rama II (1809-24) set the standard for the lakhaun luang (court dance) and khoon luang (masked dance) troupes including the standards for creating and training dancers, teachers, choreographers, and composers of dramatic texts.\textsuperscript{32} Inao was one of the most popular performance subjects in the court before 1932, when the absolute monarchy became a constitutional monarchy. During the reign of King Rama VI, musicians, teachers and dancers began working in government institutions instead of inside the court, but they continued to perform primarily for the king and royal family. The government also supported the publication of key texts that promoted Thailand as a modern nation, and as a result there are several versions of Inao composed by several authors. Textual expansions of the Inao story

\textsuperscript{32} Rutnin, 57.
emphasized the king’s ability, his appreciation of the arts, and his sensitivity and education.

_Inao_ is an key example of Thai royal literature and its importance in Thai culture.

_Inao_ is a classic, composed by an anonymous author or authors. It first appeared in Thailand during the Ayutthaya period. King Bormmakot (r. 1733-58) had two daughters, Chow Fa Mongkut and Chao Fa Kunton, who supposedly composed two versions of _Inao_ based on a story told to them by a Javanese maid. These are known as _Inao Lek_ and _Inao Yai (Dalung)_ or the ‘small Inao’ and the ‘big Inao’. Supond Bunnag, a well-known Thai historian, provides a brief summary of the _Inao_ story in his book, and writes that the _Inao_ story was very famous during the Ayutthaya period. He also recounts how much the last king of Ayutthaya, King Suriyamarin, or Phra Chow Akekatad (r. 1758-1767), loved to watch _Inao_—so much so that he lost a battle with Burma because he was busy watching the play when the Burmese and Siamese were at war. He also notes that the story was told to King Rama I (r. 1782-1809) by Phra Maha Nek Watt Asia, a famous monk at a temple. King Rama I (with the assistance of others) composed a new version of _Inao_ which was based on his memory and the _Inao_ versions available to him. In the period of King Rama II (1809-1824), another version of _Inao_ was written, based on only the _Inao Lek_ story. The version of _Inao_ by King Rama II is widely held to be the best _Inao_ ever written. Many other artists subsequently helped to make it a complete story for theater, including King Rama III (1824-1851), Sunthon Phuu (a very famous poet during the

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33 Bunnag, 646.

34 Ibid., 644.

35 Ibid., 644-49.
reigns of Kings Rama I-IV), and choreographer Luang Pitak Montrii. Today, the earliest extant handwritten manuscript of *Inao*, published in 1921, is kept in the Thai National Library.

Published versions of *Inao*, composed by royal authors at various times, include: King Rama I’s version, first published in 1917, King Rama II’s version, first published in 1921, ‘Staff of the National Library’ version, first published in 1921, Damrong Rachanuphap’s version in the Vachirayan library, first published in 1921, and King Rama V’s theatrical version, also first published in 1921.

In 1916, the version of *Inao* by King Rama II won the prize for the best Thai literature from the Thailand Literature Association due to the use of words and poetic forms and for theater and stage direction. It remains the most well-known version of *Inao*. Yet another version of *Inao* in Thailand written by a son of King Rama V, Prince Boripat (1881-1944) (Somdej Chow Fa Boripat Sukhumpan Krom Pray Nakornsawan Warraphinit), who translated the Hikajat Panji Simelan from the Malay language while living in Bandung, Indonesia, where he lived in exile after King Rama VII abdicated the throne in 1932. This version was published in 1920 to commemorate the sixtieth birthday

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36 Ibid., 650.

37 King Rama V (1868-1910) traveled to Europe in 1897 where he saw national libraries and wanted to have one for his own, to show foreigners that Thailand was civilized, so in 1905 he established a personal library for the court people to collect books, articles and other published material. In 1916, King Rama VI (1910-1925) moved the court library out of the royal palace and allowed ordinary people to read and use those books. In 1926, King Rama VII (1925-1935) divided the library into two libraries: one called Vachirayan for keeping handwritten texts and Buddhist dharma subjects, and one called Vachiravut for other kinds of books. In 1933, the name was changed to the National Library under the watch of the Fine Arts Department. In 1961, a new building was built on Samsan Street in Bangkok, for the National Library. During the time of development of publication in Thailand, Damrong Rachanuphap (1862-1943), a son of King Rama IV and a younger brother of King Rama V and a good friend of King Rama VI, was the main supervisor who established a school for royalty and he was a Minister of Education and the Interior. He was a director of the library who did research, composed many books, supported publications, and he collected, transcribed and described literary materials, including many versions of the *Inao* story.
of Prince Boripat’s wife. Several years after his death in 1944, Prince Boripat’s body was brought back to Thailand for a formal funeral under the power of King Rama IX (1946-present), and his work Inao: Hikajat Panji Simelan was republished for his funeral in 1950 and republished yet again in 2003 for his daughter’s funeral. His version is full of Javanese transliterations and many borrowed foreign words. Many other versions by unknown authors of Inao were published in Thailand before 1921, after the British recognized Pattani province in southern Thailand as part of Siam and not of Malaya, and before the Siam Primary Education Act of 1921.38 After 1932, the Inao epic was used by the government to promote Thai nationalism and parts of this epic were used in elementary schools all over the country.

The Inao story depicts a handsome young king who likes to watch theater, who has many wives, who wins every war, and has a nonchalant lifestyle. It covers his travels, his power, protection from gods, and his desire to get what he wants when he wants it. No matter what he does to his families, friends and his people in his palaces, at the end, he is still the only one who can conquer chaos and bring peace back to the world. It is a very intricate and long epic. However, from my point of view as a scholar, the authors of Inao, as royalty, wanted people to hear about the king’s life and at the same time convince people of the king’s power to bring back peace. They promoted this by supporting a music ensemble and theater form based on the Inao epic that became a ‘high art form’ for the Thai nation. Despite the often unacceptable and even unethical behaviors of King Inao, all is accepted at the end of the story, leading people to think that the king is never

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38 Wyatt 1984, 228-229.
really wrong and that even if the king was wrong, he will be forgiven because he is the king, since only the king can solve problems.

All the versions of *Inao* from the Chakri kings include prescribed musical preludes to each scene. These compositions play a crucial role in depicting the emotional content of the story. Theatrical performances of *Inao* have employed every kind of musical ensemble, including *khrueangsai pii chawaa*. The intimacy of the texts reflects the KSPC ensemble itself, which is rarely performed in public, and when it is—at funerals—it is only for special occasions with loved ones who hear the music of this special ensemble before they depart to another realm.

In contrast to the *Ramakian* and *Inao*, which are stories about royalty, the third epic story I discuss here is *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* which is about common people, their sins, and impossible decisions that lead to death. The story is very well known for use in the poetic recitation forms *sakkawaa* and *seephaa*, and for *lakhaun* theater. Selected texts from this story are also performed with accompaniment by the KSPC ensemble. The main characters work for royalty. It was first a local story and later was adopted by royalty and consequently reorganized and recomposed for the purpose of performing and entertaining. King Rama II ordered many poets to help compose a version of this story. The royal poet, Sunthon Puu, King Rama II himself and King Rama III, and later sons of King Rama IV all composed parts of the story. While royalty composed their version of *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*, outside of the palace ordinary people also composed and performed *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*, but their versions were not published or made part of
Khun Chaang Khun Phaen is a love tragic story about one woman and two men at a time in Siamese society where the rich had power, men worked for the royalty, and women were good wives who stayed home, as society expected. The story took place in the Suphanburi and Kanchanaburi provinces of central Thailand. The three main characters in this story are Khun Chaang, the rich man; Khun Phaen, the good looking man; and Wanthaung, the pretty woman. The story shows gender responsibility, monkhood, royal power, social status, and family expectations. And most importantly, it shows social status where those in power have the right to determine the lives of others.

They are many versions of this story in different forms, in including poetry, prose, sakkawaa, theatre, and parody. King Rama VI ordered the staff of the National library to collect and reorganize this story and publish it. He officially recognized this story as the best text to used for seephaa. The story is now very famous and is taught in public school. Many parts of this story are used to sing with classical and popular musical ensembles.

Here is a brief summary of the story. Khun Chaang, Khun Phaen and Wanthaung were friends since they were young. When growing up, Khun Chaang worked for the royalty, Khun Phaen went into the monkhood, and Wanthaung stayed home with her mother. One night, Khun Phaen, while still a monk, went into

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40 Ibid., 62.
Wanthaung’s bedroom and made love with her; eventually they married. Khun Chaang, on the other hand, had loved Wanthaung for many years and was very upset about losing the woman he loved. When he had a chance to meet with the king, he told the king that Khun Phaen was a good fighter and suggested that the king order Khun Phaen to go to war. The king believed what Khun Chaang told him and ordered Khun Phaen to leave home and his wife to fight. For several years, Khun Chaang visited to Wanthaung’s house and one day told her mother that Khun Phaen had already passed away at war, and that all of his belongings, including his wife were to become royal property. To avoid that fate, Wanthaung would have to marry Khun Chaang instead. The mother was afraid to become royal property and she also liked that Khun Chaang was rich and marrying her daughter and Khun Chaang would bring her higher status and richness, so she ordered her daughter to marry Khun Chaang. Wanthaung had no right to refuse her mother, so she married Khun Chaang and moved in to his house. Not long after that, Khun Phaen came back from war, only to find his wife remarried to his friend. Khun Phaen went to Khun Chaang’s house demanding to see his own wife. However, Wanthaung discovered that Khun Phaen did not come back from war alone but had another wife with him, named Laothaung. Wanthaung was furious, and later that night she was raped by Khun Chaang. Not so long after that, Khun Phaen came back for Wanthaung and took her from Khun Chaang’s house. Before leaving, Wanthaung wrote a letter for Khun Chaang to read when he woke up from the black magic spell that Khun Phaen cast to put everyone to sleep. In the letter, she said that did not want to go with Khun Phaen and that Khun Phaen is going to kill her, and she told Khun Chaang to rescue her as soon as
possible. Khun Chaang and his servants followed them into the jungle. Wanthaung hid while Khun Phaen fought with the troops. Khun Chaang lost and returned home. He told the king that Khun Phaen betrayed the country and killed many soldiers. The king ordered Khun Phaen to be captured. Khun Chaang took Wanthaung home with him without knowing that she was pregnant with Khun Phaen’s child. After giving birth to a son, she was captured by Khun Phaen again. At the end of the story the king ordered Wanthaung’s execution due to her misbehavior according to the terms of aristocratic society.

These two stories, *Inao* and *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*, portray ordinary lives where people make choices according to their desires without caring about others, and they have to live, or die, with the consequences. Selected texts from these two stories are sung with music by the KSPC ensemble.

**Other stories used with KSPC**

The texts most often performed by the KSPC ensemble are from *Inao* and *Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*. Three other literary sources have also been used for performance with KSPC, all composed by kings and royalty: *Ngau Pua*, composed by King Rama V, *Sakuntalaa* by King Rama VI, and *Rachathirat* composed during King Rama I (which is the least often used). The appearance of ethnic minorities in Thai royal literature began during King Rama I, with Burmese characters in *Rachathirat*. This was followed by Indonesian characters in *Inao* during King Rama II, and Chinese characters in *Sam Kok*, a adaptation of the Chinese Three Kingdoms story, during King Rama III. Later, during
King Rama V, stories began to include Westerners and hilltribes who came into the gaze of the King from his travels. Referencing others in Thai royal literature became more popular and was presented in staged performances influenced by Western theater during King Rama VI, when he composed and translated many stories from other languages into Thai and used the texts for performances. One of the stories that King Rama VI translated and arranged is *Sakuntalaa* which originally came from the Indian epic, *Mahabharata*. I present these three stories, *Sakuntalaa*, *Ngau Pua*, and *Rachathirat*, ordered by their frequency of use for KSPC, not by the date of their composition.

*Sakuntalaa* is a story about love between a king and a poor girl. A short story, *Sakuntalaa* is the first story that King Rama VI developed for dance drama performance on stage with Western-style scenery and curtains known as *lakhon duekdamban*. The story of *Sakuntalaa* focuses on a king who wanted to gain more power, so he gave up his throne and became a hermit, growing his spiritual power in the jungle and causing chaos. The god Indra wanted to fix this situation so he directed an angel from heaven to go down and break the hermit’s concentration. The hermit and angel had a baby girl together but the hermit abandoned the girl to the birds in the jungle. The angel went back to heaven and did not take the girl with her. In the jungle, another hermit found the girl and rescued her. He took her back to his place and later gave her the name Sakuntalaa which means birds. She grew up to be beautiful, and one day the king Tussayan went to hunt deer in the jungle. He went to pay respect to the hermit, but when he went to the hut

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41 Yuphaun 2005, 49-54.

42 Ibid., 188-195.

43 King Rama VI, 224-6.
where the hermit lived, he found Sakuntalaa instead. They fell in love and had sex in the hut. Before the king left from the hut, he gave Sakuntalaa a ring. The day after that, a rude, uncouth hermit came to the hut asking for the hermit, but the hermit was not home and Sakuntalaa was sick and slept inside. She could not get up to greet the foul-mouthed hermit. The hermit was very upset because he thought that Sakuntalaa did not respect him, so he cast a black magic spell causing her lover the king not to remember her when he saw her again. After the hermit came back to the hut and explained that Sakuntalaa was sick, the ill-mannered hermit was no longer angry at Sakuntalaa and gave her a blessing so that the king would remember her when he saw her ring. When the hermit found out about Sakuntalaa and the king, he sent her out from the jungle to marry the king, but on the way to the palace, Sakuntalaa lost her ring so that when she met with the king again, the king did not recognize her. Later, a fisherman found the ring and gave it to the king, and he finally remembered Sakuntalaa. They lived happily ever after with a son.

_Ngau Paa_ was composed by King Rama V and is a sad story about the indigenous people known as the Ngau; it is historically significant because it is set entirely within indigenous communities, with no ethnic Thai characters. This play reflects a central Thai fascination with the jungles of the south during the expansion of the Thai nation (Siam) from the central region into the south. The story is about an arranged marriage between two indigenous characters, Lamhap and Sompalaa. But another man in the village, Hanao, also loves Lamhap. Lamhap and Hanao planned to escape together on the night of the arranged wedding. They did, and Sompalaa follows them into the jungle.
Sompalaa and Hanao fought with each other and Sompalaa killed Hanao. Later Lamhap found out that her lover was killed. She killed herself to follow her lover. When Sompalaa found out about Lamhap he also killed himself to follow Lamhap. The wedding event became a funeral for three of them.

All the texts that are used with KSPC depict moments of tragedy, painful moments, or intimate emotions when the characters talk to themselves or their loved one. Because the composers who selected the texts did not explain their reasons for their choices and all of them have already passed away, so I can only speculate about their intentions. The case of Ngau Paa is distinct because it is the only text used for KSPC that is not about royalty at all. It may have been chosen for KSPC because it is set in Southern Thailand and KSPC is associated with the south, as I explained above. But mainly, it is literature written by royalty and like the other cases, the excerpt set to music depicts a tragic moment in the story.

*Rachthirach* is also a sad story a prince who was ordered killed by his own father the king due to his lack of respect for the king’s second wife. This story was an old tale from the Ayutthaya period. When King Rama I established the Chakri dynasty in 1782, he ordered poets and other royalty to collect and compose the popular stories of his time. David Wyatt suggests that he “moved the capital across Chaophraya River to Bangkok on the east bank, where the government might be less vulnerable to a Burmese attack from the west,”44 and to avoid political struggles. The story is about the king and his wars. Burmese and Mon kingdoms fought each other constantly for many years. The king of

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44 Wyatt 1984, 145.
Mon, Prayaa Noy had two wives. The first one was royalty and they had a son together named Pho Lao Khen Thaw. The second wife is a commoner who sold things in the market. The first wife, Talamea Thaw, was so upset with her husband for taking a commoner for a second wife that she refused to act as the queen. Prayaa Noy later changed the name to Sriharachathirach, or Rachathirach. When the son grew up and asked his mother why she did not visit his father, Talamea Thaw told her son that the king married a commoner and mixed their blood with hers. The son was also offended. When he went to pay visit to his father, he saw the second wife; the king ordered his son to pay respect to his second wife, but instead of doing so, the son cut off his fingers so that he could not pay respect to her. The king saw that his son had no respect for his decision and decided he should no longer live: he ordered his own son to be put to death. Before the son died, he wished that he would be reincarnated as the son of the Burmese king so that he could fight with his own father in the future. He was then reborn as the son of the Burmese king Muangrai Krayua Chawaa. The king Rachathirach and Muangrai Krayua Chawaa were at war and finally the king Rachathirach won.

Selections for musical performance

The passages that are selected to be sung in musical performance are not about kings’ greatness but rather depict the intimate personal interactions between the king and his loved one; these scenes depict respected ones teaching others how to behave towards the king. The music thus works to deliver a private message that only a few could hear. Most of the texts concern lonely moments or critical moments in life where the king or a
commoner need to make a difficult decision. The emotional reflection is something that the kings would not normally share in public.

The poetic texts in question often use very similar passages to describe related situations, where the change of just a few words signifies a difference in context that would be difficult to appreciate for someone not very familiar with the entire story. For example, in the song *Klon Naree*, with lyrics from Inao, the prince Inao speaks to his lovers in two different situations using almost identical words. In one case he speaks to Chintalaa and the other to Bussabaa. But the passages that are used for song lyrics do not specify to whom he is speaking. The choice highlights how Prince Inao uses the same words to manipulate two women to his advantage.

The following passages are used in the musical compositions *Sakkawaa*, *Seephaa* and *Lakhoon*, all of which are performed by KPSC. These compositions, with these texts, are also performed by other musical ensembles.

ก่อนมาคี่
สามชั้น (ข้าปี้ คำที่ 7-8)

The king smiles and plays with his loved ones
Teasing, moving back and forth with happiness
The face of the woman looks too tried
He wants to sing her a lullaby and put her to sleep
In this passage Prince Inao talks to Princess Bussabaa in a cave after abducting her from her own wedding with another Prince. In another passage he speaks to Princess Chintalaa in another town. Inao sleeps with Bussabaa for days and nights. He is happy, full of joy, laughing and proud of himself, while Princess Bussabaa is a bit tired from lack of sleep. Inao sings her a lullaby to calm her to sleep. He says that Bussabaa is perfect, beautiful like a fine painting: her face is attractive like a full moon without any mark, her eyes are stunning like deer’s eyes, her eyebrows are impeccably curved, and her delicate body is like an angel’s. He wants to be with her forever.

\*\*A mythical character that is half-female and half-bird.\*\*
The following passage from Khun Chaang Khun Phaen describes a situation in which a woman has no right to her own body and has no power in a society dominated by men. The music is called Saarathii which literally means “to drive” or “driver.” This scene takes place at Khun Chaang’s house when Khun Phaen wants to get his wife back after Khun Chaang took her and made her his. Going to Khun Chaang’s house, which is a very large house according to his high social status, Khun Phaen misses Khun Chaang’s bedroom and finds another girl’s bedroom instead. Khun Phaen first thought that the woman in the room was his own wife due to the cleanliness of the room. He discovers it is not his wife but after talking to the girl for a while he has sex with her and gives her some money so she can free herself from Khun Chaang. Here is the poetic passage that becomes sung lyrics accompanied by KSPC: See Appendix 4 track 1

Saarathii
Saam chan

Look, what you said to me
ironically
but deeply, he is very happy
I am sorry that you are alone
Whoever would be your loved one
Will take great care and be with you
I will love you forever
I am not lying and I will not make you sad
Do not tell me that you owe fifteen chang\(^46\).
Even if you owe fifty, I could help you to pay it off.
Because of our merit from the past
That unexpectedly has brought us to meet
Then, he moves close to her
Telling her not to be afraid

He opens his money pouch and calms her down
Do not be mad, and please show mercy to him
Then, Miss Kawkiriya
Turned her face, hiding from him
Protecting herself and not letting him touch her
She knows that he loves her and is sincere

In this passage, Khun Phaen is talking to Kawkiriya, a woman in Khun Chaang’s possession as collateral for a debt. He tells her that he is sympathetic towards her situation and is sorry she has no one to turn to. If he were lucky, he would give her love and make her happy everyday. Her price is 15 chang (a unit of money) but if it is more, Khun Phaen also could help her with that. Khun Phaen gives her money and tells her it is their fate they met that night. She initially holds Khun Phaen at arm’s length, but

\(^{46}\) An old unit of Siamese currency.
not for long; they finally sleep together. After that Khun Phaen asks Kawkiriya where Khun Chaang’s bedroom is located. Kawkiriya tells Khun Phaen and Khun Phaen goes to get his wife from Khun Chaang’s house. Instead, he ends up sleeping with another girl along the way.

In Thai literature, including in *Inao*, it is common to compare a woman to a deer. This excerpt from *Ngau Paa* explains how pretty the girl/deer is:

กาเรียนทอง
สามชั้น
เหลือบเห็นกวางข้าดํา
งามสรรพสะพรั่งดั่งเลขา
งามเงาเปนกิ่งกาญจนา
งามตานิลรัตนรูจี
คอโกงเปนวงราววาด
rูปสะอาดราวนางสําอางคศรี
เหลียวหนามาดูภูมี
งามดั่งนารีชําเลืองอาย

Kaarianthong
Saam chan

Seeing the vividly black deer
So beautiful like a painting
So shiny like gold
With black eyes like jewelry
The neck is pretty like a painting
The body is so clean and newly groomed
Looking right at the king
Beautiful like a shy girl

The king goes hunting in the jungle and finds a golden deer. He explains how beautiful the golden deer is, that it has vividly dark black fur like a painting. The horns are nicely spread and have golden color. The eyes are like black sparkling gemstones. The neck is curved as pretty as painting and looks very clean like a pretty girl who takes care...
of herself. The golden deer look at the king just like when a girl looks at him, with charm in its eyes, seducing him.

Phraamkhaoboot
Saam chan

Please remember what I tell you
You, the one I love the most
Please take care, hand and foot
And do not make him mad
Even when he has many wives
One thousand, ten thousand, do not be jealous
Do not speak badly or fight with anyone
You have to be patient and respectful

Saung chan

You have to be kind to your staff
Do not speak loudly and complain
If anyone does wrong, you have to teach them and hit them softly
If any one does good deeds, you need to reward them as they deserve
Chan diaw

Do not be selfish and only find happiness
When your husband is sick, you should feel bad too
A good wife brings happiness
A bad wife brings bad fortune to the family

When Sakuntalaa is going to leave the hut to be with the king, the hermit who raised her gives her his last thought about how to behave when she becomes one of the king’s wives. He says, please remember that you are the one the king loves. You have to take good care of your beloved husband. Do not do anything that will anger him or cause trouble. Even he has another wife, a thousand, or ten thousand of them, do not be jealous. Do not speak badly to anyone or make anyone mad at you. Only be faithful to your king. You have to care for your servants, do not be so picky or say bad things to them often. If any of your servants behave poorly, you must teach them, and if anyone does a good job, you must award them respectfully. Do not be selfish and search for only happiness. When the king is sad, you need to mourn with him. A good wife will bring only good things and freshness into his house, while the bad wife is no use and brings sin to the family.

These examples are texts that singers perform with KSPC as well as with other ensembles. The common theme of the texts is that they depict intimate moments between king and his lovers, from the king’s perspective. When the king is free from working for others, he has private time to think about his loves and where he finds his happiness and sorrow. These texts represent the thoughts of the king not meant for others to hear, just for his loved one.
Power, literature and nation in KSPC

The musicians and composers of KSPC have chosen texts composed by kings, members of the royal family or royal servants, to link their performances to royal power. The texts most often used for KSPC come from Inao and Khun Chaang Khun Phaen, and a few additional texts are taken from Ngau Paa, Sakuntalaa, and Rachathirat.

Often the KSPC ensemble only plays music without any singing so that all musicians are able to show off their highest skills without having to slowing down to accommodate singing. The focus is on the individual musicians and how they improvise melodies and variations in response to one another on stage, without thinking about the meaning of any texts. However, when performing songs with the royal literature, the ensemble represents both the power of royalty and the musicians themselves. These texts are special to the singers because they sing differently in the KSPC ensemble. It is true that these texts are also sung with other kinds of music ensemble, however, when they are sung with the KSPC ensemble, the singers, mostly male, sing in an especially high register which makes it difficult to shape the melody according to the tones of the Thai language, which is necessary for the text to be comprehensible.

Even though the KSPC ensemble was an innovation created outside of the royal palaces, as I explain in detail in the next chapter, the composers and musicians still chose old texts. These texts are links between the royalty and the musicians, reminding them of the time when musicians, singers, and dancers worked inside of palaces performing for the kings and royal family under their patronage. This patron-client relationship served to direct power and respect towards the king in exchange for a higher social status and
steady employment. Although this patron-client relationship is now directed through governmental institutions, the musicians still imagine their close proximity to royalty and royal power, and so the music and the texts serve to express this idea.
Chapter 3
Instrumentation, Ensemble, and Repertoire

In this chapter I focus on musical instruments, ensembles, repertoires, and the history and foundation of the KSPC ensemble. Identifying musical instruments is important for understanding Thai music culture, as they have clear functions within their ensembles and deep gender connotations.

Thai music ensembles and teachers were supported by private royal palaces until 1911, when many of them moved from royal palaces to work for newly-created government institutions such as the Krom Mahorasoph (ritual and entertainment section for royalty), which later became known as Krom Sinlapakorn (the Fine Arts Department). Some Thai musicians went to work for the Thai military in the music departments of the various branches. But for the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the Krom Sinlapakhorn line because the military music departments no longer maintain KSPC ensembles. The first group of music ensembles in government departments, were directed by Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasub (Plaek Prasaansab) and Phrayaa Sanoeduriyang (Cham Sunthaunwaathin), who had worked closely with Kings Rama V and VI in their palaces before moving to work at the Fine Arts Department. They had many colleagues and students who contributed to the development of Thai music society. For example, the prominent music teachers, musicians, and composers Montri Tramote and Luang Pradit

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1 Myers-Moro 1988, 82-92. She explains the names and titles or bandaasak of Siamese musicians during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They received their names and titles from the kings as a sign of recognition and respect for their musical ability.
Phairau borrowed ideas and also introduced musical instruments from neighboring countries and cultures, such as China and Indonesia, and incorporated them into Thai music culture. They both were music students and colleagues of Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasub (Plaek Prasaansab). Late in the 19th century, a formal practice of combining musical instruments from outside of Thai royal music culture developed, became famous, and was eventually accessible to the public. In addition, Montri Tramote wrote many of the lyrics that accompany songs composed by Phrayaa Prasan Duriyasub.

In Appendix 2, I review the oboes and stringed instruments in detail, as well as some common ensembles in the Thai musical tradition. In this chapter, I present the ensembles that feature oboes such as *pii klaung*, *pii chanai klong chana*, *pii wong*, and *pii muay* which are used to perform ritual music for the king, for martial arts, and for funerals. The other ensemble that I discuss is the *khruangsai* ensemble that includes the stringed instruments *krachappii*, *jakhee*, *sau uu*, *sau duang* and *khim*, and the relationship of each of these musical ensembles to the KSPC ensemble that is the topic of this study.

For context, I will also briefly discuss the other main ensembles that are now commonly performed in Thai music culture such as *piiphaat* and *mahoorii*. I also explain the new musical ensemble called *khruangsai phasom* that was influenced by Western music during the reign of King Rama VI.

I will examine in detail the existing written history of the KSPC ensemble that can be found in royal travel writings. Based on this evidence, I will argue that the ensemble was invented during the reign of King Rama VI period when the King and government were in favor of modernization, in all aspects of culture, including the arts. I will also
attempt to resolve confusion in the written history between KSPC and older ensembles, such as *mahorii booraan*, *mahorii khamen*, and *mahorii khrueang sai*. I end the chapter by describing the modern KSPC ensemble, reviewing its repertoire, and identifying multiple generations of musicians that created and perform it.

**Oboes**

Several kinds of *pii* (oboe) are played in musical ensembles in Thailand, and these ensembles are primarily used for ritual music, funeral, and to accompany dance. Although women are not forbidden to play the *pii*, they never do, and in fact the instrument has strong masculine associations. Depending on its size, various kinds of *pii* are found in the martial arts, royal processions, funerals, and dance drama accompaniment. Many of its iterations strongly evoke the Malay world to the south. Different *pii* are found in particular kinds of ensembles but I am interested in the ways they are viewed as inhabiting different worlds. Ensembles with *pii* are normally accompanied by a pair of drums (*klaung khaek*) that are sometimes played with mallets and sometimes with bare hands, and one pair of brass cymbals (*ching*). Terry Miller writes, “The *pi* is likely one of the oldest of Thai musical instruments, for it is mentioned by name by La Loubere (1691), but *pi* alone can refer to any reed instrument”. At least six kinds of *pii* are identified in Thai musical books by both Thai musicians and music scholars. However, Uthid Naksawat wrote in 1970 that “there are about 10 kinds of Pi

2 Miller 1998, 236.
available in Thai music. The most important class includes Pi Nâwk, Pi Klang Pi Nai and Pi Nawk Tâm. Besides these, a few more kinds are also available such as Pi-Âw, Pi-Saw, Pi-Chanai, Pi-Chàwa and Pi-Mon.”

*Pii* instruments in Thai music culture have many variations, and have become associated with particular ensembles and contexts. *Pii* come in a variety of sizes, with different tonic pitches (the lowest playable pitch on the instrument), and this pitch is the primary reason why certain instruments are used in each ensemble that includes *pii*, and defines the tonic pitch for that ensemble. The *pîi* has a double or quadruple reed and the body is made of carved wood, both in one or two pieces. Pitch is controlled by changing the pressure of the wind, and by fingering positions. A metal sleeve covers one end of the reeds and is tied with thread and securely placed into the upper end of the wooden oboe. When blown, the mouth covers the entire reed and part of the metal sleeve, but the lips do not touch the top of wooden body. Some *pîi* have one wooden body and some have two separate, detachable parts.

The *pîi* with one part has a double reed and is normally seen in three sizes from large to small: *pîi nai* (inner *pîi*), *pîi klaang* (middle *pîi*), *pîi nauk* (outer *pîi*).

*Pîi nai* (inner *pîi*) has tonic G⁵, and is normally included in the *piiphaat* ensemble, which performs inside the palace and accompanies the masked dance theater (*khon*). *Pü*

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4 Uthit, 5.

5 The Thai pitch “saun” (“so” in the solfège). The Thai seven-tone solfège system is transposed in different ensembles. The pitches I refer to here are for the *piiphaat* ensemble.
klaang (middle pii), has tonic A, and is used for the shadow puppet theater (nang yai). And pii nauk (outer pii) has tonic C, and is used for dance-drama (lakhaun) performance, outside of the palace. The terms nai (inner) and nauk (outer) refer both to the location, relative to the palace, where the instruments are used, as well as to how close the tonic pitch of the instrument is to the Thai pitch phiang au (the tenth gong of the Thai gong cycle khaung wong yai). I will discuss the Thai concept of pitch organization later in this chapter.

The other kinds of pii have a quadruple reed, and the body is in two separate parts made of wood and some with metal, or sometimes ivory or bone. There are four: pii chawaa and pii nee, that have the same construction and differ only in size, and were formerly used for military processions; pii chanai, and pii maun. At present, pii chawaa is used to accompany Thai martial arts, funerals, and to accompany theater when performing episodes from the Inao story. Pii chanai was formerly used in royal processions, such as on the royal barge when the king travelled from his palace by river. Pii maun is of ethnic Maun (Mon) origin, and in Thailand is performed at funerals. From here on, I focus on the pii chawaa, which is the one oboe in the ensemble that is the focus of this dissertation.

Pii chawaa is the smallest oboe in Thai music culture and produces the highest range of pitch. It has a conical wooden tube, with seven upper and one lower hole for fingering. It has a wooden disc on the tube between the quadruple reed and the body for the player to apply pressure with their lips. This instrument is associated with the drums klaung khaek (Indian influences) formerly used in royal palace and in military processions, it

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6 Frequently also written jawa or java.
is now heard primarily as accompaniment to martial arts, in certain funeral ensembles and for accompanying episodes from Inao story in lakhaun dance drama.\(^7\)

The \textit{pii chawaa} is used in multiple ensembles and sometimes as a solo melodic musical instrument accompanied by cyclic rhythmic patterns played by drums and brass cymbals (\textit{ching}). As I discussed in chapter 2, the \textit{pii chawaa} is associated with the Malay world, and this will be seen in the ensembles discussed below. The most common musical ensembles that include \textit{pii chawaa} are \textit{pii klaung}, \textit{bua laui}, \textit{pii chanai klaung chana}, and \textit{pii muay}.

\textbf{Ensembles with \textit{pii}}

\textit{Pii klaung}

The \textit{pii klaung} (‘oboe and drum’) ensemble includes one \textit{pii chawaa}, two two-headed drums (\textit{klaung khaek}), and one \textit{ching}. In the past, sometimes one \textit{khaung} (a small gong struck with a hand-sized wooden stick) was used instead of \textit{ching} to accompany this ensemble.

Most of the time this ensemble plays for auspicious rituals that do not relate to death, such as those pertaining to religion or the king’s activities. It was formerly used also for royal and military processions. The knowledge about this musical ensemble and repertoires are limited to a few musicians and music scholars who work with the Fine Art Department in Bangkok, because this ensemble is used only for very special events that are closely related to royalty and the prosperity of the kingdom. The ensemble is still used for the royal barge procession today.

\(^7\) Miller 1998, 235.
During the reign of King Brommakote, in the Ayutthaya period, *pii klaung* was part of the Thai tradition and used to accompany the *Inao Krit* dance. This dance depicts sword fighting, and this music is still used to accompany this dance today.

This *pii klaung* ensemble also appears in funeral ceremonies, where it is called the *bua laui* (‘floating lotus’) ensemble. This name refers to the musical composition *Phleeng Bua Laui* that this ensemble performs during funerals. The *bua laui* ensemble includes one *pii chawaa*, one or two pairs of drums, played with one mallet and one bare hand, and a small tuned gong called *khaung mong*, or *khaung meng*, that keeps a steady beat. The musicians in this ensemble typically sit on the floor or on a mid-level platform near the coffin or crematorium to perform. This ensemble is used in funerals for ordinary people, especially musicians and those who are not members of the royal family.

The use of the *pii klaung* ensemble in funerals was in evidence during my fieldwork in 2012. During my fieldwork in Thailand, I was at the Sanaam Luang in Bangkok during the Royal Cremation of Her Royal Highness Princess Bejaratana, that lasted from April 8-12, 2012. On April 9, the royal urn was moved from the Dusit Maha Prasat Throne Hall to the Royal Crematorium at Sanaam Luang for the symbolic royal cremation in the afternoon, which was open to the public, and the actual royal cremation took place at night. I saw the full-dress procession rehearsal for the royal cremation which included a group of musicians playing *pii chanai klaung chan* accompanying the royal carriages and palanquins in the royal parade. Most of those same musicians also performed on November 15, 2008, for a Royal Cremation of Her Royal Highness Princess Galayani Vadhana that also took place at Sanaam Luang. They told me that
several kinds of musical ensembles performed including the Royal Thai Army’s marching band, *trae-sang*, *phiiphaat*, *piiphaat nanghong*, *pii chanai klaung chana*, and *bua laui*. I later confirmed the ensembles and repertoire in the official funeral book published by the Fine Arts Department. The royal barge procession is another context where the *pii klaung* ensemble is directly connected to royal authority. In 2012, I interviewed via Facebook two musicians from the Fine Arts Music Department, Thapanut Thumtheing and Apichi Ponglerlert, about the music that they performed on a boat for the royal barge procession. They told me that they were two *pii klaung* ensembles performing music on two royal barges, and that all the performers were from the Fine Arts Department. The *pii* they used were *pii chawaa* and the drums were *klaung khaek*.

Figure 3. A *pii klaung* ensemble performing music on a royal barge, with, from left to right, Yuthanaa Chidthuam, Thapanut Thumtheing, Apichai Pongluekert and Jatupaun Damnin. (Photograph by Thapanut Thumtheing, used by permission)

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8 Krom Silapakorn, 2008.
They performed for many hours as the royal barge travelled from the Royal Navy to Wat Arun temple, across the Chao Phraya River. They played Saramaa, Yoon and Phaeng for the royal barge procession, and this is the same repertoire they play with KSPC, as I will discuss later in the chapter.

Bua laui⁹

Figure 4. Bua laui ensemble performing at a funeral, with pii chawoa played by Somnuk Seang-Arun.

⁹ Also often spelled bua loi.
In his Master’s thesis on *bua laui*, the *pii* player Chaivudh Goson addressed that the *bua laui* repertoire used in the funeral is similar to that of another oboe and drum ensemble in the south of Thailand called *kaalau* where music acts as a link between the spiritual realm and human realm. The sound of music helps to bring the soul of the dead up to heaven. The two-headed drums for *bua laui* are called *klaung malaayu*, a name that refers to their origin in the Malay world. The *klaung malaayu* are shorter and wider than *klaung khaek*, and played with a mallet in the right hand and the bare hand on the left. The related ensemble *pii klaung malaayu* (sometimes also called *pii chanai klaung chana*) is used for parades related to the king and royal family, such as parades in front of a royal coffin from the Royal Palace to Sanaam Luang for a public cremation. The parade ensemble includes multiple *pii chawaa* and *klaung malaayu* drums. When for a royal funeral, the number of drums and *pii* relate to the royal rank of the deceased.

I witnessed performances by the *bua laui* ensemble many times while in Thailand. In 2012, I recorded three *bua laui* performances by musicians from the Fine Arts Department, with the * pii chawaa* played by Peep Khonglaythong accompanied by two *klaung khaek*, that were played with one mallet as a substitute for *klaung malaayu*, *khaung meng* and *ching*. These three funerals were for well-known musicians who had worked at the Fine Arts Department in the past. The musicians sat closely to the coffin or sometimes on a small stage near the *meru* (crematorium). Before starting, the musicians prayed for the musical instruments with candles, incense, rum, and flowers placed on a plate. The music began when people walked up to the *meru* to place paper flowers and say goodbye to the

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10 Chaivudh, 28.
deceased. Deborah Wong has written about three different ensembles that perform for funerals in Bangkok, including the bua laui ensemble.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Pii chanai klaung chana}

The \textit{pii chanai} is very similar to the \textit{pii chawaa} except smaller. When played it is accompanied by \textit{klaung malaayu} and \textit{ching}. I have seen this ensemble used to lead parades in community festivals, and by royal musicians for a procession by the King. The only other evidence for this ensemble that I have found comes from scholar Sujit Wongthet. He traveled with a group of scholars to Sri Lanka in 1986. There he saw a kind of musical ensemble that is very similar to the \textit{pii chanai klaung chana} ensemble in central Thailand. He claims that both the Sri Lankan ensemble is used to perform for Buddha relics at temples and to accompany monks to and from the temple. The musical ensemble includes one \textit{pii chanai}, two two-headed drums, one small drum and one \textit{ching}. The name he gives for this ensemble is \textit{mangkhala pherii}, which literally means five kinds of instruments. He argues that the \textit{kaalau} ensemble in Southern Thailand and the \textit{mangkhala} ensemble in Sukothai and Phitsanulok provinces, in central Thailand, are the same ensemble.\textsuperscript{12} This ensemble may therefore represent the influence of Southern Thai musical culture, associated in particular with religion and royal institutions and having South Asian origins, on central Thailand.

\textsuperscript{11} Wong 1998, 112-113.

\textsuperscript{12} Sujit, 56-59.
Pii muay

The * pii muay* (‘fighting oboe’) an ensemble used to accompany Thai martial arts (kickboxing, and staff fighting and sword fighting) in performance and in competition. The ensemble consists of one * pii chawaa*, a pair of two-headed drums (* klaung klaek*), and * ching*. The ensemble plays to sonically mark clock time for the fighters and track the intensity of the fighting, and to motivate the fighters. They use just two or three drum patterns with improvised variations. In this context, the * pii chawaa* has much freedom to improvise and the drums follow accordingly. The most common composed repertoire for this ensemble are: *Chert*, a composition which is also used to invite and accompany the arrival of the angels (*thewadaa*) during the preparatory *wai khruu* ritual; *Yoon*, used in the music theater to signify preparation for fighting; and *Plaeng*, which is unique * pii klaung*.

Before fighting the fighters prepare themselves physically and mentally through a ritual dance, called *wai khruu*. They worship their teacher who taught them how to fight and they also worship the spirits that protect them from harm. The * pii klaung* ensemble also accompanies the *wai khruu* dance performed by the fighters before combat can begin.
On February 2, 2012, I went to the famous boxing venue of Rachadumnern stadium to observe Thai kickboxing, and the *pii muay* ensemble that accompanies the fighting. There were four musicians in the ensemble. One played *pii chawaa*, two played *klaung khaek* and the other one played *ching*. They were very busy with their music and could not talk to me. Anytime I tried to speak to them, they had to start playing. They started out by playing *wai khruu* to accompany the boxers as they came on stage. After that, the musicians would play three more minutes and then rest two minutes for each of the five rounds of fighting. I was focused on the *pii* and drum players and did not pay much attention to the boxers. I returned a week later and saw the same group of

Figure 5. *Pii muay* ensemble at Rachadumnern stadium, with *pii chawaa* played by Manat Wongbunphat.
musicians. I talked to the piï player very briefly and asked permission to take their pictures and record some video while they were performing. The piï player smiled and said yes. Before midnight, I talked to the piï player again and said that I would like to come back and interview him. He said, “Yes, come back next week a half an hour before the boxing starts.” A week later I interviewed the piï chawaa player, Manat Wongbunphat, who is a 65 year old native Bangkok resident. He can play all kinds of piï including the piï maun and piï nai, and he plays piï in other ensembles for weddings and other events in Bangkok. However, he did not play Saramaa, the primary composition for piï chawaa and klaung khaek, due to the limited duration of each round of boxing. As for repertoire, he only plays Yoon for wai khruu, plays Khaek Jao Sen for fighting, and plays Chert for the finale one minute of each round to let the boxer know that they have one minute left before it ends. Manat told me that he has no other specific repertoire for kickboxing and that he could play whatever he feels like. Sometimes, the drum players would play with him. But sometimes, when they get excited about the boxing, they would play very fast rhythms, and the musicians watch the boxers intensely. This building intensity also signals to the audience to place their bets before time runs out, because gambling is a major activity in the stadium. The music is played only to accompany Thai kickboxing, when fighters of other styles came on stage, the musicians did not play. Manat said that when there was muay saakon (international kickboxing) the music would not apply there. I was not able to interview the two drum players. No one else sat alongside the musicians; others avoided the loud sound of the music. Although I asked about KSPC, Manat had not even heard of the ensemble even though he plays some of the same repertoire. This piï chawaa player
works as a professional musician among common people and boxers at the Rachadumrnern stadium, plays a similar repertoire to that of the pìi klaung ensemble, but had no knowledge of the KSPC ensemble. This is further evidence that the KSPC ensemble is very limited and exclusive, not in its participants and audience, but it also kept almost as a secret among the royally-connected musical community.

Pií chatrii

The pií chatrii ensemble is used in South and Central Thailand to accompany dances that originate from the south, known as nooraa and chatrii, or sat chatrii, as well as the southern theatrical genre lakhaun chatrii. The ensemble consists of one pií chawaa or pií nauk, two klaung thuk (small drums played with sticks), two gongs in a wooden box, and one ching. The song that normally accompanies the sat chatrii dance is fast and has melodic phrases separated by rhythmic passages. The dancers show off their ability to move quickly which causes their ornamented costume to look more like a flying bird. In the center, for theatrical performances of Inao, only pií chawaa is used, not pií nauk.

Pií wong

The pií wong (‘oboe ensemble’) is an ensemble that includes many pií chawaa, one Western snare drum and one bass drum. It was used for military parades in the past and it had disappeared for many years before Somnuk Seang-Arun rebuilt the ensemble based on a description from his music teacher, Master Tawee Taipayuk at the Music School, Thai Royal Army. He has a strong background in both Western and Thai music
and he studied with many pii masters as well as clarinet. He also studied at the music school of the Royal Army Music Division before getting his degree in music education at Chulalongkorn University. He is a member of several well-known Thai music ensembles and a founder of the Joongkrabeen and the Sabai ensembles.

On May 1, 2013, this reconstructed ensemble debuted on stage in Bangkok and on Thai television. I interviewed Somnuk and he told me that he hoped to use this ensemble for parades at the national level, such as for military and national and international sports events. Most of the musicians who performed that day were his own music students from multiple institutions, and some were musicians from the Royal Army Music Division where Somnuk works as a music teacher and professional musician. The repertoire they performed was mainly arrangements of older Thai compositions for Western marching band by Phra Chen Duriyang. Somnuk advocates for more music for this newly reconstructed ensemble. He wants people to know how the pii has been used in the past, and how the pii could be used more widely in the present. Most importantly, he wants the pii to regain its place in the military along with the Western musical ensemble that are presently used in the militaries.

I have reviewed the various kinds of pii ensembles to show how the instruments are used in the Thai tradition, and most importantly because the pii chawaa leads the KSPC ensemble and evokes the playing associated with all of these kinds of ensembles. The pii klaung ensemble, which is part of KSPC, is not only associated with the royalty and with ritual, it also performs entertainment music for dance and sport as well. The other ensemble that is combined with the pii klaung ensemble to become the KSPC is the
khruangsai ensemble, which also has a long history in Thai music society. I note also that oboe and drums are performed almost exclusively by men, which may be due to their close association with male-dominated activities including martial arts and royal rituals. In contrast, female musicians are much more commonly associated with the khruangsai instruments that make up the other constituent of the KSPC ensemble.

**The khruangsai ensemble**

The khruangsai piid chawaa ensemble is based upon the older khruangsai ensemble, which is still one of the most common ensembles in Thailand today. The name khruangsai refers to the stringed (sai) instruments (khruang) that are the main instruments in the ensemble. The ensemble also includes percussion instruments such as thoon-rammanaa (drums) and ching, and another kind of melodic instrument, the khlui (flute). The khruangsai ensemble is not normally used for ritual music but rather for entertainment inside the royal palace, and in more intimate settings due to the quieter sound of the ensemble. There are three kinds of strings instruments, according to the Thai classification based on the playing techniques of plucking, strumming, and bowing, and all are used in the khruangsai ensemble.

A key part of my argument is that khruangsai ensembles have long been sites for innovation, experimentation, and recombination in central Thai music, especially in court contexts. Whereas the piiphaat ensemble, which is usually performed by male musicians, commands a (mostly) stable ritual repertoire, secular ensembles featuring stringed instruments have been consistently reinvented over at least the last three hundred
years, often featuring imported ‘foreign’ stringed instruments that quickly became standard in Thai practice. I argue that the KSPC ensemble is neither particularly old nor unusual when seen in this context.

The early history of the khruangsai ensemble can only be a matter of speculation. An anonymous 18th-century missionary account mentions that “various stringed instruments” accompanied Chinese theater street performances in Siam. By the end of the 19th-century, the khruangsai ensemble was evidently important enough to be chosen by the Thais for inclusion in the 1885 Inventions Exhibitions in London. The instruments used included khluí (flutes), fiddles, “alligators” (jakhee zither), thoon, rammana and ching.

The instruments of the modern khruangsai (‘stringed instruments’) ensemble include two kinds of bowed fiddles, sau uu and sau duang, one plucked instrument, jakhee, one or two kinds of flutes, khluí phiang au and/or the smaller khluí lip, and percussion, thoon rammanaa and ching. Two other stringed instruments, sau saam sai and krachappii are not included in the khruangsai ensemble but are included in another kind of ensemble call khatpai or mahoori boraan which I will discuss in a later section on mahoori. The hammer dulcimer khim is known as a “foreign” instrument and is specifically identified as an additional instrument when included in a standard ensemble. The khruangsai ensemble is commonly used to accompany weddings and indoor events, because it sounds more softly than other ensembles.

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13 Miller and Chonpairot, 37-39.

14 Ibid., 47.
Basic principles of Thai music and KSPC

Compositions are created to fit with in a regular naathap (rhythmic cycle) that organizes the melody. All the melodic instruments play simultaneous variations (thaang) of one central skeletal melody. These variations are mostly composed, except in selected cases where musicians can improvise their variations. The wind instrument included in the piiphaat ensemble is chosen based on the emotion of the composition, and will require musicians to transpose their variations accordingly. Special repertoire, including that played by KSPC, often requires unusual rhythmic cycles or irregular rhythmic parts that are not cyclic.

Within an ensemble, each musical instrument functions as a member of the family and performs within a hierarchy. A basic idea in Thai music is that the ensemble is divided into two groups, a leading and following group. In the khrueangsai ensemble, for example, the sau duang acts as the leaders of the ensemble while the sau uu is a follower, and the jahkee play the skeletal melody with some ornamentation.

The khaung wong yai in the piiphaat ensemble plays the main melody, which is like a skeleton of the composition, and is commonly seen as the father of the musical family because it plays the main melody that all other instruments need to play with. The ranaat ek is plays a variation with extensive ornamentation of the main melody and leads the ensemble and plays in the leading group, while the ranaat thum plays a syncopated variation that teases the ranaat ek, and plays in the following group.

Musical instruments have gender connotations that are understood to be due to the sound of each instrument itself and the character of sound that instruments are
produced in the past. Even though today both males and females are able to play almost any of the musical instruments, some musicians believe there is a gender for musical instruments. Most broadly, men play piiphaat instruments and women play khrueangsai instruments. The gender of instruments is expressed through their style. For example, the sau saam sai sounds like a weeping female and produces a lonely sound that normally accompanies singing. It is common for this instrument not to be played fast, but in a slow and sophisticated way. On the other hand, the piiphaat instruments, mostly played by male musicians, can play both slow and fast styles.

In the case of the pair of drums klaung khaek, there is one male drum and one female drum. The one that smaller in size and higher in pitch is the male. The male drum is held horizontally in the lap by one player, and the female drum is held diagonally rested on one raised knee by the other. The parts for the drums intertwine together, so both drum players are required to know both parts, male and female. Drums are played by men.

Most pii players are male. I have seen only a few female musicians who play pii, and still their music teachers are male pii players. Pamela Myers-Moro mentions that according to her key informant, Pichit Chaiseree, males and females have different sitting positions. For men, the sitting position is called khatsamaathi (crossing their legs in the front of their body) and women’s sitting position is calls phap phiap (folding their legs together to one side). When the male musician play stringed instrument she writes, “in ancient times only women played the kinds of ensemble which use stringed, and naturally they sat phap phiap. During the era of Rama IV (1910-25), men began to play stringed instruments as
well, but they too sat phap phiap. For a long time before King Rama IV, mahorii and khreuangsai ensembles were commonly played by females, but when King Rama IV allowed commoners to have their own female dance troupes outside of the palace, more males started playing stringed instruments. Also more females liked to learn to become dancers rather than musicians due to the response that audiences gave for female dancers.

**History of mahorii and khreuangsai ensembles**

The stringed instruments are also grouped into an ensemble called mahorii boraan (‘ancient mahorii’), also known as the khabmai ensemble. It consists of just one musician who plays sau sam sai and another playing percussion, to accompany a singer. This ensemble later developed into mahorii khreuangsai which is a combination of one krachappii, one sau saam sai, one khlui phiang au, thoon, rammanaa and ching. This ensemble is used for entertainment inside the palace, to perform lullabies for the royalty and for the royal elephants. This unique ensemble is used for special occasions that relate to royalty much more so than the other khreuangsai ensemble. Today, this ensemble performs outside of the palace as well.

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16 Damrong, 7.
17 Elephants are highly respected in Thailand and used in royal processions. Royal elephants are kept inside the palace grounds and have special servants assigned to take care of them. (Pongsil 2010, 24)
Many Thai music scholars\(^\text{18}\) have claimed that individual stringed instruments appeared in Thai (Siamese) music culture during the Ayutthaya period. The evidence they cite for the existence of individual stringed instruments is from stone carvings and inscriptions. No evidence shows that stringed instruments were combined into ensembles during the Ayutthaya period. According to Damrong Rajanuphap in his 1928 historical study of instruments, *Prawat Khreuang Mahoorii*, during the Ayutthaya period there was a *khatpmai* ensemble and a *banleeng phin*, both of which featured one musician playing a single stringed instrument while singing, accompanied by percussion and performed mostly outside of the palace for common people. Both plucked and bowed instruments were called *mahoorii* and were played by males only. Later, still during the Ayutthaya period, as the music became more popular, the royalty created ensembles with female musicians inside the palace.\(^\text{19}\) He also states that since this female *mahoorii* ensemble was created and became very popular among the aristocracy during the Ayutthaya period, it was represented in stone carvings and inscriptions. Those carvings also show that the ensemble added two more musical instruments, *rammanna* and *khlui*.\(^\text{20}\) This ensemble continued to include more musical instruments, and by the early Rattanakosin period this ensemble was combined with *piiphaat* to create *mahoorii khrueang yai*.\(^\text{21}\) In the early Rattanakosin period, there were more new ensembles and many new compositions for


\(^{19}\) Damrong, 5.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 6.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 8.
these ensembles were created. This creativity was motivated by competitions between different palaces that each sponsored their own musicians.

Musical instruments that were added into the *mahoorii* ensemble were made in a smaller size for female musicians. Before King Rama V, it was normal that the *mahoorii* ensemble was played by females and *piiphaat* ensemble played by males. During King Rama V, as common people were allowed to form theater groups, more women became dancers and men played *mahoorii*. At that time, the instrumentation of the *mahoorii* ensemble changed to include *sau uu*, *sau duang*, and *jakhee*, and exclude *krachappi* and *sau saam sai*, and this ensemble was called *mahoorii khrueangsai*.23

Montri Tramote traced the origin of the *khrueangsai* ensemble to the King Rama VI period.24 The string ensemble that was standardized by musicians at the Fine Arts Department in Bangkok included one *jakhee*, one *sau uu*, one *sau duang*, one *khlui phiang au*, one *khlui lip*, *thoon-rammanaa* and *ching*. A double ensemble featured one *jakhee*, two *sau uu*, two *sau duang*, one *khlui phiang au*, one *khlui lip*, *thoon-rammanaa* and *ching*. The ensemble with *krachappi*, and *sau saam sai* then became known as *mahoorii booraan* or *mahoorii luang*, i.e., ‘the ancient *mahoorii*’ or ‘the royal *mahoorii*’.

**Wong khrueangsai phasom (mixed string ensemble)**

King Rama VI was in favor of modernizing the country to the standard of Westerners. He helped create the Fine Arts Department and developed many art forms of

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22 Ibid., 8.

23 Ibid.

24 Montri 1956, 8-9.
music and theater. A remarkable new ensemble was created during his time, in which one Western or other non-Thai musical instrument would be included into the Thai string music ensemble. The newly included instrument plays as just another member of the ensemble, but its part included stylistic features appropriate to the instrument, such as chords on the piano. The non-Thai instruments included *khim* (hammer dulcimer), pump organ, piano, accordion, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, violin, guitar. This new ensemble was called *wong khruangsai phasom* _–_ where the name of non-Thai instrument would be inserted into the blank. The term *phasom* here means ‘combined with’ or ‘mixed’._25_

In her 1997 Master’s thesis, *Thai String and Organ Ensemble: A case study of Vajarabanleng*, Kvintip Buyaikit wrote that only the string ensemble (*wong khruang sai*) mixes easily with foreign musical instruments._26_ The first mixed ensemble was *khruang sai phasom piano*. The first piano in Thailand was shipped to the country during King Rama V for one of his wives, Daaraaratsamee. Thai musicians both inside the palace and in the military easily accepted the piano. The first Thai string ensemble mixed with piano was recorded during the King Rama V period. During the King Rama VI, there was another well-known Thai piano player, Sudcharidsudaa, one of King Rama VI’s wives. She had her own ensemble at her palace and trained three other Thai musicians to play piano there. She studied with Thai musicians from the Fine Arts Department and learned from a Western Music teacher. The *khruangsai phasom piano* ensemble that she created was named *Naaree Sriisumid*. In 1927-29, this ensemble performed and achieved commercial

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_26_ Kvintip, 10.
success with recording. The repertoire that this ensemble performed was the suite *Wiwaa Phasamoot* (‘wedding suite’). Several other string ensembles mixed with piano were also recorded during the reigns of King Rama VI and VII.

The second well-known mixed ensemble was *khrueang* *phasom sau farang* (‘string instrument mix with foreign fiddle’, which refers to the violin). This ensemble appeared during the reign of King Rama V. Most of the repertoire and lyrics performed by this ensemble came from the *Inao* and *Phraalau* stories. This ensemble was also recorded.

The third mixed ensemble included the *khim*. The *khim* has a long history in Thai music culture: it was first brought to the country by the Chinese, to accompany Chinese opera, and was found in the royal court sometime before King Rama IV. In 1924, when King Rama V was sick, Montri Tramote brought a *khim* along with other string instruments and performed for him in his Phayaathai palace. King Rama V liked the sound of the ensemble, so it became famous outside of the palace as well. This mixed ensemble performed for radio stations and was featured in many recordings. Most of the songs that these ensembles performed were Thai compositions, often with a Chinese ‘accent’ (Thai versions of Chinese-style compositions).

The pump organ was brought to Thailand during the reign of King Rama III by missionaries for the purpose of Catholic worship, but was not well known among Thai musicians. The first mix of Thai stringed instruments and organ happened also during

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27 Ibid., 39-41.

28 Ibid., 106-119.

29 Ibid., 41-2.

30 Chin and Likit, 133-4.
the reign of King Rama VI. When silent movies were introduced into Thailand during this reign, this mixed music ensemble performed between scenes in the theater. Later, the pump organ was modified to sound in a lower register to better complement the ranges of the khrueangsaï instruments. Also, the sau duang was replaced by violin because the range of the sau duang was too close to that of the organ. This is one of the only cases where more than one foreign instrument was included in the khrueangsaï ensemble, although one of them specifically replaced one of the Thai instruments. The sau uu and other stringed instruments from the Thai string ensemble still appeared in this ensemble.

Another musical instrument used was accordion, which could be retuned into Thai tuning, and these were mixed with khrueangsaï during the reign of King Rama V. Kvintip Banyaïkit documents a khrueangsaï ensemble played by commoners combining accordion and violin, which also included the sau duang and is therefore one of the few mixed ensembles to include multiple foreign instruments in addition to the complete khrueangsaï instrumentation. The ensemble performed in movie theaters between scenes. It was popular for five years and then declined when movies with sound were introduced into the country in 1929. Since then, the ensemble has been performed only rarely.

It was not only Western instruments that were combined with khrueangsaï to create new ensembles. Other Thai musical instruments are also used, for example, there is khrueangsaï mixed with sau saam sai (three-stringed fiddle), khrueangsaï mixed with ranaat (xylophone), and khrueangsaï mixed with khim (hammer dulcimer).

31 Kvintip, 43-44.
32 Ibid., 62.
Through the *khrueangsaï phasom* ensembles, Thai musicians developed a custom for the inclusion of foreign instruments into the Thai ensemble tradition. Generally, the *khrueangsaï* instruments maintained their traditional Thai tuning even when side by side with non-Thai instruments. The aesthetics of inclusion were more focused on the appearance, rather than the sound of the foreign instruments or tunings, and some Western instruments that were included in the *khrueangsaï* ensemble were adapted to Thai tuning instead of keeping their original Western tuning. The *khrueangsaï phasom* ensembles still play the same repertoire that the *khrueangsaï* ensemble usually plays, which shows that *phasom* represents the incorporation of foreign instruments into a Thai tradition rather than a self-consciously hybrid tradition. In some cases, there were new compositions written for a few *khrueangsaï phasom* ensembles, but they were very similar to the usual *khrueangsaï* repertoire. Furthermore, foreign musical instruments in *khrueangsaï phasom* ensembles were not treated as soloist or given virtuoso styles of performance, which is unsurprising given that the musicians and leaders of the *phasom* ensembles who played these foreign instruments and sometimes wrote new compositions for mixed ensembles were still Thai whose background was mostly within the Thai musical tradition. Foreign instruments served only to accompany or to fit unobtrusively into the *khrueangsaï* ensemble texture as much as possible, by playing in unison or adding just a few chords in the case of instruments such as pump organ or piano. Even newly composed repertoire did not introduce musical elements idiomatic to the foreign instruments’ capabilities at all. Put simply, the introduction of foreign instruments into the Thai tradition did not build a new identity for the *khrueangsaï* ensemble. Instead, the inclusion of foreign instruments served
as a kind of ornamentation or enhancement to the *khruueangsaī* ensemble, symbolizing an elevation of the ensemble into modernity.

*Khrueangsaī pii chawaa* (KSPC)

![Image](image.jpg)

Figure 6. *Khrueangsaī pii chawaa* ensemble performing at the Thai National Theatre.

It is now possible to introduce the ensemble that is the subject of this dissertation, the *khrueangsaī pii chawaa* (KSPC) ensemble. KSPC is constituted similarly to a *khrueangsaī phasom* ensemble, but as I will show, it has developed into a unique tradition of much greater political significance. It is essentially a combination of *khrueangsaī* with the *pii klaung* ensemble, which, as discussed above, has been closely associated with royal power, military procession, combat, and funerals since the Ayuthaya period. Although the first generation of teachers included males and females, most of the musicians who participate in KSPC after the first generation have been male. Several musicians whom I interviewed told me that they felt that gender is not a factor in determining who can
learn and KSPC, only skill is. But in fact access to the ensemble has been limited only to a few hand-picked students, and those have overwhelmingly male. This may be in part due to the speed, aggressiveness and virtuosity of the performance style, and the perception that women are less capable of this kind of playing. In addition, the pii klaung musicians lead the KSPC ensemble and are closely associated with royal rituals and martial arts, both of which are traditionally male domains. In practice, male authority exterts strong controls over access to KSPC.

The repertoire for the ensemble is closely associated with the Inao story, and in particular the version composed by King Rama II. Evidence suggests that this ensemble was created during the reign of King Rama VI, corresponding to about the same time that the version of Inao composed by King Rama II received a prize from The Thai Association for Literature, for the best literature for drama and theatre in 1916.33

The king’s power in real life and as represented in the Inao story is presented when KSPC is performed. The ensemble is a place for two identifiable musical ensembles to join together, but the pii klaung ensemble represents the power of royalty and functions as the leader of the KSPC ensemble. The khrueangsai component of KSPC represents the common people. I will argue that, because the khrueangsai instruments must be retuned in order to play with the pii klaung ensemble, the KSPC ensemble symbolizes people changing their identity under royal authority, in the context of an emerging Thai nation.

The KSPC ensemble is a combination of two ensembles: pii chawaa klaung khaek and khrueangsai. The ensemble therefore consists of pii chawaa (‘Javanese oboe’), one jakhee

33Saan Prasoet, 8.
(three-stringed zither), one sau uu (two-stringed coconut body fiddle), one sau duang (two-stringed snakeskin fiddle), one khlai lip (vertical block flute), one klaung khaek (pair of two-headed drums) or sometimes one thoon-rammana (the drums typically used with khrueang sai), one pair of ching (small brass cymbals).

Although KSPC is a khrueang sai ensemble mixed with pii chawaa klaung khaek, there are many ways in which is distinct from the khrueang sai phasom tradition. It is worth noting that the name of this ensemble in the Thai tradition specifically does not use the term phasom. The implication is that one instrument is not incorporated into an existing and unchanged tradition, but rather two sets of instruments are combined and given equal symbolic musical authority. The KSPC ensemble repertoire is very strictly defined, from the typical overtures performed to typical ending songs. KSPC performs with a distinct musical character, including playing very fast with virtuoso variations for each musical instrument. Also, as I describe in detail later in the chapter, many of the instruments are retuned to better suit the pii chawaa. The pii chawaa klaung khaek ensemble retains the specific repertoire of drum patterns and pii chawaa melodies called Saramaa, where drums and pii chawaa play in intertwined, complex, and partly improvised patterns. This repertoire is performed by the KSPC ensemble after an overture. Also unlike khrueang sai and khrueang sai phasom, only a very few musicians participate in this ensemble because of the high level of technique required. Finally, the contexts in which KSPC have been performed are very limited, inside and especially outside of the palace. In fact, my research shows that this ensemble has been almost like a closely-guarded secret,
understood only by those few musicians who have been directly taught and authorized to perform it.

A large proportion of the KSPC musicians are men who have obtained permission from master teachers to perform. As I will discuss in the next chapter, all studied directly with the teachers who were the founders of KSPC situated in the Fine Arts Department since the reign of King Rama VI. Although this ensemble can play the same musical preludes that are used in theater forms, they are performed with the most elaborate, rapid and difficult variations of any ensemble. As a result, KSPC is very highly regarded, but rarely performed among Thai musicians. To perform KSPC, musicians not only have to learn the repertoire in multiple melodic modes, they must be able to memorize and create multiple new melodic variations of each song to suit their particular instrument, called *thaang* (idiomatic instrumental style); most importantly, they must do this and still be able to fit their parts together as a group. Songs provide opportunities for each performer to show off their skill, but in order to play ‘politely’ and symbolically pay respect to one another, musicians should not do this the whole time. Learning and practicing the same song together is necessary in order to achieve a balance of ensemble collaboration and individual display. However, challenging one another with creative *thaang* is customary for highly skilled musicians because they trust that the other musicians will be able to respond in turn. Sometimes, when musicians have to perform with someone of less skill or someone they do not know well, they tend to hold back on their *thaang* because they do not want to make musicians uncomfortable or cause them to get lost.
The musicians perform with intensity when on stage but are relaxed when they finish. After each performance that I attended, the ensemble talked about the specific sections of songs where there were mistakes, or the sections that they liked the most. They actively assess the ability of each musician and consciously choose whether or not to perform with them again. Performance together thereby functions as a test for the less experienced musicians.

The percussion parts take on a heightened importance in KSPC because they maintain consistent rhythmic patterns while other musical instruments avoid playing on the beat and employ complicated variations. If a musician gets lost, he will focus on the sau uu because this instrument has a lower sound than any other in the ensemble. Each performer responds in the moment to the music, choosing their melodic variations based not only on what their teacher taught, but also on what other musicians are playing at that moment so that they will not play overly similar variations. Therefore, the musicians are improvising, to some extent, while they perform, and they try not to be predictable so they play differently with each performance. This unique ensemble requires intensive ensemble rehearsal to build a new vocabulary of interactions between musical instruments that will function smoothly and confidently.

The ching player is especially important because musicians tend to play irregular variations, which sometimes match with the rhythmic cycles or ching but sometimes not. Many variations of phrases are composed or improvised with rhythmic syncopation that makes it hard for the ching player to mark the beat, so he must know the main melody of the composition very well.
One of the things that makes KSPC different from other Thai musical ensembles is the changing tuning system, which requires that some of the instruments be tuned higher than in other ensembles. The retuning of instruments is not required by any other kind of Thai ensemble, and is not employed by the khruangsai or khruangsai phasom ensembles. In addition, the thaang must also change, and this is the main reason why the musicians who play in KSPC ensemble are very highly regarded by other musicians. The thaang for KSPC are considered to be very difficult to perform and to remember.

The changed tuning of instruments requires the musicians to be able to change their tone, pitch, and thaang from what they would perform in other kinds of ensembles.

For example, because the pii chawaa has a high fixed pitch (f’-c’’), the sau duang (the range of which is normally g’-a’) has to be tuned up four steps (to c’’) to match the pitch of the pii chawaa in order to play in the ensemble. However, the sau uu (with a range of c-d’) and jakhee (with a range of c-f’), and khlui lip do not change their original tunings, but the players need to modulate the melodies of each song to match the pitch of the pii chawaa. To illustrate, if a melody begins with the note G (second pitch of pii chawaa), the sau duang, which has been tuned up from G to C, can play mostly normally, but with changes in finger position. On the other hand, the jakhee and sau uu, that have not been tuned up, need to transpose the pitch of the song from G to C and then change their thaang to play melodic patterns that suit the instrument and the fingering to make the melody proceed smoothly. Sometimes, the sau duang player does not change their tuning but moves the noose that fastens the strings to the neck closer to the sound box to shorten

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34 Puangpen, 43.
the sounding length of the strings by half.

**Historical claims about KSPC**

The origins of KSPC pose a difficult problem. As I noted above, many music scholars in Thailand have claimed this musical ensemble was created during the reign of King Rama IV. However, I have found no convincing evidence to support such a claim. The first document about KSPC I found is a program note written by Montri Tramote (1900-1995), perhaps the most highly regarded Thai music scholar in Thailand. He wrote many books about Thai music and Thai music society from his memory and experiences. He mentions the term *khrueang sai pii chawaa* in a book about *khrueang sai*, but did not explain the use of the ensemble in any setting.\(^{35}\) However, Damrong Rajanubhab states that during the reign of King Rama IV KSPC was called *klaung khaek khrueang yai* ("large klaung khaek ensemble") and later *mahoorii khrueang sai* \(^{36}\) which had a different meaning than the *mahoorii* ensemble of the present day. Montri did not appear to know the specific instrumentation of *klaung khaek khrueang yai* ensemble even though it had been maintained in the palace possibly through the reign of King Rama IV.

The travel letters between Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, a son of King Rama IV, and his brother Prince Naritsara Nuwatiwong, and letters between Prince Naritsara Nuwatiwong and Phrayaa Anumaan Rachchaathon, offer no additional evidence though they contain abundant information about music. These published letters include

\(^{35}\) Montri 1956, 25.

\(^{36}\) Phoonphit 2009A, 396.
conversations about music and dance in Siam from 2457-2486 (1914-1943) during Kings Rama VI to VIII, a period spanning over thirty years.\textsuperscript{37} None of their letters mention the term \textit{khreuangsai pii chawaa} at all.

The earliest origins claimed for KSPC is during King Rama IV, by scholars who cite Dhanit Yupho and Montri Tramote. Puangpen Rakthong, Nattapong Sukuman, and Sirilak Chalongtham wrote their Master’s theses on KSPC and they each refer specifically to a passage from a book, \textit{Thai Musical Instruments} by Dhanit Yupho, in which he claims that Prince Damrong wrote that

there are a group of men who try to play string instruments like the ones the Chinese have, mixing \textit{sau duang}, \textit{sau uu}, \textit{jakhee} and \textit{pii au} with \textit{klaung khaek}. This \textit{phasom} ensemble is called \textit{klaung khaek khreuang yai} and later we called it \textit{khrueang sai pii chawaa}. The Prince also gave an estimated time period for this ensemble: ‘I thought it happened late in the King Rama IV period, because in the beginning of King Rama V, we still believed that this ensemble was very new’. He later explained that this ensemble that \textit{klaung khaek} and \textit{pii aau} were replaced by \textit{thap}, \textit{rammanaa} and \textit{khlui}, and this ensemble was called \textit{mahoorii khrueang sai}.\textsuperscript{38}

The musician and scholar Montri Tramote also refers to Damrong Rahjanuphap’s travelling letters as the source for \textit{klaung khaek khreuang yai}, and then he introduces the new term \textit{khrueangsai pii chawaa}:

\textsuperscript{37} Phoonphit 2009.

\textsuperscript{38} Dhanit, 136. Translated by Supeena Insee Adler.
During the reign of King Rama IV, someone created an ensemble mixing klaung khaek with khruangsai and removed thone, rammanaa and khlui phiang au because their sound was in the same range and did not make any difference when played in the ensemble. He called this mixed ensemble klaung khaek khruang yai, then in the next reign, it was called khruang sai pii chawaa that is another kind of khruangsai phasom.\(^{39}\)

Chin Sinlapabanleang and Likit Chindaawat also wrote that the KSPC was created during King Rama IV, in a passage that is almost exactly the same was what Montri Tramote wrote, although Chin does not specify a source.\(^{40}\)

Sangad Phukhaothong, in his book about Thai music, refers to the same passage by Damrong Rachanuphap, although he inexplicably changed the origin to King Rama III, and does not mention KSPC:

...there is another kind of mahorii that is played by males instead of females called mahorii khruangsai believed to have started during King Rama III. Someone mixed this ensemble with string instruments such as the two-stringed fiddle, like the Chinese (meaning sau duang) to play Thai music. Later the ensemble included sau duang, sau uu, jakhee, pii au and klaung khaek and was called klaung khaek khruang yai. When it became popular, it was turned into a mahorii ensemble by mixing mahorii instruments with it such as thoon, rammanaa, and khlui replacing klaung khaek and pii au.

\(^{39}\) Montri 1956, 24. Translated by Supeena Insee Adler.

\(^{40}\) Chin and Likit, 132.
Sometimes, ranaat and khaung were also included so that is why it was called mahoorii khrueangsai and resembles the one that is still played today...”41

Pongsil Arunaratana is a scholar of music who teaches Thai traditional music at Sinlapakorn University in Bangkok. He is the son of a very famous sau saam sai player in Thailand, Khruu Udom Arunaratana. After Khruu Udom passed away, Pongsil followed his father as a sau saam sai player. He has written several books about Thai music and wrote a Master’s thesis about the life and music of Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasub (Plaek Prasaansab). In one of his books, he has reproduced a collection of anonymous documents published in the year 1920 by the publisher Sophonhipatthanaakorn. One document in this collection appears to be the document that Sangad quotes above, including the reference of King Rama III.42

The original work on which these sources appear to based, *The Myth of Mahoorii Khreuang Sai* by Prince Damrong Rajanuphap, mentions the two terms klaung khaek khrueang yai and mahoorii khrueangsai, but does not mention the term khrueangsai pii chawaa at all. In fact, the pii chawaa is not mentioned at all. Phoonphit writes, paraphrasing the common understanding of the history of the string ensemble:

When the number of female mahoorii players is reduced, there are a group of men who try to play string instruments like the ones the Chinese have, mixing sau duang, sau uu, jakhee and pii au with klaung khaek (which I will explain next). This phasom ensemble is called klaung khaek khrueang yai.

41 Sangat, 246.

42 Pongsil 2010, 335.
Then, later, klaung khaek and pii au were removed and thap, rammanoa and khlui were added, and the ensemble was called mahoorii khrueang sai. Some ensembles added ranaat ek and khaung, and that was when male mahoorii players played instead of women. Still women played in this ensemble, but less often than men. There were no strict rules about how many musical instruments could be included in the ensemble, such as sau duang and sau uu. It depended on who wanted to play. They wanted the sound to be loud and they did not care much about harmony. At present, some ensembles remove sau duang and sau uu and add the Chinese khim and foreign harmonium [portable reed organ] to mix with in the ensemble.43

Based on these same quotes from Montri Tramote and Damrong Rajanuphap, Puangpen Rakthong argued that the KSPC originated from klaung khaek khrueang yai and that this ensemble preceded the standardized khrueangsai ensemble.44

Part of the difficulty and confusion that these scholars face is that the terms mahoorii and khrueangsai were not yet standardized during the reigns of Kings Rama III and IV. During the Ayutthaya period, the word mahoorii referred to an ensemble that included sau saam sai, krachappii, khlui and thoon. Naksawat wrote, “The oldest one was called ‘Mahori Krüang Si’. This band was originated in Sukothai or Ayuthaya period. It consisted of only 4 musicians.”45 This is different from modern usage of the term mahoorii which refers to a combination of instruments from both the khrueangsai ensemble and piiphaat ensemble. However,

43 Phoonphit 2009A, 396. Translated by Supeena Insec Adler
44 Puangpen, 18.
45 Uthit, 7.
the older mahoorii which is also called mahoorii booraan (‘ancient mahoorii’) did not have jakhee, sau duang nor sau uu in it.

Another letter about music between Naritsara Nuvattiwong and Damrong Rachanupab on December 20, 1920 offers additional evidence that KSPC is not mentioned in any sources before King Rama VI. In this letter, Prince Narit explains that there were at least two kinds of mahoorii, mahoorii luang and mahoorii nauk that have different musical instruments and were used for different purposes inside and outside the palace. He mentions the term mahoorii luang (royal mahoorii) that is used to accompany ritual activity inside the palace. This ensemble includes sau sam sai, krachappii, jakhee and khlui. There are no sau duang or sau uu in the mahoorii luang ensemble. The sau duang and sau uu, are included in an ensemble he refers to as mahoorii nauk (outside-of-the-palace mahoorii). He adds that the mahoorii nauk has no sau saam sai and no krachappii because these instruments were too hard to learn, so that people chose sau duang and sau uu for the mahoorii ensemble instead. He argues that there was no evidence for when or where the sau duang and sau uu originated, but he first saw these musical instruments playing with the ensemble klaung khaek pii chawaa, which was also called klaung khaek khrueang yai and was used to accompany seaphaa story telling only.46

In sum, even when Prince Naritsara Nuwatiwong wrote this letter mentioning both mahoorii nauk and klaung khaek pii chawaa, which appear to have had instrumentation similar to KSPC, he still refers to this ensemble as klaung khaek khrueang yai, not khrueang sai.
*pii chawaa.* Evidently the term KSPC was a new name for the *klaung khaek khrueang yai* ensemble when royal palace musicians adopted it sometime after 1920.

**Mahoorii outside of the palace**

The term *mahoorii* has several meanings that relate to music. First, it refers to musicians, second, it is an ensemble that was used in the palace in the past to entertain the king in his private residence, and the musical instruments were *sau saam sai*, *krachapii*, *khlui*, and *thoon rammanaa*. This second meaning corresponds to Prince Narit’s *mahoorii luang*. The third meaning refers to stringed instruments played outside of the palace in an ensemble of *sau uu* and *sau duang*, sometimes called *mahoorii nauk*. So, the term *mahoorii* broadly refers to musicians and ensembles of stringed instruments.

*Mahoorii khamen* is a musical ensemble well-known by Khmer speakers. The ensemble performs for wedding, healing rituals, and other entertainment events; it normally accompanies singing. The leader of the ensemble plays a high-pitched fiddle. The musical ensemble included *pii au* (oboe with a papaya stem body), *trau uu* (similar to *sau uu*), *trau duang* (similar to *sau duang*), *jakhee*, *ching* and drums, and sometimes *krachappii*. Except for the oboe, the ensemble more closely matches the Thai *khrueangsaï* ensemble than *mahoorii luang*, which includes *sau saam sai*.

As I mentioned earlier, Montri Tramote claims that KSPC was created during the reign of Rama IV. In his history of *mahoorii*, he uses the word *saw*, referring to the category of bowed fiddles, but he does not name any specific kind of fiddle, and the *pii* that he mentions is also known as *pii au*. The only string ensemble that has *pii au* in it is
the mahoorii khamen. Due to the very fragile construction of the pii au, he claims that later, people made a more durable wooden flute khlui phiang au, which had a softer sound than pii au.\(^{47}\) Therefore, it is likely that mahoorii khamen with the khlui phiang au took the form of the modern khreuangsaï ensemble possibly during the late Ayuthaya period.

Moreover, there is a photograph from a trip Prince Damrong made into Isaan where he heard people performing mahoorii khamen with pii au.\(^{48}\) So, while klaung khaek khreuang yai provided a model for the combination of the pii chawaa klaung khaek ensemble, and its royal associations, to be combined with other kinds of instruments, mahoorii khamen most likely inspired the idea of combining the stringed instruments specifically with an oboe.

\(^{47}\) Montri 1956, 23-25.

\(^{48}\) Luang Bauriban Buriiphan 1929.
Written evidence of KSPC

During 1948-49, the Fine Arts Department (Krom Silapakorn, known as Krom Mahorasop after 1911) created a series of musical events. Ensembles gave public performances of both Thai traditional music and Western music twice a week. The series started and stopped several times, but the total number of performances given was fifty-four. After those two years, the Fine Arts Department continued to offer public performances occasionally. The performances took place near the National Theatre in Bangkok, sometimes on a temporary stage and sometimes on the lawn, outdoors. Ordinary people sat on the grass, and seats were not offered. In 1949, three performances of KSPC took place on February 6, March 1, and December 4. Program notes for the first two performances were in a combined publication but the third one was given to people separately. All three program notes were written by the same author, Montri Tramote. These notes are the first printed evidence of KSPC being performed in public.

On February 6, 1949 Montri explained the history of KSPC in detail, and I summarize it here. He wrote that KSPC is a combination of the mahoorii khruengsai and klaung khaek ensembles, noting that the khruengsai has a long history but it is unclear when it came to Thailand and whether it came from China or originated in Thailand and went to China and was then re-adopted in Thailand. He states his strong belief that khruengsai was influenced by Chinese musical culture. However, he wrote that in the Ayutthaya period, the Thai royal court had prohibited a few stringed instruments from performing in certain places, which implies that the khruengsai ensemble already existed during the Ayutthaya period. The standardized khruengsai ensemble was created subsequently in the
Ratthanakosin period. The klaung khaek ensemble that he refers to meant two kinds of drum ensemble, one called klaung khaek and the other called klaung Malayuu. In both of these ensembles, the drums are accompanied by one pii. The klaung Malayuu ensemble was used in royal processions, royal funerals, and for parades, and was later used for the funerals of common people where it is known as the bualai or nanghong ensemble. The klaung khaek pii chawaa ensemble, with influences from Java, was used to accompany the krit (Javanese dagger) dance and wooden sword dance. Later these ensembles were incorporated into royal processions and performed along with the piiphaat ensemble. Montri claims that during the reign of King Rama IV, someone combined the khrueangsai ensemble and the klaung khaek ensemble. They replaced a few musical instruments including thoon, rammanaa and khlu phiang au (flute) because the range of sounds would not contribute anything different in this new ensemble. This new ensemble was known as klaung khaek khrueang yai, but was later called khrueangsai pii chawaa.

In the program notes for February 6, 1949, Montri explains the repertoire performed by KSPC. One of the compositions was an overture composed by Phrayaa Prasen Duriyasab (Plaek Prasansab), who was the director of the Music Department at the Fine Arts Department during the reign of King Rama VI. Montri wrote that Phrayaa Prasen Duriyasab was a great pii player and composed many songs during his lifetime. Phrayaa Prasen Duriyasab sometimes traveled to a cave where his pii teacher, Khruu Nuudam49, lived in order to learn compositions. The overture titled “Ruang

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49 There is very little information about Khruu Nuudam, even though his name appears in multiple written histories of Thai musicians and singers (Rachabanthittayasathaana (Royal Institution) 2006, Nattapong). The complete entry in the Rachabanthittayasathaana Encyclopedia reads “Khruu Nuudam (dates unknown) was a male pii teacher who was born during the reign of King Rama V. He was very famous and composed many
Chomsamut” has incomplete drum patterns. I assume that the composer created something new by leaving the part incomplete intentionally, so that musicians who wanted to play this overture would need to learn the piece carefully to be sure where the pattern ended. Montri says that the next generation should not think that the song does not follow Thai traditional compositional practice because of the missing segments of the song, but should respect the one who composed it. The other two songs performed that day were also composed during the reigns of Kings Rama V and VI. One was composed by Prince Narissaraa Nuwattiwong and another was composed by Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasab and arranged by Montri Tramote. I have not found any written evidence about whom Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasab studied music with, so I assume that he helped to create, arrange or even compose the music by himself and invoked a myth of a teacher who taught him this special piece in a cave, and the piece later became known as a work for KSPC.

In the second program note, for March 1, 1949, Montri did not discuss the history of the ensemble. He and Phraya Prasanduriyasap (Plaek Prasansap) composed and arranged three of the four songs that were performed that day, and Luang Pradit Phairau composed and arranged the other one. Both of them worked at the Fine Arts Department during the reign of King Rama VI. Phraya Plaek Prasansap was the first music director of the Fine Arts Department, and used to perform and teach Thai music for royalty at the Burapapirom Palace during the reign of King Rama VI.  

songs. The most famous one is the overture titled “Ruang Chomsamut”. His most famous student is Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasab” (Rachabanthittayasathaan [Royal Institution] 2006, 212. Translated by Supeena Insee Adler).

50 Pongsil 2010, 335.
Khruu Nuudam and studied pihipaat with Khruu Chauy Sunthaunwaathin. Phraya Prasanduriyasap composed many Thai musical songs, and Montri Tramote was his last student at the Fine Arts Department.

In the program note for December 4, titled “The Orchestra of String Instruments with the Addition of Javanese Pipe,” Montri again explains the history of KSPC and the five songs they performed. He wrote that the KSPC ensemble normally starts with a short overture and then follows with songs for pii chawaa such as Saramaa, Plaeng and the Language Suite (Auk Phaasaa). Saramaa is a unique song for pii chawaa, which borrows musical ideas from Java. He believes that it came to Siam during the reign of King Borommakot along with the Inao story, and that it also accompanied the kris and wooden sword dances. The three songs, Klaummaarii, Thayoi Khamee, and Ton Baurathet thao, when sung, also use lyrics from King Rama II’s version of Inao. This clearly shows that the relationship between Inao and KSPC was established by this time.

Montri wrote in 1948 that the ensemble was called khrueangsai pii chawaa. This was the first use of this appellation: the name of this ensemble had never appeared anywhere in print before this article. So I conclude that the name khrueangsai pii chawaa was new in Thai music society during Montri’s life, and that before it became known as khrueangsai pii chawaa, this ensemble was called klaung khaek khreuang yai.

KSPC was conceived and functioned differently from other musical ensembles created during the reign of King Rama VI. It was not a ‘mixed ensemble’, i.e., khrueangsai

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51 Montri 1949.
52 Ibid.
phasom piii chawaa, but is a modern khrueangsai ensemble combined with a piii klaung ensemble where the instruments of the piii klaung ensemble replace the khlui phiang au and thoon rammanaa from the khrueangsai ensemble. Also unlike other phasom ensembles, it has its own distinct repertoire and unique musical style, requiring a change of tuning. Because it was quite different than other phasom ensembles at the time this ensemble was first publicly presented, I suggest that Montri felt the need to explain the history of the ensemble unlike the other ensembles that performed in the concert series.

There is very little published information about the early history of the KSPC ensemble. Montri Tramote’s written passage is misleading about the name of ensemble and many people have cited him without subjecting his claims to scrutiny. To support my argument that KSPC was invented during the reign of King Rama VI, I have shown evidence of several innovative new ensembles that such as khrueangsai phasom with Western musical instruments that still played Thai traditional repertoire that were created during King Rama VI. Another ensemble that was created during the reign of King Rama VI, is pippaat deukdamban by Prince Narisara Nuwatthiwong (1863-1947), a son of King Rama IV. This new ensemble incorporated seven large hanging gongs and includes a lower pitched khlui, and shows influences from Indonesian gamelan ensembles. It was used in performances that lasted just a limited time—about an hour—like Western music performances. Older literature, such as Ramakian, Inao, and other stories that were regularly used for lakhawn theater, was excerpted and set to music performed by this ensemble. The evidence presented suggests that KSPC was created during the reign of
King Rama VI, a time when many new musical ensembles were being created and performed widely.

**History of KSPC**

The KSPC was a new musical ensemble that performed with its own distinct repertoire and tuning system. Most of the lyrics that were accompanied by KSPC came from the version of the *Inao* story composed by King Rama II. The Entertainment Department (*Krom Mahorasop*), which later became the Fine Arts Department, was created to maintain performing arts outside of the royal palaces during the reign of King Rama VI, and was strongly influenced by Western culture that was in fashion at the time. Several other musical ensembles changed and innovated to fit and respond to this cultural pressure. I have argued that the KSPC was an adaptation of the *klaung khaek khrueang yai* ensemble created by Phrayaa Plaek Prasansap, the first director of Fine Arts Department, and was suited to the many new compositions that he composed. KSPC was an instance of musicians trying to find a new identity for Thai music in a changing time. His colleagues and students at the Fine Arts Department became the first generation who performed KSPC, and included Thiap Khonglaythong (*pii chawaa*), Luang Pairuaseangsaw (*Aun Duuriyachiwiw*) (*sau uu* and *sau duang*), Thongdii Sucahritkun (*jakhee*), Bang Luangsunthon (*khlui lip*), Prathomrat Thintharanin and Pring Kanchanaphalin (*drums*). Phrayaa Plaek Prasaansap himself was also a great *pii* player.

The second generation of musicians directly studied with the first generation of musicians who performed KSPC at the Fine Arts Department. After finishing their
degrees, they obtained jobs as music teachers at various institutions around the country. The most famous among them are Khruu Peep Khonglaythong and Khruu Bunchuoy Sowat (pii chawaa), Pakorn Rodchangphuan and Jeeraphon Petchsom (jakhee, sau uu, sau duang), Chavangsak Phothisombat (sau uu and sau duang). I have interviewed all of them all except for Bunchuoy Sowat, who said to me at the Playrnern Palace where Princess Sirindhorn practiced her Thai music that it was sufficient for me to interview Khruu Peep Khonglaythong because he and Khruu Peep studied together with Khruu Peep’s father, Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong. The three string players and musicians have tried to create their own KSPC ensembles outside of the Fine Arts Department for many years and are still facing some difficulties. Their students, who learned some repertoire with them after finishing their school, have had very limited chances to perform KSPC in public. I will discuss these efforts further in the following chapter based on my interviews with the second and third generation of musicians who play KSPC.

**Repertoire and recordings of KSPC**

The repertoire for the KSPC ensemble is organized differently than for other ensembles. KSPC normally begins performances with an overture like other ensembles, but the overture for KSPC is immediately followed by three compositions, Saramaa and Yoon, Plaeng and Yoon, which are very special compositions for pii and khlaung khaek. Right after Saramaa, Yoon, and Plaeng the ensemble joins to play the Language Suite (phleeng phaasaa, a suite of pieces in different foreign accents) and ends with Yoon again in a form that other ensembles do not do. The compositions that KSPC commonly performs are
ones that have a basic melody, but not a fixed melody or fixed *thaang*, so musicians are able to create their own *thaang* to show off their high level of skill. The repertoire for KSPC can be categorized into three different groups: overtures, regular songs (mostly *phleeng thao*, sometimes *saam chan* or *saung chan* with lyrics usually from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* or the version of *Inao* by King Rama II), and ending songs. Included among regular songs are *thayoi* and *phleeng yai*, which are long, complicated compositions with many modulations and difficult improvisational requirements. In Appendix 1, I list all the repertoire played by KSPC that I have been able to document from published recodings, private recordings, my own field recordings, written program notes from historical performances, and additional performances.

There are four different kinds of recordings of KSPC that I collected since beginning research in 2008. The first is a set of five compact discs of KSPC produced by *Khruu* Prasit Thawon’s studio and Mahidol University, recorded in 1973. This set of CDs contains valuable repertoire for KSPC performed by the first generation of musicians who learned KSPC at the Fine Arts Department such as *Khruu* Thiap Khonglaythong, Luang Phairau Siangsau, Lamead Jittasawii, Thongdii Sujaritkul, Bang Lunagsunthon, Pring Kanchanaphalin, Prathomrat Thintuaranin, and Cheang Khlaysithong. This set of CDs is not well known among Thai musicians and the CDs do not include liner notes beyond naming musicians and repertoire; the CDs are sold only at

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53 *Thao* refers to a form of Thai music composition that contains three sections in different metric levels called *chan*. The old compositions in *Ayutthaya* period are mostly *saung chan* and these are used for expansion into *saam chan* (twice as long as *saung chan*) and compression into *chan diaw* (half as long as *saung chan*) by composers and arrangers. The arrangement of these variations into a three-part form in the order *saam chan*, *saung chan*, and *chan diaw*, is called *thao*.

Mahidol University. The second kind of recording features students and teachers who perform KSPC on multiple occasions at various places in Thailand. These often required me to write a letter to ask for a copy from the music libraries and the Fine Arts Department where they are kept for archival purposes. The third kind are the very few commercially produced CDs sold in record stores in Bangkok. Two out of four such CDs include the singer Cheang Khaisithong, a National Artist from the Fine Arts Department, and the other one is a CD by the Fong Naam Ensemble, *Siamese Classical Music Vol.3: The String Ensemble*, that was produced internationally and includes one overture for KSPC. The fourth type are recordings I made in 2012 during my fieldwork in Thailand, of multiple ensembles, mainly with musicians from the Fine Arts Department, and a few other occasions in Thailand. All four kinds of recordings have in common the musicians who perform, and the choice of repertoire. In the following sections I review these in detail in order to identify the complete repertoire of KSPC and its association with specific literary works as discussed in Chapter 2.

*The Prasit Thawon/Mahidol set*

The musicians who performed on these CD were the most well-known musicians from the Fine Arts Department, and I identified them earlier in this chapter as the first generation that performed KSPC in Thai music society, most born around the year 1900: Thiap Khonglaythong on *piii chawaa*, Lamead Jittasawii on *sau duang*, Luang Phairau Siangsau on *sau uu*, Thongdi Sujiaritkul on *jakhee*, Bang Luangsunthon on *khlui tip*, Pring Kanchanaphalin and Prathomrat Thintuaranin on *khaang khaek*, Thom Prasitthikun and
Usaa Khunthamalai on *ching*, and Uraiwan Chanmanii singing. The first CD begins with the overture *Kruabchakkrawaan Ook Maayuang*, followed by *Saramaa* and the Language Suite. The second track is *Thao Thaun Samau*. This is an old song from the Ayutthaya period, and at the end of the reign of King Rama V, Plaek Prasansab arranged this song into *saam chan* and then Luang Phradit Phairoe arranged the *saam chan* composition into *thao* form in 1924. The CD ends with *Thao Klaummaarii* arranged by Montri Tramote followed by *Plaeng* and *Hangkhreuang*. The two *thao* compositions were sung by female vocalists and the lyrics for both were from *Inao*.

The second CD has three *thao* and two *saam chan* compositions. The first *thao* composition was *Karaweak* which the musicians performed in three variations with the male singer Jeang Khaysriithong. This composition was arranged by Phraa Pradit Phairau (Mii Duriyangkun) with old lyrics by an unknown author. The second composition was *Hongthaung*, also performed in three variations with the same male singer. The lyrics are from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* literature. The composition has many variations, some of which were arranged by Samaan Thongsuchot in 1946 and some by Chalerm Buathung in 1972. Also on the CD is *Khaek Lopburii* which is an ending composition. The fourth work on this CD is *Khaek Sai* arranged in part by Luang Pradit Phairau and then by Chalerm Buathung into *thao* form in 1970.

The third CD contains seven compositions. The first composition is an overture, which is the same overture as the first CD, however, in this CD the musicians perform a very different *thaang* and do not follow it with *Saramaa*. The second song is *Lomphatchai khao saam chan* arranged in a new *thaang* by Chalerm Buathung in 1977, with a female singer
and with lyrics from *Inao*. The next song is *Khaumklaumluuk saung chan*. The *thao* version of this anonymous composition was arranged by Aongkarn Kleechuan in 1938 for the Air Force Thai Music Department, by Chalerm Buathung, and later in 1977 by Boonyong Keetkhong who arranged new *thaang* based on these earlier arrangements and adding a solo part for *pii* and *khlu*. The fourth composition is *Khaek Maun Bangchang saam chan* with a male singer and lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*. The *thaang* that is most popular was arranged by Montri Tramote, but I am unable to ascertain which *thaang* is played on the recording. The fifth composition is *Khaek Sai saung chan*, which is the same as *Khaek Sai* on CD number two. The next composition is *Lomhuan saam chan* with a female singer and lyrics from *Inao*. The last composition in this CD is *Krarianthaung saung chan* with lyrics from *Ngau Paa* composed by King Rama V.

The fourth CD has only two *saam chan* compositions on it, *Theep Ran Chuan* and *Thayoi Khamen*. For *Theep Ran Chuan*, there are many *thaang* arranged by Thai composers such as Mii Duriyangkun, Chauy Sunthaunwaathin, Pheak Prasansab, and Luang Pradit Phairau. The female singer uses lyrics from *Seephaa Phrayaa Rachawaangsan* composed by King Rama VI. The second composition, *Thayoy Khamen saam chan* arranged by Theang Pii and Mii Duriyangkun, sung by a male singer with lyrics from *Inao*.

The last CD contains five compositions. It starts with the overture *Rakhoo* followed by *Saramaa* and the Language Suite. The overture was composed by Montri Tramote in 1931. The second track is the instrumental composition *Phleengruang Launglom* for which there is no known author. However, there is better-known *thaang* arranged by Chalerm Buathung in 1977, but this recording was made in 1973 so the musicians in this CD did
not use the *thaang* of Chalerm Buathung. The third composition is *Phamaa Hae thao* arranged by Montri Tramote in 1923, which is the most popular version because his arrangement has more variety in the repetitious parts. This particular composition has more room for musicians to improvise by incorporating different foreign accents as they improvise, and this is considered especially difficult. The female singer uses lyrics from *Rachathirach* literature composed by Prince Narisara Nuwatthiwong. The next composition is *Heeraa thao* arranged by Luang Pradit Phairau in 1932; the female singer uses lyric from *Inao*. The last song is *Sarathii thao* arranged by Mii Duriyangkun. The female singer uses lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phae*.

This set of CDs by Prasit Thawon is significant because these are the first recordings of the complete KSPC ensemble performed by the first generation of musicians at the Fine Arts Department. It set a standard and a model for the second and third generations to follow.
Archival Recordings

I have collected archival recordings from the music libraries of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok Bank, Mahidol University, and from the Fine Arts Department. These were obtained after I contacted several people at the libraries, who allowed me to have a copy for the purpose of research and education only. The institutions were a bit concerned about letting copies out of their possession. They are live recordings from events on multiple occasions at various places in Thailand. A series of performances called Chulawathit took place at Ruan Thai, Chulalongkorn University, in Bangkok where they invited several groups of musicians from different institutions to come and perform on campus. From the many performances, there were nine performances of KSPC archived in the twenty-eight years spanning 1985-2012. These archival recordings are kept at the libraries of several institutions in Bangkok, including the Chulalonnkhorn University. The musicians who performed for these recordings were in the second and third generations at the Fine Arts Department and other institutions. Just under one-third of the repertoire they performed, over those twenty-eight years, was the same as that on the Prasit Thawon recordings.

The first recording of KSPC was made on February 22, 1985, performed by musicians from the Fine Arts Department and other institutions honoring Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong, who had just died in 1981. All of the musicians and the announcer were students of his, and one was his son, Khruu Peep Khonglaythong, who works at the Fine Arts Department. He directed the KSPC ensemble performing that day. The whole performance lasted more than two hours with multiple ensembles. At the end of the
concert, the KSPC ensemble performed two compositions: one overture *Lomphatchaikhao*, and *Saramaa, Yoon, Plaeng*, the Language Suite, and *Plaeng* again for the ending. This whole set of songs when played as a suite is also known as *Phlengreuang pii chawaa*. The second song they performed was *Phamaa Haa Thaun*, arranged by Montri Tramote. It was sung by a male vocalist, Sombat Sangweanthong, using lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*.

The second recording of KSPC was made on February 15, 1987, performed by musicians from the Fine Arts Department and the repertoire was *Phamaa Hae thao*. Montri Tramote and Luang Pradit Phairua also arranged this song. The lyrics came from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*. The other song they performed that day was *Thaun Samau* originally arranged by Phrayaa Pheak Prasansab for string ensemble at the Fine Arts Department, and the lyrics came from *Inao*. In addition, Luang Pradit Phairua also arranged different *thaang* for this song in 1924.

The KSPC ensemble that performed at *Chulawathit* on February 7, 1989 is identified as *Wong Mai Mee Cheu* (‘The No Name ensemble’). The musicians were combined from the Fine Arts Department and from Chulalongkorn University. They performed the *Rakhoo* overture and *Saramaa*. The second song was *Khaek Maun Bangchang thao* as arranged by Montri Tramote with lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*. The third song was *Phramkhaoboot thao* composed and arranged by multiple musicians including Phrayaa Plaek Prasaansab, Pra Pleangphairua (Soom Suwathit) and Montri Tramote, with lyrics from *Sakuntalaa* composed by King Rama VI. After that was a *khlui* solo and

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55 Rachabanthittayasathan 2006, 158.
the sad song Saensanau saam chan. There was a ranaat ek solo and KSPC played Khaek Oot thao and Saramaa Khaek. Khaek Oot thao was composed and arranged by Khruu Chauy Sunthaunwaathin, and he added many aspects of the khaek accent into the composition. Luang Pradit Phairau arranged this version into thao form in 1933. The lyrics came from Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen. Saramaa Khaek is another composition for pii and khlaung khaek that is specifically for funerals. The performance ended with Okthalee saam chan song that Montri Tramote arranged from a composition by Khruu Chauy Sunthaunwaathin, and he also composed lyrics for the song in 1932.

The fourth recording took place on May 7, 1993. The ensemble called themselves ‘students of Khruu Luang Phairau Siangsau (Phau Luang)’. The musicians were mainly from the Fine Arts Department, a few were from Chulalongkorn University, and one each was from Roi Et province, Chiangmai province, and Mahidol University. They performed the overture Lom Phad Chai Hao and Saramaa. The second song was the sad song Thayoi Khmer saam chan arranged by Luang Pradit Phairau with lyrics from Inao as composed by King Rama II. There were instrumental solos, and then KSPC performed Theep Nimit saam chan level and the suite Kraaw Nauk Phaasa, which includes the Language Suite. They ended with Tao Kin Phak Bung.

The fifth performance was by musicians from Fine Arts Department and took place on an indoor stage on April 7, 1999. They performed three songs starting with the overture Thoet Sau Tau, followed by Phan Farang thao sung by Somchay Thappaun. This was composed and arranged by Boonyong Keetkhong with lyrics composed by Chid
Sunthonchot. The last song with a female singer had lyrics from Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen and was followed by Saramaa.

The next performance of KSPC at Chulawathit took place on January 4, 2002, by the Look Chaang (‘Elephant Child’) ensemble. They performed nine songs that day but only one was for KSPC, Aathan thao. This song was arranged by Phrayaa Plaek Prasansab for mahoorii ensemble and used lyrics from Sakhunthalaa composed by King Rama VI.

On December 15th of that same year, the KSPC ensemble from the Fine Arts Department performed outdoors near the Thai National Theatre. This performance also accompanied two dances. They started with the overture Mali Lueay saam chan followed by the krit (dagger) dance known as Suraanakong with lyrics from Inao, and with Saramaa afterward. The second song was Theep Somphop thao with a female singer. The arrangement and lyrics were by Montri Tramote. The third song was Maun Ramdaap thao with a male singer and lyrics from Seephaa Phongsawadaan composed by the poet Sunthaunphuu. The next song was Aathan thao with male singer and lyrics from Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen. The music was arranged for string ensemble by Phrayaa Plaek Prasansab, but performed on KSPC. After that was another thao, Thaun Samaau with a female singer. The lyrics came from Inao. After that was the Ngweak dance with music and lyrics by Montri Tramote. The ending song was Khaek Lopburii saam chan level sung by a female singer. The music was arranged by Khruu Chauy Sunthaunwaathin and later by Montri Tramote. There is also another thaang arranged by Luang Pradit Phairau for this same song.
Another KSPC ensemble performed on February 7, 2003 at Chulawathit with musicians from the Fine Arts Department. They performed five songs. *Theep Somphop thao* was arranged by Montri Tramote for Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn 36th birthday in 1991. Montri Tramote also composed the lyrics for this song. The second song was *Khaek Maun Bangkhunphrom thao* arranged by Prince Boriphat (Somdet Prachao Bauromwongther Chaofaa Bauriphat Sukhumphan Krompra Nakhonsawan Wauraphinit) and most of the lyrics came from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* except *chan dieo*, which was composed by the Prince.

The ninth performance was also by musicians from the Fine Arts Department, staged outdoors near the Thai National Theatre on December 13, 2003. Most of those musicians are still working today and I interviewed most of them in 2012. On that day in 2003, they performed eight songs. They started with the overture *Lom Phat Chai Khao* followed by *Saramaa* and the Language Suite. The second song was *Saarthii thao* with a female singer and lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen*. The third song was *Bram khao boot thao* with a male singer, and lyrics from *Sakuntalaa* composed by King Rama VI. The fourth song was *Khaek Sai thao* with a female singer and lyrics from *Inao*, as arranged by Luang Pradit Phairau. The next song was *Sudsanguan thao*, with lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* and a male singer, also as arranged by Luang Pradit Phairau. The sixth song was *Swin Tharahuu saam chan*, and lyrics from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* and a female singer. This song is very famous and many Thai musicians and composers have arranged this song into many *thaang*, including Luang Pradit Phairau and Luang Phairau Siangsau. The next song was *Tha Luum Poong thao* sung by a male singer with lyrics from
Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen. There are several lyrics that are used with this song, including some from Inao, but I was unable to identify the lyrics used in this performance.

The next song, Faum Duang Duean, included both male and female singers, and four dancers, and this program ended with the song for the King, San Soen Phra Baaramii.

These nine archival recordings span a period of twenty-eight years and represent the KSPC music ensemble of musicians from the Fine Arts Department and a few other institutions. All the musicians who performed in these archival recording are colleagues and students of the musicians who played KSPC in the first generation. Of the thirty total compositions recorded, eight of these were also on the Prasit Thawon recordings. While there are thousands of compositions in the Thai tradition that could be performed, these archival recordings demonstrate the loyalty of KSPC performers to the repertoire performed by the first generation, as documented in part on the Prasit Thawon recordings.

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56 Although it is not possible to count all known compositions, just two published sources list nine-hundred compositions, many of which are suites of multiple shorter pieces. (Rachabanthittayasathaan 2007 and 2007A)
Commercially produced recordings

Two of the commercially produced recordings feature the singer Caeng Khaaisiithaung, a National Artist from the Fine Arts Department who also sung on the set of five CDs by Prasit Thawon/Mahidol University discussed earlier. One of the CDs was recorded in 1992. In it, he sings Saensanau saam chan, in a poetic verse form called sakkawaa. The second song is Phraamkhaoboot thao, with saam chan section arranged by Plaeck Prasansab and chan diaw arranged by Soom Suwathit. The lyrics used were from Sakuntalaa composed by King Rama VI. In addition, the other lyrics frequently used for this song were composed by Montri Tramote in 1947. The third song is Klaummarii thao with lyrics from Inao. The thao composition was arranged by Montri Tramote in 1931. The fourth one is Theepnimit saung chan. On the second CD by Caeng Khaaisiithaung, three of the songs are repeated from the first CD; Saensanau saam chan, Klaummaarii thao, Phraamkhaoboot thao, and the one additional song is for khrueangsai phasom piano.

The other CD is titled Khruang Sai Pi Chawaaa directed by Sinlapi Tramote, a son of Montri Tramote, recorded in 1981. The musicians are from the Fine Arts Department and they only play instrumental music. Most of the saam chan and chan diaw compositions are developed from older saung chan compositions. The repertoire performed on KSPC was his father’s composition, the overture Rakhoo, with Saramuaa and the Language Suite. The second song is Lom Phad Chai Khao saung chan, by an anonymous

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58 Chang, *Wong Khrueangsai Pi Chawaaa.*

59 Krom Sinlapakorn. *Thai Classical Music: Kruangsai pii chawaa (Thai Strings Pee-Cha-Va).*
composer. The third composition is *Phraam Khao Boot saung chan*, and the last one is *Khaek Maun Bangchang saung chan*, also with composers anonymous.

The one other CD of KSPC that is publicly available is *Siamese Classical Music Vol.3 The String Ensemble* by the ensemble Fong Naam. The one song performed by KSPC is the overture *Rakhoo* with *Saramaa, Plaeng* and the Language Suite. Most of the musicians who perform on this track were from the Fine Arts Department, including *pië chaewaa* by Khruu Peep Khonglaythong, *sau duang* by Thiira Phumani, *khlaung khaek* by Sman Noynit and Manat Kaopleum. The *jakhee, khluï lip, sau uu* and *ching* were performed by musicians from other institutions. These three commercially produced recordings present seven compositions two of appear on multiple recordings. Three of these seven compositions were on the Prasit Thawon recordings and the other four were represented on the archival recordings, again representing the reliance on a relatively small collection of repertoire.

**Field Recordings**

By keeping in touch with many musicians in Thailand since 2008, I knew that there would be performances of KSPC in Thailand in 2012, but what I did not know was that there would also be three funerals for musicians who used to play in KSPC while I was there to conduct my fieldwork. Compared to the number of performances documented in archival recordings I discussed earlier, the year of 2012 was an exceptional year for KSPC musicians and audiences because there were eight KSPC
performances in one year and I able to attend and record most of them. See Appendix 4 for the examples shown on the included DVD.

The first performance I recorded took place at Cultural Center of Chulalongkorn University on February 17, 2012. The musicians were from the Fine Arts Department and one additional jakhee was played by a former musician of the Fine Arts Department who now works in Roi Et province teaching music. That day, the musicians performed five songs, starting with the overture Khraupjakkrawan composed by Khruu Chauy Sunthaunwaathin and followed by Saramaa and the Language Suite. The second song was Phamaa Hae thao with a female singer. This song has many thaang, and the thaang that the musicians performed that day was by Montri Tramote. The lyrics came from Rachathirach composed by Prince Narisara Nuwatthiwong. The third song was Launglom thao, which is known in an anonymous arrangement and in one by Khruu Chalerm Buathung from 1977. The thaang that they performed was the anonymous one, and sounds to me to be the same thaang as on the 1973 recording. The female singer used the lyric from Inao literature. The fourth song was Saarathii thao.60 The expansion into saam chan was arranged by Phraa Praditphairau (Mii Duriyaangkul). Because there is no fixed melody for this composition, just a basic skeletal melody, this allows musicians and composer to arrange many thaang to perform it. This song was also arranged anonymously in thao form and in a solo version during King Rama VI. The lyric used that day come from Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen literature, sung by a male vocalist. The last song was Ok Thalee saam chan sung by a female singer with arrangement and lyrics by Montri Tramote.

60 See accept from Appendix 4 track 1
The second KSPC performance took place at the Thai National Theatre on March 16, 2012, in honor of Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasup (Plaek Prasansab) who was the director of a music ensemble for King Rama VI. The only song performed by KSPC that day was arranged in saam chan by Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasup and the name of the overture was *Thaun Samau*. It was performed with *Saramaa* and the Language Suite.\(^{61}\)

April 21, 2012 marked one year after the famous Thai singer, *Khruu* Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaathin had passed away, and her family was waiting for a royal funeral sponsored by Princess Sirindhorn. Because *Khruu* Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaathin used to sing with a KSPC ensemble, the musicians from the Fine Arts Department came to pay their respect by performing KSPC one night at her funeral which took place at Thepsirin Temple in Bangkok. They performed *Nanghong, Saramaa*\(^{62}\) and *Khaek Maun thao* with a male singer.

Yet another funeral took place at the same temple from June 22 to July 1, 2012, for *Khruu* Sinlapi Tramote, a son of Montri Tramote and a former head musician from the Fine Arts Department. Unexpectedly, on the first day of the funeral, there was a performance by a student ensemble from Roi Ei province, directed by Jeeraphon Pechsom, who was a former student and musician at the Fine Arts Department. He brought his students to the funeral in the afternoon and performed KSPC with them to pay respect to Sinlapi Tramote who himself had performed KSPC at the Fine Arts Department. They performed the overture *Raakhoo, Saramaa* and the Language Suite and

\(^{61}\) See Appendix 4, track 2.

\(^{62}\) See Appendix 4, track 3.
The ensemble and borrowed one female singer from the Fine Arts Department who had been present at the funeral to sing with another ensemble. I will discuss these institutions and musicians in more detail in the next chapter.

August 18, 2012 was a day for honoring the great jakhee player, Khruu Thaungdii Sujaritkun who was a former musician at the Fine Arts Department and former Thai music teacher at many institutions in Thailand. It was the 100th anniversary of her birth and her students helped to manage an event of Thai music featuring stringed instrument, and they gathered many musicians to practice and perform together at the Thai National Theatre. KSPC was one of many ensembles that performed on stage that day. The musicians in the ensemble were from the Fine Arts Department, Chulalongkorn University, and Roi Et and Chiang Mai provinces, where two former musicians from the Fine Arts Department work. They all came together to perform in order to honor their music teacher who used to perform KSPC at the Fine Arts Department with the first generation. They performed the overture Chomsamut with Saramaa and the Language Suite. This composition is considered to be especially difficult, and was composed intentionally with an incomplete drum pattern so that when performed, the drum players have to pay close attention to the melody and to other musicians, and have to improvise to fit with the music.

63 See Appendix 4, track 4.
64 See Appendix 4, track 5.
Several days after the August 18 performance I followed a group of musicians to Nakhon Sri Thammarat province where they were conducting a workshop on KSPC. Prior to the performance on August 18, one of the sau duang musicians was sick and admitted to a hospital, so his teacher, Jeeraphon Petchsom, took his place and went to Nakhon Sri Thammarat along with Khruu Peep Khonglaythaung, one female singer, and another piiphaat musician from the Royal Air Force Thai Music Department. I was there to observe and participate in the workshop. The teachers taught students to play Rakhoo \(^{65}\) and Thaun Samua thao.

Sadly, after we all returned to Bangkok on August 23, we all received news that the musician who was admitted to the hospital had unexpectedly passed away. The news put everyone in shock. Khruu Peep and I met again at the funeral. We could not say anything, we just looked at each other quietly, with tears in our eyes. We all went to his funeral almost every night. Unfortunately, I could not attend the last day of his funeral, September 2, 2012, due to my flight back to the U.S. However, I watched and read about the progress of the funeral live via Facebook as many musicians in Bangkok posted about it in real time. On the last day, to pay respect him, musicians from the Fine Arts Department and his teachers came to perform KSPC at his funeral.

After I returned to the U.S., there were several more KSPC performances, but mostly just performances of one song on different occasions. These included Raakhoo for Luang Phairau Siangsaú’s 120-year anniversary, Maliluay on two different occasions at Wangna (the front palace), Thaun Samau, and Saensanoe at the Kasikaunthai Bank in

\(^{65}\) See Appendix 4, track 6.
Bangkok sung by Princess Sirindhorn in honor of her singing teacher, Khruu Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaathin. While I had been in Thailand, I was invited by musicians from Fine Arts Department to go to her palace three times to listen to the rehearsals for this performance.

Thirteen out of sixteen compositions that I documented are the same compositions that were in the recordings I discussed above. The musicians that performed were from the Fine Arts Department, Chulalongkorn University or from College of Dramatic Arts outside of Bangkok, and all were students of the first and second KSPC generations. Between all the sources available, I have been able to identify a repertoire of thirty-three total compositions used for KSPC. So, remarkably, in the year of 2012, I was able to see and recorded half of repertoire that the KSPC ensemble has performed and recorded since 1973. The history of KSPC as documented in recordings reveals a strong continuity to the traditional repertoire established by the first generation of musicians. While the tradition began as an innovative new ensemble with new repertoire and new variations, subsequent generations have shown an intense loyalty to preserving that repertoire rather than expanding it or innovating.

66 The complete repertoire is summarized in Appendix 1.
Summary

I have reviewed the existing written history concerning the "pui klaung" ensemble and "khruemngai" ensembles that were the precedents for the modern invention of the KSPC ensemble. I have discussed the understanding that has been passed down concerning the history of these two ensembles from many Thai music scholars, and I have contrasted that with the written evidence that suggests an origin of KSPC during King Rama VI, and not Rama IV. Most of the music compositions and arrangements that are regularly performed by KSPC were composed or arranged by Phraya Plaek Prasaansab, who lived in a royal palace as a musician during the end of the reign of King Rama V and during King Rama VI, and his well-known students Montri Tramote and Luang Pradit Phairau who were active during the reign of King Rama VI to the beginning of the present reign of King Rama IX. In surveying all of the repertoire recorded and performed since the 1985, I note that the body of repertoire is very limited compared to other ensembles, consisting of merely thirty compositions. When performed with a singer, most of the lyrics are taken from Inao and Seephia Khun Chaung Khun Phaen, using versions composed by Thai kings or royal family.

There are still a very limited number of musicians who perform KSPC. Most of the musicians are from the Fine Arts Department, except for a few other musicians who are based in other institutions but all of whom trained with musicians from the Fine Arts Department. My survey of the performances and recordings indicates that the KSPC ensemble is performed quite rarely in Thai music society. This is due in part to the limited number of musicians who are capable of performing at a sufficiently high level,
and to the limited number of suitable occasions to perform, at funerals or to honor the musicians who were once members of a KSPC ensemble. Even though there are some musicians capable of performing in KSPC ensemble outside of the Fine Arts Department, they do not perform KSPC often, for several reasons. First, by not performing it, they seek to pay respect to their teachers in the Fine Arts Department who are still alive and still perform KSPC. Second, they do not have the opportunity to rehearse music together often enough due to their work obligations. And finally, because performing KSPC represents a challenge that might bring harm to the reputations of their own teachers if they failed to perform well. The social dynamics of KSPC will be the subject of the next chapter.

The KSPC ensemble is not only a place for elite musicians to show off their high skills, it is a symbol of the respect gained from other musicians in society. All the musicians I interviewed are connected directly to musicians at the Fine Arts Department in the past and at present. They can perform KSPC because their teacher taught them and worked with them very closely, and granted them permission. Thai musicians widely respect this principle and regard KSPC as a special place for selected musicians to interact with their highest musical knowledge and skill. They regard it as the highest achievement musicians can attain in their lifetimes.

KSPC brings together musical traditions from both the pii klaung and khruangsai ensembles, and performs with the royal literature Khun Chaang Khun Phaen and Inao in a new form of musical theater. The music for this ensemble was composed and arranged by musicians from the Fine Arts Department, mostly during the reign of King Rama VI, a
period of modernization. The well-repected music teachers who worked closely to the King created theater performance forms associated with the royal power and the public sphere because the music was performed in public. The piu klaung ensemble, which was otherwise played exclusively for the king, symbolized royalty, while the khrueangsai ensemble offered the aesthetic flexibility to play with foreign musical instruments and to absorb newness.

In the next chapter I continue with the history of KSPC at the Fine Arts Department by introducing the living musicians who perform in this ensemble today, including how they came to participate in this exclusive ensemble and how they carry on their tradition.
Chapter 4

Musicians of the Fine Arts Department

The Fine Arts Department is an institution that maintains tangible and intangible cultural arts in Thailand encompassing history, architecture, literature, national museums, national libraries, handicrafts, and performing arts. There are at least 1,500 employees in total. The Department employs many experts from all over the country and they have fifteen main offices outside of Bangkok, some of which employ National Artists who have been recognized for their contribution to the arts for the country. The National Artists project started in the year of 1984. One of the seven rules required to be appointed a National Artist is that the artist has to be living and to have Thai nationality. In addition to the higher status in society that these National Artists receive, they also receive some extra financial support. These artists are proud to work for the Fine Arts Department and consider themselves to be close to the king and royal family, and believe that their work in the Department supports the Thai nation and Thai culture. The department buildings are not only workplaces: they function like a home and a very special place for artists to work together for the benefit of the Thai nation. The employees become very close. Many of them studied at the same institution or studied with the same teachers before coming to work at the Fine Arts Department. Some are blood relatives, and several employees I interviewed also want their descendants to work for the Fine Art Department when they grow up. Many of the employees work, eat, attend events, and participate in social activities together often.
Beyond the artistic employees, the Fine Arts Department also hosts education sections that offer instruction at the high school and college levels. Under the umbrella of the Fine Arts Department, these sub-organizations train young students to become artists and art teachers in various subjects including music, dance, painting, sculpture, carving, and so on. The performing arts of music and dance are taught in the College of Dramatic Arts (วิทยาลัยนาฏศิลป์). Teachers and students become very close due to the nature of the subjects, involving the body and movement requiring close interaction among teachers and the learners. There are twelve branches of the College of Dramatic Arts throughout the country: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Sukhothai, Angthong, Suphanburi, Lopburi, Chantaburi, Kalasin, Roi Et, Nakhon Ratchasima, Pattalung and Nakhon Si Thammarat. At present, the Bangkok College of Dramatic Arts has expanded to include Sathaaban Bandit Patthanasin, which offers bachelor’s and master’s degree in music and dance. The total number of years that one student could study at this institution is thus twelve to fifteen years, from high school through graduate levels. After finishing with a degree, a few artists who graduate from the College of Dramatic Arts are selected to test in front of professional artists in order to work at the Fine Arts Department. There are also sometimes other artists from other institutions who come to take the test, but they are less likely to be chosen over those who have studied at the College of Dramatic Arts or studied with any teachers from the institution.

Where these artists work are very important to them and to the country, mainly because of their position in society as a symbol of the nation, supported by both government and royalty. It is important to point out how close the buildings of the central
Bangkok branch of the Fine Arts Department are to the royal palaces and to several national temples, the National Theatre, the National Museum, and the Royal Grounds (Sanaam Luang) where many royal activities take place for the public.

When the Fine Arts Department was established as a governmental organization outside of the palace in 1912 under King Rama VI, many royal servants were officially transferred from the palace to work at the Fine Arts Department. King Rama V granted special titles to musicians and dancers who worked in the royal palaces. Before establishing the Fine Arts Department, King Rama VI continued to grant special titles to musicians, and these musicians retained their titles when they moved to the newly created Fine Arts Department. However, once the department was established, the practice of granting royal titles to musicians stopped. Instead, artists could be appointed a National Artist. The titles held by the first generation of musicians in the Fine Arts Department symbolized the close relationship of this institution with royal authority and the continuity of their responsibilities. Remaining physically close to the centers of royal power in Bangkok was symbolically important for the artists of the Fine Arts Department.

At present, the Fine Arts Department is very close to many buildings along the main road in Bangkok where the royal family travels, as well as tourist attraction areas where the arts and performances are displayed as national performances in public, especially at the Royal Grounds (Sanaam Luang) where many royal activities are publicly presented as a form of national theatre, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2. The Fine Arts Department functions to support the king, royalty, and the nation. Located close to the palaces and prominent national institutions is central to its symbolic power, and how the
Fine Arts Department is seen as a part of royal power. The National Theatre is in fact located just next to the Fine Arts Department main building and it hosts concerts and performances throughout the year, especially on the weekend when it is open for the public to attend. I discussed in Chapter 2 the concept of nation-religion-monarch. The Fine Arts Department functions to support all of above, especially the imagined ideal of the Thai nation and the notion that a great nation is constructed through great and profound arts. The artists of the Fine Arts Department work to maintain and protect the artistic traditions, and generally do not innovate with art forms. The musicians refer to their work as ‘national property’ (*sombat khaung chaat*), ‘national heritage’ (*mauradok khaung chaat*), and ‘Thai identity’ (*ekkhalak khaung Thai*), inherited from their ancestors and accepted without question as being of great value to the nation. I asked all of the musicians about their feelings about working for the Fine Arts Department, and all responded that both they and their families are quite proud, and that they must possess great merit (*bun*) to be able to work so closely to the king and royal families. In response to a question about the value of Thai music to Thai society, many referred specifically to the uniqueness of Thai musical instruments and it sounds (Thai tuning). Khruu Yuthanaa Chidthuam, a drummer, for example, pointed out the uniqueness of the shape of the Thai xylophone *ranaat ek*, despite the fact that nearly identical instruments are played in nearby countries. For them, questioning the value of music to the nation was nonsensical. Having studied music all their lives and having been relentlessly taught the national value of their heritage, it is simply accepted without question and not ever taken as a subject for reflection. When I interviewed Khruu Yuthanaa at his work place in Bangkok, I asked
about his opinions on mixing Thai musical instruments with other musical instruments that are “not Thai”, he first asked back “do you really want me to tell you that? Really?” I said, yes, please. Then he said that mixing instruments is like selling or betraying one’s own country (khai chaat).

What good does it do, mixing instruments? Is it just because it is strange, or only for fun? What about the Thai identity, your own flesh and blood? People who do it do not care about the real knowledge of music received from their teachers and their parents who built the nation from generation to generation. Why would they do that? How about the value of collecting and receiving knowledge, don’t they have to study anymore? Now they cannot even reach a standard!

He explained as an example that playing ranaat ek standing up and moving the body, in contrast to the normal position sitting on the floor, appears to him like the actions of a drunkard.

I also did it sometimes among my friends, just for fun, but not for any media to see! But when someone plays like that for the media or for others to watch, it is not polite! Because traditionally, when playing ranaat ek, musicians should sit! It is not the way to play Thai music. Playing Thai music requires so much concentration, and Thai music is associated with royalty and high-class people, and requires manners to perform. At present, this has changed!

He thinks that doing so sets a bad example for the next generation. What especially annoys him is when the tuning of Thai musical instruments is changed to fit with Western instruments.
Changing the sound of musical instrument is like changing the language of the music. They are selling their own sound! Now there are *ranaat ek* tuned to the keys of C, F, and G. I am so confused and can only ask myself why it is like this? It is only going to please the Western ensemble! How about Thai music? Will there be a place for Thai music anymore? If they want to play like this, why not use Western xylophone instead? It is okay to tune Western instruments into Thai tunings and play Thai music, but not the other way around. It changes the way to appreciate Thai music. They are so many other ways to mix musical instrument without changing the tuning. They should do it that way. For example, *khrueang sai phasom* organ is a good example of mixing Thai musical instrument with Western instruments. That is acceptable in Thai style, and not too angry! Above all, it is about the appropriate mixing musical instruments, not just doing it for fun and money. However, there are many people who prefer to hear Thai music mixed with other instruments and not many people who want to hear pure Thai music. What we need is a better media who would show the music. There are many great musicians here, but not many people know about us.

He ended his comments before he became more angry. He later explained that the national heritage (*sombat khaung chaat*) of music is in the decoration of musical instruments, tuning, the wisdom of musical instrument makers, and the splendor (*wijit*) of musical composition. He believes that the way of life of Thai musicians shows a Thai style. He thinks it is the perfect way to learn music. At the Fine Arts Department there is no chance to present something ‘out off the box’, due to their main duty being to perform sacred music for royal activities that have to be repeated every year, and in many cases under the gaze of their teachers and a royal audience. This is in contrast to other institutions, where students spend less time learning music in school and they have to earn
a living with new or popular musics which require less time to learn. He thinks that only the Fine Arts Department still has “real arts” that represent Thainess, togetherness, and the inseparability of the art forms. In addition, the purpose of learning and performing Thai music at the Fine Arts Department is not mainly for money but to continue working together for promoting the unique Thai national heritage.

None of the other musicians that I interviewed were willing to express their opinion about mixing musical traditions, because they had friends or colleagues who did it. I think many of the musicians would agree with the strong opinions of Khruu Yuthanaa Chidthuam, but they were unwilling to publicly express views that would cause conflict later. Khruu Yuthanaa Chidthuam, on the other hand, was well known for his strong opinions about music.

At the 100th anniversary event in Bangkok, government employees from all parts of the Fine Arts Department came together and served different roles. I witnessed a group of musicians without a singer sitting on the floor performing ritual music behind a large Buddha statue in a hall (wihaan) at the National Museum that is opened only for special occasions. I asked permission to take some pictures, and many of the musicians who performed that day recognized me and nodded their heads as a sign for me to take their pictures. When the royal monks started to chant, I went back to my seat and I had a chance to converse to one of the government employees who was in charge of the royal carriages for royal funerals. He told me about how proud he is to work for the Thai nation and preserve the national heritage of the country. In front of the Buddha statue inside the hall there were about forty top-level government employees from the Fine Arts
Department sitting on decorated chairs listening to high-ranking monks chanting in alternation with the music in the main hall. Later, several of the government employees who were directors of different organizations within the Department were called upon to make offering to the monks, including some prepared food and other ornamental items. Outside of the hall, a group of employees gave out books and papers explaining the event. The man who talked to me in the hall later came out and asked for a special copy for me, which he signed “wishing this would be valuable for your education and wishing you success”. In that book, there are many notated musical works for the royal funeral.

Many government employees from different departments come to work together to honor the institutions where they work and that benefit their lives, giving them social status and opportunities that few other people have a chance to enjoy. The togetherness and Thainess that Khruu Yuttanaa explained can be seen in this event where employees of the Fine Arts Department came together, each responsible for different roles in an important public and spiritual event. This event made public the kind of things that are normally done inside the palace. The symbolic significance of this event was to ensure the role of arts in Thai society. They sought to recognize, and to be recognized not only among themselves, but also by the public that these employees work for their nation, work for the king, and support religion to ensure their national heritage and to honor the royalty who established the Fine Arts Department, from the past to present.

I will now focus on the section of musicians who work for the Fine Arts Department. The dance and music organization known as the Thai Music Division (samnakkaan sangkhiit) is one of many organizations under the Fine Arts Department. The
mission of the Division is maintaining, promoting, and recovering arts of dance and music, including royal rituals, government rituals, and traditional costumes. In addition, the unit conducts research on how to develop and promote Thai dance and music culture in academia, for both private and public institutions, nationally and abroad. The Division also sets standards and rules for dance and music performance to keep traditions stable and unchanging except with permission.¹

Professional musicians and dancers in the Department are responsible for performances at three national theatres; the main one is in Bangkok, near Sanaam Luang, another in Suphanburi province north of Bangkok, about two hours’ driving distance, and a third in Nakhon Ratchasima in northeast Thailand, about three to four hours’ drive from Bangkok. The dancers and musicians normally travel together. While dancers are required to select their performers based on the specific characters in masked dance and lakhau-n theater, or other kinds of performances, the musicians remain in the same group. So, when a performance is set, there are always more dancers than musicians on stage. Often, when accompanying dances, the group of musician sets up on the side of stage where the audience cannot see them. This raises the question as to whether or not to bring musicians abroad to accompany the dance, or just to use a recording. I interviewed several dancers who came to perform in America, and they told me that several organizations prefer to bring only dancers and use recordings for music due to the expense of bringing musicians. However, at the Fine Arts Department, they still prefer live music to accompany dance when travelling abroad despite the higher cost.

¹ Krom Silapakorn 2014.
Since King Rama VI established the Fine Arts Department outside the royal palace in 1912, there have been many directors of the institution and many directors for the Thai Music Division as well. Several of these directors have heavily influenced the development of Thai traditional music development, which I will discuss later.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the Thai Music Division at the Fine Arts Department in Bangkok. The department includes forty-four musicians, thirteen singers and twelve senior teachers (Khruu aawusoo). The performers are divided into five ensembles whose responsibility is to always be ready to perform, day or night, wherever and whenever an order comes to them. Musicians have titles according to their position at their workplace and their salaries. For example, the senior teachers receive a higher salary than the duriyangka sinlapin chamnanngaan (‘skilled musical artist’), due to their age.

Orders come directly from the royal palace or the Prime Minister’s office. When an order comes to the office, the director of the Thai Music Division is the one who confirms the order and signs paperwork specifying which of the five ensembles will be dispatched to perform. He posts the order in front of the office for all performers to see and review their role in the event. The paperwork shows the names of the performers who have to go perform, what kind of clothing they have to wear, what kind of music they have to perform, and several other details such as who is assigned to be the leader for the ensemble for that specific event, and how to get the event by themselves or by the unit’s bus. The senior teachers provide instruction and guidance to the musicians and singers, but are not required to perform unless specifically ordered.
These five ensembles, named just by the numbers one through five, are all *piiphaat* ensembles with different groups of musicians. So the Thai Music Division can provide full ensembles for up to five simultaneous events. Musicians from these different ensembles can also join to form other kinds of ensemble when required. Among the ensembles there are musicians who play both *piiphaat* and stringed instruments the Thai Music Division. For performances, they can form any kind of ensemble involving musicians and singers. Musicians who perform in the *khrueangsaipii chawaa* ensemble are from one of these ensembles. The KSPC ensemble is formed only as needed, but in contrast to other ensembles such as *khrueangsai* or *mahoorii*, the KSPC ensemble is very selective and not everyone is able participate. No one is specifically hired for their ability to perform KSPC, but the musicians of the Fine Arts Department form it among themselves when required.

In 2009 the musicians from the Thai Music Division relocated their office so the old building could be renovated. They worked inside the small hall of the National Theatre. There, in the music department, the musicians normally all stay in the same big room. Each one of them has their own table and chair, but there is not much paperwork to do. The musicians mainly come to the office to sign in if they do not have perform, or they might come in and leave from the office by the bus together to wherever they have to perform for that day. When they travel to perform outside of Bangkok for several days, they have permission to take one extra day off to relax and recover. The musicians are all very close. Many of them come from the same music families and a few of them are related by blood. Besides their demanding job at the Thai Music Division, most of these
musicians also have their own music teaching businesses or teach at high schools and universities. In addition, many of them are members of other professional Thai music ensembles outside of the Thai Music Division where they can perform for the public in exchange for money and other gifts. But for all of them, their main job is to work for the Thai Music Division.

Khruu Choy Sunthornrawathin was a palace musician during the reign of King Rama V; he passed away near the end of that reign. No one knew his exact birthday. He was the main music teacher for many students and musicians inside the palace, and two of them later built the first KSPC ensemble at the Krom Mahorrasop (the institution that preceded the Thai Music Division). One is Praya Plaek Prasaansab, who was skillful at piiphaat instruments, especially the püi. The other musician was Luang Phayrau Siangsau, who was very skilled at stringed instruments. They both also had many students throughout their lifetimes. Other musicians of the next generation, such as Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong and Khruu Montri Tramote, were pioneers in building and performing in KSPC ensemble at the Thai Music Division in addition to other ensembles.

The KSPC is a very special ensemble at the Thai Music Division because of its long tradition of being played only rarely, the specific teachers who pass on this knowledge, and because of its special repertoire. The musicians who are now directly involved in performing KSPC at the Thai Music Division were my primary informants during my fieldwork in Thailand. The musicians whom I interviewed and who performed KSPC during my fieldwork all studied with at least one of the founding musicians named above. There are few musicians and singers who perform KSPC at present, and they
perform very seldom, and so I was quite fortunate that there were several KSPC performances while I was doing my field research in Thailand in 2012, my first field research on this subject took place in 2008. In addition, there are several other musicians who studied KSPC in the past and who do not work at the Thai Music Division institution, and I will introduce them in the next chapter. Here, I introduce the musicians from the Thai Music Division who play in KSPC ensemble at present and who are still alive today.

**Khruu Peep Khonglaythong**

*Khruu* Peep Khonglaythong is a *piï* player. *Khruu* Peep was born in a musician family in the Thonburii district of Bangkok. He studied *piï* with his father, Thiap Khonglaythong. *Khruu* Peep is a Bangkok native. He just officially retired at the age of sixty in September 2013, although he continues to work as a senior teacher.
He and his wife were Thai musicians at the Thai Music Division and they married after working together. At the time I interviewed him in 2012, he had been the leader of the Thai Music Division for several years. As a musician, he said that he is not so good at managing others, but with help from many other musicians, older and younger, he could manage ensembles efficiently. He is thankful to have friends to help
him with his duties. In addition to managing the musicians he must communicate with the dance department and that is not an easy job.

I interviewed him for the first time in 2008, and again many times in 2012, and one more time in Washington, DC in 2013. I was also with him when he and other musicians conducted a workshop on KSPC at the College of Dramatic Arts in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

His mother was a singer who was born and raised in the Bangkunphrom palace. After Khruu Peep finished his elementary school at Wat Kanlayaa school, he went to study music at the College of Dramatic Arts in the year of 1964. In 1968, his father took him to the houses of several musicians to continue his study of music outside of school. In 1968 to 1970 he took classes for a bachelor’s degree in Thai Music at the Bangsomdej Chowprayaa Rachaphat University, and later in his life, he received a Master’s degree from Mahidol University under the direction of Phoonphit Amatayakun in 1992. Khruu Peep is a talented pii player and was selected to perform with great teachers very often. He started working at the Thai Music Division in 1975. Beside studying music with his father, he also studied pii with Khruu Bunchuoy Sowat, a primary disciple of his father. Khruu Peep has several siblings but they have all passed away.

In addition to being a musician at the Thai Music Division, Khruu Peep is also a guest Thai music teacher at many institutions, mainly in Bangkok, including Chulalongkorn University and the College of Dramatic Arts, Bangkok. When teaching pii or khlai, he prefers teaching one on one, because he thinks that a student can learn more that way. The total number of students that he has taught is less than fifty, and most of
them have not become professional musicians. He often performs for royal rituals and privately for royalty. The first time he performed in front of royalty was when Chulalongkorn University opened the Ruean Thai (‘traditional house’) building in Bangkok. He was invited by Khruu Bunchuoy Sowat to perform pii with many famous music teachers. He was excited and nervous because he was quite young compared to the other musicians who performed that day. Besides performing pii in an ensemble, he had to perform the pii solo Sarathii. His most proud moment was when all the great musicians told him that he did a fine job and that they were so proud of him. The Princess Sirindhorn told him in person that he played pii very well. After that performance, Khruu Peep regularly performed for royalty. He practices pii at home before going to work almost every day.

**Suwat Atthakrit (or Nid Prahuum)**

Suwat Atthakrit is a pii player at the Thai Music Division and he plays khlui lib when performing in the KSPC ensemble. In July 2012 he was 60 years old and he retired from the Thai Music Division. Two of musicians at the Thai Music Division who happen to be the musicians who played in the KSPC ensemble thus retired in the same year. Khruu Suwat, however, also teaches at several other institutions such as the Thai Cultural Center, Sathaban Kukruth, Thammasat University and Banthit Phatthanasin, another branch of the Fine Arts Department.

Khruu Suwat was born into a musician family in Prathum Thaani Province. His father, Thawin Atthakrit was a very famous khaung player. Khruu Suwat started his music
journey by learning Western instruments in 1963. When he was so small that he could not yet play any instrument, he helped other musicians carry drums for parades. Later he helped the group by playing cymbals (chaab yai) and then learned trumpet, clarinet, saxophone and other instruments in the brass band. He started studying Thai music in 1965 on the khaung wong lek (small gong circle) in his father’s ensemble. All his family members were in the same ensemble. I first interviewed his father at his house when I was an undergraduate. There I saw many musical instruments in the house and I was mesmerized by a set of piiphaat instruments. They were decorated with mother-of-pearl and they were all white and inviting. I mentioned that to Khruu Suwat when I interviewed him. He smiled and told me that those instruments were still at his home. Khruu Suwat has six siblings. His older brother plays ranaat thum, the second brother plays ranaat ek, he is the third one and play khaung wong lek, his younger brother play khaung wong yai, the younger sister sings, and the youngest brother plays ching. Beside studying music in his family, he also studied with master Phaitoon Chanlaa, the pii player. The main reason that he studied pii was so that he could replace the musicians in his family’s ensemble who were often sick and caused many problems. He first learned to play pii when he was only eleven years old. However, at that time he could not do circular breathing yet as required for proper pii performance, so he quit for a while, and then picked the pii up again when he saw another pii player who had once been a student of his own father, playing in a music competition against his own ensemble. He felt betrayed. With anger in his heart and deep sorrow for his family, Khruu Suwat redoubled his effort to learn pii. He practiced pii very hard, mastered circular breathing and attained the highest level of pii repertoire. He
studied with the pîi masters Khruu Somnuk Booncharean, Khruu Boontern and Khruu Phuna who was the father of Khruu Somnuk, another student of Khruu Khonglaythong at the Thai Music Division. In addition, Khruu Suwat studied pîi chawaa with Master Bunchuoy Sowat who is the highest pîi student of Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong.

During 1971-77, he took a job as Thai musician at the Thai music Department in the Royal Air Force. His monthly salary was 450 Thai baht, and he gave 200 to his father each month. Then, he was transferred to work at the Thai Music Division in 1977. He mentioned that as he was a musician who normally played only at his house and at the Royal Air Force, when he transferred to work at the Thai Music Division, he needed to change many things in his music. At his new workplace there were many new thaang (variations) in the music and repertoire that was new to him; he also had to learn how to perform to accompany dance, which was difficult for him at first.

At the Thai Music Division, he had many opportunities to perform Thai music for royalty. The most proud moment in his life as a musician was when his director at the Thai Music Division, Master Oongkarn Kleepchuean asked him to go to Playnern Palace, where Princess Sirindhorn lives, to play pîi chawaa for the krit (sword) dance. The Princess wanted to dance and asked for a pîi player to accompany her. At that time, the other two well-known pîi players, Khruu Peep and Khruu Bunchuoy were performing Thai music abroad, so Khruu Suwat took their place. As soon as the Princess saw him waiting at the Playnern Palace, she said, “I can dance now, the pîi player is here.” This made Khruu Suwat burst into tears knowing that the Princess recognized him as a pîi player. It was not
only him that had a chance to work for the Princess—all of his family has. Six of them are in the Royal Military as musicians and also work in other organizations playing Thai music. When Suwat’s father passed away, the Princess went to his funeral. It is not common for royalty to attend the funeral of a non-royal person who has passed away. This was thus a very special appearance, made by the Princess because his family worked as musicians for the nation and in return, the Princess showed her appreciation to his family by coming to the funeral.

Khruu Suwat is married to Khruu Matetaa Atthakrit who also works at the Thai Music Division. They have one daughter who is now twenty-two years old; she loves Thai music and learned some, but does not take it as her occupation.

**Khruu Thanyatip Khonglaythong**

Khruu Thanyatip Khonglaythong is the wife of Khruu Peep Khonglaythong. She also works at the Thai Music Division. Her old name was Areri Thabsin and then she later changed it to Thanyatip on the advice of a fortuneteller when she was hired as a musician at the Thai Music Division. She was born in Phetchaburi Province, into a musician house. She has thirteen siblings. Her mother is a dancer and a singer who performs lakhau theater. Mr. Prayun Thassanaa, her uncle, works at the Royal Police Office and plays music. Her mother’s family includes musicians who live in Phetchaburi province and are known as the Thassanaa Family, and they have a piiphaat ensemble. Along with her sisters, she studied piiphaat with her uncles in Phetchaburi and later studied with Khruu Kalong Phuangthongkhum in Bangyai, Nonthaburi province. Khruu
Kalong was a musician at the Royal Police Office. Khruu Lek Ketthraa was Khruu Kalong’s assistant at that time and he was a musician at the Royal Navy. Many years ago, when I trained at the Royal Navy as part of my undergraduate education, I met and worked with Khruu Lek Ketthraa. Khruu Thayathip and her family also studied with him.

The most notable thing is that her ensemble was an all-female piiphaat ensemble, which is very uncommon in Thailand, where male musicians are preferred for piiphaat. When she studied music at various houses, she would get up around 4 a.m. and study from a master for several hours before going to school or work. She has an excellent memory, and she learned several thaang (variations) for multiple instruments and later taught them to her sisters. The members of her female piiphaat ensemble performed for the first time at Wat Phraphireen in a wai khruu ceremony where many musicians traditionally gather together for music competitions. The event lasted all night. It was the first time a female piiphaat ensemble performed there. At that time she was only around fifteen years old. In 1984, she came to help out at the Thai Music Division and five years later was hired to work there as a musician. She now holds the position of senior musician, the highest position at the Thai Music Division besides the director. She and Khruu Peep did not have children. She, however, does have many nephews who play music. She teaches them that as a musician, you have to be in a good mood, be very easy to work with, and be very polite. Many of them told her that their income was never enough, but for her, her income was enough and she knew how to manage her own budget well. That is one of the main reasons why many of her nephews did not continue working as musicians. For her, the benefit of being a musician is that wherever she goes,
she has friends. People love and take a good care of musicians, she said with smile on her face.

Her education was equivalent to high school and later she studied more language but did not continue. Her family did not want her to go to school because they needed her to learn and perform piūphaat. When one of her sisters passed a test and was accepted into nursing school, her family still did not want her go. Music was the most important thing in their lives. They obeyed their parents, and it was only her male siblings that had a chance to obtain bachelor’s degrees.

She wanted to obtain higher education to at least be seen as a “good match” for Khruu Peep in society, but Khruu Peep told her that if he wanted someone who had a Master’s degree, he would not have chosen her to be his wife; he wanted her to give up pursuing education and focus on her work as a musician at the Thai Music Division. She compares her life to many other musicians who have academic degrees, but did not have a chance to work as close to royalty as she does, so she expressed no regrets that she did not continue to study in the system.

Khruu Thanyatip works for the Princess at Playnern Palace and has had many chances to perform music in front of royalty. She regards these opportunities to work for royalty as a result of her having so much merit (bun). To perform for royalty is the highest position in life that she could possibly attain, and nothing else is more important to her than this. She was born into a poor family, but music has enabled her to have a chance to be where she is now. Khruu Sirichaichan Fakjamroon was Princess Sirindhorn’s music teacher and the director of the Fine Arts Department, and he helped Khruu Thanyatip
and her family by selecting her to perform for the Princess. She considers it “phraakhun [favor] from the royalty” for her to have this life.

**Khruu Yuthanaa Chidthuam**

There are normally two drummers who play in the KSPC ensemble but I was only able to interview one of them while I was in Thailand, *Khruu* Yuthanaa Chidthuam. In 2012, he was in the position of *Duriyangka sinlapin chamnanngaan C6*, musician at the Thai Music Division. He married twice, and has one son with his first wife. After divorcing from his first wife, his son lived with his ex-wife in the south of the country and he pays for child support. He had a daughter with his current wife and she was about one year old when I interviewed him. The daughter lives with her grandmother in Nakhon Si Thammarat province. His current wife is a *lakhaun* theater player from the south. *Khruu* Yuthanaa was born in Samutprakarn province into a music family. His father has a *piiphaat* ensemble that performs in town at least one per week. *Khruu* Yuthanaa started learning music when he was only four years old. He still often travels with his family’s ensemble to perform music. His mother took him to a master’s house to first learn how to play *ranaat ek* (xylophone). The master, *Khruu* Jaui Chuuwong, was also a student of his own grandfather, *Khruu* Changwangsuan Chidthuam who had been a musician in the palace. He also learned to play *khaung wong yai* at home. Even when he was not yet capable of performing any song on melodic instruments, he played rhythmic instruments such as *chaap* and *krab* in the ensemble. For his first performance of Thai music in his hometown, he received 15 Thai Baht and was so happy. However, he did not have much
chance to play with his friends from school when he was young because his parents wanted him to practice music at home. He practiced music every day after school to obey his parents. He was very frustrated and tired because he wanted to go out and play with his friends. Later, he developed friendships with other young musicians from other ensembles when going out to perform and he learned to love music more and more. After finishing his elementary school in Samutprakarn province, he went to Bangkok to continue his music learning at the Fine Arts Department, which was a dream come true. He felt that “it was the best music school in the country.” Sadly, he did not pass his exam the first time he came because he was so nervous he could not play anything. A year later, he came back and took the test again. This time he passed, and started learning khaung wong yai again.

Not so long after he started school, a drum teacher, Khruu Prathomrat Thintuaranin saw him and told him to start learning drumming. Drummers refer to Khruu Prathomrat by the nickname Paa Thom [Father Thom]. Paa Thom took Khruu Yuthanaa to many performances outside of the school. During this time Khruu Yuthanaa had many chances to watch, learn, and perform drums with many well-known musicians. He said that these times were the greatest experience for his music career, and that he made so much money, too.

Khruu Sahawat Plempriichaa taught him drumming for six years at the College of Dramatic Arts in Bangkok. The first thing he would do in the morning when he arrived at school is to practice taphoon. “Even though my hands hurt so badly when I started drumming, it was so much fun to play”, he said. His teacher was very patient and had
many jokes to tell students each day which helped everyone to become very close. He learned music happily until he could play all kind of drums. Beginning around 1994 he worked as a musician at the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat. He ordained as a monk there for twenty days also, mainly because his father wanted him to stop drinking. He learned to chant well because he had heard chanting many times when performing music at houses and temples. He realized that he had memorized all the chants already.

While he was in the south, he also had a chance to learn the local style of the [Western] violin because he liked the sound of it and because the songs from the south are fast and fun. He mentioned that many of the songs from the south are about being near the sea, which is a very happy and relaxing image for him. He learned violin from Khruu Juulim Prommin who also plays pìi and khlui. I also met with Khruu Juulim when I travelled to the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat for a KSPC workshop in 2012. (Sadly, Khruu Juulim passed away in 2013.) Khruu Yuthanaa also tried to play pìi, but he did not like it due to his smoking habit and was afraid that his teacher would find out about it. He never used notation while he studied, but he wrote down notation after he finished learning each new song. He now uses the notation only when he forgets part of a song.

He worked in the south for ten years. Around 2003 he was transferred to the Thai Music Division to work as a drummer. He performs for many events as ordered by the palace or government offices, and there are additional events to perform beyond those
main duties. He feels that he has a great job and is glad that he is able to support his family.

**Lerkiat Mahavinijchaimontri**

Lerkiat Mahavinijchaimontri is the *sau* player at the Thai Music Division. Sometimes people call him Pao or Pao Bunjin, a character from a Chinese movie, to joke about his dark skin color. His position in 2012 was *Duriyangka Sinlapin Awusoo*. He married a *sau duang* player from Chulalongkorn University. They had gone to the same school but in different years. They have two daughters, and they are learning both Thai and Western Music. *Kruu* Lerkiat went to elementary school at Wat Aummarinthararam school and then Jitladaa for high school. Then he went to Chulalongkorn University for a Bachelor’s degree in music in 1989 and finished in 1993. He later went to the same university to pursue his master degree in music; however, after only one year at the university, he realized that he did not like working on paper and he preferred playing and teaching music. He chose not to continue studying and he changed his focus to totally devote attention to performing music. For his undergraduate work, he attended the university under the project of *Silapaa Diiden Haeng Chat* (‘great arts of the nation project’), which enabled him to enter university without passing an entrance test because of his musical ability.

Since the time he was young, he has won very many first prizes in Thai music competitions. His mother is a singer at the Thai Music Division. She is sixty-six years old, and beyond working at the Thai Music Division, she also teaches at Bansomdejchaopraya
Rajabhat University and Jitladaa school where Khruu Lerkiat studied. Khruu Lerkiat started his musical training officially when he was thirteen years old. His first teacher, Khruu Won Aunchan, taught him to play sau uu. Khruu Won and his mother were colleagues at Jitladaa school, and their house was near the teacher’s house, so when he was young he would ride his bicycle to the teacher’s house for his lesson every weekend. The first sau uu that Lerkiat uses was made by Khruu Won.

He studied with Khruu Won Aunchan for several years and then his mother took him to many more sau teachers including Khruu (Term) Bencharong Thanakosate, a very famous sau player and National Artist in Thailand. Khruu Lerkiat studied sau saam sai with Khruu Chalerm Muangpreesii at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. Khruu Lerkiat has had many great opportunities to learn and perform with great musicians in Thailand, partly because of his mother’s position at the samnakkaan sangkhiit and because she is respected by other musicians.

He developed his own style when he studied with Khruu Thiira Phumani, who was a sau player at the Thai Music Division. In 1986, he won a sau saam sai competition, and then he was accepted as a student by the famous sau player Khruu Udom Arunrat. Khruu Peep took him to Khruu Udom’s house to ask the teacher to accept Khruu Lerkiat as his student. Another sau student of Khruu Udom, Khruu Suporn Chanapan, helped to teach Khruu Lerkiat in the distinctive style of the great sau saam sai player Praya Phuumii Sawin who had worked for King Rama VI and the Thai Music Division, and who had passed away just a few years earlier. After winning the prestigious Sorn Thong music competition, Khruu Thiira Phumani took Khruu Lerkiat to his own teacher, Khruu Chonkon
(Worayos) Suksaychon to study more styles of sau. Whenever any of his teachers had performances, Khruu Lerkiat was often called to play and would learn new styles right before each performance. While he was at Jitladaa school, Khruu Bunchuoy Sowat from Chulalongkorn University came to teach his ensemble, and because of that, his ensemble won another music competitions three years in a row. Khruu Peep took him to Khruu Jareanjai Sunthonwaathin, another national artist, to study sau saam sai and she later wrote Khruu Lerkiat a letter of recommendation to help him to get into Chulalongkorn University. He majored in sau duang instead of sau saam sai because there were no suitable teachers when he was there. Khruu Pichit Chaiserii taught him sau during his second year at the university.

He has been quite fortunate to have had so many exceptional teachers who were also open minded about his learning different styles of sau (thaang sau). When he was performing for his annual exam at Chulalongkorn and completely forgot the thaang sau that he was supposed to play that day, he improvised his own thaang and finished the song. The teacher who had taught him the thaang sau has was supposed to play came to him after the test and told him, “I am not mad at you for forgetting what I taught you, and I will still give you a top score because you were able to create your own thaang and able to finish the song”. Khruu Lerkiat was happy and grateful that his teacher was so kind to him.

Khruu Apichai Pongluelert

Apichai Pongluelert (Chaay) is the jakhee player for KSPC at the Thai Music Division. He took a position of Duriyangkha Sinlapin Chamnankhan in 2012. At the age of
forty, he is still single. His father was Chinese and his mother was Thai, and they have both already passed away. He is one of twelve siblings in the family in the south. No one in his family plays any musical instruments except him, and many of them do not like Thai music at all. He still questions himself as to why he ended up being a musician. He had yearned to play music since he was young. At home, his family members worked hard to make ends meet. He was born in Trung province and only he and one of his sisters came to live in Bangkok. He joined a Thai music ensemble when he was in elementary school. One day, he borrowed a ranaat ek from school to practice at home. His father hated Thai music so much that he broke the ranaat ek. Khruu Apichai was shocked to learn how much his father did not like Thai music. He never brought any instrument home again. But at school, he continued to learn Thai music, eventually focusing on stringed instruments. He had a chance to participate in a Thai music competition at Songklaa Nakarin University and fell in love with competitive playing.

After finishing three years of high school, he searched for a music school without any support from his family. He attended school at the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat to continue his study for five more years, majoring in jakhee. He studied with Khruu Wimonsrii Rattanansororat, Khruu Wannapon Sawasdii and jakhee with Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom.

He loved Thai music so much that he would listen to the Thai music radio station and transcribed the music in notation for himself to practice and perform. Thai music has so many musical accents and emotions, he said. He loves them all and cannot specifically tell which song that he likes most. After finishing two years of study, he continued to study
at the Rachamongkol Technology Institution in Bangkok. He also found a job as a *jakhee* teacher at the College of Dramatic Arts in Bangkok. Luckily, right after he finished his bachelor’s degree, he was hired to teach at the College of Dramatic Arts in Supanburi and worked there for eight years before being transferred to the Thai Music Division in 2004. He has performed before royalty both in Supanburi province and Bangkok, and in France on a trip with the Princess.

He likes the idea of mixing Thai musical instruments with other string instruments, but said that it has to be presented with the perspective of addressing the ability of Thai musical instruments that are capable of playing and being mixed with other musical instruments from another cultures:

Thai music means traditional and in the old style, the real Thai, Thai musical instruments not Western instruments—music as presented in the country of Thailand. It is the identity (*ebkhalak*) and the uniqueness of Thai musical instruments that suggests the customs of the Thai. The new idea to mix Western musical instruments with Thai musical instruments started with the string ensemble, and it just happened in the Thai society very recently.
He himself also plays the Chinese guzheng (zither) and loves it very much. He sometimes mixes guzheng with other stringed instruments for performances beyond his main duties at the Thai Music Division. At the Thai Music Division, he pointed out that “they perform music in traditional style to preserve national identity (ëkhalak khaung chaat) already, but other ensembles outside of this institution can mix instruments for specific events”.

**Khruu Suriya (Tay) Chidthuam**

*Khruu* Suriya Chitthuam (*Khruu* Tay) is the sau duang player for KSPC. He was born in the Prapradang District of Samut Prakarn province. He was one of eight children, four boys and four girls. He is the youngest one in this music family. All are capable of playing Thai music, both piiphaat and stringed instruments. His parents have ensembles at home and perform music professionally. But only two of the eight siblings have permanent jobs as musicians in government institutions. His older brother plays percussion instruments in a Thai music ensemble in the Royal Army, and he works at the Thai Music Division. His parents are related to Changwang Suan, who worked inside the palace as a musician during King Rama VI. His father was an adopted son of Changwang Suan.

*Khruu* Suriya studied Thai music at home with his parents and other teachers before coming to Bangkok to continue his music study at Collage of Dramatic Arts for five years, with a major in stringed instruments. There he learned all the basic lessons, but at the time he did not so much love the sound of sau uu and sau duang. He had a chance to
study jakhee with Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan, a well-known jakhee player and a student of Khruu Tongdii Sujaekkul. But Khruu Suriya did not like this instrument much either. After he had gained the ability to teach sau uu and sau duang, he learned sau saam sai from Khruu Chalerm Muangprasen who was especially skillful at sau saam sai at the College of Dramatic Arts. Still Khruu Suriya was not fond of the sound of fiddles. He felt that there was something still missing from the teachings of these great music teachers. His inspiration to learn more sau emerged when he saw a Thai movie called Phra Wetsandaun (‘Life of the Buddha’) in which Khruu Thiira Phuman plays sau saam sai. He was touched by the sound that Khruu Thiira produced because of it smoothness and sweetness. He asked Khruu Thiira to teach him. Khruu Thiira told him to start from scratch, and to practice only bowing for several months. He studied with Khruu Thiira for about two years, and he fell “madly in love” with the sound of sau saam sai and the style of Khruu Thiira. He later continued his education at a teacher’s college, Wittayala Khruu Bansomdej for two more years and finished his bachelor’s degree in Thai Language in 1984. While working on his degree he also worked at the Royal Army as a Thai musician to help his family. He worked as a soldier-musician\(^2\) for seven years.

Then, in the year of 1993, the Thai Music Division had two open positions for string musicians, and he went for the test and was hired. The other position went to Khruu Lerkiat. Khruu Suriya is now not only a sau player, he is also the leader of the fourth piiphaat ensemble to his ability and experiences in both piiphaat and stringed ensembles.

\(^2\) Adler 2013, 98-102. Soldier-musicians serving in the Thai Royal military music divisions receive military titles and are trained as soldiers, but their duties are to serve as musicians for entertainment and ritual.
His main duty at the Thai Music Division is to perform in a stringed ensemble that accompanies dance.

He used to teach many places and at home, but his duty at the Thai Music Division now consumes much of his time and he often has to perform outside of Bangkok on short notice so he frequently cannot keep up his commitment to teach his students on a regular schedule. Instead he sometimes teaches his students at the Thai Music Division. His son is fourteen years old and is learning piiphaat at Collage of Dramatic Arts Bangkok, and Khruu Suriya will later teach his son how to play stringed instruments. He often brings his son along when he has events to perform.

**Power in the institution**

There are many levels at which power is managed among musicians at the Thai Music Division. It is customary for younger musicians, some as young as nineteen years old, to listen to the older musicians, even as little as a month older, because they have more experience in music and in life. The institution is very hierarchical. All of musicians at the Thai Music Division know each other and one another’s families well. The Director makes decisions about assigning musical ensembles to perform at each event, approving music projects and exhibitions for the National Theatre and other institutions, and when asked, arranges performances for events that promote living musicians or honor great teachers who have already passed away. However, the Director does not normally make these decisions alone but is helped by a group of senior musicians. Beyond
their main duty of performing music as ordered, the younger musicians may propose projects to the other musicians seek approval and conduct their projects and seek donors.

To prevent conflict among musicians in the institution, all the musicians tend to follow the order of seniority even though sometimes the younger ones do not agree with their seniors. I interviewed most of the musicians who work at the Thai Music Division about decision-making in the institution, and they said that it was up the older ones and that they, as the younger ones, must only follow and keep quiet. For example, while I was conducting fieldwork in Thailand, Khruu Peep was the Director of the Thai Music Division. I asked him about his responsibilities as the Director, and he responded that he did not want to be the Director, but that the order came from someone higher than him, so he had no choice, he could only follow the order. He said that one of the reasons he was promoted to be the Director of the Thai Music Division was because he is old and because his father was a great musician and had many great students who were then at the high point in their career. Out of respect to his teacher, he was a prestigious choice to receive the position of Director of the Thai Music Division. He mentioned that managing other musicians is a hard job, because he had no experience doing so. He receives help from many others to manage the musicians and do the paperwork. His wife, Khruu Thanyathip, also works at the Thai Music Division and helps him quite a bit. Those in higher positions tell him what to do, such as the director of the Fine Arts Department, Dr. Sirichaichan Fakjamroon, who is also a music teacher for Princess Sirinthorn. There are only a few female musicians at the Thai Music Division and they are mostly string players.
or singers. Some female musicians do not perform as much, as compared to the male musicians, and they do more paperwork instead.

An important duty that musicians from the Thai Music Division need to perform is to play sacred music (phleeng naphaat) for the wai khruu ritual for the Thai Music Division and for many of the Colleges of Dramatic Arts around the country. I witnessed three wai khruu rituals outside of Bangkok in which music was performed by the same group of musicians from the Thai Music Division. As I discussed in Chapter 2, power from the center is expanded outside of the center and here is an example. By sending musicians to the College of Dramatic Arts or the Thai Music Division ensures the authority of their thaang, and connects the music teachers and music students outside of Bangkok to the teachers of the center who once lived in the royal palaces. I interviewed Khruu Tanakrit Chareanchiib, from Collage of Dramatic Arts Roi Et, who studied pii for two years with Khruu Peep Khonglaythong at the Collage of Dramatic Arts Bangkok when Khruu Peep was a special guest teacher. At the wai khruu ritual in Roi Et, Khruu Tanakrit told me that when he or his teachers play sacred repertoire, the musicians play very politely and with their best manners, because the sound of music they play is a sign of their respect to the repertoire and their teachers.

Even though some musicians outside of Bangkok are able of performing and conducting the wai khruu ritual themselves, they pay respect to the senior teachers who have received special permission to conduct the ritual by preferring to have the musicians and ritual officiant come from Bangkok to conduct this special ritual. The ritual functions to maintain the authority of the center, and the periphery emulates the center in order to
gain power by putting their lineage of teachers and their connection back to the center on display, no matter how far they live from the center. Once a year, this *wai khruu* ritual takes place all over the country to remind the teachers and students who play Thai music of their roots and of the value of their role as musicians to support and promote national heritage. Many students outside of Bangkok told me that after attending the *wai khruu* ritual that they felt they had received approval from the teachers of the Thai Music Division and the Fine Arts Department, and that by performing music in front of them the students gained more confidence. During the *wai khruu* ritual, the students who are in their last stage of their education at their institution will receive permission to teach music to others (*rap maup*).

When I was a student of music at Mahasarakham University, in Northeast Thailand, the department was in relatively new and there were not yet enough music teachers to teach every musical instrument, so I and three of my classmates had music teachers from multiple institutions who came to the campus to teach us. We also studied Thai music with many music teachers from the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et. We all attended the *rap maup* ritual at the College where our music teachers taught. The ritual was an official public display of us, the students, receiving approval from the officiant and from the center. We felt the need to protect this valuable heritage not only for ourselves but for the sake of the country and the king. I also remember that when I was in high school, I joined the Thai music club and practiced after school almost every day. Once a year, my music teacher would take all of club members to the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et to attend their *wai khruu* ritual. At that time, I was young and did not understand
why we needed to go, but my teacher always told me “you play music for the nation, you play music for the country and you play music for the king”. It was a big deal to attend the wai khruu ritual for music students and music teachers, not just to be part of the ritual but also to feel a sense of belonging to the larger music institution that was bigger than just the College of Dramatic Arts and the Thai Music Division.

The Thai Music Division is a place for professional musicians and singers to have a career within the government. Many of these professional musicians also have their own music ensembles at home where they learned in their own music families and perform with other professional musicians for the public. However, when they perform in the Thai Music Division, these professional musicians have specific thaang they must follow. Through their work at the Thai Music Division, they ensure that the power and authority of performing Thai music emanates from the center, with royal support, out to the entire country.
Figure 8. KSPC from the Fine Arts Department performing at a funeral of Khruu Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaathin.
Chapter 5

Social Context of Khrueangsai Pii Chawaa in the Royal Capital City

The KSPC ensemble in Bangkok is a special place for only exceptional musicians who have a long and close relationship with the teachers who have played khrueangsai pii chawaa (KSPC) in the past.

The ‘selected’ musicians who play KSPC at present all work in the Thai Music Division, with the exception of just five other musicians who work at a few other institutions in the royal capital of Bangkok. In Bangkok, I identified only thirty living musicians able to play KSPC. They all learned from the same group of teachers who played KSPC in the Krom Mahorasop. Permission to participate in the ensemble is given orally by teachers and is known among the musicians themselves. Occasionally, musicians from other institutions may be invited to participate but only by those who regularly perform KSPC. The musicians are extremely selective about who they will invite to perform. They are also selective about who they will teach and who they allow to perform in public with the group. Beyond this extremely limited circle, there is no context for others to participate in KSPC in the royal capital.

The musicians maintain their prestige by keeping KPSC highly exclusive and closely associated with royalty, which is expressed also through the use of pii klaung ensemble, new music compositions from the reign of King Rama VI, and the selected texts for performing. Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan from Chulalongkorn University told me that he did not teach KSPC repertoire to any student as a sign of respect to his own teachers while they were still alive. In fact, he just started teaching KSPC to a few
students after his teachers had passed away. By stressing this point to his students, he hopes that his students will also delay teaching others until after he passes away, as a sign of respect. His students know to come to their teacher for advice and approval when they need it, and not to act alone. The musicians regard themselves as the gatekeepers for this high art form. Performances of KSPC, rarely given, demonstrate their ability to perform the difficult repertoire but also to demonstrate its inaccessibility. They also think that they are protecting the ensemble in order to maintain it at the highest quality. The musicians have earned a special reputation as a result of their teachers having received royal titles, social respect, and passing KSPC on to them, and they wish to keep it for themselves as long as possible. Many of the musicians I interviewed mentioned the religious notion of merit (bun) to account for the special status they have as musicians who can perform KPSC. Merit is an individual quality which refers to good deeds they did in their previous lives, and it cannot be transferred to someone else. They use the word ‘merit’ to refer to their fortune in having had the opportunity to study with the teachers that taught them and granted them permission to play KSPC. They often also refer to the musicians who used to play KSPC and who have already passed away by saying that there is a complete KSPC ensemble up in the heaven and the deceased can join the teachers there.

Customarily, the oldest musician in the group acts as the director of the group because of his experience playing in the ensemble. The most well known pê chawaa player of KSPC at present is Khruu Peep Khonglaythong. He also plays other musical instruments and is very widely respected both because of his skill and his humble character. He and his wife still work at the Thai Music Division even though Khruu Peep
has already retired. I interviewed him many times over the course of 2008-14 and have several of recordings of him and his father performing in KSPC ensembles. Khruu Peep learned piu from his father who also played in KSPC in the past. Even though his father has passed away, Khruu Peep still performs in his father’s style as much as possible. Another piu musician whom I interviewed, Khruu Suwat Atthakrit, said of Khruu Peep that, “in the last forty to fifty years, he still keeps his father’s style which has gained him high respect from both music teachers and musicians in the country.” Although at least four musicians that I interviewed came to work at the Thai Music Division and wished to have a chance to play in KSPC with Khruu Peep, only two have been granted permission to learn from Khruu Peep and perform in the KSPC ensemble. Khruu Peep said that he assigns musicians to the KSPC ensemble based on his perception of their manners and respectfulness for the repertoire and for the whole ensemble.

There are many requirements for skilled musicians to be able to perform in KSPC at the Thai Music Division. Not only do they have to know and improvise in all of the special repertoires, they have to know how to play respectfully according to the more experienced musicians in the ensemble. For example, when the sau uu plays one pattern that the sau duang happens to know well, the sau duang would not play that pattern again. If everyone plays simpler melodies for a section, one musician should not play a more virtuosic solo variation for that period because it would stand out. It is all about togetherness, and not embarrassing anyone in the ensemble by making the audience or other musicians think that one musician is better than another.
When they perform, the musicians do not use any notation. The compositions are long, complicated, and difficult to memorize. The repertoire for KSPC is very difficult to learn and to remember and the basic melodies are very easily lost when performed at the characteristic fast tempo. According to Khruu Peep, in the KSPC ensemble, “everyone must be fully confident. No matter how many times they have practiced KSPC, when they perform on stage, it will never be the same as when they practice.”

When they get lost performing on stage, as often happens, at that moment they have to create new melodies that fit with the main melody, while trying very hard not to steal melodies from the other instruments. Sometimes they get lost intentionally to trick other musicians in order to challenge them on stage. I observed this on several occasions when Khruu Jeeraphon played his sau uu in his teacher’s style of rapid double-time variation, because he knows that Khruu Pakorn also knows those patterns. Khruu Pakorn smiled and tried to play back to Khruu Jeeraphon with other variations. After finishing their performance, I asked Khruu Pakorn why he smiled. He replied that “it was fun and I wanted to play a trick back to Khruu Jeeraphon.” They both are good friends and had learned stringed instruments from the same teachers, so they know each other’s skills well enough to trick each other and still be able to respond on stage. On another occasion, when the drummer missed his note, he also smiled and just played basic patterns waiting for the other drum player to give him a signal to get back into the more complicated part again. Only the two drummers know how to get back in together. If they both got lost, they could only play basic patterns and wait for the pii chawaa to give them signal to get
back in with a new pattern. The drummer who got lost explained this to me after the concert.

Only a few musicians are capable of this kind of sophisticated improvisation. To hear and recognize which melodies the other musicians are playing onstage, they have to practice together and know how to anticipate each other’s reactions respectfully. This situation helps to develop trust among the musicians. As Khruu Peep said,

Musicians in the KSPC ensemble have to know each other well, and must really love and respect each other. They not only have to have high musical skill, but also have to have good manners to be a part of this ensemble. KSPC is simply not a place for just anyone to participate.

Because of his position in the Thai Music Division, Khruu Peep is the most respected KSPC musician at present and only he has power and authority to pick and choose who will perform KSPC with him in the group. He needs to know both the musicians’ skills and that he can trust their manners. One who plays wrong melodies might break the concentration of other musicians, and that might bring the whole ensemble down on stage. Because KSPC is a special place for only musicians of the highest skill to participate and perform, expectations are very high among musicians who play KSPC. So, in his own institution, Khruu Peep makes sure that the musicians perform their best and are well respected, and most importantly set a great example for others to watch. Khruu Suwat Atthakrit, another KSPC musician at the Thai Music Division, gave some reasons why there are such a limited number of musicians who can play KSPC. “It is very hard to play in KSPC and it is up to the pii player,” he said. The pii player he
mentioned in the interview is referring to Khruu Peep. Even though Khruu Suwat and Khruu Peep are the same age and work at the same place, Khruu Peep is the son of Khruu Thiap and has played KSPC longer than Khruu Suwat is, so all the decisions for KSPC depend on Khruu Peep. Another reason that the pii player is the director of KSPC ensemble is that the main repertoire comes from the pii repertoire, which was later mixed with the stringed instruments. The main repertoires for pii are still the same, but the strings must adjust to be able to play with the pii chawaa. Khruu Suwat also said that “only the KSPC ensemble at the Thai Music Division is the correct one, but there are, however, other KSPC ensembles that have copied their style.” He feels that when he performs KSPC with the group, “the sound of the music fits together smoothly within its own system.” He agrees that the KSPC ensemble is a place for highly skilled musicians to show off their great ability. To perform together smoothly, musicians must know who will play which instruments and which melodies, and be able to play with and play around those melodies on their own instruments. Khruu Suwat has been working at the Thai Music Division for thirty-six years, and he said that “KSPC’s door is still locked mainly because if the door is opened, anyone could walk in and out. Musicians here keep this door locked for a reason.”

It is this attitude of KSPC musicians that makes the ensemble hard to access and limits the number of musicians who can participate, and that is the main reason why this unique musical ensemble is played by so few.

Because the pii chawaa is the star of the KSPC ensemble, that player takes the role of director and makes decisions for the entire ensemble. In Thailand, there are fewer
musicians who can play *pii chawaa* compared to other musical instruments, due to the technical difficulty and the few occasions to perform *pii chawaa*. Among those, not all of the *pii chawaa* players are able to participate in KSPC ensemble. All musicians who play KSPC have studied with teachers who play KSPC and whose knowledge is passed as to family. Many musicians refer to their teachers as father or mother as a sign of great respect and feel themselves to be related to their teachers closely.\(^1\) Some of the musicians who play KSPC are actually related by blood. A typical example is *Khruu* Thiap Khonglaythong who was one of a few musicians who played KSPC ensemble in the past. He had many music students in his lifetime, but only two of them are well known for performing KSPC and being recognized for it. They are *Khruu* Bunchuoy Sowat and *Khruu* Thiap’s son *Khruu* Peep Khonglaythong. Both are now past retirement age but still teach some music. At present *Khruu* Bunchuoy Sowat teaches Thai music at Chulalongkorn University and *Khruu* Peep is a professional musicians at the Thai Music Division. *Khruu* Peep also considers *Khruu* Bunchuoy Sowat to be his music teacher as well as his older brother. *Khruu* Bunchuoy Sowat comes from a big music family. At Chulalongkorn University *Khruu* Bunchuoy Sowat teaches *pii chawaa* to some students, including repertoire for KSPC, and he has one student, *Khruu* Pattara Komkhum, who is at present a music teacher in the same department who is able to perform *pii chawaa* and *khlui lip* in the KSPC ensemble. This student has also studied *pii chawaa* from *Khruu* Peep. At a recent KSPC performance at the National Theatre in 2012, this student played *khlui* \(^1\) Wong 2001, 63.
lip and Khruu Peep played pii chawaa. So, with at least two great music teachers’ approval, this student is now able to participate in the teachers’ group and perform in public.

The knowledge of KSPC is transmitted orally from teachers to selected students directly. There are no students who learn KSPC repertoire from recordings. Even for the few students who have learned KSPC repertoire from their teachers, they still have a hard time proving their ability for other musicians due to their lack of experience. When these students perform KSPC, there are always some teachers to perform with them.

Here is an example of the musicians’ kinship system and the long time close relationship between teachers and students of KSPC performing in the royal city. One string musician who studied with the first group of musicians who performed KSPC, Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan, studied at Wittayalai Nattasin and then taught at the College of Dramatic Arts for eleven years before moving to teach at the music department at Chulalongkorn University. He is now past his retirement age but still teaching some music at Chulalongkorn University. While studying at the College of Dramatic Arts, Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan studied jakhee with Khruu Tongdii Sujaritkul and Khruu Lamead Jittasawii both of whom played in KSPC with Khruu Pravet Kumoot, Khruu Luang Phairau Siangsau, and Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong. Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan said to me during an interview, “I had a lot of merit (bun), to see and watch great music teachers practicing KSPC when I was a student.” He liked to stay after school to practice on his own until his teachers saw that he was able to transpose fingering on jakhee comfortably. The teacher then taught him a thaung for KSPC. He and his two friends who also played stringed instruments started from there. I will discuss in more
detail his two friends in the next chapter. At present, these three musicians are still very good friends and play KSPC together on special occasions. When they were young, and when teachers had music performances outside of the Wittayalai Nattasin, these three students would follow along and often performed with their teachers around the royal capital. They were recognized by their skills in Thai music society and when their teachers went to perform without these three boys, people would ask about them. Their reputations were built by their teachers and by themselves as they performed together on stage. After Khruu Pakorn finished his eleven years of learning music, he took a job helping his teacher teach jakhee at the College of Dramatic Arts. He was in the first group of teachers in the Fine Arts Department at Chulalongkorn University, where he continues to teach at present even after his retirement age. He started teaching there in 1985, and since then two of his jakhee students graduated and became music teachers at the same institution as well, and they both are able to play jakhee in the KSPC ensemble, but only on very limited occasions. He started to teach KSPC after his teachers had passed away. One of his students, Mr. Prasan Wongwirojruk and Mr. Anant Nakkong were able to perform KSPC with other music students from another department on one occasion when they were in their last year of college. Other than that, KSPC was only performed by teachers and invited guests.

Only basic knowledge about KSPC is taught at Chulalongkorn University, and there is no KSPC ensemble for students. “It is hard to find a good pii chawaa player,” Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan said. So when the department wants to perform KSPC for special occasions, he has to invite a pii chawaa player from another institution to help.
“The students know only the basics of KSPC, and only a few are able to perform in KSPC ensemble, and a limited number of songs,” he added. Khruu Peep is often the guest performer for KSPC for this institution.

Unlike in the Thai Music Division, where professional musicians come to work together and have time to practice as long as they work there, the main limitation for performing KSPC at Chulalongkorn University is the limited period of study for students. After students finish their degree, they have fewer chances to perform KSPC in a group. A few musicians who graduated from the institution told me that they no longer have a chance to play KSPC at all. They might play KSPC just for fun among themselves, with very close friends who have studied in the past, but they do not perform in public. They are very humble about their own skill level, which is quite normal in Thailand. Not many musicians talk about their own ability. But musicians’ abilities become known from other musicians who have seen them perform and speak for them.

A similar situation applies to other institutions that teach KSPC to their students. Not all institutions that teach KSPC have enough music teachers to cover every instrument in the ensemble, especially pii chawaa players or drummers who know Saramaa. Also, the KSPC repertoire is very hard to learn and requires much time to practice and memorize. Most of music students in these institutions just learn about KSPC and most of them will not learn to perform it. For example, Khruu Pakron explains that
There are many requirements for *jakhee* before learning KSPC. Students have to know the songs in and out and be able to play in several *thaang*, and be intelligent about choosing melodies. The form of the hand position tells the fluidity and smoothness of the fingering positions of the students. There should not be any jumping so wildly when playing on *jakhee*. It is impolite to do so.

As I mentioned earlier, *Khruu* Peep gave his approval to two musicians to participate in the KSPC ensemble at the Thai Music Division, and one of the two is *Khruu* Apichai Ponguelert. He is a *jakhee* player in KSPC at the Thai Music Division. He is very quiet, both in his personality and in music. He studied with many great musicians but has never shown off about his skills. He has a long history of studying *jakhee* with great musicians who played KSPC, which was the main reason he gained approval from *Khruu* Peep to participate in the ensemble. *Khruu* Apichai had no opportunity to play KSPC before coming to Bangkok even through he had learned the repertoire from some of his teachers. He got a job after finishing his bachelor’s degree at Rachamongkol Technology Institution. While he pursued his studies, he also taught *jakhee* at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. Right after he finished his degree, he got an official job at the College of Dramatic Arts Suphanburi (about one hundred km. northwest of Bangkok) and worked there for eight years before he was transferred to work at the Thai Music Division in 2004. He first learned about KSPC as a student in Nakhon Si Thammarat with *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom but at that time he did not understand it well.

He first performed KSPC as a student in 1991, and only one song, *Khamen Rachaburi*, for a Cambodian troupe that was visiting Thailand. The ensemble performed at the National Theatre. It was a student group that included three teachers and he
played jakhee with his long time friend, Khruu Somboon Boonwong playing sau uu and another student from Roi Et playing sau duang, while pii chawaa and drums were played by music teachers. He has no problem playing music with someone he already knows, but if he has to perform with someone whose ability he does not know, without practicing, he prefers not to perform at all just because he does not want to harm his reputation with a performance that does not go well. While protecting his own reputation, he also wants to protect his teachers’ reputations and not embarrass them. When he came to work at the Thai Music Division, Khruu Peep asked him to perform in a KSPC ensemble. Khruu Apichai will do whatever Khruu Peep tells him for music performances as a sign of respect. In addition to working at the Thai Music Division, Khruu Apichai runs his own music shop where he and a few music teachers teach music lessons privately. However, at his own shop, he has never taught any students KSPC.

On March 4, 2012 during my third fieldwork trip, I witnessed a conversation between three great musicians who worked at the Thai Music Division. They were practicing KSPC for a performance on March 15. I was there to record the rehearsal environment. The practice started with chitchat among the few musicians who were going to perform on stage. Khruu Peep and Khruu Apichai were also there to practice KSPC. At the time they were warming up with their musical instruments. The ensemble was not yet complete because two of the musicians that were supposed to be practicing with the group had other obligations to perform music outside of Bangkok, so they were left only with the pii chawaa, drums, jakhee, sau duang and ching.
After warming up their fingers, they rehearsed the same song several times and after each time they would discuss how they would like to do it on stage. The ensemble was led by *pìi chàwaa*. The drummer’s teacher, who is a well-known drum player himself and already retired, was nearby the rehearsal area and listening to the rehearsal the whole time. At the end of the rehearsal, he came to tell the drummer which drum pattern he should play to accompany the song that they were practicing. Unfortunately, *Khruu* Peep did not agree, and told the drummer’s teacher that they used another pattern to accompany the same song for KSPC in the past, according to a recording made by his father; therefore, he said, the drummer should use the same pattern regardless of the appropriate pattern for the song when played by other ensembles. It was frustrating for the drummer due to his younger age and position in the ensemble and in the institution. Because his drum teacher was not going to be with him on stage, he felt obliged to play the pattern that the *pìi chàwaa* player told him to play. He obeyed the authority of the *pìi chawaa* player who is the leader of the KSPC ensemble even though the pattern was not what his drum teacher told him to play. As a researcher facing this tense situation between these two great teachers, I could see that *Khruu* Peep kept total control of the KSPC ensemble. I later looked at the *saw* player and the *jakhee* player. They could only sit quietly during the conversation. They looked at me, and just nodded a little.

Permission to participate in KSPC is very hard to acquire. However, there are exceptional occasions where permission is allowed. On my first experience watching a KSPC ensemble perform on stage, after sending many written requests to the host institution asking permission to record the performance on stage, I finally received
permission to record the whole concert right before the concert started. On this special occasion that took place at Chulalongkorn University, I saw musicians from the Thai Music Division invite an extra *jakhee* player to perform with them. This invited guest was *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom from the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et. He was the teacher of Apichai Ponguelert and Somboon Boonwong at Nakhon Si Thammarat. However, after asking several musicians who performed that day, no one would give me a clear answer why the ensemble needed two *jakhee* players that day. I later went to the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et to interview *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom and he told me that *Khruu* Peep invited him to perform with the group to make the ensemble stronger and because he knew well the musical skill of two of his stringed students who would also perform on stage with him, so it would be like playing with his own ensemble. Another invited music teacher from the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok, *Khruu* Somboon Boonwong, who used to work at Thai Music Division before being transferred to work at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. That day *Khruu* Somboon Boonwong played *sau duang* on stage. There were thus two students of *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom on stage with him that day, and each was being promoted and approved in public by both *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom and *Khruu* Peep Khonglaythong.
Another occasion where both teachers and students performed KSPC together was for Khruu Tongdii Sujaritkul’s 100th anniversary in 2012. She had already passed away many years ago, but students still celebrate her birthday by performing music on stage. It was a big event. Khruu Tongdii was one of the few musicians who played KSPC in the first generation. She had also played KSPC with Khruu Thiap. The students who performed that day had studied with both Khruu Tongdii and Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong. Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom, Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan, and Khruu Chavangsak Phothisombat were the three young boys who had had a chance to study KSPC in the past when they were students at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. All three came to perform KSPC to honor their teachers together at this very special event. On that day, Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom played sau uu, Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan played jakhee and Khruu Chavangsak Phothisombat played sau duang. The pii chawaa was once again played by Khruu Peep Khonglaythong and the two drums were played by two professional
musicians from the Thai Music Division. The *khlu lip* was played by a student of *Khruu* Bunchuoy and *Khruu* Peep. Additional musicians on stage to perform KSPC that day were *Khruu* Somboon Boonwong who was a student of *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom, playing *sau duang*, and *Khruu* Kumkom Pornprasit, who is a student of *Khruu* Pakorn Rodchangphuan, playing *jakhee*.

This KSPC ensemble featured the second and third generations, teachers and students (who themselves are now also teachers) performing to honor the teacher of their teachers together. Performing of stage with musicians who had directly studied with teachers who played KSPC in the past help them to gain trust from the Thai musical society and ensured their place in the ensemble. Even these middle-aged and highly experienced musicians could only play KSPC with their senior teachers’ approval and together with them on stage.

There are several ways in which knowledge of KSPC is protected by and for an exclusive group of musicians in Bangkok. Only a few musicians are able to perform in the KSPC ensemble, and even fewer are capable of teaching KSPC to others. A few students who have had a chance to learn some KSPC repertoire are unable to perform KSPC outside of their own institution without seeking permission from other musicians who will come and help them. All the musicians I interviewed believe that no single teacher is able to teach an entire ensemble because no musician has enough knowledge and experience in all the musical instruments of the ensemble. The knowledge is only transmitted from one teacher to one or two students at a time, and so the total number of players remains quite limited. Occasions to perform are also limited. Musicians keep KSPC exclusive to
protect it as it is and keep it as closely as possible to what used to be as the first generation played in their recordings.

The selected musicians who perform KSPC keep their knowledge closely with them and carefully handpick students who will receive this knowledge. KSPC was never more widespread in the past and at present there are still a very limited number of musicians who are permitted by great KSPC musicians to learn and perform in public. Keeping this ensemble exclusive makes this ensemble especially unique. Few people even have a chance to see or hear it, raising the expectations not only among musicians themselves but also those who want to hear this ensemble perform live. Several teachers whom I have mentioned refer to their opportunities to be a part of this special ensemble as being due to their bun (merit). It was due to their merit that their teachers gave them a place in the ensemble. According to my interviews, teachers protect the traditional knowledge about KSPC they received from their teachers as a sign of respect and at the same time protect and preserve this ensemble. They make sure only to pass along knowledge to those who would be able to receive the knowledge from them and keep KSPC as exclusive as they have.

The Audience for KSPC

In this section I explain the role of the audience for KSPC in the royal capital. This special ensemble is not performed often even though the musicians who perform in it are very skillful. The KSPC ensemble will perform only when ordered from above, such as from the director of the Thai Music Division, from the royal princess, or through an
agreement among top musicians to perform to honor their teachers who used to perform KSPC at so-called ‘special events’ such as 90-, 100-, and 120-year anniversaries of those teachers. The contexts for performing KSPC are very limited, and even those are not widely circulated in the royal capital. Opportunities to hear this ensemble perform are few and it is even harder to find an audience who can much appreciate this ensemble. I will explain the situation of the audience for KSPC on several occasions, and report what the audience thinks about this ensemble: besides interviewing musicians who perform KSPC, I also interviewed people in the audience.

Many people in the audience expressed concern that the ensemble would not last long in Thai music society due to the limitations on who could participate in the ensemble and be socially accepted. On one occasion, I witnessed a special event to honor one of the KSPC teachers, Khruu Tongliti Sujaritkul, on his 100th anniversary. It took place at the large hall of National Theatre. Another occasion I witnessed KSPC performed was at the funeral for a well-known musician, Khruu Sudcit Durijapranit, which took place at a temple in Bangkok. After talking to audiences on these both of these occasions, I found not many people who knew much about KSPC. Those I interviewed only knew that the musicians who perform KPSC have to be exceptional and that the musicians play very fast and high-pitched, and many people said they did not like the sound of the pii chawaa.

On these two occasions there were however differences in the atmosphere of the performances. At the National Theatre, they were about four hundred seats and most of the audience was made up of musicians, music students, and music teachers who used to
study or perform in the style of Khruu Tongdii Sujaritkul or who were somehow related to the great teacher. Also, the other musicians who performed on stage that day, besides the KSPC ensemble, had many students who had been invited to come see them perform to honor Khruu Tongdii as well. Most of the audiences were string players from many institutions because Khruu Tongdii was a string player (especially jakhee). The highlight that day was a performance of 100 jakhee all together in two virtuoso compositions arranged especially for jakhee in style of Khruu Tongdii. Jakhee teachers and students from all over the country who were selected to perform received a recording and notation to prepare and they came to Bangkok to practice at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok one day before the concert. The ensemble was directed by Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan. Of these one hundred jakhee players, only four could play in the KSPC ensemble and they were all teachers and professional musicians. Clearly not every jakhee player who studied with Khruu Tongdii could participate in the KSPC ensemble.

The KSPC ensemble that played only performed two songs. On stage, there was little explanation given about KSPC by the two announcers. There were however, a few students who came to talk to the KSPC musicians after the concert, but most of them just wanted their pictures taken with the great musicians. I was asked to take many pictures for students that day, and after that, those students just quietly walked away and no one asked the KSPC musicians about what they had played. One student said that “it was my great bun to see KSPC live and this ensemble cannot be compared to any other ensemble.” Afterward, the music teachers and their students went out for dinner together.
as a usual tradition among teachers and students. I was with two of the KSPC performers and a few string students and no one really talked about KSPC during the dinner.

The other occasion where I interviewed the audience of KSPC was after I recorded a KSPC ensemble performing at the funeral of Khruu Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaathin, the well-known singer and sau saam sai player who taught at several institutions, including Chulalongkorn University. One of musicians at the Thai Music Division hinted to me that there might be a KSPC ensemble performing at the temple on any day of the funeral. I stayed at the temple several nights in a row hoping to see the KPSC ensemble perform. Each night I asked people who were there, “will there be a KSPC ensemble performing tonight?” and the reply was “I don’t know.” Finally, on the third night of the funeral, the KSPC ensemble from the Thai Music Division came and performed two compositions and then left. I asked people at the temple again “did you know that the KSPC ensemble would perform tonight?” They replied, “I did not know.” When the musicians showed up, there was no announcement of the ensemble and no explanation. The musicians just showed up, performed and left. I was at the temple for a long time afterward and had a chance to talk to several other musicians who were there to perform music for their teachers who had passed away. No one I talked with that night knew that KSPC would be performed that day, but they were all excited to see it live.

One string musician who did not want me to use their name told me:

I did not like the sound of the ensemble; it was too loud and too fast. The pii chawaa is too high and the drums were too loud. The whole ensemble was just racing. I don’t know why they have to perform that fast.
After the KSPC musicians left, there were several more ensembles of strings and singers who performed for a long time each night of the funeral. Those musicians seemed not to care much about having or not having KSPC at the funeral.

I later had a chance to interview Mr. Anant Nakkong about KSPC and there are several reasons that I chose to interview him. First of all, he has seen KSPC performed on multiple occasions, and he had had a chance to participate in the ensemble when he was at Chulalongkorn University. Another reason is that he is an announcer for a Thai music radio station where he has presented KSPC on the air. He is a musician, ethnomusicologist, music teacher, and radio announcer. He is highly respected in Thai music society and often people see him emceeing big Thai music events and conferences. He graduated from the Fine Arts Department at Chulalongkorn University. I have known Mr. Anant for a long time and I studied with him at Mahasarakham University and Mahidol University.

He first saw KSPC when he was in his final year of elementary school when students from Thammasat University performed KSPC with special guest, Khruu Peep Khonglaythong at the Dontriithai Udomsueksaa (University Thai Music Festival) annual event. He said that the students “dared to perform KSPC.” They performed only one song at that time. The performers were mostly teachers who had studied KSPC with Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong and Khruu Luang Phairau Siangsau when they were alive. The second time he saw a KSPC ensemble perform was for Khruu Thiap’s funeral on December 25, 1982. “The sound of the pii chawaa is not like any other instrument,” he
said. He was fascinated by the sound of the ensemble. He later saw a recording of KSPC on Thai television, Channel 4 Bangkhunphrom. Again, he was very impressed by the sound of the ensemble and by the fact that it was special and few musicians were able to perform like musicians in KSPC. “It was fast and loud,” he added. He likes the sound and character of the ensemble very much. He explained that, “it is the only one ensemble at that time that could keep him awake.” He also likes the sound of the drums. Our conversation reminded me of my interviews with other musicians, pointing out that the pïi chawaa and drums have very complicated patterns that intertwine when performed together. The pïi and drum players need to know each other’s patterns so that they can improvise and support each other of one got lost unintentionally in a performance. The pïi chawaa normally prefers to play with the same set of drummers so they can develop trust. The two drummers most of the time will stay as a pair because they know each other well. The bonding of musicians in the ensemble is very tight and musicians in KSPC ensemble feel that they would perform well only with musicians they know well.

Mr. Anant and his two friends, before studying KSPC at Chulalongkorn University, came together and to play KSPC without knowing any structure for the music. They had seen great music teachers playing KSPC several times during their youth and liked to try to mimic the sound. Mr. Anant played sau duang and his friends played jakhee and sau uu. When he had a chance in his second year at Chulalongkorn University, he and two other students with high skill learned chomsamoot song from Khruu Pichit Chaiserii and Khruu Bunchuoy Sowat. With help from these teachers, the students were able to perform KSPC for one event in public. Mr. Anant learned KSPC in order to
perform at a funeral for a drummer who used to play in KSPC, and that was the main reason the students were able to participate in the ensemble. On that occasion, Khruu Bunchuoy and Khruu Pakorn performed in the ensemble with their students. Khruu Pring Dontriirot had been a well-known drummer and the KSPC ensemble performed to honor him. KSPC was not in the curriculum at Chulalongkorn University at that time. Mr. Anant noted that “it was very hard to find pii chawaa and drum players for KSPC.” It was exciting for him to see a KSPC ensemble perform because the ensemble provided “new melodies and new thaang for string instruments and for pii chawaa.” Since then, he has had just a few chances to perform KSPC.

From his personal point of view as a radio producer for a Thai music station, he said, “KSPC is great for watching live, but not good for listening on radio or CDs; it is not pleasant to my ears.” He expressed concerned that not many people are interested to know about the ensemble, in contrast to other ensembles, where, after he presents them on the air, people call or give comments on the webpage.

The KSPC ensemble is not good for listening, it is best for watching and being in front of the ensemble. And this music is not good for sale. No one would buy CDs of KSPC for listening for pleasure! The repertoire is too hard, and too long to listen to. The KSPC is an ensemble that needs to practice before performing, in comparison to other ensemble that need less time for practicing. The big problem for the KSPC ensemble is that it has limited itself by not providing any information that could link the music to audiences who have different background in music from the performers. Many people just walk away when they hear the KSPC due to the loudness of the ensemble. There are however, performers and listeners who are musicians and who have background in music and have love for the KSPC ensemble, who still listen to it.
Mr. Anant observed that the KSPC ensemble functions as a place for highly skilled musicians to come and try something new. With compromise, great musicians from two ensembles tried to create a new identity for a new music ensemble to represent the institution where they worked, the Krom Mahorasop. Mr. Anant said, “the KSPC ensemble is the successful mixing of sounds together.” Still, knowledge of this ensemble circulates mostly just among musicians who perform it. The ensemble has little connection to the wider Thai musical community because few people understand the function of the ensemble and most are unable to participate or use this ensemble for any occasion, in contrast to other musical ensembles in the country.

However, the few musicians who keep this ensemble give the impression that it is a “must play” for the highly skilled. The musicians who perform in this ensemble care to keep the tradition alive but they make it so hard for other musicians to participate in the ensemble that it could cause the decline of this ensemble in the near future. No one will hire a KSPC ensemble to perform professionally. The musicians come together for special occasions to perform KSPC and do not play it for money. There are many other thaang for string teachers, but the KSPC musicians at the Thai Music Division fix their thaang according to their own teachers. For anyone who plays differently, they would not be considered to participate in the KSPC ensemble.

The first generation that created the KSPC ensemble set the example for those who followed. The generations after that just want to keep doing what the first generation did as closely as possible. Mr. Anant added that, “there was only a moment where great
musicians came together and make something that became legendary.” The musicians at present, on the other hand, try hard only to keep their teachers’ legendary reputation, and those musicians are the “royal musicians.”

With “royal musicians,” Mr. Anant referred back to musicians who used to work inside the royal palaces and who were then transferred to work at the Fine Arts Department. During the time of King Rama VI, when these musicians came together in one place to represent music of the country, the great musicians created several new Thai musical ensembles to represent themselves as well as the country. They mixed Western musical instruments into the Thai string ensemble (khrueang saiphom). At the same time, the KSPC ensemble was presented by greatly skilled musicians, and it was particularly new and innovative that two musical ensembles were combined to play together. What made the KSPC ensemble successful was that it was a creation by royal musicians who were well-respected, and they came together to further build their reputations through musical innovation. Now, musicians who play KSPC only play music, mimicking what had been created by those royal musicians, and they try hard to keep it that way. There have been no new compositions for KSPC since King Rama VI.

With a structure analogous to Geertz’s theater state, these musicians combined the pii klaung ensemble, which represents the power of the king through symbolic associations to royal rituals and combat, with the string ensemble (khrueang sai) which is used to accompany singing and for entertaining, creating their own new ‘music kingdom’ outside of the palaces where they used to work directly for royalty. The pii klaung ensemble with its characteristic repertoire Saramaa is a symbol of power and the highest
authority, performing ritual music for honoring king, spirits, and soldiers who fight for their king, nation, and country, while the string ensemble represents ordinary people who, by being Thai citizens, work for the king. The flexibility of the string ensemble allows it to accommodate the authority of this ‘musical king’, and pii klaung gains a place in music outside of the royal context. The country has its king and the Thai music society also has its own “king,” revered and respected but rarely seen directly.

The extreme exclusivity of the KSPC ensemble is brought about not only by the selectivity of musicians who are able to perform it on very few occasions, but also the lack of information made available to audiences and Thai musical society in general. I argue that musicians who are in charge of directing and keeping KSPC have the power to keep the ensemble exclusive, and by doing so, these musicians gain even higher respect and authority among the Thai music community.

Mr. Anant also gave his opinion as to why the KSPC is only performed in the royal capital (mueang luang) and why the musicians outside of the center are so restricted from participating in this special ensemble. He said,

This ensemble was born in the mueang luang and it will die in the mueang luang because the musicians in the mueang luang keep it just for the center, but the country not only consists of musicians in the mueang luang. There are many more musicians who are capable of playing KSPC outside of the mueang luang, but they do not have much chance because of the belief of musicians in the mueang luang who set such a high standard that no one outside of their group is able to perform KSPC ‘well enough’.
There are several groups of audience for the KSPC ensemble, including professional musicians who use to play KSPC, music teachers who have heard KSPC live or from recordings, and younger students who follow their music teachers to events and have a chance to see KSPC ensemble perform. Many of the people I interviewed were excited to see the KSPC ensemble and regard this ensemble as a high place for well-respected musicians to participate. Still, many of them could not see themselves ever being a part of the ensemble. By not seeing this ensemble perform often, many did not really know what to expect, other than that the musicians in the ensemble would have very high skills.
KSPC in the Royal Palace

Figure 10. KSPC performing with Princess Sirindhorn at Kasikorn Bank in Bangkok.

I now present two case studies of KSPC to illustrate how exclusive this ensemble is and to show who has access to it. One case is the Royal Princess Sirindhorn practicing singing with the KSPC ensemble at Playnern Palace, which is an older palace where one son of King Rama IV used to live. At present, part of the palace is used as a museum, while other parts are still used as a residence. Often Playnern Palace hosts Thai music rehearsals for the Princess, approximately once a month over several months before performing in public. Another case is a KSPC ensemble performance at Chulalongkorn University with exceptional *jakhee* and *sau duang* players from other institutions alongside musicians from the Thai Music Division.
At present, among the royalty only Royal Princess Sirindhorn still practices and performs Thai music regularly. The Princess has studied Thai music on a variety of musical instruments for many years. She now makes some time to learn *ranaat ek* with the director of the Fine Arts Department, Dr. Sirichaichaan Fakjamruun and a few other National Artists. The princess has her own ensemble and she often performs with the musicians for special events, mainly in Bangkok. However, the music ensemble at the princess’s palace does not perform KSPC. The musicians there play both string instruments and *piiphaat*. They are professional musicians from various institutions, royalty who enjoy playing Thai music, and a few young musicians who are mostly related to people who work for the princess. A few of the musicians graduated from Chulalongkorn University and now work at the palace as private musicians. The Princess also studied Thai music and singing with the well-known singer *Khruu* Jaroenjai Sujaritkul (Sunthaunwaathin). One of many songs that she studied with *Khruu* Jaroenjai is *Thaun Samau Thao*. When *Khruu* Jaroenjai passed away in 2011, the princess presented a wreath at the funeral. She went to the temple for the cremation a year later. After the cremation day at the temple, the princess told musicians from the Thai Music Division that she would like to perform the song *Thaun Samau thao* with a KSPC ensemble to honor her teacher. The musicians went to practice KSPC with her singing at her palace once a month for several months before performing on September 16, 2012 at the Kasikorn Bank in Bangkok, Thailand.²

² Several Banks in Thailand support arts and cultural performances and often host music and dance performances at halls inside the banks. A small music archive and library is located at Bangkok Bank in Bangkok.
I had the opportunity to be at the palace twice to witness the princess practice singing with the KSPC ensemble from the Thai Music Division. After interviewing several musicians at the Thai Music Division, the sau duang player, Khruu Lerkiat invited me to go with him to see the ensemble practice at the palace. I was told to dress properly according to Khruu Lerkiat and the rules that he mentioned. When we arrived, we walked along a small path where many guards stood. Clearly the guards knew the musicians well. Khruu Lerkiat told one of the guards who I was and why I was there with him. The guard checked my bag and let me walked through. I sat with other musicians who had already arrived near the kitchen where many people were busy preparing food for princess, her workers and the musicians. Many well-known musicians showed up at the palace. They talked to each other very quietly. I was told to sit in one spot, in the shade, where I could see the backs of the musicians practicing on a raised floor with the princess in the front of them. I was also told only to watch; no recording and no talking was allowed. “Just sit here and watch quietly,” Khruu Lerkiat told me before entering to where the musicians sat.

I sat there listening and thinking about so many things and I had so many questions. The practice lasted about one and a half hours. The musicians practiced the same song several times and Khruu Jaroenjai Sujaritkul was there to direct the whole ensemble. At one moment while musicians were practicing, one of the servants brought some water in glasses up the where the ensemble sat, and unexpectedly she accidentally spilled a glass of water on a drummer. She was shocked and said “I am terribly sorry” very quietly to the drummer. The drummer continued performing without stopping. I, on
the other hand, saw and immediately got up, hoping to help clean up the water because I was just about two meters away from the musicians. One of the musicians, who sat next to me, grabbed my hand and told me not to move until the princess was done with her practicing. I sat back down very quietly. I was stunned for a few minutes. I looked at the musician who told me not to help cleaning up, and he told me that “you just do not move when the princess in the process of doing something.” I nodded, showing that I understood. He smiled.

After the musicians finished practicing, they came down to the level where I sat. Food was provided for the musicians and for a few people working at the palace. *Khruu* Peep invited me to join them for lunch. I said, “no, thank you” but he insisted and told me that you just do not reject an invitation from the royalty. “It is your *bum* to have a chance to have lunch here at the palace,” *Khruu* Peep said to me with a smile. So I took some food and had lunch with all musicians there. The KSPC group went back to practice with the princess for several more months and I had one other chance to go there again.

The second time I went, I was told to dress up nicely and not to wear a black shirt like I wore last time, so I ended up wearing white with brown pants. When I arrived at our meeting point, the musician said that I should not wear pants and that I should wear blue instead of white. I told him that I could go back to my place nearby or I could stop at any place to buy new clothing, but he said, “there is no time.” When we arrived at the palace I could only sit a bit farther away this time, but still close enough to hear the rehearsal, due to the incorrect color of my clothing. Again I was told not to make any
recording of the rehearsal, so I wrote in my notebook instead of using any electronic device. This second time I observed one difference in the KSPC ensemble from the Thai Music Division. There were two sau duang players instead of one as before, and as would be expected. I later interviewed the second sau duang player he said that he “was not completely sure why I had to come because the ensemble already had a sau duang player.” I later asked Khruu Peep about this, and he told me that “it is true that the KSPC ensemble already has one sau duang player, but he (the sau duang player) is no longer officially work at the samnakkaan sangkiiit, so I wanted to have a complete KSPC ensemble consisting entirely of musicians from my institution to perform with the Princess.”

Khruu Somboon Boonwong was the first sau duang player that normally performed with the KSPC ensemble at the Thai Music Division. He later had transferred to work at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok to teach Thai music and music research. The second sau duang player was Khruu Suriya (Tay) Chidthuam who is a director of the string ensemble at the Thai Music Division. It is clear that Khruu Peep wanted to have the KSPC ensemble from the same institution to represent it as one unit. He also mentioned that Khruu Somboon is now very busy teaching and taking care of his students, and that took away much of his time for practicing KSPC, but if the Thai Music Division really needed him to come and perform with the ensemble, he could come when asked.

Unexpectedly, Khruu Somboon passed away not so long before the concert. The second sau duang is now the official sau duang player for KSPC at the Thai Music Division. The concert went well and onstage with only one sau duang in the ensemble. I will discuss the effect of Khruu Somboon’s passing on the KSPC ensemble in the next chapter.
In this case, the musicians from the Thai Music Division went to practice KSPC under orders directly from the princess, because the princess wanted to perform with a KSPC ensemble to honor one of her Thai music singing teachers who taught her the song *Thaun Samau*. The musicians practiced in order to perform with the princess and performed for one of the musicians who had to performed KSPC in the past. At the funeral, this ensemble had performed once (without the Princess), and when the princess ordered the KSPC ensemble to perform again, the whole ensemble did what she asked. By performing Thai music with the princess, the musicians maintain their high status in Thai music society, showing on a public stage that they have the great opportunity—resulting from their great *bun* (merit)—to work for the princess and perform music with her. There are a few more musicians who are able to perform KSPC in the royal capital, but the Princess chose to order the ensemble from the Thai Music Division because these musicians studied KSPC directly with their teachers at the Fine Art Department. This illustrates that the KSPC ensemble is trusted by royalty to represent the voice of the royalty through music in public. The relationship between the princess and her own teacher, *Khruu* Jaroenjai Sutjaritkul, is reestablished and represented by performing the most difficult music repertoire and most exclusive ensemble in Thai music society, in order to show that her teacher should receive the best of whatever the society could offer, including the princess herself.

**KSPC in a Bangkok institution**
A second case of the KSPC ensemble shows its exclusivity and that the support of the audience had no effect on the musicians. The concert took place at Chulalongkorn University on the evening of February 17, 2012. My mother, my cousin and I were there in the late afternoon to get tickets thinking that there would be many people to attend this very special concert. But it turned out that it was a free concert, and tickets were not required. I was there to record the performance with permission from Khruu Peep and the musicians who were to perform on stage. There were eleven musicians and three singers performing that day. However, when I arrived at the Cultural Concert Hall, I was told to not record anything. I rushed to talk to many people who managed the concert that day, and finally one lady who worked at the front door there called her boss and her boss granted me permission to record video if I gave them a copy of what I recorded. But, sadly, they put me in the last row farthest from the stage. The sound was great, but the video quality was poor due to the distance between the camera and the stage.

Surprisingly, despite good publicity, a fine concert Hall at Chulalongkorn University, and with the best KSPC ensemble in the country performing an entire whole concert for one and a half hours, a very small audience showed up for the concert. Most of the audiences were students of the musicians who were performing that day. A few music teachers from Chulalongkorn University that I recognized also came to show their support and a few graduate students came. The total size of the audience was only about forty people, leaving many empty seats. This concert made me aware that the KSPC ensemble had little audience in general. The announcer did not provide much explanation about the history of the ensemble, and only read from a handout describing
the texts used for performance that day. There was no explanation given about the connection between the texts and the ensemble or why this ensemble was significant for Thai music society.

I later asked the musicians about how they felt about the outcome of their performance that day, and most of them told me that they were there at the concert hall just to perform KSPC and could not control who would show up or not. They did their part. After the musicians finished having lunch and performing music, they went back to their workplace to put back a few of their instruments, and several of them went out for dinner with their students afterward. I asked my mother what she thought about the concert, and she smiled a bit and told me that she did not like it. “It was so high, fast and loud.” My cousin had the very same reaction. They both have no background in Thai traditional music much and this concert was the first KSPC ensemble they had ever seen.

Figure 11. KSPC performing at Chulalongkorn University.

At this concert, there was one extra jakhee player from another institution performing on stage with the ensemble, Khruu Jeeraphon Phetchsom from the College of
Dramatic Arts Roi Et. He is a stringed teacher of two musicians; Khruu Apichai and Khruu Somboon who performed on stage with the KSPC ensemble that day. When I interviewed Khruu Jeeraphon about how he had become the other jakhee player that day, he said the musicians from the Thai Music Division had invited him. And when I asked musicians at the Thai Music Division about Khruu Jeeraphon, they told me that Khruu Jeeraphon had asked to join the ensemble. Whatever the reason was, all the musicians on stage performed together happily as they had all known each other very well for a long time.

Chulalongkorn University is an institution with very close connections to royalty, and many members of the royal family have studied there, including Princess Sirindhorn. While she studied there, she participated in Thai music ensembles and studied with many great Thai musicians at the university and at her palaces. In addition, one of the musicians who played in the KSPC ensemble graduated from Chulalongkorn University and he helped to put the program together with support from both institutions. That this institution was able to invite a KSPC ensemble from the Thai Music Division to perform is a sign of their connection to the royal palace.

The power from royalty is symbolically associated with the KSPC ensemble, through the history of the ensemble itself and the texts that are performed. Only those selected musicians that have a close and long relationship with musicians who used to work inside the palaces and played KSPC can perform. The royal musicians link

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3 Chulalongkorn University is a public school under the Ministry of Education. The university was established in 1971 by King Rama VI and he named it after his father, King Rama V. The main purpose was to provide a university for the royal family, royal attendants and their families. A university cannot ordinarily order a performance from the Fine Arts Department.
musicians in the present back to the power of royalty who had supported them and their teachers. A few musicians who teach at Chulalongkorn University also teach music to the princess and were teachers of some of the musicians who work at the Thai Music Division at present. Musicians from both institutions, Chulalongkorn University and the Thai Music Division, go to teach and perform music with the princess at her palace. The Thai Music Division was invited to perform at Chulalongkorn University to represent the best KSPC ensemble of the country, sharing power among these two institutions without the royalty themselves being present. Yet it is still the power of royalty that is used as both sides claim their long relationship and support from and for royalty and royal family.

In this case of a performance at Chulalongkorn University, it turned out that there was not much of an audience for the concert. The musicians did not feel disappointed because their job is simply to give a performance and if not many people show up it does not affect their ability to perform and has no bearing on them financially. The musicians already have the highest status in Thai music society. They support they receive is not based on any one performance in particular but based on their relationship with the royal and governmental institutions. They already have enough support and prestige for themselves and for their family. In short, they have nothing at stake when giving a performance. Performing KSPC for public keeps the relationship between the host institution and the Thai Music Division. When a host institution has the authority to ask for a KSPC performance and the musicians from the Thai Music Division have the authority to perform, they need not worry about the audience.
The power from the royalty and royal musicians is deeply established in the Thai music community, especially since King Rama VI when many of the royal musicians received royal titles and were transferred to work outside of palace. This also allowed more common people to know of them, and some studied with them as well. These musicians still refer to their own teachers as royal musicians even though their teachers passed away many years ago. Now these musicians work in institutions such as the College of Dramatic Arts, certain universities, and the Thai Music Division. The political order is basically very much the same as when the royal musicians worked for royalty inside the palaces. Those musicians received their support directly from their palaces, whereas musicians at present, who work in public, receive their support from the government and also work for the King and the nation.

By using royal literature in the theatrical dance drama forms *khoon* and *lakhaun*, musicians and dancers mostly convey the ideas about how kings interact with other royalty and common people. They maintain the power of royalty by presenting the idea that the king’s power is absolute, and protected even from his own misdeeds. As part of the Fine Arts Department, the performers gain an intimate relationship with the royalty and perform that relationship to the public by only participating in events with an explicit royal connection, such as funerals for former royal musicians and their descendants, or performing at royally affiliated institutions such as Chulalongkorn University.

Students consider their music teacher to be their parent and they obey their teachers as would they obey their own parents. This close relationship creates a lineage of musicians from generation to generation. When teachers teach virtuoso repertoire to the
best students, such as KSPC, they admonish these students not to use the music to show off. The teachers think that music is like a weapon, so they select only students who can use music respectfully and who will not use it to harm anyone.

Conclusions

I apply Clifford Geertz’s model of the theater state to describe how the community of Thai musicians maintains a hierarchy of power and authority with the Fine Arts Department at the top. The musicians’ role is to symbolically give voice to royalty by performing royal literature, and are seen in public as powerful due to this role. These musicians maintain their power by expanding this patronage system to include the musicians of the next generation, selecting only a few musicians who will represent them as students. This next generation of musicians faithfully imitate their teachers by repeating the same repertoire, performing their teacher’s thaang, even using recordings as a guide to what their teachers had played. Unlike the musicians of the first generation, their role is to imitate, not innovate.

All the musicians who play in KSPC also play in other ensembles; some play both piiphaat and khrueangsai and some play khrueangsai phasom, and they perform KSPC only for special occasions, when ordered. The only other institution in the royal capital that can sometimes present KSPC is Chulalongkorn University, but they have been unable to maintain their own ensemble. Students at Chulalongkorn University and a few branches of the College of Dramatic Arts have sometimes been able to study a few songs used for KSPC, but will usually be able to perform once or twice in public.
KSPC is performed at special events to show off the ability of the musicians themselves, to honor their teachers who used to perform KSPC in the past, and to further establish the reputations those teachers in Thai music history. The musicians attribute their ability to the greatness of their teachers, and to their own merit (bun), and by enhancing and performing their teacher’s greatness they build a reputation for their generation. The power of the teacher shields them from criticism. The musicians ensure their own status by performing their relationship to their teachers in public, which is a traditional way of ensuring their own social status and power as well. Musicians do not need to be concerned about the size of their audience because keeping the ensemble exclusive makes the ensemble itself more mysterious and hard to access, which gives the musicians a kind of power within their community. And when others, outside of this exclusive community, want to perform KSPC, they must seek approval from these musicians.
Chapter 6

KSPC: Center and the Periphery

There are twelve branches of the College of Dramatic Arts (Wittayalai Nattasin) throughout Thailand, one in Bangkok and other eleven outside the capital. The same curriculum is used across all twelve branches. These are located in the administrative district of each province, where the provincial government is situated trying to imitate the center, and they receive direct orders from the Fine Arts Department in Bangkok. Most of the music teachers in the College of Dramatic Arts are alumni of the college.

Five branches in different regions throughout Thailand have had KSPC ensembles at their institution, but only one branch still has a KSPC ensemble outside of Bangkok. In this chapter, I discuss all of KSPC ensembles that were created outside of Bangkok, including a unique workshop on KSPC that took place in the south of Thailand. However, without help from musicians from the center, each of these KSPC ensembles outside of Bangkok have not met with success. One ensemble performed KSPC just once before disappearing, due to a change in the musicians at the institution.

Authority over KSPC is still closely held by the center where the KSPC was established. One musician in particular still thinks that it is not yet the right time to let this guard down and step aside to let other musicians take his place. Musicians preserve and transmit their exclusive musical heritage from generation to generation and keep it in a highly respected position while at the same time limiting the number of musicians who can participate in the ensemble. They keep it rare for a reason.
In contrast, several string musicians who are concerned that some repertoire for KSPC will disappear due to strict limitations on transmission. One string teacher I discuss in this chapter for example, has tried very hard to teach his students everything he knows about KSPC because he wants the ensemble to stay alive. He believes that the more students who play this ensemble, the better for him and for society.

![Map of Thailand showing the locations of KSPC ensembles.](image)

Figure 12. Map of Thailand showing the locations of KSPC ensembles.
Current situation of KSPC outside the Fine Arts Department

Khruu Somboon Bunwong, a music teacher at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok, about the curriculum for KSPC in 2012, told me that only a few students are capable of playing at a high enough technical level to be able to learn the repertoire. He has taught only a few string students just a few songs that are used for KSPC. In contrast, another string teacher whom I interviewed, Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom, has a rather different idea to teach his students songs for KSPC: every string student who studies with him learns some songs for KSPC. In short, teachers have a range of attitudes and approaches to this esoteric repertoire, and I examine some of the reasons for this.

Only a few branches of the College of Dramatic Arts outside of Bangkok have attempted to establish KSPC ensembles at their institutions. Two used to have their own KSPC ensembles, one more is in the process of building their own, and just one institution has enough musicians to perform KSPC without inviting musicians from the center to help them perform. However, their repertoire is still very limited due to their lack of occasions to perform KSPC in public.

In this chapter, I explain the occasions where KSPC ensembles have performed outside of the center, where a few institutions have tried to imitate the ensemble of the royal capital in order to gain power for their own musicians and at the same time transmit the high power of the royal musicians out into the country. The musicians who have attempted to build KSPC ensembles outside of Bangkok have direct relationships with the founders of the KSPC ensemble in the past, just like those in the royal capital. And the reason they want to create their own KSPC ensembles outside of Bangkok is
because they want to show their highest musical skills to the public, and at the same time symbolically gain approval from the musicians of the center so that they, too, are able to perform the hardest repertoires—because they, too, have learned from the same group of teachers as the musicians in the center. But in practice, few places have succeeded in having their own KSPC ensembles without help from the musicians in the royal capital.

The first group of teachers, and directors of the College of Dramatic Arts graduated from schools in the royal capital before being sent out to build new institutional branches outside of Bangkok, following the same model that is employed in the center. All twelve branches maintain the same set of common ensembles, including piiphaat, khruuang sai, and mahoorii ensembles. Some institutions outside Bangkok include local musical ensembles in their curriculum. For example, at Roi Et in the northeast, students are required to learn northeast (Isan) folk music while at Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south, students study local folk dances and music such as noraa and kaa lau. In the four branches (Figure 1) where KSPC has been attempted, the members of the ensembles have mainly been teachers, with a few students. In three of these four institutions, the KSPC ensemble was started by one teacher, Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom. The Chantaburi branch ensemble was started by a drum player, Khruu Prathomrat Thaintuaranin who used to play KSPC with the first generation in Bangkok, when he was the director of the institution.

These two music directors have the very same idea about starting KSPC in the Collage of Dramatic Arts to prove their ability. By giving life to a KSPC ensemble outside of Bangkok, these two teachers gave to their students the best of them. Because KSPC is
believed to be so difficult that only the best musicians of the royal capital are able to perform in it, making the ensemble especially valuable, these two teachers sought to borrow the power from the center, using themselves as mediums to connect their students back to the royal capital. Those students who have had a chance to study with these two teachers feel strongly connected to the center where their teachers came from and where Thai traditional music is most strongly supported by government and royalty. The musicians who played in KSPC in the past had worked inside palaces for the king. So, students who are selected to learn KSPC become part of a long line of musicians who used to work for the kings in the past and so feel honored and very special. Even more so because many other students who live in the center have not had any chance to study KSPC.

The teachers who used to perform and studied KSPC with Khruu Prathomrat Thaintuaranin are not yet ready to teach or perform KSPC after a few members of the group have moved to work at multiple institutions and unable to practice together. In contrast to the teachers and students who have studied with Jeeraphon Petchsom at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et, and who have performed KSPC in public, told me that they would not hesitate to teach KSPC to their own students in the future, which is in contrast to the musicians in the royal capital, who are very strict about teaching KSPC.

**Saam Thahaansuea**

The three musicians Pakorn Rodchangphuan, Chavangsak Phothisombat, and Jeeraphon Petchsom are known as *saam thahaansuea* (“the three tiger soldiers”) since they
became close friends when young, and all gained the ability to play KSPC together. The name came from their teacher, Khruu Thaungdii Sujaritkul when they were studying music at the College of Dramatic Arts, Bangkok. She traveled to school by riverboat and these three students waited for her at the dock to help her carry her belongings or to travel with her to school or other places. The students acted like little protectors for their teacher, so that how they gained the name “three tiger soldiers.”

Figure 13. Khruu Pakorn Rodchangphuan.
Figure 14. Khruu Chavangsak Phothisombat.

Figure 15. Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom.
These three remained friends since their elementary school days despite the fact that they came from different parts of the country. Now they are all in retirement age, but they still occasionally play music together, especially for the KSPC ensemble. They are each very well known for playing stringed instruments. Here I provide background on each of them.

Pakorn was born and raised in central Bangkok, Chavangsak grew up in multiple towns because his father was a policeman and the family moved quite a bit; finally studying in Chumphon province before moving to Bangkok, while Jeeraphon was born in the south, moved also to Chumphon province and then again to Bangkok to continue his study in music. Chavangsak was one year older than the other two, but he repeated one year of his education so they all entered the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok in same year as students. They met there and became very close friends and fellow majors in stringed instruments. At that time there were no male students who played stringed instruments. Traditionally, it was up to teachers to assign students which instrument they would learn according to their character and to cultural expectations. In practice, most male students would learn *piiphaat* instruments and female students would learn strings.

Pakorn was the first male *jakhee* player at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. Chavangsak played *khim, sau saam sai*, and *sau duang* while Jeeraphon play *sau uu*. They all said that they felt very fortunate that they all three had a chance to meet and study with many great musicians at that time.

Beside studying music at school, their teachers brought them to perform outside of the institution to gain experiences on stage. When people saw the teachers, they often
found these three young musicians along as well. All three told me that they had seen their teachers practicing and performing KSPC at this institution, and that they memorized the patterns of the songs to play later among themselves. There was no official course for KSPC at that time. Often when these three practiced and performed, teachers would come by and tell them which patterns they should play for each song. When they travelled with their teachers, sometimes they would have a chance to perform with other teachers and musicians as well. When a teacher went without these three boys, people would ask, “where are the three tiger soldiers?” They embraced their nickname, becoming devoted to their teachers. They not only played music with their teachers, they also helped with teachers’ chores at home and other things, doing whatever the teachers asked. They earned good reputations since they were young. They were all good students and strong musicians, and very humble, so many teachers were willing to teach them many songs. They finished school in the same year and later worked at College of Dramatic Arts and the Thai Music Division before gaining various positions outside of the Fine Arts Department. When I interviewed any of them, they would often refer to the other two and joke about them.

I discussed Pakorn in the previous chapter, so in this section I will only address Chavangsak and primarily focus on Jeeraphon who has helped to build KSPC in two institutions outside of Bangkok.

I interviewed Chavangsak Phothisombat (Khruu Pok) in 2012. He has retired but still works at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, in a special position, as expert in music. His wife owns a Thai traditional clothing store in Chiang
Mai. As a policeman, Chavangsak’s father held a high position in government and had been engaged with investigations into illegal drugs and anti-government activities in the past. He was the son of a gangster, he said to me. He whispered with smile on his face, “my father was a really big deal.” His father also played *sau duang* and used music as a connection to local people, playing music with them to get them to talk about illegal activities. When his father moved to work in Chumporn province, Chavangsak mostly grew up there, playing music with local musicians. Chavangsak also studied with *Khruu* Prasit Thawon, a well known *raaat ek* player in Bangkok. *Khruu* Prasit Thawon also produced the set of KSPC recordings from the first generation, which I discussed in Chapter 3. The main reason, he told me, that he chose to study music instead of becoming a policeman like his father was because he did not like to do any kind of paperwork. When Chavangsak later moved to Bangkok to study music, *Khruu* Sinlapi Tramote (a son of *Khruu* Montri Tramote) introduced him to *Khruu* Luang Phairau Siangsau, and then Chavangsak studied with other string teachers at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. While studying there, he played *khim, sau duang, sau uu* and *sau saam sai*. He studied closely with *Khruu* Sinlapi who also used to play in the KSPC ensemble at the Thai Music Division in Bangkok. Every Friday, he and his friends would go to *Khruu* Luang’s house to practice and they would stay over for the weekend. This reflects an older social practice where young musicians and students lived at their teachers’ house and helped with chores, and in return they would receive music lessons.

After studying for about six years, he worked at the Thai Music Division for about three years, and then moved to work at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai. He has
a very strong connection to royalty, especially Chaofaa Petcharat, King Rama IX’s sister who likes to listen to khim. Chavangsak played music for her often when she travelled up north. I asked him more about the KSPC ensemble in the north. He explained to me that there were only two generations of students at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai that were able to perform KSPC in public. The pui chawaa player, however, studied with Khruu Peep in Bangkok so that is the main reason why the students at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai were able to play KSPC. There were otherwise no good pui chawaa players at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai. He is concerned about the time limitations for students to finish their education, which takes two to four years in the system. It is too hard to teach everyone everything needed and to reach to a high level of music performance. Furthermore, not many students have a strong background in music before attending school, so it takes longer for them to reach to the point where they could play nicely. “Time should not be a limitation for music education,” he said. “And for any institution that wants to teach KSPC, they should teach it the right way.” He added that he was very concerned musicians who wanted to play KSPC without the background would not be able to play it correctly, and so they should not try. He strongly believes that there is only one right way to play KSPC. At present, he does not think that anyone in Chiang Mai is able to perform KSPC. His main focus is therefore to teach standard repertoires for string instruments to a few students only.

In Chiang Mai, there are several palaces also known as khum, houses of royal descendants with local political significance in the community that support Thai music and often host music events. Chavangsak was often invited to go teach Thai music to sons
and daughters of royalty there, and Chavangsak helps to run the palace musical ensembles. When Khruu Peep travelled to Chiang Mai, they performed KSPC together for Pravate Komoot, an ailing first generation KSPC musician.

Chavangsak later told me about his personal experience of studying music with his teacher, Khruu Luang, who waited a long time before teaching him anything. The teacher would walk from the Thai Music Division and help to teach sau to Chavangsak while he was a student at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. Chavangsak said that the sound of KSPC is like piiphaat maikhaeng (piiphaat played with hard mallets, that have heads made with black resin to create a louder and brighter sound than ordinary piiphaat ensemble), which plays fast, complicated music to show off the great ability of the musicians. Without experience, musicians would not know what to listen for in both ensembles. He used to write about KSPC for teaching, but had to stop because no students were able to study KSPC in Chiang Mai, and now he has retired from official work. At the moment, he teaches sau duang, sau saam sai, and khim privately. At the very end of our conversation, he said that, “there is no short cut for studying music, so do not try to cheat by not learning how to play music, or only speaking about music without having deep understanding for the music. There are too many people who only can talk about music but never learn how to really play music.”

The most recent KSPC performance in which Chavangsak participated with his friends was the very special event for Khruu Thaungdii’s 100-year anniversary that took place at the Thai National Theatre on August 18, 2012. Khruu Thaungdii was born in the year 1912 and passed away in 2007. Chavangsak travelled from Chiang Mai to join his
trio to perform KSPC to honor their music teacher, and that is when I took the opportunity to interview him in Bangkok.

The third member of the three tiger soldiers is Jeeraphon Petchsom, who is at present the Director of the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et. When Jeeraphon was young, he studied music with his father and with Chavangsak’s father in Chumpon province, in the south. So Chavangsak and Jeeraphon knew each other before they moved to Bangkok. Jeeraphon is an expert performer on stringed instruments. He won many prizes when he was young and still living in the south. He said, “I had to play sau uu because no one played it in the ensemble even though my first instrument was sau duang.” This shows his ability to play both instruments equally well. When Jeeraphon was at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok, he studied with several great teachers who had played in the KSPC ensemble; he studied sau uu with Khruu Luang Phairau Siangsau, along with sau duang and sau saam sai, and he studied jakhee with both Khruu Lamead Jittasawii and Khruu Niphaa Aphaiwong. Right after he finished his education at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok, he took a job at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai for three years. At that time, he and the team from Bangkok included Dr. Sirichaichan Fakjamroon and two more teachers who taught khoon and lakhon dance drama, and they helped him to start the first College of Dramatic Arts outside of Bangkok in Chiang Mai province in the year of 1971. He returned to Bangkok in 1974 and lived with his music teacher Luang Phairau Siangsau, until the teacher passed away in the year 1975. A year later, Jeeraphon went to Prasanmit University in Bangkok to pursue higher education in music. While he was a student there, he and his music ensemble went on tour to perform at the World Music
Festival in the United Kingdom three times, and they performed at several universities while they were there. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree, he took a job at Chulalongkorn University for one semester in the Music Education department. There he also taught Puangpen Rakthong, who, many years later, was the first to write a master’s thesis on KSPC in Thailand. Unexpectedly, in the year of 1979 Khruu Prasit Thawon asked Khruu Jeeraphon to go teach at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et. Khruu Jeeraphon felt that he could not say no to his teacher. He told me that many other musicians in Bangkok did not want to go to work in the northeast because they would not be able to earn extra income by performing for events outside of their official job, they were afraid of being poor and facing hardship living in the countryside. Thai traditional music is not popular in the northeast and does not yet have much connection to local people and local communities. Local people do not seek Thai traditional music for their private events as much as the local Isan music, which means that there would be no extra income for Thai traditional musicians from private performances. Also, Thai traditional music relies finding members for ensembles, which is easy in the center. But it is almost impossible to call up musicians from the center to come to the northeast to perform. Furthermore, Isan, has a reputation of being poor and lacking water, being less modern than the center, with fewer shopping malls, schools or universities, because it is mostly agricultural. Imagining themselves far away from civilization and far away from royal patronage, many musicians from the center choose not to leave Bangkok.

Khruu Prasit and Chavangsak’s father were very close friends and Jeeraphon had studied with them both. Jeeraphon told me about the time that he and his teacher walked
from his school back to Wat Mahathaat Temple in Bangkok. His teacher would wait for him at the dock and the teacher would tell him many stories about music while walking back home. Jeeraphon said, “I did not understand what my teacher told me about the fundamentals of music and philosophy at that time, so I only listened quietly for many years.” When Khruu Prasit asked him to take a job at Roi Et province, Jeeraphon had to say yes to his teacher. Jeeraphon taught at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et for ten years before receiving a promotion and moving to Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south. His first two string students there were Somboon Boonwong and Aphichai Ponghualert, both of whom I mentioned in Chapter 5. Jeeraphon taught them in the south for four years and helped seven of his string instrument students win music prizes in music competitions and receive many scholarships from the center. “There were many events hosting music competitions during that time and more students were interested in learning stringed instruments and participating in music competitions in the center. I gave them everything,” Jeeraphon said. I think that Jeeraphon knows what it takes to be a skillful musician, hard work, and he is a living proof. He has provided resources for his students, such as written instructional materials, to be able to improve their skills. He wants the younger students to be able to reach to where he is in the society.

In 2005, he moved back to Roi Et to work as the director of the institution where he still teaches. After several hours of conversation he told me about his experience seeing a KSPC ensemble. The only KSPC ensemble he saw while he was a student at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok was the ensemble from the Thai Music Division where the first generation of KSPC musicians worked. He remembered the musicians, especially
Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong. Khruu Thiap was so skillful to play both *pii chawaa* and *sau uu* and Jeeraphon loved the sound of his playing. Jeeraphon also had a chance to learn some music from Khruu Thiap personally. When Khruu Thiap played in the KSPC ensemble, “it was like a revolution of Thai music for the Thai music community,” Jeeraphon explained. All the musicians who played in KSPC ensemble would have to be very skillful, and the music was so difficult to perform well. Many of those musicians did not continue to perform KSPC because of the difficulty and because they felt uncomfortable performing it. Only a few musicians keep doing it. “I am doing it now because I want others to know about this part of our musical culture,” he ended.

He later explained the condition of playing in a KSPC ensemble that “each musician cannot rely on anyone in the ensemble and it is hard to find anyone who is happy within such an intense situation.” When all musicians in KSPC ensemble are so confident in their own *thaang*, the *sau uu* player (like him) would be the happiest one in the ensemble because he too, could show off his skill with his complicated variations of the music without worrying others, and that is something not possible for the *sau uu* to do in other ensembles. He said, “The KSPC was created specifically for showing off! You know!”

Khruu Jeeraphon uses the word “*uat,*” which normally refers to the performance style of a soloist, with special *thaang* for showing off. This term is not normally used to refer to ensemble playing, in which each musicians fit comfortably into the group. KSPC is unusual in that it is an ensemble of soloists each performing with the same intensity and skill as a soloist.

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1 “*Wong khreuangsai pii chawaa pen wong thi uat fii mue. Ruu mai?*”
The three tiger soldiers all still teach music in three parts of the country. Pakorn teaches at Chulalongkorn University in the center, Chavangsak teaches at College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai and privately, and Jeeraphon teaches at College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et in the northeast. They are all well respected in the Thai music community, and known especially for their ability to perform KSPC. The group represents the second generation of KSPC players, and all the musicians have studied directly with the first generation of teachers who played KSPC. These three, the three tiger soldiers, have each tried hard to teach their students to play KSPC, but have faced several limitations and have had a hard time maintaining a complete KSPC ensemble at their respective institutions. The main reason is that good pii and klaung players for KSPC are very difficult to find, and these three teachers are only able to teach new string players, not pii or klaung. As a sign of respect, they will not teach across musical instruments.

To illustrate this difficulty, I present the example of an unsuccessful attempt to build a KSPC ensemble at the College of Dramatic Arts Chantaburi, outside of Bangkok, where a drum player, Khruu Pathomrat Thinturanin (1939-1998) started the KSPC ensemble. After finished his school from the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok and Chankasem University, he got a job at the Thai Music Division in a year of 1959. In 1993, was the Vice Director of the institution, College of Dramatic Arts Chantaburi. When he was there for four years and wanted to show off the highest repertoire for drums and pii, he formed and taught a KSPC ensemble. He trained his colleagues on the faculty to preform KSPC repertoire, and he sent one of them to study pii chawaa with Khruu Peep Khonglaytong in Bangkok in order to come back and perform with the KSPC group at
the College of Dramatic Arts Chantaburi. Khruu Pathomrat Thinturanin used to play drums in KSPC at Thai Music Division before taking a position at the College of Dramatic Arts Chantaburi. He had already passed away when I began my fieldwork, but I was fortunate to interview two of his students and colleagues from the College of Dramatic Arts Chantaburi, the drum player and the pii chawaa player. They both still teach at the institution. After performing KSPC at special events on just two occasions, the KSPC ensemble at the College of Dramatic Arts Chantaburi did not perform again. Two string music teachers who played in the ensemble had moved to other institutions, and because there were no more requests from the community for KSPC. This is similar to the situation at the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai that I described earlier.

In both cases, teachers tried to build a KSPC ensemble but had little success. They performed only a few times and were not able to form the group any longer. In interviewing music teachers from these two institutions, they would not criticize or reflect much about the reasons that prevented their KSPC ensembles from surviving. I, however, combine several ideas from what these teachers discussed to form a tentative conclusion. The main problem is that there are only few pii chawaa players who can perform in the KSPC ensemble, because Khruu Peep tightly controls access to the repertoire and power over who is approved to perform. As long as he is still alive in Bangkok, far away from these two institutions, when a pii player needs to prepare to participate in KSPC, he must first go to Bangkok to practice with Khruu Peep in person for a long period of time, and this is often impractical. The second problem is that the drummer has no partner to play Saramaa. Most of the institutions have only one drum teacher, but the repertoire requires
two drummers. The third problem is that the few good string players for the KSPC ensemble move to work at other institutions. Fourth, there is no demand from the community for KSPC to perform. There are not enough teachers for each instruments to teach students to build a new generation, and when the teachers leave the institutions where they perform KPSC, they do not continue to practicing KSPC and they lose their ability to play well and do not want to perform in public.

Without a complete ensemble of musicians who studied directly with the first or second generations, these musicians would not be able to perform KSPC confidently. Out of respect to their teachers and especially to Khruu Peep, attempting to perform KSPC without approval would only bring harm to these teachers’ reputations, and it would be seen as a threat to the authority of the center over KSPC.

**College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et**

In contrast to the College of Dramatic Arts Chiang Mai and Chantaburi where KSPC ensembles were able to perform just a few times and were not able to continue, at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et, which is located in northeast Thailand about 512 kilometers from Bangkok, Jeeraphon Petchsom has been building a KSPC ensemble for the past ten years. The ensemble includes both teachers and students. One of Jeeraphon’s daughters also plays sau uu in the ensemble. I did not meet her in 2012, but I later interviewed her via Skype in 2013. I had heard of her from her father and her colleagues who play KSPC with her in Roi Et. She is now a music teacher at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et with her father. She said that the reason she plays in the KSPC
ensemble is just because that is what her father wanted. I asked her about her position as a female who plays KSPC and she told me that she did not think that was preventing her from participating in the ensemble. However, she said that as a string musician, she needed to practice with the *piū* and drums more often so that she would not be seen as the one who would slow down the whole ensemble. She told me that a few young female students were also interested in the KSPC ensemble and she is considering teaching them when they are ready.

I have seen the ensemble from this institution performing KSPC in person once, and a second time at a university event remotely via the internet in December of 2013.

![Khruu Jeeraphon's KSPC ensemble from Roi Et with a singer (on the right) from the Fine Arts Department, Bangkok, performing for Khruu Sinlapi Tramote’s funeral in Bangkok.](image)

Figure 16. Khruu Jeeraphon’s KSPC ensemble from Roi Et with a singer (on the right) from the Fine Arts Department, Bangkok, performing for Khruu Sinlapi Tramote’s funeral in Bangkok.
I interviewed six of students and two teachers who are members of this KSPC ensemble. One teacher plays *pii* or drums and now teaches his student to play *pii chawaa* in the ensemble. The teacher who plays *pii chawaa* was a *pii* student of Khruu Peep Khonglaythong when he was a student at College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. This teacher also is able to play drums for the KSPC ensemble as well. When performing KSPC, he and other drum teachers are able to play complicated interlocking patterns together. He only started teaching several students to play *pii chawaa* for KSPC in the past four years, and at present only one student is capable of performing in the ensemble, and only a limited number of songs. I asked the *pii* teacher why he thinks that it is necessary for him to teach his young students to play *pii chawaa* for KSPC and he answered:

> I know not many musicians have the repertoire and I think that is a big problem. These students are getting their degree in music and they need to have everything that could give them a place in the society, so that they could find a job. As a teacher, I am responsible for their knowledge and I will teach them what I know.

I asked, “what if the students cannot do well?” and the *pii* teacher said, “yes, they still need to know even if they can not play well. I teach them hard songs not for them to show off, but for them to know about the music.” I later asked the student who studied *pii chawaa* with this teacher what he wants to do with the KSPC music. And remarkably, he said, “I do not know much about KSPC but I will teach these songs to my students just as my teacher taught me.” At present he is only seventeen years old and he wants to continue studying Thai music to become a music teacher.
One former student from this institution came back for a wai khruu and I had a chance to interview him after the ceremony. Teachers and students in Roi Et call him Took or Phi (‘older sibling’) Took. Took was the first student that Jeeraphon taught KSPC to at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et. He still plays stringed instruments and at present he is a musical instrument maker specializing in stringed instruments. He now lives in Bangkok and teaches music privately, and sometimes performs in public. I also met him at several music events in Bangkok. He and other former string students of Jeeraphon joined for me an hour-long group interview in Roi Et. Parts of our conversion covered Took’s experience of participating in the KSPC ensemble when said, “without Khruu Jeeraphon, the KSPC would never have reached to Isan [the northeast provinces].” He was the first string students that Jeeraphon taught to play in the KSPC ensemble before he moved to Bangkok to further his education in music at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. He is very skillful, and even the pii teacher mentioned him and his experience playing KSPC together during our conversation.
At present, two more stringed instrument students who studied with Jeeraphon in Roi Et also now live in Bangkok and continue their music education at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok. They also came back to the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et to attend the wai khruu ceremony. There are three more students who study strings for the KSPC ensemble who are continuing their education in Roi Et instead of moving to Bangkok, but just two of them perform. One plays jakhee, and one plays sau duang. When performing KSPC, these three students are joined by their teachers, who play sau uu, drums, and sometimes pii chawaa.
I interviewed each of them and they all told me of their similar goal that they would be able to teach their students everything they have learned about KSPC, and that they would not require much of students’ individual skill. I think these students feel they have a chance to do something special. They know how exclusive it is to be a part of a KSPC ensemble, but they do not seek to prevent anyone from having the experience they have had. These students want more people to understand and appreciate KSPC as they do, or as their teachers have taught them to. Also, higher education helps to make this transmission possible because these students need to learn more in order to get a good job after they graduate. Their teachers will teach whatever they think would give their students an advantage, because the student’s success is a sign of the teachers success. In turn, these students later represent their teachers’ reputations and institution as well.

They think that they would teach what they know and the individual students would get as much and he or she could. Jeeraphon has had a very strong influence on them to think that this kind of music is a national treasure and that the musicians should only protect their music for a short period of time. If they want music to live on after they are gone, they need to spread knowledge by teaching others to play music and then let the students experience what is next for the future. These students call Jeeraphon “phau” which means father. One other student is a daughter of two music teachers who teach at the College of Dramatic Arts Roi Et. So, these students have a close relationship with both the teachers and their institution, which helps them to gain Jeeraphon’s trust, despite his still strong connection to the center, enough to teach them everything he has. As students, they do not yet feel comfortable to make their own thaang when performing
KSPC in public so they normally stick to the *thaang* that their teachers taught them. They will learn multiple variations as time goes on. Jeeraphon strongly believes that these students have enough basic skills to develop and reach the highest level. He is happy with what these students have accomplished already even though he knows that there will always be more music to learn to make these students better.

Jeeraphon still teaches music to his students and occasionally brings them to perform in Bangkok, partly as a sign of respect to his own teachers who still live in Bangkok, and those who have already passed away, and partly to show off his students’ abilities to perform hard songs. By doing this, he is symbolically asking for a place in the Thai music community in the center for his own students. At the same time, he shows his students where he came from and how hard it is to be recognized and accepted in the center. Jeeraphon’s strong connection to the center helps him and his students to build new relationships.

Jeeraphon has brought students in several ensembles to perform in Bangkok and he himself often goes to Bangkok to perform solos and in groups for special events. People in the center know him well. In the year 2012, Jeeraphon brought his complete KSPC ensemble to perform in the *wai khruu* ceremony in Bangkok and for one of his teachers, *Khruu* Sinlapi Tramote, son of *Khruu* Montri Tramote, who had just passed away. Both *Khruu* Montri and *Khruu* Sinlapi used to play in KSPC ensemble. Jeeraphon then brought the ensemble to the temple where the body was kept and there his KSPC ensemble performed. This situation was very unique because no other KSPC ensemble outside of Bangkok has ever gone to Bangkok to perform. As I mentioned before, the KSPC
ensemble in Chiang Mai performed only in Chiang Mai and the ensemble in Chantaburi likewise stayed in Chantaburi, and if those ensembles needed to augment their numbers, musicians from the center would go to help them to perform. The KSPC ensemble from Roi Et coming to perform in Bangkok was an unprecedented reversal of this relationship.

Another remarkable thing about the KSPC ensemble from Roi Et is that most of the parts are performed by students, and there are only a few teachers. I was there to attend the funeral and to observe the ensembles that came to the temple to perform music at the funeral. As usual, it is common to see music ensembles at temples accompanying rituals and funerals for well known music teachers, performing as a sign of respect to the one who passed away. So I was fortunate to be able to document this surprise appearance by the KSPC ensemble from Roi Et. After finishing their performance, I met all of the musicians and asked to interview them later in Roi Et.

While listening to their performance, a few musicians from the Thai Music Division who were there to pay respect to the teacher who had passed away were talking about the Roi Et KSPC ensemble quietly. I asked them what they thought about the ensemble. They would not tell me much due to the custom of Thai music culture that one should not critique anyone except when a teacher critiques one of their own students. One of the musicians told me that it was good to hear another KSPC ensemble perform besides the one from the Thai Music Division. However, another musician did not appreciate the Roi Et KSPC ensemble due to their allowing students to perform. That same musician also said that the KSPC ensemble still lacked experience. This musician said little to me but in my own interpretation, I think that the reason this musician did not
appreciate the ensemble from Roi Et because the ensemble did not first seek the approval of this musician from the Thai Music Division before performing. Because the KSPC ensemble is rare and used only for very special occasions and is usually performed by professional musicians, seeing the student group perform KSPC in Bangkok challenged the authority of the center. I remained at the funeral until the end, and I did not see any musicians from the Thai Music Division talk to any student from Roi Et. Only one musician came to Jeeraphon to say hello because he had been a student of Jeeraphon when he studied music in the south.

I did not quite understand the choice of *pii chawaa* player from Roi Et to use his “practice instrument” to perform at the funeral instead of using a real *pii chawaa*. He had one in his case but did not use it for the performance. This might be another reason that other musicians felt uncomfortable listening to the ensemble from Roi Et. The practice instrument demonstrated a lack of experience and did not pay enough respect to the teacher who has passed away or to the musicians who knew how to play KSPC who were present. Yet, another reason was that Jeeraphon invited a singer from the Thai Music Division ensemble to sing with his KSPC ensemble, without practicing together first, and both the singer and the students misaligned their parts, and only Jeeraphon could help bring the whole ensemble back to the main melody and continue performing through to the end of the song. The father of the singer, who also sings in KSPC ensemble at the Thai Music Division, stood behind the ensemble to listen to the Roi Et group. After the KSPC ensemble from Roi Et finished performing, no musicians talked about the ensemble any further. Many of the attendees of the funeral were listening to an ensemble
from the Thai Music Division in which performed piiphaat nanghong for funeral and they were talking about the teacher who passed away. Most people just sat quietly until the ritual finished. What I remember was the decision of KSPC ensemble made at the funeral did not meet the high expectations held by some musicians.

Figure 18. Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom and the author in Roi Et.
I later went to Roi Et and interviewed Jeeraphon about his decision to perform KSPC at the funeral in Bangkok. He quickly responded that, “I played for my teacher.” In his mind, he thought that the best thing he could give to his teacher in the end was music, the music that his teacher had taught him while he was in Bangkok. By choosing to perform KSPC in the center, Jeeraphon also symbolically presented his students for approval from the center. The students, however, just performed as their teacher had taught them. One of the teachers who performed in the ensemble, however, did not feel comfortable with Jeeraphon’s decision to perform, because of the appearance of many professional musicians from the Thai Music Division at the funeral. That teacher whispered to me that “I had no choice and I will later ask forgiveness from my own teacher.” This teacher in the ensemble felt that he should not play KSPC that day out of respect for his teacher and due to his lack of experience performing KSPC. However, one year after that interview, he performed KSPC again, but this time instead of letting his student play *pii chawaa*, he played *pii chawaa* himself on December 2013 in public at the Dontriithai Udomsuksaa (University Thai Music Festival) event hosted by Mahasarakham University in northeast Thailand, and he told me in a Skype conversation that it would not embarrass his teacher because he had practiced for a long time and had let his teacher in Bangkok know before performing KSPC in public, so he did not feel guilty about it anymore.
The College of Dramatic Arts, Nakhon Si Thammarat

Another institution that has sought to build a KSPC ensemble is the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat, which is located in the south of Thailand, about 780 kilometers from Bangkok. In this section I examine this case of starting a KSPC ensemble in the south, involving the interaction of several institutions and teachers who were invited to conduct a workshop in KSPC, the first ever held.

Figure 19. The team of teachers who helped with KSPC project with the author. The director, Dr. Wassana Bunyaphithak, is fourth from the left, Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom in third from the left, and Puangpen Rakthong is on the right.
The Director the College, Dr. Wassana Bunyaphithak graduated from the Wittayalai Nattasin system. After working at several College branches, she later went to Chulalongkorn University for a Ph.D. in Education. Her research addresses how colleges develop into top institutions for dance and music. She finished her education at about the same time that the College of Dramatic Arts started to offer bachelor’s degrees in music and dance. She hosted many music and dance projects and workshops at the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat, empowering her connection to the center. Connecting her institution with the center would assure her status as the Director and help her other projects to go smoothly. A few students from her institution continued their music educations in the center, and to these connections also help these students fit more comfortably there as well.

With her connection to Dr. Sirichaichan Fakjamroon from the Fine Arts Department and many other music teachers in Bangkok, she invited three musicians from Fine Arts Department to lead a workshop in KSPC at her institution in the year 2012. She strongly believes that because the KSPC ensemble is the ideal high-skill ensemble, she would like her colleagues and students in the south to have a chance to experience KSPC. No one in the south is capable of teaching this ensemble, so she invited a group of musicians from Bangkok to conduct the workshop. There is a deep connection between this institution and the KSPC ensemble in Bangkok. Two well-known musicians who worked at the Thai Music Division had been string instrument students at the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat before they moved to study music in Bangkok. One is Apichai Pongluelert who still works at the Thai Music
Division and is a member of the KSPC ensemble. The other musician, Somboon Boonwong, who used to perform and teach KSPC in Bangkok, had just recently passed away unexpectedly. These two musicians were students of Jeeraphon when he taught at the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat. These students were famous in Nakhon Si Thammarat because they had come from the south and were successful in the center.

The KSPC workshop was planned before Somboon passed away, and he had been hospitalized right before the workshop started, so Jeeraphon was called to take his place to teach the workshop on stringed instruments. He agreed out of his respect and admiration for Khruu Somboon and happy to go back to teach at Nakhon Si Thammarat where he used to teach Somboon and Apichai. Khruu Peep Khonglaythong lead the group of teachers and taught pii chawaa. Along with him were Khruu Thatsanii Khunthaung, a National Artist, who taught singing and another musician from the Air Force who separately taught a group of students in the piiphaat nanghong ensemble in a concurrent workshop.

This case will illustrate how teachers selectively teach students KSPC outside of Bangkok. The number of participants on each instrument, and singing, indicates the level of difficulty of the ensemble and at the same time limits the number of students who will be able to carry on this KSPC knowledge with approval. I will examine the different points of view from each teacher who conducted the workshop and what they wanted their students to learn from them at the workshop. Twenty-five stringed instrument students (including me) were taught by Khruu Jeeraphon to empower them to keep playing
KSPC and thus make the ensemble less exclusive in the future. Jeeraphon told stories of his success, often referring back to when he studied music with his teacher who was one of the first generation to play KSPC ensemble and how his teacher taught him different variations until he became lost. He explained his connection to his teacher and then made the point that he teaches these students in a similar way. The power of that relationship transferred from his teacher to him, and then from him to his students. He showed the students what to do to be successful themselves and with help of a great teacher like he had. He encouraged students that nothing is too far out of teach or too hard if they try hard and never give up.

Another three students and one teacher learned how to sing with the KSPC ensemble, which is challenging but not central to KSPC performance. In contrast, Khruu Peep selected only one pii teacher from Wittayalai Nattasin to learn two songs that could be used for KSPC. Khruu Peep was not interested in empowering that teacher and he made sure that this teacher would not yet teach the same repertoire to his pii students, by teaching only a fraction of what is required. Without the musicians from the center, this workshop would not have happened, and by sharing only a limited amount of their repertoire knowledge about KSPC in the south, and knowing that the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat would not soon be able to establish an independent ensemble, these teachers reassert their authority and gain power over the musicians in the south.

Participating in the Nakhon Sri Thammarat workshop was a very special fieldwork opportunity for me. The day after an event honoring the 100th year of Khruu
Thaungdii Sujiartikul, which took place at the Thai National Theatre in Bangkok on August 18, 2012, two KSPC musicians caught a flight to the south to conduct the first ever KSPC workshop. They had talked to me about this workshop for months while I was conducting my fieldwork in Thailand, and I had made my great interest in it clear. However, it was still a very private workshop and Khruu Peep had not told me any of the details. Khruu Jeeraphon, on the other hand, fortunately asked me to join the workshop. He had taken the place of Somboon due to Somboon’s illness, and after Somboon had just missed a performance on stage with the group at the last minute. So, before going, I called the director of College of Dramatic Arts, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Dr. Wassana Bunyaphithak, to ask permission to observe and participate in the three days of intensive workshop. Luckily, she said “yes, please come.” The group of teachers arrived on August 19, 2012 in the late afternoon. I took the first flight the day after I talked to Dr. Wassana on the phone, Monday, August 20.

Before the talk begin, I went to thank the director for letting me be a part of the event and she gave me a big smile. I registered for the workshop and a teacher asked for my passport to make a copy. There I ran into Khruu Peep, Khruu Jeeraphon, Khruu Thatsanii, and other music teachers from the Thai Music Division of the Royal Thai Air Force who had come to conduct a piiphaat nanghong ensemble workshop—that is, musicians from Bangkok who I already knew quite well. The first three came to conduct workshop on KSPC, two for musical instruments and other one for singing. Khruu Peep, Khruu Jeeraphon were a bit surprised to see me there, and before saying anything to me, I told them that I had already asked for permission to participate in the workshop from the
Director, they both smiled. I went back to my seat and sat in the back of the room where I could record the event on my Tascam recorder.

Unexpectedly, the director mentioned my name to the audience and immediately invited me to give a talk to explain my presence at the workshop from the front podium next to her and Khruu Peep after they finished opening the event. Unprepared, I was walked to the front, the director gave me her microphone and I improvised a talk. I cannot remember much of what I said, but I do recall that I thanked to the director and everyone who help to make the event happen and who allowed me to be a part of it. I mentioned that I was conducting research on KSPC, which is a topic that had interested me for a long time. When I heard that there was going to be the workshop on KSPC, I wanted to see it with my own eyes and to experience it in person. It was a special opportunity for both teachers and students outside Bangkok to have a chance to learn from the great teachers who still play KSPC. I said to the teachers and students that it is important not only to perform Thai music, but to talk about music to others who do not yet know much.

...Not because we want to be like Farang [foreigners], but when transmitting knowledge about Thai music to others, we need to learn others’ vocabularies as well so that more people could be able to appreciate Thai music. Disseminating knowledge is the way to preserve knowledge....” I said specifically to the students that, “it takes time to learn another language, and so it also takes time for others to learn Thai music, and people might not understand you. There are more things to do outside of your own comfort zone. Create your own opportunities and do not forget to create more for others.
That is all I can remember. After my brief talk, Khruu Peep and Khruu Jeeraphon gave presentations on KSPC for another thirty minutes and then we separated into rooms and split students according to their skills and instruments. Teachers and students were divided in three groups; strings, pū, and singing for KSPC workshop and another separate workshop for piiphaat nanghong, a special version of the piiphaat ensemble with special repertoire which commonly played at funerals and using pū chawaa instead of pū nai.

Figure 20. Pū teacher studying with Khruu Peep at the workshop.
There was just one *piï chawaa* teacher who had been selected from the institution to study with *Khruu* Peep. They went to practice on the second floor of a nearby building. I went to observe them practice several times. *Khruu* Peep sat opposite the *piï* teacher, teaching him one phrase at a time. *Khruu* Peep did not playing *piï chawaa* all the time, in fact, sometimes he played a *ranaat thum* for the *piï* teacher to listen to and try to mimic the melody. And sometimes *Khruu* Peep would sing the *piï* melody. The *piï* teacher tried to mimic the voice of *Khruu* Peep with his *piï chawaa*. It took him a while before he could get each phrase down and be ready for the next phrase. Playing *piï chawaa* is very tiring and the *piï* teacher took a little break during his lessons often to save some energy. While students had a quick prepared lunch at school and then returned to their practicing, the *piï* teacher, had to go out for lunch in town with all of the teachers, and at night he needed to go back to his house to be with his family. So, he had a little bit of time to practice at home before coming back in the morning.

The singers were in another room. *Khruu* Thatsanii sat on a chair and had a small stick on her hand to tap on the table to keep the beat. She would sing one phrase at a time and repeat it several times before letting three students and one teacher copy her. *Khruu* Thatsanii would correct a few words at a time and show how to sing with ornamentation for particular parts of the songs. Finally, they would try to memorize the texts and not have anything in front of them when they perform. A few students had difficulty with melodic leaps due to the unusually high register required to sing with the KSPC ensemble.
And finally there were twenty-five string players to study with Khruu Jeeraphon, with jokhee, sau duang and sau uu and including as participants both teachers and students. I joined the string group to study. The workshop conductors planned to teach one or two songs for the KSPC ensemble during the workshop so that all the participants would come to perform together on the last day of the workshop to end the event.

In Jeeraphon’s room, I first just wanted to observe, take pictures, videotape, and asking some questions to the students who were participating in the workshop when they took little breaks. However, I could not resist learning as well, and asked permission to participate. Khruu Jeeraphon told me with a big smile “not a problem, come come come!”
so I learned on the *sau uu*. There was a bond between me and other participants as we all started from the same point regardless our age differences. Teachers and students from Nakhon Si Thammarat were learning together. There were also two outsiders studying in the workshop, me, and a teacher from Trang province, Puangpen Rakthong. She was the one who had written a master’s thesis on KSPC a decade ago. I was delighted to see her there, unexpectedly. I had tried very hard to meet with her during my fieldwork in Thailand in 2008 and in 2012, and so I finally had a chance to interview her during the breaks.

![String students and Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom.](image)

Figure 22. String students and *Khruu* Jeeraphon Petchsom.
For three days, I studied with teachers and students almost twenty hours a day. With help from one of the teachers there, I stayed in the same hotel as other teachers who had come from Bangkok. The van driver also picked me up there along with the teachers. I paid for my own expenses and helped to pay double for meals for everyone when we went out together as to show my appreciation to the institution and teachers who allowed me to be a part of the workshop. The teachers’ expenses were covered by the College of Dramatic Arts, including their flights, hotel, meals, and pocket money. I observed, I learned, I interviewed, and talked to most of the students and teachers who participated in the workshop. I only studied sau uu at the workshop while other teachers and students studied their own instruments, and Khruu Jeeraphon, on the other hand, taught all these instruments group by group without tiring.

We also spent one or two hours a day listening to the teachers give talks. They were inspiring to all of us. Besides the teachers and me, the students in the string room were mostly seventeen years old. In three days, we learned three songs for stringed instruments, one with singing and including many technical modulations. We started with scales and modulations for an hour or so before learning the song melodies phrase line at a time in order to memorize them. Khruu Jeeraphon used notation for each song that was projected on a monitor one line at a time. For about five or ten minutes, he would turn off the monitor and practice with us. All three groups had to learn the same notation first, and it took time to memorize them all. Then we would play together for a long time until Khruu Jeeraphon thought that we could remember the main melodies. Then we would separate in to groups according to our musical instruments. Each group also included one
or two teachers and they all helped everyone to practice. Some copied down the notation. We were taught the *thaang* (variation) for our respective instruments by Khruu Jeeraphon, and he often changed to a harder *thaang* when he felt that students could remember the previous one. This was just like when his teacher taught him when he was young. He kept pushing and pushing us by introducing new variations for the same main melody until we were unable to remember them all and started to mix them up. He would also change to a less difficult *thaang* if the students could not play it. He always analyzed the students’ ability to play and to learn new *thaang* while teaching them. All three instruments play different *thaang*, but it is important to make them fit smoothly together and that is the main reason why the string musicians for KSPC often learn from the same teacher. They will know each other’s *thaang* very well and would know which *thaang* to use or avoid when performing together. This process took the most time for the workshop.

The workshop participants and I recorded on cellphones, tape recorders, and video cameras because the *thaang* were very hard to remember and hard to play. We all helped each other to listen and recall the melodies when needed. The two sau uu players were very fast learners. They would get most of the melodies right away as Khruu Jeeraphon taught, while many of us needed to listen several times before getting them. At the end of the day, we came together to play for several hours before a shower and dinner break. And then more practicing until midnight. The students had their meals provided by the school, but the teachers, and I as well, went into town for lunch and dinner every day. All the teachers stayed at the same hotel and had breakfast there before the van came and pick us up around 8 a.m. I was very tired and had only a few hours of
sleeping each night partly because I spent some time in the hotel to transfer all my recordings from the day into my computer so that I had space on my equipment to record the next day.

![Figure 23. Teachers and students practicing together.](image)

The students in this special workshop felt very lucky to be selected to participate in the workshop, which basically made them feel more special than their friends who were not chosen. The workshop brought students from several years to come and learn new songs together, and this situation bound them together to feel responsible for each other because when one would forget a melody they could ask for help from others. The younger students tried even harder to keep up with the more experienced ones in order
to play well together. Every one tried their best to not be blamed for holding back the group. Each tried to learn as much as they could during this short period. This situation reminded me of my time in military training camp where everything was done together, eating, sleeping, and learning. Everyone was responsible for one another. We moved as a unit, not as individuals, to accomplished assignments. And most importantly there was no time for resting. These students felt very exclusive to be the first group at their institution to learn KSPC with well-known teachers such as Ḛhruu Peep and Ḛhruu Jeeraphon. However, these students were not yet sure about continuing to practice this ensemble because their teachers have the power to decide, not the students. Even though they might want to continue, I am not sure if that would be realistic due to the advanced level of songs and the limited time to practice KSPC as a group. What they had in the workshop was an experience of learning just a few songs that could be used for KSPC ensemble, and an experience of the level of intensity required to be a part of this ensemble.
Figure 24. The KSPC performance at the end of the workshop.

The three organizers came into the workshop with different goals. Khruu Jeeraphon sought to empower the students by inspiring them, and by referring to his two musicians and their success in the center and that they had come from where the students were now. He gave opportunities to students to hope and at the same time gave them tools to become more highly skilled musicians. Khruu Jeeraphon always worked overtime. He often made other teachers wait before going out for lunch and dinner. He was one said to me, “what, eating again? There was no time to teach and you want to go out and eat again?” His attention was always with the students. He moved from one to another to make sure that they all learned the melodies correctly, and he was there for them when they had any questions. He wanted these students to be able to keep doing KSPC and thereby make it less exclusive. He wants to expand the future of the ensemble. For him, the more people that know about this ensemble, the more it will have a chance to survive.
It was a different situation for Khruu Peep, the pii chawaa player. The reason why there was only one pii teacher who was able to participate in the workshop was because there was only one pii teacher at the institution at the time, and the pii students were considered to be not yet skilled enough to participate. It takes a long time to build a good pii player. Furthermore, at the workshop, Khruu Peep was not empowering that teacher but taught only the amount of music that that teacher could memorize. Khruu Peep did not teach him Saramaa, an important piece for KSPC, due to the lack of time and the inexperience of the pii teacher. And Khruu Peep made sure that this teacher would not the same song to his pii students yet (without Piip’s approval) because the pii teacher did not yet do it well himself. So if the pii teacher wanted to learn more, he would have to travel to Bangkok to study with Khruu Peep further.

The short period of time for workshop would not realistically make the students into KSPC players. What the participants gained from this workshop was an exclusive experience in playing KSPC that gave them a deeper appreciation of the music of KSPC. While Khruu Peep gave a bit of himself to teach pii chawaa for KSPC in the south, he gained power over the pii player and has linked that pii teacher back to the center, reminding him of the status of pii in the center as compared to the south. This one teacher held knowledge to himself while the other teachers tried very hard to teach whatever they could to further knowledge of KSPC ensemble, with the exception of teaching pii chawaa, out of respect to Khruu Peep and his status.

Without the support of the Director of the College of Dramatic Arts Nakorn Si Thammarat and in Bangkok, and the help from musicians of the Thai Music Division,
this workshop would not have been possible. Knowing that there would be a long way to
go to build KSPC in the south, these teachers still wanted to start to give an exclusive
experience to their students and so connect them to the center. This situation could also
be read as a small change in the tradition of KSPC, by expanding who could participate,
but the ideal presented to the students was still to learn directly from the teachers who
play KSPC.

Since the workshop took place in 2012, there has not been another workshop on
KSPC, however, Khruu Jeeraphon went back to conduct one more workshop just for
string instruments in December, 2013, to help the same students to practice the same
KSPC repertoire again. There have been no more performances of KSPC in public from
the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat since the workshop. I still keep up
via Facebook ‘chat’ with several students who were at the workshop, and I asked them
about practicing KSPC. Two of them told me that they sometimes come together to
practice the two songs they learned from the workshop. They are now undergraduates
and have many other songs to practice. However, there have been no performances of
KSPC since then.

Conclusions

The KSPC ensemble is a combination of two ensembles, the pii klaung and
khruangsai, with additional instruments. It requires skilled musicians from both ensembles
to practice and perform together. Often, there is no highly skilled pii chawaa player to
participate in a KSPC ensemble whether in and outside of the center, and so Khruu Peep
is the highest power when performing KSPC. One workshop in the south with Khruu Peep was not nearly enough for a pii player to be able to perform in public. What the institution in the south did receive from the KSPC workshop is a closer connection to the center, by trying to mimic the center through bringing musicians from the center to come and teach their own students in the south. The idea of borrowing power from the center came from the directors, and the one at the top was once part of the center before moving to the work in the south.

At present, there are a few musicians who are able to perform KSPC, and some of these musicians have tried very hard to build their own KSPC outside of the center, but they have met with little success due to the lack of capable musicians and of suitable occasions to perform outside Bangkok. There has also been very little teaching on the subject at any institution in the country.

The KSPC ensembles that have come about outside of the center have always formed with close connections to the center. They have been built by musicians who used to play KSPC ensemble in the center. They studied at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok, and after graduating, they worked at Thai Music Division of the Fine Arts Department and at nearby institutions before moving out from the center. Each later tried build a KSPC ensemble outside of Bangkok to bring power from the center into their own institutions, and to gain recognition from the center for their achievements. KSPC is still dominated by the center, and the power is concentrated with Khruu Peep in particular. Only with approval from Khruu Peep can another pii chawaa player participate in a KSPC ensemble. And if anyone did attempt to perform KSPC in public without
having studied directly with any of the musicians who played KSPC in the center, they would not be respected by the musicians who know KSPC. As I found during my fieldwork, all of the pii chawaa players for the KSPC ensemble inside and outside Bangkok had learned from Khruu Peep at one point before participating in the KSPC ensemble at their own institutions. The pii chawaa players received their power and authority directly from Khruu Peep. And, when performing KSPC, the pii chawaa player would normally inform Khruu Peep as a sign of respect and in effect to ask permission to perform KSPC without him present.

While other stringed teachers who play KSPC are encouraging their own students to be able to participate in the KSPC ensemble outside of Bangkok, Khruu Peep, on the other hand, still exerts tight control over all pii chawaa players. He has a very close relationship with the royalty through the Thai Music Division, and he is a son of the first generation of pii chawaa player of KSPC, Khruu Thiap Khonglaythong, and most importantly he is still alive and able to perform well in KSPC. With high respect to him and his father, no one yet wants to challenge his power. When performing music for the royalty and for government events, the orders come from the top to Khruu Peep first before going to other musicians. If he performs KSPC, he will pick who will perform with him. But if he does not want to perform, at a small event for example, where KSPC might only perform one or two songs for show, he would assign his own students to perform in place of him, but the power is still with him even though he is not on stage.
Chapter 7
Conclusion

In Thai music society, this music for the few, KSPC, reveals the strong relationship between royalty, royal authority, royal literature, and royal musicians. Power circulates among these, supporting each other and permeating outwards to a small public sphere, which also enhances the value of the ensemble by keeping it rare. KSPC is also reveals the pattern of politics and social control that is centered on the leader of the ensemble, and in my research all of this centers on Khruu Peep Khonglaythong, the pii chawaa player of the Fine Arts Department and Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom, the string player who lives in Roi Et. The ensemble was created in royal capital of Thailand where Khruu Peep’s father was a member of the KSPC ensemble. The ensemble has recently emerged in a few places outside of the center where musicians have tried to build their own ensembles, but without much success so far.

The written materials I have presented and analyzed suggest that the KSPC ensemble was created during King Rama VI, at the Fine Arts Department when it was first established outside of the royal palaces, when displays of respect for the king led to higher social status and steady employment, after King Rama V had introduced aspects of Western civilization into the kingdom. The first group of music ensembles in the government department were directed by Phrayaa Prasan Duriyasub (Plaek Prasaansab) and Phrayaa Sanoeduriyang (Cham Sunthaunwaathin), both of whom had worked closely with Kings Rama V and VI in their palaces before moving to work at Fine Arts Department. At present, the KSPC ensemble of professional musicians now works at the Fine Arts Department, and they are a mix of the second and third generations who received their knowledge directly from the first
and second generations of musicians whom I propose were the creators and founders of the KSPC ensemble.

Musicians who work at the Thai Music Division of the Fine Arts Department feel very special to have the opportunity and ability to serve the nation, the royalty, and especially Princess Sirindhorn, keeping, promoting and protecting the national heritage in the form of music performances. KSPC ensemble is the combination of two ensembles, the string ensemble and *piu klaung* ensemble, which has a long history of close association with royalty, martial arts, religious events, and funerals. When the *piu klaung* ensemble is combined with the stringed ensemble, they perform new repertoire showing the highest ability of the musicians to be able to play with one another smoothly. As shown in the Thai musical literature I reviewed, the *piu klaung* ensemble represents the power of the king and of royalty, while the string ensemble has flexibility to incorporate other, especially foreign instruments. The string ensemble is adaptable; the players can change fingering and play new *thaang* to fit with the *piu klaung* ensemble, so the stringed ensemble acts to represent the ordinary people who work willingly with royalty, while the royalty leads the whole ensemble. I conclude here that the KSPC ensemble is an attempt to mix two musical ensembles used for different purposes in the past, to create a new Thai musical ensemble with repertoire from *piu klaung*, *piiphaat namghong*, stringed ensemble, and *sephaa*. The new ensemble called upon string musicians to play fast and difficult variations while the *piu chawaa* did not change its variations much.

The literary texts most often used in performances are from *Inao* and *Khun Chaang* *Khun Phaen*. In addition, there are three other literary sources that have been used for performance with KSPC, all composed by kings and royalty, *Ngautpa*, composed by King
Rama V, *Sakuntala* by King Rama VI, and *Rachathirat* composed during King Rama I. The selected texts from these literary works that are presented with the KSPC ensemble represent the private thoughts of the king, not meant for others to hear, just his loved ones. The message from these moments in royal literature is very intimate, and so the ensemble acts as the voice of the king and those people who are really close to him.

The musicians who work at the Fine Arts Department are very close—indeed, many of them are relatives—and these relationships create power and tension within the institution. For the KSPC ensemble, Khruu Peep is still has power even through he has already retired, because he still works at the institution in a special position. The musicians there tend to follow the order of seniority to avoid problems. Also, Khruu Peep and his family have especially close relationships with the royalty since his father, Khruu Thiap worked for the royal palace. And Khruu Peep and his wife now also work for the Princess at her palace.

Despite the fact that KSPC has received some limited performances in public, my research shows that this ensemble has been almost like a closely-guarded secret, understood only by those few musicians who have been directly taught and authorized to perform it. And it remains so, also because of its own distinct repertoire, style of performance, and tuning system that make it harder for musicians to access or participate.

The musicians who play KSPC are proud to be with the group, knowing that not many musicians will have the same opportunity they have. All the musicians I interviewed told me that it is the high point of their career to work for a royalty that cares about the arts. They will give the finest performance of KSPC any time they perform even though it is on very few occasions and for limited audiences. Making this KSPC ensemble very exclusive
elevates the expectation for both performers and audience. What the musicians gain by doing this is high respect from the world of Thai musicians, and sometimes even jealousy from other musicians who will never have a chance to be at the same point like them. The musicians earn trust and respect from royalty and among fellow musicians. Many musicians mentioned that Khruu Peep is the best pui chawaa player and that he would never disappoint when he performs. So, many musicians want to play with Khruu Piip. His father and other great musicians have built their music reputations for a long time inside and outside of the palaces and are often referred to as the ‘great generation’ (baraoma Khruu or Khruu phuu yai) of Thai musicians, and Khruu Peep continues that same path at the Thai Music Division, Fine Arts Department where professional musicians now come to work together under royal and government authority. The KSPC ensemble is a place for the highest skilled musicians to join to show the highest art form in Thai music society, and the musicians make sure to keep this ensemble exclusive to be able to maintain the quality of the ensemble as highly as their teachers did. After those teachers passed away, their reputations are live through their students, and I think that the musicians who are still alive at present also want and expect the same thing from their students.

There are several reasons that the KSPC might be considered an endangered music. Having more students learning KSPC would make it hard to control, so the small number of musicians who are allowed to participate in the KSPC ensemble allows control over the transmission knowledge—of the music of the ability to represent the king’s voice. So, the teachers make sure that they pick the right students to represent them, and by extension royal authority, by participating in KSPC ensemble. Because it is a long process which requires
many years of intimate learning and practicing closely with the teachers, students who would successfully carry on this musical heritage have to be really close to the teachers physically and emotionally. There are musicians who learned a few songs that are use for KSPC while they were in school, college, or university, but almost all of them have had no chance to participate in the ensemble after they graduated.

Another important reason that keeps access to the KSPC ensemble very limited is because younger musicians are not yet accepted to participate or perform in this special ensemble in public. It means for the teachers that only the highest skilled musicians come and challenge each other on stage for the sake of music itself, and this might be to hard to understand and appreciate for the younger musicians, even though they have learned to play KSPC from their own teachers, especially if they are not yet able to create their own thaang. This dynamic appeared in two cases that I witnessed while conducting my research in Thailand. Even while there is a younger generation of musicians who now try to perform KSPC in different contexts from where this special ensemble has functioned in the past, the musicians are not yet being recognized by the second and third generation of musicians who perform KSPC in the Fine Arts Department. They still think that it was too soon for those inexperienced younger musicians to perform KSPC in public—partly because those students did not properly study KSPC directly with the ones who did. In addition, one teacher is not qualified to teach the whole ensemble. When students perform KSPC on their own, they challenge the power of authority among musicians in general because the KSPC ensemble is not only a place for elite musicians to show off their high skills, playing it symbolizes respect already gained from other musicians in society. I also interviewed a musician who performed
KSPC with his friend for his teacher’s mother’s funeral who has no connection to KSPC, and he told me that he just wanted to play what he and his friends can do best for their teacher as a gift and they did not want me to compare them to the professional KSPC musicians. He said, “it was a one time thing”.

Besides the musicians of the Fine Arts Department, there are the ‘three tiger soldiers’ (saam thahaamsuea) who have tried to build their own KSPC ensembles at their institutions outside of Bangkok. They have each faced similar problems, especially the lack of skillful piit chawaa and drums players who can perform Saramaa at their institutions, so, they must invite musicians from the Fine Arts Departments to help them perform KSPC at their own institutions. And so the hierarchy of power and authority is preserved, with the Fine Arts Department still at the top.

However, it was remarkable that musicians from several institutions could come together in 2012 to conduct a workshop in KSPC at the College of Dramatic Arts Nakhon Si Thammarat. They gave a small taste of the intensive practice for KSPC, and they connected teachers and students at this institution to the center where the KSPC ensemble was created. The young students in the workshop could be watched very closely by their teachers, and there might be a chance to pick a few of them to further receive knowledge of KSPC in the future. These students might not yet know about their teachers’ plans yet.

I conclude that, at present, the KSPC ensemble in Thai music society is an endangered music due to the small number of musicians who are capable of performing it, and the number of musicians who have permission to perform in public is kept intentionally
low. To end, I present two recent incidents that illustrate the fragility of KSPC and the potential for change.

**The loss of Khruu Somboon**

Somboon was the beloved and trusted musician and college who worked at Fine Arts Department. He has studied KSPC from several musicians from the second generation directly and he performed with them publicly. Many Thai musicians knew he was an important figure in the third generation of the KSPC ensemble. He unexpectedly passed away, leaving people in shock and some of the musicians came to realize that not only was Somboon gone, his musical knowledge was gone too. Somboon did not yet teach KSPC to any students who might in the future play in place of him. Several teachers and musicians from Bangkok and Nakhon Si Thammarat who attended the funeral addressed their sense of loss to me knowing that I was doing research on the subject and that Khruu Somboon was one of my main informants, but so far they have not taken any action to change the way knowledge of KPSC is transmitted.

There are some actions that musicians and music scholars could take if a particular ensemble or special repertoire or dance was in danger of disappearing in Thailand. For example, Wong recounts a special training session the for Phra Phiraap dance held to make sure that there would be more teachers who could transmit this knowledge to the next generation, because this dance was considered essential for the wai khruu ritual.¹ In another case, Pongsin Arunrat, a youngest son of the well known sau saam sai player Khruu Udom

¹ Wong 2001, 214.
Arunrat, presented recreation of musical ensembles that had already disappeared by researching stone carvings, paintings, old pictures, old texts, and old recordings. He restored *wong khab mai* (stringed instruments accompanying singing) and *mahoorii khruang sii* (four musicians) and *mahoorii khruang hok* (six musicians). He researched *mahoorii booraan* (old *mahoorii*) and wrote a book *Mahooriviak* and gave presentations with live ensembles. I attended one of these presentations at the College of Music Mahidol University. Sujit Wongthet and Sathian Duangjantip came to discuss on stage about the possibility of sound of ensembles that Pongsin and his student presents.2

During the Nakhon Si Thammarat workshop in 2012, *Khruu* Jeeraphon often mentioned his two students, Somboon Boonwong (*Khruu* Jeup) and Aphichai Ponglualert (*Khruu* Chaay), and encouraged students to practice so they could reach as a high point in their careers like these good examples. They both had been his string students and they both achieved very high status in the Thai music society in Bangkok. *Khruu* Somboon was the Director of the College of Dramatic Arts in Bangkok after he had been a string musician at the Fine Arts Department with *Khruu* Aphichai. And *Khruu* Aphichai is a string musician for the Fine Arts Department in Bangkok. They both were good and very close friends and they play in KSPC ensemble together.

I interviewed *Khruu* Jeup about KSPC several times and, I had made another appointment with *Khruu* Jeup which would take place right after I returned to Bangkok from Nakhon Si Thammarat, but on the night that I had flown back to Bangkok, he was gone. He was admitted to a hospital for only several days. He was practicing KSPC ensemble with his

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2 Presentation by Pongsin Arunrat and his students.
teachers and the second generation until the last day of preparation but he was too sick to perform on stage in the evening. What I know was that he was too sick and he was at the hospital. Three of us, Khruu Peep, Khruu Jeeraphon and I, planned to visit him after we came back from the workshop in the south. The day we came back, I heard the news from Khruu Aphichai’s phone call. When I received the news, I was on my way to my home in Sisaket province by express train. At around 5 a.m., Khruu Aphichai called and he asked softly, “Cherry, you already knew that right?” “Yes,” I replied, one of the pîi musicians at Fine Art Department had just posted the loss of Somboon on his Facebook wall a second before Khruu Aphichai called me. We both were in silence for a while. I burst into tears, sobbing quietly, and people on the train looked at me confusedly but no one said anything. “Khruu Jeup went to a better place, you know?” Khruu Aphichai told me from the other side of the line. “I will be at the temple and see you there” he said. After hanging up the phone, several more teachers from Nakhon Si Thammarat, where the KSPC workshop just took place, called and told me the news. Everyone was in shock. For a while, I was quiet, in my mind were pictures, performances, and conversations with Khruu Jeup. I was for a while still could not believe that he was really gone. I cried and sobbed and cried again. Trapped on a train knowing that I had other obligations to take care of at home, I did not get out of the train and headed back to Bangkok immediately. To pass time and reduce my pain, I wrote many thoughts into my notebook to remember Khruu Somboon. While writing on my notebook blocking other sounds around me out, at one moment I felt like someone whispered in my ear “do not let it disappear, Cherry, do not let it disappear!” I immediately regained my focus and said to myself, “I cannot promise you, but I will try my best”. The train took six hours to reach my
hometown. I later called my mother when I was on the way home. My mother who was waiting for me to return home and I told her that I would not sleep at home that night; I had to go back to Bangkok right away after finishing our business. She replied sadly, “okay, I understand”. I had dinner with my mother and my sister before taking an overnight train back to Bangkok, and went straight to the temple where they kept Khruu Somboon’s body. I sat down there, in front of his coffin, speechless. That night, musicians from the Fine Arts Department came to perform music for the funeral in honor to Khruu Somboon. I met with Khruu Peep there. We both looked at each other long and painfully, tears in our eyes. “Who knew, it would happen like this?” Khruu Peep said to me quietly. I did not say a word. I sat next to Khruu Peep quietly. I also met with Khruu Jeeraphon at the funeral. After receiving the bad news, he decided to not return to Roi Et as planned. Both teachers Peep and Jeeraphon were very quiet and sad. I could see their deep pain in their eyes. We all were at the funeral every day. Khruu Peep and Khruu Jeeraphon talked to their KSPC colleagues and wanted to perform KSPC to honor Khruu Jeup. “He deserved it,” Khruu Jeeraphon told me.

However, I could not stay for that. I was very upset that I had to fly back to the U.S. right before the last night of Somboon’s funeral. After having changed my return flight several times, I could not postpone it any longer. When I was back in the U.S., I was on Skype all night to attend Somboon’s funeral online. One of my friends who was attending the funeral there was kind enough to leave her phone on at the funeral so that I could hear what was going on though her phone. In honor of Khruu Somboon, who used to play KSPC, the three tiger soldiers joined with the pii klaung ensemble, with pii chawaa played by Khruu Peep to perform KSPC at the funeral. Several teachers who attended the KSPC workshop in Nakhon
Si Thammarat came to the funeral in Bangkok. They all knew Somboon well, especially Puangphen Rakthong whom Somboon had helped so much while she wrote her master’s thesis about KSPC sixteen years ago. Puangphen brought a big white flower wreath with poem on it expressing how lost she felt when Somboon passed away. She called Somboon “my younger brother”.

The loss of Somboon hit me and other musicians hard leaving only the feeling of emptiness and worry about the future of KSPC because he had been chosen to carry the knowledge of KSPC in the third generation and he had just started to teach a few students about KSPC. The line was cut and it would take time to find another musician to take Somboon’s place.
Figure 25. Picture of *Khruu* Somboon Boonwong taken by the author at the College of Dramatic Arts Bangkok on May 4, 2012.
Figure 26. The author with Khruu Apichai Ponguelert and Khruu Lerkiat Mahavinijchaimontri at Khruu Somboon Boonwong’s funeral on August 30, 2012.

In fact, since Somboon passed away, the number of KSPC performance from the Fine Arts Department declined dramatically compared to the year of 2012. For over a year and a half since then, there has been only one KSPC performance in Bangkok in response to a request by the Princess. I think that losing one great KSPC musician caused too much pain for Khruu Piip. He is still thinks of Khruu Somboon and has not yet been able to find someone to play KSPC like Khruu Somboon. Khruu Jeeraphon said that “it was too soon for Jeup to be
gone”. I could see his deep pain in his eyes. I think that the reason Khruu Jeeraphon went back to Nakhon Si Thammarat a second time to help string students practice was mainly because that was the institution where he had taught Apichai and Somboon. Khruu Jeeraphon wants to find a new musician where he once had success and he went back to where he has started. However, for that second workshop at Nakhon Si Thammarat, Khruu Peep did not go back. I speculate that he did not feel like it would be possible for the pii teacher in the south to get much better and reach a high enough skill level in a short period of time, so he would rather stay in the center where he could choose to teach a few more skilled pii players at his institution or at the College of Dramatic Arts in Bangkok instead of going back to the south. Also, if the pii teacher from the south would like to continue learning pii chawaa with Khruu Peep, he could travel to the center and learn from him just like other pii teachers who have traveled from their home institution to study in the center.

An unapproved performance

On Thursday evening, January 9, 2014, in Bangkok, a small group of students of Dr. Narongchai Pidokrat came together to perform at the funeral of their teacher’s mother. They were at the funeral and decided at that moment that they would perform KSPC. It had not been planned in advance. These students had learned KSPC at their institutions, and some of them had been students of Khruu Somboon Boonwong. Dr. Narongchai Pidokrat is a well-known music teacher in Thai society and he teaches at several institutions at the Master’s and Ph.D. levels. I interviewed one of the musicians who performed at the funeral and asked him the reason they came to perform KSPC at this particular funeral, and he told
me that they wanted to show their respect to their teacher and his mother. KSPC is the highest repertoire they could choose to perform as a symbol of respect to their teacher. The younger generation choosing this music to show their ability and at the same time to show their teacher respect is a new way for this music to appear in Thai music society. They gave their teacher the best they could.

KSPC musicians have very tightly relied on only a few teachers who had studied directly with the teachers who played KSPC in the past. At present, however, more students are having more opportunities to make and create their own artwork for themselves and anyone they like. This contrasts with Khruu Peep, who is close to royalty and professional musicians at work, and both affect his decisions to keep his father’s legend and to try not to change anything his father taught him about music. His father was very successful and received high respect from society and Khruu Peep does not want to change a thing. Musicians expect him to represent his father’s style, and so to reach a similar goal in life and stay at the pinnacle of his career, he has chosen to take the same path his father walked.
Appendix 1

Table of Repertoire on Recordings of KSPC

In this table I show the repertoire I discussed in Chapter 4. In performance, the overture for KSPC is immediately followed by three compositions, Saramaa and Yoon, Plaeng and Yoon, which are very special compositions for pii chawaa and khlaung kheak. Right after Saramaa Yoon, and Plaeng the ensemble joins to play the Language Suite (phleeng phaasaa, a suite of pieces in different foreign accents) and end with Yoon again in a form that other ensembles do not do. Then, the ensemble would normally perform the regular songs before the ending songs. When compositions include sung text, the selected texts are from royal literature such as Inao and Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen and these are shown in the table. In addition, I show how many times the pieces have been recorded. The most well-known overture, Rakhoo, for KSPC composed by Khruu Montri Tramote (1900-1995).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Times recorded</th>
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Appendix 2

Instruments and Ensembles

Khrueangsaí Ensemble

Here I present the musical instruments of the khrueangsaí ensemble as it has been constituted since at least the late 19th-century.

Plucked instruments

The krachappii is a fretted lute. Krachappii means tortoise and probably refers to the size and shape of the sound box.1 It has two or four strings and very deep frets. The strings are made of nylon and the pick is made of hardwood or animal bone. According to David Morton, the krachappii was a prominent ensemble instrument until the end of the nineteenth century.2 However, in the 20th-century, the instrument became much less common. Recently, scholars including Pongsin Arunrat and Pakorn Rodchangphuan are seeking to restore the former importance of this instrument by reconstructing and performing in older ensembles.

The jakhee is a three-stringed zither with a sound box shaped like a crocodile. It has five legs and eleven frets. When played the strings are stopped by the fingers of the left hand while the right hand plucks the strings with a hardwood or animal bone pick that is tied onto the index finger. David Morton has written the jakhee “has been used by Thai since at least the first part of Ayutthaya period (14th-century), being mentioned in the

1 Morton, 92.
2 Ibid.
court regulations of that time.”\textsuperscript{3} The strings of the jakhee are tuned to C, G and C and octave higher.

\textit{Struck stringed instrument}

The \textit{khim} is a hammered dulcimer with brass or stainless steel strings line on top of bridges. Originally from China (where it is called the \textit{yang qin}), the body comes in a shape of butterfly or trapezium, and the strings are struck with two slender mallets.

\textit{Bowed instruments}

The \textit{sau saam sai} is a three-stringed spike fiddle with a coconut-shell body that has been split, re-shaped and glued together. The front of the body is covered with baby goatskin. This fiddle has a bow that is separate from the strings. It is used to accompany singing and to perform lullabies for royalty. The playing style of the \textit{sau saam sai} is meant to emulate singing, and as a result singers often play the instrument. The strings of the \textit{sau saam sai} are tuned to A, D and G from low to high. King Rama II, who was also known as a great musician and a great writer of literature including a version of \textit{Inao}, played \textit{sau saam sai} and composed several songs for it, such as \textit{Bulaan Lau Leuan} (“The moon”).

The \textit{sau uu} is a two-stringed coconut body fiddles with the bow trapped between the two strings. \textit{Sau uu} is used in the \textit{khreaung sai} ensemble as well as in the \textit{piiphaat} ensemble when it is played with soft mallets (such as \textit{piiphaat mai nuam} and \textit{piiphaat duekdamban}). The strings of the \textit{sau uu} are tuned to C and G above.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
The *sau duang* is a two-stringed snakeskin fiddle. The body is made from hardwood or ivory with the backside open. It has a bow trapped between the two strings like *sau uu*. It leads the ensemble while the *sau uu* takes the following role when the instruments perform together. The *sau duang* is tuned a fifth higher than the *sau uu*. The strings are tuned to G and D.

**Wind instruments**

*The khlui phiang au* is a vertical block flute made of hardwood or plastic. It has seven finger holes in the front and one hole in the back. When played in the ensemble, it takes the follower role. The tonic (lowest note) of this instrument is C.

*The khlui lip* is also a vertical block flute but the size is smaller than *khlui phiang au*. The tonic of this instrument is F.

**Percussion**

For percussion, the *khruangsai* ensemble usually includes one *thoon* (goblet drum), one *rammanaa* (frame drum), both played by one performer, and one pair of *ching* (brass cymbals).

**Piiphaat and Mahoorii Ensembles**

Thai music can be classified by three main purposes: religious ritual music, where music is performed for the divine; theatrical music which is music to accompany performances, where the focus is on the performers and the stories; and entertainment
music, which is the music that is performed in smaller and private settings and is focused on the audience. Besides the khruueangsaï ensemble, there are two other common ensembles known as piiphaat, and mahoorii.

The piiphaat ensemble is commonly used to accompany the khoon (masked dance drama) and for rituals such as the wai khruu ceremony, honoring spirit teachers, funerals and temple events. The main musical instruments are pî (oboe) or khliî (flute), ranaat eek (xylophone), ranaat thum (bamboo xylophone), khaung wong yai (large gong circle), khaung wong lek (small gong circle), thapoon (two-headed drum), klaung that (large drums), klaung khaek (two-headed drums), and chîng.

The mahoorii ensemble as understood at present is a combination of the piiphaat and khruueangsaï ensembles with additional instruments such as sau saam sai (three-stringed fiddle), and with adjustments in percussion to balance the overall sound. However, before King Rama IV, the word mahoorii also referred to music more generally or to musicians.\(^4\) The mahoorii ensemble provides entertainment for the king inside the palace or when the king travels.

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\(^4\) Damrong, 7.
Appendix 3

Lineage of Teachers and Students

This diagram illustrates the first three generations to perform KSPC and its origins as understood within the Thai tradition. Birth and death dates are indicated where known.
Appendix 4

DVD Contents

The DVD includes excerpts of performances by KSPC ensembles that I recorded while in Thailand in 2012.

1. Saarathii thao at Chulalongkorn University

2. Performance at the Thai National Theatre in honor of Prayaa Plaek Prasaansap

3. The funeral for Khruu Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaatin

4. The funeral for Khruu Sinlapi Tramote

5. Performance at the Thai National Theatre in honor of Khruu Thaungdii Sujaritkun

6. The KSPC workshop in Nakhon Si Thammarat

Track Descriptions

1. Saarathii thao at Chulalongkorn University

    The first performance I recorded took place at Cultural Center of Chulalongkorn University on February 17, 2012. The musicians were from the Fine Arts Department and one additional jakhee was played by a former musician of the Fine Arts Department who now works in Roi Et province teaching music. The fourth song performed was Saarathii thao. The expansion into saam chan was arranged by Phraa Praditphairau (Mii Duriyaangkun). Because there is no fixed melody for this composition, just a basic skeletal melody, this allows musicians and composer to arrange many thaang to perform it. This
song was also arranged anonymously in *thao* form and in a solo version during King Rama VI. The lyrics used that day come from *Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen* literature, sung by a male singer, *Khruu* Sombat Sangwianthaung. The following describes a situation in which a woman has no right to her own body and has no power in a society dominated by men. The music is called *Saarathii* which literally means “to drive” or “driver.” This scene takes place at Khun Chaang’s house when Khun Phaen wants to get his wife back after Khun Chaang took her and made her his. Going to Khun Chaang’s house, which is a very large house according to his high social status, Khun Phaen misses Khun Chaang’s bedroom and finds another girl’s bedroom instead. Khun Phaen first thought that the woman in the room was his own wife due to the cleanliness of the room. He discovers it is not his wife but after talking to the girl for a while he has sex with her and gives her some money so she can free herself from Khun Chaang.

สารถี

สารถี

น้องหรือว่าจะช่างน่ารัก เสนจะบันทึ้งที่ร้ายเสียดสี
หนึ่งจะกลับเชื่อใจใจไม่หายต้าน
แม่นจะอยู่เป็นสูร้รักไม่แรมชม
แม่จะอยู่เป็นสูร้รักไม่แรมชม

Saarathii
Saam chan

Look, what you said to me
ironically
but deeply, he is very happy
I am sorry that you are alone
Whoever would be your loved one
Will take great care and be with you
I will love you forever
I am not lying and I will not make you sad
Do not tell me that you owe fifteen chang\(^1\) 
Even if you owe fifty, I could help you to pay it off 
Because of our merit from the past 
That unexpectedly has brought us to meet 
Then, he moves close to her 
Telling her not to be afraid

He opens his money pouch and calms her down 
Do not be mad, and please show mercy to him 
Then, Miss Kawkiriyaa 
Turned her face, hiding from him 
Protecting herself and not letting him touch her 
She knows that he loves her and is sincere

In the second and third passages, Khun Phaen is talking to Kawkiriyaa, a woman in Khun Chaang’s possession as collateral for a debt. He tells her that he is sympathetic towards her situation and is sorry she has no one to turn to. If he were lucky, he would give her love and make her happy everyday. Her price is 15 chang (a unit of money) but if it is more, Khun Phaen also could help her with that. Khun Phaen gives her money and tells her it is their fate they met that night. She initially holds Khun Phaen at arm’s length,

\(^1\) An old unit of Siamese currency.
but not for long; they finally sleep together. After that Khun Phaen asks Kawkiriyaa where Khun Chaang’s bedroom is located. Kawkiriyaa tells Khun Phaen and Khun Phaen goes to get his wife from Khun Chaang’s house. Instead, he ends up sleeping with another girl along the way.

2. Performance at the Thai National Theatre in honor of Prayaa Plack Prasaansap

   The second KSPC performance took place at the Thai National Theatre on March 16, 2012, in honor of Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasap (Plack Prasaansap) who was the director of a music ensemble for King Rama VI. The suite performed by the KSPC ensemble from the Fine Arts Department was arranged in saam chan by Phrayaa Prasaan Duriyasap and included the overture Thaun Samau, Saramaa and the Language Suite.

3. The funeral for Khruu Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaatin

   On April 21, 2012, it was one year after a famous Thai singer, Khruu Jaroenjai Sunthaunwaatin had passed away, and her family was waiting for a royal funeral sponsored by Princess Sirindhorn. Because Khruu Jaroenjai used to sing with a KSPC ensemble, the musicians from the Fine Arts Department came to pay their respect by performing KSPC one night at her funeral which took place at Thepsirin Temple in Bangkok. The excerpt is performance of Saramaa.
4. The funeral for Khruu Sinlapi Tramote

There was another funeral for Khruu Sinlapi Tramote, a son of Montri Tramote and a former head musician from the Fine Arts Department, which took place at the same temple from June 22 to July 1, 2012. Unexpectedly, on the first day of the funeral, there was a performance by a student ensemble from Roi Et province, directed by Khruu Jeeraphon Petchsom, who was a former student and musician at the Fine Arts Department. He brought his students to the funeral in the afternoon and performed KSPC with them to pay respect to Khruu Sinlapi Tramote who himself had performed KSPC at the Fine Arts Department. In this excerpt, they perform part of Khaek Maun Bangchang thao using lyrics from Seephaa Khun Chaang Khun Phaen. The ensemble and borrowed one female singer, Khruu Kaansini Sangwianthaung, a daughter of Khruu Sombat Sangwianthaung, from the Fine Arts Department who had been present at the funeral to sing with another ensemble.

5. Performance at the Thai National Theatre in honor of Khruu Thaungdii Sujaritkun

August 18, 2012 was a day for honoring the great jakhee player, Khruu Thaungdii Sujaritkun who was a former musician at the Fine Arts Department and former Thai music teacher at many institutions in Thailand. It was her 100th anniversary and her students helped to manage an event of Thai music featuring stringed instrument, and they gathered many musicians to practice and perform together at the Thai National Theatre. KSPC was one of many ensembles that performed on stage that day. The musicians in the ensemble were from the Fine Arts Department, Chulalongkorn
University, and Roi Et and Chiang Mai provinces, where two former musicians from the Fine Arts Department. They all came together to perform in order to honor their music teacher who used to perform KSPC at the Fine Arts Department with the first generation. The complete performance is shown on the DVD, including the overture Chomsamut with Saramaa and the Language Suite. This suite is considered to be especially difficult, and was composed intentionally with an incomplete drum pattern so that when performed, the drum players have to pay close attention to the melody and to other musicians, and have to improvise to fit with the music.

6. The KSPC workshop in Nakhon Si Thammarat

This excerpt is a performance of the overture Rakhoo and the Language Suite from the final concert of the KPSC workshop in Nakhon Si Thammarat, performed by the students of the workshop. The overture composed by Khruu Montri Tramote. The ensemble consists of both students and teachers who participated in the three-day workshop. Khruu Peep plays ching to keep the beat for the ensemble while Khruu Jeeraphon sits in a chair next to the Director of the College of Dramatic Arts and watches over the performance. In 2014, a few students who participated in the workshop graduated and left this institution.


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