

## Lam in Ubon Style: The Process of Transferring Learning to Inherit the Performing Arts

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### ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to study (1) the development of knowledge on the aesthetics of Lam in Ubon Style, and (2) the process of transferring knowledge to inherit the performing arts of Morlam Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style. Data from documents and fieldwork were analyzed and presented using descriptive analysis. The results showed that there are developments and changes according to the eras, divided into the old era before 1937, a few numbers of performers; the changing era into theatrical performance; the modern Morlam era brought popular musical instruments to play; and the current Morlam era, in which light and sound technology is used to help in the performance of three aspects of aesthetics: melody, poetry, and aesthetics of singing techniques. Regarding the process of transferring knowledge, the results indicated that two national artists have provided knowledge by practicing the performing arts in singing, dancing, and poetic gestures. Improvements are made in each area to enhance learners' skills development. The study provides significant insight and implications for developing learners' skills in performing arts at home.

**Key words:** Isan Melodies, The Process of Transferring, The Body of Knowledge, Inheritance of Morlam Performing Arts

### INTRODUCTION

Morlam is a performing art that plays an important role in the way of life of the Isan people. It has been popular from the past to the present, symbolizing the prosperity of economics, society, and Isan music culture for a long time (Buasri, 1985). It also has evolved to be seen continuously until now. Mor Lam's evolution reflects the fusion of knowledge and competence, thoughts and beliefs of Isan Wisdom that is refined and created into a Morlam performing arts (Dolprasit, 1987). However, it is still not perfect due to a lack of training and to inherit seriously. Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon was perfected in 1942 by the artists who imitated the Likay performances from the central region of Thailand (Anantarak, 1991). In Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon, there is a combination of international instruments and costumes that have adopted the examples of Likay is a stage play in which Mor Lam takes values from the central region of Thailand and brings them to the northeastern region.

Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon was very popular during the years 1947-1967 and there were many groups of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon. This has resulted in a lot of accents and melodies. The popular melodies of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon are Khon Kaen style, Kalasin-Sarakham style, and Ubon style (Nesusin, 2007, p. 47). After that, Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon has been influenced by the trend of Luk-Thung is a song that reflects the way of life, social conditions, ideals and Thai

culture. It has a melody, lyrics, accent, singing style, and playing that are typical. have specific characteristics which gives an atmosphere of country-ness Especially when singing using the tremolo. Isan people have turned their attention to Luk-Thung rather than Morlam. Therefore, Morlam has improved the forms of the performance. For the survival of Morlam performing arts, international instruments were mixed in the Morlam performance. There is a concert of Luk-Thung songs before the Morlam performance to grab the attention of the audience (A-Cheewasuksakom, 1992).

Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style was developed from a poetic narrative. Then, it changed the format of the show to meet the needs of the audience. The uniqueness of Morlam in Ubon style is to raise the voice and use tremolo (Lukkho) only at the beginning and the ending of the Lam. The Morlam in Ubon style is a slow and melancholy melody that creates a shocking feeling (Pangrod, 2001). Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon is the cultural heritage of the Isan people that began to disappear from the community and Isan society.

A new generation of Morlam artists is less interested to inherit Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon and Morlam who is a model for preserving and inheriting Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style is becoming less and less. The old generation of Morlam getting older remains a role model in preserving and inheriting the traditional form of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style. At present, there is a lack of inheritors and knowledge. The issue related to the conservation,

development, and continuation of cultural heritage can be a guideline for transferring knowledge and wisdom to the next generation.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the development of knowledge on the aesthetics of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style.
2. To investigate the process of transferring knowledge to inherit the performing arts of Molam Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style.

## Research Methods

This article on “Lam in Ubon Style: The Process of Transferring Knowledge to Inherit Performing Arts” has divided the research steps as follows:

Step 1: Study of document content, contents related to the knowledge of Morlam’s performances, the importance of showing a Morlum in Ubon styles, theories, and research as a guideline for studying and analyzing results.

Step 2: Explore the research area and choose to study from the network of Morlam artists and those who are interested in the coordination center at Mrs. Chaweewan Panthu’s residence, Santi Village, Muang District, Roi Et Province. Procedures are 1) Survey the network of project participants, 2) Plan work meetings, 3) Collect field data, 4) Organize a system for collecting relevant academic work and selected poetic works to be models for learning transfer activities for the youth and interested people.

Step 3: Study the key informants as follows:

Knowledgeable group:

1. Mrs. Chaweewan Panthu, National Artist in Performing Arts (Morlam)
2. Mr. Chalad Songserm, National Artist in Performing Arts (Morlam)

Practitioner group:

1. Five Morlam leaders or persons related to Morlam performance,
2. Three Klon Lam’s composers,
3. Two Mor Khaen artists

Inheritor group:

1. Thirteen Males,
2. Seven Females.

Step 4: Create tools and define research methodologies. This study used the participatory process to analyze and present results with qualitative research methods that require empirical elaboration. The research tools consisted of a survey, interview, observation of the process of transferring knowledge, group discussion guidelines, and a workshop to collect comprehensive data.

Step 5: Collecting data is divided into documents, the fieldwork, the prototype of poems (Klon), and Klon-Ruang refers to poetry that is a poetic style consisting of three essential characteristics: content, number of words, and rhyme, from knowledgeable people in the research area along with making an appointment for a

date, time, and place to go to the area to verify the data under the issues specified in research objectives.

Step 6: Data analysis according to the research issues specified in the objectives. In terms of the development of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style, experiments and practices were used to improve the teaching and learning process until higher skills were achieved, respectively. Then, synthesize content from data obtained from the interviews, categorize data that are related to the transfer process, present according to the conceptual framework, describe the phenomenon that has occurred, and verify the accuracy again according to the issues specified in the research objectives.

Step 7: Summarize the results of the research study, analyze and compile documents according to the issues specified in the research objectives; and present the descriptive and analytical research data.

## RESULTS

### The Development of Knowledge on the Aesthetics of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon Style

The history of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style: the melody is related to the accent of each local language. It is a mixed show of singing stories and Li-kay of the central region together. Popular stories used to show are Jataka tales and newly composed novels. The number of performers in the early stages has only the main character of the story. In addition, it imitates the dresses, scenes, and stage from Li-kay and mixes them with Morlam’s performance. The purpose of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon’s performance is not only to provide entertainment to the audience but also to offer ethical Dhamma content to the audience. The development and transformation of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in the Ubon style which mainly entertainment to the audience has existed for a long time, with economic and social changes. As a result, the Morlam group has developed according to history, divided into 4 eras as follows: (1) Old Morlam before 1937, an ancient Morlam in Ubon Ratchathani Province where one or two performers use a Khaen is a type of blowing music made from bamboo. In the past it was the main instrument used for MorLam Rueang’s performances, derived from storybooks. folk tales and the Jatakas were sung in local melodies. (2) New Era Morlam in 1969-1989: New Era Morlam is Morlam that has been blended from various cultures, including local cultures from other regions and Western culture that flows into the Northeast. Consequently, it caused changes in the culture, tradition, and way of life of the Isan people. Therefore, this era was an era in which there was competition for the form of performance, the use of light and sound techniques, and the costumes of the Morlam. It was an era of prosperity for Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon. Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon Office has been set up with sound recording and public relations through radio media. (3) Morlam (1989- present), the economy and society of the Isan people have adjusted to the point of capitalism. Morlam performing arts have developed a form of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon’s performance by bringing the form of Morlam Moo (group of

Morlam) and band style of Luk Thung came to change into Morlam Sing which can be shown to the audience and quickly gained popularity in the employment market. Morlam takes part share in high employment because there is a lively, understandable, and entertaining performance style.

The aesthetic knowledge of Morlam in Ubon style is a person who has knowledge and understanding of the use of language and poetry composing well (Figure 1). This is caused by being ordained to study, read, and write poetry thoroughly. Therefore, they know how to choose the appropriate form of words in their compositions to effectively communicate the meaning of the poem which will lead to the goal of presenting emotion in the poem. They could convey the emotion in the poem and the performance well. Adding emotions to the poem can make the audience appreciate and be emotionally amenable to the story according to the situation. Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style always uses the aesthetics of the traditional style of Lam to convey various emotions such as love, sorrow, mourning, anger, excitement, joy, feeling shocked, and caring, which can bring the aesthetics of listening to Lam to various emotions.

### THE PROCESS OF TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE TO INHERIT THE PERFORMING ARTS OF MORLAM-RUANG-TOR-KLON IN UBON STYLE

Students, people involved in the community, Morlam artists, and village scholars organized forums and workshops to sequence the learning process to transfer knowledge to the youth in the residence of Mrs. Chaweewan Panthu, National Artist in Performing Arts (Morlam), Muang District, Roi Et Province 45000 and Mr. Chalad Songserm, National Artist in Performing Arts (Morlam) who share knowledge with youth and those who interested in practicing to add melodies and to enhance the new generation of Morlams to have more experience (Figure 2).

1. Knowledge transfer by telling the participants of the developmental data management project of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style to choose Lam poems and the melodies have been improved into a video media to practice both basic and advanced Lam skills with demonstration methods for learners to practice simultaneously.
2. Inheritance by bringing information to produce video media. Data collected in the field were systematically reviewed and compiled into a video script, and photos were used to match the script, and then editing them as teaching aids. Creating a manual for singing Lam in Ubon style for use in activities according to the research project. Twenty artists are recipients of the knowledge transfer in singing and dancing.
3. The teachers inherit based on the case demonstration Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style has advanced techniques related to the use of sound, a raise of voice, sound manipulation, and transfer of advanced cognitive skills of this melody cannot be explained by descriptive words or other media. The demonstration is a chorus divided into short steps to climb up step by step by using



**Figure 1.** Morlam dressed in a similar style to the Central Thai Li-Kay style



**Figure 2.** Morlam Mrs. Chaweewan Panthu and Morlam Mr. Por Chalad Noi Songserm, National Artist in Performing Arts (Morlam), are transferring knowledge to the youth and interested people

- repetitive action skills to be proficient. Moreover, they use observation methods and practice singing until they become proficient.
4. Learning through real practice is a method of disseminating both basic and advanced methods that the recipients to practice both singing and dancing until they can sing along with Khaen. The instructor guides each step and keeps checking and revising until gets better to process correctly according to the steps shown consisting of postures according to the content of poems, dances, and performing arts in all aspects. Therefore, the practitioners are confident that they will achieve the desired results this method. They will learn and accumulate experience step by step with the development that is similar to each other and improve until they become advanced skills.
5. Learning in a real way from the transmission from the teacher in a way that entertains the audience on this issue of high singing skills must be transmitted anciently

and then be further developed according to one's abilities because being a professional Morlam requires good wit and finesse. Such knowledge will be guided by experienced teachers and musicians (Mor Khaen).

6. The method of transferring through the form of learning resources is the transfer of performing arts that have been stored for the benefit of knowledgeable teachers, i.e., artists in each Morlam-Ruang in Ubon style, who wants to pass on knowledge, dissemination of information produced through online media, YouTube, as part of learning more makes learners more skilled. In summary, twenty people who have inherited knowledge can sing.

## DISCUSSIONS

From the research results, the research findings were discussed as follows:

1. The development of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon is derived from telling stories and tales with poems in Isan poetry. The main instrument is the Khaen sang in the accompaniment. The opportunity to perform is a local traditional festival. Later, around 1941, Li-Kay which features a stage play from the central region of Thailand spread to the Northeast. Then, the Morlam group imitated and improved it in terms of performance traditions, costumes, and music. Later, Western music and popular music were brought into the accompaniment until it became a unique form. In addition, the Morlam group adjusted according to the tastes of the audience at every stage. This is consistent with the research of Carkin (1984) who conducted research on "Likay: The Thai Popular Theater Form and its Function within Thai society." It has continued to evolve over the centuries. Some applications and changes have been widely popular throughout the present. Indicators, subtitles, accommodations for performances, scenes, stage sets, performance, music, songs, movements and dances, dialogue, character traits, and clothing have been modified according to the era.
2. Morlam is a performing art that influences the knowledge of the people in the Northeast of Thailand. In most cases, the story is concealed with morality, followed by entertainment, and comedy, with the most important part being teaching activities and a local curriculum. It is consistent with Champadaeng et al. (2023). Morlam is a literacy art that is common in each locality. In terms of teaching and learning, it is only an extracurricular activity because there is an art curriculum that has been defined at the basic education level, so instruction must be provided as stated. Morlam in terms of teaching and learning is only an extracurricular activity, part of it can be defined as a local curriculum for higher education institutions in the Northeast of Thailand. Music and folk performances were elevated to a major subject that can be an alternative for those who are interested. However, it is still under the central part. It is consistent with Basak and Erdem (2022) who stated that "Another shortcoming as revealed in this study is that official art

education objectives set by the Ministry of National Education central authority are not concise or articulated. The performing arts of Morlam that have been inherited must include content in the local curriculum. If there is a need for preserving traditional arts should be developed and created interesting compositions. There is a design for dancing, singing, music, costumes, scenes, lights, and sounds that are appropriate through creative research that is applied to teaching and learning. Then the learning achievement is assessed for a standard that can guide innovation development in line with Omthuan et al. (2022), who proposed the idea that creating educational innovations about dance to elevate the educational achievements of the art learning subject group to higher standards or more than educational standards and to disseminate national art and culture to be known both in domestic and international levels.

3. Morlam groups who are interested in participating in the transmission of knowledge are those who play a role in promoting local performing arts. There are many ways of promotion that relevant agencies such as educational institutions and the Ministry of Culture have continuously organized the project. Young artists can expand their knowledge in singing, dancing, gestures, and cunning action to solve immediate problems which increase skills even more. This is consistent with Anantapoom et al. (2016), Boupnan Daokanong begins from admit the student. Memorize a Morlam verse process and Melody mold Process. Morlam singing and dancing process. Finished elements of Morlam performing Art and training about servile in the social with Morlam singer. And the last process is to practice fixing the facing problem from real performance in Morlam's performance. Master artists, including two national artists, have passed on their teaching techniques, and knowledge of the history of the development of Morlam-Ruang-Tor-Klon in Ubon style. There is a demonstration of the performance process, and suggestions to improve the use of teaching materials are important. The Master artists have monitored the achievements of highly skilled transferees. This corresponds to and closely resembles the results of Champadaeng et al. (2021). The results show that Morlam Weeraphong Wong Sin will convey various melodies to provide students with demonstration methods. Let's look at an example first and then start broadcasting. That melody with the pronunciation and the correct pitch of the sound is removed in each verse. The process of practicing this melody requires a lot of patience for the students because each verse must be pronounced correctly. The pitch of the poem must be correct according to the melody by comparing the sound of the Khaen in each study, Morlam Weeraphong Wong Sin will record his own vocals for the students to take back to listen to or practice by themselves.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Morlam is a popular performing art in the Northeast of Thailand. Morlam in this region has evolved

with the melody of each place that is different according to the accent of the language. National Artists in Morlam Performance are teachers who transfer knowledge to youth and interested people. From the implementation of the project, 20 people transfer their knowledge, which has benefited from the inheritance of performing arts to last for a period of time.

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