

Cultural Hybridity in Netflix's Thai-language Original Series, The Stranded



Mr. Thanarath Chaichompu

An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Communication Arts) in Communication Arts

Common Course

FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION ARTS

Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year 2020

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การผสมผสานทางวัฒนธรรมที่ปรากฏในซีรีส์เน็ตฟลิกซ์อริจินัลไทย เรื่องเควัง



สารนิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาโทสาขาสถาปัตยกรรมศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชานิติศาสตร์ไม่สังกัดภาควิชา/เทียบเท่า

คณะนิติศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2563

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Independent Study Title      Cultural Hybridity in Netflix's Thai-language Original  
Series, The Stranded  
By                                      Mr. Thanarath Chaichompu  
Field of Study                      Communication Arts  
Thesis Advisor                      Assistant Professor Dr. Thitinan Boonpap common, Ph.D.

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Accepted by the FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION ARTS, Chulalongkorn  
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master of Arts (Communication  
Arts)

INDEPENDENT STUDY COMMITTEE

----- Chairman  
(Assistant Professor Dr. SUKANYA SOMPIBOON, Ph.D.)  
----- Advisor  
(Assistant Professor Dr. Thitinan Boonpap common, Ph.D.)  
----- Examiner  
(Dr. Paonrach Yodnane, Ph.D.)

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ธนรัช ไชยชมภู : การผสมผสานทางวัฒนธรรมที่ปรากฏในซีรีส์เน็ตฟลิกซ์ออริจินัลไทย เรื่องเคว้ง. ( Cultural Hybridity in Netflix's Thai-language Original Series, The Stranded) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : ผศ. ดร.ฐิติรัตน์ บุญภาพ คอมมอน

งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้มีจุดประสงค์ในการศึกษาลักษณะที่เป็นวัฒนธรรมลูกผสมในซีรีส์เรื่องเคว้ง ซีรีส์ออริจินัลไทยเรื่องแรกที่ผลิตโดยเน็ตฟลิกซ์ และศึกษาแนวทางการผสมผสานทางวัฒนธรรมซึ่งเป็นหนึ่งในกระบวนการสร้างสรรค์ซีรีส์เรื่องดังกล่าว ในการเก็บข้อมูลวิจัย ผู้วิจัยค้นคว้าเอกสารวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้อง งานวิชาการต่างๆ นอกจากนี้ยังมีการวิเคราะห์ตัวบท และสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้กำกับและผู้เขียนบทซีรีส์

จากผลการวิจัย ลักษณะที่เป็นลูกผสมทางวัฒนธรรมในซีรีส์ปรากฏใน 1) การเล่าเรื่อง และ 2) การสร้างตัวละคร ในการเล่าเรื่อง เคว้งยืมตำนานพญานาคมาเล่าในโลกปัจจุบัน มีการอ้างอิงนิยายเรื่อง “Lord of the Flies” และซีรีส์เรื่อง “Lost” โดยไม่ตั้งใจ และมีการอ้างอิงภาพยนตร์ไชยสุริยาประพันธ์โดยสุนทรภู่และนิยายเรื่อง “Gone with the Wind” อย่างตั้งใจ ในส่วนของการสร้างตัวละคร บางตัวละครแสดงถึงลักษณะนิสัยและการกระทำที่ได้รับอิทธิพลมาจากทั้งวัฒนธรรมไทยและวัฒนธรรมตะวันตก ลักษณะการกระทำที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากวัฒนธรรมตะวันตกอย่างมาก ได้แก่ การพลอดรัก การสร้างตัวละครที่มีนิสัยแปลกแยก การเล่นเกม “Fuck, Marry, Kill” และบทเรียนและมารยาทในห้องเรียน ส่วนวัฒนธรรมไทยมีอิทธิพลอย่างมากในการสร้างตัวละครที่มีความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับพระพุทธศาสนา งานวิจัยยังพบว่า เคว้งมีแนวทางผสมผสานทางวัฒนธรรม 3 วิธี ขึ้นอยู่กับการคาดเดาของผู้เขียนบทเกี่ยวกับความเข้าใจทางวัฒนธรรมของผู้ชม ได้แก่ 1) การยอมรับองค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมบางส่วน 2) การยอมรับองค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมทั้งหมด และ 3) การเปลี่ยนองค์ประกอบทางวัฒนธรรมทั้งหมด

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KEYWORD: Cultural hybridity, glocalization, intertextuality, *The Stranded*

Thanarath Chaichompu : Cultural Hybridity in Netflix's Thai-language Original Series, *The Stranded*. Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Thitinan Boonpap common, Ph.D.

The objectives of this qualitative research are to examine culturally hybrid features in *The Stranded* and the approaches to mixing different cultural elements as part of the series' creative process. In order to collect the data needed, I conducted literature research, a textual analysis on *The Stranded*; and in-depth interviews on the series' director and co-writer.

The research findings suggest culturally hybrid features were primarily found in 1) the narrative and 2) characterization. In terms of the narrative, *The Stranded* is a culturally hybrid text thanks to the use of the Naga myth in Thailand's modern setting, the unintentional references to *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* and intentional references to the *Phra Chai Suriya* poem and *Gone with the Wind*. In terms of characterization, certain characters were constructed with varying degrees of Thai and western cultural influences. The depictions of physical intimacy, a social outcast, the game of "Fuck, Marry, Kill", and classroom lessons and manners were heavily westernized. Thai culture, on the other hand, influenced a character's beliefs. The research also found three approaches to mixing different cultures in *The Stranded*, depending on the writers' assumption of viewers' cultural understanding. They are 1) partial acceptance of certain cultural elements 2) complete acceptance and 3) complete change.

Field of Study:	Communication Arts	Student's Signature
		.....
Academic Year:	2020	Advisor's Signature
		.....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This qualitative research will go down as one of the biggest accomplishments in my life – no less – and serve as a reminder of a torturous, yet rewarding academic experience I have put myself through in the past two years. But more importantly, this research will forever serve as a reminder that you cannot achieve something meaningful in life without the help of some people along the way. For this reason, I am eternally grateful to the people who provided me with their academic or mental support.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Thitinan Boonpap Common – who kindly accepted my request to be her advisee – for her educational guidance, her extensive knowledge of creative industries that was incredibly helpful, and her academic assignments that helped us grow as students. Assistant Professor Dr. Thitinan is one of the best and most understanding teachers I have ever met. I would also like to thank Asst. Prof. Sukanya Sompiboon and Dr. Paonrach Yodnane, my IS examination committee chairman and examiner, respectively, for providing additional academic advice and lighting up their classrooms with a sense of humor and the theatric teaching approaches. I would also like to thank other teachers in the Faculty of Communication Arts who put their effort into making the learning experience there a great one.

They say teamwork makes the dream work. I would like to thank four of my Creative Industries classmates for sticking together throughout the entire academic year. Thank you Lookmai – the only one brave enough in our class to commit to a dissertation – for her insightful perspective and unique takes on a range of discussion topics. Thank you Meiw for her strong passion for museums, for her generous help with Statistics final exam and thesis and her kindness. Thank you Offer for always reminding everyone what needed to be done and for being the first to ask questions. Thank you P'Tang for her funny takes on everything, her vast knowledge of social issues and her joyful, guttural laugh.

I would like to thank InfoQuest Limited for kindly accepting me to work with them again and for making it a lot easier for me to juggle both work and school.

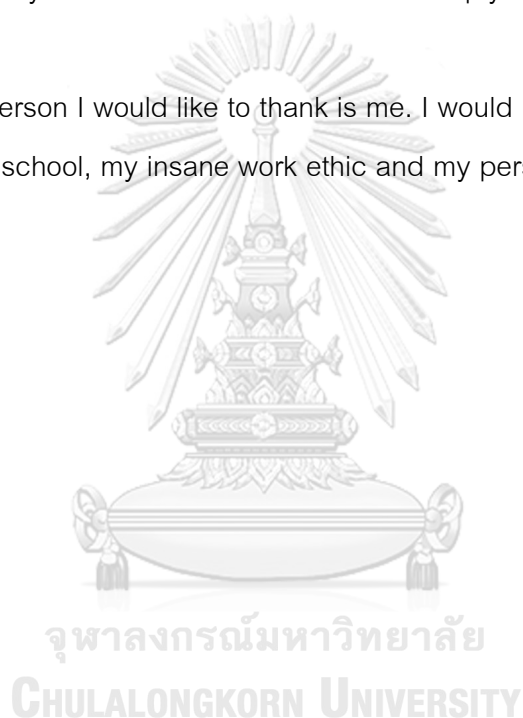
Words cannot express how much I appreciate the emotional support from two of

my best friends who will always have my back. Thank you Noom for listening to all my complaints whenever I have one, for your wise words and for coming into my life. Thank you Jay for being the best friend anyone could ask for, for her strong moral compass and for never getting angry with me for once in her life. Also, thank you Tee for never doubting me. Thank you my BALAC and Jetstar friends who I still keep in touch with. You know who you are.

My family – my mom in particular – always supports everything I do and every decision I make in my life. I want to thank them for simply existing. Without them I would not be here at all.

The last person I would like to thank is me. I would like to thank me for my strong dedication to grad school, my insane work ethic and my perseverance. May the fire in me keep burning.

Thanarath Chaichompu





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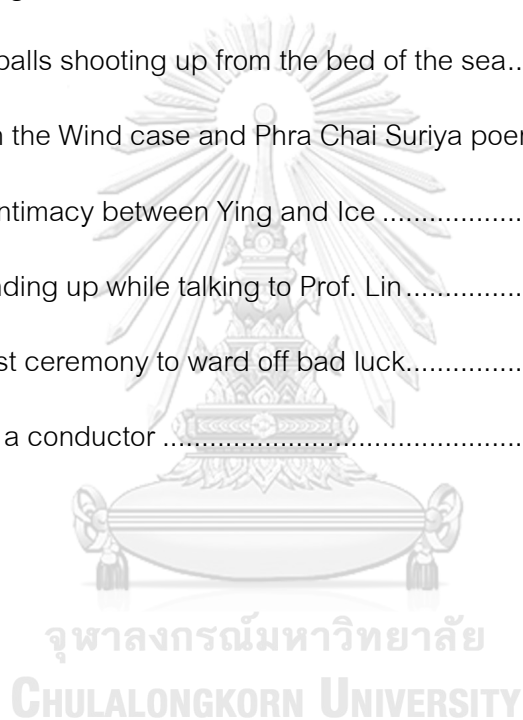
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## Chapter I

### 1.1 Background

The global media landscape in the 21st century has radically transformed due largely to the emergence of streaming services, which are actively competing for eyeballs by offering a variety of content – both licensed and original. Streaming is acknowledged as both a technological innovation and a cultural practice that affects both the audiences and the industry (Burroughs, 2015). Streaming has changed the way people consume content and how the media industry takes an approach to creating one. As streamers are locked in a fierce competition, they can no longer rely solely on licensed content to attract viewers; they need to grab viewers' attention by offering their own original content that cannot be consumed anywhere other than their own platform. Aleks and Janne (2020) note that competition among streaming services “revolves around content,” which can help them outperform others in the SVoD (subscription video-on-demand) industry in the long run, as major established entertainment companies enter the market.

Netflix, founded in 1997 by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph, was at the forefront of the cultural shift to streaming in the 2000s. Prior to becoming the streaming giant that it is today, Netflix started out as a rent-by-mail DVD service in the VHS days, during the peak of the World Wide Web. Hastings at the time envisioned internet streaming, but a lack of infrastructure rendered his vision rather far-fetched (Osur, 2016). The viable option for the company back then was to offer movie rentals on its website, which was launched on April 14, 1998, without charging late fees. When Netflix received orders on its website, it would mail movie DVDs to customers that ordered them, a practice that distinguished itself from other rivals like Blockbuster, a movie and video game rental chain. Netflix in 2007 introduced the “Watch Now” feature in the United States, allowing subscribers to instantly watch low-resolution videos from their

computer for limited hours. 2007 was also the year technology started to catch up with Hastings' vision. Citing YouTube and how the platform in 2005 made it possible for people to watch video content online, Hastings said it gave him the idea that streaming was possible (Pepitone, 2011). In 2010, Netflix launched the "Streaming Only" plan, a separate subscription plan from DVD rentals. "Streaming Only" ultimately exceeded the DVD-by-mail option in total number of subscribers, further establishing Netflix as a distinct entertainment service (McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, 2016). By the final quarter of 2010, Netflix already signed up 20 million subscribers (Osur, 2016).



Since 2010, the streaming service has added millions more subscribers. In the January 2021 letter to shareholders (Netflix, 2021), Netflix reported that the number of paid memberships reached the 200-million mark at the end of 2020, its biggest-ever year of growth, due in part to COVID-19 that forced people to stay home. Netflix is now far ahead of existing streaming players (e.g. Amazon Prime Video and Hulu) and newcomers (e.g. Disney+, Comcast's Peacock, AT&T's HBO Max, Paramount Plus and Discovery Plus). Netflix's strong economic foundation is also demonstrated by its market capitalization, which stood at 235 billion U.S. dollars as of the end of the 2nd quarter of 2020 (Ponciano, 2020), making it an even larger media company than other corporate giants that came before like Walt Disney, Comcast and AT&T.

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In order to sustain its big numbers, Netflix felt the need to become a content creator, not just a content provider. In the past decade, Netflix has actively expanded to foreign markets by offering a wealth of original content. The streamer first announced its original programming plan in 2011, before launching its first Netflix original, *Lilyhammer*, a Norwegian original series centering on an American gangster, in February 2012. Netflix would become immensely successful at transitioning from providing licensed content to creating its own shows. In 2013, Netflix launched *House of Cards*, a massively popular and critically acclaimed political thriller that was renewed for five more seasons and won numerous awards, including the prestigious Primetime Emmy

Awards and Golden Globes. Netflix followed up with a comedy series led by a diverse female cast, *Orange Is the New Black*, in July 2013. The streamer went on to create a string of internationally hit shows, including English-language series like *Stranger Things*, *Sex Education*, *13 Reasons Why*, *The Witcher*, and – most recently – *The Queen’s Gambit*. It also produced foreign-language shows such as *Dark*, *Elite*, *La Casa de Papel*, *Kingdom* and *The Stranded*.



Figure 1 (left to right) Netflix’s first three original series  
(Source: IMDB.com)

Netflix’s original programming also includes movies. The streamer launched the “original film” initiative in 2015, which has proved to be vital to its growth. Netflix’s award-winning original films, including *Roma*, *The Irishman*, *Marriage Story* and *The Two Popes*, help establish Netflix as a producer of prestigious film projects that won the streamer multiple Oscars and other high-profile accolades. The top five most viewed Netflix original movies – *Extraction*, *Bird Box*, *Spenser Confidential*, *6 Underground*, and *Murder Mystery* – racked up a combined 440 million viewerships globally (Shaw, 2020). In a sign that proves Netflix has become a powerhouse content producer, an increasing number of A-list actors have already collaborated with Netflix, including Sandra Bullock, Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston, Meryl Streep, Will Smith, Adam Sandler, Charlize Theron, Chris Hemsworth and Scarlett Johansson. The list goes on.

Netflix Originals have proven to be a strategy crucial to the streaming service's growth in the long run. As new streaming services enter the field, they are also pulling highly-watched aggregated content from Netflix. Disney and WarnerMedia, for example, have chosen not to renew their deals to stream their content on Netflix, so that they can reserve the rights for their own services (Rodriguez, 2019). Securing licensing deals has also become expensive. Netflix reportedly spent 100 million U.S. dollars to keep *Friends* for 2019, a significant increase from 30 million it had previously paid to secure the show (Lee, 2018). Netflix thus cannot always rely on licensed content to keep current subscribers or find new ones. It needs to create its own original content that ensures it can sustain growth for the foreseeable future. On being committed to its original programming initiative, Hastings (2014) said Netflix intended to "...raise capital as needed to fund the growth of original content." In the January 2021 letter to shareholders, Netflix once again underscored the importance of original programming, acknowledging that it is key to remain competitive in the market where new streamers continue to emerge.



"The big growth in streaming entertainment has led legacy competitors like Disney, WarnerMedia and Discovery to compete with us in new ways, which we've been expecting for many years. This is, in part, why we have been moving so quickly to grow and further strengthen our original content library across a wide range of genres and nations. Our fourth quarter slate highlights the breadth and diversity of our entertainment offering." (Netflix, 2021)

The platform remains confident in its original programming strategy, thanks to high viewerships for English-language and non-English language programs. *The Queen's Gambit*, debuting in October 2020, was watched by a whopping 62 million households in its first 28 days. *Alice in Borderland*, a sci-fi thriller from Japan debuting



in December 2020, was seen by 18 million member households globally. *The Stranded* also proved popular. When it premiered in 2019, Netflix's first Thai large-scale original series found around 150 million viewers worldwide (Rosales, 2019). Netflix acknowledged that local original content were the most popular 2019 titles in many countries, including India, Korea, Japan and Thailand (Netflix, 2020).

In order to define "Netflix Original," its denotative and connotative meanings must be discussed. On the denotative level, "Netflix Original" can be referred to as a business model, with an economic implication. An authentic "Netflix Original" is one that is commissioned and produced by Netflix. This means it is created by Netflix exclusively for its own platform. In addition to *House of Cards*, popular series like *Stranger Things*, *The Crown* and *The Stranded* fit this definition because they are commissioned, created and financed by Netflix for streaming exclusively on Netflix. These original content, thus, get the "Netflix Original" label prior to or during the opening credits. Titles to which Netflix acquires international rights that can be streamed exclusively on its platform are not considered authentic originals because they are not commissioned and produced by Netflix. That is, they are produced by other studios, which decide to sell the content to Netflix. It is thus more appropriate to call these movies "Netflix movies" or "Netflix series," and not Netflix Originals.

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On the connotative level, the meaning of "Netflix Original" is problematic, as it has come to mean something else. In Netflix's sense, the term "original" no longer means "original" in the traditional sense of the word. If the term itself is to be defined as something inventive, fresh or unprecedented in terms of content, then "Netflix Originals" are not entirely original. Rather, "original" in Netflix's sense has come to mean something culturally hybrid in terms of content. This is because Netflix Originals, especially those in non-English language, are infused with different cultural elements. The meaning of "original" in Netflix's sense has, thus, shifted to something more culturally hybrid, rather than inventive, fresh or unprecedented in terms of content.

In order to make a so-called “Netflix Original,” Netflix has created an open ecosystem that brings together local content producers to help it tap foreign markets. Netflix’s open-ecosystem strategy, which leads to the creation of culturally hybrid content, can be called “Go Local for Global.” Aleksis and Janne (2020) observe that Netflix relies on local partnerships, including those in emerging markets globally, to create and export its originals, which are performing well in terms of average ratings in comparison to non-originals. Asia has become the region vital to Netflix’s growth in the long run. Netflix said interest in Asia from across the globe encouraged it to create original content from Japan, Korea, India and Thailand (Yang, 2019). The streamer has been producing a slew of original content that contains the country of origin’s cultural authenticity that feels similar to local audiences, yet it also has massive international appeal to foreign viewers.



In order to be culturally authentic, a locally-produced Netflix show should be directed and produced by local filmmakers and star local talents who speak their own language. An original program produced in native language is, thus, primarily aimed at the local market it is intended for, so that it can find as many local viewers as possible. Using recognizable local talents is a proven method to attract local viewers. Furthermore, “Go Local for Global” has become a strategy that will prove sustainable in the long run, ensuring Netflix will not run out of content to feed audiences around the world. Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandos, who have been hired since 2000, said

“People have been telling stories way before we got here. Our business is usually international. We passed a hundred million subscribers outside of the U.S. on Netflix. And in those parts, I think people really want to see their stories and want to see themselves represented on screen. And these stories are phenomenal. Our goal is not to just export Hollywood content around the world. But we can find a great story from anywhere in

the world and make it play anywhere in the world. (Upfront Ventures, 2020).

*The Stranded*, directed by Sophon Sakdahisit, is a Netflix original series that exemplifies Netflix's open-ecosystem strategy of "Go Local for Global" and illustrates the shift in the meaning of "original." The seven-part series, which is Netflix's first Thai-language original, debuted in 2019. In addition to Netflix, the project brought together BRAVO! Studios by GMM Grammy, a leading entertainment platform and content producer in Thailand, and H2L Media Group, an international independent production company. *The Stranded* tells of a group of high-school students who become stranded on an remote island in Southern Thailand after it was hit by a tsunami. The students – those who survive the natural disaster – have no choice but to band together and try to contact people outside the island for help. When it becomes clear they are left completely to their own devices, they decide to find a way to leave the island, despite all odds against them. As the story progresses, the tension between the two boys, Kraam and Anan, gradually intensifies. Kraam is a boy with a mysterious identity, while Anan is a self-elected leader. Meanwhile, strange – if supernatural – events start to occur, including the vision Kraam keeps having of a mysterious woman in the jungle, the unusual behaviors of Professor Lin and the fireballs that shoot up from the seas that prevent a group of students from leaving the island. These strange events, however, provide keys to the mystery surrounding Kraam's identity.

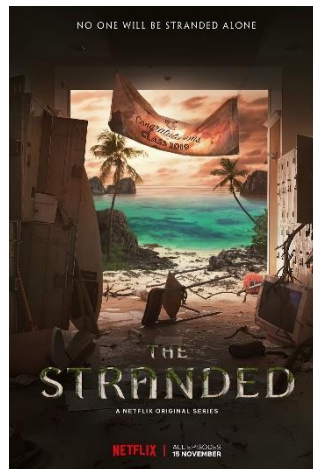
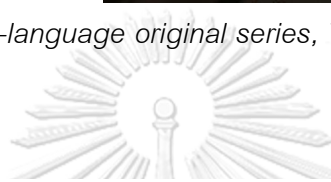


Figure 2 Netflix's first Thai-language original series, *The Stranded*

(Source: IMDB.com)



*The Stranded* is a product of an international collaboration among global and local content producers, which means it is a culturally hybrid creative product labelled as a “Netflix Original.” The series mixes both Thai and foreign cultural elements that can be recognized by Thais and – to a certain degree – foreign viewers. Cultural hybridization is a socio-cultural process in which at least two different cultures from different contexts come into contact with one another, leading to the emergence of new transcultural forms (Na Nongkhai & Phakdeephassook, 2017; Pieterse, 2009; Ashcoft et al, 2003). Cultural hybridization, or cultural hybridity, is often discussed in relation to globalization because it implies multiple contacts of different cultural flows. Appadurai (1996) notes that the global cultural flows led to cultural features such as cultural hybridization wrestling from borrowing from other cultural resources. Thailand, among many other countries in the world, is highly receptive of foreign cultural influences, including from the West. The adoption of western cultures have had a strong impact on how creative content is created. *The Stranded* is an example of how a creative product is imbued with different cultural elements, as it was produced by Netflix. The foreign elements, however, are negotiated or localized in the context of Thainess.

It is found that some cultural practices commonly found in the West were adopted in *The Stranded* as well. The adoption of western cultural practices dilutes the Thainess of the show. It is thus appropriate to study *The Stranded* within the theoretical realm of glocalization, since globalization is a concept that is often thought as overriding locality, ignoring the ethnic nationalisms that have emerged in many parts of the world (Robertson, 1995). Robertson also pointed out that glocalization, in a business sense, is “the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets” (p. 28). *The Stranded* illustrates that it is a transcultural creative product that is made and marketed towards the global market.



As a Netflix Original, *The Stranded* is original in the sense that it is culturally hybrid, not inventive, fresh or unprecedented in terms of story. Since it borrows different cultural elements and narratives, the series will be examined as an intertext within the theoretical framework of intertextuality to further understand the link among various foreign and Thai influences on the series. This will help explain that no text is, in fact, original, as it always refers back to other texts that were already written (Barthes, 1968). It is found that *The Stranded* draws from familiar narratives already told in the West and Thailand. For example, the series shares a similar narrative trajectory to *Lost*, a hit American drama series about plane-crash survivors deserted on a tropical island; and *Lord of the Flies*, a 1954 novel by Willaim Golding about a group of British boys stranded on an island who try to govern themselves. *The Stranded* also explicitly references *Gone with the Wind*, an American epic romance novel and a film adaption of the same name set during the American civil war.

Based on the background provided for this research, it could be said that studies on Thai-language Netflix Originals that use the theory of cultural hybridity are still lacking. I am, thus, interested in exploring this topic further to gain insight into Thailand's creative content produced within the global socio-cultural context and to expand on

previous studies on Thailand's creative content and cultural hybridity, in the hope of providing an insight into the creative process of mixing different cultural elements that went into the making of *The Stranded*.

## 1.2 Research questions

1. In what way is *The Stranded* a cultural hybrid media text?
2. What are the approaches to mixing different cultural elements in *The Stranded*?

## 1.3 Research objectives

1. To examine culturally hybrid features in *The Stranded*.
2. To examine the approaches to mixing different cultural elements as part of the creative process of *The Stranded*.

## 1.4 Research hypothesis

*The Stranded* is a Thai-language Netflix original series that combines local elements with foreign ones through the narrative and characterization. The mixing of local and foreign cultural elements demonstrates the social context within which the series was produced.

## 1.5 Scope of study

*The Stranded*, premiering in 2019, is selected as the sole subject of interest for this research, as it remains the only Thai-language original series to be produced by Netflix. The series demonstrates cultural hybrid elements worth studying through the lens of cultural hybridity, corporate transculturalism, glocalization and intertextuality. In-depth interviews are conducted in addition to a textual analysis to examine the approaches to mixing different cultural elements as part of the series' creative process.

## 1.6 Technical terms

1.6.1 **Cultural hybridity** refers to new cultural expressions, identities, meanings or forms that result from the mixing of different cultures.

1.6.2 **Cultural hybridization** refers to the process of mixing different cultures that lead to new cultural expressions, identities, meanings or forms. The process of combining two or more different cultures does not lead to a culture in play being erased. Instead, the cultures in the mix contribute to the creation of new cultural forms or simply co-exist.



1.6.3 **Netflix Original** refers to any creative content – whether they are feature films, series, short films, documentaries or animated features – that are commissioned, produced and created by Netflix. Netflix Originals stream exclusively on Netflix or are available first on Netflix.



1.6.3 **Corporate transculturalism** refers to the act of mixing different cultures by corporations to create a product aimed at markets around the world.



1.6.4 **Glocalization** refers to the recognition of local powers in the global discourse at the economic, social or cultural level. Glocalization is also a socio-cultural process in which the global gets localized and the local gets globalized.

1.6.5 **Intertextuality** refers to any texts that reference – whether implicitly or explicitly – other texts and will be understood through the reader's experience and cultural knowledge of those texts. Texts' meanings are constituted by meanings of other texts.

### 1.7 Expected Outcomes

1.7.1 The research can help understand the cultural hybrid elements as appeared in *The Stranded*.

1.7.2 The research can help illustrate the different creative inputs that make *The Stranded* a culturally hybrid series.

1.7.3 The research can be referred to as a guideline for how to mix different cultures for future Thai-language Netflix Originals.

1.7.4 The research is expected to make academic contributions to media studies and cinema studies, particularly in terms of digital media and cultural hybridity.





## Chapter II

### Literature Reviews

In “Cultural Hybridity in Netflix’s Thai-language Original Series, *The Stranded*,” I review the theories and research that are applicable to this research as follows:

- 2.1 The theory of cultural hybridity
- 2.2 The concept of corporate transculturalism
- 2.3 Theories of glocalization
- 2.4 The theory of intertextuality
- 2.5 Related research

#### 2.1 The theory of cultural hybridity

This research utilizes the theory of cultural hybridity to study the culturally hybrid elements in *The Stranded*. It hypothesizes that the series combines local and foreign elements to tell its own story through the narrative and characterization. *The Stranded* can, thus, be perceived as a culturally hybrid media text.

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The concept of hybridity has been crucial to understanding new cultural forms or identities that defy categorization and transcend cultural borders. Its meanings are discussed in relation to a racial, ethnic, linguistic and even horticultural discourses. In terms of race and ethnicity, hybridity refers to the mixture of different racial or ethnicity backgrounds. In horticulture, hybridity means the cross-breeding between two species that results in a third, hybrid species (Mambrol, 2016). In terms of language, hybridity means the mixing of at least two languages that leads to new hybridized languages, such as Splanglish, a linguistic mixture between Spanish and English).

Cultural Studies has been a fertile ground for the examination of cultural hybridity. A socio-cultural process, cultural hybridization requires the interaction, mixture, combination or fusion of at least two cultural elements, forms or identities. (Na Nongkhai, 2013). The cultural mixture, however, does not result in one of the cultures in play being erased. Instead, the interplay leads to the emergence of new hybrid cultural forms that bear traces of the previous cultural forms (Na Nongkhai, 2013). In a globalized world where cultural exchanges have become fluid, hybridization has become intensified by transborder interactions.



Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin and Indian-American cultural theorist Homi Bhabha are often credited as the two figures who dislocated the hybridity concept from the biological domain and applied it to the academic field of Cultural Studies (Kraidy, 2005). Bhabha (1995) viewed cultural hybridity as an anti-essentialist tool in the post-colonial discourse, suggesting it is a process that reconfigures the cultural contact between the colonizer and the colonized. The interdependence of the colonizer and colonized gives rise to the “Third Space of Enunciation,” (Bhabha, 1995, p. 209) a form of liminal, in-between or hybrid space, where cultural elements of the two opposing forces interact and negotiate, eventually rearticulating new cultural expressions. Bhabha (2010) explains



“It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory [...] may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based [...] on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*. To that end, we should remember that it is the “inter” — the *in-between* space — that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.” (p. 56)

Cultural hybridization occurs when the global forces are negotiated and reappropriated by local ones, producing the possibility of a new cultural space where co-existence is feasible. The third space, therefore, can become a shared space for the colonizer and the colonized – the superior and inferior, the Self and the Other – to create new cultural meanings and expressions that defy the binary system. Bhabha also (1995) asserts that “the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (p. 2).

Pieterse (1995) suggested that hybridity– and other equivalent terms including “creolization” and “syncretism” – can be distinguished into two types, even though both are indicative of boundary crossing.

1. **Structural hybridity:** the new modes of social co-operations, or the “increase in the available modes of organization: transnational, international, macro-regional, national, micro-regional municipal, local...and the informal spaces that are created in between, in the interstices” (p. 50). These various sites of hybridity can be inhabited by migrants or refugees.

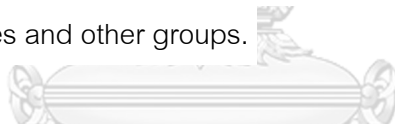
2. **Cultural hybridity:** the opening up of the imagined communities’ borders. Cultural hybridity is essentially “the making of global culture as a global melange” (p. 60).

When conceptualizing cultural hybridity, it is necessary to move away from understanding the Western cultures as homogenous in its influence. While the West has had a strong hold on many cultures, particularly since the industrialization period, the influence of non-Western cultures cannot be overlooked. Non-Western cultural expressions, thus, need to be understood as part of the global melange as well (Pieterse, 1995)

Cultural hybridity is discussed as a facet of globalization. On conceptualizing globalization, Appadurai (1996) argues that the global cultural economy needs to be understood as complex, disjunctive flows, and not center-periphery models. Globalization entails the complex overlapping movements of ethnic groups, technology, financial transactions, media images and ideological conflicts. Appadurai came up with five competing scapes to illustrate the complexity of the current global economy involving the “disjunctures” among economy, culture and politics, and the fluidity of cross-cultural traffic that comes with what he calls deterritorialization on a global scale. According to Appadurai (1996) global flows “occur in and through the growing disjunctures between ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes” (p. 301). All five scapes are defined as follows:



1. **Ethnoscapes:** The movement of people and the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world, including immigrants, diasporic communities, sub-national groupings, tourists, exiles and other groups.



2. **Technoscapes:** The movement, global configuration and exports of technology, including hardware components and technological know-how.



3. **Finanscapes:** The movement of global capital including investments, stock exchanges, currency markets and commodity speculations.

4. **Mediascapes:** The movement of media and information that involves the distribution of the electronic capabilities and the global circulation of content in print media and visual medium.

5. **Ideoscapes:** The movement of ideologies, counter-ideologies as well as knowledge, concepts and ideas involving freedom, rights, sovereignty and welfare.

Whereas cultural transactions were largely geographically and ecologically restricted in the past, the current global landscapes have warped and become impervious. These landscapes that Appadurai proposed are the underpinning of the “imagined worlds,” or multiple worlds constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe (Appadurai, 1989). Appadurai’s concept of “imagined worlds” is, thus, not different from Pieterse’s concept of “imagined communities,” since both concepts acknowledge transcultural exchanges.



Moreover, according to Appadurai, there is no central global power that controls global exchanges, which led to cultural hybridization, whereby global cultural forms get indigenized and negotiated by local forces (Appadurai, 1996, as cited in Mutman, 2013).



Culturally hybrid media texts like *The Stranded* are indicative of cultural transaction on a global scale in the mediascapes, where content circulates worldwide and is accessible anywhere.



Four patterns of indigenization, also understood as a form of cultural hybridity, emerged in hybrid television texts in Hong Kong, as suggested by Paul Lee (Lee, 1991, as cited in Kraidy, 2005, p.6)

1. **The parrot pattern:** a wholesale of mimicry of foreign culture by local industries, both in form and content.
2. **The amoeba pattern:** a modified form but a non-changing content, such as the adaptation of a foreign movie for local consumption.
3. **The coral pattern:** cultural goods whose content is changed but whose form is untouched.

4. **The butterfly pattern:** a radical hybridization in which the form and content are both altered.

It is important, however, to recognize a culture as already hybridized, since it has drawn on one or more other cultural resources that exist before. Cultural forms that are deemed hybridized are those that are composed of elements that come from different cultural contexts (Pieterse, 1995). Said (1993) also notes that every culture is “involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogenous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic” (p. xxv). Something as simple as a local cuisine can be said to be culturally hybrid, even if they are identified as belonging to a particular nation. Somtam, for instance, is one of the most popular Thai dishes. But it is hybridized in terms of ingredients. Papaya, tomatoes, peanuts and chilli all originated from South America.



In her critique of cultural hybridity, Werbner (1997) observes that “culture as an analytic concept is always hybrid...since it can be understood properly only as the historically negotiated creation of more or less coherent symbolic and social worlds” (p. 15).



This research studies how *The Stranded*, as Thailand’s first Netflix original series, is a culturally hybrid media text created in a globalized world, where cultural traffic is multi-directional. *The Stranded* illustrates that it is a product of cultural hybridization.

## 2.2 The concept of corporate transculturalism

Corporate transculturalism is studied in relation to cultural hybridity to advance understanding of hybridity in the economic dimension involving multinational corporations.

Cultural mixing has become a tool for global media companies to make financial gains by tailoring their products for specific markets. Kraidy (2002; 2005) analyzes the media in the United States to understand how they approach the U.S. popular culture's expansive influence in the context of hybridity. In defining corporate transculturalism, Kraidy (2005) suggests that it underscores "cultural fluidity as a tool to make corporations more profitable, consumers more satisfied, and the world generally a better, more connected and more vibrant place" (p. 95). Hybridity has been utilized as a natural strategy for global marketing aimed at conquering various markets. By placing hybridity within capitalism, Kraidy (2002) suggests the following:



"This vision of hybridity is thus grounded in neo-liberal ideology driving the current stage of globalization, with its relentless push towards opening new markets, dismantling state barriers to market expansion, and widespread consumerism." (p.12)



Media conglomerates rely on cultural mixture as a creative strategy to justify the expansion of their corporate footprint worldwide. In so doing, local cultural expressions get negotiated, adopted and integrated into the products made to appeal to a wide range of audiences. Corporate transculturalism is also characterized by the influence of cultural hegemony as well as the counterbalance of local cultures. With its economic implications, corporate transculturalism is crucial to corporate growth.

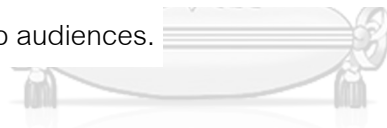
In discussing successful hybrid cultural forms, Kraidy (2005) suggests the following:

"Hybrid cultural forms that are attractive to the market will survive, while those that lack commercial value will die, which is just fine because other cultural products allegedly benefit and the range of choices remain broad." (p. 95).

Corporate transculturalism can also entail co-productions. McFadyen, Hoskins and Finn (1998, as cited in Kraidy 2005, p. 101), said incentives for co-production agreements include “pooling financial resources,” “access to partner’s market,” “access to third-country market,” “desired foreign locations,” “cheaper inputs in partner’s country,” and learning new marketing, production and management strategies from partner. Since co-productions are transnational in a globalized world, technological, economic and cultural resources can be shared.



Kraidy (2005) construed hybrid media texts as reflecting “...the existence of a variety of historical, economic and cultural forces whose enmeshment with one another are as manifest at the local, national, and regional levels as they are visible globally” (p. 6). Hybrid media texts are underpinned by the media’s intrinsic transnational political economy, whereby the same content is targeted at more than one market. As media corporates are driven by profits and the maximum number of eyeballs, hybrid media texts have shown to bear traces of successful formats that continue to get adapted and hybridized to reach out to audiences.



### 2.3 The theory of glocalization **ารณ์มหาวิทยาลัย**

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The early waves of globalization are characterized by transboundary cultural contacts that made colonization, trading, migration and cultural exchanges possible. Globalization, however, intensified during industrialization in the 19th century, as the world became more connected. Robertson (1992) defines the concept as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (p. 8).

Glocalization is a concept built upon globalization. It is often associated with sociologist Roland Robertson, who believes the term was invented by Japanese



economists to explain Japanese global marketing strategies (Blatter, 2007). The term itself is a linguistic combination between globalization and localization. Robertson defines glocalization as “the simultaneity – the co-presence – of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in contemporary social, political and economic systems” (Blatter, p. 357). It can be interpreted simply as the “global production of the local and the localization of the global.” (Barker, 2008, p. 162). In other words, the global is in the consciousness of the local, while the local is part of the global discourse.

Barker (2008) suggested that globalization is not defined by a unified one-way flow from the west to the rest. In a world where cultural flows are multi-directional, the concept of globalization should be reconceived as glocalization as a dynamic process involving global and regional cultural interplay to accommodate current socio-economic conditions. Glocalization requires rethinking modernity as multiple, not singular. The term “modernities” is, thus, more appropriate, as it accounts for the socio-cultural diversity and the influence of regional powers. That is, while globalization tends to stress the socio-economic dominance of the West, particularly the United States, as well as underlining the asymmetrical economic and cultural powers between the West and the rest, glocalization highlights the growing importance of regional cultural flows that counter global ones. Barker (2008) suggests that “an emphasis on particularity and diversity can be regarded as an increasingly global discourse.”

In the economic sense, Robertson (1995) defines glocalization as “micro-marketing: the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated and particular markets (p. 28). It points to a shift in business practices that – while still catering to international markets – tend to rely on local particularities to maximize financial gains on a global level.

Maynard and Tian (2004) suggests glocalization combines local cultural elements with global ones to create a universalized product or services. Glocal

marketing strategies make use of local particularities of regional markets they tap into to sell their products. For example, KFC introduced spicy chicken salad with rice, locally known as “*Khao Yum Kai Sab*,” for the Thai market. The American fast food restaurant chain adopted spicy salad, a popular cuisine idea in Thailand; and rice, a staple in Thais’ diets for generations; in their chicken menu. The menu is instantly recognized by local people, but it comes across as exotic yet enticing to foreigners living in Thailand.

Kotler (2009) suggested that consumers have the feeling that the product is catered to them when it meets their specific needs. Furthermore, multinational brands that take into account local expectations into their global marketing policies and products allow them to simultaneously optimize their local and global marketing.



In order to summarize the complex process of globalization and the counterflow of localization, the following table, created by Dumitrescu and Vinerean (2010), is presented to demonstrate the differences among globalization, localization and glocalization.



Definition: “the tendency toward and international integration of goods, technology, information, labor, capital, or the process of making this integration”	Definition: “the process of adapting a product or service to a particular culture, language, developing a local appeal and satisfying local needs”	Definition: “providing a global offer (brand, idea, product, service, etc), while taking local related issues into account”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undifferentiation and convergence in customer preferences and income across target countries with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation – differences in customer preferences and income across target</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizing global experiences or a global brand name, and differentiating the offer in order to</li> </ul>

economic development and trade	countries	appeal to local markets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes into account mass demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take into account specific demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates within a global market and local market niches</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating both globalism and localism</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local brand recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating quality and values in a product that gets sold in large quantities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International brand awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition from both successful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High notoriety of the brand</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost benefits from standardization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic products and international brands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A glocal product/service can face competition from both local and international brands in a better way because it meets certain local needs or preferences, at lower costs due to the global edge of</li> </ul>

		the company
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falling costs of trade with greater globalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High costs of trade create separate markets</li> </ul>	

Table 1 The differences among globalization, localization and glocalization

Culturally hybrid media texts are indicative of a paradigm shift to glocalization, whereby global media texts are receptive of local influences and local media texts are receptive of global influences. That is, the global and local forces have become equally influential in the creation of media texts geared towards global markets. *The Stranded* fits into Demitrescu and Vinerean's definition of glocalization because it was made and marketed by a major global brand that takes into account local sensibilities. This is because Netflix needs to expand to new markets to gain new subscribers as it competes with other streaming platforms.

## 2.4 The theory of intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to any texts that reference other texts, whether implicitly or explicitly. Texts' meanings are generated in relation to other texts that come before it. It is one of the markers of post-structuralism, which can be thought of as a reactionary movement that came out of structuralism, but also as a critique to its perceived limitations, including its universalizing and totalizing approach to understanding the world that overlooks diversity and heterogeneity of humans' conditions (Barker, 2008). Intertextuality recognizes text as an intertext "owing to the interrelations between texts and texts' absorptions of other texts" (Zengin, 2016, p. 300).

The term "intertextuality" was coined by French cultural critic Julia Kristeva in 1966, who was influenced by Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. Kristeva draws on

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and heteroglossia to form the concept of intertextuality (Zenkin, 2106). According to Bakhtin, language contains the dialogic nature, meaning there is "otherness" to verbal utterances and writing (Allen, 2000). And since they belong to specific speech genres, words will bear the traces of previous utterances (Zenkin, 2016). On heteroglossia, Bakhtin said a text is representational of multiple discourses, ranging from everyday communication to social, historical, literary discourses, etc, or jargon, dialects or all other users in the same language (Zenkin, 2016). Kristeva's intertextuality originated from her reading of Bakhtin's dialogism as "an open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee" (Kristeva & Moi, 1986, p. 34).



Kristeva (1980) suggested that no text is original or unique, even if it might seem original to readers of the text. A text is a "mosaic of quotations, a tissue of inevitable, and, to an extent, unwitting references to and quotations from other texts" (Allen, 200, p. 1). That is, when a text is produced, it draws from other texts to generate its own meanings. And when a text is consumed, it is done in such a way that the reader – using their cultural knowledge – draws from other meanings to make sense of the text accordingly. A text can reference a series of other texts that come before it, and the act of referencing can either be explicit or implicit. Moreover, since meaning is the product of relationships between texts, it has no single original source and often bears traces of other meanings from other social contexts (Barthes, 1977; Barker, 2008).

Fairclough (1992) distinguishes intertextuality by the degree of meaning visibility, suggesting there are two types: manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality.

1. **Manifest intertextuality:** the explicit kind of intertextuality, in which one text is explicitly present in another in an obvious way and is easy to recognize. Techniques used in this kind of intertextuality include citation (one text directly quotes from another text), allusion (general reference or the practice of calling attention to a genre or form),

parody (an ironic form of imitation) and pastiche (a simulation or reproduction of a particular style).

2. **Constitutive intertextuality**: the implicit kind of intertextuality that requires pre-existing intertextual information that shapes textual production of the producer and textual interpretation of the reader. Constitutive intertextuality can be done through (a) medium and style (producing a text in reference to a particular medium or style), (b) genre (a text being influenced by a particular genre), (c) authorship (a text that belongs to a body of text that is part of the same author and (d) cultural and historical frames (the network of cultural knowledge that informs the production and interpretation of the text).



*The Stranded* is a culturally hybrid text because it references foreign and local stories that existed before it. It can be said that, while *The Stranded* is labelled as a “Netflix Original,” it is not original in the sense that it is an intertext. *The Stranded* fits into both of Fairclough’s intertextuality categories, which are manifest intertextuality and constitutive intertextuality. In terms of manifest intertextuality, *The Stranded* directly alludes to other popular media texts, such as *Gone with the Wind*. In terms of constitutive intertextuality, *The Stranded* is a Netflix series that exhibits a recognizable creative style that is similar to other Netflix series in the genre of sci-fi thriller.

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Fitzsimmons (2013) divides intertextuality into three types depending on the intention of the author, the visibility of the reference and the personal interpretation of the text by the reader. The three intertextuality types are as follows:

1. **Obligatory intertextuality** is the type of intertextuality that occurs when the author of the text intentionally invokes a comparison or association with one or more texts. It is thus necessary that the reader understand a hypotext that serves as the text’s source to see the link that connects the text with other texts it references. For example, C.S. Lewis intentionally associates Aslan the Lion with Jesus in *The Chronicles of*

*Narnia*. To understand the significant role Aslan plays in the series, readers must be familiar with Jesus.

2. **Optional intertextuality** is the type of intertextuality that occurs when an intertextual relationship is recognized, the connection can change the understanding of the text. It is likely that a connection to multiple texts of a single phrase can be found or not at all (Ivanic, 1998). Optional intertextuality is intended to pay homage to the “original” author. To grasp the link of the hypertext’s connection with other texts is not vital to understanding the hypertext. For example, the *Harry Potter* seven-book series by J.K. Rowling bears traces of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, including a wise wizard mentor and the protagonist’s close companions that play important roles in helping the protagonist defeat his foe (Keller, 2013).



3. **Accidental intertextuality** is the type of intertextuality that occurs when readers make a connection of a text with another text they are familiar with or have encountered prior to the current one, but a tangible anchorpoint within the original text may not be present. Accidental intertextuality, hence, depends on readers’ personal experience of textual encounters.



In his reading of intertextuality, Barthes (1968) argues that the emphasis on authorship is artificial and rejects the orthodox idea that the author is the origin of the text. Since no text is original, giving a text an authorship is to impose a limit. Rather than thinking of the author as the origin of meanings, the author should be thought of as a conveyor of messages who conveys other references and allusions of other texts in their text. According to Barthes, “each text refers back differently to the infinite sea of the ‘already written’.” (Selden and Peter, 1993, p. 34.). And rather than emphasizing the text’s production, each text is written as it is consumed with each re-reading.

Intertextuality is also often discussed in the realm of media. French film theorist Andre Bazin argued that all films were, in principle, works of authors who, at a certain time and with certain technical and aesthetic means, had managed to create certain distinctive cinematic artwork (Barthes, 1957). Metz (1974, as cited in Shakib, 2013) suggested that “films are not only an artwork, but, rather, a textual system that constitutes its own original, singular totality, in which the author, if involved at all, is only a constituent of this system. In other words, the creator of a film is part of the textual system, in which they engage in the act of drawing from multiple sources to create their own text.

## 2.5 Related research



“Cultural Hybridity in Netflix’s Thai-language Original Series, *The Stranded*” is aimed at studying cultural hybrid elements as appeared in the series and the approaches used to mix different cultures. I reviewed the following relevant to this research.



### 2.5.1 Research on cultural hybridity in popular media texts

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In “Cultural hybridity and dynamics in *Hanuma Chansamon*,” Siriporn Phakdeephassook (2005) study cultural hybridity and dynamics in *Hanuman Chansamon*, a three-dimensional animated cartoon. The analysis finds that hybrid features in cartoons can be categorized into two groups – omnipresent hybrid features (those that can be perceived throughout the show) and fractional hybrid features (those existing in some specific components). The prominent omnipresent hybrid feature is the blend of traditional story and modern technology. Fractional hybrid features are the co-existence of old and new cultural elements as well as local-global cultural elements detected in the overture, dialogue, motifs, characters and settings. The two significant



factors contributing to **Hanuman Charnsamon** being culturally hybrid are the commercial purpose and the production policies of the animated cartoon.

In “**Heroes and Villains in Thai Action Adventure Films: An Analysis of Cultural Hybridization**,” Krittaya Na Nongkhai (2013) examined the characteristics of cultural hybridization in heroes and villains in a total of 88 versions of all 45 Thai action adventure films made between 1957 and 2010. The study finds that the characteristics of heroes and villains in Thai action adventure films can be categorized into four patterns based on the supposition of tale types, which are: 1) tale of outlaw heroes, 2) tale of life-struggling gentleman heroes, 3) tale of disguised heroes and masked heroes, and 4) tale of magician heroes. Cultural hybridization between Thai and foreign cultures are presented through the heroes’ and villain’s appearance and attire, behavior and roles, and special capacity and quality. These features are presented through four techniques, which are: 1) the full imitation of foreign characters’ characteristics, 2) the partial imitation of foreign characters’ characteristics and mixture with Thai characters’ characteristics, 3) the insertion of foreign concepts in Thai characters, 4) the universalization of Thai characters for international market aim. The study also found three factors of cultural hybridization in heroes and villains in Thai action adventure films during the period studied. They are Americanization and Thai socio-cultural contexts, globalization and films as popular culture. UNIVERSITY

In “**Hybrid Heroes: Cultural hybridization in Thai action adventure films from 1997 to 2010**,” Krittaya Na Nongkhai and Siriporn Phakdeephassook (2017) study 30 Thai action adventure films made between 1997 and 2010 to examine how cultural hybridization is reflected in their hero characters. It was hypothesized that the characterization of heroes in films in question was influenced by that of hero characters in foreign films. The foreign influence is negotiated by Thai local beliefs and values. The hybrid heroes demonstrate Thai film production’s response to globalization. Foreign films entered the Thai market in the reign of King Rama V. Between 1957 and 1962. This

qualitative research found that cultural hybridization is presented through the Thai hero characters' images, gender identity, and roles leading to the emergence of three important types of Thai hybrid hero: (1) local Thai cowboy heroes, (2) Thai martial art heroes and (3) Thai necromancer superheroes. These types of hero illustrate an adaptation and cultural hybridization between international films' hero characters and certain elements in Thai society, namely legends, local beliefs and the values of masculinity.

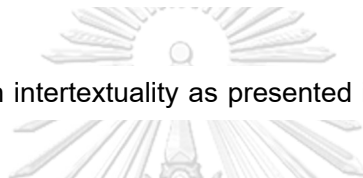
In **"The Transmission of Western Culture through the International Music Radio Stations: A Case Study of Met 107 FM,"** Sirisakul Mayureesawan (2015) studies the transmission of western culture through international music radio station MET 107 FM. It is aimed at investigating cultural dimensions that appeared in MET 107 FM's programs, patterns of western cultural hybridity in each program, and hosts opinions/attitudes towards the cultural transferences. In terms of cultural hybridity, the research finds that MET Bangkok Bright Side and MET Music and Lyrics are presented in such a way that maintains the originality of content with slight adjustments (the amoeba pattern) and that MET News Report is presented in such a way that weather culture was embraced both in respect of manners and content (the parrot pattern). News from foreign news agencies and local Thai ones are selected, edited and delivered in English. The selection of news reflects the embrace of western culture. 

In **"Music and Community's Cultural Identity: Jaran Manopetch and His Role as a Cultural Warrior,"** Thitinan Boonpap Common (2012) focuses on the role of the late Jaran Manopetch, known as the 'Lanna cultural warrior,' and his music upon the construction and articulation of Lanna cultural identity. Manopetch played an important role in articulating the Lanna cultural identity. The research demonstrates that Manopetch, inspired by western artists like Bob Dylan; John Denver; Simon & Garfunkel; and Peter, Paul and Marie, combines western musical elements with local music and Lanna lyrics, which results in a hybrid genre. The mixing of different cultural elements in

music is intended to strengthen the identity of the Lanna cultural community who share similar ideologies.

### 2.5.2 Research on glocalization and Netflix

In “Now Streaming Everywhere: An Examination of Netflix’s Global Expansion,” Amanda Mary Halprin (2018) explores how Netflix’s market positioning strategies evolved as the company sets out to achieve a global expansion. Netflix used original programming as a way to position itself glocally, as the company expands globally.



### 2.5.3 Research on intertextuality as presented in films

In “Intertextuality between Japanese-Thai Horror Film and Hollywood Remake Version,” Sumet Phosopon (2008) studies a total of nine Japanese, Thai and American horror movies to examine intertextuality presented in them. The films in question are *Ringu* (1998), *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* (2002), *Kairo* (2001), *Chakushin ari* (2004), *The Eye* (2002), *Shutter* (2004), *Ju-on* (2003), *Ringu 2* (1999) and *Ju-on 2* (2003). The findings show that all elements in movies made by Japanese and Thai productions can be maintained, modified, extended and reduced in the Hollywood remake version. The key factors in the process of intertextuality is the socio-cultural context and copyrights. The pattern of the ghost’s apparition, which is a “unique gimmick” manifesting in the Japanese and Thai horror movies, is also found in the Hollywood remake. The theme shared by these movies is love and familial relationship.

### 2.5.4 Research on *The Stranded*

In “Content Creation and Production Process of the Products of Netflix Original Thailand,” Pornpat Rattanakusoom (2019) aims to study the process of creative management and production of *The Stranded*, Thailand’s Netflix first original series and the strategies employed in composition and storytelling. It is found that the series’

process of creative management and production involved a collaboration with international staff, the “Writer Room,” the use of an international system, and the need to create local content for global audiences. Netflix’s glocalization strategies underscore U.S. cultural properties as part of the global, not the local. When a production is glocalized, a production’s local cultural elements are emphasized in conjunction with the Americanized global elements.



## Chapter III

### Research methodology

“Cultural Hybridity in Netflix’s Thai- language Original Series, *The Stranded*” is a qualitative research that aims to study cultural hybrid elements in *The Stranded*, Netflix’s first Thai-language original series, and the cultural mixing approaches adopted as part of the series’ creative process. I conducted a textual analysis and in-depth interviews on the persons considered relevant to the study.

#### 3.1 Data sources

For this research, I divide the data sources into two categories.

##### 3.1.1 Audio-visual sources

Purposive sampling is used to primarily study *The Stranded* that premiered on November 15, 2019, on Netflix. The sci fi-thriller-drama series was a product of the collaboration among Netflix, GMM Grammy’s BRAVO! Studios and H2L Media Group. Each of the seven episodes is approximately 50 minutes in length.

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*The Stranded* is chosen as the subject of the study for three primary reasons.

1. It is the first Netflix original series to be made in Thai language. Until now, it remains the only Netflix original series to be made in Thai language.
2. It has been hypothesized that, as a Netflix original series made for global markets, *The Stranded* features culturally hybrid elements that make it appealing to the Thai market as well as foreign ones.
3. It is a popular foreign-language Netflix original series. When the series launched in 2019, the show found 150 million viewers worldwide (Rosales, 2019).

### 3.1.2 Primary source

In-depth interviews are conducted with two persons, who were selected as the key informants as they were involved at one point or another in the creation and production of *The Stranded*. The key informants are as follows:

1. Sophon “Jim” Sakdaphisit, director and writer of *The Stranded*.
2. Dr. Nataporn Rattanachaiwong, co-writer of *The Stranded*.

## 3.2 Research tools



In order to meet the research’s objectives of examining the culturally hybrid elements as appeared in *The Stranded* and the approaches to mixing different cultural elements as part of the creative process, I collected all relevant information through various platforms.

### 3.2.1 Literature research



Using literary research, I collected data relevant to this qualitative research, such as previous research on Netflix’s original content and cultural hybridity, news articles on the internet, published articles on academic databases, and Master’s and Ph.D theses.

### 3.2.2 Textual analysis

I study *The Stranded* within the theoretical frameworks of cultural hybridity, corporate transculturalism, glocalization, and intertextuality to analyze the cultural hybrid elements seen in the series. Cultural hybrid elements are found in the narrative and the characters of the series. Then, I categorize the findings of the approaches to mixing

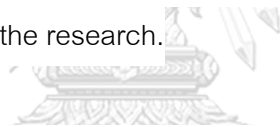
different cultural elements into three categories, based on the scriptwriters' assumption of audiences' cultural understanding.

### 3.2.3 In-depth interviews

1) Semi-structured interviews are conducted in order to gain insight into the creation of cultural hybrid features in *The Stranded*. I design the questions that allow for open-ended answers in order to give the key informants an opportunity to provide further valuable information relevant to the research's objectives. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also allows me to adapt the questions depending on the key informants' answers.



The validity of interview questions are checked by seeking an evaluation from the research advisor and subject-matter experts to ensure the questions cover the objectives within the scope of the research.



#### Questions regarding the development of *The Stranded*



- How was the project conceived and developed between Netflix and GMM Grammy?
- How does Netflix's global (or glocal) content strategy factor into the development of *The Stranded*?

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#### Questions regarding Netflix's global content policy

- What are the creative approaches to creating *The Stranded*?
- Do global and local influences play any role in the creation of *The Stranded*?
- Why is it important that *The Stranded* is infused with both local and foreign elements?

### Questions regarding cultural hybridization in *The Stranded*

- How much did the American writing team and the Thai counterpart contribute to the story when it comes to creative inputs?
- Was *The Stranded* inspired or influenced by any other stories in different mediums?
- How did the Naga myth featured in the series come about and what was its significance?
- Did the writers have *Lost* or *Lord of the Flies* in mind when writing *The Stranded*?
- Why were the *Phra Chai Suriya* poem and *Gone with the Wind* included in the series?



### 3.3 Analysis

By conducting a textual analysis, I analyze all relevant textual features in *The Stranded* to understand its culturally hybrid features. Then the data collected from in-depth interviews with the series' director/writer and co-writer are used to gain further insight into the creation of cultural hybrid features in the series. I employ the theories of cultural hybridity, corporate transculturalism, glocalization and intertextuality to illustrate that *The Stranded* is a product of cultural hybridization. **SITY**

The data collection process is described as follows:

1. I gathered and collected relevant information, including academic papers, theses, research, news articles and interviews to frame this research.

2. In terms of textual analysis, I analyzed *The Stranded* as a culturally hybrid text composed of Thai and western elements and references to other stories that came before it. I designed the questions based on the findings from the textual analysis.



3. In terms of in-depth interviews, I scheduled appointments with the two key informants and conducted the interviews via LINE Video Call. Prior to carrying out the interviews, I made sure the key informants were ready to provide answers and asked for their consent to record the interviews. I asked them the questions to gain insight into the creative process of *The Stranded*.

4. In terms of data analysis, I processed all data collected, including findings from the in-depth interviews, and revisited the series to conduct further textual analysis as the interviews provided further insights into the series.

I used the triangulation technique to validate the research, which is a qualitative one. Once the interviews were carried out, the data sources were verified to ensure the research questions were answered.

### 3.4 Research findings

The data is presented using the descriptive research method. Research findings are presented in two chapters as follows:

**Chapter 4:** Findings on cultural hybrid elements found in *The Stranded* and the approaches used to mixing cultural elements as part of the creative process of the series are presented to demonstrate the series is a cultural hybrid media text.

**Chapter 5:** A summary of findings, discussions, recommendations are provided.

## Chapter

## IV

## Research findings

In “Cultural Hybridity in Netflix’s Thai-language Original Series, *The Stranded*”, I conducted a textual analysis on *The Stranded* to understand its culturally hybrid elements and the approaches to mixing different cultural elements as part of the series’ creative process. *The Stranded* remains, until now, the first and only Thai original series commissioned and produced by Netflix. As suggested in the first chapter, *The Stranded* is a product of an international collaboration among Netflix, H2L Media Group, and BRAVO! by GMM Grammy. It is, thus, assumed that *The Stranded* is where cultural elements from different countries came into contact, making it a culturally hybrid Netflix show.



In this chapter, I will utilize cultural hybridity as the main theoretical concept to study the culturally hybrid elements and the approaches to mixing different cultures in *The Stranded*. Cultural hybridity is a socio-cultural process of mixing two or more different cultures that leads to the emergence of a new culturally hybrid content that still bears traces of previous cultural forms. While cultural hybridity is often discussed in relation to globalization, I examine cultural hybridity through the lens of glocalization, as Thai cultural flows are just as strong as western ones when it comes to making *The Stranded*, which was geared towards both global and local markets. Since glocalization takes into consideration locality, it rejects the domination of global cultural forces, even though – to a certain extent – they still play an important role in the process of content creation.

*The Stranded* illustrates that Netflix adopted Thai and western cultural forms to create a creative show it labels “original”. *The Stranded* became a playground for Netflix to blend different cultures for different audiences worldwide. Based on the findings, I would like to discuss culturally hybrid elements in *The Stranded* in three sections: 1) the

factors to mixing cultures in *The Stranded*, 2) cultural hybrid elements in the narrative motifs and characterization, and 3) the approaches to mixing different cultures in *The Stranded*.

#### 4.1 The factors to mixing different cultures in *The Stranded*

Netflix's original content strategy, which I call "Go Local for Global", was applicable to the making of *The Stranded*. The original programming strategy has proved to be crucial to Netflix's growth in the long run and a major draw to gain new subscribers. Netflix has actively expanded to other markets since it introduced the original programming initiative in 2011 by offering a variety of original shows that are culturally appealing to the country from which they originate. These shows – whether they are series or movies – feel locally authentic but also have a universal quality to them. They are infused with western cultural elements as well as those endemic to the country the show is intended for, which is why Netflix's non-English language original shows feel different from English-language original ones. *The Stranded*, as a non-English language original series, mixes different cultures as it was first conceived by a foreigner. The primary factor for *The Stranded* being a culturally hybrid show is that it was the amalgamation of different sources of creative input from both Thai and non-Thai writers. Sophon Sakdaphisit, the director of *The Stranded*, noted that "the project was created by a foreigner from H2L Media Group and the show's concept was partially thought out before the entire script was written, which involved rewriting and doing additional research on the Thai elements by the Thai team." (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021).

Nataporn Rattanachaiwong, the co-writer of *The Stranded*, said "the series was proposed to Netflix by H2L Media Group. Christian Durso, who conceived the project, came up with a story about a tsunami hitting an island. Thailand was then chosen as the backdrop of the series. H2L Media Group then formed a writing team with GMM Grammy and outlined a seven-episode series. The scriptwriting team of *The Stranded* is

a hybrid one, with the creative process involving making adjustments to some cultural elements in the series.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

Sophon and Nataporn’s accounts confirm that the people involved in the writing of *The Stranded* are both Americans and Thais. Based on the opening credits of each episode, six people – four of whom are Thai – received the writing credits. In addition to Sophon and Nataporn, the Thai script writing team also consisted of Chawanwit Imchai and Kaenipa Phanakorn. The non-Thai writers are Christian Durso, who created the show, and Steven Sims. Only Sakdaphisit and Durso, however, received the writing credits for all seven episodes. The western and Thai cultural representations in the series, thus, came from the perspectives of different people with different cultural mindsets who managed to find the common ground when it came to mixing different cultural elements.



When the Thai writing team and the American counterpart were formed and worked together on the story. *The Stranded* started to take shape. It is a story about a group of high-school students – mostly well-off, except Kraam – who become stranded on a remote island in Southern Thailand after it was hit by a tsunami. The students did not leave the island sooner because they decided to throw a party at night to celebrate the last day of school. *The Stranded* focuses mainly on Kraam, whose identity is linked to Naga and has the supernatural ability to breathe underwater. When the tsunami hit, the car Kraam and his adoptive father were in was completely submerged. Kraam survived the drowning, much to his surprise, but his father died. Kraam joins other students that survive the natural disaster who have no choice but band together. Anan, an authoritative student, becomes the leader and takes everyone’s smartphone to ensure that it will not die and be used to contact for help. But no one comes to help them, even though nearly a month has passed. As time goes by, personal conflicts start to erupt between Anan and Kraam. Anan sees Kraam as a threat to his authority, while Kraam has feelings for Anan’s girlfriend, May. Love triangle quickly ensues after May

gets emotionally involved and physically intimate with Kraam. But both Kraam and May keep their relationship in secret.

When the students find a damaged boat stuck on a cliff, they try to bring it down to fix it and use it to leave the island. Anan, however, says only ten of the students can only get on the boat because there is not enough room. Anan suggests that a lucky draw be used to select the passengers, but he also claims a seat should be saved for him. The boys work on fixing the boat, while the girls sew clothes into a canvas for it. Meanwhile, strange things start to happen on the island, including the vision of a mysterious woman Kraam keeps having and the strange reappearance of Professor Lin, who the students assumed to be dead after the tsunami. Professor Lin, however, tries to help Kraam discover his true identity as the son of Naga. It also turns out she is not Professor Lin all along, but a Naga protector who impersonated Professor Lin to gain Kraam's trust. The actual Professor Lin has been hidden in a cave.



As the story progresses and the tension between Kraam and Anan intensifies, May finds herself pregnant, but is not sure whether Anan or Kram is the father. When Anan discovers May's pregnancy and finds out she has been sleeping with Kram, he is driven mad with anger and forces May to leave the island with him on the boat other students spent days fixing. When Anan is caught leaving with May by other students, he urges them to come with him, completely disregarding the results of the lucky draw. The boat does not go far, as fireballs suddenly shoot up from the bed of the seas, instantly damaging the canvas and the boat.

The students injured during the fireball incident are taken to the ward. Meanwhile, a group of students has found the actual Professor Lin in the cave. When the fake Professor Lin runs away, the students go after her, but Kraam finds her first. The fake Professor Lin, who is a Naga protector, urges Kraam to jump off the cliff with her to find the truth about his identity. Kraam does not jump after her and is taken by Anan to his makeshift prison guarded by other students. At this point, the students

are divided into two groups, one led by Kraam and another by Anan. Anan now imposes rules and seeks to punish the other group who refuse to bow down to his rules. May came up with a plan with other students on her side to rescue Kraam. While they manage to successfully get him out of the prison, Anan finds Kraam running away with May and fights him. Both Kraam and May manage to get away from Anan and run into the jungle. Kraam is later separated from May and runs into the fake Professor Lin, who takes him to a pond in a cave. Professor Lin explains to him that there are many hidden gates that are connected to each other in this world, and one of them is in this cave. Kraam finally learns that the mysterious woman in his vision is actually his biological mother, who is only human. She once swam across this pond from the other side, but did not survive. Kraam learns that she had a relationship with a Naga being, who – for reasons not specified in the story – entrusted the task of raising Kraam to an unknown man who eventually became his adoptive father. After the realization, Kraam continues to swim across the pond to the other side and finds himself in front of a Naga gate that leads him to the northernmost part of Thailand. The cliffhanger at the end of *The Stranded* hints at a potential sequel that never saw the light of day.



Another important factor to the mixing of different cultural elements in *The Stranded* is Netflix's global expansion, which required the "Go Local for Global" strategy. Original series with cultural flavors that are recognized by local audiences are necessary, as they give the impression that the show is created for them. Original series can also ensure new subscribers will stay with Netflix in the long run. Sophon suggested that "Netflix is committed to tapping new markets from the outset. When I agreed to take on the series, Netflix intended to expand its footprint worldwide. Production quality in many countries meet Netflix's standards, making it possible for the streaming platform to access new territories. At that point (during the pre-production of the *Stranded*), Netflix had been in the game for a while. It was actively looking for new viewers in other countries outside the United States of America. This type of original content will pique the interest of locals and will urge them to move on to other Netflix shows." (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021). Glocalization is thus at the heart

of the “Go Local for Global” strategy, in which local cultural flavors are infused in original content tailored and advertised for a particular market. It was necessary that Thai cultural elements were presented in *The Stranded* for Thai audiences to recognize, as it was promoted as Netflix’s first Thai-language original series.

It is also important to note that Netflix continues to underscore the importance of Asia as the place where original stories can still be mined. Upon unveiling a slate of original content based in Asia in 2018, Chief Content Officer Ted Sarandon (White, 2018) said “the beauty of Netflix is that we can take never-seen before stories from South Korea, Thailand, Japan, India, Taiwan or elsewhere, and easily connect them to people all over Asia and the world. More than half of Asian content hours viewed on Netflix this year are viewed outside the region, so we have confidence that our upcoming slate of Asian productions will find fans in their home countries and abroad”.

## 4.2 Culturally hybrid elements in *The Stranded*

In this section, I will discuss cultural hybrid elements in *The Stranded*. Based on the textual analysis and in-depth interviews, I found that culturally hybrid elements in the series appear in two major components: the narrative and characterization.

### 4.2.1 The narrative

In this section, I will explore the presentation of cultural hybrid elements found in the narrative. They are 1) The Naga myth, 2) the references to *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* and 3) the use of classic Thai and American literatures.

#### 4.2.1.1 The Naga myth integrated into the modern setting

At the heart of the story of *The Stranded* is the Naga legend, which Thai people are familiar with. Vechasat (2016) suggests that while humans have always had beliefs

about snakes, as indicated by religious scriptures in Hindu, Buddhism and Christianity, Naga, which is snake like in form, mostly appears in the Vedas, a body of religion texts that came from ancient India and is depicted as a member of a semi-divine race whose form is part human and part cobra. While snake-like creatures can be found in different parts of the world, there are cultural variations (e.g. Basilisk in the ancient Greek and Roman legend, dragons in the Chinese and western culture, and serpents in the Bible). Naga, however, is mostly associated with Asian culture.

In Thai society, Naga is revered as a sacred, massive, serpent-like being with a crest and appeared in stories about the origin of Buddha, including one in which Phaya Mujalin Nakaraj provides shelter for Buddha during his Enlightenment. Phaya Mujalin Nakaraj is also an inspiration for the statuette of Buddha sheltered by a naga and the Naga ordination ceremony. Thai people's relationship with Naga is often depicted in literature, arts, sculptures and religious ceremonies (Vechasat, 2016). Thai people's reflection of Naga is, thus, one that is deeply rooted in their culture.



The Naga myth functions as the narrative foundation for *The Stranded* and is presented through several motifs, such as the Naga dagger, the Naga gate, the Naga fireballs and some characters with an association with Naga. A motif, according to Morgan (2015) can be defined as a recurring element that occurs in a narrative, or can be broadly defined as a repeated narrative element, often functioning as a literary device that serves to concretize or reveal the narrative's themes. In the case of *The Stranded*, the Naga myth is a motif presented throughout the story through the aforementioned objects and some characters.

On the surface, the series may come across as a story about a group of high-school students stranded on an island after being hit by a colossal tsunami. But audiences are later introduced to the first link between the series and the Naga myth through the dagger with the Naga-shaped handle in Episode 1, in which Kraam's



adoptive father presents it to him right before the tsunami hits the island. Kraam later learns that the dagger belongs to his biological father, who is related to Naga. The dagger is one of the major clues to Kraam's identity as the son of Naga, which is shrouded in mystery throughout the series.



*Figure 3 The Naga dagger with the Naga-shaped handle*  
(Source: Netflix.com)

The series is as much about a group of marooned students trying to survive on their own as it is about Kraam's quest to discover his true identity. Another major clue is Kraam's ability to breathe underwater, which helps him survive drowning twice – first when he is in a submerged car after the tsunami hits and later when he swims across the pond in a cave that leads to the Naga gate, which opens to another part of Thailand. Kraam's supernatural ability is in keeping with the myth of Phaya Julin Nakraj, the snake-like being of utmost power residing in the underwater world. Kraam being able to breathe underwater is an indication that he is the heir to the Naga in the story of *The Stranded*.



*Figure 4 The Naga gate*

(Source: Netflix.com)



The Naga cultural element is also presented through the character of Professor Lin, who is revealed to be alive following the tsunami, much to the students' surprise. It turns out, however, that she is not Professor Lin, but a Naga protector impersonating Professor Lin to gain trust from the students, especially Kraam, and convince them to never leave the island for their own safety (the actual Professor Lin has been knocked unconscious and hidden in the cave following the tsunami). This explains why the fake Professor Lin does not act like the actual Professor Lin; she comes across as ruthless, cold and unpleasant to the students. More importantly, she has supernatural abilities that make the students question her identity. For instance, the fake Professor Lin can manipulate the weather in the jungle, warp space and time, and conjure up fireballs. In Episode 6, when Anan and a group of boys try to leave the island on the makeshift boat, they are obstructed by the fireballs that shoot up from the bed of the seas, hitting the canvas and damaging it, causing the boat to overturn. Her real intention is to prevent the students, especially Kraam, from leaving the island.



Figure 5 Naga fireballs shooting up from the bed of the sea  
(Source: Netflix.com)



The supernatural abilities of the Naga protector reflect Thai people's perception of Naga – as depicted in literature, arts, religious ceremonies and sculptures – as a sacred, powerful being. And once the viewers learn that the fake Professor Lin has good intentions, her hostility starts to make sense. She does not have the intention to harm anyone. The fireball incident suggests that she is concerned about the students' safety. Once they leave the island, they will not be safe because the mega flood has wiped out most parts of Thailand. This explains why no one outside the island shows up to help the students. This makes the island a safe haven. And as a Naga protector, she wants Kraam to discover his true identity. *The Stranded* co-writer Nataporn said “the fake Professor Lin may be presented as bizarre and intimidating, but if Thai people know who she really is – which is the Naga protector – they will respect her because she is not dangerous. Naga is not a villain in our society. Lin is here to help Kraam discover his true identity.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

It can be said that the inclusion of the Naga myth in *The Stranded* suggests that the series, despite being an international one created by an international entertainment platform, is grounded in Thailand's rich history of Naga beliefs. Thai people learn about Naga in literature they study in school and from religious ceremonies. Naga is not something alien to Thai viewers. And since the study on cultural hybridity should take into consideration culturally hybrid features caused by the mixture of elements of the

same culture but from different eras (Phakdeephassook, 2005), it can be said that the Naga myth, which has its root in Asia's ancient religious texts, is depicted in a more modern setting in *The Stranded*. In this case, the Naga myth is integrated into 21st century Thailand, proving Naga is an enduring myth popularized in the realm of Thai mainstream media from time to time.

#### 4.2.1.2 The references to *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies*

The use of the Naga myth illustrates that *The Stranded* is underpinned by a Thai cultural element that is familiar to Thais and arguably appealing to foreigners. But as an international show, the series also makes use of an archetypal narrative setup often reproduced in western media, which is a group of people stranded on an island and cut off from the world. This type of narrative setup gets reproduced from time to time in western literature, such as William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso*, JG Ballard's *Concrete Island* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (Beard, 2019). Such a setup is also reproduced in the film and television media, including *Cast Away*, (2000) *Battle Royale* (2000) and *Lost* (2004). Being stranded on an island was recently reproduced in the Thai context in *The Stranded*. Based on the textual analysis, I found that the series is most similar to *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost*. I will illustrate through the five-stage narrative trajectory that *The Stranded* shares a very similar story pattern with both western stories in question.

*Lord of the Flies* is an English novel written by British author William Golding and published in 1954. It follows a group of boys who are stranded on an unknown island and their subsequent descent into barbarism after trying to create their own governing body. *Lost* is a popular American TV series by ABC premiering in 2004. It tells of a group of plane-crash survivors who are stranded on an island full of mysteries. As they venture deep into the jungle, they start to uncover supernatural elements that defy logic. Both *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* are narratives originating in western culture. While it

cannot be said that both creative works are original, as surely there must have been other stories familiar to them that came before and inspired them, it can be said that *The Stranded* adopts this recurring narrative trope popularized by the western media. Using intertextuality, I will illustrate how *The Stranded* is a culturally hybrid text that makes use of this popular western narrative setup and trajectory.

*The Stranded* is not just similar to *Lord of the Flies* in terms of the narrative motif, it is also similar in terms of the content's pattern. The series is about a group of male and female teenagers marooned on an island and must survive on their own after a gigantic tsunami hits. *Lord of the Flies* is about a group of British schoolboys stranded on an uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean after their plane has been shot down during what is described as World War III (*Lord of the Flies* was published in 1954, after World War II ended). The students in both *The Stranded* and *Lord of the Flies* must try to survive on their own as they wait for help. Both stories also explore rivalry between the two lead characters. In *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and Jack compete for leadership on the island, with Ralph being chosen as the chief and having more authority over the others. Jack, on the other hand, leads a hunting party, which provides food sources for the others. While there is another boy named Simon who also becomes another leader at one point in the story, *Lord of the Flies* gives more weight to the competing leadership between Ralph and Jack. At one point, Ralph considers stepping down as the chief, following his failure to keep the signal fire burning to attract potential rescuers. Jack later challenges Ralph's authority, attempting to remove him from the position. Jack is able to amass support and forms his own tribe with the promise to feed them with wild pigs. The tension between the two erupts into a full-blown fight, with Jack wanting to behead Ralph as he seeks to do away with Ralph's authority completely.

In *The Stranded*, not only do Kraam and Anan compete for leadership, they also vie for the attention of the same girl. While the series revolves around Kraam and the mystery surrounding his identity, it also establishes Anan as his direct rival. After the

tsunami hits the island, Anan automatically becomes the students' self-elected leader. Anan sets up a rule that forces everyone to give their smartphone to him to ensure it will not run out of reception. Anan believes it can be used to contact outsiders for help. At first, other students agreed to Anan's rule, but then their dissent grew, as no rescuers showed up. There was no use to keep the smartphone to himself anymore, prompting Anan to return their smartphones. Anan's controlling nature is also hinted at through a series of flashbacks, where viewers learn that he was the conductor for the school's orchestra band. As a conductor, he must be able to control everyone in the band, making sure that every band member follows his move. Anan also tries to upstage Kraam whenever Kraam is able to convince other students with his idea. For instance, when Kraam tells other students how to get an abandoned boat pinned up between rocks off of the cliff with his knowledge about boatmaking taught by his adoptive father, Anan cuts him off and simply repeats what Kraam has just said. Their rivalry eventually takes a violent turn by Episode 7, after Anan realizes that May, his girlfriend, is pregnant and that the father could actually be Kraam, not him. This is because May has feelings for Kraam throughout the series, even though she is dating Anan. Her feelings are reciprocated by Kraam, who at one point takes May to an undiscovered section of the island and has a sexual intercourse with her. Once Anan learns that May has been quite close to Kraam, he unravels and descends into barbarism, completely discarding the rule of law. He forces May to leave the island with him on the makeshift boat, not caring about other students. When the fireballs destroy the boat, preventing them from leaving. Kraam rescues May but he is taken prisoner by Anan. When May rescues him and they run away together, they are caught by Anan. He tries to kill Kraam with the Naga dagger in a fight, but Kraam manages to slip away.

*The Stranded* also shares similar themes with *Lord of the Flies*. Both stories explore authoritarianism, abuse of power, immorality and people's descent into barbarism. The rivalry between Ralph and Jack and Anan and Kraam eventually leads to them throwing away the moral sense of what is right and wrong. In *Lord of the Flies*,

Ralph and Jack vie for authority over the other boys with the two eventually fighting, even though neither wins. The aggressive nature of Jack is demonstrated by his attempt to hunt Ralph down and behead him like a pig. In *The Stranded*, Anan descends into barbarism after he discovers May might have been impregnated by Kraam, not him. He wants Kraam dead and to imprison May. Other students on the island are also driven to the edge for different reasons. Jan, for instance, goes mad because she thinks Jack killed Krit, her crush, by having him overdose on sleeping pills. Propelled by anger, Jan imprisons Jack and will not let him eat. But when she does, she spits on his food and serves it to him.



Based on the analysis comparing *The Stranded* with *Lord of the Flies*, I created the following table to illustrate the five-stage narrative trajectory that ties the two stories together.

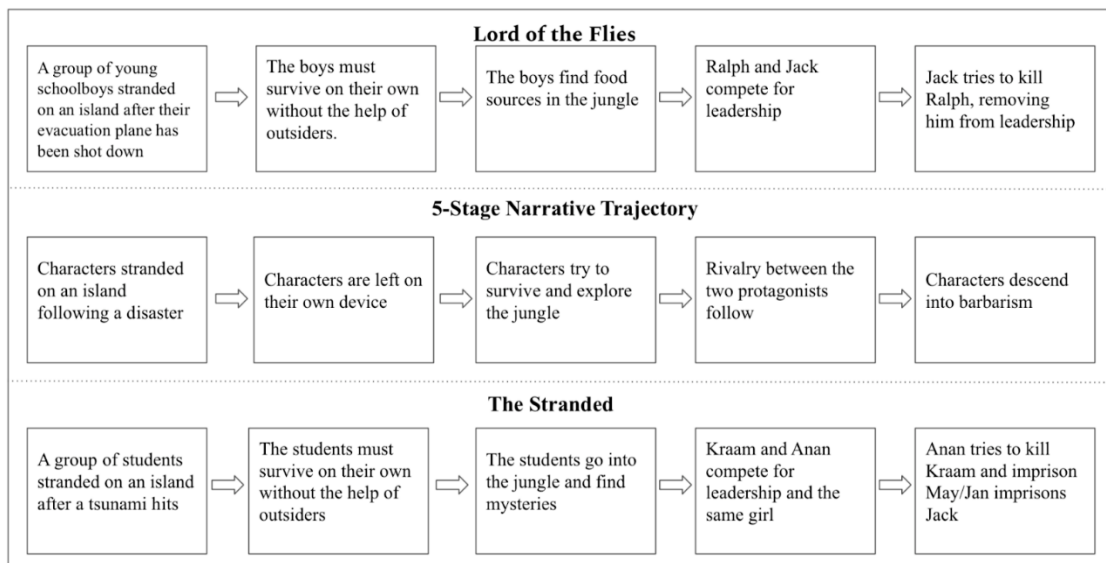


Table 2. The 5-stage narrative trajectory in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Stranded*

*The Stranded* is also similar to the first season of *Lost* in terms of the narrative trajectory. In *Lost*, the plane-crash survivors become islanders as they try to survive. But they gradually encounter unexplainable supernatural forces coming from the jungle on the island, including the Smoke Monster and malicious island inhabitants, that put them in danger. Soon they realize they need to get out of this scary island. In *Lost*, a group of

survivors also receive a mysterious radio signal that urges them to venture deep into the island, where it is believed that a radio tower is located. They also find a woman who was shipwrecked over a decade before the plane-crash survivors arrive. At one point, a group of survivors attempt to leave the island using the raft they have built. The past of primary characters is also told through a series of flashbacks.

In *The Stranded*, the students who survive the tsunami also encounter supernatural forces that they struggle to come up with reasonable explanations. These supernatural forces include the warping of space and time in the jungle (e.g. Arisa, Nut and Gun travel back through time at one point to the party scene that took place before the tsunami hits the island), and the fireballs shooting up from the sea caused by the fake Professor Lin who is actually a Naga protector. In the series, Arisa finds a clue that encourages her to venture into the jungle, believing there is a radio tower from World War II located somewhere in the jungle. And like *Lost* or other stories about people stranded on an island, the students in *The Stranded* attempt to leave the island by the raft they have built – albeit unsuccessfully. *The Stranded* also relies on episodic *Lost*-style flashbacks to flesh out its primary characters, such as Kraam, May, Anan, Arisa, Nahm and Ice. Certain episodes are devoted to exploring the past of different characters and how it informs their action in the present. ¶

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Based on the analysis comparing *The Stranded* with *Lost*, I created the following table to illustrate the five-stage narrative trajectory that ties the two stories together.



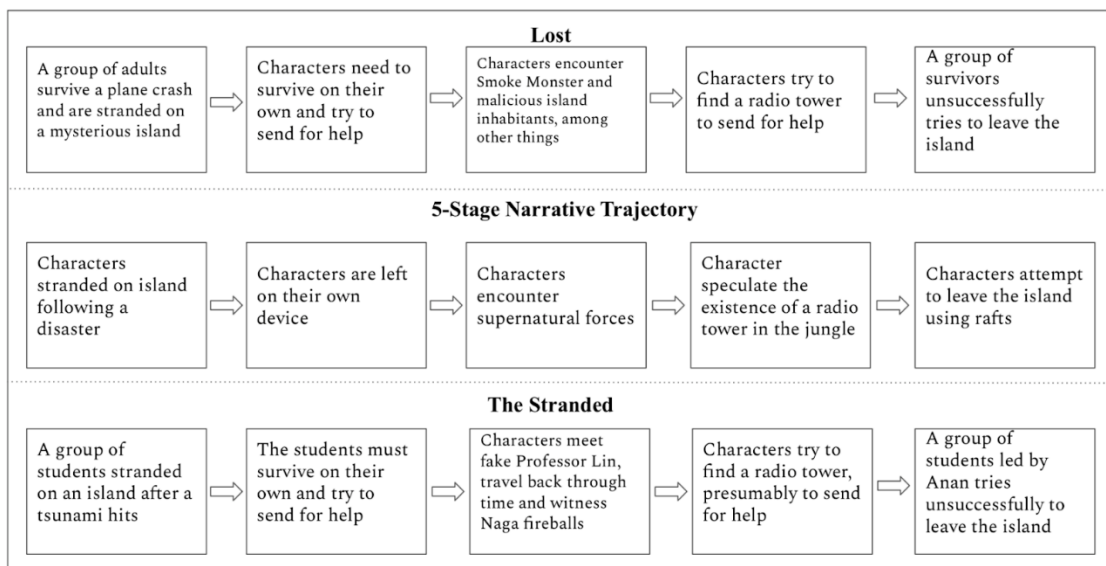


Table 3 The 5-stage narrative trajectory in *Lord of the Flies* and *The Stranded*

On *The Stranded's* narrative similarities to *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies*, Sophon said “the scriptwriting team did not set out to make the Thai version of *Lost*. Rather, people being trapped on an island works as a plot setup, which is also used in stories like *Lord of the Flies* or *Cast Away*”. (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021). Nataporn also confirmed that “the Thai scriptwriting team did not consider *Lost* or *Lord of the Flies* as inspirations for *The Stranded*.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021). Even though *The Stranded* may not intentionally references either one of the stories, its similarities to them in terms of the narrative setup, the supernatural elements, and the themes can be read as “accidental intertextuality”, which refers to the type of intertextuality that occurs when readers make a connection of a text with another text they are familiar with or have encountered prior to the current one. But a tangible anchorpoint within the original text may not be present. Since no text is original, it can be said that *The Stranded* makes use of an archetypal narrative setup commonly used in the western media to tell its own story infused with Thailand's enduring Naga myth. The mixture between a western narrative setup and the legend of Naga results in a culturally hybrid story in which different cultural elements clash and blend together.

#### 4.2.1.3 The use of classic Thai and American literatures

The utilization of two classic literatures from two different cultures to provide a clue to one of the island's many mysteries marks the most transparent collision between Thai and American cultures in the series. The classic literature in question are *Gone with the Wind* and *Phra Chai Suriya*. In the series, Arisa, with the help of Ying, tries to decode the message in the audio recording encased in a cover with the "Gone with the Wind" label attached to it. It turns out that, once Arisa is able to get the record playing, the record plays an audio of a section of *Phra Chai Suriya* verses, but the order of the verses were rearranged. That is, the verses are not cited according to the order they are supposed to be like in the textbook because they have been edited by the recorder. Sunthorn Phu, the author of *Phra Chai Suriya*, used three different types of verses – 16 syllables, 11 syllables and 28 syllables – to create *Phra Chai Suriya*. These numbers (16, 11, 28, plus another 28), when arranged in reverse (82821116), become the same set of numbers for the school's longitude. When the numbers are put next to the reversed publication date of the first edition of *Gone with the Wind* (97420603, reversed from 30/06/2479 or 30 of June B.E. 2479), the figures become the longitude for a mysterious location in the jungle. Arisa speculates that there might be an abandoned radio tower from World War II there.



Figure 6 *Gone with the Wind* case and *Phra Chai Suriya* poem  
(Source: Netflix.com)

*Phra Chai Suriya* is a poem written by Sunthorn Phu, the most celebrated poet in Thailand. It is about a kingdom rotten with debauchery that disappears from the earth's surface when, one day, it was hit by a great flood that wiped out everything in the kingdom. The incident described in the poem is acknowledged by Ying to be extremely similar to what happened to them in *The Stranded*. Superstition and destruction, both recurring motifs in *The Stranded*, are embodied in the *Phra Chai Suriya* text, a cultural element originating in Thailand. It appears in a prescribed textbook taught in many parts of Thailand and was written by a Thai poet. The decision to include the poem in the series was done deliberately on the part of the Thai writers. Sophon Sakdaphisit said "I thought of Thai textbooks as where the clues are hidden, as they are one of the Thai technologies Thais are familiar with. Thais are also familiar with poems in the Thai textbooks they grow up with. So it was a good idea to use that as the source of the clue". (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021).

"The *Phra Chai Suriya* poem was not originally included in the first draft of the script, written by Christian Durso, the foreign writer. The poem was added by Sophon

the director, replacing underdeveloped tales about haunted school and other haunting stories initially included in the first draft. The director proposed *Phra Chai Suriya*, as it would give a sense of connection to the situation that happens in the series and Kraam's identity. In the poem, a mega tsunami wipes out the earth in an era when debauchery gets out of control. *Phra Chai Suriya* is like Sunthorn Phu's version of *Davinci Code*; the verse orders, when put next to the date of the issuance of the first Announcement of the People's Party, can actually provide the number for the longitude of a place in the south of Thailand. However, the Announcement of the People's Party was replaced by *Gone with the Wind*, as it might be too contextually specific for foreigners who are not familiar with Thailand's political matters. *Gone with the Wind*, on the other hand, is more universally recognized." (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).



The *Phra Chai Suriya* audio tape encased in the "Gone with the Wind" box is emblematic of the mixture of a Thai cultural form and an American one. *Gone with the Wind* is an epic historical romance novel written by Margaret Mitchell and published in 1936. It tells of Scarlett O'Hara, the daughter of a plantation owner in the Southeastern region of the United States of America who navigates her romantic life during the American Civil War and Reconstruction periods. The novel was adapted into an award-winning film directed by Victor Fleming in 1939, which further strengthened its pop culture status. The movie is one of the most popular epics ever made in the United States, having won eight Oscars in 1940, including Best Picture. Its box-office receipts, if adjusted for inflation, would make it the top-grossing movie of all time, ahead of *Avatar* or *Avengers: Endgame*. Considering how enduring its legacy lasts in pop culture, *Gone with the Wind* is the preferred choice for the Netflix team over the first Announcement of the People's Party, as it is universally recognized.

The intentional references to *Phra Chai Suriya* and *Gone with the Wind*, constitute – in Fairclough's terms – "Manifest intertextuality", or the explicit kind of intertextuality, in which the two literatures are explicitly presented in the series. In

Fitzsimmons' terms, the intentional references to both literatures constitute "Obligatory intertextuality", in which the series' writers intentionally invokes a comparison with another text. The *Gone with the Wind* reference indicates that Netflix needs to include a western cultural element to neutralize the Thainess of the show, as *The Stranded*, commissioned by Netflix, is an international show. The combination of *Phra Chai Suriya* and *Gone with the Wind* suggests that two different cultures can exist in the same space and is a marker of a culturally hybrid content, in which the creative input was contributed by Americans and Thais.

#### 4.2.2 Characterization



Characterization in *The Stranded* is another important site of cultural hybridity, as the first draft of the script was written by a foreigner whose familiarity with western cultural expressions was transmitted to the characters he created. The behavior of the characters and how it was presented are hugely influenced by the cultural perspectives of the series' creator and writers. In this section, I will analyze the characterization of different characters in *The Stranded* by examining their attributes, qualities and behaviors that illustrate the mixture of Thai and western cultural values, norms and attitudes.

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##### 4.2.2.1 Physical intimacy

*The Stranded* does not shy away from showing many characters being comfortable with physical intimacy, which makes it different from other Thai series governed by Thailand's socially conservative code of conduct. *The Stranded* features many scenes where characters kiss and have sexual intercourse – privately and publicly. The characters that feel comfortable with lovemaking the most are Ice and his girlfriend, Ying. The two are shown kissing each other in three different scenes. First, they are shown kissing in front of other students with extreme passion, as they are

entangled with each other. The second time they are shown getting intimate is when they go to an empty classroom to have sex before they are interrupted by another character. The actors did not shy away from doing it as real as possible. They grab and caress various body parts of each other while kissing. The third time they express their carnal desire is when they are alone at the pond in the jungle. They kiss after having stripped down to their underwear. These behaviors are largely Americanized and not often depicted in Thai mainstream media. Nataporn said “characters having sex in the library or wherever they could find a spot to do it is very western, as the show’s creator wanted to include this type of scenes in the series because it comes naturally from teenagers. While the Thai scriptwriting team thought it was a little obscene, we did not oppose it. Ice, for instance, has sex on impulse. He just did it in the pond with Ying. The series’s creator just thought it was normal.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).



*Figure 7 Physical intimacy between Ying and Ice*  
(Source: Netflix.com)

Since *The Stranded* features a love triangle storyline involving Anan, May and Kraam, it was only natural to include physical intimacy among these characters. Anan and May have sexual intercourse – under the cover of a blanket – at the beginning of

Episode 3. Later, when Kraam takes May to a hidden spot on the island, they start to get physically intimate and eventually lock lips. It is also implied that Kraam has sexual activity with May, as May later finds herself pregnant, but is unsure who is the father to her baby. The mystery surrounding May's pregnancy eventually drives Anan mad.

Kissing is also depicted in LGBTQ characters in the series. The inclusion of these characters was meant to reflect gender diversity of teenagers in the real world. *In The Stranded*, there are five characters who are not entirely straight. They are Jack, Krit, Arisa, Ying and Gun. Jack and Krit are a couple. The two are shown kissing twice in the series, first during the party scene and later while they cozy up together in a room. Arisa and Ying's relationship is more complicated, as Ying is Ice's girlfriend. But after having a row with him about his personal life, Ying is pushed away and finds herself drawn to Arisa, who is occupied with unlocking mysteries. Their relationship gradually turns into romance, with the two kissing after having cracked the mystery. Gun also has a romantic feeling towards his best friend, Nut. Their behavior reaffirms the series' creator belief that physical affection is normal among teenagers.

#### 4.2.2.2 A social outcast



A social outcast can be broadly defined as someone who is rejected by their social group for various reasons. This type of archetypal character is often characterized by their insecurity, idiosyncrasies and troubled past.

In *The Stranded*, the social outcast is presented through Arisa, which I single out as the most culturally hybrid character in *The Stranded*. The know-it-all outcast is the one who fixes the broken old-fashioned audio player that helps her solve a mystery. On the one hand, she is deemed a weirdo because of her idiosyncrasies. But what makes her unsociable is her past. Arisa is banned by other students because she was accused of hacking a girl's computer that eventually leads to the girl's tragic end. On the other

hand, she is the one who represents the progressive mindset of contemporary women. Arisa calls out the regressive attitude everyone seems to have about gender roles at one point in the series. When it has been agreed by everyone that the male students will repair the boat and the female students will do all the needlework to make a canvas, Arisa asked other people – much to their dismay, “What era are we living in? The boys fix the boat? And the girls sew? This is so old-fashioned! Let’s get the guys to sew and we can fix the boat!”. Nataporn said “the activities Arisa is engaged in are very westernized. She listens to dark synth music she listens to, for example. She is pretty progressive in terms of attitude and what she does. Her character is the creation of a foreigner.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

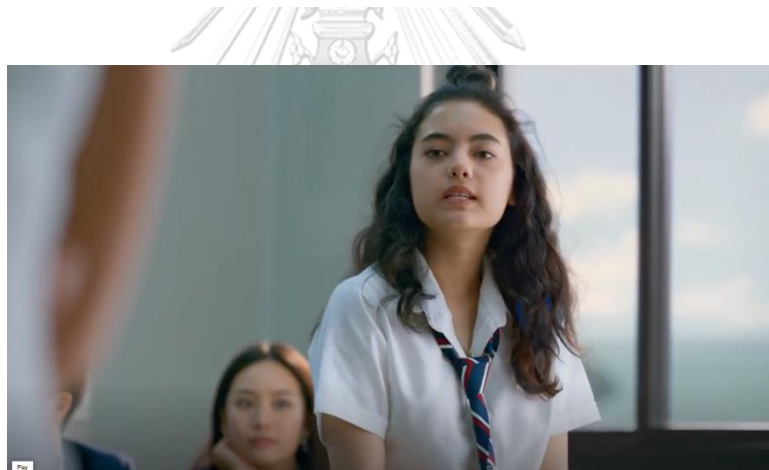
#### 4.2.2.3 The game of “Fuck, Marry Kill”

Another scene that illustrates characters embracing western culture is when Joey and Kraam are scouting for medicines that might be of use later in an abandoned house, Joey brings up the “Fuck, Mary, Kill” game, a silly, juvenile game where people fantasize about doing the actions in question with three different people. In this scene, Joey gives Kraam three names: Ying, Arisa and May. Kraam, however – being as Thai as he is – is puzzled by Joey’s question. Once Joey explains what the game is, Kraam says he would probably have sex with Ying, kill Arisa and marry May. While this scene shows Kraam’s feelings toward May and offers a sense of closeness between Kraam and Joey, who later dies in a fall, it also introduces Thai viewers to this type of social forced-choice question game commonly played in western culture. Nataporn said “the game came from foreigners and the Thai writing team kept it. It was meant to tell the viewers how Kraam’s feel about May.”

#### 4.2.2.4 Classrooms lessons and manners



There are behaviors exhibited by some characters in *The Stranded* that can be said to be influenced by Thai culture. The scene that exemplifies these behaviors is a flashback to when the students had a class with Professor Lin prior to the tsunami. In this scene, the real Professor Lin walks into the room with a fishnet of rocks and asks if anyone wants to throw them into the window. Her question is an entry point into her lesson of the day: psychogenic illness. When Professor Lin asks if anyone can explain to her what it means, Arisa raises her hand, stands up and answers the question. Professor Lin then goes on to elaborate that when psychogenic illness spreads, a new social norm is created. She then asks Anan to come to the front of the class and urges him to be the first to throw the rocks. When Anan hesitates, she explains that “the first person to throw it (a rock) is the first to break the social norm”. If another person and more follow, a new social norm will be established and people will feel rock throwing is a normal behavior.



*Figure 8 Arisa standing up while talking to Prof. Lin*  
(Source: Netflix.com)

The school the students are in – Haruethai Samut – is an international one where students wear a uniform. The boys and the girls wear a navy blue suit and a necktie. The uniforms come across as familiar to Thais because they look similar to what international students in Thailand would wear. But the behavior exhibited by some characters in this scene suggest they are still influenced by Thai culture. For instance, when Professor Lin calls out the name of a student, they immediately stand up as a gesture of

acknowledgement. Nat instantly rises when his name is called and is asked what psychogenic illness means. When he fails to give a proper answer, Professor Lin asks if anyone can give her the answer. Arisa then raises her hand and stands up before she talks. Student's behavior in this scene embodies the Thainess of Thai high school culture, even though they are in an international one.

“The idea of putting psychogenic illness in the third episode came from the series' foreign creator, who wants to flesh out Anan's character more and foreshadows his actions later in the series. The international school is supposed to be a very expensive, private school, where rich students raised by wealthy parents – except Kraam – can only afford. The teaching style is supposed to be very western and not governed by the Thai educational system.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).



Sophon saw the need to make the scene feel as Thai as possible. “The Thai script writing team needed to make sure that the vibes of the high school did not come across as too western, as this is a Thai story. So the characters in the series must still embody certain behavioral traits that are recognizable for Thai viewers. There was a character setup in the first draft created by the foreigner and how they would be presented. What I and the Thai team needed to do is to make these characters feel like they did not exist in a western high school as much as possible. But because they study in an international school, it is acceptable that they are westernized to a certain degree.” (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021). ”

#### 4.2.2.5 Thai beliefs

The character whose beliefs are informed by Thai culture is Nahm, who is clairvoyant. Since she was young, she foresaw her father's death in a car crash, which eventually happened. Her psychic ability proves to be crucial, as she is able to share her insight into Kraam's recurring vision of a mysterious woman who turns out to be his dead mother. The fake professor Lin senses Nahm's psychic ability, saying to her that Nahm's power is greater than she imagined. To help Nahm deal with her clairvoyance, her mother took her to the monks who performed a Buddhist ceremony on her to ward off bad luck. The ceremony is similar to an exorcism in the West, but what makes it different is the psychic ability Nahm possesses is not a sign of evil possession. One of the monks said to her that it can help her see the truth. Seeing the truth is an essential enlightenment concept in Buddhism. Nahm's clairvoyance is thus a gift. Her ability helps her see that the fake professor Lin is not a bad person, and she is the one who suggests to Kraam that the vision he keeps having may reveal something important about the fake Professor Lin's true identity, which is a Naga protector. Nataporn said "Nahm's psychic power is rooted purely in Thai beliefs; what Thai people believe. And the religious ceremony performed on Nahm is influenced by Thai culture. It convinces Nahm that Professor Lin is a good person, even if she appears to be cold and aloof." (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021). Nahm's psychic ability is a supernatural element that is recognizable in Thai and western cultures, but her beliefs are largely informed by Buddhism.

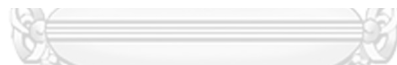


*Figure 9 A Buddhist ceremony to ward off bad luck*  
(Source: Netflix.com)

As discussed in this section, the characters in *The Stranded* are a site of the collision between Thai and western social norms, values and attitudes. It can be said that many characters in *The Stranded* have a westernized attitude in terms of how they are presented because they are created by foreigners. Yet they are still Thai who talk and behave like other Thais.

### 4.3 The approaches to mixing different cultures in *The Stranded*

As discussed in the previous section, culturally hybrid elements can be found in two aspects of *The Stranded*: the narrative and characterization. In this section, I will discuss the approaches to mixing different cultural elements in the series, based on the findings obtained from the in-depth interviews with the director and the co-writer of the series. The approaches to mixing different cultural elements in the series can be divided in three categories, depending on the writer's assumption of audiences' cultural understanding. They are 1) partial acceptance of cultural elements, 2) complete acceptance of cultural elements and 3) complete change of cultural elements.



#### 4.3.1 Partial acceptance of certain cultural elements

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*The Stranded* is an international TV series commissioned by Netflix and co-produced by GMM Grammy. It was created by Christian Durso, a foreign writer who collaborated with the Thai writing team on the direction of the story and oversaw the entire creative input by the Thai and foreign teams. The story concept originally proposed to Netflix is an island being hit by tsunami, but it did not specify which part of Asia it was supposed to take place in. While it was created by a foreigner, the Thai scriptwriters were also recruited to help craft a culturally authentic, credible story. The writing team of *The Stranded* is, thus, a hybrid one. "Christian Durso oversaw the creative input of the series. He has the final say of what was going to be included and what was not." (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

“Netflix chose Thailand as the backdrop of the story and H2L Media Group formed a writing team with GMM Grammy without the director being confirmed. It was agreed by the entire writing team that there would be seven episodes. However, once the director was confirmed to be Jim (Sophon Sakdaphisit), he requested that some aspects of the story – including cultural elements, some storylines and their credibility, and the characters and how they were presented – be changed. That was when I and other Thai writers stepped in to help Jim rewrite the first draft. The Thai writing team presented Jim’s ideas to Netflix, which were then approved.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).



Sophon corroborated that “the script did not specify the country hit by the tsunami. But once Netflix was able to strike a deal with GMM Grammy, I was contacted to develop the script. When I read the script, the story felt un-Thai. It was like putting a Hollywood story in Thailand. When it comes to rewriting the script, I wasn’t able to change the essence of the story, which is about an island being hit by a gigantic tsunami and the lives of students stuck in it being upended. All I could do was fixing certain details that didn’t feel Thai, but also making sure that those changes would be within the grasp of foreign viewers”. (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021).

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There are certain cultural elements that were revised by the Thai writing team during the rewriting process of the script, including the Naga subplot, which was an integral part to *The Stranded*. Sophon had to do additional research on the Naga myth and came up with story ideas rooted in Thai culture. He said “I had to do the research on the story of Naga and came up with a new set of data that I proposed to Netflix to suggest that Thai people have a particular perspective on and belief about Naga. There are many mysteries in *The Stranded*. In the first draft, the story included Thai beliefs, but

they were far removed from our culture, so I fixed them.” (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021).

Nataporn said the Naga element was already there in the first draft, but there were a lot of adjustments. “The Naga subplot was already included in the first draft, but the rewriting team, which included me and Jim the director, had to do a lot of research on Naga. The first draft also included folktales about a haunted island where its inhabitants committed suicide and ghost stories that felt similar to Thai ghost stories. But those horror aspects were rewritten because they were hugely underdeveloped. The Naga subplot was elaborated and dug deeper because it was crucial to Kraam’s identity. So details about the Naga myth and its association to Kraam’s background and the storyline about the fake Professor Lin, who is actually a Naga protector, were added.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021). It can be said that the Thai cultural elements proposed by the foreign scriptwriting team was partially adjusted by the Thai counterpart to ensure those elements would be recognized by Thai viewers.



Another aspect in the series that was partially kept – or changed – is the inclusion of *Phra Chai Suriya* poem and *Gone with the Wind* as the clues to a mystery. Nataporn explained that “Jim (the director) proposed to rewrite the bit about the clues. *Phra Chai Suriya* wasn’t there in the first draft. It was added to replace stories about a haunted school and other horror stuff that weren’t quite related to Kraam. Jim found out about the story of *Phra Chai Suriya*. And based on what he told us, it was quite spooky.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021). Sophon said adding Thai cultural elements was important for him, saying “there were already mysteries that needed to be unlocked in the first draft. And there was a mention of finding clues in the school library, like underground libraries shrouded in the dark that we often see in western movies that will help characters discover clues. But Thai students barely use libraries. So I thought about textbooks because these were the types of technology

Thais are familiar with. And poems are something we Thais learn in school. So I used textbooks for the characters to discover clues instead of them going to the library” (S. Sakdaphisit, personal communication, April 17, 2021). So the poem written by Sunthorn Phu was convinced by the series’ director to be included because poems are an educational aspect Thais are familiar with, as they have to learn in the Thai Language class as part of public school’s curriculum. Cultural familiarity was also taken into account, which is why it was important that some narrative aspects were adjusted so that Thai viewers would feel that they are watching something that they can relate to.



*Gone with the Wind* was not included in the first draft either. At first, it was going to be the date of the issuance of the first Announcement of the People’s Party included along with the *Phra Chai Suriya* poem that offered major clues to the mystery for Arisa and Ying to crack. But it was changed because it proved to be too culturally specific for an international show. “The inclusion of the first Announcement of the People’s Party required a lot of explanation and Netflix didn’t want to delve too deep into the country’s politics, so it was left out. *Phra Chai Suriya* was supposed to be encased in the box that reads ‘The Announcement of the People’s Party’. The date of the announcement was a historical moment in Thailand. So when the date, when put next to the verse numbers in *Phra Chai Suriya*, will provide a clue in the form of numbers. Eventually we went with *Gone with the Wind* because people around the world know of it” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

#### 4.3.1 Complete acceptance

When it comes to the inclusion of Thai beliefs, such as the proposed Naga elements, the exorcism performed on Nahm, and the depiction of the Naga imposter as a mysterious being, the foreign writing team completely embraced the ideas proposed by the Thai counterpart. “Christian Durso would consult with the Thai team on Thai

beliefs and ask what Thai people would think of, for example, Nahm and her ability.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

However, western cultural elements proposed by the American writing team were also fully accepted by the Thai team, as long as they are within the realm of Thai viewers’ understanding. The “Fuck, Marry, Kill” question Joey has for Kram while they are out looking for useful medicines in an abandoned was included in the first draft by Durso. Nataporn said the game was not hard to understand. “It was meant to show Kraam’s romantic feelings towards May. Thai people may not be familiar with “Fuck, Mary, Kill”, but we kept it in the script because it wasn’t difficult to understand. They would understand what it is once they saw it.” (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021). To make Thai audiences understand the purpose of the game, Joey has to explain to Kram, as well as the Thai audiences, how he can answer. This is why Joey says Kram can only pick one to have sexual intercourse with, pick another to kill, and pick the last one to marry.

Physical intimacy is also completely embraced by the Thai writing team, even though some intimate scenes might come across as slightly obscene. This is because the American writing team thought it was normal behavior among teenagers. And since *The Stranded* is a series about teenagers, it was inevitable that the series would feature lovemaking scenes. Many Netflix original series centering on teenagers, such as *The Society*, *Elite* and *Sex Education*, do not shy away from showing raunchy love scenes. Physical intimacy in *The Stranded* is thus in keeping with Netflix’s creative tradition. A complete acceptance of this tradition is normal and embraced by the Thai writing team.

#### 4.3.1 Complete change

There is at least one aspect in the script that was changed based on the Thai writers’ assumption of Thai viewers’ cultural familiarity. That aspect is Anan’s role in the



school band. In the series, audiences learn about Anan's backstory through a series of flashbacks to the past when he was a band conductor and how his conductor role informs Anan's motivation in the present days. At school, prior to the tsunami, Anan had to prove himself that he was a good conductor who could control the entire band with the flicks of his hands. He feels the pressure to make his band members follow his direction and to take charge of everyone. His backstory as the band conductor mirrors his rise to leadership while on the island. Anan became everyone's leader and feels the obligation to take charge. By the end of the series, Anan becomes the rightful leader, gaining support from those who side with him, not Kraam, and building a new world with a new set of rules.



Figure 10 Anan as a conductor  
(Source: Netflix.com)

In the script's first draft, Anan was not supposed to be a conductor. He was a pianist. In addition to fleshing out Anan's character, the change was also intended to make Thai viewers understand a Thai movie reference.

"We (the Thai writing team) proposed that Anan be the band conductor instead of a pianist. Anan being a conductor is also symbolic of his thirst for power and eventual leadership on the island. As a conductor, he wants to be accepted by his band members as well as his tough father, but he gets constantly challenged by others. When

we proposed this change, we said it was not too far-fetched for Thais to see a conductor being as young as Anan, as we've seen one before in *Season Change*. We also did additional research to check whether it's possible for someone very young to be a conductor. It's rare, but possible. And thanks to *Season Change*, it's the same impression audiences get from seeing Anan as the conductor." (N. Rattanachaiwong, personal communication, April 11, 2021).

The decision to make Anan a conductor instead of a pianist is based on the Thai writer's impression that Thai viewers will be reminded of another young student conductor in *Season Change*, a hit coming of age movie about a teenage boy who wants to get enrolled in a music school. With *Season Change* in mind, the Thai writers were able to make Anan's role as a conductor feasible, even though that change was questioned by the American writing team.

## Conclusion

Based on the textual analysis of *The Stranded* and in-depth interviews conducted on the director and the co-writer of the series, I found that culturally hybrid elements appear in two major components of the series: the narrative and characterization. I also found that there are three approaches to mixing Thai and western cultural elements, which are partial acceptance of cultural elements, complete acceptance of cultural elements and complete change of cultural elements.

In terms of narrative, it can be said that *The Stranded* is a culturally hybrid story because it is mixed with different narratives originating from different cultures. The series is underpinned by Thailand's Naga myth, which has been reproduced many times in different media realms, such as religion, sculpture and cinema. In Thai culture, Naga is often depicted as a mysterious, divine and all-powerful creature worshipped by people. These Naga beliefs were reflected in how Naga was presented in *The Stranded*. By

adopting the Naga myth, Netflix helps to popularize a Thai cultural belief and put it into the mainstream. Since cultural hybridity also concerns mixing elements from the same culture but from different periods, the Naga myth – an ancient belief – is put in the setting of the modern world. The legend of Naga was also juxtaposed with western cultural narratives that were used as a narrative setup. The two obvious western narratives found in the series are *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost*. Both stories originated from the United Kingdom and the United States of America, respectively. *The Stranded's* similarities to both stories constitute “Accidental intertextuality” or “Constitutive intertextuality”. It can be said that as an international Netflix show, *The Stranded* adopted the type of narrative setup reproduced in western pop culture from time to time to increase its international appeal. By mixing these narratives with the Naga myth, *The Stranded* juxtaposes Thai cultural elements with western ones.



The series' writers also mixed different cultural forms to create a mystery clue in the series. The obvious example is the use of the *Phrai Chai Suriya* poem, written by legendary poet Sunthorn Poet and *Gone with the Wind*, an American epic romance written by Margaret Mitchell. The intentional reference to the Thai poem and the American novel constitutes “Manifest intertextuality” or “Obligatory intertextuality,” in which the writers intentionally invoke a comparison with another text. The use of the two classic literatures marks the most transparent collision between Thai and western cultures, making the series a culturally hybrid show in terms of content.

Characterization is another site of the clash between Thai and western cultures. The construction of each character is more or less influenced by different cultures. The *Stranded* demonstrates that many characters are comfortable with physical intimacy, which is not often depicted in Thai mainstream TV series due to the socially conservative code of conduct. The physical intimacy is said to be intrinsic to the characters' nature. The archetypal social outcast is presented through the character of Arisa, who embodies both Thai and western cultural behaviors. Nahm, on the other hand, is the

character whose construction is largely influenced by Thai culture. Students' classroom manners, including raising their hand before speaking to the teacher, are influenced by Thai culture. This is because the series' director felt the need to inject a dose of Thainess to neutralize the Americanness of the show, making sure that it did not give off an American high-school vibe.

The approaches to mixing different cultures in *The Stranded* can be categorized into three categories based on the writers' assumption of viewers' cultural understanding. The first category is "partial acceptance of cultural elements," where some cultural elements were accepted but underwent a certain degree of adjustment to ensure they were accessible to viewers around the world. The second category is "complete acceptance of cultural elements," in which Thai and western cultural elements were accepted by both the American writing team and the Thai counterpart. The last category is "complete change of cultural elements," in which an idea regarding Anan's role was completely changed by the Thai scriptwriting team on the basis of Thai cultural understanding.



## Chapter V

### Summary of Findings, Discussions, and Recommendations

“Cultural Hybridity in Netflix’s Thai-Language Original Series, *The Stranded*” aims to study 1) culturally hybrid features as appeared in the series and 2) the approaches to mixing different cultural elements as part of the series’ creative process. I conducted a textual analysis on the seven-part series and in-depth interviews with two persons involved in the making of the series, the director and the co-writer. In this chapter, I will discuss the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

##### 5.1.1 Cultural hybrid elements in *The Stranded*'s narrative and characters

Cultural hybrid elements in *The Stranded* are a result of an international collaboration among Netflix, H2L Media Group and BRAVO! Studios by GMM Grammy. As Thailand becomes more integrated into Netflix’s international ecosystem of content production, the type of content produced also becomes increasingly glocalized, meaning cultural forms at the local level are being recognized and picked up at the global level. Netflix’s original content strategy, which I call “Go Local for Global,” played a major part in Netflix’s non-English language content receiving the culture-mixing treatment. In order to appeal to Thai viewers as well as international ones, the series should feel culturally authentic, yet universally appealing. Netflix’s non-English language content, thus, feels different from its English-language content because it is infused with cultures westerners may deem alien. *The Stranded* illustrates that, as a Netflix show, it is a conglomeration of cultural forms found in Thailand and in the West.

The project was created by an American writer from H2L Media Group and proposed to Netflix. When Netflix decided that the story would take place in Thailand, it signed a production deal with GMM Grammy to film in Thailand. The story’s creative

inputs were thus a combination of Thai and western cultural mindsets. *The Stranded* presented a good opportunity for Netflix to tap Asian markets, which showed promising growth. With the “Go Local for Global” strategy, Netflix banked on the success of *The Stranded* to find new subscribers in Thailand and Asia in general.

*The Stranded's* culturally hybrid elements and expressions can be found in two major components of the series: the narrative and characterization. These are the sites of the mashup between Thailand's local cultural expressions and western ones. In the narrative, the writers of *The Stranded* drew heavily from Thailand's ancient Naga myth deeply embedded in many cultural realms, including religion, to create the story's central mystery involving the protagonist's identity. The myth of Naga is one of the enduring myths that get reproduced in Thailand's mainstream media every now and then. In the film medium, there are *Mekhong Full Moon Party* (2002) and *Nakee 2* (2018), among others. In the television medium, there are popular Naga melodramas such as *Nakee* (2016), *The Miracle of Naga Gem* (2018), *Plerng Naka* (2019) and *Manee Naka* (2019). The popularization of the Naga myth indicates that Thailand has a long history and rich legacy of Naga. As the first Thai-language Netflix series, *The Stranded* also turned to the popularity of the Naga myth to create the first entry point or cultural gateway into Thai culture for foreigners. ทายาลัย

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The Naga element, which ties the narrative of *The Stranded*, is presented in a subtle way through key characters and objects, such as the Naga dagger and the gateway with a Naga sculpture. It is hinted, through Kraam's ability to breathe underwater, that he is the son of the Naga. *The Stranded* is about students trying to survive on their own while stranded on the island as much as it is about Kraam's journey to discover his true identity. The person who helps Kraam realize this is a Naga protector who impersonates Professor Lin. As a cold, beguiling figure, she displays some supernatural abilities that speak to Thailand's beliefs about Naga as a powerful being.

The Naga myth was juxtaposed with other narratives popularized in the West, namely *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies*. While the references to both stories might be unintentional, it is inevitable that viewers would make their own cultural connections and see the references, since the similarity among the three stories is jarring. Both stories concern a group of people who survive a disaster and are stranded on an island. With an in-depth examination on both stories, I found that *The Stranded* is similar to them more than initially thought. *The Stranded* is similar to *Lost*, especially the first season, in terms of the narrative trajectory. Like characters in *Lost*, characters in *The Stranded* venture into the jungle on the island and start to discover unexplainable – if supernatural – mysteries. Both stories also involve a radio tower supposedly located in the jungle, which the characters believe they can use to transmit a signal to the world for a rescue. Moreover, both *Lost* and *The Stranded* study their characters through flashbacks. And like *Lord of the Flies*, *The Stranded* tells of a group of students divided into two groups with two leaders competing for authority, one of whom gradually falls into savagery. With these similarities, it can be said that *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies* got reproduced in Thai context in the form of *The Stranded*. When juxtaposed with the Naga element, the story becomes a culturally hybrid one.



The most obvious mashup between Thai and western cultures is the use of Thai and American classic literatures to provide hints to one of the story's mysteries. The use of Sunthorn Phu's *Phra Chai Suriya* poem and Margaret Michell's *Gone with the Wind* constitute "Manifest intertextuality" or "Obligatory intertextuality," in which the writer intentionally invokes references to other texts. The inclusion of two literatures from different cultures speaks to Netflix's need to appeal to international audiences, not just Thais.

Characterization in the series is another site of the mixing between Thai and western cultures. Some characters in *The Stranded* exhibit western cultural attitudes

more than the others, and some embody Thai cultural beliefs more than the others. Physical intimacy is one of the most obvious aspects of western attitude. Lovemaking was deemed normal among teenagers. The progressive attitude embodied by Arisa, the “Fuck, Marry, Kill” game started by Joey, and the lesson of psychogenic illness taught by Professor Lin were all cultural ideas suggested by the American writing team. On the Thai side, the series has Nahm as the anchor of the Naga myth and the embodiment of Thai cultural beliefs.

Based on the textual analysis and the in-depth interviews, it can be concluded that cultural hybridization in *The Stranded* was driven by Netflix’s commitment to tap the Asian market with the “Go Local for Global” strategy and the need to increase subscription growth.



Table 4 Factors influencing cultural hybridization in *The Stranded*

### 5.1.2 The approaches to mixing different cultural elements in *The Stranded*

Because Netflix has created an open ecosystem that brings together foreign content producers, people from different cultural backgrounds can make creative contributions to the content. As a globalized show, *The Stranded* must appeal locally and globally. This means the Americanness of the show was neutralized by the Thai writing team and the Thainess of the show was neutralized by the American writing team. Both writing teams had to find a common space where different cultures can co-exist. Based on the findings, the culture-mixing approaches depend on the writers' assumption of audiences' cultural understanding.



Partial acceptance of certain cultural elements involves accepting some cultural elements written in the first draft and rejecting others that were underdeveloped narratively. When director Sophon Sakdaphisit agreed to direct the film, he asked the series' creator to add Thai flavors to the story, especially when it comes to the Naga myth. He also proposed that Sunthorn Phu's *Phra Chai Suriya* poem and the First Announcement of the People's Party be included in the series as major hints for a mystery. While the poem was agreed to be included in the series, the First Announcement of the People's Party was rejected because it was deemed too culturally specific, politically sensitive and inaccessible by international audiences. The First Announcement of the People's Party was eventually replaced by *Gone with the Wind*, a more popular text globally. This is to ensure that the cultural elements included in the series are accessible enough for Netflix viewers around the world. Partial acceptance illustrates that the Thai writing team has a high degree of creative liberty to make their contributions of cultural ideas.



Complete acceptance suggests that the Thai team completely accepted western cultural elements proposed by the series' foreign creator. These are the "Fuck, Mary, Kill" game and the physical intimacy scenes portrayed by different characters – straight and gay. The Thai writers did not oppose these western cultural elements because they were believed to be accessible enough by Thai viewers and did not require a lot of explaining. The decision to keep these elements was purely based on the writer's trust on Thai viewers' when it comes to western cultural grasp.

Complete change is the complete rewriting to ensure cultural accessibility. Complete change is exemplified by Anan's character, who was initially written as a pianist in the first draft. The Thai writing team turned him into a conductor instead, despite being very young, citing Thai viewers' cultural familiarity with *Season Change*, a coming-of-age movie about a boy aspiring to attend a music academy. While the Thai writing team acknowledged that young conductors in high school are rare, they exist in

the popular Thai movie. It would not be entirely unfeasible to write Anan as a conductor. The decision to turn him into a conductor was also in line with Anan's character arc, who – as the leader of the survivors – must ensure everyone is submissive to him.

## 5.2. Discussions

A previous study on *The Stranded*, titled “Content Creation and Production Process of the Products of Netflix Original Thailand” examines the creative management and process of *The Stranded*. The series' process of creative management and production involved a collaboration with international staff, the “Writer Room,” the use of an international system and the need to create local content for global audiences. The research also discusses the general storytelling techniques in *The Stranded*. My research, on the other hand, is aimed at studying cultural hybridization of the same series, or the process of mixing various cultural forms, and the ways this process occurs. By doing so, I draw from the theoretical frameworks of cultural hybridity, corporate transculturalism, glocalization and intertextuality to make sense of it. In this section, I would like to discuss the findings within those frameworks.



As Netflix continues to enjoy steady rise, new original content continues to get churned out at an unstoppable rate and consumed by audiences worldwide. Netflix's international expansion plays a major role in shaping the type of content being created. As a global platform, Netflix is proving it can give voice to underrepresented groups and put them into the center of the narrative. By hiring local content creators and writers to work with western ones, Netflix seeks to ensure that original content created for a specific market will not feel too westernized, which could alienate audiences in the market the content is intended for. This is the case with *The Stranded*, which illustrates that original content can have an international appeal while maintaining local flavors. Thanks to the mixed creative inputs by American writers and Thai counterparts, *The Stranded* was infused with diverse voices and cultural ideas that come from different

parts of the world that do not override one another. Different cultural elements can clash and blend into one or simply co-exist. Some characters in *The Stranded*, like Arisa, Ice and Ying, are the embodiment of cultural hybridity in the sense that they embody Thai and western mindsets. Ice and Ying do not shy away from showing physical intimacy in public. The depiction of their intimacy (e.g. kissing passionately in front of other people as though they do not exist) is rarely depicted in Thai mainstream high-school series due to Thailand's socially conservative code of conduct. A character that embodies Thai cultural beliefs also exists in the same space as other culturally hybrid characters in the series. Nahm, for example, comes across as more Thai than other characters because of her intense Buddhist belief.



As evidenced by *The Stranded*, Netflix has somehow developed an effective transnational media strategy for its creation of non-English language original programs. The act of using culture mixing as a creative strategy to justify its footprint expansion globally can be framed within corporate transculturalism, which influences how it produces original shows, especially non-English language ones. Corporate transculturalism concerns cultural fluidity, or the dynamic flow of different cultures across borders. Kraidy (2005) argues that corporate transculturalism has become a corporate tool for capitalists to open new markets by adopting their cultures to create products that are potentially lucrative. If *The Stranded* was claimed to have found around 150 million viewers worldwide, as of 2019, then the series was quite successful as a hybrid cultural form. Successful hybrid cultural forms need to have strong commercial value, which can be generated by the adoption of familiar cultural elements like the Naga myth and known intellectual properties like *Lord of the Flies and Lost*. The act of adopting familiar stories borders on rehashing narrative formulas that have proven many times to be successful in different cultures. In so doing, Netflix wants to ensure profitability.

The Naga myth, deeply entrenched in Thai society, speaks to its popularity at the local and international level. With the Thai writing team's familiarity with the Naga myth, Netflix avoids "hollywoodizing" a local narrative and is able to create a Thai original series with a local myth that comes from the local perspective. But Netflix's consideration of adopting the Naga myth for its first Thai-language original series and the eventual use of it may also suggest that, while Naga is endemic to Asia, it has a universal quality to it that makes it reproducible on an international level. Naga gets reproduced countless times in Asian movies and is presented through various motifs. Thanks to its transnational appeal that dominates mainstream media in Asia for decades, Naga makes *The Stranded* accessible in Asia and beyond. For those who are not familiar with it, it serves as a perfect cultural gateway into Asian culture.



The use of foreign stories like *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies* shows that popular western narratives can be reproduced in Thai context. Even though the Thai writers subject to the interview for this research claimed *The Stranded* was not influenced by *Lost* or *Lord of the Flies*, Netflix might have those stories in mind when it developed this series. The streamer also developed a similar series titled *The Society*, which premiered in the same year as *The Stranded*. It centers around a group of teenage students who are cut off from the rest of the world and must run the community they are in. *The Stranded's* similarities to *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies* may be a funny coincidence, but they are too obvious to not be ignored.

The unintentional references to *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* follows the amoeba pattern, in which the form is altered while substantial content remains the same to a certain degree. That is to say, *The Stranded* draws from *Lost* the story of a group of people stranded on an island after a plane crash and from *Lord of the Flies* the story about a group of young boys stranded on an island trying to govern themselves before falling into savagery (content). But *The Stranded* puts these concepts in the Thai context with newly created characters with Thai nationality and settings in Thailand (form). In this

case, content refers to the narrative essence that makes *The Stranded* identifiable as an intertext, which makes references to *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost*. Form, on the other hand, refers to the package in which the content is wrapped in. This is why cultural hybridization in *The Stranded* does not follow the coral pattern, which refers to goods whose content is changed but whose form is untouched.

In terms of intertextuality, *The Stranded's* unintentional references to both *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* are “Accidental intertextuality,” according to Fitzsimmons, or “Constitutive intertextuality” according to Fairclough. Both, however, suggest that the series’ references to other texts are implicit or accidental and dependent on the text’s reader to make their own connection based on their personal cultural experience. While the references may not be intentional, *The Stranded's* similarity to *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* illustrates Barthes’ argument that no text is original and the text’s creator engages in borrowing from different sources to create their own work. It is also important to note that both of these stories are not original works in Barthes’ sense. That is, they . might have been inspired by texts that existed before them – intentional or unintentional. And it can be argued that *The Stranded* drew from other western narratives in addition to *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies*, if another reader sees its connection to other similar stories. All in all, it can be said that *The Stranded* is an intertext because it draws from different narratives – Thai and western.

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I compare *The Stranded* to both *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* using my own tables that I call the “5-stage Narrative Trajectory.” The table is not modeled after plot structure models like Gustav Freytag’s Fretag pyramid or Roland Barthes’ (1977) linear narrative structure that follows the order of “Order, Disruption, Complication and Resolution.” The Five-stage Narrative Trajectory is different from the aforementioned plot structure models, often used in mainstream narratives for two major reasons. First, it is more specific and dependent on the context of this research only. Second, it takes into account the intertextual association between *The Stranded* and *Lord of the Flies* and

*The Stranded* and *Lost*. The Five-stage Narrative Trajectory model illustrates that the Thai-language Netflix original series shares a similar narrative pattern with the other two western texts. The purpose of this model is to point out the culturally hybrid nature of *The Stranded* and how it becomes a reproduction of familiar western stories.

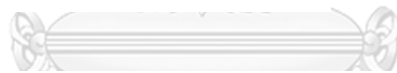
By borrowing different cultures to create original content, Netflix further complicates the concept of original content, a term that is already problematic in itself, as no text is original. If “original” is defined as something inventive, fresh or unprecedented in terms of content, then “Netflix Originals” are not wholly original. Rather, “Netflix Originals” speak to a new business model by an entertainment giant that consciously feeds on exotic cultural forms to create locally authentic content with strong commercial value. In other words, Netflix needs to borrow successful narrative formulas to create original shows to ensure profitability. Its creative strategy has redefined “original” as something culturally hybrid in terms of content. In *The Stranded*, the adoption of Thailand's enduring myth of Naga as well as narrative setups like *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost* illustrates that these narrative tropes have been successfully recycled from time to time in the mainstream media.



As Thailand's first Netflix series, *The Stranded* was produced at the time when Netflix was actively looking to tap Asian markets to bring new content to new viewers. The discussion of *The Stranded* being an international show can be placed within the trend of glocalization, which rethinks the concept of globalization and rejects its linear influence of the West on the East. With the rise of local cultural influences, cultural flows are increasingly becoming multi-directional in the modern world. Local identities are no longer overridden by global forces; they are instead recognized on a global scale and increasingly integrated into the global discourse. Netflix's interest in and acceptance of Thailand's Naga myth suggests that local cultural narratives can be presented in new lights and – in turn – popularized on an international level. In the marketing sense, the integration of local narratives is necessary because it helps sell the product in the

country it is intended for. When Thai viewers see the Naga myth, for instance, they will recognize the Thainess of the show and feel that the show is intended for them. Foreign viewers will also see the exotic appeal of the Naga myth and a taste of Thai culture without perceiving it as being inaccessible, as it is presented alongside western narratives like *Lost* and *Lord of the Flies*. Examining *The Stranded* within glocalization as a trend illustrates why blending different cultures is important to form a new, “original” product.

Another thing to note is that when making a glocalized show populated by characters with a cosmopolitan mindset, the names of the characters should come across as easy to pronounce for foreign viewers, despite them being Thai. An interesting thing I observed from watching *The Stranded* is that the names of the main characters in the series do not have difficult pronunciations. They are Kraam, Anan, Joey, May, Ice, Ying, Arisa, Nahm, Lin, Krit, Jan, Jack, Nat and Gun. These are the names that could easily be pronounced by foreign viewers. Characters’ names in *The Stranded* can, thus, be said as one of the traits of a glocalized content.



This research makes a connection between cultural hybridization and corporate transculturalism to suggest a streaming giant like Netflix uses cultural hybridization with a certain degree of awareness as a corporate tool to make profits and stay relevant in the increasingly competitive streaming arena. While cultural hybridization can be seen as a positive trend that takes into account cultural heterogeneity, it can also be argued that it has become a new, transnational language for Netflix to conquer the world of media with its own beast of original programming that has become so distinct it could be its own genre. Cultural hybridization arguably disguises itself as an transnational media imperialist engine initiated by a western media conglomerate like Netflix, which adopts local cultures, appropriates them and articulates new meanings for their own financial interest.

Netflix has already brought about a shift in paradigm of media consumption, one arguably determined by the inevitable growth of streaming technology. It is already committed to deterritorialization and decentralization on a global scale by allowing people to watch content anytime, anywhere, on any device. But Netflix's international expansion further reaffirms that that paradigm shift extends to how original content is being produced today, or its tendency to assimilate and commercialize local cultures. Thanks to its move from licensing content to producing its own, Netflix is aware of the necessity to feed international viewers. By cooking up a hodgepodge of various cultural expressions, Netflix is bringing local cultures under its dominance because of an economic imperative. While some of the original content flop (many original series by Netflix get canceled after one season and many original films are underseen), some of them become hits. Whether Netflix has found a formula to make successful original content is still a question mark, but it will continue to thrive using cultural hybridization as a beguiling tool because it opens plenty of doors of opportunity for the streamer to mine new stories in different parts of the world and make it play anywhere.

### 5.3.1 Recommendations

#### 5.3.1 Suggestions for the research to be used <sup>ล้าย</sup>

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5.3.1.1 This research can be used as an academic reference for future development of Thai-language Netflix original shows, which is bound to happen as the Asian market has been integrated into Netflix's open ecosystem. The research illustrates that cultural hybridization occurred in two major components of *The Stranded*: the narrative and characters. Content developers and creators can review this research and see how these culturally hybrid components make the show appealing to international viewers.

#### 5.3.2 Suggestions for further studies



5.3.2.1 Further audience studies research can be done to understand how audiences perceive cultural hybridization in non-English language Netflix original content and see if culturally hybrid elements are successfully blended, based on audiences' opinions. Audience studies research can provide insights into what audiences' thoughts on successful or unsuccessful cultural mixing.

5.3.2.2 Intertextuality is a useful approach to see the link between a text and its references to other texts and understand how creative content is engaged in cultural mixing. Since a text always refers back to other texts that existed or were created before it – regardless of cultural backgrounds – it may be inspired by other texts. Intertextuality can be used to study future Thai-language Netflix content and its relation to other texts, Thai and foreign. Further studies, however, may find that *The Stranded* intentionally references *Lord of the Flies* or *Lost* or other stories that came before.



5.3.2.3 Further studies on *The Stranded* or other Netflix original content can build on or expand the approaches to mixing different cultural forms discussed in Chapter 4. The findings of this research suggest there are three approaches to mixing different cultural forms: partial acceptance of cultural elements, complete acceptance of cultural elements and complete change of cultural elements. Researchers may come up with different approaches or add new approaches not specified in this research.

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
**CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY**



## VITA

NAME Thanarath Chaichompu

DATE OF BIRTH 5 September 1992

INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University  
Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University

