

## **The Development of the Folk Songs of Cultures between both Mekong River Banks of Thailand and Lao PD**

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**Abstract:** This research was a qualitative research. This aim of this study was to study the development on the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR by the data from documents, field studies, purposive sampling, key informants, focus group discussion, casual informants and general informants. The results found that the development of Thai folk songs can be divided into four eras. First, the pioneer era in 1938-1963 AD (2481-2506 BE), the folk song did not completely distinguish itself clearly from another genre. Second, the musical movie era in 1964-1972 AD (2507-2515 BE), the folk song became a new musical genre. Next, it was the life music era in 1973 AD-1997 AD (2516 BE-2540 BE). The politics influenced the evolution of the folk music. Finally, the technological advancement era in 1998 AD (2541 BE) to present, the new equipment has been used to record the folk song. Moreover, the results revealed that the Thai folk song had more adaptation and technological application for production. For the development of Lao folk songs from 1940 to present can divided into four periods. First, the era of the French Empire in 1893-1954 AD (2493-2497 BE), it was the starting era of modern Lao folk song. The song styles were patriotic songs and revolutionary songs. Second, the era of the US Empire in 1954-1975 AD (2497-2518 BE), Baan Naa or Luk Thung song of Laos was originated. Next, the era of socialism in 1975-1986 AD (2518-2529 BE), the Baan Naa folk song was stopped to spread out because of the the coup d'état. The forth era was the open era or current era in 1986 AD (2529 BE) to present. The cultural revolution from the state policies affected the music industries. Many music businesses were occurred to hold the trend. There was the spread out of the folk songs which brought changes from one to another from the past to the present times. The folk songs of Thai and Laos's cultures between both Mekong river banks became wisdom media that presented a great value to both countries.

**Key words:** Thai folk song, Laos folk song, the comparative study between two cultural folk song, cultural revolution, technological application, revolutionary songs

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks is not only an entertaining medium but it is also an important cultural medium that portrays historic events. The music and songs are parts of the human culture. They evolve with the progress of the society. This is like a music scene on the both sides of Mekong river banks. Thailand and Laos have tied a bond as a neighboring country for a long time. Having the Mekong river as a frontier, the Lao and the Thai share the similar races, languages, lifestyles, traditions and cultures, leading to a deep mutual understanding (Teerasasawat, 2000). The beliefs, values, traditions and cultures, coming with beautiful nature have inspired arts in many different forms including literature, music, singing, dancing and plays. These are the cultural root of the people living nearby the both sides of the Mekong river banks.

These cultural media have evolved, influencing the birth of the folk song or Luk Thung. The folk song comes with beautiful language and melody that tell a story of local people and unify them together. The lyrics of a song are like a piece of literature that communicates the researcher's thought, feeling, ideology, artistic taste to touch the audience's heart. The folk song is socially valuable as it brings people together.

The folk song has been popular in the both countries. Because of the cultural and linguistic similarity, the cultural assimilation between Thailand and Laos can be found in the folk song. The cultural assimilation deepens the value of the lyrics and the music of the folk song (Sarika, 2008). The folk song of Thailand and Laos portray each country's lifestyle, society, ideology and culture. The lyrics are usually written in a simple language. The melody, the tune and the singing style sound rustic and folksy. They go well with the image of

people from a rural country who are mostly a farmer. The song is accessible and entertaining. It comes with a message that is easy to understand. Also, it reflects the feeling and the lifestyle of each culture and society (Jobkraboanwon, 2007). The folk song is an important music for the people living on the both sides of the Mekong river banks. It helps shape how the people live. Many folk songs have their own unique musical style. The lyrics reflect the society, lifestyle, politics, culture, value, belief and tradition of each country. The music has evolved through generations. It is also a medium for the cultural assimilation (Paksiri, 2006).

The origin of Thai folk song was around 1939-1945 during the period of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, the "State Fashion" leader of Thailand. The prime minister advocated western culture to protect his own country. He promoted performing arts like Ramwong and Ramtone as part of the nation-building plan. The Ramtone music was recorded, played in many occasions and became popular. After that Ramtone music was fused with western musical instruments. This was the root of the Thai folk song. This kind of music became a national hit. Then, it spread to Laos (Krobthong, 1998).

The Lao folk song emerged around 1939-1943, at the beginning of World War 2. At that time, the Lao government was given permission from the French government to control the artistic and cultural movement in the country. Songs were used as a medium to promote patriotism in order to fight against Fascism. In 1940, "Lao Samai Music" or the contemporary Lao music emerged. They were patriotic songs and revolutionary songs. The songs contained musical styles of Ramwong and Ramtone. Lao Sami songs were used to advocate nationalism among the Lao people.

Later, around 1957-1960, the contemporary Lao music or "Lao Samai" evolved and the Lao folk song or "Baan Naa" song emerged. In 1975, the coup d'état took place. The Baan Naa music was banned while the revolutionary songs were brought back to life. It made Ramwong, Ramtone and Mor Lam music popular again. Today, the folk song is still a popular music genre in both Thailand and Laos. The folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks is part of the lives of the people living on both sides of the Mekong river banks (Palanwan, 2002).

There is no doubt that the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks is a valuable cultural asset. It is the reason I would like to study about the development of the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks in Thailand and Laos. The research will not only bring educational benefits but it will

also tie a bond between the two countries and create a mutual understanding and collective pride to preserve this valuable cultural heritage.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study was to study the developments on the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR.

**Scope of the research:** The scope of the study was based on the data from documents, books and Thai and Lao folk songs. The researcher collected the data of fieldwork from related people of both countries. The target population were divided into three groups for 30 people in total including 5 key informants (academics, professors and cultural officers), 10 casual informants (composers, folk song singers, musicians and vocalists) and 15 general informants (Thai and Lao folk music audiences).

The scope of content was to study the background development of the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research was a qualitative research. The research instruments were explained as follow: the survey form was used to survey the basic information in the scope of geography, society, culture and knowledge of the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR in research areas.

The observation form was divided into 2 types including participant observation and non-participant observation. The participant observation was used to record the observation results of the population's activities which were related to discussion activity or conversation group and Thai and Lao musical shows and to observe the background development of the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR. Also, the non-participant observation was used to observe the creativity of music research of the group of operators which were related to the Thai and Lao folk songs between both Mekong river banks by taking note, recording VDO and recording voice.

The interview form was divided into 2 types including structured interview and un-structured interview. The structured interview was used to interview the population for the direct and clear issues of the background development of the Thai and Lao folk songs of the cultures between both Mekong river banks. The un-structured interview was also used to interview the key informants deeply. The scope of answers was not limited. It allowed wide and general information.

Focus group discussion was the instrument that the researcher used to interview the casual informants deeply for the unclear information. The researcher could receive new additional information by specifying the group discussion or conversation that had knowledge about the folk songs and the development of the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR.

**Data collection:** The researcher collected all data from 2 sources as follow: the primary data was collected from fieldwork according to the in-dept interview and participant observation. The researcher interviewed the target group of the research including academics, singers, songwriters, music composers and vocalists in order to inform the purpose of the research and acquire information with key informants who could provide the best information about the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks and ask for their permission get the interview.

The secondary data was collected from documents by studying the recorded documents which had related details and searching for the documents that presented information about the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR.

**Data analysis:** Initially, the researcher performed data triangulation which referred to the validation of collected data by cross-verifying the same information from at least three sources. First, the group of key informants included academics, professors and cultural officers. Second, it was the group of casual informants such as composers, folk song singers, musicians and vocalists. The final group was the general informants which composed of Thai and Lao folk music audiences. Later, the data analysis was conducted by typological analysis in order to understand the situations and the background development the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Lao PDR. The analysis was implemented by using the cultural diffusion theory and descriptive analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of the folk songs of the cultures between the two sides of Mekong river banks. The researcher can classify the development of the folk song of the cultures between the two sides of Mekong river banks into two groups, Thai folk songs and Luk Thung Baan Naa/folk songs of Laos. Each development was divided into four periods as it was explained.

The development of Thai folk songs in 1938 AD (2481 BE) to present was divided into 4 periods: the pioneer era in 1938-1963, the musical movie era during 1964-1972, the life music era in 1973-1997 and the technological advancement era from 1998 to present.

The development of Lao folk songs in 1940 AD (2483 BE) to present was divided into 4 periods: the French Empire era in 1940-1952, the American Empire era in 1960-1975, the socialist era in 1975-2002 and the open era from 2003 to present. The research results from each period are explained.

The research results of the development of Thai folk songs from 1938 to present found that the development of the folk songs was caused by the changes of society and it was divided into four eras as follows.

### **In 1938 AD-1963 AD (2481 BE-2506 BE), the Pioneer**

**Era:** The Thai folk song did not completely distinguish itself clearly from another genre as it was a transitional period between Thai traditional music and Thai modern music (Thai Sakol music). Therefore, the folk song was categorized as the modern music. However, the first song that was considered to be the folk song (Luk Thung song) came out in 1938. It was "Sao Chao Rai" (Farmer girl), written by Hem Vejakorn and vocal by Kamron Samboonnanon as a song on radio. Famous singers in this pioneer era who had not divided the genre of songs included Payong Mukda, Somyot Tasanapan, Benjamin, Preecha Boonyakiet, Chan Yenkae, Boonchuai Hirunsunthon, Wongchan pairaj, Khumron Samboonnanon and Suraphol Sombatchareon. In the year 1939, the soundtrack of the Thai film in the 16 mm system was introduced. The first song was the song "Kwun Kaung Riam" written by Joungchan Chankhana for the movie "Old Wound". In 1964, Jamong Rangsikul was the first person in Thailand who defined the term "folk song" and this term was used as a name of the music show, broadcasted on channel 4 Bangkhundprom on May 11, 1964. The word "folk song" has been widely used from back then until now. Thus, the folk song was considered to be truly originated in this era (Jobkraboanwon, 2007). The folk song is unique, since, it contains easy-to-use language and narrates about life, social and cultures. The contents of a song describe about rural areas, natures, life reflections and poverty of people in a society. After the World War 2 in 1955, the development of folk songs has been modified.

The folk songs of the Thai and Laos's cultures between both Mekong river banks in this era, mostly the ways of creating songs have been changed because of the political and governmental effects. The characteristic of the songs is similar to Lao songs which some parts of the songs were written to claim the rights and self freedom.

During the year 1933 before the World War 2, the songs that have affected the politics and government in the colonial era. The song “Mekong” was a sample and written by Puanburn (Jungchan Chanchana) and vocal by “Pathum Pratipsen”, the main actress from Chantaropas dramatic band. The theme of this song clearly reflected in politics in order to use to chorus on the dancing stage. In the year 112 RS or 1893 AD, France intervened to occupy the right bank of the Mekong river of Thailand and in the year 1903, Thailand also lost the left bank of the Mekong river. For this reason, Thailand has composed songs to claim the rights on the lost land.

**In 1964 AD-1972 AD (2507-2515 BE), the Musical Movie Era:** Thai folk songs were popular, since, the songs were used in the films and became famous exceedingly. This era is the glorious period of Thai folk songs during 1964-1972 in which many music films were initiated. After Surapol Sombataroen, the king of Thai folk songs, passed away on August 16, 1968, it caused many changes in the folk field. Many singers and folk song’s writers emerged. Many people listened to the folk songs widely. In the year, 1970-1972, the folk song’s industries were furiously competitive. There was also a high competition between the city music and folk song. Songwriters tried to create the identities of each singer. Some folk singers took the role on movies, so, the era can be called “the musical movie era”. The sample of a film song reflecting the cultures between the two sides of Mekong River banks is “Can Lam Khong”, written by Paiboon Bhudkhan and vocal by Miriam Star.

**In 1973 AE-1997 AD (2516-2540 BE), the Life Music Era:** It is also called a new phenomenon era. After the incident on October 14, 1973, there was a political change in Thai society. Also, in 1973, this new phenomenon affected the folk industries in Thailand. The folk lyrics involved contents referring to rural life, poverty and the lack social opportunities. The contents were mainly focused on the issues of farmers and laborers, offering more prominence of the contents. The sample folk songs in this era were modified to reflect the social life. For example, the song “Sad at the Mekong River Bank” was written by Choltanee Tarnthong and vocal by Suriya Songsang. The song “Two Mekong River Banks” was written by Paiboon Bhudkhan and vocal by Rungpetch Leamsing and the song “Young Nor Por Kor” was written by Surin Parksiri and vocal by Suriya Faprathum.

**In 1998 AD (2541 BE) to present, the Technological Advancement Era:** It is the era of the development of modern technology that started to play a role in the

production process and communication in all aspects including the music aspect. This created the processes of music media production. The music market was a big market where the folk songs were popular again because the dramas related to folk songs were produced such as the song “Folk Song Love Story”. In addition, folk singers seemed to cover the old folk songs increasingly. Nowadays, radio and TV are getting more and more open. Game shows also bring the folk songs in the show’s activities and movies adapted folk songs in the stories. Now, these have become big businesses. The folk song of the cultures between the two sides of Mekong river banks became prominent and popular namely the song “Berng Khong Lam Plern” written by King Korakot and vocal by Yotluck Salagjai, the song “The Voice from Pakse” written by Doi Inthanon and vocal by Pongsri Woranut, the song “Ladies in Two Cities” written by Lope Bureerat and vocal by Sayan Sanya, the song “Sunrise at Khongjiam” written by Surin Parksiri and vocal by Aey Podjana, the song “Nakhon Phanom Full Moon Night” written by Sala Khundwut and vocal by Siriporn Ampaipong and the song “Sunrise at the Mekong River Bank”, written by Pongsak Chantaruka and vocal by Tai Oratai.

The research results of the development of Lao folk songs from 1940 to present indicated that the development of the folk songs coming from the transformation of society in each era which can be divided into four eras by these followings.

**In 1893 AD-1954 AD (2493-2497 BE), the era of the French Empire:** The change of music genre was caused by the development of the existing songs in order to replace the original Lao song. The original singing rhythm was remade into modern style or to be more universal which led to the new trend among Lao societies. This kind of song was named as Lao song in the era of the beginning of French empire or ‘Antagonism music’ because the French became weaker while Japanese started entering the war at that time until it finally became the World War 2. The French began to give Lao people more freedom, therefore, the first song that happened became the national Lao anthem. Sisana Sisan (1922-1998 AD) was the one who fixed and edited Lao national anthem from the original lyric of Dr. Thongdee Sunthornvijit (the Lao’s original national anthem) into the new national anthem as today lyric. This song was the first version in that era. The lyric was more related to antagonism which in another word means anti colonialism. The sample songs were Hak Mueng Lao (Loving Laos), Kao Dern Nak Hob Lao (The Step of Lao Soldier), Dan Heang Isara (Land of Freedom), Sao Pi Heang Karn Pativat (20 years of

revolutionary), etc. (Weang Palangwan, 2555). In term of songs which were like dancing songs such as Lao Haom Sampan, Lao Haom Pongpan were the developed version of the original Lao folk song during 1940 (Pikulski, 2008). This era was the starting era of Lao folk song and became the prototype for all kind of the next generation of Lao songs. There were many Lao folk songs that reflected the cultures of the two sides of the Mekong River such as 'Kulab Pak Sae' written and vocal by Boontamalee Boonchuy, 'Champa Meaug Lao' written by Mahapume Jittapong and Utama Junlamanee and vocal by Jansuda Sutatamma, 'Dan Heang Itsara' written by Visana Sisan and vocal by Malawan Duongpume, etc.

**In 1954 AD-1975 AD (2497-2518 BE), the Era of US Empire:**

The period between 1954-1960 AD was a time when Lao became independent and a time when the French defeated the Dien Bien Phu War in Vietnam. US Empire was coming and produced the songs at that time be 'The Revolution Songs'. These songs were created by the influences of having Communist Party in Lao PDR and establishing Lao Revolutionary Party. Then they became the second era of Lao songs. The songs in this era were developed then they became accessible to the general public, not especially for 'The National Savior'. While the lyrics of the song were written for the purpose of entertaining rather than struggle in the scopes of fighting for independence, political theories or encouragement. Lao music in this era was expanded into Lao modern music, urban music and country song (country folk song) which was clearly divided from 'The Antagonism music'. The most popular style was the Lao country folk song during 1954-1973 AD There were several all the time favorite songs (until now) which were related to both sides of the Mekong River culture for example, 'Kulab Pak Sun or Pak Sun Rose' written by Sureewan Lattanasawan and vocal by Kamterm Chanubaa, 'Tai Dum Rumpun' written by S. Ounwong and vocal by K. Viset, 'La Korn Sao Tong or Goodbye to the Farmer Girl' written and vocal by Sipon Sitalad, 'Leum Lai Baan Par or Forget the Girl in the Forest' written by S. Bualapan and vocal by Buangung Chapuwong, etc.

**In 1975 AD-1986 AD (2518 BE-2529 BE), the era of Socialism:**

Lao colony occupied all area across the nation and declared themselves as 'Lao People's Democratic Republic' on 2nd December 1975 (2518 BE). The dominance over Lao of the US was not an outstanding colonial style as French was. Yet, it was the secret war with the Lao Hak Chat party instead while, the political situations supported 'The Group of Lao Nobility'. The cultural influences that spread out among Lao people in

that era were the radio and broadcasting innovations as well as the records. The most flourishing Lao music was between the period of 1954-1973. There were singing contests which became the main key that can encourage the creation of many new modern Lao song singers. The year of 1960 AD became the highest popularity period of Lao songs. Owing to the US merged its political and military power with the power of culture into each influent area, the art of American music widely spread not only in Lao but also became popular songs and music in 1960. The US Psychological Operations Broadcasting from radio stations in Thailand which was a support base for fighting in Laos can be listened in Laos. Moreover, the similarity of Thai and Lao languages which came from the same language root made the songs be language closer rather than normal spoken language until it was very hard to separate. For this reason, Thai songs have influenced to other song styles like urban music and country folk song in both terms of forms and prosody in the lyric of influencing music. The cultural spread of Thai songs played a significant role in singing and songwriting among Lao people until they started imitating each other. For example, Kamterm Sanuban was the voice shadow of Somyot Tassanapan. The song of S. Bualapan was also influenced by Suraphon Sombatcharoen's song. The song 'Pla Dek Kon Hai' written by Suliwat Rattanasawan was inspired by 'Namtan Kon Keaw' song which was also written by Suraphon Sombatcharoen, etc. There were many folk songs of cultures from both sides of Mekong river in this era such as 'Phu Jan' written and vocal by Kamphu Thawewan, 'Yen Sabai Chao Na' written by Suban Suwannawong and vocal by Buangin Sapuwong, 'Song Fang Kong' written by Suriwat Lattanasawan and Tantawan Lachasak (Kantawan Lachasak), etc.

**In 1986 AD (2529 BE)-present, the open era or Current Era:**

After the revolution of the regime in 1975 AD (2518 BE), the Lao People's Democratic Republic aimed to develop the country by following the guidelines of the socialist regime, Chalemsak Pikulski (2551 BE). Lao music was forbidden. When the leading nation of Socialism which was the Soviet Union was collapsed, it affected the politics of all socialist nations across the world. Especially in the nations that have been supported by both the political, military and economic sectors of the socialist countries such as the Lao PDR. Therefore, it was necessary to adjust the policy which was adjusting economic policy to be based on the economy of the market or economic openness in order to raise the investment opportunities from foreign countries like other counties in the free world. This openness did not mean

only politics and economics. It involved the cultural revolution from the state policies that affected the music industry. There were music businesses occurred to hold the trend. There was the spread out of songs which brought changes from one to another. Lao traditional music like country folk songs or Baan Naa Lao songs which have been banned for more than 15 years, have been allowed by the Lao government to publish again. Lao folk song or Baan Naa song was the most connected song to Thai people. Songs during this period reflected the culture of the two sides of the Mekong river more than ever. In the open era, Lao music industry was gaining popularity. There have been many music businesses happened to admit the trend. In addition there have been music camp systems which led to the awakening among composers-new generation vocalists to continuously create many Baan Naa folk songs into Lao music market until now. There also have been many related songs that reflected the culture of the Mekong River such as Kid Hod Sao Khon Kaen, Bao Esan Sao Sawan, Sao Sapai, Earn Eai Sai Moh Nung, Hak Sao Esan, Hak Sao Tartphanom, etc.

Regarding the development on the folk songs of the Thai and Laos's cultures between both Mekong river banks, the researcher found that some factors that caused the changes on those folk songs were as follows.

**The development of the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks due to politics and government:**

The folk songs have the contents that reflect the politics and the government of both Thailand and Laos. From 1938 to the present there are still the noticeable changes that have occurred in different times of each era. At most, the ways to compose the songs of both Thai and Laos are the same. In the era of the liberty and equality revolution, most of the songs were related to the resistant revolution. In the year 112 RS or 1893 AD, France intervened to occupy the right bank of the Mekong river of Thailand and in the year 1903, Thailand also lost the left bank of the Mekong River. Thus in the year 1933 there was the first song about claiming the rights in that era. After that it was used to be the chorus on the dancing stage to realize the audiences about what they have lost. That folk song names "Mekong" composed by "Pranbul" or Juangjun Junkana. The singer is "Pathum Phateep Saen" who was the main actress of Chantaropas dramatic band. After that, the songs having the same characteristics were occurred once more. It was about the lost territory due to the colonial era of Foreigners (Paksiri, 2006). Its lyric is as follows.

I think and I cry. I think and feel angry that Thailand have lost some area of the land because of someone. The more I think, the more miserable I feel. To all Thai compatriots do not forget the Mekong which has made us comfortable. Our aunties, grandparents and other siblings are not far away from Thailand before. Thailand was redeemed. Thailand was built. Thais settled down and made their ways with all relatives being not straggled. Even they were in different places, it's still near to call for each other and convenient for companions like all fishes in a basket. We could lean on each other. We'd ever exchanged and befriended with others but now foreigners were arrogant. They bullied us as they pleased and separated us as they wanted. In 1893 AD, they're, so, haughty that they cut the Mekong river border unmorally. I think resentfully. I think and I cry. In 1975, Laos changed its government from the monarchy to the socialism democratic. The lands where people of both the Mekong river banks had ever visited each other were obstructed, so a folk song of two cultures between the Mekong river banks has been originated. Its lyrics reflect the story of the two lands. For example, the song names "Love across the Mekong" was composed by Thongchai Lekkampon and vocal by Wanpetch Vongthong. The lyric is the moon is clear in the middle of the 12th months. The Mekong is flooded. Gild Phrathat Chiang Saen. The Mekong river blocks the two banks, so, I can't see my dear. The border has already been closed. I do not know how to see you. At night, I just stand and see the Mekong with frightening. The Mekong river might know where you are. What do you do over there. Why don't you send me any message? I am in Thailand's bank having free sovereignty and living abundantly". This means Laos's bank had closed the border between two countries. During 1922-1998 BC or 2465-2541 AD, there is a song involving the impact from the powerful nation's occupation in Laos as well such as "Sao Pi Heang Karn Pativat/20 years of revolutionary". The lyric is "it's so beautiful for seeing mountains and forests. It is surprising that there are many flowers having sweet smell. All nations have rights to dwell together in unity and be the brave siblings. Fighting with fearless is to have the new lives. After the black cloud, the liveliness comes instead.

It was a song in an initial era before the development of the contemporary Lao music or "Lao Samai" and the era of the Lao folk song or "Baan Naa" song is the origin of all kinds of modern Lao songs which was composed by Seesana Seesan. After that, many songs like this were emerged and composed by Seesana Seesan such as Prap Fung Pee Man (Conquering the Ghost), Hak Mueng Lao (Loving Laos), Dan Heang Isara (Land of Freedom), etc.

**The development of the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks due to the development of economy, society and culture in 1954-1975 AD (2497-2518 BC):** It is the era of Laos's independence. When Laos was independent, the relationship between Thailand and Laos in both Mekong river banks became closer followed by the development of social and cultural changes. There had been some linking connections and learning affecting each other which made a lot of changes in any parts of society even in song industry where the media could approach people easily. Therefore, it is obvious that many songs used the aforementioned results to tell the story through the folk songs of the cultures between both Mekong river banks, especially Thai and Lao folk songs.

**The development of the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks due to way of life, tradition and culture:** The way of life, tradition and culture are the vital parts which the composers usually used as the materials to create the imagination for their composition. Up to the present time, the song's lyrics have reflected lifestyle, livelihood, tradition and culture mostly and got popular in every era all the time. In the year 1933, during the colonial era before the World War 2, it was the era of Thai lifestyle songs claiming the rights reflecting social problems. Then, it has been developed till the era of reflecting songs of tradition, culture and lifestyle. In 1954, the first song reflecting the cultures between both Mekong river banks was emerged. It was "The Mekong Coast" composed by Sakol Mitkarun and vocal by Rumpei at Nakorn before Benjamin or ToomTong Chokchana brought it to sing and record for the second time. The lyric is. Mekong girl, you all like working. Please help each other. The wind is blowing and it is fresh. You wear sarong and go swim with your friends and then get dressed. You are so beautiful for me. Oh nice girl when I follow you to your house, the fragrant smell comes from your house and I am surprised. When I don't see your face, I am regret that I can't see. Oh my bad luck, you still don't come out your home".

Later, in 1957, the song "Looking at the Mekong" was vocal and composed by Chalermchai Sriluecha. This song was the second one which reflected the cultures between both Mekong river banks. Its lyric is looking at the Mekong which flows curiously along the Mekong. In the evening, the sun shines softly, I look at the nice girl stepping down the Mekong". Chalermchai Sriluecha is the composer and the first singer who sang the folk songs which reflected the cultures between both Mekong river banks. In 1958, Surapon Sombathjareun brought his band to show in Vientiane, the capital of PDR. He also wrote and sang the song "The Moonlight Month at the

Riverside of Mekong" which was the third song reflecting the cultures between both Mekong river banks. It was regarded as recording part of Lao's history. Laos might not know that this song is important to their nation. Surapon Sombathjareun wrote about one of important places in Laos in the song and its lyrics is Oh Vientiane, I have been to. Oh Vien Wilai, I've lived there. Meeting the lover was also in Vien Ratri", Vien Wilai was the best hotel in Vientiane. Whoever goes to Vientiane would stay at "Viang Wilai hotel". It is the first class hotel in Laos. At Viang Wilai hotel, there was a dancing bar on the ground floor which was popular in that era. It was called "Vien Ratri". The song "the Moonlight Month at the Riverside of Mekong" was composed and vocal by Surapon Sombathjareun or the King of Thai folk songs. This song was the song that recorded the history related to the existing places. The old pictures have been lost and the place has been changed to another as the development of the country.

In 1958, a song "Sao Fung Khong" (Mekong River Lady) became the fourth song that reflects the societies and the cultures between the two sides of Mekong River banks. It was a big hit for the Thai folk song industry which is still popular until today. It was written and vocal by "Pong Preeda". Apart from "Sao Fung Khong", there are many folk songs that portray the cultures between the two Mekong River banks. Especially, the songs vocal by Pong Preeda. He sang the most song in this sub-genre. The singer earned the moniker "King of the Folk Songs of the Cultures between both Mekong River Banks". However, the first singer who sang about the cultures between both Mekong River banks was "Chalermchai Sriluecha". Performing in the same era as Benchanmin, he was a pioneer of Isaan singers.

The development of the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong River banks represents the lives, the traditions and the cultures of Thailand and Laos in the past. For example, "Keaw Sao Fung Khong" (Courtship with a lady at Mekong River bank), a song written by Surin Paksiri and vocal by Plearn Promdan. The lyrics portrays the lives of people from both sides of Mekong River banks as follows, "at the Mekong River bank, a lady catches shrimps and picks morning glory to cook a clam soup. It looks like she's looking at me. She keeps me waiting, please get up from the bank" and "Mekong River goes dry in dry season so people can pick shrimps, clams, crabs and fishes" Also in a song "Berng Nakorn Phanom" (Seeing Nakorn Phanom), written by Surin Paksiri and vocal by Chaweewan Dumnern, the lyrics say "I'd like you to visit Nakorn Phanom. Believe me. The skin of Nakorn ladies glow like a gold. In the evening, they go play in Mekong River. The silk is white. The Lao women

are gorgeous. Diving hair buns and the water is clear. Phuthai women are truly beautiful. They stun every man. Vietnamese women are attractive. Mekong River flows, like the generosity of Isaan people. It never changes. If anyone has a chance to be there and you will meet ladies from gorgeous Khamcha-I, beautiful Mukdahan, charming Tha Uthen, good-looking Na Kae, attractive Renu, glamorous Don Tan and elegant That Phanom. Furthermore, a song "Nakorn Phanom Kuen Pen" (Full Moon in Nakorn Phanom), written by Sala Kunawut and vocal by Siriporn Ampaipong. The lyrics says "In a bright moonlight night in Nakorn Phanom, we are holding hands and walking together along the Mekong River bank to feel the wind breeze. In a town of Thakhek on the Lao side, across the Mekong River, there is a long curvy line of mountains. We can hear a song of sueng from distance. It melts our hearts away." Additionally, in a song "Ror Phee Tee Nakorn Phanom" (Wait for me in Nakorn Phanom) composed by Sala Kunawut and vocal by Tai Orathai, the lyrics says "Chilly wind blows in winter, I think of you and the time we were together. We went to a temple fair at That Phanom Temple. We lit up the joss sticks and pray in the wind. We wished for our love to stay even when we are away from each other." The two songs reflect the lives and relationship of local people who live along the banks of Mekong River. Nowadays, this kind of song is still active and popular in Thailand and Laos. In 1963-1964, there was a Lao song that represents the cultures between both Mekong River banks. "Song Fung Khong" (Both sides of the Mekong River banks), it was composed by "Suliwat Rattasawan" who is also known as Champa Lattanasawan. He came from Savannakhet Province. The song was vocal by Ms. Tantawan or Khantawan Lachasak. The lyrics say "water pouring from the sky, separated the land into left and right sides. It does not matter even though the water has made us apart. Our relationship stays forever". The song became a golden oldie hit not only in Laos but also in Thailand. It has been covered and re-recorded into numerous versions by both Thai and Lao singers. The popularity remains through the history of both countries.

**Summary:** The development of the folk songs of the two countries on Mekong river banks in Thailand and Laos went differently. In the pioneer era of the mainstream Thai folk song, from 1938-1963, the folk song did not completely distinguish itself clearly from another genre as it was a transitional period between Thai traditional music and Thai modern music (Thai sakon music). Therefore, the folk song was categorized as the modern music. However, the first song that was considered to be the folk song (Luk Thung song) came out in 1938. It was "Sao Chao

Rai" (Farmer girl), written by Hem Vejakorn and vocal by Kamron Samboonnanon. After that in the musical movie era during 1964-1972, the folk song became a new musical genre. It was widely used as a movie soundtrack and became a popular trend. That was the golden era of the folk song. Nonetheless after the death of Suraphol Sombatcharoen, the king of folk music, the music scene changed. Here, came the next era, the age of Phleng Phuer Chiwit (life music) from 1973-1997. It was the period that politics influenced the evolution of the folk music. After the October 14 Incident, the political phenomenon brought a new way to the folk song. The lyrics of the song were based on the lives of rural people, poverty and underprivileged people. Later from 1998 until today, it became the technological advancement era. The new equipment has been used to record the folk song. There have been many TV series about the folk song, so this genre of music has become popular again.

Talking about the historical progress of the folk song in the Lao side, it started from the French Empire era in 1893-1954. It was the beginning of the "Lao Samai Music". They mostly were patriotic songs and revolution songs. Lao Samai Music modernized the traditional Lao song, gave it an international flavor. The music became a trend setter which was the origin of the name Lao Samai. Later, in the American Empire era during 1954-1975, the Lao folk song or Luk Thung Baan Naa emerged. It evolved from Lao Samai music. At that time Lao Samai music were separated into two categories, pop music or Luk Krung and folk music or Baan Naa/Luk Thung. The lyrics became more accessible. It did not focus on class fighting or revolution. Therefore, it reached out to wider audience. At that time, Luk Thung Baan Naa music was at its prime since, the broadcasting radio and record playing became popular. A singing contest was organized everywhere and it brought a large number of the singers to the industry. In addition, during the 60 sec American music tremendously was well-accepted in Laos. As well as Thai music, it shaped a new way of singing and writing songs which was widely spread throughout the country. However, during 1975-1986 in the socialist era, the Lao folk song was banned because of the coup d'etat. Nevertheless, it turned to the open era which was from 1986 until present. The Lao government did not only liberate its politics and economy but they also did the cultural reformation. The government policies revived the music industry and it became a professional business. Thus, the 15 years ban on Baan Naa music was lifted again.

There were three factors that influenced the changes in the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong River banks. They included politics, economic development and cultures, traditions and lifestyles. The



lyrics tell a story of the people living around the river banks. For instance, “Chai Fung Khong” (Mekong River bank), written by Sakon Mitkarun and originally vocal by Rampei Na Nakorn. The second one was “Beng Khong” (Seeing Mekong), written and vocal by Chalermchai Sriluecha. The third one was “Duen Ngai Tee Rim Khong” (Full moon at the Mekong River bank), written and vocal by Suraphol Sombatcharoen. The fourth song is “Sao Fung Khong” (Mekong River Lady), written and vocal by Pong Preeda. Also, there were many more songs in this music category. The singer who has vocal the most folk song of the cultures between both Mekong river banks was Pong Preeda. Pong Preeda earned the moniker “King of the folk songs of the cultures between both Mekong River banks”. Furthermore, the first singer who sang a folk song of the cultures between both Mekong River banks was “Chalermchai Sriluecha”. In Laos, the most famous Luk Thung Baan Naa song was “Song Fung Khong”. It was composed by “Suliwat Rattasawan” and vocal by Ms. Tantawan or Khantawan Lachasak. The development of the folk song of the cultures between both Mekong River banks have linked with the evolution of societies and cultures

The development of the folk songs of cultures between both Mekong river banks of Thailand and Laos in each era have been changed according to the occurred situation. Each change would bring something new, especially the ways of creating songs in Thailand and Laos. At the beginning era, the impact of change was due to the politics which presented some similarities and differences according to the situations. For Thailand, it presented the rights claim for maintaining their own interests. In Laos, they focused on claiming freedom over their land which was conquered by the great power, so the early music type was associated with anti-revolution. Thus, the Thai folk songs and Baan Naa folk songs in Laos which were the duality of claims were the history of the two countries and paralleled to the fight. Even the beginning of the folk songs during the French colonial period until the anti-Americanism era and until the evolution and technology era at present, Thai music had influenced Lao music and they were related to each other as the causes of cultural spreading. This was associated with the study of Pongsapit (1998, 2003), he mentioned about cultural expansion that central cultural diffusion was related to cultural interaction which existed mutual learning. The cultural folk songs of the both Mekong River banks had developed and affected on the changes of songs in all ages with a variety of creativity. Especially, the bringing of modern technology to use at the present led to the development of music types. Therefore, it was necessary to develop the music types for the

appropriateness of the music in each era. The relationship of the two cultures on the Mekong river banks in the past had spread and exchanged with each other. Lao people brought Thai music to sing in their own country while Thais sang Laos songs as well.

For the development of music related to cultures of Mekong river banks or the Mekong river, no song about the Mekong river was appeared in Laos in the past. Mostly, the lyrics of Lao songs were involved with rivers in their own country such as Nam Ngum river, Zan River, etc. Few songs about the Mekong river were introduced or reflected the cultures of the Mekong river banks. The influences that affected on the cultural spread appeared during the fever of the music film during 1964-1972 and Baan Naa folk songs in 1963-1964. Then, the song about the 2 sides of the Mekong river banks “Song Fung Kong” was initiated in the Socialist era. In 1975-1986, Thai songs had played a significant role in singing and songwriting among Lao people until they started imitating each other. For example, Kamterm Sanuban was the voice shadow of Somyot Tassanapan. The song of S. Bualapan was also influenced by Suraphon Sombatcharoen’s song. However, the music in the era of France Empire, most music research were about antagonism music. The music in the revolutionary era, the transition of old French power and the new power of America had influences in Laos and this kind of music was well-known in Thailand and all countries in this region. Therefore, the wars between foreign countries also spread cultures which was related to the research by Kotchapakdee (2014). He mentioned about the music and lyrics of Laos which were influenced by the West countries that they brought foreign cultures into Laos supported by the cultural diffusion theory of Clark Wissler and Alfred Kroeber. They claimed that one of the cultural diffusion factors was the social factor to participate in the operations. Also, the migration due to the wars and conflicts and the occupation by the invaders were factors contributing the cultural spread.

## CONCLUSION

About the development of the folk songs of cultures between the Mekong river banks, music were produced by the changing processes or the effects of economic, social and cultural changes in this era. The Thai and Lao composers were influenced by the spreading cultural among Lao people in this era through the radio and broadcasting innovations. These innovations were considered as the period of the most flourishing Lao music between 1954 and 1973. Political, military and cultural powers penetrated the influencing areas so that

the art of music of the mighty nations became widespread in 1960. The US psychological operations used the broadcasting from radio stations together with the release of entertainment in the form of music and these were also popular. Each happened situation was recorded in the song. In the songs there were a variety of lyrics that reflected the way of life and traditions of people in society. For example, the lyrics mentioned about the way of life that reflected the changes in the creative processes. The songs that had been influenced throughout the period of changes appeared. Similarly, Pongsapit (2003) claimed that humans would get some cultures from neighboring societies but the reception must not go against the principles of their society and be consistent with the existing principles. Also, the society opened opportunities for people to present their thoughts through presentation channels and gave freedom to audiences which could be an important part of bringing cultures from one society to another and changing or blending to be a new wisdom in a society.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

Further studies should compare the developments of the social and cultural reflections of the folk songs of the cultures between the Mekong river banks of Thailand and Laos in both past and present to a new dimension of the development of the countries to meet the current situations at the present era.

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