



มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏนครปฐม



Thai Melodic Percussion 3

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CHAPTER II



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Ritual songs

Ma ha chai (The Internationality)

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Ma ha chai (Phleng Ma ha Chai) is an ancient Thai traditional composition, believed to have originated during the Ayutthaya period. Originally composed in a two-level tempo (Song Chan), it was historically performed during various auspicious occasions. It was frequently played alongside the "Maha Roek" song (Phleng Maha Roek), leading to the common colloquial phrase 'Ma ha roek - Ma ha chai' (Fine Arts Department, 1973).

1895 (B.E. 2438): H.R.H. Prince Narisara Nuvadtivongs composed and adapted the *Maha Chai* melody from its original traditional Thai form into a **Western style** suitable for performance by brass bands (Nantasukon, 2024).

Later Era: H.R.H. Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu, Prince of Nakhon Sawan, further revised, improved, and re-arranged the harmony to make the composition more refined and complete. This arrangement is the standard version that is widely used today (Thienchaianan, 2008).

Ma ha roek (The Internationality)

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The **Ma ha Ruek** anthem reflects the adaptation of Thai musical culture into an international context. Its history can be divided into two primary perspectives:

In the traditional Thai context, Maha Ruek is a significant *Phleng Na Phat* (sacred instrumental piece) performed during auspicious ceremonies to ensure prosperity (Fine Arts Department, 2002). It signals the beginning of a "propitious moment" or "great auspicious time." It is commonly played during traditional ceremonies, such as the laying of a building's foundation stone or the opening of Buddhist rituals, to invite celestial beings to witness the event.

In the international context, the song was rearranged into a Western orchestral format by **His Royal Highness Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu, Prince of Nakhon Sawan** (Poonpit Amatyakul, 1986). He adapted the original Thai "two-level" (*Song Chan*) rhythm for a military brass band, utilizing Western harmonic principles to evoke a sense of grandeur and strength. Today, it serves as an official honorary anthem used for the opening of ceremonies or as a salute for presiding officials who hold a rank below the Royal Family (Office of the National Culture Commission, 1997).

Ching pa chan



Phleng Rueang Ching Phra Chan Chao is classified as a Phleng Rueang (Suite), a musical form defined by the consecutive performance of multiple pieces sharing similar melodic contours, tonal characteristics, or rhythmic cycles. Specifically, it falls under the sub-category of Phleng Rueang Ching. According to Tramote (1997), this category is distinguished by its unique melodic progression, which adheres primarily to the structural framework of the Na Thap Ching (cymbal rhythmic patterns).

The repertoire selected for the Phleng Rueang Ching Phra Chan Chao suite predominantly consists of compositions prefixed with the word 'Ching' or belonging to the same musical lineage. Examples include Phleng Ching Mulong, Phleng Ching Somphot, Phleng Ching Yai, Phleng Ching Klang, and Phleng Ching Lek, among others (Rungruang, 2003).

The role of Phleng Rueang Ching Phra Chan Chao transcends mere entertainment; it functions as both a 'temporal marker' and a mechanism for 'mood setting' within the ritual context. Its purpose is to cultivate an atmosphere of tranquility, composure, and sanctity. While the monks perform their duties (consuming the meal), the music serves to mask external auditory disturbances, thereby aiding the lay participants in centering their minds on meritorious contemplation (Suttachitt, 2001).

This specific rendition of Phleng Rueang Ching Phra Chan Chao follows the musical lineage (Thang) transmitted by the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University.





Phleng Ma ha chai



Phleng Ma ha roek

The song structure is as follows:



Song	Melodic style:
Ma ha chai	Free melodic progression
Ma ha roek	Free melodic progression

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