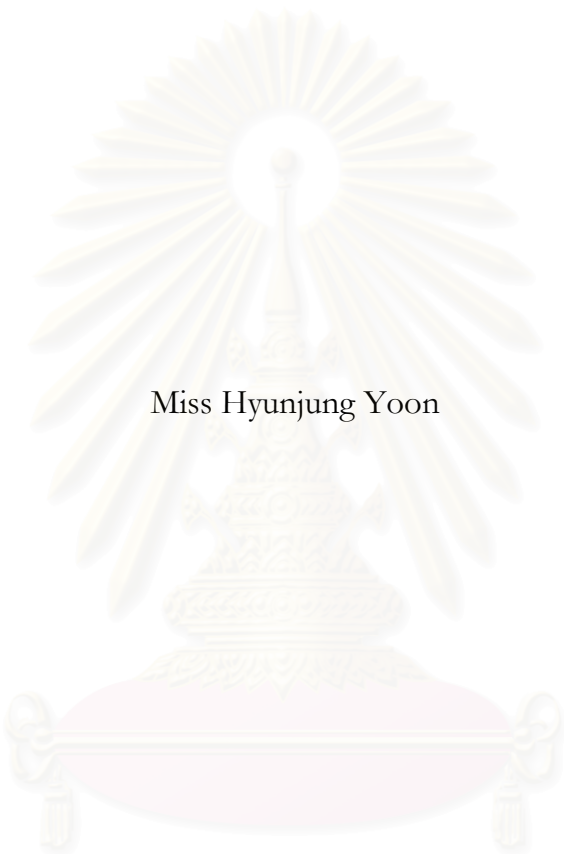


THAI FILMS MADE IN THE 1970s AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY ON
MIGRATION-RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES



Miss Hyunjung Yoon

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Thai Studies

Faculty of Arts

Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year 2003

ISBN 974-17-4628-8

Copyright of Chulalongkorn University

ภาพยนตร์ไทยวิพากษ์สังคมในทศวรรษที่ 1970 ที่เกี่ยวกับปัญหาสังคมอันเนื่องมาจากการย้ายถิ่น



นางสาวเสียนจง ยูน

สถาบันวิทยบริการ

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาไทยศึกษา

คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2546

ISBN 974-17-4628-8

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title **THAI FILMS MADE IN THE 1970s AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY ON MIGRATION-RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES**

By **HYUNJUNG YOON:**

Faculty of Study **Thai Studies**

Thesis Advisor **Associate Professor Nopamat Veohong**

Accepted by the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master 's Degree

..... Dean of Faculty of Arts
(Assistant Professor M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh, Ph.D)

THESIS COMMITTEE

..... Chairman
(Associate Professor Nuangnoi Boonyanate)

..... Thesis Advisor
(Associate Professor Nopamat Veohong)

..... Member
(Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D)

..... Member
(Professor Supang Chantavanich, Ph.D)

4380814022 : MAJOR THAI STUDIES

KEY WORD: THAI FILMS / SOCIAL COMMENTARY/ MIGRATION-RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES /1970S

HYUNJUNG YOON: THAI FILMS MADE IN THE 1970s AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY ON MIGRATION-RELATED SOCIAL ISSUES. THESIS ADVISOR: ASSOCIATE PROF. NOPAMAT VEOHONG, 158 pp. ISBN 974-17-4628-8.

The objectives of this thesis are 1) to study the socially-engaged Thai films of the 1970s that realistically portrayed migration-related social issues, and 2) to examine how these films, functioning as a tool of social commentary, project Thai society of the period.

Based on qualitative research, the thesis presents the socio-political and economic background of 1970s Thai society and discusses the issue of urban migration. In order to demonstrate what socially-oriented films are and how they project Thai society, the thesis, first of all, presents documentary-based research; second, it presents case studies of five socially-engaged Thai films of the 1970s by analyzing how they dealt with their subject matter and how they communicated their message to the audience. The five films in the study are *Luk Isaan* (Son of the Northeast, Wichit Kounavudhi, 1982), *Theptida Rongraem* (Angel of Hotel, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1974), *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* (Taxi Driver/The Citizen, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1977), *Prachachon Nok* (On the Fringe of Society, Manop Udomdej, 1981) and *Tongpan* (Tongpan, Pajong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon, Yuthana Mukdasanit, 1977). Furthermore, interviews with the directors who had produced the selected films contribute further data on the social messages they tried to convey through their work and their perspectives on the Thai society of that period.

The findings of this study indicate that, in the case of Thai films, the significant function of film as social commentary began to be implemented in the 1970s due to the changing socio-political atmosphere. A number of socially realistic films of the 1970s reflect the people and places marginalized by a combination of complex factors: an immature democracy, capital-centered development, rapid industrialization, materialistic ideas, and declining traditional values. These films significantly convey insightful portraits of that society through their content in their efforts to increase public awareness of the social and political issues of the 1970s. Through the analysis of these films, this study also contributes to a better understanding of Thai society and its culture.

Field of study Thai Studies

Academic year 2003

Student's signature.....

Advisor's signature.....

Acknowledgements

First of all, I thank my father God for offering me a great opportunity to write this paper, giving me strength and wisdom, and making all possible for his glory.

*Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might
so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully*

- Colossians 1:11

My sincere gratitude goes to Associate Professor Nopamat Veohong, who supervised the thesis and provided consistent support and encouragement. I am so grateful for her intellectual inspiration and guidance from the very beginning until the end.

Special appreciation must be made to Professor Sunait Chutintaranond, Ph. D, who rendered invaluable help, introducing me to many important people regarding the thesis.

I would like to thank Associate Professor Nuangnoi Boonyanate, the head of the thesis examination committee, and Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D and Professor Supang Chantavanich, Ph.D, the committee members, for their helpful comments and careful consideration.

I owe a special debt of thanks to Dome Sukwong, the director of the National Film Archive of Thailand, and Chalida Uabumrungjit, the project director of the Thai Film Foundation, for their willingness to help me to select and observe a number of valuable films related to the study and to provide useful information and advice. Such kind assistance offered from all the staff members of the National Film Archive has been much appreciated.

For this chance, I would like to specially thank the following persons for extending me warm hospitality and their precious time and comments in interviews; Knit Kounavudhi, Mom Chao Chatrichalerm Yugala, Manop Udomdej, Pajong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon and Yuthana Mukdasanit.

I am also greatly indebted to David Michael Cooper, my dearest friend, and Gita Brenner, Ph.D, who tirelessly helped me editing the work.

Furthermore, my special thanks go to all my friends and staff members at the Thai Studies Program for their ongoing friendship and encouragement. Lastly, but not least, I am immensely grateful to my beloved father, mother and brother for their endless love and support.

Note on Spelling

Thai words have been transliterated phonetically in accordance with the system devised by the Royal Institute, Bangkok, in 1954. However, Thai names have been spelled according to the preferences of the people concerned. Furthermore, since Thai people are referred by their first names, Thai authors have been listed alphabetically by first names in the references.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Contents

Abstract (THAI).....	iv
Abstract (ENGLISH).....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Note on Spelling.....	vii
Contents.....	viii
List of Tables, Maps and Figures.....	x

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Film as a Medium of Communication.....	1
1.2 Social Realism in Thai Films of the 1970s.....	3
1.3 Film as an Ideological Tool.....	4
1.4 Objectives.....	5
1.5 Research Questions.....	5
1.6 Hypotheses.....	5
1.7 Methodology.....	6
1.8 Scope of Study.....	7
1.9 Limitations of Study.....	7
1.10 Goals of Study.....	7

Chapter 2

2.1 Background of Thai Society in the 1970s.....	8
2.1.1 Socio-Political Background.....	8
2.1.2 Economic Development and Migration.....	11
2.2 Analysis of Urban Migration.....	16
2.2.1 Driving Forces Governing Migration.....	21
2.2.2 Consequences of Migration.....	32

Chapter 3

3.1 Overview of Thai Films.....	42
3.2 Film Movements in Realism and 'Nang Pua Chiwit' in the 1970s.....	48
3.2.1 Narrative Films and Realism.....	48
3.2.2 A Social Realist Film.....	50
3.2.3 'Nang Pua Chiwit' in the 1970.....	51

Contents (Continued)

Chapter 4: Film Analysis	63
4.1 <i>Luk Isaan</i>	64
4.2 <i>Theptida Rongraem</i>	72
4.3 <i>Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan</i>	80
4.4 <i>Prachachon Nok</i>	88
4.5 <i>Tongpan</i>	96
Chapter 5: Conclusion	106
5.1 Collective Analysis.....	107
5.2 Topics for Further Study.....	117
References.....	118
Appendices.....	128
I: List of Thai Films in Chapter 3.....	129
II: Interviews with the Six Film Directors.....	134
Biography.....	158

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

List of Tables

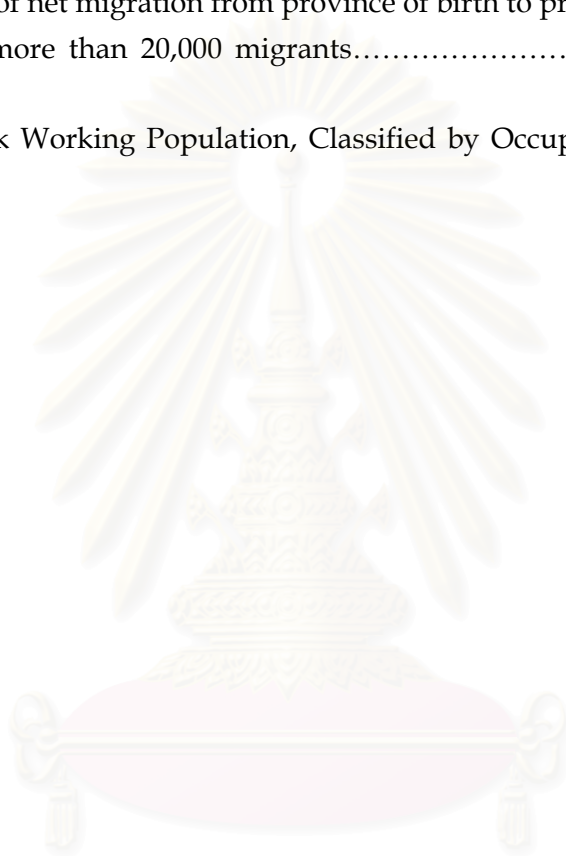
1. GDP per capita in different regions, expressed as a percentage of GDP per capita in Bangkok, 1976-78.....	14
2. Migrants in Bangkok, 1978.....	16
3. Lifetime inter-provincial migration, by region, 1980 (Numbers in thousands)....	17
4. Inter-provincial recent migration, by region, 1975-80 (Numbers in thousands)...	18
5. Reasons for migration, by urban-rural stream and by sex: 1975-80 (percentage distribution).....	22
6. Incidence of Absolute Poverty in Thailand, 1962-1976.....	24
7. Regional Real Income Per Capita and as Percent of Whole Kingdom Income, 1968/69, 1975 and 1979.....	25
8. Household income, expressed as a percentage of level in Bangkok, 1962-63 to 1975-76.....	25
9. Open Unemployment, Underemployment and Seasonal Unemployment in Thailand, 1975 and 1979.....	27
10. Reason for move : percent positive responses of migrants to specific leading questions on reason for move by sex.....	28
11. Bangkok's share of total urban activities in Thailand, 1960 and 1970.....	29
12. Percentage of population who had attained secondary or university education by migration status, sex and age, 1970.....	30
13. Bangkok Migrants: Advantages and Disadvantages of Going to the City.....	33
14. Occupational Structure of Migration,1975.....	37

List of Maps

1. The Regions of Thailand.....13

List of Figures

1. Figure 1. Volume of net migration from province of birth to province of enumeration of more than 20,000 migrants.....19
2. Figure 2. Bangkok Working Population, Classified by Occupation 1947-1989.....36



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Film as a Medium of Communication

As a popular form of mass communication in today's society, film is not only a medium for diversion and entertainment, but also a powerful medium for the transmission of messages. New journals in film studies that have come out since the 1970s have presented a view of "film as a means of communication, a set of visual languages, and a system of signification – not just the seventh art" (Turner 1999:47).

According to Agee et al. (1985), communication is the act of transmitting information and ideas from one person to another –from the sender to the receiver – and the need to communicate with other human beings is as fundamental as the physical requirement for food and shelter. Historically, face-to-face verbal contact was the primary mode of human interpersonal communication, as stated in DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach's (1989) "theory of transitions," which states that the first two stages in the development of human communication was the Age of Signs and Signals and the Age of Speech and Language. However, Agee et al. (1985) demonstrates that contemporary society has become too complex to function only through direct interpersonal communication. With the development of modern technologies, human communication has evolved as well, enabling us to convey our messages most effectively to large numbers of individuals at any given time. Limitations posed by an ever-growing world population, greater geographical distances between people, as well as time differences have diminished as a result of these new communication technologies. According to DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, most people living in our oral society of today have passed beyond the limitations of speech and language with the introduction of writing, print, and modern media as well as the invention and widespread adoption of film, radio, and television, all of which make mass communication an ever-present reality. Both interpersonal communication as well as mass communication, which are "the most significant and inescapable facts of modern life" (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach 1989:26), have benefited from these advances of media. First introduced by Harold Lasswell, and later expanded upon by Charles R. Wright, the four main functions of media communication are as follows (cf. Jay Black 1998):

1. Surveillance – surveying the environment and providing newsworthy information.
2. Correlation – interpreting information about the environment and editorializing or prescribing how people should react to the events.
3. Transmission of culture – binding generations across time by educating people about information, values and social norms.
4. Entertainment – amusing people without necessarily offering any other functional values.

Representation is a “social process of making images, sounds, and signs that stand for something” (Turner 1999:47). In terms of technique, film began with the capturing of images, which, according to Lacey (1998), are created in order to communicate visual messages as the prime provider of information in cinema. When sound was added, film became more effective in doing so because sound, as Lacey (1998) explains, carries vitally important codes for the creation of text meanings. As for the function of sound in films, Bordwell and Thompson (2001) also stress that sound can actively shape how we interpret the image.

The first films exhibited in cinemas were short and straightforward portrayals of events from everyday life. However, according to Roberts and Wallis (2001), once film was used for narrative purposes, it began to be structured into a sequence. As Bordwell and Thompson (1986) see it, a narrative is a sequence of events which are linked, usually a cause-effect chain, in a given setting within a specific time frame. Generally speaking, media texts cannot show reality as it is; they can only mediate it through their own particular form. “Different media may have different conventions; television will use sound and image codes, while radio is limited to sound” (Lacey 1998: 132). Thus, film does not simply imitate or reproduce the image of a real world; it transforms and projects the real world by using image and sound, as Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment (2000) interpret film as an “audiovisual text.” According to Turner (1998), Sergei Eisenstein, an influential figure as a filmmaker and a theorist in early film history, used editing – [a juxtaposition of one shot with another] – as his major tool to transform exposed film into a statement. Linking different images together in film is similar to linking sentences in a novel. Other than such filmic forms used to convey messages as editing, film is also known for using “filmic language” to achieve its goals (Mets 1974).

1.2 Social-Realism in Thai Films of the 1970s

According to Graham Roberts and Heather Wallis (2001), a medium as powerful as cinema needs to be closely examined for the messages and values it carries. Broadly speaking, this study is an attempt to show how films and filmmakers communicate with their audience or with society. More specifically, it looks at socially-oriented Thai films, or "social realism" films in technical terms, that were produced in the 1970s, within the context of the socio-economic and socio-political climate of that period. The main purpose of the study is to demonstrate how these Thai films project Thai society of one period in time, and how they handle the issues of that period and how they communicate their messages, thereby taking on the role of social commentary.

The 1970s brought with them important changes in the Thai political climate as a consequence of two major socio-political events: the student uprisings of October 14, 1973 and October 6, 1976, and the rapid industrialization process enforced by the Thai government, which, in turn, resulted in large-scale migration from rural to urban areas. This migration phenomenon brought with it many social problems for both the migrants themselves as well as for the society in which they existed, such as family disintegration, drug trafficking and addiction, prostitution, and crime. During this same period of the 1970s, the Thai film industry was introduced to the 35 mm sound film. This major development, together with the new socio-political situation in Thailand which fostered a liberal environment for social commentary in films, allowed filmmakers to more fully give voice to their social conscience through their films.

It is generally assumed that a more liberal social atmosphere and a rapidly developing economy, encourages those who are specifically involved in mass media or in any form of art, to express their social views more freely and to reflect, more closely, their reality. According to Parichat Phromyothi (2000), political changes in Thailand encouraged its film directors to express their social viewpoints through their films and Thai filmmakers, especially those who went to study abroad or gained higher education, took this opportunity to produce films with social awareness themes. These same forces allow for more people to become more educated, to open their eyes more widely to their societal conditions, and to look for more sophisticated treatments of these concerns in the media.

1.3 Film as an Ideological Tool

“All representations, in which signs are used to convey meanings, are the result of conventions produced at a particular time and place which is determined by the dominant ideology” (Lacey 1998: 189). Ideology is the term used to describe the system of beliefs and practices in one’s society. According to Turner (1998), although ideology has no material form, its impact can be seen in all types of social and political formations. As for the understanding of ideology in the context of film studies, he asserts that ideology is read from film texts and that the relationship between each text and its culture is traceable to ideological roots. It has been assumed by many scholars that film and society have a more or less mutually reflective relationship, that is, “film is seen as a reflection of the dominant beliefs and values of its society” (Turner 1998:152). However, Turner adds, the ideology of a film does not take the form of direct statements or reflections on a culture; rather, it lies in the narrative structure and in the discourse employed—therefore, film ‘re’-presents pictures of reality through the codes, conventions, ideologies, myths, images, and visual styles as well as through its own signifying practices of the medium. Thus, according to Andre Basin, the impression of reality or the depiction of reality in cinema is that this impression is offered from the point of view of the ruling class, in other words, that it is an instance of dominant ideology (cf. Harvey 1980:8-9). Colin MacCabe (1981) also claims that realist films are incapable of expressing opposition to or criticism of dominant values or beliefs, because they depend on them in order to make sense.

As was noted above, a particular society’s films are made on the basis of that society’s main ideology, which they are supposed to transmit, whether implicitly or explicitly? If the socio-cultural ideology of the society undergoes changes, these would be reflected in the films as well. It can, therefore, be assumed that in any examination of changes in the film trends of a society, the changing social background of that society necessarily has to be taken into account in the study. For this reason, it was important, in this study, to look closely into the political, economic, and social changes of 1970s Thailand in order to connect them to developments in the 1970s Thai film movement which, in turn, provided testimony for the changing society of that period.

1.4 Objectives

- 1.4.1 To study the socially-oriented Thai films of the 1970s that focused on migration-related social issues
- 1.4.2 To examine how films, functioning as a tool of social commentary, project Thai society of the period

1.5 Research Questions

- 1.5.1 What are the socially-oriented films of the 1970s? What made them emerge?
- 1.5.2 How do these socially-oriented Thai films describe the migration-related social issues of the period?
- 1.5.3 What kind of social messages do the selected socially-oriented films transmit to the audience?

1.6 Hypotheses

- 1.6.1 Socio-political changes in Thailand, created by the political liberalization of the 1970s, led to the emergence of Social Realism Films which dealt with significant social problems by presenting more realistic subject matter.
- 1.6.2 A number of Thai Social Realism Films of the 1970s projected migration-related social problems, such as the driving forces and consequences of migration, including family disintegration, prostitution, and crime. Migration was fast becoming a critical social issue due to the rapid industrialization process and capitalistic social atmosphere of the 1970s.
- 1.6.3 The Thai Social Realism Films of the 1970s performed the functions of projecting and commentating on society.

1.7 Methodology

1.7.1 This section of the study is mainly based on documentary research, using various written materials, ranging from research papers, theses, as well as general film studies and social studies documents, reviewed between June 2002 and December 2002.

1.7.2 A film analysis method is used to more closely examine the content of 1970s Thai films, which were selected as case studies to fulfill the purposes of this thesis. Film observations were conducted between August 2002 and December 2002.

1.7.3 Focused interviews were conducted between October 2003 and December 2003 with several Thai directors – namely, Knit Kounavudhi, Mom Chao Chatrichalerm Yugala, Manop Udomdej, Paijong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon and Yuthana Mukdasanit – who had produced the case study films analyzed in this thesis. They provide greater insight into the films and into the worldviews and social messages that these directors intended to communicate through their works.

1.7.3.1 Interview Guide: Major Questions

- (1) Which years did the filmmaking begin and end?
- (2) What were the motivations for the filmmaking?
- (3) What were the film's messages and commentaries that the director intended to convey?
- (4) To whom did the director speak? Did the director make the film specifically with any particular class of audience in mind?
- (5) Was the director satisfied with the film's result? Did the film have a successful impact on the audience and on society?
- (6) How does the director view the period of socio-political changes in Thailand in the 1970s and its connection with the director's social reality-based films?

1.8 Scope of study

1.8.1 General Social Background of 1970s Thailand

1.8.2 The Situation of the Urban Migration of the 1970s in Thailand

1.8.3 Socially-Oriented Films of the 1970s Thailand Concerning Urban Migration-related Social Issues

1.9 Limitations of Study

1.9.1. The study is limited to Thai films produced in the period between the 1970s and the early 1980s.

1.9.2 The study is restricted to the films that are only relevant to urban migration-related social issues in terms of filmic subject matter and content.

1.10 Goals of Study

1.10.1 This research was designed to allow greater understanding of Thai society and culture through its filmic subject matter and content.

1.10.2 This thesis serves as an example for further academic study on mass media and its relationship with society in the case of Thailand.

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Background of Thai Society in the 1970s

2.1.1 Socio-Political Background

Following a military coup in 1932, Thailand became a constitutional monarchy, after which the military elite group would, for many decades, play a key role in Thai politics. On October 14, 1973, there was a student-led uprising, which marked a crucial point in Thai political history. Many citizens, including intellectuals, scholars and middle-class businessmen, along with the student activist group, The National Student Center of Thailand [NSCT],¹ staged a protest at Thammasart University, near Sanam Luang, calling for the release of 13 detainees who had been arrested earlier with the charge of engaging in communist activities. They also called for the end of the existing regime, known as “The Three Tyrants”: Marshall Thanom Kittikachorn (Thailand’s eleventh Prime Minister), General Praphat Charusathien (the Deputy Prime Minister), and Colonel Narong Kittikachorn, according to Wright (1991), and demanded a new constitution. Political movements were organized by university students from the early 1970s onwards and, consequently, Thais become more aware of their civil liberties and rights which, until then, had been denied them by the reigning dictatorship for many years. Another major factor driving the student uprising was economic decline and instability, which had created a huge disparity between the Bangkok Metropolitan Area [BMA]² and the rest of the country since the 1960s. Wright (1991) states that due to rural unrest and low labor wages, the number of demonstrations led by farmers or labor unions grew around the country.

Several other domestic and international factors in Thailand at the time also played a role in the student uprising, according to Wright (1991), such as inflation, caused by the massive U. S. military presence in Thailand during the Vietnam War, and the increasing price of rice due to crop failures in the previous two years. Furthermore, according to Neher (1976), there was a worldwide oil crisis and economic depression, resulting in rising energy costs in Thailand. Indeed, it was largely their dissatisfaction with the national economy and their expectations for economic improvement that led the middle class, upcountry laborers, and farmers to join this massive turnout. According to Thai statesman

¹ An umbrella organization set up in 1970 with a broad social agenda, comprising representatives from most of the country’s universities.

² In 1972, Greater Bangkok was established as an administrative unit, with four changwats and four municipalities: Bangkok proper, Thonburi, Samut Prakan and Nontha Buri.

and economist Dr. Puey Ungpakorn, "the majority of people were against the military government principally because it failed to curb inflation and prevent rice shortages" (cf. Wright 1991:216).

Thus, the October 14, 1973 event was motivated by student organizers' political ideology that insisted upon democracy, and supported by the citizens because of their disillusionment with economic instability. Although many people died when the police and the military brutally executed protesters to control the public on this, according to Neher (1992), "Day of Great Tragedy," the protest succeeded in achieving its demands in the end.

Why is this event regarded as a crucial turning point in Thai political history? First of all, as Wright argues, it was the very first time in modern Thai history that the masses had gathered to protest against the ruling elite group and demand a change in leadership. Second, given the rising voices of citizens, demanding political changes, it represented the beginning of a true democracy in Thailand. Last, but most important, as Wright continues to emphasize, Thai people had never before realized the immense power of the masses to gather support.

Thus, although the Thai people launched the first democratic period, arising out of the student demonstrations in 1973, it did not last very long. On October 6, 1976, the students rallied again, calling for the permanent expulsion of the former 'dictator' Thanom Kittikachorn, who had consolidated power by carrying out a coup establishing a military junta in 1971. He had just returned from the U. S. where he was exiled as a result of the 1973 student uprising, and was trying to stage a come back in Thai politics. Furthermore, as Ben Anderson states, in "Withdrawal Symptoms: Social and Cultural Aspects of the October 6 Coup," at the time of the October demonstration in 1973, there was also a global oil crisis. Furthermore, he adds that, from 1975 onwards, the huge American influence in Indochina began fading away rapidly; thus, Thailand was losing its ground as the safe station of "America's Southeast Asian Empire." According to Anderson, as a direct consequence of these various events, the Thai economy was struggling badly; it got even worse after the October 1973 uprising, despite the liberal government's public commitment to civil rights and liberties, including "the rights of farmers and laborers to organize demonstrations and strikes."

Faced with no improvement in the economic situation after the events of 1973, public dissatisfaction with the leading protest groups was growing. The student groups were also gradually losing their public support partly due to their own internal discord, and also because their motivation to improve the economic conditions and civil rights of farmers and laborers was being replaced by a more politically driven ideology. Neher (1992) argues that for most Thais, this "civilian period" from 1973 to 1976 did not improve their

living conditions nor did it provide security and stability. The government's condemnation of the student groups as communists and anti-monarchists further contributed to a waning public support. Although the protest started peacefully on October 6, 1976, a large number of the student group ended up being massacred. After the failure of this event, the military regained power through a successful coup d'état.

After the October 14, 1973 student uprising until October 1976, there was a short period when freedom seemed to be instilling itself in Thai society. According to Wright (1991), this 3-year-period could be called a truly experimental democratic period; however, he also argues that it was a chaotic time in Thai political history because of the unstable socio-political situation. Whether the former or the latter, the 1974-1976 period marked a significant realignment in the relations between the rulers and the ruled. The elite and the common masses of Thai society became increasingly aware, during those three years, of their mutual dependence and, thus, it could be said that it was the first meaningful era of mass-oriented politics in Thailand.

What kind of important socio-political meaning does the three-year period of 1973-1976 have for Thailand? Prudhisan Jumbala (1977) analyzes this question by comparing the events of October 14, 1973 to the 1932 coup d'état. According to him, the 1973 uprising was a "historically unique expression" of the potentially powerful force of public gathering, which provided some of the elements for the foundation of a more participatory form of democracy in Thailand. Although many of the same people who were supporters of the mass demonstrations of October 1973 became by-standers with the return of a dictatorship three years later, it is essential to note that, as a result of the 1973 uprising, most Thais could at least begin to envisage the possibility of the clique-oriented Thai political system changing to one that was mass-oriented.

To conclude, one can question whether this mass-oriented politics brought more mass-oriented communication to Thai people. Orisa Irawonwut (1977) observed that, after October 14, 1973, censorship disappeared overnight and a number of critical songs, plays, essays, novels, books and works of poetry were published, first in the capital, and later in other provinces. According to him, many of these works had been written or composed under the dictatorship, but had never been released to the public. Others were produced as a consequence of the October 1973 event and the rapid increase in political consciousness among students in the liberalized atmosphere of the era.

2.1.2 Economic Development and Migration

As mentioned earlier, throughout the 1970s urban activism groups concerning civil rights, such as student organizations, laborers' and farmers' unions, were growing. Along with this rise in the public's political participation, it is also important to look at urban growth and the economic climate of the time.

According to Malcolm Falkus, before the 1960s, Thailand mainly relied on the agricultural sector, from which about half of the national income came and in which almost 90% of the population was engaged. Falkus explains that since the 1950s, industrialization had initially been supported by government plans and policies, and then, in the 1960s, the government promoted industrialization through import-substitution policies (i.e., protective tariffs and other incentives). According to Falkus, later, the government gradually instituted policies regarding export-led growth (i.e., tax concession, reduced import duties on capital equipment), which were pursued increasingly in the 1970s and continued to dominate Thai industrialization through the 1980s.

Although four National Development Plans (1961-1981) achieved high economic growth rates, they seem to have resulted in unbalanced growth favoring manufacturing, trade, and services, rather than agriculture (Goldstein 1986). The Third National Social and Economic Development Plan (1972-76) is a good example of this:

The Northeast received an average investment of 1,519 baht per capita, the lowest investment of all regions, while Bangkok's average of 3,815 baht was over twice as high and far exceeded that of the other three regions as well, which received only between 1,761 (North and Central) and 1,983 (South) baht per capita on average (Cocharane 1976:62, cf. Sydney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein 1986).

Overall, the economy was developing with a rapid industrialization and urbanization process. As a result, rapid growth was seen in nearly all sectors of the economy, ranging from the agricultural, construction, manufacture, trade, and transportation sectors to financial and service sectors. When compared with other less developed countries, Thailand had experienced particularly striking social and economic changes between 1960 and 1980. Its per capita gross national product [GNP] grew faster than that of eleven other less developed countries, averaging 4.6 percent over the course of the two decades (ESCAP, Population Division 1984). Rapid change was also reflected by the growing percentage of children enrolled in schools, the expansion of cultivated lands

concurrent with the emergence of small industrial sectors (mainly around Bangkok), and a growing number of workers shifting from self-employment in agriculture to salaried occupations outside the primary sector.

However, a crucial point is that the industrialization process and economic growth in Thailand during this period were heavily focused on Bangkok. According to Phisit Pakkasem (1978:1), "A small and modern industrial base has been established in a highly concentrated pattern in and around the Bangkok Metropolitan Area." Krirkkiat and Yoshihara (1983:20, cf. Korff 1989) also emphasize the extent to which all business groups in Thailand were Bangkok-based: "Large business groups tend to concentrate on the capital city...but in the case of Thailand, the concentration is carried to the extreme." Furthermore, Mary Elizabeth Mills (1991) notes that Thailand's rapid economic growth in recent decades had heavily relied on the uneven distribution of wealth and power between urban and rural sectors. For instance, in 1960, Bangkok accounted for 23.8 percent of Thailand's GDP, only 17 percent of which came from the Northeast. By 1979, Bangkok's share had increased to 27.4 percent and that of the Northeast had declined to 14.7 percent. Both Northern and Southern provinces also experienced declines whereas the Central plain, reflecting its status as a "richer" area with its closer functional ties to Bangkok, increased from 19.3 to 31.2 percent (Goldstein 1986:47). See <Map> and <Table 1>

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Map. The regions of Thailand

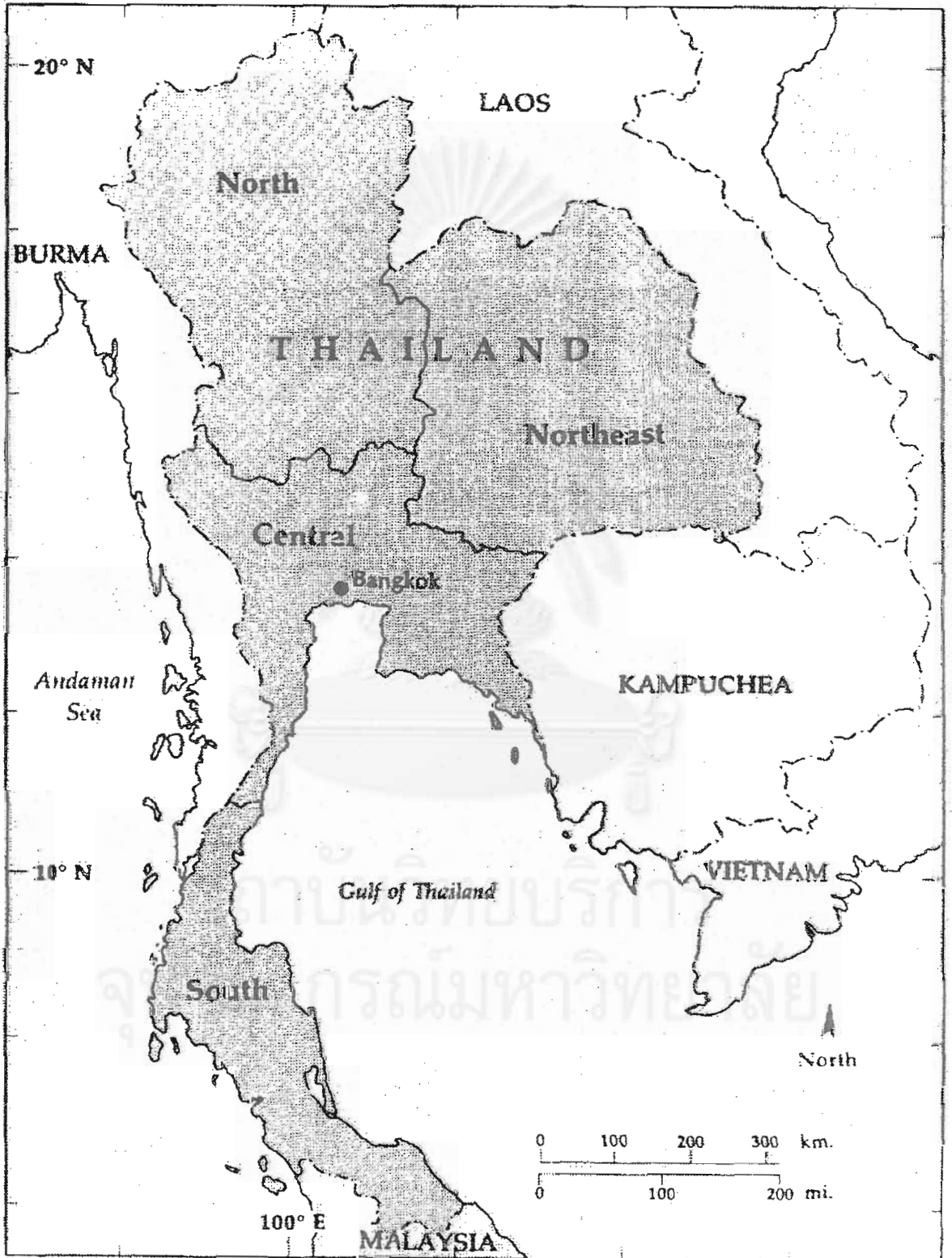


Table 1: GDP per capita in different regions, expressed as a percentage of GDP per capita in Bangkok, 1976-78

Region	1976	1977	1978
Northwest	16.2	15.3	14.8
North	25.9	24.3	24.1
South	36.3	38.1	38.4
Central Plain	55.4	54.6	54.3
Bangkok	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Thailand, NESDB: Evaluation of the first half of the Fourth Plan(1977-78) (Bangkok, 1980), p.6.

What made Bangkok the only growth-center of the country? Phipatseritham (1983:10) argues that, "At least three factors contributed to the reason for such a phenomenon – the geographical location, the concentration of economic activities, and the concentration of political and administration powers and social services." The centralization of power in Bangkok, in particular, resulted in negative consequences, such as an imbalance in development, which led to regional disparities and a wider gap between the rich and the poor (Dhiravegin 1983: 10-19).

Through urban-based development, the status of Bangkok as a primary city has been more strongly stressed. In 1971, Bangkok's population exceeded 3 million people and the urban area was almost double the size it had been twelve years before. Generally speaking, a primary city like Bangkok is featured by rapid growth in urban population resulting from migration (McGee 1971: 97-98). By 1970, lifetime migration³ all over Thailand increased as a whole by 13.1%, whereas the percentage in Bangkok, as a dominant destination of migrants, rose to 27%. This fact proves that population growth in Bangkok from 1960-1970 was mostly due to urban migration.

To sum up, unequal economic development created enormous differences between urban and rural areas in terms of resources, income and opportunities. Such differences must have been a major driving force in encouraging migration from rural areas to urban cities, especially to the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, as Thailand was becoming more dependent on urban-based and wage labor-intensive industrialization in order to pursue

³Life Time Migration: Those whose place of birth differs from their present place of residence.

Five-year, or Recent, Migration: Those whose place of residence in the preceding five years differs from their present one.

great economic success. Thus, while sharpened discontent in urban areas had resulted in a student uprising in 1973 and, later, to more organized protests among peasants, workers and slum-dwellers in the following three years, a growing number of rural people came to Bangkok to serve as cheap laborers in manufacturing and service industries, which contributed to urban growth and the economic boom in Thailand. (See also, Korff 1986; Sternstein 1971, 1976; Odhnoff et al. 1983.)



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

2.2 Analysis of Urban Migration

The rapid process of industrialization and urbanization, discussed at length above, resulted in a larger number of occupational structures in Bangkok; for example, there were growing numbers of jobs in the manufacturing and service sectors as well as professionals and white-collar jobs. Thus, rural to urban migration became a significant factor in social transformation.

Domestic migration has occurred throughout the history of Thailand. During the 1950s and 60s, rural to rural migration was the most common phenomenon because of the increasing availability of new farmland. However, as usable lands became scarce and more wage laboring jobs became available starting with the 1970s, there was a large influx of people to the central region where the BMA is located. See <Table 2>.

Table 2: Migrants in Bangkok, 1978

	Male (000s)	Female (000s)	Female participation in labor force Percentage
Total Population	13,643	14,320	44.4
Non-migrants	11,930	12,585	41.6
From Northeast	886	817	80.8
From North	173	238	54.5
From Central Plain	474	531	55.5
From South	153	127	27.0

Source: Thailand, National Statistical Office: Report of the labor force survey, 1978

From 1960-1980, there were steady increases in the actual numbers of migrants and the growth rate of migration into Bangkok. In 1978, there were 1,686,00 male migrants and 1,713,00 female migrants in Bangkok from four different regions. As Sydney Goldstein and Alice Goldstein (1986) highlight, Bangkok attracted more migrants faster than any other region in the previous 40 years; whereas the absolute numbers of recent migrants throughout the country had dropped slightly, the numbers of migrants to Bangkok or the Central region had continued to grow between 1965-70 and 1975-80, illustrating one of the major characteristics of migration during the 1970s. See <Table 3 Lifetime Inter-provincial migration > and <Table 4 Inter-provincial recent migration>. In addition, as Theodore D. Fuller et al. (1983) observed from the six village studies, the movement was solely directed

towards the city of Bangkok, the destination for 57 percent of all rural-urban moves.

<Figure 1> shows a general picture of population mobility to this region.

Table 3: Lifetime inter-provincial migration, by region, 1980 (Numbers in thousands)

Region of residence and year	Total population		Living in province of birth		Not living in province of birth							
					In same region		In another region		Total inter-provincial migrants		Foreign-born	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Whole kingdom	44,364	100.0	37,854	85.3	2,756	6.2	3,482	7.9	6,238	14.1	272	0.6
Bangkok	4,641	100.0	3,243	69.9	-	-	1,268	27.3	1,268	27.3	130	2.8
Central	9,616	100.0	7,841	81.5	796	8.3	929	9.7	1,726	18.0	49	0.5
North	9,018	100.0	7,781	86.3	558	6.2	640	7.1	1,198	13.3	39	0.4
North-east	15,548	100.0	14,033	90.3	1,030	6.6	454	2.9	1,484	9.5	31	0.2
South	5,541	100.0	4,956	89.4	371	6.7	191	3.4	568	10.1	24	0.5

Source: Thailand, National Statistical Office (1962, 1973, 1983b)

Note: Persons whose place of birth is unknown are excluded from the tabulations

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Table 4: Inter-provincial recent migration, by region, 1975-80 (Numbers in thousands)

Region of Residence	Total Population ages 5 and over	Migrants within region		Migrants between region		Total Inter-provincial migrants(a)		% of migrants making interregional moves
		No.	% of Total population	No.	% of Total population	No.	% of Total population	
Whole kingdom	39,380	755	1.9	858	2.2	1,613	4.1	53.2
Bangkok	4,250	(b)	(b)	341	8.0	341	8.0	100.0
Central	8,626	218	2.5	285	3.3	503	5.8	56.7
North	8,112	166	2.0	104	1.3	270	3.3	38.5
Northeast (c)	13,512	241	1.8	74	0.6	315	2.4	23.5
South	4,879	130	2.7	54	1.1	184	3.8	29.3

(a) Excludes migrants whose province of origin is unknown

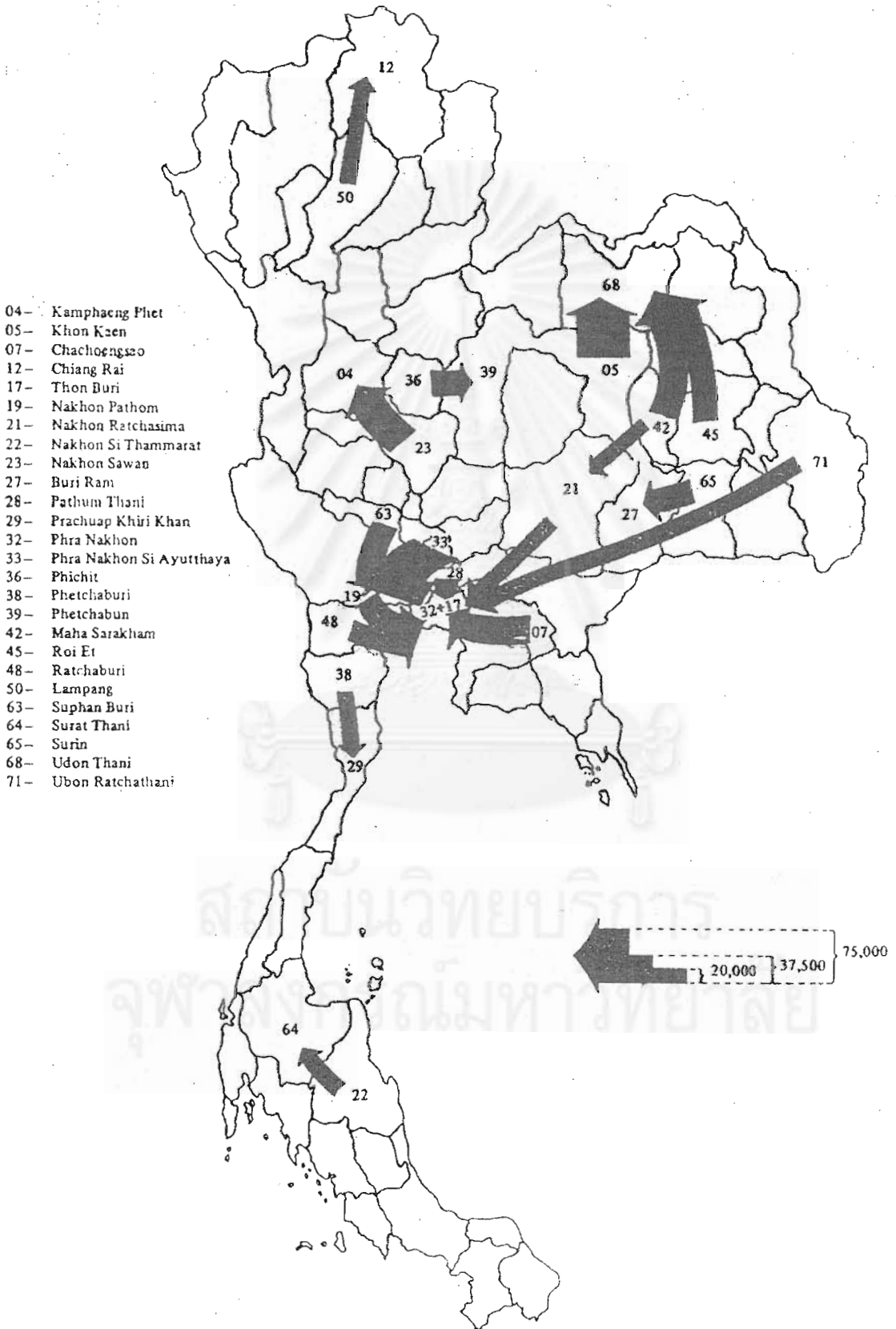
(b) Movement between the provinces of Phra Nakhon and Thonburi was not considered interprovincial migration; by 1975-80 the two provinces had been merged to form the Bangkok Metropolitan Area

(c) Adjusted for movement between the province split into two provinces between 1970 and 1980. Such movement was not considered interprovincial migration

Source: Thailand, National Statistical Office (1962, 1973, 1983b)

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Figure 1.



The majority of studies of migration in Thailand regard rural-urban migration as a necessary social element in the modernization of Thailand because it promoted an industrial labor force and urban growth. However, actual benefits to rural communities were not created, as expected, by the national economic policies at the time. Rather, economic and political disparities had deepened along with rising migration. By the mid-1970s, Bangkok's growth was out of control. Policy makers began redirecting rural-urban migration and decentralizing urbanization to balance rural and urban areas. Rural-urban migration was not yet been seen as a problem of development until the fourth national economic and social plan (1977-81) recognized it and made an effort to lessen the pressure of population movement into the BMA.

Migration can be an extremely critical social factor, given its driving factors and consequences in various contexts of society. The study of migration study as a societal force can be related to many different social issues – such as social inequality, poverty, slum expansion, prostitution, difficulties of adjustment to a new place, as well as changing world views and values. It is essential to look beyond its economic circumstances and to consider it within the social and cultural contexts which motivate migration decisions and experiences. (See also Juree Vichit-Vatakan 1983; Muecke 1981; Thorbek 1987; Kirsch 1966; Klausner 1972.)

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

2.2.1 Driving Forces Governing Migration

According to Paritta and Askew (1993), rural-urban migration is a consequence of the interaction between push factors (unfavorable rural circumstances, such as rural poverty, low prices of agricultural products, etc.) and pull factors (urban attractions, such as job opportunities, educational institutions, entertainment, a modern lifestyle, etc.).

The rapid increase in the population⁴ across the country as a whole led to the increasing scarcity of land and cash income in rural areas. Such pressures were more clearly visible in many parts of Thai society throughout the 1960s and 1970s; they include, for example, the fragmentation of farms and the growing incidence of tenancy, landlessness, and indebtedness in some regions, migration from poorer areas, declining rice output per person, and a growing intensity of labor effort.

Predominantly, migration in Thailand has been motivated by economic factors (Apichat et al. 1978). Other reasons driving migration concern rural-urban disparities, which are directly related to the economic reasons for migration. Goldstein (1986) presents data on the reasons for domestic migration in Thailand by urban-rural stream and by sex for the 1975-80 period. See <Table 5>. Economic considerations constitute an important motivating factor in all migration streams, especially among male rural-to-urban migrants, most of whom migrated to urban areas in search of work. These data also suggest that urban places were attractive for individuals seeking education. Furthermore, accompanying migrating family members was an important reason for both males and females in all migration streams. (See also, Pasuk (1982:14) and Apichat et al. (1979:21).)

⁴ In 1947, the total population was 18.1 million, in 1960, 26.7 million, and in 1980, 46.5 million.

Table 5: Reasons for migration, by urban-rural stream and by sex : 1975-80 (percentage distribution)

Sex and reason for migration	Migration Stream			
	Rural- Rural	Rural-to- Urban	Urban-to- Rural	Urban- Urban
MALES				
Economic				
Looking for work	27.5	49.7	21.0	24.6
Job transfer	6.4	7.2	21.0	13.9
Other	2.7	3.8	2.0	3.1
Education	3.4	10.7	2.9	9.7
Family-related				
Change in marital status	18.0	2.6	7.3	1.9
To accompany person in household	30.3	14.8	30.5	29.0
Other ^a	9.3	5.0	11.9	12.5
Unknown	2.5	6.3	2.8	5.3
All reasons	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
FEMALES				
Economic				
Looking for work	16.3	39.4	11.4	16.3
Job transfer	1.9	1.7	6.7	3.1
Other	1.8	2.8	1.1	3.1
Education	1.7	13.5	3.4	12.4
Family-related				
Change in marital status	12.2	4.8	6.9	5.2
To accompany person in household	59.3	33.1	59.6	49.3
Other ^a	4.3	2.0	9.2	6.1
Unknown	2.3	2.8	1.6	4.4
All reasons	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pejaranonda, Goldstein, and Goldstein (1984). ^a Includes joining family member, returning home, and going to another residence.

However, in addition to these economic reasons, several social motivations also explain urban migration. Davis (1963) suggests that migration, which is one of many important demographic responses, should not be conceptualized as a direct stimulus which causes poverty. Rather, selected rural people migrate because they see economic opportunities, and try to avoid loss of relative status. In other words, migration should be viewed as being closely and positively related to the proofs of modernization.

2.2.1.1 Economic Reasons for Migration

A. Rural Poverty and Income Disparity

Poverty in Thailand is largely concentrated in two regions: the Northeast and the North. The Northeast is infamous for its poor natural resources and excessive population rate, whereas unequal opportunity and uneven distribution of resources explains the poverty in the North. According to World Bank Report (1980), in 1975/76, about half of the total national poverty was found in the rural sector of the Northeast, and the regional concentration of poverty seems to have been increasing. The data used by Goldstein (1984) shows that the regional flow of migrants from the Northeast to Bangkok between 1965-70 and 1975-80 increased from 6.8 percent to 23.3 percent, and suggests that poverty is one the major factors for this migration. However, the relationship between poverty and migration is more complex, because, although poverty levels have declined, migration has increased, probably because of "relative deprivation." See <Table 6>. Improved educational levels and the return of migrants to rural areas has made rural populations more acutely aware of the higher levels of wealth in urban areas, beyond the villages of the Northeast. It is because of this "perceived relative deprivation" that there is an acceleration in migration rates despite a decline in the absolute levels of poverty. In his study of migration and development in Thailand, Fuller et al. (1983) discusses how the relative rural poverty, in contrast to urban wealth, is the underlying cause of movement, not the suffering caused through poverty itself.

Table 6: Incidence of Absolute Poverty in Thailand, 1962-1976

	Population with income below poverty Line as % of total population			Population as % of total In the country
	1962 - 63	1968 - 69	1975 - 76	1976
	Rural			
Northeast	75	60	38	33
North	60	31	28	19
Central	35	13	12	20
South	41	31	26	11
Kingdom				
Rural	57	37	28	83
Urban	28	11	11	17
Total	52	34	25	100

Source: NSO, Household Income and Expenditures Survey, 1962/63 and Social-Economic Survey, 1968/69 and 1975/76 as compiled in IBRD, Thailand

Moreover, there is a considerable income disparity between regions as also exists between rural and urban sectors. See <Table 7> and <Table 8>. For example, in 1960, the mean per capita income for the farm population was 26.2 percent of that of the non-farm population; by 1975, this proportion had fallen to 14.2 percent and was expected to be as low as 11.4 percent in 1985 (Mabry 1979).

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Table 7: Regional Real Income Per Capita and as Percent of Whole Kingdom Income, 1968/69, 1975 and 1979

(Unit Baht)

Region	1968 - 1969		1975		1979	
	Per capita	% of WK	Per capita	% of WK	Per capita	% of WK
	Income		Income		Income	
Whole Kingdom	2,320	100	4,856	100	6,054	100
Northeast	1,600	61	2,366	49	2,647	44
North	2,060	89	3,686	76	4,477	74
Central	2,900	125	6,667	137	8,622	142
South	2,060	89	4,371	90	5,858	97
Bangkok	5,520	217	11,725	241	15,633	258

Source: NESDE, National Income of Thailand (1978) and Economic Indicators (1979)

Table 8: Household income, expressed as a percentage of level in Bangkok, 1962-63 to 1975-76

Region	1962 - 1963	1968 - 1969	1975 - 1976
Northeast	31.7	29.3	43.8
North	32.0	31.6	44.0
South	50.4	33.6	52.7
Central Plain	52.1	48.2	65.7
Bangkok	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Adapted from IBRD: Income consumption and poverty in Thailand, 1962-63 to 1975-76, p.20, and based on the household expenditure survey.

The World Bank's survey of income and poverty in Thailand, based on the 1975-76 household survey, found that the per capita income of farmers in the Northeast and the North was 188 Baht and 240 Baht per month, respectively, and that of farm and general workers was 208-206 Baht, compared to an average for the whole kingdom of 324 Baht and for Bangkok of 605 Baht. Moreover, the World Bank survey also indicated that 31 percent of the Thai population was living below the poverty line, calculated according to an international standard, and that the vast majority of them were in the North and Northeast.

In addition, out of the total number of Thailand's poor, 49 per cent were living in the villages of the North. In other words, one-third of the rural population of the North and nearly half the rural population of the Northeast were living below the poverty level (Oey Astra Meesook, 1979:52-54, 62).

B. Seasonal Unemployment

In his study of Ayuthaya Province, Donald J. Lauro (1979) found that over 13 percent of all villagers were regularly absent from the community for several months each year as seasonal migrants. In total, 35.5 percent of villagers had been seasonal migrants at least once or more in their lifetime. The rate of seasonal migrants began rising from the early 1960s; further increases occurred during the mid-1970s up until the survey year of 1976. Thus, for example, seasonal migration from rural to urban areas increased from 11 percent in the 1962-66 period to 33 percent in the 1972-76 period (Lauro 1979), and by the mid-1970s, approximately half of all seasonal migrants moved to Bangkok. See <Table 9>. Apichat et al. (1979:89) argues that seasonal and circular migration was found to be an important phenomenon for those of lower socio-economic status and those who were engaged in agricultural work at their place of origin. See <Table 10>. According to his study, when multiple reasons for migration were requested, the second highest percentage of responses for male migrants involved seasonal migration; approximately 9 percent of men and women migrated temporarily because they were, as they reported, free from the farming season. (See also, Fuller et al. 1983, pp. 81-89.)

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Table 9: Open Unemployment, Underemployment and Seasonal Unemployment in Thailand, 1975 and 1979

(Unit %)

	1975	1979
Open Unemployment		
Whole Kingdom	0.4	0.89
Urban*	1.6	2.7
Rural*	0.2	0.8
Bangkok	1.4	2.6
Central	0.4	1.0
North	0.1	0.4
Northeast	0.4	0.2
South	0.4	0.6
Underemployment**		
Whole Kingdom January - March	-	29.4
July - September	-	35.6
Seasonal Unemployment		
Whole Kingdom	22.1	25.8
Urban	0.4	0.4
Rural	25.8	30.9
North	22.0	21.0
Northeast	61.0	66.0
Central	9.0	11.0
South	7.0	1.0

* 1978

** Worked less than 20 hours per week

Source : NSO, Labor Force Surveys

Table 10: Reason for move: percent positive responses of migrants to specific leading questions on reason for move by sex

Reasons	Percent positive response		
	Male	Female	Total ^a
Economic reasons			
To work or to find job	80.1	67.5	72.6
Free from farm season	18.7	19.5	19.2
Result of job assignment	2.8	2.8	2.8
To have job training	11.6	4.1	7.1
No land at origin	2.0	6.5	4.7
Education			
To further education	17.9	8.9	12.5
Family reason			
Moved with family	3.2	26.0	16.8
Others			
Business	1.6	1.2	1.4
Get tired of rural life	12.0	10.2	10.9
Just to stay in B.M	0.0	5.3	3.2
N	251	246	

^a: Adjusted for sex ratio of 67.6 of total 74,416 recent migrants in Bangkok Metropolis

Source: Aphichat Chamrathirong, Recent Migrants in Bangkok Metropolis, 1979

C. Availability of Wage Labor Jobs in Cities

The lack of rural employment and increased need for cash income in the rural economy encouraged even more urban migration. Since the 1960s, the most dynamic sectors of the Thai economy were urban manufacturing and service industries. At the same time, capital investment, especially in export-orientated manufacturing, such as textile and garment production, and in the many service sectors associated with the international tourist trade, was concentrated in and around the capital city, Bangkok. See <Table 11>. As a result, the numbers of cash-making jobs in such business sectors had increased in urban centers. In addition, with the increasing number of middle-class city households, their need for domestic helpers had created jobs suitable for temporary migrants.

Table 11: Bangkok's share of total urban activities in Thailand, 1960 and 1970)

(Measured as a percentage of each activity)

	1960	1970
Manufacturing	28.3	31.2
Commerce	25.1	28.4
Service	32.1	29.8
Construction	27.5	33.7
Electricity	51.8	43.8
Transportation and communication	30.4	29.1

Source: Pramote Prasartkul, "Patterns and determinants of internal migration in Thailand," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1977

2.2.1.2 Educational Opportunities

Larry Sternstein's study (1975) of 2,178 migrants in Bangkok in 1970 found that the majority came to Bangkok to further their education and to get a job in the civil service. In Thailand, as in most less developed countries, higher educational facilities are seldom provided in rural areas but are concentrated in the capital city and in large urban places. Therefore, it is understandable that rural residents' aspirations for better secondary and further education serve as a stimulus to migration. <Table 12> shows the percentage of the population who had attained secondary or university education as migrants in Bangkok. (See also, Goldstein 1986, p. 42; Apichat et al. 1979, p. 21.)

Table 12: Percentage of population who had attained secondary or university education by migration status, sex and age, 1970

Age	Males			Females			Total		
	Non-Migrant	Migrant	Total	Non-Migrant	Migrant	Total	Non-Migrant	Migrant	Total
15-19 years	10.7	16.8	11.4	9.1	12.0	9.5	9.9	14.4	10.4
20-24	9.0	18.9	10.8	8.6	13.6	9.4	8.8	16.6	10.1
25-29	8.7	18.0	10.3	5.8	11.2	3.6	7.6	15.2	8.6
30-39	5.3	13.4	6.3	2.7	5.0	3.0	4.1	9.8	4.7
40-49	5.4	11.0	5.9	2.0	4.0	2.2	3.8	8.0	4.1
50 & over	2.5	5.1	2.7	0.5	11.8	1.2	1.4	8.5	1.9

Source: Based on sample data from the 1970 population census

2.2.1.3 Other Socio-Cultural Reasons

It has been observed in several studies that what attracts migrants to Bangkok is not only the promise of a job or increased financial welfare, but also a complex variety of socio-cultural factors. William J. Klausner's study (1961, cf. Paritta and Askew, 1993:29) of Isaan migrants in Bangkok identifies six motivations which account for migration: an increased need for cheap labor in and around Bangkok; severe droughts in the Northeast in the previous 4-5 years in the Northeast causing economic deprivation; improved communication and transportation systems; the increased exposure of rural villagers to city life and, in turn, the strong desire of young villagers to see civilized Bangkok; family or peer group ties in the city; and obligations to provide financially for their family. In reference to the increasing number of female migrants in the 1970s, the socio-cultural role of Thai daughters as breadwinners in poor families must also have been a driving force in many cases. According to Mills (1993), the rural to urban female mobility in Thailand is seen in the routine patterns of community, household, gender relations and also a strong desire for the comparatively comfortable urban life. In a study by Paritta Chalermpong Koanantakool and Marc Askew (1993), they similarly concluded that rural people have become more

exposed to urban culture through improved communication systems via the migration process. In addition, the culture of '*pai thiao*' (going away on an outing), which is an integral part of Thai life, makes it easier to make the decision to leave home temporarily. It also may have helped migrants to tolerate the low wages and poor conditions of city life. Even more importantly, as Piore (1979) states, "one trip leads to another," and it has indeed been found that people who migrate once are quite likely to do so again. Furthermore, Paritta and Askew's study indicates that migrants, especially from the Northeast, were able to survive and adjust themselves to life in the city because they depended on a network of relatives and friends for accommodation and/or work. Using the term "family and friends effect," Massey et al. (1994) emphasize the powerful role of migrant networks in influencing individual or household migration decisions and in promoting collective flows of other migrants. Furthermore, Massey et al. (1994:729) conclude that, "Over time, the migration decision became increasingly disconnected from social and economic conditions in the sending community and determined more by the accumulation of migration-related human capital and social capital in the form of network connections." (See also, Apichat et al. 1979; Juree Vichit-Vatakan 1983; Fuller et al. 1983; Lightfoot et al. 1984; Penporn 1978; Goldstein and Goldstein 1979; Spear 1971.)

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

2.2.2 Consequences of Migration

2.2.2.1 Adjustment Process

One of the most significant consequences of migration is that rural migrants often end up confronting various obstacles in the city, instead of enjoying the benefits of the greater employment opportunities. Apichat et al. (1979:64-67) highlights their condition, "They [rural migrants] suffer from low income, poor living and working conditions and low social and occupational mobility." Especially in the case of female migrants, the traditional responsibilities of daughters to help support their parents frequently conflicts with the equally conventional concepts of morality as they pursue a more modern life style and their increasing material desires (Pawadee Tongudai, 1982 & 1984)⁵. According to Penporn Tirasawat (1978), there is no single process by which migrants adjust to Bangkok: the nature of the adjustment process varies with the characteristics of both the movers and the specific features of the mover's situation at the place of destination. From data obtained through in-depth interviews with migrants to Bangkok, Fuller et al. (1983) report that respondents reflected the fundamental differences between the economically marginal peasant culture of the Northeast, which is generally considered a culturally distinctive region, and the highly individualistic, contract-based, urban culture imposed on the individual migrant. See <Table 13>. Worrying about the "high cost of living" reflects not only the problem of finding enough cash, but also, on a deeper level, the fear of dependence on an uncaring social environment. Accordingly, the physical environment of the city was perceived of as the main disadvantage: crowded, polluted, unhealthy and physically unsafe. Furthermore, 6 percent reported that the characteristics and behavior of urban people were the main disadvantages of living in a town; they saw Bangkok residents as unfriendly, tricky, unreliable and selfish. (See also, Apichat et al. 1979, p. 65 and Lightfoot et al. 1983, p. 37.)

⁵ See also, Arnold and Suwanlee 1984.

Table 13: Bangkok Migrants: Advantages and Disadvantages of Going to the City

	Number	Percent
Advantage		
Better income	318	40.4
Urban facilities	131	16.6
Experience and knowledge	101	12.8
Prosperity and opportunities for the future	44	5.6
Availability of work	39	4.9
Education	14	1.8
Entertainment	46	5.8
Other	4	0.5
Don't know, not stated	2	0.3
None	89	11.3
Total	788	100.0
Disadvantage		
Living costs	283	35.9
Environment	112	14.2
Characteristics and behavior of urban people	44	5.6
Hard work, regulation and discipline	37	4.7
Safety (crimes)	28	3.6
Missing home or family	19	2.4
Housing	16	2.0
Difficulty in finding job	8	1.0
Other	7	0.9
Don't know, not stated	6	0.8
None	228	28.9
Total	788	100.0

Source: United Nations, Migration and Development in Modern Thailand, 1983

2.2.2.2 Expansion of Bangkok Slum Areas and the Slum Population

Mike Douglass's study (1984, cf. Paritta and Askew 1993), "Regional Integration on the Capitalist Periphery: The Central Plains of Thailand," found that the poor conditions of migrants who comprised the slum population in the late 1970s in Bangkok included job insecurity as well as irregular income and daily earnings. According to this study, it was nearly impossible for the migrants to provide some degree of education for their children because of their limited circumstances, such as poor access to schools caused by lack of official registrations and the need for a child labor force to supplement the family income.

Since the mid-1970s, government organizations such as the Social Welfare Department [SDP], the National Housing Administration [NHA], BMA, and, later, many Non-Government Organizations have been active in working with slum areas. Metropolitan Bangkok doubled its share of poor people over one decade, from only 3 percent in 1962/63 to 6 percent in 1975/76. In 1975, the NHA conducted its first housing survey, judging that there were 108 slum sites in Bangkok and approximately 26,739 families. Two years later, the estimate increased to 250 sites with 70,000 families. Therefore, these data prove that, although the overall incidence of poverty had declined, its distribution was concentrated in the slum areas of the capital as well as in the rural areas of the Northeast.

2.2.2.3 Lack of Occupational Mobility

<Figure 2> shows the changing trends in Bangkok's occupational structure over the past 40 years, that is, the steady decline of the agricultural sector, the growth of professional and white-collar workers, and the increase of jobs in the service sector, and from homogenous to increasingly pluralistic. However, the rural-to-urban migration, a consequence of push factors in their rural environment and of the individuals' perception of better employment opportunities in the city, often results in shift from low productive agricultural occupations to other low productive occupations in the urban sector, where migrants become laborers and service workers. Professionals and those in other white-collar occupations unevenly absorbed rural migrants. The structure of migration and labor absorption in Metropolitan Bangkok is summarized in <Table 14>. (See also, Fuller et al. 1983, p. 50.) When the occupational structure of rural regions is compared to that of the metropolitan area, it can be concluded that the occupational mobility of migrants is extremely limited. Apichat et al. (1979:83-84) note that men moved to urban regions in

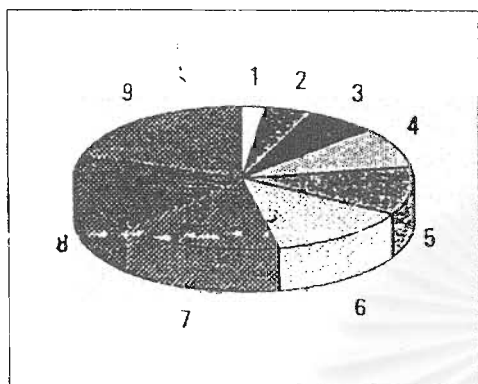
order to work as skilled and/or semi-skilled laborers and women to work as service workers and household servants.

By the mid 1970s, unemployment among rural-urban migrants reached even higher levels, with increased competition for jobs which required higher skills, resulting in 77.3 percent of the rural population living below the poverty line. Douglass (1984) reports that the proportion of migrants going into unskilled jobs was twice as high as that of the Bangkok-born.

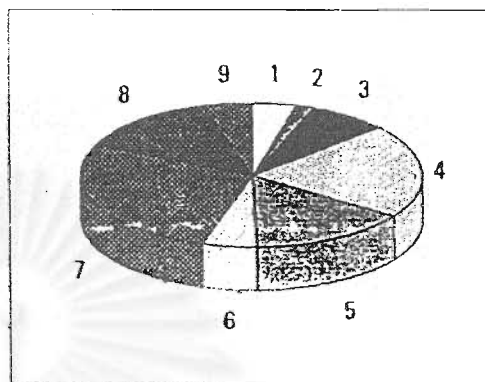


สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

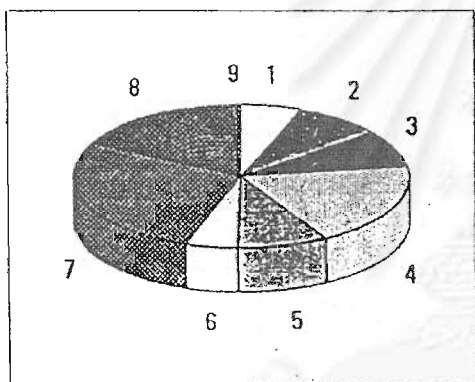
Figure 2.



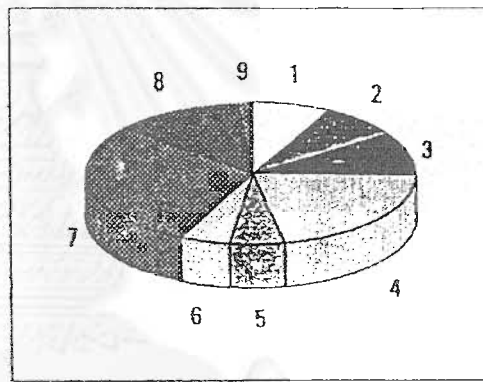
1947



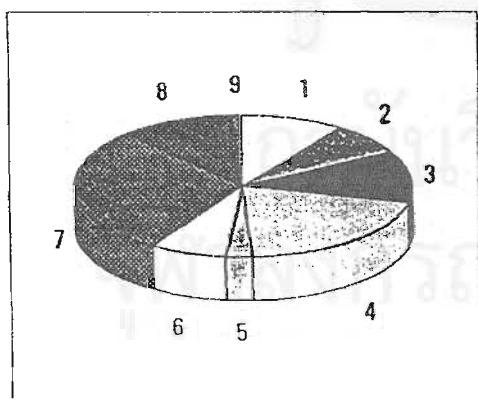
1960



1970



1980



1989

Occupation

1. Professional/Technical
2. Administrative, Executive, Managerial
3. Clerical
4. Sales
5. Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers, etc.
6. Transport and Communication
7. Craftsmen, Production process, Labourers
8. Service, Sports and Recreational
9. Unclassifiable

Sources: The Royal Thai Kingdom Population Census 1947. Registry Office, Interiors Ministry.
Thailand Population Census 1960. Central Statistical Office, National Economic Development Board.
Thailand Population and Housing Census 1970. Central Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister.
Thailand Population and Housing Census 1980. Central Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister.
First Round Labour Report, February 1989. Central Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister.

Table 14: Occupational Structure of Migration, 1975

	Metropolitan Sub-region	Sub-region migrants before migration	All migrants after migration	Metropolis
Farmers	66.8	69.9	5.4	10.1
Professor, Administrative Clerical	3.9	4.8	4.6	18.1
Sales	10.2	6.1	8.3	25.9
Transportation, Communications	3.0	5.6	8.3	7.2
Laborers, Craftsmen And Process workers	13.4	10.7	50.1	29.0
Services	2.7	3.0	23.1	9.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NESDB, Labor force survey: and NSO, The survey of migration in Bangkok metropolis, 1976

2.2.2.4 Changing Values in Kinship System

As mentioned above, most migrants (especially among female migrants) obtained information about new jobs or accommodations in the city through the kinship system. They also maintained their bonds with their rural kin by sending home wage remittances as well as returning home for major religious ceremonial holidays to earn merit⁶ and to pray for their future moral security.

In the migration process, the concept of the kin system was very important to women. They emphasize that kinship/family matters are the main motivation for migration, while men mostly give economic reasons (Apichat et al. 1979:22). The women

⁶ According to Charles F. Keyes (1983: 267), merit is "...seen as a form of spiritual insurance, an investment... in the future." Merit is also "valued for the quality of virtue that a person acquires in the eyes of others through his or her acts of merit-making," such as doing good deeds, donating food or necessary things to the temple, or being ordained as a monk, etc.

were especially concerned about the welfare of their mothers and also about that of their younger sisters and brothers. This is well described well in Suzanne Turbeck's (1987) study on the experiences of 24 migrant women. Links with up-country kin were usually maintained. Many would go back and forth in the first few years after migration and most of them still visited parents or relatives up-country at least once a year, or received visits from them. These networks also meant that women could come and visit Bangkok to explore employment possibilities before eventually making their move.

In general, sending remittances represents an important continuing link between the migrants and their village-based households (Fuller et al. 1983:95). As mentioned earlier, poverty is one of the leading causes of migration, and it can be alleviated by migration as increasing income, remittances and so on are passed into the villages to improve the families' welfare levels. In terms of the relationship between remittances sent back home and their benefits for the family, scholars have differing opinions. For instance, Griffin (1976) viewed out-movement and remittances sent back to rural families as beneficial to rural economies. Klausner (1963), in contrast, saw the increased rates of movement from Ubon Ratchathani to Bangkok among young people as a sign of the breakdown of family and village society, and, particularly, as the loss of labor-power in the village in defiance of the wishes of older village residents. (See also, Fuller et al. 1983, p.94-96; Pasuk 1982, p. 22-25; Lightfoot et al. 1983, p. 39.)

2.2.2.5 Changing World View of People in Rural Areas

The capital has always been a symbol of the world that exists outside rural villages. Bangkok also holds a very significant cultural position for rural people. Over time, Bangkok has changed its focus from being the center of traditional Buddhism and the monarchy to becoming the center of modern development and consumption, creating inevitable dilemmas with this confrontation between tradition and modernity. Massey et al. (1994) state that materially-successful migrants are powerful models, especially for the young, spreading the values of consumerism throughout the community. Massey et al. (1994:738) also explain the term "culture of migration": "it becomes increasingly important as a rite of passage or social norms for young men, providing an accepted means of demonstrating worthiness, ambitions, and manhood." As will be discussed at greater length later in this thesis, young women who migrated to work in Bangkok faced a divergence of cultural meanings as they re-examine their roles as "traditional daughters" and "modern women."

2.2.2.6 Changing Female Roles and Their Social Values

In Thailand, it has been customary for women to work in production. Penporn (1980) relates this to the concept in Theravada Buddhism in which women are considered more materialistic and less spiritual human beings than men and, thus, as materialistic beings, women ought to participate in production.

The female labor force has been playing a significant role in urban economic development. Both foreign and domestic companies in Bangkok hire young women. Slightly more than half the workforce in industrial plants in Greater Bangkok were reportedly women (Sarkar 1974). While Bangkok-born middle-class women entered professions as teachers, nurses, and office workers, female-migrant workers became active in unskilled labor as well. The majority of them were young girls from the countryside. From the early 1960s, an increasingly growing number of women moved to Bangkok to the point where they outnumbered male-migrant workers. For example, between 1960-65, approximately 70,000 males and 60,000 females moved to the metropolitan area, compared to 145,000 males and 153,000 females from 1965-70 (Apichat et al. 1979, NSO 1983, Pawadee 1982, Wilson 1983:58).

However, young female migrants were caught in a dilemma between the attractions of modern city life and their responsibilities and obligations to fulfill the traditional role of dutiful daughter with regard to their rural family. Mills' study (1993) of the worldview and values of migrant girls from northeastern Thailand found that some of these girls feel that it is going to be difficult for them to go back and live in the village again since their life has changed so much. However, in many cases, the problem of their changing values resulted in a materialistic attitude to life, leading to prostitution and women trafficking problems. Mills concludes that female migrants are not economic victims but, rather, they must be understood as conscious agents, making decisions and pursuing goals within, and at times despite, the constraints of their political and economic subordination in the wider Thai society. Massey et al. (1994:738) also note the shifts in gender roles resulting from migration, "...as women come to participate in the migration process, they gain greater power and influence within the family through their contributions to household income."

To sum up, decisions to enter the urban wage labor market and the choices which migrants face while in the city require women and their families to confront competing images of appropriate social behavior and contradictions that are widely defined as differences between "tradition" and "modernity." The complex relationships among place, identity, and cultural meaning underlie women's rural-urban mobility.

A study by Pasuk Phongpaichit (1982) is about the work and lives of girls who came from rural areas to Bangkok to participate in the prostitution trade. The girls interviewed in the study were from depressed rural areas and continued to maintain strong links with their families, supplying remittances, which contributed substantially to the basic needs of their families for housing, water, and education. Among the major driving forces of prostitution in Thailand have been the presence of foreign military bases in Asia and a growing tourism industry, which was already providing 11 percent of Thailand's foreign currency earnings by 1973. On the other hand, since all other aspects of life were regarded as commodities, sexual services were also considered "saleable," and, therefore, prostitution had taken on more commercialized and exploitative forms.

To summarize, it is possible to generalize about the social change processes based on a more complex interrelationship between modernization, industrialization, urbanization and migration, as explained above. First, there is the process of economic development, which emphasizes growth in the industrial sector at the expense of the agricultural sector, focusing on the expansion of the national economy in the capital city. Economic modernization and urbanization then lead to changes in the occupational structure, such as the expansion of the professional and managerial classes and factory and service workers in industry resulting in higher population mobility. Consequently, the rapid growth of population in the capital city, mainly due to mass migration from rural areas, causes many different kinds of social and living problems for migrants. Primarily, they have to tolerate certain social inequalities, such as poor living conditions. Secondly, they have to cope with inner-conflicts as they find their personal socio-cultural values changing ever so rapidly.

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER 3

As described in Chapter One, films, like other mass communication media, have been a medium which can deliver socially-concerned messages to the viewers. Ever since the beginning of the motion picture industry, films have had close links with our everyday lives. Various kinds of filmic subject matter have their origins in the images and stories of our lives, to be transformed in keeping with the requirements of filmmaking. This chapter will illustrate how Thai films portrayed Thai society of the 1970s and will analyze the messages they carried in such a fast-moving and turbulent period as the 1970s.

Between the 1960s and the early 1980s, films had a plethora of subject matter to deal with in Thai society. Among them were the stories of migrant groups—people who had recently moved from rural areas to urban centers. During this dynamic period of great socio-political and economic changes, as the 1970s, this was an interesting topic for films to mirror. Several questions can be asked of the films of this period: “How exactly do the films of the time portray this group of people?” “How do the films project the social problems related to this migrant group and their situations in an urban city?” “How deeply are the films engaged in reflecting the changes of that society?” and, “Do we, the audience, receive certain kinds of social messages through these films?”

Analyzing migrants through film studies, as was attempted in this study, was not limited to observing their movements from one place to another, but, rather, also represented an effort to establish what the fundamental reasons were that led to such migration and their social consequences. As discussed in Chapter Two, a number of research studies (see, for example, Juree Vichit-Vatakan 1983; Muecke 1981; Thorbek 1987; Kirsch 1966; Klausner 1962, 1972; Pawadee 1982; Mills 1993; Pasuk 1982) have linked the reasons for people's migratory movements to changes in people's frame of mind caused by the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, and, to a more fundamental degree, by changes in society as well as changing levels of personal desires and intentions. Ultimately, they reflect the poverty, poor living conditions, and unequal opportunities of the migrants after their move into the urban social structure. A keener understanding of the migrants' inner anxiety and struggle, not merely their external physical hardships, also required a careful perusal of critical documents. Within the context of cultural studies, another key objective of this study was to establish how living in the “new” urban culture affected the migrants emotionally, typically arousing in them feelings of inferiority and sense of vulnerability.

The analysis of Thai films undertaken in this study starts with an overview of Thai films and their history, which can help to provide a better understanding of how the socially-engaged films of the 1970s came into the mainstream.

3.1 Overview of Thai Films

The first imported films introduced into Thailand came from Japan in 1902 during the reign of King Chulalongkorn and were called '*Nang Yipun*' (lit., Japanese Leather).¹ According to Dome Sukwong and Sawasdi Suwannapak (2001), in 1905, T. Watanabe, a Japanese film entrepreneur, set up Siam's first permanent cinema in Bangkok and, in 1907, the Bangkok Rupphayon Cinema Company was opened and screened foreign films. Dome (1990:10) explains, "By this time, the so-called first group of amateur filmmakers –princes and Thai aristocrats–began their filmmaking hobby." Later, according to Mattani Moj dara Rutnin (1996), the Sayam Niramai Company of the Wasuwat family, the first importer of these '*Nang Yipun*' films, produced their own silent films in 1922. Their first attempts were recordings of King Vajiravudh's royal functions. The King's younger brother, Prince Burachat Chaiyakorn, also established the Tropical Film Service within the Royal State Railways Department to promote and produce national films. According to Dome and Sawasdi (2001), with increased support from both public and private spheres for films, *Sayam Ratsadorn*, the daily newspaper, published film synopses for forthcoming films, which were received with great popularity.

Henry A. Macray, from Hollywood, produced the first Thai feature film in 1923, called *Nang Sao Suwan* (Miss Suwan) or *Suwan Sayam* (Suvana of Siam). According to Parichat Phromyothi (2000), it was sponsored by the State Railways Department and the proceeds were donated to the Siam Red Cross Foundation. As Rutnin (1996:186) portrays, "The story was a typical melodrama, with heroic and romantic themes depicting the adventurous life of a young couple who had to struggle through a chain of hardships to achieve success." Parichat (2000) observes that this film's melodramatic tone and its happy ending are similar to those in '*Sangthong*,' one of the most famous Thai folktales. The purpose of this film was to show the scenic attractions and the culture of Siam. Later, in 1927, *Chok Song Chan* (Double Luck), a genuine Thai film, was made by the Wasuwat brothers' group. According to Parichat (2000), after this film, a number of commercial

¹ *Nang Yipun* refers to traditional shadow puppetry. However, the term has also been applied to films as, like with the shadow puppetry, films are also projected onto a screen (Rutnin 1996:186).

films were released, such as, *Mai Kid Loey* (*The Unexpected*, 1927). Sirichai Sirikaya (1988:61) comments on the films made during this period, "The costumes of the characters were not realistic enough, and heroes were obliged to show only good values. Such characterization implies that Thai cinema still inherited many aspects from traditional performances, for example, '*Khon*² and '*Lakhon*³'."

King Prajadhipok had a very keen interest in the film industry. As Rutnin (1996) states, the king commissioned the Wasuwat family to film many of his royal activities and, even after the Revolution of 1932, he commissioned the company to record his granting of the First Constitution to the new democratic government, on December 10th, 1932, at the Anandha Samakhom Parliament House. Furthermore, in the same year, the king attended the opening ceremony of the first Thai cinema theater, Sala Chalermkrung, the first in Thailand to be equipped with modern sound and an air conditioning system. According to Parichat (2000), the King's wish throughout his reign was for Thai people to enjoy films under better conditions.

² *Khon performances* (masked dance-drama) are a highly formalized dance-drama. The narratives and dialogues are recited by a choir and a narrator, called *Khon Phak*. As for the stories of the *Khon*, Rutnin (1993:8) explains,

All through the play, there are constant comparisons between the two opposing rulers, their politics, social and domestic affairs, systems of government, characters and personalities, as well as their psychological complexities, all of which were originally intended to give political, social, moral, and religious lessons to the audience. However, there are also many instances of comic relief provided by the demon and monkey soldier, comedians, and court jesters, who, being unmasked, exchange witty improvised dialogue.

³ *Lakhon* (classical dance-drama) performances are less formalized than those of *Khon*. Movements are more graceful, with the upper torsos and hands portraying specific emotions through conventionalized movements. According to Rutnin (1993:8-14), "*Lokhon* is romantic and social in its themes and Buddhist [philosophy] in its messages." About the stories in *Lakhon* performances, Rutnin (1993:11) writes,

Lakhon nok (folk dance-drama) are *Jataka* tales from the Mahayanna Buddhist collection of *Panyasa-Chadok* (*Pannada-Jataka*), meaning the "Fifty Lives of Phothisat," such as the life of the Bodhisattawa Phra Sang in *Sangthong*, with emphasis on comic and melodramatic scenes. On the other hand, the stories of *Lakhon nai* (female dance-drama of the inner royal court) are from the *Ramakien*, *Inao* and *Unarut*, with emphasis on love scenes and the domestic affairs of members of the aristocracy and the royal family.

In 1930, Mom Ratchawong Anusak Hatsadin produced two 35-mm silent films, *Ee Nak Phrakhanong* (Nak of Phrakhanong), a story about a female ghost obsessively attached to her husband, and a romantic war story, *Rop Rawang Rak* (Battle in the Middle of Love, written and directed by Khun Visit Matra), about World War I. Despite its special effects, this film appeared to follow the traditional style by presenting stereotyped characters and familiar storylines. According to Parichat (2000), the main reason for the incorporation of these traditional elements was so that audiences could enjoy the film as much as they did the other more traditional forms of Thai dramatic arts.

Regarding the 1930s, the most important development was the introduction of the Cinema Act on Cinema Censorship in 1931. According to Parichat (2000), the intention was to keep an increasing number of Thai commercial films under the control of the government by eliminating all elements that opposed Thai culture, tradition, social order, and morality. Commenting on this Act, Kannitha Chitprakorb (1998:44), comments, "Any film carrying vulgar language, obscene images, explicit love scenes, violence and/or controversial political issues would be banned from being shown." He adds that the 1931 Film Act was powerful and strictly adhered to, especially as it applied to filmmaking conventions; following its enactment, most filmmakers continued with familiar topics from Thai traditional stories so that their films would be released safely to the public.

In 1932, *Long Thang* (Going Astray), filmed by the Wasuwat family at the Sri Krung Studio, was the first 'talkie' using western techniques. Parichat (2000) emphasizes that it is also known for its experimental portrayal of urban social problems by contrasting virtuous ideals and vice. By this time, the Sri Krung Studio had produced numerous films with sound and music, and released phonographic records of popular songs and tunes from the box office. Moreover, the fashions of their "idol" stars had become the model for young fans. This period was truly considered to be the beginning of the Thai film industry. However, according to Rutnin (1996), the stories still kept to the same patterns as those in traditional '*Lakhon*'—romantic, melodramatic, and idealistic.

After the Revolution of 1932, the Sri Krung Film Studio continued to serve the government under the new regime. The new government set up the Air Force Cinema Division; their major task was to propagate the nationalistic schemes of Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram. According to Rutnin (1996), the most popular and influential propagandistic films were *Luad Thahan Thai* (Blood of Thai Soldiers), in 1935, and *Baan Rai Na Rao* (Our Home), in 1947, designed to promote Premier Phibun Songkhram's '*patiwat wathanatham*' (cultural revolution) which was intended to upgrade the status of Thai farmers, and to encourage people to take agriculture seriously during the depression period that lasted both throughout and after World War II. The hero in *Luad Thahan Thai*

(Blood of Thai Soldiers) sported an American cowboy outfit to create a new image for Thai farmers. The actor who starred in this film was Air Force Lieutenant Thaiwi Chullasap, a popular personality in the governments of Field Marshals Phibun Songkhram, Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kittikhachorn. Another significant propaganda film, *Phra Chao Chang Puak (The King of the White Elephant)*, was made in 1940 by Pridi Banomyong, the Minister of Finance. According to Parichat (2000), this film contained English subtitles in an attempt to earn the Nobel Peace Prize. Its content was officially against fascism, which was spreading its tentacles in Germany, Japan, and Thailand. Songs and music in film became very popular among the younger generation. According to Rutnin (1996), it was customary for film stars to sing their theme songs on stage during the intermission and this became a tradition in Thai cinemas until the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Thai film industry prospered in the early 1940s, but, as Rutnin (1996) comments, it could not develop to even higher standards because of a lack of business and professional training among its professionals and because of a lack of modernization. Furthermore, according to Dome and Sawasdi (2001) and Rutnin (1996), due to World War II, film negatives could not be imported from abroad, resulting in the closure of some film businesses. The cinemas that had functioned in theater settings were replaced with melodramatic, domestic, romantic, or historical plays. 'Lakhon Phut' (spoken drama) with songs and music flourished. Thus, film stars, directors, scriptwriters, composers and technical crews returned to the stage theater business. According to Rutnin (1996:188), "these theaters of the war period adopted many features from the cinema, particularly the use of a live modern orchestra, variety dance shows, songs, and comedy during intermission." During the post-war period, making cinemas with cheap 16-mm film was common due to the scarcity of 35-mm film stock and the nation's poor economic situation. Films like *Chat Chai (Manhood)*, M. C. Sukawannadit Diskul, 1946) and *Suphaburut Sua Thai (Thai Gentleman)*, Thee Prakaswutthisan and M. C. Sukawannadit Diskul, 1949) made a big hit. According to Parichat (2000), despite the poor quality of their images, the repetitious storylines from Thai folk tales, and the traditional performances, the films enjoyed great success. She also adds that the majority of films during this period dealt with melodramatic escapism, a main theme of famous Thai traditional stories. Sirichai (1988) notes that as a means of escapism, a film portrayed a hero of noble origin and a heroine from the lower class. Because of her good deeds, her true identity began to appear, and it usually turned out that she was actually a missing heiress from a wealthy family. Such stories typically end dramatically with the hero marrying her. According to Sirichai (1988:106), "Such plots were treated as being not much different from Thai traditional performances."

Although filmmaking activity started again in the 1950s, it was a step back into the silent film era with sound later dubbed into the films by voice performers called 'Khon Phak'¹⁰, because of inferior technical and artistic quality of the films. According to Rutnin (1996), this term came from the word for the narrator in 'Khon' performances. She argues that their performances and productions maintained a theatrical style regarded as unsuitable for the film medium. It was not until the late 1970s that a new generation of film directors and technicians became well-trained in the art of cinematography. However, Rutnin (1996) emphasizes that the majority of film actors and actresses still lacked professional training. As noted above, films in the 1950s and 1960s were mostly melodramas with a "Cinderella" theme or romantic adventures based on popular novels. Commenting there was no 'established or clearly-defined ending,' Parichat (2000) states, these repetitious story lines generated a new term, '*Nang Nam Nao*'¹¹. Dome (1990:29) explains, "...one could find love plot, life crisis, violent action scenes, nerve-breaking thrills, tragic moments with an additional sex, glamour, slapstick and a happy ending [in the formulaic, typical Thai films of the time]." However, Rutnin (1996) claims that the popularity of the film heroes and heroines was sufficient to save the film industry during this tough period.

In the 1960s, according to Parichat (2000) and Sirichai (1998), as a solution for the conventional burdens of typical plots and characters as well as traditional themes and narratives, a so-called 'star system' was introduced into the Thai film industry. Mitr Chaibancha, Thai's long-time cinema star, together with a famous actress, Petchara Chaowarat, starred in the film *Ban Tuk Rak Pimchawee* (*Pimchawee's Love Diary*) in 1962, and made it the biggest hit ever. However, with the sudden death of Mitr, the iconic film star of the 16-mm film period, the government was able to launch a promotion of 35-mm films in 1969, declaring that patentees must only produce 35-mm films. According to Dome (1990), great success was enjoyed by Piac Poster's first 35-mm film, *Tone* (*Tone*), made in 1971, and consequently, the golden period of the 16-mm film era began to fade away.

Modern realist films containing social themes began to emerge in the 1970s, according to Parichat (2000) under the direction of Western-trained professionals. According to Dome and Sawasdi (2000), the government's promotion of the domestic film industry, through its strong protectionist measures against foreign-imported films,

¹⁰ Within this context, *Khon* means a person, *Khon* can also mean masked dance; *Phak* means to provide dialogue in Thai during the screening of a film with foreign dialogue.

¹¹ *Nang* means film and *Nam Nao* means stagnant water. Therefore, *Nang Nam Nao* means, literally, "films that stink," whose chief characteristic is the repetition of storylines like those of traditional performances (Nithi Aiewsiwong, 1995, pp. 78-79).

especially from Hollywood, granted greater opportunities for Thai filmmakers. This also led Thai films in the 1970s to vary their subject matter and to touch upon more socially-based themes. Commenting on the relationship between the socio-political situation of Thai society at the time and filmic changes, Manop Udomdej (1988) states that, after the October 14 student uprising in 1974, Thai films experienced enormous changes in their content, and the frames with which they portrayed the stories. However, since the middle 1980s, as Thai films gradually lost their competitiveness to Hollywood films in the domestic film market, only a limited number of modern realist films conveying social themes have been produced.

M. R. Kukrit Pramoj (1971:463-493) notes that, "Thai films, in comparison to a language, are very repetitious and unclear." Traditionally, Thai films took their motifs from traditional performances and novels. Romantic, idealistic or tragic stories were the most commonly adopted themes. The stories and novels on which the films were based provided a means of escapism, spiriting their readers away from reality and bringing them pleasure and joy as the story unfolded with a happy ending. As Sirichai (1988) argues, Thai films are melodramas, an odd mixture of everything from tragedy to romance to comedy. Despite the influence of Hollywood, modern production techniques, and the star system, according to Parichat (2000), the narrative and plots of Thai films still remained within the story lines of the traditional Thai entertainment format. The typical themes in Thai folktales, the '*Ramakian*' and the '*Jatakas*', the main sources for such Thai traditional performances as '*Khon*', '*Lakorn*', and '*Likay*'¹² that later inspired Thai films with such motifs as romances between couples from different social echelons, in-law conflict, and jealousy between "main" wife and minor wife (or wives). Sirapon Nanthalang (2000) states that these themes are familiar to Thai people, as they had been woven into their life styles for so many generations.

¹² *Likay* performances (folk dance-drama) "contain elements of pantomime, comic folk opera and social satire" (cf. Parichat 2000). According to Rutnin (1993:6), "*Likay*, 'a modernized version of *Lakhon nok* (ibid:73),' because of its popular themes, wit and humor, is the form which best survives as a people's art."

3.2 Film Movements in Realism and *'Nang Pua Chiwit'* in the 1970s

One of the most significant points made by many scholars regarding Thai films of the 1970s was, according to Sirichai (1988) and Parichat (2000), that some of the films, especially those dealing with and reflecting society, were more realistic and less escapist compared to those of the past. Noting that the award-winning Thai Best-Picture films during the 1976-1994 period reflect social problems based on verisimilitude and realistic conventions, Ratana Srichanachaichok (1994) claims that, since the 1970s, a new group of filmmakers have attempted to realistically reflect and/or express their social opinions through filmic content. The concepts of social realism in film and socially-realistic films are introduced in this section. In addition, a sub-genre of social realist films: *'Nang Pua Chiwit'* will also be discussed.

3.2.1 Narrative Films⁸ and Realism

According to Hallam and Marshment (2000), realism is 'a form of representation' that aims for authenticity in representing social reality as it is. As the dominant form of representation in our culture, realism is the most powerful concept. Hallam and Marshment add that realism emphasizes the ordinary, not the extraordinary, rejecting unbelievable plots and unlikely characters. In production, a realist effect is created through props and sets that reproduce everyday life in great detail.

Historically, there are two significant realist movements in film studies: Soviet socialist realism and Italian neo-realism. According to James (1973), the former, the doctrine of which was set out by Zhadanov in 1932, is an art form that was colored by the experiences of the working class in its struggle to achieve socialism. Neo-realism was developed later, in Italy, after World War II. Hallam and Marshment (2000) state that the central characteristics of neo-realism consist of such filmmaking practices as location shooting, the use of non-professional actors, the desire of the filmmakers to get closer to their subject(s), their choice of subject matter (for example, the lives of ordinary people), and the ideological-political angle of the films, tending towards the left wing or liberal humanism. Thus, a realist film is not simply a recording and/or reproducing of the real

⁷ Literally translated into 'Films for Life.'

⁸ The term 'narrative film' refers to 'fictional film.' Generally, it emphasizes individual actions, a specific time and place, and so on (Nick Lacey 1998:196).

world. As Turner (1999) notes, a film is a medium which can ‘transform’ the real with its own unique language and its particular way of making sense. In ‘Breaking the Glass Armour’, neo-formalist Kristen Thompson (1988:197-198) says that,

if the cues ask us to appeal to our knowledge of the real world, we can say that the work is using realistic motivation. And if realistic motivation becomes one of the main ways of justifying the work’s overall structures, then we generalize and perceive the work as a whole as realistic.

Thompson analyzed the Italian neo-realist film “Bicycle Thieves”⁹ (De Sica, 1948) and identified five aspects of the film’s text and viewing contexts. First, the subject matter of the film draws on a historical notion, that of concentrating on the lives of peasants and the working class, which makes for more realistic action. Second, the narrative strays from a close link between characters and actions, unlike typical mainstream film narratives, by introducing sideline events and coincidences. Third, and most obvious, within the context of studio-bound mainstream film practice, the use of non-professional actors and location shooting make the style of *mise-en-scene*¹⁰ and cinematography seem realistic for its time. Furthermore, according to Thompson, although the film focuses on a social issue, it presents the social problem objectively, rather than advocating a solution to it. Finally, she emphasizes that the film calls attention to itself as more authentic and closer to representing the truth of everyday experience. As Hallam and Marshment (2000) comment, Thompson’s case study provides an excellent critique of a film which, breaking dominant conventions, came to be judged as a realist film by film scholars and reviewers alike.

⁹ *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), directed by Vittorio De Sica and written by Cesare Zavattini, is probably the best classic Neo-realist film. It focuses on an incident related to unemployment, a pressing problem in post-war Italy.

¹⁰ In French, ‘place on stage.’ It refers to what is placed in front of camera.

3.2.2 A Social Realist Film

Social realism, according to Hallam and Marshment (2000), was originally associated with the British Film Institution in the early 1960s. It is generally viewed as a mode of cinematic representation that focuses on the lives of its characters in a particular milieu or environment. It is intended to portray the effects of environmental factors on the development of a character through depictions that emphasize the relationship between location and identity. As Hallam and Marshment explain (2000:190), “. . . social realism, [often termed ‘slice of life’ dramas], is distinguished by the attention it pays to characters marginalized by virtue of their social status.” Traditionally, social realism tends to be associated with an observational style of camerawork that emphasizes situations, events, and an episodic narrative structure. More recently, the term has come to describe any moving image drama that engages relationships between everyday life, environment, and the characters. Hallam and Marshment state that, compared to traditional forms, contemporary forms of social realism are more diverse, and while focused on similar subject matter, they tend to use a wider range of features in style. Using the socio-economic matrix of localized situations as background, the films play out dramas of ‘universal’ human significance – ranging from development and conflict between the generations, domestic relationships, and the traumas of everyday family life to the realities of social and economic deprivation, injustice, and inequity, with particular attention paid to people and places left on the margins of society.

To sum up, the social realist films feature the relationships between place, character, and identity. They are all set in economically marginalized communities, places where people are disenfranchised by poverty and lack of opportunity. However, as Hallam and Marshment (2000) claim, there are no simple narrative resolutions in these films to the oppression that blights daily life, only an emphasis on reflecting how things are and an implication of the need for change.

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

3.2.3 *'Nang Pua Chiwit'* in the 1970s

In the 1970s, there was an emergence of socially-engaged films in Thailand, either mainly or partially dealing with various kinds of social issues, ranging from corruption, drug problems, prostitution, rural disparity, and other urban problems to Bangkok dreamers (urban migrants), which we looked at carefully in the previous chapter. The 1970s is considered a progressive period in Thai film history in terms of technical development, with official support for 35-mm sound in film production. However, our main focus is not only on technical developments, but also on the improved quality of filmic content and the subject matter contained in such films as exemplified in the development of *'Nang Pua Chiwit'*, –socially -engaged films that attempt to increase public awareness of particular social issues.

'Nang Pua Chiwit' (lit. Films for Life) can be interpreted as 'socially-engaged films' or 'socially-oriented films.' But, film was not the first medium to explore this concept. The socially-engaged genre of works began with music and literature, arising out of the changing socio-political atmosphere in Thai society during the 1970s. The term *'Pleng Pua Chiwit'* (lit. Songs for Life) started to be used in 1973, when inspired student-groups sang revolutionary songs while protesting against the dictatorial regime. These songs expressed visions of equality and freedom, and dealt with issues of poverty, oppression, and the people's struggles for a better life and a fairer society in the 1970s. Provocative phrases, such as "Wake up, free people," "Ten killed, hundreds of thousands reborn," and "The people must reign over this land," examples of what the lyrics of these songs emphasized. According to the Teerapap Lohirakul, author of the book- *'Phahaomabot Pleng Luk Tung Lae Pleng Pua Chiwit Thai* (The First Chapter of Thai Folk Songs and Songs for Life),' *'Pleng Pua Chiwit'* shares the same roots as Thai folk music and/or ballads, which are mostly about the lives of the lower classes. He argues that a lot of these early songs convey messages which are still applicable to present-day concerns. For example, one song mocks heavy tax burdens and suggests that people may soon be charged for breathing, whereas another mocks greedy, corrupt politicians who would go so far as to 'eat' [steal] the farmers' tools.

Meanwhile, as to the literature in this same "revolutionary" genre, called *'Nangsu Pua Chiwit'*, (lit. Books for Life), many books served as critical inspiration for film scripts or stories and some were directly applied to filmmaking; examples include, Suwannee Sukontha's *Khao Chu Kan* (*Dr. Kan*, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1972), Krissana Asokesin's *Nam Sor Sai* (*Nam Sor Sai*, Wichit Kounavudhi, 1974), and See Fa's *Khao Nok Na* (*Half Breed*, Piac Poster, 1975). For instance, *Khao Nok Na* is the story of a girl,

Dam, who was born of a Thai mother and an Afro-American father and who has a half-sister of a White-American father. After her mother abandons her, she has to fight for her life against people who are unwilling to accept her because of the color of her skin. The film contrasts the well-being of the white-American sister, in the comfort of her adopted family, to the misery of Dam, who is not adopted due to her undesirable skin color. Through this story, readers are made keenly aware of the stereotypic misconceptions, prejudices, and injustices regarding race and/or skin color that permeated Thai society at that time.

Despite the existence of films projecting society on a realistic basis and in a more critical context even before the 1970s, the reason for highlighting those made in the 1970s is perhaps due to the possible link between the existing socio-political conditions and the filmic content and message of that period. More specifically, it cannot be overlooked that the changing socio-political atmosphere during the 1970s, along with the results of the two political events of October 14, 1973 and October 6, 1976, encouraged the film directors to express their social points of view through their films, just as song writers and novelists did through their own work. However, this may not have been the only reason for films projecting a much more widened scope of society. Changes in film production systems, better financial conditions, and the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers, who were trained both in Thailand as well as abroad in new filmmaking techniques, also exerted their own influence on the types of films made in the 1970s. William J. Klausner elaborates on (1993:337) this new group of film directors who aimed to produce films that addressed different issues compared with those of the past. According to him, since the early 1970s, films with a new progressive and realistic form entered the mainstream, due to the efforts of

...ambitious and imaginative directors (who) have broken the traditional mold. They've sought new faces and treated contemporary themes with frankness; avoided complicated and irrelevant subplots; discarded comedy and violence when not relevant to the storyline and used improved editing and photographic techniques.

Among these directors, Mom Chao Chatrichalerm Yugala (commonly known by his nickname, Tan Muy) was the most respected leading pioneer. His influence on the younger film directors and producers created a new wave in the film industry. Commenting on M. C. Chatrichalerm and his films, Lee Server (1999:118) says, "A maverick independent, financing his own films, specializing in crime and lowlife subjects

and with a taste for shocking images and daring camerawork, M. C. Chatrichalerm might be dubbed 'the Thai Sam Fuller.'" After studying cinematography in the U.S., M. C. Chatrichalerm directed his debut film, *Man Ma Kap Khwam Mud* (Out of the Darkness, 1971), a science fiction movie about extraterrestrials landing in a primitive village. His second film, *Khao Chu Kan* (Dr. Kan, 1972), was one of the first films to deal with government and police corruption, and the military. His third film was *Theptida Rongraem* (Angel of Hotel, 1974), about young migrant prostitutes in Bangkok, and one of his best-known films, *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* (Taxi Driver (The Citizen I), 1977) was about a migrant taxi driver who loses his car to a gang of bandits, along with all his dreams for the future. He also directed several sequences to this film, *Itsaraphap Khong Tongpoon Kokpo* (Freedom of Taxi Driver (The Citizen II), 1984) and *Tongpoon Kokpo Klap Baan* (Citizen Go Home (The Citizen III)). M. C. Chatrichalerm continued to both direct and produce many films that could be considered as '*Nang Pua Chiwit*'. Notably, in 1976, there were *Thewada Doen Din* (A Walking Angel On the Ground), and *Phom Mai Yak Pen Phantho* (I Didn't Not Want to Be a Lieutenant), about a spy who is sent by the Thai government to a small province in the Northern part of Thailand where there are on-going communist activities in the jungle. This film sets up the communists as evil villains who need to be stopped for the sake of peace. It is a recognizable plot within the context of the worldwide explosion of anti-communist ideology throughout the 1970s. In addition, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, M. C. Chatrichalerm directed *Kru Somsri* (Teacher Somsri, 1986), about a slum teacher who fights for the rights of slum people, *Khon Liang Chang* (Elephant Keeper, 1990), about an upcountry elephant mahout who struggles with his traditional way of life in face of the modern technology and life philosophy which isolates him and his life style, *Nong Mia* (Sister-in-law, 1990), about boat people coming to Bangkok for the sand trade and the hardships, and *Siadai 1,2* (What a Pity!,¹⁷ 1995, 1996), stories about neglected high school girls from different poor and unstable family backgrounds who became involved in drug addiction and prostitution. The latter two films were great successes, winning many awards. They propagated social concerns about how the younger generation would suffer worse hardships and engage in worse life styles by being exposed to the dark side of society if their elders did not give them enough love and care. All these films, and the novels they were based on, share a common characteristic of portraying people who are marginalized from the mainstream society, which is how they came to be called "Films of Life."

¹⁷ Translated by the author.

As did Klausner (1983), Sirichai (1988) also speaks of “breaking the traditional mold,” which he defines similarly to Klausner. In his book “Thai Films,” he divides the development of Thai films into several periods: from 1947 until 1970, he entitles it the 16mm period; from 1971 until 1976, the Transitional period; and, from 1977 until 1982, the New Trend period. He asserts that the films made before the Transitional Period are clearly different from those of made after 1971 in terms of both content and form. Before the Transitional Period, Thai films evolved from traditional forms of entertainment in Thailand, and were more or less a reproduction of Thai play forms, such as ‘*Khon*’, ‘*Lakorn*’, ‘*Likay*’ and shadow plays. The films mostly dealt with the good versus evil conflict or melodramatic storylines. However, in the 1970s, new realistic and progressive styles of film flowed into the mainstream. Among the more realistic themes these films dealt with were portraying the reality of teenagers’ lives (e.g., *Tone* by Piac Poster), valuing the modern trend in culture (e.g., *Mon Rak Luk Tung*¹⁸ with ‘*Luk Tung*’ or country music), and literature with socially significant subject matter (e.g., *Khao Chu Kan*). Sirichai emphasizes that at the same time that “critical changes in filmic content and subject matter were being brought about by the changing political climate throughout the 1973 and 1976 student movements... (Ibid: 136-137) ... [and] film critics became more critical than before” (Ibid: 133). He concludes that the films of the 1970s had progressed by raising various kinds of social issues and dealing with them from more realistic and critical angles.

Parichat (2000) also describes the characteristics of this Progressive Period (1973-1985) in her research on the influences of Hollywood movies on contemporary Thai films. According to her, the characteristics of 1970s films are, first, the establishment of 35-mm sound in film production and the government’s support of the Thai film industry by imposing heavy duty on foreign films in 1977. As a result, 80-100 films were produced and shown to the public in about 700 theaters per year. Second, the political changes resulting from the 1973 and 1976 student uprisings encouraged the directors to express their social views more openly, which meant that film was no longer merely an art form but had also become a tool of social expression. Finally, the films of this period could be characterized by a new group of directors, who dealt with different themes from those in the past, and many of whom probably worked under conditions of reduced financial burden in their filmmaking. Good examples of this group of directors include M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, mentioned earlier, Chana Kraprayoon, and Piac Poster. According to Parichat (2000), throughout the 1970s, it was evident that a number of Thai films started focusing on contemporary social issues rather than on conventional wish-fulfillment. In other words, many Thai films were moving towards reality from escapism.

¹⁸ Fascination with Country Music (English title).

Between 1973 and 1976, a variety of films were produced that tackled social issues in an effort to arrive at solutions, educate people, and allow for a catharsis of emotions. Among them, for example, were films describing 'Bangkok Dreamers', *Theptida Rongraem* (Angel of Hotel, M. C. Chatrichleom Yugala, 1974), 'Family Concerns', *Mai Mee Sawan Samrap Khun* (There's no heaven for you, Parinya Leelasorn, 1974); 'Drug problems', *Samlam Thongkham* (Golden Triangle, 1975), made by a group of Thai filmmakers in documentary style; *Mae Dok Kancha* (Mother of Marijuana,¹³ Dokdin Kanyaman, 1977); and 'Corruption', *Talad Phromajaree* (Virginity Market, Sakka Charujinda). Through the subject matter of these films, filmmakers and film audiences at the time became highly involved in social issues that, for the most part, had not been dealt with in the past. Among this group of films, *Talad Phromajaree* and *Khao Chu Kan* had special significance as the first generation of socially-engaged films that addressed such contain such risky topics as corruption in the government and among other officials.

However, as Peter Aulukrin (cf. Sirichai 1988:125) wrote, after 1976, when another political event organized by student groups had failed and the military regime returned to power, for the most part films retreated to their conventional pre-revolution ways of "repeating the similar story lines with the same movie stars, containing popular '*Luk Tung*' songs, and leading the story to the happy ending." However, there were still some films that dealt with socially-engaged topics and which continued to convey profound social messages. For example, films like *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* (The Citizen I, M. C. Chatrichleom Yugala, 1977) and *Prachachon Nok* (On the Fringe of Society, Manop Udomdej, 1976) deal with 'Bangkok Dreamers' and their struggles in the city; *Khon Klang Daed* (A Man in the Sun¹⁴, Kit Suwansorn, 1979), *Chiwit Batsop* (A Damned Life, Peumpon Cheuiarun, 1976) and *Namkhang Yod Diao* (A Single Dew Drop,¹⁵ Suchat Uthichai, 1978¹⁶) reflect the hardships of urban life; and *Khon Phu Khao* (Mountain People, Wichit Kounavudhi, 1979), *Luk Isaan* (Son of the Northeast, Wichit Kounavudhi, 1982), and *Kru Baan Nok* (Rural Teacher, Surasi Patham, 1978) illustrate rural life and rural people. *Khon Klang Daed* is a tale of poor and lower-class people who make a hard living by selling jasmine flower garlands in the street; however, the film not only shows the depressing parts of their lives as powerless and money-less citizens, it also depicts them as people who have dreams, just like anyone else, and how hard they try to

¹³ Translated by the author.

¹⁴ Translated by the author.

¹⁵ Translated by the author.

¹⁶ Translated by the author.

make their dreams come true. *Chiwit Batsop* is about a slum teacher whose family life is gradually destroyed and broken by the lack of morality and ethics in society. The protagonist, depicted as a good and genuine person throughout the film, is driven to commit murder at the end, and the film ends on a sad note. *Namkhang Yod Diao* is the story of a family experiencing many kinds of dramatic and desperate situations. As the wife of a man who got injured while he was working on the construction site and the mother of a young boy, the protagonist gets fired from work at the beginning of the film. She subsequently faces sexual discrimination, injustice, and even verbal assaults, because of the harsh reality of her being the female breadwinner in Thai society at that time. While her husband tries to kill himself, blaming their ills on his unfortunate life, their son sells newspapers in the street with the dream of getting a wheelchair for his father. However, the movie ends tragically when the son commits suicide after witnessing the death of his father. Throughout the film, the title song for the film "What is life? . . . Sometimes it is struggling . . ." poignantly makes this story even darker and more tragic.

Sirichai (1988:137) notes, "Thai films of this period began to realize a new role in reflecting society" with the emergence of democratic movements in Thai society. He gives as examples *Phu Kradung* (*Phu Kradung*, Ruj Ranapop, 1973), which deals with the forest preservation issue, and *Raeng Rak* (*Power of Love*, Phankham, 1973), which satirically touches on the harshness of society.

In an interesting article, "Thai Film and The Reflection of Society (1973-1986)," which not only relates the trends in 1970s films to internal socio-political changes but also to external factors, Anchali Chaiwarapun (1997) argues that after the 1960s, the deepening conflict between America's younger, fast-changing generation and their elders as a result of the Vietnam War had a huge impact on many young people's minds and ideologies worldwide. Such famous Western films as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which compares the world to a psychiatric hospital, and *The Graduate*, which stands against the older generation's ideology, came to Thailand and wielded a huge influence on Thailand's young generation. They were motivated to look at the dark side of their society, at the authoritarian military government that remained in force for a long time and that opposed political democracy. A clash with the giant traditional wall of the older generations was inevitable. The ensuing collision surfaced in many important socio-cultural areas like music, film, and literature, especially after the two student movements of 1973 and 1976. According to by Anchali Chaiwarapun (1997), films made before 1973 were typically more focused on the filmic function of entertaining and filmmakers paid more attention to quantity rather than to filmic quality. Consequently, the educated Thais became more interested in seeing Western films, because of their particular concern with the very filmic

function of criticizing society. However, between 1976 and the mid-1980s, a number of Thai films appeared that tried to reflect society and therefore, this period, especially from 1978 to 1982, has been called 'the Golden Age of Thai films.'

In the early 1970s, before the October 14 political events, socio-political messages were shown through film commercials and the film interpreter's dialogues. For instance, according to Dome (1990), the advertisement for the film '*Chao Tung*,' made by Phromsin Siboonruang (Phankham), begins with the verse, "Today, everybody searches for Freedom!" In the second phase, the period between the October 14, 1973 and the October 6, 1976 uprisings was regarded as the real experimental period of 'democracy'; however, despite the liberated social atmosphere of the time, it may not have lasted long enough for filmmakers to fully introduce their social views into the content of their films. In some instances, as Dome adds, the film interpreters used names of significant political figures, such as Thanom or Narong, as villains' names, making audiences laugh and joke. After the successful student uprising in 1973, paving the way for freedom in the film movement, many films appeared that freely expressed a social critique, according to Wimonrad Arunrotsuriya (2000); for example, '*Nang Phet*' films which started a trend of depicting transvestites, films with more violent subject matter, and also, films which were sympathetic of left-wing ideology. In addition, the increased screening of more pornographic films in local cinemas during this period illustrates a more liberated mood towards filmmaking at the time.

However, following the resurgence of the military regime after the failure of the 1976 student uprising, this extremely short experimental period of democracy started to fade away. Thai films retreated to their old traditions of dealing with light topics for the purpose of entertainment. M. C. Chatrichalerm states,

... After the uprising in October, 6, I was returning from Thammasart University thinking about making a film with songs, dances and romance, something easy and light. At the time, nobody could dare to speak out about the issues of the day. Making this kind of light-hearted film, I would not have to argue with anybody, especially with the censorship board. That period was not a democratic period. How could we continue to do the types of things we had done before it [the student uprising] happened? (cf. Anchali 1997)

Although much of what M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala reports was true, a number of socially critical and realistic films were still being made. For example, *Tongpan* (Tongpan, 1973), which deals with the issue of a dam construction in the Northeast and its negative

impact on the lives of villagers, including that of the protagonist Tongpan, had Pajjong Laisakul as a producer, Yuthana Mukdasanit as a co-director, Surachai Jantimathon as a music director and co-producer, Laokhamhom, a writer of serious fiction about social concerns, as screenplay writer, with Surasi Patham participating and social critics like Sulak Sivaraksa and Sanae Jamarik making special guest appearances. However, this film was categorized as an anti-government after the failure of the students' democratic movement in 1976. Many people who were involved in the making of the film were either put in jail or forced to flee into the jungles and join communist groups. Another film of that period, *Prachachon Nok* (On the Fringe of Society, Manop Udomdej, 1981), cannot be ignored in that the unfairness of society and the corruption of provincial officers were well depicted through the eyes of a labor migrant, "Khong Phaeng," and of rural farmers "Sawai" and "Charat." The director, Manop Udomdej, produced many films related to social issues and problems, presenting them from a very realistic perspective. In their styles, these two films are considered as semi-documentary films, considerably different from commercial films in the mainstream. Yet another film from this period, *Karn Tor Su Khong Kammakorn Rong-ngan Hara* (Hara Factory Workers Struggle, Jon Ungpakorn, 1975), tells the stories of "Shawkiang Saechua" and "Niyam Kantoe," who initiate labor strikes against the Hara garment factory and set up their own cooperative and finally get arrested when trying to meet the Prime Minister. The film follows the victories and defeats of these Thai factory workers from the perspective of the women. In addition, *Assajeree* (Exclamation (!), 1976) is a satire on the poverty and the harsh environment of Thai children living in slum areas by using a popular nursery rhyme, *Chan Chao Kha* (Dear Moon), about children praying to the moon.

Anchali (1997) views the 1972-1976 period as the most influential for Thai filmmaking in 30 years, and she elaborates on the emergence of a new wave of filmmakers, like Piac Poster, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, Peumpom Cheuiarun, and their style of projecting society (e.g., *Shu* (Lover¹⁷, Piac Poster, 1972), *Theptida Rongraem* (Angel of Hotel, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1974), *Chiwit Batsop* (A Damned Life, Peumpom Cheuiarun, 1976). She defines the period of 1977-1986 (especially 1978-1982) as the most prominent period in Thai film history, giving as examples Wichit Kounavudhi's *Khon Phu Khao* (Mountain People, 1979) and *Luk Isaan* (Son of the Northeast, 1982); M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala's *Tonpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Tem Khan* (The Citizen I, 1977); Cheud Songsri's *Plae Kao* (The Scar, 1977); Yuthana Mukdasanit's *Nampoo* (Nampoo, 1983); and *Pi Sua Lae Dok Mai* (The Butterfly and the Flower, 1986). In *Khon Phu Khao*,

¹⁷ Translated by the author.

Wichit Khunavudhi illustrates the life of indigenous mountain people in Northern Thailand about whom the Thai people had not known very much until the film was screened. The film was sensational because it used mountain people's dialects in the conversations, with subtitles in official Thai, and also because of its use of their traditional music in the film. For the purposes of this paper, *Luk Isaan* is a significant film, as it covers migration movements not only in the 1970s but also from the time when they first started in the 1930 and 1940s. This film was not produced with a thematic storyline; instead, its main purpose was simply to show the life of rural people in the Isaan¹⁸ region. However, the film poses a key question; "Should rural peasants and/or workers have to migrate to the city?" The next important film Wichit Khunavudhi made after *Luk Isaan* was *Puying Khon Nan Chu Boonrawd* (Her name is Boonrawd¹⁹, 1984), based on Botan's novel of the same name. It is the story of a woman, Boonrawd, who comes from a rural home to work in the city of Korat, where the American air base was located. In the story, she adamantly refuses to become the hired wife of a Westerner, which was very popular among many lower-class working women. The film reflects the changes in the traditional and moral values of the 1970s by introducing the concept of 'the hired wife' and depicting the problems of prostitution, a job chosen for economic reasons by female laborers and spread by external forces in Thailand, such as the notion of R&R (Rest and Recreation) for American service men during the Vietnam War. The film questions why a poor girl like Boonrawd should be seen as a prostitute who sells her body for money. The film creates a new image for women, drawing on Boonrawd as a model of an independent and righteous woman, as contrasted with her sister, Lem, who, as the single mother of a half-black child, works as a prostitute, and with Boonrawd's mother who does not care how her daughters make their money but only how much they bring to her. The case of Lem and her mother is representative of most daughters who became "hired wives" or prostitutes and of most mothers who, living in impoverished rural areas, had to finally depend on their daughters' earnings. *Kru Baan Nok* (Rural Teacher, Surasi Patham, 1978) is another film that pictures rural people's lives. It is the story of a teacher, Kru Piya, in a small village in Isaan. As the story unfolds, he starts to fight against the unrighteousness and unethical behavior of some villains who take advantage of the area's forest and the rights of local people. After the death of Kru Piya at the end of the first series, *Nong Ma Wo* (Nong Ma Wo, Surasi Patham, 1979), the sequels in the *Kru Baan Nok* series, continued to focus on the injustices in the same village, named Nong Ma Wo, showing how they had affected other areas of

¹⁸ Northern-east part of Thailand.

¹⁹ Translated by the author.

village life. The disparity between the rich and the poor, between the urban and the rural, and the poor conditions of rural Thais are vividly depicted in these films that concentrate on the region of Isaan.

Films like *Theptida Bar 21* (Angel of Bar 21, Yuthana Mukdasanit, 1978), and *Muang Khor Than* (The City of Beggars, Peumpon Cheuiarun, 1978) highlight issues regarding moral ethics and the unfairness of society. According to Yuthana, *Theptida Bar 21* is an adaptation of Jean Paul Sartre's The Respectful Prostitute. It was Yuthana's first feature length film and the second film, after M. C. Chatrichalerm's *Theptida Rongraem*, to deal with the subject matter of prostitution seriously as its main issue. It also touches upon the rich who attack the poor on the grounds of moral ethics. *Theptida Bar 21* is considered to be the first full-length musical or cabaret style of Thai film; a style which, by its very nature, softened the presentation of the thorny subject of prostitution, thereby making it acceptable to a wide audience while still conveying serious social messages. *Muang Khor Than* is about two different groups of beggars, one of which is characterized as being evilly authoritarian, while the other is run democratically. The former always tries to put the latter under their control; and, most important, we witness the indifference of society toward these people and how people like them are isolated and marginalized in society. Another film by Peumpon, *Fai Daeng* (Red Light, 1979), realistically portrays the social pressures and struggles of life in society.

To conclude, Thai films produced in this period from 1972 until 1976, dealt with realistic and serious subjects while continuing to entertain the audience at the same time. It is especially interesting to note the emergence of a "New Wave" of filmmakers, and the fact that many of the films produced by this group of filmmakers were socially engaged, with more critical points of view. According to some, the emergence of this group of filmmakers can be attributed to the democratic movements in the 1970s and the new wave of freedom in Thai society; others ascribe it to the Thai government's protectionist measure in 1977, which curbed the importing of foreign films by levying heavy duty on them, thereby widening opportunities for Thai film production. Not to be dismissed were the availability of better production systems and greater financial resources.

Social realist films encourage identification not merely with its characters but with the situations and events they experience, as Bordwell(1988) notes, by combining events and situations that are credible not only in terms of the film's episodic narrative structure, but also in terms of factual credibility. Characters occasionally engage in confrontations with figures that represent the institutional forces of authority and containment (police officers, social workers, employers, and so on). However, more often the characters face the violent and tragic consequences of containment and exclusion. They are unable to act

according to their free will and are at the mercy of adverse circumstances and events that are out of their control. Offering few solutions, the films only tend to emphasize how things are and imply the need for change. This view is supported by Ratana (1996:88), who states that “Thai Best-Picture Films during 1976-1994 . . . suggest only awareness and warning towards the social problems which they deal with, but no recommendation is proposed to solve the problems.” But it is assumed that the films also seek audiences to critically engage with the difficulties of ‘low-life’, by projecting characters and situations that are not only a source of interest and concern but also with potential moral and political allegiances that the audience can identify with. By doing so, the films attempt to reaffirm cultural solidarities and sub-cultural identities across regional boundaries.

Some of the Thai films made during the 1970s belong in this category. They deal with people and places – farmers in rural areas, rural to urban migrants, lower-class workers or prostitutes in urban areas – marginalized by the process of rapid industrialization, capital-centered development, money-oriented capitalistic ideas, and the decline of traditional values. According to Ratana (1996), the wide range of social problems (families, teenagers, drugs, prostitution), economic problems (poverty, unemployment, urban migration), and political problems (corruption, interest groups) portrayed in the Thai Best-Picture Films during the 1976-1994 period are mostly related to the lower strata of society. The political climate also was a serious motivating factor. The strong demand for a more democratic administration, clearly expressed through two political events – the October 14, 1973 and October 6, 1976 student uprisings, emphasized the importance of the role and participation of the public in politics and encouraged greater liberal ideas in many spheres of social activities, including filmmaking.

As mentioned above, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala is regarded as the most accomplished, and certainly the most idiosyncratic, film director in Thailand, especially in the ‘*Nang Pua Chiwit*’ film series. Among his early works, two films in the ‘*Nang Pua Chiwit*’ style, *Theptida Rongraem* and *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, dealt with migration-related social issues. *Theptida Rongraem* is about a northern Thai girl, Malee, who is sold to a brothel in Bangkok by her unscrupulous boyfriend. This film provides a view of Thai society of the time from many different angles, reflecting the general attitude of the people towards women like Malee through mirroring Malee’s own perception of the bigger world.

His other film, *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* is the Thai version of the Italian neo-realist film, ‘*Bicycle Thieves*’ (De Sica, 1948). Tongpoon, a man from northern Thailand (Isaan) with a 5-year-old son, tries hard to settle down in Bangkok by overcoming many hardships. Eventually, he buys a taxi with all his savings, but, later, street thugs steal

it. The film takes the audience through his tragic journey as he searches for his car, revealing the dark underside of the city, such as corrupt policemen and businessmen who hardly seem to care about a poor and lowly citizen like Tongpoon. The film evokes a strong feeling of bitterness in the audience by contrasting two groups of people in society—the haves versus the have-nots. In Chapter 4 that follows, five films: *Theptida Rongraem* (M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1974), *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* (M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1977), *Prachachon Nok* (Manop Udomdej, 1981), *Luk Isaan* (Wichit Kounavudhi, 1982), and *Tongpan* (Paijong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon, Yuthana Mukdasanit, 1976), that show urban migrants' lives within the real socio-economic and political situation of the period will be examined in detail. The analysis will attempt to answer the fundamental question of concern in this research: How do Thai films about migration-related social issues in the 1970s project social reality?



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER 4

FILM ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a systematic analysis of five socially-engaged Thai films of the 1970s that were carefully selected as excellent examples of films that dealt with rural to urban migration-related issues in Thailand in their narratives. The five films are: *Luk Isaan* (Son of the Northeast, Wichit Kounavudhi, 1982), *Theptida Rongraem* (Angel of Hotel, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1974), *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* (The Citizen I, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1977), *Prachachon Nok* (On the Fringe of Society, Monop Udomdej, 1981) and, finally, *Tongpan* (Tongpan, Paijong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon and Yuthana Mukdasanit, 1977).

Theptida Rongraem, *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, and *Prachachon Nok* all describe the struggles of Bangkok-bound rural migrants. However, the other two films, *Luk Isaan* and *Tongpan*, were selected because of their explicit portrayal of rural conditions that force rural people to eventually leave their homes. Furthermore, these two films convey rural people's desperation, hopelessness and their harsh financial circumstances and help us to comprehend their inner emotional conflict and personal dilemma: "Should they leave or not?" Formalistically¹, *Theptida Rongraem* and *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, which were directed by M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, are different from *Prachachon Nok* in style. *Prachachon Nok* is regarded as a semi-documentary style of film, where the characters are projected in a more natural light and the story unfolds in a very realistic way, so that the audience feels that they are looking at real people and real scenes in our society, whereas both of M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala's films have a strong narrative structure, with a form and style which fits more into the mainstream.

In addition to presenting a synopsis of the film and its theme, the analysis of the five sample films addresses, in detail, their content, looking specifically at how they individually mirror migration-related issues in Thai society.

¹ A formalistic view generally focuses on the form and style of the film.

Analysis of the Five Films

4.1 *Luk Isaan*

4.1.1 Synopsis

Sud, an industrious, warm-hearted farmer, lives in Koak-e-leaw, a small rural town in the Northeast. He offers all he has caught in the field (i.e., bugs and frogs) to a group of people who are leaving the village to look for food. Sud is also the very responsible husband of a wise and obedient wife, Buasee, and a father to their three children. Koon, his first son, always helps his parents by catching bugs and frogs in the field, but the family cannot maintain an adequate standard of living because of on-going drought and famine. The question of leaving home to look for a better place to stay, either temporarily or permanently, enters all the villagers' minds everyday. On the way home from the market, Buasee witnesses her neighbor, Bualoy, locking up her naked daughter, Buala, inside her house and scolding her because she was trying to run away to Ubon, the biggest modern city in the Northeast. Buala's reason for wanting to leave was the poverty and the starvation that everyone in the village faces everyday.

One day, lightning strikes a tree in the village, and a local monk claims that it is a bad omen, foretelling that the land will dry up. This worries the villagers and they carry out a ritual of pouring water onto a little cat, praying for the rain. However, as people begin to worry that this drought may eventually cause more serious famine, Sud and Buasee, together with some other villagers, decide to leave the village and head toward the Mekhong River to fish for food. The journey truly lightens up the villager's weary minds with hopes of survival. Throughout the journey, Sud gives a lesson to his son, Koon, on how to be a real Isaan man.

4.1.2 Theme

Living in a rural setting might seem peaceful and easy going without any of the complex problems and worries faced in city life. However, to be born an Isaan² man is never an easy task. They have to fight against the harsh nature and severe weather conditions of their region, the poorest region of the country. When drought comes, people

² Refers to the Northeast or Northeastern region of Thailand.

in the region become hungrier and hungrier. They are forced to eat bugs, frogs, snakes, and wild animals to live. From the film, it is clear that these environmental factors, and their economic consequences, are continuously pushing inhabitants of the region to leave. Some people finally decide to move to a bigger province or to a city to begin a new life. But those who remain try their best to struggle and survive. Throughout the bitter experiences of his poor life, Koon learns how to be a sincere and strong Isaan man who, like his father Sud, loves his home irrespective of all its difficulties.

Another thematic issue in this film is that leaving is a choice to be made by one's free will. In Sud's case, he swears to settle in the land where his mother and his beloved people live, no matter what. However, for Buala, the film shows that it is her free mind that eventually prompts her to run away to the city in pursuit of her dreams. They represent two people in the same hopeless situation whose outcomes turn out to be totally different due to free will and the decisions they make.

4.1.3 Analysis

In this section, instances will be presented to illustrate the traditional and typical difficulties of rural Thai society and the importance of freewill in the decision-making process of rural citizens. The film starts with a scene where a group of people in Koak-e-leaw is leaving their typically barren, arid Isaan field to look for food. Sud, the main character of the film, offers them what he has caught (i.e. frogs and bugs) as well as his heartfelt and sincere wishes for luck on their journey. Continually, the film portrays the lives of ordinary villagers. Children spend their days catching bugs – an essential source for food. Going to school and studying is not at all in their interests, given their basic needs for human survival. All they learn is directly related to their existence in everyday life – to hunt and to plough. For women, bartering is a very useful method to get what they need in the kitchen. From the scene where Buasee is seen bartering with a Vietnamese trader, we see how the male householder has authority over all household matters. The manner in which Buasee shows her husband the potatoes clearly indicates that she is seeking his approval of the quantity to barter for. It helps to understand how this convention works when the issue of leaving the village becomes more pressing for Sud and Buasee in the scene that follows.

As night comes, sighs, signifying worries, emanate from the bedroom. Buasee's life concerns lead her to reject sleeping with her husband, for fear she might become pregnant with another baby, something they cannot possibly afford in their poor condition. When his

wife asks why they are not leaving the sterile land, Sud tells her to hang on: "My mother and relatives live here. Until my tears turn to blood, I'll never turn my back to them..." He is very firm and strong about his decision not to abandon the place and the people he loves. Sud illustrates the importance given to "homeland" by rural Thais. In contrast to Sud, one night, Buala eventually succeeds in escaping from home and runs away naked. Sud finds her and asks her why she feels she has to leave. Her answer is very clear: "Staying only means starvation." So, with help from Sud, Buala gets some clothes and goes on her way freely.

Despite all their life struggles, people in the market always look lively and cheerful. The patriotic song, which Koon pays the local man 3 baht to play on his stereo, especially keeps the filmic mood light and animated.

"We love Thailand.
 We'll work and fight.
 We'll live and die for Thailand.
 We love peace and harmony.
 We are as friendly as can be.
 But try to take our land and the fieriest fighters..."

But, on the other hand, it evokes an ironic feeling, in which the villagers question what kind of a reward they would actually get for being humble Thai citizens who are devoted to their country.

In one scene, a Chinese trader and a Vietnamese trader are quarrelling over competitiveness. It is interesting to note that they are both non-Thai nationals and depicted as greedy rivals, a stereotype of these foreigners which is often adopted by many Thais in real life.

The importance of the role of Karma³ (*Kaam* in Thai) in the lives of rural Thais can be seen in the scene where Buasee witnesses her neighbor, Bualoy, humiliatingly stripping her daughter, Buala, naked and locking her inside the house, as punishment for attempting to run away from home and go to Ubon, the biggest modern city in the Northeast. Bualoy's tearful monologue about her fears concerning her daughter's attempts to leave helps us to sympathize with her predicament: "What will become of me...?" She takes all the unfortunate things that have happened to her in her life (i.e., her husband's

³ According to Charles F. Keyes, ed. (1983:261-263), "Karmic theory is predicated upon a simple formula...as in the Thai saying: do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil."

death, Buala's wanting to leave home) as her Karma. Among Thais, in general, this Buddhist way of interpreting life is common as they attempt to deal with the endless concerns and events that life brings to them, believing as they do that one's present life is a result of one's past life. This traditional concept of Karma eventually leads Thais to accept the way their life is without bitterness and anger.

The strong religious superstitions and deep beliefs of Buddhist monks are also displayed in the film. Monks, in Thai culture, are generally regarded, symbolically, as core pillars of the community. This is why, in the scene referred to earlier, when lightning strikes a tree in the village and a monk warns the villagers that it is a bad omen, that the land will dry up, the villagers take it seriously. They hold a ceremony, praying for rain,

“May this sacred cat bring us the rain!
 Oh, Sacred cat, give us the rain
 Let it rain upon the cat
 Let it rain upon the fields
 Let it rain...Let it rain...”

thus, illustrating how Thai people are influenced by the monks in their superstitious beliefs and rituals.

Praying for rain seems to unite all the villagers, even squabbling children like Koon and his friend, Chan. They run off together into a barren field and Koon cries out to nature to bring them rain:

“Hold on, clouds, don't go away!
 Stop over my house!
 Rain, Come! Let it pour!”

They are both happy that they have the same wish. The relationship these boys have is indicative of the collectiveness of the village community.

As the villagers begin to realize that the drought will cause more starvation, they decide to leave the village to fish near the river. While preparing themselves for the long journey, Buala returns home from the city to visit, bearing many gifts, and to thank Sud for having helped her run away. All the women are surprised to see she that has become a real “Bangkok” girl, looking modern and fashionable in her stylish dress and hat, and even sporting dark sunglasses. Buala's coming home infers a sense of kinship which keeps reminding her of and tied to her home village. Welcoming her warmly, the villagers do not

seem to be interested in asking how she has made a successful living in city. It is left unquestioned, and the director thereby emphasizes this cultural aspect, this inward denial, of Thai society.

Buala's return to the village was not actually in the original novel. However, this scene is essential for an understanding of the social comments which the director interjects into the story. According to Knit Kounavudhi,²⁹ Buala's visit illustrates the lasting emotional bonds between migrants and their homes. Mr. Knit adds that the director tried to keep this aspect as true to life as possible.

The film expresses poor rural villagers' weariness and sorrows through songs, mostly *Moh-lam*³⁰. The *Moh-lam* which one woman sings, with the accompaniment of the *kaen*³¹ which her husband is playing, touches the hearts of the audience.

“No clothes or shelter
 No food to eat
 How does one live?
 I have seen those with many children
 Each one crying for food
 Listen, young maiden
 You are cooking for a mate
 You are dreaming love and happiness
 But after the dreams
 You'll hide your face and stay weak
 When your little ones cry for food hungry and you have none...”

Here, *Moh-lam* is portrayed as a crucial tool of communication for Isaan people and, moreover, a means of personal release and expression.

Later in the film, during their journey for food, the villagers gather near the fire and listen to one man's *Moh-lam* about life, another significant example of how messages are transmitted through song.

²⁹ Mr. Knit Kounavudhi, the son of the late Wichit Kounavudhi, the director of the film, was formerly a professor of Dramatic Arts at Chulalongkorn University. He assisted in directing many of Wichit Kounavudhi's films.

³⁰ Traditional Northeastern songs.

³¹ A traditional flute-like Thai musical instrument made of bamboo.

"Oh...Summer wind
 You bring the heat from the summer sun
 The summer sun
 Dries the land and the plains
 A young buffalo chews old dry grass
 And gets thinner...with the summer
 As he tries to quench the thirst
 With mud in the pond
 The dry, cracked land...
 While we, the people of the northeast
 Are combing the fields
 For frogs and lizards
 Too thin to fill our stomachs
 Where there is no money, there is no way
 Looking at the cracked land, we still hope to find
 Some beetles, ants...or insects of any kind
 In this dry, hot land!
 With an aching heart, and tears in my eyes
 I keep looking for the clouds, but there is none but the sun
 The bright, hot sun up above
 Listen and you will hear insects cry, to see the dry leaves fall
 They are as hungry as we are
 Poor beings! To be born insects of the northeast
 They must really suffer, like the people of the northeast"

The *Moh-lam* helps the audience to more fully comprehend the toils of life in the Northeast. Although the song relates the very sad life story of the Isaan people, the journey that the villagers have set out upon brings new hope into the lives of Sud and Buasee, as is evident when Buasee happily tells her husband that she is ready to have their new baby. The importance of the *Moh-lam* as a medium of expression is depicted by Buasee's positive change of mind after having listened to it. She feels more confident and content with her life.

When it is time to return home after a period of joyful working and playing by the river, Koon and Chan say goodbye to the river, and then Chan asks Koon where he wants to go in the future. Koon dreamily answers that he wants to go to Bangkok to study. Later, looking back over his shoulder at the river, Koon cries and tells his mother that he likes this place and will miss it dearly. His mother soothes Koon gently, "We always have to part

from things and people. So you must learn to let go of the things that life takes...," clearly exemplifying the Buddhist principle of not attaching oneself to material objects and places. Unlike in Western culture, this sense of attachment is discouraged in Buddhist philosophy.

In the last scene, Sud teaches his son how to be a man of the Northeast, a real Isaan man with a genuine love for his land. This film projects two fundamental problems of Northeastern Thailand – the scanty of natural resources and the severe weather conditions, which force the regional people to leave their hometowns for the city. Throughout the generations, drought and starvation have been the major reasons for pushing Isaan people to migrate from their villages to the cities. This theme is also illustrated through *Moh-lam*, the traditional songs of the Northeast, in the narrative. Furthermore, this film also shows that the issue of whether to leave or stay totally depends on free will in the decision-making process, as illustrated when Sud helps Buala in her attempt to leave home. However, interestingly, when this same issue arises between a husband and a wife – Sud and Buasee, we see that the main authority and/or responsibility lies with the male householder, Sud, a fact that reflects another key cultural aspect of Thai society as well.

The section below is from an interview conducted with Mr. Knit Kounavudhi, the director's son, on October 10, 2003.

This film is based on a Thai novel of the same name, which won Thailand's first SEAWrite Award in 1979. In this novel, the author, Kampon Boontawee, narrates his personal childhood story. According to Mr. Knit, the director, Wichit Kounavudhi, tried to honor the content of the original novel and depict the social concerns expressed in the novel indirectly so as to keep intact the story-telling aspect of the film.

According to Mr. Knit, Wichit Kounavudhi filmed everything in as real a situation as possible so as to touch upon real people's lives through story and music. The film, *Luk Isaan*, is like the director's own style of painting, rough-edged and unpolished. Mr. Knit finds that this film shows well the director's unconvoluted and simple way of reflecting Thailand's socio-cultural aspects, illustrating the traditional ways of life of Thai people.

Mr. Knit describes how Wichit Kounavudhi tried to depict the story as realistically as possible by using non-professional actors and location shooting 90% of the time, and also by using the Northern and Northeastern dialect for dialogues in both *Khon Phu Khao* and *Luk Isaan*. He should, thus, also be credited for his outstandingly creative way of using language realistically. The final result is that these elements, functioning together, make this film very realistic. The film also intends the central Thai or foreign audience to make a

conscious effort to try and understand this minority group within their own context.

Furthermore, Mr. Knit Kounavudhi also recalls remarkable experiences which he shared with the director while making *Luk Isaan*. For example, the director had to patiently wait for a very long time so that he could shoot the scenes where Sud and Koon are waiting to catch a bird in an old-fashioned way and where Koon and his friend run in the barren field with the whirling wind passing behind their backs without using any artificial methods. He claims that the director, Wichit Kounavudhi, can be credited for creating all the magic of *Luk Isaan* by himself the magic being that it is a realistic portrayal filmed in the most realistic way possible, even though it often meant that he had to resort to the hardest ways for bringing it about.

Wichit Kounavudhi and the film have been internationally recognized, receiving awards in several international film festivals, including Manila, Hawaii, and Berlin, to name a few. According to Mr. Knit, *Luk Isaan* was appreciated as a film which touched upon many different groups of people who shared a similar background as that shown in the film, because the scenes portrayed their own version of a hard life. . To quote an internationally-known Japanese director, Oshima, "Watching *Luk Isaan* is like traveling along a river..." Mr. Knit avers that his father's sensitive touches as well as his simple way of reflecting reality provide a deeper understanding into Isaan life and culture.

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

4.2 *Theptida Rongraem*

4.2.1 Synopsis

Malee, an upcountry girl, follows her boyfriend, Chate, to Bangkok to look for a job. She promises her family that she will bring them back a fortune from Bangkok and dreams of having a happy family with Chate. However, after a night in a cheap hotel in Bangkok, Chate heartlessly dumps Malee. Consequently, she is obliged to work as a prostitute in the hotel and, gradually, she becomes used to this city job that she was forced into by her circumstances. One day, when a prostitute, Khamkaew, slaps a police officer, a fight breaks out between a group of thugs working for the hotel and other police officers, culminating in the killing the head of thugs, Tone, by a corrupt police officer. The police then raid the hotel, but Malee fortunately saves herself by running away. With the help from Kho-lek, a co-worker at the old hotel, she returns to working as a prostitute again at another hotel run by the same owner. However, after undergoing many harsh experiences (i.e., conflicting identity, moral dilemma, pregnancy and cheap surgical abortion, and the suicide of a new girl, Kamlah, in the brothel), she gradually feels that her time in the hotel is coming to an end. She learns dress-making in order to open a dress shop and finally graduates from the dress-making school. However, when she eventually discovers that her new boyfriend, Paisan, has been cheating on her, she turns her back on her past by symbolically exchanging her yellow dress for a shirt and jeans to create a new image of independence and self-confidence.

4.2.2 Theme

A vulnerable and innocent upcountry girl, Malee, is endlessly questioning her moral dilemmas. This inner conflict, arising mainly from her keen sense of social morality, is not particular to Malee. It can be applied to all country girls who come to Bangkok for work and end up working as prostitutes. They are torn between being a good daughter who earns money for the family and being a prostitute who sells her body for money. Essentially, their moral dilemma is a consequence of the contradictory traditional values which society has taught them. However, as is illustrated in this film, their final answers to this moral dilemma are derived from their belief in Karma, a belief of inevitability. As explained earlier, Thais generally believe that whatever happens in one's present life is a result of what happened in one's past life. It is this sense of inevitability that underlies Malee's belief that

it is her own karma to suffer being a prostitute.

Besides their emotional difficulties, the film also depicts the physical hardships of prostitute women, who are represented by Malee, Dao, Kamlah, and Khamkaew. They work within a system of "slavery," mastered by the pimps and brothels and, more broadly, by capitalistic and materialistic society. They work without enjoying much freedom, an ideal which most Thai people long for and fought for during the 1970s.

Despite its bitterness, Malee actually feels quite happy about her life. She is capable of sending money home, so that her father can build a new house. To her family, she turns out to be a sort of idol. This film depicts the different struggles of her life—from when she is in the dark until the very minute when she is finally out in the light. Throughout the different stages in life, Malee cherishes her Bangkok dream and never lets go of it. She studies hard to make dresses. Her graduation impresses us and foreshadows her new life-to-be. At the end, we witness how confidently Malee is willing to survive by herself without any "man's" help, which is intended to make her beauty more profound. Malee is no longer a weak, ignorant, upcountry girl, morally conflicted between her traditional role as a female and her new modern way in life. She is a new and confident woman. This leads to another thematic topic of the film. It aims to draw an image of a strong woman, but at the same time, a woman who is capable of knowing how to adapt herself to her surroundings in order to survive.

4.2.3 Analysis

The opening scenes of the film shows the peaceful scenery of northern Thailand, surrounded by mountains and fields, and the humble house of Malee's family. These first scenes are contrasted with those that follow: crowded street scenes during the Thai Songkran⁷ festival. At this moment, Malee is facing a turning point in her life from being pure and innocent girl to one who will soon be exposed to the cruel world outside. After spending time with her boyfriend, Chate, who seduces her and persuades her to go with him to a hotel in Chiang Mai City, she decides to leave home and follow him to Bangkok. She leaves a letter for her parents, promising them that she would bring back to them fortune and money from the city. However her decision to leave is not only about money – in fact, no one in her family appointed her to be the breadwinner. –Rather, she is also inspired by her desire to fulfill her own dreams. But, she has no idea of what is awaiting her

⁷ New Year's Day in Thai Calendar: usually during April.

in Bangkok. These juxtapositions of ideas are illustrative of how she will end up finding herself trapped between two worlds: the traditional and the modern.

Malee is excited throughout the long journey in Chate's car to Bangkok. However, it becomes clear how scared she really is when she tells Chate that she knows no one but Chate in Bangkok and that he needs to stay close to her. Despite her appeals, he sells Malee to a brothel after spending a night in a cheap hotel. The next morning, Chate leaves without paying any bills and the hotel staffs threaten Malee that she would be arrested if she did not cover the costs. This ignorant country girl, who has no money, becomes panicked and frightened. At that moment, Tone, the head of the hotel thugs, pretends to clear her bills, but he then forces her to work for him until she earns enough money to pay back her debts. Tone tempts her to do so by saying that she will not only be able to pay her debts off, but also be able to send money home if she works hard. It seems so easy for them to take advantage of this poor country girl. This is how Malee begins her dream of city life, as a prostitute, caught in a trap with no clear way out.

The director, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, says that he made this film to mirror the changing face of Thai society during the 1970s. He successfully depicts that people were trying to change so as to achieve freedom during the period, but at the same time, in a corner of society, there were many, like prostitutes, who never shared in this light of freedom.

Malee's journey to Bangkok is triggered by her free will and her dreams. However, as soon as she steps into the hotel, everything seems beyond her control and what she could possibly have imagined. She has no choice but to sell herself for money. But, as the story goes, we can see how quickly she adapts herself to this hotel life and how she feels that it is easier and more comfortable than was her life in the country.

One day, a policeman, who remains unnamed throughout the film, visits the hotel to collect a "regular payment." Tone appoints Malee to take care of this important guest. Malee gradually comes to know better how to handle her customers and gets recognized as the best girl in the hotel. She no longer feels shy or ashamed. Eventually, she is able to send her first 1000 baht home. Her family assumes that she has a good job in the city to afford sending them such a big sum of money. As it was in the case Buala, her family, and the villagers in *Luk Isaan*, they do not seem curious about nor do they morally question Malee's new city life.

Despite the immoral implications of her job, Malee becomes quite happily accustomed to her way of life, as can be seen from her encounter with Dao, a girl from her

village. When Malee meets Dao for the first time, she has been beaten up because she refused to work as a prostitute. Later that night, Malee comes to Dao and talks to her about life in the hotel. "What is life to people like us?" says Malee, "It's no use disobeying those crooks. After all, you are trapped. Don't try to oppose them, or you'll only be tortured. You have to struggle for a living. In my opinion, sleeping with customers is easier than digging the ground or working in rice fields..." Malee – the Angel of the Hotel – soothes Dao and reassures her about the pay and the relative ease of the work and the physical setting, telling her that accepting her fate and position makes life more comfortable. This provides insight into the mental changes that young prostitutes undergo in Bangkok. Malee realizes that she is a salable product and we see how she is beginning to think more materially, in contrast to the country mentality she had when she came to Bangkok.

In the following scene, the generally adopted Thai attitude towards prostitutes becomes evident. In order to thank Malee for helping with Dao, Tone takes Malee to a record shop to get her a gift. He tests a record, saying "Malee... the most beautiful prostitute in the world." At this point, the male shopkeeper changes his facial expression from a smile to one of scorn. He adopts a totally different attitude towards Malee once he knows what she really is. The shopkeeper frowns at Malee and Tone, as they speak with a blatant disregard for morality. This incident reflects the general Thai public's attitudes towards women with a job considered immoral. At this point, the title also becomes significant: '*Theptida Rongraem*,' ("Angel of Hotel"), is satirical as angels are regarded as moral whereas prostitutes are not.

Later that day, an incident in which Khamkaew slaps a policeman, who had asked a perverted service of her, leads to a fight between the hotel thugs and the policemen. The police raid the hotel and Malee barely escapes. She begins wandering the streets, hungry and tired. In this scene, she listens to a country melody – which has *Moh-lam* – like sounds – and daydreams of returning home. She pictures her beloved people's cold looks and their indifference towards the person she has become in the city, illustrating her guilt about being a prostitute. Even though her current tough situation drives her to think of returning home, as does Buala in *Luk Isaan*, she seems unable to do so because of her moral dilemma. She wants to see her family but she is afraid that they will find out how she makes her money in the city. It is obvious how her own personal shame at being a prostitute puts heavy pressure on her. As the director M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala explains, he "wanted to touch on their complex minds concerning such traditional values as virginity." The same emotional crisis is shown later in scenes where she meets a man named Paisan and his mother. Malee is afraid the whole time that Paisan might figure out what she is and what she does to make a

living. This moral anxiety she feels is typical of county girls who end up working as prostitutes in Bangkok and it reveals the added burden these girls take upon themselves. They are neither traditional girls, nor are they independent modern women.

Luckily, Kho-lek, who was Malee's old friend in the previous hotel, comes across Malee as she wanders through the streets of Bangkok and steals some food from a restaurant. Kho-lek finds her work in a new place belonging to the same owner. Although nothing seems to have changed much, Malee's mind has changed in some ways. She confesses to Kho-lek that she wants to quit the hotel job and go home but she explains her painful situation at not being able to do so even though she badly wants to. She says, "I can't go home. I feel ashamed. If I were to go back, I would have to be very well off first. Until then, I won't go. I have my own way out. Just wait and see."

For her, the only way out is to become a dressmaker. She starts learning how to make dresses in a fashion school. She writes a letter home claiming that she is working in a dress-maker's salon. However, to make this dream come true, she has to try even harder at work. Malee now realizes she is the only one who can control her future.

While at school during the day, Malee has to work even harder at night. The film presents an interesting scene in a hotel room where Malee has a string of different customers; she works for the prosperity of others and becomes even more resigned to her situation. Ironically, as she opens her blouse for one of her customers, we see a quick series of scenes showing how Malee's family has prospered through her hard-earned "immoral" money and touches upon their inward denial and refusal to accept where the money has come from. The camera moves relentlessly through all these scenes and stops at Malee's parents' new house. In it, there is a big picture of Malee. Malee's father proudly announces to villagers that he could only build the house because of Malee's hard work and love for her parents. He says to Buaklee, a villager, "You have a daughter. Why don't you send her to stay with Malee?" Buaklee sarcastic retorts, "If I send her to Bangkok, she might become a prostitute." Immediately, Dao's father interjects and sadly tells the story about his daughter. "My daughter Dao... she wrote me she was practicing sewing dresses like your daughter, but when she came back, you know she died of syphilis..." "No!" Malee's father shouts out in fear and denial, "My daughter is different from your daughter! She really has learned to sew. She never lies to me. She is not selling herself to give me all this money..."

From these scenes, it is not difficult to assume that Malee's parents might have wondered about her job in the city. But perhaps they do not want to acknowledge the reality, merely wanting to be satisfied with the money they receive and to believe that she is a good and

dutiful daughter who would never let them down. This significant part of the film helps us to comprehend both the traditional concept of the role of the Thai daughter and the sense of denial in Thai culture, which keeps them from questioning the nature of their prosperity. In light of this, we can understand the true basis for Malee's moral dilemma.

Up until now, Malee has always needed a male figure in her life for support. For example, around this time, a man named Paisan is attracted to her and asks her to be her boyfriend. He lives in a slum area and has no proper job. As the relationship between Malee and Paisan progresses, the film describes him as an incompetent character who only takes advantage of Malee's earnings and spends it on gambling. Fully aware that she is a prostitute, he needs Malee simply for her money. Malee, on the other hand, never seems to realize that Paisan already knows about her and that his only reason for being close to her is for her money. Instead, she dreams of having a happy family with Paisan, since she fully trusts in his love and regards him as another savior in her life, just like Chate and Tone.

One day, Dao, who comes to leave her half-black child with Malee for "work" in Pattaya, finds out Malee is pregnant and advises her to take pills to get rid of the baby. However, Malee becomes afraid of taking prompt action. This incident, along with a feeling of guilt about her identity as a prostitute, leads her into a state of deep desperation and sadness, worrying about her relationship with the man she believes she is in love with.

Khamkaew comes to see her to ask her to take care of a newly recruited girl named Kamlah, who is from the same village as Malee and who staunchly refuses to work in "sleeping job" – a job that requires her to sleep with men. Khamkaew, by this time a pimp herself, berates Malee for still working as a prostitute. Stressing that the world has much to offer, she encourages Malee to think of her next step like the way she herself proudly became an agent, arguing that Malee cannot hang on to her youth and be a hotel angel forever. When Malee goes looking for Kamlah, she has already been beaten up badly by hotel pimps. Interestingly, these "beating" scenes are overlapped by real shots from the October 14, 1973 student uprising. As police and vocational college students beat up a number of university students and civilians, Kamlah gets brutally assaulted. This juxtaposition realistically and symbolically portrays how those who have power and influence freely oppress those with different and challenging ideas, irrespective of the social milieu, be it politics, business, or prostitution. Malee tries to talk to Kamlah, hoping it would bring peace to her, just as it had done with Dao. However, Kamlah doesn't want to listen to what Malee is saying; instead, she runs away to the top of the hotel building. Surrounded by pimps, Kamlah chooses to jump off and kills herself. This act of suicide can be regarded as a refusal to give up personal freedom and choice – a widespread

movement in the 1970s in Thailand. As the director notes, he “interjected a few cuttings from violent student uprising scenes to imply the need for freedom.” He says that Kamlah’s action of jumping off the building represents escaping socio-political oppression and the dark side of society in which there is no freedom.

Another point, which needs mentioning, is how the director attempted to realistically portray life in a brothel. By spending eleven months in a brothel (hotel) himself, he “tried to depict more realistically what is behind the brothel and what lies inside these girls’ minds and hearts.” According to his observations, there were roughly four types of girls in the brothel – represented in the film by Malee, Dao, Kamlah and Khamkaew. Malee adapts to and uses her situation to get herself out; Khamkaew gives in to the system and becomes trapped; Kamlah becomes desperate and takes her own life; and Dao falls victim to the health horrors of the business. The director is therefore justified in claiming that he has succeeded very well in portraying a realistic cross-section of this segment of society.

An unwanted pregnancy, Kamlah’s suicide, and Malee’s declining position in the hotel, all make her long to go home to Chiang Mai as soon as she graduates from the fashion school. She says, “I am fed up with this life. I want to leave Bangkok...” Her strong desire to do so is clear in this conversation between Malee and Kholek:

“I want to quit selling myself, I am tired...I want to get married and I’ll be a dressmaker. I’ll run from this hotel and from selling myself...”

“But you can’t escape from yourself,” answers Kholek.

“I won’t be like Khamkaew who trades flesh of others. I don’t want to be valueless where no one needs me. I want to be like others who have someone... a husband and kids.”

Finally, after graduation, she heads for Paisan’s house, all excited about showing him her certificate. Unfortunately, she witnesses Paisan telling another girl that he has known from the very beginning that Malee is selling her body for money. His betrayal shocks her. Her emotional trauma puts her in danger and a car hits her as she tries to run away from Paisan. The driver of the car offers to take Malee to hospital. His gentle and kind eyes reassure her, and she gets into his car. However, as soon as he talks about her beauty, every man from her past overlaps in her thoughts--Chate, Tone, Paisan, and this stranger. She realizes that what matters to them most are her physical looks and her

money, nothing else. She realizes how naïve she was to have believed in them, counted on them, and given everything away. The film superimposes the faces of the male figures of her past over the face of the man driving the car and we see flashbacks of Bangkok's nightlights. She promptly gets out of the car and escapes. Malee has finally become aware that she does not need to depend on males as much as she does. In the last scene, we see how she has developed full circle into a modern female and is no longer faced with an identity crisis; she can now fulfill her traditional role in a modern, moral, and just way.

Malee looks at herself in the window of a dress shop. She is wearing a short yellow dress, which is symbolic of her past vulnerability as a woman. She goes into the shop and changes into a shirt and jeans, symbolizing her determination to escape her situation and control her life. She walks away looking so free and independent.

To summarize, there are three important social messages in this film. First, there is Malee's moral conflict between being a good daughter and financing her family and being a woman with an immoral job. This point can be understood within the broader context of a number of upcountry and/or Isaan girls, who come to Bangkok, start working as prostitutes, and suffer from the same moral dilemma as Malee. The second important message conveyed in the film addresses the refusal of Thai culture to acknowledge the source of prosperity, as shown in the conversation between Malee's father and the villagers. Malee's father strongly refuses to doubt his daughter and how she makes her living in the city, while some villagers tell him their own stories, indicating the possibility of Malee's holding a job regarded as immoral by society. Finally, this film shows the whole circle of Malee's journey from leaving home, cherishing her dreams, facing and adapting to her reality and, finally, emerging from the other side and becoming a stronger woman because of her free will. Malee's cycle of events is well contrasted with those of the other two girls: Dao, who is not strong enough to break the mold, and Kamlah, whose desperation leads her to give up her life. Indeed, Malee is the only one to go through the full circle of life in the film.

Leaving the story open-ended, the director expects the audience to create their own reactions. However, as he depicts it, Malee is always a survivor. Her self-confidence, as shown at the end of the film, can be symbolic for a certain and better future, he says. Furthermore, he notes that the positive ending can be viewed as symbolic of the liberated atmosphere of society in the wake of the October 14, 1973 student uprising. Thus, the film clearly reflects his intention of mirroring the changing political and social aspects of Thai society through his work and transmitting social messages to the audience.

4.3 *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*

4.3.1 Synopsis

Tongpoon, an earnest, industrious man from Isaan, is finally able to afford to buy a taxi after five years of saving in Bangkok. He works assiduously and learns a lot about society, which is rapidly undergoing capitalist changes, and about its unfairness through people he meets everyday. Among them, as his closest friends, a masseuse, Raemchan, a crippled beggar, Duan,⁸ and another taxi driver, Bunrai, try to show Tongpoon their perspectives of reality. Unfortunately, he experiences the wickedness of society one day when his car is stolen by a group of thugs. He tries every way he can to get his car back, but no one, not even the police, seem helpful. After being evicted from his slum house, he and his son, Hamnoi, have nowhere to go. Tongpoon begins wandering the streets with Hamnoi and working as a construction laborer. He gradually discovers that the thugs who stole his taxi are the mechanics at a junkyard belonging to a greedy Chinese man, named Sakhon, and suspects them of stealing his car for Sakhon. Tongpoon, fuming with bitterness toward them, trespasses onto Sakhon's property and sets fire to the junkyard. He kills two men while defending himself in the process. Eventually, the police arrive and capture Tongpoon. He has no way out but to go to prison with an empty heart.

While looking at a taxi driver who was washing and meticulously taking care of his car, the director, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, said he began to realize that to some people, like the taxi driver, a car was not only a vehicle, but his whole life. Inspired by words he shared with this taxi driver, who spoke about his life and the difficulties of taxi drivers, such as stolen taxis used for spare parts, the director wrote a story about a character named, Tongpoon Kokpo. M. C. Chatrichalerm explains that his character, Tongpoon, came from a poor rural area to look for a better life in the city as a taxi driver; his taxi symbolizes his success and his future, and losing it would mean losing everything. This is the basis for the story of Tongpoon.

⁸ In Thai, *Duan* means someone who doesn't have legs or arms, usually, a cripple.

4.3.2 Theme

The core thematic issue of this film is the exploitative nature of a capitalist society. The film contrasts people who have access to money and power (i.e., the owner of Tongpoon's slum house, the Chinese owner of the junkyard, the policemen, etc.) with people who don't (Tongpoon and his friends). Ironically, the rich become richer and more powerful by taking advantage of the poor, as well as by taking away their few possessions and, ultimately, their dreams in a merciless way. Capitalist ideas and changes in society widen the socio-economic gap between the haves and the have-nots. The film depicts this notion through the eyes of the have-nots.

The protagonist, Tongpoon, is a representative of ordinary, lower-class citizens. He is depicted most of the time as a powerless victim; however, he is also a dreamer. He dreams of a place where he can make his life better by doing good deeds and working hard. Tongpoon's car symbolizes his dreams, his freedom, his future; his whole existence. Thus, the theft of his car means the loss of all these. All that remains are his humble body and his anger towards the people who ruined his dreams and towards the unfairness that still exists in every aspect of the capitalist world. In this film, unlike traditional themes, good does not triumph over evil. Tongpoon fights bravely against the villains and their wrong doings, but sadly, in vain, he has to surrender after all. Throughout the film, we are hoping Tongpoon will get his car back and, thereby, be able to declare that our society is still just and safe, even for the poor and the weak. However, the reality of the film goes contrary to these hopes.

4.3.3 Analysis

The story starts with the scene where Tongpoon is counting his savings. He is finally able to buy his own taxi – his lifelong dream. He treats his passengers kindly and talks about life and society with them.

On the first day, he meets a lady with whom he talks about the poor in Bangkok. Tongpoon tells her that in the slum area where he lives, people, most of whom are unemployed or young kids, steal everyday. A minute later, it is she who fools Tongpoon by not paying the taxi fare. She tricks him by saying she only has a five hundred baht note and asks him for the change in advance. She pretends to go to change her note and then suddenly disappears. This incident foreshadows that his journey through life as a taxi driver will not be as easy as he expects. Ironically, at the same point in the film, he befriends a

beggar who, through no fault of his own, will unknowingly get Tongpoon involved in the terrible incident that is awaiting him.

He also meets a masseuse, named Raemchan (original name Tean). Like Buala and Malee in *Theptida Rongraem*, she came from a rural province to Bangkok in pursuit of her "Bangkok dream." By chance, Tongpoon gets involved in an argument between Raemchan and her ex-boyfriend on the issue of whether she should get an abortion for their unborn baby or not. After throwing her ex-boyfriend out, she confesses to Tongpoon that she would never consider getting rid of the baby. Tongpoon tells her that he also has a son named Hamnoi in his care. He explains how his wife left him because she wanted to be a "mia farang" (a westerner's wife). He continues, "The only reason why I am willing to struggle through Bangkok life is for the sake of my son. I want him to experience only good things and have a much better life than I. I want to educate him so that he can progress to a higher level in society." For Tongpoon, above all, it is much more important to offer Hamnoi a chance for education, rather than merely better economic benefits. Later in the film, a short conversation that Tongpoon and Hamnoi have while they are wandering around the city gives us insight into Tongpoon's frame of mind. "Daddy, we have things to eat at home in the countryside," Hamnoi states. Whereas Tongpoon replies, "We may have food to eat in our old village, but there is no future." To Tongpoon, Hamnoi's future lies in Bangkok, where there are better opportunities for educational attainment.

One day, while Tongpoon is talking to another passenger, he expresses his positive attitude towards Bangkok. "Bangkok is a good place to stay. There are many jobs, not like where I come from, Udon. A number of people come from my province to work in Bangkok," says Tongpoon. However, it is interesting to see how the passenger responds, "If people are coming down to Bangkok, are they really going to be well off like that?" This passenger doubts the capitalist opportunities of Bangkok, unlike Tongpoon, who seems to believe in the optimistic side of what Bangkok has to offer. Tongpoon's attitude is also shown in the conversation between Tongpoon and Raemchan about what kind of place Bangkok is. When Tongpoon asks Raemchan why she chose to work in the massage parlor, she responds, "Bangkok is like a 'desert'. It dries up love and understanding among people. My job is, like a 'well', to offer them love and understanding which is what they long for in this city. See, people like me have some importance as well..." However, Tongpoon doesn't grasp what she means. "I don't understand why you say Bangkok is such a place." Raemchan carelessly responds, "You are merely looking at one side now." Raemchan's metaphor, in trying to explain what kind of place Bangkok is, is well contrasted to the idyllic lyrics of the *Moh-lam* song that an Isaan couple sings in the park:

In spite of constant drought and lack of rain...

People's loving and caring heart will never be dried up in Isaan.

All Isaan people, come back home...

The film shows a scene where several taxi-drivers are talking about society over their late-evening drinks. Uncle Bunrai, a good friend of Tongpoon's, tells that the worse one's welfare becomes; the more people break the rules and resort to illegal practices. His words carry an important message, even in today's world. In this film, Bangkok is reflected through the eyes of lower-class people who mostly come from the rural areas. Their various jobs and experiences give them diverse perspectives of how Bangkok is different from where the homes they left. Up until this section, we see how Tongpoon is optimistic about his life in Bangkok, as opposed to many others who know the reality of life in a capitalist city; a reality which Tongpoon himself is soon to become aware of.

One night, after driving Raemchan home, Tongpoon meets Duan and they stop at a restaurant on the way home. A group of men ask Tongpoon to give them a ride. Unfortunately, they lead Tongpoon to a remote area, brutally beat him up, and steal his car as well as the money he kept for the rent. They later abandon him in the middle of nowhere. A while later, once he has come around, he reports the incident to the police. Although the police try to get some useful information from the restaurant owner, presuming that he knows the men in question, they are unsuccessful. All the owner says is that he knows nothing. When asked by Tongpoon as to why the restaurant owner was unwilling to cooperate, a senior officer explains to him that it is a common reaction of people today. They never want to get involved in such an incident and claim they have never known, seen, or heard anything, which makes them feel more secure. Tongpoon tastes the bitterness of Bangkok life through dealing with mercilessly selfish city people. It becomes clear how these city residents are unwilling to support the collective need, unlike country folk in *Luk Isaan*, and have taken on a very self-centered attitude.

Without getting any help from the police, Tongpoon returns home with bruised eyes. He sees his son crying and the furious landlady who has all his furniture and belongings removed and dumped outside. Since he hasn't been able to pay the rent for the past few months, he desperately asks her for leniency. However, she is already too indifferent to listen to Tongpoon. At the same time, we witness all the slum kids looting Tongpoon's belongings in exactly the same ways as Tongpoon had earlier described them as doing. Tongpoon, feeling sad about losing everything, explains to his son, "We, the poor, are like

dogs. Anyone can kick us when they hate us," thus proving how the poor and the powerless are more vulnerable to exploitation in the capitalist world.

Tongpoon and Hamnoi begin wandering around the city. Tongpoon looks for his stolen car everywhere and he starts working on a construction site. It seems as if Tongpoon is beginning a new life; however, his aim of getting his car back never ceases. Finally, he decides to ask Raemchan to take care of Hamnoi while he goes out looking for his car. Agreeing to do so, Raemchan confesses her love for him. She says she has never met someone who is as sweet and honest as Tongpoon.

The next day, Tongpoon comes across a couple from Isaan, a husband who plays the *Kaen* and a wife who sings about missing home and about the harsh life in the city. Tongpoon listens closely to their song, imagining what life in the country would be like with Hamnoi. As he remembers it, life there seems happy and peaceful, without any pain or life struggles. When the song is over, Tongpoon talks to the old man about the deep trouble he is now stuck in. The old man asks why Tongpoon doesn't return home. Tongpoon answers that he cannot do it now for something has to be dealt with in Bangkok.

Both *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* and *Theptida Rongraem* were made by M. C. Chatrichalerm, and it is interesting to see how in each film, the protagonist's longing to return home (in the case of both Malee and Tongpoon) is inspired by their listening to *Moh-lam* or traditional country music. In his interview with Thomas Richardson,⁹ the director said, "I use music like that often in my films to bring back the memories of that region because Isaan has a different kind of music..." It is significant to see why these films first set up the characters in a very tough situation and then have them listen to the country music with which they are familiar and which leads them to daydream about being home. With *Moh-lam* music (Isaan music) or traditional music, they feel more at home and settled. It is also understandable how they are rather comforted with a little touch of this music, when it is impossible to get any actual help from their family members. Through this, their culture and traditions is all that keeps their spirits high. Just like in the film *Luk Isaan*, *Moh-lam* is another important method of communication for Isaan people wherever they are, whether at home or far away.

In the park, Tongpoon meets Duan, who tells him where the "bad guys" are. Tongpoon gets into a fight and is bitterly bruised again. But, luckily, he manages to get hold of a wallet, which belongs to one of the men. He goes to the police and brings them to the

⁹ www.people.cornell.edu 14, December 1993, Thomas Richardson Interview with Chatrichalerm Yugala, Bangkok, Thailand

garage, Upon Wattana, where Tangsa, the man he identified, works. A greedy-looking owner, Sakhon, shows a book in which he records all the new cars that came into his garage (in fact, the audience sees his double bookkeeping), and he denies that Tangsa is still his employee. After halfheartedly looking through the book, the senior policeman says, "It looks very well-organized. Tongpoon, this man is a well-known person in society. You cannot really get him with this." After making no progress in Upon Wattana, one of the policemen warns Tongpoon not to make any more trouble afterwards, as they see the man who Tongpoon is fighting against as a "big" guy. To make things worse, Tongpoon doesn't actually have enough solid proof or evidence for the case. The director illustrates the injustice of this society by contrasting the treatment of police of those who have power with those who do not.

Ignoring the policeman's advice, Tongpoon goes back to the garage and asks the owner to return his car. He gets savagely beaten again and delivered to Uncle Bunrai by a taxi driver. After regaining his consciousness, Tongpoon expresses to Uncle Bunrai his anger and sadness at how much he has lost, as his taxi meant everything to him both now and for the future as well. This is emphasized again in the following conversation between Tongpoon and Raemchan. She asks Tongpoon, who is helplessly lying on the bed, if he would risk everything he has now to get his taxi back and offers to buy him a new one. However, he repeatedly says to her, "It was my future. I sold my house and field for it. Taking it away from me means ruining my dreams and the future of Hamnoi." Seeing the tears in his eyes, the audience sympathizes with his utter hopelessness.

Incidentally, there seem to be some similarities between the character Malee, from *Theptida Rongraem*, and Raemchan, in this film. First, both of them are deemed by society as holding jobs regarded as immoral by society – one is a prostitute and the other a masseuse. Second, even though they are discriminated against, they do not seem to be interested in fighting back against the unfairness of society. Instead, they just try to adapt themselves to their circumstances. They even accept all the prejudices and absurdity of society as being determined by their own Karma. In the case of Malee, she accepts her situation but uses it to better herself by her earnings to finance her dress-making lessons and, thus, her future.

However, it is different with Tongpoon. Faced with unfair situations, he refuses to acknowledge that that's the way they must be. He wants to set them right, so that he can rebuild his own happiness and dreams. In a way, this shows how Tongpoon has already assumed certain individualistic traits of a capitalist society. He seeks revenge and will never stop pursuing his own personal goals.

No matter what others say, Tongpoon never gives up on his car. It gradually develops into an obsession. When Raemchan questions why he is not willing to stop chasing the car, Duan answers, "Because he is Tongpoon Kokpo – "*Ratsadorn Temkhan*."¹⁰ He is ready to be a person and fight." He is "a citizen with full the range of rights," a citizen with the right to justice. Ironically, Tongpoon ends up finding himself to be a criminal and enjoying no rights at all; a clever play on words by the director. Tongpoon's flaming rage leads him to set fire to Upon Wattana, he shoots one man, and kills Tangsa. Sakhon begs Tongpoon to take away any car he likes. But, when Sakhon says to Tongpoon that he does not understand why he brings all these troubles upon himself just to get his humble car back, Tongpoon tells him sternly that he does not want any other car than his own. By this time, the police have arrived and Tongpoon has no chance to escape. He looks utterly desperate and helpless. The last words of the senior officer ring in his ear and help the audience to empathize with the bitterness Tongpoon feels. "I told you that you could never win this. If you cannot accept this, it is impossible for you to live in this society. Although it seems that you have failed this time, you can still fight for it and you have been very brave though..." In the last scene, we see his car registration plate "T-7419" among the dumped car parts in the back of the garage... The contrast between the reality of the story and the title becomes evident.

What drives people like Tongpoon to come to Bangkok and sacrifice the freedom and the peaceful life that their hometown offers them? This can be explained within the context of the capitalistic perspective of the film. They come to make money. To them, money is the only way to survive. Without money, they do not have food to eat and, more important, cannot get an education, which they see as being the only access to social mobility. Furthermore, how can we explain why people like Tangsa and Sakhon try to steal Tongpoon's little hope of a future? The answer is the same; they are blinded by money and captives of capitalism. Consequently, the disparity between the rich and the poor widens and the poor become increasingly powerless. Lower-class people suffer from the unfairness created by the greedy who want more and more and the vicious circle continues into a downward spiral. Therefore, Tongpoon, a symbolic character of urban migration, comes to a city with a dream, but eventually gets ruined by merciless people whose dishonest ways of making money affect society in a deeply negative way. With regard to this, it is necessary to take into account the words of the director himself. The liberated social atmosphere of

¹⁰ In Thai, *Ratsadorn* means "citizen" and *Temkhan* means "fully fledged."

the 1970s made it possible to produce socially-concerned films and he admits that, at the time, there was much freedom to be enjoyed in filmmaking. However, after the October 6, 1976 uprising, censorship was increased and he was forced to return to traditional comic and romantic themes. In the case of *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* and its reflection of post-October 6, 1976 society, the director juxtaposes Tongpoon's sad and pessimistic outcome at the end of the film to the depressing atmosphere at the time. Those who fight for what they believe in -- the students of the uprising in reality and the fictional Tongpoon in the story -- are oppressed by the stronger forces of society, that is, the authorities and the wealthy.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

4.4 *Prachachon Nok*

4.4.1 Synopsis

People in a small village in Yosathon province start setting up their own agricultural group (or farmers group) to plant crops and sell them independently in the dry season as a solution to their food shortage. If the project is successful, many young villagers won't need to leave the village for the town and, furthermore, the villagers will gain greater profit by not having to go through a middle merchant. However, some villagers, like, Khong Phaeng, leave home for Bangkok to work as a seasonal migrant (or temporary migrant). The village chief, Sawai, and the leader of the agricultural group, Charat, discuss the finances needed to build an irrigation pump. A rich Chinese middle merchant, Saeng, who is closely connected to the authorities, offers his help; however, he ironically and offensively expresses his negative feelings about the proposed agricultural group, which he regards as a communist activity. Saeng and several officials, including local policemen, cooperate to interfere with the project that the agricultural group is undertaking. They threaten Charat, warning him to halt the agricultural group's activity. On the surface, the money-linked politicians and the loan shark, Saeng, seem to be defending themselves against "evil" communist dogma. However, deep inside, they only care about their own interests and what they can gain from the villagers and are trying to beat down any potential competition. Meanwhile, Khong Phaeng is trying hard to make a living in the city; switching jobs from a construction worker, to an ice delivery man, to a textile factory worker. In the textile factory, he experiences the bitterness of a laborer's life, witnessing the poor living and working conditions, and eventually he gets involved in a labor union led by one of his roommates. Through its non-stop protests demonstrating the need to improve their working conditions and rights for the laborers, the labor union successfully achieves its goals and the factory owner, who is shown to be backed by the police, concedes. However, the morning after the day of triumph, the police invade the room while Khong Phaeng and his roommates are sleeping, and arrest all of them. In the village, on the other hand, facing the mysterious death of Charat, the villagers feel great sadness without seeing any results from their agricultural group projects.

The director, Mr. Manop Udomdej, explains that the background of *Prachachon Nok* (On the Fringe of Society) was subsidized by an NGO group, The Catholic Council of Thailand for Development [CCTD], in the late 1970s. He says that he was inspired by Dr. Seri Pongphit, who also worked for the CCTD at the time, who told him about the plight

of Isaan people who had come to Bangkok and ended up facing countless problems for being outsiders in Thai society. According to him, he was sponsored by the CCTD to make this film to educate upcountry people about the political, economic, and social problems of contemporary Thai society.

4.4.2 Theme

The main thematic issues of this film begin with the hardships that two groups of people in the countryside have to deal with throughout the dry season. The first group includes those who decide to leave for the cities as seasonal or temporary migrant workers (i.e., Khong Phaeng, Bun Thom). The second group includes those who decide to stay in the countryside and who try to find a way to survive (i.e. Sawai, Charat), for example, by setting up an agricultural group to plant and sell crops independently. However, both the villagers who leave and those who remain have to face two realities to protect their own status and rights. First, there is confrontation between the rich and powerful and the poor and powerless. In the village, people in the agricultural group have to fight against a rich middle merchant (i.e., Saeng) and corrupt authority figures who are solely interested in their own financial gain through the rich middle merchant. In the city, meanwhile, a rich factory owner who has connections with the police quashes a labor union containing some temporary migrant workers from the village, which is trying to improve working rights and conditions. Communism was viewed negatively among the public in the 1970s and the content and dialogue of the film illustrate how the establishment of any kind of group activity, such as forming themselves into an agricultural cooperative(s) or a labor union, was socially regarded as promoting communist ideology at the time. In the film, this attitude hinders both the villagers who have stayed and who try to make their lives better through the agricultural group, and it also destroys those who leave the countryside to work in the city and try to improve their own civil rights at work.

4.4.3 Analysis

The film begins with a peaceful scene of the village, Huai Lua, which constitutes a small sub-district in Yosathon Province. Initially, the film shows two types of villagers who differ in their methods of surviving. The first type moves to the city for seasonal work, as exemplified by Khong Phaeng boarding the train heading towards Bangkok. On the way, he

recalls the problems of poverty that have forced him to leave home. Since he had had no money to take his fatally ill son to the clinic in town, he shamefully had to face his son's death. At that time, even the village abbot, who was an important figure in all kinds of village matters, had no way to help Khong Phaeng through with his tragic situation. Meanwhile, the second group of villagers, like the village chief, Sawai, and a young man named Charat, chooses to stay in the village and tries to improve the village's welfare with new plans to fight its irrigation and financial problems.

In the beginning, the villagers open a discussion on the issue of organizing an agricultural group and planting crops in the dry season. To them, the ultimate goal is "Live well, Eat well." The purposes of setting up the agricultural group are, first, to deal with the villagers' food insufficiency, and, thereby, to halt the loss of their young laborers who are leaving for the cities to earn money during the low season. Their main aim is to work cooperatively and sell their products without having to go through the middle merchant, Saeng, thereby cutting the villager's costs and, in turn, increasing their income. The villagers seem to agree on the issues and are excited about the planned changes.

In the city, on the other hand, Khong Phaeng and his old friend from the same village, Bun Thom, discuss the present situation of the village and the agricultural group, set up by Charat and the village chief. Khong Phaeng notes that people from the authorities mostly regard this agricultural cooperative as leaning towards communist ideologies and, hence, are strongly against it. At the end of the conversation, Bun Thom mentions that it is a shame that such an idealistic person like Charat always suffers. Although Khong Phaeng agrees with Charat's good intentions, he says he does not want to join the group himself, because he is afraid that he may be branded a communist. Khong Phaeng begins work on a construction site and talks to an old man from Suphanburi about the difficulties in farming and the hardships of rural life in Isaan. Looking at a group of college students passing by, they lament on the dismal future of their children in the countryside.

Remembering his family and home, Khong Phaeng recalls something that his son once read out from his school textbook:

Dear friends,

Let's join together.

We must work hard

Seek our knowledge that will guide us forward

If we remember this

We'll discover much

Let us work hard

And use our bodily strength to the full
 Our efforts will not be un-rewarded
 However hard we have to labor
 Our efforts will ultimately make us rich

When his son asks him when his family will become wealthy, Khong Phaeng replies flatly that they never will. Ironically, the son says that he does not understand how the poor can be clever as his sister is telling him to study hard if he wants to be rich. From the point of view of the lower-classes, education is always seen as something of a privilege reserved only for those people who have money. As with Tongpoon in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, the villagers in *Prachachon Nok* also believe education is the way forward to success but similarly, they also believe that it is also beyond their reach.

The film also illustrates the nationwide fear or disapproval of communist activities during the 1970s. When the villagers worry about not having enough money to buy fertilizer, Saeng, a rich Chinese man¹¹ in the village, offers his financial help, but some of the men in the agricultural group, including Charat, seem offended. Their attitude is caused by the fact that Saeng already has money and, at the same time, has links to the authorities as well. In the following scenes, Saeng visits Charat's mother and warns her to watch over her son, telling her that Charat is leading a communist group; the agricultural coop. Accepting some repaid debt money from Saeng, Charat's mother is shown to be overly respectful to him. She is sure that Saeng is speaking the truth and attempting to save her son from what she perceives is the communist devil. This part of the film, together with the scene where Khong Phaeng expresses to Bun Thom his fear of being accused of being a communist if he joins the agricultural group, illustrates how the general public in Thai society regarded the term "communism or communist activity" in a very negative way during the period when the film was produced. Communism was spreading quite rapidly in Southeast Asia in the 1970s, fanned to some extent by the war in Indochina, and any group activity set up for a collective gain, such as labor unions or farming cooperatives, was decidedly regarded as communist in the 1970s in Thailand, even though their main aims were of a socialist nature. It was the government's view that any kind of collective idea or behavior should be considered as anti-government and should be eliminated as a matter of national security. The title of the film is, indeed, intended to reinforce this idea. *Prachachon Nok* means citizens living on the fringe of society. Since communism lies on

¹¹ Among Thai people, the term for a rich Chinese-ethnic person is *Thao Kae* (for males) and *Jae* (for females).

the extreme left of the political spectrum, it becomes evident that the government accused its own freethinking citizens of being political outsiders to discredit them and instill fear against them. The characters are only *Prachachon Nok* to the extent that the government wants them to be regarded as such. Indeed as *Prachachon Nok* only gives a biased view of contemporary Thai society - a government-based view - it is a true reflection of the political situation in Thailand, which was indeed one-sided and hardly democratic at all. In the film, the audience is tricked into believing that labor unionists and the villagers are communist intruders, when, in fact, they are clearly not. At that time in the 1970s, contemporary Thai society was duped into believing it was living in a democratic atmosphere, which was far from the truth. Furthermore, the director's own words should be taken into account. Mr. Manop Udomdej explains that he attempted to mirror the socio-political climate after the political events of October 14, 1973, when communist activity was regarded as a protest against the government, which unfairly opposed and shut down all collective social activities, such as unions organized by students, laborers, or farmers. The director adds that even though Thailand was supposedly a democratic country, according to the government, he wondered to what extent the democracy of the time was truly democratic. As he remembered it, there was no justice during this period, because the existing institutional forces suppressed people until they had no way out, and a great number of poor and powerless people lived on the darker side of society. Given the thread of hypocrisy running through Thai society, he stresses that he tried to make his audience understand that they all had to unite in order to overcome their problems with the justice system. Mr. Manop comments that he wanted *Prachachon Nok* to act as a record of the history of the time. However, he concludes that unlike the 1970s, when many young Thai generations were serious and philosophical in their search of freedom and justice, it is becoming harder nowadays to communicate to the audience the problems their society is currently facing. In light of these comments, and given that *Prachachon Nok* is based on real life experiences of the directors' friends and family, the film does justifiably provide an in-depth and very realistic insight into the period and can essentially be regarded as highly educational.

The film also illustrates to what extent the poor are exploited by the more powerful members of society. Although all that the women and children in the village have been able to get from the fields were bugs and frogs, they are finally able to dream about a successful rice crop during the dry season thanks to the new plan of the agricultural group. The villagers start building the pump system and working hard in unison. By this time, a group of university students has visited the village to do research on the agricultural group. Explaining the goal of the agricultural group, Charat emphasizes that their activity is to be

considered as village co-operative, and not a political group. However, their visits entangle the villagers in problems with the authorities because, during that period, any involvement with student groups was also regarded as a harmful act towards the present government regime in light of the recent student political uprisings.

An official in the village comes to see Charat and asks Charat to lend him some of the money that the agricultural group had borrowed from the bank. As Charat and the village treasurer reject his appeal, the angry official blackmails them by threatening to misuse his power over the innocent villagers. In the following scenes, the film shows the dinner gathering of Nai Amphoe¹², Saeng, and some other police officers, where they discuss their plans to destroy the agricultural group in their own interests and for their own benefit. Once again, the film displays how close connections between those who have money and the authorities are detrimental for the poor.

Ironically, one night, as Khong Phaeng is walking the streets in the city, he watches a TV program through a store window in which an MP talks about agricultural development and the national economy. Even though the government is pushing for agricultural development, its own authorities are, in effect, preventing it from happening by suppressing labor unions and village co-operatives, once again proving that the powerful and greedy only want the country's economy to develop if they are going to get a slice of the profits.

In his letters home, Khong Phaeng complains about how he cannot stand Bangkok, claiming that the place is just hell:

“So many people (are) walking in the street trampling all over each other.

The big crowd at the provincial festival is nothing compared with this.

There are cars everywhere like worms in the jar of preserved fish...”

Home, on the other hand, may not be heaven, but is still a place with freedom. He informs his family about his new job in a textile factory, which he got through his roommate, Mitchai, and how dangerous it is working with the machines and how the laborers are unfairly treated. That night, as he sitting with his roommates talking, Khong Phaeng suddenly suffers from pangs of homesickness as he listens to one of his roommates playing the *kaen*. The recurring role of the *Moh-lam* as an agent who helped the Isaan people to keep their cultural bonds alive is again evident here.

¹² Literally, a district officer in Thai.

In the next scenes, we are shown a labor union meeting discussing their demands on the following issues: weekend holidays, maternity leave, summer holidays, annual days-off, over time pay, and a minimum wage of 25 Baht per day. On the way home after the meeting, one of the union members is fatally injured in a freak car accident. In spite of Michai's efforts to ask for the day off for the funeral, the factory manager mercilessly refuses it. When Mitchai continues to plead for this favor, the manager has him brutally beaten by thugs, condemning him for making trouble again. This shocks Khong Phaeng. As a result, a big strike breaks out among the factory workers.

As the strike in the city becomes more violent and demands grow stronger in calling for the owner to accept the workers' demands in the factory, in the village, an abbot ironically declares to Charat, "Nobody cares what the poor say..." His words ring in our ears, juxtaposed with the strikers' loud shouting, which is subsequently followed by a scene of dogs' barking in the village. Ironically, at the moment when the furious factory workers set fire to an effigy of their owner, a mysterious gunshot kills Charat.

In the office, the factory owner and Mitchai negotiate, under police supervision, over a list of requirements written by the labor union, among them: 1. Improve employee's welfare system, including health insurance; 2. Raise the monthly salary; 3. Discharge the previous manager; and 4. Re-instate Mitchai to his old position. Mitchai leaves the office after arriving at an acceptable agreement. The factory workers celebrate their triumph. However, the police officer quietly tells the factory owner not to worry, which foreshadows the coming tragedy.

The next morning, the police arrest Mitchai, Khong Phaeng, and their roommates in their apartment. In jail, they are desperately waiting for help, but all that they hear is the indifferent voice of their defense lawyer explaining to the press that this incident is another common case of the government having to deal with and control organized communist activity. This scene illustrates how the government used the public fear of communism as an excuse to deal with groups or movements in the 1970s which simply tried to better their own living conditions without government assistance.

To sum up, the film presents the fundamental regional problems of northeastern Thailand, especially during the dry season, that is, severe weather conditions, drought, and poverty, as previously described in *Luk Isaan*. This film also displays the two approaches that regional village people choose for survival: to leave for the cities to work as seasonal migrants or to stay in the village and improve their situation. Second, the film interestingly portrays the political beliefs of the government and the authorities towards communism at the time and their willingness to destroy any group union organized by the more

enlightened, e.g., Mitchai and Charat, to help the poor and the uneducated. In addition, we also witness the contrasting perspectives of the older generation, for example, Charat's mother and Saeng, and the younger generation towards socialist ideas, which provides an insight into the socio-political aspects of Thai society at the time. Furthermore, this film directly criticizes the corrupt relationship between the authorities and the rich. Together, the officials and the police, misuse their power and social status with the powerless, the farmers and laborers, exploiting the poor for both their own gain and to benefit the rich, for example, Saeng and the factory owner. Finally, the film exposes the injustice in society through the dialogues between the village abbot and villagers and between Khong Phaeng and his children. The tragic ending for both the rural farmers and the city factory laborers highlights this point. Furthermore, the letters that Khong Phaeng, a character symbolic of Isaan seasonal migrants, sends home from the city describe well the harsh conditions of urban migrants in Bangkok and the homesickness they endure. The director comments that he wanted *Prachachon Nok* to act as a record of the socio-political aspect of Thai history in the 1970s.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

4.5 *Tongpan*

4.5.1 Synopsis

Due to the construction of a new dam, Tongpan, a poor peasant, is forced to move from his home village to another village which also faces ruin because of further dam construction plans. Drought and water shortage, caused both by poor weather conditions and the dam construction which blocks the water-flow into the land, give no hope for villagers with their farming or fishing. Some leave the village to escape their intolerable hardships. One day, a university student from Bangkok comes to the village. After talking with Tongpan for a few minutes in a small restaurant, he asks Tongpan to be a guest at a seminar where district officers, experts, teachers, and students will meet to discuss the benefits of the dam constructions and where, most importantly, local people from the affected areas will be able to express their opinions. As the seminar lasts for many "rounds," Tongpan's expectations that it will help his situation gradually fade and he becomes pessimistic about whether these people are really concerned about the suffering of the local people. At the seminar, we see that the intellectuals seem to focus more on the administrative and bureaucratic concept of development and the benefits of the long-term based plans for the majority, rather than on the benefits for the grass-root level of people, who are, in reality, directly affected by the dam plans. Tired of being the hungry and poor clown in the seminar, Tongpan leaves and goes to fight in the ring for money, as one last way to survive. Failing to win, he returns home empty-handed, only to discover his sick wife has died, leaving him alone and in despair with his motherless children.

4.5.2 Theme

This film was made as a reflection of the successful student uprising of October 14, 1973 and in deliberation of the true meaning and function of democracy and to what extent democratic practices benefit ordinary citizens. Three thematic issues are implied in the film. First, while focusing on national plans to build the Pak Moon Dam in the Isaan region, at Chiang Khan District, near the Mekhong River, the film emphasizes that industrial development is not aimed at benefiting grass-roots people of society, such as farmers and peasants like Tongpan. To them, this development of an infrastructure, in this instance the dams, only means the loss of their traditional ways of life. Second, whereas *Prachachon Nok* describes how the powerful and corrupt authorities deal with the

problems of urban migrants, this film also touches upon the lack of national awareness of the administrative and educated classes towards country folk. Their indifference towards and poor understanding of rural life and the fundamental problems which rural people face, make the lives of rural people worse and eventually forces them to leave their homes to survive. Finally, while portraying the physical and psychological suffering of the rural peasants, this film also mirrors the Thai political situation of the time regarding rural issues. In the story, rural farmers/peasants state that they can neither stay in the village because of drought conditions brought about by the weather and the dams, nor can they move into the forest for reasons of national security. Illegal loggings are taking place everywhere and the villagers are also afraid of communist groups in the forest. Therefore, it is obvious that they have nowhere to go except to larger towns or cities.

4.5.3 Analysis

This film begins with a short prologue, narrating how the film was conceived in the wake of the student uprising of October 14, 1973, and produced in the shadow of the military coup and suppression of the democratic movement of October 6, 1976.

In the first scene, a local woman carrying water in the barren field, accompanied by her children, stares at a bus passing by. In the bus, a student from Bangkok is listening to the driver relating how life in the border towns is unsafe and full of hardship due to bandits and illegal loggers. The student narrates to the audience that in late 1975, the intelligentsia and students were eagerly anticipating a series of seminars to discuss the national project to build the Pak Moon Dam on the Mekhong River. He goes on to explain that his reason for coming to the small town, Chiang Khan, near the potential dam site, is to find some local people who want to share their ideas at the seminar. At this point, the film adopts a very democratic viewpoint by suggesting that all members of society will have their voices heard on this matter.

The student stops at a crowded local market place where busy rickshaws are coming and going. Simultaneously, the audience's attention is drawn to the advertisements for Pepsi and Coca Cola, two commercial leaders of globalization, showing how rapidly Western influence was spreading to every corner of Thailand, even as far as this remote area near the border with Laos. The student stops at a restaurant and asks Tongpan, the protagonist in the film, about a bus route to Pahk Chom near the potential dam site. When the student explains to Tongpan the government's plans for a new dam in the region and the purpose of his trip, Tongpan tells the student how his life is closely related to dams by

adding that he previously came from a place where another dam project had already forced him to move once. Tongpan also explains that the people who have to find a way to survive go to farm in the forest, which is not government-controlled because of the presence of communist guerillas. On the strength of Tongpan's reply, the student finally invites Tongpan to be a guest at the seminar. However, when Tongpan displays his cautiousness, saying, "It is forbidden to get involved with students..." the student assures him that it will be safe since the seminar is organized by district officers, engineers, professors, and students. Tongpan's fear reflects that of the general towards communism and any activities regarded as communist in the 1970s.

Accepting his suggestion, Tongpan takes the student to his house to prepare himself for the trip. The student meets Tongpan's family and witnesses their poverty firsthand. Tongpan and the student begin to talk about Tongpan's past. Tongpan, who is originally from Kalasin, worked at an American air base in Korat before he moved to Chiang Khan, where he could not settle down because of the Nam Pao Dam project. He says, "the authorities" kept the water in the dam during the dry season and only released it during the rainy season, causing both severe drought and floods. Many people left the village and Tongpan began to work in sawmills in Laos. However, after he was warned by the Red Lao Army soldiers to leave, he moved to his present village to farm and take care of chickens as a hired peasant. The student quietly listens to Tongpan's desperate voice. Tongpan is a symbolic figure of the large number of rural Thais who were forced to undergo drastic changes in their lifestyles due to national development plans.

When Tongpan is ready to leave home for the seminar, his wife skeptically questions how it will bring any changes to them as a result.

"I am going to the seminar with important people. Maybe things will get better."
Tongpan says.

"Do you know how to talk to big people?" his wife is concerned.

"We've had enough troubles. I have to speak! We can't just sit still and wait for them to cause more trouble ... [the dam] flooding up to our necks!" replies Tongpan, openly expressing his inner thoughts.

"Are they going to stop, then?" his wife skeptically questions.

"Stop them or not, we have to fight as many rounds as we can." Tongpan seems brave and firm.

The conversation that Tongpan and his wife have right before his leaving for the seminar illustrates how strongly these humble people want their lives to be better.

At the opening of the seminar, a host speaks about the success of the student uprising in October 14, 1973, and how the birth of democracy resulted from the student uprising. Mentioning the importance of the seminar as an example of good democratic practice, he emphasizes how much democracy gives to the ordinary people and how it gives all citizens the opportunity to be heard. He explains that the main purpose of this seminar is to give representatives of the local village people a chance to inform the authorities of their problems and to express their opinions.

The seminar goes on for many rounds. Although the seminar is initially intended to allow local people to air their opinions in a democratic way, the three local men invited, including Tongpan, seem to be sidelined. In the first round, the Western dam expert demonstrates how the system works; however, the local men cannot understand what he is saying and become bored. All the issues that the intellectuals in the seminar discuss seem so far removed from the reality which the local men wish to address.

The film flicks between the seminar and scenes of the village. While Tongpan and his wife work in the fields, a group of villagers leave, carrying all their belongings. Asked by Tongpan where they are going, a man in the group says this village will be soon flooded, and because of the intolerable hardships at present, they are heading for Pahk Chom to start a new life where they expect to be better off. Tongpan wishes them luck and resumes working. In the following scenes, unlike the division of male and female jobs in *Luk Isaan*, we witness gender equality in the field, as Tongpan and his wife take turns to plough the land. Hearing his wife's wish to buy a buffalo to be free from the traditional way of hard labor, Tongpan keeps quiet. He only shows his heavy heart by claiming that a dam will dry up the irrigation canals and ponds and he might lose the land if he doesn't grow decent crops.

During the third round of the seminar, an academic figure, played by Sulak Sivaraksa, criticizes the government for making Thailand imitate the West by trying to catch up with the Japanese and Western economies. This professor is well-known in Thailand for his anti-Western views. His presence in the film reinforces the sentiment that Western style modernization is harmful and incongruous with the traditions of Thai life style. In the film, he cynically questions whether people have ever been disadvantaged by infrastructure development. He mentions how economic development increases consumerism. Yet, in reality, the dams on the Mekhong river have rendered the local people homeless and destroyed their culture, for example, the depletion of the giant Buang fish, a previous source of income for locals, and it is apparent that this economic development benefits only those who live in Bangkok. In the film, Tongpan wonders where all the fish have gone while fishing with his son. He is unable to catch anything but rubbish, as the

dam has destroyed all of the fish, his source of food and income. He recites sad lyrics, which sound like a poem, to his son, Li.

The fish came all up to the surface to open their gills
 And to admire the moon.
 They made the water look like silver.

Tongpan's needs have been ignored in favor of the needs of the majority. Returning to the seminar, the prominent academic, Sulak, subsequently asks the vital question, whether Bangkokians and Western experts are actually interested in the points he is making or whether they regard them as trivial in the shadow of economic progress.

At the following seminar, a civil engineer stresses that development and personal loss must go hand in hand, as people have to choose between water and land. He says that infrastructure planners cannot satisfy everyone's wishes; instead, they always have to think about the majority in the long run. Up until now, the local men have still not been heard.

Back home, Tongpan practices boxing. He hears his wife coughing terribly and worries about her health. To make things worse, she can no longer breast-feed her youngest son. At this point, Tongpan's sick wife symbolizes the harsh reality of the land in Isaan, where nobody expects fertility, and her dried up breast milk also reflects the drying up of rivers and water sources.

One night, on the way home from the seminar, Tongpan, who has become very depressed, joins a couple of villagers over drinks. Tongpan deplores, "No house. No land. No money. Only [have] labor to sell. Work until you drop and they will kick you out." His friends try to comfort him with a glass of alcohol. Arriving home, Tongpan's inner anxiety bursts out in a monologue,

"Life in the land is scant and dear. The wind is dry. The forest has disappeared. The plain is stripped bare. Dry trees stand dead. We are poor! Hired by the year! At the end, just 2000 Baht!" [He shouts out loudly with tears] "Buy my wholesale labor! Sold by year after year! Pay later! What is all this [poverty]?" [He, then, looks at his flock of chickens and violently stirs it up, saying] "There is no advance. Why should I raise them? The more I feed, the poorer I get! Go to hell..."

Witnessing his deep sadness, the audience sympathizes with his pain.

The following day at the seminar, an expert of the student uprising of October 14, 1973, explains how the event brought about the birth of parliamentary democracy. However, he questions whether it will truly guarantee better times for the people, and if does not, what the real purpose of having democracy is. His point is that without true democracy, there won't be fair development and improvement. The expert displays a photograph to prove how ironic the meaning of "development" can be. In the picture, power lines pass right over the site where the dam is built as a sign of development for the local people; however, the power lines never feed the local villages, they only run to the cities. It tells us that, in practice, there is no improvement for rural citizens. At this point, we ironically recall the scene where Tongpan's wife sews at night using the light from an old-fashioned oil lamp, not a modern electric light. This poses the vital question: did national development and the democratization of Thailand really benefit all segments of society?

In the scene of the sixth seminar proceeding, the university student is daydreaming of dancing with two Isaan *Moh-lam* musicians who are playing the drum and the *kaen* back in the barren field at home. The *Moh-lam* song matches the subdued sound of the *kaen*,

Life in the land today is scant and dear
 In the dry season the forest disappears
 The plain is barren
 Any trees stand dead
 The scorching wind blows every year
 The people are poor lacking food and shelter
 On this starving Northeast land
 Picking up wild fruits and berries
 To eat instead of rice
 Our tough daughters, they take for them for their pleasure
 Even our wives,
 They drag away too
 Who is above the law of the land?
 Pathetic...

The song reflects the student's hope that the intellectuals in the seminar become as aware as he is of the reality of the local country people.

On the closing day of the seminar, the participants speak out on problems caused by development in Northeast Thailand and about the misunderstandings between the government and the local people. Tired of listening to their irrelevant and irresponsible talk, Tongpan leaves the room and goes off to fight in the ring, in hunger and in need of money. The audience sees, ironically in Tongpan's situation, that among those who are betting on the matches inside the stadium, money is being passed around everywhere in their hands. Right at that moment, the seminar host finally offers Tongpan the opportunity to speak out. Given Tongpan's absence, the turn goes to another local man. This middle-aged local man quietly, but deeply, impresses the seminar participants. He starts listing the local needs and problems that he and most of the villagers have in common. In contrast to earlier opinions in the seminar, that development of the dams would have to mean choosing land or water and losing one or the other, he boldly demonstrates that the farmers of Isaan need both water and land. They cannot afford to lose either. He then raises the issue of safety in the village, and the need for protection from buffalo thieves who come and threaten the locals with guns. Third, he mentions the low sale price of their rice and, fourth, he voices concern about the corrupt district officers who are always making various demands of the villagers. Next, he talks about the unfairness of the present logging situation; a poor peasant who cuts down a couple of trees gets arrested, whereas important businessmen never get arrested for hauling away trees for the sawmills. Finally, he mentions the poor health system. The local man bravely asks, "Would the dam project solve [all] these problems?" No one seems to dare to say anything. All the participants in the seminar become speechless; they have no answers for the local man's case – it has not been taken into consideration. This point in the film clearly portrays the ignorance at the administrative levels of rural life and the impossible struggle locals face in making their plight heard and understood.

Back in the ring, Tongpan fails to win the fights and returns home with nothing. He finds his four crying children, left vulnerable in the wake of their sick mother's death. Li, in deep mourning, asks why Tongpan did not buy a buffalo for her, which she wanted to have the most. At the funeral, villagers soothe the spirit of Tongpan's wife, eh Fan, and pray for better times. After the funeral, Tongpan leaves the town with his children without saying where he is heading for. Although the student returns to the village to meet Tongpan, he never sees him again.

In the epilogue, the film relates that the October 6, 1976 military coup ended three years of parliamentary democracy and shows how half of the participants in the film were

either jailed, forced to flee to join the communist groups in the forest, or exiled. Furthermore, it claims that over 3000 students and academics disappeared after the coup.

To conclude, the film contains the following important social messages. First, there is the issue of democracy. The film clearly mentions that the October 14, 1973 student uprising opened the way for a new democratic era in Thai society. However, by emphasizing the unbalanced opportunities between the intellectuals and administrative people in the seminar, on the one hand, and the local country men, on the other, the film demonstrates that there was still a long way to go until the ordinary citizens, especially the poor regional people, were able to speak out and freely express their opinions to solve problems democratically. Second, there is the issue of industrial development. The film questions whether the national development plans improve and benefit the lives of both rural as well as urban people. The film also criticizes the ignorance of the administrative/bureaucratic sectors of society towards the grass-roots people and demonstrates the consistent misunderstandings between both sides in approaching problems and solutions, which, as a result, slow down regional improvements. Finally, through both the dialogue which the bus driver and the student have at the beginning of the film, the problems which the local farmer mentions on the last day of the seminar, and Tongpan's words throughout the film, the obstacles which the rural people had to face in reality at that time are well illustrated. They fight for economic reliance, security from communist bandits and illegal loggers, a better health system and, most importantly, a reliable justice system which no one in the seminar is in the least concerned about. This reemphasizes that the modern development plans are misdirected, causing more serious inequity between the urban and the rural people, subsequently forcing rural people to become urban migrants.

The following section is based on three interviews with important figures involved in the making of the film: Mr. Yuthana Mukdasanit, co-producer, interviewed on November 10, 2003, Ms. Pajjong Laisakul, producer and co-scriptwriter, interviewed on November 19, 2003, and, finally, Mr. Surachai Jantimathon, director and music director, interviewed on November 26, 2003.

According to Mr. Surachai Jantimathon (Nga Caravan), Ms. Pajjong Laisakul (Pajjong), and Mr. Yuthana Mukdasanit, a group of people, including Jeffrey Sing, Pajjong Laisakul, Khamsing Srinawak (the scriptwriter), and Surachai Jantimathon worked all together in 1976 to make this so-called underground film.

According to Ms. Paijong, *Tongpan* deals with the Mekhong Project – a dam building plan on the Mekhong River. Academics, including Dr. Puey Ungpakorn and Sulak Sivaraksa, students, bankers, American Quakers, and village representatives held a seminar to discuss how the dam would benefit the villagers in the affected area. In order to invite a representative from the village near the dam site, she says she went to the area with Jeffrey and met a local man named Tongpan, who had to keep relocating his home because of dam plans, just like the story in the film. After the seminar in 1975, this group of people decided to make a film as a reflection of the real seminar and Tongpan's life. According to her, at the time, people regarded the film as sincere, simple, and realistic. By making this film, she initially expected to build up public understanding about the under-privileged people and ultimately to make the government aware that they should be careful with their plans not to hurt the under-privileged, acknowledging that previous [dam] development plans had already been very detrimental to local people's lives. She adds that she was also against dams for ecological and environmental reasons. Ms. Paijong was finally able to finish the film in Sweden, where the film was sold and broadcast on TV. Sadly enough, after the October 6, 1976 uprising, many people who participated in this film, such as Khamsing and a student in the film, were thrown in jail, and Surachai and a lawyer, who played the role of an outspoken local man in the seminar, had to flee into the jungle, she explains. Furthermore, illustrating the background of the 1970s, she says that the more young people wished for a better society and questioned social injustices; the more sophisticated works, such as books and films, were produced to satisfy the many different segments of society, addressing such issues as which direction society should go in and how society could benefit the common people as well as the privileged ones.

The director and the music producer of *Tongpan*, Mr. Surachai Jantimathon, a well-known singer of the '*Pleng Pua Chiwit*' genre (he had been singing about the lives and struggles of rural farmers and urban workers since the 1970s), explains, his motivation in making the film and singing a *Moh-lam* song in it. Considering that *Tongpan* is a film about peasants, especially Isaan peasants, which had rarely been made before, having a rural peasant speak central Thai didn't sound or look authentic to him. Therefore, he suggested that they should use the Isaan dialect for the film and he helped to translate the script, originally written in central Thai, to the Isaan language. In the meantime, he made a *Moh-lam* song to create a perfect harmony for the film. According to him, the message of the film is that rural peasants did whatever they had to do just to bring food to the family so that they could survive, as the film shows through Tongpan's motives to go to join the

seminar. However, he continues, that the better life which rural people longed for wholly depended on government plans to expand urban civilization, which was contradictory to the needs of rural citizens.

Mr. Yuthana Mukdasanit, who organized the seminar "sequences," says that he attempted to focus on Tongpan's mind and consciousness by constantly employing a flashback to his rural life. According to him, this film has several goals: to show the possibility that the dam project might negatively affect the villagers and to call for the government to reconsider it and to highlight the issue of technology versus humanization by presenting Tongpan as the representative of one of the villages in the affected area. In addition, when the film gets to the seminar parts, it reaches a further level of satire about the intellectuals who are holding the seminar. When the intellectuals listen to the poor, they are incapable of understanding their real issues, even though they are classed as the greatest intellectual minds in Thailand. According to him, the film asks those who are responsible for the development plans to accept that society was moving in the direction of materialism, instead of humanism. Mr. Yuthana considers this film as realistic, avoiding melodramatic factors. According to him, films like *Tongpan* and *Prachachon Nok*, which deal with minorities in society, had never been seen before that period, so they could be regarded as very pioneering works. During the 1970s, Thai films tried to get away from being melodramatic and focused more on family story-lines as a means of carrying political issues and messages, which couldn't be carried out under the traditional mainstream styles. However, he continues, since the audience refused to deal with substantive matters, over a period of 5 or 6 years, this new genre quickly lost favor. Moreover, during this period, the audience would not support any film which was suspected of having underlying left wing or student influences. According to him, in the 1980s, Thai films intended to draw young generations by using a very strong melodramatic touch, and since the 1990s up to the present time, modern Thai films are concentrating more on form and techniques without attempting to broadcast political messages. To Mr. Yuthana, every film must communicate some political ideas or, at least, must contain some social commentary.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As has been repeatedly emphasized in this paper, film is not only a medium for entertainment, but also a medium for the transmission of social messages and values, which lie in the narrative structure and the discourse employed by the films. In the case of Thai films, the significant role of film as a medium for social commentary began to be recognized in the 1970s, in tune with the various social movements of that period.

Politically, the strong desire for a more democratic country was expressed through the October 14, 1973 and the October 6, 1976 student uprisings and other public protests during the 1970s. Gaining a new awareness of how powerful the voice of the general public could be, many Thais more vigorously pursued freedom and more liberalized civil rights for the underprivileged of the country, including rural peasants and poor urban laborers. Meanwhile, from a socio-economic point of view, the process of industrialization and modernization in Thailand, influenced by the global changes of the 1970s, led to a rapidly developing Thai economy and an ever-growing GNP.

However, when the general public began to take the Bangkok-centered national development plans and their consequences seriously, it became clear that they were not going to benefit the grass-roots people in the rural regions but merely those in the large cities. This negative side of modern development emerged as a social problem, deepening the economic gap and existing inequities between the rich and the poor and between rural and urban areas. One manifestation of these problems was an increase in migration from rural areas to larger towns and cities, not only for economic reasons but also for various kinds of social opportunities. It was during this period that Thai society began to recognize the grave impact this capital-centered development and urban migration would have on their futures. To sum up, it was in the 1970s that Thai society finally turned its eyes toward the lower classes, most of whom were poor peasants and laborers, eager to make their lives better. The consequent social movements towards freedom and greater opportunities generated more liberated ideas and ways of expression in many areas of society, including music, literature, and films.

It was during this period that Thailand experienced the development of '*Nang Pua Chiwit*,' or socially engaged and socially realistic films, which were intended to increase public awareness of social and political issues. These films started to deal with the people

and places marginalized by several simultaneously occurring factors: a developing but immature democracy, rapid industrialization, capital city-centered development, materialistic ideas and attitudes, and declining traditional values. To illustrate the tremendous progress that Thai films made in the 1970s in terms of their content and their portrayal of Thai society during this period, and how the films attempted to communicate their serious social messages to the audience, five socially-oriented films – *Luk Isaan* (Son of the Northeast, Wichit Kounavudhi, 1982), *Theptida Rongraem* (Angel of Hotel, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1974), *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* (The Citizen I, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1977), *Prachachon Nok* (On the Fringe of Society, Monop Udomdej, 1981) and, finally, *Tongpan* (Tongpan, Pajong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon and Yuthana Mukdasanit, 1977) – have been individually analyzed in this paper. This final chapter presents a collective analysis and comparison of the five films, vis-à-vis their role as social commentaries.

5.1 Collective Analysis

5.1.1 Choice of Subject Matter and Attitude of Filmmakers

The five socially-oriented films depict the people and places on the margins of Thai society, such as rural peasants (i.e., Sud and Buasee in *Luk Isaan*, Charat and Sawai in *Prachachon Nok*, Tongpan in *Tongpan*), urban laborers (i.e., Tongpoon Kokpo and Bunrai in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, Khong Phaeng, Mitchai, and Bun Thom in *Prachachon Nok*), and prostitutes or masseuses (i.e., Malee, Dao, and Kamlah in *Theptida Rongraem*, Raemchan in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*). Reflecting the localized socio-economic and political situation of the 1970s, the films concentrate on highlighting regional inequities between rural and urban areas and the existing social injustices in Thai society. The places where these marginalized lower-class people make a living are sketched as either being harsh geographical regions, affected by famine and drought, like Isaan (Northeastern area) in *Luk Isaan*, *Prachachon Nok*, and *Tongpan*, or poor urban environments, like the Bangkok brothel in *Theptida Rongraem*, and the Bangkok slum area in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, and *Prachachon Nok*. The films' subject matter is finely woven into the story lines and the filmmakers have attempted to reach their subjects more effectively by using a more realistic touch.

5.1.2 Realistic Elements in the Films

The use of a new wave of professional actors and, sometimes, of real-life characters, brought a fresh new feel to the casting of the films. Location shooting, local dialect dubbing, plausible characters, and real-life events make these films more realistic. Injecting traditional music, such as *Moh-lam* songs, also introduces indigenous culture to the urban audience. Furthermore, the lyrics of these *Moh-lam* songs, as well as their sound, which carries very important codes for the creation of text meanings, continue to transmit messages between filmic events. All these ingredients help the audience to understand the messages the films are trying to convey and to contemplate the realities of the socio-cultural background which the films are portraying.

5.1.3 Migration-Related Social Issues

1) Fundamental Problems/Driving Forces of Rural-Urban Migration

The five films address the deeply-rooted rural problems which force rural peasants to become temporary or permanent urban laborers. The problems described in the films are, for example, poor weather conditions and natural resources, poverty, lack of opportunities for social mobility, a poor quality of education, and the loss of the traditional habitat and ways of living brought about by urban-centered development and misdirected management. The films project these problems not only through visual images but also via the dialogues or monologues of the filmic characters. Furthermore, also portrayed through the films' characters, like Buala in *Luk Isaan*, Malee in *Theptida Rongraem*, and Bun Thom in *Prachachon Nok*, is the notion that an admiration of the urban culture and lifestyle among young people in rural villages plays another key role in motivating urban migration.

2) Process of Making Decisions for Leaving or Staying

The films depict two different groups, categorized by the way they choose to solve their problems. Eventually, in the films, each individual's decision is made by each individual's free will. The first group includes people who decide to leave for the cities to improve their living conditions. Such characters as Buala in *Luk Isaan*, Malee, Dao, and Kamlah in *Theptida Rongraem*, Tongpoon and Raemchan in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn*

Temkhan, as well as Khong Phaeng and Bun Thom in *Prachachon Nok* are symbolic of all urban migrants who have been cherishing dreams of city living throughout modern history. On the other hand, such characters as Sud and Buasee in *Luk Isaan*, Sawai and Charat in *Prachachon Nok*, and Tongpan in *Tongpan* represent the second group of people who wish to preserve their traditional ways of life without leaving their lands. The films provide a rich portrait of the kinds of people who move to the cities and those who remain, and their reasons for their choices. In this way, the films collectively reflect a poignant picture of the migration problems of that time.

3) Feminization in Migration

As observed through Khong Phaeng's migration in *Prachachon Nok*, it is the usual practice that a male householder migrates to a different place, mostly to more urbanized towns or cities, while the rest of the family that stays behind is taken care of by a female householder who, it is presumed, will migrate soon after, following the male spouse, as has been proven in a large number of cases. However, it is interesting to note the cases of Buala in *Luk Isaan* and Malee in *Theptida Rongraem*, where both women leave home for the city that holds the promise of fulfilling their dreams. As a result, Malee is seen to gain a greater degree of influence in her family because she is now able to financially support them. These films indicate how such female migrants come to experience better gender equality which, ironically however, is achieved through subjugation and exploitation in modern society.

4) Physical Hardship and Emotional Anxiety

In the films, people who moved to the cities from rural areas, or urban migrants, are shown to be experiencing malaise and anxiety, arising out of a complex array of factors: cultural differences, the capitalistic and materialistic social atmosphere, economic deprivation, financial disparity between the haves and the have-nots, a lack of freedom, social unfairness, social injustice, social immorality, and especially, their nostalgia, when thinking of home. Meanwhile, those who had chosen to remain in their rural villages continued to suffer from desperate poverty and food shortages, caused by geographical disadvantages, institutional corruption, and the misuse of power against local people, as well as a lack of public understanding of the detrimental effects of the urban-centered

development plans on rural communities. The five films do not only touch upon the surface and easily visible migration-related issues and problems, they also try to describe the inner anxiety of both rural peasants and urban migrants through their use of plausible filmic characters and situations. For example, Sud, Buasee, and Buala in *Luk Isaan*, Malee, Dao and Kamlah in *Theptida Rongraem*, Tongpoon Kokpo and Raemchan in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, Khong Phaeng, Mitchai, Charat, and Sawai in *Prachachon Nok* and Tongpan in *Tongpan* are all forced to face experiences that give rise to considerable inner anxiety and psychological pain, and this well reflected in the films.

5.1.4 Socio-Cultural Reflection

1) Traditional versus Contemporary Gender Roles

In *Luk Isaan*, *Prachachon Nok*, and *Tongpan*, we witness the patriarchal role of the male householder in the decision-making process for all types of household matters, ranging from bartering and buying provisions to the issue of migrating. Meanwhile, *Theptida Rongraem* reflects the nowadays-common expectation of females to act as breadwinners, a role imposed on daughters since industrialization began. However, through the character of Malee as well as Dao and Kamlah in *Theptida Rongraem*, the film shows the importance of virginity in traditional society. When Malee lost her virginity, she was seen to face a major moral dilemma, that of being a good daughter and providing money for her family but having to engage in a job regarded as socially immoral job in order to do so, a situation reflective of countless female migrants who came to work as commercial sex workers in cities throughout Thai migration history.

2) Inward Denial of Immoral Truths

Luk Isaan and *Theptida Rongraem* reveal an interesting aspect of Thai culture: the refusal of rural families to acknowledge or accept the nature of the prosperity brought home by their daughters. For example, when Buala comes home and Malee sends money home, no one questions where their money has come from and how these women manage to make a living in the cities. The audience is led to assume that the families inwardly deny the truth, because they know that their society cannot accept immoral paths to success,

such as prostitution, even though it has been one of the most common city jobs for female migrants from poor rural areas for over half a century.

3) Socially-Stereotyped Professions of Urban Migrants

In the films, both male and female urban migrants are seen to hold certain types of jobs. For example, in *Tongphoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, a number of male urban migrants, including Tongphoon, are shown to earn a living as a taxi driver. However, later in the film, we observe that Tongphoon turns to being a construction worker when his taxi is stolen. Similarly, Khong Phaeng, in *Prachachon Nok*, begins his urban life as a construction worker, then an ice delivery-man, and, finally, a textile factory laborer. In another case, Bun Thom, who is Khong Phaeng's friend in *Prachachon Nok*, labors as a car mechanic. Whereas these male characters are depicted as holding different types of "labor jobs," the female urban migrant characters are depicted as depending a much more limited range of jobs than males. For example, in the films, they mostly have jobs deemed socially immoral, such as prostitutes or masseuses, like Malee, Dao, and Kamlah in *Theptida Rongraem*, and Raemchan in *Tongphoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*. These socially-stereotyped occupational frames shown in the films are intended as a criticism of the social limitations imposed on job mobility and job selections imposed for urban migrants, in general. Furthermore, it is implied that society during that time imposed a double standard on certain jobs related to the sex industry regarding them as immoral, meanwhile reaping benefits out of the workers. In *Theptida Rongraem*, for example, the two police officers depicted in the film are ironically the ones who exploit and benefit from an occupation they are supposed to suppress since it is considered to be morally and legally offensive in Thai society. One of them comes by the brothel to collect bribery money the hotel owner pays him regularly, while the other one comes to the brothel to satisfy his perverse sexual needs with the prostitutes.

4) Strong Sense of Kinship

In *Luk Isaan*, *Theptida Rongraem*, and *Prachachon Nok*, it is indicated that the kin groups that people who decide to migrate know in urban places play an important role, first, by motivating them to migrate; then, by influencing their destinations; and finally, by helping them to find accommodations and jobs in the city. In *Luk Isaan*, Buala tells Sud

that she is moving to Ubon, the largest town in the Northeastern region, where a friend of hers lives, while in *Theptida Rongraem*, Malee follows her boyfriend, Chate, to Bangkok.. In *Prachachon Nok*, Khong Phaeng also goes to Bangkok where his friend, Bun Thom, who is from the same village, has already settled and making a living. These examples show that kin or peer groups from the same villages have an influential effect on urban migrants not only after they have moved to the urban areas but even before they decide to do so. Furthermore, urban migrants, whether temporary or permanent, are, as illustrated in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, *Theptida Rongraem*, and *Prachachon Nok*, strongly attached to their mother culture, such as the local food or the traditional music, *Moh-lam*, that they listen to or play when they miss home and feel emotionally vulnerable; furthermore, they tend to rely on people from the same region. Urban migrants are always returning home when they achieve success, as is the case with the character Buala in *Luk Isaan*, or they are dreaming of returning home whenever faced with physical hardships and emotional difficulties, as in the case of Malee in *Theptida Rongraem*, Tongpoon Kokpo in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, and Khong Phaeng and Bun Thom in *Prachachon Nok*. Whereas Dao, in *Theptida Rongraem*, returns home in a tragic condition, Charat, in *Prachachon Nok*, returns with hopes for a better life in his homeland. Moreover, urban migrants are mostly shown as financially supportive of their families by sending home remittances, as in the case of Malee, who helps to support her family in their efforts to build a new house, in *Theptida Rongraem*.

5) Karma and Respect for Village Monks – Buddhist Philosophies in Life

As shown through Buala in *Luk Isaan* and Malee in *Theptida Rongraem*, the concept of Karma is deeply rooted in the lives of Thai people. This belief leads them to regard the occurrence of any situation in their present life as the result of what they had done in their previous lives, which helps them to emotionally overcome the difficulties and trials of life without direct confrontation or without questioning it. It is also reflected in the submissive nature of Thais. Another crucial concept of Buddhism, displayed in rural lives in *Luk Isaan*, *Prachachon Nok*, and *Tongpan*, is the respect that villagers have for Buddhist monks. Buddhist monks are perceived as the social core of village life as well as the religious core. Villagers consult their village monk whenever they have life concerns or have to make important decisions about their own and their families' lives.

6) Xenophobia towards the ethnic Chinese

In *Luk Isaan*, we observe that Chinese and Vietnamese traders are portrayed as being greedy, competitive, and jealous. Thus, the Chinese-origin junky yard owner, Sakhon, who is depicted as a money-minded and dishonest person in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, and the avaricious and merciless Chinese middle merchant, Saeng, in *Prachachon Nok*, are the antagonists in the films. These characters attest to Thai people's general xenophobia towards the ethnic Chinese. This attitude is assumed to be shaped by the Chinese's superior nature in managing of finances and their growing economic power. Ever since the start of the Chinese migration to Thailand, this attitude of xenophobia towards the Chinese has existed and its traces can be found all throughout modern Thai history as well as in various art forms, such as literature, film, or plays. It is interesting to observe how these films project the negative attitude of Thais towards the Chinese by using stereotypical characters in the specific settings of the filmic stories.

5.1.5 Socio-Political Reflection

1) Background of The Period

As mentioned in Chapter 3, socially realistic films can lead the audience to identifying not only with the characters but also with their circumstances.

A. Political Changes in Pursuit of Freedom

Malee, Dao, and Kamlah, in *Theptida Rongraem*, are all desperate for freedom when they are forced to work as prostitutes. To illustrate the longing for freedom, the director, M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, superimposes violent scenes from the October 14 uprising, showing students who were willing to sacrifice themselves for freedom, on the scenes where these girls are being brutally beaten up by their pimps. In *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, Tongpoon's stolen taxi is also symbolic of freedom. Tongpoon, who never gives up looking for his taxi, represents the tenacious soul of Thai people. This longing for freedom depicts well the attitude of real-life Thais at the time. Furthermore, films such as *Prachachon Nok* and *Tongpan* more directly represent liberal, humanist ideologies. The films are straightforwardly raising their voices for fairness and justice in

society and for improved conditions for urban laborers and rural peasants, or for people sidelined on the fringes of society, a common problem in the period of rapid industrialization during the 1970s.

B. Protests for Improved Civil Rights of Lower-Class People

In *Prachachon Nok*, Mitchai leads protests for the rights of laborers and factory workers, demanding that a number of specific labor conditions need to be improved, while Charat tries to establish an agricultural cooperative for the benefit of farmers. In *Tongpan*, a meeting that students and intellectuals set up for the benefit of rural peasants also shows that a limited number of people from mainstream society saw the need and, indeed, sought to improve the living conditions of the lower classes.

C. Imbalance in Development between Rural and Urban Areas

Whereas *Luk Isaan* simply portrays the lives of common Isaan people, *Prachachon Nok* mirrors regional disadvantages and the uneven distribution of wealth by showing how Khong Phaeng is forced to leave home for the city. The film *Tongpan* describes what the life of the local people is like and what their real life concerns are by showing Tongpan's everyday life, especially through the speech of one farmer on the final day of the seminar. Furthermore, in this series of seminars, at a few critical moments, regional imbalances between rural areas and urban cities like Bangkok or Pattaya are addressed, and the intellectuals question why only those two urban centers benefit solely from state development plans, such as the plan for improved infrastructure.

D. Confronting Institutional Forces

In socially realistic films, as explained earlier, protagonists are occasionally involved in confrontations with characters who represent institutional forces and authority figures, such as police officers, social workers, employers, and so on. Tongpoon gets arrested at the end of the film *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, as do Khong Phaeng and Mitchai in *Prachachon Nok*. In the meantime, Charat faces death and Tongpan loses his wife and his hope for a better life. These characters battle the unfairness and the injustice by

confronting these institutional forces. However, societal circumstances render them incapable of acting on their free will and, eventually, they face the violent and tragic consequences of containment and exclusion.

a. Categorizing Protagonists versus Antagonists

Although there is no clear demarcation of protagonists or antagonists in *Luk Isaan*, there are clearly represented as opposing forces in the other four films. In *Theptida Rongraem*, the protagonists are upcountry girls who become prostitutes in the city, such as Malee, Dao, and Kamlah, whereas the antagonists are the pimps who use these girls in order to make money. In *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, it is obvious that the protagonist is Tongpoon Kokpo. The antagonists are the dishonest junky-yard owner, Sakhon, a group of Sakhon's employees who steal Tongpoon's taxi, and the police who stand up for Sakhon rather than Tongpoon. In *Prachachon Nok*, the protagonists, Charat and Sawai, are seen struggling against the powerful group of antagonists, such as the Chinese middle merchant, Saeng, and the corrupt government officials and the police; two other protagonists, Khong Phaeng and Mitchai, are unfairly treated by the group of antagonists represented by the factory manager, the factory owner, and the government official who promises to back the factory owner who is faced with a labor union protest. In both *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* and *Prachachon Nok*, the antagonists are those in power within the structure created by rich, materialistic individuals and corrupt institutional groups. Furthermore, in *Tongpan*, it is clear from the seminar scenes that Tongpan and the other village representatives are the protagonists, whereas the administrative level of government officials and the intellectuals who are ignorant of the root problems of the villagers are the antagonists.

E. Capitalist and Materialistic Ideas

Theptida Rongraem and *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan* represent the concepts of capitalism and materialism, which were powerfully spreading during the 1970s. All the unfortunate incidents faced by the films' characters, for example, pimps trafficking as well as brutally assaulting and exploiting innocent girls' bodies for money in *Theptida Rongraem*, the theft of Tongpoon's taxi and the owner's greedy behavior and fraudulent bookkeeping, and Raemchan's senseless attitude towards her job as a masseuse, are all driven by the materialistic and money-oriented social atmosphere of the time. While

depicting such scenes as Duan's satisfaction as a handicapped beggar, who manages to sleep rough on the streets in *Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan*, or the corruption among social workers, police officers, and the rich and in the case of the factory owner and the police officer in *Prachachon Nok*, the films do not exactly offer solutions; rather, they emphasize the need for change.

F. Anti-Socialism and Anti-Communism

As seen in *Prachachon Nok* and *Tongpan*, Thai society of the period was strongly opposed to any socialist or communist ideas in the interests of national security. The films reflect the strong public opinion on this issue by showing that even such ignorant rural people as Khong Phaeng, Charat's mother, and Tongpan are all fully aware that they would get into trouble if they get involved in any group activities or student organizations. Through *Prachachon Nok* and *Tongpan*, we see how the government, with the sole purpose of keeping themselves in power, intentionally generated these strong public sentiments. The government instilled fear in its citizens to keep them under control and, thereby, prevented any real form of democracy from taking root, for example, by keeping such groups as the village co-operative from existing.

2) Raising Social Issues

The five films ask the audience to critically evaluate the filmic subject matter by projecting characters and situations which are not only a source of interest or concern but also offer the opportunity to politically and culturally observe the society of the period. As this study proves through the analysis of five socially-engaged films on migration-related social issues, the subject matter of these films, in the '*Nang Pua Chiwit*' genre, concentrate on the marginalized and under-privileged in society, such as farmers and peasants in rural areas, urban migrants, lower-class laborers, and prostitutes. Creating public awareness, these socially realistic films ultimately rally for freedom and a better life for the grass-roots people of the country. In summary, four vital social issues are portrayed in the five films analyzed here: human dignity, true democracy and freedom, equity in national development plans, and the importance of traditional Thai values.

5.2 Topics for Further Study

As a continuation of the current study, it would be interesting to research changes in the post-1970s socially realistic films, through the 1980s and 1990s, by analyzing them against contemporary social changes, to see how and why they have been changed compared to the 1970s '*Nang Pua Chiwit. Films for Life*' genre presented in this study. It would also be worthwhile researching other forms of social activities, such as the '*Pleng Pua Chiwit. Songs for Life*' genre or the socially realistic literature of the 1970s, which deal with core social problems and disparities, to compare how these different art forms convey their social messages to the public.



References

English

Altheida, David L. *Media Power*. 1st ed. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981.

Amara Pongsapich, and Chantana Banpasirichote, and Phinit Lapthananon, and Suriya Veeravongse. *Socio-cultural Change and Political Development in Central Thailand, 1950-1990*. Background Report for the 1993 Year-End Conference WHO GETS WHAT AND HOW? : CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE. Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1993.

Anderson, Benedict R. O'Gorna. *Withdrawal Symptoms: Social and Cultural Bases of the October 6 1976 Coup in Siam*. 1977.

Annchat Pongsomlee, and Ross, Helen. *Impacts of Modernization and Urbanization in Bangkok: An Integrative Ecological and Biosocial Study*. The Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, 1992.

Apichat Chamratrithirong, and Kittaya Archavanitkul, and Uraiwan Kanungsukkasem. *Recent Migrants in Bangkok Metropolis*. Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Bangkok, 1979.

Askew, Marc. *Bangkok: Transformation of the Thai City*. Geelong Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1994.

Bazin, Andre. *What is Cinema?* Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1971.

Bello, Walden, and Cunningham, Shea, and Poh, Li Kheng. *A Siamese Tragedy: Development and Disintegration*. London and New York: Zed Book, 1998.

Bordwell, David, and Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1986.

Cohen, Erik. *Thai Society in Comparative Perspective*. Bangkok: White Lotus, 1991.

- Cooper, Donald F. *Thailand: Dictatorship or Democracy?* London: Minerva Press, 1995.
- Defleur, Melvin L., and Ball-Rokeach, Sandra J. *Theories of Mass Communication*. 5th ed. New York: Longman Inc., 1989.
- Dome Sukwong, and Sawasdi Suwannapak (compiled by). Smyth, David, ed. *A Century of Thai Cinema*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2001.
- Downing, John H., ed. *Films and Politics in the Third World*. New York: Praeger, 1987.
- Fuller, Theodore, and Peerasit Kamnuansilpa, and Lightfoot, Paul, and Sawaeng Rathanamongkolmas. *Migration and Development in Modern Thailand*. Social Science Association of Thailand, Bangkok, 1983.
- Goldstein, Sydney and Alice, and Visid Prachuabmoh. *Urban-Rural Migration Differentials in Thailand*. Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1974.
- Goldstein, Sydney and Alice. *Migration in Thailand: A Twenty-five-year Review*. Papers of the East-West Population Institute, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1986.
- Hallam, Julia, and Marchment, Margaret. *Realism and Popular Cinema*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Jackson, Peter A., ed. *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999.
- Jumbala, Prudhisan. *The Democratic Experiment in Thailand, 1973-1976*. *Dyason House Papers*, 1977.
- Kanoksak Kaewthep. *Mass Movements and Democratization: The Role of the Farmer's Movement in Thailand, 1973-1976*. *Journal of Social Research* 101, Special Issue (1987): 24-47.
- Keyes, Charles, and Daniel, E. Valentine., ed. *Merit-Transference in the Kammic Theory of Popular Theravada Buddhism*. Berkely: University of California Press, 1983.

- Keyes, Charles. *Migrants and Protestors: Development in Northeastern Thailand*. The 8th International Conference on Thai Studies, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand, January 9-12, 2002.
- Keyes, Charles. *Thailand - Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State*. Bangkok: Dualngkimol, 1989.
- Klausner, William J. *Thai Culture in Transition: Collected Writings of William J. Klausner*. 3rd ed. The Siam Society under Royal Patronage, Bangkok, 2000.
- Klausner, William J. *In Remembrance of Things Past: Thai Society Thirty-Five Years Ago*. Symposium on Cultural Change in Asia/U.S. Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1991.
- Klausner, William J. *Reflection on Thai Culture: Collected Writings of William J. Klausner*. 4th ed. The Siam Society under Royal Patronage, Bangkok, 1993.
- Klausner, William J. *The Northeast Migration Problem*. Social Service in Thailand, Department of Public Welfare, Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, 1960.
- Korff, H. R. *The Dynamics of Urban Change: The Transformation of Bangkok*. Center for Social Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1987.
- Korff, Rudiger. Urban or Agrarian? The Modern Thai State. *Sojourn* 4, 1 (February 1989).
- Kritaya Archavanitkul. *Migration and Urbanization in Thailand, 1980: The Urban-Rural Continuum Analysis*. Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. International Conference on Thai Studies, Nakhon Pathom, 1988.
- Kullada Kesboonchoo. *Thai Democratization: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*. Political and Social Transitions in Contemporary Thailand. The 5th International Conference on Thai Studies, SOAS, London, 1973.

- Lacey, Nick. *Image and Representation: Key Concepts in Media Studies*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998.
- Lee, Server. *Asian Pop Cinema: Bombay to Tokyo*. California: Chronicle Books, 1999.
- Lightfoot, Paul, and Fuller, Theodore, and Peerasit Kamnuansilpa. *Circulation and Interpersonal Networks Linking Rural and Urban Areas: The Case of Roi-et, Northeastern Thailand*. East-West Population Institute, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1983.
- Manich, M. L. Jumsai. *Understanding Thai Buddhism: A Compendium of Information on Buddhism as Professed in Thailand*. Bangkok: Chalermnit Press, 2000.
- Massey, Douglas S. et al. An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case. *Population and Development Review* 20, 4 (December 1994).
- Mast, Gerald, and Cohen, Marshall, and Brandy, Leo. *Film Theory and Criticism*. 4th ed. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- McQuail, Denis. *Mass Communication Theory*. 3rd ed. London: Sage, 1994.
- Meesook, Oey Astra. Income, Consumption and Poverty in Thailand, 1962/63 to 1975/76. *World Bank Paper No, 364* (November 1979).
- Mets, Christian. *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Mills, Mary Elizabeth. "We Are Not Like Our Mothers" Migrants, Modernity and Identity in Northeast Thailand. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley, 1993.
- Mills, Mary Elizabeth. *Rural Women Working in Bangkok*. National Research Council of Thailand, Ministry of Science Technology and Energy, Bangkok, 1989.
- Neher, Clark D., ed. *Modern Thai Politics: From Village to Nation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1976.

Neher, Clark D., Ed. *Political Succession in Thailand*. California: The Regents of the University of California, 1992.

Orisa Irawonwut. Save Orisa's Life. *Thai Bulletin* 1, 3 (August 1977).

Parichat Phromyothi. *Influences of Hollywood Movies on Contemporary Thai Films: Case Studies of Action-Thriller and Horror Genres*. Thesis (M.A.) Thai Studies Program, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 2000.

Paritta Chalernpow Koanantakool, and Askew, Marc. *Urban Life and Urban People in Transition*. The 1993 Year - End Conference Who Gets What And How?: Challenges For The Future. Synthesis Papers Vol. II. Chon Buti, Thailand, 1993.

Pasuk Phongpaichit. *From Peasant Girls to Bangkok Masseuses*. International Labor Office, Geneva, Switzerland, 1982.

Penporn Theerasawal. *Factors Affecting Migration in Rural Thailand*. Thesis (M.A.) Department of Sociology, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1970.

Penporn Theerasawal. *Urbanization and Migrant Adjustment in Thailand*. Brown University, 1973.

Petri, Elio, Dan Lieorgakas, and Lenny Rubenstein, eds. *Cinema is Not For an Elite, But For the Masses. The Cineaste Interviews: On the Art and Politics of the Cinema*. Chicago, Ill.: Lake View Press, 1983.

Phisit Pakkasem. *Leading Issues in Thailand's Development Transformation 1960-1990*. National Economic and Social Development Board, Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand, March, 1988.

Reynolds, Craig J. *National Identity and Its Defenders Thailand, 1939-1989*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1991.

Roberts, Graham, and Wallis, Heather. *Introducing Film*. London: Arnold, 2001.

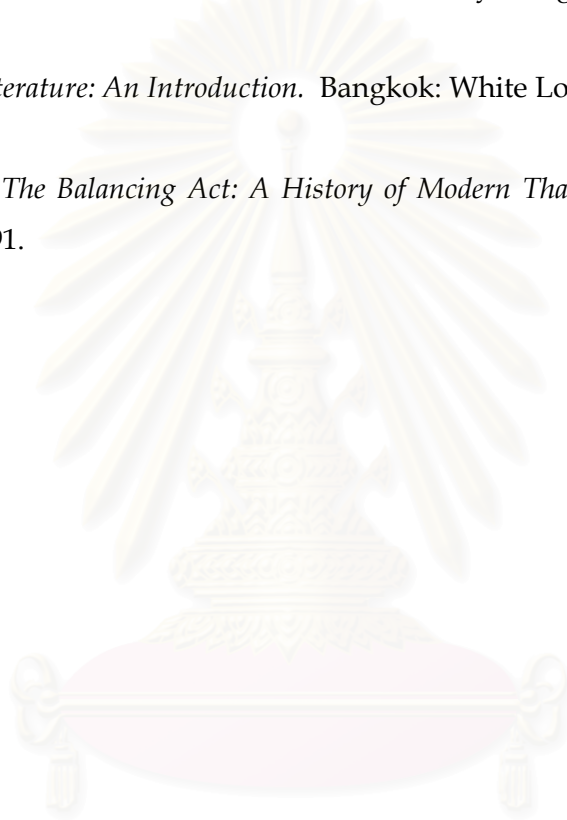
- Rutnin, Mattani Moj dara. *Dance, Drama, and Theatre in Thailand: The Process of Development and Modernization*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1993.
- Sanitsuda Ekachaii. *Behind the Smile: Voices of Thailand*. Bangkok: The Post Publishing Co., 1990.
- Siraporn Nathalang. *Thai Folklore Insights into Thai Culture*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2000.
- Skeldon, Ronald. Urbanization and Migration in the ESCAP Region. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* 13, 1 (March, 1998).
- Srisurang Poolthupya. Thai Customs and Social Values in the Ramakien. Paper No. 11. Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 1981.
- Sunantha Suwannodom. *Relationship between Urbanization and National Development*. Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1988.
- Surichai Wungaeo. *Urbanization of Bangkok and National Development: Some Issues for Discussion*. International Joint Team for Overseas Scientific Surveys, Tokyo, 1985.
- Suwanlee Piampiti. Female Migrants in Bangkok Metropolis. *Women Migrants in Asian Cities: Case Studies*. Pp. 227-246. The East-West Population Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1984.
- Terwiel, B. J., Ed. *Buddhism and Society in Thailand*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies, India, 1984.
- Thorbek, Suzanne. *Voices from the City: Women of Bangkok*. New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1987.
- Tongchai Winichakul. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. University of Hawaii Press. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994.
- Turner, Graeme. *Film as Social Practice*. 3rd ed. New York, Routledge, 1999.

United Nations. *Migration, Urbanization and Development in Thailand*. Comparative Study on Migration, Urbanization and Development in the ESCAP Region Country Report. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand, 1982.

Wathinee Boonchalaksi, and Guest, Philip. *Prostitution in Thailand*. The Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Bangkok, 1994.

Wenk, Klous. *Thai Literature: An Introduction*. Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd., 1995.

Wright Jr., Joseph J. *The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand*. California: Pacific Rim Press, 1991.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Korean

김영애 지음. *태국사*. 개정판. 서울: 한국 외국어 대학교 출판부, 2001.

김흥구 지음. *태국학 입문*. 부산: 부산 외국어 대학교 출판부, 1999.

로버트 A. 로젠스톤 역음. 김지혜 옮김. *영화, 역사 - 영화와 새로운 과거의 만남*. 서울: 소나무, 2000.

마크. C. 칸즈 외 지음. 손세호, 강미경, 김라합 옮김. *영화로 본 새로운 역사: 1. 선사시대 부터 19 세기 말까지*. 서울: 소나무, 1998.

마크. C. 칸즈 외 지음. 손세호, 김지혜 옮김. *영화로 본 새로운 역사: 2. 19 세기 말 부터 현재까지*. 서울: 소나무, 1998.

박종성 지음. *정치와 영화: 영상의 지배전략과 권력의 계산*. 경기: 인간사랑, 1999.

백문임 지음. *줌-아웃: 한국 영화의 정치학*. 서울: 연세대학교 출판부, 2001.

쑤팻트라 쑤팻 지음. 황규희 옮김. *태국 사회와 문화*. 부산 외국어 대학교 출판부, 2000.

슈테판 크라미 지음. 황진자 옮김. *중국 영화사*. 서울: 이산, 2000.

아르놀트 하우스 지음. 백낙청, 염무웅 옮김. *문학과 예술의 사회사: 자연주의와 인상주의 & 영화의 시대*. 서울: 창작과 비평사, 1999.

조동원 외 지음. 프리즘 역음. *영화 운동의 역사: 구경거리에서 해방의 무기로*. 진보적 미디어 운동 연구 센터. 서울: 서울 출판 미디어, 2000.

차상호 지음. *태국 현대 정치의 이해*. 서울: 한국 외국어 대학교 출판부, 1995.

한스 디터 겔페르트 지음. 손양근 옮김. *드라마: 어떻게 해석할 것인가?* 서울: 새문사, 2002.

한스 리히터 지음. 정치영화. 박홍식, 이준서 옮김. *매체로서의 영화*. 서울: 이론과 실천, 1996.

Thai

กฤษฎา เกิดดี. *ประวัติศาสตร์ภาพยนตร์ไทย : การศึกษาว่าด้วย 10 ตระกูลสำคัญ*. กรุงเทพฯ: ห้องภาพสุวรรณ, 2541.

โกศล วงศ์สวรรค์ และ สกิต วงศ์สวรรค์. *ปัญหาสังคมไทย*. กรุงเทพฯ: รวมสาส์น, 2543.

ขนิษฐา จิตต์ประกอบ. *บทบาทของรัฐในการตรวจพิจารณาภาพยนตร์*. วิทยานิพนธ์นิเทศศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต ภาควิชาการสื่อสารมวลชน จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2541.

ขุนวิจิตรมาตรา. (สง่า กาญจนาคพันธุ์). *หนังไทยในอดีต*. กรุงเทพฯ: มูลนิธิขุนวิจิตรมาตรา, 2541.

คำพูน บุญทวี. *ลูกอีสาน*. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 4. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์ไต้ฝุ่น, 2543.

คึกฤทธิ์ ปราโมช, ม.ร.ว. *เมืองมายา*. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 3. กรุงเทพฯ: ก้าวหน้า, 2514.

จำเริญลักษณ์ ชนะวังน้อย. *ประวัติศาสตร์ภาพยนตร์ไทยตั้งแต่แรกเริ่มจนถึงสมัยสงครามโลกครั้งที่ 2*. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์, 2544.

ชลลดา วงศ์วิชัย. *ความเป็นเมืองการเปิดรับสื่อมวลชน : การศึกษาเฉพาะกรณีประชาชนในเขตเทศบาลเมือง จังหวัดลำปาง*. วิทยานิพนธ์นิเทศศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต ภาควิชาการประชาสัมพันธ์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2526.

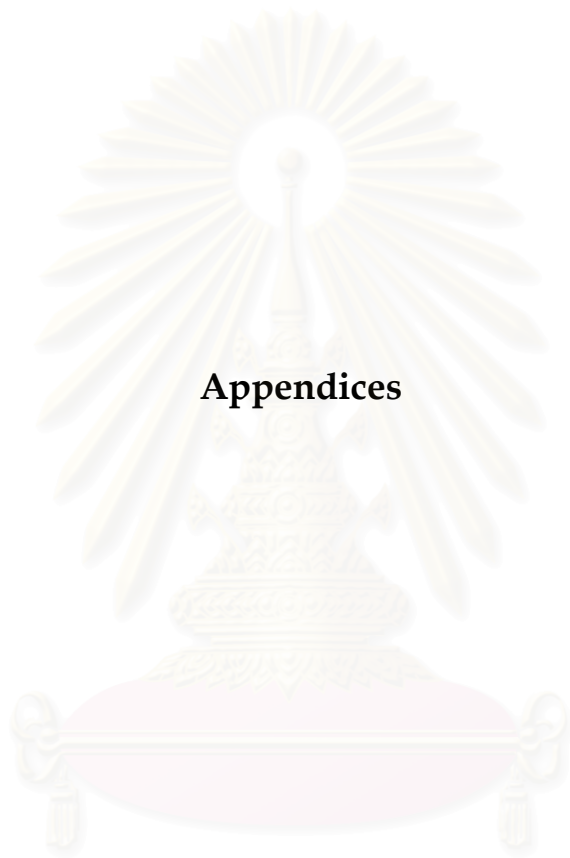
ชาญวิทย์ เกษตรศิริ. *บันทึกประวัติศาสตร์ 14 ตุลา*. พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 2. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์สายธาร, 2544.

โคม สุขวงศ์. *ประวัติภาพยนตร์ไทย*. กรุงเทพฯ: องค์การค้าของคุรุสภา, 2533.

นิธิ เอียวศรีวงศ์. *โขน, การาบาว, น้ำเน่า และหนังไทย : ว่าด้วยเพลง, ภาษา และนามานุกรม*. กรุงเทพฯ: มติชน, 2538.

นิเทศ ดินณะกุล. *การเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมและวัฒนธรรม*. ภาควิชาสังคมวิทยาและมานุษยวิทยา คณะรัฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2543.

- บงกช เสวตามร์. การสร้างความเป็นจริงทางสังคมของภาพยนตร์ไทยกรณีตัวละครหญิงที่มีลักษณะเบี่ยงเบนในปีพ.ศ. 2528-2530. วิทยานิพนธ์นิเทศศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2533.
- เพ็ญสิริ เสวตวาทรี. อิทธิพลของแนวคิดยุคหลังสมัยใหม่ที่ปรากฏในภาพยนตร์ไทยของผู้กำกับคนใหม่ระหว่างปีพ.ศ.2538-2540. วิทยานิพนธ์นิเทศศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2541.
- มนชนก ทองทิพย์. ภาพลักษณ์ของครูไทยผ่านสื่อภาพยนตร์ที่คัด. วิทยานิพนธ์นิเทศศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2540.
- มานพ อุดมเดช. หนังสือไทย : ธุรกิจของคนขายฝัน. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์มณฑนาสถาปัตยกรรม, 2531.
- รัตนา ศรีชนะชัยโชค. การศึกษาปัญหาสังคมในภาพยนตร์ไทยยอดเยี่ยมประจำปีพ.ศ.2519-2537. ทุนวิจัยรัชดาภิเษกสมโภช จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2539.
- วิมลรัตน์ อรุณโรจน์สุริยะ. หนังสือกับเสรีภาพหลัง 14 ตุลา. วารสารหนังสือ:ไทย 2, 8 (เมษายน-มิถุนายน 2543).
- ศิริชัย ศิริกายะ. หนังสือไทย. ภาควิชาการสื่อสารมวลชน คณะนิเทศศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2531.
- อนุสรณ์ ศรีแก้ว. ปัญหาสังคมในภาพยนตร์ของ ม.จ.ชาติเฉลิม ยุคล. วิทยานิพนธ์นิเทศศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2533.
- อัญชลี ชัยวรพร. หนังสือกับการสะท้อนภาพสังคม (2516-2529). *Feature Magazine สารคดี* 13, 150 (สิงหาคม 2540).
- อุดมศิลป์ ปัจฉัยโช, บรรณาธิการ. 67ปี ภาพยนตร์ไทย 2466-2533. กรุงเทพฯ: สมาพันธ์ภาพยนตร์แห่งชาติ, 2533.



Appendices

สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Appendix I

Assajeree (Exclamation (!)). Surapong Pinitkar. 1976

สุรพงษ์ พินิจคำ. *อัศจรรย์*. พ.ศ. 2519

Baan Rai Na Rao (Our Home). Commissioned by Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram.

1942

บ้านไร่นาเรา. จอมพล แปลก พิบูลสงคราม. พ.ศ. 2485

Chat Chai (Manhood). M. C. Sukawannadit Diskul. 1946

ชาติชาย. หม่อมเจ้าศุภวรรณดิศ ดิศกุล. พ.ศ. 2489

Chiwit Batsop (A Damned Life). Peumpon Cheuiarun. 1978

ชีวิตบัดซบ. เพิ่มพล เชยอรุณ. พ.ศ. 2521

Chok Song Chan (Double Luck). Wasuwat Brothers' Group. 1927

โชคสองชั้น. คณะสกุลวสุวัต. พ.ศ. 2470

Ee Nak Phrakhanong (Nak of Phrakhanong). Mom Ratchawong Anusak Hatsadin. 1930

ีนาคพระโขนง. ม.ร.ว.อนุศักดิ์ หัตถินทร. พ.ศ. 2473

Fai Daeng (Red Light). Peumpon Cheuiarun. 1979

ไฟแดง. เพิ่มพล เชยอรุณ. พ.ศ. 2522

Fon Saen Ha (The Cloud Bursts). Yuthana Mukdasanit. 1974

ฝนแสนห่า. ยุทธนา มุกดาสนิท. พ.ศ. 2517

Karn Tor Su Khong Kammakorn Rong-ngan Hara (Hara Factory Workers Struggle). Jon Ungpakorn. 1975

การต่อสู้ของกรรมกรโรงงานฮารา. จอน อึ้งภากรณ์. พ.ศ. 2518

Khao Chu Kan (Dr. Kan). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, 1973

เขาคือกานต์. ม.จ.ชาตรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2516

Khao Nok Na (Half Breed). Piac Poster. 1975

ข้าวนอกนา. เปี้ยก โพสต์เตอร์. พ.ศ. 2518

Khon Klang Daed (A Man in the Sun). Kit Suwansorn. 1979
คนกลางแดด. กิด สุวรรณสร. พ.ศ. 2522

Khon Liang Chang (Elephant Keeper). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1990
คนเลี้ยงช้าง. ม.จ.ชาติรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2533

Khon Phu Khao (Mountain People). Wichit Kounavudhi. 1979
คนภูเขา. วิจิตร คุณาวุฒิ. พ.ศ. 2522

Kru Baan Nok (Rural Teacher). Surasi Patam. 1978
ครูบ้านนอก. สุรสีห์ ภาธรรม. พ.ศ. 2521

Kru Somsri (Teacher Somsri). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1986
ครูสมศรี. ม.จ.ชาติรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2529

Long Thang (Going Astray). Wasuwat Brothers' Group. 1932
หลงทาง. คณะสกุลวสุวัต. พ.ศ. 2475

Luad Thahan Thai (Blood of Thai soldiers). Commissioned by Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram. 1935
เลือดทหารไทย. จอมพล แปลก พิบูลสงคราม. พ.ศ. 2478

Luk Isaan (Son of the Northeast). Wichit Kounavudhi. 1982
ลูกอีสาน. วิจิตร คุณาวุฒิ. พ.ศ. 2525

Mae Dok Kancha (Mother of Marihuana). Dokdin Kanyaman. 1977
แม่ดอกกัญชา. ดอกดิน กัญญามาลย์. พ.ศ. 2520

Mai Kid Loey (The Unexpected). Wasuwat Brothers' Group. 1927
ไม่คิดเลย. คณะสกุลวสุวัต. พ.ศ. 2470

Mai Mee Sawan Samrap Khun (There's no heaven for you). Parinya Leelasorn. 1974
ไม่มีสวรรค์สำหรับคุณ. ปริญญา ถิละสร. พ.ศ. 2517

Man Ma Kap Khwam Mud (Out of the Darkness). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1972
มันมากับความมืด. ม.จ.ชาติรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2515

Mon Rak Luk Tung (Fascination with Country Music). Rangsi Thasanaphayak, 1971
มนต์รักลูกทุ่ง. ริงสี ทศนพยัคฆ์. พ.ศ. 2514

Muang Khor Than (The City of Beggars). Peumpon Cheuiarun. 1978
เมืองขอทาน. เพ็มพล เชยอรุณ. พ.ศ. 2521

Namkhang Yod Diao (A Single Dew Drop). Suchat Uthichai. 1978
น้ำค้างหยดเดียว. สุชาติ ุฒิชัย. พ.ศ. 2521

Nampoo (Nampoo). Yuthana Mukdasanit. 1983
น้ำพุ. ยุทธนา มุกดาสนิท. พ.ศ. 2526

Nam Sor Sai (Nam Sor Sai). Wichit Kounavudhi. 1974
น้ำเซาะทราย. วิจิตร คุณาวุฒิ. พ.ศ. 2517

Nang Sao Suwan (Miss Suwan). Henry A. Marcray. 1923
นางสาวสุวรรณ. Henry A. Marcray. พ.ศ. 2466

Nong Ma Wo (Nong Ma Wo). Surasi Patam. 1978
หนองหมาว้อ. สุรสีห์ ภาธรรม. พ.ศ. 2521

Nong Mia (Sister-in-law). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1990
น้องเมีย. ม.จ.ชาตรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2533

Phom Mai Yak Pen Phanto (I Didn't Not Want to Be a Lieutenant). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1975
ผมไม่ยอมเป็นพันโท. ม.จ.ชาตรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2515

Phra Chao Chang Puak (The King of the White Elephant). Pridi Banomyong. 1941
พระเจ้าช้างเผือก. ปรีดี พนมยงค์. พ.ศ. 2484

Phu Kradung (Phu Kradeung). Ruj Ranapop. 1973
ภูกระดึง. รุจน์ รัตนภพ. พ.ศ. 2516

Pi Sua Lae Dok Mai (The Butterfly and the Flower). Yuthana Mukdasanit. 1986
ผีเสื้อและดอกไม้. ยุทธนา มุกดาสนิท. พ.ศ. 2529

Plae Kao (The Scar). Cheud Songsri. 1977

แผลเก่า. เชิด ทรงศรี. พ.ศ. 2520

Prachachon Nok (On the Fringe of Society). Manop Udomdej. 1981

ประชาชนนอก. มานพ อุดมเดช. พ.ศ. 2524

Puying Khon Nan Chu Boonrawd (Her name is Boonrawd). Wichit Kounavudhi. 1984

ผู้หญิงคนนั้นชื่อบุญรอด. วิจิตร คุณาวุฒิ. พ.ศ. 2527

Raeng Rak (Power of Love). Phromsin Siboonruang. 1973

แรงรัก. พร้อมสิน สีบุญเรือง. พ.ศ. 2516

Rop Rawang Rak (Battle in the Middle of Love). Khun Visit Matra. 1930

รบระหว่างรัก. ขุนวิจิตรมาตรา. พ.ศ. 2473

Samliam Thongkham (Golden Triangle). 1975

สามเหลี่ยมทองคำ. พ.ศ. 2518

Shu (Lover). Piac Poster. 1972

ชู. เปียก โปสเตอร์. พ.ศ. 2515

Siadai 1, 2 (What a Pity!). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1995, 1996

เสียดาย 1,2. ม.จ.ชาติรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2538, 2539

Suphaburut Sua Thai (Thai Gentleman). M. C. Sukawannadit Diskul. 1949

สุภาพบุรุษเสื้อไทย. หม่อมเจ้าสุภวรรณดิศ ดิศกุล. พ.ศ. 2492

Talad Phromajaree (Virginity Market). Sakka Charujinda

ตลาดพรหมจารี. สักกะ จารุจินดา.

Theptida Bar 21 (Angel Bar 21). Yuthana Mukdasanit. 1978

เทพธิดาบาร์ 21. ยุทธนา มุกดาสนิท. พ.ศ. 2521

Theptida Rongraem (Angel of Hotel). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1974

เทพธิดาโรงแรม. ม.จ.ชาติรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2517

Thewada Doen Din (A Walking Angel on the Ground). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1976

เทวดาเดินดิน. ม.จ.ชาติรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2519

Tone (Tone). Piac Poster. 1971

โทน. เปี้ยก โปสเตอร์. พ.ศ. 2514

Tongpan (Tongpan). Paijong Laisakul, Surachai Jantimathon, Yuthana Mukdasanit. 1977

ทองปาน. ไพจง ไล้สกุล, สุรชัย จันทิมาทร. พ.ศ. 2520

Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan (Taxi Driver (The Citizen I)). M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala. 1977

ทองพูน โทกโพธิ์ ราษฎร์เต็มขันธ์. ม.จ.ชาตรีเฉลิม ยุคล. พ.ศ. 2520



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Appendix II

Luk Issan

- Interview with Mr. Knit Kounavudhi, October 1, 2003

Kanit (K): When my father finished the movie, one of the very good ones, called, "Mountain People"¹ ... We worked on that, and we finished that... Then, along that time, there was a movie, that you might not [have] pick[ed], is called, "Kru Baan Nok"...the Rural Teacher... And, "Kru Baan Nok", somehow, accidentally made a lot of money. Uh... The guy who produced the movie suggested to my father to make "Luk Isaan". But, my father said, no. Uh... Because it will be... it would come right after "Kru Baan Nok" in the same style, [as] the same kind of movie. He wouldn't like to do it. So, they shared of that [idea] for a long time. I was in that conversation because we were watching some film[s] or something. And... the guy said, "Hey... we don't have to go to by the book, but just using the name" My father could pre-write a whole story. My father... uh... started out as a journalist... and also wrote many books and short stories. And one of his strength, is he is novelistic... But he said, "Hey... even I'm going to make a movie out of this one... I'll go by the book. It's a good book." This book is being an outside-reading classroom book. And... So, when we designed what to get for this movie...we have got together with the guy who wrote the book, Khun Khampoon, [who] just died a few months ago. And... uh... we were at the Five Star Company. And my father, making notes, needed more money because the story had been sold for long time, and years passed, and I guess, the cost was increasing. So, they paid him (Khun Khampoon) more and hired him as a consultant. And also, asked him to... uhm... this is my father's idea...quite unique at the... They tried not to use professional actor(s)...So, Khun Khampoon was asked if he wanted a role in the movie. And, he liked it. Uh... yes... so he became... uh... a consultant during the film, and also an actor. ... Actually, it is the story about his childhood...growing up... So, somehow, it was good to put him in the event. He was not a good actor...[to] be honest... Somehow, the movie is almost a like story telling. One scene after another and all those... Then, my father had popped out with the most unique at that time for Thai movies. There had never been a movie like that where there is no real stories where people... care each other... love each other...So that's how it's unique in terms of his... his going by the books and his decisions... and he never made one like this after. One of the things when we showed this during the 70s, the biggest movie festival (was) in Manila, by the Marcos (family), it is

¹ "Khon Phu Khao" in Thai title.

called MIFF- Manila International Film Festival. It tried to get some of my father's films, some like "Mountain People". So that year when we submitted "Luk Isaan", and...uh... we won the major one. There were two of them, and we won one of them and the other one is Chinese film. And, there was a Japanese movie director called, Oshima, if you remember his name. He was there as one of the judges. And, next day, when Oshima saw my father's film, he wrote an article in one of the local papers. And, one of the sentences is that, "Watching "Luk Isaan" is like traveling along the river". Where you [can] absorb the culture, all those... Then, I, I kind of loved this... I picked up this sentence and translated into Thai. It's such a great honor where one director had such a good compliment from a director like him... My father would never understand it unless I picked it up and translated to him. And, that's how... how, I think Oshima can see things that it is all the drama. It is the life story where it reflects what you are studying. How is the life where how they... even living things can make it fun where they gather to get ants... eggs to eat and... that kinds of things or... where they think about love... making out... young couples... that kinds of things. I think, my father was... somehow came along that quite well. I don't know. One of the articles I wrote here (the memorial book of Wichit Koundavudhi) that's during my father's life... this one. I wrote this article. It's like a 'magic' that he spelled in Luk Isaan. One of the things about my father is that... he tried to go over the most difficult (ones). Somehow... even me [as] a son and my mother [who worked as] a producer, we had difficulties coping with him. But, somehow, he made it come true. Sometimes it's unbelievable. Sometimes we all feared about... that he would force them to do it or not. For example, there is a scene in the movie where this friend is trying to catch the bird on the ground? I came to Bangkok that day. I didn't see the shooting. And when we were in the editing room... we always did editing together... He did some and I did some... One day, when he was tired, lying on the floor of that editing room, I was working on that part. The bird came into the net and all those? And I said, "Hey, show that to me again." I saw that... and I didn't believe it... I thought... they tied a string to the bird, and put in... put the bird in. And then, his assistant was sitting there next to me. Usually he would provide the... pick the numbers so I could pick them to edit them. I said... "No, no, no, no..." We were discussing while he was sleeping... Saying... "Looks like... you know it looks so unreal. How could a bird, fly in, while all these people were there for movie making? Walk right into the net while the boys were right by with the guys?" And he said, "Yeah, it took 3 hours." "3 hours to do the real thing?" "Yeah, we didn't plan [out] the bird." The bird was caught, shown to my father, we were going to release it somewhere around there quietly... or we were going to be quiet. And my father said, "nobody speak a word." The camera was there... and we tried to shoot it over and over... whether they go into the net or not... and

all those. After 3 hours, we've got a shot. So I asked, "You just sat there and wait?" And then, my father said...I think he got up and (was) listening. "This is real. That's what I wanted to do, and I've got it." To me... That's magic. I mean... He didn't do that on purpose. Uh... we could find a way to do it, but it was not going to be real. Somehow he risked.... Later I asked him, "What happens if it didn't go in?" (He said) "Well... we use some another way. But I would have to try my the hardest way... the real way first." He did that many times in the movie. Remember the boys chasing the wind? The cyclone? That's another thing. We all... I think we have finished everything. We have done all the shootings and stuff. So my father said, "let's shoot this one." I said, "What are you doing to do?" He said, "Well... we come out." I said, "You know how to do that?" He said, "Yeah... with two cameras." One of them is an assistant camera. Both sides were an open field. At 10 o'clock in the morning, with the lens at the back and everything. And it was so hot! I had to sit in the car... walk around... nothing to do. I had absolutely nothing to do. No music to listen to... Wait for this thing to happen. I said... I wanted to question him. "Hey... what happened? We don't get... we are not getting it. If we can get it... it's going to be wonderful... but..." But, he believed that... with the heat up so high. Sometimes it happened. Well... by 2 o'clock in the afternoon. After so many hours... after we all had lunch... some people were sleeping, but some of them were sitting down and watching. It happened! But, the first time we could not chase it because it was so far away. It was so high... with the camera... with the boys... trying to play around with... We didn't get it. Somehow... we almost gave up. But an hour later, it happened...not very far from us.... And we shot the whole scene. And we came back.... And I told my mother said, "[This is] pretty crazy...but it's fine because we don't have anything else to do..." (And then) we started packing. But we could have been there all day to get this one single shot. It was magic! And I wrote it in this article. There are so many magic[-al things] in "Luk Isaan". And somehow [they] made the movie different from others. I can't say how he got it done, but he got it all done...with luck in him... and all know. You know... this is the thing. The dogs? Remember this dog scene? We put out an ad, we asked the radio station and all those things...searching for dogs. Good Thai dogs that are able to hunt... We never got it. And the most of the months passed by. And nobody...My father said, "Hey we need to get these dogs... We need to shoot this thing." We're now (really) looking. Somebody told me there were dogs there, and then we went to look in. here... everywhere. We needed two good dogs. "Wait up! There are no Thai dogs in Bangkok?" But, Thai dogs in Bangkok, they cannot hunt. They don't know how to hunt. Dogs in Isaan know how to hunt but it's rare. Some of the dogs showed up... Good hunting... but ears were like this. Those are not Thai dogs.... And, we almost gave up. And one day, one of the guys said. "Hey, why don't we

go to (my) village?" He has been in our working group, and he believes that there are two dogs that could do what I was looking for. (I said,) "Are you sure?" And he said he was sure. So we drove for 3 hours to this village. And we met these two dogs. Wow! They were good at first sight. I mean, when they showed us those dogs, they looked good. And the guy had told me the story that every morning he took those dogs out to get some frogs and all those. And delivered to this guy. I liked that. So I said, "Show me." So we went out and the guy showed me that.... Those dogs could do hunting. It was a very good thing. So I brought those dogs and showed them to my father. He was happy. The night before the shooting, the guy took out those dogs to walk around and come back.... But dogs went missing. God! At 10 o'clock at night! My father already went to sleep. I came back from somewhere, and the guy came to me and said... almost crying. "Dogs are gone..." The shooting's tomorrow and it's a big scene. We cannot miss it!" (Hey)... I got all the guys... as much as possible... without my father knowing all this... you know... we walked everywhere for 2 hours. Nothing. There was a temple that was not far from was. About 400 meters... I could hear the noise but we didn't go look for there. Because I didn't think those dogs would go there. So I told the guys, "Hey if we don't find those dogs... let's be ready... you are going to face hell." My father is very temperamental, but not the worst. I told them, "Hey, prepare for it? I won't even go to sleep if I don't find those dogs." So I walked toward that... I was... just reaching there. And then, I heard the noise of dog barking. So many dogs were barking. So I ran over there. Right in the middle of these bunch of dogs, there were those two dogs.... Back to back... It was like they had been surrounded... and they were in fight. God! It was such a beautiful scene...a lot of people were looking. They are fighting at the night time... there were more than fifteen dogs... everywhere try to get these two dogs. These two dogs were brave... I wished I had a camera. But, we went in got those two dogs, and out them in the house. And I said, "Hey, no time to go out now." The next day... we shot some of the most beautiful scenes with these two dogs. Now, everything turned out to be better...he said himself that when we were editing the film that it turned out to be better than it was expected. And he was lucky to get that. Actually this was his last good film... because... a few films came after that... there is one film that you may not have seen. Because, I'm not sure whether it is in VCD...called " The Girl Named Boonrawd." Yes... actually it is a very good reflection of the 70s. About Thai girls... a lot of them turned themselves to be... But some of those good Thai girls also you know managed to get married to Americans...

J: Is it the same story to the soap opera?

K: Same thing. But I think the movie version is not that... too dramatic. So somehow... to me I don't consider that as a very good film, but actually it was the part of the reflection of the 70s. So this is probably his last good one. And then, "The Boat House" was the big flop. After finishing that... and that's it. He, kind of, retired.

J: Ok... we are talking about the 1970s... and your father made "Khon Phu Khao" and "Luk Isaan" in the 70s and the early 80s, and do you think that the political and social changes of the period have any effects on his film styles?

K: My father is... to be frank... he didn't have anything concerning political or any kind of social... trend during that period. Actually... let's look at this. He is... first[ly] is a very family man staying home and gardening... He didn't have that much social life... My mom was the main... they were inseparable... only family and work... that's it. The only thing he would be proud of is the garden. He cut it, grooming and all those... then I realized 'ah, that's how he does'... total control... [it was same] when he made his movies... it's pretty old style... He is such a calm and nice person, but when he worked, he was like a boiling water. So... well... I don't think my father had any much concern about social changes... [or] political changes. I think he cut himself out and turned himself to make movies. He used work for the newspaper... actually he was arrested and jailed during the early years. I wasn't any part of it because I didn't know at all. But he was jailed and incarcerated for writing. But my father was not a political kind of guy. Some of the guys that went to the jungle... Khun Assani... also his friends and other close friends. But my father is not a socialist... or communist. So somehow I don't believe that he had any relations. Of course, yes, there was like an official rules and regulations, but he was not the kind to protest. He believed in rules and regulations, but he also believed in honesty and all those because my father is super-honest. Turning into making films... he would [rather] go by the books. Some of the books saw them being retaliated by the officials, he would go by that... He didn't put in that much of his concern in. And, people kept asking him many times... But he said, "Hey... read the script, and look at the book. I don't hide many things." He's always like that. There is this one scene that we discussed, remember the scene where almost... sunset... girls who ran away from the village returned... with some of the good things. When we were editing this movie... the mother... the first cut of the movie... you know how long it is? Almost 4 hours. His script is this big... (showing the script...) And it's been known that he always wrote long scripts... having everything. And "Luk Isaan" was the longest. And... this was always the main problem... after the first editing. This one was not shot with sound yet, so it had to be dubbed. After all the dubbing, we sat and talked. I

said, "Dad, how long do you expect this film to be? Well... it had to be shown in the theater so it has to be in a normal length to get it... This is almost 4 hours! How can we have 2 hours of this?" Well... we had to... that was what we had to do. So all the cuttings and all those, and then we came to this scene. And I said, "Dad, can you cut this here [the scene with a girl visiting home]?" The man said... it's No! I said... why I think... He said, "This is something that is mine with my own meaning." Actually in the book, it doesn't have this... special thing that he had put in. So... "What is it your meaning, Dad?" There were so many people working in the lab. "So well, I want to show them that... when the girls ran away... mostly they... went to be prostitutes... they sold their bodies working... But they would never forget their families, houses... they brought back all the good things... But nobody looks and asks what they have done to earn that..." He wanted to show that. To me... that is a social statement. But he didn't say it out. This is what I think... I went out with this movie so many times... to show this in the festivals in Manila, Hawaii, France and Berlin... One thing strange about it was... people got glued into it... Good scenes with good meanings... then, there were these people [getting] so into it... in Berlin, specially, the community of Thai people there... I saw them crying seeing this movie, because they had the similar background... So to me, I don't know if my father made any statement [in this film] or not, but he made things that touch on people in the all kinds... The story reflects the 1930~40s of rural Thailand... actually, that is where Khun Khampoon was growing up... That's why the songs... being used to drive up the spirits... The spirit of being Thai... just part of being humble Thai... trying to be proud of be a part of Thai...

J: And there are so many interesting songs in Moh-lam style... in the film....

K: The idea of it came from this... Before the movie "Mountain people" my father used to have a music composer for his movies... He never touched anything on this thing before... he wanted to make it realistic and docudrama... So when we finished script-writing, we got a composer for the music. But I felt it [the music] was quite strange... He later confessed to my father that he didn't know how to compose the music with the feeling of "Khon Phu Khao"... Then, I suggested a idea that we could have different ethnic music, real music... But he opposed my thoughts... But I told him that I could do that... So we argued... I didn't know how to be realistically making it... But I knew my dad was very realist... So I tried to record the songs and later put into the movie... So when we finished, I showed him couple of scenes with the music... and he was quite, but after that, he look at me saying "Not bad!..." there were two kinds of audience after all. Some people hated

those songs, because they never understood the mountain people...But some people liked them. When we submitted this film to Thai Oscar, people asked me if I wrote them...But in "Luk Isaan" my father knew what I was trying to do, so he let me do whatever I wanted to do...I did everything...doing lip syncs of Moh-lam songs in the movie...My father was not very educated...and he never studied art...But there were good things...he worked around with good actors...90% of the actors were not professional...So it was difficult to do the whole scenes at once, because they couldn't remember the lines...I think that was very challenging for him...But at the end, a lot of scenes look so good...So I think another best thing about him is his casting...right people for the jobs...And he always picked such a [beautiful and right] places! And he was such a simple person...in terms of provoking anything...So I can say that three of his movies: "Luk Isaan" "Mountain People" and "Boonrawd" all have the strong social concern...But they directly came from the books...When you see all those scenes in "Luk Isaan" and "Mountain People"...you almost have to picture that he is the one who created all of them by himself...in his own ways...

He didn't make many films...for about 20 years of time, he only made four...five films; "The Wife" "Mountain People" "Luk Isaan" "Boonrawd" and "The Boat House"...There was one film that he wanted to make, he wanted to make a film in China...But it was cancelled at the last minute...so he was heart-broken a little bit...Finally he realized he should not make any more films...He was too old...[Regarding] his style of filmmaking needed a lot of energy...He was a perfectionist...

K: Luk Isaan...I suggest you read the book, because it is worth reading...You will see some of the scenes are missing...When you have question, please ask me...

J: Thank you very much for the interview...

Theptida Rongraem and Tongpoon Kokpo Ratsadorn Temkhan

- Interview with M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, November 1, 2003

Josie (J): What were the motivations for the two films?

M. C. Chatrichalerm Yugala (T): "Theptida Rongraem" first, alright? To start, it is [important to know] the period of changing in Thailand. We had been under the dictatorship for forever and at the time people tried to change that to try to get the freedom. But, there was a corner of society that would never see the light of freedom, that place was the prostitution. But, no one accepts, because we walk passing on brothels everyday. But no one sees... just like today, we walk by massage parlors everyday and we know exactly what they are. But no one accepts them. So we have people who are really still under. Because at the time, they were not just free agents like today. They had pimps and they had to pay to them. They were just slaves. So I became interested in that aspect. I spent 11 months at the brothel to talk to these people. The brothel was actually a hotel. And I discovered three types of prostitutes. One type is a person like Malee, you know, the second type is that you have to hit them up a little, because...at the time...virginity was still a virtue unlike today, so you have to beat them up first, after a while, they just turned out to be prostitutes, they were pretty happy about it. And the third type...like the girl who jumped off the building in the film. These are the three types of girls. There was other type, they were prostitutes quite a while and then turned out to be pimps. This is three or four types of prostitutes. I wanted to show the audience what were behind the brothel and what were inside these girls.

J: How do you explain the differences among these three types of girls? Malee's whole circle of journey in the city shows that she knows how to adapt herself to the city life [unlike the other two girls]...

T: Yes, because she is a survivor.

J: And Dao is in the middle between Malee and Kamlah. Is this the way you depicted the story?

T: But, you see, that is not only... one group... I put into one. Did you see "Sia Dai"? It is the similar type of film depicting a group of girls put into a theme to show how they regret for their past...

J: What about “Tongpoon Kokpo”?

T: Tongpoon and Malee are same. They are dreamers. You see, Tongpoon is different from Malee, he is from Isaan where he had very difficult life, so he moves to Bangkok to find a better opportunity. Similar to Malee, Malee comes with her boyfriend to work and to have a good family in the capital. At the period, there were a lot of people migrated into Bangkok to find a better life. Malee sells herself, but, Tongpoon sells his labor by driving a taxi. And a taxi is actually, not a vehicle as a car, but a vehicle for his success, his dream and his future...that's all in one. When I started making this film, it took me months and months, I couldn't work [on the scripts]...So, everyday I was sitting in the coffee shop spending time, and I saw this taxi driver waiting for his customers in front of the hotel. The way he was cleaning his car...stuck me...because the car itself was about 3,000 baht at the time, very cheap. At the time, I had a car, one million bath Volvo, which was never cleaned sitting there with dust. My Volvo was only a vehicle, but to him, it [his taxi] is his future, his everything. Then I thought what if the taxi is hit by a truck, which means his future is gone. His everything is gone instantly...So I was getting a story. I asked him over a cup of coffee and talked. After that, I asked him to take him wherever he might want to go. So he drove me around to all his places like where he had coffee or lunch, where he talked to the police to take money so he could have a privilege to parking, where he waited for his customers from the massage parlor everyday. It was quite interesting everyday. I went to his house in Klong Toey meeting his son talking about a lot of thieves stealing taxi for the parts...Regarding the future of the taxi driver...It gave me very strong feeling. So I wrote the story in three days.

J: Speaking of the 1970s throughout the student uprisings, the major issue was freedom...[In the context of urban migration], I see rural people had their own freewill to come to city with desires to fulfill. How would you comment on the relationship between the socio-political changes and [filmic] work?

T: Well, you see, at the time, we had freedom. Actually it was the first time we could make a film like this, beyond of the censor. When I made “Dr. Kan”, I used my power to make it possible, because it was the first one to talk about ‘corruption’. It is something that had never been done before. And when I made “Theptida Rongraem, after the October 14, there was a lot of freedom. But after the October 6, my films went back to a sort of comedy, I think...And up to now, I make a new type of film again.

J: It was also interesting to see the positive filmic mood at the end of “Theptida Rongraem” regarding the social background, especially compared to the darkness of “Tongpoon Kokpo”...

T: Yeah, Malee is a survivor. The last scene of the film is symbolic by showing her throwing away the old clothes [for prostitution] into the garbage can walking to uncertain, or certain, future, with the song suggesting the future will be better...But there are four films in Tongpoon series; The Citizen, Freedom of the Citizen, The Citizen Go Home and The Death of Citizen. Actually, there are four films in one. I quite enjoyed making these films, [especially] the second one...because it is on the basic assumption that those go to jails always go to jail, they never have freedom after getting out of the jail. ...He is still convicted as a bad guy [by society], even though he has nothing to do with it all...

J: Then, can it be said that the negative ending of “Tongpoon Kokpo” also reflects [the dark] society of the period [after the Oct.6]?

T: Yes, I think so. But, it is actually my style...the open-ending of my films... You see, my films never end with a [certain] conclusion. To me, only, the story, is the reflection of society, but I have never attempted to make what will become their future, because I am not a God, I am a director...[examples of “Gun Man”, “Sia Dai”...]

J: Can you explain about the October 14 student uprising scenes injected in “Theptida Rongraem”?

T: Well...it is the same kind of the...protesting for freedom they wanted... the girl who jumped down the rooftop after protesting oppression...

J: What made it possible for you to play a leading role in making social-realist films tackling social issues?

T: This is what I am interested in, even today, when I make historical films...You see, there are always social problems...But social problems 500 years ago and social problems now are the same type of story, if you look deep inside. Even a film like ‘Klong’, it is also about social problems, but it is very difficult to understand...Maybe it is because I studied in America during the Vietnam War. It led me to see, at the end, the innocent people were the ones who suffer.

J: Thank you very much for your time...

Prachachon Nok

- Interview with Mr. Manop Udomdej, in December 12, 2003

Josie (J): When did the film making begin?

Manop (M): It finished making in 1981, taking 2 years.

J: “Prachachon Nok” “On the Fringe of Society” ...did you put the film titles yourself?

M: Yes, I did. This is [originally] from Dr. Seri Pongphit, he worked in a Catholic organization for development. He said to me about Isaan people coming to Bangkok and facing many problems...especially political problems...Just like there were people outside of society...He said that. So I came up with the title in Thai...

J: Could you tell me of the film’s motivations?

M: At the time, I was working for the Catholic Counsel of Thailand for Development. This is a NGO, they work for the poor people. They wanted to teach the people and know about their problems...political, economic, and...social problems...They wanted to make this film to educate people in the upcountry in Thailand...So it was my duty to make this film and how to communicate with the people. So I wrote the story by myself, some part from my friends...some parts from my family, because I was born in Isaan, my father was used to be a farmer. So I knew their problems...I know about Isaan region. Some events in Thailand after the Oct 14...so I mixed storied to make it the long after that I translated to screen play...

J: It was a very interesting film. Because the film covers various social issues or critical issues...

M: [At] That time... you have to understand the institution of Thailand first...Communist party of Thailand was in jungle...fighting against the government...So when I made this movie, the police was chasing me so many months...they were accusing me of making a movie to support the communist party. But for me...it was just a joke much more than serious...

J: In the film, two groups of people are depicted...People who leave or stay...whatever their choice may be...they get involved into group activities after all...and ended up in the tragic endings...

M: This was true at the time of society. Almost twenty years ago...Many formal... leaders were killed by the governments...everything was about communist...nobody could call for the justice...total injustice at the time...

J: Also the film shows a problem due to the relationship between the rich and the politicians...

M: I wanted to show Thai society at the time if you try to [leave] no way out... all you do is just squeeze them... you will receive their strikes back...I wanted to tell everybody in Thai society that you collect the problems with the 'justice' much more than 'force'...that is the theme...in my film...

J: Any other social messages in the film?

M: Other messages...to communicate with my society...about the institutions...that many people belonged in the dark side of society being poor...at the time, Thai government said it was in democracy. But what is the meaning of democracy? I think that was hypocrisy....Nowadays...young people... they don't know...anyway, this was the history and I wanted to 'record the history'...

J: This is not a commercial film...

M: Right...I was subsidized by CCTD...

J: So is this an underground films?

M: Maybe you can call it indi-film [in a modern sense].

J: Have you tried to make the similar film after this?

M: yes...but hard to find an opportunity in the mainstream in Thailand...I tried to get

involved in other subjects like women's rights...I made this film in around 1991...The story talked of a woman accused by her husband of having adultery...It was about human rights...But...people in every society prefer to see something funny more than intellectual film...

J: I would like to know your opinion about the relationship between film and society...

M: Nowadays in Thailand and the time [back] in the 1970s were different...At the time, I am in the generations of the time...young people were very sensitive...about... 'what is injustice in our society', they tried to seek for justice...everything they were serious...true...philosophy[ical]...but after that...it is different now... we don't have problems like the old ones...we don't have a communist party in jungle...so now young people just enjoy their lives...no mind of our society...[unlike the old days...] For me, as a filmmaker, it is very hard to find the way to make [my films] to communicate with them to show them what social problems we have right now...because they don't want to know ..., did you see my last film "Khun Baap Phromphiram"? I tried to contact our society again...but the responsibility ['or reaction' of people] on this film indicated that they didn't want to know, see or hear...about the suffering story...something serious, they don't want to see...the most of them, especially women in Thai society, they don't believe this is true...I don't know...if they don't consider their own rights and security I don't know how to help them...this is the answer for you....The conclusion is very difficult to find a way as a filmmaker to relate the film and the social problems...but anyway,...I hope I should have a chance... I don't know when... to make another film like "Phromphiram", "Accusation" or "Prachachon Nok"...for which I have to thank CCTD for supporting me to make...Throughout making "Prachachon Nok", I've got to know many important people...academics or activists who work for the poor...

J: Did you have any problems due to the filmmaking?

M: When I went to Isaan region to shoot, some [regional] officials came to me and said if you shot this film I will...(threatening...), because they said I was working for the communist party...so, I left the area and came back to Bangkok...stopped half a year...and I started again from the Bangkok scenes...shooting workers... After that I went back to Ubon Ratchatahaini...Isaan, to shoot the rest of film...

J: There are interesting two scenes where Chate is shot to death in the village and where factory labors having a strong protest in the stadium...putting fire on the puppet [symbolic of their greedy owners]...

M: It is called 'Soviet montage'... to compare two events for the third meaning...I had quite a freedom or independence for that film...[whereas] in the mainstream film it was hard to do that because it was not opened for you...to do something like that...

J: Thank you very much....



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Tongpan

- Interview with Ms. Pajjong Laisakul, November 19, 2003

Josie (J): In which year, did the filmmaking of “Tongpan” start and finished?

Pajjong (P): We started in 1976 and finished in 1977.

J: Who were in the group of making this film?

P: Surachai Jantimathon, you know, he is a very popular singer, was a director. And I was a producer. I wrote the script with Khamsing...

J: What were the motivation and the background?

P: I saw Tongpan, the real person, when I went to Loey Province, Chiang Khan. We were working for the Quakers... Jeffrey Sing. He and I try to find a person for the seminar. We met Tongpan at the bus station, he said, “Hey, Pajjong, look at his hands. He has huge hands...why don't we invite him?” “Well...we should go to the village and talk to the villagers and let them select their representative...you just don't pick anybody for the seminar.” He kept saying about his hands...anyhow, ...we got to the village and talked to the people about the ‘Mekhong project’. We met Tongpan again later. He told us his life stories that he had to runaway from two dams...every time when they made a dam, he had to leave...So we thought this was a good case. We invited him to the seminar just like in the film...When I was introduced to an amateur actor who was originally a boxer in Hua Yao, when I went to Chaiyaphoom for the location. Got to know the actor... when I got the actor, I contacted Khun Surachai to help me because I didn't know much about Isaan area...country life...so he could help me with their [Isaan] way of speaking and acting and make things better...

J: This film is an underground film... Do you think “Tongpan” is the first in the genre?

P: Considering this film is a few years earlier than “Prachachon Nok”, yes..., but I am not sure. This film is very sincere, simple and realistic...[in the style]...

J: What kind of social message did you intend to put into the film?

P: At the time, we thought, a lot of government development-projects didn't benefit the poor...we wanted to say something... to call to look at the poor ...also we were against the dams...Building dams...[break]... the ecological sustainability...you remember Tongpan is trying to catch fish with his son... In Kalasin, when they built the dam, they didn't cut all the trees, so a lot of trees were underneath which made the water bad...

J: Did your group target any specific class of audience? Government officials?

P: No, [instead], general audience. Government people, they wouldn't listen to you at the time. To make people sympathize the underprivileged, you had to build the understanding through the general audience to say that the government development plans should be careful not to hurt the underprivileged people.

J: How do you explain the relationship between the society and film?

P: At the time, there were many books talking about the underprivileged came out...it was when people started to have some consciousness about where the society should go and what it develop toward? People call for the benefit were not only the privileged ...A lot of young people participating...They wanted to push the society ...when you are in that age, you want to be in the mainstream of the feeling...of the time... books were talking of the marginalized people, movies were the same...before...the films appreciate the upper-class and their way of living and that was the ideology that people wanted to see...you didn't have to think that much...And then people started questioning things...becoming more sophisticated...[with] many taste...many levels...

J: Can you tell me more about the real seminar...?

P: The real seminar happened in Chaiyaphoom province...near the dam...in 1975...Dr. Puey, bankers like Khun Charnong Tothung. We took a picture together with the Quakers...And the picture was publicized in the front page of Dao Sayam Newspaper in 1979 titled the central committee meeting of the communist party because of the Puey farmers students...academic like Sulak Sivaraksa.

J: Were many people cooperative?

P: Every one kind of said yes...it was the good time when people feel they have time for any kind of social activity social issue...

J: After the Oct 6, what were the consequences (in terms of filmmaking “Tongpan”)?

P: No political consequences...because I left Thailand before it broke out...I took the unfinished film to Hong Kong and London to sell to BBC. Without making it, I went to Sweden where I sold it to Swedish TV. Gave me finance to finish editing in Stockholm.

J: Thank you very much...



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Tongpan

- Interview with Mr. Surachai Jantimathon, November 26, 2003

Josie (J): Please tell me about the background and motivations of the film...

Surachai (S): There was an American journalist...I don't remember his name...sorry...working for 'Far East'... in Hong Kong and in Thailand...He came up with the idea of making a film about Tongpan and it was Pajjong who contacted me...Although I didn't have experiences in filmmaking, I knew Isaan region and its stories...At the time, my friend who I called a brother, Khamsing Srinawk, wrote the story and it looked very interesting. We called it underground film at the time...being unsure it would be shown to the public or not...At the time I was playing music in the band...

J: How influential this film was/is...to Thai society...

S: I think, at the time, students and the government had different ideas...not so good to each other...The government thought that these students had leftist or socialist ideology...This film reflects a problem...but not a big one...a small problem who had never portrayed before...it was about a dam in Loey province...in the Mekhong River...thinking of after making it...would it bring a good consequence? Or the bad one? But I think the writer also assumed that it would not bring the good...So there was a seminar held to discuss whether it is good to make it or not...inviting villagers from the affected area...The seminar...like the one in the film...is planned to know what we would have from building the dam...at least we wanted to reflect that the idea that the government had towards the general people...sometimes...they don't understand each other...without knowing things would turn out good for them or not...So, most of the people who made this film were from the leftist...they had a mind to fight for the people...

J: You wrote, perform and direct the Moh-lam songs in the film...what did you intend to communicate with the audience through the Moh-lam songs...

S: The movie is about those people in the country side...Before that, it was very rare to make a film about them...especially Isaan people...Language in the films was the same...central Thai...So I thought using dialect would be much better...So I directed actors from Isaan to speak dialect...translating the script in Thai [central Thai] to Isaan dialect...So there had to be Moh-lam songs and 'Pleng Pua Chiwit'...as well...So I sang

too...I was a Moh-lam musician in one of the seminar scenes where a student is daydreaming of singing and dancing with a Moh-lam song in the open field...

J: After the film, did you have any problems?

S: We know this film reflects the social problems...fighting against the idea of the government...Sometimes...in the seminar scenes...we see the villagers don't understand the administrative people...So sometimes...it is just all about oppositions among the people who are making decisions and building a country...How it would affect my life...I don't know...I just felt unsatisfied...it's just lacking something...Because after making this film, no one in the crew was there for the responsibility...everyone felt that way...Many people went into the jungle and got into jail...So we had no idea how this film would affect the society... being useful...but at least, we knew people would not see this film in Thailand... I think the film did the role like what NGOs do at present...

J: The relationship between the social changes and the filmic content and subject matter...?

S: I am not sure how they are related...but we just wanted to make the film with this subject matter, so we just made it and let it happen in film field in Thailand...Since a person who made it originally was not really Thai...so I felt no one was there to be responsible...Only it was about Thai people...made here in Thailand...So no one cared if we would pass the censor or not...I thought we would never...if we had a chance in Thailand...it was just shown in foreign countries...So I don't know how this film built a relationship with Thai society or Thai audience itself...

J: What about with 'Pleng Pua Chiwit'?

S: At the early days of this genre, we sang about peasants...farmers...reflecting their life problems and concerns... but later especially in the 1970s...it became very anti-government...We sang about labors as well as farmers...mirroring laborers' life struggles in cities...We went around to the factories and sang for them... Later playing with the students in the city... That was what I did coming through some of these changes...trying to reflect society through writing, singing and performing...

J: Thank you so much...

Tongpan

- Interview with Mr. Yuthana Mukdasanit, November 10, 2003

Josie(J): This is the study I did.... I did synopsis, theme and analysis... Let me begin with some basic questions about the film. Which year did film-making of *Tongpan* begin and finish...?

Yuthana (Y): Which year? Oh... it's long ago. Uh huh... I can't remember... but let me tell you the background of this film first. I'm not a [main] director of the film, but I think after the 14th of October 1973... yeah... So this film was [made] 1975 or 76, I think. After that, most of the students were out... and pushed to be communists in the jungle or something... There is a troop of my old friends who tried to make this type of, we call, an underground film. They made... uh... they did the production, I think, 30 or 40 % already when they contacted me. Paijong, that's her name, is the producer of the film, contacted me. They required to shoot one sequence, which they called "Seminar" sequences. It's a wrap-up of the story because the "seminar" is the key of the story. This *Tongpan* is invited to seminar, and while the story is going on, the flashback of his life comes. We shot the most of these flashbacks already, which is, in fact, the storyline of this. And then, they showed me the footage. And then, they wanted me to gather all the seminar scenes and [know] how to concentrate into *Tongpan*'s mind or consciousness to the scene that they shot before. So I think I filmed 5... 3 or 5 days only in Thammasat University. They shot the seminar theme, so I have to tell you the background that I... it was not my first...so I don't know all of it. I just saw the footage that they had shot. The director of those sequences, Surachai Jantimathon, which is my friend too, now he is a leading singer in Caravan Troop. But since... they couldn't come into Bangkok to make the scene, so they let me help. After I saw the film for the footage for a while, I did direct that scene sequence, so perhaps I can't tell you exactly what was the inspiration. You should ask Paijong, who is a producer of it, she raised the subject, she cast already, shooting the scene already..., but I'm... I mostly wrapped up it.

J: Ok. So, the motivations of the film were, after 1973, they were willing to make a social realist film....

Y: Well, as far as I know about it is... well... the first motivation is about to build a dam. They tried to talk about ... it is not right for the... there were many poor people who had effects... bad effects on them. And they tried to make a balance (by) calling the government

to rethink about... whether this is worth or not. I think that is the key. Or, in another layer. Well, it is the technology. Because the dam was for the electricity.... The technology... And the humanization of that... many poor people. Tongpan is a representative of many villagers who have the [bad] effect of it. That's uhh.... General motif of them. Uh... but the sequence that I was responsible for was a... seminar. In the seminar, they go to the another level of the parody and sarcasm of the intellectuals who held that seminar for the poor. But, later, those intellectuals tried to convey their idea that their thoughts, which they think for the poor. But not really on the... [the poor's side] yeah yeah... I think that's the general motif that [is] contrary [or a contradiction?] to look from the different point of view.

J: Uhm... actually who were the audience... that the film-making group targeted to share their ideas...? The government officials? Administrative level of people?

Y: Oh... well.... I cannot answer you... exactly. Right? Since they had done it in more than half way... before they gave me. But generally, I think that for the... quite the government and intellectuals who were responsible for this project. I think... that is the first aim...to reconsider and rethink that [whether] what they thought was benefit for the poor, and the villagers. [or not]. But, in fact, it was different because we go to the materialistic society.... Not for the humanism.

J: You called it an underground film. But can I call it like a semi-documentary film...?

Y: Yes! Yes, the way they presented is semi-documentary. Especially, the ... sequence. Oh... I directed... uh... it. Mostly I saw the footage that they had done it in a very realistic style... trying to avoid the melodramatic thing... over-drama. So surely, this film is a semi-documentary film. And... the underground, for me, means that... at the time, most of the directors...with the background of film... were claimed as communists, which was against the law, and all the troops of it were underground in a sense. Because they are the troop that the government, by that time, wanted to put in jail... at anyway.

J: So...was "Tongpan" the first one in this genre of films?

Y: Well... I think "Tongpan" is before "Prachachon Nok", isn't it? I think this is the first one. Because this was quite recognized and.... But "Pracachon Nok" is the second that more impact. In fact, they are talking about... uh... not the same in particular, but the same point of the minor, poor people. But they are recognized well, because of... partly... the

success of the “Tongpan”. This type of the film... normally in Thai... we’ve never seen... they’ve never been produced before.

J: And, I’ve seen a Moh-lam song injected in the seminar scenes.... With two Moh-lam musicians and a student daydreaming and playing the music... Was it your work?

Y: No. Since the director is a musician. Uh... because the story is [about] the northeastern region of Thailand. He was born there, I’m not, I am a ‘Bangkokian’. That’s their original.... That, his concentration... I think that Moh-lam is his motif of making this film... just like a Ballard. I think, at first, the producer tried to cut it down... don’t be too Ballard film... don’t be too art(istic) film. Uh... the producer tried to put it in a more realistic underground... But the director was very artistic.... [As] a singer and a musician, so he wanted to make a movie about Ballard. So I tried to re-adjust in-between the former director and the producer that what the producer needed... and I saw the footage and (found out) what the director needed. And... asked (myself) what the final... director... what I should say, what to keep it, and what to leave it out. So the subjective of the film come across the audience.

J: It was very interesting to see the lyrics of the Moh-lam song...because the messages of the film [came through] them...

Y: He is the artist. He wrote the song by himself. Moh-lam is traditional... but I think he is... the one who put the lyrics on... uh huh...

J: Actually, the series of the seminar in the film was actually planned out in reality? At that time?

Y: Yes. This is the copy, because... in “Tongpan”, they have a seminar. And, most of the people who were in the real seminar are in the film. But it is a re-copied... but I tried to make the film very realistic, except in the scene that I shot... especially, I tried to change the light a little to go to his image and [inside] his idea of the film that... all the shootings... [I] tried to join them together.

J: And, I assume you might have some problems in making such an underground film..., so, did you get into any troubles because the engagement with the film?

Y: Uh... not really for me, because by the time that they made [this film]... I was quite successful and I had a good reputation making the film but not in the... I have done some films that were very loyalist... It was lucky that they, the government, have considered me as a loyalist. But at the same time, I graduated from Thammasat in the year that they had the 14 of October, so many of my friends are leftist... so I was in between the rightist and leftist... No problem... no problem. I remember...by the time the police came and asked and talked... and I just stayed in the back... and they just disappeared... luckily.

J: I have been thinking about the relationship between the politics and the filmmakers... At that time, during the 1970s, these huge democratic movements in relation to student uprising... actually encouraged far greater liberal ideas in many social activities including filmmaking. How do you see the relationship between the political changes and the social movements in society.... [For example] a filmmaking trend, substantial issues or subject matter and content?

Y: That's a good question. Yeah, surely I think I am the generation, I mean, the another director who was firstly in the main stream movies... in the theater... We tried to change the concept from the general melodrama theme and family plot... into more political idea. But, in the main stream, we had to try to hide it under the love story because you cannot suddenly change the audience in the main stream. Uh... it did not work. I think my first year of making movies with my colleagues... another directors... tried to make that... even during that movement of the students... there was a ... I made the "Theptida Bar 21"... talking about the prostitute with a leading actress. [It is] the second film talking about the prostitute... The first thing is the "Theptida Rongraem", and the second for me is "Bar 21". Yeah...uh... but the first, the audience seemed to be interested, but I think we went too far... So it became more intellect... which is different...The audience was not used to...uh...Thai audience go to theater for entertainment. And the entertainment is... if the movie let them think, which is a good movie... it should let them think...but, they would reject, and then after 5 years or 7 years, this type of films... dropped down... very much in the main stream. I think that showed us that the political ideas... we tried to inject into the context of the films were fading out... or had to be very hidden in a love story theme or something like that. I think after that, 10 years... around 1970-1980... I think these are the years of change... and that change, we lose... if we were on the students' side... we lose because the audience would not appreciate it as much... and then... fade away into the young film period... So... the 80-90 of Thai [film] industry mainstream goes to the movies about young.... Fun... good-times... love story... surely melodramatic like in the

Television nowadays. At first... I was thinking... how could I survive in doing this? Finally I have realized that... the taste of Thais going to the movies of the theater... is mainly for entertainment. You have to find entertainment even in the comedy, which should be very smart... to have that idea of politics.... Which is very hard for the one who makes it. But we had to do it if we want to carry on in the main stream. But now, I mean, from 90-95... until now, there is a new trend of main stream... but mostly... it is ... a concept of the... [what] they call "Holly underground", which is not really underground-underground in the sense. But, low-budget Hollywood films... most of the directors... which came in the past 5 years are from the commercials...they have turned out to be directors. So mostly what they concentrate on is the outside... the look of the film... you have to be young with a very new-look... trying to reach the same level of the technical approach. But I found that it still lack of the context of the political messages, which I essence of life... of working... I found that every movie... should have the... political or... I believe, at least social comments or messages in the film...even though you cannot go too far in the political level.

J: Thank you very much for the interview...



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Biography

Hyunjung Yoon was born on April 28th, 1977 in Seoul, Korea. In 2000, she graduated from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, College of Oriental Studies, with a Thai major and English minor. Her background in Thai language and keen interest in Thai culture and society led her to expand her area of study and enroll in the Thai Studies Program at Chulalongkorn University in November 2000.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย