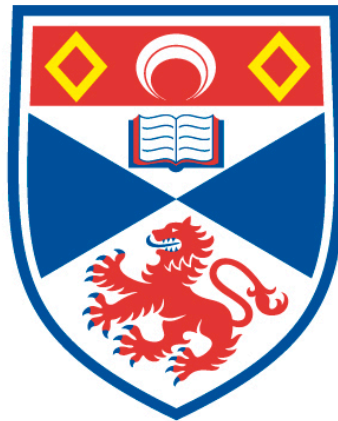


MNEMONIC COMMUNITIES : POLITICS OF WORLD WAR II
MEMORY IN THAI SCREEN CULTURE

Natthanai Prasannam

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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**Mnemonic Communities: Politics of World War II
Memory in Thai Screen Culture**

Natthanai Prasannam



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

14 November 2017

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the politics of World War II memory in Thai screen culture with special reference to films and television series produced between the 1970s and the 2010s. Framed by memory studies and film studies approaches, the thesis hopes to answer 1) how WW II memory on screen is related to other memory texts: monuments, museums and commemorative rituals and 2) how the memory is coded by various genres: romance, biopic, combat film and horror. The project relies on a plurimedial network which has not yet been extensively studied by film scholars in Thailand.

Through the lens of memory studies, the on-screen memory is profoundly intermingled with other sites of memory across Thailand and beyond. It potentially is counter-memory and vernacular memory challenging the state's official memory. The politics of WWII memory are also engaged with cultural politics in Thailand in terms of class, gender and ethnicity. The politics of commoners and trauma are given more voice in WWII memory compared to other moments of the national past, which are dominated by the royal-nationalism.

From film studies perspectives, the genres mediating WWII memory are shaped by traditions of *Thai-Thai* and transnational screen culture; the Thai WWII combat film is a newly proposed genre. The thesis also explores directors, the star system, exhibition and reception. The findings should prove that WWII memory on Thai screen serves their roles in memory institutions which construct and maintain mnemonic communities as well as the roles in entertainment and media institutions.

Another crucial implication of the research is that politicising WWII memory on the Thai screen can illuminate how memory and visual texts travel. The research likewise manifests its contributions to a better understanding of how Thai screen culture can be positioned within both global memory culture and global screen culture.

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Notes on Transliteration and Referencing

In romanising Thai script, all systems have some limitations because the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet are not sufficient to represent all the consonants, vowels, diphthongs and tones of the Thai language. However, in this thesis I adopt a modified and simplified version of the Thai Royal Institute system of romanising Thai implemented since 1999. The system makes no distinction between long and short vowel forms, and tones are not represented. Some vowels are, therefore, distinguished: for example, *i* and *ii*.

I follow the Thai norm of referring to Thai authors by given names, not surnames. I follow the authors' preferred spelling of their own names in English when known rather than romanising names in keeping with our own transliteration system to maintain consistency.

In compiling the bibliography and citation, I follow author-date system from *MHRA Style Guide* (2013). Referencing Thai materials, I primarily give romanised title of the source and indicate English title in parentheses.

INTRODUCTION

‘Certainly we would have been shocked if anyone had said that truths about the past could be expressed on screen, in film or television’
(Rosenstone 2012: 6).

1. Chapter Introduction

On the 15th of August 2015, at St Martin-in-the-Fields Church in central London, Queen Elizabeth II attended the service for VJ Day. It was the 70th anniversary commemoration of the end of World War II. Among the British and the Commonwealth, VJ Day is connected to battlefields in the ‘Far East’. On that very day, in Bangkok, as a part of the ‘Far East’, there were film screenings and talks on war and peace organised by Thailand’s Film Archive (Public Organisation), Thammasat University in collaboration with Pridi Banomyong Institute. The events were pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Thailand. It was followed by *Wan Santiphap Thai* (Thai Peace Day) on 16 August 2015 at *Seri Thai* Park. The commemoration was, again, sponsored by Pridi Banomyong Institute. Religious ceremonies were conducted before living *Seri Thai* fellows (The Free Thai Movement) and their descendants.

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FIG. 1 Special screenings, talks and commemoration of World War II in Bangkok (August 2015)

The aforementioned scenario represents the mainstream elements in World War II memory in Thailand: *Seri Thai*, their leader Pridi Banomyong,¹ and peace-building. Significantly, on this occasion, filmic texts remained predominant as a part of commemorative rituals. Some archival materials, selected by the British Pathé and the Film Archive were screened: for example, *Suansanam Seri Thai/The Free Thai's March* (1945) and *Lord Louis Mountbatten, Ro 8 Truat Phol Thahan Samphanthamit/Lord Louis Mountbatten and King Ananda Mahidol Reviewing the Allies' Troops* (1945). Although they echo how the events were reconstructed in official memory, those films, however, cannot fully illustrate the way Thai people remember World War II. Indeed, as John Bodnar has observed: 'Public commemorations usually celebrate official concerns more than vernacular ones. This does not mean that cultural differences are removed from the discussion over memory' (1992: 16).

My own memory is shaped by the interaction between official memory and vernacular memory. To situate my own position within this memory-oriented project, I would rather recall my childhood memory in relation to World War II and my own film memory, as Annette Kuhn encourages us to 'make use of the stories they generate to give deeper meaning to, and, if necessary, to change our lives now' (2000: 187). Those recalled memories should address how I, as part of the audience, interacted with the screen culture (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 263-264), and how I, as a researcher, reconstruct my memory going hand in hand with those films as memory texts.²

¹ Pridi Banomyong (1900-1983) was a Thai prime minister and a senior statesman. Pridi was an important historical figure in mainstream Thai history as he joined Khana Ratsadon (the People's Party) materialising the revolution in 1932. He was a political rival of Field Marshall Pibunsongkhram. His rise to power was apparent over the absence of royal figures in the 1940s when he also sat as Thammasat University's director. Despite the success of his Free Thai Movement after World War II, Pridi was then scandalously accused of the regicide of King Ananda Mahidol (1925-1946) which caused him to live in exile from 1949 until his death.

² Memory texts are where acts of memory are performed. They are regarded 'as embodiments, as sites of construction and negotiation, of memory' (Kuhn 2010: 299).

My first World War II memory is linked to a comic book adapted from the great film of Studio Ghibli, *Hotaru no haka/The Grave of the Fireflies* (Japan, Isao Takahata, 1988). In an unnamed month of 1989, I could see myself sitting all alone in an empty classroom during lunch break. At that moment, I apparently did not know any faces of war. Weeping in silence, I solemnly questioned why those poor children must die. When little Setsuko asked her brother, Seita: ‘Why must fireflies die so young?’, neither Seita nor I had an answer. That was my first experience of a memory text storing WWII memories.

In social studies classes, I learned about World War II and its impact on Thai society. In Thailand, there are two terms for this war: *songkhram lok khrang thii song* (The Second World War) and *songkhram maha asia burapha* (The Greater East Asia War). The lessons, however, seemed vague and dry compared to the experience I gained when I, at 10 years old, travelled to the Bridge on the River Kwai with my family. During the trip to Kanchanaburi, I heard stories of the prisoners of war (POWs) and I saw their cemetery surrounded by *farang*³ visitors. I was too young to know that some of the visitors were family of the fallen, and their visit could mean personal commemoration.

Around that time, World War II memory intersected with my film memory. Both of them are considered variations of cultural memory (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 264). Actually, in the same year that I found World War II memory in the format of Japanese animation, I was exposed to my first cinema experience in a standalone theatre called Khiri Thong Theatre in my hometown—Ratchaburi. However, movie-going was considered too luxurious for a child. Television was actively shaping my film memory. I always watched Hong Kong and Hollywood blockbusters on Channel

³ A common noun in Thai language used for calling Westerners particularly white people.

7 and Channel 9. Therefore, I regard watching *Khu Karma* on television as a part of my film memory.

Undereducated on the subject of the 45th anniversary World War II commemoration, I was, instead, impressed by the *Khu Karma* myth⁴ in the 1990s. *Khu Karma* is the greatest war romance of all in Thailand. It symbolically presents fireflies to highlight the tragic ending. The tragic love between a Japanese soldier and a Thai girl, as I observed, has gradually become one of the dominant perceptions of World War II in Thailand. Under Phairat Sangwaributr's direction, the 1990 adaptation of *Khu Karma* starring Thongchai McIntyre (one of the most famous pop singers of Thailand) was screened on Channel 7. I picture myself sitting in front of the television with my grandmother, mother and sister witnessing the heartbreaking death scene of Kobori, the male protagonist. Strikingly, Kobori's tenderness has later become a stereotype of Japaneseness in the Thai mind (Somsuk 2015). The day he died on television was, in my remembrance, the day we rushed back home. Beyond our roof, the streets were filled with emptiness as archived in Thai tabloids: 'Kobori is definitely going to die tonight! Some hardcore fans are wearing black in mourning' (*Thairath* 9 June 1990: 1). Tackled by media scholars, the phenomenon was termed: '*Khu Karma* Fever' (Somsuk 2015: 144).

⁴ My transliteration of *Khu Karma* maintains reference to its alluded sense. *Khu Karma* was transliterated from กุญ Karma in Thai. The transliterations can vary: *Khoo Gum*, *Khoo Kam* and *Khu Kam*. *Khu Karma* literally means star-crossed lovers. In this thesis, the transliterations conform to the system of Thailand's Royal Institute. Still, I decide to transliterate Karma as *Karma* to maintain Buddhist connotation.

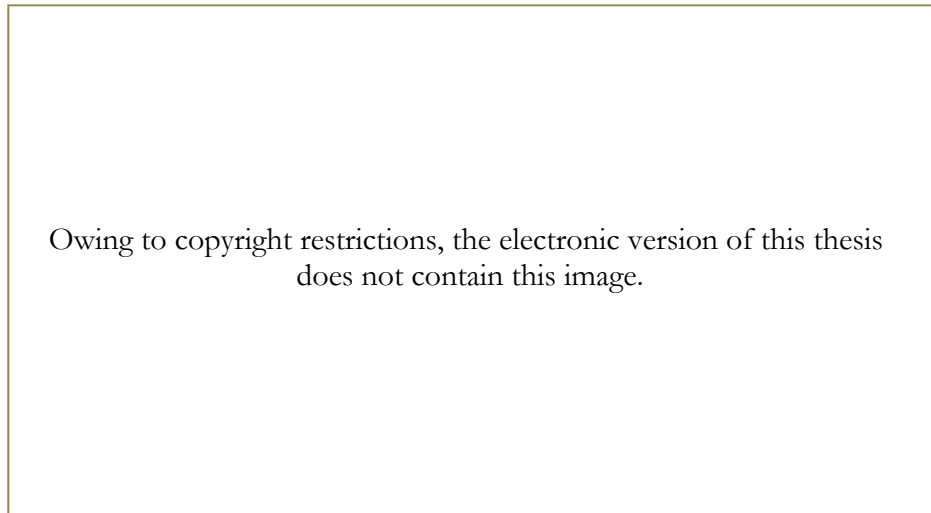


FIG. 2 *Khu Karma* (1990) transferred from television to YouTube (Accessed in October 2016)

The sensational World War II memory revived through the romance has been embodied in my reflection. The gentleness of Kobori, the tormented bodies of *farang* war prisoners, the story of the Free Thai (*Seri Thai*) Movement and as well as my continuous visits to various sites of memory have shaped my vision towards my own version of World War II memory. This is the very starting point of my research.

The brief memory work above should present the ‘technology of memory’ in the Thai society. Modes of remembrance were taught by three key institutions: my family, my schools and the media. At its best, I am bound by the war memory shared among my parents, my classmates and Thai audiences. Still, within the memory texts circulated, there are romances, nationalistic history, patriotic ideology, Japaneseness and Thainess. That is to say, there are memories within memory. Theoretically speaking, there are infinite interplays among memories at personal, societal and national levels (Nora 1996a: 10-13, Nora 1996b: 526, Erl1 2011b: 6-7). Memory is a process rather than a final product. This observation will be elaborated upon later.

Here, I also argue, the multiple versions of World War II memory within Thai society conceive *mnemonic communities* which are ‘groups that socialise us to what

should be remembered and what should be forgotten. These communities, such as the family, the ethnic group or the nation, provide the social contexts in which memories are embedded and mark the emotional tone, depth and style of our remembering' (Misztal 2003: 160). The communities exist within and without the border of Thailand and the Thai screen culture. Thus my own World War II memory, film memory and primary lens of memory studies mentioned earlier lead to the formulation of two key research questions:

1) From the perspectives of memory culture, within certain mnemonic communities, how is World War II memory politicised, contested and consented, through the relationship between official memory and other sources of memory, in the Thai screen culture?

2) From the perspectives of screen culture, how is World War II memory reconstructed, aestheticised and exhibited on Thai screen?

To problematise the research, 'Why now?' can be the simplest question asked of this project. Noticeably, our time is named, by Pierre Nora, as the 'era of commemoration' (1998b: 609-637)—other labels of this phenomenon are 'memory boom' and 'heritage boom'—particularly first occurring between the 1960s and the 1980s (Benton 2010: 320). The phenomenon is well-connected to the legacy of World War I or the Great War. Modes of remembrance normally address 'complex issues of victimhood and bereavement during and after World War I' (Winter 2007: 365). Memories, produced after the Great War, have shaped the global rhetoric of war memory in many ways. In Europe, the Holocaust dominates World War II memory while in the Anglophone world the rhetoric inherited from the Great War is more obvious. Under the reemergence of memory studies in the 1980s led by Pierre Nora's scholarship on French national memory, in Australia, for example, there

were hundreds of war monuments and memorials continuously built from the period to the 2000s (Stephens 2012: 84-85).

Placing Thai memory culture into this timeline, after a long silence throughout the early postwar period,⁵ I find the opening of the JEATH Museum, the first Thai WWII museum, in 1977 and the first commemoration of the 8th of December 1941, the day the Japanese set ashore in Southern Thailand, held in Suratthani Province in 1984 (Thotsapol 1986: 42-46) in parallel with commemorative practices across the world. These are examples of memory boom and heritage boom where everyday life memory meets the scholarly. Such moments became prophetic of another wave of World War II memory created in the 2010s.

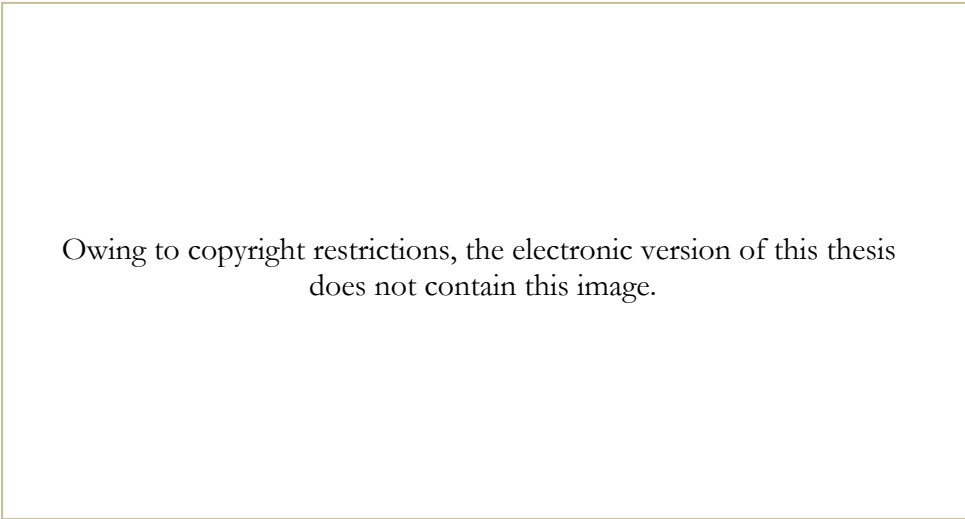
In the context of Europe and the Anglophone world, the centenary celebration of the Great War has been conducted since 2014. There have been various manifestations of the past from the events, book series, conferences, ceramic poppies, reenactments and special exhibitions in museums as well as galleries. Because the legacy of the Great War has been, rather exclusively, apparent in those areas, the rhetoric of war memory was redressed by the 70th anniversary commemoration of World War II in 2015. Assuredly the commemorations happened across the world through multiple arrays of expression.

Outside the borders of the European continent, in Japan, the speech in commemoration of World War II delivered in August 2015 by Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister, generated extensive controversy. Despite a series of Japanese official apologies since 1984—the phenomenon evidently took place under the influence of the global memory boom of the 1980s—there have also been Japanese officials' statements denying wartime responsibility. People of the East Asian nations

⁵ See appendix 2.

were not yet contented by the attempts of reconciliation, called by scholars the ‘apology failure’ (Shin 2014: 158-165). In his speech Abe insisted: ‘We must not let our children, grandchildren, and even further generations to come, who have nothing to do with the war, be predestined to apologise’ (McCurry 2015). That was before the visit of the president of the United States of America–Barack Obama–to Hiroshima in May 2016–where he delivered a speech that called for peace without apology (McCurry 2016). The rhetorical battles paralleled with the productions of films and television series remediating the World War II events.

Thailand did not fail to join Japan, the USA, and other nations in this commemorative effort. As mentioned earlier, in 2015, the Film Archive screened its archival materials along with other films recounting World War II events. The array of films was accompanied by screenings of documentaries and feature films on television.



Owing to copyright restrictions, the electronic version of this thesis does not contain this image.

FIG. 3 Special screenings in commemoration of World War II on 2 August 2015 (Film Archive’s Facebook Page)

The film-related events during the commemorations in 2015 asserted my assumption on the politics of WWII memory in Thailand because the Thai screen culture is involved with creating war memory and cinema memory. Even though WWII memory on the Thai screen looked ‘trivial,’ compared to films produced in the

neighbouring countries (Film Kawan 2013: 76-77), such observation needs to be practically supported by valid scholarship. Thus, through the lens of memory studies, I shape my project through this notion:

Compared with history books or eyewitness accounts, film today looks like a winner in the ongoing medial competition about representing and shaping war memories. As an easily 'portable' and, through its reliance on visual language, seemingly 'translatable' medium of memory, it can have an enormous impact across a very wide spectrum of mnemonic communities (Erlil 2012: 232).

Positioning myself as a member of the 'imagined community' (Anderson [1983] 2006) of the Thai nation, I can see how the Thai screen culture can affect my own version of World War II memory. At a larger scale, the Thai screen culture ought to influence the way Thai audiences remember or *re*-remember World War II events. Inasmuch as screenings are considered social practices. This observation can be endorsed by the conception of collective memory or social memory (Halbwachs 1992). In the context of modernity in Thailand and Laos, scholars argue that:

Social practices, involving remembering activities, range from everyday conversation dealing with past experiences, recitation of, and listening to narratives, to joint recollection in commemoration ceremonies. These practices construct semantically organised meaning that nearly always accompany the particular sensory images and that arouse emotion among participants (Tanabe and Keyes 2002: 4-5).

The statement above can explain my recollection, presented and experienced through sense, and it suggests the role of Thai audiences as 'participants' within remembering activities. As a part of the 'participants', it is a challenging task to address an auto-criticism as a member of the communities. Apart from revealing the ideological backdrop of my own memory, some possible contributions that this research can make are to establish World War II memory from the Thai screen culture in global perception, to pioneer memory studies in the Thai context, and to exemplify film research in a cultural intertextual or plurimedial network.

2. Contextualisation: Why Is World War II Memory in Thailand Problematic?

Throughout the entire thesis, I use the terms ‘memory’ and ‘cultural memory’ in Astrid Erll’s sense, which covers ‘all possible expressions of the relationship of culture and memory’ (2011a: 101). That is to say, from the recent perspective of memory studies, history is potentially regarded as an expression of memory or memory text (2011a: 45). In this section, I briefly introduce the special issues of World War II memory within Thai mnemonic communities bridging to the theoretical framework provided in the next section.

In the Thai context, there are many terms related to collective memory. In Thai, *prawattisat* stands for history as ‘past events’ and as a ‘study of the past’ whilst *khwamsongcham* stands for ‘memory.’ In the old days, the most frequently used words for history were *tamnan* [story, folklore, legend or myth]; *phongsawadan* [dynastic chronicles]⁶; and *chotmai het* [short report of particular events or archive]. Therefore, there was no clear-cut line between history and memory before the official establishment of the discipline along with the rise of higher education throughout the early 20th century in Thailand.

In Thailand, the reconstruction of the past, Thainess and Thai identity are defined by national independence. Such rhetoric was dramatically intensified when the country changed its name from Siam to Thailand in 1939 under Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram’s *ratthaniyom* (state decrees). In Thai, *thai* literally means free or freedom, and it links to Thai race which the name *siam* fails to correspond (Kobkua 1995: 113). Such consciousness is commonly expressed in cultural productions. That is directly connected to the collective memory conducted by the state and other mnemonic institutions. The Thai national past is basically articulated on the basis of inter-state

⁶ The meaning of *phongsawadan* has been narrowed down into dynastic chronicles afterwards whereas *prawattisat* is currently used in a broader sense.

wars led by kings or other historical figures. War, in this sense, consists of wars against armed forces and against cultural imperialism. For this reason the loss and the fear of loss of territories is embedded in Thai historiography since the age of modernisation in the late 19th century (Strate 2015: 5).

Significantly, the war rhetoric in Thai collective memory was escalated in the late 1930s by the abovementioned state decrees and *sipsii wiiratham* (Fourteen Codes of National Bravery) announced in 1944 to regulate Thai social and moral values. The three fundamental codes are: ‘1) The Thais love their nation more than their own lives. 2) The Thais are a nation of capable warriors. 3) The Thais are good to their friends but harsh to their enemies’ (Kobkua 1995: 124). Thai official memory produced after the period was undoubtedly driven by this set of principles (Kobkua 1980: 100-101).

In narrating the Thai past, the kings must be figured in historical writings and/or memory. The convention can be culturally explained as they are considered *avatars* of Hindu Gods; they are expected to be warriors following the Indian values they adopted. Likewise, the kings embrace the conception of *kshatriya* from the Indian caste system.⁷ *Kshatriya*’s duty is to protect their territory and people for the sake of great responsibility and ownership of their properties. For this reason there are some other well-known synonyms used for addressing Thai kings: *phra chao phaendin* (lord of the land) and *chao chiiwit* (lord of people’s lives). These values are consequently perpetuated in entire branches of Thai memory culture up until present.

With the awareness of the royal institution’s role in narrating the Thai past, Strate (2015) proposes two recurrent themes in Thai historiography: 1) *Siam was never colonised* and 2) *lost territory*. These two themes have been implanted not only in written history but also in collective memory and other commemorative practices.

⁷ Indian caste system or *varna* primarily divides people into four groups: *brahmans* (priests), *kshatriya* (warriors), *vaishya* (traders) and *sudra* (labourers).

They are the referential frame of narrating the past of Thailand. The *Siam was never colonised* trope ‘suggests that the primary function of the state is to protect the kingdom’s independence and territory’ (2015: 3). The other theme of *lost territory* portrays ‘Siam as victim rather than victor. [It is] to communicate the extent of past injuries sustained by the body of the nation’ (2015: 5).

Within the first theme, the royal institution and Siamese ancestors sacrificed their lives and exercised their intellectual forces to save the nation. Under the storm of imperialism since the 19th century in South East Asia, Thailand was not formally colonised by the West because of the diplomacy whilst the neighbouring countries in the region were. Such collective memory constructs and is constructed through mainstream historiography. To be precise, the perception of the past among Thai mnemonic communities is controlled by the most powerful and commonly shared ideology: royal-nationalism (Thongchai 2001: 36-47, Strate 2015: 5).

The second theme has been endowed to an ideology of *national humiliation* which ignites the xenophobic reaction against *farangs* in the Thai cultural circuit. The first loss of territory happened after the Franco-Siamese crisis in 1893. After the revolution in 1932, when the charisma of the monarchy was minimised, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram found the *lost territory* trope instrumental. Without a royal presence, the government of the 1940s promoted a national campaign for winning the territory back from Vichy France. National humiliation could justify the decision of the government, in the name of redemption, to join the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere led by the Japanese empire (Strate 2015: 109-110). However, to embrace the Japanese occupation would have violated the first trope of Thai collective memory. Unsurprisingly, there is no flow in narrating World War II memory, particularly, the version proposed by the state.

Looking through the array of events that shape Thai collective memory, I have found that World War II marks a rupture for Thai historiography. For the first time, the appearance of royal figures is disrupted by the politics of the commoners. The disappearance of the royal figures led to a radical deficiency of referential frame in narrating the national past.⁸ This formative rupture plays its dominant roles in constructing and restoring World War II memory both in the memory culture and the screen culture of Thailand.

In Thailand this trend first appeared in October 1940, when the Thai people were marching in protest against the French government. Under Phibunsongkhram's rule, Thailand engaged in irredentist moves seeking to recover lost territory near the Mekong River. The territory had been taken by the French in 1886. In the wake of the dispute, Thailand sent troops to seize parts of French Cambodia in January 1941. The dispute ended up with an agreement brokered by Japan. Thailand regained some territories. Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram was indebted to the Japanese.

In December 1941, the day after the Battle of Pearl Harbor, Japanese troops set ashore at the Southern provinces of Thailand. Because Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram was away from Bangkok, the army, the Military Youth and civilians fought against the Japanese invasion for hours until the government declared surrender. Thailand joined the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity led by the Japanese and declared war against the British-American Allies in January 1942. The aftermath of the decision pushed some political elites to form an underground movement working against the Japanese—*Seri Thai*.

Thailand was obliged to send troops to Burma while the Japanese were building the Death Railway in Kanchanaburi for the military supply coming in from

⁸ See prominent events in Thai collective memory in appendix 1.

Malaya in 1942. Amidst air raids by the Allies and catastrophic floods, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram was ousted in 1944. Then the civilian government led by Khuang Aphaiwong secretly supported the Free Thai Movement. When the war came to an end, with the full support from the American government, Thailand claimed that its involvement was forced by the Axis Powers. Yet the Thai government was required to pay war reparations to British Malaya, at a cost of up to 1.5 million tons of rice. The territories taken over by Thailand during the war had to be returned to the French and the British.

At the National Memorial of Thailand, in Bangkok, it was indicated that the war cost Thailand 812 million Thai Baht and 5,957 lives of soldiers, police officers and civilians. Thailand joined the United Nations in 1946.

Nonetheless, the aforementioned series of events informs the way in which World War II in Thailand radically shapes Thai memory culture as a whole in the following aspects:

1) Technically, World War II was the first moment in Thailand's history which was not dominated by the presence of royal figures. This royal absence began after the revolution in 1932, when King Prajadhipok left Thailand for his medical treatment in England then declared his abdication in 1935. The throne was succeeded by King Ananda Mahidol (reigned 1935-1946). King Ananda Mahidol was crowned when he was only nine years old. Pridi Banomyong served as King Ananda Mahidol's regent since 1941 during the king's study in Switzerland until his return in 1945. Although, once, forming the revolution in 1932 with the leagues, Pridi and Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram became political rivals over the 1940s. While Thailand, under Phibunsongkhram's rule, initially collaborated with the Japanese empire in World War II, under Pridi's leadership it changed orientation, built an underground

resistance network called *Seri Thai*, and began supporting the Allied British and American Armies in 1944.

The inconsistent situation later developed to a knot in Thai political history and, indeed, official memory and cultural memory. One cannot fully rely on the royal-nationalist ideology if proper recollection of WWII is sought. Therefore, the gate is wide-opened for historians to unknot the complexity of events without direct pressure from the monarchy. Since there was no king leading the nation to survive the war, it was other figures, both politicians and commoners that arose in the collective memory of the event.

2) *Thailand neither lost nor won World War II* (Direk 1967: 423). As mentioned earlier, when Thailand declared war against the Allies, the ideology used was national humiliation caused by *farang* colonisers. The ideology is potentially identical to Japanese campaigns for liberating Asian countries from their Western colonialism. Without royal figures, Thailand entered into the war led by military figures instead. However, Thailand was free from the status of defeated enemy although the agreed war reparations were paid by the Thai government.

The reluctant position of Thailand during and after the war has left its marks in Thai collective memory. To recollect World War II memory, one cannot claim victory in the same way as it is being done in reference to the monumental history of the 16th century. The solution given to the official memory is to emphasise the heroism of the Free Thai Movement while perpetuating the fact that the friendship with Japan was one of ‘forced cooperation.’

3) *Thailand does not share the rhetoric of World War II memory with other countries in South East Asia*. On the basis of the *Siam was never colonised* trope, mainstream Thai history is in dissonance with the regionally accepted narrative of

colonial history. For the region of South East Asia, World War II *per se* was a formative period. The march of the Japanese empire onto land and sea put the power of Westerner colonisers in extremis (Harper 2007: 13). Events such as the fall of British Malaya, the captivity of Dutch soldiers in Java, the fall of Bataan in the Philippines and the defeat of the French army in French Indochina all led to the formation of communists and liberation movements in the region (Harper 2007: 11). Thus, World War II and its aftermath profoundly changed the entire political facade of the region. The struggle for independence and nation-building now became common in South East Asia's official memory (Blackburn 2010: 6). Most nation-states in the region—except Thailand—'sought to foster a collective memory of shared past and shared sacrifices in war to assist their efforts in encountering a greater sense of nationhood' (2010: 5).

To sum up, it is these specific features and the overall lack of referential framework that pushes Thai mnemonic communities to create their own version of World War II memory. To make sense of how World War II memory on the Thai screen interplays with the official memory, school textbooks are occasionally referenced in this thesis. In selecting school textbooks, as the state's instrument for imposing official memory, the project is primarily inspired by Kheng (2007: 48-59) who studied official World War II memory in Malaysian school textbooks. Suggestively, school textbooks are regarded as the most accessible site of World War II memory in Thailand compared to the Royal Thai Army's documents found in major libraries and historiographies by historians circulated amongst the academia.

Thailand's Ministry of Education highlights the importance of history instruction: 'history is an important subject in primary and secondary levels because it makes Thai junior citizens to be proud of their nation and its long-standing history'

(2000: preface). In secondary level textbooks the memory of the WWII was not articulated in textbooks until the 1950s as it was assumed it could undermine Thailand's national pride.

Over the 1950s and the 1960s, WWII events were addressed through global politics. The significant changes happened in the late 1970s when the separation of memory of World War II from a European context was written, entailed by the introduction of additional details and events, and the rationalisation of Thailand's position in the War. These changes were brought about by the appearance of interest in World War II by historians. In the late 1970s, Thailand's National Archive finally lifted restrictions and opened itself to Thai graduate students and researchers. This enabled access to source documents and the projects run by historians, as sites of memory, endorse a more explicit memory of World War II. Nonetheless, the memory of the war in school textbooks did not change so much. Despite this new scholarship, the war continued to be framed and represented in the forms of 'hero-oriented' memory. And the stated hero, here, was *Seri Thai* or the Free Thai Movement who saved Thailand from losing the war.⁹

According to Pierre Nora, the rendering of the past can be used to maintain national unity. The state should construct and exploit sites of memory to restore and store national memory when people are relocated from their real environment of memory (1989: 13). As detailed above, Thai history in school textbooks is a site of memory in a sense that it combines various sites of memory together to educate the young generation of Thais. School, as a mnemonic institution controlled by the state, highlights war as the national and official memory. I acknowledge the efforts of Thai historians in attempting to turn history in Thai school textbooks into something less

⁹ See appendix 2 on the official memory of World War II in the Thai school textbooks.

nationalistic and more inclusive. Until now historians have not been granted success, however, as the textbooks are still accumulating and communicating social platitude (Nidhi [1995] 2004: 78).

In the next section, the theoretical issues are sharpened since the chapter moves to bridging the World War II memory and Thai screen culture as an aesthetic and cultural production.

3. Theoretical Framework

As suggested by Kuhn and Westwell (2012: 264), some film scholars tackle their subjects on the grounds of memory studies including work on modernity, memory and cinema; cinema memory; trauma and film; pastiche in film, and film as memory text. Here, I take both memory and film studies as key frameworks of the thesis. In this thesis, I read films and television series as memory texts that ‘may embody, express, work through and unpick interconnections at the level of remembrance between the private, the public and the personal’ (Kuhn 2010: 312).

In this section, I explore the theories and theorists embraced by the interrelated disciplines—history, memory studies and film studies—in order to design my research direction. To frame my research, I view these theories in a specific way. Since the mainstream theories on memory are rooted in the West, I accommodate those theories within the Asian and Thai context. Furthermore, in terms of analysing Thai screen culture, I propose the research framework from Asian perspectives to open new grounds concerning debates on the relationship between memory and screen culture. This framework builds on two approaches: memory studies and film studies.

3.1 Memory Studies Approaches

The emergence of studies of memory which put its branch in social and cultural memory studies has been claimed through Maurice Halbwachs's writings published in the 1920s. Then the soul-searching of memory studies happened in the 1980s when the English-speaking world was introduced to Halbwachs's works in translation, and when Pierre Nora started his serial research projects in France in the 1980s. Their major concerns were formed by the differences and/or similarities between history and memory or history-*vs.*-memory dichotomy and how we remember under the context of community, society and national memory framework (Erl 2011b: 6-9, Tamm 2013: 458-459).

Halbwachs is regarded as the scholar who first brought together issues of history and memory by proposing the ground-breaking concept of collective memory. He is also referred to as 'the forefather of a variety of memory theories' (Erl 2011a: 18). As a sociologist, Halbwachs is attracted to the social interaction between individuals and society or community. He observes the significance of memory as the linkage between certain social units. Significantly, he claims that any memories revived in people's mentality are shaped 'under the pressure of society' (Halbwachs 1992: 38).

Halbwachs considers the publicity of history and privacy bound in collective memory. History is referred to as 'dead' owing to its temporal continuity while memory is 'lived' because it blends human's life experiences. He justifies the distinction between history and memory by defining four potentially overlapping terms: autobiographical memory, historical memory, history and collective memory. Autobiographical memory is memory of those events that we ourselves experience (though those experiences are shaped by group memberships). Historical memory is

memory that reaches us only through historical records. History is the remembered past with which we no longer have an ‘organic’ or ‘practical’ relation. And collective memory is the active past that forms our identities (1992: 23-24).

Recalling the past, in terms of collective memory, functions as the identity construction involved with social practices. Things remembered are related to self-representation and the interests of a certain social group or community; the pursuit and the continuity of collective memory are important to maintaining group solidarity and identity. Consequently, ones’ sense of belonging can be evaluated by their participation in the collective memory.

Corresponding to Halbwachsian doctrine, Pierre Nora, a prominent historian, initiated a ground-breaking collection of essays on the elements of French culture and national memory, called *Les Lieux des Mémoire*. It consists of seven volumes. It was published in France between 1984 and 1993. The three-volume English edition, published in 1996 under the title *Realms of Memory*, consists of 134 essays by over 100 scholars and provides long-listing sites of memory: from the impressionist paintings and gastronomy to the Vichy Regime. Such sites of memory are shown to be instrumental in shaping French national identity. Nora’s notions on sites of memory are seen as a cultural provision for a particular collective memory.

Nora notes that ‘every *lieu de mémoire* is symbolic by definition’ (1998a: x). He draws his explanation of two types of symbols in sites of memory: the imposed and the constructed. The *imposed symbol* is manifested through official state symbols, memorials and monuments. In the French context, the Pantheon and Eiffel Tower are perceived as imposed symbols while Joan of Arc, Décartes and the Gallic rooster are apparent as *constructed symbols*. Those symbols require a combination of circumstances, the passage of time, human effort and history itself to shape the symbolic meaning of Frenchness

within (1998a: x). Stressing memory over history, Nora articulates: ‘Only through the eyes of memory do the concepts of cohesiveness, unity, and continuity retain their pertinence and legitimacy’ (1998a: xii). The sites of memory, in a way, are engaged with the nation; it correspondingly functions in identity construction as collective memory does.

Nevertheless, I frame my study under Halbwachs’s and Nora’s theoretical visions. History is thus one symbolic form of reference to the past. Memory or sites of memory are equally symbolic. Other symbolic forms such as religion, myth, literature, visual art, rituals and commemoration contribute to producing memory. That is to say, in this thesis, I treat historiography as one medium of memory alongside other media, or a plurimedial backdrop (Erll 2011a: 45), as well as the representation of the past on the Thai screen, are regarded as memory texts. These texts are constructed through the signifying practices of signs and symbols.

Collective memory and sites of memory share one key feature: the relationship between memory and memory environment including the communities or the nation living with certain sets of memory. Therefore, the term ‘mnemonic community,’ as used by Misztal (2003), is one of the key concepts I apply in this thesis.

Halbwachs is interested in the function of collective memory with regard to identity formation. For Halbwachs, collective memory is bound in group contexts remembering itself, coherence and persistence of memory. He notices: ‘It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories’ (1992: 38). Group memberships supply the materials for memory and stimulate the individual to remember particular events and to disremember others. The particular nature of a group’s experience creates a shared memory and identity. For this reason, every group has its own collective memory, and

such collective memory differs from the collective memory of other groups. This very notion of Halbwachs contributes to what is referred to as ‘mnemonic community/communities’.

Memory is part of the socialising process undertaken in certain social units or communities: the nation, ethnic groups and the family (Misztal 2003: 15). These groups are examples of the main mnemonic communities directing us of what should be remembered or should be forgotten. Mnemonic communities, by introducing and familiarising the new arrivals to their collective past, ensure that new members, by identifying with the groups’ past, reach a required identity (Misztal 2003: 15-16). In the ‘Era of Commemoration’, Nora articulates his concern about the social function of memory in identity construction. He also highlights the memory-nation relation:

For some it may be a matter of mending a torn social fabric, for others a question of strengthening national feeling in the traditional spirit if threatened citizenship, and for still others a matter of enriching that national feeling with repressed parts of marginalised types of history. The social uses of memory are as diverse and varied as the rationale of identity (1998b: 635-636).

Nora always sheds light on the emotive quality of memory; emotion is regarded as one of the distinctions between memory and history, and ‘national feeling’ also exists in Nora’s observation. The national feeling, a sense of belonging shared among a mnemonic community, connects to the sites of memory and the official memory of certain nations. Following Halbwachs and Nora’s passage, Misztal points out: ‘a group’s memory is linked to places, ruins, landscapes, monuments and urban architecture, which, as they are overlain with symbolic associations to past events, play an important role in helping to preserve group memory’ (2003: 16).

Focussing on the nation as mnemonic community, we can draw its features from Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. Anderson’s book was originally published in 1983—under the wave of modern memory studies, and it was widely

referenced by memory scholars (Ashplant, Dawson and Roper 2000: 7). The book dedicates one chapter for the topic of memory and forgetting. In his book, Anderson argues that being reminded of what one has already forgotten is a normal mechanism by which nations are constructed. He demonstrates how national memories, underscored by selective forgetting, constitute one of the most important mechanisms by which a nation constructs a collective identity or becomes an 'imagined community'.

Anderson is fascinated by narratives that function as memory storage. He proposes imagined communities, based on memory and forgetting, must narrate their stories; 'all profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives' (2006: 204). Compared to the human life cycle, the 'national biography' is written to proclaim national identity. Anderson uses such analogy to lay out his argument. He begins with a photograph of a naked baby and the modern documentary evidence that certifies the existence of the baby. The documents, like birth certificates, diaries, report cards, letters, and medical records, assert 'a certain apparent continuity and emphasises its loss from memory. Out of this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, identity (yes, you and that naked baby are identical) which, because it cannot be 'remembered,' must be narrated' (2006: 204).

From memory studies perspectives, Anderson's national biography stands for memory and 'birth certificates, diaries, report cards, letters, medical records, and the like' are sites of memory as well as memory texts. The fear of memory loss needs to be counteracted by commemorations. In addition, generating a series of self-narratives can also lessen the supposed sense of loss.

In short, memory is a key factor in maintaining group solidarity within a community and/or a nation. Memory is a source one can identify oneself with as a part of one's community. Similarly, 'imagined communities' and 'mnemonic communities' are intangible, but they exist in the minds of their members, who are bound together by what they are, subtly, taught to remember and disremember. From my theoretical standpoint, I use the concepts of collective memory, site of memory and mnemonic communities to interpret the transmission and transformation of war memory on the Thai screen. The circulation of war memory can be studied from the perspective of mnemonic communities; I treat such circulation based upon the socialisation conducted by the mnemonic institutions such as schools, media, family, and the legal system (Misztal 2003: 19-22).

Notwithstanding the invisible consent on remembrance and forgetting, there cannot be one single version of memory. In the light of internal social conflicts, different types and versions of memory can potentially cause conflict. That is to say memory can politicise and be politicised, as Michel Foucault suggested in one of his interviews: 'If one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles' (2011: 253). The statement conveys Foucault's key idea on power. Memory can become a technology of power exploited by political bodies to control members of certain communities. On the other hand, resistance grows where power exists. Scholars argue that to view memory this way is to view from instrumentalist perspectives; ironically, the term *collective* cannot be entirely collective. It 'is essentially contested: there is a great deal at stake in how we represent the past, and different groups in societies struggle to advance their own view of the past and its meanings' (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011: 249).

For this reason in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, Foucault mentions the discourse against power called ‘the counter-discourse which ultimately matters’ (1977: 209). With such a view on discourse, he coins the term: ‘counter-memory’ as discursive practices or counter-discourse since ‘memories are continuously revised’ leading to challenges against the dominant discourse (Miszta 2003: 65). The conception of counter-memory draws attention to the dichotomy: official memory vs. vernacular memory.¹⁰ This way, the memory unrecognised by the authorised parties can potentially be counter-discourse. Following these lines, Foucault strikingly notes the way official memory imposes the perception of the past to society:

[T]he history of the war, and what took place around it, has never really been written except in completely official accounts. These official histories are to all intents and purposes centered on Gaullism, which, on the one hand, was the only way of writing this history in terms of an honourable nationalism; and, on the other hand, the only way of introducing the Great Man, the man of the right, the man of the old 19th century nationalism, as an historical figure (2011: 252).

The problems raised here fit into the historiographical backdrop of Thailand briefly described in the contextualisation section. The ‘Great Man’ mentioned in the quotation can be compared to royal figures in mainstream Thai history—for instance, historiography under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab School’s tradition as well as the royal-nationalistic ideology embodied within it. Since memory of World War II in Thailand is problematic without ‘the Great Man’ (Kobkua 1980: 95), the multiple voices of the past can arise. World War II memories in Thailand can be retrieved from memoirs of diplomats to testimonies of local labourers.

The applicability of the approach is grasped through scholars’ attempts to assert the vernacular memory of World War II in Thailand; Kanchanaburi province is

¹⁰ In the American context, John Bodnar notices that vernacular memory, in opposition to official memory, restates ‘views of reality derived from first-hand experience in small-scale communities rather than the “imagined community” of a large nation’ (1992: 14). Bodnar continues that vernacular memory is the memory of ‘ordinary people’ who ‘are a diverse lot’ and ‘include individuals from all social stations’ (1992: 16).

an outstanding case. The first example is Worawut Suwannarit's writings on World War II emerging since the late 1980s. His publications could be seen in newspapers, magazines of art and culture, programmes for commemoration, textbooks, and the rest. He published *The Greater East Asia War: Kanchanaburi* in 2001; it is the first comprehensive compilation of memory of the Second World War concerning Kanchanaburi. Lessening the restricted conventions of historiographical methods, Worawut brought to life the shattered memory of veterans, POWs, war criminals, and Kanchanaburi people. I second his great lifework on memory of World War II in terms of working and networking with living memory from various stakeholders: Thais, Westerners and the Japanese.

The second example is related to commemorative practices. Ahead of the 70th commemoration of the end of WWII in 2015, Joan Beaumont conducted a study on the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum and the Thai-Burma Railway. It retrieves testimonies relevant to the construction of the railway, the museum itself and the commemorations. She concludes that memory, death and the semi-sacred quality of the site is commoditised and 'the hidden tragic past of these sites is currently unacknowledged' (2012: 36).

However, apart from the vernacular memory, the growth of studies related to World War II from a historian's perspective is slowly intervening into the state's official memory. The struggle to have those who strive to voice their own versions of memory recognised should be achieved by other channels. Screen culture is one of the most efficient channels of power negotiation. The history books are limitedly consumed when compared to screen media. The phenomenon is not only happening in our time but it is also acknowledged by Foucault:

Today, cheap books aren't enough. There are much more effective means like television and the cinema. And I believe this was one way of reprogramming

popular memory, which existed but had no way of expressing itself. So people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been (2011: 253).

Hence, the politics of memory, in this thesis explains how screen culture functions as the source of World War II counter-memory. Still the memory contained in selected films and television series is not only contested but also conversing with the official memory and the memory constructed and circulated in Thai and global academia. This way of reading should offer the amplification for diverse versions of World War II memory in Thailand.

3.2 Film Studies Approaches

In this section, I aim at drawing a theoretical backdrop for the link between screen culture and its mediation of the past, genre, genre memory and *rasa* theory within genres. Hence, the generic aspects are my major concern in decoding films and television texts. With the notion of memory studies approaches, film studies approaches are carefully applied to maintain the unity of the theoretical framework as a whole.

The body knowledge of ‘film and history’ and/or ‘history film’ has its strong tradition; it, more or less, inspires study of ‘film and memory’ and ‘memory film’. Robert Rosenstone’s scholarship (2012) is one of the important approaches integrated into my framework. First of all, Rosenstone does not read filmic texts from positivistic perspectives. He is aware of the complexity of representation of the past: ‘the screen provides no clear window onto a vanished past; the best it can do is to provide a construction of proximate realities to what once was’ (2012: 182). In his book, *History on Film/Film on History*, Rosenstone discusses history in several film genres: the historical drama, documentary and biopic. Among the films discussed, he

always notes the interplay of tradition and innovation. His notion is open to possibilities of representation of the past on screen.

Rosenstone proposed six characteristics of mainstream historical drama: 1) telling a well-plotted past; 2) storying a well-known historical figure; 3) innovative presentation within an historical frame; 4) personalisation, dramatisation and emotionalisation of the past; 5) a realistic setting or the construction of a convincing sense of place, and 6) presentation of the historical process. In terms of innovative drama, he emphasised the aesthetics of the genre: screenplay, montage, symbolic quality and sequential arrangement. He likewise focuses on those points in analysing the documentary genre adding concerns about stylised narration, intertexts and evidence. While talking about the biopic, he notes that films ‘should be seen as slices of lives, interventions into particular discourses, extended metaphors that suggest more than their limited timeframes can convey’ (2012: 122).¹¹ These are only examples of scholastic ideas I can utilise in this thesis. Therefore, I apply Rosenstone’s ideas on generic elements in my analysis.

Conventionally, some scholars, studying film and the past, value historical fact and textual fidelity. I regard their perspectives as the positivistic. However, as memory deals with the emotional dimensions of certain societies—emotionalisation in Rosenstone’s term—to interpret relationship between memory and film, one should consider ‘memory making’ functions and the emotional effect of the film that turn into collective phenomena (Erl1 2011a: 395). Particularly, history and memory in this study are not explored from positivistic viewpoints.

To bridge film studies to memory studies, I return to Halbwachs’s ideas: in the relationship between collective memory and media, he proposed a term: *cadres*

¹¹ Rosenstone’s thoughts are synthesised from chapter 3-6 in his book.

médiaux de la mémoire which can be translated as the ‘medial frameworks of memory’.

Within the framework, scholars comprehend: ‘sharing memories between people requires that these memories are “externalised” from individual minds, put into form and socially communicated via media—from oral speech to writing, print, film and the digital media’ (Erll 2012: 231-232). In the context of this thesis, the media frameworks of memory can be studied from how the screen culture encodes or transmits memory through its various forms.

Erll studies the connectivity between memory and film. Echoing Halbwachs’s contribution, she argued: ‘cinema plays a key role in the narrativisation and iconisation of war experience’ (2012: 232). She also proposed the term memory films which are not mere ‘movies about memory/the past’ (2011a: 138). What creates ‘memory films’ is ‘a tight network of different media representations [which] leads reception along certain paths, open up and channels public discussion, and thus endows movies with their mnemonic meaning’(2011a: 138).

Therefore, memory films can potentially be used by the state and/or mainstream society for building identity projects and official memory construction. On the other hand, filmic texts can release the voiceless memory hidden in society. They either continue or undermine the collective memory in society; film, as a memory text, contains a contested terrain within itself.

In this project, I include a combination of scholarship from film scholars and memory scholars. I also mark Rosenstone’s note ‘no single agreed-upon method has ever been devised for rendering the past’ (2012: 10). To study films as memory texts, particularly war memory, Erll proposes that we should analyse ‘politicians’ speeches, reviews of films in newspapers and journals, the “remediation” of films in other films or in books or video games’ (2012: 232). In other words, an intertextual network or

‘plurimedial constellation’ in Erll’s term is employed as the frame to map other related memory texts with the texts on screen.

In the dialogue between the past and the screen culture proposed by Rosenstone (2012), there are two sets of notions influencing the framework of this thesis: 1) film aesthetics of the past particularly narrativisation and 2) personalisation, dramatisation and emotionalisation. These concepts do not solely distinguish between objective history and lived memory but they can be mapped with the aesthetic conception from perspectives of the West and the East.

Audiences can make sense of certain films through the awareness of generic codes. In making films and television series, the use of verbal and visual language can be based on some ‘narrative grammar’ circulated and learnt within certain film cultures. In the context of transnationalism and globalisation, genres do travel across spatio-temporal borders. Speaking of this, I am counting on Mikhail Bakhtin’s thoughts on language. When certain speech forms are repetitively deployed, Bakhtin proposes the term ‘genre memory,’ particularly in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1963), to explain the phenomenon.

The Bakhtinian conception of genre memory focuses on dialogism or dialogue—the ongoing addressivity and historicity of language. Bakhtin argued: ‘all utterances take place within unique historical situations while at the same time contain “memory traces” of earlier usages—meaning not that any utterance can be decoded to reveal earlier usages but the specificity of every term is the product of a long historical development’ (Olick 1999: 383).

The intertextual criticism, in literary studies and film studies, owed its development to Bakhtin’s idea of genre memory. Noticeably, the notion of genre memory has been widely applied in memory studies and film studies. For example,

Jeffrey K. Olick studied the May 8, 1945 commemorations in the Federal Republic of Germany. He found dynamism of commemoration and some elements maintained through the rituals across several periods. In his article, Olick also argued that commemorative processes are ‘always fundamentally dialogical.’ He valued the Bakhtinian view of dialogism ‘as a principle for the study of all sorts of cultural productions’ which ‘are shaped as much by the ongoing mediations between past and present, context and utterance as are commemorative practices’ (1999: 400).

In the film studies context, Robert Burgoyne has explored the relationship between memory, national myth and cinematic representation. In his *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*, genre memory was employed; Burgoyne’s objective is to ‘set up a complex dialogue between the sedimented memories of history and nation preserved in these genre forms and the alternative narratives of historical experience they bring into relief’ (2010: 7).

Additionally, the film studies approaches employed in this thesis are not limited within genre and genre memory. As an entertainment media, Thai cinema shares its convention with traditional Thai performing arts. Significantly, early masters of Thai theatre adopted Indian poetics shaped by the great treatise of Indian civilisation—*Natyashastra* (Niyada [1971] 2000). In Thailand, the convention or *khanop* is an important element of fine arts. *Khanop* in certain art forms is normally known among artists and intended audiences.

Natyashastra is taught in dancing schools in India. The majority of Indian professional actors are supposed to be *Natyashastra*-literate. One of key ideas of the treatise is the receptive emotion of the audiences called *rasa* (flavour or savour). Richard Schechner explains the concept in his article, “Rasaesthetics”: ‘Rasa is experiencing the *sthayi bhavas*. [...] Every emotion is a *sthayi bhava*. Acting is the art

of presenting the *sthayi bhavas* so that both the performer and the partaker can “taste” the emotion, the *rasa*’ (2001: 31-32). Moreover, *rasa* is connected to genres. Within the circuit of *rasa* communication, performers and audiences share ‘emotions or concatenation of emotions according to the traditions of a specific genre of performance’ (2001: 32).

In this respect, *rasa* theory is tested in filmic texts. One of interesting pieces is Matthew Jones’s review of *Slumdog Millionaire* (UK, Danny Boyle, 2008) in which he suggested that the film is not qualified as an Indian film. Jones sharply remarks the relationship between *rasa* and genres:

Now, while each *rasa* does not belong exclusively to a genre, all *rasas* can be seen as the building-block of genres. [...] Genres attempt to convey an emotion to the audience through characters, situations or *mise-en-scène*. *Rasa* theory mandates that performers become the living embodiment of the *rasa* they are depicting. Character development, story progression and realism are put aside in order for the performer to convey completely the grief, anger, fear or whichever *rasa* they desire for their performance (2010: 31).

Jones’s notion of *rasa* and genre is applicable to Asian cinema (Teo 2013) as well as Thai film culture. As mentioned earlier, Thai film has been developed from traditional Thai performances. Unsurprisingly, the study of *rasa* theory and Thai cinema has been proposed since the 1980s although it has been unpopular compared to the application to theatrical and literary texts. In the study of Thai classical literature, terms for *rasa* (Sanskrit) or *rot* (Thai) are borrowed from Sanskrit. To describe emotions conveyed through filmic texts, Thai audiences seek for their alternatives leading to the positionality of *rasa* in the Thai screen culture. In his article, Gérard Fouquet illuminated this subject through a film review in a Thai newspaper. He noted: ‘as far as we know savours in Thai films do not have specific Thai names except when they correspond to the name of a genre. Most of the time savours are pointed to by means of circumlocutions like *tham hai songsan* ‘inspires pity’, or *tham hai sok*

sao klao nam ta, ‘moves to tears’ (2010: 447). The connection between *rasa* and genres can be illustrated by combining 1) the proposals on *rasa*, Hollywood and Bollywood genres (Schwartz 2004: 15, Jones 2010: 37), 2) the observations of *rasa* and Thai film genres (Fouquet 2010: 451-453) and 3) the scholarship of Thai film genres (Krisda 2010: 60-61). This is shown in the table below:

<i>rasa</i>	Emotions	Hollywood film genres	Thai film genres
<i>sringara</i>	love/desire	romance	<i>nang rak</i> (romance)
<i>hasya</i>	humour/laughter	comedy	<i>nang talok</i> (comedy)
<i>karuna</i>	pathos/sorrow	melodrama	<i>nang raksok</i> (tragic romance), <i>nang chiiwit</i> (melodrama, social problem film)
<i>raudra</i>	anger/wrath	action-adventure	<i>nang bu</i> (action-adventure, martial arts)
<i>vira</i>	energy/vigor/heroism	action-adventure	<i>nang bu</i> (action-adventure), <i>nang prawattisat</i> (history film, epic)
<i>bhayanaka</i>	fear/shame/panic	horror, thriller	<i>nang phii</i> (ghost film), <i>nang sayong khwan</i> (horror)
<i>bibhasta</i>	distaste/recoil/disgust	horror	<i>nang phii</i> (ghost film), <i>nang sayong khwan</i> (horror)
<i>adbhuta</i>	surprise/wonderment	fantasy/science-fiction	<i>nang fantasy</i> (fantasy), <i>nang sci-fi</i> (science-fiction)

TABLE 1 *rasa* and genres

Altogether, through film studies approaches, I seek to understand how memory is transformed into memory texts under the grammar of the film and the television series. Also, I modify the genre memory concept used in the Hollywood context by expanding the generic network into other film traditions. The genre memory of Thai screen culture should not only be shaped by previous texts on film and television but also fertilised by conventional literary narratives, traditional performances and films from other culture: India and Hong Kong for example. Furthermore, the generic aesthetics are to be tackled by *rasa* theory to understand how past events are emotionalised.

4. Literature Review

In this section, I locate my research in the field of film studies by reviewing related literature on Thai cinema and global World War II cinema. The literature

mentioned here is selected by its relevance to the data and key aspects of the thesis. Depending on scholarship in Thai and English, I divide the related literature into two categories: *Literature on World War II in Global Cinema* and *Literature on Thai Cinema*. These two categories should serve the thesis objectives in the matter of constructing dialogues between Thai screen culture and global screen culture as well as examining World War II as a transnational or transcultural memory.

4.1 Literature on World War II in Global Cinema: Hollywood Tradition and Beyond

American World War II films particularly in the combat genre are globally circulated, and their influence helps shape variations of its kind in several cinematic traditions. Definitely, it does not mean that Hollywood culture is a single model of Thai screen culture mediating World War II events. Therefore, to read the war memory as encoded on the Thai screen, I would rather review some useful scholarship based on Hollywood and Asian tradition, in order to support my analysis and to bridge the existing scholarship with the theoretical framework.

With reference to generic aspects, some scholarship produced within the Hollywood context should help analyse the grammar of the Thai combat film. In *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre*, Janine Basinger (2003) distinguishes World War II combat films from war films and action-adventure films. Basinger's academic proposals are developed in J. David Slocum's article: 'Cinema and the Civilising Process: Rethinking Violence in the World War II Combat Film' (2005). The article proposed further cultural interpretations of violence and projected war memory. Along this line of scholarship, Stuart Bender published *Film Style and*

the World War II Combat Genre in 2013 in which his concerns are framed by David Bordwell's and Ian Hunter's film aesthetic approaches.

Also of importance is the work that estimates the American World War II film as a mnemonic institution. In their article: 'Visual Consumption, Collective Memory and the Representation of War', Richard Godfrey and Simon Lilley propose a sharp argument on the function of onscreen World War II memory reaffirming 'a particular concept of US national identity and military patriotism of the post-Cold War era' (2009: 295). Moreover, the plurimedial network of American World War II memory is not neglected: (World War II films) 'together with a wealth of similar texts that flood our TV screens, bookshops and video stores and with the political rhetoric and scale of the 60th anniversary of the D-Day commemorations, are contributing to what might be conceived of as a new discursive "regime of memory"' (2009: 295). Their reading framework suits this thesis, and it can enhance the relationship between nation and certain film genres found on the Thai screen and beyond.

Further than Hollywood, the importance of World War II cinema in transmitting memory across certain mnemonic communities is studied in different contexts throughout the world. The classical example of the study of World War II memory and its contestation is *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* written by Henri Rousso (1991). The book seeks to illustrate the interplay between socio-political changes and memory it provides. The book also inspects the influence of film culture in creating and contesting war memory under the label of 'the politics of memory' (1991: 292).

When the scholars in the Anglophone world were more acquainted with Halbwachs's and Nora's memory studies, since the mid-1990s, new memory studies emerged to converse with them since the late 1990s. In *World War II, Film, and*

History, the authors articulate one of the significant roles of the World War II film: ‘it helps visualise the past and evokes a feeling for it’ (Chambers and Culbert 1996: 157). The notion reminds me of Nora’s conception of sites of memory. He is attracted to memory and its function dealing with emotions. Likewise, *Repicturing the Second World War: Representations in Film and Television* by Michael Paris (2007) is an outstanding example of the same paradigm. The book succeeds in providing a compilation of articles dealing with World War II films in various contexts: Italian, German, Soviet and American.

Notably the connectivity between World War II memory and cinema is never limited within European and Hollywood traditions; to make sense of World War II memory cinema in Thailand, the related literature on collective memory, feeling and cinema in Asian cinema must be highly acknowledged.

The recent scholarship on World War II memory in Asian film can be extracted from two key texts: *Chinese and Japanese Films on the Second World War* (2014) edited by King-fai Tam, Timothy Y. Tsu and Sandra Wilson and *Divided Lenses: Screen Memories of War in East Asia* (2016). The first volume deals with the Sino-Japanese War as well as various battlefields in China, Taiwan and Japan. It draws attention to diverse film genres: from martial arts film to comedy. The more recent publication edited by Michael Berry and Sawada Chiho contains chapters on memory of events that happened during World War II: the Rape of Nanjing, Pearl Harbor, the Battle of Iwo Jima and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I count on the scholarship of these volumes because of their wide range of texts beyond filmic texts. Their concerns lie on a broader sense of screen culture including television and videogames. Moreover, a study of filmic texts in the context of contested war

memories can be traced from Seaton (2007: 136-152) in which he studies Japanese films and television dramas within the framework of collective memory.

Standing on the shoulders of existing literature, this thesis benefits from the scholarship produced in the neighbouring countries of Thailand. In *War Memory and the Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore*, Blackburn and Hack (2012) studies the Singaporean and Malaysian screen culture as a transmitting channel of World War II memory, particularly the trauma caused by the Japanese occupation. Tellingly, the texts chosen in their study are bound with commemorative rituals and the sense of nationhood. The notion was pursued by Lee et al (2013) studying the early World War II cinema in Malaysia of the late 1950s. The implication of the study reveals the relationship between historical circumstances and the films.

In the Philippines, the country suffered from Spanish, American and Japanese colonisation. Valiente and Nagai (2011: 1-13) have introduced some important World War II films emerging since the post-war era. During the early stage of remembering the war, the screen culture tended to glorify the tribute of Filipino soldiers. In the 1970s, the focus shifted to individuals. The war memory in the Philippine context asserts the ties between individuals and nation contributing to mnemonic communities.

Literature on World War II in global cinema facilitates the search for the universality and uniqueness of Thai screen culture and its representation of the past. War memory in global cinema serves the construction of national identities. Such findings are profoundly linked with the approaches of this thesis. Hence, reviewing literature on Thai cinema and television, my focus is dedicated to ‘nation and genres.’

4.2 Literature on Thai Cinema and Television: Nation and Genres

The literature review in this section aims to emphasise the atmosphere intensifying the rise of Thai identity on the Thai screen as well as the role of the past

in influencing film and television production, exhibition and consumption. Another point of this section is to picture the scholarship on film and television genre in Thailand. The scholarship should shape the arguments in following chapters of the thesis.

The aspects of genres and nation, in the context of Thailand, have been foregrounded since the late 1990s. The economic crisis in 1997 brought dramatic transitions to Thai screen culture regarding its cultural functions, industry and aesthetic features. In other words, the crisis was set as a milestone of socio-cultural changes, globalisation and the revival of Thainess conducted by various cultural institutions in Thailand. Therefore, in the post-crisis era, Thai screen culture implanted its special relationship with the national past as suggested by Anchalee Chaiworaporn and Adam Knee in their chapter: 'Thailand: Revival in an Age of Globalisation' (2006: 58-70). However, before the age of revival, such legacy was surveyed by Annette Hamilton. In her projects, she demonstrates how the Thai state is obsessed with self-imaging and an effort to control Thai people's behaviour and self-perceptions. Hamilton's arguments are profoundly tied with the contextualisation of this thesis. The obsession with Thai identity in Thai screen culture was rooted in the discourse on national independence (1993: 81-105, 1994: 141-161).

Within and beyond nationalistic sentiment, after the dawn of the new millennium, Anchalee Chaiworaporn was the first Thai film scholar who spoke of the interrelationship between cinema and memory. In her article, first published in 2002, Anchalee identifies the significance of history, memory, and nostalgia in Thai cinema. Anchalee pursues her argument in another article: 'Home, Nostalgia, and Memory: The Remedy of Identity Crisis in Thai Cinema', for which she selects three directors representative of the 'new Thai cinema.' The findings reveal that the movement is

framed by national ideology, the dominant discourse on a sustainable economy in Thailand and the nostalgic waves in Asian cinema (2006: 108-122). Her work has helped solidify the dialogues between Thai and transnationalism.

Glen Lewis discusses the politics of memory in Thai and Australian contexts. He considers the relationship between media and history where media acts in a central role in public remembering and forgetting. Lewis criticises the medial potential in representing versions of the past. Thai media fails to acknowledge public voices; it chooses to present nostalgic views of history as an escape from current social conflicts in news reports (2002). His argument still clings to previous and contemporary scholarship on cinema, nationalism and Thainess (2003: 68-79, 2006).

The uses of Otherness of the West and the past for constructing Thai identities in filmic texts are investigated by Rachel Harrison (2010a). Harrison's argument sings in chorus with the scholarship on Thai cinema of the 21st century: 'The quest for Thai identities remains, unsurprisingly, in process' (2010a: 118). The dichotomy of Thai vs. the Other is not solely established to reject Otherness or the threat of cultural imperialism. Instead, it is exploited to project the desire for the Other among Thai audiences and filmmakers.

Concerning screen culture in the context of industry, Chavana Phawakanan proposed some significant characteristics of marketing context in relation to Thai film culture shaping *phapphayon*¹² *krasae chatniyom* (mainstream nationalism in Thai film): 1) melodrama is well-received 2) Thai films should reflect the lifestyle of every class 3) Thai folk beliefs and shamanism should be included in films 4) Thai martial arts should be creatively highlighted 5) history films can generate attraction and 6) Thai films imply the 'imagined community' accompanied by social criticism and a

¹² The spelling of ภาพยนตร์ in English can vary: *phap payon*, *pap payon* and *phapphayon*. In this thesis, I adopt the spelling standardised by Thailand's Royal Institute (1999).

striving for social justice (2012: 67-68). Predictably, the variety of film genres is exploited to convey a nationalistic craze. Thai screen culture is programmed by these characteristics. They will be developed and discussed later.

In the light of the contestation of Thainess since the early 2000s, Veluree Metaveevinij (2015) pioneers a study of Thai film policies conducted by the state. Her findings confirm that the Thai state imposed values of Thainess through its film policies and that national memory was positioned as a key material of the films under these policies. Most of the films funded by the government's cultural institutions do not fail to endorse the dichotomy of Thai *vs.* the Other and the urban/centre *vs.* the rural/periphery. The dichotomy is, more or less, related to the cultural politics of Thai society throughout the decade. However, this overemphasised Thainess sells in the global market, and it potentially boosts Thai film industry.

Chavana's and Veluree's research helps contextualise the screen culture of the 21st century. Another important period is the Cold War or the American Era. To understand Thai screen culture of the 1960s-1970s, the thesis mainly relies on Thai film history published by Thailand's Film Archive (Dome 2013) and other prominent scholarship by Somchai Srirak (2005), Rachel Harrison (2010b) and Boonrak Boonyaketmala (1992). In the service of nationalism, the legacy of the Cold War is embedded in the Thai screen culture of modern days.

As mentioned earlier, the array of integrated projects of genre and nation has been continuously carried out since the 2000s. In terms of the Thainess ideology and media, Chakrit Tiebtienrat (2004) examines the interaction between cinema and nationalism in Thailand. His thesis argues that symbols, cultures and traditions in the Thai context, promoted by mainstream filmmakers, represent the legitimacy of the political elites while independent films target different audiences and varies in their

backgrounds. After Chakrit's work, film studies projects within a nationalistic frame were addressed through generic aspects. The most popular genre is the *action-adventure* film. Niwat Prasitworawit (2010) analysed the Thai action-adventure genre proposing three groups within the genre: 1) Thai nostalgia action films (1997-2000) 2) Thai action films with Thai martial arts styles (2001-2003) and 3) Thai action films compromising nationalism (2004-2008).

Niwat's findings were developed by Krittaya Na Nongkhai (2013). Heroes, villains and cultural hybridisation are basic arguments found in Krittaya's thesis. Through folkloristic approaches, key motifs in Thai action-adventure films are refabricated from folk narratives and transnational cinema circulated in Thailand since the rise of Thai film industry during the Cold War era. Therefore, cultural politics and nationalistic ideology in the Thai context never stop their interplay. Such notions can be mapped onto the Thai political context of certain periods and nationalism in Thai cinema. Mano Vanawearusit (2011) investigates political issues in contemporary Thai films released from 2001 to 2010. The research uncovers that some films use significant political events in Thai history as their backdrop while others communicate through the use of symbols and characterisation. The political issues expressed in these films include: conflicts of political ideology, relationships with the military, the capitalists' political power and the impact of public policy.

Another recent study on the Thai action film was delivered by Natawan Wongchalard (2015). Though written in India, Nantawan's thesis primarily developed its argument from the scholarship on action cinema since the 2000s. The major effort of the thesis is to prove that the genre enhances the right conservatism. The thesis also explores related issues: the globalisation phenomenon, masculinities, class and audiences. In Nantawan's terms, the action cinema genre covers historical epics,

Muay Thai films, *Thai Thai* films which celebrates local culture and modern Thai film such as works of Wisit Sasanathieng, Pen-ek Ratanaruang and Yuthlert Sipapak.

Alternatively, *phapphayon ing prawattisat* or the historical film is called *phapphayaon yonyuk* or period film with an emphasis of its setting in the past. The categorisation of Thai period film is inevitably overlapped with other terms: epic, action, historical, romance and so on. However, going hand in hand with other scholars, Chajabhol Choopen (2007) studied the nationalistic issues found in five selected films from 1997-2005. In his findings, nationalistic concepts are addressed through some factors: the Burmese, women as gender rebellions, teenagers and Western aggressors.

In the Thai context, the term *yonyuk* or period is more common on television. *Lakhon yonyuk* or *lakhon period* is widely used by actors and the press to define television series set in the past. Kandamat Kophol and Suphatcharachit Chitraphai (2013) studied roles of *lakhon yonyuk*, which they called *retro drama*, in disseminating Thai cultural heritage. Their case study consists of series adapted from Thai literary canons. This study is an example of reconstruction of Thainess on television; it also illustrates how television texts function in a plurimedial network of cultural memory. However, the series are about domestic sphere rather than militarism in Chajapol's research on the period film.

Some period films and television series feature prominent historical figures. Yet there was no research on Thai biopics until Pasoot Lasuka's doctoral thesis in 2015. His research seeks to understand the biographical films and their reflection of the hybrid bourgeois-feudal cultural values of the Thai middle class. The research is informed by the Thai political context after 2006 when the Yellow Shirt and the Red Shirt movements were campaigning in Bangkok and across rural areas and it shows

how Thai biographical films are produced to support political agendas and reflect the tastes and desires of the urban middle class.

Although Thai romance and/or melodramatic genres are not as major as Bollywood films, romance is another channel picturing the past. Pram Sounsamut (2009) studied the ideology of love in popular Thai tragic romances. The term *rak sok* (tragic romance) is coined and used in the thesis. My study can employ Pram's research findings for analysing genre memory of Thai romance. Also the concepts of *pubbesannivāsa* and love suffering from the Buddhist point of view can be extracted from Pram's thesis. The generic aspects of romance, in the light of worldview and aesthetics, are likewise explored by Kamjohn Louiyapong and Somsuk Hinwiman (2009). In their book, they look at romance as an institution. The genre is active in perpetuating nationalistic ideology: 'the access to national values among women is granted by *nang rak* (romance)' (Kamjohn and Somsuk 2009: 187). Nonetheless, some of the Thai films in the romance genre from their study show the tension between romantic love and patriotism. This notion can be adopted as a reading framework of the chapter on romance in this thesis.

Kamjohn Louiyapong (2013) fosters his interests in the romance genre in his book titled *Cinema and Social Construction: People, History, and Nation*. He dedicates two chapters to Thai women, romance, transnational relationship and the role of cinema in constructing nation and history. Mostly, Kamjohn's argument is based upon Rosenstone's framework. The book also values the socio-political context, film aesthetics and generic dimension. One of the cutting-edge conclusions is that Thai history films disclose some history, but conceal some trivial narratives which are noncompliant to the middle-class producers and audiences (2013: 263-327).

In the area of television studies, Somsuk Hinwiman (2015) examines Thai soap opera under the label of *lakhon namnao* (still water drama). This term stands for ‘cheesy’ television drama in which the majority of audiences are women. The key theme of this genre is domesticity. The romance genre on film and television has a lot in common. Significantly, some *period* television dramas have had greater impact on the public compared to film. Television dramas also own various subgenres such as the historical romance, romantic comedy and ghost story.

The mixture between ghost story and romance has been apparent on television since the rise of this medium in the 1960s. Thai ghost movies or *nang phii* as a part of horror tradition is one of the most popular topics in the film studies cycle as seen from the *Horror Studies* journal (2014) which dedicated one issue to Thai horror. However, Thai television horror is not well-positioned in academia. Nirin Petrachaiand’s work on the representation of female ghosts in Thai soap serials (2007) is one of the milestones of the field. The research wisely picked the subject of female ghosts which are regarded as a unique element of horror in the Asian tradition. Nirin’s finding should be linked with other scholar’s work on gender, horror and local belief.

In his chapter published in *Horror International* (2005), Adam Knee observes functions of Thai horror in reviving the past. As agreed by mainstream film scholars Mae Nak Phrakhanong is the most popularised female ghost in the Thai screen culture; the legend of Mae Nak, the prototype of Thai female ghost, has been visualised on the Thai screen since 1936. The legend was revived by the ground-breaking success of *Nang Nak* (Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999). Nonzee’s *Nang Nak* has been explored by many researchers, for example May Adadol Ingawanij (2007), Adam Knee (2014) and Arnika Fuhrmann (2016). Although this thesis does not aim to

study the legend of Mae Nak, the scholarship on vernacular Buddhism from the literature should aid in the analysis of horror.

In all, the existing literature on Thai cinema and the uses of the past pay attention to the construction of Thainess or Thai identity, the nationalistic ideology, the influx of globalisation and the political context within the Thai society. There are not many projects on Thai screen culture engaged with the scholarship from the memory studies field. The literature on the relationship between film and national identity is however useful to this thesis because ‘memory is as intrinsic to the construction of collective identities as it is integral to the individual’s sense of self’ (Waterson and Kian-Woon 2012: 17). This cluster of literature is contributing to the view of World War II on the contested terrain of Thai screen culture and memory culture.

Here, I situate my research on the ground of related literature; I am reassured that there is not much research, in the Thai context, integrating memory studies and screen studies. There is no research that critically and particularly discusses the World War II events mediated on the Thai screen. In the respect of nation and genres, this thesis seeks to establish a new genre in Thai film culture. In comparison to world cinema, the World War II combat film has never been mentioned in the Thai context. This thesis also aims at exploring genre memory and dynamism of certain genres in Thai screen culture. These so-called issues are understated in the existing literature on Thai cinema mainly produced in Thailand.

Moreover, there are not publications concerning war memory in the plurimedial network or its interrelationship among sites of memory in Thailand and beyond. For this reason this thesis proposes an academic fulfilment of the gaps *per se*. This project attentively enjoys dialogues within the movement of interdisciplinary humanities.

5. Data Selection

Previously, in the related scholarship on Thai cinema, Thai World War II films have been categorised as history films or action-adventure films. The key messages in the research on Thai World War II films tend to convey nationalism, humanitarianism and political ideology (Chakrit 2004, Chajabhol 2007, Niwat 2010). Although they do not ignore the social context, the complexity of World War II memory has not been addressed in terms of its narratives retrieved from various historical sources and memory texts.

From memory studies standpoint, films, television series and other cultural texts are treated as sites of memory in Nora's terminology. That is they share the same quality with museums, statues and commemorative rituals. Here, I draw a connection between World War II, memory, film and the Thai context; this study seeks to endorse such connection by analysing the mediation of the war memory among various cultural texts. The way the memory is depicted should be encoded through characteristics of certain genres.

Furthermore, referring to generic approaches in the theoretical framework, in an extensive definition, the World War II film is regarded as a genre. The genre is ostensible in American film culture, and there are lines of scholarship following the tradition, particularly the combat film genre (Basinger 2003). The term WW II film covers films produced and screened during WW II as well as films set in WW II. However, when mentioning WW II cinema, the term should be broadly used as an umbrella term for various film genres. Koppes and Black (2000) assert this idea in their book: *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*. The book includes films beyond the combat film genre, for example: *Mrs. Miniver* (USA, William Wyler, 1942) and the romance genre.

Therefore, when I use the term World War II in screen culture, it means an array of films and television series imaging WWII events. The criteria of selecting data are set as follows:

- 1) The films or the television series can be labeled as memory texts. The potential association between memory represented in the texts and plurimedial contexts must be detected.
- 2) The films or the television series must be produced and launched after the end of World War II. They must be widely screened in cinemas and/or broadcast on television.
- 3) The films or the television series must represent World War II as their dominant content. That is to say, their main plots must be somehow driven by World War II events.
- 4) According to Chapman (2008), war is depicted as a spectacle, tragedy and adventure. In selecting data, the variation of genres, directors, spatio-temporal settings and contexts is also my primary concern. The selected films are listed in the table below:

No.	Year	Titles	Media	Directors
1	1973	<i>Khu Karma</i>	Film	Sompong Timbuntham
2	1985	<i>Yut Lok Phuea Thoe/I Shall Stop the World for You</i>	Film	Phornpoj Kanitsen
3	1988	<i>Khu Karma</i>	Film	Ruj Ronnaphop
4	1995	<i>Khu Karma/Sunset at Chaopraya</i>	Film	Euthana Mukdasanit
5	1996	<i>Darayan</i>	TV	Supol Wichienchai
6	2000	<i>Yuwachon Thahan Poet Term Pai Rop/ Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men</i>	Film	Euthana Mukdasanit
7	2005	<i>Chet Prachanban Phak 2/Seven Street Fighters</i>	Film	Chalerm Wongphim
8	2013	<i>Khu Karma/Sun & Sunrise</i>	Film	Kittikorn Ryosirikul
9	2013	<i>Khu Karma</i>	TV	San Kaewsrilaw
10	2013	<i>Boonpong</i>	TV	Somporn Chuaboon-um

TABLE 2 Selected films and television series

6. Methods of Research

The research process began with data selection. I shaped my criteria following film contents and generic variation. As indicated in the scope of this research, I chose the films and television series representing war as the dominant content. What is more, in the texts, war must act as a major drive in their plots. Between September 2013 and January 2014, I collected VCDs and DVDs from the branches of entertainment suppliers in Bangkok, Thailand. I also count on relevant materials of the selected data as well as related scholarship: textbooks, film critiques, periodicals, production notes, websites, cultural events, published oral narratives and unpublished dissertations and theses.

I collected related documents on collective memory, cultural memory and war memory from the Electronic Theses Online Services run by the British Library (EThOS), DART-Europe (E-Theses Portal), which supplies electronic theses of European universities, the National Diet Library-Open Public Access Catalogue of Japan (*Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan*), and KU-LINE served by the Kyoto University Library in Japan. I retrieved research articles and dissertations from the United States of America through the ProQuest database. I also sought articles on Thai cinema and World War II written in English from the online database of the Australian National University Library, the Australian War Memorial, the SAULCAT system supported by the library of the University of St Andrews and the resources of the National Library of Scotland.

I made use of various resources in the Thai language. To retrieve research and theses, I employed the Thai Digital Collection (TDC) and the Thai Library Integrated System (ThaiLIS) supervised by the Office of the Higher Education Commission,

Ministry of Education, Thailand. These secondary materials help formulate my conceptual framework in this introduction discussion in certain chapters.

My fieldwork in Thailand was divided into two phases. During the first phase, I visited Thailand in January 2014. I explored material published in film journals, particularly, *Thai Film Journal* at Phapphayon Sathan or Cinémathèque at the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre. The second phase took place between June and August 2014 and in June 2015. It consisted of library fieldwork and visits to various sites of memory. I accessed related literature at the Film Archive (Public Organisation), the National Library, the Thailand Information Centre and the Communication Arts Library at Chulalongkorn University. Bangkok, Kanchanaburi, Chumphon and Phrae are involved as sites of memory. I visited the Bridge on the River Kwai, the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, the Chong-Kai War Cemetery, the JEATH War Museum, the War Museum at the River Kwai and the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum. In Chumphon, the Youth Soldier Monument, Tha Nang Sang Bridge—the battlefield, the Chumphon National Museum, Sriyaphai School and Ban Khoson School were visited for mapping sites of World War II memory. The memory of the Free Thai Movement in Phrae was traced at the Wichai Racha Mansion, Phrae Free Thai Community-Based Museum and at the Ban Wiang Ta sub-district. The visits and the photographs of sites of memory helped interpret texts in the screen culture in the context of plurimedial network.

The analytical methods, as informed by the theoretical frameworks that I have already outlined, are based on two research questions and their parallel theoretical frameworks on memory studies and film studies. Particularly, the film studies approaches are applied with special reference to generic and intertextual aspects. In the descriptive analysis, the data are also tackled by the methods of studies of *film culture*

and *transnational film studies*. To study film culture, I employ Janet Harbord's *Film Cultures* (2002) as key text. Beyond films and television texts, their circulation, exhibition, industry, star system and socio-political context are integrated into the analysis. The approaches to film culture can go together with transnational film studies. It aims at approaching 'the cycle of film production, dissemination and reception as a dynamic process that transcends national borders' (Iordanova 2007: 508). With the focus of the thesis and the chapters divided by genres, transnational aspects help explore 'the narrative and stylistic features of films that come about as a result of this supranational cycle of film-making and reception' (2007: 508).

As memory texts, the materials are treated with the notion that they are the combination between *encoding* and *retrieval*. The encoding process can be analysed by placing the films into their related memory texts. Doing so, the analysis should trace back to the sources of memory as well as socio-political forces behind the productions of film and television series. The continual functions of the filmic texts or the series within the Thai mnemonic communities are also considered. In explaining retrieval practices, generic codes and plurimedial networks are deployed to seek for transnational intertextual influences on the texts. These methods should prove that memory travels as well as screen culture.

In all, the methods of study can be clustered into four groups: 1) research on primary materials 2) involvement of secondary materials 3) visits to sites of memory and 4) analysis from generic, transnational and film culture perspectives. All research processes should justify my argument on mnemonic communities in Thailand highlighting the screen culture and the coexistence of related sites of memory.

7. Thesis Architecture

The structure of my thesis comprises of an introductory chapter, a conclusion chapter, and four body chapters. Importantly, all body chapters are structured in a way that bridges texts and related materials. Furthermore, illustrating memory of the war in various film and television genres, trends and movement of certain genres are taken into account as a part of the analysis:

Introduction. I use the introductory chapter to exhibit my research background: rationale, literature review, theoretical framework, the scope of the study and other related aspects that should help clarify the standpoint of my research. One unique section within this chapter is ‘Why Is World War II in Thailand Problematic?’ It can be regarded as a contextualisation of the entire thesis. This section is basically referred to as a backdrop of World War II official memory in Thailand which is conformed and contested by the texts in the screen culture.

Chapter 1: Romancing the War. This chapter analyses memory of World War II represented in the romance genre.¹³ Mainly, it deals with the *Khu Karma* myth based upon Damayanti’s novel. The *Khu Karma* myth is investigated in several aspects: historical elements reimaged, love and humanity, representation and the politics of adaptations. Another romance film studied in this chapter is *I Shall Stop the World for You* (1985). The analysis focuses on the intertexts from vernacular memory, *Khu Karma* myth, class consciousness and patriotism. The chapter conclusion aims at roughly detailing the afterlives of *Khu Karma* in Thai memory culture to consolidate the tremendous impact of the myth.

Chapter 2: Lives at War. This chapter brings the biopic and its associated genre to a focus. It explores a television series called *Boonpong* as a biopic and a

¹³ Here, I estimate romance as ‘a cross-media genre of popular fiction in which a positively-portrayed love relationship (conventionally male-female) dominates plots, mood is predominantly sentimental or emotional, and love is presented as a saving grace’ (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 352).

docudrama. Analysing *Boonpong* gives me an opportunity to explore related sites of memory: memorials, museums, exhibitions and the Bridge on the River Kwai. I focus on the humanitarian messages conveyed in the film in comparison to messages on war delivered in the context of different film genres. The important arguments of this chapter are about how *Boonpong* challenges the myth of the River Kwai produced by the screen culture of the West and how it utilises transnational memory texts to maximise its impact in mnemonic communities within and beyond the border of Thailand.

Chapter 3: War Heroes. This chapter concerns two combat films: *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys will be Men* (2000) and *Seven Street Fighters* (2005). I adopt Jeanine Basinger's definition of World War II combat films in investigating the generic features of the films.

I analyse *Boys will be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* in terms of the dialogue between cinema and vernacular memory. Combining the grammar of war film and teenpic, I also show how *rites of passage* are articulated in the film. The process is framed by the patriotism retrieved from the related paratexts. Meanwhile, in interpreting *Seven Street Fighters*, my focus lies upon humorous elements of heroes and misogyny embedded in the representation of female characters. The politics of Thainess and Otherness is also investigated in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Horrors of War. In this chapter, *Darayan* (1996) is studied in the view of allegorical reading. *Darayan* is studied as belonging to the horror genre. The retrieved memory and trauma in the series is mapped with social issues of the late 1990s particularly the myth of Japanese treasure in Kanchanaburi. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and its associated scholarship are employed to interpret protagonist's monstrosity as well as the liminality of World War II memory in Thai

mnemonic communities. The aspects of liminal war heroes are explored through their 'dark sides', allegorical post-traumatic stress disorder and the entanglement of the past and the present. The chapter also seeks to answer how the war trauma is politicised by the representation of the Free Thai Movement challenging the official memory.

8. Chapter Conclusion

The main objective of this introductory chapter was to set the backdrop facilitating the analysis in following chapters. The contextualisation of Thai memory culture is addressed as a key reference of official memory of World War II which is consented and contested in the Thai screen culture in different spatio-temporal contexts.

Two key research questions are formulated by memory studies and film studies perspectives. The concerns of these two research standpoints are maintained throughout the chapter. That is the theoretical frameworks, literature review and data selection are all directed by the ties between memory and screen studies. Most importantly, although this project seems to be a national cinema project, it embraces transnational film studies as its method. So long as memory can travel across temporal and geographical borders, the screen culture as memory texts, at their best, should not be an exception.

CHAPTER 1

Romancing the War

‘Both sorrow and fear is conceived by love.’
(*The Tripitaka*, Buddhist canon)

1. Chapter Introduction

Annette Khun and Guy Westwell defined ‘romance’ as ‘a cross-media genre of popular fiction in which a positively-portrayed love relationship (conventionally male-female) dominates plots, mood is predominantly sentimental or emotional, and love is presented as a saving grace’ (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 352). In fact, the romance has a long history before the age of modern media, and, apart from the love relationship, romances used to be crucially connected to Greek war heroism, chivalry, and medieval ideology in the European context (Regis 2003: 20).

In 1897, the public film show was first launched in Bangkok. Because of techniques concerning lights and shadows, the film was called *nang farang* or Westerner’s shadow theatre before the formal term for film—*phapphayon* was coined (Dome and Sawasdi 2001: 19). The rise of Thai film culture was inevitably intervened by the popularity of romance. *Nangsao Suwan/Miss Suwan of Siam*, the first Hollywood co-production in 1923 Thailand, therefore, embraced the convention of romance to appeal to public attention. With Thai casting, the film was written and directed by Henry MacRae. Though it does not count as the first Thai film, the romance of Miss Suwan trod the way for two other Thai films of the romance genre: *Chok Song Chan/Double Luck* (The Wasuwats, 1927) and *Mai Kit Loei/The Unexpected* (The Wasuwats, 1927).

The power of romance was potentially sustained through political crises in Thailand. After the revolution in 1932, the new government, Field Marshal Plaek

Phibunsongkhram, and Luang Wichit Wathakan initiated cultural policies and several nationalistic campaigns through entertainment and mass media. To the extent of nationhood since late 19th century, war memory in Siam, once circulated by the royal institution, was contested by the political elites of the time. War memory was imposed the state's performing arts and screen culture.

Actually, in Thailand, newsreels were used for broadcasting the king's and the state's affairs since the late absolute monarchy era. The government got the Wasuwat family to film the events after King Prachadipok's throne was controlled by the armed forces, the Constitution Day in 1932 and the propaganda documentary against Boworadet's Revolt in 1933. However, war memory was first mediated through romance film production in 1934-1935.

As an army chief and minister of defence, Luang Phibunsongkram (before he was entitled as Field Marshal) drafted a plot for *Lueat Thahan Thai/Thai Soldier's Blood* (Luang Thamrongsawat, 1935), and had Khun Wichit Matra develop the screenplay. The film was produced by the Film Division, Office of Public Relations in collaboration with Sri Krung Film Company. The plot tells a story of youngsters, both men and women, joining the army to fight against an anonymous and faceless enemy. The romantic relationship among them was less obvious compared to another romance plotted by Luang Phibunsongkram— *Rop Rak/Battle and Love*¹. Although the plot was not developed into film, *Battle and Love* portrayed a love triangle with two men and a woman. Two men leave to battle against *Felonia* which can be interpreted as France. This sketched plot shows the political elite's nationalistic ideas through reviving the war memory between Siam and France in 1893 (Charnvit 1999: 37-38).

¹ The plot was drafted when Luang Phibunsongkhram had colonel rank, most likely around 1934 (Charnvit 1999: 36).

The relationship between war memory and romance was frequently revisited by Luang Wichit Wathakan. As director of the Department of Fine Arts, he produced numerous history plays to promote nationalistic ideology. *Lueat Suphan/The Blood of Suphanburi* has been the popular play since first opening in 1936. The play was adapted and screened in 1951 but this film has unfortunately been lost. In 1979, another film version by Cherd Songsri was launched. *The Blood of Suphanburi* follows the love affair of a Burmese soldier and a Thai girl captured as a prisoner of war. The soldier secretly emancipates his lover and her family from the cruel oppression of other Burmese soldiers. His actions eventually earn him the death penalty. The woman he loves later becomes a leader in the fight against the Burmese.

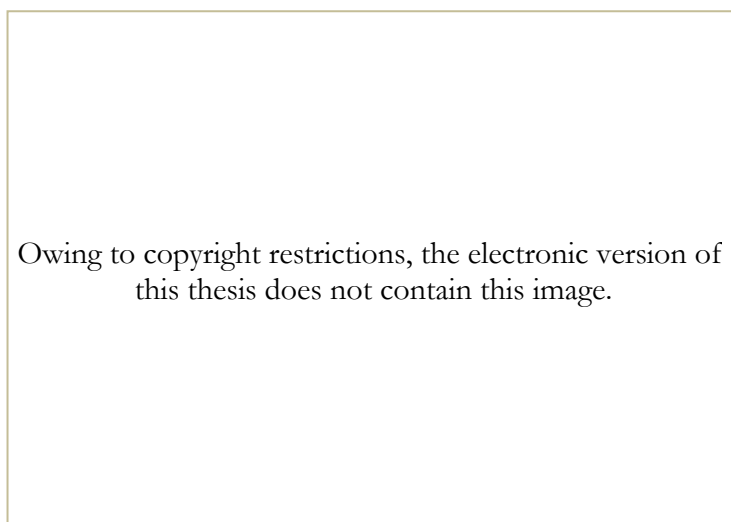


FIG. 4 Poster of *The Blood of Suphanburi* (1979)

The forbidden love between the Burmese soldier and the Thai girl has circulated in Thai mnemonic communities along with Luang Wichit Wathakan's other historically-embedded narratives in popular print media and in school textbooks. The theme song of the play and the film was also anthologised in the arts primary education curriculum.

Indeed, the legacy of *The Blood of Suphanburi* has generated war memory and genre memory among Thai audiences. Its genre memory was shaped by both historical events and imagination; the war memory was romanced then consumed. This is how generic codes go hand in hand with memory as scholars observe: ‘imagination is vital in reactivating memory, and memory is vital in stimulating imagination’ (Keightley and Pickering 2012: 51). Therefore, after the era of Luang Wichit Wathakan, war memory was never abandoned by Thai literary and cinematic cycles. One example of empirical evidence is *Damayanti*² or *Khunying*³ *Wimon Siriphaibul*, whose war romance has become one of the most popular myths of World War II in Thailand.

As a child, *Damayanti* primarily grew her historical consciousness through Luang Wichit Wathakan’s *Prawittisat Sakon (International History Encyclopedia, 1927-1962)*. Inspired by Luang Wichit’s creativity, *Damayanti* never failed to pay her homage to him and his works before starting her daily writing routine (Wisawanart 2005: 23, 28,148). The inclusion of Buddhist morals in traditional Thai romance, the interracial romantic relationship and nationalism were refabricated by *Damayanti* in her renowned novel *Khu Karma*. The novel was serially published in *Sri Siam Magazine* in 1965. The pocketbook edition was subsequently printed in 1969.

Khu Karma is widely known as the most popular World War II fiction in Thailand.⁴ The novel has been reprinted 16 times (by 2013), and there are more than 12 adaptations recreated from it including a radio drama on NHK in Japan. When compared to other Thai World War II films, *Khu Karma* is the most frequently adapted

² The penname *Damayanti* or มชยันตี can be found transliterated in other ways: *Thommayanti* and *Tommayanti*. The penname itself refers to a female protagonist in Hindu mythology: *Damayanti*.

³ *Khunying* is a title conferred to married women who are awarded Member of the Order of Chula Chom Klao.

⁴ For example *Din Nam Lae Dokmai/Soil, Water, and Flowers*, the war novel published in 1990 by Seni Saowapong—another of Thailand’s national artists—has circulated far less widely, yet it has not been adapted to other media.

and remade. Therefore the term ‘*Khu Karma* myth’ should suit the various adaptations of the novel.⁵

In this chapter, I will explore the memory of World War II as represented in the romance genre with *Khu Karma* at the core of analysis. I include the film called *Yut Lok Phuea Thoe/I Shall Stop the World for You* (Phornpoj Kanitsen, 1985) in this chapter since it was inspired by the *Khu Karma* myth. Besides, it can be considered as a memory text as it restores the counter-memory of an unforgotten historical figure of the Second World War. Moreover, the film is produced to be a counter-memory of the myth of *Khu Karma*. Studying these films should prove the ties between war memory and romance in the Thai context.

2. The Myth of *Khu Karma* (1973-2013)

The novel *Khu Karma* tells a bittersweet love story between Kobori—a member of the Japanese Navy—and Angsumalin—a university student who lives with her single mother and grandmother in Bangkok Noi, Thonburi district. The affection between Kobori and Angsumalin develops when he provides her with protection from air raids. Angsumalin feels internally conflicted because of their racial differences and because she had already promised herself to Vanas—her first love. Vanas had left before the outbreak of the war to pursue his education in the United Kingdom, where he decided to join the Free Thai Movement. Moreover, Angsumalin’s father, Luang Chalasinnurat, is a high-ranking officer of the Free Thai Movement working with the British and American Allies. A nationalistic mentality inflicts more pain on Angsumalin when she and Kobori are forced to get married for the sake of international politics between Thailand and the Japanese army. Before giving birth to

⁵ To avoid possible confusion, when mentioned with specific adaptation of *Khu Karma*, the years are shown in parentheses except *Sunset at Chaopraya* and *Sun & Sunrise*.

her first child, Angsumalin fails to express her true feelings to Kobori. At the end of the story, an Allied/Japanese air raid against Bangkok Noi takes Kobori's life. Thus, *anata o aishite imasu* or '(I) love you' is their last exchange in Kobori's death scene.

The reputation of the *Khu Karma* myth can be proved by its several adaptations across mediums and periods. As mentioned earlier, in Thailand, the adaptations of *Khu Karma* can be found in feature films, television series, parodied versions in television shows, on professional theatre stages, and on schools' amateur stages, to name but a few. Some of the well-recognised adaptations are presented in the table below:⁶

Year	Production Company/ Sponsors	Director	Stars
1970	Channel 4 Bang Khunphrom and Sri Thai Drama	Therng Satifeaung	Mechai Viravaidya (Kobori) Bussaba Naruemitr (Angsumalin)
1972	Channel 4 Bang Khunphrom and Sri Thai Drama	Therng Satifeaung	Chana Sriubol (Kobori) Phanit Kantamara (Angsumalin)
1973	Jira Bantheong Film	Sonphong Thimbuntham	Nart Phoowanai (Kobori) Duangnapha Attaphornphisana and Li Jing Zhou (Angsumalin)
1978	Channel 9	No data	Nirut Sirichanya (Kobori) Sansanee Samarnworawong (Angsumalin)
1988	Five Stars Production	Ruj Ronnaphop	Warut Woratham (Kobori) Jintara Sukphat (Angsumalin)
1990	Channel 7	Phairat Sangwaributr	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Kamonchanok Komonthiti (Angsumalin)
1995	Grammy Film	Euthana Mukdasanit	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Aphasiri Nitiphon (Angsumalin)
2002	Bangkok Theatre (musical version)	Suwandi Jakraworawut	Seigi Ozeki (Kobori) Theeranai Na Nongkhai (Angsumalin)
2004	Channel 3 and Red Drama	Nopadol Mongkholphan	Sornram Thepphithak (Kobori) Pornchita Na Songkhla (Angsumalin)
2007	Bangkok Theatre (musical version)	Suwandi Jakraworawut	Seigi Ozeki (Kobori) Theeranai Na Nongkhai (Angsumalin)
2013	Channel 5, Exact, and Scenario	San Kaewsrilaw	Sukrit Wisetkaew (Kobori) Neungthida Sophon (Angsumalin)

TABLE 3 Major adaptations of *Khu Karma* on screen and stage

⁶ Some parts of the table are compiled from Anchalee (1995: C1-C3).

The first adaptation of *Khu Karma* appeared on television in 1970. Another television adaptation was locally broadcasted in Khon Kaen province. The two television adaptations, however, were not capable of perpetuating the legacy of the *Khu Karma* myth alone. They were publicised before the rise of the television era after the political upheaval in the 1970s. The first two film adaptations were, however, both launched in 1973. One was made for Thai audiences, the other for Hong Kong movie fans. Yet the Hong Kong version has never been screened (Anchalee 1995: C3). The 1978 television version starring Nirut Sirichanya and Sansanee Samarnworawong was not quite as successful as the film produced by Five Star Productions in 1988; Jintara Sukphat won a *Tukkata Thong Award* or Thai Best Actress Award for her role as Angsumalin.

However, the most phenomenal *Khu Karma* adaptation was the series broadcast on television Channel 7 in 1990 starring Thongchai McIntrye and Kamolchanok Komolthiti. The series prompted the reprinting of the novel and the publication of critiques, interviews, and scholarship on *Khu Karma* and the history of the Second World War in Thailand. The success of *Khu Karma* in 1990 brought Thongchai back for another portrayal of Kobori in the 1995 film adaptation, *Sunset at Chaopraya*. This version was the first production of Grammy Films—a new studio implanted by GMM Grammy Entertainment, one of the most influential entertainment companies in Thailand. Despite Thongchai's huge fame as a widely successful singer for the company, and the 50th anniversary commemoration of the end of World War II in 1995, the film failed to earn as much as expected (Anchalee 1995: C3). After 1995, *Khu Karma* appeared on-and-off in screen culture. Modest versions of *Khu Karma* reunited the myth with its audience nine years later in 2004 on Channel 3 and on the cinema screen. This represented the second attempt of GMM Grammy through its

subsidiary companies, Scenario and Exact to regain its positive reception of *Khu Karma* adaptation by choosing the famous singer Sukrit Wisetkaew as a leading character in this production.

In this section, I select four film adaptations and one television adaptation: *Khu Karma* (1973), *Khu Karma* (1988), *Sunset at Chaopraya* (1995), *Sun & Sunrise* (2013) and *Khu Karma*, the television series (2013). The selection criteria are based upon their continual exhibition and circulation until now (2015). These five adaptations are still available in the form of VCDs and DVDs distributed by two of the biggest entertainment companies in Thailand: Mangpong 1989 Public Company Limited and Boomerang Online Company Limited. These adaptations are available on shopping websites and are also broadcast on YouTube. Furthermore, they were all rescreened in the 70th commemoration of the end of World War II by Thailand's Film Archive and other related channels since August 2015. In this way, all adaptations function as sites of memory storing and disseminating the memory of World War II in the Thai cultural circuit. I aim at conducting the textual analysis of these five films with references to their relationship to official memory, other related memory texts and genre memory.

As I previously introduced the tradition of romance in and beyond the Thai cinematic arena, various adaptations of the *Khu Karma* myth can fall upon receptions encoded since the *début* of the Burmese-Thai romance in the 1930s and an unending circulation of the myth in the Thai screen culture. When a newer version of *Khu Karma* is launched, the memory of other versions is revived by the press and the audience. For this reason textual fidelity always matters in adapting the myth. The criticism against *Sun & Sunrise* (2013) offers supportive evidence for this observation. Most of the critics' concerns focused on the fidelity to the original text and the casting choices. Some sample criticisms are: 'the film is concise. Nadech's acting is

good but not really impressive. A new actress's inexperienced acting and narratives distorted from the original texts do not make for an appreciative reception' and 'although I am impressed by some scenes and temporal settings, I think this version does not meet the expectations of the novel's fans' (Anchalee and Sutthiphong 2014: 224).

Both war memory and genre memory are shared in Thai mnemonic communities. The *Khu Karma* myth has championed its reproduction, rescreening and restaging. The myth is popularised in both the romance genre and in the genre of the Second World War memory. I treat the *Khu Karma* myth as genre in the Bakhtinian sense because all adaptations are referential. There are mutual motifs of the myth, relationship between the directors of different adaptations, and the presence of stars across adaptations. These elements construct a grammar of production and reception of the myth. Apart from the horizon of expectation shared among the audience, Damayanti once declared her own demand for textual fidelity:

I think it's strange when I find someone making changes to the original text. I believe letters are sacred. Whoever dares to distort someone else's writings—mine or another's, they rarely have any success. In Sanskrit, they call a pen *aksara janani*. It means "mother of letters." If a mother gives birth to her letters that way, we must maintain her will (Wisawanart 2005: 105).

Hence, directors and screenwriters do take challenges in adapting *Khu Karma*. I, therefore, adopt Bakhtin's genre memory concept in interrogating memory stored and restored in the filmic and television texts. Through genre memory, I also seek to examine the shared elements in all adaptations and some distinguished features defined by the directors, stardom, screen industry, socio-cultural context, and memory culture of certain periods.

2.1 The Lure of Historical Images

Most Thai casual audiences, then, consume historical settings in the film as an essence of *phapphayon ing prawattisat* or historical film. Broadcast on television channels, the series dealing with period settings can also be labeled *lakhon ing prawattisat* or historical drama. In productions, thus, *phap prawattisat* or historical images can both value and devalue certain filmic and television texts. As historical images are the key quality making films ‘historical’, some directors include loaded historical images in their films; for example, *Suriyothai* (Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol, 2001) is filled with historical details. Though it gained success at the box office, the film failed to be spoken of in regard to its entertaining quality. This point may be clarified by the reflection of Rosenstone who says that; ‘without the enormous amount of invention, condensation, and compression undertaken by even the most “accurate” attempt at film, the historical would not be dramatic, but a loose sprawling form far less able to make the past interesting, comprehensible, and meaningful’ (2012: 44).

As discussed earlier, Thai mainstream history celebrates the heroic deeds of Thai ancestors across various wars. Thai historical films and television series demand high budgets to recreate their glorious histories. Under the eyes of Thai casual audiences, verisimilitude appeals to popular reception in the name of historical authenticity. WWII memory is dissimilar to other mainstream histories in Thailand. Memory of the war is still revived, revised and revisited through historical research and media on a global scale. The representation of the memory of the Second World War, in a dramatised version, is not likely to be regulated by mainstream historiographical awareness. As a result, in case of *Khu Karma*, the convention is constructed within the genre and entwined with living mnemonic communities.

Moreover, *Khu Karma* is different from other texts studied in this thesis. *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* (2000) and *Boonpong* (2013) can claim their authenticity by mapping themselves with other sites of memory in Chumphon and Kanchanaburi whilst *Khu Karma* was later connected to its related sites of memory by its fans. After decades of circulation of the myth, audiences and fans have attempted to trace bits and pieces of memory contributing to the World War II images in *Khu Karma* (Saengarun 1990: 22-23). Therefore, the myth turned into reality, at least among the fans, by the lure of historical images consumed through films and television series. In reviving the myth in the screen culture, the directors tend to maintain these historical images in order to find favour among fans of previous adaptations.

Khu Karma was first launched to Thai spectators in the 1970s. The first two adaptations were not impressive in terms of reconstructing historical images. The film version in 1973, however, was influenced by other sites of memory beyond its source text: historians and school textbooks—Direk Chainam’s book, first published in 1966 and the textbooks of social studies courses since the late 1950s—for example. In the early stages of reproducing the memory of the Second World War in the Thai context, the war was represented as a part of world politics until the late 1980s. In the 1990s, stories of the Free Thai movement were properly added to the social studies curricula. That is to say, the World War II memory found in screen culture was widely consumed before the arrival of the state’s version of memory.

The interplay between historical images of the adaptations and the official war memory reaffirms some scholarship arguing that ‘mnemonic practices expresses neither the past nor the present, but the changing interactions between past and present’ (Olick 1999: 381). The echoes between the novel and the adaptations and

among the adaptations themselves appeal to be interpreted by Bakhtin's idea of genre memory.

Undoubtedly, the Bakhtinian notion of language influences the intertextual concept in the postmodern condition. The cinematic art of pastiche or montage can be included in Bakhtin's foreseeing vision. Because of its popularity, *Khu Karma* owns shared codes among its reading public and audiences. The directors of all adaptations should, more or less, be aware of those shared codes. The codes are shown in the historical images of memory reconstructed in certain versions.

Historical images found in the *Khu Karma* myth can be formed into two groups: 1) a series of events during the war and 2) the new Thai culture of Pibunsongkhram's era (between 1938 and 1944). Unlike the novel, in the film *Khu Karma* (1973), the story opens on 7 December 1941, referencing the Japanese attack against Pearl Harbor. The film reanimates Kamikaze aircraft and the dramatic destructions of the day, followed by the incident on 8 December 1941 when the Japanese army set ashore at Thailand's southern coasts. Voice-over is used to narrate the chronology of the events. The film, however, omits Angsumalin's family background.

Khu Karma (1973) portrays the series of events whilst Pibulsongkhram's regime is not dominant. The film *Khu Karma* (1988) shapes the convention of representing historical images in the myth. It reconstructs a nostalgic sensation through footage filmed in the 1940s. The monochromic footage depicts old-fashioned transportations in Bangkok—tricycles and trams—and the Memorial Bridge or Buddha Yodfa Bridge built by Dorman Long from Middlesbrough in 1929. These two sites were targeted by the Allies' attacks. The nostalgic atmosphere of the film

is enhanced by melancholic-sounding melodies from Angsumalin's Chinese cymbalo as the film's opening score.

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FIG. 5 The reanimated kamikaze mission over the Pearl Harbor (*Khu Karma*, 1973) and old footage from the 1940s (*Khu Karma*, 1988)

The 1988 adaptation unfolds its historical images after the departure of Vanas. The film alternates the celebration of the constitution in Thailand with current events through military references: the battlefields in Europe, the Pearl Harbor attack, and the Japanese invasion to Thailand respectively. Apart from visualising the situation, the film employs the use of radio news reports on the encounters between *yuwachon thahan* (the Military Youth) and the Japanese army in southern Thailand. The black and white footage of the Allies' air raids reappears in the final part of the story. All military references potentially correlate to those in *Khu Karma* (1973). The techniques of representing the past were, however, developed through aesthetic technologies in later adaptations.

Adapting the myth in *Sunset at Chaopraya* (1995), historical images still feature prominently. The story opens at the funeral of Kobori before flashing back to Ansumalin's university life. The monochromic technique is applied along footage of old trams randomly passing by old buildings in Bangkok. The film turns into true colour when the spatio-temporal setting—Siam, A.D.1939—is identified by an inserted subtitle on the Chaophraya River background. The Japanese Showā era is also indicated. Repetitively, this technique is employed in indicating the setting throughout

the film. Some practical examples are: at the Japanese Imperial Army Headquarter Region 18 on Sathon road, in November 1942, Showā 17 the engagement between Angsumalin and Kobori was announced, and at the Ministry of Culture, Sri Ayutthaya Road, in mid-February 1943, Showā 18 their wedding ceremony was held.

The conventional historical images are maintained and developed in the film. The war is chronologically told by means of headlines on old newspapers from 3 September 1939, when Britain and France declared war against Germany. Then the agreement between Germany, Italy and Japan is shown on the newspaper of 27 September 1940. The film asserts its historical images by introducing some footage filmed in 1941, Showā 16, Tokyo. The footage recounts the assembly of the Japanese civilians and soldiers shouting ‘Banzai!’ in chorus. Unlike the other versions of *Khu Karma*, *Sunset at Chaopraya* utilises references to the Japanese military instead of the Allied or Thai militaries. The references are shown in black and white, and they are used in relation to a deeper back story of Kobori. He marches from his place along with other Japanese soldiers leaving his parents and fiancée behind. The Japanese invasion of South East Asia is rendered through a map. The first Japanese-Thai confrontation and the move of the Japanese troops by trains are also reenacted.

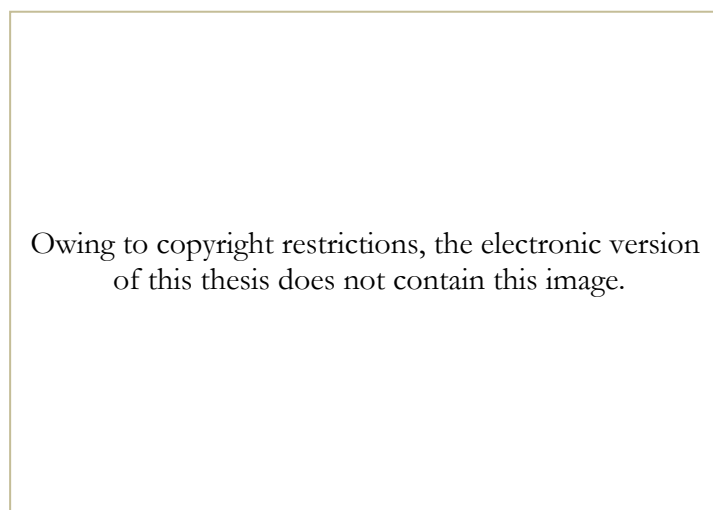


FIG. 6 Monochromic film footage from Japan (*Sunset at Chaopraya*)

Sunset at Chaopraya is the first adaptation which depicts the detailed lives of Kobori and Angsumalin. This is where the film addresses the historical images of Phibunsongkhram's new Thai culture through dress codes; hats are required. Kobori takes Angsumalin and her family to a tourist location—the Golden Mountain temple. Together they go to the musical theatre, which was a highly popular entertainment of the time. They play *Chan Chao Kha/Ode to the Moon*, a well-received play of Phranbun (1901-1976), the great playwright of the pre-revolution period. The film also realistically presents military routines at work and at the recreation club. It revitalises the detailed social lives of civilians under Phibunsongkhram's rule; they do Thai folk dances, drink local brews, eat local food; and perform religious practices and so on. The historical images in *Sunset at Chaopraya* turn the film into the most 'serious' version of *Khu Karma*.

The additional elements in *Sunset and Chaopraya* are pursued in *Khu Karma*, the television series (2013) as a product under the same company's umbrella, though old footage and monochromic pictures are absent in this version. It accepts the genre memory inherited among *Khu Karma* adaptations by paying homage to *The Blood of Suphanburi* through using a song hummed by Phol and Bua: 'We belong together as we share the blood of Suphanburi. With this blood we feel no fear.' Even so, the series aspires to establish its own historical images that make it a memory text. In the source text and other adaptations, only one prisoner of war appears to cause the conflict between Angsumalin and Kobori on their wedding day. As the most popular World War II narrative in Thailand, *Khu Karma* dims the stories of the POWs from the Death Railway which are widely circulated in the global context. It is because during the 1960s, Thailand did not acknowledge foreigners suffering during the war. They also own none of space in the official memory. Instead, *Khu Karma* on

television (2013) as a product of the memory boom era stores and restores the memory of prisoners-of-war. The first example is the dialogue between Kamnan Num–Vanas’s father and Mian:

Mian: *Farang!* Many *farangs* have been captured from everywhere! I think the Japs are going to kill them all.

Kamnan Num: Do keep it down, Mian! No one is going to be killed. The Japanese army will bring them to Banpong. *Farangs* are to build the railway from Nong Pladuk to Kanchanaburi. That’s all!

Mian: So you don’t know lots of *farang* have died there. Some died of Diarrhea and Malaria. Those who have survived are super-bony just like hungry ghosts. You don’t know how the Japs torture British soldiers. Rumour has it.

The excerpt above shares its perception with stories of the POWs curated in all war museums and memorials throughout Kanchanaburi province. These historical images are intended to build a realistic touch to the series and to place it among other memory texts. The series likewise portrays some generous Thai people giving away their food to the POWs. The scene is captured from an oral history of the war transferred to written tradition by some local historians during the late 1980s. Some further memory projects were conducted and published in the early 2000s and 2010s (Worawut 2001, Charnvit and Nimit 2014). The film also recollects some violent disputes that erupted during the war. They are not vivid in the Thai collective memory. An example here is a dispute that took place in Banpong. It is reported by Masao—a Japanese soldier—to his superior:

‘Now there’s an incident at Banpong. Last night, the 9th train soldiers were fighting against local people and Thai polices. Our five soldiers are dead. And now hundreds of our labourers have run away. The folks and Thai soldiers are still gathering. The situation is turning more and more heated!’⁷

Among the retrievals of World War II memory in Thailand, the involvement of Thai royalty in the Free Thai Movement is not particularly well-known. The memory was first recorded in Puay Ungphakorn’s writings. The collected essays related to this subject were first published and widely circulated in 1972 (Pridi et al.

⁷ This incident was recorded in details in Charnvit and Nimit (2014).

2000). Again, the memory of the royalty is not written in school textbooks or monuments but it modestly appears in some museums; for example, King Prachadhipok's museum. *Khu Karma* (2013) re-historicises memory of the royalty by personifying their involvement through a fictional character called Prince Witchaya. The prince is trained to be the Free Thai ally accompanying his Cambridge classmate, Vanas, in Britain and Ceylon. The series does not fail to express its strong interests in the Thai royalty; it creates a conversation on this agenda between Wan–Vanas's mother, Kamnan Num and Angsumalin.

Wan: As far as I know, Thai students in Britain are not arrested or regarded as enemies of the state.

Kamnan Num: Queen Ramphai Barni is residing there. She helps patronise all Thai students. They all are safe. I've heard many of our royalty and gentry are leading Thai students in Cambridge including Vanas in rejection of the war declaration against the Allies.

Angsumalin: I've heard from the university. Since the 10th of December last year, Thailand accepted Japanese co-prosperity. Thai ambassador to the United States has set up the Free Thai Movement since then.

Theoretically, the past is reconstructed to serve the present. The memory of the royalty in the Free Thai Movement is, therefore, recounted to serve political purposes. In early 2013, the political tension between the government, led by Yingluck Shinawatra, and the royalists was still garnering public attention along with heated debates on the *lèse majesté* law. The memory regained in the series can be regarded as a reaction from the royalists' side, against the government. On the other hand, the series aims at redeeming a figure of royalty which was absent during the war. By doing so, the series claims its unique historical images. Though it does not definitely deny the genre memory of *Khu Karma*, it tends to conform to genre memory of the 'royal-nationalist' mode of constructing collective memory in Thailand.

Sun & Sunrise (2013) acknowledges the conventional historical images of the *Khu Karma* myth only in its film teaser launched in February 2013 by showing the

monochromic footage of militant aircraft over Bangkok sky, the Thai-Japanese military parade in front of the Grand Palace in Bangkok and the horseback procession of the Japanese high-ranking soldiers. The footage and Kobori's narrating voice in Japanese are placed side by side. However, in the film, the footage is replaced by a dolly zoom shot of a sleeping Kobori on a train filled with Japanese soldiers. He is slowly opening his eyes. Kobori's narrating voice morphs from Japanese to Thai. It sums up the background story of the war and the Thai-Japanese relationship.

Surprisingly, after this succinct narrative, the whole train transforms into *anime*. Zoomed out, the train travels upon a map of Bangkok. It passes many landmarks including the Grand Palace and the Memorial Bridge. It, then, stops at the shipyard station near Angsumalin's place. The film does not show its loyalty to the conventional historical images, particularly of any series of events, at any point of the story.

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FIG. 7 Historical images in the teaser and the *anime* in the opening scene (*Sun & Sunrise*)

The acknowledgement of the importance of historical images in the conventional adaptations can be seen in their efforts to insert chronological details about incidents during the war, and their realistic representations of lives and cultural policies under the Phibunsongkhram's regime. In *Sun & Sunrise*, those details are replaced by anachronisms. The most anachronistic element is the costume design. In spite of significant research on realistic Japanese soldier uniforms, the film instead

parodically shows Che Guevara-like hats of the 1960s and styles of female costumes that differ from the other adaptations.

While the film does highlight the local industry in the setting, a feature which is neglected in other variations of the myth, even this opportunity to develop historical images is bypassed. In *Sun & Sunrise*, most of the people in the Ban Bu community of the Bangkok Noi area inherited the craftsmanship of metal bowls. The sound of pounding metal bowls is featured in the film during Angsumalin's secret mission to save a prisoner of war. Yet the sonic features *per se* are unrealistic: they sound melodic. In addition, instead of supporting the historical images of the film, the radio report in *Sun & Sunrise* about Vanas, who is arrested by the Thai police on his return to Thailand because of his role in the Free Thai Movement, is played during a fast motion scene depicting Vanas walking to his trial. The alternate sonic and graphic representations of the *Khu Karma* myth imply the director's objective of challenging the conventional. They also indicate the shift in the director's focus from the 'historical' to other features.

Historical images of the Second World War in *Khu Karma* myth retain fidelity to the novel. The author classified her writing as a historical romance. She supported the directors who did not fail to make her memory 'historical.' However, the historical images in the adaptations have varied alongside the official memory of the war in certain periods. Significantly, the official memory reproduced since the 1990s focuses on the politicised Thai-Japanese collaborations. For this reason, the adaptations since then turned their focus to pursue bits and pieces of historical images echoed within the myth, for example some elements in *Sunset at Chaopraya* can be detected in *Khu Karma*, the television series. Indeed, some adaptations assert their novelty in presenting the war memory and genre memory, particularly ones affected by the nostalgic wave during the 2000s. The revisionary projects of the

memory of the Second World War in Thailand are still in progress. Therefore, the memory is unfinished and it is still open to further reconstructions.

The journeys of two protagonists in *Khu Karma* were refabricated from Damayanti's and various directors' imaginations. Yet the myth can assure the crucial roles of screen culture in shaping the World War II memory of present Thailand. The fictional was perceived as the factual because of the lure of historical images. Additionally, the adaptations of the *Khu Karma* myth on screen as memory texts were used in creating an identity for the Bangkok Noi community and neighbouring areas. Kobori's death scene is one of the most memorable tragic endings in Thai film and television history. The phrase *anata o aishite imasu* (I love you) said by Kobori was later reenacted on a water tank tower near Thonburi station previously Bangkok Noi station—the setting of Kobori's death scene. Besides, *Khu Karma* in screen culture was also consumed through tourism: particularly after the introduction of two adaptations in 2013. The cultural tourism in the Bangkok Noi area was boosted by the World War II memory, as a vernacular memory, revitalised by the film and the series. This is evidence of the popularity of *Khu Karma* and its bond to mnemonic communities achieved by its realistic historical images.

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FIG. 8 The brochure of the 'In trace of Kobori' walking tour and the cultural festival of the Bangkok Noi community with a movie still from *Sun & Sunrise* (30 November 2013) and the water tank tower with the phrase 'I love you' at Thonburi station (taken in December 2016)

Discussed above is the ‘historical’ part of the ‘historical romance’. I will analyse ‘romance’ with reference to the author’s key message, which is maintained in all adaptations. Love and humanity are discussed and questioned in the next section.

2.2 Humanity and (Un)Conditional Love

Nico Carpentier proposes his cultural perspectives on war: war is not limited to military practices but it is symbolically attached to de-civilising process. To justify the war through social effects, a dichotomy between ‘self’ and ‘enemy’ is constructed. This dichotomy can be traced back to notions of ‘good vs. evil’ rooted in certain cultures, and it shapes other binary oppositions e.g. civilisation vs. barbarism, bravery vs. cowardice, and guilty vs. innocent (2007: 1-4). The battle in the war, thus, happens both in the combat zone and in the cultural sphere. Theoretically the identity of the ‘enemy’ is constructed so that one can identify one’s own ‘self.’ The evil antagonist is portrayed to assert our own goodness (2007: 1-4). The enemy-vs.-self dichotomy can be reproduced by different cultural texts. In the case of Thailand, the Burmese usually are antagonistically represented to proclaim Thai identity as found in the official war memory.

To convey the message of humanity in wartime, *Khu Karma* undermines this dichotomy by showing how characters develop their worldviews. Angsumalin, at first, hates the Japanese as she feels deceived by Yoshi *sensei*, who is her dentist and private Japanese language tutor. Yoshi works as a secret agent for the Japanese army. Angsumalin believes that the war tears her and Vanas apart. As a daughter of a Navy family and as a product of Thai nationalistic historical education, Angsumalin regards the Japanese as the enemy.

Speaking of the elements of romance,⁸ Angsumalin first meets Kobori when she is swimming in the canal near Kobori's station. *Meeting*, as a key element of romance (Regis 2003: 30-31), defines their conflict through the setting and their dialogue. Angsumalin refuses to speak Japanese. Significantly, the setting of the Japanese shipyard does not exist before the war; it signifies an invasion to the 'virgin land' of serene orchards and the sovereignty of Thailand.

Angsumalin's hatred towards the Japanese is a *barrier* defining the dramatic action of the characters. The *barrier* is also a core ingredient of romance. It rationalises conflicts between protagonists. *Barriers* include the *society defined* since the plot's exposition, internal and external conflicts of the protagonists, attitudes, emotions and values (Regis 2003: 30-38). Racial differences, promises, and worldviews inform the barrier in the *Khu Karma* myth. Angsumalin is raised by her single mother. Her personality tends to be stubborn. The only love scene in *Khu Karma* is controversial as Kobori is drunk, and Angsumalin is forced to make love with him. After the incident, Angsumalin acts cold against Kobori, for example, in *Sunset at Chaopraya*: 'I hate you. If I ever had a baby, I'd teach him to hate you too. I'd teach him how to hate before how to love.' She also makes an attempt to take her child's life, as well as her own, when she misunderstands that Kobori wants to give Vanas the death sentence.

To melt Angsumalin's coldness, Kobori remains thoughtful and gentle, and admired by Orn (Angsumalin's mother). In the novel, Orn functions as a moral mouthpiece for the author. She shows her daughter a brighter side of the war-humanity. Nevertheless, only two television versions in 1990 and 2013 confirm their fidelity to Orn's role in the novel. In other adaptations, the film directors

⁸ See the analysis of *Khu Karma*, the novel as romance in Natthanai (2016b: 447-509).

position different characters to fulfill the role such as Angsumalin's father and grandmother.

In *Sun & Sunrise*, Angsumalin rushes to consult her father Luang Chalasuratt about her 'marriage of convenience' in the sense of romance. She suffers from the fact that she is breaking promises made to Vanas, from her feelings of hatred, and from the manipulated political condition she finds herself in. When she learns her refusal is regarded as impractical, she stereotypically insults the Japanese by renouncing their capability to love. The father warns her: 'to everyone, love is essential, my dear. I didn't know love when I had a chance to embrace it. The day I knew what love was, I no longer had that chance.' This lesson pushes Angsumalin to reevaluate her love-hate relationship with Kobori. She is contemplating her feelings when she sees Kobori at the Memorial Bridge a minute before the air raid: 'why is he here when I need someone to lean on?'

Angsumalin bitterly conforms to her marriage of inconvenience. As the war is progressing, she hears news from Vanas little by little. In *Sunset and Chaopraya*, sitting at the riverbank and absent-mindedly longing for her faraway first love, Angsumalin converses with her grandmother.

Grandmother: A married woman is supposed to think of her husband.

Angsumalin: I was forced by the invaders. My duty is to hate them.

Grandmother: This thought makes you unhappy. Life is short. You should benefit from your youthful love and not let it go to waste.

Angsumalin's father and grandmother allegorically act as *senex*—a Latin word for 'old man.' The *senex* is an archetypal concept referring to psychological qualities endorsed by 'the elderly including wisdom, the vision and maturity to see far into future, a sense of balance and a generous attitude towards others' (Izod and Dovalis 2015: 211). It usually appears in form of a wise old man (2015: 214). The *senex* in *Khu Karma* are successful in shaping Angsumalin's new mentality. She finally embraces humanity:

‘ones have their right to love whom they fall for no matter when it happens’ (*Khu Karma*, 1973), and at Kobori’s death scene, she admits her true feelings: ‘I tried so hard not to love you. [...] I can’t lose you. Let me love you whatever it takes. [...] I’ll pray for our child. I wish when he grows up he could stay with his love as long as he wishes.’ (*Sun & Sunrise*)

Nonetheless, the most striking device employed by *Khu Karma* on screen is the transforming of Kobori into a *senex*. Throughout the story, he teaches Angsumalin the principles of humanity and of love. In doing so, the *Khu Karma* myth destabilises the self-*vs.*-enemy dichotomy in the ideological war model. In *Khu Karma* (1988), Kobori repeats the message from the novel:

‘You know what, all soldiers share one feeling: they are afraid of death. They are homesick and lonesome. We need some warmth, friendship, and love. Yet you don’t know love. [...] You may have ones who love you. If you could really love someone, your heart wouldn’t be this cold.’

Despite his combatant bravery, Kobori expresses his recognition of humanity and/or vulnerability lying within the Japanese soldiers. Kobori’s position challenges typical representation of blindly cold-blooded Japanese soldiers publicised by the Allies. Before Angsumalin’s revelation, Kobori profoundly knows that love is beyond *barriers*. Love is selfless and nationless. Kobori once helps Angsumalin and her alliance in hiding an American POW. He also defends Angsumalin’s neighbours from the threats of his own army and a German soldier. These conflicting feeling cuts through his heart as seen in *Sun & Sunrise*: ‘Do you know, Hideko? I have betrayed my own dignity and have disregarded the dignity of my own country just for you!’ In *Sunset at Chaopraya*, Kobori, therefore, cherishes his ephemeral moment of happiness while he is sitting next to Angsumalin.

‘I want to freeze everything to this particular moment. The fireflies are probably looking for their lovers... The Lumpoo spirit. I wouldn’t remember anything but this moment of happiness, the Chaopraya River that brought us

together and the Milky Way up above where neither war nor duty could keep us apart.’

Kobori dreams of a world without *barriers*. Ironically, as an invader sent from the Japanese Empire, Kobori strives for a simple life with his family. At Bangkok Noi train station, mid-January 1944, Showā 19, Kobori died. In *Khu Karma* (1973), the narrator’s concluding remarks in the novel are imposed onto Kobori’s voice: ‘my war has ended although others’ may continue. May this world remain warless so that humankind can peacefully strive for each other’s love.’

Vitaly, in *Khu Karma* (2013) this message of humanity is enhanced by means of a monologue and dialogue among characters of different nations. Beyond the Thais and Japanese soldiers, the series proclaims humanity through Michael’s voice.

Michael is an American POW. Rescued by Angsumalin and the Free Thai allies, he sends Vanas a letter explaining Angsumalin’s situation with a special emphasis: ‘Actually both of them (Angsumalin and Kobori) are victims of war and politics just like you and I.’

Michael is likewise created as another *senex* for the characters in the myth. He once again convinces Angsumalin to accept her own true feelings before it is too late. In the series, with a POW who is supposed to be regarded as a war victim, Kobori shares victimhood with the Thais and *farangs*. This excerpt affirms there is neither victor nor loser. In the war, we are all victims.

The politics of war memory, representation of Japaneseness, and humanity can be explained through retrospection on Damayanti’s individual memory. Kobori’s gentleness is potentially inspired by Japanese soldiers that the author met during her childhood. There are two narratives of Japanese soldiers referred to in her interview. The first story is about the Japanese she met on a train: ‘My mother once told me that, on the train to Suphanburi, there was a Japanese soldier sitting next to me. He put me

on his lap telling my mother how he missed his daughter in Japan. It was difficult for him to hand me back to my mother. He also saw me off” (Wisawanart 2005: 155). The second story is about the soldier she met in Bangkok: ‘I and my brother were fishing. A Japanese soldier was observing us. He told us to come back again. Another day, he gave us a box filled with hooks and a sack of sugar’ (Wisawanart 2005: 155).

To Damayanti, Japaneseness deals with exoticism in terms of differences of looks, personality, customs and mentality. This exotic Japaneseness is concisely referred to in *Khu Karma* (both 1973 and 1988) and richly represented in *Sunset at Chaopraya*. It reveals Kobori’s detailed background. A festive procession at a Japanese temple and a setting filled with Sakura blossoms are also depicted. Through the myth, Kobori is *not* a faceless enemy found in some Hollywood war films and Thai films of other genres. Paradoxically, Kobori is a desirably humanised enemy. His characteristics are shaped by exotic Japaneseness, kindness, generosity, protectiveness and, certainly, humanity. These images are reenacted in all adaptations.

However, the Japanese soldiers are not absolutely idealised. Although Damayanti and her family were not directly threatened by the Japanese, she does not fail to show her recognition of the damage the Japanese did to Thai people and society. In the novel, there is an unnamed character on a tram mentioning the cruelty of Japanese soldiers. Some of the Japanese soldiers intentionally hurt and raped Thai women. The character stated that some women must suffer post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD.⁹ The majority of readers seem to miss these very lines in the novel. This barbarism enhances the self-*vs.*-enemy dichotomy instead of challenging it in the name of humanity.

⁹ PTSD is a disorder suffered by people who encounter frightening, dangerous or brutal events. The common symptoms include nightmare, unusual heartbeat and sweating and continual depression. See more in Caruth (1995), Köhne, Elm and Kabalek (2014: 6-8).

The barbaric Japanese soldiers from the novel, however, are portrayed in *Khu Karma* (1973) and the television series in 2013. In the 1973 version, there is a van bearing the flag of the Japanese Imperial Army and carrying cruel Japanese soldiers. They catch a Thai woman and suffocate her before raping her. A group of young Thai men, with Thai swords in their hands, then run to the scene. The film employs a jump-cut to dead bodies of the Japanese soldiers killed by Thai heroes. Nonetheless, the soldiers are identified as forces stationed in Burma. Corresponding to the novel, the film keeps the dark sides of Japanese soldiers but it refuses to properly interact with the representation of the Japanese in Thailand as ‘war creatures.’

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FIG. 9 Representation of the Japanese soldiers’ cruelty (*Khu Karma*, 1973)

The memory is politicised in the scene. The film expands a trivial element in the novel into a scene because of the genre memory of Thai film in the 1970s. During another decade of the Cold War period, mainstream Thai film audiences came to the cinema expecting the excitement of ‘action’ or ‘drama’ to escape from social problems and the intensity of political conflicts in the actual world. Additionally, the political messages, for example right-winged ideology, were delivered through this cluster of popular culture (Harrison 2010b). That is why action-adventure films were holding the high number of market shares during this period. That said, the brutality

of the Japanese is remediated to assert Thai masculinity and Kobori's exceptional tenderness.

Furthermore, to pursue the key messages of love and humanity and to purify Japanese images, the other adaptations after 1973 overlook this part of the myth. They only keep the story of a group of Japanese soldiers who ruin Angsumalin's banana trees while they are drunk. Yet, under Kobori's orders, they are punished to swallow many baskets of bananas. The comic relief is inserted when they fearfully reject bananas offered by Angsumalin's mother after the incident.

In the 2013 television adaptation, the Japanese hostility is shaped through two characters: General Tomoyuki and Lieutenant Colonel Masao. The layout of 'self' and 'enemy' is revealed from the first episode on. When the Japanese army goes to Angsumalin's university, Masao tries to destroy the Thai flag. The shot-reverse shot presents Angsumalin holding the Thai flag and Masao's hostile 'figure behaviour'. The sequence successfully identifies the concept of 'self-vs.-enemy' that is developed in the main plot.

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FIG. 10 Angsumalin's patriotism and Masao's cruelty (*Khu Karma*, 2013)

Again, Masao appears in the dispute scene between Japanese soldiers and villagers from Bangkok Noi. Yoshi is attacked by that group of Thai villagers. Masao comes to stop the dispute with his gun and enacts violent punishment against an old helpless shopkeeper. The scene clearly identifies the face of the enemy. Moreover, in terms of casting, a Japanese actor plays Masao. This is different from other 'friendly'

Japanese soldiers for example Kobori, Yoshi, and Takeda who are played by Thai actors.

That said, Masao and Tomoyuki are eventually positioned into the background of the series when a new commander, General Nagamura, arrives. Again, the existence of those characters is to foreground Kobori's characterisation. The otherness of the Japanese people is represented in the early phase of the series so that it can be, conversely, integrated into the whole picture of humanity at the end. This issue can be traced from modes of communication conducted by the Japanese soldiers. Through the course of the plot's development, they speak Japanese less. The mother tongue's interference in Thai pronunciation gradually disappears.

Some questions on the politics of humanity may be raised here. The myth of *Khu Karma* does not seem to be skeptical about the celebration of differences as another key element of humanity. To minimise the gap between 'self' and 'enemy', *Khu Karma* proposes that sameness should be embraced. I argue, love in *Khu Karma* is, therefore, 'conditional' as it requires sameness. Ironically, reading from a deconstructive viewpoint, Japaneseness in *Khu Karma* is exoticised and eroticised. That is to say, *Khu Karma* does not believe in the shared humanity it proclaims.

As discussed in section 2.1 and 2.2, genre memory acts its dominant roles in adapting *Khu Karma*. Yet over the socio-cultural changes, memory and genre memory of *Khu Karma* are reinterpreted. In the next section, I will discuss how 'afterlives' of the myth are affected by Thai film culture in terms of entertainment and star industry, with special reference to *Sun & Sunrise*.

2.3 Politics of Adaptations

A sea-change in the Thai film industry occurred after the death of Mitr Chaibancha in 1970.¹⁰ Then, production shifted from the 16 mm. system to the use of 35 mm. The new era of Thai cinema was hit soon after by a socio-political crisis in the October Events of 1973 and 1976 massacre.

Consequently, teenpics and teen stars emerged in mainstream Thai film culture as they were appealing to those who desired an escape from reality. The genre was integrated into other genres: romance and comedy, for instance. After the political crises, teenpics depicted university students' lives and the problems of teenagers instead of criticising social inequality and the roles of university students as intellectuals. Teenpics were concurrently produced with the rise of the star-making business in Thailand throughout the 1980s (Dornsaron 2013: 81-104).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the star-making business or *maew-mong* in Thai, grew in concert with the production of teenpics. Teenpics functioned as a platform for new-born stars before they expanded their career paths to other sections of the entertainment industry. One of the most successful star-makers of the 1990s was Poj Anon, who started the craze of mixed-race stars in the Thai media. The legacy of Poj Anon lies in Leo's *Sun & Sunrise* and it affects the adaptation in different aspects.

The star system affects the production of *Sun & Sunrise* as it potentially turns 'historical' romance into 'teen romance.' Before starring in the film, Nadech Kugimiya and Oranate D. Cabelles signed contracts with A. Supachai—the great star-making company active since 2008. A. Supachai's stars supply the television,

¹⁰ Mitr Chaibancha (1934-1970) was a great Thai actor whose works, of various genres, were prominent since the late 1960s. His memorable roles were masked heroes in *Insee Daeng* and *Insee Thong* franchise. His legacy is annually commemorated at Thailand's Film Archive (Public Organisation).

advertisement, and film industries. Due to the contracts with stars drawn up under the studio system, when Kittikorn picked Nadech first, Oranate was offered as part of a twin-package from A. Supachai (Pichet 2013). Casting these two stars follows the Thai teenpic legacy in terms of selecting young and mixed-race actors but it goes against the casting patterns of previous adaptations.

Year/Adaptations	Stars	Stars' Ages during Film and TV Screening
1970 (TV)	Mechai Viravaidya (Kobori) Bussaba Naruemitr (Angsumalin)	29 No Data
1972 (TV)	Chana Sriubol (Kobori) Phanit Kantamara (Angsumalin)	40 No Data
1973 (Film)	Nart Phoowanai (Kobori) Duangnapha Attaphornphisat and Li Jing Zhou (Angsumalin)	27 No Data No Data
1978 (TV)	Nirut Sirichanya (Kobori) Sansanee Samarnworawong (Angsumalin)	31 31
1988 (Film)	Warut Woratham (Kobori) Jintara Sukphat (Angsumalin)	19 23
1990 (TV)	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Kamonchanok Komonthiti (Angsumalin)	32 23
1995 (Film)	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Aphasiri Nitiphon (Angsumalin)	37 24
2004 (TV)	Sornram Thepphithak (Kobori) Pornchita Na Songkhla (Angsumalin)	31 24
2013 (TV)	Sukrit Wisetkaew (Kobori) Neungthida Sophon (Angsumalin)	28 22
2013 (Film)	Nadech Kugimiya (Kobori) Oranate D. Cabelles (Angsumalin)	22 19

TABLE 4 Stars and their ages during film and television screening

Although some viewers have attacked Oranate's weak acting skills, the ages of the stars have not been criticised. The ages of Nadech and Oranate, on the other hand, efficiently offer the benefit of verisimilitude, conforming closely to both the ages of characters in teenpics as well as in the novel. Ironically, enchanted by stars in previous film versions of *Khu Karma*, most commentators did not question the propriety of casting young actors as Kobori and Angsumalin.¹¹

¹¹ The eldest Kobori appeared in 1995 version; the director solved the problem by deeply illustrating character's background to justify his 'not-quite-young' looks.

In *Star Studies: A Critical Guide*, Martin Shingler proposes elements of star quality: glamour, photogeny, phonogeny, expressivity and acting talent (2012: 65-91). These qualities are all combined within Nadech, A Supachai's star product. Nadech is half-Austrian, half-Thai. He was adopted by a Japanese businessman and his mother's sister; his surname comes from his surrogate father. As a young teen star, Nadech's glamour is equaled by his evident morality: his expressions of gratitude to his surrogate parents and his self-representation as a decent Buddhist. Apparently, Nadech's glamour is defined and localised in the Thai context. His photogeny is proved by his appearance on several magazine covers and in dozens of advertisements throughout his career. His phonogeny was verified in the original film soundtrack of *Sun & Sunrise*: 'Angsumalin.' And, his acting talent was recognised by media-related institutions.

Nadech is a star according to the demands of the film industry, the teenpic genre, marketing, and popular expectations for young stars in the Thai context since 2000. His Japanese name and successful role as Kobori earned him unique social and cultural capital. He has turned into a representative of Japaneseness in the Thai entertainment media, as he starred as the son of a Yakuza boss in a popular television drama in 2014.

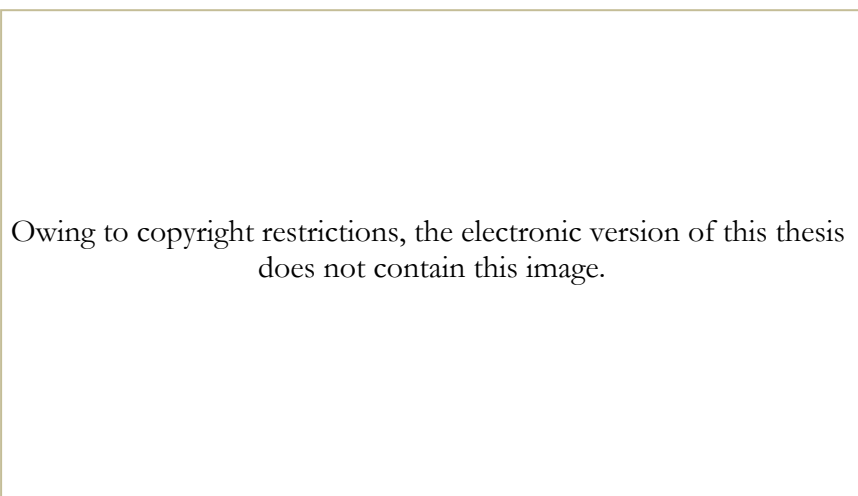


FIG. 11 Nadech as a representative of Japaneseness in a commercial and in an ad for a television drama in Thailand

Oranate, on the other hand, lacked star quality in accordance with Shingler's criteria in the judgment of many viewers and was labeled, by some audiences, as the main flaw in *Sun & Sunrise*. Indeed, she is still struggling on screen, now in the leading role in a television series. Her youth and naïve looks may, somehow, conform to the ideals of the teenpic genre in Thailand but, as a star, she was given nicknames by Thai press such as *chao ying nam khaeng* ('The Frozen Princess') and (along with the actor in her so-called television series) *khu 'gine hin granite* ('The Granite Couple') (Thairath Online 2014).


Janet Harbord proposes that the conception of genre has arisen from the relationship between film, marketing, audiences and other related cultural practices conducted in certain contexts. She argues that 'the concept of genre lies at the cusp of discourses of production and institutions, of aesthetics and classification, of audiences and cultural values' (2002: 77). Thematically, Kittikorn's *Sun & Sunrise* can be situated in the aftermath of a nostalgic trend in Thai society dating from the first decade of the new millennium, in which teenagers were at the centre of entertainment consumption.

Observing advertising statistics, Jira Malikul, director of several Thai teenpics and CEO of production for the GTH film company concluded that, in 2012, 80 percent of audiences were 15-21 years old. The Thai film industry, thus, reacted by attempting to navigate the terrain of teenagers as a target group (Dornsaron 2013: 15). Nostalgia and teenpics are a recurrent combination found in global film culture driven by marketing as Sarah Neely argues about Hollywood: she calls the phenomenon, 'culture's obsession with looking back' (Neely 2001: 74) and notes that American nostalgic teenpics 'emerge from a history of films targeted to youth market' (Neely 2001: 74).

Thai film culture, under the influence of Hollywood film culture since the Cold War period, is not exceptional. Kittikorn's interpretation is experimental compared to previous adaptations of *Khu Karma*. Yet, at the same time his interpretation was conditioned by marketing. A teenpic interpretation of the *Khu Karma* story may have attracted a majority of film audiences, but it simultaneously challenged the conventional perception of *Khu Karma* among mature audiences and mainstream fans of the novel.

In fact, Kittikorn introduced a number of significant differences between *Sun & Sunrise* and other adaptations. First of all, in terms of characterisation, Kittikorn's version of *Khu Karma* reduces the roles of Vanas and Angsumalin's mother, grandmother, and neighbours. In the novel and other adaptations, Angsumalin's stubborn personality is perhaps shaped by her broken family. For this reason, she strives for independence from her father through hard work. Representations of nationalistic and patriotic consciousness among the other Thai characters including Vanas, in other versions, also present her with a dilemma. Kittikorn's Angsumalin does not look 'suppressed' by her emotional reluctance and by social expectations as she is in other versions. Kobori, as the narrator in Kittikorn's film trailer, read as the film's paratext, does not reveal much of his background. The immediate cause of the main characters' heartache is confused feelings. Angsumalin's journey to the tragic ending is her rite of passage; the loss of her true love symbolises her loss of innocence. Audiences know that she faces great responsibilities as a mother in her life ahead. As a teenpic, in contrast, *Sun & Sunrise* does not explicitly 'deal with traditional themes of the relationship of youth to authority: either the family or to an educational institution' (Neely 2001: 75) but instead hews closely to the very core themes of the teenpic genre and/or cultural productions for teens: the problems of 'growing up' and 'maturity.'

To portray the teen protagonists, genre memory from Japanese teenpics, *manga* and *anime* was appropriated, resulting in a critic naming *Sun & Sunrise* as ‘*Khu Karma* from Harajuku’ (Anchalee 2016: 165). The film tries to retain Japanese exotic touches through casting Japanese supporting actors, Japanese film scores and the unique design of Kobori’s love scene, which is based upon *tatami* culture (Anchalee 2016: 166-168). In building Angsumalin’s character, the film develops the traits of Austenian heroines¹² from the novel. In the film, Angsumalin resembles female protagonists in Japanese teen *manga* and *anime* destined to be *tsundere*: ‘characters who’re particularly moody. [*tsundere* is] a developmental process wherein an icy character shows their warm side over the course of time (Galbraith 2009: 226-227).



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FIG. 12 Fan art for *Sun & Sunrise* intertwined with the genre memory of Japanese *manga* and *anime* (Intip 2015)

To rebrand *Khu Karma*, the director eliminated or eclipsed most of the most well-known motifs of the myth: Angsumalin’s traditional Thai house, promises made earnestly beneath a riparian cork tree, mystic fireflies, and saddening melodies from Angsumalin’s Chinese cymbalo. The director claimed, ‘We maintained only the core

¹² Austenian heroines are typical female protagonists in Jane Austen’s novels. In quest of their own quest of sense of self, Austenian heroines are proud, intelligent and decisive (Irvine 2005: 124-134).

of the story. That's why we credited Damayanti's story, not her complete novel' (Nakorn 2015).

When adapting a literary text into film, the production can be marketed to two quite separate types of audience: the (teen) film-goers or the readers of the original texts (Whelehan 1999: 17). Here, I argue, the other adaptations tried to appeal to Damayanti's readers, whereas *Sun & Sunrise* targets teen film-goers. Thus, this version highlights Angsumalin's and Kobori's roles at the expense of other characters. Minimising textual fidelity, the film maximised its profit from the stardom and fandom of its primary star, Nadech.

The complexity of the politics of adaptation can be tackled from another viewpoint: *auteur* theory. Here, I argue, the decision to produce *Khu Karma* in the teenpic genre was not driven only by the demands of the marketing and star industries; instead problems faced by teenagers, including violence, are a major interest of Kittikorn's. Exploring Kittikorn's work, I found that up to seven of his eleven films concern teenagers centrally. Most of them problematised teen lives and violence along the borders of sex, race, class, and age. Since his first film, Kittikorn has also raised problems related to generational gaps. The film, which brought him fame early in his career, was *Goal Club*, another film related to teenagers, football gambling, and Thai hooligans.

Year	Film Titles
1999	18-80 Buddy
1999	A miracle of Ohm and Somwang
2001	Goal Club
2002	Saving Private Tootsie
2005	The Bullet Wife
2005	Ahimsa stop to run
2007	Bus Lane
2007-2013	King Naresuan the Great *dir. second unit
2008	Dreamteam
2010	That sounds good
2013	Sun & Sunrise

TABLE 5 Kittikorn's achievements (M39 Studios)

The teenpic genre itself arose from the marketing conditions and the growth of the film industry in the global context, and films in the teenpic genre successfully fit the conditions. Nevertheless, I argue that Kittikorn's works are not 'genre films' simply geared by the industry.

Sun & Sunrise can be read as a representative part of the whole Thai teenpic industry, as I explained before. Yet as an *auteur* Kittikorn does not neglect to inscribe his signature in the film. For this reason, Kittikorn's *Khu Karma* was tailored as not another adaptation of the *Khu Karma* myth—the greatest retelling of World War II in Thai popular memory and screen culture—and not as a common teenpic in the Thai entertainment circuit. Interestingly, *Sun & Sunrise* as a Thai war teenpic can be interpreted as another piece of Kittikorn's legacy.

Sun & Sunrise purposefully turns its back on the Damayanti reader despite Damayanti's comments in interviews and positive feedback on the film, which were widely circulated in the media and included on the DVD package. To make a film targeting the teen audience and pursuing the director's style preferences can be considered a win-win negotiation. This may imply something about the current condition of Thai film culture. Whether Thai directors conform to marketing needs or they shape audiences' tastes according to their own preferences is a question worth exploring further in another context.

3. *I Shall Stop the World for You* (1985)

Yut Lok Phuea Thoe/I Shall Stop the World for You, a feature film directed by Phornphot Kanitsen, was first launched on 23 November 1985. The screenplay was written by the film director, Saengphet and Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol who later became one of the most celebrated directors of the Thai epic film genre. The film was

the *début* of Patcharawan Sophida, a teen actress of the period. The film production appealed for public attention by starring Chatchai Plengphanich who was seen in *Raya* (Permpol Choei-arun, 1981), another film set during World War II. It was likewise featuring some other well-known actors for example Phromphong Nopparit who later became popular in television industry and Sor Assanajinda who gave birth to *Chet Prachanban/Heaven's Seven* franchise troubling Japanese soldiers on the Thai screen since 1963.

Although *I Shall Stop the World for You* is not as popular as *Khu Karma*, it has been continuously circulated in the Thai cultural sphere. During the age of VCD and DVD commercial trends since the late 1990s, the film was packaged and distributed by Rose Video Company. It has now reached mass audiences through hypermarkets and discount-stores across the country such as Big C Supercentre and Tesco Lotus. A VCD package costs only 99 Thai Baht.¹³ Furthermore, as the film is well recognised by Thai cinephiles, it was rescreened on ThaiPBS Channel under the popular programme 'Unboxed Thai Film' on 10 April 2010. As a result of *Khu Karma's* return in 2013, *I Shall Stop the World for You* was aired on True Visions—the biggest cable channel in Thailand on 6 October 2014. And the film went online on YouTube website on 14 December 2014. It is still accessible at the time of writing (February 2017). Getting involved with Thai memory culture, the film was anthologised by the Thai Film Archive's screening programme for the 70th anniversary of commemoration of World War II in 2015.

¹³ 99 Thai Baht can be estimated about 2 British Pound Sterling.

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FIG. 13 Film poster of *I Shall Stop the World for you*

Although it was inspired by the legend of Chao Wong Saensiriphan (1898-1970)—a royalty from Northern Thailand, *I Shall Stop the World for You* has been perceived as an offspring of the *Khu Karma* myth. The film features love conflicts between a man in the Free Thai Movement, a patriotic teenage girl, a Japanese soldier and a deaf man. The film unfolds its temporal setting with some early attacks of the Allies against Bangkok during World War II. Chao Rattana, a young princess of the North, is the female protagonist. She is educated in a Catholic convent. Chao Khamsaeng, Chao Rattana's father, asks her to return home for her safety.

In a province of Northern Thailand, Chao Rattana (Patcharawan Sophida), with her father and local people, secretly join the Free Thai Movement. There are two main plotlines: the conflict among the protagonists caused by their romantic relationship and the conflict between the Thai people and the Japanese army. Both conflicts are deepened by Colonel Tanaka's arrival. Tanaka's gentleness is covered by his threatening looks. Tanaka (Chatchai Plengphanich) falls for Chao Rattana at first sight because she reminds him of Mariko—his dead wife. Tanaka tries to approach Chao Rattana while she is herself harbouring a fondness for Olan (Phromphong

Nopparit) who is working for the Free Thai Movement. Chao Rattana fails to notice that she is also loved by Bai, a deaf man.

The rising action of the film appears when Tanaka mobilises his forces for a violent attack against Chao Khamsaeng's mansion. During this scene, Chao Khamsaeng is shot dead. Olan is imprisoned and then is sent to the Death Railway as a forced labourer. Chao Rattana decides to lead her people in burning Tanaka's military camp down. The punishment against Chao Rattana is intentionally exempted by Tanaka. He, at last, lets his love blind his Imperial duty. When Japan surrenders, Tanaka and most of his soldiers commit suicide. Chao Rattana finally reunites with Olan on the railway bringing him back from his assumed death.

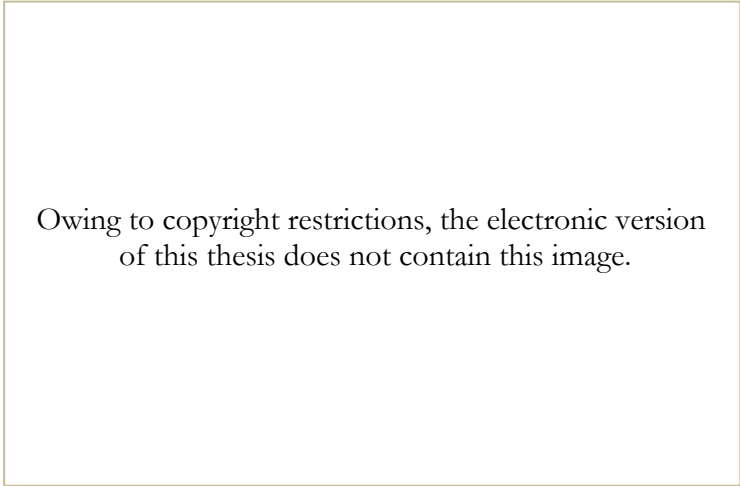
While the *Khu Karma* myth is reconstructed from the novel inspired by the author's own childhood memory and other related memory texts, in *I Shall Stop the World for You*'s case, the film aims at establishing its dialogue to *Khu Karma* through its subversive mimicry. However, the film outstandingly functions as a memory text; it stores and restores a memory of World War II ignored and/or suppressed by the official memory. In this section, I will map the film with other memory texts to prove its functions. Also, I will read the film from counter-memory perspectives, potentially subverting the *Khu Karma* myth, with the notion of genre memory applied in earlier sections.

3.1 Filming the Memory of Chao Wong Saensiriphan

I Shall Stop the World for You is here regarded as a memory film. It is not because the film simply depicts a World War II memory. Instead, it is interwoven with other memory texts through a plurimedial dimension by the definition of memory film provided by Astrid Erll (2011a: 53). Furthermore, the film can be read

as ‘counter-memory’ in a Foucauldian sense because the legend of Chao Wong Saensiriphan, restored in the film, can be viewed as ‘other voices which have remained silenced for so long’ (Foucault 1977: 18). As a set of counter-memories, the film also records ‘the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality’ (1977: 144). Apparently, the memory of Chao Wong Saensiriphan was not acknowledged by the Thai official memory prior to the film’s production. This way, Foucault’s notion of counter-memory does not necessarily differ from conceptions of vernacular memory.

To locate the filmic text into its memory culture, it should be mapped with the story of Chao Wong Saensiriphan, a forgotten hero of Phrae province in Northern Thailand. Without a specific reference to the legend, its links can be detected from the film’s end credits. It appears to thank Khwan Panomkhwan—mayor of the city of Phrae—and Wannee Wongburi. The production was also located at Wongburi Mansion which later became Phrae’s tourist attraction. That is the starting point of rediscovery of Chao Wong Saensiriphan’s legend stored in the film.



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FIG. 14 Chao Wong Saensiriphan in an archive and on film
(Committee of Documentation and Archiving 2000: 285)

My fieldwork supports the argument that the film is the first memory text restoring the memory of Chao Wong Saensiriphan since his death in 1970. The memory of his lifework was eclipsed for political reasons. Looking from a local

historian's perspective, Weera Star explained that Chao Wong Saensiriphan grew his close friendship to Pridi Banomyong before the Second World War and it grew fonder even after Pridi left Thailand, in refuge, for China and France following the military coup d'état in 1947. It was said that Chao Wong Saensiriphan had to keep his low profile in order to avoid the eyes of the military government. As a result he failed to keep his political career, his business, and his Wichairacha Mansion, which used to be another haven for the Free Thai companions during the war. Aside from political factors, the memory of Chao Wong Saensiriphan was outshone by the memory of Thong Kanthatham—a Free Thai ally whose children are local celebrities. Thus, the first regional museum of the Free Thai movement was built by the Kanthathams (Weera 2011: 13-21).

Years after the film's launch, there was an attempt to restore the memory of Chao Wong Saensiriphan by renovating his Wichairacha Mansion. The project was funded by Weera Star—a casual local historian of Phrae. When the economic crisis hit Asia and Thailand in 1997, the project was suspended. Phrae's governor ran a campaign for renovating the mansion as commanded by the central government in 2005. It is, from time to time, used for fashion shooting and as a venue of occasional visits of important figures or other related activities.

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FIG. 15 Chao Wong Saensiriphan's Wichairacha Mansion, Phrae (taken 3 July 2015)

Though the mansion was not used as a shooting location for *I Shall Stop the World for you*, due to its abandoned condition, it hosted a screening of *Phra Chao Chang Phueak/The King of the White Elephant* (Pradi Banomyong, 1941) and following talks on 20 June 2009. This site of memory is bound to film culture and memory culture. It used to accommodate Pradi and some of his cast and crew during the production of *The King of the White Elephant*. Chao Wong Saensiriphan was assigned, by Pradi, to provide elephants for the film sets. He, therefore, was befriended by Pradi since that point. The friendship caused his involvement in the Free Thai Movement when the war situation in Thailand became more intense (Weera 2011: 17-18).

The archaeology of Chao Wong Saensiriphan's legend was pioneered along with rediscoveries of local history and the great revisits of historical narratives in the 1980s led by *Silpawattananatham (Art & Culture Magazine)* that was first printed in November 1979. The magazine has turned into a school of thought; it rooms many against-the-current historians, archaeologists and anthropologists, such as Suchit Wongthes, Srisak Vallibhotama, Nidhi Eawsriwong, and Michael Wright. The school's emergence and development aims at demythologising and challenging the meta-narratives in Thai official memory (Baker and Pasuk 2014: 228). The increasing interests of oral history, the expanded permission to access the National Archives (Sumalee and Sukanya 1992: 4-5) and the rise of folkloristic studies, during the decade, should also be seen as inspiring the rediscovery of the counter-memory. Yet still Chao Wong Saensiriphan's legend was retrieved in the cinematic form of the romance genre instead of the biopic or epic genres.

Positioning *I Shall Stop the World for You* in Thai film culture, since the late 1970s—after the October Events in 1973 and 1976, I find the films in the action-

adventure and romance genres well-received. There were action stars playing roles of hypermasculine heroes with military training: Krung Sriwilai, Sombat Mathanee and Soraphong Chatri. These actors have appeared in the film cycle until the present in various roles. Nevertheless, most of the war on agenda in action-adventure films was the Vietnam War and the war against the communists. Some interesting works are: *Haek Khai Narok Dien Bien Phu/ Breaking the Hellish Camp of Dien Bien Phu* (Chumphon Thepphithak, 1977), *Sat Songkhram/War Creature* (Thoranong Srichuea, 1980), and *Haek Narok Vietnam/Refugee* (Thoranong Srichuea, 1983). There were history films produced with special reference to the Ayutthaya kingdom (1351-1767 Siam), for example *Khun Suek/The Warlord* (Sakka Charuchinda, 1976) adapted from Mai Mueangdeum's novel and *Khun Dech/The Treasure Guardian* (Thianchai Laphanan, 1980) based on Suchit Wongthes's novelette.

In the light of romance genre, Austenian heroines in Thai romance on screen were widely presented in the early 1980s; *Dokfa Kap Dome Phu Chonghong/Lady and Dome, the Proud* (Suphan Phramphan, 1980) and *Prissana/Lady Prissana* (Ruj Ronaphop, 1982) should be mentioned as proper examples. The other source of influence on *I Shall Stop the World for You* is romance which features *phuchai nai khruengbaep* or 'man in his uniform' produced through the decade. Men in uniform appeared in several romance films: *Khruea Fa* (Prince Anusornmongkholkhan, 1980), a tragic romance between Second Lieutenant Prom from Bangkok and Khruea Fa—a girl from Northern Thailand; *Aridang* (Jazz Siam, 1980), a tragic romance between a Thai soldier and a young Korean woman during the Korean War; and *Phuying Khon Nan Chue Boonrod/Her Name is Boonrod* (Wichit Kunawut, 1985), a romance between a Thai woman and an American soldier of the early Cold War in Thailand.

The tragic romance of men in their uniforms can correlate to *Khu Karma* (1973). They help endorse a positive reception of romance among Thai audiences.

Here, I argue that the legend of Chao Wong Saensiriphan was transformed into a romance for two reasons. Firstly, Thailand in the 1980s was ruled by General Kriangsak Chamanan and General Prem Tinnasulanon who became enthroned after the coup d'état in 1977. During the decade, military rhetoric was implemented in constructing the monuments and school textbooks. Placing the filmic text into official memory, the school textbooks did not document the Free Thai Movement. The political atmosphere was filled with the defeats of students, activists and their shattered dreams after joining the Communist Party of Thailand in the forests. This leads to the second set of reasons: the popularity of *Khu Karma* since the Cold War, and the growing attractiveness of romance: both tragic and comic, and Chatchai Plengpanit—a rising star from another World War II film. *I Shall Stop the World for You*, thus, conforms to the romance genre. By adopting the rules of the genre, it portrays double plots in order to maintain Chao Wong Saensiriphan's legend in the film. Given this, the film can 'write back' the myth of World War II through the rules of similar genres.

To illustrate the complexity of the past in *I Shall Stop the World for You*, I will examine its role as a memory film through the vernacular memory contained within. In order to understand the film's subversive spirit, I will read its counter-memory by illustrating its challenges against genre memory of the *Khu Karma* myth. The analysis should show how *I Shall Stop the World for You* is contesting official memory and the dominant discourse on World War II in Thai society.

3.2 Counter-Memory in Twisted Romance

Foucault's idea on counter-memory introduced earlier should entail Richard Terdiman's notion of counter-discourse to validate its stronger sense of subversion by means of the reconstruction of memories. Suggestively, Terdiman values Bakhtin's idea of dialogism in his article on cultural theory and memory culture in France since the revolution (1985: 22). He also proposed a conception of counter-discourse for analysing French literature in his book *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Terdiman 1989). Such conception widely contributes to postcolonial literary studies, in particular the reading of subversive writings by the colonised. The idea was implemented by Helen Tiffin. In her article: 'Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse,' she demonstrates how we can read Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* in opposition to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The novel retells the protagonist's back story before he met his romantic interest in *Jane Eyre* (2006: 99-101). The counter-discourse in postcolonial context may be undertaken through narratives. This reading framework should be applicable to *I Shall Stop the World for You* in opposition to *Khu Karma*.

The myth of *Khu Karma* draws its plot upon the relationship between Angsumalin and Kobori in spite of Angsumalin's promise given to Vanas who joins the Free Thai Movement in the United Kingdom. As an Austenian heroine; Angsumalin's 'pride and prejudice' pushes her own romance to its closure with Kobori's death. The romance between the protagonists is also disrupted by patriotism, racial differences and an unforgettable first love rooted by Vanas. As explained earlier, reading along the mainstream message of *Khu Karma*, Angsumalin can cross over her 'pride' and (racial) 'prejudice' to embrace her true feelings, though Kobori's life is traded for it.

I Shall Stop the World for You subverts the myth of *Khu Karma* by twisting its plot and messages. Before analysing the twist, the mimicry at the level of characterisation is worth explaining. Angsumalin is a daughter of a high ranking navy who divorces Angsumalin's mother. Angsumalin lives in suburban area of Bangkok. During the war, she earns her living by her mother's orchards while Chao Rattana, in *I Shall Stop the World for You*, lives her elite life without a mother. Sharing their orphanage, these two characters are differently cultivated by their single parents. Angsumalin, by nature, is a strong girl because she yearns to prove the independence from her father figure. Growing up with her mother's love pain, Angsumalin is not open to passionate love. As the plot develops, Angsumalin is softened by Kabori's passionate love.

Chao Khamsaeng, in contrast, teaches his daughter to be tough. Out of the fence of her convent—a symbol of restriction, Chao Rattana masters her equestrian skill. She strives to travel to the forest and enjoy a sense of wild serenity. Her adventurous spirit works at its best when she volunteers to lead her people in attacking the Japanese camp after Chao Khamsaeng's death and Olan's absence. With the notion of genre memory, Chao Rattana's *female bandit* figure can be found in Thai classical literature since the late 18th century. Such figures are employed when a female protagonist needs to fight for justice that her femininity fails to facilitate. This motif is empowered by the reconstruction of memory of female historical figures after the 1932 revolution (Barmé 2002: 199-208). The figures of female leaders are also restored in Luang Wichit Wathakarn's history plays all through the 1930s and the postwar period; they influenced the Thai film industry suggested by some prominent films in history and action-adventure genres before 1985: *Suranaree* (Prince Sukornwannadit Diskul and Banthun Ongwisit, 1957), *Suek Bang Rachan/The War of Bang Rachan* (Khun Wichit Matra, 1966), *Nangfa Chatree/Bold Angel* (Suphan

Brahmaphan, 1972) and *Luksao Nakleng/A Daughter of Hooligans* (Chao Meekhunsud, 1982).

Along these lines, the developments of characterisation in the texts run to their opposite edges. Angsumalin's radical spirit is domesticated by the lessons learned from *senex*, wifhood and motherhood while Chao Rattana's is liberated. Haunted by the memory of his dead wife, Mariko, Tanaka desires Chao Rattana who features a similar appearance to Mariko. Antagonistically, Chao Rattana once burns Tanaka by her words: 'a phoney great friend.' Another situation is when Tanaka and his soldiers are torturing Bai who obstructs their way. Chao Rattana says: 'Why are you so barbaric? You claim to be civilised? You tortured even a helpless deaf man.'

The other confrontation between these two protagonists is when Chao Rattana claims her responsibility for the death of a Japanese soldier to defend her people. Tanaka's feeling deepens at this point. The incident is finalised by releasing some convicted Thai men. This encounter is also derived from *Khu Karma* when Angsumalin asks Kobori to stop punishing Phol and Bua who steal fuel from the Japanese army. Kobori does not stop while Angsumalin is being dragged out of the scene. In *I Shall Stop the World for You*, Tanaka chooses to leave the scene instead. This is another difference from the myth of *Khu Karma*.

However, Tanaka tries to subordinate Chao Rattana's boldness by inviting her to his tea ceremony. He comes to her mansion and initiates a conversation praising her courage: 'I admire your courage. That is *bushidō* spirit.' When Tanaka informs her he knows the real offender, Chao Rattana fails to tame her rage: 'Why don't you spread him out and let him die of famine? If you are not satisfied yet, do slaughter and pickle him.' The cruelty of the Japanese army is associated with barbarism as found in *Khu*

Karma. Tanaka gently responds to his romantic interest: ‘Please don’t speak like that. I just hope we can be friends. If you know me, you will see me as a common man.’

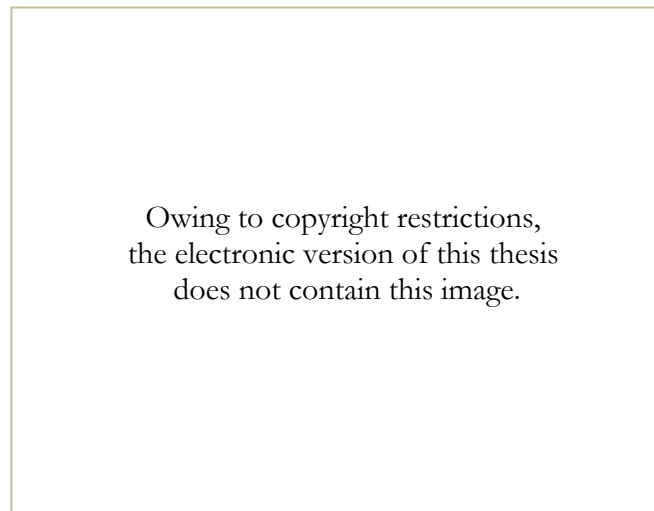


FIG. 16 The tea ceremony

Chao Rattana accepts Tanaka’s invitation to distract him from her Free Thai comrades’ mission. She is prepared by bringing her chaperone with their hidden daggers to Tanaka’s venue. She conceals her threat under a feminine dress and a red exotic flower behind her ear. In this scene, the film depicts Chao Rattana’s exotically honey-skinned looks in a contrary way to Angsumalin’s pale looks in the novel and on the screen.

Actually, the tea ceremony scene affects Tanaka more than it does Chao Rattana. He looks harmless in his Yukata that alludes to the moment Kobori and Angsumalin share under the cork tree in *Khu Karma*. The scene portrays ‘another’ Tanaka compared to his first appearance in the film when he and his troops come by train to the station surrounded by Japanese soldiers and Thai villagers. Chao Khamsaeng and other public officers are gathering in the scene. Yushido–Tanaka’s junior entourage is assumed to be Tanaka. Tanaka’s walking stick appears in the frame followed by his shoes. The camera tilts up revealing his full uniform and his scarred face. He haltingly walks to Chao Khamsaeng. Being stared at by Thai people, Tanaka

manifests his hostile aura through his ‘figure behaviour’ referring to ‘the cluster of physical signs—gesture, posture, facial expression and movement—that communicate a set of messages to the spectator’ (Burgoyne 2013: 242). Tanaka’s figure behaviour turns confrontational against Chao Khamsaeng’s hostile gaze, close up, before the beginning of their conversation. At this moment, two other characters are talking about Tanaka’s background, helping fuel the perception of his cruelty and heartlessness: ‘he is the first Japanese soldier setting ashore at Surat Thani province and the commander of fighting unit in the Philippines where he became crippled.’

Tanaka’s toughness is undermined when he is with Chao Rattana. While he is offering her his locket with Mariko’s photo inside, Tanaka laments his loss caused by the war, ‘It was 18th of April when the air raid first happened at Tokyo. I was on home leave but it was too late. I lost Mariko that day despite our love.’ Chao Rattana rejects the locket in the first place: ‘I’m sorry. I don’t think I can accept your gift. It’s so meaningful to you.’ At last, Tanaka declares his true feeling conforming to the element of romance, ‘You are meaningful to me too. Please accept it if you aren’t disgusted with a gift from your enemy.’

However, Chao Rattana is not charmed by the precious gift she is offered. When Taro secretly reports the mission of the Free Thai allies, Chao Rattana tries to spy on them. After she is asked to leave, Chao Rattana encounters Major Yohashi who is assigned to inspect Tanaka’s mission. Major Yohashi suddenly spots the locket. Chao Rattana boldly reacts: ‘Manner! You, Swine!’ Fongchan, Chao Rattana’s chaperone, pulls her dagger out and affirms her threat, ‘Honestly speaking, I don’t want to make a sin by slaughtering a swine here.’

In *Khu Karma*, Angsumalin’s coldness is melted when she allows her love with Kobori to grow. From his boyish looks at the beginning of the story, Kobori

cultivates his manhood by protecting Angsumalin; that leaves many scars on his body. Ironically, Chao Rattana's subjectivity is constructed by means of growing courage to the degree she can lead her group while Tanaka's sharpness is gradually weakened. In other words, Tanaka is deprived of his masculinity by interacting with Chao Rattana. This is subversion against the myth of *Khu Karma*. My argument can be exemplified by the scene Tanaka rushes to arrest Olan at Chao Rattana's mansion. Olan is bleeding; on the floor, his blood is identified. Chao Rattana cut herself to claim it is her blood. Unfortunately, this is not out of Tanaka's sight.

Tanaka: The cut on your arm has cut through my heart.

Chao Rattana: Did it hurt you? Surprisingly, it didn't hurt me at all. For the one I love, I can do more. I can give up my life for him. Can you hear me? I love Olan but I hate you, Tanaka!

At this point of time, Olan uncovers himself and claims his intended protection for Chao Rattana: 'My death doesn't matter. There're still other Thai patriots replacing me. Yet you must be safe. I don't want to see even a scratch hurting you.' Although, Olan once rescues Chao Rattana from a tiger and he carries her when she cannot walk, his protective quality is not explicit compared to Kobori who wins his female protagonist's heart.

There is another borrowed element from *Khu Karma* in Olan's last dialogue before he is sent to the Death Railway, 'Beyond other things, I love you. I don't want you to be in trouble. We may not see each other ever again. I just want you to know that my love spirit will be with you forever.' Olan is represented as the well-educated Thai middle-class man identical to Vanas in *Khu Karma*. *I Shall Stop the World for You* challenges *Khu Karma* by granting the passionate relationship between Chao Rattana and Olan while Vanas, in *Khu Karma*, is heartbroken. Vanas has to maintain his brotherly love for Angsumalin despite Kobori's departure. Still, Olan's passionate love does not fulfill his role as a father figure after Chao Khamsaeng's death. His

image in the later stage of the film declines. He turns helpless at the end of the film, in spite of his hopeful homecoming. The helplessness of Olan is asserted when Chao Rattana asks Tanaka to spare her lover's life.

Tanaka: I'll never let anything be above my duty.

Chao Rattana: I came here to beg you as a woman who is losing her love just like what happened to you before.

Tanaka: I can't believe you can do this much. You are disgracing yourself.

Chao Rattana: I can do more than kneeling!

The best deal Chao Rattana receives from Tanaka is that Olan's death penalty is exempted. In this sense, Chao Rattana is capable of manipulating Tanaka's decision and rescuing Olan in return. Then she embraces her female bandit image as mentioned earlier. This proclaims Chao Rattana's subjectivity in subversion to *Khu Karma*, as Angsumalin vulnerably cries a river over Kobori's death. Chao Rattana's strong personality enables her to maintain her love and patriotism but Tanaka fails to prevent himself from becoming blinded by love.

To 'write back' *Khu Karma*, the film awards death to Tanaka even though he becomes humanised and cherishes the values of love instead of the values of war. The film challenges the message of humanity in *Khu Karma* by placing patriotism higher than personal interests. In the next section, I will explain how patriotic rhetoric is practiced in the film along with genre memory.

3.3 'The Nation is above Love'

If the main theme of *Khu Karma* is *rak nuea chat* or 'love above the nation' (Kamjohn 2013: 263-327), *I Shall Stop the World for you* should convey: *chat nuea rak* or 'the nation is above love.' Thus, the film enhances the values of war and it purposefully dichotomises the notion of 'self-vs.-enemy' adopted from the war ideological model. In the last section, I focus on how the film twists the mythical

romance of *Khu Karma* through reconstructing female and male protagonists as opposed to the source text. Also, I will explore how ‘self-vs.-enemy’ is constructed from Thai patriotic perspectives.

Under the wave of nationalism since the revolution in 1932, Thai political elites ran several state campaigns to convince the Thai public of their new form of government. Speaking in Foucauldian terms, their ‘governmentality’ projects aimed at raising both nationalism and patriotism. Luang Wichit Wathakan published an article on these two concepts to educate the Thai people. Apart from this, the Thai state aimed at redefining Thainess with its notion of ‘Pan-Thaism’ in order to reclaim its prosperity in the Suvarnabhumi region before the age of modern cartography (Saichon 2002: 52, 136). Consequently, these practices expand the gap between the Thai race and the rest. Redefining Thai identity means othering and racialising people who do not own their Thai label as found in the official memory of war.

Genre memory of the Other on the Thai screen is influenced by nationalistic historiography and by Luang Wichit Wathakan’s history plays. The Burmese and the Chinese seem to be constructed as enemies (Saichon 2002: 165-174). In tragic romances like *Khu Karma*, Laung Wichit Wathakan’s *The Blood of Suphanburi* is referred to in terms of plot and characterisation. The message of humanity can be considered as one of the collective messages in global war narratives. From the Thai point of view, tragedy was rather rare in Thai narratives before the revolution but it has implemented the moral function of Thai tragedy: ‘love equalises us all’ significantly differs from the theme of ‘love conquers all’ in universal romance.

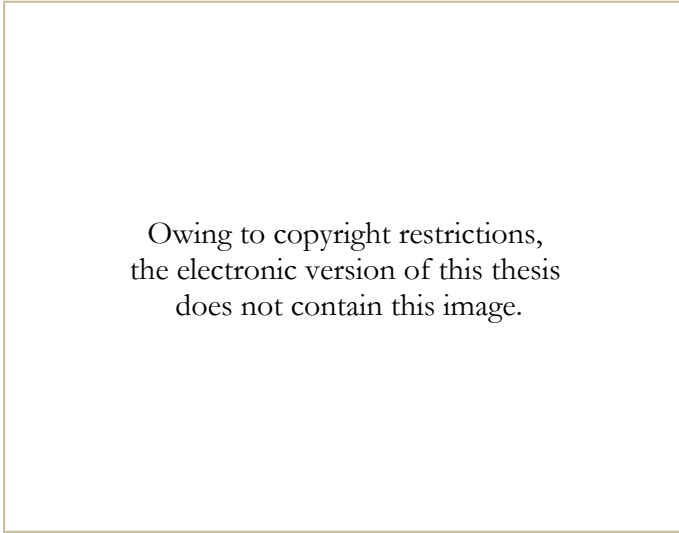
To challenge the *Khu Karma* myth, *I Shall Stop the World for You* does not stop at twisting the romance between Kobori and Angsumalin. The film undermines the sense of humanity and morality by replacing them with patriotism, nationalism

and even jingoism. Pursuing its patriotic implications, the film depicts the Free Thai Movement and its allies during World War II to show Thai resistance against the Japanese invasion as found in other countries in the South East Asian region. And to enhance nationalism, apart from the rejection of love from an enemy, the film tends to stress jingoism through the representation of the Japanese. In this section, these two issues will be discussed.

The interaction between patriotism and memory transforms Chao Wong Saensiriphan's legend into film. In his real life, Chao Wong Saensiriphan weathered many political and economic storms until his death in 1970. Under these political pressures, the stories of Chao Wong Saensiriphan were painted. Some commentators and historians labeled him as a hedonist and the last aristocrat (Weera 2011: 21). In the name of Chao Khamsaeng, Chao Wong Saensiriphan's anonymous heroism is redeemed in the film; he is represented as another great World War II martyr.

There is one Thai district governor who secretly collaborates with the Japanese. He is represented as the retarded. Before he is executed (without trial), he murdered a number of war martyrs. Also the film conveys that Thai people are 'brave in the battle' as written in the national anthem. This is illustrated by the scene where Tanaka and his soldiers investigate Thai perpetrators who kill a Japanese soldier at the market. Thai patriots, from the whole village, come forward to take responsibility for the killing. Led by Chao Rattana, they sing *Siammanussati*, which connotes their sense of patriotism and is itself connected to other memory texts.

Siammanussati is a poem written by King Vajiravudh in 1918. The king gave the poem to the Thai troops joining the Allies during the Great War. It was inspired by the last stanza of Rudyard Kipling's poem, 'For All We Have and Are' written in 1914 to promote a patriotic sense in England.



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FIG. 17 The gathering of Thai patriots

Siammanussati, the poem, was rearranged by Nart Thaworabutr. The song was featured in *Khai Bangrachan/The Camp of Bangrachan* the war film produced by Sri Khrung Company in 1939. The song was well-known because it used to be played as a prelude in Thai theatres since the 1940s before being replaced by *Sansern Phra Barami*, the royal anthem. Up to the present, Radio Thailand under the Public Relations Department plays the song with music performed by the Fine Arts Department before broadcasting daily news. Recently, *Siammanussati* has returned to the visual media again by the National Peace and Order Maintaining Council after the coup d'état on 22 May 2014.

Siammanussati, therefore, is bound up with military rhetoric in reimagining the memory of World War II. In order to detach itself from the genre memory of *Khu Karma*, the film partially identifies with the intertext of other films featuring war heroes: *Seven Street Fighters* for example. Furthermore, the confrontation between the Thai patriots and the Japanese soldiers in the film display an outwitting of the Japanese. Despite their stronger armed forces, the Japanese army is punished by laughter.

The first confrontation happens at the Thai Water Festival, right after Chao Rattana's arrival at her hometown and before Tanaka's advent. Taro leads his troops to join the festival with the Thai villagers. The scene strongly underlines Thainess with its reference to the Thai tradition while it alienates the Japanese as they fail to comprehend Thai exoticism. Taro, thus, is lured to be shamefully soaked wet and powdered alongside the rest of his troops. It is powder because, in Indian poetics, *sita* (white colour) is associated with *hasya* (humour) (Schwartz 2004: 15), and powdered faces make them look like clowns. The camera titles up from 'toe to head'. In the Thai context, the head-to-toe or toe-to-head glance is an act of insult. In this way, the camera movements seem identical to Thai non-verbal language. This camera device is repeated at the first disclosure of Tanaka but with a different sense. Besides, Taro and his troops are perished and exiled from the scene by a chorus of laughter from the Thai villagers.

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FIG. 18 Taro in Thai Water Festival and Yushido's disgraced looks

The other encounter is when Yushido—Tanaka's junior fellow—goes to the market to find some eggs. He cannot speak Thai at all. However, he tries his best to exercise non-verbal language and appears to imitate a chicken. The people at the market laugh at him. Then he is publicly humiliated by some locals who kick Yushido against a flour bag. Yushido, thus, shares this shameful look with Taro in an earlier

scene of the film. They look like clowns. Yushido decides to fight back and it causes a violent dispute between the Thai and the Japanese.

The debility of Taro and Yushido is reaffirmed in other scenes. Taro cannot calm his fear when Tanaka comes to town. He blindly commands his soldiers to salute Yushido. This makes people giggle. Further, when Tanaka gets Taro to behead him after his *seppuku*, Taro is hysterically screaming and running away. At last, he dies by being shot by Bai. His only bravery appears when, in return, he takes Bai's life by his Japanese sword.

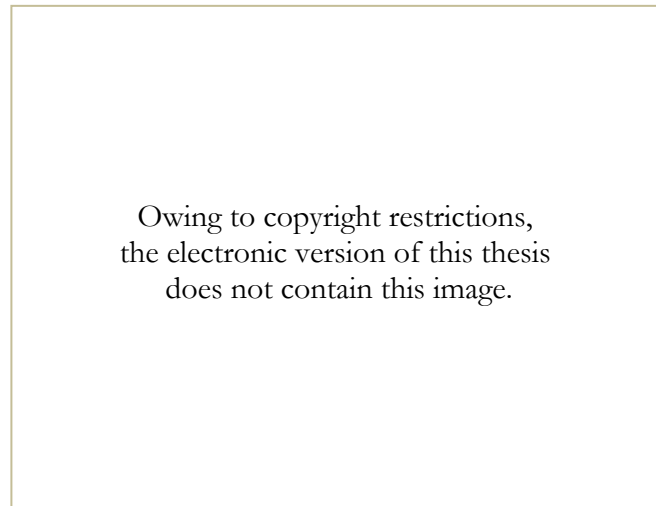


FIG. 19 Tanaka's *seppuku*

After the declaration of Japanese surrender, in the film, some soldiers commit suicide to show their spirit; they are unnamed. Conversely, Yushido is hilariously dancing around the camp. He fails to hide his joy until he comes to see Tanaka's *seppuku* ceremony. Again, he hysterically cries, warned by his superior: 'Be proud of dying like a Samurai. Don't you cry!' Yushido is too weak to kill himself; instead, he works as Tanaka's messenger to Chao Rattana. Actually, prior to his *seppuku*, Tanaka murders Major Yohashi to protect Chao Rattana. The notion of equating softness with weakness is echoed, through voiceover, in Tanaka's suicide note.

Dearest Rattana,

Let me use the word ‘dearest’ when I’m dead. When I’m alive, I must have no chance to say: Rattana...I’d rather call you Mariko because Mariko always places me in her heart. You must have only Olan in yours. I dreamt a dream: when the war ended, I would take you to my Japan. Now my dream’s been torn apart. Please let my body lie in Thailand to be close to you, my dearest. My soul will be watching over your joyful life.

Tanaka’s suicide note may leave questions to audiences. *Seppuku* is a courageous practice in the way of *samurai*. Nevertheless, Tanaka seems to choose his death because he cannot bear his pain of unrequited love. Tanaka’s body, therefore, symbolises the battle between love, as a part of humanity, and war. The Japanese, in the film, are withdrawn from their war ideology and the prosperity of Pan-Asianism. Tanaka cannot cope with his trauma as he is haunted by his past wife and unrequited love. Even though the Japanese soldiers are humanised by expressing loss and pain, through the Thai jingoistic lens, love is not able to equalise us all.

4. Chapter Conclusion

The myth of *Khu Karma* is the most popular among cultural productions referring to World War II in Thailand. As a romance, *Khu Karma* touches Thai readers and audiences in extensive cycle through continual adaptations and new technologies. The myth functions as memory text, storing and restoring memory and counter-memory suppressed by the official memory. *Khu Karma* on screen urges Thai mnemonic communities into recalling their own versions of WWII memory. It also pinpoints how memory is commoditised in screen culture and in the Thai cultural circuit as a whole. The dominance of *Khu Karma* can be proven by its revisionary text—*I Shall Stop the World for You*. The myth and the film are highly intertextual and politicised.

In all remakes of the *Khu Karma* myth, textual fidelity and genre memory, in Bahktin's sense, play a dominant role in terms of reception. Basically, those are the first criteria appraised by mainstream audiences including fans of both the novel and of the screen adaptations. The reinterpretation in *Sun & Sunrise* earned a huge negative criticism because it challenged the genre memory and reimagined historical images of the previous adaptations. However, the interpretation should not be simply regarded as a counter-memory because these challenges are potentially driven by both the star industry and the director's authorship. *Sun & Sunrise* is an interesting case. Its exhibition in the film festival in Japan (2014) can transmit the World War II memory in Thailand in a transnational context. To communicate with wider audiences, the film borrows some elements of Japanese *anime* 'as a sign of its Asianness' (Teo 2013: 79) in reconstructing memory.

In terms of aesthetics, as memory texts of the romance genre, *Khu Karma* and *I Shall Stop the World for You* foreground *shringara* (love). *Shringara* covers love in union and separation (Schwartz 2004: 15). In *Khu Karma*'s case, death tears Koberi and Angsumalin apart. Yet there is still hope for love in union. They shall reunite at the Milky Way like the Japanese folk tale. In case of *I Shall Stop the World for You*, it is love in separation in the first place then the protagonists reunite right before the end credits. The secondary *rasa* of *Khu Karma* is *karuna* (pathos, sorrow) meanwhile the story of Chao Rattana has *vira* (heroism) as its secondary *rasa*. The aesthetic differences show how *I Shall Stop the World for You* is positioned as counter-memory; it subverts the *Khu Karma* myth by means of the vernacular memory of the Free Thai allies of the North.

The greatness of *Khu Karma* is to inspire other memory texts in restoring memories of World War II and constructing a counter-myth to give multiple voices to

the past. The influences of *Khu Karma* remain in Thai popular culture. It reappears in several parodic versions, school dramas, caricatures, television shows, advertisements, folk performances, cultural tourism in the Bangkok Noi area and so on. Therefore, the WWII memory stored in *Khu Karma* is still 'lived' as a site of memory in the fashion of a constructed symbol (Nora 1989, 1998a).

CHAPTER 2

Lives at War

‘Life is no brief candle but a splendid torch
made to burn ever more brightly.’

(Sir Edward Weary Dunlop)

1. Chapter Introduction

In mnemonic communities, memory is employed as ‘a “suitcase”, a kind of storehouse or repertoire of narratives and images, from which both groups and individuals in a given culture select the items that they need’ (Burke 2015: 262). The selected subjects can be individuals, texts and events. Peter Burke suggested that ‘the fame of some individuals may last for centuries, a “life beyond the tomb” in which their biographies are transformed’ (2015: 262). The lives of great individuals can be termed ‘afterlives’. That was how biography was first created in both written and visual media. Afterlives in biographies are, for sure, bound to certain ‘texts and events’.

In the Thai screen culture, visual biography first appeared in King Prajadhipok’s private collection filmed by himself between 1926 and 1940 (Dome 2013: 64). On the other hand, affected by the official war memory, some prominent historical figures were used as materials in early Thai biopics. The sources of memory can be traced from monuments, social studies textbooks, conventional literary biographies produced since the late 19th century and other entertainment media particularly Luang Wichit Wathakan’s history plays promoted by the Thai state from the 1930s onwards.

Since the early 1930s, the post-revolution period of Thailand, some historical figures called *virachon* (heroes) were visually glorified in the form of monuments. Examples of such glorification include: King Naresuan the Great, King Taksin the Great, King Buddhayodfa Chulaloke the Great, Queen Suriyothai, Thao Suranaree,

Thao Thepkasattree and Thao Srisunthon. Unsurprisingly, after a revision of the social studies curriculum in 1948, these figures and their battles were taught at primary and secondary levels (Siriwan 2010: 51). School textbooks provided some illustrations based on the reimagined appearances of these monuments.¹

Biopics gradually emerged in Thai cinema in the 1950s. Most of them were related to the venerable Siamese monarchy. Some interesting early biopics include *Phanthai Norasingha* (Prince Bhanubandhu Yukol, 1950) telling life of a royal entourage who died for his duties, *Phra Chao Krung Thonburi/The King of Thonburi* (1952), a biopic of King Taksin the Great, *Fa Thammathibet/Prince Thammathibet* (Suphan Promphan, 1956) a mediation on the life history of the great court poet in the early 18th century and *Chaomae Yuhua Sri Sudachan/Queen Sri Sudachan* (1954) which retells the life of a notorious Ayutthaya queen of the 16th century.

On another side of the global screen, in the 1950s, the influence of the Hollywood studio system was gradually played down. American biopics were introduced before the rise of television during that age. However, the first American television biopic was broadcast in 1971 (Custen 1992: 215), later than the emergence of the same genre in Thailand. Thai television biopics were launched since the establishment of Channel 4, the first Thai television channel, in 1955. Over time, the biopic genre has grown more and more popular among television producers. The genre has continually been revisited in productions that celebrate or commemorate special occasions. Some examples include: *Nai Khanomtom/Master Khanomtom of Thai Boxing* (Noppadon Mongkholphan, 1996) on Channel 7 produced to celebrate the first gold medal for Thailand at the 26th Olympic Games at Atlanta won by Somrak Khamsing and *Phanthai Norasingha* (Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol, 2016) on

¹ Most of these figures are represented in Laung Wichit Wathakan's history plays as well.

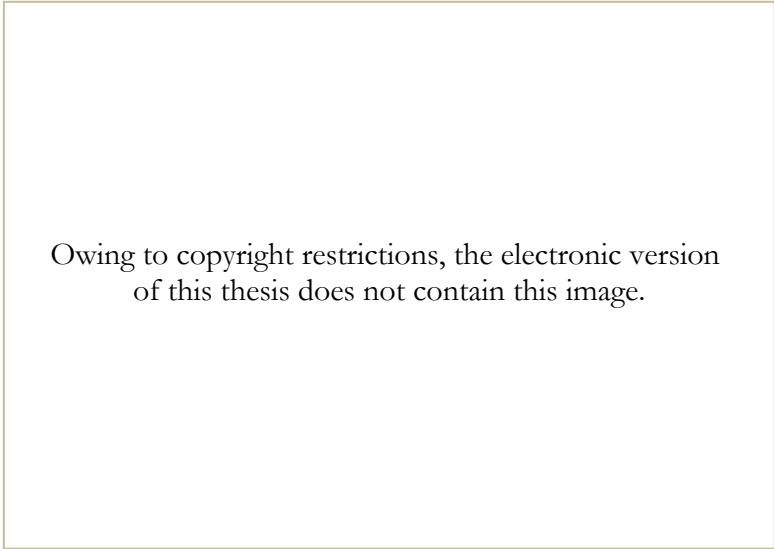
Workpoint Channel televised in May to commemorate the 70th anniversary of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's accession.

Exploring the development of the biopic genre in the Thai screen culture, I have found that the taste of Thai directors and audiences favoured mythical figures or 'great men'. The larger-than-life biopics of commoners, as seen in early Thai television biopics, shared their materials with the cinematic biopics: popular history plays and literary biographies. Some of the early pieces thereof were *Anuphap Phokhun Ramkhamhaeng/Charisma of King Ramkhamhaeng* inspired by Luang Wichit Wathakan's nationalistic works; *Susithaihao/Empress Dowager Cixi of the Imperial China* adapted from M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's literary biography; and a series of biopics inspired by figures from Lord Buddha's biography (Paowipa 1985: 23-25).

The afterlives of warriors and kings were the vehicles of war memory in Thai biopics on film and television, whereas the lives of commoners, without a war memory, became increasingly common in the early 1980s—after the 9 October 1976 Massacre. During the 1980s, *Wanlee* (Ekkalak, 1985) touched Thai audiences with its plot of a poor schoolgirl named Wanlee nursing her sick mother and disabled grandmother. At the prologue of the film, the real life Wanlee confirms: 'some part of the film may be fictionalised but it is based on my life story, not a tale.' The film was supported by the National Council on Social Welfare of Thailand. In the same way, *Chanraem Pratheep Haeng Lum Maenam Sai/Chanraem: The Light of Sai River*, directed by Phankham, was launched in 1992. The film shows Chanraem who devotes her life to teaching children of Northern hill tribes in Thailand. To educate those children is to keep them away from prostitution. These examples proved that Thai audiences were rather familiar with biopics of people on the news. However, these two films also conformed to the type of great persons in Hollywood and Bollywood biopics. Although the protagonists

are not of royal pedigree, they could ascertain their great humanity more than common people are capable of.

After the economic crisis in 1997, the memory boom in Thailand threw its light to the Thai commoners. The war memory was also told through the commoners' eyes. One of the reformist biopics of the period was *14 Tula Songkhram Prachachon/The Moon Hunter* (Bhandit Rittakol, 2001) adapted from literary biographies of leading student activists under the Marxist wind of the 14 October 1973 event. Another commoner's life embodied in the war memory was Luang Pradit Phairoah (Sorn Silpabanleng), a great Thai musician, who lived his later life during World War II and the age of Pibunsongkhram's cultural reforms. He was portrayed in *Hom Rong/The Overture* (Itthisunthorn Wichailuck, 2004). The film tackles Sorn's life from the cradle to the grave. Therefore this biopic was celebrated by Thailand's Ministry of Culture as an index of Thainess affected by the revolution and modernisation since 1932.



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FIG. 20 Thai biopics of the 2010s: *The Moon* (2011) and *Yang Bao the Movie* (2013)

Since then people from different walks of life were filmed and screened: for instance, the life of a homosexual kick-boxer in *Beautiful Boxer* (Ekachai Uekrongtham, 2004). Particularly after 2006, when the influence of Prime Minister

Thaksin Shinawatra empowered the ideology of a 'self-made' bourgeoisie, the portrayals of lives on the Thai silver screen were more diversified (Pasoot 2015: 27-29). Some examples are: the from-soil-to-star life of a folksong singer in *Pumpuang/The Moon* (Bandit Thongdee, 2011), the life of a young tycoon in *Top Secret Wairun Phan Lan/The Billionaire* (Songyos Sugmakanan, 2011) and the development of Marxist-winged music band in *Yang Bao the Movie* (Yuthakorn Sukmuktapha, 2013).

Sharing the impact of socio-political transition with film culture, biographies of commoners were first televised in the mid-1980s. *Tee Yai*, the life of a legendary Thai bandit was screened on Channel 7 in 1985; it was later remade in 1999 and 2016. In 1986, the life of Phon Kingphet, the first Thai world boxing champion was produced and aired on Channel 7 as well. He was celebrated as the legacy of Thai boxing inherited from the old Siam era. Biopics on film and television have been continuously reproduced since then. During the 1990s, however, biopics concerning commoners were not prominent on television. They could not become more visible in the age of the memory boom because royal-nationalistic television biopics solidified the mainstream political discourse: *Kasatriya/The Kashatriya* and *Maharat Khu Phaendin/King Naresuan, the Savior* (Nirattisai Kaljareuk, 2003-2004) on Channel 5, *Taksin/King Taksin the Great* (Nopporn Vatin, 2007) on Channel 3 and *Anuphap Phokhun Ramkhamhaeng/Charisma of King Ramkhamhaeng* (Siam and Sayom Sangworiboot, 2008) on Channel 7.

The commoners' lives returned to the television screen in the 2010s after the establishment of the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS) which will be discussed later. This organisation aimed to be an alternative media, as it declared not to bear political or commercialising pressure from other social units. Forgotten historical

figures were retrieved and channeled. Some of the important examples are: *Mo Nguan Saengdao Haeng Sattha/Life of Mo Nguan, the Star of Hope* (Weerasak Saengdee, 2010) which tells the story of a medical student who went to the forest after the mass massacre in 1976; *Amdaeng Muean Kap Nai Rit/Muen and Rit* (Sathaporn Nakwilairoj, 2012) which displays the life of a Siamese woman of 19th century who fought for her human rights; and *Boonpong* (Somporn Cheaboon-Um, 2013), the main focus of this chapter.

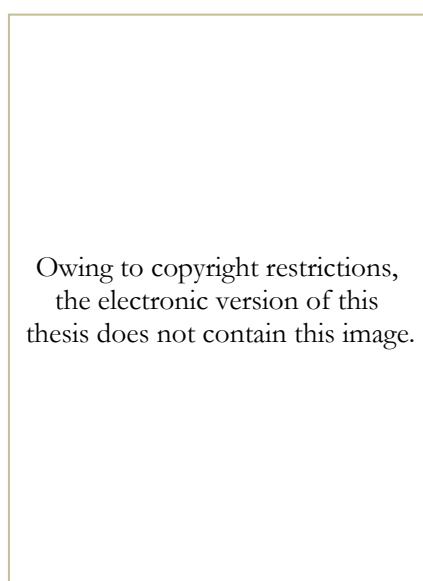


FIG. 21 *Boonpong*'s poster (English version)

The story of *Boonpong* plays a crucial part in Thai memory culture; it discloses another face of World War II which does not conform to the official version. In the revision of an alternative WWII memory, *Boonpong*'s afterlife and the political crisis in the 2010s are intertwined with ThaiPBS as a new media institution of the period. As presented earlier, class issues in Thai biopics should be taken into account because they have shaped the genre memory of the biopic and memory culture. Therefore, the first section of this chapter will deal with class politics and memory politics before moving to issues on transnational memory and the moralising function of the memory respectively. Another important aspect is that *Boonpong* can also be

read as both biopic and docudrama; these two genres are interrelated (Lipkin 1999). The dramatic elements of the series should appeal to Thai audiences. That is how I also place *Boonpong* among other television dramas. This should show how certain genres are related to their markets (Harbord 2002: 82-83).

2. Politics of Memory vs. Politics of Thai Commoners

Boonpong Sirivejaphan (1906-1982) was born in Kanchanaburi. He was sent to a prestigious upper secondary school in Bangkok in 1926. After 8 years of working in the National Railway Organisation, Boonpong served as a mayor of Kanchanaburi from 1943-1945. His business—Boonpong and Brothers Company—was run by him and his family. As he was fluent in English, many prisoners of war came to him describing their misery in the camps. Boonpong also supplied financial support, medicines, batteries, and, most importantly, compassion to the POWs. Boonpong became good friends with Sir Edward Weary Dunlop, a prominent Australian war figure. Also, he was dealing with the ‘V’ Organisation, established by civilians of the Allied countries, to help the POWs. Because of the conflict of interests among the groups of people Boonpong got involved with, right after the war he was violently assaulted. He survived his severe injuries thanks to medical care provided by grateful POWs. Following his recovery, he ran a transportation business in Bangkok and was also involved in land development. He finally passed away at Siriraj Hospital, Bangkok. There were a great deal of obituaries for Boonpong in Australian and Thai-English newspapers.² In 1986, the Weary Dunlop-Boonpong Fellowship was established, in memory of Boonpong’s unflinching humanity, to support Thai surgeons (Worawut 2001: 112-121).

² Many of the obituaries are curated at the JEATH Museum, Kanchanaburi.

The afterlife of Boonpong was turned into a television biopic in May 2012; directed by Somporn Cheaboon-Um and his crew from Hunk Mnoga Company. The series was first aired in April 2013. The production research took more than five years; *Boonpong*'s in-depth research has been proclaimed for its contribution to the learning of history in Thailand. Such contribution can be sharpened by Amy Holdsworth's observation on the relationship between television and memory:

Contrary to the notion of television as an amnesiac and moving on from the privileging of the news and media event in discussions of television memory, [...] television is understood as part of both a material network of memory and a system of everyday memory-making within and in relation to the home and the family (2011: 3).

The quotation above implies the potential of television as a memory institution; it can have access to or be accessed by a wider public compared to other memory institutions dominated by the state, for example schools or the army. However, the state may attempt to manipulate television. In Thailand, the tension between state manipulation and the 'Free-TV' ideology was ignited in the mid-2000s when the Yellow-Shirt Movement was rallying against Thaksin Shinawatra's regime followed by the Red-Shirt Movement—Thaksin's devotees (Baker and Phasuk 2014: 278-279).

The heated political conflicts gave birth to Thailand's first 'Free-TV' channel under the name Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS) in 2008. Interestingly, the political agenda of the channel was rather outspoken:

In establishing ThaiPBS, we were obstructed by conflicts of political interests. [...] The countries with strong public media are to develop the political maturity, provide mechanism for the balance of power, standardise democracy and qualified citizens. In those countries, people should tolerate different ideas, artists have their creative platforms, public interests and national heritage should be protected, communities should be prosperous, and the marginalised groups can have their voice publicised (*Thai Public Broadcasting Service (ThaiPBS): Annual Report 2008 2009*: 3).

With this positioning, ThaiPBS launched its research on communication and reception of the public media. It also erected a ground-breaking 'Audience Council' for the

channel to co-work in developing plans, strategies, and help maintain a sense of quality for the news and other programmes. The members of ThaiPBS's Audience Council are from different backgrounds. The selection and application for membership are based upon a variety of educational backgrounds, occupations, ages, genders and religious beliefs (*ThaiPBS: Annual Report 2008 2009*: 108-109, 137). For this reason ThaiPBS has been regarded as a hope of the Thai society which needs to be educated on cultural diversities and on respecting differences. The voice of the commoners from various political movements has been included and significantly politicised in the operation of the channel.

Bridging ThaiPBS to the emergence of visual biographies of the commoners introduced in the last section, I find ThaiPBS playing a dominant role in endorsing the politics of the commoners through life narratives and cultural memory on screen. In 2013, apart from *Boonpong* and a documentary of outstanding figures from the BBC and Discovery Channel, ThaiPBS screened various other documentaries and docudramas about commoners, such as: *Lives at the Southern Violence*, *The Way of Truth: 40th Commemoration of 14 October Event*, *Unless It Happened: 14 October 1973*, *Suep Nagasathian: The Light that Never Fades* and *Fighting for Thailand: A Life of Volleyball Player*, to name but few. This group of shows was targeting a 'general and new generation audience' (*ThaiPBS: Annual Report 2013 2014*: 150). A television biography of Boonpong should, undoubtedly, have grown in concert with those shows.

Located into the wider picture of the official war memory in Thailand, the memory of Boonpong cannot earn its space in either monuments or school textbooks. Even though there are many publications concerning World War II in Thailand, the mainstream narratives are dominated by the story of the Free Thai Movement to

justify the political positioning of the country after the war. In some sites of memory related to Kanchanaburi, the selfless acts of Boonpong are as equal as some of the Thai people who risked their lives to give away fruit from their orchards to the POWs; it, however, fails to outshine the Free Thai Movement's afterlives: 'with those merciful acts and the Free Thai allies' bravery, Thailand was freed from being a war loser' (Apinya 2012: 7). Shadowed by triviality in the Thai official memory, writings on Boonpong do not tend to significantly levitate his status. In *Cultural Heritage Management of the Death Railway*, a recent work of Thai scholarship on World War II memory, Boonpong is mentioned in brief: 'Boonpong secretly brought money donated by British businessmen inside cigarette packets. He was another one of the kind, like other Thais giving clothes, medicines and cash to the POWs for their special meals in Christmas season' (2012: 21).

There was secret military training for the Free Thai allies in Kanchanaburi. Boonpong did not appear to be involved with those people. To form a memory of Boonpong in the Thai screen culture with a notion that he is not recognised by the state, the director characterises Boonpong as a common gentleman unlike the Free Thai allies who are normally represented as highly educated persons and noblemen. Actually, Boonpong's father, named Khian, is not a common folk medic. He is ranked as Khun Sirivejaphan. *Khun* is a title conferred to senior officers inferior to *Luang*. The title is removed from the series to equalise Khian as a commoner. Beside this, Boonpong is technically detached from his governmental duty. In the series, Boonpong is not shown as mayor of Kanchanaburi. Likewise, his privileged educational background is omitted. The characterisation connotes the agenda of the series: it yearns to disengage Boonpong from the official memory, the state and the

classist consciousness in the Thai context. The act of disengagement is addressed in the introductory documentary of the series—*The Last Bolster of the Death Railway*:

The reason why Thailand was not a loser in war was attributed to two major reasons. But there is another reason Thai people rarely know and scarcely talk about the story of Boonpong Sirivejaphan. [...] When all those prisoners of war went back to their motherland, some of them became leaders in their countries. Therefore, in meetings, those ex-POWs helped Thailand by understanding that Thailand was forced to declare war against the Allies.

Boonpong's benevolent spirit is highlighted through the roles of the Free Thai Movement's diplomacy and the civilian government. However, the problems of Thailand's position in wartime are criticised by KG. The character is based upon KG Granner of the 'V' Organisation, founded by civilians of the Allied countries.

Boonpong rushes to see KG as recommended by Dunlop when he has not enough money to purchase medical supplies.³ At the outset, Boonpong is rejected and dramatically insulted. KG contemptuously criticises Thailand: 'because your government can't decide which side they want to play. [...] Today the Japanese, tomorrow the Allies. You! [...] You want me to believe that a war profiteer like you actually has a good side?' Boonpong is stunned. Before being dragged out, Boonpong shouts 'Don't let the war destroy the humanity inside you!'

KG sent his man to secretly investigate Boonpong. He is finally convinced that Boonpong is sincerely helping the POWs. Befriended by KG, Boonpong always discusses war situations with him. When praised, Boonpong modestly replies: 'There're many who are braver, KG. Those parachuting to the Northern base to fight against the Japanese or those movements in the West declaring that Thai people don't agree with the Japanese invasion are braver.'⁴ Boonpong is referring to *Seri Thai*

³ Every time Boonpong goes to see KG in Bangkok, monochromatic footage of the Grand Palace and neighbouring areas is inserted. This stylistic feature should be considered as a genre memory from *Khu Karma*.

⁴ The Northern base in this sense can potentially refer to the mission of the Free Thai allies in the film *I Shall Stop the World for You* (1985).

while separating himself from their operations. KG kindly remarks: ‘All world-changing movements usually begin in a heart of a commoner.’ Apparently, the politics of the commoners are emphasised here.

In the late part of the series, KG needs to escape from Bangkok because he is threatened by the Thai government. KG’s attitude towards Thailand is unflattering: ‘You know best. Thailand can pick any side. Their smiles are even pretentious.’ This way the interaction between Boonpong and KG can be considered as a new confrontation to the controversial past in Thai memory culture. The controversy can be seen from the screen aesthetics. In every scene Boonpong and KG encounter, the lighting is low-key. There is no light within the shuttered room. The characters are always covered by shadow, confronting each other. The atmosphere remains dimmed until the last day Boonpong sees KG. This connotes the ambiguous relationship between Thailand and the United Kingdom during and after the war. Without American diplomatic support, Thailand might have been more disadvantaged by the British political forces in the postwar period (Direk 1967: 421-426). The controversial memory is retrieved by the screen culture in order to not be concealed by official memory. Hence to propose an alternative memory, *Boonpong* radically vilified *Seri Thai*.

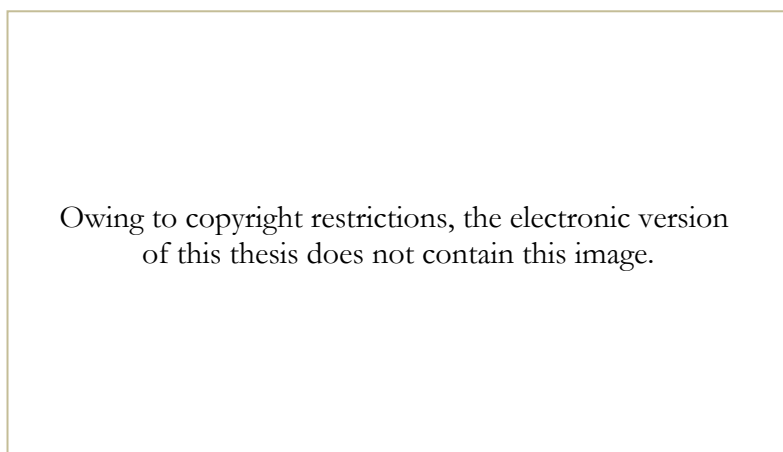


FIG. 22 The encounter between Boonpong and KG

Boonpong's getting in touch with the 'V' organisation, can be regarded as undertaking the work of the Fifth Column.⁵ This organisation worked underground because the Thai government was seen as a collaborator of the Axis powers. Still, Boonpong is suspicious among the Free Thai allies in the Kanchanaburi area. One day Boonpong's medical parcel is snatched by a mysterious man. Puzzled by the situation, Boonpong is investigated by that man. Boonpong is also threatened: 'supplying medicine to the POWs and contacting the 'V' organisation, you're breaking the law.'

Boonpong refuses to help the man. He is presented as suspicious and hostile, unlike the Free Thai members found in other screen texts. The mysterious man, again, follows Boonpong to Banpong when he is purchasing medicine with Panee. This time the mysterious man goes with his two fellows. He forces Boonpong to help them. The man threatens to kidnap Panee: 'Aren't you concerned for your family?' Fortunately, Panee can outwit the mysterious man's fellows. She safely returns to her father. However, the image of the Free Thai allies is represented as that of a 'villain' or 'bigot'; this image cannot be traced in either official or popular memory. Instead, the Free Thai Movement is typically represented as one of heroes and saviours.

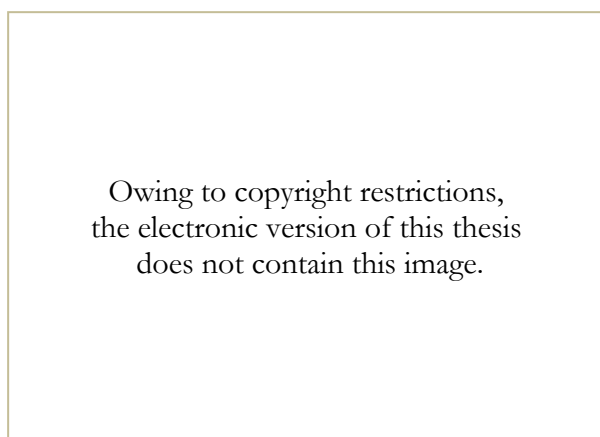


FIG. 23 The threatening image of the Free Thai Movement

⁵ Fifth Column (*naew thii ha* in Thai) is used for secret agents. In the context of World War II in Thailand, Fifth Column worked as messengers and secret agents.

To disown the official memory of the Free Thai Movement and to proclaim the politics of the commoners, *Boonpong* sensibly utilises other sites of memory, such as the Death Railway and the Hellfire Pass, as its ‘backdrops.’ As it does not belong to the memory in nationalistic frames, *Boonpong* seeks to be entangled with a more ‘transnational memory’ found in Kanchanaburi. This is discussed in the next section.

3. When Transnational Memory Meets Vernacular Memory

Detaching from the official memory, the memory of Boonpong has owned its place in other sites of memory in Kanchanaburi, Boonpong’s homeland. The rhetoric of his memory is much influenced by the way it was curated in museums and other commemorative sites. In addition to two prominent war cemeteries supervised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), in Kanchanaburi, there are more than four museums run by private and governmental sectors retelling World War II events. The only national museum in the province exhibits the pre-historic civilisation and ruins of the *Bodhisattava* image while the recent history was studied by Buddhist monks and *farangs* who are into historical matters.

Excluded from the official war memory, the afterlife of Boonpong has been alternatively shaped through the vernacular memory. The memory of POWs, rescued by Boonpong’s unfailing mercy, lies within the initialising process of the vernacular memory. Dollied out from Thailand’s national frame, the memory of Boonpong is, ironically, anthologised in the Scottish memory of the Second World War. Browsing through the pages of the book *Beyond the Bamboo Screen: Scottish Prisoners of War under the Japanese*, I found at least three POWs evoking their fond memory of a Thai unsung hero: ‘[Boonpong] was extremely good for the morale and I was told that a decoration was conferred on him after the war. It was well deserved’ (McGowran

2000: 72-73). Tracing to Liverpool, I found Brigadier Sir Philip John Denton Toosey (1904-1975) whose story was retold by his granddaughter. *The Colonel of Tamarkan: Philip Toosey and the Bridge on the River Kwai* dedicates its pages to memories of Boonpong (Summers 2005: 200-202, 302-303, 338-340). Tracking the memory down to Kent and London, the afterlife of Boonpong can be found in John Coast's bestseller war memoir: *Railroad of Death* (1946). The book would later become core material which informed *Return to the River Kwai* (1969), a documentary filmed for the BBC.

The mnemonic mosaic of Boonpong in the United Kingdom can be surpassed by popularisation of its kind in the Australian context which will be discussed later on. It is convincing that the reconstruction of Boonpong's afterlife in Thailand, particularly in Kanchanaburi province, was driven by 'transnational memory.' The debate was recently raised by two Australian scholars researching the memory of POWs in the Australian-Thai contexts. The term transnational memory arrived during the early stages of the report but at the final part of the study, the conclusion was addressed: 'the claim of these sites to represent a transnational memory is thin' (Beaumont and Witcomb 2015: 82). Because the sites of World War II memory in Kanchanaburi have not 'given birth to joint acts of remembrance in which cultural and national differences are subsumed within a new transnational synthesis which reflects different ways of remembering the past' (2015: 82-83).

What can be problematic here is the term 'transnational'. Borrowing Steven Vertovec's explanation, I treat the transnational as 'sustained, cross-borders relationships spanning nation-states' (2009: 1) Sharing an equivalent definition, in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney provide a sound observation of transnational memory: 'the combination of "transnational" and "memory" opens up an analytic space to consider the interplay

between social formations and cultural practices, or between state-operated institution of memory and the flow of mediated narratives within and across state-borders' (2014: 4). Along these lines, though there are not 'joint acts of remembrance,' we cannot deny 'the flow of mediated narratives' absorbed into memory texts on Boonpong in the Thai-Australian contexts beyond physical borders of these two nation-states.

In this section, I will explore 'the flow of mediated narratives' embarking the reconstruction of Boonpong's afterlife on screen. The 'acts of remembrance' found in this television series are a combination between memory, counter-memory, local memory, official memory and beyond. The starting point of the section lies within the global perception of World War II events occurred in Thailand and the lives of the POWs on the international screen, and I will close the curtain on this section with the Australianising process carried within *Boonpong* to prove its transnational aspects.

3.1 Encountering the Bridge on the River Kwai on the 'Western' Screen

Saphan kham maenam khwae or the bridge on the River Kwai is a part of the Thailand-Burma Railway, later called the Death Railway, built between June 1942 and October 1943 by forced Asian labourers and the prisoners of war from the fallen Malaya and Java. In the Japanese language, the labourers from different racial backgrounds: Indian, Chinese, Tamil, Malay, Burmese and the rest were called *romusha*. Most of the prisoners of war were Australian, British and Dutch. The death rate caused by the construction can be estimated at more than 12,000 of the 60,000 allied prisoners while 80,000 or 100,000 Asian labourers died (Apinya 2012: 13). The tragedy of the Death Railway gave birth to *Le Pont de la Rivière Kwai*, a French novel written by Pierre Boulle. The novel was first published in 1952, and its English

version followed in 1954. Boulle's tale of Thailand became immensely famous through David Lean's film adaptation first screened in 1957.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the global perception of World War II events in Thailand, more or less, have been geared by Boulle's and Lean's interpretations ever since their respective releases. *Boopong* was the first Thai revisiting, in the space of screen culture, of the *Bridge on the River Kwai* myth. *Boonpong*'s focus on the POWs and their Thai saviour reaffirms a different standpoint as it creates a sharp reaction to Lean's film.

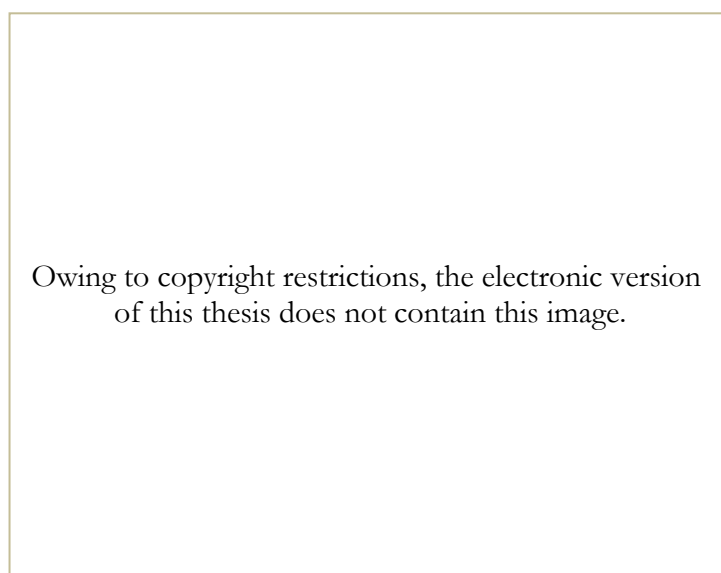


FIG. 24 Poster of the *Bridge on the River Kwai*

Boulle was attacked due to the inauthenticity of his story. He himself was not a POW at the Death Railway. The novel was inspired by Malayan rubber planters, the forced labourers at the site. He also flavoured his novel by appropriating some motifs from memoirs written by British POWs: such as John Coast and Rohan Rivett (Hack and Blackburn 2008: 149). However, the film helped expand market of the British POWs' life writings. The array of writing can be considered as their 'protest' against the film wrongly representing the POWs after their official protest led by the Far East Prisoners of War Association (FEPOW). Ironically, most revisionist narratives of the

Far East POWs in Britain and the Commonwealth were attached to the bridge—their core symbol—as Frances Houghton observes in her article: ‘a shared revised form of the Kwai “myth” emerges in these texts. The film’s discourse has arguably driven these narrative representations ever since its release’ (2014: 234).

One striking example of ‘a shared revised form of the Kwai myth’ is that the River Kwai *per se* did not exist before the film; during the war, the bridge, referred to in the film, was built at the Tamakham sub-district by Mae Klong River where it met *khwae noi* which simply meant a small river. Perplexed by linguistic barriers, *farangs* pronounced *tamakham* as *tamakarn* and *khwae* as Kwai. Before the war ended, two bridges at Tamakham, both the wooden one and the concrete one, were destroyed by an air raid. The concrete bridge was repaired and renamed after the launch of Lean’s *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. The film was awarded not only its artistic successes but also received global attention. As a result, global tourists and war pilgrims have been going *en masse* to the bridge as a site of memory. It still fuels the tourism industry of Kanchanaburi (Apinya 2012: 14).

Therefore the local authority named the bridge after the film, and strategically renamed the upper part of Mae Klong River as *khwae yai* or the Big Khwae River along with the old *khwae noi*, which was later regarded as the Small Khwae River, to draw its connection to this popular film and memory (Houghton 2014: 225-256). After the reestablishment of the bridge, Kanchanaburi’s administrative unit set up a new provincial slogan to promote cultural tourism and to cultivate a sense of local pride: ‘Ancient city, the Pagoda borders, Kanchanaburi jewels, the Bridge on the River Kwai and mineral resources within the waterfalls.’ This is how the transnational memory was woven into Thai vernacular memory. People of my generation were taught the cruelty of war through the story of the bridge on *khwae yai* and its

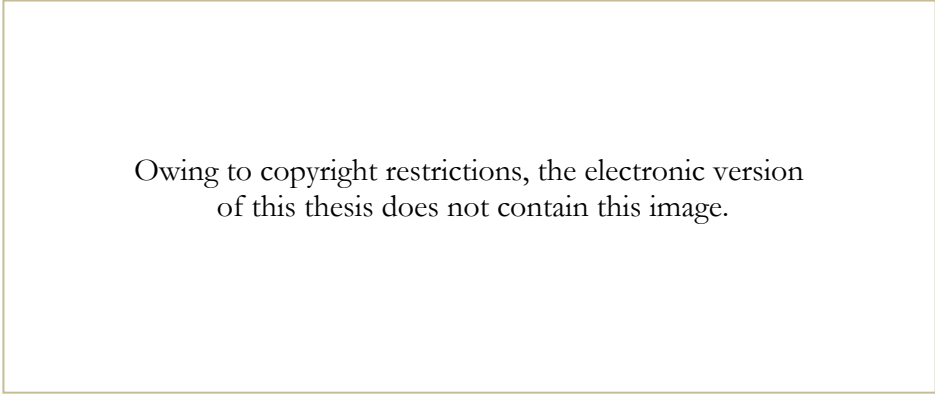
associated commemorative rituals without knowing that it used to be a ‘foreign’ memory.

The plot line of the film deals with Colonel Nicholson (Alec Guinness), the protagonist, who does not let the soldiers under his command work as slaves in building the bridge and the railway. Forced by his responsibility and Nicholson’s stubbornness, Colonel Saito (Sessue Hayakawa) allows Nicholson and his fellows to build the bridge their way. Nicholson denies that he collaborates with the enemy; he aims at restoring the military discipline among his men and demonstrating the greatness of the ‘Western’ engineering wisdom. Nonetheless, the bridge is eventually demolished by the mission of Shears (William Holden) who flees from the POW camp. Shears is obliged to return with his allies. After all, the bridge is built under Nicholson’s supervision to be drowned into the River Kwai by Nicholson himself when he is faint and falls upon the detonator set by the Allies. The last line of the film dialogue is addressed by Major Clipton (James Donald): ‘Madness! Madness!’

The POWs voiced their opposition against the film with regard to the representational inauthenticity of their experiences. The misrepresentation in the film did not solely relate to the POWs; it concerned local Thai minor characters as well. The subversive project against such misrepresentation here is to re-appropriate ‘a shared revised form of the Kwai myth’ through Boonpong’s memory.

Notably, the imperialist atmosphere is flavoured within the novel and the film; the name of Rudyard Kipling is referenced by Colonel Nicholson while Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is quoted in the source text (Hack and Blackburn 2008: 149). These two authors are famous for their British colonial discourse. The hint of power relation between the colonisers and the colonised can be detected from the interaction between the ‘Western’ and Thai characters, for example, Major Warden

(Jack Hawkins) who used to teach ‘Oriental languages’ at Cambridge patronises Thai villagers in the film. A village leader called Yai addresses Warden as *nai* (master). Yai and his woman bearers join the mission owing to their hatred of the Japanese; most of the villagers are forced to work at the railway. On the way to the bridge Shears and Lieutenant Joyce (Geoffrey Horne) seem to charm the bearers and to be charmed by their ‘Oriental’ beauty. Yai also sacrifices his own life for the mission. The local people, thus, become handy for the mission under the elusive touches of their servitude and eroticisation.



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FIG. 25 Positionality of the native Thai in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*

The representation of Thai people in the film seems to be overlooked by the ‘Western’ critics. The film is crucial to the memory of World War II in Thai mnemonic communities, particularly in Kanchanaburi, in spite of its shooting location in Sri Lanka. The film is curated in most of the war museums in Kanchanaburi. It is repetitively exhibited in war-related events in Thailand. Some footage of the film is utilised in a Thai documentary about the war, and, the film is usually mentioned in the annual festival at the bridge on the River Kwai. Hence, I read *Boonpong*, the series as a revisionist writing of the myth from the Western screen culture.

The connection between the film and the series made here is not over-interpreted. Even with its focus on Australian POW experiences at Chungkai Camp and the Hellfire Pass, 50 kilometres away from Tamakham, *Boonpong* does not fail to

visualise a huge wooden bridge touching on the inspiring model from *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. The rebuilt wooden structure features in many television scoops on the *Boonpong* series production. Also, in the series, stories of the POWs and air raids widespread among the Thai community in the market are made with special reference to the bridge at Tamakham.

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FIG. 26 The annual *sons et lumière* at the bridge and the opening event of *Boonpong*

As the bridge is at the centre of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and other echoing and countering narratives, *Boonpong* aims to reinterpret the myth since its launching event on 25 April 2013. At the event, the annual *son et lumière* performance at the bridge, influenced by the British film, was re-enacted. The spectacular scene of the train, the railway, the bridge and the bombs were contested by a newer or revised version of the same old myth.

The event at the bridge tricked its audiences that the story should be faithful to the myth. Yet the bridge, as a core motif, is derailed to the Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in *Boonpong*'s opening scene. Old Boonpong is carrying a bouquet with his adorable daughter—Panee. The first dialogue of the series starts with her statement: 'the war has dramatically changed our country, dad.' The cemetery connotes the heartfelt feelings shared between Boonpong and the POWs and the commemorative sense conducted by the nations of those fallen soldiers rather than a clichéd discursive reproduction of the bridge. Although, in the last scene of the series, the bridge

appears; it implies the new meaning of the bridge encoded through all the stories attached to Boonpong's afterlife. The real Panee–Boonpong's daughter in her old age—is sitting on her wheelchair staring at the bridge with a peaceful smile.

In terms of characterisation, Yai, the village leader in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, is replaced by Boonpong; a loyal servant is replaced by an honoured saviour. Boonpong speaks eloquent English while the Western POWs speak their languages and broken Thai. The woman bearers are succeeded by Thai women who are economically independent. They are keen on articulating their own worldviews. They are sweet but morally courageous enough to help the POWs and to face rough Japanese soldiers.

One of the most important subversive techniques in the series is the representation of the POWs. In *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, most of them are British. They work under a British commander. The POWs of other nations seem to be less apparent. In *Boonpong*, the British soldiers are replaced by Australian soldiers. The fictive Colonel Nicholson who is revealingly proud of his prestigious Britishness is substituted by Colonel Sir Ernest Edward 'Weary' Dunlop who is regarded as an Australian war hero despite his exceptional humbleness. This set of representation is significantly interwoven to the mnemonic community in Kanchanaburi in a transnational dimension. This issue will be discussed in detail in the next section.

3.2 The Australianisation of Memory

In *Boonpong*, there exists a POW called John. He once says to his fellows: 'tonight I'll write the story of Boonpong while I'm still alive.' I am positive, to his determining announcement, that this character is derived from John Coast (1916-1989), a British POW who published a renowned memoir—*Railroad of Death* (1946). The book was published into two Thai translations in 1992 (translated by Ong-Ard

Nomitkul) and 1994 (translated by Sangkheet Chanthanabodhi). Another notable memoir of a British POW in Thai translation is Leo Rawlings's *And the Dawn Came Up like Thunder* (1972). Rawlings sent his first book to Boonpong when it got published. The book then travelled to a Thai editor in 1983. Decades later, the translated version of the book was launched at the Hellfire Pass Memorial in December 2008 (Rawlings 2008).

The memory of Boonpong in POWs' narratives was revealed earlier but these two books were vital in the pre-production phase of the series. John Coast's memoir is referred to by Pensiri Sawetwiharee, a television screenwriter of the series, in the behind-the-scene documentary of *Boonpong, The Last Bolster on the Death Railway*. Right after the name of Coast, Weary Dunlop's war diaries are quoted. This piece of evidence proves that *Boonpong* was reconstructed from several sites of memory even though the opening credit indicates: '*Boonpong* is a television series based on the oral history of Panee Supawat, Boonpong Sirivejaphan's daughter. Thai PBS has been granted the permission and copyright of the story.'

In fact, Boonpong's afterlives were not refabricated from a single site of memory. Still, his legend remained 'unsung' to the public until the establishment of the Hellfire Pass Memorial under the name of Australian government. The trajectory of the Australian museums in Thailand can be traced back to Australia between the 1980s and the 1990s. The wave of POW memories were evoked through oral histories, radio documentaries, memoirs and wartime diaries. This phenomenon led to the pilgrimage of the ex-POWs, their family and students to the Death Railway. The survey for building the Hellfire Pass Memorial at Konyu Cutting was being conducted correlatively throughout the decade. With the assistance of the Australia-Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Hellfire Pass became more and more prominent for

Australian commemorative rituals. The first service on Anzac day happened there in 1987, a tradition which continues to the present day. The success of the Hellfire Pass Memorial has enthused Rod Beattie, an Australian expatriate, to build the Death Railway Museum next to the war cemetery at Donrak in 2003⁶ (Beaumont and Witcomb 2015: 70-72).

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FIG. 27 The Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum at Kanchanaburi

Boonpong has been reincarnated at both of these Australian sites of memory in Kanchanaburi. In Sir Dunlop's war diaries which are one of the major sources of the museums, the name of Boonpong is repetitively mentioned: 'the hospital today obtained some most useful drugs and money—3,000 [footnote] by grace of that magnificent man, Boon Pong' (Dunlop 2009: 341). Boonpong has been highly praised because he was 'at great personal risk to himself since he was laying himself open to torture and death at the hands of the Japanese military police' (Hearder 2009: 61). In 1998, at the Hellfire Pass, John Howard, the Australian prime minister, awarded a certificate of appreciation to Boonpong's grandson. He also announced the establishment of the Weary Dunlop-Boonpong fellowship for the Thai surgeons who seek to 'refine their skills' in Australia. These actions symbolised 'a token of an unrepayable debt' in Howard's words (1998). At the official opening ceremony of the

⁶ The museum is run initially as a Limited Company (TBRC Co Ltd). It is intended to convert to a Foundation under Thai law in due course. The research director and the main curator of the museum is Rod Beattie. Currently, he is the supervisor of the Commonwealth War Cemeteries in Kanchanaburi.

Hellfire Pass, Sir Weary Dunlop, again, addressed the objective of this site of memory:

Appropriately the memorial is not only in memory of those prisoners of war who died on railway construction but also to those Thais who risked their lives to supply money, food and medicines to those in such dire need. Very notable amongst them was the heroic Boon Pong Sirivejaphan, who, in his guise of a river trader saved a great many lives (*Hellfire Pass Memorial: Thailand-Burma Railway* 2011: 23).

The eulogistic rhetoric of Sir Weary Dunlop and the Australian government has been well-curated in both Australian museums in Kanchanaburi. Also it has been converted to a core narrative in all sites of memory related to Boonpong. In Worawut Suwannarit's *The Greater East Asia War*, he adopts the intertextual resource from the Australian sites of memory (Worawut 2001: 56-58). This intertextual circuit is extended to the collections of Australian War Memorial in Canberra where Boonpong's stories and photographs are archived.⁷ Worawut's book is a key text for those who study World War II in the Thai context. Some readers may not be aware they are reading an Australian version of Boonpong. Furthermore, the rewritten life of Boonpong through an Australian vision is eventually injected to a site of memory set up by the Sirivejaphans at the very home of Boonpong where his story begins. There is a modest exhibition of Boonpong's life and his heroic deeds. Strikingly, the life of Dunlop is also enshrined in the exhibition in the form of photographs, stories and the documentary *The Quiet Lions* (Robin Newell, 2008) which has earned its regard in the Commonwealth of Australia. The legend of Boonpong also undoubtedly features in the documentary.

After years of their research fieldwork on the World War II memory in Kanchanaburi, Joan Beaumont and Andrea Witcomb note: 'other countries have not been as interventionist in the Thai landscape as the Australian government' (2015:

⁷ See the Australian War Memorial's online collection at: www.awm.gov.au and the published collection in Moremon (2009).

73). They should not be surprised if the degree of Australian intervention is much more multi-dimensional in retelling the memory of an unsung Thai hero. Interrelated to Boonpong's exhibition at his place, the exhibition booklets are based upon data compiled by Worawut's book. Boonpong's story is narrated along with Dunlop's under the brand of their 'friendship'.⁸

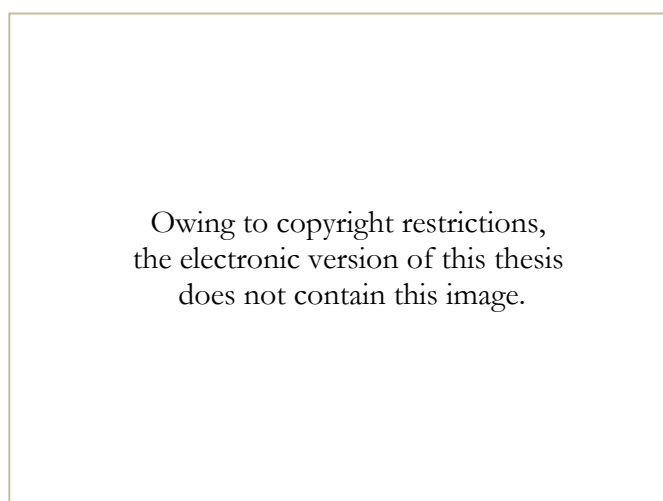


FIG. 28 The exhibition at Boonpong's house

Therefore, to resurrect Boonpong's afterlives on the Thai screen in 2013, Australian rhetoric was explicitly employed to assert Boonpong's international recognition and the universality of his humanitarian acts. In producing a television biography of Boonpong, Sir Weary Dunlop and his Australian crew had to be revitalised because, among Thai audiences, there is no further reference, narrative model or 'genre memory' for Boonpong's biography but the transnational memory from Australia implanted in several memory texts.

To go distinctively Australian, I call this in-the-making process:

Australianisation. Speaking with Bakhtinian language, the Australian transnational memory has shaped the genre memory of Boonpong's afterlives. *Boonpong*, the series, is not an exception. Firstly, the most dominant Australianised element in the series is a retelling of the legacy of Sir Edward Dunlop. In Australia, Dunlop is the

⁸ See more in Lamyai (n.d.).

most recognisable war figure as in *Weary: The Life of Sir Edward Dunlop*, Sue Ebury iconises him ‘alongside Don Bradman, Ned Kelly and Phar Lap’ (2001: xiii) who are Australian national heroes. His monuments stand across Australian soil: before the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, in Victoria, New South Wales, as well as in other parks and memorialised sites. One of his monuments was built in 2009 at the Weary Dunlop Park, Kanchanaburi. Rosalind Hearder describes the popularity of Dunlop’s afterlives in her research: ‘his state funeral in 1993 was a televised event. Documentaries have been made about him, and countless articles and books written. He was commemorated on a souvenir 50-cent coin and is even the subject of a school textbook’ (2009: 206-207).

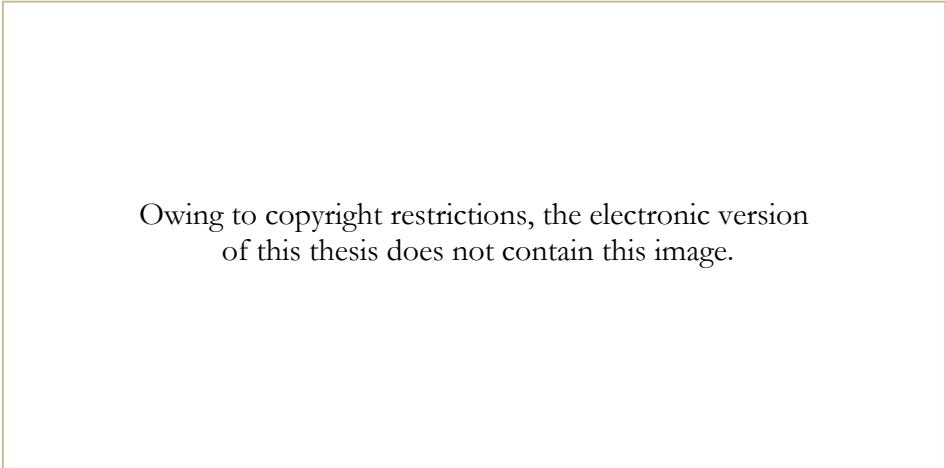
In *Boonpong*, Dunlop is presented as a senior soldier who is highly respected by his allies without referring to his military rank. Dunlop is also viewed as a spiritual leader among the soldiers in his camp; when he is asked about how he copes with the worsening situation, he simply replies: ‘I think of tomorrow. That’s the encouragement I need.’ During the *speedo* phase of the railway construction, the death rate is increasing; Dunlop does not fail to comfort his fellows: ‘Today, fate is not at our side. The road ahead is long but we must persevere. We will not give in. We will make it home.’

As a medical officer, Dunlop has to take care of his patients. His kindness and generosity can be seen already in the first march of the POWs to the camp. Placing this scene in parallel with the marching scene in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, I found a dialogue between them. The film depicts a ‘group of well-ordered British POWs merrily whistling “Colonel Bogey”⁹, a First World War marching tune, as they parade into a lush jungle camp spotlighted by rays of golden sunshine’ (Houghton 2014:

⁹ The sustained power of the myth from *The Bridge on the River Kwai* can be observed from this song as an iconic motif. The song is replayed in the ending credits of *Building Burma’s Death Railway: Moving Half the Mountain*, a recent BBC documentary screened in 2014.

228). While in *Boonpong*, a group of soldiers are wearily walking to the camp. Some are injured and sick. When the march is granted a break, Dunlop bravely asks for water from the Japanese for his sick men. He does not sip a single drop of it.

Dunlop's benevolent responsibility for his comrades is repeated in the scene he meets Boonpong for the first time. At the main building of the camp, Dunlop is pleading the Japanese for medicine. He is assaulted by the Japanese guards. One day, in the camp hospital, Miyoshi, a Japanese soldier, is investigating some severely sick men about the smuggled medicine. Dunlop presses his hands together to pay obeisance to Miyoshi; he is begging: 'on their death bed, please let them pass in peace.'



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FIG. 29 Afterlives of Sir Dunlop in the Australian War Memorial's archive, at Victoria, Australia and in *Boonpong*

The way Dunlop acts indicates his selflessness: not only his responsibility but also his humility. He is brave enough to be disgraced by 'the enemy' to save the lives of his fellows despite his lionised figure in later times. This image is contrary to Colonel Nicholson in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* who invades the hospital asking sick men to help complete his lifework.

Essentially, the representation of Australian soldiers on the Thai screen is not merely retrieved from museums and literary narratives. The representational logic is programmed by the genre memory found in Australian literature and film. Since the

1980s, Australian literary scholars have drawn their attention to ‘the literary trope of *mateship*’ (Turner 1993: 93). The trope was developed from Australian manhood initiated by the independence of Australian men among the wild but marvellous landscapes of Australia. Graeme Turner theorises the aforementioned convention: ‘[*mateship*] is a major narrative strategy for our male writers in particular. But it does occur in narrative modes other than those of prose fiction; for instance it is clearly operative in our films and our ballads’ (1993: 96-97). Consequently, some outstanding Australian film directors ‘turned the relationship among men to a foundation of the establishment of national values’ (O’Regan 1996: 200). This notion emerged in the 1950s and its legacy can be seen in the male ensemble film found in Australian screen culture since the 1970s (1996: 57).

In this instance, Australian screen and literary cycles were first occupied by *mateship* in the post-war period. *Mateship* was also assimilated to Anzac legend and nostalgic waves in Australia since then. *Mateship* remains in focus in war commemorations and it can justify the POWs’ need ‘to find a niche within the chain of Anzac memory’ (Grant 2008: 43). *Mateship* is connected to Australianised sites of memory in Thailand prior to the opening of the Hellfire Pass Memorial. Paul Keating, the prime minister of Australia, stated at Kanchanaburi war cemetery he was aware of the importance of POWs in popular memory: ‘It has become a legend of courage, comradeship, sacrifice and resourcefulness’ (2008: 43).

While the British POWs as seen in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* are obsessed with military rank, discipline, honour and pride, Australian soldiers, in *Boonpong* and other sites of memory, cherish their comradeship. This transnational genre memory is well-maintained in the series. In the face of mundane labour imposed by the Japanese, ‘the POWs were combined into work parties; the dynamics of the group could offer a

sense of solidarity, morale and therefore subtle resistance to their Japanese captors' (de Matos 2015: 77). They take care of each other without mentioning their ranks or affiliations. *Boonpong* displays the moment of silence of the POWs at funerals.

POWs dying in their friends' arms are a thoroughly common event in the series.

Dunlop is in charge in collecting the military tags of the fallen soldiers. In particular scenes, the comradeship of the POWs is shared through their comforting dialogues.

John: Let me write for a screen. Let's say that we're at home. [...]

A random POW: I just want to go back to the farm, hug my mum, marry Genie and have four kids.

When the war ends, Boonpong rides his bicycle to the camp announcing the news.

Boonpong joins his POW friends in dancing, jumping and chirping with joy. When

Boonpong is shot, he is well looked after by his foreigner comrades.

Beyond *mateship*, Dunlop, like Boonpong, is venerated by means of his humanity. Being aware of his duty of serving his country, Dunlop is ethically aware of his healing hands. He is at one point greeted by Miyoshi: 'Your look seems like you want to stab me.' Dunlop suddenly replies: 'This blade is for saving lives not taking them.' Further, Dunlop is a man of his word. When the camp is heavily bombarded by the Allies, Dunlop helps injured Japanese soldiers against the questioning eyes of Miyoshi.

The denial of Thai official memory in *Boonpong* goes hand in hand with the Australianisation of vernacular memory. *Boonpong* conforms to the Australian genre memory of war narratives, the rhetoric of *mateship* and the positionality of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop as an iconic figure. Particularly, the afterlife of Dunlop in the Australian popular memory is well-maintained: 'it is a wonderful thing indeed that Australia's pre-eminent hero of World War II should be a healer, nurturer and preserver of life rather than a destroyer of it' (Grester 1995: 10A cited by Hearder

2009: 206). That is to say, by appropriating the Australian memory into Thai screen culture, *Boonpong* can subvert both the official memory in Thailand and the stereotypes of Thai people during wartime on the ‘Western’ screen. In the next section, the humanitarian rhetoric is explored to prove a revisionist quality of *Boonpong* and the solution this series contributes to the World War II memory complex in Thailand.

4. Regarding the Pain of ‘Us’

In her well-known book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* ([2003] 2004), Susan Sontag investigates the connection between gaze, memory, photographs and war. The more recent visual technologies, for example news on television, are also acknowledged in her intellectual reflection. On memory, Sontag strikingly remarks: ‘perhaps too much value is assigned to memory, not enough to thinking. Remembering is an ethical act, has ethical value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead’ but she also notes that memory in this line belongs to ‘those who in the normal course of things die before us’ (2004: 103). Therefore, she goes on:

Heartlessness and amnesia seem to go together. But history gives contradictory signals about the value of remembering in the much longer span of a collective history. There is simply too much injustice in the world. And too much remembering (of ancient grievances: Serbs, Irish) embitters. To make peace is to forget. To reconcile, it is necessary that memory be faulty and limited (2004: 103).

Sontag’s observation agrees with the mainstream scholarship on the politics of memory in terms of how and what we remember and forget. According to Sontag, to make peace does not mean to forget the past but to let memory ‘be faulty and limited.’ Hence, remembering still functions as ‘an ethical act’ though it is subtly manipulated by the political agendas of certain memory texts. This argument may be developed

from everyday practices; on VJ day in August, when people stick little poppies on their jackets this does not mean they are supporting the wars but rather it conveys a remembrance of the wars. Beside this, the poppies can be exposed to the public; to remember is still an ethical act.

The title of Sontag's book suggests that people should remember what they regard. The act of regarding is to look carefully and to consider. In this way, such ethical acts can be groomed by visual culture. Focusing on photographs, Sontag notices: 'narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us' (2004: 80). The haunting effects of integrating narratives and moving images can therefore be imagined.

Implementing this view to the cultural memory of World War II in the Thai context, I argue that regarding the pain of the POWs in the cemeteries, the museums and the screen culture should aim at morality. The afterlives displayed at the museums or on the screen 'cannot be more than an invitation to pay attention, to reflect, to learn, to examine the rationalisations for mass suffering offered by established powers' (2004: 105).

Beyond the established powers, there is humanity as a core message in *Boonpong*. Such a message is transferred through a regarding of the pain of all characters in the story, regardless of their nationalities. In this section, I investigate how the pain of 'others' becomes the pain of 'us.' To be precise, the message of humanity is communicated through the images, the memory and the genre memory in *Boonpong*.

4.1 Ethical Acts and Domesticity: *Boonpong* (2013) as Docudrama

Investigating World War II on the global screen, I find some significantly identical elements of *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) in *Boonpong*. The film

was studied as biopic and docudrama. My observation is also supported by Vanchai Tantivitayapitak who, as the editor of *Sarakadee Magazine*, suggested the similarity in an editorial published in May 2013 (Vanchai 2013). At the time, Vanchai was also sitting as a member of the executive board of ThaiPBS that screened *Boonpong*. The aura of *Sarakadee* as *National Geographic*'s Thai sibling and the role of Vanchai as a stakeholder of the series potentially shaped another way to perceive Boonpong's afterlife.

Oskar Schindler (1908-1974) was a German businessman who joined the Nazi party. Ironically, he saved thousands of Jewish lives from execution in concentration camps by building a factory and employing them as a form of refuge. Schindler ethically acted after regarding the pain of the Jewish people. In the postwar period, he was highly respected as a great saviour regardless of his German blood and Nazi involvement. Nevertheless, as a biopic 'based on true story,' *Schindler's List* faces some difficulties in representing the unrepresentable elements of the Holocaust memory with special reference to a life of German Nazi.¹⁰ Located in parallel with *Schindler's List*, the life of Boonpong as a businessman befriended by the Japanese should appear to be identical. The transformation of their ideology after regarding the pain of others also matches not to mention their status in the postwar period. One different aspect is that, unlike *Schindler's List*, *Boonpong* has attained a vast array of positive receptions mainly for the positionality of the story. In the transnational memory context, Thailand could clear its name better than the German Nazis could despite the polyphonic representations of the Nazi over decades.

The genre memory *Boonpong* absorbs from *Schindler's List* is the hagiographic features in constructing the protagonist. In Christian hagiography, the

¹⁰ See more various receptions in Burgoyne (2008: 100-103).

genre is keen on representing evil to formulate the life of the saint. Therefore, in the film, the sainted Schindler depends upon Geoth, another Nazi character as well as the persecution of the Jews (Burgoyne 2008: 116-228). To such a degree, *Boonpong* is sainted through encountering rough Japanese soldiers and the tortured POWs. Furthermore, the domestic life of Boonpong is told with resemblance to Schindler's. It comes to cause his moral dilemma so that he can substantiate his sainted aura.

When entangled with 'domestic life,' similar to *Schindler's List*, *Boonpong* should also be categorised as docudrama. Generally, 'the docudrama narrative, moreover, foregrounds dramatic codes, assuming melodrama's larger function of emphatically clarifying board moral system through domestic imagery' (Lipkin 1999: 370-371). One further trait building up the link between *Boonpong* and works of docudrama genre is:

The docudrama narrative may also reference other, earlier texts that offer the initial definition of their actual material. The very existence of a prior text or texts arguably motivates production of film, as well as its eventual narrative structure. The viewer is invited to accept the argument that recreation warrants, that what we see might have 'really' happened in 'much this way' (Lipkin 1999: 372).

'Other or earlier texts,' for *Boonpong*, are the aforementioned memory texts in this chapter. Apart from its 14 episodes, *Boonpong* also has a television documentary on the pre-production research, interviews, production and related World War II memories as its prologue. The documentary *per se* should warrant the authenticity of the re-enacted narratives, events and settings in the following episodes. Moreover, the dramatic elements intertwined with domesticity are likewise encoded by an 'understanding of television as a domestic object watched within the space of the home' (Holdsworth 2011: 3).

The matter of domestic life appears from the first episode while Khian, Boonpong's father, is giving medication to a child. Bu-Nga, Boonpong's younger

sister, wants to have Boonpong buy her a new skirt. Lamchiak, Boonpong's mother, forces Bu-Nga to bake and sell Thai palmyra fruit cake to afford a new skirt.

Lamchiak is money-oriented. She preaches to her family members about the value of money. The first conflict erupts when Khian is scheduled to see a coolie's sick child. He refuses to see a police general's sick son because the car was sent later than the coolie's arrival. When Khian returns home the next morning with a bunch of bananas instead of money; he is interrogated by his wife:

Lamchiak: Doing this, when will we be rich?

Khian: I'm rich, Lamchiak. I'm rich in humanity not money.

This dialogue is a perfect layout of the moral atmosphere in the house of the Sirivejaphans where two sets of ideology—money and humanity—are battling against each other. Khian's decision enhances the positionality of *Boonpong* in the 'classist' political climate of Thailand in the 2010s. Humanity is not only a proper solution to the war but also a platform for the rights of Thai commoners. Though Boonpong can be regarded as capitalist, he tends to be conducted by his father's humanitarian acts.

Boonpong witnesses the POWs' adversities when he first delivers his goods to the camp. The adversities appealing to the viewers' sympathy are embodied within the POWs, and they drive the plot. If the patterned exhibitions of war bodies in museums can be regarded as a genre in a broadened sense, *Boonpong* maintains such genre memory by exhibiting the sick bodies of the POWs. Unlike the bodies heroically injured in the battlefield, bodies here are infected, rotten, deformed and crippled by the working conditions enacted by the Japanese. The series depicts some POWs working without hands. One interesting example is a friend of Dunlop: James. His foot gets infected and the medical shortage dramatically worsens his situation.

Eventually, James's leg is cut by a manual saw without painkillers. Longing for news from his mother, amputee James dies in his comrade's arms the day the letter arrives.

The series values the act of regarding. Influenced by the museums, it shows lines after lines of the crosses in the POWs' makeshift cemeteries. When the POWs die of diarrhea, dysentery and cholera, their bodies are thrown into the river. Some are buried in a mass grave dug by their fellows. As Boonpong once mentions to those who work on the railway: 'How can they survive wild animals, fatal diseases and human wilderness?' Human wilderness is expressed through the punishing of guilty POWs by execution and crucifixion. Hence, the continual representation of the POWs' suffering bodies mobilises the plot, and it generates the dramatic effects of moral dilemma in the series.

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FIG. 30 Adversities of the POWs from Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum reenacted in *Boonpong*

Boonpong once meets his old friend in captivity, who asks Boonpong for medicine, his voice noticeably trembling. Blocked by fear and a moral dilemma, Boonpong is helpless in watching his friend die. Afterwards, he prepares some medicine for the POWs. Surat, Boonpong's wife, begs him not to help the POWs because it could earn him the punishment of death by the Japanese: 'I thank you for not giving this pack of medicine to the POWs. I thank you for thinking of me, our child and the Sirivejaphans. I can speak for everyone. We feel warmly gladsome and

secure having you as our guiding light.’ Surat employs such rhetoric to remind her husband of his roles as a husband, a father and the family’s leader. Surat successfully stops her husband in the first place but Boonpong’s humanitarian spirit is evoked by his respectable father.

Boonpong rhetorically fights against Surat again: ‘Don’t let your fear defeat your humanity.’ In the confrontation, Boonpong continues:

If Panee will be an orphan, I want her to be proud. Her father would rather die for humanity. [...] Life of a POW is also one life. As a mother, your child must be your first priority. Yet, in this wartime, there’re thousands of sons fighting for their nations. Those sons are also longing for home, returning to their mothers.

Surat is stunned by her husband’s strong will. One day, Surat secretly follows a POW running away from the Japanese. She finds him shot dead at last. Surat, little by little, responds to the call for humanity. Similar to Khian, Boonpong, as a father figure, is entitled to morally lead his family. Surat is viewed as Boonpong’s first disciple. She helps him by hiding medicine into bamboo baskets sent to the camp. When Boonpong lacks money to buy a medical supply for the POWs, Surat gives him her beloved necklace to be traded for money. Seeing Boonpong looking indecisive; she insists: ‘never mind, if this can save a human life. Just one life is still enough.’

Moral dilemmas continue when Phaen, Boonpong’s younger brother, comes up with his plan to expand his business with the Japanese. He tells Lamchiak about the progress of the railway building. ‘Not only the POWs are forced to work but the Japanese are collecting people for building a bridge at Tamakham before lining the railway. Coolies from different races: Thai, Chinese and Indian, are heading there. They are paid 1 Thai Baht a day.’ Phaen’s story contains the recognition of the *romusha* hidden from pages of the official memory. Correspondingly, to recognise the *romusha* implies the message of humanity in the series. After seeing the gleam of

excitement in his brother's eyes, Boonpong cannot help interrupting Phaen through his refined speech:

Boonpong: How many lives must be sacrificed? Hundreds? Thousands? How can they survive wild animals, fatal diseases and human wilderness?

Phaen: I understand your sympathy for the POWs, brother. Yet it's not our duty.

Boonpong: It is our duty! This is the duty of humanity! How can I be indifferent to the miseries they have to face? They all are human like us. No! I shan't turn my back or be glad to witness their death, either the POWs or the Japanese.

Phaen is silenced. In the scene, all grown-up family members are gathering.

Boonpong has got a full support from Khian, both financially and morally. As a 'guiding light' of the family, Boonpong is not solely supposed to protect them from certain sorts of harm; he is to protect his family from their own greed, heartlessness and indifference.

As Boonpong's only daughter, in the series, Panee is taught to be morally strong by her father. 'Action speaks louder than words' is not an overstatement when describing the relationship between Boonpong and Panee. When Boonpong is suspected by the Japanese, he gets Panee to deliver food to the camp. As described by Dunlop, Panee is 'a brave little girl.' However, the toughest threshold of these ethical acts lies within the domestic sphere, not in facing the Japanese. On learning that her dear niece is sent to the camp, Lamchiak hysterically confronts her son and her daughter-in-law: 'Are you heartless, Boonpong? You sent your daughter to die for you. Those POWs' lives are more worthy than your daughter's? They can't die but she can?' Lamchiak turns to Surat: 'Do you still have the heart of a mother, Surat?' The scene is dramatically intense even with Panee's safe return. She does not look afraid as much as her grandmother and uncles seem to be. This scene, again, proves how the domestic life intervenes with Boonpong's ideology.

Boonpong's selfless acts are concerned with religious intertextuality; he is praying at his household tabernacle before deciding to help the POWs. Therefore to argue that he is sainted is not an exaggeration. Boonpong's moral dilemmas come from his own fear and his domestic life. Reading through the lines in the *Tripitaka*, a part of the Buddhist canon, I find similar characterisation in the story of Vessantara. Vessantara is the last life of the Lord Buddha before his enlightenment. In Thai Buddhist narratives, this story is named *mahachati* or the greatest life of *bodhisatta*.¹¹ Vessantara is an Indian prince. He is exiled from his city because he donates an auspicious elephant to those who need. Travelling into the forest, Vessantara offers his children to a Brahmin, and his wife is given to Indra, the God in disguise. His 'Perfection of Generosity' of *danaparami* is based upon his detachment from things and persons he cannot adore more. The promising enlightenment in his next life is eventually rewarded.

Also, the Buddhist intertexts can be applied to the Law of Karma in the Buddhist belief. The series explains why Boonpong should be highly venerated through his 'Jobian sufferings'. Boonpong earns death threats many times, and his daughter is subject to threats of being kidnapped. Much of his property must be traded for the POWs' lives. Yet still he is shot by a mysterious gunman. Because of that incident, his hand can never be the same, and his father passes away before his recovery. In the last episode, Lamchiak, thus, randomly questions: 'who said merit is a great facilitator?' Even so the Law of Karma functions well. More than a common Good Samaritan can do, Boonpong is redeemed in the form of many buses given to him for his post-war business, the continual waves of letters of appreciation from the ex-POWs and their families and the privileged honour granted by Queen Elizabeth II

¹¹ *bodhisatta* means a being bound for enlightenment.

and the Australian government. Above all rewards, the memory of his incompatible selflessness remains explicit in many sites of memory in his very home and beyond.

As money-and-humanity is a core dichotomy in Boonpong's domestic life, he once says to Surat when he is repeatedly rejected by the 'V' Organisation. Surat regards it as the great humiliation her husband does not deserve but Boonpong assures her: 'my dignity can't be more valueable than the POWs' lives.' His dignified life is still echoed on YouTube and other channels. However, Boonpong's docudrama is not the only means of conveying a humanitarian message; the POWs and the Japanese are also portrayed in the pursuit of such a message. This is investigated in the next section.

4.2 De-Othering the Enemy: Representation of the Japanese

At the Hellfire Pass Memorial, the Thailand-Burma Railway Museum and JEATH Museum, the suffering bodies of the POWs are displayed to stress the barbarism of war. Those bodies, in the form of photographs, sketches, paintings and wax figures, are exhibited in juxtaposition with military uniforms, insignia and heroic medals. To interpret these displays, there can be many possibilities of meaning. One interpretation I may propose is the displays that ennoble the victims. They deserve sympathy but not as losers in captivity. This notion can be confirmed by an excerpt from John Howard's speech: 'Yet this Memorial does not seek to magnify tragedy but to commemorate triumph' (*John Howard's Address at the Opening of the Hellfire Pass Museum on 24 April 1998*).

The war bodies in museums can be bridged to the bodies of their kind in the screen culture because they are 'subject to cultural, historical, and political ascription'; heroic and diabolical myths are drawn from the victorious image of

soldiers and from passive and alienating images of the enemy (Randell and Redmond 2012: 4). In Kanchanaburi, two Australian museums and the JEATH Museum show their attempts to promote humanity through the suffering bodies of the POWs caused by the war. In doing so, the museums emphasise the barbarism of the Japanese as their enemy. Paradoxically, at the JEATH Museum, there is a bronze statue of a Japanese veteran—Takachi Nagase—behind the bamboo huts accommodating photos and sketches of the POWs. That is to say, most of the sites of World War II memory in Kanchanaburi resonate with the representational phenomena in the screen culture of the present day, as some commentators remark: ‘powerful binaries exist between the legitimate and legitimated bodies of war, often belonging to the Western and white soldiers, hostage, innocent victim, investigative journalist—and bodies that ‘unfairly’ bring destruction, belonging to the Eastern and off-white terrorist, extremist, or hostage taker’ (2012: 8).

In fact, at the Death Railway, ‘wild animals, fatal diseases and human wilderness,’ likewise, killed many lives of Japanese soldiers. The memory embodied in exhibitions can be found ‘biased and ridiculous’ (Apinya 2012: 54) if they are calling for peace and humanity. To respond to such a memory complex, I revisit Sontag’s interest in the acts of regard and remembrance as ethical acts. In spite of an Australianised memory, the series strives for its own moral positionality by dismissing the ‘self-vs.-enemy’ dichotomy embodied within Australian and Thai sites of memory in Kanchanaburi. To achieve the ultimate degree of a saint-like mind, Boonpong is to overlook racial differences among people in wartime. This significance connotes that the belief in humanity lies within the souls of the humankind or from Buddhist perspectives, we, humans, are equalised because of the sufferings we share in one life-circle.

The ethical acts pursued regardless of human differences are to regard the pain of the Japanese as much as pain of the POWs. Some Japanese soldiers in this series are deeply characterised: their back stories are multi-dimensionally told. Notable major Japanese characters are Saito and Miyoshi. Both of them have their domestic lives to fulfill, a generic criterion of docudrama. Without tangible references in other major sites of memory in Kanchanaburi, the representation of the Japanese soldiers relies on trivial vernacular memories and the genre memory of World War II on screen. Therefore, oral history and the *Khu Karma* myth are appropriated in the series.

The first part of source memory detected is the story of Saito and Chawee. Saito may be named after Saito, the Japanese commander in the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Saito marries a Thai woman in Kanchanaburi—Chawee. They both live happily and run a clothing business. Saito's story should be based on oral history collected from Kanchanaburi locals. Ahead of the outbreak of the war in Kanchanaburi, there were 2-3 Japanese merchants opening clothing stores in Muang district. They hired Thai women and married them. Their interests focused on travelling to waterfalls and forests. When the war had erupted, the Japanese appeared in their military uniforms working as engineers (Worawut 2001: 2-4). Saito is also shown to mainly work on the construction of the railway. Still Chawee's treatment after the truth is out becomes antagonistic. The way she acts has a lot in common with Angsumalin in the *Khu Karma* myth. Chawee feels deceived, and she is humiliated for marrying 'the invaders.' Besides, Chawee is no longer welcomed by some of her neighbours. One day Saito further cements Chawee's understanding: 'I'm not meant to dump you. I'll take better care of you because you are Chawee, Lieutenant Colonel Saito's wife not Saito, the cloth merchant. Chawee simply replies: 'Get out of my house!'

Like Kobori in the *Khu Karma* myth, Saito spends most of his time at the camp. Chawee tends to cling on to her ‘pride and prejudice’ as Angsumalin does. She cannot be convinced by Saito’s sincerity; she feels exploited by him and his army. Moreover, the genre memory from *Khu Karma* is seemingly verified in the death scene of Saito. Saito rushes back home to protect Chawee during a heavy air raid. Among catastrophic ruins and injured bodies, Chawee finds Saito blood-soaked. Similar to Kobori’s death scene in *Khu Karma*, they exchange their love vows. The scene owns a ‘weepee’ quality as much as *Khu Karma*. Furthermore, the wounded body, death and loss here belong to a Thai woman and a Japanese soldier; their story is not curated in museums either Thai or Australian.

The correlation between the Japanese soldiers and an imaginary homeland is embodied in Miyoshi. Miyoshi has one adorable daughter—Aiko. This motif of domestic life should be retrieved from *Sunset at Chaopraya* (1995) in which Kobori usually expresses a retrospective view on his life in Japan: his parents and fiancé. Apart from the *Khu Karma* myth impelling the genre memory of *Boonpong*, *Schindler’s List* should influence the characterisation of Miyoshi as well. *Schindler’s List* ‘features contrasting family settings and even more extremely contrasting father figures. Oskar Schindler and Amon Goeth are morally opposite surrogates of the same family’ (Lipkin 1999: 375). The same family here stands for the Jews of Krakow. However, *Boonpong* and Miyoshi also play out in ‘contrasting family settings’. *Boonpong* and Panee live together; he raises her properly while Miyoshi’s Aiko is staying only in his nostalgic dreams.

Miyoshi is a strict officer before meeting Panee who softens his boldness. When *Boonpong* smuggles some herbal leaves for the POWs, he is threatened by Miyoshi: ‘One leaf or one pill can cause you the same punishment.’ Still, through the

haunting picture of his daughter in Japan, Miyoshi's strictness is gradually undermined by Panee's innocent looks. He knows she helps Boonpong smuggle medical supplies to the camp. Duty and personal desire is an opposing dichotomy found in *Khu Karma*. Such a dichotomy ignites conflicts between Kobori and Angsumalin, Saito and Chawee and Miyoshi and Panee.

Nostalgia and homesickness of the Japanese is a cross-reference to the genre memory from *Khu Karma*. Those feelings humanise the soldiers who own them. In the museums, there are displays of corresponding letters between the POWs and their families. *Boonpong* proposes that the Japanese also have their families longing for their return. Nostalgia and homesickness are repeatedly emphasised by dialogue and other related devices. Panee once asks Miyoshi, whom she is close enough to address by his nickname: 'Don't you miss your home, Yoshi?' Miyoshi replies: 'I do miss my home very much but I can't go home.' This nostalgic motif is dramatically developed into theme songs of the series. There are three theme songs: 'Tairiku no Soyakaze,' 'Hanazakari' and 'Rom Mai Klang Daet' (Tree Shades against the Sun). They can be read as paratexts of the television biography.

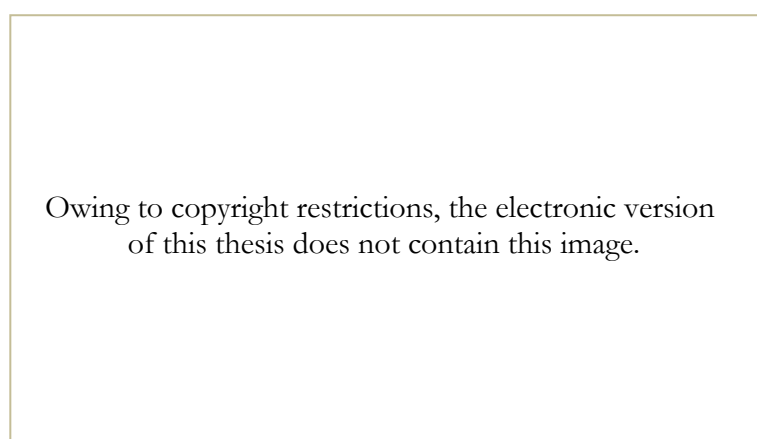


FIG. 31 Miyoshi expressing his gentleness to Panee

'Hanazakari' or 'Flowers in Bloom' is adapted from a Japanese folk song telling the unique beauty of Sakura. Miyoshi teaches Panee to sing this song. Panee

once performs the song to distract the Japanese from investigating a water container with hidden medicine. The Japanese soldiers are stunned by Panee's singing talent and the song lyrics which reinforce their melancholic dreams of home. The song lyric is Haiku-like, and it implies a temporality of life and the cruelty of war. The Sakura in the song is 'so adorned that all glooms are washed away'. Still, nothing lasts forever as stated in the lyric: 'alas, the sweet scent of Sakura was blown away by the wind.'

'Tairiku no Soyakaze' or 'The Wind' represents Miyoshi's heart. The song lyric is written in Japanese. It conveys the homesickness of Miyoshi and, perhaps, of other Japanese soldiers and the POWs: 'the Southern wind is waving over the line of trees. By the river, my heart's flown home. In the Far East, the land beyond your imagination, I'm begging the wind to bring you my heart.' Interestingly, the song 'Tree Shades against the Sun' is less apparent compared to the others. The lyric praises Boonpong's heroism. The series, therefore, aims at consolidating the humanity; the Japanese, as an enemy of the POWs, are humanised by what I call the 'de-othering process.' This process is also a 'drama' part of *Boonpong* as docudrama.

The calls of domestic life are dramatised in a dialogue between Boonpong and Miyoshi. In this scene, regard, as an ethical act, and the docudrama are, again, intermingled. This scene takes place after Panee is sent to the camp in the name of her father. Panee is regarding the misfortunes of the POWs. She meets Miyoshi at the camp where he first teaches her to sing a sweet-sounding Japanese song. Miyoshi does not want Panee to become exposed to the cruel scenes of war. He rushes to blame Boonpong: 'Do you have a father's heart?' Boonpong insists: 'I do! I really have one! And everyone does. I, you or the POWs, we all are fathers.'

Not long before his death, Miyoshi comes to Panee to say his farewell: 'grow up to be a good girl, Panichan. Be an obedient child. Do love your parents. Love

them at your best.’ When a serious air raid hits Kanchanaburi, Miyoshi is severely wounded. He drags himself to the riverbank murmuring: ‘We’re going to win. We’re going home. I’m going to see my dear daughter.’ Tragically, his wishes never come true. Miyoshi’s blood-soaked body is lying by the river. Despite her efforts, Panee fails to discover Miyoshi. She cries out loud calling for him. The name of Miyoshi in turn resonates in the River Kwai. His death looks as heartbreaking as those happening to the POWs.

On the ‘Western’ screen, the Japanese soldiers are othered and demonised. In a film titled *Return from the River Kwai* (Andrew V. McLaglen, 1989) which potentially is influenced by the *Bridge of the River Kwai*, a Japanese soldier cuts off the head of a POW. The violence is repeated through the storyline. Unlike on the Thai screen, in some versions of *Khu Karma*, the Japanese cruelty and barbarism is not well-articulated to proclaim humanity. In *Boonpong*, the de-othering process for the Japanese continues in other aspects of the story. The brutality of the Japanese is addressed in the form of a rumour. For example, while travelling to the camp, Boonpong is asked by his employee—Noon: ‘Have you ever seen the prisoners beheaded by the Japanese?’ Another example is when Chawee tells Surat what she has heard: ‘They say there’re hundreds of the POWs’ corpses piled up on the Japanese trains.’ Hence, cruelty of the Japanese is encoded as being forced by their orders. Most of the time, the acts of punishment and killing are visualised when the POWs are trying to escape, and when there is a need for discipline.

To proclaim humanity by de-othering the enemy, *Boonpong* offers another remarkable phenomenon: the decline of language barriers. In the Old Testament the Tower of Babel, humanity is cursed to speak different languages. They are scattered around the world, and it leads to conflicts and wars. In early episodes of *Boonpong*,

most of the characters speak their own language. But after they learn more about each other, the Japanese can speak fluent Thai and English. Boonpong can speak both Japanese and English, and the POWs can speak Thai. There is no evidence of instructing different languages in the series. The collapse of language barriers connotes that love and humanity conquer all boundaries. Strikingly, there are some conversations between Dunlop and Miyoshi about their families, not to mention the dialogue between Boonpong and Miyoshi in eloquent Thai. In other words, the language barriers, representing racial differences, cannot outlive the core connection among humankind. We all share love, loss, pain, homesickness and other ‘emotional capital.’

5. Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored World War II memory as seen in *Boonpong*, the series (2013). This television biography is a voice of the commoners and a missing piece of memory as it is not acknowledged by the official memory. In a sense, *Boonpong* fulfills its role as a vernacular memory interwoven with other sites of Kanchanaburi province with the quality of a *constructed symbol* in Pierre Nora’s term. The findings should reaffirm Sontag’s idea: ‘The memory of war, however, like all memory, is mostly local’ (2004: 33). The problem is what constructs local or vernacular memory. Despite its opposition to official memory, vernacular memory is not necessarily bound by its local sites. In this context, Boonpong’s afterlives in the transnational memory are in the process of memory-making.

The transnational memory from Australia is crucial in museums and sites of World War II memory in Kanchanaburi. Therefore, it is exploited, at its best, in the series. The Australianised memory is used to subvert the World War II memory produced on the ‘Western’ screen: *The Bridge on the River Kwai* is therefore a major target. To venerate Boonpong from transnational perspectives is also to subvert the

Thai official war memory clinging to the heroism of the Free Thai Movement.

However, *Boonpong* contributes to redeeming Thailand from its ambiguous position in the global World War II memory through a message of humanity.

The production of the series has evoked the ‘The Perfection of Generosity’ conducted by Boonpong. Interestingly, proclaiming his status as a commoner, Boonpong’s afterlife is retold within the narrative frame of ‘The Great Men’, a clichéd mode of biopic genre. The series seeks to expand its mnemonic richness by employing the genre memory from docudrama and the *Khu Karma* myth. The strategy works well in moving the viewers and in proposing a new phenomenon to Thai television. Still, the most important aspect of *Boonpong* as a memory text is how it can be located in parallel with other sites of memory in Kanchanaburi and in Australia; *Boonpong* retells afterlives of both Thai and Australian war heroes.

In the lens of Indian aesthetics, *Boonpong*’s *vira* (bravery) owns special quality. The heroes do not win in the battlefield but they are morally courageous. In the wake of humanity, the adversities of the POWs are represented to emphasise *karuna* (pathos). Another *rasa* ironically empowering heroes’ moral bravery is *bhayanaka* (fear). The fear is shown to prove how courageous the heroes are although they are not invincible warriors or deities as found in traditional *vira*. This can be another way to look at heroes of our time—the age of reconciliation.

CHAPTER 3

War Heroes

‘The Thai people are peace-lovers,
But they are not cowards at war.’
(The national anthem of Thailand)

1. Chapter Introduction

In his important essay: ‘Epic and Novel,’ Mikhail Bakhtin distinguishes the epic from the novel. As the epic is an ancient literary expression, it associates with ‘epic distance’ and ‘epic time’ which are far from the contemporary. Epic time connotes the national myth in certain cultures as ‘an absolute past of national beginning and peak times’ (1981: 15). Though the Bakhtinian notion is based upon the epic in Western civilisation, it can also be linked to epic culture on a global scale. Most mainstream epics are instilled in world culture in conjunction with the memory of wars and warriors of ancient times.

In the Asian context, the epic can possibly be absorbed into various social, cultural, political and religious practices as it is considered that ‘the tradition of the past is sacred’ (Bakhtin 1981: 15). This statement explains why *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, the two greatest Indian epics, have programmed a historiographical and religious consciousness in South East Asian region. The battle at Kurukshetra from *Mahabharata* has inspired the visual representations of its memory, for example at the South Western gallery of Angkor Wat before the 9th century. Thus far *Ramayana* is more popular in Khmer art and Javanese visual culture (Rungroj 2001: 9-20). The epic tradition perpetuated by *Ramayana* has undoubtedly been developing in Thai visual culture since the rise of the Ayutthaya kingdom in the 14th century up until the present.

Blended into Thai entertainment sectors, historical narratives centre the battle scene to attract audiences. The mainstream chronicles in Thailand share a keen interest in the epic tradition and in the battles of the kings and their brave army. However, bloodshed and fearless fights are not seen as a novelty in Asian media. Indian theatre persistently maintains warlike or heroic feelings, in the name of *vira*, within its showcases. Before the emergence of the Hollywood era, Thai film, therefore, adopted the genre memory inherited from the epic tradition and *vira*. This spirit has been circulated in various sites of memory.

The Thai epic tradition, in this sense, is associated with the wars fought in order to protect Siamese or Thai territories from the enemy or foreign nations. This tradition plays its dominant part in sculpting patriotic sentiment in Thai society promoted since the rise of the public discourse on ‘National Humiliation.’ Such patriotic feelings were validated by post-revolution political elites (Strate 2015: 42).

In Thai film history, the epic tradition is merged into *phapphayon songkhram* or the war film in a broadened sense. Neung Diaw (2007: 40) estimates *Songkhram Khet Lang* or *Bin Klang Kheun/The Night Pilots* (Prince Bhanuphan Yukol, 1943) as the first Thai war film. In this way, *phapphayon songkhram* or war film is synonymous with the combat film.¹ In fact, the representation of combat on the Thai screen emerged to public reception during the age of revolution in 1932. Over the early years, the Thai combat film was perceptibly exploited through propagandistic functions. Here, I, therefore, propose *Thai Soldier’s Blood* or *Undaunted Son of Siam* (1935) as the first Thai combat film. This film production was supervised by Luang Phibunsongkhram when he was the Minister of Defense. This film glorifies the army of the People’s Party in their victory over the Boworadet Revolt (Dome 2013: 83-84). Then, another film within the epic

¹ In some context, the war film is defined as an umbrella term or a synonym of combat film (Kuhn and Westwell 2012: 449-450).

tradition launched in 1940 was Pridi Banomyong's *The King of White Elephant*. The film conveys the message of peace rather than a strong patriotic sensation.

In the early days, most war film productions in Thailand were controlled by the state. For this reason, *The Night Pilots* was filmed by The Royal Thai Air Force Film Division. The film was politically significant as it projected a fictive battle between the Thai Air Force, on the side of the Japanese army, and the Allied forces. Unexpectedly, in 1945, there was an abysmal fire accident destroying most of the film reels made by this unit. The production of *The Night Pilots* was not well-finalised, and it was never screened (Chamroenluk 2001: 220). However, the film can be regarded as the first Thai World War II combat film.

After the war, the role of the state in film production began to fade. A new era of the Thai combat film, thus, began over the Cold War period beginning in the late 1950s in the company of the rise of Hollywood culture in South East Asia. This phenomenon brought a generic complexity and hybridity to the Thai film industry.

The problematic terms here are *phapphayon songkhram* or war film and combat film which have never been coined in Thai language. Owing to the overlapping terminological aspects in the Thai context, the differences between them and *phapphayon bu* or action film should be discussed before going further on to the grammar of the genre in this chapter and beyond.

2. Hollywood Action and Combat Films: The Tastes of Their Thai Counterpart

Jeanine Basinger who has studied the generic aspects of the Hollywood World War II combat film profoundly notes in her book: “‘War’ is a vague category, and is too broad to contain a basic set of characters and events, the hallmark of genre’

(Basinger 2003: 9). This is a simple view employed as a basis in establishing the combat film genre.

In the Thai context *phapphayon bu* or action film is the broadest umbrella term which includes the martial arts film, gangster film, combat film and other action-adventure films in a more general sense. The term *bu*, in a sense, is as controversial as the term ‘war’ in war film. It was assumingly derived from *butueng* or *wudang* in Mandarin. Another theory is that *bu* was probably picked up from the word *wu xia* or the Chinese martial arts. These two sources are, however, correlated. The Wudang Mountains in Hupei, China are the key setting in Jin Yong’s *wu xia* novels widely circulated in Thailand since the post-World War II period. In their translated form, the novels were well received. The *wu xia* was, likewise, represented in cinematic versions produced by Shaw Brothers’ Studio from Hong Kong from the 1960s onwards (Kornphanat 2012: 97). Hence, the term *bu* has been used in Thai colloquial language and in some existing literature in a misleading sense; Thai audiences tend to generalise films with action scenes as *bu*.

The combat film is not an exception. Books found in Popcorn Publishing’s ‘Thai Film Chronicle Series’ deploy the term *bu* in the broadest definition. In the academic context, Niwat Prasitworawit (2010) uses the term *phapphayon action* with the inclusion of Thai World War II combat films: *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* (Euthana Mukdasanit, 2000) and *Seven Street Fighters* or *Heaven’s Seven 2* (Chalerm Wongphim, 2005). Krittaya Na Nongkhai (2013) also includes the *Heaven’s Seven* franchise as *phapphayon tosu phachonphai* or action-adventure film in her corpus.

In this chapter, I treat *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* (2000) and a text from the *Heaven's Seven* franchise² as World War II combat films with responsiveness to the genre memory within the Thai-Asian film culture and the Hollywood formula shared by the case studies. After the film reels of *The Night Pilots* were destroyed in fire, the *Heaven's Seven* franchise was first screened in 1958. Most film critics and film scholars vaguely define it as a legacy of Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (Japan, 1954). In fact, there had been Hollywood World War II combat films, listed in Basinger's book, screened and publicised in Thailand before the premiers of *Nueng To Chet/One Is To Seven* (Sor Assanachinda, 1958) and the following films of the franchise—*Chet Laek/Seven Wonders* (Sor Assanachinda, 1958). The examples of the Hollywood films are listed below.³

Film Titles	Screening Information	Sources
<i>Breakthrough</i> (Lewis Seiler, 1950)	Screened in Bangkok in February 1952	Advertised in <i>Phim Thai</i> newspaper on Sunday 10 th February 1952
<i>The Steel Helmet</i> (Samuel Fuller, 1951)	Screened in Bangkok since 26 th February 1952	Advertised in <i>Phim Thai</i> newspaper on Friday 1 st February 1952
<i>The Frogmen</i> (Lloyd Bacon, 1951)	Film title in Thai is <i>Manut Kop</i> Screened since 6 th March 1952	Advertised in <i>Phim Thai</i> newspaper on between Sunday 24 th February 1952 and 5 th March 1952
<i>Submarine Command</i> (John Farrow, 1951)	No Data	Advertised in <i>Phim Thai</i> newspaper on Wednesday 29 th February 1952
<i>The Bridges at Toko-Ri</i> (Mark Robson, 1954)	Film title in Thai is <i>Songkhram Toko-Ri</i> . Without a specific screening date, it is screened at New Odeon after <i>Song Sing Samut</i>	Advertised in <i>Khao Phapphayon</i> (Film News) Number 79 on Saturday 4 th June 1955
<i>The Enemy Below</i> (Dick Powell, 1957)	Film title in Thai is <i>Sattru Tai Samut</i> . Screened at Chalaerm Netra and Siri Netra since 25 th January 1958	Advertised in <i>Phim Thai</i> newspaper on Friday 24 th January 1958 (page 11)
<i>China Gate</i> (Samuel Fuller, 1957)	Film title in Thai is <i>Pratu Chine</i> . Screened at Chalerm Kiat during 27-30 January 1958	Advertised in <i>Phim Thai</i> newspaper on Tuesday 28 th January 1958 (page 11)

TABLE 6 Hollywood World War II combat films screened in Thailand during the 1950s

² I treat the films inspired by *Heaven's Seven* written by Sor Assanachinda as a franchise because the film directors, the actors and other elements vary in certain versions. One remaining core motif is the number seven of the protagonists.

³ This table is based upon the accessible newspaper archive collection at the National Library of Thailand (compiled in October 2015).

The table above illustrates the exhibition of World War II combat films among Thai audiences. Seeing combat films as a subgenre of *phapphayon bu*, some directors were attracted to or inspired by the films. The film marketing opportunity was endorsed by the various launches of the *Heaven's Seven* franchise by Sor (Somchai) Assanachinda—Thailand's national artist of 1990. Apart from some film titles given earlier, there have been remakes of films and television series from the franchise. Some interesting examples are *Chet Talumbon/Seven Combatants* (Sor Assanachinda, 1963), *Chet Prachanban/Seven Battlers* (Sor Assanachinda and Wichian Wirachote, 1977), *Chet Prachanban Phak 1/Heaven's Seven* (Chalerm Wongphim, 2002) and *Chet Prachanban Phak 2/Seven Street Fighters* or *Heaven's Seven 2* (Chalerm Wongphim, 2005). The castings and the war setting in certain films of the franchise are various; some are set in the Vietnam War, the Cold War in Thailand and in the former French Indochina region.

During the Cold War, particularly the 1960s, there was an influx of American culture, as historians note: 'the city changed in shape, style, and tastes. New suburbs clustered around the schools, shops, cinemas, and clubs catering for westerners [...] Foreign goods—and especially American brand names—acquired new status value' (Baker and Phasuk 2014: 149). Throughout the period, American action films were broadcast along with the films of similar genres from Hong Kong. It affected the growth of Thai film production and reception. This was evident in the remakes or the sequels of Thai films of the period (Krittaya 2013: 22-24). The Hollywood genre was adopted to boost the anti-communist ideologies intensified during the 1960s and the 1970s. Apart from the legacy of Hollywood combat films found in the *Heaven's Seven* franchise, the Hollywood generic influences could be seen in other Thai action-

adventure films. They can be traced in the style of gun fighting and protagonists as representatives of authorities.

On the other hand, Hong Kong genre memory could be detected from fist fighting, climactic fight scenes and gangster elements, for example, in Bruce Lee's achievements: *The Big Boss* (Hong Kong, Lo Wei, 1971), *Fist of Fury* (Hong Kong, Lo Wei, 1972) and *Way of the Dragon* (Hong Kong, Bruce Lee, 1972). Particularly, *The Big Boss* was filmed in Thailand, and it features overseas Chinese workers and Chinese-Thai gangsters. Another outstanding genre memory was formed by Hong Kong action cinema under the brand of *heroic bloodshed* '[in] which gunplay replaced the earlier kung fu-ery.' The pattern of the sub-genre can be viewed in John Woo's achievements: *A Better Tomorrow* (1986) (Logan 1995: 186). Woo's films were widely embraced by Thai audiences. *A Better Tomorrow* was retitled as *Hot Leo Dee* (*Cruel, Wicked, Virtuous*) in the Thai language. In my own vivid memory, this film and its sequels were televised since the late 1980s. Besides, Woo's films and Hong Kong action films were well-displayed in video rental shops connected to the common home entertainment before the internet era in Thailand (Intarachai 2015).

The boldness of the protagonists played by Bruce Lee and other actors, Chow Yun Fat for instance, can match the values of *nakleng* (lion-hearted gentleman) and *luk phuchai* (real man) in the Thai cultural context. Additionally, plots driven by the male protagonists' vengeance, popularised in Hong Kong cinema, were also widely deployed in Thai cinema of the period.

Some exemplars of the hybrid tastes in the making and receiving of Thai action films are: *Luk Phuchai Chue Ai Phaen/A Real Man Called Phaen* (Win Wachai, 1965) featuring a tough guy who loves bar fights, *Haek Khai Narok Dien Bien Phu/Breaking the Camp of Dien Bien Phu* (1977) and *Haek Narok*

Vietnam/Refugee (1983) which recount memories of the Vietnam War, *Phan Thai Norasingha* (Neramitr, 1982) related to a King's fellow who first encounters the King in disguise at a boxing fight for charity, *Ang-Yi* (Lanphun Srihan, 1983) about the Chinese secret society in Thailand and *Sing-Wing-Lui/Race/Run/Battle* (Phanna Ritthikrai, 1986) depicting Thai martial arts and the talented stuntmen—the formative stage of *Ong-Bak*'s legacy revived in the 2000s. However, when the global socio-political atmosphere changed its face, during the late 1990s, the Thai combat and action film tended to pursue nationalistic and patriotic messages through their set of 'foreign' enemies from historical narratives.

The differences between the Thai action film and the combat film should be defined by the 'group fight' and the array of brave warriors with their own back stories. At the beginning of the new millennium, *Bang Rachan* or *Bang Rajan* (Thanit Jitnukul, 2000) and *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* (2000) were screened. Detaching from the *Heaven's Seven* franchise, these two films completed the seriousness of war through the epic sensations of commoners. On an aesthetic level, the images of war depicted were also significantly inclined to both Hollywood culture and the genre memory of former Thai films. This issue will be elaborated upon later.

While *Bang Rachan* recalls the *historical memory* of the Ayutthaya Kingdom in the 18th century, *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* can be heralded as the first World War II combat film of the decade with a keen emphasis on realistic images of the past. *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* unfolds its story in June 1941 when Captain Thawin Niyomsen (Ron Banchongsang) is sent to recruit another unit of the Military Youth in Chumphon. With Lieutenant Samran Khuanphan (Kajohnsak Rattananisai), Thawin is heading to Sriyaphai School for his mission. After Thawin's touching speech on patriotism, a majority of the male students volunteer to be trained

after school. As the war was erupting in Europe, the training needed to be brief but efficient. Alongside the main plot of training and fighting, some romantic elements are inserted to dramatise the story. There is a triangular romance between Marut (Rungreung Anataya), Prayut (Worayot Panittraiphop) and Chidchong (Taya Roger) and a love rivalry between Thawin and Samran. Another subplot is about Marut's Japanese brother-in-law who happens to be a Japanese soldier in disguise. However, all subplots are loosened when the Japanese set ashore at Chumphon; the storyline turns to historicise the incident of December 8th 1941. The troop of Military Youth assembles and moves to Tha Nang Sang Bridge with some police officers and civilians. The battle between the Japanese army and the Military Youth takes more than six hours. At noon, the governor of Chumphon declares a truce. The Thai government agrees to grant safe passage to the Japanese.

In the battlefield, Thawin is shot dead, and Samran loses his arm. Though the Military Youth feel shame at not being able to fight until their last drop of blood, and they are made fun by some rough Japanese soldiers, one high-ranked Japanese soldier comes forward and commands his troops to do the military salute. This last scene is to glorify the Military Youth's heroism, not to represent the incident as a defeat synchronised with the memory attached to the Military Youth Monument.

Nevertheless, the *Heaven's Seven* franchise still tracked their marketing by means of the comic and the patriotic elements attracting Thai mass audiences. In *Heaven's Seven* (2002), American soldiers are villains. The film was read by some commentators and audiences as an allegory of the imperialism of the modern days through the International Monetary Funds—IMF and American cultural commodities. It was praised by some film critics for its sharp humour targeting class issues and urban-rural divides under the mask of an 'action comedy' film.

Meanwhile *Seven Street Fighters* (2005) deals with memories of World War II. The enemy in the film is the Japanese Empire. It has been widely received because of its typically Thai humour and parodying elements. The success of the film is also evident in other cultural productions: an array of comic books and a television remake distributed since the 2000s.

Seven Street Fighters features the return of Sergeant Dap Champo (Pongpat Wachirabanchong) with his allies: Moh Choengmuay (Samart Payak-Arun), Tangkuay Sae Lee (Thospol Sirivat), Akkhee Mekyan (Aummarin Nitiphon), Dan Mahitra (Pisek Intarakanchit), Kla Talumpuk (Vivat Champram) and Chuk Biawsakun (Arkom Preedakul). They are assigned a mission by Captain Ong-At. In the opening scene, they fight against unidentified armed forces. The story then introduces Suriya Ebata (Hiro Sano) who is a Japanese soldier in disguise as a photographer.

Confronted by Suriya, Sergeant Dap voluntarily lives in exile in Prachuap Khiri Khan Province where the Japanese set ashore after the outbreak of the Second World War. As Sergeant Dap accidentally kills a Japanese high-ranked soldier; he is arrested but then is freed by his friends. All the fighters, allied with the Chinese secret society in Thailand, have embraced their new mission of undermining the Japanese army. At their gathering, they are, without prior notice, attacked by Japanese soldiers and seven killers. Though they manage to survive the attack, Tangkuay's father is kidnapped and taken to the Death Railway in Kanchanaburi.

The seven street fighters are trapped by Kobota but the air raid at Bangkok Noi station takes Kobota's life before he gets the fighters murdered. At Kanchanaburi, Tangkuay's father is tortured to confess about the Chinese secret society. In the camp, a group of Thai women in captivity serve the army as comfort women. The arrival of

seven street fighters frees them all. Still, such freedom is short-lived as they are raked by Suriya's machine gun. Eventually, Suriya is finished by the seven fighters corresponding to the collapse of the wooden bridge on the River Kwai.

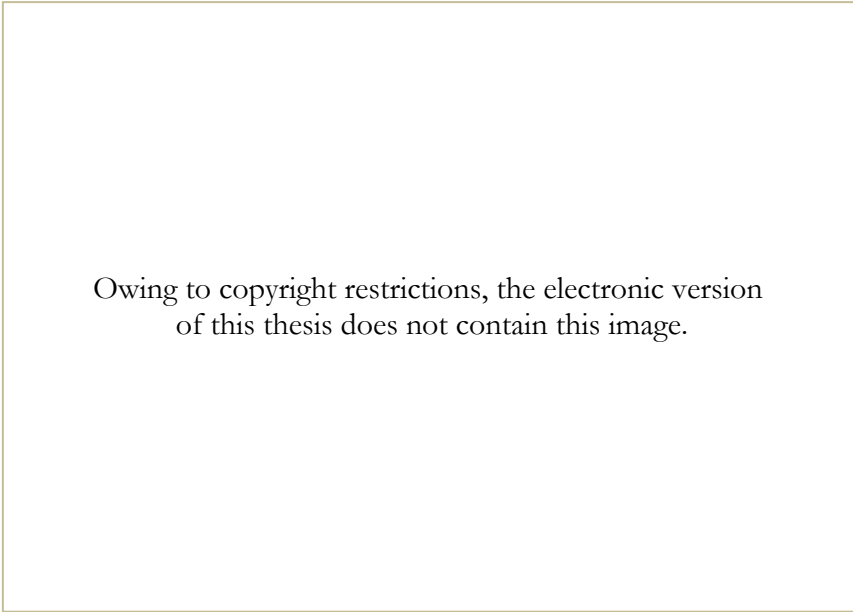
Exploring the storylines and visual components in these two films, I have found explicit influences of the Hollywood World War II combat film. This observation can be proved by the checklist of key traits synthesised from the American combat film by Basinger (2003: 67-69). The checklist should reveal the transnational influences of Hollywood prior to the negotiation with the genre memory from other sources that are explained in latter sections. The table illustrated below is also referred to in the other parts of this chapter and the entire thesis.

Hollywood World War II Combat Film	<i>Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men</i>	<i>Seven Street Fighters</i>
The credits of the film unfold against a military reference. The credits include the name of military advisor.	✓	✓
Closely connected to the presentation of the credits is a statement that may be called the film's dedication	✓	✓
A group of men led by a hero, undertake a mission which will accomplish an important military objective.	✓	✓
A group contains an observer or commentator.	-	-
The hero has had leadership forced upon him in dire circumstances.	✓	✓
They undertake a military objective.	✓	✓
As they go forward, the action unfolds. A series of episodes occur which alternates in uneven patterns the contrasting forces of night and day, action and repose, safety and danger, combat and noncombat, comedy and tragedy, dialogue and action.	✓	✓
The enemy's presence is indicated.	✓	✓
Military iconography is seen, and its usage is demonstrated for and taught to civilians.	✓	-
Conflicts breakout within the group itself. It is resolved through the external conflict brought down upon them.	✓	✓
Rituals are enacted from the past.	✓	-
Rituals are enacted from the present.	✓	-
Members of group die.	-	-
A climatic battle takes place, and a learning or growth process occurs.	✓	✓
The tools of cinema are employed.	✓	✓
The situation is resolved.	✓	✓
THE END appears on the screen.	✓	✓
The audience is ennobled for having shared their combat experience, as they are ennobled for having undergone it. We are all comrades in arms.	✓	-

TABLE 7 The Hollywood formula and the Thai World War II combat genre

From the table, the two texts from the *Heaven's Seven* franchise do not seem to fit in some generic structures. They are altered from *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*, tailored to venerate the courage of young heroes inspired by real events and military figures. Conversely, the stories of the seven street fighters are entwined into the vernacular Thai genre memory because of the humour at the very core of their productions.

I am not proposing that the World War II combat film in Thailand has been solely shaped by its Hollywood counterpart. Yet all case studies of this thesis own various portions of *Thai-Thai* or vernacular Thai genre memory inscribed in the Thai entertainment media contouring the Thai combat film as a 'hybrid genre.' Basinger herself is aware of the flexibility of film genres: 'Genre is a kind of Lego set. It is a bunch of pieces that stay the same, but out of them you can build different things' (2003: 15). Speaking with Basinger's metaphor, the Lego set, here, comes from the United States of America and some counties in Asia. Some of 'the pieces' are apparently made in Thailand.



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FIG. 32 Film posters of *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* and *Seven Street Fighters*

In this chapter, I explore the memory of World War II as remediated in two films and one television series: *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will be Men* and *Seven Street Fighters* or *Heaven's Seven 2*. The issues addressed are the intertextual relationship between the films, their related source texts and sites of memory in Thailand

3. *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* (2000)

‘Be proud, my Yuwachon Thahan! The history of Chumphon must inscribe your names. We did not surrender. We let them pass our land owing to the government’s political negotiation. Actually, we all have felt disheartened ever since. Such bitterness remains unspeakable’ (Sanan et al. 1990: 27).

Yuwachon thahan or the Military Youth⁴ is now perceived as *naksueksa wicha thahan* or Reserve Officer Training Corps Student led by the Territorial Defense Command.⁵ The unit was first established under the Ministry of Defense in 1938. It aimed at training upper secondary school students to be registered as reserve officers. It is believed that the establishment of the Thai Military Youth, under Phibun Songkhram’s regime, was influenced by the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) formed in 1933 (Baker and Phasuk 2014: 124).

There are a couple of scholarly writings on the film: Chakrit Tiebtienrat’s and Chajabhol Choopen’s master’s theses. Chakrit’s analysis focuses on the political background of the Military Youth from an international relations perspective, the linkage between Grammy Film studio, political institutions, nationalistic messages and some political symbols in the film: for example, costuming, weapons and flags (2004: 179-204). Offering a different approach, Chajabhol explains how nationalistic messages

⁴ There are various translations of *yuwachon thahan* in English: Youth Volunteers, Junior Soldiers, Juvenile Soldier, Young Soldiers, Militarised Youth Movement and Military Youth. I choose the term Military Youth to maintain its etymological trait from Hitler’s Youth, and it resembles the term indicated in the official document of the opening ceremony the Military Youth Monument.

⁵ The Thai name of Territorial Defense Command is *raksa dindaen*. It is, thus, causally called *ro do*.

are conveyed through the film elements (2007: 72-78). However, the findings of these studies do not illustrate the entanglement between media, memory and communities. They do not reflect upon *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* as a combat film. In the following sections, I therefore fill the gaps of these previous studies with special reference to memory-making practices of the film and the transnational effects generated from Hollywood culture.

3.1 Unfinished Dialogues: Cinema and Vernacular Memory

Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men is a product of Grammy Film under GMM Grammy Entertainment's umbrella. Chakrit (2004: 195) notes the company 'has government and political leaders as their patrons and partners in business.' His theory is that film 'can sell and, promote nationalism and patriotism, which subtly support their patron' (2004: 195-196). As a matter of fact, the company cannot stand without its association to the Thai film industry during its contemporary context and the achievement of the studio before the production of *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men*.

The Grammy Film studio was conceived in 1995 when the GMM Grammy Entertainment had been successful in music industry and the star-making business. The first production of the company was *Sunset at Chaopraya* (Euthana Mukdasanit, 1995). However, the film's success was underperforming despite the magnetic charisma of Thai superstar Thongchai McIntyre. Based upon its investment, 24 million Thai Baht, the film gained 47-48 million Thai Baht. The income was outgrown by 55 million Thai Baht earned by *Lok Thang Bai Hai Nai Khon Diaw/Romantic Blue* (Rachen Limtrakun, 1995). It was produced by R.S. Film, a business competitor of Grammy Film (Visit 2004: 74).

As a result, GMM Grammy adjusted its strategy by gearing back to teen stars and teen audiences which caused the long-standing achievements of the company. The film productions of Grammy film during 1997-2000 were, therefore, teen-centred. Some exemplars, before 2000, are: *Anda Lae Fahsai/Anda and Fahsai* (M.L. Pundhevanop Dhewakul, 1997) debuting Ananda Everingham⁶ and Joy Chonticha, *Chakrayan Sii Daeng/The Red Bike Story* (Euthana Mukdasanit, 1997) starring Patiparn Pataweekarn and Tata Young, the popular teen idols of the late 1990s and *Rak Ok Baep Mai Dai/O-Negative* (Pinyo Roothum, 1998) starring Tata Young, Chakrit Yamnarm and Ray McDonald, the teen idols who remained famous until the 2010s.

Reviewing Grammy Film's achievements, I am not surprised why the return of teen stars appeared in their film production in 2000. Here, I argue, *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* is not simply produced to please the company's patrons or the political elites; it is a product crystallised from the rise of teenpics and the patriotic craze circulated through the film industry since the economic crisis of 1997. Evidently, *Bang Rachan* was a hit with Thai audiences. The film features—a group fighting against the foreign enemy and masculine comradeship—have charmed the Thai cultural circuit over the years.⁷ The success of *Bang Rachan* encouraged the birth of *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*. The film could be considered as a teen version of *Bang Rachan*. There were two target groups of audience: those who loved *phappayon bu* or action-adventure films in the broadest sense and fans of teenpics or teen stars. This observation can be supported by Theeraphap Lohitkul—a Thai

⁶ Later on Ananda Everingham has been dramatically successful in his acting career. His dominant works in various genres are: *Shutter* (Banjong Pisanthanakun and Parkpoom Wongpoom, 2004), *Sabaidee Luang Prabang/Good Morning, Luang Prabang* (Sakchai Deenan and Anousone Sirisackda, 2008) and *Insee Daeng/Red Eagle* (Wisit Sasanatieng, 2010).

⁷ *Bang Rachan* was later adopted by Oliver Stone and screened in the United States in 2004 'presumably for the same reason that Quentin Tarantino is "presenting" Zhang Yimou's *Hero*, to promise a level of mayhem that will attract a cult film audience' (Kehr 2004).

national artist in literature (non-fiction writing). He once wrote in his travelogue to Chumphon and the memory of the Military Youth: '*Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* is a must-watch film for Thai audiences particularly for teenagers' (Theeraphap 2003: 137).

Theeraphap Lohitkul's quotation above can be interlaced with the quality of the film as a memory film. Before the introduction of the film, *yuwachon thahan* or the Military Youth was not acknowledged in the official memory for example in school textbooks because the memory was dominated by the rhetoric of the Free Thai Movement. As another source of the official memory is the narratives from the Royal Thai Army, the memory of the Military Youth is accredited. Still, the memory is drowning into the ocean of heroism of the soldiers fighting during the 8th December 1941 incident. In *Yutthakot, the Journal of the Royal Thai Army*, a radio script aired on 8th December 1949 was reprinted. Titled 'We Thais shall fight until our last breath,' the script mentions the battle of the Military Youth within two short paragraphs (Chai 1986: 34). Although the memory should also be remembered by some institutions related to youth affairs, in the *Journal of National Education*, a paragraph is dedicated to the memory: 'particularly in Chumphon, Captain Thawin Niyomsen, the commander of the unit [who] led the Military Youth to the battle against the Japanese at the Bridge on Tha Nang Sang canal' (Preecha 1985: 132-138). Again, the Military Youth are still unnamed, and they are put on the shared platform among the soldiers of other areas battling with the Japanese on the same day.

Muted in Thai official memory, the memory of the Military Youth was voiced again during the pre-production phase of the film. The film crews were conducting their research at museums. They travelled to Chumphon seeking for living figures of the Military Youth or their descendants (A Conversation with Euthana Mukdasanit

2000: 38). In this way, the memory in the film has been refabricated from vernacular memory in the form of oral history and relevant cultural productions. As a memory film, the film restores and stores the vernacular memory, and the memory is mediated through cinematic grammar.

The invisibility of the Military Youth in the official memory helped boost public attention in the restored memory through the film. There have been resultant publications, television documentaries and news scoops after the film. One of the most cited pieces is Sornsansan Phaengsapha's *Dark War: Japanese Invasion to Thailand*. The book was first published in 2000 and reprinted in 2015 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. In his renowned book, Sornsansan depicts the heated atmosphere before the war hit Thailand. The incident when the Japanese army descended on beaches in Chumphon is chronologically mapped. The book conjoins the referentiality of the film by illustrating the incident with movie stills from the film (Sornsansan 2000: 144-145).

Another crucial publication is Theeraphap's writing cited earlier. His travelogue to Chumphon was first published in 2002. It was later anthologised in Sanan Chumworathayee's book on local knowledge of Chumphon (Sanan 2002: 157-164). When Theeraphap was asked about his aims of the visit, he simply replied: 'I read stories of the Military Youth, and I watched the film. I was wondering how Sriyaphai School looks these days. Is there any trace of the Military Youth in [the] last 60 years?' (2003: 127). Met by Theeraphap at Sriyaphai School, the setting of the film, a middle-aged man conversed with him: 'I had a chance to read the stories of Military Youth when I had left the school. I'm proud of them. It thrillingly evoked my patriotism. When they were filming in Chumphon, some Sriyaphai students were recruited to the set' (2003: 127).

Theeraphap's writing has been taken up in other writings in later periods as well as other cultural productions related to Chumphon province, the incident when the Japanese set ashore in Chumphon and the bravery of the Military Youth. When the film was widely circulated in Thailand and beyond, it was attached to reproduce memory. Presently, it is attached to vernacular memory in Chumphon. The reason behind this is the film is interconnected to Sanan Chumwarathayee's memory. Back in 1941, Sanan was affiliated with the Military Youth. He joined the combat against the Japanese. He was a local celebrity as he was the principal of Sriyaphai School, the most prestigious school of Chumphon province. Thus, Sanan himself was acting as an academic consultant and a site of memory over the film production (2003: 134). The film relatively is a visual projection of the individual memory intertwined with the vernacular memory found in other memory texts.

Visiting Sanan in his late life, Theeraphap did a casual interview with him in 2002: 'the first test for the Military Youth was being mocked by the Burmese from the other side of the Kraburi River. Some of them showed their buttocks' (2003: 129). Sanan revived his memory which was included in the film: 'before the war I once detained an Indian soldier of the British Empire on his offshore patrol vessel. After the investigation, he was freed' (2003: 129).

Long before Sanan's memory was addressed through cinematic representation, there had been a multi-layered tension between the official memory and the vernacular memory of World War II in Chumphon. Sanan initiated the monument building project for the Military Youth. Before the construction, there was only a small pagoda near Tha Nang Sang Bridge dedicated to those who fell in the battle. Sanan was struggling to champion acknowledgement of the Military Youth from the state. In *Heroic Monument of the Youth Soldiers Unit 52* published on the occasion of

the opening ceremony of the Military Youth Monument on the 8th December 1990, such an attempt was pursued through weaving the vernacular war memory with the loss of territories and the royal-nationalistic ideology remaining in the mainstream official memory. To that end, King Bhumibol's speech was quoted with his royal portrait: 'Nation is life, flesh, blood and our shared treasure. To protect the nation is not a particular group's duty. The duty belongs to us all' (Sanan et al. 1990: n.pag.). The speech reflects the trope found in the Thai national anthem and other mainstream historical narratives.

In the preface of the book, war memory is traced back to 1785 and 1802 when Chumphon was defeated by the Burmese army. The assertion of importance of the Military Youth and their legends was summoned to justify the establishment of the monument. The preface assures their acts of sacrifice are positioned along with other warriors in Thai mainstream history as described in King Vajravuth's *Siamanusti* poem (Sanan et al. 1990: 1-2). The poem is recited in some Thai memory films set in World War II.⁸ It was followed by the Prime Minister's message: 'may this monument remain forever and remind our descendants of their ancestors' sacrifice' (1990: 3).

The backstory of the building project unfolds the politics behind the monument and the vernacular memory in opposition to the state's reluctant collaboration and the army's abandonment. These problematic issues are allegorically articulated in the film. In 1984, Captain Samran and Lieutenant Colonel Thawin's son⁹ asked the director of Sriyaphai School to organise an opening ceremony for the monument. The provincial governor of Chumphon objected to the scheme. He noted that the monument was not 'majestic enough' to be opened by an important person from the central government. The fund, thus, was raised to build a new base for the monument (1990: 6). As an aside,

⁸ *I Shall Stop the World for You* (1985) and *Sunset at Chaopraya* (1995) for example.

⁹ Thawin and Samran were promoted for their higher ranks honouring their heroic deeds.

from Sanan's memory, while the people of Chumphon, in panic, were escaping from Japanese perils, Luang Srisupahannadit, Chumphon's legislator, told his family and neighbours not to leave because the fight would be over soon. Yet soldiers, police officers and the Military Youth were not informed; they consecrated their lives' (Theeraphap 2003: 133).

In the film, the governor is portrayed as an indecisive and powerless person. He refuses to help Thawin to raise funds for weapon training for the Military Youth. The governor patronises Thawin and his scheme. For this reason Thawin and his fellows organise a public performance emphasising the importance of the Military Youth affairs. This sequence in the film henceforth stretches its shadow over the reenactments in latter commemorations of the unit. Expecting the commands from the central government in despair, the governor appears more powerless on the day the Japanese army invades Thailand. The reluctant expression of the government in the film is articulated in a similar fashion with findings of historians. The power relation between the ruler and 'the ruled' in this problematic memory is also encoded through film aesthetics: particularly the *mise en scène*.

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FIG. 33 Thawin and the *mise en scène*

The *mise en scène* in the film persistently depicts Thawin's roles and status. Thawin is highly respected among the Military Youth; he is called *khru* (guru in Sanskrit). A low-angle shot is always deployed in presenting Thawin, and he usually appears with Thailand's national flag. One interesting scene is the encounter between

the governor and Thawin. This scene connotes how trivial the Military Youth and their memories are under the eyes of the state. This scene is presented through a high-angle shot. The *mise en scène* includes the national flag and the photo of young King Ananda Mahidol behind the governor. These two objects also signify the triviality of the Military Youth's memory. It connotes that the fights of the Military Youth must be a 'bottom-up' approach, particularly to remain remembered.

Apart from Sanan's memory and the monument, the transformation of the vernacular memory into film can be tracked from the National Museum of Chumphon and its related memory texts. *Chumphon National Museum*, the book, was written and edited while the film was in its pre-production and production phases in 1999. It is stored in a small library of the museum in Chumphon. Additionally, this book can be found at most university libraries across Thailand. As the museum spares an exhibition room for the memory of the Military Youth, the book provides some information and rare photos of the Military Youth and the Japanese invasion. The most magnetic part is a collection of photos of the Military Youth who had become old veterans at their 70s. The collection attempts to match the veterans' current appearances with their portraits in the uniforms. Some remaining figures found in 1999 are: Thaworn Sornsawat, Phut Nilyakanon, Sanan Chumworathayee and Supot Indrasupha (Wisanthanee 1999: 136).

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FIG. 34 The Military Youth Monument reenacted in the Chonphon National Museum and in the film

The book remarks on the building process of the Military Youth Monument: ‘when the World War II ended, courageous mission of soldiers, police and the Military Youth was fading from people’s memory to scrub out those traumatic pictures of the war’ (Wisanthanee 1999: 139). The message fits into the background of the book *Heroic Monument of the Youth Soldiers Unit 52* (Sanan et al. 1990: 5). The displays in the museum centre the picture of the monument and a figure of the Military Youth. Seemingly, the monument turns to be a leitmotif in the film as it appears in both the opening and ending scenes before being inherited by other reenactments after the film.

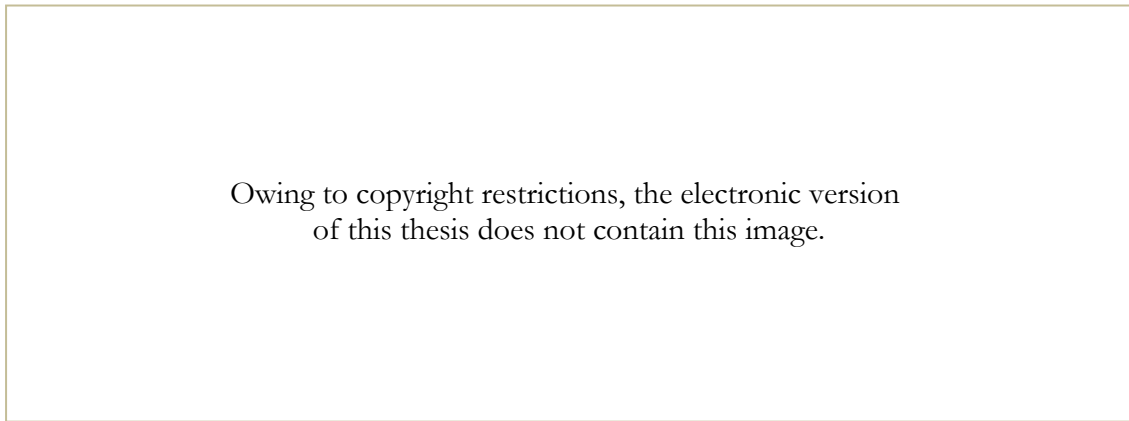
The dialogue between *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* and its related memory texts was continued when the film was exhibited in Chumphon and other places where the Military Youth used to be unknown. At the museum, when asked about the film a curator trainee replied: ‘I watched it before working here. It helped me a lot when I talked about the local history curated in this museum’ (Olan 2014: n.pag.). Some old Military Youth members had a chance to watch the film; Pichet Charoenpanit reflected: ‘In the year the film was launched, they did [a] screening at a veterans’ meeting. The event was held at a big hotel in town’ (2014: n.pag.). Though it was labeled as a semi-documentary work, the film faced massive complaints from those who were involved with the incident and historical figures in the film. As a member of the Military Youth Veteran Club, Pichet explained: ‘my first impression was the film was not loyal to the facts. Thai Youth Soldiers fighting for a girl? That’s unthinkable’ (2014: n.pag.). When the film was circulated and gained public attention, there was a meeting of the Military Youth veterans and their descendants in Bangkok (Khaosod Newspaper 2000: 12). They agreed to protest against the film because some figures were misrepresented. The situation resembles the happenings in the United Kingdom

when *The Bridge on The River Kwai* was screened (Hack and Blackburn 2008: 156). Either to be forgotten or to be misremembered can disturb those living sites of memory. Notwithstanding, the protests faded away. The audiences were pleased to learn about the heroism of the Military Youth. The combination between the individual memory, vernacular memory and fictional elements, somehow, makes it a good film. It has become a portion of Euthana Mukdasanit's lifetime achievement as praised by the Thai Film Director Association in 2015.

The success of the film in embedding itself into Thai memory culture can be seen in the recognition from the National Committee of Documentation and Archiving. In 1998, the committee recruited some local scholars to join their teams unlike the committees for school textbooks totally controlled by the Ministry of Education. However, the memory is historicised in a chronological order as found in other governmental publications. It lays a small amount of paragraphs highlighting the politics behind the building process of the monument of the Military Youth (Committee of Documentation and Archiving 1999: 60). Meanwhile the memory under the Royal Thai Army's military trope is not dramatically changed. The importance of the Military Youth is diminished by the memory of the incidents from other provinces of Thailand's South for example Suratthani, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Pattani where chief military bases are located (Chatchai et al. 2011: 65-71). However, on pages of the book published to commemorate the incident on 8 December 1941, the war memory in Chumphon is revived through posted movie stills from *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* (2011: 67).

The film has shaped genre memory of the reenactments based upon the incident; this is another commemorative function of the film. The first outstanding example is the *tableau vivant* performed by the Sriyaphai students in the opening

ceremony of Chumphon sport festival on 4 August 2004. The performance imitated the monument figure and other students in the set were placed to denote group combat as seen in the film. In 2011, the Wat Phicahyaram School in Chumphon hosted the 61st School Art and Culture Festival of Southern Thailand. Their proud performance was a school historical drama performed on the 8th of December to commemorate the gallantry of the Military Youth on the day Chumphon was attacked by the Japanese (School Art and Culture Festival of Southern Thailand 2011). The drama conforms to the storyline of the film. The protests against the film's infidelity to the historical fact did not seem to disrupt this adaptation. The fictional characters from the film were maintained in the drama as well as the love triangle between teen protagonists.



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FIG. 35 Genre memory of the film reenacted in school drama (2011)

On the 8th of December 2011, at Surin province, located in the North Eastern part of Thailand, there was a performance called 'I am the Military Youth' by students of Surin Technical College. The reenactment was based upon the battle against the Japanese at Chumphon province even though the Military Youth in the North Eastern region of Thailand were assigned to border patrol during the Franco-Thai Dispute before the Second World War instead. In the performance, the combatants were, however, led by two general soldiers signifying the characters of Thawin and Samran from the film, and the dialogues are refabricated from the film. In this way, the film

has dominated the general perception of the Military Youth both in its local and translocal contexts.

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FIG. 36 The Military Youth Monument and the film reenacted in the *tableau vivant* (2004) and the light and sound show (2015)

The most recent *sons et lumière* show endorsing the genre memory of the film is the reenactment at Thataphao Games on 22 October 2015.¹⁰ The record of the event was published on YouTube on 4 November 2015. In the opening scene, the narrating voice borrows the rhetoric published in *Heroic Monument of the Youth Soldiers Unit* 52: ‘The blood of Chumphon warriors has been inherited from Ayutthaya to Rattanakosin period.’ Yet several parts of the dialogue are quotations from the film. The monument posture depicted in the opening and ending scenes of the film is also borrowed. The description covers the defeat of the Axis power at the end of the war. Besides, the scene wherein the Military Youth is respected by the Japanese army is noticeably reenacted from the film.

Significantly, the light and sound show constructed its dialogue with memory texts archived by the state. In the background of the standing Military Youth, there appears the film called *Suansanam Seri Thai/The Free Thai Movement’s March* (1945). The film recorded the event of 25 September 1945 when the Thai government succeeded in claiming its collaboration with the Allies. As the film is now a collection

¹⁰ Sports games attended by students from the institutions under the local administrations of South Thailand.

in Thailand's Film Archive, it pursues the mainstream rhetoric of the World War II memory dominated by the Free Thai Movement. Therefore, placing the Military Youth and the Free Thai Movement together, the show, reenacted under the genre memory of *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*, reclaimed its position in the mainstream remembrance of the society.

Despite the unfinished conversation on memory between the state and the commoners, the memory of the Military Youth remains continuous at both individual and collective levels. At the individual level, the veterans are still retelling their memories; such as, in Phut Nilyakanon's short autobiography widely circulated among the veteran community of Chumphon. To Phut, his memory as a member of the Military Youth is *khwam songcham thii luem mai long* (unforgettable memory). His own honour is proudly written: 'By that heroic deed, Phut Nilyakanon was awarded a victory medal as announced in Thailand's Royal Gazette No.98, section 96, page 32, line 7: 22nd June 1972' (2013: 10). Alongside this, there are two pieces of poetry in the same book: 'In memory of young warriors' and 'Life story of Phut Nilyakanon.' The first one aims at praising the Military Youth's heroism and Thawin's sacrifice: 'in protection of Thai territories' (2013: 10). In the latter poetry, being a member of the Military Youth is acknowledged as a formative phase of his life; it is mentioned in one stanza (2013: 10). At the communal level, the Military Youth has been included in schools' local curricula. One proper example is Ban Khor Son School. The school is located at the beach where the Japanese landed. The local museum was opened in 2004. Some supplementary readings have been published with an emphasis on memory for instance in Sam-Ang Khongchuchai's book, the storyline is delivered along with colour illustrations. Its most important technique is to employ

the use of a grandfather character telling stories of the Military Youth to a group of young students (Sam-Ang n.d.).

Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men possesses some political functions. The film was screened in 2007 under the cooperation between the Thai Knowledge Park and the Thai Film Foundation. It was subsequently screened in 2008 on ThaiPBS channel. The film symbolises the virtue of *khwam rak chat* or ‘Nation loving’ in the time of political crisis and social disunity after the coup in 2006 and the conflict with Cambodia over the land of Preah Vihear (King 2017: 78).

In respect of its commemorative functions, the film was rescreened at the Film Archive under the World War II screening series and on the One Channel in 2014 and 2015, to name but a few. The most remarkable screening channel is the homepage of Sriyaphai School. The film has been developed into a branded history of the school. Also it has been used as instructional media in social studies classes. These should be claimed as the film’s success in promotion of the memory it stores and restores despite its modest success as a blockbuster and large indifference from film critics (Visit 2004: 77).

In the next section, the construction of the ‘young heroes’ will be explored. The ‘young’ part is encoded by genre memory of the teenpic while the heroic elements are asserted by the grammar of the combat film. The analysis focuses on how the combat itself influences the *rite of passage* of the characters.

3.2 Raising Young Heroes: Militariness and Rite of Passage

The English title of *yuwachon thahan poet term pai rop*—*Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men*—does not transfer its direct meaning in Thai. The word *yuwachon* stands for young people while *thahan* means soldiers. *Poet term pai rop* signifies the

characters' status as schoolboys; it can be translated: 'a new semester in a battlefield.' The English title, instead, appropriates an English expression, 'boys will be boys,' which is 'an expression of resignation towards childish way' (*The Oxford English Dictionary Volume II* 1989: 467). Hence the title *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* suggests the coming-of-age theme of the film.

Some commentators consider coming of age or rite of passage in an anthropological definition as 'a natural process through which positive development of the adolescent protagonist occurs' (Hardcastle, Morosini and Tarte 2009:1-2). They often connect the process to the literary convention inherited from a type of genre memory in German literature: *Bildungsroman* (2009: 4) dealing with 'a troubled quest for identity' (Baldick 2001: 27). In the mainstream Hollywood teen film, the coming of age is normally projected through the eyes of school and family (Driscoll 2011: 70). The 'troubled quest' should be proper enough to raise a sense of maturity. But the protagonists are, somehow, monitored by social institutions to assure their desirable membership of certain societies or communities. In this sense, the coming-of-age process should be 'cultural' rather than 'natural.'

In the context of its exhibition, *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* owned its didactic functions as the director aims at educating his audiences on *esprit de corps*: 'My feeling is, during this time, our nation must bear political and economic crisis. The firm stance of *esprit de corps* should empower us to go through the storms' (A Conversation with Euthana Mukdasanit 2000: 39). To survive the national crisis was 'a troubled quest' Thai audiences were challenged to accept. The war in the Thai official and vernacular memory can, therefore, be metaphorically deployed in the post-crisis Thai cinema (Anchalee 2002: 303-304). However, the transformational process of the group of protagonists in *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men* is not

mainly associated with youth problems; their maturity is pursued through their military training and exposure to the real battlefield. To give a clearer picture of how the rite of passage is embodied within the film, I adopt a set of anthropological explanations on the issue synthesised from various cultures (Grimes 2000: 106-107).

After reaching the train station, Thawin commands his military fellows to recruit a new troop of the Military Youth at Sriyaphai School. The young protagonists remain in their class. They are reciting *akhyan*¹¹ from school textbooks.¹² In the film, the recited *akhyan* is from King Vajiravuth's poem: 'Love of race and fatherland'. The King's works recurrently appear in Thai memory texts. The King's messages, in a similar fashion, can be found in the other texts studied in this thesis: *I Shall Stop the World for You* (1985) and *Sunset at Chaopraya* (1995). With a strong patriotic sentiment and foreshadowing elements, the boys recite: 'Should strangers come and rule over us. They will surely order and drive us; They will oppress us from morn till night as is the custom with masters. [...] Should we stand ashamed before the whole world!'

Patriotic campaigns or *pluk chai* are one fundamental genre memory found in Thai screen culture. Surprisingly, Watthana Nittayanart, one of the students, despite his skinny and nerdy appearance, speaks his mind out loud to greet the arrival of the soldiers: 'Hooray! I'm going to be a soldier.' After the recruiting procedure, mocked by his stronger friends, Watthana insists: 'Though I'm small, I have a big heart.' He can be allegorically read that patriotism is for all; the message is maintained all through the story. Watthana's and his friends' enthusiasm to be recruited responds to the call of a rite of passage. The drafting requires the boys' bare chests to be

¹¹ In Hindi, *akhyan* means narration while in Thai, it associates with recitation.

¹² *Akhyan*, related to Thai memorising techniques, significantly reflects oral tradition as the very root of Thai education since the age of temple-based schooling—before the modernisation of Thailand in the 19th century. *Akhyan* texts are quoted from Thai classical literature and lyrics.

measured. Some boys prove their physical readiness by flexing their muscles. Looking through an anthropological lens, the scene looks like a ritual, and the professional soldiers are mature members of the community.

Recruited for military training, the boys are partially giving over their civilian status. The school and family which are supposed to shape the boys' identities attempt to contest their roles from the army. At the school, the teacher from *akhyan* class comes to Thawin expressing his concerns: 'So now the white cloth must be painted?' The white cloth is a clichéd metaphor of innocent childhood used in Thailand. Thawin firmly replies: 'It's inevitable. It must be tricoloured.' The metaphor is contested by another metaphor. The tricoloured cloth stands for tricolour flag or *thong trai rong*—the national flag of Thailand.

Tension between the army and the family institution appears when Marut is warned by his Japanese brother-in-law: 'If it's not necessary to be so brave, don't be!' Another example is when Thawin is advised by the Chumphon governor: 'The boy's parents are complaining. Your training doesn't need to be that tough!' Saying this, the governor refuses to grant his financial support to the Military Youth training. The existing tension between the institutions confirms remarks by film scholars: 'One of the most difficult processes boys experience in adolescence is identity construction' (Pomerance and Gateward 2005: 16). For this reason the rite of passage in *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* proposes a more progressive coming of age than other Thai teenpics. As a combat film, it suggests that to be trained and to fight in certain battlefields can prove one's maturity and masculinity. It frees the boys from other social institutions that can become malfunctioning during the war.

Over the early phase of the rite of passage, the boys are 'taught by mentors, spiritual parents, or elders.' They also have to show respect, to display obedience and

to be intimidated by mentors (Grimes 2000: 106). Thawin and Samran are mentors within this context. They cultivate disciplines and patriotic ideology, through the intensive training sessions, among the Military Youth who are ‘hazed, [and] subjected to painful or unpleasant treatment’ (2000: 106).

In terms of patriotism, Thawin gives his moving speeches on several occasions. On the drafting date, he speaks: ‘Thailand has remained independent for so long, and it will remain so until the end of time.’ What he says is retrieved from the *Loss of Territories* discourse perpetuated since the Siamese-Franco War in 1893 (during the reign of King Chulalongkorn). The discourse was redressed under nationalistic waves in the post-revolution era (Strate 2015). Thawin also adopts a novel discourse in his speech given before the National Day on 24th of June: ‘On this day in the last two years, Siam changed its name to Thailand. On this very day, Thailand has been laid in your hands. We shall celebrate our national day so long as we can protect our national sovereignty.’

Following the ideology, the boys have to learn military discipline. They learn how to control their bodies: standing, turning, walking and running. The militarised body is the basic pathway to become the Military Youth and to practically detach from the state of schoolboys reciting patriotic *akhyan*.

The next step towards body control is learning how to use weapons. The boys have to use wooden guns in the first place. After their fund-raising performance, a new machine gun is introduced to them. In the rite of passage, this phase is ‘learning sacred, sexual, or cultural knowledge’ (Grimes 2000: 106). Both Thawin and Samran mentor the learning process. Interestingly, the weapon is interrelated to women. As found in the teen-film relationship, ‘the presexuality, or asexuality, of screen boys is an important characteristic in that it can function to free them from one whole field of

narrative requirements or to imprison them in another (Pomerance and Gateward 2005: 5).

This borderline sexuality can be seen in Samran's action. Samran feels heartbroken when he sees Wandee's romantic interests in Thawin instead of him. He spends time in a brothel where he is greeted by Prayut and other boys. Gradually becoming the Military Youth, the boys are 'allowed access to secrets; gaining access to previously off-limits areas' and 'observing food, sexual and other behavioural taboos' (Grimes 2000: 106). When asked by Samran, Prayut claims: 'What if we die before learning how to make love? We should make our lives worth living.' Samran preaches to his young fellows in return: 'Life is worth living not being hurt. [...] I was at the Franco-Siam War (1940-1941). I shot French and Lao soldiers. Friends matter anyhow. Captain Thawin is the worst superior and the worst friend.'

Sickened of his love pain, in training, Samran teaches the boys how to use guns. He indirectly insults Thawin through the lesson: 'A gun is like a woman of whom you have to understand every part to control her. You have to be careful because it can hurt you.' During this state of training 'sacred, sexual and cultural knowledge' can be intertwined. As the subtle conflict between Thawin and Samran erupts, the conflict between Marut and Prayut is not solved yet. The metaphor of women is used again when the new machine gun is uncovered.

Wattana: Wow! It's more beautiful than a woman. Shooting a gun is difficult?

Thawin: No, it depends on what is targeted.

Prachum: To shoot a man is difficult, isn't it?

Thawin: In battlefields, we shoot enemies not men.

Wattana is first allowed to try out the gun. He nearly kills his comrades with his unskilled shooting. It, however, turns out to be a comic relief. Another milestone mentioned here is that to be a soldier means to be ready to kill by command.

Following this line, the Military Youth have to learn how to distinguish between ‘friends and foes.’ One practical lesson given in the film is the romantic rivalry between Marut and Prayut. Fighting against each other, they are witnessed by Thawin and other boys. Thawin shouts at them: ‘If you don’t care for your friends or your comrade-in-arms...if you see a girl is more important, go on! Kill each other! If you still care about your nation, do turn over a new leaf. Act like selfless Military Youth! Go!’

The process of ‘learning sacred, sexual, or cultural knowledge’ is not simply a part of the rite of passage. It can be considered as genre memory derived from teen-related films. Pomerance and Gateward propose that representation of boys in screen culture is often connected to conventional film genres: the western, sci-fi and horror (2005: 6). The course of growing up in the western genre shares a lot in common with the elements found in *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*: ‘the young or very young man learning how to handle a gun, how to look other men in the eye, how to aim with his own eye, and how to be with women’ (Pomerance and Gateward 2005: 6). To master their ‘guns’ and ‘women’ can hereby define the characters’ maturity.

The resolution of double-layered conflict is developed prior to the real battle against the Japanese. Their solidarity, leadership and comradeship are grown in their group training. For example, when Prayut giggles while training, Marut volunteers to be punished rather than letting all of his friends be in trouble. Despite his selfless act, Marut is antagonistically treated by Prayut not only because of their romantic interests but also Prayut’s discriminatory attitudes.

Prayut is the son of a rich sheriff in Chumphon. He had planned to pursue his law degree in the United Kingdom. Compared to other students in the same class, Prayut’s background is foregrounded. Marut, newly moving from Bangkok to

Chumphon with his sister and Japanese brother-in-law, is accused by Prayut of being a spy for the Japanese. Moreover, when the boys are heading to the brothel, Marut excuses himself. Prayut contemptuously assumes: ‘Why? Are you scared? If you don’t have enough money, I can treat you this time.’ Prayut’s bigotry is also confronted by other boys.

Banchong: If you had been a bit later, I would have volunteered. To exert is my job, Marut.

Prayut: I have no doubt. You have been with buffaloes since the day you were born.

Banchong: So what? I was born a farmer’s son. Do you have a problem with that?

An intensive breaking-the-ice camp is provided by Thawin and his crew.

Patrolling along the Thai-Burma border, the Military Youth have to maintain a high level of discipline to secure the border and their troop. Such a mission is normally given to ‘real’ soldiers. The boys are proud of the adventurous mission. They arrest an Indian soldier. They are chased by a wild elephant but saved by Thawin’s gun. One of the remarkable scenes is when the boys are mocked by Burmese villagers from the other side of the River Kra Buri. The boys are commanded to unzip their trousers then urinate into the river; the villagers are shooed away. The boys and one of his mentors laugh together. The scene connotes the masculinity of the Military Youth and the touch of homosociality which is more intensified than when they are at school. After the patrol, the strong comradeship shared among the boys is restored; the biased attitudes are fixed.

Alongside the patriotic message, in their rite of passage, the characters should project their future dreams as a part of ‘imagining, envisioning, dreaming, praying’ processes (Grimes 2000: 106). In this context, the boys’ dreams are associated with the loss of innocence—in trade for maturity. Chidchong, the reward of the love rivalry among the protagonists, is not an exception. She wants to be the first female pilot of

Thailand though she has no chance to pursue her higher education. Marut values everyone's dreams. He sincerely says to his friends: 'If dreams can come true, it must be awesome.' He also makes a wooden toy plane for Chidchong. The scene wherein they are playing with the toy plane by the sea depicts their pure innocence. Sharing the same romantic interests, Chidchong and Marut talk about their future:

Chidchong: 'Nobody takes my dream seriously. Thanks so much, Marut. You have joined my dream. What is your future dream anyway?'

Marut: I want to pursue my degree at the University of Moral and Political Sciences.

Chidchong: I'll fly there to see you.

Their innocence is terminated when the Japanese set ashore on 8 December 1941. Chidchong's father is killed when he tries to stop the Japanese. Marut eventually confronts his brother-in-law who appears to be a Japanese high-ranked soldier. Marut spits into Kawakami's face then he runs to assemble with the other Military Youth. This is a key moment for Marut, as a protagonist, he eventually leaves his family behind to join the army. When he meets Prayut on the street, their conflicts are hereby solved by their comradeship: 'Let's go, mate! Let's die together!'

On the bus to the field, there are lines of local people escaping from the areas of fighting. They are asking the Military Youth not to dare fight the outnumbering Japanese troops. The fearful atmosphere potentially undermines the spirit of the Military Youth. Thawin, thus, preaches: 'we soldiers are going there for our mission: to protect these people. We are born once and die only once. It depends on how we die. It should prove if we deserve to be real men.' The spirit is in time evoked by agreeing to 'die together.' This agreement ties into the later phases of the rite of passage as the boys are 'strongly identifying with a gender or age cohort; being differentiated from the other sex and from other kinds of people' (Grimes 2000: 106).

To expose to the real battle scene is synonymous to ‘giving up dependencies’ and ‘mastering difficult tasks’ (Grimes 2000: 106). In the convention of Hollywood World War II combat films, there should be the death of a father figure. In *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men*, Thawin is shot dead at the beginning of the combat. Samran also loses one of his arms. Before passing out, Samran tells Marut to lead the troop: ‘If I can’t stand, take my place! Don’t let them pass Chumphon.’ In this way, Marut has his ‘status elevated’, and he is ‘passing through initiatory levels or degrees’ (2000: 106).

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FIG. 37 The death of Thawin and the last homage in the battlefield

Borrowing from psychoanalytic interpretation, I argue, the boys cannot gain access to their full adulthood if the paternal figure is not removed as the paternalism is represented through the church, the army and the nation state (Troyer and Marchiselli 2005: 266). Thawin can be estimated as ‘a charismatic leader’ who can make the boys stay in solidarity (2005: 267). When he and Samran fail to lead the boys, they fight on because of their ‘brotherly love based on shared hatred of the father’ (2005: 267). From the battle scene, we cannot see Marut growing dominant or Wattana mastering his weapon before the death of Thawin. Their ‘hatred of father’ encodes their desire to be real soldiers.

Setting their bayonets, the group of Military Youth; thus, ready to run into the faceless enemy. The field is represented as a theatre for ‘dramatising, acting out, performing, using masks and costumes’ (Grimes 2000: 106) in the rite of passage.

Marut: Yuwachon Thahan, what kind of people did Khru Captain Thawin want us to be?

Everyone: Never fearful of death.

Marut: What word did Khru Captain Thawin teach us to remember?

Everyone: Sacrifice!

Marut: What for?

Everyone: The sovereignty of our country!

The boys kill many of Japanese soldiers. Marut stabs a Japanese soldier with his bayonet, looking into his eyes. All of the Military Youth are marked by wounds from the battle; they can be regarded as ‘body marking’ or ‘tattoos’ (Grimes 2000: 106) in tribal rites of passage. When they have to give up fighting under the command of the central government, they wearily walk back to their school—the start point of their military training. They are ‘welcomed by elders, a community, or cohort’ (2000: 106) after becoming initiating elders. This scene is the finishing point of the boys’ quest for maturity. Moreover, the Military Youth’s bravery is cherished by the Japanese. The scene subtly subverts the gap in Thai memory culture. This great heroism is glorified by all including the Japanese; to forget the Military Youth is a shameful act.

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FIG. 38 Welcoming scene

Before closing its curtains, the subtitles indicate the Military Youth's present lives: Marut is now an attorney; Prayut is now a retired soldier; Sanan is now a principal of Sriyaphai School; Watthana is teaching Chinese language in Baytong, Yala. Overall, the film itself is 'telling stories about initiatory experience' (Grimes 2000: 106), as seen from the rite of passage throughout the plot.

The analysis should demonstrate the hybrid genre contained in *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men*; it combines the teenpic with the combat film to attract teen audiences. It follows the rules of Hollywood combat films but the *rite of passage* also dominates the development of plots. The transmission of World War II in a hybrid genre can similarly be detected in another case study, as seen in the next section.

4. *Seven Street Fighters* (2005)

In the chapter introduction, the importance of epic tradition in Thai film culture is concisely described. As scholars have agreed, the relationship between Indian aesthetics and Thai literary and performing arts, the idea of *vira* or heroic sentiment does not stand alone; it combines with other *rasa* (savour or mood). The heroes' bravery can be driven by love, anger and uplifting inner peace (Niyada 2000; Fouquet 2010: 447).

Since the time of traditional society, Thai creative cultures have relied on the concept of *sanuk* (fun, amusing or entertaining) as a core of Thai values. This observation is widely studied by Thai and international scholars; one of their views is: 'Many Thai shows feature at least some comedy in keeping with the belief in *sanuk*' (Kislenko 2004: 147). In the context of entertainment, the concept of *sanuk* also implies 'an intense pleasure' bringing 'something special which life does not bring, to make it (certain entertainments) worth watching' (Fouquet 2010: 446). By no surprise,

the epic tradition in the Thai context can be profoundly bonded with the *sanuk* conception with special relationship with *hasya* derived from Indian aesthetics.

The observation above can be materialised in Thai dramas of the 18th century. One of the masterpieces was *Ramakian* (1797) inspired by *Ramayana*, the great Indian epic. Although the protagonist of the epic can be allegorically read as King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke the Great, the text does not reject its comic elements. Another exemplar is the ever-popular *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen* (the standard edition was published in 1917-1918) estimated as ‘Siam’s folk epic of love, war and tragedy’ (Baker and Phasuk 2010). At the climax of its first major part, the comic elements are inserted to minimise the tragic effect of the scene.

That is to say, under the high wind of Hollywood culture since the Cold War period, Thai entertainment media still bore the legacy of the past. There were several American World War II combat films screened in Thailand since the period, and the genre dealt with both battlefields and the comic variations as ‘a jolly way to reminisce about the good old days of the war’ (Basinger 2003: 227). The *Heaven’s Seven* franchise should represent the localised variation of the American combat film. Its popularity can be verified by its recurrent adaptations over decades.

The achievement of the *Heaven’s Seven* franchise can be measured by its positionality in Thai popular culture. Nevertheless, the films of the franchise, made between the 1950s and the mid-1960s were lost. The continual remakes and reinterpretations of the franchise rested on Sor Assanachinda’s sketched idea found in his publications. In other words, the memory productions from the franchise were mainly proceeding from 2002 on which was the first resurrection of the *Heaven’s Seven* after a gap of decades. The return of Sergeant Dap and his six comrades in the 2000s was undoubtedly connected to the nationalistic sensation after the economic crisis in

1997. The villains in this version are American soldiers, of the Cold War, secretly planning to develop toxic weapons. *Farang* as an enemy can be interpreted as an allegorical projection of the Westerner's intervention in the Thai socio-economic condition through the International Monetary Fund—IMF (Harrison 2010a: 109-111).

Even so, the American army as enemy was not present in later productions; what has remained in the Thai popular culture is the story of the hostile Japanese army as shown in *Seven Street Fighters* (2005). Significantly, the *Heaven's Seven* franchise was also produced as a comic under the name of one of the biggest comic studios and publishers in Thailand—Vibulkij. The comic version was an offspring of the success of two films: *Heaven's Seven* and *Seven Street Fighters*. The comic version consists of seven sequels telling the protagonists' side stories. Since 2005, the comic version has been well-received, and it led to the development of the television series version in 2010. They all remediated memory of World War II under the genre memory of combat film and comic elements preferred among Thai audiences.

In this section, I investigate *Seven Street Fighters* in terms of genre memory. I aim at tracing the sources and trajectories of the text concerning the convention of combat film and film comedy it bears. In trace of the genre memory, I also illustrate the complex remediation of the World War II memory in relation to memory sites in Thailand and beyond. The last part of this section partakes in decoding misogynic and xenophobic touches in the texts to show how the othering process is used to construct 'comic heroes.'

4.1 Bloodshed and Laughter: The Politics of Genre Memory

Although the first piece of the *Heaven's Seven* franchise did not belong to World War II memory, Sor Assanachinda's militant spirit flourished with the

establishment of the Military Youth unit in its early days during 1935-1936. The Military Youth uniform laid in Sor's fantasy since his upper secondary school years (Sor 1993: 105-106). This should explain why Sor's achievements tended to be clinging onto the action-adventure genre in which he himself loved to play male protagonists. Sor's militant fantasy has been taken up by Thai film history as it delivered later sequels of this big franchise. Above and beyond, versions of *Heaven's Seven* since the 2000s modified 'the dedication' as found in the Hollywood combat genre. The dedication in the opening scene or the ending scene should be granted to veterans or war heroes but in *Seven Street Fighters* and its television version (2010), Sor is venerated as the great *guru* of the Thai film cycle. Therefore, the case study of this section deserves an alternative analysis of memory stored and restored within.

Seven Street Fighters is structured under the code of a humorous narrative. Distinguished from the docudrama and documentary elements in *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*, the film manifests its superficiality playing with the realistic quality of war memory maintained in other film genres. The objective of comic texts is to detach their audiences from the texts by virtue of humour. This does not mean there is no war memory contained within the film. Paradoxically, the film touches upon the wide range of World War II memories in Thailand which occur in multiple sites, but it refuses to be faithful to representational verisimilitude.

Seven Street Fighters plays with the gap of World War II memory in the Thai official memory; the mainstream memory focuses on international diplomacy and the 'victory' of the Free Thai Movement. The film, thus, undervalues the roles of the Free Thai Movement. Glorious figures of the Movement are replaced by the seven fighters—fictive characters who are not affiliated to an unnamed underground organisation. The film retells the incident of the 8th of December 1941 when the first

Japanese soldier was killed by a Thai police officer in Prachuap Kiri Khan Province. The case ignited the first attack at the police station.¹³ Sergeant Dap is portrayed as that police officer.

Another example is the memory of the comfort women or *ying plop khwan* in Thailand. The film portrays those women as victims of evil Japanese soldiers, possibly influenced by *Khu Karma* (1973) first presenting this issue on the Thai screen. The rape scene, committed by Japanese soldiers, was included to heighten patriotic sentiment of the 1970s through the fighting scene of Thai men against the Japanese.¹⁴ Yet, in fact, the archives and oral history designate that comfort women in Thailand were managed by private sectors under the agreement of the Thai government and the Japanese army (Sophida 2001: 82-83, Puengthip 2011: 228-235).

The film likewise recalls the anti-Japanese movement of the overseas Chinese in Thailand which is not widely acknowledged by other memory texts (Pradtana 1990: 333-335). Another interesting element is Suriya Ebata—the great villain of the film. He is named after a real Japanese soldier who was married to a Thai woman.¹⁵ Suriya's life also inspired Riam-Eng or Malai Chuphinit, the great Thai novelist, to write *Mueang Nimit (Dreamland)* in 1953.¹⁶ But Suriya in Riam-Eng's novel is half Thai half Japanese. Ironically, he joins the anti-Japanese movement during World War II because of his love of Thailand. His disloyalty costs his life at the end of the novel.

¹³ At first, a Japanese colonel was killed by bayonet. The Japanese troops assumed that the Thai government had accepted to take their side. After the death of their superior, the troops attacked the police station resulting in 13 deaths of Thai police officers and 70 deaths of Japanese soldiers (Vanchai 1995: 108). The incident was not included in the school textbooks.

¹⁴ Although Shaw Brother's action films were popular in the 1970s Thailand, the matter of comfort women was later articulated in the early 1990s in the film called *Comfort Women* (Hong Kong, Bruce Le, 1992). That is the memory of comfort women in Thai cinema was first developed from *Khu Karma* myth, and it was reimagined with anecdotes of other countries in Asia.

¹⁵ Suriya Ebata was the son of Wai Ebata (Japanese) and Phrom (Thai). Suriya's parents ran a photography shop. He married Chamrat Malayamonthon during World War II. Suriya was deported to Japan after the war. Chamrat and Suriya had Sumiya Ebata as their only son (Orasom 1995: 166-168).

¹⁶ This novel was canonised as one of 100 books for young Thai readers in 2000.

All anecdotes of World War II memory mentioned are not acknowledged in the official memory, and they are outshone by the *Khu Karma* myth. For this reason, mnemonic fragments could be restored to test the audiences before the film undermines the *Khu Karma* myth through its parodying point of view.

Wittingly, the film plays with the authenticity of the memory it rediscovered and *Khu Karma*—a popular fiction boasting to represent the World War II event in Thailand. To be precise, the film does not only mock the memory but it also seriously plays, in the form of parody, with the genre memory of the World War II memory texts circulated in the Thai cultural circuit. From a film studies perspective, King (2002: 108) points out the general characteristics of parody: ‘A popular form of recent parody takes one individual film or genre as its principle target while scattering references more randomly to other recent or classic films.’ To that end, among other genre memories parodied in *Seven Street Fighters*, *Khu Karma* is prioritised. Its reputation should appeal to the audiences’ attention and laughter at its best.

The film depicts Angsumalin from *Khu Karma* in the name of Angsuman. She lives with her unnamed mother and grandmother.¹⁷ Angsumalin who looks cold-hearted is replaced by a domineering Angsuman. Her manner does not match the *kulasatrii* type (perfectly virtuous woman) found in Thai values. She can use a gun—a phallic symbol. She gambles. Moreover, she is humorously eroticised making coconut milk. This last scene refers to *Mae Bia/Snake Lady* (Somching Srisuphap, 2001) the popular Thai erotic film.

¹⁷ Essentially, the characterisation of Angsuman’s family implies a strong misogynic message. Yet its major objective is to subvert the myth of World War II. It is, therefore, analysed in this section instead of the latter.

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FIG. 39 The parody of *Mae Bia*

Angsuman's dysfunctional family is presented through the mother who is sexually attentive despite her age and an absent-minded grandmother with her Alzheimer's symptoms. These two characters always appear in improper manners; for example, excessive makeup and a mummy-like costume. *Seven Street Fighters* subverts the typical images of these two women in other adaptations of *Khu Karma* in which they are presented as *senex* giving wisdom to Angsumalin. In the last scene, outrageously, these two characters are violently assaulted by the seven fighters thanks to their hysterical behaviour.

Similarly, Kobori from *Khu Karma* must be ridiculed in this film. He is renamed as Kobota—the name of an agricultural machine. The machine's casual name is *khwai lek* or iron buffalo. In Thai context, buffalo connotes dumbness. The gentleness of Kobori is switched to Kobota's brutality, madness and cowardice. Kobota's death scene is one of the most hilarious scenes of the film. The last scene between Kobota and Angsuman is musically scored with the original soundtrack of *Khu Karma the Series* televised in 1990. The melancholic melodies are intervened by the incongruous Angsuman's soliloquy; she does not let Kobota speak. Angsuman wants to act as if she is the real Angsumalin without Kobori. On top of this, the death of Kobota leads Sergeant Dap to be a new groom of Angsuman.

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FIG. 40 The parody of the *Khu Karma* myth

Parody cannot achieve its communication without audiences' stock knowledge of targeted texts as some scholars notice: 'At one extreme, parody can be seen as a form of attack, debunking and undermining familiar conventions in a manner that has potential social or political implications. At the other, it might ultimately be a form of celebration or reaffirmation of the object of its apparent mockery' (King 2002: 109). Thus, the *Khu Karma* myth is subverted in several memory texts of World War II. However, there is another text exhibited in the Thai memory culture—*The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1959). Prior to the production of *Boonpong* which undermines the myth of World War II in Thailand, *Seven Street Fighters* took the very first step of such subversion.

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FIG. 41 The parody of Lean's *The Bridge on the River Kwai*

Seven Street Fighters takes us to Kanchanaburi where the Death Railway is located. In the film, there exists the wooden bridge similar to the one in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. The subversive rhetoric appears when the seven fighters help liberate all forced labourers and the POWs. The POWs look weak, helpless and confused deviated from the dignified ones in the British-Hollywood film. One of the POWs is standing naked in the woods. He is trembling and fails to make sense of the freedom granted by the Thai heroes. The vulnerability of Westerners in the film shows its connection to the massacre in the last scene of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* when bravery and arrogance turn into madness. In David Lean's film, the wooden bridge is destroyed by the Allies. In *Seven Street Fighters*, the handsome Allies are substituted by Thai outranked fighters. The fall of the bridge happens along with the end of Suriya's sorry life. The bomb-then-run scene is visualised with slow motion conforming to the grammar of Thai action films: *raboet phukhao phao krathom* (bombing mountains, burning down houses).

Self-parody is another subversive strategy in *Seven Street Fighters*. There is a theory on the source of the *Heaven's Seven* franchise stating that Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* could potentially be the source text of the first production in the 1950s (Neung Diaw 2007). *Seven Street Fighters* mocks this view through the creation of seven villains from Japan. They are Ninja-like killers. Some can be invisible. Some use *shuriken* and *katana*. And some can multiply their *avatar*. Their introduction is presented in the mystic Japan. Their refined killing skills are countered by the seven fighters. The film also makes fun of the craze of Japanese cultural products such as *anime* and Japanese television series in Thailand by displaying *tsuzuku* or 'to be continued,' a clichéd phrase shown in Japanese television franchises. Ironically, there is no extension for these seven killers.

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FIG. 42 The parody of Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*

After challenging the theory on the source text, the film continues to mock its own genre memory. It appropriates some elements from *7 Man Army* (Hong Kong, Chang Cheh, 1976). The film was produced by Shaw Brothers' Studio. It is conveyed as a nostalgic reminder of Thai action-adventure movies of the 1970s and the 1980s. *7 Man Army* features a story of seven Chinese soldiers guarding their base in 1933 when the Japanese army marched into China. They fight until their last breath.

Fascinated by their fearless action, the Japanese army gets them buried properly with beautiful grave inscriptions. Some characters of *7 Man Army* are imitated in *Seven Street Fighters*: Chu Tiancheng (Kuan-Chun Chi) who masters *kung fu* is transformed into Mo Cheongmuay mastering Thai boxing, Pan Ping Ling (Yi-Min Li) from a Chinese opera show is replaced by Tangkuay Sae Lee. Pai Chang-hsing (David Chiang) who cherishes his wife is played by Sergeant Dap. *7 Man Army* has been concurrently distributed in Thailand in the form of a DVD release, and it has been broadcast on YouTube long before several screenings of *Seven Street Fighters* for the 70th commemoration of the end of World War II in 2015. It should therefore be possible for the intended Thai audiences to build a connection.

4.2 Comic Heroes in the Making: *Thai-Thai* Humour and Chauvinism

With an emphasis on the portrayal of heroes, in the Thai epic tradition, male heroes are constructed with two key traits: *nak rop* (warrior) and *nak rak* (lover). Heroes in traditional literary, theatrical and, perhaps, historical representation are fearless in the battlefield but they never fail to exercise their charms on female figures. This notion is evident in the polygamous values in the Thai socio-cultural context. However, this set of values was challenged by the modernisation in the 19th century and the early 20th century.

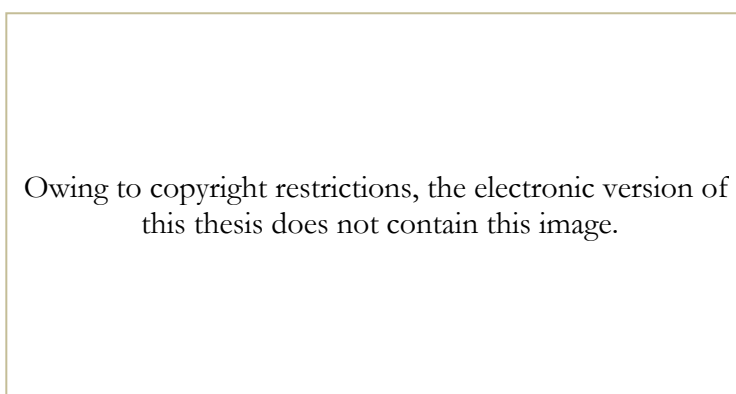


FIG. 43 The hypermasculinity in the epic of King Naresuan (2014)

In the making of heroes, the assertion of warrior identity should not be surprising. The identity of lover does not present ‘softness’ to these heroes. Instead, it intensifies the charismatic leadership of the heroes as widely perceived in Thai minds. Therefore, in modern Thailand, we can find King Naresuan as a hero in *The Legend of King Naresuan*, the film hexology (Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol, 2007-2015). He is represented as a fearless hero in every battle, and he is also desirable as a hyper-masculine and irresistible man. This argument should explain why there must be conflicts of ‘romantic’ interest in *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*. The two real heroes, Thawin and Marut, win women’s hearts though the conflicts are ultimately solved by the patriotic key message.

Nevertheless, the *Heaven's Seven* franchise since the 2000s subjected itself to being branded a comedy during the rise of comedy in the Thai screen industry. What it sells are comic heroes blended with the traits of warrior and lover as it is a combination of *vira* and *hasya* in the Indian aesthetics. The 'heroic but comic' characters are actually not an innovation of the era. They have existed in Thai visual culture and entertainment media since the early 18th century, during the late Ayutthaya period, long before the birth of Hollywood comedic formulas.

In Thai visual culture, the root of comic heroes can be traced back to traditional Thai mural paintings in palaces and temples. The popular visual narratives in the mural paints are *Ramakian*–Thai *Ramayana*, Buddha's biography and *jataka* tales telling the past lives of the Buddha before His enlightenment. Without regard to the main subjects of the paintings, some additional characters can be added; they are known as *tua kak* or *tua prakop*, in a more general sense. *Tua kak* represent folk ways and values as backdrops of certain paintings. Their looks are amusing (Samerchai 1998: 105-123).

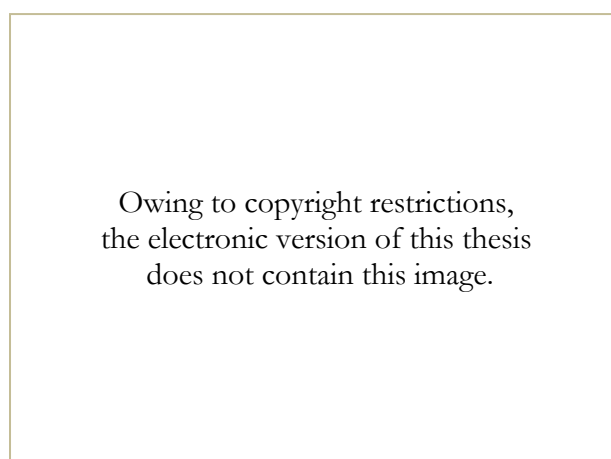


FIG. 44 *Tua kak* in traditional Thai painting

In Thai entertainment media, comic heroes concurrently appeared in *lakhon nok*, a dance drama developed from Thai folk tradition. The term *nok* stands for 'outside (the palace).' The materials of *lakhon nok* are folk tales and folk *jataka*.

Formulated to fit Thai folk taste, before the 19th century Siam, *lakhon nok* was solely performed by male actors. Hence it contained rough humour and subtly conveyed social criticism. Male protagonists in *lakhon nok* are apt to carry flaws: for example, unpleasant appearances, moral weakness, gullibility and cowardice despite their royal connections and magical objects or power. *Lakhon nok* is still well-known in Thailand. The genre is usually performed at the National Theatre in Bangkok and anthologised in school textbooks.

Accordingly, I argue that the genre memory of *tua kak* and *lakhon nok*, as one of the origins of Thai humorous art form, is potentially adopted in the *Heaven's Seven* franchise. In Thai film history, particularly during the age of early Thai cinema, comic characters were inserted as the helpers of male protagonists. Comic heroes were quite rare until the transitional period of the Thai film industry after 2001. There was the rise of 'comedians' in Thai screen culture in spite of the wave of royal-nationalism. Most television shows sought to provide comic episodes. The comedy genre rose again when comedian actors turned to be film directors and screenplay writers apart from their leading roles in certain films. In the past, comedians were at the margin of acting careers and the film industry. Ironically, the return of comedians determined the success of each film (Thanathat 2009: 215). The marginalisation of comedians happened through the birth of the *Bunchoo* franchise since the 1980s when teenpics and student-related films were highly commercialised. The *Boonchoo* franchise created a 'high-brow comedy' with sophisticated humour (*talok panyachon*) while the comedians were regarded as 'low-brow comedy' (*talok chaoban*) affiliated with folk culture and rural-urban divides (Manoch 2004).

My observation is: the renaissance of low-brow comedy was related to the nostalgic sensation and the People's Constitution Movement since 1997. Combining

with the returning-to-the-past flavour of the age, the memory of World War II, without royal figures, allowed the remediation of the past in a comic form. The entertainment for commoners did not deny the voices of commoners.

In the Thai film history, the national war memory was not usually expressed in comic form. Significantly, the royal figures played in the epic films cannot be made fun of; they must be gloriously and ‘carefully’ characterised. There exist the *lèse majesté* laws in Thailand, and it affects politics in the mass media arena. Humour is perceived as commoners’ business. To that end, cultural productions of World War II memory, without royal figures, was the only open ground for the comic expression. Until the 2000s, war memories of the commoners beyond World War II began to be reconstructed in more alternative ways. It was palpable in the case of cinematic representations of the 6 October 1976 event: *Colic Dek Hen Phii/Colic: The Movie* (Patchanon Thammajira, 2006) in the horror genre and *Blue Sky of Love* (2008) in the romantic comedy genre. With the genre memory and the context provided earlier, the comic heroes in the *Heaven’s Seven* franchise are formed by *Thai-Thai* or vernacular Thai humour.

Sergeant Dap, as a male protagonist, undoubtedly portrays the imperfect picture of a comic hero. He appears with his inelegant red shorts tailored by his wife. In the television series (2010), he is rather old and bears a scar on his face. His manners are not those of a typical gentleman. He does not acknowledge any decency or political correctness. This feature connotes a sense of Thai chauvinism bragged about throughout the text. This observation can be inspected after Tangkuay’s father is held captive by the Japanese. Instead of consolation, Sergeant Dap says to Tangkuay: ‘Tangkuay, I’ve heard the Japanese are cannibalistic. Now they must be boiling your father in their soup pot.’

Racist jokes are not only tolerated by mass audiences but are also foregrounded in the film. Tangkuay and his father are overseas Chinese. Though they are integrated into mainstream Thainess and befriended by the seven street fighters, they fall into a ‘neither-Chinese-nor-Thai’ category of in-betweenness. The implicit othering process can be interpreted through the lens of genre memory or a former representation of the overseas Chinese on the Thai screen. It differs from American combat films projecting ‘a group of mixed ethnic type’ to maintain political correctness. In the encounter between the Thai and the Chinese, when Tangkuay hears Sergeant Dap’s assumption about his father, he turns wildly mad. With his overwhelming fury, Tangkuay chases all the people in the scene. He tries to bite everyone while they are reacting with pure laughter. The monstrous-looking Tangkuay suggests a reference to Zee-Oui, a Chinese cannibal who lived in Thailand during the 1950s. Zee-Oui consumed his victims’ internal organs to enrich his stamina. His horrifying legend was adapted into television series and feature films over the decades. Some prominent versions were screened in 1984, 1991 and 2004 (Ainslie 2009: 97-113).

Tangkuay is still othered in another following scene when the seven fighters are caught by Kobota at Bangkok Noi station. Talking about Tangkuay’s father, Kobota says: ‘Until now your father may be a dead man. He must be treated as a slave labourer or be anally raped by those *farang* POWs.’ Along these lines, the Chinese are demonised or feminised.

Another example, stereotyped by the Thai chauvinism of the film version, is the story of Ziw Ziw. She is a transgender Chinese opera actress in the show of Tangkuay’s father. Dan Mahitra, one of the seven fighters, is allured by her exotic beauty. All of a sudden, Dan has anal intercourse with Ziw Ziw but he falls into a

passive role. Dan, as another anti-hero, becomes an object of ridicule among his friends. Some of them deliberately express their disgust by vomiting. The image of ZiW ZiW is a further staging of Chineseness through the Thai chauvinistic lens; the Chinese are non-Thai, they can appear monstrous, emasculated and even more queered.

The issues on Chineseness are expanded in the televised version. Tangkuay is also an actor in his father's Chinese opera show. On the top of his martial arts skills, Tangkuay is alienated from his mediocre life. This derivative character is from Tangkuay in *Heaven's Seven* (2002). He identifies himself as a Chinese Casanova but he cannot afford the women he falls for. Tangkuay hates to practice his routine performance. He wants to be rich. His dream job is a Hollywood star. Tangkuay's greed ignites conflicts of interest among the seven fighters throughout the story. His image echoes the discourse on the Chinese in Thailand publicised in the early 20th century as 'Jews of the Orient'; they were the other within (Thak 2014: 477).

This inferior Chineseness is conjoined with the destabilised hierarchy of values. At the secret assembly of the Chinese society in Bangkok China town, the seven fighters volunteer to guard the gate of Tangkuay's modest opera theatre. Captain Ong-At shows up but he is obstructed by Akkhi Mekyan who seeks to make fun of him.

Akkhi: 'Are you Thai?'

Captain Ong-At: '*jek*'

Akkhi: If you are *jek*, sing a *jek* song!

Captain Ong-At: [singing Thai song of Loy Krathong festival in a broken Chinese accent]

The word *jek* stands for the Chinese-Thai. It is perceived as an insulting word used by Thai (Thak 2014: 475). Prior to this conversation, there are Chinese men calling themselves Thai with Chinese accents. Instead of claiming an interchangeable

Chinese-Thai identity, the film racialises its characters. Furthermore, the humorous portrayals of the Chinese are not an invention of the franchise. This stereotype can be tracked back to the late 1970s when the communist perils in Thailand were violently handled by the state.¹⁸ Before the age of compromise in the 1980s, there were well-known Chinese protagonists clowning around, mocked and mocking their own *jek* identity. The neither-Chinese-nor-Thai identity was embodied in some films directed by Kamthorn Thapkhanlai: *Thayat Pong Paeng/The Offspring of Pong Paeng* (1978), *Khoi Mai Pueng Pang/A Strong Son in Law* (1979) *Taohuai Lai Liao/Donhua Has Been Served* (1980) and *Aiya A De!/Oh My Pig!* (1981). The persistence of the stereotyped Chinese can be measured by the remakes of these films on television since the 1990s.

In *Seven Street Fighters*, Captain Ong-At mocks the *jek* identity through his costume which is identical to the scene in which he wears an Indian costume in disguise. Captain Ong-At, however, is not respected for his military rank. He is always ridiculed and played pranks against. He fails to symbolise Thai authority. He does not possess charismatic leadership. More than that, he is captured and sent to the Death Railway by the Japanese. He is finally set free by the fighters alongside the comfort women and the sorry-looking POWs.

In the film, the social hierarchy is undermined, as found in *Boonpong*. After all, the voices of the commoners are not raised at the expense of the decline of hierarchy but the symbols of hierarchy are devalued. Captain Ong-At is a *Peeping Tom* as he watches a woman taking a bath through a small hole in the wall. Awkwardly, that happens to be

¹⁸ During the Cold War period, it was believed that the communists in Thailand were secretly supported by the Chinese government. After the 6 October 1976 Massacre, the rise of right-winged government implemented political policies against overseas Chinese in Thailand. However, the end of the Cold War brought integration ideology back to policies of the Thai government. Overseas Chinese were later perceived as a *model minority* as opposed to Malay-speaking communities in Thailand's South.

an old lady, and she is using the toilet. Significantly, the decline of hierarchy is also used as a strategy of representing the Japanese in the film.

The representation of the Japanese is politicised, and it variously functions in films of different genres and periods. The Japanese can be a clown and a tragic lover. In the comedy genre, the Japanese, as an enemy, should inevitably be an object of ridicule. Still, the analysis of Japaneseness cannot be simplistically undertaken as the heroes of the *Heaven's Seven* franchise *per se* are all ridiculous.

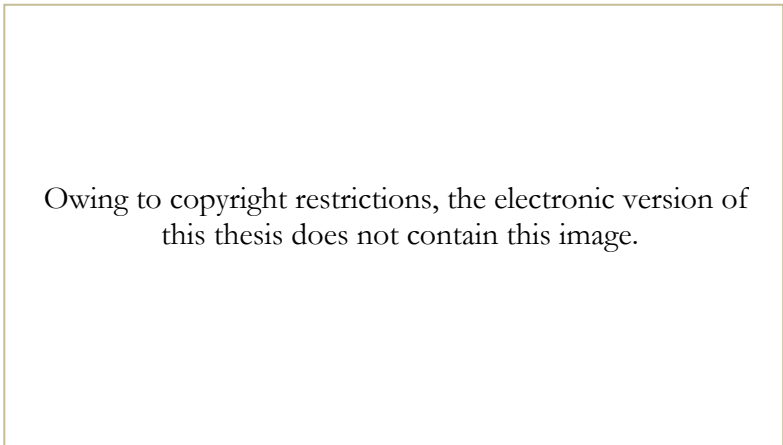
In *Seven Street Fighters*, there are two key Japanese characters: Kobota and Suriya Ebata. Kobota is a parodic portrayal of Kobori from the *Khu Karma* myth. He is unintelligent in terms of both knowledge and emotion. He is bullied by the seven fighters, and his life ends in the arms of his wife. Suriya, created from a real person, is depicted as a very serious and responsible soldier. Yet he goes insane when disgraced by the group of seven fighters. He is also bullied and dies dishonourably. These two characters share one core feature: they both are violent and violently treated. The question is why the audiences do not take pity on them? The genre memory of comedy film should provide a sound answer.

While authors of tragedy seek to make their audiences identify themselves with performance or tragic heroes, comedians must grow a sense of emotional detachment among their audiences. We can laugh at someone only when we do not identify ourselves with them. This process goes hand in hand with the otherness issues brought up throughout the thesis.

In *Khu Karma's* case, the myth projects Kobori's Thainess and humanity. In contrast, the Japanese in the *Heaven's Seven* franchise do not own depth, intellect or humanity. The texts convince their audiences that the Japanese deserve to be undignified despite their strong faith in honour. As the Japanese are inferior to

Thainess and Thai values, the Pan-Asianism led by them is challenged by this memory text.

In the film, one ordinary Japanese soldier is bullied by the seven street fighters. He is bruised and tied to his motorcycle. He is forced to ride and is killed by a time bomb. This soldier is an exemplar of the ‘faceless enemy’ typically illustrated in the Hollywood combat film. Suriya’s case is, however, different. In the earlier stages of the plot, he is invincible but in the later phases, he loses his strength. The seven fighters do not kill him when they have the chance. They prefer to torture him. Suriya’s bottom is violently and repetitively penetrated by the seven fighters’ fingers. Such mischievous acts of fingering can be widely seen among school children in Japan and Thailand. It is regarded as a low prank. The painful face of Suriya is unlike those dignified faces of the Japanese soldiers, on the Thai and the global screen, who sacrifice their lives in different ways: *seppuku* or *kamikaze* for example. Suriya in *Mueang Nimit* the novel also takes his own life by *seppuku*. Therefore, Suriya’s inglorious death helps unload the anger and aggression of Thai audiences as found in comedy variations of the Hollywood combat film (Basinger 2003: 231).



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FIG. 45 Suriya’s undignified death at the Bridge on the River Kwai

In the *Heaven's Seven* franchise, female characters are employed to verify the privileges of masculinity at certain levels. Although typical Thai heroes are normally portrayed as warriors and lovers, the misogynic sentiment can be felt in the texts. Most of the female characters, as civilians, are involved with the construction of the on-screen memory of World War II; they are non-male and non-soldier. This feature is entangled with implicit and explicit misogyny. Women are there to be protected but they are still othered and marginalised.

In the film, the misogynic connotation is articulated in an ironic way. Chom is Sergeant Dap's wife. When Sergeant Dap is away on his mission, Chom has to earn her living by escorting Japanese high-ranking soldiers. Faced by Dap, Chom is scolded: 'Why do you behave like this? You are a whore, sleeping with those Japanese soldiers.' Chom saves her grace by slapping Dap's face as he knows nothing about her situation. However, when Chom and other Thai women are captured by the Japanese, Sergeant Dap and his friends rush to Kanchanaburi to release them. They claim their own heroism over the protection they offer to Thailand and the female bodies penetrated by the foreign enemy.

Chom is a character representing the lost memory of comfort women in Thailand during the Second World War. As found in the archives, the Thai government agreed to supply comfort women for the Japanese army through hiring contracts (Puengthip 2011: 228-235). Undoubtedly, such archives are not included in official memory, and it is also neglected by mainstream historical studies. The memory of comfort women in Thailand was first retrieved by a scholar of women's and gender studies (Sophida 2001). Nevertheless, the memory of forced Thai comfort women was invisible. It was vaguely and roughly mentioned in some Thai literary writings concerning the World War II event, for example, *Khu Karma*.

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FIG. 46 Chom at a fictional comfort station in Kanchanaburi

In *Seven Street Fighters*, the memory of comfort women is revived but it is not for the sake of women's voices. The helplessness and frailty of the comfort women aim at highlighting the bravery of the seven street fighters and the brutality of the vilified Japanese. Although all female characters can escape from the deadly horrific chambers, they all are murdered by mad Suriya. These women are raped, and their tragic misfortune cannot be cured or redeemed. With this stance of interpretation, the women are victimised by the misogyny in the film. They die of nothing but their flaws.

What Thai comfort women have to experience in the film is differently tackled in the case of Angsuman. Though Angsuman marries Kobota, they are under the marriage institution as explained in *Khu Karma*—the source text. However, Kobota is later replaced by Sergeant Dap. The happy ending implies that reclaiming the right over women—to be precise over female bodies—is reclaiming the sovereignty of Thailand. This trope is associated with the discourse on National Humiliation (Strate 2015).

5. Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained how the memory of World War II is mediated through the combat film genre with a special focus on young and comic heroes.

Although the young heroes are not 'real soldiers,' they can fight at their best to protect

their beloved country. While not all comic heroes are ‘real soldiers’, they can empower one another to overcome the Japanese peril.

On screen, these two types of heroes are portrayed in hybrid genres that reflect the tastes of Thai audiences, the development of the Thai film industry, and the current socio-cultural atmosphere of certain periods. That is *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* relies on generic codes of Hollywood combat films. It also counts on teen idols and elements of the teenpic industry of the 1990s. The hybrid genre of *Seven Street Fighters* consists of the Hollywood combat film and comedy. *Seven Street Fighters* can be regarded as a product of the *nang bu talok* (action-comedy) cycle in Thailand.

Speaking within the terms of *rasa* aesthetics, hybrid genres show the entanglement of various *rasa* within certain texts. *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* amplifies *vira* (vigor) through its underrated teen fighters and *shringara* (love) through conflicted romance whereas *hasya* (humour) is, at its best, deployed in *Seven Street Fighters*. The findings, more or less, should illustrate the uniqueness of Thai film culture, particularly, in terms of humour and historical-political consciousness.

Placing these two memory texts into Thai memory culture, young heroes may be judged by their age while the seriousness of comic heroes may be questioned. These types of ‘flawed’ heroes are not usually constructed in the Thai history film dealing with royal institutions. That is to say, the memory of World War II can be a common ground for the commoners. The stories of these heroes confronts their invisibility in the official memory and the ‘authorities’ entailed. The allegorical pictures in the texts are metaphorically disowned by the Thai government. The films also prove their capacity to compile motifs from other WWII memory texts, both well-known and neglected ones.

CHAPTER 4

Horrors of War

‘Neither divinity nor morality, it is the watermark that remains in the darkness and horror of night, allowing such a night, nevertheless, to be written’

(Kristeva 1982: 135-136).

1. Chapter Introduction

In Asia, the ghost story is bound with cultural values, as Stephen Teo suggests: ‘The term “ghost-story” alludes to fiction and narrative but also, and perhaps more importantly, to folklore, legend and oral tradition of story-telling in Asian societies’ (2013: 95). On the ghost story in mass media, Anchalee Chaiworaporn adds: ‘That is why horror films in the Western context tend to display the evil from the East [...] For the East, the ghosts are the return of revengeful spirits failing to cross over’ (2016: 36-37). Positioned in cultural practices and everyday life, the ghost story has been used as a material for the Thai screen industry since the 1930s. The genre has been integrated into the mainstream along with the other major genres of Thai cinema. The four genres include: drama, comedy, action and horror (Patsorn 2004; Anchalee 2016: 25-59).

In Thailand, the ghost story, as a branch of entertainment, is disseminated through screen and radio culture. I myself have grown up with ghost stories as my home is surrounded by two Buddhist temples. I first encountered a horror television series in 1989. It was called *Daen Sonthaya (Twilight Zone)*, directed by Pinyo Roothum) and was aired on Channel 9, and this was followed by *Miti Meut (Dark Dimension)* on Channel 7 in 1990. The first radio show telling ghost stories was established in 1992; its legacy has been continued until the present under the name of *The Shock FM*. Meanwhile, *Chomrom Khon Hua Luk (Ghost Story Club)* the first television show circulating ghost stories was broadcast in 1996. This is the backdrop

of the terms *nang phii* (ghost film) or *lakhon phii* (ghost series) which are more commonly used than the term *sayong khwan* (horror).

The Thai ghost story, as an element of popular culture, is potentially employed for the purposes of memory production; it intensifies a sense of ‘in-betweenness’ between the present and the past, including both the alive and the dead. Adam Knee observes the return of horror in the late 1990s suggesting that the genre marks ‘a retrieval of the past’ (2005: 141). Thai horror can ‘engage modern global (read Hollywood) conventions of the horror genre, but also very specifically refer back to the local genre tradition, itself deeply rooted in local folklore [...]’ (Knee, 2005: 141). Thus Thai horror shares the market which is still mainly in the Asian region: Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Cambodia and Laos (Anchalee 2016: 37).

Although, in the context of academia, horror used to be considered less valuable in Thai media studies (Kamjohn and Somsuk 2009: 57), most media scholars agree that Thai horror owes its revival to the ground-breaking success of *Nang Nak* (Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999). In fact, *Nang Nak* recreates the legend of Mae Nak, the prototype of Thai female ghosts visualised on the Thai screen since 1936. The grand success of *Nang Nak* is correlated with the female ghosts of Thai film and television. However, prior to *Nang Nak*’s launch in 1999, the television series *Darayan* (Supol Wichienchai, 1996) ruled the screen with its World War II memory and the questionable heroism of *Seri Thai*. The horrifying quality of the series was the talk of the town immediately following its premier. Another reason was the casting of Sinchai Hongthai, in which the famous actress played a female ghost for the first time.

In the previous chapters, films and television series in the drama, comedy, action genres, which were categorised as major genres in Thai screen culture, were discussed. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to the horror genre positioned at the

centre of the Thai film and television industry. *Darayan*, the case study of this chapter, is one of the most popular ghost series of all time. The series is usually shortlisted when people seek to vote for a memorable ghost series. Popular cyber communities in Thailand such as Pantip.com and Postjung.com also celebrate *Darayan* along with the legend of Mae Nak and other female ghosts of Channel 7.¹

The name of GMM Grammy is often mentioned in other chapters in relation to the industrial landscape of Thai screen culture. It is, thus far, the biggest entertainment company dominating the major market of middle class entertainment in contemporary Thailand. There are several other business conglomerates running radio stations, television shows, film production studios, star-making and music subsidiary groups. Before the age of digital terrestrial television of the 2010s, GMM Grammy expanded its business through Channel 9, formerly known as the Mass Communication Organisation of Thailand, by launching three unconventional television series in the late 1980s under the supervision of Wanit Charungkitanan and Euthana Mukdasanit (director of *Sunset and Chaopraya* and *Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men*). During those days, Thakonkiat Weerawan (widely known as Khun Boy) started his career in the television industry ahead of establishing his own company—Exact Company Limited—in 1991.

The television series produced by the Exact Company were found to be progressive and stylised (Kamala 2001: 56-58). In 1996, Exact Company launched its first horror series *Darayan* directed by Supol Wichianchai; it was on air between 17 March-24 May 1996 on broadcast on Channel 5. The series was later novelised and published by Ton-Or Grammy in the same year.

¹ See Nookiecnu (2013), Lo Thuk Anu Rukhumkhon (2014), GreenDemon (n.d.).

Significantly, *Darayan* plays a major role in shaping the genre memory of later female ghost narratives with the intersectionality of ethnicity, class and gender on the Thai screen. Some obvious examples are *Tari Bugna* (Chatchai Surasit, 2004) on Channel 5 as well as the television series adapted from Pongsakorn Chindawatana's novels set in Lanna, Hong Kong and Japan broadcast on Channel 3 since the late 2000s.

The inspiration of *Darayan* should be the 50th commemoration of the end of World War II in 1995 which evoked an increasing number of publications and historical scholarship in the Thai language. *Darayan* is set in World War II on a fictive island called Bayu in the Deep South of Thailand. The temporal setting is during the last stage of the war. Six members of *Seri Thai* have secretly landed on the island.² Initially, they hide in a cave investigating a rumour about buried Japanese gold. Later on, however, they are asked to abolish the Japanese base and the gold in order to undercut the supply for other branches of the army. The leader of the group of Free Thai allies and the male protagonist is named Phuwan (Anuwat Niwatwong).³

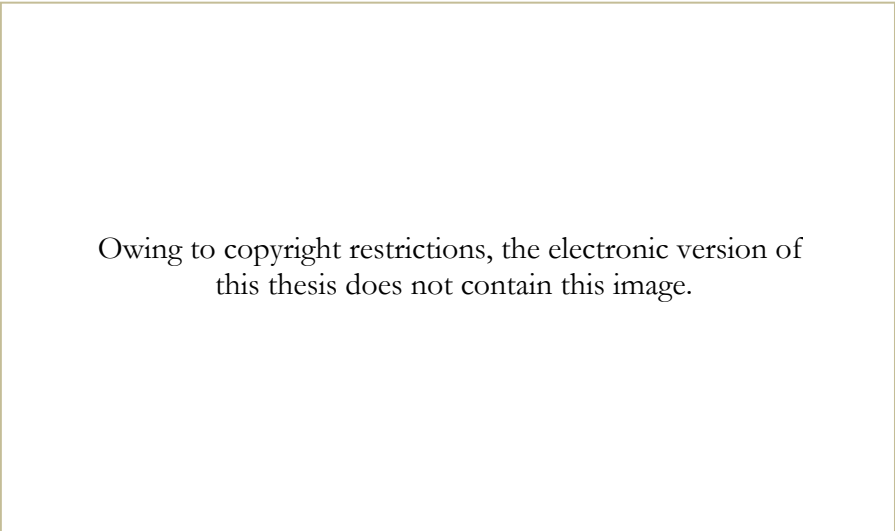
Darayan (Sinchai Hongthai), the female protagonist, is the daughter of the village chief. She first meets Phu when she is rescued from the time bomb set by his team. *Darayan* is instantly attracted to Phu. Therefore, she is lured by him to spy on a Japanese superior soldier who finds her desirable. Other minor conflicts are caused by Phu's fellows. However, *Darayan* is obliged to have sex with that soldier in trade for top secret information about the Japanese gold. The gold is moved and hidden in the cave by the Free Thai allies. As tensions grow, Phu is shot by his own war comrades and leaves for Bangkok. Guarding the gold as ordered by Phu, *Darayan* suffers

² Six is also the number of labourers found dead in Lijia Cave, Kanchanaburi. In search of Japanese treasure, they died of suffocation. The interpretation of *Darayan* in the light of the gold rush in Kanchanaburi will be discussed in this chapter.

³ Following this, he is called Phu to make an exact parallel with how *Darayan* calls him.

assaults from both the Japanese and the Free Thai allies who want the hidden gold. After dying in agony, Darayan returns in a ghostly form when the other characters reincarnate in their next lives.

Darayan seeks to recall the past she shares with Phu, who is reborn as Phurit, by bringing him and his friends back to Bayu Island. By their company, Phu and his team are assigned to find the hidden gold from the Second World War. Day after day, they are haunted by Darayan and their own past. One day, Darayan is overcome by a powerful psychic. Safely returning home, all characters hope they can turn over a new leaf but Darayan's vengeful spirit never forgives them. She manipulates two members of the group to bring her to Bangkok. The members of the group are murdered one by one. Phu cannot bear his guilt. Eventually, when Darayan is dragged to the underworld, Phu follows her. The ending dramatically betrayed the expectation of audiences. It is widely discussed despite being the end of the series because the separation between human and non-human should have been upheld. Most viewers were clinging on to the genre memory of the myth of female ghosts; for example Mae Nak. Again, the moral from the myth conveyed that ghosts and human must belong to different worlds conforming to the Law of Karma.



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FIG. 47 *Darayan* in DVD boxset and in Thai popular culture as a Halloween costume

Critic Bliss Cua Lim suggests that ‘ghost films that are historical allegories make incongruous use of the vocabulary of the supernatural to articulate historical injustice, referring to “social reality” by recourse to the undead’ (2009: 151). Along similar lines, Mary Ainslie suggests that Thai myths and supernatural folklore, in the horror genre, are deployed ‘as a means to mediate a traumatic wider context of social upheaval’ (2016: 204). Counting on Lim’s and Ainslie’s notions, in the next section, *Darayan* is interpreted to answer how the series articulates historical injustice through the actions of female ghosts, social reality from the eruption of the myth of Japanese treasure and the war heroes who suffer from the return of their own past.

2. *Darayan* (1996) and the Myth of Japanese Treasure

One decade after the launch of *Darayan*, in 2006, the film *Thai Thiip/Thai Thief* (Pisut Praesangeam)⁴ was released, starring two teen actors from the RS Promotion 1992 Company.⁵ The film was labeled as another ‘action comedy’ as circulated during the post-1997 era. The film title was misleading for many Thai viewers. It was viewed as a remake or reboot version of the film *Thai Thief, The Tiger* (1975). Yet the film stood on its own agenda; there was no plot unity driven by the World War II events. *Thai Thief* depicts the conflict of interests among the protagonists as they plan to rob gold from the Japanese army. However, tracing the myth of Japanese gold, I find a long thread binding the films with other sites of memory. Under similar titles, the films reproduce the myth of Japanese treasure in Thailand; it became widely known during the late 1990s.

⁴ The term *Thai Thief* is derived from *Thai Thiip*. In Thai, *thiip* is an act of kicking or shoving by foot. Therefore, the English film title is a pun between Thai and English. Among the Thai people of my generation, *Thai Thiip* was known as an underground movement mentioned in the *Khu Karma* myth. The mission of the movement is to cut the war supply of the Japanese.

⁵ This company later came to be known as RS Public Company Limited, one of the influential entertainment institutions in Thailand.

Prior to the gold rush of the 1990s, the myth of Japanese treasure inspired a Thai-Hong Kong film co-production: *Sombat Maemam Khwae/ The Treasure of the River Kwai* (directed by Neramit and produced by Runme Shaw) was the first film depicting the quest for hidden treasure in the jungle of Kanchanaburi. It was filmed in 35 mm and it is believed to have been screened across six countries at the same time. Mitr Chaibancha, a leading Thai actor of the time, played the protagonist.⁶ This film is of importance as it is the first Thai-Hong Kong production using other source materials beyond the Sino-Thai community.⁷ Yet it also treats Thailand as an exotic space which has been one of the popular perceptions of Thailand among Hong Kong audiences (Knee 2007: 77, 86-88). From the genre memory viewpoint, this film is considered as the very source text of the Japanese treasure imagination in Thai screen culture.

The genre memory dominating the formula of this film should be considered alongside popular literature, particularly the action-adventure fiction genre. The genre began development when Sir Henry Rider Haggard's works came to Thai translation in the early 20th century. Those works moved Thai writers and filmmakers to transfer the Victorian adventure sensation to the Thai public. In the wake of Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* franchise, the genre memory of the treasure hunting film was pursued by another film: *Khum Thong Maenam Khwae/ The Gold of the River Kwai* (Saenyakorn, 1985).

Resembling *The Treasure of the River Kwai*, *The Gold of the River Kwai* is a co-production between Thailand, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong employing a budget of 10 million Thai Baht (Neung Diaw 2008: 218). The main plot of the film was fabricated from the genre memory of Haggard's imperial romance. The film tells the story of Chingchai (Soraphong Chatri), a Thai archeologist, who protects the

⁶ The information supplied by the Hong Kong Movie Database (HKMDB) indicates other members of the cast: Angela Yu Chien, Cheung Lai-Chu and Tang Ti.

⁷ The original film reels were found but they were too damaged to be utilised.

Kanchanaburi forest invaded by Khunsak and his allies. Khunsak is an aristocratic mafia boss hunting a mythical Japanese treasure. He kidnaps East Asian tourists that are mistaken for a group of gold hunters. Chingchai tries to rescue the kidnapped tourists but he is betrayed by a greedy foreigner and a local hunter. To enter the treasure cave, Khunsak plans to sacrifice the kidnapped women to the cannibal tribe. Yet the ritual is dismissed by the *nang phrai* (Amazonian woman) and her fellows. She rescues the woman and falls in love with Chingchai. Reaching the cave, Khunsak dies from a sudden cave collapse. They find nothing but a pile of human skeletons. The film ends with a scene showing the corpse of the local hunter on a pile of glittering gold that the other characters fail to discover. Some elements of the film are identical with *Darayan*: the cave, the unfound treasure, the sacrifice, love and death.

Mapped onto the myth of treasure in Thai cinema, the vernacular memory claims that the Japanese army hid their gold in a cave in Kanchanaburi along the continuing lines of the Death Railway. The myth was perpetually retold by the locals acquainted with a group of Japanese businessmen during the late 1980s. The Japanese businessmen established a factory processing bamboo shoots. Three years later, they sailed back to Japan. Their discovery of the Japanese Gold was suspicious (Worawut 2001: 84-88). The interest of treasure hunters might have been enhanced, apart from the World War II film and vernacular memory, by the unearthing of the notorious Yamashita's Gold in the Philippines. The myth of Japanese treasure was, again, voiced because of Rogelio Roxas' lawsuit in 1988 when he fought against Ferdinand Marcos's command to confiscate the gold found by Roxas. This incident gave birth to several World War II films in South East Asia: *Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure* (The Philippines, Chito S. Ronõ, 2001) and *Pemburu Emas Yamashita/Yamashita's Gold Hunters* (Malaysia, Aziz M. Osman, 2006).

Actually, the legend of Yamashita's Gold has left a lingering effect on the dreams of treasure hunters in the region but, in Thailand, the myth was not extensively uncovered until the mid-1990s.

The rediscovery of WWII memory in Thailand was caused by the 50th commemoration of the end of the war in 1995. Throughout the year, there were many publications concerning the war written by national and international historians, archivists and librarians. The so-called mnemonic craze resonated in the news about one letter sent from Kanchanaburi to the royal court. According to the letter, there was Japanese treasure hidden in Lijia Cave in Kanchanaburi. Although there was no historical record, either written or oral, concerning the Japanese treasure, the story has been repetitively retold among the people of Kanchanaburi (Worawut 2001: 85).

Thereafter, the myth was boosted by Chaowarin Ratthasaksiri, Deputy Minister of Education. Going hand in hand with the man who sent the letter, Chaowarin began exploration without an official permission. In late 1995, the discovery of Japanese gold was publicised in the Thai media. They captured the moment in which Chaowarin held an old Buddhist nun's hand; she was believed to be the wife of the man who knew the secret. Despite an army of well-equipped gold hunters, no gold was found in the cave. This first failure, however, could not stop Chaowarin in his quest. His return in 2000 claimed a new discovery of an aircraft fighter and two train carriages filled with gold. The survey was first obstructed by the director-general of the Department of Forestry since the cave was located in a national park area. However, an illegal survey was carried out, and as a result six people died. They suffocated in a 50-metre hole in the cave (Worawut 2001: 89-90).

Darayan should be inspired by the myth of the treasure hunting in the previous texts in Thai screen culture and the Japanese treasure unearthed from 1996 on.

Alongside this, the combination of death and superstition can be formed by other sites of memory in Kanchanaburi. The key sources are the myth of hiding and the discovery of the treasure. The myth was gradually embellished with additional superstitious elements such as, for example, that during the war, two Japanese soldiers were seen forcing four Malayan labourers carrying a big box into a cave and that before those labourers left, the access route to the cave had been shut by an explosion. The ghosts of the Malayans are fabricated by superstitious beliefs as much as the story of a Buddhist monk on pilgrimage and his vision of the hidden gold not to mention the story of a monstrous giant snake believed to be the guardian of the treasure (Worawut 2001: 87-88).

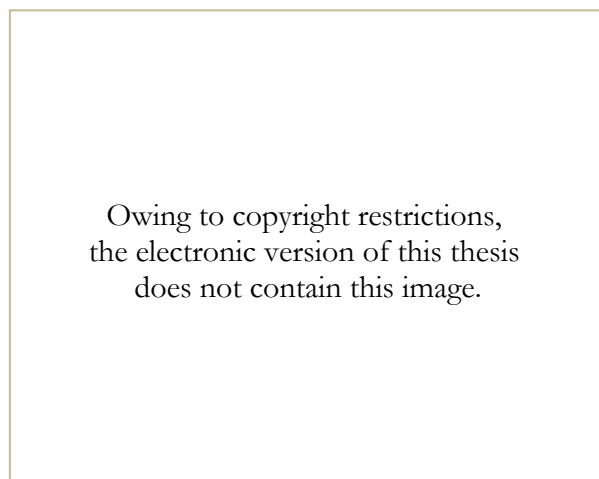


FIG. 48 Lijia Cave in January 1996 (Thairath, 15 December 2015)

The myths mentioned above are informed by Thai superstition and folklore; they stand on common ground with the *rueang liilap* (mysterious story) or *rueang phii* (ghost story) from other sources. Interestingly, superstition is also a collective feature of Asian and South East Asian culture and screen culture (Teo 2013, Bräunlein 2016: 1-7). The translation of the myth of Japanese treasure into a Thai horror series should be inspired by such tradition.

Darayan can be linked to social criticism or social reality which is common in the genre memory of ghost visual narratives. As illustrated earlier, the gold rush in the late 1990s should be seen as targeted by the series. Both official and unofficial hunts for the treasure at Lijia Cave reveal, to some extent, the conflicts of interest among Thai politicians and the vulnerability of the Thai public hit by one of the worst economic crises. Allegorically, the presence of walking corpses and various undead creatures in *Darayan* sharply criticises politicians and other believers who risk their lives and honour for the fulfilment of their greed.

The horror genre is used to carry the criticism of this issue because ‘the motif of haunting is also connected to place. The war film, with its iconographic combat zones of trenches, foxholes, embattled beaches, jungles, and ruined villages possesses a special resonance as a sector of spectral encounters’ (Burgoyne 2010: 168).

Therefore, the superstition amplified from the Lijia Cave is embodied in *Darayan* as a carrier of social criticism and a sign of the social anxieties of late 1990s Thailand.

Within this context, Thai people were appealed to be weaned ‘from destructive acquisitiveness through education and through sustainable development using traditional technology’ (Baker and Pasuk 2014: 242).⁸

The explorations at Lijia Cave have been widely scandalous. The royal institution was also involved in them. Royal permission was repeatedly broadcast by mass media within Thailand and beyond before the gold turned out to be a ‘national hoax’ (Worawut 2001: 102). Although the conclusion of the myth came out after

⁸ One prominent index of this social anxiety is the launch of King Bhumibol’s *Phra Mahajanaka* in 1995. It is the adaptation from one of *jataka tales* about the previous lives of the Buddha. The didactic message of this book is to educate the values of perseverance.

Darayan, the incidents at Lijia Cave, from the beginning to the end affected the social organism in Thailand. Lives and pride should not have been paid in vain.⁹

Reacting to the gold rush, *Darayan* depicts a group of security guards sent from Bangkok to Bayu Island. In the cave, they are killed by land mines left over from World War II. The explosion of land mines evokes both the revengeful spirit of *Darayan* and the malice of World War II memories concealed underneath official memory.

The intersection between the myth of the Japanese treasure, Thai spiritual beliefs and the representation of female ghosts creates cultural meaning. Here, compared to other contemporary on-screen texts, *Darayan* functions as a site of memory containing the myth, and it shares some implications of the horror genre as observed by some scholars: ‘examined in a broader view, then, contemporary Thai horror films consistently appear as a cultural means of grappling with the past, with secrets and traumas still haunting the country’ (Knee, 2005: 156-157). Further to this, the most popular Thai horrors of all are the horrors featuring female ghosts waiting for their lovers. *Darayan* is, thus far, the one and only World War II horror series. What matters is not the fear a horror series can bring to its audiences but the wounded memory that is still ‘unsettled.’ Hence, *Darayan* who waits for her lover can be read as a metaphor of the trauma waiting to be revisited. This matter will be dealt with in the next section.

3. Mediating War Trauma

The official memory of World War II is exclusively retold and almost ‘occupied’ by Thai men, particularly the rhetoric of *Seri Thai* emerging in the 1970s. Unsurprisingly, the social and cultural lives of people during wartime have been

⁹ Such loss and shame gave birth to another allegorical film set in the late 1940s Thailand—*Satang* (Bandit Rittakon, 2000). The film conveys a more intensive version of morality conducted by the royal institution, particularly, the one endorsed by the conception of sustainable economy.

gradually restored since 1997 when the new people's constitution was launched and the politics of commoners were taken more seriously. Nevertheless, the voices of people who have suffered trauma during, or in the aftermath of, the Second World War are not adequately recognised by the official memory. They were collected by and in some vernacular sites of memory such as local historians and private testimonies but there was no commemoration or memorialisation (Worawut 2001: 127-176, Charnvit and Nimit 2014).

Many unsung heroes are still unsung. Additionally, *Seri Thai* and their missions are not continuously investigated since they have been venerated as national heroes. Their stories have been appropriated by the typical plot of Thai historiography dominated by the trope of 'the Great Man' (Foucault 2011). Reciprocally, the vernacular memory of World War II can be under multiple layers of repression. Additionally, the World War II memory in Thailand is hardly articulated in the form of trauma. The term trauma is applied here in the broadest sense. The term is associated with the areas of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, sociology, history, literary studies and other related disciplines (Caruth 1995: 4). Thus trauma inclusively refers to violence or violent events experienced individually and collectively. Those who experience trauma tend 'to be possessed by an image or event' (Caruth 1995: 5) which causes a pathological state of mind and body.

The retrieval of the vernacular memory or counter-memory, in Foucauldian terms, and trauma was endorsed by the scholarship and evidence beyond Thai soil. The popularity of World War II memory was, instead, awakened by popular culture. There was an increasing number of publications on World War II after the launch of the *Khu Karma* television series on Channel 7 in 1990 (Wasin et al 1991). In 1991, the first Thai edition of the memoir written by Lieutenant General Aketo Nakamura

(1889-1966) was published. It proposes some observations that may give Thai people awkward feelings. The memoir reveals the subtle non-cooperation of the Thai government under Phibun Songkhram's regime and a smoother Thai-Japanese relation under the Thai civilian government which can undermine the assumptions of many historians. In 1995, Yoshikawa Toshiharu's book on the Death Railway was published in a Thai translation. The book unearths the memory of *romusha* or the paid laborers who lost their lives anonymously. Their stories have been retained not as prominently in Thai or Australian memory but rather in Japanese writing. These are samples of vernacular memory from the periphery, if Bangkok is considered the centre.

This section aims at addressing two issues. Firstly I seek to explain how vernacular memories of World War II are represented through the codes of horror and the characterisation of the female ghost. This issue will be addressed through the genre memory of Asian horror and Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection which has been developed by film scholars. Secondly, I examine how the awakened war trauma affects the protagonists throughout the series. Their suffering and death will be allegorically read from a pathological perspective of post-traumatic stress disorder—PTSD. The second issue is likewise related to how *Seri Thai* characters are alternatively portrayed through *abjection*, which differs from other genres.

3.1 The Haunting Past: The Return of Vernacular Memory and Female Ghost

Darayan was primarily derived from the *phii ro rak* or 'love-longing ghost'—the most common type of female ghost in Thailand. The afterlife of Mae Nak is the prototype of love-longing ghosts popularised since the age of modernisation in the late 19th century (Nirin 2007: 41-42). The genre memory of Mae Nak's legend has been perpetuated in the Thai screen culture. Nonzee's *Nang Nak* conceived new dimensions of the Thai film industry, cultural heritage and nostalgic fashion at the

turn of the century. The love-longing female ghosts look forward to reuniting with their lovers after reincarnation. The ghosts do not incline to admit their lovelornness (Nirin 2007: 42). In this manner, love-longing ghosts are bonded to a rediscovery of their past, forcing their lovers to recall both love and sin from their past lives. *Chak yon yuk* or period settings are common in the texts of the ghost story genre. This reaffirms the notion that ghosts are a personification of the past, and they play a dominant part in Thai memory culture.

The construction of Darayan, as an iconic female ghost, can be traced in several sources. Before the boom of ghost movies in the late 1970s (Kamjohn and Somsuk 2009), the horrors of the late 1950s and the 1960s were well received particularly in rural Thailand. The cultural significance of the films includes the divides among male *vs.* female, rural *vs.* urban and higher class *vs.* lower class (Ainslie 2016: 204). These divisions were developed by formulating Darayan along with an older genre memory of a rural lower-class woman who was lured by an urban higher-class man—the myth of *Sao Khruea Fa*.

In the light of genre memory, Darayan strives for her new life although she is a common villager. She wants to make a family with Phu. Darayan's passionate love at last leads her to a catastrophic end. Potentially, this part of the plot is influenced by Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* which was introduced to the Thai theatres in the early 20th century under the name of *Sao Khruea Fa*. The story has been reproduced in the screen culture since 1943. The female protagonist lives in Northern Thailand. She falls in love with a young lieutenant from Bangkok. One day, the lieutenant leaves her for his home and never returns to Khruea Fa. He starts his new life with his new wife. Due to the pain of love, the female protagonist commits suicide. *Sao Khruea Fa* has

become a moral lesson for ‘girls from the village.’ They must be aware of the hypocrisy of those from Bangkok. *Darayan*’s plot obviously falls into this genre memory.¹⁰

The intertextual touch from *Madame Butterfly* can be seen in the costume of Darayan. Her white cloak is, in theory, similar to that of Butterfly’s night gown. However, to view *Darayan* through another transnational lens, the series can also be influenced by the popularity of Hong Kong ghost films. Correspondingly, love-longing ghosts are also common in Hong Kong cinema. In my own film memory, back to the late 1980s, film culture in Thailand flourished through *ran chao video* (video rental shops) found in Bangkok and the town centres of every province. They provided videos for VHS players. That was the time I watched Thai-dubbed Disney Classics and some ghost films from Hong Kong. The most memorable ghost film from Hong Kong was *Sinnui Yauman/A Chinese Ghost Story* (Ching Siu-Tung, 1987) starring Leslie Cheung and Joey Wong. The film was well-received in Asia. Its franchise was continued until 2011. The title was known in Thai as *Poye Poloye* derived from *bōrě bōluómì* in Mandarin. However both *Sao Khrueta Fa* and *A Chinese Ghost Story* represent the ‘in-betweenness’ of the urban vs. rural divide and the dead vs. living dichotomies which are apparent in *Darayan*.¹¹ This notion will be developed in explaining the ‘monstrous femininity’ of Darayan.

¹⁰ The myth of *Madame Butterfly* has given birth to several adaptations. Henry David Hwang’s *M. Butterfly* (1988) is one of significant variations of the myth. Hwang’s play turned into David Cronenberg’s film—*M. Butterfly* (1993). Hwang’s play absorbed the context of the Vietnam War and American imperialism in South East Asia. It inspired *Miss Saigon*, the great Broadway performance. In the 1990s, Hwang’s play, as an afterlife of *Madame Butterfly*, was introduced in Singapore (Wisenthal 2006). In this manner, the *Madame Butterfly* myth has been well-known in both on-screen and off-screen worlds. *Darayan* is, thus, estimated as another reimagined variation of the myth from the 1990s.

¹¹ Apart from the costumes and the plot on female ghosts, *Darayan* and *A Chinese Ghost Story* also share Asian spiritual belief and the genre memory of Asian horror such as interchangeable appearances of female ghost between the monstrous and the feminine (Teo 2013: 107), the belief in reincarnation in relation to the ashes of the ghosts.

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FIG. 49 Comparative shots between *A Chinese Ghost Story* and *Darayan*

Darayan can verify itself as a memory text; its main plot projects the tension between forgetfulness and remembrance. The crucial quest in the plot is the quest for lost memory, and memory is manifested in several aspects: clinical, neurological, spiritual and cultural. In the protagonists' present lives, Phu and his fellows are tortured by Darayan; she uses her dark power to revisualise their past lives. Furthermore, before arriving to Bayu Island, Phu's fiancé, with her psychic powers, sees Phu in his *Seri Thai* uniform. Travelling by plane, she also sees aircraft fighters from her window seat. Moreover, her grandmother is suffering from Alzheimer's disease but she, from time to time, acts as an oracle predicting her granddaughter's and Phu's future. The wife of the company director who assigns Phu and his group to go to the island is also facing dementia.

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FIG. 50 The intervention of the past into the present in *Darayan*

Darayan's vengeful spirit rises again when the landmines are activated and kill six security guards. She appears with her haunting scream and unique white cloak.

This costume is what she was wearing as part of a sacrifice ritual for the ocean god. In terms of aesthetics, the main colour of the series is blue, which is connected to *nila* in the Indian aesthetics. The blue colour is associated with the emotive core of horror genre—*bhibhasa* (fear/panic). Alongside this, the return of Darayan is the act of opening Pandora's Box: the rising action of the main plot. That is, typically, how the past begins to contest the present through the haunting motifs of the genre. *Darayan* appropriates the genre memory of the war film as explained by Burgoyne:

The presence and persistence of the past is rather found in the way it seems to 'possess' the present in the war film, seeming to haunt it and to shadow it at every turn. Many of the most important films of the genre include literal scenes of spectral haunting, the reappearance of the dead in memory and hallucination, or independently of the subjectivity of the characters, with images and the voices of the dead addressed directly to the viewer (2010: 166).

Darayan's struggles to be remembered signify the strain between vernacular memory and the official World War II memory in Thailand. Darayan is seeking to be human again by gathering her ashes and possessing a human's body. Darayan's process of becoming human can be read as a materialisation of memory. Once it is formed, it can be accepted or rejected. The rotten body of Darayan is how vernacular memory is undermined and suppressed by official memory. The emergence of vernacular World War II memories may change the perception of the past among Thai people. Its failure to be included in the mainstream is demonstrated by the scene wherein Darayan turns ghostly again despite the marks she leaves in the plot.

The otherness of vernacular memory is asserted through the backwardness of the rural. It is fabricated in the superstitious beliefs of the villagers. Bayu Island is a fictive place but the interaction between Thai-Malay culture and Buddhist-Animistic practices seems realistic to Thai audiences. The series may be successful in switching World War II memory from 'history' to 'herstory' and from the centre to the

periphery, from Darayan's perspective. Along these lines, without the direct backlash from royal-nationalistic powers, through the otherness of vernacular memory, Darayan can question national memory and national heroes by portraying the disunity in their representation. Another point of provocation is that Darayan can voice her story after her death but not while she is still alive. As the Thai horror genre is always a channel of criticism towards social establishments such as the military, religion and medical professionalism (Kamjohn and Somsuk 2009: 89), life after death is a liminal time and space to speak the unspeakable.

The aforementioned in-betweenness is connected to the decline of borders among the present *vs.* the past, forgetting *vs.* remembering, the centre *vs.* the periphery and the living *vs.* the dead. These declined borders contribute to the rise of Darayan. As a personified trauma of World War II, Darayan is potentially an *abject* in Julia Kristeva's sense. Kristeva's vision on abject and abjection is found in *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* ([1980]1982). Primarily, abjection deals with border; the simplest example is the border between inside and outside the body. To explain her term, Kristeva recounts her childhood memory when she was offered food and milk by her parents. She interprets the skin on top of the milk as a sign of her parents' desire separating her world from theirs. Kristeva goes on: 'But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*' (Kristeva 1982: 3). Along these lines, human subjectivities which are constructed through *abjection* are connected to excretion or bodily waste: shit, blood, vomit, urine and open wounds for example. Thus the ultimate form of abjection is the corpse, 'the most sickening of waste' (1982: 3-4).

Borders, abjection and bodily waste are extensively applied in horrors as Barbara Creed suggested in her lengthy essay: 'Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection' (1986: 44-70). Creed seconded Kristeva's conception on abjection for analysing horror films featuring monstrous female characters with a strong link to archetypal forms of the monstrous female, for example Medusa, vampires and witches. Three aspects that bridge Creed's essay to Kristeva's ideas include: 1) horror features abjection through the corpse and bodily waste to horrify audiences, 2) the notion of border is important in constructing monsters in horror (man *vs.* beast, the normal *vs.* the supernatural and good *vs.* evil, for instance) and 3) the monstrous femininity is associated with the maternal figure as an abject (1986: 48-50).

If the tradition of horror is bound with abjection, it is interesting to analyse how the genre can be related to trauma in the Thai context. Here, my argument is that *Darayan* is employed to channel the war trauma because the status of World War II in Thai memory culture exists in abjection. Although after 1995 the World War II memory in Thailand was expanded by new historical sources, the violence which occurred during the war was still underrepresented, particularly in the official memory. The events of World War II are a core part of socio-political transition in Thailand but this is not fully accepted or widely retold. To identify national history with such trauma, this projection was framed through the distorted reality found in horror. World War II trauma is the bodily waste of the national body. That is how it is mapped with the monstrous femininity of *Darayan* who is always at 'the border'.

According to Buddhist beliefs, death is just. Death fairly happens to everyone. Therefore, *Yama* or *yama raja*, the god of death in Hinduism, is also the god of justice. Moreover, death is just in the sense that the hierarchy in the living world is declined in the world of the dead. This way *Darayan* can be more powerful than her

enemies when she becomes ghostly. She is an evidence of the cliché: ‘war creates a new monster.’ The monster here is not soldiers from the battlefields but instead a civilian whose trauma is not acknowledged by the state. Thus Darayan is a personification of both bad *karma* and war trauma. Moreover, in terms of justice, all characters in the series are equally victimised by the violence of war, the pride they believe in and the shame they cannot deny.

Apparently, Darayan is constructed under the generic code of monstrous femininity of horror films, particularly when she tries to regain her physicality with her dark power. She turns human again by consuming the body of a person who is filled with lust and greed. Darayan believes that the Law of Karma can be violated. Yet she cannot triumphantly cross over ‘the border’. Despite her new look of a business woman; Darayan still lives a vampiric life in a coffin. Moreover, the body she inhabits gradually turns rotten. She eventually becomes the corpse again; the series does not fail to depict blood and muscle under Darayan’s skin. Significantly, long fingers of Darayan as a *phallic mother* are also represented in the process of returning to a corpse-like state.

From Creed’s perspective, the monstrous femininity and the rotten body of Darayan bring about ‘the confrontation with the abject [...] in order, finally, to eject the abject and re-draw the boundaries between the human and non-human’ (1986: 53). That is how ‘the border’ and the Law of Karma are restored in Thai horror, as seen in the myth of Mae Nak and of other female ghosts. Yet at the end of the series, *Darayan* prevails over the generic rule through Phu’s sacrifice for his attrition. The two protagonists are not separated in different worlds. This signifies the status of World War II trauma in Thailand, which cannot fully be redeemed by the rhetoric of *Seri Thai*’s heroism. This significant ending will be elaborated more in the next section.

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FIG. 51 Vampiric and monstrous Darayan

Another allegorical reading of *Darayan* is though the ghost as a personification of resisting power, it cannot normalise and cannot be normalised. In this respect, the past restored by women cannot be persistent. This is simply explained by Buddhist doctrine: *anijjang* or the law of impermanence. This doctrine is applied in general female ghost stories on film and televisions in Thailand since the female corpses are always employed in Buddhist pedagogy (Fuhrmann 2016: 68-69). *Darayan* eventually returns to the underworld; it can be viewed as an analogy of the fading of ‘herstory’ or a counter-memory of World War II.¹²

The death of *Darayan* provokes me to investigate the agenda of the text if it believes in a female voice. This can be read through a satirical lens; the series may criticise the male-dominated historical consciousness by identifying *Darayan* as a victim of misogynistic culture. In this fashion, the alienation of the villagers is, likewise, interpreted as a criticism against the urban middle-class audiences who tend to exoticise the rural and to underrate its culture and memory. The extreme superstition is read as a metaphor of ignorance or barbarism imposed by the imagination of the ‘privileged commoners.’ Hence, the Free Thai group once says of the villagers: ‘people here are uncivilised. I’m sorry for them.’

¹² Other Asian ghost films dealing with femininity, history and trauma include *Ringu/The Ring* (Japan, Hideo Nakata, 1998), *The Maid* (Singapore, Kelvin Tong, 2005), *Arang* (South Korea, Ahn Sang-hoon, 2006), *Huapi/Painted Skin* (China/Hong Kong, Gordon Chan, 2008) for example (Teo 2013: 92-110).

Mingling with *Seri Thai* fellows, Darayan is spotted as trouble maker through the eyes of the villagers. Severely threatened by the Japanese, the villagers believe that the chaos is caused by their misconduct. They rush to the shaman seeking for possible solutions. According to the shaman, Darayan, perceived as a pure maiden of the village, has to be sacrificed to the ocean god. However, as Darayan is not a virgin, the ritual is ruined. She is condemned to be crucified in the sea while her father is fatally punished and his tongue is cut out. That is to say their lives are ruined for the mission of the Free Thai allies. Ironically, Darayan's devotion is pointless because the war is over before the gold is destroyed.

The return of Darayan is the return of the counter-memory of World War II. In the next section, the effects of such a return are explored. Darayan is a proper case study of war heroes suffering PTSD. Although PTSD is widely represented in global war films and television series, it is almost invisible to the Thai viewers. Horror is used to suggest the symptoms and the abjection which distinguish the Thai heroes of World War II from those of other moments in the national memory.

3.2 Neither Pride Nor Shame: Liminal Heroes and PTSD

Structuring this section through Kristeva's abjection theory and the idea of trauma, I also seek to illuminate the characterisation of the protagonists in *Darayan* with the scholarship on 'liminal heroes'. Rebecca Umland suggests that 'being at the border' or liminality is common in American screen culture. She introduces her point through anthropological aspects: 'a liminal space, an anthropological concept of threshold between past and future, or between conflicting social values and/or individual experiences and desires' (2016: 1). Umland's in-between figures stand for the outlaw heroes in Hollywood films and television westerns. Those heroes have

developed through the evolution of the western genre to ‘the urban western.’ The new liminal heroes can be seen in the *Rambo* franchise (1982-2008) and the *Batman: Dark Knight Trilogy* (2005-2012) (2016: 5). A hero should seek to negotiate ‘between conflicting values, reconciling competing ideological stance’ (2016: 5). Speaking with the language of ‘vernacular theory’ in Thai film studies and folkloristic studies, the liminality can be termed as *miti sii thao* or grey dimension proposed by Krittiya Na Nongkhai (2013: 162-166).

Heroes of the *grey dimension* are heroes who share status, profession, interrelationship or overlapping relationship with villains; they are not different in the sense of a black-and-white dichotomy. For example, both heroes and villains are bandits, police officers or even brothers. Both heroes and villains can express their light and shadow (Krittaya 2013: 163). This trait is developed in Thai action-adventure films. That is to say, liminal heroes on Thai screen are the children of the genre memory of *avatar*, liminal figures in the Thai classics and the Hollywood effects.

Both John Rambo and Bruce Wayne in *Batman* are proper examples of heroes who witnessed trauma. Despite their strength and toughness, their frailty is explored more and more in certain sequels, and such traits push them to the *grey dimension*. To endorse this point, the film *Rambo: First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982) should be mentioned. It tells the story of John Rambo who fought in the Vietnam War. After the war, he cannot reposition himself within civilian life. He turns violent then heads back to another battlefield. During the course of Rambo’s civilian life, the film always inserts his traumatic experiences from Vietnam. They directly affect his behaviour and mental health. Rambo’s pathological condition is called post-traumatic stress

disorder—PTSD. Cathy Caruth defines this term in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, her edited volume:

While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (1995: 4).

Caruth's definition suits Rambo's situation. PTSD is a common issue in mediating the war memory in the global screen culture (Köhne, Elm and Kabalek 2014).

Conversely, it is rare in the *Thai-Thai* genre memory which tends to glorify warriors in epic or action-adventure genres. Despite its triviality, war trauma can potentially be articulated through the codes of the horror genre. That is the main objective of this section.

As a *Seri Thai* member, Phu is a patriotic idol. He has strong determination and leadership but these qualities blind him from rightful judgement. Hence the liminality of the male protagonist is more about moral dilemmas. Rescued by Phu, Darayan seems to fall for him. Phu appears in the market as a government officer from Bangkok; Darayan assists him in finding a food supply for his fellows. Persistently, Darayan is spied on by Phu and another Free Thai fellow who is attracted to her. However, Phu wins Darayan's heart by the sweetest words: 'I didn't expect to see such beauty in the middle of nowhere [...] I didn't expect this heartless war would bring me my love.' He makes Darayan fall for him whilst he is planning to use her to spy on the Japanese.

Phu lets his fellows know his scheme, and; it is criticised. To exploit an innocent civilian is not morally acceptable. Yet Phu, as a leader, argues that this is the way they are trained: 'I don't care what you think. To me, our nation must be prioritised.' Darayan is compelled to accept the invitation to the Japanese camp in

order to investigate the hidden gold. That night the superior Japanese soldier offers Darayan his marriage proposal and the gold. That is when Darayan gives up her virginity.

Darayan trades her virginity for the mission. The rhetoric *tham phuea chat* (mission for the nation) is used to justify the acts of the protagonists. Although the female protagonist is not literally raped, they are raped by a patriotic ideology perpetuated by men. No matter how many missions they accomplish, she has to live painfully with shame as well as pride. Darayan is condemned by the villagers and by her own father. She does not know the concept of nation; she agrees to give up everything to the one she loves:

Phu: You have to do nothing but love me. To love me is to give the most precious thing to me. [...] If you love me, you need to love the nation.

Darayan: I don't understand what you just said. Yet I shall do everything for you, Phu. [...]

Phu: You have to sleep with Tanaka.

Darayan: You are talking about others not about me! You want me to do such a filthy thing for our nation? Fine!

Phu: I love you. I can die for you but I can't let the Japanese rule our country!

Again, the representation of *Seri Thai* in this television series is problematic. They are not represented as saviour figures as in the official WWII memory. While hiding in the cave, the Free Thai group causes the villagers of Bayu Island serious troubles. In search of the Free Thai members, the Japanese do not hesitate to assault innocent strangers. The villagers' properties are keenly inspected. Their normal everyday life is violently disrupted.

Moreover, after the gold is secretly transferred to the cave, the villagers are suspected by the Japanese. They are severely tortured and murdered. The series unfolds the dark side of the Free Thai Movement in a manner similar to *Boonpong*. This exposé is heightened by the status of 'privileged commoners.' Incongruously,

their mission to liberate Thailand and the Thai people does not correlate with the way they interact with the 'underprivileged.'

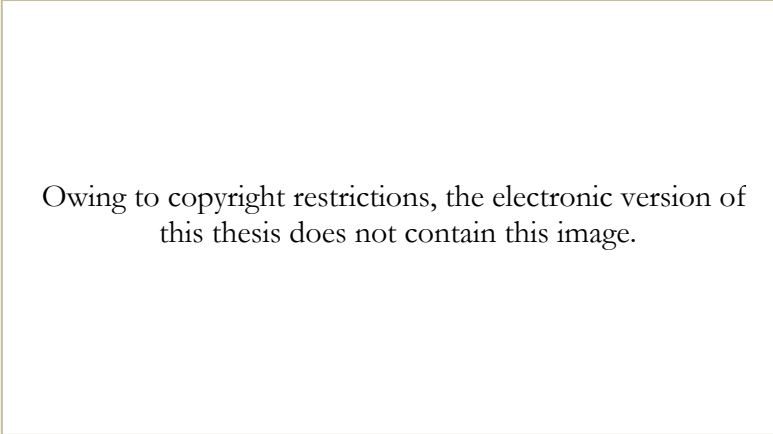
To some extent, their morality is tested. Except Phu, the other fellows try to collect the gold. They cannot tame their greed. Phu tries to obstruct them by saying that their acts are *kabot* (rebellious). The problematic aspect of World War II is instantly recited from one of the allies: 'Rebel? Rebel against what? We are now rebelling against Thailand. Thailand is the Japanese empire's great friend but we are enemies of the Japanese.' When the Japanese learn about this scheme, the Free Thai team is arrested, and they are forced to retrieve the gold. In a push to extract the secret, one of them kills Darayan's father.

This is the liminality of national heroes raised by the series. They follow their mission. The nation is upheld in a higher position than humanity. The notion that patriotism and morality cannot be the same thing is presented in the chapters on romance and biopic genres. Such a notion is likewise transmitted to the horror genre. Suggestively, in the lack of humanity, peace cannot remain within or without the war.

Darayan is oppressed by structural, multi-layered violence. As a woman from a remote island, she is underprivileged because of her ethnicity, gender and class. Darayan is abused by the patriarchy and a patriotism she cannot make sense of. Her lovelornness and the loss of her virginity become more and more traumatising. She cannot cross over to her next life not only because she is waiting for her love but because she cannot let go of her own trauma. That is to say, Darayan is not only a personification of the repressed trauma, but she herself also suffers from PTSD. The violence of war does not solely happen to her; she witnesses the death of her father and of her neighbours. At the end of the war, most of the villagers are dead. Those who are alive cannot stay sane. The question is whether the calamity was brought to

Bayu Island by the Japanese or by the Thai patriots from Bangkok. In short, it should be fair enough to say that Darayan is also a war hero with PTSD. Her corrupted psychological wellness enables her to project a consequent violence.

The trauma of commoners is repressed by the official memory. This notion is illustrated by the resistance against *re*-remembrance. When Darayan captures Phu inside the cave, she forces him to regain the memory of his past life. The act of re-remembering *per se* causes him profound pain. The more memory is restored the more Phu spits out blood. Darayan insists: ‘I don’t want to hurt you, my dear Phu but this is the only way I can make you remember. It must be very painful.’ Ultimately, his blood floods over his sensation when the lost memory is rematerialised. It brings back his sin, guilt and internal conflicts that he did not reconcile in his past life.



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FIG. 52 *Re*-remembering trauma

Blood is involved in regaining memory. This should support my argument on WWII trauma as abject. Phu’s blood is blended with Phu’s memory. The sensory border is forced open. In Thai folk beliefs, prior to one’s rebirth, his memory in his past life needs to be erased for the sake of good *karma* he can conduct in his new life. The opened sensory border, blood and regained memory are in the abjection which does not respect borders, positions and rules; it disturbs identity, system and order (Kristeva 1982: 4). After he regains his memory, Phu never finds his inner peace.

Carrying along his guilt to Bangkok, Phu is disturbed by the ‘identity’ from his past life which used to be repressed by his forgetting. The only relationship he has is undermined, first by his guilt and then by Darayan’s resurrection. This pain, that is psychologically destructive, carried equivalence with trauma. Apparently, during the latter part of the series, Phu is suffering from PTSD.

When the past is evoked, the present is interrupted by anachronisms. Within Thai horror culture, *Darayan* challenges the representation of temporal linearity. The past and the present are merged into each other to construct ‘the present of the past’ facilitating Darayan’s revenge against her enemies. Phu’s friends are haunted by Darayan after her resurrection. They face anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations and fear of loss. Those symptoms are common among PTSD patients. One of them turns into a zombie under Darayan’s control.¹³ They fail to detach from their past or their sinful acts. They, however, seek redemption without attrition. Such self-contradictory acts allow horrifying elements to be showcased in the latter part of the series when Darayan kills those who owe her their lives.

Darayan’s vengeance raises moral dilemmas for the audience. My argument, here, references Susan Sontag’s statement that ‘remembering is an ethical act,’ that it ‘has ethical value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead’ (2004: 103). No one can run away from their past or *karma* in the Buddhist terminology as stated in the series.

¹³ Obviously, this is also related to the abjection aspects particularly when the character is at the border between the living and the dead (Creed 1986: 49).

The death of characters in *Darayan* is defined by their bad *karma*.¹⁴ For example, a nurse of the Free Thai team at Bayu Island tortures Darayan with her medical skills. She lures Darayan near to learn about the location of the gold. The nurse then injects something toxic into Darayan to make her paralysed. In the present life, she is killed by an injection syringe controlled by Darayan. Another example is a greedy character. He would do anything or hurts anyone to satisfy his hunger. In his death scene, under Darayan's dark spell, his stomach is filled with soil. When the Free Thai are slaughtered by Darayan and their *karma*, the sin from their past lives is visualised. Their death scenes, hence, are reenactments of the past events through Darayan's trauma.

Looking through the achievements of Supol Wichienchai, the director of *Darayan*, I cannot help noticing his outspoken interest in period settings and Buddhist messages. During 2000-2001, he produced a television series called *Chao Karma Nai Wen/The Malevolent*¹⁵ illustrating incarnations and bad *karma*. The series was very successful. However, it was not Supol's first work with a strong Buddhist message. Actually, *Darayan* does not fail to assert its moral function in the wake of other Buddhist products in mass media and popular culture from the late 1990s to the 2000s (Orathai 2004).¹⁶

Moreover, the intensification of moral messages through brutal deaths reminds me of another film beyond the Thai screen. In *Darayan*, human goodness is

¹⁴ Before directing *Darayan*, Supol Wichianchai directed another of Exact's television series. *La /Hunting* (1994) was a memorable series as it tells a female serial killer's life story. Sinchai Hongthai played the protagonist hunting a group of rapists. The law cannot grant her and her daughter justice. Bridging this observation with the stylised dead scenes, the series can be read as an offspring of Supol's *Hunting*.

¹⁵ In Thai, เจ้ากรรมนายเวร/*Chao Karma Nai Wen* literally means enemies from a former life.

¹⁶ In 1996, King Bhumibol published his allegorical tale, *Phra Mahajanaka/Mahajanaka, the Lost Prince*. Adapted from *jataka* tale (past lives of the Buddha), the book aimed at morally educating Thai people in the wake of globalisation and the sign of economic decline. The book was lunched during the time that Buddhism was merging into mass media, popular culture and commercialism. See more in Orathai (2004: 10-65).

articulated in a form of guilt which is embraced by only one character—Phu. He is killed by his guilt while the rest are killed by the denial of their own guilt: their own past. Still *Darayan* seems to be a catalyst of the law of *karma*. The uncertainty of the Law of Karma does not differ from the uncertainty of legality in Thailand.

Darayan's moral function and allegorical meaning should also be analysed from a genre perspective. Kamjohn and Somsuk divide the development of Thai horror into three waves. The first wave was traditionalist ghost films emerging between 1977 and 1986. During this period the screen texts were inspired by folklore and Hollywood horror. The second movement was between 1987 and 1996: the age of traditionalist and teen horror. Thai horror joined the market of teen audiences much like other genres. The genre began to function as social criticism. The key characteristic of the genre was continued in the third movement during 1997-2004: the era of modern and neo-traditionalist horror adapting new narrative techniques of global cinema from Hollywood, Hong Kong and Japan (2009: 65-75). Although *Darayan* is bound to the second wave, 1996 was a 'liminal space' in terms of the transition to another period of time and of social condition. I find *Darayan* progressive compared to other horror texts of the same period. It employs some narrative techniques of crime cinema generally found in the third movement (Kamjohn and Somsuk 2009: 74). The opening scene of *Darayan* showed a massacre of engineers sent to the Bayu Island. It was followed by an investigation.

To cure PTSD is not to forget but to forgive. From a Buddhist perspective forgiveness is the very key to the art of letting go. That is why most love-longing female ghosts on Thai screens cannot live with their lovers in the present time. The development of plots should demonstrate how the female ghosts learn to cope with their grudges which might be generated by trauma. In the last scene, *Darayan* retells

her trauma in the cave. Her trauma lies within the space, her body and her soul.

Before her detachment, Darayan's own narrative should potentially cure her or assist her to make sense of her own trauma.

Can you remember? This knife cut my wrist to buy time when you were moving the gold. Can you remember? You gave this perfume to me so that I can seduce Tanaka. Can you remember? Over there, my father was killed by your man. In this cave, I was dying in agony just because I trusted the vague promise of a man from Bangkok. How could you do that to me? Do you still have a human heart? Your nation? Your duty? Are they supposed to destroy my true love?

Articulating her traumatic memory with an alternation between past and present tenses, Darayan can mute all male characters' voices. Metaphorically, the official 'history' of World War II is not dominant in the context of the series. Phu's fiancé is the only one who can preach to Darayan about the true meaning of love. Love is not a possession but is intended to set the lovers free. With assistance from Phu's fiancé, Darayan can see another side of her past. After the war, Phu comes to the cave with his heavy heart. He admits that he has to bear the trauma after Darayan's brutal death. He decides to get married to cure his 'wounded heart.'

Phu's prayer for reconciliation is called *ahosi karma* (*ahosi kamma* in Pali) in Buddhist register. *Ahosi karma* is somewhat similar to attrition. The difference is the sinner does not appeal forgiveness from God but from his *chao karma nai wen* (enemies from a former life). That seems to be the only way to redeem the chaos in the main plot.

The act of *ahosi karma* does matter. It is not the act of forgetting but it is the act of making peace with what you must remember. It is analogous to the treatment of PTSD. In the Buddhist context, trauma, grudges and mourning create attachment. The attachment or the desire for rebirth must cause reincarnation which equals to continuous suffering. To detach from suffering, 'between desire and attachment, that the chain must be broken' (Fuhrmann 2016: 68). That is the typical ending of films

and television series portraying female ghosts. Since the values of media are still evaluated by their moralising function, *Darayan* seems to be geared in that direction.

Nonetheless, as suggested by Köhne, Elm and Kabalek ‘translating traumatic language into film language often implies moments of deformation, disfigurement, fracture, breakup, dislocation, or transmutation (2014: 10), in the end, *Darayan* thus twists audiences’ referential frame shaped by the genre memory. The most outstanding case of the female ghost genre memory is the myth of Mae Nak. The very key motif of the myth is the separation of the female ghost and her lover. That is how *chaos* is redeemed and transformed into *order* under the Law of Karma. Yet such a law is ultimately challenged through the moments of ‘deformation, disfigurement, fracture, breakup, dislocation, or transmutation’. In the pathological view, Phu eventually takes his own life. That is a common symptom among veterans suffering from trauma, on screen and in reality (2014: 6-7).

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FIG. 53 The act of *ahosi karma* and Phu’s reunion with Darayan in the underworld

The last scene, wherein Phu jumps into the abyss with Darayan, takes place in the cave—a liminal space. There is no separation between the dead and the alive, the past and the present and the remembered and the forgotten. In the lens of abjection, the cave itself can be read as abject; it causes both death and desire. Death and desire are entangled with Phu’s and the other characters’ death wishes. Since the beginning

of the story, entering into the cave is forbidden. There is hidden gold as well as unmarked landmines in the cave. After the rise of Darayan, the cave is also where her corpse rests. Moreover, the cave is where the violence among the villagers, the Japanese and *Seri Thai* happened in their past lives. Therefore the cave is an abject as it is rejected whilst it defines all characters' identities.

Within the space of the cave the exposition and the ending, which is directly related to Darayan's rise and fall, happen. Darayan lures Phu to the cave to remind him of his love and sin. Phu also voluntarily goes to the cave to conduct his attrition. In the light of Creed's scholarship, the cave, attached to the monstrous femininity of Darayan, can be interpreted as *vagina dentata* (toothed vagina) (1986: 44-45). As mentioned earlier, the cave is identified with desire and death. Phu's last jump into the abyss is not an act of penetration because in the underworld, he has no power over Darayan. Instead, Phu is symbolically castrated by Darayan's *vagina dentata*. Finally, Phu's death wish is fulfilled; he is defeated by his post-traumatic symptoms. He also fails to maintain the archetype of Thai heroes: warrior and lover. As a leader of the *Seri Thai* group, Phu's death goes against the official World War II memory which is male-dominated and *Seri Thai*-oriented. Thus, the official memory is challenged by vernacular memory. *Darayan* signals that there are many more World War II traumas in Thailand to be discovered.

The interpretation I propose here is that vernacular memories of World War II may have faded but they do not go away and continue to haunt Thai mnemonic communities. The moment of detachment from memory may happen, from time to time, but the attachment will last so long as the memory is still 'unspeakable.'

4. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores how the horror genre mediates WWII memory through allegorical reading and Julia Kristeva's idea of abjection dealing with liminality. The mediation of memory in horror is uncommon in the Western and Hollywood tradition as the genre is not acknowledged in prominent scholarship of the 'history film' field.¹⁷ This liminality is defined by their position which is different from ideal heroes in the epic genre constructed from the monumental history of the Thai nation. Therefore, the liminal heroes connote the problematic issues of World War II memory in Thailand since the memory does not fit in the frame of mainstream historiography.

The allegorical technique is likewise deployed in *Darayan*. As a memory text of the horror genre, it represents the return of the unsettled World War II memory which is an open floor for restoring vernacular memory under the suppression of official memory. *Darayan* conveys a contemporary message: a call for morality in a time of moral amnesia. The myth of the Japanese gold is a moral exemplar to educate Thai audiences about the problems of greed and desire. The liminal heroes were also used for projecting PTSD aspects which were rare Thai screen culture before 1997.

In terms of aesthetics, *Darayan* conveys the bitterness of lovelorn female ghosts in Asian screen culture. *Darayan*'s return with her grudge generates multi-layered *rasa* reception. At its best, *Darayan* conveys *bhayanaka* (fear/panic) as the first *rasa* supported by *bibhasa* (distaste/disgust). The second *rasa* is *karuna* (pathos/sorrow). *Karuna* shows the cruelty of war as found in *Khu Karma* and *Boonpong* but the cruelty itself is committed by both the Thai and the Japanese people. In this way, the dichotomy between 'self' and 'enemy' is destabilised because heroes are as liminal as villains. Ironically, the 'monstrous-feminine' as a

¹⁷ The genre is underrepresented in key texts of the field; e.g. Rosenstone (2012) and Burgoyne (2010).

personification is even less fearful than the 'dark side' of human nature particularly during wartime.

However, the representation of liminal heroes, as an alternative to revisiting the past, is still dominated by right-wing ideologies and Buddhism. The two ideologies are always present in history films and memory films as they are embedded in Thai mentality. That is to say, counter-memory can be addressed in many possible ways but to what extent Thai screen culture can restructure the perception of the past is still an open-ended question.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the politics of World War II memory in Thai screen culture. It seeks to answer: 1) how World War II memory is intermingled with other memory texts: school textbooks, monuments, memorials, museums and commemorations contributing to the creation of mnemonic communities in Thailand and beyond and 2) how World War II memory is mediated in certain genres: romance, biopic, combat film, and horror.

The data cover films and television dramas screened between the 1970s and the 2010s. The research questions are addressed through memory studies and film studies approaches. The findings should illustrate the characteristics of memory culture and screen culture in Thailand from national and transnational perspectives. The key findings are connected to the ‘circuit of culture’ filtered through the lens of cultural studies. It combines five concepts: representation, regulation, identity, consumption and production (Seaton 2007: 26).

1. The politics of World War II memory are the politics of Thai commoners.

Michel Foucault’s conception of counter-memory (1977) and John Bodnar’s idea on vernacular memory (1992) are adopted to examine alternatives of World War II memory beyond the official memory. Both ideas on memory suit this project because World War II hit several regions across Thailand, not only Bangkok. Looking back to the official World War II memory in school textbooks, the *home front* is rarely mentioned. If the mission of official memory is to justify Thailand’s position during the war, counter-memory and vernacular memory should work on projecting people’s lives rather than the rhetoric of politicians or diplomats.

As pointed out in the introduction, World War II memory in Thailand is problematic as Thailand cannot claim either victory or defeat, and the king was away during the war. Therefore, attempts to retell or to restore WWII memories among mnemonic communities are always controversial without the conventional referential framework. In such contested terrain, screen culture responds to the controversies in dynamic fashion.

First of all, in the absence of the royal figure, the traditional ways of addressing memory issues on screen are not available. The only representation of the war that can qualify as officially sanctioned is the rhetoric found concerning *Seri Thai* (the Free Thai Movement). However, the representations of *Seri Thai* on screen are profoundly varied. Typically, members of *Seri Thai* include politicians, diplomats, intellectuals and public officers for example. Significantly the myth of *Seri Thai* on screen is challenged by vernacular memory; they are represented as villains and losers (*Boonpong*, *Darayan* and *Seven Street Fighters*). In the on-screen world, they can be local gentries, local commoners or even women (*Khu Karma* and *I Shall Stop the World for You*). In this way the unified image of *Seri Thai* is diversified and the representation spills over into vernacular memory. Being patriotic is not reserved for the privileged.

Secondly, counter-memory and vernacular memory can represent the underrepresented. Sketches of people's lives during the war are presented in the *Khu Karma* myth. Vernacular memory on screen functions as a cultural archive; it seeks to reenact how people in 1940s Thailand lived their everyday lives, how the work-and-leisure division worked, what system of values they held on to and how they coped with the war. In *Boonpong*, the interaction between the locals and the POWs is also documented. In *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*, the heroism of the young locals

is cherished. This is related to an emotionalised quality of the memory and of the texts official memory cannot capture.

Thirdly, the politics of World War II memory can be read in parallel with the socio-political history and class politics of Thailand. That is the concept of *regulation* in the circuit of culture. To put it in Pierre Nora's words, within politics, there is a dialogue between sites of 'dominant' and 'dominated' memory. The study seeks to identify political conditions which make such dialogue possible (1996a: 19). In this light, during the 1970s and the 1980s, memory, class issues and the rural-urban divide were sharpened by the arrays of military government, rightist devotees and the eruption of the October Events in 1973 and 1976. Therefore, the *Khu Karma* myth of the 1970s presents militant Thai people fighting against the Japanese which is allegorically read as the communist peril of the period. During the 1980s, *I Shall Stop the World for You* rebelled against the notions of rural inferiority by unearthing local heroes. It was supported by waves of local history over the decade.

In the 2000s, under the shadow of the economic crisis, Thai commoners were supposed to redeem national pride. In the wake of epic culture, teenagers, as the majority audience, were, instead, targeted by *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men*. The film reveals the brotherhood and heroism of *Yuwachon Thahan* starring teen actors. Such political awareness was for everyone. Therefore the social hierarchy is undermined in *Seven Street Fighters* through its comedic viewpoint which was also popularised among lower middle class audiences in both urban and rural areas.

In the revival of World War II memory, social hierarchy was toned down particularly over the conflict between the Yellow Shirt Movement and the Red Shirt Movement in the 2010s. In this respect, *Boonpong* devalues hierarchy and state authority; it, instead, asserts humanity and humanitarianism instead. Besides, *Khu*

Karma (on television, 2013) presents a paradox to mnemonic communities. It adds stories of Thai royal family members who joined the Free Thai Movement. It is regarded as a reaction against the anti-royalist sentiment grown by the Red Shirt Movement. It is also an endeavour to redraw a referential framework in recounting WWII memory by means of *re*-remembering the roles of the royal institution which used to be forgotten in official memory.

2. Screen culture constructs and maintains mnemonic communities.

The earlier findings emphasise *representation, production, regulation* and its associated politics. This set of findings aim at discussing *identity* and *consumption* based upon World War II memories on screen. Firstly, the regulation here is directly connected to the rhetoric of memory. Without royal figures, the mainstream rhetoric of WWII memory is regulated by *Seri Thai*. In politicising memory, Thai audiences seek to identify themselves through certain films and television series.

When the representation of *Seri Thai* is challenged, patriotism is a common rhetoric perpetuated in both the romance and combat genres (*I Shall Stop the World for You* and *Seven Street Fighters*). The screen texts go beyond patriotism by articulating war memory through the rhetoric of humanity and trauma which are sparingly used in Thai ‘history films’. The problem of patriotic rhetoric is that Thailand did not win World War II, unlike King Naresuan’s and King Taksin’s victories. It can be only a call for the morals of certain periods that these texts were circulated. Yet it cannot justify the positioning of Thailand during the war. Hence, humanity and traumatic rhetoric emerged to cope with this complex.

Humanity and traumatic rhetoric are employed to proclaim the absurdity of war. Both civilians and military officers are victims of war. One may lose his family

(*Khu Karma* and *Darayan*). One may be forced to leave his home (*Khu Karma* and *Boonpong*). There is no real victor of the war. We all are losers at war. Humanity is the broadest rhetoric calling for moral acts among the audiences. Pathos is a collective emotion; it touches and is touched while audiences are identifying themselves with certain films and television series, and they potentially identify themselves with each other through such sentiment. That is the moment of the rise of mnemonic communities.

Furthermore, under the wave of consumerism, World War II memory in screen culture is also commodified. The films and series are not simply watched; they bridge vernacular memories in other kinds of memory texts. One example is the memory that is consumed through cultural tourism. The *Khu Karma* myth and *Boonpong* are transformed into parts of walking tours, field trips and fan culture. Intertwined by vernacular memory, screen culture on World War II can cultivate local identity.

Boys Will Be Boys, Boys Will Be Men is another proper example of how filmic texts can maintain the network of members in mnemonic communities. The film was screened at gatherings of the Military Youth and their descendants. It was repeatedly referenced in commemorative practices: school plays, light and sound shows and parades. Moreover, the film has become an educational material for local history pedagogy. This shows how screen culture functions in memory culture.

3. World War II memory and genres travel.

Running in cultural circuits, the findings should be discussed in the light of *production* again. Official memory and vernacular memories are not the only material for screen productions. As the Second World War is a global experience, it can travel across national borders: for instance, the memory of the Holocaust and comfort

women. In Thai mnemonic communities, transnational World War II memory is appropriated. Texts in the romance genre try to reenact the loss of the Japanese in their own country. In the meantime *Boonpong* adopts the Australian war memory to subvert the British perception of the war. Strikingly, the representation of the POWs in *Boonpong* has shaped another genre memory of WWII narratives in Thailand. One outstanding case is an advertisement by TrueMoveH, a mobile network company in Thailand. The advertisement was launched in 2015 for the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. It has been widely shared on YouTube and Facebook. It recounts the memory of a POW who was given moral support from a Kanchanaburi woman through her ‘human touch’. Hence, in the future, the humanitarian rhetoric tends to be more employed to establish WWII memory from Thailand within global memory culture.

Owing to copyright restrictions, the electronic version of this thesis does not contain this image.

FIG. 54 TrueMoveH’s advertisement: ‘Compassion is true communication’

In view of transnational film studies, travelling memory comes to Thai *cultural circuits* in the company of travelling genres. Genres travel across time; within Thai screen culture, texts converse with each other. The myth of *Khu Karma* is the most popular text for remaking, adaptation and parody. It reappears in several genres.

Transnational screen culture is also crucial in reconstructing World War II memory on Thai screens. The very tradition of Asian cinema is widely appropriated in

appreciative and comic ways; for example *anime* (*Sun & Sunrise*) and horror (*Darayan*). Thai screen culture also embraces Hollywood influences as found in Asian cinema as a whole (Teo 2013: 241). Hollywood genres contribute to *Boonpong* (biopic/docudrama) and *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* (combat film). Significantly, this thesis argues that *Boys Will Be Boys*, *Boys Will Be Men* should be categorised as a World War II combat film. This genre did not exist in Thai film scholarship before.

Despite several sources of inspiration, the Thai screen is still governed by the tradition of Indian poetics. *Rasa* theory can explain how memory is emotionalised (Rosenstone 2012) and received by the audiences. However, *rasa* theory is adapted to the specifics of Thai screen culture. The theory used to be deeply connected to divinity. But in Thai popular culture, Buddhism is in the mainstream; *rasa* theory is desacralised. In Indian performance, the ninth *rasa* is *shanta* which is the mixture of all *rasas*. It is a supremely stable feeling and embodies a transcendental tranquility. This *rasa* does not appear in memory texts included in this thesis. Another significant implication is that Thai cinema is normally a part of the epic tradition found in Asian Cinema. It tends to cherish monumental style to convey a sense of nationhood (Teo 2013: 53, 63). Yet there is no epic genre in World War II cinema in Thailand. World War II memory on screen targets commoners with narratives and media concerning commoners.

After all, mnemonic communities constructed by World War II memory and screen culture are pluralised owing to the diversity of stakeholders, local backdrops, temporal contexts and politics held within. The richness of culture, memory and genre, at both the national and transnational scale, is based on the absence of royal figures. The figures are apt to monopolise mnemonic communities, as happens to the

memory from other moments of Thailand's national past. Without World War II memory, the way we *encode* and *retrieve* our memory can be monitored to maintain an 'imagined community' within the border of Thailand as a nation-state, regardless of the transnationalism in everyday rhetoric.

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- Aiya A De!/Oh My Pig!* (Kamthorn Thapkhanlai, 1981)
- Amdaeng Muen Kap Nai Rit/Muen and Rit* (Sathaporn Nakwilairoj, 2012) TV
- Anda Lae Fahsai/Anda and Fahsai* (M.L. Pundhevanop Dhewakul, 1997)
- Ang Yee: Luk Phuchai Phan Mangkon/Ang Yi* (Nopporn Vatin, 2000)
- Ang-Yi* (Lanphun Srihan, 1983)
- Anuphap Phokhun Ramkhamhaeng/Charisma of King Ramkhamhaeng* (Siam and Sayom Sangworiboot, 2008) TV
- Aridang* (Jazz Siam, 1980)
- Bang Rachan* (Thanit Jitnukul, 2000)
- Bang Rachan/Bang Rachan the Series* (Pawat Panangkasiri, 2015) TV
- Banrai Na Rao/Our Fields, Our Lands* (1940)
- Beautiful Boxer* (Ekachai Uekrongtham, 2004)
- Boonpong* (Somporn Chuaboon-um, 2013) TV
- Chakrayan Sii Daeng/The Red Bike Story* (Euthana Mukdasanit, 1997)
- Chanraem Prathiip Haeng Lum Maenam Sai/Chanraem: The Light of Sai River*
(Phankham, 1992)
- Chao Karma Nai Wen/The Malevolent* (Supol Wichianchai, 2000) TV
- Chaomae Yuhua Sri Sudachan/Queen Sri Sudachan* (1954)
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- Chet Prachanban Phak 1/Heaven's Seven* (Chalerm Wongphim, 2002)

- Chet Prachanban Phak 2/Seven Street Fighters or Heaven's Seven 2* (Chalerm Wongphim, 2005)
- Chet Prachanban/Seven Street Fighters* (Weerachai Rungrueang, 2010) TV
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- Darayan* (Suphol Wichienchai, 1996) TV
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- Khun Dech/The Treasure Guardian* (Thianchai Laphanan, 1980)
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Appendix 1: Prominent events in Thai collective memory

Period	Events	Dominant figures	Opponents
1548	Elephant Battle	Queen Suriyothai	Siam vs. Burma
1569-1605	From the First Fall of Ayutthaya, the Declaration of Independence and the Reign of King Naresuan	King Naresuan	Siam vs. Burma and neighbouring countries
1765-1767	War of the Second Fall of Ayutthaya or the Burmese–Siamese War (1765–1767)	King Taksin and Villagers of Bangrachan	Siam vs. Burma
1893	The Siamese-Franco War	King Chulalongkorn	Siam vs. France
1932-1933	The Revolution and Boworadet Revolt	King Prajadhipok, Prince Boworadet and the People's Party	royalists vs. democrats
1941-1945	World War II	Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram and Pridi Banomyong	Thailand vs. British-American Allies/ The Free Thai Movement vs. Japanese army
1973	14 October 1973 Uprising	King Bumibhol Adulyadej, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and General Praphas Charusathien	Military government vs. Thai people (led by students' movement)
1976	6 October 1976 Massacre	Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn	Military government vs. Thai people (led by students' movement)
2010	Cruel April and Savage May	Abhisit Vejjajiva, Taksin Shinawatra and Red Shirt leaders	Civilian government vs. United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD)/Red Shirt movement

TABLE 8 Prominent events in Thai collective memory

This table is a reference for analysis throughout the thesis chapters. These events, estimated as collective memory, are based upon the official memory found in school textbooks (*A Handbook of History Instruction and Learning Activity, Thai History: How to Teach and Learn* 2000) and their coexisting memory practices and institutions: commemorations, monuments, memorials, museums and other cultural productions. One of the crucial criteria is that the selected collective memory should also be projected on Thai screens.

The collective memory between the 16th century and the 18th century was revisited in the late 18th century—at the beginning of Rattanakosin Era (in 1782)—to serve political purposes. Primarily, the sites of memory were royal chronicles and literary narratives before being transmitted to the school textbooks. According to the royal chronicles, the Burmese are the permanent enemy of Siam/Thailand. The heroism of Thai ancestors are celebrated in various socio-cultural practices. The evidence of this notion is found in the monuments of King Naresuan and King Taksin built throughout Thailand. These two kings freed Siam from Burmese occupation. Their *avatars* are also observable in screen culture: *Tamnan Somdet Phra Naresuan/The Legend of King Naresuan* (Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol, 2007-2015) and *Taksin Maharat/King Taksin the Series* (Nopporn Vatin, 2007), for instance.

The memory of wars against the Burmese is normally refabricated under the royal-nationalistic ideology, resonating that the royal institution can save Siam from servitude time after time. King Mongkut (reigned 1851-1868) and King Chulalongkorn (reigned 1868-1910) are also key figures consolidating royal-nationalism and national modernity (Strate 2015). They saved Siam from colonisation by the West: the British and the French. Their monuments are seen everywhere, and their great contributions, perpetuated through the *Thawiphop* myth, first appeared in 1987. The grand success of the myth can be measured by its adaptations on screen and stage (Morakot 2014).¹

In the post-World War II period, there is only the 14 October 1973 Uprising which recognises the royal involvement in granting a temporary refuge for those who

¹ European and American colonisation in South East Asia can be seen throughout the timeline of the early 16th century when the Portuguese conquered Melaka and Timor-Leste. It was followed by the Spanish invading the Philippines. The Dutch took control in Indonesia in the 17th century. The power of the British and the French was on the rise in the 19th century; British Malaya was established as well as the French Indochina region. In the early 20th century, America succeeded the colonial authority in the Philippines. However, the colonial system of the West was dramatically weakened then abolished after World War II leading to the independence of all countries in the region over the second half of the 20th century.

were chased by the army.² Considerably, in Thai collective memory, World War II is the last event where Thailand has been at war with other countries. During the Cold War, the war against the communists was considered domestic; basically the event has been commemorated at the local level without explicit recognition in Thai official memory. The rest tends to be civil wars between Thai people from different political and class stances.

The 14 October 1973 Uprising was caused by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn's military government and people's need of an established constitution. His return from exile in 1976 ignited the 6 October 1976 Massacre, a confrontation through the context of which the students' movement was painted as communist whilst in fact it was a movement against the militarised rule. The violence that happened on the day was revisited at the 40th commemoration of the events of 6 October 1976 in 2016. Both October Events are continuously recycled in popular memory; corresponding examples in screen culture include films such as *Wela Nai Khuat Kaew/Time in a Bottle* (Prayoon Wongchuen, 1991), *14 Tula Songkhram Prachachon/The Moonhunter* (Bundit Rittikon, 2001), *Fa Sai Chai Chuenban/ Blue Sky of Love* (Krerckchai Jaiman and Napaporn Poonchareon, 2008) and *Rak Thii Rokhoi/October Sonata* (Somkiat Wituranit, 2009).

² The 14 October 1973 Uprising was triggered by the calls for a new constitution under the rule of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn. The event actually happened on the 13th of October but the violence erupted on the next day when public properties and protesters were harmed by armed forces. Some protesters ran to the royal residence in the pledge of temporary refuge. At last, King Bhumibol announced Field Marshal Thanom's resignation on radio calling for the redemption of national unity. Years later the 6 October 1976 Massacre broke out during the protest of the students' movement against Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn's return from abroad. The protest was again painted as an act of communist unrest. The gathering was severely attacked by combined armed forces. Some leading figures of the students' movement joined the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in the forests.

Appendix 2: Official memory of World War II in the Thai School Textbooks

The school textbooks selected in the thesis are in *sangkhom sueksa* (social studies), one of the most efficient channels of the Thai state in imposing a collective memory. The subject covers history, geography, socio-cultural studies and Buddhist studies and aims at educating students ‘to love, to own, to attach to and to be proud of the local, the nation and humankind in our region and in the global society’ (Siriwan 2010: 90). To understand the origins of the Thai nation, culture and wisdom, students were appealed to ‘identify names of Thai kings and their contributions in kingdom-building, to explain royal biography and royal duty of the current king in brief, and to narrate heroism of Thai ancestors protecting Thai nation and its territories’ (Siriwan 2010: 93). Reciprocally, recalling national memory in the Thai school textbooks is influenced by the historiography of the Prince Damrong Rajanubhab School.¹ Prince Damrong capitalised on the great-man theory regarding ‘great happenings in the past as a result of certain roles played by various leading personalities, especially roles of certain monarchs’ (Kobkua 1980: 95). Some classical examples are: the national independence through the age of colonialism under King Monkut’s and King Chulalongkorn’s diplomatic policy and the fall of the Ayutthaya kingdom caused by an incapable king (Kobkua 1980: 95).

Though in certain revisions the content focus of the textbooks was shuffled, there are some key contents that can be extracted. To picture the position of World War II in official memory, I group some key content recurring through the decades in the table below:

¹ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862-1943) was the son of King Monkut. He was one of the most respected Thai historians of the century.

Content Group Curricula and Years	World War II in global context (excluded Thailand)	Franco-Thai War and Japanese intervention	Rationalisation of Thailand's collaboration with the Japanese army	Social lives during World War II	Internal political conflicts in Thailand	Free Thai Movement	International diplomacy after World War II	Social lives after World War II
Secondary level: 1950	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Upper secondary level: 1955	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Upper secondary level: 1960	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Upper secondary level: 1975	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Secondary level: 1978	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓
Secondary level: 1978 (revised 1990)	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Secondary level: 2001	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Upper secondary level: 2001	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Secondary level: 2008	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓

TABLE 9 Official memory of World War II in the Thai School Textbooks

In its first appearance, without mentioning Thailand, World War II memory was attached to memory of the Great War under the topic: ‘War and Peace.’ In 1955 and 1960, the significance of the events has not been raised; the textbooks spoke more of the European context, and of Thailand joining the United Nations in 1945. Then, after the curriculum revision in 1975,² they emphasised the treaties from before the War and global politics leading to the war. Thailand was mentioned as part of the Asia-Pacific War along with a rough historical timeline.

Only in 1978 secondary level textbooks lifted the curtain and brought the memory of WWII to the classroom. Nonetheless, the suggested conceptualisation of the instruction, still centred on World War II on the global stage. Thailand was just a tiny piece of the whole picture of the War: teachers were advised to introduce the Holocaust, the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and figures such as Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini to students. The content was also presented in parallel

² The objective of the curriculum revision was to ‘integrate students’ learning to the current constitution (*A Curriculum Handbook of Upper Secondary Level: Social Studies, History 1977: n.pg.*).

with the Great War (*A Social Studies Teachers' Handbook: General History, Secondary Level Curricula-1978* 1983: 70-71).

Another significant change took place in 2001.³ The committees began their work in 1999 and ran a big workshop in 2000 before the curricula were implemented. The Second World War was now placed as part of the topic on international relations and discussed on its own. Interestingly, the textbooks depicted the Free Thai Movement through its interrelationship between state and political elites. In the same revision, textbooks for the upper secondary level were more ideologically explicit. The positive image of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram was redeemed, and the textbooks justified Thailand's alliance to the Japanese army: 'The government carefully considered the situation. The Thai army was not capable of standing against Japanese advancement. To prevent Thailand from calamity, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram needed to conform to Japanese offers' (*General Textbook of Thai History: Upper Secondary Level* 2008: 200).

The most recent curriculum revision in 2008⁴ changed the timeline of the Second World War in Thailand and pinpointed the War between Thailand and Vichy France (1940-1941) to claim rights over territories on the left of Mekong River. The Japanese empire intervened and set a treaty at Tokyo. That was the beginning of the Japanese influence expansion across South East Asia. However, the textbooks placed memory of World War II under the topic 'Thailand and Global Politics.' They emphasised the aftermath of the War in political, economic, and social dimensions with its focus of the roles of the Free Thai Movement in international affairs.

³ The curriculum revision was carried out under the educational reformation implemented by the national education decree of 1999.

⁴ The curriculum revision of 2008 was conducted under the findings of previous education research and the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011). This most recent revision aimed at inclusivity; local history and local wisdom were more recognised.