

The 'Southeast Asia Phenomenon' in Korea Viewed Through Thai Food*

YOON Jinpyo**

I. Introduction

Culture has the unique all-inclusive characteristic of being an assembly of what humans think, have, and do, but it is also a concept of specific connotation where numerous cultures in different regions and eras are created and developed by human groups. It is difficult to define a clear boundary of culture's time and space, but it is important to basically view culture from a mutually-different perspective. Thus it can be said that having a perspective of cultural diversity and relativity is the starting point of understanding culture. Culture is developed, learned, and passed down by a certain group, and the subject of its comparison of it the diversity and relative differences. The subject of a lot of research has been the background that forms the origin of a culture, and the contents that compose the characteristics of a culture. Among countless cultural phenomena, food can be argued to be the one that displays the most basic lifestyle of mankind, as it is directly related to human's living and surviving. Food culture

* The original version of this article was written in Korean language and published in 『The State and Politics』(Vol. 17, 2011), and as a book chapter in 『Southeast Asian Phenomena in Korea』(MyunginMunwhasa, 2012). This English article is based on the original Korean version with some revisions

** Professor, Sungshin Women's University. jpyoon@sungshin.ac.kr

makes up basic lifestyle culture, along with housing and clothing, but it is regarded to be the most unique aspect of culture of them all. Since food is known for its diversity, it can be the most effective pathway to enjoying another's culture. In addition, it provides the easiest approach for a person in a certain culture to enter a different culture through meaning and action, and nurture skills as well as attain an esthetic attitude related to other cultures(Hannerz 1996a).

As interchange among mankind expands widely beyond national borders, and the so-called wave of globalization expands ever more fiercely, interest in transnational cultural phenomenon is growing. Transnationalism is the concept that reflects how transnational networks beyond national borders are being formed and transnational cultural fusion is taking place more and more in today's world. Kivisto(2001) suggested the international expansion of capitalism, growth of transnational NGOs, the emergence of transnational citizens, popular culture fusion, and so on as the causes of activated transnationalism. The social and cultural aspect of transnationalism is mainly focused on the transnational migration phenomenon, and thus its main interests are in the topics of the move towards a transnational society and attendant identity issues. As international human movements and material interchange has expanded, culture is being recognized as something to be universal for all mankind despite being developed by certain groups(Hannerz 1996b).

Korean popular culture such as TV drama, movie, K-pop, and so on continue to be greatly popular and are gaining great interest in Southeast Asia. Also, numerous types of Korean products are widely distributed and consumed all over Southeast Asia. This phenomenon has been called the 'Korean Wave' and is currently under the limelight. Concurrently, recent Korean popular media has been showing more and more programs with Southeast Asians or those that introduce Southeast Asian food, institutions and customs. It is becoming more

frequent to come across a Southeast Asian in everyday life. Discussions on Southeast Asian culture have emerged and a certain image of it has been created and communicated in Korean society as well; not only through migrant labor and international marriage, but also through the increasing number of Southeast Asians frequenting Korea for various purposes. In the other direction, there are an increasing number of Koreans visiting Southeast Asia for the purposes of investment, trade, travel or relocation.

As such, social and cultural aspects related to Southeast Asia one can experience in Korean society are becoming a new social phenomenon. These 'Southeast Asian Wave' phenomena that react to the 'Korean Wave' are to be categorized as the concept of 'Southeast Asia phenomenon' in Korea. 'Southeast Asia phenomenon' will be used as a general term that encompasses all Southeast Asia related phenomena experienced and recognized in Korea. Aspects of this 'Southeast Asia phenomenon' in Korea include migrant labor, retirement relocation, popular culture, food, tourism, international marriage, studying abroad, corporate investment and so on.

Amidst the recent 'Southeast Asia phenomenon' in Korea, as aspect of the flow of transnationalism, food is becoming more meaningful as the bridgehead of transnational cultural fusion. Food is unique in each country and at the same time is a cultural product with transnational characteristics. Thai food began to spread out into the rest of the world in the 1970s, as Thailand's tourism industry started to develop. The unique scent and flavor of Thai food due to its use of numerous kinds of herbs and spices was perhaps the reason that made it one of the most characteristic and popular cuisines of the East along with Chinese food. The Lonely Planet, an international travel publication, conducted a preference survey with travel agencies around the world and the results selected Thai food as one of the 4 World Foods along with French, Italian, and Chinese food. Thai government statistics say

that there are as many as 13,149 Thai restaurants around the world as of August 2009.

This study uses a transnational perspective on food as its basis and desires to explain the phenomenon of Thai food culture going beyond national boundaries, even reaching Korea, by tracing the origin and past routes of Thai food. The characteristics and types of Thai food that form the base of Thai food culture will be reviewed and the inducement and strategy of how Thai food moves over borders to expand its influence will be mainly dealt with. Also, the status of Thai food in Korea will also be reviewed through the opening of Thai restaurants while a survey will show what Koreans think of and react to Thai food. Lastly, the related prospect of Thai food becoming a transnational cultural phenomenon in Korea will be explored.

II. Origin of Thai Food

2.1. Characteristics of Thai Food

Thailand has a land space two and-a-half times bigger than the Korean peninsula and a population of 66 million. Boasting a long history and culture based in Buddhism, it is located in the center of Southeast Asia. The four main regions- Central, southern, northeastern, and northern – all have distinctive topography and characteristics; with central and southern beaches, mountains in the northern region, the Chao Phraya River that cuts across the country vertically, and the Mekong River in the northeast region all constituting the beautiful nature of Thailand. Buddhist temples dispersed all around the nation and numerous kinds of festivals are the highlight of Thai culture. Being blessed with affluent natural resources leads to the diverse and rich food culture of Thailand. A huge tourist destination that represents

Southeast Asia, Thailand's food receives international acclaim for both its flavor and diversity. Food represents its country and is also a representative cultural product. In that sense, Thai food acts as a cultural spearhead which represents and promotes Thailand.

Thai food is hailed as one of the 4 World Foods with French, Italian, and Chinese food for its diversity and unique flavor. Thai food, along with Chinese food, represents the taste of the East and is known for its mixed, stimulating 'sour, sweet, spicy, and salty' flavors. The distinctiveness lies in having not only spiciness but also a sweet and sour flavor strong enough to be stimulating. The reason for such diverse flavor is Thai food's use of lots of herbs and spices. It is a common characteristic of Southeast Asian food, but various herbs and spices attained from tropical plants that grow in this region can be said to be the basis of Thai food's diversity and the background of its colorful flavors. Herbs like lemongrass, basil, mint, coriander, Kaffir Lime leaf and Morning Glory and spices such as chili, garlic, pepper, cinnamon and dried clove buds are used in various ways to create the unique Thai food taste and scent (Wang Young-ho et al. 2009, 24-26). There are a lot of Thai dishes that make your tongue burn with spiciness. Chili is an important ingredient for such dishes. It plays a pivotal role of deciding the flavor of Thai food with many other food ingredients or on its own. Chili creates the unique Thai food flavor and scent as it mixes with major Thai food ingredients such as coconut oil, lemongrass, lime leaf, sugar, salted fish, and so on.

A typical Thai meal has a big bowl of rice on the dining table and each family member takes a portion of rice from it with other dishes. They share not only side dishes but also rice. Thai people usually have three meals a day, with at least two rice meals. In the morning they have a rice noodle dish for breakfast and a noodle type dish for lunch as well. Dinner is the most important meal of the day, usually consisting of salad, vegetable dish, and curry dish. These main dishes

are also always served with rice. Thai people use a spoon and fork, and chopsticks mainly for eating noodles. For dessert they mainly eat cake or jelly made with various fruits, beans, coconut oil, and so on. All Thai people eat rice as a main staple, cooking it or making noodles with it. Rice is also used in powder form to make curries and other sauce-based dishes thicker and also in batter when deep-frying meat or seafood. It is recorded that Thailand cultivated rice as early as B.C. 3000, which is before even China and India. Thailand was able to cultivate rice on the fertile land created by the Chao Phraya River which cuts across the country vertically. Currently Thailand is the second largest rice exporter in the world.

There are numerous kinds of Thai rice but they can be categorized into two major types. Whereas people in the Northern and Northeastern region prefer short, elastic rice with lots of starch, people in Central and Southern Thailand prefer long, dry rice scented with jasmine. Rice is often the main ingredient used for meals, often cooked as fried rice or a rice dish with toppings for lunch. Rice is also used as an ingredient for various desserts such as pudding, crackers, cakes, and so on. Rice noodles make up a big part of Thai cuisine. Noodles with various flavors and texture have been developed. A lot of noodle dishes are served with beef, chicken and duck, fish, seafood, tofu, and vegetables. There are hot ones with broth and cold noodles as well as fried or stir-fried noodles too. Along with countless types of noodles there are also simpler noodle dishes with many types of sauces that are often made for breakfast, dinner, or a snack.

One of the things one could point out as a characteristic of Thai cuisine is the development of professional cooking and the culture of eating out. There are especially a great number of restaurants that specialize in one certain dish in Thailand. Staking all in one certain dish means confidence in flavor, and also that customers seek out such expertise. This obsession with professional cooking has been an

important background in the international dispersion of Thai food. Thai people prefer to eat out rather than to cook at home. It's difficult to prepare meals inside the house due to the hot weather, but whatever the cause this has created a very active food culture of street food and food courts. It is reckoned that such traits have also provided the background for Thai food to be marketable internationally.

Thai food also developed through interchanges with geographically close countries that share their borders with Thailand. It has a lot of similarities with the food of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, countries that are also located along the Mekong River. Areas around Northern Chiang Mai have dishes similar to Burmese curry soup. Food of the Southern region, close to Malaysia, was much influenced by Muslim cuisine. In addition, Thai dishes in the 4 regions have developed according to different geographical traits. The Northeast region, known as Isaan, is surrounded by highlands and the Mekong River. It was the first place in Thailand to have cultivated rice but irregular precipitation leads to inconsistent harvests and therefore makes it the most barren land in Thailand. Due to such conditions, the Northeast region shows its strength in strong flavored foods like salted fish and chili, both of which serve the purpose of storing ingredients for a long time. Kai Yang, a classic chicken roast, is chicken roasted with garlic, salted fish, coriander and lemongrass dipped in chili sauce. Somtom, originating in the Northeast region is now a representative Thai salad. It is made with chopped green papaya and chili, peanut, tomato, dried shrimp, and crab all blended together. This dish was developed by adding numerous ingredients and spices. This area is also famous for frying or cooking various insects and frogs. Northern Thailand has a very different food culture when compared to the South and Central region. The mountainous terrain and cool weather allowed for a rich amount of fruit and vegetables. The curry in Northern Thailand is greatly influenced by Myanmar, tastes spicy and does not use coconut

milk. Kang Hang Lae, a Chiang Mai curry, is the representative dish. Another distinctive Northern dish is a complete rice meal called KanTok. KanTok is composed of 5 side dishes, 1 or 2 sauces, and sticky rice. Kap Mu, fried pork rind, Pat Pack Lu Am, stir-fried vegetables and noodles with oyster sauce, Mikrob, fried thin noodles, Kai Tot, fried chicken, Kang Hang Lae, a type of Northern curry are just some of the dishes that are included in this meal.

Central Thailand is a vast plain, an internationally-known rice cultivating area with the capital Bangkok at its core and Chao Phraya River flowing into the ocean. An abundance of water and developed irrigation facilities allow it to focus on various tropical fruit and vegetables. This region is also the area where fish, shrimp and crab are farmed with river water. Being an integral area in Thailand's history, classic Thai dishes were developed here while food from all over the country competed and was improved in this region, too. Red and green curry dishes, soup dishes such as Tom Ka Kai, Tom Yam, Kang Jut, and various salads – Yams – represent the Central region. Influenced by Chinese and Japanese food (suki), this area has also developed many fusion foods. Southern Thailand is a long, narrow area with a lengthy coastline that begins from the Isthmus of Kra, reaching the Malaysian border and therefore is influenced more by the ocean than other regions. With the strongest influence of Malaysian traditions and food evident, the South is famous for fresh seafood dishes. There are seafood barbeque dishes cooked with various spices as well as dried seafood, salted shrimp, salted fish, etc. The Southern region also is a palm tree growing area. There are lots of dishes cooked with palm tree coconut milk and the hot weather has led to the creation of numerous strong flavored foods.

2.2. Introducing Representative Thai Dishes

This sweet and sour dish originated in the Isan region in Northeast Thailand. It is a kind of pickled salad, in some ways similar to kimchi. The ingredients vary but the most common dish, Som Tam Thai,



[Som Tam]

includes papaya, dried shrimp, peanut, tomato, lime, sugar, and salted fish. If small, black fresh water crab or ocean flower crab is also included the dish becomes Som Tam Poo.

This is a sweet and sour cellophane noodle dish. Using cellophane noodles known as WunSen in Thai, this Japchae-style salad also uses tomato, onion, and peanuts. You can add seafood to make Yam WunSen



[Yam WunSen]

Tale, and pork to make Yam WunSen Mu.

This dish is made with minced fish meat wrapped in banana leaf with coconut milk and steamed soft fish meat. This dish is very popular among Thai people for its balance between its



[Ho MokPla]

rich coconut milk flavor and banana leaf scent.



[Tom Yam Kung]

With seafood it becomes Tom Yam Tale and with chicken it is called Tom Yam Kai. Other supplementary ingredients include strawmushroom, lemongrass, coriander, lime leaf, chili, dried ginger, tomato, and coconut milk.

A symbolic dish that represents Thai food culture, this dish is a stew that combines sour, salty, sweet, and spicy flavors. ‘Tom’ means to boil, while ‘Yam’ means sour and ‘Kung’ refers to the main



[KhaoPhat]

(chicken), KhaoPhat Moo (pork), KhaoPhatNeu (beef), KhaoPhatTalay (seafood) and KhaoPhat Poo (crab). KhaoPhat uses salted fish called ‘Pick Nam Pla’ with sauce made with finely chopped bird’s eye chili (known as phrikkhi nu in Thailand), which brings out the spicy yet refreshing flavors.

‘Khao’ means rice, and ‘phat’ to stir-fry. This dish literally means stir-fry noodle rice. Depending on the ingredients that are fried with the rice the dishes are called KhaoPhat Kung (shrimp), KhaoPhat Kai

This is the most common street rice noodle in Thailand. Depending on the thickness the noodles are categorized into 'SenMee (thinnest noodle)' 'SenLek (middle thickness noodle)', and 'SenYai(thickest noodle)'.



[Kwetiaiw]

The more broth there is, the thinner the noodle should be. When there is broth it would be Kwetiaiw Nam, and mixed noodles without broth is called Kwetiaiw Hang. A variety of toppings are used including pork, fish cake, chicken breast, and seafood. The dish is seasoned according to personal taste. Seasonings include the sweet sugar 'Nam Tan', chili powder 'Prick Pon', 'Nam Som Prick' – chili with vinegar, and the sour red chili-pepper paste with vinegar, 'Nam Prick Si Lat Cha'.

A stir-fry rice noodle dish cooked with numerous vegetables and shrimp with peanut powder sprinkled on top. The sweet tasting phatthai is balanced by the inclusion of bean sprouts, chives, fresh spring onions, and cucumber.



[Phatthai]



[PuPhatPhong Curry]

dish. With seafood like squid, clam and shrimp it becomes Tale Phong Curry.

‘Pu’, meaning crab, this dish is crab fried in curry. The dish includes crab meat, coconut cream, curry, and vegetables such as celery, onion, spring onion and garlic. This is a representative Thai seafood



[Pla La Prick]

seafood dish.

‘Pla’ means fish; this dish is deep fried fish mixed with hot sauce created with chili garlic in starch syrup. Breams are usually is used for the fish. In celebration meals this dish becomes the main



[PlaNeung Si Yu]

This is steamed fish seasoned with soy sauce. The inclusion of spring onions and ginger really brings out the true flavor of the fish in this dish. Sea bass and saw-edged perch are usually used as the fish.

Morning Glory fried with minced pork, oyster sauce, and garlic. This dish is pungent and salty as it uses Thai soybean paste. It goes well with rice and many Koreans like it as a side dish when they visit Thailand.



[Phat Pak PungPaiDaeng]

Chicken stir-fried with cashew nuts, which are grown in abundance in southern Thailand. Chicken breast is fried in batter, then stir-fried with onion, carrot, small green onion,



[Kai Paht Mae Ma]

garlic, and cashew nuts. This dish shows excellent an excellent contrast between the sweet flavor and nutty cashew nuts.

‘Kao’ means rice while ‘Mu’ is pork and ‘Daeng’ is the color red. With garlic, pepper, soy sauce, and brown sugar, this sweet baked pork on rice dish is popular for lunches in street restaurants and food courts.



[Kao Mu Daeng]



[Suki]

Known as Thai style shabu-shabu, suki is meat broth containing vegetables, seafood, meat, noodles and various other ingredients. Ingredients are lightly cooked in the pot before eating.

The dish didn't originate in Thailand but it became greatly popular for its use of various seafood and vegetables that are freshly blanched. The left-over broth at the end is made into porridge (Kao Tum) by adding and boiling rice in it.

III. Thai Food Routes

3.1. Thai Food Attraction

Thai people and Koreans visit each other's country by the millions each year. Since hitting the peak of 1.37 million in 2003, roughly 800,000 to 1.2 million people from both countries visit one another every year. Koreans take up 85~90% of this number and this is because Thailand is one of the most popular holiday destinations for Koreans. Thailand became an attractive country to Koreans due to the low cost, the proximity to Korea, and its tourism resources. In the world, after Japanese and Chinese, Koreans visit Thailand most frequently. On the other hand, Korea is the 5th most frequently visited country by Thais, following ASEAN member countries, China, Hong Kong, and Japan. As both countries have more and more visitors, it is only natural that each other gets more opportunities to enjoy each other's cuisine. With more opportunities to visit one another, it is expected Koreans who've experienced Thai food will wish to try Thai

food again after returning to Korea.

<Table 1> Visitors from Korea and Thailand to one another

| Year | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Koreans visiting Thailand | 351 | 447 | 582 | 1,292 | 754 | 662 | 1,093 | 1,084 | 884 |
| Thais visiting Korea | 88 | 73 | 74 | 78 | 103 | 113 | 129 | 147 | 161 |
| Total (1,000 people) | 439 | 520 | 656 | 1,370 | 857 | 775 | 1,222 | 1,231 | 1,045 |

Source: Tourism statistics from Korea Tourism Organization and ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2008

According to the 2007 Thailand Tourism Office's statistics, foreigners who visited Thailand spent on average 4,120 baht (about 150,000 won) each day, of which 17% was spent on food. The sour, spicy, and sweet flavor of Thai food created with spices and herbs tends to be more addictive than other cuisines. The reason why people have strong preference/dislike for Thai food is also due to spices and herbs in large part. People who like Thai food tend to enjoy stimulating flavors. Also, there are an increasing number of people who buy the spices and sauces used in Thai food to cook their own according to personal tastes.

Another attraction of Thai food is that it is considered to be good for dieting. While being low in both fat and calories, Thai food also includes spices and herbs that enhance your health functions.. As these facts came to be known Thai food became known as a characteristically healthy food. With the perception of being good for your health, Thai food enjoys great popularity in Europe, North America and Japan as an option for eating out, after being adjusted slightly to local tastes.

3.2. Globalization Strategy of Thai Food

The great interest in Thai food led to an aggressive promotion of Thai food and an international promotion strategy by the Thai government.¹⁾ The Thai tourism industry is highly related to the spreading of Thai food. Foreigners visiting as tourists naturally experience Thai food and have opportunities to familiarize with it. The direct and indirect value created by the tourism industry in Thailand amounts to \$35.5 billion (2007) which is around 14.6% of their GDP. This is the greatest amount and percentage among all Southeast Asian countries. People who work for the tourism industry also surpassed 4 million in 2007, taking up 11% of all the working population. The Thailand tourist balance, which shows the influence of the tourism industry, shows profits of \$4.7 billion in 2000 and \$10.3 billion in 2007. This shows how the Thai tourism industry is of great importance in its overall economy, acting as a foundation for the Thai food industry to enter international markets.

Thai food is well known for going outside domestic tourism industry boundaries and pursuing an aggressive world market strategy. With the Thai government at its center, related businesses and public organizations are working together to systematically nurture the food industry and spread out internationally. The Thai government supports the world promotion of Thai food by assisting the two core institutions; Department of Commerce's DEP (Department of Export Promotion) and Ministry of Industry's NFI (National Food Institute). The DEP is in charge of marketing and PR for Thai restaurants launching all over the world, as well as the task of improving the skills of Thai chefs. Founded in 1996, the NFI is in charge of Thai

¹⁾ In 2008, 3,960,000 Korean travelers (33%) visited China, 2,380,000 (20%) visited Japan, 880,000 (7%) visited Thai, and 760,000 (6%) visited the U.S. On the other hand, 3,330,000 Thai travelers (65%) visited ASEAN member countries, 610,000 (12%) visited China, 290,000 (6%) visited Hong Kong, 170,000 (3.3%) visited Japan, and 160,000 (3%) visited Korea in 2007.

food quality, safety, standardization and development of new dishes. Thai food's globalization strategy is based on these two organizations working hand in hand; DEP leading the launch into world markets and NFI supporting it.

The two organizations develop various measures and systematically carry out such plans to promote Thai food all over the world such as the opening and maintenance of Thai restaurants abroad. The concept that represents this world market launch strategy is the policy called 'Thai Kitchen to the World'. 'Thai Kitchen to the World' encompasses systematically assisting businesses whereby the government and private industry work together to develop the Thai food industry domestically and internationally. The purpose of this project is to strengthen the competitiveness of the Thai food industry and carry out activities such as; ①founding 'the Center for Thai Kitchen of the World', ②customer research, ③Thai food PR, ④Thai food skill development, ⑤chef relocation cooperation, ⑥restaurant business support, ⑦financial support, ⑧food related R&D, ⑨strengthening food safety standards and food export competitiveness. The Center for Thai Kitchen of the World was established as a one-stop service institution for Thai food related businesses entering world markets. With the service that connects market information and businesses together, it also manages the database of registered chefs. This institution's website (www.thaifoodrestaurant.com) acts as Thai food related portal that shows all of the above information.

This project sets a goal country and focuses on customer research and market management. The U.S. and Canada in North America; England, Germany, and Scandinavian countries in Europe; Japan in Asia; Australia and New Zealand in Oceania, as well as new markets in the Middle East, China and India are the currently set targets. It also regularly participates in international food fairs such as Anuga (Germany), SIAL (France), and FoodEX (Japan) to promote Thai

food internationally and holds Thai food fairs like ThaiFEX and Thai festivals in many countries. Thai food franchise businesses are also being undertaken.

What is distinctive about the Thai Kitchen to the World project is that it has a Thai restaurant certification system. The standardization of Thai restaurants is promoted with the certification mark 'Thai Select'. Thai food is categorized as traditional food (divided into quick service and table service) and modern cuisine (divided into quick service and table service) and certification marks are given after a thorough inspection of each category's standards of food and chefs, as well as restaurant management. As of August 2009 there are 13,149 Thai restaurants abroad, of which 1,179 have attained the Thai Select mark.

Thailand has set up a training course for overseas Thai chefs to develop and transfer Thai food skills, in which experts are dispatched to regularly train ingredient management and cooking methods. Also, a Thai Food Center is set up in 5 target countries and alliances are formed with professional cooking schools such as Australia's TAFE and England's Tameside College. Such systematic Thai food promotion policies have resulted in Thailand's food related exports to grow from 480 billion baht in 2003 to 780 billion baht in 2008, with a high growth rate of 10.8%/year.

IV. Thai Food in Korea

4.1. Status of Thai Food in Korea

An online search shows there seems to be around 50 Thai restaurants opened in Korea. Major Thai restaurants displayed in [Table 2] shows that they are mainly located in Seoul. As it is in the

early stages of Thai food's introduction to Korea it seems that opening in marketable Seoul and other metropolitan areas would be advantageous for business. Most restaurants that were interviewed answered that they prefer the Seoul region due to the better supply of Thai ingredients and chefs.

<Table 2> Major Thai Restaurants in Korea

| Business Name (Franchise) | Store | Contacts | Homepage | Address |
|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| After the Rain | 2 | 3446-9375 (Cheongdam) | http://www.atrain.co.kr | Art Building 4 th Floor, 92-16, Cheongdam-dong, Seoul |
| Kuetio | 1 | 516-0995 (Nonhyeon) | http://www.kuetio.kr | 39-10, Jamwon-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul |
| Lanna Thai | 2 | 782-8284 (Yeouido) | http://www.lannathai.co.kr | Lotte Castle Ivy, 43-4 Yeouido-dong, Youngdeungpo-gu, Seoul |
| Little Thai | 1 | 3783-0770~1 | http://www.littlethai.co.kr | Finance Building B1, Mukyo-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul |
| Sala Thai | 4 | 2146-2407 (Jamsil) | http://www.thai-suki.co.kr | Lotte Castle Gold Plaza 2 nd Floor, 7-18, Shincheon-dong, Songpa-gu, Seoul |
| Sukho Thai | 1 | (031) 223-5522 (Suwon Ingye) | http://sukhothai.co.kr | 1114-10 Ingye-dong, Paldal-gu, Suwon-si, Gyeonggi |
| Sawasdee | 1 | (02) 363-7897 (Sinchon) | http://www.sawasdee.co.kr | 1 st Floor, 5-31 Changchun-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul |
| Ahan Thai | 1 | (02) 783-2204 (Yeouido) | http://ahanthai.co.kr | Jinmi Paragon Building B1, no.13, Yeouido-dong, Youngdeungpo-gu, Seoul |
| Thai Orchid | 3 | (02) 792-8836 | http://www.thaiorchid.co.kr | 3 rd Floor, 737-24 Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu, Seoul |
| Pattaya | 4 | (02) 798-4888 (Itaewon) | http://www.ipattaya.co.kr | no. 116-14 Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu, Seoul |
| Wang Thai | 1 | 749-2746~7 | http://www.wangthai.kr | Younghwa Building 3 rd Floor, no. 176-2 Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu, Seoul |
| Kokasuki Family | 1 | (051)701-0801 (Busan Haeundae) | http://www.cocasuki.co.kr/ | 313-10 Songjeong-dong, Haewundae-gu, Busan |

| Business Name (Franchise) | Store | Contacts | Homepage | Address |
|---------------------------|-------|--|---|---|
| Baan Khanitha | 1 | (02) 479-1818 | http://www.baankhanitha.com | 237-1 2 nd Floor, Pungnam2dong, Songpa-gu, Seoul |
| Siam Thai | 1 | (02) 323-4201 | | 407-21 2 nd Floor, Seogyodong, Mapo-gu, Seoul |
| Golden Thai | 1 | (02) 461-8089 | | Seoul Songpa-guBangi-dong 171-4 Palace Building 1 st Floor |
| Hello Thai | 1 | (051) 731-5033 | | Dongchon Building 3 rd Floor, 626-2 Wu-dong, Haewundae-gu, Busan |
| Seabilly | 1 | (02) 332-4800 (Entrance of Hongik University) | | 408-7, Seogyodong, Mapo-gu, Seoul |
| Buddha's Belly | 1 | 796-9330 (Itaewon) | | 673, Itaewon2dong, Yongsan-gu, Seoul |

Source: Naver Directory, Menupan.com, Wingbus Foodie (Searched on March 31st, 2010)

The Thai restaurants in Korea consist of franchises and privately owned restaurants. Broadly speaking, privately owned restaurants show the will to promote unique flavors based on personal interest and experience whereas franchises provide somewhat standardized Thai dishes to popularize Thai food. Most franchises are supplied with Thai chefs but privately owned ones used more Korean chefs than Thai chefs. A lot of dishes were Thai dishes made to suit Korean taste, especially those that were not too strong or too sugary. This led to stir-fried noodle dishes and fish not really differing a great deal from Chinese food. The price range was researched to be about 10,000 per person for noodles or stir-fried rice noodles and 1-2 dishes for lunch and about 20~30,000 won per person for dinner consisting of 3-4 dishes.

Thai restaurants in Korea with the Thai government's Thai Select certification from 'Thai Kitchen to the World' are shown in [Table 3]; there are 7 of them - After The Rain(2), Sala Thai(3), and Thai

Orchid(2). These restaurants have the official certification of meeting Thai government standards after surprise visitations and inspections by the Thai embassy in Korea and related organizations.

<Table 3> Thai Restaurants in Korea with Thai Select Certification

| The Following 7 Restaurant | | | | |
|---|---|-------|---------|---------------------------|
| Restaurant Name | Address | City | Country | Year Received Thai Select |
| ▶ After The Rain Restaurant (Ahnkook Branch) | 117 Hwa-Dong , Jongrogu | Seoul | Korea | - |
| ▶ After The Rain Restaurant (Chungdam Branch) | 4th Floor , Art Building , 92-16 , Chungdam-Dong , Gangnam-Gu | Seoul | Korea | - |
| ▶ Sala Thai (Bundang Branch) | Polaris Building 3rd Floor , 15-3 , Jong Ja-Dong , Bundang City , Seongnam , Kyungido | Seoul | Korea | - |
| ▶ Sala Thai (Jungdong Branch) | Hyundea Department 8F , 1164 , Jung-Dong , Wonmi-Gu , Buchun-City , Kyungido | Seoul | Korea | - |
| ▶ Sala Thai (Jamsil Branch) | 2F 7 - 18 Lotte Castle Gold Castle Plaza Shincheon - Dong Songpa - Gu | Seoul | Korea | - |
| ▶ Thai Orchid (Itaewon Branch) | 3F , 737-24 , Hannam-Dong , Youngsan-Gu | Seoul | Korea | - |
| ▶ Thai Orchid (Lotte Branch) | 12F , Food Court , Lotte Department Store , Sogong-Dong , Jung-Gu | Seoul | Korea | - |

4.2. Thai Food Preference Survey

From December 2009 to April 2010, 219 adult males and females living in Seoul were surveyed on their recognition and preferences for Thai food. The subjects were selected as people who live in Seoul as Thai restaurants are mainly located in Seoul and therefore they have more opportunities to experience Thai food.

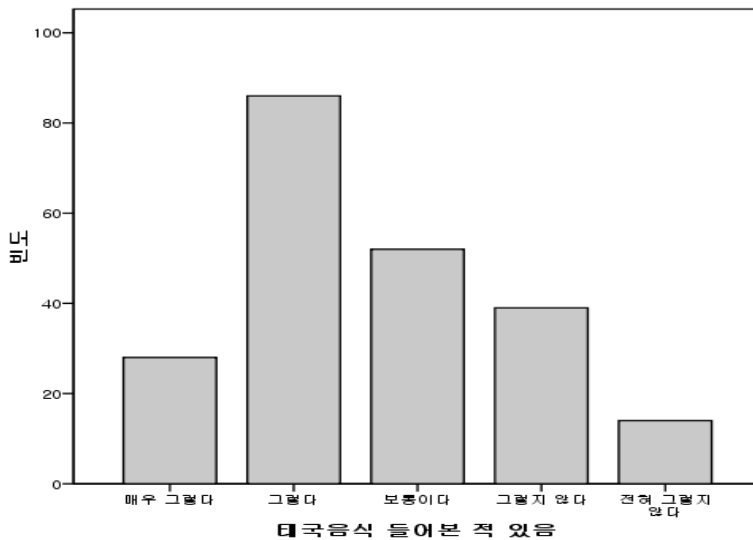
| Gender | Number of responses | % |
|--------|---------------------|-----|
| Male | 92 | 42 |
| Female | 127 | 58 |
| Total | 219 | 100 |

Among 219 survey subjects, 92 were male (42%) and 127 were female (58%). Ages ranged from 16 teens (7%), 71 in 20s (32%), 68 in 30s (31%), 39 in 40s (18%), and 25 over 50s (12%). Those in their 20s and 30s were our main subjects as they were thought to be more interested in Thai food.

| Age | Number of responses | % |
|--------------|---------------------|-----|
| Teenagers | 16 | 7 |
| Twenties | 71 | 32 |
| Thirties | 68 | 31 |
| Forties | 39 | 18 |
| Over fifties | 25 | 12 |
| Total | 219 | 100 |

First, to the question of having heard of Thai food, 76% answered that they have, while 24% answered that they have not. Thus it can be said that 3 in 4 Koreans have heard something about Thai food.

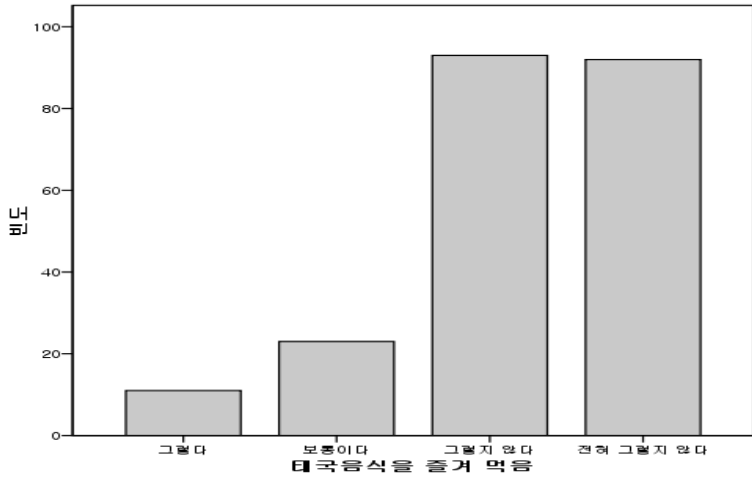
<Figure 1> I have heard of Thai food



- ① Very much so ② Yes, I have ③ I think I have ④ Not really ⑤ Never

To the question of having enjoyed Thai food, 16% answered “Yes, I have. Very much so” while 94% answered “Not really” and “Never”. 42% of those surveyed answered “Never”, which shows that Thai food is known to Koreans but has not been enjoyed by them. This could be because of the strong Thai flavors with spices and herbs not appealing to the conservative Korean palate which doesn’t react well to unfamiliar flavors.

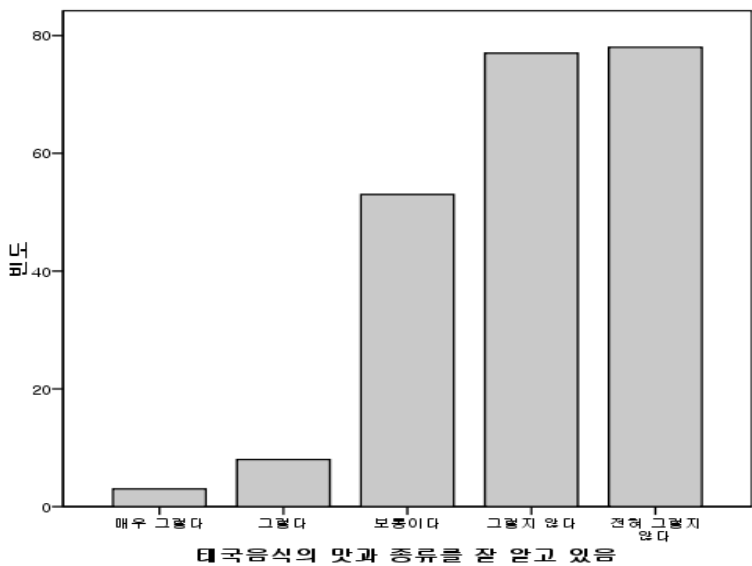
<Figure 2> I enjoy Thai food.



① Very much so ② Yes, I have ③ I think I have ④ Not really ⑤ Never

As for the question of knowing the tastes and kinds of Thai food, 29% answered positively and 71% answered negatively. It is natural that Koreans who do not enjoy Thai food answer more negatively with regard to the question of knowing the tastes and kinds of Thai food.

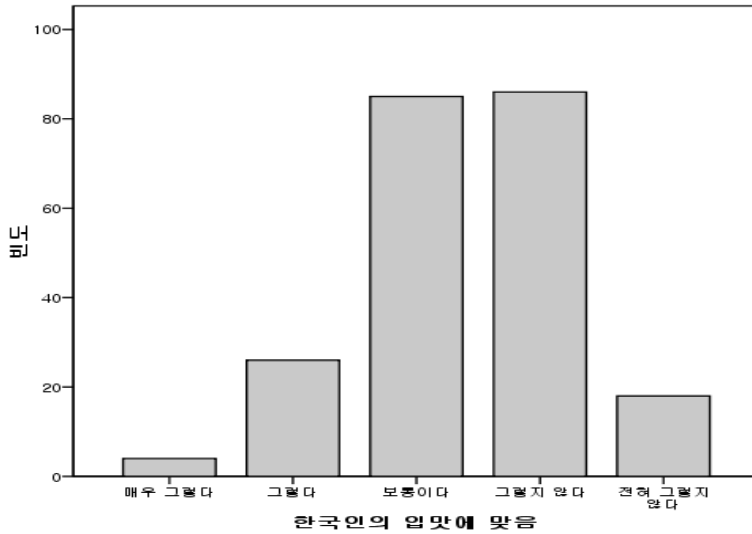
<Figure 3> I know much about the flavor and types of Thai food.



① Very much so ② Yes, I do ③ So-so ④ Not really ⑤ None at all

When asked whether Thai food suits Korean tastes, 14% answered positively, 47% answered that it didn't and 39% answered "to a certain extent". It seems that Thai food isn't so familiar to Korean people.

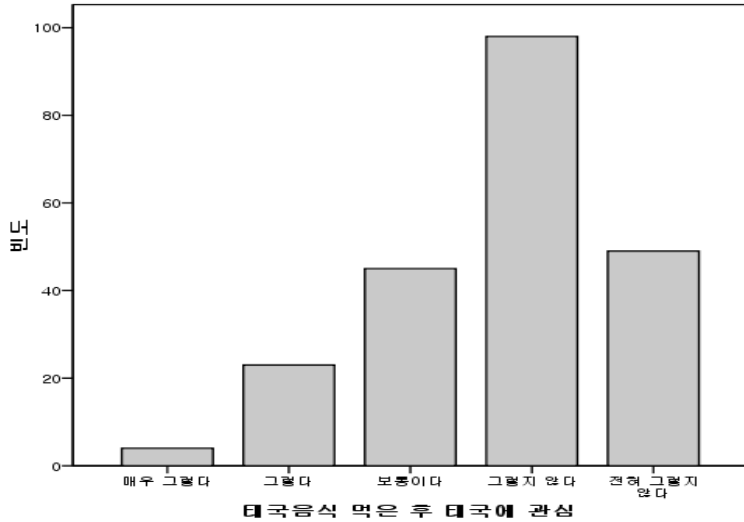
<Figure 4> Thai food suits Korean taste more than other countries' cuisine.



① Very much so ② Yes, it does ③ So-so ④ Not really ⑤ Never

Only 12% answered positively to the question of having more interest in Thailand after trying Thai food while 88% said not really or no. The effect of increasing interest in Thailand after trying Thai food seems to be not so great. Also, only 13% of people answered positively to the question of having a better image of Thailand after eating Thai food while 87% answered not really or no. The overwhelming effect that the food brings about doesn't seem to be present.

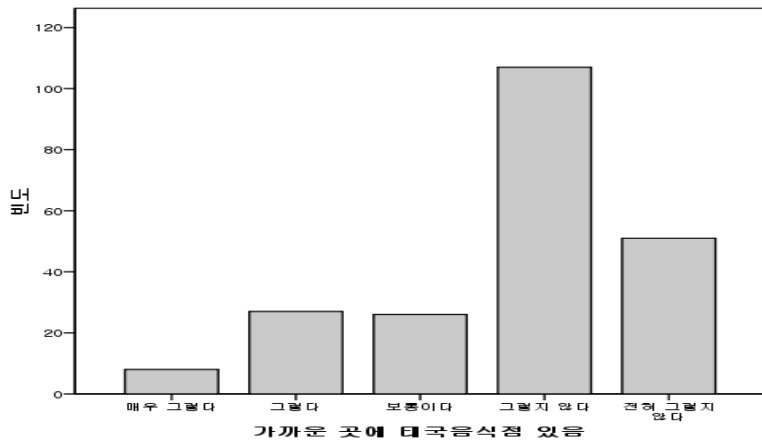
<Figure 5> I came to be interested in Thailand after eating Thai food.



① Very much so ② Yes, it did ③ So-so ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

To the question of having a Thai restaurant near their home, 28% answered positively while 72% answered no. This shows that the environment of approaching Thai food easily isn't in place yet. Even though the survey was conducted in Seoul area where Thai restaurants are located, the results show a lack of environments to experience Thai food means that the opportunity to experience Thai food is limited.

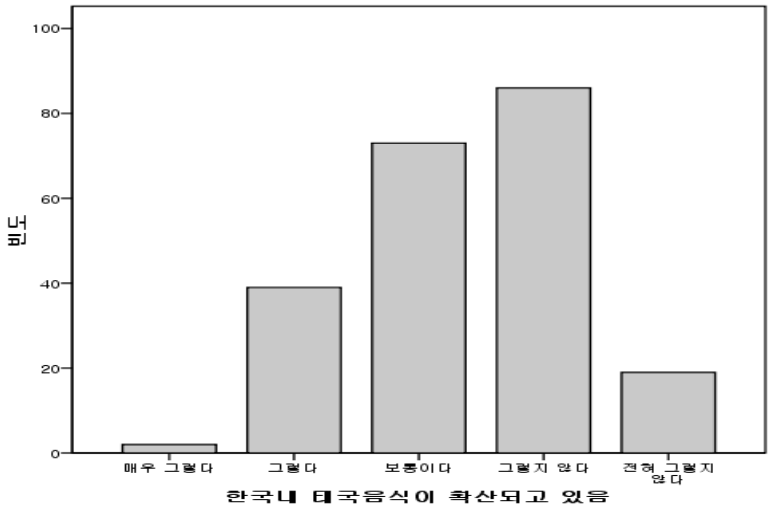
<Figure 6> There is a Thai restaurant near my house, work, and school.



① Many ② Kind of ③ Some ④ Rarely ⑤ Not at all

As to the question of whether Thai food is spreading in Korea, 33% said somewhat, while 48% answered no and 19% said yes. It is possible to predict that Thai food will not expand its influence in the future if the current situation of not being widely known is maintained.

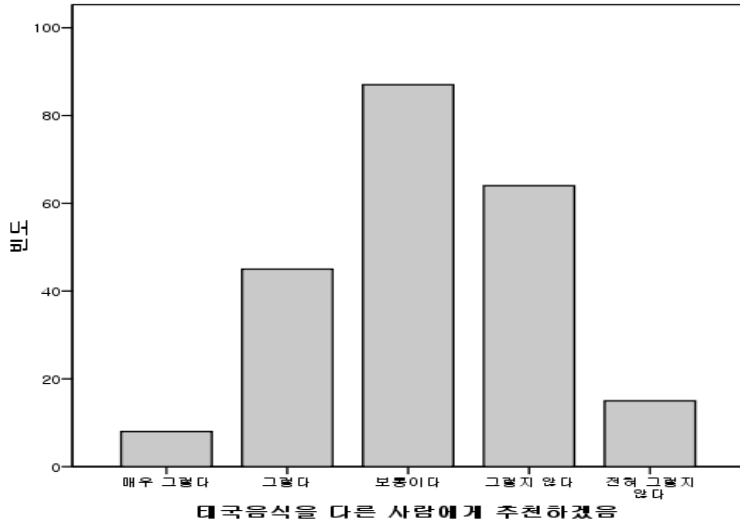
<Figure 7> Thai food is spreading out in Korea.



- ① Very much so ② Yes, it is ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

25% answered yes to the question of whether they would recommend Thai food to other people while 40% remained neutral and 35% said they wouldn't. In relation to the high percentage of people not enjoying Thai food, Koreans can be said to have reservations in recommending Thai food. It seems that Korean regard Thai food as a somewhat eccentric food that they can try once or twice when eating out.

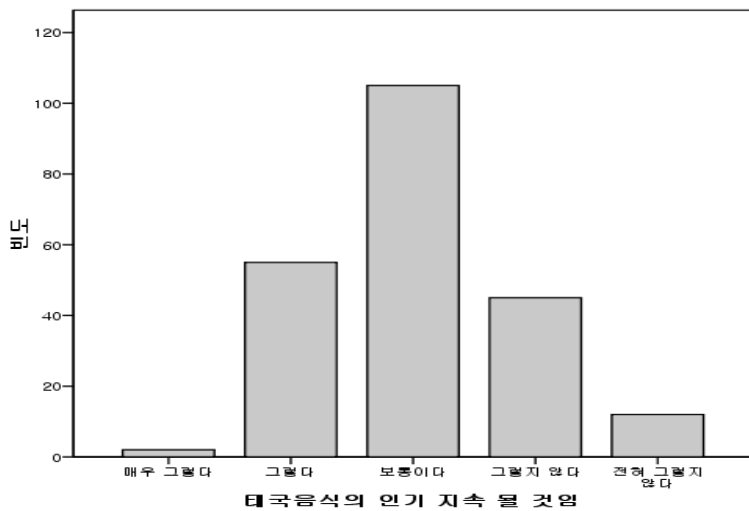
<Figure 8> I would like to recommend Thai food to other people.



① Very much so ② Yes, I would ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

To the question of Thai food’s outlook in Korea, 26% answered it would be popular while 48% remained neutral and 26% answered negatively. The answers were bipolarized into positive and negative opinions.

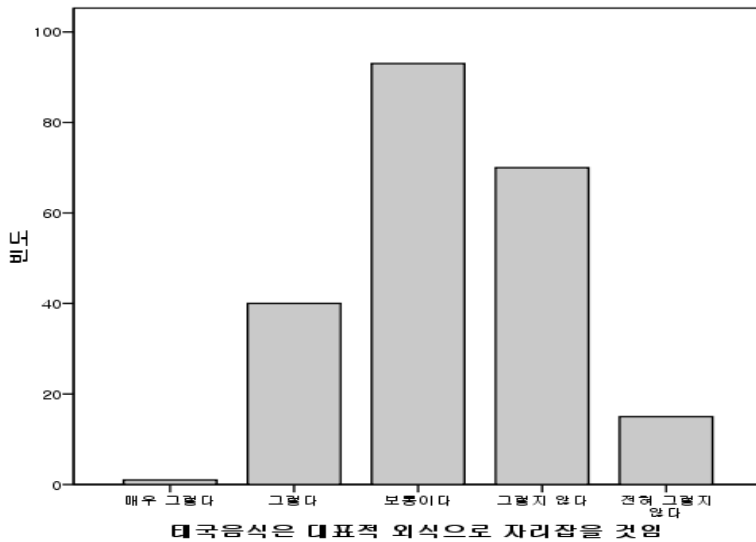
<Figure 9> Popularity of Thai food in Korea will continue on.



① Positively ② Yes it will ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

19% answered that Thai food has a future of being a regular eating out option while 42% said maybe and 39% answered no. Koreans tend to regard Thai food as a once-in-a-while special meal while maintaining a negative attitude when it comes to seeing it as a regular eating out option.

<Figure 10> Thai food in Korea will become one of the main eating out menu.



- ① Positively ② Yes, it will ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

Lastly, the main route of finding out about Thai food was broadcasting (36%); 23% of those surveyed accessed it through family and friends, 8% through the Internet, 1% through newspapers and magazines, while 30% said they had no special route. Many people answered that they saw a TV program related to Thailand, got interested in Thai food or went to restaurants when it was suggested by friends or family.

4.3. Outlook of Thai Food in Korea

As shown by the survey results above, the current status of Thai food in Korea is no more than a special eccentric foreign food to

Koreans. It does not have a familiar attractive element. Even with the surge of mutual visitors from and to Korea and Thailand and the popularity of Thai food increasing all over the world, it seems that Thai food remains to be unfamiliar to Korean tastes. With Koreans tending to be closed off to other cultures and a conservative taste tending to insist on only our traditional food may be a reason as to Thai food not being particularly popular. But Thai food, full of strong Southeast Asian traits, is pushing aggressively into the Korean market in a short period of time and is carrying out various endeavors to suit Korean tastes. As a major part of the 'Southeast Asia phenomenon' in Korea, Thai food is expected to contribute greatly to cultivate Korea's cultural diversity as it familiarizes itself with other cultural elements and goes through the process of localization.

Bibliography

- Benson, Alan and Lulu Grimes. 2005. *The Food of Thailand*. London: Murdoch Books.
- Freeman, Michael. 2008. *Ricelands: The World of Southeast Asian Food*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Gernwal-Smith, Philip. 2009. *Very Thai*. Bangkok: River Books.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 1996a. Seven Arguments for Diversity. *Transnational Connection: Culture, People, Places*. New York: Routledge.
- _____. 1996b. When Culture is Everywhere: Reflections on a Favorite Concept. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. New York: Routledge.
- Kim, Dong-wook. 2004. *Food Travel in Southeast Asia*. Seoul: Gimyoung Publishers.
- Kim, Sook-hee and Kang Byeong-nam. 2009. *International Eating Habits and Food Culture*. Seoul: Daewangsa.
- Kivisto, Peter. 2001. Theorizing Transnational Immigration: a Critical Review of Current Efforts. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 24(4): July.
- Lee, Young-mi. 2006. *Spices*. Seoul: Gimyoung Publishers.
- Park, Kyung-tae and Paik Jong-eun and Cho Yong-beom. 2009. *Understanding of Global Food Cultures*. Seoul: Seokhagdang.
- Ryu, Soon-kyung. 2009. *Various Styles of Bangkok*. Seoul: Random House Korea.
- Tannahill, Ray. 2006. *Food in History*. Seoul: Welled House.
- Van Esterik, Penny. 2008. *Food Culture in Southeast Asia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood
- Wang, Young-ho and SeongHee-soo. 2009. *Fascinated by Thai Food*. Seoul: Random House Korea.
- Williams, Judy. 2003. *Food of the World: Thailand*. Bath, U.K.: Paragon.

[Appendix] Survey on Thai Food for Koreans

1. I have heard of Thai food.

① Very much so ② Yes I have ③ I think I have ④ Not really ⑤ Never

2. How did you mainly come to know about Thai food?

① Newspapers, magazines ② Family-friends ③ Broadcasting ④ Internet ⑤ Advertisement ⑥ No specific means

3. I enjoy Thai food.

4. Thai food suits Korean taste more than other countries' cuisine.

① Very much so ② Yes It does ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Never

5. There is a Thai restaurant near my house, work, and school.

① Many ② Kind of ③ some ④ rarely ⑤ Not at all

6. Thai food is spreading out in Korea.

① Very much so ② Yes It is ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

7. I know much about the flavor and types of Thai food.

① Very much so ② Yes I do ③ So-so ④ Not really ⑤ None at all

8. I came to be interested in Thailand after eating Thai food.

① Very much so ② Yes It did ③ So-so ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

9. The image I had about Thailand improved after experiencing Thai food.

① Very much so ② Yes It did ③ So-so ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

10. I would like to recommend Thai food to other people.

① Very much so ② Yes I would ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

11. Popularity of Thai food in Korea will continue on.

① Positively ② Yes it will ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

12. Thai food in Korea will become one of the main eating out menu.

① Positively ② Yes it will ③ Maybe ④ Not really ⑤ Not at all

13. What is the Thai dish you like the most/remember most well?

(multiple answers are allowed)

①Phatthai(Thai style stir-fry noodle), ②KhaoPhat(Thai style stir-fry noodle rice), ③ Tom Yam Kung(Thai style shrimp soup), ④ Kang Ki Yeo Wan(chicken green curry), ⑤Som Tam(green papaya salad) ⑥ Yam WunSen(cellophane noodle salad), ⑦PuPhatPhong curry(crab curry stir-fry noodles), ⑧Kwetiaw (Thai style rice noodle), ⑨Suki(Thai style stew)

A. What is your gender? ①Male ② Female

B. What is your age? ()

C. Which industry do you work in?

① Manufacturing ② Technical post ③ Management, office work ④ Self-employed ⑤ Agriculture/fishing industry ⑥ Public officer ⑦ Housewife ⑧ Unemployed ⑨ Salesperson ⑩ Education/research post ⑪ Student ⑫ Other (_____)

D. What is your marital status?

① Single ② Married

<국문초록>

태국음식을 통해 본 한국에서의 '동남아현상'

윤진표

성신여대 정치외교학과

본 연구는 초국가주의 개념을 바탕으로 한국에서의 '동남아현상' 중의 하나로 태국음식의 한국 내 전파와 적응을 설명하기 위한 목적으로 수행되었다. 본 논문은 태국문화의 다양성을 구성하는 태국음식의 기원과 특징 및 태국음식이 국경을 넘어 확대되는 동기와 전략에 대해 살펴보았다.

한국에서 태국음식의 위상에 대해 알아보기 위해 한국내 태국식당의 현황을 조사하고, 한국인들의 태국음식에 대한 인식과 반응을 알아보기 위해 설문조사를 실시하였다. 설문조사의 결과는 태국음식의 세계적인 인기와 한국과 태국간의 인적교류의 증가에도 불구하고 태국음식이 아직은 한국인들에게 낯설고 크게 매력적으로 다가가지 못하고 있는 것으로 파악되었다. 그렇지만 한국내 동남아 현상의 확산을 나타내는 주요상징으로서 태국음식은 단기간에 한국사회에 비교적 빠른 속도로 전파되고 있고, 한국인들의 입맛에 맞추어 나가려는 다양한 노력이 이루어지고 있다는 사실도 확인되었다.

이러한 연구결과를 바탕으로 본 연구는 초국가적 문화의 확산으로서 한국내 태국음식이 '동남아현상'으로 친숙해지고 현지화 하는 단계를 통해 태국음식이 한국의 문화적 다양성을 발전시키는 데 많은 기여를 할 수 있을 것으로 기대한다.

주제어 : 태국음식, 한국, 동남아현상, 음식문화, 초국가주의