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Thai Melodic Percussion 3

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CHAPTER IV



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Phleng Sam Chan

Kaek mon Sam chan



Originally, 'Khaek Mon' was an ancient melody in the two-tier (Song Chan) tempo. Later, during the Rattanakosin era, Phra Pradit Phairoh (Mee Duriyangkur), or famously known as 'Khru Mee Khaek', recomposed and expanded this original two-tier melody into a three-tier (Sam Chan) version. This was intended for use as an overture (Homrong) and as a vocal accompaniment in both Piphat and Mahori ensembles (Montri Tramote and Wichian Kultan, 1980).

Toi roof Sam chan



The song Toi roof was originally an ancient melody in a two-tier tempo. It was later expanded into a three-tier (Sam Chan) version by Khru Pheng. In 1935 (B.E. 2478), Mr. Montri Tramote composed a one-tier version to complete the 'Thao' (three-level) suite. Regarding the lyrics, the original version only existed for the three-tier tempo, but its literary source remained unknown. Consequently, when Mr. Montri Tramote completed the suite, he selected verses from the famous literature "Phra Aphai Mani," specifically the episode where Phra Aphai Mani falls in love with the portrait of Nang Laweng, to serve as the new lyrics for the entire suite (Montri Tramote and Wichian Kultan, 1980).

Ka men Yai Sam chan

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Originally, **Khamen Yai** appeared as part of a *Phleng Rueang* (a suite of songs), composed in the **Song Chan** rhythmic cycle. It was traditionally performed alongside its counterparts in the same set, *Khamen Noi* and *Khamen Klang*.

Later, **Phraya Prasan Duriyasap (Plaek Prasansap)** adapted the original melody, expanding it into a **Sam Chan** rhythmic cycle, making it ideal for performance by *Piphat* and *Khrueang Sai* (string) ensembles. The composition was further refined by **His Royal Highness Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu, Prince of Nakhon Sawan**, who reimagined *Khamen Yai* with a distinct identity. His version introduced the "**Luk Lo Luk Khat**" technique—a sophisticated musical dialogue or "call-and-response" between instruments. He also composed condensed versions of the melody into **Song Chan** and **Chan Diao** cycles, completing the set as a "**Phleng Thao**" (a suite containing all three rhythmic levels).

His Royal Highness's arrangement was granted for use by **Army and Navy brass bands** and became a signature piece for the **Wang Bang Khun Phrom Piphat Ensemble**, which served as a premier musical hub during that era (Montri Tramote and Wichian Kultan, 1980).

Kaek lop bu ree Sam chan

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Originally, **Khaek Lopburi** was part of the "Song Mai" set within the *Phleng Rueang Khaek Mon*. In the past, it consisted of only a single movement in the **Song Chan** rhythmic cycle and was primarily used in *Khon* and *Lakhon* performances to evoke feelings of sorrow or loneliness. Later, a second musical movement was added, though the vocal melody remained the same for both parts.

As the popularity of **Sam Chan** compositions grew, many masters of Thai classical music adapted **Khaek Lopburi** into this extended rhythmic cycle. They introduced sophisticated techniques, such as the "**Luk Lo Luk Khat**" (musical dialogue), which transformed the original somber mood into a more intricate and beautiful melody. The version composed by **Khru Choi Sunthonvathin** during the early reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) remains the most widely performed today.

In 1949, **Mr. Montri Tramote** further developed the piece by taking the original **Song Chan** version and aligning its style with Khru Choi's **Sam Chan** arrangement. He also composed a new **Chan Diao** (one-level) movement, completing the composition as a "**Phleng Thao**". Furthermore, he refined the vocal cues to ensure a seamless transition between the singers and the ensemble (Montri Tramote and Wichian Kultan, 1980).

Bang bai Sam chan



Bung Bai is a notable example of a composition that evolved from its theatrical roots into a sophisticated musical suite. Originally, the melody existed in the Song Chan (two-level) rhythmic cycle. During this early period, its primary function was to serve as vocal accompaniment for Khon and Lakhon (traditional Thai drama) performances.

As the musical arts flourished, master composers began to expand upon the original foundation. They developed the melody into the Sam Chan (three-level) rhythmic cycle and subsequently condensed it into a Chan Diao (one-level) version. This process eventually completed the composition as a full Phleng Thao suite. Due to the popularity of the piece, various masters created their own unique musical interpretations or "Thang," resulting in the diverse versions of Bung Bai that remain influential in the Thai classical repertoire today.

Kaek od Sam chan



Originally, **Khaek Ot** existed only in the **Song Chan** (two-level) rhythmic cycle. It was categorized as a dramatic piece performed with the *Song Mai* rhythmic pattern, specifically used to accompany sorrowful scenes in traditional performances. The name "Khaek Ot" is derived from its original melody, which contained a slight "Khaek" (Indian/Persian) influence.

Later, **Khru Choi Sunthonvathin** expanded the piece into the **Sam Chan** (three-level) rhythmic cycle. His version became widely popular as he purposefully integrated more pronounced "Khaek" accents into the melody to better reflect the song's name and enhance its musical appeal. Around 1937, the great master **Luang Pradit Phairoh (Sorn Silapabanleng)** adapted Khru Choi's Sam Chan structure to compose the Song Chan and **Chan Diao** (one-level) movements. This completed the composition as a full **Phleng Thao** suite, renowned for its intricate variations and engaging musicality throughout (Montri Tramote and Wichian Kultan, 1980).



The song structure is as follows:



Song	Melodic style:
Kaek mon Sam chan	Free melodic progression
Toi roof Sam chan	Free melodic progression
Ka men Yai Sam chan	This song has a partly prescribed melody.
Kaek lop bu ree Sam chan	This song has a partly prescribed melody.
Bang bai Sam chan	This song has a partly prescribed melody.
Kaek od Sam chan	This song has a partly prescribed melody.

Reference list

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