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**INTRA-ASIA CULTURAL TRAFFIC:
TRANSNATIONAL FLOW OF EAST ASIAN TELEVISION DRAMAS
IN INDONESIA**

**by
TAMBUNAN Shuri Mariasih Gietty**

**A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies**

Lingnan University

2013

ABSTRACT

Intra-Asia Cultural Traffic: Transnational Flow of East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia

by

TAMBUNAN Shuri Mariasih Gietty

Doctor of Philosophy

East Asian television dramas have crossed the threshold of Indonesian mediascapes since the 1990s. This transnational product offers new resources for the “work of imagination” within the rapid flow of cultural products in Asia. By focusing on the Network Flows and Reception Theory models in the approaches to cultural globalization, the project asks how the process of intra-Asia cultural traffic mediates and is mediated by gatekeepers/intermediaries and by the ordinary experience of the contemporary Indonesian audience. East Asian television dramas have nurtured a process of transnational imagination and self-reflexivity in the Indonesian audience’s everyday life. Furthermore, the Indonesian cultural, political and social specificities have created significant distinctions on how these television dramas reconstruct the shared imagination of (East) Asia in Indonesia compared to how it is in other locales.

The main question of the research would be on the circulation network and the reception context of the East Asian television dramas in Indonesia with an aim to understand the complexity of the cultural globalization process in Asia. The research concerns a multi-layered analysis that draws on the methodological resources of textual analysis, institutional research and audience study. The multiple methods have contextualized the objects of study culturally, historically and geographically. For the audience study, throughout the research, the methods have been chosen reflexively and recursively resulting in a triangulation of data from the Focus Group Discussions, Interviews and Diary Study.

In conclusion, the research findings have extended the discussion of geocultural/linguistic regions and also the cultural proximity thesis. It echoes that the Asian case should be analyzed in a distinctive framework compared to other regional case studies. Furthermore, I argue that the circulation and reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia has constructed an imagined unitary Asia while at the same time orientalise the notion of Asia. As a result, the intra-Asia cultural traffic, which has intensified the process of cultural globalization in Asia in the last decade, does not indicate a geocultural approximation between the Asian countries. The regional dynamics occur because ‘Asia’ has been appropriated as a depository of in-betweenness.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

SIGNED

(Shuri Mariasih Gietty Tambunan)
6 August 2013

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

INTRA-ASIA CULTURAL TRAFFIC:
TRANSNATIONAL FLOW OF EAST ASIAN TELEVISION DRAMAS
IN INDONESIA

by
TAMBUNAN Shuri Mariasih Gietty

Doctor of Philosophy

Panel of Examiners:

(Chairman)
(Prof. Mette HJORT)
(External Member)
(Prof. Koichi IWABUCHI)
(Internal Member)
(Prof. Meaghan MORRIS)
(Internal Member)
(Prof. CHAN Ching Kiu Stephen)	

Chief Supervisor:
Prof. CHAN Ching Kiu Stephen

Co-supervisor:
Dr. LEUNG Yuk Ming Lisa

Approved for the Senate:
(Prof. Jesus SEADE)
Chairman, Postgraduate Studies Committee

21 August 2013

Date

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1 Introduction: Framing the Research

1.1 The Regional Cultural Flow

"Someday I want to be a tree ... Because once a tree is planted, it won't be able to change places ... To make sure we will not be separated once again ... (Eun-Suh – Autumn Tale¹)

We didn't know why those simple words could make us cry silently. We tried to hide our tears and avoid looking at each other while trying to wipe our tears. It would be too embarrassing to know that we were crying especially because we were college students. It would be more embarrassing for others to know that we shed tears simply because of a dialog from a female character in a television drama. We didn't budge and kept on listening and watching every scene on the television. Everybody was silent and there were only tears when the two lovers on television embraced each other closely at the seaside. Their feet were firmly planted on the white sandy beach along with their intertwining shadows. This scene, of the lovers hugging on the beach, was just one of the many scenes that had made us cry over and over again while watching this television drama." (Merdikaningtyas, 2009, p. 1)²

Since the 1990s, East Asian television dramas have been a part of the day-to-day television experience in Indonesia. The second quotation above, taken from Yuli Andari Merdikaningtyas' research on fans of Korean dramas in Yogyakarta (Central Java) in 2002, describes how female college students watched *Endless Love*, a popular Korean television dramas at that time, in one of the students' boarding houses. The audience's experience reflects a process of intimate connection with the television dramas they watched. However, the reception process is not as simple as a temporarily emotional reaction. Due to the transnational nature of watching foreign television dramas in Indonesia, the reception context is more complicated. The

¹ *Autumn Tale* or *Autumn in My Heart* (Hangul :가을동화, *Gaeul Donghwa*) also known as *Endless Love* in Indonesia, is a South Korean television drama, which was directed by Yoon Seok-Ho and produced by Korean Peninsula television network's KBS. It was produced in South Korea in 2000.

² Translated from: "Kelak aku ingin menjadi sebatang pohon... Karena sebatang pohon sekali tertanam tidak akan bertukar posisi lagi... Dengan begitu tidak akan terpisah lagi... (Eun Suh – *Endless Love*) Entah mengapa ucapan sederhana itu membuat kami terisak diam-diam. Sambil menyeka air mata dengan tissue, kami menyembunyikan wajah dan menghindari kesempatan untuk saling bertatapapan. Malu kalau ketahuan menangis, karena bagaimanapun kami sudah mahasiswa. Apalagi penyebab air mata kami tiba-tiba jatuh adalah sebuah ucapan yang keluar dari mulut seorang gadis yang ada dalam televisi. Kami bergeming, hanya mendengar dan menyaksikan adegan per adegan yang ada dalam televisi di pojok kamar itu. Hanya air mata kami yang semakin menderas ketika sepasang kekasih itu berpelukan di tepi pantai. Kaki-kaki mereka terpaku di atas pasir yang bergores gambar keduanya. Adegan pelukan di pinggir pantai itu, merupakan adegan yang kesekian kalinya sukses menguras air mata kami." (Merdikaningtyas, 2009, p.1)

audience is not only engaging with the storyline but also with a narrative set in a distant locale. Research on these particular cultural products "...should be oriented towards the structure and modalities through which the products partake into the political, social, cultural and economic material relations within the different locations where the products are produced, circulated and consumed" (Chua, 2012, p.12). As a result, since these dramas are consumed in Indonesia, a country with different significant socio-historical background than the East Asian countries, the research should look at every layer of the flow and contextualize it within the social, cultural and political aspects of the specific locale of reception.

Asia has become a transnational space, in which all kinds of cross-border connections are rapidly increasing. This multiple connectivity of popular culture flows has been analyzed in a number of studies researching cultural circulation across national, geographical and geopolitical boundaries within a specific contextual environment.

"...since the 1980s popular culture products have criss-crossed the national borders of the East Asian countries and constituted part of the culture of consumption that defines a very large part of the everyday life of the population throughout the region. This empirically highly visible cultural traffic allows for the discursive construction of an 'East Asian Popular Culture' as an object of analysis." (Chua, 2004, p. 202)

The flow of East Asian transnational popular culture products has affected the complex imagination of East Asia as a part of cultural globalization in Asia. Research working on this area has concluded that, in the end, cultural globalization cannot be understood within the existing media imperialism model of cultural globalization. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002b) argues that the regional connection in Asia through the transnational flow of cultural products should no longer be analyzed from the West-Rest perspective. The media imperialism model, in which the Rest is expected to be a passive receiver, cannot explain the complexity of this intra-regional cultural traffic. Iwabuchi invites new kinds of research to move beyond this paradigm to reveal more on the interconnection between the locales within the region and the "cultural fusion and intertextual reworking" of these multiple forms of cultural products from East Asian countries.

Additionally, it is important to define what East Asia means, especially as it relates to this research specifically. What is the implication of using the term East

Asia as a contrast to the location of the research, which is in a Southeast Asian country? As argued by Chua (2010), “Geographically, PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan are proximate and conventionally grouped as East Asia, or more accurately Northeast Asia. The countries in Southeast Asia constitute a different grouping. This geographical division is further embedded in the cultural differences between the two regions” (Chua, 2010, p. 16). Because these television dramas come from East Asian countries, the analysis will focus on the comparable characteristics of the countries of production and the country of consumption. These comparable characteristics, such as the cultural, political and social aspects and the “ordinariness” of the audience, are the main reasons why this research is expected to deal with new issues, which have not yet been explored by other research in this area of media studies.

Furthermore, in several studies, East Asian popular culture has been situated against Western or American cultural products. However, to look at television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and Korea as the anti-thesis of the “West” is actually essentializing East Asia as one entity without acknowledging its multiplicity. Such essentializing leads to the idea of East Asia as “an abstract container of Asian values [in which] the diversity of Asian cultures overall, let alone their varying degrees of affiliation with Western influences or even varying degrees of acceptance/popularity of the Korean wave, remains unrecognized” (Cho, 2011, p. 387). This study argues that East Asia has often been romanticized both in the circulation and reception of television dramas. As Cho argues, East Asia has often been used as an “empty signifier or a profitable market.” Often enough, East Asia has also been used to represent Asia³ in general, emphasizing its cosmopolitanism and global consumption. This seems to overlook the multiplicity of East Asian popular cultures.

East Asian popular culture should not be seen as an essentialized materialization of Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean⁴ culture. Iwabuchi argues that:

³ “Inside the region itself, anxiety over the meaning of Asia arises from the politics of representation. For instance, in Japan and South Korea, Asia has referred mainly to China, and occasionally to India. This understanding of Asia indicates how larger civilizational entities functioned historically. China, for example, considers itself to be the center of its imaginary Asia, so Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, the Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand have been pushed to the margins or have simply disappeared all together. In East Asia, challenging this bias can open up new horizons and a broader regional system of reference. There is certainly a need for subregional integration, but it would be a mistake with enormous consequence if East Asia were imagined as a replacement for the whole of Asia.” (Chen, 2010, p. 215)

⁴ I am referring to these three countries and not referring to China/other countries in East Asia because the specified television dramas (the main subject of this research) are from Japan, Taiwan and Korea.

"These popular culture are undoubtedly imbricated in U.S. cultural imaginaries, but they dynamically rework the meanings of being modern in Asian contexts at the site of production and consumption. In this sense, they are neither 'Asian' in any essentialist meaning nor second-rate copies of 'American originals.' They are inescapably 'global' and 'Asian' at the same time, lucidly representing the intertwined composition of global homogenization and heterogenization, and thus they well articulate the juxtaposed sameness and difference among contemporaneous indigenized modernized in East Asia and Southeast Asia." (Iwabuchi, 2002b, p.16)

East Asian cultural products are the embodiments of "global" and "Asian" and could not be simply categorized as an anti-thesis of Western cultural products. In other words, these East Asian cultural products, including the television dramas, are already hybridized products. Therefore, this case study of the reception of East Asian dramas in Indonesia will revisit previous analyses, which tend to position East Asian television dramas as merely an anti-thesis of the West without looking at these products as hybridized products.

It is important to emphasize that the categorization of East Asia is meant, first and foremost, in a geographical sense. It highlights the location in which these television products are produced. During the discussion of audience reception, East Asia will be defined through each country's individual identity. The research findings have indicated that for the audience, a part of the experience is to identify the television dramas as either Japanese or Taiwanese or Korean, not simply as East Asian. Despite having a more or less similar experience of urban daily life and cosmopolitanism, there are different characteristics that have been identified by Indonesian audience members. The analysis will focus on how the cultural geography of East Asia should not be considered as a monolithic entity, especially in the consumption process. Before going into the specificity and complexity of the Indonesian circulation network and reception context, I will now elaborate on the development of East Asian television dramas in the Asian region.

1.2 A Short History of the Development of East Asian Television Dramas

East Asian television dramas have grown into a massive industry crisscrossing the Asian countries since the 1990s. This rapid flow was made possible, first and foremost, by technological advancement. As explained by Chua (2012),

"By the mid-1990s, in East Asia – made up of the People's

Republic of China (henceforth China), Taiwan, Japan, South Korea (henceforth Korea), Hong Kong, and Singapore, on account of its seventy-five percent ethnic Chinese population – free-to-air cable and satellite television screens and computer screens with Internet streaming and the capacity to download were awash with Japanese television dramas.” (Chua, 2012, p.2)

With this advancement in technology, these television dramas began to be broadcast in many other countries. Moreover, with the development of the internet, streaming and downloading have become possible modes of circulation and consumption. These technological changes, along with some other conditions, are the reasons why the transnational movement of East Asian television dramas in Asia rapidly accelerated in the early 1990s.

Chua Beng Huat (2012) has highlighted another condition that enabled the emergence of a regional East Asian popular culture connection, including television dramas. During those early years, the liberation of media industries in several parts of Asia had opened up the market for these television dramas. By the late 1980s, the authoritarian regimes in the region, including China, began to liberalize the media industries even though the government continues to regulate the transnational flow even up until now. As a consequence, there was a speedy development of television stations. There was a massive amount of airtime that needed to be filled quickly and inexpensively. Imported serial dramas were considered the best options in filling extra airtime, and in early 1990s Japanese television dramas were the most accessible ones as they were produced abundantly. Consequently, television stations, such as *STAR TV* and *Channel U* in Hong Kong and Singapore, started to fill their airtime with Japanese dramas.

In early 2000, there was a significant shift from Japanese dramas to Taiwanese and Korean dramas. When Korean dramas first circulated in Asia, audience chose these dramas because they essentially had the same formulae with the previous Japanese dramas. The successful penetration of Korean dramas into the regional market was due to appropriate timing. The post-1997 Asian Financial Crisis had trampled the Korean national economy, forcing the government to step up the exporting of Korean popular culture as part of the national export industry. The result for this expansion of export resulted in: “The confluence of these two separate industry strategies led to the rapid importation and screening of Korean TV Dramas in the rest of East Asia, except Japan, creating the so-called ‘Korean Wave’ in the

region” (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 4). At the same time, the crisis had steered television industries in other countries to look for relatively cheaper programs compared to the expensive Japanese dramas. By early 2000, Korean dramas⁵ started to replace Japanese dramas in most parts of East Asia, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, and also in Singapore.

In order to contextualize the nature of East Asian television dramas, it is necessary to look at the development of the dramas in relation to one another affecting their textual formulation. Japanese television dramas, or what Koichi Iwabuchi (2002b) characterizes as “trendy dramas⁶,” generally center on romantic stories between young professionals in an urban setting. This thematic element would then be formulated in Taiwanese and Korean television dramas. Referring back to an earlier discussion, Korean dramas were shaped in conversation with the development of Japanese dramas. As mentioned earlier, in early 2000, Korean dramas were replacing dramas from Japan as a cheaper option⁷ for television stations in Asia. Chua Beng Huat (2012) has explained that Korean producers came up with relatively the same formulae with Japanese dramas. A significant difference is that the characters in Korean dramas usually come from a younger generation. They remain entangled in familial relations while inserting an additional layer of drama, a combination of romantic and family themes. In the matter of thematic content, these television dramas share a comparable story line, mainly focusing on romantic involvements, familial relations, and more importantly, an urban context.

Another comparable textual element in Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean television dramas is the visual aspect. As Chua describes,

“The visual pleasure comes largely from the fact that on screen, the characters, major and minor, are very well dressed in designer clothes, live in cozy apartments, eat in expensive – usually Western – restaurants in the entertainment districts of the city and, above

⁵ “According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2005), the total amount of Korean television program exports dramatically increased from US\$5.5 million in 1995 to US\$71.4 million in 2004. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism expects that broadcast program exports in 2005 will surpass the US\$100 million mark.” (Shim, 2008, p. 27)

⁶ There is also a categorization of “post-trendy drama” referring to dramas after 1990s because those before 1990s are already regarded as “trendy dramas” (Schilling (1997)). However, as argued by Iwabuchi (2002b), the “post-trendy dramas” could also still be categorized as “trendy dramas” because the notion of “trendy” refers to the visualization of urban consumptive lifestyle depicted strongly in these dramas. For this research, the notion “trendy dramas” is used in this sense without referring to Japanese dramas from before 1990s.

⁷ “...the economic downturn in Asia in the late 1990s made the cheaper Korean programming a popular alternative in these media markets. Korean television dramas were a quarter of the price of Japanese ones...” (Shim, 2008, p. 25)

all, all the actors and actresses are beautiful men and women.”
(Chua, 2012, p.18)

These urban trendy dramas offer an enhanced depiction of the urban life enwrapping the aforementioned thematic content of romance and family drama. The Japanese dramas set the industry standard for producers elsewhere in East Asia to create parallel visual aspects in their formulation of trendy dramas.

“It (*Korean drama*) consciously or unconsciously followed the Japanese dramas convention that had, with its own audiovisual imagery, first mediated globalized consumer lifestyle in an Asia context. Japanese television dramas, which have indigenized American media culture in its local context and created distinctive cultural trends, became a model for Korean television production ... However, it cannot be regarded as merely a copycat of Japanese media culture. Rather, the unofficial influence of Japanese drama conventions on Korean dramas shows an intriguing case of cultural hybridization in the formation of local media products.” (Lee, 2004, pp. 254-255)

Korean dramas in their early development, as argued by Lee (2004), are outcomes of an inter-textual reworking with Japanese dramas in response to a market demand for a cheaper product. However, it is not a matter of copying the thematic content or visual styles. What matters most is how the formulation of these trendy dramas affected one another. The transnational flow of these dramas as they are dispersed to many parts of Asia has constructed the thematic and visual element driving a distinct textual and genre formulation.

This is also the case for Taiwanese television dramas as they were rapidly exported to many parts of the region in the early 2000s, especially with the popularity of *Meteor Garden*. *Meteor Garden* was a “trans-medium production” (Chua, 2012), because it was produced in Taiwan, while re-making a Japanese *manga*⁸ story into a television drama. *Meteor Garden* was then made into Japanese (*Hana Yori Dango* in 2005) and Korean (*Boys Over Flowers* in 2009) versions, which also gained popularity in many parts of Asia. These three similar, yet different, dramas reflect how the textuality⁹ of television dramas in Taiwan, Japan and Korea, are constructed in connection to one another.

⁸ *Manga* are comics created in Japan, or by Japanese creators in the Japanese language, conforming to a style developed in Japan in the late 19th century.

⁹ “By ‘textuality’, I mean the different ways in which something can function as a text for its readers.” (Couldry, 2000, p.71)

(Taiwan)

(Japan)

(Korea)

Thematically, the three dramas have the same story line, focusing on the romantic involvement of the characters as they become entangled in familial issues. Visually, the Taiwanese, Japanese and Korean versions depict urban consumerist lifestyle, emphasizing the good-looking characters in a city setting. In the matter of style and format, dramas from these countries are commonly done in a one hour-long format consisting of a number of episodes. This kind of inter-textual reworking alongside has shaped the textual and visual elements of these television dramas as they flow across Asian countries, reaffirming a particular formulation of textuality.

For this research, it is significant to bring forward these comparable elements even though to claim East Asian television dramas as a genre would require more intensive research. The fabricated thematic and visual elements echo how the dramas from Japan, Taiwan and Korea have formulated the textuality, which is heavily influenced by their transnational disposition. As an illustration, the early development of Korean and Taiwanese television dramas came as a response to a regional market need. For that reason, there are a number of similarities in the thematic content and visual aspects as these dramas are produced based on dramas, which were circulated earlier. The circulation network has indeed shaped these comparable textual elements. Furthermore, on the consumption level, as audience members moved from Japanese dramas to Korean dramas in the year 2000, they were seeking for familiar formulae. However, it should be noted that the television drama, whether from Japan, Taiwan or Korea, is consumed fragmentally. Individual audience members may treat different elements of the text differently. Audience members bring their own context in interpreting the text and develop a preferred meaning of their own in comparison, sometimes in contrast, with the preferred meaning encoded in the text. Subsequently, the discussion of the circulation and consumption should not be separated from the discussion of textuality and vice versa.

Besides its textuality, the popularity of these television dramas in the Asian region is also affected by strategies done by producers and distributors in order to extend the life span of these dramas. One way is by circulating them to locations outside the production countries and by creating “media spectacles.”¹⁰ Tania Lim (2008) identifies that most East Asian producers and distributors would create media spectacles in order to extend the life span and to increase the profile of their television products. She argues that:

“Such spectacles include lavish concerts and road-shows in the largest cities around the world, advertising for global brands as a signifier of their success as a pop icon, and generating lots of news and more likely rumors of love triangles, rivalry and other kinds of stories that stir the public’s imagination, feelings and opinions about the stars behind the shows.” (Lim, 2008, p. 47)

One example is *Meteor Garden*. After the rapid popularity of *MG* in many parts of Asia, and also some other parts of the world, there was “an F4-merchandising and advertising empire” appearing quite provisionally through concert tours, albums, music videos and celebrity appearances in mega events which lead to a huge fan following in 2001 to 2003.

These Asia-based networks of production and distribution reflect the regional dynamics of cities, which are connected geo-linguistically in order to create a prospective market. Lim (2008) uses several examples to illustrate how the advanced flow of East Asian popular culture has given birth to what she claims to be “regional networks of cultural productions.” Many pan-Asian¹¹ cultural commodities are consumed simultaneously. For example, in Singapore, if there are new and popular television dramas or other television shows like reality shows and game shows, there will be a ready supply of program-associated merchandise to be distributed to all over the region. One particular popular culture product is complemented with other lifestyle products.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that East Asian media cultures have been hybridizing local elements and American cultural influences for many decades now, as explained earlier in this chapter. This cultural fusion also occurs within the

¹⁰ Douglas Kellner, in his work *Media Spectacle*, defines media spectacles as defining moments in a collective or society’s life. They are “...a phenomena that itself has been subjected to the logic of spectacle and tabloidization in the era of the media sensationalism, political scandal and contestation...” (Kellner, 2003, p. 2)

¹¹ This term is used to refer to an ideology or a movement that countries in Asia are to unite, solidify and create a continental or regional identity in order to challenge the dominance of “Western cultural imperialism.”

region itself. There have been a number of remakes of successful television dramas, which could be seen as an example of how the regional network of cultural productions works. In the discussion of Cultural Globalization, the West and the Rest are often equated with the global and local dichotomy. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002b) has argued that the remaking of successful television dramas shows demonstrates how the dichotomy of West and Rest could no longer be used to explain the flow of cultural products. Therefore, "...it is not a credible option to ignore the lingering influence of American media cultures in East Asia, dynamic and intriguing processes of inter-Asian cultural fusion and intertextual reworking urge us to move beyond crude paradigms in which the globe is inexorably 'Americanized'" (Iwabuchi, 2010, p. 405). The discussion now must move further away from the cultural intoxication discourse of the Western influence toward a more complex analysis of the regional network of cultural productions, observing other distribution and consumption locations in other parts of Asia, such as in a Southeast Asian country like Indonesia.

1.3 East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia

The popularity of Asian cultural products is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. *Bollywood* or Hindi films and Hong Kong *kung fu* series were constantly present in the Indonesian film and television culture from 1970s to late 1990s. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, their popularity was overtaken by a new kind of Asian cultural product. Television dramas featuring urban trendy melodramatic storylines from East Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan and Korea rapidly became a part of the Indonesian audience's everyday lives. These television dramas are visible within the diverse mediascapes¹² in Indonesia due to the changes happening within the media sector itself, especially the television broadcasting policy and the development of internet technology.

To begin with, the circulation network has been discursively affected by a major transition in the media sector from state to market regulation. This is associated with the political transformation in Indonesia in 1998. In the Old Order

¹² The mediascape is one of five dimensions of the social imaginary (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financiescapes and ideoscapes) as stated by Arjun Appadurai in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996). Appadurai notes two main characteristics of mediascapes: "the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information," and "the images of the world created by these media."

(*Orde Lama*) period, during the presidential years of Soekarno from 1945 to 1965, the state television (*TVRI* or *Televisi Republik Indonesia*) was established. As the only television station in Indonesia, *TVRI* was often used as the state's instrument in consolidating national and political interests. Afterward, when Soeharto was in power during the New Order (*Orde Baru*) era from 1965 to 1998, *TVRI*'s role as a political instrument in Indonesia grew even stronger. Consequently, "...the requirement to broadcast 80 percent of local cultures in *TVRI*'s programming schedule has long been imposed" (Ida, 2008, p. 96). At that time, the broadcasting policy was politically stimulated as television was used to disseminate a sense of nationalism.

During the 1990s, the television industry developed without any clear regulations. Even though the discourse of nationalism was still significant in the broadcasting policies, with the establishment of private television stations, the demand to broadcast non-local programs was rapidly increasing. In 1997, the state established *UU no.24* to regulate the Indonesian television industry, which was later on revised in 2002.

"Recently, under the new Broadcasting Bill No.32/2002, article 36 point 2, all national private television stations and public broadcastings are allowed to broadcast at least 60 per cent domestic programmes and as much as 40 per cent imported programmes. Almost all television stations import foreign programmes, mostly movies and teledramas, a few music and variety shows, and some adventure shows and sports programmes." (2008, p. 97)

At that time, television stations considered that non-local programs could attract viewers and advertisers. During the time of writing, most private national television stations have different proportions in broadcasting both local and non-local programs. However, it is noticeable that there are a significant number of non-local television programs, even during prime time hours. Foreign programs, particularly non-Western and East Asian television dramas, have become a major source of consumption for the Indonesian television audience.

The most prominent local Indonesian television station broadcasting East Asian television dramas is *Indosiar*. *Indosiar* was established during the period of changes, in late 1990s, when the broadcasting system opened up possibilities for more private commercial television stations to be established. Since the beginning, this television station has positioned itself to be the most prominent television station

in broadcasting East Asian television dramas. When *Indosiar* was first established on 11 January 1995, it broadcast a number of Asian television programs ranging from *kung fu* series from Hong Kong like *The Return of the Condor Heroes*¹³ and *Bollywood* films from India. Subsequently, after establishing its position, receiving high ratings and attracting a large number of advertisers, *Indosiar* continued broadcasting Asian television products as its main focus.

The first development of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia started in 1998 when *Indosiar* first broadcast a Japanese television drama, *Tokyo Love Story*. It received high ratings and opened a new genre of East Asian television products on this television station, “*Drama Asia*” or “*Asian Dramas*.” Afterward, *Indosiar* began broadcasting more Japanese television dramas, such as *Long Vacation*, *101 Proposal* and *Ordinary People*. As a matter of fact, *Tokyo Love Story* was not the first Japanese television drama ever broadcasted in Indonesia. In 1983, *TVRI*, as the only television station in Indonesia at that time, broadcasted *Oshin*¹⁴. Besides in Indonesia, *Oshin* was popular in 59 other countries, especially in other developing countries in Asia. This shows how East Asian television dramas have had a long-standing historical presence in Indonesia.

Besides television dramas, there have been a number of Japanese popular culture products consumed by Indonesians even before *Tokyo Love Story* was first broadcast in 1998. One of the most popular is Japanese *manga*, which first came to Indonesia in the early 1990s. In 2008, 90 percent of all translated comics were imported from Japan (Herlinda, 2009). Many Indonesian comic artists drew their inspirations from these Japanese manga. Another form of Japanese popular culture is *cosplay*¹⁵ or costume play, which reached its peak of popularity in 2003 to 2005, and also *harajuku* style, a particular Japanese fashion style derived from a fashion street name in Japan. These popular culture products have constructed particular images of Japan infiltrating the Indonesian consumers’ imagination of this country. As argued by Chen Kuan-Hsing (2010), inter-references to other Asian countries are done

¹³ *The Return of the Condor Heroes* is a Hong Kong television series adapted from Louis Cha’s novel of the same title. It was first broadcast on TVB in 1983 in Hong Kong. It was broadcast on *Indosiar* in 1995 (from Monday to Friday.)

¹⁴ A Japanese television drama, which was aired on broadcaster *NHK* from April 4, 1983 to March 31, 1984. The series tells about the life of Oshin Tanokura during the Meiji period up to the early 1980s.

¹⁵ *Cosplay* is an activity where participants wear costumes of a specific character from a work of fiction. *Cosplayers* often interact with one another in order to create a subculture centered on the role-play of these fictional characters.

through the politics of representation, in this case the representation by means of popular culture.

The next development of East Asian popular culture products was signified by the booming popularity of *Meteor Garden* from Taiwan in 2001. After a few years airing Japanese television dramas along with other kinds of East Asian television products, the broadcasting of *Meteor Garden* marked the high popularity of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. At that time, “The rating for MG reached 5,1 with a 29.9 share and this was considered as a very high rating. This has also influenced other television station’s policy in importing East Asian television series¹⁶” (Merdikaningtyas, 2001, p. 3). Soon afterward, *Indosiar* was regularly airing television dramas from Taiwan such as *Meteor Rain*, *Happy Campus*, *Idol Boy*, *Welcome to My Place*, and *Orange Boy*.

Meteor Garden, considered the highlight of East Asian television products in Indonesia, opened up a new discourse on “Asianness.” Another example of how popular culture has constructed Indonesians’ imagination of the country of production is reflected in the popularity of F4¹⁷, which could be considered as a momentarily popular culture phenomenon in Indonesia at the time.

“MG brought a new milestone in the new genre of Asian dramas within the entertainment discourse in Indonesia. MG is considered important because it brought upon what is meant by “Asia” and can encourage the people to participate in imitating the so called ‘Asian-ness’ appearing in the series (the hairstyle, fashion style, make up, etc).”¹⁸ (Juliastuti, 2011, p. 1)

Many fans decorated their belongings, including bags and t-shirts, with the faces of the boy band members, downloaded the series’ theme song as their mobile ring tone and even learned how to sing the song by heart, despite not understanding meaning of the lyrics. At that time, one could find F4 knick-knacks in shopping centers scattered all over Jakarta and also other cities in Indonesia. In January 2003, the F4’s concert was one of the biggest concerts ever held in Jakarta. The atmosphere was

¹⁶ Translated from: “Rating MG yang mencapai 5,1 dengan share 29,9 terhitung bagus dan mempengaruhi kebijakan stasiun televisi lainnya dalam mengimpor serial Asia” (Merdikaningtyas, 2001, p. 3).

¹⁷ A Taiwanese boy band which become popular as the four male leading roles in *Meteor Garden* with members Jerry Yan, Vanness Wu, Ken Chu, and Vic Chou.

¹⁸ Translated from: “Tapi MG bisa dikatakan membawa tonggak genre baru drama Asia dalam dunia tontonan di Indonesia. MG dianggap penting karena memunculkan diskursus tentang ‘Asia’, dan bisa mendorong masyarakat untuk berpartisipasi meniru ke-Asia-an seperti yang muncul dalam serial tersebut dalam kehidupan sehari-hari (katakanlah dalam gaya rambut, gaya berpakaian, riasan wajah, dsb).” (Juliastuti, 2011, p. 1)

chaotic, as Setijadi (2006) described: “Outside, thousands of eager fans who could not get hold of tickets stood on trees, on top of buses, climbed on gates and even risked their own safety by climbing on construction cranes just to catch a glimpse of their idols” (Setijadi, 2006, p. 197). These fans crowded the concert venue to watch the Taiwanese boy band, famous from the television drama *Meteor Garden*.

The Taiwanese boy band, *F4*, is an illustration of the producers and distributors’ strategic manufacturing of a “media spectacle” to ensure a longer life span for the television dramas. As argued by Lim, “the more an Asian media production is able to create cultural meaning, sales and circulation of stars and related merchandise that appeal to more than one cultural market, the more likely broadcasters, advertisers, and audiences will aid the circulation of particular TV programmes within the region” (Lim, 2008, pp. 40-41). By marketing *F4* as a boy band with the album, concerts and many other forms of media spectacles, the producers and distributors are ensuring the popularity of *MG* to last longer, extending beyond its broadcasting period. In Indonesia, even though *MG* was broadcasted in 2001, Indonesian audience could still experience the *MG* phenomena until 2003, when *F4* held their first mega concert in Jakarta. Moreover, by extending the life span of the television drama, producers and distributors also guaranteed a starting point for another television drama to be produced and distributed by using *F4* members as the main characters. Television dramas starring Jerry Yan, Vanness Wu, Ken Chu, and Vic Chou in the following years, even those produced before *MG*, became a huge hit among the *MG* audience.

Within this period of *F4*’s popularity, there was a sudden recognition and acceptance of “oriental” looking actors and actresses in television programs and films. These “oriental” looking actors were often seen as similar or identical to Chinese Indonesians, who have been at the brunt of long-term historical discrimination in Indonesia. “Oriental” looks became the mainstream discourse of East Asianness in Indonesia. “Oriental artists, mostly from Chinese descendants in Indonesia, became very popular and fans adored them including the artist’s hairstyle and fashion style”¹⁹ (Juliastuti, 2004, p. 95). Juliastuti emphasizes the irony of this, as the Chinese ethnicity was a discriminated minority before the abolition of the

¹⁹Translated from: “Wajah oriental, wajah-wajah yang dimiliki kaum Tionghoa menjadi sangat terkenal, digemari, berikut potongan rambut dan gaya pakainya, menggeser wajah Indo yang lebih dulu jadi idola.” (Juliastuti, 2004, p. 95)

Assimilation Law. The spectacle of “oriental” looking actors and actresses actually playing a part on television program (or on films) was unusual or even impossible during the New Order era. This has to do with systematic discrimination against Chinese and even an attempt at eradication of Chinese ethnic identities within the political and social discourse of Indonesian public culture, as elaborated by Ariel Heryanto (1998), especially with the Assimilation Law during the New Order era.

The Assimilation Law was enacted by Indonesia while affecting the lives of Chinese Indonesians or Chinese nationals living in Indonesia. The laws were overtly discriminatory, identifying Chinese Indonesians as the “other” and to be considered as *Warga Negara Keturunan* (non-indigenous descendant), not as Indonesian citizens despite having lived in Indonesia for generations. One example of the Assimilation Law was the statute that required ethnic Chinese to have an Indonesian name, and was not allowed to use his or her Chinese names amenably. Most of these laws were revoked following Reformation era, under President Abdurrahman Wahid, commonly known as Gus Dur. During his time as president, Abdurrahman Wahid ended policies discriminating against Indonesian citizens. Today, Indonesian Chinese hold the same rights as other Indonesian citizens. The current study highlights the discourse of Chineseness as a part of the reception context of East Asian dramas in Chapter 4. This particular topic is distinctive in the Indonesian context.

Following the popularity of Taiwanese television dramas, especially *Meteor Garden*, there was a significant shift to Korean television dramas, opening up the flow of Korean popular culture products in Indonesia. In 2001, *Endless Love* (also known as *Autumn in My Heart*) was broadcast from Monday to Thursday, at 6 pm, considered prime time in Indonesia. The attractiveness of *Endless Love* opened up a barometer for a new wave of television dramas from Korea, continuing its predecessors from Japan and Taiwan. Not long after *Endless Love*, other Korean television dramas were broadcast, such as *All About Eve*, *Hotelier*, *Winter Sonata*, *Full House*, *Lover in Paris*, *Jewel in the Palace*, and *Princess Hours*. The latest Korean television dramas to be shown are *Boys Over Flowers*, *Dream High*, *49 Days*, *City Hunter*, *Secret Garden* and *The Moon that Embraces the Sun*.

The popularity of Korean drama has opened up the gate for other forms of

Korean cultural products to enter the Indonesian market, including K-pop²⁰. In 2005, with the new generation of Korean television stars coming from K-pop, the attractiveness of Korean drama in Indonesia often overlapped with the recognition of K-pop as more and more music idols began starring in popular dramas. According to Jung (2011a), there has been a significant demographic change in K-pop fandom because, nowadays, most Indonesian K-pop fans are in their teen years. However, there are also fans in their early 30s or even early 40s, who have been consumers of Korean television dramas since its first development in Indonesia in the year 2000. Jung (2011) argues that in Indonesia, K-pop's popularity has lasted longer because, on one side, the Korean entertainment industry seeks out market possibilities to sell and distribute their products. On the other side, for the Indonesian media industry, there is a desire to be globalized and South Korean popular music products offer a new kind of global as an alternative to the global West. K-pop has also shaped up the mainstream discourse of how Indonesians imagine East Asia, which is a part of the circulation and reception context of East Asian television dramas.

In explaining the historical development of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia, I have also incorporated a brief discussion on other forms of popular culture from Japan, Taiwan and Korea, which have shaped the mainstream discourse of East Asia for the Indonesian audience. First of all, East Asia is more known through its individual country in Indonesia. In other words, to coin the phrase *Asia Timur* (East Asia) to Indonesians is to invite a conversation about China, Japan, Korea or Taiwan. The popular knowledge of each country is mainly dispersed by multiple media forms in many aspects, such as economy, politics, and cultural elements. In connection to this research, their popular culture products. Providing a complete illustration of East Asian mainstream discourse is outside the scope of this research; therefore, I have only focused on the discourse of East Asian popular culture in Indonesia, specifically from Japan, Taiwan and Korea, in relation to the popularity of television dramas from these countries.

Throughout this first section, I have explained the historical development of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia, which are mostly aired on *Indosiar*. Why is this significant to the research? Why did I highlight these television dramas and

²⁰ "... K-pop – predominantly the product of idol girl and boy band music – has also gained recognition in Indonesia; in 2010, over 120 fan-operated K-pop related events were held, including fan gatherings and Korean pop festivals and concerts." (Jung, 2011a, p.6)

not other television dramas? This explanation does not assume that during a certain period, like during the Japanese television dramas popularity, there were no other television dramas. The emphasis on Japanese dramas in the 1990s, Taiwanese (especially MG) in 2001-2002 and also the era of Korean dramas from 2002 until now are important to give a contextual time frame on how they have become a part of the Indonesian audience's everyday lives since the 1990s until now without disregarding other television dramas from other countries.

It is important to highlight that Korean television dramas have had the longest life span in terms of popularity among Indonesian audience since 2002 until now. As quoted by Merdikaningtyas (2009) in her article, a representative from a distributor of Korean television dramas, *PT Duta Cahaya Utama*, was interviewed by *Tabloid Bintang Indonesia* (2002), and the representative stated that in purchasing these dramas, the main considerations were whether or not the drama could be sold and whether there was a potential for high ratings. The main selling point for audiences was not the theme and scenario. The more important aspect was the good-looking actors and actresses. The representative gave an example in choosing between two Korean dramas: *All About Eve* or *Hotelier*. The distributor decided to go with *Hotelier* because the actor and actress were already known in Indonesia through previously aired television dramas. They were Bae Yong-joon from *Winter Sonata* and Song Hye-kyo from *Endless Love*. In conclusion, Korean television dramas still have a high selling point up until the time of writing, making them a significant part of the research to see how it fits into the Indonesian mediascape.

Furthermore, the research that I have mentioned at the beginning of this section, as well as others done within the discourse of East Asian television drama in Indonesia, have been conducted according to a certain period of popularity, such as the research on *Meteor Garden* by Nuraini Juliastuti (2004) or the work on Korean Drama and its fans by Yuli Andari Merdikaningtyas (2009). Chua Beng Huat (2004) has stated that the study of East Asian television dramas is limited by its short lifespan. Therefore, he suggests analytical interest should not be in the television dramas themselves. Bearing this in mind, this research does not only deal with a certain lifespan of a television drama from one country, but will look into the diachronic stages of television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and Korea since they were first introduced to the Indonesian audience in the 1990s until the present time.

The discussion will now move onto other means of distribution of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. Even though to a certain extent, the main means of distribution of these dramas in Indonesia is still through television, technological changes have created new means of distribution and consumption. One means of consumption, which has created the most significant change, is the technology of VCD/DVD, both the original and pirated DVDs. In Indonesia, VCD/DVDs are distributed mainly through two ways, through rentals or sellers. One of the main reasons why audience chooses to watch the recorded version in the form of VCD/DVDs is to satisfy the curiosity or to have a more continuous experience. Watching it through television means having to wait for advertisements or even having to wait for the next episode to be aired in the following day/week. The use of VCD/DVD has created a new audience formation. They are "private," "convenient," and "not expensive," compared to broadcast television. VCD/DVDs offer a different experience in consuming these television dramas; therefore, the analysis will cover the distribution patterns, especially how the East Asian television dramas are "mediated"²¹ through this kind of technology.

Besides the medium of consumption, another significant aspect of the Indonesian context is the community of audience, or how audiences works on their viewing experience either individually or with other audiences. Friends and colleagues often play an important role in providing information on the latest Asian television dramas and are often used as a guide to select the VCD / DVDs at the rental or seller. "Getting information from friends or from fellow fans of Korean series and also the habit to hunt Korean series on VCD/DVDs rentals"²² (Merdikaningtyas, 2009, p. 8) are a part of the experience in consuming the television dramas. Moreover, this is also a part of the reception context created not only by the audience as an individual but also as a part of the 'community of audience.'²³

Several communities of audience are usually established in an online

²¹ "Mediation involves the movement of meaning from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another. It involves constant transformation of meanings..." (Silverstone, 1999, p. 13)

²² Translated from: "*Informasi dari teman, dari sesama penggemar serial korea, maupun kebiasaan hunting serial Korea di rental-rental VCD/DVD secara acak...*" (Merdikaningtyas, 2009, p. 8)

²³ "... making it necessary to conceptualize the idea of 'communities of consumers' beyond the restrictive boundaries of fan clubs. Arguable, it is the larger and wider community of more casual or leisure consumers which accounts for the 'popularity' of a pop culture item, not the small number of avid consumers." (Chua, 2006, p. 37)

communication forum either in the form of a mailing list, a discussion forum on a particular website or pages on *Facebook* or other social networking websites. These means of communication are often used to discuss various aspects of the television drama, ranging from alternative ways to watch a certain series or even about doing some subtitling for some of the episodes, which do not yet have any “correct” subtitles. All in all, these sites and discussion forums are the space in which members of the “community of audience” become a part of the reception context. It is where they find out about the latest television drama to watch and discuss anything related to the actors and actresses in their favourite television drama.

In the circulation process in Indonesia, the popularity of East Asian television dramas has also influenced the producers of local television dramas, known as *sinetron*, who have imitated products such as *Benci Bilang Cinta* (Hate Saying I Love You), an adaptation of *Princess Hours* or *Om Loe Keren Abis!* (Your Uncle is so Cool!) imitating the storyline from *Lovers in Paris*, which was about an uncle and his nephew who fell in love with the same woman. Other imitating products in Indonesian television are *Pengantin Remaja* (Young Bride) and *Sumpah! Gue Sayang Elo* (I Swear I Love You). These local television dramas did not only adapt the stories, but also the fashion, accessories and even hairstyles. They also use stereotypical characters such as the clumsy female characters and the cold but romantic male character.

Sinetron is a short form for “*sinema elektronik*”, or electronic cinema, and was first coined by Soemardjono, one of the founders of *Institut Kesenian Jakarta* (an Art Education Institute in Jakarta). In America, these types of television dramas are known as soap operas, while in Latin America the term used is *telenovela*. Still, each has its own unique characteristics. The duration for each episode is usually one to two hours. The high rating of these *sinetron* shows can prolong the broadcasting time for one title. The producer can decide to make sequels out of a *sinetron* if the ratings keep on increasing and have a high selling point for the advertiser. One example is *Tersanjung*, a *sinetron* that was broadcasted for seven years from 1998 until 2005. Television has received high profits from these local television dramas, as they attract lots of advertisers. In one day, the broadcasting time for these *sinetron* takes approximately four hours, which are spread into several broadcasting spots such as 10 am, 1 pm, 6 pm and 8 pm. The scheduling of *sinetron* by the television stations is

based on the scheduling of East Asian television dramas, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Research on Indonesian *sinetron* has proposed that these local television dramas depict a hedonistic lifestyle of the rich with “unrealistic” storylines. For the audience, what makes these shows unrealistic are the overtly black and white characters and that everything is obtained instantly. This kind of theme reappears again and again in *sinetron*. Positioning these East Asian television dramas next to local television dramas is not only important to see how the audience perceives both products, but also to see how television stations and also distributors strategize the programming process. The research will reveal a wider and more comprehensive understanding by analyzing the way *sinetron* is utilized by consumers and distributors, including the television station, in comparison with the East Asian television dramas.

At the point of writing, East Asian television dramas are still highly visible in the Indonesian audience’s day-to-day experience, which means that it still exists even though in other East Asian countries, the popularity of these television dramas is diminishing. Korean dramas are still dominating. Furthermore, with the increasing popularity of Korean pop culture, specifically Korean idol bands for the last few years, the attractiveness of Korean dramas has lasted even longer. Audience members also enjoy other television dramas through other mediums, such as through pirated DVDs and internet streaming/downloads. Japanese and Taiwanese television dramas are still evident through these other mediums, according to the data collected in the audience study.

1.4 Problematizing the Circulation and Reception Context

Much research done on the circulation and reception context in Asia has emphasized why and how East Asian television dramas have become a part of the region’s popular discourse, especially in the context of cultural globalization. However, most of these studies have focused on other East Asian countries or “...locations where ethnic Chinese make up the overwhelming majority of the population” (Chua, 2012, p. 3). There has not been much research done in locations with significant differences in terms of socio-historical contextual background within the region, such as Southeast Asian countries. For the few that have studied

television reception and circulation in Southeast Asia, they have focused more on countries that have a historical link with East Asia. For example, while some studies have analyzed television in Vietnam and Singapore, these countries “may be said to be culturally East Asian. Singapore, also geographically Southeast Asian, however, by virtue of its overwhelming 75% ethnic-Chinese population who are largely fluent in at least one Chinese dialect, is pop culturally in the East Asian zone” (Chua, 2010, p. 16). Research in these locations has revealed how the contexts of each location affects the process of consumption, distribution, co-production and other activities in connection to the transnational flow of these television dramas. However, as we now move on to the case study chosen for this research, the question is how this would work in a different locale with a distinctive political, social and cultural background?

Indonesia is an extremely diverse country that defies accounts, which treat it as a single entity. However, it is apparent that there are many aspects affecting the circulation and reception context of these television dramas across diverse settings in Indonesia, which differ from previous research locations. The most significant of these is religion. As a country with a 90% Muslim population, the social, cultural, and even political contexts are all connected to the discourse of Islam. This is one particular aspect that distinguishes the Indonesian context from other Southeast Asian countries studied in previous research. Additionally, discussions focusing on Confucianism, as one of the contextual aspects for the audience in other locations, should be re-evaluated in the Indonesian context because of the different religious historical background. What is more, the past political situation in Indonesia, which was hostile toward the Chinese population, even attempting eradication of Chinese identity during the New Order era, should also be taken into consideration.

To further problematize the circulation and reception context, I will give a brief description on the social contextualization of the Indonesian middle class, specifically in Jakarta, and the domestic and working life environments. Jakarta’s middle class²⁴ is the targeted market for these East Asian television dramas and, consequently, the primary focus of this research. Fundamentally, the class membership of the Indonesian people is evaluated through one’s consumption

²⁴ “The 1980s are widely recognized as a major turning point in Indonesian economic development, leading to important changes in Indonesian consumption patterns. Indonesia adopted a new economic paradigm of deregulation and market liberalization ... The liberalization and deregulation policy of Indonesia had significant effects on its systems of finance, banking, and production by helping to stimulate the structural changes of occupation and creating various middle class jobs.” (Ansori, 2009, p. 90)

patterns and lifestyles. The Indonesian middle class has always been marked by changes in prosperity and social identities/relations. Ariel Heryanto (1999) argues that consumerism is an important site for the culturally constructed identities of this social class. In the complex urban settings in Indonesia, consumption has increasingly transformed itself into consumerism as the defining component of middle class lifestyle in Indonesia.

The middle class in Jakarta (Indonesia) is defined by commodity consumption and social practices of taste. Furthermore, the reality of the middle class in Indonesia is also something that is in continuous reproduction through their social and cultural practices. It is also necessary to note that compared to the working population, the size of middle class based on census results is relatively small. Furthermore, the middle class is largely centralized in the capital city, Jakarta, where economic development is also centralized. Ansori (2009) describes the middle class culture in Jakarta in which “the consumption pattern and lifestyles of those middle-class people are featured in weekly and monthly magazines and appear on TV talk shows: young banking professionals are shown dressing in brand new suits, driving expensive cars, and eating out in posh Italian, French and Japanese restaurants” (Ansori, 2009, p. 91). The burgeoning “mall culture²⁵” in Jakarta is an excellent example of middle class practice and a consequence of economic privilege. Malls in Jakarta provide semi-public spaces where members of the middle and upper classes can mingle and engage in class-defining activities (e.g. shopping). The cultural meaning of visiting malls is to articulate and demonstrate the class identity.

For the middle class in Jakarta, the consumption of East Asian popular culture products is also a matter of articulating their class identity. For example, class to a certain extent determines access to television/DVDs/internet, enabling the consumption of these television dramas. However, it should also be noted that television is a common medium to be found in all households, not solely for the middle class. Pirated DVDs have also become cheaper options, although they are still considered products restricted to the middle class. Despite these ambiguities in

²⁵ “These developments seem to ‘cultivate’ aspiring mall visitors into experienced, socialized members of mall society: knowing what to expect and what not, how to behave and move and how to appreciate circumstances at differing malls ... Here people learned to be aware of, and strip themselves of, all traits that might be seen as *kampung* (the ‘vulgar,’ ‘inhibited’ and ‘primitive’) ... In *Jabodetabek*, it was the middle class that built shopping malls to experience modernity and exclude outsiders ...” (van Leeuwen, 2011, pp. 170-171)

the defining middle class consumption patterns, these characteristics are significant as social contextualizations of how audience members of this particular social class consume East Asian television dramas.

The specificity of the Indonesian context complicates how these East Asian television dramas flow within the Indonesian mediascapes and how the Indonesian audience engages with and reflects on the Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean television dramas. I will discuss these aspects of the social and cultural context in the following chapters in analysis of both the circulation and reception processes.

1.5 Research Focus

This research consists of a multi-layered analysis of the transnational flow of the television dramas as they criss-cross borders within the Asian region and the socio-political implications of this transnational flow within the Indonesian reception context. It also investigates the multiple dimensions of audience engagements, especially the audience's meaning-creating process in the transnational reception framework. The analysis explores the moments of self-identification in which the audience relates to the television drama, be it the main characters, the storyline or other on-screen elements. The main questions to be asked throughout the research are: How do the East Asian television dramas circulate within the network of Indonesian mediascapes and ethnoscapas through the work of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries? How does the audience engage with and reflect on the television dramas as they intertwine with their everyday experience? Finally, what are the implications of the circulation network and the reception context of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia with regard to the complexity of the process of cultural globalization in Asia?

The main goal of the research is to extend the study of cultural globalization and to contribute to the ongoing discussion of audience studies and its position in current models of cultural globalization. It attempts to revisit existing theses of cultural globalization, especially within a regional context. However, the study also has a significant limitation because it focuses only on one specific area in Indonesia, which is the capital city, Jakarta, limiting the reception context to an urban setting. Limitations also include the problem of "ethnography at home." I would like to acknowledge the possibility of subjectivity in conducting the research. However, this

experience has also offered a greater reflexivity because of my personal relationship with what is being studied, which reveals more about the object of study. In the end, while the research is not able to cover all aspects of the reception of East Asian television in Indonesia, it provides many insights and opens up new possibilities for research.

1.6 Research Design

To get as complete a picture of the complexity of the cultural globalization process in the transnational flow of East Asian television drama in Indonesia, it is necessary to look at this process on two levels. The first focuses on the network flows of these television dramas as they enter Indonesia, which explains the flow on a more macro level. I analyze the circulation network of East Asian television dramas and how they flow within the Indonesian mediascapes through the intermediaries/gatekeepers²⁶ as a part of the Network Flow model. The second layer of analysis, in Chapter 4, examines the multiple dimensions of how audiences experience these television dramas in their everyday life, which is more micro in the sense that it touches on a more pragmatic dimension of the audience's everyday experience of these television dramas. In order to get sufficient illustrations of the respondents' patterns of everyday life and how they experience the television dramas, the methods are Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Interviews and Diary Study²⁷. Each stage has a reflexive and triangularly significance for the sake of cross verification.

To acquire a comprehensive understanding of the audience's engagement and reflexivity with these television dramas, the respondents consist of a variety of audience members. First of all, they are expected to be either fans of East Asian television dramas or a casual/leisure audience member. Furthermore, in the beginning of the research stage, the main criterion to select respondents was to get two main age groups. The first group consists of respondents in their early twenties, who are mostly college students or fresh graduates. The second group is in their early

²⁶ For this, I conducted several interviews with representatives from television stations, tabloids focusing on East Asian popular culture, illegal DVD sellers and also fan-page administrators. The analysis was also done based on samples collected, such as news and articles from tabloids/magazines/newspapers on East Asian popular cultures, recent television dramas in a form of VCDs/DVDs, and also manual recordings from television.

²⁷ For further explanation on the audience study, please refer to Appendix 2: "A Reflection on Audience Research."

thirties, are mostly professionals or housewives. The justification for this is to have a comprehensive reflection on the relationship between the television dramas and the audience within the specific time frame. East Asian television dramas were first broadcast in Indonesia in the 1990s. Subsequently, to have respondents who have watched these television dramas since the early development is fundamentally important. Furthermore, the other groups of respondents were introduced to East Asian television dramas in their later development in Indonesia, mainly the beginning of Korean dramas' popularity in 2002. Other characterizations of the respondents are further explained in a list of respondents in Appendix 2.

Field research was conducted in Jakarta from July to August 2011, December 2011 to January 2012, and from July to August 2012. Due to the limited time for field research, I divided the research into several stages, especially regarding the reception study. The first stage was to conduct informal interviews with three (3) respondents who would then introduce other respondents to me for the Focus Group Discussions. With this technique, the respondents for each FGD would already know each other, creating a comfortable discussion ambiance. They were selected mostly through personal introductions; therefore, they do not represent the entire Indonesian audience community. Moreover, the discussions occurred among friends who, in their everyday lives, affect one another in their experiences of watching East Asian television dramas.

The next stage of the research was the diary study, which started with the Entry interviews to introduce the diary writing process. This was done from December 2011 to January 2012 so that the respondents were able to write the diary for the next four months, which was from February to May 2012. The respondents had the option to do it manually, in the diary given to them during Entry interviews, or in an electronic version sent by email. The justification for this method was the limitation of research time. The diary study method was chosen since it was considered as the best way to get data from the respondents with the researcher not present. In June 2012, I returned to Jakarta to collect the diaries, although some of them were emailed to me during the diary-writing period, and also to conduct Exit interviews. These summary and exit-from-the-field interviews were a moment of reflection for both me as the researcher and the respondent in their involvement in the study.

Finally, this dissertation is divided into five chapters. Following this introductory chapter is Chapter 2, which presents an elaboration of the conceptual frameworks of this research. Chapter 3 focuses on the in-between space of production and consumption. In this chapter, the discussion moves into the circulation network, as a web of mediating lines constituted by gatekeepers and/or intermediaries. The next chapter, Chapter 4, emphasizes the audience engagement and reflexivity in making sense of the depiction of (East) Asia from the television dramas. The main results of this work are summarized in chapter 5, which also covers the implications and contributions of the research. There is also a discussion on the limitations of the research and how they open up future research possibilities.

2 Conceptual Frameworks

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework for understanding the process of cultural globalization in Asia, studied through of the circulation and reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. The chapter is divided into five sections, focusing on the understanding of cultural globalization through the Network Flows and Reception Theory models (2.1), the notion of the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries and their roles in television drama production and consumption (2.2), the conceptualization of audience engagement and everyday reflexivity (2.3), recent research on East Asian television dramas in other locales (2.4), and the application of these conceptual tools in a comprehensive framework for the study of transnational television drama circulation and reception.

2.1 Understanding Cultural Globalization

With the rapid development of technology, mass-mediated products have transcended national and regional spaces to a greater extent than ever before. Technology is one aspect that many scholars have taken into account in attempting to explain globalization, due to its crucial role and influence in the transnational movement of goods, people and capital. Appadurai (1996) argues that, as media and cultural flows are intensified in many parts of the world, the extensiveness of technological developments has affected the way a cultural product mediates the everyday lives of its consumers. Mainstream discussions argue that globalization is constituted by the movement of products from the “West” to the “Rest.” In this scenario, Asia has always been considered as a part of the “Rest,” merely a market for cultural goods from North America or Europe. However, it is important to note that after the 1990s, more cultural products from Asian countries have also been moving throughout the region:

“If ‘Asia’ must no longer be thought as Other, this is not just because of the moral/ideological liability of the discourse of Orientalism, but because the region that has come to be called Asia has become an inherent part of, and force in, the contemporary global condition.” (Ang and Stratton, 1996, p. 20)

Intra-Asia cultural traffic has become a part of the contemporary global condition

challenging the West-Rest dichotomy. The discussion of cultural globalization²⁸ has been revisited because of these multidirectional cultural flows in Asia. A good example of this is the circulation of television dramas in and around Asia.

As it stands, no single theory can adequately explained cultural globalization as it constantly changes. Diana Crane (2002) has formulated four models to understand cultural globalization, namely, the Cultural/Media Imperialism, Network Flows, Reception Theory and Cultural Policy. Crane, first and foremost, points out how the Cultural/Media Imperialism model has dominated the study of globalization since the 1960s as a part of the Marxist critique. This model focuses on the cultural domination of powerful nations over weaker nations, reflecting a centre-periphery dichotomy. This model has led to the ideas of “Americanization,” West-Rest dichotomy, homogenization of culture and passive/uncritical consumers, which are contested by Crane in her formulation of the other three models derived from wide-ranging bodies of research. In this case study, I will draw primarily from the Network Flows and Reception Theory models to understand the process of cultural globalization in Asia, as seen through the transnational flow of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia.

The Network Flows model offers an alternative understanding of cultural globalization that is categorically different from the established formal and ideological structure as defined in the Cultural/Media Imperialism, in which globalization works only as a one-way force, a one-directional flow from the west to the rest. In this alternative model, cultural globalization is seen instead as a “network” with no clearly defined forces as represented in the centre/periphery dichotomy of the Cultural/Media Imperialism model. This understanding of globalization as the flow of cultural products through a network is exemplified in the intra-Asia cultural traffic, in which Asia is becoming a network facilitating all kinds of cross-border cultural flows.

“...dynamic globalization of Non-Western cultural images and narrative points towards the emergence of new local identifications that imagine communities beyond the nation-state, such as the Southeast Asian pan-Islamic identity associated with the new trend of the so-called *nasyid* music ... the “East-Asian”

²⁸ “... cultural globalization – as opposed to economic, political, or technological globalization – refers to the transmission or diffusion across national borders or various forms of media and arts ... cultural globalizatoin is recognized as a complex and diverse phenomenon consisting of global cultures, originating from many different nations and regions.” (Crane, 2002, p. 1)

form of trendy urban youth culture propagated by serials such as *Meteor Garden*.” (David, 2008, p. 159)

The phenomenon of transnational popular culture in Asia has boomed in recent years. Good examples of such cultural products flowing through the Asian network include the new trend of *Nasyid*²⁹ music in Southeast Asian countries and the spectacle of the 2001 Taiwanese drama, *Meteor Garden*. Asia has emerged as a network of interconnected locales mediated by unprecedented cultural flows, in which consumers receive cultural images and narratives from various parts of the region.

Contrary to what is often described under the critical lens of Media Imperialism, intra-Asia cultural traffic works effectively through an emerging network without a defined centre-periphery connection. This case study takes up the call from Iwabuchi (2002c) to “fill in the lacuna in the West-centred analyses of cultural globalization ... not just by offering empirical evidence to counter (American) media/cultural imperialism thesis but, more importantly, by attending to ways in which the intra-regional cultural flows forge connections both dialogically and asymmetrically in terms of production, representation and distribution” (Iwabuchi, 2002c, pp. 4-5). Analyzing the multidirectional cultural flows allows one to look at possible connections of an affirmative dialogical process between the locales. It will also open up the possibility to identify asymmetrical power structures in newly emerging transnational networks. These two aspects of the Network Flows model, the multidirectional flow and the shifting transnational power structure, are well reflected in the network flows of regional television.

Regional television is an excellent illustration of how the globalization network works. In her work, Crane (2002) has proposed that a region with shared communities and culture could be a space in which “the numbers of producers of media content and of countries producing such content are steadily increasing, contributing to the diversification of global culture” (Crane, 2002, p. 7). Due to amplified flexibility of television production technology, each region has drawn audiences from both within and outside its area, including diasporic communities. This growth in regional television has significantly reduced the dependency on the

²⁹ The Arabic name of this kind of music is *Anasheed*; however, in Indonesia and Malaysia, it is spelt as *Nasyid*. It is an Islamic vocal music, which is either sung in acapella or accompanied by percussion instruments. The material and lyrics of *Nasyid* usually make reference to Islamic beliefs and history.

formerly dominant source of television programs, the American television industry. Using Latin America as his case study, Joseph D. Straubhaar (1991) has argued how the television industry has transformed from a simple dependency on the American television industry (as explained under the Cultural/Media Imperialism Model) to an “asymmetrical interdependence”, thus:

“...the development of commercial genres and their success in the national, regional, and even world market places represents a step beyond traditional dependence into an (admittedly commercialized) interdependence within the capitalist world system.” (Straubhaar, 1991, p. 49)

Straubhaar argues that there is a strong regional flavour and cultural similarity, including shared language, which made it possible for a Latin American television network to evolve. Arguing for what he calls the “asymmetrical interdependence” of this regional television network, Straubhaar refers to the genre of *telenovela*³⁰, which have been exported throughout the Latin American region, reflecting a “remarkable degree of interchange and influence” (1991, p. 49). One element in the interchange process is how scripts for these *telenovelas* are often sold to other producing countries to be translated and adapted. The amount of trade in television programs between countries in the region has increased significantly. Mexico is the major exporter within the region, while Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela also compete in the regional market.

Straubhaar further explains that due to the regional television network, Latin America is now less dependent on the American television industry and has reached a point of asymmetrical interdependence. These new shifts “refer to a variety of possible relationships in which countries find themselves unequal but possessing variable degrees of power and initiative in politics, economics, technological capability, and culture” (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 21). Due to the rapid growth of *telenovelas*’ production and distribution³¹, television industries have become interdependent on one another as they move beyond their dependence on the American television industry. However, the relationship is asymmetrical, an

³⁰ “...prime time serials with a common cast and a series of subplots, like soap operas, but that run for 5-10 months, five to six evenings a week, with distinct beginnings, plot developments, and endings.” (Straubhaar, 1991, p. 49)

³¹ “By 2005 the *telenovela* had developed into a \$2 billion industry, of which \$1.6 billion was earned within the region and \$341 million outside, being broadcast in 50 languages and dialects and reaching 100 countries from Latin America to southern and eastern Europe, to Asia, Africa and the Arab world.” (Thussu, 2006, p. 9)

indication of the uneven and constantly changing growth in the television industry.

In the context of regional television networks in Asia, the regional television network has its dependency shifted from the American television industry to an even more asymmetrical interdependence with other television productions in the same region. According to Straubhaar, *telenovela* is a representative example because besides the attractiveness of the narrative structure, a key attraction is the shared language and cultural context among the Latin America countries. However, in Asia, the geographical composition is different. Asia consists of sub-regions, such as East Asia and Southeast Asia, with fewer similarities in language and historical background. Although Asia has developed into an emerging network through the existence of regional television with the establishment of the Pan Asian satellite service, the significant differences in the circulation and reception contexts need to be further explored to understand the uniqueness of the Asian case.

In addition to the Network Flows model, Diana Crane discusses the Reception Theory, which reflects on the audience's response to global programming, mainly television programs. This theory shifts the emphasis to the audience, the public, cultural entrepreneurs and the gatekeepers. The audience is considered "capable of interpreting media texts in different ways" (Crane, 2002, p. 10). Crane argues that in studying reception, it is important to look at the context and social characteristics of the audience, such as class, gender, race and age. These features construct part of the contextual background and shape the audience's interpretation of the media texts. For example, a preference for local programs is not only related to a sense of national belonging, but also can be tied to the audience's social class. In Indonesia, audience members from higher social class will have more access to local, regional and global programs because they have the economic means, such as access to high-speed internet, to download/stream the television programs.

Liebes and Katz (1993) elaborate on the relationship between the audience's contextual background and the interpretation process. In their project on the "export of meaning," investigate the role of cultural variation of diverse cultural groups in making sense of *Dallas*, a popular American soap opera in the 1990s. The respondents' interpretations reveal basic cultural themes, such as inheritance, sibling

rivalry, sex and marriage. These basic themes, as they structure the soap opera, might have been the reason for its popularity. The empirical study concludes that different social and cultural backgrounds of each respondent gave rise to divergent interpretations of the same episode:

“In sum, measuring the degree of involvement of the five ethnic groups in terms of use of rhetorical forms finds the 'Western' groups with the most complete set of distancing mechanisms, as if they were issued defensive equipment together with the remote control of their television sets. The Americans and the *kibbutzniks*—nativeborn, and most 'modern' of the Israelis—address *Dallas* more 'critically', personally and playfully. Although the Russians are even more 'critical', invoking most meta-textual references, they are not so lighthearted about the programme; they seem to take it very seriously, at both the referential and the meta-textual (critical) level.” (Liebes and Katz, 1986, pp. 165-166)

Their research findings indicate that the groups whose cultures seem most remote from the culture of *Dallas* were more involved in the program. They also note that it is more referential for the more traditional groups because they can relate better to what is being represented. By looking into the reception level, they study the interaction between the respondents' cultural resources and the elements in the text. In this interaction, audience members are found to have constructed different readings of the same episode. Subsequently, an audience-based study of a transnational television product would provide a more pragmatic understanding, which could not be achieved solely from an analysis of the circulation process.

It is important to note that in her own presentation of the four models of cultural globalization, Diana Crane sees Reception Theory as the “weakest” one. In its development, she argues, many have stated that audience response seems to have little effect on global media conglomerates and cultural policy. Referring back to the example from Liebes and Katz, the question is how the audience's multiple interpretations of *Dallas* affect the flow of the soap opera, especially the practice of the global television conglomerate? To exclusively focus on the audience provides a more empirical understanding of the transnational flow of these television dramas. However, the wider context of the reception process would not be sufficiently investigated as it may facilitate or obscure the audience's meaning-making process. Therefore, the study of reception should expand beyond the examination of audience reactions to “include artists, promoters and distributors who market these products”

(Crane, 2002, p.12). It should be complemented with “the middle range analysis,” as proposed by Cunningham and Jacka (1994), in order to bring into focus the role of “actors” involved in the network. The work of these actors has preconditioned the circulation and reception context, including the driving force to maximize the popularity of the television dramas. One aim of this research is, therefore, to expand the discussion of reception to the connection between the audience’s meaning-making process and the preconditioning by the “actors” in the circulation network and to see how that connection plays a part in the intra-Asia cultural traffic.

Thus, studying the circulation and reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia requires a careful and effective application of Diana Crane’s models. Here, it is significant to note that, as Diana Crane formulates the four models³², her main goal is to propose the fourth model, the Cultural Policy approach to understanding the significance of cultural globalization. The present research does not share this goal. I have drawn out particular aspects from the Network Flows and Reception Theory, which are relevant to the analysis here. For example, this research draws on the idea of a network with no clearly defined centre/periphery dichotomy, which is different from the Cultural Imperialism model. In analyzing the flows within the network, the research needs to take into consideration the work of the “actors” involved and how there are layers that these dramas need to go through before being consumed by the Indonesian audience. Consequently, the analysis first needs to take into account the gatekeeping and intermediary practices as these dramas enter the “gate.” The next stage is to look at what happens after they enter the gate and how the audience perceives the television products. The aim is to have a detailed understanding of how these layers of circulation are affecting or affected by the reception process. In other words, the study of the audience is done in connection to the practices in the circulation process.

Hence, the proposed study of audience reception cannot be separated from a discussion of the media industry itself, since media and consumers are no longer

³² “...each of these four models is useful for explaining specific aspects of the phenomenon of cultural globalization. Since cultural globalization is not static but an ongoing process with dimensions that are continuously evolving and consequences that are difficult to predict, we can expect that new models will emerge.” (Crane, 2002, p.19)

separated in the process. This echoes Henry Jenkins' notion of media convergence, which deals with "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 2). Convergence for Jenkins involves both a transformation in the manner of how media is produced and how it is consumed. Media convergence has, for Jenkins, affected the relationship between producers, audiences and even the media content. In the current study, the notion of media convergence is useful in sharpening the arguments as we examine the two layers of analysis: the circulation network and the reception process. On these two layers of analysis, the media industry and the audience are considered participants who constantly influence one another.

Another element of media convergence, which has played an important role in the cultural globalization process in Asia, is the rapid development of media technology. As explained in Chapter 1, technological development is one factor that has enabled the transnational movement of these television products in the region. However, older media formats have hung around as well, leading to a kind of "media convergence," as Jenkins explains:

"Each old medium was forced to coexist with the emerging media. That's why convergence seems more plausible as a way of understanding the past several decades of media change than the old digital revolution paradigm had. Old media are not being displaced. Rather, their functions and status are shifted by the introduction of new technologies." (Jenkins, 2006, p. 14)

For this case study, the meaning of television drama has shifted as a result of the changes in the medium of circulation. For example, with the intensification of pirated DVDs and internet streaming/download, audience's are free to watch television dramas outside the constraints of the television broadcasting format and time slots. However, this does not mean that television is no longer significant in the discussion. Jenkins explains that the notion of convergence exemplifies the relationship between existing technologies. It is important to look at these various media as they change the landscape of television dramas' flow from East Asia to other parts of Asia. It is no longer sufficient to focus on either the old media (television) or new media (DVDs/internet). Both are significant and need to be examined in relation to their positioning in the transnational flow of television dramas.

However, the analysis also needs to look at how the participants remain unequal, reflecting an imbalanced relationship in the power structure. The institutional practices of the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in the network of circulation still put forth the institution's superior power relative to the power of an individual member of the audience. This is the core argument against the Reception Theory. Some audience members have greater abilities to participate in the consumption process because they have more access to media technology, such as the internet. Consequently, circulation of the television dramas depends greatly on the audience's cultural capital and active engagement. It is one aim of this research to understand the structure of power of these participants as they construct the context of circulation and consumption in Indonesia.

2.2 Gatekeepers and/or Intermediaries

The participants within the network of circulation will be categorized as gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in the analysis. As suggested by Cunningham and Jacka (1994), research on television programs should heighten the practices of these participants by means of a "middle range methodology." In their case study of the popularity of Australian soaps on British television, they state that "the point of this exercise in reviewing modes of explanations for international success is to demonstrate that middle-range factors – factors which focus on the mediating role of the 'gatekeepers' and the role of the media in creating a reception context" (Cunningham and Jacka, 1994, p. 529). With what they call middle range methodology they analyze the important roles of the "gatekeepers" in the British television industry, including commissioning editors and programme buyers. In their research, they take into account contexts of reception set up by relevant media, notably tabloid newspapers and television guides as well as other factors like scheduling, program philosophy and cultural environment. This close analysis of the industrial preconditions reflects the role and work of the gatekeepers in the flow of transnational cultural products, such as television dramas.

The notion of gatekeeper should also be critically evaluated in the context of this case study, which can also be referred to as "intermediaries," a term borrowed from Keith Negus (1996). In analyzing the mediation of music in the industry, Negus proposes three modes of mediation, which analytically identify different layers of

intermediary practices. The first one focuses on how mediation works as an intermediary action that refers to “the practices of all the people who intervene as popular music is produced, distributed and consumed” (Negus, 1996, p. 68). This mode of mediation actually shares some similarities with the concept of gatekeepers, as both refer to those responsible for setting out the preconditions of the reception context. However, Negus argues that the term gatekeeper reflects a one-way flow, which is from outside to the inside, while he really wants to emphasize the multiplicity of the mediation processes. Negus argues that gatekeeping is not a unidirectional process, but “instead, there are a series of interactions and mediations as people in particular occupations connect together and play an active part in the production, distribution and social consumption of popular music” (1996, p. 68). The second mode is mediation as transmission, which focuses on the role of the media technology in the distribution of the cultural products. For example, Negus elaborates on the technology of radio in distributing new kinds of music. The last mode is the mediation of social relationships in which power and influence is implemented. These relationships directly affect the production and consumption of popular music and other forms of cultural products that need to be critically examined for its “ideologically privilege.”

These distinctive layers of intermediary practices provide a foundation for studying what happens to the cultural products once they enter the “gate.” As an example, Negus’ study reveals that the recording industry personnel have become intermediaries as they constantly shape the production and consumption process. By looking at these personnel, Negus moves away from the purely formal and institutional analysis that mainly deals with big music corporations. It is important to take into consideration the cultural context and wider social relationships within which these recording personnel were situated. This research will analyze the practices of such participants, who have been working as either gatekeepers or intermediaries in the in-between space of production and consumption.

The gate-keeping/intermediary practices affect the audience’s experience when they watch television dramas within the preconditioned circulation and reception settings. One example of these intermediary practises, which will be discussed further in the following chapter, is the translation process, either through dubbing or subtitling. The question is how this particular practice from the television

station and pirated DVD sellers has constructed the audience's reception context. Audience members have different preconceived ideas before they even watch the television dramas because they know what to expect when they watch them on television, in the dubbed version, and when they watched them on pirated DVDs with the subtitles. In other words, examining the work of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries will contextualize the discussion for the next part of the analysis, which focuses on the audience in the reception process.

2.3 Audience Engagement and Reflexivity

It is crucial to clearly define audience reception as it relates to cultural globalization and the Reception Theory model. Unlike theories claiming ideological indoctrinations of the mass media, for the Reception Theory, the viewers are considered active agents as they make meaning out of these texts in multiple ways. This way of understanding the audience's role is in line with later developments of audience study, which highlight the recognition of an "active audience" and "audience agency." Hence:

"Rather than analyzing primary texts and assuming a predictable, often negative 'effect' on the intended audience, these writers propose a two-way relationship between audiences and texts whereby readers can resist, engage with and create their own meanings from the culture they receive from 'above.'" (Broker and Jermyn, 2003, p. 91)

In this later development of audience studies, meanings are not only anchored in a preferred reading offered by the text itself. Meanings are accepted, negotiated or even contested by the audience. In relation to cultural globalization, the question to ask is how transnational audiences make sense of the "foreign" texts and what kind of agency do they practice? To be able to get a complete understanding of the audience's meaning-making process, it is necessary to first provide the relevant background on audience study from its early development.

There has been a wide range of scholarly works on the study of audience, each work unique in its hypotheses and propositions and providing a different conceptualization of the audience. However, Takahashi identifies a trend in audience studies, arguing that "the historical development of audience theory can be seen as the swinging of a pendulum between the conception of the audience as active and that of it as passive" (Takahashi, 2010, p. 3). The wave of scholarly works arguing

that the audience members are passive in their reception process often claims that audiences have been overpowered by media influence. They are considered to be rather helpless in resisting the overpowering media influence. However, more recently the pendulum has moved away from these media intoxication theories, with the development of active audience studies.

Toshie Takahashi (2010) has categorized the development of active audience studies into three inter-related paradigms. They are the "behavioural", "incorporation/resistance," and "spectacle/performance" paradigms. The first two paradigms are distinguished according to the area in which similar kinds of audience studies had been burgeoning at a particular time, which are the American communication studies and British cultural studies. The third one refers to the latest development of audience studies, developed by many scholars from various parts of the world, including Japan. Takahashi's main purpose in categorizing these three paradigms is to search for a possible "convergence" and a more comprehensive framework for her research on the role of media and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in Japanese everyday life.

The first paradigm, "behavioural", refers to the uses and gratification studies, which had developed rapidly in the American communication studies area since the 1940s with the popularity of radio. These works "investigated the diversity of uses media have been put to in terms of the gratification of people's need" (Takahashi, 2010, p. 13). Their main goal is to see how media have become a source of pleasure and information as they are used by the audience for a variety of purposes, such as diversion, personal relation, self-identification and surveillance. They looked into the audience activities as consequences of their needs. Some of the needs identified in these kinds of studies were selectivity, use and interpretation. Furthermore, use and gratification theorists offered a counter-argument to the critique of popular culture, which had labelled media use as escapism or the passive audience approach. In the 1970s, the uses and gratification approach was criticized severely for functionalism. The approach was said to rely too much on mental states and mental processes, which is problematic due to difficulty of access. Moreover, as elaborated by Takahashi (2010), it has also been criticized for its individualism since it deals with processes inside the individual's head instead of social processes. Others criticize its methodology, its lack of foundational social theory, and for its incapability to explain

the “real” social process of media consumption.

The second paradigm categorized by Takahashi is the Audience Reception studies rooted in British Cultural Studies and European Reception Theory. The main scholars for this paradigm are Stuart Hall with his “Encoding” and “Decoding” framework and David Morley, with his extensive work *Nationwide Audience*. Hall argues that audience studies should move away from behaviourism, which presupposes televisions to have direct and linear effects, which can make an individual’s reception of the television physically “observable.” Hall suggests a cyclic model, not a linear one, of this communicative process of reception. His arguments draw from Marx’s analysis of relations and practices of productions to claim that the encoding process in broadcasting structures construct messages which are then released “into the structure of social practices” through audience reception in the decoding process.

Furthermore, Morley explores the notion of “decoding” further and considers the process of how meaning is generated in communications from the perspectives of semiotics and sociology. He investigates the diversity of audience interpretations resulting from different socio-economic backgrounds, such as class, gender and subcultures, while uses and gratification studies investigated audience activity from the individual psychological perspective. In his research he outlines three different readings, namely “oppositional,” “negotiated” and “dominant.” Moreover, to understand the meaning of a text, a “cultural map” is drawn to show the audience’s membership in various subgroups. Morley “treats audience as a set of cultural groupings rather than a mass of individuals or a set of rigid socio-demographic categories” (Morley, 1980, p. 163). The idea of the audience as cultural groupings was not taken into consideration in the first paradigm. In Morley’s work, the audience memberships provide a variety of discursive codes as they are utilized in decoding the text.

Finally, the third paradigm extends the conceptualization of the audience to the idea of a socially and culturally contextualized audience in the process of reception, which is directly connected to the audience’s everyday life. A prominent scholar working in this third paradigm is Roger Silverstone, who focuses on the role of media in everyday life in terms of both media reception and use. According to Silverstone (1999), audiences are both interpreters of “media-as-texts” and users of

“media-as-objects.” As media has become a more constant presence in everyday lives, the audience members are now accustomed to make use of media in order to get information, pleasure, comfort and security as they learn about what is happening in other parts of the world. Audience members are active in making sense of the media texts, even though they also use media as objects.

Silverstone’s conceptualization of media and everyday lives has reformulated the significant findings from previous paradigms. Now the audience is being constructed and re-constructed within abundant forms of media. Media “filters and frames everyday realities ... providing touchstone, references, for the conduct of everyday life, for the production of common sense” (Silverstone, 1999, p. 6). The process of media filtering and framing everyday lives is constant and never-ending. Additionally, it creates a complex process of audienceship. For the present case study, audienceship is multidimensional due to the transnational feature of the products and the audience. The everyday lives experienced by the audience and the everyday lives portrayed in the television dramas are arguably similar and yet also different. The audienceship itself is constructed through the mediation of the multiple gatekeeping/intermediary practices and the audience’s personal expectation. Consequently, for the third paradigm, research on audience studies needs to take into account this complex relationship between the reception preconditions and the audience members’ individual and social positioning.

Hence, all of the audience’s active and passive reactions now need to be taken into consideration. Previous paradigms that focus on the dichotomy of either an active or passive audience tend to obscure our understanding of the nature of the audience. This more recent development of audience study has opened up new directions in audience studies, as argued by Takahashi, who further proposes the notion of “audience engagement.” Audience engagement refers to selecting what programs to watch, being emotionally involved with the characters, using television personally and socially, and interpreting it socially and critically. This kind of study will reveal more than just audience being active or passive in the consumption process.

“Take a typical television drama viewer who selects television dramas because she is involved in their characters and interprets their messages in terms of their experience. Because of her involvement in a television drama, she may centre discussions with her friends around it in face-to-face communication, via mobile

phone or email, participate in the fan community on SNS, browse the programme's home page, download or upload video clips related to the programme on *YouTube* and thus strengthen her involvement with the drama." (Takahashi, 2010, p. 7)

It will examine both the audience's individual sense of using the media and also his or her social and cultural context in engaging with the media as two interconnected elements.

By referring to the wider context of consumption the word "engage" offers, this research will examine multiple dimensions of the audience experience as one engages with the television dramas, through the "work of imagination." The term imagination is used not in its romantic connotation, which usually relates it to an effortless activity. It has a sense of "work" as argued by Appadurai (1996). Imagination captures audience engagement as well as reflexivity, because a member of the audience needs to do the work of imagination, since what they watch are "foreign" programs depicting things from other parts of the world or things often very detached from their own everyday surroundings. Moreover, imagination is not limited in one moment of consumption in the reception of the television drama. "Because of the sheer multiplicity of the forms in which they appear (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life routines, electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4). Movement of people in migration and also movement of images, scripts, models, and narratives that come through mass mediation make the difference between the process of imagination in the past and now. Imagination is a way of self-imagining of possible lives as reflected in the television dramas.

Additionally, Appadurai emphasizes the difference between imagination and fantasy. To imagine is not simply to escape. In the past three decades, electronic media have been assumed to be "the opium" of the masses. Nevertheless, much research has provided evidence that "the consumption of the mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, agency" (1996, p. 7). This is not to assume that consumers are free agents, living happily in a consumer world. On the one hand, "consumption in the contemporary world is often a form of drudgery, part of the capitalist civilizing process. Nevertheless, where there is consumption there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure there is agency" (1996,

p. 7). Therefore, if fantasy refers to that escaping effect from the drudgery of the capitalist world, imagination becomes projective in the sense that it can be converted into fuel for action, not only for passive escape. Appadurai specifically accentuates that imagination would have this sense of agency only if it is done in its collective form. Collective imagining is particularly relevant in this study since the individual audience experience in Indonesia is highly affected by its communal context. Communal context refers to how other individuals affect the reception context of a particular audience member, such as when one of the respondents for this research becomes the 'go-to-girl' for her peer group in disseminating downloaded television dramas from her computer. As a result, the imagination process happens within the audience's individual experience, but also in this communal contextualization.

The conceptualization of imagination is significant in this research because imagination, in the scope of audience research, is not limited to fantasy. It is true that audience members engage in fantasies while watching East Asian television dramas. Certainly, these television dramas have become a psychological or emotional cushion for the audience. Audience members are able to relate what they watch with what is happening in their everyday lives. However, in engaging with and reflecting on the television dramas, the audience moves beyond the limitations of fantasy because the experience "provokes resistance, irony, selectivity and, in general, agency." The experience entails layers of imagination process and, in doing so, audience members are practicing their agency in response to the depiction of everyday lives in these television dramas. In the reception study I conducted throughout my research, respondents have explained how they "imagine" what they watch and what they experience from these television dramas while applying it to their everyday experience. The process of imagination becomes more complex because these products are circulated in a transnational network. The audience's resources of imagination are no longer limited to local media products³³, but have been expanded to transnational media products.

The work of imagination is also made possible due to the audience reflecting on what they watch through their "everyday reflexivity." Television dramas from East Asian countries have created an ideal opportunity for the practice of reflexivity.

³³ "...the globalization of culture presents people with a *mélange* of cultural and consumption choices that they never had when their cultural imagining was defined by the limits of the national media system..." (Sinclair, 2004, p. 75).

These dramas open up a space for audience members to make sense of their life conditions within the multiple constraints of the social/cultural/political contexts. Youna Kim (2005, 2008) argues that the increased flows of television products like East Asian television dramas have affected the audience's meaning making process in their everyday lives. "It is not just media's ubiquity in everyday life, but it's unique and plausibly powerful capacity to affect the meaning-making of everyday life experience, its capacity to trigger a heightened reflexive awareness of the world, which is arguably a key cultural dynamic and change" (Kim 2008, 10). Kim's argument echoes Silverstone's point about how media has become so intense and routinized that it affects the audience's meaning-making process in everyday life.

Watching East Asian television dramas has become an opportunity for Indonesian audience members to engaged with everyday reflexivity since the dramas depict representations of everyday life from the countries of production, i.e. Japan, Taiwan and Korea. For the Indonesian audience, East Asian television dramas provide "the opportunity to get a sense of how people live differently in other parts of the world, a sense that can give them a reference point to reflect on the conditions of their own lives" (Kim 2005, 452). This different spatiality of everydayness from both the audience and the television drama present an opening for reflexivity. What is more important, reflexivity emerges in the dialectical space where the audience accepts, negotiates with or contests the meaning in their reception experience.

Moments of reflexivity do not only refer to the audience or the respondents' experiences, but also the researcher's reflexivity. The respondents were able to be reflexive when they were explaining their experiences in all stages of the research: FGDs, interviews and writing in the diaries. Reflexivity has become a major component of this research because of the nature of the research methods and the kind of data collected. Respondents were not required to describe their personal life histories, but these were often revealed in the respondents' discussions of the television dramas. The audience's everyday life is explored in their reflexive awareness of the television dramas they watch. For the researcher, reflexivity facilitates recognition of the ways in which researcher subjectivity influences the choices and interpretations made throughout the research process. This added value of reflexivity is a contribution to the field of audience studies.

The notions of engagement and reflexivity are crucial in this study and allow

for a more comprehensive understanding of the audience reception process. Other paradigms that fail to acknowledge the role of agency provide an incomplete picture of the audience experience. To formulate the audience's agency in the reception process is related to the second layer of analysis. The main question for this layer of analysis will be: "how does the Indonesian audience engage with and reflect on the television dramas in connection to how they make sense of their everyday lives?" I examine more than the physical act of watching the television drama. The research will look at, for example, the audience members' emotional engagement with the television dramas and their communal experience when they discuss the television dramas with their friends. By referring to the audience's engagement and reflexivity, the multiple dimensions of audienceship that constitute the meaning-making process will be further explored.

2.4 Recent Conceptualizations on East Television Dramas

While work on reception of East Asian dramas in Indonesia is very limited, there have been some studies of East Asian television drama in other parts of Asia. Three themes run through this previous work. First, these dramas have been said to represent an "Asian cosmopolitan imaginary." Second, they show how the television dramas embody a dualism between being modern and traditional. Third, previous work has emphasized the role of socio-historical contexts in constructing the contextual environment of the television dramas.

East Asian television dramas are considered to be representing an "Asian cosmopolitan imaginary" of modernity, especially because they are mostly set in cosmopolitan environments, such as Tokyo, Seoul or Taipei. Iwabuchi (2004) proposes that there has been an "emerging regional cultural connection" in Asia with the transnational flow of television dramas from Japan. He examines the process of appropriation of the "non-West modernity" offered by these television dramas. Modernity is no longer exclusive to the West. Iwabuchi also states that the global and the local are represented through "textual and symbolical appeal" on the representation of modern urban life within the elements of drama, love, friendship, family and work. He also discusses how the flows of Japanese popular cultural products have provided the consumers with multiple modes of transnational imagination, opening up a dialectic space in the decentering globalization process

(Iwabuchi 2002b, 2007, 2010). Chua and Iwabuchi (2008) have argued that the circulation and consumption of television dramas from Japan/Taiwan/Korea, in which an audience watches a “foreign” program, is most intriguing because the viewing position reflects differences between the cultures of the country of consumption and that of the country of production.

This “Asian cosmopolitan imaginary” is also visible in television dramas from Korea or Taiwan. Chua and Iwabuchi (2008) extend the discussion to the emerging popularity of Korean dramas. The crisscrossing of these television dramas logically raises the question of how the audience makes sense of these representations of Asian cosmopolitanism. Chua and Iwabuchi explain that “audiences in the different locations read imported products along a linear temporality defined by capitalist-consumer modernity, specifically in terms of nostalgia for a ‘less-capitalist’ past where life was more vigorous or desire for a more consumerist future.” (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008, p.8). It could be concluded that there is ambivalence in this imagination of Asian modernity because audiences seem to perceive both the “traditional” and “modern” Asia from these television dramas.

Ko Yu-Fen (2004) proposes that historical conditions and global continuity have set the background of Taiwanese audiences’ imagination of modernity when consuming television dramas from Japan. She argues that the appeal of Japanese Idol Drama for Taiwanese youth is rooted in the modern, urban setting and “emotional realism.” The audience perceives the modern “reality” represented in the dramas as the ‘real’ thing. Japanese drama provides a “real Imagery,” which is “imagery manifested beautifully into a spectacle of modernity.” The appeal of this kind of modern television product becomes a means for the audience to perceive “reality” of what it means to be “modern” and “global” in their everyday lives.

However, other studies also discovered that many television drama audiences engage with the sense of being “traditional,” as opposed to the modern way of life reflected in some television dramas. Angel Lin and Avin Tong (2008) identify a contradiction in the process of “imaginaries of Asian modern femininities.” Their research focuses on how women located in different Asian societies consume Korean TV dramas. They found that some respondents recognized and appreciated the representation of modern women in workplace scenarios in the Korean television dramas. These viewers also rejected a total acceptance of the traditional gender

values, specifically the *confucianist* virtues. Nevertheless, some also still have the desire "to retreat to a safe fantasy place" where they can return to a more traditional role of femininity and where they do not have to struggle to survive in the masculine work environment.

This dual nature of being modern and traditional at the same time seems to be the major appeal of these East Asian television dramas, especially when compared to non-Asian television dramas. Lisa Yuk-Ming Leung (2004) explores how Hong Kong audiences interpret and then translate "the global dramas into their local everyday lives." Leung argues that Japanese television dramas in Hong Kong offer a "psychological cushioning effect" and also work as a "catharsis." Through her research, Leung concludes that there are three ways in which the audiences integrate these television dramas as a part of their everyday lives. They identify themselves with the characters, use the television dramas as a reflection of their own life situations and also adopt the dialogs in their daily conversations. It seems that the television dramas have provided "a spatial and temporal emotional space" for the audience, which is "a level of reality the audience can relate to." The audiences are also able to relate to the Japanese notion of "*ganbaru*," which means the spirit to strive and to struggle hard.

Another important aspect of the study of East Asian television dramas in Asia is the significance of the socio-historical context, which is a part of the textual environment³⁴ of the object of the study. The historical differences from one Asian country to another create distinct textual environments. For example, Ubonrat Siriyuvazak (2004) takes a historical approach to the study of Japanese popular culture in Thailand. This work is a historical analysis of two time periods, the 1970s and present time, and how youth in Thailand reacted toward Japanese popular culture. Japanese drama in Thailand is a part of the "global popular culture" from which urban youth search for their identity as consumers and as citizens of Thailand. However, in the 1970s, anti-imperialist cultural politics was on the rise. Therefore, student activists rejected and boycotted both US militarism and Japanese capitalism. At that time, youth considered that their consumption of popular culture was connected to the formation of their political identity. Afterwards, in 1980s-1990s,

³⁴ Textual environment could be seen as the result of a number of flows: "It helps to think of our textual environment as three patterns of movement: (a) flows of texts, (b) flows of meanings (across and within texts), and (c) the movements of potential readers within (a) and (b)." (Couldry, 2000, p. 80)

there was a return of American and Japanese popular culture. Young people then consumed it as a "mode of modern consumption" and as a "counter-culture" against the "repressive and patronizing society." This research has highlighted the different textual environments in Thailand throughout time, which has also affected the different modes of consumption of Japanese television dramas.

Besides the historical condition of the television dramas, another important concern is the comparison with local television dramas. Siriyuvasak (2004) compares Japanese and local Thai television dramas, and argues that Thai television dramas did not really represent Thai youth and their lives. On the other hand, Japanese television dramas seem to articulate the power of youth. In brief, the capital accumulation from the 1980s to mid 1990s made it possible for young people to choose freely any cultural products that happened to suit their process of identification. Consuming (or not consuming) popular culture has become a way for Thai youth to express their ideas and opinions because they can relate to it better compared to the local television dramas. The comparison of East Asian television dramas with the local is a significant part in the discussion of cultural globalization in Asia. Local television dramas are a part of the reception context because how audiences choose what they watch, East Asian or local television dramas, and also how they experience these television dramas in their daily lives discloses the way the East Asian television dramas flow within the local mediascapes and ethnoscapas.

Previous studies on East Asian television dramas have foregrounded several aspects that will be explored further in this study. The primary concern is the dualism between being modern and being traditional. It is also about the significance of these modes of life as depicted in the television dramas and how the contrast seems to be one of the major appeals for the Asian audience. Additionally, how the audience experiences these television dramas is also greatly affected by the socio-historical context constructed in the variety of textual environments in each locale. The audience themselves should also be treated as a complex object of study. In other words, the study should not generalize the audience in one country as a cohesive audience community, but more as a group of individuals not to be romanticized as a "monolithic national subject." Furthermore, as proposed by Chua (2012), research on East Asian popular culture products, including television dramas, needs to be oriented toward the "structure and modalities" in which the products are situated

within the locale's social, cultural and also political contexts.

Research on “foreign” television dramas tends to look at the appeal of these dramas to the transnational audience by looking at the specificity of the locale. Consequently, some would expand their arguments by referring to the cultural proximity thesis³⁵. As explained by Straubhaar (1991), there has been “a tendency to look next to regional Latin American productions, which are relatively more culturally proximate or similar than those of the United States” (p. 56). He argues that the audience searches for ‘cultural proximity’ in the television programs they watch. This is due to a similar linguistic and cultural background for most of the Latin American countries because language seems to be one of the most important factors in the cultural proximity thesis.

However, a number of studies of East Asian television dramas have debunked and/or re-evaluated the Cultural Proximity thesis. It has been argued to be too simplistic and ends up essentializing the regional culture. It is “an ahistorical and totalizing way of conceiving culture. Cultural proximity explains the general tendency of audience preference for local programmes and programmes imported from countries of similar cultural make-up” (Iwabuchi, 2001, p. 57). This does not mean that there is no such thing as cultural similarity or resonance between countries in the regional network, like Asia. However, the analysis should not attempt to categorize these similarities, but more importantly, to examine the ways in which these cultural similarities are appropriated in the television drama to attract audience in a different location.

2.5 Conceptualizing the Circulation Network and the Reception Process

In this chapter, I have provided an outline of the framework for conceptualizing how East Asian television dramas flow into and throughout Indonesia in the circulation network and reception process. In the chapters to follow, I will first map the flow of the television dramas, while analyzing the practices of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in setting up the preconditioned reception context. The second level of analysis in chapter 4 will investigate how audience members engage with these East Asian television dramas while reflecting on their everyday lives. The research

³⁵ “... a tendency to look next to regional Latin American productions, which are relatively more culturally proximate or similar than those of the United States.” (Straubhaar, 1991, p. 56)

examines the relationship between circulation and reception. For example, I examine how audience members actively negotiate with the preconditioned context set up by the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries. The goal is to provide an empirical understanding of the intra-Asian cultural traffic through the lens of the reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia.

As discussed earlier, in the changing landscape of cultural globalization, new transnational networks have emerged that cannot be explained from a centre-periphery perspective. The discussion reveals possible connections, such as a constructive dialogical process between locales. In the case of Asia, the way consumers perceive cultural images and narratives from other parts of the region are now done within this network of interconnected locales. It opens up possibilities for people in Indonesia to perceive representations of everydayness from other Asian countries, such as Japan, Taiwan and Korea. In doing so, there is space for societies in Asia to be “each other’s points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectively rebuilt.” (Chen, 2010, p. 212)

Before moving forward into detailed empirical analysis, it is necessary to explain the limitations of this research. First, the study of the circulation network will not cover the work of transnational media and cultural industries in the region. Transnational media companies, such as South Korean television dramas promoters, are not included in the discussion due to difficulty in obtaining the necessary data³⁶. However, throughout the analytical stages, this limitation has actually shaped the research. It has shifted the focus to other participants in the network that are directly connected to the reception process, such television stations, pirated DVD sellers and tabloids/magazines. The study of these gatekeepers and/or intermediaries provides empirical evidence on how the flow works before and after these dramas enter the “gate.” It is also through the in depth study of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries that the research connects the work of the industry with that of the audience.

The second part of the analysis will shift focus to the audience and provide a detailed account of how audiences make sense of the television dramas. It has been

³⁶ In my interview with the television station’s representative, they were not able to provide links to the official distributors of the television dramas or any technical explanations on the process of buying the television dramas from Japan/Taiwan/Korea. Furthermore, Indonesian government is not open to give information on imported television products due to the bureaucratic authorities.

argued that audience response has little effect on global media conglomerate and cultural policy. However, the first part of the analysis will reveal the preconditioned context set up by the television station, pirated DVD sellers or tabloids/magazines. Their gatekeeping/intermediary practices work in several practical layers in the circulation network while shaping the reception context. This allows the research to extend the discussion of the audience and think about reception as more than an individual account. The aim is to offer a better understanding of the reception process, since most audience-based studies in Cultural Studies rely on active audience reception without linking it to the industry.

The study of the audience has moved away from the active-passive dichotomy to the recognition of audience agency. This later paradigm provides a foundation for this research to examine the audience engagement and reflexivity. The notion of engagement will give more space for the research in analyzing multiple forms of audience activities, such as discussing the dramas with friends, reading the reviews online, making use of social networking to express emotional reactions on the story lines and other forms of engagement, not only the physical activity of watching. Furthermore, after collecting the data, especially from the diary study, the concept of reflexivity has been helpful in addressing the nuances found in the respondents' experiences. The diary study made it possible for the respondents to be reflexive³⁷ in thinking about what they watch and relating to their own personal lives. Even though audience members are often constrained within the hegemonic values of their everyday lives, these moments of reflexivity give the opportunity to cope with these personal battles of subjectivity against these dominant discourses. Ultimately, the research will shed a light on these multiple moments of the audience's reception process embedded in Indonesia's social, cultural and political conditioning.

In the remaining chapters, I will discuss the East Asian television dramas' circulation network and reception process in Indonesia. Chapter 3 will examine the work of intermediaries/gatekeepers in preconditioning the reception context within the network, while Chapter 4 will discuss audience engagement and reflexivity as they pertain to the (re)imagination of East Asia as "Asia." Finally, in the concluding

³⁷ In writing their diaries, respondents had the opportunity to think about what they watched without the researcher being there because sometimes in interviews or discussions, the researcher might have imposed questions that could not be thoroughly reflected unlike in the diary writing process.

chapter, I will formulate how understanding the circulation and reception of East Asian television drama in Indonesia would allow us to problematize the idea of cultural globalization in Asia.

3 Multilevel Circulation of East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia

“...the increasing importance of regions as producers of and markets for their own media provides support for a network model of cultural globalization.” (Crane, 2002, p. 7)

3.1 Network Flows in Regional Perspective

The discussion of cultural globalization needs to move away from the media/cultural imperialism model because it has endorsed the overpowering position of the seemingly dominant media/cultural producer, the West. The re-evaluation of cultural imperialism theory comes as a response towards the changes registered in the structure of power regarding the cross-border flows of cultural products. There has been a “decentering” and “recentering” change, as argued by Koichi Iwabuchi (2002b), in which the movement is no longer a one way flow in the dichotomous West-Rest direction. As “...cultural imperialism theory assumed not only that media audiences in the affected countries would absorb the same ideological meanings in the same way as just so many “cultural dupes” but that the alien messages would drive out whatever previous values, beliefs, and worldviews were held by these people” (Sinclair, 2004, p. 74), the decentering and recentering flows need to be analyzed in order to arrive at a more convincing way of understanding cultural globalization.

One of the best illustrations of these flows of products within a network is the operation of regional television networks. East Asian television drama, for example, flows throughout the region primarily through the operation of a particular regional television network. With the establishment of the Pan Asian Satellite, specifically *Star TV* operating from Hong Kong, the regional television network began distributing other programs besides those from the typical Western sources. This regional television network has indeed eradicated distance and linked multiple regional locales through their consumption of “Asian” television products. Other means of distribution including legal/illegal DVDs and the internet adds to it another layer in the dynamics of television distribution, which will be discussed further in

subchapter 3.3.

In the earlier stages of broadcasting developments, there was a high dependence on American imported television programs. Technological changes, such as the launching of satellites, spurred an overwhelming increase in the number of broadcasting channels, creating multiple broadcasting spaces. Consequently, there was a rapid development of cable television creating greater demand for new television programs to fill in the slots. This made it possible for other television programs to be broadcast in the regional network of cable television. This is partly why *telenovela*, according to Straubhaar (2003 & 2007), started to gain its popularity in other parts of the world. The new satellite and cable broadcasting system made it possible for programs produced outside the United States to be broadcasted worldwide. The 1990s saw these developments in Asia, especially with the opening up of several Asian countries, such as China. Furthermore, the emergent economies of Asia in the 1990s highly influenced strong media production industries in countries like India and Hong Kong, and also emerging new media centers in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Korea (Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham, 1996, p. 3). In Asia, the development of satellite technology and the changes in media production industries shifted the regional television's preference for American products to those coming from other parts of the Asian region.

This new pattern of regional television flow shows that the previous discussions, which highlight the West-Rest paradigm, should not be considered as a permanent condition, but more like a transitional stage in the development of television. The flow, no longer one directional, now reflects greater regional exchange and shifting geo-political patterns. This regional perspective on the development of television markets is essential to understanding how regional and transcontinental geolinguistic markets are being fashioned. "Attention to this regionalization of markets gives greater insight into what is happening in the world that does the hollow rhetoric of globalization" (Sinclair, 1996, p. 189). Research done from the regional perspective would reallocate the focus from the grand narrative of the cultural/media imperialism model to the regional traffic of cultural product flows as a more pragmatic layer of the globalization process.

Some previous research (Straubhaar, 1999, and Cunningham, Jacka and Sinclair, 1998), has challenged the media imperialism model by foregrounding the

discussion of multidirectional network flows. Based on the regional cultural affinities assumption, they claim that embedded regional affinities in television products have driven their circulation and increasing popularity within the region, replacing or complementing previously dominant American television products.

“We are beginning to recognize that markets and services are not simply or clearly defined by technology, or by corporate ambition, but also by cultures, uses and identities and how they layer over time. Many of these culturally defined markets and identity reflect pre-global layers of culture. These include many of the most powerful layers of both media and identity.” (Straubhaar, 2008, p. 25)

Other works on the transnational movement of television products seem to rely on the idea of regional cultural affinities as a milieu in the television products’ rapid circulation and consumption. In this case study, I argue that there is a need for a middle-range analysis, as proposed by Cunningham and Jacka (1994), to see whether or not the multiple layers between the production and consumption sites have preconditioned the cultural affinities as their circulating strategy. The research, in addition, needs to consider how these layers are socially, culturally and politically entrenched, which would also examine further how the network works in the particular context of Indonesia.

To do this, it is important to re-evaluate the idea of the regional affinities in which a region is observed as a “geolinguistic” (Sinclair, Jacka & Cunningham, 1996) or “geocultural” (Straubhaar, 2007) market for these television products. If the network flows within the region is discussed within this framework, it is assumed that the success of the flow relies heavily on these affinities shared by the countries of production and consumption. This assumption is problematic for the Asian region, in which the assumed cultural affinities are not fully shared. Asia does not share the same circumstances with the other regions, such as Latin America, with regard to previous research on regional television networks.

3.2 Asia as a (non)Geolinguistic/cultural Market

In this era, in which the global, regional, national and even local television networks overlap in a multidimensional way, there are different ways of looking at the movement of television products which do not immediately imply an essentially global condition. As argued earlier, a regionalist view of the cultural globalization

discourse reflects the multi dimensional flows of television products in this case study. Regions are primarily defined geographically; however, there are also other aspects, such as cultural, linguistic and historical connections. In taking a regional perspective to look at the practices of television network flows, it is important to contextualize the discussion according to the region's specificity, which I would argue has been under-explored in other discussions of regional television networks.

John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham (1996) introduced the notion of a "geolinguistic region" to explain the rise of particular production centres and transnational circulation of their productions in their study of the case of *telenovela* in Latin America. They argue that there has been a good deal of commercial television trade taking place within geographic regions with shared linguistic and cultural features, which "... are also defined by common cultural, linguistic, and historical connections which transcend physical space" (Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham, 1996, p. 5). Geographical realities become less significant in defining the regional network because other features, such as the shared commonalities of language and culture, tend to be more prominent in the success of the regional television networks.

Joseph D. Straubhaar (2007) takes the categorization a step further by defining two types of cultural-linguistic spaces or markets, the geocultural and the transnational.

"Geocultural markets are cultural linguistic spaces that are also contiguous or closely linked by geography. Transnational cultural-linguistic markets can be spread all over the planet by colonization – for example, the former Portuguese empire, which has produced the modern Lusophone cultural-linguistic market for television – or by massive migration, such as Chinese, Indian, or Turkish diasporas across continents." (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 7)

These two categories are different: while the geocultural markets are geographically connected, such as Latin America or Asia, the transnational cultural-linguistic markets rely on diasporic connections. The latter are also significant in the discussion of television flows and networks because many television programs from "home" are broadcasted in other areas of the world to be consumed by those who are no longer living in their "home" country.

In the study of East Asian television dramas, this trend towards geocultural and transnational cultural-linguistic regions or spaces is as crucial as the impact of

globalization itself. In regions like Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, hundreds millions of people regularly watch transnational regional soap operas, variety shows, news, and many other programs, and they are considered as both a geocultural and transnational market.

“One can see the development of geocultural regions or transnational cultural-linguistic markets that are less than global but more than national, based on geography and cultural-linguistic identity groupings ... are typically unified by language (even though different accents and dialects may divide countries somewhat). Beyond language, however, such markets are also defined by history, religion, ethnicity (in some cases), and culture in several ways: (1) shared identity, gestures, and nonverbal communication; (2) ideas of what is considered funny or serious or even sacred; (3) clothing styles; (4) living patterns; and (5) climate influences and other relationships with the environment.” (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 107)

Both the geocultural and the transnational cultural-linguistic markets are characteristically regional, which is not completely global, yet goes beyond the national. However, both markets are defined not only geographically but also, as Straubhaar argues, culturally, on the basis of shared history, religion, ethnicity and other features. All of these markers affect regional television because they set up the way the television products move from one locale to the other. The way these markers affect movement of television products in Asia will be further examined in this case study.

In his work, Straubhaar (2007) argues that Asia is a geocultural region, similar to Latin America, suggesting that the Asian television network might work in a way similar to the Latin American television network. He referred to Koichi Iwabuchi's (2002) example of Taiwanese audience reception of Japanese television dramas and Chadha and Kavoori's (2000) research on local television products in Asia. Straubhaar argues that from these discussions, the chosen case studies reflect that the sharedness of linguistic, historical and cultural roots is the driving force of the transnational movement of the television products. This has also been the overall argument of the existing theses on television drama flows in areas, which have been categorized as geolinguistic/cultural markets or transnational cultural-linguistic markets.

Nevertheless, to examine the network flows in Asia and to study how the media product comes from East Asia to flow in a South East Asian country, I would

argue that the geocultural/linguistic discussion needs to be revisited. The analysis in this chapter questions whether or not the flow of television products within the Asian network is driven by the sharedness of linguistic, historical and cultural roots. The case study will examine how every layer in the circulation affects these preconceived sharedness and affinities through the work of the actors in the network. As explained earlier, a middle range analysis, as proposed by Cunningham and Jacka (1994), would allow us to see the role of “actors”³⁸ involved in preconditioning the circulation and reception context, including the driving force to maximize the popularity of these television dramas. The discussion will focus on how the preconditioned setting of the network affects the micro layer of analysis, which concentrates on audience reception in the locale.

Even though the network operates on the regional level, the nation/locale is significantly influential in shaping the regional television network. James Curran and Myung-Jin Park (2000) argue that the nation determines the laws and regulations in which the national and transnational media companies work, but also add that “different nations have different languages, political systems, power structures, cultural traditions, economies, international links, and histories” (Curran and Park, 2000, p. 12). Thus the national or locale’s specificity needs to be examined as a part of the preconditioned setting. The regional television network is shaped not only by the national laws or the national audiences’ preference, but also by the formation of social connectivity that has taken shape in the national landscape.

Furthermore, as multiple kinds of media formats emerge due to the rapid development of technology, television is no longer the primary medium in the flow of television products. There is a need to reflect on different layers of television consumption. As an example, more people are watching television programs from DVDs or online streaming. This opens up another layer of consumption. These different layers of consumption of television products reflect what Straubhaar’s characterization of television as a “plural phenomenon” (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 3). Television means differently for people in various cultures and countries.

Time and space have been reformulated in the television experience. One

³⁸ In this context, the word “actor” (in quotation marks) is used to explain the institutions or even individuals involved in the circulation process of the television products, such as the television station, pirated DVD sellers and printed media, which will be later on categorized as ‘gatekeepers and/or intermediaries.’ In other parts of the analysis, the word actor, which will be written without quotation marks, will also be used in its literal meaning to refer to the performer who acts in a play, film, broadcast and many others.

illustration is how television experience is becoming more diverse with the invention of the internet. Audience is now able to watch a television program in advance, before it is broadcast on local televisions, or in the future. There is no longer any necessity to follow the television schedule because audiences can watch the television drama in their own time and schedules, not as each episode is being broadcast. One could possibly watch all of the episodes at one sitting. In relation to space, watching television is no longer a living room or bedroom activity. The communal experience of watching together with the family in the living room is being reconstructed because of alternative modes of watching it on other screen technologies, such as DVD, laptop, tablet, personal computer or a smart phone.

These layers of television experience have affected the flow within the network. I am referring to more than the network of local television stations in connection to the distributors or with the Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean television stations. The distribution network goes beyond them. As an example, illegal DVDs are involved in a different kind of network as it has a 'hidden' structure of flow. Furthermore, there is also the network of the internet referring to how one television drama flows from one portal to another in the virtual world. In this network, an 'actor' in the network downloads the television program from an official internet television broadcast, which would then be uploaded to different illegal sites or discussion forums where other "actors" could download them. Afterward, some would make alterations, such as adding in subtitles, and then circulate the edited television dramas, such as the audiences in Indonesia who can then download/stream the dramas. He or she would then watch it on a personal computer or laptop or give the file to a friend, introducing yet another "actor" into the network. The changes in the network then multiply rapidly and affect the flow of the products substantially

It is therefore necessary to look at the role of these "actors" in the network, both from a regional perspective and also from within the nation/locale, in order to examine how they affect the preconditioning of the circulation and reception contexts. More importantly, the middle-range analysis examines the politics of these actors, especially as it is related to the law/regulations of the locale and the sociocultural contexts that shape the network flows creating either access or boundary. The discussion will now move on to the analysis of the intermediate space between production and consumption.

3.3 The In-between Space of Production and Consumption

The section explores the complex process of East Asian television drama flows in Indonesia within the moments of distribution and consumption, considering that the research object focuses on Indonesia and not the producing countries. As mentioned in subchapter 1.2, with the development of technology, there has been a major transition in how these products move within the network. The television dramas are produced in East Asian countries and consumed in other parts of Asia, which means that production and consumption take place within different spaces and also in different times. For most of the time, the television series would be circulated in Indonesia approximately a few months after all the episodes have been broadcast in Japan, Taiwan and Korea. The multiple modes of consumption add another layer in the time and space discussion. The question is: what has happened to these products during the time and space differential? There are a series of technological, cultural, historical, geographical and even political factors, which operate in this in-between space. Within that space, multiple mediating practices are performed by occupational “actors” or institutions, namely the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries.

Gatekeepers and/or intermediaries are continuously involved in mediating the cultural products. In their mediating practices, they shape the use and symbolic values of these products and influence the way these products fit into the audience’s everyday lives. Given the dynamics of contemporary cultural production and consumption, gatekeepers and/or intermediaries would have to be examined in accordance with the fluctuating changes in production, consumption as well as in the in-between space. If we want to understand this space, we need to explore the symbolic and cultural practices of these “actors” as well as the economic and political aspects that tie them to their institutional practices. Consequently, this section will highlight two specific gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in the case study of East Asian television drama in Indonesia: television and pirated DVDs.

First, we need to re-evaluate the two concepts, the gatekeepers and the intermediaries, which are first raised in Chapter 2. As one example of the use of these concepts, Stuart Cunningham and Elizabeth Jacka (1994) adopt a middle-range methodology to study the popularity of Australian soaps on British television by analyzing the role of the gatekeepers, such as commissioning editors and programme buyers. They also analyze the role of relevant media, such as tabloid newspapers and

television guides, and take into account the scheduling, program philosophy and cultural environment of the television station.

However, some scholars have argued that the term gatekeepers could be misleading because it implies a one-way flow, which is from outside the gate. This means the role of the gatekeeper is to screen and select the products coming from outside the gate. Keith Negus (2002), in his work "The Work of Cultural Intermediaries and the Enduring Distance between Production and Consumption," argues, "taken alone, the gatekeeper concept is limited by the assumption that cultural items simply appear at the 'gates' of the media or culture producing corporation where they are either admitted or excluded" (Negus, 2002, p. 510). If the gatekeeper's role is limited in either admitting or excluding the products entering the "gate," the dynamic movement of the products in the in-between space of production and consumption will not be understood sufficiently.

In my research, to concentrate on the in-between of the two ends: the consumption end in Indonesia, and the production end among the East Asian countries, the concept of the gatekeeper is used to highlight the flow of the television dramas from the outside to the inside, which indeed reflects a one way flow. To be more specific, my investigation will focus on understanding the role of the television station and the people working in the pirated DVD network as gatekeepers. Both work at the "gate," in screening and selecting what will be consumed by the Indonesian audience. However, both operate differently, especially because one is a legal distribution actor while the other is an operator in the non-legal zone. The research will also need to stress how key personnel in both the television station and pirated DVDs business control access to the gatekeeping practices. The role of "gatekeepers" is similar to the role of editors in publishing businesses, who decide which books will be published, or the role of talent scouts the music industry who decide which musicians are to be signed by the recording company.

Television in Indonesia is under the government's broadcasting regulations under the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. The areas regulated include the percentage of imported products that can be broadcasted on television; the language used in the imported television products and most importantly, the censorship of content. As a gatekeeper, televisions work within the legal terrain and their practices are regulated by the legality of government policies

and also institutional values. Meanwhile, in the business of pirated DVDs, the key personnel do not have to follow these legal regulations. In some sense, piracy is actually opening the gate wider because:

"A quick look at pirated discs kiosks and rentals in Indonesia does not only show the domination of Hollywood movies but also growing interest in Asian movies and series. To put it in other words, piracy - accelerated by globalization - has provided stages for Asian cultural products." (Juliastuti, 2008, p. 11)

With piracy, there has been more access to a variety of films and television series. In the past, before piracy became one of the biggest distribution modes, audiences had a limited range of options, either watching the film in the cinema or the drama show on the television set.

Moreover, since piracy relies much on Internet technology, as an open highway of information, this method of distribution has been claimed to be a reflection of "globalization from below" (Tilman Baumgärtel, 2006). To understand this, we need to look at the way piracy works in South East Asia. Piracy in South East Asia has two major networks, which are the Muslim Connection (mainly in Indonesia and Malaysia) and the Chinese Connection (mainly from China, Hong Kong and Singapore), which usually have better quality. However, there is a lack of reliable, detailed information due to the limitation in conducting any kind of research on piracy. From Baumgärtels' work (2006), it could be concluded that pirated DVDs in Indonesia usually come from the Muslim Connection. The main source is actually the same with the Chinese Connection that is from China. The Indonesian-Malaysian network will receive the materials by peer-to-peer internet sharing. This is an example of globalization from below because the mechanism of globalization has changed. In the past, to access the networks of peer-to-peer offerings and the many private servers and nets for the exchange of pirated materials like films and music, one would need exclusive access to executives in the film, television and music industry in order to get the new materials. But now,

"In the age of digital globalization, however, we see a well-developed and highly efficient network of intermediaries that provide material that was completely inaccessible to people outside the privileged group of film distributors, television executives, etc." (Baumgärtel, 2006, p. 391)

The piracy network in South East Asia, like the Chinese and Muslim network, which relies heavily on the P2P offerings, is a part of this well-developed and highly

efficient network of intermediaries. That is why, with this kind of piracy network and also availability of the supporting technologies, pirated DVDs in Indonesia have become another form of gatekeepers, creating a chance for a variety of products like the East Asian television dramas to move from outside the gate into Indonesia.

From this, one would conclude that the way the gatekeeper works reflects a one-way flow in selecting and screening what could enter the gate; however, this still does not explain how distribution works after the products have crossed the “gate.” I would argue that television and pirated DVDs also play the role of intermediaries via multiple layers of mediations, as proposed by Keith Negus (1996). Negus presents the concept of mediation as a way of starting to think about the range of processes, movements, relationships and power struggles occurring between and across production and consumption. For example, in the mediating process of popular music, recording industry personnel are the intermediaries who are constantly contributing to the production and consumption process, especially in reorganizing, circulating and mediating the words (lyrics), sounds (music) and images (stardom, promotional activities, etc) of popular music to audiences.

Negus’ work (1996) emphasizes that the study of intermediaries should move away from purely formal and organization definitions. He tries to look at the cultural context and wider social relationships within which these workers are situated, including their ideas, values and practices, which cultural industry workers adopt in order to give meaning to and guide their work. Ultimately, there should be a shift of focus because, as argued by Negus, there has been too much emphasis on the determining power of the corporations. We shall next move to the discussion on the actors in the cultural industry, who work as intermediaries between the production and consumption stage.

According to Negus, there are three distinct senses of mediation. The first one is how mediation works as an intermediary action that refers to “the practices of all the people who intervene as popular music is produced, distributed and consumed” (Negus, 1996, p. 68), such as staff in recording companies, also disc jockeys, journalists, video directors, and even retail staff in record shops. Negus wants to emphasize the multiplicity of the mediation processes. “Instead, there are a series of interactions and mediations as people in particular occupations connect together and play an active part in the production, distribution and social consumption of popular

music” (1996, p. 68). The second mode is mediation as transmission, which focuses on the role of media technology in the distribution of cultural products. The last mode is the mediation of social relationships, in which power and influence is implemented in these mediated social relationships. These relationships directly affect the production and consumption of popular music and other forms of cultural products.

Negus theorizes these three senses of mediation through his study of the music industry in Britain, focusing on radio in the early development of the British music industry. Radio at that time was reflecting the three interacting and overlapping processes of mediation. The first one is how the technologies of transmission have enabled musical experience to be distributed across time and space. Secondly, the intermediary activity of specific occupational groups, such as the individuals working in the radio station, is a mediation process in itself. An example of the intermediary activity is how the radio station organizes musical schedules, which affect the listeners’ way of perceiving the music products. The last one is the social relationships within which radio and music interact, including the listener’s suggestions to the radio station.

In the case of Indonesian consumption of East Asian television drama, the role of technological transmission as a mode of distribution is significant in understanding the in-between space of production and consumption of these television dramas. Distribution is “... an important *dynamic* and *consequence* of process of mediation. Hence, significant struggles over musical meaning are not just occurring during production or among audiences but among those moments in between” (Negus, 1996, p. 96). In this case study, I would argue that the television station and those who are a part of the pirated DVDs business are mediating the world of the production (the country of origins) and consumption (in the Indonesian context). The analysis would now look at how the three modes of mediations, as proposed by Negus, namely the technologies, the intermediary action and social relationship, accommodate the distribution of the East Asian television dramas in the particularity of the Indonesian social, cultural, economic and political context. Furthermore, to understand the process of mediation, one needs to understand its “politics,” which is “its vulnerability to the exercise of power, its dependence on the works of institutions and also individuals, and its own power to persuade and to

claim attention and response” (Silverstone, 1999, p. 18). The next section will investigate how these layers of mediation seen in television and the distribution of pirated DVDs and their “politics” of mediation affect the preconditioned network of circulation and also the context of reception.

3.4 Media Technology as Gatekeepers and/or Intermediaries

Television and pirated DVDs, the two main modes of consumption, embody the three interacting and overlapping processes of mediation in the distribution of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. Both are types of technology that enable the circulation of these television dramas in Indonesia. Furthermore, these two intermediaries have become a part of the audience’s everyday routine. Television is a technology, which is available in every household, while pirated DVDs have become an alternative technology of distribution. Both have rapidly mediated these television dramas across time and space.

The first out of the two intermediaries to be analyzed is television, both as a technology of distribution and for its institutional practices as intermediary activities. It is useful to begin with a brief explanation of the setting of television institutions in Indonesia. There are three kinds of television stations in Indonesia, including one public television (*TVRI* or *Televisi Republik Indonesia*), a number of private television stations and also cable television stations. For cable television, the channels for East Asian television dramas in Indonesian cable televisions are usually *KBS* and *NHK*. However, cable television in Indonesia is expensive and mainly for the middle to upper class audience. Since local television channels are much more accessible to audiences from all classes, I will highlight one of the private local television stations in Indonesia over the cable networks. I would argue that cable television channels are not the prominent intermediaries of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia, unlike in other countries in Asia. East Asian television dramas have been broadcast on local private television stations since the beginning of its popularity in the late 1990s. Up until now, even though there are several television stations broadcasting East Asian television dramas, the most prominent one is *Indosiar*.

Indosiar has been known as a television station that specializes in East Asian television products. As explained in Chapter 1, when *Indosiar* was first established in

1995, the main goal was to broadcast 'spectacular' programs, including East Asian television products. It was not until 1998 that *Indosiar* started to broadcast modern-day television dramas, known as *trendy dramas*, from Japan. The first trendy drama broadcast on *Indosiar* was *Tokyo Love Story*. It was first broadcast on *Fuji Television* consisting of 11 episodes from January to March 1991. The time difference between the original broadcasting time in Japan in 1991 and when it was finally broadcast in Indonesia in 1998 is, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, a reflection on how the network worked in the early development of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. In this early development, the network relied mainly on the legal terrain of regional television network. When *Indosiar* decided to broadcast *Tokyo Love Story* in 1998 as a part of their 'spectacular programs,' the television station had not only introduced Japanese trendy dramas to the audience but also opened up a new genre for the audience, which is the East Asian modern-day television drama.

Furthermore, based on an interview with the PR office of *Indosiar*, the station continued to broadcast Japanese trendy dramas to maintain audience loyalty by giving them what they want. The audience's demand is a significant point in the institutional practice of the television station. *Indosiar* has an online forum named *Lautan Indonesia*. In this online forum, audience members contribute ideas on what they want to watch or what titles should be rerun. From the interview I conducted with the television station's PR officer, audience's demands is one of the most significant factors in pre-determining what titles would be picked up, besides other factors such as the high success in the country of origin and what would be most profitable. It is important to take note that, in my analysis of the online forum discussions and also from the PR officer's answers, the audience has more knowledge about recently popular titles compared to the television station's production team. The production team often makes use of the discussions forum as sources of information to decide which titles are most profitable to be broadcast. The audience directly affects the decision makers in the television station, which is a part of *Indosiar*'s intermediary activities.

We shall now look into three specific intermediary activities done by *Indosiar* in mediating the East Asian television dramas, which are the practice of scheduling, the "packaging" of the television dramas and also the marketing strategies.

Regarding scheduling, in which *Indosiar* has reserved particular time slots for East Asian television dramas. At this moment, these television dramas are broadcast in three time slots every weekday: at 12, 1 and 4.30 pm³⁹. The last slot, 4.30-6 pm, is considered prime time. This prime time slot has been reserved for East Asian television dramas since *Indosiar* first broadcast *Tokyo Love Story* in 1998. This intermediary act needs to be analyzed by looking at how other Indonesian television stations schedule their programs. One will ask the question, why this time slot? According to the PR officer, these time slots were chosen to suit the majority of East Asian television dramas audiences, which are mostly housewives, teenagers, domestic helpers (for the noon time slot) and also workers (for the late afternoon time slot).

However, I argue that this is how the television station is constructing the commonalities of these television dramas in comparison with local products. After observing *Indosiar*'s broadcasting schedules (Appendix 1) for the last three years, it could be determined that East Asian television dramas are put in the same space as local programs, such as local soap operas known as *sinetron* or infotainment/gossip shows. This preconditioning affects the audience's reception context since the choice of time slot constructs what is expected from these television dramas. I would conclude that by reserving afternoon time slots and prime time slots, 4.30 to 6 pm, there is an indication that these television dramas are categorized in an equivalent space with the local programs. The ideal construction that East Asian television dramas are "appropriate" enough to be put in a time slot with the larger number of targeted younger audience members is one of the television station's mediating activities.

Furthermore, another form of appropriation done by *Indosiar* could be seen in the packaging and marketing strategies. First of all, if we refer back to the schedules (Appendix 1), one could see what label *Indosiar* used in reference to East Asian television dramas. "*Drama Asia*" literally means Asian Drama. Even though there is the word "Korea" in brackets after the term "*Drama Asia*," I would argue that the usage of the word "Asia" to describe East Asian television dramas is in itself an essentializing mode. If we further examine the schedule, in the 22.00 time slot, there

³⁹ There is also an East Asian television series in the 3.30 am slot, but this slot is reserved for re-runs. It is basically a 'filling the broadcast time slot' decision by putting it so early in the morning without targeting a large number of audiences.

is a “Mega *Bollywood*” program, which refers to films from India. One would say that by using “Asian” to refer to East Asian products while Indian (or Hindi) films are not labeled as “Asia,” this reflects how the television station constructs what it means by “Asia” as a part of the intermediary activity. Moreover, the oversimplification of using the word “Asia” could also be seen as how, from a gatekeeping perspective, these television dramas, no matter whether they are Korean, Japanese or Taiwanese, are “Asian” and not “East Asian.” In the analysis of pirated DVDs, there will be more discussion of how these countries are lumped into one big category of “Asia” on the circulation level as well. This opens up the discussion on what the word “Asia” means for the Indonesian audience in reference to the consumption of these television products and how this relates to the geocultural/linguistic hypotheses.

The next intermediary that needs to be taken into account is the pirated DVD. There are some limitations to the research of pirated DVDs. Much of the information available is based on literature studies and a limited number of interviews. Based on the preliminary research for this case study, the people involved in this business are not that keen to reveal the operational details. Most of the time, they know very little or do not have any knowledge about where the original discs came from or where they were manufactured. The following discussion of pirated DVDs is based on the limited information I managed to collect. The focus will be on how the pirated DVDs became one of the main modes of television dramas’ consumption for Indonesian audiences.

The transformation of the landscape of East Asian television dramas’ consumption in Indonesia brought about by the production and consumption of pirated DVDs exemplifies the role of technological transmission in understanding the in-between space of production and consumption. Piracy in Indonesia relies heavily on the latest technological means to receive and distribute the television products, such as reliable high-speed internet access and the innovation of disc burners. For the pirated DVD distributors, internet technology is essential because it is their primary means of obtaining the media, through the use of P2P (peer-to-peer) offerings⁴⁰ on

⁴⁰ The Indonesian piracy network relies on the Chinese-Malaysian piracy network, which uses the P2P offering method. This has affected the mediation process of the television dramas, especially how the pirated DVDs mediate the language. In this research, the mediation of language will be used to investigate the nature of the intermediaries in mediating the television dramas to the Indonesian audience as a preconditioning in the

the internet. For the audience, the technology of DVD players, which are easier to access due to ever-decreasing prices, has become a must have item in most households in Jakarta. It should also be taken into consideration that DVD is a different mode of consumption unlike television. It would result in the formation of a new audienceship and way of consumption. It is "private," "convenient" and "not expensive" compared to broadcast television or cable (Davis *et.al.* 2004, p. 228). These technological changes exemplify the role of pirated DVDs as a media technology in the process of mediation.

In Indonesia, at the time of writing, there are two kinds of pirated DVD sellers: the DVD kiosk (in malls, markets, etc.) and the online DVD sellers (using *Facebook* or other free blogging internet space as their virtual kiosks). For the DVD kiosks, the intermediary activities are resonated from the display and packaging of the DVDs. The DVD sellers are mediating the television dramas to the buyers through their extensive knowledge about the television dramas. They explain to the buyers what the story is about, the actors/actresses and whether the story will end happily or not. This relationship between buyer and seller most of the time leads to an interpersonal relationship, building a network in itself.

An interpersonal relationship between the DVD sellers and consumers is a significant part of the intermediary activities. Based on my personal experience, there are several DVD kiosks I visit regularly where the seller would either remember my name or just remember what I look like. As a part of the mediating process, the seller would give several choices on which television dramas I should buy. Moreover, since I have been coming to their kiosks regularly, they already know what kind of dramas I prefer and will suggest, for example, romantic stories. There is of course an economic drive for this interpersonal relationship between the seller and consumer; however, for them to know the stories and being able to highlight what is good (or not good) about the television dramas reflects another dimension of the circulation process. The consumer's decision is affected by the sellers' intermediary activities. The information from the seller would affect the audience's experience when he or she watches it. The interpersonal relationship between sellers and consumers influences the consumer's expectation and his or her decision on how to experience the chosen particular television drama.

The other two mediating practices observed involve the display of products and packaging of the pirated DVDs. The kiosks classify the titles into various categories with a 'free-style classification,' such as New Release, Drama, Comedy, Horror, Action, Asian Series, Western Series, and others. In some kiosks, East Asian television dramas are categorized according to its country of origins and because at the time of writing the most dominant one is Korean dramas, all Korean dramas are categorized into one. However, in other kiosks, there is an "Asian Series" category consisting of television dramas from Korea, Japan and Mandarin, which refers to Taiwan, Hong Kong or China. The popular titles would either be on full display, such as being hanged on top of the DVD boxes or plastered on the walls. In some kiosks, these popular ones are put on the front section of the DVDs in the box. Based on the observation, one factor in deciding which titles are popular or not is related to what is being broadcast on local private television stations or what is popular in the countries of origin.

The last intermediary activity from the DVD sellers is the packaging. Sellers rarely use the original packaging. This is because the official or original DVDs are not released yet. The design of the packaging for the pirated DVDs is usually a 'copy paste' design from the internet, including pictures or screen shots of the television dramas and the summary of the story taken from the internet. This would often lead to a mishap. For example, after the popularity of *Meteor Garden*, a series with one of the cast members would be sold by writing down the title: *Meteor Garden 2*. This was before the release of the original *Meteor Garden 2*. The cover for the DVDs would be taken from the internet with a picture of one of the actors or actresses. The plot summary on the back cover is taken from internet sources and they are often written in poor English with a number of typos. Ultimately, the packaging of the television dramas is a consequence of the laxity of standards in the piracy network due to the primacy of pure economic motives.

This particular mediating activity can be linked to a precondition in the circulation and reception settings of these television dramas. Audiences know what to expect when they watch television dramas from pirated DVDs. The sometimes-misleading covers, the poorly translated summary of the stories, or even the bad quality of the disc mediates the television dramas differently, compared to the intermediary activity done by the television station. Pirated DVD sellers' practices

are short-term and purely economically motivated. In other words, everything must be as economic as possible with the bottom-line cost as the driving factor. This will also affect the audience's consumption pattern because quality becomes less important or even insignificant. The most important thing is to be able to watch the television dramas without having to think whether or not the summary at the back cover is accurate or whether or not the quality of the disc is good enough. The cheap price is also more significant. On the other hand, television stations need to meet the necessary requirements for the television dramas to be broadcasted. They need to make sure that the summary, often posted on the websites (Appendix 2), is as accurate as possible.

Compared to the kiosks, the online DVD sellers have similar but also different intermediary practices. Online DVD sales are easy, cheap and more convenient for both sellers and buyers. Nowadays, the online DVD sellers mostly use free internet spaces like *Facebook*, *Multiply* or *Blogspot* page as their 'DVD kiosks.' The way they promote the newest titles is a part of their intermediary practices, which is how the sellers predetermine the reception context with marketing strategies such as: "This title will be aired soon on television." This is used to entice audiences to watch the series in advance before it is aired on television. The audience is invited to be one step ahead of the television stations. This reflects how television is still a reference even for the pirated DVD sellers, for both kiosks and online vendors. Furthermore, this demonstrates the inter-connectedness between the two major intermediaries, which actually operate differently, legal and illegally.

Subsequently, both television and pirated DVDs work as gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in layers of both gatekeeping and mediating practices. First, both means of technology work as gatekeepers in filtering, screening and selecting the television dramas. The motives behind the process of selections for both mediums are different even though the prevalent one is the economic motive. Since television operates legally, laws/regulations bind the selection process. As mentioned earlier, the Indonesian broadcasting regulation controls the number of non-local programs⁴¹, creating limitations for *Indosiar* in deciding the number of East Asian television

⁴¹ Article 41: "(1) The Government shall prevent the entry of import film contradictory to the **religious** values, ethic, morals, norm, and **national culture**. (2) The Government shall restrict the import film by maintaining the proportion between the import film and Indonesian film to **prevent the foreign culture domination**." (Translated by the researcher)

dramas to be broadcast. Due to this regulation, *Indosiar* needs to pay attention to the quota of foreign programs and also the content. As stated in the broadcasting regulation, the content should not be in contradiction to “the religious values, ethic, morals, norm, and national culture,” which thus limits the types of dramas that could enter the ‘gate.’

This particular regulation has affected the type of East Asian television dramas that can enter the “gate.” It is a research limitation that I was not able to get official information on the titles of East Asian television dramas that have been broadcasted in *Indosiar*. From several internet sources made by fans on types of East Asian television dramas they have consumed in Indonesia and from the collected data in the audience study, it could be said that the type of television dramas broadcasted on *Indosiar* fell into several categories, such as as “romantic, “family,” and “trendy drama” (a term coined by Koichi Iwabuchi (2002b)). *Indosiar*’s institutional practice under the broadcasting regulation has narrowed down the selected types of East Asian television dramas, which is in itself a filtering process to make sure what is consumed by the audience is acceptable according to the lawmakers.

Another significant aspect in *Indosiar*’s gatekeeping practice is censorship, which is regulated by the *Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia)*. The *Indonesian Broadcasting Commission* is the government’s official broadcasting commission regulating all kinds of broadcasting activities in Indonesia. In one its regulations⁴², the Commission gives authorities to the *Film Censorship Board (Lembaga Sensor Indonesia)* to censor television programs as stated in the “Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement between Indonesian Broadcasting Commission and Film Censorship Board.”⁴³ In other words, television programs, including East Asian television dramas, need to go through a censorship process by *the Film Censorship Board*, under the censorship law⁴⁴, which regulates what is considered to be appropriate as stated in Section 1, Article 6 of Constitutional Law

⁴² “Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement between Indonesian Broadcasting Commission and Film Censorship Board,” Nomor KPI: 02 / KPI / NK / 11 / 2007, Nomor LSF: 1519 / LSF / XI / 2007, on Censorship and Supervision on Television Broadcasting, translated from: “NOTA KESEPAHAMAN DAN KESEPAKATAN ANTARA KOMISI PENYIARAN INDONESIA DAN LEMBAGA SENSOR FILM, Nomor KPI: 02 / KPI / NK / 11 / 2007, Nomor LSF: 1519 / LSF / XI / 2007, TENTANG PENYENSORAN DAN PENGAWASAN TAYANGAN TELEVISI”

⁴³ <http://www.kpi.go.id/download/regulasi/Nota%20Kesepahaman%20LSF-%20KPI.rtf>

⁴⁴ Constitutional Law Number 33 Year 2009 about Films, translated from: *Undang-Undang Nomor 33 Tahun 2009 tentang Perfilman*, can be accessed at: <http://www.lsf.go.id/film.php?module=peraturan&sub=detail&id=9>

Number 33 Year 2009⁴⁵ regarding Films. Furthermore, the television station also has an internal censorship division responsible for censoring for their own programs, especially local programs, before being broadcast. These two layers of censorship for television dramas are a part of *Indosiar's* gatekeeping activities in making sure what has been screened and selected could pass through the *Indonesian Broadcasting Commission*. *Indosiar* conducts these censorships not only from the visual aspects but also in the dubbing process, which differs from the practice of subtitling in pirated DVDs.

The government's control of the broadcasting practices does not stop when the television dramas is broadcasted on television. On 12 June 2012, the *Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI)* released a warning letter to *Indosiar* about two Korean television dramas, which were broadcasted on 30 May 2012. One of the warning letters stated that in the broadcasted episode of *Protect the Boss*, there was a "...scene, which imply the act of kissing and also a scene of lips kissing at the end of the program." Furthermore, the letter stated that the television station should do an internal evaluation by editing those particular scenes because they "will have an affect toward the psychological development of children and teenagers."⁴⁶ This reflects how the *Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI)* constantly monitors television stations in broadcasting foreign programs even though they have been through multiple layers of censorships. *KPI* is an extension of the lawmakers' constraining role in making sure what will be broadcasted on Indonesian television is 'acceptable.' The gatekeeping practice of the television station can be read as a strategy in constructing acceptable features making these television dramas more proximate to the Indonesian context, at least in the lawmakers' perspective.

On the other hand, the pirated DVDs sellers work as gatekeepers when they

⁴⁵ Article 6: "The film being the main element of cinematography activity and business shall not contain the content that is: a. encouraging the public to commit the violence and gambling as well as abuse of narcotics, psychotropic and other addictive substances; b. highlighting pornography; c. provoking inter-group, inter-ethnic, inter-race, and/or inter-group conflicts; d. insulting, harassing, and/or stain the religious values; e. encouraging the public to go against the law; and/or degrading human dignity." (English translation from Indonesian Broadcasting Commission website)

⁴⁶ Translated by the researcher from Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*KPI*)'s Warning Letter 354/K/KPI/06/12: "***Menayangkan adegan yang mengesankan ciuman dan juga penayangan adegan ciuman bibir di akhir episode program. Jenis pelanggaran ini dikategorikan sebagai pelanggaran atas perlindungan anak dan remaja, pelanggaran adegan seksual serta norma kesopanan dan kesusilaan yang disiarkan oleh lembaga penyiaran. KPi Pusat meminta agar segera melakukan evaluasi internal program dengan cara melakukan editing pada adegan tersebut yang berdampak pada perkembangan psikologis anak-anak dan remaja. Tindakan penayangan adegan tersebut telah melanggar P3 Pasal 9, Pasal 14 ayat (2), Pasal 16, dan Pasal 21 ayat (1) serta SPS Pasal 9, Pasal 15 ayat (1), Pasal 18 huruf g dan k, dan Pasal 37 ayat (4) huruf a.***"

select the television dramas to be sold in their kiosks without any screening and filtering activities regulated by the law. The main motive of the pirated DVD sellers' gatekeeping practices is essentially economic. Although in this research I was not able to do in-depth research on those involved in the pirated DVD business besides the sellers in the DVD kiosks or online DVD sellers, from other research done on piracy (Juliastuti, 2008) and also based on regular observations, the selection of television dramas being circulated is mostly based on what is most popular and highly demanded. After the selection process, television dramas circulated through pirated DVDs are not censored like the ones broadcasted on television. There is a significant difference in this particular gatekeeping activity between the two gatekeepers, which will affect the precondition of circulation and reception context. It also affects audience members' expectations and when they choose to watch the television dramas on television or on a pirated DVD. I will take the work of dubbing for the television station and subtitling for the pirated DVDs to illustrate this point further.

Through the analysis of television stations and pirated DVDs as intermediaries due to their function as media technology and also their intermediary activities, I have highlighted three elements out of each intermediary: the scheduling, packaging and marketing for *Indosiar* and the seller, the display and the packaging for pirated DVDs. It is evident that there is an inter-connection between both intermediaries in how they use each other as a reference. Pirated DVD sellers will use the phrase "being broadcast on television now" to attract buyers. On the other hand, the audience, most of the time, will know about a television drama when they go to the DVD kiosk and purchase a drama, which has not even been broadcast on television yet. After the pirated DVD has changed hands in his or her circle of friends, there will be a demand for that particular title to be broadcast on television. The audience can go to *Indosiar*'s online forum, as mentioned earlier, and request the television station to broadcast it. These inter-connections can also be seen as how the mediating process conducted by both intermediaries has accommodated a web of mediating lines. It is not a linear transmission of products along a straight line moving from the producer to the consumer. It is not a one-way flow, like the gatekeeping act in which the product enters the locales and is directly consumed by the audience. The inter-connection between television stations and pirated DVDs

reflect how the works of intermediaries are, consciously or unconsciously, connected to one another even though both work in two different areas, a legal and illegal one.

The second observation focuses on how the mediating activities are actually constructing the so-called regional affinities that have become the main thesis of why these television dramas have become increasingly popular in most of its country of consumption. In my analysis of some of the mediating activities, the regional affinities are not given features because these television dramas come from countries, which do not share similar historical, cultural or linguistic roots with Indonesia. Without any intention to essentialize the East Asian culture with one identifiable characteristic, which could be identified from the television dramas, I would argue that mediating activities done by these intermediaries have created a sense of similarities between these television dramas and the local programs. One illustration is how *Indosiar* reserves afternoon time slots for these television dramas together with local programs, presenting to the audience that they are ‘appropriate’ for all-age audience, unlike Western television series or films, which are mostly broadcast later in the evening (times deemed less appropriate for younger viewers).

Furthermore, how the television stations use the term “*Drama Asia*” or “Asian Dramas” as a label for the television dramas, which actually come from Japan, Korea or Taiwan, could also be read as a way to blur the differences between the countries of origin. It does not mean that *Indosiar* is consciously creating an essentialist definition of East Asia as Asia. The television station is drawing on a well-known and assumed essential notion of “Asia” which is restricted to East Asia. However, when we have East Asian television dramas being labelled as “*Drama Asia*” and films from India are labelled “*Bollywood Films*” without the usage of the word “Asia” in it, the essentialist tendency is observable. From an economic and financial perspective, it is easier for television stations, or even in the pirated DVD kiosks, to categorize these television dramas into one category of “Asian Dramas.” As argued by Straubhaar, “media programmers or marketers can take such commonalities and consciously try to synthesize a cultural-linguistic market out of common elements, glossing over significant differences” (Straubhaar, 2003, p. 84). I would argue that the usage of the term “Asia” can also be read as a counter measure in constructing the acceptability of these television products as something “Asian” or non-Western. They are acceptable and appropriate because they come from the same

region as Indonesia. I will elaborate on this point in the conclusion chapter.

In section 1.5 I shall focus on one specific element out of the mediating practices from television stations and pirated DVDs, namely dubbing and subtitling. I want to explore how television and pirated DVDs mediate language both as a gatekeeper and as intermediaries. Translation could also be considered as a gatekeeping practice or as a complex interconnecting process of mediation. Translation is a tool for the intermediaries to create “commonalities” and amalgamate a cultural-linguistic market, while overcoming the fact that, linguistically, there are no commonalities between the countries of origin and the country of consumption.

3.5 Mediating Language: Subtitling and Dubbing

The mediating of language is of special significance in the discussion of intermediaries in the East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. Indonesian audiences are relying completely on the translation of the original language because the language between the producing countries and the consumer’s country is completely different. In this part of the discussion, the role of intermediaries is different from what Negus has explained in his work on the British music industry due to the issue of translation. Therefore, I will analyze how television and pirated DVDs reconstruct the product to adjust it to the Indonesian context. Mediating the language is essential for Indonesian audiences to experience the television dramas. In the in-between space of production and consumption, there is a transfer of meaning. The meanings originally constructed in the production stage are necessarily altered before it even reaches the consumer. This is true for both methods of translation, namely dubbing on television and subtitling on pirated DVDs. The two intermediaries have marked a preference in the audience for either dubbing or subtitles. The audience will know what to expect. If they watch the series on television, they will know it will be dubbed and if on DVDs, there will be options of subtitling, mainly English or Malay or Chinese.

Dubbing is the preferred method used by *Indosiar*, like most television stations. Economically, dubbing is more expensive than subtitling. *Indosiar* outsources the dubbing process to a production house. The television station used to have a dubbing department, but in 2010, the department was closed and the dubbing

process was outsourced to a production house. In the production house, the practice is to use the same voice-over actors/actresses (henceforth “*dubbers*”) for a variety of East Asian dramas. This repetition will affect the audience because they will know what to expect. They will hear the same voice coming out of the male and female protagonists or other typical characters like the mother or children because the production house will use the same *dubbers* for different television dramas. This turns out to be one of the reasons why some viewers do not like the dubbed version.

As discussed in the previous section on the role of the television station as a gatekeeper, the dubbing practice is actually a practice of censorship on its own due to the government regulations and also the authority of the television station, the production house, the translator and even *dubbers*. From the first sense of mediation, *dubbers* are a part of the occupational groups with their defined constraints and variables, such as their values and ideas, which are regulated by the censorship regulations as well as by the practices of their routines. This has created the style of dubbing affecting the final result of the dubbed version. I will elaborate on this by taking a sample from one of the dubbed versions of an East Asian television drama to illustrate how the routine practice of dubbing in *Indosiar* has created a particular style of dubbing language exclusively attached to the East Asian television dramas in this television station. This could be read as a part of the intermediaries’ activities in creating commonalities.

The second sense of mediation also plays a part in the process of dubbing and subtitling because development in technology makes it possible for voice synchronization and even subtitling. Last but not least, social relationship between these occupational groups, like voice-over talents (*dubbers*) and translators, and also the relationship between the institution and the audience should also be taken into account. *Indosiar*, for example, prefers to use dubbed version mainly as a response to requests from the audience. According to an interview with the PR officer, *Indosiar* has tried to use subtitles but received protests from the audience through the online forum and fan letters, so the television station decided to stick with the dubbed version.

Next, subtitling in pirated DVDs offers a different experience to the Indonesian audience. Since Indonesia is a part of the Chinese-Malaysian network, the subtitle options are usually English, Malay, and Chinese. Due to the language

similarities within the countries of the network, the pirated DVDs suppliers in Indonesia do not need to do their own subtitling, which cuts the costs associated with translation. Since the whole point of piracy is the low cost, the choice of subtitling reflects this value completely. Moreover, unlike dubbing in television, subtitling in pirated DVDs is not regulated like the regulation of censorship. The main motive is economic, which is the lowest cost possible. That is why, most of the time the subtitles in the pirated DVDs of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia are in ‘broken’ Malay or English, especially for the first edition copies. Subtitling is simply for the sake of ‘getting the point’, not for a complete understanding. For Indonesian audiences, choosing the Malay subtitle is a challenge on its own because even though Malay is actually the root of the Indonesian language, there are some significant differences, especially in vocabulary.

shots taken from *Romantic Princess*⁴⁷; pirated DVD)

I would like to refer to the chosen example to elaborate on this issue. The screenshots above show the significant difference in vocabularies for the two languages: Malay and Indonesian. On the 2nd screenshot, the Malay subtitle literally means: “to live a social noble life.” These vocabularies are used in a different sense in the Indonesian language. For an Indonesian audience, noble will imply high position in the social life. In this particular scene, the meaning is actually “to live a happy life” because the male character was telling the female character to go on the plane and move on with her life. This example reflects how the Malay subtitle could

⁴⁷ A Taiwanese Television Drama (*Gong Zhu Xiao Mei*, 2007)

give different meaning for an Indonesian audience because even though the two languages have similar roots, the differences could obstruct the meaning-making process. However, despite this translation barrier, for those who do not understand English or feel more comfortable with the Indonesian language, the Malay subtitle is the best option. To conclude, subtitling is a part of the dynamic process of mediation by pirated DVDs and should be taken into account to see how these intermediaries construct the reception context.

There is a significant difference in the mediating action of dubbing and subtitling. First of all, in dubbing, the actor/actress' original voice is eliminated, which is an important component in the performance. This changes the communication source that is the specific voice and also the connotations in relation to the image and the character.

"Dubbing is often perceived to be less 'authentic' than subtitling, because the original performance is altered by the addition of a different voice. However, it could be argued that re-voiced film and television comes closer to the actual viewing process where only decoding of the moving images and sound is required and this is, in fact, more 'authentic'". (Mera, 1999, p. 80)

As argued in the quotation, dubbing could be seen from two contradicting perspective. In one point, the elimination of the actor/actress' voice can reduce the direct experience of the television dramas; on the other hand, some will argue that dubbing will make the audience focuses on the moving image and sound without having to be distracted by reading subtitles.

Second of all, dubbing requires synchronizing specific words with specific lip-movements. In any dubbed version of television series (or films), perfect lip synchronization is almost impossible to achieve. *Dubbers* will attempt to create the best possible match for the lip movements, but slight incongruence is unavoidable. In the context of this research, this aspect of dubbing is significant since the dubbed language is either Korean, Japanese or Mandarin, which have a completely different linguistic system than the Indonesian language (including in pronunciation, intonation, and other linguistic elements). I have argued in the beginning of this sub-chapter that the specific dubbing style of East Asian television dramas in *Indosiar* is actually caused by this technical limitation of dubbing. The dubbing languages are highly affected by all these factors, namely, by the dubbing process that must follow the lip synchronization technique, and also by the significant linguistic difference

between the country of origin and Indonesia.

In the mean time, in subtitling, it is said that audience is able to pick up ‘the ebb and the flow’ of the language. It is argued within the translation community that subtitling can guarantee authenticity of the audio experience in listening to the original voice of the characters and also the original flavour of the language, the mood and the sense. "Hearing the real voices of the characters not only increases meaning in terms of specific dialogue or plot structure, but gives vital clues as to status, class and relationship." (1999, p. 75) However, almost half of the dialogue is sometimes lost through subtitling because of the limited space for the subtitles. It also adds the activity of ‘reading’ to the watching experience.

"Subtitles change film from an audio-visual medium to a more literary medium which requires a greater level of attention from the viewer than a dubbed film. Time spent reading subtitles is time spent away from the screen action and this is clearly a problem when there is both a great deal of visual information as well as dialogue." (1999, p. 79)

The *subtitled* must decide which information is most relevant to the audience and this is a mediation process, which is the transfer of meaning from the original text to the subtitle. As a result, **subtitle** and **dubbing** eventually can change the perceptions of a character, an intention or mood. Moreover, alteration of language is unavoidable in both techniques. The question is how will this particular practice of mediation by the two intermediaries, television and pirated DVDs, affect and even construct the reception context for the Indonesian audience.

I have chosen several samples to analyze how meanings are transferred and even altered in the in-between space of production and consumption with the two methods of translation, dubbing on television and subtitling on pirated DVDs. The first sample will reflect this alteration of language, which eventually lead to the alteration of meaning. In *Meteor Garden* (2001), there is a famous line from the male protagonist:

"*Kalau minta maaf itu berguna, buat apa ada polisi?*"

(Indonesian: taken from the television dubbed version)

"What are the police for if apologies do any good?"

(English: taken from the pirated DVDs English subtitle version)

"道歉有用的話要警察干嘛? (流星花園)"

(Chinese)

In both, dubbed and subtitled version, there is, and will always be, a problem of interpretation. The above sentence is an example on how literal translation has the

potential to disturb the interpretation process. I took this example because it is related to my own personal experience when I watched *Meteor Garden* on television and also later on, on the pirated versions (both VCD and DVD). I remembered distinctively when I watched the dubbed version; I did not understand what the character meant while saying that sentence. I tried to relate it to the context, but I did not manage to understand what it meant. When I watched the pirated version, having the privilege to read the Malay or even English subtitle, I still experience the same difficulties. I was finally enlightened with a Hong Kong colleague's explanation of its reference to the mafia films in Taiwan, which often use this term. It is a very contextualized phrase. It reflects how both dubbing and subtitling could not translate cultural context. Most Indonesian audience members do not understand this particular sentence. However, it has become one of the most memorable and popular sentence from the television dramas, which has been used in *blogs* and discussion forums by its audience continuously even until now. This reflects how complete understanding of meaning seems to be insignificant for both dubbed and subtitled version.

Another form of language alteration is the changes in the tone or mood of the language in the dubbed version. As I explained previously, the linguistic system of the original language and Indonesian language is completely different. All of the East Asian countries producing these television series have particular linguistic system, unlike the Indonesian language. In translating the dialogues from the original television dramas, the *dubbers* will have to recreate the tone and intonation by using a completely different style of language. This has created, as argued previously, a specific kind of dubbing language, which I would describe as 'overtly dramatized.' Moreover, it also does not use a typical Indonesian conversational language style, which is more like a written language being used orally.

QUEEN OF REVEARSALS (2011)

Transcribed by the researcher from the television version:

Woman: "Wah ... bagus sekali ... cantiknya ... cantik sekali ya?"
(*dramatized intonation*)

(*pause*)

Woman: "Aku ... aku harus ... mengatakan sesuatu padamu. Kalau aku tidak mengatakannya sekarang. Aku rasa aku tidak akan bisa mengatakannya lagi." (*not a conversational style of Indonesian language*)

Man: "Apa itu?"

Woman: "Cobalah membaca pikiranku. Aku rasa ... kau pintar membaca pikiranku."

Literal English translation (translated by the researcher):

Woman: "Wow ... so nice ... beautiful ... it's really beautiful, right? (*dramatized intonation*)

(*pause*)

Woman: "I ... I have to ... say something to you. If I don't say it now. I don't think I can say it again." (*not a conversational style of Indonesian language*)

Man: "What's that?"

Woman: "Try to read my mind. I feel ... you're good at reading my mind."

This sample is used to reaffirm that the television station, *Indosiar*, has constructed a particular style of dubbing language in terms of diction and intonation style. I further argue that this could be analyzed as a way to create commonalities between the countries of origin. As an audience, when I want to watch a television drama in *Indosiar*, I would know what to expect. I will hear the same voice from the characters because *Indosiar* will actually use the same voice-over actors/actresses for regular characters, like the female and male protagonists, male and female antagonists, the mother character or even the child character. It does not matter if the television drama is Korean, Japanese or Taiwanese, from an economic perspective; it is obviously more convenient to use the same voice-over actors and actresses. However, as an audience, this create the aforementioned commonalities, creating a line of similar experience when watching the television dramas from Korea, Japan or Taiwan, which are all bumped into one category of "*Drama Asia*" or "*Asian Drama*."

Furthermore, the technique of dubbing has made it possible for the television station to abide by the regulation of censorship. Unlike the pirated DVDs, which are not regulated by the government regulations, since the pirated DVDs business is operating in the non-legal terrain, dubbing in the television version has to follow the strict public regulation of censorship. One of the most taboo content which has to be censored according to the Indonesian broadcasting law is anything related to sexual content. If the government censorship institution, or even the television's own authority in censorship, can eliminate any sexual scenes, including kissing scenes, the production house and the *dubbers* need to make sure any dialogs that have any sexual content are not translated literally. Most of the time, the translation is so

different with the original version and if the scene is not explicitly related to the content of the conversation, the dubbed version can be accepted as it is without any confusion from the audience like the example I have chosen.

(Screenshot from *Hanakimi*⁴⁸ (2007), pirated DVD)

HANAKIMI (broadcasted in 2011 by Indosiar)

English subtitle:

B1: Who else is there that I don't know about? Doesn't matter if you're talking about I Cup or a G-cup?

B2: Are you really that captivated by large-breast women?

B1: Idiot! I love beautiful ones. For now, I just want to find the right one that will excite me.

Dubbed version: (Literal English translation by the researcher)

B1: *Apa tidak ada foto lain? Misalnya foto cewek yang lebih cantik atau foto cewek yang lebih berani lagi?*

Are there any other pictures? Like a naturally beautiful woman or a more vulgar one?

B2: *Hmm ... dasar ... otakmu itu payah sekali.*

Errr ... loser ... your brain is so dirty!

B1: *Kau ini yang payah. Disini aku perlu itu ... perlu sesuatu yang lebih panas ...*

You're the loser. I need that ... I need something hotter ...

In this scene, the characters are male students in an all-male school who are discussing women, specifically discussing breast sizes. However, in the dubbed version, the dialog is translated in a way that the word "breast" is no longer used, even though the dialog still implies (not explicitly) sexual connotations.

At this point, television plays a part of a gatekeeper by multiplying its censorship practice not only from the visual aspect but also the audio aspect. By making sure the mediated television drama no longer has any sexual content or

⁴⁸ A Japanese television drama, known originally as *Hanazakarino kimitachihe/ Hana zakari no kimi tachi he: Ikemen paradaisu* (花ざかりの君たちへ イケメン♂パラダイス). The television drama was broadcasted from 3 July to 18 September 2007 in Japan. (source: <http://asianwiki.com/Hana-Kimi>). Note: *Hanakimi* was broadcast on *Indosiar* in June 2011, 4 years after it was first broadcasted in Japan.

simply minimizing the sexual content, the television station is making sure what enters the gate is reconstructed according to what is regulated by the authority. It does not only stand in the gate deciding what could enter the gate, but once the product enters the gate, there are some things which needs to be regulated and changed, such as what is being delivered in the dramas.

On the other hand, the pirated DVDs version does not have this issue in translating the language. However, as I explained previously, due to economic factors, the subtitles in pirated DVDs are not done for the audience's complete understanding. One will find foul language in the subtitles of the first copies of the pirated DVDs. The language for these subtitles is usually broken English or Malay, which means it is grammatically incorrect and will sometimes be incomprehensible. If the technique in dubbing makes it possible for the television station to censored the television dramas, the subtitling in pirated DVDs is also reconstructing the content of the series with its limitation in delivering the original text. The pirated DVDs do not reduce or eliminate certain content, like sexual content censorship, but the foul subtitles and the fact that most of the subtitles are not in Indonesian (in Malay/English/Chinese) could affect the audience's interpretation of the text and can even reduce any content incidentally.

The Malay subtitles is the most favoured subtitle for East Asian television dramas in pirated DVDs for those who do not understand English or feel more comfortable with Indonesian language. As discussed earlier, the biggest and most important motive for the intermediary activity in pirated DVDs is purely economic. Also, subtitling is affected by this economic motive, which means it is not done in the purpose of precision of meaning. Moreover, since the pirated DVDs in Indonesia come from the Chinese-Malaysian network, is it apparent that the Malay, and also Chinese subtitles, is considered as the most economic and suitable subtitles for the pirated DVDs in this network.

With this analysis, I concluded that subtitling in this kind of medium is simply for the sake of "getting the point" and not for a complete understanding of the original dialog. If the technique in dubbing makes it possible for the television station to censor the dialogs in the television dramas, which will make the audience misunderstand elements of the storyline, the subtitling in pirated DVDs is also limiting the audience's experience in completely understanding the television series.

The subtitling is reconstructing the content of the series with its limitation in delivering the original text. The pirated DVDs do not reduce or eliminate certain content, like sexual content censorship, but the low-quality subtitles and the fact that most of the subtitles are not in Indonesian are actually distracting the audience from the narrative of the drama.

To sum up, both techniques in mediating language have problems of “understandability” in communicating the dialogues, which is an important part of the narrative. Translation will never have the same effect on the reader like the original. Both, dubbing and subtitle, have an alienation effect. If the dubbed version eliminates the original voice of the actor/actresses and even replaced it with the same voices for multiple titles, the subtitling also requires the audience to take more time reading the subtitles and not focusing on the audio and visual experience. Moreover, the low-quality language used in the subtitles and also the non-Indonesian subtitles can also give this alienation effect.

Translation process in dubbing and subtitling is a mediation process. Meanings are interpreted and appropriated from the original text to the dubbed or subtitled text. It undergoes fundamental shifts in the context and meaning. Within this mediation process, there will always be a consideration of authenticity and originality. However, because meanings are transferred in multiple layers in this kind of transnational flow, originality and authenticity become insignificant. The highlight should be on these layers of mediation process in which meanings are altered from its original source and what kind of power relations are involved in this alteration of meanings. The process of dubbing and subtitling are profoundly predisposed by the institutional practice of the government/television station and the pirated DVD business.

Through the analysis, I argue that television and pirated DVDs, both as gatekeepers and also as intermediaries, have contextualized the East Asian television dramas through dubbing and subtitling to be consumed by the Indonesian audience. Both operate differently in translating the language in the television dramas and these differences have also constructed a reception context. Basically, they have changed the appeal of the series for different audiences. An audience choosing to watch the television version and the one choosing to buy the pirated DVDs are the effects of

having two gatekeepers and/or intermediaries. “At the individual audience level, competence, ability to speak or at least understand the language of a broadcast, is an important ingredient in audiences’ selection of a program and their enjoyment of it” (Straubhaar, 2003, p. 82). Indonesian audience will not consider the East Asian television dramas as a preference due to its original language because most Indonesian audience do not speak Japanese, Korean or Mandarin. Dubbing and subtitling are intermediary activities. Audience will be able to select and enjoy the television drama because the problem of language has been resolved if they watch the dubbed or subtitled version.

To conclude, television (dubbing) and pirated DVDs (subtitling) reconstructed the East Asian television dramas in order to be consumed by the Indonesian audience. It is significant to highlight that the two intermediaries have marked a preference in the audience. In their mediating practices, the two intermediaries are continuously identifying and even constructing what kind of audience will prefer which version (dubbed/subtitled). For example, in dubbing, the sense of identification in which the foreignness of the product is reduced by the familiar audio experience (East Asian actors/actresses “speaking” Indonesian) will be chosen by members of the audience who are looking for this particular of experience and also for those who chose the subtitled version. However, most of the time, it is not only from the intermediaries’ authority on how the end product (after the dubbing/subtitling) will be consumed by the audience. It is also a part of the audience’s active experience, which is in constant dialog with the intermediaries’ mediating practices.

One significant difference from this practice of communalizing the language of the television drama for the sake of a smooth reception is how the television station has created a routine style of dubbing which increases this sense of commonalities as compared to the subtitles on pirated DVDs. As argued in the earlier section of this chapter, intermediaries deliberately try to manufacture a cultural-linguistic market from the common or shared elements by glossing over significant differences. Dubbing could be analyzed as the intermediaries’ strategies in glossing over the nuance specificity of the country of origin be it Japan, Korea or Taiwan. I would argue that the dubbing style, the overtly dramatized intonations and the same voice-over actors/actresses for all television dramas, has created these

commonalities. They mark the audience's preference and create what the audience expects when they choose to watch the television drama on television. This adds up to how *Indosiar* categorizes East Asian television drama as "*Drama Asia*" or Asian Dramas in its scheduling and packaging as intermediary activities.

3.6 Other Intermediaries: Tabloids/Magazines and Community of Audience

Other important intermediaries of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia are a number of mass media, especially printed media, which highlight news about East Asian popular culture, and also the television dramas. There are several local printed media, which already existed before the popularity of East Asian television dramas, such as the tabloids *Bintang Indonesia*, *Tabloid Gaul* and teenage magazines like *Kawanku*. These media started to cover news related to either the television series or actors and actresses from the East Asian countries when television dramas, and nowadays Korean Pop or *K-Pop*, gained popularity all over the country. One example is in 2001, when *Meteor Garden* was a big hit. More and more tabloids and magazines covered every single detail about the television drama, especially the famous F4 boy band. Afterward, new tabloids and magazines specializing on East Asian popular culture were published like *Asian Plus*, which was published by *CV Asian Starindo*. *CV Asian Starindo* has published several tabloids and magazines highlighting East Asian popular culture. This publisher collaborates with *Media Networks* from Taiwan and *Estarent Media* from Hong Kong to get the latest news.

As intermediaries, these printed media have created evident preconditions for the audience. These tabloids and magazines multiply the mediation process. When an audience reads a synopsis on these printed or even online media before selecting or experiencing the television dramas, he or she will by now have preconditioned ideas about what the series will be about. Being familiar with news or gossips about the actors and actresses is a part of constructing the reception context.

(Photographs taken by the researcher)

Based on the samplings collected throughout the research period, 2010 to 2013, these tabloids and magazines commonly highlight news from recent and popular East Asian popular culture, including television dramas. They usually categorize the news into sections like “*Gossip Jepang*” or “Japanese Gossip” (literal translations) and “*Profil Korea*” or “Korean Profile,” which are sections in *Bintang Indonesia* tabloid. In one of the July 2011 editions, the articles in “*Gossip Korea*” or “Korean Gossip” were “*Ji Jin He: Lebih Ekspresif di Dong Yi*” or “Ji Jin He: More Expressive in *Dong Yi*”; “*Jelang Wajib Militer, Rain Gelar Konser ‘The Best’*” or “Before Going Into Military Service: Rain Held ‘The Best’ Concert”; “*Apa Saja yang Dilakukan Artis Korea Saat Senggang?*” or “What do Korean Artists do in their Spare Time?” On the whole, the news covers many areas, which give additional information to the readers about the famous public figures, who are well known in Indonesia through East Asian popular culture products, particularly television dramas.

I would like to put forward one example in order to elaborate further the mediating practice done by these tabloids and magazines in shaping the reception and circulation context. This article is taken from *Bintang Indonesia*, August 2011. The title is “*Yeay! Secret Garden Akhirnya Tayang di Indonesia*” or “Yeay! Secret Garden is Finally Aired in Indonesia.” In this article, we can find the summary of the storyline, information on actors and actresses and also the phenomenal reception in its country of origin, Korea. First of all, the article started with a celebratory note because more and more Korean television dramas are being aired in *Indosiar*. It should be noted that the article specifically mentioned *Indosiar* because it is one of the prominent television stations that constantly airs East Asian television dramas. The article was published in the second week of August 2011 edition and *Secret*

Garden was broadcasted on 4 August 2011. The tabloid works concurrently with the television station, which emphasizes the inter-connection between the multiple intermediaries of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia.

(Photograph taken by the researcher)

Furthermore, the article also highlights the actors' previous television dramas, which are all broadcast and gained a significant popularity in Indonesia. Ha Ji Won was the actress in *Memories in Bali*, which was broadcasted in Indonesia in 2005 and was well-received, especially due to the major shooting location in Bali, Indonesia. The actor, Hyun Bin, was known by the Indonesian audience in *My Name is Kim Sam Soon*, which was also popular in Indonesia. The article did not mention other television dramas these actor and actress star in because it needs to make sure the readers could relate the information they receive with their own experience. The language of the article also plays into what Indonesian audience prefer in their selection and screening process.

"Yeay! Serial terakhir Hyun Bin sebelum masuk asrama wajib militer ini bikin fans Hyun Bin cenat cenut tak karuan melihat aktingnya yang kocak dan romantic. Oh ya, dan ganteng! Hehehe."

English Translation (translated by the researcher):

"Yeay! This last television drama before Hyun Bin starts his military assignment will make his fans 'cenat cenut tak karuan' (informal Indonesian phrase which basically means feeling nervously happy because of something) in seeing his funny and romantic acting. Oh yes, and also handsome! Hehehe."

The article attempts to persuade the reader on the drama's selling point by emphasizing the "funny, romantic and handsome" features of the actor. Moreover, the article also accentuates the phenomenal popularity of the television drama in Korea and also how SBS TV, the television station in Korea, has sold the broadcasting right to 13 countries.

“...serial ini membawa dampak begitu besar bagi para bintangnya. Pada 29 Januari lalu, Hyun Bin menggelar jumpa fans di Lotte Department Store di kawasan Myeongdong untuk mempromosikan Laneige Homme, produk kosmetik pria yang dibintanginya.”

“Awal tahun ini, pihak SBS TV mengumumkan hak siarnya sudah terjual ke 13 negara senilai 3,5 juta dollar AS atau senilai 29,6 miliar rupiah.”

English Translation (translated by the researcher):

“...this TV series has created a big impact to the stars. On 29 January, Hyun Bin held a fans greeting session in Lotte Department Store in Myeongdong area to promote Laneige Homme, a male cosmetic product which he endorsed.”

“At the beginning of this year, SBS TV announced that they sold the broadcasting right to 13 countries and earned 3,5 million \$ US or around 38,6 billion Indonesian rupiah.”

From this excerpt of the article, it is obvious that the television drama is being presented as a phenomenally famous television drama. It is done to persuade the audience to watch the television drama. Interestingly, the article also mentions that the television drama was broadcasted earlier in the year in Korea, which shows how, even nowadays, Indonesian television stations will broadcast television dramas long after they are broadcasted in the country of origin. As argued in chapter 1, these television dramas have a short life span; therefore, the intermediaries also function as a tool to extend the life span outside the country of origin by these kinds of media highlights.

Another intermediary is the audience community, which mediates these television dramas through physical and virtual forms of communities. However, one needs to recognize that unlike in most developed countries, even though internet connection has now become a very common thing in the everyday lives of Indonesians, not everyone has constant high-speed access. High-speed internet connections are still very expensive, which means the kind of internet most people have access to is either a slow or average connection, usually in a form of free *wifi* in public places, mobile phone internet or cheap internet connections with a speed of around 385 kbps/s. However, the internet is basically the main source of information about East Asian television dramas and also the means of downloading the series. At this moment, the handiest gadget to be used to access information from the internet is mobile phones, which provide cheap and easy-access internet service. One of the

most accessible internet portals is social networking, which has been wildly successful in Indonesia, the second largest country in terms of *Facebook* users. *Facebook* is now also used as a source of information for these television dramas through the virtual community of audience formed in this social networking page.

(Screenshot from the webpage)

One example is the *Drama Asia Lover Facebook* page with more than 3000 members. The *Facebook* page started with six (6) active moderators, who at the beginning decided to make a fan page on *Facebook* as a way to communicate with one another and later on decided to invite other fans of East Asian dramas to join. The members know each other because they are friends from work, college friends, or family members. However, many of them are complete strangers. Members benefit from this *Facebook* page because they can get information about East Asian popular culture from the administrators and also other members' posts. Some examples of the posts are synopsis or summary of the storyline, preferences of television dramas to watch, how and where to get access to the television drama, links for downloading, the lyrics of the latest soundtrack, and many others. Many aspects of the East Asian television series are thus mediated to the audience virtually.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, television and pirated DVDs first work as gatekeepers in screening, selecting and also filtering what can be consumed by the Indonesian

audience, even though both operate differently. This is especially true because television stations work under government regulations unlike the illegal business of pirated DVDs. The screening process is determined mostly by economic reasons for both gatekeepers. However, for *Indosiar*, there are also moments of connection with the audience members when the television station takes into account the audience's feedback and suggestions in the online discussion forum. In selecting the titles to be broadcasted, the television station will choose popular titles or television dramas, which are highly popular in the country of origin as well as other countries in the region. The television station works in a legal terrain of the network flow, which means it has to have a legal relationship with the television stations in the country of origin in order to officially buy the broadcasting rights for television dramas. This will affect the other decisions to be made when the television drama is finally broadcasted because the television station needs to cover the buying price with advertisements and a strategic way to keep the broadcasting cost low. One way of doing this is to utilize the same voice-over actors and actresses in different shows for the dubbing practice. In other words, the institutional relationship within the legal network has affected the final product, which will be consumed by the local audience. This includes the alteration of meanings in the dubbing process. Moreover, the legality of the network enforces the television stations, the Indonesian or the Korean/Japanese/Taiwanese ones, to work under the government/national (or even transnational) laws and regulations. On the other hand, the same legal network does not affect the pirated DVD business. The flow within the pirated DVDs network works differently and, as argued previously, more freely. Official laws do not bound the flow and regulations business transaction are driven more by economic motives.

Furthermore, both television stations and pirated DVDs do not only work as gatekeepers but also as intermediaries. As gatekeepers, they work on the 'gate' to decide which products enter the market. However, the process is not limited to the one-way flow, from the outside of the country into the country, because there are layers of mediating practices in both television and pirated DVDs distribution, especially after the product has entered the "gate." In mediating the television dramas into the circulation and reception context, both work as intermediaries, in which their cultural context and wider social relationships construct their ideas, values and practices. These ideas, values and practices affect the three senses of mediations of

technology, intermediary activity and social relationship of television and pirated DVDs. These actors, television station and pirated DVDs operate in a network, which consist of an interconnected web of gatekeeping/intermediary activities. Nevertheless, the findings in this chapter have also uncovered that these activities are bound in the specificity of the contexts, such as the broadcasting law. For that reason, the nation-state, Indonesia, continues to regulate and even restrict the transnational flow of these cultural products in what is both an economic and political measure.

Moreover, research findings have indicated that there is an interconnection between various intermediaries, like how pirated DVDs sellers use television as its reference or how television uses tabloids to market the television dramas broadcasted. The mediation process has accommodated the various social relationships between these intermediaries, creating a web of mediating lines. It is not a linear transmission of a product along a straight line moving from the producer to the consumer. There are layers of mediation and each layer is socially, culturally, economically and even politically contextualized. Within these layers of mediation by the intermediaries, there will always be an alteration of meaning. There is endless textuality in which meaning is transferred and altered from one text to another, like in the practice of dubbing in the television version and subtitling on the pirated DVDs. In doing so, they are also vulnerable to the exercise of power, namely the governmental regulation for television or the economic drive that affects the way low-quality subtitling is used in pirated DVDs.

More importantly, the intermediaries work within the network while constructing commonalities and glossing over differences as a strategy to sell these television dramas. The intermediaries are trying to reflect the pre-assumed regional affinities by scheduling East Asian television dramas in the afternoon time slots along with local programs, which are assumed to be “appropriate” for a larger number of viewers, including younger viewers, compared to Hollywood films or television series broadcasted in the evening time slots. The television stations also co-opt the television dramas through censorship, both visually and in terms of the dialogs by the process of dubbing. I will argue that this is not only a mediating activity in creating a precondition for the television dramas to be consumed by the audience, but would end up categorizing East Asian television dramas along with local programs, enhancing the possibility for them to be well-received by a larger

number of viewers. Another illustration of how these commonalities are created in the variety of East Asian television dramas, no matter whether they are Japanese/Korean/Taiwanese, is the routines of the dubbing practice. By using the same voice-over actors and actresses and also repeating the same style of dubbing, the dubbing process creates certain expectations in the audience when they watch the dubbed version on television. The television station has equated these television dramas and lumped all of them into one category: "*Drama Asia*" or "Asian Drama." By using the term Asia to describe these television dramas, the intermediaries construct the regional affinities these television dramas have with the locale, namely Indonesia.

In other words, the previous hypotheses of how regional affinities work as a driving force in the flow of television products within a region has been re-evaluated with this case study. The regional affinities are not embedded in the television products, but could be read as a precondition set up by gatekeepers/intermediaries. These television dramas come from Korea, Japan, Taiwan, which are countries with different historical, cultural or linguistic roots than Indonesia. My argument is that, without essentializing the East Asian countries as one category of culture, the mediating activities have enhanced commonalities between these television dramas with local expectations and gloss over differences, especially by putting everything together into the category of "Asian Drama."

Ultimately, the in-between space of production and consumption are filled with moments of mediation that "...connect the 'control' of the industry with the 'creativity' of the audience" (Negus, 1996, p. 98). Therefore, I will now move on to the discussion of the audience and how their active engagement with these television dramas has created another layer of complexity in the discussion of the transnational flow of television products within a regional perspective.

4 Reconstructing a Shared Imagination of (East) Asia

“...there are differences between watching, understanding, accepting, believing in and acting on or out, that we test out what we see and hear against what we know or believe, that we ignore or forget much of it anyway, and that our responses to media, both in particular and in general, vary by individual and across social groups, according to gender, age, class, ethnicity, nationality, as well as across time.” (Silverstone, 1999, p. 9)

In Chapter 3, the analysis revealed how the transnational flow of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia generates the cultural geography imaginary of East Asia as “Asia” in the in-between space of production and consumption. In this space, gatekeepers/intermediaries set up the preconditioned context for reception, such as by categorizing East Asian television dramas as *Drama Asia* or Asian Dramas, constructing commonalities among these television dramas from various nations. As a result, regional affinities, which are considered as the driving force of East Asian television dramas’ transnational flow, are not something embedded in these dramas. They are a part of the preconditions set up by the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries. In the consumption stage, the audience has been situated in this preconditioned context before they watch the television dramas.

In this chapter, the analysis moves on to the scope of audience reception. I will look at how television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and Korea have become important resources for the audience’s “everyday reflexivity” in their imagination of East Asia or even Asia. As discussed in Chapter 2, Youna Kim (2007, 2008) uses the notion of “everyday reflexivity” to describe how increased flows of television products like East Asian television dramas, as they travel to other countries, have affected the audience’s meaning making process in their everyday lives. For the Indonesian audience, this everyday reflexivity is combined with exposure to other representations of everyday life from East Asian countries due to the transnational features of the television dramas’ flow.

The process of everyday reflexivity allows audience members to reconsider their social condition and to negotiate with or even break through the constraining

hegemonic system at the level of the everyday. As discussed in the account of the development of audience studies in Chapter 2, further development of in the area has highlighted the aspect of agency. The audience makes sense of what they watch from the television dramas while contemplating their own condition. One example is the reformulation of gender roles. For the Indonesian audience, East Asian television dramas have brought upon an alternative discourse of masculinity and femininity. Another example is the reflexivity of ethnic identity. In the Indonesian social and historical context, the discourse of Chineseness has affected or has been affected by the audience's reflexivity on East Asian television dramas. The meaning of Chineseness in Indonesia emerged from a specific historical formation and is (and will always be) in fluctuation. Consumption of East Asian television dramas has affected the reworking of ethnic identity in being Chinese Indonesian. These are some of the issues that will be highlighted in this chapter. They constitute recurring themes in the collected data⁴⁹ and give an illustration of the reception frameworks in Indonesia as they differ significantly with other locales.

The next subchapter (4.1) will stress how the reception contexts could not be analyzed in an essentialized manner because they have been preconditioned by gatekeepers and/or intermediaries. In other words, in relation to the discussion of cultural globalization, the Reception Theory model focuses not only on the audience but also on the preconditions set up by gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in order to get a more pragmatic understanding of how cultural globalization works on the reception level. In my analysis of the collected data, I have taken into account how the audience responds toward these preconditioned contexts, which eventually affect viewers' engagement and reflexivity of the East Asian television dramas.

4.1 Preconditioned Reception Context through Audience Perception

As discussed in Chapter 3, the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries have set up a particular reception context for the audience, either through gatekeeping activities, such as screening/selecting/filtering or intermediary activities, such as constructing commonalities among these television dramas. Both *Indosiar* and pirated DVD sellers work in many layers of mediation practices. They should no longer be seen as

⁴⁹ Refer to **Appendix 4** to know more about the data collection method(s), the data triangulation and the stages of the analytical process.

a singular entity but as interconnected “actors” within both legal and illegal networks. Other intermediaries, such as tabloids/magazines and virtual audience communities, are also a part of the larger network. The analysis on the network provides an illustration of the preconditioned contexts created through the constraints of institutional practices, such as government regulations and economic motives. These practices have restricted the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries’ own institutional practices.

Research findings have indicated that audience members take advantage of the gatekeeping/intermediary practices as they negotiate or even challenge the preconditioned contexts. Most of the respondents explained that even though they do not typically watch these television dramas on television, television broadcasts remain an important medium. On the one hand, they find that pirated DVDs and downloaded versions are more convenient. On the other hand, some admit that they will watch a television drama on television because it happens “accidentally” when they are sitting in front of the television and flipping through the channels. The sense of continuity, a basic feature of television dramas, is not considered important by most of the respondents, who accidentally watch the dramas on television. It does not matter that they did not watch the previous episodes or will not be able to watch the next episodes. Some explain that if they were interested to watch more episodes, they would buy the pirated DVDs or download/stream it from the internet. Besides the “accidental” factor, other respondents explained that they would “intentionally” watch the dramas on television. They usually know when the television drama would be aired from the advertisements.

(I, female, 22 year old, college student) Diary “When I saw an advertisement on television that *Full House* was going to be aired on 12 March, I planned to watch it routinely. This is because *Full House* is one of my favourite Korean dramas. Even though I have watched it several times, I still enjoy it and I will never feel tired watching it.”⁵⁰

As discussed in subchapter 3.4, these television dramas are marketed in a form of advertisements routinely aired during other programs. The audience members utilize this intermediary activity to decide whether or not they will watch the drama on

⁵⁰ Translated by the researcher: **DIARY** “Saat lihat iklan bahwa *Full House* akan tayang pada 12 Maret, saya sudah berencana untuk rutin menyaksikan drama ini. Itu karena *Full House* adalah salah satu serial drama Korea favorit saya ... Meski sudah berkali-kali menonton serial ini, saya tetap menikmati dan tidak merasa bosan.” (I, female, 22 year old, college student)

television. Television seems to be one of the mediums chosen by the audience to consume East Asian television dramas, whether intentional or accidental.

Based on the data, it could be concluded that there has been a significant shift in the pattern of experience with the development of media convergence as more technologies are available to consume the television dramas. These television dramas originated from actual television broadcasts, which carry unique features. One of these is the sense of continuity, as the series is aired daily implying a continuous pattern of experience for the audience. To be able to do this, the audience has to intentionally watch the television drama everyday on television. However, this intentional factor is also affected by a prior experience of other forms of medium. Additionally, other respondents highlighted the accidental factor. They would only watch the dramas on television if they accidentally⁵¹ saw one while flipping through the channels on television. This is a negation to the continuity aspect of television dramas. It could be concluded that technological development has created multiple choices of East Asian television dramas consumption. The audience is able to make use of the available media and no longer has to rely solely on television in creating different patterns of experience.

The availability of recorded versions of the television dramas, through the pirated DVDs or the internet downloads, has given more flexibility for the general audience. As I argued briefly in Chapter 1, one of the main reasons why the audience prefers pirated DVDs or internet download/streaming is to satisfy his or her curiosity and to have a more continuous experience. Watching it through television means being constantly disrupted by advertisements, as explained by one of the respondents. They also have to wait for the next episode on the next day. The recorded version gives a chance for the audience to experience these television dramas faster and at a convenient time. Some respondents explained that they just want to know the ending as soon as possible than having to wait for several weeks or months if they watch it on television. In other words, the audience can now determine his or her own pattern of experience in watching the television dramas

⁵¹ The scheduling of the television dramas is affecting the consumption through television. For college students, to watch the television, as most of them are aired in the afternoon time slots, they need to do extra efforts like going home directly from campus to catch the television drama on television. For the over 30s group, who are mostly employees working until 5 in the afternoon, to watch the television dramas on television on weekdays is definitely impossible. Due to the limitation of the research, I haven't covered other audience members who utilize television more than other mediums because they have more free time and consider television as a better medium.

through the recorded versions in contrast to watching them on television.

Some respondents highlight their preferences for pirated DVDs and internet download/streaming in relation to the communal experience. These mediums are distributed with ease among friends and peers. It creates a network of audience members, which also constructs a reception context affecting the audience's engagement and reflexivity with the television dramas. One of the respondents explained quite thoroughly in her diary entry:

(N, female, 22 year old, college student) Diary

"If someone wants to lend me DVDs or give me some downloaded series, I will really want to ask them. That way, I could watch it when I'm bored or when I have some spare time. If I buy them myself, I'm afraid that it will be a loss because maybe the quality is not good or the storyline is bad. If I download it myself, I will be too tired to wait for the download. It will also be a loss if I already exhaust myself waiting for the download and it turns out that the storyline is bad. That's why I'd rather wait for a friend lending me DVDs, giving me the downloaded series or recommendations. If I don't get them from a friend, I won't watch anything. I will probably then decide to watch the dramas on television."⁵²

Respondent N explained that she would rather borrow DVDs or get downloaded series from her friend due to its greater flexibility. If she decided that the drama was not worth watching, she did not have to worry because she did not pay for it. Moreover, if she already exhausted these two options, she would then move on to television. This reflects how the audience utilizes all kinds of media, whichever benefits him or her the most. In other words, no matter how controlling the intermediaries/gatekeepers are in constructing the reception context, the audience members are still able to decide what kind of experience they desire from these dramas.

Friends or peer groups are important sources of information and also sources of new material to watch. One of the respondents, W (female, 22 year old, employee), is known by her peer as the "go-to-girl" because she has a lot of East Asian television dramas downloaded in her laptop.

⁵² Translated by the researcher, **Diary**: "*Kalo ada yang mau minjem DVD/mau ngasih download serial lain, saya niat banget mau mintanya. Biar bisa ditonton kalo lagi bosen dan ada waktu luang kalo beli sendiri suka khawatir rugi misalnya filmnya jelek kualitasnya/jelek ceritanya, dan kalo download sendiri capek nunggu downloadnya kellar plus ngerasa rugi kalo ternyata film yang udah capek-capek didownload ternyata jelek. Makanya selalu nunggu download/pinjaman/rekomendasi dari teman. Kalo ga ada dari temen, saya ga nonton apa-apa. Paling jadi berpaling ke nonton drama di TV.*" (N, female, 22 year old, college student)

(W, female, 23 year old, employee) Diary:

"I have a lot of drama collections that I haven't watched but I will always keep on looking for other dramas to download. That is why, when I finish watching one drama, I will search in my hard disc and choose a folder with the latest date. That means I have downloaded the film for a long time or I asked from a friend, but I haven't watched it."⁵³

This experience reflects the flexibility of this medium. The respondent explained how she could freely choose what she wanted to watch even after downloading the dramas. She likes to download all kinds of dramas and would only decide to watch (or to not watch) them in the future. Her decision-making process also reflects this greater flexibility.

(W, female, 23 year old, employee) Diary:

"So, even though I'm watching a drama that I don't find interesting, I will not stop watching it. I will watch it until the last episode because I don't like to wonder how the drama will go if I don't watch it until the last episode. I often find that some dramas are not so interesting at the beginning, but I continue watching and I will find out that the story really touches me and gives a lot of moral messages, which I find interesting. Even if the drama remains uninteresting for me when I finish watching it, I can just erase it from my hard disc and move on with another drama."⁵⁴

From the quotation, it is clear that the respondent would randomly decide which dramas to watch. During the exit interview, she explained that she would often choose unpopular titles, referring to dramas that are not highly recommended by online forums or by friend. She would even choose dramas that are not broadcasted on television. In her experience, television dramas, which were not highly popular, were in fact more interesting for her.

Respondent W's preferences and pattern of experience warrant extra attention. She acts as the 'source' of information and materials for other respondents in her age group. Her preferences and pattern of experience have affected what she

⁵³ Translated by the researcher, **Diary:** "*Saya memiliki banyak koleksi drama yang belum saya tonton, tapi walau begitu saya akan terus mencari drama-drama lain untuk di download. Jadi ketika saya selesai menonton satu drama, saya akan melihat ke hard disk dan memilih folder yang tanggal dibuatnya paling lama. Karna itu berarti film itu sudah lama saya download dan saya minta tapi belum ditonton.*" (W, female, 23 year old, translator)

⁵⁴ Translated by the researcher, **Diary:** "*Jadi, walaupun saya sedang menonton drama yang menurut saya tidak menarik, saya tidak akan berhenti menontonnya. Saya akan menontonnya sampai habis karena saya tidak suka jadi penasaran karena tidak menonton dramanya sampai habis. Saya bahkan sering memilih bertahan untuk tetap melanjutkan nonton karena tidak jarang saya menonton drama yang episode awalnya tidak menarik, di akhir-akhir menyentuh hati saya dan memberikan banyak pesan, juga menarik. Walaupun pada akhirnya dramanya tetap tidak menarik buat saya, saya tinggal menghapusnya dan move on dengan drama yang lain.*" (W, female, 23 year old, employee)

recommends to her peers. In this audience network, W works as an intermediary in preconditioning what her friends will watch and how they will experience the television dramas. However, unlike the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries on the circulation level, within the audience network, the mediation process is not prescribed by any institutional practices. In this network, the mediation process is prescribed by the audience's context, which consists of accumulated values and norms, a sense of morality, or the audience's personal battle of subjectivity against the dominant discourse within their everyday lives.

Returning to the discussion of communal experience, in the audience network, it does not only occur because of the television set in the living room setting. Most of the respondents explained that their communal experiences occurred watching recorded versions of the dramas. The communal experience does not only occur when the audience is watching the dramas, but also 'before' and 'after' watching them.

(D, 23 year old, female, college student), Exit Interview:

"Oh yes, with friends ... about discussing ... all of my friends in campus and also in my boarding house like to watch Korean dramas, so now when I choose a drama I will ask my friends whether or not they think it is good. My sister (*D's sister also lives in the same boarding house with her*) also just bought DVDs and she likes the television drama. I have many friends to discuss the dramas with, the good or not so good things from the drama, like the acting or when the fashion is not too good."

"... like in the boarding house, friends in the boarding house will join me when I watch a television drama, and if after a few minutes it's not so good, we can just stop."⁵⁵

Respondent D is a college student who moved to Jakarta from Medan (North Sumatra, Indonesia) and now lives in a boarding house with her sisters. From the interviews and diary entries, respondent D reflects upon her communal experience as she explains how she asked suggestions from her sisters and friends in the boarding house and when they discussed the stories and characters.

Communal experience becomes a space where audience engages with the television dramas through transferring information between friends/peers. Another

⁵⁵ Translated by the researcher, **Exit Interview:** "*Oh iya, sama temen..soal diskusi ya..kalau temen saya semuanya rata-rata baik di kampus atau di kostan semua udah suka Korea, jadi sekarang jadi kayak lebih milih-milih semuanya, bagus gak menurut lo, ini drama on going bagus gak..adek saya juga kan baru beli jadi suka gitu.. banyak temen diskusi, oh bagusnya ini ya.. gak bagus ah aktingnya atau apa baju-bajunya kurang bagus..kurang oke kayak gitu-gitu*"

"... jadi kayak di kostan, sesame di kostan pun oi nonton dong, nonton berapa menit misalnya kurang bagus nih ga usah..punya apalagi ... "(D, 23 year old, female, college student)

example comes from respondent W, who explained in her diary entries how she recommended respondent MS to watch *Boss*⁵⁶ and *The 1st Shop of Coffee Prince*⁵⁷.

(W, 23 year old, female, employee), Diary:

"After watching *Boss*, MS told me something. I cannot agree more on her opinion. So before I watched *Boss*, she was watching *Coffee Prince*. I was the one who told her to watch *Coffee Prince* because I think it is love story, which is not *kacangan* (an Indonesian term which means the love story is not 'cheesy'). It's funny. So I offered it to MS. Why do I offer a lot of dramas to MS? You must be confused ... I don't offer that many to the others. This is because I live in the same boarding house with her and because now I rarely go to campus, I could not recommend dramas to my friends anymore. Moreover, I haven't topped up my internet modem, so I can't access *Facebook*. I used to post links to the dramas I have watched and liked on *Facebook*. Now, I don't do it often. *Facebook* is no longer interesting. I usually write in twitter now."⁵⁸

The communal experience also includes this flow of information from one audience to another. From the diary entry, I would argue that respondent W's close encounter with respondent MS, because they live in the same boarding house and meet each other quite often, is the main reason why the interaction could occur. Furthermore, respondent W was using her value judgment by commenting on the "not so cheesy" love story. This would of course affect respondent MS' reception context as her perception was already preconditioned by respondent W's suggestions. Furthermore, in this era of social networking, there a virtual communal experience also exists. This can be seen in respondent W's experience in utilizing social networking, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, to express her thoughts on the television dramas or to share information.

Audiences have made use of the practices of gatekeepers and/or

⁵⁶ A Japanese Television Drama, Broadcast period: 16 April to 25 June 2009 (source: <http://wiki.d-addicts.com>). Storyline: "This series revolves around a group of peculiar detectives in a new division created to fight against an increase in atrocious crimes. Osawa Eriko is a beautiful career woman who has just returned from training in the U.S. and is appointed as the "boss" of this division."

⁵⁷ A Korean Television Drama, Broadcast period: 2 July – 27 August 2007 (source: <http://wiki.d-addicts.com>). Storyline: The life of Go Eun Chan (Yoon Eun Hye) is not easy; she works many jobs to pay off debts and even gave up her feminine image. Choi Han Kyul (Gong Yoo) is the heir of a big food company, but his grandmother wants him to settle down, so she arranged many dates for him. After Eun Chan bumped into Han Kyul and was mistaken for a boy, Han Kyul decided to hire Eun Chan to be his gay lover in order to avoid the arranged dates. Desperately in need of money, Eun Chan had no choice but to accept.

⁵⁸ Translated by the researcher, *Diary*: "Abis nonton *Boss*, mamas bilang sesuatu. Dan saya cannot agree more on her opinion. Jadi sbkn nntn *Boss*, dia nonton *Coffee Prince*. Lagi-lagi karena saya suruh. *Coffee Prince* menurut saya drama cinta yang ga *kacangan*. Lucu. Jadi saya tawarin ke Mamas. Kenapa saya nawarin banyak drama ke Mamas? Miss pasti bingung..sementara ke yang lain kurang. Karena saya satu kosan sama dia dan karena saya mulai jarang ngampus jadi mulai jarang recommend drama ke anak-anak. Juga karna selama hampir tiga minggu pulsa modem abis, jadi ga buka2 feskuk. Karena biasanya saya suka ngepost drama bagus yang beres saya tonton di feskuk. Cuma sekarang udah jarang. Feskuk udh ga menarik, jadi saya biasanya cuma nulis2 di Twitter." (W, 23 year old, female, employee)

intermediaries according to either the intentional or accidental factors of television or the flexible, continuous and communal experience offered by pirated DVDs/internet. The way the audiences create their own pattern of experience has constructed a network of audience, especially for those who prefer the recorded versions. If in the past television has created a sense of communal experience due to the shared living room setting, the recorded versions have created a similar condition. Free flow of television dramas from one viewer to another is done communally, in which the member contributes something to the network. Even though W is considered as the source of information and downloaded series, she always takes into consideration her friends' preferences. Her friends will also ask for the kind of dramas they like or want to watch, as respondent N explained in the previous diary quotation. I would argue that the network of audience in this case study is comparable to the operation of a network in the circulation process. To look at the intra-regional cultural traffic as a network of production and distribution is no longer enough. We also need to look at the interconnectedness of cultural consumption as a part of the network.

Another intermediary practice utilized by the audience is the use of language mediating tools with television, pirated DVDs and/or internet downloads/streaming. First of all, as argued in Chapter 3, due to economic motives, the subtitles used in pirated DVDs are mostly low-quality subtitles. Furthermore, most of the subtitles are not in the Indonesian language. They are mostly in "broken" Malay, English or Chinese. This has indeed affected the audience's interpretation of the text and the meaning-making process. Subtitling in pirated DVDs is simply for the sake of getting-the-point and not for a comprehensive understanding of the original dialog. According to the respondents' experiences, subtitles can either be misleading or actually useful in understanding the story. However, other mediums, specifically streaming or downloading from the internet, will have extra layers of mediation practices. One example is the work of subtitling by some members of virtual discussion forums. Downloading or online streaming, with good English subtitling, give a quality assurance that audience members will be able to understand the storyline, even though they do not understand the original language used in the television drama.

While pirated DVDs and downloaded versions typically use subtitling, foreign dramas broadcasted on television prefer to use dubbing, which has distinct

effects on the audience's viewing experience. The practice of dubbing, as explained in Chapter 3, has created an identifiable style exclusively attached to East Asian television dramas broadcast on *Indosiar*. I have analyzed this intermediary activity as one of the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries' strategy in constructing commonalities among a range of television dramas originating from Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Respondents have also explained that they could easily identify the voices of different characters because the television station uses the same voice-over actors/actresses for similar characters in different dramas. Respondents explained that they could predict what they will hear or how the characters will sound.

Some respondents do not consider this routinized practice of dubbing as a disturbance in watching the television dramas. For example, R explained in her diary and also during the exit interview:

(R, 22 year old, female, college student) Diary:

"I will easily remember the name of the characters in the film especially if the film is dubbed in Indonesian. It will be easier for me to remember how to pronounce the names, especially if the names are repeated over and over again. It's quite different when I just read the name on subtitles. It will usually be difficult for me to remember the name of the characters, especially Korean names consisting of three syllables."⁵⁹

On the reception level, dubbing brings a sense of familiarity. The foreignness of the television drama is reduced through the familiar audio experience. Listening to the "foreign" names pronounced in Indonesian language helps the audience to remember the names better. The Indonesian names for the Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean characters are easier to remember. One evident example is the name of the male character in *Meteor Garden* (2001). For the Indonesian audience, the name of the male character is "Tao Ming Tse" (pronounced /tao ming se/ in the Indonesian pronunciation), which came from the television dubbing. The Mandarin name and pronunciation is actually Dao Ming Si.

Easy recognition of the name is substantial in the audience's engagement with the characters. Most of the time, recognition of the Indonesian-pronounced-names makes it easier for the audience to understand the story line. The foreign names

⁵⁹ Translated by the researcher, Diary: "*Saya akan lebih mudah mengingat nama tokoh dalam film jika film tersebut di-dubbing dalam bahasa Indonesia. Karena akan lebih gampang diingat cara pengucapannya, apalagi jika nama tersebut diulang-ulang. Berbeda jika saya hanya membaca nama tokoh pada subtitle, biasanya saya tidak terlalu mudah mengingat nama tokohnya, apalagi nama Korea yang terdiri dari tiga suku kata.*" (R, 22 year old, female, college student)

become more familiar as the foreignness of the television drama is reduced. On the circulation level, the intermediaries, in this case the television station, are strategically constructing commonalities to induce a sense of familiarity with the foreign dramas. On the reception level, the audience is utilizing this intermediary activity in order to better enjoy the television dramas.

The constructed sense of familiarity produced by the use of Indonesian-pronounced names and dubbing of television dramas promotes a re-evaluation of the geo-linguistic region hypothesis. Indonesia has a different linguistic system with Japan, Korea and Taiwan. The process of consumption requires an extra layer of mediation practice in the in-between space of production and consumption. This is done to ensure that the flow of products into the Southeast Asian sub-region is not obstructed due to a linguistic barrier. This active interpretation of how dubbing practice affects the audience's enjoyment and meaning-making process reveals how the audience reacts toward the intermediary activities in mediating the meaning. Translations techniques are required to ensure a non-obscured flow from the countries of origin to Indonesia. More importantly, audience members make use of these available translation techniques to benefit the way they engage with the television dramas.

Setting aside the technicality of the translations, whether it was properly done or not, the audience still needs to make sense of the translated meaning when they watch a dubbed/subtitled version of the television dramas. Viewers realize that there is a limitation in completely understanding what is being offered by the television dramas. Furthermore, different translation tools have automatically marked the audience's preference for a particular medium. For those who prefer subtitles, pirated DVDs and internet downloads/streaming are the best option. However, based on the data collected, their preferences are also affected by other aspects, which are not always related to the translation tools. For some, complete understanding of the story line is not always significant. Availability is more important. They will watch a television drama on whatever medium is available, even though the poor translations disrupt their understanding of the story.

Ultimately, audience members have appropriated the preconditioned reception contexts set up by gatekeepers and/or intermediaries according to their needs. Even though the gatekeepers screen/select/filter these television dramas

before they enter the “gate,” audience members strategically utilize the most flexible media in creating their own patterns of experience. This means, they can use other kinds of media to negotiate with the gatekeeping practices. They can also watch the recorded versions to have a different experience without having to wait for the next episodes or to watch the non-censored version. Furthermore, audience members also reject some intermediary activities, such as when television stations construct commonalities among East Asian television dramas by lumping them together into one broad category of “Asian Dramas.” Based on the data, the country’s specificity is one of the main appeals for the audience members. The audience does not generalize all of these products as merely Asian or East Asian.

Research findings indicate that respondents are able to identify certain characteristics of Japanese/Korean/Taiwanese dramas. These characteristics include both technical (number of episodes) and non-technical (narrative structure):

Less episodes for Japanese dramas:

(F, 22 year old, female, college student), FGD: “... Japan, in my observation, will make series for only 13 episodes, so they don’t drag the stories for too many episodes. If they need to make it long, they will make a sequel. I think Korean and Taiwanese dramas are like Indonesian soap operas. If people like it, they will make many episodes, which make the story unreasonable sometimes.”⁶⁰

(J, 24 year old, male, college student) FGD: “Japanese drama is not long because the minimum format is only 10-12 episodes.”⁶¹

The two respondents identified that there is a difference in the number of episodes and in the narrative pattern. Respondent MS explained that Korean dramas are only funny in the early episodes, but the later episodes are sad and filled with tragedy. Another respondent, J, who prefers Japanese dramas, reported in his diary some Japanese dramas use a similar narrative formula, often losing its funny elements at the end. In these examples, respondents show that they are able to identify the specific textual elements of each television drama. Audience members critically and strategically differentiate the television dramas as Japanese, Korean or Taiwanese. This identifiability reflects the multiple types of drama in the category “East Asia” as

⁶⁰ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “... kalo Jepang itu, kalo saya lihat, bikin serial mereka per 13 episode, jadi apa namanya ya, ga dipanjang-panjangin gitu loh Miss, kalo pun dipanjangin nanti jadi sekuel, nah kalo Korea ama Taiwan tuh kalo menurut saya sih itu kayak sinetron Indonesia, jadi kalo laku, ntar dipanjangin gitu, jadi ceritanya kadang-kadang jadi kurang masuk juga.” (F, 22 year old, female, college student)

⁶¹ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “Kalo Jepang tuh gak ada yang panjang-panjang tuh semuanya formatnya minimal tuh 10-12 doang.” (J, 24 year old, male, college student)

distinguishable in the consumption process for the Indonesian audience. This contrasts sharply with the commonalities constructed by gatekeepers and/or intermediaries in the circulation process.

On the micro level of audience reception, viewers utilized all the available media while marking their preferences not only based on the medium, but also on the country of origins. To be able to recognize the unique characteristics of each country of origin is an essential part of the viewing experience. This reflects how the audience's everyday reflexivity also includes the modalities of each country (Japan, Korea or Taiwan) as a marker of preference. In other words, for the audience, East Asia is not considered as a single entity or as merely the other Asia, as it is in the circulation process. On the other hand, there are moments in which the audience tends to romanticize East Asia through its assumed commonalities with Indonesia, which is comparable with the intermediary practices of the gatekeepers and/or intermediaries. The next part of the analysis will look at this intertwining process as the audience reflects on the imagination of East Asia in these television dramas.

4.2 Reimagining (East) Asia

Research findings reveal an understanding of the Indonesian audience's engagement and reflexivity with the East Asian television dramas as products coming from different locales. The audience engages with the television dramas not only in a physical sense, such as through their emotional engagement with the stories as explained in the respondent's diary entries. Furthermore, the audience's everyday reflexivity is observable because the way the television dramas have provided a dialectic space for the audience's meaning making process. As argued earlier in Chapter 2, the audience engages with and reflects on the television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and Korea while interpreting the different or similar everydayness offered by the television dramas, which affects the way respondents imagine or (re)imagine East Asia.

The audience's interpretive contribution comes not only from prompting of the television dramas themselves, but also from the audience's prior social and cultural knowledge. Audience research must therefore investigate how the audience's construction of meaning in watching television drama is guided by their own social and cultural knowledge. Sonia Livingstone (1992) in her work, "The Resourceful

Reader: Interpreting Television Characters and Narratives," argues that:

"Viewers' interpretations inform us about the nature of the viewing experience--the ideas, images, and concepts with which viewers can and do engage, the pleasures and emotions which fill their leisure time, and, consequently, the repertoire of representations on which they may draw in their everyday interactions with others."
(Livingstone, 1992, pp. 62-63)

In the scope of this research, the audience's interpretation is not only seen as the construction of meaning at one particular moment of watching the television drama, but as accumulation of multiple moments of experiences that ultimately lead to a particular interpretation. As argued by Livingstone, when audiences interpret "the ideas, images and concepts" from the television drama, they are drawn into their everyday lives in order to make them sensible and understandable. Furthermore, everyday lives are also contextualized according to particularities of the country of reception.

For this case study, the idea of audience engagement provides a more inclusive understanding of the Indonesian audience's experience in consuming East Asian television drama in comparison to the concept of audience activity. Instead of focusing on the activity of the audience, which overemphasizes the physical act of consumption, a study of transnational television audiences needs to examine other forms of experiences and not only the physical act of watching the television. The notion of "engagement" points to a wider context and the need to examine multiple dimensions of an audience's experience viewing television dramas. This engagement includes both physical and non-physical experiences. This research will also focus on the audience's "everyday reflexivity" in order to show how television dramas from East Asian countries have created conditions for the practice of reflexivity by opening up a space for the audience to make sense of his or her life condition within the multiple constraints of his or her social/cultural/political contexts. Youna Kim (2007, 2008) argues that the increased flows of television products like East Asian television dramas into other countries, have affected the audience's meaning making process in their everyday lives.

In analyzing the data, I encountered several recurring themes revealing how Indonesian audience members engage with the television dramas while actively reflecting on their own everyday lives. These themes are closely related to the specificity of the Indonesian social, cultural and political contexts. They are also

related to the individual's life, values and norms. I will limit the discussion here to three themes exemplifying the process of Indonesian audience's engagement and reflexivity, specifically focusing on **attributed values**, **"soft" masculinity and "cute" femininity**, and **the discourse of Chineseness**, which are all used as filters in making sense of the depiction of East Asia in these television dramas.

4.2.1 Attributed Values

Indonesian audience members reflect on and engage with the attributed values represented in the East Asian television dramas while using their own values as a filter. Some of the attributed values the respondents identify in these television dramas are the values of hard work, respecting the elderly, family piety and normative sexuality. Respondents explained that one of the reasons they find the television drama appealing is the hard work ethos in most of the dramas they have watched.

(A, 26 year old, male, employee), FGD:

"Before I started watching Korean dramas, I thought Korean people are hard workers and they can resolve their mistakes really fast. I really like automotive and I used to follow the automotive development in Korea. They could, for example, in the first race, get a warning and in the next one, they could get five stars for their score. I think they could learn from their mistakes really fast. After watching Korean dramas, I am even more convinced."⁶²

(K, 33 year old, female, employee), FGD:

"I think the work ethic of Japanese people, I could see, they really respect their customers. They are really humble toward their customers. And also how they work really hard."⁶³

These quotations see how audience members reflect on the hard work ethos in the television dramas and how this becomes the reason why they watch these television dramas. They used a positive tone in describing how they already acknowledged the hard work ethos even before they watched the television dramas. It is significant to highlight that the process of reflexivity and engagement with the television dramas

⁶² Translated by the researcher, FGD: "*dulu gue sebenarnya sebelum ngikutin film Korea, gue nganggepnya orang Korea itu tipenya pekerja keras dan sangat cepet ngebenerin kesalahan gitu. Karna gue sebelumnya sangat suka otomotif, jadi gue sangat mengikuti perkembangan otomotif di Korea tuh gimana. Dia bisa misalnya di keluaran pertama ini dia sampe dapet warning tapi di keluaran berikutnya bisa sampai dapat nilai bintang lima gitu jadi gw nangggepnya mereka segitu cepetnya belajar dari kesalahan mereka. Makin yakin lagi setelah nonton film Korea.*" (A, 26 year old, male, employee)

⁶³ Translated by the researcher, FGD: "*Yang menurut gw paling tuh ya etos kerja orang jepang, dari situ gw liat, mereka harus ini banget sama customer, humble banget sama customer untuk kepercayaan customernya, trus yang gimana ya buat mereka tuh kerja gila-gilaan*" (K, 33 year old, female, employee)

convinced the audience that these values are the values of “Korean people” and also “Japanese people.” In other words, they are not values of the characters in the television dramas alone, but are also attributed to the countries where these television dramas come from. The values represented in the television dramas are generalized as the values of the countries of production or of East Asia in general.

Another attributed value is respect for the elderly. Audience members make sense of the storyline while at the same time using their own frames of reference creating different meaning-making process for different individual audience.

(E, 27 year old, male, employee/student), FGD:

“What I really like is in Korean culture, it is really important to respect older people.”

“The culture to respect older people, I think this is it. That is also one of the reasons why I decided to go and live there. Why? A developed country but it is still able to maintain the culture to respect each other. Look at us, I think it is slowly degrading here.”⁶⁴

Respondent E identified the attributed value of respecting elders, which he often saw in the Korean television dramas. Like the value of hard work, it is attributed to the Korean culture in general. There is a process of comparison when he stated: “A developed country but it is still able to maintain the culture to respect each other. Look at us, I think it is slowly degrading here.” The audience member here compares Korea with Indonesia, showing that he identifies this as a familiar value for Indonesia as well. In reflecting on the value of respecting elders, the viewer first identifies it as a familiar value attached to his or her own everyday life. However, E’s comments show that his viewing experience leads him to see a disparity between Korea and Indonesia in terms of how strictly people uphold this particular value.” Based on their interpretations, respect for this value is “slowly degrading” in Indonesia unlike in Korea, seen as a more developed than Indonesia. Here, there is an intertwining process of familiar identification and the audience’s individual aspiration.

Another attributed value the respondents interpret from the television dramas is the value of family piety. The next two quotations reveal the audience members’

⁶⁴ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “yang gue suka satu oh ternyata budaya Korea masih segitu pentingnya untuk menghormati yang lebih tua” ... “...budaya lebih ngehargain yang lebih tua, kayaknya itu deh, tadi gue pikirin apa lupa, itu juga salah satunya yang memutuskan gua kesana. Kenapa? Suatu negara yang maju tapi masih bisa gak menghilangkan budaya mereka yang menghormati. Bahkan kita, kayaknya kalo kita kan pelan-pelan pudar tuh.” (E, 27 year old, male, employee/student)

familiar identification and aspiration while also appropriating the values they interpret with the attributed values in their everyday lives.

(J, 24 year old, male, college student), Diary:

"In this episode, the character, Taro, is emphasized as the older brother who has 5 younger brothers. It is a typical family drama ... a typical drama touching upon the harmonious relationship between brothers."

"A very touching episode but also silly. The sacrifice of a brother (Taro) to fight for her younger brother (Jiro) so that he can join the basketball team. Really touching."⁶⁵

(N, 22 year old, female, college student), Exit Interview:

"For example, the traditional music player is trained by the grandfather and was expected to be a traditional music player. Meanwhile, her passion is to play in a band. When she started mixing traditional with popular music, she thinks it sounds good. However, she has to go against her grandfather. It shows if you really have something you want, even though someone says you can't have it, you still have to try. I think, even though the grandfather is upset but he knows that his granddaughter will not do any harm. The granddaughter also reassures her grandfather that she will still practice music even though it will be harder. However, it's not like that in my house ... hahaha"⁶⁶

By looking into the family relationship, the respondents not only express their appreciation of the representation of family closeness, but also comparing what they saw with what she experienced in their own family life. Respondent N referred to the granddaughter-grandfather relationship as one of mutual understanding. When asked why she compared it with her own situation, she explained that it was a different situation for her because her parents sometimes enforced what they want on her without considering her opinion. Furthermore, she explained that it was different in Indonesia due to a cultural norm or expectation of unquestioned obedience to parents' wishes. Yet again, the audience members are making sense of what they watch by reflecting on their own frames of reference, their own family lives.

⁶⁵ Translated by the researcher, Diary: "*Pada episode ini ditonjolkan peran Taro sebagai kakak tertua yang memiliki 5 adik ... Tipikal drama yang menyentuh dengan hubungan antara kakak beradik yang sangat harmonis.*"

"Episode yang mengharukan sekaligus konyol. Pengorbanan seorang kakak (Taro), untuk memperjuangkan adiknya (Jiro) masuk dalam tim baseball, sangat menyentuh." (J, 24 year old, male, college student)

⁶⁶ Translated by the researcher, Diary: "*kayak misalnya itu kan si yang pemain tradisional itu dilatih banget sama kakeknya harus jadi pemain tradisional gitu, sementara yang group band ini memang passionnya disitu kan dan setelah ter-mix gitu si cewenya ini mikir kok kayaknya yang populer itu memang enak yaa.. tapi itu harus ngelawan si kakeknya itu, jadi disitu kalau emang punya sesuatu yang kita pengenin walaupun orang luar bilang gak usah gak usah gitu yaa tetep aja harus nyoba gitu.. Kayaknya sih, apa yaa, bedanya sih kalo disitu kakeknya marah-marah tapi tau percaya gitu cucunya gak akan gimana-gimana dan cucunya juga kayak iyaa kakek aku berjanji kalau misalnya aku ikut-ikutan nanti latihannya lebih berat gitu, tapi kalo dirumah kayaknya gak kayak gitu.. hahaha"* (N, 22 year old, female, college student)

In this process of reflexivity, audience members are exercising value judgment when they try to make sense of the attributed values on the television dramas. They were trying to assess what they are watching and this actually reveals more about the values of the person making the assessment than about what is represented on the television drama. This is also observable in interpretations of values by other respondents, particularly regarding the value of normative sexuality. In the following quotations, the respondents expressed their thoughts on what is considered normal and not normal in terms of sexuality. Respondent R expressed her opinion on the male-female body switch in *Secret Garden*:

(R, female, 22 year old, college student), Exit Interview:

"I actually don't like the whole switching body thing. I think male-female body switch is not normal. I don't like it."⁶⁷

Another respondent expressed her thoughts on a seemingly homosexual representation on a Japanese television drama.

(MS, 23 year old, female, employee), Diary:

"What I like most from this episode is when Iwai felt that he was shot and Hanagata hugged him ... maybe the scene would have been disgusting if the innocent Hanagata was also gay ... but the scene became funny because Hanagata hugged Iwai sincerely. Iwai, who was gay, really enjoyed the hug when he hugged Hanagata who was sad after losing his friend."⁶⁸

Respondent MS used the word "disgusting" to describe the character's apparently homosexual act as he hugged the other character. She knows that one of the male characters was homosexual. However, she then reinterprets the scene to be "funny" because she read the hug as a non-sexual gesture. She was exercising value judgment based on her frame of reference on normative sexuality.

The way audience members perceive the attributed values represented on the East Asian television dramas is anchored in their own culturally constructed values. In the process of perceiving the attributed values on the television drama, "... the viewers have sifted and evaluated all of this through the sieve of their own values" (Kantz *et.al.*, 175). In the Indonesian context, the audience's constructed values are

⁶⁷ Translated by the researcher, Exit Interview: "sebenarnya saya tuh ga terlalu suka yang tuker-tukeran gitu, cewe cowo tapi ga normal gitu, saya ga suka.." (R, female, 22 year old, college student)

⁶⁸ Translated by the researcher, Diary: "Yang paling saya sukai adalah bagian ketika Iwai merasa dirinya tertembak dan Hanagata memeluknya ... mungkin adegan ini akan sangat menjijikan jika Hanagata yang polos situ juga seorang gay ... namun hal itu menjadi sangat lucu karena Hanagata begitu tulus sebaiknya Iwai yang seorang gay sangat menikmati ketika ia memeluk Hanagata yang sedih karena kehilangan temannya." (MS, 23 year old, female, employee)

most of the time detached from what they perceived on the television dramas. A good example of this is what is considered as a normative relationship in Indonesia. If this normative relationship is disrupted, like in the male-female body switch or the seemingly homosexual hug, the audience members reject them because they do not fit their own constructed ideals. These attributed values are constructed by the audiences' reception context and their social and cultural condition. The audience needs to fill in the gaps between what they watch and what they 'know' by appropriating it. The "desirable" and the "real" always need to be synchronized.

4.2.2 "Soft" Masculinity and "Cute" Femininity

The second theme to be explored concerns how audience members rework what they watch according to their everyday conceptualization of masculinity and femininity. As an illustration, respondents identify male characters in the East Asian television dramas as "*cowok cantik*" (pretty or beautiful men) while female characters are characterized as "*cewek imut*" (*imut* could be used to describe the petite figure of the female characters, but it could also refer to the cute attitude). These two categorizations of masculine and feminine attributes are constructed based on the audience's understanding of gender in their day-to-day experience. One needs to take into account that, within the discourse of masculinity and femininity in Indonesia, the word "*cantik*" (pretty or beautiful) will not be attributed to men because it offers a contradicting feature of masculinity. On the other hand, the word "*imut*" (cute) is a common phrase used to describe a feminine feature. I would like to elaborate further by looking into each aspect while bringing into the analysis other scholarly discussions about the discourse of masculinity and femininity in Indonesia and also in East Asian television dramas.

The dominant reading from the respondents deals with the representation of "soft" masculinity through the image of "pretty men." Respondents, mostly female respondents but also male respondents, use the term "pretty men" to describe how they think about the majority of male characters in the television dramas. Even though this term has also been used in other research on East Asian television drama to describe the kind of masculinity depicted in these television dramas, I would like to point out the respondents' use of the word "pretty." In the Indonesian context, "pretty" is most often attributed to women. However, based on the respondents'

explanation in Focus Group Discussions, interviews and diary entries, it is clear that they construct the definition of “pretty” while reflecting on what men are ‘normatively’ supposed to be in the Indonesian social and cultural context.

The respondents identified several aspects of “pretty men” and “soft” masculinity based on their viewing of the television dramas, namely certain physical features, over-the-top fashion and romantic characteristics. First of all, most of the respondents highlight the physical features of the male characters such as fair and smooth skin, curly eyelashes, soft and stylish hair, and even manicure-pedicured nails. The tones of their explanation on the physical features are diverse. Respondent F presented her description in a positive tone because these “pretty men” are the reason why she watches East Asian television dramas, specifically Japanese dramas.

(F, 22 year old, female, college student), FGD:

“For me, I like it because of the male characters, because I originally like reading Japanese comics.”

“In those comics, the guys are ‘pretty.’ Sometimes they are more pretty than the girls. At first I thought it is because it is in a form of drawings, but after watching the television dramas, I realized they are originally very pretty. Moreover, I think these pretty guys in Japan are respected and people adore them. That’s why, now, whenever I see a pretty guy I will immediately like him and say “Oh ... he’s pretty.””⁶⁹

I would like to highlight a part of her description that says: “I think these pretty guys in Japan are respected and people adore them.” This implies a significant difference from what she recognizes in her everyday life. Her tone of wonderment that “pretty men” are respected in Japan implies that this is not the case in Indonesia. There is a gap between what she sees on the television drama and on her everyday life. Furthermore, the experience also led her to shift her perspective on masculinity. At the time of the research, she was able to use the word “pretty” to describe an attractive man she saw, as stated on the last part of her description. When asked what she meant by the phrase “*cowok cantik*” (pretty or beautiful men), respondent F explained: “Pretty as in physically ... Like their hair is very soft ... their eyes and also

⁶⁹ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “Kalo aku sih dari cowoknya, jadi kan aku emang suka baca komik Jepang kan”; “He eh, terus kalo komik Jepang tuh kadang-kadang cowoknya tuh cantik-cantik gimana gitu, yak an, kadang-kadang cantik dari ceweknya, nah itu saya pikir cuma karena, oh cuma gambarnya aja kali, nah ternyata setelah nonton buku gambar-gambar Jepang, ternyata emang gitu di Jepang itu yang cowok-cowok cantiknya itu kayak diharga-hargain gitu lho Miss, wah ... wah dia cantik, dia cantik, dikagum-kagumin gitu dan sekarang tuh saya kalo ngeliat cowok cantik tuh jadi kadang-kadang jadi suka ikut, wow ... dia cantik gitu” (F, 22 year old, female, college student)

their curly eyelashes.”⁷⁰ The word pretty is once again associated with constructed feminine features in Indonesia like soft hair and curly eyelashes. However, respondent F carried a positive tone, which does not imply any objections toward this kind of feminine construction of male beauty.

On the other hand, most of the respondents gave a less positive tone when describing these non-normative physical features of the male characters. Respondent S expressed her amazement that male characters on the television drama have prettier nails than her.

(S, 34 year old, female, housewife/employee), FGD:

“The fashion can be disturbing if it’s too over-the-top ... Their nails are more beautiful than me ... Oh God ... the guys’ nails in the *Secret Garden* series are so good ... manicure pedicure ... wow ...”⁷¹

Her astonishment at the male characters’ beautiful nails reflects a dissimilar constructed view of what she is accustomed to in her everyday life. For her, beautiful nails are not an appropriate masculine attribute, which could be concluded from her exclamation: “Their nails are more beautiful than me.”

Respondents make use of their prior cultural and social knowledge in understanding the features of “pretty men” in the television dramas. Most of the time, they relate to their own perspective of what men should and should not look like, physically. On one side, respondent F was able to use the word “pretty” to refer to what she considered attractive men. It seems that, due to her prior accumulated images of “pretty men” in Japanese comics, she was reassured that the features of “pretty men” in the Japanese dramas match her own perspective of physically attractive men. However, for respondent S, perhaps less familiar with the Japanese dramas and comics, the reverse is true. Without acknowledging prior accumulated images of East Asian men, the “pretty men” physical attributes do not match her perspective of what a man should look like.

In the data analysis, I found that the second interpretive process is more common in the respondents’ reflexivity. There is a predisposition to disregard the non-normative physical attribute of “pretty men” represented in the television

⁷⁰ Translated by the researcher, FGD “*Cantik ke fisik sih, kayak rambutnya tuh kayak lembut banget ... Matanya juga, bulu matanya lentik*” (F, 22 year old, female, college student)

⁷¹ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “*“Yang pasti tadinya gw gak suka cowo-cowo Asia ; When asked why she change her views, she answered “Ya lumayanlah ganteng ... bersih soalnya” ; “Orang kukunya aja lebih bagus dari kuku gue ... heh ... please deh ihhh ... Cowok-cowok yang di Secret Garden kukunya bagus banget bo ... meni pedi ... buset dahh”* (S, 34 year old, female, housewife/employee):

dramas. Respondents tend to prefer more normative masculine physical aspects. I would like to take the actor, Rain, as an example, because his name kept on reappearing in the data. Some of the respondents explained that they considered Rain to be more masculine; therefore more “handsome,” in television dramas like *A Love to Kill*⁷².

(N, 22 year old, female, college student) Diary

“He (*Rain*) played as Bok Goo, a guy who is not afraid of anything and can fight, but he has a messy life. He was scruffy, his face was full of bruises, shabby. But I think that’s what makes him cool! He’s still handsome hahaha.”

“My favourite scene is when Bok Goo becomes a car mechanic. Wow ... seeing Rain (Bok Goo) wearing a sleeveless shirt and pants with his six pack body ... aaaa ~ **mimisan (nosebleed, an expression to show how excited she was due to Rain’s six pack body)** damn men, he was so sexy and hot! He was also sweating. Oh no ... oh no ... **faints**”⁷³

Respondent N highlighted Rain’s physical features, like his ability to fight and his scruffy and shabby style. She considered him as “cool” and “handsome” because of these physical features. She then further elaborated a scene emphasizing her admiration toward Rains’ six-pack body.

⁷² A Korean television drama, Broadcast period: 31 Oct – 20 Dec 2005 (source: <http://wiki.d-addicts.com>). Storyline: “In *A Love to Kill*, Bi (Rain or Jeong Ji Hoon) plays a tough guy as the role of a K-1 Fighter, Kang Bok Gu. Bok Gu is a character who is dynamic in nature and grew up in a foster home. He falls in love with a woman whom he should not love. It was because of the woman, his emotionally-wounded brother fell off from the rooftop and became a human vegetable. So, his love is forbidden and inevitably tragic.”

⁷³ Translated by the researcher, **Diary**: “Dia jadi Bok Goo, cowo yang kayaknya ga takut apapun dan jago berantem, tapi hidupnya berantakan. Disini dia dibikin brewokan, muka penuh luka, kumel, lusuh, compang-camping. Tapi justru menurut saya keren! Tetep ganteng hahaha.”

“Tapi adegan yang paling saya suka itu pas diliatin Bok Goo jadi montir mobil. Beh ... ngeliat Rain (Bok Goo) pake kutang sama celana panjang doank dengan badan six pack yang jadi banget ... aaaa ~ **mimisan* anjrit men itu sexy dan hot parah! Mana pake adegan keringetan segala, Haduh haduh *faints**”

(Screenshots from *A Love to Kill* (2005))

All of these physical features contrast with what respondents interpreted as the physical features of pretty men. In this television drama, the character does not have beautiful nails, soft hair or curly eyelashes. On the other hand, he is scruffy, shabby and messy, typical masculine features. Another example is respondent C, who also described how she compared Rain in *Full House*⁷⁴ and *Ninja Assassin*⁷⁵.

(C, 22 year old, female, employee), FGD:

“... maybe because Rain’s image is not a typical guy who has ... hmm ... a feminine style, especially because I saw him in other series like *Ninja Assassin*. In that series, he was really different and his image there is so manly.”⁷⁶

Respondent C considers Rain as a more manly character in the film *Ninja Assassin* compared to when she watched him in *Full House*. She also acknowledged that Rain has always been depicted as a non-feminine man in other television dramas. However, one element that makes him look less manly in *Full House* is his over-the-top fashion sense, just as respondent MS explained in response to respondent C’s explanation during the Focus Group Discussion: “I think Rain was too fashionable there, I mean come on, as a guy, please just be ordinary.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ A Korean television drama, broadcast period: 14 July to 2 Sept 2004 (source: <http://wiki.d-addicts.com>). Storyline: “Han Ji Eun is a naive writer who got swindled out of everything she owned including her house by her best friends. Stranded in China, she managed to borrow money from an actor Lee Young Jae (*Rain*) to return to Korea. On her return, she found out that her house was bought by Lee Young Jae.”

⁷⁵ *Ninja Assassin* is a 2009 American martial arts film directed by James McTeigue. The film stars South Korean pop musician Rain as a disillusioned assassin looking for retribution against his former mentor, played by ninja film legend Sho Kosugi. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1186367/>

⁷⁶ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “Iya soalnya kalau saya liat yang lain-lainnya yang sekarang gitu, ga tau, saya ngeliatnya ga cocok aja, mungkin image saya ke Rain yang Rain itu bukan tipikal cowo yang ... yang agak melambai itu kan enggak ... iya apalagi waktu saya nonton yang dia main yang apa, yang bunuh-bunuhan ... Nah itu *Ninja Assassin* kan, dia beda banget kan, jadi ya udah image saya ke Rain ya udah ya dia cowo banget” (C, 22 year old, female, employee)

⁷⁷ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “... pakai bajunya tar kalo si Rain tuh terlalu fashionable, maksudnya

(Screenshots from *Full House* (2004))

The respondent interprets the depiction of fashionable men or more specifically, over-the-top fashionable men, as “not ordinary.” It negates the notion of masculinity that she is familiar with. Another respondent explained during the FGD:

(R, 22 year old, female, college student), FGD:

“Yes, when I saw them, their style, I mean their style is really modern and sometimes the clothes are too over-the-top. The men’s clothing style does not really fit to their style. It looks like it’s too westernized. I think they force it too much. It’s like when they’re wearing layers of scarves. For the guys, it makes them look like girls.”⁷⁸

Respondent R clearly stated that over-the-top fashion made the male characters “look like girls.” This implies that her social and cultural context for what men should wear is different from what she is interpreting from the television dramas. In her everyday

cowok tuh yang biasa aja lah” (MS, 23 year old, female, employee)

⁷⁸ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “Iya, waktu liat mereka, ternyata gaya mereka tuh, maksudnya tuh udah gaya-gaya modern, dan kadang-kadang gaya bajunya juga terlalu berlebihan kaya cowok-cowoknya tuh gaya-gaya bajunya kayaknya tuh kaya gimana gitu kayak gak cocok dari gayanya... Kaya terlalu mengikuti Barat kayak gaya bajunya gitu kan, gimana gaya bajunya tuh kan ngusahain gayanya Cuma kaya maksa bajunya, pakai syal yang berlapis-lapis gitu, tapi buat cowoknya tuh kaya cewek-cewek.” (R, 22 year old, female, college student)

context, the layered scarves worn by the male characters are usually only worn by girls, making it a feminine attribute. The aspect of fashionable men in the “pretty men” depiction on East Asian television drama is regarded by most of the respondents as non-masculine because it doesn’t match what they acknowledge as masculine in their everyday lives.

Another aspect of “pretty men” and “soft” masculinity highlighted by the respondents is the romantic feature:

(N, 22 year old, female, college student) Diary:

“...this episode is overload with cute attitudes + the romantic side of Lee Shin to Kyu Won. Aaawww!! How adorable I want to have a boyfriend like Lee Shin. Huhu ... I really like Lee Shin here! My favorite scene is when LS + KW went out on a date, and then KW wanted to buy a couple cellphone accessories shaped like a bear. LS at the beginning said no because he does not like couple items. But when KW was looking at other stuff, LS showed up and showed KW his cellphone. It turns out that on his cell phone, he already used the bear couple accessories. Huaaa ... so cute! Especially LS face who looks embarrassed. Aaa ~ *faint* ... This episode is filled with romantic moments, I became *mupeng* (Indonesian slang which means really want something). I want to have a boyfriend who is as nice and as romantic as Lee Shin hiks.”⁷⁹

Romantic attitude from the male character becomes one of the main aspects of masculinity highlighted by almost all of the female respondents, in both the over 20s and over 30s groups. Other research has proposed a similar observation in audience research on soap operas reception. Ariel Heryanto (2010) argues, in his observation of previous research done in Indonesia on East Asian television dramas reception, that the male fictional characters’ good physical condition and romantic attitude is the main appeal for Indonesian female audiences. However, as I have argued in the beginning of this sub chapter, the audience’s interpretation of the male characters’ masculine attributes are embedded in the multiple moments of experiences that build up the interpretation. In other words, the female audience’s perception of what masculinity is in her day-to-day experience should also be analyzed in order to make sense of her interpretation of masculinity.

⁷⁹ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “...episode ini overload dengan sikap unyu + romantisnya Lee Shin ke Kyu Won. Aaawww!! Gemes!! Mau dong punya cowok kayak Lee Shin. Huhu ... Pokoknya paling suka deh ama Lee Shin disini! Adegan yang saya sukain tuh waktu LS + KW lagi ngedate, trus KW tertarik bel icouple straphone beruang. LS awalnya nolak karena anti barang-barangf couple, tapi pas KW lagi liat-liat barang lain, LS muncul dan pamer hapenya gitu. Eh ... tau-tau tuh hape udah ada straphone beruang couple-nya. Huaaa unyu banget! Apalagi mukanya LS yang malu-malu gitu. Aaa ~ *pingsan* ... Karena episode ini full of romance, saya jadi mupeng. Pengen punya cowok sebaik + seromantis Lee Shin hiks” (N, 22 year old, female, college student)

The findings reveal that there is a gap between the categories of masculinity represented on the television dramas with the audience's everyday conceptualization of masculinity. First and foremost, most of the male characters in the East Asian television drama are represented as "pretty men" with features of "soft" masculinity, as interpreted by most of the respondents. Sung Jung (2011) uses the term "soft" masculinity to describe "the shared imagination" of Pan-East Asian masculinity constructed in a variety of popular culture products.

"This soft masculinity is a hybrid product constructed through the transcultural amalgamation of South Korea's traditional *seonbi* masculinity (which is heavily influenced by Chinese Confucian *wen* masculinity), Japan *bishōnen* (pretty boy) masculinity, and global metrosexual masculinity. This transculturation creates *mugukjeok* (non-nationality) which helps BYJ's (*Bae Yoong-Jun*)⁸⁰ soft masculinity to freely travel across national boundaries." (Jung, 2011, 39)

Even though Jung mainly refers to the Korean context, she explains that the pretty boy images, which are frequently used in television dramas from other countries like Japan and Taiwan, has possibly originated from the *bishōnen* of Japanese Manga. The idealized image of the male characters in these television dramas has created "the shared imagination" of a Pan-East Asian soft masculinity. A specific kind of masculinity has emerged from these East Asian television dramas. This combination of the *Seonbi* masculinity (tender charisma, highly influenced by *wen* masculinity), Japan *bishōnen* (pretty boy) masculinity, and global metrosexual masculinity (the physical body, six-pack stomach) amalgamate into the soft masculinity represented on the television dramas.

On the other hand, the conception of masculinity in Indonesia is mostly influenced by the dominant religious context, which is Islam. The main discourse of masculinity includes hypermasculinity highlighting physical strength, bravery, hero complex and aggression. Another one is the familial and pedagogic discourse, which refers to the role of a steady worker and reliable provider in the family. There are also the state-sanctioned gender roles in the process of nation building as argued by Pam Nilan (2009). Based on her observation, there are at least three (3) common types of Indonesian young men:

⁸⁰ Bae Yong Joon (born August 29, 1972 in Seoul, South Korea), is a South Korean actor best known for his roles in numerous television dramas and one of the first *kkonminam* icons. He is known as Yon-sama (ヨン様) to his Japanese fans.

“The first type is the bearded devout young Muslim *santri* in white cap and white flowing shirt ... also common in popular media is the secular image of the ‘cool’, but sensitive young man ... an urban ideal, he may be a *cowok trendi* (hip guy) or a troubled soul ... The pugnacious criminal or gang member is also a common media stereotype of the young men. He might be a *preman* (thug), a drug user or dealer, a pimp, or just a collective participant in the gambling, drinking, whoring ‘fight club’ culture that characterises inner city street life after midnight” (Nilan, 329).

Nilan’s work is based on 6 years of fieldwork in Indonesia focusing on the key icons or exemplars of youthful Indonesian masculinity in mainstream media. Limiting the idea of Indonesian hegemonic masculinity within these three types of Indonesian young men could be an oversimplification. Indonesia is a heterogeneous country; therefore, the context of masculinity cannot be discussed in a single narrative. However, Nilan’s work provides a basic frame of reference to talk about masculinity in contemporary Indonesia, especially in the scope of this research in order to compare the representation of masculinity in East Asian television dramas with the Indonesian hegemonic masculinity. Her research has identified several key elements in the re-affirmation of masculinity: the important role of the global media hypermasculinity, the state-normative role, and the Islamist discourse.

From these two discourses of masculinity in the two contexts, which are the representation of soft masculinity and the hegemonic Indonesian masculinity embedded in the audience’s everyday experience, there is definitely a noticeable gap. Audience members have indeed reworked what they watch in the East Asian television dramas with what masculinity means in their everyday lives. They will try to fill in the gaps in order to make sense of what they are watching. Based on the respondents’ explanations, they negotiate with the embodiment of “soft” masculinity they interpret from the television dramas by still grounding the reception process to the hegemonic Indonesian masculinity.

To discuss the discourse of masculinity, this research also needs to look at how the respondents’ make sense of the construction of femininity attributed to the female characters on the television dramas. Almost all of the male respondents agreed that the main reason they watch East Asian television dramas is because of the female characters. One of the main feminine features they interpret from the television dramas is the “cute” and “innocent” depiction of the female characters.

(E, 27 year old, male, employee/student), FGD:

“Their faces are innocent, but also beautiful in a way. Even though

they're wearing such glamorous clothes, their faces are still innocent. Moreover, the way they speak, the Korean dialect, I think the Korean dialect is '*manja*' (sounds cute). If the girls speak, it's so cute. But if the guys speak, it's not so cute hehehe."⁸¹

Respondent E stated his fondness of "cute" and "innocent" features of the Korean girls he saw on television dramas. He even emphasized that no matter how the female characters dressed up, they still looked innocent. Later on during the discussion, respondent E stated that before watching Korean dramas, he has always liked "cute" girls, and now he likes them even more. His decisive factor of an attractive girl is confirmed after consuming Korean dramas, which are fair-skinned, petite and has an innocent and cute face. It is also because of this fondness of Korean girls after consuming Korean films, television dramas and *K-Pop* girl bands that he decided to go to South Korea and take another bachelors degree in Seoul.

Another feminine feature the respondents identified from the female characters in the television drama is the petite body. One of the female respondents explained that her male friends changed their preferences to 'smaller' or petite girls after watching Japanese dramas.

(F, 22 year old, female, college student) FGD:

"... this is not based on my experience, but based on my male friend's experience. Since he watched the dramas, he now likes petite girls. He likes those kinds of girls. He even said "Oh, in the future, I want to have a petite wife ... and also fair skin, and long hair."⁸²

Another male respondent, respondent A, explained that this petite figure is considered attractive: "That's why they don't get fat even though they eat like that (*referring to how female characters eat their food heartily*), here, we still consider them beautiful."⁸³ These physical features, petite figure and innocent face, and also the way the female characters speak and act (the "cuteness") are interpreted by the male audience as "cute" femininity, which is specifically attributed to the East Asian female characters, or what respondent A named as "Oriental girls." On the next

⁸¹ Translated by the researcher, FGD: "*Rata-rata muka mereka innocent, tapi cakep cakep gimana, mau udah pake seglamor apapun mukanya innocent ... trus sama logatnya mereka ... logatnya Korea itu kan manja menurut gua, kalo cewenya ngomong itu udah lucu ... kalo cowonya malah ga lucu hehehe*" (E, 27 year old, male, employee/student)

⁸² Translated by the researcher, FGD: "...ini sih bukan pengalaman saya, tapi pengalaman temen saya cowok, sejak dia nonton drama-drama gitu, dia jadi suka cewek yang kecil-kecil ... dia sukanya cewek-cewek kaya gitu trus bilang "*ah gw kalo nanti mau punya istri harus mungil gitu-gitu ... ya kayak gitu, kulitnya putih, kulitnya itu, rambutnya panjang.*" (F, 22 year old, female, college student)

⁸³ Translated by the researcher, FGD: "*Iyah makanya walaupun makannya begitu mereka gak gemuk gemuk ... Disini dianggap cantik-cantik.*" (A, 26 year old, male, employee)

section of this subchapter, I will discuss how the categorization of Oriental girls is related to the discourse of Chineseness. All in all, the male respondents' experience of femininity is constructed from their own frame of references, such as respondent A and E, who acknowledged the represented cute femininity has affected or reconfirmed their ideas of feminine attributes.

While the male respondents focused more on the physical attributes and gestures of the female characters, the female respondents make sense of the feminine attributes based on the characters' characterizations. Some respondents stated their preferred feminine attributes, such as the independent and modern features of the female characters:

(MS, 23 year old, female, employee), Diary:

"She is a typical independent woman and she is really confident of herself. This is the character I really like in this story. She is a representation of modern women who chose their own life path according to what they want. A woman who has integrity and purpose in life."⁸⁴

Respondent MS looks highly at the independent female character and considers this feature as an inspirational feminine feature. However, other respondents also give negative responses to what they consider as dispreferred features of femininity. For example, respondent N expressed her disappointment in reaction to the younger man – older woman relationship in *Heartstrings*.

(N, 22 year old, female, college student), Diary:

"I really hate the scene when LS was attentive toward the dance teacher. Oh nooo ... they just don't match ... LS is handsome and young ... The dance teacher looks old ... *jadi geli ngeliatnya* (Indonesian phrase that means she could not stand looking at the couple) I can't stand it!!!! And when the dance teacher told LS to find a girl his age, a young girl like him, wowww ... I really support that! Haha :P"

"The preview for the next episode makes me feel so upset!!! In the preview, LS was kissing the dance teacher! AAAAHHHH I DON'T LIKE ITTTT!!! ☹ I don't like it. I don't like it! Huhu ... It demotivates me to watch the next episode ... hiks ☹"⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Translated by the researcher, **Diary:** "Ia adalah tipikal wanita mandiri dan sangat percaya diri, karakter yang sangat saya sukai dalam cerita ini. Ia merupakan cerminan bahwa wanita modern yang memilih jalan hidup sesuai dengan keinginannya. Wanita yang mempunyai integritas dan tujuan." (MS, 23 year old, female, employee)

⁸⁵ Translated by the researcher, **Diary:** "Saya juga gak suka pas adegan LS perhatian ama guru dansa. Aduhhhh ... gak cocok banget ... LS Ganteng and muda gitu ... Lah guru dansanya udah keliatan berumur ... jadi geli ngeliatnya. Gak relaaaa!!! Dan waktu guru dansanya bilang ke LS nyari cewe yang seangkatan aja, yang sama-sama muda, wuihhh ... saya dukung banget! Haha :P)"

"Preview episode selanjutnya bikin sebel!!! Di previewnya diliatin LS ciuman sama guru dansa itu! AAAAHHHH GA SUKAAAAA!!! ☹ Ga suka ga suka ga suka! Huhu ... Jadi sedikit demotivational nih buat nonton ep. Selanjutnya ... hiks ☹" (N, 22 year old, female, college student)

Respondent N is making sense of the ideal female attitude from her own perspective on how a woman should behave. In her perspective, a woman should not be in a relationship with a younger man. Her own understanding of feminine roles is built upon her reflexivity and identification with the television dramas. For the female audience members, the features of femininity in the television dramas reflect both the “desirable” and the “real.”

Female and male audiences contribute a different understanding of masculinity and femininity represented in the television dramas. While female audience focuses more on the preferred and dispreferred features of femininity, the male respondents identify the female characters as objects of attraction, which they relate to their own preferences of an idealized partner. Furthermore, in filling the gaps between what is represented on the television dramas and what they experience in their everyday lives, audience members are going back and forth between the familiar and their aspirations. As they fill in the gaps, they are appropriating the contestable representations, for example by rejecting the over-the-top fashion while focusing more on the romantic features of the male characters. Audience members consider those that complement his or her conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity as something acceptable, while appropriating those outside these conceptualizations.

4.2.3 The Process of Othering: “Asian” Men and “Oriental” Girls

Finally, East Asia is often referred to as “Asia” or the “oriental” in the reception level, which is connected to the Indonesian historical baggage of Chinese sentiment. Favourable consumption of East Asian television dramas has changed the portrayal and image of Chineseness, which has also been argued by other research (Heryanto (2010), Juliastuti (2004)). Their works have revealed that the changes are happening due to the intensity of Chinese/“oriental” looks on television, eventually opening a path for Chinese Indonesians actors/actresses to get acting parts on television programs. I would argue that with the historical baggage of Chinese sentiment, the transnational flow of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia has affected the perception of ethnic identity. Within the network of audience, the audience is reworking the identity of Chineseness while making sense of

Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean television dramas. The popularity of these television dramas creates an intense depiction of features that has always been attributed to the Chinese Indonesians, namely the aforementioned physical features.

The decision to take into account the discussion of Chineseness in this research was acquired during the Focus Group Discussions, in which respondents used the term “*cewek oriental*” (oriental girls) and “*cowok Asia*” (Asian men, referring to East Asian men). The respondents identify the characters in the television drama as “oriental” or “Asian.”

(A, 26 year old, male, employee), FGD:

“Not really different with E (*another male respondent in the FGD*), I have also always liked oriental girls.”⁸⁶

(S, 34 year old, female, housewife/employee), FGD:

“Before watching these tv series, I don’t really like Asian guys (*referring to East Asian men*)”

When asked why change her views, she answered:

“They’re not bad, they’re handsome ... they’re also clean.”

Even though in the Indonesian public sphere, the word “oriental” was (and still is) commonly used to refer to Chinese Indonesian girls, it was thought provoking to hear male respondent using it to refer to the female characters on the television drama, who are either Korean or Japanese or Taiwanese but not Chinese. The notion of oriental is being used to describe physical features that are used to be attributed to Chinese Indonesians. The physical features like fair skin, petite and straight hair are ascribed to the female characters even though they are commonly attributed to Chinese Indonesians. When this happens there is a process of naming and categorizing the Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean female characters into one category and corresponding it with the physical attributes of Chinese Indonesians.

Furthermore, when the female respondent use the word “Asian” to refer to the male characters on the television drama, I would argue that this is in accordance to the conceptualization of East Asian countries as “Asia” in Indonesia, which I have also discussed in Chapter 3. East Asia is, in this sense, parallel to “Asia.” However, I would like to put this in the context familiarity discussed earlier. In this moment of reflexivity, the audience is not detecting any shared physical attributes with what is represented on television. This particular respondent immediately recognized that the

⁸⁶ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “*Hmmm ... ga jauh beda dari E sebenarnya, gue dari dulu emang suka cewek yang oriental*” (A, 26 year old, male, employee).

male characters on the television dramas do not look like what she thinks Indonesian men look like. From the quotation, the respondent implies a change of perspective. She drew the boundary between the male characters with the men in her everyday life. Audiences embraced the “othering” of the characters as a part of the pleasure in engaging with the East Asian television dramas. I would elaborate this further at the end of this subchapter.

It is significant to highlight that the respondents are divided into two age groups in order to have a wider range of data. The late 20s and over 30s group would have already experience East Asian television dramas since its first development in Indonesia in late 1990s, while the early 20s group would have the post Korean drama popularity experience. However, in relation to the history of the eradication of ethnic Chinese identity in the New Order era, these two age groups provide a significantly different perspective on the issue. This of course affected the way they make sense of the television dramas they watch. First of all, the early 20s respondents does not really understand the historical aspect or even the whole idea of ethnic Chinese discrimination in the New Order era. Most of them were born in the 1990s, which means they did not categorically experience the Chinese identity eradication process.

First of all, as explained earlier, the late 20s and over 30s respondents identify the characters as “Asian” men and “oriental” girls. Some of the early 20s group also used the term the “East” to describe where the characters come from. The data revealed that there is a different reaction from the two age groups. Early 20s group does not seem to have the same “collective memory” of the late 20s or early 30s group. At this point of the analysis, I need to acknowledge the limitation of the research because even though the respondents come from different ethnicities, there is only one Chinese Indonesian in the early 20s group and two (one male and one female) in the late 20s and early 30s group. At the beginning of the ethnographic research, ethnicity was not the main criteria. The first 3 interviewees who later on suggested other respondents were chosen based on age and gender criteria. Furthermore, the issue of Chineseness was later on taken as an issue during the data analysis. Therefore, I would not argue that the popularity of East Asian television dramas has radically transformed the Chinese sentiment due to the limitation of the data. However, there is definitely a shift in how audience members perceive the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians, which keeps on shifting and being redefined.

Othering the ethnic Chinese⁸⁷ in Indonesian history has been done in several aspects of the Indonesians everyday lives. One of them is the geographical argument, which emphasizes that ethnic Chinese originated from outside the nation's boundaries. It was then constructed that Chinese ethnic group threaten the project of nationalism in seeking national authentic roots. Another argument, which Heryanto (1998) claimed as "cultural explanation," discloses that unlike other ethnic groups, such as Indians and Arabs, the Ethnic Chinese had always been segregated from the society through the overemphasis of religion and cultural difference. Moreover, in the New Order propaganda, the ethnic Chinese were profoundly associated with communism.

"...because the People's Republic of China was communist, there was a general essentializing identification of this ethnicity with communism. Because the Soekarno government established a close tie with the People's Republic of China and the Indonesian Communist Party, the New Order's allegation of China's implication in the so-called "abortive group" of the later made some sense to a large section of the population. Soon after the army took control of the country in 1966 the government enforced a wide range of anti-Chinese measures as part of the wave against communism. These included banning of all Chinese schools, mass organizations, mass media, use of Chinese characters, personal names and names for firms/shops." (Heryanto, 1998, pp. 98-99).

The stigma that being Chinese also meant being involved in the 1965 communist coup were constructed within a variety of direct or indirect propaganda, convincing people that it was also hereditary. The 1965 incident was one significant historical aspect of the process of "othering" the Indonesian ethnic Chinese.

Furthermore, during the New Order era, the process of 'Othering' remained active through many other practices, like labelling Ethnic Chinese as "*non-pribumi*" (non-native) and as "*warga keturunan*" (non-indigenous descendant). This was "stamped" on every Chinese Indonesians⁸⁸ up to the abolishment of the Assimilation

⁸⁷ "The ethnic Chinese are on of the four major "Others" of the New Order Self, the other three being the "West," "Communism," and "Fundamentalist Islam." (Heryanto 1998, 97)

⁸⁸ Aimee Dawis in her book, *The Chinese Indonesia and Their Search for Identity: the Relationship between Collective Memory and the Media*, argues that it is a "slippery task" to define Chinese Indonesians. Many scholars like Leo Suryadinata, who has done extensive work on Chinese Indonesians identity, categorize Chinese Indonesians into 2 categories: the *peranakan* (Indonesian oriented) and the *totok* (Chinese oriented). However, Dawis explains that the development of Chinese Indonesian communities in the last 3 or 4 decades have made the two categories vague or even insufficient. "As I have discovered in my study, there are various socio cultural factors such as regional origins, family influences, religious beliefs, values and customs that complicate the task of identifying Chinese Indonesians ..." (Dawis, 82). For this research, I would like to refer to Dawis' redefinition of Chinese Indonesians, without any intention of treating this heterogeneous ethnic group as a monolithic entity: "Chinese Indonesians are persons of Chinese ancestry who either function as members of, and identify with,

Law after the Reformation Era. After years of propaganda, as the new generations or post 1965 generations accumulated knowledge about ethnicities, this labelling of the “Other” had been internalized and reconstructed in other forms of discrimination. “Citizens of Chinese descent must carry identification cards with distinct number. Extra paper-work and fees are required of them in any legal dealings with public service. All schools and colleges impose a certain maximum quota for Chinese Indonesians seeking admission. Professions other than commerce are only minimally open...” (Heryanto, 1998, p. 101). Later on, the process changed into “eradication of Chinese identity” by the government’s endorsement for the “Assimilation Program.” This program included encouragement for intermarriage, to give up Chinese personal/business names and to convert to Islam.

The speedy revival and high-profiled of ethnic Chinese politics and culture, as argued by Ariel Heryanto, actually happened a few years before the end of the New Order era in 1998. As an example, President Megawati Sukarnoputri officially declared Chinese New Year’s as a national public holiday in 2002. However, the public celebration of the New Year, along with the dragon dance, which was banned until the year 2000, had re-appeared in early 1990s. However, it was after the end of the New Order era, that:

“Many new publications have emerged since Suharto’s fall and the subsequent elections. New Chinese language dailies and magazines sprouted like mushrooms ... As for television and movies, the final years of the Suharto regime saw some loosening up of controls, with the products of studios in Hong Kong and Taiwan being dubbed in Indonesian and shown for the first time. The number of such showings increased under the new cultural freedoms of Gus Dur’s administration. In addition, Chinese books, music, and video-CDs have become widely available in the Chinatowns.” (Suryadinata, 2001, p. 522)

Subsequently, the discourse of Chineseness in Indonesia has changed dramatically after 1998. The profound redefinition of Chinese identity has not only affected the Indonesian Chinese, but also the Indonesian public in general, including the audience members who consume East Asian television dramas.

The shift of how Indonesians understand Chineseness is a part of the Indonesian audience’s reception context influencing the meaning-making process. The intensity of Chinese looking actors/actresses after the popularity of East Asian

television dramas has been a signifying shift. As argued by Krishna Sen in her work, “‘Chinese’ Indonesians in National Cinema,” “... Chinese Indonesians are rarely present as the subject matter of film texts even before their absence is effectively mandated by government policy under the New Order” (Sen, 2006, p. 171). Even though Sen focused on film texts, this absence also happens in other forms of visual texts, including television. Consequently, when Chinese looking actors and actresses took centre stage after the popularity of *Meteor Garden* in 2001, one could not diminish the shift in the ongoing battle of Chineseness subjectivity in Indonesia.

As argued by Ariel Heryanto (2011), portrayal of Oriental-looking Asians in contemporary Indonesian popular culture has changed considerably. The study of East Asian popular culture in Indonesia is significantly different with other locales because:

“The one important exception that distinguishes the case of Indonesia from most of its neighboring countries ... the legacy of anti-Chinese sentiment ingrained deeply (if with varying degrees) in the consciousness of many Indonesians, especially those aged 40 or above in the 2000s.” (Heryanto, 2011, p. 220)

There has been a “re-emergence of the portrayal of Chinese Indonesians in fictional narratives,” specifically in Indonesian films in the 2000s. The Chinese Indonesian characters in films like *30 Hari Mencari Cinta* (2004) and *Brownies* (2005) are depicted as ordinary and yet likeable Indonesians, even though they are distinctively Chinese in their appearances. This re-emergence of “oriental” looks on television or film is not directly affected by the popularity of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. The two phenomena happened simultaneously yet separately. When the films, as argued by Heryanto, came out with Indonesian Chinese characters, which were not made possible during the New Order Era, it happened at that same time *Meteor Garden* reached popularity in Indonesia.

East Asian television dramas have consolidated the historical baggage of Chinese sentiment to the extent that Chinese Indonesians stereotypes, being built for the last few decades, have been neutralized. Audience members perceive the physical attributes of the Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean characters as similar to the constructed Chinese Indonesians’ physical characteristics. Most people in Indonesia are fully aware that Japan, Taiwan and Korea are different nation-states. However, when they see “oriental” look, they are usually identified as being Chinese descent, with all the familiar stereotyped attributes commonly attached to them. Now, most of the

respondents explained that they could observe some changes in how the public acknowledges some physical features that was once attributed to the ethnic Chinese. One example happened during the media spectacle of *Meteor Garden* in 2001. The "straight hair" trend (also known as "*bonding*") was becoming very popular, which was rarely discerned before *MG*. I argue that this illustrate how *MG*, at that time, brought new images of Chineseness. It additionally conveyed a platform for Indonesian Chinese and also non-Indonesian Chinese to re-interpret physical features that were once only attributed to Chineseness.

These physical attributes have been transformed into an attractive feature interpreted by male and female respondents, which is a shift from the prior construction of othering Indonesian Chinese. In the past, these physical attributes are used as differentiating tools. One respondent, a non-Indonesian Chinese, explained that in her school there was a shift in how her friends understand the physicality of Chineseness.

(MS, 23 year old, female, employee), FGD:

"For example, my school was a regular school, a public school. People said, oh Chinese people has fair skin but not really that beautiful. Well after *Kabut Cinta* and also what's that? *Meteor Garden*, they said oh yeah the people there are really beautiful. Nowadays, the images for the people, what's the name? Eastern or Chinese or Korean, they are beautiful."⁸⁹

In respondent MS' explanation, there is a shifting perspective of Chineseness, which happened due to the new images represented by the East Asian television dramas. I would like to bring forward the three words she used to describe the television drama's characters. She used the words "Eastern" and "Chinese" to talk about a character in Korean dramas. This implies a labelling process, in which East Asia is, once again, put into a different category than Indonesia.

The politics of inclusion and exclusion is disturbed in this case study; however, it is not yet completely overthrown. I would like to refer to Koichi Iwabuchi's work (2002a) on Korean dramas reception in Japan and how they have enhanced image of resident Koreans in Japanese public space. These dramas have improved the image of Korea. Many Japanese people are getting more interested

⁸⁹ Translated by the researcher, FGD: "*Misalkan, aku sih sekolahnya biasa, negri gitu, jadi orang-orang tuh bilang, ih, kalo orang Chinese itu kan gitu-gitu, maksudnya kan putih doank, tapi enggak, enggak cantik-cantik gitu, nah setelah yang ada Kabut Cinta, trus apa namanya, Meteor Garden juga, ternyata tuh orang-orang sana tuh cantik-cantik juga sampe kesini tuh image-image orang yang apa, yang eastern yang Chinese tuh atau korea, mereka tuh cantik-cantik sih.*" (MS, 23 year old, female, employee)

about Korean society and culture and about the history of Japanese colonialism. However, they tend to overlook the complicated in-betweenness that resident Koreans have experienced and struggled with in Japanese society. “The recognition that resident Koreans are fellow citizens who live ‘here’ (in Japan) is collapsed into the identity assigned to them as people who belong to another ‘nation’ over there. The historic discrimination and identity distress that many resident Koreans have experienced in Japan has not yet been fully understood ... ” (Iwabuchi, 2002a, p. 412). It conflates with the difference between resident Koreans with the people and culture of Korea itself. The essentializing of resident Koreans in the same group with the “Koreans” they see in these television dramas. The sentiment is not erased; however, it has shifted.

In this case study, the correlation between “oriental” looks and the audience reception is not the matter of eradicating anti-Chinese sentiment, but more on the shifting perception of ethnic Chinese identity. Based on the data, there is no evidence that the popularity of East Asian television dramas has eradicated the anti-Chinese sentiment. However, audience members are now familiar with the portrayal of Chinese looking actors. The once constructed and embellished differences are no longer perceptible. Nonetheless, in the shifting perspectives, audience members sometimes draw a boundary, especially when they use words like “Oriental,” “Asia” or even “Eastern” when they are referring to the Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean characters. This process of drawing boundaries becomes a negation of any sense of sharedness originally constructed either in the circulation level, or even when audience identify any familiarities with what is being depicted in these East Asian television dramas.

After discussing the recurring themes from the collected data, I will now analyze the findings in relation to the Cultural Proximity thesis. In Chapter 3, I have concluded that in the circulation level, gatekeepers and/or intermediaries enhanced the proximity among the countries of production and also with Indonesia as a strategy to boost the circulation. Proximity, first and foremost, is constructed through the circulation network. However, it is also constructed in the reception process. The findings in the audience study reveal that audience’s engagement and reflexivity constitute of multiple experiences, such as identifying familiarities, expressing aspiration or filling in the gaps. All of these experiences could be further explored as

they re-evaluate the Cultural Proximity thesis.

4.3 Evaluating the Cultural Proximity Thesis: 3 Modes of Pleasure

I would like to take account of previous theses on regional network flow of television products, which have highlighted the discussion of regional affinities as the driving force of East Asian television dramas' transnational flow. These theses are problematic because they tend to perceive elements of culture as "fixed" and "essentialised." One should consider the social and historical context of the locales. As discussed in Chapter 1, Koichi Iwabuchi has argued that the questions need to be raised under specific historical conjunctures, in which these cultural similarities are associated with the fascination of the television dramas or the pleasure in consumption. It is not the similarities between the two cultures that need to be explored, but how these similarities are "reworked" within the consumption process.

The reception study of television dramas should not assume pre-determined features of the text. Cultural proximity does not exist "*a priori*" but occurs *a posteriori* because ... it is not something "out there," but needs to be subjectively identified and experienced by the audience" (Iwabuchi, 2001, p. 58). For that reason, the research needs to recognize the audience's everyday life within a specific context. The surrounding environment, within a specific time and place framework, shapes this context. As argued by Iwabuchi, instead of focusing on the Cultural Proximity thesis, which I have strongly argued could not be drawn on to understand the transnational flow of television dramas from East Asian countries to Indonesia, the analysis will look more into ' ... what sorts of pleasure, if any, audiences find in identifying cultural proximity in a particular programme ... ' (Iwabuchi, 2001, p. 57). Based on the data analysis, there are three categories of pleasure in the case of Indonesian audience: pleasure due to a **sense of sharedness, desire/aspiration and appropriation.**

4.3.1 Sense of Sharedness

First and foremost, what I meant by a sense of sharedness is that audience gains pleasure because he or she is able to identify something on the television dramas, which he or she could relate to his or her everyday life. In other research, this has been distinguished as cultural proximity. Nevertheless, in this case study,

cultural proximity is not embedded in the television dramas. It is something “identified and reworked” by the audience. For the Indonesian audience, they are from non-sexual scenes in the television dramas, family oriented narratives, or even everyday “reality” experienced by the characters, which is also experienced by the audience. In other words, there is pleasure knowing that what the audience is watching is also what he or she is experiencing in the everyday life.

As an illustration, respondents have claimed that East Asian television dramas are less sexual or even non-sexual in comparison with American/European television dramas (or films). This has also created what I claim as the inter-generational communal experience. Parents consider East Asian television dramas to be more “appropriate” to be watched together with their children. More than half of the early-20 respondents wrote in their diaries or during interviews and FGDs that they regularly watch television dramas with other family members, including their parents and younger siblings.

(M, 22 year old, female, college student), FGD:

“...I watch it often with my mom. And when my brother asked “what are you watching *mbak* (sister)?” I would say “watching this (referring to the East Asian television drama she was watching at that moment) and then we would watch it together, even with my mom. Moreover, my mom would think, if she saw a kissing scene in a Korean drama, it’s still good unlike the Western one.”

“My mom think it’s okay, so my brother can watch it too.”

On American/European series/films: “My mom won’t let us watch it, so if I want to watch a *film luar* (foreign film) I will watch it by myself, but if it’s Korean dramas, it’s okay.”⁹⁰

Respondent M explained that East Asian television dramas are more “appropriate” to watch together with her mother and younger brother. Her mother considers these dramas to be more acceptable in comparison with American/European films/series. Respondent M also consciously choose to watch American/European series/films by herself and will only watch Korean dramas with her mother and younger brother.

Moreover, from the quotation, the respondent points out a specific content, which was the kissing scene, while explaining that East Asian television dramas are

⁹⁰ Translated by the researcher, FGD: “...kalo itu biasa bareng mama, terus misalkan kayak adik, cowok sih, kalau misalkan “nonton apa sih mbak?” “nonton ini” terus udah, terus mama juga jadi nonton rame-rame, terus kalau menurut mama, film korea itu kan ada adegan, apa ya, itu tuh kissingnya, kalau mama sampe bagus gitu, gak kayak Barat.”

“Iya, kalau menurut mama sih, jadi kalau adik saya nonton juga, ya udah gak papa.”

On western series: “Nah kalau itu malah mama gak dikasih, jadi kalo nonton film luar mending nonton sendirian, tapi kalau Korea, gak papa.” (M, 22 year old, female, college student)

less (or even non) sexual compared to Western series/films. The comment comes from the mother, who seems to be practicing her moral-barrier role in the family structure. The respondent then explained that she would watch Western series/films on her own. This kind of moral attachment to the East Asian television dramas should be taken into another level of analysis. Why would the mother consider the kissing scene as acceptable or appropriate? This pre-assumed subtle sexual content has been a reoccurring theme in the research findings. The constructed non-sexual feature of the East Asian television dramas has induced a sense of sharedness with the Indonesian social and cultural conditioning.

This sense of sharedness emphasizes on the non-Western elements of the television dramas. These television dramas are “Asian” because they are “non-Western.” I would like to bring back into the discussion the gatekeeping role of television stations in screening/selecting/filtering the kinds of television dramas that could enter the “gate.” *Indosiar* has consciously selected particular kind of dramas to be imported through the television station network (the legal network). The television station works under the government regulation controlling imported programs⁹¹. Consequently, with the consideration of popular television dramas in the country of origin and specific prohibition of the content, the kinds of television dramas broadcast by *Indosiar* are mostly what I will categorize as trendy⁹² family romantic dramas. Furthermore, other networks, like the pirated DVDs, still rely on what is being broadcast on television in order to select which titles they will sell in their DVD kiosks. That is why, even though most respondents make use of other media, such as pirated DVDs, the kinds of dramas circulated and consumed in Indonesia fell into more or less the same categorization of trendy family romantic dramas.

As a result, the non-sexual feature of East Asian television dramas is, on one side, a preconditioning set up by gatekeepers/intermediaries, but it is also due to the filtering process in the reception level. I would argue that when the audience experience these dramas, there is a screening/selecting/filtering process. With the availability of other mediums, such as internet download/streaming, audience is

⁹¹ Law Of The Republic Of Indonesia Number 33 Of 2009, Article 41: (1) The Government shall prevent the entry of import film (*also include television programs*) contradictory to the religious values, ethic, morals, norm, and national culture. <http://www.budpar.go.id/asp/detil.asp?c=86&id=1241>

⁹² “The eye-catching features of “trendy dramas” were the depictions of stylish urban lifestyles and trendy nightspots abundant with extravaganza brand commodities, the chic interior and latest pop music, all of which clearly reflected the then prevailing highly materialistic consumerism Japanese young people afforded to enjoy under so-called bubble-economy.” (Iwabuchi, 2002, Conference Paper, pp. 11-12)

actually exposed to select other kinds of television dramas, which has more non-normative content⁹³. However, in the network of audience, there is also a process of filtering. Audience reworks the text because his or her social and cultural knowledge informs this filtering process, which will be further elaborated in the next subchapter.

Another example of sense of sharedness is that audience members gain pleasure when they could identify some situations mirroring their everyday lives. MS (23 year old, female, employee), who just started working in a company as a translator, relates her everyday experience in the new office with one of the television dramas she watched. During the exit interview, she gave further explanation on an entry she wrote in her diary:

(MS, 23 year old, female, employee), Exit Interview:

“What I feel is related to the boss and the world of working, especially when I cannot mingle with others in the office. It seems that our existence needs to be acknowledged by others and this will make me feel needed and be a part of the office. It is just like what Motomame (*referring to the character in the television drama she was watching*) experienced. He did not care with his surroundings and people around asked him why he was like that. People want to ask. I haven’t been feeling comfortable in the office. If only people in my office are like that. They don’t even say hello to me. In Boss (*the television drama*), they will say hello and ask questions. Maybe because my office room is too small and there are only 3 people...”⁹⁴

Respondent MS felt connected to the story line because at the moment of writing, as a fresh graduate who just got a job, there was a difference in her everyday reflexivity when watching dramas with office theme after she graduated from college and got a job. She could relate better and even explained how she wished that her new office condition could be more like the office condition in the television drama. She explained that she probably could not understand the story better if she had watched

⁹³ “But not all Korean dramas handle homosexuality in the indirect, wishy-washy ways some of the dramas described above do. There are truly dramas out there that handle the topic more literally, and consequently, more laudably as well ... First of all, there was drama *Life is Beautiful*, which first aired in 2010. *Life is Beautiful* told the story of a family living in Jeju island, but is probably best known for the gay couple the drama detailed, portrayed by actors Song Chang-eui and Lee Sang-wook.” (Jasper, <http://seoulbeats.com/2012/09/k-dramas-more-literal-and-laudable-takes-on-homosexuality/>). This particular title was not broadcasted on *Indosiar* even though it was popular in Korea.

⁹⁴ Translated by the researcher, diary: “*Iya kalau yang saya rasain tuh dari yang Bos itu sama dunia kerja juga, ketika ga bisa nyampur sama orang lain, apa sih keeksistensian kita tuh ketika kita diakui orang dan itu membuat saya sendiri jadi apa ya, merasa dibutuhkan dan itu membuat saya sendiri jadi kayak ikut bagian dari kantor itu..itu tuh yang apa sih itu.. waktu kasusnya si Motomame yang orangnya cuek dengan apa sih lingkungannya, ketika orang-orang di dekatnyaanya kamu kenapa, kamu kenapa ditanya, menurut saya memang berat banget ya kalau kerja tim sama satu orang, dan ngerasa kalau, kalau saja, saya belum ngerasa nyaman sama orang kantor, kalau aja ada orang di kantor saya bisa seperti itu sama saya..mereka kan boro-boro mau nyapa saya, kalau di bos tuh mereka mau nyapa, mereka mau nanya, mungkin karena ruangan saya juga kecil cuma tiga orang...*” (MS, 23 year old, female, employee)

this when she was a college student. She would probably relate to other elements of the story back then.

Another respondent, who was writing her thesis when she wrote the diary entry, explained how one quotation from the television drama she was watching affected the way she re-evaluated her situation at that time.

(W, 23 year old, female, employee), Diary:

"I want to quote from this drama. This time there are two. The first one is what Seiji's father said when Seiji felt hopeless and asked for his father to find him a job. The father said this, 'The more competent an individual is, the more he'll insist that he is judged unfairly.' And I felt really *ketohok* (a non formal Indonesian phrase which implies that the quotation really 'hits' her) ... ahahahhaa.. because I felt that I was really incompetent this semester because of my thesis. The first reason is because I had problems with the theories, and then I just don't want to think about it and later on I became lazy."

"The second quotation was said by Seiji when he finished working late. He said: 'No matter how useless I am, no matter how pathetic... will there come a day when I'll be able to start anew?' This is the question I asked myself at this moment. This semester, I just stay in my room on my bed watching television dramas or some useless things. My room is even as messy as Seiji's room. I feel useless and my life seems aimless. It doesn't feel good but I'm too lazy to move. So I asked myself just like what Seiji did. Will there come a day when I'll be able to start anew?"⁹⁵

This respondent mirrored her troubles in life with what the character was dealing with his life. There is again a sense of sharedness, which is individually constructed by the audience, which does not only refer to her psychological state. She internalized the father's remark to his son into her own troubles. This could not happen if her everyday life is disconnected to what she watched in the television dramas. Moreover, when she stated that she saw herself in the character, like how she and the character had a messy room similar to their 'messy' lives. Most of the respondents imagine situations in the television dramas and connect them to their own lives.

⁹⁵ Translated by the researcher, diary: "*Kaya drama sebelumnya, Miss..saya mau ngutip quote dari drama ini. Kali ini ada dua. Yang pertama diucapin si Bapaknya Seiji pas Seiji udah hopeless minta bantuin cari kerja. Bapaknya bilang gini "The more incompetent an individual is, the more he'll insist that he is judged unfairly". Dan saya ngerasa ketohok miss..ahahahhaa.. Karena saya ngerasa saya incompetent khususnya semester ini yang keseret2 skripsi. Pertama karena saya kepentok2 teori, terus jadi ga mau mikir, lama2 jadi dibawa males."* "Quote kedua diucapin si Seiji pas dia beres lembur kerja. Dia bilang "No matter how useless I am, no matter how pathetic..will there come a day when I'll be able to start anew?" Ini adalah pertanyaan yang saya ajuin ke diri saya saat ini. Karena saya yang semester ini, cuma tidur2an di kamar nonton drama atau ngapain yang ga berguna. Bahkan kamar saya sama persis berantakannya kaya kamar si Seiji ini. Saya ngerasa useless dan hidup aimless. Ga enak dan bosan tapi males buat gerak. Jadi saya juga ikutan nanya ke diri sendiri pas Seiji blg gt..Will there come a day when I'll be able to start anew?" (W, 23 year old, female, employee)

4.3.2 Desire/Aspiration

Second of all, pleasure in experiencing East Asian television dramas is also achieved based on the audiences' "desire/aspiration." In his work, *World Television: From Global to Local*, Joseph D. Straubhaar proposes, "...cultural products represent a proximity based on not true cultural familiarity but desire or aspiration" (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 200). Even though Straubhaar did not elaborate on this particular kind of proximity, I would like to extend this idea to look at what it means to gain pleasure from a television drama based on the audience's desire/aspiration. Pleasure is achieved due to a longing for what is being represented on the television dramas.

Referring back to the discussions in previous subchapters, audience members reflect on the issues of attributed values, masculinity-femininity and the discourse of Chineseness by grounding their interpretation on their aspiration or desire. For example, respondents expressed their desire/aspiration of the ideal family life represented in the television dramas. Furthermore, it is something they long for because it does not exist in their everyday lives. This also happens when audience members reflect on the aspirational feminine features in the television dramas, such as "a representation of modern women who chose their own life path according to what they want" (MS, 23 year old, female, employee, diary). In this quotation, the respondent's desire/aspiration is to be like the female character because it is not something happening in her own life.

I would like to discuss another example to emphasize the importance of desire/aspiration for the Indonesian audience as a part of the reworked and identified proximities. One of the respondents compares the case of a corrupted government official in one of the television dramas with the flawed Indonesian legal system in dealing with corruptors. In this example, there is a longing for a non-corrupted government:

(N, 22 year old, female, college student) Diary

"In this scene, I was really upset! How can they say the evidences are not valid because they cannot trace who collect the evidences? Maybe the procedures were correct, but what upset me more is that the court members were happy because they could win the case for Kyeong Wan. They did not become more alert or suspicious to Kyeong Wan! It made me think, maybe in Indonesia it is difficult to arrest corruptors because of these evidence problem that they do not know who collect the evidence. Wew ... ⊗"

“...I now have an idea on how a corrupt government official/leader/powerful people will do anything to cover up their mistakes. When they do everything related to corruption, they do not even think about their family. And when later on the court sentenced them, they would then beg for forgiveness or suddenly care about their family’s well-being (like Nazarudin who asked for protection for his family after he was sentenced). This film really does give an image of reality (maybe, hehe).”⁹⁶

Respondent N reflected on what she watched with a real life situation, namely the political issues in Indonesia. Even though she did not go into a deep discussion of the corruption case, she was able to relate a particular element of the television drama to what is happening in the everyday lives of the Indonesian political context. As these corruption cases are extensively discussed in many forms of media, they have become a part of the respondent’s everyday life, which enables her to relate to this aspect of the television drama instead of other parts of the story.

Ultimately, I argue that these two moments, pleasure due to sense of sharedness or desire/aspiration, are the reasons why East Asian television dramas are considered to be culturally proximate with the locale, in this case, Indonesia. Sense of sharedness is not the same with pre-given affinities embedded in the text, which I already argued to be preconditioned by the gatekeepers/intermediaries or even constructed within the reception experience. In order to get pleasure from the process of engaging with the television dramas, audience needs to find something to relate to or something that mirrors his or her own life. On the other hand, if something does not mirror his or her everyday life, in this moment, pleasure could also be achieved based on the audience’s desire/aspiration. Viewers will start to identify what they long for or what is missing from their everyday lives. I would argue that for the Indonesian audience, the process is not as clear-cut as what seems similar and what matches the audience’s desire/aspiration. It is also a matter of filling in the gaps between what fits the audience’s frame of references and what is considered

⁹⁶ Translated by the researcher, *Diary*: “Di adegan ini, saya sangat kesal! Masa bukti-bukti itu dianggap ga valid karena ga bisa ditelusuri siapa pengambilnya? Mungkin emang prosedurnya bener, tapi yang lebih ngeselin lagi anggota sidangnya bergembira karena berhasil memenangkan Kyeong Wan, bukannya menjadi lebih waspada dan curiga sama Kyeong Wan! Saya jadi kepikiran, jangan-jangan di Indonesia susah nangkap para koruptor gara-gara alasan sumber bukti tidak diketahui siapa yang mengambilnya! Wew ... ☹”

“...saya jadi dapet gambaran gimana seorang pejabat/pemimpin/orang berkuasa yang korup bakal ngelakuin apa aja untuk nutupin kesalahannya. Mereka selama ngelakuin hal-hal korup ga mikirin keluarga. Giliran udah ada hukuman yang jelas baru deh mereka mohon-mohon/peduli banget ama keselamatan keluarganya (persis kayak Nazarudin yang minta perlindungan untuk keluarganya). Film ini jadi ngasih gambaran yang cukup merepresentasikan kenyataan (kayaknya, hehe).” (N, 22 year old, female, college student)

unacceptable. This would lead us to the discussion of the third mode of pleasure, which is achieved by the act of appropriation.

4.3.3 Appropriation

The third mode of pleasure is achieved through the act of appropriation because, for the Indonesian audience, there are more gaps that need to be filled. As argued several times in this chapter, these gaps are related to the specificity of Indonesian social, cultural and political context. It is also related to the individual's life, with its attached values and norms. One example is by appropriating the representation of "soft" masculinity from the television dramas. Audience members do this by contesting the feminized images of the male characters, such as over-the-top fashion or feminine physical features like polished nails. They focus more on other acceptable features, such as romantic attitude or heroic acts, which fit better into the construction of masculinity in Indonesia.

For the Indonesian audience, the necessity to appropriate is a significant process in order to receive pleasure from the East Asian television dramas experience. If the gap between what is being offered in the television dramas and the audience's everydayness is too distinct, there is a chance that the audience will reject and decide not to continue watching. However, based on the findings, the audience actively conveys what they consider unacceptable by appropriating it. I would like to refer back to an example from subchapter 4.2.1, when a respondent expressed her thoughts on a scene of two men hugging: "... maybe the scene would have been disgusting if the innocent Hanagata was also gay ... but the scene became funny because Hanagata hugged Iwai sincerely. Iwai, who was gay, really enjoyed the hug when he hugged Hanagata who was sad after losing his friend" (MS, 23 year old, female, employee, diary). The respondent interpreted this particular scene by anchoring her value judgment on the normative heterosexuality. When she changed her mind and said that the scene became funny because she read the hug as a non-homosexual act, even though one of character is homosexual, she was doing an act of appropriation. She did not immediately reject the homosexual representation, but read the text according to her own value judgment. It is not to say that her reading is right or wrong. This example is used to emphasize the need to appropriate those considered unacceptable the reception context.

The act of appropriation is significant in the Indonesian context compared to other locales because of these distinct gaps. In order to experience the television dramas, audience members are reflecting on and engaging with the television dramas by identifying something similar with their everyday lives, discovering their desire/aspiration and appropriating things that do not fit in to their frame of reference. It is not a predetermined cultural proximity between Indonesia and the countries of productions that constitutes the pleasure in experiencing the East Asian television dramas. Indonesian audience reworks what is being represented on the television dramas in the intertwining modes of pleasure of the sense of sharedness, desire/aspiration and appropriation.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has moved from the discussion of circulation to the audience engagement and reflexivity in the preconditioned context of reception. First and foremost, the Indonesian audience members have made use of the available forms of medium according to their needs. They have constructed their own pattern of experience in engaging with these television dramas. Furthermore, the strategy in creating commonalities by the television station or pirated DVD sellers is utilized by the audience for a sense of identification in the reception level. Audience makes use of the dubbing to better identify and remember the names of the characters overcoming the significant differences in the linguistic systems. On the other hand, the constructed communalities are disregarded in the reception process because audience members consider the country's specificity, Japanese, Taiwanese or Korean dramas, as one of the most important appeal of the dramas. In other words, categorizing all the dramas into Asian Dramas does not significantly reverberate in the audience's experience.

The significance in the Indonesian context is that the audience engagement and reflexivity are delimited by the audience's everyday lives. Consequently, for the Indonesian urban audience, the bounded context reveals issues, such as attributed values, masculinity-femininity and Chineseness/"oriental" discourse, which are used as filters in the meaning-making process. As an example, the audience tries to make sense of the attributed values on the television dramas, which actually discloses more about the values of the audience. They are either identified due to a sense of

sharedness or as a desire or aspiration. Furthermore, the audience is often disconnected from what is being represented on the television dramas, such as the representation of soft masculinity, which is in contrast with the Indonesian hegemonic masculinity. As a result, audience members try to fill in the gaps by appropriating what they watch with their own frames of reference.

Furthermore, in the discourse Chineseness, the association between “oriental” looks and the audience reception moves beyond the issue of anti-Chinese sentiment, which originated during the New Order era. The audience’s contextualized perception of the issue and how they use this perception in making sense of the television dramas discloses that the discourse of Chineseness, like seeing “oriental” looks on television or other forms of popular culture, has become a part of the everyday lives of the audience, which was not the case during the New Order Era. This research is not arguing that the audience no longer looks at it as a sentiment, but there have been major changes in the way the audience perceives “oriental” looks.

The reception study has disclosed that there is an interconnectedness of consumption. The network of audiences is actually comparable with the network of gatekeepers/intermediaries. If gatekeepers/intermediaries are tied to contextualized institutional practices, the network of audiences is tied with attributed norms and values like normative femininity and masculinity. Moreover, the regional identity of “Asia” is related to the practice of the consumers in making sense of what they watch. This is done by filling in the gaps between the preconditioned reception context by the gatekeepers/intermediaries, the audience’s everyday lives, and what is being presented in the television dramas. All of these processes, evolving within the network of audience, have constructed what I would like to propose as an “imaginary of Asia.”

Ultimately, this chapter has disclosed that the audience’s everyday reflectivity of East Asian television dramas has given new constituent to the “ambiguous imaginary space of ‘Asia’.”⁹⁷ This cultural geographical regionalization of Asia has created a defined space of regional culture. For the present case study, this has been done through the imaginary Asia constructed in the production and circulation of

⁹⁷ Ien Ang and Jon Stratton in their work, “Asianing Australia: Notes Toward A Critical Transnationalism In Cultural Studies,” argue that we have come to live in “a world where all cultures are both (like) ‘us’ and (not like) ‘us’” a world where familiar differences and inexplicable similarities are concurrently enunciated in many ways within the process of cultural globalization.

East Asian television dramas. In the reception level, through the process of reflexivity, Indonesian audience alternates to what belong and what does not belong to the imaginary space “Asia.” There is an ambiguous borderline between being a part of Asia or being outside Asia. When Asia is contrasted to the West, the audience feels that they are a part of the imaginary space with the so-called Asian values. However, in their consumption pattern, most of the time, audience members have to fill in the gaps between what is being represented in the television dramas and their own everyday experiences distancing themselves from the previously assumed Asianness. For example, in the discussion of masculinity, normative sexuality and the “Asian” men – “Oriental” girls, the audience excludes him or herself from the imaginary “Asia.” This ambiguous positioning of “Asia” is the most significant finding of this point of analysis, which will be further examined in the conclusion chapter.

5 Conclusion

This study has attempted to understand the complexity of cultural globalization in Asia by looking at the circulation and reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. The aim is to evaluate existing theses of cultural globalization within the environment of Intra-Asia cultural traffic. The existing theses have been evaluated through two layers of analysis, examining both the institutional practices of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries as actors in the circulation network as they precondition the reception context as well as audience engagement and reflexivity in making sense of the depiction of (East) Asia in the television dramas. The next section provides a recap of the findings and their implications as they relate to the main research questions.

5.1 A Recap of Circulation Network And Audience Reception

The analysis in chapter 3 focused on the gatekeeping and intermediary practices of television stations (specifically *Indosiar*), pirated DVD sellers (both online and kiosks), as well as printed media and (virtual) community of audience. These various gatekeepers and intermediaries work to screen, select and filter what is consumed by the Indonesian audience. As an illustration of this process, since the television station works within a legal terrain, its institutional practice is constrained by the government, both national and even transnational regulations. One example of this is the practice of censorship, which occurs at all stages of the circulation process. First, censorship is observable in the screening process when the television station chooses particular television dramas to be broadcast due to legal constraints under the foreign program quota and content regulations. In doing so, the type of television dramas entering Indonesia has been limited to a particular kind of drama, which I have categorized as trendy, romantic, family dramas. This censorship, in turn, affects the practices of pirated DVD sellers, who operate outside legal constraints. Consequently, the practices of screening, selecting and filtering have preconditioned the type of television dramas to be consumed by the Indonesian audience.

Censorship is also apparent in the filtering process. All foreign television

dramas must go through the Film Censorship Board as well as the television station's self-censorship process. Selected television dramas are censored again through the dubbing process. These censorship practices reformulate East Asian television dramas before the Indonesian television audience consumes them. A further stage censorship consists of monitoring by the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*KPI*). In Chapter 3, I discussed an instance of censorship typified by *KPI* releasing a warning letter to *Indosiar* on 12 June 2012 regarding the scene in the Korean television drama, *Protect the Boss*, which portrayed a seemingly kissing scene. *KPI* is tasked with ensuring that the content is acceptable and in line with the lawmakers' definition of "norms of decency and pudency."⁹⁸ These multiple layers of censorship, as argued previously, ensure that television content remains in line with the morals and values espoused by the state. This turns television tool for state-sponsored moral policing.

As a result, the gatekeeping and other intermediary practices have created a web of mediating lines in which they construct commonalities and gloss over differences of the Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean television dramas. As a result, East Asian television dramas are considered more proximate to the Indonesian context, especially when contrasted with American television series or Hollywood films. The television stations and pirated DVD sellers have drawn on pre-assumed regional affinities as a part of their routinized practices. For example, they categorize these television dramas into "*Drama Asia*" or "*Asian Drama*." They also allocate the East Asian television dramas to the afternoon time slot along with local ones. These practices precondition the reception context, which needs to be taken into account before going into the study of the audience.

In Chapter 4, I interpreted the research findings regarding audience engagement and reflexivity on what is depicted on the television dramas. The study uncovered three ways in which audience members make sense of what they watch and gain pleasure from watching, namely experiencing a sense of sharedness, visualizing their desires/aspirations on screen, and appropriation of foreign cultural

⁹⁸ An excerpt from the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission warning letter (number 354/K/KPI/06/12) on 12 June 2012: "This kind of violation is categorized as a violation against children and teenagers' protection, restrictions of sexual scene and norms of decency and pudency which are aired by a broadcasting institution." Translated by the researcher from: "*Jenis pelanggaran ini dikategorikan sebagai pelanggaran atas perlindungan anak dan remaja, pelanggaran adegan seksual serta norma kesopanan dan kesusilaan yang disiarkan oleh lembaga penyiaran.*"

aspects of the shows. The first mode of pleasure, the experience of a sense of sharedness, evokes a sense of familiarity with the depiction of other parts of Asia or “the other Asians.” Second, audience members also experience visualization of their desires/aspirations on screen, although these desires/aspirations are frequently defined by the television dramas themselves. One example of this is the representation of how the Korean justice system deals with corruption cases in the Korean dramas, which is compared to the many unresolved corruption cases in Indonesia. The desire/aspiration exists because of the audience’s social, economical or even political positioning, which leaves the audience in a state of longing to achieve his or her desire and aspiration. It is significant to point out that these two modes of pleasure are not in contradiction with one another, but rather overlapping.

In the third mode of pleasure, audience members appropriate certain foreign aspects of the television dramas in order to fill in the gaps between the socio-cultural and political contexts of Indonesia and the countries of production. The Indonesian audience identifies several moments of appropriation, including attributed values, “soft” masculinity, “cute” femininity, and Chineseness/oriental discourse. For instance, audience members contest the feminized images of the male characters, such as over-the-top fashion and polished nails. Other features, such as a romantic attitude and heroic acts, however, seem to fit better into the constructed Indonesian hegemonic masculinity. Audience members then appropriate what they watch with their attributed norms and values by filling in the gaps between the representation of soft masculinity and the Indonesian hegemonic masculinity. What constitutes the experience is more than moments of identification and distancing. For the Indonesian audience, the necessity to appropriate what is being offered by the television dramas is an important process in order to receive pleasure from watching East Asian television drama experience.

5.2 Revisiting the Regional Affinities and Cultural Proximity Theses

This research has extended the discussion of geocultural/linguistic regions and also the cultural proximity thesis. The results strengthen the argument that the Asian case should be analyzed in a distinctive framework when compared to other regional case studies. There are numerous gaps in previous research on audience reception of transnational television products, which mainly focused on areas with

historical, cultural and even linguistic backgrounds shared with the countries of productions. This case study has moved beyond the proximate East Asian markets of China, Taiwan and Singapore, by looking at the Southeast Asian markets, located in a different sub-region of Asia. Previous research, such as the study of *telenovela* in Latin America, has concluded that a strong regional flavor and cultural proximity are the driving forces of the intra regional cultural traffic. It is crucial to understand that these concepts were developed in a particular locale at a particular historical moment. These concepts need to be interrogated critically in understanding the distinctiveness of each case study, especially in the Asian region.

The first layer of the analysis examines the circulation practices of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries, namely the television stations, pirated DVD sellers, printed media (tabloids/magazines/newspapers) and virtual community of audience. Research findings have indicated that there is an interconnection between various intermediaries, such as when pirated DVDs sellers use television as references or when television uses tabloids to market the television dramas. There are multiple layers of mediation and each layer is socially, culturally, economically and even politically contextualized. In these layers of mediation, gatekeepers and/or intermediaries are constructing commonalities and glossing over differences between television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and Korea. The so-called affinities between the country of production and country of consumption are not in fact embedded in the television dramas. In this Indonesian case study, they are a part of the preconditioned reception context set up in the circulation network by gatekeepers and intermediaries.

Furthermore, research findings have indicated that the regional affinities thesis is contestable in the intra-Asia cultural traffic. Scholars (Straubhaar 2007, Sinclair 2004, Cunningham, Jacka & Sinclair 1998) have argued that the main driving force of the transnational flow of cultural products within a region is its regional affinities. Nevertheless, by looking at the network of actors involved in the layers of East Asian television dramas circulation in Indonesia, there is a dissimilar geographical dimension with, for example, Latin America. Asia is a region consisting of distinct sub-regions, unlike the case study of *telenovela* in Latin America (Straubhaar) or Australian soap opera in the United Kingdom (Cunningham et.al.). In this case study, North East Asia (country of production) and Southeast Asia (country

of consumption) are located in two distinctive parts of the region. The conceptualization of Asia in this process of intra-regional cultural products flow is significantly different from elsewhere, where regional affinities or geocultural/linguistic theses are relevant.

The second layer of analysis focuses on the study of the audience and evaluation of the idea of cultural proximity. First of all, with the idea of cultural one would be able to perceive that elements of culture are fixed and essentialized. Cultural proximity, as Koichi Iwabuchi (2001) argues, is something “identified and reworked” by the audience. It is not something already pre-existing in the television dramas. The fascination or what constitutes the pleasure in experiencing these dramas is not predetermined cultural proximity. The Indonesian audience reworks what they consume from the television dramas. The analysis here identifies three modes of pleasure experienced by the audience: the sense of sharedness in which audiences are familiar with what is being represented, such as the representation of family piety, desires/aspirations in which the audience members identify what is being represented as something missing in their everyday life, and lastly, moments of appropriation, when they need to fill in the gaps, such as in appropriating the images of “pretty men” by focusing on the acceptable features of masculinity.

This research has examined what constitutes the multidirectional flows of television dramas from East Asian countries to Indonesia. These flows consist of the network of interconnected gatekeepers/intermediaries and also the audience members as they are bounded in the dominant discourse of everyday life. Furthermore, the idea of affinities or proximities between shared communities of language and culture in other regional case studies are problematic in the Asian case. To treat Asia as a single unit of analysis is to ignore the complexity of the region. The intra-Asia cultural traffic consists of multiple layers that need to be examined in relation to one another.

5.3 Belonging and not Belonging to “Asia”

As argued in previous chapters, the construction of Asia in the process of circulation and reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia, could be

considered as a construction of a “unitary imagined community”⁹⁹,” to borrow Ien Ang’s term. The circulation of images of (East) Asia in these television dramas has produced a unitary sense between Indonesia and the country of production. The sub-regional distinction in Asia is in itself an antithesis of the previously argued geocultural/linguistic regions in the discussion of regional television. Furthermore, as Holden argues, “Asia is a conceptual category of such extremes – not only economically, but politically, socially, culturally, and historically – its differences [are] so great that it may legitimately be challenged as a valid unit of analysis” (Holden, 12). In the case of the flow of television dramas from one sub-region in Asia to another, there has been a capitalization of Asian cultural affinities in order to create a suppositious network of intra-Asian cultural traffic. In the Indonesian context, I would argue that the imagination of belonging to Asia is related to anti-Western rhetoric, the “politics of morality” within the context of Islamic reawakening in the *Reformasi* period and the historical baggage of ethnic/group segregation from the New Order era.

First, the anti-Western rhetoric in Indonesia has been formed alongside other discourses including the higher degree of religious puritanism affecting the burgeoning of morality politics during and after *Reformasi*. The social and political situation in Indonesia after the end of New Order dictatorship era has been characterized by a cacophony of multiple discourses and the many voices trying claim power in the changing political scene. One of the major changes concerns the issue of religious puritanism, such as the powerful awakening of radical fundamentalist groups like FPI.¹⁰⁰ The segregation of the society based on group interests has created particular social understanding of what is considered moralistic or not. The violent work of FPI is a reflection of how, for example, the issue of morality, has been used as a tool in the political interests of those who want to obtain power.

⁹⁹ Ien Ang has argued that, in the emergence of globalization, there’s an uprising discourse of Asianness, which could be read as a “...transnational construction of Asia as unitary imagined community...” (Ang, 2007, p. 7). Ang refers mostly to the specific situation in Southeast Asia in which the nation(s) reflect upon the necessary speaking position in the struggle of national identity amidst ‘global’ (namely Western) media flows. Asianness is utilized to interrupt the global force and raise the status of Asian civilization.

¹⁰⁰ “...the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI, Defenders of Islam Front), another Islamist militia, made headlines by patrolling the streets of Jakarta and other cities in order to prevent what their members perceived as “vice” (e.g., massage parlors, nightclubs, the selling of “pornographic” literature, etc.). Furthermore, the FPI conducted raids during Ramadan, targeting businesses and individuals who were deemed disrespectful to the holy month. In April of 2006 the organization attacked the newly founded office of the Indonesian edition of *Playboy*...” (Heiduk, 2012, p. 32)

Another change in the Indonesian social and political discourse affecting the circulation network and reception context is what Manneke Budiman (2011) calls the “the politics of morality.” One example of this is the ongoing Anti Pornography debate as a reaction to the government’s plan in creating an Indonesia’s Anti-Pornography Bill¹⁰¹ [*Rancangan Undang-Undang Antipornografi dan Pornoaksi*, known in Indonesia as RUU APP]. It was first drafted in 2006 and has drawn a lot of protest as well as support. There has been a clash between opponents and supporters. Budiman argues that this is a result of the political awakening of Islam¹⁰² in the post-Suharto era, but it has gone beyond the conservative Islamic awakening discourse and become highly politicized. On the one hand, the Islamic dimension is indisputable; however, to say that the politics of morality in today’s Indonesian social and political context is directly or solely influenced by the Islamic awakening would be making a hasty correlation. There are yet a number of progressive Islamic leaders, trying to take Indonesia to a different direction. As argued by Budiman,

“The politics of morality has indeed become the politics of the day in the *Reformasi* period, but it would be misleading to assume that Islamic teachings serve as the underlying motive behind this type of politics, especially when many Muslim intellectuals and religious leaders chose to locate themselves as part of pro-democratic camp that rejects the use of religion as a repressive tool to restrict freedom of expression” (Budiman, 2011, p. 494).

The changing discourse of morality has created a new kind of censorship on what is considered appropriate or not, affecting the institutional practices of gatekeepers/intermediaries and also the reception context of the Indonesian urban audience.

These social and political conditions are just a few aspects of the Indonesian context. This is decidedly interrelated with the intermediaries/gatekeepers’ preconditioning and also Indonesian audience’s reception process. Globalization in the Indonesian context has always been associated with a destructive external force,

¹⁰¹ “The February 2006 draft of the Bill covered both pornography and what the lawmakers called “pornoaction” [*pornoaksi* in Indonesian]. Pornography was defined as “a substance [*substansi*] in the media or a tool of communication that is made for the purpose of conveying concepts that exploit sex, obscenity and/or erotica”, and pornoaction was defined as “an action, in public, that exploits sex, obscenity and/or erotica” (DPRRI, 2006).” (Allen, 2009, p. 101)

¹⁰² “In the post-Suharto era, the political awakening of Islam is primarily spearheaded by formal, Islamic organizations sanctioned by the state, such as MUI (Council of Indonesian *Ulamas*) and the ICMI (Associations of Indonesian Muslim Intelligentsia), but informal organizations such as FPI (Islamic Defender Front), Hizbut Tahrir, and Majelis Mujahidin (Mujahidin’s Council) also plays a major part in putting Islam back on the frontline of Indonesian contemporary politics.” (Budiman, 2011, p. 494)

with the West as the main culprit. There is, however, an ambiguous perspective in Indonesia about the West, as articulated by Suryakusuma (2004):

“Western liberalism, both political and personal, is seen as undesirable and even abhorred. While there is great respect for the scientific and technological achievements of the West, Indonesians deplore the influence of *pergaulan bebas Barat* (liberal Western social norms), which in essence mean socializing too freely among the sexes, leading to pre- and extra-marital sex and other immoral practices” (Suryakusuma, 2004, p. 59).

In this ambiguous love-hate relationship with the West, the essence of “hate” is discussed in a moralistic stance, in which “liberal Western social norms” or what Indonesian called as “*pergaulan bebas*” is directly labeled as a destructive Western influence. This essentializing assumption is of course debatable, but in the recently escalating politics of morality, what is considered moralistic and not is mostly evaluated from this anti-Western point of view.

This case study has provided a different sense of Asia as compared with other research. Asia is often romanticized as an anti-Western idea or as a negation of the destructive modern Western influence to the traditional moralistic Indonesia. In other research, East Asian television dramas are often said to induce a sense of a popular, urban, and decidedly modern Asia, reflecting an experience of urban modernity that is both like and unlike the West at the same time. However, in the Indonesian case, even though the elements of “popular,” “urban,” and “modern” are still highly regarded both on the circulation and the reception level, there is a strong emphasis on its moralistic baggage. In a time when Indonesian social and political discourses are overpowered by the politics of morality and anti-Western rhetoric, East Asian television dramas provide a comforting pleasure through the sense of sharedness and desire/aspiration.

The construction of an imagined unitary Asia could be further discussed as a defense mechanism to make sure the “enemy” is identified and expelled. The research findings open up the discussion to a more evaluative perspective when the analysis focuses on the local level of the flow, which is the flow of the television dramas once it enters the gate (i.e. Indonesia). There is a construction of an imagined unitary Asia by gatekeepers/intermediaries because they are bound by local regulations and also by the Indonesian social and political conditions. On some levels of the reception process, Indonesian audiences also position themselves as a part of

the imagined Asia as interpreted from the television dramas. However, there are also moments when audience members exclude themselves from this constructed Asia. I have argued that this is the moment when the Indonesian audience members feel that they do not belong to the kind of Asia being depicted in the television dramas. As discussed in Chapter 4, the process of othering occurs when the audience members refer to the characters in the television dramas as “oriental” or “Asian.” The orientalisng process stands in contrast with moments when Indonesian audience experiences a sense of belonging to the constructed Asia while identifying Asianness as a negation of the destructive West.

These moments of orientalisng Asia in Indonesia must be understood within the context of historical anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia. Japanese/Taiwanese/Korean characters in the television dramas are labelled as oriental because they share physical attributes with what has been constructed as the physical attributes of Chinese Indonesians. The historical baggage of Chinese sentiments is a primary reason why Indonesian audience orientalises the depiction of (East) Asia in these television dramas. In these moments, the audience members are excluding themselves from the imagined unitary Asia. I would argue that this part of the findings is unique in the Indonesian case and clearly negates the previously contested thesis of geocultural/linguistic region and cultural proximity.

As the audience keeps on alternating between being a part of Asia and not being a part of it, this could be understood as a form of agency in responding to the constructed boundaries created in the growth of anti-Western rhetoric and the escalating politics of morality. This form of agency is a reaction to the constantly changing nature of cultural globalization. With the rapid transnational flow of Asian products in the midst of other products, including American or European products, audience members and other kinds of consumers make sense of the products according to their personal accumulated knowledge about what these products mean in their everyday lives. In the case of East Asian television dramas, the audience imagines and re-imagines the construction of Asianness from these television products. For the Indonesian audience, these dramas are Asian precisely because they are *not* Western products. This resonates with the Indonesian social and political condition of anti-West rhetoric and an escalating politics of morality. In this stage of reflexivity, the audience is attaching moral baggage to East Asian television dramas

as a way to justify their choice of consumption. On the other hand, the word “Asian” is also used to exclude “us” (the audience) from the “Asian(s)” or the “oriental” characters represented on the television dramas. In this moment of exclusion, audience members momentarily distance themselves from the representation of the oriental as a result of the historical baggage of anti-Chinese sentiment. All in all, audience members have appropriated the imagination of Asia in accordance with these national and local contexts within the rapid transnational flow of East Asian cultural products in the cultural globalization process in Asia.

5.4 Asia as a Depository of In-betweenness

This research has been situated in the framework of cultural globalization, looking at the network of gatekeepers/intermediaries and the associated issue of audience engagement and reflexivity. The transnational flow of East Asian television dramas from their countries of production, Japan/Taiwan/Korea, to the Southeast Asian countries, specifically Indonesia, has opened up a discussion of cultural globalization from a regional perspective. It has also nurtured a process of transnational imagination and self-reflexivity on the audience’s everyday life. I argue that the circulation and reception of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia has constructed an imagined unitary Asia while at the same time orientalised the notion of Asia for Indonesians.

The audience’s work of imagination has become an arena of negotiation as well as contestation in sites of individual and communal agency. Appadurai argues, “...where there is consumption there is pleasure, and where there is pleasure there is agency” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 7). Through the three modes of pleasure, these cultural products have brought about some kind of transnational imagination and self-reflexive views towards the audience’s context of their everyday lives. In the Indonesian case, this “work of imagination” (Appadurai 1996) is problematic due to a dualism in how the audience imagines “Asia.” First, in the time when Indonesian social and political condition are overpowered by escalating politics of morality and anti-Western rhetoric, East Asian television is positioned as a strategic defense mechanism (i.e. against Western cultural domination). This has created a bordered imagined space of “Asia” to ensure the flows of what is assumed as non-threatening cultural products. However, on the reception level, Indonesian audience members

engage with and reflect on East Asian television dramas while constantly alternating themselves from being a part of the imagined bordered Asia or by withdrawing themselves from the depiction of Asia on the television dramas. East Asian television dramas have become a comforting alternative because of this in-between position.

In the end, the discussion has moved beyond the case study in its attempt to understand the complexity of cultural products' transmissions and diffusion across the region. The growing circulation and consumption of East Asian television dramas in Asia has facilitated connections among people in the region, which is accentuated by the previously mentioned work of imagination. Moreover, it has challenged the uneven process of cultural globalization and even facilitated intra-regional dialogues as these circulation and consumption networks link up parts of Asia. Other researches¹⁰³ of East Asian television dramas, which focused on areas more proximate to the East Asian countries, have concluded that the main attraction of these criss-crossing cultural products lies within the dualism between the identifiable/desirable Asian modernity/cosmopolitanism and the nostalgia for traditional Asian values. For Indonesia, a country with a distinct historical and cultural background, the multidirectional flows of these cultural products occur due to its positioning as either an inducement of an imagined unitary Asia or as the other Asia. In conclusion, intra-Asia cultural traffic, which has intensified the process of cultural globalization in Asia in the last decade, does not indicate a geocultural approximation between the Asian countries. The regional dynamics occurs because Asia has been appropriated as a depository of in-betweenness.

5.5 Implications and Contributions

The results of this study have important implications for discussion of the two models of cultural globalization, particularly in the Indonesian context. The Indonesian case shows that context specificity is most significant in the study of intra-regional traffic because contexts are situated within particular cultural and political practices operating within a set of power relations. In the study of the transnational flow of popular culture products, particularly television products, the context's specificity will reveal not only a descriptive analysis of the flow but more

¹⁰³ Iwabuchi; Chua; Leung; Siriyuvasak 2004; Cho 2011; Davis and Yeh 2004; Sun 2011; Tania 2008; Ling and Tong 2008; Shim 2008; Syed and Hamzah 2011; Ko 2004.

importantly, an evaluative one. It needs to be evaluative in order to see the power play between actors involved in the transnational movements of the products. Power is seen as a web of relations that flow multi-directionally, as indicated by other research under the Cultural Studies framework, and not as a top down process. Consequently, the network of actors will never be independently free from one another as they are all interconnected and politicized by the power relations. This has been reflected in the bounded institutional practices of gatekeepers and/or intermediaries and even the audience's everyday context.

The research findings have indicated the dynamic nature of audience reception, in which audience members position themselves as either a part of the constructed unitary Asia or exclude themselves from this imagination of Asia when they label the depiction of East Asia as Oriental. In this way, the reception study reveals a situation, which is in direct contrast with the Western cultural imperialism idea. In other words, on the reception level, the borders originally created in the network to differentiate Asia and the West, are now re-worked by the audience to differentiate "us" (Indonesian) and the other "Asia" (East Asia or the "oriental"). The audience is bounded in the context not only in a communal sense, but also as individuals, who are characterized by accumulative formations of everyday life affected by a particular social, cultural and political situation.

By and large, this study contributes to the emerging discussions¹⁰⁴ of intra-Asia cultural traffic, specifically East Asian television dramas, addressing the relationships between the transnational flows of these television products and the emerging regional cultural connections. The findings have extended the discussion of geocultural/linguistic regions and also contested the cultural proximity thesis. It echoes the argument that the Asian case should be analyzed in a distinctive framework. Furthermore, the intra-Asia cultural traffic consists of multiple layers that need to be examined in relation to one another in order to capture the complexity of the cultural globalization process.

In the audience engagement and reflexivity with the television dramas, audience members have reflexively recreated themselves as members of an imagined "global" (or regional) community by means of television dramas in today's rich global media environment. They do this as a response to the constantly changing

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

social and political conditions of their everyday lives, such as the escalating sense of morality in Indonesia after the New Order era and the growth of anti-Western rhetoric. Audience members may embed or dis-embed from what they watch and do this simultaneously in order to assist them in reassessing their everyday condition. Through the “work” of imagination (Appadurai 1996), the audience goes through an ongoing process of self-imagining as his or her everyday endeavour. Presumably, audience members negotiate with or even break through the constraining hegemonic system they encounter in their daily lives by practicing their agencies in making sense of their television drama experiences.

Methodologically, this study combines a multi-layered analysis that draws on tools, which could be a model for other research in a similar area of study, such as textual analysis, institutional research and audience study methods. During the research process, there were a series of methodological decisions to be made as the research developed from one stage to the next. The multiple methods of research, especially on the level of audience study, have contextualized the subjects of the study culturally, historically and geographically. This is related to the audience’s habitual activities, within the time and space relation. Time is significant because the collected data were within the broadcasting/circulating timeframe of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. It is also related to the space or the audience’s location due to the transnational feature of these products.

In the audience study, the triangulation of data from the chosen methods helps the researcher to cross-verify. What is more significant is how multiple ways of conveying the audience’s engagement with television dramas have offered greater reflexivity, for both the respondents and the researcher. As explained in Appendix 2, respondents have been able to describe their experience in the discussion with friends (Focus Group Discussions) and in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. More importantly, they were able to express it in the diary, which provides data closer to the time of watching. This method also allowed the respondents to express whatever they wanted without having the researcher “breathing down their neck” at the time of writing. These methods are highly recommended tools for future studies as they offer moments of constant reflexivity, which is important in any study concerning audience reception.

5.6 Limitations and Future Research Possibilities

The limitations of this research consist of the small scope of the research location and research objects. By focusing on one specific area in Jakarta, Indonesia, the research has preconditioned its contextual analysis in an urban setting. Furthermore, it also affected the categorization of respondents chosen for the research as most of them come from the middle class. Another technical problem was an imbalanced number of female and male respondents. It is important to take into consideration all of these limitations to open up possibilities for new kinds of research, which could cover other non urban areas in Indonesia and other categories of respondents, such as upper or lower social class, more focus on male audiences or more specified ethnic background.

Furthermore, the collected data has also revealed that the popularity of East Asian television dramas is connected to that of other forms of popular culture from East Asian countries. At the time the research was done, the popularity of Korean boy/girl bands or known as *K Pop* has created a new phenomenon of *I Pop*, which is basically an Indonesian version of *K Pop*, consisting of boy/girl bands imitating those coming from Korea. Even though this analysis was anticipated at the beginning of the research, the decision to not include this topic was taken due to limited research time. Future research could cover this particular topic as it offers new avenues to understand other forms of intra-Asia cultural traffic.

The conceptual frameworks used in this research could be further explored and examined in new and different contexts or locations. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the transnational flow of East Asian popular culture products in Southeast Asian countries is still underexplored. This research has concluded that the context's specificity is the most important component underlying the conceptual frameworks and theoretical models. As much of the research done has focused on areas with shared historical, cultural and even linguistic background with the countries of productions, future research should focus more on other areas with significantly different context(s). The purpose of this research was to move beyond its reception in proximate East Asian markets such as Japan, China and Taiwan. Consequently, it is significant to further explore other key markets of East Asian products in Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, and others. East Asian products have affected these territories in varied and complex ways.

Furthermore, future research can move well beyond audience reception to investigate the production of East Asian influenced cultural works by Southeast Asian cultural practitioners or industries, such as the aforementioned development of *I Pop* in the Indonesian music scenes as a response to the popularity of *K Pop* in recent years.

Appendix 1: *Indosiar* Daily Schedule (Samples)

DAILY SCHEDULE

2011

FOKUS | PATROLI | RAGAM | GOSSIP | SINOPSIS | TALK SHOW | KOLOM | RESPOND ONLINE | PEDULI KASIH | KITA PEDULI | INVESTOR RELATION

Jadwal Acara

16 SEPTEMBER 2011

00:01 - Wish To See You Again

02:00 - Fokus Malam

02:30 - Starlit

03:30 - Bike To Nature

04:00 - Inayah

05:00 - Mamah dan Aa

06:00 - Fokus Pagi

07:00 - KISS Pagi

07:30 - Halo Polisi

08:00 - FTV Pagi: Mawar Tak Berduri

09:30 - FTV Drama: Hippo Si Kuda Air Raksasa

11:30 - Patroli

12:00 - Drama Asia (Korea): Tamra The Island

13:30 - Drama Asia (Korea): Bread Love And Dream

15:00 - KISS Sore

16:00 - Drama Asia

16:00 - Drama Asia (Korea): Oh! My Lady

18:00 - Khadijah dan Khalifah

20:30 - 2 Dewi

22:00 - Mega Asia: Casino Raiders 2

Tags: depok ketua dprd sumut tewas sering
goda istri pelaku pencurian
arcaper pustaka analice patten pasangan muda
- mudi dirampok isabel yahyakrutv7stephen
resapi cinta tumenggung
purwacarakatolak balatibir
kehidupan buah nagater sesat
berbagai dampak bulan bintang buku
pelajarankimberly catesputing beilunhendrik
betadi freeportke
indonesia anak haripengungsi kekurangan air
bersih mahasiswa baru pejabat
bialexander kuznetzov pengusur andikenal
anak yang baik turun gunung togel menteng
tenggulung tewas australia brigyeon mi rikonser
trio macan rikuhindu idroespopdenari
bugilbiografi beruntun warga berebut
air robertino candellarasani mukherjiambrose
hsuzhang yimounasution

DAILY SCHEDULE

2012

Activate Facebook Timeline App and Get Experience with Your Friends.

Jadwal Acara - 14 NOVEMBER 2012

01:00 - Fokus Malam

01:30 - Sinetron Dini Hari: UFO

03:30 - Serial Dini Hari: Mary Is Out At Night

04:30 - Mu'izat Masih Ada

05:00 - Mamah dan Aa

06:00 - Fokus Pagi

07:00 - KISS Pagi

08:00 - Sinema Pagi: Amanda Anak Ajaib

10:00 - Sinema TV Spesial: Mencari Jejak Takdir

12:00 - Patroli

12:30 - Drama Asia: Monkey King, Journey To The West

13:30 - Drama Asia: Dong Yi, Jewel In The Crown

14:30 - Drama Asia: Cruel Temptation

15:30 - KISS Sore

16:30 - Fokus

17:00 - Kata Hati

18:00 - Serial: Takdir Cintaku

20:00 - Sinema Pintu Taubat

22:00 - Mega Bollywood: Ka Ho Naa Pyaar Hai

Berita HOT:

Sekilas fokus

Banjir Pasang Rendam Rusakan Rumah

BNN Tangkap Seorang Wartawan dan Sita 2,6 KG Narkoba

Pembunuhan Berantai Mujianto Divenis 9 Tahun Penjara

Mahkamah Konstitusi Subarkan BP Migas

Rapat Wagub Ahok dengan Dinas PU Diunggah di Youtube

Keluarga TKI Minta Korban Perkosaan Dipulangkan

Mabes Polri Selidiki Pompos Darul Akhliya

Born Ikan Meledak

Tiga Nelayan Tewas

Sinema TV Pagi

Kalau Cinta Sudah Melekat

Seorang TKW di Malaysia Kembali Diperkosa

Random Tagu di rs sari asih pesawat

adam air jatuh hutan pinus tepung terigu

jalur gaza kain 3 nelayan hilang

muhammad fardhan tewas dibunuh di

hotel siswa senken 12 bandung

kementerian hukum dan ham nami watts

betharia sonata buka puasa bersama investasi

ketua kpk mendesak sophie's revenge

sapa pesawat latih allen lee haff

DAILY SCHEDULE

2013

Close your eyes. Open your ears.

Every Sunday, 8 Pm Only on

Jadwal Acara - 29 APRIL 2013

00.30 - Football Review
01.00 - Sinema Dini Hari: Jaka Tingkir
03.00 - Sinema Tengah Malam: Timun Mas
04.30 - Penyejuk Imani
05.00 - Mamah dan Aa
06.00 - Fokus Pagi
07.00 - KISS Pagi
08.00 - Pagi Pagi Bagi Bagi
09.30 - Sinema Tv Spesial: Bukan Salah Takdir
11.30 - Patroli
12.00 - Sinema Pritu Taubat Siang: Aku Lupa Jadi Ibu
14.00 - HOT KISS
15.00 - Fokus
15.30 - Penolong Misterius
16.00 - Komedian Galau
17.00 - Drama Asia (Korea): Fashion King
18.00 - Drama Seri Indonesia: Bukan Maswar Tapi Melati
19.00 - Sinema Indonesia: Aku Boneka Istri
21.00 - Drama Sen Keluarga: Brama Kumbara
23.00 - Sinema Unggulan: Silat Kid

FASHION KING
Monday - Friday at 05.00 PM

Berita HOT:
 Solo Menari 24 Jam
 Peringati Hari Tari Dunia
 Indonesia Hari Ini
 Pasca Banjir Bandung, Warga Berharap Bantuan
 Terdakwa Jalani Sidang Perdana
 Kasus Anggota Polisi Tembak Tentara
 Jelang Peringatan Hari Buruh
 Ribuan Buruh Keliling ke Kawasan Industri
 Tuntut Diangkat Menjadi PNS
 Ratusan Guru Honorir Unjukrasa
 Warga Lakukan Pengejaran
 Gang Motor Berulah
 Razia Tempat Kos
 Diduga Jadi Tempat Mesum
 Bus Tabrak Angkot dan Rumah
 Diduga Akibat Hindar Jalan Berlubang
 Korban Tidak Bisa Tertolong
 Siswa SD Terseret Ombak
 Jasad Wanita Tanpa Identitas

Appendix 2: A Reflection on Audience Research

I would like to give a brief explanation of the ethnographic research I have conducted during the research period and my reflection on the stages of the research, which will contribute significantly to the analytical process. The problems faced during the research were both conceptual and technical. The conceptual problem lies on the fact that it focuses on the private world of the audience. During the research period, I had to devise a series of methodological decisions done reflexively and recursively as the research was developing. "All ethnographic require, in large measure, the reinventing of the methodological wheel. This is, because, of their very nature, ethnographies are grounded in the realities of other people's lives ..."

(Silverstone *et.al.*, 1991, pp. 206-207). These methodological decisions have definitely affected the outcome of the research and also the process of data analysis.

The research started by choosing respondents to finally deciding to conduct pre-interviews, semi-structured questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions. At the beginning, I chose respondents from two age groups, which are the over 20s and over 30s groups. At that time, the decision was based on the assumption that age was an important criterion. The main purpose was to get a range of audience members, who have been watching East Asian television (trendy) dramas since they were first broadcasted in 1990s in Indonesia and also those who just started watching in early 2000, when Korean dramas started to replace Japanese and Taiwanese dramas on television. This is not to say that the first group of respondents, in their early 20s, only watches Korean dramas. Some of them actually do not even watch Korean dramas and prefer Japanese ones. This is another important aspect in the selection of respondents because the early 20s group because it was during the period when they first watched East Asian television dramas that the medium of distribution changed quite drastically. For the early 30s group, the main medium in the early years of watching East Asian television dramas was television and also pirated VCDs. It was not until early 2000 when pirated DVDs became a cheaper and more attractive option. By then, the choice to download from the internet was becoming more feasible as the internet developed quite significantly in Indonesia. This was also the background for the development of pirated DVDs, which relies greatly on internet Peer-to-Peer sharing. It was during this introduction of cheap pirated DVDs and

internet download/streaming that the early 20s group first encountered East Asian television dramas.

In the stage of recruiting respondents, the selection was done as far as possible to be heterogeneous in terms of age, gender and religious affiliation. This would have affected the “context” of the everyday lives of the audience, which is the main consideration for the ethnographic research. However, it was also necessary to create a comfortable environment during the Focus Group Discussions in order for respondents to share and discuss about a lot of things during the discussions. As a result, I chose to use the snowballing technique. I first chose three interviewees: one female college student (over 20s group), one housewife/employee (over 30s group) and one male college student (over 20s group).

This is when I encountered one conceptual problem because I was not able to find a male respondent for the over 30s group. I believe this is due to the assumption that watching television dramas have always been stereotypically connected to female audience. I will take into account this as a limitation of the research. There is a gap between the number of male and female respondents. However, this will also be a part of the analysis in which preferences of the television dramas are highly affected by gender issues, especially later on during the discussion of audience reflexivity in the issues of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, I will not claim that the respondents in this research would constitute a representative sample especially because they all live in Jakarta, an urban setting, and also come from middle class constituents.

In the first stage, the three interviewees recommended some of their friends or colleagues for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Eventually, there were four FGDs with two over 20s female groups, one over 20s/late 20s male group and one over 30s female group. We started the FGDs with a semi-structured questionnaire in order to understand the respondents’ structures of everyday life and their habitual experience in watching East Asian television dramas. This was a necessary prerequisite for the other stages of the research. It was during this process that I, as the researcher, asked them to sign a consent form, which could be found in Appendix 3, as a written agreement between the respondent and the researcher in the matter of inclination to participate in the research and also the matter of confidentiality in the outcome. It was also really helpful that throughout the 3 years period of research,

relationships with the respondents have remained good and the requests by the researcher for follow-up research activities have been granted since the first stage of the research.

Throughout the research, I found it necessary to redesign everything in an attempt to generate a better understanding of the respondents' experiences and also to cope with the time and space limitation. Each stage has a reflexive and triangularly significance. One of the research limitations is that I was not able to be physically researching in Indonesia due to my postgraduate work in Hong Kong. Therefore, after collecting data with pre-interviews, questionnaires and FGDs, the next stage of data collection was done through a different method, which is the diary study method¹⁰⁵ complemented with entry and exit interviews. The diary study method was chosen because it involves a lot of reflexivity for the audience in making sense of their experience of the East Asian television dramas.

“If participants' reflexivity about their practices of 'public connection' (or lack of them) was a key part of what we were trying to understand, it seemed important to allow participants to reflect so far as possible without us, as researchers, being there” (Couldry *et.al.*, 2007, p. 47).

The diary would also allow more complex process of reflexivity and the data were collected closer to the time of the watching experience. Moreover, with the absence of the researcher during the diary writing process, the respondents would be able to give a more personal reflection compared to during FGDs or interviews.

After reading the diaries, I realized that a diary study could get really complicated and challenging. Some diary entries are meticulously completed; however, some are minimally written. Furthermore, some respondents seemed to think that they were writing for the researcher creating a certain self-aware persona constructed in their entries. For that reason, it was important to conduct an exit interview, in which I was able to tease some unexpressed emotions in the diaries. The final exit interview, conducted from June to August 2012, has provided a platform for both the researcher and the respondents to reflect on the research. These respondents

¹⁰⁵ I also acknowledged that the routine diary writings will create boredom and frustration and this could be a burden for the respondents. That is why, to start the diary study, I asked all of the sixteen respondents who attended the FGDs on whether or not they would be willing to participate and only twelve of them agreed to participate. Respondents could fill the diary whenever they want to do it, depending on their routines in watching the television dramas, within the four month time period. They were also given the freedom to write in a diary I gave them during the entry interviews, conducted in December-January 2011, or to send me an electronic file via email during the writing period.

felt more comfortable in explaining some of the “unwritten” emotions during a direct conversation, rather than in writings, even though some were still reluctant. This has also been taken into consideration during the analysis process because it involves the respondents’ personal values and beliefs in responding toward certain themes in these television dramas.

These methodological decisions have definitely provided a strong platform for this research because they did not only provide a number of useful data for the analysis, but more importantly, they provided a strong sense of reflexivity. This has helped to always take into account the respondent’s social and cultural background, or even their personal values in their everyday lives, when they were expressing their ideas and emotions. The respondents admitted that they were more reflexive with the diary writing. It made them think about what they watched while recalling moments from when they watch the television dramas.

All in all, both methods, direct conversations and personal diary writing, were significant for the triangulation of the data. The multiple methods of research have also helped to contextualize respondents culturally, historically and geographically. This is in relation to their habitual activities within time and space relation. In relation to time, the collected data were within the time framework of East Asian television dramas broadcasting/circulating time in Indonesia. It is also related to the locales of the audience, the issue of space, which is Indonesia’s cultural, social and political specificity.

The last and most challenging stage was to the data interpretation. With transcripts and recordings from FGDs and interviews in addition to the diary entries, the data interpretation was done in several stages. Before conducting the entry interviews to introduce to the respondents about the diary writing, I analyzed the transcripts of the FGDs to have an idea on the respondents’ routines in watching the television dramas. Most of the re-occurring themes were on the medium, which is how they watch the television dramas, the reason why they watch the television dramas, the country preferences (Japanese or Taiwanese or Korean), and specific themes the respondents consider most significant in their East Asian television dramas experience like gender issues, attributed values, and the discourse of Chineseness.

Later on, I utilized these reoccurring themes to design the interview questions and also the template for the diary. Without wanting to direct the respondents in writing the diary, I decided to make three (3) boxes consisting of “Before,” “During,” and “After” moment of writing with some guided questions to help respondents in reflecting their experiences. I have also explained to the respondents during the entry interviews that they could use the questions as guidelines but not as the main thing to focus on. They have the freedom to write anything they want if they feel that the guidelines are too restrictive. In interpreting the diaries and also the transcripts from the Entry and Exit interviews, I highlighted keywords that keep on reappearing while still keeping in mind the themes that had occurred during the Focus Group Discussions.

A LIST OF RESPONDENTS:

Group 1 (Female, Over-20)

NAME (Acronym)	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	OCCUPATION	PARTICIPATION
D	23	Female	Single	Postgraduate Student	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
W	23	Female	Single	Employee (part time teacher +) translator	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
Mc	22	Female	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD
N	22	Female	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
I	22	Female	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
C	22	Female	Single	Employee (Embassy Staff)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews

Group 2 (Female, Over-20)

NAME (Acronym)	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	OCCUPATION	PARTICIPATION
R	22	Female	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
M	22	Female	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
MS	23	Female	Single	Employee (Translator)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
FI	22	Female	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD
D	23	Female	Single	Employee (Translator)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews

Group 3 (Male, Over-20)

NAME (Acronym)	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	OCCUPATION	PARTICIPATION
E	27	Male	Single	Employee + Student (Cruise Ship Staff)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
J	24	Male	Single	Undergraduate student	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
A	26	Male	Single	Employee (Consultant Staff)	FGD
Fr	25	Male	Single	Entrepreneur	FGD
G	26	Male	Single	Employee (Research Market Consultant)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews

Group 4 (Female, Over-30)

NAME (Acronym)	AGE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	OCCUPATION	PARTICIPATION
S	34	Female	Married	Employee (Trainer)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
K	33	Female	Single	Employee (Accountant)	FGD
Fb	34	Female	Married	Housewife	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews
Mn	33	Female	Single	Employee	FGD
V	33	Female	Single	Employee	FGD
S	37	Female	Married	Employee (Purchasing Manager)	FGD, Diary Study, Interviews

Appendix 3: Consent Form and Diary Template

Title of Study : “Intra-Asia Cultural Traffic: Transnational Flow of East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia”
Date of Study : June 2011 to August 2012

My name is Shuri Mariasih Gietty Tambunan. I am a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies Department, Lingnan University, Hong Kong. I am inviting you to take part in a research project that aims to analyze the circulation and reception process of East Asian television melodrama (from Japan, Taiwan and Korea) in Indonesia and how it has become a part of the cultural globalization process in Asia.

The title of my research is “Intra-Asia Cultural Traffic: Transnational Flow of East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia.” The micro-level of the research, which focuses on the reception context, is carried out in Jakarta from June 2011 to August 2012.

You have been chosen to participate in this research, along with a number of other respondents because you are a part of the community of audience of these East Asian television dramas. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in a small focus group (about 5-8 respondents), which will last for approximately an hour. The focus group will be held at _____ I will ask some personal questions about your daily life especially those related to the way you ‘consume’ these television products and other questions about your perceptions on this subject.

With your permission, the focus group discussion will be audio and videotaped so that I can accurately capture the ideas and opinions expressed during the focus group discussion. I will then create a transcript of the discussion, which does not include any personal identification so that the ideas and opinions discussed are completely anonymous.

I may ask to contact you by telephone or mail if we have any follow-up interviews after the discussion. I will also provide you with a summary of our analysis for your comments and reactions. Unfortunately, I am unable to compensate you for your time.

There are no significant risks to you from taking part in this research project. However, it is possible that interpersonal or interagency conflicts could emerge in the discussion. I will make sure the discussion will be comfortable for every respondent. There are no foreseeable direct benefits to you for participation, other than how the research will benefit the academic and also public discussions of the transnational flow of cultural products among Asian countries in response to the ongoing development of globalization.

All information obtained from you during the evaluation research will be kept confidential. Identifying information about you will not be used in any reports of the research. Your participation in this evaluation research is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part at any time, without giving a reason. You may refuse to answer any questions and may stop taking part in the study at any time without disadvantage.

Please take time to consider whether you want to take part in this evaluation research or not. If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Shuri Mariasih Gietty Tambunan at _____

If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the form on the attached page and keep one copy of this agreement page for your future reference

CONSENT FORM

**Study: *“Intra-Asia Cultural Traffic:
Transnational Flow of East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia”***

Researcher: Shuri Mariasih Gietty Tambunan (Lingnan University)

DECLARATION

I have read the information sheet describing the above study and this consent form and have had time to consider whether to take part in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary (it is my choice) and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without disadvantage. I agree to take part in this research. I understand that, as part of this research project, audio and videotapes of my participation in the research will be made and then transcribed. I understand that my name will not be identified in any use of these records. I am voluntarily agreeing that transcripts of the audio and videotapes may be studied by the researcher for use in the research project and used in the dissertation.

Name of Respondent (in block letters) _____

Signature _____

Date / /

DIARY STUDY (FEB – MAY 2012)

Dear respondents,

Please use this diary to describe your experience in watching the East television dramas.

I would really appreciate if you can fill in this diary **everytime** you watch a television drama. There are 3 (three) sections in every diary entry, which are the before, during and after process. I have provided several questions as guidelines, but you are given the freedom to write beyond those questions. Feel free to write anything about the before, during and after process of watching the television drama.

Printed version: You can write down the diary manually and submit the whole diary by the end of the study. However, if you choose this method, in the middle of the time period, I would like you to submit the entries you have made that far for some cross-check. I will make sure the submission process to be as easy as possible.

Electronic version: You can type down your experience and submit it to me online (via email) as soon as you finish writing the diary. If you prefer this method, I will do all the compiling as soon as you email the diary entry to me.

Number of entry: Respondents are expected to submit **at least** 12 (twelve) entries in the time period, which is from February to May 2012. You can submit more entries.

Please contact me if you have any questions:

Day & Date: _____

Title of the series & Episode: _____

BEFORE:

Please write down the process and experiences you had before watching the television drama. You can use these questions as a guideline, and you can also write other things. Feel free to write your 'before' experience as extensive as possible.

- What do you do before watching the television drama?
- How do you get the information about the television drama?
- How do you choose this title? What are the considerations?
- Have you watched it before? Why did you decided to watch the next episode?
- What do you usually do at this time of the day, besides watching the television drama? What makes you decide to watch it at this time of the day?

DURING:

Please write down the process and experiences you had when you are watching the television drama. You can use these questions as a guideline, and you can also write other things. Feel free to write your 'during' experience as extensive as possible.

- What's the episode about? What's your favorite part? Why? What's your least favorite part? Why?
- Who's your favorite character? Who's your least favorite character? Why?
- How do you feel when you are watching it? What makes you feel that emotion?
- What come across your mind while you are watching it?
- What do you get from the television drama?

MEDIUM: Television / DVD / VCD / Streaming online / Download / _____

Did you watch it?: Alone / With _____

What time of the day? How long?: _____

AFTER:

Please write down the process and experiences you had after you watched the television drama. You can use these questions as a guideline, and you can also write other things. Feel free to write your 'after' experience as extensive as possible.

- What do you do after watching?
- Do you discuss it with anyone? Please explain.
- How will you plan the next episode or another title to watch?
- Are you planning to watch another series? Why?

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