Exploring Thai Cultural Identity through the Remakes of Korean Dramas: A Study of Transnational and Hybrid Culture on Thai Television

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ABSTRACT

This thesis adopts the perspectives of media and cultural studies to interrogate 'cultural identity' and 'cultural hybridity' through an analysis of the influence of South Korean popular culture on contemporary Thai media production and audience reception. It posits that the deeply hybridized nature of Thai media, especially television drama, can be taken as a starting point to interrogate questions of Thai cultural identity in relation to authenticity, diversity and hybridity.

Although Thai media have long been influenced by different cultures, typically from Western and East Asian countries, the official television remakes of foreign materials started as late as 2012 after the influx of South Korean pop culture, or the so-called 'Korean Wave', into the country. Hence to explore the features and definitions of Thai culture and to reveal the appropriation of foreign culture, as well as negotiation and reception in Thai contexts, three first remakes of South Korean television dramas in Thai versions, namely *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince, Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*, are studied through three approaches: textual analysis, interviews with Thai remake directors and focus groups with Thai audiences.

The findings from this analysis reveal that none of above-mentioned remakes fully follows the form and content of the original versions. Each has been revised, yet with a differing degree of cultural adaptation based on the directors' own experiences and understandings of their national culture. In terms of audience reception, although Thai audiences in this study also hold a variety of differing views on Thai culture, they share similar opinions regarding Thai remakes of Korean dramas. To them, television is more of a local than a global medium. No matter how much they appreciate Korean television drama, if it is transformed into a Thai version and is called a Thai product, Thai audiences will expect to see what they believe to be Thai culture rather than other cultures. Thai remakes with a greater degree of localisation prove preferable to remakes that offer less adaptation.

Disagreement regarding Thai cultural interpretation from Thai producers and audiences provides evidence that the definition of Thai culture is subjective, variable, and sometimes inseparable from other cultures. Furthermore, it suggests that a definition of 'true' or 'authentic' Thai culture is difficult to achieve. Despite this, however, Thai culture, by law, is something Thai people feel obligated to preserve. Therefore in order to search for a consensus on the definition of Thai culture or what to preserve, instead of describing Thai culture with tangible criteria and characteristics, this thesis alternatively suggests it is necessary to take into account the dimensions of subjectivity, flexibility and hybridity in viewing Thai culture.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND REFERENCING

There are many systems for the Romanisation of the Thai language. However, each system has some limitations, because the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet are insufficient to represent all the consonants, vowels, diphthongs, and tones of the Thai language. This thesis has adopted the Royal Thai General System of Transcription promulgated by the Royal Institute of Thailand, to transliterate Thai words to be read with the Roman alphabet. The system makes no distinction between long and short vowel forms, and tones are not represented. Furthermore, unlike English writing system, Thai writing does not use spaces between the words in a phrase or a sentence. To make it easier to read, I have therefore separated complex polysyllabic Thai words that are difficult to read in English with hyphens. For example, I render *khwampenthai*, a Thai term for 'Thainess', as *khwam-pen-Thai* for ease of reading.

To render the Thai authors' and informants names in English, I do not, however, use the above-mentioned transcription system, but rather follow the authors' preferred spelling of their own names in English when known. Also, I have applied the Thai norm for referring to the Thai authors by their first names instead of their surnames. The citation of Thai authors, both in-text and in the bibliography, is then shown and alphabetised by the author's first name.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Research rationale

Thirty years ago, if someone had asked people who lived in Thailand, 'What do you know about South Korea?' the answers would usually relate to the Korean War, which occurred between 1950 and 1953. They also might refer to the Thai song in the late 1950s called 'Aridang', composed by Toomthong Chokchana, a Thai music composer who volunteered to join the Thai army to support South Korea in the Korean War. The name 'Aridang' comes from the Korean word '*Arirang*', which refers to a Korean folk song. The Thai song 'Aridang' tells of a tragic love story between a Thai soldier and a local Korean woman during the war. Later, the Aridang story was adapted for both a Thai film and a television drama with the same title in 1980 and 1996, respectively.

In contemporary Thailand, however, if the same question were to be posed, 'What do you know about South Korea?', there would be a number of possible answers as Thais are now far more familiar with the country on account of the influx of its pop culture into Thailand since the 1990s. The popularity of South Korean pop culture in Thailand has noticeably increased, and causes 'Korean fever' in Thai audiences, especially in the younger generation who are infatuated with South Korean cultural products and who find out facts about South Korean pop stars whom they admire, as well as South Korean television dramas and other programmes, mostly by browsing the Internet (Woranuch, 2008). Other activities they indulge in include grooming themselves to look like Korean pop stars, adopting Korean fashions and buying Korean clothes and cosmetic brands with the idea of becoming as good-looking as Koreans, eating Korean food, travelling to South Korea, and even learning the Korean language (Chutima, 2007; Ubonrat and Shin, 2007).

The reception and fusion between contemporary Thai and Korean cultural elements may be considered to be a form of 'cultural hybridity'. Edward Said (1993, p. xxv) argued that, 'all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic'. In his view, when two or more cultures meet, they neither maintain their cultural identity nor homogenise but adapt to the much more complex process of hybridity.

Keri E. Iyall Smith (2008), an American sociologist, also provides a clear demonstration of this kind of mixture by discussing the arrival of a 'stranger'. She argues that a stranger arrives today and has the potential to leave tomorrow. Once joining the community, however, the new identity of the stranger may emerge through a combination of the stranger's previous identity and the identity of the community which were previously disconnected and now overlap. Smith calls this new identity 'hybrid identity'. In Smith's view, a 'stranger' may be or may not be welcomed by the local environment. In pop culture trends, 'strangers' - from South Korea to Thailand, for instance, have received a warm welcome from many Thai audiences. Some of them even regard cultural and entertainment products from South Korea as superior to those from their own country. Yet, in consequence of such great popularity, growing concerns are raised by many Thai scholars and figures of authority as to whether these 'stranger' cultures might affect and weaken 'original' Thai culture.

Taking Smith's concept of the 'stranger' and the concerns regarding the penetration of South Korean pop culture to Thailand into account, cultural hybridity is considered to be a controversial issue, and there is a division between the 'dominance' and 'pluralism' perspectives (Jackson, 2010). Marwan M. Kraidy, in his article 'Hybridity in Cultural Globalization' (2002), defines cultural hybridity as a 'site of a cultural mixture' emanating from the local reception of global media texts, and views cultural hybridity from two perspectives: the ontological and political. From the ontological perspective,

cultural hybridity may be seen to be a product of global and local connections. It needs to be understood as a communicative practice, established by sociopolitical and economic concerns. From a political perspective hybridity is seen as 'a space where intercultural and international communication practices are continuously negotiated in interactions of differential power' (Kraidy, 2002, p. 317). If these points of view are adopted, hybridity may be regarded either as the result of cultural imperialism or as a resistance to its domination.

Cultural hybridity has also been studied in terms of media texts. Most analysts who adopt this perspective often view the mixture of media texts as a symptom of cultural pluralism rather than as an indicator of dominance. Kraidy (2005) claims that the boundaries between domestic and foreign cultural influences are not always clearly demarcated. Hybrid media texts reflect the existence of a variety of historical, economic and cultural forces that engage with other cultures, either from the same region or nation, or even at a global level.

Recently, because of the advance of media and communication technology, cultural hybridity has been discussed widely in relation to different topics including youth culture. Previously, young people worldwide were commodified by assumptions of Western culture, which grouped them into generations, such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, etc.. But the current generation of young people across the globe are to some extent caught up in the 'network society', which has been created by the social, political, economic and cultural changes caused by the spread of networked, digital information and communications technologies. Young people today tend to obtain their information and inspiration from global networks (Castells, 2000). Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa (2006) argue that the disjunction between local contexts and global sources may result in a crisis of identity politics and/or insecurity in most individuals and social groups. Young people today tend to be uncertain and depend on

others to be their leaders or models on social networks. The construction of subjectivities, identities, lifestyles and consumption practices of these people become adapted to greater openness and hybridity, and they use whatever cultural and linguistic materials are available.

Although young people nowadays seem to be more open to different cultural influences, some scholars, for instance, Vered Amit-Talai (1995) and Nilan and Feixa (2006), suggest that they still rely on local culture to some extent. Their instinctive engagement – choosing or rejecting, transforming or synthesising – with global youth cultural products and practices is formed by their lifestyles, which in turn are formed by their income, religion, language, class, gender and ethnicity.

The issue of hybrid culture is certainly not something new for people who live in Thailand. Craig J. Reynolds (1999), suggests that '[t]he notion of hybridity may also prove useful in articulating what is happening to the current Thai social formation' (p. 266). Not only the reception of South Korean pop culture as mentioned earlier, but throughout Thailand's history, Thai culture has blended with other cultures from different parts of the world such as India, China, countries from South East Asia, the Middle East and the West, which have influenced the country in many ways, from past political organisations, art and literature to present-day media. From the foundation of the kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1350, Thais have adopted political organisations, material civilisations, writing and a considerable number of words from Cambodia, and have received Theravada Buddhism, indigenous beliefs, customs and social organisations from India (Girling, 1981; Peleggi, 2007).

In addition there have been regional interactions as a result of immigration. For centuries, a number of people from China have emigrated to Thailand, and vice versa. Since Thailand was one of China's trade routes, this created a number of Chinese

diasporas and intermarriage over the centuries, which in turn led to a cultural blending within Thai-Chinese families and communities (Ricklefs et al., 2010). George William Skinner (1963), an American anthropologist majoring in China and South East Asia regions, even claims that Chinese who emigrate to Thailand are completely assimilated after the fourth generation.

In the nineteenth century, with the arrival of European and American merchants, missionaries and diplomatic representatives in Bangkok, the association with the West brought about a number of improvements to Thailand, then known as Siam, and provided the notion of 'ศิวิไลซ์' (*siwilai*), a modified version of the English term 'civilised' to the country. These developments may also be regarded as part of a process of cultural hybridisation. Thongchai Winichakul (2000, p. 529) argues that:

> ideas on how to make Siam *siwilai* ranged from etiquette to material progress, including new roads, electricity, new bureaucracy, courts and judicial systems, law codes, dress codes, and white teeth. The list could be much longer. But unlike the European experience, the Siamese quest for *siwilai* was a transcultural process in which ideas and practices from Europe, via colonialism, had been transferred, localized, and hybridized in the Siamese setting.

Later, in the twentieth century, Thai culture was affected by the imported media of Hollywood movies and music. These influences 'Americanised' Thai society and affected how Thai people thought, ate, dressed and spoke. Subsequently, Chinese and Hong Kong movies infiltrated into the country, followed by Japanese pop culture. The latest and very influential strand of culture emanates from South Korea (Noppadol, 2012).

As discussed above, popular culture from South Korea, known as the 'Korean Wave', has introduced Thai audiences to various types of popular culture, such as television dramas, movies, music, games, food, fashion, tourism and language, all of which have had major impacts on Thai society up to the present time.

In response to the popularity of Korean pop culture in Thailand, many businesses in the country have had to align themselves with the trend and adapt their marketing strategies to attract their consumers by introducing Korean-related elements into their products, and advertise using the keywords 'Korean-style product'. Also, many Thai entertainment companies adopt the same strategy to gain attention from local audiences. For example, a satellite television channel company called True Visions has bought the right to remake famous South Korean dramas to be reproduced with Thai casts and broadcast in Thailand (True Visions, 2013). From 2011 till now (August 2018) this company has bought seven Korean television dramas namely *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince*, *Autumn in my Heart*, *Full House, Princess Hours, Secret Garden, My Girl and Oh My Ghost* to remake as Thai versions.

The influence of the 'Korean Wave' on Thai society, as well as on Thai television productions, has inspired me to study the subject of cultural hybridity seen in Thai media in depth, especially with regard to television dramas. With the intention of exploring how one culture has been adopted and reproduced by another culture, and understanding the position and characteristics of Thai culture amidst the influx of foreign cultures to the country, my study examines three remakes of Korean television dramas in Thai, using the first three remakes *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince*, *Autumn in my Heart*, and *Full House* as case studies.

These three remakes are shown on Thai television respectively, starting from *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* which was re-created in 2012 with a new Thai title วุ่นรักเจ้าชาย กาแฟ (*wun rak chao-chai kafae*), which can be translated as 'the chaotic love story of *Coffee's Prince*'. It was directed by Songyos Sukmakanant and starred Weeradon Wangcharoenporn and Inthiporn Tamsukhin. The second remake was *Autumn in my Heart* which was produced under the Thai title 'รักนี้ชั่วนิจนิรันดร์' (*rak ni chua nit niran*), meaning eternal love, in 2013 directed by Siwaroj Kongsakul, and starred Jesadapon

Pholdee and Susharat Manaying. Then, the remake of *Full House,* which was also remake in 2013, it was renamed in Thai 'วุ่นนักรักเต็มบ้าน' (*wun nak rak tem ban*), which means 'chaotic love in the house', directed by Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, and starred Pirat Nitipaisalkul and Sucharat Manaying. Details of these three Thai remakes are provided in Chapter 3.

The selected remakes are studied from three perspectives which are the texts, their production, and the reception they received from their audiences. The main issues of each perspective comprise how the plots and scripts have been adapted to the Thai context; how Thai producers have appropriated Thai and South Korean cultural elements; and how Thai audiences have received and engaged with the hybrid cultural content. These issues are examined with the use of textual analysis, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Moreover, the framework of globalisation, cultural identity, theories of adaptation and television studies, as well as the background of the Thai-Korean relationship and television in Thailand, will also be reviewed to understand the development of South Korean popular culture in Thailand and to study how hybrid cultures are constructed, circulated, reproduced and received across borders.

Research relating to the 'Korean Wave' has adopted various perspectives that emanate from a number of countries, mostly in Asia. For example, there are assessments of the impact of the 'Korean Wave' on Asia (Shim, 2006; Chua, 2010); studies of how the Taiwanese engage with South Korean pop culture (Yang, 2008; Huang, 2011); and a study of the influence of South Korean pop culture on Japanese audiences (Hayashi and Lee, 2007). However, research relating to the 'Korean Wave' in Thailand is still limited. The significance of this current PhD research project has therefore been to address this gap and to move the study forward in new and important dimensions. The main study topic relating to the subject in Thailand is concerned with audiences' attitudes and behaviours that have been influenced by Korean trends

(Preecha, et al., 2007; Chutima, 2007; Chayarn, 2013) as well as specific media genres such as television dramas (Sirinut, 2011; Noppadol, 2012) and Korean pop (known as 'K-pop') music (Woranuch, 2008; Thanatida, 2010). Only one scholar, Ubonrat Siriyuvasak (2008), has discussed how Thai audiences consume Korean pop culture, but there has been no focus on the reproduction of Korean cultural products. I therefore suggest that my research will be the first to show how the 'Korean Wave' influences both Thai producers and Thai audiences, and it will provide an in-depth analysis of how Thai and hybrid cultures are negotiated and placed in television dramas.

The results of this project are expected to contribute to both pure and applied academic research. It is expected that it will expand existing academic knowledge within the framework of transnational media and cultural hybridity. Moreover, since this research aims to show how Thai television dramas appropriate mixed cultural elements and how they are received by Thai audiences, the research anticipates proposing production criteria in creating effective hybrid cultural content that might win local, and possibly global, audiences. Additionally, this may be useful for other scholars and organisations in other countries who want to study issues related to the production of hybrid cultural products.

Research objectives

Since the research aims to explore notions of Thai cultural identity that emerge amidst hybrid contents and reveal issues of cultural appropriation, negotiation and reception in Thai contexts through the analysis of Thai remakes of Korean television dramas, the research objectives are established based on three elements of those remakes comprising texts, productions and reception. To study texts, the research examines the adaptation of the foreign cultural content of television dramas to Thai contexts. While the objective of studying the remake productions is to understand Thai producers'

views of the reproduction and negotiation of foreign cultural contents, the objective of examining transcultural reception is to explore Thai audiences' opinions and expectations of hybrid culture contents, Thai culture presentations as well as their media consumption patterns.

Research questions

Corresponding to the research objectives, the research questions are framed with the same foci: texts, productions, and reception.

Texts

RQ 1: How are cultural elements adapted and presented in cross-cultural Korean–Thai remake television dramas?

Productions

RQ 2: How do the producers/directors appropriate and negotiate local and foreign elements?

Reception

RQ 3: How do Thai audiences accept and interpret these Korean–Thai adapted media texts?

Research methods

To tackle those three research questions, mixed research methods, namely textual analysis, in-depth interviews and focus groups, will be employed. Different methods have different units of analysis, which it is hoped will answer the research questions in greater depth than if only one method was to be used. Each research method is designed based on the main focus of research objectives and questions, which include adapted text, remake production and audiences. Adapted text is studied by textual analysis, which is used to compare Thai remake television dramas with the original Korean versions to observe how the original plots, scripts and settings have been adapted to Thai contexts. With respect to the remake productions, in-depth interviews

are applied to gain insights from Thai remake directors with regard to the process of the remakes, and to discuss other factors relevant to the productions. To understand audience reception, I have examined and refined the research questions by conducting focus groups. Detailed explanations of each research method are set out as follows.

Textual analysis

The research method that has been used for examining adapted text, textual analysis, is useful for researchers, especially for those working in the areas of culture, media and mass communication. It is a way of gathering information about how human beings make sense of the world (McKee, 2003). Since different cultures have different methods of understanding issues, textual analysis may offer an insightful analysis and is perhaps the best method of interpreting particular texts. The text to be analysed is broadly described as something that people might make meaning of, ranging from books to film, to items of clothing and buildings. A key element in the study of any cultural text is to understand how that text has been structured and framed (Thornham and Purvis, 2005).

With the textual analysis research method, the research has aimed to examine **RQ 1: How are cultural elements adapted and represented in cross-cultural Korean– Thai remake television dramas?** There was an examination of how the plots and scripts were adapted to Thai contexts; what elements in the Thai versions were retained from the original; what elements had been changed to fit the Thai context; and what elements may be regarded as thoroughly or partially hybridised.

To complete this first phase of the research practice, I have set criteria of Thai cultural identity (see Chapter 2) and have monitored texts based on those criteria. I have also compared and listed both similar and dissimilar points between the remakes and

originals. After collecting these data, I have applied all of them to adjust and develop the questions for the following phases of the research.

The selected texts to be studied are original South Korean television dramas and their Thai remake versions. Up until now (August 2018) there have been more than ten cross-cultural television remakes presented to Thai audiences, not only remakes of dramas from South Korea, but also from Japan, Taiwan and the US. My thesis, however, concentrates on just the first three remake dramas, namely *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince, Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House* to determine the first step of transnational television adaptation in the country. More discussion and the result of these three remakes' textual analysis are provided in Chapter 3: Transculturalism and 'Thainess' on Screen.

In-depth interviews
The next stage of the research following textual analysis is engaging in in-depth interviews. They are applied to this research to understand the way hybrid cultural texts are chosen, produced and shown. Because this technique involves face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the informants in seeking to understand their views (Kumar, 2010), the interview will help the researcher to gain in-depth insights from the participants on how they appropriate and negotiate foreign content into the Thai context, and expose the content to the Thai market, as well as consider factors influencing the process of remaking the television dramas.

There are a number of types of interview, ranging from the highly structured survey with closed questions to the completely unstructured interview. Each type is suited to particular types of research. For example, the structured survey-type interview tends to be used more for quantitative research with large samples, and is regarded as the best method for proving a hypothesis (Saunders, 2012). For this study, a semi-structured

type of in-depth interview has been proposed. To start with, there is an outline of questions or specific topics that need to be covered, which may be called an 'interview guide'. Although there is a guideline for the interview, the interviewees nevertheless have a great deal of freedom in answering questions, which may not follow the way they had been planned initially. Questions that are not included in the list may be asked by picking up on interesting points stated by the interviewees. Alan Bryman (2012) has suggested that the flexibility and informality of this method will help informants to open up more easily to the researcher.

The informants of this research are three directors of selected Thai remake television dramas, namely Songyos Sukmakanant, the director of Thai *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (2012), Siwaroj Kongsakul, the director of Thai *Autumn in my Heart* (2013), and Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, the director of Thai *Full House* (2013). An interesting point to note about these three directors is that they all share the common background of being veteran film makers but were inexperienced in television dramas before working on the remake projects. Apart from learning about how they reproduce foreign cultural products in a Thai context, it is also interesting to understand their ideas about using television dramas to communicate to Thai audiences.

The findings from the interviews are revealed in Chapter 4: Cultural Negotiation in Thai Remake Productions, and are expected to answer the **RQ 2: How do the producers/directors appropriate and negotiate local and foreign elements?** Examples of questions in the in-depth interviews include:

- Why did the producers decide to do the remakes of Korean dramas?
- How did the producers adapt the original scripts/plots to the Thai context?
- Is there any control or limitations on working on the remake project?
- What are the producers' views of Thai culture?
- What are the producers' expectations of Thai audiences?

Focus groups

The third methodology used in this research is focus groups, which is used to explore the aspect of audience reception. Focus group interviews have been widely used, sometimes with other methods, to study South Korean pop culture and related research with regard to its audience. For example, Sue Jin Lee (2011) and Doobo Shim (2013) both used focus group interviews as their primary data collection method to examine the impact of South Korean popular culture on Asian fans, while Nicole Kato (2013) used both focus groups and in-depth interviews in her work entitled *Uses and Gratifications among Korean Drama Fans in Hawaii.*

This research method has a role in providing the researcher with the opportunity to study the way individuals make sense of a phenomenon and construct meaning around it (Bryman, 2012), and it has helped me to clarify the relationship between Thai audiences, the 'Korean Wave', and their media consumption. Focus groups also function well with homogenous groups (Lee, 2011): participants are encouraged to express their attitudes and opinions and relate their experience with regard to their shared interest in South Korean pop culture with the use of this technique.

To answer **RQ 3: How do Thai audiences accept and interpret these Korean-Thai adapted media texts?,** I asked the group participants a number of questions. For example:

- What do you think of Korean dramas?
- What do you think of the remakes of Korean dramas in Thai versions?
- To what extent do the remakes remind you of the original versions?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Thai remake dramas and the originals, and between the Thai remakes dramas and regular Thai dramas?
- Of the remake and the original versions, which one do you prefer and why?

In terms of sampling and sample size, Janice M. Morse, in her paper entitled 'Designing Funded Qualitative Research' (1994), has suggested that a researcher needs at least six participants for phenomenological studies, while John W. Creswell (1998) in his study relating to designing qualitative research has suggested a number of between five and twenty-five interviews for similar studies. Another scholar, Daniel Bertaux (1981) has suggested that fifteen is the smallest acceptable sample size in qualitative research.

Taking these suggestions into account, I invited eighteen informants to be participants in focus groups. These participants were divided into three categories based on their age group, with the idea that different age groups consume media in different ways and have different opinions about it. Each category contained six participants. The first and second sets were selected from the main target group for Asian pop culture in Thailand, specifically those who watched both original South Korean dramas and Thai remake versions. According to Ubonrat Siriyuvasak's *Consuming and Producing (Post) Modernity: Youth and Popular Culture in Thailand* (2008), the main target group for Asian pop culture in Thailand comprises young, middle-class people aged fourteen to twenty-three. With this age range, the researcher decided to split this age range into two sub groups to study, and name them as **students** (fourteen to nineteen) and **first jobbers** (twenty to twenty-three). Although these two age ranges are very close, they are different in several respects. For instance with regard to daily routines and income, while the 'first jobbers' spend most of their time at work and have their own income, the 'students' group spend their daily lives in schooling and leisure. In Thailand, most students live with their parents and are provided with food, accommodation, travel and an allowance by their families. Since they are free from financial concerns, some students spend a large part of their allowance on leisure activities such as the consumption of media and pop culture.

For the third set, the researcher recruited participants from a regular Thai television viewers' category. The highest number of Thai television viewers who watch television everyday are workers in the middle-aged range (aged from forty to forty-nine) (Kanokkan and Ailada, 2014). In this research I called members from this group *middle-aged workers*. Apart from their relevant age ranges, participants who took part in this study had to engage with Thai–Korean adapted texts. All participants, whether from the *middle-aged workers group, students, or first jobbers*, had to watch the original and remake dramas before attending the focus group.

With regard to approaching informants, as stated by Ubonrat Siriyuvasak (2008), most of the consumers of pop culture in Thailand are able to access the required content and build up their social networks through online media. I therefore selected samples from this group of people and reached individuals by making contact through the Thai-based Korean pop culture content websites and other social media they participate in, such as kodhit.com, serie8-fc.com, and kpop-th.com. The sample collection was chosen based on a purposive sampling method, which allowed me to judge the sampling criteria by myself, and ensured that the participants were relevant to the research. Furthermore, to ensure the requisite number of participants, I also applied a snowball-sampling technique, whereby existing participants helped to recruit future subjects from amongst their acquaintances.

It was anticipated that the classified informants would provide the researcher with the opportunity to compare and contrast both the differences and similarities of the popular culture media consumption, cultural identity and hybridity viewpoints, and media text interpretation between categories. In addition, it was interesting to hear the participants' opinions on the progress of Thai television and its productions. These findings and discussion of the audience reception are presented in Chapter 5: Transcultural Consumption.

Thesis outline

This thesis consists of six chapters. In Chapter 1 I first discuss the background of, and justification for, the research, covering both from theoretical and practical perspectives. An outline of research objectives, research questions and research methods are also included in this chapter to provide a general idea of the structure of the research. Chapter 2 focuses on contextualising Thai–Korean relations and their reinvention. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first half reveals the background of South Korean pop culture around the globe, or so-called 'Korean Wave', showing how it has swept around the world and how it connects to, and has an influence on, Thailand. The association between South Korea and Thailand in terms of diplomatic relations and popular cultural exchanges is discussed, followed by an introduction of television studies and the circumstances governing television in Thailand. The second half of the chapter reviews related theoretical frameworks, comprising globalisation and globalised media, culture and identity, Asian identity, Thai identity and the theory of adaptation in order to understand more about the research focus, to identify criteria to study, and to determine the research direction.

As this study attempts to cover three aspects of remaking work, that is, text, production and reception, the following three chapters present the findings and discussion about each aspect, respectively. Chapter 3 sets out an observation of cultural negotiation between the remakes and their original texts, based on the proposed criteria of Thai culture, and a discussion of how Thai cultural identity is exposed on screen is provided. The criteria to study Thai culture will also be discussed in this chapter, and whether it is actually valid in terms of representation of Thai cultural identity. Chapter 4 comprises a report of the interviews of Thai remake directors, showing their thoughts on cultural appropriation and adaptation, while Chapter 5 details a report of the focus groups with selected Thai audiences showing their engagement with, and preference for, cultural

adaptation products. A conclusion, together with further discussions, limitations and suggestions for future study is offered in Chapter 6, the final chapter.

Chapter 2

Contextualising Thai–Korean Relations and Reinvention

Since the case studies in this research are remakes of Korean television dramas by Thai producers, it was thought necessary to present a review of the background of the ongoing trend of South Korean popular culture and its influence on Thailand as well as the relationship between these two countries. Also, to understand more about media production and its reception in Thailand, an overview of television and related media in the country is provided. Subsequently, related theoretical frameworks are discussed.

Historical and social background
Korean pop culture across the globe

In July 2017 the world population was around 7.5 billion. At the same time, 'Gangnam Style', a song launched in 2012 by a famous South Korean singer 'Psy', on Youtube, reached 2.9 billion 'views' (Youtube, 2017). Taking one 'view' to be one person, this means that around 40 percent of the world's population has heard this Korean song once. Even though 'Gangnam Style' is no longer ranked as the most-watched video on Youtube, it is the first video that reached 1 billion and then 2 billion views in Youtube's website history (Billboard, 2017). This massive viewing might be perceived as clear evidence for the success of the South Korean music industry.

It is not only music, however; other aspects of Korean popular culture have also been flourishing and are nowadays recognised worldwide. The development of the South Korean entertainment and culture industry was initially generated for economic and political reasons. Since the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the South Korean government has supported its popular culture business, seeing it as an initiative for increasing the nation's brand power and the country's economic advancement (Kim, 2007).

Thanks to the liberalisation of Asian media in the 1990s, the 'Korean Wave' was afforded the opportunity to grow across Asia. The success of the South Korean television drama *What is Love All About?* in China in 1997 first demonstrated the international acceptance of Korean culture. In response to the high demand of Chinese audiences, the drama was re-shown on China's Central Television (CCTV) prime-time slot, and made the second highest ratings record in Chinese television history (Heo, 2002). Because of the popularity of Korean television drama in China, the Chinese press called this the 'Korean Wave' (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011).

Subsequently, a number of South Korean television dramas such as *Stairways to Heaven*, *Winter Sonata* and *Jewel in the Palace* were exported and became a big hit in many countries in Asia. The success of the export of South Korean TV programmes has led to the development of the South Korean business as a whole, including movies, pop music, video games, food, fashion and tourism (Jin, 2012).

The 'Korean Wave' has had an impact on its parent country in various ways, the most significant of which perhaps relates to a political issue. National images of South Korea were once considered negative because of the demilitarised zone and other political issues such as the North and South conflict. Now, however, such images are gradually becoming more positive. South Korea is seen as a trendy entertainer and innovative technology maker (Kim, 2007), and South Korean pop stars have contributed to enhancing Korea's overseas relations. For example, although South Korea and Vietnam were in conflict during the Vietnam War (1955-1975), this adversarial relationship does not appear to have had a lasting impact on cultural exchanges between the two countries some forty years later. Both the Korean actor Jang Dong-gun and the Korean actress Kim Nam-ju have become very popular in Vietnam, and are regarded as Vietnamese 'national stars' (Shim, 2006, p. 30).

Another instance of the widespread influence of the 'Korean Wave' is to be found in Japan with a romance drama called *Winter Sonata* in 2004. Kaori Hayashi and Eun-Jeung Lee (2007), in their study regarding the popularity of Korean melodrama in Japan, suggest that this drama has improved the image of South Korea. A large number of viewers have developed a new respect for the country through watching this television drama, even though the drama itself focuses mainly on the tragic love of two protagonists and provides little knowledge about the contemporary social and political conditions in South Korea. The drama also brought about the 'Yon-sama' *syndrome*: the social phenomenon that shows that Japanese fans, especially middle-class women in their late thirties and older, have a craze for the main actor Bae Yong-joon in the drama. This phenomenon truly changed Japanese audiences' opinions of Korean people. They now view Koreans as polite, kind, and sophisticated, which was not the case previously (Creighton, 2009, p. 35).

In his book chapter 'When the Korean Wave Meets Resident Koreans in Japan: Intersections of the Transnational, the Postcolonial and the Multicultural', Koichi Iwabuchi (2008) has further discussed the influence of the 'Korean Wave' in Japan. He suggests the rise of the 'Korean Wave' in the country have significantly improved the images of Koreans who live in Japan. In the past, Korean residents in Japan have been forced to live as a second-rate citizens and suffered from great discrimination and prejudice. Many of them have been compelled to live by naturalising into Japanese, hiding their ethnic backgrounds and adopting Japanese names in public. However, thanks to the popularity of Korean entertainment media across Japanese society, it has empowered Korean residents, particularly the younger generations, to be more confident to disclose themselves and live as Koreans in Japan.

The growth in the export of Korean media has not only improved the national image of South Korea but has also contributed to an increase in awareness and sales of Korean

consumer products, including food, fashion clothing, cosmetics and electrical appliances. For example, since South Korean TV dramas became the highest rated in Vietnam, most Vietnamese teenagers have been influenced by the Korean-style images they have seen on their screens (Kim, 2007). This influence has benefited *O Hui*, a Korean cosmetics company, which has become the market leader in Vietnam (Korean-Product, 2012).

The popularity of the Korean entertainment business has also boosted the Korean tourism industry and study of the Korean language. In 2004 South Korea welcomed around three million Asian visitors, mostly from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, and two-thirds of these people were persuaded to come to the country by watching Korean TV dramas (Kim, 2007). Places where memorable scenes were filmed have become 'must visit' tourist destinations (Chua, 2004, p. 213). Furthermore, the Korean language has become ever more popular among Asian fans. According to Doobo Shim (2006), Korean popular culture has generated audiences' interest in studying the Korean language, illustrated by the increasing number of Singaporeans learning Korean. From 2001 the number rose by 60 per cent in 2003 (ibid).

The 'Korean Wave' has successfully rolled out across Asia and is now moving to other parts of the world. Many international film distributors, such as Fox and Columbia, are interested in buying Korean movies and in obtaining the remaking rights (Frater, 2003). In the United States, Korean dramas are now broadcast to more than twenty-seven million households (Kim, 2007). South Korean popular culture is also gradually being accessed by South American and Middle Eastern countries, and this is expected to create a positive feeling generated towards South Korea in these regions (ibid).

There are four reasons that may explain the success of South Korean popular culture worldwide, particularly in Asian countries and with Asian consumers. The first relates to the common cultural connection, or what Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) calls 'cultural proximity' – 'the tendency of audiences to prefer local programmes and programmes imported from countries of a similar cultural makeup' (p.131). Unlike the entertainment media form distant countries, from the US in particular, which usually focus on urban lifestyles and the romance of young lovers, South Korean media, especially TV dramas, offer rich content rooted in the traditional values of family relationships and local culture. They also portray divergences between tradition and modernity that 'American popular culture cannot represent' (Iwabuchi, 2002, p. 120). Asian audiences have a tendency to share similar cultural experiences, and therefore these storylines are appealing and engaging to Asian audiences as a whole (Ko, 2004).

The second reason is the subtlety with which South Korea combines the similarities and differences between tradition and modernity. Although the media of South Korea represent related traditional values, they also act as a 'filter for Western values', making them more desirable to other Asians by portraying the metropolitan environment, the lives of young professionals and aestheticised lifestyles (Kim, 2007, p. 147) to increase the perception of South Korea as being the centre of 'Asian modernity' (Erni and Chua, 2005, p. 7). South Korean pop culture is recognised as being exotic and foreign to Asian audiences' eyes (Chua, 2004). Audiences consume it with pleasure for the 'familiar difference' (Iwabuchi, 2005, p. 21).

The third reason for the success of Korean popular culture relates to global power relations and political affairs. According to Youna Kim (2007) in her article 'The Rising East Asian "Wave": Korean Media Go Global', because Korea used to be occupied by China, Japan and the US, these powerful countries do not see the country as a threat. They seem to be more open to exchange popular culture with South Korea. At the

same time, many Asian countries welcome Korean popular culture as a reaction to 'the Western cultural invasion', and use it to seek 'the protection of Asian values' (Park, 2007, p. 276).

The fourth reason relates to the development of the Internet and social networking. According to 'The Korean Wave: A New Pop Culture Phenomenon' (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011), the Internet and social media have played a crucial role in spreading the 'Korean Wave'. South Korean pop culture has been accessed easily and quickly. In 2010 there were around 700 million worldwide YouTube website hits for Korean pop music videos. The Internet has also been used as a channel for showing fans' contributions and their affection for such activities as flash mobs and cover dances.

The popularity of Korean popular culture is now one of the most important examples of the decentralisation of global media flows. Its importance is reflected in the region-wide recognition of its significance, which shows that American and European media are no longer considered to be the main players of popular culture by Asian audiences (Kim, 2007).

Thai–Korean relations and the 'Korean Wave' phenomenon in Thailand

The key moment of the relationship between Thailand and South Korea began during the Korean War of 1950–53. Thai troops, as part of the United Nations (UN) and Western forces, were sent to defend South Korea from its 'Northern aggressors'. Since that time, Thailand and South Korea have been connected mostly through economic and diplomatic arenas (Ubonrat and Shin, 2007). The Thai government established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea in 1958. Since then, both countries have enhanced their relationship in many sectors, with, for example, exchanges in trade, investment, academic enterprises, culture and tourism, and the fiftieth anniversary of

their diplomatic relationship was celebrated in 2008. On this auspicious occasion, both countries held a number of events and activities throughout the year to commemorate and strengthen the foundations of closer cooperation (Royal Thai Embassy, 2012).

The beginning of the 'Korean Wave' in Thailand began in 1997 when a Korean drama entitled *Wish Upon The Stars* was shown on a free-to-air TV station and attracted the attention of Thai audiences. After that, many Korean TV dramas for example, *Autumn in my Heart*, *Winter Sonata*, *Full House*, *Coffee Prince* and *Jewel in the Palace* were imported and broadcasted on Thai national television. Due to the similar and shared storyline to existing Thai television dramas, they can reach Thai audience easily and become a big hit. Some of them were rerun and remake as the selected dramas to study in this paper. Some of them, *Jewel in the Palace*[1] for instance, even gained the highest rating, beating other Thai programmes shown during the same period. *Positioning* (2006), a Thai marketing magazine, has covered its special scoop with the story of this specific drama and suggested that *Jewel in the Palace* gets Thai audiences' attention because it provides the mutual sensation and conveys the familiar message of holding morality, gratitude, honesty and respect for the king as existing Thai drama has done.

The high reception of *Jewel in the Palace* in Thailand has influenced a great number of Thai audiences to learn more about South Korean culture, especially South Korean food. According to another article from *Manager Online* Newspaper (2006), on account of various cooking scenes presented in this specific period drama, the interest in South Korean food among Thai people has increased dramatically. At the same time Korean restaurant business in Thailand has flourished as never before. Many restaurants had

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[1] *Jewel in the Palace* is the first a Korean period drama to be presented in Thailand. It is based on a true story about a legendary woman, Jang Geum. Despite her being a low class girl in a male dominated society, Jang Geum overcame a series of incidents related to social discrimination and eventually landed up as a royal cook, while later becoming the royal physician, and eventually the first female physician in charge of the king. The drama was bought and presented in Thailand by Thai television Channel 3 in 2005.

to adjust themselves and align with the trends, which this article called 'Jang Geum Fever', by adding traditional Korean dishes Thai customers learned from the drama to their menu.

Apart from television dramas, 'K-pop' music is another trend that has penetrated the Thai market and received warm welcome from Thai audiences, particularly young Thai audiences. 'K-pop' in Thailand initially grew popular owing to two major Thai music companies: RS, which introduced 'Se7en' in 2003, and GMM Grammy, which introduced 'Rain' in 2004 (Ubonrat and Shin, 2007). Since then concerts and fan meetings of singers, either soloist or band, from South Korea are held in Thailand regularly. In 2018, there are more than 20 South Korean artists on the list to visit the country (*Prachachat Turakij*, 2018).

Figure 2.1: The first K-pop singers who were introduced to Thai fans. Se7ven (left) Rain (right)

Online games are another category of South Korean popular culture that caused a big stir in Thailand. Since 2002 *Ragnarok Online* [2] has been introduced to Thai gamers.

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[2] *Ragnarok Online* (RO) is a Korean massive multiplayer online role-playing game, created by Gravity Co. Ltd., based on *Ragnarok Comics* by Lee Myung-jin. It was first released in South Korea in August 2002 and has since been released in many countries around the world including Thailand. The game was so popular that some Thai players spent real money to buy the game's currency and items for improving their game characters' performance, leading to some reports of deceit among some game players. On account of its rapid popularity and with a concern for the rising addiction rates among young gamers, the government at that time imposed a night curfew on online gaming at Internet cafés and online game shops across the country (BBC News, 2003; *Marketeer*, 2016; *The Nation*, 2016).

Within a year after the game was launched, there were over 600,000 registered players in Thailand.

The South Korean movie trend in Thailand has also had an astonishing reception. In the early days, South Korean movies were less successful than music and television dramas. Most South Korean movies that were released in local cinemas during 2008 - 2013 in Thailand have gained very low revenues of only about 200,000 Baht (around £4,000), or even less, on account of the piracy issue and the audiences' preference (*Thairath*, 2013). The preference in Thailand is for romantic products from South Korea, and therefore a preference for passionate and 'dreamy' movies such as *Il Mare* (2000) and *My Sassy Girl* (2001).[3] Other movie genres, however, tend to be rejected or ignored (Fahthanee, 2013). However, in 2016, the South Korean blockbuster zombie movie entitled *Train to Busan* took over Thai audiences by gaining a nationwide revenue of over 70 million Baht (around £1,400,000) and has become the highest grossing Asian film of all time in the country. One reason for the success of *Train to Busan* in Thailand is its production quality. Many Thai movie critics from, for instance, *Voice TV* (2016), *Post Today* (2016) and *Prachachat Turakij* (2016) agree that the quality of the production is as good as, or even better than, Hollywood.

As Ubonrat Siriyuvasak (2008) argues, the main target group for Asian pop culture in Thailand is young middle-class people aged fourteen to twenty-three, with a family income range from 100,000 to 500,000 Baht a month (around £2,000 to £10,000). As

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[3] *Il Mare* and *My Sassy Girl* were South Korean romantic genre movies imported into Thailand in 2000 and 2001, respectively, and gained a high revenue of more than 10 million Baht each (around £200,000). They were, ranked among the top ten of the highest Korean movies' revenue record in Thailand until 2015.

'Il Mare', means 'the sea' in Italian, and is the name of the seaside house which is the setting of the story. The two protagonists live there two years apart in time, but are able to communicate through a mysterious mailbox. The film was remade by Warner Brothers in 2006 as *The Lake House*, starring Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock.

My Sassy Girl is about a love story between an ordinary college student and a self-centred young woman who always humiliates him. The film was remade in an American version with the same title and released in 2008, starring Jesse Bradford and Elisha Cuthbert, and was adapted as a Japanese drama, *Ryokiteki na Kanojo*, in 2008.

discussed in Chapter 1, most of the target group are students who are free from money concerns thanks to the support from their families. Some of them then spend their allowance on the leisure activities they are interested in, such as engaging with media content and pop culture. Additionally, these middle-class youngsters usually form social networks to share the same interests and experiences as themselves. Networks initially start with individuals' school or university classmates whom they know personally, and then expand to additional groups outside their own environment through the Internet.

The types of Korean popular culture that Thai audiences mostly consume are music and television dramas. They appreciate, and connect with, Asian common values, including family values and traditional emotive considerations, and discover the modern and stylish trends they wish to follow (Chutima, 2007; Noppadol, 2012). Moreover, young Thai fans are also attracted by the physical looks and talented performances of the Korean idols[4] (Woranuch, 2008).

Usually Thai audiences access Korean cultural products through two main channels: local and online media. From the late 1990s, Korean television dramas have been popular on terrestrial TV stations, but they are limited to certain time slots such as weekend mornings and mid-day. 'K-pop' music is also played randomly on FM radio in Bangkok; it is rare to find 'K-pop' music videos on mainstream channels. This limitation of access has created a strong desire for audiences to consume a continuous flow of the dramas and music. To get what they want, young consumers have to buy music and drama CDs, or download them from the Internet (Ubonrat, 2008).

As a result, the Internet has become the most effective communication tool for finding and exchanging information and products. There are a number of Korean-related fan

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[4] In Korea, the term 'idols' refers to K-pop singer. They reach idol status after training for years and successfully debuting either as a soloist or in a group (Tucci, 2017).

sites and social media groups in Thailand, such as kodhit.com, serie8-fc.com and kpop-th.com. Audiences share music and drama files, and also share updates about fan activities and concerts. Additionally, they express their feelings toward their admired superstars through these networks (Ubonrat, 2008; Woranuch, 2008).

Initially Thai online-based fans faced a difficulty on account of the differences in the two countries' languages as previously the Korean language had not been included in the Thai educational system. Consequently, many Thai fans decided to take private Korean language courses so that they could understand and really appreciate Korean pop culture. They have also applied this new knowledge they have learnt to translate music lyrics and drama scripts, and to create Thai subtitles that can be shared with others. Moreover, Thai fans also enjoy active participation in, for example, concerts, fan meetings, cover dances and flash mobs. They regard such activities as a way of showing how they support their admired idols and actors, and it is how they unite their own group (Ubonrat, 2008).

To illustrate this, I present two pictures from the concert of a group of South Korean idols named 'EXO' which was held in Thailand in March 2018. This is their fourth concert in Thailand after the previous ones in 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively. The tickets for their concerts in Thailand are always sold out quickly. For the fourth concert, more than 30,000 tickets were all gone within five minutes (*Thairath*, 2018; *Sudsapda*, 2018).

Figure 2.2: The concert of a South Korean band, 'EXO', in Thailand in March 2018

Figure 2.3: Thai fans show their support for the 'EXO' group at the concert

From the first official introduction of South Korean pop culture into Thailand with a South Korean television drama in 1997 to the present time (2018), the trend of pop culture emanating from South Korea in Thailand still continues and has had a great impact on Thai society at various different levels, from Thai people's attitudes and behaviours to the country's economics, and to the basic education system. As mentioned earlier, the Korean language was formerly not yet part of the Thai academic

system; however, with the demand for engaging with Korean culture and for Thai audiences to learn the Korean language noticeably increasing, the Korean language has now become a major subject of academic study for Thai high school and undergraduate degree students, widespread across the country. The Korean language was officially included in the Thai high school curriculum in 2008 at Benjamarachutit Pattani School (Parit, 2012). From only one school in 2008, the number of schools offering the Korean language as part of the school curriculum has risen to 107 schools nationwide in 2017. Moreover, in 2018, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand's oldest higher education institute, will open a Korean language major for undergraduate students, and has planned to launch its own textbook tailored for Thai learners studying Korean in the same year (KBS World, 2017).

With regard to consumer behaviour, it is clear that Korean pop culture has a significant influence on Thai people today (2018), especially on younger generations. In a study relating to the influence of Korean pop culture on Thai teenagers by Chutima Chunhakan (2007), the author interviewed a group of eight Thai teenagers and collected questionnaires from 400 young Thais living in Bangkok and the city's perimeter area, aged between fifteen to twenty-five, who watched Korean dramas and movies, and listened to South Korean pop music, to show that there are links between the young people's South Korean popular culture consumption and their daily lifestyles. South Korean-related products such as tourism, food, fashion, cosmetics, plastic surgery and electronic devices are also very popular among this Thai age group.

An article from *The Bridges Magazine* (2015) shows the results of the South Korean influence on the travelling preference of Thai people by detailing the number of tourists from Thailand travelling to South Korea, which has considerably increased from around 90,000 tourists in 2000 to almost 400,000 tourists in 2012. According to recent statistics of the Korea Tourism Organisation (2017), throughout 2016 the number of

visitors from Thailand to South Korea reached 470,107 and Thailand ranks seventh out of all nations[5] after China, Japan, the US, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Philippines for tourism. The Kasikorn Research Center (2010) has shown that as a result of the boom of the 'Korean Wave' in Thailand, young Thai middle-class people want to groom themselves in the same style as their admired Korean idols. The following pictures demonstrate how Thai teenagers emulate the way one specific Korean idol dresses himself up.

Figure 2.4: Fashion styles of G-Dragon, one of the most famous Korean idols (left) and the imitated styles by Thai fans (right).

Pictures on the left are a famous South Korean superstar 'Kwon Ji Yong', well known by his stage name 'G-Dragon'. He is a singer, a song writer and a fashion icon for his

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[5] Although Hong Kong is now part of mainland China, it is listed as a country in these statistics.

fans across the world. He is also on the list of a digital magazine HYPEBEAST's most 100 influential people around the world in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (Hypebeast, 2017). With his unique character and fashion style, he has inspired his fans and followers worldwide, including in Thailand, to be like him.

In consequence of Korean stars' influence, there has been an enormous growth in imports of South Korean fashion clothes and cosmetics to Thailand. Between 2009 and 2010, for instance, the percentage of the value of imported fashion clothes and cosmetics items from South Korea dramatically rose by 40.8 and 110.6 per cent, respectively (The Kasikorn Research Center, 2010).

In response to the great commitment to Korean pop culture in Thailand, many Thai entertainment companies have seized the opportunity to produce and sell Korean-related products to Thai audiences. One company, SHOW DC Corp, has invested 9,500 million Thai Baht (around £220 million) in a South Korean-themed retail and entertainment mega-complex mall called 'Show DC' in Bangkok in 2017, targeting both Thai fans of Korean pop culture and foreign visitors. The mall has stores with Korean clothing, cosmetics and restaurants. It also has statues and palm prints of Korean stars, and plans to bring South Korean performers to perform in its concert venue (*Reuters*, 2017).

As television drama is the genre that usually gains the highest viewing ratings in television in Thailand (Nielsen Television Audience Measurement, 2013), with the high competitive atmosphere, some television producers have also added Korean characters or Korean-related content to their productions to attract Thai audiences. For example, the leading male character of a drama called *Six Senses Part 2*, shown on Channel 3 in 2013, is narrated by a half Thai–half Korean singer from South Korea called Park Jun Jee (Thai TV Channel 3, 2013). Also, two dramas from Channel 7

entitled 'นางฟ้ามาเฟีย' (*nang-fa mafia*) (2012) and 'มายาสีมุก' (*maya si-muk*) (2013) were shot in several locations in South Korea (Thai TV Channel 7, 2013). In 2010 there was a joint Thai-Korean drama called *Autumn Destiny*, starring both Thai and Korean actors that was shown on Channel 9 in Thailand (*Positioning*, 2010). Furthermore, the entertainment company True Visions bought the rights to remake several South Korean dramas, such as *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* in 2012, *Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House* in 2013 (Truevisions, 2013).

It is not only television producers of Thai dramas that adopt co-production strategies; the Thai movie industry has also united with South Korean production teams with the aim of developing the quality of production and increasing the potential for export. The first such movie to be made was an action film called *The Kick* in 2011, jointly produced by CJ Entertainment from South Korea and Sahamongkol Film International from Thailand (*Thairath*, 2011).

Following the way television drama has developed, several Thai movies have combined Korean-related content to attract their target audiences. The most successful movie using this approach is *Hello Stranger*, or กวน มึน โฮ (*guan muen ho*) in Thai, a romantic comedy about two strangers falling in love in South Korea. The overall revenue for this film reached 125 million Baht (around £2.2 million), the highest revenue recorded for a Thai movie in 2010 (*Oknation*, 2011).

The contemporary music industry in Thailand is also influenced by Korean pop culture. Two major music companies, GMM Grammy and RS, are the market leaders of this genre, and they aggressively compete against one another. Korean pop music has become the 'desirable cultural product' for both of them, and they fight for the largest share in the music market (Ubonrat and Shin, 2007, p.115). GMM Grammy manages to import Korean pop music in Thailand and holds the distribution rights. Examples of

Korean artists under the care of GMM Grammy are '2PM', 'BIG BANG', 'Girl's Generation', 'Wonder Girl', 'Super Junior', and 'SHINee' (GMM Grammy International, 2014). RS focuses more on recruiting new singers and group singers, and launches music in Thai-Korean fusion style. The company even introduced a new sub-record label 'Kamikaze' in 2007 so that it could control this particular sector of the business (Kamikaze, 2017).

Nonetheless, similar to every coin, 'Korean Wave', too, has two sides. Many scholars, journalists and government representatives have investigated the reasons for the emergence of Korean popular culture and its importance throughout Asia, and have considered the effect of its potential influence on the future of the region (Lee, 2011). In Thailand, concerns over the cultural invasion of the 'Korean Wave' have been shown in a number of academic research papers, government campaigns, news coverage and online web pages. In a Master's degree thesis entitled พฤติกรรมความคลั่งไคล้ศิลปิน นักร้องเกาหลีของวัยรุ่นไทย Korean Singers Maniac (*sic*) Among Thai Teenagers, Woranuch Tantiwititpong (2008) used a questionnaire survey with 400 young Bangkok residents aged fifteen to twenty-five and interviewed twenty-five teenagers who were infatuated with Korean singers to find out the different facets of Thai teens' obsession with Korean singers, including the behaviour of these teens, the resulting problems on account of their behaviour, and their attitudes toward their Korean idols. Her findings show that Korean pop culture has generated negative behaviour in Thai teenagers. According to Woranuch, the craze for South Korean teen idols is a contributory factor in leading young Thai fans to develop habits such as wasting their time and money on products and activities related to their idols, telling lies, borrowing money and physically following these singers.

Representatives from government bodies have also acknowledged that what they have seen are problems of the overseas influence on the young Thai generation. As claimed

in a seminar about the change in Thai culture and education by the Office of the Educational Council of Thailand in 2002, an influx of foreign culture through various media channels has brought about cultural domination, cultural variation and conflict between young and old generations. This has also led to social problems and a perceived deterioration of morality. To protect and preserve Thai culture against what they see as a threat, many organisations have initiated cultural related campaigns and activities. The Ministry of Culture of Thailand, for instance, has introduced a campaign called กระทรวงวัฒนธรรมนำค่านิยมความเป็นไทยสู่ใจประชาชน (The Ministry of Culture brings 'Thainess' value to the heart of the Thai People) to instil a sense of nationalism in young Thais and to encourage them to appreciate national Thai attributes as well as proudly present Thai culture internationally (*Manager Online*, 2015).

Moreover, there is a concern about the use of the Thai language. Since the 'Korean Wave' has encouraged many Thais to study the Korean language, The Royal Institute of Thailand is very concerned that Thai people may prefer, and give priority to, this foreign language, and that this may create a lack of ability in the use of the native tongue (*Thairath*, 2010). A social media group called Anti 'K-Pop' Club is a Thai fan club group that is opposed to Korean singers; it strongly disagrees with the mix of Thai and Korean languages being spoken, and culture being enacted, in the lifestyles of young Thais (*Isranews*, 2013).

Additionally, it is argued that the 'Korean Wave' is not a bilateral relationship in terms of cultural exchange (Lee, 2011). The one-way influx of Korean pop culture through today's 'Korean Wave' reinforces an imbalance in the cultural industry in Thailand and in the Asian region as a whole with regard to Korean culture. Since each country in Asia has a strong sense of national identity with dissimilar traditions and culture, some academics such as Mary J. Ainslie, Sarah Domingo Lipura and Joanne B.Y. Lim are concerned that South Korean values may lessen other countries' national identity. In

their article 'Understanding the Hallyu Backlash in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Consumers in Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines' (2017), they have also claimed that Asian consumers become conscious about the 'Korean Wave' negative influence on their own culture, creating a sense of threat and intimidation which makes them to some extent uncomfortable. (p.76).

More discussion on the influence on and the importance of national and regional identities, however, will be provided later in the chapter on the topic of the theoretical framework. Before reaching that part, the subject of television and Thai television is presented for a better understanding of the nature of television medium that the researcher regards as one of the main foci of the study, and as the main venue for cross-cultural negotiation and presentation.

Television and Thai television

Although there is an increasing in audiences numbers of those who prefer consuming media content online, and as discussed earlier that online channels are regarded as the main option for Thai audiences to engage with pop culture from South Korea, a survey from Global Web Index (2017) concerning digital and traditional media consumption of internet users aged between 16 and 64 from 34 countries worldwide, including Thailand, reveals that linear television remains the most important route for internet users looking for TV content. With a variety of content from local, international and cross-national productions available on Thai television nowadays, I consider television as an excellent site for the study of national and transnational cultural presentation, negotiation and reception.

To examine cultural hybridity seen on Thai television, I here provide a brief account of television studies and the current television and related media situation in Thailand. Also, since television studies up until now have mostly been discussed by Western

scholars and in Western contexts, it is interesting to review the potential differences of television contexts in different regions, especially in a non-western country such as Thailand.

Television studies

> Watching television and discussing television and reading about television takes place on an hourly basis: the result of focused or unfocused, conscious or unconscious attention. Television accompanies us as we wake up, as we breakfast, we have our tea and as we drink in bars. It comforts us when we are alone. It helps us sleep. It gives us pleasure, it bores us and sometimes it challenges us. It provides us with opportunities to be both social and solitary. Although, of course, it was not always so, and although we have had to learn how to incorporate the medium into our lives. … We take television for granted in a way similar to how we take everyday life for granted (Silverstone, 1994, p. 3).

According to a statement made by the media sociologist Roger Silverstone above, whether or not we are aware of it, television is part of our everyday life. To Silverstone, television is not just an object, but could contribute to, and influence, its audience at different levels as individuals, and as social and cultural entities.

In his book *Television and Everyday Life,* Silverstone (1994), refers to television as a 'domestic medium' that is received and discussed at home. Nonetheless with 'its capacity to allow [the viewer] to see (-vision) at a distance (tele-)' (Allen and Hill, 2004, p. 105), television is able to bring the world beyond the barrier of the house into the interior, as well as create the possibility for the construction of the 'plurality of imagined worlds' (Buonanno, 2008, p. 104). Peter Larsen (1999) gives an example of this televisual experience by citing the answer of a Norwegian viewer who was interviewed about the television programme she had watched during the previous evening for research on cable television: 'I went to Sweden'. Larson comments, 'she is referring to what she did with the remote control, but she actually describes a movement in space … by her action she moved to another location' (p. 113). Watching television, then, is an experience of dislocation between localised contexts of the place where the

television is watched and the distant contexts where events seen on the screen are taking place, as well as a construction of social knowledge and social imagery (Barker, 1999; Buonanno, 2008).

However, as I mentioned earlier, television may be viewed in somewhat dissimilar ways in different cultures. While the Western scholar defines television as a domestic or a private medium, television in Thailand could be said to be consumed publicly. In the Thai context, it is common to see Thai people watch television together and share their views on the programmes they watch in a public space such as local markets and restaurants. Therefore, instead of constructing or interpreting social knowledge from watching television privately or individually, Thai audiences possibly establish and experience them within their groups.

Whether watching separately or together, spatial experience is not the only feature television can deliver; television also functions as a 'time machine' offering tenseless or an illusion of time experience to its audiences. Even though television holds a sense of 'nowness' or 'liveness' as it was originally when the action or place was being filmed, and is still sometimes broadcast live (Feuer, 1983; Heath and Skirrow, 1997), the recorded processes, contents and production of contemporary television may reveal the present event, rewind the past and demonstrate the future (Marriott, 2007). Steve Anderson, who wrote the article 'Loafing in the Garden of Knowledge: History TV and Popular Memory' (2000), even assumes that as a result of endless repetition on screen, television might become an ideal facilitator of audiences' collective memories.

This kind of television influence on its audiences is found in Thai society. It is said that television takes part in the formation of contemporary Thai audiences' attitudes, perceptions and behaviour. The Thai media scholar Pong Wisetsang (2010) illustrates this point by stating that many Thai audiences have received, learned and imitated

Western lifestyles through watching television programmes. He also suggests that television has triggered consumerism and materialism in Thailand. One example of Pong Wisetsang's argument is seen back in the 1970s – 1980s when the American television series '*Charlie's Angles*' was presented through Thai Television Channel 3. Owing to such attractive leading characters, the series became a big hit in Thailand. A number of Thai women at that time wanted to have the same curly hairstyle as one of the main actresses, Farrah Fawcett (see figure 2.5). The hairstyle was so popular among Thai women that it became a 'compulsory' hairstyle (ทรงบังคับ – *song bang-khap*) for many Thai beauty pageant contestants (Phaplongyuk, 2014), including Phonthip Nakhirankanok, a Thai former beauty queen who won the title Miss Universe 1988 (see figure 2.6). Thai people have called this hairstyle 'Farrah' after the famous *Charlie's Angels'* actress. Also, 'Farrah' has become a Thai generic term for this kind of hairstyle up till now.

Figure 2.5: Farrah Fawcett, an actress from the American series Charlie's Angels

Figure 2.6: Phonthip Nakhirankanok, a Thai former beauty queen and Miss Universe 1988 (left), and a group of Thai former beauty pageant contestants with their 'Farrah' hairstyles (right)

With the already mentioned capacity for conveying motion, space and time to a massive audience, together with the examples of the influence of television on Thai audiences, television is considered to be a powerful tool of communication. In the era of globalisation, it is claimed that television is a major source of global cultural capital (Barker, 1999). Marshall McLuhan, an early theorist who made the connection between media and globalisation, argued that communication technology would transform the world we live in so that it would become a 'global village', and that 'the electronic age' has bound 'the entire human family into a single global tribe' (McLuhan, 1962, p. 8).

Although later televisual scholars, such as John Fiske, David Morley and Kevin Robins may not state directly that television is the key to cultural globalisation, they do not deny that there is a connection between television and cultural identity formation. In his work *Television Culture* (2001), Fiske sees television as part of a social dynamic by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction, while David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995) suggest that television plays a crucial role in the construction of shared knowledge and identity.

As an influential medium that mediates to massive audiences, it is debatable as to whether television brings about a dominant culture and ideology. However, the definition of television as a dominant medium is contested by the notion of audience reception, and a notion of polysemy, that is, that the text can be read in many different ways.

> Television is not quite a do-it-yourself meaning kit, but neither is it a box of ready-made meanings for sale. Although it works within cultural determinations, it also offers freedoms and the power to evade, modify, or challenge these limitations and controls. All texts are polysemic but polysemy is absolutely central to television's textuality (Fiske, 1989, p. 59).

Cultural adoption always comprises some form of interpretation and adaptation, and consumption comes with the process of alteration and customisation. When local audiences receive the dominant cultures, they usually screen and integrate them with their own historical elements (Martin-Barbero, 1993). Also, if there is a locally produced programme available, it tends to be the first choice of the local audiences (Straubhaar, 1991).

Whether the medium of television leads to cultural homogeny or heterogeneity, it is believed to be able to reveal society's happenings and reality, or what John Fiske (2001) calls 'television realism'. Fiske uses metaphors describing television either as 'a transparent window on the world' or as 'a mirror reflecting our own reality back to us' (p. 21). Interestingly, these metaphors can cover every genre of television, including television dramas, which are usually based on fictional stories. Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis (2005) argue that although drama is a distinct category like sport or news, because of the hybrid character of television there is the constant appearance of new hybrid genres and sub-genres, such as 'drama-documentary', 'comedy-drama' and 'the made-for-TV' film. Such forms frequently blur the boundaries of fact and fiction, as well as the serious and popular. An explicit example of this is the longest-running British drama series *Coronation Street* that started in 1960 and is still running today, and it

may be said that the drama has to some extent portrayed the changes and development of British culture and society (Caughie, 2000).

Although Thai television dramas do not provide such variety sub-genres as Thornham and Purvis (2005) suggest, and do not have the long-running drama series such as *Coronation Street* available, Thai television dramas are still considered to be a tool to present the Thai image and preserve Thai culture. Thus to investigate happenings and changes in society, television studies is regarded as one of the fruitful options for many media scholars, including myself. In this research in particular, the metaphors of television as a transparent window and as a reflecting mirror are central considerations. They draw out key questions as to whether Thai television works as a transparent window, showing and bringing foreign cultural influences to Thai society, or as a mirror, reflecting individuals' experiences and actual happenings in society. In the Thai context, however, not all truths may be totally revealed through television, especially with regard to the genre of soap drama, as issues such as political concerns have usually been avoided up to the present time. This is one of the limitations that have to be borne in mind while working on this project, and will be discussed further under the heading 'Broadcasting censorship in Thailand'.

Thai television and related media

In Thailand, mainstream media comprises television, radio and newspapers. These three media can be divided into two categories, consistent in the way they operate and in their management. Almost all the broadcasting media are under the control of government agencies. Most print media, however, are privately owned, and have more independence in expressing and publishing content (Government Public Relations Department, cited in Ubonrat, 1999, p. 149).

Of the media mentioned, television is the most accessed. Almost 80 per cent of Thai people are estimated to rely on television as their primary source of news and entertainment (Nielsen Television Audience Measurement, 2013). Television in Thailand was first introduced during the former Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram's government in 1955 as a means of supporting his political power. At that time he intended to employ television as a tool to fight against the subversive press and halt the expansion of communism. In the following decades, however, the role of television dramatically changed from its original political purpose to become a source of entertainment and leisure, with the launch of the colour telecast system in 1969 and full-time colour transmissions in 1975. State networks began to provide privileged franchises to private enterprises, which led to an increase in competition in the broadcasting business (Thitinan, 2007).

In the late 2000s there were six free terrestrial television channels available: 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and Thai PBS, with five of these channels numbered after the signal distribution channel. The owners of these channels can be divided into four categories, comprising government agencies, the Royal Thai army, state enterprise and private enterprise.

From May 2014, however, digital television became fully operational within the Thai broadcasting industry, which means that now (2017) Thai audiences are able to view programmes on up to twenty-six channels, which comprise four public channels, fourteen variety channels, six news channels and two children's channels (The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, 2017). Except for two former terrestrial television channels 11 and Thai PBS, the licensed owners of the new digital channels are obtained from an auction run by The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission in 2013 with the total auction value of 50,862 million baht (around 1,100 million GBP) (*Manager Online*, 2013).

These television investors spend a great deal of money in this business, expecting the return on investment from commercials and airtime rental. Nonetheless the strongest players still lie in the group of previous terrestrial channel owners, Channel 7 and Channel 3, which held the position of the highest and second highest nationwide rating station, respectively. In 2016, Channel 7 gained not only the highest rating, but also the highest overall revenue of 2,576 million baht (around 50 million GBP) (*Thairath*, 2017; *Thansettakij*, 2017).

Many new players are still struggling with the intense competition to draw audiences' attention to gain more ratings and attract more sponsorship, and thanks to the competition a lot of new television programmes, both domestic and imported productions, have been introduced to Thai audiences.

According to Supinya Klangnarong, a former board member of the office of The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission of Thailand, in her article การร่วมผลิตรายการโทรทัศน์ ระหว่างประเทศไทย – เกาหลี (The Television Co-Production between Thailand and South Korea) (2016), although there is a law forbidding foreigners to own Thai television stations (only up to 25 per cent of a foreign stakeholder is allowed), there is no quota or limit to importing foreign content or showing content from transnational co-productions on Thai television. The percentage of imported programmes shown on each channel varies from around 6 to 60 per cent. The only obligation relating to foreign content mentioned is that the content must be presented dubbed in the Thai language, or with the option of it being bilingual.

Thai authorities may not be strict about the proportion of local or foreign content shown on Thai television, but they are concerned about the ratio of programme genres, especially with regard to news and entertainment programmes. For instance, news-focused channels must present at least 50 per cent of the overall programme available

with news and knowledge programmes, while the allocation of news programmes on variety channels has to be a minimum of 25 per cent.

Apart from free digital television channels, there are also paid cable and satellite television systems available as options for Thai audiences, with the main providers of satellite television services in Thailand being True Visions, CTH and GMMZ (*Marketingoops*, 2014). As part of the television industry, cable and satellite stations also need to adjust and develop to survive in the business. For example, True Visions, a satellite television station, has launched a new channel called Asian Series Channel which offers a Thai-dubbed series of programmes from South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as Thai remakes of Asian television series to attract a new target group of audiences (Truevisiongroup, 2015).

In addition to the media mentioned above, the Internet, including social networks, has become popular among the middle classes and teen users in Thailand. In 2016, in a survey of sixty-eight Thais, forty-one were social media users. The most commonly used social media is Facebook, which accounts for 92.1 per cent of all Thai social media users (*Marketingoops*, 2016). On account of the popularity in accessing the Internet, a link has been found between television viewers and online users. Hit television programmes, especially dramas, have been widely discussed on social networks, either during the time they are shown or after the programmes have ended. Social network users have become important peer viewers and/or opinion leaders. Positive comments can encourage large audiences. For example, the television drama called 'สามีตีตรา' (*sami ti tra*) that was shown on Thai television Channel 3 on February 2014 became a big hit topic of discussion online from the first day it was launched. It ranked fifth and first on the trend lists for discussion on global twitter and Thai-based twitter, respectively (*Thairath*, 2014a). It also ranked as the most popular search in the category of Thai television drama on the Google website in 2014 (*Post Today*, 2014).

Owing to the massive interest shown by Thai audiences, the drama made the record highest rating of Channel 3 in 2014. Because of the significant influence of online audiences on audience ratings, most television programmes nowadays are also available online as viewing options for their audiences.

Thai television drama

Among various types of television programme available in Thailand, soap opera drama is the most popular genre for Thai audiences, and usually gains the highest viewing ratings (Nielsen Television Audience Measurement, 2013). Television drama are known in Thai as ละคร (*lakhon*), which is short for ละครโทรทัศน์ (*lakhon thorathat*) or ละครทีวี (*lakhon TV*). The term ละคร (*lakhon*) originally means theatre. In an earlier stage of Thai television, *lakhon* refers to the broadcasts of actual stage plays featuring Thai traditional verse and dance (Jaiser, 2017). This kind of programme was the first entertainment show presented on Thai television that started a couple months after the establishment of television network in Thailand in 1955 while the first Thai television drama with modern script and dialogue was presented afterwards in 1956 in a romantic theme, titled สุริยานีไม่ยอมแต่งงาน (*Suriyani mai yom taeng-ngan*) (Miss Suriyani does not want to get married) (Krisada, 1992).

At first, Thai television dramas were broadcast live and only lasted for one episode, with a length of thirty to forty minutes per episode. Video tape and pre-recorded systems were adopted later in 1961 (Naraporn, 2009). After that in the contemporary Thai TV era, from 1980s onwards, rather than adapting stage performances for television, Thai TV dramas were usually adapted from novels. A short narrative changed to a much longer process of storytelling, with an ongoing plot that unfolded in a sequential episode-by-episode format known as a television serial (Krisada, 1992).

In *Television Histories in Asia: Issues and Contexts*, edited by Jinna Tay and Graeme Turner (2015), Brett Farmer wrote a chapter entitled 'Battling Angels and Golden Orange Blossoms: Thai Television and/as the Popular Public Sphere'. Farmer pointed out the similarities and differences between Thai television serials and Euro-American TV soap operas. He maintains that both Thai and Western soaps focus mainly on subjective material drawn from the personal and domestic spheres of everyday life, such as relationships, generational conflicts, birth, marriage and death. Unlike a Western soap, however, which usually runs over a long period of time, sometimes for years or even decades, a Thai TV serial typically runs for about twelve to eighteen episodes and lasts for no more than a few months. One episode of a Thai TV soap opera drama serial is about two hours long, including commercials. Most serials comprise a complete story, although some popular dramas may be followed by re-runs, sequels or remakes.

As already mentioned, Thai TV soap opera drama serials usually bring high viewing ratings to their broadcast channels, and are therefore often placed in prime-time viewing slots, starting from 20.30 to 22.30 each day after the evening news programme (*Thansettakij*, 2016). At this time slot, two or three episodes of each drama may be shown in a week. The common pattern of Thai television station is to show three dramas a week. One drama is shown on Monday and Tuesday, while another two dramas are shown on Wednesday and Thursday, and Friday through to Sunday, respectively. The market for television drama in Thailand today is dominated by two leading channels: Channel 7 and Channel 3 (Farmer, 2015). Each channel focuses on a different target audience. While Channel 7 tends to produce programmes that serve the working class and provincial sectors, Channel 3 is aimed at the urban middle class and youth audiences. However, these distinctions have recently started to blur because Channel 3 has shifted its strategy and enhanced its content to suit a broader audience (*Positioning* 2008).

Although Thai television dramas nowadays offer various types of plot to viewers, for instance, action, thrillers, fantasy and sci-fi, the most familiar and popular plot for Thai producers and audiences is romance with a melodramatic storyline, especially one that relates to a love triangle and love between two people from different social classes and which includes 'slap-and-kiss' [6]. Somsuk Hinwiman (2015), a Thai professor majoring in Media and Communications, has argued that for Thai viewers, the emotional engagement is more important than the storyline. It does not matter how well the plot unfolds; as long as the drama contains some sensational features, it has the potential to win a mass audience. Agreeing with Somsuk, Nantaporn Waisayasuwan, a Thai columnist writing in the entertainment section of the Thai newspaper *Komchadleuk* (2012), has provided reasons why sensational plots have become national favourites. She says that since melodramatic plots usually narrate stories about the difficult life situations of the leading characters, this has caused Thai audiences to feel an emotional engagement with, and sympathy for, the characters in the dramas throughout all episodes of the dramas. Stories from recent episodes of famous dramas are also one of the main topics of conversation among various social groups, in both working and middle classes, in Thailand. For these viewers, television dramas are as fantasy worlds that most never experience. Watching these television soap opera dramas is a leisure activity and an escape from the viewers' dull, boring and routine everyday lives.

Despite the fact that melodramatic TV dramas are hugely popular, they are nevertheless labelled by Thai audiences as ละครน้ำเน่า (*lakhon nam-nao*). '*Nam-nao*' in Thai means 'stinky' or 'polluted water'. When combined with the word '*lakhon'* (television drama), this refers to Thai television dramas that are considered to be 'social pollution' (Farmer, 2015, p. 81). Brett Farmer claims that '[a]dultery, seduction,

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[6] 'Slap-and-kiss' is known in Thai as ตบจูบ ('*thop-chup'*). It is one of the most common plots of the Thai television industry. 'Slap-and-kiss' shows the main male protagonist being aggressive to the lead female character, mostly on account of misunderstandings. However, the story usually concludes with a reconciliation and happy ending.

revenge, corruption and … sexual and social transgression' (Farmer, 2015, p. 82) are subjects that have been portrayed, circulated and repeated in Thai television dramas for a long time. Even with being aware of the negative content of Thai television dramas, however, Thai audiences so enjoy the sensational engagement of the story that they ignore the negative features. The usual comment from Thai audiences relating to this issue is that 'it is just '*lakhon*' implying that audiences consume the drama just for fun. They understand that what is shown on screen is sometimes exaggerated, and that there is no need to take it seriously.

Nonetheless some groups of critics and audiences do not agree with the notion that 'it is just '*lakhon'.* It is suggested that the negative features portrayed on Thai television dramas, such as rape and 'slap and kiss', do conceivably influence Thai audiences, both consciously and unconsciously. According to an article in the *Daily Mail* on 16 October 2014, 'Thai Soaps Trigger Outcry Over Romanticizing Rape', it is suggested that Thai television dramas are responsible for a 'rape culture' or for 'romanticising rape'. Sexual violence is trivialised, thought to be a regular occurrence, and fantasised. The article discusses a famous scene from Thailand's award-winning soap opera in 2012, *The Power of Shadow*, known in Thai as แรงเงา (*raeng-ngao*), where the handsome protagonist gets drunk and rapes the leading actress. He later begs her forgiveness, and they live happily ever after. Such scenes, unfortunately, are to be found not only in this particular soap opera, but also in many existing Thai TV dramas. The depiction of rape has become a popular part of TV shows for young Thai audiences. In a poll of more than 2,000 young men and women, conducted by Thailand's Assumption University, more than 20 per cent of 13- to 19-year-olds said they loved to watch dramas that feature scenes of sexual abuse, and consider that sexual abuse is an acceptable act in society (Thai Health, 2010).

Figure 2.7: The sexual abuse scene from the drama 'The Power of Shadow' (2012)

Concerns relating to the presentation of inappropriate behaviour and violence in Thai television drama have been regularly and seriously discussed by Thai media, private organisations and state agencies. Many TV channels still offer programmes that include such content in the expectation of gaining further popularity and higher viewing ratings. A study from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation has revealed that of 113 Thai television dramas broadcast in 2008, more than 80 per cent contained scenes of violent activities, especially relating to sexual assault or gender-based violence (*Manager online*, 2009). As a result, an online petition was launched, asking those who created Thai soap operas to stop showing scenes that romanticised rape. Nitipan Wiprawit, one of the main petitioners, has said:

> I'm not saying soap operas are the cause of rape in Thailand. But I believe they are part of the problem. Soap operas send the message that rape is acceptable. This is something that needs to stop. (quoted in *Daily Mail*, 2014)

With the examples given, it cannot be denied that Thai television dramas have a significant influence on Thai society. Also, I am reminded of John Fiske's metaphor of television, where I argued earlier in the television studies section of this thesis that television can be seen either as 'a transparent window on the world' or as 'a mirror reflecting our own reality back to us' (Fiske, 2001, p. 21). The two parallel worlds, 'the real world' and 'the fictional world' on screen now seem to be very close and sometime become inseparable. Even though most Thai television dramas have been adapted from fiction, Thai viewers tend to consider that what is displayed on screen is possibly based on true stories, or is a mock-up of real life situations. One clear case of this was found in 2008 when a Thai television drama entitled *Battle of Angels* or สงครามนางฟ้า (*songkhram nang-fa*) was aired. The drama was an adaptation of an online novel about a love affair and scandal taking place between a group of Thai flight attendants and pilots. The portrayal of flight attendants as brainless beauties obsessed with men, together with the display of their vulgar and uninhibited behaviour, enraged real-life cabin crews of the national airline Thai Airways. They considered that the melodramatic and exaggerated drama might cause misunderstandings and bias against their careers, as well as damaging 'the professional image and dignity' of Thai flight attendants. There was a demand made by the flight attendants' union to the broadcast channel to re-edit, suspend, or take the serial drama off the air for good (Kong, 2008; *Nation*, 2008). After discussion with all involved parties, the broadcast station and the production company agreed to revise the scripts and re-shoot the scenes, for example, by cutting out scenes showing the inappropriate behaviour of the flight attendants and pilots, especially when wearing their uniforms, to maintain a good image of their careers and stop the protests.

Figure 2.8: Example scenes from the drama 'Battle of Angels' (2008) in Thai that triggered protests by real-life Thai cabin crews.

Issues of what should or should not be shown on television are constantly being debated by viewers, production companies, broadcasting stations and state authorities. Nowadays each Thai broadcasting station by law has the right to consider and control its content. Nevertheless, questions relating to these subjective decisions and intervention on behalf of both private and public agencies to attempt to control the content of television broadcasting companies are constantly broached. To understand more about Thai media controls and censorship, discussion of this topic will be provided in the following section of the chapter, 'Broadcasting Censorship in Thailand'.

Although the power of Thai Television in its communication of drama seems to trigger many negative responses, the influence of Thai television dramas also has a positive aspect. The story of the Thai teen series *Hormones 3* in 2015 can be seen as solid proof of this. This particular television drama tells the story of a group of high-school students and features controversial issues such as teenage sex, pregnancy, homosexuality and school violence. In one episode it was revealed that one of the leading characters had HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), and viewers were provided with the distinction between HIV and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). No Thai TV drama had ever done this previously; HIV and AIDS patients shown in Thai dramas had been portrayed as having the same disease. Both HIV and AIDS are thought to be disgusting diseases in Thailand and in Thai television dramas

have been regarded as punishment for the villains portrayed in the dramas, who would contract the diseases and die miserably. Unlike other Thai dramas, however, *Hormones 3* highlighted the point that although HIV and AIDS are related, as the symptoms of the latter are caused by the HIV virus, not every patient with HIV develops the AIDS symptoms. Hormones 3 showed that with proper care and medication, people with HIV and AIDS can live a normal life and are able to fall in love, and, most importantly, they are not necessarily villains to be hated. After this episode was broadcast, a number of Thai viewers went on the Internet to say that they had just learned that HIV and AIDS were different. An article entitled 'Hormones Series Breaks the Wall of Bias' from the Thai online magazine *True ID* (2016) suggested that just one episode of *Hormones 3* was able to correct a misunderstanding by Thai people regarding HIV and AIDS that had been in existence for a long time.

Figure 2.9: Actor from the series 'Hormones 3' (2015) who takes the role of a HIV patient.

Chularat Saengpassa (2015), a columnist from the *Nation* newspaper, suggested that most Thai TV dramas often fail to deliver practical knowledge about real-life situations. She proposed that since the impact of television dramas on TV audiences is immense, it is time for the dramas to help Thai society to advance, as they are sources of knowledge, with good references that can be learnt, and with suitable trends that can be followed.

The impact of Thai television dramas is not limited to Thailand only; viewers in other countries are now watching Thai television dramas that have now turned into one of the most remarkable export products of Thailand, and have become very popular among Asian fans, especially in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and even China. In his article relating to the reception of Thai television dramas in China, Sukhri Manchainimit (2011) writes about the fact that Thai Television dramas have been bought from Thai television producers to be shown on one of the national Chinese television channels, CCTV 8, as well as on local channels, namely Hunan and Anhui. Thai television dramas such as *Royal Blood* or เลือดขัตติยา (*lueat khatthiya*) in 2008 and *Battle of Angels* or สงครามนางฟ้า (*songkhram nang-fa*) in the same year, gained the highest rating of local channels and were ranked within the top ten on the national television channel. Sukhri further suggests three strong attributes of Thai TV dramas that may encourage Chinese viewers to watch them: the uncomplicated and familiar storyline, the attractive appearance of the Thai characters, and the fancy props and shooting sets.

The rise in popularity of Thai television dramas abroad has helped and benefited businesses in Thailand, especially the tourism industry. The Department of International Trade Promotion (2011) has indicated that Thai television dramas are one of the key factors that have enhanced the success of the Thai tourist industry, because they create an interest in, and favourable disposition towards, the country's identity with regard to food, fashion, lifestyle, as well as tourism. Moreover the local cultural elements that are shown in Thai television dramas may motivate people to travel to the country and influence people's travel decisions. The recent Thai period drama *Love Destiny* or บุพเพสันนิวาส (*bup-phe sanniwat*) in Thai about the love story of a couple who are fated to be together although they live in different lifetimes is a very good example. Its popularity, both locally and internationally, has very significantly boosted the number of visitors to the ancient province of Ayutthaya, the main location of the

drama. Before the drama was shown, the province welcomed around 3,000 visitors a day. Once the drama was aired, however, the number of visitors increased dramatically to more than 18,000 visitors a day (*Post Today*, 2018). Furthermore, this drama initiated a love of Thai culture and an interest in the nation's history. It has generated a trend for wearing traditional Thai costumes in daily life and an appetite for traditional Thai dishes (*Post Today*, 2018).

Figure 2.10: Picture from the Thai drama 'Love Destiny' (2018)

Figure: 2.11: Examples of the influence of the Thai drama 'Love Destiny' (2018) on Thai audiences' clothing and food preferences.

It is suggested that Thai television drama today can provide much more than just entertainment to its audiences. On the one hand it can be both a positive and negative role model and a didactic tool for Thailand's citizens. On the other hand, it can be a representative for the country. Following in the footsteps of the 'Korean Wave',

Thailand has started to create its own 'wave' by using its entertainment products, specifically television dramas, to introduce the country to other countries. Further discussion about the influence of Thai television dramas on local and international audiences is provided in Chapter 5: Transcultural Consumption, and suggestions for future Thai television dramas are presented in Chapter 6: Conclusion.

Broadcasting Censorship in Thailand

As mentioned at the beginning of the Thai television section of this chapter, television in Thailand is controlled by Thai government bodies. There are strict regulations and censorship controls that operate both before and during the broadcasts of both local and imported programmes. Scenes displaying nudity, sexual contact, consumption of alcohol, smoking, drug use and weapons pointed at people are usually censored by blurring out the areas under consideration (Kislenko, 2004). Thai government authorities not only control what to present but also put pressure on television stations and television producers to present particular subjects such as Thai historical and cultural knowledge. It may be said that with these authorities Thai censorship has a crucial role in setting a limit on what is, and what is not, culturally acceptable, thus shaping Thai audiences' perceptions as well as guiding Thai television producers in the direction they should be working.

The degree of television broadcasting censorship in Thailand varies, however, and depends on different controls over each television organisation over different periods of time. According to a study, การกำกับดูแลเนื้อหาของสื่อวิทยุและโทรทัศน์ในประเทศไทย (*The Content Control of Radio and Television in Thailand*), by Thai media scholars Pirongrong Ramasoota and Sasithon Yuwakoson (2003), the first phase of Thai broadcasting censorship history may refer back to between the first introduction of television into the country in 1955 and the establishment of the first official censorship body in Thailand in 1975. Pirongrong and Sasithon call this period of time 'ยุค

กระบอกเสียงของรัฐ' ('the state mouthpiece era'). Throughout these twenty years most television programmes showed only entertainment and governmental policy related content.

After the pro-democracy uprising on 14 October 1973, the Thai government run by M. R. Kukrit Pramoj reformed the broadcasting system of the country and inaugurated the first official media control unit called คณะกรรมการการบริหารวิทยุกระจายเสียง และวิทยุโทรทัศน์ (Radio and Television Broadcasting Committee) in 1975. The main responsibility of this organisation was to give permission for radio and television stations to be established, and to check the proposed programme content before broadcasting. There was also a sub-committee that was in charge of the censorship of video advertisements, and film and television drama in particular. Critiques relating to politics or society on these types of communication were prohibited. On 6 October 1976, the date of a harsh crackdown on demonstrators in Bangkok, censorship of the media in Thailand became greater. The broadcasting control committee forced radio and television operators to include more patriotic content in their programmes, and refused to allow any content that showed support for communism (Pirongrong and Sasithon, 2003).

The Radio and Television Broadcasting Committee operated for almost two decades before it was terminated and replaced with a new government body, คณะกรรมการกิจการวิทยุกระจายเสียงและวิทยุโทรทัศน์แห่งชาติ (the National Broadcasting Commission) in 1992 as a result of the 'Black May' incident, demonstrations against the government that had taken place that year. During this incident news reporting in the country was interfered with and distorted. A private mass communication group headed by an academic then requested reformation of the media to provide freedom for news reporting and public opinion exposure from the new government. Consideration of content before broadcasting was discontinued by the National Broadcasting

Commission, with pre-censorship responsibility now belonging to each radio and television station. The National Broadcasting Commission would now only monitor programmes randomly after they were broadcast (ibid).

Although by law each radio and television station is currently responsible for its own presentation of content, the National Broadcasting Commission in the role of an inspector has provided each television station แนวทางการจัดระดับความเหมาะสมของรายการโทรทัศน์ or the television content classification guideline for scheduling the suitable programmes for the audiences in different age ranges (The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, 2013). It is discussed that this guideline could suggest Thai viewers, especially the parents, to select the proper television programmes for themselves and for the young audiences. The main criteria to categorise the programme contents are involving the presentation of violence and vulgar behaviours, the portrayal of sexuality whether sexual abuse or sexual discrimination, and the inappropriate application and misuse of Thai language. The programmes with this content are suggested to be restricted and to be presented at a certain time. On the other hand, programmes containing educational, ethical, and practical contents are recommended for presentation throughout the day (ibid).

The National Broadcasting Commission proposes six types of television programmes. Details of each type are presented in the following table.

Table 2.1

Thai television content classification

Rating Sign	Description
	Programmes intended for pre-schoolers, aged between 3 and 5 years old
	Programmes intented for children, aged between 6 and 12 years old
	Programmes suitable for all ages
	Programmes recommended for viewing by persons aged 13 years or over. The viewers with the age under 13 may require parental supervision.
	Programmes recommended for viewing by persons aged 18 years or over. The viewers with the age under 18 may require parental supervision.
	Programmes suitable for adult audiences only

Source: The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (2013)

The programmes which contain suitable content for pre-schoolers and children are proposed to be on-air at least 60 minutes per day everyday from 16.00 – 18.00, and from 07.00 – 09.00 on the weekend. Programmes for viewers with the age of 13 and over are prohibited for broadcast until 20.30 each day, while programmes for viewers aged 18 and over and programmes for adult viewers are limited to be shown only after 22.00 and 24.00, respectively (The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission, 2013).

In addition to considering the content evaluation systems, each television operator has to be aware that the content exposed through Thai media must not endanger national security and should conform to given standards of morality (Pirongrong, 2015). Furthermore, criticism of the Thai monarchy is not allowed. According to the Penal Code of Thailand and its Amendments in 2017, the monarchy is a key institution protected in Thai law by Article 112 of the Penal Code, which states that, 'whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, the Queen, the Heir-apparent or Regent shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years' (Nakorn, 2017). The Thai media, therefore, avoids presenting anything that might be interpreted as criticism of the monarchy and risk being charged with lèse-majesté.

With all the guidelines and suggestions by state bodies, there is a controversial issue as to whether or not the content of television stations is interfered with covertly. This issue was in the spotlight in 2013 when a television drama on Thai television Channel 3 called เหนือเมฆ 2 มือปราบจอมขมังเวทย์ (*nuea-mek 2: mue prap chom khamangwet*) which related to the suppression of corrupt politicians was forced to end unexpectedly. Although the station explained that the drama had been banned because of its inappropriate content and that the decision had been made by the station, many people were doubtful that this was in fact the case, and the issue became headline news for

weeks. The minister attached to the Prime Minister's office at that time had to clarify that the government was not involved in this matter (*Komchadluek*, 2013).

Figure 2.12: The banned television drama: nuea-mek 2: mue prap chom khamangwet.
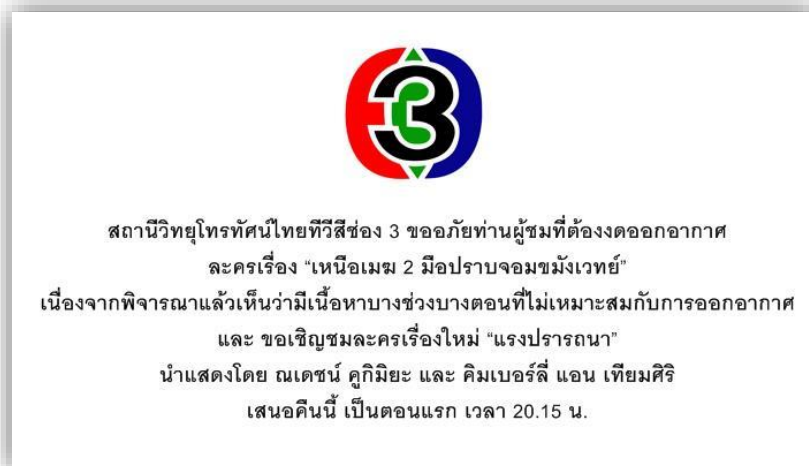
Figure 2.13: The explanation from Channel 3 with regard to the banned television drama.[7]

Rather than censoring media content, the current Thai government under the supervision of the Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha has tried to take part in media production, especially with regard to television drama production. According to a statement by Government spokesman Major General Sansern Kaewkamnerd in the

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[7] Translation of Figure 1.2: 'Channel 3 Thai Television Station would like to apologise to all viewers for not continuing the broadcast of the television drama *nuea-mek 2: mue prap chom khamangwet* owing to its inappropriate content. However, Channel 3 would like to introduce a new television drama *rang pratthana* starring Nadech Kugimiya and Kimberly Ann Tiamsiri, the first episode of which will be broadcast tonight at 20:15.'

Dailynews newspaper on 13 September 2016, he conveys Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha's proposition to see Thai producers reduce content relating to jealousy and violence, and create more television dramas that are concerned with national culture, which conform to societal norms, and that depict peaceful narratives (*Dailynews*, 2016).

The history of television censorship in Thailand clearly shows that the Thai state has always taken part in Thai media productions, even with regard to television drama as a platform for entertainment. The suggestion of the current Prime Minister that the national culture might be presented and preserved through the media seems to be challenging for many Thai television producers. The question for them is not just how to present 'Thai culture', but what exactly 'Thai culture' is that can be presented, and how to make it stand out amidst an influx of foreign cultural content coming into the country. To understand more relating to this concern about the mixed culture, cultural identity and the adaptation of foreign dramas, I highlight three main theoretical frameworks in this thesis. The first framework to be reviewed is the general concept of globalisation and its influence on the transnational media flow. The second framework is culture and identity, which includes an overall discussion of cultural identity, Asian identity and Thai identity. The third framework to be discussed is the theory of adaptation.

Theoretical frameworks

Globalisation and globalised media

Globalisation has become one of the major research fields in media and communications studies, and up until now has been a controversial issue. Many scholars have tried to provide a definition of what it means. In this study, I use Andrzej Potocki's definition (2010), taken from his report *Globalization/De-Localization*, which describes globalisation as 'a process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a global network of communication, transportation, and trade' (p. 1). It corresponds to the definition given by David Held and Anthony G. McGrew (2002), which holds that globalisation 'denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction' (p. 1).

With regard to the background of the study of globalisation, the sociologist Roland Robertson (1992) states that an interest in this area arose from a division between sociology, which deals with the comparative studies of societies, and international relations and political science, which deals with studies of interactive societies. This division has subsequently become weakened, however, and new academic fields such as communication and cultural studies have developed that have continued to show an interest in the study of globalisation.

For a better understanding of globalisation, David Held et al. (1999) provide a useful framework that focuses on three main viewpoints with regard to globalisation research, namely, that of the hyperglobalists; that of the sceptics; and that of the transformationalists. Hyperglobalists argue that we live in an increasingly global world. They claim that globalisation, especially economic globalisation, is a direct threat to the nation state, as it enhances global marketplace rules that erode the power and autonomy of the state. Sceptics, however, argue that globalisation is by no means

unprecedented. According to Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson (1996), what hyperglobalists describe as economic globalisation is merely a reinforced level of economic interdependences. Since genuine transnational companies are rare, capital mobility has not caused a shift in investment from developed to less developed countries. They claim that major economic powers definitely have the power to exert their authority and that there are still great inequalities, both between and within countries. Transformationalists, however, see globalisation differently from the other two viewpoints. For them, globalisation is not simply related to the economic perspective, and it is also not a debate about either convergence or divergence. Rather, it represents structural consequences and is a driving force in society that influences political, social and economic change (Giddens, 1999; Held, et al., 1999).

These three perspectives are still widely debated. From the point of view of this research project, however, I argue strongly that no nation can avoid the influence of globalisation. Today, every country may connect to every other country by every means available. They may experience, share, exchange or even merge with each other, not only economically and politically but also at social and cultural levels.

As globalisation involves a number of aspects, there have been numerous studies of the subject by many scholars. The theories and studies of globalisation usually lie in the categories of political, economic and cultural globalisation. Also, there has been a widespread discussion about globalisation and its relationship to the media and communication. Terhi Rantanen (2005), for example, has claimed that without media and communications there can be no globalisation. Other theorists, suchs as Terry Flew (2007), provide reasons to explain why media are important to globalisation. He suggests that since there has been an increasing worldwide expansion of media corporations, the global communication infrastructure facilitates global information

flows and helps to construct people's perception of how they view events across the world and develop shared systems of meaning.

This notion of global information flows, or transnational media flows, has recently been much in focus, especially when they have challenged the former thesis of cultural imperialism. Previously, powerful Western countries, mainly the United States, maintained a heavy flow of media products exported to the rest of the world (Boyd-Barrett, 1977). The expansion of global media has affected other countries in various societal aspects, including politics, economics and culture (Tomlinson, 1991). Globalisation has also opened up new paths for the flow of media content (Shohat and Stam, 1996), and the emergence of the reverse currents concept shows that global media traffic is no longer only a one-way flow from the West (Thussu, 2007). Globalisation has led to the international circulation of media products. Media produced in one country are distributed not only in the domestic market but also globally (Movius, 2010). Anthony Giddens (2002) claims that because this happens, '*reverse colonisation*' may occur, meaning that non-western countries can influence, or be a cause of, social changes in the West (p.16). Evidence for multiple direction flows may be seen in the export of television productions from Latin America, or film productions from Hong Kong and India, to the US and Asian audiences (Movius, 2010).

Focusing more on the export of television productions from Latin America, *Telenovela*, a Latin American soap opera, is able to be broadcast in fifty languages and dialects, and reaches a hundred countries in every continent (Martinez, 2005). In *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-flow,* Daya Kishan Thussu (2007) describes this case as a key example of new media flow directions, and calls it a 'subaltern flow' (p.23) or flow from the South to the rest of the world. Thussu also suggests that with this example of the counter-flow there is hope and possibility for non-dominant media

countries to develop and stand out by quoting Venezulan columnist Ibsen Martinez that:

> In all, about 2 billion people around the world watch *telenovelas*. For better or worse, these programs have attained a prominent place in the global marketplace of culture, and their success illuminates one of the back channels of globalization. For those who despair that Hollywood or the American television industry dominates and defines globalization, the telenovela phenomenon suggests that there is still room for the unexpected (Thussu, 2007 p. 24).

Furthermore, in parallel with the media contra-flows, new multinational networks known as '*Easternisation*' have emerged (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004, p. 122). Asian countries such as China, Japan, South Korea and India have played an important role in the circulation of media and cultural products that have become more popular at an international level. The Japanese entertainment business is worth more than £60 billion a year, while South Korea has become a major exporter of entertainment products such as film, TV drama and popular music across East and Southeast Asia (Shim, 2006). This phenomenon can be seen as 'a way to counter the threat of [the] Western-dominated media market' (Kim, 2007, p. 136).

Apart from the export of media products, the increase in Internet usage is another key reason for the cultural reverse trend with regard to media. In 'Internet Transformations: "Old" Media Resilience in the "New Media" Revolution', Freedman (2006) claims that the Internet has greatly impacted on 'old' media tools and is used by audiences in various ways. Starting with a change in media consumption patterns, a decline has been seen in consumption habits of traditional media, such as terrestrial television, newspapers and magazines. As the Internet generates interaction between media senders and receivers, it creates 'demassification', transforming the one-to-many traditional flow of broadcast and print media to personalised and customised forms. Consumers now have an ability not only to select their own preferred content but also to create their own through online media. In terms of cost of production compared to

other types of media, the cost of production and distribution through the Internet channels is considerably less. This has helped to create lower entry barriers to the global media market and has provided opportunities for new players from around the world to challenge Western media conglomerates.

Transnational media flows and contra-flows from different directions have affirmed my argument relating to globalisation: that no nation can avoid the connection with other countries, especially when globalised media has brought the world closer together and introduced one nation to another. Yet the outcome of the process of globalisation and transnational media is neither determined nor predictable.

Culture and identity

<u>*Cultural identity*</u>

As I argued earlier, globalisation does not influence any country only in terms of economics and politics, but also aspects of society and culture. The term 'culture' mentioned here has been defined by Stuart Hall (1997) as simply a set of shared meanings that enable people to understand and communicate with one another. Yet Raymond Williams (1983) has suggested that 'culture' is one of the most complicated words in the English language. He gives three broad definitions for the word 'culture', which derives from the Latin *cultura*. Culture may refer to a general intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development or it may be defined as a particular way of life. It may also describe the work and practices of intellectual, especially artistic, activity.

'Culture' is a problematic word, not only in English but in many other languages and countries. It may refer to various notions such as folklores, traditions, trends, or development. In the Thai language, for example, the term 'culture' in Thai is 'วัฒนธรรม' (*wat-ta-na-tham*), which might refer to both traditional and developmental practices. According to the Thai textbook *Language and Culture* (ภาษากับวัฒนธรรม) (Phrachak et

al.,1999), the word 'วัฒนธรรม' (*wat-ta-na-tham*) was coined from the English term 'culture' by Prince Naradhip Bhongseprabhan, a Thai language specialist and first president of the Royal Society of Thailand, and officially used in 1940. To create the word, he combined Pali *wattana*, which means growth or progress, and Sanskrit *tham*, which means goodness, together and provided a definition of this new term *wattanatham* as:

> advance knowledge such as sciences, arts, literatures, religions as well as customs, traditions and manners. *Wattanatham* is a social heritage presenting in both tangible and intangible forms … It is a key factor in constructing the comportment of Thai people. (quoted in Suphattra, 2015, p. 1).

In other words, it is a model of behaviour which is obtained from, and passed on to, society. Although the term วัฒนธรรม (*wat-ta-na-tham*) has been created and used in Thailand for less than a century, it is argued that this does not mean that there was no such culture in the country before that time. In an earlier period, without that specific word, Thai people acknowledged and called culture by various forms or practices, such as' tradition', 'manners', 'habitude', 'morality' and 'craftsmanship' (Phrachak, 1999).

For this project, I maintain that the term 'culture' refers to both an intellectual mindset and practical behaviour. It is the way of life of a group of people: the behaviour, beliefs, values, and symbols that are accepted and passed by communication and imitation from one generation to the next, as well as to those who are able to travel and mix with other cultures.

To explain 'other cultures': as there are a variety of human societies living in the world, each group may have different beliefs, practices and cultures. The culture of each group or society is then usually regarded as its 'cultural identity'. In his work entitled *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*, Fred E. Jandt (2013) has defined cultural identity as 'the identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as

norms for conduct' (p. 7). Culture has also been described as the product of 'imagined communities', a concept coined by Benedict Anderson (2006). Anderson suggests that although members of a community will never know most of their fellow members they may have similar interests or identify themselves as part of the same nation. To him, the terms 'nation', 'nationality', nation-ness', as well as 'nationalism are regarded as 'cultural artefacts' (Anderson, 2006 p.4) that command such profound emotional legitimacy among people who perceive themselves as part of the group.

Cultural identity is not discussed only according to the notion of a shared identity within a group, but also with the idea of being different. Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas (1988) have defined cultural identity in their work *Cultural Identity: An interpretive Perspective* as individuals who consciously identify themselves with their group and are able to distinguish themselves from others. David Birch, Tony Schirato and Sanjay Srivastava (2001) have elaborated on this definition by suggesting that if one were to ask Croatians or Bosnians about their identity, some of their answers might include 'not being Yugoslavs' (p. 4). These three authors also suggest that: '[a] group or community is always constructed, to some extent, in terms of what it is different from, or opposed to' (p. 4) They also claim that 'not being the other' is perhaps the most significant factor in establishing and maintaining group identity (p. 5).

The argument for the purity of cultural and national identity, however, which implies that culture can always be distinguished and is stable and fixed, is viewed as being irrelevant (Werbner, 1997). This is especially the case with globalisation. When local cultures meet global cultures they might form new identities: 'hybrid identities' that are somewhat, or even completely, different from their original identities. A chapter in a book on hybrid identities entitled 'Hybrid Identities: Theoretical Examinations', by Keri E. Lyall Smith (2008) claims that hybridity is related to creativity and cultural imagination. The hybrid consists of elements of the local and the global, and the

mixture of both makes it unique. He claims that 'the hybrid identity might allow the globe to unite in its differences' (p. 5).

On the other hand, according to John Tomlinson (2003), as a result of globalisation, cultural identities have not only interacted and/or become mixed; they have also become more uniform. It is argued that globalisation results in a growth in 'cultural globalisation', a specific set of values and beliefs that are largely shared around the globe (Castells, 2009, p. 117). Lauren Movius (2010) claims that cultural globalisation may appear to act as a solvent, dissolving cultural differences and creating homogeneity across the world. She points out that icons of popular culture such as Coca-Cola and McDonalds are examples of cultural globalisation. Martin Albrow (1996) argues that globalisation brings about a 'global society', as he describes globalisation as 'all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society' (p. 9).

Arguing against Albrow's 'single world' notion, Arjun Appadurai (1996) says that globalised media and communications strengthen the complex interaction and disjunction between different cultures by advocating five 'scapes' that influence culture. He suggests that these five 'scapes' – ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes – enhance cultural diversity. Ethnoscapes are flows of people, such as tourists and immigrants, while financescapes are flows of currency markets. Technoscapes refer to cross-boundaries technology, while mediascapes refer to mass media technology and images. Ideoscapes also refer to images, but more precisely to their political and ideological aspects. These 'scapes' demonstrate that rather than creating homogeneity, media play a role in creating cultural diversity.

One proof of the continuing cultural and identity diversity in the globalisation era can be shown from The World Values Survey conducted in 2002. When respondents were

asked about how they identified themselves, 47 per cent of respondents chose to identify themselves according to their local identity, 38 per cent chose their national identity, while less than 15 per cent chose a cosmopolitan identity. Consistent with this finding, it can be said that overall national and regional identities are still more solid than cosmopolitan identities (World Values Survey, cited in Movius, 2010, p. 12).

Asian identity

The cultural identity issue is more debatable when discussed with regard to regional identity. One region may see itself different from another region, yet it may contain a high diversity among the regional members. For instance physically, Asia is the largest continent in the world with the largest population that speaks several hundred different languages and is characterised by the area's cultural, political, economic and social diversity (Birch, Schirato and Srivastava, 2001). In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1979) argues that the identity of the West is marked out as different from that of the Orient. He claims that particularly in the colonial era, Westerners saw 'Orientals' as 'other than human' and that they could take over those countries and stay in a superior position (p. 3).

With the example given above, the identity of Asia becomes more challenging to define and lies between the concept of diversity and uniformity. In *Asia: Cultural Politics in the Global Age*, however, David Birch, Tony Schirato and Sanjay Srivastava (2001) have offered another idea of hybrid Asian culture. They discuss the notion that there is 'no one Asian culture' in contemporary Asia and claim that all cultures intersect, and are engaged and influence each other.

Birch, Schirato and Srivastava further argue that the connection between Asians has occurred with diasporas. For millennia, travellers in different parts of Asia have wandered in and out of different regions, carrying and bringing back goods, stories or

beliefs and customs with them. Some of them have settled down far from their motherland. For example, there are substantial Indian populations in Singapore and Malaysia, as well as numerous Chinese in Thailand and Vietnam. These diasporas and foreign traders have contributed networks and a shared cosmopolitan culture to the region concerned.

Apart from the aspect of migration, Asia has been united for various reasons. Historically, it was thought that Asia had found itself in the process of confronting the European–American challenge (Funabashi, 1993). Later, there has been the rise in Asian unity with regard to its economic and trading power. The growth in Asian economic importance in the early 1990s, and the birth of the 'Asian tiger' economies, which relate to four new industrialised countries, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong,[8] have created a great deal of 'soul searching' in the West (Birch, Schirato and Srivastava, 2001 p. vii). Subsequently, with the huge expansion of East Asian pop culture, the reasons for regional unity that have been cited have ranged from political and economic concerns to the reception of popular culture.

'Asian pop', a new unified regional category that combines cultural products produced by northern Asian countries, mainly Japan and South Korea (Ubonrat, 2008, p. 183), has generated a trans-Asian cultural traffic, which possibly challenges the Western flow of pop culture coming into the region, and 'Asianises' Asia's culture (Iwabuchi, Muecke and Thomas, 2004; Chua, 2004).

A shifting of economic development from an industrial-based to an information-based economy in Northeast Asia (excluding China) illustrates Manuel Castells's thesis (2000) that there has been a restructuring of capitalism from an industrial mode of development to an informational mode of development, and that this has developed the regional identity into an Asian modernity (Iwabuchi, 2005). This development is

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[8] Although Hong Kong is now part of mainland China, it is listed as a country in these statistics.

creating an 'Asian taste' in popular culture (Ubonrat, 2008, p.183), and that taste has now spread to other parts of Asia such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East (Kim, 2007).

These features, that is, 'Asianisation', 'Asian Modernity' and 'Asian taste', are considered to be challenging topics for this research, which will attempt to determine whether the spread of Asian pop culture through imported media brings about hybrid cultural forms to Thai society, and how Thai cultural identity negotiates with foreign culture, especially that which emanates from South Korea. The findings from this research may answer the long-standing arguments of whether globalisation/ Asianisation generates 'homogenisation', whether this generates the loss of authenticity in local culture, whether 'heterogenisation' creates a greater cultural diversity, or whether a new form of cultural fusion, 'hybridisation', exists.

Thai identity / proposed criteria

As discussed, it is claimed that all culture is connected, whether at a local, regional or global level. Thai culture is no exception. It then becomes problematic to define what 'authentic Thai identity' is, or what is so-called 'Thainess'. Thongchai Winichakul (1994) even stated in his work *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* that the definition of 'Thainess' has never been, and never can be, clearly defined.

This thesis, however, has to define criteria to analyse and pinpoint Thai cultural and hybrid identity that have been exposed in the selected texts. I then explore the meaning of Thai culture and Thai identity through the existing descriptions available. There are many public and private bodies that have claimed to have established the definition of Thai identity and the concept of being Thai. For example, Prince Damrong Rachanuphap, who is regarded as The Father of Thai History, relates 'Thainess' to the

act of adoption and adaptation of Thai people. Owing to the country's long history of cultural blending, he then describes the characteristics of Thai people:

> The Tai knew how to pick and choose. When they saw some good feature in the culture of other peoples, if it was not in conflict with their own interests, they did not hesitate to borrow it and adapt it to their own requirements (quoted in Peleggi, 2002, p. 12).

Philip Cornwel-Smith, in his study of Thai popular culture, *Very Thai: Everyday Popular Culture* (2005), shares similar thoughts with regard to Thai character being adaptive by quoting Siamologist Neils Mulder's assessment of Thai 'cultural personality' that:

> Eclectic borrowing, temporization, adaptive skill and pragmatism are the very flavour of Thai cultural genius […] They trust their own ways; meanwhile they are not shy to incorporate whatever is perceived as useful or attractive (p.11).

The term 'cultural genius' – the adaptive skill of Thai people – has also been referred to by the Thai anthropologist Sanit Smackarn (1991) in his three key features of Thai culture, comprising 'highly adaptive', 'highly flexible' and 'holding an unswerving conviction in Thainess', translated from the original Thai and quoted by Rachel Harrison in her introductory chapter of *South East Asia Research* (2009 p.333): 'Thai culture has been mixed with many other cultures and this is a very important cultural phenomenon which has made a small-scale society such as that of Thailand, enduring and resilient to this day' (Sanit, 1991, p. 80). Sanit also links the feature of adaptability with the notion of historical continuity, and argues that the adaptable character of the Thai people is the reason why Thai society has survived and has preserved its independence (Sanit, 1991, p, 78).

An example of Sanit's view on the relationship between the Thai adaptive skill and freedom may be seen when Western colonial expansion reached Southeast Asia

around the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Thailand, then called Siam, was felt to be under threat of excessive influence from the West. To maintain national sovereignty, King Vajiravudh, or Rama VI of Thailand, advocated the adoption of much Western knowledge, including sciences, to promote the national progress of Thailand and to be recognised as one of the developed or 'civilised' countries (Vella, 1978). The message Thai monarchy at that time intended to deliver to the Western powers was that 'You Westerners do not need to colonise Siam in order to make us civilised. We Thais are disciplined enough to subject ourselves to your standards of civilisation' (Jackson, 2004 p.237). Harrison (2009) claims that this action of the Siamese ruling elite was the tactic of 'donning the (Western) wolf's clothing' to conceal fears of falling victim as the Siamese sacrificial lamb (p. 339).

Although King Vajiravudh agreed to import Western culture into the country, he was concerned about the limits of what Siam could learn from the West and was also concerned to preserve the Thai distinctiveness. In Walter F. Vella's *Chaiyo! King Vachiravudh and The Development of Thai Nationalism* (1978), Vella quotes a statement made by the King: 'We must remember that we Thai have characteristics basically different from those of foreigners' (p. 178), and argues that what set the Thai nation apart from other nations was a combination of things, including 'Thai history, Thai art, Thai language, Thai literature, Thai Buddhism, Thai love of the royal leader, and an essential Thai spirit … in a sense of "free", a warrior spirit' (ibid). Since the King realised that the Thai nation had to highlight its unique values, the people of Thailand had to understand what being Thai meant and what being a nation meant. He then initiated the notion of national identity by introducing the word for 'nation' in Thai: 'ชาติ' (*chat*), emanating from the Sanskrit word *jadi,* meaning birth. The King wanted to define the Thai nation or 'ชาติไทย' (*chat* Thai) as a group of people who had a common ancestry, or who came from the same origin. For Siam to become a complete and strong society, King Vachiravudh suggested it should be based on three fundamental

institutions: nation, religion and monarchy or ชาติ (*chat*), ศาสนา (*satsana*), and พระมหากษัตริย์ *(phramahakasat)* in Thai.

The third fundamental institution, the monarchy – to be exact 'the King' – above all, takes an important role in signifying and building the Thai nation. The institution of the monarchy has encouraged loyalty and brought about harmony to Thai society. The King of Thailand is therefore often referred to 'ศูนย์รวมใจไทยทั้งชาติ' (*sun ruam-jai Thai thang chat*), meaning a centre of the country or the 'soul of a nation' (BBC Thai, 2016). However, in 1932 there was the 'Siam Revolution' run by a group of military and educated civilians which transformed the system of government in the country from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. In fact, the 'People's Party' that performed the coup d'état and overthrew the absolute monarchy possibly led the country in different directions by a different system of government. The Party's leaders, nonetheless, affirmed to retain the Monarch's status as a head of state under the constitution. This is because, regardless of the change, the view on the King as 'the heart' of the country is still valid and obvious in Thai people's mind. The retention of the King's status was then crucial to the purpose of maintaining the status of Thai nation, eluding the resistance and enhancing nationalist sentiment (Saichon, 2002).

During the time of the alteration of the authority system in Thailand, Thai cultural identity or Thainess has also been revisited and reformed based on nationalism and modernisation perspectives to demonstrate to the world the national unity of modern Thailand (Kobkua, 1995). Two key figures in the construction of contemporary Thai identity at the time consist of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram and Luang Wichitwathakhan.

Regarding the former, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, he was one of leaders of 'People's Party' and was the longest serving Prime Minister of Thailand from 1938 to

1944 and 1948 to 1957. His name has been mentioned once in this thesis in the section on Thai television and related media as a head of Thai government during the first launch of television network in Thailand. Field Marshal Plaek used television not only to support his political power, but also to instil into and instruct Thai people in new concepts of Thai culture and social habits.

As discussed by Kobkua Suwannathat-pian (1995) in her book *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun throught Three Decades 1932-1957*, Field Marshal Plaek viewed culture as the 'key to the success of the nation' (p. 110) at the same time as the country's sovereignty and integrity, while Thainess to him was 'a heart that is truly Thai, that truly loves Thailand, that will undertake whatever for the good of Thailand, and finally that inspires Thailand to progress and prosper as other civilized nations' (p. 112). Therefore, with the purpose of reinforcing the notion of being a modern nation and cultivating a strong sense of Thainess, his government began a nation-building programme and a cultural campaign with the announcement of a series of Cultural Mandates which were known in Thai as รัฐนิยม (*Ratthaniyom*) (State preferences). These Cultural Mandates prescribed several cultural norms and practices for Thai citizens to follow, for example the renaming of the country from Siam to Thailand on 24 June 1939 to be consistent with 'Thai', the name of the major ethnic group of people living in the country, and to indicate that Thailand is a country for Thai people; the declaration of the national anthem and national flag; and assigning the Thai central language as the official language of the nation, as well as introducing a new Thai word, สวัสดี (*sawat-di*), to be used for greetings on a daily basis (Ibid).

Moreover, to respond to the vision of Field Marshal Plaek in terms of developing Thailand into a modern and 'civilised' country rather than a barbarous one in the eyes of foreigners, the Cultural Mandates further required Thai people to uphold the proper dress code and proper social etiquette in accordance with 'Western standards'

(Kammales and Patcharin, 2018). The following picture is an example of announcement from Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram's government describing how to and how not to dress in public as a 'civilised' Thai person. Certain kinds of clothing such as sarongs, wraparound cloth and being topless are prohibited. Instead, Thai citizens were encouraged to wear international-style attire and shorts or skirt with clean and polite shirt (Reynolds, 2002).

Figure 2.14: Poster promoting 'civilised' forms of dress in the Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram era

The intention to adopt what Field Marshal Plaek believed to be 'good' manners from the West to help in reforming and uniforming Thai culture, however, became a debatable issue in the country. Some changes, such as the recommendation regarding how to dress properly, how to eat properly by using spoons and forks and the change of official Thai New Year from 1 April to 1 January to match up with the international practice, led to the criticism of ความหลงนิยมวัฒนธรรมต่างด้าว or being 'obsessed with foreign culture' of the Thai government (Saichon, 2002 p. 143).

To correct and counter those criticisms, the second key person in constructing contemporary Thai culture I have mentioned, Luang Wichitwathakhan, a former Thai

politician, head of the cultural campaigns and head of the Thai broadcasting committee during the Pibulsonggram government, was the one who handled these matters. In her book titled ความเปลี่ยนแปลงในการสร้างชาติไทย และความเป็นไทย โดย หลวงวิจิตรวาทการ (*The change in constructing Thai nation and Thainess by Luang Wichitwathakhan*), Saichon Sattayanurak (2002) has revealed that Luang Wichitwathakhan resolved the issue against the government's cultural reformation by refining the concept of Thai culture and the adoption of foreign culture. He convinced Thai people that Thai culture was changeable and could be adapted and recreated for the purpose of national benefit and security. Also, with his intention to build up nationalism and patriotism in the country, Luang Wichitwathakhan regarded whatever features that enhanced the country as 'ความเป็นไทยแท้' − an authentic Thai feature. He referred, however, to features he considered as a threat to Thai people and the Thai nation to คนอื่น − other or 'un-Thai' culture. To illustrate this, Luang Wichitwathakhan referred to the previous barbaric slavery system in Siam. He said it was not originally generated by Thais, instead, it was influenced by the arrival of foreigners since the Ayutthaya period, an earlier Kingdom of Thailand between 1351 and 1767.

With respect to the adjustment of the date to celebrate national New Year, Luang Wichitwathakhan elucidated that this change was definitely **not** an adoption of foreign custom. Alternatively, it was a change to maintain Thai traditional practice since he found that the traditional Thai New Year had actually started in January. He further suggested the previous New Year's Day on 1 April that had been cancelled, on the contrary, was not an 'authentic' Thai custom. It was derived from Myanmar when it invaded Siam in the past. For Luang Wichitwathakhan, as long as the change in Thai culture is for the country's and Thai people's sake, it was possible and acceptable (ibid).

From the explanations relating to the change of Thai cultural features of Luang Wichitwathakhan together with the examples of Phibunsongkhram's cultural strategy, it evidences that the term 'culture' does not refer only to the values and practices that have been passed down over the generations. Rather, 'culture' can be invented and manipulated according to the needs of those in power. For Thai culture in particular, the definition of Thainess as an identity initially originated from the construction of Siam/Thailand as a nation-state. A sense of belonging and collective selfhood is believed by those in power, whether they are the ruling elites or state leaders that could enable them to negotiate with other powerful countries and to govern millions of Thai people easily and peacefully (Reynolds, 2002). Later, however, when several Thai government offices had been established, the business of enhancing Thai identity started to produce differing dimensions.

According to Ampai Tiranasar in her paper *Cultural Identity and Art Education in Thailand* (2004), the first official government activity relating to Thai cultural identity was held in 1976 when Professor Tanin Kraivixien, the Prime Minister of Thailand at that time, initiated the Thai identity project to promote awareness of Thailand's cultural heritage and pride in being Thai to the Thai people. The message was particularly directed towards Thai children and teenagers. The main features of the project were broadcasting royal speeches, activities, and past and present development projects, as well as programmes such as 'อยู่อย่างไทย' (*yu yang Thai*), or 'Thai way of Living'.

After the first campaign to enhance the culture of Thailand, in 2002, twenty-six years later, the Ministry of Culture was established as the government body responsible for Thai culture. It is in charge of implementing a national culture policy and provides strategies to encourage, create, study, distribute, protect and promote the history, culture, moral assets and ethics of the nation (Ampai, 2004). The Ministry has launched campaigns every year to enhance Thai cultural values.

One interesting campaign was run in 2015 called 'Thainess' or ความเป็นไทย (*khwam-pen-Thai*), which aimed to encourage Thai people to preserve 'Thainess' and introduce it internationally. The campaign was divided into three levels: local, ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and global. The Thai elements that this campaign wanted to present included Thai manners, the Thai smile, the Thai greeting, Thai food, Thai traditional performances, Thai music, Thai boxing, Thai language and Thai wisdom (Department of Cultural Promotion, 2015).

Before the formal establishment of the Ministry of Culture, there were two key state agencies that were in charge of Thai cultural affairs, namely the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Ministry of Education. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, even though it was specifically responsible for the promotion of Thai tourism, always included Thai cultural identity as part of its information, about where and how to travel in Thailand, to attract foreign tourists.

One of the most well-known Thai tourism campaigns is called 'Amazing Thailand' which first ran in 1998 and was continuously extended for a number of seasons. The campaign started a year after the Asian financial crisis in 1997 with the expectation of helping its country's economy recovering from the recession (Paradech, 2006). It has encouraged large numbers of international tourists to visit Thailand and view the country as their preferred destination by positioning the country as a 'golden paradise' – an exotic and peaceful wonderland (Redden, 2007). 'Amazing Thailand' has categorised and placed the spotlight on nine features identified as being 'unique to the Kingdom', including 'amazing shopping paradise', 'amazing tastes of Thailand', 'amazing culture and heritage', 'amazing world heritage', 'amazing natural heritage', 'amazing Thai arts and lifestyle', 'amazing sports', 'amazing agricultural produce', and 'amazing gateway' (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1998). These elements were used as marketing tools for promoting particular attractions. They have also been displayed

in the travel literature and advertisements frequently so that they became stereotypical images of the identity of Thailand in foreigners' eyes.

Benefiting from the perceptions of foreign tourists in their attitudes toward Thailand, in 2015, the Tourism Authority of Thailand launched another promotional campaign, 'Discover Thainess', based on foreign visitors' preferences, to present the country in a wider variety of aspects, including Thai arts, Thai food, Thai festivals, Thai fun, Thai wellness, Thai wisdom and the Thai way of life (Discover Thainess Tourism Thailand, 2015).

With regard to the Ministry of Education, another key state body that have been involving with Thai cultural affairs, it has been one of the most important figures responsible for cultural education since 1892. The topic of Thai identity, or 'Thainess', is included in the basic education core curriculum under the subject of Thai civic education. Previously the subject relating to civic duty had been a part of Thai social history; however, according to the current Thai military government's policy on basic education, since the 2014 academic year, Thailand's Basic Education Commission has increased the study hours on civic education, focusing more on 'Thainess' and patriotism for primary and secondary school students for up to forty hours a year to instil understanding and personal conduct in accordance with the duties and responsibilities of good citizens; observance and preservation of Thai traditions and culture; and enjoyment of peaceful coexistence among Thais (*Prachatai,* 2014, MCOT, 2014). The main content of the 'Thainess' curriculum includes personal conduct (Thai manners, gratitude, generousness and sacrifice) and culture (costume, language, folk wisdom and tradition) (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Education Standards, 2014). A definition of 'Thainess' has been given in a Thai textbook หน้าที่พลเมือง วัฒนธรรม และ การดำเนินชีวิตในสังคม (*Thai Civics, Culture and Social Living*) by Kramon Thongthammachat et al. (2008) as the uniqueness of Thai culture that comprises the

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following features: the monarchy, Buddhism, the Thai language, agriculture, a humble lifestyle and personality, Thai food and herbs, Thai recreations and Thai traditions.

Apart from the increase in study hours of Thai civics, the new education policy also suggests twelve core values that Thai students should study, recite and implement in their daily life. In his televised public address on 11 July 2014 in the programme คืน ความสุขให้คนในชาติ (Return Happiness to Thai People), the Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha stressed that the core values of Thai people should be clearly defined so that they could build a strong nation. The twelve core values comprise the following:

1. Upholding the three main pillars: the nation, religion, and the monarchy;

2. Being honest, dedicated and patient, with a positive attitude for the common good of the public;

3. Being grateful to parents, guardians and teachers;

4. Seeking knowledge and education, both directly and indirectly;

5. Treasuring cherished Thai traditions;

6. Maintaining morality, integrity and wishing others well, and being generous and sharing;

7. Understanding and learning the true essence of democratic ideals, with His Majesty the King as Head of State;

8. Maintaining discipline, respect for laws, and respect for the elderly and seniority;

9. Being conscious and mindful of action in line with His Majesty the King's royal statements;

10. Applying His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy, saving money for a time of need, being moderate with profit for sharing or for the expansion of business;

11. Maintaining both physical and mental health and not yielding to human passions or desires; having a sense of shame and guilt for sins in accordance with religious principles;

12. Putting the public and national interest before personal interest. (National News Bureau of Thailand, 2014).

Looking closely at the discussion about, and state construction of, 'Thainess' over time, it is challenging to find out exactly what 'Thai cultural identity' is when different groups of people and state bodies describe it in various different ways and for different purposes. While the past Thai ruling elites refer Thai identity to national security and value instillation, Thai historians and anthropologists associate it with the nature of the adaptiveness of Thai people. For the Ministry of Culture Thai culture is regarded as a national treasure that should be preserved, and for the Tourism industry Thai culture has become a tool for marketing purposes.

In addition to the above-mentioned descriptions, Thai culture can also be viewed as adopting a postmodern perspective. For instance, Kasian Tejapira (2002, pp. 220–21) suggests that 'Thainess' has now been transformed into a postmodern entity. In other words, what can be seen in 'Thainess' these days is 'a de-essentialisation of national identity, a clearing of ethno-ideological space, a liberation of national identity signifiers, a collapse of linguistic boundaries, an influx of commodities-as-signification units, and a subsequent semiotic chaos.'

The notion of a decline of cultural authority in Thailand has been echoed by Craig J. Reynolds (2002), who argues that adapting new technologies and foreign knowledge to develop the country may bring about the possibility of losing local identity and sovereignty. Reynolds illustrates this point by referring to the changes to Thailand and its identity in the age of glabalisation. He says Thai identity since the early 1990s, when

the global market and 'borderless' communications have grown and flourished, 'was no longer something to be defended in the interests of national security but to be consumed in the interests of boosting the economy (p.311)'. In order to promote Thai businesses and to compete with international brands, Thai culture has been employed, commodified and fabricated. These fabrications raise questions about the authenticity of Thai culture, and are often discussed by several Thai scholars and media as a threat to and a possible substitution for the 'authentic' Thai culture inherited from the past.

In an attempt to describe 'Thai identity', Haj Yazdiha (2010) proposes that cultural and national identity definitions can be outlined either by a particular nation or by other cultures. With regard to 'other cultures', he mentions Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), which offers a strong description of the system by which some nations appropriate from other nations to define themselves. Said says that Orientalism 'has helped to define Europe (or the West) [with] its contrasting image, idea, personality, [and] experience' (pp. 1–2). Thus, comparing the different cultures, one from another, may help to define what Thai culture is. The notion of recognising oneself by taking into account the dissimilarities of other people from oneself also links to the concept of bifurcation by Thongchai Winichakul (2010). Bifurcation appears to be an intellectual strategy in trying to negotiate between the power of the modern West and the persistent strength of the local culture and identity. It represents foreign culture as the 'other' or outer appearance and Thai culture as 'oneself' or the essence of inner selfhood. Apart from the notion of bifurcation, Thongchai has also discussed the relationship between 'Thainess' and its 'otherness' by referring to the notion of 'negative identification'. He suggests that Thainess is made by identifying what is 'un-Thai', and 'once the un-Thainess can be identified, its opposite, Thainess is apparent' (Thongchai, 1994, p. 5).

The concept of 'Thainess' and 'otherness' discussed by Thongchai is also connected with that of Luang Wichitwathakhan mentioned earlier. In order to develop the bonds

and harmony between people in the nation, the notion of 'others' needs to be established. In Luang Wichitwathakhan's view, it is common for one nation to decide and perform for its own benefit rather than for that of others (Saichon, 2002).

Nevertheless the process of classifying 'others' or 'un-Thai' elements is not that simple, especially when those elements have been transculturated and become so fundamental to Thai identity that Thai people now do not see them as outsiders, but truly perceive them as part of their own culture. Buddhism, for instance, is considered as the religion of the Thai nation and the core guidance for a Thai way of life despite the fact that it originated from one local culture in ancient India (Thongchai, 2010). The further complication of this process has been discussed in relation to the globalisation and localisation. It is argued that 'a Western, or any other foreign, element stops being purely Western (if it ever was) and becomes a localized Western element the moment that it is translated into Thai context' (Ibid, p.148). In other words, while the classification between Thai and un-Thai features is regarded as a potential way to define Thainess, the consideration of Thai cultural identity as a hybrid identity cannot be ignored.

On top of the diverse definitions listed above, Thai culture is also established in different forms. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's discussion of 'invented tradition' in their work *The Invention of Tradition* includes,

> a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2009, p. 9)

With reference to Thai culture, it may be seen that the previous construction of Thai national identity in the imperial West era might fit into the second category of the 'invented tradition' of establishing status and negotiating relations of authority. Yet the

twelve values and practices of the current government are best suited to the third category of inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.

With this variety of definitions and forms of Thai cultural identity, as mentioned earlier, I, however, have to define criteria for this research to explore Thai cultural and hybrid identity that are exposed in the selected cultural texts on which I focus. Of the definitions I have discussed so far, I have decided to use the meaning and features of 'Thainess' from the Thai student textbook หน้าที่พลเมือง วัฒนธรรม และการดำเนินชีวิต ใน สังคม (*Thai Civics, Culture and Social Living*) which comprises the following features: the monarchy, Buddhism, the Thai language, agriculture, lifestyle and personality, Thai food and herbs, and Thai festivals as my primary criteria. I provide three reasons to support this decision. First, the definition of 'Thainess' in this book provides features of 'Thainess' that can be analysed. Second, since it is part of a national student textbook, the definition may be regarded as official and approved by state bodies. The third reason for my choice is that as the book has described the national Thai culture as 'the culture that the government has stated and announced for all groups of Thai people in the nation to conduct and practice' it is interesting to see how and to what degree the selected entertainment content will both conform to, and diverge from, the state notion of 'Thainess'.

Details of each criteria featured and a discussion on Thai cultural presentation in the remakes based on this proposed criteria will be addressed in Chapter 3, Transculturalism and 'Thainess' on Screen, and further discussion on the decision of Thai cultural placement will be presented in Chapter 4, Cultural Negotiation in Thai Remake Productions.

Theory of adaptation

As the main area of study in this project is the remaking of Korean dramas in Thai versions, theories of adaptation are required to understand the process of adapted media texts, especially cross-cultural texts and relevant factors.

According to her PhD thesis, *Popular Television and the Construction of Contemporary Thai Cultural Identity*, Thitinan Boonpap (2007) considers culture to be media texts or representational systems in which meaning is produced and exchanged through the use of language in the form of signs and symbols, such as sounds, written words, electronically produced images and musical notes. Seeing culture in this way, one or more cultures can then influence others through the process of media text adaptation or imitation.

In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon (2013) defines the adaptation of media texts as creative and interpretive acts of appropriation, and acknowledged transpositions of recognisable other works, ranging through all kinds of media genres from literature, film and television to comic books and video games. Since the adaptations are based on the originals to some degree, they are often denigrated as secondary, derivative or culturally inferior, what Gerard Genette (1982) would call a text in the 'second degree' (p. 5), created and then received in relation to a prior text. But in the case of cross-cultural adaptation works, such as Hollywood film remakes, they alternatively may be regarded as evidence of 'aesthetic copy-cat' or of 'cultural imperialism', with the loss of local detail and insertion of Western elements to penetrate new markets (Verevis, 2006 p. 3). On the other hand, because of globalisation and local reproduction, the politics of transcultural adaptations may also render changes in racial and gender politics, as well as a shift in the direction of media influence (Hutcheon, 2013).

Another concept of adaptation is the remake. According to Thomas Leitch (1990) in his article 'Twice-Told Tales: The Rhetoric of the Remake', the remake is described as a form of adaptation that claims to be better than the original. Constantine Verevis (2006) distinguishes between the two concepts of adaptation and remake according to the type of medium to be adapted: whilst a remake is generally considered to be a remake within the same media, 'one of the principal arguments of adaptation theory is concerned with the movement between different semiotic registers, most often between literature and film' (p. 82). However the relationship between adaptations and remakes can be more complicated when the original version of the remake has also been adapted from literature.

Studies of adaptations and remakes usually fall into three categories: industry, text and reception. For industry, as far as this category is concerned, works that have been adapted or remade may be understood to be industrial products that provide suitable production models and a financial guarantee to the producers. They are 'pre-sold' to their audiences, since viewers are assumed to have some prior knowledge of the original story before being involved in the retold version (Verevis, 2006).

Moreover, with regard to the discussion of the production, since one adaptation may involve more than one artist or producer, this leads to the question of who is the real adapter or 'remaker'. Michael Ondaatje (2002) has discussed this point in his book *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*:

> It is hard for any person who has been on the set of a movie to believe that only one man or woman makes a film. At times a film set resembles a beehive or daily life in Louis XIV's court − every kind of society is witnessed in action, and it seems every trade is busy at work. But as far as the public is concerned, there is always just one Sun-King who is sweepingly credited with responsibility for story, style, design, dramatic tension, taste and even weather in connection with the finished product. When, of course, there are many hard-won professions at work (p. xi).

Linda Hutcheon (2013) suggests Ondaatje's term 'Sun-King' (p.82) may refer to the director, who is the head of production and responsible for interpretations of the script. However, a major adapter is often referred to as the author or screenwriter who creates a plot, characters, dialogue and theme. Costume and set designers are also possibilities for the role of adapter, and many admit that they turn to the adapted text, especially if it is an adaptation from a novel. Likewise, actors or performers also feel they are adapters.

In spite of a number of adapters in one adapted work, or a remake, in this study I will consider only the 'Sun-King' or director of each selected Thai remake to be the key informant of the research, with the expectation that as a leader of the production team he or she would provide an insight into the process of the remake, the aspect of cultural appropriation and negotiation as well as on the production limitation.

The second category that many scholars usually focus on when studying an adaptation is text. Each adapter adopts a different viewpoint with regard to the adapted text. The adapted text is not something to be produced, but rather something to be interpreted and recreated. Robert Stam (2000) describes the adaptation of texts as the relationship between an adapted text (a 'hypertext') and an original text (a 'hypotext'), and that the former transforms, inviting a double reading (p. 66). He also takes up the concepts of transformation and translation to describe adaptation as 'a principled effort of inter-semiotic [or inter-textual] transposition, with the inevitable losses and gains typical of any translation' (p. 62).

Nonetheless, adaptations from one culture to another, or transnational adaptations, not only involve the translation of words but also involve the change of place and time period. It seems logical, therefore, that time and place shifts should bring about alterations in cultural associations, and that they might create indigenisation by the

transformation of the previous works into new contexts, combining alien and local elements, and creating hybrid results (Hutcheon, 2013 p.145-146).

Examples of patterns of hybrid media texts have been proposed by the Hong Kong scholar Paul Lee (1991). He identifies four patterns of absorption and indigenisation of foreign cultures in Hong Kong, comprising the 'Parrot', 'Amoeba', 'Coral' and 'Butterfly' patterns. These patterns vary in the extent to which they absorb the form and content of foreign cultures. The 'parrot' pattern totally mimics the foreign culture by local industries, both in form and content. The 'amoeba' pattern describes a modified form but non-changing content, such as the adaptation of a foreign movie for local consumption. The 'coral' pattern involves cultural products where the content is changed but the form is untouched, while the butterfly pattern is an extreme hybridisation that makes the domestic and foreign elements indistinguishable. For hybrid media texts, Lee (1991) further argues that the key factors include consumer power and the strength of local production, both of which are able to reflect the economic status of the country and its inhabitants. Applying Lee's pattern to Thai remakes of Korean culture, it is suggested that Thai remakes lie in between the 'parrot' and 'coral' patterns. This is because although Thai remakes of television drama maintain the presentation and the main storyline of the original, they adjust the original Korean story and cultural element to suit Thai audiences.

For the last category, the reception of adaptations, Linda Hutcheon (2013) argues that the appeal of adaptations for audiences lies in the mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and innovation. She also suggests that there are two kinds of adaptation audiences, that is, 'knowing' (p.120) and 'unknowing' audiences (p.121). 'Knowing' audiences have expectations and demands, but they may interpret adapted texts differently depending on their cultural and social backgrounds. 'Unknowing' audiences,

however, simply experience an adapted work as an original, and may agree that adaptations can stand on their own.

Another name for adaptation audiences might be 'fans'. The word 'fans' usually refer to young people, who need to be able to appropriate cultural material to construct personal meaning (Laurel, 2005). That is why the interactive mode can be so attractive to them and why stories in particular are important to retain their interest in adaptations. With these dissimilar perspectives of reception, to be successful in presenting adapted work, adapters have to satisfy the expectations and demands of both 'knowing' and 'unknowing' audiences, as well as the fan target group, and to be successful in studying adapted work I, too, have to examine and reveal all points of view of these audiences.

The main focus of adaptation studies lies within the three categories of industry, text and audience. Since each category explores adaptations from different perspectives, to study the adapted work from all angles and perspectives, I have decided to use all three categories as key structures of my research to view the completed process of the Thai reinvention of foreign cultural content, starting from the adapted text itself to the production and then to the reception. The research direction and the key findings are also constructed based on these three categories, and will be set out later in the following chapters.

Conclusion

All topics reviewed in this chapter have served to sharpen and refine the research questions that need to be asked of the material under interrogation in this thesis. The historical and social background of Korean pop culture and its relation to Thailand sheds light on the situation of the cultural exchange at global and regional levels, while the discussion of television studies and television circumstances in Thailand has shown the potential of this medium as a powerful communications tool as well as the limits that Thai television can challenge.

The theoretical frameworks of globalisation and globalised media have also been explored to establish how hybrid cultures are constructed and circulated across borders. With regard to the discussion of culture and identity, although I have argued for the complicated nature and description of culture and cultural identity, I decided to set the criteria of Thai identity for conducting the research. I have applied the definitions and features of Thai culture from a national textbook in the belief that the concrete and authorised features presented in this book would represent Thai culture as a whole and would therefore be suitable measures for the investigation of cultural negotiation and appropriation in this research. Lastly, with the theory of adaptation, the topic reveals the key elements of the adaptation and remake work which lead to a series of interrelated research questions that are central to this thesis, and which I propose to explore in detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 3

Transculturalism and 'Thainess' on Screen

As discussed, the objectives and the examinations of this research are established based on the three elements of the remakes comprising texts, productions and reception. This chapter presents findings and discussions of the first mentioned element, texts, from the analysis of three remake dramas, namely *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince, Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*, and their original Korean versions, with the aim of trying to understand the cultural negotiation between the remakes and the originals, and to answer **RQ 1: How are cultural elements adapted and represented in cross-cultural Korean–Thai remake television dramas?** To categorise cultural items found in the Thai remakes, the texts are reviewed based on the criteria of Thai cultural identity proposed in Chapter 2, comprising the monarchy, the Thai language, lifestyle and personality, Buddhism, agriculture, Thai food and herbs, and Thai festivals. A brief introduction to each feature is provided at the beginning of the chapter, followed by a textual analysis according to the above mentioned criteria. Significantly, different features other than the selected categories found while undertaking the observation cannot be ignored. They will also be discussed subsequently in order to understand more about the characterisation and presentation of Thai culture. At the conclusion of this chapter it is shown how Thai cultural elements are presented on screen, and the extent to which the proposed criteria effectively represent Thai cultural identity.

Criteria of Thai cultural identity

In the previous chapter I have argued it is difficult to define what 'Thai cultural identity' or 'Thainess' is because culture is always changing and blending with other cultures over time. And as I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, the definition of cultural identity is also subjective. However, to distinguish Thai culture for this study, the criteria to observe are taken from the definition of Thai cultural identity from the Thai social

textbook หน้าที่พลเมือง วัฒนธรรม และการดำเนินชีวิตในสังคม (Thai Civics, Culture and Living) (Kramon et al., 2008). Since the descriptions have been taken from a national student textbook, they may be regarded as 'official' definitions and approved by state bodies. Apart from gaining tangible and conventional features to study, it is interesting to see how, and to what degree, the selected entertainment content conforms to, and diverges from, the state notion of Thai cultural identity.

The textbook was first published in 2008 as part of the new Thai national study curriculum, called 'The Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008'. It is an improvement on the previous Basic Education Curriculum in 2001, which served as the core curriculum for national education at the basic level. The Thai Basic Education Curriculum was revised to run in tandem with the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007–2011), which emphasises human development and corresponds to the objectives of the National Education Act 1999. Amendments made in 2002, which have focused on the decentralisation of educational authority to local communities and schools, the Act is expected to provide students with curricula that suit their situations and serve their needs. The revision of the Thai national study programme aims to help Thai students in several areas, including advancing their skills in analytical and creative thinking and technological know-how, and enhancing their capacity for teamwork and ability to live in peace and harmony in the local and world community, with the stress on morality, patriotism, awareness of responsibilities and commitment as Thai citizens, as well as awareness of 'Thainess' and the need to preserve Thai culture and Thai wisdom (The Basic Education Core Curriculum, 2008).

The social textbook I selected serves The Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008's goals, particularly in terms of educating Thai students about civic awareness and responsibilities, and emphasising a preference for Thai culture. The textbook describes Thai culture as the shared experiences of the Thai people and as the identity of the

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country which needs to be maintained. It suggests seven fundamental components of Thai culture, namely, the monarchy, the Thai language, lifestyle and personality, Buddhism, agriculture, Thai food and herbs, and Thai festivals. Although there is no clear explanation provided as to why these specific features have been selected to represent Thai culture, a possible reason lies in the book's main purpose as it refers to the implementation of centralisation in King Rama V's era, designating the core essence of Thai culture by propagandising traditions and customs from the capital to the regions. Also, as mentioned in Chapter 2 with regard to the construction of Thai national identity in the reign of Rama VI to avoid Western cultural influence, the issue of Thai culture was raised and considered to be the country's strength, and something that set Thailand or Siam at that time apart from other countries. The distinct characteristics of the nation at that time were considered to consist of history, art, language, Buddhism, monarchy, and the devoted and free spirit of the Thai people (Vella, 1978). These characteristics interestingly match well with current Thai official cultural features, which might imply that the intention of the Thai authorities to define and categorise Thai culture like this was to firmly establish and present the unity of the country.

Seven cultural features in the textbook are defined in terms of core values to believe in, codes to practice and standards to follow, although each feature has problematic and controversial issues. I now provide a description of each feature.

The monarchy

The first Thai feature the textbook mentions is the institution of the monarchy, which has existed since the beginning of the Thai nation state. Thai citizens are taught to think of the national history as spanning through royal eras, for example the current 'Chakri Dynasty' has been established since 1782. The monarchy is regarded as the centre of the Thai people's spirit. However, as stated in a previous chapter on the topic

of television censorship, media productions in Thailand try not to present images or content involving the King, Queen and other royal family members to avoid showing any disrespect or criticism of the monarchy and risk being charged with the crime of lèse-majesté. Media productions relating to the monarchy are usually seen in the form of a documentary or a tribute on various special occasions, such as on the birthday of the King and Queen, and on a coronation day.

The Thai language

The authors of *Thai Civics, Culture and Living* textbook suggest that Thai people have their own language and alphabet that they use to communicate. In spite of several local dialects used in the country, the central Thai language is the national and official language, which helps people in the nation to relate to each other. Moreover, Thai literacy is considered to be part of a Thai citizen's responsibility. As stated by the *Royal Thai Government Gazette* (1940), Thai citizens have a civic duty to be literate in the Thai language. Also, they must help, support and encourage other Thai citizens who are illiterate to become literate.

In order to learn the Thai language, it is necessary to know the Thai alphabet, vowels and tones, which are usually described as a unique language system. Nonetheless, it is known that the Thai alphabet originated from the Cambodian language. Also, throughout Thai history, a number of Thai words have been influenced by various other languages, such as Chinese, Pali, Sanskrit and even European languages such as English and French. These hybrid words are widely accepted and used in the daily lives of Thai people. There is, however, a concern about the blending of the language with other languages, and a fear that this may result in the regression of the Thai language. An example of this concern has been mentioned in the previous chapter when it was stated that the Royal Institute of Thailand has expressed concern about young Thai people who are interested in Korean trends. A speaker from the institute

voiced concerns that young Thais tend to focus more on Korean culture, and ignore learning, and also misuse, the Thai language. The organisation has therefore suggested that Thai language lessons in schools should be improved and that the young generation should be directed to use the Thai language correctly (*Thairath*, 2010). The use of Thai language in the remakes of film, as well as the mixed use with other languages, will be discussed later in this chapter.

Lifestyle and personality

As explained in the *Thai Civics, Culture and Living* textbook, the key characteristics of the Thai people consist of humility, generosity, respect for elders and attachment to family. These personal attributes are said to be induced by social processes, both directly, for example, from family and school, and indirectly from, for instance, Thai proverbs and folklore. These characteristics, however, especially family attachment, are shared values of Asian culture (Iwabuchi, 2002) and therefore it is interesting to see how Thai remakes have adapted and distinguished these similar cultural features in the Thai context.

Buddhism

Although there are a variety of religions and beliefs that are accepted in Thailand, the major religion of the country is Buddhism, which is supported and protected by the state. The teaching of Buddhism plays an important role in forming the values, beliefs, thoughts and norms of the society. Most Thai people use Buddhism as a guideline for their conduct. When Buddhist-related content is presented through the entertainment media in Thailand, only positive aspects of the religion are allowed. In 2015, a Thai horror movie entitled อาบัติ (*a-bat*), which means infringement [of Buddha's discipline], was banned from release by the Ministry of Culture. A speaker from the Ministry gave four reasons for this ban, which comprised the depiction of monks engaged in violent conduct; monks drinking alcohol; monks having sexual relations; and portraying images

that were disrespectful to Buddha. The movie was subsequently released after these particular scenes had been edited out (Variety, 2015; *Bangkokbiznews*, 2015). A similar incident occurred in 2006: Apichatpong Weerasethakul's แสงศตวรรษ (*saeng satawat*) (*Syndromes and a Century*) was also banned by the board of censorship for showing many scenes that were considered to be problematic, including one depicting a Buddhist monk playing a guitar and two monks playing with a remote-controlled flying saucer. It was suggested these scenes should be deleted before the film was released in Thai cinemas. In protest over this censoring, the director inserted black clips in place of each of the censored scenes which lasted for the same length of time as the scenes that were cut. The result was that the audience experienced no picture or sound for the same time and in the same place as the censored scenes. The film was eventually released in its censored form for a limited run only in Bangkok in 2008 (*Prachatai*, 2008).

Agriculture

Because of its suitable location for cultivation, on account of fertile soil, satisfactory climate and few natural disasters, Thailand is considered to be an important world agricultural country. Although nowadays a lot of people previously living in the countryside have emigrated to towns to live and work in industry or the service sectors, it is claimed that agriculture is still the main occupation of the country, and one that reflects the Thai identity, and constructs many local customs and traditions (Kramon et al., 2008).

However, Sirijit Sunanta (2013), in her article 'Learning from the West? The State of the Multicultural Debate in Thailand', focuses on the inequality in Thai cultural citizenship on account of the different living locations. Despite the fact that every Thai person has the same rights as every other citizen by law, most Thais who live an agriculture lifestyle in rural areas have fewer opportunities for public welfare and

education. They are also considered to be an outmoded and backward group of the country, while Thais who live in towns or cities are regarded as representative of a preferred modernity and contemporary culture.

Sirijit Sunanta's argument about the inequity in Thai cultural citizenship may also link to the interpretation of the word 'civilisation' by Thai people. As discussed in the introductory chapter, Thailand has adopted the term, together with the notion of country development or 'civilisation' from the West. To be civilised, or what Thai people called *siwilai,* involves not only adapting to modernity in the form of, for example, building roads or providing the country with electricity, but also providing education and an understanding of each other. According to Thongchai Winichakul (2017) in his book คน ไทย/คนอื่น (*Thais/Other),* the concept of being civilised has been applied to stratify people in different spaces. Thai people, especially those in the ruling class and those emanating from the capital city in the late nineteenth century, thought Thai people living in the countryside were คนบ้านนอก (*khon ban-nok*) or 'bumpkins', and stereotyped them as being illiterate and uncivilised. However, these urban people considered themselves to be a civilised, educated, modern and superior group of people who characterised the nation and national identity. In any event, it is still controversial to say whether someone from an agricultural or metropolitan background, or even both, might represent Thai identity.

Thai food and herbs

Thai food is the most renowned cultural feature of Thailand around the world because of its special characteristics: the hot spiciness of the nutritious food, together with the use of many herbs and artistic decoration (Kramon et al., 2008). It is also the cultural item that receives the most support from the Thai government. A study of *Food and the Tourism Experience* by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2012 showed that the Thai government has been interested in the

globalisation of food since the 1990s, and has promoted Thai food with the campaign entitled 'the kitchen of the world' since 2001. The campaign has supported the development and increase of thousands of Thai restaurants overseas. The many Thai restaurants established worldwide stimulate foreigners to know more about Thailand and to travel to the country to experience 'authentic' Thai food.

However, among a number of Thai foods available locally and internationally, only one menu, ผัดไทย (*phat thai)*, alternatively and typically transcribed as 'Pad Thai' – a stir-fried rice noodles, has a traceable beginning, and can be claimed that was originated by Thai people. 'Pad Thai' was created during World War II when the country suffered from economic crisis and a rice shortage. The Thai Prime Minister at that time, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, had come up with an idea to encourage Thai people to have noodle dishes instead. As a result, a new Thai noodle menu was created (Jariya, 2016). 'Pad Thai', which later known as a 'national menu' and become popular worldwide, nonetheless, has been contested that it was actually influenced by different culture, Chinese cuisine in particular. Sujit Wongthes (2016), a Thai author and columnist specialised in Thai history and culture, has discussed this point referring to the naming of this specific menu. He says the word 'Thai' in 'Pad Thai' was added to identify that this menu is Thai and separate it from other existing Chinese noodle dishes in the country. The discussion of the origin of 'Pad Thai', Thai food shares with other Thai cultural features with characteristics that have been integrated with other cultures, it is questionable whether 'authentic' Thai food truly exists.

Thai festivals

Last but not least there are Thai festivals. These are cultural elements that have been created to celebrate and remind people about other Thai cultural elements. These festivals may be divided into three categories: those related to the Thai monarchy, those related to Buddhism and festivals related to the Thai characteristics of modesty

and family values. (Kramon et al., 2008). These three types of festivals provide evidence of Thai traditions and culture which have been observed and passed along from generation to generation.

There has been a change in the patterns of some of the festivals over time. For instance, the Songkran festival, known as 'Thailand's water festival', celebrates the traditional Thai New Year in April each year. The objective of the event is for individuals to show their gratitude to family members and friends by using water as the mediator or symbol of their fondness for their close kin (*Thairath*, 2014b). The traditional activities of this event include making a 'merit' at a temple and pouring water for the elderly and asking them for a blessing, as well as playing with, and gently throwing, water around with friends. Nowadays, however, the focus of the Songkran festival is on fun rather than on showing gratitude to family members. In the past, the venues for the Songkran festival were mainly set in homes or temples, but now many Songkran events are held in clubs or concert arenas. Also, the previous sedate playing with water has changed to a more aggressive practice of throwing water around (*Thairath*, 2014b).

With the example given, I cannot say whether the change in culture is advantageous or disadvantageous for Thai people. Still, debates between the contemporary and conservative groups do exist. For example, in 2016, came the launch of a music video promoting tourism in Thailand using 'ogres' from a classic Thai literature *Ramayana* to encourage Thais to travel within the country. The video shows the characters travelling and doing a lot of activities, such as taking selfies and driving go-carts, which led to criticisms over the appropriateness of portraying characters from classic literature in such a playful manner (*Bangkok Post*, 2016). While supporters of the video, such as the famous Thai visual artist Chalermchai Kositpipat, and Thai music producer Nitipong Hornak, have agreed that the change has been for the better, corresponding to the change in global technology and the tastes of younger generations (*Komchadleuk,*

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2016), others such as former Fine Arts Department official Ladda Tangsupachai have argued that the change might lessen the value of decency and devalue the status of Thai national identity (*Bangkok Post*, 2016).

Whatever the cultural alteration, one thing that is clear is that culture never remains the same; it is always changing. While freezing the pattern of culture would seem to be impossible, ironically the preservation of culture is still a duty for Thai people by law and by social instruction, but how is it possible for Thais to recognise and preserve such an uncertain element as culture?

This question, together with the unsettled nature of culture, relates to the question I posed at the beginning of the chapter, as to whether the proposed cultural features could genuinely represent Thai cultural identity. It has also inspired me to ask a further question, which is whether Thai people see Thai culture, and understand how and what to preserve in the same way. I expect the answers to these questions to be revealed through a number of my research approaches: in-depth interviews with Thai remake directors (Chapter 4) and focus groups with Thai remake audiences (Chapter 5). Part of the answers, nonetheless, will be disclosed here in Chapter 3 with the use of the textual analysis method. This will show if the proposed cultural features are agreeable in terms of media production and presentation, and will focus on the placement of cultural elements this thesis has regarded as Thai culture on screen, seeing which elements have been selected and those that have been rejected, as well as those that have been blended with the Korean–Thai adapted stories. The textual analysis starts with the remake of *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince,* then *Autumn in my Heart* and subsequently Full *House*.

Findings from textual analysis: Exploring (hybrid) Thai culture

The remake of *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince*

The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince, known as *Coffee Prince* for short, is one of the most famous Korean dramas in both South Korea and in Thailand. The story is about a girl with a tomboyish look (starring Yoon-Eun Hae in the Korean version). She is mistaken for a young man, but maintains the deception for the sake of being employed at a male-only staff coffee shop named Coffee Prince. The situation becomes complicated when her male boss (starring Gong Yoo in the Korean version) begins to fall in love with her, even though she is disguised as a boy. The drama was shown in South Korea on MBC channel in 2007. It was then bought by Thai Television Channel 7 to be shown and dubbed into Thai in 2008 as a weekend morning programme, and was re-shown in 2010 as a weekday morning programme. Later, on account of the excellent reception of this television drama, the Thai satellite television service and entertainment company True Visions bought the remaking rights with the intention of reproducing it as the first Korean remake drama in a Thai version, and appointed the Nadao Bangkok Company to be responsible for the production. Thai *Coffee Prince* was produced and shown on True Visions Channel television in 2012, with a new Thai title วุ่นรักเจ้าชายกาแฟ (*wun rak chao-chai kafae*), which translated means 'the chaotic love story of *Coffee's Prince*', directed by Songyos Sukmakanant and starring Weeradon Wangcharoenporn and Inthiporn Tamsukhin.

Figure: 3.1 Posters of the original South Korean Coffee Prince (left) and the Thai Coffee Prince (right).

According to an interview with the director that appeared in *Manager Newspaper* in 2012, as the Thai *Coffee Prince* was a remake production, the director decided to retain as much as possible of the original storyline. Nevertheless, on account of the Thai casting and certain production aspects, there were two important issues that the Thai version had to adapt from the original involving characters and some cultural elements (*Manager Online*, 2012).

According to the director, during the observation and investigation of the proposed criteria of Thai cultural identity, there were attempts to insert various Thai cultural features into almost every episode. The main features that were shown and stated were in the category of food, followed by the Thai language, the Thai way of life, and agricultural lifestyle, respectively. However, the monarchy, Buddhism and Thai festivals were not featured.

In terms of introducing Thai food into the story, the Thai producers directly replaced Korean dishes that were shown on screen or were mentioned by characters with Thai foods in the same categories. For instance, there was a change in the 'battle' food in the eating competition scene, which shows that the leading female character not only looks like a boy but also acts like one. To help her sister escape from a thug who keeps bothering her, she challenges him to compete in a speed-eating contest. Without much effort she manages to win the competition easily. In the original version, the 'battle' food for this scene is Korean black sauce noodle (*Ja-jang-myeon*[9]), but in the remake Thai producers have changed this to a Thai noodle dish called ขนมจีนน้ำยา (*khanom chin nam-ya*), or curry with rice vermicelli. They have also introduced another local food, fried bamboo caterpillars, into the same scene when the leading female character's younger sister tries to upset a man by deliberately putting caterpillars on to his plate.

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[9] Ja-jang-myeon (자장면) (Black Bean Sauce Noodles) is a Chinese cuisine adapted to the Korean style served in most of the Chinese restaurants in South Korea and has become a favourite food among the Koreans (Korean Culture Blog, 2015)

Figure 3.2: The food 'battle' scene in the original South Korean Coffee Prince (left) and in the Thai version (right).

There is another scene showing a change from Korean food to Thai dishes, when the leading male meets the one he loves in their home town after three years apart and living in different countries. He asks her whether their home town is better than abroad. In the Korean version, the female character replies 'Definitely, because there are spicy rice cakes, rice sausages and you are here.' The answer implies that she is thinking of her favourite foods and favourite man in her home town. In the same situation and with the same question, the Thai actress mentions her local dishes which are ข้าวซอย (*khao-soi*) northern style curried noodle soup, and น้ำพริกหนุ่ม (*nam-phrik num*) northern Thai green chilli dip.

The Thai *Coffee Prince* not only shows the main course dishes as Thai food, but the desserts as well. In one scene in the eleventh episode of the remake version, the leading male takes his grandmother to a dessert café. The Thai version has switched the menu they order from Korean style shaved ice dessert with sweet toppings or *pat-bing-su* to ขนมปังเย็น (*khanompang yen*) Thai style shaved ice dessert with bread toppings.

Figure 3.3: Pat-bing-su, shaved ice dessert, in the original South Korean Coffee Prince (left) and khanompang yen in the Thai version (right).

The Thai producers have also revised the script to include Thai herbal products in the remake story. In episode eleven, when the main female protagonist visits the grandmother of the leading male character in hospital, instead of bringing her orange juice as in the original, she brings her herbal drinks and some fruit juice, namely chrysanthemum tea, a roselle infusion and guava juice.

The replacement of these drinks interests me and two aspects of these scenes are worth discussing. First there is the selection of drinks. As mentioned earlier, the Thai *Coffee Prince*'s director presents a Thai food feature by switching the Korean meal to a Thai menu. However, the chrysanthemum tea that the director chooses to present is not originally from Thailand; rather, it is from China. Although there is no record of when it was first introduced into Thailand, it has possibly been in the country long enough to be thought of, at least by this director, as a Thai drink. The remake director's decision to cast a Chinese drink as a particular Thai feature might be regarded as a good example of cultural hybridity that starts with learning about a particular cultural artefact from the 'other', then accepting it, and finally with the artefact being recognised and becoming part of one's own heritage.

Another point to emphasise relating to the drink replacement is the reason behind the change. Unlike other scenes where Korean items have been substituted with Thai

items, the item replaced in this scene is orange juice, which cannot be regarded as entirely a foreign item by Thais. In my view, on the one hand to cut out orange juice and replace it with herbal drinks may convey a local folk intelligence in applying herbal elements for remedy purposes. On the other hand it may refer to a symbol of antiquity. Since the Thai cultural identity is sometimes portrayed with age-old or timeless pictures, such as monumental ruins or bucolic scenery, these somehow become stereotypical images of Thai culture. However, since culture is never static and is always changing, the challenge between the old and the new, the past and the contemporary, has often arisen, as well as which would best represent Thai identity. Such a contest has been shown repeatedly throughout the three remakes and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Also with regard to the food feature topic, while South Korean dishes shown in the original drama together with the common drink of orange juice have been substituted with Thai food and drinks, food from other countries is still maintained in other scenes. For example, in the remake drama's second episode, after the female protagonist completes her mission in helping the male protagonist to ruin his arranged dates, they celebrate at a Chinese restaurant just like the characters in the original version. Likewise, in the scene where the male protagonist's mother phones the female protagonist to meet up, in both versions the meeting takes place at a Japanese restaurant.

The decision to choose, replace or maintain specific types of foods is likely to be based on the remake directors' opinions. To understand more about the connotation of these local food selections, in-depth interviews of the directors were conducted and the findings reviewed in Chapter 4: Cultural Negotiation in Thai Remake Productions.

The other Thai cultural feature found in the remake of *Coffee Prince* is the use of the Thai language. Even though the script of the Thai remake has been translated directly from the Korean version, there are many instances where the producers have decided to adapt the language to link to Thai settings and Thai audiences. One example is the use of a Northern Thai dialect. Since the main setting of the Thai *Coffee Prince* is in Chiang Mai, a northern province of Thailand, there are many scenes of supporting actors and actresses where they speak in their local dialect. The northern Thai dialect is also revealed in some folk music in episode fourteen, when staff at the Coffee Prince shop arrange a shop-promotion event. They perform live music and dance to a famous northern Thai folk song, พี่สาวครับ (*phi-sao-khrap*). The original version shows a very different international drum performance and live pop music.

Applying dialect to the story may be seen to be an instance where there was disagreement between the Thai authorities and the Thai remake production teams regarding how Thai culture should be portrayed. With reference to the description of official Thai cultural features provided earlier, only the Thai central language is accepted as the official Thai language, although there are several Thai dialects available in the country, For the Thai *Coffee Prince* director, however, the Thai central language was perhaps not thought to be enough to present Thai culture as a whole, and so he places his remake story in a northern regional background with a local atmosphere and the use of dialect. This director does not think that Thais can only communicate in the official central language, or that Thailand refers only to Bangkok. The localised application to the director's remake of the drama will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Another point to mention regarding language use is how the coffee shop, the main set of the story, is named. The name of the coffee shop in both versions is called by the English name 'Coffee Prince'. Before becoming 'Coffee Prince', the previous names of

the shop in both the South Korean and Thai versions come from their own languages. In the Korean version, the coffee shop is first named '왕자 커피' *(wang-ja coffee)*, which means Coffee Prince in Korean. In the Thai version, however, the previous name of the 'Coffee Prince' shop is 'ราชากาแฟ' (*racha kafae*), which translates as the 'King of coffee'. The word 'racha' does not mean prince in Thai, rather, it is an old word for 'king', which may also convey a traditional and old-fashioned feeling to viewers. When the main male protagonist becomes the new shop owner, he believes using an English name will make the shop sound trendier than the former local name. Therefore when he is fully in charge, changing the name of the shop is his very first suggestion.

The use of the old Thai language in naming the coffee shop in the Thai version has brought me back to my previous argument with regard to the food topic, about equating 'Thainess' with antiquity. Again, using contemporary Thai language does not convince Thai producers that this is enough to present Thai identity. The old Thai language, however, seems to represent the Thai image more clearly. To change the Korean story into the Thai context, an attempt has been made by Thai directors to insert Thai retro-feeling elements into the scenes.

An additional issue about the Thai name presented in the remake is the use of the unique attribute of a Thai name given to the storyline to show the connection between people. Two Thai people with the same surname are almost certainly related. Therefore, in episode nine of the remake, when the two main characters go to a bookstore together, the female character notices that the surname of one book's author is similar to that of the male protagonist. She then asks if they are related and finds out that they are father and son. Unlike Thai people, however, Koreans cannot easily find their family connection just by seeing their last names since there are only a few hundred family names in Korea (Cavendish, 2005). In fact there is high possibility that Koreans who share the same family name may not know each other at all. The father–

son relationship in the original scene is revealed when the female character notices that the book's author is the chief executive officer at the male character's family company.

The Thai and Korean languages are not only different in wording, but also in lettering. Nevertheless, although these two languages are completely dissimilar with regard to writing and speaking, there are some similarities in terms of cultural use. For example, both the Thai and Korean language have groups of word titles, which can show a brother or sister relationship. These terms are used to indicate both seniority and individuals of lower status and show both respect and closeness. In this drama the female leading role usually calls the main actors by their position as 'Manager' or 'Boss'. Later, when they are closer, the main actor, who still does not know that the person he is talking to is in fact a woman, asks her to be his sworn brother and let her address him as brother or 'พี่' (*phi*) in Thai, or '형' (*hyeong*) in the Korean version.

The cultural similarity has also been seen with regard to lifestyle and personality features. According to *Thai Civics, Culture and Social Living* (Kramon et al., 2008), the lifestyle and personality of Thai people include modesty, respect, friendliness, generosity, kindness and attachment to family. Both the original and the remake of *Coffee Prince* have presented family values in a similar manner. As a child, one should show gratitude to one's parents, and the main female character regards the welfare of her family as her first priority. Also, the family relationships of the leading male character in both versions are shown in the form of a traditional extended family. His grandmother, father and mother live together in the same house. They also hold the traditional roles of family members. While his grandmother is regarded as the head of family, his father is in charge of the family business. His mother as daughter-in-law and wife is responsible for taking care of all family members, cooking and housework.

Although the aspect of family attachment in both versions is similar, the way modesty and respect of Thai people are shown differs from the South Korean version. Thai people usually greet and demonstrate their politeness and respect with a ไหว้ (*wai*) posture: bringing one's palms together while bowing or dipping one's head. In the Thai remake, w*ai* is seen throughout the story, especially in the scene where the two main characters first meet and when the young and the old meet.

Figure 3.4: An example of wai posture in Thai Coffee Prince.

Another way to demonstrate the modesty of Thai people is in the words used. While English uses different tones of speaking to show their politeness, Thais use particles at the end of sentences. Thai women end their sentences with the term ค่ะ (*kha*) while Thai men use ครับ (*khrap*). The closest expression in English to these words might be 'Yes, Sir'. In the remake, the main female character uses the masculine word *khrap* at the end of a sentence when she is disguised as a man, but uses the feminine word *kha* when her true sex has been disclosed.

Regarding the agricultural feature, there is only one instance in episode seven of the remake that relates to the agricultural lifestyle when the Coffee Prince shop's staff agree to a company outing. The head of staff suggests to visit his friend's orange garden in a suburb of Chiang Mai. He says his friend can offer them free accommodation. They then decide to go without knowing that 'free' accommodation means that they have to work for it. When they arrive, they find they have to help the

owners of the garden do the gardening and orange picking. Initially most of the staff do not want to work, but when they do start to work they enjoy themselves and realise the meaning of friendship and teamwork.

The scene implies that an agricultural lifestyle can bring people close to nature as well as generate generosity and bring about a more equal society, which corresponds to the description of the agricultural feature in 'Thainess'. However, the scene has been adapted directly from the South Korean original version. It is therefore problematic to say whether the company outing scene to the rural area really represents the 'true' Thai cultural identity or simply shares the Asian common value of an agricultural background.

Figure 3.5: Company outing scene in the original Coffee Prince (left) and in the Thai Version (right).

For the cultural features relating to the monarchy, Buddhism and Thai festivals, they are not seen on the screen, or mentioned by any characters in the remake. However, there is one interesting point to make regarding religion. Even though Buddhism is the main religion in Thailand and considered as an essential part of Thai society and tradition, the remake of *Coffee Prince* does not have any activity related to Buddhism to the story. However, the remake director does keep the only religious activity, a Christian wedding ceremony, as shown in the original version. In episode twenty of the remake, the wedding between two of the supporting male and female figures is set in

Western style. The bride is in a white wedding dress and the groom is in a suit. They exchange their vows in front of the priest, their families and friends.

Figure 3.6: The wedding scene in the original Coffee Prince (left) and in the Thai version (right).

It is interesting to note that although the Thai producers insert some Thai features such as food and language into the remake, thinking that they should present certain features of Thai cultural identity to the viewers, they nevertheless decide to keep the Christian wedding ceremony as shown in the original. Whether the producers want to imitate the scene as closely as possible, or do not regard Buddhism as one of Thailand's cultural features, will be disclosed in the discussion with the Thai remake directors shown in Chapter 4.

On first viewing the remake it would seem that the Thai producers have largely imitated the original rather than having adapted much in the remake of *Coffee Prince*. The later remakes, however, have done much more revision of the storyline, especially in terms of the placement of Thai cultural elements. The remake of *Autumn in my Heart,* for instance, shows a different interpretation of the story, with the insertion of more Thai cultural beliefs and features.

The remake of *Autumn in my Heart*

Autumn in my Heart is a tragic love story of a boy and a girl (starring Song Seung-heon and Song Hye-kyo in the South Korean version) who grow up as siblings. But the girl is in fact from a different family as there was a mix-up at the hospital where she was born. The mix-up comes to light when she is involved in a car accident and it is discovered that her blood group is different from that of her 'parents'. Her life takes a completely different turn when the two girls who have been living with the wrong parents are returned to their respective families. Many years later, when the non-biological brother and sister are reunited, their relationship changes from siblings to lovers.

The drama was originally shown in South Korea on KBS2 Channel in 2000, and was shown dubbed in Thai on Thai TV Channel 7 in 2001 and re-shown in 2011. The Thai remake version under the new title 'รักนี้ชั่วนิจนิรันดร์' (*rak ni chua nit niran*), meaning eternal love, was produced by Halo Productions and directed by Siwaroj Kongsakul, staring Jesadapon Pholdee and Susharat Manaying. It was broadcast through True Visions Channel in 2013.

Figure 3.7: Posters of the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and the Thai Autumn in my Heart (right).

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Compared to the Thai version of *Coffee Prince*, the remake of *Autumn in my Heart* was adapted more loosely from the original, especially with regard to the style of the narration and the script. A clear example of different narration styles is seen in the beginning of the story. While the South Korean version narrates the story chronologically, beginning with the hospital scene where the main actress as a baby was switched at birth, the Thai version starts with the end of the story, showing the main actor sitting miserably by the sea. He daydreams, sees the female protagonist when she was young, and asks her not to leave him. The remake then cuts to the hospital scene as presented in the original.

Figure 3.8: Opening scene of the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and the Thai version (right)

Although the main plot, conflict and climax of the Thai *version of Autumn in my Heart* are based on the original, the remake considerably changes how the story ends. The South Korean version ends tragically, with the death of the female leading role on account of her leukaemia and the possible death of the male leading character in a car accident right after his loved one's funeral. However, even though the Thai version's leading female character dies with leukaemia as in the original version, here the main actor is still very much alive with no accident and viewers can see him in the end scene heartbroken and thinking of his past love with a repeat of the opening scene. The remake director's revisions of the script were made expecting to match the Thai audiences' expectations, and conveying his opinions about life and the circle of life, where every end has its beginning and every beginning has its end. Further discussion

about these changes and the director's decisions are presented in the following chapter.

In addition to the change in the style of narration, it is noticeable that this remake has cut all specifically Korean-related items out of the story and replaced them with other features, either Thai or non-Thai items. For instance, when the South Korean main actor asks his long-lost sister how to cook *kimchi stew,* a Korean soup dish, as an excuse to talk to her; the recipe the Thai male protagonist asks for is Thai red curry. Another instance of replacement is seen once the female protagonist discovers she has got leukaemia. To reduce her stress, the South Korean protagonist brings home a bottle of *Soju*, a South Korean alcoholic beverage, to drink with her mother. The alcoholic drink shown in the Thai version, however, is whiskey.

Figure 3.9: Drinking scene in the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and in the Thai version (right)

If there is no substitute for something similar, the South Korean items mentioned or shown in the original are simply deleted from the remake scenes. For example, in episode ten of the South Korean version, on the leading female character's birthday,

her mother prepares a variety of foods as well as 미역국 (*Miyeok-guk*), Korean seaweed soup, for her. In Korean culture, seaweed is widely believed to contain a high content of nutrients that are important for nursing mothers. In the past, pregnant women would eat seaweed soup for about a month after giving birth. Eating *Miyeok-guk* on their birthdays would be seen as a way to remind Korean children not to forget the pain of childbirth and to appreciate the care given to them by their mothers (Visitkorea, 2016a). Yet there is no such belief in Thailand, and consequently seaweed soup has been cut out of the remake scene.

Figure 3.10: The birthday meal in the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and in the Thai version (left).

It has also seen an attempt in inserting Thai cultural elements into this remake in the engagement ceremony of the main actor and his fiancée. Such an event has already been discussed in the remake of *Coffee Prince* where the Thai producers tried to keep the details as similar as possible to the original. However, the producer of the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* decided to replace the Western-style engagement ceremony seen in the original with a Thai traditional style ritual. There are different patterns in the ceremony and different styles of costumes. As seen in the pictures below, while the Korean couple are in Western outfits and celebrating the moment with cake and

champagne, the Thai characters are in traditional Thai costumes and receiving a blessing from their parents.

Figure 3.11: Engagement scene in the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and in the Thai version (left)

In focusing more on how the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* negotiated and appropriated a Thai context into the story using the proposed criteria mentioned above, only the Thai lifestyle and personality features can be clearly seen. The Thai language, Buddhism and agricultural life are less clearly highlighted, and the monarchy and Thai festivals are not featured at all throughout the story.

The main Thai cultural item found in the topic of Thai lifestyle and personality again relates to the *wai*. Since the *wai* is regarded as a symbol of Thai respect when people greet each other, the *wai* is presented throughout the story, especially in the classroom scenes when the main protagonists are young. In Thai schools students usually have to greet and show their respect to the teachers by giving them a *wai* at the beginning and end of each class*.*

Figure 3.12: Wai posture shown in the Thai Autumn in my Heart.

Most Thai people are taught not only to be polite but also to be grateful to anyone who supports them, particularly their parents. In this television drama, when the main female protagonist knows that she has cancer, she feels very sorry because she does not have enough time to be a good daughter to both her real mother and her foster mother. In her view, being a good daughter is to be grateful and be able to take good care of her parents.

Since the main plot of this story is about a daughter who grows up in two different families, family attachment is a key factor in the drama. However, the scene showing the closeness between the foster mother and the female protagonist when she was young was remade in the Thai version. The original version depicts an intimate scene in a bath, showing the two of them taking a bath together. In this scene, the mother notices that her girl has reached puberty, but in the Thai version the scene has been altered to the daughter having her hair cut by her mother.

Figure 3.13: The scene revealing the close relationship between the main female protagonist and her foster mother in the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and in the version (right).

The Thai remake version has also added a scene showing the mother caring for her daughter by helping her to wear her first bra and teaching her to beware of being touched by anyone. The Thai mother's teaching may imply why the bathing scene between mother and daughter has been revised with the daughter having her hair cut by her mother to harmonise with the traditional value of Thai women being reserved and avoiding the issue of sexuality.
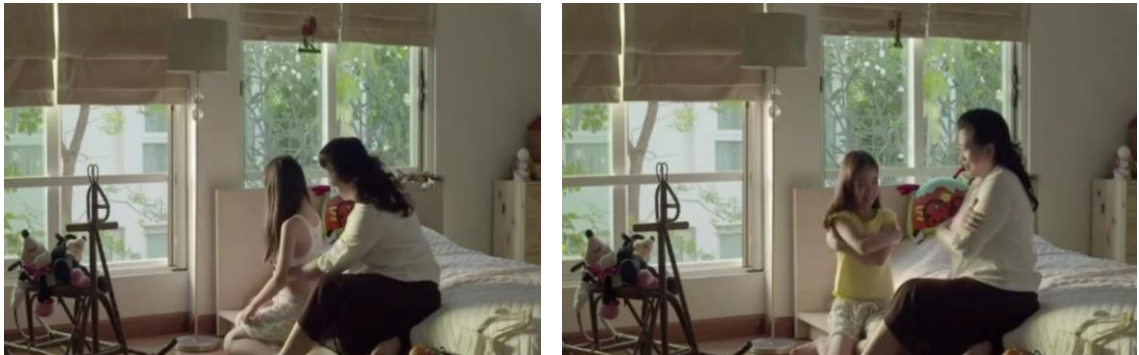
Figure 3.14: The mother teaching her daughter how to wear a bra scene in the Thai Autumn in my Heart.

With regard to the Thai language used in the remake, since the romantic sibling relationship between the main male protagonist and the main female protagonist is at the heart of the story, the term พี่ (*phi*), which shows the brother and sister relationship in Thai as discussed in the Thai version of *Coffee Prince*, can be seen throughout the story. However, in the Korean language, to address someone older is more complicated than in the Thai language, and depends on the gender of the speakers and to whom they are talking. For male speakers, the title for elder brother is 형 (*hyung*) and the title for elder sister is 누나 *(noo-na)*. For a female speaker, the title for elder brother is 오빠 (*op-pa*) and the title for elder sister is 언니 *(un-nie)*.

Op-pa has now become a generic term for many Thai people in the way they address Korean pop singers and actors, or even to use in addressing Korean trends in the country. An example of Thais using the word *op-pa* has recently been seen in a Thai news headline. The term is used, together with the nickname of the current Prime

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Minister of Thailand 'Tu', as *'Op-pa* Tu*'* in association with the content of an article about his positive attitude expressed toward Korean television drama. (*Manager Online*, 2016). The article is about a speech given by the Prime Minister encouraging Thai people to watch the patriotic South Korean drama *Descendant of the Sun*, a love and duty story about a captain of the South Korean Special Forces and a talented field surgeon, and trying to encourage Thai producers to create television dramas with a similar concept.[10]

With regard to the subject of Buddhism, there is a scene in the remake related to this feature. When everyone knows that the female protagonist has cancer, her real mother does not know how to help but prays to a Buddha amulet. From the way she has behaved it may be implied that when some Thai people despair, Buddhism will be their spiritual anchor. However, this remake scene has been reproduced completely differently from the original. The Korean character who prays for the main actress is not her mother, but rather the male supporting character who is in love with her. He does not pray to the Buddha but to the Christian God in a church.

Figure 3.15: Praying scene in the original Autumn in my Heart (left) and in the Thai version (right).

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[10]About a year after the Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-ocha suggested television producers should create television dramas with a patriotic theme, there was a television production team that accepted his advice and produced a television series called ภารกิจรัก [*pharakit rak*] or Love Missions, which told a story about love, friendship and sacrifice for the nation. The series was launched in July 2017 on Thai television Channel 7 and divided into four parts. The protagonists of each part acted as representatives from each Thai military and police division. Because the series shows a positive image of these organisations and because it has a patriotic content, it has received a lot of support from the Ministry of Defence in terms of venues being provided for filming, equipment and manpower (BBC Thai, 2017).

In terms of the presentation of the argricultural life in this remake, even though the main settings of both the original and Thai versions are in a provincial area, all the key casts' careers are unrelated to argriculture. The main male character is a university lecturer and the main female character works as a housekeeper in a hotel. However, when they decide to run away from their families after their love affair is exposed, the Korean couple go to a faraway dairy farm while the Thai couple elope to a farm where horses are kept. They spend their free time relaxing at these farms and openly expressing their love for each other. Focusing on the escape that features Thai agriculture, it may be assumed that agricultural life and nature are considered to be a sanctuary for people. Although many Thai people these days have moved to urban areas to live and work, attachment to rural areas, agriculture and nature have never faded.

The final criteria found in this remake drama is in the category of food. Thai food is usually regarded as one of the top categories to be presented in depicting Thai cultural identity, and it is therefore quite surprising to find that there is only one scene in the whole story which clearly states the name of a specifically Thai food: Thai red curry. This is mentioned when the main actor asks the main actress for her recipe.

Although it was courageous of the director of the Thai remake *Autumn in my Heart* to introduce a new style of narration as well as inserting more Thai cultural features into the story, it is clear that the percentage of script adaptation in the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* is still less than repetition of the original. The degree of adaptation is, however, remarkably developed in the final remake television drama that I discuss: *Full House.*

The remake of *Full House*

Full House tells the story of a young woman (starring Song Hye-kyo in the Korean version) who lives in the house she has inherited from her parents. Her father called the property 'Full of love House', or 'Full House' for short. She has two close friends who end up selling the house behind her back to a famous superstar (starring Rain in the Korean version). Through a series of incidents, the two make a contract to marry for each other's benefit. Although they are not in love with each other when they marry, a love between them develops slowly over time. This Korean romantic comedy television drama was shown in South Korea on KBS channel in 2004 and hit the highest ratings with an average of 38 per cent of the total population of South Korea who viewed the programme. In Thailand, the original *Full House* was shown dubbed in Thai on Channel 7 in 2005. It was then reproduced and shown on the True Visions channel and on True Visions official online in 2013 with the Thai title of 'วุ่นนักรักเต็มบ้าน' (*wun nak rak tem ban*), which means 'chaotic love in the house'. The remake of the Thai *Full House* was produced by Halo Productions, directed by Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, and stars Pirat Nitipaisalkul and Sucharat Manaying.

Figure 3.16: Posters of the original Full House (left) and the Thai Full House (right).

Full House is the third Korean drama that was remade by Thai producers under supervision of the True Vision Company, and become the most famous in comparison to the former remakes. Since this company sees the potential of online viewers as well as international audiences, an online channel and mobile application for watching the programme online were created for additional viewing options. When it was broadcast, there were at least a million Thais and ten million Chinese online viewers per episode, and statistics gathered in May 2014 show that the number of online viewers increased to reach 200 million viewers in Thailand and 2,000 million viewers across Asia[11]. Furthermore, nine Asian countries have already bought the viewing rights of the Thai remake of *Full House*, namely China, Hong Kong,[12] Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar (*Newplus*, 2014). According to *China News*' article, 'Thai Version of "*Full House*"' (2014), the three main reasons that the Thai remake of *Full House* gained such recognition abroad, especially in China, are on account of the attractive leading characters, the familiar storyline and the original mix between Thai and Korean components.

Of the three Korean remake dramas in Thai versions, it is noticeable that the Thai *Full House* is the most modified from the original. Rather than offering scenes that imitate the original like the first two remakes, the Thai *Full House* retains only the main plot and some key elements of the original story, but narrates the rest of the details differently. One influence on the revision of the script is the involvement of the Korean production company. On account of the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Thai–South Korean diplomatic relationship in 2013, the same year that the Thai version of *Full House* was launched, there was cooperation between the Thai and Korean production companies in creating this remake television drama. The story of *Full House* in the Thai version was revised to relate to South Korea in various ways. South Korea became the second

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[11] Since there is no record of the household television ratings of Thai *Full House* available, I would suggest the number of online viewers as evidence of the remake's popularity among local and international audiences.

[12] Although Hong Kong is now part of mainland China, it is listed as a country in these statistics.

main shooting location for this remake. Every event in the original version that occurred abroad, including the main cast's first meeting in China and their honeymoon in Thailand, was changed to occur in South Korea. The Thai producers also added two more situations that were not shown in the original so that the Thai casts could once again visit South Korea. One is for a television commercial shoot and another for the protagonists' reconciliation at the end. Each time the main cast is in South Korea there are lots of obvious tie-in scenes to promote South Korean tourism, Korean cuisine and even South Korean consumer brands.
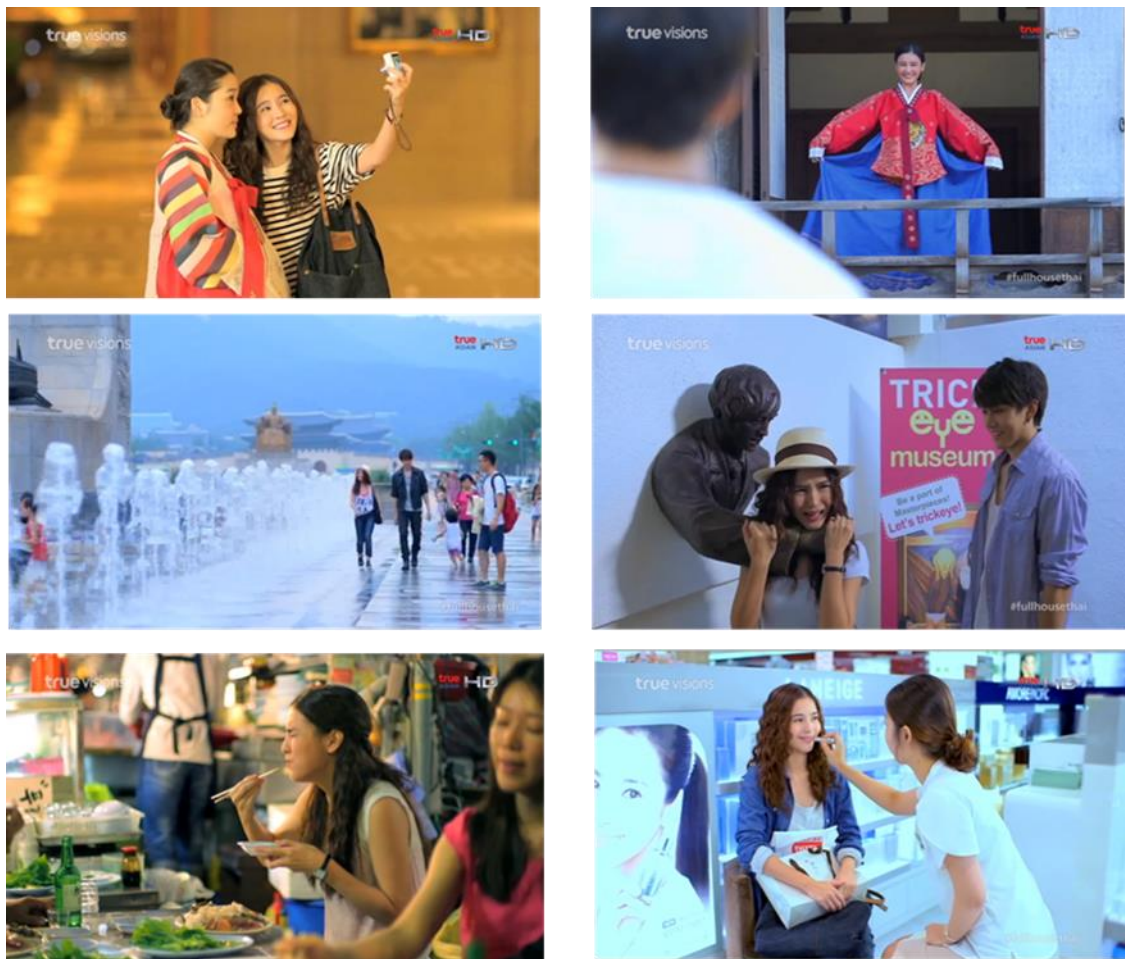
Figure 3.17: Examples of the Thai remake of Full House scenes in South Korea.

However, because the honeymoon scene in the original version takes place in Thailand, It can be seen to be an exchange in promoting tourist attractions in both countries.

Figure 3.18: Examples of the original Full House scenes in Thailand.

In terms of presenting Thai cultural identity into the story, while the remakes of *Coffee Prince* and *Autumn in my Heart* introduce Thai cultural elements by directly replacing the Korean items, the Thai *Full House* tries to insert them into the story realistically. With the Thai food feature, for example, the director changes the career of the female protagonist to be not only an amateur scriptwriter like the original version's character, but also a food writer columnist. Because of her job, she has to review various kinds of food, including Korean and Thai food. The photos below show the main actress reviewing the Korean *bibimbap* (a Korean rice dish with mixed vegetables) and northeastern Thai dishes.

Figure 3.19: A scene showing the Thai protagonist's job as a food review columnist.

A variety of Thai dishes are constantly mentioned and presented throughout this Thai remake. Since the main story is about two strangers that have to stay together because of certain events that have occurred, they have to learn about each other's needs including their favourite foods. There is a scene where the main actor asks the main

actress to jot down a list of Thai foods he likes, and scenes where she prepares food for him. After their fake wedding, the grandmother of the main actor asks the main actress to visit and teaches her how to cook her grandson's favourite menu: Thai chicken green curry. To highlight this cooking lesson, the Thai producer presents it like a cookery programme, explaining in detail how the food should be cooked.

Figure 3.20: Examples of cooking scenes in the Thai Full House.

The grandmother teaches the female protagonist not only how to cook, but also how to be a traditional Thai lady. The grandmother considers that a Thai lady is one who is able to cook, knit and create a fine fruit carving.
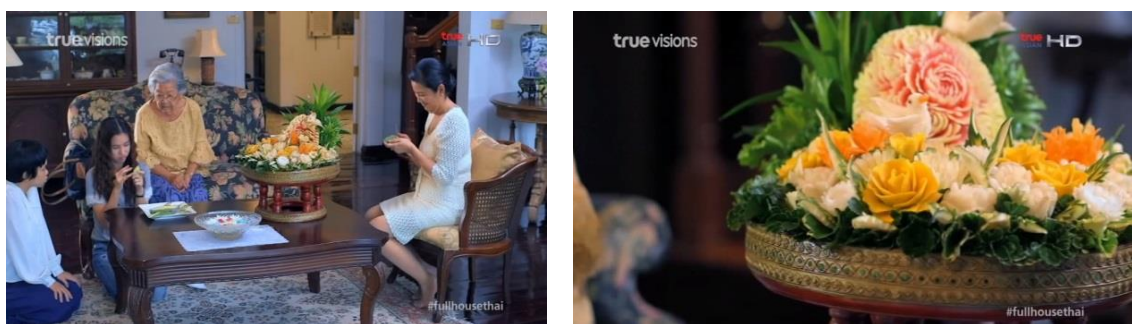
Figure 3.21: Examples of the Thai lady-to-be practising scene in the Thai Full House.

Additionally, the grandmother expects a proper *wai* greeting from her granddaughter-in-law, because, as previously mentioned, the *wai* gesture is considered to be part of the Thai cultural identity that conveys respect and politeness shown by Thai people to others. Also, many foreigners who know about Thailand know that they should greet Thai people with *wai.* For example, in episode one of the Thai remake *Full House*, when the lead male protagonist is being interviewed by Korean reporters, they greet him with *wai.* Another instance is in episode two where, when a member of the Korean sale staff at a Korean duty free outlet notices that his customer, the female leading role, is Thai, he gives her a *wai* greeting and says thank you to her in Thai.

Figure 3.22: Examples of wai gestures in the Thai remake Full House.

The demonstration of *wai* by foreigners in the Thai *Full House* can be explained by my previous discussion about the definition of Thai identity: that one culture can help in distinguishing another culture by remarking on their differences. When Korean people acknowledge that *wai* is the way Thai people greet each other, it is then understood that *wai* is part of Thai culture.

The same idea of affirming one cultural identity with another culture is also found in the use of the Thai language. There are scenes where foreigners try to speak Thai with Thais using basic Thai phrases such as สวัสดี *sawat-di* (hello), ขอบคุณ *khop-khun* (thank you) and คุณน่ารักมาก *khun na-rak mak* (you are very pretty). However, there is one Thai in the remake Thai *Full House* who alternates between Thai and English almost every time he speaks. In some scenes the conversation between this character and his friend is completely in English with Thai subtitles provided. One reason he talks in English is because the producer wants to present him as someone with an international background.

The revision of the script of the Thai *Full House* clearly reveals another Thai key feature: Buddhism. In the original Korean version of *Full House* there is a scene where the Korean lead character is reminded of his younger sister who has died when the lead female actress finds a picture of her in his room. He then tells her about his sister. The Thai version of the story is narrated differently, however, with reference to a Buddhist activity, where the main actor makes a 'merit' and listens to a monk's sermon at a Thai temple on the occasion of the anniversary of his sister's death.

Figure 3.23: An example of Buddhism featured in the Thai remake Full House.

Another religious feature is the wedding scene. In the Korean version the wedding ceremony is set in a formal western style in a big ballroom, with lots of guests including family, friends, reporters and photographers. The bride and groom appear in the scene

in white wedding dress and tuxedo, respectively. As the bride's parents have already died, the groom's father volunteers to walk her up the aisle in a Christian wedding ceremony. In the Thai version, however, although the two main characters also get married, the Thai producer presents the wedding scene in traditional Thai style. The wedding is arranged as a private event at the house of the groom's parents; only family members and friends attend. The bride, groom and most of the guests are in traditional Thai costume. Even though it is an arranged marriage, the atmosphere of the wedding in the remake Thai *Full House* seems more relaxed than the wedding in the original Korean version.

Figure 3.24: Wedding scene in the original Full House (left) and in the Thai version (right).

With regard to features that are not represented, although viewers might be slightly aware of the agricultural related content in the remakes of *Coffee Prince* and *Autumn in my Heart*, they would not see anything about agriculture in the remake of Thai *Full House*. This is because none of the characters' occupations are in any way related to agriculture, and the main location of the story is set in the city centres of Bangkok, Thailand and Seoul, South Korea. The monarchy and Thai festival features are also not mentioned at all throughout this story.

From the monitoring of three remake dramas based on the proposed criteria, it may be concluded that each remake emphasises different cultural features and portrays Thai culture in various different ways. While the Thai *Coffee Prince* tries to localise food by switching all Korean dishes to Thai food, the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* focuses more on family relations. Thai *Full House*, on the other hand, creates a number of specifically Thai situations in the story, and some of these cultural aspects are not associated with the set criteria. The following discussion will expose the cultural elements outside the given criteria, and suggest the reasons why these particular cultural features were selected.

'Thainess' beyond the official criteria

Apart from monitoring remake dramas according to official designated cultural categories, I also look at cultural elements that are shown differently from the Korean version, but which do not fit into any of the official categories. What I found can be divided into three groups: setting, props and expression of characters. These features led me to the next step of the research, which was to interview the remake directors to understand what they thought about cultural identity and find out why certain cultural elements were selected or rejected. Moreover, when the features outside the given criteria are found, they have affirmed an important question: 'Is the official definition of Thai culture actually valid?'

The first feature outside the existing criteria is setting. The main location of the Thai remake *Coffee Prince* is set in Chiang Mai, while the Korean story is placed in Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. The setting selection led to the question of why the director agreed to use a city in a province in the north of Thailand, Chiang Mai, as a prime location rather than Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand. Likewise, the location selection of the remake of *Autumn in my Heart was* also brought to my attention. Of seventy-seven provinces in Thailand, the director chose a specific province, Phetchaburi, a seaside venue, as a main setting. One reason for this selection may link to the viewpoint of the Thai *Coffee Prince* director mentioned earlier: that Bangkok alone cannot represent Thailand as a whole. Using different locations, therefore, might be the way to present various aspects of Thai culture. Whether or not this relates to localisation, the director's decision with regard to location will be further discussed in the following chapter on cultural negotiation in the Thai remake production.

The second feature I noticed was concerning the use of props and decoration. In the remake of *Coffee Prince,* the type of flower shown in a particular scene is clearly dissimilar to that in the original version. According to the storyline, the male protagonist asks the woman he loves to draw a picture on a shop wall. The actress in the Korean version draws a picture of sunflowers, but the Thai remake actress draws a picture of a hibiscus. Interestingly, this hibiscus drawing is not only used in the remake scene, but also becomes part of the logo for the drama in the Thai version. Although the hibiscus does not really represent the country's identity, it is nevertheless selected to be placed in the scene, again on account of the director's decision.
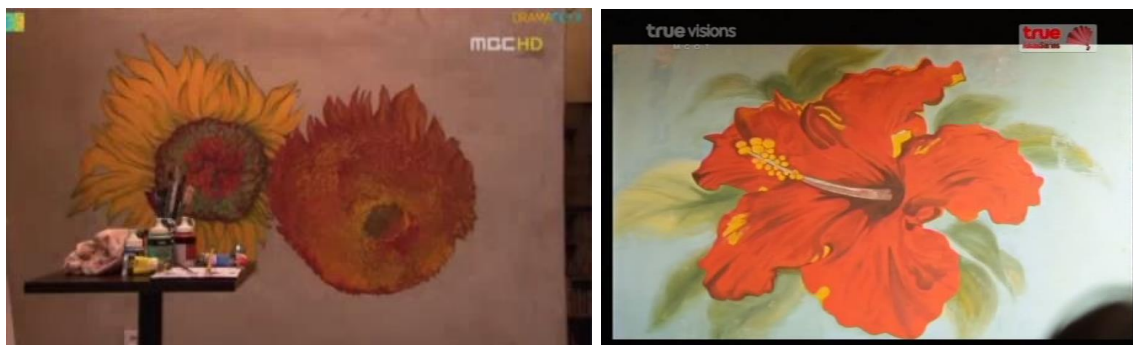
Figure 3.25: Flower drawing in the original Coffee Prince (left) and in the Thai version (right).

Figure: 3.26 The Thai Coffee Prince logo.

Furthermore, I have found that Thai producers deliberately add other Thai cultural features, especially tourism-related items to the scene, such as a *tuk tuk,* a three-wheeled motorcycle and an icon of Thai tourism. A *tuk tuk* is seen in the second episode of Thai *Coffee Prince*, when the male leading role gets drunk and needs a vehicle to get home. It also reappears in the Thai version of *Full House* as a public vehicle in which the main female protagonist often commutes back home. The Thai *Full House's* director also underlines the *tuk tuk* as an icon of the country by showing it alongside the Victory Monument, a landmark of Bangkok.

Figure 3.27: tuk tuk vehicle seen in the Thai Coffee Prince.

Figure 3.28: tuk tuk scenes in the Thai Full House.

The final feature I want to discuss is the way the characters express themselves, especially in the love scenes. Love scenes in the Thai remakes are fewer and are much 'softer' than in the original. For example in the Korean version of *Coffee Prince*, the main male and female characters kiss more than ten times throughout the story, while in the Thai version the leading figures only do so four times in all. Also, the Thai version skips some of the original scenes that are related to sexual conversation or activities. For example the scene shown in the Korean version where the two main characters are seen partly naked waking up in bed after spending a night together is absent from the Thai version.

A similar difference is found in the love scene of the remake of *Autumn in my Heart.* The only scene where the lead female and lead male kiss has been placed in different episodes in the original and the remake. While the Korean version's kiss scene

happens during the elopement of the two main characters, the Thai version's kissing scene occurs on the lead actor and actress's wedding day.

One explanation for the change of love scenes in the Thai version may relate to the cultural notion of Thai women being reserved and not being touched before the 'right' time by the 'right' person. This particular cultural value has been indirectly mentioned once in the remake of *Autumn in my Heart* in the scene showing the mother teaching her daughter to protect herself against being touched, and is shown again in the Thai version of *Full House* when the main characters draw up a contract for marriage. The female protagonist adds one important clause to the contract, which is that any kind of physical relations such as touching, holding or kissing are prohibited.

As discussed so far, the main purpose of the remake in revising the script is to blend the story into the local context. However, the adaptations are not the only aspect I have observed; the level of imitation from the original also interests me. I consider that of the three remakes, the Thai *Full House* has adapted the most from the original drama, while the Thai *Coffee Prince* has adapted the least. Although there is an attempt on the part of the Thai *Coffee Prince* director to adapt a Thai cultural context into a remake story, he still repeats most of the scenes as shown in the original. He even retains some items or activities which appear in the original scenes that have never existed in Thailand. For example, an opening scene of the original *Coffee Prince* drama aims to narrate the background of the female protagonist to show that she looks like a boy and is always thought by other people to be a boy rather than a girl. The story then shows a shot of her riding on a *ramen* restaurant's motorcycle, heading to deliver a client's orders at a public female bathhouse. Because of her boyish looks, many women and girls in the bathhouse think that a boy has entered the building. They shout and throw things at her. Although she takes off her helmet and says she is a girl, no one believes her.

Figure 3.29: The appearances of female protagonist at the opening scene of original Coffee Prince (left) and of the Thai version (right).

Except for the change of location from Seoul in South Korea to Chiang Mai in Thailand, the Thai *Coffee Prince* version imitates almost everything from the original scene, such as the way the actress looks, her costume, the manner in which the motorcycle is decorated and the venue of the bathhouse, as well as the belief that the same situation could occur within a Thai context. One item shown, however, may puzzle Thai audiences: a public bathhouse.

While public bathhouses in South Korea, 찜질방 (*Jjim-jil-bang*) are commonplace for people to enjoy a spa, shower and sauna, as well as providing a sleep overnight service (Visitkorea, 2016b), there is no such place that exists in Thailand. In the remake, the bathhouse signage is changed to 'sauna for women only', but in fact most Thais are concerned about revealing their bodies in public. Thai women are hardly ever seen, especially if they are middle-aged or older, wearing just their underwear in a communal area as shown in one particular scene of *Coffee Prince*. Also, presenting the imitation scene like this would seem to contradict the notion of Thai women being reserved, which I have previously discussed.

In the Korean version of *Coffee Prince*, the female bathhouse is mentioned once again when a male colleague at the Coffee Prince shop accidentally meets the female protagonist in front of the bathhouse and finds out that she is actually a woman. In the

Thai version, however, the scene where the Thai female character's secret is revealed occurs in a different place at a lingerie section in a department store.

Another item in Thai culture that does not exist but which is found in the remake is the (Korean-style) matchmaking. Even though arranged marriages are common in Asian culture, each country has different methods of matchmaking. In South Korea, for example, the arranged marriage between two families involves the parents arranging a meeting between the couple, who may or may not decide to continue seeing each other. The parents may have to arrange several meetings with different potential spouses before their child finds a suitable partner (Monger, 2004). Unlike the Korean matchmaking pattern, however, most arranged Thai couples do not meet each other privately. Instead, they usually meet together with their parents or guardians. However, in Thai *Coffee Prince*, the Thai script exactly imitates the South Korean matchmaking pattern with the male leading character trying to avoid his numerous arranged matchmakings by hiring the female protagonist to act as his gay partner and ruin all his arranged dates.

These scenes in the remake where the script is imitated from the original drama and where the content is not related to the Thai cultural context may be seen as a grey area of cultural presentation, challenging how far cultures can be merged, as well as questioning how much the local audience might accept. Also, seeing that Thai television dramas can offer 'non-Thai' features to the viewers has brought me back to an issue about Thai television in Chapter 2 when I claimed that television is like 'a mirror reflecting our own reality back to us'. What is shown on screen may refer to the openness and involvement between the Thai culture and other cultures in the actual world. Therefore, to study Thai culture relying only on the official criteria may not be enough. Should these unofficial criteria also be revisited?

The perplexity of 'Thainess'

To me, the 'true' Thai cultural identity is still mysterious and contradictory, since it might be presented and interpreted in various different ways. Even the description of Thai culture according to government bodies, which should be a well-constructed and clear source of knowledge, is both limited and controversial.

Referring back to the overview of the official features of Thai culture from the selected textbook, *Thai Civics, Culture and Living*, it is clear that the monarchy that the Thai people cherish as well as Buddhism, the country's major religion, are topics that are difficult to present, or need to be positively discussed when they are shown in the entertainment media. To present these topics and avoid disrespect, Thai producers have to be careful and creative. For example, one recent Thai remake of Korean television drama in 2017, *Princess Hours*, has changed the original plot by narrating the relationship between the Korean crown prince and a commoner not in the context of Thailand but instead in an imaginary land.

Figure 3.30: Posters of the original Princess Hours (left) and the Thai remake of Princess Hours (right).

The Thai monarchy I discuss here does not refer only to the current dynasty, but to the whole of Thai history. Although the historical story is one of the most famous genres of Thai television drama, the royal family is usually mentioned infrequently and is not regarded as central to the story, being simply stated to indicate the period of time in

which the story occurs. Nevertheless, despite the royal family not being much mentioned, most Thai historical dramas still convey the idea of patriotism and gratitude to the nation and monarchy.

It is also interesting that the national Thai language that Thai people should be proud of is regarded as inferior to other languages, English in particular. I previously mentioned Thongchai Winichakul's (2017) notion of being civilised: that literate Thai city people consider themselves to be more civilised than illiterate people in rural areas. However, this thesis has found 'civilised' Thais are presented as graded lower, and are regarded as being more old-fashioned, than people with an international background. There is one actor in the remake of *Coffee Prince* whose character although ethnically Thai comes from Australia. As he is from an English-speaking country, he is proficient in English. He usually speaks English when he does not want others to understand him. Even though the story tries to make it like a comedy, showing other characters always confused when hearing English spoken, it is implicit that being simply literate is not enough to be 'civilised'.

There is another instance, this time in the Thai remake of *Full House*, of a character who has grown up abroad. He is a Thai businessman who is bilingual and keeps alternating between Thai and English almost every time he speaks. Apart from the reason to balance the story with a Thai and an international atmosphere, the director gave me another reason behind this character setting, which I think is very interesting: that of social classification. The director implied that the character with an international background and who is proficient in English is different from characters who do not speak English and is of a higher social class or higher status than they are.

Although someone who speaks only Thai is shown on screen as perhaps being inferior to those with multilingual ability, Thai food is exhibited in detail and replaces most of

the Korean food shown in the original. In the Thai *Full House,* one specific dish, chicken feet green curry, is intentionally inserted in the storyline and repeatedly shown throughout the story. Also, in the remakes of both *Coffee Prince* and *Full House* the scripts suggest that Thai food is the best and is what the characters are looking for.

Regardless of the inferior or superior position of the Thai cultural presentation, what are defined as Thai cultural elements here are noticeable in comparison to other countries' cultural elements. The comparison between two or more cultures, therefore, could be considered as a way of defining national and cultural identity. The idea of providing a definition by considering cultural differences has reminded me of my discussion about Thai identity in Chapter 2 when I referred to Thongchai Winichakul's notion of negative identification (1994), that 'Thainess' might be differentiated by identifying 'non-Thai' elements or 'otherness'.

Actually, it could be said that throughout this textual analysis chapter that Thai cultural features have been observed not only by setting the criteria for cultural identity, but also by the concept of negative identification. Since the start of the monitoring process I have made comparisons between two versions of dramas and have listed the differences. Even with the imitations found, I still try to differentiate and label them as 'non-Thai' elements.

However, some of the scenes which were repeated, such as the agricultural activity in the Thai *Coffee Prince*, and the relationship between the mother and daughter in the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* could not be clearly classified. This is because different cultures are not always expected to be different. They might be crossed, mixed and shared. As discussed in Chapter 2, the similarities between cultures are what Iwabuchi (2002) calls *'cultural proximity'.* Rather than cultural diversity, cultural proximity offers a shared content rooted in the traditional values of family relationships and the local

culture, and is regarded as one of the key reasons behind the success of South Korean pop culture across Asia. This is particularly relevant to Korean television drama, as cultural proximity means that a story with shared beliefs and values can be portrayed across Asian audiences and easily reach a wide audience (Corner, 2009).

In Thailand, Korean television drama is also well received among Thai audiences for a similar reason. As mentioned in a previous chapter, some Korean television dramas, such as *Jewel in the Palace*, are able to penetrate Thai market and win Thai audiences' heart because they could provide the familiar message, value and flavour as existing Thai drama has done. Nonetheless Surin Kritayaphongphan, a marketing manager of Thai television Channel 3, who is responsible for content selection has remarked 'the familiarity is yet not the original' (quoted in *Manager Online*, 2005). In his view no matter how close Korean culture might be to Thai culture in a drama, it is not the same as the existing Thai drama. He may agree to bring Korean drama to present in his channel in order to increase the variety of programmes and offer an entertainment option for a potential audience. But, it has never been a substitute for Thai drama.

Taking Surin's comments into consideration, it may be positively assumed that in spite of the similarity, or the overlap, between cultures, it may be possible to identify each culture. This is because the mixture means a gathering of different features. The creation of hybrid identities is then evidence of existing borderlines (Smith, 2008). Yet how thin or how blurred these lines are we will never know. If the culture cannot be clearly separated, how can we claim it is ours? Most importantly, as has been stated all along, culture, Thai culture in particular, may be received or adapted from, as well as combined with, others. Therefore how can 'true' Thai cultural identity really exist?

Conclusion

In conclusion, observation of the three Thai remakes has shown the development of cultural placement in each production, starting with the scene-by-scene presentation in Thai *Coffee Prince* to the attempt to change the style of narration in the Thai remake *Autumn in my Heart*, to the full adaptation of the Thai *Full House*. In the placement of Thai cultural features, based on the proposed official criteria, Thai food ranks in the highest position and the cultural feature that is exposed the most. Most of the foreign foods in the original versions have been replaced by Thai foods that are the same type or which look similar. After Thai food, the Thai personality and Thai language are the next two categories that are most presented. The polite greeting of *wai* is shown a lot in all three remakes, as well as family attachment, which is considered to be a key narrative of those stories. Agriculture and Buddhism features, on the other hand, are shown less on screen, and the monarchy and Thai festival related contents are not shown at all in any of these three remake dramas.

In my opinion, the three remakes of Korean dramas are like a mockup of the real world of cultural blending. Scenes and characters are also like real people. While some are designed to stick with the original script, such as people with conservative beliefs, some, in contrast, experience and enjoy new things. The variety of cultural presentation in the remakes also proves that the meaning of culture is very subjective. The proposed criteria do not match with these case studies. In other words, there is no real guideline for perceiving and revealing Thai culture on screen. Although there are some suggestions for what not to present, what to present is mainly based on the director's choice, and the approval or acceptance of these presentations belongs to the audiences. To understand more about the meaning and position of Thai culture, further discussion of the directors' decisions and audience reception will be provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4

Cultural Negotiation in Thai Remake Productions

Chapter 3 showed how, and what type of, cultural elements were positioned on the Thai remaking of Korean television dramas, but questions regarding decisions on, and appropriation of, cultural selection still remained. To find the answers, the people who made decisions about these issues, that is, the directors of the Thai remakes, were approached and asked to talk about their decision-making with regard to these issues. Three in-depth interviews were conducted with Songyos Sukmakanant, director of the Thai *Coffee Prince,* Siwaroj Kongsakul, director of the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* and Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, director of the Thai *Full House.* The findings from these interviews are set out in this chapter, in the anticipation that they will help to provide a better understanding of the process of cross-cultural adaptation and cultural negotiation, as well as provide the answers to **RQ 2: How do the producers appropriate and negotiate local and foreign elements?**

This chapter is divided into five topics: What is a 'remake'?; Thai remakes of South Korean Television dramas; Korean stories in Thai settings; Directors' perception of Thai culture; and Cross-cultural remake: the contest between 'our-self' and 'otherness'. The first topic, 'what is a "remake"?', provides a general description of remakes and an introduction to remake productions in Thailand. The topics of Thai remakes of South Korean television dramas and Korean stories in Thai settings discuss the reasons for choosing South Korean content as prototypes, and the directors' motives for story revision and cultural assignment, respectively. Subsequently a discussion about the directors' perceptions of Thai culture is provided. It is interesting to note that their opinions are varied and that they echo those that are presented in their work; also that they are not based on the official definitions of Thai culture. Thanks to their diverse thoughts, topics regarding negotiation and appropriation between 'our-self' and 'other'

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cultures will be discussed at the end of the chapter. Since Thai directors or media producers who act as cultural communicators to their society see their own culture differently, not only between themselves, but also differently from the official authorities, this might accord with what has been discussed in the previous chapter: that the meaning of culture is really subjective and multi-dimensional, and might lead to further discussion of what cultural elements one should perceive, present and preserve.

What is a 'remake'?

This study takes cultural negotiation to start from the reproduction of foreign content to the Thai context, from which point it is essential to understand what a 'reproduction' or 'remake' is, the reason why it is done, and its meaning for Thai audiences.

The term 'remake' is usually used with reference to a movie based on an earlier screenplay, or a new version of an existing one (Verevis, 2006). Thomas Leitch, in a chapter of his book *Twice-Told Tales: Disavowal and Rhetoric of the Remake* (2002), says that '[s]hort stories and novels are often adapted for stage or screen; ballets are … rechoreographed; comic strips are occasionally revived by new artists; plays are reinterpreted … but only movies are remade' (p. 37). If his statement about the relation between media and their re-creation is correct, only films can be described as remakes. How then is it possible to begin to discuss remaking practices from the perspective of television?

The concept of the remake has been widely discussed among film scholars. Remake works are, however, also pervasive within the television industry and are a fascinating topic to examine, especially when seeing how texts are revised and how the reproductions encounter generational, cross-cultural, and transmedia format shifts. Examples of studies with regard to television remakes are the character comparison

and identification of different *Doctor Who* versions from the series' first launched in 1963 and its remakes in 1996 and 2005 by Paul Booth and Jef Burnham (2014); the study of the transformation and reinterpretation of American remakes of British television series by Albert Moran (2011) and Carlen Lavigne (2011); and the study of the trend in remaking South Korean television programmes in China by Younghan Cho and Hongrui Zhu (2017).

In most related studies, the term 'remake' is often discussed by pairing it with the related and overlapping term of 'adaptation'. This is because they share similar characteristics in recreating the original. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, these two concepts can be differentiated by the type of medium to be adapted. 'Remake' usually refers to reproduction within the same medium, such as film to film. 'Adaptation', however, involves reproduction between different platforms, mostly between literature and film. When applying these descriptions to television, the 'remake' therefore takes place when a television show is re-made, while adaptation occurs when a film or written material is turned into a television show.

One reason for repeating an existing programme relates to marketing strategy, since a remake could 'reduce text to title, packing a narrative body into a reified "brand name" which can be mass-produced and recycled over time' (Arnzen, 1996, p. 175). Other reasons for remakes have been cited by Constantine Verevis (2006), who considers that remaking in the film industry occurs as a result of a lack of creativity and laziness on the part of film producers when they see an opportunity to make a quick and reliable profit based on past successes, established material and audience nostalgia.

These comments are related to the reinvention of South Korean dramas by Thai producers. According to the Thai *Coffee Prince*'s director, Songyos Sukmakanan, the criteria for selecting the dramas to remake are based on the success of the original

Korean drama when it was first shown on Thai terrestrial channels, with the belief that its popularity and familiarity with the story will easily please Thai viewers. In his view, most Thai people prefer watching an already-known story because they can engage with it and avoid an unexpected ending (Songyos Sukmakanan, personal interview, May 26, 2016). The director of *Autumn in my Heart*, Sivaroj Kongsakul, agrees with this, saying that the previous success of a television drama plays an important role in encouraging viewers to watch it again (Sivaroj Kongsakul, personal interview, May 19, 2016).

The opinions of these two remake directors become more convincing on learning that most Thai audiences have known about the recreation and reproduction of a story for a long time, even before the era of television and film, as seen with a number of translations of foreign literature into Thai, such as the translation and adaptation of the Indian epic 'Ramayana' and the Javanese tale of 'Inao'. In King Rama VI's era, the king himself translated several works by William Shakespeare into Thai and also earned the alias as 'father of Thai detective fiction' on account of his detective fiction series entitled *Tales of Mr Thorng-In*, which had been inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Harrison, 2009).

As far as the reproduction of television drama is concerned, during the past six decades since the first Thai television drama was launched in the country, successful dramas have been reproduced up to seven times. For example, ผู้กองยอดรัก (*phu kong yot rak*) (1972), a romantic comedy story about a military draftee and his female commander, had remakes in 1973, 1979, 1981, 1988, 1995, 2002, 2007 and 2016, and แม่นาคพระโขนง (*mae nak prakhanong*) (1979), the story of a famous Thai female ghost named Nak, had remakes in 1989, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2013 and 2017.

In Thailand, the cross-national television drama remake, however, was first launched in 2012 through a satellite television station True Visions, with the first remake of a South Korean drama entitled *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (2007) followed by *Autumn in my Heart* (2000) and *Full House* (2004). Later*,* after the launch of digital television in Thailand in 2014, which now enables Thai audiences to view programmes on up to twenty-six channels, several new television channels and production companies also took up the idea of reproducing foreign films to attract audiences. For example, remaking rights to American television series such as *Ugly Betty* (2006–2010), *Gossip Girl* (2007–2012) and *The O.C.* (2003–2007) were bought and presented in Thai versions in April 2015, July 2015 and March 2016, respectively. True Visions, however, still holds its own in adapting and remaking Asian television dramas in competing with other channels by presenting the adaptation of the Japanese comics *Itazura na kiss* or *Playful Kiss* in a Thai version in 2015, as well as the remake of the South Korean television drama *Princess Hours* (2006) in a Thai version in 2017. The company has also planned to remake more South Korean television dramas in 2018, namely*, Secret Garden* (2010) *and My Girl* (2005)*.*

Whether television remakes repeat indigenous or international content, the term it is known by in Thailand is ละครรีเมค (*lakhon remake*), which can be literally translated as 'remake drama'. The term is coined by combining two words, 'ละคร' (*lakhon*), which means drama in Thai, and the English word 'remake' with each other. Usually, when the repeat production is presented on Thai television, it is not presented as a new drama; rather, its status as a remake is openly advertised. This is especially the case with the remake of foreign content: the original version is always brought up and referred to for advertising purposes to draw its attention to its viewers. One way of attracting and reminding viewers of the earlier version is to have the same name as the original. However, there are questions as to what else, besides the name, should be maintained to establish the production as a remake.

In a chapter entitled 'Affecting Fidelity: Adaptation, Fidelity and Affect in Todd Hayne's Far from Heaven' of her book, *Adaption in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*, Rachel Carroll (2009) argues that 'the status of the remake or adaptation as remake or adaptation is not inherent in the text itself, but is a product of the discourses which surround it' (p. 38). In her view, the most important act that adaptation and remake need to perform to present their status as re-creation work is to make audiences recall the original, or what she calls audiences' 'cultural memory' (p. 37). However, no remake is homogenous enough to reconstruct a perfect 'cultural memory'. There are numerous reasons that affect the context of reproduction, such as historical and cultural contexts, national provenance, authorship and the type of medium that is remade.

Although the three selected Thai remakes in this research, *Coffee Prince, Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*, share international names with their respective originals, the original texts have been adapted in various ways on account of their production circumstances and the directors' decisions, especially with regards to cultural placement. As stated in Chapter 3, of these three remakes, the Thai *Coffee Prince* maintains most of the key scenes from the original and narrates them in the order they were in the original South Korean version. The Thai *Autumn in my Heart*, however, has different opening and ending scenes from the original, while the narration of the Thai *Full House* has been considerably changed.

Before discussion of this variety of presentations, I set out the reasons why these specific Korean television dramas were selected by Thai productions for remake in Thai versions.

Thai remakes of South Korean television dramas

With very high competition operating in the Thai television business, each player has to come up with new strategies to become a leader in the field and attract audiences. Pay-tv channel players with a subscriber base are no exception. True Vision, Thailand's leading pay-tv provider, which also offers its services nationwide via satellite and cable, is concerned with this issue. Usually most of True Visions' programmes are bought from foreign channels, such as HBO, ESPN and Discovery Channel. However, since 2010 the company has decided to become not only a content provider but also a content producer. With the introduction and good reception of True Visions' new channel called Asian Series channel, which offers twenty-four-hour Thai-dubbed Asian series, the company has seen an opportunity for the growth of this channel, and has agreed to start the project of remaking Asian television series to serve as the channel's alternative content.

The first three Asian television programmes the company chose to remake were television dramas from South Korea, namely *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince*, known as *Coffee Prince*, *Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*. They were selected as the kick-off for the project on account of their popularity with Thai viewers when presented on Thai television in the original Korean version. These three South Korean dramas offer familiar stories to Thai audiences. The main ideas of all of the originals are pretty similar to those existing in Thai dramas. For example, at least seven Thai television dramas, namely ทัดดาวบุษยา (*thatdao butsaya*) (1976, 1984, 1997, 2004, and 2010), ตะวันยอแสง (*tawan yo saeng*) (1978, 1997, 2010, 2017), ผู้ดีอีสาน (*phudi isan*) (2000, 2013), แม่ค้าขนมหวาน (*mae kha khanomwan*) (2009), ดอกรักริมทาง (*dokrak rimthang*) (2010), เงากามเทพ (*ngao kammathep*) (2010) and ตะวันฉายในม่านเมฆ (*tawan chai nai man mek*) (2013), narrate the same story as *Coffee Prince* - that of a girl being disguised as a boy to conceal some secrets. Eight Thai dramas, that is คมพยาบาท (*Kom Phayabat*) (1963, 1969, 1977, 1982, 1988, 2001, 2014), เลือดหงส์ (*lueat hong*)

(2001), รอยลิขิต (*roi likhit*) (2005), กลิ่นแก้วกลางใจ (*klin kaeo klang jai*) (2007), แก้วล้อม เพชร (*kaeo lom phet*) (2008), เงารักลวงใจ (*ngao rak luang jai*) (2010), แผนรักแผนร้าย (*phan rak phan rai*) (2013) and กากับหงส์ (*ka kap hong*) (2013), offer a similar plot to that of *Autumn in my Heart*, in which the main characters are switched at birth. Also, more than four Thai television dramas, including รักหลอกๆ อย่าบอกใคร (*rak lok lok ya bok krai*) (1996, 2005), คุณสามีกำมะลอที่รัก (*khun sami kammalo tirak*) (2012), ลมซ่อนรัก (*lom son rak*) (2015) and เพียงชายคนนี้ไม่ใช่ผู้วิเศษ (*phiang chai khonnee maichai phuwiset*) (2016), present a fake wedding theme like the story of *Full House*. Given that the stories are familiar and that there was an excellent audience response to the original versions, the three remakes were anticipated to become equally successful in Thailand.

True Visions assigned the Nadao Bangkok Company to reproduce *Coffee Prince* and Halo Productions to reproduce the latter two dramas, *Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*. Both companies were new to television production, and the three remake directors shared similar backgrounds as filmmakers, with not much experience in television production and little knowledge of South Korean television dramas. The directors of the Thai *Coffee Prince* and the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* had never previously watched Korean television dramas, with the first Korean drama they watched being the drama they were assigned to remake, while the director of the Thai *Full House* had only watched *Full House* in the original version before joining the project. Nevertheless, True Visions expected that these newcomers in the field would bring new ideas to the fore, and possibly create new standards for the Thai television industry.

Although the three directors initially knew very little about Korean culture, after watching their first Korean drama, all three understood and agreed with each other as to why Korean television dramas had become so successful with Thai audiences.

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Despite the fact the selected Korean dramas they watched had somewhat similar plots to the existing Thai television dramas, 'The Korean script is harsher', said the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* director. Also, the Thai *Coffee Prince* director said that the narrating style was much faster and more convincing. They thought Korean dramas were better than the Thai television dramas they had seen. This was not only because of the presentation technique; Korean dramas also won the Thai directors' hearts with their creativity and excellence, which went beyond the mere purpose of entertainment. For them, it was as though South Korean television dramas represented their country. The director of the Thai *Full House* noticed that an attempt had been made to include local elements in the story, and was impressed that South Korean television dramas might function as tools to present Korean culture to the world.

Aside from having favourable opinions about South Korean television dramas, the three directors were very positive about the South Korean entertainment industry in general. The director of the Thai *Autumn in my Heart*, for instance, saw the entertainment industry of South Korea as a key player in advancing the country, and suggested it was a cultural weapon that could pierce through any business area and bring about development and recognition of the country. The Thai *Full House* director claims that without Korean television dramas and the growth in the South Korean entertainment business over the past two decades she would have known nothing about the country, or would not even have been able to differentiate between North Korea and South Korea. During this period of time, the South Korean entertainment industry and pop culture have developed and expanded worldwide, and the director of the Thai *Coffee Prince* believed the country had now become a trendsetter and standard bearer for both its local and international audiences, including Thai viewers, and that admiration for the achievements of the South Korean entertainment industry and pop culture would not easily diminish. All three directors suggested the remaking of Korean dramas in Thai versions opened up an opportunity for them to learn and

develop their own works, and probably would lead to the future success of the Thai entertainment industry.

Nonetheless, no matter how much the Thai directors admired the original South Korean television dramas, none of them could just repeat the originals. To label their works as 'Thai remakes', and make them relevant to Thai audiences, the work on cultural negotiation and adaptation could not be avoided. As discussed in Chapter 3, although the Thai *Coffee Prince* was the least adapted of the three remakes as it maintained most of the original script and even included some scenes taken directly from the original, the remake of the television drama was nevertheless regarded as an attempt to localise the story by replacing South Korean cultural items with Thai features. There is more introduction to Thai culture and story adjustment to be found in the Thai *Autumn in my Heart*, while the Thai *Full House* retains only the main plot and some key details from the original, with the rest being narrated differently. The director of Thai *Full House* also expected her work to be something of a Thai cultural didactic tool to propagate Thai culture to its audiences. Decisions about these different degrees of adaptation and cultural placement, as well as the production conditions and limitations, will be discussed in the following section through the interviews of the three Thai remake directors, *Coffee Prince*, *Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*.

Findings from in-depth interviews: Korean stories in Thai settings
Behind-the-scenes of the Thai *Coffee Prince*
"The Thai *Coffee Prince* is not an adaptation, but a repetition or a true remake", said Songyos Sugmakanan, director of the Thai *Coffee Prince* during the personal interview conducted on May 26, 2016. 'Adaptation' and 'remake' terms here are not the same as discussed earlier in this chapter, which involves the reproduction of a different, or the same type of, medium. Here, Songyos refers to the production process and its outcome. Adaptation, in his opinion, is to retain the heart of the story and change the

rest, while a remake is to recreate the original as closely as possible. Owing to time constraints, he decided to use the television drama script that had been directly translated from the Korean version to the Thai language for his production. Although not compelled to do so, Songyos agreed to follow almost every footstep of the original script, which is why he considers his work to be a 'true remake'. With his decision to adhere to the original production, the South Korean *Coffee Prince* and Thai *Coffee Prince* are considered to be the same story but one that occurs in different settings, with the set moving from Seoul, South Korea to Chiang Mai, a province in the north of Thailand.

Instead of locating the remake story in Bangkok, a capital city like Seoul of South Korea, Songyos choose the upcountry province of Chiang Mai as the main setting of the story. This was because he considered that there was no place in Bangkok that provided an atmosphere in which to relax and chill out, as well as appreciate hot coffee, which he sensed was the case in Seoul in the original drama and also in Chiang Mai. Although Chiang Mai is not a capital city, it is the largest city in northern Thailand with about 1.7 million inhabitants, with a ranking within the top five provinces with regard to the largest number of people in Thailand (The Bureau of Registration Administration, 2017). Thanks to its character as a big city and at the same time operating as a provincial area, it was thought to provide residents and visitors with a metropolitan yet relaxed atmosphere. It was for these reasons that Chiang Mai was selected as the setting for *Coffee Prince*.

Using Chiang Mai as the main location for the story also helped the production team in terms of localisation. Despite the fact that the remake of *Coffee Prince* was produced by sticking closely to the Korean script, a revision of the story to place it in a Thai context was still needed to claim it as a Thai version. Local items in the north of Thailand, such as food, public transportation and the use of the Northern Thai dialect

were intentionally inserted into the story to make it believable that the story could take place in Thailand. To make it local, the director admitted he possibly did not work on including ความเป็นไทย (*khwam-pen-Thai*) or 'Thainess', but did include ความเป็น เชียงใหม่ *(khwam-pen-Chiangmai)* or 'Chiangmai-ness' in the story. Songyos argues that:

> At that time, I knew very well that we did not have enough time for script adaptation. Therefore the storyline, content, characters and acting are almost 100 percent based on the original script. However, I felt that I had to find a way to present a local atmosphere to the story. And this presentation needs to be very distinct. The 'local' here means 'Chaingmai-ness'. I did not talk about 'Thainess', but Chaingmai-ness, [or] Northern-ness (Songyos Sugmakanan, personal interview, May 26, 2016).

From what Songyos says here, the idea of introducing specific regional culture may be considered to be contrary to the official notion of 'Thainess'. I have already said in the previous chapter that official 'Thainess' was determined by the government and designed to be spread from the capital to the rest of the country. To Songyos, however, Thai culture is not limited to Bangkok. He considers that aspects of Thai culture can also emanate from provincial areas that can equally represent Thai culture.

The idea of inserting local items into the story is shown in the change of decoration for the coffee shop. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Thai remake character draws a picture of ชบา (*cha-ba*) or a hibiscus on the coffee shop's wall in place of a picture of sunflowers as shown in the original. The director gave two reasons for this change. First, he considered that sunflowers do not represent 'Thainess', especially 'Chiangmai-ness', sufficiently well. Even though they are commonly found in Thailand, sunflowers are not very common in Chiangmai. Hibiscus, on the other hand, are plants that the director and his team found when scouting for a location. They then agreed to change the image drawn on the wall to a hibicus. The director said that what was plentiful in the area would convey a better local feeing than anything that was not

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indigenous, and that what already existed in the area had to get along well with other local features.

Taking his comments into account, one way of defining a culture may involve the location and its borders. But what is the answer when the borderline is extended, blurred out, or intersected? Different cultures from different borders are sometimes not clearly separated; they may get along well and become more accepted culturally, and later become fused rather than rejected. One example of cultural acceptance is seen in this remake: the reception of specific Asian foods. While every Korean dish shown in the original *Coffee Prince* is changed to Thai dishes, food from other Asian countries such as China and Japan remain unchanged. This is because the remake director wanted to present his work based on what was actually happening in Thai society. He said that Thai people are now familiar with Chinese and Japanese food, and that these are common choices of food for Thais in their daily life. Therefore he chose to retain scenes that took place in Chinese and Japanese restaurants.

Another example of the acceptance of foreign culture is revealed in the wedding scene, when the remake director decided to retain the Western Christian ceremony as presented in the original version. He considered that a wedding in Western style, together with tuxedo and white wedding gown, was now common practice for Thai couples who want to get married. The director claimed that if he changed the scene to a Thai northern-style traditional wedding with *khan-tok* (northern Thai style dining table) and let the characters wear local clothing, his remake would at once look false. Also, according to the location scouting and primary research, it was found that there were a large number of Christians who live in Chiang Mai, so the director considered it reasonable to repeat the scene as shown in the original.

Taking the food and wedding scenes into consideration, it might be thought that apart from location, the concern of local audiences with the familiarity with what they see, as well as ongoing and up-to-date situations, would become other significant factors for cultural adaptation. However, not every foreign feature receives a warm welcome, especially if it does not cohere with the particular pervasive culture that connects with it, in which case audiences may feel what they see to be irrelevant or even be offended by what is shown. An illustration of a cultural disagreement can be seen in the remake of *Coffee Prince* when the director decided to present one scene at a Korean-like public bath house. This particular scene failed to make Thai viewers believe that what they saw was possible in Thailand since there is no such place in the country, and in addition to the unrealistic setting, most Thais are not accustomed to the idea of sharing a bathroom with strangers and revealing their bodies in a public space such as a public bath house. Thai audience's reaction to this scene may be geared to the concept of the contrast between oneself and others, which will be discussed later in the chapter, which indicates that one setting cannot suit and please everybody. It may be fine to see others do something that is not applicable to local culture, but it may be unacceptable for oneself to do the same. Thus, Thai viewers have no problem in seeing Korean characters revealing themselves in a public bathhouse, but it may be unacceptable for them to see Thai characters doing the same. The Thai *Coffee Prince* director admitted there were some scenes in the remake that he was not satisfied with. He believed that they could have been done better, and that this particular scene was one of them. He said that if there had been no time limit he would have been able to revise the scene to make it more realistic and convincing for Thai audiences.

Time constraints were not the only limitation that the Thai *Coffee Prince* team had to contend with. Another key factor with the remake was the sponsor input. Since True Visions, the main sponsor and the broadcasting channel, classifies its main target audience as family groups, the production team had to present suitable content for

these particular viewers. Some love-scenes shown in the original version were therefore edited out. Moreover, as True Visions Company had its own contractual casting, most of the characters in the Thai *Coffee Prince* were recruited from an in-house casting agency.

In addition, the budget is one of the most important factors in any production. A sponsor who funds the production usually takes part in the production and script revision for his/her/its own benefit. True Visions, the main sponsor of this remake, is an affiliated company of the True Corporation, a communication conglomerate in Thailand. True Corporation as a parent company influenced the production. When the Thai *Coffee Prince* was launched, the True Corporation introduced a new business which was a chain of coffee shops called 'True Coffee'. There was therefore a request to add a barista of 'True Coffee' to the story as a tactful product placement of the company. While the Korean Coffee Prince shop has six staff, the Thai remake has seven. The additional character is described as a childhood friend of a main female character. He is looking for a job and eventually becomes a staff member in the Coffee Prince shop. Even though there was no special scene for him in the remake, his appearance became a news item in promoting the drama, and at the same time helped the True Corporation business.

There was heavy promotion of the television remake project when it was first introduced, through both offline and online channels. Nevertheless, the first time the Thai *Coffee Prince* was shown on television it did not succeed as expected. New adaptation strategies were then applied to the next remake, *Autumn in my Heart and* a new production company and director recruited. They came up with a new style of remaking, and a new reinterpretation of the story and cultural revision as shown below.

Behind-the-scenes of the Thai *Autumn in my Heart*

"It is an experimental project" is the way in which Sivaroj Kongsakul, the director of Thai *Autumn in my Heart*, described his remake (Sivaroj Kongsakul, personal interview, May 19, 2016). Remakes adapted from Korean stories at that time, when the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* was launched in May 2013, were very new in number in the Thai entertainment industry, and in fact the only remake of South Korean television drama prior to *Autumn in my Heart* had been *Coffee* Prince. There were therefore no clear guidelines to observe and follow with regard to the remake. In addition, Sivaroj himself had no experience in directing television dramas; his previous work related only to films and commercial advertisements. When he worked on this project, he decided to apply a filmmaking perspective in his directing, which meant changing the method of shooting and reorganising the sequence of the story. As he said:

> I decided not to use a switching system – no OB Van [Outside Broadcasting Van], no live editing. I would speak with all actors and actresses not to act as a pattern or a setting character for television drama. You do not need to wait for the camera to capture your face, but just act naturally … I think this is a production development in making a quality movie for television broadcasting (Sivaroj Kongsakul, personal interview, May 19, 2016).

Sivaroj reinterpreted the key message of this tragic love story: that love and memory can be regarded as a cycle of life; that the end of something can lead to the beginning of something else. Instead of narrating the story chronologically like the original version, he started his remake with the end scene before moving back to the original opening, and narrated the rest until once more it came back to the end scene.

Another example of story reinterpretation is seen in the way the story ends with regard to the two main characters. Both the Korean leading protagonists die at the end, but in the Thai remake only the female character dies with the same illness, leukaemia, as in the original. The Thai male character does not have a car accident like his Korean counterpart and stays alive until the final scene. The director considered that the death

of the main female character was sufficient tragedy for the story. Having received no major strictures regarding the conversion of the script, he decided to change the ending of the story. He also made a point that suffering may be regarded as a kind of 'taste'. People from different nations may have different 'taste buds' with regard to tragedy and feel it differently. As he argued:

> You cannot tell which version provides the most suffering. The [South] Korean version ends the way it does because Koreans may like a cruel ending. But it is different for us. [Tragedy] is like a flavour that cannot match everyone's taste buds (Sivaroj Kongsakul, personal interview, May 19, 2016).

The Thai *Autumn in my Heart* director strongly insisted to both his production team and sponsor that he did not want to make the remake as a copy. "No matter what we try, we have never made the Thai lifestyle, how to speak, act or whatever, the same as [Koreans]", said the director. Many times throughout the interview he reaffirmed that his intention was not to duplicate the original directly. For instance:

> It is no fun working on a copy. Thai camera men may also not enjoy shooting the same shots as the Korean crews did. Everyone would like to develop his own work.
>
> I do not know how to explain why I cannot just place Korean situations in Thai backgrounds; they just cannot be together. It is too difficult to bring real Korean smells and flavours to Thai people. I cannot do it. Thai people still have to speak as Thai, eat as Thai and live their own way.
>
> We cannot force the setting to be the same. We also cannot force the same story to happen in a Thai context. (Sivaroj Kongsakul, personal interview, May 19, 2016)

The director and scriptwriter then decided to rewrite the script, cutting out all Korean cultural items and adding more Thai context to the story.

Despite a strong intention to apply a Thai context to the remake, the director preferred not to deliberately insert Thai cultural items into the story. In his view, Thai culture is

part of the Thai people's daily life rather than being itemised by names. He believed that without saying out loud what Thai culture comprises, viewers could still engage with Thai culture through revised storytelling and the lifestyle of Thai characters.

Like the remake of Thai *Coffee Prince*, the decision to assign Thai cultural elements to the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* relied on shooting in real environments. The prime location of this remake is set in Phetchaburi, a province located approximately 160 kilometres south of Bangkok. During the revision of the script, the director and his team spent some time in this province reviewing the area and local residents to ensure the storyline blended in with the real location. Sivaroj, the director, said that Phetchaburi embraced the feeling of both countryside and city. The province partly consists of developing cities with buildings, condominiums and hotels, and partly of natural reservation areas including lakes, sea and mountains. Although there is a thirteen-year gap between the original (2000) and its remake (2013), he thought that the selected location might share the same mood and tone of the original story. It also fits in perfectly with the storyline, which needs a variety of backgrounds. For example, the story starts in the countryside by the sea when the main characters are in their youth. Later, when they grow up, they move to, and work in, the city area. The environment and people that live in this location were considered and applied to the story.

One change based on the local environment that took place was in an engagement scene. Unlike the Western-style ceremony in the Korean version, the Thai version shows this scene in a traditional Thai manner, with the characters appearing in traditional Thai costumes. The remake director said the reason he revised the scene was not because he intended to show Thai culture, but to make the story more convincing for the viewers. He thought that most Thai families who live in the countryside tend to hold engagement and wedding ceremonies in a traditional fashion.

Since the background of the male character who becomes engaged and his family is from the countryside, the Thai style of engagement had to be their option.

Another revised scene based on a Thai rather than a Korean context is when everyone knows that the main actress is in the last stage of cancer and is dying. In the original version, the co-actor who is in love with her stops by a church to pray to the Christian God asking for help. In the Thai version, however, the scene is completely different. The director reinterpreted the scene, retaining only the key point of someone praying to a holy spirit for help. In the remake, the one who prays becomes the female protagonist's mother, and the holy figure she is praying to is Buddha. In the director's opinion, since the majority of Thai people are Buddhist, Thai viewers may be more familiar with the picture of someone praying to Buddha rather than to Jesus. Yet the young generation may not choose to pray, which is why the director chose to appoint the act of praying to the mother character. As he said:

> This scene should not belong to Pan [the name of the male actor]. Pan is young. If he needs to ask or say something, he has to say or show his support for the actress directly, not to a god. We then agreed to switch the character [who prayed] to the mother. It is very convincing when we see the mother character praying. We really believe that she is a believer (Sivaroj Kongsakul, personal interview, May 19, 2016).

The director's view on generational practices is interesting, since it may be inferred that people from the same nation but in different age ranges may have different interests with regard to cultural features and activities. Some religious related features, for instance, are likely to be labelled as an activity for older people but not for younger members. Nonetheless, it is still believed by the government that national Thai culture can be passed on from generation to generation, and the scene showing the mother character teaching her foster daughter in this remake is added to reinforce this notion. When the mother helps her young daughter to wear her first bra, she teaches her to be aware that she should not be touched. This scene does not exist in the original, but

was intentionally created in the remake to present the traditional Thai value of Thai women being reserved, and, very important to note, taught by a member of her family.

Although there was more Thai cultural adaptation to the story in the remake of *Autumn in my Heart*, and although new production strategies were applied, such as shifting the genre from romantic comedy to tragic love story, and employing a new production team as well as recruiting a nationally famous actor and actress to be the main characters, the second Thai remake of Korean drama again did not succeed as expected. The director stated that the previous success of the original did not always guarantee the success of its remake and also that the familiarity of the story might not be enough to engage the viewers' attention; the popularity of a drama comes when it is launched at the right time and in the right place. However, True Visions, a Thai–Korean remaking rights holder, still believed there was an opportunity for a remake production from foreign content in the Thai market. The company then undertook another remake project with a third Korean television drama: *Full House*.

Behind-the-scenes of the Thai *Full House*

"Expecting complaints rather than compliments" was the expression Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, the director of the Thai *Full House*, used when working on the project (Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, personal interview, May 17, 2016). Since the two remakes prior to her work had not succeeded as expected, Sarasawadee decided to change the production strategy completely by not following the original as the previous remakes had done and retelling the story in the way she thought would relate to Thai audiences. With this risky plan, she was unable to predict whether the audience response would be negative or positive.

However, the phrase 'third time lucky' might be true for True Visions. When the third remake was shown, it immediately became very popular and was the most famous

remake of the three South Korean remake dramas. The director claimed there were two main reasons why her remake became so successful. The first was that it had an additional viewing option. Unlike the two previous remakes, the Thai *Full House* was shown through both the True Visions and Youtube channels. With the extra online option, the remake was therefore able to reach a larger audience, both locally and internationally.

Another reason behind the success was the director's adaptation strategy. Compared with the other two South Korean remakes, the script of the Thai *Full House* was the most adapted from that of the original. Sarasawadee and her team agreed not to follow the original altogether, but to revise the script to make it more realistic in the Thai context. She said:

> Not following the path of the original does not mean we do not show respect [for it], but we cannot present what the Thai people would not understand … what the Thai people cannot believe (Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, personal interview, May 17, 2016).

The first feature that the director and her team thought should be changed was the relationship between the characters. In the original version, the main actress has two close friends who trick her by selling her house behind her back. Although these friends are mean to her and abuse her many times throughout the story, the main actress still cares for, and always forgives, them. The Thai director and her team, however, did not believe that this situation would be acceptable to Thai people. In their opinion, Thais would not allow their friends to deceive them over and over again. They then decided to change the characters of the two friends and made one a cousin and the other the cousin's boyfriend, taking into account the strong belief of Thai people that the family unit is more important than friendship.

Apart from the change in the relationship of two of the characters, the background of some of the other characters, such as that of the female protagonist, are described differently from the original to match Thai circumstances. In the South Korean version, the main actress works as an amateur novelist, but the main actress in the Thai version has two jobs at the same time: she is both a novelist and a food writer. As explained by the director, 'being just a novelist in Thailand, would mean in truth that it would be impossible to support oneself. For the character of an unsuccessful novelist, we had to create an additional job for her to earn a living.' Moreover, allowing the character to be a food critic benefited the director in terms of convincingly introducing Thai food into the remake.

The attempt to present Thai food in this remake is not seen only through the actress' job, but also throughout the story. The menu most referred to is 'Thai green curry with chicken feet', which is described as the favourite dish of the main male character. Interestingly, the menu does not appear only on the dining table; there is also a scene showing how to cook it step-by-step, similar to that of a cookery programme. The reason for this related to the South Korean influence. When the director watched the original version of *Full House* and other Korean television dramas, she found they introduced and encouraged the viewer to try Korean foods. She then decided she would like to apply the idea of introducing food into the remake. 'It would be great if I could arouse the viewers' appetite while watching', she said. After the remake drama was launched, she received amazing and unexpected feedback from foreign audiences, especially from China. When the main Thai actor and actress went abroad for a fan meeting, there was a request from their Chinese fans asking them to show how Thai green curry should be cooked as shown in the drama.

The influence of South Korean programmes on the Thai director of the remake of *Full House*, together with the drama's influence on its foreign fans, can be explained as a

result of 'soft' power. Usually, power is defined as the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events. While 'hard' power may relate to political and military force, 'soft' power uses positive attraction and persuasion to accomplish the given objective (Nye, 2004). The availability of a variety of South Korean pop culture products, including television dramas, could be regarded as part of South Korea's exercising of 'soft' power. This kind of power benefits the country in so many ways, from improving its image to boosting its economy. The Thai remake of *Full House*, a production which is both the 'soft' power receiver and exerciser, like the original Korean television drama, also has the potential to become more than just an entertainment item for its audience in its own country. The relationship between Thai remakes and 'soft' power, as well as the influence of remakes on their audiences, will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The capacity of Thai television to provide more than just entertainment was agreed by the Thai *Full House* director, since she saw that her work might also offer a didactic function and provide culture for its audiences. Despite the contemporary background of the story*,* the Thai *Full House* director intended to introduce traditional Thai arts into the drama, such as Thai-style fruit carving and flower garland-making. She said that nowadays the young generation hardly related to these traditional Thai cultural items and that placing them in television dramas, particularly contemporary dramas, might help to maintain them for longer. As she said*:*

> Why should flower garland-making be found only in period or historical dramas? If I want this to remain [a cultural feature], I have to show and talk about it now, so that over the next 20 years I can still show garland-making in my dramas without any difficulty (Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, personal interview, May 17, 2016).

The concern of this director for the preservation of culture for young generations was again expressed through the activity of the main male character on the anniversary of his sister's death. While the South Korean protagonist simply thinks of his dead sister,

the Thai actor goes to a Buddhist temple to make 'merit' and listens to a monk's sermon. The director changed the scene completely because she considered that young Thai people these days were not associated much with Buddhism, or indeed any Buddhist activity. "If young viewers see that even their admired actor can go to the temple, anyone can go too." As a Buddhist herself, she wanted to show that it was not at all strange or old-fashioned to make a 'merit' or go to the temple.

Sarasawadee's views on Thai culture and the young generation reminded me of the viewpoint of the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* director on the same subject. Although the director of the Thai *Full House* mentions more about the preservation aspect, both viewpoints imply that the degree of cultural involvement is altered by generations. Moreover, they share the same idea that culture can be maintained and passed from generation to generation, and that their work may deliver this message to audiences. Scenes of cooking, fruit carving and flower-garland making in the Thai *Full House* are added and narrated together, with pictures showing two generations learning these activities together.

The director's notion of cultural presentation and preservation is also shown in the wedding scene. While the wedding ceremony between the leading characters in the Korean version is set in a Western style, the wedding scene in the remake is shown in a traditional Thai setting. The bride, groom and guests are in traditional Thai costume and details of a traditional Thai wedding are presented. The director said that although it is common to see many Thais now having their wedding reception in Western style, she would nevertheless like to show what a Thai traditional wedding is like.

Apart from the purpose of preservation, Thai culture is revealed for a similar reason in the other two remakes: to convince viewers that the story takes place in Thailand, with Thai characters, and that it is Thai drama. Additional Thai cultural elements, such as

wai, the Thai greeting posture, and the *tuk tuk*, the iconic Thai vehicle, were deliberately inserted into the remake, because the Thai *Full House* director considered them to be selling points for the country that are widely acknowledged not just by Thai people but also internationally.

To be recognised as a Thai production, cultural adaptation was considered to be key. However to make the remake realistic, an up-to-date situation was also suggested as being an important part of the story. Since the remake of *Full House* was produced nine years after the original version (2004 and 2013), a revision based on current circumstances was thought to be required. For instance there is a change in the way people in the story consume news and media. While the fans of the male protagonist in the original version follow the news of their admired star through newspapers and television, fans in the remake version consume news and any other content of interest online through various types of smart devices. The advantage of online media is also directly presented in the remake story when the main character decides to return to the entertainment business after dealing with his personal affairs. He composes a new song and uploads it online, and then receives traceable feedback starting from one to more than a million views over a short period of time.

Another consideration for the revision of the script relates to what is actually happening in the real world. The Thai *Full House* director intended to insert several specifically Thai cultural items into her work, but nevertheless accepted that cultures are connected and hybrid. Although it is called a Thai drama, she found it impossible to show only Thai culture. The remake of Thai *Full House* is therefore also based on the concept of a mixed culture. One example of this is shown through a supporting character who has an international background and is bilingual. There are many scenes showing him speaking English with Thai subtitles provided. The character and his scenes are shown in this way because the director wanted to make her remake

both innovative and modern, and providing a balance between Thai and international elements. She said that not every character had to be 'so Thai', and that if it were so, viewers would be overwhelmed by 'Thainess'.

To me, I find it is difficult enough to define what Thai cultural identity, or 'Thainess', is. But given the comment from the Thai *Full House* director on the mixed cultural presentation, it is even more difficult to describe the Thai production when it is not just about the Thai context, and what Thai audiences expect when what they see is not only Thai content. The Thai *Full House* is different to the previous remakes which focus more on adapting Thai cultural elements, given that foreign cultures, especially South Korean cultural elements, have been inserted into the story. The clearest instance of this is in the locations. While the remakes of *Coffee Prince* and *Autumn in my Heart* presented their stories in only Thai settings, the Thai *Full House* uses several places in Thailand and South Korea as background to the story. The director explained that the selection of settings started during the process of rewriting the script when they found a scene in the Korean version showing the lead figures visiting Thailand during their honeymoon. The director and her team then thought it would be a good idea if they could reverse the story, showing the lead figures visiting South Korea for the same reason. However, producing films abroad costs lots of money, so to make the budget worthwhile, the director and her production team decided to shoot additional scenes in South Korea. Two situations in the original version which occur abroad, including the main characters' first meeting in China and their honeymoon in Thailand, were therefore changed to take place in South Korea. The production team also added two more scenes that were not in the original version, using the settings in South Korea for the commercial shooting scene of the main protagonists and the reconciliation scene at the end of the film.

As a consequence of using South Korea as the second main setting after Thailand, many South Korean tourist venues and cultural features were exposed through this Thai remake. The Thai *Full House* thus became a television remake that showed the environments of two countries and portrayed two or more cultures in the same story, but nevertheless still held its position as a Thai television drama for a Thai audience. The mixed cultural presentation in this Thai remake may therefore imply that being Thai, whether referring to Thai television drama or Thai culture, is usually associated with a hybrid nature. Although there is no formula or proportion in the integration of cultures, the study of the three Thai remakes with different degrees of cultural adaptation and appropriation shows that a higher degree of adaptation seems to receive a more positive feedback. The remake of the Thai *Full House*, for instance, is the most adapted story from its original of the three remakes under consideration and has gained the highest accolades. The reasons for this success, and an explanation for why viewers receive Thai re-creation in various ways, will be discussed in the following chapter.

Aside from the shooting of the locations and audience feedback, the Thai *Full House* also differs from the previous two remakes in terms of support from the South Korean Production Company. Thanks to the celebration of the 55th anniversary of the Thai–South Korean diplomatic relationship in 2013, the year that the Thai *Full House* was launched, the Thai production team took the opportunity to request cooperation from the South Korean production company for advertising purposes. The Korean production company agreed to support the Thai production in many ways, including facilitating access during the shooting in South Korea and arranging a meeting between the Thai director of the remake and the director of the original *Full House*. This meeting marked the Thai *Full House* as the first Thai remake that directly communicated with, and received feedback from, the original production team. On account of the high level of story adaptation, the Thai *Full House* production team had

to send the completed edition of the first episode to the Korean director and his team for their approval before working on subsequent episodes. Fortunately, the Korean team approved of all the changes and thought it was good to see the story from a different perspective. They even said, "There is no need to follow the original. If the audience need the same, they would watch the original." (Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, personal interview, May 17, 2016)

After talking to the three remake directors, the answers from each director confirm my argument that the definition of Thai culture is subjective, and made me understand why each remake was adjusted in various degrees, from little adaptation to a high degree of revision. Regardless of the productions' regulations and limitations, the remakes were created and revised based on the directors' experience and personal views of Thai culture, which are discussed as follows.

Directors' perception of Thai culture

As discussed in Chapter 2, I have taken the features of 'Thainess' from the Thai student textbook *Thai Civics, Culture and Social Living* (หน้าที่พลเมือง วัฒนธรรม และการ ดำเนินชีวิตในสังคม), namely the monarchy, the Thai language, lifestyle and personality, Buddhism, agriculture, Thai food and herbs, and Thai festivals, as my primary criteria with which to analyse the contents of the remakes. In the interview sessions, I once again addressed these criteria and asked the directors for their opinions about them. As expected, they each have different views about my proposed criteria, as well as on the definition of Thai culture.

The director of the Thai *Coffee Prince* strongly disagrees with the suggested criteria in saying that 'Thainess should not be explained by just naming items'. Listing cultural identity as items like this implies that the culture is steady and fixed. In his view, however, culture changes, and Thai culture should be regarded as a way of thinking

and attitudes of the Thai people that change over time. For him there is nothing wrong if people's thoughts change and are not constant. Applying his views to his work, he clearly stated that he did not want to 'hard' sell Thai cultural items in the scenes. Although viewers might not be able to see specific Thai items, such as Thai traditional costumes, on screen, they still experience 'Thainess' through the characters' daily lifestyles and expressions.

The director of the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* views 'Thainess' as being the affection shown, and intimacy, in the family. He somewhat agrees with my proposed criteria, especially with regard to lifestyle and personality that relates to family attachment. He said that of the cultural features I mentioned, the feature about the family is the only subject that is important for him, and the only subject that he would like to express as Thai culture in his work. He also critiqued other items, the monarchy and Buddhism in particular, that are difficult to expose and engage with. He considered Thai food to be a very old-fashioned and clichéd topic to present. However, if sponsors or producers really wanted him to work on these topics, he would need to think how to present and shape them in a creative way.

The Thai *Full House* director, however, completely agrees with all the criteria I suggested, since they match well with her thoughts about 'Thainess'. Most of her past works, including the remake of *Full House*, portray a number of Thai cultural features as defined in the official criteria, for instance Thai cooking, Thai manners and lifestyle, and Buddhist-related activity. In order to adopt these cultural items into her work, she not only introduces them by placing them directly in scenes, but also by blending them through the backgrounds of the main characters. One of the main characters in her recent television adaptation of Japanese comics *Playful Kiss* in 2015 is changed from a general medical student to a traditional Thai medicine apprentice, while another character from a previous movie she worked on studies in the faculty of agriculture.

With these backgrounds, Thai culture can be naturally displayed with the characters' lifestyles and activities. The intention to establish Thai cultural features into her work stems from her belief that television can act as a tool to preserve Thai cultural identity and educate the younger generation. She strongly believes that if every television drama constantly presented Thai cultural elements, they would not vanish or be forgotten, and she would be pleased if her works were part of this.

When referring to Thai culture, the three directors here seem to be on different pages, yet they have similar goals for their reproductions, that is, to make them convincing and realistic. However, without definitive agreements and with no valid measures, how can we conclude which remake is the more convincing? And more importantly what is being 'realistic' or, in a sense, being 'real Thai'?

While we cannot, perhaps ever, define precisely what the 'real Thai' element is, 'un-Thai' items seen in the original versions are identified and revised. As already discussed, in order to localise foreign content to a Thai context, the three Thai directors introduced features they believed to be Thai culture into the stories, and at the same time they adjusted and even screened out some South Korean-related items. These challenges between what is claimed as 'ours' and what is not are found throughout the process of Thai reproductions, and are suggested as being one of the main features that make Thai remakes more convincing and "realistic". Again, the goal of making the story convincing is addressed, which brings us back to the same question: how can we deduce which remake is the most convincing? Also, how can we decide upon a 'suitable' proportion of 'our-self' culture and otherness?

Cross-cultural remake: the contest between 'self' and 'otherness'

The Thai remake of Korean drama, a demonstration of the adaptation between Thai and foreign culture in the media industry, can be certainly discussed in terms of hybrid identity since it is unclear what identity the adapted media content still hold. What should we call them, whatever its origin, Thai or fusion? To answer this question, it is suggested they are called 'hybrid identity'. As argued since the introduction chapter, all cultures are crossed and connected, 'true' self and other identities have perhaps never existed due to the ongoing process of cultural hybridisation. Nevertheless, the sense of identity and unity does exist though individuals' perceptions. Evidence for this can be clearly deduced from this study. When both the Thai remake directors and their audiences enjoy and engage with the hybrid Korean–Thai content, yet still regard their familiar features as 'Thainess', and consider Korean features as 'otherness'. As discussed the working process of the Thai remake directors in this chapter, in order to localise the South Korean original story to Thai context, the directors have identified and separated what they considered as South Korean or other foreign cultural items, at the same time replaced with or introduced what they imagined as Thai cultural features.

Regardless of the ambiguity and disagreement of definition of Thainess, the notion of national identity and belonging is clear enough in the mind of Thai people. Walter F. Vella (1978) quotes King RAMA VI's proposition of the unity of Thai nation. The King compared it to the relationship between a man and his family. 'Only by feeling the oneness with fellow members could a nation exist' (p.178). Thongchai Winichakul (1994) affirms this point by saying that Thainess is what Thai people belong to and are part of. 'It is a "thing" on earth, and in history, which possesses particular features, all of which are distinct from others' (p.6). Since the sense of 'self' and 'other' seems tangible for Thais, Thongchai therefore suggests, as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, the way to identify Thai identity by distinguish 'non-Thai' or 'other' elements.

The term 'other' or 'otherness' (คนอื่น – *khon uen*) for Thai people at one time referred to the 'enemy' (Saichon, 2002 p.167) or 'the opposite of we-self'' (Thongchai, 1994 p. 168), differentiated by border and race. However its current definition, especially in the era of globalisation, has shifted from negative adversary to positive, or sometimes preferable, dissimilarity. As argued by Craig J. Reynolds (2002), the 'borderless' world of businesses and communications today have introduced Thai people a variety types of consumer and cultural products from different countries, and leaded to the conflict between 'the desire to remain Thai and the desire to be "un-Thai"' (p.312). The promotion and illusion of foreign brands have sometimes made Thai consumers believe that the foreign products and the concept of 'foreignness' are better and desirable. Local brands, on the other hand, usually communicate messages that feature attributes of 'Thainess' and 'localness' to offer their local consumers a sense of belonging and intimacy.

For South Korean culture, the key otherness to study in this research, Thais have learned that the cultural features from South Korea are different from what they considered as locals, nonetheless there is no negative feeling directed toward these 'foreigners'; instead they are provided with a warm welcome to Thailand. South Korean culture, perceived as 'desired otherness', has introduced new cultural perspectives and brought about many changes to Thai audiences. However, when consuming what is branded as a Thai product, in this case Thai remake of Korean drama, Thai audiences still anticipate viewing a Thai version and being attached to their own culture.

According to the focus groups I conducted for this research (which will be discussed more in Chapter 5), Thai participants who have watched both the Korean originals and the Thai remakes have shared their thoughts on this matter. Although they, too, have different views about Thai culture, seeing their imagined Thai features on screen might convince them to believe that the story is situated within a Thai context, and may even

make some of them forget the original version. On the other hand, the misplaced South Korean items shown create awkwardness and disbelief in these audiences.

The participants in the focus groups further commented that although they enjoyed watching South Korean dramas and consuming different types of Korean cultural products, nevertheless, Korean culture was perceived to be 'foreign' or 'other'. Even though some of the participants were able to find some similarities between Thai and Korean cultures, the majority regarded them as totally different. They were aware of, and able to distinguish, features that differed from what they believe in and were familiar with.

The comments from these participants are reminiscent of the argument set out by John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham (1996) in their book *New Patterns in Global Television: Peripheral Vision*, that despite the increase in television channels and the increasingly globalised nature of the industry, television for the universal audience has always been regarded more of a local than a global medium. Audiences still prefer their own national culture and language, and also prefer to consume their own national and/or regional media (Tunstall, 2008).

Thai remake directors, too, consider South Korean culture to be 'other' and try to localise their remakes to suit their audiences' expectations. Autumn in my Heart's director, for instance, refers to Korean culture with a Thai term, 'รสชาติ' (*rot chat*), which means a flavour or taste. To him, people from different nations have dissimilar 'taste buds' and view things differently. Since he considered that one 'flavour' could not match up with everyone's taste, he strongly opposed the idea of following the original script completely.

The term 'taste bud' suggested here seems to be the best metaphor to refer to audiences' viewing preferences. In his article *'The Good, The Bad and the Ugly: "Eastern Spaghetti"* in Thailand', Thanes Wongyannava (2009) suggests that 'of all the changes in human behaviour, food habits are among the most difficult to change' (p.509). In his view, Thai people usually disapprove authentic cuisine that does not agree with their personal taste. When foreign foods were introduced into Thailand, Thai people tended to adjust them to suit their own tastes. Most foreign food entrepreneurs in Thailand, therefore, have to invent new menus that feature Thai ingredients to gain local acceptance. Examples of adapted dishes include pizza with '*tom yam khung*' (Thai hot and sour prawn soup) topping, and a serving roast salmon with a hot-chilli-fish-sauce. Although the mixing food features up like this could make the food purists displeased, Thanes sees it as a common habit for Thais of being adaptive and creative persons. Therefore, to reinvent, whether food or television drama, successfully and win over Thai people' hearts, a careful balancing between foreign features and Thai cultural elements is considered to be vital.

Still, there is no accurate instruction of how to integrate different cultural elements available. This, again, returns to the question posed by the three directors with regard to how to make their remakes as convincing as possible and the main reason for adapting Thai cultural features to Thai reproductions. The intentions to do so are to please and make the remakes relevant to local audiences. Therefore, the right to evaluate whether the remake is realistic or unrealistic, relevant to 'self' features or irrelevant as 'otherness', lies perhaps in the hands of the audiences. The further study on the audience, which is presented in the next chapter, is therefore significant to this research, especially in terms of the reception of hybrid contents and the perception towards cultural adaptation.

Conclusion

According to three interview sessions with three Thai remake directors, the main reasons for adopting Thai cultural features in their television remakes are to localise and brand them as Thai dramas, and at the same time to make them connected to Thai audiences. Thai television remakes of foreign culture may be referred to as an end product of the cultural adaptation process. Yet being Thai does not show only in the end product or at the end process. Instead, being Thai is discussed, adapted and appropriated throughout the remaking process from the start of each production.

However, the degree of adaptation and cultural appropriation of each remake is different. Thanks to few limitations and no requirements imposed by the original producers, each Thai director was able to re-narrate the story based on his/her personal experiences and opinions. Their different opinions, especially with regard to Thai cultural features, are considered as key in the process of revision. The reason that Thai *Coffee Prince* was the least adapted from the original and shows fewer Thai cultural items on screen may not be related simply to time constraints as claimed by its director, but also to his perceptions when referring to Thai cultural identity. To him, 'Thainess' can be represented through the way Thai people think. He then believes that in presenting 'Thainess' there is no need to show tangible items since the way characters think and act is enough to present Thai identity. For the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* director, family attachment is the only feature he considered when discussing Thai cultural identity. His style of adaptation and cultural placement ideas are based on this, while the intention of the Thai *Full House* director to present and preserve the image of what she believes to be 'Thainess' is found in a number of Thai cultural elements in the Thai version of *Full House*.

With three dissimilar styles of adaptation, I cannot (and have no right to) judge which production is the best, better or worst. Yet one comparison can be made between

these remakes, and that is the reception of their audiences. Of the three remakes, the Thai *Full House* was the most popular. Further explanations for this success, preference factors and the engagement of Thai audiences, as well as the national and transnational media reception, will be offered in Chapter 5, Transcultural Consumption.

Chapter 5

Transcultural Consumption

As suggested in Chapter 1, the process of the Thai reinvention of foreign cultural content begins with the textual revision, then the remake production and audience reception. While the first two steps, textual revision and remake production, have already been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, the last step of the reproduction process, audience reception, will be considered in this current chapter. This chapter is divided into four parts: audience reception; transcultural media consumption; findings from focus groups; and 'soft' power, which endeavour to show a better understanding of Thai audiences, especially in terms of their reception of foreign and adapted content, and for answering **RQ 4: How do Thai audiences accept and interpret Korean–Thai adapted media texts?**

The chapter begins with a discussion about the concept of 'audience' and its mode of reception, followed by a focus on transcultural media consumption to understand more about audience preferences at local and international levels. Subsequently, key findings are provided from three focus groups of Thai audiences in different age ranges who have engaged with designated Korean television dramas and their Thai remakes. The findings from these groups show how they interact and interpret the cross-cultural content, and reveal suggestions for improving Thai productions and the entertainment industry in general. The chapter also focuses on the influence of 'soft' power, showing its ability to affect Thai audiences and also outlines the possibility of utilising this power in the future to benefit Thailand.

Audience reception

Since the focus of this chapter is on the audience, it is important to understand the meaning of the word as well as the development, nature and type of audience this thesis is concerned with. Originally, the 'audience' was regarded as a collective term for the 'receiver' in the model of the mass communication process (source, channel, message, receiver, effect), and initially referred to 'the readers of, viewers of, listeners to one or other media channels' (McQuail, 1997, p. 1). However, thanks to the establishment of new communication media, such as cable, satellite, smartphone and particularly the Internet, the character and role of audiences has become more diverse. These new media have shifted consumer behaviour with regard to media consumption and daily life patterns (Solomon et al., 2010) and have encouraged a degree of interaction and negotiation (Jenkins, 2006). With the change in media form and consumption, studies of audience reception become more significant for many media scholars when investigating the influences of mass media, either traditional or new media, and their content, to find out how audiences engage and negotiate with, interpret, and also resist, the media.

To understand audience reception studies, especially in the global and advanced media context, it is helpful to look at some media research. James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein, in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies* (2001), have shown that in the 1930s and 1940s there were a number of studies measuring the effects of media on audiences by matching output with input, following the model of communication in which the stages of sender, message, medium and receiver were utilised. One communication model applied was called 'uses and gratifications', which argued that audiences responded to media because they wanted media to fulfil their personal needs.

In the 1960s, the 'uses and gratifications' model was challenged by a new notion, influenced by works of the Frankfurt School. Scholars such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer regarded media communication as the 'culture industry', which strengthened the identification of the audience with the dominant culture. This theory sees mass media as conduits of commodification that are used to manipulate mass society into passivity.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, there was another challenging notion known as 'technological determinism'. This concept has two different paradigms according to two main researchers in the field: Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams. While McLuhan (1964) considered that 'it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action' (pp. 8–9), Williams (1990) rejected this idea and argued that:

> Determination is a real social process, but never ... a wholly controlling, wholly predicting set of causes. … We have to think of determination not as a single force … but as a process in which real determining factors – the distribution of power or of capital, social and physical inheritance, relations of scale and size between groups – set limits and exert pressures, but neither wholly control nor wholly predict the outcome of complex activity within or at these limits, and under or against these pressures (p. 123).

At present, with the rise of new media, for example, digital technologies and networking media, the traditional interests of media and communications studies have also expanded by moving the focus from media production and audience to 'the artefacts and devices used to communicate ... the activities and practices in which people engage in communication or share information; and the social arrangements or organisational forms that develop around those devices and practices' (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006, p. 2).

Global shifts in media operation and audience reception have encouraged many scholars to discuss and investigate these changes. For example, Henry Jenkins (2006), in his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, raises a seminal assumption about 'what it means to consume media' nowadays:

> If old consumers were assumed to be passive, the new consumers are active. If old consumers were predictable and stayed where you told them to stay, then new consumers are migratory, showing a declining loyalty to networks or media. If old consumers were isolated individuals, the new consumers are more socially connected. If the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible, the new consumers are now noisy and public (pp. 18–19).

Evidence for Jenkins' assumptions can be seen in this current research. In the adaptation of the Thai *Full House*, for instance, the original script was updated in tandem with the current trend of media communication and consumption. As discussed in the previous chapter, unlike the original story, the Thai remake had fans of the main protagonist who enjoyed watching and following the news of their admired star through various types of smart devices. The remake also adds a scene where the main character launches his new single through an online channel, and receives massive and positive online feedback in return.

Another instance supporting Jenkins' arguments is found in the audience study part of this research. Media consumption patterns of audiences from different age groups, which are set out later in the chapter, vary accordingly. While participants in their forties still prefer to consume media content through traditional channels, younger audiences are more open to online media. Some young participants not only watch programmes they like but also search more information about them and share their thoughts with others only through online options.

The multi-practices or cross-roles of young audiences mentioned here can be labelled 'participatory culture', meaning a culture in which individuals do not act merely as

audiences, but also act as contributors or producers as a result of the technological advance in media and the convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006). Technology has opened up new avenues for communication, collaboration and circulation, and has consequently provided opportunities for media consumers to create their own content. Barriers such as money, time and space are becoming less significant. Extensive knowledge of computer programming and costly production equipment are no longer necessary to create user-led content on the Internet (Jenkins, 2006). Nevertheless, there is an argument that technology is not the only factor to be taken into account regarding participatory culture. Axel Bruns (2008), in his article 'The Future is User-Led: The Path Towards Widespread Produsage', mentions another important factor, which is the users themselves, in particular the young generation of users, who have the skills, abilities, and, above all, the interest and inclination to use these skills.

However, the change in audience media consumption habits is not the only one that was found. Another issue, often discussed in relation to this field, is the point of reception. Adrian Athique, in his book *Transnational Audiences: Media Reception on a Global Scale* (2016), argues that among various types of media content available, there are two types of audience: 'resident' audiences and 'non-resident' audiences. The former category is usually seen as one that is keen to consume content which is simultaneously 'about here and about us' (p. 10). The content is preferably related to the society in which this group lives or belongs. The latter group, however, the 'non-resident' audience, is interested in imported and transnational media content. Yet in practice these two groups are never clearly separated, and inevitably overlap. The reception of Thai remakes is a good example. Within one episode of a remake of a foreign television series, Thai audiences are able to experience both local and transnational content. Athique assumes the characteristics of media content are intertextual and that they come from multiple sources.

The intention of localising Korean stories to fit the Thai contexts of the three Thai directors, discussed in Chapter 4, can be regarded as an attempt to offer 'resident' product to Thai audiences. Nonetheless, their remaking processes and the end products still present the intertextual character as Athique suggested, and at the same time provide audiences with an in-between status of 'resident' and 'non-resident'. With the interesting status of Thai remake audiences, together with the generational change of media consumption patterns, specific groups of audiences were then selected and investigated. Before exploring the audiences' media reception in detail, however, another viewpoint of being 'resident' and 'non-resident' audiences, that of transcultural consumption, will be presented.

Transcultural media consumption

Nowadays in a globalised world it cannot be denied that the choices for audiences are very open, whether from 'resident' or 'non-resident' productions. However, local and national productions are usually regarded as the most preferable options (Straubhaar, 1991; Tunstall, 2008). Joseph D. Straubhaar (1991) suggests there are a number of factors that create local preference, including the local appeal of celebrities, specific local humour, relevant local issues, culturally specific styles and the appeal of similar-looking ethnic faces. Some of these preference factors are associated with the views of audiences in the focus groups of this research. One of the main motives for watching television dramas is to see local male and female characters. Some participants even watch the dramas repeatedly and thereby demonstrate their feelings for the main personnel of specific remakes.

The case studies in this thesis are the remakes of South Korean television dramas in Thai versions. The original texts here are clearly not local; therefore, to reach and please local audiences, localisation is considered key. Otherwise it was considered that local audiences' satisfaction would drop. Again, opinions from the participants of the

focus groups prove this point. Some participants were strongly opposed to the remakes and felt awkward when noticing non-Thai items such as a public bathhouse being displayed in a remake. They also suggested that the Thai producers should either delete or replace such items with something else more relevant to their local context. From the example given, it might help to verify Straubhaar's argument (1991) that 'native' culture always comes first in audience choice, followed by neighbouring or familiar cultures, while more distant cultural choices are referred to as being 'exotic' or 'foreign'.

However, the notion of audience selection by distance is challenged by South Korean pop culture when it introduces and develops the notion of 'Asianness'. According to Amporn Jirattikorn (2016), South Korean pop culture has received a warm welcome from many countries with diverse cultures across Asia because it was able to offer a sense of belonging to its international audiences. The notion of joint ownership occurred because of the 'content collaboration' strategy, cooperating with, and combining, South Korean cultural content together with other countries' cultural content. South Korean producers also develop the content of programmes relating to different countries, and shoot in various locations outside South Korea to engender a closer connection with their foreign audiences for programmes and to ensure their cultural products receive a positive reception.

With regard to the Korean influence, although Thai audiences have positive feelings about Thai characters in Thai remakes and expect to see more Thai cultural adaptations, they prefer the original Korean versions. They may enjoy watching Thai remakes; as one viewer said, if she had never watched the original, she would think that the Thai *Full House* was an outstanding Thai television drama. Nevertheless, when Thai audiences realise that what they have watched is a recreation, they cannot help but compare it to the original and view the remake as inferior. One participant made a

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strong comment, saying that the Thai remake in question was unable to be compared, or to compete, with the original.

Thai audiences' fondness for foreign works does not occur only with regard to Korean material; a similar preference of Thai readers for foreign literature has also been shown in the past. According to Wibha Senanan's *The Genesis of the Novel in Thailand* (1975), a literary trend in the 1920s in Thailand was for translated or adapted work from Western and Chinese stories. Literature influenced by foreign culture gained such popularity that some Thai readers regarded Thai fiction as insufficient and indefensible work. Wibha cites the comments of Luang Saranuphraphan, an editor of เสนาศึกษาและ แผ่วิทยาศาสตร์ (*sena sueksa lae phae witthayasat*), one of the famous monthly journals at that time.

> Some readers often complained, after reading Thai fiction … that the story does not sound as convincing as a Western one, and that a Thai story always gives an impression of being lie … Such an attitude of the readers, therefore, made some writers wish to punish the extreme admirers of the Western novel by inventing an original story and borrowing [foreign] names such as Dick, Bob, Phillip, for their characters to make the story sound Western. In the end, their stories sell well. (Wibha, 1975 p. 70).

Ironically, Thai works in Western disguise were easily able to win Thai readers' hearts. Although these Thai stories were renowned because of the use of foreign character names, their ability to touch the readers was considered to be the result of the story and wording adapted to the Thai context (Wibha, 1975). This is because despite the influx of foreign culture into countries, local people still prefer consuming their own national culture and language.

Linking this argument to the current research, Thai audiences from the focus groups expected to follow international trends, and at the same time wanted to consume the adaptation of the Thai features. Yet, as discussed, the perception of being Thai or being foreign is very personal, and can be referred to in many different ways. The study

of Thai audiences also works well with this argument. The definition of Thai culture, the expectations for Thai feature adaptation and Thai audience preferences for Thai productions found in this study are very varied, based on generational aspects. To understand more about the differences of audience media perception and consumption, audience analysis through the focus group interviews is provided as follows.

Findings from focus groups: A cross cultural and generational reception

The focus group method is proposed to gain insights from Thai audiences, seeing how they receive foreign content, from South Korea in particular, as well as from Thai adapted media texts, and to understand their perceptions of 'other' and their 'own' culture(s). Three sessions of focus groups were conducted separately, with participants in different age groups, with an assumption that viewers from different generations not only consume media differently but also have different opinions about what they consume. Each focus group contained six participants. The first and second groups were selected from the main target group for Asian pop culture in Thailand. The first group, which I call 'Students', included participants in the fourteen to nineteen year age range, while the second group, 'First jobbers', was aged between twenty and twenty-three. Even though the age range of these two groups was very close, they were nevertheless different in several respects; in terms, for example, of their daily routines and incomes. The third group I interviewed that I named 'Middle-aged workers' was aged between forty and forty-nine, and was recruited from a regular Thai television viewers' category.

Analysis from each focus group interview shows a number of key findings, which can be divided into five topics comprising the following:

- South Korean–Thai adapted media consumption and engagement.

- Perceptions of, and preferences for, South Korean dramas and their remakes.

- Differences and similarities between the originals and the remakes.

- Perspectives on 'Thainess'.

- Suggestions for future Thai television dramas.

South Korean–Thai adapted media consumption and engagement

In the first topic, a cross-cultural media consumption pattern of Thai audiences, it is noticeable that while participants in each group engaged with South Korean television dramas and Thai remakes in the same way, participants in different groups experienced the same content differently. 'Students', the youngest group interviewed, only watched online channels. Every participant in this group watched the remake dramas as well as other television programmes they were interested in only through online channels, such as YouTube, and only on their smartphones. All of them decided to watch if the programmes had good reviews from netizens or were recommended by their friends. As one participant from the group said, a number of posts, comments and content-sharing about specific programmes seen on Facebook encouraged her to follow the trend and watch the same programmes as others had done. Also, after seeing a programme, if participants of the 'Students' group found it either interesting or boring, they would interact by sharing their positive or negative thoughts online and talk about it with friends.

Participants of the 'Students' group also had a specific preference for the soundtrack. They all preferred to watch the foreign content with the original soundtrack and subtitled. One of them expressed her view on Korean drama with Thai dubbing, saying that 'it is strange seeing a Korean face speaking Thai'. The reason why dubbing does not work for this audience might be explained by Phyllis Zatlin's argument in her book *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: A practitioner's View* (2005), that 'dubbing

seeks to create the illusion of an illusion ... No matter how well synchronized the lip movements of the actors on screen with the voices in the foreign language, that illusion will have its flaws' (p. 126). In contrast, the retention of the original voice offers 'honesty' to its audience. It might be implied, therefore, that what might please this young audience had to contain the sensation of 'honesty' and 'authenticity'. However, when the South Korean story was adjusted to the Thai context, the 'Students' views on the productions' honesty and authenticity changed in various respects. Further discussion on this issue will be presented in the next topic.

While the 'Students' group was strongly in favour of the original soundtrack, the 'First jobbers' had no problem watching South Korean dramas dubbed in Thai. 'First jobbers' seemed to be more compromising in their engagement with new and traditional mediums. Although the 'Students' engaged with Korean dramas and their remakes only through online platforms, the majority of 'First jobbers' watched the programmes through television channels. Four out of six participants in the 'First jobbers' group watched the original South Korean dramas dubbed in Thai through Thai terrestrial channels, whereas the other two participants in this group watched in DVD format with the original soundtrack and subtitled. When viewing the Thai recreations, the same four participants watched live programmes on television, but the other two watched the rerun programmes online.

Despite the fact that most participants of the 'First jobbers' group watched the original Korean dramas and Thai remakes through television, a traditional medium, they shared their thoughts and feelings about the dramas they saw through social networks, new medium platforms. According to the group interviews, there were two participants who had online communication with friends while watching the dramas and three participants shared the remake-related content online after the programmes had finished.

With examples of 'First jobbers' online activities and the way the group of 'Students' engaged with media content, it may be suggested that online networking and social media are important influences on young Thai audiences. However these online channels do not seem to be very relevant to the older audience group. According to the interviews with them, 'Middle-aged workers' participants still preferred offline viewing options. They regarded television and DVD players as the main home entertainment. Every participant in the older group watched Korean dramas through terrestrial channels, and half the group also bought DVDs of already-watched Korean dramas to re-watch later. When watching the Thai remakes, all the 'Middle-aged workers' watched the Thai reproductions through their DVD players.

How the 'Middle-aged workers' selected television programmes to watch did not involve much online influence. Rather, their choices were influenced mainly by relatives and friends' suggestions, actors' attractiveness, and advertisements about programmes. Unlike the 'Students' and 'First jobbers', 'Middle-aged workers' participants were considered to be passive receivers, with no active response or involvement, especially through online platforms. Although all the older group members had their own social network accounts and started to look for more information about programmes they were interested in online, they nevertheless admitted that face-to-face communication was more practical and preferable.

The different styles of media consumption habits shown here may verify my assumption, and correspond to arguments made by many media scholars mentioned earlier, that viewers in different age ranges engage with media content differently. Nonetheless, the behaviour of audiences is not the only aspect I assume to be different; the perceptions and preferences of audiences from different generations are also expected to be dissimilar. The question 'What do you think about Korean dramas

and their Thai remakes?' was then posed during the focus group interviews to prove this point.

Perceptions of, and preferences for, Korean dramas and their remakes

Every participant in the 'Students' group had a positive feeling about television dramas from South Korea. The reason they gave for this is that they thought South Korean dramas would provide them with more up-to-date fantasy stories than the stereotyped Thai television dramas they were familiar with. When they knew there would be a remake of a South Korean drama in a Thai version that they had been impressed with in the original, they all were excited and looking forward to seeing it. Since the young participants wanted to see something different and avoid clichés, they had high expectations for a new style of Thai creation. One participant even expected a better production from Thai producers, saying, 'If you call it remake, it means a better version'. Another participant looked forward even more to seeing the new production when she found out who the lead characters would be in the Thai version, while a few participants were curious about how the Thai production team would adapt the South Korean story to a Thai background. 'I would like to know how they adjust the location from South Korea to Thailand, and how they maintain the story like the original', one group member wondered.

After the Thai remakes were launched, however, almost every participant in the 'Student' group was disappointed. Four out of six participants said that the Thai casts were too awkward and tried too hard to copy the South Korean characters. One said:

> When I watched the Thai [*Coffee Prince*] version, actually it is not that bad, but the Thai actors act unnaturally and try so hard to be like the original characters. They should be more relaxed and act in their own way. This imitative acting makes me want to watch the original dubbed in Thai.

Dubbing was referred to again. It was decided that it was not a preferable option for young Thai audiences since it lacked honesty and authenticity. One 'Student' participant, in comparing the Thai remake to the Thai dubbed version, suggested that even though the remake story was adjusted to be situated within a Thai background, and with Thai language speaking characters, without suitable adaptation and localisation it still failed to offer enough of a realistic atmosphere to this group of participants. Another reason for 'Student' dissatisfaction was the perceived imbalance of cultural placement. Although many 'Student' members noticed an attempt on the part of the Thai producers to introduce Thai elements into their remakes, the retention of Korean items sometimes confused and distracted them.

There were, however, two participants of the 'Student' group who had positive opinions about the remakes. One participant said that the remake was more convincing for her than the original. 'Since I am just aged fifteen, I do not know much about South Korea. I feel I relate more to the Thai version.' Another participant said her preference was based on the performance of the Thai leading character. She said, 'Just seeing him as the main actor makes the rest acceptable.'

Highlighting the comment regarding the character preference, one of the main reasons Thai audiences watch specific television programmes is that they are concerned with character preference. A character's appearance has a great influence on an audience's decision about a television drama and was the main appeal for the participants in the 'First jobbers' group with regard to South Korean dramas. Three participants from this group admitted they chose the drama only because they wanted to see what the actors looked like. However, after watching the drama, the South Korean casts impressed them more with their natural acting and the chemistry between the characters. Satisfaction from watching the original leads to interest in viewing the remake.

When the 'First jobbers' group knew there would be Thai remakes of South Korean dramas they had previously enjoyed, they wanted to watch them. However they also wanted to ensure that the remake versions would not be imitations. They wanted to see an adaptation and a balance between Thai and South Korean culture. As one 'First jobber' clearly states:

> I did not expect the Thai version to be exactly the same as the Korean version. Instead, I would like to have seen how the story blended with Thai culture because Korean and Thai cultures are different. For example, we typically do not drink Soju [a Korean alcoholic drink],.. I would like to have known how the Thai version was going to adapt this.

The Thai remakes, however, slightly disappointed members of the 'First jobbers' group on account of the cast selection. For the members of this group, the main motive for watching the dramas was the appearance of the leading characters, and to some extent the Thai remakes could not satisfy them regarding this matter. Two participants in this group pointed out that the Thai characters seen in the remake of *Coffee Prince* were not attractive enough and were not good at acting. Likewise, another three participants were pleased only with the main actress in the Thai *Full House.*

Apart from comments about characters, the 'First jobbers' expressed indifferent feelings with regard to other features of the remakes. They all agreed that the Thai remakes in general were not that bad, but that the original South Korean versions were preferable. They contended that the Thai remakes were not realistic. Some of them could not believe that the Korean story could happen within their local context. One participant insisted that the 'Korean story suits best with only a Korean background'.

Although the 'First jobbers' mentioned several weaknesses in the Thai remakes, all the participants of this group looked forward to seeing more remakes of South Korean dramas in Thai versions. They suggested that since they had seen such an improvement from the first, stiff, *Coffee Prince* to the third much more flexible remake

of *Full House*, future remakes were bound to be ever better. Feedback from the 'Students' group was equally positive. Despite the deficiencies of the Thai remakes, they found the cross-cultural reproductions were more appealing than typical Thai television dramas. One of them said that 'the remakes are trendier and easier to engage with'. Unlike the usual Thai dramas, the remakes offered unpredictable endings. The same participant adds, 'Traditional Thai dramas always have the same happy ending. But the remakes might end differently and keep me wondering how they might end.'

Contrary to the previous optimistic views about Thai remakes, when the 'Middle-aged workers' group, the oldest study group in the research, understood that the South Korean dramas they had previously watched would be remade in Thai versions, four out of the six participants had no interest in watching the remake versions at all. In their view the originals were already perfect. They also listed what they liked about the South Korean productions, which included the concise narratives, the variety of plots, the unpredictable endings, the realistic settings and appealing characters. All of them enjoyed watching the South Korean dramas very much. One participant claimed that if she started to watch a particular South Korean drama and found it to be very interesting, she would stay up all night and watch the whole sixteen or eighteen episodes within a day.

Participants from the 'Middle-aged workers' group also considered that South Korean television dramas had the potential to offer their audiences far more than just the usual home entertainment. They increased awareness of South Korea, introduced Korean culture, and influenced the audiences' consumption behaviours. For instance, there were two participants who now appreciate Korean food and are learning how to cook Korean dishes while another two participants have been to South Korea and have

visited the locations shown on screen. A participant whose trip was inspired by South Korean dramas commented:

> Korean dramas are good at promoting their country's tourism. They reveal attractive locations and encourage viewers to visit. Tourism in South Korea induced by South Korean dramas is so successful that Thai travel agencies have had to open up special tours for visiting the drama's shooting locations. The coffee shop in *Coffee Prince*, for example, although it was initially set up for shooting purposes, continues to welcome real customers after the filming ended. It's not just Thai viewers like me but also viewers from other countries who want to visit.

With these extremely positive opinions about the South Korean entertainment business and television dramas, the members of this group consider South Korean television dramas to be a better choice not only than the remake versions but also typical Thai television dramas. When they had a chance to watch the remakes, none of the Thai recreations were able to win their hearts. The participants kept comparing the remakes to their originals, and all agreed that the South Korean versions were superior. As one of them said:

> If I had never watched original Korean dramas before, I would think the Thai remake was fine. But as soon as I remember the original, done! The Thai version cannot compare or compete at all.

Although the other two younger groups did not directly mention that they kept thinking of the original versions while watching the remakes, like the 'Middle-aged workers' participants, the comparison between the Thai remakes and their South Korean original versions was one of the main subjects discussed during the groups' interviews. Again, the viewpoints and foci of each study group were somewhat different. The foreign features and adaptation of local features, too, were detected and discussed from a variety of perspectives.

Differences and similarities between the originals and the remakes

The Thai remakes kept reminding the 'Middle-aged workers' group of the originals. One explanation for this relates to the great degree of imitation. Most of the group participants could not recall noticing much difference between the originals and their remakes. Food was the only feature they noticed that had been changed: from Korean to Thai menus. The participants even questioned whether there was any requirement from the original production company to compel the Thai producers to remake the Thai versions as close as possible to the original. The 'Middle-aged workers' group members did not mind watching the same South Korean series repeatedly, but when the exact same story was repeated within the Thai contexts, they did not view it the same way. Instead, they expected to see more adaptation and less imitation from the Korean-to-Thai recreation. As one of them commented: 'it is no fun at all watching the copy.' In addition, production with 'too much' replication created uneasy feelings in this group. For example, the sense of humour was found to be incompatible: the jokes that make the participants laugh in the South Korean version did not do so within a Thai setting. Also, the non-Thai items included on the remake screens did not convince the group participants.

When watching the remakes, the 'middle-age workers' group seemed to detect only the imitations and similarities between the original works and their remakes. The 'Students' group, however, referred more to the development of the adaptation. At the start, the 'Students' group's participants agreed that the Thai remakes, and the Thai *Coffee Prince* in particular, should be regarded as imitations rather than as revisions. One participant understood that:

> Since *Coffee Prince* is the first Thai remake, the producers must have intended to copy everything from the Korean version. I cannot feel any 'Thainess' in it. Locations, the wording and foods look the same as shown in the original.

The 'Students' found that the Thai adaptation in the second Thai remake, *Autumn in my Heart*, was somewhat improved. Not only were more Thai cultural items found, but also different narratives were noticed. One adapted scene that a participant from this group was able to remember was the bathing scene of the female protagonist when she was young with her foster mother. She noticed that the bonding scene between mother and daughter in the South Korean version was reinterpreted and re-narrated with a haircut scene, showing the Thai mother cutting her daughter's hair with care. Although this participant said that she felt indifferent about the change of this scene, she also said she would feel awkward if the scene had duplicated the original. 'I don't find it interesting to see Thai women having a bath', she added.

Unlike the first two productions, for the third remake, the Thai *Full House*, the 'Students' group's participants observed significant differences between the South Korean and Thai versions. They noticed the placements of various Thai cultural items, namely the wooden Thai-styled houses, Thai food, Thai desserts and Thai costumes and flower garlands. They also considered the Thai *Full House* to be the most preferable of the three Thai remakes. One participant even claimed that, 'if I had never watched the original before, I would have thought the Thai Full House to be one of the most outstanding Thai dramas. It is so convincing and entertaining.'

The great level of adaptation found in the Thai *Full House* was able to shift the remake status to the position of original drama. Many focus groups participants forgot they were watching a remake and thought that what they were seeing was brand new drama. In the eyes of a 'First jobbers' participant, the Thai *Full House* was like a new story. She did not recognise any connection between the original and the remake. She said that while she watched the Thai *Full House* it did not remind her of anything associated with the original version. Rather, she noticed numerous Thai cultural

elements, including a Thai wedding ceremony, Thai traditional costumes, Thai foods and Thai songs.

With regard to opinions about the remakes of *Coffee Prince* and *Autumn in my Heart*, the 'First jobbers' group said much the same as the 'Students' and 'Middle-aged workers'. The repetition pattern was again mentioned, but the 'First jobbers' group focused more on the copying of props, costumes, venues and characters. To illustrate, one group member commented that the 'costumes of the Thai *Coffee Prince*'s characters look very similar to those in the Korean version. Especially the barista's uniform: the Thai version has tailor-made it exactly the same as shown in the original.' The appearances and personalities of the main protagonists also sometimes reminded them of the South Korean casts.

There was one dissimilarity between the South Korean dramas and Thai remakes that the 'First jobbers' group noticed and agreed with the change, which was the exposure of the love scenes. All of them remarked that the love scenes in the three remakes were far less revealing and were much 'softer' than in the originals. They assumed that 'Thai society was still not ready for this kind of scene. If the remake had openly presented it just like the Korean version did, it might have caused a big issue.' This viewpoint of the 'First jobbers' group should remind any production team that they should never ignore concerns about local culture and social expectations. Something or some situation that seems fine when it happens with one group of people may become unacceptable with another group. Participants of the focus groups believed that producing the remakes in similar or dissimilar fashion to the original were actually not as significant as balancing the cross-cultural content. As one of them concluded, 'Neither a true repetition nor over-adaptation can make a remake successful. Balancing the content, alternatively, is more important.'

In discussing cross-cultural productions the issues of cultural appropriation and adaptation cannot be avoided. Apart from the 'First jobbers' views on harmonising cultural content, Thai culture is mentioned again and again in the focus groups, especially when comparing the original productions with reference to audiences' expectations of Thai remakes. Personal views about Thai culture certainly have an influence on media perception and reception. Since television is usually regarded as a local medium, and its audiences prefer watching local relevant content, remakes that do not offer enough local cultural features to match audiences' expectations might possibly fail to satisfy them. Then again, to please audiences and meet their expectations, I once again have to consider the question of 'What is Thai culture?' Further questions then arise: 'Do the three groups share the same views about culture?' and, 'Do the views of Thai audiences about Thai culture accord with those of Thai producers as well as with the Thai authorities?'

Perspectives on 'Thainess'

Before arriving at a conclusion as to whether Thai audiences' opinions accord or disagree with the definitions of Thai culture as set out by various different institutions, the question of 'What is Thai culture?' needs to be addressed. When this specific question was posed in the interview with the 'Students' group, all the group members referred to visible and tangible features of Thai culture and 'Thainess'. Special occasions and activities, for example, the *Songkran* festival (the Thai New Year), Buddhist Sabbath Day, making 'merit' (*tham bun*), pouring water for revered elders and asking for blessings were mentioned first. One participant then added additional features such as the Thai greeting and Thai language as part of their culture. She said, 'While Korean people greet each other by saying "*ann-yeong-ha-se-yo*" (hello), Thai people have a term "*sawat-di*" (hello) as a signature greeting.' Especially a greeting with a welcoming smile, as another participant suggested. 'Thainess' reminded her of a smile and a famous related motto: 'Thailand, the land of smile.' She

considered smiling and kind-heartedness were the most significant and distinct features of Thai culture.

Unlike the 'Students' group's ideas, in the case of the 'First jobbers group', unique Thai features related to the characteristics of Thai people. For them, what differentiated themselves from others from different countries was their reserved behaviour: polite, considerate, deferential and generous. The way Thai people greeted each other with a *wai*, and the way Thai people had meals together were also mentioned as examples of people-related features. Participants of the 'First jobbers' group believed that 'Thainess' could be reflected through how Thai people lived their everyday life. As one of them said, 'Thai people are Thai culture. People from different nations cannot be the same as us. How we live is our so-called culture.'

The answers about Thai culture from the 'First jobbers' group largely accorded with those from the 'Middle-aged workers' group. Participants from the latter also connected the term 'culture' to people's lifestyle. However, the lifestyle of Thai people they talked about referred to their childhood. When the question 'What is Thai culture and "Thainess"?' was posed, the 'Middle-aged workers' participants thought back to childhood moments and shared their own experiences. One participant referred 'Thainess' to her relations with the elders in her family and Buddhist activities:

> The term 'Thainess' reminds me of when I was young and staying with my grandmother. She took me to the temple every Buddhist holy day. And that made me learn about Thai customs and culture.

Another participant also linked 'Thainess' to attachment to her family, but illustrated her point with home-cooked recipes. As she said:

> I grew up in an extended family, staying together with parents, grandparents and relatives. Every day we cooked for ourselves and had meals together. All the Thai recipes we had were taught and passed down from generation to generation.

Another two participants described 'Thainess' as their good old times in a provincial area. The first participant revealed her previous upcountry lifestyle and talked about the contrast of living in a city today:

> People living in the past and people living in the countryside are the same. They know all their neighbours well and are considerate and kind to each other. I now live in Bangkok and hardly know people even from the same housing estate as myself.

The second participant said that 'Thainess' still resided with older people.

> In talking about Thai culture, I think of the lifestyle of Thai people in the past, relating to agriculture, rice farming, being generous and wearing traditional clothes. Nowadays, older people in these areas still preserve this traditional culture.

Participants from the 'Middle-aged workers' group believed that the Thai cultural features they experienced when they were young had now faded away because of the lack of interest in preserving Thai culture for younger generations. The participants of this group said that young people nowadays were careless and self-centred; that they prefer shopping malls to Buddhist temples, and had less respect and manners. They therefore suggested that parents as well as schools should take more responsibility for instructing and showing Thai traditional features and values to the new generations.

While the 'Middle-aged workers' group was very concerned about cultural variation and the decline of Thai culture on the part of young generations, the younger audiences in this study interestingly shared the same thinking as the older group. They also expressed their concerns about their own culture by pointing out problems and suggesting solutions to these problems. A few participants from the 'Students' group,

for example, worried that Thai people, especially those who were in the same age range as themselves, could not use the Thai language properly. Although they created many new sayings, they were careless about acknowledging the proper use of their own language. Both the 'Students' and the 'First jobbers' participants stressed the 'over-interest' in other cultures and trends, especially from South Korea, and also argued that this made young Thai people nowadays have less interest in their own culture. Rather than learning Thai traditional music, they would prefer to practise and perform South Korean-style pop songs. Instead of buying local Thai products, they preferred items that were imported from South Korea. The different interests of people of different ages caused a conflict between generations, mostly between young Thais and their parents. To avoid these issues between generations, participants from the 'Students' group suggested there should be a collaboration of many institutions. In addition to further teaching through family members and schools, the Thai media should have the opportunity and responsibility for educating appropriate Thai culture to Thai audiences.

Suggestions for future Thai television dramas

Although each audience group in this research had different views on most topics, they all agreed about one issue, which is that they all saw the potential of Thai television dramas and had expectations that they might provide them with more than simply entertainment. It was suggested by the 'Students' group that Thai television might be a medium that offered some educational content. Some participants noticed that several Thai dramas nowadays have inserted didactic elements concerning family and personal values, and they therefore wanted to encourage Thai producers to continue to apply these elements in their work with the hope that Thai television dramas would become one of a Thai family's teaching tools. A participant from 'Students' group comments:

> Thai dramas are good at teaching family values. If the producers could focus more on this, I think it would greatly benefit Thai audiences. Since almost every Thai family watches television dramas constantly, even if some parents do not teach their kids properly, those kids could learn from TV dramas.

Apart from family values, Thai culture and history are other subjects that Thai audiences, especially those in their forties, expect to see in Thai television programmes. Participants from the 'Middle-aged workers' group said that young Thai people these days lack the knowledge of, and are unfamiliar with, traditional Thai culture and history. In their view, it might help if they were to be educated by watching historical period television dramas, considering they are accessible learning tools. At present, however, most of the existing Thai period dramas focus on love stories rather than on historical period dramas. Presenting true historical events and traditional Thai culture on screen is recommended as a support for Thai education and for learning about Thai culture.

There was a further suggestion of reducing a certain type of Thai television drama: melodramatic stories with immoral characters. The 'Middle-aged workers' participant who came up with this idea said, 'When young Thai audiences see a character who screams, wears sexy outfits and does nothing but seduce a man, they might think this conduct is acceptable because it is shown on TV.' She recommended that Thai producers should abandon such stories and replace them with didactic content, which would reflect the real Thai society's concerns and offer solutions or food for thought to viewers.

Similar ideas for improving Thai television productions are also recommended by the 'Students' and 'First jobbers' participants. They too would like Thai television producers to present them with a choice of stories rather than simply clichéd love triangle plots. For 'Student' participants, current Thai drama plots with their styles of narration are too similar and predictable. Therefore it would be appreciated if there were a variety of

drama choices available. The 'First jobbers' participants also ask for more convincing and realistic productions:

> Please do not underestimate us. We are quite open and able to understand serious issues or interpret the situations. Therefore, please show us something new; no more melodramatic stories involving a first wife and minor wife.

> As a viewer I can see what is real or fake. Thai dramas are sometime too pretentious.

The suggestions from 'Students' and the 'First jobbers' groups are not related only to improvement for local benefit and satisfaction; participants from these two groups also share similar ideas for Thai productions to reach an international level. They agree that Thai productions are strong in the comedy and horror genres. One participant from the 'Students' group even claims that these genres are the strengths of the Thai entertainment industry. She claims that the horror genre, and Thai ghost stories in particular, is the best. 'It offers a very scary taste that no one could compete with.' Another participant from the 'First jobbers' group also supported this argument by agreeing that the Thai ghost story was the scariest. Therefore it is suggested that there might be an opportunity for promoting Thai productions abroad by producing Thai style comedies and ghost stories.

The potential for promoting the Thai entertainment business at an international level was also referred to by the 'Middle-aged workers' group. Their suggestions involved using Thai productions to promote Thai culture abroad. They believed that although Thai productions were aiming to stand out among global players, there was also a chance to introduce Thai culture extensively, and that that would benefit the country more. For instance, participants from this group mentioned the popularity of certain Thai television dramas shown in China. Thanks to these dramas, the number of Chinese tourists to Thailand has increased. The 'Middle-aged workers' participants

would therefore like to encourage Thai producers to insert more Thai cultural items into their future productions.

From the five topics that have been discussed so far (South Korean–Thai adapted media consumption and engagement; perceptions of, and preferences for, Korean dramas and their remakes; differences and similarities between the originals and the remakes; perspectives on 'Thainess'; and suggestions for future Thai television dramas) it is noticeable that the opinions of the participants from the three focus groups were in agreement only in the case of the last topic – that of improving the quality of Thai television programmes. Even though all the study groups enjoyed watching the originals rather than the Thai remakes, they nevertheless looked forward to seeing Thai productions being better developed and adapted.

The connotation of 'suitable adaptation' was hard to define. The audiences in the study groups themselves were unable to suggest a clear guideline or a definite amount of the original productions that should be adapted. Yet all the viewers agreed that some degree of adaptation and localisation were what they expected from future Thai remakes. Because of this expectation, this might explain why the Thai *Full House*, the most adapted drama of the three remakes, has become the most successful reproduction to date. However, no matter how good a rating the Thai *Full House* has received, it is still perceived by Thai audiences to be inferior to the original. On the one hand, this perception has occurred because of the deficiency of current Thai remakes; on the other hand, the specific preference of the audience has also been claimed to be a result of 'soft' power, the ability of one country to shape the preferences of other countries through its appeal and attraction.

'Soft' power

Power, defined by the German sociologist, Max Weber (1925), is the ability to get people to do things that they may not be willing to do. In world politics, it may be common to see the exercise of 'hard' power with the application of military and economic forces. 'Soft' power, however, is able to achieve its goal of influencing others through various methods of persuasion and attraction without tangible threats or payoffs. The American political scientist, Joseph Nye has argued that when using 'soft' power '[a] country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it'; thus '[s]oft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye, 2004, p. 5). Nye further claims that one of the sources for the exercise of 'soft' power is 'culture': 'the set of values and practices that create meaning for a society', and the type of culture that might influence the masses is pop culture. One example of the relationship between pop culture and 'soft power' is illustrated by the innovation of Japanese pop culture. It has created the notion of 'national cool', which impresses foreign audiences and encourages them to follow suit (Chua, 2012). In addition, Japanese producers have considered Japan to be the most developed nation in Asia and have taken on the role of passing their own version of modern Asian culture on to their neighbours (Iwabuchi, 2002).

The innovation and modernity shown in the media has also influenced Thai producers and audiences. The recreation of South Korean television dramas in Thai versions is another good illustration of 'soft' power, since one of the main reasons for beginning this project was on account of the high popularity of South Korean pop culture in Thailand. The creative stories, food, fashion and travel attractions from South Korean television dramas reach and please Thai audiences. Many Thai viewers in the focus groups mentioned they would like to try Korean foods and visit South Korea because of the television dramas they watched. Some even claimed that South Korea has set new

standards of beauty for women across Asia with the stylish make-up and costumes Korean women wear, together with the country's high quality plastic surgery industry.

With regards to plastic surgery, for decades surgery for beauty purposes has not been found much in Thailand. Most Thai people consider natural beauty to be real beauty. Those who have operations to improve their looks usually feel ashamed and try to conceal the fact that they have had plastic surgery (*Prachachat Turakij*, 2014). However, the influx of Korean pop culture and the attractive appearance of Korean female stars, usually as a result of plastic surgery, have changed the way many Thai people think about surgery for the purpose of beautification. The practice is now viewed more positively, and there has been a rapid increase of plastic surgery clinics in Thailand as a result (ibid).

The interest in South Korean pop culture and the change in perceptions toward the plastic surgery of Thai people mentioned above show evidence of the capability of influencing people's opinion of 'soft' power. The ability to gain attraction and positive perceptions seems to cause no harm to anyone. However, in parallel with 'hard' power, 'soft' power and the flow of pop culture products are considered to be very unequal. While Japanese and Korean pop culture have heavily circulated across Asia, very little reverse flow has been found (Chua, 2012), and therefore the argument about cultural domination has to be addressed. People may be motivated, but no one wants to be the target of another's power, either 'hard' or 'soft'. Penetration of pop culture into another country is almost always resented by many state departments and academic scholars as 'cultural contamination', 'cultural imperialism' or 'cultural hegemony'. Therefore, a resistance to, and defence of, 'national culture' against the spread of 'soft' power on the part of foreign cultures has emerged.

In connection with the study of Thai remakes, although productions have clearly been influenced by foreign cultures, resistance to this has nevertheless been revealed through an attempt by Thai directors to compromise South Korean culture and harmonise it with Thai features. Thai audiences, too, require a balance between the Thai and Korean content of television dramas, rather than having to view pure imitations. It therefore seems that Thai producers are currently in the process of introducing more Thai culture and contesting foreign influences. At present, Thailand's 'soft' power is perhaps not strong enough to fight the stronger players in the region such as Japan and South Korea. Nevertheless Thai culture does have a great influence on its neighbouring nations such as Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia (Amporn, 2016).

In her study related to Thai television drama and ASEAN audiences, Amporn Jirattikorn (2016) noted that for over two decades Thailand's neighbouring countries have engaged with Thai media, especially television drama, first by unofficially receiving television signals that have spilled across borders and also through pirate CDs and DVDs. However, since the beginning of the 2010s, there has been an official launch of Thai television dramas in those countries through their national television services, with the language being dubbed. Also, in order to reach more international viewers, there are many websites geared to translating, subtitling and uploading Thai television online.

Amporn gives three reasons behind the popularity of Thai television within Thailand's adjacent countries. First there is the lack of, or undeveloped, entertainment industries in these countries. Because some countries or communities will not or cannot produce their own television programmes, they have decided to consume media from elsewhere instead. The second reason is cultural familiarity. Amporn claims that as a result of the long connection between people in this region, they have shared some similar cultural

and language roots. For instance, most Laotian viewers can appreciate Thai television dramas without dubbing or subtitling thanks to the closeness of the languages in Laos and Thailand. Amporn further suggests that almost every young Laotian can understand and speak Thai because he or she has grown up watching Thai television dramas. The third reason for the popularity of Thai television Amporn provided was for its modernity. She interviewed a group of Tai-Yai, an ethnic group in Myanmar, who said they admired the modern images presented on Thai television, such as the use of mobile phones, the portrayal of trendy houses and other buildings, as well as advanced transportation, which their own media could not offer (Amporn, 2016 p. 175).

Highlighting the aspect of modernity, while it is claimed that Thai audiences are impressed with other countries' modernity, Thai modernity itself is also recognised by Thailand's neighbours. Innovation and modernity have thus become trends which many audiences are seeking. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that it is only new features that please audiences. Some viewers are moved by traditional features. The Chinese fans mentioned in the previous chapter, for instance, have paid more attention to Thai cuisine because they have seen Thai menus in the Thai *Full House*. Also, Thai television dramas and Thai characters are regarded as major inspirations for Chinese people to learn the Thai language (*Post Today*, 2017).

Thailand and Thai productions might present multi-dimensional images, either traditional or contemporary, follower or leader, and Thai or Asian. Strategies for exercising Thai 'soft' power, and for attracting local and international audiences, are still debatable and it is open for discussion as to whether localisation, regionalisation or even globalisation will best suit audiences.

Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter 4, Thai remake directors try to localise and produce their remakes to make them as convincing as possible. Likewise, audience study groups look for authenticity and convincing content in the dramas. With these two strands of opinions, it would seem that Thai producers and audiences are on the same page and see the same picture. Nevertheless, Thai remakes do not fully satisfy Thai audiences. According to the focus groups set up, with participants from three age ranges, 'Students' (aged between fourteen to nineteen), 'First jobbers' (aged between twenty to twenty-three) and 'Middle-aged workers' (aged between forty to forty-nine), the important factor in pleasing them relates to the degree of adaptation and localisation. Every participant enjoyed watching adaptations rather than imitations. The least adapted work, the Thai *Coffee Prince*, therefore failed to impress them, while the Thai *Full House*, the remake with the most adaptation, was able to draw their attention somewhat and win their hearts. In the study groups of audiences' views, Thai remakes were actually not regarded as at all bad, but they were not the preferred option. Thai productions were considered by these audiences to be lacking in many respects in comparison to the original versions. There is room for improvement. Better works by Thai producers and the use of television beyond mere entertainment proposes is anticipated.

In addition, the findings from the focus group audiences have affirmed my assumptions relating to audience reception: that each age group consumes and views media content differently. The first piece of clear evidence for this was their media consumption patterns. While the group of 'Students' watched any programme they were interested in and expressed their opinions only through online channels via their smart devices, the 'First jobbers' used both online and offline platforms for watching programmes and expressing opinions about them. The traditional consumption of

television and DVD players were the main viewing options for the 'Middle-aged workers'.

The second proof I have of my assumptions being correct is on account of the different views of Thai culture of each age group. The 'Student' participants listed Thai culture as being features such as the *Songkran* festival and the Thai greeting and Thai language. 'First jobbers', on the other hand, referred Thai culture to the deferential and kind characteristics of Thai people. The group of 'Middle-aged workers', however, pointed out that Thai culture was varied and they felt it to be weakening over time. For them Thai culture was situated in "the good old days" and in memories of their childhood, such as home cooking, religious activity and their relationship with family and neighbours.

The views of audiences in the focus groups about Thai culture in this chapter, together with the opinions of Thai producers on the same topic in Chapter 4, show similar patterns and confirm my supposition that the meaning of culture is very subjective. Each director and member of the three focus groups has his/her own views on Thai culture, and these views do not match well with the definition of Thai culture by the Thai authorities, or even with my proposed criteria to study Thai culture that are suggested in Chapters 2 and 3. Moreover, features that various organisations believe to be Thai culture are problematic and cannot be fully claimed to be 'original' Thai characteristics. I myself have always believed that one culture cannot be described using only one description or dimension. Nonetheless, in practice, for whatever reasons – marketing, advertising, education or media production proposes – Thai culture is still expected to be clearly defined, with morals to hold to and/or guidelines to practice and follow. Therefore, in order to introduce Thai culture both locally and internationally, as well as to reproduce foreign content in the Thai context, what should be framed as Thai

context? What should be suggested as Thai items? And what should be regarded as truly representative of Thai culture?

Chapter 6

Conclusion

To conclude this study, I would like to refer back to the starting point of this thesis. My intention to study the topics of cultural identity and cultural hybridity was inspired by the South Korean trends or so-called 'Korean Wave' in Thailand. Around two decades since these trends were introduced into the country they have influenced Thai society in a variety of ways, including changing many Thai people's views on South Korea, from a country with political conflict to a modern and fashionable nation. At the same time, they have encouraged many Thai people to learn about and engage with South Korean popular culture, especially with regard to fashion, music and television dramas. These features have inspired many Thai scholars to explore the influence of South Korea on their country. However, studies relating to the 'Korean Wave' in Thailand are still limited, with a narrow focus on the relationship between the trends and Thai audiences or consumers. My intention has therefore been to extend this research limit and to discuss the South Korean influence from various different viewpoints. The remakes of Korean television dramas in Thai versions thus became the choice of my study to demonstrate that the 'Korean Wave' does not only concern Thai audiences but also Thai media productions. Above all, it helps in understanding the position and perception of Thai cultural identity amidst waves of foreign cultural influences.

In this research I have focused on the processes of the Thai recreations of Korean content to examine how foreign cultural features have been adopted and adapted to fit Thai contexts and Thai audiences. I selected the first three Thai remakes of Korean television dramas, namely *the 1st Shop of Coffee Prince, Autumn in my Heart* and *Full House*, as case studies, and drew up research questions based on three key aspects of the remaking process comprising texts, productions and audience reception. Each

aspect has been examined by different research methods: textual analysis, in-depth interviews with the remake directors, and focus groups with Thai audiences.

The findings from these research approaches reveal that none of the selected remakes completely follows the patterns of the originals. They have all been revised with varying degrees of cultural adaptation, based on each director's experience and understanding of national Thai culture. With regard to audience reception, participants in this research also hold a variety of perspectives of cross-cultural contents and definitions of Thai culture. Nevertheless the remakes with a greater degree of localisation are considered to be preferable viewing options. These groups of audiences anticipate seeing what they believe to be 'Thai culture' rather than the 'culture of an Other' on screen, and expect Thai television to provide them not only with mere entertainment, but also with didactic and cultural elements included. Therefore, apart from revisiting the findings from each research method and related arguments regarding cross-cultural adaptation, this chapter will also discuss the issue of Thai television and its function in introducing and promoting Thai culture.

To understand the process of cultural adaptation and negotiation, and to discuss the relationship between television and culture, I considered a definition of Thai culture and its features was necessary for the purpose of acting as an indicator for research and in setting a standard for further applications. In the primary process of this research, I have proposed the criteria to study Thai culture, derived from the national student textbook หน้าที่พลเมือง วัฒนธรรม และการดำเนินชีวิตในสังคม (Thai Civics, Culture and Living) by Kramon Thongthammachat et al. (2008). It comprises seven features: the monarchy, the Thai language, lifestyle and personality, Buddhism, agriculture, Thai food and herbs, and Thai festivals. Unfortunately, the findings from the current study reveal that the features I presented via this textbook did not provide a consensus between research participants and cannot represent Thai culture as a whole. As

discussed earlier in this research, the adaptation works I studied and the interviewees I convened present and interpret Thai culture in various different ways. Since there are so many different ideas about what Thai culture comprises, the 'true' definition of Thai culture and national identity is therefore still something of a mystery and remains ambiguous.

Nevertheless, despite the difficultly and perplexity in describing the features and definitions of Thai culture I have discussed throughout the thesis, I conclude by presenting an explanation of what the nuanced nature and characteristics of Thai culture might be. Rather than previously describing Thai culture with tangible criteria, I alternatively suggest that Thai culture should be considered in terms of the dimensions of subjectivity, flexibility and hybridity. Details of this proposition will be provided at the end of the chapter.

Thai recreation of Korean dramas

Since the main objectives of this research are to explore how Thai cultural features were identified and placed within the hybrid content, and to study the influence of the 'Korean Wave' on Thai productions and their receptions through the analysis of Thai remakes of Korean television dramas, research questions and research methods are therefore established based on three elements of those remakes, comprising texts, productions and reception.

Media texts were the first element to be studied. Through textual analysis, I have monitored the adaptation of foreign content to Thai contexts and tried to answer **RQ 1: How are cultural elements adapted and presented in cross-cultural Korean–Thai remake television dramas?** In order to categorise and analyse the cultural features found in the Thai remakes, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and at the beginning of this chapter, I used the definition and features of Thai cultural identity taken from the

Thai social textbook หน้าที่พลเมือง วัฒนธรรม และการดำเนินชีวิตในสังคม (Thai Civics, Culture and Living) (Kramon et al., 2008) as criteria to study. According to this textbook, Thai cultural features are identified and classified into seven categories namely the monarchy, the Thai language, lifestyle and personality, Buddhism, agriculture, Thai food and herbs, and Thai festivals. Although each of these proposed features are controversial, in that it was not determined whether or not each could really represent Thai culture, all of them are nevertheless cited in national student textbooks. I therefore think that they hold a certain status as 'official' definitions of Thai culture and are approved by state authorities. Aside from using these features to investigate the negotiation and appropriation between Thai and foreign cultures, I anticipated seeing how, and to what extent, the presentations of Thai features in the selected Thai remakes accord and disagree with the notion of Thai cultural identity approved by the state authorities.

After reviewing the original Korean dramas and their Thai remakes, I have found that each Thai remake adopts a differing method of revising the original story, a differing degree of cultural adaptation and a differing focus with regard to adapting Thai features. With the three Thai productions that were under consideration, the remake of *the 1st Shop of Coffee Prince* (*Coffee Prince* for short) is regarded as the least adapted. Although its Thai director has tried to localise the story by relocating the original setting (that had mostly taken place in Seoul, South Korea) to Chiang Mai, a Northern Province in Thailand, many scenes and items shown in the original Korean version were found throughout the adapted drama. For example, a public bathhouse was presented in the original version and reappeared in the Thai version, despite the fact that no such item or its location exists in Thailand. With regard to examining the remake under the proposed criteria, while some Thai features, such as the Thai greeting posture of the '*waiʔ*' and references to agricultural lifestyles were found occasionally, it was the adaptation in the category of food that was most clearly

marked. All Korean menus, which included both main dishes and desserts and which were shown in the original, were changed to Thai foods in the Thai version.

In contrast to the remake of *Coffee Prince*, the Thai version of *Autumn in my Heart* referred to Thai food only once throughout the drama. Only one Thai dish was mentioned. Nevertheless this second Thai remake has presented greater script revision and cultural adaptation than the remake of *Coffee Prince*. The director intended and expected to make his work more relevant to Thai audiences, and therefore reinterpreted and revised the story accordingly. Moreover, to label his remake as Thai drama, the director agreed to add more Thai cultural features to scenes in the story, especially regarding the lifestyle of Thai people. The added Thai items replaced foreign features, both from South Korea and other countries that were shown in the original drama. One instance of cultural adaptation found in the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* is at the scene of the main characters' engagement ceremony. While the South Korean version presented the ceremony in Western style, the Thai version replaced this with a Thai traditional-style ritual. Instead of the groom wearing a Western style tuxedo and the bride wearing a white wedding dress, in the remake the Thai couple appeared in their traditional Thai costumes. Another instance of cultural adaptation is a scene where in the original Korean version one supporting character prays to the Christian God. In the remake, however, the scene was changed to the character praying to Buddha because the Thai director considered that Buddhism was not only the main religion of Thailand but also part of Thai culture, and could therefore better represent the Thai situation.

From the examples given above, it can be inferred that the remake of *Autumn in my Heart* presents more adaptation of the story and introduces more Thai cultural features than the remake of *Coffee Prince*. Nevertheless, both of them apply a similar approach towards cultural placement in identifying foreign cultural features and replacing them

with what they believe to be Thai cultural elements. The last remake observed, however, that of *Full House*, employs more cultural placement techniques than direct substitution. One of the techniques employed to make audiences believe that the situation really happens in Thailand and with Thai people is the revision of the characters' backgrounds. For instance the female protagonist in the Thai version has two jobs at the same time, as an amateur writer and a freelance food columnist. The latter job is deliberately added to the remake to convince the audience that the character has really faced difficulties with financial issues, to the extent that she needs an extra jobs to solve her problems. Eventually she has to agree to a fake marriage contract to save the house she has inherited. The addition of the job of food columnist also benefits the director in terms of providing a credible reason for the introduction of Thai food into the scenes.

Such an approach of deliberate insertion has been noted in several scenes throughout this remake. Other notable Thai elements such as Thai-style fruit carving, flower-garland making, Buddhism related activity, the Thai iconic transport of the '*tuk-tuk'*, a Thai traditional wedding, Thai personalities presented as kind and humble, and the attachment between family members are also deliberately presented in the story. Some of them, especially Thai menus, are displayed repeatedly.

In comparison to the Thai *Coffee Prince* that focuses more on introducing Thai food into the drama and the Thai *Autumn in my Heart* that places importance on Thai lifestyles and personality, the Thai *Full house* shows many more Thai cultural features. However, not all the Thai features from the proposed criteria are mentioned and presented. According to the monitoring of the three remakes based on the proposed criteria, Thai food was the most discussed and exposed feature, followed by the categories of the Thai personality as being polite and humble, and Thai language. On the other hand, agriculture and Buddhism were shown less on screen, while the

monarchy and Thai festival related content were not shown at all in any of the remake dramas. From these outcomes, it may therefore be concluded that the presentation of cultural identity of the three remakes is discordant, inconsistent and not closely associated with the 'official' definition of Thai cultural identity.

Different styles of story narration, script revision and cultural adaptation were designed and decided by the remake directors themselves. To understand more about the decision to retain, reject or select specific features for the scenes, and to tackle **RQ 2: How do the producers/directors appropriate and negotiate local and foreign elements?**, I interviewed the three Thai directors who were in charge of the three remakes. The findings from the three interview sessions with these directors reveal that they have similar ideas with regard to making their remakes more realistic within the Thai context and more relevant to their Thai audiences. To the directors, most South Korean and other foreign cultural elements were considered to be unfamiliar to Thai society. When they were working on the Thai television remakes, they therefore decided to localise the story by cutting out most of what they believed to be foreign or 'un-Thai' elements and adopting their imagined Thai cultural features into the remakes.

Despite some limitations such as time constraints and limited budgets, each director was able to adapt the original story freely based on his/her opinions, since no obligations were imposed on them with regard to what was produced from the original producers. However, as already mentioned, the degree of adaptation and cultural appropriation of each remake differed noticeably. The dissimilar backgrounds and beliefs, especially with reference to views on Thai culture, of each director are assumed to be major influences on their working processes and the end products, and are considered as key regarding the differing degrees of revision undertaken.

In each interview session, I have addressed my proposed criteria to study Thai cultural identity and asked the directors for their thoughts about them. As anticipated, the three directors had different views about the proposed criteria and also about the definition of Thai culture. The director of the drama that was least adapted from the original, the Thai *Coffee Prince*, was strongly opposed to my criteria and suggested that Thai cultural identity should not be listed or grouped into categories at all. For him, Thai cultural identity or 'Thainess' is Thai people, and can be reflected in the way Thai people think and live their lives. It may also change over time and generations. He believes that without 'hard' selling, tangible and clichéd cultural items, and even within cross-cultural environments, Thai audiences still experience Thai cultural identity through the way Thai characters talk, act and express their views in the dramas.

The adaptation work of the *Thai Autumn in my Heart* director was also created based on his views on Thai culture. He believes that people are unique, and to some extent agreed to my proposed criteria, especially with regard to the aspect of Thai lifestyle and personality. He drew a metaphor comparing Korean entertainment content to food flavours and suggested that, no matter how hard one tries, South Korean flavours have never completely merged and matched up with Thai personal tastes. Given these views, this director was very firm in his intention of not making the remake a copy, and tried his best to adapt the original story to relate it to the local Thai context as much as possible.

However, the greatest degrees of adaptation and cultural placement are to be found in the remake of *Full House.* The explanation for this again involves the particular view of Thai culture held by the director. Unlike the previous two directors, the director of Thai *Full House* totally agreed with every Thai cultural feature I proposed because they were all compatible with her own views about 'Thainess'. The intention of portraying traditional Thai cultural images and conveying didactic messages relating to Thai

culture through this director's work concerns not only the question of localisation, but also her opinion that television can act as a tool to preserve Thai cultural identity.

Although they had different views about Thai culture, the three Thai directors nevertheless shared similar goals for their reproductions which was to make them as convincing and as realistic as possible for their audiences. But, to decide which remake is the most convincing is difficult and questionable. As an observer I realised that unfortunately my proposed criteria could not represent Thai culture as a whole as I had previously thought, and also that they were not fit for the purpose of investigating and understanding Thai culture, and I definitely cannot adjudicate which production is the most realistic or was closest to the 'real-Thai' status. Rather, I suggested groups of people who might be able to do this: Thai audiences. Since Thai audiences are the main targets that the Thai directors are aiming at and with whom they would like to communicate and want to adapt the story to relate to them, my supposition was that they might be able to verify the accuracy of the Thai remakes, and would be able to say which remake they found was most relevant to them.

To gain insights from Thai audiences regarding their reception of cross-cultural content and to answer **RQ 3: How do Thai audiences accept and interpret these Korean–Thai adapted media texts?**, I conducted three sessions of focus groups with three different age ranges that included the groups of 'Students' (aged between fourteen and nineteen), 'First jobbers' (aged between twenty and twenty-three), and 'Middle-aged workers' (aged between forty and forty-nine). As discussed in Chapters 1 and 5, the first two groups are the main targets for Asian pop culture in Thailand while the last group was recruited from a regular Thai television viewers' category.

Analysis from the three focus group interviews has revealed a number of key findings. One of these has confirmed my assumption that audiences in different age groups

consume media content, and also view it, differently. The younger groups tended to watch most of the programmes they were interested in through online channels, and mainly via smart devices. While watching, they also functioned as an 'active' audiences, transforming themselves into online commentators or media influencers with their friends and online communities. On the other hand, the older audience, the 'Middle-aged workers', still operated as a 'passive' audience as their preference for media viewing was always the traditional mode of consumption of television, that is, watching programmes live on screen and DVD players.

Furthermore, it is interesting to discover that no matter how much the focus group participants from all age ranges enjoyed Korean television drama, if it was remade into a Thai version drama, they expected to see their imagined Thai cultural features in the drama that is now labelled as Thai. When the participants watched the remakes they preferred to watch adapted dramas rather than imitation dramas. The drama with the greatest degree of localisation and adaptation was regarded as the most convincing for these audience groups. This may explain why the most adapted work, the Thai *Full House*, became the most popular remake, and the least adapted work, the Thai *Coffee Prince*, largely failed to impress Thai audiences. Most of the research participants could not recall seeing much difference between the original Korean versions and the remakes of *Coffee Prince* and *Autumn in my Heart*. Rather, they found a number of imitations and similarities in the dramas, and these two remakes kept reminding them of the original versions. However, the much greater level of adaptation of the Thai *Full House* from the original Korean version was able to engage more of the audiences' attention and make them believe that what they were watching was a brand new Thai television drama, not a remake version of a drama from another country.

The local preferences of Thai audiences might also verify the argument made by many media scholars, such as John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham (1996)

and Jeremy Tunstall (2008), that television is more of a local than a global medium. Within the cross-cultural content and platforms, Thai people still seek, and feel comfortable with, their own national culture. However, the quantity and types of Thai culture that they are looking for currently remain unknown. This is because, as with the directors' opinions on Thai culture, the selected audiences from different age groups also view their national culture in various different ways. While the group of 'Students' discussed Thai culture with an emphasis on features they experienced in their daily lives, for example the Thai greeting, Thai language and specific Thai events such as the *Songkran* festival, the 'First jobbers' described Thai culture with an emphasis on Thai characteristics such as manners and of Thai people being respectful, humble and kind. The group of 'Middle-aged workers', however, had a very different view of Thai culture, which they related to their childhood moments and upcountry experiences. They believed 'authentic' Thai culture to be situated in the past and that it has been weakening over time and generations.

Disagreements about Thai culture presented here, again, confirm my supposition regarding audience reception that each age group views things, or in this case Thai culture, differently. Also, they have evidenced that definitions of Thai culture and features are very subjective and incompatible with the 'official' criteria that I have suggested. Despite this, Thai television, especially the genre of television drama, is still considered by the focus group participants to be able to portray their imagined Thai cultural features, and to educate Thai people about their national history and culture.

Television and culture

In the summary of findings discussed so far, it may be suggested that Thai television remakes provide great models for the investigation of cultural adaptation. It is the site where different cultures may meet and negotiate. Thai television therefore can no longer be viewed simply as a household appliance; rather, it may now be considered

as a mediator between television producers and audiences, a messenger between audiences from generations to generations, and a tool to promote and preserve national culture at local and global levels.

Examples of considering television as a mediator between TV producers and audiences can be found in this study. Even though there is no specific guideline with regard to adaptation and no consensus on the definition of Thai culture between the three Thai remake directors that I interviewed, each regard their work as a means of presenting and preserving what they believe to be Thai culture. The content of television drama has therefore become a tool by which to convey their message and intention to their viewers. As the director of the Thai *Full House* said, if Thai television producers still present Thai cultural elements frequently as she intends to do with all her work, Thai culture will be retained and passed along to future generations.

In fact, in terms of the law and through the functioning of social norms and social sanctioning, the responsibility to preserve national culture belongs to every Thai citizen, not just to the TV producers. However, some audiences, especially those in their forties who participate in this research, the 'Middle-aged workers', believe that young Thai generations nowadays lack the knowledge of, and are unfamiliar with, traditional Thai culture and history. In their view, since television is considered as an everyday part of Thai people's life, it might help if young Thai audiences were educated by watching television programmes containing cultural and historical elements. By contrast, younger audiences consider that the different interests of people of different ages might trigger a conflict between generations. To avoid misunderstandings between generations young participants suggested there should be an association of several institutions, comprising family members, schools and media, for introducing appropriate Thai values and cultures to Thai people.

The usage of television for education and identity construction has also been agreed by international viewers when referring to Thai television. According to interviews with viewers from Thailand's neighbouring countries, namely Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam undertaken by Amporn Jirattikorn (2016), Cambodian participants regarded Thai television as a moral content provider. They learned from Thai television drama what 'proper' and 'improper' behaviours are and how to act as good citizens. In Amporn's interviews, the group of Tai Yai in Myanmar viewed Thai television as a reflection of Thai society and observed the modernity of Thailand through television dramas. The images of trendy city life, modern buildings and prosperous businesses displayed on screen have encouraged these viewers to come to Thailand as tourists and for the purposes of finding work in the country. Vietnamese viewers, on the other hand, observed the social status and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) trends from Thai television. They believed what they watched to be true and considered that Thai society generally classifies people according to their family status, and that it was very open to LGBTs.

Based on the discussions and examples outlined above, given television's ability to visualize cultural features and help in constructing national identity, it is no surprise why many Thai audiences and television producers see the potential of the medium, especially with regards to the genre of television drama, to construct far more than simply home entertainment. Focus group participants addressed the possibility that Thai producers should add more Thai cultural features to their productions, in the belief that any Thai drama with Thai cultural features would be more appealing to both local and foreign viewers, while at the same time benefitting the country, especially in terms of tourism and economic prosperity.

However, this raises the same question that has persisted throughout the thesis in terms of, what 'precise' cultural elements should be presented on screen and which cultural elements represent 'true' Thai identity?

Revisiting the definition of Thai Culture

The position and attributes of Thai culture, which has always stood in the midst of transcultural flows, are considered with regard to whether it stays separated from, or is connected with, other cultures; whether it portrays traditional or modern forms; and, importantly, whether or not it can ever be clearly defined. As a Thai citizen myself who has passed through the Thai education system, I have, like other Thai students, been taught that Thai culture consists of unique features that are different from other cultures, and is something that all Thais must cherish and preserve. However, after studying the topics of hybrid cultures and transcultural productions closely in this thesis, my perception about 'my own culture' has changed forever.

When I first started this project, with the concept of Thai culture as tangible features in mind, I decided to find and apply tangible criteria to analyse the selected Thai remakes with high expectation that the ultimate outcome of this research would possibly be a guideline for future Thai media productions to introduce specific Thai cultural features in their work, and even a proposal for Thai related authorities to support media productions featuring Thai cultural content systematically. Therefore, the definitions and features of Thai culture from Thai student textbooks were selected and used as the main criteria to analyse Thai cultural materials in this thesis in the belief that given their approval by Thai state authorities, these features could be regarded as an 'official' definition and best represent 'official' versions of Thai culture. However, the 'official' definitions and features of Thai culture that I learned since I was young and that were suggested as criteria for studying Thai culture did not match well with the definitions given by interviewees in this research. Disagreement regarding Thai culture and the

way it was interpreted on the part of Thai directors and the audiences of the adapted television dramas they produced prove that the definition of Thai culture is subjective, variable, sometimes indivisible from the features and characteristics of other cultures, and, most significantly, not necessarily in accord with 'official' definitions.

Thanks to the unexpected directions of research results, my first intentions to list out suitable Thai features for media productions then have to be retained and revised. This research has opened up my mind to understand 'my own culture' in a variety of different ways, not as just a conventional culture. Nevertheless, since the preference of the Thai state is to appeal to the duty of Thai citizens to acknowledge and preserve national culture, a tension exists in the search for how such cultural elements can be pinned down and clearly defined. To search for elements to be labelled as Thai, instead of referring Thai culture to tangible yet problematic features as I previously proposed, I therefore suggest taking into consideration the dimensions of subjectivity, flexibility and hybridity in viewing Thai culture.

According to the Thai school textbook that I used as a reference for this research, Thai culture is usually described and taught to Thai students with its fixed features. In reality, however, Thai culture may refer to several aspects, whether tangible or intangible features. Since culture is established, transferred, transformed and passed along by people with differing views about what culture means and comprises, it has therefore never been fixed. Individuals from the same country may share the same sense of belonging or identity as an 'imagined community'. They may be taught under the same education system and provided with the same information, but because they differ in ages, genders, backgrounds and experiences, what they learn they view differently to others. The variety of differing views on Thai culture by the Thai directors and Thai audiences in this study clearly evidences this point. With reference to the 'Middle-aged

workers', for instance, even though they referred Thai culture to the same topics as their good old days, each of them embellished it with different and unrelated stories.

This particular versatility and variability of Thai cultural features observed to exist among the audience interviewees, interestingly echoes the distinct characteristic that Prince Damrong Rachanuphap strategically attributed to Thai culture at the height of its propensity for adoption and adaptation in the colonial era, as discussed in Chapter 2. To Prince Damrong, Thais have a distinct ability to integrate aspects of foreign culture without, or with minimum, conflict in regard to their own requirements. Whether this is distinctively Thai or not Thai producers clearly see the opportunity to introduce Thai remakes of South Korean television dramas into the Thai market; and Thai audiences are clearly open to the adaptation of foreign works.

The negotiation between local and foreign features, and the reception of 'Other' cultures have long occurred throughout history. What is now referred to as Thai culture as well has long been associated with many foreign cultures from different parts of the world. With the country's lengthy history of cultural blending, some foreign features that were once identified as 'un-Thai' items might later be considered as part of Thai culture having undergone the process of hybridisation and localisation. Even 'official' Thai elements from the proposed criteria, such as Thai language, Thai food and Buddhism, all originated from the adoption and adaptation of different cultures residing in the country. When discussing the definition of Thai culture, the question of hybridity must then be included.

Even though this thesis has demonstrated the difficulty in describing Thai culture and the continuity of the tension between the fixed cultural features suggested by Thai state and the varied cultural features referred in practice, with the three dimensions used to scrutinise Thai culture suggested above, definitions of Thai culture may come closer to

the light. In my opinion, 'true' or 'authentic' Thai culture may never have existed. Maintaining a specific form of Thai culture likewise seems impossible. Instead Thai culture has lasted and been recognised, whether in real life situations or on screen, over time by its 'flexible' personality and 'hybrid' identity. Therefore, if Thai culture is still something that is necessary to present and preserve for whatever purposes, the very nature of culture itself must first be addressed.

Research implications and suggestions for further study

According to research findings together with definitions of Thai culture I suggested, they could be considered as another proof showing that no culture is clearly separated. Thai culture, as mentioned earlier that is usually described and understood by most Thai people as a distinct and exotic culture, is no exception.

Truly, the topics of transnational and hybrid culture have been discussed extensively in various academic fields, especially in the fields of media and cultural studies. Yet, this thesis is the first paper to highlight the influence of South Korean popular culture on both contemporary Thai media production and audience reception. It demonstrates that cultural influence can be widespread from/to different directions not just from the West to the rest of the world, and evidences that 'Easternisation', a circulation of media and cultural products from/among Asian countries, does exist.

Also, as the first paper to study the remake of Korean television dramas in Thai versions, this thesis has extended the boundary of study relating to the 'Korean Wave' in Thailand, which previously focused only on the trends and their reception by Thai audiences. With this research focus and findings, it is affirmed that the 'Korean Wave' does influence many clusters in Thailand including audiences, media productions and even the entertainment industry. And this may be helpful for other scholars who would like to study topics concerning the production of hybrid cultural products.

Regardless of its contributions to the fields, this research, on the other hand, is subject to some limitations, which yet could be potentially developed for future research, including the source of data collections, the selection of criteria to study and the conceptual framework. For the data collections, since the key informants I approached to gain insights about the South Korean influence on Thai productions are only the directors of each Thai remake, there is a question whether the director alone could be represented as the author of a whole production. Even though the three directors from the three selected remakes had been appointed to be responsible not only for TV directing but also for project managing, it cannot be denied that there are such highly industrial collaborative practices in the TV remaking process. Many more personnel and parties are involved, such as producers, scriptwriters, actors, casting agents and sponsors. Thus, one suggestion for future research would be to consider extending data sources that might be collected in order to gain additional facts with broader perspectives as institutional, financial, technical, and labour networks issues.

It is also important to reconsider the selection of audience groups to study. Apart from specific age groups, another key condition in selecting sample audiences for this study is their engagement with both original Korean dramas and Thai remakes in order to understand the audiences' perceptions towards those two versions. Owing to the previous engagement with Korean dramas, the selected audiences, however, may be presumed to be fans of Korean drama. Their answers were possibly biased with preference for the Korean source texts. Therefore, it might have provided more balance to include a contrasting group of non-fans who had never seen the original versions. Also, diversity of audiences' profiles and a variety of source materials are additional aspects to consider for future research. More interesting insights might further have been gained from sample audiences from different social classes (upper, middle and lower), and locations (Bangkok-based and provincial), as well as from different

audiences' relating materials, such as online comments, ratings/download figures and press reviews.

On top of suggestions on data collection, the criteria to study Thai culture are another issue to be reviewed. As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, this thesis has demonstrated that only fixed and physical features may be not enough to describe what Thai culture is and to study the topic relating to Thai culture. To examine any further materials relating to Thai culture, again, the nature of culture of being subjectivity, flexibility and hybridity must be raised and deliberated.

The attempt to understand the characteristics of Thai culture through the analysis of Thai remakes of Korean television drama may be specified as an example of the transnational and cultural media flow among Asian countries. In practice, Thai television remake producers did not limit themselves only to the remake of contents from the same region. As mentioned in chapter 3, since 2015 there are at least three Thai television dramas that were remade from American series, namely ยัยเป็ดขี้เหร่ (*yaipet khi-re*) (2015) the remake of *Ugly Betty*, *Gossip Girl Thailand* (2015) the remake of *Gossip Girl*, and *กรุงเทพ...มหานครซ้อนรัก* (*krungthep...mahanakhon sonrak*) (2016) the remake of *The O.C.* It is then interesting to further observe how Thai remakes appropriate and negotiate the materials and contents from different countries/regions that may deliver more diverse cultural perspectives and practices.

Lastly, whether the Thai remakes are influenced by Asian or Western materials, they are still viewed as a re-creator rather than an initiator. Then, when Thai productions have once become a trendsetter themselves and started their own media circulation as an original version to remake for other countries, it would have been challenging to study further with the new conceptual framework from how Thais receive other cultures to how others perceive cultural features from Thailand.

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