

FOSTERING THE HERITAGE OF SUKHOTHAI FOLK MUSIC: A STUDY OF LOCAL ARTISTS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION TO THE COMMUNITY

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Abstract

This area-based developmental research titled “Fostering the Heritage of Sukhothai Folk Music: A Study of Local Artists and Knowledge Transmission to the Community” aimed to collect information on Sukhothai folk music artists, analyze local literature for creating the Sukhothai Artist Hall, and transfer musical knowledge to the community. Conducted in lower northern Thailand using local study methods, data were gathered through field observations and interviews. The findings revealed 21 artist groups across all districts, with four districts, Mueang, Kong Krailat, Sawankhalok, and Khiri Mat, serving as major cultural centres, and two national artists recognized by the Ministry of Culture. The collaboration among researchers, Sawankhalok Municipality, and local organizations resulted in the establishment of the Sukhothai Artist Hall and successful knowledge transmission activities. The project received strong community participation and contributed to preserving and revitalizing Sukhothai’s folk music heritage.

Keywords

Thailand Sukhothai folk music, local artists, community-based learning, area-based research

งานวิจัยเชิงพัฒนาพื้นที่เรื่อง การส่งเสริมมรดกดนตรีพื้นบ้านสุโขทัย: การศึกษาศิลปินท้องถิ่นและการถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้สู่ชุมชน

บทคัดย่อ

มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อรวบรวมข้อมูลศิลปินดนตรีพื้นบ้านในจังหวัดสุโขทัย วิเคราะห์เอกสาร ท้องถิ่นเพื่อนำไปใช้ในการจัดตั้งหอศิลป์สุโขทัย และถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้ทางดนตรีสู่ชุมชน การวิจัยดำเนินการในพื้นที่ภาคเหนือตอนล่างของประเทศไทย โดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงพื้นที่ศึกษา เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลด้วยการสังเกตภาคสนามและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก ผลการวิจัยพบศิลปินดนตรีพื้นบ้านจำนวน 21 กลุ่ม ครอบคลุมทุกอำเภอของจังหวัดสุโขทัย โดยมี 4 อำเภอ ได้แก่ อำเภอเมืองสุโขทัย อำเภองาวไกรลาศ อำเภอสวรรคโลก และอำเภอศรีมณเฑียร ทำหน้าที่เป็นศูนย์กลางทางวัฒนธรรมที่สำคัญ และพบศิลปินแห่งชาติจำนวน 2 คน ซึ่งได้รับการยกย่องจากกระทรวงวัฒนธรรม ความร่วมมือระหว่างคณะนักวิจัย เทศบาลเมืองสวรรคโลก และหน่วยงานท้องถิ่น ส่งผลให้เกิดการจัดตั้งหอศิลป์สุโขทัย และการดำเนินกิจกรรมถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้ทางดนตรีสู่ชุมชนอย่างเป็นรูปธรรม โครงการวิจัยได้รับการมีส่วนร่วมจากชุมชนในระดับสูง และมีส่วนสำคัญในการอนุรักษ์ฟื้นฟู และสืบสานมรดกดนตรีพื้นบ้านของจังหวัดสุโขทัย

คำสำคัญ

ประเทศไทย, ประเทศดนตรีพื้นบ้านสุโขทัย, ศิลปินท้องถิ่น, มรดกทางวัฒนธรรม, การเรียนรู้บนฐานชุมชน

INTRODUCTION

Sukhothai province is known for its ancient civilization and rich cultural history in Thailand. This importance highlights the province’s potential as a valuable space for cultural learning, benefiting the community through tourism and educational opportunities.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized three heritage-related items associated with Sukhothai province. Sukhothai Historical Park and Si Satchanalai Historical Park were inscribed as World Heritage Sites on 12 December 1991 (Sukkasem & Kansamut, 2017). In addition, the first stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great was registered in the Memory of the World Programme on 2 September 2003, and the city was later

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selected as a member of the Creative Cities Network for Crafts and Folk Arts on 30 October, 2019. Based on these data, it can be observed that such international recognition has primarily emphasized ancient sites and historical documents, while the artists and cultural practitioners who have created, transmitted, and presented the diverse artistic expressions of Sukhothai province have received comparatively little attention.

Studies examining the contexts of Sukhothai Historical Park, Si Satchanalai Historical Park, and Kamphaeng Phet Historical Park indicate that these three historic sites continue to face challenges related to sustainable and integrated management. In particular, conservation practices and community-based tourism development remain in critical condition. Sustainable management in these areas requires effective integration among network partners, including government agencies, the private sector, local communities, tourism operators, and tourists. Furthermore, existing approaches reveal limitations in presenting distinctive local identities and in establishing meaningful connections between local communities and the surrounding World Heritage sites. Constraints in tourism resource management further exacerbate these challenges, highlighting the need for more coherent and participatory management frameworks (Pokharatsiri, 2013).

Realizing the importance of literary works in local music, the researchers propose a plan to develop and expand the knowledge of Sukhothai's local artists. They aim to create learning areas for the people in Sukhothai province by executing a research project focused on developing learning spaces for these artists. The project will culminate in the establishment of an artist hall, which will be further developed into community spaces designed for cultural engagement, eco-tourism, and lifelong learning in the future.

A preliminary study of local music artists in Sukhothai province revealed a variety of musical styles. These include country music singers, musicians, Thai bands, folk song performers, and even popular music artists. Notable figures among local people and social networks include Chinnakorn Krairas (national artist in performing arts in 1998), Prateep Suksopa (national artist in performing arts in 2020), Rapin Phuthai, and Thatthep Prasong.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The objectives of this study were threefold: (1) to collect data from local music artists in Sukhothai province, (2) to analyze local literature and related information concerning local music artists in Sukhothai province and synthesize the data for developing a learning space for the Sukhothai Artist Hall, and (3) to provide knowledge and experience from artists to the community through activities designed to promote lifelong learning. In line with these objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the distinctive characteristics, experiences, and artistic identities of local music artists in Sukhothai province?
- How can local literature and related information about Sukhothai's music artists be analyzed and synthesized to develop an effective learning space for the Sukhothai Artist Hall?
- In what ways can the knowledge and expertise of local music artists be transferred to the community through activities that foster lifelong learning?

LITERATURE REVIEWED

In the literature review, the researchers seek to conduct a comprehensive examination of the contextual background of the research area in Sukhothai province, Thailand, with particular attention to local folk music and related area-based studies. Moreover, the review incorporates a critical discussion of the theoretical frameworks that inform and guide the analytical approach adopted in this study.

FOLK MUSIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Culture and tradition function as essential mechanisms through which communities transmit narratives, historical experiences, and ways of life from one generation to the next, employing diverse forms and media across different historical periods. When social phenomena emerge that influence lifestyles, value systems, and structural dynamics across multiple domains—including cultural and

traditional practices—such phenomena warrant critical scholarly attention due to their far-reaching implications for cultural continuity and transformation (Phongnil 2023). In the contemporary era of globalization, these global dynamics play a dual role: while posing challenges to local cultural sustainability, they also provide opportunities for safeguarding and revitalizing local musical traditions that are increasingly at risk of disappearance. Through processes of global circulation and exchange, local music traditions may not only survive but also gain renewed visibility and viability within global cultural and market systems, as they engage with increasingly diverse audiences worldwide (Peterson & Richard A., 2001). As a result, the process of cultural hybridization, in which local identities are integrated with external cultural influences, has fostered diverse forms of cultural transformation that both preserve local distinctiveness and generate innovative cultural expressions (Steingress, 2003).

In this context, Johnson (2002) observed that many of the world's major tourist destinations have become key sites for the preservation, reinterpretation, and reinvention of traditional cultural practices. This perspective forms the foundation of area-based research and development. By examining local characteristics and applying new insights derived from existing cultural roots in a tangible and creative manner, such an approach can effectively enhance community sustainability, resilience, and cultural vitality.

CHARACTERISTICS AND IDENTITIES OF THAI FOLK MUSIC

The identity of Thai folk music can be perceived from multiple perspectives. The researcher found that the tuning intervals of musical instruments, vocal and instrumental styles, and distinctive musical characteristics are fundamental elements in defining the essence of folk music in each region, particularly in the Lower Northern region of Thailand.

First, the methods of musical tuning vary across cultures, reflecting both shared and unique characteristics. Gamer and Robin J. (2010) noted that musicians and acousticians have established various systems for dividing pitch intervals without limitation. For instance, Chinese music employs several tuning systems, including equal temperament and a system that divides an octave into 53 tones. Indian music, meanwhile, subdivides each semitone into three parts (Nettl, 1985). Burmese national music uses a diatonic seven-tone scale, but its tonal spacing has its own distinctive “neutral tones” (Williamson, 2000).

The identity of folk music, as expressed through the tuning of instruments, can be analyzed from various viewpoints. For example, the instruments in the Central Thai piphat ensemble are tuned to a seven-tone equal scale (Gamer & Robin, 2010), which does not correspond precisely to the Western diatonic harmonic system (Sethares, 2004). However, contemporary Thai musicians have increasingly adopted standardized tuning practices that align more closely with the Western diatonic scale, diverging from traditional Thai tonal preferences (Ryker, 1991).

This observation aligns with Swangviboonpong's (2003) assertion that, although traditional Thai vocalists still adhere to the seven-tone equal tuning of the piphat ensemble, their vocal performance naturally flows according to the inherent characteristics of the tonal system, creating harmony with scientific principles of acoustics. Consequently, the tonal identity of Central Thai music—and other regional folk genres—has gradually converged toward Western cultural standards, where mathematical precision plays an increasing role in tuning systems. Moreover, the growing influence of the commercial music industry and advertising media has contributed to the diminishing prominence of traditional local musical identities.

Nevertheless, it can be stated that the distinctive musical features of traditional folk songs continue to preserve their local authenticity. Luk thung (Thai country music) serves as a significant example of folk-inspired music from the Northeastern region that has become a dominant musical culture nationwide. Mitchell (2015), Siriyuvasak (1990), Jirattikorn (2006), and Eamsa-ard (2006) agreed that luk thung symbolizes local and rural identity, with its lyrics reflecting the struggles of Thai rural life. Its vocal style shares common features with other regional folk traditions, such as the use of melismatic ornamentation and vocal vibrato (Jirattikorn, 2006).

The tradition of ornamented singing and vocal embellishment later evolved into modern Thai popular songs. Mitchell (2015) further noted that this has been a distinctive characteristic of Thai folk music

since 1944, during the era of Plaek Phibunsongkhram, who introduced Ramwong Matathan (standardized folk dance) as a fusion of Thai traditional singing and Western rhythmic forms. These were commonly performed at festivals, temple fairs, and community celebrations (Mitchell, 2015).

Contemporary Thai folk music, therefore, remains deeply influenced—intentionally or unintentionally—by these cultural policies and practices established more than sixty years ago. It continues to represent a living musical heritage passed down through generations within each community, forming the enduring identity of Thai folk music today.

This perspective forms the foundation of area-based research and development. By examining local characteristics and applying new insights derived from existing cultural roots in a tangible and creative manner, such an approach can effectively enhance community sustainability, resilience, and cultural vitality.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, the area-based theoretical framework serves as the primary foundation for understanding the complex relationships between local cultural dynamics, folk music heritage, and community development. By integrating concepts from local studies, this framework aims to explore how Sukhothai's folk music wisdom can be transmitted, revitalized, and transformed into a living learning resource within the community. This study employed a research and development approach to document and preserve the local music heritage of Sukhothai province, ensuring that traditional knowledge continues to evolve while remaining rooted in its cultural origins. The approach emphasizes the importance of connecting cultural knowledge with local participation and creative development processes to promote cultural sustainability and strengthen the identity of Sukhothai as a learning area grounded in its musical heritage.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS IN LOCAL EDUCATION PROCESSES

Field studies in cultural contexts within the framework of local studies indicate that globalization, while accelerating worldwide cultural exchange, can also serve as a mechanism for safeguarding local musical cultures that are at risk of extinction. As Peterson (2001) argued, the success of preserving local music traditions increasingly depends on their ability to engage with global audiences through appropriate marketing and dissemination strategies.

In this regard, the process of cultural integration, in which local identities are merged with external cultural elements, has fostered the transformation of traditional cultures in diverse ways while maintaining their local distinctiveness and simultaneously generating new cultural forms (Steingress, 2003). Johnson (2002) further emphasized that many of the world's major tourist destinations have become vital spaces for the recreation and reinvention of traditional cultures.

Consequently, the origins of area-based research and development can be understood through this perspective. By studying local contexts and applying new insights derived from indigenous cultural foundations in a tangible and creative manner, the sustainability and vitality of communities can be effectively promoted. This framework highlights the importance of integrating cultural research with community development to ensure that traditional knowledge continues to evolve within modern contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a research and development approach to document and preserve the local music heritage of Sukhothai province. Data collection focused on the needs and basic information of local music artists. The collected data were analyzed and synthesized, integrating creative insights to develop a cultural map, which was published in a modern format to support the creation of a "Learning City." Collaboration with government and private agencies ensured the study's effectiveness and the development of tangible outputs, such as the Local Music Artist Hall, aimed at preserving local music culture and promoting sustainable community development. The study was conducted in four phases:

Phase 1, Planning and Stakeholder Collaboration: Establish collaboration with government and private agencies, and conduct focus group discussions with community coordinators and stakeholders to identify strategies, potential sites, and requirements for the Artist Hall.

Phase 2, Construction and Field Data Collection: Build the Local Music Artist Hall in Sawankhalok District and collect field data on local music heritage to integrate into the hall's resources.

Phase 3, Knowledge Transfer: Open the hall and transfer knowledge of local music traditions to youth, with support from local agencies.

Phase 4, Youth Performance and Reinforcement: Conduct a second knowledge-transfer session, during which youth demonstrate their understanding of local music traditions through performances.

This phased approach effectively preserves local music culture, creates a functional learning space, and promotes lifelong learning and community engagement.

PHASE 1: PLANNING AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

In the initial stage, a network of local researchers was established to serve as field research assistants and coordinators. Collaboration was built with government and private agencies, including Sawankhalok District Office, Sukhothai Tourism Authority, Sawankhalok Municipality, and the Sukhothai Cultural Network. Focus group discussions were organized between the research team, community representatives, and stakeholders to identify strategic directions, operational plans, and specific needs for the establishment of the Sukhothai Artist Hall. This phase emphasized participatory planning to ensure that local voices were fully integrated into the project design.

PHASE 2: CONSTRUCTION AND FIELD DATA COLLECTION

Based on insights from the focus group discussions, the old Sawankhalok Tourism Office was selected as the main site for constructing the Local Folk Music Artist Hall. The hall was designed, renovated, and decorated in collaboration with local craftsmen and community partners to reflect the identity of Sukhothai's folk music heritage. During this phase, field data were systematically collected through interviews and documentation of local folk musicians, integrating the findings into the Artist Hall's knowledge base as part of its cultural and educational resources.

PHASE 3: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The Artist Hall was officially inaugurated through cooperation between local agencies, schools, and community members. During the opening ceremony, three distinguished folk musicians from Sukhothai shared their musical knowledge and performance techniques with local youth and interested residents. The event also featured a community cultural market to promote local products and stimulate culture-based economic activities, reinforcing the hall's role as both a learning centre and a space for cultural entrepreneurship.

PHASE 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the final phase, a second knowledge-transfer session was organized to deepen participants' understanding of folk music traditions. Youth selected through the municipality's recruitment process were given opportunities to perform and demonstrate their learning through live musical and cultural performances. These performances represented the practical transmission of local musical heritage, strengthening intergenerational continuity and fostering pride in local identity.

RESEARCH AREAS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

In collecting data on local music artists in Sukhothai province, the researchers obtained information through focus group seminars organized to gather data on local folk musicians in collaboration with the Provincial Cultural Office across different districts. The findings revealed that folk music artists are primarily concentrated in four main districts: Mueang Sukhothai, Khiri Mat, Sawankhalok, and Kong Krailas.

RESEARCH TOOLS

In this research, a variety of research tools were employed to obtain comprehensive and area-based data. These included a focus group form, an interview form, and both participatory and non-participatory observation forms.

The first tool, the focus group form, was used to gather ideas and opinions from key stakeholders in Sukhothai province, Thailand, including representatives from both public and private sectors. The discussions aimed to support the establishment of the Local Folk Music Artist Hall and to collect information on local folk music artists for inclusion in the official registry of Sukhothai folk musicians, which was later incorporated into the Artist Hall's archives.

The second tool, the interview form, was used to collect in-depth data from local folk music artists in the research areas. The information gathered was developed into an online database to be utilized by local agencies in Sukhothai province for future cultural and educational development.

Finally, participatory and non-participatory observation forms were employed to study the behaviors of local youth engaged in folk music learning activities. The researchers also participated as part of the knowledge transmission process, collaborating with local folk artists in teaching and cultural exchange activities. All research instruments underwent a quality assessment by academic experts to ensure the appropriateness and validity of the tools before their actual use in the field study in Sukhothai province, Thailand.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed a qualitative analysis approach, utilizing data collected from fieldwork, including interviews, both participant and non-participant observations, and focus group discussions. These activities were conducted in collaboration with local agencies involved in establishing the Local Folk Music Artist Hall and in the knowledge-transfer sessions led by Sukhothai folk music artists in Thailand. Notably, two rounds of knowledge transfer were provided to youth in the area, followed by presentations of local folk music performances by the youth after receiving instruction in Sukhothai folk singing techniques.

The collected data were analyzed and synthesized using the Theoretical Concepts in Local Education Processes and Ethnomusicology Theory to address the research questions. The study successfully achieved all three research objectives. The results were compiled and presented in a descriptive analytical format, accompanied by illustrations, to summarize and discuss the research findings comprehensively.

FINDINGS

The study revealed that Sukhothai province, Thailand, possesses a rich and long-standing tradition of folk music, making it highly suitable for development as a Learning City of Folk Music. The province is supported by skilled local musicians who are capable and willing to collaborate with governmental initiatives.

Sukhothai's musical heritage encompasses diverse forms such as Pi Klong (traditional wind and drum ensembles), Mangkala ensembles, Ramwong (folk dance music), Maw Tham Khwan (ceremonial blessing songs), Lae (chanting songs), Lullabies, and Beggar songs, all of which reflect the province's distinctive cultural wisdom. Notably, two prominent folk musicians, Mr. Chin Faithets and Mr. Prateep Suksopha, have been recognized as National Artists of Thailand, and their contributions have been recorded in a Cultural Map, which is exhibited at the Artist Hall of Sawankhalok Municipality, Sukhothai province, Thailand.

Knowledge-transfer activities led by Sukhothai music masters, particularly Mr. Kiang Chamni, demonstrated strong youth engagement and interest. Since many young participants inherited basic musical knowledge from family traditions, the transmission of folk music heritage was more effective and sustainable.

Overall, the findings indicate that Sukhothai province, Thailand, has significant potential to preserve, revitalize, and promote its folk music culture among younger generations, thereby strengthening its role as a Learning City rooted in musical and cultural heritage.

SUKHOTHAI FOLK SONGS AND LOCAL MUSIC ARTISTS OF FOLK SONGS IN THAILAND'S SUKHOTHAI PROVINCE

The study of folk songs is of great importance for those who wish to explore ethnic cultures, as folk songs reveal the identity of communities, their ways of life, and their historical backgrounds. Thailand possesses folk songs in every region, and their existence reflects the transmission of traditional knowledge from ancestors to descendants through oral tradition.

Thailand has both spoken and written languages as part of its own cultural heritage, which demonstrates the charm of the Thai language embedded in local folk songs across different regions. Folk songs in each area of Thailand function rhetorically to reflect the purity of the Thai language and its regional accents, without any mixture of Pali, Sanskrit, or Khmer vocabulary. Literary scholars believe that these folk songs originated before the creation of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great's stone inscription.

In the process of development, folk songs evolved into rhymed compositions accompanied by melodies that correspond to the characteristics of each local dialect. Rhythmic patterns and dance movements were also incorporated into the performances. Consequently, each locality's folk songs possess distinctive melodic and stylistic features, serving primarily as musical expressions performed during various regional festivals and communal events.

กาเหว่า	
กาเหว่าเอ๋ย	ไซไว้ให้แม่กาฟัก
แม่กาที่หลงรัก	คิดว่าลูกในอุทร
คาบเอาข้าวมาเมื่อ	ไปคาบเอาเหยื่อมาป้อน
นอนมไว้ในรังนอน	ซ่อนเหยื่อมาให้กิน
ปีกเจ้ายังอ่อนคลอแคล	ห่อหุ้มจะสอนบิน
แม่กาพาไปกิน	ที่ปากน้ำพระคงคา
ดินเจ้าเหยียบสาหร่าย	ปากก็ใช้หาปลา
กินกุ้งแลกินกุ้ง	กินหอยกระพั้งแมงดา
กินแล้วก็โผล่มา	จับที่ต้นหว้าโพธิ์ทอง
ยังมีนายพราน	เฝ้าเขาเยี่ยมเยียมมองมอง
ยกเอาปืนขึ้นส่อง	จ้องเอาแม่กาดำ
ตัวหนึ่งว่าจะต้ม	อีกตัวว่าจะฆ่า
กินนางแม่กาดำ	คำวันนี้ดูแม่นา

Figure 1: An example of the document showing folk song lyrics by Kiang Chamni, Sukhothai music artist in Kong Kailas District.

Folk songs of Sukhothai province, which have been sung and transmitted by local folk artists for generations, possess distinctive musical and rhetorical characteristics that reflect the province's cultural heritage. Based on field data collection, focus group discussions conducted in Sukhothai province, and the examination of relevant documents (Figure 1), video clips, and related online media, the findings revealed that Sukhothai folk songs can be categorized into nine types: Thepthong songs, beggar songs, children's lullabies, folk dance songs, Lae songs (in the Sukhothai dialect), Chui Chai Khao Wat songs, Naga parade songs, Bua Rang Bua Roi songs, and Choi songs (from Northern Thailand).

During the second field visit aimed at transferring folk song knowledge to local youths, Mr. Kiang Chamni, a distinguished Sukhothai folk artist and cultural knowledge transmitter, demonstrated a wide range of folk song examples in a systematic and sequential manner. These performances illustrated both the diversity and the pedagogical process of local folk music.

In the spatial and cultural context, the traditional folk songs of Sukhothai province have preserved their distinctive local characteristics while gradually adapting to modern influences. Although the

number of traditional performers has declined, the advancement of media, communication technologies, and global changes including the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the transformation of musical identity in Thailand, with Sukhothai reflecting these changes.

Empirical data on local folk musicians show that Sukhothai's folk songs retain their authenticity while selectively incorporating cultural elements from neighboring areas. This combination, supported by technological and media developments, sustains and revitalizes the province's musical heritage. Such evolution aligns with the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, which explains how culture disseminates and blends over time through individuals who act as transmitters.

Field studies revealed active folk music communities across several districts in Sukhothai. In Mueang District, the Mangkala Band "S. Ratchaphruek" led by Mr. Thossaphon Saetia and the Pi Phat ensemble of Phanuphan Chobtham remain prominent, alongside blessing singers and long drum troupes in nearby subdistricts such as Thani, Ban Suan, and Pak Khwae. The Cultural Study Centre Ensemble at Wat Kamphaeng Ngam in Ban Kluai continues to support traditional musical activities.

In Sawankhalok District, Prateep Suksopa is known for beggar songs, while local women's and youth groups continue to perform folk songs. Kong Krailat, birthplace of National Artist Chinakon Krailat, hosts artists such as Kiang Chamni, Naris Putsorn, and Darawan Makphokha, alongside Lao Khrang khaen players. In Khiri Mat District, leading musicians include Wicha Uyaem, Boonlert Saengchan, and Manas Songsang.

Overall, Sukhothai's folk musicians demonstrate expertise in both vocal and instrumental performance, encompassing melodic and rhythmic traditions. This continuity between traditional and modern influences highlights the resilience of Sukhothai's folk music culture, forming the foundation for the compilation of local folk artists presented in Figure 2.

The three musical instruments that the researchers have designed and developed comprise materials and equipment, construction processes, and principles of using musical instruments are presented as follows:

Figure 2 presents a comprehensive list of identified folk music artists in Sukhothai province, categorized by district and type of musical performance. The data were collected through field studies, focus group discussions, and examination of local media and archival sources. This compilation highlights the distribution of artists across districts and illustrates the variety of traditional vocal and instrumental practices that continue to sustain Sukhothai's local musical heritage. Figure 2 provides an overview of the active folk musicians who play a key role in preserving, transmitting, and adapting the province's folk music traditions to contemporary contexts.

Music artists' living areas	Name	Types of folk songs
Mueang district	1. Thotsapon Saetia	<i>Mangala</i> band
	2. Samran Bunlue	Ordination blessing
	3. Kritsana Phayak	Singing with long drum
	4. Suwat Suwannaroj	<i>Mangala</i> band
	5. Thiang Kakamseng	Ordination blessing chant
	6. Waree Rodmuang	Ordination blessing chant
	7. Somjit Puttanak	Ordination blessing chant
	8. Chanai Sukkasem	Folk songs with long drum playing
	9. Bunyong Kraipok	Ordination blessing chant
	10. The band of the Arts and Culture Study Centre, Kamphaeng Ngam Temple	<i>Mangala</i> band
Sawankhalok District	1. Prateep Suksopa	Beggar's song
	2. Chae Yuthasin	Beggars' song
Kong Krailas district	1. Chin Faithet (Chinnakorn Krailas)	Intoing folksong
	2. Kiang Chamni	<i>Mangala</i> band
	3. Naris Phutson	<i>Ankalung</i> band
	4. Darawan Makphoka	<i>Choi pa faek</i> song
	5. Samroeng Saengarun	<i>Khaenthai songdam</i> band
	6. Chamlong Thongchua	<i>Khaenthai songdam</i> band
Khiri Mat district	1. Wicha Yooyam	<i>Ramwong</i> band
	2. Boonlert Saengchan	<i>Ramwong</i> band

Music artists' living areas	Name	Types of folk songs
	3 Manas Songsaeng	<i>Pi-khlong</i> band

Figure 2: Table of musical artists' living areas and the type of folksongs they serve. Directory of local music artists in Sukhothai province, Thailand.

A LEARNING SPACE AT THE SUKHOThai ARTIST HALL

Using theoretical concepts from local education studies as a conceptual framework, the development of “A Learning Space at the Sukhothai Artist Hall” aimed to address the preservation of local musical cultures. Peterson (2001) emphasized that globalization has created an urgent need to safeguard local musical traditions that are gradually disappearing. Establishing a dedicated learning space, therefore, plays a crucial role in extending and transmitting local knowledge to a broader, global audience.

The initiative began through collaboration among various local organizations that actively support and promote systematic cultural learning. The learning space was designed to present information and examples of Sukhothai artists' works across multiple dimensions, including audio, visual media, interactive games, animated text, and motion pictures. Specifically, the researchers highlighted the contributions of two national artists from Sukhothai province: Chin Faithet (also known as Chinna-korn Krairas) and Prateep Suksopa.



Figure 3: Sukhothai Artist Hall (a) and Facebook Fan page called *Sukhothai Artist Hall in Sawankhalok* (b). Photographs by the author, 2024.

During the project, the researchers received substantial support and cooperation from the Sawankhalok Town Municipality in developing and maintaining the learning space. In addition to the physical exhibition at the Sukhothai Artist Hall, the project's content was also made accessible online via the Facebook fan page “Sukhothai Artist Hall in Sawankhalok,” as shown in Figure 3(a) and (b).

TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE FROM ARTISTS TO THE COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

Following the establishment of the Sukhothai Artist Hall as a community-based learning space, the research project implemented a series of practical learning activities to foster engagement among local youth. As part of this initiative, two key knowledge-transfer sessions were conducted. The first session featured Prateep Suksopa, a National Artist, and his apprentice Cae Yuthasin, who presented and performed the traditional “Beggar’s Song,” highlighting its cultural background, stylistic nuances, and performance techniques. The second session involved Kiang Chamni, a distinguished Sukhothai folk musician, who discussed the origins and musical characteristics of Sukhothai folk songs, complemented by live demonstrations of Beggar’s Songs and folk lullabies.

During these activities, it was found that the participating youth possessed foundational knowledge of folk music derived from family members. They also took an active role in selecting songs and developing their own performance skills based on what they had learned from the demonstrations and discussions led by the artists. The outcomes showed that the youth not only improved their singing abilities but also gained confidence and recognition from both their peers and local organizations. This achievement marked an important step toward establishing a sustainable learning community that continues to preserve and promote Sukhothai’s folk music heritage.



Figure 4: Local music artists in Sukhothai province in the first meeting for transferring knowledge of folk songs in Sukhothai province, along with the opening ceremony of the Sukhothai Artist Hall by the researchers and the support from Sawankhalok Town Municipality. Photographs by the author, 2024.

As for the second meeting, the researchers used a hands-on transfer format to see the empirical results by allowing students to choose the style of folk songs to sing by themselves. The aim was to create learning results that met the needs of the students and had natural learning results with the cultural transfer process, combined with classroom learning processes. The researchers were thankful to Kiang Chamni, who was a lecturer on the history of the various styles and evolutions, for demonstrating the singing of folk songs of Sukhothai province for the youths in the area to listen and join in the action. This was supported by Sawankhalok Town Municipality, as shown in Figures 4 and 5.



Figure 5a (left) and 5b (right): An example of the atmosphere where knowledge is transferred into practice regarding folk dance songs in Sukhothai province by Kiang Chamni. Photographs by the author, 2024.

In the second visit to the area to transfer knowledge and practice regarding Sukhothai folk songs, it was found that most youths knew about Sukhothai folk songs mainly through the transmission of their predecessors. When listening to a lecture from the local music artist, the type of songs that the youths would like to learn and practice was a folkdance song. They received the transfer through practice together with the integration of dancing and singing virtually.

Cultural zones do not vary according to the national border since the nature of culture is diffused, integrated, or adapted according to the social contexts, migration, marriage among ethnic groups, or growth in public utilities. These cause the movement of population groups, which directly results in increasing the dimensions of cultural diversity in that cultural ideas in one area can appear in another, near and far from the source culture. Nevertheless, enabling the organization of cultural information in accordance with the context of administration and the budget allocation of stakeholders, this research therefore created the boundaries of cultural areas into groups according to geographic characteristics in Sukhothai province. From the initial survey, folk music artists were found living in various areas of Sukhothai province, such as Mueang district, Sawankhalok District, Kong Krailas district, and Khiri Mat district. These could be divided according to the nature of making music or creating music in that the artists who used their own bodies as a source of sound to create music by original singing or using a slur vocal technique were mor tham kwan, beggar's song singing, or folk songs such as choi pa faek songs. Another group of artists created sound by playing music that transmitted sound through musical instruments according to their skills in instrumental music, either musical instruments that could create sound levels, such as pi mangala, piphat ensemble, khaenthai songdam, and Angklung, or rhythmic instruments in the mangala band or in the long drum ensemble.

Folk music artists are those who try to promote and pass on music culture from one generation to the next. They are also a living tool for uniting art with the community and moving them together. Creating a cultural space, therefore, requires the specialty of each artist, including the way of life, attitude, and environment that encourage the artist to be inspired to create music, promote the area, and sustainably preserve its cultural identity.

DISCUSSION

Through collaboration between the research team and local organizations in Sukhothai province, with the support of the Sawankhalok Municipality, a space was provided for the establishment of the Sukhothai Artists' House. This initiative aimed to transfer artistic and musical knowledge from local artists to the community, as well as to organize lifelong learning activities for youth in the area. Such efforts have encouraged and supported local organizations to participate actively in preserving culture through learning processes based on the knowledge transmission of local music artists. This aligns with Peterson (2001), who stated that globalization can serve as a mechanism to protect local musical cultures that are at risk of disappearing, while simultaneously allowing them to thrive within market-oriented systems due to the existence of diverse audiences around the world. Likewise, Steingress (2003) observed that cultural hybridization, combining local identities with external cultural materials, can lead to dynamic cultural transformations that preserve local identity while creating something new. Consequently, the folk music of Sukhothai province, Thailand, has retained its distinctive local characteristics while continuously adapting to social change in the modern era. The integration of authentic Sukhothai identity with cultural influences from neighboring provinces has resulted in a rich diversity of cultural expression that remains grounded in local distinctiveness yet fosters innovation (Steingress, 2003). In implementing the knowledge transmission process, the Sukhothai music artists conducted activities in two phases. The first phase focused on providing foundational knowledge about Sukhothai folk music to local youth who live in the context of the modern (2021) era. This phase aimed to instill in the participants an appreciation of the value and significance of their local cultural heritage. The second phase emphasized the actual transfer of musical knowledge in accordance with the theory of cultural diffusion. Without consistent and profound dissemination within the local community, cultural knowledge risks being forgotten. Therefore, when young generations who might otherwise have been disconnected from their folk music traditions receive direct transmission and engage with the contextual study of musical works and artistic heritage, they gain insight into the evolution, development, and adaptation of musical culture within a contemporary framework of cultural coexistence.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A study employing a local approach to collect data on music artists in Sukhothai province, located in the lower northern region of Thailand, revealed that folk musicians are found in every district. However, four districts, namely Mueang, Kong Krailat, Sawankhalok, and Khiri Mat, are recognized as the main areas where authentic folk music traditions have been continuously preserved and transmitted. A total of 21 groups of local musicians were identified, with two of these groups officially registered as National Artists by the Ministry of Culture. The analysis of local literature related to Sukhothai music artists and the synthesis of data for the establishment of the Sukhothai Artists' House were conducted with strong cooperation from local stakeholders. The Sukhothai Provincial Tourism Office provided the space for the creation of the Artists' House, and the project received enthusiastic participation from the community, including local residents, interested individuals, and youth who took part in the opening ceremony and in knowledge-sharing activities. The performance and transmission of Phleng Kho Than (the Beggar's Song), a rare and unique form of Sukhothai folk music, attracted great public interest and active engagement. In terms of knowledge transmission from artists to the community and the promotion of lifelong learning, government organizations facilitated and supported youth participation in two knowledge-transfer activities. The outcomes were highly satisfactory, as local leaders expressed appreciation for the initiative, and participating youth demonstrated strong interest and enthusiasm. These positive results indicate the potential for ongoing development and the expansion of folk music activities in the community, contributing to the sustainability and vitality of Sukhothai's cultural heritage. The suggestions of this research are as follows:

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that local government agencies continue to support the activities of folk musicians and promote youth participation in cultural learning programs. Establishing long-term community-based learning centres or cultural hubs such as the Sukhothai Artists' House can serve as a sustainable platform for intergenerational knowledge transmission. Furthermore, integrating Sukhothai folk music into formal and non-formal education systems can enhance cultural awareness among younger generations while preserving the local identity. Collaboration among researchers, cultural organizations, and local communities should be strengthened to develop digital archives and creative learning materials that document and promote traditional Sukhothai music. Finally, further research should be conducted to explore innovative approaches to combining traditional folk music with contemporary media and performance practices, thereby ensuring that Sukhothai's musical heritage continues to evolve and thrive in modern society.

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