

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

A number of Thai films produced from 2003 to 2007 featured two Isaan actors, Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok, the subjects under this study, in leading roles. The change in the depiction of the Isaan film characters and the film box-office success led not only to the popularity of the two characters but also a more positive public image and identity of Isaan people in general. The popular film 'Ong Bak' (2003) has not only sparked people's interest in martial arts film but also introduced Isaan characters as the leading actors of the film. This, together with other influencing factors, revealed that the two characters were offered more chances to perform leading roles in other subsequent films such as Bodyguard (2004), Tom Yum Goong (2005), Cherm (2005), Yam Yasothorn (2005) and The Bodyguard (2007). These films earned outstanding revenue and were among the top hit films ranked among the top five in each year they were launched. The achievement of these two personalities in performing the leading roles and the films' success in term of revenue and rank in the Thai box office indicates that they have successfully stepped out of the barrier which limits Isaan performers to take only minor roles in Thai films from the 1880s to the 1990s.

The study showed that there are four influencing factors that support the successful path of Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok in the Thai film industry. The first factor and most influential factor is their remarkable talents, martial arts for Jaa Panom and comedian for Mum Jokmok, which builds the optimistic path to leading roles in the selected films. The second factor is the role of television in promoting the

two characters and helping the mass to recognize their abilities, leading to a stable acceptance towards them. The third factor is positive identity pride in both characters which also helps them rise and emerge in the mainstream Thai society where the Central Thai culture and look is considered the most favored. Identity pride in Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok encourage them to feel confident in presenting their unique cultures and this gradually influences their fellow Isaan people to value their ethnic identity. The last factor is the trend of popularity of Isaan culture which eases the path of achievement for Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok in the Thai film industry. Isaan people, who form the largest group of the country's population, and their migration to other regions, form a strong group of consumers who are eager to ingest Isaan cultures while being away from home.

To conclude, the selected Thai films launched between 2003 and 2007 have marked the transitional change of Isaan talented characters from minor to leading roles. The subjects of the study, Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok, have earned nationwide recognition and acceptance towards their roles in selected films that are not typical of "underprivileged" Isaan people. It can be stated that this transitional change has signaled an opportunity for other Isaan performers to emerge as superstars. However, it will take a long time and much effort for any Isaan performer to substitute or achieve acceptance like Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok. In rising as famous performers, new Isaan actors and actresses would have to possess sharp and unrivalled talents that serve the best selling film genres such as comedy and actions. If the competition in his/her special talents is high, a leading star needs to have influential media to strengthen people's recognition of his/her abilities. The popularity of Isaan culture may be gaining its momentum but the rising stars need to

have a strong sense of their own identity so that they will not be easily or overwhelming discouraged by the stereotyped social and economical disadvantages. All in all, the success and achievement of Jaa Panom and Mum Jokmok in Thai film industry has greatly contributed to the indication of the empowerment that provides space for marginal people to become the film's main attraction or focus of the film.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

There are many prospects for further study that this research has not yet covered and explored, and it would be worthwhile to conduct the study in a wider frame. The research could be further studied and expanded in many ways. The researcher suggests that the following areas are worthy of examination:

1. A comparative study of Black American and Isaan struggle to overcome prejudice from the mainstream White and Central Thai people.
2. A comparative study of characteristics and presentation of leading roles performed by Isaan and non-Isaan people in the Thai film industry.
3. A comparative study of films according to the sources of production, one by the non-Isaan and the other by the Isaan.