การทำคริสต์จักรโปเตสแตนต์ในกรุงเทพมหานครให้เป็นคริสต์จักรท้องถิ่น:
การศึกษาเพลงคริสเตียน

นางสาวเจน ลี ยุน เมย์

THE LOCALIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN BANGKOK PROTESTANT CHURCHES: A STUDY ON CHRISTIAN MUSIC

Miss Jane Lee Yuin Mei

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for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Thai Studies

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ถึงแม้ว่าในช่วงเวลา 400 ปีที่ผ่านมามิชชันนารีในประเทศไทยจะดำเนินการเผยแพร่ศาสนาคริสต์อย่าง จริงจังและต่อเนื่อง แต่ประเทศไทยก็มีประชากรที่นับถือศาสนาคริสต์เพียงประมาณร้อยละสองเท่านั้น เหตุผล ประการหนึ่งก็คือความรู้สึกแปลกแยกและเป็นต่างชาติของศาสตราคริสต์ซึ่งใช้รูปแบบแบบตะวันตก ไม่ว่าจะ เป็นบทเพลง รูปทรงของอาคาร ธรรมาสน์และวิธีการนมัสการ ส่วนแปลกแยกไปจากวัฒนธรรมไทย อย่างไรก็ดี จากการที่ผู้นับถือศาสนาคริสต์ชาวไทยริเริ่มโบสถ์แบบไทยและมีบทบาทเป็นผู้นำในโบสถ์ที่มิชชันนารีเป็นผู้ ก่อตั้งขึ้นประกอบกับการที่มิชชันนารีต่างชาติก็เริ่มมีความตื่นตัวให้ความสำคัญกับเรื่องราววัฒนธรรมก่อให้เกิด ความพยายามที่จะผลักดันศาสตราคริสต์ให้มีความเป็นไทยมากขึ้น

ด้วยวิธีการใช้แบบสำรวจความคิดเห็นในโบสถ์ 18 แห่ง ตลอดจนการวิจัยแบบมีส่วนร่วมในโบสถ์ที่คัด สรร 4 แห่ง รวมถึงการสัมภาษณ์ในเชิงลึกกับผู้นำของโบสถ์ ผู้นำการนมัสการและผู้แต่งบทเพลง วิทยานิพนธ์ ฉบับนี้ศึกษาขอบเขตของอิทธิพลต่างประเทศต่อดนตรีคริสเตียนรวมทั้งระดับที่ดนตรีคริสเตียนในโบสถ์คริสต์ นิกายโปรเตสแตนท์ในกรุงเทพมหานครมีลักษณะที่เป็นไทยมากขึ้น ผลการวิจัยพบว่ากว่า 3 ใน 4 ของบทเพลง นมัสการขับร้องกันในการบูชาในวันอาทิตย์เป็นบทเพลงที่แปลจากภาษาอังกฤษเป็นส่วนใหญ่ สิ่งนี้สะท้อนให้ เห็นว่าอิทธิพลตะวันตกยังคงปรากฏในวัฒนธรรมของโบสถ์และปรากฏในประเด็นต่าง ๆ เช่น แนวคิดทาง เทวศาสตร์ เครื่องดนตรี และการให้คำจำกัดความของ "ดนตรีที่ดี"

ผู้วิจัยชี้ให้เห็นตัวแปร 4 ประการที่มีผลต่อการที่ศาสนาคริสต์จะมีลักษณะที่เป็นไทยมากขึ้นใน กรุงเทพมหานคร ได้แก่ ความขัดแย้งในระดับหนึ่งระหว่างประเพณีกับความเป็นสมัยใหม่ ชนชั้นกลาง การอุบัติ ขึ้นของดนตรีไทยแนวป๊อป และแนวคิดเรื่องความเป็นไทย ด้วยเหตุนี้โบสถ์ที่มีสมาชิกเป็นชนชั้นกลาง มักจะ พยายามที่แสดงออกซึ่งภาพลักษณ์ของความ "ทันสมัย" โดยการใช้ดนตรีที่มีรูปบลักษณ์แบบตะวันตกซึ่งอาจ เป็นได้ทั้งบทสวดหรือบทขับร้องหมู่สรรเสริญพระเจ้า ในทางตรงกันข้ามโบสถ์ที่พยายามยามกลับไปสู่ "ชนบประเพณี" และพยายามที่จะแสดงออกว่าสามารถที่จะเป็น "ไทย" และ "คริสเตียน" ในเวลาเดียวกันมักจะ ใช้รูปแบบทางวัฒนธรรมแบบไทย ๆ ในพิธีนมัสการในวันอาทิตย์ อย่างไรก็ตามการใช้ท่วงทำนอง และเครื่อง ดนตรีแบบไทยมักไม่เป็นที่นิยมนักในกรุงเทพฯ เนื่องจากไม่เป็นที่ยอมรับของกลุ่มชนชั้นกลางที่เป็นประชากร ส่วนใหญ่ในโบสถ์เหล่านี้ ดังนั้นวิธีการที่เหมาะสมที่สุดในการทำให้ดนตรีคริสเตียนในกรุงเทพฯ มีความเป็นไทย มากขึ้นอาจได้แก่การเขียนเพลงไทยโดยคนไทยที่มีประสบการณ์แบบไทยเพื่อคนไทย -- แต่ใช้รูปแบบการ ดนตรีแบบตะวันตก

ลายมือชื่อนิสิต ....

สาขาวิชา ไทยศึกษา   ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา ....

ปีการศึกษา 2548   ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาร่วม ....

Despite prolonged and intensive Christian missionary efforts for the last 400 years, the religion lays claim to only about two per cent of the population. One of the main reasons for the dismal failure is the foreignness of Christianity, where its Western forms – hymns, building styles, pulpits and worship styles – are all alien to Thai culture. However, with more Thai Christians starting local churches and taking over the leadership of the missionary-planted churches, as well as foreign missionaries becoming more aware of the cultural issues, attempts have been made at localizing Christianity in Thailand.

Based on a questionnaire survey of 18 churches, participant-observation research at four selected churches, and in-depth interviews with church leaders, worship leaders, and songwriters, this thesis explores the range and extent of foreign influences on Christian music as well as the level of localization in the music used in Protestant churches in Bangkok. Research findings show that three-quarters of the songs sung during the Sunday worship service are translated, mainly from English. This suggests that Western influences remain prevalent in church culture, and have been noted in areas such as theology, musical instruments, and the definition of "good music".

The author identifies four factors that affect localization of Christianity in Bangkok: the tension between tradition and modernity; the middle class, the emergence of Thai pop; and the concept of "Thainess". Hence, churches with a middle class congregation tend to try to portray a "modern" image by using music in the Western style, which could be either hymns or praise choruses. Conversely, churches which hearken back to "tradition" and want to show that it is possible to be both "Thai" and "Christian" are likely to use Thai cultural forms in the Sunday service. However, the use of Thai traditional tunes and instruments in church is not popular in Bangkok as it is likely to offend the urban sensibilities of the middle class, the main demographic of the city churches. Hence, the most suitable way to localize Christian music in Bangkok is perhaps, to borrow a phrase from one of the informants: Write Thai songs by Thai people with Thai experiences for Thai people – but use the Western style of music.

Field of Studies Thai Studies   Student's signature ....

Academic Year   2005   Advisor's signature ....

                                        Co-advisor's signature ....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GLOSSARY

Ching	Small cymbals for keeping time.
Khaen	A mouth-organ whose pipes are connected with a small, hollowed-out wooden reservoir into which air is blown. It is a polyphonic instrument and is today associated with the Lao of Laos and Northeast Thailand.
Khim	A hammered dulcimer made of wood and trapezoidal in shape, with numerous brass strings and is played with two flexible bamboo sticks.
Khon	It is the most stylised form of Thai dance and mostly features episodes from the Ramakien.
Khong wong yai	A set of sixteen pitched gong-kettles that surround the musician and are played with large, medium-hard mallets.
Klong yaw	A drum with a relatively long body compared to its head and has a wide range of tones from booming lows to snappy highs.
Lakhon	Features a wider range of stories than *khon* and includes folk tales and Jataka stories.
Likay	More varied than *lakhon* or *khon*. Stories may be original and include singing, comedy and ham acting.
Luk thung	Literally means "child of the fields", it is the most popular form of Thai country music and typically reflects the hardship of everyday life among the rural poor.
Mor lam	An ancient Lao form of song in Laos and Isan whose characteristic feature is the use of a flexible melody which is tailored to the tones of the words in the text. Accompanied primarily by the *khaen*.
Ranad ek	Xylophone

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christianity on the whole has been spectacularly unsuccessful in penetrating Thailand despite prolonged and intensive missionary efforts by both Catholics and Protestants. The Catholics were the first to arrive in the 17th century. French Jesuits attained considerable influence at the court of Ayutthaya, and even attempted to convert King Narai, but failed. They lost their position and influence in the xenophobic revolution of 1688 which followed Narai's reign (Thompson 1967:646, Wyatt 1984:113-117). This early failure to convert the Thais led to a stagnation of Christianity in Thailand for 150 years.

The Protestants arrived in the 19th century and also failed to convert many Siamese. More than 20 American Presbyterian missionaries laboured for 18 years, from 1831 to 1849, and did not make a single convert. Meanwhile, the American Baptists made only 45 converts, chiefly among the ethnic Chinese, after toiling for 30 years from 1833 to 1863 (Saad 1985:21). The picture has not improved much through the years. The Population and Housing Census carried out by the National Statistical Office in 2000 showed that there were 730,996 Christians in Thailand, making up 1.2 per cent of the population. However, the figures from Christian sources (Barrett *et al.* 2001) are nearly double for the same period: there are about 1.4 million Christians, making up 2.2 per cent of the population. A large proportion of the Christian population is found among tribal peoples which implies that the actual percentage among ethnic Thai people is still quite low.

Scholars and missionaries offer various reasons for the dismal results, with the foreignness of Christianity being the main issue. In 1931, American sociologist Carl Zimmerman reported that everything the Thai convert was expected to do shouted foreignness: "A person could not become a Christian according to standards laid down by the missionary, without becoming almost completely denationalized and deculturized from his own social system." (Zimmerman 1931 cited in Hughes 1983:100) Carl Blanford, an American missionary to Thailand, expresses similar views:

"Christianity has been introduced into Thailand by Westerners and is generally regarded as a 'foreign religion'. Its institutions are foreign. The architecture of its buildings is foreign. Its music is foreign. Its emphasis on individual conversion and the separation of its members from their original social relationship also cause people to regard it as foreign." (1975:15)

In short, Christianity in Thailand is heavily influenced by foreign forms – hymns, building styles, pews, pulpits, and worship forms – which are all alien to Thai culture. Besides, this foreignness was compounded by the often uncompromising attitudes of the early Catholic and Protestant missionaries towards the "heathen" beliefs and customs of the natives whom they sought to convert. However, these attitudes began to change in the last few decades under the impact of a more open, "liberal" theological outlook of the churches and the exigencies of the local situation (Cohen 1995:41). With Thai Christians starting indigenous churches and taking over the leadership of the missionary-planted churches, as well as foreign missionaries being more aware of cultural issues, the discourse for localizing Christianity is widening up.

Considerable localization efforts have been made in the area of Christian music. The act of singing in church, in Thai and to a personal God, is arguably the most "foreign" aspect of the Christian religious ritual. In atheistic Buddhism, the lay practitioner chants in Pali. Moreover, the singing session is the only activity that the entire congregation can participate in simultaneously during the Sunday ritual. Hence singing in church is believed to foster unity among the churchgoers (Gregory 1997:131).

This thesis looks at the cultural change in the music culture of Bangkok Protestant churches. The three stages or types of localization that this study will deal with are: the modifications that Western compositions underwent when adopted by local Christians, the growing use of local compositions in the churches and the adaptation of traditional music for use in the churches. Although the popular perception of Christianity in Thailand assumes Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity to be a homogenous bloc, the reality is that the two are completely separate entities, with very little to do with each other and different tenets of faith. Protestant Christians are known as *khristian*, while Roman Catholics are known as

khristang. This research focuses only on Protestant Christianity and unless specified otherwise, all mention of churches and Christianity refers to Protestant Christianity.

Objectives

1. To study the current range and extent of foreign influences on Protestant churches in Bangkok through Christian music.
2. To assess the level of localization of Christianity in Bangkok Protestant churches through Christian music.

Theoretical framework

Evangelical Christianity has been widely numbered among those supposedly homogenizing forces and forms of globalization that infiltrate the local while in the process becoming locally differentiated (Aragon 2000; Knauft 2002; van der Veer 1996). It joins in that judgement, presenting itself as an example of the most intentionally globalization of traditions. Not only does it seek to reproduce itself in every nation, culture and person but it imagines itself doing so in a way that transplants the pristine truth of a transcultural (or culture free) divine Word into the heart of every convert regardless of society and cultural background. Yet along with this homogenizing intent, evangelical Christianity has also been concerned that the products of their labour should become self-governing, self-propagating churches that express evangelical Christianity in their own local idioms (Zehner 2003:25). Thus an ideal of globalizing anti-syncretism is combined with an equally powerful ideal of localization.

In predominantly non-Christian settings such as the one in Thailand, this interactivity helps ground the global in the local, while doing so in a way that does not directly challenge the tradition's anti-syncretistic self-image of timeless and universalist purity. In other words, it may be possible, through the study of Christian music, to conceive of Thai evangelical Christianity, like other forms of alternative modernity, as embodying rhetorics and social arrangements that, while incorporating elements of globalized culture, also give it new local expression. Hence, the discussion on the localization of Christianity in Bangkok has to necessarily be situated

in the wider discourse on globalization and culture change. The theoretical framework for the thesis is based on theories used in the study of music as culture, and, more specifically, in the study of musical change, within the discipline of ethnomusicology. It also draws heavily on Barnett's (1953) seminal work on the concept of innovation.

Globalization and culture change

Globalization may be nothing new (cf. Clark 1997; Hannerz 1996; Wolf 1982), but nearly all authors agree that the process has been accelerating since the 1960s. More importantly, some strongly suggest that in particular its cultural dimensions and consequences have become much more salient than in all preceding epochs. In particular, technological advances in communications and transport are referred to in this regard (Appadurai 1990:1-2, 1996:1-26; Hannerz 1996:19). There are many definitions of globalization, but Kearney's heuristic definition will be used here:

> *"Globalization (…) refers to social, economic, cultural and demographic processes that take place within nations but also transcend them, such that attention limited to local processes, identities and units of analyses yields incomplete understanding of the local. In other words, we are dealing with the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa."* (Kearney 1995:258)

Hannerz describes globalization in a similar manner. But he also suggests, following the sociologist of religion, Roland Robertson, that we should approach the outcome of the increasing interconnectedness of the world as an emerging "global ecumene" rather than with rivalling concepts, such as "global mosaic", presuming that boundaries remain intact, or MacLuhan's "global village", evoking homogenization.

The study of globalization is necessarily indebted to world-systems theory. Wallerstein's (1974) world-systems concept was a welcome tool to counter the nation-state centred social analyses of modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s. Stressing the international and transnational asymmetric distributions of power in its core concepts of centre and periphery, it directed attention to the importance of systemic global flows and relationships for local developments in various parts of the world. World-systems theory has repeatedly been dismissed for its rigid

functionalism. Its inability to accommodate the emergence of new successful regions and the making of a more polycentric world have been valid points of criticism (Chirot & Hall 1982; Robertson & Lechner 1985). Appadurai's notion of disjuncture between various sorts of flows in the world economy has been explicitly introduced to transcend such shortcomings. Polycentricism, disjunction of flows, and even some measure of mutuality in the interaction between centres and peripheries, are the dominant themes in contemporary analyses of cultural globalization.

Global, local, glocal

Until recently, it was widely assumed in public opinion that market expansion and modernization entailed increasing cultural homogenization, as implied by such concepts as "one world culture" and "Cocacolonization". In this scenario of homogenization, global culture – its commodities, ideologies, and styles, stemming from the centre – diffuses downwards along global (economic) asymmetries and results in a loss of local cultural distinctiveness (Hannerz 1992). This view is still prevalent among economists, while it also shapes media studies. Appadurai in this respect makes the illuminating statement that the homogenization thesis is generally a thesis of commodification. In contrast to the commodification-view, he emphasizes that the fact that commodities are now distributed everywhere on the globe does not necessarily imply that the meaning and use of such items become homogeneous (1996:45). The formats in which meanings are being expressed might be increasingly similar, but they are generally appropriated differentially and become incorporated in the organization of meaning and everyday life in a variety of ways, leaving much to the needs and creative practices of indigenous people. Homogenization and heterogenization, thus, may not necessarily be opposites. Or to speak with Clifford Geertz, "the more things come together, the more they remain apart" (1996:71 cited in Staring *et al.* 1997:10). In the cultural globalization theory advanced by most anthropologists nowadays, it is mainly the last part of Geertz' one-liner that is emphasized and heterogenization rather than homogenization is put forth.

It may recognise that "indigenous peoples" have long been quite familiar with markets and Western capitalism, that they come to the market with specific needs and outlooks, and that their cultural practices therefore need not be suddenly swept away

by the high tide of global capitalism. It embraces Hannerz's concept of an ongoing creolization of cultures and cultural styles within the theoretical framework of a "culturally sensitive" world-systems theory. This theory accepts the presence of multiple centres and dynamic peripheries. It recognizes that peripheries might sometimes speak back, even unexpectedly and unsolicited, and it can thus attribute some essential cultural will and capacities to peripheral actors as well as accommodate a lack of oversight and power on the part of any core (Staring *et al.* 1997:10).

Appadurai's basic dilemma has been the relation of culture to territory in an increasingly deterritorialized world, now that the classic idea of a locally rooted, authentic culture has become irrelevant. At the same time, Appadurai claims, we cannot gain much from Wallerstein's world-systems approach on this terrain of culture. Instead, he distinguishes between five different sorts of global cultural flow that move cultural materials across national and territorial boundaries. These flows, instead of being seen as closely interconnected, as in a Marxist or world-systems vision, are held to be fundamentally disjuncted. He identifies five such flows and looks at them in their capacity of shaping local human landscapes. He calls them: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes (1990:6-7). Appadurai argues that none of these flows is prior to and formative of the others. The cultural outcome of the interplay between such flows and the local events, problems, and responses to which they give rise, are therefore "radically context-dependent" (1990:21), similar to the multiple and specific local conjunctions of translocal cultural traits that Hannerz sees emerging in the ever more heterogeneous world. He seeks to capture these with his concept of creolization. Creolization of culture describes the process whereby elements from distinct and separate local cultures, from the centre as well as the periphery, become mixed and integrated into meaningful local forms (Hannerz 1996:69). Creole culture stems from the creative interplay between cores and peripheries and Hannerz uses it as a symbol for an increasing global heterogenization of culture.

If there is really "nothing mere about the local", as Appadurai (1996) claims, then this should reside in the patterned conjunctions that localization entails: the structured linkages with global flows, forces, and opportunities; the recollections and

institutionalized outcomes of prior local history; the patterned fields of force within which interrelated actors, local and global, move, innovate, and manoeuvre in order to secure their interests and realise, in a double sense, their needs and their projects. Building on Sony's president Kenichi Ohmae's thoughts on global-local relationships, Roland Robertson (1990) has coined the concept of "glocalization", stressing the various patterned but creative ways in which global flows become locally appropriated, incorporated, and transformed. The fact of "glocalization", of the patterned conjunctions that shape localities and by means of which they shape themselves, lends a new relevance to classic local fieldwork, precisely in the current epoch of accelerating global flows.

Innovation: the basis for cultural change

Barnett's (1953) study on culture change identifies innovation as the basis for the change. He attempts to formulate a general theory of the nature of innovation and to analyse the conditions for, and the immediate social consequences of, the appearance of novel ideas. For the purposes of this study, only the section on the process of innovation will be discussed here.

An innovation is defined as any thought, behaviour or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms (Barnett 1953:7). In defining innovation as something that is qualitatively new, emphasis is placed upon reorganization rather than upon quantitative variation. Innovation does not result from the addition or subtraction of parts. It takes place only when there is a recombination of them. The essence of change lies in the restructuring of the parts so that a new pattern results, a pattern the distinctness of which cannot be characterized merely in terms of an increase or decrease in the number of its component elements. Hence, Barnett proposes that the first step in innovation takes place when an individual analyses the conventional configurations to which he and others have been accustomed so as to provide possibilities for new organizations. Configurations, as he defines them, are made up of the activity systems of their component parts, the qualities of the configuration being distinctive to it and different from the qualities of its components (1953:184). When a configuration is analysed, its parts are recognised

as being bonded together by specific relationships, such as spatial, correlative, genetic, and so on.

Barnett notes that an innovation is due to the hybridization or cross-referencing of two pre-existing configurations. By this it is meant that what was formerly a part of one configuration has been united with what was formerly a part of the other to form a new configuration with properties distinct from those of either of the two pre-existent wholes (1953:188). Figure 1.1 illustrates the process.

Figure 1.1 Process of innovation.
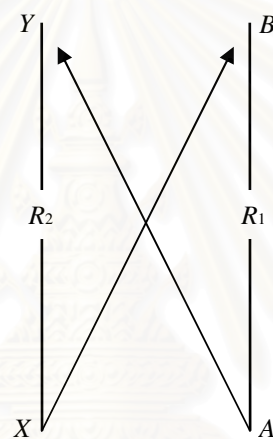
(Source: Barnett 1953:188)

In it, *AB* represents one of the configurations involved in innovation. It is a recognised unit of some description, such as the idea of a table or the idea of a family. As long as it remains a unit, it is without parts; but as a prelude to its inventive recombination, it must be analysed into its parts *A* and *B*. When this happens, inevitably some relationship will be perceived between parts *A* and *B*. In the diagram, this relationship, whatever it may be, is symbolized by R_1. The other configuration, *XY*, is similarly conceived, so that at the moment of analysis its two components stand in some relationship, symbolized in the diagram by R_2. When innovation takes place, *X* is combined with *B* in the relationship R_1 or R_2; or *A* is combined with *Y* in the relationship R_1 or R_2; or *X* is combined with *Y* in the relationship R_1; or *A* is combined with *B* in the relationship R_2.

Barnett goes a step further from innovations that result from an identification of either *X* with *A* or *Y* with *B* and their single or alternative assimilations to *AB*, and

suggests that both these identifications, and consequently a total assimilation of *XY* by *AB*, can occur. When double assimilation takes place, the relation, R_1, between *A* and *B* is the new bond between *X* and *Y*. Otherwise nothing new would result. But with the combination XR_1Y, there is something new. The importance of this compounded process lies in the fact that there is a sameness of relationship with the prototype but a substitution of its component parts. In any event, there is a change of the content of a prototype but retention of its shape or form because of the retention of relationships. The result is a "square of similarity" or an analogy (Barnett 1953:267). Musicians make extensive use of analogies. The most obvious instances occur when the same tune is played by different instruments or the same song is sung by different voices. In the same way, an analogy is created when a score is transposed from one key to another. The substitution of different words in the same tune is, of course an equally common occurrence. In all these cases, the form has remained the same but the precise characteristics of the content have changed. The tonal relationships of the words are the same as in the prototype; but the content, the actual sounds, are different (Barnett 1953:271).

This theoretical framework of innovation will be used to assess and gauge the churches' efforts in localizing Christian music.

Music and the West

Popular music, with its unique capacity to cross borders, communicate on multiple planes, and symbolically encode and embody social identities has provided particularly fertile ground for explorations of local/global interactions (see, for example, Austerlitz 1993; Desroches 1996; Erlmann 1994; Guilbault 1993; Langlois 1996). Scholarly treatments of new, hybridized forms of popular music in the non-Western world or on the periphery of the West have tended to revolve around the overlapping concerns of mass media critics, opponents of cultural imperialism and more recently, post-modern theorists.

Some of the most fruitful work along these lines is that which has recently coalesced around the phenomenon that has come be known as "world music" (Feld 1994). But as critics of the world music trend have been quick to note, a highly arbitrary assortment of genres and styles have been lumped together under this label;

in fact, the only thing that all (or most) would seem to share, other than a peripheral position vis-à-vis the corporate-controlled transnational recording industry, is recent commodification as a result of the development of new types of global markets for musical exotica. As Martin Roberts argues, "World music may best be defined… not in geopolitical but in economic terms, as a new kind of commodity in the global marketplace of the popular music industry, a new unit of exchange in the cultural economy of global capitalism." (1992:232-33)

Western music

The concept of "Western music" is a term used widely in the literature but rarely defined. One may ask whether, through the many stylistic changes through which European music has gone since the Middle Ages, there is sufficient continuity to justify such a unilateral term. Further, the study of inter-cultural influences in the 20th century must take into account the differences among styles and strata of Western music available to non-Western societies, for it includes everything from Renaissance music to Cage, Viennese waltzes to rock and roll, Sousa to Sullivan, samba to polka. It is true that the first contact of most non-Western societies with Western music was through church music and military bands, but surely the Renaissance composers introduced to Japan during the first missionary period, the English military bands brought to India in the 18th century, the Protestant hymns that came from the Dutch to native South Africans, and the massed choral works and organs introduced to 16th century Mexico presented Western music in a number of different guises. It is against this backdrop that Nettl (1986a) defines Western music as a style with functional harmony, emphasis on instrumental ensembles, metric pieces.

Even then, musical taxonomy within a culture remains a related area of concern. What happens to this classification system when a new musical culture is introduced into it is a further methodological problem, and there may be substantial discrepancy between an outside analyst's "objective" appraisal and the perception of a society. For example, whether something is properly Chinese music, in the view of Chinese musicians, seems to depend less on the style than on the identity of composer, performer and context. Western sounding music is Chinese if composed by a Chinese

person. On the other hand, some North American Indian tribes sharply distinguish between "Indian" and "white" musics in their repertories, although they perform and listen to both (Nettl 1986b:368).

Weber's sociology of music

Weber's (1921) work on the rationalization process, which led to the rise of capitalism in the West, sheds light on how rational elements crept into Western music. Part of the rationalization process was the growth of bureaucracies and he suggests that the bureaucratization in the Roman Catholic Church had a rationalizing or bureaucratizing effect on the music the Church produced, and was eventually responsible for the music "conventions" (accepted musical practices and rules for music writing and musicianship) associated with European classical music. Example of this would be notational systems, structured harmony, organised choirs, ensembles, orchestras, and the standardised construction of instruments. A combination of processes led to the standardization of music notation, standardized music instrument construction, and standardized performance that produced the unique European music style we recognise.

Weber's theory rested on a unique vision of the West, and the assumption that deep-rooted structures, unknown to the human actors, were shaping historical events (Eisenstadt 1992). He applied a methodology of researching music notation in the Roman Catholic Church (the only institution to hold any substantive, ancient records of music then) to uncover the evidence of rationalization. The data he found proved his theory that it was indeed the church monks who standardized notation to teach and pass on liturgical music. He was also unable to find music notation in other cultures, and thus concluded that the rationalization process had produced these rational elements in music. While music's effect on culture may be overstated by Adorno's (1945) earlier work on National Socialism in Germany, both Weber and Adorno have in their analyses the reciprocal model of society influencing music and music influencing society.

Western influences in local music

Nettl (1986a) contends that "the most significant event in the world music of the 20th century is the coming of Western musical culture to all other cultures." Yet, intercultural influences were not invented by the Western missionaries or colonialists who first brought Western music to much of the world, and their hymns and military ensembles were not the first strange sounds that ever fell on unsuspecting ears. Some things are known, and much is suspected, about the confluence of indigenous, Indian, and Middle Eastern cultures in the development of Javanese music, the influences of Persians on the music of North India under the Mughals, the combination of older African and North African elements in the course of the Islamicization of parts of West Africa, and on a smaller scale, the exchange of styles accompanying the prehistoric movements of North American Indian peoples (Nettl 1986b:361). The 20th century has been different in several ways: One music was brought to all others, and thus the world becomes a laboratory in which it is observable how different cultures and musical systems respond to what is essentially the same stimulus.

Although the ways in which Western culture has influenced other musics are almost countless, Nettl (1986b) identifies a few features that stand out for their prominence and widespread distribution. The most prominent perhaps is the introduction of **Western harmony** (in its 18th and 19th century versions) into non-Western musics, and thus, the performance of old melodies, and the composition of new ones, with harmonic accompaniment often of a very rudimentary form. A correlative feature is the increased emphasis on **scalar or modal patterns** that may be present in a non-Western repertory, but that are compatible with Western major and minor modes. Also among Western influences is greater emphasis on **metric structures** (in those cultures in which there is non-metric music), and simplification of complex metric patterns where these exist, in order to provide compatibility with simple Western duple and triple meters. Many **Western instruments**, such as the piano, guitar and violin, have been introduced. In some of the societies in which improvisation has played a major role, the importance of the composed piece has increased. To some degree these influences do not involve merely stylistic change, but also the introduction of major **musical values** of the West – the concept of

harmony, of rhythmic control through meter, and of composition as the most significant kind of music-making.

Response to Western influences

Despite Western's culture influence on local music, it has not been an entirely one-sided dialogue. Nettl (1958), Wachsmann (1961), and Blacking (1978) have written theories about the nature of musical change, concentrating principally on the interaction of non-Western and Western and how local cultures respond to the Western forms. Nettl (1978) identifies 11 processes that contribute to the adaptation of Western influences in an article that was criticized and complemented by Kartomi (1981) who suggests redirection of some of the concepts and indicates a half dozen others. Shiloah and Cohen (1983) then went on to provide a classification of materials resulting from the influence of Western music and social contexts on the musical culture of "Oriental" Jews in Israel, suggesting a grouping possibly applicable in many societies. Nettl's (1986) useful summary of the processes identified in these publications is replicated in Table 1.1.

The social psychology of music

The enjoyment of music is essentially a social experience. Music contributes to many of the ceremonies that mark the significant events in people's lives – weddings, funerals, parties, dances, church services, thanksgiving, and state ceremonies of commemoration, coronations, and political rallies with their fanfares and anthems. This section focuses on the function of music in religion and ritual, and its role in group identification and cohesion.

Role of music in religious rituals and ceremonies

Religious and state or local ceremonies are one of the most widespread occasions for music throughout the world, ranging from church bells to ceremonial fanfares on trumpets to greet a new ruler. Nkeita (1988) describes the use of music in ceremony in Africa, and points out that music may either set the mood for the actions or provide an outlet for the feelings they generate. Drumbeats may create a mood of mourning for the death of a chief or a sense of pageant for the installation of a new

Table 1.1 Responses of non-Western musics to Western influences.

	Nettl (1978)	Kartomi (1981)	Shiloah and Cohen (1983) (for Israel only)
	Abandonment (e.g. Australian aborigine's vestigial retention of didgeridoo)	Virtual abandonment	Fine art Ethnic fine art
	Reduction or impoverishment (e.g., Japanese reduction of repertory)		
Westernization (becoming part of Western system by adopting central features of Western music)	Diversification (diverse styles in one concert, record, film)	Transculturation (taking clusters of Western musical culture)	Popular Pseudo ethnic
	Humorous juxtaposition (mariachi Mozart; "Twinkle, twinkle" in Indian film)	Pluralistic co-existence of musics (Blackfoot "white" and "Western")	Transitional
	Consolidation (pan-Indian or Peyote style from several Indian traditions)	Transfer of discrete traits (harmonizing but leaving all else)	
	Syncretism (fusion of compatible elements – Africa)		
Modernization (modifying tradition by adapting non-central Western features)	Exaggeration (non-Western character stressed; Plains India, Arabic singing styles)		Neotraditional
		Compartmentalization (e.g. Japan)	
	Artificial preservation ("national treasures" in Korean and Japan)		Conserved
	Reintroduction (Afro-Caribbean music influences Africa)	Nativistic revival (e.g. Ghost Dance, Juju)	
		Virtual rejection of Western music (e.g. India)	Traditional

Source: Nettl (1986:366)

ruler. The formal part of any ceremony is often followed by music and dancing which allows an emotional expression of feelings. Ceremonies for individual members of society are also important, and music is an essential element of every marriage, initiation ritual, and funeral in most cultures.

Music is believed to facilitate communication with the ancestors, the spirits, and the Creator, and to harmonize the forces of the visible and the invisible world (Gregory 1997:132). Diallo and Hall (1989) document that in Mali traditions, music, particularly drum rhythms, is used for healing purpose. They describe the technique of the musician in trying to find a musical rhythm that has a calming and stabilizing effect on the patient, and then continuing it for several hours, helping to restore the disturbed individual to inner balance. As part of the attempt to communicate with the spirit world, some practitioners fall into a trance, a special state of consciousness which usually occurs in a religious context. It may feature a convulsive state, accompanied by cries, trembling, loss of consciousness, and falling. In many different traditional cultures music is used to induce trance states in individuals during special ceremonies (Gregory 1997:134).

Rouget (1985) gives a detailed review of the relations between music and trance. He rejects the simple view that music directly causes trance states, pointing out that the forms of the relations between music and trance are quite different in different cultures. He describes the role of music as "socializing" the trance, where the precise relation between music and trance will depend upon the conventions of each particular society. Music may trigger a trance state or calm it, and in different cultures trance may be induced by loud or quiet music, the human voice, drums, or other instruments. He analyses trance as being associated with two different aspects of religion: shamanism and possession. The word shaman originally comes from the Tungus people of Siberia, but is now used for similar religious practices in Southeast Asia and all the Americas. In all these cultures, the shaman's trance is conceived of as a journey to the "upper" or "lower" worlds, undertaken in the company of the spirit he embodies. It is a voluntary trance, where the shaman gains control over the spirit. In possession it is not the person who visits the spirits in their world, but the spirits who visit him or her. It is essentially an involuntary trance where the spirit gains

control over the person. Theses two forms of trance are associated with quite different uses of music.

Possession is associated everywhere with music and dance, and these both play their part in inducing trance. Often music and dance may act together to produce the emotional state favourable to trance. All kinds of music may produce possession trance, although there are some frequently recurring characteristics such as breaks or abrupt changes in rhythm, or a simultaneous accelerando and crescendo (Rouget 1985:26). Within a culture trance music may be characterised by a particular scale or mode, such as the Phrygian mode in ancient Greece which was associated with the cult of Dionysus, but the scale is a cultural signal and does not have intrinsic emotional properties. It was noted that it is the dancers, who are members of the cult, who go into trance, not the musicians playing who are external to the cult.

The ability of music to induce different moods has also been used by religious practitioners in worship rituals, so as to modulate the response from followers. On the basis of a review of empirical studies, Bruner (1990) offered generalizations about the musical qualities that induce different moods. Excitement is produced by music in the major mode, fast tempo, of medium pitch, uneven rhythm, dissonant harmony, and loud volume. Tranquillity is produced by music in the major mode, slow tempo, medium pitch, flowing rhythm, consonant harmony, and soft volume. Happiness is induced by the major mode, fast tempo, high pitch, flowing rhythm, consonant harmony and medium volume. Sadness is produced by the minor mode, slow tempo, low pitch, firm rhythm, and dissonant harmony.

In Christianity, practitioners believe that music plays basically two roles: to praise and worship God, and to displace worldly or secular music. Since listening to music is a social experience, and music is able to induce various moods in the listeners, Christian musicians have traditionally seen music as a tool for evangelism purposes. It is thus not surprising that when a musician or artiste converts and becomes a Christian, he becomes keen to use his art to bring the gospel message across (see Chapter 3).

Role of music in group identification

Music is a powerful means of creating a sense of belonging, either to a particular ethnic group or to a place. Stokes (1994) states that "music is socially meaningful… largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them". In British popular music, Cohen (1994) has shown how discourses, both oral and in the musical press, have created a distinctive "Liverpool sound" as opposed to both a "Manchester sound" and a "London sound".

Lewis (1992) writes that people's musical tastes may reflect a tendency to listen to, and to enjoy, the same music as is listened to by other people they like, or with whom they seek to identify. Take for example the upper middle class: Research has shown that musical tastes are related to social class, usually defined in terms of socio-economic status and occupational category, and classical music, as a putative element of "high culture" is preferred more by higher socio-economic status groups and/or those with higher education (Gans 1974:81). Why, then, is the upper middle class more likely to have a taste for classical music? Russell (1997) suggests that subscribing to a particular musical taste culture may be one way in which people seek to identify with a specific social class. The different musical tastes of different classes are part of a much broader panoply of class difference norms relating to tastes, interests, values, attitudes and behaviour. These norms serve simultaneously to reinforce between-class differences and to promote within-class solidarity.   Musical tastes, then along with such factors as style of dress, manner of speech, and political affiliation, help establish an individual's membership of a particular class and promote class cohesion (Russell 1997:151).

Moreover, the socialization of individuals involves a host of influences, stemming from parents, other family, peers, and society generally, and serving to perpetuate systems of behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, and values. There is reason to suppose that this intergenerational reproduction of culture will extend to the aesthetic domain, including musical tastes (DiMaggio & Useem 1978). For example, the tendency for a taste for classical music to be more common among the upper middle class would reflect the fact that children growing up in upper middle class homes are

more likely to encounter classical music and to experience positive values associated with it.

While adults can and do, by flashing their musical sophistication, make themselves members of an imagined elite, music plays an even bigger role in group identification and cohesion among young people. Music consumption may be considered the primary leisure objective of adolescents – at least in industrialised societies that afford adolescents sufficient leisure time as well as the privilege and the means to choose freely from among entertaining alternatives. Davis (1985) estimates that from seventh to 12th grade, American teenagers average 10,500 hours of elected exposure to popular music. Such times approximate those spent in the classroom from kindergarten through high school. Popular music, in its various forms, appeals more to younger people. The existence of a distinctive youth, teenage culture centring on popular music has long been recognised and the commercially-slanted popular music of the best-seller charts has traditionally been aimed at this taste public. Not only is the taste for popular music in general stronger – and tastes for other music types (especially classical) weaker – among teenagers than among older age groups (Denisoff & Levine 1972), but the teenage group also shows a stronger preference for current popular hits (Fox & Wince 1975).

The distinctive musical tastes of the young serve to separate them from their parents and older people generally (the "generation gap") and also act as a framework for a set of socially shared meaning and common states of awareness through which individuals identify with others in their peer group (Coleman 1961; Frith 1983). The exhibition of one's musical taste is used to distinguish oneself. Or as Frith so succinctly puts it, "All adolescents use music as a badge." (Frith 1983:217) For instance, adolescents in foreign countries that embrace Western culture can easily distinguish themselves by exhibiting a strong interest in popular Western music, which is exactly what the better educated students tend to do (e.g. Cuthbert 1985; Rauth 1982; Reddi 1985).

Literature review

One of the most common charges levelled against Western missionaries is that they were unable to separate the Christian religion from such European trappings as monogamy, Western dress and etiquette, and accordingly sought to impose an all-inclusive package upon the Third World countries. The extreme ethnocentricity and cultural arrogance of many early Western missionaries cannot be denied but there have been sincere attempts in the last few decades to correct it. Hence, it is not surprising that the voluminous literature on Christian missionary and evangelising activities (e.g. , Bosch 1991; Boutilier *et al.* (eds.) 1978; Davis 1998; Hvalkof & Aaby (eds.) 1981; Schneider & Lindenbaum (eds.) 1987; Whiteman (ed.) 1983) is primarily concerned with the adaptation of Christian beliefs and practices to the local setting, and particularly the adoption of indigenous customs by the Christian churches.

Many different terms, each with a slightly different shade of meaning, have been used to describe this process – contextualization, localization, indigenization, inculturation, incarnation, accommodation, acculturation, adaptation, and etc. While the more commonly used expressions in Christian circles are contextualization and inculturation, the long list of terms highlight the lively, and sometimes heated debate, over this issue as well as the difficulty, if not impossibility, of crystallizing the multi-faceted process into a single word. This literature review is divided into three sections. The first part gives an overview of the broad perspectives on localization; the second gives a sampling of the localizing efforts ongoing in three countries, with special attention paid to ritual and music; the last part looks at the literature on localization in Thailand.

Broad perspectives on localization

The concept of "localization", although the term was not coined yet, has its historical origins in a 1659 injunction issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to the missionaries in China and Indonesia:

> *"Put no obstacle in their way: and for no reason whatever should you persuade these people to change their rites, customs and ways of life unless these are obviously opposed to religion and good morals. For what is more absurd than to bring France, or Spain, or Italy or any other part of Europe into China. It is not these that you*

should bring, but the faith which does not spurn or reject any people's rites and customs unless they are depraved, but on the contrary tries to keep them... admire and praise what deserves to be respected." (Davis 1998:6)

Theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) later pioneered the view that all theology was influenced, if not determined, by the context in which it had evolved. There never was a "pure" message, supracultural and suprahistorical. It was impossible to penetrate to a residue of Christian faith that was not already, in a sense, interpretation (Bosch 1991:422). Yet his views were slow to take off and the period from 1800 to 1950 was referred to by Hiebert (1987) as the "era of non-contextualization" as far as Protestant missions were concerned. Missionaries still thought of their defined theology as universalist and simply had to be "indigenized" in Third World cultures, without surrendering any of its essence (1987:104-106).

What is localization?

The attempt to localize Christianity can be seen as parallel to the translator's effort to produce a "dynamic-equivalent" script which faithfully reproduces the meaning of the original text through the use of a culturally appropriate form. For example, the Inuit people of the Arctic know nothing about grazing animals, and to them the description of Jesus as the "Lamb of God" is meaningless. In their Bible, therefore, He has become "the Baby Seal of God", for the seal is an animal they understand and depend upon for food, clothing and fuel – it is their life (Bowen 1996:79).

Over time, localization became understood as the process by which a *local community* integrates, in the light of universal Christian tradition, its understanding of the gospel (the "text") with its understanding of its culture (the "context"). Unlike in accommodation, the primary agent in mission is no longer the missionary but the members of the local community. In accommodation, the missionaries assigned only very minor roles to the members of the mission church; contextualization, on the other hand, demands what is essentially self-Christianization (Luzbetak 1985:516). The most common illustration of localization in the literature is that of the seed and the plant pot. As Kraemer (1956) puts it, the gospel must not be brought as a potted plant

dependent on the foreign soil of another culture. The gospel must be brought as a seed that is planted and raised in native soil. Only then will it lose its foreignness.

Kaplan's typology

Kaplan (1986), who writes from an African context, makes a valiant attempt to introduce some specificity and order into the study of adaptation of Christianity to indigenous religions. In his programmatic paper on the "Africanization of missionary Christianity", he proposes a six-fold typology of the modes of mutual adaptation of Christianity and native African religions. It consists of six empirically defined types, ranging from the "toleration" of African beliefs and practices, to their "translation" into Christian ideas and concepts, "assimilation", "Christianization" and "acculturation", all the way to their "incorporation" into the body of African Christianity (ibid:167-180).

The author does not propose an explicit rationale underlying his types and their order, but it appears that the types are loosely ordered by the extent to which the adaptations and adoptions become central to the theology and institutional structure of African Christianity, "toleration" being the most peripheral, "incorporation" the most central type. The typology does not, however, resolve the problem of the conceptual distinction between Christianization and indigenization (Africanization in Kaplan's case); in fact from the viewpoint of this distinction, the title of his paper is a misnomer: he deals with the Christianization of African beliefs and practices, rather than with the Africanization of the Christian religion. Hence, the use that the Africans make of Christian beliefs and practices in a traditional African religious framework remains unexplored.

'Pre-axial' versus 'axial'

In most literature, the "indigenous" religion and culture is conceived as a global, undifferentiated category. Relatively little attention is paid to the distinguishing characteristics of different indigenous religions and their impact on the extent and the specific types of Christianization. A distinction of crucial significance in this respect is that between "axial" and "pre-axial" indigenous religions (Eisenstadt 1986). In brief, "pre-axial" religions, illustrated by most "primitive" or "pagan"

religions, whatever their complexity, do not construe the world in terms of a fundamental chasm between the incomplete mundane sphere and an absolute transcendent sphere nor do they possess a detailed soteriology, a systematic teaching as to the route by which salvation from the mundane world could be achieved. "Axial" religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism do posit a chasm between the two spheres and propose a soteriological teaching in which it can be overcome.

Most detailed studies of Christian missionary activities relate to "pre-axial" indigenous contexts, such as that of African (e.g. Beidelman 1982), Oceanian (e.g. Boutilier *et al.* (eds.) 1978) or South American (e.g. Shapiro 1987) tribal religions. Scholars have remained largely unconcerned with the difference between the encounter of Christianity with such "pre-axial" religions and the great "axial" religions, such as Buddhism.

Cohen (1987) also points out that studies of localization do not distinguish clearly between processes in which *beliefs* of one religion are adopted by another and the parallel processes of adoption of *practices*. He argues that Christianity, being primarily concerned with correct beliefs (e.g. in "dogmas") will find it easier to adopt some of the practices rather than the beliefs of other religions; a more practice-oriented religion, such as Judaism or Islam, in contrast, will find it easier to accept beliefs, rather than practices (ibid:4).

Localization in practice

Yang (2004) contends that there have always been two obvious motivations for localization: the disseminators' strategy for spreading the religion and the recipients' identity crisis. Obviously it is hoped that by means of its inculturation, Christianity will acquire grounds for legitimacy in the various cultural contexts and resolve the identity tensions between "Chinese/Thai/Indian" and "Christian". This section explores the localization efforts that have led to the growth of "African Christianity", "Korean Christianity", and "Indian Christianity".

African Christianity

The development of an "African Christianity" started with the establishment of the African Initiated Churches (AICs), or sometimes called African Independent Churches, as early as the late 19th century. They have typically grown out of a Protestant mission context but, often in frustration with the Western missionaries, have gone their own way and function without reference to overseas churches. They range from independent versions of Western Protestant churches to highly syncretistic Christian versions of traditional African religions, which may use Christian language in reference to God, but have no real role for Jesus Christ. AICs are found across Africa; they are strongest and most numerous in Kenya, Nigeria and Southern Africa, though there are hardly any in Tanzania, Uganda, or Sierra Leone. Pauw (1995) suggests that at least 36% of the population of Africa belongs to an AIC.

Most of the AICs arose as a result of disagreements between African Christians and Western missionaries over the extent to which traditional African practices were permissible. Many AICs permit polygamy following the Old Testament cultural practices which the New Testament does not reject. Very few mission churches tolerate polygamy. AICs also often have a vividly spiritualistic view of reality as a cosmic spiritual battleground sprinkled with demons and witches, in which diseases have spiritual causes and cures, and prayer can persuade God to bring rain. This view, which is much closer to the Biblical world than to the Western world, led them to clash with the scientific Western mission view which had little time for exorcism, faith healing or rainmaking through prayer (Kenny 1990). Mbiti (1969) points out the popularity of the AICs:

> *"Africans do not really feel at home with the foreign religions because some are based on books with the hymns translated from Latin or English and sung to foreign tunes which have little rhythm and no bodily movements like clapping hands, twisting the loins or dancing. Worship under this type of dull condition for an African would be the height of hypocrisy. Thus Independent Churches are an attempt to find a solution, to feel at home not only in worship but in the whole profession and expression of Christian faith. In these African Churches, people can freely voice their sorrow, present their spiritual and physical needs, respond to the world in which they live and empty themselves before God."* (1969:234)

The AICs are mostly doctrinally identical to Protestant mission churches except that more African music, and later dance, is mixed with the imported church services (Ayuk 2002:193). Participation is vital to the African in worship. Music, be it spontaneous or written in hymn form, is usually accompanied by instruments such as drums of various types, gongs, flutes, trumpets, and rattles (Olajubu 2001:179).

Localization of Christian music in Kenya

According to Kidula (1999), Christian music for most Kenyan society was at the onset forcibly imposed onto the people at a fast rate. Through repeated performances, it became part of the people's collective memory. Kenyan Christian adherents modeled their initial compositions on missionary styles although the performance delivery differed somewhat from that of their European counterparts. Eventually, with changes in Christian doctrines for some, e.g. the onset of Pentecostalism, spontaneous songs sprang from Christians who had not been to segregated mission schools. This led to compositions using indigenous musical structures, as the composers first drew on their own heritage and the sounds around them.

She also notes that musicians have only recently begun to explore their traditional instruments, which have yet to move away from their "primitive", "pagan" and secular associations. It is a controversial issue and discussions often became tense regarding acceptable church instruments from the West which are also used in "secular" spaces. On the other hand, many of the musicians do not know how to play traditional instruments. Musicians, who had initially done so, abandoned it as a sign of becoming a Christian as, historically, these instruments were inappropriate for playing Christian music. However, because of Western domination and control of the industry, religious-based and other sounds coming from the West are still posited as the best compositional and performance models.

Black music

It would be remiss to discuss Africa and music without mentioning African American music, which in itself is a fascinating study of the ability of black Americans to assimilate European-based forms and bend them to their own purposes,

as in the spiritual and the ragtime, and to provide inspiration for some of the most popular mainstream white music. Most blacks in 18th- and 19th- century America were slaves; hence, most black American communities existed under some degree of white control, which discouraged the survival of such elements as drums, Old World languages, and African religious beliefs. Living in proximity to whites, black Americans gradually adopted certain white musical genres without abandoning their own indigenous performing styles – much more aggressive in rhythm and freer in pitch than any Euro-American singing or playing.

Perhaps the most famous example of an acculturated vocal music is the spiritual, the black American version of the Protestant hymn. First set down by white amateur musicians in the landmark collection *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), then sung in harmonized choral versions by the Fisk Jubilee Singers and other groups of young blacks under white direction, and much later turned by trained black musicians into art songs for solo voice and piano, the spirituals illustrated how the folk music of a people considered "half barbarous" by its first white collectors could be adapted without losing its distinctive, haunting beauty (Southern 1997). Black musicians' fondness for off-beat accents within a steady metre was expressed through all available means: vocables, such as body-slapping and foot-stomping; African-derived instruments like the bones and the banjo; and eventually European instruments, especially the fiddle and the piano. By the end of the 19th century, black American performers had fashioned an entertainment and dance music called ragtime, in which square-cut, syncopated melodies were played in a series of contrasting, march-like strains. Genres such as the blues, jazz, and swing (a pop-based outgrowth of jazz) can all be traced back to the black influence.

Korean Christianity

About a third of South Korea's 45 million people is Christian – 11 million Protestants and three million Roman Catholics. The largest church in the world is also found in South Korea: the Central Full Gospel (Pentecostal) Church in Seoul has about 650,000 members and a pastoral staff of over a hundred. The church holds multiple services each Sunday and broadcasts a domestic radio and television ministry (Ro 1996:48)

The Korean Church has been known for its emphasis on prayer. Every church has a predawn prayer meeting every day, come rain or snow. Its origin goes back to 1906 when Rev Kil Sun-Jun started it at his church in Pyong Yang when the Koreans were going through a painful experience of being annexed by the Japanese Empire. Currently, some of these predawn meetings at 4.30am, 5.30am, and 6.30am draw up to 16,000 people (ibid:62). All night prayer meetings are another aspect of the prayer emphasis in the Korean Church. They are usually held on Friday evenings, once a week, or once every two weeks. Christians sing hymns, listen to messages, give testimonies, and pray all night. Korean Christians often pray audibly together with loud voices during worship services. There are 52 prayer mountains (prayer retreat centres) throughout the country, and thousands of Christians go up to the mountains for prayer.

Johnstone (2001) reports that there are 14,646 Korean missionaries serving in 156 countries, which is more than any country, except the United States. It has been observed that these Korean missionaries have brought the traits of Korean Christianity such as fervent prayer and pre-dawn gatherings to the countries they go to, with many holding it up as the correct model for a church. For example, Korean missionaries in Thailand have set up a "prayer mountain" in Chonburi. Bosch (1991) cautions against what he calls "absolutism of contextualism", where one's theological position is universalized, made applicable to everybody, and demanding that others submit to it. This was what happened in Western missionary outreach where theology, contextualized in the West, was in essence elevated to gospel status and exported to other continents as a package deal:

> *"If Western theology has not been immune to this tendency, neither are Third World contextual theologies. A new imperialism then simply replaces the old."* (ibid:428)

Because of the religio-cultural legacy of Confucianism, which has been the sole cumulative tradition during the past five centuries in Korea, Confucian elements have been incorporated into the practice of Christianity. Hence, early church buildings in Korea were built not in a Western style but with traditional brick and straw. Old-fashioned Confucian schools were used as the place for the gathering of early Korean Christian communities. Christians also employed Confucian musical

instruments, which were formerly used for ancestor worship, for their own worship service (Kim 2002:84). In fact, Ching (1989) suggests that the stronger Confucian influence in Korea has been favourable to the development of Christianity, whereas the stronger Buddhist influence in Japan has been more of a deterrent.

Indian Christianity

The 2001 census in India recorded over 24 million Christians, comprising 2.3% of the country's population. There are two main regional concentrations of Christian population, namely in South India and among tribal people in East and Northeast India. Protestant missionary activities started with the onset of British rule in India from 1757. This correlation of colonial rule and Protestant mission effort resulted in Christianity and churches being perceived in some ways as vestiges of colonialism and as a threat from the outside. The missionaries' effort to supplant Hindu civilization and establish a superior civilization failed and left the country with pockets of a very Westernized church which is isolated socially and culturally (Shubin 2000:7).

By late 19th century, Indian Christians were attempting to separate Christianity from its Western associations and rethink the Hindu-Christian interface. One of the forerunners, Kali Charan Banurji, started a newspaper in 1870 called The Bengal Christian Herald, later changed to The Indian Christian Herald, and the first issue of the paper stated that:

> *"In having become Christians, we have not ceased to be Hindus. We are Hindu Christians, as thoroughly Hindu as Christian. We have embraced Christianity, but we have not discarded our nationality. We are as intensely national as any of our brethren of the native press can be."* (Baago 1967:67)

Some 30 years later, Sadhu Sundar Singh came to the fore of Indian Christianity and had since remained as one of its permanently significant figures. He took on the dress and lifestyle of a *sadhu*, or ascetic, and wandered the roads in his yellow robe and turban, preaching to the Indian people in a way that made Christ relevant to them. In his words, he lived to introduce his own people to "the Christ of the Indian road" (Sharpe 2004:64). Some of his biographers estimate that, even though he never heard the later vogue-word "indigenization", he had done more than any man in the first

half of the twentieth century to establish that "Jesus belongs to India" (see Watson 1975, Thompson 1992).

Efforts at Indianizing Christianity are still ongoing. Semantically, the term "Christian" is sometimes avoided in order to dissociate from the "Christian West" and the baggage it entails. Increasingly, the terms "believer", "Christ-follower" or even "Christ *Bhakta*", which means a devotee or disciplined disciple of Jesus, are used to denote one's spiritual affinity. It is also not uncommon to find various indigenous forms integrated into church worship, for example, the use of the *tabla* and/or *sitar* alongside Western instruments; the utilization of *Bharatanatyam*, or the classical Indian dance, as an evangelism tool; and the singing of *bhajans*, the devotional song of the Hindus. However, Hale (2003) notes that the last 50 years, especially the last 15 years when foreign missionaries were expelled after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, have shown a marked decline in efforts to indigenize worship, not because there are no local talented musicians to compose indigenous songs but because the localization effort lost its most enthusiastic promoters and sponsor – the long-term foreign missionary.

Meanwhile, urban Indian society at large is becoming increasingly globalized and Western influences can be seen in everything from Indian MTV to Bollywood to the fight for who holds the mantle of India's Silicon Valley. The growing middle class shows little outward affection for traditional Hinduism: they are dressed well but not often in traditional Indian clothing; they have discretionary income and spend it freely on all types of entertainment (Shubin 2000:9). While it seems that the Westernized Indian church may then be a perfect fit for the urbanized, modernized India that is growing, Arles disagrees, noting that under the young people's Westernized surface, they are actually "very Indian at the core of their being":

> *"Middle class India is running after Western ways. Except religion. They are absolutely adamant: No foreign religion, no foreign religion. That is as repulsive to the Hindu today as it was a hundred years ago, as it was a thousand years ago, maybe even more repulsive today. So, these cultural trends are not an aid to the Gospel in that sense."* (Shubin 2000:9)

Localization in Thailand

The current literature on localization in Thailand remains limited. The most prolific writing on this topic has come from Western missionaries at the Thailand Covenant Church, a work of the Evangelical Covenant Church of America. Covenant work in Thailand was initiated by Jim Gustafson, a missionary, in the 1970s and became well-known in evangelical and international missions circles for its approach to localizing the Christian message in Northeast Thailand. The discourse on localizing Christianity in Thailand has been dominated by Westerners, mostly missionaries, but Thai scholars are beginning to engage with the issues. Nantachai and Ubolwan Mejudhon, a husband and wife team, are one of the first Thais to write, at least in English, on this subject.

Interestingly, while both Gustafson (1983) and the Mejudhons (1997) acknowledge the importance of localizing the forms of Christianity, which they also put into practice, they contend that "making people sit on the floor, using Thai musical instruments, performing Thai dances in worship services, substituting sticky rice for bread in the communion services and building churches in the style of Buddhist temples" (1997:9) is only part of a bigger holistic approach. In Gustafson's case, the underlying concept of "grace" – giving second chances to those who fail and refusing to ostracise those who do not conform – underlines the freedom he gives to local leaders in decision making and making the gospel relevant to the Isan context. On the other hand, the Mejudhons advocate an attitude of "meekness". Drawing on examples of how early missionaries evangelised in Thailand, Nantachai concludes that a humble and open attitude towards Buddhism and Thai culture will yield better results than an attitude that is openly critical of Buddhism.

The literature can be broadly divided into two categories: contextual theology and the localization of forms.

Contextual theology

The attempts that have been made so far at contextual theology in Thailand, as with other parts of Asia, have by and large been theologies *from below* where primarily the context, rather than revelation, has dictated the agenda. These have

generally not been well-received by the more orthodox evangelical sector and there has yet to be a systematic Thai theology (Taylor 2005:32).

Koyama, who taught theology at the Thailand Theological Seminary from 1961 to 1968, introduces his "from below" approach in *Waterbuffalo Theology* (1974). He writes in the preface: "My theology in Northern Thailand must begin with the need of the farmers and not with the great thoughts developed in *Summa Theologiae* and *Church Dogmatics*." While Koyama's dialogical approach to theological study was groundbreaking in those days, his writings are more like reflections on his personal grappling to make Christianity relevant to the Thai Buddhist – what he calls efforts to "season the Aristotelian roots of our theology with Buddhist salt" – instead of an attempt at systematic theology. Even the lectures by Wan Petchsongkram, a Buddhist monk turned Christian pastor, on contextualizing the gospel with the use of Buddhist terms such as *karma* and *avijja*, only scratch the surface of the issue.

Taylor (2005), who advocates the need for a systematic Thai theology, proposes some methods that may be used to start formulating a Thai theological system. He suggests that the process should be inductive, by which truth is gradually concluded by means of amplification of concrete examples, and interactive in that it relates to the Thai context by maximizing on Thai feelings and needs and by utilizing the Thai way of philosophizing (ibid:50).

Localization of forms

The localization of forms is one of the most visible expressions of the localization of Christianity because it has got to do with ritual, music, performing arts, and architecture. Wisley (1984), formerly a missionary in Thailand, tackles the form of Christianity in Thailand and argues that not only is Christianity perceived as a foreign religion but the Thai church itself also exhibits a Westernity that is a legacy of the Western missionary movement that helped to found it. He emphasizes the point that meaning, function and usage can only be transmitted through forms and forms point to underlying meanings and the deep needs and preferences of a society (Wisley 1984:228). Noting that forms are relative, functional, and that meanings attached to them change, he advocates that Christians maintain an open attitude towards forms that will allow new ones to arise.

Gustafson (1985) writes extensively on developing a North-eastern Thai church that is identified with its Isan context: the Lao language is used and hymns are North-eastern tunes with scripture. DeNeui (2002) further documents the use of the *khaen* and other traditional instruments during the gatherings, as well as adapting the genre of *mor lam* for Christian use. This is discussed further in Chapter 2. Gustafson also mentions that there are no church buildings and the Christian community meets in houses. There is no preaching but a discussion led by elders asking questions on a Bible passage. Certain Isan traditions, such as *tham khwan*, or binding of souls, are adopted into the church liturgy. It is the latter that has raised many eyebrows among conventional evangelicals in Thailand who feel that it is not appropriate to adopt what is basically an animistic ritual into Christianity.

Writing from North Thailand, Eubank (2004) documents his experiences, and struggles, of adapting the *likay* art form for evangelistic purposes in Chiang Mai. Traditional *likay* artistes help to create plots which convey a novel Christian message even as they preserve and even conserve the traditional form. For example, the Biblical story of the "prodigal Son" is transformed into the "prodigal Daughter" in the *likay* – the story of a provincial girl from a "good" house being lured into the big city, Bangkok, with false promises by her Casanova-like lover. Eubank's use of *likay* will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 2. Related to the localization of music and arts, Bennett's (2004) biography on Samyong Songsan Prasopsin, a *likay* actor turned pastor-musician, sheds light on some of the earliest attempts to localize Christian music. The main drawback of Eubank and Bennett is that their accounts, while readable and informative, are hardly scholastic expositions which are needed to further the literature on the localization of Christian arts in Thailand. To the author's knowledge, there is no literature on the localization of Christian music in Bangkok.

Definition of terms

The following terms will be defined in this section: localization, Christian music, and Protestant churches.

In this work the word "localization" will be used in accordance with theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher's view that all theology was influenced, if not determined, by the context in which it had evolved. There never was a "pure"

message, supracultural and suprahistorical (Bosch 1991:422). Here, localization will mainly refer to the efforts and processes by which a local community integrates its understanding of the gospel (the "text") with its understanding of its culture (the "context").

Second, "Christian music" is defined as music created by or adapted for the Christian church. It refers to songs where references are made to God either explicitly or implicitly in their various formats, such as hymns, classical Thai tunes, praise choruses and pop.

Third, "Protestant churches" refer to the churches that are separate from the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with the principles of the Reformation.

Scope, approach and limitations

This study examines the localization of Christianity in Bangkok through the observation and analysis of the music culture in churches. Informal interviews with new converts from Buddhism show that the act of singing in church is arguably the most "foreign" aspect of the Christian religious ritual. At the Buddhist temple, the lay practitioner chants in Pali; at the church, the Christian sings to a personal God (as compared to the atheistic stance of philosophical Buddhism) in Thai. It is not uncommon for new converts to report emotional responses, such as "the songs touch my heart", during the singing portion of the Sunday ritual. The three stages or types of localization in the churches' music culture this study will deal with are: the modifications that Western compositions underwent when adopted by local Christians, the growing use of local compositions in the churches and the adaptation of traditional music for use in the churches.

While the localization of Christianity in the North and North-eastern parts of Thailand has been well documented (Eubank 2004; Gustafson 1983), it has not been the case in Bangkok, despite it being one of the two cities with a high proportion of Christians, the other being Chiang Mai. One could argue that the North and Isan lend themselves to localization because they have strong local cultures or tribal identities. Bangkok, on the other hand, exhibits an urban culture typical of big cities instead of an easily identifiable local culture. Hence, this thesis hopes to fill the gap in current literature.

It has been mentioned earlier that this research is limited to Protestant churches. Despite the persisting misconception among Thais that the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Christianity is a uniformly homogenous body politic, the reality is that the two are divided on doctrinal issues. At present, the Catholic Church does not actively engage in proselytization and its missionaries restrict themselves primarily to humanitarian and educational activities. On the other hand, the Protestants are proactive in their evangelizing and also demand a more dogmatic adherence to the religion. Moreover, most of the Roman Catholics are ethnic Chinese or of Vietnamese origin while Thais make up the majority in the Protestant community. Finally, although Roman Catholics used to be a bigger community than the Protestants, their numbers have steadily shrunk. Barrett (2001) estimates that the Catholics now make up 0.4% of the population in Thailand while Protestants account for 1.8%. Despite the preponderance towards Protestant churches in this study, special mention is made in Chapter 2 of the Roman Catholics' attempt at localization which provoked unexpected controversy and an attack from right-wing Buddhist groups in the 1980s.

Research methodology

The material for this research has been collected during fieldwork over four months from October 2005 to January 2006. The three kinds of data are: a questionnaire survey of songs used in Christian churches in Bangkok; in-depth interviews with church pastors, music leaders and Thai songwriters; and observation records of the Sunday worship services at four selected churches. Observations made during my personal involvement with a church in Bangkok in the last two years are added in the discussion when appropriate. The research only covers churches with Thai leaders (even if they were originally planted by missionaries), which hold Thai worship services, and where all the songs sung are in Thai.

Questionnaire survey

The survey of songs used in churches was conducted between November and December. A survey form, along with a self-addressed envelope, was sent to a

selected sample of 40 churches, requesting that they take note of the songs sung in church over four consecutive Sundays (see Appendix A). The churches were picked to represent the various denominations as well as in proportion to the size of the denomination.

In all, 18 churches responded (see Appendix B for a sample reply). The replies reflected the wider Protestant community: five from the Church of Christ in Thailand, six from independent churches started by Thais, five from Pentecostal-charismatic churches started by missionaries and two Southern Baptist churches (see Chapter 2 for an explanation of the denominational differences). The low rate of return could be due to churches preparing for the Christmas season and church leaders might have been too busy to respond. Another limitation of this survey is that it serves, at best, as a snapshot of the music used in church at a particular point in time because the songs sung in church go hand in hand with the church calendar. For example, the snapshot will look very different if it were taken in March/April during the Lenten period because the music used will generally be more sombre and revolve around the cross. However, the snapshot for this study was taken during November/December where Christmas carols were *de rigueur*. While the survey is necessarily a snapshot, it still provides a good picture of the kind of music used in the churches.

Interviews

In-depth interviews were carried out with six church and/or worship leaders; two Christian songwriters, and a representative from the organisation that produces Christian songbooks. Five of the interviews were conducted in Thai while four were in English (see Appendix C for the interview questions). Although the author had a list of questions as a guide, the questions were adjusted accordingly in the course of the interview with the informants. Each initial interview lasted for 1.5 to 2 hours. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Subsequent interviews were carried out for clarification purposes.

Other than in-depth interviews, shorter interviews were conducted with members of the four selected churches to gauge their response and reaction to the music used during worship services. These interviews were worked into casual

conversations during the after-service interaction that is common to all four churches. A total of 40 people, ten from each of the four selected churches, from a range of ages and social statuses were interviewed in this manner. The tape recorder was not used so as to retain the "naturalness" of the conversation. The author relied on interviewing techniques from her journalistic experience for these interviews.

Observation

Participation-observation research was carried out in four selected churches and the author spent four consecutive Sundays in each church. The following are documented in my observation records: the church atmosphere, the demographic profile of the congregation, the music used, the style of playing and presenting the music, as well as the churchgoers' visible response to the music. No recording devices were used, unless it was a special occasion, e.g. the special service to commemorate the King's birthday at Muang Thai Church. This is because most evangelical churches, especially the Pentecostal-charismatic ones, believe that the worship service is a sacred time of communion with God and should not be filmed or photographed as though it were a performance.

Here is a brief summary of the four churches:

Wattana Church

The church was set up in 1922 by American Presbyterians who were among the earliest Protestant missionaries to come to Thailand. This denomination spearheaded the move towards indigenization when it formed a national unified church in 1934 – Church of Christ in Siam (or now Church of Christ in Thailand) – with other smaller denominations like the Baptists, Methodists and Disciples of Christ. This unified denomination is the largest in Thailand and its adherents make up 40 per cent of the Protestant community. Wattana Church was handed over to local leadership in 1957. The Sunday worship service is in the traditional Presbyterian format and hymns are sung, with accompaniment from the piano. About 250 to 300 people attend the Sunday service.

Immanuel Baptist Church

The Southern Baptists were one of the last foreign missions to enter Thailand in early 1950 when the expulsion of missions from China by the Communist Regime forced many of these missions to come to Thailand. Immanuel Baptist Church was started in 1952 by missionaries and local leadership took over in 1966. The Southern Baptists were one of the first to dub Bible films into Thai in the 1950s and they continue to be the leader in Christian media. A five-piece band leads the music session during the Sunday services. Most of the songs are in the contemporary style, with the occasional hymn thrown in. About 250 to 300 people attend the Sunday services.

Muang Thai Church

Six Thai academics, including Nantachai and his wife, started the church in 1973. They saw the mistakes that the Western missionaries made and wanted to do things the Thai way. Nantachai contributed to the discourse on localization by proposing the "meekness approach" (1997). Both hymns and modern Christian songs are used during the Sunday services. Thai traditional instruments along with Thai classical tunes are used in place of the Western instruments and music once every two months. About 150 people attend the Sunday services.

Rom Klao Church

The church was started in 1979 by a former Buddhist monk who attained the rank of Barian 5 before becoming a Christian. Wan Petchsongkram was one of the first Thais to articulate the need for localization and gave lectures on how to present the Christian message to the Thai Buddhist in terms which he would find intelligible. Sunday services at the church are Pentecostal in nature – as characterised by loud praying in tongues, lively music and supernatural miracles. About 1,500 people attend the Sunday services.

Personal background

To write with sympathetic yet critical distance about a religious tradition in which one was born and raised, and with which one still identifies is necessarily a difficult task. One faces a constant temptation to overemphasize either the sympathy or the distance, or else to alternate wildly between the two. Fortunately, such problems are common in anthropology and sociology, as researchers are often drawn to issues of personal interest. One thinks, for example, of women writing about women's rights, of noted sociologist Robert Bellah writing about religion even when he appeared to be writing about Marxism, of medical anthropologists studying the impact of Aids on childcare and so on. In recent decades anthropologists have been encouraged to be more open about their emotional interactions with their topics and their research subjects. Though there has never been agreement on the proper methods of doing so, the basic notion is that there is no longer a need to hide those feelings behind an ironic or clinically distanced tone.

Much of this thesis is shaped by my experiences in churches both in Singapore and Thailand. As such, it would be an oversight to not provide a sketch of my background. I was born in a Christian family in Singapore and was raised in the Anglican or Church of England denomination. Up to my late teens, the worship service I attended with my family was in the traditional Anglican format, but held in Mandarin. It was all very staid and proper. We sang hymns, accompanied by the choir and the organ. Although I was proficient in Mandarin, I hardly understood the hymns because classical Chinese was used in translating the songs from English.

I soon got bored of singing hymns that I did not understand and drifted into an English contemporary worship service which was in the Pentecostal or Charismatic tradition. Accompanied by a five-piece band, we alternated between clapping and lifting up our hands when singing the songs which were in the pop style. I found new meaning in Christianity. Soon, a few of us started a worship service that targeted young people. Dancing and music became *de rigueur*. We were constantly looking out for the latest CDs from Christian music trendsetters in the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand so that we could be on the cutting edge. And we would spend countless hours rehearsing so that we could play the songs in exactly the same way the top Christian bands played them. Quite a few adults from the traditional worship

services complained that our Sunday service sounded more like a rock concert than anything else.

Hence, when I first visited Bangkok eight years ago, I was surprised to walk into churches here and feel totally at home. The traditional worship services, with their organs and translated hymns, reminded me of my childhood. And in the contemporary worship services, although the songs were in Thai, I could sing all of them because they were translated from English. At times, I could even recognise the songs before the worship leader started singing because the band was playing the intro as per the original English CD version. It began to disturb me that the churches here seemed to be clones of churches overseas and there was nothing distinctly Thai about them, other than the language that the services were conducted in. And this has largely spurred me to conduct research on the localization of Christianity in Thailand.

CHAPTER II
LOCALIZATION EFFORTS IN THAILAND

The history of Christianity in Thailand has been told in several detailed publications (McFarland (ed.) 1928; Smith 1982; Swanson 1984; Wells 1958) and is summarised in the first section, with special attention given to the political and social context of the various periods. The second section traces the milestones in efforts to localize Christianity in Thailand, from early Protestant missionaries imposing Christianity in all its Western forms to the Roman Catholics' attempts at inter-faith dialogue in the 1980s. The final section deals with present-day efforts to present Christianity in local forms.

History of Protestant Christianity in Thailand

Protestant Christians were present in Thailand before the 18th century but primarily for commercial purposes, such as trading. By 1819, Ann Judson, wife of Adoniram Judson, a famous pioneer to Burma, studied Siamese for 18 months and translated a catechism and Matthew's gospel for use initially among Siamese displaced in Burma (Narin 1996:232).

Protestant beginnings (1828 – 1850)

The first missionaries to Thailand were Carl Gutzlaff, a German who came at his own expense, and Jacob Tomlin, an Englishman with the London Missionary Society. They arrived on August 23, 1828, after 20 days of sailing from Singapore. Siamese officials granted them permission to reside in Bangkok and to work among the Chinese. There were very few foreigners then, so people flocked to see the *farang*. The interest was so obvious that persecution arose and King Phra Nang Klao (Rama III) issued a royal edict forbidding the Siamese to receive Christian books (McFarland 1999:3). The missionaries, and others who followed later, focused their efforts on the Chinese who were "by far the most accessible and inquisitive" (Gammell 1849:189). In fact, the first Chinese church organized in the East was in Bangkok, which is called Maitri Chit Church today (Smith 1982:21).

Buddhism was already strongly entrenched in Siam when the missionaries arrived. In July 1842, Rama III proclaimed, "Siam excelleth all the nations of the earth in her attachment to the Buddhist religion." (Buell 1843 cited in Smith 1982:29). It was identified as one of the seemingly impenetrable barriers to Christian missions:

> *"Its (Buddhism's) teachings are inculcated among the first lessons of infancy. It is mingled with all the literature of the country, receives the sanction and the powerful influence of government, is intertwined with all the civil and social relations of the people, and even enters largely into all their amusement."*
> (Mattoon Annual Report, Oct 1, 1849, cited in Smith 1982:30)

Rama III's wariness of missionaries

Rama III ruled during the beginning stage of Protestant missions. He not only had to face internal power struggles at home, such as uprisings among the Lao kingdoms (Freeman 1910:109) and rebellions among the restive Chinese (Bowring 1977:85-86) but also had to cope with persistent European influence growing stronger throughout East Asia. Western writers painted an unflattering picture of him, as a usurper to the throne, a despotic narrow-minded conservative who frustrated Western hopes for trade agreements (Bliss 1891:335). Rama III was understandably suspicious of foreigners because of European expansion and opposed to Western innovations. Being already wary of Western nations the king was cool and unfriendly towards Christian missions (Pierson 1891:67). His strict attitude brought severe constraints on the missionaries. At times he restricted their residence to Bangkok (Backus 1884:321). At first they were not allowed to travel out into the country areas among the people although occasional permission was granted to do so later (Strong 1910:115).

It was during Rama III's reign when Dan Beach Bradley, a missionary and physician, landed in Siam in 1835. Through his medical skill he speedily gained access into the royal circle. His battle against smallpox made him a hero and later a legend. Cholera and smallpox epidemics were expected annual occurrences, killing thousands of Siamese in Bangkok and across the kingdom. By introducing the first vaccination in 1840 among the royal family, Bradley trained the royal physicians in his technique under orders of King Rama III (Strong 1910:115). His 38 years of missionary labours (1835 – 1873) as preacher, teacher, physician, author, diplomat,

translator, printer, and colporteur made significant impressions for the future of Christianity in Siam (Smith 1982:25).

By the time Rama III died in 1851, he had ruled during the first 23 years of pioneer Protestant missions to Siam.

The Church emerges (1851 -1910)

The contributions of Presbyterian missionaries to the modernization and, perforce, Westernization of Siam during the reigns of Rama IV and V from 1851 to 1910 has been well documented. The Rev. Dr. Daniel Beach Bradley is remembered as the father of modern medicine in Thailand; at the invitation and sponsorship of Rama V, the Rev. Samuel G. McFarland founded King's College, the first government school; his son, Dr. George McFarland, at age twenty-five became the superintendent of the new Sirirat Hospital as well as the dean of its medical school and was decorated by the king with a royal title; his brother, Edwin, invented the first Thai typewriter and served as secretary to the distinguished H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, Minister of Interior; and another brother, William, was private secretary to H.R.H. Prince Bhanurangsi, the Minister of Defense. In these and other ways 19th century missionaries contributed to the growing modernization and inevitable Westernization of Siam as a modern nation-state. In other words, Christian missionaries were factors in the process of Siam's late 19th century globalization. As the first Siamese regent to Chiang Mai remarked, "Siam has not been opened by British gunpowder, but by missionary effort." (Swearer 2003:13)

King Mongkut

On the death of Rama III, King Mongkut Pra Chom Klao (Rama IV) was called from the seclusion of the Buddhist monastery to ascend the throne. In contrast to his predecessor, he was educated, liberal, tolerant and progressive. In 1845 while in the Buddhist priesthood Prince Mongkut, the future king, invited American missionary Jesse Caswell to tutor him privately in language and science. For 18 months, Caswell did so, also gaining permission to preach Christ at the *wat*. Caswell's influence no doubt paved the way for better relations with the West and with Protestant missions (Smith 1982:24).

The king was recognised as the owner of all land and with the king as the only land holder, a cultural problem confronted missionaries in obtaining land. Even permission to lease land required the king's approval. Rama IV was more flexible than his predecessor. On July 21, 1851, he allowed the Presbyterians to lease land near Wat Arun and to build homes there. He also gave the Christians land to build a cemetery and chapel (Smith 1982:33). In the same year, the king invited three of the missionary wives to go to the Royal Palace to teach English to his wives and the women of the palace (Smith 1982:40). Besides, when King Mongkut concluded treaties with England in 1855 and the United States in 1856, he requested one of the missionaries, Stephen Mattoon, be appointed US Consul (Bliss 1891:335).

King Mongkut was open to improvements of Western civilization. In this he was progressive, enlightened and liberal. But in religion he remained firmly Buddhist. He had revived the purity of Buddhism, cleansing it from all interpolations. He would not accept Christianity, nor did he oppose it. He knew that as long as the king remains Buddhist it is unlikely that any great numbers of the Siamese people would turn to Christ. He used to tell the missionaries: "The science I receive, astronomy, geology, chemistry, these I receive; the Christian religion I do not receive." (Backus 1884:391)

King Chulalongkorn and Edict of Toleration

When King Mongkut died in 1858, his son, King Chulalongkorn, carried forward his father's friendliness to Christian missions to an even greater degree of progressiveness. On various occasions, he and the royal family members gave gifts to mission schools and hospitals (Smith 1982:34).

It was during his reign when two Lao converts were martyred. Phra Chao Kawilaroot, the Lao king of Chiengmai had felt threatened by the missionaries' presence and their growing influence. He had tried to get Bangkok officials to withdraw the missionaries by accusing them of causing a rice famine but was thwarted in his efforts (House April 16, 1869 cited in Smith 1982). Hence he arrested two of the first converts, one was a doctor and the other was formerly a Buddhist abbot, and demanded that they recant and renounce Christianity. However, they refused and were finally clubbed to death (McGilvary 2001:111). News was sent to

Bangkok and the Regent dispatched a special commissioner to Chiengmai with a communique that read: "The Laos Christians were the king's own slaves. If he chose to kill them, we have no right to interfere." However, the conversation stated that the missionaries could remain or leave and were to be unmolested. The Lao king did not take kindly to the words and raged:

> *"Siam is one government, Chiengmai is another. The king of Bangkok may permit his subjects to become Christians. I will kill every one of mine who forsakes Buddhism for the religion of Jesus. Those who embrace Christianity are rebels against me and will be treated as such. If the missionaries teach their religion and continue to make Christians, I will banish them from the country."*
> (Wilson, Jan 24, 1870 cited in Smith 1982)

In 1878, King Chulalongkorn issued an Edict of Toleration to the princes and people of Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang states. It mentions briefly the origins of the edict and makes it clear that it rests on the full authority of the King of Siam. It then provides a general statement of a concept of religious toleration that affirms the right of individuals to worship as they choose without governmental interference. The edict affirms the right of citizens to become Christians and enjoins the princes, relatives, and friends of converts to throw up no obstacles to conversion and the practice of the Christian religion. It frees Christians from participation in non-Christian rituals and affirms the right of Christians to observe their Sabbath unmolested, excepting only in times of war or genuine pressing need. The edict also confirms that American citizens living in Chiang Mai, Lamphun, and Lampang (i.e. the missionaries) had the right given to them by international treaties to employ anyone they chose. No one could impinge on that right (Swanson 2003a:144). This edict was an important step in the establishment of the Northern Thai church.

Early converts

The majority of members entering the Church were first of all mission employees and sometimes their relatives, house helps, language teachers, workers in the print shops, and school teachers. All on the mission payroll probably attended church (Smith 1982:51). Some school pupils formed a second category in the Church. In these early years, as was practised in India and other lands, pupils were often paid

to go to school. Another way was contracts by which the mission paid parents in order to get their children into the mission schools. At the mission stations they were fed, sheltered, taught and evangelized. Grateful for their advantages, some later accepted Christianity. Hence, the motivation of converts then was often questioned (Smith 1982:53).

There was great receptivity among the Chinese during the 19th century up to the 1920s. This was the early period of migrations and trade when Chinese men appeared as foreigners in Siam. Hence, they were free of the restraints, expectations and ties of Chinese communities in their villages or towns on the China mainland, and they were lonely. The arrival of foreign missionaries was timely for these alien Chinese. Smith (1982) notes that the missionaries found them accessible for the following reasons: The Chinese were more open to innovation and help than were the resident Siamese, so missionaries could meet the medical needs of the Chinese. Secondly, almost all of the literature and the Bibles the missionaries distributed in the early years were in Chinese. Thirdly, the early Chinese converts were often those employed or hoping to be employed by the missionaries. The economic opportunity of advancement with Westerners was readily grasped by enterprising Chinese. Fourth, there was also a visible Chinese Church from 1837 onwards (Smith 1982:55).

Stagnation and decline (1911 – 1945)

There was a tremendous growth in educational work by the missionaries from 1911. In that year, there were only 37 mission schools, very few of which offered more than four years' work, and only one of which boasted a complete high school course. About 800 students attended these schools. By 1938, there were 65 grade schools, many of which offer also some high school work, and six full-fledged high schools. The number of pupils also jumped to 5,569 (Eakin 1938:286-287). At first the need for more educational missionaries for the growing work was met by the increase in foreign staff and schools had priority in receiving personnel than churches. When staff shortages arose, ordained missionaries working with the church were withdrawn and deliberately assigned to the schools. Therefore between 1914 and 1940, many key people from the churches were redeployed in the schools. With the

"education first, evangelism second" priority, church growth inevitably stagnated (Eakin 1938:287).

It was believed that the institutional approach would work better and the following line of argument was prevalent in the Presbyterian circle:

> *"Thailand is a difficult field, the people are resistant. Only comparatively few turn wholeheartedly to Christ. Most people are illiterate. They appear backward in many ways. They need to be educated, civilized, Christianized, modernized and Westernized. Therefore, as the older generations are set in their ways and the children are more pliable, we shall build schools, take in the young, isolate them as much as possible from the non-Christian environment, educate them, teach them to read the Bible, and give them the Gospel. They are the future of the nation. Hopefully as they are converted in the schools and rise to leadership in the next generation, our goal of claiming Thailand for Christ will be realised."* (Smith 1982:168)

Rama VI's attitude towards Christianity

Although the Buddhist chief priest had been a member of royalty and Buddhist ceremonies had been woven into the political administration, King Chulalongkorn left the Buddhist hierarchy alone to promulgate its own religious dimensions. His toleration of religion, including Christianity, was a landmark of Thai historical progress. However, his son (Rama VI) took a distinctly different attitude towards religion when he ascended the throne in 1910. He vigorously supported Buddhism, propagated it, and used it as a political instrument for national unity. On September 28, 1917, he introduced a new national flag, the *Tri-rong*. The red band on top represents the Thai nation. The symbolic white, retained from the old flag, represents Buddhism (Missionary Review of the World 1919:306). The blue, symbolizing the monarchy, was a new element added. Thus nation, Buddhist religion, and the king became the three-fold call for Thai loyalty and to be Thai came to mean to be Buddhist (Smith 1982:177).

Although Rama VI's policy towards Christianity was officially cordial and he occasionally gave donations to Christian institutions, he publicly encouraged Buddhism. The king's commending Buddhism to his people as their national religion added momentum to the resurgence of Buddhism (Missionary Review of the World 1916:363). Later he told his people that "to become a Christian is to be disloyal to the

country, and that Buddhism is and must continue to be the national religion of Siam"
(Mills 1923:356). The king was not so much anti-Christian as he was strongly pro-
Buddhist. No open opposition to Christians was experienced, though the subtle social
ostracism and covert pressure to be loyal Buddhists was always there:

> *"A constraint which is closely akin to persecution has already fallen*
> *upon some Christians, and it is understood and openly stated in many*
> *places that the king is opposed to the acceptance of Christianity by*
> *his subjects, and that he desires instead to see his people zealous in*
> *the practice of Buddhism."*
> (Speer 1916:100)

When Rama VI died suddenly in 1925, his younger brother, King Prachatipok,
returned to the attitudes of King Chulalongkorn, encouraging full religious freedom
and showed great friendliness towards Christianity (Smith 1982:177).

Militant Nationalism

Throughout 1941 pressure was applied to Christians to return to Buddhism.
Refusal often resulted in social ostracism. Eakin writes of a definite change in
attitude towards Christians that took place between 1940 and 1941. First was
restriction on Christian work. In 1941, missionaries and evangelists were required to
get special police permission in each village before meetings could be held.
Policemen were in attendance at each series of meetings. Second was discrimination
against Christians:

> *"No (Christian) official could hope for advancement and in 1941 it*
> *became plain that none could even retain his position. In many*
> *cases the superior officer would take a subordinate to a Buddhist*
> *temple and see that he publicly renounced other religions and*
> *accepted Buddhism."* (Eakin 1942:1)

This Buddhist reconversion campaign was aimed particularly at Christians and
Muslims. Lists of names, places, and numbers of persons who "accepted Buddhism
after renouncing other religions" were often published in Thai daily newspapers
(Smith 1982:202). Kenneth Wells cites a quote from The Bangkok Times (Feb 13,
1941) as an illustration of this nationalistic attitude. In a radio speech
commemorating Makha Bucha Day, Luang Vichitr Vadarkarn, head of the
government's Fine Arts Department and Phibulsongkram's ideologue, announced as a

victory for Thailand and Buddhism that "realising the importance of the nation is greatest, and that national unity is more important than the religion they used to worship, several hundred Christian converted themselves to Buddhism" (Wells 1942:204).

Japanese occupation

The pressure on the Christians worsened between 1942 and 1945. During the Japanese occupation, mission or church buildings were confiscated and used as military billets (International Review of Missions 1944:25). The national Christians suffered planned persecution, especially through social measures and psychological pressures. Some were forbidden to read the Bible or pray in their homes (Wheeler 1950:126-127). Associating Christianity with European control, the Japanese rejected the religion. Instead, they supported the Buddhist movement in Thailand, in keeping with their policy of catering to the dominant national religion in each area occupied. This further encouraged renascent Buddhism and the greatest persecution of the church came from the Thai Buddhist nationalists (Thomas 1962:26, 33, 48).

Pressure on Christians to revert to Buddhism prior to the Japanese war has already been mentioned. Government confiscation of Christian schools, hospitals and churches encouraged fervent persecution by reactionary nationalistic groups (International Review of Missions 1947:18). This official pressure to revert to Buddhism took several forms. Christian government workers, teachers and doctors were threatened with dismissal unless they returned to the old religion. Students were warned they would certainly fail their examinations unless they repudiated their faith in Christ (Wells 1958:161). Membership in the Church of Christ in Thailand fell from 10.000 in 1939 to 6,000 in 1946 (Glover & Kane 1960:119).

Steady growth (1946 to present)

The victory of the Western allies again brought Christianity to a new bright status in the East. Down through history conquered peoples have frequently accepted the god of the victor. In the immediate post war years the Thais saw Christianity as a popular and respectable religion again. Under these conditions the CCT grew from about 8,000 in 1945 at the close of the war to 13,422 in 1950 (Smith 1982:217).

An influx of new missions after the end of the war also increased the missionary force and their employed Thai helpers throughout Thailand, contributing to the growth of Christianity (Goddard 1967:23). The expulsion of missions from China by the Communist Regime in 1950 forced many of these missions such as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Southern Baptists, and Swedish Free Mission to relocate to Thailand.

By the 1960s, in a move to counter Communism, monks were sent by the Thai government to hill tribes scattered in the Northern border region to convert them to Buddhism under the *Dhammacarik* project. This did not go down well with the hill tribes who saw it as an attempt by their Thai masters to control them. Because they were told that they needed to have a religion (and animism did not count as one), many of the hill tribes rebelled and chose to become Christians. At the same time, the hill tribes saw that the missionaries could help them establish a separate identity (Prasert 1990:106).

Rise of mega-churches

Although Pentecostal missions have been in Thailand since World War II, it was only in the 1980s with the rise of four big Pentecostal-charismatic churches started by Thai Christians in Bangkok that there was a noticeable impact on church growth. Three of these mega-churches have at least 1,500 to 2,000 members each while the fourth has about 20,000 members. While their headquarters are in Bangkok, they have planted daughter churches all over Thailand. It seems that the strong individual government of charismatic leaders fits well into the Thai patron-client context and is a factor in church growth (Narin 1996:238).

Having studied the phenomenal growth for both Wat Dhammakaya and Hope of Bangkok Church in the 1980s, the author suggests that one reason for the strong growth of Christianity is the burgeoning middle class' disenchantment with established Buddhism. While a good number have flocked to Buddhist reform movements, others have opted to try another religion.

Religious freedom

In the 1997 Constitution, all references to Buddhism as the national religion was left out. It states that:

> *"A person shall enjoy full liberty to profess a religion, a religious sect or creed, and observe religious precepts or exercise a form of worship in accordance with his or her belief; provided that it is not contrary to his or her civic duties, public order or good morals."*
> (Chapter 2, Section 38)

The concept of "Nation, Buddhism and King" has also been altered with Section 66 of the constitution which states that "every person shall have a duty to uphold the Nation, **religions**, the King and the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State". Although these statements are largely symbolic, they have been a useful rhetorical tool when dealing with the Thai bureaucracy or conservative Thai officials who forget that Thai Buddhism is no longer the national religion.

Moreover, there has been a move towards increased cooperation among the churches since the mid-1990s. Churches have come together to organise nation- and region-wide events. All these have helped to raise the profile and influence of Christianity in Thailand.

Denominational differences

According to 2000 figures, there are about 1.4 million Christians in Thailand, making up 2.2 per cent of the population. The main denominations are Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), Pentecostal-charismatic churches, and the Southern Baptists. In the published membership statistics of the CCT, which is the national church, 65 per cent of its 45,308 members are Thai, 25 per cent are Chinese and five per cent are Karens (Barrett 2001:736). Although the CCT is an amalgamation of a few denominations, it is predominantly Presbyterian. Theologically, **Presbyterianism** places a high emphasis on the sovereignty of God in all things, including human salvation. Socially, it places a high value on equal education for all people; hence its missionary efforts have always progressed along with the provision of education. Its institutionalized church order is reflected in the highly-structured of the format of the Sunday worship services. This is why CCT churches use songs only from the CCT hymnal for the Sunday services.

The **Pentecostal-charismatic** churches are distinguished by their emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. They believe that everyone who is genuinely saved has the Holy Spirit living in them and working through them, and are able to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which include speaking in tongues (also known as *glossolalia*), prophecy, working of miracles and supernatural healing. Thai people, always conscious of the supernatural, showed significant responsiveness to this movement (Narin 1996:235). These churches are characterised by a lively form of worship and the congregational singing period is given equal importance with the sermon.

The **Southern Baptists** are generally more conservative in their doctrines and practice of Christianity. For example, the office of the pastor is reserved exclusively for men and wives are urged to "graciously submit" to their husbands. They also do not hold to many of the practices held by charismatic groups, such as speaking in tongues. The focus of the Sunday church service is the sermon, which ranges from 30 to 60 minutes. The sermon is often surrounded by periods of musical worship led by a song leader, choir or band. Musical style varies between hymns and praise choruses with many churches choosing a blend of the two, based on the predominant age of the congregation.

Despite the differences, Thai Christians do not seem to have problems working across denominations. This is partly because a Thai's first loyalty is personal: to the person of Christ, or leaders and teachers who have helped, or to family and friends. The second loyalty is to personal advancement. So denominational loyalty is a new, less important and more imported concept and may be accepted or rejected on the basis of personal relationships. Christian students and full-time workers move easily from one group to the other, not always to the satisfaction of the more ideology-oriented missionary (Narin 1996:250). However, the denominational differences have a bearing on the localization efforts of the various churches. Hence, the ecumenical CCT churches are likely to be more embracing of efforts to use traditional Thai music in church as compared to the more conservative Southern Baptist churches.

Milestones in localization efforts

This section provides a sketch of four stages of localization efforts in Thailand: (1) Lack of localization attempts during the early Protestant missions; (2) A move initiated by the West towards localization with the setting up of a national unified church; (3) Locally-initiated move to set up independent Thai churches; (4) the Roman Catholics' concerted effort at inter-faith dialogue.

Early Protestant beginnings

In the early stages of Christian activity in Siam during the late 19th century, missionaries generally equated Christianity with their brand of Christianity, that is, Western Christianity. Their ethnocentric attitude was evident in their correspondence with the mission board, where frequent references were made to the need for a church bell cast in the West, or an organ for the chapel and for evangelistic touring (Smith 1982:131). The architecture of the churches and their internal physical arrangements were exact copies of those customary in Europe or the United States. To the missionaries who were in Thailand during the reign of King Mongkut, Christianity was inseparable from Western civilization. The basic attitudes with which they came to Siam, and which appear frequently in their diaries and other writings, were that because the West's advanced science and technology had been produced by Christians, Christianity was manifestly the superior religion. This meant, conversely, that backwardness was the result of idolatry like Buddhism; that the religions professed by barbarians were as inferior to Christianity as the barbarian civilizations were to that of the West (Ishii 1986:157).

Moreover, both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries prohibited their new converts from preserving any element of Thai culture, whether or not it had an expressed religious significance, to prevent a contamination of Christianity by "paganism". Thus the use of Thai musical instruments and tunes in Christian churches was strictly forbidden, for fear that they might unwittingly produce associations with their previous religion among Thai converts. Foreign missionaries, and later also the local clergy, strenuously emphasized the difference between Christianity and Buddhism in every realm of life, in an effort to strengthen the distinct

Christian identity of their new converts. This meant the new Christian had to almost completely denounce his own culture. As a result, many of the converts failed to continue in their new faith because the social system created by the missionaries did not provide completely for the social life of the convert (Nguyen-van-Khoi 1972:266).

Formation of the Church of Christ in Thailand

In the early years of the 20th century, the indigenous principles of "self-supporting and self-governing" became a primary focus in missions around the world, particularly the Presbyterian Missions (Smith 1982:183). The American Presbyterians were pioneers in the Protestant work in Thailand and claimed the highest numbers of members. The increased focus on the indigenous church thus brought pressure toward organising a national unified church. The events of the 1930s, including the economic depression, the 1932 coup d'etat which overthrew the absolute monarchy, and the growing anxiety over Japan's military expansion on the Asian mainland, increased the pressure to indigenize (Smith 1982:181). It has been observed that the indigenous church in Siam had not been as insistent on gaining autonomy as in some other lands. Much of the stimulus and action originated with the missionary, rather than the national (Mäkelä 1993:36).

In April 1934, an autonomous Thai Protestant Church – Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) – was formed. It incorporated the Presbyterians, the Disciples of Christ, the Baptists, the Methodists and some smaller denominations, and comprised 8,100 of the 8,700 Christians then in Siam (Eakin 1938:286). Between 1931 and 1941, the Presbyterians provided scholarships to send Thai leaders overseas for training. This was geared to develop a leadership adequate to the Thai Church's need, and for international relations with other Churches. The CCT was weak spiritually, administratively and economically during its first years. Both Swanson (1984) and Smith (1982), from different theological frameworks, point to policies and actions of the American Presbyterian Mission as the reasons for the weaknesses (Mäkelä 1993:38). The mission continued to exert influence on the church after formally handing over power, especially evident in the year just before and after World War II. However, by 1980, it was rare that anybody suggested that the CCT was anything other than a fully Thai organisation (Zehner 2003:44).

It is worth noting that whereas mission boards elsewhere are often blamed for hanging on to power and being too slow in turning over to the nationals, in the case of Thailand, almost the entire thrust was from the West which initiated and funded the move. They provided scholarship for study in the West and subsidized the CCT. Smith (1982) notes that "missionary statesmen of the West, seeing the coming dissolution of Western empires, were most anxious to set up really independent and self-reliant national churches". The events in Thailand were part of the worldwide endeavour to integrate Christianity in the nation.

Growth of independent churches

The expansion of the independent churches worldwide is a phenomenon of the 20th century. This first became known from South Africa, and the debate on the African Initiated Churches has influenced the discussion on the independent churches as whole. These churches are understood to be free of foreign subsidy, management, influence, organisation or anything else that might encroach upon their own freedom. They attempt to be reform movements of an over-Europeanized Christianity. The independent churches are seen as a reaction to the institutionalism of the mission churches (Mäkelä 1993:3).

In Thailand, Protestant work continued under the form of mission organisations or established national churches for more than 100 years before the first independent churches were born. Mäkelä (1993) defines the independent church, or *krischak issara*, as a church or congregation which has been established by Thai Christians without the consent of organised national churches or mission agencies. It functions as an independent body without affiliation to organised national churches or mission agencies. Although some of the independent churches have contacts with mission agencies and missionaries – mostly Pentecostal and non-denominational evangelicals – the local leadership in the churches is in control. Independent churches in Bangkok are not uniform by any chance. They are bookended by the mega church, such as Hope of Bangkok which has 20,000 members, and the small house churches with just 35 members. Both Rom Klao Church and Muang Thai Church which were studied for this research fall somewhere along this spectrum.

Leaders of the independent churches tend to espouse the rhetoric that Christianity has not flourished in Thailand because the Western missionaries did not understand the local culture and customs. Hence, the implication is that the leaders, being Thai, would be better agents for spreading the Christian message. The independent churches enjoy a somewhat uneasy relationship with the established ones. Politically, some are looked upon with suspicion because of their aggressive tactics and reputation of "stealing" members from the other churches. Theologically, some are deemed to have "compromised" the faith by interpreting Buddhist concepts with a Christian angle or by using Thai traditional instruments in the worship service.

The Roman Catholics' attempt at dialogue

Until the Second Vatican Council held from 1962 to 1965, the Catholic Church did not develop a specific theology of Buddhism; nor did it wish in recent times to enter into open disputation with it. Catholicism in Thailand was, on the whole, less eager than the Protestant Church to convert the Thais, and in recent years stopped all active proselytization. Saad's research (1984) shows that only 2.1% or 6 out of 285 Catholic priests realised the significance of evangelism and even then it was third on their priority list.

At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church formulated a new approach to non-Christian religions, modifying considerably its earlier claim to be the unique and exclusive bearer of salvational truth through God's revelation and sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Rather, a more complex doctrine was formulated, according to which other religions can be assumed to embody grains of salvational truth, through God's partial revelation to their founders; but only in Christianity did that revelation become complete. Other religions could then be conceived, theologically, as embodying the Christian truth to differing degrees of clarity, forming what some members of the clergy in Thailand called "stepping stones" towards the full revelation of the salvational truth in Christianity. Within this new theological framework, Buddhism was also recognized as containing some grains of truth. Some Catholic thinkers in Thailand eventually formulated the idea that, just as Judaism preceded Christianity in the West, so Buddhism preceded it in the East. According to this logic, Buddha came to be viewed as a kind of prophet, a predecessor of Jesus Christ (Cohen

1991:128). Members of the Catholic clergy in Thailand consequently made a serious effort to reconcile the two religions to the greatest possible degree. Participation of Catholics and Buddhists in each others' rituals was encouraged.

In the early 1980s, the Catholic Church in Thailand, which heretofore coexisted side by side with Buddhism without much theological exchange or friction, initiated, in accordance with the decree of the Second Vatican Council on the Church's missionary activity and the instructions of the recently formed Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, a "dialogue" with Buddhism, in which some leading Buddhist monks were invited to take part. This initiative for holding a dialogue and, even more, the idea that Buddha can be seen as a prophet – with the implication that his was an incomplete message awaiting its completion by the coming of Jesus Christ – provoked a fierce reaction on the part of a militant Buddhist group calling itself the "Group of the Defendants of Security of Buddhism". That group saw in the new Catholic approach nothing but an attempt to subvert Buddhism (Sobhon-Ganabhorn 1984; Catholic Plot 1986). Specifically, the group objected to:

1. The statement that Buddha is a mere prophet of God

2. The statement that all the teachings of Buddha were imparted partially to him by God, whereas the whole and complete ones were given to Jesus Christ, a statement which was implicitly intended "to deny the fact that the Buddha was fully self-enlightened".

3. Various ways in which the Catholics had allegedly misused and distorted the Dhamma and thus "trampled" upon it, for example in the statements that "Nirvana in Buddhism means heaven" and that Buddhism did "no longer exist after B.E. [Buddhist Era] 500 and this era belongs to Phra Sri Aryamettrai or Jesus Christ [i.e. that the Catholics identified Jesus Christ with the Future Buddha, Matreya]" (Sobhon-Ganabhorn 1984:4-5).

The Catholics were further accused of changing their strategy from a direct attack upon Buddhism, as in the past, to the more insidious strategy of "dialogue", with the ulterior motive to subvert Buddhism (Catholic Plot 1986:1-4). Accordingly, it was claimed that "the dialogue is a strategy to carry out the plans of the Catholic Church to assimilate Buddhism". Evidence for these claims was allegedly to be found in the secret "Bulletin" of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions in the Vatican, which

is amply quoted in the Group's publications. Lantern (1986), writing in The Bangkok Post, drew parallels between the Catholics' attempts at dialogue and the "absorption tactics" used by the Hindus 1,500 years ago. The Hindus developed a theory that Buddha was an incarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu. They said that Buddha is not outside the Hindu circle. He belongs to Hinduism. He is an incarnation of their God. This has led to the flourishing of Hindu ideas alongside Buddhist concepts.

The Catholics, protesting that their effort at dialogue was misunderstood, toned down their programme, which is at present conducted only on a modest level and in a discreet manner, if at all. The apparent liberalization of the Catholic outlook, and its opening up towards other religions, thus backfired in Thailand, provoking a rare outbreak of militancy form among the ranks of the otherwise tolerant Buddhist monkhood.

Current localization efforts

The meagre results of prolonged and intensive missionary efforts to convert the Thai people have in recent decades engendered much thought among Christian missionaries and particularly Protestant evangelists on the causes and reasons for their relative failure (e.g. Cooke 1978; Gustafson 1970:157-9; Saad 1975:33-7). Their deliberations frequently touch upon two major themes: the close association between Buddhism and Thai cultural and national identity was pointed out as a reason for reluctance to give up Buddhism; on the other hand, the identification in Thai eyes of Christianity with the West, and Christianization with Westernization was seen as the reason that Christianity is considered by the Thais as a foreign religion. These deliberations point to a crucial dilemma facing Christian missionaries in Thailand: how to adapt the religion to the Thai context, so as to divest it of its foreign character and enable Thais to preserve their national identity, while at the same time safeguarding the purity of the Christian message.

Thai customs and festivals

The strategy of adapting "cultural" customs, but rejecting "religious" beliefs and practices, however, poses an interesting problem of "negotiation of meaning"

(Cohen 1987:22). In Thai culture, no clear line exists between popular religious and "merely" cultural practices. Most such practices have, at least implicitly, some popular religious significance although this may not be anchored in the tenets of doctrinal Buddhism. In an effort to open the churches to Thai custom, the Christian missionaries and clergymen, foreign, and later on local, set out to redefine the meaning of Thai customs and practices and to demarcate a line between what they considered to be the "cultural" as against the "religious" domain. Simply put, they have to consider what is religiously neutral culture and tradition which belongs to all Thais and what are religious customs. The demarcation lines set by different clerics of varying denominations and at different times were not identical. In general, as the pressure upon the churches increased, they tended to interpret more and more customs as "merely" cultural, arguing that they lacked any scriptural basis in doctrinal Buddhism. Thereby such customs became available for Christianization.

For example, some Christian leaders endow traditional Thai festivals with a new Christian meaning. Thus many Thai Christians continue to celebrate the festival of *Loy Krathong*, during which lit candles are floated on rivers and waterways. Some Christian clerics tolerate that festival, arguing that at the present time it is a cultural custom without religious meaning (even though it probably originated as an offering to the water spirits). The author once heard a pastor reinterpret the festival in Christian terms, saying that as we float the *krathong* down the river, it is symbolic of the river of God cleansing us from our sins. It is doubtful, however, that this interpretation is widely accepted – or even known – among rank-and-file Thai Christians. Another church, or some would say sect, went furthest in this respect, accepting as cultural custom even local practices such as *tham khwan*, the "binding of the soul" (Heinze 1982), which others considered as unequivocally religious – and caused widespread consternation and criticism in more conservative Christian circles.

Special Sunday service for the King's birthday

The general spirit of the change of attitude towards Thai culture derived from the missionaries' intention to preserve features of traditional culture which they felt to be valuable and compatible with the development of Christian spirituality. A principal expression of this spirit is the emphasis by many churches that Thai

Christians are and remain culturally Thais and that their religion does not infringe upon their allegiance to the Thai nation and monarchy. One way to symbolize this allegiance is prayers dedicated to the King, common in both Protestant and Catholic churches, as well as special services on the King's and Queen's birthdays.

Figure 2.1: Traditional *parnphum* offerings in front of the King's portrait at Muang Thai Church during a special Sunday worship service to commemorate the King's birthday.

Muang Thai Church held a special celebration on December 4, 2005, during the Sunday service in honour of the King's birthday, which is also Father's Day. The church carried out the tradition of having the gold and silver *parnphum*, used in ceremonial offerings, in front of the King's portrait (see Fig. 2.1). In most Protestant churches, there would be special prayers for the king and his achievements would be recounted. At Muang Thai, the deacon uncovered the Thai-style banana leaf tray with floral offerings, paid his respects, and intoned a rhyme of adoration before leading the congregation to sing a song of praise to the King. The pastor, Nantachai Mejudhon, preached on living a simple life, which revolved around the King's favourite philosophy of "self-sufficient economy". He started off by saying, "The Thais are doubly blessed because we have both Jesus and our King. There is no king in the

world who is as good as ours." He went on to show how the King's teachings were the same as those taught in the Bible – be generous and help other people – and gave the example of the King donating 760 million baht to just one charity. "The problems in the society can't be solved by religion. It depends on the mercy (*khwam metta karuna*), of the King, Jesus and you."

Church architecture and ritual

Protestant churches in Thailand have been initially built in the style which at the time prevailed in the missionaries' countries of origin. However, the style of recently constructed churches has been partially assimilated to that of the Buddhist *wat* – the multiple gabled roof, in particular, has often been adopted. Still, care was taken for these churches not to resemble the *wat* too closely, so that the symbolic differences between the two are not obliterated. The Roman Catholics – whose early churches were completely European in style – went even further. Some of their recently built churches, designed by "progressive" Catholic foreigners, entirely resemble a Buddhist *wat*. Moreover, the Catholic institutions are no longer called "churches"; they are called *wat* or *bot*. So, for example, St. Louis Church is now called Wat St. Louis.

In terms of ritual, the most prominent example would be church music. In the past, only Western musical instruments, such as the organ, and Western liturgical tunes, were permitted in church. Opposition to Thai instruments was deep-seated not only among foreign missionaries, but also among the Thai converts to Christianity. Thus when in the 1960s, a Protestant missionary in the province of Nakhon Pathom introduced for the first time a Thai instrument, the *ranad*, into worship, some of the members of the congregation expressed fierce opposition, claiming that the instrument reminds them of the spirits (Cohen 1987:23). In the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council formally permitted the use of profane music, and even of the music of other religions, in worship. Gradually, Thai tunes became accepted as a basis for an indigenous liturgical music for which new Christian texts were provided. At present, Thai instruments and tunes are used in both Protestant and Catholic churches.

Localization efforts in the North and North-east regions

On the whole, there have been more attempts at localization in the North and North-east parts of Thailand than in Bangkok. For example, one hears of churches using sticky rice instead of bread during the Holy Communion and using traditional Thai dances during the worship. Two examples are highlighted in this section: the Christian *likay* group in Chiang Mai and the use of *mor lam* to worship God in the North-east. The localization efforts in Bangkok are discussed in Chapter 3.

Christian likay in Chiang Mai

The Christian Communication Institute (CCI) at Payap University, a Protestant institution in Chiang Mai, adapted one of the most popular traditional forms of the Thai folk-theatre to disseminate the Christian message. The *likay* was chosen because, in the eyes of the missionary heading the institute, unlike the classical *khon* and *lakhon* plays, it is devoid of express Buddhist religious content (Eubank 2004:45). The traditional *likay* resembles the European operetta, consisting of dialogue mixed with song, comedy, romance and improvisation on the traditional story with contemporary themes. In recent times the *likay*, which traditionally was principally performed on popular festivals, declined into cheap clowning, while "classic" likay plays are rarely performed any more.

The CCI revived the "classic" *likay* tradition and formed a troupe composed of individuals with some background in the performing arts. With the help of traditional *likay* artistes, they created plots which convey a novel Christian message even as they preserve and even conserve the traditional form. Some plots are, in fact, taken from Biblical stories, but have been adapted to contemporary Thai circumstances. Thus the Biblical story of the "prodigal Son" is transformed into the "prodigal Daughter" – the story of a provincial girl from a "good" house being lured into the big city, Bangkok, with false promises by her Casanova-like lover. Though the plot does not expressly refer to it, Thais viewing the play will inevitably be reminded of the problem of young local girls being lured into prostitution in Bangkok.

The *likay* produced by the CCI are distinguished by a high technical level of performance, which is combined with a subtle, unobtrusive insertion of the Christian message. The *likay* of CCI is the opposite of the crude and direct approach to

proselytization, practised by some extreme fundamentalist Christian sects. It is a comprehensive and conscious effort to clad the Christian message in indigenous vestments (Cohen 1987:34). The *likay* plays, some of which are shown on the local TV station of Chiang Mai, reach a very broad audience, which generally responds enthusiastically to the well-produced shows. It is difficult to estimate the effectiveness of these shows in conveying the Christian message to the broad public. It appears, however, that a more important effect of the plays than direct conversion is the fact that they engender a certain openness, sympathy and receptivity to Christianity on the part of the local Thai public. And more than that, the plays, which are produced in a Thai style, convey the important message that one can become a Christian without uprooting oneself from Thai culture, or losing one's national identity.

Using mor lam to worship God

Mor lam ballads which utilize the *khaen* and other Isan instruments are a distinctive part of the cultural heritage of the people of Northeastern Thailand. These songs are often lengthy ballads, typically telling the tear-jerking stories of lost love or the pain of experiencing unfaithfulness. A talented singer will be able to not only perform the songs well but also improvise on them with more elaborate word play as he or she goes along. A missionary saw the advantage of this musical form, in that a *mor lam* ballad is able to tell a story in an entertaining way that Isan people could easily remember (DeNeui 2002:60). Yet he faced a dilemma because certain tunes in this genre are used specifically in animistic practices to call upon spirits and musicians had to take part in the pre-performance *wai khru* ceremony where they would bring all their instruments together and offer gifts to the spirits of the teachers of the instruments and ask for their favour before they begin to play. These offerings could be as little as a pack of cigarettes and a joss stick to complex offerings of alcohol, flowers, money and other valuables. However, these practices went against the teachings of conventional Christianity.

Eventually it was decided that most of the tunes could be used but there would be no *wai khru* ceremony beforehand for the spirits of the teachers or instruments. Instead, all instruments used were to be dedicated to God beforehand. Lyrics were

rewritten for popular *mor lam* tunes and were recorded for use in church during the worship services. For example, the song Jesus Loves Isan, which is much loved by Isan Christians, uses the well-known *Lom Duay Khoong* tune (Mekong River tune) that is still being played on both the Thai and the Lao side of the border of Isan. This tune is commonly used in the secular circles with lyrics written and rewritten for it simply because it represents a deep expression of the Isan people. Therefore, the missionaries believe that putting the words "Jesus Loves Isan" to that particular tune remains especially meaningful to Isan people today. The reworked tunes were a big hit with the Isan Christians and when *lam* tunes (as opposed to central Thai or other new tunes) were being sung in church, most people became extremely attentive and many could not resist getting up to dance (DeNeui 2002:65). The collection of Christian *mor lam* tunes grew and a *mor lam* songbook, *Lam Isan Sanrasern Phra Jao* (Isan *Lam* Ballads for Praising God) was printed in 1996.

The use of Thai tunes with Thai traditional instruments would be revisited in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER III
CHRISTIAN MUSIC IN THAILAND

The act of singing a song which venerates a great person or a deity is well documented through history. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, hymn singing is at the heart of worship ritual. From early church history, Christians were specifically identified as "those people who sang hymns to Christ, addressing him as God"[1]. There are two main reasons behind the Christians' penchant for singing. First, Christians sing because it is so commanded in the Bible. Second, Christians sing as a response in gratitude to what they believe God has done for them (Saternos 1998:1). Singing then became an integral part of the cultural identity of the church. As noted in Chapter 1, music is a powerful means of creating a sense of belonging (Stokes 1994) and churches have used music to forge feelings of social cohesion and solidarity. A church culture can often be identified by its song literature.

In Thailand, Christian music could be divided into four broad genres: hymns, praise choruses, traditional Thai tunes, and contemporary Christian music. The first section of this chapter examines the four categories in detail. The second section gives an overview of the songwriters and producers of Christian music in Thailand. Finally, the last section discusses the music that is used in Protestant churches in Bangkok, based on the results of the questionnaire survey of 18 churches.

Types of Christian music in Thailand

It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that the early Protestant missionaries to Thailand in the early 20th century did not make any attempts at localizing Christianity. Their belief in the superiority of Western civilization over Siamese culture was evident in the way they banned traditional Thai instruments and tunes from church, and instituted the singing of hymns, accompanied by an organ or piano. Santos (2003) writes that the Westernization of Asian cultures, whether it materialized in the context of colonization by, or accommodation of, Western powers, brought about a variety of

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[1] This was how Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecelius Secundus, circa 61-113), a Roman administrator in Bithynia, Asia Minor described the Christians to Emperor Trajan in a letter in AD 112.

significant changes in the musical traditions of the region. Besides its symbolic function as an artistic commodity of a technologically superior, cultivated, and modern lifestyle, Western music was adopted as a global culture medium that facilitated interaction between the West and the individual Asian states.

The development of Christian music in Thailand has largely paralleled the trends in the worldwide Church, for example the move towards using praise choruses during the Pentecostal-charismatic movement and the use of traditional Thai instruments during a worldwide revitalization of indigenous arts. The four genres of Christian music in Thailand are discussed in the following sections in their wider cultural context.

Hymns

Hymns are written in metrical verse in lines of regular length and are usually led by the piano or organ, with or without a choir. The hymns that are sung in Bangkok churches come from two hymnbooks. The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) hymnal, เพลงไทยนมัสการ (*Phleng Thai Namasakan*), was first printed in 1953. Of the 302 songs in the current edition printed in 1987, 21 are written by Thais either as original songs or rewriting new lyrics to traditional Thai tunes. The second hymnbook, เพลงแห่งชีวิตคริสเตียน *(Phleng Haeng Chiwit Khristian*), is commonly used by the Baptists, Methodists and other independent churches, and consists of 324 songs, all translated from English. The hymns from both books were written between the 16th and 20th centuries and the root of the hymns can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century which marked the separation of the Protestants from the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestant Reformation

In 1517, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, called for reopening of the debate on the sale of indulgences. In Catholic theology, an indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment due to God for sin. During Luther's time, the ability to offer a full pardon of the punishment due for sins was abused by some unscrupulous members of the

Church's hierarchy for monetary gain, particularly to raise money for the building or renovation of churches. In 1517, Pope Leo X offered indulgences for those who gave alms to rebuild St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, a situation that took on the appearance of "selling indulgences". This provoked Luther to write his 95 theses, protesting what he saw as the purchase and sale of salvation, which is stated in the Bible as a free gift from God (Bainton 1985:29). Luther's dissent marked a sudden outbreak of discontent which had been pushed underground but not resolved. The quick spread of this dissent to other neighbouring countries was aided by the printing press.

This radical change in religious thought, initiated in Germany in 1517 by Luther, and in Switzerland in 1519 and 1541 by Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, respectively, led to the growth of the various forms of Protestantism and the subsequent changes in church music. In Germany the influence of Luther, a traditionalist by nature, ensured the preservation of much of the ritual and music of the ancient Roman Catholic Church, provided it did not conflict with his theological reforms. Though primarily concerned to promote the religious education of the people through German congregational hymns and vernacular versions of the Bible and the liturgy, he was by no means averse to the use of the traditional Latin texts, several of which held their place in continuing types of Lutheran worship. He even purportedly adapted some of the popular tavern tunes of his time into congregational hymns. The sophisticated art music tradition of the Latin Renaissance of the pre-Reformation Church had developed with little music for the people to sing and Luther is largely credited with the introduction of the congregational singing commonly seen in churches today.

The situation, however, was more austere in countries where the teachings of Zwingli and Calvin took root. Zwingli, though highly gifted musically, stipulated at first that music should be entirely excluded from church worship; while Calvin sanctioned only the unaccompanied congregational singing of biblical texts, mainly vernacular psalms and canticles in metrical versions. Although polyphony was disallowed in Calvinist church practice, it resurfaced after the mid-16th century in the form of four-voice psalm settings. In England, progress was made under Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and James I (1603-25) towards the creation of a more expansive English musical liturgy, with major polyphonic settings of vernacular anthem and service texts,

chiefly for the use of cathedral and collegiate choirs. An important innovation from 1600 was the "verse" form (used for both anthems and services) in which sections for one or more solo singers alternate with ones for the full choir, with accompaniment for organ or a consort of strings (Blume 1974: 35).

Hence, the fate of established musical traditions in the new churches of the reformation depended to a large extent on their respective founders' views regarding the utility of music in Christian worship. Luther retained the received musical tradition almost intact, supplementing it with vernacular settings and congregational hymnody. On the other hand, Calvin restricted songs to congregational renditions of metrical psalms. As for the Anglicans, elaborate music was preserved in some colleges and cathedrals, while Anglican parish music was generally reduced to metrical psalmody.

Post-Reformation

John Wesley's founding of the Methodist movement in England during the early 1740s ushered in a shift away from the Calvinist metrical psalm towards a means of expressing the personal emotion of an evangelical[2] congregation. The Methodists emphasise on the theological concept of prevenient grace, which can be defined as "the divine grace that precedes human decision and it exists prior to and without any reference to anything humans may have done" (Collins 1989:5). Most Methodist hymnals have a section with hymns concerning this theology and one of the best known hymns written about the doctrine is Charles Wesley's "Come Sinners, to the Gospel Feast", which includes the lines, "Ye need not be left behind, *for God hath all bid all humankind… the invitation is to all…*" (italics by the author). Other hymns include lines like "now incline me to repent" or "He moved my soul to seek Him".

With its emphasis on personal experience, the hymns written by the evangelicals tend to be more personal and intimate and their music exerted tremendous influence on the subsequent Pentecostal movement of the 20th century. A few hymn writers who had significant impact during this period and whose songs

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[2] Evangelicalism is typified by an emphasis on evangelism, a personal experience of conversion, biblically-oriented faith, and a belief in the relevance of Christian faith to cultural issues.

are still being sung in Bangkok churches today are: Charles Wesley, the younger brother of John Wesley, whose thousands of hymns include "And Can It Be That I Should Gain" and "Hark The Herald Angels Sing"; Isaac Watts, recognised as the "Father of English Hymnody", wrote some 750 hymns which include "Joy To The World" and "When I Survey The Old Wondrous Cross"; and Fanny Crosby, a blind American lyricist, whose repertoire of 8,000 hymns include "Blessed Assurance" and "Tell Me The Story Of Jesus".

Local hymns

In the CCT hymnal, เพลงไทยนมัสการ (*Phleng Thai Namasakan*), 21 hymns were written by Thais, who either rewrote new lyrics to traditional Thai tunes or composed new tunes. These original tunes are again divided into two types: the Western anthem or chorale format; or Thai melodies that utilise the pentatonic scale. The two most prolific hymn writers as represented in the CCT hymnal are Samyong Songsan Prasopsin and Junram Puntupong Strausbaugh.

Samyong, a former *likay* actor turned Christian pastor, was arguably one of the first Thais to localize the Christian message in Thailand and was responsible for the first indigenous Thai hymnal, เพลงไทยเพราะ (*Phleng Thai Phai Roh*). When he first became a Christian, he completely gave up what he called "worldly songs" and pledged that he would use his voice only for singing Christian songs, which were then Christian hymns with Western tunes that Thai people found difficult to pick up and slow to enjoy (Bennett 2004:49). For example, the first three words of a Western hymn, "bring them in" (พาเขามา) when translated and sung to the required notes meant "cloth-white-horse" (Bennett 2004:54). After his baptism, he happened to write a song to a traditional Thai tune which immediately caught on with his fellow Thai Christians. He was encouraged to compose more Thai hymns by the missionaries, and the hymnal, *Phleng Thai Phai Roh*, or Melodious Thai Hymns, was published in 1961. Rural Thai loved their book of religious pop songs while Bangkok's Presbyterian and Baptists churches disparaged them, saying that these Thai hymns "don't express the holiness and majesty and reverence that we have for God" (Bennett 2004:58). Samyong passed away in 1994 at the age of 62.

On the other hand, Junram, who is now 60 years old and retired from her position as choir director at Wattana Wittaya Academy, grew up in a different music atmosphere from Samyong. Her great-grandfather was one of the first Christians in Thailand and her father was a preacher and used to be the moderator[3] of the CCT. She grew up singing Western hymns, having learnt most of them from her father when they went on trips to visit churches. By the time she graduated from high school in Chiang Mai, she had decided that she wanted to study music so that she could help the churches in Thailand. With the help of the missionaries, she went to a Christian women's college in the US to major in music, where she took up courses in conducting, composing and hymnology. Her first hymn "which sounds like a Thai tune in the way it goes up and down" is included in the CCT hymnal was written even before she went to the US (personal communication, 10/12/05). When she was working at the academy, Junram spent most of her time translating and arranging Western anthems and chorales for use by the school choir. But now that she is retired, she said she is hoping to write more Thai tunes, especially classical Thai tunes that utilise the pentatonic scale, which could then be played by traditional Thai instruments.

Praise choruses

This style of Christian music is commonly used to denote songs that are used to worship God and set in a choral music style, usually with repeating, short, easily sung "chorus" parts, which are meant to bring people and entire churches into a deeper personal worship experience and intimacy with God. The congregation is usually encouraged to move and clap their hands. Praise choruses emphasise the manifest presence of God and are also sometimes referred to as praise and worship music. Praise music usually is used to refer to faster, upbeat type of songs while worship music implies a slower, more heartfelt expression of adoration and worship to God. Compared to hymns, praise choruses tend to use simple, repetitive lyrics and are often guitar-based or led by a small group of musicians. Critics often focus on the simple or repetitive lyrical structure and the perception of simplistic theology in some

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[3] The moderator is the chairperson of the General Assembly, the highest court of a Presbyterian church.

songs from the worship genre while others favour the contemporary language of the lyrics, which make the songs more accessible to those unfamiliar with the vocabulary common to many hymns.

This genre became popularised in Protestant churches in Bangkok with the growing influence of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement in the 1980s. Praise choruses in Thailand can be divided into two categories: those translated from English or original compositions by Thai Christians. There is no central body to translate English praise choruses into Thai but some of the bigger Pentecostal-Charismatic churches such as Holy of Holies, Jai Samarn and Hope of Bangkok attempt their own translations, which are then picked up for use by other churches. These translated praise choruses are sometimes plagued by the same problems that translated English hymns face, the skewing of the meaning in the song because of the tonality of the Thai language. For example, the words "draw me close" in a popular praise chorus when translated into Thai and constrained by the original melody, comes across as "draw me further" (see Appendix D for song lyrics).

Knight (1974) notes the contributions of the charismatic renewal on Christian music: importance of singing psalms and scripture songs; heavy use of music for praise and worship, not only in the sanctuary but also in conferences, festivals, small groups, home churches and in private; use of musical instruments; return to emphasis on spirited congregational singing featuring praise leaders rather than choirs; use of spontaneous and choreographed dance and pageantry; use of drama, mime and hand-signing; and emphasis on the prophetic role of the musician, which means that the musician is not only just someone who plays music but also functions as a minister of God.

This section examines the origins of the praise choruses, their modern-day proponents, and local compositions in this style.

Origins of praise choruses

Fervent, spiritual singing is and has been typical of the Pentecostal-charismatic tradition of worship, and music occupies a vital place in the religious experience of typical Pentecostal-charismatic believers. While praise choruses were popularised during the charismatic renewal in churches during the early 1970s, their

roots can be traced back to the music associated with the great revival movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, especially the popularity of the folk-oriented hymn which came to be known as the camp meeting or revival spiritual. Black music and Negro spirituals were a major part of these revivals and camp meetings. The spirituals denoted a style of text more enthusiastic than those of the metrical psalms and traditional hymns. The music is suffused with the melodic idiom of folksong, often modal, and frequently using the gapped scales typical of American folksong. Text repetition and responsorial song forms are common. The text of black spirituals often refer to the flight of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and to the hope of salvation in heaven. It is often suggested that this was a reference to the hope of escape from the American South to the "free" North (Lovell Jr. 1972:18).

By the 1930s, the spirituals developed into a new style of music called the gospel song, which tended to tell the story of redemption or announce the second coming of Christ and the joys of an eternity spent in heaven. Many songs related experiences of the perceived joys of hardships of the Christian life. Texts were more often experientially oriented than praise or worship related.

From the mid-fifties to the late sixties, young people in particular became increasingly restless because what they were hearing in church had little in common with the music they were listening to elsewhere. Ralph Carmichael, a composer-arranger with roots in the Assemblies of God[4], attempted to build a bridge between the generations and introduced new styles of music together with "new" instruments like drum sets, electric guitars, electric keyboards, and sophisticated electronic sound systems. This dovetailed with the Jesus Movement of the 1960s and 1970s where former hippies who, disenchanted with hippie values, embraced Christianity and wrote new hymns and worship songs with a folk rock style. The Jesus People kept many of the mannerisms and style of the hippies but changed the content. For example, free love became free love of God and people.

This style of music was initially popularised in charismatic churches in the early 1970s and became popular in the 1980s when Christian publishers such as

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[4] The Assemblies of God is the world's largest Pentecostal Protestant Christian denomination and emphasises core Pentecostal teachings such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking of tongues and faith healing.

Maranatha! Music and Integrity Music started promoting and releasing such songs. Moreover, because of the influence of Charismatics within some denominations, praise songs were published in some denominationally-supported hymnals and incorporated in worship services otherwise following a more traditional or liturgical structure.

Praise choruses in the present

The praise choruses that have been written since the 1990s reflect current music trends and have taken on more of a "rock" sound compared to the earlier worship music. While Integrity Music continues to be a major label, the emergence of the Vineyard Movement and Australia's Hillsong Church tilts the balance away from the label. The music from Vineyard and Hillsong are sung by churches worldwide, including Bangkok.

The Vineyard Movement is an organization of over 850 churches worldwide that was started in the US in 1982. Its beliefs include the use of spiritual gifts[5] and the active presence of the Holy Spirit[6] in the church. It also places strong emphasis on connecting with God through worship. Hence, in regular gatherings, whether they are main Sunday services or small groups based in private homes, equal time is given to both worship and Bible study. Worship in the Vineyard is almost always performed in a modern music style, with a multi-piece band leading worship. The movement has its own recording label, Vineyard Music.

Hillsong Church was founded in Sydney in 1983 and now has branches in London, Leatherhead, Paris and Kiev. Its services are attended by 20,000 people every Sunday and are telecast in 160 countries. The church's emphasis on "prosperity gospel", which is the idea that wealth can be effective rather than destructive, has been panned by conservative Christians. Its stand on this issue is found on its website: "We believe that God wants to heal and transform us so that we can live healthy and prosperous lives in order to help others more effectively". The church's music

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[5] Spiritual gifts as listed in the New Testament portion of the Bible include the speaking of tongues, healing powers, miraculous powers, prophecy and so on.

[6] In mainstream Christianity, the Holy Spirit is one person of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father (God) and the Son (Jesus).

department is overseen by Darlene Zschech who has penned many Christian songs for albums which have gone gold and platinum in Australia. It is believed that her song "Shout To The Lord" is sung by 35 million Christians of all denominations each week and Hillsong's music business alone brings in an annual income of $40 million (ABC News, 1/8/2005).

Local compositions

It has been observed that the number of original compositions by Thai Christians has increased in the last few years. Sudchai Krishnakan, who spearheads the Youth For Christ Thailand project of compiling praise choruses into songbooks, notes that 40 per cent of the songs in the third songbook are written by Thais (personal communication, 20/12/05). This is a marked increase from the first book where almost all the songs were translated from English. The third book was published two years ago and consists of 402 songs, collected and compiled based on market demand.

The bigger Pentecostal-charismatic churches, such as Jai Samarn and Hope of Bangkok, produce original songs which are recorded on albums and sung in other churches. With more Thai Christians writing songs, and the increasing ease of digital recording, more aspiring singers and songwriters are publishing their own works independently. The number of independent Christian recording labels has also jumped in the last five to 10 years. Unfortunately, many of these CDs appear home-made and the music arrangements sound over-synthesized. Grace Journey Music, the forerunner in original compositions, is probably the only label whose music quality is of a professional level. It has 17 albums under its belt and encompasses a variety of music styles such as worship, rock, jazz, and *luk thung*.

The founder of Grace Journey Music, Ruangkit Yongpiyakul, has a full-time job as a songwriter/producer at GMM Grammy and regards the Christian label as a hobby, a "labour of love". His songs are widely sung in churches and have become popular ring tones among Thai Christians. Although he has observed more Thai Christians taking the plunge to write original songs, he estimates that less than 10% of the churches in Bangkok are doing so, a figure that he hopes to increase by holding a song-writing seminar in October this year (personal communication, 20/12/05). He

says he does not take any cut from the profits generated by the Christian albums but depends on his secular job for a living. Having seen the amateur quality of many Christian albums, he says he aims to make quality Christian music that is comparable to secular music, so that young people will not shun away from listening to it.

Traditional Thai tunes

The move towards developing an indigenous Christian music started in the 1960s with the efforts of Samyong, as has been mentioned earlier in this chapter. Although he wrote several original compositions, the major part of his body of work revolved around writing Christian lyrics to traditional Thai tunes that are familiar to the Thai audience. His efforts were published in 1961 as *Phleng Thai Phai Roh*, or Melodious Thai Hymns. This concept of reworking traditional tunes was replicated in the Northeast when missionaries infused Christian meaning into *mor lam* tunes (see Chapter 2). The *mor lam* tunes were collated into the songbook, *Lam Isan Sanrasern Phra Jao* (Isan *Lam* Ballads for Praising God) and printed in 1996.

Currently, it is more common to find traditional music being used in the rural churches, especially those in the Northeast, than in Bangkok. In the rural churches, the *khaen* is typically used during the worship time and it is not unusual to see church members getting up to dance while singing. In Bangkok, only Muang Thai Church and Abundant Life Centre use the traditional Thai forms of music. At Muang Thai, traditional Thai music is used once every two months. Classical Thai instruments such as the *ranad* and *khong wong yai* are used to play familiar Thai tunes that have been adapted for Christian use by the pastors. Conversely, Abundant Life Centre, a small house church with a weekly attendance of about 30 people, aims to reach out to the Isan people. Hence, Isan music forms and Isan instruments such as the *khaen* are used.

A few Christian artistes have produced *mor lam* and *luk thung* albums but they cater to a very niche audience and in Bangkok, they do not sell as well as the praise and worship albums.

Contemporary Christian music

Other than worship music, the Jesus Movement also spawned another form of Christian music called Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), which is used to describe a new form of pop/rock music that was lyrically based in the Christian faith. While praise choruses are suited to congregational singing, CCM is like secular songs but with religious lyrics. Howard & Streck (1996) divide CCM conceptually into three specific subgenres – separational, integrational and transformational – which are distinguished from one another and from the mainstream vis-à-vis the lyrics of the music.

The **separational** orientation emphasises the religious functions of the music: evangelism, edification and worship facilitation. Despite the musical diversity, such as Christian heavy metal, Christian grunge, Christian rave and Christian rap, however there is a tremendous lyrical homogeneity within this subgenre. Lyrics present clear and explicit theological statements, reminding the listener of God's love, concern and proximity or the need for personal salvation: "God good, Devil bad", sing DeGarmo and Key (1993); "You can trust in God", proclaim the Allies (1989); "Fall in love with Jesus tonight", urges Kenny Marks (1987). Moreover, musicians define themselves as "ministers" or "missionaries" (Howard & Streck 1996:44).

Integrational CCM, while recognising some potential for evangelism, focuses on presenting positive role models and wholesome entertainment. The music is transformed from blatantly evangelical messages to "positive pop" which for the most part, addresses the value of the individual and the importance of love. Thus Amy Grant's lyrics go from "sing your praise to the Lord" in 1982 when she was of the separational orientation to "you could be so good for me" in 1991. The message is usually simple: "Resist temptation, life gets tough but God is only a prayer away, love your spouse, get religion involved in your everyday life, forgive yourself, and have a good time." (Millard 1986:12)

Transformational artistes, through the belief that Christian art has value apart from evangelism, offer both a critique of society and the church and an image of the struggling Christian, striving to believe but remaining painfully honest about his or her human failings. The transformational musicians tend to think of themselves as "artistes" rather than "ministers". They view their music as a reflection of the

creative divine image of God found in all humans, and as such, inherently valuable regardless of its utility for evangelism or exhortation. The lyrics of transformational artistes often lack clear religious references and steer clear from the straightforward, if potentially cliché filled, statements concerning the nature of God such as "our God is an awesome God". Instead transformational bands sometimes present failure as a current and ubiquitous condition, for example when Steve Hindalong sings "We're just not always that happy" (Howard & Streck 1996:47).

Beside these three subgenres, there is a form of music which is not necessarily Christian music and yet has much in common with the CCM genre, called "secular Christian" music. This refers to the popular music of the mainstream rock industry produced by artistes who (usually as individuals rather than artistes) claim the label "Christian". Artistes such as U2, Bob Dylan, The Call, and Vigilantes of Love are not considered to be CCM but their music is often embraced by Christian music fans who find a Christian viewpoint presented in their lyrics. While Christian rock fans are often anxious to embrace these artistes as "one of ours" (thus expecting the mandated religious content of CCM), the artistes themselves usually take great pains to distance themselves from the stereotypes of the evangelical subculture (Howard & Streck 1996:49).

CCM in Thailand

The fledgling CCM in Thailand would be discussed within Howard and Streck's framework of separate subgenres.

Contemporary Christian music in Thailand arguably started when former pop superstar Anchalee Chongkadeekij became a Christian in 1990. After her high-profile conversion, she left the limelight and cut her ties with the world of secular music. Instead, she formed a band that included other Christian artistes like Ruangkit Yongpiyakul to perform music and evangelise, as well as to play at Christian conferences. The band was active from 1990 to 1997 and played as much as 10 times a year (interview with Ruangkit, 20/12/05). The two albums that she headlined in those years could be classified as separational CCM because of the strongly religious lyrics which talked about God's love. In Thailand, the main audience for separational CCM are the Christians. Hence separational albums, such as Thai TV host Debbie

Klongtruadroke-Scott's self-titled debut album, are known only within the Christian circle.

The most widespread form of CCM found in Thailand is the integrational subgenre while there are almost no examples of the transformational genre. Thai artistes who become Christians or are already Christian do not usually see music as just an art but they see music as a tool to reach out to other people, hence the gravitation towards the integrational subgenre.

Another reason that this format is the most common subgenre of CCM found in Thailand could be due to the limitations of the Thai language. Unlike many secular English songs that have the word "God" in them and still remain popular among the mainstream audience, a Thai song which has the word *Phra Jao* in it will straightaway be considered as a religious song and attract only the small Christian market. Hence many Thai CCM artistes choose to write and sing songs with positive meanings without obvious reference to God. For example, the track that youth pastor Vara Mejudhon sings on a soon-to-be-released R&B album is called ฉันดีใจที่มีเธอ (*Chan Dijai Thi Mi Ther*). The Thai lyrics (see Appendix D) translate as: "In this world of chaos, in this world of problems, I'm glad that I've met you, I'm glad that I've found you and during the worst times, you were there." He notes the difficulty of making the song obviously Christian:

> *"It's not like in English where we can use You, with a big Y, for God. But in Thai, if we want to make it overtly Christian, I'll have to sing Chan Dijai Thi Mii Phra Ong. No one (outside of the Christian circle) would buy that. Or non-Christians might think that I'm singing it to the king of Thailand!"*
> (Personal communication, 30/11/05)

Integrational musicians get around the problem by explaining during press interviews that the song is not an ordinary love song but about his or her experience of God. A prominent figure in this subgenre is singer-songwriter Boyd Kosiyapong, who became a Christian two years ago. He came out of Bakery Music and started Love Is Records last year, with the aim of making it a Christian music company. He has been foremost in producing and promoting integrational CCM in Thailand. One good example is his collaboration with Anchalee on her latest album, *50*, that was

released at the end of last year. While the songs do not explicitly refer to God, Christians would be able to read between the lines. Take the song, เพื่อนที่ชื่อว่าพ่อ, the lyrics talk about having a father, who is also a friend, and who is always ready to love or forgive (see Appendix D). On one level, it can portray Anchalee's relationship with her father (which was the explanation she gave at a concert the author attended). On another level, it could describe her relationship with God, who is also addressed by Christians as "Father". The booklet of lyrics that comes with the CD explains the Christian meaning behind each song and includes her testimonies of being a Christian.

Finally, there has been an increasing number of "secular Christian" artistes in Thailand whose music is not considered to be CCM yet they as individuals claim the label "Christian" while pursuing a career in mainstream pop/rock music. These are artistes who do not intentionally inject Christian references or meanings into their music, either in explicit or roundabout ways, unlike the musicians discussed earlier. Notable examples include "Sun" Rattana Wongsunaurn who is one half of the R&B duo, Dos, and "Tor" Saksit Vejsupaporn in the group B5. Moreover, there are also others who, like Ruangkit, pursue careers in both Christian and secular music in tandem. Generally speaking, the "secular Christian" artistes in Thailand are not as cut off from the Christian circle as their counterparts in the West who have consciously stayed away from anything overtly "Christian". The Thai artistes regularly perform at Christian events and lend support to Christian projects.

Songwriters and producers of Christian music

As noted earlier, more Thai Christians have been penning songs, and there has been an obvious spurt since the 1990s. This section will only cover Christians who are currently writing and producing Christian music in Bangkok.

The **traditional Thai music** format has the least number of producers. This is not surprising, given that there are only two churches, with a combined membership of under 200, which use these songs. The songwriters tend to be pastors from these two churches, who write Christian lyrics to well-known Thai tunes. There are also a few *luk thung* singers who have released *luk thung* albums after converting to Christianity.

This is followed by the **hymn** format, which has slightly more producers. Hymn-writers tend to be older in age and have an educational and professional background in church music, which is essentially Western. Most of them would have grown up in Christian families and gone overseas to study music, some with the help of missionaries. Junram is a good illustration of those who work in this genre, and who have been socialized into this music style since childhood. While these hymn-writers pen songs in the Thai language, the format of the songs is essentially Western, such as anthems and chorales. They are also responsible for translating English hymns into Thai.

The most popular format that Christian songwriters like to write in is the **contemporary pop style**[7]. Songs in this style can be broadly divided into those that refer to God explicitly, and those that refer to God implicitly. Praise choruses, as well as songs in the separational subgenre of CCM, will fall into the first category while songs in the integrational subgenre of CCM will fall into the second.

In the first category of songs where **specific references to God** are made, Ruangkit identifies three generations of songwriters. The forerunner was Winida Siphumpon, who is from Saphan Luang Church, a church that has a long tradition of music excellence. Utilizing the Thai pentatonic scale, she was one of the pioneers in penning praise choruses during the early 1980s, an obvious break from hymns. She is in her 40s now and her label is called Winida Music. Some of the songs that she wrote back in the 1980s remain very popular in Bangkok churches and still resonate very strongly among Thai Christians.

The second generation, which includes Ruangkit, started writing songs in the 1990s. This was also the period when some pastors of churches with a Pentecostal-charismatic bend started penning praise choruses. Examples include Anuparp Wichitnantana of Bangkok Liberty Church and Prayut Sariman of Hope of Bangkok Church. While Hope of Bangkok remains one of the leading producers, as well as translators, of praise choruses with its Genesis Records, new original compositions from Bangkok Liberty Church have been used only within the church.

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[7] This reflects trends in secular music trends where Thai pop constitutes 80 per cent of the music market (Hayes 2004:23).

The third generation of songwriters are in their late 20s and early 30s who became active in the 2000s. One of the more well-known songwriters from this group is Bongote Hudson, who married a missionary from Youth With A Mission. Her song, ข้าจะรักและบูชา, is currently one of the favourites in Bangkok churches. Other songwriters come from the Footprints band and the music team in Jai Samarn Church. The latter has been prolific in publishing both original and translated songs. Ruangkit observes that almost all of the songwriters across the three generations grew up in a Christian home and could play at least one instrument.

In the second category where **references to God are implicit**, Boyd remains the main songwriter. Being a relatively new Christian, he has yet to start writing songs in the previous category, which is characterized by simple lyrics and uncomplicated melody lines. Instead he sticks to the style that he is used to. Hence, he still writes his trademark love songs, which can be, on one level interpreted as romantic, fraternal or parental love, but can be read on a deeper level as a symbol of divine love.

Christian music in Bangkok churches

The discussion in this section is based on the data collected from a questionnaire survey of Bangkok churches, which were asked to take note of the songs sung in church over four consecutive Sundays. In all, 18 churches responded and the music used covered the time frame from October to January. The churches which responded reflect the wider Protestant community in Bangkok and are classified broadly based on denominational difference into four groups: Church of Christ in Thailand (5), Independent churches (6), Pentecostal-charismatic churches started by missionaries (5), and Southern Baptist (2). Although the independent churches tend to follow Pentecostal-charismatic doctrines and styles of music, these home-grown churches are considered under a separate group to distinguish them from missionary-planted churches.

Another special case in point is where, for ease of discussion, three churches were placed in a category based on style of worship. For example, the church started by the Korean Presbyterian Mission and the Baptist church are not strictly CCT but

were included under CCT for this study because its style of worship is similar to that of CCT. And a church that belongs to the Christian and Mission Alliance (C&MA) is included under the Pentecostal-charismatic group although C&MA as a whole has generally moved away from its early Pentecostal roots.

Coding of the songs

All the churches used music from the hymn and praise chorus genres and none drew from the traditional music or CCM categories. This is to be expected because the survey covered only the songs used during congregational singing in the Sunday worship services. All the songs were sung in Thai.

All respondents filled in the survey in Thai, giving only the Thai titles of the songs used in church. Songbooks and Christian music experts were consulted to determine if a song was translated or an original composition. If a song was translated, its English title was entered into the data, along with the Thai title. The translated songs were further coded into three categories according to their format: hymns, praise choruses written before 1990 and praise choruses written after 1990. It is important to distinguish between the two time frames for praise choruses because not only do they sound different but their proponents are also different. For ease of discussion, praise choruses written before 1990 are referred to as "older choruses" while those written after 1990 are referred to as "newer choruses".

The "1990" dividing line

To a certain extent, the year "1990" as a demarcating line is somewhat arbitrary, since musical change occurs over time and cannot be held to a particular point in time. However the secular musical trends between the 1980s and the 1990s differ enough to warrant delineation in the Christian music composed over these two periods. The big hair and power dressing of the 1980s went hand in hand with New Wave music, or Synthpop, a style of popular music in which the synthesizer is the dominant musical instrument. It is most closely associated with the era between late 1970s and early 1980s when the synthesizer first became a practical and affordable instrument. The style of music developed as musicians embraced the synthesizer as a

lead instrument, taking advantage of its unique sound and capabilities (Wikipedia 2006a).

The 1990s were marked by rapid progression of democracy, globalization and global capitalism following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Many countries experienced the nineties as "a prosperous time"; Thailand, as well, until the economic crash in the later part of the decade. The widespread adoption of personal computers and the Internet meant that individuals could record, edit and publish their original compositions. There was also a 1980s backlash beginning in about 1992 and lasting into the 2000s. During most of the 1990s, anything "Eighties" was considered to be ultimately "uncool". As a result, people started wearing straighter hair, darker clothes, and acoustic music became popular in opposition to the bright Synthpop of the 1980s. The major 1990s slang words were mostly related to hip hop culture and included "phat", "da bomb", "you go girl!", and "Wasssuppp!" (Wikipedia 2006b).

Locally, the 1990s saw a spike in the number of Christian songs written by Thai Christians. The trend has largely continued. It should be noted that Bangkok generally lags behind the music trends of the West by at least five to six years, presumably because of the language. For example, the Western hip hop culture and its accompanying slang words of the 1990s emerged in Thai mainstream music only in the last two to three years.

Results of the survey

The results of the survey will be discussed in three parts: the types of songs, denominational preferences for certain genres, and the most popular songs sung in church.

Types of music used

Of the 496 songs sung in the churches over a one-month period, three quarters are translated and the remaining quarter is original compositions by Thai Christians. It should be noted that all the 371 foreign songs are translated from English except for three that were translated from Chinese and were sung in one particular church. All the local compositions used belong to the praise chorus genre.

All the churches used only music from the hymn and praise chorus genres. The number of praise choruses (76%) far outweigh the number of hymns (24%) sung. This is because the churches that use hymns in the worship service tend to sing fewer songs compared to churches that use praise choruses.

Of the 371 foreign songs sung in the churches, 32 per cent are hymns, 52 per cent are the older choruses and 16 per cent are the newer choruses.

Figure 3.1 shows the different types of music used in the churches. The older choruses are most popular (39%) followed by a tie between hymns (24%) and local songs (25%). The hymns' share of the pie will probably remain stable because the more traditional and conservative churches will continue to use hymns. It is interesting to note that more local songs than newer choruses are sung. A possible reason is that as more Thai Christians started penning songs in the 1990s and adding to the repertoire of Christian songs, the need to translate songs from English became less pressing. The steady increase in original compositions and the slowing down of translating songs led to a bigger pool of local songs for worship leaders to choose from. However, it is argued that the continued growth in the use of local songs is likely to be at the expense of the older choruses instead of its more contemporary counterparts. With the worldwide Church becoming increasingly globalized due to international Christian conferences and the media, Thai Christians, like Christians all over the world, will want to be firmly plugged into the latest trends in Christian music and sing the latest chart-toppers in the Christian scene.

Figure 3.1 Types of music used in the churches.
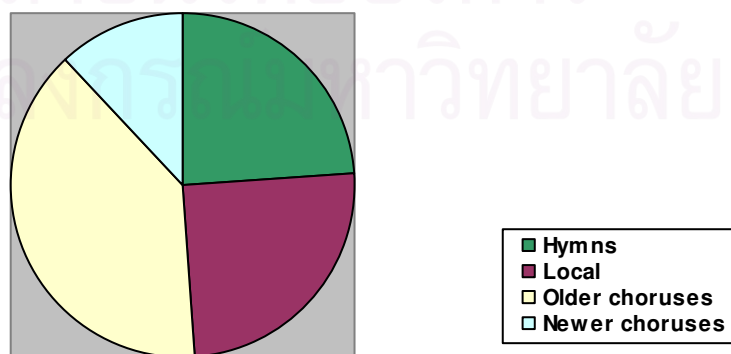
Denominational preferences

As discussed in Chapter 2, the various denominations have differing worship styles and preferences in the use of Christian music. Figure 3.2 gives evidence of these differences. The CCT denomination sings markedly fewer songs, about four every Sunday, than the other denominations. This is probably due to CCT churches having a more rigid format for the Sunday service, where the number of songs and slots for congregational singing are fixed. On the other end of the spectrum are the independent and Pentecostal-charismatic (PC) churches which sing some nine songs each Sunday. This is not surprising given the denomination's emphasis on praise and worship. Interestingly, the independent churches are also the ones with higher Sunday attendances. The Southern Baptists tend to be somewhere in the middle between the two.

Figure 3.2 Comparing average weekly attendance and number of songs sung across denominations.

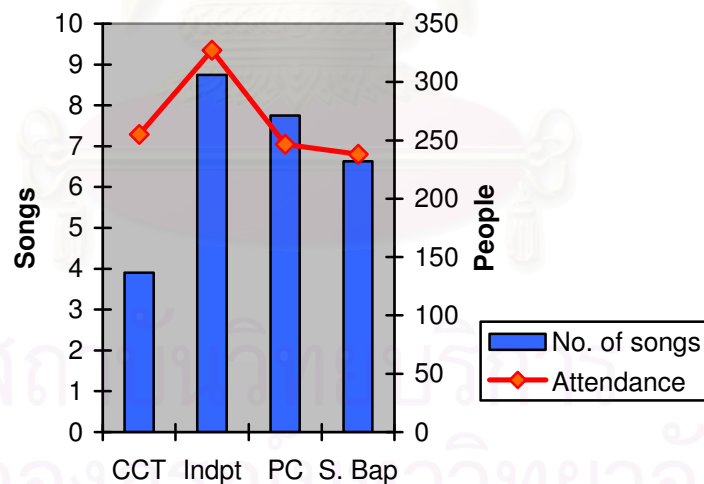Figure 3.3 compares the music used across denominations. The CCT uses almost exclusively hymns while the Southern Baptists subscribe to a blend of both hymns and praise choruses, with a propensity to use hymns (23%) and local compositions (26%) in about the equal proportions. The independent churches use the highest proportion of old praise choruses (67%) and are most averse to singing hymns (7%).

Figure 3.3 Comparison of music used across denominations
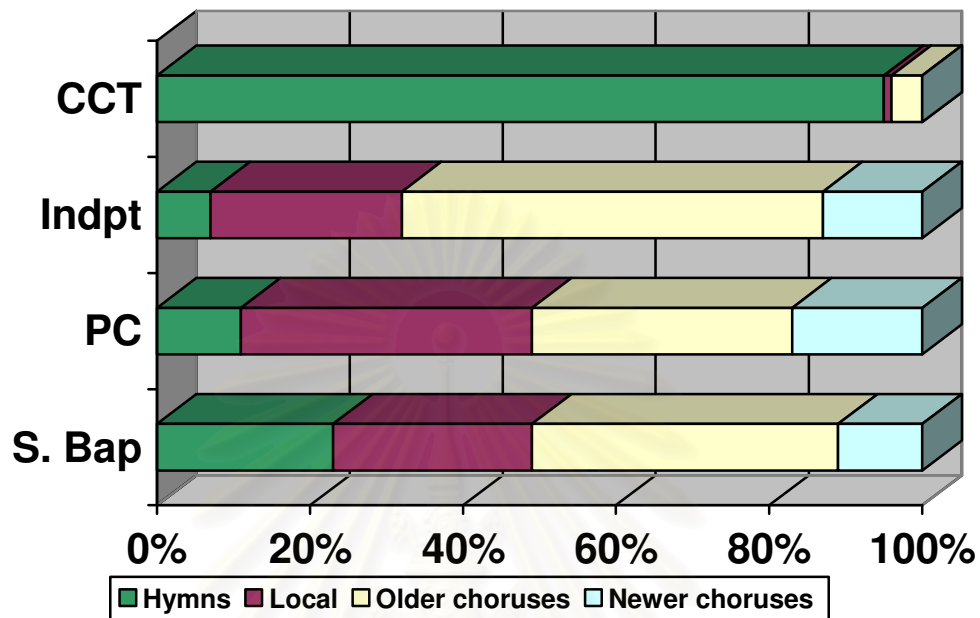
Meanwhile, the Pentecostal-charismatic churches have the distinction of using more local songs and newer choruses than the other groups. In fact, personal observations confirm that these churches have the reputation of being the trendsetters in these two genres of Christian music. There are two possible reasons for this. First, although these churches are under Thai leadership, they still retain strong links with the mission boards that started them and they tend to have a sizable number of missionaries either on staff or in the congregation. This partnership with missionaries gives the churches better access to the Christian trends worldwide, including in Christian music. Secondly, the emphasis that Pentecostal-charismatics place on praise and worship is likely to result in an environment that encourages the writing of local songs. More importantly, these churches have the resources, in both finances and personnel, to arrange and produce these compositions into albums.

Church chart-toppers

In the repertoire of Christian songs in Thailand, there are some that are more popular than the others. Table 3.1 shows some of the more popular songs sung in the churches during the surveyed period.

Table 3.1 Most popular songs sung in surveyed churches

Genre	Title*	Year of copyright	Recording label
Hymns	How great Thou art (พระเจ้ายิ่งใหญ่)	1859/1953	
	Doxology (สรรเสริญพระเจ้าผู้อำนวยพร)	1551	
	At the cross (ที่กางเขน ที่กางเขน)	1700/1885	
Local songs	ข้าจะรักและบูชา	2002	Grace
	น้ำแห่งชีวิต	1999	Grace
	จงสรรเสริญพระเจ้าเถิด	2001	Jai Samarn Church
	ทุกวันเวลา	2001	Jai Samarn Church
	พระสิริ โอ้ พระสิริ**		
	ไฟ ไฟ ไฟ**		
Older choruses	My life is in You (ชีวีอยู่ในพระองค์)	1986	Integrity
	Jesus we enthrone You (พระเยซูเราน้อมรับพระองค์)	1980	Thankyou Music
	Through our God (จอมโยธา)	1979	Scripture in Song
	Spirit song (เชิญพระวิญญาณแห่งความรัก)	1979	Vineyard
	As the deer (จิตวิญญาณข้ากระหาย)	1984	Maranatha!
	Give thanks (ขอบพระคุณด้วยใจกตัญญู)	1978	Integrity
	When I look into Your holiness (เมื่อมองดูความบริสุทธิ์)	1981	Integrity
Newer choruses	Come now is the time to worship (มา..นี่เป็นเวลานมัสการ)	1998	Vineyard (UK)
	I could sing of Your love forever (ฉันจะร้องถึงความรักของพระองค์)	1994	Curious? (UK)
	Mercy is falling (เมตตาหลั่งมา)	1995	Vineyard
	In the secret (ในที่ลึกลับ)	1995	Vineyard
	Shout to the Lord (พระเยซู พระผู้ช่วย)	1993	Hillsong

* Arranged in order of popularity
** These songs were written in the late 1980s and are the Thai equivalent of the older choruses.

While the Doxology is sung in some churches to affirm the members' faith in the Holy Trinity, the all-time favourite hymn "How Great Thou Art" is sung in churches across all denominations. Although this Christian classic became popular only in the last 30 years, it dates back to 1885 when Carl Boberg, a well-known Swedish Lutheran minister, penned the words as a poem after being inspired by the beauty of his homeland during a summer thunderstorm. The poem was published and Boberg forgot about the text until some years later when he heard it being sung to its current melody, a Swedish folk melody. Over the years translations were made into German and Russian but the hymn never enjoyed the immense popularity which it does today. However, in 1927, English missionary Stuart Hine was so moved when he heard the hymn in Ukraine that he translated it into English and expanded the words. In 1954, famous gospel singer George Beverly Shea heard the song and liked it so much that he sang it 99 times during the Billy Graham New York Crusade in 1957. Its popularity exploded after that and in 1974, the Christian Herald magazine, after conducting a poll, named "How Great Thou Art" as the number one hymn in America (McClelland 1997:25).

The most popular local song making the rounds in churches nowadays is "ข้าจะรักและบูชา" or, in English, "I Will Love and Adore" (see Appendix D for Thai lyrics). The chorus has a nice tune and translates as:

> *"I will love and adore, and worship You.*
> *Let me not be far away from You*
> *I will love and adore, and worship You*
> *Let me be at the feet of my Lord."*

The lyrics fit in with the aspirations of the evangelical community, to enjoy a personal and intimate relationship with God. Hence, it is not surprising that it has taken off in a big way. Besides, the more frequently sung local songs tend to be those that hit the market in the last few years and are still fresh in the mind of local Christians. The two most popular songs are produced under the Grace Journey Music label, further confirming that the founder's professional expertise gives the label an edge over the other Christian music labels. The other two songs are written and produced by Jai Samarn Church, a Pentecostal-charismatic church, which is at the forefront of the Christian music scene.

Among the familiar favourites of the older choruses are some songs that date back to the 1970s and were written at the time when praise choruses were coming into vogue. While these songs are considered dated and old-fashioned by the trendier churches in the US, UK and Singapore, and are not sung by them anymore, they continue to be used widely in churches in Bangkok. In fact, some of the songs like "Give Thanks" have become such an evergreen and staple that many Thai Christians forget that it is translated from English and think it is a local composition. However, there are also some old choruses that are translated only now and are regarded as a new chorus by churches in Bangkok. For example "Great is the Lord" by Marantha! was released in 1985 but was translated into Thai only last year and was included in an album with other translated newer choruses.

It is noteworthy that the recording labels which produced the popular older choruses are all from the US while the labels that produced the well-liked newer choruses reflect the entrance of other countries such as the UK and Australia. This shows that the global Christian music scene is no longer dominated by the US and Thai churches are translating songs from a greater range of sources. Given the close links between some Thai and Singapore churches, a few songs written by the latter have been translated and used in the former. Despite the ease of modern-day communications, the latest CD releases arrive in Bangkok at least a year or two later than, say, Singapore. Because the songs cannot be sung in their original language in the Thai churches, there is a further time lag while the songs are being translated into Thai. Hence the most up-to-date songs that are being sung in churches in Bangkok were actually released four years ago.

Summary

This chapter gave an overview of the types of Christian music found in Thailand – namely hymns, praise choruses, traditional Thai music, and contemporary Christian music – as well as their origins. It then looked at the music used in 18 Bangkok churches in terms of the types of music, preferences of the different denominations and the popularity of various songs. It was found that three quarters of the songs used are translated while the remaining quarter is original compositions by Thai Christians.

CHAPTER IV
SOUND OF MUSIC: FOUR CASE STUDIES

The previous chapter gave a broad overview of the types of Christian music in Thailand as well as the genres that are used by churches in Bangkok. This chapter picks out four churches, namely Wattana Church, Immanuel Church, Muang Thai Church and Rom Klao Church, for in-depth qualitative analysis. They are selected to represent the major denominations in Protestant Christianity in Bangkok: Wattana is under the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT); Immanuel is Southern Baptist; Muang Thai is independent; and Rom Klao is Pentecostal-charismatic. Wattana and Immanuel were started by missionaries while Muang Thai and Rom Klao were set up by Thai Christians. This chapter explores the Christian music used and played in the churches and examines the different stages of localization that the churches are at.

<u>Introducing the four churches</u>

This introduction covers a brief history and current status of the churches, as well as a description of the worship service on an average Sunday based on fieldwork observations gathered as a participant-observer in each church.

Wattana Church

History

In 1874, Mrs Harriet House, an American Presbyterian missionary, started Wang Lang School, the first boarding school for girls in Siam. A few years later, the school expanded and leased from the government a spacious ex-gambling hall, cleaned it up, ousted its only occupant, a pig, installed classrooms, and named it *Utitstan*, which means "given or dedicated to" (Wells 1958:36). It also served as the chapel of Second Church, organised in 1878 on the Wang Lang premises. The campus of Wang Lang did not allow the growing school to expand its facilities and in 1921, the school moved to its current premises at Sukhumvit Soi 15 and was given the current name of Wattana Wittaya Academy. Wattana Church was then set up in 1922 as a chapel to serve the school.

At first, the only people who went to the church were teachers and students of the school (Smith 1982:51). As time went by, the church membership expanded and included those who are not related to the school. In 1957, Wattana Church (along with the school) was handed over to local leadership. Missionaries became fraternal workers and came under the authority of the Thai leaders.

Currently, about 250 to 300 people attend the weekly Sunday service. About 30 per cent of the congregation are below the age of 30, 20 per cent are between 50 and 60 years old, while 10 per cent are above the age of 70. The monthly income of the average member starts from 30,000 baht, while 10 per cent of the congregation is considered high-income.

Sunday service

The church building looks rather Thai on the outside but is totally Western inside – down to the pews, layout and pulpit, along with the high ceiling and beautiful wood panelling enhanced by warm lighting. Immaculately dressed ushers hand visitors a bulletin, the CCT hymnal and a prayer book as they arrive. There is a sacred hush and sense of reverence as one enters the sanctuary. It is evident that Wattana attracts the middle and upper middle class strata of society: the women are dressed in Thai silk suits and with their hair coiffed while the men wear long-sleeved shirts. A few of the foreigners have formal jackets on.

The worship service starts at 10.30am but half an hour before that, the choir mistress leads the congregation in the singing of hymns, some of which are from outside of the CCT hymnal. Occasionally, the youth band leads in the singing of some praise choruses. However when the worship service begins, an air of solemnity sets in. All the pastors are robed and they conduct every part of the service, from the announcements to the sermon, with a certain gravity. The format of the service has remained unchanged from the time American Presbyterian missionaries planted the church. Hence Presbyterians visiting from overseas usually feel at home at Wattana and are able to follow the service quite easily. The service lasts for 1.5 hours and there is only one service on Sunday.

Music

During the service, the congregation sings seven times. Of these, three are fixed songs/prayers that are sung every Sunday, namely Gloria Patri, Doxology and Threefold Amen. The remaining four songs are picked by the senior pastor from the CCT hymnal based on the theme and text of his sermon. All the songs sung in the service will have to be selected from the CCT hymnal. The songs are used in what is sometimes called the "hymn sandwich" style – hymn, prayer, hymn, sermon, hymn. A piano to the side of the sanctuary is used in accompanying the singing and the 40-strong choir leads once a month. The hymns are sung as part of the Sunday ritual and churchgoers do not exhibit visible emotions or response to the music.

Immanuel Church

History

The Southern Baptists were one of the last foreign missions to enter Thailand in the early 1950 after they were expelled from China, along with other missions, by the Communist Regime. They were the forerunners in Christian mass media and dubbed Bible films into Thai as early as 1959. The film library grew and became a significant contribution for the churches of all denominations to use in evangelism. Radio work commenced in April 1961 and the first television attempts started in December 1961, using two of the films. A series of Thai radio drama was also produced and aired, starting at Creation and followed the biblical record. In the 1970s, evangelistic films were produced based on three parables of Jesus. They have been used widely especially in rural evangelism.

Immanuel, which means "God with us" in Hebrew, was started in 1952 and was the first church started for Thai people; an earlier church catered to foreigners. The first pastor was an American missionary but local leadership took over in 1966. A majority of students attend this church from their connection with the Baptist Student Centre, which now teaches English, Chinese and Thai.

Currently, about 250 to 300 people attend the Sunday service. About 60 per cent of the congregation are under the age of 30 while 10 per cent are above the age of 60. Three quarters of the members are considered as middle class while 15 per cent are regarded as high-income.

Sunday service

The inside layout of Immanuel looks like a traditional church because of the pews. The music instruments are on one side of the church while the central area is occupied by the music leader during the singing or the preacher during the sermon. Visitors do not receive hymnals or prayer books upon arrival; song lyrics and prayers are put on PowerPoint and projected on the wall. The pastors do not wear robes but put on a clerical collar. Churchgoers are also not as formally dressed as those at Wattana. The worship service starts at 10am while the band usually warms up before that. The service lasts for 1.5 to 2 hours. There is only one service every Sunday but an additional worship service targeted at youth is held once a month on Sunday afternoons at 3pm.

Music

The style of worship evolved in the last few years from traditional hymn-singing to the use of praise choruses after the current senior pastor, Winich Wongsansern, returned from further studies in the United States. He came back with the belief that music can invoke an emotional response that leads to repentance, hence the importance of instruments during the worship service. He invited students from Chulalongkorn University's music faculty to teach the church members how to play orchestral instruments with the hope of eventually forming an orchestra. Although the orchestra did not materialise, some of the music students who taught at the church stayed and formed a band, consisting of drums, electric guitar, acoustic guitar, bass guitar, piano and two singers. The band plays three times a month, and the remaining week is left open to either the junior band or a worship leader who will lead hymns, accompanied by the piano. The senior pastor usually joins in on his violin.

Immanuel follows the Southern Baptist tradition of having periods of musical worship surrounding the sermon, which is held to be the focus of the Sunday worship service. Hence, three sets of music are played every Sunday. The first set comprises two or three fast songs, followed by the announcements. The second set consists of four to five slower songs which precede the sermon. The song after the sermon which is used as a form of response is usually a hymn. An informant, who leads worship, explains the need for a hymn:

"There are a lot of adults in the church and although they're now familiar with the band and praise choruses, we still want to cater to them. That's why the last song, which is sung before the final prayer, is always a hymn." (personal communication 18/11/05)

It is apparent that some of the older churchgoers are still not used having a band and singing choruses in church. Many of them do not join in the clapping during the fast songs or the singing at some parts. About a quarter to half of the congregation exhibits visible response to the music by clapping or lifting their hands. These tend to be the youth. However, the singing is always loudest during the hymn, presumably because the entire congregation can sing it. The band at Immanuel, which also plays at international Christian conferences, has the highest musical standards among the four churches. This is hardly surprising as the band is made up of artistes, producers or music teachers.

Muang Thai Church

History

Literally meaning "church of the Thai country", Muang Thai Church was started in 1973 by six Thai academics. Their aim was not only to establish a local congregation but also to find ways of evangelising the whole country by arranging training for future church workers. With the help of the Korean Evangelical Church, they established a seminary to prepare workers to plant churches across Thailand. There are now 10 daughter churches around the country.

In the last few years, the senior pastors, Nantachai and Ubolwan Mejudhon, have been exploring more culturally-sensitive means to evangelise, which include a greater respect for Thai culture and Buddhism, as well as using traditional instruments and Thai tunes during the worship service. They said they started looking for alternatives when they realised that the Western forms of Christianity that early Protestant missionaries advocated did not go down well with the Thai population, resulting in few converts despite the long years of effort. Their doctoral theses (1997) – "Meekness: A New Approach to Christian Witness to the Thai People" and "The Way of Meekness: Being Christian and Thai in the Thai Way" – lend a Thai voice to the ongoing debate on localizing Christianity in Thailand, a discourse that has been

largely dominated by Western missionaries and scholars. However, Nantachai has sometimes been criticised for focussing only on the errors that missionaries made and not giving them credit where it is due.

Muang Thai is an independent church and belongs to the Evangelical Free Church tradition[8]. About 150 to 200 people attend the Sunday service in Bangkok. Forty per cent of the congregation is under 30 years old while 20 per cent is above 60 years old. The average monthly income of the members is between 10,000 to 30,000 baht.

Sunday service

The church is a four-storey building at Saphan Khwai. Worship services are held in a hall on the ground floor. Rows of chairs take the place of pews. The pastors are not robed and the ambience at Muang Thai is more informal and churchgoers chat easily with one another before the start of the service. The congregation is also more casually dressed than the ones at Wattana and Immanuel. Some of the church members are from the nearby *chumchon* and tend to be older in age.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the sermons preached at the churches, it has been observed that sermons at Muang Thai tend to have a slight ethnocentric slant. The anecdotes or examples used in the sermons tend to portray Westerners in a negative light, for example the racism the senior pastor faced when he was in the US or the mistakes that Western missionaries made. On the other hand, the anecdotes would praise the Thais for their tolerant attitude and that basically, the Thais are better than the Westerners. Such rhetoric has not been observed in the other three churches.

The Sunday service starts at 10am and lasts for 1.5 hours. There is only one service every Sunday.

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[8] Evangelical free churches claim six distinctives: inclusive not exclusive; evangelical but not separatistic; ecumenical in spirit though not in structure; believes in liberty with responsibility and accountability; believes in both the rational and relational dimensions of Christianity; affirms the right of each local church to govern its own affairs.

Music

The main singing session is before the sermon and takes 20 to 30 minutes. The faster praise choruses are usually followed by the slower ones in a seamless manner. A hymn is sung after the sermon as a response. The singing is led either by the youth band or by a worship leader with his guitar. The music team, being youth, usually dresses rather casually and is of a mediocre standard. The band is made up of the worship leader, two co-singers, an electric guitarist, a bassist, a drummer and a pianist.

The band was started by the youth pastor about four years ago when he first returned from studies in the US, where he had grown up in the Pentecostal-charismatic style of worship. When he tried to introduce the same worship style in church, he encountered resistance from the congregation which tended to be more reserved but he said the situation has improved (personal communication 26/11/05). However, it is observed that only about a quarter of the congregation exhibits visible response, which includes clapping and lifting of hands, during the singing.

Rom Klao Church

History

Rom Klao Church was started in 1979 by Wan Petchsongkram, who grew up in a temple as a *dek wat*, spent eight years as a Buddhist monk and attained the rank of Barian 5 (equivalent of an M.A. in Buddhism) before becoming a Christian. Trained by the Southern Baptists, he became an itinerant evangelist, then a hospital chaplain, before starting Rom Klao, partly to prove that he could "practise what he preached" (personal communication, 4/12/05). He was also one of the first Thai Christians to articulate the need to present the Christian message in terms that are understood by Thai Buddhists. He explains:

> "When I talk about God, Thais say it's stupid or ignorant. When I talk about love, they say it's attachment. When I talk about eternal life, they say there's no such thing. Or when I talk about forgiveness or salvation, they say it cannot be proven. They look down on all the Christian teachings and believe that Buddhism is far superior."

Hence, he insists that the first vital step towards acceptance of the Christian faith and indigenousness in its expression lies in presenting the message of Christ to Buddhists in all its wholeness yet doing so in full consciousness and recognition of Thailand's Buddhist stance. In 1979, he gave a series of lectures, which were later compiled into the book called "Talk in the Shade of the Bo Tree", on using Buddhist terms like *karma* as a springboard to talk about Christianity.

Rom Klao is known for its intensive use of members' time. There are Bible study classes five mornings a week, members are expected to attend house group once a week and go out to evangelise on another day of the week. Wan believes that such a hot-housing method is crucial for the spiritual growth of a new convert:

> *"It is not enough for new Christians to know about God if they come to church only once a week. They are still with the old society, at home, at work, at school. They don't see Christians very much, and they still don't know many Christian friends. They are like seeds in the river and they can't grow. They know a bit of the Bible but their thinking is still like that of a Buddhist because ever since they were a child, they grew up in Buddhism and they still live in a Buddhist society. So it's important that the church become a new family to them."*

Wan has since retired although he still teaches some of the Bible classes. His son has taken over the reins and follows in his footsteps. Rom Klao is a Pentecostal-charismatic church and holds strong beliefs in the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which include speaking in tongues and miraculous healing, especially during the music session of the worship service. Currently, it has daughter churches in about 30 provinces and a total of 1,500 people attend the main church in Bangkok on Sundays. About 40 per cent of the members are under the age of 30 and 10 per cent are above the age of 60. About 70 per cent of the congregation is considered to be middle-income while 20 per cent are regarded as high-income.

Sunday service

The most noticeable aspect of the church as one enters is the overwhelming friendliness of the ushers, especially if it is one's first visit. They ensure that the visitor is seated with a long-standing member of the congregation who usually proceeds to tell the visitor about the good things that God is doing in his or her life.

There is a tangible buzz of excitement in the air as people come into church, catch up with friends and look for seats, which fill up a good deal quicker than at the other three churches.

The worship service is held in a big multipurpose hall with chairs laid out in rows. The performance stage at the front is lavishly decorated and is used by the preacher, worship leader and back-up singers. The pastors do not wear robes but every one who goes onto stage (the worship leader, the four co-singers, and the preacher) dons a black jacket. The musicians, who are off the stage to the left, are dressed casually. It is the only church among the four that does not give out bulletins to the congregation. Song lyrics, bible verses and announcements are put on PowerPoint and screened on the walls. The service starts at 10.30am and lasts for 2 to 2.5 hours. There are three services every Sunday.

Music

Wan says that when he started Rom Klao, he based it on Pentecostal-charismatic churches in the US, including having a music team. He claims that Rom Klao was the first church in Bangkok to have a band during Sunday worship services. The band consists of a drummer, an electric guitarist, an acoustic guitarist, a bassist and a keyboardist. The style of playing is reminiscent of the 1980s Hosanna! or Maranatha! rhythms and chord structures, which can sound quite dated by current musical standards. Wan does not believe in using hymns because he says they are boring and that the church needs to project a modern image. Instead, he prefers praise choruses.

The singing, which lasts for 45 minutes to an hour, is divided into three sections which flow seamlessly into one another. It starts with one or two songs to prepare people for the service as they confess their sins. It is then followed by fast songs to "wake them up and build unity". The songs move into a slower tempo, from which it crescendos as the congregation start speaking/singing in tongues, pray loudly and sometimes even wailing away. It usually culminates in a time of silence, where it is believed that God speaks to individuals and answers prayers. The congregation participates fully in the singing, from clapping during the fast songs to lifting up their hands during the slow ones. The pastors acknowledge that the loud speaking/singing

in tongues sometimes puts newcomers off, but they say the issue is addressed during the sermons and that people get used to it after a while, especially when God answers their prayers during those periods.

Types of music used in the four churches

The data for this section is based on the churches reporting the songs that are used in the Sunday service over a period of one month and is summarised in Figure 4.1. The division of the music into the categories of hymns, local songs, older choruses and newer choruses, follows the framework laid out in Chapter 3. Hence, older choruses refer to those that are published before 1990 while newer choruses refer to those published after. The local songs in Figure 4.1 are all in the style of praise choruses, except for in Wattana, where is it is in the hymn format.

With the exception of Wattana where the senior pastor chooses the songs to be used, the other three churches let the worship leaders decide what songs to use every Sunday. The songs are usually picked based on the sermon topic. For example, if the theme of the sermon is about "do not worry", the songs will revolve around the theme of how God is in control and that God cares for His people.

This section explores the reasons that the churches give for their choice of a particular genre or source of Christian music.

**Figure 4.1 Comparing the types of music used
in the four churches over a period of one month.**
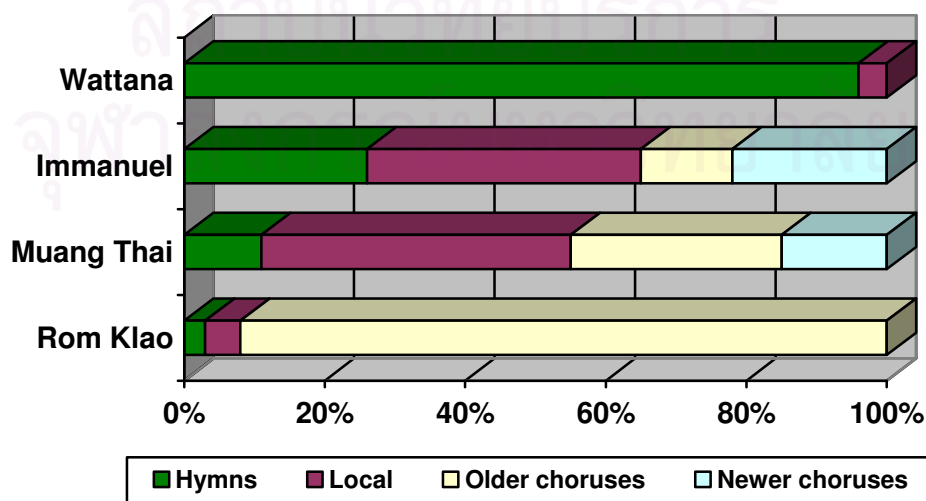
No choice

Over the one month at Wattana, all the songs sung during the service were hymns from the CCT hymnal and were translated except for the lone local hymn (Fig 4.1). This is in line with church policy that the hymns sung during service comes from the CCT hymnal, which contains 302 songs, with 21 written by Thais either as original compositions or penning new lyrics to traditional Thai tunes. According to an informant, although the congregation responds better when local hymns are sung, there are just not enough original songs to go around. When asked if changes could be made to the church policy of using only hymns from the CCT hymnal during the worship service, now that the church is under Thai leadership instead of Western missionaries and does not depend on the mission board for funding, the informant got slightly flustered:

> *"Terrible, terrible, cannot, cannot, terrible. Nobody can do that, nobody can even think of doing that. Cannot, cannot, cannot. The church members will disagree. They will say that this is the church culture and we cannot change it."*

Choosing the local

Putting aside the hymns because it is in a different style, it can be seen from Figure 4.1 that Immanuel and Muang Thai use a balanced proportion of both foreign and local songs in the praise chorus format. This almost-equal ratio is noteworthy because translated songs far outnumber local songs in the repository of Christian music in Thailand. Informants from both churches say they do not choose songs based on whether it is a foreign or local song but based on what they think is suitable for the sermon. However, on hindsight, they say that they have been unconsciously choosing more local songs.

One main reason is that when Thai Christians pen songs, they take into account the tonality of the language when writing the melody so that it rises and falls accordingly. However, when an English song is translated into Thai, the translator is constrained by having to fit the Thai words to the original melody, giving rise to three possible problems. First, changes to the meaning in the original song have to be made so that the Thai words can fit the melody. Second, some of the faster choruses that have been translated are difficult to sing because the melody mandates a certain

number of words. The informant at Immanuel said it is especially difficult in a big church where there are a lot of adults:

> *"Take for example the song 'Come Now Is The Time To Worship'. The youth had no problems and could catch it straightaway. But the adults found it very difficult when we first introduced the song in church, especially at the chorus where the tempo is fast and there are so many words to sing in one breath. Many just gave up singing during the chorus."*

Third, even if the lyrics were translated perfectly, the meaning could be skewed during singing because of the tonality of the Thai language. For example, the line in a song that says "nearer to You" can end up meaning "further from You" when sung because *klay* can mean near or far depending on the tone. This problem is not confined to praise choruses; translated hymns suffer from the same malady.

While it is common for worship leaders who use music from the praise chorus genre to prefer foreign over local songs in the beginning, there has been a growing realisation among these opinion leaders that songs written by Thais impact them emotionally more than translated songs. The informant at Muang Thai grew up in the US and was used to singing in English, hence he used to choose only translated songs when he returned to Thailand a few years ago and started leading worship. But he soon changed his mind: "After having been back for a while, I realised that Thai songs written by Thais have a greater effect on my spirit in me more than a translated song, although the Thai language was not really my native tongue then." Another reason that local songs seem to have a stronger emotional impact than translated songs is that Thai Christians tend to write songs that address a specific need that arises from a particular context, for example songs that talk about praying for Thailand or stepping forward to take the gospel to the Thai people. Hence, local Christians can identify emotionally with the situational contexts of the songs

Moreover, the informant at Immanuel maintains that nowadays, local songs are comparable in terms of the musical standards to the releases by Christian labels in the West. Since the home-grown is as good as the imported, there is a decreasing need to use foreign songs.

Choosing the foreign

Along with Wattana, Rom Klao is the other church that uses almost exclusively foreign songs. However, unlike Wattana, the Pentecostal-charismatic church steers clear from hymns – except for the universally sung hymn "How Great Thou Art" whose popularity was discussed in Chapter 3 – and has a policy of using only praise choruses from overseas. Wan believes that English songs have better melodies and lyrics than Thai compositions:

> *"The problem with Thai songs, or even the danger of Thai songs, is that Thais always talk about their problems first. So the song talks about the problems in your life, your health is not good, you are poor and at the end of the song, there's just one sentence that goes, 'But thank God for helping.' Eighty per cent of the song focuses on the problems. But in English songs, the whole song is about God, joy and love. Thais like to first talk about the negative before the positive. And we don't want these kinds of songs. We want positive, spiritual songs that can help people focus on God instead of their problems."*

The mentality that the West is better is widely held among the worship leaders at Rom Klao, and the superiority of the Western songwriter over the Thai songwriter is usually attributed to the differences in cultural background. An informant at the church explains that while Western songwriters come from a culture that worships God, Thai songwriters come from an atheistic Buddhist culture that has no concept of worshipping a personal god. Hence, he concludes that even when the Thai becomes a Christian, the songs that he or she writes do not delve as deeply into the profundity of the Christian experience as those written by Westerners. It is interesting to note that the informant continues to regard the US and the UK as "Christian countries" although the two countries have become increasingly secularized, with professing Christians being a minority now. Moreover, as more Thais become Christians, it is not uncommon to find songwriters, such as Junram Puntupong Strausbaugh and Ruangkit Yongpiyakul, who grew up in a Christian family and in a church culture. Although these two points were raised during the interview, the informant remains adamant that Western songs, which have to be translated before being used in church, are still better than local songs.

Choosing the new

Of the four churches, Immanuel uses the highest proportion of new choruses (22%). This could be due to a few reasons. As mentioned earlier, the band at Immanuel plays at international Christian conferences. Hence it has more access to the new songs that are released in the West as well as Christian music trends. Second, the band, being made up of professional musicians, have the capability to play the newer choruses. Third, Immanuel has a sizeable proportion of young people who much prefer the new choruses to the old choruses which they consider boring and old-fashioned. The informant at Immanuel also said that the young people like novelty, which is why they like new songs, no matter whether it is a local song or a foreign song. At the same time, he said that in an increasingly globalized world, young people in Bangkok want to be singing the choruses that other young people in the West are singing.

Choosing the traditional

Currently, Muang Thai uses Thai traditional instruments and Thai classical music during the worship service once every two months. It is the only church among the four that uses Thai traditional instruments on a regular basis[9]. At Wattana, there is a group of youth who play the traditional instruments but they play only once in a while and only as a special item in the worship service.

Sunday service with traditional music

The author visited Muang Thai when it held a special celebration during the Sunday service in honour of the King's birthday, which is also Father's Day, on December 4, 2005. It was also the day when traditional music was being used in church. At the beginning of the service, the congregation was called to attention with the strains of Thai classical music, played on traditional Thai instruments such as the *ranad* and the *khong wong yai* (Figure 4.2). On typical Sundays, this role is fulfilled by the piano. The songs used during the worship session are sung to traditional Thai

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[9] The author is aware of only one other Protestant church in Bangkok that uses traditional instruments regularly. The Abundant Life Centre is a small gathering of about 30 people and targets Isan migrants.

tunes but with new Christian lyrics. Because it was Father's Day, there was a performance of *khlong yaw* and *ram thai* by students from a nearby school (Figures 4.3 and 4.4), as well as a *lam tat* about Father's Day (Figure 4.5). It was observed that while the older members in the congregation obviously enjoyed themselves, the youth looked mortified and only participated quite reluctantly. Figure 4.6 shows an interesting juxtaposition of a picture of Rama IX, a picture of Jesus and Thai traditional instruments, reflecting Muang Thai's efforts to "Thaify" Christianity.

Figure 4.2 The *ranad* and *khong wong yai* used during the worship service.

Figure 4.3 *Klong yaw* performance from a nearby school.
Note the various Thai instruments.

Figure 4.4 *Ram Thai* by the children

**Figure 4.5 Members of the congregation performing a *lam tat*.
Note that they tend to be older in age.**

Figure 4.6 A representation of Muang Thai's efforts to localize Christianity by juxtaposing the central figures of the King, Jesus, and Thai culture in one setting.

The road to using traditional music

Three years ago, Muang Thai decided to introduce traditional Thai music and instruments into the church as an attempt to localize Christianity. One of the informants in the church leadership explained the rationale behind it:

> *"We were so used to worshipping God with farang instruments, so we wanted to try using traditional Thai instruments. We figured that it doesn't mean we have to use farang instruments in order to draw close to God; we can worship God with Thai instruments and meet Him with our Thai tunes."*

A church member who is an instructor of Thai traditional instruments started training a group of youth to play the *ranad*, *khwong wong yai*, *khim* and *ching*, while Ubolwan wrote Christian lyrics to traditional Thai tunes, choosing familiar favourites such as those where "the tune is easy and fun, the rhythm's fast and the tunes are those that Thais grew up with when they went to temple fairs".

The informant admits that there have been mixed reactions to the use of traditional Thai music during the service. The opposition is strongest from long-standing Christians whose concept of worship music has been shaped along Western lines, as well as the youth who regard traditional Thai music as a relic of the past. To the established Christians who are used to either the organ or the piano, the idea of

worshipping God to the strains of the *ranad* is a foreign concept that they are still coming to terms with. One of the informants from the youth group can hardly tolerate it:

> *"Oh man, I hated those traditional Thai songs. I wanted to get up and throw chairs at the people playing the Thai instruments. How can you worship God with trang-trang-trang? And the songs they sing are just so Thai, get out of here seriously."*

However, the response from Buddhists visiting the church has been quite different. According to the informant in the church leadership, when these visitors walk into the church, expecting the Western trappings of Christianity, they are surprised to hear familiar Thai tunes that they can sing along to despite a change in the lyrics. She claims that using traditional music is one way to show Thais that Christianity is not just for the foreigners but is also relevant for the Thai people.

Yet, Muang Thai's use of traditional Thai instruments has raised some eyebrows within the evangelical Christian circle, where a good number of people still link the instruments with the worship of ghosts and spirits. They feel that because the instruments were and are still used in Brahmin, Hindu and Buddhist rituals, it is not appropriate that they be used in Christian gatherings. The informant at Rom Klao has strong words against the use of traditional instruments:

> *"We should only use instruments that are written about in the Bible, such as the trumpet, flute and harp, which includes the piano. These instruments bring about an atmosphere of holiness and can be used to play songs to worship God. But Thai instruments are rooted in the worship of phii (spirits), so how can they be used to worship a holy God?"*

Efforts at localizing Christian music so far have not been all that well-received by conservative Christians who feel that the advocates are deviating from conventional Christian practices. Muang Thai's use of traditional instruments in church, Samyong's hymnal of "religious pop songs", and Gustafson's use of *mor lam* have all earned looks of askance from the urban Christians in Bangkok, who are used to Western forms of Christianity and have localized Christianity in their own ways.

Summary

This chapter has looked at how Wattana Church, Immanuel Church, Muang Thai Church, and Rom Klao Church have appropriated Christian music for use during the Sunday worship services. It was observed that both Wattana and Rom Klao use a high proportion of translated songs, with the former using hymns and the latter using praise choruses. At Wattana, the songs sung in the worship service have to be selected from the CCT hymnal, which is made up of mostly translated hymns, while the founder of Rom Klao has made it church policy to choose translated songs for the service because he believes that they are superior to local compositions. Both Immanuel and Muang Thai exhibit a higher use of local compositions, which make up about 40 per cent of the songs sung in church on a Sunday. Immanuel also tends to use newer choruses than the other three churches while Muang Thai uses traditional Thai instruments and music in the worship service once every two months.

CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

This thesis started by situating the discourse on the localization of Christianity within the larger context of globalization. When early Protestant missionaries brought their form of Christianity to Thailand, the West was considered as the centre from which a homogenous Christian culture, in its commodities, ideologies and styles, was diffused downwards along global asymmetries to the periphery. This presumably resulted in a loss of local cultural distinctiveness, a trend that was observed in countries where Protestant missionaries landed in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, a Siamese convert had to exchange his traditional garb for Western clothing while an Indian convert had to give up his Hindu name and adopt a Western, Christian name.

However, as the colonial empires collapsed, the power centres in the world-systems also shifted, resulting in the emergence of multiple centres and dynamic peripheries. Going along Appadurai's (1996) line of thought, the fact that Western Christian commodities are now distributed everywhere on the globe does not necessarily imply that the meaning and use of such items become homogeneous. While the formats in which meanings are being expressed might be increasingly similar, they are generally appropriated differently by local cultures. Therefore while the Western praise chorus style is getting increasingly popular in churches on the periphery, the Thai case has shown how local Christians have used the same Western format but imbued it with their own experience and meanings.

Despite this reinterpretation of Western forms, the most common charge levelled against Christianity in developing nations is its inextricable link with Westernization. In Thailand, scholars claim that the foreignness of Christianity is the key reason that few converts have been made so far. As has been shown in Chapter 3, Bangkok churches are still predominantly under Western influences in the area of Christian music. However, this concluding chapter will examine if Christianity's connection with Westernization, and its corresponding modernity, is as regretful as

critics make it out to be. Or it is perhaps an association that urban churches in the capital city can exploit to attract more people to church.

The discussion will be structured in four parts. The first looks at Western influences on the church music culture; the second examines the stages that churches are at in their localization efforts. The third section explores the factors affecting localization of Christianity while the final portion offers some thoughts on the future of localization of Christianity in Bangkok, as well as suggestions for future research

Western influences on church music culture

To the European colonizers, the superiority of their culture was a "total" superiority, not just one of technology and productive systems, but also of ideas and values. If material pre-eminence was based on modern science, the spiritual superiority of European culture over all forms of indigenous culture, including even the religions of Asia, was equally unquestioned (Worsley 1999). In most countries and territories that assimilated Western culture, music was generally disseminated in Christian religious institutions and public schools instituted by European, and later North American, missionaries and educators in the 19th and 20th centuries. One reason for the rapid spread of Western musical knowledge is that its principal purveyors – religious missionaries – sometimes enjoyed extensive influence in the affairs of governance (Santos 2003). Hence, the roots of Christian music in Thailand is inherently foreign and unavoidably bound up with the structure and standards of Western music.

However, this section is concerned with looking at the current range and extent of foreign influences on Christian music in Bangkok churches. Figure 3.1 shows that three quarters of the music used in the 18 churches over the surveyed period are foreign songs translated into Thai. The very preponderance of foreign songs being sung in churches is indicative of the extent of foreign influences on the church music culture. The following framework is loosely based on Nettl's (1986) identification of the ways Western culture has influenced local music and the discussion is structured into three parts: theology, instruments and musical values.

Theology

A Christian song is not birthed in a vacuum; it is context-dependent and reflects the theology of the songwriter. Because music is such an effective carrier of theological thought, Luther's main reason for promoting congregational hymns during the Reformation was to promote religious education of the people. In Bangkok, almost all the foreign songs come from the West and were translated from English, although some of which, mostly hymns, were originally in German, Russian or Swiss. These Western songs inevitably reflect a Western theology, or the Westerner's perspective of God and one's relationship with the Almighty.

In Bangkok, the hymns that are sung in churches are drawn from different eras and various denominations. Therefore the theology that the congregation is exposed to is based on the doctrinal leanings of the particular hymn writer or denomination. For example, Lutheran hymnody is reputed for its doctrinal, didactic and musical riches, with the credit in the latter going mostly to Johann Sebastian Bach, a devout Lutheran, who composed many hymns for the church. Or if a hymn is written by a Calvinist, it is likely to have heavy emphasis on the mercy of God, His righteous wrath, and man's complete inability to escape from the condemnation before him. However the didactic nature of the Reformation hymns later gave way to songs that highlight a Christian's personal relationship with God, with themes that reflect the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer:

> *"I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal."*

With the advent of the praise choruses, the emphasis on a Christian's intimacy with God became even more apparent. The impact of the Jesus Movement on praise choruses also meant that there was an inordinate focus on the free love of God. Moreover, as more Pentecostal-charismatics started to pen praise choruses, the songs also began to carry Pentecostal concepts, such as the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. While hymn writers of the past tend to write about God with a certain reverence and respect, modern song writers describe the relationship in more informal

or even casual terms. For example, a line in a contemporary chorus goes: "I want to touch You; I want to see Your face."

Furthermore, with mega churches, such as Hillsong Church, producing songs that are sung around the world, the choruses often exhibit the theology of the particular church. Hence at Hillsong Church, where members are expected to "live healthy and prosperous lives", such an attitude permeates the music that they write. Here are a few lines from one of their more popular songs:

> *"… In Christ all of God's promises are yes, yes and Amen.*
> *… Seek His kingdom and His ways, all the power of heaven is yours*
> *to call today."*

It should be noted at this point that while Western theology seemed to be predominant in many cultures, it is not the only perspective on God and man in the world. For example, the hymnody from China exhibits different emphases from Western songs. The Chinese Christians, having gone through persecution, tend to write songs that talk about being martyrs, endurance through suffering and giving up one's life for God. These tropes, however, are hardly found in any of the Western praise choruses.

Therefore, since three-quarters of the music used in Bangkok churches are from the West, it suggests then that local congregations are exposed to a one-sided Western view of God and man in the music, since Christian songs from countries that present alternative perspectives, such as India and China, are hardly ever translated for use in Bangkok. This also implies that the songs that local Christians write is likely to reflect and further propagate the Western theology because that is the only point of view that they have grown up with.

Instruments

It has already been mentioned elsewhere that early Western missionaries introduced the piano, organ and violin as instruments that are appropriate for worshipping God, in contrast to local instruments that are deemed as primal and profane. However, this section looks at new instruments that have been introduced to Bangkok churches, following the influence of world music trends on Christian music. The term "world music" is currently used to classify and market recordings of the

many genres of non-Western music which were previously described as "folk music", "ethnic music", or simply "local music from out there" (Bohlman 2002, Nidel 2004:3).

From the late 1960s, musicians started exploring the inclusion of ethnic instruments in pop songs. One thinks of George Harrison playing the *sitar* on the Beatles' recording of the John Lennon song "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)" in 1965 and Paul Simon's use of Andean folk instruments in the popular single "El Condor Pasa" in 1970. Similar efforts at fusion music quickly gained momentum and popularity, and a variety of folk instruments, ranging from Balinese gamelans to Hungarian pan flutes, were used alongside conventional Western instruments.

These trends in the secular music circle inevitably influenced Christian music. Christian bands in the West started including ethnic instruments such as the maracas and the rain stick in the 1990s. Maracas are simple percussion instruments, usually played in pairs, consisting of a dried gourd shell filled with seeds or dried beans. The instrument is of prehistoric American origin and is considered characteristic of the music of Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil. Like the maracas, the rain stick is also a percussion instrument. A section of bamboo is filled with seeds or pellets which make a sound similar to the sound of falling rain as the stick is turned over. The original rain stick was purportedly invented by Chilean native Indians in order to attempt to bring rain to the dry desert regions of modern-day Chile. While the maracas are typically used in the faster praise songs, the rain stick is used during the slower worship songs to create a soothing ambience.

These percussion instruments can now be found in some Bangkok churches, especially in those where newer praise choruses are sung (see Fig. 5.1). This is indicative of Roberts' argument in Chapter 1 that world music is now "a new kind of commodity in the global marketplace of the popular music industry, a new unit of exchange in the cultural economy of global capitalism" (1992:232-33). Folk instruments like the rain stick and the maracas have been commoditized and arrived in Bangkok under the bigger package of Western music, and losing their own cultural, or even religious, significance in the process. Bangkok churches have appropriated the use of another culture's indigenous instruments while largely ignoring their own local instruments. While some Thai instruments, such as the *ranad*, have been used in

world music recordings, most Bangkok churches steer clear from using traditional instruments. An informant who is firmly against the use of Thai instruments because they were originally used in pagan rituals is, however, a keen advocate of the use of rain stick during worship sessions despite its original associations with invocations to the gods for rain. Hence, the rain stick, which was once a pagan instrument, has lost that religious association in the process of commoditization, and gained legitimacy to be used in Thai churches because it is used by Christian bands in the West.

Figure 5.1 Using the rain stick during Sunday worship.

"Good music"

The theory and practice of Western music, with its strong orientation on structure and technique creates a hegemonic view of all sonic/time related expressions as "music" (Chou 1995 cited in Santos 2003). Thus, anything that does not fit its theoretical rubrics is deemed of inferior value, for example, music that lacks harmony or counterpoint, music that has no tempered tuning, music of unknown modalities and so on. In contrast, traditional Thai music is non-harmonic, melodic, or linear, and its fundamental organization is horizontal, meaning that a main melody is played simultaneously with variants of it which progress in relatively slower and faster rhythmic units (Morton 1976:21). This is known as heterophony or polyphonic stratification: instrumentalists improvise idiomatically around the central melody. Rhythmically and metrically Thai music is steady in tempo, regular in pulse, divisive,

in simple duple meter, without swing, with little syncopation, and with the emphasis on the final beat of a measure, as opposed to the first as in European-influenced music (Morton 1976:41). The Thai scale includes seven equal notes, instead of a mixture of tones and semitones. Classical Thai music will not fit in the mould of "good music" as defined by Western standards.

While Asian musical practices conveyed a sense of pagan worship and primal antiquity, Western music represented creative freedom, modernity and power (Hsu 1999 cited in Santos 2003). It is perhaps in the ideation of its superiority that Western music provided the emerging Asian bourgeoisie the motivation to flock to countries such as Spain, Austria, Germany, France, the United States, and Russia to study and train in the "modern" art form, providing an explanation for why the missionaries helped support Junram Puntupong Strausbaugh to go to the US to study Western music.

The introduction of mass media technology as well as mass culture distribution and consumption further cements Western ideas of what is "good music" within the churches. While the commercialization of music makes available to the consuming public a great variety of musical commodities, the advertising and market strategies – classification, valuation, and distribution – are nevertheless controlled by and adhered to, Western standards and commercial predisposition. To quote Foucault on the subservience of taste and choice to market forces:

> *"Many of the elements that are supposed to provide access to music actually impoverish our relationship with it. There is a quantitative mechanism here. A certain rarity of relation to music could preserve an ability to choose what one hears, and thus [one's] flexibility in listening. But the more frequent this relation is (radio, records, cassettes), the more familiarities it creates; habits crystallize; the most frequent becomes the most acceptable, and soon the only thing perceivable. It produces a 'tracing', as the neurologists say… Clearly, the laws of the marketplace will readily apply to this simple mechanism."*
> (Foucault and Boulez 2000)

Related to this phenomenon is a more deep-seated condition in which Asian musical products will, in theory, continue to lag behind in market value to those of the West for the very reason that for centuries, the West has invested in hegemonizing taste in its cultural colonies and setting standards for musical valuation and

discernment based on, and in favour of, its own musical products – from the classical works of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, or Stravinsky, to the music of Sinatra, the Beatles, Michael Jackson, and other icons of the well-schematized popular music culture industry.

Likewise, what Bangkok churches perceive as good Christian music, including the notion held by some that foreign songs are far superior to local songs, is largely shaped by the West. It should be noted that Thai churches are not alone in this view, this is a common perception held by churches across Asia and Africa. With Christian bands in the West seen as standard-bearers, it has been observed that some local church bands strive to model themselves after them. Hence they try to play the songs in exactly the same way that the Western band plays it, by copying the riffs, the style, and the tempo. It is not unusual for a music leader to play the CD of the original English song during the practice so that the band can then imitate it.

Moreover, foreign influences on a church's musical values extend beyond the style of playing a song; they also have a significant impact on local songwriters. It was mentioned at the outset of this section that just because a song is written by a Thai does not mean that it is free from foreign influences. A Thai songwriter's idea of music is influenced by the music he or she hears both in church and in the secular world, music that has largely developed along the lines of Western music. Despite the increasing number of songs penned by Thai Christians, the music generally reflects the musical and packaging formulae of North American popular music, albeit localised through the use of the Thai language.

Localization of music in Bangkok churches

Sulak Sivaraksa, one of Thailand's leading social critics, was educated in Catholic schools and in light of his experience with both Catholics and Protestants, he stated: "Christianity here in Thailand should be more Asian, more Thai, and it should show more respect for Thai culture." (cited in Swanson 2003b:51) Generally, Bangkok churches have responded to the criticism that Christianity is a Western religion by exploring means to make the religion relevant to local culture. As discussed in Chapter 1, evangelical Christianity is a globalizing agent and every attempt to localize the religion will result in "glocalization", a term that Robertson

(1990) coined to emphasise the various patterned but creative ways in which global flows become locally appropriated, incorporated, and transformed. Hannerz (1996) also describes the Creolization of culture as the process whereby "elements from distinct and separate local cultures, from the centre as well as the periphery, become mixed and integrated into meaningful local forms" and he uses it as a symbol for an increasing global heterogenization of culture.

Christian music was first introduced to Thailand in Western forms but, as seen in previous chapters, it is now available in both Western and local forms. While the overarching Christian message embedded in Christian music remains "global", and the adaptation of Christian music to the local Thai culture results in glocalization, it does not necessarily mean that the "global" and "local" components bear equal weight when it comes to the form and content of the music. Hellberg (2003), who studied the localization of church music in Namibia, suggests that there are three stages or types of localization. At the modification stage, Western compositions undergo some alterations when adopted by local Christians. For example when an English hymn is translated into Thai, the tune and the meaning of the translated version remains largely the same as the original song. In this case, the "global" component, as evinced from the Western form and the content, figures greater than the "local" component, the Thai lyrics.

The second stage is characterised by a growing use of local compositions in the churches. This happens when local Christians write songs that arise from their own experiences while perhaps making use of Western music forms. With the content of the music derived from local settings, the "local" component in this glocalization has now increased from the previous stage. In the third stage, traditional music is adapted for use in churches. In this case, the "local" component is likely to outstrip the "global" component, represented by the theology embedded in the content of the song.

This section will discuss the level to which churches have responded to the foreign influences by using Hellberg's framework.

Modification

At this stage of localization, churches typically make minimal modifications to the Western songs, such as translating them from English to Thai. The tune and the meaning of the translated songs remain largely similar to the original songs. Both Wattana Church and Rom Klao Church can be considered to be at this stage. The former uses mostly translated hymns while the latter uses mostly translated praise choruses.

Despite the minimal modification to the Western songs, Barnett will argue that a form of innovation has still taken place. To him, the substitution of different words in the same tune, such as substituting Thai words for the English ones, creates an analogy where the form has remained the same but the precise characteristics of the content have changed. The tonal relationships of the words are the same as in the prototype; but the content, the actual sounds, are different (Barnett 1953:271).

Both Wattana and Rom Klao represent two prevailing, but differing, paradigms of churches in the modification stage.

Wattana characterizes the churches, especially those that have been planted by the early Western missionaries, which prefer to do things the old way, keep to the status quo and not rock the boat. These are the established churches, with a high social image and a good proportion of the middle class and upper-middle class in the membership. Despite its Thai name, Thai leadership and Thai architecture, Wattana has an unmistakable foreign stamp on it, with the pews, robes and service format. It thrives on predictability, just like the Golden Arches – one could walk into any McDonald's in any part of the world and expect to get hamburgers and fries. The informant at Wattana has said that it would be "unthinkable" to change anything at the church because "the members will get upset". There are a number of reasons for this inertia: the entrenched church culture that has remained the same since the missionaries started the church; a significant proportion of older people who treasure traditions; and the presence of established generational Christian families who have been socialised into notions of what a proper church should be like.

On the other hand, Rom Klao, being Pentecostal-charismatic, is not held captive to its members' demands, especially since the founder has styled himself as the benevolent patriarch figure to his flock who are willing to go along with changes

initiated from the top. In fact, at the commencement of this research, it was expected that Rom Klao would be further along the stages of localization since the founder, Wan Petchsongkram, is an advocate of presenting the gospel to Thais by using Thai concepts like *karma*. Yet Rom Klao has made it a policy to use only foreign songs, for reasons that have been discussed earlier.

Rom Klao epitomises churches that hold to the superiority of Western Christianity and view Western churches as an ideal culture worthy of emulation and a goal to be aspired to. With the idea that the West is better, these churches tend to model themselves after Western churches and local bands inadvertently try to copy the way the foreign bands play. To Wan, Western music denotes modernity: "Thais don't like Thai music. Since religion is seen as a *boran* thing, the church has to be modern by using Western music." Harking back to the earlier discussion on tradition and modernity, Wan obviously sees the advantages of using Western music to give the church a Western (read modern) image.

Use of local compositions

The growing use of local compositions in churches such as Immanuel and Muang Thai suggests that Thai Christians are no longer on the periphery passively waiting to be dictated to from the centre; instead it implies that local Christians are actively using Western forms to achieve their goals. Well aware that Western-style praise choruses are most popularly used in Bangkok churches, local songwriters have gravitated towards this format when penning songs. The same can be observed in contemporary Christian music where the format of secular pop has been appropriated for spreading the gospel message. As an informant said, "The whole idea is to use the Western style of music but to write Thai songs by Thai people with Thai experiences."

Churches that are at this stage of using more local compositions tend to have a sizeable proportion of youth, like at Immanuel, since most of the songs are written in the praise chorus format which appeals to the youth rather than the older members in the congregation. While Immanuel bears certain similarities to Wattana in that both were started by missionaries and have a fixed service format, Immanuel is not constrained by having to choose songs only from a particular hymnbook. This is why

it has been able to negotiate space within an existing church culture laid down by Western missionaries to localise by using songs written by Thais. Immanuel's move towards greater localization, as evinced in substituting local songs for translated hymns, is tied up with its move towards modernity where praise choruses are seen as being "up to date" while hymns are seen as being "old-fashioned". Hence, the discourse on localization is entangled in the tension between the old and the new, the hymn and the praise chorus.

It is observed that Bangkok churches are still at the beginning stages of Creolization or as Kartomi (1981) calls it, transculturation. While secular attempts have been made to fuse, say the *ranad* with a string orchestra, such syncretism is yet to be found in the churches. For example, Muang Thai uses traditional Thai instruments to play classical Thai music but not the modern praise choruses. There seems to be an underlying mindset to consider the two as immiscible discretes. The author once tried to choreograph *ram thai* to a Western song but encountered great consternation from an older Thai pastor who said, "*Ram Thai* has to be done to Thai music, it is not suitable to be danced to Western music." However, it is expected that with secular fusion attempts gaining popularity – such as in the recent release of Siam Soul, a CD that fuses Western lounge music and Thai classical music – such trends will eventually gain more acceptance in Bangkok churches.

Adaptation of traditional music

In Bangkok, Muang Thai Church is one of the very few churches that have adapted traditional music for use in the churches. Its efforts at localizing Christianity go beyond using Thai traditional instruments during the worship service; the church has been advocating a greater respect for Thai culture and engendering church members to view Buddhists and Buddhism differently, that is, not as pagans on the way to hell and not as a demonic religion respectively.

Muang Thai's approach to using indigenous instruments in church will be analysed under Barnett's framework of innovation. In Figure 5.2, *AB* represents the configuration of Thai music where Thai traditional instruments (*B*) are used in pagan rituals (R_1) to worship spirits (*A*). On the other hand, *XY* represents the configuration of Christian music where Western instruments (*Y*) are used in Sunday services (R_2) to

worship God (X). According to Barnett, an innovation takes place when either of the following happens: X is combined with B in the relationship R_1 or R_2; or A is combined with Y in the relationship R_1 or R_2; or X is combined with Y in the relationship R_1; or A is combined with B in the relationship R_2 (Barnett 1953:188). What Muang Thai did was to combine Thai traditional instruments (B) with the worship of God (X) in the relationship of Sunday services (R_2). This innovation thus gave rise to a new configuration (BR_2X). Barnett will perceive the motivation behind Muang Thai's innovation as a desire for change from status quo in the search for more effective means to achieve its goal, in this case, to make more converts.

Figure 5.2 Process of innovation.
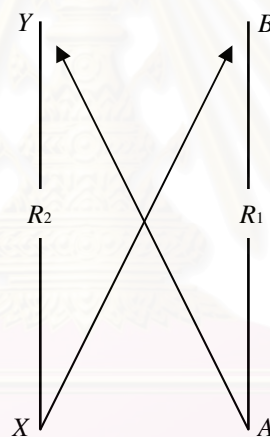
(Source: Barnett 1953:188)

Barnett's treatise also deals with the rejection of innovation, which sheds light on the lukewarm reception that greets Muang Thai's efforts. Since some of the reasons behind the opposition to using traditional instruments in church have already been discussed, this section concentrates on Barnett's hypothesis that "an individual will not accept a novelty unless in his opinion it satisfies a want better than some existing means at his disposal" (Barnett 1953:378). This implies that Bangkok churches are not following in Muang Thai's footsteps because they do not regard its approach as being better or more effective than their current methods. In the context where church membership is largely drawn from the middle class bracket that are more likely to respond to Western forms of music than Thai classical music, *luk thung*

or *mor lam*, it can be foreseen that urban churches will reject such an innovation. The informant at Muang Thai concedes that while the use of traditional instruments may not be that effective in urban Bangkok, it depends on the church's target group: "The youth don't like the Thai instruments but the people from the slums love it and they really enjoy themselves when we have Thai music in church."

Muang Thai's revival of the traditional arts mirrors the trends that are influencing music in Asia today. In the last 50 years, the Western intellectual inquiry on the musical and social value of non-Western musical practices has gradually reified and "elevated" Asian music from its colonial image as purely archaeological objects, to its present-day valuation as living human expressions with their own distinct aesthetic, theoretical, philosophical and cultural frameworks. Santos (2003) argues that the various types and classifications of creative revivalism, from acculturated and accommodative fusions, to aesthetically inspired creative expressions and semi-intuitive tradition-based innovations, are all expressive of a modernism that seeks to liberate the contemporary Asian musical artist from both his colonial ties to the West as well as from the social isolation and cultural alienation from his traditional past. The phenomenon is indicative of a search for an identity and an emblem of nationalism within and outside his globalized environment. In Muang Thai's case, this is a search for a Thai identity and banner of nationalism within and outside a globalized Christianity.

Factors affecting localization

While the localization of Christianity is something that takes place within churches and within Christian circles, it is nonetheless influenced by external factors in the society. Bangkok, with its middle-class values and urban lifestyles, will exert a different impact on the rate and type of localization that takes place in the city churches, as compared to, say, in the North-east, where rural values and lifestyles still hold sway. This section explores four factors: the tension between tradition and modernity; the middle class; the emergence of Thai pop; and the concept of "Thainess" as opposed to the Otherness of Christianity.

Modernity and tradition

The categories of "tradition" and "modernity" both have as central functions the legitimating of a state of affairs in a society. They are ideological constructs that serve, among other things, to support the interests of those who wish either to maintain or transform society in ways concordant with their material or ideal interests (Rhum 1996:327). Several elite groups, such as the political class (once the nobility and royalty but now electoral politicians), military, bureaucracy, and bourgeoisie have embraced various forms of "modernity" and used it to redefine tradition.

In its original, pre-modern context, "tradition" is a capping category which is used to state that "this is the right way to do things" and it has the virtue of wrapping complex ideas up in a simple package, allowing one to say, "Anything I put in this package is good" (Rhum 1996:350). This was, and in large measure still is, one of the uses of this term in Thailand, where spirit sacrifices, for instance, are typically done for the reason they are "traditional" rather than for any explicit theological or cosmological reason. When a second term "modernity" is introduced into this system, "tradition" becomes radically revalued. In the modern context, "tradition" is opposed to "modernity" in which case its essential meaning becomes "this is *our* way to do things", while modernity takes on the function of indicating "the improved way to do things".

As Sahlins (1993:5) observes, "tradition" here functions as a yardstick by which the people measure the acceptability of change. The "right way" is now no longer validated by the sanctity of a supposed ancientness that is internal to the society, but by a balance between the authentic us-ness of "culture" and the allure of the new and up-to-date, which refers to the achievements of an idealized and foreshortened West. Unlike "tradition", "modernity" is an external criterion of validation. To validate a particular action, practice, or institution as "traditional" one makes reference to the actions and assumed values of people much like oneself. To validate something as "modern" one is forced to compare oneself (and one's whole society) to an external standard (Rhum 1996:328).

Hence, "tradition" legitimates things in terms of their fit with the internal history and identity of a society; "modernity" legitimates by reference to other societies. Under these changed circumstances "tradition" becomes less a global way

of legitimating things than of defining them as good and right because they are one's own. In other words, they are not right *tout court*, but right for us, and even more, right in helping us remain us. Things that are right for everyone, and thus right in the most general sense, are things that are "modern". This leads to the dilemma of how to "modernise" without abandoning one's "tradition" or "culture". "Tradition" in the modern sense is a particularly powerful tool in the hands of elites seeking to legitimate their power and of nationalists (who are often the same people) seeking to define a nation. Like a common language, a common "tradition" is a powerful instrument in the creation of a secular, national imagined community, to borrow Benedict Anderson's term. Various instruments – monuments, language, and ritual – are used to construct a common national "culture" that is at once "traditional" and "modern" (Rhum 1996:351).

Christianity as "modern"

In much of Asia, including Thailand, Christianity has benefited from its association with countries that are considered "modern" or "developed". Mary Beth Mills (1999) has shown that contemporary Thai villagers have learnt to value the making of "modern" *thansamay* selves. Literally meaning "up-to-date", but also used as a synonym for "modern", the word *thansamay* highlights the rhetorical aspect of modernity that labels "tradition" or the "non-modern" as out-of-date and therefore of little worth. Among Mills' villagers, the desire for modernity also manifests as a kind of status envy through imitation of people more up to date (and richer) than oneself, aspiring to a level of consumption and display that is never quite attainable.

To some extent this status envy is focused on the acquisition of symbolic markers – such as up to date houses and clothing – similar to the markers that Pierre Bourdieu (1984) termed "symbolic capital". His concept focuses not just on the acquisition of material things but also on knowledges and tastes that effectively set the middle and upper classes apart from their less accomplished peers. It should be obvious that such markers can include styles of religion, and in the late 20th century, at a time when the desire for modernity was especially apparent in Thai society, Christianity benefited from its notional association with countries, like Europe and the US, that were considered to be the epitome of the modern.

That church attendance remains "symbolic capital" today is apparent from the membership rolls of the churches in Bangkok, where at least three quarters of the congregation are from the middle class. Some churches have intentionally buttressed the link between Christianity and Westernization by holding Christian courses imported from the UK or by getting *farang* missionaries to teach English classes in church. In fact, it is interesting to note that free English lessons in Bangkok are usually related to churches or Christian organizations. Other churches, such as Rom Klao, position themselves as a symbol of "modernity", as evinced by the increasing popularity of Western-style praise choruses and presence of bands in churches, over the "tradition" of hymn-singing. They believe in using mainly imported songs in church and to play them the way the West plays them. As Rom Klao's founder said, "Since religion is seen as *boran*, the church has to be *thansamay*."

But this erstwhile ally of a Westernised Christianity can cut the other way. Just as the blossoming consumer culture in 19th-century England unleashed an individualistic romanticism hostile to Christianity, the markets and media that accompany modernity today offer self-idealizations that can undermine Christian ideals (Cambell 1987, Heelas 1996, Thompson 1993). Converts discover that their religion has ideals and disciplines other than those they expected (Hefner 1993b, Pollock 1993). The work of the Holy Spirit may be put to unlicensed ends, particularly where rather than rebuilding hierarchy, it encourages retreat to islands of personal piety (Hefner 1998:97). Even among US evangelicals notorious for their fire-and-brimstone moralism, the past generation has seen a shift away from community fellowship and moralism toward a view of religion as a "service agency for the fulfilment of its individual members" (Wuthnow 1988:55, cf Hunter 1987). To put it bluntly, Jesus as a non-judgemental buddy has nudged God-the-Patriarchal-Father.

Other than considering the shifts in the West, it will also be instructive to remember India's experience (Chapter 1), where it was suggested that a Westernized church may not necessarily reel in a middle class that is hearkening for Western ways because deeply rooted cultural identity in the Indians automatically rejects overtures from propagators of Christianity.

The middle class

If, as argued earlier, that going to church is a status marker, then it follows that the Christian music consumed by middle-class churchgoers is also a sort of status marker. Consequently, the music used in a church directly affects its image. Observations have borne out that the churches which follow traditional Western service formats and sing only translated Western hymns have a higher social image, with a higher proportion of the middle and upper-middle class in the congregation. The converse is also true. Unlike in Pentecostal-charismatic churches where the decision-making authority is vested in one person, in the CCT churches, it is the established members, who are usually in the upper middle class, who call the shots. While Thai classical music in church is tolerable, this group has partisan interests to keep *luk thung* and *mor lam* out of church, and to maintain the status quo of Western format and music. Their ideas of what is "profane" and what is "sacred" echo the teachings of the early missionaries, where hymns and the piano or organ are regarded as sacred music and instruments while traditional Thai tunes and instruments are deemed as profane. As one informant said, "Church should be proper and sacred. We don't want any bawdy music or undesirable characters in church." To follow on from the earlier discussion of "tradition" and "modernity", it is interesting how something that is deemed as "traditional" in the West, such as hymns, is taken on by the middle class as "modern" in Bangkok.

The discussion on the middle class so far has revolved around those older in age. However, the young people in this class bracket have significant impact on the localization of Christian music. It has been established in Chapter 1 that young people spend an inordinate amount of time on listening to music, especially pop music. It has also been shown that they have a preference for current pop hits. Therefore, Bangkok churches that have a high proportion of young people are likely to use songs that are written in the contemporary, pop format, instead of hymns, which young people now construe as "traditional" as compared to their parents' generation. Moreover, as long as the Christian song exhibits the latest music trends, it is likely to go down well with the youth, no matter whether it is written by a Thai or translated from the West.

Emergence of Thai pop

While Thai pop has been around for 20 to 30 years, there are two key transitional periods worth noting because of the way they situate the music in a political and economic context. First, in the early 1970s, the interest in pop music increased dramatically with the popularity of a Thai band called the Impossibles. Considered by some as the "Beatles" of Thailand, The Impossibles were one of the first successful bands to integrate Thai and American music (Hayes 2004:29). Previously music was dominated by local folk and country-style music (*luk thung* and *luk khrung*), though there was some interest in Western music. This period also saw the massive increase in the middle class which Anderson (1977) considers increased around 1000 per cent in the early 1970s, which became the main audience for The Impossibles. The Impossibles were popular among American GIs on recreation leave in Bangkok. Rewat Bhutthinun, or more commonly known as Der, who later started Grammy Records, would sing English and American music in English for the American audience. The Impossibles also translated these songs and sang them in Thai for a Thai audience. The popularity of Thai pop thus emerged as a point of translation, where American music which was popular among the American soldiers was translated into Thai, and in which a Thai band performed Western pop music.

While The Impossibles and the music of the 1970s were an important precursor, Thai pop boomed in 1983 when Grammy was established. From an almost negligible impact on the market, within a couple of years about 80 per cent of all music sales were Thai pop. The market also expanded, with best-selling albums selling five million and upwards (Hayes 2004:29). Although 40% of all music sales originate from Grammy, the majority of the pop music industry operates along the lines of Grammy because rival companies were started by Grammy-trained professionals. Hayes (2004) situates the explosion of pop in the phenomenal changes occurring in Thai society during the 1970s and 1980s of huge economic and infrastructure growth. This period saw Bangkok's population triple, levels of industrial activity increased enormously, and wealth quickly developed in the country. He contends that the boom of a capitalist economy is conducive to the emergence of popular music. The new consumer group of middle-class children became vital to the

entertainment industry, as the main consumers of Thai pop are people who have to ask their parents for the money to buy the record.

Thai pop and praise choruses

In the West, Christian music has tended to follow the trends in the world of secular music. Thai pop and the praise choruses sung in Bangkok churches have seemed to progress in tandem. While Thai pop constitutes 80 per cent of the music market, praise choruses make up three quarters of the songs sung in the 18 churches that were surveyed. Both Thai pop and praise choruses came into style in the 1980s. While the popularity of praise choruses in Bangkok Protestant churches is usually attributed to the growing influence of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement in the 1980s, the author posits that the emergence of Thai pop in the mass market helped to pave the way to greater acceptance to the pop style of praise choruses. Hence, when the first praise choruses were translated from English to Thai in the 1980s, the genre found a primed and ready audience in the Thai Christians. In the same way that "modern" Thai pop marked a departure from the "traditional" genres of *luk thung* and *luk khrung*, the "modern" praise choruses signified a break from the "traditional" hymns.

With the predominance of Thai pop in the music market, it is not surprising that the majority of the current Christian songwriters are penning their songs in the contemporary pop style of praise choruses. It is a style that they are familiar with, and a style that is widely popular. Thai pop and local praises choruses are further linked by the interesting parallel between Grammy Records and Grace Journey Music. While Grammy is the biggest player in secular music, Grace is the undisputable leader in Christian music. Ruangkit Yongpiyakul, Grace's founder, has been working at Grammy for the last 16 years as an arranger/songwriter/producer and has made it clear that he wants to use the skills he learns from his secular job, be it recording techniques or product packaging, to help develop Christian music in Thailand (personal communication, 20/12/05). As mentioned elsewhere in the thesis, the albums from Grace have a professional look and sound that is lacking in other Christian CDs. Hence, it is in this indirect way that Thai pop, through Grammy, leaves an imprint on local praise choruses.

Thainess, and the Otherness of Christianity

Thai ethno-nationalism, or what Kasian (2004) prefers to call the ethno-ideology of Thainess, has little or nothing to do with Thai ethnicity as such. In its real intent and actual operation, it is not racism per se, but a racializing or ethnicizing political discourse that has been created and manipulated by successive Thai state elites to brand and demonize as the "un-Thai Other" those considered a threat to "national security", regardless of the actual ethnicity, political creed, religious faith, or language of the persons concerned. In contemporary Thailand, "national security" denotes essentially three thing: (1) the state development projects, (2) the centralized, authoritarian, auto-colonial state structure, and (3) the unequal, hierarchical socio-economic structure. Anyone who challenges or opposes this triple essence of Thainess with the King at its symbolic apex becomes automatically un-Thaified as a "Chinese or Vietnamese communist", an "NGO in foreign pay" or "a Muslim terrorist-bandit", thus exorcising any threat to the established order from the imagined body of Thainess (Kasian 2004:35).

While Christianity in Thailand has yet to be branded as a threat to national security, it exists in the uneasy state of the Other, a position carved out by Rama VI for the religion. When he ascended the throne in 1910, he vigorously supported Buddhism as a political instrument for national unity, thus coining the coining the motto "nation, Buddhism, monarchy". He commended Buddhism to the people as their national religion and later told them that "to become a Christian is to be disloyal to the country, and that Buddhism is and must continue to be the national religion of Siam". Hence, the three-fold call for Thai loyalty came to define Thainess and to be Thai was (and is) to be Buddhist. Christianity was defined as the Other, and by implication, a Thai who converts to Christianity then loses his Thainess and becomes un-Thai in the process.

This is why the localization of Christianity has picked up speed as churches in Thailand have tried to correct this damning indictment by adapting Thai cultural customs and practices for use by Christians, in an attempt to portray that one can be Thai and Christian at the same time. Hence missionaries and local pastors alike have increasingly redefined festivals such as *Loy Krathong* and *Songkran* as well as allowing their church members to attend *tod kathin* ceremonies with their Buddhist

family members, an act that was heavily sanctioned against in the past. Churches such as Muang Thai have gone to great lengths to demonstrate that Christianity is not the Other but part of Us by using traditional Thai instruments, music and dance in the worship service.

However, cracks seem to be appearing within the monolithic tradition of Thainess, mainly due to the way cultural globalization has "glocalized" with local traditions. While it is still possible, from the perspective of the ethno-ideology of Thainess, to view globalization either as an external cultural encroachment upon the body of Thainess or alternately as its economic muscle-building or technological armour-plating depending on the context, what is striking is the way globalization has begun to foment discordant, dissonant, and dissenting voices inside Thai society itself. A torrent of glocalized cultural flows and networks has loosened the state's grip and provided a space for the emergence of a messy, chaotic, even anarchistic, critical and less compromising non-Western un-Thainess, evinced from local grassroots movements against state mega projects to public intellectuals, crusading artists and singers, activist monks, and human rights NGOs. Kasian (1996) has observed that many Thais, in particular the middle class, still seem unable to find their way out from the double bind of Western modernity and Thai tradition, from the paradoxical conflict between their desire to be un-Thai on the one hand and their simultaneous desire to be Thai on the other:

> "If possible, they (the Thais) want to be simultaneously both Thai and un-Thai. They want to be un-Thai in a Thai-Thai way and they want to be Thai in an un-Thai manner. They want the capitalist freedom of competition, consumption, profit-making, moral corruption, share and property speculation. And they also want authoritarian order and discipline, obedience, conformism, consensus, submissiveness… They want the equality of powerless subjects under an absolute benevolent ruler, but not the equality of free citizens to lead their lives independently and disobey the dictates of power to which they do not freely consent. They want to be as rich and bourgeois as Khun Chang but also as soldierly and sakdina (or feudal) as Khun Phaen, the two legendary antagonists of Thai classical poetic literature… Hence the widespread symptoms of cultural schizophrenia in contemporary Thailand, with individuals professing conflicting cultural desire and exhibiting signs of a split cultural personality."
> (Kasian 1996:249)

It remains to be seen whether urban churches in Bangkok are able to respond to and capitalise on this "cultural schizophrenia", and to resituate Christianity in the psyche of Thainess not as Them but as Us. The countries where Protestant conversion have been more extensive are those where the organic linkage of religion and ethnicity has long since slackened, and the differentiating demands of the state, capitalism and migration have increased. The conversion of large numbers of South Koreans to Christianity in the aftermath of Japanese colonialism and civil war provides one example of this process (Clark 1986, Wells 1990). If the definition of Thainess – which includes "being Thai is to be Buddhist" – is being redrawn because of globalizing forces, a possible weakening of the tie between religion and ethnicity may indicate a more fertile ground for Protestant efforts.

However, it should also be noted that it is in the Otherness of Christianity that lays the appeal to people groups tarred by the same brush. Historically, Protestantism has taken hold among long-marginalised populations seeking to maintain an identity apart from the dominant culture even while appropriating the symbols and instruments of modernity. In this case, conversion reproduces the binary logic of ethnic categories even as it transforms their cultural content. Thus Karo Batak outflank their Malay Muslim neighbours in colonial Sumatra (Kipp 1993), Akha in northern Thailand compete with their Buddhist Thai neighbours (Kammerer 1990, cf. Keyes 1993), and Nuer resist state-imposed Islamization in the Sudan (Hutchinson 1996). Untouchable conversion to Christianity, Islam and Buddhism in India has shown a similar logic (Mujahid 1989), whereby a subordinate people adopt the religion of a distant but high-status outsider to declare their independence from a closer but dominant neighbour. To this day, the hill tribes in Northern Thailand remain one of the most open to the proselytization efforts of Protestant Christians.

Looking into the future

This chapter began by looking at the Western influences on Christian music culture and exploring the different stages of localization that Bangkok churches are at. It was followed by a discussion on the four factors that influence localization. In this final section, the author looks into the future of localization efforts in Bangkok churches as well as suggests areas for future research.

Future of localization efforts in Bangkok churches

The body politic of the churches as a whole seems to be able to simultaneously accommodate current localization efforts that appear to be developing in two opposing directions. The "modern" camp is characterised by churches which use Western forms of music to carry Thai experiences and Thai messages; the "traditional" faction advocates a greater emphasis on Thai culture and the use of traditional art forms in church.

It is expected that more churches are likely to localize in the "modern" way than the "traditional" way. While many of the informants are not entirely happy with the excessive use of Western-style praise choruses, the prevailing attitude seems to be one of "if you can't beat them, join them". Moreover, in Thailand, Christianity's association with the West does not have as negative a connotation as in India. Thailand, which has never been colonized, enjoys a less contentious relationship with the West. Churches have found through experience that a modern (but not always necessarily Western) form of Christianity seems to appeal to the sensibilities of the middle class in Bangkok. For example when Immanuel Church holds its monthly worship services targeted at youth, it always invites a local Christian celebrity to headline the service. Other than the reality that young people usually gravitate towards famous people, the very presence of a star performing in church projects the image of an up to date, or *thansamay*, church.

On the other hand, Bangkok churches localizing Christianity via the "traditional" way is likely to remain few in number and limited in influence. One key factor is that the issue of localization is hardly on the priority list of most local leaders. Other than the Mejudhons, the dialogue on localization has largely been dominated by the voice of foreign missionaries. Unlike in India, where the vilification of the West has helped to drive localization, there is not a similar impetus in Bangkok. There are hardly any theses or dissertations in local seminaries in the capital city that examine localization at length. Besides, church music courses at these seminaries focus on Western instruments, theories and chorale formats, and make little mention of traditional Thai instruments and music.

Aside from the belief that a "traditional" approach will not attract the Bangkok middle class, churches are hesitant in making this move because of the deeper

apprehension of syncretism. Evangelical churches in Bangkok are generally theologically conservative and are rabidly fearful of departing from Christian conventions. As one informant puts it, "Once you start, it's like going on a slippery slope. If you keep on adapting, you might eventually lose what it means to be a Christian." Cohen hypothesises, based on the church-sect typology[10] originally conceptualised by Troeltsch (1961), that the more a denomination resembles the sect-type, the more closed it will be to the local Thai environment; but the more a denomination resembles the church-type, the greater will be its readiness to adapt itself to the Thai environment (Cohen 1987:17). To an extent, this hypothesis seems to have been borne out by data in this study. The oldest established denominations, such as the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Roman Catholic Church, presently appear most open to innovation (say, in the use of traditional music) while most evangelizing sectarian movements such as Rom Klao are much less responsive to local conditions and are opposed to using cultural forms. However, there are some sects, such as Muang Thai, that display a marked readiness and even eagerness to absorb local customs, though continuing to reject popular non-Christian beliefs and practices.

To sum it up, based on the data and the interviews, the best way to localize Christian music in Bangkok churches seems to be for local Christians to write songs arising from their context and experiences, but using the Western style of music. Using traditional instruments or *luk thung* and *mor lam* will only alienate the middle class and the youth, the two main demographic groups of church membership. Ultimately, when it comes to musical taxonomy, the Thai songwriters can always do what the Chinese do – regard the music based on the identity of the composer instead of the style. So, even if the music sounds Western, as long as it is composed by a Thai, it is Thai.

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[10] The idea behind the typology is that there is a continuum along which religions fall, ranging from the protest-like orientation of "sects" to the equilibrium-maintaining "churches". The "denomination" lies between the church and the sect on the spectrum. "Sects" are newly formed religious groups that arise to protest elements of their parent religion (generally a denomination). Most of the well-known denominations in the US existing today, such as the Methodists and Baptists, originated as sects breaking away from denominations.

Suggestions for future research

In the course of conducting research for this thesis, the author encountered various limitations as well as opportunities for future research. First, while the author's working knowledge of Thai is sufficient to conduct interviews in the language and to understand the songs sung in the churches, it is however not adequate to conduct a textual analysis of the song lyrics. A researcher fluent in both Thai and English is likely to discover another interesting aspect of localization through a comparative study of the translated Thai versions and the original English songs. For example, in the process of translation, why were certain Thai words used and not others? In the attempt to make the songs more relevant to Thai Buddhists, were certain Thai words with Buddhist connotations used, such as the word "ศรัทธา" instead of "ความเชื่อ"? This same analysis can also be applied to local compositions to look at the language that modern-day composers used. Moreover it would be useful to look at the themes of the Christian songs written by the Thais to see if any dominant tropes emerge. As mentioned earlier, the hymnody in China exhibits a certain slant towards the topic of martyrdom.

Second, the main premise of this thesis looks at how Thai Christians in Bangkok churches adapt the religion to the Thai culture. The concept of "Thainess", or what makes one Thai, remains elusive and difficult to define. It has been mentioned that the elites have, over several epochs of history, tried to equate being Thai as being Buddhist although it can be seen in present day that one could be a Thai-Muslim or a Thai-Christian. However, the four per cent of Muslims in Thailand ultimately shares the same uneasy status of the "Other" with the Christians. The examples and research in this thesis have focussed on how Christians adapt Christianity to a Buddhist context, largely because Buddhism remains the dominant religion in the nation. However, it would be noteworthy to study the localization attempts of the churches in the deep South, where most of the Muslims reside, to see if and how they have adapted Christianity to the Muslim context.

Third, the scope of this thesis has been limited to churches in Bangkok to give it some focus, and also because the literature on the localization efforts of urban churches remains scarce as compared to similar writings on attempts by rural

churches. Urban and rural churches differ in their population demographics as well as the lifestyles of their members. Hence it is a foregone conclusion that localization endeavours in the two types of churches will also differ. It would be interesting to not only compare the differences in the localization efforts but to also see how the attempts in Bangkok influence those in the provinces, and vice versa. This influence would be all the more apparent if the pastor of the rural church was either trained in the seminaries in Bangkok or had been sent by a church in Bangkok to start a daughter church in the provinces. With the majority of Bangkok churches taking the "modern" route to localizing Christianity, the danger is that these fashion-setting urban churches would impede the attempts made in localizing Christianity in rural Thailand. For example, the use of the *khaen* and *Isan* music in provincial churches has been deemed as "too rural" by the city churches; in the meantime, more churches in the provinces are beginning to use the synthesizer and/or guitar, and sing praise choruses during the Sunday service. A comparative study of the urban and rural churches will shed light on whether the localization of Christianity in Thailand is diverging along a rural-urban divide or converging on a more or less Western form.

Conclusion

Despite prolonged and intensive Christian missionary efforts for the last 400 years, the religion lays claim to only about two per cent of the population. One of the main reasons for the dismal failure is the foreignness of Christianity, where its Western forms – hymns, building styles, pulpits and worship styles – are all alien to Thai culture. However, with more Thai Christians starting local churches and taking over the leadership of the missionary-planted churches, as well as foreign missionaries becoming more aware of the cultural issues, attempts have been made at localizing Christianity in Thailand.

In the early stages of Christian activity in Siam during the late 19th century, missionaries equated Christianity with Western civilization and held the belief that Christianity was superior to Buddhism, which was deemed as barbaric. The missionaries also prohibited their new converts from preserving any element of the Thai culture. Thus the use of Thai musical instruments and tunes in Christian churches was strictly forbidden.

One of the first steps towards localizing Christianity was the formation of an indigenous national church – the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) in 1934. It incorporated the Presbyterians, the Disciples of Christ, the Baptists, the Methodists and some smaller denominations. Local church leaders were sent overseas for studies in order to take over from the missionaries upon their return. Independent churches were later started by Thai Christians, free of the national church and foreign mission boards. Some of the leaders of these churches tend to espouse the rhetoric that they would be able to do a better job at spreading the Gospel, compared to Western missionaries, because they know and understand Thai culture.

In the 1980s, in accordance with the decree of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church invited some Buddhist monks to have an inter-faith dialogue. However, this provoked a fierce reaction from a militant Buddhist group which accused the Catholics of trying to subvert Buddhism. The Catholics eventually toned down their programme.

Some of the current localization efforts include adapting Thai cultural forms for Christian use. For example, the Christian Communication Institute has adapted the *likay* to disseminate the Gospel while churches in the Northeast have modified the *mor lam* genre so that it can be used to worship God.

In Bangkok, a questionnaire survey of 18 churches found that three-quarters of the songs sung during the Sunday worship service are translated, mainly from English. The problem with the translated song is that the meaning is sometimes skewed because of the tonality of the Thai language. For example, the words "draw me nearer" in a popular praise chorus when translated into Thai and constrained by the original melody, comes across as "draw me further".

Christian music in Thailand can be divided into four broad genres – hymns, praise choruses, traditional Thai tunes, and contemporary Christian music. However, churches generally draw from the first two categories for the Sunday ritual. Different denominations also exhibit differing preferences in the choice of music. The CCT churches used mainly hymns while the Pentecostal-charismatic churches favour praise choruses. The Southern Baptists use a mix of both types. It was also noted that the US is no longer the dominant producer of Christian music. Among the most popular

songs sung in the churches over the surveyed period, some of the songs were published in the UK and Australia.

Moving from a macro to a micro perspective, this study also looks at how Wattana Church, Immanuel Church, Muang Thai Church, and Rom Klao Church have appropriated Christian music for use during the Sunday worship services. Wattana is a CCT church while Immanuel is Southern Baptist. Both Muang Thai and Rom Klao are independent churches, with the latter being Pentecostal-charismatic. It was observed that both Wattana and Rom Klao use a high proportion of translated songs, with the former using hymns and the latter using praise choruses. At Wattana, the songs sung in the worship service have to be selected from the CCT hymnal, which is made up of mostly translated hymns, while the founder of Rom Klao has made it church policy to choose translated songs for the service because he believes that they are superior to local compositions. Both Immanuel and Muang Thai exhibit a higher use of local compositions, which make up about 40 per cent of the songs sung in church on a Sunday. Immanuel also tends to use newer choruses than the other three churches while Muang Thai uses traditional Thai instruments and music in the worship service once every two months.

Since most of the songs sung in churches are from the West, it can be deduced that Western influences have largely shaped the music culture of the church. This includes the introduction of new instruments, such as the rain stick, a South American percussion instrument with pagan origins. Thai Christians also tend to define "good music" based on Western standards.

The author identifies four factors that affect localization of Christianity in Bangkok: the tension between tradition and modernity; the middle class, the emergence of Thai pop; and the concept of "Thainess". Hence, churches with a middle class congregation tend to try to portray a "modern" (sometimes equated with "Western") image by using music in the Western style, which could be either hymns or praise choruses. Conversely, churches which hearken back to "tradition" and want to show that it is possible to be both "Thai" and "Christian" are likely to use Thai cultural forms in the Sunday service.

Based on the data and the interviews, the most popular way to localize Christian music in Bangkok churches seems to be for local Christians to write songs

arising from their context and experiences, but using the Western style of music since the use of traditional Thai tunes is likely to alienate the urban sensibilities of the middle class. With the majority of Bangkok churches taking the "modern" route to localizing Christianity, the danger is that these fashion-setting urban churches would impede the progress made in contextualizing Christianity in rural Thailand. For example, the use of the *khaen* and *Isan* music in provincial churches has been deemed as "too rural" by the city churches. This could eventually result in an urban-rural divide in the localization of Christianity in Thailand, especially when Bangkok churches are currently in the process of redefining their Thai-Christian identity in the language of Western forms.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER AND SURVEY SENT TO CHURCHES

578 สวนพลูซ.3 ห้อง 5B

ถ.สาทรใต้ สาทร

กทม.10120

3 พฤศจิกายน 2005

เรื่อง ขอขอบพระคุณในการตอบแบบสอบถาม

เรียน ท่านศิษยาภิบาลคริสตจักร

สิ่งที่แนบมาด้วย 1. แบบสำรวจ 1 ชุด

                 2. ซองจดหมายตอบกลับ 1 ซอง

         ดิฉันนางสาวเจน ลี เป็นคริสเตียนจากประเทศสิงคโปร์ ดิฉันได้สังเกตุในคริสตจักรโปรเตสแตนท์ในประเทศไทยและเห็น
ว่ามีสิ่งที่น่าสนใจมากมายในเรื่องการรับอิทธิพลจากต่างประเทศ

         วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ ดิฉันต้องการศึกษาในเรื่องอิทธิพลจากต่างประเทศในคริสตจักรโปรเตสแตนท์ในประเทศไทย และ
คริสตจักรได้มีการปรับเปลี่ยนจากอิทธิพลเหล่านี้หรือไม่อย่างไร โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งดิฉันทำวิจัยมุ่งเน้นในเรื่องเพลงคริสเตียนที่ใช้ใน
คริสตจักรโปรเตสแตนท์ในกรุงเทพฯ

         ถ้าท่านมีข้อสงสัยใดใดกรุณาติดต่อ 0-2287-2475, 0-6557-1891 หรือที่ e-mail : janeleeym@gmail.com

         ขอพระเจ้าอวยพระพรท่านและคริสตจักรของท่านตลอดไป

ขอแสดงความนับถือ

(นางสาวเจน ลี ยุน เมย์)

นิสิต

ข้อควรปฏิบัติในการตอบแบบสำรวจ

     1. กรุณาเขียนชื่อเพลงทุกเพลงที่ท่านใช้ในการนมัสการในโบสถ์วันอาทิตย์ (บันทึกเพียง 1 รอบนมัสการ)

     2. โปรดบันทึกตามลำดับวันที่อย่างต่อเนื่องทุกสัปดาห์เป็นเวลา 4 สัปดาห์

     3. กรุณาส่งแบบสำรวจคืนดิฉันภายในวันที่ 16 ธันวาคม 2005 โดยใช้ซองที่ดิฉันได้แนบมากับจดหมายฉบับนี้

เพลงที่ใช้ในการนมัสการในโบสถ์วันอาทิตย์

	วันที่	ชื่อเพลง	จำนวนผู้เข้าร่วมนมัสการ
สัปดาห์ที่ 1.			
สัปดาห์ที่ 2.			
สัปดาห์ที่ 3.			
สัปดาห์ที่ 4.			

ชื่อคริสตจักร _____

ชื่อผู้บันทึกข้อมูล _____ โทรศัพท์ _____

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE OF A SURVEY REPLY

เพลงที่ใช้ในการนมัสการในโบสถ์วันอาทิตย์

	วันที่	ชื่อเพลง	จำนวนผู้เข้าร่วมนมัสการ
สัปดาห์ที่ 1.	25/12/2005	ยามราตรีศรีหรรษา มีหมู่บ้านน้อยชื่อเบธเลเฮ็ม ชาวโลกทั้งหลายชื่นใจยินดี ขอเชิญท่านผู้วางใจ	ชาย 95 หญิง 180
สัปดาห์ที่ 2.	1/01/2006	ทุกวันเวลา ในที่ลึกลับ สรรเสริญพระนามขององค์พระเจ้า สิ่งเดียวที่ข้าต้องการ ข้าจะรักและบูชา พระวิญญาณเมื่อเราเชิญพระองค์ น้ำแห่งชีวิต เป้าหมายสูงสุด	ชาย 60 หญิง 90
สัปดาห์ที่ 3.	08/01/2006	มา..นี่เป็นเวลานมัสการ โปรดเปิดดวงตาแห่งดวงใจ จิตวิญญาณข้ากระหาย ฉันจะร้องถึงความรักของพระองค์ สรรเสริญ สรรเสริญ สรรเสริญ	ชาย 99 หญิง 164 เด็ก 37
สัปดาห์ที่ 4.	15/01/2006	เมื่อคิดถึงความรักของพระองค์ พระองค์ทรงอยู่ รักวิเศษ ความรักมั่นคง พระเยซูเป็นที่รักของข้า ไม้กางเขนโบราณ	ชาย 116 หญิง 171 เด็ก 42

ชื่อคริสตจักร อิมมานูเอล
ชื่อผู้บันทึกข้อมูลวิชัย สีสุด   โทรศัพท์ 018685373

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH
AND/OR WORSHIP LEADERS

Note: These questions act as a guideline for the in-depth interview and are adjusted accordingly during the course of the conversation.

1. Tell me about your church.
2. What is the style of worship in church?
3. What instruments are used?
4. How many songs are sung generally?
5. What do you think is the role of Christian songs in a church service?

6. How do you choose songs for the service?
7. Are you aware of the origin of the songs, whether it is translated from English or an original Thai composition?
8. When using a translated song, for example from Hillsong, how does the band play it? As per the CD or make changes?
9. What do you think are the differences (if any) between local and foreign songs?
10. Personally, which do you prefer? Local or foreign songs? Why?
11. How does the congregation respond to the local and foreign songs?

12. What are some aspects of Christianity that are foreign to a new Christian converted from Buddhism when he or she steps into a church service?
13. Christianity has always been seen as the *farang* religion. How has the church tried to make Christianity local for the Thais?
14. What do you think can be done to localize Christianity in Bangkok in terms of songs?

APPENDIX D

LYRICS OF CHRISTIAN SONGS

Draw Me Close (นำข้าใกล้พระองค์)
© 1994, Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

นำข้าใกล้พระองค์   Draw me close to You
อย่าปล่อยข้าไปห่าง   Never let me go
ด้วยใจที่ยอมจำนนอีกครา   I lay it all down again
เพราะทรงเรียกข้าเป็นเพื่อนพระองค์   To hear You say that I'm Your friend

ข้าปรารถนา พระองค์   You are my desire
ไม่มีใครเทียบได้   No one else will do
ไม่มีสิ่งไหนมาแทนพระองค์   'Cause nothing else can take Your place
ความรักสัมผัสในอ้อมพระหัตถ์   To feel the warmth of Your embrace
โปรดนำข้ากลับมา   Help me find the way
นำมาถึงพระองค์   Bring me back to You

ทรงเป็นทุกสิ่ง   You're all I want
ทั้งสิ้นที่ข้านั้นต้องการ   You're all I've ever needed
ขอทรงโปรดนำ   You're all I want
ให้รู้พระองค์อยู่ใกล้   Help me know You are near

Note: The last line of the song is especially funny when sung in Thai. Because of the tune, the word "ใกล้" sounds like "ไกล", which then skews the meaning of the line to "Help me know You are far".

ฉันดีใจที่มีเธอ (*Chan dijai thi mi ther*)

Words & Music by **บอย โกสิยพงษ์**

ในวันที่มีความมืดมน
ในวันที่ทุกคนต้องดิ้นรน
ที่สับสนร้อนรน
จนใจนั้นแสนเหนื่อย

ในวันที่ท้อใจ
ปัญหาเดินเข้ามาเรื่อยๆ
และไม่รู้จะข้ามไปเช่นไร
แต่ยิ่งชีวิตยิ่งผ่าน
ยิ่งได้พบ ยิ่งเจอ
กลับทำให้ฉัน ยิ่งรู้เข้าใจ

ฉันดีใจที่มีเธอ
ฉันดีใจที่เจอเธอ
เธอคือกำลังใจเดียวที่มี
ไม่ว่านาทีไหนๆ
ฉันดีใจที่มีเธอ
แม้ต้องพบอะไร
ก็ยังรู้และยังอุ่นใจ
ว่าฉันนั้นมีเธอ อยู่ตรงนี้

เพื่อนที่ชื่อว่าพ่อ (*Pheuan thi chi wa phor*)

Words by **บอย โกสิยพงษ์**   Music by **เรืองกิจ ยงปิยะกุล**

วันที่พ้นมา ยังจำได้ดี
จนวันนี้ ไม่เคยเสื่อมคลาย
มีเพื่อนคนหนึ่ง ซึ่งเขาเป็นผู้ชาย
ที่ร่างสูง แข็งแรงกว่าใคร
เราอยู่ด้วยกัน ไม่ว่าใกล้ไกล
อยู่แห่งไหน เป็นเงาติดตาม
ปกป้องคุ้มครอง แม้ทุกโมงยาม
คอยห่วง คอยถาม ด้วยความใส่ใจ

เพื่อนคนนี้ คือเพื่อนที่ให้ทุกอย่าง
และพร้อมเข้าใจ ทุก ๆ สิ่ง และทุก ๆ ด้าน
แม้ว่าจะร้ายแรง ผิดพลาด เพียงไหน
เขาก็พร้อมให้อภัย อย่างที่ไม่เคย ได้รับจากใคร
ความรักยิ่งใหญ่ จากเพื่อนคนนี้ที่ชื่อว่าพ่อ ของฉัน

วันที่เสียใจ มีเขารับฟัง
และเติมความหวังให้เดินต่อไป
วันที่สำเร็จ มีเขาภูมิใจ
โดยไม่หวังอะไร ตอบเลย

เพื่อนคนนี้ คือเพื่อนที่ให้ทุกอย่าง
และพร้อมเข้าใจ ทุก ๆ สิ่ง และทุก ๆ ด้าน
แม้ว่าจะร้ายแรง ผิดพลาด เพียงไหน
เขาก็พร้อมให้อภัย อย่างที่ไม่เคย ได้รับจากใคร
ความรักยิ่งใหญ่ จากเพื่อนคนนี้ที่ชื่อว่าพ่อ ของฉัน

## ข้าจะรักและบูชา (*Kha ja rak lae bucha*)

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อยากจะพบพระองค์
ผู้ทรงดำรง ในกาลเวลา
อยากจะเห็นพระพักตร์
ผู้เป็นที่รักของข้า
ข้าปรารถนา ได้อยู่ใกล้ชิด
ได้พินิจ ในความงาม

อยากจะนั่งลงใกล้
ที่เบื้องพระบาท
องค์พระเยซู
อยู่ตรงหน้าพระพักตร์
ผู้เป็นที่รักของข้า...
เพียงหนึ่งวันนี้
ได้อยู่ใกล้ชิด ก็ดีกว่า
พันวันในที่ ใดๆ

ข้าจะรักและบูชา นมัสการ
จะไม่ขอไปไกลห่าง
จากพระพักตร์
ข้าจะรักและบูชา นมัสการ
อยู่ตรงนี้ที่พระบาท
พระองค์...
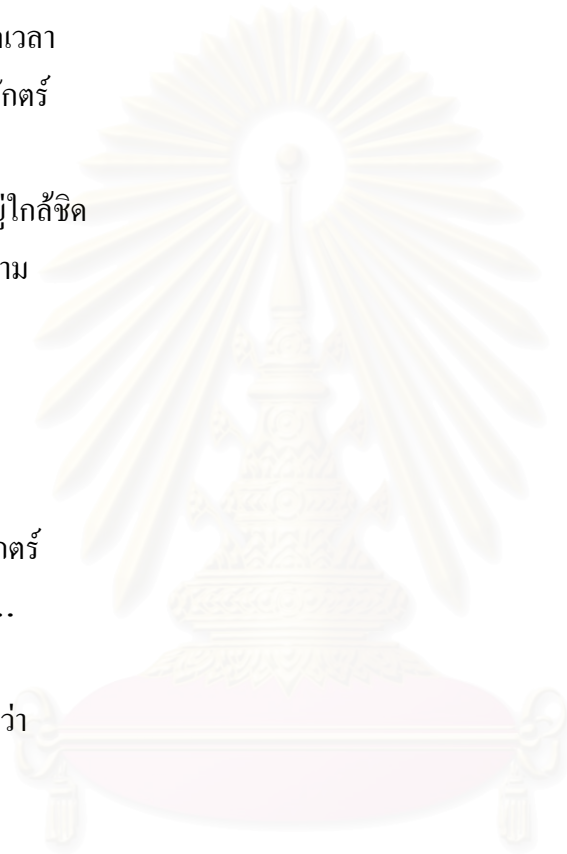
BIOGRAPHY

Jane Lee Yuin Mei was born in Singapore. She graduated from the Nanyang Technological University with a bachelor degree (honours) in communication studies in 2000. She then joined The Straits Times, a leading daily newspaper in Singapore, as a journalist specializing in education issues. In 2004, she enrolled in the Masters program in Thai Studies at Chulalongkorn University.