

## Luktung Mohlum Song: Creative Development Model for Economy

<sup>1</sup>Chinda Kaensombat, <sup>1</sup>Souneth Phothisane and <sup>2</sup>Sitthisak Champadaeng

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University, Nai Muang Sub-District,  
Muang District, 40002 Khon Kaen, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Khamriang,  
Kantarawichai, 44150 Mahasarakham, Thailand

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**Abstract:** This study is part of the qualitative dissertation using the data from documentation research, observations and interviews. The content of this study is a presentation on the current status of Luktung Mohlum which is one of the important terms within this research. The result of the study shows that Luktung Mohlum in its current status is going through an era of adjustment due to modern communicating technologies which is the main factor to its broadcast on today's online society. This had caused the music creators to manage their broadcast channels, distribution channel and channels to collect royalties. Currently, the direction of Luktung Mohlum music is the development on the creativity of the music, presenting a more up-to-date content in responding to the need of the society while considering the values that the consumers hold to ensure the survival of the music itself. However, one important aspect that is still ingrained in Luktung Mohlum music is that it is still rooted in Isaan culture using Isaan dialect in the lyrics and the "waad" (conversational style of singing) and the use of Isaan traditional music instruments along with contemporary musical instruments which is considered a legacy in the cultural wisdom, poetry, music and had created a beauty in arts and culture.

**Key words:** Luktung Mohlum song, current status, Isaan culture, Isaan music, arts and culture, dissertation, communicating

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### INTRODUCTION

**Background and importance of the research:** Mohlum is local art that is the most popular and most outstanding of Isaan, since, the past to the present. The music has evolved itself until it became Luktung Mohlum. "Rum Tone" is one component that got integrated into the Mohlum performance. Historically, during the Second World War (1938-1944) under General Por Phibunsongkhram as the prime minister, Western Nationalism ideology was supported as a way to make sure the is safe by supporting Rum Tone. It has become a national policy. Rum Tone was turned into a record and reach its popularity. Later on, Rum Tone was rearranged into a new form, incorporating Isaan language as a lyric and evolved itself into Luktung Isaan music (Plangwan and Plangwan, 2014). "Waad" was added to the Luktung music and eventually became Luktung Mohlum music.

**Different era for Luktung Mohlum:** Luktung Mohlum music started during the year 1967-1982. The factors that

caused the changes in Isaan culture started from the basic structure in communication and transportation. Because of this reason, Mohlum Klon artists came into existence (Suwannawong, 2010). Soon after, Luktung Mohlum became popular due to the radio stations. This era was the opening era for the Luktung Mohlum. The Luktung Mohlum artists during this period were Angkhana Khunchai singing "Isaan Lum Plern", Chabaphai Namwai singing "Lum Plern Chern Yim", Supap Daoden singing "Lum Plern Salab Toey", Phailin Pornphiboon singing "Lum Klom Toong" and Hongthong Dao-Udon singing "Hongthong Khanong Lum".

Flourish era for Luktung Mohlum music was during 1983-1997. An important business was created in the Luktung Mohlum industry. From producing records going into a commercial music industry in a capitalist system. There were competition between this type of music against the other types such as contemporary Thai music which has stronger base than Luktung Mohlum. This had forced the Luktung Mohlum business to have to adjust itself by becoming more modern (Rachburi, 1994). During this era, many Luktung Mohlum artist became well-known

such as Pornsak Songsaeng singing “Teoy Sao Jun Kung Kobe”, Chalermphol Malakham singing “Tam Jai Teud Nong”, Satit Thongchan singing “Pak Grod Jai Kidteung”, Pimpa Pornsiri singing “Namta Mia Sa-U”, Duenphen Amnuayporn singing “Sao Na Kaad Rak”, and Siriporn Amphaiphong singing “Bow Rak See Dum”.

The regressing era for the Luktung Mohlum music (1998-2007). This is the era of music copyrights were violated which had caused many music company to shut down. This had brought about many changes due to the changes in the information aspect. It was the internet communication though social network that had taken over the audience society. Smartphones (Anonymous, 2007) which had incorporate the capacities found in computers cause the regression for the Luktung Mohlum music. It was a crisis which required struggle to be able to survive. The artist who were able to survive were the ones who were popular and whom the company can launch a full album for. For new artists, they were required to make “single”. Full album wasn’t an option which had reduce their opportunity of making a living.

Modern technology, new kind of communications, and the changes in the economy, social and political system had created a new form of society and these processes had also created small broken pieces of the culture. This includes the changes in the experience concerning space and time and new kind of experience, identity and culture. These conditions had defined the social and economy base as well as the cultural roots off Isaan. The economic system shifted from producing for self-reliance to producing for the selling. The tradition and culture as well as the worldview of the audiences and changed. The status and the role of Luktung Mohlum in the midst of social changes caused Mohlum artists who, originally were supposed to be passing on the local knowledge and traditional culture to have to adjust themselves. From Mohlum Pheun and Mohlum Klom to Mohlum Pleun, Mohlum Sing and eventually Luktung Mohlum (Chanthabut and Chuntalu, 2004).

The new society after the Industrial revolution that connects the world through technology or so-called the digital age, had created stakes, benefits and other things in the arts and cultural aspects, economy and politics. All these changes came from the reasons that globalization affect all of today’s aspect which includes the music industry. There is a need to study the current status of Luktung Mohlum with the hope that one day, Luktung Mohlum will come back with the music adjusted for survival.

**Research objectives:** To study the current status of Luktung Mohlum.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The goal of this research was to study the current status of Luktung Mohlum music using secondary source of data from the related documents and research and the primary source of data from the population selected for this research and field visit within Thailand.

This study was conducted with a population of 14 people who have the knowledge, understanding and are related to the Luktung Mohlum music which includes. The 5 experts governmental experts who are directly related to the study of Luktung Mohlum music such as academics, local wise men and leading people in the Mohlum performances industry. The 6 practitioners which include the president of the music company, artists, song writers, chorus editors, musicians and producers.

The 3 related people who are in in direct contact with the Mohlum music which are producers and music company CEOs. The tools used for collecting the data are surveys, observations and interviews.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The current status of Luktung Mohlum music from 2008-2016 is in its adjusting era. In this current status, the business needs to adjust reduce their investments from when compared with the past. This change affect people within the industry starting from the artists, the creators, or the people working behind the scene. Today, Luktung Mohlum music also needs to adjust its market strategies at the same time. Apart from the fact that every company is focusing on digital downloading, they also make profits from the copyrights. Additionally, they also bring back the Luktung Mohlum artists who already have their fan base which makes it easier than building up a new artist since they already have fans and are still considered popular artists. Former Luktung Mohlum artists also remake their own music. These phenomenon can be concluded as follows:

**The characteristics of current Luktung Mohlum artist:** These are the characteristics of the current Luktung Mohlum artists:

Older Luktung Mohlum artists were brought back with the remake of their music and new music that isn’t necessary Luktung Mohlum in order to create the novelty amongst the audiences. This kind of things are well accepted such as the song “Mua Rai Ja Poh” by Duenphen Amnuayporn.

Taking the current popular artist to sing old popular songs or making a remake of the songs by different artists. This proved to be rather popular such as an album called “Tam Hoy Isaan”.

Different kind of music artists such as rock singers singing a song together with older Luktung Mohlum singer, singing together in a contemporary music style with unique composition and chorus and created a sense of features and exotic for the audiences. This proves to boost the popularity really rapidly such as the song “Kid Hod” by Siriporn Amphaiphong and Bodyslam.

Taking old popular songs and recreate the song for the original Luktung singer to feature with older Luktung Mohlum singer by adjusting some part of the lyrics and add additional “klon”. The chorus were all rearranged to show the assimilation of the local Isaan music and contemporary music which increases the song popularity such as the song “Cha Ting Nong Noi” by Chai Muangsing and Jintara Poonlarp.

**The current characteristics of the song composition:**

Today, the music and lyrics are composed in the following manners. Remake of the original music and lyrics sung by new artists such as “Tam Hoi Isaan” by Grammy Gold music company, under Grammy. The composition of the music and lyrics through the integration of different types of music such as rock music integrated with Luktung Mohlum music in order to create a featuring and the feeling of exotic for the audiences such as the song “Kid Hod” by Siriporn Amphaiphong and Bodyslam.

The melody or “waad” from “lum pleun”, “teuy”, “lumpaen”, “lum deun kalasin” and “waad lum deun khon kaen” are integrated into Luktung music. Some parts of the music and lyrics were changed and newly composed “klon” added to the song such as “Cha Ting Nong Noi” by Chai Muangsing and Jintara Poonlarp.

Currently, many new blood music composers had emerged due to the fact that it is the era of change, a technology and digital age and the age of communication which led business of musical industry to commercial song downloading system. This forced the song writers to have to improve their musical form and lyrics to be more up-to-date and improve the technology in the music production to respond to the need of society.

**Chorus arrangement in the current Luktung Mohlum music:**

The current status of the chorus arrangement in the Luktung Mohlum music consist of the integration between rock music and the old Luktung Mohlum music which resulted in a contemporary kind of music creating the featuring and the feeling of exotic to for the audiences while rapidly increasing the popularity such as the song “Kid Hod” which is an empirical example.

**The current status of the Luktung Mohlum music:** It was found that in terms of the recording of the current songs, a local instruments such as “kan”, “saw”, “pin”,

“ponglang”, “wote” or other contemporary musical instruments such as saxophone, organ and guitar, were used in the solo. Some of the instruments were inserted to as a counter point to the vocals where the musician can improvise. Many synthetic sounds were also added to make the music more modern. Most music composers today have at least the basic knowledge in how to use computers since many need to have home studio to make records, make music scores, music demo and using the computer to fix the bad points before the real recording process happen in the studio.

**The current characteristics of the Luktung Mohlum music production:**

The current process of music production needs to consider the creativity of the music in order to increase its value. There needs to be at least 5 components as follows:

- Music creation
- Production
- Manufacturing
- Distribution and application management
- Consumption

Every component, every group, every relationship, every connection, all the way to the educational system that helped polish the skills through organizations and other art supported institutions. The evaluation within those institution needs to happen to determine the next round of budget. There needs to be lawyers taking care of the copyrights, accountants to take care of the income and expenses, marketing team to analyze and plan. There needs to be IT people to take care of the computer systems to manage the information of concerning the music and other aspect of the company. The point is to create a database to prepare for future recording. The characteristics of the Luktung Mohlum production is in its adjusting era. The company had brought back the famous Luktung Mohlum artists that already have a fan base which will make it easier for the music to be sold comparing to building up new artist. These famous artists were brought back to do a remake of their music. These kind of phenomenon can be observed as follows. The phenomenon of the Luktung Mohlum artist name “Duenphen Amnuayporn” who already have her own fan base who was brought back to have her music reproduced as well as making new music. She also sing new style of songs to create the feeling of exotic for the audience. One of her popular case is a song called “Mua Rai Ja Por”.

The phenomenon of Luktung Mohlum singer “Siriporn Amphaiphong” who was brought back to sing the songs that was made popular in the past by the original singers such as the song “Tam Hoi Isaan” which became quite popular.

The phenomenon of the Luktung Mohlum artist “Siriporn Amphaiphong Featuring Body Slam” in a song called “Kid Hod”. This method of bringing artists from different kind of music style such as Luktung Mohlum artist and a rock artist is the first phenomenon for Thai music industry. Bringing artists such as Siriporn Amphaiphong who is a successful artist with lots of fan and Bodyslam which is a well-known band together was very successful because of the music composition style and the chorus arrangement in a contemporary music style and created a sense of erotic for the listeners. It was also an integration of local Isaan music culture and a modern music culture that caused this attempt to be successful.

The phenomenon of Luktung Mohlum like “Jintara Phoonlab featuring with an actor/Luktung music composer Chai Muangsing” in a song “Cha-Ting-Nong-Noi” after being adapted and some parts of the lyrics change as well as adding the “klon” into the song which makes it unique and exotic. The chorus was also rearranged in the Luktung Mohlum song which is an integration of local Isaan music culture and a modern music culture that caused this attempt to be successful.

Currently, there is a quick advance in technology. Things that used to be difficult became easy things for the consumers. The things that used to provide income for the music company became expenses due to the music player equipment of the people in this digital age that plays digital files. CDs that used to be produced disappeared from the market. Consumers developed that behavior in consuming free media from smartphones and computers. Neither the audio nor video files are generating income for the music companies who needs to find ways to survive by focusing on the big producer markets for support such as selling tickets for a concert that consist of multiple artists using the artists to promote a product or performing concerts. The companies also make money from collecting copyrights fee from karaoke bars, pubs, restaurants, TVs, radios and any other ways that allows them to make income. Although, consumers are still demanding good quality of music but they purchase the music less and less. From this phenomenon, the way to survive for the mid well-known Luktung Mohlum artists is launching a single to maintain their reputation while gaining continuous work. Many music companies and song writers shifted themselves to do other things. The Luktung Mohlum industry today is still in the adjusting period due to the time that keeps changing. Many artists and music companies still have the determination to produce continuous good quality music by holding on to the hope that the music industry

will get better after the adjustment period and the changing behavior of the consumers. The producers need to find ways to develop the Luktung Mohlum music to increase its value which can be listed out as the followings.

Improvement of the artists the CEO and the producers needs to find and select the screening and artist development department as their first priority. They need to have an screen department that will help improve the quality of the artists both in the vocal department and the uniqueness of the artist’s vocal for the performance and the Mohlum. They need to create their uniqueness in their costumes, dance, their determination, their patience, and their pride as Luktung Mohlum artists.

The direction on development in composing Luktung Mohlum song to create the uniqueness for the listeners needs both the CEO and the producers to setup an screen department for the song writers in order to get the songs that meet the needs of the companies as well as increasing the value. Therefore, the songs composed need to address the characters of the artists. The songs have to be composed in the right direction that can create the uniqueness for the characters. In addition, the content of the songs need to have the correct prosody, the “waad” part needs to be correctly composed and the concept of the songs need to be different and based on the positive perspective that kept up with the world incidents.

The chorus arrangement of the Luktung Mohlum song to achieve an outstanding characteristics and the feeling of exotics for the listeners requires the CEO and the producers to setup the screening department for the arrangers, since, the arrangement of the chorus is the adjustment of the music and the vocal of the artists to go in harmony. People who can arrange the chorus need to have good knowledge in music. Moreover, they have to have the knowledge in the melody and the “waad” as well as understanding the nature of every musical instruments chosen for the songs in order to bring each quality of the sounds and mix them together in a harmonious way. The most important thing is that chorus arrangers today need to have a home studio to prepare the music score or record a music demo in order to find the bad points in the songs before the actual recording.

The direction in developing the musicians for Luktung Mohlum music ipn order to achieve the exotictness for the listeners requires the CEO and the producers to setup a screening department as the first step. Since, the recording and the creation of music needs one main instrument for the solo by using a local instrument integrated with the contemporary musical instrument. Therefore, the musicians need to communicate their emotion to the listeners very clearly. There are many

technics in the performing as well as the knowledge in the melody or local music patterns. Producers needs to have a project to setup a workshop for using computers to compose music in order to provide the basic knowledge in the recording.

Therefore, the current production needs to consider the creativity for the music in order to create the value requires 5 components and related people, since, every component, every group and ever relationship needs to be connected in order to achieve the success.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current situation of Luktung Mohlum music, from 2008-2016 was the era of adjustment due to the fact that the communication technology of social media system has been playing more roles in the consumption of information as well as song listening in today. The fact that human society communicate faster through different technologies such as the internet, phone and smart phones, the behavior of the consumers had also changed a lot compared to the past. This created new forms of entertainment which changes people's behavior in listening to music by listening to more mp3 songs or through the internet in stead of buying CDs or cassette tapes. This had caused the sale of both cassette tapes and CDs to reduce. Because of this many entrepreneur began to develop an interest in digital music more and more. This source of income had replaced the sales of cassette tapes and CDs. To maintain the customer base and their own market share which had caused the music industry to continue expanding in this digital age while causing the overall picture of the music industry smaller.

Once the music industry gets smaller, the budget for the production also gets smaller which initiate the trend of artists shifting to different companies. This is also the same with the people who are working on the background who weren't prepared for the changes. These factors directly affect the people who are working in the music industry since the producers need to screen for the artists that the listeners want to hear while the income is no longer from the sales. The music industry also adjust their own investment to be smaller than the past and when this change happens, it also affect the people who are working both front and back stage, the ever changing Luktung Mohlum artists and the Luktung Mohlum songs themselves which need to adjust their marketing strategies at the same time.

The producers today will need to consider the creativity of the music to create the added value of the music which will need 5 components and related people

which are the people involving in the music creation, production, manufacturing, distribution and application management and consumption.

Luktung Mohlum music today is going through the era of adjustment due to the communication technology of social media which plays more role in the consumption of information as well as the way people are listening to music today. The fact that human society now have faster communication through all the technological system and caused the behavior of the consumers to change compared to the past. We need to create and develop the songs in order to achieve the success by using the knowledge, the education, the creativity and the intellectual property to connect with the root of Isaan traditional culture while using the technology and new innovation to develop the Luktung Mohlum music to create the value. The word "value" here can be categorized into 2 aspects) the concrete aspect such as literature language, the melody, the arrangement, the chorus, the vocal and the performing) the abstract aspect; the beauty that comes from the lyrics, from the singing, the performing, the chorus arrangement, the expression of emotion and the value which means the value in Isaan culture, legacy of the cultural wisdom which ensure the income and the survival of the Luktung Mohlum artists.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The modern technology, the new kind of communication and the changes in the economic, social, and political system are creating a new kind of society. These processes are breaking the culture into smaller cultures which includes the free space and time and also new characteristics of experience, identity and culture. These conditions gave a new base to the socio-economy and culture which goes along with the research by Chanthabut and Chuntalu (2004) who studied the status and role of Mohlum amidst the trend of social change: A case study of Mohlum in Ubonratchathani Province and provide the explanation that from the production system that aimed at household consumption to the production system aimed at selling Isaan traditions and culture along with the changing world view of the listeners. Mohlum artists who used to be people who pass on the local wisdom and culture now have to adjust themselves in order to survive from Mohlum Peun to Mohlum Plern to Mohlum Sing and eventually Luktung Mohlum.

The music industry is adjusting in developing their music for survival which goes along with the structural functional theory that states that all societies have different functions and systems for survival. The parts and the subsystems within the society will work in

accordance to reach the final goal which is to survive. This also includes the ability to adapt or change under different circumstances to fit in with certain period of time according to the theory by Radcliffe and Radcliffe (1971).

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The suggestion for further research is to study the development of the Luktung Mohlum music industry in an ASEAN level.

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