

Negara Brunei Darussalam

Cultures

Cambodia

in

Indonesia

ASEAN

Malaysia

&

Philippines

the

Singapore

21st

Thailand

Century

Vietnam



GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN MODERN THAI SOCIETY

Anant Narkong

The Siamese, naturally imaginative and gay, cultivate music with great zest. Every village has its orchestra, every prince and noble has his band of musicians, and in every part of Bangkok the sound of strange instruments is heard continually. Their music is not particularly like ours, but there is always harmony with good expression, and an agreeable variety of movement and volume is derived from the diversity of instruments and the taste of the players.

Anna Leonowens,
The English Governess at the Siamese Court, 1870.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Within the context of "Modernisation" and "Globalisation" flowing over Thailand in recent history, there are feelings about the cultural struggle in many angles. Rapid modernisation effects qualitative as well as quantitative cultural change. Thai traditional music, the focus of the following discussion, has been a principle entertainment along with other types of the performing arts and has played such a great function in Thai life for a long time, especially its functions in Buddhist calendrical and life cycle rituals. Folk and classical music of Thailand vary according to the local cultures of different regions. Some are indigenous to the regions, and some are the results of acculturation and adaptation of regional cultures, or the cultures of the neighbouring countries (geographically, Laos at the north and northeast, Cambodia at the southeast, Burma to the north and west, and Malaysia in the south). Within several hundred years of history, Thai music has been created, transmitted and developed to suit the changes in the social environment. Nowadays, some of the Thai folk and classical music heritages are highly preserved whereas some are gradually dying out, or completely changed in order to survive in the modern world.

To make some contributions to this seminar, where many aspects of ASEAN cultures have to be realised before the turning of the new century, I therefore would like to give a brief overview of the main components of Thai music and to extend this to its present situation. The aim to do so is to give a general knowledge of Thai music to anyone who might not be familiar