

**Combi-nation: Thai nation building and national identity in Thai TV dramas
with Northern Thai focus**

Kittiya Moonsarn

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

The University of Leeds

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

December 2020

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her/their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Kittiya Moonsarn to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would have not been possible without the support of so many individuals and institutions, to each of whom I am very grateful.

First, I would like to thank Chiang Mai University for sponsoring my PhD at the University of Leeds, School of Languages, Cultures, and Societies. I would also like to thank the Division of General Education, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai University, for granting me necessary study leave.

I would like to show profound gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Dr Martin Seeger, who has patiently encouraged and intellectually guided me throughout the whole PhD process towards successfully writing my thesis. His knowledge and helpful comments facilitated the shaping and structuring of my thesis to a deeper level, more than I ever expected. His kindness means a lot to me because he mentally supported me too, as I experienced hardship during my journey of study. I also want to express deep gratitude to Associate Professor Dr Vlad Strukov who also guided and broadened my knowledge in areas I never imagined. His support and advice effectively aided me to concretise and develop the perspective I used in my thesis. Without both my supervisors, my thesis would have never materialised.

I want to give special thanks to Karen Priestley, the Doctoral College Officer of the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, who has always helped with and solved my problems during my study in Leeds. I also want to thank Adcharawan Seeger for her encouragement and support. Without them, I would not have been able to manage several issues relating to the school and in finding a work-life balance.

My thesis would not be finished in this wonderful shape without help from my trustworthy language consultant, Dr. Matthew Yoxall, who did not only proofread my thesis but also gave me lots of good advice. I would also like to thank all my relatives and friends for their connections who helped my fieldwork in Thailand run smoothly, and thank you to all the participants who gave me useful information. I also want to thank all my friends in Leeds who often cheered me up and who made my stay in the UK so enjoyable.

Most of all, my thesis would never have been completed without the mental and financial support of my family – my parents, my brother, my nanny, my five pugs, and my husband, who helped me in other aspects of my life, so that I could focus on studying worry-free. I am deeply indebted to them.

Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate how Thai TV dramas with a Northern Thai focus demonstrate and are used to construct the Thai nation and national identities. As a researcher, I am interested in how hegemonic narratives are used and depicted in selected television dramas and how the dominant power creates and distorts the pictures of subaltern/less powerful regional cultures. My major argument is based on the hypothesis that the Thai nation is not only constructed from 'Thainess' but also from the combinations of many ethnicities, cultures, and identities of many groups of people.

Many scholars in the field of Thai Studies have shown that many Western elements are hybridised with Thai identities. This thesis goes further in investigating the Thai nation by focusing on Northern Thai culture as an example of subordinate culture and identity which are not hybridised but combined with and into Thai nation-building. The key term, 'combi-nation', means the unequal, selective way that constructions of the Thai nation often adopt some specific cultures and identities to form the idea of a 'modern nation.' This combi-nation depends on their hierarchical relationships with Thai nation. While Thais choose to hybridise with the West by selecting what is good for their nation, that hybridisation is barred from northern identities as Thais regard the North as inferior and subordinate.

This research uses qualitative analysis via close readings of key points and moments in four selected dramas. Chapter three is 'history and nation' in which I aim to show how Royalist Nationalist Historiography dominates presentation in these dramas, how the state exploits history to construct the Thai nation, and how history creates different combinations to form the Thai nation. This is done by examining three combinations - with the West, with other ethnicities, and with the Others within. Chapter four is concerned with 'body and nation', in which I investigate how Thai national identities are created by different combinations by looking specifically at combinations between genders and through concepts of beauty.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Note on translation and transliteration system	9
Chapter 1 Introduction	10
1.1 General Thai views on the Thai nation	10
1.2 Thai Studies view on the Thai nation.....	12
1.3 Thailand and its imperialist thinking.....	16
1.4 Combi-nation	18
1.5 History, nation and narration.....	24
Chapter 2 Thai TV context and research methodology	29
2.1 Television today – watching and studying	29
2.2 Background of Thai television.....	31
2.2.1 The Birth of Thai TV	31
2.2.2 Screening, schedule, state control	33
2.2.3 Consumption of Thai TV dramas.....	38
2.3 Historical background of Thai TV dramas and typical patterns	41
2.4 Structure and key elements in Thai TV dramas.....	45
2.5 Historical drama: How Thailand narrates its nation	47
2.5.1 Definitions of Thai historical dramas.....	48
2.5.2 Popular themes and plots in Thai historical dramas.....	50
2.6 Hyper-royalism and sensitive topics in Thai TV dramas.....	58
2.7 Research questions and methodology	64
2.7.1 Research aims and questions	64
2.7.2 Why the north?	65
2.7.3 Research gap	67
2.7.4 Methodology	69
2.8 Empirical data from fieldwork: How TV dramas are made.....	72
2.8.1 Pre-production	72
2.8.2 Production: Roles and power in drama production.....	75
2.8.3 How the Royalist Nationalist Historiography shapes their thought	76
2.8.4 How these drama makers view the North.....	78

Chapter 3 History and Nation	81
3.1 Combination with the West.....	81
3.1.1 Royalist Nationalist Historiography.....	81
3.1.1.1 definition and problems.....	81
3.1.1.2 Boundary and Mandala.....	83
3.1.2 The West as external threat.....	85
3.1.3 Marriage of a nation – a country reform and annexation of Lanna 86	
3.1.4 Analysis of TV dramas.....	88
3.1.4.1 The West as destroyer of a modern Thai nation.....	88
3.1.4.2 The West as a builder of modern Thai nation.....	94
3.1.4.3 Marriage, internal-colonisation and demarcation of Siam.....	97
3.1.4.3.1 English as a means to build the Thai nation.....	100
3.1.4.3.2 Combination of pre-modern and Western concepts of nation.....	102
3.1.5 Conclusion.....	106
3.2 Combination of ethnicities.....	108
3.2.1 The making of the Greater Thai nation.....	108
3.2.1.1 The irredentist campaign, national humiliation, and the ‘lost territories’ map.....	109
3.2.1.2 The Greater Thai nation.....	111
3.2.2 Tai ethnicities in Thai TV dramas.....	114
3.2.3 Analysis of TV dramas.....	117
3.2.3.1 Cultural assimilation and generalisation of Tai ethnicities.....	118
3.2.3.1.1 Cultural proximity between ethnic groups.....	121
3.2.3.1.2 Abandoning one’s identity to become Thai.....	125
3.2.3.2 Thailand as a protecting brother.....	128
3.2.3.2.1 Friendly relationship between Thailand and Keng Tung	130
3.2.3.2.2 Keng Tung under Thai protection.....	133
3.2.4 Conclusion.....	137
3.3 Combination of the uncivilised Others.....	139
3.3.1 <i>Siwilai</i> : a power relation between Siam and the local.....	139
3.3.1.1 Empowering Siam and the concept of ‘ <i>siwilai</i> ’.....	140
3.3.1.2 The unification of the less civilised Others.....	142
3.3.2 Localism and Thai rural community.....	144

3.3.3	Analysis of TV dramas.....	147
3.3.3.1	The Siamese burden: products of the civilising process.....	148
3.3.3.1.1	Civilising the Lanna identity.....	149
3.3.3.1.2	Civilising the Lanna society.....	151
3.3.3.2	The strange Others: depiction of uncivilised villagers and hill people	159
3.3.3.2.1	The villagers.....	160
3.3.3.2.2	The wild others.....	165
3.3.3.3	The good old days: Communitarianism and the Thai rural village.....	172
3.3.3.3.1	The ideal authentic Thai past	173
3.3.3.3.2	The nostalgic past and localism as tourist destination	176
3.3.4	Conclusion.....	179
Chapter 4 Body and Nation		181
4.1	Combination of Genders	181
4.1.1	Old <i>Kathoey</i> and New <i>Kathoey</i> : Background on pre-modern and Western concepts of genders in Thailand	182
4.1.1.1	Old <i>Kathoey</i>	182
4.1.1.2	New <i>Kathoey</i> after the Western trend of LGBT	187
4.1.2	How much <i>Kathoey</i> s are tolerated in contemporary Thai society	192
4.1.3	Analysis of TV dramas.....	194
4.1.3.1	Modernisation through gender: Imperialist ideas of genders	195
4.1.3.2	'Old <i>Kathoey</i> ' and Westerns concepts of gender.....	200
4.1.3.2.1	<i>Kathoey</i> as exotic beast	202
4.1.3.2.2	<i>Kathoey</i> as a gender without sexuality.....	208
4.1.3.2.3	<i>Kathoey</i> as unifier of gender and social norms	212
4.1.3.3	<i>Kathoey</i> as an element of nation-building.....	216
4.1.4	Conclusion.....	220
4.2	Combination of beauty	223
4.2.1	Beauty and hybridity	223
4.2.2	Concepts of Beauty in Thailand.....	227
4.2.2.1	Thai pre-modern concept of beauty	227
4.2.2.2	Thai beauty reform: hybridity with the West.....	228
4.2.3	<i>Luk-khreung</i> : a new hybridised Thai identity	231

4.2.4	Analysis of TV dramas.....	235
4.2.4.1	Westernised beauty modernises the past.....	235
4.2.4.2	Beauty as power	247
4.2.4.2.1	Power of being hybridised	248
4.2.4.2.2	Power of being civilised.....	253
4.2.4.3	Hybridised Thai identity – Western on the outside, Thai at heart.....	257
4.2.4.3.1	The schizophrenia of being Thai	258
4.2.4.3.2	The West is materially advanced but spiritually backward	264
4.2.5	Conclusion.....	268
Chapter 5 Conclusion		270
Bibliography.....		276
Glossary of key terms		296

Note on translation and transliteration system

In this thesis, I have adopted a transliteration style from the Royal Institute System. The Royal Institute System itself has gone through several changes since 1939 and the current one was revised in 1999. The system however does not indicate long and short vowels, as well as tones. All names and Thai words are romanised following this system unless they are proper names that have been spelt differently and become widely used by the public, such as royal titles or names of well-known people. Some key terms that are used as main concepts are in italics to highlight that they are Thai terms, such as *kathoey* and *siwilai*. Other Thai words in the thesis will also be italicised and then followed by Thai script for the first time they are mentioned.

While it is common for international standards to refer to people by their surnames, in this thesis I follow the Thai way by referring to them by their given names. The first time their names are mentioned will be in full, meaning given name and surname. In the bibliography Thai names are presented in alphabetical order based on their given names. For some Thai scholars and people whose transliterated romanised names are not well-known, I have followed the Royal Institute System. However, some well-known scholars have a specific way of spelling their names that differs from the said system. In that case, I stay allegiant to how it has been spelt so that it will be consistent with other textbooks in the field.

Titles of TV dramas and films are romanised and italicised, followed by the year of broadcasting (mentioned first time only) and without translation to avoid confusion, because many dramas do not have official English names and they have several versions of translation. For tables and figures, credits and references are given in captions. Only in the case that they are originally Thai, and that I have translated into English, the caption will say 'my translation.'

This thesis contains dialogue from TV dramas. Unless stated that they are in English, all conversations are my translation, from the original Thai versions. This also applies to quotations from interviews. Glossary of key terms can be found in the appendix.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 General Thai views on the Thai nation

In 2020, there were several social movements and protests within Thailand that showed resistance and dissatisfaction towards the military government. One protest in August was led by students and more than 10,000 protestors rallied at the Democracy Monument roundabout in Bangkok. The protestors had three demands: the dissolution of the House, the commencement of writing a new constitution, and an end to harassment of government critics (Bangkokpost, 2020a). The protests called not only for political reform but also monarchical reform, to moderate royal use of public funds, and to stay out of politics and without exercising control over important army units. The student protestors have since been accused of ‘crossing the line’ and powerful army commander, General Apirat Kongsompong, commented that the protesters were afflicted by ‘*chung chart*’ or ‘hatred of the nation’, a term used in the past to rally ultra-nationalist Thais against perceived enemies, and a disease, General Apirat told soldiers, that was far worse than Covid-19 (BBC, 2020).

Such phenomena raise some important questions in the minds of many Thais: ‘what exactly is a nation’? Why is criticizing the government or the monarchy equal to criticizing or even hating the nation? Why do the military government and the monarchy so strongly monopolise the definition of nation? This thesis originated from the idea that Thai nation-building is everywhere, and that it is even more obvious in places that are frequently overlooked, such as in entertainment media. This thesis will, thus, investigate nation-building and the construction of national identities in TV drama, and it is one of Thailand’s most influential entertainment media. I therefore investigate how the Thai nation and national identities are constructed in Thai TV dramas. I do so by looking specially at the relationship TV drama has with the regional identities of Northern Thailand, and as a subordinate culture. The Thai nation has frequently been a major topic and theme in mass media and textbooks, but as what, and how do these media present the Thai nation?

In one Thai elementary school textbook, one learns that the concept of the Thai nation arose from the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya kingdoms¹, continuing through

¹ In Thai school textbooks, there are three main periods of Thai history starting with Sukhothai (1257-1350), moving to Ayutthaya (1350-1767), and Bangkok (1768 to present). The rise and fall of these ancient kingdoms as shown in Thai historiography is a simplified linear presentation of Thai history, in that one kingdom falls, and another begins. This kind of history ignores the fact that these ancient kingdoms overlapped and were independent.

to the current Bangkok period. In this textbook, one also learns that Thailand is the only country that has never been colonised and has stood firmly as a nation with a long history of over 800 years. Students are taught to be proud of their nation in comparison to other countries, which were colonised or newly founded (OBEC, 2012:248-249). The Thai nation is a topic frequently found in mass media and television is a genre that repeatedly presents the Thai nation and Thainess. For example, the national anthem and its music video are decreed to broadcast twice a day at 8am and 6pm on every TV channel. For entertainment programmes, the Thai nation has become a popular theme. In 2019-2020, one of the country's famous singing shows, *The Mask Singer Thailand*, featured nationalist themes of 'Lai Thai' (Thai painting) and 'Luk Thai' (Thai children). These forms highlighted Thai national and regional identities. In these two seasons of the show singers were dressed in special costumes and masks. These were designed to represent national and regional cultures and traditions such as festivals, food, myths, music, dance, and animals. The TV hosts and judges all dressed in traditional Thai costumes. Even the songs and performances were carefully selected and designed to showcase Thai nationalism and cultural identities. By watching this show, audiences were reminded of the 'Thai nation', inclusive of national and regional identities. Throughout the shows, a brief history of each 'Thai identity' was introduced to the audience, urging them to feel proud.

The idea of 'Thai nation' is even more apparent in Thai TV dramas. The country's most famous historical drama in 2018, *Bupphesanniwat*, is an outstanding example to demonstrate how much the theme of the Thai nation can generate national hype. (I will elaborate on this drama and topic in Chapter 2, in a section on historical drama). Because of this drama, the topic of Thai history during the Ayutthaya period has become of major public interest, as well as boosting the popularity of Thai traditional costume. This was simultaneously promoted by the government just as the drama aired. The drama's success was confirmed when actors and producers were summoned to meet the Thai Prime Minister and members of parliament after they were impressed by the drama's promotion of Thai culture and history. The major themes and messages in *Bupphesanniwat* are not different from existing well-known Thai historical TV dramas, which focus on the prosperity of Thailand in the past². These depict pre-modern kingdoms such as Ayutthaya and the early Bangkok period. Nation in these dramas is portrayed through the representations of a prosperous history of a country that has never been

² For example, themes revolving around king and monarchy, ruling elites, war heroes, or a nation's unity (read more in Chapter 2).

colonised. These representations are accompanied by anti-Western themes. Under this narrative of the nation, Siam/Thailand³ is shown to have always been an independent, prosperous country with a long history, enriched by its national and regional identities that, somehow, all nicely combine as one. It is this version of nation that has been constantly reproduced and served up to Thai audiences. However, Siam/Thailand's independence and its relationship with regional states have also been under debate amongst many scholars in the Thai Studies field.

1.2 Thai Studies view on the Thai nation

Conventional histories of the Thai nation as exemplified above emphasise a 'Siam-was-never-colonised' discourse, and a status as an independent country. (I will explore this later according to Thongchai Winichakul and other scholars in Chapter 3.1). However, several scholars in Thai Studies argue that the Thai nation cannot be understood on the premise of a 'never-colonised' discourse. They have debated Thailand's independent status and that its history should rather be considered as a 'semicolonial' one, or 'crypto-colonial.' While Siam was a 'semicolonial' state, under Western imperialism, it exercised its power through internal colonisation of other smaller states, such as those in the northern region. This has built hybrid characteristics of Thailand as a nation, which is both semi-colonial and self-colonising.

Nidhi Eoseewong, a well-known Thai scholar and historian, calls conventional Thai history the 'Prince Damrong school of history' because it follows a style written by Prince Damrong, the half-brother of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910). According to Nidhi, this kind of history was the writing of chronicles focused on kings and their activities. The historians of this school dominated the approaches to Thai history by focusing on events as the outcome of the actions of great figures, while paying no attention to society, economy, or culture (Baker, 2005:362-363, 367). The problem of this school is its sacredness, which prevents criticism or alternative interpretation of history.

Likewise, Barend Jan Terwiel reviews the writing of the Thai past by placing attention on Royal Autographs. This writing, Terwiel proffers, is burdened by a process of rewriting the past, and avoiding disagreeable events – in favour of an account that renders a more positive impression (Terwiel,2011: 318). Historians covering the Bangkok period from 1782 face the same problem that 'the plot of most

³ Thailand was previously known as Siam (*Prathet Sayam*). In this thesis, Siam refers to pre-modern Thailand before 1939, when the first State Convention during Phibun's regime changed the name of the country to be *Prathet Thai*, or Thailand in English.

Thai history' is chauvinistic. If any historian argues the fact, the debates will quickly tend to degenerate into accusation of ill-will towards the nation, being against authority, being Communist, or generally being held up for undermining proper law and order (Terwiel, 2011: 321-322). These views suggest that the writing of Thai history has been dominated by the power of the ruling class and they were the initiators of Thai nationalism.

According to Benedict Anderson, Thai scholars often rely on the axioms that their nation is unique and fortunate because of the non-colonisation that made Siam an independent nation or the belief in the Chakri dynasty's historical role as 'modernising' and 'national.' Nevertheless, Anderson contends that Siam was unfortunate, not because it was colonised but for being indirectly colonised. He calls into question the accepted view of the modern Thai monarchy and the relationship between the modern Siamese nation (Anderson, 1978:198-200). Therefore, Anderson studies the modernisation of the Thai armed forces, roles of the monarchs, Royalism and economic relationship with the imperial West that somewhat resembled that of a colony. All of these suggest Siam's status as semi-colonial. However, what created the idea of nationhood and nationalism in Thailand was the 'myopic interpretation of the rationalisation and centralisation policies of Rama IV, Rama V, and Rama VI, which reads the internal consolidation of the dynastic state as identical with the development of the nation' (Anderson, 1978:210). On the contrary, he argues that 'because the construction of the centralising 'colonial'-style late 19th-century state was affected by the monarchy, the growth of an authentic popular Siamese nationalism was stunted' (Anderson, 1978:211).

Anderson refers to nationalism in Thailand as 'official nationalism', in which national consciousness is dominated by a dominant power from central Bangkok using a top-down process. Narrative does not originate from the nation's people but rather is introduced by the monarchs and elites. The monarchs founded many state-controlled organisations to promote their version of nationalism. King Chulalongkorn modernised the country by taking a model of nationalism not from European countries but the colonies, such as the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya and the Raj, which means 'rationalising and centralising royal government, eliminative traditional semi-autonomous tributary statelets, and promoting economic development somewhat along colonial lines' (Anderson, 2016: 99-101).

Thongchai Winichakul has a similar view that Thai history has focused heavily on the roles of the monarchs or what he calls 'Royalist nationalism', or a nationalism defined by loyalty to the monarchy and where 'being Thai' means being royalist (Thongchai, 2008:584). The foundation of the royal-nationalist ideology of Thai

history is based on the 'Siam-was-never-colonised' narrative. This narrative was created based on the assumption that Siam has always been an integrated nation, which included other smaller states. His argument on the construction of Siam's geobody points out that Siamese elites constructed the Thai nation from two stories, following the 1893 Paknam crisis. (The conflict between Siam and France regarding boundary at the east side of Mekong River. I will discuss this incident in chapter 3.1). These stories, or narratives, are the loss of territories and reform. These narratives present Siam as an integrated nation-state, set against Western power, and as Siam pressed its status over other independent states based on expansionist desires to magnify the anticolonial pretension (Thongchai, 1994:146-148). Within this view, Siam justified its internal colonisation of smaller independent states such as the North, or Lanna Kingdom. The main idea of this kind of nationalism is that all kings are presented as national heroes and other states as being saved and united by Siam to form a single, independent nation.

Royalist nationalism has become a powerful ideology in Thailand, even after the 1932 revolution to overthrow the absolute monarchy. Though the emphasis of the military government during the 1940s shifted to racial nationalism, it did not eliminate Royalist nationalism which has also become blurred with chauvinism. The external threat changed from Western imperialism, to Communism, and then to Western capitalism, consumerism and the negative impacts of Western culture. Thongchai states that though the varying 'Others' of Thai nationalism have changed over time, the monarchy, the Thai race, and the people are the main bases for Thai nationalism (Thongchai, 2008:585). The sacred aura of the monarchy was intensified after the 1960s. Jack Fong refers to the role of the monarch as a 'sacred nationalism' rooted to Thai primordial society and the reproduced cultural essence for legitimating its authority (Fong, 2009:676).

Apart from historical writing that emphasises the role of the monarch, Siam's independent status during Western imperialism is also questionable. Peter Jackson points out it should be termed as 'semi-colonialism.' While Siam might remain politically independent, economically and culturally it followed patterns very similar to those of colonised Southeast Asian societies (Jackson, 2010:38). There are many other similar terms that could also be used to describe the Siamese scenario at that time, such as 'indirect rule', 'informal empire', 'cultural imperialism', internal colonialism, auto-colonialism, and crypto-colonialism (Jackson, 2010:41). For Jackson, the semi-colonisation of Siam is reflected in themes of duality and ambiguity. On the one hand, Siam had shown semi-colonial forms of power as the local elites were subordinate to Western power. On the other hand, Siam's absolute monarchy established new forms of control over the local population. Siam obscured

the internal tyranny that the absolute monarchy and its successors exercised over the local population in order to secure their own political autonomy in the international arena (Jackson, 2010:51-53).

Other scholars also find that definition of the Thai nation and nationalism is problematic. Michael Herzfeld states that Siam was not independent but should be described as a 'crypto-colonial' nation. Crypto-colonialism is the condition in which the very claim of independence marks a symbolic as well as material dependence on intrusive colonial power;

the curious alchemy whereby certain countries, buffer zones between the colonised lands and those as yet untamed, were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models. Such countries were and are living paradoxes: they are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a sometimes humiliating form of effective dependence (Herzfeld (2002), cited in Herzfeld, 2010:173-74).

In Herzfeld's view, Siam was forced not only to cede territory but also to reform its administrative institutions like other countries that fell under Western colonialism. The only difference was that Siam tried to present that Western authoritarianism, culture, technology and values, models of public order and conceptual discipline were local products (Herzfeld, 2010:175-76). Thais have long been, and still are, strategic and selective in their adoption and use of Western forms as expressed through Thai urban architecture, hygiene, personal clothing, table manners, and also the production of stereotypically Thai cultural forms such as Buddhism and feudalism to claim political attitudes for local creativity (Herzfeld, 2010:178,180-182).

Due to its ambiguous status during Western imperialism, Rachel Harrison has shown how Siam/Thailand gained a lot of Western influence, akin to other colonised countries. By looking at Thai films as a cinematic display of hybridised Thai identity, Harrison finds that these films reveal underlying anxieties about the resilience of Thai cultural integrity in a rapidly globalising world (Harrison, 2010b:96). Thai films use anti-Western themes to build national pride by depicting the nationalist theme of 'never-been-colonised', the narratives of which surround the country's avoidance of a fully-fledged colonial past by the wisdom of Siamese kings (Harrison, 2010b:113).

According to these scholars, this attitude lies in contrast to the conventional view of Siam/Thailand as an independent state, or what can be described as the 'never-colonised' nation. Rather, this construct of the Thai nation is a hybrid composed of being an indirect colony in an outward gaze with the West, and being

the internal coloniser when viewed by the inward gaze of local people. While these scholars mainly focus on the characteristics of the Thai nation in its relationship with the West or from the central Thai perspective, this thesis aims to look at Thai nation-building from the internal perspective that local identities are exploited to construct national identity and this reflects the imperialist status of Siam/Thailand.

1.3 Thailand and its imperialist thinking

When the Siamese ruling class wanted to oppose Western imperialism, Bangkok elites acted in the name of Siam by uniting all local populations and identities to form a united, modern Thai nation. However, it is questionable how well local identities are accepted domestically regarding the nation-building in which these Bangkok elites or central Thailand has always been the dominant power over local, subordinated peoples. These subordinate identities are treated as inferior, yet they are essential for the construction of the nation. The manipulation of local identities within Thai nation-building processes has shown Thai imperialist thinking⁴, which is also a product of Western colonialism. This imperialist thinking in Thailand is still recurrent and is reproduced in the contemporary Thai media, even though actual Western colonisation has ended.

In order to illustrate this recurrent imperialist thinking, I would like to take examples from new racism in Britain. Stuart Hall studied British law and mugging as social phenomenon. Hall found that racism dominated attitudes and the thoughts of British people in the 1970s, even though imperialism had ended. Race, crime and youth were the articulators of social crisis and that crisis functioned as a mechanism for the construction of an authoritarian consensus (Hall et.al, 1978: viii). As British society was in a moral panic about the rising rate of violent crime, they found a link between the crime rate and environment that determined crime and the background of the criminal. In other words, there was a transparent association between crime, race, poverty and housing (Hall et.al, 1978:115, 119).

Following Hall's work, a book entitled *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* further shows that race has become the means through which hegemonic relations are secured in a period of structural crisis management (Solomos et.al, 1982:11). Black people in Britain have been constructed as a national problem, or enemy within. This is neo-conservative racist theory which believes in the common-sense that 'enemies within' are undermining the structures of British society and racial problems are a result of illegal immigrants and that the

⁴ Way of thinking, mindset, ideas, concepts that are influenced by Western, especially the British and French, colonisation that came to the country in the nineteenth century.

black community is a home-grown problem, who are in Britain, but not of Britain (Solomos et.al, 1982:21,29-30). Sectors of British society have believed that 'normal' family will generate correct 'moral social compulsions' and 'inner controls', while 'criminal' or 'immoral' behaviour are the outcome of an inadequate upbringing, or even in some cases the result of an *abnormal*, black, family life (Lawrence, 1982:50-51). Therefore, problems in British society were regarded as being imported by immigrant, *alien* communities, with *alien* cultures (Lawrence, 1982:81).

While these scholars studied British law and social crisis since the 1970s, more than 30 years have passed and racism in Britain is yet to go away. The construction of an authoritarian state in Britain is fundamentally intertwined with the elaboration of popular racism and long-standing common-sense views of immigration as a problem and of black and minority ethnic groups (BME) as alien to British nationhood and citizenship. Racial crisis remains salient across a range of arenas – education, labour markets, housing, crime and policing (Alexander, 2014:1785-86). Even though Britain today is a multicultural society, people are living parallel lives. West Indians or Asians do not become 'Englishmen' despite being born in Britain. British society is a community of communities (Alexander, 2014:1789).

Just like the new racism that is still persistent in Britain, imperialist thinking in Thailand has dominated the ideologies and social values of the dominant power in central Thailand towards local populations. This thesis will focus on the depiction of Northern people and Northern Thai identity as a case study of a subordinate region. Northern people and cultural identities may not be regarded as threats or causes of social crisis as black people in Britain are. However, they are treated as peripheral, alienated and inferior to the dominant central Thai identity in Bangkok. The suppression of the North has been evident in mass media especially TV dramas. The recurrent imperialist thinking is often shown via narratives and themes relating to Western colonialism, the country's reform and centralisation of power, demarcation of territories and the expansion of Thai empire. Following these narratives, Siam plays the role of a saviour who protects the north from external threats. I further investigate these themes in Chapter 3.1 and 3.2 in which the North, as an independent state, seeks help by uniting with Siam to find peace and sanctuary. Seen with imperialist eyes, the dominant power in Bangkok regards itself as more civilised so the north is therefore deemed savage and backward. This theme is discussed in Chapter 3.3 as the North, represented by landscape, villager and hill tribe peoples, are shown as stereotypes of a helpless, uncivilised Other, waiting for Central Thai power to educate and civilise them. The imperialist eye has frozen the North both in time and space – as a faraway land and as the past.

Based on imperialist thinking that often sexualises a relationship with the colonies, Siam has effeminised the North, and this is reproduced in Thai TV dramas. This is portrayed through the stereotypical romance between Central Thai men and Northern Thai women. I will elaborate this issue in Chapter 4.1. Western gender binary is also a product of imperialism that has altered pre-modern concepts of gender in the country and positions the coloniser with masculinity and adulthood, and the colonised with femininity and childhood. Following this gender binary, other genders are invisible in this imperialist relationship. The third gender, which is an intermediate gender between male and female, and one of the compulsory elements in Thai TV dramas, is almost invisible in TV dramas with a Northern Thai focus. Chapter 4.1 explores this gender stereotype and the sexualisation of the North. Lastly, Siam/Thailand is often situated as superior to local populations. One way of doing so is by the occupying of hybridised beauty, as modern Thai identity gains more power over subordinate Others. This modern concept of beauty is a product of imperialism that Siam/Thailand has gained from being an indirect colony. While modernised identity is presented, the North is suppressed and compressed into a pre-modern identity and concept of beauty. Chapter 4.2 will explore the hybridised beauty mechanism that Siam/Thailand has used to exercise power, constantly creating reminders of Thainess while suppressing the North to enhance their own status.

What this thesis aims to show is that imperialist thinking is still persistent in Thailand and it is reproduced continuously in contemporary television dramas, even though actual colonisation has ended. This kind of imperialist thinking is found in the nation-building process and construction of national identities. The North as subordinate culture has been exploited by Siam/Thailand in different aspects to create its power.

1.4 Combi-nation

Thinking the history of Thailand through the lens of internal empire building brings forth the concept of 'Combi-nation.' My major argument is that Thai nation-building and national identities are both hybridised, as a product of semi-colonialism, and also constructed from many combinations as a result of internal colonisation. Many different elements are taken, merged, and mixed during this process, to become modern Thai identities. This process of combination is ongoing, and it is expressed through the political conflicts in the country.

Political unrest in Thailand in 2020 urged more and more people to question and redefine the meaning of Thai nation. The protesters' demands to reform the

country in many aspects, including the political and monarchical, implies an apex of dissatisfaction towards the government and status quo. Among many topics, one problem raised by the protesters is social structure and inequality, which they argue to be the effect of the centralisation of power. Bangkok is the centre of almost everything ranging from administration, military, education, transportation and healthcare while other provinces are less developed. Thus, parts of the demands also mentioned the decentralisation or distribution of administrative power and tax revenue to other parts of the country.

This reminds us of Thailand's political conflict between the Yellow and Red Shirts since 2006, which was a clash between the middle and upper classes who are mostly Royalists, supporting the old establishment, with the lower middle-class people who supported the former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was regarded as 'the arch enemy of the old establishment' (Row, 2020). These conflicts were based on discourses such as *phrai* (ไพร่ commoners) and *ammatt* (อำมาตย์ privileged class), the educated middle-class in urban Bangkok and the uneducated lower-classes in the rural areas, and so on. All these divides are suggestive of how hierarchical power is and how it is unequally distributed in the country.

The political divide in 2006 was also based on an urban-rural split, a regional division between the poor North and Northeast and centrally located Bangkok where money and power is located. The crisis in Thai politics was exacerbated by regional imbalances and uneven development (Schmidt, 2011:323-324). In 2014, the tension escalated after a demand of separatism by the Red Shirts. Though they later denied this and claimed that it was a misunderstanding, they admitted that the people in the North and Northeast had painful feeling towards the political injustice since the 2006 coup (Bangkokpost, 2014). According to Duncan McCargo, the government's 'reconciliation' in responding to political conflicts does not work because reconciliation is a royalist construct, based on the premise that all Thais are bound together by a shared sense of identity predicated on the pillars of 'nation, religion, and king.' This evidence of political division shows unequal distributions of power and the political landscape that has long been suppressed by the Bangkok elite and is now challenged (McCargo, 2010:6,11).

Similar to the conflicts fuelling Thailand's political crisis, this thesis is based on the idea that the roots of problems start from the construction of the 'Thai nation.' Thai nation-building prioritises the dominant power in Bangkok and Central Thai culture. Bangkok as a capital city acts as a hegemony of Thainess and nationhood. Central Thai culture has marginalised and exploited other regional cultures and identities in the nation building process. Therefore, this thesis investigates how the

concept of the Thai nation is complex, containing different layers comprised of many other sub-altern identities that are essential to it, though not equally treated. In order to understand the complexity in Thailand, I have drawn on the following theories.

The first concept used to help explain this situation in Thailand is Homi Bhabha's hybridisation. According to Bhabha, the new form of culture that emerged as a product of colonisation is 'hybridisation.' Bhabha's concept points out that the process of cultural assimilation is not one-way. In contrast to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) which focused on the binaries between East and West or colonised and coloniser, Bhabha contended that colonial power did not only dominate, command authorities of the colonialist or repress the colonised. Bhabha argues that it also produced 'hybridisation' – a new space which is neither the colonised or the coloniser, rather, something 'in-between.'

The concept of hybridisation is concerned with two key terms – ambivalence and mimicry. Mimicry is a strategy used by a colonial power to transform the colonial subject into a 'partial presence' (Bhabha, 1994:86). To dominate one culture, the coloniser wants to turn a colonial subject to be something similar to themselves. However, this similarity must not be identical since it is 'the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of differences that is almost the same but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994:86). In other words, to control the boundaries of that mimicry, it needs an ambivalence which is produced by remaining slippage, excess, and difference. Therefore, a non-equivalence needs to remain; a split between superior and inferior to explain why one group can dominate another (Huddart, 2006:59).

Bhabha argues that in the process of mimicry, the colonised and coloniser had produced something 'in-between' or a space that initiated new signs of identity. It is a space where the social articulation of difference is complex in an ongoing negotiation, and this permitted cultural hybridity to occur (Bhabha, 1994:1-2). Hybridity is not a mixing of two different cultures. However, it is the way that the rejected and denied culture has turned back to a dominant discourse and weakened the authority of the colonist. In Bhabha's terms, hybridity is 'a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal.' So, the other 'denied' knowledge enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition (Bhabha, 1994:114). Hybridisation breaks down the authority constructed by the coloniser because colonial authority requires an identity asserted through the repetition of discriminatory effects, through the construction of a differentiated identity (Childs and Williams, 1997:134). Thus, hybridity intervenes in this exercise of authority. It is the revaluation of colonial identity by deformation and displacement of all sites of

discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power and turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power (Bhabha, 1994:112, 114).

There are several scholars who have argued on the ambiguity or hybridity of the Thai nation. For example, *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand* comprises articles by scholars who argue how Thailand has hybridised with the West. Scholars who contributed to this volume, such as Harrison, Pattana, and Thongchai, have presented different aspects of Western influences in Thai society. In terms of Siam's relationship with its internal colonies, Jackson investigates its hybridity by using Bhabha's hybridisation to explain the unique characteristic of Thailand as being semi-colonial. He uses Bhabha's and Garcia Canclini's concepts to show Siam/Thailand's two dimensions of semi-colonial relations to the West – one in which the ruling elites are autonomous of the West and another in which both these elites and general population are in a subordinate, colony-like relation. In the local, Jackson uses Canclini's account of Hispanic hegemony in Latin America to show that hybridity in Siam bolsters elite power over the population. In the international level where Siam is in subordinate, colony-like dimension, he uses Bhabha's approach to explain that hybridity is both a form of resistance to or evasion of Western domination (Jackson, 2008:161).

While Thailand's semicolonial relationship to the West can be defined using the notion of hybridisation, its status as a self-colonising or internal coloniser to smaller states such as Lanna needs another concept to understand this doubleness. I have drawn on the case of Russia, which also has that kind of ambiguity. Russia has special characteristics that made it different from other imperialists, or that is its being 'European but not Western' identity. Three significant reasons caused 'Russia's contradictory status.' These are sequence, duration, and contiguity. First, the sequence of the Russian nation-state is unlike those in western countries. While other empires fell when their former metropolises were gradually being transformed into nations and nation-states, the Tsarist and Soviet empire fell apart before a modern Russian nation and a Russian nation-state had emerged (Condee, 2009:21).

The next feature is the duration of the imperial structure, which was far longer than the Western cohort. The last reason is contiguity. Unlike the British Empire, Russian empire did not easily divide geographically or culturally, and its territorial markers were hybrid with blurring ethnic identifications. These caused cultural hybridity, ambiguity and contested boundaries. Besides, the distinctions between metropole and periphery are problematic due to the fluidity of space (Condee,

2009:22-24). Because of these characteristics, Nancy Condee argues that the formation of the Russian nation does not fit with Western definitions of a nation.

There are different definitions of a nation according to Western scholars. For example, scholar of ethnosymbolism Anthony Smith defines a nation as 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (Smith, 1991:14). Scholars of modernism like Gellner, Anderson, and Hobsbawm term it differently. For Gellner, nation resulted from modernity and industrialisation whereby universal literacy, mobility, individualism, political centralisation, and the need for educational infrastructure were required for the economic growth of industrial society (Gellner, 2006:106). For Anderson, nation emerged when religious community and dynastic realm declined in power. The coming of print capitalism created new 'homogeneous, empty time', in which simultaneity is marked by temporal coincidence and measured by clock and calendar (Anderson, 2016:16-24). Hobsbawm states that nation is an invention and product of social engineering, created from above or top-down processes. For him, nationalism comes before nation, not the other way around. Nationalism sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nation while sometimes inventing them. Nations need certain political, technical, administrative, economic and other conditions to emerge (Hobsbawm, 1991:9-11).

According to these definitions, Russia has shown some overlapping features. On the one hand, it is a strong centralised state and imperial identity. On the other hand, ethnic and linguistic categories are not identical to territorial boundaries, to each other, and to the nation as constructivist theorists have elaborated that concept. So, these characteristics have created two Russias (Condee, 2009:12). These two Russias are imperial and demotic identities. For the imperial identity, the elites forged to command the mechanism of the state through civil bureaucracy, economic patronage and other means. At the same time, there was a demotic identity which has little to do with Western education, language, culture, and travel but relies on the notion of '*Holy Rus*', which denotes the idea of land with a sacred ruler (Condee, 2009:17-18). The difference between metropolitan elites and the demotic periphery imbues Russia with an exceptional status with its nationhood in internal differentiation under the larger imperial rubric. In Condee's words, 'Russia has occupied a space between empire and ethnicity, space where nation does not cohere' (Condee, 2009:17).

Considering the idea of 'two Russias', I want to investigate what structure Thailand has and uses to build its nation. While Russia has two distinctive identities

to form its nation, in the case of Thailand however I want to propose that there is a process of 'Combi-nation.' Thailand formed a modern nation from its relationship with the imperialists and followed the imperial structure. Still, it cannot fit with either the definitions by the ethnosymbolism or the modernism alone. Based on these two theoretical concepts, Bhabha's hybridisation emphasises the 'in-between' where the hybridised culture breaks down the authority constructed by the coloniser. At the same time, Condee's 'two Russias' focused on the ambiguity and doubleness in becoming a modern nation. In the case of Thailand, it is not only a doubleness of Siam's identity or hybridisation between cultures of colonised and coloniser – Siam VS. West, or Lanna Kingdom VS. Siam. Instead, it is a selective combination of both the West and ethnic cultures to formulate the Thai nation.

This 'Combi-nation' is rooted in the uneven distribution of power among elements of the superior and inferior, a colony within a semi-colony, a colonised who is also a coloniser, and subordinate people as double-colonised object. Modern Thai identities are hybridised with Western imperialist's culture to empower Thailand as a modernised, civilised nation. This is expressed through bureaucratic system, education, technology and innovations, eating habits, architecture, and bodily practices. At the same time, the central power in Bangkok dominates other parts of the country and standardised its own culture, language, ideologies and so on, they have also exploited and adopted some features of suppressed cultures and people to form the Thai nation and national identities. Ethnic groups and cultures like Lanna were exploited to stabilise the united Thai nation.

The process of 'Combi-nation' in Thailand is not identical to, but consists of, hybridisation because different elements are not necessarily hybridised. Elements are either combined or hybridised depending on a hierarchical relationship or how the project of the Thai nation uses it. During the combination process, the Thai nation making adds new signification to each element. Each part remains meaningful in itself, but once it is combined, its meaning has been changed to something else. For example, the West is hybridised to becoming modern Thai identities. The West has its meaning in the western world. Once the West is associated with the Thai nation, its meanings changes and becomes complex, regarded either as external threat and destroyer or as models of civilisation that the Thai nation desires. In contrast to the West, the North is combined but never hybridised. Northern Thailand has meaning in itself, but once combined with the Thai nation, its status changes according to a relationship it has with Siam/Thailand, the centre. It was termed as a 'territorial state', and then 'provinces' with inferior status so that Thailand can construct its identity. Ethnic cultures and identities of the North are exploited to differentiate the centre from the periphery and empower the Thai nation. Yet, the

ethnic cultures are not hybridised with Central Thai culture. They are combined, assimilated, but at the same time kept apart because of social hierarchies and racial differences.

Accordingly, this is a selective way of using 'combination', between different cultures and identities that depend on where Siam/Thailand positions itself by relationship to others. In this thesis, I want to call this selective way of hybridisation and combination, 'Combi-nation'. This concept explains a Siamese way of using such combination to construct a nation. One is the Thai nation structured from the imperialist perspectives, which is united, homogenous, static and stable. It is the Thai nation that has been modernised and Westernised, so it survived Western colonisation. It is the Thai nation with bureaucracy, sovereignty and independence. Another is the Thai nation that is grounded on traditional perceptions of hierarchies and racial differences. This Thailand is in an ambiguity and ongoing tension between centre and periphery, central Thai and other subordinate regions, elite and commoners, official and non-official caused by assimilation during the formation of a nation as exemplified with the political crisis above. These two identities of Thailand were caused through the complex relationship of Siam/Thailand acting as an internal imperialist among other states.

The relationship between Siam/Thailand and the West and its internal colonies have been discussed by scholars in the field. However, all of them were done from a central Thai perspective of Thai history. I wish to further investigate, branching out from the above-mentioned scholars in the Thai studies field. This thesis aims to investigate further on a non-centric perspective that focuses on regional, subordinate culture and the construction of the Thai nation and national identities. It will develop from these scholars by looking at the representations of the North in the narrative of the nation as shown in TV dramas. This is different from studying historical records because it is the representation of history, not the history itself. (I will explain this in the following section in this chapter). Finally, this thesis demonstrates a new way to understand that the construction of a modern Thai nation is a complex process. While these scholars have shown Thailand's hybridity, it does not simply mean that every identity of the Thai nation is hybridised. On the other hand, the hybridisation and assimilation processes are selective, and variant based on the dimension of relationships.

1.5 History, nation and narration

My thesis is based on the idea that history and nation are related to narratives. When reading textbooks or watching historical films, how can we trust

history as recorded in those textbooks or adapted into movies? How important is historical narrative to a nation? Can a nation be constructed without referring to its past or history? Every narrative was written or told for some specific purpose, and this thesis wants to investigate Thai television drama in providing narratives of Thai nation.

In Thailand, TV drama is one of the most influential forms of media. Popular TV dramas can have a high impact on the whole population. While these TV dramas are produced mainly for entertainment, it is undeniable that they are laden with Thai values, beliefs, ideologies, and hegemony. One of the key messages propelled through Thai television drama is that of Thai nationalism, rooted in Thai Royalist Nationalist Historiography (hereafter RNH). The RNH is the writing of history which is built on the concept Thongchai calls 'Royalist nationalism' and Nidhi's 'Prince Damrong School of history' that I have mentioned earlier (more detail in Chapter 3.1). Therefore, I want to use three concepts which are nation, narration, and historical writing borrowed from Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, and Linda Hutcheon, respectively. These will explain and help us understand how history and narratives in Thai television dramas are related and used to build the Thai nation and some specific national identities.

The first question to ask then, is how a nation is related to narration. Anderson's concept of a nation as an 'imagined community' explains that a national consciousness starts from two forms of imagining, which are the novel and the newspaper. This imagination is possible through the emerging of 'homogenous, empty time', a concept which replaces mediaeval conception of time, marked by temporal coincidence and measured by clock and calendar (Anderson, 2016:22-24-25). Reading novels creates a sense of nationhood because it gives a picture of people doing different activities at the same time. For omniscient readers, these people are living in the same clocked, calendrical time and 'the idea of sociological organism moving calendrically is analogue of the idea of the nation, which is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history' (Anderson, 2016:26).

Similarly, reading a newspaper gives experiences of 'doubleness of reading' because stories on a front-page happened simultaneously and independently, without actors being aware of each other. Still, their linkage is imagined because of the calendrical coincidence (Anderson, 2016:32-33). The emergence of two forms of imagination holds a lot of credit to the rise of print language and print-capitalism, as well as the decline of a religious community and sacred language. Print language, or vernacular that had become a language of power, laid the bases for national

consciousness while print-capitalism created mass consumption and imagined world among readers (Anderson, 2016:34-35, 44). In other words, it is a convergence of capitalism and print technology which created a new form of imagined community, which set the stage for the modern nation (Anderson, 2016:46).

According to this concept, national consciousness is constructed by forms of narration which create a sense of unity from reading, and that then connects people even though they do not know, meet or are aware of one another. Thus, a nation is then associated with perception rather than reality, as long as people feel they are united. As in Anderson's words, 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 2016:6). Same as newspaper and novel, television drama also creates an imagined community through narrations because it is a modern genre of mass media that aims to reach a wide group of audiences nationwide at the same time. Audiences who watch a television programmes are aware of million of others who could have also watched the same programme. Besides, the watching of TV forms a perception that people on screen are also members of the same nation. In other words, the Thai nation is forged from narration, through narratives, but these are narrated or dominated by those who are in power.

Anderson's concept focuses on the process of imagining, done through the reading of 'newspaper-as-fiction.' It does not touch upon the production of narratives but rather emphasises how people perceive the feeling of a nation after reading or watching it. Anderson regards a nation's people as a group with their own self-originated perception free from power or domination. Can Anderson's concept of imagined community describe the imagining of the Thai nation? The answer is yes, but we also have to consider whose narratives are told. Therefore, I want to bring in a concept from another thinker to expand an idea on a nation's narrations.

Homi Bhabha contends that Anderson's discussion focuses on the process of signification rather than the progress of narratives. For Bhabha, Anderson's concept of the 'meanwhile'— a form of temporality that produces 'imagined community' which works like a plot of a realist novel – puts more emphasis on the 'suddenness' of the arbitrary sign (Bhabha, 1994:158-159). According to Bhabha, nations are forms of narration, and it is created on the double narrative movement. He proposes an idea of 'doubleness' in writing, which questions the concept of '*many as one*' that treats gender, class or race as social totalities of unitary collective experience (Bhabha, 1994:142). To understand 'doubleness', Bhabha took Freud's concept of 'uncanny' to explain national narratives. The uncanny associates with a liminal, uncertain state of

cultural belief as a result of some psychic ambivalence or intellectual uncertainty. Therefore, a double narration is a process of 'the doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self' (Bhabha, 1994:140-144). A national narration is neither derived from dominant power or a nation's people alone. It is in between.

While Anderson stresses the consuming of printed text like novels or newspapers, Bhabha further points out that a nation's people are not simply parts of historical events or a patriotic body politic, but they must be thought of in double-time. On the one hand, the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*. On the other hand, the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification. They must erase any prior presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as contemporaneity. In other words, the production of the nation as narration is in 'a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative' (Bhabha, 1994:145). The pedagogical found its narrative authority in a tradition of the people, encapsulated in historical moments while the performative found its narrative between people as 'image' and its signification as a differentiating sign of self. So, a problem is not the 'selfhood' of a nation as opposed to the otherness, but a nation split within itself. This turns to be a liminal space in which no political ideologies could claim authority for themselves (Bhabha, 1994:148).

Following Anderson's view, we assume that a nation is formed by imagining. It is only a question of whose narratives that are used for imagination. Then we have Bhabha's concept of double narrative movement which opens more spaces for people to be both object and subject of narrations. According to this, it is presumed that narratives can be produced between the authoritative power and the nation's people. Most Thai TV dramas have turned out to be both pedagogical and performative. These TV dramas show signs of being pedagogical as they make use of historical moments from traditional sources like textbooks or conventional history. At the same time, they are performative as being contemporary adaptation by the people. Their signification of self and the nation is very much influenced by the pedagogical. So, nation narrations in Thailand lie in the ambivalence between being the state's apparatus or propaganda, and being people's process of representing themselves as 'subjects' of historical narratives.

Apart from the question of whose narrations get told or whether they are from dominant power or people, another thing to consider is what kind of stories are selected to be in those narratives. Many Thai TV dramas make use of historical

moments to build up their narratives, and many times history and fiction are blurred. Audiences find it difficult to distinguish between fiction and historical facts. However, it does not matter at all whether it is fiction or fact. Linda Hutcheon argues that both history and fiction are discourses that constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past. When looking at history, the meaning is not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past 'events' into present historical 'facts.' In Hutcheon's terms, there can be no single concept of 'genuine historicity' because the writing of history and fiction is always filled with contamination (Hutcheon, 1988:89-92).

As a postmodern thinker, she is interested in *how* we can know the past today and *what* can we know of it. Hutcheon calls it 'historiographic metafiction' (Hutcheon, 1988:92). 'Historiographic metafiction' refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that the only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems (Hutcheon, 1988:93). To put it simply, neither truth nor falsity are the right terms to discuss fiction. There are only '*truths*' in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths' (Hutcheon, 1988:109). Accordingly, the critical question is not whether history or fiction is real or not, but what does it mean to a nation's people. It is a shift from validation to signification and to the way those discourses make sense of the past. Besides, what is also essential is a selection of past events. While events occurred in the real empirical past, only some events are constituted as historical facts. This selection means that we only know those past events through their discursive inscription and their traces in the present (Hutcheon, 1988:97).

When combining these three concepts, the framework of this thesis hinges on the idea that a nation is formed by imagining through narrations. These narrations are in the doubleness of being both pedagogical and performative. In Thai TV drama, the nation's people are performed as 'subjects' of a nation. Yet, it is a genre that is much dominated by historical moments, hegemonic and ideological power as state apparatus. Moreover, history and fiction are discourses that are exploited to produce these narratives, so that none of them should be considered as facts or truths. What this thesis emphasises is not the past events themselves but that it is the representation of the past that does matter. Thai TV dramas are selected as a text for this thesis because they clearly illustrate how a nation is narrated and broadcast to Thai people both nationwide and worldwide to build a sense of nationhood. The next chapter 'Pre-chapter' will provide background of Thai TV drama, its situation, history, and characteristics.

Chapter 2

Thai TV context and research methodology

This chapter provides a landscape of Thai TV drama, looking at a television pattern - historical background, screening, schedule, state control, and consumption of TV drama - through to the structures and key elements of Thai TV dramas. It then discusses the genre of historical drama because all four selected dramas in this thesis are historical dramas. This genre has long been popular for Thai audiences. These historical TV dramas take place within a specific spectrum or use a specific repertoire, ordinarily laden with RNH, that is, they exhibit a mode of hyper-royalism. This chapter aims to provide a better understanding of these Thai TV dramas – why particular themes are recurrent, which topics are taboo, what the role of the Thai state is in the industry, and how TV dramas are viewed or have impact upon the audience. The last section focusses on the central research question and methodology. I have provided empirical data from fieldwork in Thailand also. This data provides background to the dramas I analyse and demonstrates they were created based on existing ideologies and frameworks in Thailand; the RNH and stereotypical images of the north from the central Thai perspective.

2.1 Television today – watching and studying

According to Toby Miller, television has given rise to three major topics. These are technology, ownership and control or its political economy; textuality or its content; and audiences or TV's public. Each topic is divided into different theories and methods. For example, technology lies between two disciplines; one that believes in limited regulation of the state, and the other controlling socio-political agenda. The study of text could be hermeneutics and content analysis, while audience studies vary from the relation between social conduct and TV or the spectators own interpretations. Miller divided these approaches into TV studies 1.0 and 2.0 (Miller, 2009:23-25). While TV studies 1.0 focused on the political economy of TV, roles of mass media, top-down, leftist functionalism and its audiences as 'passive consumers', TV studies 2.0 placed stress on the audiences as powerful agents that could make their own meanings. However, Miller terms more recent studies as TV studies 3.0, a hybrid concept composed of political economy and cultural studies. Under this approach, we see media not as things that 'fall out of the sky' but as produced with meanings, and thus requiring comprehensive interdisciplinarity to acknowledge the specificity of television as a cultural, economic, and technological apparatus (Miller, 2009:147). This shift indicates that television

studies can contribute to wider understanding not only in terms of media function, but social, cultural and historical contexts that surround a production.

Studies on the impact of television before the 1980s were based on the conventional viewing atmosphere and the idea that television content was limited within a particular area. Traditionally, television had been closely bound to a national territory and tied up with national projects and in engineering a national identity. However, the rise of transnational television has changed viewing behaviour as hundreds of cross-border TV channels occupy transponder space on communications satellites (Chalaby, 2005:1). Ramon Lobato states that the history of broadcast television is closely tied to the history of the nation-state. Television systems in almost every country have reinforced national boundaries. The nationwide distribution of television has shaped advertising markets, propagated official language policies, and established common frames of national discourse. However, the internet has offered 'transnational television', enabling distribution across one or more national borders (Lobato, 2019:50-51). Through the internet, audiences in many parts of the world can view content from overseas through many channels, using browsers, apps, and set-top boxes.

Does this mean the end of television as we have known it? The answer is of course not. The flux of internet distribution and online channels do not reduce the power of television. It is just the form of viewing that has changed, while the function remains the same. Toby Miller argues that a lot of internet media is basically television because 'television institutions are still central to digital media markets' (cited in Lobato, 2019:27). Many internet-distributed or online-streaming platforms such as YouTube or Netflix, do not bring the internet to television, but rather take television contents to other online screens. As Michael Wolff points out, television tamed and absorbed digital media. 'It is not Netflix bringing digital to television, but, quite obviously, Netflix bringing television programming and values and behaviour – like passive watching – to heretofore interactive and computing-related screens' (Wolff, 2017:91).

The power of television flow and sequence, the interval between programmes and users' experiences are not much affected by the changing of viewing behaviour. William Uricchio found that the changing of audience reception and viewing environment – from the living console to the use of remote control and smart TV – are only the shifting of an agency. It does not turn down the flow of television (Uricchio, 2004). This is the same in Thailand in which the changing of platforms does, in fact, enhance the power of television. People watch more television than ever because they can watch it anytime and anywhere. During the course of writing

this thesis, I could watch Thai TV dramas that were selected for this thesis almost at the same time as those who live in Thailand, even though I was in the UK. Even dramas from last season were hard to find many years ago became available via many online video-sharing platforms. Thus, the internet has intensified and broadened the watching of television more than ever before.

This recent trend towards television studies has implied that technology, channel, or platform may be changing but television is still a powerful source where social values, ideologies, beliefs, perception, imagination and so on are reproduced and combined with global content that supports a national discourse. It is assumable that the concept of nationhood can be constructed regardless of how television is consumed. Nation-building is not restricted to a national border, but embedded in dramatic content, which is the result of a restricted atmosphere controlled by the state. In order to understand the situation in Thailand, it is essential to know the starting point of television in Thailand and how Thai television content is framed and controlled.

2.2 Background of Thai television

2.2.1 The Birth of Thai TV

Television broadcasting in Thailand began in the early 1950s. Though it was established by a government as a private enterprise, the board of Thai TV consisted of army chiefs and government bureaucrat. Thus, it was a private organisation owned, operated and subsidised by the government and the bureaucracy (Thanet, 1996). Thailand's first television channel or Thai Thorathat Company Limited was founded in 1953 by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram (MCOT, 2017; Sinit, 1992:111). The first intention was to use it for political and cultural propaganda to fight against the press, and also the expansion of communism. Alongside this was a desire to contend with the economic expansion of the West (Thitinan, 2007:31). In 1957, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the Royal Thai Army Commander-in-Chief at that time, founded the Royal Thai Army Radio and Television Channel 7. Later, in 1974, it became Channel 5. The main three purposes of this channel were to train army officers to be knowledgeable of radio and television technology; to provide knowledge and entertainment for army officers and the public; and to build a good understanding between the army's affairs and the public (Royal Thai Army Radio and Television Station, n.d.). Even though these two first channels were initiated for political purposes, their programmes were mainly entertainment based, including news and folkloric music and performances (Thitinan, 2007:32).

After Sarit died in 1963, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn succeeded as Prime Minister (1963-1973). In this government, Field Marshal Praphas Charusathien⁵ approved the establishment of a new television channel privately operated by Bangkok Broadcasting Television Co., Ltd. However, the shareholders of the company were members of the Charusathien family. This channel is well-known today as The Royal Thai Army Television Channel 7 or Channel 7 (Daunpen, 1996). After that, Thanom launched a fourth television channel in 1970. This was privately operated by Bangkok Entertainment Co., Ltd (BEC) under a concession contract with Thai Thorathat Company Limited (Thai Digital Television, 2014). It is best known as Thailand Colour Television Channel 3, or Channel 3, and was Thailand's first commercial television station. Apart from these first four channels, at the end of the 1980s, the first public service television network was founded. The National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT) is a state-run channel, operated by the Public Relations Department (PRD). NBT, or Channel 11, was designed to broadcast educational programmes and public service announcements (Thitinan, 2007:32).

The last free-TV channel, ITV, was founded after the 'Bloody May' political crisis in 1992, which raised public awareness regarding the government's interventions in the media. The ITV Station was established in 1995 under a 30-year concession with the Office of the Prime Minister. Due to the concession contract that required the channel to broadcast news programmes up to 70% of the total airtime, the channel went into financial crisis and then bankruptcy. It was renamed by a new government as TITV. In 2007, after the launching of the Thailand Public Broadcasting Service Act B.E.2551(2008), TITV was renamed again, as the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS). The Thailand Public Broadcasting Service Act provides Thai PBS with legal protection against political and commercial intervention (Somkiat 2008:4). Television channels in Thailand, in the early stages of broadcasting, were divided into two groups; those that were state-owned and run, and those that were state-owned but privately run (Somkiat, 2008:3). These six channels - Channel 3, Channel 5, Channel 7, Channel 9, Channel 11 (NBT), and Thai PBS, were free-to-air analogue terrestrial television stations. They provided programmes to audiences free of charge making their profits from advertising.

The liberalisation of Thailand's broadcasting and telecommunication industries was initiated through the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E.

⁵ Deputy Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army in Thanom's government.

2540⁶ (1997) and two independent regulatory agencies were founded to complete the task. In 2010, two agencies were combined as one to be The National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission (NBTC)⁷ in accordance with the Act on Organisation to Assign Radio Frequency and to Regulate the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Services BE. 2553⁸ under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2550⁹ (2007). NBTC's duty is to supervise broadcasting and telecommunication industries by promoting free and fair competition, and regulating the spectrum usages for the utmost benefit of the public interest and the country (Nathnipa, 2014:98; The Fundamental Acts Relating to Telecommunications and Broadcasting Services, 2015; Regulations on Radio and Television Broadcasting, 1992¹⁰). Since 2014, broadcasting technology in Thailand has been entering the process of digitalisation. NBTC awarded 24 commercial digital TV licences via auction on December 2013, including the existing six main channels, and the 15-year licences became valid from April 25, 2014 (The Nation Thailand, 2019). Most new channels are privately run by newspapers and media industry such as music and film companies. However, in 2019, operators of seven digital TV channels returned their licenses to the broadcast regulator, bringing the number of digital TV channels still operating in Thailand down from 22 to just 15 (2 channels had returned licenses before this) (Thai PBS World, 2019).

2.2.2 Screening, schedule, state control

State regulations on radio and television are divided into four phases. The first phase was 1955-1975 which state monopolised all channels for broadcasting political propaganda. The second phase was between 1975-1992. The Radio and Television Broadcasting Management Commission¹¹ was founded to censor and strictly control content to respond to the national trinity (nation, religion, monarchy) as well as regulating content criticising Thai politics or supporting communism. The third phase was 1992-1997. The Bloody May raised more awareness on media freedom and state intervention. Thus, the old state censorship was cancelled and replaced with The National Broadcasting Commission¹² (NBC) to supervise rather than censor placing self-censorship as each channel's own concern. The last phase was from 1997 to the present. All channels still had to comply with rules and

⁶ รัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย พุทธศักราช 2540

⁷ คณะกรรมการกิจการกระจายเสียง กิจการโทรทัศน์ และกิจการโทรคมนาคมแห่งชาติ (กสทช.)

⁸ พระราชบัญญัติองค์กรจัดสรรคลื่นความถี่และกำกับการประกอบกิจการกระจายเสียง วิทยุโทรทัศน์ และกิจการโทรคมนาคม พ.ศ. 2553

⁹ รัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย พุทธศักราช 2550

¹⁰ ระเบียบว่าด้วยวิทยุกระจายเสียงและวิทยุโทรทัศน์ พ.ศ.2535

¹¹ Unofficial translation for คณะกรรมการบริหารวิทยุกระจายเสียงและวิทยุโทรทัศน์ (กบว.)

¹² คณะกรรมการกิจการวิทยุกระจายเสียงและวิทยุโทรทัศน์แห่งชาติ (กทช.)

regulations according to the Operation of the Sound Broadcasting Service and the Television Broadcasting Act B.E. 2551¹³. Some parts of the Act are ambiguous and open to interpretation and intervention by the station owners and state officers (Pirongrong and Sasithorn, 2003:v-vii; Nathnipa, 2014:97-98).

In 2013, NBTC announced in the government gazette (B.E. 2556, no. 130, section 27 and 147) criteria regarding TV content, a rating system, and schedule. NBTC classifies different types of programmes according to content and their age appropriateness. Criteria and evaluation are based on three main aspects – the presentation of violence, sexual content, and inappropriate language (Royal Gazette, 2013a:1-2). This divides Thai programmes into six categories and each category has definite airtime and description. For example, programmes that are classified type PG13 are not allowed to air before 8.30pm; programmes classified type PG18 are not allowed to air before 10pm; and programmes classified as ‘Adults’ are not allowed to air before midnight (Figure 1). All permit holders from every TV station must submit their schedules to NBTC every year and at least 15 days in advance before broadcasting (Royal Gazette, 2013b:24-26).

All channels must follow and practice self-censorship by avoiding violence, sexual content, and inappropriate language. However, many forms of violence can still be seen in TV dramas. Rape has become a common form of violence in Thai TV dramas and may be portrayed as a so-called act of love, or as a punishment. When a male protagonist rapes a female protagonist, it will be suggestive of some kind of misunderstanding, and the characters often fall in love by the end. On the contrary, if a female antagonist is raped, usually by a male antagonist, it is an act of revenge or punishment that she is seen to have deserved (Townsend, 2016:581, 583-585). Thai TV dramas often romanticise rape and violence as parts of a normal relationship. The violence of rape is sometimes reduced by using the word ‘*bplum*’ (ปล้ำ) instead of ‘*khom kheun*’ (ข่มขืน). While ‘*khom kheun*’ is used to describe a criminal act, ‘*bplum*’ in Thai TV dramas is a forceful act that ends with romantic relationship (Under the Ropes, 2016). Rape has been more acceptable in Thai literature and TV dramas because ‘a good woman’ cannot initiate sexual contact. So, if a woman cannot willingly engage in sexual interaction with a man without losing her ‘good girl’ status, sexual violence becomes an alternative. Otherwise, she would be labelled as a ‘whore’ for being sexually confident. Therefore, the TV producers use rape to justify the inclusion of sexual intercourse (Townsend, 2016:587; Nanthayapirom, 2017).

¹³ พระราชบัญญัติการประกอบกิจการกระจายเสียงและกิจการโทรทัศน์ พ.ศ.2551

However, more and more, younger audiences find this kind of plot unbearable as it encourages rape culture. In July 2020, one famous Thai TV drama *Sawanbiang* was rerun on a prime-time slot. The story is about an abusive man who kidnaps and rapes a woman. The drama has been widely discussed on social media such as Twitter urging the channel to stop this show, but the attempt was not successful. At least this phenomenon suggests that audiences have more awareness and social sensitivity to rape, albeit that the TV stations seem not to. Apart from rape, other violent scenes such as people killing each other or female characters slapping each other are also common in Thai dramas even though they are rated for 'general audience.' According to the NBTC announcement, every programme aired during the prime-time slot (6-10 pm) must be suitable for 'general audiences' (Royal Gazette, 2013b:24). However, most of the programmes in this slot are TV dramas and these violent scenes are common. So, the warning subtitles act to defend their presence in the shows.

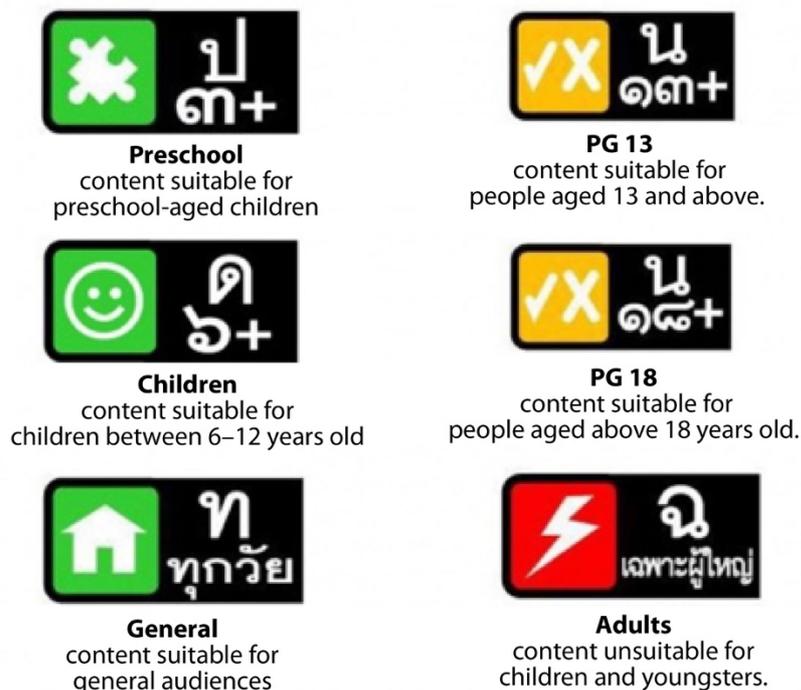


Figure 1 Six categories of TV rating and classification (Royal Gazette, 2013b, my translation)

Apart from the schedule of general programmes, there are also restrictions on the broadcasting of national programmes. The national anthem must be played twice a day at 8am and 6pm and royal news must be broadcast every day from 7-8.30pm

(Royal Gazette, 2013a:25). Royal news lasts about half an hour and shows the activities of the Royal Family and sometimes of high government officials. Besides, every Thai station is a member of The Television Pool of Thailand (TPT or T.V.Pool¹⁴), which means they are obliged to live broadcast all the government's programmes and special events nationwide such as royal ceremonies, military or government activities, sports events, and so on. In October 2016 after the death of King Bhumibol, the prime minister declared a year of mourning and urged all Thais to wear only black and white. Television and radio were to refrain from broadcasting entertainment for a month and could only air in monochrome or muted colours. On October 14 when King Bhumibol's body was moved in a procession to the Grand Palace in Bangkok for royal funeral rites, all television channels live broadcast the historic procession, which lasted for one and a half hours (Jitlada, 2017:5-6). Below are the rules and regulations issued by the NBTC for television stations to follow:

All media operators must 'take into account 'appropriate' broadcasting to show appreciation towards the King's compassion and take part in mourning his death', and that an intense atmosphere of mourning must be sustained for 30 days. All information regarding the king's death must strictly follow the palace's rules; must be approved before airing; and must not include 'interpretation, analysis, and criticism of such information.' All television and radio channels must refrain from showing 'any element of entertainment, dancing, joy, violence, impoliteness, or overly expressed emotion for 30 days.' Media presenters and guests must dress in plain 'black and white—preferably black, and appear composed.'
(Jitlada, 2017:49)

After the mourning period, commemorations of Bhumibol were still ubiquitous in books, exhibitions, media coverage, and television programming throughout the first 10 months of 2017 (McCargo,2018:181). All TV stations were obliged to broadcast the king's funeral from October 25-29, 2017 and all programmes during the funeral ceremony were required to drop 40% of their colour tones to be less vivid or close to grey scale during 1-27 October 2017. Similar to this mourning period, NBTC and T.V.Pool announced detailed rules and regulations for every station to follow during the restricted time of the daily royal funeral ceremony. This included the controlling of other programmes' content, emotion and clothing that would be on air in that period (Posttoday, 2017; Brand Buffet, 2017).

¹⁴ Since 1968, Channel 9, Channel 5, and Channel 7 had formed a special unit responsible for broadcasting national special programmes. Channel 3 joined in 1970 followed by Channel 11 and ThaiPBS.

Raknakkara, one of the TV dramas selected for this thesis is a good example. It showed how Thai TV programming was controlled by the state. The drama aired on a prime-time slot around one month before the royal cremation. A few weeks prior to the ceremony, entertainment programmes were retained from schedules. TV stations withdrew television dramas as well as many variety-shows and replaced them with documentaries about the late king. *Raknakkara* was the only prime-time drama at that time that had not yet finished by the restricted period. Therefore, Channel 3 station decided to air the last five episodes on five consecutive days from 29 September to 3 October, which was not its normal time slot, so that the drama would finish before the cremation ceremony.¹⁵ The last five episodes had to also drop the colour to a softer tone almost similar to grayscale, as for the mourning period.

Likewise, in April and May 2019 during the period prior and after the coronation of King Vajiralongkorn, NBTC announced guidelines on broadcasting which included the content on TV, website, advertisement, online video, and so on. A coronation emblem had to be displayed on the top left corner of the screen (Figure 2) (Thai Webmaster Association, 2019). Apart from this, TV newscasters and moderators were also encouraged to wear yellow, which is the colour of the monarchy (Figure 3).



Figure 2 Coronation emblem was put on the top left of the screen months before and after the coronation period (*Krongkram*, 2019)

¹⁵ Most prime-time dramas in Thailand air in three main slots; Monday-Tuesday, Wednesday-Thursday, Friday-Saturday-Sunday



Figure 3 TV moderators of a cooking show wear yellow before and after the coronation period (*Masterchef Thailand* season 3, ep 15)

Because of these strict rules and guidelines, most Thai TV programmes avoid controversy and follow the restrictions for their own benefit. Thanet Aphornsuvan stated that even though television has expanded, into many channels, one thing remains the same – ‘they are owned and strictly controlled by the government and the responsible bureaucracies... contents of the TV programmes are mainly entertainment and government news without comment and feedback from the audience’ (Thanet, 1996). This statement is accurate up until the present day.

2.2.3 Consumption of Thai TV dramas

Thai TV schedules are abundant with entertainment programmes and almost every channel has TV dramas in their schedules. Among the top ten highest-rating channels in January 2020 (Figure 4), four are news channels (Amarin TV, Thairath TV, Nation, MCOT HD), one channel is for game shows and variety shows (Workpoint), one channel for foreign movies and series (Mono 29), and the last four are channels that broadcasts TV dramas, news and variety shows (3HD, 7HD, One31 and Channel 8). I have listed TV dramas on air in a weekly schedule of these four channels and found that there are 23 different dramas to watch in one week, throughout the day (Figure 5). It is interesting to note that all these four channels broadcast dramas almost at the same time especially in the prime-time slot, which is between 6-10 pm.



Figure 4 Top ten channels with highest ratings in January 2020 (Thai Broadcast Journalists Association, 2020)



Figure 5 TV dramas on air in a weekly schedule of four channels

Thai people watch television as a part of family activities. It is an act of watching without an intention to watch a particular programme. According to Raymond Williams, people 'watch television', not particular programmes because of the 'planned flow' which is 'the characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form.' The sequence of shows created normal experience and people 'find television very difficult to switch off, even when we have switched on for a particular 'programme', we find ourselves watching the one after it' because flow is organised without definite intervals (Williams, 1990:86,94). For Thai audiences, television flow goes along with their daily activities. Somsuk Hinwiman argues that Thai people watch TV dramas while doing other activities, and without paying attention to particular programme because of the flow or someone in a family wants to watch it (Somsuk, 2015:47, 57-58). Thai viewing habits are rooted to the way audiences watch traditional Thai performance — *likay*.¹⁶ While watching *likay* performance, audiences have many other activities that occur at the same time. There are food stalls and kiosks nearby where people could buy food to enjoy during the show. Kids are running around, in front of, or even to the back of a stage. *Likay* actors can also interact with the audience. It is a 'carnival-like' atmosphere which is in contrast with the viewing of western film (Juree, 2003:164). With this viewing culture as a background, Thais are accustomed to viewing behaviour that does not need much concentration.

Thais have this viewing habit because, for TV dramas, a storyline is not important. Thais watch television drama for 'emotion' rather than 'content.' Dramas are often adaptations of popular novels that most Thais are already familiar with. So, audiences are excited to comment on the performances of actors rather than focusing on the story (Somsuk, 2015:98). Besides, Thai viewing habits do not rely on a single medium. Thai audiences enjoy TV drama with many other kinds of media before or almost at the same time of watching a drama. Besides original text or novels, newspapers and magazines are supplementary for conventional audiences. Newspapers usually provide full pages of TV drama synopsis, from chapter to chapter in advance of the programme. Magazines with detailed synopsis and photos are available in most bookstores and street restaurants. They help to complete the drama watching because viewers use the synopsis as a guide to catch up with the part they may have missed (Somsuk, 2015:29).

¹⁶ A performance usually shown in a temple fair. Its style and characteristics have been influential in the content and style of Thai films e.g. the role of monarchy (hero, heroin, parents) (Patsorn, 2004:52).

Nowadays, Thai people do not rely on broadcasting schedules. The internet has created 'on-demand' watching which gives viewers a chance to watch any programmes they missed (Akkarong, 2016:10). Drama watching is accompanied by new tools such as browsers and social network apps. Drama synopsis moves from a newspaper and magazine to website. A conventional community between drama viewers like family, neighbours or friends are substituted with social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or web forums. Research has found that in 2018, Thai people spend an average of 10.05 hours per day on social media. So, many channels have started to use social networks in addition to TV broadcasting (Pornchai and Aswin, 2020:3). This number is very high compared to statistics found in other countries. For example, in the U.S. internet users spent an average of 2.22 hours per day on social networking in 2019 (Metev, 2020), while in the UK the average daily use of social media in 2019 was 102 minutes or 1.7 hours (Statista, 2020). This number implies that the internet has significantly changed their viewing behaviour. Therefore, the watching behaviour of a typical drama viewer is never one-dimensional. Thai viewers watch TV dramas for entertainment, and at the same time, the watching itself is entertaining as it creates communities between viewers. Tools and equipment may be improved, yet Thai viewing behaviour hardly changes. Watching TV has created a community and entertaining activity between viewers, either in actual or virtual experiences.

2.3 Historical background of Thai TV dramas and typical patterns

Thai TV dramas began airing in 1955. The first being to is *Phongphang*, written by King Vajiravudh,¹⁷ though it copied a form of Western dialogue play. The first TV drama that was written specially for television was *Suriyane Mai Yom Taeng-ngarn* in 1959 (Chitralada, 1995:5-6). Recording and videocassette were introduced to the country in 1961 but they were not widely used. In 1976, more TV dramas started to switch from live broadcasting to video tape. This was regarded as the revolution of the industry because production quality and actors' performances had improved e.g. realistic setting, modern technique of cutting and editing, and actors remembering their own dialogue (Arune, 1993:4-5; Naraphorn, 2009:140).

TV drama is called '*lakhon*' (ละคร) in Thai, which is a term referring to the performing arts¹⁸. When Thai traditional performing arts are developed into TV drama, they are called '*lakhon TV*.' Sometimes, television drama is called '*lakhon*

¹⁷ King Rama VI of Chakri Dynasty (reign 1910-1925).

¹⁸ Such as *lakhon nai* (dance-drama shown within inner court, performed by female dancers), *lakhon nok* (dance-drama shown outside royal court, performed by male dancers), *lakhon rong* (operetta/lyric drama), *lakhon phut* (dialogue play), and so on.

namnao, literally meaning 'stinking, polluted water' because of its recurring theme, emotional plots and low-quality production that remain the same as still, putrid water. According to Van Fleet, *Namnao* is a term originated during the 1970s to describe the corruption of the political establishment and 'evokes the look and smell of stagnant water and rotting garbage, conjuring up images of modern Thailand's polluted canals and waterways' (cited in Farmer, 2015:81).

The plot and theme of *lakhon namnao* can be compared with Western melodrama. According to James L. Smith, the typical theme of melodrama:

relies heavily on well-worn devices such as long-lost children, lying letters, tell-tale scars, secret marriages, murders frustrated and plot overheard... have handsome and courageous hero, a comic servant who befriends innocence in distress and a mysterious stranger, later revealed as the heroine's long-lost father ... a dramatic piece characterised by sensational incident and violent appeals to the emotions, but with a happy ending (Smith, 1973:3-5).

Melodrama has been regarded as 'low-class' entertainment. In England during the industrial revolution it was an entertainment form mass-produced to satisfy workers. Its story caused little controversy after offering simplified views of life, particularly of morality (Basuki, 2003:4). When compared to a tragedy, that is often highly regarded, melodrama provides single and simple emotion. Smith argues that emotions in this context are savoured singly, in isolation, divorced from anything which might qualify, contradict or otherwise diminish the prevailing monopathic tone as he says 'In melodrama we win or lose; in tragedy we lose in winning or win in the losing' (Smith, 1973:10). However, William Sharp states that they are just different; neither one is better than the other. The only problem is that people tend to use the term tragedy for a good serious play and melodrama for a bad one (cited in Basuki, 2003:8).

Like melodrama, Thai TV drama is often regarded as a low-quality entertainment having very little academic or aesthetic value. Though it is popular and provides entertainment to audiences, Thai TV dramas are mostly love stories that rarely attempt to problematise or criticise Thai society. Most deal with personal and domestic spheres rather than any controversial politicised issue. Besides, the production quality is often poor due to small budgets and timelines. According to Brett Farmer, *lakhon* 'are routinely disregarded as worthless trash, something of insignificance with no intrinsic value or merit, yet on the other, are ascribed a quite intense potency as objects of social pollution that need to be expelled or quarantined.' Many of them have attracted attention from powerful state agencies that take action whenever they feel the *lakhon* is breaking moral taboos and/or breaching the social boundaries of what is deemed respectable. For example, two

dramas *Dok Som Si Thong* and *Raeng Ngao* were criticised by the Ministry of Culture, the Senate Committee and the NBTC because the main female characters present images of bad girls. A character in *Dok Som Si Thong* has 'sexual aggressiveness, violent language and behaviour, and ... showing in gratitude to her mother' while a character in *Raeng Ngao* sets a bad example for the nation's youth and through destroying the image of Thai femininity because she uses violence, verbally and physically. Their main female protagonists are 'patterned on the conventional *mia noi* (เมียน้อย) or 'minor wife/mistress' figure with the low-birth status, towering ambition and super-crass personality.' These characters are considered a threat to public decency setting a bad example for the nation's youth (Farmer, 2015:80-83).

Though stories are similar, the broadcasting patterns are different from the West. American or British soap opera runs over a long period for years or decades. As Hobson defines, soap opera is 'a radio or television drama in serial form... transmitted more than three times a week for fifty-two weeks a year' (Hobson, 2003:1). American soap operas have self-contained episodes, with a narrative openness that gives the drama series the capacity to endure through seasons, while British soap operas are serialized and open-ended. Some British dramas have regularity, continuity, longevity in broadcast schedule and audience loyalty such as *Coronation Street*, which has aired since the 1950s (Dunleavy, 2009:20-21). Latin American telenovelas, though they have definitive endings, normally have up to 180-200 episodes depending on their popularity (La Pastina et.al, 2003). Thai dramas, on the other hand, are much shorter and run for a finite period of no more than a couple of months with one or two hour episodes aired in batched instalments over several nights each week (Farmer, 2015:80).

TV drama in Thailand can be categorised based on many criteria, i.e. mood and tone. According to Ongart Singlamphong, Thai television drama can be divided into eight main categories which are historical, dramatic, comedy, crime/detective, horror/mysterious, adventurous, fantasy, and folktale (Ongart, 2014:97-98). However, it needs to be pointed out that they often overlap, and may move between categories which mean one drama can fit into more than one category. For example, a historical drama can be both dramatic and comedic, such as *Bupphesanniwat*. In this drama, there is an attempt to make a historical drama with historical figures, but also there are many non-essential scenes, sometimes irrelevant to the core plot, to make it a romance with strong elements of comedy. For example, the drama shows the main female character (who is a contemporary woman time-travelling to the Ayutthaya period) speaking some modern Thai slang, doing yoga, parodying a character from another TV drama, or cooking contemporary Thai dishes. This

character therefore appears as a strange, unique woman, and her differences from other people create comical elements for the drama.

Apart from tone, we may also categorise Thai TV drama into groups with similar plots. According to Georges Polti (1921), there are only thirty-six dramatic situations in every story or performance. Thai TV dramas commonly have much less than that. Juree Vichit-vadakan has listed seven main themes seen in Thai movies, which could be applied to the case of Thai TV dramas also. These themes have remained constant even though setting or presentation of story may vary (Juree, 2003:159-160). They are:

1. The struggle between opposing forces of good and evil
2. The conflict between persons of unequal socio-economic status
3. Human weakness, misunderstandings, fate, and so on.
4. Conflict and rivalry among kinsmen
5. Marital strife
6. Sex as a subject of fascination
7. Life histories of protagonists

These seven themes can overlap, and one drama can have subtle mixing of more than one theme. Still, they share some typical plots and storylines except some minor, additional details. As Sirinya Wattanasukchai (2009) argues, Thai TV dramas are characterised by a very high degree of formula with stock plots, character types, scenarios, settings and even actors in a repetitive, conventional manner. If a story was successful in terms of economic popularity it could be remade as a *lakhon* every few years, updated with a new cast and sensibility, but remaining similar to preceding versions (cited in Farmer, 2015:80-81). This repetition of theme Amporn Jirattikorn calls 'modern fable drama' because of its characteristic similar to a fable developed from romance novels where secret relationships, extra-marital affairs, and genuine love form a basis for dramatic plots (Amporn, 2008:45).

Thai TV dramas, to a large extent, are of the same storyline and pattern because they are in form, strongly influenced by the same framework. This framework will be discussed later. Nevertheless, there are few exceptions such as *Soi Prathana 2500*, which was an adaptation from the American play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This drama showed high-quality production, complicated plot and realistic characters that are hardly found in other dramas. More recent examples are *Luedkhon Khonjang* and *Kahonmahoratuek*. These have outstanding narratives, complex characters and subtle plots of the detective drama ilk. Though these two

dramas were praised by critics and social media for having original plots, high-quality production, and complexity of characters, they were not highly successful in terms of audience rating. *Luedkhon Khonjang* got an average rating of only 1.345 while *Bupphesanniwat*, a romantic-comedy historical drama, got average rating of 13.2¹⁹ (Brandbuffet, 2019; Positioning, 2018). These numbers imply that new style dramas of subtle plot may not be widely accepted in the country and most TV dramas are still, to the large extent, following the same old patterns.

One key feature of Thai drama is a happy ending. It is expected for a Thai drama to end with the villains punished or forgiven, and two heroes (male and female) living happily ever after. Thai people strongly believe in the popular Buddhist concept of karma; that those who do good receive good things in reward and those who do bad, receive bad things in return. When a character is good, he or she must be rewarded, and when a character is bad, he or she must be punished. With this kind of story, Thai dramas convey cultural and moral messages (Kultida, 1993:85-88; Juree, 2003:158, 161; Amporn, 2008:45). Moreover, Thai TV dramas aim for preaching moral lessons as well as modelling social rules and standards to keep everything in its place. Juree argues that the ending of Thai movies reminds audiences that things will turn back to a normal state. Even though some movies begin with a wide range of situations and behaviours that are unacceptable, in the end, those behaviours change to yield to social conformity and expectation (Juree, 2003:162).

2.4 Structure and key elements in Thai TV dramas

Most Thai television dramas have a fixed binary of characters – either good or evil. A large number of Thai TV dramas and films are influenced by *khon* (โขน), a masked dance-drama with the *Ramakian*²⁰ being the most frequently performed. The central theme of the *Ramakian* is indeed the triumph of good over evil. The story revolves around the ruling monarch and elite society (Patsorn, 2004:46-48). The most important obligatory roles in every drama are the two main heroes – male and female, or ‘*phra-ek*’ (พระเอก) and ‘*nang-ek*’ (นางเอก) respectively in Thai. These heroes are different from the main or leading characters in western drama because they also represent goodness and people who would do no wrong intentionally. The hero or ‘*phra-ek*’ must be ‘brave, gallant, and impartial.’ The heroine or ‘*nang-ek*’

¹⁹ According to a document by Public Relations Department (PRD), rating is a number of audiences, calculated by AGB Nielsen (Thailand). Numbers are calculated from case studies (face to face observation or through a device called people meter) and using statistic methods. Rating 1 means approximately 670,000 audiences per one minute (Samer, n.d.).

²⁰ The Thai version of the *Ramayana*, a dance-drama from India.

must be 'innocent, gentle, prim, well-behaved, forgiving, and, most of all, a virgin' (Kultida, 1993:83-83). The word '*phra*' is also related to Buddhism as it is the word used to refer to a Buddhist monk and/or Buddha image²¹. '*Phra*' is also related to highly respected objects and people. The royal family hierarchy starts with '*phra*' as a prefix of their ranks. Therefore, the word '*phra*' is used for something sacred and highly worshipped in Thai society, while the word '*nang*' stands for a female role that accompanies the '*phra*.' Thus, we see a hierarchy of gender here, too.

A rounded character is often found in Western drama while most characters in Thai dramas are simple and stereotypical. Recently, however, in contrast to previous generations of dramas, there is an increasing complexity where characters develop or evolve over the course of the story. Occasionally, characters have complex characteristics that are not easily distinguishable. For example, the role of the mother in *Bupphesanniwat* (2018) appears like evil, dictators while actually she is kind-hearted. Even the '*nang-ek*' starts to change. Kultida, cited above, notes that the '*nang-ek*' has to be a virgin. In Townsend's words, the women's virginity ultimately determines the man's perspective of her (Townsend, 2016:590). The virginity of the female leading role is challenged in *Krongkam* (2019). The '*nang-ek*' is a prostitute who works in a bar for the American GIs. She has had a sexual affair with her brother-in-law and a child before moving to a new town to start a new life with a new husband. Despite her blemished background, she is a hard-working, loyal wife. Another example of the mother role can be found in *Lah* (2017), which is a remake of the 1994 drama of the same name. Here, the mother role shows complexity regarding good or bad behaviour because she becomes a murderer to take revenge on all the men who have gang-raped her, and her daughter. So, it is true to some extent that characters in Thai dramas are static. Recently these dramas have shown more signs of character dynamism, though they are in small number. The majority of characters are easily distinguishable and are constructed in line with a binary of what constitutes 'good' or 'bad.'

In Thai TV drama, supporting characters often have hilarious personalities. They are known as clowns or '*tua talok*' (ตัวตลก) which literally means a funny, hilarious person. These characters function as the voices of the audience, and also prevent audiences from feeling too sad or too bored (Kultida 1993:92). According to Nidhi, the clown in Thai movies can be compared to a god in a Javanese play, who

²¹ In Thailand where the dominant religion is Theravada Buddhism, most of Buddhist monks are male (Bhikkhu) and they are commonly referred to by lay people as '*Phra*' while female monastic (Bhikkuni) in Theravada Buddhism is very rare. Buddhist laywomen in Thailand are called Mae Chee (nun).

communicates with the audience or criticises other characters' actions and behaviours. This concept is taken from Javanese dance-dramas, in which the clown is god's avatar²². Clowns in Thai movies violate the rules of Western movies which aim to present realistic settings completely separated from the real world. A clown in Thai movies keeps reminding audiences of the imagined setting by communicating with them directly, criticising or making fun of the actions of others. She or he reminds audiences of another reality, beyond the make-believe world of the stage or screen (Nidhi, 2014:74-75).

In Western literature and mythology such as picaresque tales, carnivals and revels, and magic rites, there is a character broadly known as 'the trickster.' Medieval customs demonstrate the role of the trickster as those comic types who entertained the prudish public with ribaldries (Jung, 2010:140). A trickster is not a normal human being. Its main role is to entertain as well as challenge the norm in a story. According to Jung Carl Gustav, a trickster is 'a forerunner of the saviour, and God, man, and animal all at once. He is both subhuman and superhuman.' A trickster could be either stupider than animals or have a 'divine-animal' nature, which is superior to man because of his superhuman qualities (Jung, 2010: 143-44). In many cultures, tricksters challenge the status quo and disrupt perceived boundaries. The trickster's role is both survivor and transformer, creating order from chaos, as well as challenging culture from both within and without, strengthening and renewing it with outrageous laughter (Smith, 1997). However, the '*tua talok*,' in Thai dramas are not for trick playing or troublemaking. They do not challenge any status quo or norm but are supporters there to enhance the superior aura of the main characters. Normally, supporting characters are reserved for lower-class people such as servants, or marginalised groups like transgender people, minority and hill tribe clans, or people from 'the upcountry.' These fixed characters – hero and heroine, villains, and clowns have become the basis for the majority of Thai television dramas.

2.5 Historical drama: How Thailand narrates its nation

Though there are several kinds, historical drama is a popular genre that has been produced regularly in the TV industry. I examined prime-time television dramas between 2017-2018, from the two main Thai channels (Channel 3 and Channel 7) which have broadcast television dramas regularly since the beginning of the television industry in Thailand. The result shows that out of the total number of 99 dramas produced in these two years, 25 of them are historical dramas and 17 out of

²² อวตารของพระเจ้า

25 are remade versions of existing historical dramas or films. However, not all historical dramas are focussed on history. Some are only set in a historical setting. The term historical drama in Thailand is often loosely used, to refer to any drama that has its plot and setting in the past. Before this thesis analyses any further, it is important to define what 'historical drama' means exactly in the Thai television industry and what the most popular themes are for this genre.

2.5.1 Definitions of Thai historical dramas

Generally speaking, 'historical drama' narrates and presents stories which are inspired by or based on historical events. Historical narratives of important events such as wars or a story relating to a historical figure such as a monarch are used to generate impact. Rodríguez Cadena (2004) defined historical films as:

primarily characterised by the representation of a specific period of collective history and its main heroes in plots that depict wars, conspiracy, heroic feats, the public deeds of the heroes and national unification. As a complement to that essential historical component, non-historical characters enact interconnected subplots of passion, love, jealousy, betrayal, and intrigue (Rodríguez Cadena, 2004:49).

Steven Fielding studies interwar cinema and defines it as 'wholly fictional, with the past merely supplying glamorous costumes and colourful contexts' as well as tackling the biographies of real figures in which he calls 'historiophoty' or the biopics of political figures (Fielding, 2013:494). According to these definitions, a historical drama is a re-working of historical events, with additional components, and thus a construction of the past.

In Thailand, historical drama is varied according to themes, plots, presentations, or even production quality. There are many definitions and similar terminologies. Sometimes, the definition is blurred and overlaps. Gandamas and Supatcharajit use the term 'retro drama'²³ which means any drama that is modelling an atmosphere of the late Ayutthaya and Bangkok period²⁴ in which the author imagines or picks up some parts of events in history to form a plot. Retro dramas are stories about a specific period in the past and evidence, therefore, how contemporary writers view the past (Gandamas and Supatcharajit, 2014:61). Or, as Seri Wongmontha translated from Thai to English: '*movies and TV series that are*

²³ ละครย้อนยุค (literally means drama that goes back in time)

²⁴ One important event during this period was the sacking of Ayutthaya in 1767 by the Burmese army and the founding of new Thonburi kingdom (1767-1782). This was regarded as a resurgence and King Rama I founded the Bangkok period of the Chakri dynasty as a result.

based on true stories in history²⁵. Seri states that drama producers should have some liberty to use 'literary truth' or be able to add some extra detail to make such drama more entertaining (Seri, 2018:2). Dinar Boontharm defines historical drama as 'a drama that presents some important parts of events in history.' He suggests the main purpose of any historical drama/film is to entertain, not to teach history. Therefore, this is entertainment first and foremost, while its content is based on citable historical information (CURadio, 2018).

According to these scholars, history and fiction are separated and it is acceptable for drama makers to use their own interpretation of history to make shows entertaining. However, this statement may apply to only dramas or films that deal with historical events in general. Once the role of a monarch is included in a drama or film, especially concerning the Chakri dynasty, the possibility to change or add extra detail to the conventional 'historical facts' would immediately be problematic. In Thai TV dramas and films, there is no one playing a King of the Chakri dynasty as a central role. Sometimes the King is mentioned or shown by his back or shadow. He may sit in a throne far away but it is impossible to see his face. It may be possible to have actors perform roles of kings in the Ayutthaya period, such as King Narai in *Bupphasaniwat* or King Naresuan in the film *Naresuan*, but not for kings in the current dynasty²⁶. The case of the film *Anna and the King* is a good example, which I will discuss later in this chapter and in relation to hyper-royalism. When a monarch is depicted on screen, there is no room for other interpretations or entertainment.

In the Thai entertainment industry, there are two similar terms which are suggestive of different degrees of seriousness in relation to presentations of history. The first is *lakorn ing prawattisat* (ละครอิงประวัติศาสตร์) or 'historical drama.' This kind of drama has a historical narrative based on the life of national heroes or key events in historical records. Usually, it comes with nationalistic thematic such as wars, war heroes, national enemies like the Burmese, or the West. This kind of epic drama usually involves famous actors, using high budget on lavish settings and production, and usually have a serious dramatic tone. Another term is *lakorn yon yuk* (ละครย้อนยุค) or 'period drama.' This is similar to a Western definition of 'costume drama.' Most of these take the form of melodrama, romance, or comedy, with stories set in the past. This 'period drama' tells less seriously of a specific historical theme or event

²⁵ ภาพยนตร์และละครโทรทัศน์อิงประวัติศาสตร์

²⁶ Both are kings of the Ayutthaya period. Narai is a well-known because his reign was regarded as the prosperous time of the Ayutthaya kingdom and he was open to Westerners. Naresuan is a highly revered king who brought the resurrection of Ayutthaya from Burma in 1593.

and entails less historical background as a result. Often Thai TV dramas are blurred between these two categories. They may use historical figures and events in the story as a background, with high-quality production and costumes that are presented as 'historically accurate' yet the core plot revolves around a love story.

Bupphesanniwat is a good example to show how the two terms 'historical drama' and 'period drama' can overlap.

However, what is more important than definitions or historical accuracy is the question of 'what kind of history is being told' in these dramas. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Hutcheon argues that both history and fiction are discourses. Therefore, the meaning is not *in the events*, but *in the systems*, which make past events into present historical facts. So, it is not a question of true or false, but what does it mean to a nation's people (Hutcheon, 1988). For Thai TV dramas, it is essential to note that only limited narrations of history are reproduced.

2.5.2 Popular themes and plots in Thai historical dramas

Historical dramas portray a picture of Thailand in the past. Such depictions are essential for modern society because it reminds people who they are and where they came from, of their identity and sense of belonging. For example, Baker and Pasuk argue that 'historical dramas create a nostalgic past for the new city that has only recently sprung into existence' (cited in Amporn, 2008:45). Some Thai scholars note that historical dramas act as a medium for modern-day audiences in getting them back to their Thai roots. These historical narratives create an understanding of Thai cultural heritage and history for modern-day audiences (Phornphat and Patchanee, 2018:44). Others view these dramas as a tool to fight against global or international culture and modern technology that is negatively affecting the country. People of all generations thus have a chance to admire Thai cultural heritage and its roots through the modelling of Thai lives (Gandamas and Supatcharachit, 2014:59).

Historical dramas can be nationalistic in their themes and plots. Most Thai historical dramas revolve around the king and monarchy, ruling elites, war heroes, or a nation's unity. These similar stories are generally set in some specific period, when important events occurred; for example wars between Siam and Burma in the middle of the sixteenth century, the sacking of Ayutthaya in 1569 and 1767, Ayutthaya's regaining of independence from the Burmese in 1593, the prosperity of the Bangkok period after being free from the Burmese (late eighteenth century – first half of nineteenth century), the coming of Western power since the seventeenth century and the coming of Western imperialism in the late nineteenth century, or even the turbulence in life during the Second World War.

I have listed examples of well-known TV dramas that clearly set their stories in specific periods of the past. There are a number of dramas that use stories taking place somewhere in the past without stating specifically when, and they are not included here. This list comprises both ‘historical drama’ and ‘period drama’ according to the definitions above, because many of them overlap and the tone or degree of historical accuracy is not the point of discussion in this thesis. Therefore, I would rather call both categories ‘historical drama.’ However, it is impossible for this thesis to make a complete list of every drama aired in Thailand due to the limited time provided. We should treat this data as examples to show what kind of history is favoured in this country. These dramas can be divided into five periods starting from the Ayutthaya era up to WWII. Table 1 below shows examples of historical dramas based on popular historical events which I have grouped into these different periods.

Theme and time period	Title of dramas
Ayutthaya kingdom (14th century) to the sack of Ayutthaya in 1767	<i>Sailohit</i> (1986, 1995, 2003, 2018), <i>Atita</i> (2001, 2016), <i>Fa Mai</i> (2004), <i>Niratsongphop</i> (2002), <i>Khun Suk</i> (2012), <i>Bangrajan</i> (2015), <i>Phanthainorasing</i> (2016), <i>Pitsawat</i> (2016), <i>Sri Ayothaya</i> (2017-2018), <i>Bupphesanniwat</i> (2018) <i>Nuengdaofahdiew</i> (2018) <i>Likithaengjan</i> (2019)
From the first to fourth reigns of Chakri dynasty (1768 - 1868)	<i>Rattanakosin</i> (1996), <i>Yattika</i> (1996), <i>Kha Badin</i> (2015)
King Chulalongkorn’s reign (1868 - 1910)	<i>Si Phaendin</i> (1961, 1974, 1980, 1991, 2003), <i>Thawiphop</i> (1994, 2011), <i>Romchat</i> (1995), <i>Rak Nakkara</i> (2000, 2017), <i>Malaisamchai</i> (2010), <i>Luk That</i> (2014), <i>Chatphayak</i> (2016) <i>Plaijawak</i> (2019), <i>Thongek Moryathachalong</i> (2019)
King Vajiravudh’s reign to the abolishing of the absolute monarchy (1910 - 1932)	<i>Si Phaendin</i> (1961, 1974, 1980, 1991, 2003), <i>E-sa - Rawi Chuangchote</i> (1971, 1977, 1987, 1995, 2003, 2009), <i>Malaisamchai</i> (2010), <i>Petklangfai</i> (2015) <i>Klinkasalong</i> (2019) <i>Raklaekphob</i> (2020)
After 1932 to the second World War (1945)	<i>Si Phaendin</i> (1961, 1974, 1980, 1991, 2003), <i>Khu Kam</i> (1970, 1972, 1978, 1990, 2004, 2013), <i>E-sa - Rawi Chuangchote</i> (1971, 1977, 1987, 1995, 2003, 2009), <i>Buangbanjathorn</i> (2002, 2017), <i>Taepangkon</i> (1987, 2005, 2017), <i>Malaisamchai</i> (2010), <i>Kahonmahoratuek</i> (2018)

Table 1 List of Thai historical dramas and years of production, grouped into different periods according to their plots and themes

This list shows the periods that have frequently appeared in Thai historical dramas. Some of them tell a story covering lengthy periods and can fit into many

categories. During Ayutthaya period (14th-18th century), Siam had struggled with many conflicts and enemies, both inside and outside the kingdom such as with the Burmese. For Thai students, the Ayutthaya period reminds them of two major wars with the Burmese in which Siam struggled to maintain its independence; one fought by King Naresuan in 1593, and the other by King Taksin in 1767. These conflicts are also regarded as moments of resurgence for the kingdom. Dramas in this group are usually about ordinary people or soldiers who fight bravely and sacrifice their lives for the nation. Characters are sometimes contemporary people who travel back to the past to learn how their ancestors sacrificed themselves for their nation. These themes are evident in dramas like *Atita*, *Bupphesanniwat*, *Niratsongphop*. For example, *Atita* tells a story about a man who time-travels to Bangrajan village and helps the villagers to fight against the Burmese to protect Ayutthaya kingdom. The rest of these samples portray lives of patriotic soldiers. *Sailohit* and *Fa Mai* are about soldiers who fight for Ayutthaya before its fall in 1767.

The early Bangkok period, on the contrary, had less conflicts or problems so there are fewer dramas. These dramas instead focus on the prosperity of life in a newly established kingdom rather than bloodshed and wars, enemies and colonisation. *Yattika* tells a continuing story after *Sailohit*, a drama written by the same author. In *Sailohit* the Ayutthaya kingdom falls. In *Yattika*, we see descendants of a family in *Sailohit* starting their new lives in a new kingdom. Similarly, *Rattanakosin* shows a peaceful life of one Chinese family who moves to Bangkok and gradually become Thai. There are few examples in this group partly because during this time there was not much conflict from external threats thus providing less material for dramatic content.

In Chulalongkorn's reign (19th century), again Siam had to fight, with Western imperialism. There was also the abolition of slavery, modernisation, and in-country reform. Dramas in this group focus on the roles of the monarch (Chulalongkorn) in modernising the country. For examples, *Luk That* centres its theme on social class and the life of a slave who wants to be free. *Thongek Moryathachalong* talks about Thai herbal medicine, pandemic and the coming of Western medication. *Plaijawak* features life in the inner palace and introduction of food, both traditional and those inspired by Western dishes after the king's journey to Europe. *Thawiphop* brings in the 1893 Siam-Franco conflict and then praising the king for safeguarding the country from Western imperialism. All these events underpin the origins of RNH that Thais use to understand and explain their past, and also form a sense of nationhood. There is more detail on RNH in Chapter 3.1.

There are not many dramas taking place during Vajiravudh's reign up until 1932 (before the coup) because it is a short period and has less conflict according to conventional Thai history. However, *Petklangfai* is one example that illustrates social and political conflict. It portrays the decline of an aristocrat's life, some criticism against Vajiravudh's Wild Tiger Corps²⁷ and features the Palace Revolt of 1912 that tried to topple the absolute monarchy but unsuccessfully. However, the drama ends up presenting harmonious life under the king's benevolence. *Raklaekphob* also features prosperity in this reign by placing emphasis on the Government Savings Bank (GSB), which was founded by Vajiravudh. This drama is sponsored by the GSB to commemorate its 100th anniversary.

The post-coup period is more popular for drama makers because it was the time when there were massive changes in Thai society, e.g., the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, the Westernisation of the country by the military government, and the second world war. Usually, dramas based on this period depict changes in the life of Thai people, how Thai people felt and survived after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy, and how the ruling class or elites coped with these changes. For example, *Si Phaendin* (often known in English as *Four Reigns*) is a detailed portrayal of royal life and the women in the inner palace. The lead female role lives her life throughout four reigns (Rama V-VIII) and we see her attitudes as a royalist towards social change, such as the overthrow of absolute monarchy in which her son, who is one of the instigators, is presented as an aggressive man. Some dramas mention, though not often, about wars, independence of the nation, and enemies of the state. *Khukam* is an obvious example that uses political context during WWII as a backdrop for the story. Though it depicts Japan as an enemy, it also romanticises the relationship between the Thai and Japanese military. However, it ends with the death of a Japanese man and Thailand saved by the Free Thai movement. Explicitly or not, each of these dramas are nationalistic in terms of how they support and strengthen the Thai RNH.

However, there are little to no dramas about contemporary Thai history, especially after the 1970s and let alone dramas about the current or more recent monarchs. According to Jory, it is the monarchy's overwhelming political and cultural presence that makes some topics too taboo to discuss in public (Jory, 2003). Two important events in the 1970s are the Thai popular uprising in 1973 to overthrow the unpopular regime of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, and the Thammasat University Massacre in 1976 involving students who were against the return of

²⁷ A paramilitary unit under the patronage of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI), founded by the king to promote marital values and loyalty to authority (Reynolds, 2014:269).

Thanom. The Thammasat Massacre ended with violent attack by the numbers of Village Scouts, Red Gaur, assisted by police and army units that killed and wounded a large number of unarmed protesters (Terwiel:2011, 279-281). The political uprisings in the 1970s have been deleted and forgotten in Thai conventional textbooks because of the problematic issues relating to the government and the monarchy. Nevertheless, student protests in October 2020 have brought this topic back into the public arena, as well as raising more awareness and interest in contemporary Thai history that is not taught in school. I will explore this sensitivity in Thailand again in the section on hyper-royalism.

It can be concluded that Thai historical dramas are obsessed with the past; that which happened somewhere 'a long time ago' while more recent history remains untouchable. The question arises as to why drama makers are fixed to creating material about those periods, and why nationalistic themes in historical dramas are so important for Thai society. In order to understand this trend, I investigate it in this thesis in relation to Thai historical films.

Nationalistic themes are popular in Thai films. In part this arose out of the 1997 economic crisis as an effective apparatus used to restore the country. The *Tom Yum Kung* Crisis, or 1997 Asian Financial crisis, led to Thailand facing widespread bankruptcy among companies and financial institutions. The Thai baht was floated on international currency markets, spurring the Thai government to secure a rescue package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Callahan, 2003:495-96). After 1997, more films with nationalistic themes were produced as a reaction against global forces. There was a general feeling that the country was being colonised by the West and the IMF. For Thais, the collapse of the economy smacked of western imperialism and drove a felt need to build up nationalist feeling again as part of a national sense of recovery.

This phenomenon is known as 'new nationalism' (or neo-nationalism). As a reaction to the 1997 crisis Thai public intellectuals created a new set of Others; these were liberals and the West. In responding to the 1997 economic crisis, Thai nationalism turned inwards by stressing self-sufficiency and communitarianism (Lewis, 2003:69). Accordingly, Thai neo-nationalists proposed the idea of economic and cultural self-sufficiency that romanticized the Buddhist village community, and as part of its rejection of urbanism, consumerism and industrialism (Callahan, 2003:496-97). These themes were the hallmarks of the old nationalist movements of the early twentieth century. Now the colonial powers have gone, the neo-nationalists have sought to create new enemies with the goal of new movements involving not the

national right to self-determination, but national pride and the integrity of national territories (Vu, 2013:266).

Thus, the 1997 crisis provoked a revival of interest in national culture as a reaction against everything modern and global. Thai investors then turned their interests to producing more historical films. *Nang Nak* (1999)²⁸ was credited as the beginning of the Thai film revival after the 1997 crisis, which featured 'the nostalgic sensibility that Thais are yearning for, and serves as a social function in recognising and resolving the anxiety of Thai views, who are experiencing the loss of their history and culture, and the infiltration of cultural forces from elsewhere' (May Adadol, 2007:187). *Bangrajan* (2000), also reflected the anxieties of Thais in the IMF era. Its plot has anti-Western, anti-imperialist sentiments and the movie's closing narration mentions the independence of the kingdom, regained after this war with the Burmese, and lauding Siam for having never become a colony of any other nation since (Harrison, 2010b:111). Later, films were filled with a nostalgic, and nationalistic atmosphere, towards the threat of the West. *Suriyothai* (2001)²⁹ resonated with the new discourse on Thai national identity and a restatement of Thai elite nationalism (Lewis, 2003:71-76). *Thawiphop* (2004)³⁰ reiterates a nationalist master narrative that Siam survived colonisation because of wise diplomacy and characteristic of compromise. According to Harrison, it persuades audiences to engage with a method of compromise, and as a trait of national identity that could be used to push back against the influence of the West in the IMF era (Harrison, 2010b:114).

These samples explicitly illustrate how historical films were essential in the time of economic crisis. They were used as an apparatus to restore the country's prestige and remind people of their glorious past. Phiphat Krajaejan studied the relationship between the Thai political crisis/problems with the number of historical dramas and films. He found that every time a country was in political crisis, more and more historical films/dramas were produced (Figure 6). Those films and dramas portray nationalistic themes emphasising the sacrifice of Thais for the nation and the monarchy as well as the yearning for a bygone time before the 1932 coup, when Thailand was in an absolute monarchy. In a period of hardship, these films provoke the idea of a need for unity within the nation as well as strengthening the aura of the

²⁸ A ghost story set in a historical setting during the time of Rama IV (1851-1868). The film provides a nostalgic picture of Thai rural society in the past.

²⁹ A film that is believed to portray the life of Queen Suriyothai from the Ayutthaya period. She is regarded as a heroine of the nation who saved her husband's life from the Burmese army, and saved the Ayutthaya kingdom.

³⁰ A story about a woman who time-travels to Siam during the fifth reign (1868-1910) and helps Siamese officers in negotiating with the French in the 1893 Paknam Crisis.

monarchy (Phiphat, 2018). It is obvious that historical films and dramas are essential in this regard, especially for a society in political crises.

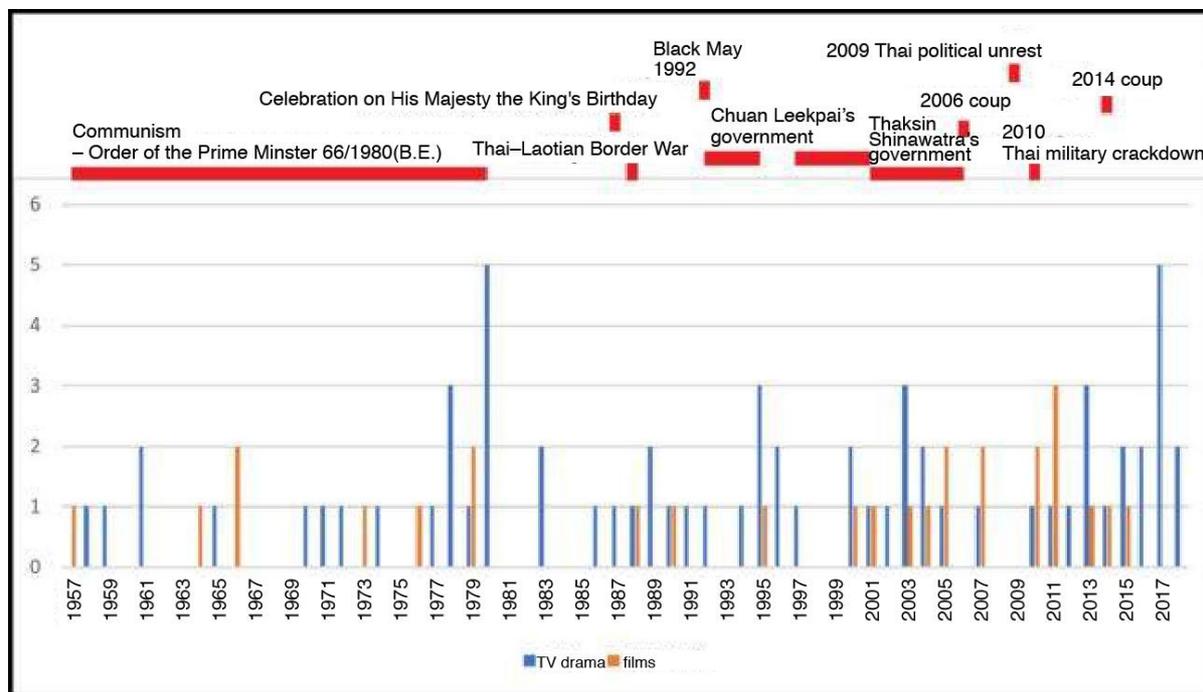


Figure 6 Numbers of historical dramas and films in relation to Thailand's political crises (Phiphat, 2018, my translation).

In contemporary Thai society nowadays, though there is no external threat or major crisis, political conflict has remained since the 2014 coup and the yearning for historical drama has not gone away. The creation of historical TV dramas is motivated by similar factors and inspirations, as historical films are. The only difference is that they are recurrent more frequently in Thai TV schedules, and this trend lasts for a longer time. One obvious example is *Bupphesaniwat* (2018), which has garnered huge national interest.

Bupphesaniwat is about a woman from contemporary Bangkok who travels back in time to possess the body of another woman who lives in the Ayutthaya period in the late seventeenth century. The drama made a highest ever-recorded rating for Channel 3, a statistic few dramas achieve³¹. It sparked public interest in archaeology and early modern Thai history. Many Thais have been dressing up in 'traditional' dress, and travelling to historic sites in which the series is set (the old

³¹ Episode 11 made a record at 22.6 for Bangkok and its metropolitan area, and 17.4 for nationwide rating (Posttoday, 2018b). According to PRD, rating 1 means 670,000 audiences per minute (Samer, n.d.). So, rating 22.6 would make up to 15,142,000 audiences watching the programme.

Siamese capital of Ayutthaya and Lopburi) (Jory, 2018: 441). The drama aired during the same period as Bangkok's vintage festival in which participants dressed in traditional Thai outfits and enjoyed nostalgic vibes around the Royal Plaza on the grounds of the Dusit Palace and Sanam Suea Pa in Bangkok³². This pushed the trend of traditional Thai dress to continue some months after the drama concluded.

According to Jory (2018), the success and popularity of *Bupphesanniwat* reflects a felt loss of identity among contemporary Thai audiences. For the state, this drama celebrates Thainess and shows what Thailand is about. Therefore, it was used as a cultural tool by the government to promote Thainess. The actors and producers were summoned to meet the Prime Minister and other cabinet members (Figure 7). The drama was praised by the PM and ministers because it promoted the three national pillars: nation, Buddhism, and the monarchy. The government planned to offer more funding to support any historical dramas with cultural and nationalistic themes³³. This emphasis on Thainess by the state, according to Jory, was the way the military regime has tried to latch onto the show's popularity. At the same time, this drama can be read as a commentary on how the Bangkok middle class views the absolutist society of Ayutthaya which can be compared to the situation in Thailand that has been under political crisis and military coup for 12 years (Jory, 2018:442). According to Irene Stengs, this drama has a significant education dimension. First, it educates audiences about the etiquette and tasks of women. Then it narrates the story of the greatness of the Ayutthaya Kingdom and it teaches viewers about King Narai's reign³⁴, which offers an opportunity to demonstrate the accuracy of the twenty-first-century Thai history curriculum (Stengs, 2020:263). These features strongly restate aspects of Thai national identity to the show's audiences. (I will further discuss the recreation of the past as the modernisation of the past in Chapter 4.2.)

³² 'Un Ai Rak Khlai Khwam Nao,' or 'Love and Warmth at Winter's End' held from 8 February – 11 March 2018 and 9 December 2018 - 19 January 2019 (TATnews, 2018).

³³ The Ministry of Culture offered funds to support TV dramas that promote Thai history, Thai food, Thai textiles, and Thai artisans (Ch3 Thailand, 2018; Posttoday, 2018a).

³⁴ The 27th monarch of the Ayutthaya Kingdom who was one of the most beloved kings. Narai's reign (1656-1688) was prosperous because many foreign visitors were welcomed, and the king was open to Western trade and knowledge.



Figure 7 Bupphesaniwat actors meet Thai PM and the cabinet at Government House (Posttoday, 2018a)

This section illustrates the popularity and situation of historical dramas and how they are similar in terms of themes and plots. We can clearly see that historical dramas/films are a part of the new nationalist movement responding to economic crisis as well as political instability. Still, there are many questions as to why the depiction of Thai history or past is analogous with nationalism in most cases and what kind of power dominates these narratives. Certainly, there is a climate of restriction in the country, and sensitive issues that need to be considered when making historical dramas. The next section further explores these issues.

2.6 Hyper-royalism and sensitive topics in Thai TV dramas

The first and most important framework that founds the restrictive atmosphere in Thailand is the country's special kind of royalist nationalism. This framework, which is referred to in Thongchai's term as 'hyper-royalism,' has become very strong in the country and as part of a mission initiated by the military government and the monarchy's network, to revive the monarch's power as far back as the 1960s.

In Thongchai's terms, 'Hyper-royalism' is 'intense, excessive royalism because it has occupied the space and time of public life.' Hyper-royalism is defined by the following characteristics. First, the monarchy (images, rituals, sayings, worship, and so on.) has been omnipresent. Next, the exaggeration of the royals is a norm. The king and his family are portrayed as 'the best at everything.' There are invented requirements and taboos too. Failure to show loyalty results in severe punishment and social sanctions (Thongchai, 2016a:7-11). For example, standing to show respect to the royal anthem in a cinema can be problematic. In 2007, two men were charged for not doing so. This issue became public interest again in 2019 when a Thai actor recorded a video showing a man who did not stand, and posted it on his

Instagram. SF Cinema, one of the major cinema companies in Thailand, responded that ‘there is no enforcement to stand’ while Major Group, another company, said ‘any customers who wish not to stand please wait outside until the anthem ends’ (BBC, 2019). Even though it is not restricted by law, the action of standing is required in public space and any people who resist risk being condemned or charged with one of the most severe laws in the country, Article 112 - Lèse majesté.

This is the most important feature of hyper-royalism. The ‘112 Lèse majesté law’ prevents people from criticising the monarchy or even the 112 law itself. According to this law, ‘whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent’ will be punished severely by imprisonment for three to fifteen years. The problem is the way this law has been interpreted as it includes previous kings and even the royal pets. Any violation is therefore considered as a threat to national security, and anybody can report another body's violation to the authorities (Thongchai, 2016a:11). For example, a Thai well-known social critic Sulak Sivaraksa was charged with lèse majesté after he gave a speech about the revision of Thai history at Thammasat University in 2014. Sulak was accused of deconstructing King Naresuan's famous battle waged on elephants against a Burmese prince in 1593. This was the very first time that the 112 law was interpreted to cover the previous monarchs (BBC, 2017; Atiya, 2020).

As an idea, hyper-royalism was introduced during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Sarit³⁵ government was responsible for reviving the roles of the monarch after the coup in 1957, to purge Phibun, the former Prime Minister from power. As the role of the monarchy weakened during Phibun's regime, Sarit aimed to create re-Thai-ification and he sent a message to King Bhumibol that the revolutionary council would never allow the institution of the monarchy to be altered. Thus, his government was supported by the royalists and the monarchical network³⁶, that allowed the military in taking a leading role in running the Thai state (Fong, 2009:686-87). This revival of the monarchs was done by organising royal visits to the countryside and overseas, as well as initiating royal public holidays and national days. This included the construction of royal monuments and universities and institutions named after Thai kings. Even the custom of prostration in the presence of the king was revived in this era (Jory, 2001:211).

³⁵ Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the Prime Minister of Thailand from 1959-1963

³⁶ A term coined by Duncan McCargo to explain how King Bhumibol stayed in power. The monarchical network relied on political groups led by ‘good men’ such as royalist proxies, Prem Tinsulanonda – the former prime minister and privy council – and other with the connections with the place (Fong, 2009:675).

Hyper-royalism has created an intense discourse that there is no space for other kinds of presentation regarding the monarchy except the one coated with a sacred aura. It is very rare to see the role-playing of the monarchs in dramas or films. Presenting the monarchs in disgrace can be considered violating the *Lèse majesté* law. The case of the movie *Anna and the King* (1999) was a good example. The movie was adapted from a book written by U.S. novelist Margaret Landon which was based on the autobiography of Anna Leonowens, a teacher in the Siamese court during the reign of King Mongkut. In 1998, the Thai Film Board rejected the request by Twentieth Century Fox to film *Anna and the King*, arguing that it showed inappropriate presentations of the king and Siamese people. The script portrayed King Mongkut as a 'brutal buffoon' and conveyed disrespect to the monarchy and defamation of Thailand (Jory, 2001:204; Van Esterik, 2006:301).

Not only was the application of filming in Thailand rejected, but also the film's showing. Information provided by Thai embassies on the banning of *Anna and the King* was that it portrayed Mongkut³⁷ and Chulalongkorn as despotic, arrogant, barbaric rulers whose acts of modernisation were inspired by Anna (Van Esterik, 2006:303). According to Pattamawadee Jaruworn, a member of the Thai Film Board, the film was banned because 'it disparaged royal aura of power, and explicitly distorted Thai history. Besides, Leonowens' novel is unreliable, and the film producer had excessively emphasised characterisation and narrative. If the film to be screened in the country, it would have likely caused more harm than profit' (Amphorn and Chonratda, 2000). There are more reasons from the Film Board's criticism such as 'it contained certain dialogues which humiliated Siam and Buddhism; there was a line in which a character said Siam was uncivilised; there were suggestions of a romantic attachment between Anna and the King; there was inappropriate characterisation of the King and the King's son, Chulalongkorn, and there was a scene in which an assassination attempt is made on the King' (Jory, 2001:204).

Because of this strong restriction, characters who play the role of the monarch are not expected in most Thai historical dramas. It may be possible to have actors perform roles of kings of previous dynasties. For example, in *Bupphesanniwat* (2018), there are actors who perform roles of kings in the Ayutthaya period, such as

³⁷ Rama IV (1851-1868) was highly revered for his competency and interest in Western knowledge and innovation. For example, he was a master in astronomy and mathematics. He studied from English textbooks and hired an English woman, Anna Leonowens, to be a teacher in the court. Thus, portraying the king as barbaric is unacceptable for many Thais.

Narai³⁸, Phra Phetracha³⁹, and Luang Sorasak⁴⁰. However, the depictions of the Chakri dynasty, or to be specific, Thailand's most beloved kings such as Chulalongkorn and Bhumibol, is impossible. Although Chulalongkorn has been highly revered by Thai historiography and celebrated as the one who saved the nation from western colonisation by the country's reform and modernisation, he is invisible in Thai historical dramas. The king is omnipresent in many forms but not in person. His name is mentioned and revered, yet he never appeared because it would be risky for the TV producers. For example, in a final episode of the drama '*Thongek Moryathachalong*,' King Chulalongkorn is mentioned as the moderniser who started public health in the country. Despite the fact that throughout the whole drama, the king was never mentioned and the story itself was a romantic comedy, the final episode had brought in the invisible monarch by having many characters sit on the floor and make a gesture of '*wai*' above their heads to show immense gratitude to the king (Figure 8). In this case, the monarch is present, but not visible, and has been a common practice for many Thai television dramas.



Figure 8 *Thongek Moryathachalong*, ep 14

Other sensitive topics regarding the monarchy are also taboo, even if they can be interpreted as subtly inferred. According to Jory (2003), sensitive historical events include the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932; the suspicious death of Rama VIII who was found dead in his bed in the Grand Palace; and the massacre of students, who protested the military dictator, by the security forces and village

³⁸ The 27th monarch of the Ayutthaya Kingdom.

³⁹ Ayutthaya king, who staged a coup in the reign of King Narai and founded the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty.

⁴⁰ Phetracha's son who ascended to the throne after his father.

militias at Thammasat University in 1976. The Thammasat massacre in 1976 has been removed from the conventional Thai education system as an unthinkable topic. According to Thongchai, there are many factors contributing to the silencing of this event. The most important factor is because 'the monarchy and the Buddhist *sangha* had been involved in the conspiracy that led to the killing.' Other factors include the narrative that the protesters, believed to be communists, were threats to the 'nation, religion, and monarchy', and the massacre or state crime is against the saga of the unity of Thai people under the benevolent monarchs (Thongchai, 2001:3-4). Therefore, among many examples of historical dramas provided earlier in this section, very few mention these topics, and none openly criticise or discuss them in detail.

However, criticism of the country is evident in other new media such as YouTube. In 2018, an anti-military rap song '*Prathet Ku Mee*' (What My Country's Got) by a group called RAD (Rap Against Dictatorship) has become an unprecedented phenomenon in Thailand. The song's lyrics directly challenge the military government and confront corruption, nepotism, the lack of accountability and transparency, poor healthcare, suppression of freedom of speech, and so on (The Guardian, 2018). The video also displays subjects considered a taboo in Thai society. It replicates the historic scene, based on an iconic image from the 1976 massacre at Thammasat University, where a corpse hanging from a tree is continuously beaten as a crowd cheers (Figure 9). This corpse was supposed to represent two activists who had been hanged while putting up protest posters. The act of hanging was shown in a theatrical skit by students and it was accused by the military of staging a satire of the hanging of the Crown Prince in effigy (Thongchai, 2001:3). This is one of the events that the Thai state does not want to be remembered or allowed to be discussed or shown freely in public. The Prime Minister Prayut responded to this video by complaining that 'anyone who shows appreciation for the song must accept responsibility for what happens to the country in the future' (Beech, 2019).

Consequently, the government launched an official rap 'Thailand 4.0' in retort. Most Thais found its lyrics and melody lame and out-of-date (Bangkokpost, 2018). The government's song consists of sampling melodic themes from the national anthem and using hallmark lyrics such as 'Make today and tomorrow better by agreeing with another' and 'Thai people are so smart. We just need to set collective goals to be stronger.' The government tried to fight against political resistance with blatant nationalism and political correctness (Coconut Bangkok, 2018). It was unsuccessful.



Figure 9 captured from the music video of an anti-military rap song ‘Prathet Ku Mee’

In 2020, the resistance to this taboo was elevated by continuous student protests. The protesters call themselves ‘Khana Ratsadon 2563’ (The People’s Party 2020) after the instigators of the 1932 Siamese Revolution, which ended absolute monarchy. In September 2020, protesters placed a plaque near the royal palace so as to demand democracy as well as imitating the original plaque placed by the People’s Party in 1932, which incidentally went missing in recent years and was replaced by a royalist plaque. The key event started again in October 14 as a student-led rally gathered at Democracy Monument and walked to Government House. The protest was set on that day to commemorate the 47th anniversary of the Thai popular uprising in 1973, which toppled the dictatorship of ‘Sarit-Thanom-Praphas⁴¹’ (Thai PBS World, 2020; Paddock and Linder, 2020). Not only did the protests re-illuminate these unspeakable topics, the protesters’ demands also reached the unreachable, to the point of reforming the monarchy. This is unprecedented thinking in Thai society. The 10-point manifesto for monarchical reform includes ‘curbing the monarchy’s authority, mentioning a desire for the king to be truly above politics, reducing the national budget allocated to the king, disbanding royal offices, including the historically powerful privy council, and ending public relations that excessively glorify the monarchy’ (Row, 2020).

The government responded to these actions by declaring a severe state of emergency to ban gatherings of more than five people. Police dispersed the unarmed protesters with water cannons and protest leaders were arrested and

⁴¹ Prime Ministers of Thailand: Sarit (1959-1963) and Thanom (1963-1973). Praphas (Minister of Interior 1958-1973). They were regarded by the protesters in 1973 as ‘tyrants.’

charged for defaming the monarchy. Some of them were arrested with harsh penalties for showing an act of violence towards the queen, who was in a car that unexpectedly drove past a demonstration (Paddock and Linder, 2020). Other responses can be found as assertions of soft power. This resulted from a sharp rise of interest in modern Thai history. Young people now turn to textbooks about Thai history that are different to those used in schools. The political crisis has caused more and more young people to study themes, such as that of the geobody, the 1932 revolution or Thammasat massacre of 1976. A Thai translation of Thongchai's *Siam Mapped*, for example, has become a best-seller and quickly sold out, along with his other books. Consequently, the police raided a publishing house, Same Sky Books⁴², and seized copies of three best-seller titles from *Monarchy Studies*. Besides, the government censored media outlet Prachatai Voice TV, *The Reporters*, *The Standard*, and *Free Youth* for broadcasting content that 'could cause panic' and 'could threaten national security' (Thanthong-Knight, 2020; ABC, 2020).

Here we have an overview of how these sensitive topics are dealt with in Thailand. Though there are attempts to challenge these restrictions, the Thai authorities would exercise their power to halt resistance. It may be possible to see the criticism of the state or the monarchy online or on the streets, though sadly it is deemed impossible to see it on TV. Due to this strict climate, this thesis aims to analyse Thai television dramas to see how nation-building and national identities are constructed, and how it is believed that these structures and formulas of Thai television under these kinds of restrictions, have played important roles in shaping drama content. Television drama is never solely for entertainment. It is a state apparatus to deliver key messages to audiences as well as to sustain the status quo to long afterwards.

2.7 Research questions and methodology

2.7.1 Research aims and questions

This thesis aims to investigate how Thai TV dramas with a northern Thai focus demonstrate and are used to construct the Thai nation and national identities? How is the North as one of different regions of Thailand represented in historical TV dramas?

Thai television programmes, as well as all mass media in the country, are, to a large extent, produced in the capital city Bangkok, which is regarded as the 'centre'

⁴² A publishing house that handles books by Thai and foreign scholars with sometimes controversial perspectives (ABC, 2020).

where most forms of dominant power are located such as government, education, military, and cultural institutions. Therefore, this research is interested in how hegemonic narratives are used and depicted in selected television dramas and how the dominant power creates and distorts the pictures of subaltern/less powerful regional cultures. The major argument is based on the hypothesis that the Thai nation is not only constructed from 'Thainess' but rather from combinations of many ethnicities, cultures, and identities of many groups of people.

Many scholars in the field of Thai studies have shown that the Thai nation has an ambiguous relationship with the West that many Western elements are hybridised with Thai identities (which I have mentioned in chapter 1). However, this thesis will investigate further on this topic by focusing on northern Thai culture as an example of subordinate culture and identity that are not hybridised but combined with Thai nation-building. The key term 'combi-nation', in this thesis, means the unequal and selective way that constructions of the Thai nation often adopt some specific cultures and identities to form the idea of a 'modern nation.' The thesis will show that this hybridisation and combi-nation are selective assimilations, dependent on their hierarchical relationships with Thai nation. While Thais choose to hybridise with the West by selecting what is good for their nation, that hybridisation is barred from northern identities as Thais regard the North as inferior and subordinate.

2.7.2 Why the north?

Northern Thailand is one of the most popular geo-cultural focal points of the Thai television drama industry. The north is frequently used in Thai television dramas for the following reasons.

First, the north has long been a competitive kingdom and target of Siamese power. The northern provinces as we know them today were previously collectively known as the Lanna kingdom, and since the thirteenth century. Lanna had a relatively competitive relationship with its southern neighbours – the kingdoms of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya. War between Lanna and Ayutthaya lasted more than 25 years, and took place between 1451-1475 (Sarassawadee, 2005:105-106). During the eighteenth century, Lanna had fallen under Burmese power for more than 200 years. In 1786, Siamese troops defeated the Burmese army and helped Lanna fight back. Siam took this opportunity to claim its higher status as overlord (Terwiel, 2011:91-92). Since then, Lanna became a vassal state which Siam tried to strengthen as their northern line of defence. According to the historical background, the north had been an area that Siam wished to conquer and then took up an inferior status. However, there were other northern states where the Siamese ambition to be

overlords were unsuccessful such as Keng Tung and which is often depicted in Thai TV dramas.

Second, the north has a relationship tied to Siam as an internal colony. It represents an intimate, yet also subordinate culture in a hierarchical relationship with central Thailand. After Lanna had become a tributary state, Chiang Mai (capital city of the north) had two obligations as a tributary state – the sending of tribute and the defence of the country against invasion from the Burmese (Sarassawadee, 2005:152). During Chulalongkorn's reign, Lanna and Siam developed into having an intimate relationship through Lanna Princess Dara Rasami becoming one of Chulalongkorn's concubines. After the country reform, commissioners from Bangkok were sent to rule Lanna as provincial administrative units. In 1878, these commissioners were changed to be governors, which brought the north under direct Siamese control (Terwiel, 2011:191-92). Thus, from having been a competitive power, Lanna was converted into being a submissive, subordinate region under Siamese control.

Third, the north has features that offer great potential for romanticisation in TV dramas. This romanticisation of the north has been largely achieved through depictions of culture and nature - beautiful scenery and good climate. The north has a culture that is distinctive from central Thailand, yet differences could be blended. Compared to the cultural and religious differences in the south, where the majority of people are Muslim, the north has more cultural proximity. While the northeast has been presented as a dry and hot region, the north has an easier climate. It was a target of unification as the government promoted tourism in the north during the 1940s by making it 'a beautiful region', a region of rich culture, fertile land, and friendly people – expressed through beauty of nature, culture and women (Darunee, 2006). These features of beautification have effeminised the north and they are reproduced in literature.

Accordingly, TV dramas with a northern Thai focus were regularly produced almost every year. This also resulted from the government campaigns and media liberalisation after the end of the Cold War. The Thai government felt relaxed and did not see local cultural identities as posing a threat to Thai national identity. This was supported by the Thai governments 'Year to Campaign for Thai Culture' in 1994, 1997 constitution, and Tourism Authority of Thailand's campaign 'Amazing Thailand' (1998-99) (Jory, 1999a: 337-341; Jory, 1999b:471). I will investigate the representation of the North as non-threatening Otherness with more detail in Chapter 3.3.

2.7.3 Research gap

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of the Thai nation building by investigating via new perspectives and new material. In terms of perspective, this research aims to study nation building from non-Western and non-centric perspectives. It uses Thailand and its regional culture as a case study to demonstrate that nation building in Thailand is different from Western concepts of nation. Chapter 1 has shown that existing research in Thai Studies focuses on central Thai perspectives. I want to develop from existing knowledge that Thailand is hybridised with the West by demonstrating that it is also combined with regional identities. This non-centric perspective will prove that the making of the Thai nation is complicated and multi-layered. This results from the ambiguous status of Thailand as both semi-colonial and internal coloniser, and it shows a kind of nation building that is different from Western scholarly understanding of nation.

This research also draws on new material to study TV drama. This research follows a more recent trend of TV Studies, termed by Toby Miller as TV Studies 3.0, which is a hybrid concept composed of political economy and cultural studies. This shift indicates that television studies can contribute to wider understanding not only in terms of media function, but social, cultural and historical contexts that surround a production (as previously discussed). This research, however, uses that approach from a non-Western perspective as it investigates TV dramas in Thailand. Thai TV offers good material to study how cultural and historical contexts affect content because it is much controlled by the state and laden with specific nationalism inspired by the RNH.

TV Studies in Thailand do not gain much attention academically. Some international scholars have criticised Thai TV content for being flooded with entertainment programmes, lacking focus on controversial issues, which in turn limits research on TV content to being 'simple, value-laden opposition between serious news and light entertainment' (Farmer, 2015:75-76). Nevertheless, Farmer illustrates how TV dramas can indeed be read critically regarding controversial issues. He has exemplified how TV dramas challenge the elite's hegemonic rules, which mean they have political significance conveying political discursivity in the public sphere (Farmer, 2015:85). Similarly, Townsend illustrates how the common violence in Thai TV dramas reflect Thai society. The presentation of rape scenes are a reflection and construction of sexual authority and gendered forms of behaviour (Townsend, 2016:580). Her work signifies that TV dramas can also be read as a social construction.

Even though these works suggest that TV drama could contribute to social construction, it is unlikely to find a discussion on nation building or national identity in TV dramas. TV Studies in Thailand focus on wide ranges of topics but mostly relating to social and cultural issues. First research on television in Thailand was in 1977 and it was about the influences of television. Currently, television studies are more open to cultural studies approaches. Some studies have been developed from textual analysis and the analysis of audience behaviour through to ethnographic approaches (Somsuk, 2015:7-11,148). Besides, most research about TV dramas in Thailand is at master's degree level and is concerned with the effect of television on audience's attitudes and behaviours (Somsuk, 2015:152-153). Research by Thai well-known scholars in the field included Kanjana Kaewthap (1994), for example, investigates different cultures in Thai TV dramas and films. Her research particularly elaborates cultural ideologies and social norms regarding Thai women. Somsuk Hinwiman (2015) also takes cultural and ethnographical approaches to analyse cultural politics in TV. This includes studying behaviours, content, social and cultural context. His research problematises topics such as gender, class, social ideologies.

Examples of PhD theses about Thai TV Studies are also about social and cultural identity. Thitinan Boonpap (2007) explores the construction of contemporary Thai cultural identity in television. Her work includes all forms of TV programmes such as game shows and dramas, putting emphasis on roles of globalisation in constructing cultural identity. Nitikul Chamaraman (2007) studies the cultivation effects on the representation of social attributes, marriage, family and occupational roles in Thai TV dramas. Isaya Sinpongsporn (2018) looks at Thai cultural identity through the remaking of Korean dramas and focuses on transnational and hybrid culture. Her research indicates that these Korean dramas were revised and localised based on Thai cultural and national identities. Though there are topics relating to ideologies, cultural or social identities, they do not discuss topics relating to the nation building.

On the contrary, a number of theses and research about the Thai nation are often in the political field and based on historical texts or literature. For example, Copeland (1993) studied political newspapers as source text. Chanokporn Chutikamoltham (2015) investigates the construction of national identity in Thai school textbooks. Janit Feangfu explores the construction of modern Thai identities by looking at Thai literature during the Cold War era. Hamilton (2002) discusses cultural identity in Thai media yet she includes all kinds of entertainment media, not only television.

Other research relating to nation or national identities can be found in film studies but they take a central Thai perspective and less focus on the representation of regional identity. Kultida Boonyakul Dunagin (1993) studies Thai cultural identity in Thai movies. Patsorn Sungsi (2004) explores how Thai national identities, particularly the three pillars (nation, religion, and monarchy) are constructed from the creation of Otherness, or threat to the nation in different periods. Other scholars have been focusing on Thai cinema in connection with the theme of nationalism. Harrison (2005,2010) elaborates how Thai films are full of popular animosity towards the West, anxieties over Thai authentic identity in a globalising world, promoting national pride as the only nation 'never-been-colonised', and the yearning for the imagined Siamese past. Lewis (2003) argues that Thai films are used to echo Thai nationalism, either elite or popular, which is proud of its independent non-colonial past. Amporn Jirattikorn (2003) further adds that these historical films are the attempts to reaffirm Thainess and national identity in both local and global contexts. Chajabhol Choopen (2007) studies nationalism in contemporary Thai society by looking at Thai films. He notes five nationalistic themes which are closely connected to Thai historiography, such as historical wars, Western threats, cultural invasion, feminism and teenagers' nationalistic consciousness.

Based on the existing research, Thai TV Studies do not discuss the topic of Thai nation-building while research that examines the Thai nation in other texts does not particularly focus on regional identity. Accordingly, this thesis anticipates investigating Thai TV dramas, particularly historical dramas, with historical and political context surrounding them, and the representation of the North as one regional identity. It anticipates illustrating how the construction of the Thai nation and national identity in TV dramas are in connection with specific Thai nationalism and RNH, which cannot be found in existing research. Though Thai historical dramas do not show as strong nationalistic themes as Thai films, they constantly remind audiences of Thai nationalism as resulting from the RNH. Moreover, the content and representation in TV dramas are more static than films. In addition, the depictions of regional identity are recurrent and repeatedly reproduced in TV dramas, and they are more obvious than found in films. My major contribution of the concept of 'Combination' will therefore broaden knowledge on the idea of nation.

2.7.4 Methodology

This research uses qualitative analysis which includes a close reading of visual presentation, montage, sound, light, camera angle, clothing and makeup, body language, dialogue and language use. Instead of examining these TV dramas randomly, this research will deeply engage with key points and moments in the

selected dramas. The major analyses of TV dramas in this thesis will be divided into two main chapters, which are made up of five smaller sub-chapters. The first chapter is 'history and nation' in which I aim to show how the Royalist Nationalist Historiography (RNH) dominates the presentation in these dramas, how the state exploits history to construct the Thai nation, and how history creates different combinations, that is combi-nations, to form the Thai nation. This will be done by examining three main points which are combination with the West, combination with other ethnicities, and combination with the Others within. The second chapter is concerned with 'body and nation', in which I aim to investigate how Thai national identities are created by different combinations by looking specially at combination with genders and though combination with concepts of beauty.

In this research, four TV dramas were chosen as case studies because they correspond explicitly to the five main concepts of discussion.

List of four selected dramas

1. *Ploeng Chimpalee* (2014)
2. *Raknakkara* (2017)
3. *Buangbanjathorn* (2017)
4. *Klinkasalong* (2019)

Each of these four dramas are distinguished in different ways. I do not separate them in each chapter but use them as texts for discussion where appropriate. I do not wish to analyse every episode/scene but do close reading of some key scenes. Moreover, the analysis will be done alongside contextual analysis regarding the historical and social background of Thailand from the late nineteenth century to the present.

These four dramas set their stories from the nineteenth century to the 1950s. The first tale, *Raknakkara*, is a historical drama that takes place in the late nineteenth century. This drama is the only drama with a northern Thai focus that uses historical events situated during Western imperialism and Siamese centralisation as a context. Moreover, the presentation of northern Thai culture (language, costume, props) has gained a lot of public interest. This raised public awareness and concerns about Thai history as well as inspired many seminars, both academic and non-academic. *Klinkasalong* set its story during the 1920s. It is a romance with a background of a northern province, after the Siamese administrative reform. It is one of a few dramas that illustrates the civilisation and modernisation of the north. While many other dramas about the North occur at unknown times and places in the past, this drama was set in a specific time with actual names of people

and places referred to. The story also features the roles of missionaries, supported by Siam, in advancing the civilisation in the North, which we cannot see in other dramas. Next is *Buangbanjathorn*, which is a historical drama set in the 1940s during the second World War when the irredentists gained parts of the northern states from British Burma. This drama is worth studying because it has the representation of ethnicity coming from beyond the Thai border. Though Keng Tung and its culture are commonly found in Thai TV dramas with a Northern Thai focus, this is the only drama that shows Thai government's invasion of Keng Tung. The last selected case study is *Ploeng Chimpalee*, set in the 1950s. *Ploeng Chimpalee* is one of many dramas that reproduces gender stereotypes between northern women and Bangkok men. However, it is the only drama with a northern Thai focus that also has a third gender⁴³ character.

This thesis also includes interviews with people involved in the production and TV business i.e., screenwriters, director, and costume designers. The interviewees are professionals in the TV business and selected specifically by their work and positions. I selected these small samples only to provide background of these dramas and formulate research questions in this thesis. Their answers are not used for analysis though some parts may be used as supportive evidence in the discussion of certain TV dramas. These participants were approached either by personal connections or via social networks such as Facebook. I had their contact numbers and emails from my friends and family who work in the Thai entertainment industry. In Thailand, connections are significant to reach these groups of participants. For each participant, I had contacted them individually in advance to ask for permission before doing the interview and made initial appointments.

Interviews took place in Thailand, in June 2018, mostly in Bangkok and in Chiang Mai provinces because the participants work and live there. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and informal atmosphere. These took place in cafés, participant's workplaces or shops. I visited each participant one time, and the interview lasted one hour approximately. In some cases, I contacted them later to ask for more information by using chat applications like Line or Messenger. All participants were Thai and interviews were conducted in Thai by the researcher who is a native Thai speaker. Interview data is recorded through digital audio recordings and in written notes. All the data is stored in a personal laptop, the University M drive and OneDrive. Parts of the interview answers are included in the thesis, and I translated all of them into English.

⁴³ Apart from the normative genders between men and women, Thailand has accustomed to the 'third gender' which is an intermediate category commonly known as *Kathoei*.

Participants and the dramas they were involved with include:

1. Piyaphorn Sakkasem (Author of *Raknakkara*)
2. Yingyot Panya (Screenwriter for *Raknakkara*)
3. Wasin Aunchanum (Costume Designer for *Raknakkara* and *Klinkasalong*)
4. Sutthiphan Hera (Costume Designer for *Raknakkara*)
5. Phensiri Sawetwiharee (Screenwriter for *Ploengchimpalee*)
6. Atthaphorn Theemakorn (Director of *Buangbanjathorn*)

2.8 Empirical data from fieldwork: How TV dramas are made

The main idea of this section is to show a process of drama production and find out who dominates and has more power. Thai TV drama production process is varied in different production companies, but it can be roughly categorised into five processes which are; planning, pre-production, production, post-production, and evaluation (Sirinthip, 2002: 2-4). From fieldwork in Thailand I have collected information on the pre-production and production process, based on interviews with an author, directors, screenwriters and costume designers. This thesis will not cover post-production and evaluation such as editing, colouring, or audience reception.

2.8.1 Pre-production

Based on the interviews, people who had the highest influence in the pre-production process was the TV station owner or committee. According to Arunee (1993), the production of a TV drama in Thailand involves three sectors, which are the TV station, production house, and sponsor. TV dramas that I have studied were either produced, funded, or owned by the TV stations.

The first step of production is to find a suitable novel for adaptation. The TV station committee make this choice. For *Raknakkara*, the novel's copyright belongs to Channel 3 and it has power to grant permission to an appropriate production house. Piyaphorn, the author, stated that the copyright of her novel was bought a few years before the production started. At that time, she had no idea who would be the director or which production house would make it (Piyaphorn, 2018, interview). Yingyot Panya, the screenwriter, said that Act Art Generation, the production house, had always wanted to make it into TV drama. So, they approached the station and luckily their request was approved (Yingyot, 2018, interview). In some cases, a production house could propose a project to the station. Phensiri Sawetwiharee found the novel *Ploengchimpalee* interesting, so she proposed it to the station, and it was approved.

In these two cases, production houses were interested in the novels and asked for permission from the stations. For *Buangbanjathorn*, it was the other way around. It was the station that wanted to make this drama and the production house had to do the job. According to Atthaphorn Theemakorn, the director from one production house was assigned to run the project and he was hired as an outsourced director. So, he had very little involvement in the screenplay or the casting of actors. His duty covered mainly the filming and art direction. Though he did some historical research, it was for the setting of scenes, not the content (Atthaphorn, 2018, interview). From this information, it can be assumed that TV stations play an important role in controlling, deciding and selecting a drama to broadcast on their channels. These drama makers were either assigned or approved by a TV station before production. Figure 10 shows an example of the workflow of a Thai TV drama based on the interviews I conducted. This workflow is in fact a common process, found in most TV dramas in the country.

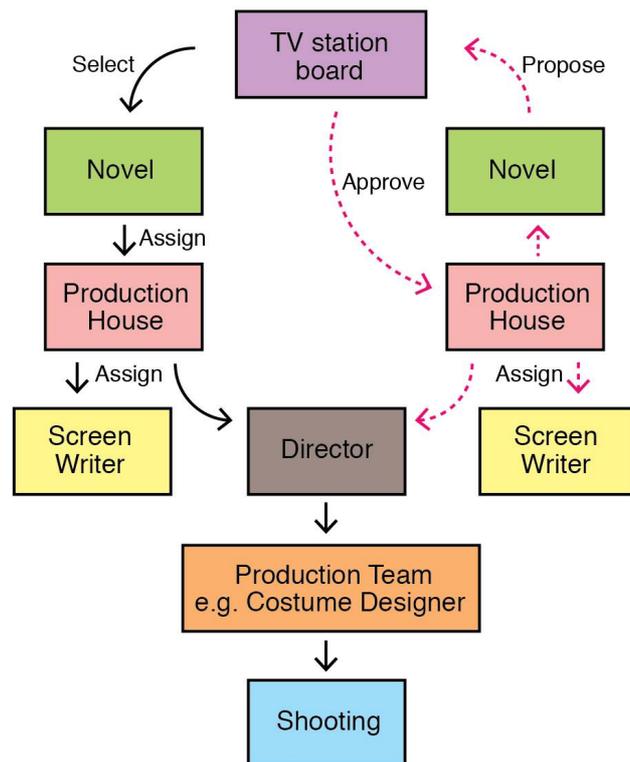


Figure 10 Processes of Thai TV drama production, showing two main different workflows

Next in the process is preparation for production. As the selected dramas are about northern Thai culture, so the interviews focused on how to gain knowledge

about the north. Of the interview participants, three researched from textbooks and held interviews with experts. One person did not research but relied on his memory and lasting impressions. Among the six interviewees, only two had a background from the north of Thailand and had a direct educational background related to northern Thai culture. Wasin Aunchanum and Sutthiphan Hera were costume designers for *Raknakkara* and *Klinkasalong*. Both gained some knowledge about Tai textiles before they entered the entertainment industry. They graduated with a degree in Thai Arts from Chiang Mai University. They also had experiences from working, full-time and part-time, with northern textiles and related business, so their knowledge came from education and direct experience. When they designed costumes for the drama, they applied their background knowledge with some more research on textbooks and interviews (Wasin, 2018; Sutthiphan, 2018, interview).

Four out of six interviewees are not from the north of Thailand. Piyaphorn gained her knowledge about the north from textbooks. She had spent two years on research in libraries, reading Thai textbooks and theses about the topic, especially in the field of history. Atthaphorn and Phensiri interviewed some experts apart from reading. Atthaphorn was interested in art direction, so he went to the north to interview northern artisans and lecturers about northern furniture and objects used in ceremonies, as well as the ethnic groups he wanted to present in the drama. Phensiri travelled to the north to find shooting locations and interviewed people who worked in a timber business, which is the main setting of the drama. She went to see traditional performances and invited professional dancers to train the actress (Phensiri, 2018, interview).

Yingyot is the only one who did not research from books or interview but used his memories from 30 years prior. What he produced in his screenplay was his perception and impression, which was created and represented through media or tourism. For example;

My 'Chiang Mai at first sight' was in 1983-84 when I visited Chiang Mai for the first time. Back then, everything was so unique and beautiful. ... These things impressed me, and I cannot forget it. I told the director that this is Chiang Mai in my mind. I wrote it from a pure, romantic feeling that I have for Chiang Mai (Yingyot, 2018, interview).

Based on the fieldwork, these drama makers gained knowledge about the north from research (reading textbooks and interviewing experts), personal experience and formal educational backgrounds. These people's interests in Northern Thailand were in the area of tradition, culture and history. Their perception was shaped by the stereotype of the North reproduced in media, tourism, textbook, or conventional history.

2.8.2 Production: Roles and power in drama production

During the production process, typically, the person who holds significant power in decision making is the director. However, the relationship between a director and a screenwriter may differ case by case and that affects their roles and influences in the production. If a screenwriter is a freelancer, and hired by a production house, he or she would normally play important roles over the making of plot. Most of the time, this happens with a famous screenwriter who has written a screenplay for many well-known dramas. Then he or she could add or change the story where appropriate. *Raknakkara*, for example, was written by Yingyot, who is one of the most well-known screenwriters in the country. Therefore, he could make some changes from the original text in the TV version and the director had to strictly follow his screenplay.

He elaborates the idea of feminism and gender equality in *Raknakkara* by presenting the concept of monogamy, which is anachronistic to the story. Yingyot added a new character to challenge polygamy in the nineteenth century. He was aware that monogamy was a Western idea that had not yet been practiced widely in Asian society, where polygamy was more accepted. Yet, he insisted on adding the topic to the drama, as it would strengthen the modernisation and appeal of the characters.

Moreover, he modernised female characters by having them speaking English⁴⁴, and interested in modern and Western knowledge, which are not mentioned in the novel. For example, one supporting character learns to swim, which was uncommon for Northern women in the nineteenth century; or a character learns to use a fountain pen and clothes iron. The role of women and idea of egalitarianism were elaborated to convey a central idea of the drama that talks about how people should adapt to changes and how the North should 'change' to be a part of Siam. In this situation, we can conclude that a person who has dominant power in shaping the story is the screenwriter, which has equal power to the director.

The situation is different if a screenwriter works as an employee in a production house. In this case, his or her power is reduced. Phensiri is an example as she works as a staff for a production house. Though she has played a role in choosing a novel, she needs to propose the project to the production house's owner and then the TV station committee. She might add more characters, change some

⁴⁴ In the original text, Manmuang cannot read English books, let alone speaking or writing. She received a book from her cousin, and the novel clearly stated that it is 'a thin book with beautiful illustrations and a language that no one can read' (Piyaphorn, 2016:189).

parts of the story from the novel for the TV version, but the person who has more power is the director. In Phensiri's case, the director is also the production house owner, so she had to change her screenplay upon his request and to help the shooting run smoothly. Comparing these two cases, the power of screenwriters depends on their reputation and status with the director.

It is not always the case that a director would have more power. For *Raknakkara* and *Ploenchimphalee*, the directors and production house owners were the same person and thus they are the most powerful people. For *Buangbanjathorn* and *Klinkasalong*, the directors were hired by production houses. Atthaphorn, the director of *Buangbanjathorn*, had very little involvement in the adaptation from novel to TV drama. The screenplay was written and approved by the production house and he was not supposed to make any changes unless necessary. He referred to the screenplay as a 'bible' that he should follow.

According to the interview, the director and screenwriters do not have full power in the production process. It depends on their status and relation with the production house, which has higher power in decision making and shapes the story.

2.8.3 How the Royalist Nationalist Historiography shapes their thought

From the interview, it is noticeable that RNH has dominated their thoughts. Piyaphorn wrote her novel based on the Siam-was-never-colonised discourse and her novel supports the internal colonisation. In interview, she emphasised the idea of 'unavoidable changes' which are important for a state to survive from Western imperialism and the idea of change in her novel means the Siamese administrative reformation. Therefore, Piyaphorn created a main male character to stand for a new world:

I created this character to be educated as a representative of the new world. He stands for someone who has been abroad and knows other countries. So, he wants his own country to change and wants to be a part of Siam...He sees the world and realises that if his state wants to survive, it has to be united with Siam (Piyaphorn, 2018, interview).

Apart from the Siam-was-never-colonised premise, Piyaphorn makes use of hero/heroine who sacrifice their lives for the nation. Her inspirations are the princesses Suphankanlaya⁴⁵ and Dara Rasami⁴⁶. The life of Dara Rasami became the main inspiration because it took place during the Siamese administrative reform.

⁴⁵ A 16th-century Siamese princess and older sister of King Naresuan, who was Queen Consort of King Bayinnaung of Burma.

⁴⁶ A princess of Chiang Mai and the Princess Consort of King Chulalongkorn, King Rama V of Siam.

She claims that she wanted to tell stories of women who sacrificed their lives for the nation more than an intention to talk about the internal colonisation in the North.

In many Thai historical dramas, Burma has been depicted as the traditional enemy. This resulted from the chronicles of wars between Burma and Siam in Prince Damrong's⁴⁷ book *Thai Rop Phama* that has influenced many other Thai textbooks and historical writing (I elaborate on this with the RNH in Chapter 3.1). Sunait Chutintaranond, a Thai scholar, expert in Thai and Burmese history, stated that the Ayutthaya chronicles did not seriously consider wars against the Burmese as being more important than other historical events. It was not until the sacking of Ayutthaya in 1767 that Siamese leaders realised the hazard of the Burmese and they rewrote the past to depict the Burmese as the nation's enemy. Later, chronicles of the Bangkok era expressed their antagonism towards the Burmese (Sunait, 1992:92). According to Sunait, this national history gave birth to modern Thai historical writing. In this framework, the Burmese are characterised as an important enemy and Damrong's book had expressed hostility towards the Burmese since then (Sunait, 1992:95-95). Accordingly, interviews have shown that the animosity or negative views towards the Burmese is evident in these film makers' perception.

For these drama makers, Siamese internal colonisation was better than Burmese power. In *Raknakkara*, the king and queen of one fictional state could not manage to protect the country from Western colonisation. The king, in the drama, enjoys courtly life with young girls while the queen exercises her power in the court. This was the cause of its fall into British colonisation. Piyaphorn admitted that she 'imitated a situation that happened in Burma...I just wanted to write that it was a collapsed nation.' For Piyaphorn, Burma is a model of a nation that did not survive Western imperialism. This corresponds to the RNH narrative that Siam was the only one country that was never colonised. Yingyot has a similar view. He added that Piyaphorn's novel is about Chulalongkorn's diplomatic strategy in contrast to Burmese strategy. He said that 'Muangman⁴⁸ is inflexible with the British, that is why it was destroyed. They treated them like an enemy while Siam treated them like a friend.' For these producers, the Siamese king was more knowledgeable and capable of diplomatic tactics to deal with the West.

The negative view towards Burma is also expressed in *Buangbanjathorn* which illustrates political unrest in Burma during the second world war. The director, Atthaphorn, stated that the drama 'was based on Burmese political situations during the time of Aung San Suu Kyi's father. There was a drastic change in that country,

⁴⁷ a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn

⁴⁸ A fictional state representing Burma

with massacre and execution of royal family members.' I was interested in their language use when these people talk about Burma. The words such as 'collapsed nation,' 'inflexible,' 'destroyed,' 'massacre' ⁴⁹ signify their negative view towards the situation in Burma. To these producers, Burma is associated with political problems while Siam/Thailand is depicted as peaceable.

Moreover, these drama makers also express the idea of irredentism in these dramas. For example, the ethnic Tai people in Keng Tung (a state in Burma) are considered as 'Thai.' Sutthiphan states that she used Keng Tung costume in the drama because it used to be held under Siamese power and had historical relations with Siam. This point suggests that these drama makers formulate their knowledge of the North from the concept of greater Thai nation which believes that other ethnic Tai are also Thais. According to this information, RNH heavily influenced them in their narratives of history and relation to other countries especially Burma.

2.8.4 How these drama makers view the North

Due to the rise of regional culture in TV, these drama makers aimed to create dramas with high quality production and accurate presentation of culture and history. One of the obvious developments is the presentation of Northern Thai dialect, meaning to be more natural and realistic than prior dramas.

For *Raknakkara*, the director and screenwriter agreed that actors need to speak in Northern dialect to make the dramas appear 'realistic.' The drama set a new trend for TV dramas with a Northern Thai focus, and in that actors spoke in the Northern dialect (with standard Thai subtitles shown). This influenced other dramas, such as *Klinkasalong*, to follow this standard. Yingyot shared that he really liked the Northern dialect and the production team had put much effort to train actors.

Once we decided to make a drama about Lanna, they must speak Lanna dialect...I believe that Lanna dialect is beautiful. This beauty of language must be presented, and everything must be correct (Yingyot, 2018, interview).

Though *Raknakkara* uses Northern Thai dialect, *Ploengchimpalee* and *Buangbanjathorn* use standard Thai. Phensiri stated that she wanted the drama to be understandable for people in general. The use of subtitles is not suitable for Thai TV audiences, and it was not possible to train the actors in a limited time. For her, presenting Northern culture was more important than speaking the dialect.

If actors cannot speak it correctly, I think it is offensive and disrespectful to Northern Thai culture. So, we would better show the northern culture

⁴⁹ ชาติล้มสลาย, แข็ง, บรรลัย, การฆ่าล้างเผ่าพันธุ์

through something else such as belief, culture, tradition (Phensiri, 2018, interview).

Another aspect of cultural presentation is costume. Wasin and Sutthiphan viewed their roles as important because they had created a good standard for traditional costumes in TV drama. These replaced the stereotypical Northern Thai costumes of earlier TV dramas, which they considered inaccurate and ridiculous. The popularity of these dramas had also promoted tourism in the northern provinces as well as their textile business. After this drama aired, Wasin got an opportunity to work for *Klinkasalong* and other dramas with Northern Thai themes. So, it has become a new standard for TV dramas to pay more attention to costume design and cultural accuracy, and it shows that regional culture is more accepted.

Next, these drama makers often mention Northern women, and they are presented in typical stereotypes. The first stereotype of Northern Thai women is physical beauty. *Ploengchimpalee* explicitly portrayed this stereotype. Phensiri stated that Northern women are often symbolised as a 'wild orchid' which represents natural beauty and Northern identity. For Phensiri, Northern Thailand is represented by its beautiful dance, and beautiful women who are kind and gentle (Phensiri, 2018, interview).

Phensiri viewed this as a classic and static characteristic, and to the extent that she cannot make them appear as something else. For example, in the original text, the main female character is not as submissive as female characters in the past. However, when adapted to TV drama, she had to stick on a concept of beauty of Northern women. 'I could not make Northern women strong and aggressive like women from the South. They have their kind of gentleness.' It is a stereotype and essentialisation of women according to the region. Northern women are usually presented as gentle while women, or people in general, from the south are depicted as tougher. This is resulting from a political relationship between Siam and these regions. The North is a non-threatening Other that Siam could fully unite with whereas the South has been more aggressive as seen in the insurgency in three Southern border provinces.

This stereotype is also found in Yingyot's interview. Before *Raknakkara*, he wrote a screenplay for another drama with a Northern Thai focus and helped the director choose the main female actor that corresponded to the Northern female stereotype. He stated that, she fit very well into this role and perfectly represented Northern Thai women because 'she is beautiful and so sweet. Her manner, her opinion, and her behaviour are just right' (Yingyot, 2018). This fixed stereotype of Northern women also limits the presentation of Northern women in the realm of

culture. For example, in the original text of *Ploengchimpalee*, the main female character works as a teacher. However, Phensiri decided to change this part because she saw it beyond being a *nang-ek* and she wanted her to be with arts and cultures (Phensiri, 2018). At this point, we can see that these drama makers associated Northern Thai women with fixed stereotypes which are physical beauty and local culture.

Apart from attention to Northern women, the landscape is also in fixed stereotype. The beautiful landscape of the North has been a setting and background for many novels and dramas. According to Phensiri, Thai TV drama loves the North because of its beautiful locations:

It has beautiful scenery. When a drama was on air, the audience felt like they were traveling to the North. The North and Northeast have different geography, but the North is more completed with flowers, mountains, waterfall, temples, arts, and culture (Phensiri, 2018, interview).

According to Yingyot, Thai TV production prefers the North not only because it has charming, romantic places but also the cost of production is cheaper compared to the South. The North for these drama makers is a place with beautiful scenery, fixed and frozen in time. When a new drama is made, they would search for unseen places, unfamiliar views, or uncommon tourist sites to present the exoticness and uniqueness of the North. These people were looking for a place that was untouched by urban lifestyles because they perceived the North as a fantasy, remaining static and unchanged through time.

The last stereotype of the North is its culture. Phensiri stated that the North is best represented through performances because they are unique and distinguishable to the eyes of people from other regions. Likewise, Atthaphorn wanted to present Keng Tung (Shan) culture and its traditional dance in *Buangbanjathorn*. He told in the interview that he hardly saw Keng Tung culture on screen, so he put the traditional dance in a scene even though it was not mentioned in the story because they looked strange to him. Therefore, these drama makers tend to view the North with stereotypes such as language, women, landscape and culture. These representations were aimed to create a fascinating visual presentation that would be attractive to general audiences. The North, according to these drama makers is an exotic, tempting, unique culture distinguishable from central Thai yet harmoniously coexists with Thai national identities. While the production and presentation of Northern Thai culture in TV dramas has improved, they consistently restate the concept and framework of the Thai RNH. This attributes the North with a non-threatening Otherness, which can then be combined as part of constructing Thai nation.

Chapter 3

History and Nation

3.1 Combination with the West

The relationship between Thailand and the West is ambiguous and complicated. That the modern Thai nation is comprised of many Western elements which are the products of Western imperialism has been investigated by many scholars in the Thai studies field (see chapter 1). However, these ongoing debates sit in contrast to the master narrative of the country, which regards the West as an enemy of the nation. This powerful narrative is rooted in a specific kind of history which lies at the foundation of the Thai nation as mentioned in chapter 1, and leads to other aspects of combination that this thesis goes on to propose in the following chapters. Though scholars have studied the complicated relationship between Thailand and the West, the depiction of the West in relation to regional identity in TV dramas as an element of nation-building has been overlooked. This chapter thus aims to investigate the construction of the Thai nation as combination with the West and by investigating to historical representations of Siam and the North. In order to understand the depiction of the West in Thai TV drama, first we must look back to the foundation of a specific Thai historiography, known as Royalist Nationalist Historiography.

3.1.1 Royalist Nationalist Historiography

3.1.1.1 definition and problems

Thai Royalist Nationalist Historiography (RNH) is a master narrative for most stories concerning Thai nation. It revolves around a narrative of Western imperialism and the country's independence, and how this combination is active in developing a paradigm of Thai nationalism. This section will explain why RNH is so important in Thai historiography, and how it affects depictions of Thai nation.

RNH is a specific narrative focusing on the roles of the monarch. Some academics term it differently. For example, Nidhi argues that the writing of Thai history has relied on Prince Damrong Rajanubhab's school. As a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn, Damrong (1862-1943) contributed many works on Thai history, his most influential being '*Thai Rop Phama*'⁵⁰ (ไทยรบพม่า Thai Fought Burma), which

⁵⁰ A book written in 1917 which systematically depicted the Burmese as an enemy of the Thai nation. The book deals principally with the wars between the two rival kingdoms (Sunait, 1992:96).

chronicles the wars between Thailand and the Burmese. It focused on kings as heroes and the progenitors of the modern nation-state. Nidhi argued that the writing of Thai history that followed this book initiated a style he called Prince Damrong's school of history which 'dominated the approach to Thai history, focused on events as the outcome of the actions of great figures and paid no attention to society, economy, or culture. They saw no value in history but a tool for inducing nationalism. These historians used nationalism, which was a recent idea, to explain the motivation of people in the past' (cited in Baker, 2005:362-363). With this historiography, no space is left for different angles on Thailand's past.

Thongchai Winichakul (1994) contends that this most powerful theme of Thai history emerged from the early twentieth century onwards, becoming one of the most significant instruments in the identification of Thai nationhood (Thongchai, 1994:163). He calls this specific kind of history 'Royal-nationalism', which refers to the politics, concepts, and beliefs of Siamese elites after the 1893 Paknam Crisis or Franco-Siamese Conflict. This historiography has adapted over time and in response to various challenges, so as to stay firmly at the core of Thai history. It is grounded within two discourses which are, the 'lost territories' and country reform, during the reign of Chulalongkorn (Thongchai, 2016b: (13)-(17)). Therefore, it is 'a nationalism defined by the loyalty to the monarchy and being Thai is equated with being royalist' and thus reinforcing the power of the monarch and elites. Whereas in many countries, nationalism and anti-colonial struggle weakened the power of elites, in Siam the power of the ruling elite was strengthened (Thongchai, 2008:584). Similarly, Jack Fong refers to a 'sacred nationalism', which reinforces the power of the king and his institution. This mode of narrative attends to primordial themes and sacralises nation as rooted in a glorious past, showing the monarch as a transcendental figure above and beyond politics (Fong, 2009:674).

RNH is the foundation of a specific nationalism in Thailand, which is different from the concept of nationalism as understood in many western countries. The movement towards nationalism in Thailand was promulgated by those in power (the monarchy or the military government). Therefore, it is regarded as an 'official nationalism.' According to Anderson, 'official nationalisms is a process developed by dynastic power after and in reaction to the popular national movements widely practiced in Europe since the 1820s' (Anderson, 2016:86). In Thailand, nationalism was fuelled by the monarch. Chulalongkorn used diplomatic strategies to shield his country from Western imperialism with his prime interest being to centralise royal government, eliminate semi-autonomous tributary states and promote economic development along colonial lines (Anderson, 2016:99-100). Similarly, Chai-anan Samudavanija sees that the rise to the modern nation-state in Thailand is non-liberal

and based on 'the ideological enthronement of the nation-state in Thailand as being between the King and the bureaucratic elite.' So, the nation-state was only 'a technical and administrative instrument of the regime' and there was no need to build a national identity because the identity of state was inseparable from the monarchy (Chai-anan, 2002:50).

RNH problematises Thai historical writing because it dominates how people think and understand the history of their nation. It controls how people imagine the past as well as understand contemporary situations. This strong narrative is sacred to the Thai nation and thus criticism or reinterpretation of it is very rare in Thai society. In order to gain a more profound understanding of it, it is important to illuminate the origins of where this historiography is generated.

3.1.1.2 Boundary and Mandala

The paradigm of the RNH uses nationalism as a modern concept to explain situations in the past. The Thai nation's independence is at the apex of Thai national pride as the country is believed to have never been colonised. This is what Thongchai terms as the 'Siam-was-never-colonised' narrative. This kind of history usually relies on national crises to build nationalistic sentiment among Thai citizens. The most influential is the 1893 Paknam Crisis, also known as the Franco-Siamese Conflict, which gave birth to this narrative. However, before we understand the Paknam Crisis, first we need to know the concept of boundary in pre-modern societies.

Geographical boundary is a modern concept initiated by Western imperialism. Prior, independent states and kingdoms in the region lived under the rules of protection and overlordship. Thongchai's research on the making of Siam's Geobody explicitly discusses how the pre-modern concept of boundary in Siam meant a limit without a clear-cut edge or sense of division. Pre-modern boundary was not determined or sanctioned by the central authority. Rather, it was determined by the extent of area it could protect so there were political-territorial patches with a lot of blank space in between. A kingdom extended to area over which their power could be exercised. The political sphere could be mapped only by power relationships, not by territorial integrity (Thongchai, 1994:75,79). Therefore, what was important for pre-modern society was power relationship between states which leant an idea of sovereignty, which was different from the one known in relation to modern concepts of nation.

The relationship among several major kingdoms and their tributary kingdoms lay in networks of hierarchical lordship. These kingdoms had their own sovereignty

but operated by common recognition of a hierarchical world order. A tributary kingdom had to submit itself and show allegiance to the supreme overlord. Nevertheless, the overlord's power could expire if it was defied by its tributaries or challenged by another contending overlord (Thongchai, 1994:82). This scheme of power relations is known as mandala which O.W.Wolters describes as a;

...unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centres tended to look in all directions for security. Mandalas would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals (O.W. Wolters, cited in Thongchai, 1994:82).

Siam had followed this system of power relationships both with the superior and inferior kingdoms. Siam fell under Pax Sinica, a system established by China regarding unequal relationships between kingdoms. Through the power relationship between Siam and China, Siam had to send a mission of tribute payment to China until the ritual stopped after the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855 (Charnvit, 2016:2-3). Also, Siam, as well as many other kingdoms in Southeast Asia during the late eighteenth century such as the Inwa of Burma (14th -19th centuries) and the Hue of Vietnam (17th - 19th centuries), acted as powerful kingdoms in the region. These three kingdoms had gained high power over smaller such as like Laos, Chiang Mai (one of the Lanna states in North Thailand), and Hanthawaddy (Charnvit, 2016:15-16).

The Lanna kingdom, the area known today as North Thailand, included eight provinces; Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Phrae, Nan, and Mae Hong Son. The kingdom was seized by Burma in 1560 and held for the following 200 years. In the late eighteenth century, Lanna's leader, Chao Kawila asked for assistance from Siam to oust the Burmese overlords. After a victory, King Taksin of Siam appointed Chao Kawila and his six brothers as rulers of the Lanna kingdom (Woodhouse, 2009:34). Accordingly, Lanna turned to be a tributary state of Siam. However, this did not mean that it was under Siam's power. It was a mutual relationship in which Chiang Mai (the capital of Lanna) sent an annual tribute and military support to Siam in time of war, while Siam also depended on Lanna to guarantee the security of northern frontiers (Woodhouse, 2009:36). It was a political relationship loosely tied by hierarchical power, allegiance and protection. Moreover, a tributary relationship did not mean one kingdom fell under one overlord at a time. It could be shifting, fluid, and flexible between more than one overlord. Some small states were in share sovereignty between two or three kingdoms to balance power (Thongchai, 1994:84).

The idea of Western boundary was imported to the country via Western imperialism after the British won the first war against Burma in 1825 and the frontier between Siam and the southern part of Burma became a problem (Thongchai, 1994:63). This problem of boundary became more intense in the nineteenth century as Siam began to settle over the areas with overlapping powers, and that led to the Paknam Crisis conflict with the French over the boundary at the east of the Mekong River. The French proposed that the area on the east side of the river should be part of the French colony. In July 1893, the French pressured Siam by sending two gunboats to blockade the Chao Phraya River and the two armies opened fire. The French gave the ultimatum that Siam must withdraw from the east of Mekong area and pay two million francs to the French. Siam then needed to sign a new treaty with France in October 1893 (Terwiel, 2011:209-213).

3.1.2 The West as external threat

The Paknam Incident created the perception that the West was an external threat that destroyed national pride. Siam viewed this incident as 'the loss of territories' because it had to surrender and give the French some part of their vassal states. This belief became a great misery for Siamese rulers (Terwiel, 2011:213). This incident was dramatised again by the national humiliation discourse during military nationalism in the 1940s. This viewed the Paknam Crisis as symptomatic of Siam's inequality with the West and tried to place blame. Thus, France was viewed as a barbaric country and greedy coloniser, who took away Siamese land. The British were their 'two-faced' friend who abandoned Siam and refused to help in the Franco-Siamese Crisis (Strate, 2015:11,100).

Nevertheless, Siam's feeling towards the West before or during the Western imperialist period was different from the views found in narratives of RNH today. The Siamese elite admired and was fond of Western technology and knowledge and was aware of European power over China, which was the greatest power in the region at that time. Even the kings (Mongkut and Chulalongkorn) had shown their enthusiasm for western knowledge, civilisation and technological advance (Thongchai, 2011:25). In Thongchai's words, during the colonisation period, Siam was not threatened the way its neighbours were, and its independence was not in serious jeopardy. The negative view towards the West was constructed many years later or by the post-1893 experience (Thongchai, 2011:39).

While Thongchai sees the Paknam Crisis as the starting point, Shane Strate points out that the distaste towards the West was strengthened many decades later. According to Strate, the Paknam found full expression after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. This discourse became the basis of an irredentist

campaign that led to war with French Indo-China in 1941, so as to restore the 'lost territories' from France and regain national pride (Strate, 2015:6). I explore this topic in detail in Chapter 3.2.

After the Paknam Crisis, a new narrative was required to help Siamese people recover face after defeat and humiliation. According to many Thais, Siam's independence during Western imperialism, and the fact that Siam had become a modern nation, was Chulalongkorn's personal achievement (Stengs, 2009:19). RNH was used as a frame to redeem Chulalongkorn's legacy as a hero and wise monarch, who saved the country from European imperialism by defending the nation by sacrificing some territories in preserving overall independence of the nation. The King was praised for having 'sacrificed a finger in order to save the hand' (Strate, 2015:10-11). This became a master plot in Thai history; the country was invaded by an external force, but Siam survived because of their skilful monarch.

For Nidhi, the external threat discourse in Thailand was formed by three major events, defined by 'identity crisis' experienced by the Thai ruling elites. The first was the Thonburi - early Rattanakosin (Bangkok) period, following the fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese in 1767. The second period was the Paknam crisis in 1893. The third was the American era in 1957, or capitalist economic development, which saw the outbreak of communist insurgency and the government's alignment with the United States (cited in Jory, 2003). In these three events, Siam/Thailand was threatened by external forces, yet it was the monarch who was perceived to save the country's independence. The same narrative was used to explain the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 when the nation was threatened by Western globalisation and capitalism. This plot of the nation fighting with an external enemy has been repeatedly reproduced. Even in 2020, the Thai government's campaign to cope with the pandemic of Covid-19 still denotes the fighting of external enemy. The mobile application and website were launched after the partial cancellation of lockdown period for customers to check in and out of venues by scanning a QR code. Both platforms were named '*Thai Chana*' or Thai Victory, which implies Thai victory over the foreign disease. Thailand is trapped in the RNH narrative with every crisis thus viewed as a threat to the nation.

3.1.3 Marriage of a nation – a country reform and annexation of Lanna

Many Thais regarded reform as a way to fight against the West and praised the monarch who safeguarded the country from being colonised. The reform included the modernisation of the country, centralisation of the monarch's absolute power and administrative system of tributary states.

The annexation of the Lanna kingdom was a part of the reform. Siam claimed that it protected Lanna or northern states from being colonised by the British. The reform started with an Anglo-Siamese treaty in 1874. Siam felt that British timber companies in Chiang Mai (city in the north) were a colonial intrusion. When the Chiang Mai ruler became entangled in court cases and debts, Chulalongkorn saw it as Siam's opportunity to interfere in the business and the administration of Lanna. Siamese commissioners were sent to oversee the tributary state's government. This became a 'centralised pyramid of bureaucratic administration', replacing local lords with Siamese officers. Baker and Pasuk compare this structure with the colonial government in British India, as the local rulers were 'figureheads' while the true power was with Siam (Baker and Pasuk, 2017:53). In 1892, Siam introduced a provincial administration called the *thesaphiban* system. The highest position was the *thesaphiban* or royal resident commissioner. Officials from Bangkok were sent to rule over the region. It was governed under this system until 1933, when it then became the provinces under the Ministry of Interior (Penth, 1994:35-36).

Another strategy which Siam used as part of the reform was the marriage between two kingdoms. Prior to the reform of 1882, Chulalongkorn's half-brother asked Dara Rasami, the daughter of the Chiang Mai ruler (Inthawichayanon) to be a consort of Chulalongkorn (Woodhouse, 2009:75). In 1886, Princess Dara Rasami was sent to Bangkok and she was later promoted to the position of *Phraratchachaya* (the Princess Consort) (Sarassawadee, 2005:187). According to Woodhouse, her status was a symbol of allegiances to ensure that Lanna would be loyal to Siam. While in most cases, consorts were a 'gift' provided to the king by the noble families, such an offer by the king himself was an unusual case and partly arose from rumours of an offer of adoption from Queen Victoria to Dara Rasami. The marriage offer demonstrated the increasing pressures on northern territories being felt by Chulalongkorn in the 1880s (Woodhouse, 2009: 73-77).

Siam acted like an imperialist, colonising Lanna the vassal state, and by masking its colonial intention, presenting as a protector of these states from the British. Siam assumed that its vassals had been integral parts of the territorial state of Siam, while at the time Siam was not a unified country with integrated territorial sovereignty. So, it is an anachronistic narrative that is used to defend Siam of its internal colonisation or, in Thongchai's term, 'a euphemism for Siam's imperial conquests' and it is 'a narrative that would not only help them come to terms with the defeat and severe humiliation, but also justify their actions' (Thongchai, 2011:29-31).

3.1.4 Analysis of TV dramas

Among many historical dramas, *Raknakkara* (2017) has an outstanding plot because it is the only drama with a Northern Thai focus that set its story around the theme of Western imperialism and Siam's internal colonisation. It is based on the politics between northern states and Siam. The main conflict featured in this drama is western colonisation and the formation of Thailand as a nation-state. It is a historical drama that sets its story in three fictional northern states – Chiang Phrakham, Chiang Ngern, and Muang Man. The story takes place around the late nineteenth century when western imperialism had expanded its power in the region. Chiang Phrakham willingly unites with Siam as they will be protected from foreign colonisation. Chiang Ngern, on the contrary, wants to be an independent state yet they are on the brink of crisis. As a traditional tributary state, it is under pressure from both Siam and Muang Man (representing Burma) who want to annex Chiang Ngern as a part of their territories. The ruler of Chiang Ngern uses political tactics to balance power between these two overlords by sending one daughter to marry Muang Man's ruler (as a consort) and another daughter to marry Chiang Phrakham's prince (which is under Siam). Apart from a historical and political theme, *Raknakkara* also revolves around romances and tragedy. In the end, Chiang Ngern's mission for independence fails. Muang Man is defeated by the British. Chiang Phrakham and Siam assume that Chiang Ngern has always been a part of Siam. Chiang Ngern's ruler and his son want to take revenge on Chiang Phrakham for dismantling the plan. Unfortunately, the daughter who marries Chiang Phrakham's prince sacrifices her life to save her husband's and for the sake of the nation. Her death ends the conflict. Chiang Ngern and Chiang Phrakham are then fully integrated within Siam's boundary.

In the following section, I analyse scenes from two episodes of *Raknakkara* by using its visual presentation and dialogue as a text for analysis. The first aspect of combination that I will demonstrate in this chapter is a combination of Thai and western elements in nation-building.

3.1.4.1 The West as destroyer of a modern Thai nation

These three continuing scenes from the first episode show the coming of western imperialism and how people in these states cope with the corresponding threats. According to the drama, there are two options to fight against the west. The first is to be at war to protect their kingdom. The second is to use diplomatic strategy by uniting with Siam, which will protect them from being colonised, and also lead to progress and modernisation.

In the first episode, the drama introduces the main male character. His name is Sukkawong. He is a son of the former king and nephew of the present king of Chiang Phrakham. Sukkawong has graduated from a university in Singapore and spent some years working in Bangkok. On the day of his return, he visits his father's cemetery with his servant, Inthorn, and talks about a mission that he plans to complete.

Scene 1: at Chiang Phrakham



Figure 11 Sukkawong and Inthorn in a monastery area that stores the late king's relics (*Raknakkara*, ep 1)

Sukkawong is sitting in a monastery in front of a pagoda which stores his father's relics. The area is surrounded by big shady trees and moss, giving a calm and peaceful ambience. Joyful traditional music from the previous scene slows down and changes to a soft, slow instrumental song. A camera shows a medium shot of Sukkawong and Inthorn, with a servant behind them prostrated on the ground. Then a camera uses close-up shots when they speak.

Inthorn: It's unfortunate that your father passed away. Otherwise, he would be very proud to see you return to Chiang Phrakam.

Sukkawong: Not yet Inthorn. I can make my Dad proud of me once I complete the mission he told me to do. First, make a peaceful kingdom. Second, people in the kingdom should live happily and peacefully. Third, I must not let *farang* (foreigners) seize our land. And fourth, all my relatives, which means every state, must be united. None of them will be split off or separated from one another.

Scene 2: at Chiang Ngern

The king, Saen-inta, and his brother, Singkham, are discussing the situation, how the nearby states deal with western imperialists colonising the region.



Figure 12 King Saen-inta and his brother, Singkham, talk about the West in a palace hall (*Raknakkara*, ep 1)

From the previous scene, the music suddenly changes to a faster beat of instrumental music. An establishing shot shows a landscape of a city, with a bridge across the moat to the entrance gate and a brick wall. A camera cranes down, showing the rooves of many houses behind a wall in a thick forest. It then cranes forward and we hear a voice of Singkham. Then a camera shows a medium shot of Saen-inta sitting on a bench facing towards a camera and Singkham sitting on another bench on the right, facing towards him. A few officers and servants are sitting on the floor. While they talk, there are intercuts showing a young prince (Normuang) practicing a sword fight with a few servants. He is half-naked with tattoos, fighting arrogantly and conceitedly. Other intercut shots show female characters who are princesses and queen of the state.

Singkham: Let's see how Muang Phraek and Chiang Nan have freed themselves. They live happily, peacefully, and independently. If we live without independence, it is like a body without a soul.

Saen-inta: But Siamese reform will unite all the northern states, and we will be safe from the West.

Singkham: What is the difference between being under Siamese power and being colonised by '*kulakhao*' (white foreigners)?

An officer: *Kulakhao* colonise because they want our natural resources such as forest and precious stones that are abundant in our land. But is that all they want?

Saen-inta: That's right, Singkham. We are afraid of the British, and also the French. If we are not united with Siam, then how about Muang Man?

Singkham: Neither Muang Man nor Siam. Chiang Ngern needs no one!

Singkham suddenly gets sick and faints. Saen-inta and the servants quickly run to him. (He dies in the following scene).

Scene 3: at Chiang Phrakham

A camera cuts to the next scene. Sukkawong comes inside a palace to greet his grandmother. Then, they talk about the British man who has come with him. His grandmother does not like him because she regards westerners as alien and inferior.



Figure 13 Sukkawong and his grandmother in the palace (*Raknakkara*, ep 1)

The scene begins with a slow, soft tune of traditional music played by string instrument. Sukkawong sits on the floor while his grandmother sits on a bench. He greets his grandmother with a gesture of high respect by giving a 'krab'⁵¹ on her lap. They are sitting at a terrace with a servant sitting nearby. Then they walk along the terrace, continuing their conversation.

Grandmother: God bless you. I have waited for a long time. I'm afraid you would not return home forever.

Sukkawong: Chiang Phrakham is the place where I born, and I shall die here. Why wouldn't I return?

Grandmother: I wonder why you brought that *farang* with you. You act like his friend and treat him as if he has the same status as us.

⁵¹ Similar to 'wa' (ไหว้) but suggesting more polite and respectful action. Krab means to conjoin hands together in a prayer position and prostrate. It is used to pay respect to the senior people or Buddhist monks.

Sukkawong: I have to work with him. Nowadays, we cannot avoid being in contact with these people. I need to make sure that people in this state are aware and well-prepared so that there will be the least difficulty among us.

Sukkawong and his grandmother walk along a corridor, a servant is following behind. Camera cranes down to show an extreme long shot of three characters.

Sukkawong: The world has changed, Grandma. We can no longer hide from their sights. We must confront them and admit that we are disadvantaged.

Grandmother: You mean we need to surrender?

Sukkawong: I know that our relationship with them is not on a smooth path, but we must take a risk. I promise that I will be careful. Our relatives, family, and our lands are the things that I must protect, take care, and preserve. You can trust me.

According to these three scenes, the West is presented as a threat to the nation. The negative perception towards the West is expressed through language. There are many different terms used to refer to the West, ranging from the most disrespectful to a neutral term, which I will list them below. The way the drama addresses this is the combination of Thais' perspectives towards the West, and the way these signify attitudes constructed via the RNH.

The first term mentioned in the dialogue is '*farang*' (ฝรั่ง) which means the West, western people, and western derived things. According to Pattana Kitiarsa, the word '*farang*' was borrowed from Muslim Persian and Indian traders during the Ayutthaya period when it was used to refer to the Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to visit Siam in significant numbers. Thai dictionaries now define *farang* as 'a generic Thai word for white foreigners/Caucasians.' People of African descent and come from Western countries, such as the African-Americans that came to Thailand during the Vietnam War, are occasionally referred to as *farang dam* (black *farang*). The term derives from Frank, originally referred to a Germanic-speaking people in the region of modern France which was widely used in early medieval Egypt, Greece and other Mediterranean areas to refer to western Europeans in general. Frank later became Frenghi used by the Indians to address the Portuguese (Pattana, 2010:60-61).

Farang is also a term used to refer to Otherness. In order to define what Thainess is, the un-Thai is identified as belonging to another nation. The term *farang* is then an adjective and noun referring to Western people without any specification of nationality, culture, ethnicity, language, or whatever (Thongchai, 1994:5). Pattana observes that *farang* is an expression of Siamese/Thai Occidentalism. It is 'a historically and culturally constructed way of knowing, dealing with, criticising, condemning, consuming and imagining the West as powerful and suspicious Other' (Pattana, 2010: 58). This means that Thais are aware of western power and regard

them as a threat, but they also exploit some western elements to modernise Thai identities.

In the drama, this term connotes a negative sense of distrust, disrespect, and discrimination. In Scene 1, Sukkawong talks about his mission to safeguard a kingdom from the West. He uses the word '*farang*' as he says, '*I must not let farang seize our land.*' *Farang* in this dialogue means the European imperialist, especially the French and British empire that invaded Southeast Asia at that time. However, the drama uses a generic term to label them as greedy coloniser wanting to take over other kingdoms. Also, in Scene 3, the grandmother regards the westerner as alien and inferior as she says '*I wonder why you brought that farang with you. You act like his friend and treat him as if he was in the same status with us.*' Accordingly, the West is a greedy coloniser and low class being that should be avoided. This narrative reflects how RNH views the West with distaste and suspicion. The term *farang* is repeated constantly to remind the audience of the colonial atmosphere and also hints at Siamese independence.

In Scene 2, another term to address the West is '*kulakhao*' (กุลชาขาว). '*Kula*' is a word that northern and north-eastern people called any foreigner in general, and '*khao*' literally means white. *Kula* is one of the Shan ethnic groups from Burma. They were nomadic traders who moved by caravan. *Kula* travelled for trading in the area which is now the north and northeast of Thailand. During the imperialist period, these people became British subjects protected by British law to travel and trade freely. People in the northern area often uses the generic term *kula* for any mobilising foreigners or wanderers, while adding racist terms to distinguish their physical characteristics. For example, they called the European '*kulakhao*' (white *kula*) and the Indian '*kula dam*' (black *kula*). However, this term connotes a negative meaning as it signifies racial discrimination and sets the speakers in a racially higher position (Ch3Thailand, 2017; Sujit, 2016; Isangate, 2017).

In Scene 2, Saen- Inta and Singkham (Chiang Ngern's ruler and his brother) are discussing whether they should unite with Siam or surrender to the West. The king chooses a neutral term, referring to the West as '*moo tawantok*' (หมู่อะวันตก the Western folks) but his brother, whom the drama presents as intensely conservative uses '*kulakhao*', exhibiting strong distaste. This term is then repeated by an officer who describes how western colonisation will absorb natural resources from the kingdom. *Kulakhao* is a northern Thai version of *farang*, because it also suggests general dislike of foreigners while situating themselves as superior. The only difference is that Lanna people were less familiar than Siamese people with Westerners, so they did not have a specific term to address the West. Nevertheless,

these two terms are used to strengthen the perspective derived from the RNH in which the West is viewed as a threat.

However, while the drama shows the West as a threat, it also hints toward a combination of admiration within this evident disrespect. In Scene 3, after the princess mother calls the West '*farang*', Sukkawong uses another term to convince her that the West is useful for their future. He says, '*I have to work with him. Nowadays, we cannot avoid contact with these people.*' In this sentence, he chooses a more neutral word '*puak khao*' (พวกขาว) which literary means them or they, who are white. His use of a neutral term suggests positive attitudes. In the following conversation, Sukkawong talks about the coming of the cosmopolitan modern world insisting that the traditional world is changing. His dialogue stresses that Westerners are key sources of knowledge that he must learn from. From these scenes, word choices reflect the discourse and narrative found in the RNH. They illustrate that Thailand and the West are in a complex relationship. This dialogue reuses the same narratives that the West is a national threat, yet Siam must learn from them in order to survive from colonisation. The strategy claimed by many Thai historians, as wisely employed by the Siamese monarch.

3.1.4.2 The West as a builder of modern Thai nation

The idea of 'the West as a builder of a modern Thai nation' is presented through the main male character. According to the historical background of the RNH, Siam held a distaste for the West, but the Siamese elites were fond of Western knowledge and cultural materials. This perspective manifests in the characterisation of Sukkawong. His personality, characteristics, as well as contribution to the northern states in the drama represent King Chulalongkorn of Siam who is a Westernised, modernised king whose skilful diplomatic strategy deterred Western imperialism.

Sukkawong's first feature of westernisation is his educational background. As we learn, he graduated from a university in Singapore. His father, who was a king of the northern state, sent him to study in Siam where he had a chance to follow the king to Singapore and then studied there. After graduating, he worked in Siam before returning to his hometown. His background is made to be parallel with Chulalongkorn's first visit abroad. The story in this drama takes place in 1884. Chulalongkorn's visit to British Singapore and Dutch Java was in 1871. The original text mentioned that he went with a Siamese officer, who was in a group of Siamese elites who followed Chulalongkorn to Singapore (Piyaphorn, 2016:28). When Chulalongkorn was in Singapore and Java, he visited many modern institutions, like schools, postal and telegraph offices, hospitals and railway stations, which stimulated his desire to modernise his kingdom (Stengs, 2009:69). Similarly,

Sukkawong is returning home with the same ambition to modernise his kingdom and educate people so that they will not be taken advantage of by the West.

However, his educational background is anachronistic and not possible in reality. According to Tanet Charoenmuang, well-known Thai scholar of Lanna culture and history, historical records show that there were not any royal family members of tributary states who had a chance to study abroad. The only prince who was sent abroad was the son of King Kaew Nawarat, the last king of the Lanna kingdom, and he studied in Burma (Tanet, 2017). This created a controversy between Tanet and Piyaphorn, the author of *Raknakkara*, who I interviewed in Thailand. Piyaphorn claims that she was aware of this historical fact, yet she did not want to make her character study in Burma, but rather wanted to make him a man 'who had seen the world' (Piyaphorn, 2018, interview). So, it can be assumed that this character is created to serve a particular function in the novel (and also TV drama), to appear as a moderniser of the kingdom despite contradicting historical facts.

Apart from a Western educational background, Sukkawong is a 'civilised' man. In the following scenes, the audience gradually learns he is knowledgeable of western culture and way of life. He dresses in a western outfit (which I discuss in detail on the issue of hybridised costume in Chapter 4.2). He reads English books, has English friends, and is fond of western goods such as perfume, iron, fountain pens, and he knows how to eat and cook western food as he teaches one princess to bake a cake. These elements suggest a westernised and modernised character. Besides which, Sukkawong's characteristics impress Bracken, his English friend, who respects and treats him equally as his only friend in the kingdom. This is similar to Chulalongkorn, whose similar characteristics also impressed his western hosts on his trip abroad. In Stengs's words, 'the king spoke in English, knew Western manners, appreciated Western art and craftsmanship, and had a keen interest in technological innovations' (Stengs, 2009:69). In this drama as well, Sukkawong is the only person in the kingdom capable of using English language and culture. These are features sought for by many Thais as part of a desirable modern Thai identity and Sukkawong is a model inspired by the Siamese king.

Moreover, he is represented as having diplomatic skills, a feature of Chulalongkorn and widely praised by many Thais. In these three scenes I have mentioned, Sukkawong is presented in sharp contrast to Normuang, a prince of Chiang Ngern. In Scene 2, when King Saen-Inta and his brother Singkham discuss Western colonisation, a camera uses parallel cutting to show Normuang practicing sword fighting with other soldiers. Normuang is shown as a brave, yet primitive warrior. He is half-naked, wearing only a piece of cloth around his legs like shorts.

His topless torso is tattooed, which was a cultural practice among men in the northern states, to show their strength and bravery (Figure 14). The depiction of Normuang as a warrior, together with a conversation between Saen-Inta and Singkham, suggests that this kingdom will make war with the West. It also implies their traditional way of thinking as they plan to fight with swords remaining unaware of western armed forces and technology. On the contrary, Sukkawong is shown as a man who fights with tactics and strategies of diplomacy. He does not mention fighting with the West but rather focusses on how to ‘work’ and ‘contact’ with the West. In a conversation with his grandmother, he states that *‘I need to make sure that people in this state are aware and well-prepared so that there will be the least disadvantage among us’* and *‘the world has changed, Grandma. We can no longer hide from their sights. We must confront them and admit that we are disadvantaged.’* This dialogue stresses the discourse from the RNH that Siam survived colonisation because of the monarch. Sukkawong is a medium to speak these words. He takes the role of moderniser as Chulalongkorn did for Siam.



Figure 14 Normuang practices traditional sword fighting (*Raknakkara*, ep 1)

Finally, his modernised and westernised features bring the kingdom to the future. As Sukkawong comes with the idea of change, the drama contrasts him with another character who refuses it. In Scene 2, Singkham is depicted as a conservative patriot who strongly believes in his own opinion. He refuses both options either to be united with Muang Man (representing Burma) or Siam. The death of Singkham foreshadows the end of Chiang Ngern State as they do not change with the world. In contrast, Sukkawong who is ready to ‘change’, can make his kingdom progress and survive western colonisation. According to this drama, the

northern state could remain independent because it has a modernised ruler. The western elements as depicted in the lead male character save the kingdom from the Western threat. It is Sukkawong, or, in other words, his westernised features that have contributed to the formation of a modern nation-state.

3.1.4.3 Marriage, internal-colonisation and demarcation of Siam

From the previous sections, the West is shown as both the destroyer and builder of the Thai nation. This section will investigate the idea of boundary, a Western-derived concept used in nation-building. Siam used geographical boundary to construct a modern nation-state, which meant the internal colonisation of its tributary states. In *Raknakkara*, internal colonisation is achieved through the annexation of northern states. Alongside this is marriage between royal family members of these states, which were claimed to protect the north from falling to be British colonies. The drama legitimises the Siamese colonial mission by combining pre-modern Thai and western concepts of nation together alternatively as if they were traditional thinking. One selected scene from *Raknakkara* clearly demonstrates the formulation of a nation by emphasising the sovereignty and boundary between Siam, northern independent states, and the British colony. In this scene, Chiang Ngern as an independent state is struggling between falling under the British empire, united with Siam, or isolating itself as an independent state. This event imitates the Siamese centralisation of power. In this section, I will investigate how the Western concept of nation is expressed through language and mise-en-scène. I go on aims to show how the West is used in the making of a boundary and the construction of a nation.

The following is a scene from episode 12, the final episode. It is a demarcation meeting about the territory of northern states. Attendants are representatives from Siam (a Bangkok prince), northern states (Normuang, a prince of Chiang Ngern; Sukkawong and Jakkham, two princes of Chiang Phrakham), and the British. These people are divided into two sides. On one side are Siam and Chiang Phrakham who think that all northern states should be united with Siam because they are related by blood and traditions, and they will be safe from western colonisation as a result. The other side is Chiang Ngern, backed by the British, who think that each northern state should be independent. This side argues that traditions and customs are not indications to prove that one state belongs to another. They are merely common practice in premodern society. The British supports Chiang Ngern (as the drama implies) because it hopes to seize the land later, once it is isolated from Siam's protection.

This scene starts with a master shot and high angle, showing a meeting room and all attendants around a rectangular table. There is one man taking minutes on the side of the table. He sits on a chair and works on a western-style desk. There is also another man who is a translator, who behind two British representatives. The meeting hall is decorated with Western style architecture such as arched window frames, staircasing, pillars and decorative cornices. Other furniture includes a bookshelf, wall lamps, flower stands, round table with figurine bronze lamp in Victorian style. On the table are teacups. When a camera pans around the room, we can see a table with English tea set at the back. A giant map is hung on a blackboard and right next to that board is a big globe. There is another map spread on the table. Medium and medium close-up shots are used to show each character speak. Most of the conversation is in English. Orchestral instrumental song is a music background. Music starts from a slow tune and then rises to higher amplitude, and faster beat (Figure 15).

British Official A: According to the map, it seems that Siam is intruding into the territory of an independent state of Chiang Ngern, your highness.

British Official B: Siam should step back and draw a clear borderline, and Britain will do the same on the west side.

A Bangkok prince: No independent state has ever existed between Siam and Muang Man. Chiang Ngern has long been under the kingdom of Siam. You can verify this with the Chiang Ngern ruler.

Normuang: Chiang Ngern is an independent state. In the name of the king of Chiang Ngern, I insist that we are free and independent.

A Bangkok prince: What you have just said implies your tendency towards a mutiny.

Sukkawong: Just explain this. If Chiang Ngern is independent, why Bangkok designates and gives credentials to the regent of Chiang Ngern and Chiang Mai? And why the princess of Chiang Ngern, who is also your sister, is residing with me in the governor's villa?

Normuang: My sister has to stay with you out of necessity and under tradition. Maenmuang has no choice. Just like my father and I, we have no choice but to follow tradition by giving a loyalty oath. This is a tradition of survival.

Sukkawong: We are relatives, made by blood. This whole region is one country.

Normuang: But I see that Chiang Mai and every kingdom in this area must be independent just like Chiang Ngern.

British Official A: We are not concerned about traditions and customs here. We would like Chiang Ngern to confirm whether or not they wish to be independent.

A camera cuts to a small scene break. A Bangkok prince, Sukkawong, and Jakkham walk into another room to discuss. They are angry with Normuang and think how they could defeat him. They refer to a secret plan to take over the power from Chiang Ngern's ruler. Then they go back to a meeting room.

A Bangkok prince: (stands up, and walks halfway around the table) I, in the name of the government of the kingdom of Siam, hereby confirm that lands in our custody are protected states and Chiang Ngern is one of them. All

government decisions must receive peer approval, be reported to the king of Siam, be given royal credentials and it is a must to attend a royalty oath ceremony.

Normuang: (stands up) That was your own claims. Right now, I, regent Normuang, representing the king of Chiang Ngern, announce that Chiang Ngern is an independent state and not under Siam's rule anymore.

Sukkawong: (stands up) Your claim is personal but not official in this meeting. You are no longer a regent of Chiang Ngern.

A Bangkok prince: (smiles and slowly take a letter out of an envelope, showing to everyone) The ruler of protectorate Chiang Ngern has just approved the designation of Chao Phrakham as a new regent and Boonsong as a commissioner.

(Conversations suddenly switch to central Thai and northern Thai.)

Normuang: No. Impossible. I don't believe it.

A Bangkok prince: Why it's impossible? Look. The evidence is here.

Normuang: No way. This seal is a fake one.

Sukkawong: How can it be fake when King Saen In-ta had stamped it himself. Look, Normuang. He appointed Chao Phrakham to be a regent and dismiss you from the position. You are no longer the regent of Chiang Ngern.

An intercut showing a flashback scene, which is a secret mission planned by Sukkawong and Siam. A group of soldiers seize power from Chiang Ngern's ruler, King Saen In-ta. He is sitting on a bench in a palace hall. His face shows that he is angry. All the servants prostrate on the floor. One of the seizers says 'Please be calm. You are still a king of Chiang Ngern. You and your son forced Siam to do so. Soon, you will realise that you made the right decision today.'

After this scene, Normuang tries to claim the independence of his state. He argues that it is a premodern tradition for an independent state to show respect to more than one overlords by claiming that two princesses from Chiang Ngern were sent off as a symbol of respect to two states – Chiang Phrakham (which is under Siam's rule) and Muangman (representing Burma). Bracken, one of the British representatives is the friend of Sukkawong. He is aware of the marriages between these states. Though he joins a meeting as a British representative, he prioritises his friendship over the profit of his own country. Therefore, he takes side with Siam by pretending that he has no clues about the political marriages between these three states. This makes Normuang's claim invalid, and he is caught as an insurgent. At the end of this scene, it seems that other two British representatives disagree with Siam's rule over Chiang Ngern. A conversation switches back to English.

British Official A: The British are suspicious about the story of a princess from Chiang Ngern. We believe she exists and will find her to prove it. If Chiang Ngern befriends both sides, it is common for an independent state

A Bangkok prince: Once your evidence is substantial, we shall go on with border demarcation, but now Chiang Ngern still is a protected state under the kingdom of Siam.

This is a long sequential scene, and it is a highlight of this episode and the whole drama because the meeting brings an end to the independent northern states. Since Normuang's reason is made to be invalid, Siam can occupy Chiang Ngern as a part of its territory and accordingly form its boundary of a nation.



Figure 15 a demarcation meeting over the dispute of boundary (*Raknakkara*, ep 12)

3.1.4.3.1 English as a means to build the Thai nation

The first aspect of the West that is obvious in this scene is the use of English as the main language in the conversation. Usually, Thai TV dramas speak central Thai language. This is regardless of the setting of the drama or nationality of characters. Even though a character is a person from other regions of the country or a foreigner, he or she will speak central Thai because it is understandable to most viewers. Many times, the drama makers let actors pronounce Thai incorrectly to pretend that they are westerners or Chinese. Speaking regional languages or English will require the adding of subtitles, which is unfamiliar to Thai TV viewers. *Raknakkara* is an unusual case as the drama makers wanted it to appear realistic. So, they use northern Thai language with subtitles in most scenes.

Even though the drama puts more emphasis on other vernacular such as northern Thai language, the language of power is central Thai and English. It is interesting to note that long English conversation is only found in some key scenes. In other scenes, even though a character is talking to a westerner, the drama permits actors to speak central Thai instead. For example, Sukkawong, who is a northern prince and speaks northern Thai language throughout the whole drama, talks to Bracken (his English friend) in central Thai all the time. English is used in other small

scenes when they have short greetings. Other than that, central Thai is used instead of English. English is avoided almost throughout the whole drama despite the drama makers wanting it to appear realistic. The main reason is not the actors' incapability of speaking English (which is clearly not the case) but because they are non-essential scenes. The above scene, on the contrary, is the climax of the drama because it is about the demarcation and the creation of Siam's boundary. English is used as main language because the drama producers want to create a realistic scene that imitates an international meeting. Even the architecture and decoration of the meeting room is designed to appear western producing a colonial atmosphere. English was a coloniser's language that came with the British colonisation, and thus a language of superior power. Therefore, debating in English signifies that they have equal power with the imperialist and their arguments are convincing. Moreover, the drama uses English to gain the validity of the conversation. Boundary and demarcation are products of colonialism, so they are discussed in the colonial language. This dialogue is not only spoken to the British representatives in the drama but delivers the message to international audiences beyond.

Apart from English, they also use central Thai in this scene to indicate that it is an official meeting whereas in most scenes northern dialect is spoken. In Thailand, while there are many regional dialects and vernaculars, central Thai is a print-language which means it is a formal language used in the bureaucracy. According to the ninth State Convention, all Thai citizens, including non-Thai-speaking groups, must study Thai language so that they be able to read and write. Everyone must consider that he is born Thai, so he naturally possesses Thai blood and talks Thai irrespective of birthplace or pronunciation (Barmé, 1993:155). The promotion of central Thai as the national language involved the ban on the use of region-based nomenclature for Thai groupings such as northern, northeastern and southern, in favour of Thai. This was assumed that language and ethnic differences could be eradicated or reduced. It caused central Thai, especially in its written form, to be the preeminent component of identity for those seeking to define and promote a national culture (Reynolds, 2002:8).

The creation of print-language is a product drawn from western concepts of nation. In Western European countries, print-language was necessary for constructing the modern nation-state. According to Anderson, print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness. People become aware that a million others were connected through that print-language and formed the embryo of the nationally imagined community. It builds an image of antiquity as well as creating language-of-power to be a politico-cultural eminence (Anderson, 2016:44). As an official language, a conversation in central Thai would hold superior power to those in

regional languages. In this scene, central Thai is used by the Bangkok prince who stands for the Thai monarch. Sukkawong and Jakkham, who are northern princes and speak northern Thai language throughout the drama, have to speak central Thai with the Bangkok prince. This implies that they conform to Siamese power through language.

The use of English and central Thai, in this situation, makes their discussion appear official and thus the official meeting verifies this narrative of history as truth. The only moment they turn back to northern Thai dialect is when Normuang rejects the argument by saying '*No. Impossible. I don't believe it*' and it is followed by a quarrel between him and Sukkawong. Normuang's disapproval of this 'official meeting' causes him to be expelled from the meeting room. His protest spoken in northern Thai dialect does not have any significance in the meeting as no one wants to listen. Accordingly, the drama exploits English and central Thai to form a nation. English, as a colonial language, and central Thai, as a print-language, are all products of the West and they are used to confirm the boundary of the nation.

3.1.4.3.2 Combination of pre-modern and Western concepts of nation

The next combination of the West is found in the concepts of nation as expressed in the dialogue. From the demarcation meeting in Episode 12, the drama presents mixed concepts of nation between pre-modern and modern, traditional Thai and western. The first concept that is stressed in this scene is the pre-modern based on collective identity, which is also known as ethnosymbolism. Anthony Smith sees that the essential element of a nation lies in the concept of ethnicity in what he called 'ethnie' or ethnic communities. Ethnie consists of a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific 'homeland,' and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (Smith, 1991:21).

This pre-modern concept of nation is stressed by Sukkawong who refers to the idea of blood and family relationship. A nation in his point of view is defined by people who are from shared backgrounds and ancestry as he says, '*we are relatives made by blood.*' He further uses marriage to support his argument by saying, '*your sister is residing with me in the governor's villa.*' This implies traditions and customs of pre-modern states in which women were used as signs of relationship and allegiance to unite one state with another. It is a tradition for tributary states to give their daughter to a king or overlord to guarantee loyalty. According to Reynolds, marriage and concubinage were ways of balancing power and securing the kingdom's perimeters. Vassal rulers seeking the protection of Siam would offer their female relatives to the monarch as tribute to pledge their loyalty and the king

received these women to exhibit his own and the kingdom's reproductive capacities (Reynolds, 2006:193-195). Another pre-modern signifier of nationhood is to give the loyalty oath to the monarchy and be under the power of the overlords. A dialogue by a Bangkok prince explicitly illustrates the belief that the northern state belongs to Siam because it has been under Bangkok's power;

...lands in our custody are protected states and Chiang Ngern is one of them. All government decisions must receive peer approval, be reported to the king of Siam, be given royal credentials and it is a must to attend a royalty oath ceremony.

Based on these statements, the Thai nation was formed by pre-existing elements such as bloodline, kinship, marriage, and loyalty to the overlords.

In this drama, the dispute over the northern state Chiang Ngern is based on its multiple sovereignty between two overlords. The drama brings back pre-modern hierarchical relationship to claim that it must belong to Siam. However, the pre-modern relationship is different from the modern understanding of nation-state. This kind of relationship did not guarantee conquering power of one overlord over one state nor did it confirm eternal allegiance. Power and loyalty could be shifting and flexible depending on power of the overlords. This multiple sovereignty was common for many tributary states and they were regarded as the frontier of several kingdoms, which means the realms of the overlords were overlapping (Thongchai, 1994:96).

In this scene, pre-modern concepts of nation are raised to legitimise Siam's internal colonisation. However, the drama uses Normuang to counter this claim by saying '*my sister has to stay with you out of necessity and under tradition. Maenmuang has no choice. Just like my father and I, we have no choice but follow a tradition by giving a loyalty oath. This is a tradition of survival.*' Normuang's statements remind us that pre-modern traditions are different from modern concepts of nation and thus should not be applied here. Therefore, he does not consider the marriage or kinship as proof of nationhood. The counterargument of the pre-modern concept is stressed again by the British representative who says that '*if Chiang Ngern befriends both sides, it is common for an independent state.*' Nevertheless, both arguments are finally made invalid and Siam can unite the northern state.

For modernist thinkers, a nation is not naturally formed by collective identities alone, but rather a result of a modern, industrialised society. Ernest Gellner states that nations resulted from modernity and industrialisation whereby universal literacy, mobility, individualism, political centralisation, and the need for educational infrastructure were required for the economic growth of industrial society (Gellner, 2006:106). For Anderson, a nation is imagined after the decline of religious community, dynastic realm, sacred language and the rise of print capitalism

(Anderson, 2016:13-22). Nation has finite boundaries and sovereignty and it is imagined as a community because the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson, 2016:6-7). In Montserrat Guibernau's term, a nation is a human group, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself. The idea of a nation with demarcated territory derives from nationalism which was created by concepts of equality, freedom, solidarity and especially popular sovereignty (Guibernau, 1996:45-47). This means nationalism engenders and concretises a nation, and it is similar to what Gellner says that 'nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (cited in Anderson, 2016:6).

Here we can see new concepts related to the modern nation that are individuality, demarcated territory, sovereignty and the right to rule itself that are not mentioned in pre-modern nations. These concepts are expressed in a dialogue when Normuang affirms the independence of his state and that '*we are free and independent.*' His claim has nothing to do with ethnic or pre-modern concepts but rather focuses on the idea of sovereignty over a territory. The drama's use of the word 'independence' is a western understanding of nation that is depicted on pre-modern relationships between vassal states. Thongchai argues that during the nineteenth century (the time the story takes place) the word 'independence' did not have equivalent Thai translation and it was different from two Thai words '*ekkarat*' (เอกราช) and '*itsaraphap*' (อิสรภาพ) which have become Thai translations of this word in the present day. *Ekkarat* and *itsaraphap* meant 'superior', supreme power of the monarch, but not independence. The meaning of these two words became equal to 'independence' only from the early twentieth century and it was the geo-body and the role of the map that takes part in generating new ideas, new values, and new culture, and used to represent nationhood to arouse nationalism (Thongchai, 1994:136-137). So, making Normuang speaks about independence here is very modern and anachronistic.

The clash of concepts is not only between characters but can be found within the same character as well. In this drama, it is not as simple as characters clearly divided into opposite sides in which one represents pre-modern and the other represents the modern concept. Rather, they keep mixing up both concepts and using them alternatively. For example, Sukkawong supports Siam's right to rule over an independent state by claiming its ethnic tie. Shortly afterwards, he quickly turns to the modern, Western idea of a nation by saying '*this whole region is one country*' while the concept of a country at that time meant only a space or unspecified spatial unit. At this point, a nation is not only a collective community between people who

shared ethnic roots or history. Instead, it is a finite area as he uses the word 'country.' As Thongchai argues, the idea of nation or *chat* which denotes common origin, cultural commonality, soil, and royal sanctity is combined with another word *prathet* (country) which was given new spatial definition by the geo-body (concretised by modern geography) to become synonymous. In Thai, a combined word *prathetchat* therefore is a mixing of traditional values and modern concrete embodiment (Thongchai, 1994:135). Sukkawong's use of a word 'country' reflects this combination as he mixes up both traditional and modern concepts of nation.

It is clear that the drama uses the concept of boundary to form a modern nation-state. The Bangkok prince, representing Siam, states that '*no independent state has ever existed between Siam and Muang Man. Chiang Ngern has long been under the kingdom of Siam.*' This is an anachronistic understanding of a nation presented in a historical drama when a concept of a boundary was not clear at that time. This is based on the assumption of the pre-existing boundary of Siam and a 'Siam-was-never-colonised' discourse which is derived from the RNH. This narrative is successfully created by assuming the northern state as a part of Siam's territory and ignoring the internal colonisation done. Even though Normuang and the British representatives argue that it is a common tradition to show respect to more than one overlord, the drama ignores this fact and presumes Siam's absolute power over the area.

Geographical maps and boundaries have become foundations for Thai historiography. A boundary is not a natural thing but rather constructed and determined by those who are in power. According to Thongchai, mapping was no longer merely a conceptual tool for spatial representation. It became a lethal instrument to concretise projected desire on the earth's surface. Siam's geo-body was created by the modern map and geographical knowledge that 'the role of the modern map did not record or represent the reality, yet it has concretised it' (Thongchai, 1994:129-130). It is the geographical map that is exploited in the 'lost territory' discourse and irredentism campaign by the military government during the 1940s. With a modern map, the monarch was revered as a hero, and the military junta created anachronistic maps to make a new narrative to convince the populace of its right to rule the country (Strate, 2015: 10) (see Chapter 3.2).

To conclude, the *Raknakkara* uses traditional practices of premodern vassal states to build the Thai nation but combines it with modern, western concept of boundary to verify the making of a geographical map. Characters refer to a pre-modern concept of nation by referring to ethnicity, race, kinship, marriage, and allegiance. At the same time, the nation-building in this drama relies on modern,

western concepts which are about independence, sovereignty, and a clearly demarcated boundary. This kind of thinking is a product of the RNH, which selectively uses the West to build the modern Thai nation and exercise the power over the tributary states through internal colonisation.

3.1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the West is one essential feature that is combined to form a modern Thai nation. The West is often perceived as threat or destroyer of the Thai nation. This perception is based on a master narrative and conventional Thai discourse that are rooted in the RNH. A selected Thai TV drama has exemplified that master narrative from RNH, and the West is selectively exploited to formulate the modern Thai nation and identities.

In *Raknakkara*, the negative perception towards the West is expressed through the use of language. *Farang* is a generalised term to stereotype without specifying races or nationalities, and it presents the West as greedy coloniser. Another term, *kulakhao* is also a generalisation of westerners, with some attributed racism by adding a word that specifies skin colour. These two terms demonstrate that a westerner is a destroyer of the nation and reminds the audience of the narrative of Siamese independence in the colonial atmosphere. While the drama shows the West as threat, the West helps constructing the modern Thai nation. This is expressed in the characterisation of the main male character who is westernised in many aspects such as his educational background, his characteristic as a civilised man, his diplomatic skill, and his view towards social changes. Thus, the drama implies that the only way to survive from Western colonisation is by learning from the West, which was the strategy claimed by many Thai historians as wisely done by the Siamese monarch.

The West is further exploited in Thai nation-building through the making of geographical boundary and the internal colonisation of its tributary states. The drama legitimises the Siamese colonial mission by combining pre-modern Thai and western concepts of nation together as if they are traditional thinking. The first aspect of the West is the use of language – English and central Thai – which makes the discussion in a selected scene appear official and thus the drama can verify the particular narrative of history as a truth. In other words, English, as a colonial language, and central Thai, as a print-language, are all products of the West and they are used to confirm the boundary of the nation and form a modern Thai nation.

Lastly, the combination with the West is found in the making of a geographical map. Thai nation, modern mapping and the idea of boundary are created from the

mixing of concepts between pre-modern and modern concepts. On the one hand, the Thai nation is comprised with the pre-modern concept of collective identities with pre-existing elements such as bloodline, kinship, marriage, and loyalty to overlords. On the other hand, the Thai nation is constructed from modern concepts of nation such as individuality, demarcated territory, sovereignty and the right to rule itself. According to examples from this drama, the making of the modern Thai nation is not successfully done without the combination of Thai and western features, concepts, or elements.

3.2 Combination of ethnicities

Siam used imperialist thinking to form the modern nation, which was expressed through the internal colonisation of Lanna and the creation of a modern geographical map. The idea of nation-state and boundary was elaborated during the 1940s through the irredentist campaign to regain the 'lost-territories.' Thailand was literally like an empire as it expanded to rule over other provinces in French Indochina and British Burma. Hypernationalism and the Thai-ification process were being encouraged by the military government through the annexation of territories. Moreover, people of different ethnic Tai groups in the area absorbed by the irredentists were identified as Thai citizens.

This perception continued even though the Thai empire terminated after World War II. While irredentism passed, the annexation of other Thai ethnicities did not vanish from the Thai perspective and constant reiterations act as a reminder of Thai empire. People of other Tai ethnicities who live within and outside of Thailand's border are still considered Thai or a part of the nation and this is reflected in contemporary TV dramas. These ethnic Tai groups are often evident in the narratives of nation-building which suggest that the Thai nation is not a homogenous nation but rather comprises many ethnicities. As Patrick Jory points out, Thailand was traditionally a multi-ethnic kingdom, which included ethnic Chinese, Lao, Khmers, Burmese, Mons, Malays, hill-tribe groups, and the dominant ethnic Thais. But Thai governments have commonly stressed the homogeneity of the people of Thailand. There has never been an official discourse on multiculturalism in Thailand and the predominant polity towards cultural diversity was assimilation, which aimed to integrate minority groups into a cohesive nation-state (Jory, 1999a:337). This chapter investigates this matter of the Thai nation as combination with other ethnicities. It does so by looking at products of imperialist thinking, such as presence of irredentism in Thai TV dramas.

3.2.1 The making of the Greater Thai nation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the origin of RNH was the Paknam Crisis, which gave birth to the modern map and boundary, and the 'lost-territories.' During the 1940s, the Thai nation expanded to become an empire, and this was known as the Greater Thai nation.

3.2.1.1 The irredentist campaign, national humiliation, and the ‘lost territories’ map

After the Paknam Crisis, Siam recovered from its loss with the narrative of the country’s reform led by Chulalongkorn which brought the country to modernisation and civilisation. However, Siamese people’s feeling towards the monarchy started to change in the next reign of Vajiravudh as criticism of the monarch increased due to the king’s expenditure. During 1919-23, Siam faced financial crisis which had cost the country massive amounts of revenue and foreign loans. While Vajiravudh had the power to change the nation’s financial policies and decree a measure that would have freed the Treasury, there is no evidence that the king even considered such a step (Terwiel, 2011:244-45). Finally, this led to the coup to topple the absolute monarchy, in the following reign of Prajadhipok. Prajadhipok’s reign was clouded with criticism and unrest, together with economic problems. This period marked the end of absolute monarchy and the rise of a new segment of urban elite who began to question the social and political system based on an absolute monarchy (Wyatt, 1982:234-235). A group of Siamese students abroad, calling themselves ‘The People’s Party,’ were sceptical of the class-conscious authoritarians in the country. This group was later joined by members of high-rank military men. In June 1932, the coup toppled the absolute monarchy without bloodshed. Prajadhipok went abroad and abdicated in 1935 (Wyatt, 1982:238,245).

The turning point of the nationalistic narrative was after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932. According to Strate, the ‘lost territories’ discourse was transformed to be the ‘National Humiliation’ discourse, which brought the Paknam Crisis to full expression (Strate, 2015:6). After Phibun became prime minister in 1938, the military government needed to legitimise its right to rule the country so the topic of ‘lost territories’ was restored with a new narrative. Prior to this, the Paknam crisis was more an agony of Chulalongkorn, and Siamese elites, having less impact on commoners’ day to day lives because the event mainly diminished royal prestige. The military created a new sense of historical memory by transforming the disgrace of the elite into a collective trauma that would bond citizens to the new state. In other words, the new narrative converted ‘royal shame into national agony’ (Strate, 2015:11-12).

‘National agony’ is created by through attention on a ‘chosen trauma.’ This then stands in collective memory. The making of collective memory, for Tanabe and Keyes, is also called ‘social memory’;

the processes of collective remembering and remembering together, in which people share memories of events, recalling them together or commemorating them, all the while reconstructing and reinterpreting

features of the past... social memory is imaginatively shared by a social group, such as a family or ethnic group, and provides a basis for its identity and an instrument for shaping ideas and emotions that affect the actions and practices of its members (Tanabe and Keyes, 2002:3).

While the RNH viewed the Franco-Siamese crisis as the monarch's legacy of saving the country from European imperialism, the irredentists saw it as an embarrassing defeat. Phibun's regime constructed this kind of collective memory to convince the public to support their actions. In order to do so, Phibun's government needed to concretise the memory by producing an anachronistic map, identifying areas ceded to French Indochina that had once been part of Thailand.

The publishing of the 'lost territories' map concretised the memory and urged strong nationalism and support from the public since the disputed spaces in the imagination of Thais were unclear. Even the Thai government at that time had difficulty identifying the territories it hoped to recover. The disputed areas were assumed to be part of the kingdom of Siam because nationalistic writings from the government made no distinction between sovereignty and suzerainty (Stowe, 1991:144). Besides, the areas of 'lost territories' were based on a person's interpretation. This is because the 'lost territories' are not a location, but a symbol commemorating the idea of National Humiliation (Strate, 2015:45).

Nevertheless, the government had visualised the idea of loss into different versions of a map. One version of this map was published in a book entitled *Prawatisat Sakon* (A Universal History) written by Wichit Wathakan⁵², defining the lost territories surrendered to French Indochina. This book described Siam's defeat and chronicled France's expansion by dividing the nation's loss of territory into five specific incidents, from 1867 to 1907 (Strate, 2015:45). Another map was entitled *Phaenthi Prawat-anakhet-thai* (Map of the History of Thailand's Boundary⁵³), which was launched by the government. This map depicts eight losses of territories, which reduced Thailand's legitimate realm, until the present boundary of Siam came about. Most of these losses were territories surrendered to European powers from the late nineteenth century, except the second which was taken by Burma. This map assumes that the extent of Siam's bounded territory, before any loss, is the total legitimate realm of Siam. Thongchai pointed out that the 'lost territories' map created and made national agony visible – 'It makes the National Humiliation discourse

⁵² A distinguished and respected intellectual during Phibun's regime. He held many positions but the most important one was Director General of the Fine Arts Department. Wichit produced a large number of influential historical plays and nationalistic songs during the 1930s (Barmé, 1993:2).

⁵³ Directed translation by Thongchai (1994)

visible and concrete. It concretises a geo-body which had never existed in the past and the agony is visually codified by a map' (Thongchai, 1994:150-152). These maps have important functions since they connote the idea that Siam used to be a great kingdom covering a vast area in the region and inspires the Siamese/Thai people to yearn for its by-gone prestige. The military government legitimised the irredentism by projecting modern conceptions of boundaries into the past.

Under Japan's support, Thailand invaded and eventually annexed Lao Sayaboury, west-bank Champassak, and the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap in 1941 (Wyatt, 2003:245). Not only were the French colonies targets of the Thai irredentists, but also the British colonies. Phibun desired two areas of Burma – the Tenasserim region in southern Burma, which had been under Thai control during the Ayutthaya period, and the Shan states in the north. In 1942, the Thai army invaded the Shan states. This was supported by Japan who wanted to form an alliance with Thailand, so they decided to give the portion of the Shan states already occupied by the Thai army, along with the four northern Malay states over which Bangkok had once claimed suzerainty (Reynolds, 2004:130-131). The results were widely celebrated in Thailand. The conflict and its outcome suited the nationalistic propaganda machinery that the regions inhabited by members of the great Thai race had been liberated from a colonial regime and become part of Thailand (Terwiel, 2011:270). Accordingly, this was the triumph of the nation and became the foundation of the Greater Thai nation and created a national prestige. It formulated the notion of Thai and Tai people as members of the Thai nation, a belief still deeply engraved and circulating in the perceptions of many Thais' today.

3.2.1.2 The Greater Thai nation

To accomplish the irredentist campaign, the government needed to create a good understanding among people within the country that those who lived outside Thailand's border were also Thais. The government constructed the concept of brotherhood and homogenisation between the Thai's and Tai people, who lived in the 'lost territories.' This became known as Pan-Thaism. The first shift towards the homogenisation of the Thai race was to change the country's name. Before the 1940s, even though Thais usually refer to their country as '*Muang Thai*' or more formally '*Prathet Thai*', the name Siam was more well-known among foreigners. The first State Convention during Phibun's regime in 1939 stated that the name of the country had been changed from '*Prathet Sayam*' to '*Prathet Thai*,' in Thai, and from 'Siam' to 'Thailand' in English (Stowe, 1991:122; Barmé, 1993:147). The change of the country's name brought about controversy. Several ministers who disagreed with the idea contended that there were many races living in Siam, apart from the

dominant ethnic Thai. Other races would feel discriminated against if the name of the country was changed from Siam to Thailand (Chai-anan, 2002:52). Nevertheless, Phibun and Wichit paid more attention to the homogenisation project. This repositioning reflected Phibun's aspiration to bring ethnically related peoples in neighbouring territories under Bangkok's rule and so that he could reclaim the nation's 'lost territories.' In Reynolds' terms, 'Thailand raises the political claim to embody in one great empire all Thai and not only the Siamese' (Reynolds, 2004:119).

However, rather than adopting the word 'Tai' (ไท) to create homogeneity among members of other ethnic groups, a decision was reached to use the word 'Thai' (ไทย) instead. This decision was made despite the name 'Thai' denoting only the ethnic Thai group. The given reason to use 'Thai' instead of 'Tai' was irrelevant to the construction of brotherhood. The government claimed that 'Thai with an H is like a sophisticated girl with her hair set, her lips touched with lipstick and her brow arched with eyebrow pencil, while Thai without H is like a girl who is naturally attractive but without any added beautification' (Van Esterik, 2000:106). However, Thongchai contends that the use of these different terms is not because one is an elaborated version while the other is not. Rather, these two names connote deeper signification of a modern nation-state and ethnicity. Here, I would like to cite Thongchai's full explanation to distinguish how the term Thai/Tai is used in both Thai and English;

In contemporary Thai, the word that connotes the Tai/Thai ethnicity is spelled in two ways. With exactly the same pronunciation – 'thai' – one is spelled with a y at the end and the other without, respectively as 'thaiy' (ไทยย) and 'thai' (ไทย). When spelled 'thaiy' the word denotes the modern nation-state and its citizens... When spelled without the y ending, it is a loose term denoting the ethnic peoples whose languages belong to the same Tai/Thai linguistic family. This 'Thai' (without a y ending) includes the Shan of Burma, the Lao people on both sides of the Mekong, and people speaking various Tai/Thai dialects in Thailand today, including the Muang people of former Lanna (Chiang Mai), the Tai Lue, the Tai Maung, the Tai Khoen in the border areas between China, Burma and Laos, the Black and White Tai in Vietnam, and others... Thus, in recent academic writings, 'Tai' refers to the larger ethnic and linguistic groups and 'Thai' to the modern nation and its citizens (Thongchai, 2008:576).

Barné argues that the state convention was an attempt aimed at forging a 'Thai' consciousness among the Lao and Shan peoples living within Thailand's borders and those in the neighbouring areas coveted by the irredentists. The promoting of Thainess went so far as the government issuing the order that the word 'Lao' and 'Ngiew' (Shan) be deleted from the popular folk songs of north and northeast Thailand and be replaced with the term 'Thai.' This homogenisation of Thai

race affected the people in the country that would henceforth be simply known as Thai (*Chao Thai*) (Barmé, 1993:151). So, it could be assumed that the change of the country's name was for the ethnic Thai group, which was the majority of people, whereas the other Tai groups living within the country were forcefully changed to becoming Thai. Accordingly, to address the country and its people as 'Thai', the government aimed to turn all these Tai ethnic groups into Thais more than to accept their Tai ethnicities as a part of nationhood.

The homogenisation of other ethnic Tai groups was then expanded to outside Thailand's border in the area defined by the irredentist known as the Greater Thai nation. Wichit began to forge bonds between Thais and those living in the area divided by the 1893 crisis by encouraging Thais to view the Lao and Khmer people as part of their larger nation. Consequently, the area was referred to as 'left-bank Thais,' which was portrayed as the victims of the Paknam crisis (Strate, 2015:13). To create a stronger sense of brotherhood, these ethnic Tai groups were divided into 'greater Thai' and 'minor Thai' groupings. Wichit's book *Siam and Suwannaphum* classified the Shan of northern Burma as part of the first category, while the Siamese and Lao belonged in the second category. The homogenisation of these people was stressed by the government as Wichit stated that 'the Lao had just as much Thai blood as the Siamese' and emphasised that both Lao and Khmer had many similarities to the Thai in religion, culture, and tradition (Strate, 2015:48-49).

In the north of Thailand, which is the focal area of this thesis, the Thai undertook a military campaign to conquer the Shan region around Keng Tung in northeastern Burma in May 1942. This acquisition of the 'United Shan States' became the 'Original Thai States' or '*Satharanarat Thaidoem*' (Wyatt, 2003:248). Keng Tung in Shan state, which was populated by ethnically related people, was an area the Siamese were ambitious to conquer since the late Third and Fourth reigns. During 1851-53, Siam sent several troops to attack Keng Tung, as the Burmese became weak due to the Anglo-Burmese war. However, the attack was unsuccessful due to a lack of weapons, food, and morale, partly because the northern vassals were not motivated to give battle against the Keng Tung defenders. This had a sobering effect upon Siam's leaders (Terwiel, 2011:152-53). When the irredentists saw the opportunity to regain national prestige in the 1940s, they did not hesitate to proceed. The Thai army invaded the Shan state, occupied the city of Keng Tung and eventually moved northward until reaching the border of Yunnan Province in China. This time, Thailand acted as an empire and ruled over Keng Tung by establishing provincial officials in northern Thailand to work for the Thai government.

Nevertheless, the Greater Thai nation did not last long. After the end of World War II, all treaties and pacts signed during wartime were invalidated. Thailand restored the Malay and Shan territories annexed in 1942-43 (Wyatt, 2003:250). However, the notion of brotherhood of the Thai empire never went away. During the irredentism campaign, it was promoted by the media that the people living in those territories were also ethnically Thai. Thus, when they had to return the four provinces to France, Thais believed that they were sending 'innocent men to the gallows' because these people are 'our flesh and blood' (Strate, 2015:141).

So, we can see that Pan-Thaism and the concept of the Greater Thai nation were a chauvinistic means to constructing a modern nation-state. These concepts stimulated nationalism among Thai people as Thailand tried to be an empire to show its prestige as a great nation. Though the actual empire building was over, the imperialist thinking became deeply engraved within Thai people's perceptions. The view of other ethnic Tai as members of the nation was recurrent in many genres. This chapter will demonstrate that this kind of thinking is still visible in contemporary TV dramas. The 'Greater Thai' or Tai ethnic group of Keng Tung in Shan State have become one of the most frequent topics for content-making in Thai TV dramas with a northern Thai focus. In the next section, I explore how other ethnicities are depicted in Thai television dramas with strong themes on northern Thailand.

3.2.2 Tai ethnicities in Thai TV dramas

Regional culture is one of the most frequent topics in Thai TV dramas. The north, northeast, and south are commonly used as materials for drama makers and these regional cultures rotate in Thai TV programmes every year. I have looked through Thai TV dramas dating from 1990 to 2020 (as of the time this thesis was written) which were broadcast during prime-time slots, mainly on major channels (Channel 3, 5, 7 and 8). I found at least 32⁵⁴ TV dramas that have northern Thailand as the main theme. This number demonstrates that the north has been a popular choice for drama makers as it reappears almost every year as an essential element of Thai TV programming.

The north comprises of many ethnic groups such as Tai Lue, Tai Khoen and Tai Yuan which is the majority. In Chiang Mai, the capital of the Lanna kingdom, people of many ethnicities were relocated to populate the city after great forced

⁵⁴ This number excludes TV dramas where the story takes place in northern provinces but have little emphasis on northern culture, tradition, or history. This kind of drama mostly uses the northern provinces as locations for scenic presentation, but the north itself is not its main theme. So, they are not counted here.

resettlements during the late eighteenth century. These ethnic groups were classified and settled in the city based on their skills and background (Sarassawadee, 2005:136). While the Tai Yuan made up the majority of the Lanna kingdom, it is not the most popular ethnic group chosen to for depiction in Thai TV dramas. Commonly drama makers select the culture and identity of other ethnic Tai groups, and then mix them together. Therefore, I divided dramas with strong northern themes into three main groups. The first group is dramas that combine cultures and identities of many ethnic groups together to represent the 'fictional states.' The second group is dramas that use cultures and identities of particular ethnic groups to represent fictional states. The third group is dramas which use cultures and identities of specific ethnic groups to stand for that particular states where those cultures and identities actually belong.

Most of the dramas in the early period studied (1990-2000) and some remade versions in recent years regularly depict the mixing of northern identities. Accordingly, the north as shown in these dramas is a 'generalisation of the north', which is constructed via the mixing of features from different ethnicities according to the drama maker's imagination. However, the popularity of these dramas influenced the fashion of northern Thai costume even though it modelled an inaccurate mix (Chiang Mai University, 2017). Northern Thai costumes as seen in TV dramas became a trend for people in the north to wear during ceremonies, parades, cultural performances, and so on. The combining of different ethnic costumes later became a controversial issue among officials in Chiang Mai as they wanted to redefine proper northern Thai dress. In 1994 and 1996, a meeting was held at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, attended by northern culture and costume experts, to find an agreement on how to wear proper northern Thai costumes. The mixing of costumes was one of the main concerns in these meetings that the committee had pleaded the public to avoid (Wilak, 2004). Still, this kind of TV drama did not completely fade from the Thai TV industry and many have been reproduced, even in recent years.

After the 2000s, more and more TV dramas were developed in terms of production quality. Drama makers paid more attention to cultural accuracy. There was more awareness of northern Thai culture after 1996, which was the year that celebrated the 700th anniversary of Chiang Mai Province. This stimulated interest among scholars in Chiang Mai University in Lanna history, arts and culture, including northern Thai costume. This period marked the awakening of authentic Lanna costumes of different ethnic groups (Chiang Mai University, 2017). Following this movement, more and more dramas made effort to present cultural accuracy by imitating cultures and traditions of some specific ethnic groups. These are TV dramas in the last two groups.

However, among many ethnic groups that are presented in these dramas, the most frequent group appearing is the Tai Khoen in Shan State, who live outside the present Thai border. The Tai Khoen frequently appear in TV dramas, either mixed up with other cultural groups or presented alone in dramas with more concern placed on cultural representation. Among the 32 TV dramas with strong northern Thai focus, only 14 of them explicitly show Tai Yuan culture and identity, despite it being the dominant culture in the north. There are 17 dramas that portray cultures and identities of other ethnic Tai groups while 3 dramas strongly show hill tribe people⁵⁵. Six out of these 17 dramas explicitly present the ethnic Tai Khoen group, while the ethnic Tai Khoen culture and costume also appear as mixing elements in 11 dramas out of 17 (Figure 16). These numbers imply that the Tai Khoen from Keng Tung have become one of the iconic presentations of northern Thailand, rather than the dominant ethnic Tai Yuan who live within the Thailand border.

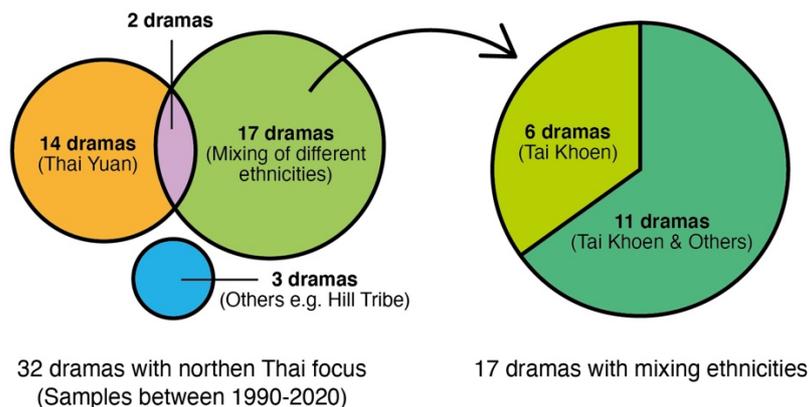


Figure 16 Left: Ethnic cultures and identities presented in Thai TV dramas with a northern Thai focus between 1990-2020 (32 dramas in total) / Right: Dramas which show other ethnic Tai identities

Tai Khoen culture and identity is often chosen to represent the north even though it is not specified in the plot or original text. For example, the drama makers of *Raknakkara* wanted three distinctive ethnic costumes to represent three states. While the previous version in 2000 mixed different cultures and identities to present three fictional states, the 2017 version aimed at a realistic presentation. The Tai Khoen was chosen as one of them because its ethnic costume is distinguishable

⁵⁵ Two dramas in the list fit in more than one category, that is, they present both the Tai Yuan and other ethnic groups. Three dramas in the last category are remade versions of the same title.

from other ethnic groups in the north (Sutthiphan, 2018, interview). Another example is *Roymai* (2011). According to its original text, the original story takes place in Luang Phrabang in Laos. It is a drama about a princess from Chiang Mai (north of Thailand) who is sent as a tribute to the Luang Phrabang ruler. In an interview, Yingyot, the screenwriter, states that the production house had a lot of difficulties asking for permission for film shooting in Laos. The production house in Laos who acted as an agent with the Ministry of Culture asked for 300,000 baht (approx. £7500) for additional operation fees which was considered a lot of money for Thai TV drama production⁵⁶. Besides, the production cost in Luang Phrabang was estimated to be much higher than shooting in the north of Thailand. Therefore, the screenwriter and the director agreed to change the location of the story to be Chiang Mai instead. So, the drama makers changed from a Chiang Mai princess being sent to Luang Phrabang to be a Keng Tung princess being sent to Chiang Mai (Yingyot, 2018, interview). As an ethnic group in one of the provinces used to be in the Greater Thai nation, Tai Khoen has become the most common depiction of the north for these drama makers.

These samples reflect a strong perception that many Thai people have towards the ethnic Tai groups outside Thailand's border. Drama makers seem to assume that the ethnic Tai who live beyond Thailand's present territory were members of the Thai nation. These kinds of dramas also often end with a unification between Thais and Tai people from other states. They may begin with conflict within these states or with Thailand. However, in the end they are peacefully united and live together happily. The depiction of these ethnic groups recalls the idea of the Greater Thai nation that assumes all other Tai races as a part of the Thai nation. The following section investigates the depiction of the ethnic Tai Khoen in Thai TV dramas and to study how that depiction demonstrates machinery for nation-building.

3.2.3 Analysis of TV dramas

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the Thai nation is constructed through combination with other ethnicities. The analysis of TV dramas will focus on the presentation of the ethnic Tai Khoen, which is one of the ethnic groups used as part of creating the Thai empire. While the notion of a Greater Thai empire has passed, imperialist thinking is still evident in contemporary dramas with a northern Thai focus. These dramas do not only present people in northern Thai provinces but go beyond

⁵⁶ In contrast to films, Thai TV dramas do not usually have high budget. For example, the budget for making traditional costumes for every character in *Raknakkara* was only 300,000 baht (Wasin, 2018).

to other ethnic groups outside the Thailand's border. This kind of thinking is based on the assumption of brotherhood between Thai and Tai people as promoted by the RNH. This section will analyse two TV dramas that clearly present the ethnic Tai Khoen. These dramas are *Raknakkara* (2017) and *Buangbanjathorn* (2017). I investigate two main aspects, which are the assimilation and generalisation of these ethnicities, and the creation of brotherhood. The ethnic Tai in *Raknakkara*, who were successfully united with Siam, are presented in the first aspect while the ethnic Tai in *Buangbanjathorn*, who are no longer part of the Thai nation, are presented in the second aspect. However, both aspects do stress the idea that these people are closely related and essential to the construction of the Thai nation-state.

3.2.3.1 Cultural assimilation and generalisation of Tai ethnicities

Raknakkara (2017) exemplifies the case of successful unification of the north through internal colonisation. In this drama, all ethnic Tai groups have close relationships and cultural proximity that can be exchangeable. The harmonious combination of these ethnic groups is presented via the generalisation of these people as one unit through their traditional style costumes.

This selected version is famous for its representation of northern Thai culture and production quality. It has been praised by media and drama fans in social media⁵⁷ and Thailand's most popular web forum (Pantip.com⁵⁸) as an accurate historical adaptation, especially the representation of characters (wearing traditional costumes), language (speaking northern dialect), props and locations. One of the features that caused the drama to be widely known was its costumes and appearances of leading characters which are inspired by the outfits of ethnic groups in the northern part of Thailand. The production house claimed that they had worked with specialised consultants and costume designers who were textile experts. The production house also launched a photo book with photos of actors in specific ethnic and traditional Thai costumes, with interviews of actors and costume designers. Not many Thai TV dramas gain high interest among audiences in terms of the costumes and overall physical appearance of the show.

⁵⁷ official Instagram account, official Facebook page of Channel 3, official YouTube channel, and its official website (www.ch3thailand.com)

⁵⁸ Thailand's most popular web forum, which is a big online community in Thailand covering many aspects of interest. The highest-viewed forum could reach more than 7 million views. Content in Pantip.com is influential and affects many brands' marketing. The website could gain around 100 million Thai Baht yearly (over 2.5 million GBP) from advertising. Among many categories of forums, TV drama and the entertainment business is the biggest share of all web forums (Nakarin, 2017).

This version is different from the 2000 version which did not pay much attention to cultural accuracy by mixing several ethnic costumes together. The 2017 version aims at presenting three different ethnic groups via culturally accurate costumes. *Raknakkara* sets its story around three fictional states in the north of Thailand. According to Piyaphorn Sukkasem, the author of the novel, one kingdom represents Burma and other two kingdoms stand for the northern states. One of the northern states is Chiang Phrakham which, according to the TV version, is situated in the eastern part of northern Thailand. The drama makers choose Nan province which is located in the east of northern Thailand as reference for costume design. There are diverse ethnic groups living in Nan such as Tai Yuan (Lanna), Tai Lue from Sipsongpanna (in China) and Laos but the drama makers chose Tai Lue as reference for costume because the clothing is distinct from the Tai Yuan style in Chiang Mai, which they believed was used so often in Thai TV dramas.

Another northern state included is Chiang Ngern. This is a problematic choice. When Piyaphorn wrote her novel, she referred to Thailand's geographical map and chose three locations that matched the plot;

Chiang Phrakham should be somewhere around Nan, Phrae, or Lampang⁵⁹. For Chiang Ngern, I imagined it should be on the upper north with a difficult route to get there, and it must be within Thailand's border. So, when I point to these locations on a map, it would fall at the border of Chiang Rai Province. ... my intention was that Chiang Ngern must be in present Thailand's territory and not too far from or too near to Chiang Mai (the capital of the north). People from Chiang Ngern could travel to Chiang Mai or to Chiang Phrakham within a similar distance. These locations on a map should look like a triangle (Piyaphorn, 2018, interview). (Figure 17).

⁵⁹ All are three provinces in the north of Thailand are located in the eastern side of the region in which the author calls them in a group as eastern Lanna



Figure 17 Locations of three fictional states according to the author of the novel and locations that are used as references for ethnic culture in the TV drama

The concept of territory is important in this drama because the main conflict is about the demarcation of these two northern states. At the end of the story, they are unified as provinces of Siam. This is why Piyaphorn was concerned that they should be located within Thailand's boundary. However, in the 2017 version, the drama makers go beyond that boundary. They decided to use the ethnic Tai Khoen culture in Keng Tung as reference for costume despite it being a group outside Thai territory. Sutthiphan states in the interview that the main reasons for selection come from its distinguished costume and historical background of Keng Tung (or Chiang Tung in Thai), which had a close relationship with both Siam and Burma;

Our team agreed that costume is essential. It is the first thing that appears to the eyes of the audience before a character speaks. It must be obvious to indicate where he or she came from and they must not look the same... Chiang Tung is in a perfect location, and it used to be a state with two or three lordships. It had a relationship with both Thailand and Burma, depending on which period (Sutthiphan, 2018, interview).

Accordingly, this drama presents three states via cultures of three ethnic groups which are the Burmese, Tai Khoen in Keng Tung, and Tai Lue situated in the eastern part of northern Thailand. These costumes were exploited to signify cultural differences of ethnic peoples. However, as the story goes on, the drama rather generalises these ethnic groups as one unified unit. It is a discourse from the RNH which assumes the north as a part of the Thai nation and automatically considers all ethnicities as one group included within Siam. This is reflected through the assimilation of characters between different ethnic groups and generalisation of their identities.

3.2.3.1.1 Cultural proximity between ethnic groups

Cultural proximity between different ethnic groups is exploited by Siam to facilitate internal colonisation. Diverse ethnicities in the north were generalised as one group with similar cultures and identities like brothers and sisters, so that they could be unified with Siam later on. This selected scene from *Raknakkara* shows two ethnic cultures of the north: Tai Khoen and Tai Lue, representing the fictional state Chiang Ngern and Chiang Phrakham respectively. Different identities of these two ethnic groups are depicted by two women through their costumes. The first one is Maenmuang, who is a princess from Chiang Ngern. Another is Laongkham, who is a princess of Chiang Phrakham. The identity difference is stressed in episode 6 when they discuss their clothing. However, the drama eventually demolishes the difference by making one character transform her identity by wearing another ethnic costume.

A close-up shot shows a wooden box with tube skirt inside. Laongkham's hands carefully pick it up and gently touch it. Camera closes up to show detail of that cloth, which is a green silk skirt, decorated with striped cloth, silver threads and pins at the bottom edge.

Laongkham: The more I look, the more beautiful it is. I think the Chiang Ngern skirt is more beautiful than Chiang Phrakham.

Maenmuang: That's not true, Laongkham. The Chiang Ngern skirt is in Chiang Ngern style. Chiang Phrakham skirt is in Chiang Phrakham style. They are both beautiful but in a different way. You just get bored because you wear the same skirt every day.

Laongkham: Right, then can I borrow your skirt today?

Two servants come in and sit on the floor. Medium shot shows their awkward faces when they hear Laongkham's request.

Maenmuang: (talk to the servants) Can you two help Laongkham dress up? She wants to try Chiang Ngern skirt.



Figure 18 Laongkham (left) in Tai Lue costume and Manmuang (right) in Tai Khoen costume (*Raknakkara*, ep 6)

From this scene, we can see that two women wear different styles of clothing (Figure 18). Their clothes may look very similar in the eyes of people who are outsiders. However, for ethnic people, these outfits stand for their identity and they can distinguish what ethnic group a person belongs to by looking at their dress. So, wearing outfits apart from their own is not a common practice. This transformation of identity is elaborated in the following scene. After Laongkham changes her outfit to be in Chiang Ngern style, both women go to the grandmother's house.

A crane shot showing external building, it is the grandmother's residence. Medium shot shows the grandmother sitting on a bench and Sukkawong on the floor. A servant comes in to serve tea. She looks outside and tells the grandmother that Laongkham and Manmuang have arrived. Everybody looks out and seems to be surprised. A lively and exciting tune of music is suddenly playing. A camera reveals Maenmuang and Laongkham walking into the room. Camera changes a slow-motion. They slowly sit down and prostrate on the floor to pay respect to the grandmother. Close-up shots show Sukkawong and the grandmother's happy faces.

Grandmother: I thought it was an illusion. You dress alike and look like sisters.

Laongkham: (move closer to the grandmother) Grandmother, do I look pretty in this dress?

Grandmother: (gently touch Laongkham's head to show her affection) You are pretty. You look pretty in whatever you wear.

Laongkham: How about you, Sukkawong? How do I look in this dress?

Sukkawong: Chiang Phrakham and Chiang Ngern are like brothers. I am delighted to see that these two states are combined to become one without discrimination.

Laongkham: I'm asking Manmuang to teach me to do Chiang Ngern style embroidery.

Grandmother: Is Manmuang free to teach? She has lots of work to do.

Laongkham: Of course, she is. Right, Manmuang? Please teach me so that I can have my own pretty skirt in Chiang Ngern style.

Manmuang: Sure. I will.

Sukkawong: Are you going to wear Chiang Ngern skirt forever and not return to Chiang Phrakham style?

Laongkham: Of course not, brother. I might wear Chiang Phrakham skirt for three days and the other four days I will wear Chiang Ngern skirt. What do you think, Manmuang?

Manmuang: I'd leave it up to you.



Figure 19 Maenmuang (left) and Laongkham (right) dress in Tai Khoen style costume (*Raknakkara*, ep 6)

The changing of identity implies one meaning in the drama, yet it reflects another meaning if we read it to a deeper level. According to the story, Sukkawong is married to Manmuang. Laongkham wants to be a minor wife so she tries to imitate Manmuang's style. Therefore, her transformation of ethnical identity as well as her request to wear Manmuang's ethnical outfit four days a week (despite that the concept of week did not exist at that time) indirectly means her wish to be another wife and share a husband. However, on a deeper level, it reflects how the drama makers have perceived the ethnic groups in the north as interchangeable. The drama emphasises the similarity between these two women by making them have almost the same movement. They walk, move, and sit simultaneously. These two women look alike in their appearance. Even the colours of their clothes, hair style and make-up are the same. Other characters all seem to be happy to see these two women dress alike. Besides, the concept of brotherhood is stressed twice, first by the grandmother and then Sukkawong, in a conversation.

Though these two women represent two northern states and two ethnic Tai groups, audiences do learn from the story that Chiang Phrakham has unified with Siam. Thus, Chiang Phrakham is also a representative of Siam. If we read this scene from this perspective, the language used is a restatement of the RNH discourse that revolves around the similarity and brotherhood between Thai and Tai ethnic groups. The RNH often refers to the idea that Thai and Tai are sharing the same blood and they look like each other in regards to physical appearances. For example, during the time that the irredentism campaign was promoted, some Thai media described Keng Tung people to have 'dress, culture, and religion just like us (Thais)' (Strate, 2015:119). This strategy is not new but rather a repetition of the same old ideology

that the Thai state has always used in the entertainment media, which includes plays.

During the Phibun regime, there were also plays with irredentist themes, composed by Wichit Wathakan. These included *Ratchamanu* and *Chaoying Saenwi*. According to Barmé, these two plays employed themes revolving around the military, heroism and sacrifice in wartime, and the links between Khmer and Shan people. In *Ratchamanu*, the idea of brotherhood between Thais and Khmer was presented. This is explicitly expressed in a conversation in a play for example; 'They are Thais like us,' 'We are all really Thai brothers,' and 'There's no more need to fight. All of us on the Golden Peninsula are the same... the Siamese Thais are the elder brothers.' In the printed version of this play, Wichit reaffirmed, by citing physical and cultural similarities between two peoples as 'proof' – 'such as the shape of face and skull, the type of food eaten, common diseases, indigenous literature, music and song... it is clear that the Khmers of the present day are Thais' (Barmé, 1993:124-126). In a play *Chaoying Saenwi* (The Princess of Saenwi), which had the purpose of advancing the irredentist movement against the British, Wichit emphasised the racial and cultural links between the Shan people (Tai Yai, greater Thai) of northern British Burma and the Siamese Thais (Tai Noi, minor Thai), suggesting that the two groups should unite. An excerpt from the play states that 'Thai Noi, Thai Yai, though we live far apart, we are together Thai. We must love one another as more than friends because we are of the same blood and stock, brothers from old times, sharing sorrow and joy as Thai' (Barmé, 1993:126).

These kinds of statements are reproduced again in *Raknakkara*. Chiang Phrakham and Chiang Ngern do share some similarities in their race (as shown via physical appearance), languages (which are understandable and have no differences in this drama because they both speak northern Thai dialect) and culture (through the costume that can be exchangeable and transformed). Sukkawong states that 'Chiang Phrakham and Chiang Ngern are like brothers' and 'these two states are combined to become one without discrimination.' His statement echoes the discourse from the RNH. Based on Siamese perspective, the drama generalises these two ethnic groups as one unit. No matter what ethnic group, they are regarded as 'the north' and they must be annexed to Siam. The unifying between Chiang Ngern and Chiang Phrakham symbolises the Thai-ification of the ethnic groups. This illustrates how the notion of 'brothers of the same blood' is still alive in the perception of these drama producers so that the same kind of conversation from the 1940s is evident in contemporary dramas. Apart from the generalisation of these ethnic groups as one unit, this drama further shows the assimilation of one's identity in the following scene.

3.2.3.1.2 Abandoning one's identity to become Thai

Cultural assimilation is depicted through Manmuang. After marriage, she moves to Chiang Phrakham which is her husband's hometown and where she has to adapt to a new life. While Manmuang gets along well with people there, she strongly maintains her ethnic identity by wearing her hometown's traditional outfits all the time. Manmuang and her two servants who have accompanied her are the only people in the city that wear Tai Khoen style dress, while others wear Tai Lue. However, after she lives with her husband for a while, she starts to change. From a radical patriotic woman who has strong singular perspectives, she learns to be more open-minded to new cultures and people, both Thai and Western. In other words, she transforms gradually to blend in with her husband's way of life, perspective, and culture. In episode 7, she is transformed from her own ethnic costume to that of her husband's hometown, which implies the cultural assimilation of the ethnic Tai to becoming Thai.

In this scene, Sukkawong wants to take a picture with his wife. He asks her to dress in Chiang Phrakham style. So, Manmuang changes from Chiang Ngern dress, which is represented by the ethnic Tai Khoen, to Chiang Phrakham style, which is represented by the ethnic Tai Lue. Audiences learn from the story that Chiang Phrakham is a northern state that is unified with Siam. Sukkawong himself represents the king of Siam (see Chapter 3.1) through his characteristics and personality. Accordingly, this scene could be understood as the Siamese effort to assimilate the ethnic Tai as a part of their nation-building. In other words, Manmuang is requested to abandon her identity and transform to become Thai.

A long shot shows Sukkawong, Maenmuang, and two servants. He is holding her hand and taking her to the terrace. He walks fast and seems to be very excited while Maenmuang is curious and keeps asking. The other two female servants are following them, and their faces show anxiety as well. Then they walk to the terrace in front of the house where Mr. Bracken stands with his camera. The camera is set on a tripod with black cloth covering it. Opposite to the camera are a table, a chair and piece of cloth hanging as a backdrop for photo shooting. Five other servants are sitting on the floor, not far from the photo set.

Maenmuang: Where do you take me to?

Sukkawong: Don't worry. I don't take you anywhere far.

Maenmuang: Then why do I have to wear Chiang Phrakham dress?

Sukkawong smiles and does not answer. He leads her and calls Bracken.

Bracken: (bow his head) Hi Maenmuang. Please let me take a photograph of you and Sukkawong. It would be my great pleasure.

Before they take a picture, two female servants warn Maenmuang that a camera would take away her soul. Sukkawong laughs at them and takes

Maenmuang to sit on the chair. Mr. Bracken covers his head with a black cloth and then presses a shutter. This scene ends with a photograph of Sukkawong and Maenmuang (Figure 20).



Figure 20 Sukkawong is taking Manmuang to take a photo in Tai Lue costume (*Raknakkara*, ep 7)

Taking such a picture has an implication of recording an important event or people. During the nineteenth century, photography was new to Thai society and only the elite could access this luxury. Photography was introduced in Siam under the reign of Mongkut (reign 1851-1868). The earliest extant daguerreotype image of the Siamese monarch dates to the early 1850s. Mongkut was aware that it was essential for foreign heads of state to have their portraits circulated for public relations purposes and so he allowed a photographer to take a portrait of him and his wife to present to Queen Victoria in 1857 (Peleggi, 2002:47). Therefore, taking one's photograph was only in important occasions and reserved for particular purposes. Only the nobles and royal family could have portrait photos and the shooting was often done with a set of background, furniture and decorative items to signify the status of people who were photographed. Consequently, what a person wears or uses in the photograph really matters. Maenmuang is dressed in Tai Khoen costume in every other scene and her husband does not find it a problem. However, he demands that she changes her costume for the photograph. It suggests that he does not want her ethnic identity to be recorded. In this drama, this photo is also a key element because it is the only evidence to prove her existence after her death. The identity that is chosen to be recorded in the photograph is not her true identity, but the one she is forced to assimilate to. Once she dies, her identity also disappears with her.

What *Raknakkara* reflects is the Siamese ambiguous feeling towards other related ethnicities. In this drama, the ethnic Tai Khoen is regarded as the other but at the same time it is also unified as a part of the Thai nation. The ethnic Tai Khoen had had close relationships with the north but were discriminated and excluded from the nation-building project by Siam. During the great forced resettlements in the Lanna kingdom between 1781-1813, the Tai Khoen was one of many ethnic groups that were 'collected' by King Kawila of Chiang Mai to be relocated to Lanna. It was the gathering of people to populate the city known as 'collecting vegetables for baskets and collecting people for *muang*' (Sarassawadee, 2005:132-133). Thus, many ethnic Tai groups, including the Tai Khoen, Tai Lue, Tai Yai, Yong, and the dominant Tai Yuan lived together in the north. However, after the Siamese reform in the late nineteenth century, Siam began to differentiate between people who were Siamese and those who were not. The dominant Tai Yuan or Lanna people in the north were included as a part of Siam but the target of discrimination was the other ethnic groups especially the Tai Yai which Siam saw as the untamed, threatening Other. This was because the ethnic Tai Yai, who migrated between Lanna and Burma, had close relationships with Burma and the British. The discrimination even led to a Shan Uprising in Phrae province in which Siam sent troops to destroy the rebellion and used it as an excuse to take full control in the North (Sarassawadee, 2005:206). For other ethnicities that are less threatening, the discrimination was expressed in the form of 'Thai-isation' during the country's reform. The reformation went along with the building of the Thai national identities in many aspects including education, religion, administration and the spread of Bangkok culture to the north. Northern people were made to have a consciousness of the Thai nation which meant the ethnic differences were forcefully faded out. It was Siam who intervened and created a sharp division between Lanna people in the north and other ethnic groups.

This drama is a product of imperialist thinking, which was intensified after the government rebuilt the brotherhood among these ethnic groups during the irredentist campaign. This process is reflected in the assimilation of ethnic groups. The focal point of the drama is the Siamese reform in which all northern independent states became provinces of Siam. Even though the drama makers emphasise the cultural differences through costumes, these characters go through some processes to become Thai. The drama blurs the lines of ethnic identity by making characters swap clothes and transform their identities back and forth. This signifies how they perceive the ethnic Tai group, as one single unit which is interchangeable. At the end of the drama, all ethnicities are transformed and blended into becoming Thai. Tai Khoen and Tai Lue are generalised and assimilated as one, known as the north of Thailand, so that they can be unified with Siam afterwards.

3.2.3.2 Thailand as a protecting brother

The previous section gives examples from *Raknakkara*, which uses the ethnic Tai Khoen to represent the northern state as successfully united with Siam. This section will investigate the ethnic Tai Khoen as the representation of the northern state but as no longer a part of the Thai nation. Examples are taken from *Buangbanjathorn* (2017). This drama is attention worthy because it explicitly shows the concept of the Greater Thai nation in relation to the Tai Khoen people in Keng Tung, Shan State, Burma, during the expansion of the Thai empire in the 1940s.

The story is set in 1944 and when the Thai army, under the irredentist campaign, invaded Keng Tung and established an administrative division called *Satharanarat Thaidoem* (Unified former Thai Territories/ Original Thai States). This was part of a Pan-Asianist mission in which Thailand collaborated with Japan, to reconquer their 'lost territory' in 1942. TV versions of the drama were adapted from a novel of the same name, written by Keerati Chana in 2000. The original novel is written in a hybrid style using novel and documentary. The novel heavily relies on the book '*Tiew Muang Chiang Tung and Kwean Salawin*' (เที่ยวเมืองเชียงตุงและแคว้นสาละวิน). This book is documentary travel writing authored by Boonsing Boonkham, a Siamese education officer working in Keng Tung during the Thai invasion of Shan State. Every chapter of the novel begins with one page of excerpts from that book, describing life, culture, landscape, and people of Keng Tung. There are also excerpts from other books at the opening of some chapters, but those written by Boonsing play a key role in continuously setting the scene. Names of actual places as well as historical figures such as the Keng Tung royal family are referred to. Fiction and reality are thereby blurred. The fictional events in the novel run alongside ethnographical records and autobiography.

Keng Tung and its culture forms the centre of the novel. When it was first adapted for TV in 2002, the drama maker made use of Keng Tung culture as well as its history. Characters were dressed in Tai Khoen style, and the story was said to be taking place in Keng Tung. However, in a 2017 version, the name Keng Tung was deleted from the drama. Despite improved production quality to create historical and cultural accuracy and a realistic presentation of Keng Tung, this version decided to make it a story occurring in a 'fictional place.' So, the name of the state 'Keng Tung', or in Thai pronunciation 'Chiang Tung' as used in a TV version, was changed to be 'Wiang Kin' and Burma was changed to be 'Padeng.' As well, names of historical figures such as the royal family members of Keng Tung were also replaced with new names to avoid referring to actual people and places.

These changes of names were done to avoid conflicts between Thailand and other ethnic groups. According to my fieldwork in Thailand, Atthaphorn, the Director of *Buangbanjathorn*, stated that he tried to avoid mentioning actual names (Keng Tung and Burma) as it might upset people in other countries;

The name Keng Tung, as well as names of cities and royalty are real names. So, we decided to change these because the drama is about their history, international affairs, and a massacre that people in that country might not want to deeply remember. If this drama is successful at an international level, it would bring about discussion of history. The discussion would travel to other countries. ... It is all about international affairs. People in Burma wanted to end all these wars. To raise such topic of this massacre again could cause international conflict (Atthaphorn, 2018, interview)⁶⁰.

A similar conflict had occurred before. *Ploengphranang* (2017) revolves around the theme of love and jealousy inside the Burmese court, and characters are inspired by the last king and queen of Burma. Moreover, the drama is based on a book '*Phama Sia Mueang*' (พม่าเสียเมือง), which is a chronicle of Burma before its fall to be the British colonialists, and written by Kukrit Pramoj, a well-known Thai writer. In 2017 *Ploengphranang* was heavily criticised by Burmese audiences, that it negatively represented the Burmese royal family. The great-grandson of Myanmar's last monarch King Thibaw accused Thailand of double standards in how it treated another country's royals and requested Thailand's royalty to stop the drama broadcasting (AFP, 2017). TV drama can indeed lead to international conflict.

Similarly, TV dramas and actors can be manipulated into fuelling international conflict. For example, the famous case of actress Suwanan Khongying who became a target of conflict between Thailand and Cambodia over the Preah Vihear dispute. In 2003, the ingrained sensitivity felt by Cambodians in relation to their relations with Thailand was triggered when Suwanan was supposed to have stated that she would not perform in Cambodia until that country restored Thailand's sovereignty over the great Angkorian temple of Angkor Wat. Whether she made such statement or not, the publicity that surrounded her alleged remark led to serious anti-Thai rioting in Phnom Penh. Unrest erupted in Phnom Penh in the course of which the Thai embassy was burned to the ground and the destruction of many Thai businesses even though Suwanan denied ever having said anything to that effect (Wagener, 2011:39; Osborne, 2008:4). Regardless, Thai TV dramas need to be cautious to avoid such sensitive topics to prevent the recurrence of conflict.

⁶⁰ The persons who made decision on the avoidance of these names are actually the station owner and committee while Atthaphorn as the director as limited role in making decision. More detail of this is mentioned in Chapter 2.

Even though names are avoided, ethnic culture and identities are emphasised. In *Buangbanjathorn*, Tai Khoen culture was clearly shown through costume, cultural performances, rituals and ceremonies, props, and so on. With more advanced technology, better quality of production, and more access to information or research on culture and history, the 2017 version appears to present even more realistic pictures of the ethnic Tai Khoen than the 2002 version, when production technique as well as research were limited. For the 2017 version, the production team did a lot of research on Tai Khoen culture by interviewing experts, visiting museums and temples in the northern provinces, and making replicas of antique cultural objects by local artisans for instance. A lot of effort was used to create realistic presentation of Tai Khoen life (Atthaphorn, 2018). Only its name is censored, while other cultural identities are less concealed.

Buangbanjathorn is a story about a Bangkok woman named Praenuan who inherits a house from her father in Chiang Rai (one northern province). There, she finds an antique bed. When she sleeps on the bed, she wakes up in Keng Tung, in 1944, the time when the Thai army occupied the city as a part of the Thai empire. In Keng Tung, she meets Laoperng who is the adopted son of Keng Tung's ruler. Laoperng's half-sister, Tongrew, is a princess from Chiang Rung (Jinghong⁶¹) who is forced to marry a Burmese nobleman. Tongrew runs away from her arranged marriage to seek help from her brother in Keng Tung. In the drama, Keng Tung is attacked several times by the Burmese but remains protected by the Thai army. The selected scenes demonstrate the relationship between Thai and Keng Tung as friendly brotherhood and safe under the Thai army's protection.

3.2.3.2.1 Friendly relationship between Thailand and Keng Tung

In the first episode, after Praenuan sleeps on the bed and magically awakens in Keng Tung, she meets Laoperng for the first time. He is surprised and wonders why she is in a palace in Keng Tung. He recognises immediately that Praenuan is Thai because she speaks Thai (though the whole drama speaks central Thai language anyway). They do not have a chance to talk much as he has to leave and Praenuan wakes up. In the second time that they meet, he saves Praenuan from a Burmese soldier who takes her as a hostage.

A long shot shows four soldiers holding guns and patrolling in front of a palace wall. Fast instrumental music is played. A long shot shows Praenuan and Laoperng walking into the garden in front of the palace. Music changes to a soft, slow tune. A camera gives medium and long shots

⁶¹ A city in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, in the far south of China's Yunnan Province, and the historic capital of the former Tai kingdom of Sipsongpanna.

as they walk along the garden while talking. Praenuan thanks Laoperng for helping her. He then asks where she comes from.

Laoperng: Where are you from?

Praenuan: Chiang Rai.

Laoperng: It takes a day to travel from Chiang Rai to Wiang Kin. Most Thais who live here are soldiers who come to seize our country. No women travel here alone.

In the next scene, a camera slowly pans, using an extreme long shot to show Praenuan and Laoperng sitting in a garden. Long, medium and medium close-up shots are used when they speak. Laoperng keeps asking where she comes from.

Praenuan: I was feeling unwell when I slept on a bed in Chiang Rai. Then I woke up here, in Wiang Kin.

Laoperng: So, this is the reason why you don't put on shoes.

Praenuan: Who would I wear shoes on a bed?

Laoperng: You lie to me because you don't want to tell how you snuck into this palace.

Praenuan: I told you the truth, but you don't believe me.

Laoperng: During this political crisis, I cannot trust anybody.

Praenuan: You told me that the Thai army had seized over *your country*.

Laoperng: The Thai Army of *Monthon Payap*⁶² seized *Wiang Kin* since the middle of last year. By the end of last year, they set up an army to control the region. *Phor* Boonsing is a Thai provincial education officer. He taught me some Thai.

Praenuan: So, you don't like Thai people?

Laoperng: We are like brothers and sisters⁶³ however, I want *Wiang Kin* to be independent, not under anybody's control (Figure 21).

⁶² The administrative reform of the Lanna Kingdom during the centralisation of Siam. *Monthon Phayap* is a subdivision governed under *Thesaphiban* (literally local government) system. Officials from Ministry of Interior in Bangkok were sent to administer the region (Sarassawadee,2005:185-201).

⁶³*baan phee muang nong* บ้านพี่เมืองน้อง



Figure 21 Laoperng and Praenuan meet for the second time and he treats her very well (*Buangbanjathorn*, ep 1)

The idea of brotherhood is explicit in this conversation. The phrase ‘*baan phae muang nong*’ (บ้านพี่เมืองน้อง), that Laoperng uses to refer to the relationship between Thailand and Keng Tung, literally means ‘houses of older brothers/sister and cities of brothers/sisters.’ It is a discourse commonly found in the RNH to build awareness among the Thais of the other ethnic groups living both inside and outside Thailand’s borders, that they are members of the same nation. It is similar to a statement by the main character in *Raknakkara*, in the previous section, that two ethnic Tai groups are like brothers but in *Buangbanjathorn* this discourse is emphasised in line with the irredentist campaign and concretised by the depiction of the Thai empire.

The idea of brotherhood is romanticised to be a loving, friendly relationship. First, it is shown that the Thai army and Keng Tung people can live together harmoniously. The drama does not show signs of oppression or resistance. As seen in a conversation, when Praenuan asks if he dislikes Thai people, Laoperng does not say yes or no. He tries to speak nice thing about Thai people even though Thai soldiers seized his country. Moreover, the way he talks about Thai soldiers living in the palace or in his country does not show any strong sentiment. His voice is in a neutral tone and his face is calm without any sign of anger or sorrow. Although he says that he wants his country to be independent, he does not show hatred towards Thai people or the country. Rather, he shows his preference for Thai people as he refers to the Thai education officer with the respectful word ‘*phor*’ (พ่อ), followed by his name Boonsing, which literally means ‘father Boonsing.’ This suggests that he gives some respect to the Thai man. The drama implies that he probably has positive feeling towards Thai people because he learns to speak Thai from ‘father

Boonsing.’ These statements demonstrate that Thailand and Keng Tung have lived together harmoniously despite being under the rule of Thai empire. He can tolerate the existence of Thai soldiers in the palace and in the country. More importantly, he expresses his friendliness and hospitality to Praenuan, a suspicious Thai woman whom he does not know. At the end of the scene, Laoperng shows his kindness and offers Praenuan accommodation and treats her like his guest. Based on what we see from this scene, Thai people are respected and well treated by Keng Tung people, even though they are ruled by the Thai empire.

Second, Thailand is not an enemy but a friend. Even though the Thai army takes control of their country, Laoperng still has full power in the palace. As an adopted son of Keng Tung’s ruler, he is owner and master and can exercise power over the Thai soldiers. This implies that the Thai army respects his rights to rule the palace and people, and they are in good relationship. On the contrary, the Burmese appear as a threatening enemy. In an earlier scene, a Burmese soldier intrudes into the palace and takes Praenuan as a hostage. Laoperng fights with him bravely and then orders all the soldiers to chase after the Burmese soldier. This scene infers that the Burmese are the enemy and harmful to Keng Tung people. The idea of a country in danger is also expressed in the beginning when four Keng Tung soldiers are patrolling the palace wall, suggesting that the country is experiencing threat of war or similar unstable situation. This image of the Burmese as enemy is in sharp contrast to that of Thai people as a good friend. Accordingly, this scene also implies that Thailand and Keng Tung are like brothers living peacefully together under the rule of Thai empire, an idea promoted by the irredentists at that time.

3.2.3.2.2 Keng Tung under Thai protection

The above section illustrates the supposed brotherhood between Thai people and the ethnic Tai Khoen in Keng Tung. This section will show that, under the Thai empire, the ethnic Tai Khoen appear protected by the Thai army. Keng Tung is safe from their enemy, the Burmese, because it is a part of the Thai nation. In episode 9, Tongrew is getting married. Her family is worried that Usor, the Burmese nobleman, might destroy the wedding ceremony and kidnap the bride because Tongrew was previously supposed to have an arranged to marry him. Her brother asks the Thai army for help.

The wedding party is set in a big garden in front of a palace. It is a Western style banquet. A rectangle table is set in the middle. On top of the table are food trays and afternoon tea stands. Five round tables are set in a half circle. On each table are Western-style cutlery. Food is served on the tables including steaks, sausages, and bread. Guests are enjoying food and

watching traditional dances. Extreme long shots are used to show overall setting and landscape. A medium shot gives a closer look at the table where the main characters sit. At that table are Tongrew (the bride), Sanpang (the groom), her grandmother, her uncle, Laoperng (her brother and main male protagonist), Praenuan (main female protagonist), Boonsing (a Thai officer), and Major Kit (a Thai soldier). All the characters dress in traditional Tai Khoen outfits, except the two Thai men that wear western suits. Medium and medium close-up shots are used as characters speak. Slow and soft instrumental music is played (Figure 22).

Praenuan: What time will the wedding parade leave the palace?

Laoperng: 2 o'clock. Some soldiers will dress like villagers and stand with the crowds watching the parade along the way to the temple and on the way back here.

(Music changes to faster, exciting drumbeats.)

Major Kit: Don't be afraid, Praenuan. Thai soldiers and Wiang Kin soldiers will do their best to protect the people and the peacefulness of this city.

Uncle: I've heard that a weapon storehouse in your military camp was burnt and destroyed by Usor.

Major Kit: If Usor dares to cause trouble in Wiang Kin, I will arrest and punish him. I won't fear anyone's power.

Boonsing: Usor wants to show his power and scares everybody.

Laoperng: Power can force people but cannot create loyalty. To rule others, one needs to build respect, not scare them.

Sanpang: I don't believe oppressing people will bring him power. Nor do I believe that violence will bring respect.



Figure 22 Two Thai men and one Thai woman are joining a wedding party with Keng Tung's royal family members (*Buangbanjathorn*, ep 9)

This scene restates the depiction of friendly relationship as discussed above but it adds the idea that Thailand is a protector of other ethnic Tai groups. This is treated equally like a friend and in contrast to the Burmese. Two Thai men and one

Thai woman (Praenuan) can sit at the same table with the royal family of this state. It suggests that Thailand receives a certain amount of respect. In contrast, the Burmese are represented by a character named Usor, who is a bad man as he will destroy the wedding. This sharp contrast builds the image of Thailand as a protector. According to Major Kit, the Thai army takes the role of a protecting brother who would bravely chase away all danger. This scene indirectly states that Keng Tung will be saved from Burma if it is under the protection of Thai empire. This statement legitimises the Thai invasion of Keng Tung to be a heroic deed of a more powerful nation to help a less powerful one. This legitimisation is elaborated when characters criticise the Burmese way of ruling through force and violence. This reminds audiences of the discourse frequently found in the RNH that the Thai king is a righteous ruler who protects his kingdom and people with benevolence. The Thai king is portrayed as a merciful and compassionate ruler who has both mystical power and might, and thus creates the essence of *barami*, or virtuous and moral power (Fong, 2009:688). The RNH assumes that the *barami* will make people respect and bring loyalty to the ruler which is opposite to the Burmese ruler in this drama that exercises its power violently.

The role of the Thai army is to elaborate the next episode. Usor and the Burmese soldiers kill several men in the wedding parade and take Praenuan hostage. They run away into the forest. Laoperng chases after them and fights furiously. When Laoperng is about to lose, Thai soldiers come in (Figure 23).

An extreme long shot and high angle shows these people standing in a forest. A gun shot is heard, followed by the voice of someone speaking 'Just give it up, Usor.' Then, a long shot shows several Thai soldiers, led by Major Kit, running to them. All are holding guns and aiming at Usor and his men. Medium close-up shots are used to stress characters' feelings when they speak.

Usor: What can you do?

Major Kit: You burnt the Thai army's storehouse, abducted women, and harmed Wiang Kin people under the protection of the Thai army. With all these offenses, no army can save you.



Figure 23 Thai army arrests the Burmese soldiers (*Buangbanjathorn*, ep 9)

Even though both Usor and Laoperng have guns in their hands, they throw them away and fight with traditional martial arts. In contrast, the Thai soldiers come in, all armed with weapons such as rifles and pistols. This is a different mode of fighting. It symbolises that Keng Tung and Burma's fight is in a traditional context, while the role of Thai soldiers and army belongs to a modern context of a nation-state, as expressed in Major Kit's saying that Usor harms '*Wiang Kin people under the protection of the Thai army.*' The Thai army in this scene is portrayed as civilised, advanced in weaponry and fighting skills, able to help a small state like Keng Tung from pre-modern, traditional overlordship, which relied on simplistic modes of violence.

According to the dramatic narrative, Thailand and Keng Tung are brothers that have close relationship and Thailand acts as the older brother who willingly protects its younger, less powerful sibling. In this last episode, the Thai army interferes with internal conflicts between Burma and Keng Tung because they believe that it is their responsibility as a protector. There are no Keng Tung soldiers in this scene which hints at the disappearance of Keng Tung military power. The drama uses this scene to remind audiences of Thailand's right over Keng Tung. At the end of the drama, Usor is dead and Keng Tung has returned to a peaceful life. The depiction of Keng Tung in conflict with Burma provides the opportunity for Thailand to step in and prove that it is reliable as a trustworthy brother. Therefore, the creation of brotherhood with other ethnicities in *Buangbanjathorn* is a way to build an image of Thailand as a strong Thai nation.

The narrative drive of the drama builds an image of Thailand as a great nation. However, the Thai empire no longer exists. The drama thus acts to recall this

memory. The drama reproduces national pride that Thailand was once a powerful country and these people used to be a part of the Thai nation and have always been their brothers. It is based on imperialist thinking that views the colonised country as incapable of ruling itself. One scene in episode 3 explicitly expresses national pride. After the Burmese soldiers intrude into the palace several times, Praenuan asks Laoperng why he does not negotiate with Usor (the Burmese). Laoperng's answer is;

Usor is a man who crazy for power. He never loses. He will never yield to a small state like us. Your country has never been colonised. You might not understand a country that wants power or a country that wants independence.

This statement reflects how the RNH circulates in the perception of these drama makers. While this drama presents Thailand as a great nation in the past, it never fails to reaffirm the discourse that the Thai nation has always been independent. In order to do so, the combination with other ethnicities is needed. The ethnic Tai Khoen in Keng Tung are exploited to make a comparison with Thais who, according to the RNH, have always been independent and protective. The Tai are essential as they are evidence of the Greater Thai nation, and proof of national pride, and associated power.

3.2.4 Conclusion

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the Thai nation is built through combination with other ethnicities. It does so by looking at the idea of the Greater Thai nation and irredentism, which were products of imperialist thinking. This kind of thinking resulted from the RNH and narratives revolving around the 'lost territories.' This discourse was elaborated to be a 'National Humiliation', and used by the military government to construct a hypernationalism in Thailand, claiming to restore national prestige as an empire. The building of the Thai empire was followed by the creation of an anachronistic map, the concept of brotherhood between Thais and other Tai-speaking people beyond Thailand's borders, the homogenisation of all ethnic groups living within the country, and the expansion of territory to the areas Thai leaders believed to be their 'lost territories.' It was a short period in Thai history that Thailand actually functioned as an empire.

This thesis has found that the ethnic Tai Khoen from Keng Tung are the popular choice used to represent the north of Thailand in Thai TV dramas despite them existing predominantly beyond Thailand's borders. This implies that drama makers assume ethnic Tai who live beyond Thailand's present territory are

historically members of the Thai nation. These kinds of dramas often end with the unification between Thais and ethnic Tai people from other states. The depiction of this scenario recalls the idea of Greater Thai nation. While the empire or the Greater Thai nation had passed, this imperialist thinking is still evident in contemporary dramas with a northern Thai focus. It also reminds Thai audiences of the unification and hierarchical relationship between Bangkok and the north as the centre and the periphery.

Raknakkara (2017) exemplifies the case of successful unification of the north through internal colonisation. This discourse from RNH assumes the north as a part of the Thai nation and automatically considers all ethnicities as one group to be included in Siam. This is reflected through the assimilation of characters between different ethnic groups. In this drama, the assimilation of ethnic Tai groups is expressed through cultural proximity as they are generalised as one, and via the abandonment or shifting of one identity to becoming another. Another drama, *Buangbanjathorn* (2017) depicts the perception of brotherhood relating to ethnic groups that are no longer a part of the Thai nation. In this drama, selected scenes demonstrate the relationship between Thailand and Keng Tung as friendly brothers showing Keng Tung as safe under the Thai army's protection. The idea that Thailand is a more benevolent ruler compared to the Burmese who use only violence is also perpetuated. It legitimises the Thai invasion of Keng Tung as a heroic deed of a more powerful nation to help one less powerful.

Pan-Thaism and the Greater Thai nation were chauvinistic ways of constructing a modern nation-state. These concepts were used by the military government to build appearances of a strong Thai nation and to stimulate nationalism among Thai people. The key message of these dramas is that Thailand has always been a powerful nation and to extoll national prestige as an empire in the past. So, it is needed for this drama to instil a social memory of Thailand as a once great nation. Evidence from these dramas have shown that other ethnic Tai groups are combined to build the Thai nation, yet they are not hybridised. It is a 'Combination' process where Siam/Thailand has positioned itself on a superior level in all aspects. Even though the ethnic Tai groups are not treated equally as the dominant Thai, the modern Thai nation cannot be completely constructed or imagined without them.

3.3 Combination of the uncivilised Others

The depiction of the north in Thai TV dramas is often framed in similar patterns. Stories are set in the past, or take place in rural areas. These dramas, capturing the north in days-gone-by, differentiates them from audiences who by relation occupy the 'future' domain. The north is represented as Other, both of time and space. The dominant power in Bangkok has exercised power over them.

A key element in the construction of Thai national identities are the signifiers pertaining to being a 'civilised nation.' However, at the same time, the combination with peripheral uncivilised Others is essential to nation-building because it confirms a superior status. This chapter will examine the presentation of the north as Otherness in Thai TV dramas. The making of Otherness is constructed from the Siamese *siwilai* discourse, which follows imperialist thinking. The first section provides historical background on how dominant power exploits and adapts the meaning of 'civilise' and turns it to being the '*siwilai*' concept. The second section analyses scenes from selected TV dramas in relations to this topic.

3.3.1 *Siwilai*: a power relation between Siam and the local

Siam/Thailand has followed imperialist thinking in its nation-building and then through the concept of '*siwilai*', which reflects products of imperialism. Western imperialist colonisers viewed indigenous people and their lands as objects of study, open for investigation and occupation and because the Imperialists regarded themselves as being more civilised. As Mary Louise Pratt's concept 'Imperial Eyes' contends, the West legitimised their occupation of land by using 'travel writing' to explain that appropriation without subjugation and violence. For example, it narrated those lands as 'uninhabited, unpossessed, unoccupied landscape' with indigenous people portrayed as 'ghostly presence' or 'cultureless beings' thus acting to leverage a narrative that legitimised the appropriation of resources and administrative control (Pratt, 1992:38-39,51-53). In this chapter we see how a dominant Bangkok based power acts as the imperialist, looking to a 'less civilised' Northern Other as something to be controlled, investigated, evaluated or enjoyed for holiday pleasure.

Siwilai or 'civilise' was coined as a term in Thailand around the nineteenth century. The word 'civilise' and 'civilisation' came to Siam during the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV, r.1851-1868) after the coming of Western trade and imperial power. The Thai King was aware that Siam's sovereignty would depend on a relationship with the West and to certain Western notions and standards of 'civilisation' (Stengs, 2009:7). With the notion of *siwilai*, Siamese elites and the ruling

class could sustain their power as well as distinguish themselves from less civilised Others.

3.3.1.1 Empowering Siam and the concept of *'siwilai'*

A significant amount of Thai historical narrative explains that Siam's modernisation, or the quest for *siwilai*, was done to avoid being colonised by external forces saving the country's independence by satisfying the Europeans (Thongchai, 2000b:532). The country's reform and King Chulalongkorn's first journey to Europe in 1897 was highly praised as a tactic to save the country's independence from Western imperialism. For example, David K. Wyatt states how the king felt Westernisation was needed for the country after a trip to Europe;

... he (the king) knew what the Europeans were demanding and the theory that lay behind their often contemptuous judgements of his kingdom. He knew how, according to European definitions of modernity, his country should develop, and he often despaired at the compromise that had to be made, the work left undone, and the imperfections in the system that was being developed... (Wyatt, 2003:196-197).

This is part of the 'Siam-was-never-colonised' discourse, which implies that the king was obliged to reform the country and Siam was forced to follow Western ways. Nonetheless, some scholars have noted that the motivation to become civilised among the Siamese elite was for their own benefit. Thongchai points out that 'the quest for *siwilai*' was not simply a reaction to the colonial threat. Rather, it obscured another motivation and an attempt originated by the elites to attain and confirm the superiority of Siam (Thongchai, 2000b:529). The Siamese monarch and elites exploited the westernisation process to gain advantage in many aspects.

First, the concept of *siwilai* conceals Siam's internal colonisation over the smaller states. *Siwilai* legitimised extensions of power over tributary states in Lanna, Lanchang and Pattani (Harrison, 2010a:17). The reformation of the country was believed to be part of an anti-colonisation movement because it was linked to the Paknam incident, a territorial conflict whereby when the French pressured Siam by sending two gunboats to blockade the Chao Phraya River. The centralisation of administrative systems was the only way to survive. However, in Thongchai's words, the administrative reform was an 'apologetic discourse for Siam's aggression' and 'merely a euphemism for Siam's imperial conquest' (Thongchai, 2011:29-30). The centralisation of the administrative system enabled Chulalongkorn to achieve 'absolute' power and Siam to enjoy the centralisation of tax collection and absolute spending power, too (Peleggi, 2002:41) So, the *siwilai* discourse disguised Siam's internal colonisation to act as if it was an obligation or 'burden' to make a modern, unified nation.

Second, the concept of *siwilai* prevented Siam elites from being uncivilised. The reformation was done by the Siam elites since they could not tolerate being seen as uncivilised. This group were not hostile to Westerners either. Conversely, the Thai elite were fond of the West and their craving for things Western was well known (Thongchai, 2000b:532). They did not have a distaste of colonial economic or Western technology because they were the beneficiaries. They were eager to modernise the Thai state, bureaucracy, and society in more ways than the colonial power dictated (Thongchai, 2011:28). Peleggi's book (2002) illustrates in detail how the monarchy and Siamese elite enjoyed Westernised objects, fashions, and lifestyles. Thus, their thirst to be civilised also drove the *siwilai* project.

Third, *siwilai* enhanced the image of the monarch as a moderniser. Westernisation in the country was claimed to be achieved by the monarch and the king's trip to Europe in 1897 was highly praised as a strategy to save the country. However, there is little evidence to prove this claim. More reliable evidence to confirm Siam's independence is the Franco-British Declaration of 1896, which secured Siam as a buffer zone and was signed a year prior to the King's first trip. Thongchai and Harrison argue that the most significant meaning of this trip was to claim a status on par with European monarchs and to regain the nation's glory after losing the supreme royal power in the Paknam Incident in 1893. Instead, what the King achieved was the standing of a significant political player on the world stage, in the eyes of most Thais, whilst acquiring symbols of Westernisation as attributes of status and markers of prestige (Thongchai, 2000b:539; 2011:27; Harrison, 2010a:18). Accordingly, Thais worship Chulalongkorn as a king who brought modernisation to the country and glorify this idea. Irene Stengs's research elaborates that Chulalongkorn has become a mythical figure as the great Buddhist king who modernised his kingdom. Thais admire him dearly, leading to the cultivation of a cult of King Chulalongkorn worship and deference, founded on these narratives of him as a great moderniser, saviour, and caring father to the nation. These narratives constituted the myth of the Great Beloved king⁶⁴ (Stengs, 2008:160-162). *Siwilai* discourse leveraged the monarch in to being a great hero of the nation, even though modernisation was only a by-product of his preference and desire for Western lifestyles.

Finally, *siwilai* turned Siam towards being a modern nation state. Though the reform started during the 19th century, its products were carried on and intensified during the 1940s. *Siwilai* became more concrete in the form of cultural mandates (รัฐ

⁶⁴ พระปิยมหาราช (*phra piya maharat*).

นิยม *ratthaniyom*) during Phibun's first government (1938-1944), which aimed at creating a 'uniform, civilised, and progressive' society (Barmé, 1993:138). This policy was proposed to remove flaws which hampered the country's progress. These flaws were seen as unsightly dress and undisciplined social behaviour, which made the country seem 'unprogressive' (Barmé, 1993:144). The *siwilai* programme covered almost all aspects of life from clothing to housing, daily life, economy, language, and so on. For example, it included linguistic reforms where people were taught how to say hello (สวัสดี *sawatdee*) and thank you (ขอบคุณ *khop khun*) properly as a civilised person (Peleggi, 2008:73-75). The most obvious policy called on the public to dress in a neat and well-groomed manner and Western-style clothing, to lead Thailand to becoming 'the equal of civilised nations' (Barmé, 1993:156-157) (read more in Chapter 4.2). Under the concept of *siwilai*, Siam had gained a new image as a 'civilised' and 'progressive' Thai nation.

Therefore, the concept of *siwilai* empowered Siam elites so that they could feel equal to the West in terms of social, cultural or technological mores. Even though the function of '*siwilai*' itself was not the main factor in saving the country from colonisation, Siam elites adopted Western ways of life to modernise their own identities. Siam followed imperialist thinking to exercise power over the less civilised commoners and local people whom they treated as subjects of internal colonisation.

3.3.1.2 The unification of the less civilised Others

Siam's 'higher civilisation' and the 'less-civilised' Others were reflected in some ethnographic records which show that the distance between rulers and their subjects was not in ethnic cultures but the power relations of the 'tamed/untamed', 'civilisable/uncivilisable' qualification of the Others (Thongchai, 2000a:44,49). Thongchai finds two kinds of Otherness in these writings: one is the '*chaopa*' (ชาวป่า) or 'jungle people', which they regard as uncivilised and barbarian; another is '*chaobannok*' (ชาวบ้านนอก) or the rural villager, who is seen as uneducated and backward (Thongchai, 2000b:534-536). The Siamese elites put themselves in the centre and applied the geographical concept to differentiate the Others. Forest, rural areas, and city are differentiated spaces of civilisation. The elites situated themselves in a *muang* (เมือง town, nation state) with the outer rings being *bannok* (บ้านนอก rural village) and *pa* (ป่า jungle) (Thongchai, 2000b:537). These two groups are also referred to as the 'wild others' and the 'docile others.' The wild others were objects of entertainment whereas the docile others were those who 'begged to live under the shadow of protection of Siamese overlords' (Thongchai, 2000a:46-49). These villagers are often stereotypical as uneducated and backward folks who live in

the backward space, in the domain of simplicity, superstition, ignorance and uneducatedness, which is less *siwilai*.

Siam loved to display the less civilised others such as village, hill tribe, or savage people for their entertainment. For example, Chulalongkorn adopted a young boy (named Khanung) of the Semung tribe in the Malay peninsula and raised him in the Inner Palace as the King's 'own experiment in civilising a savage.' Photographs of Khanung or '*Ngo Ba*⁶⁵' were displayed in fairs and festivals for urban people and these photographs became popular souvenirs. This is the same as photographs of Princess Dara Rasami⁶⁶. Her photographs showed the ethnic difference through her looks and northern style costume which were different from the central Thai fashion. These two samples are colonial subjects that the king kept inside the palace, for political relationship and reinforced the Siamese hierarchy of ethnic categories (Woodhouse, 2017:145, 149-151).

However, when it comes to nation-building, these 'Other' people are counted as 'Thai' when presented to foreigners. In the 19th century, Siam commissioners needed to emphasise the common identity of Lao and Siamese when talking to foreigners, but to retain some of the old Thai-Lao difference in private (Baker and Pasuk, 2017:64). During the Phibun Regime in the 1940s, the government wanted to stress the unity of a nation, and this included the building of perception among Thais. One of the cultural mandates states that 'the citizens of the country would henceforth be simply known as Thai (*Chao Thai*).' The mandate was aimed at forging a Thai consciousness among the Lao and Shan peoples living within Thailand's borders and neighbouring areas coveted by the irredentists (Barmé, 1993:151).

Consequently, the Others in regional area such as the north was a target of this unification because it has distinctive culture and tradition. The government promoted tourism in the north during the 1940s by making it 'a beautiful region' (Darunee, 2006). The unification was intensified after the construction of highways and railways which connected the north and Bangkok more effectively. This led to the first National Economic and Social Development Plan (1961-1966) which promoted the northern provinces as new tourist attractions (Sarassawadee, 2010:595-598). Despite the unification process, the difference of hierarchical civilisation still exists. According to Baker and Pasuk, the unification has stratified people into three broad bands. The hill peoples are at the bottom, next are the

⁶⁵ A play, written by Chulalongkorn, describing the Semang people in detail. The play is a means of knowing these tribal people, who are seen as less than human in the royal court (Woodhouse, 2017:148-149).

⁶⁶ A princess from northern tributary states who became King Chulalongkorn's consort

agricultural docile people. The top of this hierarchy is the princes and elites. These strata of peoples are both 'united and divided', at the same time (Baker and Pasuk, 2017:64).

The next section will explore Siam's centralised view of and over local people, and their 'inferior' identities. This phenomenon is known as 'localism', in which local cultures are promoted and people are yearning for an authentic (Thai) life. While the craze of *siwilai* was a must for the elite, they felt it was essential to preserve and display life of the uncivilised, because this affirms the necessary status of Siam as internal imperialist.

3.3.2 Localism and Thai rural community

Localism was widely discussed in Thailand during the 1970s as a 'grassroots development movement.' In Parnwell and Seeger's term, 'this privileges locally rooted, locally controlled, and locally relevant forms of development which have the moral market society and traditional culture at their core' (Parnwell and Seeger, 2008:85). In the 1980s, there was an NGO development strategy and ideology which tried to avoid the state and politics after the collapse of the Communist Party of Thailand and related to community cultural development perspectives (CDP or วัฒนธรรมชุมชน *watthanatham chumchon*) (Baker & Pasuk, 1999:121; Hewison, 2002:148). This did not only bring attention to local culture but also shed light on the concept of an authentic Thai community, which is the root of Thai society.

According to Atthachak Sattayanurak, Thai renowned scholar on Thai history and politics, CDP has shaped the stereotype of the rural community to be an agricultural society where people live harmoniously like family and relatives. Villagers are perceived to be politically humble and live in a vertical relationship to a hierarchical society. This stereotypical image was created by Phraya Anumanratchathon⁶⁷ during 1940s, and was then combined with images of backward, underdeveloped communities that required development (Atthachak, 2016:32). This turning back to village life in a way stood against Westernisation and modernisation. One of the key scholars in this field, Chatthip Nartsupha (1999)⁶⁸, illustrates that the Thai village community is a peaceful community where people were tied into ancestor systems, Buddhism and spiritual beliefs, and lived under the state's control system of corvée and tax. Chatthip suggests that the villages' subsistence economy was destroyed by free trade and economic changes during the

⁶⁷ Thai scholar well-known for culture-related works such as the study of Thai folklore which set the foundations for cultural awareness among young Thai scholars.

⁶⁸ In a book 'Thai Village Economy in the Past' (original Thai edition in 1984)

mid-19th century (1855 – 1932) where traditional monopoly was replaced by free trade. Economic systems changed from subsistence to commercial, and people were tied to a metropolitan capitalist system instead. For Chatthip, the Thai village community is unique, self-sufficient, and was in existence before the state was exploited and neglected by external forces. The villagers were ‘dragged into the market, capitalist system half-heartedly’ (Chatthip, 1999:42-50). This is what Atthachak calls ‘the plot of Thai village history⁶⁹’ which fixes on ‘beautiful past that was ruined by capitalism and Western influences, and all Thai citizens must help preserving Thainess in the village.’ Eventually, this plot has turned to be a yearning for ‘the good old times’ (Atthachak, 2016:33).

Localism was raised to higher concern after the economic crisis in 1997⁷⁰ when the country had to depend on international financial power. The popular opinion was that the country was threatened by modernisation, the capitalist movement, globalisation, Westernisation and thus needed to reject liberalisation, and respond by proposing a rural localism as a ‘bedrock of Thai cultural values’ and an alternative means to fighting back (Parnwell and Seeger, 2008:85; Hewison, 2000: 280,285). This perspective was restated in King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s birthday speech in December 1997. This included a solution to national economic crisis by using a ‘new theory’ of self-sufficiency economy or ‘*setthakit pho phiang*’ (เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง). The speech was televised nationwide. The King’s preaching was regarded as a reaction to the threat to sovereignty and ‘economic warfare’ which was paralleled to the previous threats to Thailand’s sovereignty in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries (Reynolds, 2001:265-266).

Localism also brought local identities into public view. After the end of the Cold War, the Thai government relaxed and did not see local cultural identities as posing a threat to Thai national identity. Rather, local and regional cultures such as languages and traditions were promoted in the mass media such as on soap operas, in advertisements, or government campaigns. This media liberalisation was supported by the 1997 constitution that increased the use of regional dialects (Jory, 1999a: 337-340). This was in line with the Thai governments ‘Year to Campaign for Thai Culture’ in 1994 and Tourism Authority of Thailand’s campaign ‘Amazing Thailand’ (1998-99). The result was that local identities were employed in the tourism

⁶⁹ โครงการเรื่องในประวัติศาสตร์ชนบท

⁷⁰ *Tom Yam Kung* crisis or Asian financial crisis which caused many business sectors to terminate and put thousands of people jobless. This era is sometimes referred to as ‘*Yuk Ai Em E*’ (IMF era).

industry more heavily (Jory, 1999a;1999b). Consequently, the economic crisis gave birth to the rise of localism in the country as a true essence of Thai identity.

Even though localism was highly praised as a solution to save the country from crisis, there are some critics that view the concept differently. Baker and Pasuk (1999) argued that Chatthip's book romanticised the rural while ignoring the benefit of urbanism, modernism, and progress. The village is represented only one-sidedly, as an idyllic place and via a backward-looking lens (Baker and Pasuk, 1999:122-123). Thongchai also stresses that the idea of 'Oriental despotism', found in Chatthip's work, substitutes the empirical village with his own idealised village. He notes that what makes Chatthip's idea so influential within Thai society is the idea of community culture and the belief in the primordial essence of 'the Thai village' (Thongchai, 2008:580-581). Hewison also argues that localism in Thailand ignores the positive aspects of industrialisation and remains unable to develop a 'sound alternative model.' What localism does do, is provide moral arguments about globalisation, privileging agriculture, and ignoring other industries beyond farming and the agricultural sector. In essence, the localist movement in Thailand does not go beyond the reactionary, romantic, anti-urban, and chauvinistic (Hewison, 2000:291-292).

The romanticisation of localism is also associated with the idea of '*phumpanya*' (ภูมิปัญญา) which translated as local knowledge, indigenous knowledge, native wisdom, local genius, and ingenuity. However, *phumpanya*, which is believed to be a very old model of thinking, and presented as a main source of local knowledge, does not originate from the local. On the contrary, it was introduced at a global level as a key concept in the twentieth century, because Western social scientists were concerned about representing subaltern actors, and many years before the failure of grand theories (Reynolds, 2001:264). Localism is a newly invented concept resulting from global processes. Parnwell and Seeger had given their significant criticism over localism in that it;

misrepresents the reality of 'traditional rural life', for its lack of realism in the face of the continuing certainty of global capitalism, for its use as a cathartic sop for people in denial after the economic crisis, and for its lack of appeal to a majority of Thai people still intent on the path toward modern development (Parnwell and Seeger, 2008:85-86).

However, the ideal village community contrasts to reality. Research by many scholars has revealed that villagers in the countryside have changed significantly from the constructed stereotype. They are no longer farmers who rely on primitive farming. They have developed towards more progressive technology usage, as well as non-farm business and have various sources of income. The rural community are

not farmers who were forced or 'dragged to consumerism.' Rather, they are not against consumerism but have benefited from economic changes (Naruemon and McCargo, 2011:1005). They may be poorer than people in urban areas, but they are not so close to the subsistence margin. These people seek to improve their lives, not maintaining their standard of living as imagined by urban people in some faux mode or model of sustainability (Keyes, 1983:15). Rural farmers and traditional agricultural society have been replaced by a new pattern of farming and new community of entrepreneurs (Atthachak, 2016:45). According to these changes, farmers should be referred to as farm-entrepreneurs, post-peasant, taproot, middle-income peasants, or cosmopolitan villagers (Atthachak, 2015,2106; Naruemon and McCargo,2011). Janit Feangfu also challenges the binary of 'modern' and 'traditional' as fixed categories. She argues that modernisation in Thailand is complex and dynamic as it is a result of both 'the desire to be modern' and the modern environment itself. Thus, it is spurious to identify 'modern/Westernised elements' as alien to 'Thai tradition' in order to preserve what is believed to be 'Thainess' (Janit, 2011:235-237). Based on these scholars, existing images of traditional, rural society are problematic. These scholars' views affirm that localism and its romanticisation in the Thai context is no longer applicable to reality.

To conclude, localism and the romanticisation of the rural past are products of the *siwilai* concept and mode of thinking. People of dominant power in Bangkok enjoy stories and depiction of localism with a perception that they are situated higher up, in a hierarchy of civilisation. While they used *siwilai* to respond to an external threat from the West, they also used *siwilai* to put themselves in a higher position than the Others within. In Western culture where actual colonisation takes place, *siwilai* functions as a tactic used by the coloniser in transforming or controlling their colonised Others. In Thailand, the difference is that Siamese elites take the role of Western coloniser over their internal subjects.

3.3.3 Analysis of TV dramas

In this section, I investigate the concept of *siwilai* in three selected TV dramas. I do so to see how these dramas use the depiction of the past and northern Thailand to construct a nation. The discussion is divided into three sections. The first section examines the products of the '*siwilai* project' in the north. The second section focuses on the making of Otherness. The last section analyses the nostalgic presentation of the north.

3.3.3.1 The Siamese burden: products of the civilising process

Siamese civilising projects are a product of imperialist thinking and also used to legitimise Siamese internal colonisation. This section examines the products of Siamese *siwilai* projects in the north as depicted in two TV dramas. It shows how the north was developed in different aspects because of Siam, and the discourse that Siam used in its nation-building.

The imperialists perceived is an obligation of civilised countries to help other uncivilised countries. According to Niall Ferguson, though the British Empire was zealous in the acquisition and exploitation of slaves, practiced forms of racial discrimination, and acted brutally or negligently towards the suffering of the colonies, it was obvious that no organisation in history has done more to promote the free movement of goods, capital and labour, Western norms of law, order and governance than the British Empire (Ferguson, 2004b:xxii). The 'Anglobalisation' from the British Empire left many imperial products to the world, including commodity and labour markets, culture, government, capital markets and warfare (Ferguson, 2004a:9-10,21-22).

This concept is explicitly shown in Rudyard Kipling's famous poem 'The White Man's Burden' (1899) which talks about the American colonisation of the Philippines. The poem states that it is a duty of the empire to help the uncivilised world and justifies imperial conquest as a mission-of-civilisation. It is not only the degree of civilisation but also racial ideology that underpins this civilising mission. U.S. imperialism was backed by white supremacist conviction such as Anglo-Saxonism, Social Darwinism, and benevolent assimilation as well. These are rationale for seizing other countries and extending American dominion (Love, 2007:76,83). The terms differ in each country. The British empire calls it a white man's burden. It was the 'civilising mission' for the French and the American empire calls it 'manifest destiny' (Ferguson, 2004a:23). In Thailand, this mission is known as 'the quest for *siwilai*.'

This section explores the *siwilai* project in the TV dramas *Raknakkara* and *Klinkasalong* in which examples of civilisation and modernisation process is clearly presented. These two dramas have similar themes that talk about modernisation in the north. *Raknakkara* takes place in 1884 and the story is about how the northern states should adapt to changes, prepare for the coming of West, and be united with Siam to survive Western colonisation. The story in *Klinkasalong* is set many years later in 1924 after the north had been incorporated as a province of Siam. It can be said that *Raknakkara* depicts the beginning of country reform while *Klinkasalong*

portrays the success of that reform. I will separate the *siwilai* project in the north into two parts – Lanna identity and Lanna society.

3.3.3.1.1 Civilising the Lanna identity

This section will focus on the civilising of northern identity in order to turn the colonised Others into civilised subjects. In *Raknakkara*, Sukkawong, the main male character, represents Siamese power and Western civilisation. Though he is a northern Thai prince, his education in Singapore and work experience in Siam give him superiority in the north. He is the only civilised man in that northern state who is fluent in English and knowledgeable about Western culture. Sukkawong imports Western knowledge, ways of thinking, and Western objects to his hometown, too. For example, he teaches his servants to use an iron in episode 5 and in episode 7 he has his British friend taking his picture with a camera. These episodes show northern people as backward and lacking education; amazed with the iron and scared of a camera. These examples are not found in the original text but in the TV adaptation. The producers added them to stress the idea of modernisation of the north. Episode 4 shows that a Western way of thinking is imported to the north when Sukkawong teaches one servant to swim:

Kamkaew, a young servant, practices swimming in a pond. Manmuang (her master) and other servants try to stop her, saying that a woman should not swim, and she should be ashamed of herself. Minutes later, Kamkaew starts drowning. A male servant jumps into the pond to save her. When she is safe, everybody tells her not to do this again. Sukkawong asks if she is scared of swimming and she says no, insisting that she wants to swim. Then a camera cuts to new scene. Kamkaew is in the pond again. This time she uses dried coconuts as floats.

Sukkawong's grandmother: You should have stopped her, but you help her instead.

Sukkawong: How can we stop her? If we say no, do you think a girl like her will not do it again?

This scene is added to the drama though it is not essential to the core plot. Its makers want to present the *siwilai* project, that Siam has exported to the north. According to an interview with the screenwriter, he claims that typical northern Thai women in the past did not swim because it exposed their bodies. He states that he wanted to add a feminist idea that women should be equal to men, and this idea is supported by Sukkawong, a character that stands for Siam (Yingyot, 2018, interview). Accordingly, swimming symbolises the modernisation of northern people. It does not simply mean the ability to swim but it also signifies the Western idea of gender equality which means a civilised identity. While northern people are scared of

swimming and think that a good woman must avoid it, Sukkawong is the only character who supports Kamkaew and finds a solution for her to swim safely. Here, the drama displays how Siam is the important agent in civilising the north.

In the same episode, the drama further illustrates that Sukkawong's modernised and civilised lifestyle gradually changes his wife's identity. Manmuang is becoming more civilised when she opens her mind to learn new things. In this scene, Sukkawong allows her to read his collections of English books and educate her about the concept of colonialism. Then, he changes her attitude towards the West and his British friend.

Manmuang is in a living room with two servants, cleaning and unpacking her husband's belongings. She is interested in some English books which are her husband's collection. She flips through some pages then suddenly her husband comes in.

Manmuang: I'm sorry to use your things without asking.

Sukkawong: I told you. All my belongings are also yours. What really interests you?

Manmuang: I'm wondering why the West wants our teakwood.

Sukkawong: That's because their countries do not have valuable and costly wood just like ours. Teakwood only grows in tropical areas. Even though their countries are much more developed, they lack many things we have such as ore, spices, and rice that they need during winter.

Manmuang: They just want to trade with us, don't they?

Sukkawong: Nobody knows their real intention.

(Mr. Bracken, Sukkawong's friend, enters the scene)

Bracken: (in English) Good Morning.

Sukkawong: (in English) Morning. (Turns to Manmuang, switch to northern Thai dialect) We should be friends with them and exploit this time as much as we can. It is the best way.

Bracken comes in and shakes hand with Sukkawong. Both of them speak in English. Bracken then turns to Manmuang.

Bracken: (in English) How are you today?

Manmuang: (in English) I'm fine. Thank you. And you?

Bracken: (in English) Delightful. Absolutely delightful.



Figure 24 Sukkawong introduces his wife to his British friend (*Raknakkara*, ep 4)

This scene shows how Manmuang changes her attitude towards the West. She looks uncomfortable at the beginning but later she seems to be more relaxed and answers in English. A sudden facial expression of happiness is shown on Bracken's face, and he smiles back to her husband. Both men look very happy to see that she is now 'changed.' This scene is explicit in portraying how Manmuang, as a representative of the north, has gradually changed to be open-minded to new knowledge and experiences, which is an ideal characteristic for the subjects of the Siamese *siwilai* project. Manmuang is now civilised because she engages with Western culture; she has adapted to Western thinking and developed modern attitudes towards the West. She understands the concept of colonialism and knows how to deal with it, and, more importantly, she demonstrates a better understanding of the significance of internal colonisation and Siamese reform.

3.3.3.1.2 Civilising the Lanna society

This section investigates the civilising process in the north on modern facilities such as railways, medication, education, or economic systems. *Klinkasalong* highlights the modernisation of the north via a relationship with Western medication, education and other symbols of civilisation brought to the region by the West and Siam. While many TV dramas with a northern Thai focus usually avoid referring to actual places and make them 'fictional', *Klinkasalong* clearly specifies when (1924) and where the story takes place (Chiang Mai). So, it appears as a historical record of the modernisation of the north.

The first aspect of modernisation comes in a form of transportation. There are several kinds of pre-modern transportation in this drama such as boat and ox cart. In

episode 3 however, the drama introduces a train. The train is first referred to in a dialogue when a servant is asking her master, Songpeep, to go shopping at a local market to see new goods that have just arrived by boat, but she replies irritably;

Songpeep: I'm lazy. Goods from boat are outdated. It took a couple of months from Bangkok to get here. Right now, everybody goes to Sanpakoi Market⁷¹. There, goods come with trains. They are much faster and newer.

This dialogue signifies that water transportation within is going to become a thing of the past. The Ping River was the major route between Bangkok and Chiang Mai until the railway route opened in 1921. This caused rapid economic changes (Sarassawadee, 2005:245). Siam foresaw that the construction of railroads would bring them economic benefit in the north. Train journeys were also later promoted for tourism (Darunee, 2006:90,128). In *Klinkasalong*, substituting boats in terms of domestic logistics come the idea that whatever comes with the train is modernisation. Trains are a symbol of the Siamese *siwilai* project, elaborated in the following scene when Songpeep accompanies her father (Mang) to welcome Siamese commissioners at the train station.

A long shot, high angle shows Songpeep, Mang (a village headman), and Moey (a servant) cross over train tracks to stand on a platform. An extreme wide shot shows long train tracks on the left of the screen and mountains on the right. We see a train coming from the far left which stops in the middle of the frame. The camera uses cross-cutting shots to show three characters as they are waiting at the platform. When the train stops, Mang tells Songpeep to wait as he will get on the train to welcome the Siamese officers. A high angle shows Songpeep sitting on a bench and waiting for her father. We see a Thai flag and a sign of the train station says 'Chiang Mai.'

Not far from them, a group of Westerners just get off the train. A camera gives a worm's eye view and then tilts up to give a long shot of 6-7 men standing on the platform with their baggage. Sap, the main male character, and another Western doctor greet the newcomers. We learn from a conversation that they are doctors who come to help at a hospital in town. Several medium shots show these men talking, shaking hands, and we see a Thai flag as a background.

Songpeep spots Sap and wants to say hello. A long shot gives Songpeep and a servant on the left side of the screen and Sap on the right side. While she walks towards him, one Siamese officer in a formal uniform walks in a frame (Figure 25). When they are about to greet each other, Mang calls Songpeep over to greet the Siamese officers. A long shot presents a group of Siamese officers and Mang in *Ratchapattaen* outfit which is a Siamese formal uniform (Figure 26).

⁷¹ A local market near the Ping River (main river in Chiang Mai Province), where the Chinese and Christian community resided.



Figure 25 Songpeep and a servant (left), Sap (right), and a Siamese officer in the middle (*Klinkasalong*, ep 3)



Figure 26 Songpeep and her father welcome the Siamese officers (*Klinkasalong*, ep 3)

The train is a symbol of how Siamese power penetrated the northern region. It does not only bring modern goods to the north but also it literally imports a concrete form of Siamese power. Bangkok officers can travel more easily and that enables the administrative system in the north to run smoothly. It is a form of modern transportation that looks like a civilising of the north but in fact it is to enhance the administrative system so that Siam can control the north more effectively. This scene implies that the train station is a space where Siam exercises their power while local

people are only supporting elements. Passengers on that train are the Siamese commissioners and Westerners. The locals can only stand on a platform to welcome them. Though Mang can get on the train, he does not board on the train to travel but to welcome and show respect to the Siamese commissioners.

Figure 25 provides several signifiers of Siam which are a Thai national flag, train tracks and a Siamese officer. One flag is attached to the building and there is a flagpole in the middle of the screen. Even though audiences see only a bottom part of a flagpole, most Thai viewers would recognise immediately that this kind of pole is used solely for a national flag to be raised and lowered twice a day. In 1939, the Thai government under the Phibun regime called on the public to show respect towards a national flag. The government prescribed that 'whenever the National Flag was raised or lowered in public places individuals in the vicinity were required to stand at attention' (Barmé, 1993:152) and that this happens twice a day. Though the story in this drama takes place in 1924, it reflects the idea of the Thai nation that is deeply engraved in the perceptions of these drama makers. In Figure 26 as well, a station sign 'Chiang Mai' is sandwiched between two national flags. It keeps reminding audience that the station as well as the province are under Siam's control. The visibility of a Thai flag will link automatically to audience perceptions that this place belongs to the Thai state and falls under control of the Thai government. Moreover, in Figure 25, a Siamese officer walks into a frame and appears in-between characters. While he does not have any role in this scene, he is intentionally put here to stress Siamese ubiquitous power. Accordingly, the drama conveys the idea that Siam is in charge of this civilising process. In the following scenes, it leads to another form of civilisation which also comes with the train, brought by the Siamese officers and Western doctors – Western medication.

In *Klinkasalong*, Western medication is represented through the main male character. Sap is a Chinese doctor who moves from Bangkok to Chiang Mai to work in a newly opened Western hospital run by American missionaries under Siam's support. During the time of the story, smallpox is a pandemic disease in the region. In episode 3, after the arrival of Western doctors and Siamese commissioners at the train station, they have a meeting about the disease at the hospital.

In a meeting room, one Siamese officer is a head of a meeting. He sits at the short end of a meeting table. Two Western doctors sit on the left side of the table. Sap and another Thai man sit on the right side. Western and Thai nurses sit around the table in a back row, taking minutes.

Doctor A: Smallpox infection is getting worse. Yesterday three kids died because they came here too late. It is Haemorrhagic smallpox which is a severe form accompanied by extensive bleeding into the skin.

Sap: According to the statistic, the pandemic of this disease has stopped for a long time. We have no clue why it starts to reoccur and this time the situation is even worse.

Doctor A: Lots of villagers refuse to get vaccination. We don't know if they are scared of a treatment, a doctor, or an injection. But when they were sent to the hospital, it was too late.

Sap: Same as villagers in Bangkok, they were also scared of the vaccination. They did not understand how injecting of antigens could prevent them from the disease. I even had to inoculate myself to show them that it is safe.

Bangkok commissioner: This is an urgent issue. We need to educate these villagers. In fact, we have been doing research on the antigens for decades before the Saovapha Institute⁷² was founded. Most of Bangkok villagers have been vaccinated. We need to make sure that all the people here are aware of this problem. Otherwise, more people will die from this disease and it will be harder to control the pandemic.

A discussion on the issue of pandemic in TV dramas is not common but this drama uses it to stress the *siwilai* project done by Siam. A conversation tells us that Bangkok has more experience and research to deal with the pandemic. This also infers that the north cannot deal with this pandemic without the assistance from Bangkok and the West.

The drama elaborates this idea in the following episodes. In episode 4, Sap offers free vaccinations to people in the village which is a technique he has successfully used in Bangkok. He is at the market centre, using a megaphone to talk to the villagers. There are two nurses holding signs which say, 'free vaccination for smallpox.' However, the villagers are scared of injection and run away from him (Figure 27). As a result, the drama shows northern people as being backward through lacking knowledge of Western medication. It suggests that it is Siam's duty to provide modern health and medical care to these uncivilised people. Siam needs to educate the north about diseases and how to prevent them. This positions Siam as the benevolent ruler helping to modernise the north.

⁷² Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute, founded by Vajiravudh (Rama VI) in 1912 and named after his mother. The institute specializes in snake venom, rabies, and smallpox vaccines.



Figure 27 northern people run away from a doctor who wants to give free vaccinations (*Klinkasalong*, ep 4)

The next form of the *siwilai* project is modern education. *Klinkasalong* refers to the first school for girls in Chiang Mai. Founded in 1879 by American Presbyterians, it was renamed Dara Academy in 1924 - after Dara Rasami, the northern princess and queen consort of King Chulalongkorn. Even though this school was founded by missionaries, in 1909 Chulalongkorn gave it the official name Phra Racha Chaya Girls School, which means school of the queen consort, and was authorised under the Private School Act B.E.2461 (1918). A short background of the school is even mentioned by one character – see below. In this moment, Sap thinks that Buakiang, a girl whom his aunt has adopted, needs a proper education so he sends her to the school. He sponsors her school uniform and takes the role of her parent at school. He also promises that when Buakiang graduates, he will take her to Bangkok to study in a medical school so that she can become a doctor. Here, the idea of schooling is encouraged by the main character who stands for Siam. In episode 7, Buakiang and Kasalong talk about the profit of education.

At Kasalong's house. Buakiang runs into the house happily to tell them that she is going to school.

Buakiang: Mother! Kasalong! (makes a *wai* gesture to pay respect)

Mother: Why do you dress so well today? You look like a schoolgirl.

Buakiang: Yes. I will study at Dara Academy. (stands up and turns around to show her outfit)

Kasalong: Really? (turns to her mother). Phra Racha Chaya School that my sister and I went to. Now they have changed the name to Dara Academy. (talks to Buakiang) I told you to go to school a long time ago, but you said no. Then why you changed your mind?

Buakiang: It's because of Nai Mor⁷³. He told me if I graduate from this school, he will take me to medical school in Bangkok.

Mother: Really? That's good. If you want to be a doctor, you must study hard.

(next scene)

Buakiang and Kasalong walk to the school. Medium shot shows them walk from the left side of screen. On the right side is a sign which says, 'Dara Academy's announcement.' There are two schoolgirls in front of them and one man in Siamese official attire walking in the opposite direction.

Kasalong: You must study hard. People say women do not need to study but believe me, what you study today will make you survive in the future.

This scene shows the importance of education, in that it is seen to be able to improve one's life. Buakiang has a promising future that she will be a doctor which is also emphasised by Kasalong. Besides, the drama thus also stresses that education in the north is controlled by Siam. Even though it is a Christian school for girls, the drama has one man in Siamese uniform walk into the scene in the foreground (Figure 28). This reminds audiences that the school is under Siam's rule. When the idea of education and progress in life is juxtaposed with the presence of Siam's representative, the drama signifies its core driver of a Siamese *siwilai* project, of which education in the north is also a product of civilisation, brought by Siam.



Figure 28 Kasalong and Buakiang at school (*Klinkasalong*, ep 7)

The next aspect of modernisation imposed by Siam is the trading system. The drama presents the picture of a subsistence economy and simple commodity market, where people earn a living from forest goods, agricultural and hand-crafted products.

⁷³ A term in northern Thai dialect to address a doctor in a respectful tone.

In episode 3, the drama shows a local fresh market. We see stalls selling fruits, vegetables, local food, and handmade items such as handwoven cloth, wooden containers, and other knickknacks (Figure 29). It is a picture of pre-modern society where the economic system is a subsistence one, rather than commercial.



Figure 29 local fresh market (*Klinkasalong*, ep 3)



Figure 30 Chinese community and a paddy merchant (*Klinkasalong*, ep 3)

However, the drama also shows that there is in fact a dynamic of economic systems already operating in the north. In the same episode, we see other kinds of markets and new business in a Chinese community, such as a Chinese medicine shop and paddy merchant (Figure 30). These two pictures illustrate the changing of economic system in the north from subsistence to commercial. According to Chatthip, northern people relied on a subsistence economy and

products traded out of the north were mainly forest goods. In 1900 when the administration of Chiang Mai was more completely merged with Bangkok, land tax was collected in cash. Farmers were forced to sell their produce and enter into the capitalist system. Rice began to be produced for export to Bangkok and the trend of commercial rice production in the north began from the 1920s onwards after the railway was built (Chatthip, 1999:62-63). This new mode of economics gave rise to a new social class of Chinese merchants. Sap's uncle, for example, is a paddy merchant who buys and sells rice between villagers and rice mills. Thus, the existence of the Chinese community in the north as shown in this drama demonstrates how economic systems from the central region reached the north and gradually changed the society. These are depictions of social changes as a result of the *siwilai* project brought by Siam after the reform of administrative systems.

Examples from these two dramas are portrayed as if it was the Siamese burden, to modernise and civilise the north and display the products of the *siwilai* project in so many aspects. From northern identity to various forms of social change – health, education, transportation, and economics – the north has changed significantly into being a modernised and civilised region because of Siam/Thailand. While presenting pictures of the north as uncivilised, or people in need of assistance, Siam gains the role of saviour or benevolent ruler, having helped the north out of barbarism and backwardness. These are premises of imperialist thinking, and as Siam/Thailand imagined it was their obligation to behave so.

3.3.3.2 The strange Others: depiction of uncivilised villagers and hill people

This section will explore the creation, or 'casting', of northern Thai people as Others in two TV dramas. It will support the main idea of this chapter that Thai nation-building works in combination with this Otherness. It aims to show that the making of Otherness is essential for nation-building because it reminds audiences that these people are uncivilised and require rule by the more elevated Siam.

Siamese elites viewed themselves as superior and they rank the north as Others depending on the level of their 'backwardness.' This view equates with imperialist perspectives, when the European knowledge-building project created a new kind of Eurocentred planetary consciousness (Pratt, 1992:38). In other words, the ethnographers and imperialists view of indigenous people as objects of study in which they can take samples, record, study their behaviours, observe and analyse based on their own prejudice and standards. The Siamese elites also recorded, analysed and categorised people in the northern region as if they were objects of study or entertainment.

According to Thongchai's concept of Others within, the Siamese elites have followed ethnographic constructions, as produced as part of the colonial project, to formulate and control the perceived Others, thus reaffirming their superiority, and justifying their rule. Siam categorised Others based on the level of their backwardness using *chao pa* (the forest, wild people) and *chao bannok* (the multi-ethnic villagers under the supremacy of Bangkok) as identifiers (Thongchai, 2000a:41). *Ploengchiphalee* and *Klinkasalong* are different in the presentation of Others. *Klinkasalong* takes place in 1924 in Chiang Mai during the time when the administration in the northern region was completely united with Siam. Therefore, it gives a picture of the north as, using Thongchai's terms, the 'docile others' whose people and culture is assimilable, similar to Siamese only in that they are less civilised. People appear submissive, obedient, friendly and highly respect the Siamese power in the drama. *Ploengchiphalee*, however, sets a story many years later during the 1950s in a mountainous village. The Others in *Ploengchiphalee* are the 'wild others' or hill people. They are far less civilised by Siamese standards, and thus they are harder to control. The presentation of Otherness in this section reflects hierarchy on ethno-spatial ordering which is the imperialist thinking that Siam manipulated to legitimise its power, and confirms the fact that Siam needs the north as Otherness as one element of a combination to construct its nation.

3.3.3.2.1 The villagers

In *Klinkasalong*, northern people are shown as less civilised, different but assimilable. The first feature that creates Otherness is cultural difference. This is expressed through the eyes of Sap, the main character. Sap is ethnic Chinese but his characteristics represent Siam. Though he wears Chinese-style outfits and has features of a Chinese face (light skin and single eyelid), he speaks central Thai throughout the whole drama. Besides, he speaks it in a fluent way while other Chinese characters (such as his Chinese aunt and uncle, performed by Thai actors) need to speak it 'incorrectly.' Even his name is Thai, and we learn from the story that he has moved from Bangkok. So, it is assumable that he stands for Siam, not mainland China.

In episode 3, one mode of cultural difference is the use of northern language. After his arrival, Sap goes to a local market to explore the city. There, he meets three sellers who misunderstand that he is a tax collector sent by the Siam government. These three sellers spot him as a newcomer in town and want to make fun of him. So, they speak bad words to him in northern Thai language, assuming that he will not understand their native language. Sap understands almost every single word though, smiles back patiently and views these people with kindness.



Figure 31 Local people assuming that Sap does not understand their language (*Klinkasalong*, ep 3)

Seller 1: Who's that? I never seen him before. Oh! It must be a Chinese from Bangkok.

Seller 2: Isn't he a tax collector from Bangkok?

Seller 3: Let's talk to him. Keep smiling. He doesn't know our language.

(All go to talk to Sap.)

Seller 2: What the hell are you doing here, greedy Chink? Why don't you live in your country?

Seller 3: Your face is handsome, but you are greedy. We are ripped off to the bones. We're starving now.

Seller 1: What are you looking at? You never seen our vegetables? Such a twonk!

(Laughing out loud.)

Sap: I saw these herbs in a book, but never a real one.

(All are shocked.)

Seller 2: Oh... you can speak Thai. You understand northern Thai language?

Sap: I travelled by boat for 3 months and heard bargemen talking. I think I understand.

Seller 1: Well, you don't understand every word, do you? Some difficult words, you may not get it, right?

Sap: Yes. I don't know what 'twonk' means. But I'm pretty sure I will learn.

The first feature that differs northern people from Siamese people is language. Lanna had developed its own traditional knowledge in the fields of arts, linguistics, local culture, and Lanna Tham script⁷⁴. People in the north speak another language which is different and incomprehensible for the central Thais. It is an obstacle in communication between people from the two regions. The different languages meant a lack of unity. Thus, Bangkok embarked on a process of educational reform in the north, in which students were required to study in central Thai language (or 'standard' Thai) instead of '*kham muang*' or Thai Yuan language (Sarassawadee, 2005:185). By 1903, the government policy enforced that central Thai script must be taught in schools throughout the kingdom. The government believed that this educational reform would lead to the disappearance of local languages, given the rule that government officials had to know central Thai. The use of Lanna Tham script has continued to decline to the present day, together with knowledge of the old texts (Sarassawadee, 2005:209-210).

This language difference is also expressed in the way the drama was produced. The majority of Thai TV dramas employ standard Thai despite stories taking place in other regions of the country. This is because drama makers want to reach a wider range of audiences. For example, Pensiri, the screenwriter for *Ploengchimphalee*, suggests that to make a drama in regional language with central Thai subtitles would prevent Thai audiences from understanding the story. She states that 'we must agree that the audiences in our country read quite slowly. They cannot read subtitles. Unlike films, characters talk a lot in TV dramas. If they cannot catch up, they would lose their interest.' Moreover, most Thai actors speak central Thai as their mother tongue, so it is a struggle for them to speak regional dialect and Pensiri adds that the production does not have much time or budget to invest on language training (Pensiri, 2018, interview). However, there are rising number, though still small, of TV dramas that have started to use regional language with central Thai subtitles. *Klinkasalong* is one of these and northern Thai dialect is spoken as the main language throughout the whole drama. In this regard, the use of northern Thai dialect and standard Thai subtitles reminds audiences, and indexes, the cultural differences between the north and Siam.

The idea of incomprehensible language is elaborated in this scene as the three sellers make fun of Sap, presuming that he does not understand what they are saying. Here the drama presents language as a cultural barrier that obstructs Siam and the north from understanding one another and also differentiates them as

⁷⁴ A writing system used for Northern Thai, used in Buddhist palm-leaf manuscripts and notebooks.

separate groups. However, the drama quickly brings in the idea of unification by showing that Sap understands their language almost clearly and he also shows his eagerness to learn new words in the future. So, the north is firstly presented a region with cultural difference (in term of language) yet it is not hard for Siam to overcome this obstacle given Sap's grasp of Northern Thai.

The next feature of Otherness is that of backwardness, resisting modernisation. Though northern people are similar to the Siamese in many ways, they are deeply engaged with traditional, superstitious beliefs. In episode 8, Sap is called to Kasalong's house because she has a fever. Her mother does not allow him to come in because of tradition. However, her daughter's condition is serious, so she has to relent though it means destroying her daughter's reputation. The day after, Sap realises that entering a woman's room does not only defame her, but it also indicates he has had a sexual affair with her. In order to compensate, he has to apologise to the house's spirit.

Mother: Thanks for coming, doctor. Just give me some medicine. I will take them to Kasalong.

Sap: I can't. I need to check first. How is she now?

Mother: She has high fever, shivering and cough.

Sap: Let me check.

Mother: No. I can't let you enter her bedroom. It's against our tradition.

Sap: I know that tradition, but her symptoms are really bad. If she has high fever, it may lead to shivering. This is a fatal situation. I beg you, please.

Buakiang (a girl who comes with Sap): Just let him do the job, mother. I saw a patient shivering because of high fever and died, I saw with my own eyes. If it's too late we may not be able to save her.

After he comes into the room and checks her temperature with a thermometer.

Mother: How is she, doctor?

Sap: She has high fever. 105-degrees Fahrenheit. I will give an injection to reduce the fever.

Mother: Injection? How?

Sap: I will insert a needle under her skin to deliver medicine.

Mother: Insert a needle under the skin? How can it be cured? Can we just drink boiled herbs as usual?

Sap: You can, but she will recover very slowly. With injection, medicine is quickly absorbed by blood vessels and will reduce fever much faster. I'm afraid if she has this high fever she may be shivering.

Mother: Alright, doctor. As you see fit.

Sap: (make a *wai* gesture). I apologise to you for doing this.

(After giving injection).

Sap: All done. Her fever will reduce shortly. I will give you some medicine for her to take after this. If she does not recover, you must dab her with a wet cloth to cool down her body and give her this medicine.

Mother: Thank you very much, doctor.

On the next day, Sap comes back again.

Mother: Do you come here to check up? This time I can't let you in.

Sap: No. I'm here to meet you. I just learnt that entering a woman's bedroom doesn't only mean a sacrilege to the house's spirits but also it suggests I was molesting her.

Mother: I'm aware of this. But last night, the situation was deadly.

Sap: So, I want to make it right by asking her to marry me.

Mother: I know that you sincerely love my daughter. But we have to wait for a proper time before you two can get married. What is urgent now is to apologise to the house's spirits, otherwise these spirits will make us suffer.

Sap: That's alright. What should I do?

Mother: We have to prepare an offering, but you mustn't do it by yourself. I don't want her father and her sister to know about this. You just pay for it and leave the rest with me.

Sap: Thank you very much.

These scenes show a staunch traditionalism in northern people both in terms of medication and social behaviour. For health and medication, it is obvious that they lack Western, modern, scientific knowledge and rely on local herbs. The mother is worried and scared of injection because she has no idea what it is. Sap needs to explain in detail how injections work. This kind of conversation is not common in Thai TV dramas. Sap's explanation educates the mother and it demonstrates how the north is less civilised. It is also clear that villagers have no idea about the modern concept of gender equality. In the north, people hold a strong belief in traditions that socialising between male and female genders is a taboo. The idea of gender equality that allows men and women to socialise in public have recently been imported to Thailand, in the 1920s. During Vajiravudh's reign (1910-1925), the status of women was the symbol of the degree of civilisation of the country. There were three major restrictions on Thai women that the king wanted to change. One of them was the limited freedom to socialise with men on equal terms (Van Esterik, 2000:99). However, it is shown here that the concept of gender equality did not exist in the north.

The northern tradition is grounded in a belief of family spirits. Northern Thai people ancestors' spirits are believed to reside in each house, to protect the members of a family. These spirits are inherited from generation to generation via female descendents or close relatives on a mother's side. Family members who

move to other villages can share the spirits back home. The sharing of spirits means preparing a bowl or tray of offerings to invite the spirits to live in their new home. The house spirits do not only unite family member, but also, they protect the family members' wellbeing. If a member is unwell, they normally assume that it is because he or she might have insulted the spirits or broken social rules (Chiang Mai news, 2018). One such important rule is about relationships between men and women as we see from the above scene. Sap is not allowed to enter a house because it is against social order to do so. In the actual conversation, the mother uses the words '*phid phee*' (ผิดผี) in which '*phid*' literally means wrong or violate, and '*phee*' means ghosts or spirits. So, '*phid phee*' is an act that insults the ancestors' spirits and violate social norms. To compensate this wrongdoing, a man must prepare bowls of worshipping objects, as required by the woman's family, to apologise to the spirits (NITC, 2012).

These scenes portray Siam's views towards the different and strange features of northern people based on their own standard. According to Thongchai, the favourite stories that Siam likes to tell about '*chao bannok*' or docile villagers are about 'magic, superstition, spirits, local customs, and beliefs' where a Siamese usually expresses scepticism. They take the role of non-believers as they considered themselves men of science, while the villagers are full of stories of superstition and rural life (Thongchai, 2000a:50-51). The north as shown in this drama follows the pattern as described in Thongchai's article to be 'inferior, superstitious, and uncivilised people.' *Klinkasalong* repeats this aspect to enhance the image of the Siamese as a civilised nation and thus marketable to Thai audiences. Northern people are shown as less intelligent, unknowledgeable, having some cultural differences that the Siamese do not understand. However, these characteristics and cultural difference are not harmful to Siam. These people are still assimilable to Siamese culture and can be educated with modern knowledge.

3.3.3.2.2 The wild others

In *Ploengchimphalee*, northern people are presented as hill people and less civilised than provincial villagers according to a central Thai standard. *Ploengchimphalee* tells the story of a Bangkok man, Natrai, who is a son of a wealthy family in the north, who own a timber business in a mountainous village in a forest. He returns home after graduating from study in England. Natrai does not want everybody to think he got his job purely because it is a family business, so he

disguises himself as a new manager and changes his name from Natrai to Nantrai⁷⁵. As he works in the forest, he is challenged by the villagers. Natrai needs to prove to these people that he is deserved to be a manager of the company and also a ruler of the forest.

The first aspect of Otherness of hill people is the diversity of tribes and ethnicities. The drama portrays different tribes living together in the forest and all of them need to be united, but also controlled under Siamese power. In episode 1, Natrai finds out there are different kinds of people in that village and not all of them respect him as a new leader. So, he has to show his power and control them. He calls over every mahout (elephant keeper) for a meeting to show everybody that he is a friendly overseer and, at the same time, exercises his power as a ruler by informing a policy that everybody must comply.



Figure 32 Natrai (in green shirt) talks to all mahouts (*Ploengchiphalee*, ep1)

In the background we see thick forest and mountains far behind. A slow and soft tune from a woodwind instrument is played. Then a camera gives a low angle shot of high trees and the sun shines through thick leaves. The camera then tilts down showing a wooden house. A group of men are standing and sitting in front of it. Natrai stands alone, opposite the men, at the house terrace, which is a little bit higher than where the other men stand. He walks down the steps as he talks and stops in front of Muenlah, the chief mahout. Medium close-up shots show Natrai and Muenlah smiling to each other. A long shot shows other mahouts, standing and sitting on the ground.

⁷⁵ 'nan' (หนาน) is a prefix in northern Thai word attached to men's names after a man has been ordained as a Buddhist monk and resigned from monkhood to be layperson.

Natrai: Though I am a newcomer to this company, I hope that all of us can work together. I know that grandpa Muenlah is the most skilful and highly respected mahout for everybody here. There are many tribes living together – Khmu, Ngjaw, Burmese and Thai. We will live together without any problems. We will live like brothers. I'm a newcomer here and I'm willing to hear your suggestions.

Mondo: So, you are one of us now, right? (He stands up, walks to Natri and puts his arm on Natrai's shoulder).

Natrai: Right. Anyway, I want to stress one important thing. Our company's policy is that we must not do illegal logging and destroy the forest. We will cut trees only in the area granted by the state concession. And we will grow more trees than we cut because the forest is the important resource for our lives. Definitely, we will never destroy our nation and country's treasure⁷⁶.

Saenkham: We all know this.

Mondo: Hey, he just repeats the policy. What's wrong with that?

In: Ugh! Any new manager always says this. Just remember from a book and speak it out.

Muenlah: Stop it! Both of you. (Smiles back to Natrai.) We are pleased to work with you.

Natrai: Thank you very much grandpa Muenlah.

From this scene, Natrai emphasises the idea of unification, that people of all tribes, ethnicities or races must live together peacefully in this community and under his leadership. The way he says 'live together without any problems' or 'like brothers' reflects the discourse in the nation-building process. People of all races and ethnicities are assumed to be citizens of the Thai nation as Natrai tells them to protect the forest which is a national treasure (more on the aspect of forest as nation will be discussed in the following section). The Thai state's policy during the 1930s had turned tribal people to be Thai citizens as everybody should be simply known as Thai or *chao Thai*. People of different ethnicities or tribes needed to 'shed traditional ethnic terms of identification for a new, officially sanctioned historical-cultural identity' (Barmé, 1993: 151). This is how Siam/Thailand follows imperialist thinking. They aspired to include these subjects in the nation-building as well as constructing their consciousness of a nation.

The idea of unification of hill people is clearly reflected in another scene which shows a school in the village. Though it is called 'school', it is actually a temporary pavilion made of wood to function as a classroom. In a pavilion, there is a blackboard which has three words written on the top reading 'nation, religion, monarchy' and Thai numbers from 0 to 10 (Figure 33). This scene reiterates the Siamese *siwilai*

⁷⁶ สมบัติของชาติและแผ่นดิน

project which is the cultivation of 'savage' people. In the beginning of the scene, they are talking about Natrai giving learning supplies to village children. This reminds us of the schooling by central power. The Thai state has put a lot of effort into uniting the hill people as a part of the Thai nation via the centralisation of religion and education. The cultivation and civilising process of hill people has been done by the monarch during the 1960s. King Bhumibol's projects with hill people included the process of turning them to be 'the security of national frontiers', or making them contribute to national development. This meant teachers were sent to hill villages to transform them into Thai-speaking loyal citizens (Baker and Pasuk, 2017:174). Schooling would teach these people to use central Thai language as well as Thai ideologies.

Thus, it was embedded in the national mindset that the monarch and the central power were in charge of providing civilisation and development to the hill tribes. This drama therefore implies that though there are diverse groups of hill people living together, they live together harmoniously under Thai ideologies and all would become Thai citizens⁷⁷. In this case, the trinity of the Thai nation – nation, religion, monarchy – on the blackboard is reminiscent of the core of the Thai nation. This is also central to the construction of 'Thainess.' Though the definition of Thainess has never been clear, it has been reaffirmed by the monarchical institution and Buddhism as the state religion, as opposed to things un-Thai (other nation, ethnicity, and a communist) (Thongchai, 1994:3-6).

⁷⁷ While the Thai state tried to integrate the hill tribe people, they do not have Thai citizenship. Only a few hill tribe people could be granted Thai citizenship if their parents register their birth and have a household registration. Hill tribe children in the third generation have more chance to be granted Thai citizenship. In the case that none of the parents have citizenship, the children's citizenship would be refused. From 2016 onwards, hill tribe people have to carry Pink ID card which does not have the same rights as a Thai national or equal as having Thai citizenship (Pesses, 2018:6; Isaan Lawyers, n.d.).



Figure 33 at village school, on the blackboard it reads ‘nation, religion, monarchy’ (*Ploengchimphalee*, ep2)

However, the hill people are not easily tamed or included into the Thai nation as the friendly, uncivilised villagers as seen in *Klinkasalong*. There is a tension between Natrai and other indigenous men who do not accept him as their new ruler and they express strong dislike. So, the next feature of Otherness found in these hill people is their coarse and resistant traditions. The drama further illustrates one character, Saenkham, who is dangerous to the central power in the episode two. Saenkham’s hatred and anger towards Natrai grows stronger as Natrai tries to befriend every villager, especially Nuanang, the most beautiful woman in the village who is Saenkham’s crush. Saenkham challenges Natrai to fight, claiming that it is ‘their way’ of making friends.

The scene starts with a long shot. There are villagers gathering and three women come in.

Soifah: What’s going on? Why does the manager fight?

Khamfai: Shut up, Soifah. It’s a manly act.

Runjuan: He’s a manager. He’s an educated man and works with his brain, not using his body like a labourer.

In: We are all labourers here. If he wants to be a ruler, he must prove this.

Nuanang: (talk to Muenlah) It’s because Saenkham challenged Natrai to fight.

Muenlah: Don’t worry. If he wants us to respect him, he must prove he is good enough. Our tradition believes that only the strongest man can be our ruler. Even wild animals in this forest would bow their heads to that man.

A fast, exciting drumbeat is played as background music when In plays a traditional drum. Natrai and Saenkham walk to the combat ground from each side. Saenkham is half-naked, revealing his worked body with six-pack abs, and muscles. Natrai is wearing a shirt. Then, both stand in the middle

of the ground, surrounded by other villagers. A camera uses close-up shots and cutaway to show facial expressions of the two fighters and villagers. These quick cross-cutting look like a gun fight scene in a Western cowboy movie. The drumbeat goes faster and louder. Natrai takes off his shirt, then throws it away. He raises his arms to make a gesture of a boxing guard while Saenkham raises his hands and arms like traditional martial arts of a Kungfu fight. They walk around making a circle for more than 10 seconds before starting the first punch. Villagers cheer and shout.

The fighting goes on for 5.12 minutes with different styles of punches and kicks such as kickback, jump-kick, fly-kick, and many others that resemble a scene from action movies. These two men are fighting furiously so that their bodies are full of sweat, dirt, and blood. The fight ends when Natrai is about to lose and Muenlah tells Saenkham to stop. Natrai goes back home, frustrated and angry at Saenkham (Figure 35).

According to this scene, northern people in the mountains or hill people are considered as having cultures and traditions that are far less civilised than that of Siam/Thailand. While the north in other provinces of Thailand are obedient, friendly, and submissive to Siamese power, the north in the forest are aggressive, dangerous and lack restraint. A comparison between two fighting scenes from two dramas gives a clearer picture how Thai TV portrays these two groups differently. In *Klinkasalong*, there is a sword fighting scene as a part of the cultural performances in a new year festival. This fight is presented as a traditional and cultural ritual because one has to learn from a master. There are patterns of fighting postures and techniques. A student must give offerings to a teacher before he is accepted. There are sets of rules that can and cannot be done. As a part of the ritual, they even have to dance before they fight as to pay respect to their masters. They use swords as weapons which people regarded as sacred objects. They fight at a proper fighting ground with a full musical band. All these elements suggest culture and tradition (Figure 34). This drama portrays that northern people are cultural beings. Though they may be different from Siam, they are assimilable.



Figure 34 A sword fighting which is shown as a cultural performance (*Klinkasalong*, ep 6)



Figure 35 Natri is fighting with Saenkham in a hill village (*Ploengchimphalee*, ep2)

Conversely, in *Ploengchimphalee*, the fighting scene and hill people are portrayed as barbaric and savage. They are half-naked, barehanded without any weapons or set of rules. Their fighting modes are freestyle and combined of many martial arts. Natri fights with boxing skills while Saenkham uses traditional martial arts, and then every mode of fighting combines in the end. This implies that it is not a cultural or traditional way of fighting as each man does what he wants. Besides, they fight on soil ground, which is dry, unsmooth, and uncultivated in all aspects. This fight reminds audiences of the fighting of wild animals with the idea stressed by Muanlah when he says, 'even wild animals in this forest would bow their heads to

that man.’ This statement implies it is not only a combat to win over these savage men, but also it is a means to rule all the beings in the forest. While Siam can use civilisation such as scientific knowledge to educate and control the north in the rural village as shown in *Klinkasalong*, in *Ploengchiphalee* they have to use stronger modes such as fighting. The wild Others in TV dramas are shown as more diverse and dangerous that Siam must unite as Thai citizens.

3.3.3.3 The good old days: Communitarianism and the Thai rural village

The previous sections investigate how the products of the Siamese *siwilai* project reflect the role of Siam as the moderniser and the creation of the uncivilised Others. This section will examine the making of Otherness through the depiction of localism. It will illustrate how the north is attached to a nostalgic presentation of the past and how it contributes to Siam’s process of Thai nation-building.

The depiction of localism in media, films and TV dramas in Thailand are, to a large extent, connected to a sense of the past. Localism does not only infer local, rural or village life but also implies a yearning for the past when life was ideally good in people’s memories. Or, as is otherwise known as nostalgia. Svetlana Boym explains that sometimes nostalgia is presented as a form of historical record, while sometimes it is a longing for ‘the past’ that no longer exists or has even existed. It is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy (Boym, 2008:xiii). There are two notable kinds of nostalgia; the restorative and the reflective. Restorative nostalgia proposes to rebuild the lost home and ‘patch up’ memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history (Boym, 2008:41). Nostalgia in Thai media fits into both categories as it makes use of the past and memory. The media recall and obsess in historical record and the restoration of these memories is performed, rather than erect in forms of monuments.

The images of the past reemphasise the root of the nation and thus they help constructing the nation. This section will analyse the presentation of the past in two dramas, *Ploengchiphalee* and *Klinkasalong*. In *Ploengchiphalee*, the north is shown with a pure, uncontaminated nature representing the ideal authentic Thai life in the past, while in *Klinkasalong*, the north is glossed with images of a tourist destination. Both are nostalgic presentation based on a central Thai perception in which they view the north from the eyes of the imperialist and treat the area as a playground for enjoyment and appreciate bygone days.

3.3.3.3.1 The ideal authentic Thai past

In *Ploengchiphalee*, a story is set in the 1950s in a rural, mountainous village. Thai rural life in the past is symbolised by a forest which is depicted as innocent, pure, peaceful, fertile nature, uncontaminated by material progress or Western capitalism. A forest does not only function as a location of the story but also it is treated in this drama as a 'national treasure' which everybody must protect. Natrai, the main character, is portrayed as a hero who protects this forest. This is shown in a scene when he fights with timber thieves.

An establishing shot shows a thick forest. A jeep comes in. High and low angle shots show that jeep passing rough, unsmooth ways in the forest. Then it stops in front of a big log that blocks its way. Natrai gets out. A high angle, medium shot shows him from the back. He walks to the front of the jeep and stands on its bonnet, looking to the forest. Medium close-up shot shows his back. He is wearing a jacket and a cowboy hat.

(cut to parallel scenes)

He jumps over a log and runs quickly into the forest. A close-up shot gives a picture of a saw cutting a log. Then, another wide shot shows a pile of logs on the right side of a screen and Natrai running from the left side. He quickly jumps on the log pile. A wide shot gives a picture of a tent, another pile of logs, and four thieves. Then it shows a medium shot of one thief. He says;

Thief: Today, they will have a party to welcome the new manager. No one will look around here. You two, go and get all those logs.

Natrai: Stealing logs in this forest is not as easy as you think.

Suddenly, he jumps down and kicks one man. Then they start to open fire. He uses that man's body to protect himself from bullets before runs away. All the thieves follow him.

(cut to parallel scenes)

Natrai is running and the thieves are chasing after him. He runs back to the car, takes another gun and fires. While all the four thieves miss every shot, Natrai shoots them easily. One man hides away and turns back to attack him. Then they start fighting.

(cut to parallel scenes)

They continue fighting, up and down the hill, running around, kicking and punching. Finally, the fight ends when Mondo, a villager, riding a bicycle and bangs into the two of them. The whole sequences of these scenes, excluding cuts to parallel scenes, takes 3.52 minutes.

What is explicitly reflected in these scenes is the idea of a fixed, unchanged forest as property that needs to be preserved. This is expressed through Natrai who acts as a protector of the forest. His mission in these scenes is to save the forest and expel the bad men. On the one hand, these scenes introduce the main character to the audience for the first time, by making him a brave, strong man. Natrai appears on screen as a hero as in action movies; he uses both fighting skills and pistols. The way he dresses in a jacket and a cowboy hat resembles a character such as Indiana

Jones, and thus it gives a perception of a civilised man hunting for a treasure and exploring in an unknown, dangerous land. On the other hand, his role as a protector signifies the idea of ownership, and provided the fact that he is the owner of a timber business. Thus, the forest appears as his property, a treasure, in which Natrai has discovered and claimed ownership.

Ploengchimphalee provides this background knowledge to its audience, that a forest can be owned or belong to someone. Stealing or making profits from that forest without permission is unacceptable. This is the idea that the Thai state has exploited in controlling forests and other natural resources, as well as in affecting the indigenous people who earn a living from forests. In pre-modern society, though forests or lands were governed by the rulers or nobles of each state, ordinary people were able to use them freely. The idea of a timber business entered the north during the early nineteenth century when the British Borneo Company and the Bombay Burmah Company of England began logging in Burma and later expanded into Lanna (northern Thailand). These contractors were respectful of the northern nobles because forests were considered the property of the rulers and the nobles, and the concessionaries paid a fee for every tree they cut. However, this fee was not fixed, and forests had not been seen as a commercially valuable resource but were used for local needs (Sarassawadee, 2005:169). This indicates that the ownership of forests was not taken seriously back then. In the 1840s, Siam showed that they did not want to interfere in Lanna's internal affairs. They considered that forests were for the benefit of the tributary states and that trade and logging rights were for the prerogative of their rulers. It was in the 1870s when problems with logging increased which put the Lanna rulers in court cases and debts so that the central government of Siam decided to take control of all the forests (Sarassawadee, 2005:168,171).

Chulalongkorn of Siam took this opportunity to bail out the debtors, and took charge of negotiating an Anglo-Siamese treaty in 1874 to constrain the colonial loggers. After the 1880s when the administrative reform began, forests in the north were controlled by Siamese commissioners in almost all aspects. Consequently, the local nobles were gradually removed from being in charge of the timber concessions (Baker and Pasuk, 2017:53). Since then, the forests have become the property of Siam and they are regarded as commercial profit providers for the Thai state. In this drama, the timber thief is portrayed as a villain, while the owner of the forest is a hero despite both of them having the same purpose, that is to gain profits from the forest. Natrai is legitimate to arrest these thieves, either dead or alive. The drama suggests that it depends on who has the power to define ownership.

The idea of ownership is expanded to the discourse of national treasure in the following scene. As shown in Figure 32 (a section on the wild Others), Natrai reminds all workers that the forest and all trees belong to the Thai nation and that they must follow the concession's rule. This emphasises the role of the Thai state as the owner and ruler who determines who and how many trees one can cut. From the dialogue of Figure 32, Natrai tells the workers that 'we will grow more trees than we cut because the forest is an important resource for our lives.' This gives a negative perception of the timber business and destroying natural resources and thus will destroy one's life as well. He even goes further by stating that cutting trees means 'destroy our nation and country's treasure.' While the hill people had lived in the forest before the timber business or any idea of concession existed, they had to conform to these rules because forests had become national treasures. Besides, the discourse of deforestation is, to a large extent, shaped by the perception of many Thais that hill people destroy forests because of opium and shifting cultivation.

According to Baker and Pasuk, the monarchy resurgent in Sarit's government had encouraged the expansion of the royal role. One way of doing this was rural development and during the 1960s, King Bhumibol went to the north to develop projects with hill people to stop opium growing and stabilise shifting farmers (Baker and Pasuk, 2017:174,177). Hill people were alleged as being 'opium producers' or the 'health-hazardous Other' being a risk to Thai welfare (Thongchai, 2000a:56). This became a Thai nationalist discourse, that hill people are the destroyers of forests and it is an obligation of the Thai state to control them and give protection. Forests, in these regards, must remain the same and untouched by the locals whereas the only one who is legitimised to gain benefit is the one who establishes the ownership over these forests. This is how Siam viewed forests or natural resources with imperialist thinking. They must own and control them because the locals are not eligible to do so. Moreover, they shaped a new definition of forests and nature, which later was seen as rooted of Thai rural community, or a simple life in a forest.

In *Ploengchimphalee*, we see a small self-sufficient community that does not rely on market economy or material progress. Food is abundant and medicine can be acquired from herbs. Recreation and leisure places can be found in forests. It is a picture of an ideal society in the past where people are closely connected to nature. Localism is often associated with the concept of communitarianism in which people live their lives on agriculture and subsistence economy. This image of the Thai rural community is described in Chatthip's book as a peaceful community where people were tied in ancestor systems, Buddhism and spiritual belief (Chatthip, 1999).

The presentation of rural community in this drama is one-sided. The drama ignores the unequal relationship between the business owner and hill people who are workers. Let alone the suffering of life in the forest that is not mentioned. This is very much in line with many scholars such as Baker and Pasuk who argue that the romanticisation of the rural community often ignore the benefit of urbanism, modernism, and progress. The village is represented as a romantic place and by a backward-looking viewpoint (Baker and Pasuk, 1999:122-123). In this drama, the north is framed as an ideal rural community, represented by a forest that is fixed and unchangeable. This is the Siamese elites' views towards the uncivilised Others that have become nostalgic narrative that Thailand has repeatedly used to shape the characteristic of Otherness.

3.3.3.3.2 The nostalgic past and localism as tourist destination

This section moves to another aspect of nostalgia which is the promotion of localism via tourism. This will elaborate the making of Otherness that has been fixed in stereotypes. In *Klinkasalong*, many scenes and events resemble captured moments that were frequently used for tourism campaigns and advertisements. This section investigates the construction of Otherness via the romanticisation of localism, which portrays the north as attractive, beautiful and a passive subject of Siamese entertainment.

Klinkasalong follows the success of many preceding dramas with a northern Thai focus by showcasing high quality production, ethnic costumes and props, beautiful locations, and the use of northern Thai language. The story refers to actual locations in a northern province (Chiang Mai) while other dramas often make up fictional places. The drama's popularity encourages tourism in that province, which is a predictable consequence almost every time after a drama with regional themes is aired. However, while the drama promotes tourism in the north, the production itself was reproduced from the stereotypical images used in pre-existing tourism campaigns.

Tourism in the northern Thai region was a part of the government's campaigns to build a strong nation. The state viewed that regional differences were obstacles to the building of Thai national identity, so they encouraged the Thai-ification of people from different ethnicities. While villages in Thailand contained a mix of people including Khmer, Mon, Lao, Lua, Lue, Karen and many others, there was the generalisation of multiethnicities by assuming that all Tai-speaking region share the Thai culture and language (Thongchai, 2008:582). The Thai-ification of the north was emphasised after the end of an absolute monarchy since the government wanted to stress unity of nation. The north, which has distinctive culture and

traditions in central Thai perspectives, was a target of this unification. Thus, a tourism campaign was designed to encourage people to visit the north. Images of the northern provinces and northern Thai women were promoted and distributed as a part of the government's policy during the 1940s which Darunee Somsri argues was the beautification of the north – expressed through beauty of nature and women – having been reproduced in different genres (Darunee, 2006).

In *Klinkasalong*, many scenes appear as if they were inspired from magazines or tourism advertisements. For example, a brochure by The State Railway of Thailand in 1940 to promote tourism in the north illustrated a picture of fertile nature, markets, mountains, together with northern women in traditional outfits doing the *fon leb* dance⁷⁸. These images had become stereotypes of the north and a brochure in 1951 still used the same set of pictures (Darunee, 2006:129). Until these days, *fon leb* has been used as symbol of the north because of its exotic feature that is different from the central Thai culture. It has become a traditional dance of the region and a trademark in many TV dramas with a northern Thai focus. Although there are many cultural or traditional performances of the north, the drama selects *fon leb* because it is the well-known performance frequently appearing in tourism campaigns and most Thai viewers recognise this dance as a symbol of the north. In *Klinkasalong*, a scene of *fon leb* is again reproduced.

In episode 6, a *fon leb* parade is held during the Songkran Festival or Thai New Year. A dolly shot, high angle camera tilts down, we see a parade of dancers in traditional costumes. There are viewers on both sides of the road. A medium shot shows Kasalong, the main female character, dancing. Slow tempo music from traditional wind instruments and drum is played as background music for dancers. Medium shots, long shots, and close-up shots are used alternately to show the costume, face, and hands of dancers (wearing artificial nails). On the background, we see people splashing water which is an activity on Thai New Year's Day. Then, Sap comes in. He stands among other audience members and looks at Kasalong. Then, Sap bumps into a Japanese man who is taking pictures.

Sap: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that.

Saito: *Daijoubu* (speaking Japanese). That's alright.

Sap: Are you Japanese?

Saito: Yes. I have a photo shop in town.

Sap: Then, can you please take a picture of this woman?

Saito: I took a lot of her pictures. She is so beautiful.

Sap: I will take a look at these photos at your shop. What is the name of the shop?

⁷⁸ A northern style dance in which dancers put on long, curvy, artificial nails made of brass.

Saito: Saito. It's my name.

Sap: Nice to meet you, Saito.

Two men bow to each other. The whole sequence takes 4.20 minutes (Figure 36).



Figure 36 Fon Leb parade (*Klinkasalong*, ep 6)

The depiction of the north as a tourist destination or using images from tourism campaigns do not simply deliver nostalgic atmospheres or beauty of the north. Rather, doing so reflects imperialist products through the power of a gaze that Siam exercises over the north. According to Pratt, the imperialist or the coloniser takes the role of a 'seer' while the indigenous is 'seen.' This is shown in the descriptive writing about what the travellers discovered. Pratt calls them as the 'verbal painter' whose rhetoric made use of three techniques that are estheticized landscape, density of meaning, and the relation of mastery between the seer and the seen. Thus, the scene is painted verbally based on the traveller's viewpoint which is 'intended to be viewed from where he has emerged upon it' and that scene is 'ordered with reference to his vantage point, and is static' (Pratt, 1992: 198-201). Likewise, in Thongchai's view, the docile others are 'the objects of Bangkok's gaze.' The people, the landscape, and everything are described by the Siamese as normal villagers who had lived peacefully under the rule of Siam in ways that are familiar to the author and his readers (Thongchai, 2000a:48). In other words, Siam uses the imperialist view to hold the north as a frozen, unchanged stereotype that they want to see.

In this scene, power is with the one who gazes. Siam/Thailand, as represented by Sap, is the seer both through his eyes and through a camera. As an object of gaze, Kasalong cannot move away or escape but stays in her position in the parade while Sap is a moveable agent, as he walks around. A northern woman is

seen and captured, both in photographs and in the reproduction of *fon leb* performance which repeatedly appears in different genres about the north. The way this scene is inspired by stereotypical tourism campaigns and how a character in this drama wants to capture the event in photos indicates a continuing, never-ending loop.

This whole section demonstrates that Thai TV dramas present the north in the static, unchangeable past. First, the north is fixed with the idea of rural society closely connected to nature, represented by a forest. Second, the north is attached to the depiction of a beautiful region, inspired by stereotypical images from tourism. These are foundations in the romanticisation of the north, which have turned local people, their cultures and ways of life to being objects of Siamese entertainment. TV drama follows the imperialist path by putting the north in a romanticised past, situated in an ideal village and glossed with stereotype for tourism purposes. The depiction of good old days provides no dynamic. The north is nothing but an undeveloped Otherness that clings to the old world, yet it is nonthreatening to the Thai nation.

3.3.4 Conclusion

This chapter supports the key thesis concept of 'Combi-nation' by illustrating that Thai nation-building and national identities are constructed through combination with Otherness. Siam/Thailand has followed imperialist thinking by exploiting these features of Otherness under the Siamese *siwilai* concept. This chapter has shown the construction of Otherness and *siwilai* project in three main points.

The first section portrays how the north developed under the Siamese *siwilai* project. Examples from these two dramas legitimise the notion of internal colonisation as it was Siamese burden to modernise and civilise the north. This displayed the products of the *siwilai* project in many aspects from northern identity to various form of social change. Siam gained the role of a saviour or benevolent ruler who helped by saving the north from barbarism and backwardness.

The next section is the construction of Otherness by divisions of the 'wild Others' and the 'docile Others.' The first feature that creates the docile Others is cultural difference which is shown by northern Thai language which is different, yet it is understandable. The second feature of Otherness is that of being stuck to traditional, and superstitious belief. However, these characteristics and cultural difference are not harmful to Siam. These people are still assimilable to Siamese culture and open to being educated with modern knowledge. The wild Others are presented as hill people who are far less civilised. The first aspect of the wild Others

is the difference of tribes and ethnicities. The drama portrays the diversity of tribes living together harmoniously in the forest under Siamese power and ideologies. The next feature is their coarse and resistant traditions. The north in the forest are aggressive, dangerous and lack sophistication, making it Siam's obligation to subdue these threatening features.

This last section examines the making of Otherness through the depiction of nostalgic localism. It shows the imperialist thinking in viewing the north as a utopia for entertainment and yearning for the good old days. The first aspect of the nostalgia is the image of the Thai rural community as the ideal authentic Thai life of the past. A forest in this drama is fixed in the past and regarded as national treasure. The second aspect of nostalgic localism is images of a tourist destination. This part investigates the romanticisation of localism which portrays the north as attractive, beautiful and passive as Siamese subject of entertainment. This reflects through the power of gaze. The north is shown as a beautiful region with exotic culture and tradition, static, fixed and unchanged. Consequently, this chapter confirms the construction of the nation that is comprised with the combination of Others. This is essential to nation-building because it confirms their superior status. Siam followed imperialist thinking to exercise power over the less civilised commoners and local people whom they treated as subjects of internal colonisation.

Chapter 4

Body and Nation

4.1 Combination of Genders

Chapter 3 elucidates how nation-building and national identities are constructed via the many elements of ‘combi-nation’ and in relation to history. This chapter focuses on the aspects of body and nation. The nation-building process has played a key role in shaping perceptions on body and form with some specific characteristics in modern Thai identities. The first aspect of the body that I want to investigate in this chapter is gender because it is a concept that Siam/Thailand has drawn on from imperialists and manipulated during the making of a modern nation. The power relationship between Siam and northern Thailand has followed the gendered stereotypes of the coloniser and the colonised. However, instead of exploring the masculine/feminine dichotomy between Siam and the north, this chapter will focus particularly on the depiction of *Kathoey* or third gender. This traditional gender is frequently excluded in TV dramas focussed on northern Thai culture.

It is almost compulsory that every Thai TV drama have a binary of characters – of male and female heroes. Besides heterosexual men and women, Thai TV audiences are familiar with *Kathoey* as another essential element. *Kathoey* acts as an intermediate gender that represents an ‘in-between’ space. While *Kathoey*s are commonly found in contemporary dramas, they are rarely seen in historical ones that focus on nation-building. Their appearance is even more unlikely in historical dramas with strong themes on regional culture. Over the course of doing this research, I have searched for TV dramas which have strong themes of Northern Thai culture and found at least 32 that are well-known. These were all broadcast between the late 1980s to present (2020). These dramas are either romance driven, comedies, or horror. Among the 32, 20 are historical dramas or dramas that taking place in the past, and only one has a *Kathoey* character.

The scarce appearance of *Kathoey* in Thai historical TV dramas, especially dramas with a Northern Thai focus, implies that it is a gender that is not important in the construction of a nation. In this chapter, I want to investigate depictions of *Kathoey* in Thai TV dramas by looking specifically at a historical drama focusing on Northern Thai culture, to see how *Kathoey* is presented as a part of nation-building. The first part deals with historical background and *Kathoey* as third gender in Thailand, and the second part analyses the TV drama on this topic.

4.1.1 Old *Kathoey* and New *Kathoey*: Background on pre-modern and Western concepts of genders in Thailand

The first section provides historical background of *Kathoey* and other genders in Thailand. This is divided into three main parts which are the 'Old *Kathoey*' or the pre-modern concepts of gender in Thailand and the coming of Western concepts of gender after imperialism; the 'New *Kathoey*' which is a new movement of new gender categories and how that affects genders in Thailand; and the toleration of *Kathoey* in Thailand.

4.1.1.1 Old *Kathoey*

Thailand has an intricate pattern of sexuality and gender. Apart from the normative genders between men and women, it has accustomed to the 'third gender.' Genders in Thailand are divided into three forms of *phet*, namely, masculine 'men' (*phu-chai*), feminine 'women' (*phu-ying*) and an intermediate category called *Kathoey* (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999:4). This thesis calls the third gender in pre-modern Thai society as 'old *Kathoey*' for they belong to traditional society.

Literally, *Kathoey* means unnatural or withered, undeveloped, a seedless plant that cannot be reproduced (Channarong, 2014:5). According to Channarong, the word *Kathoey* was translated from Pali words *pandaka* (ปณฺฑก) or *bando* (บ้นฺฑกะ) which have two different meanings. The first meaning is a castrated man and the second meaning is a man who may or may not enact feminine roles but prefers to have sex with a man. *Kathoey* developed a new meaning also which denotes a person, male or female, who exhibits hermaphroditic features which is different from the original meaning of the word *pandaka/bando* as described in the Tipitaka (Channarong, 2014:5-6). *Kathoey* in pre-modern Thai society was a person whose social behaviour was considered inappropriate for their genders. Sometimes, *Kathoey* have been called a 'third gender/sex' in both popular and academic discourses. Historically, *Kathoey* included all forms of difference, whether in the domain of sex (hermaphroditism), gender (cross-dressing), or sexuality (homosexuality). Only after the 1970s did *Kathoey* develop its meaning to denote only a person who is born male but subsequently enacts a feminine role (male transvestite) or undergoes a sex change operation (a male-to-female transsexual) (Jackson, 2001:16).

Even though Thailand has regarded *Kathoey* as one gender, they were not treated equally especially in terms of Buddhist beliefs. According to the Buddhist and traditional beliefs, *Kathoey* are viewed as sinful people and excluded from religious roles. In the Buddhist Tipitaka, *pandaka* or *bando* are prohibited from ordaining as

Buddhist monks because their sexual behaviour would cause problems or create negative images in the eyes of lay people towards the Buddhist monastic community (Channarong, 2014:6-7). Also, the Three Seals Law (กฎหมายตราสามดวง *Kotmai Tra Sam Duang*, a collection of law texts compiled in 1805) links *Kathoey* with the Buddhist belief that one was born *Kathoey* because he committed adultery in his previous life. However, Thais also believed that being *Kathoey* is not an eternal sin and can be redeemable. If one does lots of good deeds in this life, one will be born in a better form, as masculine man or feminine woman, in one's next life (Terdsak, 2003:311-312).

In actual practice, Thais' attitudes towards *Kathoey* Buddhist monks vary to different degrees. Sometimes, Buddhists feel that *Kathoey* monks may cause the decline of Buddhism but not always in thinking that these monks' behaviour are problematic, as long as they practise religious and social work, such as traditional or cultural rituals. However, there are some private and clergy organisations that monitor this scenario. For example, there are anti-gay-monks organisations operating in the north of Thailand, though some lay and clergy in some communities do not see it as a severe problem (MGR Online, 2009; MThai, 2009). In April 2009, Phra Wor Wachiramethi, Thailand's well-known preacher, launched a course entitled '*Sombat phudee sammanen*' (An etiquette course for novices) to prevent 'gay expression' among young monks (Palungjit, 2009).

Kathoey monks are only accepted if they are seen to not impact the 'harmony' (status-quo) of the community. If monks violate their disciplines, especially if they engage in sexual intercourse, then the lay population would consider it a serious problem. According to Sulak Siwaraksa, a violation of these rules is known in Pali as '*parajika*' and entails an irrevocable 'defeat' and the monk must then leave the *sangha*. A man expelled from the *sangha* can never again seek entry into the order (Sulak, 1999:121-123). There are few examples of highly revered monks who were expelled because of sexual scandals such as Phra Nikorn and Phra Yantra, who were found guilty of having sexual intercourse with many women and were disrobed (Sulak, 1999:124-129). There have also been many cases of paedophile monks who have sexually abused novices. High ranking abbots can exercise their power over young novices, threatening them into silence. On many occasions, those paedophile monks escaped the law because they are protected by cleric authorities which tend to treat the problem as isolated crimes by individuals, rather than look at the problem as systemic (Sunitsuda, 2019). Such cases impact on how and why *Kathoey* are not seen as acceptable in the realm of Buddhism, and as if *Kathoey's* presence in society violates social and religious disciplines.

The concept of *Kathoey* in Thailand is different from Western understanding of sexuality, and particularly one that distinguishes between normative heterosexuality and homosexuality. *Kathoey* is more about gender appearance (transgender and at times transsexuality), rather than sexuality. Moreover, pre-modern Thai culture did not oppose homosexuality. *Kathoey* have been recognised in Thailand since the pre-modern era. During the Ayutthaya period (14th -17th century), there was also a record of a *Kathoey* who worked as a eunuch in an inner court. According to Simon de la Loubère's⁷⁹ records, there were small numbers of Persian eunuchs imported from the Islamic world too (Silpa-mag, 2018). The Muslims played significant roles in administrative positions in both military and civil services as well as the Royal Court. Among many, there was a unit called *Krom Kanti* (กรมขันที) or 'the Eunuchs Department' (Julispong, 2007:103).

In the Bangkok period (starting 1782), the idea of homosexuality was found among women in the Inner Palace or elite men, but they were not regarded as *Kathoey*. Rather, homosexuality was considered an individual, private activity and Thais do not have specific terms to describe this in specific genders. Neither did Thai society have any severe punishment for homosexuality, as in Western or Christian societies. There was only one case of homosexuality in the Siamese court that led to the death penalty. During the third reign of Chakri dynasty (1824-1851), Prince Rakronnaret was charged of corruption and treasonable conduct. One of his transgressions was homosexual relations with young members of a theatre group. Craig J. Reynolds argues that the prince's crime was that he did not stay with his wife, and reproduction of the family was important. This shows that homosexual behaviour was a threat to the political order of the time, based as it was on family ties (Reynolds, 2006:136). However, Terdsak Romjampa⁸⁰ states that the execution was because Rakronnaret was found guilty of many other charges while other court men who were found committing homosexuality were safe from such penalty (Terdsak, 2003:320-321). It was the only recorded case where homosexuality had such severe sanction.

For court women in the Inner Palace, homosexuality or *len phuan* (เล่นเพื่อน literally, play with a friend) was prohibited with specified punishment such as 'beaten 50 times and shown around the palace for public shaming' (Phon, 2019). According to Loos, female homosexuality was of more concern in the court than male homosexuality because these women were the king's concubines and 'the only

⁷⁹ a French envoy in Ayutthaya, Siam in 1687-88

⁸⁰ A Thai scholar who published a thesis and article on the discourse of 'gay' in Thailand between 1965 – 1999, Chulalongkorn University.

sexual activity lawfully permitted within palace perimeters was that between the king and women in the Inner City' (Loos, 2005:886). However, in actual practice, the punishment was much lessened and treated as a non-serious matter. Court literature written by one elite female writer during the early Bangkok period mocks female homosexual relationships between concubines in the Inner Palace in a hilarious way, and shows how the behaviour was tolerated (Phon, 2019). Temple mural painting in Ratchaburi Province, dated from the mid-Ayutthaya period depict palace women engaging in sexual behaviour (caressing each other's breasts, bodies, and faces) and punishment (two women are seen hung in a cage). Nevertheless, women in these murals seem to be happy as they continue to fondle breasts despite their containment (Loos, 2005:887). The use of a cage may suggest unequal power between the monarch and court women, and BDSM relationships. Besides, it is also 'animalistic' and suggests a lack of maintaining a mode of courtly comportment. However, the artists who painted these murals chose to depict these women as if they were not guilty for their behaviour. These murals, as well as court literature, evidence that female homoerotic relationships were recognised in pre-modern society, without being treated as a serious offence.

Kathoey was regarded as one of the three-genders concept, separated from homosexuality, in pre-modern Thai society. During the nineteenth century, Western imperialism reached Siam however, and started to influence Siamese elites in many aspects, including concepts of gender.

In Western culture, the paradigm of two genders founded on two biological sexes began to predominate in Western culture only in the early eighteenth century, as a product of a modern Western gender system especially in countries in north-western Europe such as France, the Netherlands, and England. In the seventeenth century, there were two genders – male and female – three biological sexes – man, woman and hermaphrodite. People were assumed to have sex ordinarily with the opposite gender only, and only in marriage under Christian teaching. Hermaphrodites were obliged to choose one gender or the other for themselves. If they moved back and forth in their gender, their sexual relations could be stigmatised as a crime of sodomy (Trumbach, 1993:111-113).

However, the Western concept of gender imported to Siam was a Victorian concept, travelled by the British Empire during the nineteenth century. Unlike the idea of three biological sexes in the seventeenth century, Victorian concepts of gender stressed gender polarity and binarism that divided sharply between masculinity and femininity. The division included the sphere of women and men of public worlds and private lives. The Victorian family, especially the bourgeois family,

had created structures of order, and boundaries of gender were a significant part of that order (Mendus and Rendall, 1989:3).

During this period there was the emergence of a sexed opposition between the male and female body, which regarded men's bodies as superior and female bodies for sexual passivity and men's libido. There was a dichotomy of the rational and emotional that structured the 'sexed mind as well as sexed body' (Tosh, 2005: 68, 91). The division did not only cover private family life but also work life as well. The dualism compared gender relation with economic relation. In patriarchy, men benefit sexually and economically by subordinating or exploiting women. This way of thinking created social meaning of masculinity and femininity. Men were supposed to be honourable and respectable and women should have virtues of sexual purity, domesticity and motherhood (Rose, 1992:12,14-17).

This gender binary of the Victorian bourgeois family also brought with it ideas of monogamy. This stood in contrast to the custom of polygamy that was widely practiced among elite men in Siam acting to contradict Western imperial standards of civilisation, since the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868). In the eyes of the West, Siam was regarded as feminine, improperly masculine, and subordinate to the manly Western states primarily because of polygamy and prostitution, which the West saw as evidence of the 'barbarity' of the Siamese. The West was using ideas of 'proper' gender and sexual behaviour as criteria to judge the standards of civilisation (Jeffrey, 2002:3). Though a sign of 'backwardness', polygamy was continuously practised until the reign of King Vajiravudh (1910-1925). The king did not do any legal action to revoke polygamy, though he himself did not practice this custom. Vajiravudh advocated monogamy for most of his reign but refused to promulgate a national monogamy law (Loos, 2005:901).

There were rumours and criticism over the king's refusal of polygamy, which related to the idea of homosexuality. Vajiravudh rejected marriage for many years and dispersed the inner palace harem. In contrast to his grandfather and father who had many wives, he had only four wives and one child. This brought criticism of his sexual preferences for men. However, Loos argues that this is an insufficient explanation to confirm the king's homosexuality and the source of criticism comes from Vajiravudh's rejection of marriage and the Inner Palace, rather than homosexuality (Loos, 2005:897-900). According to Reynolds, many Thai scholars do not suggest him homosexual but rather his 'personal inclination' from problems with the bureaucracy. Even one Thai scholar, Chanan Yothong, who wrote a book tribute to the issue of 'men of the inner palace' also refers to this behaviour as 'homosociality', instead of homosexuality and regards it as part of 'alternative

masculinities.’ These men were a ‘group of men loyal to him (the king)’ and ‘an affluent coterie of refined gentlemen who shared his tastes and values’ (Reynolds, 2014:260-263). According to these scholars, it can be assumed that the practice of polygamy was more important for people in the Inner Palace than the king’s behaviour, and if it were homosexuality, which tended to be acceptable among the Siamese elites at that time besides.

Polygamy was officially outlawed in 1935, when the Three Seals Law Code of 1805, which recognised polygamy, was replaced by the Civil and Commercial Code, which recognised monogamy (Reynolds, 2006: 185). Eventually, Siam followed Western concepts of gender and there were legal restrictions to support these changes. Monogamy and the western concepts of family inspired Vajiravudh to issue gender-related regulations which distinguished masculinity from femininity. For example, the king required government officials and personnel to register their marriages, the names of their wives and children. This regulation also forbade the registrar from recording certain women as wives (Loos, 2005:903). After the restriction on marriage registration, the surname act was issued in 1913 in which a woman and her children were required to use her husband’s surname, and the surname must be chosen by a family head which is the oldest male of a family. A pattern of family was taken from the West, so roles of women and men were clearly defined. The gendered roles were encouraged as the idea of nationalism was concerned, which means both men and women must do their parts to sacrifice for the country. In wartime, men go to war and women should serve as nurses. At home, a woman should do a good job in the home and provide a husband with pleasant and comfortable surroundings so that he can work efficiently (Vella, 1978:132,152).

From a historical background, *Kathoey* was regarded as a sovereign third gender. It is a traditional gender in Thailand’s three gender concept (and as mentioned was more akin to a mode of transsexuality, rather than homosexuality). *Kathoey* was aligned with homosexuality after the coming of the Victorian binarism of gender and thus it started to be viewed as problem. These western, Victorian-style gender roles and morality that the king cultivated after his education in England, therefore, drew a more definite line and function between being a man and being a woman, and *Kathoey* was excluded in the gender domain as a result.

4.1.1.2 New *Kathoey* after the Western trend of LGBT

Gender binarism has long dominated how people view themselves and their genders. The gay and lesbian rights movement in western countries during the late 1960s – 1970s stimulated a major shift in gender concepts and thought. The movement, often allied to the iconic Stonewall riots in New York in 1969, provoked a

sexual revolution in western culture. Before this time, lesbian and gay men were mostly restricted in exhibiting their gender identities or sexuality, because of the domination of heterosexual norms. Especially in the United States where the Stonewall event took place, there were anti-sodomy laws in many states to aid the targeting of sexual non-normativity and cross-dressing, for example, with gay men and lesbians being considered part of the criminal class. The Stonewall incident paved the way for new organisations to deal with homophobia and gave rise to US and other LGBT movements (Hanhardt, 2013). In many European countries, a movement had been started many years before. In the UK, for example, homosexuality was decriminalised after the Sexual Offences Act 1967. Even though the criminalisation of homosexuality in the UK did not completely end, the Act marked as a starting point to reform gay law which anal sex was made a crime since 1533 (Tatchell, 2017).

In Europe, in the 1970s, Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* offered a counter-narrative to Victorian sexual repression and triggered progressive liberation. Foucault questioned the idea of sexuality as a natural feature. For him, sexuality was a 'constructed category of experience, which was historical, social and cultural' rather than purely of biological origins. Even though there were feminist and racial movements during the 1960s-1970s, gay and lesbian people were often still trapped in heteronormative roles, for example, the division between butch partner and femme partner between female homosexuality. Therefore, Foucault's book presented significant shifts with the introduction of 'queer theory' which was a new identity that people identified themselves apart from normative heterosexuality or gay/lesbian identity (Spargo, 2000).

Queer theory questions and contests gender categories whereby people feel they do not fit into the expectations and remit of a particular category. It also investigates and examines the meanings that attach to binaries, such as man/woman or heterosexual/homosexual. In other words, queer theory insists that persons do not divide so neatly into these binary categories (Spargo, 2000; Turner, 2000). According to Morland and Willox, queer theory challenges the hegemonic understandings of the relations between identity, sex, gender and sexuality, which patriarchal values are founded upon (Morland and Willox, 2005:4). Consequently, western gender concepts moved from binarism to new gender variations. There is a growing number of literature under the area of 'queer' and 'queer theory.' As a result of this shift in gender studies and gender proliferation, queer has become a useful term and having replaced some existing terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender acting to generate better understanding and existence of a collective queer body of social, cultural and political experience.

After Foucault's queer theory, the discussion on gender issues developed vastly. One interesting aspect is about female sexuality. Many, especially among lesbian scholars, criticised queer theory for mainly focussing on male homosexuality and ignored lesbianism. Lesbian scholars felt frustrated when they were included in feminism, nevertheless, they felt that a referent identity for queer is gay, and lesbian becomes absent (Walters, 2005). In 1990, Judith Butler developed Foucault's arguments to question the concept of 'body' as natural and looks for a way of reading a body as a signifying practice. In her book *Gender Trouble*, she quoted Simone de Beauvoir's notion, which stated that 'one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one.' In Butler's terms, there is no reason to divide up human bodies into male and female sexes except that such division suits the economic needs of heterosexuality and a lesbian is not a woman. So, 'one is not born a female but can become neither female nor male, woman nor man' (Butler, 1990:112-113). Her major contribution was the question of gender as 'culturally produced' and a 'performative effect' experienced by the individual as a natural identity (Spargo, 2000). With these views disseminating more into public consciousness after the 1990s, western societies started to recognise the proliferation of genders.

Western notions of homosexuality were also imported to Thai society after the 1970s. This was evident by the way Thais use borrowed English terms to label different homosexual identities such as *tom* (from tomboy), *dee* (from lady), *seua bai* (bi-tiger for bisexual) (Jackson, 2001:16). According to Peter Jackson, even though Thais adopted Western-derived terms, these terms are appropriated to the Thai context to relabel the existing genders (Jackson, 2001:7). For example, the word 'gay' for gay men is not a new concept of gender but used to refer to male homosexuality and to distinguish from *Kathoey* (cross-dressing, transgendered people). Historically, the *Kathoey* category had included all forms of gender/sex variance from normative forms of maleness/masculinity and femaleness/femininity. In the 1960s, gay men, lesbians, and hermaphrodites were different types of *Kathoey*. By the 1970s, *Kathoey* had come to mean only a person who is born male but subsequently enacts a feminine role (both transvestite and transsexual) (Jackson, 2001:16).

Rosalind Morris (1994) argues that the emergence of new, Western-modelled discourse of sexuality is the co-existence of the older *Kathoey* category with newer homosexual and bisexual identities, and this represents a complex of 'two irreconcilable but coexists sex/gender systems' (cited in Jackson & Sullivan, 1999:5). This appropriation and localisation of Western gender terms generates a hybridisation of Thai-Western perspective on genders and sexuality, and it is a part of the 'combi-nation' which is the main focus of this thesis. According to Jackson,

these new gendered terms reflect Thai's highly selective usage, and they do not introduce a new concept of genders or mark the emergence of a new phenomenon but have replaced pre-existing Thai expressions (Jackson, 2001:16). Megan Sinnott, however, views the combination with western concepts of gender as ambiguous. It is regarded as a means to modernise the Thai nation as well as bringing 'strange gender' to the country. Thai media often associates transgendered sexuality with modernity and national development in contradictory ways. Traditional transgendered people like *Kathoey* are presented as a sign of the lack of modernisation, which resulted from Thai traditional same-sex schools and taboos on teenage dating. At the same time, the emergence of new genders like transgendered homosexuality drawn from Westernisation is perceived to be 'the strange ways of modern middle-class youth', which are threatening to a more conventional and traditional society. Sinnott views this as the vexed relationship between the positively valued concept of 'being modern' and the more troublesome concept of 'westernisation' in Thai public discourse (Sinnott, 2000:427-429).

Nevertheless, these Western-derived terms pertaining to gender and gender identities are still framed within the Western binary concepts of male and female, and in that order. For example, they are divided into masculine/feminine, active/passive roles of gay men and lesbians. Even though Sinnott argues that *tom* masculinity is in contrast to normative conceptions of masculinity for Thai men, because it is a selective appropriation of Thai expectations of both normative masculine and feminine genders (Sinnot, 1999:98-99), the sharp division between masculine and feminine roles explicitly demonstrates how binarism has controlled gender in Thai society. Accordingly, the emergence of LGBTQ discourse and greater acceptance of gender proliferation may appear like Thais are welcoming new gender, but in fact, they are framed within the Victorian duality of the heterosexual norm.

While English-borrowed terms are adopted, it is interesting to note that the *Kathoey* category is unaffected by western-imported terms. The linguistic persistence of *Kathoey* means that popular English terms for transsexuality and transgenderism, such as 'drag queen' or 'tranny', have not been borrowed and are largely unknown in Thailand (Jackson, 2001:17). Even the word 'queer' which could fit with *the Kathoey* category is not widely used. For people in general, the most common term is *tud* (ตุ๊ด), which was taken from a 1982 American film *Tootsie* which was not about being transgender but depicted a cross-dressing man. A *Kathoey* who is a transvestite or transsexual is often called *saopraphetsong* (สาวประเภทสอง second-type woman) or *phuying kham phet* (ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ transsexual woman) (Käng, 2012:477). In contrast, there are many other terms that are loosely used as slang for homosexual men, and also new words more recently imported at the

beginning of the twenty-first century which have started to become more widely used.

More contemporary terms for homosexual men are *geng* (เก้ง) and *gwang* (กวาง) (literary mean different types of deer) which are slang terms for 'gay' to avoid using the term directly. There are also new terms for homosexual men which are 'ke' (passive role), 'me' (active role) and 'se' (both). These three terms were inspired by Japanese Y-comic (*Yaoi* or Boy's love comic), and they are commonly used among female readers to refer to male homoerotics or homosexuality (Anucha and Sopee, 2017:179). This new homoeroticism, as originated from romance literature, stresses romantic scenes between two men rather than sexuality, even though their sexual roles are clearly identified. According to Kam Louie, this is the trend of 'beautiful men' resulting from American metrosexual and CJK popular culture (China, Japan, Korea) which shows a 'hybrid masculinity' widely seen in media and replacing older, traditional images of masculinity (Louie, 2012:932, 936). In Thailand, beautiful men are commodified for female audiences. The target group of this new homoerotic relationship is not people who are homosexual but straight female readers who prefer reading this kind of story. Still, the presentation of these new emerging genders in media is much controlled by the pre-existing binarism. Anucha and Sophee's research on Boy's love novels demonstrates that these characters represent 'a frozen queer character' which they argue is based on the stereotype of a heterosexual relationship (Anucha and Sopee, 2017).

According to these varieties, Thai genders show a combination of different concepts by mixing perspectives on traditional gender with western concepts, or even Japanese, and then customise them to fit with their own preferences. In contemporary Thai society, these terms have been developing and building different perceptions. Modern-day Thai people and academics try to invent new words to prevent sexual discrimination, such as using 'alternative gender' instead of 'third gender', which signifies the ranking of sex from men as a first gender to female (second) and other genders (third). They even promote the use of the Thai term '*rakphetdiewkan*' (รักเพศเดียวกัน love a person who has the same biological sex) instead of '*rakruamphet*' (รักร่วมเพศ) as a Thai translation of homosexuality because the latter can also be literally translated as 'love and have sexual intercourse' and thus connotes an idea that homosexuality is about sexual intercourse only. These are attempts to redefine different gender variations, apart from the normative of heterosexual men and women (VoiceTV, 2015). There is no finite answer what terms should be used and whether the terms are appropriate, or they carry with them the same old ideologies based on social norms.

It can be said that new gender movements after the 1970s have provided new categories of *Kathoey*, which were generalised in the past. Different categories of third genders and their sexuality are being recognised more and relabelled with Western-derived terms. This is the way that the old Thai *Kathoey* has become a globalised third gender, and hence, new *Kathoey*. However, these new genders are still dominated by Western binarism. Consequently, Thai modern concepts of gender are a combination of traditional three forms of gender – men, women, and *Kathoey* – and two different notions of gender from the West.

4.1.2 How much *Kathoey*s are tolerated in contemporary Thai society

Even though Western concepts of gender have participated in creating a new notion of *Kathoey*, the discussion of a new gender outside normative heterosexuality was not widely accepted in Thailand. During the 1980s, *Kathoey* and homosexuality were targeted as problematic issues after the spread of HIV/AIDS, which was regarded in Thailand as a largely homosexual disease. The epidemic brought homosexuality to being pathologised as a sexual perversion in accordance with contemporary western psycho-medical theories. It was not until the 1990s that mass media like television programmes started to show *Kathoey* on-screen widely, and they were shown through a 'commodified, exaggerated femininity' (Peleggi, 2007:88). Outside the world of entertainment media, being homosexual or *Kathoey* in real life was not fully accepted, and general discourse in Thai society struggled with ways to prevent this 'deviation' (Jackson and Sullivan, 1999:10).

On a superficial level, it appears as if *Kathoey* in Thailand enjoy a certain degree of acceptance and toleration. They can cross-dress and go to work, especially in the entertainment industry. Same-sex marriage is sometimes socially, though not legally, accepted. Nevertheless, there are many laws and restrictions that limit rights of *Kathoey* in their lives. For example, a transsexual woman cannot change her gender designation on identity papers from Mr. to Miss or Mrs. Male designation affects their lives in many aspects. They cannot travel to other countries freely without being physically examined because the designation does not match with their gender appearance. The fact that they cannot legally marry affects how they manage their properties or can adopt a child (Voice TV, 2019).

Most of all, *Kathoey* are still considered as men, so they need to undergo the annual military draft enrolment. Before 2014, transgendered and transsexual women were labelled in a conscription certificate as 'disabled, psychotic or having mental disorder.' If they could not provide a medical certificate upon military enrolment, they would have to go through a physical check, which in some cases meant being half-naked in front of male doctors and inspectors in a private room, or just behind a wall.

Many were abused and bullied because of their gender. After 2014, the Thai Sexual Diversity Network successfully lobbied to change the detail in the conscription certificate from 'permanent mental disorder' to being 'gender identity disorder' or a person whose gender is opposite to his birth sex (Intharachai, 2016; Allen, 2019).

This evidence suggests that Thai laws are gender discriminatory. Thailand has recently had its first transgender MP from the 2019 election. Tanwarin Sukkhapisit, a renowned film director who is famous for films that criticise gender issues in the country, came from a new party that puts equality at the forefront of its agenda and aims to change the discriminatory laws and push for a change in marriage laws and sex education in schools. Despite an effort to raise the issue of gender equality, she still receives lots of criticism and online bullying (Ellis-Petersen, 2019; Thanyaphorn, 2019). However, in 2020 she was dismissed from parliament for being a stockholder of a media company, several months after her party was dissolved.

It is also difficult for *Kathoeys* to get a job in the academic world, especially at a higher education level. Apparent evidence of the homophobic environment in Thai academic institutes came in 1996 when Rajaphat University, the country's teacher's college, which has branches all over the country, announced a ban on 'sexually deviant' or 'homosexual' students. Rajaphat's actions significantly show how Thai society discriminates against homosexuality. According to Sinnott, Rajaphat University associated with national development because it produces teachers to educate Thai people into being Thai nationals. Teachers are the primary bearers of the state and to have a homosexual teacher is considered unacceptable role models for students (Sinnott, 2000:429-430). Rajaphat University is not the only case whereby *Kathoeys* are excluded from the academic sphere. In 2018, a transgender instructor sued Thammasat University for discriminating against her gender by refusing her employment (Mathichon, 2018).

Within this atmosphere of discrimination and tension in some cases, there are not likely to be any significant liberation movements, as in the West. Rather, gay and *Kathoeys* people in Thailand have shown their resistance to social norms by simply ignoring them. As mentioned in Storer, 'we would not expect to see a gay community as in the West with its tradition of liberation, simply because without oppression, there can be no liberation' (Storer, 1999:154). Regarding the legal restriction and discrimination on homosexuality, Thailand is considered as tolerant towards homosexuality. Jackson argues that much of the opposition to homosexuality in Thailand operates at the level of discourse rather than institutional practices affecting everyday life. The anti-homosexual sanctions are based on cultural norms of

appropriate and inappropriate masculine or feminine behaviour. So, 'long as a Thai homosexual man or woman maintain a public face of conforming to normative patterns of masculinity or femininity, he or she will escape sanctions' (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999:4, 11). *Kathoey* in Thailand enjoy certain freedom in everyday life or in the entertainment industry, but other normative spaces and occupations do not welcome *Kathoey*, and they still have to struggle to be accepted.

Both concepts and corresponding discourses of old and new *Kathoey* indicate power struggles to gain acceptance. The only difference is that they are struggling with different agendas. Old *Kathoey* was regarded as a sovereign third gender subject of traditional society yet they lacked a sexuality. New *Kathoey* is a global/western third gender subject which comes with more recognition, or at times objectification, of sexuality but still they are discriminated and dominated by the binarism of genders in the expression of their sexuality. Therefore, *Kathoey* in Thailand is complex, laden with different layers of perception on gender that are both traditional, Western influenced, and reflect imperialist thinking.

4.1.3 Analysis of TV dramas

This chapter will now investigate the depiction of genders in Thai TV drama as a combination of Western and Thai concepts to see how it contributes to the nation-building project and national identities. The first part of the analysis is the modernisation of the Thai nation through gender which explores how imperialist binarism shapes genders and identities in TV dramas. The second part will investigate how the depiction of *Kathoey* represents one aspect of combination. The third part is how *Kathoey* is used as an element of nation-building. The TV drama that is used as a case study is *Ploengchiphalee* (2014).

Ploengchiphalee is the only drama with a Northern Thai focus that has a *Kathoey* character. The role of the *Kathoey* does not exist in the original novel, but it was added to make the drama 'more enjoyable.' According to the screenwriter, the role of the *Kathoey* was used to entertain and to make the drama more comical as 'colours in this drama' and that the *Kathoey* role helped in 'supporting the main characters' (Pensiri, 2018, interview). This single sample demonstrates how dramas with a Northern Thai focus normatively do not include a *Kathoey* character, unless used for entertainment purposes. The first section will demonstrate gender binary and power relations between the north and Central Thailand where *Kathoey* are not included.

4.1.3.1 Modernisation through gender: Imperialist ideas of genders

When gender is considered in the construction of a nation, it is often the division that separate men and women into a dichotomy of private/public and nature/civilisation. The identification of women is with 'nature' while men tend to be identified with 'culture' (Yuval-Davis, 1997:6). Gender binary is a modernisation which associating imperialist gender stereotypes to unequal power relations, between the coloniser and the colonised.

The imperialist concept of gender is explicitly seen in a power relationship between Siam and the north in TV romances. Siam entered the process of modernisation by situating itself on the masculine side and thus putting their colonised subjects, including the north, on the feminine side. The most popular plot is a love story between a Central Thai man and a Northern woman which is based on a 'Madame Butterfly' model. *Madame Butterfly*, the opera written by Giacomo Puccini, is a love story between a Japanese girl, Jojosan, and American man, Lieutenant Pinkerton, set in Nagasaki, Japan. In 1907, Prince Worawannakon⁸¹ who is a half-brother of King Chulalongkorn adapted this play into a Thai version entitled *Sao Krue Fah*. The Thai version is then a love tragedy between a Northern Thai girl and Bangkok man, with setting changed from Japan to Chiang Mai (a province in Northern Thailand). Since then, romances and dramas in the later period follow this story pattern; a focus is on hetero-romance between a masculine man and a feminine woman who are the main characters.

This is the product of imperialist thinking as Siam situates itself in the role of the Western imperialist and the north as the oriental subject. The imperialist's view on gender is based on what Edward Said calls Orientalism.

Orientalism is not only a positive doctrine about the Orient that exists in the West; it is also an influential academic tradition, as well as an area of concern defined by travellers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, and civilisations (Said, 1979:203).

Within the framework of Orientalism, Western imperialists associate the Orient with its backwardness, silent indifference, feminine penetrability, supine malleability (Said, 1979:206). This was based on biological bases of racial inequality and leads to the division of races into advanced and backward races, cultures and societies. Said calls it 'an exclusively male province which viewed itself and its subject matter

⁸¹ Also known as Prince Narathip Praphanphong

with sexist blinders.' Orientals were linked to delinquents, the insane, women, the poor (Said, 1979:207). This pattern is used in the gendering of the nation which is explicitly shown in *Ploengchimphalee*. In this drama, an imperialist view on genders is represented by the sexualisation of the main characters who are a Bangkok man and a Chiang Mai woman.

In the opening scenes in episode 1, Nuenang, Saenkham, and Natrai are introduced as representatives of northern woman, northern man, and Bangkok man respectively.

A close-up shot shows several orchids. The camera moves upward and we see a long shot of Nuenang, the main female character, riding on a baby elephant in a shallow river. There is an elephant keeper standing on the side. Soft and slow instrumental music is played. Medium close-up shot shows her face and upper part of her body. She is wearing a strapless top and trousers, and her hair bun is decorated with orchids. Then, she starts reading *The Jungle Book* out loud. Suddenly, she drops the book and it flows along the river. She looks around and cries out for help.

Saenkham, a northern man, comes in. A low angle shows a silhouette of his topless, muscular body. Music changes to faster, livelier instrumental song.

Nuenang: Saenkham! My book!

He quickly slides into the river to grasp the book. When he walks towards her, an elephant splashes water at him. Nuenang giggles. They smile to each other. She gets off her elephant and hugs him.

Nuenang: You are the dearest person in this village, brother.

Saenkham: Keep on reading.

Nuenang: No, you always say you don't understand.

Saenkham: I don't understand English, but your voice is so sweet. Keep reading. I want to hear it for the rest of my life.

Then he carries her on his arms and turns around. Both are smiling and laughing. In the following scenes, the drama introduces Natrai, the main male character, in a gun fight scene (I describe this scene in detail in chapter 3.3). Natrai is introduced for the first time by driving a jeep, wearing a jacket and cowboy hat, and uses pistols to fight with timber thieves (Figure 37 and Figure 38).



Figure 37 Characters representing a northern Thai woman and man (*Ploengchiphalee*, ep1)



Figure 38 A character who represents a Bangkok man (*Ploengchiphalee*, ep1)

First, the drama makes a sharp division between characters. We learn from the story that Natrai has graduated from England and returned home to run his family's timber business. He represents Bangkok and central Thai identity through the language he speaks, clothes he wears, and his background as a foreign-educated man. Though he is not from Bangkok, he comes from the 'city' while other characters live in the forest. Nuenang and Saenkham, on the contrary, dress in ethnic costumes and speak words of northern Thai language. Though every character in this drama mainly speaks central Thai, they use some words which hint at possessing northern Thai language. This is how the drama maker simplified

northern Thai language to be comprehensible to audiences nationwide. For example, Nuenang calls Saenkham 'ai' (อ้าย) which means a brother in northern Thai language. Natrai, however, always uses central or standard Thai. So, he is an outsider of the community which bears with him central Thai identities. It is the same plot and structure as many other dramas which are about a man who is an outsider, newcomer, falling in love with a local woman.

This gendering of characters is dominated by Orientalism. Oriental females were the creatures of male power-fantasy, expressing unlimited sensuality, more or less stupid, and above all they are willing, while the Oriental male is viewed with something resembling contempt and fear (Said, 1979:207). Hasan adds that non-western women are often portrayed as 'ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimised, etc.,' and western women as 'educated, modern ... having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions' (Hasan, 2005:29). Similar definition adds that Europe is seen as being essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, virtuous, normal and masculine, while the Orient is seen as being irrational, backward, despotic, inferior, depraved, aberrant and feminine sexually (Shabanirad and Marandi, 2015:23). These stereotypical images can be seen in these scenes as the drama effeminises the North, while Bangkok is associated with masculinity.

The drama also associates the north with nature. In the opening scenes, Nuenang and Saenkham are at the river in a forest with the baby elephant. The location implies nature and uncivilisation and the baby elephant suggests they are innocent and childish. Even the book she reads (*The Jungle Book*) symbolises nature and primitive life. Orchids, a wild, regional flower, are a symbolisation of northern Thai women in Thai literature and widely known among many Thais. This flower is juxtaposed with a northern woman to indicate that she is also one of the wildflowers. Then, Nuenang's beauty is intensified with close-up shots to show her body, face, skin, or cleavage. Her beauty is in harmony with a pure, beautiful, serene natural surrounding. Also, she is seen as weak and fragile when she calls for help.

Northern man on the contrary is shown as a strong yet primitive being. Saenkham is topless, showing his muscles and tanned skin. His physical strength is shown when he carries Nuenang in his arms. At the same time, he is an uncivilised man, English illiterate. So, the drama portrays northern woman as beautiful, submissive, weak, naïve and northern man as physically strong but lacking intelligence. On the contrary, a Bangkok representative is associated with modern objects and civilisation that aim to contrast with the north. Natrai drives a car while Nuenang rides on an elephant. Natrai wears a shirt, jacket, trousers, and a hat while

Saenkham wears only loose trousers and wraps his head with cloth. Natrai has graduated from England but Saenkham is illiterate both in central Thai and English (this information we learn later in the following scenes). It is a product of imperialist thinking that relies on the gender binary and separation between Orientalist and Orientals into male/female, civilised/uncivilised, educated/uneducated, refined/savage. To highlight this idea, the drama also creates a model of a colony to emphasise this power relationship.

In the next scene, villagers are having a welcome party for Natrai, who is the new manager.

A wide shot shows the party venue. We hear fast tempo music from drums and cymbals. Medium close-up and long shots show Saenkham performing a traditional dance using different postures of martial arts. Long and wide shots show Natrai sitting on a chair in the middle and other villagers sit on the ground on both sides. One man throws Saenkham a torch. He grabs it and swings it around his body. Camera uses cross-cutting to show other characters as they watch the show. Some are standing and some are sitting on the ground, eating food on wooden trays. When the show finishes, everybody claps their hands. Suddenly the music changes to slow tempo from string instrument and cymbals. An elder villager tells Natrai that the next show is 'fon ngaen⁸².' Nuenang comes in. Camera uses close-up shots to show her feet and then tilts up. Long and medium shots show her body in a traditional costume (strapless top and tube skirt). She slowly walks to the show space in the middle. When Natrai turns to see her, he is stunned. Music suddenly changes to a love song, the theme song of the drama, and she dances until the song ends. Close-up and medium shots are used to show her performance and Natrai, who seems to be fascinated by her beauty. When the show ends, he gives her some flowers. The whole scene takes 8.32 minutes.

The unequal relationship between coloniser and colonised is simply expressed through the way people sit in this scene. Natrai is the only person on a chair, which does not only signify power but also civilisation, while other villagers sit and eat on the ground. Cultural performances of the indigenous people are presented for the coloniser's entertainment (Figure 39). Both performances show two main features of the local people, or Orientals. On the one hand the male Orient is strong and primitive as represented by martial arts and torch dance. On the other hand, the female Orient is beautiful and seductive. Said states that it is the male conception of the world which tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The Orientalists or Western imperialists carry with them this stereotype. The possibility of development, transformation, human movement is denied the Orient and the Oriental (Said, 1979:208).

⁸² A traditional dance when dancers bend their bodies backward to touch the ground with their hands like a gymnastic posture.



**Figure 39 A welcome party with traditional performances
(*Ploengchiphalee*, ep1)**

In this drama, the north is effeminised or frozen in the gendered stereotypical images that follow the imperialist premise. Siam adopted this gender binary from the west during the modernisation process and has used it to construct a power relation with its subject. In the drama, thus, a relationship between a Bangkok man and a Northern woman stands for a political relationship between Northern states and Bangkok. To place emphasis on this romantic relationship and gendered stereotype is a way a nation maintains its masculine core and power. *Kathoey* are not necessary for this binary structure since it is a power relation between male/female and Bangkok/Northern Thai. In these scenes, a *Kathoey* character is visible, but has an unimportant role. What does *Kathoey* do and how important are they for nation-building is investigated in the next section.

4.1.3.2 'Old *Kathoey*' and Westerns concepts of gender

The previous section illustrates that *Ploengchiphalee* is dominated by Western concepts of gender that emphasises binary. This drama sharply divides characters into two sides of being men and women, and each of them is in stereotypical functions. However, there is a *Kathoey* character who is presented as living harmoniously with other genders. This suggests the idea of three genders in Thai pre-modern society. At the same time, the old *Kathoey* clashes with the Western concepts of gender. This next section will show how much *Kathoey* are tolerated in this drama, modelling a society dominated by the new Western concepts of gender, and how the depiction of *Kathoey* therefore sustains the heteronormative discourse of nation.

Kathoey in Thai TV dramas are frequently seen as extraordinary and uncommon. This makes them a special gender, standing out from heteronormative men and women. In this drama, a *Kathoey* is presented as a transgression of gender and social norms. They are indeed often represented as clowns or funny, ugly beings.

The presentation of *Kathoey* in TV dramas is different from films. There are an increasing number of Thai films which show dynamic representations of *Kathoey* characters. The appearance of *Kathoey* and gay men in mainstream Thai films started during the 1970s, starting with *Games* (1976) and *Plengsudthai* (the last song, 1985, 1987) (Thitiwat, 2010:4). During earlier periods, *Kathoey* and gay men were presented as negative stereotypes, similar to clowns, marginalised, or as alienated social outcasts (Thitiwat, 2010). The most frequent characteristic of homosexual men found in Thai films is that of a comedian however (Chaisiri, 2010).

Satree Lek (Iron Ladies, 2000) shows a significant change in direction because *Kathoey* and gay men are the main characters. Based on a true story of gay volleyball players, this film was highly successful as it made gross income of 99 million baht (approx. 2.5 million GBP) and won 10 Awards (from 12 nominations) (Film Archive, 2019). Its popularity caused its second episode to be released in 2003. One year after, another film based on a true story, *Beautiful Boxer* (2004) was released, and it was the most famous of all films about *Kathoey* at that time. This biographical film about the life of *Kathoey* Thai boxer was highly received both in Thailand and at international levels, with several awards, including the Torino International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, and Milan International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. It was the time when Thai film really began critically engaging with social problems on gender. Films in more recent years have dealt with problematic existing issues of *Kathoey* and gay men such as, *The Love of Siam* (2007), *Insects in the Backyard* (2010), *It Gets Better* (2012), *Malila* (The Farewell Flower, 2018) and *Dew* (2019). All these films show *Kathoey* and gay men in dramatic, problematic contexts with more understanding of variations of gender and sexual orientation.

Kathoey on TV shows, on the contrary, remain in a more static fixed stereotype as a clown. This is based on the four basic elements of Thai traditional performances which are *phra* (male hero), *nang* (female hero), *kong* (villain), and *talok* (clown/comedian). *Kathoey* often falls into the '*talok*', clown category. The Thai *talok* is also similar to a trickster in Western literature, a comical character that entertains audiences and offers strategies for writers to challenge social structure with laughter (more discussion on trickster and *talok* in chapter 2).

In Sanskrit drama, a clown appears to prevent the audience from being too bored or too sad. A clown is a person who relieves tension, assist, give advice, and provide warnings (Kultida, 1993:92). A clown also functions as the voice of the audience. They speak what the audience may think, and dare not say, or they share a secret that other characters are not aware of, for example. According to Nidhi, a clown in Thai movies violates the rules of Western movies that aim to present a realistic setting completely separated from the real world. A clown in Thai movies keeps reminding audiences of the imagined setting by communicating directly with them, criticising or making fun of the actions of other characters (Nidhi, 2014:74-75). Patsorn Sungsi argues that a clown also stands for ordinary people or someone of inferior status, such as servants or friends who have a role for serving the main characters (Patsorn, 2004:48). With these functions, a clown is essential for a drama in entertaining audiences, supporting main characters, and or acts as the voice of the audience, although their roles may affect plots and storylines very little, or not at all.

According to these three scholars, a clown can relieve tension and sadness, remind audiences of the pretended reality of the drama at hand, and criticise other characters, while also standing for ordinary people. Here I also want to add that a clown represented by *Kathoey* is a transgression of social norms. While other characters are fixed in a binary – either male or female, good or bad – *Kathoey* is more fluid and can move back and forth between opposite sides. Roles of *Kathoey* in Thai TV dramas can thus be better understood through Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival and carnivalesque. According to Bakhtin, in a carnival, social rules and hierarchy are reversed and transgressed. While medieval society in the West was hierarchical and strict, in a carnival, all rules were abandoned and suspended. In other words, it was the time of free and familiar contact among people when hierarchical structure and all forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette were dispatched (Bahktin, 1998:251). In Thai TV dramas, *Kathoey* act as a mouthpiece, medium, chaos, or anti-system agent to perform actions that are against accepted social norms.

4.1.3.2.1 *Kathoey* as exotic beast

The first aspect of transgression is shown via the strangeness of the *Kathoey* in the fixity of a heteronormative and imperialist gaze. In many Thai TV dramas, *Kathoey* and third genders are classified as extra, unusual elements. In *Ploengchiphalee*, a double layer of strangeness is presented as a *Kathoey* in the north here is alienated both by gender and ethnicity. In this drama, a *Kathoey* character is represented as a kind of exotic beast; alienated, a strange object of

entertainment portrayed through bizarre costumes and heteronormative expectations of a *Kathoey's* physical appearance.

This bears relationship to Bakhtin's concept of a carnival whereby 'the utilisation of things in reverse such as putting clothes inside out, trousers on their heads. It was the violation of the usual and the generally accepted' (Bahktin, 1998: 253). A *Kathoey* usually ends up wearing strange clothes in these dramas, elaborate headdresses, bold make-up and fancy hairstyles. Their appearance does not belong to common, everyday-life practice. In *Ploengchiphalee*, Kampong, the *Kathoey* character, usually appears with her two female friends. These three characters are strange and different from others because they wear bold make-up and vivid, colourful clothes. Kampong is the strangest as her outfit is complicated, more elaborate than her friends' making her look like a clown in the community. Her outfit usually comes in many layers, vibrant colours, with elaborate headdress and lots of accessories that are uncommon for everyday uses. The drama stresses this idea by showing her in eccentric ethnic costumes. In this case, Kampong is more exoticised than other characters however, because she is not only foreign to Thainess in terms of ethnicity but also her gender is alien and external to Thai society.

Figure 40 gives a comparison of the *Kathoey's* outfit with other female characters. Two women on the right, according to this drama, are good girls. They dress in plain outfits – black and blue shirts with dark-colour tube skirts – with little hair accessories and wear light make-up. Three women on the left, as the drama tells us, are the antagonists. They wear brighter colour dresses – red, shocking pink, and violet shirts and colourful, fancy skirts. Their accessories are big, and they have heavy make-up. Among these five women, Kampong's dress is the most elaborate. She is the only one in this scene who has a headdress, and she wears several long and short necklaces. Even her shirt and skirt have more details compared to the other women because they both have patterns while the other women either have a patterned shirt or skirt.

Also, Figure 41 shows a scene from episode 1 when villagers attend the welcome party. While other villagers' costumes are more special than everyday outfits, Kampong is still in the strangest outfit. She has three pieces of cloth in three different colours wrapped around her head as a crown. There are also two bunches of small colourful pom-poms hanging on two sides of her head. On her neck are the golden rings of the long-neck Karen people. Her bizarre costume, inspired from Karen hill tribe with extraordinary details, doubles up on her Otherness, both as an Oriental, and as 'backwards' because she appears as outrageous and as a member of a 'hill tribe' at the same time. According to these two figures, the drama has shown

how a *Kathoey* is always the strangest character. In everyday life, her costume is fancier than other characters. When other characters dress for special events, the *Kathoey* will be made even more strange with bizarre costumes.



Figure 40 comparison of costumes between 'bad' and 'good' women (Ploengchimphalee, ep2)

In this situation, the *Kathoey* is presented as an alienated, strange individual that does not belong to normal, standardised social practices. Her fancy outfits remind audiences of the unreal setting and that she is fictional. A *Kathoey* could be compared with a character in a carnival meant to challenge dominant power. According to Bakhtin, a carnival offers a 'half-real and half-play-acted form' which is a new mode of the interrelationship between individuals to free them from the authority of hierarchical positions. It is a space of Eccentricity that permits the latent sides of human nature (Bakhtin, 1998:251). The strangeness of *Kathoey* in Thai TV drama is to distinguish them from normative gender constructs. This can also challenge normal practices and reminds audiences that the drama is unreal.



Figure 41 Kathoey's costume for special occasion (*Ploengchiphalee*, ep1)

Since they are presented as strange beings, most *Kathoey* in Thai TV dramas are not associated with beauty. It is highly contradictory to the depiction of beautiful *Kathoey* in many transsexual beauty contests. Whether beautiful *Kathoey* outside TV dramas, or *Kathoey*'s ugliness in TV dramas, reflects how the idea of being *Kathoey* is dominated by heteronormative ideas of feminine beauty. This is expressed in transsexual beauty contests where *Kathoey* are evaluated not on their ability to express hybridity between masculinity and femininity, but on their mimicry and ability to transgress the gender boundary. These contests become subjugating sites that subject *Kathoey* to imitate mainstream (dominant/Western) notions of beauty and femininity which means these *Kathoey* need to be as beautiful as real woman (Wuen, 2005:10-12). Example of well-known beautiful *Kathoey* in Thai entertainment industry is Treechada Petcharat (Poy), who won Miss Tiffany and Miss International Queen in 2004. Poy has become a well-known actress in Thai entertainment industry. She featured in many Thai advertisements and films, and later appeared in several Hong-Kong films (Figure 42).



Figure 42 Treechada Petcharat (Poy), Miss Tiffany and Miss International Queen 2004 (Kapook, 2020)

Accordingly, feminine beauty has dominated how people treat *Kathoey* and how they view themselves. In Käng's terms, *Kathoey* in cabarets are promoted and commodified by Thai government and private agencies for foreign tourists to demonstrate the 'amazing' character of Thainess, an exotic place with an institutionalised third gender. Moreover, modern and younger *Kathoey* are in search for ideal feminine beauty as they often have utilisation of modern medical technology such as hormones, Botox and surgery (Käng, 2012:479-480). This evidence suggests that *Kathoey* in Thailand are controlled by the domain of beauty in which they need to be beautiful to be accepted. There is social expectation and feminine beauty that *Kathoey* have to conform to and many of them have proved to successfully achieve it. However, this mode of beauty surrounding *Kathoey* life, is not visible when it comes to TV dramas.

A majority of *Kathoey* in Thai TV dramas are not beautiful by Thai beauty standards. When there is a beautiful *Kathoey* in a TV drama, it is never performed by a transgendered or transsexual woman. For example, *Baimaithiplidpliw* (2019) superficially indicates an improvement of *Kathoey's* beauty in TV by having a beautiful *Kathoey* as the main character. However, the drama makers cast a female actor in the *Kathoey* role rather than having a transsexual/transgendered woman to perform. It is also interesting to note that other supporting characters are typically unbeautiful *Kathoey*, and played by transgendered and transsexual actors. The situation is similar in films in which typical *Kathoey* characters are shown as 'weird and ugly.'

In *Ploengchimphalee*, *Kathoey* is associated with ugliness as expressed through non-standardised beauty. Kampong is not beautiful, according to the

popular Thai beauty standard, so she is humiliated and treated unequally. Her figure is not an ideal type of Thai women, as shown in TV dramas and films that promote light skin, small, and slim bodies. She is tall and plump. She has a big, rounded face, and she does not look like an ideal type of woman. Her name is the Northern Thai word for a spider, and throughout the story, she is often called 'a giant spider' (แมงมุมยักษ์ *maeng mum yak*) to mock her big body. The concept of female beauty and *Kathoey's* beauty is elaborated in episode 6 (Figure 43).



Figure 43 Kampong in a yellow dress joining a beauty contest (Ploengchiphalee ep 6)

There is a beauty contest in a village. Kampong is one of the contestants. A master of ceremonies introduces every contestant one-by-one, and each of them walks on stage. When it is Kampong's turn, an MC announces. MC: The next contestant is a woman who should not have been born. Her beauty makes everybody want to kick her. Number three. Miss Kampong, or a giant spider.

She walks in, prostrates on the floor and performs a Thai way of greeting by making '*krab*' (putting two palms together on the floor to show high respect). Then she stands up, raises one hand and slowly waves to a cheering crowd. That hand-waving is mimicking an action done by most Thai beauty contestants. Daoden, a girl from Bangkok and also one of the audiences, laugh at her and talk to a friend.

Daoden: That dress belongs to my sister. She is huge. How can she squeeze her body into that dress?

The crowd cheers and gives applause. Some people laugh. She blows kisses to the crowd, smiles, walks and poses on stage. Runjuan, her friend and also a contestant, then says;

Runjuan: You think you are beautiful in this dress? You look fake!

Kampong: Say what you want. Look! Don't you see that everybody is stunned by my beauty?

Runjuan: Make sure they are stunned, not shocked and want to vomit.

As seen from dialogue in this scene, a *Kathoey* cannot be considered as beautiful because of her physical appearance. Instead of admiring *Kathoey's* beauty, the crowd, contestants and MC make fun of her. These voices stand for the audience and social norm that judge her beauty according to a social standard she cannot attain. Regardless of the dynamic of *Kathoey's* beauty outside TV, *Kathoey* in TV dramas remains static and dominated by the standard of feminine beauty. *Ploengchimphalee*, like many other Thai TV dramas, reproduces this stereotype by having conventionally 'unattractive' *Kathoeyes* as an object of humiliation. Consequently, this part has demonstrated that, under the dominant Western concept of beauty, *Kathoey* in Thailand is shown as a strange, unbeautiful being which transgresses the norms of a society. They are presented as a gender that can harmoniously live in a community without problem, yet they are also exoticised and alienated as the excess of a society based on binarism. This is how Thai TV drama reproduces imperialist ideas of gender and depicts them through the bodies of third gender people.

4.1.3.2.2 *Kathoey* as a gender without sexuality

The next aspect of transgression is that *Kathoey* can go beyond restrictions on gender norms. Victorian etiquettes have influenced concepts and roles of gender in Thailand like how each gender should behave. However, *Kathoey* are a gender in the ambiguity that transgresses norms, and at the same time are also excluded from those norms. In other words, *Kathoey* can do what good men and women cannot do. And they have that freedom to do so not because they are a privileged gender but because they are presented as a gender without sexuality.

Thai TV is very much controlled by law and thus affects the depiction of *Kathoey*. During the 1990s, gay men were associated with the issue of the HIV/AIDS. As a result, their representation on screen was prohibited and controlled. For example, in 1994, the Ministry of Culture prohibited any actors, producers, or TV hosts who were homosexual from appearing on TV to prevent behavioural imitation. It was not until the late 1990s, due to the lesbian and gay movements in Western countries and Thailand, that gay characters reappeared in Thai TV dramas (Phatthanaphon & Mayuri, 2016:103-106).

After the digitalisation of Thai TV in 2014 and the birth of new privately-run channels, there have been increasing numbers of production houses who are willing to invest money in TV dramas which have gay male leading roles. However, dramas with gay male themes are not broadcast on major TV channels but via new digital TV channels (such as GMM25 or ONE channel) and internet-based platforms such as internet-distributed TV (YouTube and live streaming websites) and smart

applications (Line TV, AIS Movie Store, ONE HD). For Line TV alone, 'Boy's Love' dramas have attracted high number of female audiences and reached more than 600 million views in 2017, which was only a few years after the digitisation of Thai TV (Positioning, 2017).

Despite this change, the country's two main channels (Channel 3 and Channel 7) which have broadcast TV dramas since the beginning of the TV business in Thailand, continue to show conservative dramas that hinder expression of male homosexuality. Moreover, the presentation of homosexuality in Thai TV drama never includes sexuality. The presentation of sexual/erotic scenes are strongly restricted by law even between heterosexual men and women, let alone a love scene for *Kathoey* or homosexual people, which is even more scarce. According to the 2013 Royal Gazette (B.E.2556) on the guidelines on content and classification, television programmes for general audiences and children above 13 (TV drama is in this classification) should avoid content that shows inappropriate sexual values and scenes that indicate sexual intercourse. Consequently, if male homosexuality is shown in TV dramas, it is indirect. The only permitted sexual expression on TV is kissing on lips or cheek. This is different from Thai films where obvious sexual scenes or tongue kiss are more common. Romance or love scenes between two male actors, remain taboo. For example, male homosexuality is hinted but not verbally stated. In *Mongkutdoksom* (1996), there is only one scene which implies male homosexuality by showing two men sleeping on the same bed.

In *Ploengchimphalee*, *Kathoey* can transgress gender norms yet there is no sign of sexuality. *Kathoey* however is the only gender that can publicly express sexual attraction and desire, while it is strictly refrained for heteronormative men and women. *Kathoey* in contemporary Thai society usually means a person who is born male but enacts a feminine role. Most *Kathoey*s in Thai TV dramas are normally portrayed as being sexually attracted to masculine men. In *Ploengchimphalee*, though it is not clear about the sexuality of Kampong, she is the only character who can verbally express sexual desire to men. In episode 1, after villagers talk about the new manager and predict what kind of person he will be, Kampong states that she wishes him to be:

handsome with a muscular body, having a big chest, fit and firm butt, and he must be single so that he can be mine.

According to Bakhtin, law, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary life are suspended during carnival as well as hierarchical structure and all forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it (Bakhtin, 1998:251). These built constructs surrounding *Kathoey*

can be compared to the carnival, therefore breaking social rules and articulating 'low culture' that is regarded as unacceptable if done by other genders. The way Kampong describes and sexualises a man's physical body above in detail is not acceptable if spoken by a heteronormative woman, especially in traditional Thai society. Even though a main male character is sexually attractive to many women, they do not talk in the same way as Kampong does. Likewise, if a man describes a woman like this, it would also be unacceptable. On the contrary, it is acceptable when a *Kathoe*y speaks these kinds of sentences and people do not take it seriously for she is already a clown, let loose in the community.

The *Kathoe*y's transgression of social rules and order are tolerated because she reminds others constantly of the rules of behaviour. As Bakhtin puts it, in festivities and holidays, people express their carnivalistic characters because people in the Middle Ages had two lives:

one was the official life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence, and piety; the other was the life of the carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything (Bakhtin, 1998: 256)

So, the *Kathoe*y's role is to remind these people of their 'official life' that they need to conform to rules, while the *Kathoe*y also reflects their potential 'carnival life' which is free from restrictions. She openly expresses her sexual desire in the following scene when everybody introduces themselves to the new manager. While other villagers offer to serve the manager by doing housework, Kampong offers to take him for a bath. When she speaks, she also sniffs (a strong referent to a kind of 'kissing' in the Thai context) and looks at his body, which shows strong sexual attraction (Figure 44). A *Kathoe*y is added here to hint to the audience that this action is unacceptable in real life, but it is acceptable in the drama because it is done by a *Kathoe*y who does not belong to official life but regarded as other.



Figure 44 Kampong shows her sexual attraction to the main male character (*Phloengchiphalee* ep 1)

While *Kathoey* may thus have the freedom to express their sexual preferences at times, it is infrequent in Thai TV dramas that they be cast in a relationship or be seen to have a sexual affair. Audiences will not see or know their sexual practices. Though they exhibit a sexual desire for masculine men, there is no way we can decide whether this person is straight, homosexual, or bisexual. *Kathoey* is in the domain of gender, not sexuality, and their existence is to direct audiences towards heteronormativity. The presentation of *Kathoey*s is different from the presentation of gay men and lesbians in new dramas which foster Western ideas of sexuality. These dramas tend to focus on sexuality rather than gender expression. For example, gay men in *Sotus: the Series* (2016) or a lesbian in *Phloengphrangthian* (2019) (Figure 45 and Figure 46) do not show gender differences. Their gender identities are masculine male and feminine female. Neither do they act nor dress differently from heteronormative men and women. This representation of gender and sexuality is influenced by Western concepts of LGBTQ and in contrast to traditional *Kathoey*, or third genders, in Thai society.



Figure 45 Male homosexuality in *Sotus: The Series* (2016)



Figure 46 Lesbian in *Phloengphrangthian* (2019)

The *Kathoey* in *Ploengchimphalee* bears the traditional image of old *Kathoey*, which is the sovereign third gender subject. Focus here lies on gender differences between heteronormative men and women. Old *Kathoey* is divested of sexuality and when it is combined with Western binarism, shows a transgression of gender and social norms. Though the *Kathoey* can openly express sexual desire, it does not affect the gendered norm or heteronormative structure and conforms to the rules of imperialist binary therefore. *Kathoey's* sexual preferences do not cause trouble to the harmony of the society as long as they show no sexuality. So, the existence of *Kathoey* in Thai TV drama reemphasises the premise of imperialism that it is a gender outside the heteronormative structure.

4.1.3.2.3 *Kathoey* as unifier of gender and social norms

The previous section has shown that the 'old *Kathoey*' is presented as a transgressor of social norms under the dominant Western binary of gender. This section further provides the ambiguity of *Kathoeyness* in how they are also a unifier

of gender and social norms. This function of *Kathoey* also helps in sustaining the core of gendered roles in society.

Ploengchimphalee demonstrates a clear social function of gender through male and female stereotypes, but *Kathoey*s do not have a specific gendered role in that society. Men are associated with masculinity, physical strength, and some specific jobs such as a manager, mahout (elephant rider/trainer), or doctor. In contrast, women do stereotypical feminine roles and domestic jobs. For example; Natrai, the hero, is a manager. Nuenang, the heroine, does not have a specific job, but her duties include dancing, cooking, and doing housework. Moreover, she wants to be a schoolteacher, which is a job done mainly by women in Thailand. While everybody has their gendered roles, *Kampoong*, who is a *Kathoey*, does not have any specific job. She is always accompanied by two female friends. One of them, we learn from episode 1, is a cook and another is often seen as helping with kitchen tasks. However, we do not know what *Kampoong* does exactly. She is often seen wandering or hanging around with her friends, touching this and that but does not really work. This is shown in a scene from episode 1 (Figure 47).



Figure 47 villagers are doing their gendered roles (*Ploengchimphalee*, ep 1)

A high angle, long shot shows villagers are preparing for a new manager's welcome party. A group of male musicians and female dancers are rehearsing for a performance. Other men do outdoor, laborious work such as taking care of elephants, while those who work indoors and make flower garlands are mostly women. *Kampoong* (sitting on bottom left), the only *Kathoey*, is joining with female workers, but it is not clear what she is doing. It looks like she only sits there as a part of the community.

Then a manager arrives. All the villagers introduce themselves one by one by telling their names and their roles such as mahout, head worker, a cook,

housemaid, and so on. Then, Kampoong steps in front of everybody to introduce herself.

Kampoong: My name is Kampoong. People also call me 'giant spider.' I can do everything. If you want to take a bath or change your clothes, I can help you with that.

According to this scene, stereotypical gendered roles are clearly depicted. Men, as breadwinner or head of a family, are associated with jobs and occupations outside a house. Women are reserved to be within domestic space, doing housework, rearing and teaching children. This is the binary concept of gender roles showing itself, as influenced by the West. For example, during nineteenth-century England, people believed in biological roles and oppositions that anatomical differences signalled social categories and capabilities between men and women. Women have physiological capability to bear and nurse children, while men have capability in culture (Rose, 1992:14). *Kathoey* in this drama neither fits in the social function of male nor female. However, instead of showing it as a transgression, the drama uses a *Kathoey* as a unifier that can cross between the functions of two genders. The way she says 'I can do everything' is meant to be funny in the drama as other characters laugh and smile. However, it also implies the *Kathoey's* multifunction. This idea is elaborated in episode 7.

Kathoey, in the most popular Thai understanding of this word, is a person who is born male but enacts feminine roles. So, even though *Kathoey*s dress and behave like women, they do have male physical strength. In episode 7, Natrai's mother wants her son to marry a rich woman, so she is not very happy to know that her son has fallen in love with Nuenang, who is a worker in the village. Therefore, she tries to get rid of Nuenang from her son's life. She orders Kampoong and Runjuan to kidnap Nuenang and make a fake-rape scene to destroy her reputation (Figure 48).



**Figure 48 Kampong and Runjuan are making a fake rape scene
(*Ploengchiphalee* ep 7)**

A long shot shows Nuenang at a waterfall as she does some washing. Runjuan and Kampong approach quietly from her back and wrap her head with a black cloth. Then they put her onto the ground. Kampong punches Nuenang's stomach until she faints away, and then both of them help to tear her clothes to create a crime scene as if she was raped.

Violent scenes are common in Thai TV dramas. Face-slapping is a female driven act of violence, while rape or kidnap are often perpetrated by male characters upon women. Townsend argues that in many Thai TV dramas, rape operates as a form of punishment for female behaviour deemed inappropriate by the male characters and Thai society (Townsend, 2016:581, 581). Thai TV dramas often romanticise rape and violence as parts of a normal relationship. Violence such as 'slap-kiss' is a cliché scene in Thai dramas in which the *nang-ek* would slap the *phra-ek* who forcefully kisses her. Moreover, rape is used in Thai dramas because of the perception of 'a good woman' that a female protagonist cannot initiate sexual contact (Nanthayapirom, 2017). (More detail on this topic in chapter 2). According to this pattern, a female protagonist can be raped only by a male protagonist. Other than that, she must be safe or able to escape from rape as it is not acceptable in Thai TV dramas for a *nang-ek* to lose her virginity to a man other than to which is married and committed.

Therefore, in *Ploengchiphalee*, rape is not real but 'set-up' to cause misunderstanding. Instead of having a male character perform this action therefore, the drama uses a *Kathoey* to do this. The way Kampong punches Nuenang in her stomach is an act of a man. At this point, Kampong functions like a typical male

villain who hurts a female character, yet she does not rape because she is a *Kathoey*. Right after this scene, Kampong and her friends perform another role of female villains which is spreading rumours and gossip. They act as a mouthpiece in the community by telling other villagers that Nuenang was raped. In Thai TV dramas, rumour and gossip are more associated with female activities. So, as a *Kathoey* and a villain, Kampong is multifunctional and switches between male and female stereotypical behaviours. On the one hand, Kampong shows that she does not serve a particular social function in the community as she does neither a typical man nor woman's job. On the other hand, she can cross over social functions to act both as a man and a woman. Her male physical body can function as a male villain to make a mock rape, while she engages in gossip culture, which is seen as more related to women. In other words, she embodies both male and female villainy.

Accordingly, these scenes demonstrate nation-building through the combination of gender, and that combination is dominated by imperialist thinking. *Ploengchimphalee* is a drama which reproduces the imperialist power relation of gender and the binary of the Orientalist/the Oriental, male/female, civilised/uncivilised. This dichotomy is a basis for Thai nation-building which is constructed via the relationship between masculine Bangkok and effeminised northern Thailand. It is a double announcement of nationalist patriarchy through a difference of male imperial subject from a woman and from a *Kathoey*. *Kathoey* is presented as a transgression of social norms and genders. They are excluded from heteronormative binary and sexuality. At the same time, they are the unifier that can conjoin social functions of genders. To be *Kathoey* means that one can be both, or neither man nor woman. However, *Kathoey* are tolerated in a community because they sustain the heteronormative discourse. A perceived abnormality is used in reifying to the audience what normality is, or should be.

4.1.3.3 *Kathoey* as an element of nation-building

*Kathoey*s may function in a dramatic role as an excess of the Western binary of gender. Yet, they are also tolerated as one of the three traditional genders, as long they service and help sustain the heteronormative structure conveyed. This section further investigates how the existence of *Kathoey* in TV drama contributes to the image of nation-building.

In this scene we learn Nuenang wants to be a teacher, so she sets up a school in the village. Before class starts, all the villagers stand in rows in front of a Thai national flag and sing the national anthem (Figure 49).



Figure 49 Villagers sing national anthem and pay respect to Thai flag (*Ploengchiphalee*, ep 2)

The first thing that appears on screen is a Thai flag. A few men are helping to set up a flagpole on the ground. A camera zooms in to close-up on the flag. An extreme long shot shows that the pole is up, with flag now raised to the top. Next to the flagpole is a wooden pavilion that acts as a classroom. Natrai runs downhill to the classroom. His face looks angry. Khamfai, a village girl, quickly approaches him and explains that they are making a classroom for village children and Nuenang wants to be a teacher.

Then, a group of three villains enter the scene – two female and one *Kathoey*. The oldest woman, who is leader of the gang, starts to pick a fight with Nuenang and her friends.

Ranjuan: What are you doing? Did the owner tell you to build this school?

Natrai: Yes. He wants to have a small school so that these kids can study and Nuenang can be a teacher.

All the three villains turn back and gossip. Their faces look like they do not believe what he has just said. Then, a camera switches to long shot again to show all students, teachers, and the rest of the villagers standing in front of the flagpole. They stand on sloping ground. The leading and supporting characters are standing at the back row, which is the highest level of the ground. Other villagers are on the lower level, and the children are in the front row, which is the lowest position. They are singing the Thai national anthem, without background music. When the song ends, everybody bows and then walks out. The children run to the classroom. Nuenang and two of her friends then follow and start to teach them to sing a song.

A practice of singing the national anthem, shown in this scene, is known in Thailand as '*khao thaew*' (เข้าแถว literally meaning 'stand in a row'), which is a daily ritual performed in every Thai school in the morning before class starts. Students and teachers must stand in rows, usually outdoors, in front of the Thai flag. This ritual includes singing the national anthem, Buddhist prayer, and singing the royal anthem too, as the final step of the process. It is a must that the national anthem is sung twice a day, and the Thai flag has to be raised at 8am every day at school. This

practice was initially designed to show respect to the national flag, a potent symbol of Thai nation.

The current Thai national flag was decreed in 1917. In 1939, the Thai government under the Phibun regime prescribed that 'whenever the National Flag was raised or lowered in public places individuals in the vicinity were required to stand at attention' and they were required to stand to attention when the national anthem or the royal anthem was played (Barmé, 1993:152). This ritual has been followed in schools, and it has continued until today. According to the original intention of '*khao thaew*', this activity is a tool to restate the three national pillars, or core of the Thai nation – nation, religion and monarchy. Every Thai citizen, no matter what race, religion, or gender, needs to take into account these three pillars. Even though it is common for Thai TV audiences to watch music videos of the national anthem twice a day (at 8 am and 6 pm), having characters singing the full national anthem in a drama is unexpected.

This scene is significant for nation-building because it reaffirms the unity of Thai people. There are tensions between villagers, and they are about to fight but the fight is interrupted by the '*khao thaew*' ritual. After this ritual, they pick a quarrel again. So, the ritual is a structure of power that keeps things together. The power is invisible and sacred which is only visible through the tradition of singing the anthem. This scene reminds Thai audiences that no matter what conflicts they have, they are still Thai citizens that should live harmoniously within the country. This power is symbolised by the language of nation as expressed through the anthem. According to Anderson, nationalism works from language of kinship and home. National anthems are one example that creates contemporaneous community and experience of simultaneity;

At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. (Singing national anthem) provides occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realisation of the imagined community...If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing (Anderson, 2016:145).

Accordingly, this scene reproduces the model of the nation as imagined through the singing of the national anthem. The way characters stand also parodies a music video of the Thai national anthem that is broadcast in Thailand every day. This drama imitates a scene from that video by showing people of all ages, ranks, and genders. Standing on different levels they signify hierarchy in Thai society. Children are on the lowest level, then the hill people, and on the highest level are the villagers who have higher status (teachers and the manager for example). This

scene does not only emphasise the Thai-isation of hill people but also it reaffirms the traditional structure of Thai gender identities that men, women and *Kathoey* are all members of the same nation and should live together happily. However, if we compare this scene to the official music video of the anthem, we recognise there is no *Kathoey*. (Figure 50 and Figure 51).

This Thai national anthem music video was produced by The National Identity Office⁸³. Figure 51 shows the version produced in 2011, which was broadcast during the time the drama was aired (2014). In this video, different kinds of people are selected to represent Thai citizens. The music video starts with a picture of many people standing in rows on different levels. Then a camera zooms out to show that there are representatives of many kinds of people of all sexes and ages. It even includes people of all religions (Buddhism, Brahman, Christian and Muslim), coloured people, people of the ethnic groups, people of many occupations (doctors, nurses, teachers, soldiers, police, white-collar/blue-collar workers, bike-taxi riders). They are standing in rows and 'lip-syncing' to the song. Even the latest version in 2019 (after the coronation of King Vajiralongkorn) was produced in similar style with different kinds of people such as farmers, soldiers, government officers, students, and so on. However, there is still no *Kathoey*. While most types of people are included, regardless of their religion, skin colour, ethnicity, occupation, and so on, *Kathoey*s, through their absence, appear not to be accepted, or recognised, as ordinary Thai citizens.



Figure 50 A long shot shows different kinds of people are singing national anthem (*Ploengchiphalee*, ep 2)

⁸³ under the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister Office



Figure 51 Image captured from 2011's music video of Thai national anthem

Therefore, the presence of *Kathoey* in this scene of *Ploengchimphalee* both affirms and challenges these dominant structures of nation. *Ploengchimphalee* makes a model of a nation that reflects traditional concept of genders, which are comprised of men-women-*Kathoey*. However, it also challenges the dominant structure of the nation which is based on the Western imperialist concepts of binarism. In this drama, *Kathoey* are presented as strange, ugly creatures who, have the ambiguity of being both transgressor and unifier. A *Kathoey* is included in this scene to prove that they have long existed within the Thai nation. They are always there, yet have been blended into the combination of new gender concepts, so that they are posing no threats to the heteronormative community and its structure.

4.1.4 Conclusion

Representation of *Kathoey*s in Thailand reflect the dynamic of gender concepts in the country, which have resulted from the combination of three different concepts and having been dominated by imperialist thinking and behaviour. In pre-modern society, *Kathoey* is a traditional gender in Thailand's three gender concept, and it was differentiated from homosexuality. Thai society tolerated *Kathoey*s as long as they did not show inappropriate sexual behaviours and conformed to normative patterns of masculinity or femininity. This is what this thesis has called the 'old *Kathoey*' for they belong to traditional society. However, after the arrival of Western imperialism, *Kathoey* moved from gender difference to being a deviation, and thus

started to be viewed as a problem. This was indicative that Western ideas of heteronormativity and monogamy had come to dominate perceptions of gender in Thailand, to being those of duality and binary.

Thailand has since been influenced by newer ideas of gender from the West, and emergent ideas of 'new *Kathoey*' as third gender resulting from globalisation. However, these 'new *Kathoey*' are not totally new genders. Rather a relabelling of old existing genders took place. Moreover, these new genders are still dominated by the idea of binarism. Consequently, Thai modern concepts of gender are a combination of three concepts which are the pre-modern Thai (old *Kathoey*), imperialist Western concept of binary, and new *Kathoey* from globalised trends of gender variation. This combination has shaped how *Kathoey* are tolerated in Thailand and presented in Thai TV dramas.

While old *Kathoey* is a traditional gender and new *Kathoey* is part of a new globalised social movement, *Kathoey*s more generally almost disappear, when it comes to discussion of nation. Most Thai TV dramas with nationalistic themes ignore including *Kathoey*s. For TV dramas with a northern Thai focus, the main focal point of this thesis, *Kathoey*s are even more uncommon. Such drama focuses on the power relationships between Siam and Lanna. Thus, *Kathoey* are not deemed to have a necessary dramatic function. However, *Kathoey* can exist in this drama as long as their roles and functions sustain the heteronormative ideologies. The depiction of *Kathoey* in the North is a double suppression both in terms of ethnicity and gender. Therefore, it demonstrates how the Thai nation is combined with this subordinate culture and gender and uses them to sustain its power.

*Kathoey*s in Thai TV dramas can be both a transgressor and unifier of gender and social norms. *Kathoey*s transgress social norms as they are presented as an abnormality, in appearance and behaviour, as to affirm the normality of being male and female. They are often shown as a clown, funny, or ugly beings. *Kathoey* can go beyond the restrictions of gender norms and also do what good men and women cannot do. At the same time, they also act as a unifier of gender and social norms. Even though *Kathoey* can cross between two gendered social functions, they cause no harm or threat to the harmony of the community.

To conclude, the existence of *Kathoey*s also contributes to ideas of nation-building. In this drama, *Kathoey* is shown as one element of the nation to confirm the three gender identities in Thailand. The inclusion of *Kathoey* in a national anthem scene challenges the dominant concepts of gender binary and structure of a nation too. *Kathoey* have long been an element of Thai nation, or in other words, the Thai nation is incomplete without *Kathoey*. However, the Thai perception and

representation of *Kathoey* today has been shaped by the combination of gender concepts as merged and which cannot be separated from one another.

4.2 Combination of beauty

The discussion in this chapter will then focus on the combination of pre-modern Thai, and Western imperialist modern concepts of beauty. Thailand is a country where physical appearance plays an important role in categorising or distinguishing people into different hierarchies. The idea of beauty relates to traditional beliefs, Buddhism as the major religion, social class, and the products of imperialist thinking. These elements have shaped Thai people's attitudes and experiences and then aided in formulating the modern Thai nation, including some specific national identities. The hybridised identity produced was intended to be viewed as civilised both in the eyes of the West and domestic audiences. This chapter investigates the combination of these concepts of beauty, which are depicted and used to create power relations between Siam/Thailand and the north, and how TV dramas exploit to the idea of beauty in constructing the idea of nation. The chapter begins by outlining general concepts of beauty, then moves to a historical background of Thai pre-modern beauty to show how concepts of beauty are hybridised through a relation with Western ideas. The last section provides an analysis of these aspects through exploration of scenes taken from two TV dramas; *Raknakkara* (2017) and *Buangbanjathorn* (2017).

This chapter supports the main idea of the thesis that Thai nation-building and national identities are not only constructed through a hybridisation with the West, but also from combination with other elements from the north, which are included to show the relative functions of Siamese superior power. Siam acquired a hybridised sense of beauty and identity, and gained power over regional people who became internal colonies. Moreover, ethnic or regional identities have been exploited to legitimise this Siamese hybridisation. The overstated, repetitive reminding of Thainess, Thai essence and identity are represented by the portrayal of northern Thai identity in contrast to a modern, hybridised identity. This is an aspect of Thai nation-building whereby on the one hand Siam/Thailand used and uses the West to enhance their identity; and on the other hand, never fails to fossilise and sustain traditional northern Thai identity so as to reinforce the craze for Thainess and maintain modes of Siamese power.

4.2.1 Beauty and hybridity

Beauty is not an easy term to define. Even Charles Darwin's 'natural selection' cannot explain beauty of some animals as more elaborate elements are not essential for their survival. Rather, Darwin uses 'sexual selection' to understand this better. It is the 'taste for the beautiful' that female animals choose their mates

based on their innate preferences. Mate choice resulted in the evolution of ornamental features that are thus so called beautiful, and pleasing to the senses. However, many scholars find this explanation insufficient because sexual preferences are malleable and always changing. It is impossible for animals to create complex evolution (Prum, 2017). According to Netflix short documentary *Beauty explained*, beauty is what a human brain finds 'pleasure' in. It is a biological expression formed in the cortex and dopamine motivates us to approach things we find attractive. Nonetheless, it is more difficult in case of the human brain because we do not all agree or share the same perception. Humans are creatures influenced by social environments. We take variations in that environment and we cooperate amongst ourselves. While our brains do not change, our preferences change according to time. It is the structure of the society that influences what one regards as attractive (*Beauty explained*, 2019). Regarding this, I would like to draw on Umberto Eco's explanation of beauty to show how beauty is diverse and flexible.

In the beginning, humans associated well-proportioned objects with beauty. So, everything that was in symmetry and correct proportion would be regarded as beautiful (Eco, 2004:61, 73-74). In the Middle Ages, beauty was related to light and colours. People associated God with light, such as the light of the sun, stars, and fire. They also used colours as signifiers of wealth and social status. Only the nobles and rich people could afford gold, jewels, and colourful clothing, while the poor wore only fabrics in drab and modest colours (Eco, 2004:100-102,105-106). Female beauty was rarely mentioned since the Middle Ages focused heavily on religion. It was not until the Renaissance that female bodies became objects of artists interest (Eco, 2004:196). After the seventeenth century, the image of women underwent a progressive change as beauty was allied to useful and practical functions. This change meant the concept of beauty stepped away from Grand Theory and paved the way for subjectivist and particularist concepts of beauty (Eco, 2004:206, 214-216).

A new art movement called Mannerism dissolved all the strict rules of Classical beauty and art in the Renaissance. It valued 'public opinion' and artists' appeal to the imagination more than the intellect or criteria of measure, order and proportion (Eco, 2004:221). Following this, the Baroque period searched for new expressions of beauty. This model allowed beauty to be expressed through ugliness, truth through falsehood, and life through death. The ethical nature of beauty does not lie in rigid canons of the religious and political authorities, but having dramatic, melancholy, dream-like features, express full dignity of beauty and facial expression. Then, art moved to a more straightforward style of neoclassicalism, which emphasised the greater freedom of expression (Eco, 2004: 233-234, 244). At that

time people started to believe that beauty was not inherent in things, but formed in the mind of the critic or the subjectivity of 'bodily taste.' In other words, the same object can appear beautiful to one person and ugly to another (Eco, 2004:246). Or in short 'beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.'

In the nineteenth century, the impressionists believed that real things do not exist but artists created them. One does not paint a landscape, but an *impression* of a landscape (Eco, 2004:354-356). After the coming of the Art Nouveau movement, beauty changed to a beauty of lines, decorative fields, design, and fancy goods (Eco, 2004: 368-369). Then Deco style inherited its characteristics of abstraction, distortion and formal simplification, while moving toward functionalism enhanced by elements from Cubism, Futurism and Constructivism (Eco, 2004:371-372). In the twentieth century, beauty was no longer for aesthetics alone, and art paid attention to everyday objects for commercialisation. Artists like Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol turned everyday objects into art, reminding us that even the world of industry can convey an aesthetic emotion and reveal an unsuspected beauty (Eco, 2004:409). If we look at media nowadays, we will see that mass media are offering different models of beauty. With the coming of pop art, media are full of provocative experimental works based on images from the worlds of commerce and industry. So, the mass media no longer present any unified model, any single ideal of beauty (Eco, 2004:425-426).

According to Eco, concepts of beauty constantly change and are subjective. Beauty is a cultural idea shaped by a dominant culture within a society. To further understand the dynamic of beauty, I will use the concept of hybridity. Hybridity is a topic discussed in postcolonial studies, whereby two different cultures have contact. According to Patrick Hogan (2000), colonised and coloniser would typically form a 'contact culture.' That contact leads to widespread modification or even loss of basic culture. However, it also leads to a reification of contact culture. There are many degrees of contact culture depending on the intensity of contact, degree of severance, and degree of internalisation (Hogan, 2000:1-17). According to Stuart Hall, hybridity as a postmodern subject is conceived not as having 'a fixed, essential or permanent identity' but rather as assuming 'different identities at different times.' The multiple and overlapping forms of identification do not necessarily coexist in an easy alignment but set up 'a series of different positionalities' which are 'often dislocating in relation to one another' (cited in Kureishi and Frears, 1999:207,216).

Hybridity is used to describe intermixing and in different ways. Jaina C. Sanga compared hybridity to the notion of leaking or Chutnification. That is 'in the process of pickling, ingredients undergo a transformation, so that pickling does not preserve

individual flavours, but rather makes new flavours ... this metaphor can also be applied to the notion of hybridity because identity is affected by a host of ingredients; different people, places, and experiences are chutnified and produce a wholly different identity' (Sanga, 2001:89). Other scholastic ideas on hybridity include Edward Said's notion of overlapping, which views immigrants as existing between the old empire and new state. Robert Young also questions the fixity of identity by discussing issues of colonial desire that are rooted in hybridity. Young differentiates between two forms of hybridity. First, hybridity is the combination of two distinct things that come together, making one, thereby 'making a difference into sameness.' Second, hybridity also implies the 'severing' or 'splitting' of one object into two, thereby turning 'sameness into difference.' Difference and sameness occur in an almost uncanny simultaneity; and there is 'breaking and joining at the same time, in the same place' (cited in Sanga, 2001:79-84).

Nevertheless, the key thinker proposing the concept of hybridity is Homi Bhabha. According to Bhabha, colonial power did not only dominate, command authorities of the colonialist or repress the colonised, but it also produced 'hybridisation' – a new space which is neither the colonised or the coloniser, rather, something 'in-between.' Bhabha's hybridity is in relation to two words – ambivalence and mimicry. Mimicry is a strategy used by a colonial power to transform the colonial subject into a 'partial presence' (Bhabha, 1994:86). To dominate one culture, the coloniser wants to transform a colonial subject to be something similar to themselves. However, this similarity must not be identical since it is 'the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of differences that is almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994:86). The ambivalence is needed to maintain the distinction between the coloniser and the colonised. This was done by remaining slippage, excess and difference (Huddart, 2006:59). Accordingly, hybridity occurs in the process of mimicry. The colonised and coloniser had produced something 'in-between' or a space that initiated new signs of identity where a social articulation of difference is complex in an ongoing negotiation (Bhabha, 1994:1-2) (Chapter 1 has also dealt with Bhabha's theories of hybridity).

These concepts of hybridity, mainly Bhabha's, can be used to explain the concept of beauty in Thailand. Before the coming of the West, Thai preferences for beauty stemmed from cultural and religious beliefs. After the coming of Western imperialism, they adopted specific features of Western beauty that were then localised to enhance identities. It was not a mere imitation, but rather a creation of a new hybridised identity that was appealing to Thai domestically, while also showing Thailand as a civilised nation to international spectators. The following section

illustrates the changing of Thai traditional concepts of beauty to that of the hybridised, which now formulate modern Thai identities.

4.2.2 Concepts of Beauty in Thailand

4.2.2.1 Thai pre-modern concept of beauty

Thailand values physical appearance as a signifier of one's social status. A person's physical appearance plays a significant role in determining one's position in the prevailing hierarchy. The first important factor that contributes to the concept of beauty comes from Buddhism, which is the dominant religion in Thailand, and regionally. Thai notions of beauty are related to Buddhist belief that physical attributes are markers of one's accumulated merit. Body is a reflection of morality that good people must be good-looking. According to Susanne Mrozik, body and morality are closely connected, which is not only for buddhas but for all living beings. In Buddhist literature, living beings who literally stink with sin, are disfigured by vices and, conversely, are perfumed or adorned with merit and virtues. Mrozik calls the discourse on bodies as 'physiomoral discourse', which means bodies are cast as the effects of morality. Through the workings of karma, the body a person has in any given lifetime is the effect of his or her past deeds. Two extraordinary beings include a buddha, and a world-conquering king (*cakravartin*), who are adorned with the thirty-two auspicious marks of a great man as the karmic effect of their past deeds; for example, golden skin that is smooth without dust and dirt, a straight and tall body, white teeth, blue eyes and eyelashes like a cow's. The lists of these marks may vary yet they signify the Buddhist fascination with a physical body (Mrozik, 2007:62-65). Based on the Buddhist belief, complexion, grace, and serenity were reflections of moral goodness and ugliness conveyed the opposite. In other words, it is widely believed in the country that those who have a dark complexion have had extreme misfortune in life and this is due to their lack of merit from previous lives (Weisman, 2001:234).

Apart from the signification of merit in life, beauty and skin colour also classify people into different classes. It has been a strong perception in the country that people with light skin tones are believed to come from higher social status, while people with dark skin are on the contrary. This perception is not only found in Thailand but evident across all countries in Southeast Asia. Thailand's favouring fair skin colours is rooted in the Indian caste system and myths, which the ideal of whiteness played a role before European colonisation. Having a fair skin tone in most Asian countries implies a woman's chance of fortunate marriage with a partner from a higher social class (Napat, 2013:28). In other words, women with fairer

complexions were believed to be guaranteed a better future, and it was an obligation for any women with a dark complexion to change their skin tone if they wanted a better life. In Jan Weisman's words, migration of rural labour to the city can sometimes be read as a way to upgrade physical appearance or to get fair skin (Weisman, 2001:234). This idea implies that dark skin and rural areas are closely associated. The discrimination of skin colour resulted from the fact that Thailand is an agricultural society in a tropical zone where most people are exposed to sunlight. According to Penny Van Esterik, light and bright skin was proof of class because a person was exempted from work in the sun (Van Esterik, 2000:154). Besides, complexion sometimes also connotes a stereotypical woman's behaviour. Dark-skinned Thai women are thus commonly stereotyped as being low class and course, whereas fair-skinned women are stereotyped as being upper or middle class and sexually subtle (Napat, 2013:30). Therefore, the beauty concept in Thailand goes beyond skin colour working as criteria for judgement, especially of women.

While light skin is seen as preferential, having black teeth was a signifier of beauty in Thai pre-modern society. During the Ayutthaya period (1351-1767), people coated their teeth with black powder from burnt coconut shell for beauty (Kriangkrai, 2016:237-238). The trend of black teeth continued for decades. It was also another way to show one's social status. Apart from coating their teeth, many people claimed that the black teeth were a result of betel chewing (Petchrung, 2017:79). Betel chewing was a habit that was widely practised throughout the country, and wealthy people had to carry with them accessories that were used in consuming it. Those accessories were indications of one's wealth as well as status, and they were given as valuable presents (Kham, 2017). Black teeth had been a mark of beauty until King Chulalongkorn took his first tour to Europe and perceived they needed to be white (Thongchai, 2000b:538). Only then, the trend of black teeth dropped, firstly among the elites, and then expanding to common society.

Obsession with beauty and appearance, especially whiteness, was firmly held in Thai society and Thais still use it as a classification in the social stratification system to distinguish people of different groups. When influences of other cultures reached the country, Thais adopted new trends of beauty that matched their social values and turned them towards a hybridised concept of modern beauty.

4.2.2.2 Thai beauty reform: hybridity with the West

The hybridity of Thai identity has been mixed between Thai and many races such as *jek* (mainland and overseas Chinese), *khaek* (Persian, Indo-Malay, South Asian and middle-Eastern and most Asian Muslims) and Lao. However, the mix of Thai and Westerner is the most powerful marker of Siamese/Thai cosmopolitan

modernism and has become the aesthetic face of Thailand (Pattana, 2010:58-59; Harrison, 2010a:33).

The hybridisation of beauty started when Siam had contact with Western imperialism in the late nineteenth century. Western influences affected many aspects of life, firstly among the elites, and one of them was the sartorial reform. It was strongly believed that the fashion reform of the Siamese elites was a part of diplomatic strategies done in order to gain a civilised image in the Western eye. The reform started among the court men as they were encouraged to wear long hair and moustaches. As well, women's beauty was restyled to having long hair and Victorian-style dress⁸⁴ (Peleggi, 2002:48,59). The bodily reform was emphasised on women's bodies more than men's, as they were objects of the Western gaze, through which the West judged and assumed Siam's lack of civilisation. In King Vajiravudh's reign (1910-1925), the female appearance was observed and judged by the West as backward, i.e., having black teeth and a short-brush-cut hairstyle that made them look like men. Besides, the *chongkrabaen*⁸⁵ worn by both men and women made them indistinguishable by the West. According to the Western perspective, they were strategies that Siam used to keep woman unattractive and implied limited freedom and equality of women. Therefore, King Vajiravudh needed to raise the status of Thai women and encouraged them to wear their hair long and use skirts (Van Esterik, 2000:99).

Western facial beauty and cosmetics have become popular among elite women during the time of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), as Western cosmetics were imported to Thailand. Accordingly, beauty was interpreted less as a natural attribute than something that can be purchased and enhanced so that it was the responsibility of women to develop their own beauty rather than assume responsibility for meritorious acts. As beauty trends changed, Thai's habit of betel chewing and their black teeth became less popular and was banned. During King Prajadhipok's reign (1925-1935), the trend of white teeth rather than black teeth became part of the new criteria of beauty (Van Esterik, 2000:154). After 1940, the Phibun government sought to standardise bodily practice and to discipline Thai citizens, so the chewing of betel was declared illegal (Peleggi, 2008:73). From this period, Thais started to have white teeth according to Western beauty standards.

The idea of promoting Western beauty was more concrete under the Phibun regime, the period when nationalist culture heavily stressed national stability and

⁸⁴ High-necked blouse trimmed with lace, old *sabai* (a piece of long cloth) worn over it, and a silk *chongkrabaen*, European stockings, and high-heeled shoes (Peleggi, 2002:60).

⁸⁵ Fabric twisted up between the legs made to look trouser-like.

progress. This time, the emphasis was on costume and fashion, which were effective strategies to deliver civilised images, just as in other countries. For example, after the declaration of independence, America used fashion as a means to appear as a new independent nation in the eyes of the world. American people devoted to pleasure, dress and extravagance and they believed to dress up 'for the good of my country' (Haulman, 2011:181-84). Likewise, in Thailand, twelve sets of cultural mandates were released to discipline the citizens and modernise the image of the country. One of the cultural mandates regulated a dress code which called on the public to dress in a neat and well-groomed manner so that Thailand would become 'the equal of civilised nations.' Specified 'Western clothing' was regulated in detail, such as men wearing hats, shoes and socks, jacket and long trousers, with women wearing hats, skirts, blouses covering the shoulder, gloves, and high-heeled shoes. Socks and stockings were also encouraged but not compulsory (Barmé, 1993:156-157).

This policy urged all Thais to believe that they were not 'barbaric.' The Thai government believed that 'proper dress and correct manner are no different from other civilised countries' (Peleggi, 2007:151; Van Esterik, 2000:103). Accordingly, fashion reform and bodily practice turned out to be a physical burden for Thai women in that they must take responsibility for the nation in both concrete and personal ways. Kanjana Hubik Thepboriruk argues that this cultural mandate was patriotism via motherhood. The mandate required Thai women, whom they called 'Thai sisters', to achieve self-improvement through health, behaviour, and dress, and obliged them to take good care of children as well as make sacrifice and volunteer for the nation (Kanjana, 2019:245-248). Such bodily practice was a responsibility that one must do for the nation.

Furthermore, a woman's body became a symbolic space for national progress as Phibun further promoted beauty and clothing contests. The Miss Siam contest in 1934 was regarded as an official policy of the Thai government to promote nation-building. As Peleggi stated, the launching of the Miss Siam contest on the same day of the celebration of Constitution Day, 10 December 1934, proclaimed the relationship of the physical body of citizens, mainly female, with the abstract body politic (Peleggi, 2008:72). In Van Esterik's terms, the beauty contest was a strategy that Phibun used to display new Western fashion for Thai women (Van Esterik, 2000:140). Before the Phibun regime, contestants wore both Western and traditional Thai attire. After Phibun was in power (first period 1938-1944), the contestants were told to wear only Western-style clothing – dresses, high-heeled shoes, hats and gloves (Barmé, 2002:235). Beauty contests in Thailand was thus closely connected with the new nationalism. Its significations were to display modernised, westernised

women to represent the new civilised country. Kanchana calls this action as creating 'the fashionably patriotic Thai women' (Kanjana, 2019:249) and Van Esterik terms it as the turning of Thai women into the 'public embodiment of Thai culture' and 'flower of the nation' (Van Esterik, 2000:103, 105).

Beauty contests were later exported to a global level and thus required a higher degree of Western standards of beauty. It aimed to promote Thailand to being better known abroad, with contestants joining the Miss Universe competition. Then, Western standards of beauty for face, figure and posture played a significant role as judgment and evaluation of beauty. During this period, more and more beauty queens possessed a Western look, and several of them were *luk-khreung* or mixed-raced children, who were born and raised in western countries and moved back to Thailand to join the contest. A good example is the Miss Thailand winner of 1988 Pornthip (Pui) who is a Thai-born, California-raised woman and in 1992 several runner-up contestants were Thai-Caucasian mixed-race children (Van Esterik, 2000:149-150). However, this trend brought the question of authenticity and Thainess as a representative of Thai women. The 1992 Miss Thailand contest was criticised because three out of five finalists had mixed looks (two out of three were born to Thai and American parents) and failed to express themselves in Thai. Nevertheless, it was undeniable that their 'mixed-looks' and facility in English are sought out in the international level contests as Pui Phornthip won the Miss Universes title because of her cultural hybridity, while Miss Orn-anong, who exemplified typical traditional Thai beauty and was crowned Miss Thailand of 1992, could not strengthen Thailand's chances in the international competition (Van Esterik, 2000:149-150). Accordingly, beauty standards in Thailand moved from the traditional Thai to being hybridised with Western beauty standards, which are commonly embodied in in the '*luk-khreung*.'

4.2.3 *Luk-khreung*: a new hybridised Thai identity

Luk-khreung means 'half child', or mixed-race offspring. This word can cover any mixture of races, but in most of Thais' perceptions, it generally connotes mixed-race children of a Thai and a Western parent. The craze over *luk-khreung* is part of a significant Thais fetish for *farang*. *Farang* is a term used in Thailand to refer to a Westerner or Western-derived things. Pattana explains that the word was borrowed from Muslim Persians, and Indians, used to refer to the Portuguese who visited their shores. *Farang* is also a generic term referring to any Westerner or Western-derived things without any specification of nationality, culture, ethnicity, language, and so on. (Pattana, 2010:61). In the second half of the twentieth century, *farang* moved from being 'desired and feared' to becoming a form of 'hybrid postcolonial self.'

Accordingly, the *luk-khreung* phenomenon is seen as the Thai craze for things *farang* or the *farang*-isation of the Thai, at both individual and national levels (Pattana, 2010:71-72).

Luk-khreung in Thailand, to a large extent, were a consequence of the post-Vietnam War era, after the 1960s, when American GIs stationed at the US military bases in upcountry Thailand fathered children with Thai women (Pattana, 2010:72). Most of the *luk-khreung* at that time were the children of American GIs and non-elite Thai women, even though some of them were born from elite or high-ranking couples. During the 1960s-1970s, interracial marriage with European people was not widely accepted, and mixed-race children were stigmatised as 'wild rice' seedlings (ข้าวนอกนา *khao nok na*). Reynolds stated that it carries a sign of illegitimacy, analogous to seedlings that have fallen 'outside the dyked boundaries of the rice field' (Reynolds, 1999:269). *Luk-khreung* children in the later generation are also a result of sex tourism⁸⁶ and the expansion of the economy resulting in more contact with the West.

It was only after the boom of Amerasian/Eurasian *luk-khreung* popularity in the 1980s that Thailand's entertainment industry discovered *luk-khreung* as representatives of a modern form of Thainess 'constructed as being cosmopolitan and self-confident, successful and beautiful, prepared to take its place alongside other 'modernities' on the global stage.' (Pattana, 2010:72). In Weisman's terms, after 1990s, *luk-khreung* have become a 'positive – even desirable – status, viewed as linking not only the individual but the nation with positive, desired, Western worlds beyond Thailand's borders.' Images of *luk-khreung* are constructed and commodified to project a modern, developed, cosmopolitan picture of the country to an international audience. Their fluency in English, physical attractiveness, and well-developed talents are essential in international competitions, such as beauty contests, or even at the Olympic games (Weisman, 2001:233).

However, not all mixed-race children are favoured in Thai society. *Luk-khreung* of Thai and Chinese parentage was not highly positioned. During the reign of King Vajiravudh, the Chinese as well as their descendants were discriminated against as the king developed an extreme ideology of nationalism, patriotism and ethnicity at the expense of the Chinese, whom he regarded as the Jews of the East (Sulak, 2002:36). During the 1940s, the government policy aimed to limit the

⁸⁶ During the Vietnam war, the United States Air Force established a military base at U-Tapao Airport in Pattaya city, Rayong Province. Pattaya is renowned as Thailand's tourist destination for the American soldiers. After the war ended, Pattaya expanded and developed as a famous tourist spot well-known for its beach and nightlife.

Chinese from many rights. Any names or surnames which denoted Chinese origin had to be changed, people of Chinese extraction were not allowed to join the military, and Thais were told to hate the Chinese (Sulak, 2002:40). For Thai politics, the Chinese bourgeoisie were restricted from political participation because of the criterion of citizenship. Moreover, the underground, marginalised Chinese, were identified as communists, and thus labelled as alien or 'un-Thai' (Chai-anan, 2002:56-58). As their racial identities were not accepted, Thai-Chinese children, who were and are large in number, needed to merge with Thai identity and become localised as *konthai chue sai jeen*, (คนไทยเชื้อสายจีน) or 'Thai with Chinese race', and via the building of intense Thai patriotism (Sitthitthep, 2015:116-119). Only *luk-khreung* who are part-White are highly positioned while the public embodiment of *luk-khreung* of other ancestry, especially of those who are part-Black is problematic (Weisman, 2001:234). According to Pattana, *luk-khreung* whose fathers were of African-American⁸⁷ descent endured discrimination and ostracism (Pattana, 2010:72). A good example which shows social discrimination against part-Black *luk-khreung* is a Thai novel *Khao Nork Na* (1976) by Thai author Sifa Mahawan. This novel depicts the life of a half-Black girl who has to struggle with hardship while her half-sister, who is half-White, has a better fortune and is adopted by a wealthy family.

This trend of *luk-khreung* beauty set such a standard that other types of beauty faded out. In modern-day Thailand, races that are in the bottom ranks of social hierarchy according to Thai beauty standards include traditional Thai and other ethnicities. For example, the facial features of people in the northeast are known as 'Na Lao'⁸⁸ (หน้าลาว), which means Lao face. A lot of Thai upcountry girls, both in the northeast and other regions, evaluate their beauty based on central Thai beauty conveyed in TV. Here, beauty means having an international look, which is characterised by fairer skin, an oval face, a more angular and narrow nose, wide eyes and being tall (Hesse-Swain, 2006:266). Specific facial features of north-eastern (*Isan*) Thais, such as 'Na Lao', are undesirable among the people in the northeast, and they want to transform their physical appearances as a result. Many *Isan* people even squeeze the nose of infants to prevent it from being flat and broad, and whitening skincare products are ubiquitous (Hesse-Swain, 2006:266-268). However, there is also an 'extreme localisation of ethnic identity in the discourse of globalisation.' They describe their *Na Lao* features as ugly, but they are aware that their faces could be viewed as beautiful outside the country. For example, they say

⁸⁷ Luk-khreung in the 1960s are offspring of American GIs, so any half-Black children were assumed to be descent from African-American fathers.

⁸⁸ Facial feature of people in the northeastern Thailand which is also called Lao face or *Isan* face as a character of the north-eastern people of Lao origin (Hesse-Swain,2006).

that their exotic looks elicited more positive responses in the US (Hesse-Swain, 2006:269).

Unlike the northeast, people in the north, especially women, were generally regarded as beautiful according to central Thai beauty standards. According to Darunee, the north is often described in tourism media as having beauty in three main aspects, which are beauty of nature, culture and tradition, and women. Her thesis studied the representation of Chiang Mai beauty as the capital of the north and it found that Chiang Mai women were described as having fair, white skin tones, sweet faces, and a gentle manner (Darunee, 2006:2-4). Though the beauty of northern women was well regarded compared to the northeast, facial features of typical northern people do not correspond with the Western beauty standards exhibited by *luk-khreung* and favored in the capital Bangkok. For example, a research in 2014 found that the most popular surgery for women in Chiang Mai was rhinoplasty, nose jobs, followed by cheek and jaw surgery (Kanoknat, 2014).

More and more people whose faces do not comply with Western beauty standards are having surgery to transform their beauty. Thai women often modify their faces such as having nose jobs and eye lifts. In 2012, the plastic surgery industry was worth more than 20,000 million baht (500 million GBP approx.), which sharply increased from 2011 at 15,000 million baht (375 million GBP approx.). This sufficiently demonstrates that plastic surgery is a fast-growing business in Thailand (Kanoknat, 2014:2). According to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS), in 2017 Thailand was ranked 21st in the world for plastic surgery cases, with the top three most popular surgeries being eyelid, breasts, and nose enhancements (Nantchanok, 2017). A modelling agency in Thailand stated that more and more young people usually have a nose job and double eyelid fix, as they believe they would look more suitable for TV, with an angular, pointed nose looking apparently more appealing on camera than 'flat' noses. It has become commonly understood among young people that plastic surgery is a pathway to the entertainment industry (Yuphaphorn, 2013:8-9).

Although *luk-khreung* beauty is favoured by the majority in Thailand, there is also a concern about the deterioration of Thainess. This concern is intensified especially in the globalising world. The question of '*Thai tae*' (ไทยแท้ authentic Thai) and '*Thai thiam*' (ไทยเทียม synthetic Thai) is widely discussed (Reynolds, 1999:264). There are efforts to bring back and recall authentic Thai identities. Kasian Tejapira calls this anxiety around being Thai 'cultural schizophrenia', and by presenting 'split in personality' or fragmented subjectivity. Thais try to show that the interiorised Thai self is more authentic than the projected un-Thai self in the form of dress, behaviour

or activity. This reflects the 'irrepressible, ardent, resilient, recurrent and ever-reincarnating desire to be Thai.' These people need a purifying of Thainess, which means presenting Thainess in a form that has to be old, venerable, immutable and fossilised in present-day circumstances such as traditional dress, and classical dance. All these are attempts to 'spiritualise, purge, subjectivise, and project Thainess back into a solid image or sign of their desire' (Kasian, 2002:210-15).

However, many scholars argue that it is impossible to extract Thai or Western elements out of modern Thai identities. Reynolds notes that the distinguishing factor between the two sides are more and more difficult to judge because *luk-khreung* offspring gained more acceptance in Thailand and engender the 'postcolonialist Thai self' (Reynolds, 1999:270). Similarly, Harrison (2010a), Thongchai (2010), and Pattana (2010) argue that Thai and Western features became a hybridity that is inseparable. Harrison argues that the *farang*-isation of Thai aesthetics, culture and identities is intense, and it is impossible to separate out the strands. The hybrid identity that Thais have with the West cannot be examined in isolation from the powerful cultural influences of the outside world (Harrison, 2010a:34). Thongchai further adds that nothing is pure culture since the West in Thailand is a 'Thai-ised west', and many Thai identities are colonial products (Thongchai, 2010:149). Moreover, Pattana notes that the Thai craze for Western things now goes deeper in mental and physical terms. From his point of view, *luk-khreung* is a form of hybrid identity caused by the cultural intimacy between Thais and the West, and that it is impossible to deny or squeeze out Western features from Thai identity (Pattana, 2010:72.74). According to these scholars, *luk-khreung*, as well as their innate link to Western beauty, have become a hybridised, modern Thai identity. This hybridisation of beauty is used in nation-building and it is explicit in Thai TV dramas.

4.2.4 Analysis of TV dramas

In this section, I will analyse hybridised beauty appearing in Thai TV dramas in relation to three topics. The first topic will show how the hybridised beauty of actors is used to modernise the past. The second illustrates how hybridised beauty implies power and social hierarchy. The final topic shows Thai's concern regarding Westernisation and the revival of Thainess, expressed through the fetishizing of a nostalgic Thai past and spiritual comfort set against Western material progress.

4.2.4.1 Westernised beauty modernises the past

Many Thai historical dramas today have placed tremendous effort on production quality to create almost perfect imitation of the past. However, while many elements appear to be historically accurate, the beauty of leading actors in many

historical dramas sit in contrast to the overall production. In this section, I want to demonstrate that Thai historical TV dramas have exploited *luk-khreung* actors and hybridised beauty to modernise the past.

Raknakkara (2017) is an excellent example to show contradictions between historical settings and actors. This selected version shows strong representation of northern Thai culture and it has been praised by media and drama fans as an accurate historical adaptation, especially concerning the representation of characters (wearing traditional costumes), language (speaking northern dialect), props and locations. The production house claimed that they worked with specialised consultants and costume designers, who were textile experts.

Raknakkara gained interest with not only the media and general public, but also academic interest too. Film critics, historians and scholars widely discussed the drama on topics relating to its cultural and historical representations. For example, Manop Manasam, a lecturer from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University praised this drama for creating a 'neo-Lanna'⁸⁹ phenomenon where many people, including those in nearby countries, became interested in northern Thai culture. Several seminars were also held in both academic and non-academic arenas. For example, an interview with the author and costume designer of the show, about inspiration drawn from the novel and textile history (Figure 52). In contrast, some scholars saw that the historical representation of the drama was problematic. Tanet Charoenmuang, one of the leading Thai scholars in historical and cultural studies, argues that 'there is no neo-Lanna in this situation, but only a commercialised Lanna.' For Tanet, *Raknakkara* brings only a discussion on appearances, costumes and acting, while little discussion focuses on its content. He points out that the drama reflected the failure of historical studies in Thailand since historical facts were ignored, and a reproduction of history into imagination never leads to arguments or debates and it has dramatised the individual's tragedy over historical facts (Tanet, 2017).

These public and academic receptions demonstrate how the message of the drama and its representation of culture, history, and appearances are interpreted in diverse aspects. *Raknakkara* has been observed in relation to both cultural and historical aspects, because of its presentation as a so-called 'historically accurate' drama.

⁸⁹ He published this post on his personal Facebook account on 17 September 2017. After that, his words were copied and distributed in a web forum Pantip.com.



Figure 52 Posters for seminars and talks on topics regarding Raknakkara, in academic and non-academic arenas. (Event organisers from top to bottom: Top: Chiang Mai University; Bottom left: Museum Siam; Bottom right: Paruskavan Palace)

Despite the effort to produce a convincing historical drama, the beauty of the actors is modernised and westernised. Among four leading actors, who play northern Thai people, one of them is Thai-Belgian (Chaiyapol Julien Poupart) and the other three (Nathaphon Temirak, Nittha Jirayungyurn and Prin Suparat) are Thai. However, they all have features of Eurasian beauty which are white skin, bigger and pointed noses, big rounded eyes with double eyelids⁹⁰, oval or V-shaped face. Such Eurasian faces are ubiquitous on Thai TV, although they do not represent the characters. This is because Thai TV drama is a genre that primarily targets Thai audiences. Though the internet has provided more opportunities to reach international audiences worldwide, television drama is not 'officially' exported, neither by the Thai government nor TV stations. Some dramas are available on online-video platforms such as YouTube, but they do not have English subtitles. Even in some

⁹⁰ Some Thai people are born with Asian eyes that appear to slant because of epicanthic folds. Big rounded eyes with 'double eyelids' or clear lines on upper eyelid are more favourable among many Thais. Many people have had double eyelid surgery which is a technique to slit eyelids to open incision in upper eyelids and create lines.

nearby countries such as Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, where Thai TV dramas are favoured because of cultural proximity, the distribution of Thai TV dramas to those countries is done privately and illegally (Amporn, 2008;2016).

Thai films, on the other hand, target both Thai and international audiences. According to May Adadol Ingawanij, there are two types of Thai films, which are the 'bourgeois heritage film' and 'un-Thai teen cinema.' The first type forms within a category of period films that lay claim to international quality by referencing national biography and are regarded as emblematic of the bourgeois narcissistic sensibility. Some of them may lie outside the realm of national biography, but they usually come with an 'aesthetic turn toward historicist spectacle and pastiche' (May Adadol, 2006:75-77). These heritage films were aimed to be exported at an international level, while the un-Thai teen cinema targets Thai youth with a style of music-video movies, generic cityscape, pop-cultural artefacts and a large cast of young, new, actors (May Adadol, 2006:135, 144-145).

Many 'heritage films' were produced after the 1997 economic crisis. These films were made in the anti-West atmosphere as Thais felt they were threatened by Western financial forces again. For Harrison, post-1997 films mostly deal with a nationalistic sense, a yearning for Thainess and a Thai rural past. Sometimes they respond to the Tourist Authority of Thailand's promotion of an 'Amazing Thailand' by presenting 'exotic landscape, verdant nature, vibrant colours, serene spirituality, explosive cuisine, balletic martial arts, bucolic peacefulness, total relaxation and sensual pleasure' that incorporate a set of fantasies and appeal to international audiences (Harrison, 2005:326). Amporn Jirattikorn (2003) also points out that Thai films in the 1990s followed the 'go-inter' trend and they were moving up to the international market (Amporn, 2003:299). Based on these film categories and definitions, Thai films that target international market feature Thai actors who best represent images of Thailand in the past while *luk-khreung* actors are commonly found in teen movies. Characters in heritage or historical films possess the pre-modern 'authentic' Thai beauty, which are dark skin, flat noses, a round or square shaped face, high cheekbones, short hair, and black teeth (Figure 53).



Figure 53. Examples of period/historical films with ‘authentic Thai’ actors (from left to right Bangrajan (2000), Nang Nak (1999), Suriyothai (2001), Naresuan (2007), Ong Bak (2003), Fa Talai Jone (2001)).

However, there are exceptions in some historical films where hybridised beauty can be found. For example, *Thawiphop*'s⁹¹ main actor contradicts the film's nationalistic agenda because it is meant to 'reiterate the message for Thais to accommodate, assimilate and move with the times.' In other words, a *luk-khreung* actor stresses the film's key message that Thais are flexible in learning and adopting from the West (Harrison, 2010b:116), which was a theme of that film and a feature that is seen to have saved Thailand from colonisation. Other historical/period films which show hybridised beauty tend to be romances or melodramatic films. They do not aim to sell the 'authentic Thai' look to international audiences or provoke nationalistic sensibility amongst Thais (Figure 54).

⁹¹ A 2004 film, directed by Surapong Piniikhar, about a contemporary young woman who travelled back to Siam during the 19th century and witnessed the country's struggles against the Western colonialism of Britain and France.



Figure 54. Examples of Thai period/historical romances that feature ‘hybridised beauty.’

The same rule applies to historical TV dramas which target Thai viewers. According to Gerhard Jaiser, Westernised features of Thai actors are so prominent that ‘Thai sought for Westernised beauty makes these actors even more *farang* than *farangs* themselves’ (Jaiser, 2017:156). As Reynolds states, these facial features are ‘highly prized’ in the Thai entertainment industry. This phenomenon is ‘the engendering of a postcolonialist Thai self, which has been part and parcel of the commercialisation and commodification of beauty in Thai popular culture for some time’ (Reynolds, 1999: 269-270). Thai TV has manipulated the marketable new Thai self and beauty and thus can guarantee profits for the business.

Besides Eurasian facial features, *Raknakkara* also avoids pre-modern bodily practices such as the exposure of the upper part of a body. As mentioned in Chapter 3.2, three ethnic groups were selected to represent three fictional kingdoms in *Raknakkara* because their ethnic costumes are distinguishable. However, these costumes also help the drama makers to create more civilised images of northern kingdoms. During the nineteenth century, women in the north did not cover their upper body. Commoners usually had a piece of cloth to wrap loosely around their torso and neck (Figure 55). Shirts were not commonly worn except on special

occasions such as religious ceremonies. Even the upper class and nobles rarely wore shirts. It was not until the late nineteenth century that shirts had become common in everyday use (Manop, 2008:125, 129). Stitched vestimentary or western-style blouses were regarded as the mark of civilisation among court women and the Bangkok elites (Peleggi 2008: 67-68). The fashion reform was carried to the north by Dara Rasami, Lanna princess and queen consort of Chulalongkorn, after the Lanna kingdom became a province under Siam's administrative system. Dara Rasami mixed Siamese Westernised fashion with northern Thai (Lanna) style. She adopted the use of upper garments, such as lacy Victorian blouses draped with a silken sash to accompany Lanna tube skirt (Woodhouse, 2009:170). Dara Rasami entered the Siamese court in 1886 and did not return home until 1908 and permanently leaving the Bangkok palace in 1914, which was after the timeline featured in *Raknakkara*. This information implies that if the drama makers wanted to depict accurate presentations of Lanna people (the majority of whom are ethnic Tai Yuan), they had to show uncivilised, unreformed dress, or topless actors. Instead, the selection of costumes from Tai Lue, Tai Khoen, and Burmese groups helped them to avoid the issue of uncivilised dress or topless appearance. Women in these ethnic groups were commonly seen wearing *suea pat*⁹² or *htaingmathein*⁹³, while northern Thai women in the Lanna kingdom wore simpler shirts, or not at all due to the hot climate. Other pre-modern signifiers of beauty are eliminated, such as black teeth. So, it is not merely for fashion or beauty purposes that this was done, but to create a refined, reworked, version of the past.

⁹² A long-sleeved shirt with no buttons. It is worn by wrapping the right side of the front panel of the shirt over the left side of the front panel, and the two panels are then tied together via strings.

⁹³ Buttonless tight-fitting hip-length jacket worn over a bodice.



Figure 55. Northern Thai women in 1902 (Sarassawadee, 2005:220)

A reason behind the contradiction lies in a specific pattern of entertainment media in the country. *Raknakkara*, as well as many other Thai historical TV dramas, conform to this pattern. Only admirable aspects of Thai history and refined depictions of the past are permitted on screen. Stories of most Thai historical dramas revolve around similar themes about heroic deeds of heroes or showing yearning for a nostalgic past (this issue is discussed in detail in chapter 2). In order to reproduce good images of the country, many Thai historical dramas select only positive aspects from captured moments in textbooks and entertainment media. For example, *Bupphesanniwat*, Thailand's most famous historical TV drama in 2019, is full of scenes taken or inspired from textbooks and Thai tourism advertisements. According to Patrick Jory, *Bupphesanniwat* creates the romanticised setting of a noble household, to show Thai family in the past living in a decorated traditional Thai-style house. Though there are masters and slaves and a strict code of bodily practices, the drama naturalises social distinctions and inequality as inherently good. All this fantasy comes with a soundtrack of Thai classical music. He states: 'it is a textbook example of official constructions of Thai culture that could have been produced by the Ministry of Culture' (Jory, 2018:443).

Similarly, Irene Stengs argues that Thai dramas and films have repeatedly dramatised moments of historical records, and vice versa, which she terms these moments the 'moving monuments.' King Naresuan's victory, Queen Suriyothai's sacrifice and the villagers of Bang Rajan's bravery, all these have been reproduced in numerous media and their monuments have been erected in many places both to imitate and inspire scenes in films. In *Bupphesanniwat*, a scene is a duplicate of an image which was drawn from an important event in Thai history. This image, depicting the audience of the French ambassador with King Narai in 1685, was

shown in a flashback scene when Ketsurang (the main character) saw it in her history class. The imitation of that image, which illustrates the French ambassador handing over a letter from Louis XIV to King Narai, and a story behind the event, are filmed and blurred as a real event in *Bupphesanniwat* (Figure 56). As a consequence of this, Ketsurang, a contemporary woman who has time-slipped back into the Ayutthaya period in the seventeenth century, now being able to confirm what she learned in class is correct, exclaims to herself that ‘history is not wrong’ and ‘it is the truth.’ Thus, this scene offers an opportunity to demonstrate the accuracy of the twenty-first-century Thai history curriculum (Stengs, 2020:265).

According to Stengs, these film directors need the reality of the monuments to create the ultimate sense of reality and make convincing movies. As she states, ‘for Thai public, monuments determine to a significant degree what history looked like.’ Moreover, all these captured moments from historical TV drama are recreated by costume-playing fairs for the public to have direct experience of a nostalgic past. King Vajiralongkorn’s ‘Love and Warmth at Winter’s End’ fairs was held in 2018-2019 at the Dusit Palace and Sanam Suea Pa to promote the wearing of traditional Thai costumes. The events were in parallel with the Government’s programme to encourage Thai citizens to wear traditional costumes after the hype of *Bupphesanniwat*. The way these dramas/films popularised tourist destinations and costume wearing implies that ‘Thai people need continuous (re)education in Thai history, culture and values, to guarantee that the country will remain independent and unified.’ In other words, it is the re-enactment of absolute monarchy veiled in the new attire of entertainment (Stengs, 2020:278-279).



Figure 56 *Bupphesanniwat* (ep 11) and a drawing by Jean-Baptiste Nolin (Matichon, 2018b)

Based on Stengs and Jory's views, I would like to suggest that historical events are visualised and idealised not only to confirm 'historical truth' but also to revise and edit them into a better version. Likewise, in *Raknakkara*, hybridised beauty in the historical setting is the romanticisation of the past as an ideal paradise lost. Photographs of actors in ethnic costumes are compared with old photos. These photos were uploaded by costume designers and the production house in their Instagram accounts. They posted these pictures from the dramas in comparison with old photos to prove that they used research for costume design. At the same time, the comparison of these photos credited the whole team of drama makers, in being able to duplicate the look almost perfectly, and gain public acceptance of presenting historical and cultural accuracy (Figure 57). These photos were reposted on social media like Twitter and Thailand's famous web board Pantip.com by drama fans. These photos may appear like a perfect imitation of the past, however, they are not simply a reproduction of the past but an upgrade to be more elaborate version with a hybridised beauty that attracts contemporary audiences.

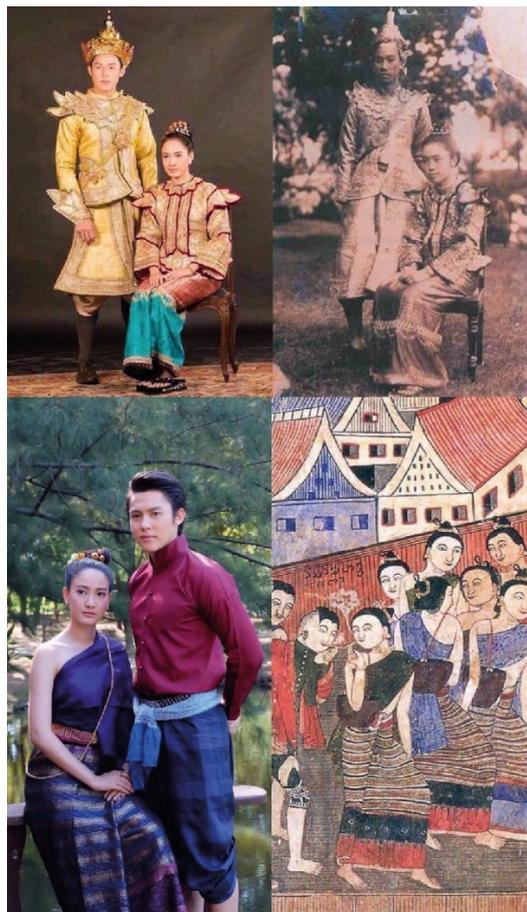


Figure 57 Characters as replicas of old pictures and paintings (images from @wasin_aunchanum and @actart_gen)

In Figure 57, pre-modern beauty in the old picture can be contrasted with the hybridised beauty of the shown contemporary Thai actors. People in the old picture/painting have darker skin tones (partly because of photo quality), thick lips and smaller eyes. Women in the old picture/painting (upper and lower right) have round-shape faces, which is an outstanding feature of people in the north of Thailand, while the actors have oval or V-shaped faces. In the lower right picture, women use long pieces of cloth to wrap around loosely, which was a common bodily practice of people in pre-modern Lanna. Nevertheless, the female actor in the lower left photo wraps her torso tightly and properly as nudity or exposing female upper body is unacceptable in modern Thai society, especially on TV. In addition, the male actor has a fine brushed-up hairstyle which is different from a traditional cut in the mural painting, where men have shaved the sides and back of their heads and left the top hair in the shape that looks like the horns of the buffalo. The actor's hairstyle is modern and commonly found among contemporary Thai men. Hairstyle is one of the most common anachronistic features in Thai historical dramas. Hybridised faces with modern hairstyles make these actors look more beautiful, contemporaneously, than the people in the past that they are supposed to represent. For example, female actors in the drama *Plaijawak*, set in the nineteenth century, long hair substitutes short, with brush-cut hairstyles during the 19th century to offer modern beauty for these characters (Figure 58).



Figure 58. Female hairstyles of elite women in King Chulalongkorn's reign. Top: the Bunnag family (Sirinya, 2015), Bottom: female characters from a drama 'Plaijawak' (2019), in which the story takes place during the same period

Not only their faces but also their posture and costume are refined and elaborated. The couple in the old picture (upper right) are prince and princess of the northern kingdoms, and in their wedding dress. In the top left picture, actors are set in the same posture. However, the female actor sits with straight back and shoulder while the actual princess in the old picture has bent back and shoulders. It suggests that the character in the drama is more confident than the woman in the picture. Besides which, the outfit of the male actor is more extravagant than the man in the old picture. His headdress, decorative collar on his shirt, and sleeves, are more prominent and adorned with gold. While the outfits of these two actors are in bright, vivid colours, in the old picture, they are dull and discoloured because of the greyscale film. This picture is elaborated into a scene where two leading characters, Sukkawong and Maenmuang, get married. The drama adds more detail to present a traditional wedding with servants, soldiers, king and prince attending the ceremony.

This scene starts with extreme close-up shots. We see the back of Maenmuang's wedding dress. Then she walks far from the camera, to the wedding pavilion, with 4-5 servants preceding and following her. The background of the set is a group of northern-style buildings and a monastery. All these come with slow and soft background music from string instruments. Maenmuang sits on a chair. A camera gives close up of her face. Then, Sukkawong enters from an arch doorway at the side of the ceremonial area and walks to the pavilion.

Two servants talk to each other: Don't you see? He is beautiful as being moulded from an angel.

When he approaches close to a camera, louder, faster tempo music from keyboard and string instruments is played. Then, Sukkawong sits on another chair. A wide shot shows overall setting. We see Sukkawong and Maenmuang sitting on separate chairs. On both sides are two servants sitting on the floor. This scene takes 1.28 min. (Figure 59)



Figure 59. *Raknakkara*, ep 3

The drama makes use of this wedding picture and develops it to a realistic presentation. Wedding dresses are replicated with more elegant details – costumes, setting, props and music. Servants and a parade of wedding guests are added in the following scenes to make a grand scene. From the greyscale picture, now audiences can see the whole event in colours and moving pictures. Facial beauty is intensified with close-up shots, at the same time as the camera showing details of traditional costume. The character's beauty is echoed to the audience in a conversation between two servants that he is as beautiful as a divine⁹⁴. The drama producers do not only remake the past but also improve it via the body of these actors. Hybridity of Eurasian physical features and historical elements makes a space where the past can be reinterpreted and offers admirable perspectives. This drama illustrates how the past looked and at the same time shapes the perceptions of Thai audiences in how they should view and love their national history.

In Pattana's terms, the *luk-khreung* phenomenon is the *farangisation* of Thai at both the individual and national levels, and it creates the modern form of Thainess (Pattana, 2010:72). It appears that hybridised beauty in TV is more like a Thai preference to view themselves as westernised and modernised, rather than to display this image to an international level. These good-looking actors fulfil Thais' ambition to achieve a modernised self that is believed to be on parity with others globally, and highly held as a desirable aspect of national identity. With improved film techniques and higher production budgets, the depiction of the past will be even more realistic. At the same time, the portrayal of characters is always modernised, expressed through modern concepts of beauty. This reiterates to Thai viewers that Thailand in the past is an ideal society they should long for.

4.2.4.2 Beauty as power

In Thai TV dramas, beauty is often associated with leading characters. Their beauty can be identified by physical appearances such as white skin, bigger and pointed nose, big rounded eyes with double eyelids, oval or V-shape face, tall, slim body for women and muscular body for men. In contrast, supporting characters who play the roles of servants, friends, or clowns have 'Thai appearances', which are physical appearances commonly found among non-hybridised Thais and it is based on the typical appearance of pre-modern Thais before the nineteenth century. Pre-modern Thai appearances are identified by a small and short body figure, dark complexion, rounded face, small eyes, and flat nose, for example. These physical

⁹⁴ *Ngam muan tewada lor bao* งามเหมือนเตวดาลือเล่า in northern Thai dialect, literally means as beautiful as being molded from a deity

appearances, together with body language, and clothing, will be used as criteria to study concepts of beauty as a representation of power. In this section, I want to illustrate this notion of power through the physical appearances of leading and supporting characters in a selected TV drama to show that beauty in Thai society is distributed unequally, and that is a part of Thai national identity.

4.2.4.2.1 Power of being hybridised

The selected scene is from episode 1. It is the opening scene of the drama as well as the opening of the episode. This scene introduces the main male protagonist, Sukkawong. He is a son of the former king and nephew of the present King of Chiang Phrakham. Sukkawong, we learn, was sent to Singapore when he was young for education. After graduation, he has worked in Siam for several years before returning to his hometown. Accompanying him are Bracken, his British friend, and Inthorn, his servant. This scene is an opening scene which introduces the main character and his westernised characteristics that would later change the traditional society.

The scene begins with a camera zooming in from a top view exposing a geographical map of many states. There is a voice-over reading a poem in northern Thai dialect with subtitles in central Thai. The poem tells that foreign countries and Siam threaten small states. The poem ends saying the same sentence twice that every state in the north 'must not be a colony.' Then the image of the map changes to an extreme wide shot of a city and a camera zooms out to show three men standing on a hill overlooking that city, down below them, as a distant view. The camera then shows a medium close-up shot of three men standing and freezes for 10 seconds. Sukkawong takes off his hat and holds it in his hand. They then have a short dialogue. (For most of the story, characters speak in the northern dialect. Only when Sukkawong speaks with Bracken, they switch to central Thai.)

Bracken: Is this your town?

Sukkawong: Yes, it is. Chiang Phrakham, my hometown. (camera zooms in for close-up shot)

Camera zooms out again to show a medium shot of three men for five more seconds. Bracken takes off his hat. The camera changes to a wide shot of a city but we can hear Bracken's voice saying, 'like heaven.'

This opening scene introduces the main character to the audience. He is shown in Western apparel to signify that he has a relationship with foreign culture and that he socialises with Westerners. This 10-second shot emphasises the importance of his appearance. It depicts how civilised and Westernised he looks as he views the town down below and signifies his superiority. This episode continues to show how he is different from other people through his physical appearance, and the contrast is more vivid in the following scene when he meets some villagers (which will be analysed later in this section).



Figure 60 *Raknakkara*, ep 1

This scene portrays the appearances of three characters in different ways. Although this drama has several leading roles, Sukkawong (in the middle) is the only Thai character that appears in Western-style attire. Other leading characters are portrayed in traditional costumes. The role of Sukkawong is played by an actor who has elements of Western Caucasian appearance. He is tall, with a light complexion, big rounded eyes, and a pointed nose. In contrast, the man on the right is Inthorn (a servant) who has a Thai appearance. He is short, has a flat nose, small eyes, and a rounded face. He dresses in an old-fashioned outfit – traditional shirt, and a *yam*⁹⁵ which has connotations of religion, and simplicity, that is, unelaborate. On the left is Bracken, who is a British man played by a *luk-khreung* actor (half-Thai, half-Australian). Even though he is mixed-race, he plays someone who is fully British. This actor signifies hybridity in Thai perceptions of beauty and appearance that it is acceptable for a *luk-khreung* actor to play a role of a foreigner as well as a Thai actor with Western Caucasian signifiers of beauty to play in a role as a northern Thai man.

The hybridisation between pre-modern Thai and Western appearance is portrayed through the way these characters stand. These three men are ranked from the most Western-looking to the least; a British man played by Thai *luk-khreung* actor, a Thai man played by a Western-looking Thai actor, and a Thai man played by a conventionally Thai-looking actor. By looking at this scene, Sukkawong occupies the in-between position. This character implies a process of becoming whereby he transforms from a local man to a Western man. At the same time, he is between two

⁹⁵ A bag that Buddhist monks typically carry around with them but it is also carried by laypeople.

worlds – Western and Thai. His position can be explained by Bhabha's concept of liminal space which situates in-between the designations of identity and link between two fixed identities (Bhabha, 1994:4). Bhabha argues that 'social articulation of difference is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities' (Bhabha, 1994:2). Sukkawong's characteristics and appearance have been reformed and transformed from traditional Thai to Westernised Thai. His hybridised characteristic is in line with Bhabha's concept of mimicry which was mentioned earlier in the section on 'Beauty and Hybridity.' In Bhabha's terms, mimicry is a colonialist's tool to turn a colonial subject into being something similar to the coloniser, as to serve their purposes and benefits. To be successful, this use of mimicry needs to have an ambivalence that must not be identical to the coloniser or as Bhabha states 'the same but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994:86). This causes the hybridisation that a person repeats manners and ideas with differences and creates a new sign of identity (Bhabha, 1994:1-2).

While Bhabha discusses this concept in Western culture, the drama illustrates a mimicry within the Thai context and its self-colonisation. Sukkawong stands in the middle of traditional Thai society, which is his hometown and a globalised, Western, modern world where he has grown up. According to his background, he was raised in Siam and educated in Singapore. Sukkawong has been hybridised between local (northern Thai), Siamese identity, and the West (through a British colony, Singapore). The role of Sukkawong infers that hybridisation does not only come from a two-way relation between colonised and coloniser in Bhabha's discussion. It is also created by multiple hybridisations that, in Sukkawong's case, from British to Singapore as a colony, from British to Siam as semi-colony, and from Siam to a northern tributary state as an internal colony. Sukkawong cannot fully represent the colonised or the coloniser. He is not fully a Siamese man, nor is he a purely local, northern man.

Although Sukkawong's outer appearance implies the Western concept of beauty and he looks like the 'British man' on the left, one difference between these two men is their facial hair. While Bracken has facial hair, Sukkawong has a clean-shaven face. In Western culture, facial hair like moustaches and beards are signs of masculinity and maturity. Masculinity rating increases as facial hair increases, and it also affects judgements of male socio-sexual attributes. Beardedness is considered attractive, and full-bearded men are perceived to be a better protective father (Dixson and Brooks, 2013). Facial hair is linked to masculine power and distinguishes a man from a boy. Sukkawong is presented here as a young man with fewer experiences whereas Bracken, a British man, is shown as mature, more experienced and masculine.

However, masculinity and facial hair are read differently in contemporary Thai media. Although the imported trend of North American hipster culture has changed the way, contemporaneously, Thai men treat moustache wearing, facial hair is rarely seen among male TV and film stars. In most Thai television dramas and films, the main male character has a clean-shaven face. Some of them appear with light stubble or pencil-thin moustaches but not heavy stubble or a full beard. Their masculinity is not shown by their facial hair, but muscular body and character, such as having obtained combat skills. It is a Thai value that the main character in a TV drama needs to look beautiful, as a king, queen, or god's re-incarnation⁹⁶ (Kultida, 1993:85, 100). Male protagonists in classical literature are described as beautiful as well as women. Male beauty is implicated in the power to rule and possession of beauty is evidence of legitimate power so that great kings in literature were often described as good-looking and handsome (Van Esterik, 2000:155-156). Moreover, male protagonists in much classical Thai literature, though they are great warriors, were not described as masculine but usually possessed physical bodies that are slim and delicate (Wichitwathakhan, 2017). Figure 61 shows an example of how men's facial hair is treated in TV dramas. In a TV drama *Bangrajan* (2015), only supporting characters could have moustaches (lower right photo), while leading characters are presented as god-like figures (upper right photo), with clean-shaven faces.

Apart from being a sign of masculinity, some kinds of facial hair also imply civilisation and modernisation. King Chulalongkorn adapted moustache wearing after a Western fashion as he did not want to appear 'barbarian' (Peleggi, 2002:48). The first person who was recorded as having a moustache in Thailand was King Phra Pinklao⁹⁷ (1851-1866) (Damrong, 2017). However, King Chulalongkorn was the most iconic person who is well-known as 'a man with a moustache.' Thai men started to wear long hair and moustaches widely under Chulalongkorn's reign and after his trip to Singapore and India in 1896. Moustaches then became a fashion in the Siamese court and spread to the elites and people in general (Kimleng, 2016). In pre-modern Thai society, a moustache was not commonly found among Thai men. Those who were recorded as having full moustache and beard are *Ruesi*⁹⁸ (ฤๅษี) and Brahmin

⁹⁶ In Buddhist cosmology and Hindu myths, there are gods on many levels and many of them are reborn in a mortal world in human form. A soul reincarnates again and again on earth until it becomes perfect and reunites with its source (Hinduwebsite, 2017).

⁹⁷ A viceroy of Siam and younger brother of King Mongkut (Chakri dynasty 4th reign), King Phra Pinklao was also entitled the second King of Siam. He had a strong interest in Western knowledge and culture and spoke fluent English (Terwiel, 2011:147-148).

⁹⁸ Ruesi in Thailand refers to those Brahmin priests who converted to Buddhism, and then did many good deeds for the religion such as making monasteries, erecting sacred statues and building some cities (Thai Royal Academy Encyclopaedia Vol.25: 16118-16120).

priests, as depicted in mural paintings or literature. Facial hair usually worn by these men was a long, full and heavy beard in non-groomed style, to signify their isolated life from a secular world. This is in contrast to the shaped moustache introduced to Thai society by King Chulalongkorn. The King's moustache was well-groomed and kept in a Chevron style.



Figure 61 On the left is a poster of a film '*Bangrajan*' (2000). On the right are two posters of a TV drama '*Bangrajan*' (2015).

At the same time, different kinds of facial hair in films and dramas were created to demonstrate civilisation. For example, in *Bangrajan* (2000) (Figure 61, on the left) a man in the middle with unkempt, full, heavy beard to signify his characteristic as savage and wild, whereas the other two men have nicely groomed moustaches and haircuts. Their half nakedness was common for male warriors in the time of the story (18th century), so the only thing to distinguish a civilised man from a savage man was a haircut and moustache shape. In a TV drama of *Bangrajan* (2015) (Figure 61), facial hair was presented in a civilised and sophisticated manner. As I indicated above, characters in TV dramas, especially the main characters, are meant to be good-looking and fit Thai felt norms of beauty. When the same characters from the film appear in the TV version, they are shown with well-groomed moustaches. These three characters in the film belong to the group in the lower right for the TV version. In that photo, these men are shown with nicely kept moustaches. Furthermore, most characters in the TV series were created to look more civilised by wearing Western style shirts. Though these are based on the same story, a TV version tends to appear more sophisticated, while a film emphasises realistic presentation. This is because films tend to target international audiences, while

characters refined for TV dramas target domestic audiences (see the topic on 'Westernised beauty modernises the past' in this chapter).

Regarding Bhabha's theory of hybridisation, 'authority is articulated with a range of differential knowledge and positionalities that both estrange its identity and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power' (Bhabha, 1994:120). In other words, when a coloniser's culture is introduced to the colonised, it will produce and be reinterpreted into new things (Childs and Williams, 1997:136). When facial hair and moustaches were appropriated into Thai society, they were adapted to suit Thai standards of beauty, connoting different meanings from the West. Even though a moustache expresses a sign of masculinity or civilisation, it is not regarded as attractive, especially for leading actors. Sukkawong's appearance exemplifies that a Western notion of beauty for men in Thai society may adopt some physical features of the Western Caucasian but facial hair is not always regarded as desirable.

4.2.4.2.2 Power of being civilised



Figure 62 Sukkawong on horseback, followed by Bracken and Inthorn. Sukkawong is shown as a leader and appears in god-like status wearing white clothes (*Raknakkara*, ep 1)

In the next scene, Western notions of beauty, as depicted by the main character, are emphasised to show different levels of civilisation and power relations.

Continuing from the first scene, the music changes to the faster beat of a traditional instrumental song. The camera shows a medium shot of Sukkawong entering, riding a horse, followed by Bracken and Inthorn on horseback as well. A group of villagers are sitting on steps waiting to see him. A close-up shot shows Sukkawong's face. He smiles at the villagers. Then the camera changes to a wide shot to show Sukkawong, Bracken, and Inthorn on horses, villagers sitting on steps, and three servants running to help them get down. The scene lasts 23 seconds.

In this scene, Sukkawong's Western-style beauty and power are depicted to be in contrast with the villagers. Firstly, power is expressed through the position of characters. Villagers sit on the floor and steps to show they are in a lower status. Thai society is hierarchical and people are ranked on a vertical axis; for example, royalty is superordinate to commoners, religious specialists have superiority over laity, urban dwellers are more advanced than rural folk, seniors over junior and male over female (Jackson and Cook, 1999:9). Thus, it is a common practice for villagers to sit on the floor to welcome members from noble families, monks or royalty. Not only their position that indicates inferiority, but their physical appearances also imply their lower status, or deference. The physical appearances of villagers are diverse as they represent different groups of people – men and women, young and old, thin and fat, white and dark complexions. However, they have facial elements that represent pre-modern Thai looks such as a rounded face, flat or snub nose, small eyes, and dark complexion (Figure 63).

As mentioned, there is a belief in Thai society that those who are beautiful have higher moral attributes than those who are not. This belief supports the idea that powerful people must possess some kind of beauty because it relates to their moral life. In Van Esterik's terms, 'the attribute of gentleness, subservience, silence and virtue are intertwined with the attributes of grace, composure and beauty' (Van Esterik, 2000:129). In Buddhist literature, living beings who literally stink with sin are disfigured by vices, which is opposite to those who are adorned with merit and virtues. Body is cast as the effect of morality through the work of karma or one's past deeds (Mrozik, 2007:62-64). Moreover, in Thai classical drama and literature, almost all heroes and heroines are kings, queens, or godly reincarnation. They are symbols of ultimate virtue (Kultida, 1993:100-101). Nidhi also refers to the physical body of heroes and heroines as *'the ultimate truth'*⁹⁹. Characters can always look elegant and pretty no matter what the situation is. In this way, audiences are aware of the character's divine spirituality, that their bodies should reflect their morality, and this does not need to match with reality (Nidhi, 2014:76). With this perception of beauty, merit and power combined together, the King or ruling class's physical beauty is a sign of proper moral comportment.

The villagers are thus portrayed as less civilised by the way they dress. Their clothing is simple and not elaborate. Men are half-naked; topless with pants and a cloth wrap around their head. Women wear tube skirts and cloth wrapped around the upper part of their body. Some women wear traditional style shirts. This is based on what is believed to be historically accurate, about what people wore in the northern

⁹⁹ ความจริงระดับปรมาตฺถ์ (Nidhi, 2014:76).

part of Thailand during the nineteenth century. Thai sumptuary rules regulated behaviour and consumption of objects, such as textiles which were meant to preserve and display hierarchy. This rule displays hierarchy and continues to influence rural and urban rituals (Van Esterik, 2000:129-130). As mentioned in *Raknakkara's* photobook about the costume design, colourful tube skirts or shirts decorated with silver or gold threads, were reserved for the ruling class only (Eknaree, 2017:11-12, 25). Colour of cloth, pants, and tube skirts that the villagers wear is dull in colour without elaborate patterns or decoration. This suggests that they are of lower status. Their hair is simply put in a bun without accessories or decoration. They do not apply makeup on their faces, and none of them wears any ornaments. Compared to the main character, he is presented as more civilised in a full Western formal outfit – shirt, waistcoat, scarf, suit, pants, leather boots, and a hat. Considering the colour of clothes, Sukkawong is shown here in a god-like image. His white suit implies an image of a god or deity. White in Indian culture signifies purity, and that is related to the quality of a king who cannot be contaminated by flaws. Thai culture is affected by many Indian influences, for example, they use the white tiered umbrella of kingship, which is a shared culture in southeast Asia, to imply the purity and virginity of a Brahmin (Hindu priest) (Pitchaya, 2017). In contrast, the villagers' dress is either black or dark blue to signify their inferior power.



Figure 63. Villagers are shown here as less civilised in traditional outfits and appearances (*Raknakkara*, ep 1)

Another symbol of civilisation which is exploited to illustrate power is hat wearing. Hats are a Western object imported to Thai society in the late nineteenth century. Hat wearing in Thailand was regarded as a sign of civilisation. It was

introduced to Siam since the reign of Chulalongkorn, together with Western-style outfits, in which the King and princes were the first groups to have sartorial reform. It was not until the 1940s that Western clothes and hats were spread to the general public. Before that, hats and Western-style outfits were only reserved for the royal family and elites because the condition for appropriating Western-style clothes was wealth (Peleggi, 2002:61). In the 1940s, dress reform was one of twelve cultural mandates issued by Phibun's government¹⁰⁰. It required the public to dress in a neat and well-groomed manner. This included wearing hats and other Western-style clothing (Barmé, 1993:156-157). A hat was used as an index of civilisation with a slogan 'Wear a hat for your country', 'Hats will lead Thailand to greatness' (Peleggi, 2008:73-75). People were not allowed to get on buses or enter government offices if they did not wear hats. This was done in the interest of progress and civilisation that the government aimed at bringing Thailand to be a modern nation (Wyatt, 1982:255). According to this information, Chulalongkorn and Phibun brought the first wave of modernisation to the country. This TV series then restates the model of civilisation and presents a new wave of modernisation for the 21st century by making a westernised, modernised character. However, the modernisation of a character is a reproduction of the past that lies in contrast to reality.

Regarding historical contexts, Sukkawong might wear a hat and Western outfit because he is a royal family member, though of a small tributary state, and after a Western education in Singapore. However, the way the drama creates this character shows an anachronistic idea. The story of *Raknakkara* takes place in 1884, whereas King Chulalongkorn's first trip to Europe was in 1897. The drama is set at a time when the idea of Western fashion reform had not even been brought into the country. Besides, Sukkawong's education in Singapore was not possible. Historical records show that there were not any royal family members of tributary states who had a chance to study abroad. The only prince who was sent abroad was the son of King Kaew Nawarat, the last king of the Lanna kingdom, and he went to study in Burma (Tanet, 2017). Therefore, the presence of hats in this scene does not only imply different levels of power of the characters. It rewrites the past making the main character a modern, Westernised nobleman, which, historically, is not accurate.

Accordingly, hat-wearing by a Thai prince is a TV drama's reconstruction of the past. It is exploited in the opening scene to exemplify the idea of civilisation and power relation. When they arrive in the town, Sukkawong suddenly takes off his hat. Bracken does not take off his until Sukkawong introduces that this is his hometown.

¹⁰⁰ Phibun's first government (1938-1944) emphasised nation-building policy that aimed to lead the country to a state of civilization.

Then he slowly takes it off. Since a hat is a sign of Western civilisation, Inthorn does not wear one. He is in his traditional outfit to represent traditional society. However, when Sukkawong arrives, he shows respect by taking off his hat. This implies that he blends Western civilisation with traditional society. Bracken, on the other hand, does not take off his hat because he symbolises the Western world and lacks cultural understanding. He is only an outsider and does not belong to that town. He keeps his hat on, as a sign of power as well as to show superiority and also performing disrespect to society. He finally removes it at the end of the scene, because Sukkawong emphasises that *'it is my hometown'* and Bracken needs to show some respect. In this scene, hats are signs of civilisation that indicate power relations between characters. Even though Sukkawong takes his hat off to pay respect to a city, once he enters the town he wears it again (Figure 62) to show a higher level of civilisation than the villagers. Together with Western-style outfit and Western beauty norms, a hat is used to represent power relations between characters.

According to this scene, hybridised beauty in Thailand is not merely a dynamic of aesthetic concepts, but it is used as an indicator of unequal power relations. It is a combination of values between pre-modern and modern concepts of beauty that has been carefully adapted to boost modern Thai identity. Thais have learned how to achieve and maintain their power through beauty and bodily practices. With hybridised beauty, Thais build up their national pride as a developed nation. They use this new identity to comfort themselves that they are advanced and civilised while also differentiating them from the non-hybridised others.

4.2.4.3 Hybridised Thai identity – Western on the outside, Thai at heart

While hybridised characters are portrayed as being powerful and civilised, there is a tension that hybridity is in jeopardy to Thainess; the question of how much Thais can be Westernised, without losing 'Thai identity.' This is a popular discourse in Thailand that, according to Prince Damrong¹⁰¹, 'Tai know how to pick and choose' from the West (cited in Harrison, 2010a:15). In other words, it has been an obsession among Thais that they should be like the West, both in terms of civilisation, intellect, interest, as well as bodily practices, but never fall under the Western power and 'kiss the asses of the *farang*' (Thongchai, 2010:135). In this section, I want to show how this tension between the hybridised identity and a craze for Thainess has built a dichotomy in TV drama, and how Thais form their national identities from this conflict.

¹⁰¹ Half-brother of King Chulalongkorn (5th reign of Chakri dynasty), revered as 'a father of Thai history.'

4.2.4.3.1 The schizophrenia of being Thai

A conflict between Thainess and the West in Thai TV dramas is often depicted via a binary of characters. Though all leading actors have hybridised beauty, they are different in the way they react to the West. Characters who favour the Western way of life are the villains, while the heroes are 'Thai at heart.' In this section, I show a contrast between two kinds of hybridisation, and I take examples from *Buangbanjathorn* to support this argument.

Buangbanjathorn presents the contrast of hybridity in two female characters. The main character, Praenuan, is a Bangkok woman who moves to Chiang Rai Province in the north. Despite being a modern woman who has graduated from America, she loves the peaceful life in Chiang Rai and Wiang Kin (fictional name of Keng Tung). Then the drama introduces another female antagonist, Ruangrayap, who is a northern princess and fiancé of Laoperng, a Keng Tung prince.

At a foyer in a palace, Ruangrayap and Laoperng are quarrelling. She is angry that Laoperng lets Praenuan stay in his bedroom and jealous that he is attracted to Praenuan. Suddenly, a servant tells them that Praenuan comes (after she takes a bath and changes to new clothes to have breakfast). Everybody stops talking and looks at her. A high angle shows Praenuan standing on a stairway. She appears in an ethnic costume and with traditional hair style. When she slowly walks down the stairway, we hear slow and gentle background music. Cross-cutting shots show other characters' facial expressions. They are stunned by her beauty. Praenuan stops at the landing. A camera gives a long shot of her body and then zooms in, takes a close-up shot of her face and freezes. Music stops and changes to vocal music, giving a smooth, relaxed, and romantic feeling. When she walks down on the floor, one character says, 'you are so gorgeous.' From the moment she appears and walks down to the hall, it takes 1.14 mins.

In a dining room. A servant is serving Western-style breakfast. We hear fast, upbeat music. Medium shots move between Ruangrayap and Praenuan, and wide-angle shot shows everybody at a dining table. Laoperng sits at the short end of the table. On the right side are Tongrew (his sister), Sanpaeng (Tongrew's lover), and Praenuan. On the left side is Ruangrayap sitting alone (Figure 64). She looks at Praenuan, who seems to be excited and says;

Ruangrayap: Thai people eat rice as their main food. You are probably not familiar with the Western way of living.

Praenuan: I have adapted to it since I studied in America.

Laoperng: What did you study in America?

Praenuan: (in English) International Law.

Ruangrayap: A person like you studied International Law?

Sanpaeng: It is so strange that a woman can study International Law.

Praenuan: In the future, women can do everything.

Tongrew: You talk like you see the future.

Ruangrayap: That's nonsense.

In a following scene, at a furniture factory. Close-up and medium shots show a worker using an electric woodcutter and other male workers doing their jobs. Laoperng and Sanpaeng walk into the frame, discussing their business. Praenuan is seen standing behind. A medium close-up shot shows her smiling and looking around. A faster musical beat suddenly plays, and Ruangrayap walks from her back to stop in front of her.

Ruangrayap: You seem to be interested in everything about Wiang Kin.

Praenuan: I'm a foreigner. I've hardly ever seen a simple life as in Wiang Kin.

Ruangrayap: You studied in America, but why do you wear Tai-Khoen¹⁰² dress?

Praenuan: I'm interested in the progress of education, not material progress.

Ruangrayap: I studied and lived in England for many years. English people think America is a rootless country and does not have its own culture.

Praenuan: Every country has good and bad sides. It all depends on how we choose them for our benefit.

Ruangrayap: The good part of the Americans is respecting others. Committing adultery or having an affair with other's loved one is regarded as a shame.



Figure 64 *Buangbanjathorn*, ep 2

These scenes illustrate two types of hybridisation that have been discussed widely in Thailand regarding how much Thais should be westernised without losing national identity. A conflict is depicted through two types of woman; both are *luk-khreung* and having hybridised beauty. Ruangrayap represents undesirable hybridisation because she favours Western culture as shown through her outfits and

¹⁰² An ethnic group that lives in Keng Tung, Shan State, Burma

attitudes. She is the only character in this drama who wears full Western-style outfits – dress, gloves, stockings, high-heel shoes, and a hat. Her preference is for Western dress and ways of living. She is confident and comfortable in this Westernised space. The dining table is set to be in Western style with table runner, placemats, candle stands, tea set, with milk and orange juice served in wine glasses. She holds her knife and fork well and looks down on Praenuan for her lack of familiarity with Western cutlery and food.

Food can represent civilisation and it frequently does so in films. In different versions of the films *Anna and the King*, the state banquet was used to display Siamese civilisation. According to Van Esterik, the state banquet for British diplomats and merchants featured as a way for King Mongkut to prove that he was not a barbarian, and deserved a place among the civilised nations of the world. The 1946, 1956, and two 1999 films all use the trivial cliché that the proper use of a knife and fork, and use of European table manners during the state banquet, would demonstrate the king's 'civilised' status (Van Esterik, 2006:299). Table manners and Western etiquette are signifiers of one's cultivation and sophisticated cultural background. Therefore, these films depicting the king as incapacity were criticised by many Thais and one of the main reasons why Thailand officially banned the 1998 film, was because of the scene showing King Mongkut eating with chopsticks, instead of a fork following the state banquet (Van Esterik, 2006:302). In *Buangbanjathorn*, the drama makers made use of Western-style food and table manners to represent a character who is extremely westernised and has a civilised identity. However, her westernised identity is not highly praised by other characters as no one cares to talk about it. This character reminds audiences of an excessive imitation of Western culture, which has been a cultural anxiety since the time of King Vajiravudh. The King wrote a book 'The Cult of Imitation' to ridicule and criticise middle-class Thais who were aping the '*farang way*' of life (Peleggi, 2008:70). It connoted that, apart from the Siamese elites, Westernisation found in other classes was harmful to the nation.

On the contrary, the drama has Praenuan who stands for the preferable hybridity. She represents the ideal westernised Thai identity that maintains the essence of Thainess. Her response to Ruangrayap's insult at the dining table has two meanings. One, it confirms that she is as civilised as Ruangrayap. Second, she is better than Ruangrayap who simply imitates Western ways of life, whereas she 'adapts¹⁰³' it to her life. So, Praenuan expresses a perfect hybridisation that Thai/Siamese people should be able to adopt Western culture without losing Thai

103 ปรับตัว

identity, seen through the way she deals with Western food. This is similar to King Chulalongkorn during his long journey in Europe, as he mixed his spaghetti with Thai chili powder and lime juice. This showed how the Siamese were adept at integrating aspects of Western culture that they felt would be beneficial to the kingdom with aspects of Siamese culture they wished to preserve (Sud, 2009:455).

On the one hand, Praenuan is a Westernised character who imports modern identities to Thai society. She has an international education as she can speak English and uses it spontaneously. When being asked about her education, she chooses to reply in English to show her language competency as. For a country where the majority of people are English illiterate, speaking English connotes high education, social background and class status. People who are fluent in English are highly praised for their language competency and it is on the contrary for those who are not. For example, a video aired on the government's channel DLTV¹⁰⁴ for Grade 6 students to learn during the Covid-19 lockdown aroused public criticism and debate about English language education in the country. Clearly, the video teaches incorrect English grammar and problematic pronunciation. To learn English language is a scar cast by the Thai education system, so much so that anyone who can fluently, properly use it, is highly regarded in Thai society. However, using English to brag about oneself could put that person into trouble as well. In 2007, a Thai female TV host, who is foreign educated, said in an interview that she had a quarrel with two actors, and she called for help in English because she assumed that her disputants did not understand. This interview caused Thai fans to rage as they were upset about how she looked down on Thai people. She had to apologize shortly afterwards (Kapook, 2007).

According to these two examples, Thailand is a country that admires English competency as long as a person uses it in a humble way. Praenuan's use of English in this scene indicates that she is capable of using it, yet she does not brag about it directly. Anyway, her only English sentence suggests her high education, and it creates an image of a modern woman. Other characters admire her answer and praise her for that. Regarding her language competency and educational background, Praenuan is designed to be more advanced than other characters. She is anachronistic to the story, which is set in 1944, but she is a contemporary woman who time-slips to the past. Therefore, her field of study is uncommon to people at that time and far more progressive than that of most women in the society. From this

¹⁰⁴ Distance Learning Foundation under the royal patronage of King Bhumibol.

conversation, the drama shows the desirable qualities of a modern Thai woman, with hybridised beauty, westernised education and progressive world view.

On the other hand, she represents Thai people who long for a romantic, simple life in the past. The way she appreciates the old-fashioned furniture factory suggests an urban middle-class perspective, which appreciates the rural world beyond the capital Bangkok. Her love of Thainess is reflected through her outfit, made to be in contrast to Ruangrayap. She appears in traditional costume almost throughout the whole drama. Even before she goes to bed, she dresses up in an ethnic outfit, so that when she wakes up in Wiang Kin (as a magical bed brings her back to the past), she will dress like other people there. When she stays at home in Chiang Rai Province, she also avoids contemporary clothes choosing local attire instead. Only in some minor scenes in Bangkok we see her in contemporary clothes. This drama promotes Thainess through the fashion of the main character and reminds Thai audiences of their cultural roots by associating ethnic dress with the past (a rural area in Chaing Rai and Burma in 1944) while contemporary dress is aligned with progressive urban life in Bangkok.

The Thai-isation of Praenuan can be read as a counter to extreme Westernisation, akin to the revival of traditional Thai dress during the 1960s to counter American cultural domination. The Thai royal revival, initiated by the military government of the Sarit Regime¹⁰⁵, brought back the wearing of traditional Thai attire. While Thai king Bhumibol and queen Sirikit wore western clothes during their tour in Europe and gained a modern and cosmopolitan image, domestically, the queen chose to wear traditional Thai dress, which was modified from the pre-modern, uncivilised style of the 1870s. The modified Thai costume became popularised among upper and middle-class women, later becoming a signifier of Thainess (Peleggi, 2008:77-78).

The Thai fetish for traditional attire is further emphasised through Praenuan. Several scenes depict her transformation from a contemporary Bangkok woman to a northern woman. In episode 2, a scene lingeringly shows Praenuan taking a bath and to changing clothes. The moment she appears in a new outfit and walks down the stairs she appears like a beauty contestant walking on stage (Figure 65). Her transformation and beauty surprise every character. One character even praises her as looking like a princess, which means she blends in well with the group. The way

¹⁰⁵ Before this, the military government of Field Marshal Phibun had limited the public visibility of the royals. Marshal Sarit Thanarat (Thai prime minister 1959-1963) rehabilitated the monarchical institution in order to overcome his lack of legitimacy after the overthrow of Phibun in 1957 (Peleggi, 2008:77).

people admire her indicates that a western appearance can claim to have a national identity if it conforms to the characteristics of Thainess.



Figure 65 Praenuan, slowly walking down the stairway like a beauty pageant contestant (*Buangbanjathorn*, ep 2)

Praenuan's transformation can be compared to the case of Pui Pornthip (Miss Thailand and Miss Universe in 1988). Pui embodied an opposition, between her Thai race and her background as part of the Thai diaspora (California-born), bringing many Thais to conclude 'she is an American in a Thai body' (Reynolds, 1999:271). Pui's lack of Thainess, i.e. inability to speak Thai fluently or ignorance of Thai culture, brought conflict and criticism of her cultural impurities. In order to gain acceptance among Thai people in general, Pui had to undergo a 'process of cultural reintegration back to modes of Thai femininity untainted by western mores.' This included studying Thai language, learning Thai manners, history, and culture (Harrison, 2010a:28). Whereas Pui's Westernised features (beauty and competency in English) brought national success at an international level and made her a national hero, she was still not fully accepted because she was not 'Thai enough' to be a symbol of the nation (Harrison, 2010a:31; Reynolds, 1999:270-271). In *Buangbanjathorn*, Praenuan abandons her modern self in Bangkok and embraces a new self to be localised with traditional culture and pre-modern society. This process restates the same old value that a person would not be fully accepted unless he or she conforms to a particular Thai identity. According to these characteristics, Praenuan stands for desirable hybridity that builds up a new form of Thainess.

It is acceptable for Thais to have Westernised beauty and features as long as they strictly hold onto Thai values. As Harrison puts it, a *luk-khreung* actor in Thai

historical film (*Tawiphop*) is acceptable because she represents a character that is 'essentially Thai at heart, despite an outward surface appearance of *farangised* Thainess.' It is less the '*farang*-isation of Thainess' but the 'Thai-isation of the *farang*' (Harrison, 2010b:116-117). Kasian's words best describe this phenomenon. He argues that the need to represent Thainess was is a symptom of 'cultural schizophrenia.' It was a Thai's endeavour to prove to themselves that they are truly Thai even though their outer appearances look westernised. Their hearts are purely Thai and the Thai self is more authentic than the projected un-Thai self in the form of dress, behaviour, or activity (Kasian, 2002:210-212). *Buangbanjathorn* underlines the idea that hybridised beauty and Westernised personalities are only the outer package that conceals the truly Thai heart inside. An ideal Thai person should be modernised, Westernised, and hybridised, on the outside, yet he or she has to remain closely tied to their interior Thai identity, and be able to express it.

4.2.4.3.2 The West is materially advanced but spiritually backward

A dialogue from the above scene provides a comparison between the West and Thailand, as well as the perceived good, and bad sides, of the West. Following the existing discourse in Thailand, the conversation reflects ambiguous Thai views towards the West as being both desirable and dangerous. According to Thongchai, Siam's enthusiasm for Western knowledge and materials was known as the distrust/desire, hate/love attitude (Thongchai, 2011:25). The dialogue above implies that Thais should take only good things from the West, such as education, while avoiding Western material progress such as clothes.

Thongchai explains this ambivalence as the concept of bifurcation, which is a binary between spiritual and worldly aspects. This is a dichotomy that Thais use to deal with superior Western power and legitimise their imitation of the West. It is a way forward without feeling a loss of power or, in Thongchai's words, 'how to be like the West yet also to remain different; how not to love the West despite its attractions; and how not to hate it despite its obnoxious dominance' (Thongchai, 2010:136). Bifurcation is a product of nineteenth-century Western imperial discourse, deployed as an epistemological framework for selecting western knowledge and influence. Thais use it to negotiate between the power of a modern West and local culture, by claiming that the Western world was advanced in material development but spiritually backward, while the traditional Thai is better in spiritual terms because of Buddhism (Thongchai, 2010:136-139).

In *Buangbanjathorn*, America is presented as the undesirable West. America stands for a new world with advanced material progress, but it is often depicted as a busy, unpleasant country, compared to Europe, though emitting a romantic and

glamorous ambience. As Harrison puts it, the cinematic portrayals of Europe and the United States relate to dominant perceptions in the popular Thai imagination. Western Europe has been associated with the elite, while North America has an appeal that erodes the differences of social class and incorporates travellers from Thailand in search of employment and adventure as much as further education and the confirmation of social status (Harrison, 2010b:102). Thus, America is not the West that most Thais adore as having progressed in civilisation or cultural roots, but rather a place for the newly rich to upgrade their financial and social status.

In Thongchai's article, a lecture to Thai monks in the U.S. warned them not think of the United States as a model because Thais are in a better situation spiritually, and thanks to Buddhism which brings harmony with nature and fellow humans (Thongchai, 2010:136). Not only America, but also other Western countries that Thais considered as 'new countries' are often looked down upon as lacking cultural roots. This is in contrast to Thailand that is a country rich in culture, tradition, and history. For example, an official school textbook, published by the Office of the Basic Education Commission, for Grade 6 students in Thailand has a short reading text about a *luk-khreung* boy whose father came from 'an island country.' In that text, the boy criticises his father's hometown and its history;

White people wanted to find a new land to expand the boundary of their nation. They migrated on a ship, sailing overseas. When they found a new land, they seized it and banished the natives who lived in that vast area to stay in reservations. It is common that weapons like spears, axes, bows and arrows cannot fight with rifles and cannons. Finally, these white people established their country, which its history lasts less than 200 years.

When I look back to my mother's home country. I am so proud. As you all know, Thailand has a long history. It gradually formed kingdoms into a country. This was led by the monarchs who were highly revered as a center of Thai people's hearts. If we started from the Sukhothai kingdom, now Thailand has aged more than 800 years (OBEC, 2012:248-249).

An excerpt from a school textbook and a lecture given to the monks are all based on the RNH that aims to forge the nation's pride from its historical and cultural roots and assume pre-modern kingdoms to be part of the modern nation-state. Consequently, the drama makers use of this discourse to look down on America as a rootless, unadmirable country. According to the story, Praenuan comes from an upper-middle-class family. Her family is well-off enough to sponsor her education in America; still, she is not an elite. Compared to Ruangrayap, who is a princess of a

northern kingdom and studied in England, Praenuan's background is not highly prized. The above conversation reiterates this perception by pointing out that '*America is a rootless country and does not have its own culture.*' This implies Thailand as a country is richer in cultural heritage. Besides, Praenuan's reply that she has no interest in 'material progress' strengthens the discourse that America, or the West in general, is not a role model for Thais in spiritual aspects.



Figure 66. This scene shows a sharp contrast between two characters who are both hybridised but represent different identities (I combine two shots together to show two characters in one picture) (*Buangbanjathorn*, ep 2)

Thai TV dramas often depict ambiguous feeling towards the West. One of the obvious examples is the role of Constantin Phaulcon in a drama *Bupphesanniwat*. Phaulcon is a Greek adventurer who joined King Narai's¹⁰⁶ court during the Ayutthaya period in 1678. He played important roles in the Siamese court, and also influenced the king to send envoys to the court of Louis XIV (Terwiel, 2011:33). In *Bupphesanniwat*, he is depicted as one of the king's favourite men and one who can influence him. In one scene, Phetracha¹⁰⁷ is having a quarrel with Narai because the king allows Phaulcon to disrobe Buddhist monks to be used as labourers for the construction of a fortress. The event shows that the king trusted and granted certain

¹⁰⁶ The 27th monarch of the Ayutthaya Kingdom

¹⁰⁷ Ayutthaya's 28th king, who usurped the throne from King Narai and founded the Ban Phlu Luang dynasty

power to Phaulcon more than many other Siamese officials. His action therefore frustrates Phetracha and his son Sorasak¹⁰⁸ who is Phaulcon's opponent, and one of the main causes leading to the coup d'état in which Phaulcon was executed. The role of Phaulcon in this drama reflects Siamese ambiguous feelings towards the West. While he is presented as a highly respected, powerful Westerner in the Ayutthaya court, he carries an image of a tricky, sly man, whom Siamese officials view with doubt and animosity.

Moreover, it is common for most Thai TV dramas to criticise the West, rather than Westerners themselves. According to Jaiser, when Thai TV dramas want to show a conflict between Thainess and *farangness*, they do not show *farang* themselves in a negative light but rather cast suspicion on Thais following the *farang* way (Jaiser, 2017:54). A common presentation of undesirable Western ways, such as a bad girl behaves as if she were a real *farang*, which is clearly the wrong way for a Thai, is more frequent in Thai TV (Jaiser, 2017:152). Likewise, in *Buangbanjathorn*, a character who represents extreme Westernisation symbolises spiritual backwardness. Ruangrayap is similar to Praenuan in several aspects, only that she has a bad *farang* way about her. Praenuan, who is fond of the Thai way of life and culture, is shown as a sweet, gentle, polite, and smart person. She is loved by other characters. On the contrary, Ruangrayap, who is fully Westernised – both in her outer appearance and personality – is shown as hot-tempered, jealous, self-centred, impolite and sometimes rude. She is not favoured by other characters. In a scene at a dining table, Ruangrayap sits alone on one side, opposite to everybody else, while Praenuan is accompanied by other two characters. The seating position suggests that she is opposed to everybody and showing how her personality and manner are unattractive (Figure 64).

This anti-West idea is in contrast to the fact that Thai TV dramas often depict Western material progress as desirable. In this drama, the anti-American material progress is contradictory to the existence of many Western objects such as the furniture factory, machines, and a car. Other signifiers of Western progress such as education, English language, and English breakfast are also acceptable as signs of civilisation. Sud Chonchirdsin argues in regard to the ambivalent attitudes of the Siamese elites towards the West and that the monarch and the elites were fond of Western arts, performance, and education, yet the king was not in favour of miscegenation, liberal ideas or the greater public freedoms in Europe so that he repeatedly reminded those students abroad to retain a sense of Thainess (Sud, 2009:451-54). Therefore, 'as long as Western ideas did not challenge Siamese

¹⁰⁸ Phetracha's son who ascended to the throne after his father.

views on the structure of political power, the Siamese elite seems to have accepted them without difficulty. On the other hand, whenever these ideas presented danger, they were rejected' (Sud, 2009:455). In *Buangbanjathorn*, the only aspect of being American, that is corresponding to Thai value and acceptable, is monogamy. It fits perfectly well with the Thai moral practice; therefore, this idea is agreed and respected by both characters.

The drama indicates that, on the one hand, having Westernised features such as beauty, personality, and attitudes are admirable. On the other hand, extreme Westernised features would make a person unwanted and repellent. It is a Thai style hybridised identity that sprung up in the in-betweenness of being both Thai and Western, and neither Thai nor Western at the same time. While Bhabha's mimicry means to maintain slippage in the colonised and to transform the colonial subject into a 'partial presence' (Bhabha, 1994:86), hybridity in Thailand demonstrates that Thailand as an indirect colony has tried to maintain that slippage by themselves. Praenuan's outer appearance, as well as characteristics, reflects the hybridisation between the West, and Thai identity. She is an ideal example in the Thai discourse, such as one quoted by Chatthip Natsupha that 'Thais should be flexible in learning and adopting from the West but do not jeopardise the essence of Thainess' (quoted in Thongchai, 2010:140). They want to prove that they are different, or even better than the West, by becoming the better version of West. This character is created to show a perfect combination. From these samples, Thai TV dramas have 'ripped off *farangness* to build their modern identity and use it to criticise the excessive farang way at the same time.

4.2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown the combination of pre-modern and modern concepts of beauty operating in Thailand. This has resulted in hybridity and built some specific modern Thai identities. Primarily, hybridity is exploited to construct modernised images of the past that are appealing to modern-day audiences. The depiction of the ideal past is essential in the nation-building process as it encourages national pride and the love of national history. Eventually, the depiction of an idealised Thainess is the only imaginable picture of Thai history that can be employed in these TV dramas.

Not only important for constructing a positive perception of a nation, beauty is also an indicator of power. My findings suggest that the representation of power, seen through these Western notions of beauty, are distributed unequally. Characters with more power are represented with physical appearances derived from Caucasian beauty and Western costumes. On the other hand, characters in less powerful roles

are depicted with pre-modern Thai appearance. The selected drama exemplifies Bhabha's concept of liminal space and mimicry, and infers that hybridisation does not only come from a two-way relation between colonised and coloniser as in Bhabha's discussion, but by multiple hybridisations as a subject of direct colony, semi-colony and internal colony.

However, there is a tension between the craze for modernised, Westernised identity and the yearning for Thainess. Hybridised identity is essential to improve a person towards being civilised, yet this value is less important than the value of Thai spirituality. Thus, the drama highlights the principal Thai discourse that Westernised characteristics are only superficial personality traits that Thais express to the world. What is more essential is the Thai heart. The conflict for the modern Thai identity is the ambiguity that is described as 'bifurcation.' Thais make use of hybridised features to prove themselves as having achieved the milestone of being equal to other civilised nations, globally. At the same time, this hybridised identity has been carefully selected and adapted to fit with Thai values so as to maintain a perceived authentic Thai core.

Hybridised beauty is depicted in contrast to the subordinate northern identities. The main characters in these dramas possess hybridised beauty, yet they are presented with a repetitive reminding of Thainess, Thai essence and identity by the portrayal of northern identities. These characters are shown as idealistic, powerful, admirable according to Thai standards and they build the modern Thai identities. While Siam/Thailand needs to be modernised and hybridised in order to gain the images of the modern Thai nation, northern identities are essential as they help sustain the narratives of the nation as dominated by the RNH. According to these narratives, Siamese hybridisation and beauty reform are necessary for a modern nation to survive and be in parity with other nations in a globalised world. However, they need to recall their Thai essence as well as demanding a subordinate counterpart to showcase the modern identities relatively. Therefore, the North is exploited here not only in enhancing Siam's modernised identities but also legitimise Siamese hybridisation.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

What is occurring in Thailand, in October 2020 (this thesis was completed on 26th December 2020), suggests that the construction of the nation that this thesis has illustrated so far is being challenged and questioned. Massive protests in Bangkok, as well as in other provinces across Thailand, demanded the disbanding of the junta government, new drafting of constitutions, and most importantly target monarchical reform. This last demand is regarded as an unprecedented move in the country. While there have been a number of political protests throughout Thai history, the 2020 protests aim directly at the monarchy, a topic considered in Thailand so sensitive that public criticism has been almost impossible. This phenomenon connects deeply with a modern Thai history that relates to the RNH. An increasing number of young people are looking at historiographical issues that are different from what they learn in schools, particularly Thongchai's idea of geobody, which questions and dismantles the predominant understanding of the Thai nation. Once seriously forbidden topics are now also normalised in public, such as the 1932 revolution and the Thammasat student massacre in 1976.

While the majority of pro-democracy protesters are from the younger generation, mostly high-school and university students, the majority of the counter protest are royalists who are middle-aged and above. These two sides not only represent a clash of generations, but also different perceptions that each group has towards the idea of the nation. The predominant definitions of a nation that are based on the RNH and heavily rely on the monarchy, military, national security or stability, or even nationalistic, archaic history do not seem to appeal to young people any longer. Because of these demands, many conservatives and royalists accuse the protesters of being '*chung chat*' (haters of the nation) and '*lom chao*' (wanting to overthrow the monarchy). Compared to the political unrest in Thailand since 2006, between Yellow Shirts and Red Shirts, all these movements were based on the unequal distribution of power and the desire for democratisation of the country.

Political divides in 2006 also rose from inequality, an urban-rural split, a regional division between the poorer North and Northeast and centrally located Bangkok, where money and power is located (Schmidt, 2011:323-324). The unequal development caused dissatisfaction and in 2014, there was an allegation that the Red Shirts wanted to form a people's democratic republic in the north and separate into being another country (Bangkokpost, 2014). The idea of autonomy, or self-government, signified the problematic administrative centralisation in the country.

According to McCargo, the conflict between Yellow and Red Shirts 'reflects the unravelling of Siam's nineteenth-century form of rule – the domination of royal Bangkok over the untamed hinterlands, and the substitution of internal colonialism for European empire' (McCargo, 2010:5). These political divisions have rooted in the inequal distribution of power that resulted from Thai nation-building.

These phenomena have proved to be the problems of Thai nation-building. The Thai state puts much effort into constructing ideas of nation, but it has never been fully successful. This is because the Thai nation is not a perfectly unified unit but rather combined from many elements. These elements - such as the rural, regional, minority people - are suppressed, exploited and treated unequally. Therefore, there are reoccurring negotiations and resistance from the 'combined elements' from time to time. This thesis shows one aspect of the Thai state's attempts in constructing a unified nation. It brings forth the construction of the Thai nation and national identities in Thai historical TV dramas. TV drama is a good example for showing how Thai nationalism and ideology are distributed to the public because of the repetitive similar content and plot that are based on the RNH (as discussed in Chapter 2). Though the Thai nation is perceived to be united or strongly following the RNH, it is being challenged beyond TV. This thesis illustrates that TV content in Thailand, especially historical TV drama, remains untouched in its use of static, conventional narratives and that is the state's effort to keep everything in its place. This thesis takes the Northern people and its culture to illustrate this combination process. The North has been combined to build images of a harmonious unified nation. However, it is a combination that stands on an unequal distribution of power. It is only a subordinate identity to enhance the images of Siam/Thailand as a modernised nation. As shown in this thesis, the Thai nation was built by exploiting regional identity like the North and manipulating narratives from the RNH, the concept this thesis calls 'combi-nation.'

What this research wanted to find out

This thesis has investigated the following questions. What is the role of historical TV dramas in constructing contemporary Thai nation? How are different regions of Thailand represented in historical television drama (for example North Thailand)? And how can the investigation through Thai TV dramas contribute to an understanding on debates of nation-building?

Thai TV is a space where narratives of the nation are reproduced for communication to local audiences. While TV dramas gain less attention in academic fields, especially in terms of nation-building, this thesis aims to show that this everyday medium of entertainment too can be read from and for political or

historiographical perspectives. These can be recognised and analysed through a close reading of visual presentation, montage, sound, light, camera angle, clothing and makeup, body language, dialogue and language use. This thesis has shown how Thai TV is controlled and manipulated by the Thai state, both directly by law, indirectly by self-censorship, social values and norms, and via sensitivity resulting from the applications of the RNH. Thus, Thai TV dramas are laden with state-based ideologies.

This research particularly used the lens of historical drama in confirming that narratives from the RNH strongly shape Thai TV dramas and the imagination of the Thai nation. In order to understand the complexity of Thai nation-building, this research has taken a non-centric perspective, through the representation of Northern Thai identity as a subordinate identity. The North is 'combined' in the constructing of the Thai nation by enhancing Siam/Thailand's image as a civilised, modernised, peaceful, and independent country. On the one hand, Siam follows the modernist theory of a nation by hybridising with the West to become a modernised nation, expressed through modern elements such as administrative systems, the military, national education systems, and sartorial reform. On the other hand, the nation-building project necessarily concerns premodern elements such as ethnic communities, ethnic ties, myths, and historical memories. Still, the ethnic communities need to be suppressed for the centralised application of the Thai nation to be successful. This thesis has shown the combinations of Northern identities through five aspects. The first three aspects result from history, which are historical narrative or the RNH in particular, and the other two aspects being combinations that are reflected on or through the body. On the basis of my analysis I propose a theoretical concept of 'combi-nation', which means an unequal, selective way of exploiting or subordinating cultures and identities to boost images of a strong, unified nation. The subordinated culture, such as the North, is therefore an important part of the jigsaw that helps to make central Thailand's narrative of the nation complete.

Contribution to fields

'Combi-nation' takes a step forward in understanding the complexity of nation-building in relation to subordinate culture. Developed from hybridisation, 'Combi-nation' is not a simple two-way relationship between a coloniser and a colonised. Rather, this 'Combi-nation' is rooted in the uneven distribution of power among elements of the superior and inferior, an internal colony within a semi-colony, a colonised who is also a coloniser, and subordinate people as double colonised object. The process of 'Combi-nation' in Thailand is not identical to, but consists of, hybridisation because different elements of subordinate identities and cultures are

not necessarily hybridised. In other words, this is a selective way of using 'combination', between different cultures and identities that depend on where Siam/Thailand positions itself by relationship to others.

This 'Combi-nation' concept makes a contribution to Thai Studies by taking a non-centric perspective on the construction of Thai nation. It is developed from existing knowledge provided by many scholars in the Thai Studies field who have demonstrated Thai culture and systems of power have been hybridised with the West. I discuss this in Chapter 1, and the relationship of hybridisation with internal colonies. This results from the ambiguous status of Thailand as both semicolonial and internal coloniser. However, existing research focuses on Central Thai perspectives. For example, Anderson questions Thai axioms as an independent nation and calls the nationalism movement in the country 'official nationalism'; Thongchai's argument on the foundation of the royal-nationalist ideology after the Paknam Crisis and the construction of the geobody; Jackson's idea of 'semi-colonialism' and Herzfeld's 'crypto-colonialism.' Still, none of them have looked closely at how these internal colonies and their identities are exploited. I developed my research from existing knowledge by focusing on the internal colony and its regional, subordinate culture. My approach allows us to question the roles of regional identities in the process of nation-building and it helps us to better understand the technique and process that Siam/Thailand uses. While these scholars have shown hybridity, it does not simply mean that every identity of the Thai nation is hybridised. On the other hand, the hybridisation and assimilation processes are selective and varied based on the dimension of relationships. This non-centric perspective provides a better understanding that the making of the Thai nation is complicated and multi-layered.

This research also contributes to studies of nation and nationalism. It uses Thailand and its regional culture as a case study to demonstrate that nation-building in Thailand is different from Western scholarly ways of describing the nation. As I mentioned in Chapter 1 on the section of 'Combi-nation', the Thai nation is constructed from pre-modern and modern elements. Based on Smith's four paradigms of nations, this thesis shows that the Thai nation has combined concepts found in Smith's ethno-symbolism and the modernist scholars like Gellner and Anderson. Gellner's idea about nationalism and industrialisation as well as Anderson's Imagined Communities explain the nation-building that Siam/Thailand has hybridised with West. In this research, we can see that there are elements of modernism in constructing the nation such as geographical maps which concretise a geobody, print language, and bureaucratic systems. At the same time, there are such things as Smith's ethno-symbolism or ethnic communities. The investigation in

the representation of Northern Thai culture in Thai TV dramas has illustrated these premodern elements.

This 'Combi-nation' concept also contributes to Postcolonial Studies. Thailand often differentiates itself from other countries in Southeast Asia as the only country that 'has never been colonised.' Thus, a lot of Thai scholars deny the study of Thai history through a postcolonial approach. This research takes existing knowledge from scholars in the Thai Studies field that propose Thailand too can be regarded as a product of Western imperialism. This research takes a viewpoint that Siam/Thailand is an indirect colony of the West, and also acted as internal coloniser. Thailand's semicolonial relationship to the West can be understood using Bhabha's hybridisation theory. Moreover, this thesis takes Condee's 'two-Russias' to explain the doubleness in becoming a modern nation. This doubleness resulted from Siam's ambiguity being both colonised and coloniser. The depiction of North Thailand, closely studied in the thesis, is a product of this hybridisation and doubleness, and accordingly it has provided another example for Postcolonial Studies. Each chapter illustrates how Thailand constructs nation by using imperialist premises to exercise power over subaltern people.

Apart from the new perspectives provided to these fields, which are non-Western and non-centric, also, this research takes on new material, from Thai TV drama, to study this topic. Regarding Media Studies, or TV Studies in particular, this research looks at non-Western contexts and at a specific genre. Thai TV drama, though different, has something in common with Western soap operas. It does have its own uniqueness in terms of length (much shorter than Western dramas), stories developing in continuing episodes, and with closed endings that do not linger from season to season. Shows generally have a short finite airtime yet remain powerful in the hearts of the audience and can be rerun time after time. As a genre that differs from the West, this research has provided a new perspective in the knowledge of TV Studies. Therefore, it contributes to a global discussion of TV drama as a genre.

For TV Studies in Thailand, this research uses a different approach. Existing research has been focusing on content, production, and reception, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2. Research in later periods take a Cultural Studies approach combined with media analysis. In contrast to that, my research has used historical, cultural and the political background of Thai society as a context to analyse TV dramas. By using this approach, it allows us to evaluate and understand the imagination and creation of Thai nation. It enables us to use a particular lens to study Thai TV, or in other words, it permits us to investigate construction of the nation. This has not been done before in Thai TV Studies, to date. This thesis, simply put, helps us to understand

things that are happening on TV better. With historical, cultural and political background, readers can see an overall picture of why TV dramas in Thailand are produced in such a manner. It shows that TV dramas too can be read as historical and political texts.

Suggestions for new research

Within a limit of time, I have investigated only one genre of mass media, which is historical TV drama. I deeply explore in detail only selected scenes in four productions. Though this research has conceptualised a unique way of understanding nation-building, it would be useful for future research if this concept were tested against other genres such as songs, variety shows, printed media, or content in new media like YouTube videos which are having more and more impact on younger generations. It would also be useful for future research to look at how these media interrelated in terms of nation-building. *Bupphesaniwat*, for example, is firm evidence of how an historical TV drama with nationalistic themes can be developed and impact other media, such as songs and printed media. Some researchers may find it interesting to learn that Thai nation-building can be found even in the country's favourite activities such as beauty contests, singing contests, ceremonies or festivals. Possible contexts to study this concept also include areas beyond media and entertainment like national development policy, public health, education, the military, or state campaigns. The concept of 'combi-nation' can be applicable for observing and examining how regional, subordinate identities are abused. Likewise, I would also suggest using this concept to test nation-building in other cultural contexts such as Russia, Turkey, or even the UK, that have similar problems as Thailand (problems of ethnicity, discrimination and assimilation of cultures, and premises of internal empire) to see whether this concept can help explain the construction of those nations and the lived experience of them.

Bibliography

- ABC. 2020. Thai authorities seek to censor coverage of student protests that have reached their sixth day. [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-20/thai-protests-enter-sixth-day-as-authorities-censor-coverage/12784958>
- AFP. 2017. *Thai soap angers family of Myanmar's last king*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 March 2017]. Available from: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/thai-soap-angers-family-myanmars-last-king-083157664.html>
- Akkarong Punpong. 2016. โซเชียลทีวีกับโลกทัศน์ใหม่ในการรับชมกีฬาฟุตบอล (Social TV and New Vision of Exposure to Soccer Sport). *Humanities and Social Sciences Journal of Graduate School, Phibulsongkram Rajabhat University*. **10**(1), pp.1-17.
- Alexander, C. 2014. The Empire Strikes Back: 30 years on. *Ethnic and racial Studies*. **37**(10), pp.1784-1792.
- Allen, F. 2019. *THE WEIGH-IN Obese young men and 'ladyboys' dodge Thai military draft on conscription day*. [Online]. [Accessed 9 August 2019]. Available from: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/8767890/lardies-ladyboys-measured-weighed-military-conscription-day/>
- Amphorn Wandee and Chonratda Janna. 2000. สิทธิคนไทยกับการดูหนังเรื่อง *Anna and the King* (Thai people's rights to watch *Anna and the King*). [Online]. [Accessed 28 July 2020]. Available from: <http://sarakadee.com/feature/2000/02/vote.shtml>
- Amporn Jirattikorn. 2003. Suriyothai: hybridising Thai national identity through film. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. **4**(2), pp.296-308.
- Amporn Jirattikorn. 2008. 'Pirated' Transnational Broadcasting: The Consumption of Thai Soap Operas among Shan Communities in Burma. *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, **23**(1), pp. 30-62.
- Anderson, B. 1978. Studies of the Thai state: The state of Thai studies. *The study of Thailand*, pp.193-247.
- Anderson, B. 2016. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 4th ed. London: Verso.
- Anucha Pimsak and Sopee Unthaya. 2017. SOTUS พี่วักต้วร้ายกับนายปีหนึ่ง: การประกอบสร้างอัตลักษณ์เพศนอกกรอบในนวนิยายรักวัยรุ่นแนววาย (SOTUS: The evil sophomore and the freshman: Construction of Queer identity in the Y novel). *Governance Journal*, **6**(September), pp. 175-193.
- Arunee Pradittheera. 1993. การดำเนินธุรกิจการผลิตละครโทรทัศน์ของสถานีโทรทัศน์ไทยทีวีสีช่อง 3 ปี พ.ศ. 2535 (*Television Drama business of Drama Programme of Thai Television Channel 3 in 1992*). Master Thesis. Chulalongkorn University.
- Atiya Achakulwisut. 2020. *Thailand needs to talk about lese majeste law*. [Online]. [Accessed 8 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1939428/thailand-needs-to-talk-about-lese-majeste-law>

- Atthachak Satyanurak. 2015. ชนบท: ประชาธิปไตยบนความเคลื่อนไหว (Rural Society: Democracy on the move). In: Phongsakorn Chalermchutidet and Kesara Srinaka. eds. *ความเปลี่ยนแปลงชนบทในสังคมไทย: ประชาธิปไตยบนความเคลื่อนไหว (Changes in Thai Rural Society: Democracy on the move)*. 21/22 November 2015, Bangkok. Bangkok: The Thailand Research Fund, pp. 390-415.
- Atthachak Satyanurak. 2016. *ลืมตาอ้าปาก: จากชาวนาสู่ผู้ประกอบการ (Get better in financial status: from farmers to entrepreneurs)*. Bangkok: Matichon.
- Atthaphorn Theemakorn. 2018. *Interview with K. Moonsarn*. 24 June 2018, Bangkok.
- Bahktin, M. 1998. Carnival and the Carnavalesque. In: Storey, J. ed. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A reader*. 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson.
- Baker, C. and Pasuk Phongpaichit. 1999. Afterword: Chatthip and the Thai Village. In: Chatthip Nartsupha. *The Thai Village Economy in the past*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.114-131.
- Baker, C. 2005. Afterword. In: Baker, C. and Anderson B. eds. *Pen and Sail Literature and History in Early Bangkok Including the History of Bangkok in the Chronicles of Ayuthaya*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 361-384.
- Baker, C. and Pasuk Phongpaichit. 2017. *A History of Thailand*. 3ed ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bangkokpost. 2014. *Lanna group denies separatist policy*. [Online]. [Accessed 17 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/397928/sor-por-por-lanna-says-name-misunderstood-not-republican>
- Bangkokpost. 2018. *'Lame' government rap responds to 'Prathet Ku Mee.'* [Online]. [Accessed 18 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1568634/lame-government-rap-responds-to-prathet-ku-mee>
- Bangkokpost. 2020a. *Massive student-led protest calls on govt to quit*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 August 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/politics/1969211/massive-student-led-protest-calls-on-govt-to-quit>
- Bangkokpost. 2020b. *Woman slaps girl for not standing during national anthem*. [Online]. [Accessed 2 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/easy/2010387/woman-slaps-girl-for-not-standing-during-national-anthem>
- Barmé, S. 1993. *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the creation of a Thai identity*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Barmé, S. 2002. *Woman, Man, Bangkok: Love, Sex and Popular Culture in Thailand*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher.
- Basuki, R. 2003. A Journey Across the Atlantic: the History of Melodrama in Western Landscape. *k@ ta lama*, 5(1), pp.1-16.
- BBC. 2017. *ส.ศิวรักษ์ ยึดหลักอุเบกขา หลังถูกตั้งข้อหา ม. 112 (S.Suwalak remains in 'detachment' after charged with 112 law)*. [Online]. [Accessed 8 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-41548797>

- BBC. 2019. เพลงสรรเสริญพระบารมี: จาก 'ไม่ยืนไม่ใช่อาชญากร' ถึงกิจกรรม 'ไม่ยืนในโรงภาพยนตร์' (*Royal anthem: not stand up is not a crime and a campaign 'not stand at Major Cineplex'*). [Online]. [Accessed 8 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-49470465>
- BBC. 2020. *Thailand protests: Risking it all to challenge the monarchy*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 August 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53770939#> =
- Beauty Explained*. 2019. [Netflix Documentary]. Klein, E. and Posner, J. dir. USA: Vox.
- Beech, H. 2019. *A Rap Challenger to the Thai Military Junta*. [Online]. [Accessed 22 July 2020]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/15/world/asia/rap-video-thailand-liberate-p.html>
- Bhabha, H.K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Boym, S. 2008. *The Future of Nostalgia*. Basic Books.
- Brand Buffet. 2017. แนวทางสื่อโฆษณา ช่วงพระราชพิธีถวายพระเพลิงขลุ่ยตุลาคม (*Guideline for advertising media during the funeral ceremony for TV digital and outdoor media*). [Online]. [Accessed 30 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.brandbuffet.in.th/2017/09/guideline-broadcasting-media-for-king9/>
- Brandbuffet, 2019. เรื่องเดียวรีรันวนไป! ช่อง 3 จัดกรุปเพลงเสด็จนิเวศอนแอร์ Non Stop ส่งท้ายปี 16 วันรวม (*Bupphesanniwat rerun. Channel 3 will air it non-stop for 16 days during the end of the year*). [Online]. [Accessed 2 August 2020]. Available from: <https://www.brandbuffet.in.th/2019/12/ch3-rerun-love-destiny-new-year-festival/>
- Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Callahan, W.A. 2003. Beyond Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism: Diasporic Chinese and New-Nationalism in China and Thailand. *International Organisation*. **57**(3), pp. 481-517.
- Ch3Thailand, 2017. แบร็กเก็นคงอยากรู้ 'กุลสาว' คืออะไร? (*Brackens wants to know what is 'kula khao'?*). [Online]. [Accessed 9 March 2019]. Available from: <http://www.ch3thailand.com/news/scoop/9328>
- Ch3Thailand. 2018. ทำเนียบคึกคัก ทีมนักแสดง-ผู้จัดละครบุพเพสันนิวาส เข้าพบนายกฯ (*The Government House is getting exciting. Bupphesanniwat's actors and producers meet the PM*). [Online]. [Accessed 15 March 2019]. Available from: <http://news.ch3thailand.com/politics/66187>
- Chai-anan Samudavanija. 2002. State-identity creation, state-building and civil society, 1939-1989. In: Reynolds, C.J. ed. *National identity and its defenders: Thailand today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.49-70.
- Chaisiri Boonyakulsrirung. 2010. *เพศสภาพและเพศวิถีชายรักชายในภาพยนตร์ไทย (Gender and Homosexuality in Thai Films)*. Master thesis. Chulalongkorn University.
- Chajabhol Choopen. 2007. *Nationalism in contemporary Thai society: a case study of period films from 1997 to 2005*. PhD Thesis. Chulalongkorn University.

- Chalaby, J.K. 2005. Towards an Understanding of Media Transnationalism. In: Chalaby, J.K. ed. *Transnational Television Worldwide: Towards a New Media Order*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 1-13.
- Channarong Boonnoon. 2014. ห้ามกะเทยเป็นพระ ห้ามพระเป็นกะเทย (Kathoey is not allowed to be a Buddhist monk). *Journal of Buddhist Studies Chulalongkorn University*, 21(2), pp. 5-10.
- Chanokporn Chutikamoltham. 2015. *Destabilising Thainess: The Construction of National Culture in State Ideologies and the Return of the Repressed*. PhD Thesis. SOAS, University of London.
- Charnvit Kasetsiri. 2016. โลกของพระเจ้ากรุงสยามกับการวิโตบายไทย (*The world of Siamese kings and international policy*). ASEAN: Siam-Thailand + Japan =+ China and + India, 25 November 2016, Payao. Samudprakan: Toyota Thailand Foundation, pp.1-46.
- Chatthip Nartsupha. 1999. *The Thai village economy in the past*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Chiang Mai news. 2018. 'ผีปู่ย่า' ความเชื่อของคนล้านนาถูกลือไว้เพียงความทรงจำ (*Will Lanna's house spirit be only a memory*). [Online]. [Accessed 22 September 2020]. Available from: <https://www.chiangmainews.co.th/page/archives/821403/>
- Chiang Mai University. 2017. *พลวัตอาภรณ์แห่งนครเชียงใหม่ (100 Years Evolution of Chiang Mai Costume)*. Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai University.
- Childs, P. and Williams, P. 1997. *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Chitralada, D. 1995. *กลยุทธ์ในการผลิตรายการละครโทรทัศน์ของบริษัทกันตนาวิดีโอโปรดักชั่น จำกัด (The strategic of T.V. drama Kantana Video production Co., Ltd.)*. Master Thesis. Chulalongkorn University.
- Coconut Bangkok, 2018. *Following 'Rap Against Dictatorship,' Thai Junta releases their own rap single (video)*. [Online]. [Accessed 22 July 2020]. Available from: <https://coconuts.co/bangkok/news/following-rap-dictatorship-thai-junta-releases-rap-single-video/>
- Condee, N. 2009. *The imperial trace: recent Russian cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Copeland, M. 1993. *Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*. PhD Thesis. Australian National University.
- CURadio, 2018. *ละครอิงประวัติศาสตร์ (Historical drama)*. [Online]. [Accessed 16 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBvS2p6YIBk>
- Damrong Rajanubhab. 2017. A letter to Prince Narisara Nuvadtivongs. In: *เจ้านายไทย พระองค์ไหนทรงไว้หนวดพระองค์แรก (who was the first royal family member who had a moustache?)*. [Online]. [Accessed 25 December 2017]. Available from: https://www.silpa-mag.com/club/miscellaneous/article_5897
- Darunee Somsri. 2006. *การสร้างภาพลักษณ์ความงามของเมืองเชียงใหม่ พ.ศ. 2464-2500 (The Construction of Chiang Mai's Beautiful Image, 1921-1957)*. Master Thesis. Chulalongkorn University.

- Daunpen, L. 1996. ช่อง 7 สี ทีวีเพื่อใคร (*Channel 7: TV for who?*). [Online]. [Accessed 1 September 2017]. Available from: <http://info.gotomanager.com/news/printnews.aspx?id=4767>
- Dixson, B.J. and Brooks, R.C. 2013. The role of facial hair in women's perceptions of men's attractiveness, health, masculinity and parenting abilities. *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, **34**(3), pp.236-241.
- Dunleavy, T. 2009. *Television Drama: Form, Agency, Innovation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eco, U., 2004. *On Beauty*. London: Seeker and Warburg.
- Eknaree Wachirabunjong. ed. 2017. บันทึกฮักรักนकरา (*Love record, Rak Nagkara*). Bangkok: Act Art Generation.
- Ellis-Petersen, H., 2019. 'I am not here to entertain': meet Thailand's first transgender MP. [Online]. [Accessed 9 August 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/06/i-am-not-here-to-entertain-meet-thailands-first-transgender-mp>
- Farmer, B. 2015. Battling angels and golden orange blossoms: Thai television and/as the popular public sphere. In: Tay, J. and Turner, G. eds. *Television Histories in Asia: Issues and contexts*. London: Routledge, pp. 74-91.
- Ferguson, N. 2004a. *Colossus: the rise and fall of the American Empire*. London: Penguin Books.
- Ferguson, N. 2004b. *Empire: How Britain made the modern world*. London: Penguin Books.
- Fielding, S. 2013. British Politics and Cinema's Historical Drama, 1929-1938. *The Historical Journal*, **56**(2), pp. 487-511.
- Film Archive, 2019. สตรีเหล็ก (*Satree Lek*). [Online]. [Accessed 4 June 2020]. Available from: <https://www.fapot.or.th/main/news/196>
- Fong, J. 2009. Sacred Nationalism: The Thai Monarchy and Primordial Nation Construction. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. **39**(4), pp.673-696.
- Gandamas Gophon and Supatcharajit Jitpraphai. 2014. บทบาทของละครย้อนยุคที่มีต่อการสืบสานและอนุรักษ์มรดกวัฒนธรรมไทย (The roles of retro drama in disseminating and conserving Thai cultural heritage). *Cultural Approach*, **14**(26), pp. 57-69.
- Gellner, E. 2006. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Guibernau, M. 1996. *Nationalism: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hall, S. et.al. 1978. *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state and law and order*. Hong Kong: Macmillan Press.
- Hamilton, A. 2002. The national picture: Thai media and cultural identity. In: Ginsburg, F., Abu-Lughod, L., Larkin, B. eds. *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.152-170.
- Hanhardt, C.B. 2013. *Safe Space: Gay neighborhood history and the politics of violence*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

- Harrison, R. 2005. Amazing Thai film: The rise and rise of contemporary Thai cinema on the international screen. *Asian Affairs*. **36**(3), pp.321-338.
- Harrison, R.V. 2010a. Introduction. The Allure of Ambiguity: The 'West' and the Making of Thai Identities. In: Harrison, R.V. and Jackson, P.A. eds. *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 1-36.
- Harrison, R.V. 2010b. Mind the Gap: (En)countering the West and the Making of Thai identities on Film. In: Harrison, R.V. and Jackson, P.A. eds. *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 93-118.
- Hasan, M.M. 2005. The orientalization of gender. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. **22**(4), p.26-56.
- Haulman, K. 2011. *Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century American*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Head, J., 2015. *Defaming a dog: The ways to get arrested for lese-majeste in Thailand*. [Online]. [Accessed 31 July 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-35099322>
- Herzfeld, M. 2010. The Conceptual Allure of the West: Dilemmas and Ambiguities of Crypto-colonialism in Thailand. In: Harrison, R.V. and Jackson, P.A. eds. *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 173-186.
- Hesse-Swain, C. 2006. Programming beauty and the absence of *Na Lao*: popular Thai TV and identity formation among youth in Northeast Thailand. *Geojournal*. **66**, pp.257-272.
- Hewison, K. 2000. Resisting globalisation: a study of localism in Thailand. *The Pacific Review*. **13**(2), pp. 279-296.
- Hewison, K. 2002. Responding to Economic crisis: Thailand's Localism. In: McCargo D. ed. *Reforming Thai Politics*. Copenhagen: NIAS Publishing, pp.143-161.
- Hinduwebsite. 2017. *Hinduism and the Belief in Rebirth*. [Online]. [Accessed 23 January 2018]. Available from: <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/reincarnation.asp>
- Hobson, D. 2003. *Soap Opera*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hogan, P.C. 2000. *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crises of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean*. State University of New York Press.
- Huddart, D. 2006. *Homi K. Bhabha*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, L. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Intharachai Panichakul. 2016. *ไขข้อสงสัยที่คนไม่ค่อยรู้เมื่อกะเทยต้องไปเกณฑ์ทหาร (What people don't know: when Kathoey go to conscription)*. [Online]. [Accessed 9 August 2019]. Available from: <https://www.posttoday.com/politic/report/424568>
- Isaan Lawyers. n.d. *Pink ID Card for Foreigners in Thailand*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 August 2020]. Available from: <https://www.isaanlawyers.com/pink-id-card-for-foreigners-in-thailand/>

- Isangate, 2017. กุลา จากชนเผ่าพ่อค้าเร่สู่ตำนานแห่งท้องทุ่ง (*Kula: from wandering traders to a legend of the land*). [Online]. [Accessed 9 March 2019]. Available at: http://www.isangate.com/isan/paothai_kula.html
- Isaya Sinpongsporn. 2018. *Exploring Thai Cultural Identity through the Remakes of Korean Dramas: A Study of Transnational and Hybrid Culture on Thai Television*. PhD Thesis. SOAS, University of London.
- Jackson, P.A. 2001. Pre-Gay, Post-Queer. *Journal of Homosexuality*, **40**(3-4), pp. 1-25.
- Jackson, P.A. 2008. Thai Semicolonial Hybridities: Bhabha and Garcia Canclini in Dialogue on Power and Cultural Blending. *Asian Studies Review*. **32**(2), pp.147-170.
- Jackson, P.A. 2010. The Ambiguities of Semicolonial Power in Thailand. In: Harrison, R.V. and Jackson, P.A. eds. *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp.37-56.
- Jackson P.A. and Cook, N.M. 1999. Desiring constructs: transforming sex/gender orders in twentieth-century Thailand. In: Jackson, P.A. and Cook, N.M. eds. *Genders & Sexualities in modern Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.1-27.
- Jackson, P.A. and Sullivan, G. 1999. A Ponoply of Roles. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, **9**(2-3), pp. 1-27.
- Jaiser, G. 2017. *Thai Soaps: An Analysis of Thai Television Dramas*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Janit Feangfu. 2011. *(Ir)resistibly Modern: The Construction of Modern Thai Identities in Thai Literature during the Cold War Era, 1958-1976*. PhD Thesis. University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Jeffrey, L.A. 2002. *Sex and Borders: Gender, National Identity, and Prostitution Policy in Thailand*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Jitlada Meesuk. 2017. *A Grieving Nation: Exploring Thainess in the Space of Emotion*. Master Thesis. Lund University.
- Jory, P. 1999a. Political Decentralisation and the resurgence of regional identities in Thailand. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. **34**(4), pp.337-352.
- Jory, P. 1999b. Thai identity, globalisation and advertising culture. *Asian Studies Review*. **23**(4), pp.461-487.
- Jory, P. 2001. The King and Us: Representations of monarchy in Thailand and the case of Anna and the King. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, **4**(2), pp. 201-208.
- Jory, P. 2003. Problems in Contemporary Thai Nationalist Historiography. *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, Issue 3.
- Jory, P. 2018. Bupphesanniwat Fever: Gendered Nationalism and Middle-Class Views of Thailand's Political Predicament. *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*. **33**(2), pp. 440-456.

- Julispong Chularatana. 2007. Muslim Communities during the Ayutthaya period. *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities*, **10**(1), pp. 89-107.
- Jung, C. 2010. *Four Archetypes*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Juree, Vichit-Vadakan. 2003. Thai Movies as Symbolic Representation of Thai Life. *Aséanie, Sciences humaines en Asie du Sud-Est*, **12**(1), pp. 157-169.
- Käng, D. 2012. Kathoey 'In Trend': Emergent Genderscapes, National Anxieties and the Re-Signification of Male-Bodied Effeminacy in Thailand. *Asian Studies Review*, **36**(4), pp. 475-494.
- Kanjana Hubik Thepboriruk. 2019. Dear Thai Sisters: Propaganda, Fashion, and the Corporeal Nation under Phibunsongkhram. *Southeast Asian Studies*. **8**(2), pp. 233-258.
- Kanjana Kaewthep. 1994. 'East' Meet 'West': The Confrontation of Different Cultures in Thai TV Dramas and Films. In: Nitaya Masavisut et.al. eds. *Gender and Culture in Literature and Film East and West: Issues of Perception and Interpretation*. Honolulu: College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, University of Hawaii and the East-West Centre.
- Kanoknat Kriangchutima. 2014. พฤติกรรมของผู้หญิงวัยทำงานในอำเภอเมืองจังหวัดเชียงใหม่ต่อการทำศัลยกรรมเสริมความงาม (*Behaviour of Working-Aged Women in Muang Chiang Mai District Towards Cosmetic Plastic Surgery*). Master Thesis. Chiang Mai University.
- Kaplan, E.A. 1997. *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film, and the Imperial Gaze*. London: Routledge.
- Kapook. 2007. ข่าวฉาวทำดาราสุด sexy อย่างอัม สุญเงิน 20 ล้าน (*Scandal caused Thailand's sexy star to lose 20 million baht*). [Online]. [Accessed 21 September 2020]. Available from: <https://highlight.kapook.com/view/16646>
- Kapook. 2020. ข้อวันวานกับภาพ ปอย ตริชญา เมื่อตอนประกวด มิสทิฟฟานี ปี 2004 (*Poy Treechada's photos when she won Miss Tiffany 2004*). [Online]. [Accessed 14 December 2020]. Available from <https://women.kapook.com/view226152.html>
- Kasian Tejapira. 2002. The Postmodernisation of Thainess. In: Tanabe, S. and Keyes, C. eds. *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos*. Routledge, pp. 202-227.
- Kham Chaturongkul. 2017. เชี่ยนหมากอีสาน ความเป็นมา รูปแบบ และคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรม. (History, Style, and Cultural Value of Isan Chain Mhark). In: *Assembling of Wisdom Conference, 15/16 June 2017, Khonkaen*. Khonkaen: Assembling of Wisdom, pp.423-436.
- Keyes, C.F. 1983. Economic Action and Buddhist Morality in a Thai Village. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. **42**(4), pp.851-868.
- Kimleng. 2016. เจ้านายไทยกับการไว้หนวด (*Thai royal family and moustache wearing*). [Online]. [Accessed 25 December 2017]. Available from: <http://www.sookjai.com/index.php?topic=173280.0>
- Kriangkrai Kongseng. 2016. 'ร่างกายภายใต้บังคับ' การเปลี่ยนแปลงความหมาย 'ความงาม' ของสตรีไทย-จีนตามวิถีสมัยใหม่ ('Under-control Body Vessel', the Change of Meaning on 'Beauty' of Thai-Chinese Woman in Modern Age). *Lampang Rajabhat University Journal*. **5**(2), pp.235-249.

- Kultida Boonyakul Dunagin. 1993. *Cultural Identity in Thai movies and its implications for the study of films in Thailand*. PhD Thesis. The University of North Texas.
- Kureishi, H. and Frears, S. 1999. 'Race' and Cultural Hybridity: My Beautiful Laundrette and Sammy and Rosie Get Laid. In: Hill, W.J. ed. *British Cinema in the 1980s*. USA: Oxford University Press, pp. 205-218.
- La Pastina, E. 2003. The centrality of telenovelas in Latin America's everyday life: Past tendencies, current knowledge, and future research. *Global Media Journal*, 2(2), pp. 1-15.
- Lawrence, E. 1982. Just plain common sense: the 'roots' of racism. In: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism In 70's Britain*. London: Routledge, pp.47-94.
- Lewis, G. 2003. The Thai movie revival and Thai national identity. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*. 17(1), pp.69-78.
- Lobato, R. 2019. *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution*. New York: New York University Press.
- Loos, T. 2005. Sex in the Inner City: The Fidelity between Sex and Politics in Siam. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 64(4), pp. 881-909.
- Love, E. 2007. White is the Color of Empire. In: Campbell, J.T et.al. eds. *Race, Nation, & Empire in American History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Louie, K. 2012. Popular Culture and Masculinity Ideals in East Asia, with special reference to China. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 71(4), pp. 929-943.
- Manop Manasam. 2008. พัฒนาการเครื่องแต่งกายชาวล้านนา (ไทยวน) (evolution of Lanna costume (Tai yuan people)). *Journal of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University*, 1(1), pp. 122-135.
- Mathichon, 2018a. *เคท ครั่งพิบูลย์ ขอคุณศาลสั่งเพิกถอนมติ มธ.ไม่รับเป็นอาจารย์ หวังสังคมยุติเลือกปฏิบัติ (Kate Krangphibun thanks the administrative court to hold back Thammasat University's order)*. [Online]. [Accessed 13 October 2019]. Available from: https://www.mathichon.co.th/politics/news_868543
- Mathichon, 2018b. *เปิดธรรมเนียมการรับทูตครั้งโบราณ พระนารายณ์ไม่รับพระราชสาส์น ไม่ใช่ธรรมเนียมหลักที่ปฏิบัติกัน ('King Narai bends to receive a letter from the French ambassador' is not a traditional custom)*. [Online]. [Accessed 14 December 2020]. Available from: https://www.mathichon.co.th/social/news_895228
- May Adadol Ingawanij. 2006. *Hyperbolic heritage: bourgeois spectatorship and contemporary Thai cinema*. PhD Thesis. University of London.
- May Adadol Ingawanij. 2007. Nang Nak: Thai bourgeois heritage cinema. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. 8(2), pp. 180-193.
- McCargo, D. 2010. Thailand's Twin Fires. *Survival*. 52(4), pp. 5-12.
- McCargo, D. 2018. Thailand in 2017: Politics on Hold. *Asian Survey*. 58(1), pp.181-187.

- MCOT. 2017. ประวัติ อ.ส.ม.ท .องค์การสื่อสารมวลชนแห่งประเทศไทย (history of MCOT: Mass Communication Organization of Thailand). [Online]. [Accessed 1 September 2017]. Available from: http://dtv.mcot.net/mcot_one.php?dateone=1243329758
- Mendus, S. and Rendall, J. 1989. *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary studies of gender in the nineteenth century*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Metev, D. 2020. *How Much Time Do People Spend on Social Media? (63+ Facts to Like, Share and Comment)*. [Online]. [Accessed 3 November 2020]. Available from: <https://review42.com/how-much-time-do-people-spend-on-social-media/>
- MGR Online. 2009. ตุ๊เจ้า(ง) ...ใต้เงาสลัวของร่มกาสาวพัสตร์ ('Sister monk' in yellow robes). [Online]. [Accessed 12 October 2019]. Available from: <https://mgronline.com/live/detail/9520000011782>
- Miller, T. 2009. *Television studies: The basics*. London: Routledge.
- Morland, I. and Willox, A. 2005. *Queer Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mrozik, S. 2007. *Virtuous Bodies: The Physical Dimensions of Morality in Buddhist Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MThai. 2009. กลุ่มเกย์ยื่นมหาเถรฯเชือด พระตุ๊ดเณรตัว แฉรับจ้าง จัดดอกไม้ สอนเต้น! ผัวพุ่มพวง โผล่จีพั้น (Gay community urges the Sangha Supreme Council to punish kathoey monks). [Online]. [Accessed 12 October 2019]. Available from: <https://news.mthai.com/general-news/1795.html>
- Nakarin Wanakitphaiboon. 2017. *Pantip.com* เว็บบอร์ดภาพแทนสังคมไทยที่ยังเติบโตได้ดีในยุค 4.0 (Pantip.com, a quality web board and a representation of Thai society that still grows in the Thailand 4.0 era). [Online]. [Accessed 23 January 2018]. Available from: <https://thestandard.co/podcast/thesecondsauce04/>
- Nantchanok Wongsamut. 2017. ไทยศัลยกรรมความงามติดอันดับ 21 โลก นิยมทำเลสิกตามากสุด (Thailand ranked 21st for the World's highest cases of plastic surgery, eyelid surgery is number one). [Online]. [Accessed 22 September 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-40439947>
- Nanthayapirom, C. 2017. *I love you, I rape you: The strange relationship between love, rape, and Thai TV*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 July 2020]. Available from: <https://coconuts.co/bangkok/features/love-rape-strange-relationship-love-rape-thai-tv/>
- Napat Chaipraditkul. 2013. Thailand: beauty and globalised self-identity through cosmetic therapy and skin lightening. *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics*, 13(1), pp.27-37.
- Naraphorn Sangchai. 2009. บทละครโทรทัศน์ไทย: กระบวนการสร้างสรรค์และเทคนิค (Thai TV Drama Script Writing: Creation Process and Techniques). *University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce Journal*. 29(3), pp. 139-158.
- Naruemon Thabchumon and McCargo D. 2011. Urbanised Villagers in the 2010 Thai Redshirt Protests. *Asian Survey*. 51(6), pp.993-1018.
- Nathnipa Rojana. 2014. ปัญหาเกี่ยวกับสิทธิเสรีภาพของสื่อมวลชน: ศึกษากรณีการควบคุมเนื้อหาละครโทรทัศน์ (Problems with the right and freedom of mass media: A case study of TV series content control). Master Thesis. Dhurakij Pundit University.

- Nidhi Eoseewong. 2014. *ชาติไทย เมืองไทย แบบเรียนและอนุสาวรีย์ ว่าด้วยวัฒนธรรม รัฐ และรูปการณจิตสำนึก (Thai nation, Thailand, school textbook and monument: about culture, state, and consciousness)*. 3rd ed. Bangkok: Matichon.
- NITC. 2012. ประเพณีล้านนา: ประเพณีกินแขกแต่งงาน (Lanna tradition: wedding tradition). [Online]. [Accessed 21 September 2020]. Available from: <http://library.cmu.ac.th/ntic/lannatradition/wedding-phidphee.php>
- Nitikul Chamaraman. 2007. *The study of cultivation effects on the representation of social attributes, marriage, family and occupational roles: TV dramas in Thailand and Thai young adolescents*. PhD Thesis. University of Leicester.
- OBEC (Office of the Basic Education Commission). 2012. หนังสือเรียน รายวิชาพื้นฐาน ภาษาไทย ชุด ภาษาเพื่อชีวิต ภาษาพาที ชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 6 (*Thai language fundamental textbook for elementary school student grade 6*). Bangkok: OBEC.
- Ongart Singlamphong. 2014. *กระบวนการผลิตละครโทรทัศน์ (Television drama production process)*. Bangkok: Samlada Press.
- Osborne, M. 2008. Preah Vihear: the Thai-Cambodia temple dispute. *Open democracy*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 September 2020]. Available from: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/preah-vihear-the-thai-cambodia-temple-dispute>
- Paddock, R. and Linder, E. 2020. *Bangkok Is Engulfed by Protests. What's Driving Them?* [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/world/asia/thailand-protests-explainer.html>
- Palungjit, 2009. พระว.วชิรเมธีร่วมแก้พระตืด-เณรแก้ว (*Phra Wor Wachiramethi helps to prevent gay monks*). [Online]. [Accessed 12 October 2019]. Available from: <https://palungjit.org/threads/พระว-วชิรเมธีร่วมแก้พระตืด-เณรแก้ว.184416/>
- Parnwell, M. and Seeger, M. 2008. The Relocalisation of Buddhism in Thailand. *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*. **15**, pp. 78-176.
- Pasuk Phongpaichit and Baker, C. 2000. *Thailand's Crisis*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Pattana Kitiarsa. 2010. An Ambiguous Intimacy: Farang as Siamese Occidentalism. In: Harrison, R.V. and Jackson, P.A. eds. *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp.57-74.
- Patsorn Sungsi (2004). *Thai cinema as National Cinema: An Evaluative History*. PhD Thesis. Murdoch University.
- Peleggi, M. 2002. *Lord of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Images*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Peleggi, M. 2007. *Thailand: The worldly kingdom*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Peleggi, M. 2008. Refashioning civilization: Dress and bodily practice in Thai nation-building. In: Mina, R. and Louise, E. eds. *The politics of dress in Asia and the Americas*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, pp.65-80.
- Penth, H. 1994. *A Brief History of Lanna: Civilisations of North Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

- Pesses, A. 2018. *Highland Birth and Citizenship Registration in Thailand. Final Report on Karen Focus Group Discussions in Chiang Mai Province*. (Research Report) UNESCO Highland Birth and Citizenship Registration Promotion Project Funded by the United Kingdom Sustainable Development Programme.
- Petchrung Teanpewroj. 2017. ความหลากหลายของวัฒนธรรมอาหารการกินสมัยอยุธยา (Diversity of Food Culture in Ayutthaya Period). *Songklanararin Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. **23**(1), pp.68-89.
- Phattanaphon Wongmuang and Mayuree Srikulwong. 2016. ตัวละครเกย์ในละครโทรทัศน์ไทยยุคใหม่ (Gay Characters in Modern Thai Television Dramas). *Journal of Communication and Management NIDA*, **2**(2), pp. 96-109.
- Phensiri Sawetwiharee. 2018. *Interview with K. Moonsarn*. 22 June 2018, Bangkok.
- Phiphat Krajaejan. 2018. บุษปะสน์นิवास: ความรุ่งเรืองในอดีตที่คนไทยทุกสมัยใฝ่หา (*Bupphesanniwat: a prosperity in the past that Thais always long for*). [Online]. [Accessed 16 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-43430043>
- Phon Ittharom. 2019. บันทึกรักหม่อมเบ็ดสวรรค์ ความสัมพันธ์ของเลสเบียน 'เล่นเพื่อน' ในวัง (*Love diary of Mom Ped Sawan: Lesbianism in the Inner Palace*). [Online]. [Accessed 13 October 2019]. Available from: https://www.silpa-mag.com/culture/article_4301
- Phornphat Kittiamahachok and Patchanee Choeyjanya. 2018. พฤติกรรมการเปิดรับและเนื้อหาละครบุษปะสน์นิवासที่ส่งผลต่อพฤติกรรมตามกระแสนิยมไทยของผู้รับชม (Research on media behaviour exposure and perception towards contents of Bupphesanniwat drama affecting audiences' behaviour according to popular trends). *Journal of communication and innovation NIDA*, **5**(1), pp. 41-61.
- Pirongrong Rammasut and Sasithorn Yuwakoson. 2003. การกำกับดูแลเนื้อหาของสื่อวิทยุและโทรทัศน์ในประเทศไทย (*Radio and television content control in Thailand*). Chulalongkorn University.
- Pitchaya Soomjinda. 2017. สีขาวของเศวตฉัตรมีความหมายอย่างไร (*What does white colour on a tiered umbrella of kingship mean*). [Online]. [Accessed 30 December 2017]. Available from: https://www.silpa-mag.com/club/art-and-culture/article_12270
- Piyaphorn Sakkasem. 2016. *รากนครา (Rak Nagkara)*. 10th ed. Bangkok: Amarin Printing.
- Piyaphorn Sakkasem. 2018. *Interview with K. Moonsarn*. 16 June 2018, Bangkok.
- Polti, G. 1921. *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*. Ohio: James Knapp Reeve.
- Pornchai Chanvisetlak and Aswin Nedpogaeo. 2020. เฟซบุ๊กเพจ: การสื่อสารจากสื่อโทรทัศน์สู่สื่อสังคมของสถานีโทรทัศน์ไทยรัฐทีวี (Facebook Page: Communication from Television to Social Media on Thairath TV). *Journal of Communication Arts*. **38**(2), pp. 1-15.
- Positioning, 2017. หนึ่งวาทกับ Line TV เจาะใจแฟนคลับสายเปย์ ตลาดแมสแล้วจะ (Y-drama and Line TV targeted high-income fans and now gone mass). [Online]. [Accessed 4 June 2020]. Available from: <https://positioningmag.com/1128964>
- Positioning, 2018. เปิดเรตติ้ง เลือดข้นคนจาง อวสานไม่ปัง แต่ปลุกกระแสละครศุกร์-เสาร์ ช่องวัน (*Luedkhon khonjang final episode did not get high rating but promoted a weekend slot for Channel One*). [Online]. [Accessed 2 August 2020]. Available from: <https://positioningmag.com/1197321>

- Posttoday. 2017. สื่อปรับแผนรับเดือนต.ค. ที่วีเน้นเนื้อหาโทนสีเหมาะสม (*Media plans in October focus on appropriate content and colour tone*). [Online]. [Accessed 2019 May 30]. Available from: <https://www.posttoday.com/market/news/512249>
- Posttoday, 2018a. ทำเนียบคึกคัก พี่หมิ่นโป๊ป-แม่หญิงเบลล่า นำทีมนักแสดงบุพเพสันนิวาสพบนายกฯ (*The Government House is getting excited! Pope and Bella lead all the Bupphesanniwat actors to meet the PM*). [Online]. [Accessed 15 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.posttoday.com/politic/news/546535>
- Posttoday. 2018b. นาคีก็ต้องหลบ บุพเพสันนิวาสขึ้นอันดับ 1 ละครเรตติ้งสูงสุดในยุคทีวีดิจิทัล (*Bupphesanniwat got highest rating for TV drama in digital era*). [Online]. [Accessed 18 September 2020]. Available from: <https://www.posttoday.com/ent/news/546074>
- Pratt, M.L. 1992. *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Prepanod Nainapat. 2017. รีเมควนไป 9 แชมป์ละครไทย ที่ทำออกมากี่ทีก็ยังมีคนดู (*Cycle of Remake: Thailand's top nine of most frequent remade dramas*). [Online]. [Accessed 6 June 2019]. Available from: https://thematter.co/rave/they-already-remade-these-lakorns-more-than-five-times/37587?utm_source=LINE&utm_medium=Content+Discovery&utm_campaign=LINE+TODAY
- Prum, R.O. 2017. Beauty Happens: Darwin's theory that mate choice is explicitly aesthetic was a really dangerous idea. *Natural History*. **125**(3).
- Regulations on Radio and Television Broadcasting*. 1992. [Online]. [Accessed 16 September 2020]. Available from: <http://communications.police.go.th/image/law/6047d3c1173ad39384a5e454d7a967e0.pdf>
- Reynolds, C.J. 1999. On the gendering of nationalist and postnationalist selves in twentieth century Thailand. In: Jackson, P.A. and Cook, N.M. eds. *Genders & Sexualities in modern Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 261-274.
- Reynolds, C.J. 2001. Globaliser vs. Communitarians: Public intellectuals debate Thailand's future. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*. **22**(3), pp. 252-269.
- Reynolds, C.J. 2002. Introduction: national identity and its defenders. In: Reynolds, C.J. ed. *National identity and its defenders: Thailand today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.1-32.
- Reynolds, C.J. 2006. *Seditious Histories: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asia pasts*. London: University of Washington Press.
- Reynolds, C.J. 2014. Homosociality in modern Thai political culture. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. **45**(2), pp.258-277.
- Reynolds, E.B. 2004. Phibun Songkhram and Thai Nationalism in the Fascist Era. *European Journal of East Asian Studies*. **3**(1), pp.99-134.
- Rodríguez Cadena, M. 2004. Contemporary hi(stories) of Mexico: Fictional re-creation of collective past on television. *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*, **34**(1), pp. 49-55.
- Rose, S.O. 1992. *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and class in nineteenth-century England*. London: Routledge.

- Row, J. 2020. *Behind Thailand's Protests, Cracks in the Establishment*. [Online]. [Accessed 2 November 2020]. Available from: <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/behind-thailands-protests-cracks-in-the-establishment/>
- Royal Gazette, 2013a. ประกาศสำนักงานคณะกรรมการกิจการกระจายเสียง กิจการโทรทัศน์และกิจการโทรคมนาคมแห่งชาติ เรื่องแนวทางการจัดระดับความเหมาะสมของรายการโทรทัศน์) *Announcement of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission (NBTC) on the guidelines of television programmes rating according to the criteria on television rating system B.E.2556*).
- Royal Gazette, 2013b. ประกาศคณะกรรมการกิจการกระจายเสียงกิจการโทรทัศน์และกิจการโทรคมนาคมแห่งชาติ เรื่องหลักเกณฑ์การจัดทำผังรายการสำหรับการให้บริการกระจายเสียงหรือโทรทัศน์ พ.ศ .2556 (*Announcement of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission (NBTC) on the rules of prgrammes schedule for television B.E.2556*).
- Said, E.W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, Random House.
- Samer Nimngern. n.d. เรตติ้งคืออะไร และแปลความหมายได้ว่าอย่างไร (*What is rating? And what does it mean?*). [Online]. [Accessed 18 September 2020]. Available from: https://www.prd.go.th/download/article/article_20200522145616.pdf
- Sanga, J. C. 2001. *Salman Rushdie's Postcolonial Metaphors: Migration, Translation, Hybridity, Blasphemy, and Globalization*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Sarassawadee Ongsakul. 2005. *History of Lan Na*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Sarassawadee Ongsakul. 2010. *ประวัติศาสตร์ล้านนา (History of Lan Na)*. 7th ed. Bangkok: Amarin Printing.
- Schmidt, J.D. 2011. The Red Shirt Rebellion in Thailand. In: *State Violence and Human Rights in Asia*. Gwangju: The May 18 Memorial Foundation, pp.321-342.
- Seri Wongmontha. 2018. แนวทางการผลิตภาพยนตร์และละครโทรทัศน์อิงประวัติศาสตร์ (The production of movies and TV series based on true stories). *Journal of communication and innovation NIDA*, 5(1), pp. 1-22.
- Shabanirad, E. and Marandi, S.M. 2015. Edward Said's orientalism and the Representation of oriental Women in George orwell's *Burmese Days*. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*. 60, pp.22-33.
- Silpa-mag, 2018. ชั้นที่แห่งกรุงศรีอยุธยา: นักเทศ-นายกำนัล-ยูนุค...ถูกตอนจริงไหม ตอนที่ไหน (*Ayutthaya Eunuch: how and where they were castrated?*). [Online]. [Accessed 10 August 2019]. Available from: https://www.silpa-mag.com/history/article_16985
- Sinit Sitthirak. 1992. *กำเนิดโทรทัศน์ไทย (2493-2500) (The origin of Thai television 1950-1957)*. Bangkok: Thammasat University.
- Sinnott, M. 1999. Masculinity and Tom Identity in Thailand. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 9(2-3), pp. 97-119.
- Sinnott, M. 2000. The Semiotics of Transgendered Sexual Identity in the Thai Print Media: Imagery and Discourse of the Sexual Other. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 2(4), pp. 425-440.

- Sirinthip Pimsen. 2002. ปัจจัยเชิงพาณิชย์ที่มีผลกระทบต่อการเขียนบทละครโทรทัศน์ไทย (*Commercial factors Thai affect scriptwriting of Thai television drama*). Master Thesis. Chulalongkorn University.
- Sirinya Pakditawan. 2015. Thai History: The Bunnag family's Persian connection. [Online]. [Accessed 14 December 2020]. Available from: <https://www.thepuketnews.com/thai-history-the-bunnag-family-persian-connection-55341.php>
- Sittitthep Eaksittipong. 2015. ลูกจีนรักชาติ: สำนักประวัติศาสตร์และชาตินิยมประชาธิปไตย (The Patriotic Thai-born Chinese: Their Historical Consciousness and Defined Democracy). *Journal of Human Sciences*. **16**(2), pp.112-157.
- Smith, A.D. 1991. *National Identity*. London: Penguin Books.
- Smith, A.D. 2000. Theories of nationalism: Alternative models of nation formation. In: M. Leifer, ed. *Asian Nationalism*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-20.
- Smith, J.L. 1973. *Melodrama*. London: Methuen.
- Smith, J.R. 1997. *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Solomos et.al. 1982. The organic crisis of British capitalism and race: the experience of the seventies. In: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism In 70's Britain*. London: Routledge, pp.9-46.
- Somkiat Tangkitvanich. 2008. The Creation of Thai Public Broadcasting Service: Thailand's First Public Television Station. *TDRJ Quarterly Review*, **23**(2), pp.3-8.
- Somsuk Hinwiman. 2015. *อ่านทีวี (Reading Television)*. Bangkok: Paragraph publishing.
- Spargo, T. 2000. *Foucault and Queer Theory*. Cambridge: Icon Books.
- Statista. 2020. *Average daily media use in the United Kingdom (UK) in the 3rd quarter of 2019, by media*. [Online]. [Accessed 3 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/507378/average-daily-media-use-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>
- Stengs, I. 2008. Modern Thai encounters with the sublime: the powerful presence of a great kings of Siam through his portraits. *Material Religion*. **4**(2), pp.160-170.
- Stengs, I. 2009. *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Stengs, I. 2020. Dramatising Siamese independence: Thai post-colonial perspectives on kingship. In *Monarchies and decolonisation in Asia*. Manchester University Press.
- Strate, S. 2015. *The Lost Territories: Thailand's History of National Humiliation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Storer, G. 1999. Redeasing Gender and Sexuality in Modern Thailand. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, **9**(2-3), pp. 141-159.
- Stowe, J.A. 1991. *Siam becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue*. London: Hurst and Company.

- Sud Chonchirdsin. 2009. The Ambivalent Attitudes of the Siamese Elite towards the West during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn, 1868-1910. *South East Asia Research*. 17(3), pp.433-456.
- Sujit, W. 2016. กุลา (เป็นชาวไทยใหญ่จากพม่า) บ้านโนนใหญ่ ที่อุบลราชธานี (*Kula, Shan people from Burma, at Baan Nonyai, Ubonratchathani*). [Online]. [Accessed 9 March 2019]. Available from: https://www.matichon.co.th/columnists/news_247936
- Sulak Sivaraksa. 1999. Moral Authority of the Sangha and Modernity in Thailand: Sexual scandals, sectarian dissent, and political resistance. In: Sulak Sivaraksa. ed. *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium: Essays in Honor of the Ven. Phra Dhammapitaka (Bhikkhu PA Payutto) on His 60th Birthday Anniversary*. Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation & Foundation For Children.
- Sulak Sivaraksa. 2002. The crisis of Siamese identity. In: Reynolds, C.J. ed. *National identity and its defenders: Thailand today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.33-47.
- Sunait Chutintaranond. 1992. The image of the Burmese enemy in Thai perceptions and historical writing. *Journal of the Siam Society*, 80(1), pp.89-98.
- Sunitsuda Ekachai. 2019. *Temples no longer safe for children*. [Online]. [Accessed 5 June 2020]. Available from: https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1782969/temples-no-longer-safe-for-children?fbclid=IwAR1w_EEegvhm1ey9SwlSKFMEExMaPa52_wk2I1vml94I_rQ_yepISrxSirsLq
- Sutthiphan Hera. 2018. *Interview with K. Moonsarn*. 14 June 2018, Chiang Mai.
- Tanabe, S. and Keyes. C. 2002. Introduction. In: Tanabe, S. and Keyes, C. eds. *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 1-39.
- Tanet Charoenmuang. 2017. รากนครารีย์เทิร์น กับสิ่งที่หลงเหลือบนทางแพร่ง (*Rak Nagkara Return and what left behind on a crossroad*). [Online]. [Accessed on 20 December 2017]. Available from: https://www.matichonweekly.com/บทความพิเศษ/article_58167
- Tatchell, P. 2017. *Don't fall for the myth that it's 50 years since we decriminalised homosexuality*. [Online]. [Accessed 27 August 2020]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/23/fifty-years-gay-liberation-uk-barely-four-1967-act>
- TATnews. 2018. *Un Ai Rak Khlai Khwam Nao festival returns on 9 December 2018 to 19 January 2019*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.tatnews.org/event/un-ai-rak-khlai-khwam-nao-festival-returns-on-9-december-2018-to-19-january-2019/>
- Terdsak Romjampa. 2003. จากกะเทยถึงเกย์ ประวัติศาสตร์ชายรักร่วมเพศในสังคมไทย (From kathoey to gay: male homosexuality in Thailand). *Journal of Letters, Chulalongkorn University*. 32(1), pp. 303-332.
- Terwiel, B.J. 2002. Thai Nationalism and Identity: Popular Themes of the 1930s. In: Reynolds, C.J. ed. *National identity and its defenders: Thailand today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.108-123.

- Terwiel, B.J. 2011. *Thailand's Political History: From the 13th century to recent times*. 2nd ed. Bangkok: River Books.
- Thai Broadcast Journalists Association, 2020. 10 อันดับเรตติ้งทีวีดิจิทัล ม.ค.63 (*Top ten rating of Digital TV, January 2020*). [Online]. [Accessed 25 July 2020]. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/thaibja/posts/1859248764212711/>
- Thai Digital Television, 2014. *ความเป็นมาทีวีไทย กับสายสัมพันธ์ช่อง 3 (History of Thai TV and relationship with Channel 3)*. [Online]. [Accessed 1 September 2017]. Available from: <http://www.thaidigitalelevision.com/ความเป็นมาทีวีไทย-กับสว/>
- Thailandtourismdirectory. n.d. *Wat Phrasing*. [Online]. [Accessed 20 September 2020]. Available from: <https://thailandtourismdirectory.go.th/th/info/attraction/detail/itemid/5166>
- Thai PBS World. 2019. *Seven struggling digital TV channels return licenses*. [Online]. [Accessed 25 July 2020]. Available from: <https://www.thaipbsworld.com/seven-struggling-digital-tv-channels-return-licenses/>
- Thai PBS World. 2020. *Thai protesters rally for repeat of 1973 uprising*. [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.thaipbsworld.com/thai-protesters-rally-for-repeat-of-1973-uprising/>
- Thai Royal Academy Encyclopaedia (สารานุกรมไทย)*. Vol.25. s.v. ฤๅษี (Ruesi), pp.16106-16120.
- Thai Webmaster Association, 2019. *แนวปฏิบัติในห้วงพระราชพิธีบรมราชาภิเษก พุทธศักราช 2562 (Guidelines during the coronation ceremony B.E.2562)*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.webmaster.or.th/news/พระราชพิธีราชาภิเษก-62>
- Thanet Aphornsuvan, 1996. *Communication and preservation of national identity*. Ho Chi Minh City.
- Thanyaphorn Buathong. 2019. *อนาคตใหม่: ส.ส. ข้ามเพศคนแรกของรัฐสภาไทยกับการแต่งกายตามเพศสภาพ และก้าวแรกของความเป็นมนุษย์เท่ากัน (Future Forward: Thailand's first transgender MP, gender-identity dress code and the first step of human equality)*. [Online]. [Accessed 8 August 2019]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-48382940>
- The Fundamental Acts Relating to Telecommunications and Broadcasting Services* (unofficial translation). 2015. [Online]. [Accessed 16 September 2020]. Available from: <https://broadcast.nbtc.go.th/data/document/law/doc/th/580300000001.pdf>
- The Guardian, 2018. *'Gun at your throat': viral rap song tests freedom of speech in Thailand*. [Online]. [Accessed 18 March 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/gun-at-your-throat-viral-rap-song-tests-freedom-of-speech-in-thailand>
- The Nation Thailand, 2019. *BEC Multimedia compensated for return of digital TV licences*. [Online]. [Accessed 25 July 2020]. Available from: <https://www.nationthailand.com/business/30376944>
- Thitinan Boonpap. 2007. *Popular television and the construction of contemporary Thai cultural identity*. PhD. Thesis. University of Northumbria.

- Thitiwat Samitinantana. 2010. *การสร้างตัวละครเพศที่สามในภาพยนตร์ไทย (Characterisation of the third gender in Thai films)*, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- Thanthong-Knight. 2020. *Thailand Threatens to Censor Media Outlets as Protests Swell*. [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-19/thai-parliament-to-decide-on-special-meeting-as-protesters-rally>
- Thongchai Winichakul. 1994. *Siam Mapped: A History of Geo-body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2000a. The others within: Travel and ethno-spatial differentiation of Siamese subjects 1885-1910. In: Turton, A. ed. *Civility and savagery: Social identity in Tai states*, pp.38-62.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2000b. The Quest for 'Siwilai': A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Siam. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. **59**(3), pp.528-549.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2001. 'We do not forget the 6 October.' The 1996 Commemoration of the October 1976 Massacre in Bangkok. In: *Imagining the Past, Remembering the Future, 8-10 March 2001, Cebu*. Philippines: Imagining the Past, Remembering the Future, pp.1-15.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2008. Nationalism and Radical Intelligentsia in Thailand. *Third World Quarterly*. **29**(3), pp.575-591.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2010. Coming to Terms with the West: Intellectual Strategies of Bifurcation and Post-Westernism in Siam. In: Harrison, R.V. and Jackson, P.A. eds. *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 135-151.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2011. Siam's Colonial Conditions and the Birth of Thai History. In: Grabowsky, V. ed. *Southeast Asian Historiography Unravelling the Myths: Essays in Honour of Barend Jan Terwiel*. Bangkok: River Books, pp.21-43.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2016a. Thailand's Hyper-Royalism: Its past success and present predicament. *ISEAS: Yusof Ishak Institute*. 2016 Issue 7, pp. 1-36.
- Thongchai Winichakul. 2016b. *โฉมหน้าราชาชาตินิยม (The Face of Royal-nationalism)*. Nonthaburi: Same sky books.
- Tosh, J. 2005. *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-century Britain*. London: Pearson Longman.
- Townsend, R. 2016. Prisoner of love: sexual violence on Thai television. *Critical Asian Studies*. **48**(4), pp.579-596.
- Trumbach, R. 1993. London's Sapphists: From Three Sexes to Four Genders in the Making of Modern Culture. In: Herdt, G. ed. *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York: Zone Books, pp. 111-136.
- Turner, W.B. 2000. *A Genealogy of Queer Theory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Under the Ropes. 2016 *Rape Culture in Thailand*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 July 2020]. Available from: <https://undertheropes.com/2016/04/01/rape-culture-in-thailand/?fbclid=IwAR2uerHf89RLCIIM74-7hRrNKMSp8xHfIXvrLykiQdB9wo0rxmseNWHwq-o>
- Uricchio, W. 2004. Television's next generation: Technology/Interface culture/Flow. In: Spigel, L. and Olsson J. eds. *Television after TV: Essays on a medium in transition*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 163-182.
- Van Esterik, P. 2000. *Materialising Thailand*. Oxford and New York: Berg.
- Van Esterik, P. 2006. Anna and the King: Digesting Difference. *South East Asia Research*. **14**(2), pp. 289-307.
- Vella, W. F. 1978. *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- VoiceTV, 2015. ตู๊ด เกย์ กะเทย ทอม ดี เรียกร้องอย่างไรไม่เหยียดเพศ (*Tud, Gay, Kathoey: how to term without sexual discrimination?*). [Online]. [Accessed 22 September 2019]. Available from: <https://www.voicetv.co.th/read/156477>
- Voice TV, 2019. ต้องการเพียงแค่นำหน้าชื่อ เงินเงิน บุญสูงเสิน นักร้องสาวข้ามเพศในตำนาน (*'I want to change gender designation': Jern Jern, the transgender female singer*). [Online]. [Accessed 7 August 2019]. Available from: https://voicetv.co.th/read/JcgyC7CLE?fbclid=IwAR1Qs6XYkS4O1GXa4oPj6FVIJuf3xdAuQUa27TC_AlpMb1Fc9KZCghSnUps
- Vu, T. 2013. Southeast Asia's New Nationalism: Causes and Significance. *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and – National Studies of Southeast Asia*. **1**(2), pp. 259-279.
- Wagener, M. 2011. Lessons from Preah Vihear: Thailand, Cambodia, and the Nature of Low-intensity Border Conflicts. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*. **30**(3), pp.27-59.
- Walters, S.D. 2005. From Here to Queer: Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Lesbian Menace. In: Morland, I. and Willox, A. eds. *Queer Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wasin Oonjanam. 2018. *Interview with K. Moonsarn*. 11 June 2018, Chiang Mai.
- Wechsler, M. 2018. *The 'Tom Yum Kung' financial crisis that shocked the world and ended Thailand's status as an Asian tiger economy*. [Online]. [Accessed 2 February 2018]. Available from: <http://www.thebigchilli.com/feature-stories/the-tom-yum-kung-financial-crisis-that-shocked-the-world-and-ended-thailands-status-as-an-asian-tiger-economy>
- Weisman, J.R. 2001. The Tiger and His Stripes: Thai and American Reactions to Tiger Wood's (Multi-) 'Racial Self.' In: Williams-León, T. and Nakashima, C.L. eds. *The sum of our parts: Mixed-heritage Asian Americans*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. pp.231-243.
- Wichitwathakhan. 2017. พระเอกของเราแทบทุกเรื่องมักได้ดีโดยไม่ต้องทำอะไร (*our heroes win by doing nothing*). [Online]. [Accessed 25 December 2017]. Available from: https://www.silpa-mag.com/quotes-in-history/article_9515
- Wilak, S., 2004. *ครุฑหยั่งของงาม แม่หญิงล้านนา (Costume and accessories of Lanna women)*. Chiang Mai: CMU Social Research Institute.

- William, R. 1990. *Television: Technology and cultural form*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Wolff, M. 2017. *Television is the new television: The unexpected triumph of old media in the digital age*. 2nd ed. New York: Portfolio/Penguin.
- Woodhouse, L.A. 2009. *A 'Foreign' Princess in the Siamese Court: Princess Dara Rasami, the Politics of Gender and Ethnic Difference in Nineteenth-Century Siam*. PhD. Thesis. University of California.
- Woodhouse, L.A. 2017. Picturing 'Siwilai': Colonial Anxiety and Ethnic Difference in Elite Photography during Siam's Fifth Reign (1868-1910). *Amerasia Journal*. **43**(2), pp.141-157.
- Wuen, W.Y. 2005. The Making of a Local Queen in an International Transsexual Beauty Contest. In: *Sexualities, Genders, and Rights in Asia, 1st international conference of Asian queer studies, 7-9 July 2005, Bangkok*. Singapore: National University of Singapore, pp. 1-15.
- Wyatt, D.K. 1982. *Thailand: A Short History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wyatt, D.K., 2003. *Thailand: A short history*. Yale University Press.
- Yingyot Panya. 2018. *Interview with K. Moonsarn*. 19 June 2018, Chiang Rai.
- Yuphaphorn Kajornkosol. 2013. การนำเสนอตัวแบบด้านบวกของการทำศัลยกรรมเสริมความงามในนิตยสารแฟชั่นและบันเทิงไทยและการตอบสนองของวัยรุ่นสตรีไทย (*Thai Female Teens' Responses to Positive Modeling of Cosmetic Surgery in Thai Fashion and Entertainment Magazines*). Master Thesis. Bangkok University.
- Yuval-Davis, N. 1997. *Gender & Nation*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Glossary of key terms

Ayutthaya period (1351-1767):

The kingdom of Ayutthaya was founded by King U Thong. By the end of the fourteenth century, Ayutthaya was regarded as the strongest power in Southeast Asia. The Thai kingdom was not a single unified state, but rather a patchwork of self-governing principalities and tributary provinces owing allegiance to the king of Ayutthaya. In 1765, its territory was invaded by Burmese armies and destroyed in 1767. After Ayutthaya, a new Thonburi kingdom was established from 1767-1782 with King Rama I founding the Rattanakosin kingdom of the Chakri Dynasty in 1782.

Chakri Dynasty:

The current dynasty of Thailand which has ruled the kingdom since the founding of Rattanakosin kingdom (the Bangkok era), in 1872. The current monarch of the Chakri Dynasty is King Maha Vajiralongkorn, or King Rama X.

Farang:

A term used in Thailand to refer to a Westerner or Western-derived things. The word was borrowed from Muslim Persian, and Indian traders during the Ayutthaya period. It was used to refer to the Portuguese who were the first Europeans to visit Siam. Thai dictionaries define the term as 'a generic Thai word for white Caucasians' and is used to describe Western people without any specification of nationality, culture, ethnicity, or language etc¹⁰⁹.

Kathoeay:

The third gender in Thai society, *kathoeay* is an intermediate category between masculine men and feminine women (and not to be confused as referring to transsexual women). *Kathoeay* literally means unnatural or withered in Thai language, a seedless plant that cannot be reproduced. In traditional Thai society, 'kathoeay' can also refer to a person whose social behaviour is considered inappropriate for their gender. Historically, *kathoeay* included all forms of difference, whether in the domain of sex (hermaphroditism), gender (cross-dressing), or sexuality (homosexuality). Only after the 1970s did the term *kathoeay* develop to denote only a person who is

¹⁰⁹ Pattana, 2010:61 and Thongchai, 1994:5

born male but subsequently enacts a feminine role (male transvestite) or undergoes a sex change operation (a male-to-female transsexual).¹¹⁰

Lakhon:

A term referring to the performing arts, particularly dance-drama, such as *lakhon nai* (dance-drama shown within the inner court, performed by female dancers), *lakhon nok* (dance-drama shown outside the royal court, performed by male dancers), *lakhon charti* (dance-drama usually performed in the south of Thailand), *lakhon rong* (operetta/lyric drama), and *lakhon phud* (dialogue play), and so on. When Thai traditional performing arts are developed into TV drama, they are called '*lakhon TV*.'

Lakhon Namnao:

'*Namnao*' evokes the look and smell of stagnant water and rotting garbage, conjuring up images of modern Thailand's polluted canals and waterways.¹¹¹ Its literally means stinking, polluted water because of its recurring theme, emotional plots and low-quality production that remain the unchanging, like still, putrid water. *Lakhon nam nao* usually portrays stories of unreal life, presenting characters who are more attractive, glamorous, and wealthy than everyday reality. The plot usually involves romance between a poor girl and a rich boy¹¹².

Lanna Kingdom:

Northern Thailand as we know it today was previously the Lanna Kingdom. It included parts of what is known as upper Burma, Sipsong Panna (Xixuang Banna) in China's Yunnan Province, Northern Thailand, and Northern Laos. In 1560, the Burmese took control of Lanna and for the next 200 years. In the late eighteenth century Lanna's leaders, with help from Siam, ousted the Burmese overlords. Lanna states then placed themselves under Siam's power and became tributary states. Every three years, Lanna sent token tributes and presented themselves regularly at the royal court in Bangkok (Siam's capital)¹¹³.

¹¹⁰ Jackson, 2001; Channarong, 2014.

¹¹¹ cited in Farmer, 2015:81

¹¹² Amporn, 2008:44-45

¹¹³ Penth, 1994:30; Woodhouse, 2009:26-33

Luk-khreung:

A mixed-race child, of Thai and foreign parents. *Luk-khreung* have been known as such in Siam since the Ayutthaya period, resulting from interracial marriages. They became a widespread phenomenon after the post-Vietnam War era in the 1960s after intense intimacy between visiting soldiers and local Thais¹¹⁴. *Luk-khreung* children in the latter times have also been the result of increases in interracial marriage, as well as sex tourism after the expansion of the economy and more contact with the West¹¹⁵.

Nang-ek:

The female side of a fixed binary of leading male and female characters in Thai TV dramas, the *nang-ek* normally appears as a good woman who is 'innocent, gentle, prim, well-behaved, forgiving, and, most of all, a virgin.'¹¹⁶ The *nang-ek* must represent people who would do no wrong intentionally. It is compulsory for *nang-ek* to end up in a romantic relationship with the *phra-ek*.

Paknam incident:

The conflict between Siam and France regarding the boundary at the east side of the Mekong River. In July 1893, the French pressured Siam by sending two gunboats to blockade the Chao Phraya River and the two armies opened fire. The French gave the ultimatum that Siam must withdraw from the east of the Mekong area and pay two million francs to the French. Siam had to sign a new treaty with France in October 1893.

Phra-ek:

The leading male role of the fixed binary of characters in Thai TV dramas, the *phra-ek* must be 'brave, gallant, and impartial.' The role of *phra-ek* (and *nang-ek*) may be comparable to Western hero and heroine types only in representing good and people who do no wrong intentionally. *Phra-ek* is highly regarded in Thai dramas as the word 'phra' is also related to Buddhism. It is the word used to refer to a Buddhist

¹¹⁴ Pattana, 2010:71-72

¹¹⁵ Weisman, 2001:233

¹¹⁶ Kultida, 1993:83-83

monk and/or Buddha image. *'Phra'* is used for something sacred and highly worshipped in Thai society.

Ratthaniyom:

The government's civilisation programme starting in 1939 translated in English as state conventions or cultural mandates. This includes 12 sets of pronouncements as the state's attempt to create nationalism and a new political culture. Each announcement was aimed at changing the outlook of people in wide variety of subjects. For example, the changing of country's name, lyrics in national anthem, daily activities, and emphasises on social values.

Self-sufficiency economy or '*Setthakit pho phiang*':

King's Bhumibol's theory of self-sufficient agriculture to help people make a living close to subsistence. The concept includes self-sufficiency, self-reliance, the rejection of consumerism and industrialism, culture and community, power, rural primacy, and nationalism. This concept came in sweeping statements that suggested Thais had been misled by the West, and made slaves of financially strong countries. The West, IMF, and world bank were seen as threatening Thailand¹¹⁷.

Siwilai:

A term coined in Thailand around the nineteenth century and adapted from the word 'civilise' and 'civilisation', after the coming of Western trade and imperial power. The Thai King was aware that Siam's sovereignty would depend on its level of civilisation. Thus, the Siamese quest towards being civilised, or '*siwilai*', was therefore adapted by ruling elites. This process was believed to prevent Siam from being colonised.

Tom yam kung crisis:

The 1997 Asian financial crisis. In the early 1990s, Thailand opened up its financial markets and foreign investment started to pour in because Thai banks offered high-interest rates on deposits. Loaded with foreign money, the banks loaned big and carelessly and it became mountains of bad debt. By the end of 1997 bankrupt

¹¹⁷ Hewison, 2002:148-153

corporations and failed financial institutions were spread across the continent. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) lent tens of billions of US dollars with strict conditions. Unemployment rose to high levels across the region as factories and other enterprises closed down. By the end of 1996, the Thai government had closed 64 local finance companies, leaving just 27 in operation, along with 13 local banks. The Thai economic boom came to an end. Construction of hundreds of big offices, housing and retail projects came to a halt, as did infrastructure projects. Thai workers left the cities to return to their home villages¹¹⁸.

Tua talok:

A supporting character who takes the role of a clown, *tua talok* functions as the comedic voice of the audience, entertains, criticises, and makes fun of other characters.¹¹⁹ *Tua talok* can also be compared with the trickster of Western dramas due to the comic style. While a trickster may challenge the norm in a society and the status quo, the role of *tua talok* in Thai dramas is to support the *phra-ek and nang-ek*.

¹¹⁸ Wechsler, 2018

¹¹⁹ Kultida, 1993; Nidhi, 2014

