

Ethnomusicology in Thailand

The cultural politics of redefinition and reclamation

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Ethnomusicologists spend a lot of time thinking and talking about what ethnomusicology is, as a field and as a discipline. Our journal, *Ethnomusicology*, is marked over the years by a fairly constant stream of articles all asking, in one way or another, whither ethnomusicology. As a rather recent historical offshoot of musicology, it is probably not surprising that the nature and aims of ethnomusicology is still a subject for discussion even among those who claim it as their discipline.

In the past ten years, the reflexive urge from anthropology has provided ethnomusicologists with a framework for talking about the shape, ethics, rationale, and mythology of our discipline. Given this bent for self-examination, it is surprising that there has been little public discussion of the impact that ethnomusicology has had on non-Western academic institutions. Like anthropology, ethnomusicology has deep colonial roots and its epistemologies, whether acknowledged or not, are inescapably based in Western ideologies of rationalism and empiricism. This essay is in part a response to Larry Witzleben's question, "Whose ethnomusicology?" (1997) and a continuation of his discussion.¹ Ethnomusicology has a certain presence in various non-Western universities and conservatories,² and I

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sense a pervading postcolonial character to this phenomenon which I will address at the end of the essay.

I have visited Thailand on and off since 1986 and have spent several long periods in Bangkok doing ethnomusicological fieldwork. The study of Thai music is an established part of most university curriculums, and during all my visits I have been in close contact with several universities, taking music lessons, consulting with musicians and scholars, and sometimes making confused attempts to teach.

In the past few years, two master's programs in music have been created in the greater Bangkok area; they are the only such programs in Thailand. Both bear strong family resemblances to ethnomusicology programs in the Western world. Still, neither their character nor their purposes are equivalent to North American or Western European ethnomusicology programs, and this bears some examination because it suggests a certain reclamation of intellectual control over cultural heritage marked, however, by strongly ambiguous even troubling nuances of postcolonial self-doubt. Who is empowered to study what, and to receive institutional academic recognition for it, is increasingly charged with an epistemological politics that has scarcely been written about in ethnomusicological circles. Small wonder, because none of us are innocent in this process, and the ethical dilemmas are considerable. Some of us who teach in North American or Western European universities with graduate programs routinely engage with graduate students from Asia, Africa, and elsewhere and must find some common ground between their needs and the decidedly Western shape of ethnomusicology. I offer this essay in the hopes that we can begin this discussion, and can support our non-Western peers as they forge their own way. My approach here is ethnographic — that is, it is based on talking, witnessing, and participation — and it is based in the assumption that education and pedagogy always address deeper questions about the basis and control of knowledge, which gets at fundamental issues of culture and power.

Music in the Thai educational system

Ethnomusicological studies of music institutions are few and far between. Henry Kingsbury's study of a Western European art music conservatory in

²In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Ernst Heins states, for instance, that "ethnomusicology is not yet taught in Indonesian universities" (Heins 1980), but ethnomusicology is in fact taught at Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) in Medan, North Sumatra.

the U.S. (1988) remains definitive; Bruno Nettl's examination of a School of Music in an American university (1995) is gentler but no less critical of Western European art music ideologies. Georgina Born's ethnography of the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM), the renowned center for computer music in Paris (1995), rounds out this trilogy with a consideration of the cultural economy of the French avant-garde. A few other ethnographies of music (Sutton 1991; Stokes 1992) address the cultural politics of institutionalized music bureaucracies, but the total number of such examinations remains small. I offer a look at both the emergence of ethnomusicology in Thailand as well as an ethnographic consideration of two graduate programs.

Thai traditional musics have been included in public school, college, and university curricula for some decades.³ The College of Dramatic Arts was established in 1934 for the study of the former court arts of music and dance. In the 1940s, this court music and dance (often referred to in Western scholarship as classical Thai performance) was introduced into the public school curriculum. By the mid-1980s, most colleges and universities offered some kind of music major. At this point (the late 1990s), there are several kinds of music departments. Chulalongkorn University, for instance, has a department of music performance (in the Faculty of Arts) as well as a completely separate department of music education (in the Faculty of Education). The College of Dramatic Arts is essentially the national conservatory, and is administratively part of the government's Department of Fine Arts.⁴ The Prasanmit campus of Srinakharinwirot University formerly had a department of music education and divided into two departments in 1993, the "Department of Music" (*phaak wichaa duriyangsaat saakol*, in which *saakol*, 'universal,' marks it as Western music) and the "Department of Thai Music" (*phaak wichaa duriyangsaat Thai*). All of these institutions separate the study of Thai and European art music; undergraduate music majors choose one or the other, and although they may have a few requirements in common, their tracks are fairly separate. Similarly, university professors specialize in either Thai or European art music: few are conversant in both traditions.

The booklet describing the 1994 curriculum for the master's program at

³A number of private music schools offer music lessons as well, but I will not discuss them here. Examples include the St. Cecilia School and the extensive system of Robinson Schools; both offer lessons in Western and Thai music, but Western music lessons (especially piano, violin, and guitar) are by far the most popular.

⁴The Department of Fine Arts also administrates the extensive National Museum system and all archaeological sites in Thailand.

Mahidol provides the following history for the academic study of music in Thailand:

BE 2460/AD 1917⁵ Phra Chen Duriyang⁶ opens the school for musicians: The Phran Luang School.

2477-79/1934-36 Phra Chen Duriyang teaches music at the Withayaa Sakol Sontrii Sathan School.

2477/1934 The School of Dramatic Arts opens. In 2485/1942, its name is changed to the School of Musical Arts, and in 2514/1971, its status was raised to a college: The College of Performing Arts. At present, the College has twelve branches [in different provinces] at which music is taught.

2508/1965 The Institute of Higher Education establishes “music appreciation” as a required subject for the undergraduate degree at Chulalongkorn University, and in the curriculum of the College of Education at Prasanmit.

2513/1970 The Baan Somdet Cao Phrayaa Teachers College establishes a music teachers’ curriculum [...], with a major in music; it was consequently enlarged to include Teachers Colleges all over the country.

2519/1976 Srinakharinwirot University, Prasanmit campus, establishes a major in music with a two-year curriculum (for juniors and seniors). Phayap University [in

⁵The Thai calendar follows the Buddhist Era (BE), which is calculated from the year of the Buddha’s birth, 543 BC. I provide both Buddhist Era and Anno Domini years throughout.

⁶Phra Chen Duriyang lived from 1883-1968. He was born in Thailand to German parents and was originally named Peter Feit; his father was an accomplished Western classical musician. After a brief career in the civil department of trains and transportation, he was hired by the Krom Mahorasop (the Department of Performing Arts) in 1917 at the age of thirty-four, where he taught orchestra for several years; that same year, he opened his own school of music, and the establishment of this institution is regarded as a formative moment in the history of Western art music in Thailand. He chose to rename himself ‘Piti’ and was consequently renamed Piti Waatayakaun by Rama VI (*waatayakaun*, ‘conductor,’ leader of a music ensemble), with the help of the renowned Thai scholar Phraya Anuman Rajadon, in recognition of his great musical skill. Later still, the King gave him the aristocratic title of phra and renamed him yet again (*duriyang*, ‘music’), a great honor. He eventually became the director of the newly-formed Royal Department of Western Music (*Krom Kaung Dontrii Farang Luang*), where he taught Thai musicians to play Western art music. During the late teens and early 1920s, his orchestra was widely regarded as the best in Asia. When the Department of Fine Arts was created in 1934, he was made director of the Western music section. He also composed the Thai national anthem. He essentially established the study of Western art music in Thailand, and many musicians still trace their lineage through him.

Chiang Mai] establishes a music curriculum with a four-year course in music performance.

2520/1977 Chulalongkorn University establishes a four-year curriculum in music education; in 2526/1983 it establishes the Faculty of Arts with a four-year curriculum.

2526/1983 Kasetsart University begins to offer a four-year curriculum in music.

2532/1989 Mahidol University establishes a master of arts program in culture and music.

2535/1992 Srinakharinwirot University, Prasanmit campus, establishes a master of arts program in musicology.

The music of rural regions has not had a defined place in university music departments, even outside Bangkok. Although courses in so-called folk music (*dontrii phüün baan*) are occasionally offered as electives, a major in "Thai music" means the music of the courts, and this has strong implications for class, region, identity, and cultural capital. In other words, this single tradition, which is only one of perhaps hundreds of Thai genres, has (since the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932) been redefined as a national tradition, though its associations with central Thai aristocracy and the capital have everything to do, of course, with its place in the educational system.

Thai universities, whether public or private, are intensely hierarchical, and (as elsewhere in the world) professor's titles and salaries are determined according to degrees, publication, and university service. As in the Western world, Thai academics certainly have no illusions about becoming rich on a professor's salary, but I must say that many Thai university professors are shamefully underpaid.⁷ Many salaries are so low that professors are almost forced to take on outside work if they want to raise a family. A graduate degree from a Western university can make a substantial difference in salary, and also in status. A Western university degree changes a teacher's career, leading to higher pay and rank and possibly to administrative positions. At Chulalongkorn and Thammasat Universities, which are the most prestigious schools in the country (rather

⁷I know that one professor, who retired at the age of sixty after teaching at his university for over twenty years, was at that point making just over 60,000 *baht* a month (US\$ 2,400.00).

like Harvard and Yale in stature), a majority of the professors have foreign graduate degrees. Given the limited number of graduate programs in Thailand until recently, this was almost necessary in many disciplines.

Music was one of these disciplines. Since there were no Thai graduate programs in music, most music departments hired young professors on the strength of their undergraduate work. In fact, most departments of any sort hire their own graduates, and this is generally seen not as favoritism but as a way of maintaining certain intellectual approaches and performance styles. Unlike some other disciplines, music was until recently seen as having a strong base in practice (i.e., performance), and young music professors were hired on the basis of their performance skills as well as their grades and general promise as teachers.

Faculty members without doctoral degrees are addressed as *acaan*, or 'professor,' and those with them as "Dr. So-and-so." At this point, there are two kinds of university music professors, with two kinds of backgrounds. Those who are over forty-five years of age or so, or who teach only performance, generally have only undergraduate degrees (from Thai colleges or universities), or may not have a degree past high school if they teach only performance. Professors now in their forties or younger usually have at least a master's degree if not a doctoral degree from abroad.⁸

Older musicians are often doubtful if not openly resentful of this system that requires higher education for advancement. Two extremely respected musicians were recently awarded honorary doctorate by Thai universities,⁹ and several musicians told me in separate conversations that they felt this was a very good thing: to their minds, book learning is overly emphasized in contemporary music programs, and they thought it right and fitting that such master musicians have been recognized with degrees for a lifetime's worth of knowledge and experience. In fact, the growing pressure to get foreign doctoral degrees is beginning to create interesting contrasts of authority and experience *within* departments and generations, and a degree

⁸To date, I know of some five Thai scholars who have earned American or British doctoral degrees specifically in ethnomusicology, including Jarernchai Chonpairot (Ph.D. from Kent State University, now teaching at Mahasarakham University), Somsak Ketukaenchan (Ph.D. from York University, now teaching at Srinakharinwirot University, Prasanmit), Anant Narkong (M.Phil. from SOAS/University of London, now teaching at Mahidol University), Bussakorn Sumrongthong (Ph.D. from York University, now teaching at Chulalongkorn University), and Panya Roongruang (Ph.D. from Kent State University almost in hand), and Dusadee Swangviboonpong (Ph.D. from SOAS/University of London almost in hand). The marks that they will leave on Thai ethnomusicology remain to be seen.

⁹Montrii Tramote (born in 1900), and Prasit Thaworn, both recognized as master musicians; both have also been named National Artists.

in ethnomusicology is acquiring more and more cultural capital in university music departments even as it contributes to a widening divide between scholarship and practice.

Performers' resentment of this paperchase points to a basic epistemological problem much on the minds of the master's degree students at Mahidol and Prasanmit. Thai classical music is, and has always been, a tradition emphasizing oral transmission and the direct passage of important knowledge (whether of music or ritual practice) from teacher to disciple. While books are respected and even revered as symbolic embodiments of knowledge, the deepest kinds of knowledge are often secret and guarded. Contemporary degree programs are instead invested in books, writing, and the accessibility of knowledge that the written word creates. The M.A. students not only recognize this conflict, but even see themselves as engaged in a pursuit that inherently devalues traditional systems of knowledge and, by implication, the human beings in whom that traditional knowledge resides. This is of course deeply troubling to some of them: their sense of complicity is urgent and even anguished, and most views the awarding of honorary degrees with mixed feelings. Their salvage approach to scholarship, to be discussed below, is thus understandable: it is one way to bridge the contested domains in which they move.

Bureaucracy is epistemology

It is impossible to think about the creation of Thai ethnomusicology programs without recourse to Foucault's formulation of knowledge as power and Bourdieu's arguments for educational systems as the recirculation of cultural capital. The emergence of these programs is 'about' more than ethnomusicology and education *per se*: it is about the construction and maintenance of Thai culture as much as anything else.

First, I would argue that Thai ideas about musical knowledge are intimately tied to ideas of power and cultural capital, but in two different and sometimes conflicted ways, as suggested above. The traditional social system of Thai performance is tied to an intensely hierarchical and gendered system of ritual authority in which a minority of older men have (and pass on) the right to initiate others into the tradition (Wong 2000). For some years, these men were also generally the leaders and administrators of educational institutions for the arts, but this has changed as music and dramatic arts departments have begun to emulate Western educational models. At this point, a foreign graduate degree is to all effects and purposes a ticket to administrative advancement within the Thai

educational system. In short, knowledge is (and has always been) cultural capital within Thai performance traditions, but its shape and basis has changed. Traditionally, knowledge was housed in musical works, choreography, and in the ritual technologies used in teaching; furthermore, knowledge was secret, exclusive, and personal, always transmitted one-on-one. This was in some ways a model of diminishing returns, in which contemporary men of authority were always regarded as knowing less than their predecessors. By contrast, foreign graduate degrees represent a very different kind of capital: their power and efficacy come from outside Thailand, obviously, but are tied to ontologies of book knowledge. Book knowledge is the opposite of traditional Thai conceptions of knowledge: books provide knowledge for everyone and anyone, are not secret, and (at least theoretically) open up knowledge to anyone; this noetic shift thus has strong implications for changes in the class, region, and gender base of Thai educational authority. This shift in conceptions of knowledge is central to the genesis of Thai graduate programs in ethnomusicology.

In Foucauldian terms, these programs are a discourse-object — that is, they are institutional sites that enunciate, and are enunciated by, specific forms of discourse that create legitimacy and authority. Foucault provides the example of doctors (1972: 50-51), and notes that the status and construction of “the doctor” was “profoundly modified” at the end of the eighteenth century; he explains this shift as the result of changing economic and social norms demanded by the industrializing societies of the West. His discussion of doctors and medical knowledge is so closely analogous to the graduate programs being considered here that it is worth presenting his case study in detail.

Foucault first notes that the “status” of doctor is created and maintained via specific criteria of competence and knowledge, by institutions and pedagogic norms, and by legal conditions that simultaneously allow and delimit a doctor’s enactment of medical knowledge. He points to the power of speech in a doctor’s social role (*op. cit.*, 51):

Medical statement cannot come from anybody: their value, efficacy, even their therapeutic powers, and, generally speaking, their existence as medical statement cannot be dissociated from the statutorily defined person who has the right to make them, and to claim for them the power to overcome suffering and death.

Furthermore, a doctor’s authority issues from specific institutional sites that verify the legitimacy of the doctor’s speech: the hospital, the laboratory, and the ‘library or documentary field,’ i.e., the mass of published statistical

and research information that is “supplied to the doctor by public bodies” (52). In short, the doctor’s social role is created and maintained by “a whole group of relations” (53) and Foucault makes it clear that he does not locate these relations in the doctor him- or herself. Indeed, he does not allow for the authority of the subject at all: he does not locate the authority of discourse in “the unity of the subject” but rather in “the various statuses, the various sites, the various positions” from which a doctor speaks (54). Discourse is thus always an act stemming from a series of relationships, “a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed” (55). There cannot be any single speaking subject — Foucault explodes this mainstay of Western humanist thought, saying “discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality” (55) of the relationships outlined above.

Institution-building such as the Thai graduate programs is part of the apparatus of emergent forms of discourse that enunciate emergent forms of social authority. At present, the leaders in these programs are dependent on their foreign doctoral degrees for their authority, but this will change quickly enough as they create several generations of Thai ethnomusicologists holding Thai master’s degrees; together, they will presumably take the next step of creating institutions that can confer doctoral degrees and thus become totally self-replicating. Indeed, any institutionalized educational system (whether Thai or not) is dedicated to the creation and maintenance of certain forms of authoritative discourse. The Thai graduate programs are creating several things all at once: the vocabulary to talk about ethnomusicology, and the library/documentary field built out of student theses that will enunciate an authorized field of knowledge. Students who finish their degrees are automatically granted the status to speak as experts in ethnomusicology and on Thai music.

Bourdieu’s work on the economy of educational systems is even more closely political and it opens up any consideration of educational bureaucracies. His model in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977) is based on the premise that the participants in any educational system, whether students, faculty, or administrators, are dedicated to perpetuating it and themselves. Bourdieu analyzes the French system of education primarily in terms of how cultural capital is established and then maintained through selective, exclusionary practices and through particularized relations to class. The system itself thus tends “to produce the ideological justification of the order it reproduces by its functioning” (206), i.e., it creates a self-perpetuating, closed system. Bourdieu notes that the

French system supports a rhetoric of education as a socially liberating force but that it hands over “the power of selection” to the academic institution which then carefully controls the movement of individuals through it. As Bourdieu writes, “The mobility of individuals, far from being incompatible with reproduction of the structure of class relations, can help to conserve that structure, by guaranteeing social stability through the controlled selection of a limited number of individuals ... and so giving credibility to the ideology of social mobility” (167). This rather bleak scenario is a specific analysis of French institutions but is, to varying degrees, part of the logic of any public educational system. In Asia, the close relationship between education, cultural policy, and nation-building becomes all the more evident when considered in terms of Bourdieu’s model, though I believe that its neatness is challenged in important ways when inflected with the dynamics of postcolonialism.

A consideration of the performative nature of knowledge transfer in traditional Thai expressive culture extend Bourdieu’s model of bureaucratic exclusivity in the distribution of cultural capital. The ritual complex known as the *wai khruu*, the ritual honoring teachers, is central to music, dance, and theater: all performers continue to participate in the ritual technologies that issue out from a system of ritually-appointed men of authority who have the ability to initiate other performers into the tradition. Although the court has not existed in any absolute sense since 1932 (when the institution of absolute monarchy came to an end), continuing associations between the palace and the former court musics now known as ‘classical’ Thai music lends considerable status and prestige to its study while regional traditions are often relegated to folkloristic studies supported by the state for purposes of preservation and archiving. As elsewhere, certain kinds of knowledge are imbued with cultural capital in Thailand because of their association with power and prestige. I must go beyond the straightforward Foucauldian argument that discourse deploys networks of relationship that make the speaker powerful, because the leading Thai teachers of music were and are also religious practitioners who maintain control over exclusive and secret forms of knowledge. The confluence of exclusionary ritual practices and associations with the court grants Thai classical music a powerful post-life at the center of university music departments.¹⁰

R. Anderson Sutton’s discussion of music and dance conservatories in Java raises questions that are of similar concern in Thailand. He notes that the two major tensions acted out in government-supported institutions of

¹⁰The *wai khruu* is the subject of my forthcoming book (Wong 2000).

the arts are the contested area between preservation and innovation, and between regional focus and supra-regional/national focus (1991: 173). Thai musicians have long been concerned about the former (see Wong 2000); issues surrounding the latter in the arts are a relatively new bureaucratic problem. In Java, the regional/national distinction is enacted through Java-centric slippages such as using the Javanese word *karawitan* (meaning specifically Javanese *gamelan* music, or sometimes other indigenous Indonesian musics) to mean 'music' in the most general sense. The first government-supported school of performing arts, created in 1950 only a few years after Indonesian independence, was, for instance, named Konservatori Karawitan Indonesia (*op. cit.*, 174),¹¹ and most of its curriculum is focused on the court music and dance of Surakarta and Yogyakarta.

In the two Thai graduate programs, many students similarly focus on the court musics of central Thailand (*piiphaat* and *mahoorii*), though some write theses on regional traditions of music. On the other hand, the majority of the students are from central Thailand if not Bangkok, and those who did grow up in north, northeast, or southern Thailand are often conversant with the music of central Thai authority, enacting Bourdieu's point that the bureaucracy of elimination and exclusion keeps outsiders from complicating any educational system. Sutton notes that regional musics are not only (largely) absent from the Javanese conservatories but are treated as styles to be mixed into new compositions that move out from a Solonese or Yogyanese base. In the 1970s, the governments of Thailand and Indonesia each took a new interest in the traditional regional arts. In Indonesia, conservatories were opened in east and west Java and in Sumatra, and in Thailand, a series of government-supported regional cultural centers were founded. In both cases, the intention was to preserve traditions seen as endangered by foreign influences as well as by the popular culture of each nation's capital. Sutton points out, though, that the teachers and administrators for the new conservatories were almost entirely graduates of the Solonese or Yogyanese conservatories, most without expertise in regional styles of music; indeed, he notes that actual regional experts "have occasionally been employed as assistants, but the emphasis on notation and formal teaching methods, together with the lowly status bestowed upon them, turned them away, leaving the teaching to those less expert but holding degrees" (*op. cit.*, 179). The Thai cultural centers are not schools but are rather focused on documentation (to varying degrees) and tourism (both

¹¹In the 1970s, this was renamed Sekola Menengah Karawitan Indonesia.

domestic and foreign), but as arms of the Ministry of Culture, are often led by administrators from Bangkok. Who controls the representation and transmission of the regional arts is thus troubled from the outset.

Looking back over more than a century of scholarship on Javanese music theory, Marc Perlman acknowledges a wealth of ontological exchange that can be neither denied nor disentangled, and it is worth quoting him at length (1994: 549-50):

I don't know if indigenous musicians or scholars should fear recruitment into the Western army of ethnomusicologists — or is 'enlistment' a more accurate word? I do know that we have paid relatively little detailed attention to the work of local thinkers, especially those who were affected by Western-style training, theories, institutions, or methods. [...] I would argue, then, for an expanded definition of dialogical ethnomusicology: not simply a discipline sensitive to the personal interactions essential to the production of knowledge, but a discipline aware of the cross-cultural social and institutional intersections of ethnomusicological theories, indigenous scholarship, and musicians' 'oral concepts.' I have termed this site of intersection the postcolonial musicological juncture, but this term should not be limited to a narrow chronological or geographic sense.

Much of Perlman's dissertation is an extended consideration of the historiography of Javanese music theory as informed by an ethnographic sense for individual musicians' lives and values. In examining his teachers' exegeses of Javanese musical concepts, Perlman's search for conceptual authenticity gave way to an awareness that Solonese musical thought carries with it the history of particular kinds of cultural contact. Folding this awareness into his interpretative work implicated not only himself but the entire practice of ethnomusicological research.

J. Lawrence Witzleben's recent essay reflecting on his own experiences as an American teaching ethnomusicology in Hong Kong (1997) is a rare and extended consideration of ethnomusicology elsewhere. Acknowledging that his graduate students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (from the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) have different motivations and purposes than him, Witzleben looks back to the Western anthropological roots of relativism and its base in cross-cultural research. He finds that many Asian scholars regard the Western predilection for studying "others" as ethnocentric as well as an implicit devaluing of scholars who study their own culture's traditions. Still, he argues that Chinese and Western (American) ideas of multiculturalism are essentially "compatible" and "complementary" (1997: 235): despite a general Chinese

suspicion for anthropology as a colonial enterprise, Chinese scholars recognize regional and ethnic differences within and across the Chinese world, and Witzleben notes that his graduate students routinely venture beyond their “own” regional musics when conducting research. He concludes that cross-cultural research is thus “no less imperative in a Chinese society than it is elsewhere” (1997: 234), i.e., in the West.

Furthermore, Chinese scholars are generally aware of Western models of ethnomusicology. Unlike in Thailand, translations of work by Nettl, Merriam, Hood, Kunst, and Nketia into Chinese are available and their theoretical models have been “borrowed, adapted, or debated” (1997: 232). High regard for Western art music in China has led to Western-based constructions of Chinese music concepts that place Chinese musicologists in the interesting position of arguing against ethnocentrism in much the same way as Western ethnomusicologists. Witzleben walks an uneasy line between accepting Chinese intellectual differences, noting their potential usefulness for Western scholars, and suggesting that anything without a base in relativism isn’t ethnomusicology. As he puts it, “It is one thing to discuss a localized tradition of scholarship such as ‘Chinese ethnomusicology,’ quite another to use — or, as I see it, misuse — the word ‘ethnomusicology’ to refer to scholarship which is solely concerned with the music of one country or cultural area” (1997: 227). His conflicted attempts to position Chinese research in relation to Western disciplinary debates provides a good jumping-off point to consider Thai constructions of ethnomusicology.

Creating a Thai ethnomusicology

The vocabulary surrounding the Thai academic study of music is still emergent. *Dontrii süksaa*, literally “music study,” is fairly well established as ‘music education.’ “Musicology” is harder to pin down: I have heard *dontrii withhaya*, ‘the science of music,’ as well as *wichaadontrii*, ‘the academic study of music’; these terms include *both* music history and music theory. “Ethnomusicology” is thus even harder to formulate, and there simply isn’t any single Thai term for it at this point. Many Thai music professors simply call it “*et-ta-no*,” though a linguist at Chulalongkorn thoughtfully suggested *chaattiphan sangkhiit* or *chaatphan wichaadontrii*, since *chaattiphan* (‘human species’) is used in *chaattiphan phaasaasaat* to mean “ethnolinguistics.” The compound word *manutsaya-duriya-witthaya* (quite a compound word) will perhaps become the accepted name for ‘ethnomusicology,’ since it has begun to appear in journal and magazine articles, and is sometimes used in

conversation; it approximates the Latinate compound word, *ethnomusicology*, i.e., *manutsaya* = 'ethno-' or 'anthropo-', *duriya* = an elegant Sanskrit word for music, and *witthaya* = science or, in this context, '-logy.' Related concepts are also difficult to formulate in Thai, and result in new expressions that only make sense if one is familiar with the original English-language concept. 'Fieldwork,' for example, is literally translated as *pattibat khao sanaam*, or 'to do/act/perform/carry out activities in a field,' in which *sanaam* literally means an open grassy area.¹² Still, the ambiguities of formal vocabulary suggest that the very means and aims of "ethnomusicology" are as yet unclear, even to those who see themselves as participants in this kind of study.

The students in both programs are, to differing degrees, aware that their concerns are different from those of Western ethnomusicologists. Most feel a pressing need to document Thai performance traditions, and although we discussed the value of cross-cultural research in several seminars, the students were generally not convinced that they needed such experience. This feeling arose from several concerns. First, it is difficult to get funding for research outside Thailand, and most of them have discounted it as a possibility. Second, most of the students are strongly motivated to document traditional Thai performance; in fact, I would go so far as to call it a kind of salvage mentality, similar to American folklorists of past generations, who saw documentation — in and of itself — as inherently important and worthwhile. The students are thus generally not interested in working on popular culture, but are keenly interested in rural traditions and in the old court traditions of music and dance.¹³

Even more interesting is their growing awareness that Western scholarship may not have the last word on non-Western performance traditions. The students I know were generally quite critical of David Morton's *The Traditional Music of Thailand* — that is, the most widely available English-language monograph on Thai classical music to date. In fact, attitudes toward Morton and his work highlight some dramatic shifts in Thai intellectual engagement with the West. Morton did his fieldwork in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and his book was published in 1976. In the 1960s and 70s, a booklet published by the Department of Fine Arts on the

¹²See Clifford 1997 for more on "the field" and "fieldwork" as spatial practices in anthropology.

¹³There are a few exceptions. At the University of London's Institute of Education, Primrose Maryprasith recently (July 1999) defended her Ph.D. thesis on *luuk thung*. Quite a few established Thai scholars, however, have written about popular musics, e.g., Ubonrat Siriyuvasak (1990).

ritual honoring teachers of music and dance prominently featured photographs of Morton and two other Western researchers (Beryle Grey and Constance Crouch) engaged in lessons and ritual initiation (Dhanit 1974). Although not explicitly articulated, it is clear that, at that particular historical moment, Western interest and involvement carried great cultural capital for traditional musicians. This attitude has changed. Most of the M.A. students at Prasanmit and Mahidol expressed skepticism about Morton's work, and they were especially dismayed by his tendency to use Western music vocabulary for Thai musical concepts. Morton's work has not been translated into Thai, but a lively (often) second-hand knowledge of his book circulates among Thai musicians, and his use of the term 'metabole' was particularly irritating to the students (Morton 1976: 128-30), though its genealogy is actually even more involved than most of them were aware. Morton explains that he borrowed the term from the Vietnamese musicologist Tran Van Khe, who borrowed it from ancient Greek music: both Morton and Tran Van Khe were in fact avoiding the ethnocentrism of the musicological term "modulation," searching instead for a term not dependent on implied Western harmonic relationships but describing the "relocation" of the tonal center (often by a fifth) in the problem of commensurability a step further, suggesting that there isn't even, really, a Thai *concept* for metabole, at least within the body of a single piece. He said,¹⁴

I'm not sure that "metabole" has much meaning, though Thai musicians would probably say that "the sound/pitch changed" (*plian siang*), which basically means that the "order" of the sound/pitch (*radap siang*) has changed. They're most likely to say *plian siang* when they have just finished playing a piece through and then, when repeating it, each musician will take a turn playing it starting it on a different pitch. [...] *Plian siang* means that the *whole piece* changed in pitch, but there isn't any Thai term for changing pitch in the middle of a piece.

Indeed, it was even a bit difficult to talk about "metabole" in Thai because there isn't any specific term similar to "tonal center": Manop used the term *siang* throughout, but this simply means 'sound' (most generally) or 'pitch' (in specific musical contexts). Most pieces do in fact center around a particular pitch, and a piece would feel unresolved if it didn't end on it; the point is, though, that they may be perfectly aware that they have shifted from emphasizing one pitch to emphasizing another within the body of a

¹⁴Personal communication.

piece, but they don't have a term or even an expression for it. In class discussions, several students voiced the strong feeling that Thai words for Thai musical concepts may well be untranslatable, and certainly non-equivalent to Western ideas of music. In other words, a sense of the non-equivalent is strongly bound up with emergent ideas of intellectual ownership and the authority to explain.¹⁵

Although not a student in either of these programs, Vimala Siripongse offered the following critique of Morton in her master's thesis, written for the anthropology program at Thammasat University (2534/1991: 12-13); here is the most articulate critique I have yet encountered, but is similar to thoughts voiced by many students. Unlike most other students, Vimala had also read American anthropologist Pamela Myers-Moro's dissertation on classical Thai music (1988), and she compared Morton's work to Myers-Moro's as follows [my translation]:

David Morton's *The Traditional Music of Thailand* (1976) ... is a detailed study of Thai music written in the style of musicology. This is an important work for all consequent scholars of Thai music, whether Thai or foreign. [...]

"Thai Music and Musicians in Contemporary Bangkok: An Ethnography" is another study of Thai music from an anthropological standpoint, by the American student Pamela Myers-Moro.

Myers-Moro did her research in Bangkok between 1985-86, and studied Thai music from an anthropological viewpoint. She attempted to research the music theory of the Thais themselves (Ethnotheory of Thai music [sic: in English]) by studying music from the points of view and thoughts that Thais have for their music, in terms of form, structure, and various elements. Myers-Moro feels the fact that David Morton concluded that Thais have no music theory of their own was because Morton studied Thai music through the frame of Western music. Myers-Moro studied Thai music vocabulary used by the Thais themselves (or rather, by Thai musicians) — vocabulary which expresses how Thais think about Thai music,

¹⁵Similarly, Marc Perlman (1994: 252-325) provides a convincingly nuanced historiography of the Javanese term *balungan* (basic melody), tracing it from colonial scholars' discussions into contemporary Javanese musicians' and scholars' responses to that scholarship; he argues that the term and the concept are not quite the same thing, and that the ascendancy of the term was related to Javanese musicians' efforts to associate their craft with Dutch and Eurasian intellectuals' constructions of the Javanese 'arts.' Indeed, Perlman carefully locates his thesis "as a contribution to the *history* and *ethnography* of music theory, not to music theory itself" (541, italics his).

and which leads to a much more accurate understanding of Thai music theory, from the point of view of Thais themselves.

In asking how — and where — any theoretical system is located, Vimala points to the politics of knowledge, though she was not working within a reflexive model that would allow her to critique her own use of Myers-Moro to reach this conclusion. Vimala's point was to show how anthropological concepts open up more useful questions about Thai music than musicological models, and she essentially leaves it at that. To push at the ways in which "ethnotheory" begs the question of marked and unmarked categories was not her purpose, though I must ask it here: the most leveling move of all would be to regard *both* Western and Thai systems of thought as "theory," albeit with different histories and purposes. Vimala's work is important because she takes a step back and acknowledges the differential politics of theory (whether anthropological or musicological).

The master's programs at Prasanmit and Mahidol

The Salaya campus of Mahidol University matriculated its first class of master's students in 1989, and the Prasanmit campus of Srinakharinwirot University in 1992. The two programs have the same title — the "master of arts program in music" — and both have similar curriculums and students with similar backgrounds.

Most of the students in these programs are in their thirties though a few are older, and even fewer are younger; one entered the Mahidol program immediately after completing his B.A. in music at Chulalongkorn University, but he was unusual. The majority, however, return to school after many years of teaching music in the public school system. One student, for instance, had taught music at the kindergarten level for almost twenty years, and entered the Prasanmit program because she was "bored, and ready for something new," as she said to me. Most of the students obtained a year's leave from their teaching posts in order to complete the coursework at Prasanmit, but some have found themselves unable to cut loose from their responsibilities, and thus attempt the nearly impossible task of studying, working, and raising a family all at the same time.

Finding the time to read and write is an ongoing challenge for these returning students. The entering class at Mahidol in 1989 was a group of already-established and even famous musicians and professors; although most completed the coursework for the degree, virtually none of them could find time to write the required master's thesis, and the program has

accordingly become more cautious about admitting students who are clearly unable to gain release time from their jobs. Both programs are competitive: in 1994, for instance, Prasanmit received applications from about sixty students but admitted only sixteen. One professor was quite critical of students who seemed unable to find time to study: in a private conversation with me, he said, “They all want to have a degree — they want the status and recognition that goes with it — but they often don’t understand that attending class is just the beginning.” After several years of grappling with this problem, the professors at Prasanmit created a “special section” for students (*misit phaak phiseet*) who could not obtain work releases from their teaching jobs as civil servants; this program holds classes only on Saturday and Sunday, though its curriculum is essentially the same as the “normal” master’s program.

The students’ backgrounds are quite diverse. The class that entered Prasanmit in June 1993 had thirteen students whose background was in Thai classical music, and three in Western art music. One student came from a major lineage of Thai classical musicians; another is a dedicated pianist who ran home in the afternoon to give piano lessons. One student at Mahidol already had a master’s degree in architecture, but loved playing the saxophone and piano; he was in his second year of the program when I knew him (writing his thesis on Chinese opera in Bangkok), and was hoping to eventually get a doctoral degree in musicology. In 1994, the oldest student in the Prasanmit program — a full-time performer of Thai classical music in the Department of Fine Arts — was in his late forties.

Not coincidentally, the two programs are very much in competition with each other, though their professors have long been friends and acquaintances. First, let me offer some general background on each program, and I will then turn to the transformation of ethnomusicology that I see as a by-product of these programs.

The master of arts program in music at Mahidol University

The program at Mahidol was the brainchild of Dr. Phunphit Amatyakul, a physician (an ear, eye, and nose specialist) who is also a prominent promoter of traditional Thai musics and a music historian of impressive accomplishments. Mahidol is the leading medical university in Thailand, and Dr. Phunphit has taught there for decades. He invited Dr. Sugree Charoensook to join him in designing and opening the new musicology program. Dr. Sugree has a D.M.A. in saxophone performance from Northern Colorado University,¹⁶ and is well-established in Bangkok’s intellectual circles; his newspaper columns on music history and criticism

are widely read, and he has frequently offered rather strong and interesting criticisms of contemporary Thai musics. The M.A. program opened in 1989; it was placed in the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development and has since been refigured as the Cultural Studies Program (Ethnomusicology).

The program accepts about twenty students per year, and has two tracks in the master's program, one for musicology and the other for music education; theoretically, the program has room for ten new students per year in each. The suggested requirements for acceptance into the program is a minimum of five years' teaching experience, an undergraduate degree in music or a related subject, and the approval of the Ministry of Education. The shortest enrollment period is two years or four semesters, and the longest is five years or ten semesters. Tuition is determined by Mahidol University, and an additional flat fee of 20,000 baht (US\$800) must be paid by each student to support the special needs of the music program (e.g., musical instruments). Students must also pass a test in English language ability since much of the required reading is in English.

Students in either track must take a minimum of 36 course credits and must write master's thesis, with the following distribution of credits:

Core courses	9 credits
Electives within the track	Not less than 9 credits
Free electives	Not less than 6 credits
Thesis	12 credits

All seminars are worth three credits. The three required core courses are "Music Scholarship," "The Music of Southeast Asia," and "The Aesthetics of Music." "Music Scholarship" is described in the catalog as follows:

Addresses methods of sociological, anthropological, and musicological research; problems in music research; ethics; different scholarly approaches; doing research; finding and using citations; interviewing; checking data; oral and written reports; developing a thesis topic.

"The Music of Southeast Asia" is a survey course devoted to the entire culture region, but with the express purpose of exploring the similarities,

¹⁶His specialization in the sax is unusual in Thailand, despite H.M. the King's well-known enthusiasm for this instrument and for jazz. Most Thai specialists in Western music focus on art music and its instruments, e.g., violin or piano.

differences, and social functions of various music traditions. Finally, "The Aesthetics of Music" is described as:

An introduction to the aesthetics of music and philosophy. Approaches to the elements of music and concepts of beauty. The transmission of meaning; the transmission of emotion and meaning through music. Beliefs related to theories of beauty, both visual and aural. Relationships between music and the other arts.

Although these three courses are quite similar to courses offered in most North American ethnomusicology programs, their formulation as core courses points to a rather different intellectual agenda. First, Southeast Asian performance traditions are emphasized rather than a broad, comparative understanding of world music cultures, as required in most North American ethnomusicology graduate programs. Instead, the emphasis is squarely placed on matters of regional identity, a move which I think is best interpreted as empowering rather than Balkanizing. Western scholarship on Southeast Asia has often emphasized the so-called Indian and Chinese origins of Southeast Asian religion, economy, technology, and so on. One could argue that if American ethnomusicologists were only required to take a survey course on American music, their worldview would be rather restricted (to say the least), but then again, the stakes here are different.

The course called "Music Scholarship" may seem impossibly broad, but it too serves several important purposes. Notice that it emphasizes fieldwork over library research. Thai-language sources on music are still quite limited, and although proficiency in English is required of all Mahidol master's students, English-language books are scarce indeed. The library at the Salaya campus is growing, but students are rarely required to buy books because they are too difficult and expensive to obtain. Although all students have passed the required English-language exams, few have the proficiency to comfortably read and evaluate Western scholarly work. Looming over all of this, of course, is the question of whether they *should* be familiar with such Western scholarly work: after all, they are most concerned with creating an indigenous body of scholarship. Even if Thai students had easy access to English language books, I fully expect that they would use them in (probably) different ways and for different purposes: the 'same' knowledge is often used to serve different purposes in different contexts. In many ways, the program is designed to create the Thai scholars who will go out and write the works that are not yet available to today's graduate students. The standard North American bibliographic course that seems to be missing

from this core curriculum is thus absent for real reasons, if not explicitly articulated.

Finally, "The Aesthetics of Music" hearkens back to traditional Western musicological interests in philosophies of the arts, with an emphasis on classical constructions of inherent beauty and meaning, rather than on meaning as a consequence of social context. When I watched Dr. Sugree teach a class session in this seminar in 1994, he gave a long and detailed lecture covering a number of Western theories of aesthetics beginning with Kant and eventually moved the students into a discussion of these issues addressing similarities and differences with Thai ideas of musical beauty.

Unlike North American programs, there is no required course on the history of musicology or ethnomusicology as disciplines, and again, this seems to issue from the program's emphasis on active research. Whereas North American ethnomusicologists tend to be quite conscious of their intellectual lineages and loyalties, Thai music scholars see themselves as starting with a clean slate, and thus view the concerns of their Western counterparts as relatively unrelated to their own needs and agendas — the result of literally a different history.

The master of arts program in music at Srinakharinwirot University, Prasanmit campus

The Prasanmit master's program may give equal time to musicology and ethnomusicology on paper, but its public face is strongly directed toward ethnomusicology. When its first class of master's students went on a performance tour of the United States in October 1993, they brought with them a banner, hung over every stage on which they performed, that announced them as "The Graduate Program in Ethnomusicology." At Prasanmit, "ethnomusicology" means the study of Thai music, and this differentiation from the study of Western European art music was profound enough to result in dividing the music department into the Department of Thai Music and the Department of Music in 1995.

Two of the full-time faculty members hold Ph.Ds. Chalermpon Ngamsutti received a doctorate in music education many years ago from the University of Missouri, and Somsak Ketukaenchan received his degree in the early 1990s from York University (UK) after writing his dissertation on the *pii nai* (a double-reed instrument); when he returned to Prasanmit he was immediately made chair of the department; the creation of the master's program and the new Department of Thai Music occurred under his administration. The current chair of the Department of Thai Music, Manop Wisuttiapat, received an M.M. from the University of the Philippines in 1985,

where he studied with José Maceda and received training in music education, musicology, and ethnomusicology.

The core curriculum consists of six seminars, all required: "The History of Thai Music," "Techniques of Analyzing Thai Music," "Foundations of Ethnomusicology," "Asian Music," "Ethnomusicological Research," and "Foundations of Anthropology and Culture Studies." Students must also choose two elective courses from an array of possibilities, depending on what is taught while they are in residence (see Appendix B for the complete list of courses). The emphasis on Thai and Asian culture is obvious. In fact, "Foundations of Anthropology and Culture Studies" is also focused on Thai culture; taught by the only faculty member in the department who is a woman, it emphasizes Thai traditional arts and crafts, mostly rural. "Foundations of Ethnomusicology" is usually taught by Dr. Somsak; when I sat in on one class session, Somsak brought along his copy of Nettl's *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts* and paraphrased certain sections of it for the students. The overall emphasis of the coursework is, however, on Thai music and culture.

At the time of this writing (1999), about thirty-five students have successfully completed the M.A. in ethnomusicology; most were teachers who decided to study further. Some twenty-five students are currently enrolled in the program.¹⁷ Most of the graduates to date wrote theses about particular parts of the Thai court music repertoire (e.g., the solo tradition, the vocal tradition, etc.). Only three or four (in seven years' time) have written about rural music traditions (*dontrii püün baan*), and those have included one on music of northern Thailand, one on a genre from Surin province in northeast Thailand (*kantrüm*), another on a funeral genre found in Songkhla province in the deep south of Thailand (*kaalau*), and one on the music of a highland minority group in northern Thailand. None has addressed any form of music from outside Thailand, and all the theses have been written in Thai.

When I visited the new program in the summer of 1994, the entering class was made up of some eighteen students, most of them in their thirties or forties. The curriculum included some seminars in Western music but far more about Thai music, and I was asked to fill in and teach a seminar on musics of Asia while one of the professors went on tour with the undergraduate performance troupe. The pressing challenge, to my mind, was teaching materials: there were none, and although the university

¹⁷Personal communication, Manop Wisuttiapat, chair, Department of Thai Music at Srinakharinwirot University, Prasanmit.

library had books on Asian musics in English, there was virtually nothing in Thai. Neither the library nor the department had audiovisual materials, so I visited local embassies and got what I could. About two-thirds of the students were polite but frankly uninterested: their lives were focused on Thai classical music, and they simply didn't have any intellectual framework for considering how and why anything else was worth studying. The other third of the class was interested, though, and consistently took notes, asked questions, and made comparisons between Thai music and the Japanese and South Asian traditions that I presented.

I found the experience nerve-wracking and fascinating, frustrating and inspiring. I had the real sense that I was witnessing (and indeed participating in) an important step in the development of Thai music scholarship, but I certainly couldn't teach Asian musics in the same way that I do in the U.S.; I tried to build that reflexivity into my lectures, but found that this double step back didn't seem to engage any of the students. Those who were interested were hungry for information — for “data” about the rest of the world — and they were utterly focused on simply getting at it rather than thinking about how, why, and in what form it was available to them.

Indeed, much of the program's focus was on learning how to do research. The students were required to take several seminars on research methods, and much emphasis was on writing papers in particular formats. They were taught that any paper should have certain sections (e.g., “introduction,” “research methods,” “previous work,” “data,” etc., with an emphasis on social science terminology), and their written work was generally handsomely presented (often bound, and written in very formal language with very few typos) and invariably followed the suggested formats to the letter. Less attention was paid to content and almost none at all to critiquing or interpreting (or sometimes even citing) other sources.

Prasanmit is famous for its student tours: for many years, the professors have organized an annual three- to four-week international music and dance tour for the undergraduate majors; past tours have included the east coast of the U.S., Scotland, Denmark, Eastern Europe, and Malaysia. Each student has to come up with some money, but the professors obtain professional sponsorships from Thai businesses, and Thai Airways has donated plane tickets more than once. Professors from other universities often speak disparagingly of the Prasanmit tours, saying that they are more like tourism than education; the Prasanmit professors feel, however, that the tours give their students valuable performance experience as well as the chance to become a little more cosmopolitan, and the tours certainly are not

vacations — they are grueling, with constant performances, sometimes several in a single day. By the second year of the master's program, the professors were organizing annual tours for the graduate students, and the resulting music ensembles were often breathtakingly good, as they featured some of the best musicians in Bangkok. Many of the students were far more comfortable performing than reading or writing, so it is not surprising that this aspect of the program has gotten stronger even though it is not a degree in performance.

By 1998, the professors at Prasanmit were getting concerned over the number of students who had not yet finished writing the required master's thesis. The program calls for two years of coursework and then the thesis, with completion intended at the end of the third year, but in fact few students could find the time to write the thesis once they were finished with classes as they almost entirely went back to the jobs they had had to begin with. In September 1998, I sat in on a fifth-year student's thesis defense: the student in question was at that point up against the outside deadline for finishing the degree, and would have had to take the coursework all over again if he didn't submit his thesis within a week or two of his defense date. I would like to offer an ethnographic glimpse of this student's defense, as it highlights many of the ideological issues that are central to Thai ethnomusicology.

The student, a man in his early thirties, was a performer on the *pii nai*, a double-reed instrument, and had chosen to write his thesis about how the great piece *Krao Nai* (one of the longest and most powerful works in the ritual/theater repertoire) is realized on this instrument. Since Thai music is heterophonic, instruments render the melody of any given piece in different ways, and this student's decision to consider one piece in terms of a single instrument necessarily meant addressing issues of teachers' lineages. Although I just felt compelled to explain this, it is self-evident to any Thai performer or scholar of music, so the student did not frame his discussion in those terms; instead, he spent his twenty-minute presentation first outlining the characteristics of the ritual/theater repertoire (*phleng naa phaatt*), then narrowing in on the characteristics and importance of pieces called *krao*, and then he specifically addressed the piece *Krao Nai*. Most of this information was offered without citation, though he noted that he had "done research" (*khon khwaa*) in commemorative books (*nangsüü anusaun*) for three great musicians (*Luang Pradit Phairau*, *Uthit Naaksawat*, and *Bunyong Ketkhong*). The commemorative books for the first two musicians are standard sources for information on many aspects of Thai classical music and have been available for almost twenty years, and the third was just

published two years ago, not long after this musician's death. The student then moved to the famous *pui* players of the last two generations and to their lineages, referring to them as *run yai*, great groups.

Up until that point, the four professors present had remained silent; three had spent the time paging through their copies of the thesis and the fourth had sat listening (though looking somewhat unimpressed). Three of the professors were in the Department of Thai Music (one was the department chair) and the fourth was a Western music specialist holding an American doctoral degree. One of the Thai music professors broke in to the student's presentation with the first question, asking why a particular living *pui* player was considered important. The student answered that it was because he was a close disciple of a particularly noted *pui* player of the previous generation (Thiap Khonglathong) and that he had received much of his teacher's knowledge; the student did not need to explain that he knew this from first-hand, participatory experience in the *pui* tradition, and he neither cited a source for this information nor did any of the professors ask how he knew it. At this point, the other professors began examining the student, and I began to realize that none of them thought it was a good work.

The Western music specialist, long regarded as one of the stricter members of the faculty, addressed the form of the thesis, noting that his bibliographic citational form was wrong, that he had misspelled one reference's name, and that one reference was completely missing. She went on to identify a number of typos in the text of the thesis and then — just before saying that she had another meeting and would have to leave — noted that the length and scope of the thesis were much too limited and needed further thought and expansion. She left, and one of the Thai music professors left with her, saying that he too had another engagement.

This left two faculty members. The department chair asked a rather searching question about *pui* players lineages and the transmission of certain ritual/theater pieces and not others. The student started to provide more detail about *Krao Nai*, but the chair stopped him and tried to get him to address this broader issue without much success. The other professor then lit into him, saying the thesis wasn't very detailed at all and needed quite a bit more work. As the student looked increasingly anxious, the department chair gave him a very stern talking to, saying, "You *must* use more sources than three commemorative books, and you must make it clear when you are writing in your own words and when you are quoting from written work." He asked the student why he had chosen to simply read large portions of the thesis text aloud, noting that other students gave defense presentations using video or other audiovisual examples; he then swept into a long fist of

suggestions, saying that a single interview with a living performer was quite inadequate and that the student needed to include other player's perspectives as well. Furthermore, he needed address why certain performers were regarded as the best, and that the only way to ascertain this was through fieldwork — that he had to go to places and talk with people, not just listen to tapes that other people had recorded. The chair and the other professor then discussed between themselves whether one can use both qualitative and quantitative methods in a thesis, and they concluded that one can and indeed should; they turned to the student and told him that he needed to make such movement clear, and that he should look at other theses to see how it was handled.

At this point, the discussion turned to matters that were all too familiar to me, as they regarded writing problems that I also encounter in my American graduate students: both professors told him to cut out a lot of explanation about what he was *going* to write about and simply get down to the matter at hand; they also suggested brief summarizing sections as well as certain expansions; and they told him he needed to meet the fast-approaching deadline with a perfect, mistake-free revision of the thesis that addressed all of their concerns. One of the professors offered to look at the thesis again before it was handed in. Making the best out of a tough spot, the student thanked them for their suggestions, *waved*, and crept out. Left alone with me, the professors said that this student still had a lot of work ahead of him — not the usual 10% or 20%, but much more. They agreed that he was not at all “ready” to deposit the thesis. The department chair sighed heavily and said, “Ah, I’m tired!”

The entire exercise was fascinating to me both for what was addressed and what wasn't. As an American scholar, the overall framework for the student's thesis was essentially familiar to me (book research, fieldwork, comparison, etc.), but the balance was toward fieldwork because there simply aren't many written sources yet for this kind of scholarship. Distinctions between fieldwork and the contents of commemorative books were not discussed, though I have long felt that such books are fascinating examples of indigenous fieldwork, based on people's memoirs and conversations. The lines between the student's experiential knowledge and his fieldworker's knowledge were quite blurred, nor was there any apparent expectation that he should address it. On the other hand, there was explicit attention to the time-honored Thai (and more broadly Southeast Asian) practice of quoting from authoritative written sources without citing them: in this case, the thesis-writer was expected to emulate Western practices of reference and citation, though he clearly was not yet

accustomed to this. In sum, the balance of expectation was toward Western scholarly techniques, but not entirely. If this student did indeed finish his thesis, it will be a record of *pui* players' lineages and styles, not unlike Daniel Neuman's formative ethnography of Indian *gharana*, but any discussion of why this is important for Thai ethnomusicologists is transparent lineages are the tradition, and are thus assumed rather than marked as important avenues of research and documentation.

The dilemmas of implication

I am obviously conflicted over Thai ethnomusicologists' efforts to create bureaucratic and institutional niches for their work. The ambivalent Westerner in me would like to see them throw over the Western inheritance of ethnomusicology and to forge their own way, even as I acknowledge its impossibility and the not-so-hidden romanticism of this wish. Kofi Agawu has impatiently argued that African scholars should not be expected to think purely African thoughts (1992: 260); he states that this Western expectation denies a long history of colonial contact and its effects, and that it is yet another way of keeping Africans in their place, intellectually separate from Here. I am directly implicated in these matters and must acknowledge this even as I am wary of valorizing my own role in the emergence of Thai ethnomusicology. Since I first began doing research in Bangkok in 1986, my friends — musicians and academics alike — have strategically noticed, celebrated, and (sometimes) used my presence as an indication of Thai music's worth and value for late twentieth-century cultural politics. After I read an earlier version of this essay at a Thai studies conference, a Thai doctoral student in ethnomusicology from SOAS asked me in a friendly but pointed manner whether my presence at Prasanmit hadn't left its mark on their M.A. program.¹⁸

Of course it has: I have played my small part in investing ethnomusicology with a certain *cache* for Thai scholars of music. I hope it is evident that I am not arguing for a return to an innocent Thai past. If that space ever existed, it certainly doesn't at this point, nor do Thai scholars and educators have any motivation to disengage with the global circulation of educational capital. If anything, I am simply eager for them to be more vigilant of the terms of this capital and to develop a more critical postcolonial consciousness, which I see as simply necessary. Here I should address two potential responses — that Thailand was never colonized, and

¹⁸I thank Dusadee Swangviboonpong for this question.

that the postcolonial framework might be regarded as part of the apparatus of Western intellectual hegemonies.

Historians generally agree that a succession of Thai rulers avoided colonization through skilled diplomacy, often playing one Western power off another, and contemporary Thais are generally aware and proud of their country's longtime independence; Thailand is in fact the only Southeast Asian nation never colonized. On the other hand, it has never been a world power, either, and was only named a Newly Industrialized Country (NIC) in the early 1990s; its economic status has long been intertwined with ASEAN concerns, and ASEAN's welfare is directly tied to First World relationships between the U.S., the EOC, and the former Soviet Union. Thai government support for the U.S. during the Vietnam War resulted in close economic ties and a general Thai enthusiasm for American culture: many Thai intellectuals have noted that Thailand escaped colonization but willingly accepted American cultural dominance.

Postcolonialism "de-scribes a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises," as Stephen Slemon puts it (1995: 45), and it not only outlines these possibilities but also critiques them. As a critical endeavor, postcolonialism necessitates a reexamination of the conditions of colonialism, and some theorists (e.g., Homi Bhabha) have carried this forward into a critique of Western constructions of modernity. Educational structures are one of the primary *foci* of emergent political formations, often of new intellectual circles whose members turn their attention to the very bureaucratic institutions that created them. Postcolonialism carries with it a focus on the construction of agency and resistance, and educational structures are one of the most problematic areas for this enterprise. Educational systems are frequently 'left behind' when colonizers depart, though in Thailand, the creation of public education, including the university system, was undertaken quite self-consciously as part of the creation of a modern Thai nation-state (see Arong 1973, Varaphorn 1985, Watson 1980, and Wyatt 1969). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note that education was a central "imperial apparatus" that re/inscribed colonial values through persuasion (1995: 425):

Such patterns are reproduced not just through established curricula, syllabuses and set texts, but more fundamentally through basic attitudes toward education itself, to both its nature and its role within particular nations and cultures. Moreover the conditions of production and consumption of education and its technologies, while they may have undergone subtle shifts, have not ... significantly altered the unequal power relations between the educational producers and the

'peripheral' consumers of education.

In short, I would suggest that considering the Thai programs in ethnomusicology as a postcolonial phenomenon sheds a certain light on their political location. Whether created by a colonial power or instituted voluntarily, educational systems carry with them particular ontological terms of authority, and they are generally so utterly dedicated to reproducing those terms that difference or dissent is routinely removed from the system. In newly independent nations, such systems insert the neocolonial by reproducing colonial terms of knowledge and authority. The postcolonial emerges when the intellectuals created by these educational systems critically question and assess the terms of authority, and I believe that this is beginning to happen with nascent Thai ethnomusicologists. This assessment necessarily implicates the questioner as well, though, and it is this step towards reflexivity that I do not yet see in Thailand — that moment when the holders of knowledge begin to critique the global system that places them in the position of authority. The space of agency opened up through that question carries with it a defining power that I long to see in Thailand.¹⁹

When I was last in Bangkok (a year ago at the time of this writing), I met briefly with Vimala Siripongse, the young woman whose master's thesis I discussed above. She was still undecided about what to do with her future and was working as an independent research assistant in the meanwhile. Concerned that she might be at a dead end, I encouraged her to apply to doctoral programs abroad, but she shook her head. No, she said, her professors at Thammasat University said they would soon propose a Ph.D. program in cultural anthropology, and she was willing to wait for that: she thought there was plenty that she could learn right there in Thailand.

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Arong Suthasana

¹⁹I disagree with Larry Witzleben's simple dismissal of postcolonial theory as an extension of colonialism (1997: 236-7). Witzleben argues that the postcolonial crisis of authority was created by Western scholars and is essentially a development wholly within Western intellectual culture. This locates postcolonial and subaltern intellectuals squarely on the side of Western thought and ignores the ways in which they reassemble the conditions of knowledge through critique.

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〈요약〉

태국 민족음악학의 새 자리매김 서구 민족음악학의 개정을 위한 문화정치학적 고찰

데보라 윙(UC 리버사이드)

성기련 정리

민족음악학자들은 과연 민족음악학이란 무엇이며 그 범위와 학문분야는 또 무엇인지에 관해 많은 시간을 들여 생각하고 또 토론한다. 미국 민족음악학회(SEM)에서 나오는 학회지 『민족음악학(Ethnomusicology)』에는 앞으로 민족음악학이 어느 방향으로 나아가야 할지에 관해 쓴 논문들이 여러 해 동안 꾸준히 실려 왔다. 이와 같이 음악학으로부터 파생되어 나온 지 오래되지 않은 민족음악학의 성격과 목적은 스스로 민족음악학을 공부한다고 주장하는 사람들에게조차 여전한 토론의 주제가 되고 있다고 해도 과언이 아닌 것이다.

지난 10년 동안 민족음악학자들은 인류학으로부터의 자극에 힘입어 민족음악학 분야의 형태와 윤리, 이론적 근거와 신화를 논하기 위한 열개를 만들어 왔다. 이러한 자체실험의 경향에 비추어 볼 때, 지금까지 민족음악학이 비서구권 학계에 어떠한 영향을 미쳤는가에 대한 공개적인 토론이 거의 없었다는 것은 사실 놀라운 일이다. 인류학과 마찬가지로 민족음악학은 식민주의에 그 뿌리를 두고 있으며, 또한 그 인식론들은 부지불식중에 서양의 합리론과 경험론 사상에 기초하고 있다. 그러나 나는 최근 비서구권의 대학과 음악원에 다양한 모습으로 만들어지고 있는 민족음악학 전공과정을 통해 그 속에 탈식민주의의 성격들이 짙게 나타나고 있음을 감지하고 있다.

나는 1986년 이후로 여러 차례에 걸쳐 태국을 방문하면서 특히 방콕 지역에서 태국음악에 대한 민족음악학적인 현장조사작업을 하여 왔다. 태국음악 연구과정은 현재 대부분의 대학의 교과과정에 들어 있을 정도로 태국 학교교육 내에서 이미 확고한 기반을 가지고 있다. 나는 태국을 방문할 때마다 여러 대학과의 긴밀한 접촉 속에서 음악 실기수업을 받고 음악가나 학자들과 상담을 했으며 시행착오를 겪으며 직접 수업을 가르쳐 보기도 하였다.

최근 몇 년 사이 태국에서는 대학원 과정이 처음으로 방콕의 두 음악학교, 스리나카린위룻 대학(프라산밋) 태국음악과와 마히돌 대학(살라야) 음악과에 만들어졌다. 이 두 대학원 과정은 모두 서구권의 민족음악학 과정과 같은 계열에 해당함에도 불구하고, 그 목적이나 성격에 있어서 북미나 서유럽의 민족음악학 프로그램과 큰 차이가 있다. 이것은 탈식민주의적 자기 불확신으로 인해 애매모호한 어감으로 표현되어 온 문화적 유산에 대해서 지적인 통제와 개선을 제안하고 있다는 점에서 다소간 실험적인 요소를 내포하고 있다고 할 수 있다. 태국에서 제도권의 인정을 받으며 음악공부를 하는 사람들은 아직까지 민족음악학계에서는 거의 논의된 적이 없던 문제인 '인식론의 정치학'에 대해 점점 커다란 책임을 느끼고 있다. 북미와 서유럽의 민족음악학자들 역시 이제는 이러한 문제와 윤리적인 딜레마들에 대해 고민할 필요가 있다. 그들은 아시아·아프리카 그 외 비서구권에서 유학 온 대학원생들의 요구와 기존의 서구식 민족음악학 사이의 접점을 찾아내어야만 하는 것이다. 이 글은 이러한 문제의식에서 나온 것으로, 교육과 교육학이란 항상 문화와 권력이라는 문제와 연관되며 지식의 토대와 통제라는 문제를 재고찰하게 한다는 가정에 기초하고 있다.

민족음악학 연구 과정이 있는 대학은 아직까지 그리 많지 않으며 또 있다고 해도 그 성격이나 체제가 지역이나 학교에 따라 차이도 크다. 나는 이 글에서 태국의 두 민족음악학 대학원과정에 대해 현장참여를 통한 민족지적 관찰을 하는 한편, 태국에서 민족음악학과정이 등장하는 과정에 대해서도 살펴보고자 하였다. 태국의 전통음악은 몇십 년 동안 공립학교와 대학의 교과과정에 포함되어 왔다. 궁중음악과 무용에 대한 연구를 하기 위한 연극예술대학이 1934년 만들어졌고, 1940년대에는 (서양음악학자들이 '태국 고전 연행예술 classical Thai performance'이라 부르는) 궁중음악과 무용 과목이 공립학교의 교과과정에 포함되었다. 1980년대 중반부터는 대부분의 대학에 음악전공 과정이 생겨나기 시작했으며, 1990년대 후반 현재에는 몇 종류의 음악관련 학과가 태국에 존재하고 있다. 스리나카린위룻 대학의 프라산밋 캠퍼스에는 음악교육과만 설치되어 있다가, 1993년부터는 서양음악을 가르치는 음악과와 태국음악과로 나누어 학생을 받고 있는 것이 그 한 예인데, 이와 같이 태국의 음악학교에서는 태국음악과 서양예술음악을 나누어 가르치고 있다. 두 학과의 학부과정 학생들은 공통된 과목들을 일부 배우는 경우가 있더라도 상이한 진로를 걷게 되며, 교수들 역시 태국음악과 서양예술음악으로 전공이 나누어져서 양쪽 모두의 전통에 정통한 교수들은 소수이다.

중앙지역 이외의 지방음악은 아직 대학의 음악과에서 전공으로 가르쳐지고 있지 않다. 소위 민속음악이라는 과목들이 가끔 선택과목으로 개설되기는 하지만, '태국음악' 전공이라고 했을 때는 궁중음악만을 가리키며 이 경우 함축적으로 특정한 계층이나 지역, 정체성 또는 문화자본만을 가리키게 된다. 수많은 태국음악 중 하나인 '태국음악'이라고 불리는 이 특정 장르는 (절대왕정이 끝난 1932년 이

후로) '국가적 전통'으로 재정의되었으며, 중앙 태국귀족과의 강한 연계와 자금지원에 힘입어 교육제도에까지 강한 영향을 끼치고 있다.

태국의 민족음악학 과정의 신설은, 푸코의 '권력으로서의 지식의 구조'와 부르디외의 '문화자본의 재순환으로서의 교육제도'에 대한 논쟁과 관련지어 생각하지 않을 수 없다. 이러한 과정의 출현은 단순히 '민족음악학'이나 '교육'의 문제라기 보다는 태국 문화의 계승이나 구성의 문제와 밀접하게 관련되어 있다.

첫째로, 음악적 지식에 관한 태국인들의 관념은 권력과 문화자본의 관념들과 밀접하게 연관되어 있다. 태국 전통 연행예술의 사회적 제도는 의식의 권위(ritual authority)를 갖고 있는 계급과 성별의 체제와 매우 강하게 연관되어 있으며, 그러한 의식의 권위란 나이든 소수의 사람들이 후대의 사람들에게 물려주는 방식으로 전승된다. 과거에는 오랫동안 이러한 사람들이 예술교육의 제도권 내에서 지도자와 행정가로서 활동하곤 하였으나, 음악과 연극학과들이 서양의 교육제도를 모델로 하여 새로이 만들어지면서 이러한 상황 역시 변화되어 왔다. 현재는 외국에서 취득한 학위가 태국 교육제도권에서 행정적인 주도권을 잡을 수 있는 보충수표와 같은 역할을 한다. 다시 말해서, 지식이란 태국 연행예술의 전통 속에서 문화자본의 역할을 수행해 왔고 현재도 그렇지만, 이제는 그 형태와 기준이 변화하고 있는 것이다.

전통적으로, 지식이란 음악작품이나 무용 혹은 의식을 진행할 때의 기술적인 부분과 같은 것 속에 포함되어 있는 것인 데다가, 이러한 지식은 비공개적이고 배타적인 일대일의 관계 속에서 후대의 사람들에게 전승되어 내려왔다. 이것은 당대의 권위를 가진 사람들이 항상 이전 시대의 사람들보다는 적은 지식을 가지고 있다고 간주되는 근거가 되었다. 그러나 이와 대조적으로 외국의 석박사 학위는 매우 다른 종류의 자본을 대표하며 그러한 학위의 힘과 효력은 태국 외부로부터 오는 것으로, 책이라는 매체를 통한 지식과 직접적으로 연계되어 있는 것이다. 책에서 얻는 지식은 태국의 전통적인 지식의 개념과 상반한다. 책은 비밀스럽지 않은 방법으로 누구에게든지 지식을 전달해 주기 때문이다. 따라서 이러한 노에시스(noesis)의 전환은 태국 교육제도의 권위를 가진 계층과 지역, 성별의 기본요소들이 변화하게 되는 것에 강한 영향을 끼치는 것이다.

이러한 지식개념의 전환은 태국 민족음악학 대학원과정의 기원에 중요한 역할을 한다. 푸코의 용어로 이러한 과정들은 담론이면서 대상, 곧 '담론-대상(discourse-object)'이다. 적법성과 권위를 만들어내는 특정 형태의 담론을 언명하고 또 그 담론에 의해 언명되는 제도적 장소라는 것이다. 다시 말해서 이러한 과정들은 뚜렷한 형태의 사회적 권위를 언명하는 담론 형태의 장치의 일부분이라는 것이다. 현재 태국 민족음악학의 지도자들은 자기들의 권위를 외국에서 취득한 박사학위에 바탕하여 얻고 있으나, 이러한 현상은 그들이 태국 내에서 석사학위를 받은 태국 민족음악학자들을 몇 세대 길러내게 되면 매우 빠른 속도로 변화하게 되

며, 그 다음 단계로 박사과정이 신설되면 이러한 변화의 과정은 더 가속화될 것이다. 실제로 태국뿐 아니라 어떤 나라에서든 제도화된 교육제도는 특정 형태의 권위적 담론을 형성하고 유지하는 데 한 몫 하게 된다. 민족음악학의 용어 정립, 학위논문의 축적(그 자체가 또 하나의 권위적 분야가 될테데), 이 모든 것을 태국의 대학원과정은 한꺼번에 창조해 내고 있는 것이다. 그리고 학위를 받은 학생들은 자동적으로 태국음악과 민족음악학의 전문가라고 말할 수 있는 지위를 얻게 된다.

부르디외의 교육제도의 경계에 대한 연구들은 푸코의 연구보다 더 정치학에 가까우며 관료적 교육제도에 관한 고려로까지 이어진다. 1977년에 나온 『교육, 사회, 문화에서의 재생산(Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture)』은 학생이건 교수진이건 행정가이건 간에 교육제도에 속해 있는 사람들은 누구라도 그 제도와 그 자신들을 영속화시키는 과정에 공헌한다는 가정에 근거하고 있다. 부르디외는 프랑스의 교육제도를, 선택적이고 배타적인 관례와 특정 계층과의 관계를 통해 어떻게 문화자본이 확립되고 또 유지되는가에 주안점을 두어 분석하였다. 그의 다소 어둡기까지 한 프랑스 교육현실에 대한 시나리오는 프랑스 교육제도에 한정된 분석이긴 하지만, 정도의 차이는 있더라도 모든 공교육 제도의 논리학의 일부이기도 하다. 아시아지역에서 부르디외의 이론을 적용하여 교육과 문화정책, 국가수립의 관계를 고려하면 그 연관성이 확실히 보이는데, 나는 여기에다가 탈식민주의의 역할까지 더하여 연구한다면 그 연구가치가 높아지리라고 믿는다.

태국 전통 연행예술의 지식전수적 성격 역시, 문화자본 분배의 관료적 배타성이라는 부르디외의 모델이 적용될 수 있는 예이다. 태국의 두 민족음악학 석사과정에서 공부하는 많은 학생들은 공통적으로 중앙의 궁중음악에 큰 비중을 두어 공부하고 있으며, 민간 지역음악 전통에 대한 논문을 쓰는 학생들이 더러 있다. 한편, 대부분의 학생들은 방콕이 아니면 태국 중심부 출신이며, 북부나 동북지역 혹은 남부 태국에서 자란 학생들의 경우에도 중앙의 권위있는 음악에 정통한 경우가 많아, 배제와 소외의 관료제도는 비주류세력이 교육제도와 뒤엎히는 것을 막는다는 부르디외의 지적을 뒷받침해 주는 예를 보여 준다.

태국 음악학계에서 사용되고 있는 음악학 혹은 음악관련 용어들은 아직까지도 정착이 되지 않아서 그 쓰임이 혼란스럽다. 'ethnomusicology' 라는 학문 이름 역시 태국어로 정확히 그 개념을 표현할 수 있는 용어가 없는 관계로 흔히 그냥 '에타노(et-ta-no)' 라고 하거나, '마누차야-두리야-윳타야(manutsaya-duriya-witthaya: 종족-음악-학)' 같은 합성어를 쓴다. 이러한 공식적인 용어들의 의미가 불명료한 현상은 'ethnomusicology' 라는 학문의 수단과 목적조차 불확실한 것으로 받아들여지게 하며, 실제 스스로 이러한 공부를 하고 있다고 여기는 학생이나 학자들 사이에서조차 그 개념이 불확실하게 여겨지기도 한다.

태국의 두 민족음악학 대학원과정에서 공부하고 있는 학생들은 그들의 관심사가 서구의 민족음악학자들의 관심영역과 다르다는 것을 자기 나름대로 인지하고

있다. 학생들 중 태국의 연주전통을 기록화해야 한다는 압박감을 느끼는 경우는 많으나, 비교문화적 연구의 가치를 깨닫고 그러한 경험이 필요하다고 실제로 느끼는 학생들은 그리 많지 않다. 이러한 인식은 몇 가지 이유에 기인한다. 첫째, 외국에서 연구를 수행하기 위한 재정적 지원을 받는 것이 용이하지 않기 때문인데, 대부분의 학생들은 이것을 아예 불가능하다고 여기기까지 한다. 둘째, 그들 대부분은 태국의 전통적인 연주전통을 기록해야 한다는 매우 강한 의지를 가지고 있기 때문인데, 내게는 그것이 (마치 과거 미국의 민속학자들의 예에서 보이듯이) 기록화작업만이 절대적인 가치를 지닌 것으로 여기는 의식구조에서 비롯한 것으로 보인다. 이와 같은 배경 속에서 학생들은 일반적으로 대중문화에 대한 연구에는 관심이 없으며 오직 지역적 전통과 과거 궁중음악과 무용을 연구한 것에만 관심을 가지고 있다.

더욱 흥미로운 사실은, 서구식 연구방식으로 비서구권 연주 전통을 연구하는 데 한계가 있음을 인지하는 학생이 점점 많아진다는 것이다. 영어로 쓰여진 태국 전통음악에 대한 책 중 가장 널리 읽히는 것이 데이비드 모튼의 『태국의 전통음악 (The Traditional Music of Thailand)』(1976)인데, 내가 만난 민족음악학 전공 학생들은 대체로 이 책에 대해 비판적이었다. 토론수업 시간에 많은 학생들이 태국어로 된 태국음악의 개념과 용어를 서양식 사고방식에 맞추어 정확한 용어로 번역하기는 어렵다는 의견을 강하게 피력하였다. 바꾸어 말하자면, 서양식 개념과 태국식 개념의 불일치에 대한 그들의 인식은 자주적 지적 소유권과 권위에 대한 생각들이 새로이 대두하는 경향과 밀접한 관련을 맺고 있다고 할 수 있는 것이다.

지금까지 내가 접한 이러한 유의 비판 중 가장 날카로우면서도 주목할 만한 것은 타마삿 대학에서 인류학을 전공하는 비말라 시리폰세라는 학생이 석사학위논문에서 모튼의 책을 마이어스-모로라는 미국 인류학자의 논문과 비교하여 평가한 부분이라고 생각한다. 비말라는 모튼의 『태국의 전통음악』이 태국 음악 연구에 있어서 매우 중요한 책이긴 하지만, 모튼이 태국에는 그들 고유의 음악이론이 없다고 결론지은 것은 서양음악의 기준을 가지고 태국음악을 연구했기 때문이라고 비판했다. 반면 마이어스-모로의 경우 태국사람들이 사용하는 태국음악 용어와 태국음악 이론(비말라는 이것을 ‘민족이론 ethnotheory’ 이라고 하였다)을 공부한 후 태국 사람들의 시각을 가지고 태국음악을 이해하고 연구하려고 했기 때문에 태국음악 이론을 훨씬 더 정확하게 이해할 수 있었다고 지적하였다. 필자인 비말라의 당초 의도는 아니었겠으나, 각기 전혀 다른 역사와 목적을 가진 서구와 태국의 ‘이론’이라는 사고체계와 이론의 정치학을 동시에 고려하는 것이 태국 음악연구에서 가장 바람직하다는 것을 제시하고 인식했다는 점에서 이 논문은 매우 중요한 성과라고 평가하고 싶다.

나는 태국 민족음악학자들이 그들의 활동을 위한 관료적이고 제도적인 적절한 장소를 만들려고 하는 노력들에 확실히 반대하는 입장에 있다. 비록 실현되기까

쉽지 않고 다소 감상적이기까지 한 희망이지만, 그들이 서구 민족음악학적인 유산을 던져 버리고 그들 나름의 새로운 길을 찾아나갔으면 하는 것이 나의 솔직한 바람이다. 코피 아가우는 서양 학자들이 아프리카의 학자들에 대해 예전과 같이 순수히 아프리카식으로 사고하기를 기대하는 것은 아프리카의 기나긴 식민지 경험과 그 영향을 부인하는 데 기인하는 것이며 그것은 아프리카인들을 지적으로 서구세계와 격리시켜서 그들만의 세계에 머무르도록 하는 또 다른 길이라고 주장한 바 있다. 마찬가지로 나도 태국사람들더러 이전의 때문지 않은 상태로 돌아가라고 주장하려는 것은 아니다. 그러한 과거의 시대와 공간은 이미 지나가 버려서 이제 다시는 그러한 시절로 돌아갈 수 없을 뿐 아니라, 태국 학자들과 교육자들이 전 세계의 교육자본으로부터 분리되고자 하는 욕구를 가지고 있지도 않다. 내가 그들에게 필요하다고 생각하며 바라는 것은 이러한 교육자본의 문제를 더욱 조심성있게 다루고 더욱 비판적인 탈식민주의 의식을 발전시켜 나갔으면 하는 것이다.

이에 대해서 혹 “태국은 한 번도 식민지화된 적이 없다”거나 “탈식민주의의 열개란 것도 결국 서방의 지적 주도권에 의한 장치일 수도 있다”는 반응이 있을지 모르겠다. 일반적으로 태국은 열강의 세력다툼을 적절히 이용함으로써 식민지화를 피할 수 있었다고들 하며, 태국인들도 동남아시아에서 유일하게 식민지화되지 않은 나라라는 사실을 자랑스러워하고 있다. 거꾸로, 태국은 한 번도 세계의 중심국이었던 적이 없으며 1990년대 초반에야 비로소 신흥공업국 대열에 낀 나라이다. 태국 지식인들도 태국이 식민지화는 피했지만 미국의 문화적 지배는 오히려 의식적으로 수용해 왔다고 지적한다.

탈식민주의는 주관적 입장, 전문영역, 비판작업의 이질적 집합인 식민지적 조건에 대한 재검토를 필요로 하며 일부 이론가들은 이러한 문제를 현대 서구사회의 구조에 대한 비판으로까지 확대하기도 하였다. 교육 구조는 신흥 정치세력이나 지식인집단(자신들을 키워낸 바로 그 관료제도에 눈독을 들이는)이 가장 먼저 장악하려 하는 분야의 하나이다. 탈식민적 체제 수립에서 가장 문제가 되는 분야 중 하나가 교육제도이다.

교육제도란 종종 식민지배자들이 남기고 가는 잔여물 같은 것이지만, 근대국가 수립 이후 태국에서는 대학교육을 포함한 공교육의 창설작업이 꽤 자주적으로 이루어졌다. 그러나, 나는 태국의 민족음악학 과정 역시 탈식민 현상의 관점으로 바라봄으로써 그러한 과정들의 정치적인 위치를 조명해 볼 것을 제안한다. 식민세력에 의해 만들어졌건 혹은 자주적으로 제도화되었건, 교육제도란 궁극적으로 기존의 권위를 재생산하는 장치여서, 비판적 의문을 용납하지 않는다. 탈식민주의란 이러한 교육제도 아래서 양산된 지식인들이 기존의 권위의 문제에 대해 비판적으로 의문을 갖고 평가하고자 할 때 나타나는 것이며, 나는 발생기에 있는 태국의 민족음악학자들에게서도 이러한 현상이 나타나고 있다고 본다. 한 걸음 더 나아가, 지식 담지자들이 자신들의 권위의 원천인 제도권을 비판적으로 보기 시작하면 ‘재

귀성(reflexivity)'의 단계에 다다를 수 있게 된다. 나는 이 글이 민족음악학계에서 이러한 논의가 활발히 이루어지는 계기가 되고, 태국뿐 아니라 비서구권에 있는 우리의 동료학자들이 자기네 나름의 학문의 길을 찾아나가는 데 도움이 되길 바란다.