

อมนุษย์ในภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญร่วมสมัยของไทย:
ภาพลักษณ์การนำเสนอและความหมาย



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**MONSTERS IN CONTEMPORARY THAI HORROR FILM:
IMAGE, REPRESENTATION AND MEANING**

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**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Program in Thai Studies**

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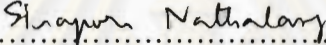
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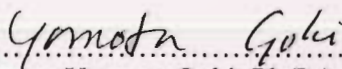
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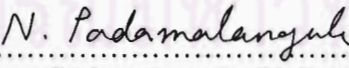
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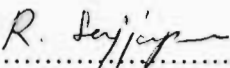

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วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาภาพลักษณ์การนำเสนอและความหมายของอมนุษย์ในภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทย และวิเคราะห์ภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทยที่สะท้อนสภาพสังคม วัฒนธรรม และบริบททางการเมือง การศึกษานี้วิเคราะห์เชิงลึกภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทยตั้งแต่ปี 1999 ถึงปี 2008 จำนวน 11 เรื่อง โดยพิจารณาความเชื่อมโยงกับบริบททางสังคม วัฒนธรรม และการเมือง

ผลการศึกษาสรุปได้ว่า ภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทยมีลักษณะพิเศษสำคัญ ได้แก่ การผสมผสาน (hybridity) กับแนวภาพยนตร์อื่นๆ เช่น หนังสยอง หรือ หนังสยอง และเพศวิถี (sexuality) แม้พุทธศาสนาและไสยศาสตร์จะเป็นลักษณะเด่นของภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทย โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง "ธรรมนิยาม (เหตุและผล)" และ "กรรม" เป็นจุดเด่นในภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทย ดังละครผีเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญ โดยเฉพาะผีเพศหญิงที่ปรากฏตัวด้วยพลังอภินิหารเพื่อแก้แค้น แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม ตั้งแต่ช่วงหลังปี 2000 มีตัวละครที่ใช้ไสยศาสตร์เริ่มปรากฏตัวมากขึ้น นอกจากนี้แล้ว ยังมีอมนุษย์เพศชาย เด็ก และคนแก่ปรากฏร่วมด้วย การปรากฏตัวของอมนุษย์ในภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญของไทยนี้ สะท้อนความกดดันในแต่ละระดับชั้นของสังคม อมนุษย์ในภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญไทยไม่เพียงแต่แสดงบทบาทของตัวละครฝ่ายร้ายแต่ยังมีบทบาทเป็นผู้ปกครองจริยธรรมและประเพณีของสังคมด้วย

ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่า ภาพยนตร์สยองขวัญโดยทั่วไปสะท้อนปัญหาทางสังคม การเมือง หรือ วัฒนธรรม รวมถึงความกลัวร่วม (collective fear) และความกังวล โดยสามารถจำแนกได้เป็น 4 ประเด็นหลักดังนี้ 1) ผลบาดเจ็บทางจิตใจ (trauma) จากวิกฤตเศรษฐกิจ จากเรื่องนางนาก โรงแรมผี และมีสามบาท; 2) ความกลัวต่อภัยพิบัติหรือ โรคระบาด จากเรื่องขุนกระบี่ผีระบาดและตะเคียน; 3) สถานภาพสังคมของผู้หญิงที่สูงขึ้นและการตกต่ำของสถานภาพสังคมของผู้ชาย จากเรื่องบุปผาราตรี บ้านผีสิง และล่องของภาค 1 และภาค 2; 4) ความไม่สงบทางการเมือง จากเรื่องแฝดและบ้านผีเปิบ

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The purpose of this study was to illustrate how the images of monsters are projected in Thai horror film and to examine the metaphorical meaning and representations of monsters. The scope of my research was Thai horror films released on the screen from 1999 to 2008, with selected films specifically elaborated with regard to Thai cultural, social, and political contexts.

This study defined the characteristics of Thai horror films, explaining that hybridity with other genres, such as comedy and romance, and sexuality are important components, while Buddhism and supernaturalism are crucial elements of the films. In particular, the Thai Buddhist belief of 'cause and effect' and 'karma' predominates over all Thai horror films. Ghosts are the primary horror object in Thai horror film, especially female ghosts, who appear with supernatural power to avenge or fulfill their grudge in the traditional Thai ghost films. However, human monsters using black magic, again mostly female, appear more often in the later 2000s, and pursued their desires in more forceful and active ways. In addition, men, children, and the aged also appear as monsters in Thai horror films, and they represent as the 'Otherness' of Thai society. Interestingly, monsters in contemporary Thai horror films are not only evil, but can also be good, since they can be society's 'guardian of morality and mores' from the bad or even 'loss of locality or tradition'.

Horror film usually implies social, political or cultural problems and issues, and also deals with collective fear and anxiety. In this study, 11 films with four issues were investigated: 1) trauma from the IMF crisis and unsettled social climate is reflected in *Nang Nak* (1999), *Phi Sam Baht* (2001), and *Rongraem Phi* (2002); 2) fear for natural calamities and pandemic disease is portrayed in *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* (2004) and *Takhian* (2003); 3) women's issues and men's anxiety for their loss are represented in *Buppha Ratri* (2003), *Ban Phi Sing* (2007) and *Long Khong 1 and 2* (2005, 2008); and 4) political turmoil is implied in *Faet* (2007) and *Ban Phi Poeb* (2008).

Field of Study : Thai Studies

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Chapter I

Introduction

“Films are produced and seen within a social, cultural context that includes more than just the film texts. Film serves a cultural function through its narratives that goes beyond the pleasure of the story. Most films relate to the story of people in a particular nation and over areas such as their ways of life, politics, and current affairs.” (Turner, 1988: 94)

“Films 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.” (Tudor, 2000)

In 1999, while the recession continued from the 1997 economic crisis, Thai classical ghost story *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* was revived by director Nonzee Nimibutr, becoming the most smashing record-breaking hit at the box-office in Thai film history. According to Adam Knee's notion (2005: 141), one of the latest generic trends in the recent resurgence of Thai cinema has been the reemergence of the Thai horror film and the phenomenon may be attributable in part to the singular success of Nonzee Nimibutr's *Nang Nak* in late 1999. Coincidentally, the Korean horror film *Whispering Corridors* (aka *Yeogogoedam*, dir. Park Ki-hyung) hit the box-office in 1998, and the Japanese horror film *Ring* (aka *Ringu*, dir. Hideo Nakata) made new Asian horror history in 1998. Many film scholars have asserted that horror film is a medium of anxiety and fear, or a 'return of repression' according to Freud, and if one considers these notions, the revival of horror film during the time under IMF management is not a mere coincidental phenomenon.

Due to the fact that most Asian countries experienced the same economic crisis from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, and shared experiences and collective memories, the economic cooperation system established throughout pan-Asian as a

measure to overcome economic crisis also influenced the film industry. Accordingly, there was a tendency for some Asian countries to co-produce films. For examples, *Arom Athap Akhat* (aka *Three Extremes*, dir. Kim Ji-woon, Peter Chan, Nonzee Nimibutr, 2002), was an omnibus formatted horror movie by Thai, Hong Kong, and Korean popular directors that was released in these three countries at the same time in 2002, and, commercially and critically was successful as well as in other countries. Noticeably, here again, the genre that they selected for their co-production was horror.

Baek Moon-im argues that the 1997 financial crisis throughout Asian countries and its trauma opened a new era for horror film (2008: 253). From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the 1997 IMF trauma covered almost all cinema genres. As part of the embodiment of its trauma or the solution to overcome it, Thai film emphasized nationalism and Thainess and the horror film genre was no exception. As well as the Thai nostalgic horror film *Nang Nak* (dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999) (May Adadol Ingawanij, 2007; Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 2007), old ghost stories and folktales were consecutively revived in slightly different formats.

The situation over the ten years since 1999 has changed drastically due to the effects of the new global economy, the decline of rigid national boundaries, and the trans-cultural phenomenon affecting virtually all sectors of cinema. Thai horror film has also changed and significantly developed in cinematic techniques with the influences Hollywood, and since around the mid 2000s, narrative, style, and plot of Thai horror film has been more seriously influenced from Hong Kong, Korea, Japan horror film (Kamjohn Luiyaphong, 2005). Since the late 1990s, horror films about the infinite development of technology and alienation^{*}, or fear for it, and horror cinematic motif involving the combination of media with surrealism emerged with the success of *The Blair Witch Project* (dir. Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) and *Ring*.

^{*} The Marxist idea of alienation: Marx points towards the role of technology in reinforcing alienation, as capitalism comes to harness the new knowledge of science in the nineteenth century. This idea of alienation is often used in analyzing films (Falzon, 2007), Page 195.

Television monitors, VCRs, telephones, the internet and such things in horror films such as *Phone* (dir. Ahn Byung-ki, 2002) and *One Missed Call* (aka *Chakushin ari*, dir. Takashi Miike, 2003), disseminated fears and made all these machines change into horrific monsters. In Thailand, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* (dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Wongpoom, 2004) spread fear for the camera and *Ngao* (aka *Happiness*, dir. Yongyut Thongkongtoon, 2008) warned about alienation caused by over-dependence on cellular phones by modern people.

Since the mid 2000s horror films have been more focused on individual matters such as gender or sexuality. Along that line, same sex relationships or homosexuality has come to the fore since the mid 2000s in Thai film by and large, and the horror film genre began to present homosexuality as ‘the Others’, such as a transgender monster in *Suai Lak Sai* (aka *Sick Nurses*, dir. Piraphan Laoyont & Thodsapol Siriwiwat, 2007). While folkloric Thai ghost stories have decreased, new types of gory horror movies have settled on the Thai film industry and have been to some extent successful. However, monsters appearing in new styled horror films are not totally new to Thai audiences; they mostly remain female ghosts. Though the circumstance of production and reception is far different from the earlier horror films and could be seen as folksy and old, the appearance of female ghosts implies that the female ghost still has its validation in the 2000s.

Monsters in the horror films have developed along with spatial and temporal reasons and influences from internal and external factors. According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s thesis that the monster’s body is a cultural body, monsters in the horror films have metaphoric meanings and they are cultural embodiments (Cohen, 1996: 4). Monsters are more complicated and sophisticated than what they appear in the film. The female ghosts that are the main characters in Thai horror film have changed not only in their outlooks owing to the development of cinematic technology, but also with respect to their underlying implications. Phi Pob first appeared in horror film during the 1990s and phi Pob in the 2000s needed to be different in translation as much as in feature. The advent of the monster in the horror film is ultimately based on

cultural contexts and horror films portray anxieties and fears of people in shared space and time.

1.1 Rationale for the study

It is obvious that the horror film genre has constantly enjoyed popularity among Thai moviegoers throughout all Thai film history since 1933, when the first Thai horror film *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, produced by Hasadin Phaphayon, was released. It is no exaggeration to say that horror film can represent the Thai film industry, along with the comedy genre. However, the genre that gave the turning point to establish a foothold for the second golden age of Thai film industry from a long-time recession was the horror film (*Nang Nak*), and the most lucrative genre among all Thai films throughout Thai film history is also horror film.

When *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* was ranked as 1st in box office receipts by earning 110 million baht in 2004, it could hardly be predicted that this serious horror film directed by two young directors would succeed to that extent. There were no funny characters, and it was fearful enough to cause goose bumps, but it was well received by both audiences and critics in Thailand, as well as in many other countries. Horror film is no longer a marginal genre. However, some critics claim that recent horror film has been influenced by other countries horror films too much, and there is no any Thainess in the films. However, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* as well as *Khon Len Khong* (aka *Art of the Devil*, 2004) by Tanit Jitnukul, are films that played a great role in the new horror film boom in the 2000s, and upgraded Thai horror film one more step from the perception of audiences that Thai horror film is only B-grade and vain.

From 1999 to 2001, movies produced per year were only 10 films or so, but in 2002, movies produced almost double from the earlier years. Since 2003 an average of up to 45 films has been produced every year. From 2001 to 2008, more than 20% of all films were in the horror genre. The chart below shows the numbers and percentage of Thai horror film released.

Chart 1.1. Thai Horror Film Released 1999-2008

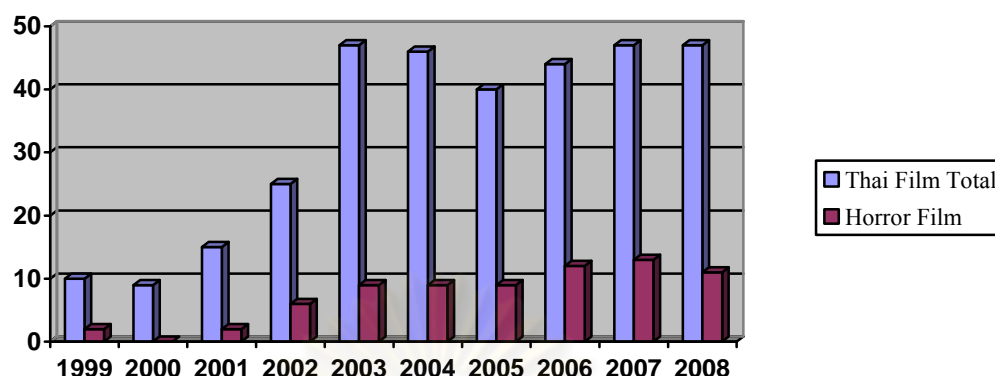


Table 1.1. Thai Horror Film Released form 1999-2008

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Thai Film Total	10	9	15	25	47	46	40	44	47	47
Horror Film	2	0	2	6	9	9	9	12	12	10
Per centage (%)	20	0	13.3	24	19.1	19.6	22.5	27.3	25.5	21.3

(The Federation of National Film Associations of Thailand, 2006; Thai Film magazine 'Flicks', 2006; Pantip: Online; IMDB (Internet Movie Data Base): Online)

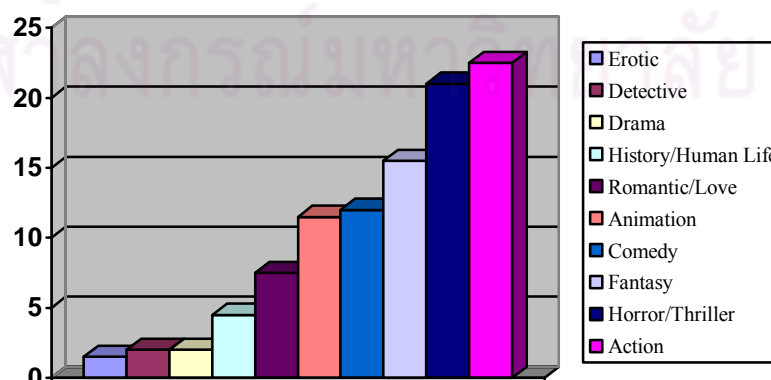
In the years 2001 to 2007, the horror genre has gradually increased in production as can be seen above. In 2008, 47 Thai films were released and 10 films out of the 47 were horror films.

According to Entertainment magazine, six movies out of the 20 top Thai hits of all time are horror films. This indicates that horror movies have found a place in the hearts of the general Thai audiences. In 2003, *Hian* (aka *The Unborn / The Mother*, dir. Bhandit Thongdee) earned 1.1 million US dollars. In 2004, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* was ranked as 1st in box office receipts in that year by earning 2.584 million US dollars. *Buppha Ratri 2* (aka *Ratri Returns*, dir. Yuthlert Sippapak) earned 1.7 million US dollars in the year 2005. *Koi Thoe Yom* (aka *See How They Run*, dir. Jaturong Mokjok), which is horror mixed with comedy earned 1.6 million US dollars and *Dek Ho* (aka *Dorm*, dir. Songyos Sugmakanan, 2006) earned 1.186 million US

dollars in 2006. *Faet* (aka *Alone*, dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Wongpoom) earned 2 million US dollars and *Ban Phi Sing* (aka *The House*, dir. Monthon Arayangkoon, 2007) earned 1.346 million US dollars in 2007. In 2008, *Si Praeng* (aka *4bia*, dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun, Parkpoom Wongpoom, Yonyoot Thongkongtoon, Paween Puriktipanya) was ranked as 1st in box office receipts by earning 2.435 million US dollars and *Long Khong 2* (aka *Art of the Devil 3*, dir. Pasith Buranajan & Kongkiat Khomsiri) earned 1.483 million US dollars.

The following graph shows the preferences of Thai movie goers, action is most popular among Thai audiences, with horror genre taking the next position, fantasy and comedy follows behind. Film magazine Flicks researched the preferences of Thai moviegoers for three months in 2005, 55% male and 45% female out of 200 random samplers. The most preferred genre was action films with 22.5%. The next was horror/thriller films, chosen by 21% of those sampled. Fantasy was in the third place, which is a very exceptional case because for that year Hollywood's big budget block buster movies, such as *The Lord of the Rings* (dir. Peter Jackson), *Harry Potter* (dir. Chris Columbus), were released in year 2005. Comedy films were ranked in fourth place with 12%. Thus, this result shows the immutable three codes – action, horror, and comedy – for having a hit at the box office for Thai moviegoers.

Chart 1.2. Thai Movie-goers' Preferences (Thai film magazine Flicks, 2006.)



When audiences choose a movie at the theater, 25% of the audience select the genre they prefer, 24.5% decide from the plot or story, 16.5% pick the film from the star, and 14.5% of the audience want to see the movie because of its box-office power. 6% of audiences choose the movie because of the recommendation of friends, 4.5% is because of the synopsis, personal reason is 4%, the rest 2% is for the director. The star system is also an important factor in Thai film production. Recently, popular actors and actresses often appear in the horror films. Academy Fantasia* stars starred in *La-Tha-Phi* (aka *Ghost Game*, dir. Sarawut Wichiensarn) in 2006, Thailand's top actor Ananda Everingham took the main roles in *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*, and *Long To Tai* (aka *The Coffin*, dir. Ekachai Uekrongtham, 2008). Horror queen Sai Jarernpura has starred in several horror films since *Nang Nak* in 1999, and most horror movies in which she has played have recorded high ranking at the box-office. No less than star power, directors who are renowned with horror film, such as Yuthlert Sippapak, Tanit Jitnukul, have ticket power at the box-office as well. The directors of *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*, Banjong Pisanthanakun and Pakpoom Wongpoom, have credits for horror genre, and their movies constantly are a success at the box-office.

There have been approximately 70 Thai horror films produced from 1999 to 2008, most showing a significant development in filming techniques and computer graphic. For example, ghosts in the films are now more realistic and powerful in visual effect, and at the same time, the plots and storylines of Thai horror films have changed to be more fearful, gory, and gruesome than before.

* Academy Fantasia or True Academy Fantasia is a reality show. It is a singing contest, judged through popular votes. The contestants are selected through nationwide auditions, as well as through online audition clips. The live auditions take place in major cities in every part of Thailand to search for those who dream about becoming superstars.

1.2 Literature Review

Film has been studied using a wide range of theories and methods, and the academic area of film studies is now firmly established in colleges, schools, and universities around the world. In Thailand, some universities and colleges have opened film studies, however most of them have focused on filming techniques, not theoretical and academic interest in film that much. Thus, there has not been many precedent studies in film, and, as for horror film, there are very a few studies done so far.

In monster theory, Cohen (1996: 8-16) asserts that political or ideological difference is as much a catalyst to monstrous representation on a micro level as cultural alterity in the macrocosm. Whereas monsters born of political expediency and self-justifying nationalism function as living invitations to action, usually military, the monster of prohibition polices the borders of the possible, interdicting through its grotesque body some behaviors and actions, envaluing others. It is possible, for example, that medieval merchants intentionally disseminated maps depicting sea serpents like Leviathan at the edges of their trade routes in order to discourage further exploration and to establish monopolies. Every monster is in this way a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves. The monster of prohibition exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot be crossed.

Noël Carroll's (1990: 34) notion is that the concept of monsters abound horror, "monsters are un-natural relative to a culture's conceptual scheme of nature. They do not fit the scheme; they violate it. Thus, monsters are not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening. They are threats to common knowledge... monsters are in a certain sense challenges to the foundations of a culture's way of thinking." Monsters can be categorically interstitial or contradictory, i.e. they blur or undermine

distinctions between categories, such as, the living and the dead (the vampire, the zombie, the mummy, Frankenstein's monster), human and animal (the werewolf), or human and vegetable (the intellectual carrot monster); or they can be formless, such as shapeless monsters. The horrific object is a compound of threat and impurity. The monster may also be psychologically, morally, or socially threatening. Impurity involves a conflict between two or more standing cultural categories. Thus, it should come as no surprise that many of the most basic structures for representing horrific creatures are combinatory in nature.

Edward Ingebretsen states that every monster is, essentially, a political entity; that our production of monsters is always part of our broader political understanding of the world and of our notions of good and evil (Ingebretsen, 1998: 25 cited in Phillips, 2005: 6) Some initial evidence for this claim can be offered in the observation that horror film tends to become more popular during times of social upheaval. Paul Wells, for instance, asserts that "the history of the horror film is essentially a history of anxiety in the twentieth century." (Wells, 2000: 3 cited in Phillips, 2005: 9) When the culture is in turmoil, for some reason audiences flock to the horror film. Monsters in the horror film particularize individual and social fears. Horror monsters have also been interpreted as expressions of or as metaphors for socially specific fears and anxieties. From this perspective, monsters help audiences (and perhaps film-makers as well) to engage with and come to terms with those fears.

In addition, Robin Wood offers a more politicized engagement with the horror monster, one that seeks to combine psychoanalytical concepts with Marxist ideas about social oppression. For Wood, the monsters in horror film are expressions of social and psychological repression that can reveal truths about the political and social structures within which we all live (Wood, 2004: 107-41). He also analyzes that in his own culture the concepts of "otherness" are immanent and admits the sense of distances if it states the theme of horror film itself; however, it is still probably the best method to explain the horror genre. In his research, he mentions seven concepts of "otherness" in his culture: woman, the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic groups,

alternative ideology or political system, deviations from ideological sexual norms, and children. In this thesis, I want to talk about the concept of “otherness” of Thais relevant to the monsters that appear in Thai horror films and how they are represented in film.

Monsters particularize individual and social fears. If the terrors represented in horror films represent a society’s collective dreads, their coded reflections in contemporary anxieties seldom appear as overtly as they did in World War II B movies. Susan Sontag’s 1965 essay “The Imagination of Disaster” argued that the sudden popularity of science fiction after the war represented sublimated Cold War anxiety with radioactive mutants and bug-eyed invaders being barely concealed symbols for the hydrogen bomb and the threat of international communism. Political, economic, and educational writing, advertising and popular culture alike as often stressed the potentially limitless wonders that could result from scientific and industrial development, including atomic energy, as expressed fears of nuclear war. In any case, for more than a decade after the war, science fiction’s flying saucers and marauding behemoths seemed to bury the old-fashioned gothic horror story. How, then, to account for the reappearance of the horror genre at the end of the 1950s, a wave which has not diminished since? Perhaps the new fears of an impersonal, bureaucratic society and catastrophic nuclear destruction actually intensified the appeal of quaint old demons like Dracula and Frankenstein, especially among children and adolescents, groups that made up increasing portions of Hollywood’s audience.

In Southeast Asia area, there is prominent work on horror film. Felicidad presents the Phillipines legendary ghost, aswang, and its alligorical relationship with politics saying that the aswang-complex cannot be considered apart from its intersection with several historical moments and ideological discourses – not only archaic traditional folklore but also the anti-insurgency campaigns launched in the Phillipines by American military stratagists in the 1950s. Reports of sightings and aswang activities in economically impoverished and hence potentially disruptive urban communities during the national presidential elections in 1992, a period when

the government's need to check social unrest in Metro Manila (manifested, for instance, in the alcohol ban) coincided with a rash of rumors about monstrous incidents – from bestial births of mudfish to aswang attacks in depressed squatter areas like Tondo and Mandaluyong (Lim, 1997: 81-2).

Thai horror film studies

Compared to Western studies for horror film, Thai horror film has not drawn academic attractions as much as it deserves, despite its long-time popularity. Thai horror film had been neglected until the early 2000s due to its lack of cinematic techniques, clichéd stories and low-budget productions. However, thanks to persistent efforts of Thai filmmakers, plus globalization, Thai horror film became known internationally, and some film scholars began to take a look into Thai horror film.

To all intents a trailblazer in the field of Thai horror film studies, Kamjohn Luiyaphong and his colleague Somsuk Hinwiman presented Thai horror film in their research sponsored by the Thailand Research Fund in 2005, indicating that Thailand had significantly changed socially and politically between 1977 and 2000, and that Thai films also had changed following society. Thai films fluctuated up and down due to the tax policies of the government. As well, the industry was subject to considerably influence from other countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, as well as Hollywood. They classified Thai horror film into three periods regarding narrative style and plot. The first period of horror films (1977-1986) is classified as the traditional period. In this period there were three types of horror films; firstly, horror films based on Thai folktales or legends of Thai; for instance, *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* (1978), *Winyan Rak Mae Nak Phrakhanong* (dir. Seni Komarachun, 1978), *Mor Mae Nak* (dir. Sonthaya Duangthongdee, 1985), *Takien Khanong* (dir. Rangsee Thansanaphayak, 1979), *Krasue* (dir. Komintr, 1982), *Athap Namman Phrai* (dir. Komen Sakseni, 1983). Compared with other periods, the number of horror films produced in this category was relatively significant. Secondly, horror films adapted

from Hollywood films, for example, *Dracula Tok* (dir. Lotok, 1979) from *Count Dracula*, *Decha Phi Dip* (dir. Kaithip, 1984). Ghosts that appeared in these films were transformed to Thai styled ghosts, so they were shown with many comical features, not necessarily horrific. Thirdly, horror films that are based on novels or radio scripts such as *Phut Phitsawat* (dir. Saueyakorn & Metta Rungrat, 1980), *Ngoen Pak Phi* (dir. Chana Khraprayoon, 1981) and *Kaeo Khon Lek* (dir. Suriya Duangthongdee, 1983). With respect to the audience's perspective, the target of horror film in this period were mostly rural residents because city dwellers had started not to believe in ghosts and were not that interested in ghost stories, while rural people still maintained their traditional way of life.

The second period (1987-1996) is classified into two categories of horror films; one is teenage horror film and the other is traditional horror film. As society changed, audiences of horror films also changed and many refused to see ghost films any more because they did not believe in ghosts. Thus, horror filmmakers had to pay more attention more to rural people and to focus on new customers, such as teenagers. The very famous *Ban Phi Pob*, which was remade 13 times between 1989 and 1995, first appeared in this period, and phi Pob often appeared with other ghosts, for instance, *Krasue Kat Pob* (dir. Phlawut, 1990), *Dracula Joe Pob* (1991), *Mae Nak Joe Phi Pob* (dir. Charin Phrahomrangsi, 1992). Separately, teenage horror film tended to add horror to romance or comedy, for example, *Ai Khun Phi* (dir. Chana Khraprayoon, 1991) and *Ho Hue Hue* (dir. Khomsan Triphong, 1992). In terms of storyline, some films reflected teenager daily life in those days and often dealt with teenager problems and family problems, for example, *Pi Neung Phuean Kan Lae Wan Asachan Khong Phom* (dir. Somjing Srisuphap, 1993).

The last period (1997-2004) is classified as the brand new horror film and new traditional horror film period. This period is important because Thai society and Thai films underwent significant rapid changes. Thai politics experienced continuing instability after 1995. When Chuan Leekpai's Democrat government fell in 1995, Prime Minister Banharn followed, then General Chavalit soon after. An economic

crisis was looming, while divisions were emerging about a controversial new Constitution that promised widespread reforms. The 1997 financial crisis coincided with the adoption of the new Constitution after considerable social division. Then, with the re-election of Chuan for a second term, the country had to face the bitter prescription of the IMF medicine, large-scale unemployment, and growing dissatisfaction with the Democrat's failure to revive the economy (Glen, 2003). In this context, people took traditional culture and their own beliefs as a solution and a part of the solution to the problems were ghost movies. *Nang Nak* by Nonzee Nimibitr and *Tha Fa Likit* (aka *Who is running?* 1997) by Oxide Pang are instances of this. Also, from this period, filmmakers collaborated with other countries as can be seen in such films as *Khon Hen Phi* (aka *The Eye*, dir. Oxide and Danny Pang, 2002) and *Arom Athap Ahhat*, which are work of Hong Kong, Korea and Thailand.

Kamjohn extended his research about Thai horror film in terms of political allegory between Phi Pob and Isan (and Lao). In *Ban Phi Pob* (dir. Srisawat, 1989), the protagonist is a female aged-ghost who scares and startles villagers. Later, the male protagonist who is a doctor, comes from Bangkok to expel Phi Pob, however, Phi Pob will not go and, furthermore constantly spreads her species to younger women, despite the endeavors of the male protagonists, even a male spirit doctor. Victory of Phi Pob represents two meanings; first, the power of female ghosts in Isan society; second, a triumph over Bangkok. Phi Pob represents Isan, fighting to protect the traditional culture of Isan and Lao. Phi Pob, as the female, also represents the vulnerable local people in Isan competing against the strong and powerful central government system, which is the male, particularly from 1987 to 1997, when Thailand changed into a more industrialized and centralized society during what has been called the golden era of Newly Industrialized Countries (Kamjohn Luyaphong, 2006).

There has been academic research undertaken by a student of the Thai Studies Center at Chulalongkorn University; "Influences of Hollywood movies on contemporary Thai films: case studies of action-thriller and horror genres" by Parichat

Phromyothi. Parichat (2000) studied the identity of Thai horror film which is different from Hollywood, and the influences of Hollywood movies on Thai films. She contends that 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, who took this opportunity to produce films with social awareness themes. In conclusion, while the Thai film industry has made a move towards upgrading the quality of films by inserting Hollywood elements, other forms of visual entertainment, such as '*likay*'* and TV drama series, still keep the traditional formula, i.e. '*nam nao (น้ำเน่า)*'* in their production. Finally, since Thai films target teenagers, it is unavoidable that the films should correspond to their unique lifestyle.

Recently, the studies of Thai horror films have been actively researched by film students. Todsaporn Gorachit studied Thai ghost film in his thesis "The Horrification in American, Korean and Thai Ghost Films". He asserts that there are three components of the horrification process: 1) ghost characters; 2) codes; and 3) image and sound. American ghost characters usually relate to counter-Christian beliefs, while Korean ghost characters are influenced by the Japanese genre on the basis of ghosts in white cloths, without legs, floating in appearance and some are able to change into fire or electric light, which I do not necessarily agree with. While, the portrayal of Thai ghosts possesses two clusters of character: 1) the conventional, which is deconstructed and reinterpreted in terms of ghost meaning; and 2) the intercultural. Codes are divided into two groups: 1) the general; and 2) the cultural, relating to religion, beliefs, values, outlooks and lifestyles. In his conclusion, ghost characters and codes are differentiated by nationality, while image and sound are likely to be resembling and cultural unbinding.

* A type of synthetic dramatic performance of Thailand

* Dirty water or stagnatory water, means soap operas or stories which are only for entertainment; they do not carry any message or meaning.

In addition, Rawiwan Nuchanaka studied marketing to promote Thai ghost films in her thesis “Marketing Public relations to promote Thai ghost films and professional ethic”, and Sumet Phosopon researched the intertextuality between Japanese-Thai horror film and Hollywood remake versions and how to tactically change the plots and the cultural-based images.

1.3 Objectives

1. To illustrate how the images of monsters are projected in Thai horror film and to examine the allegorical meaning of monsters with regard to Thai cultural tradition.
2. To investigate the social and cultural contexts of Thai horror film and to analyze how they are represented to the fictional world.

1.4 Major arguments

My proposed research is to focus on monsters in Thai horror films and how social and cultural contexts are projected in Thai horror film. I will examine films connected to existing cultural drifts and directions in peculiarly poignant ways as to be recognized as somehow “true”. This is not, of course, to suggest that the audience emerges from these films fearing the undead or ghosts or monsters, but that they emerge knowing that somehow what they have seen on the screen was an accurate, if allegorical, depiction of their own collective fears and concerns.

To start, I will begin to elaborate in the second chapter on how to define Thai horror film. According to Tim Dirks, a film critic, ‘horror film’ is a widely used term for movies that strive to elicit responses of fear, horror and terror from the audience (Dirks, 2009: Online). However, the difficulty here is to define Thai horror film because of its hybridity. Thai horror film usually involves element of the supernatural, and many of them contain comic elements. For those reasons, Thai horror film is

often perceived as a science-fiction genre or a comedy genre. As archivist and film-historian Dome Sukwong mentions, comedy, romance and tragedy is contained in Thai horror film, not just a horrific element (Interview, April 2007). Many film scholars agree that Thai film has the formality of *likay*, which contains a melodramatic story and comical characters, even if it is the horror genre that aims to scare audience (Glen, 2003; Parichat Phiromyothi, 2000). Furthermore, successful Thai horror films typically combines horror with comedy, for example *Buppha Ratri* (dir. Yuthlert Sippapak, 2003), *Koi ThoeYom*, *Phi Mai Chim Fan* (aka *Vow of Death*, dir. Piyapan Choopetch, 2007). Therefore, this research particularly needs to draw the line between horror and comedy and define what is Thai horror film.

Due to the fact that horror film has been treated as B-grade film in Thailand, and actually horror film has been produced with low budgets since the main target is rural residents rather than urban dwellers, there have been few Thai horror film studies academically. Thus it seems that the primary work to do is to arrange Thai horror films, and to understand the characteristics of Thai horror films and the current tendency of the times. Thus, I will provide a summary of the Thai horror film history to understand the differences and traditions of Thai horror film between ‘classic’ and ‘new’, and look into the characteristics of Thai horror film.

In chapter 3, I will illustrate the image of monsters in Thai horror film and attempt to classify them with regard to their origin and relevance to Thai traditional culture and beliefs. For the purpose of my research, I will draw on horror theories, in particular Robin Wood’s ‘the Otherness’ of culture, to engraft onto monsters in Thai horror films.

My approach to the horror monster is less concerned with the nature of the monster itself and more with what the monster might represent. In other words, the question being addressed is not so much ‘What is a monster?’ as ‘What do monsters mean?’ Of particular importance in this respect are the various cultural readings of horror that usually view the monster as either a symptom of, or a metaphor for, something bigger and more significant than the ostensible reality of the monsters.

In chapter 4, I will scrutinize the background and social/cultural context of the horror films from 1999 to 2008 and concentrate on some films that I selected for the research in accordance with the objectives of the study. The concern of this chapter is how the collective fears articulate with horror films. By so doing the chapter will show how the horror films represents social/cultural contexts.

1.5 Hypothesis

1. In horror films that have dealt with collective fears and beliefs, there can be found differences in images of monsters and how the monsters are created. Whereas Hollywood's horror film is mainly related to Christian beliefs, the images of the monsters in Thai horror film are created upon the basis of Thai cultural tradition and beliefs such as Buddhism and Thai animism.

2. Horror film usually implies social/political or cultural problems and issues. Society or natural calamities in Thai history that have had deep impact are assumed to be projected in Thai horror film by metaphoric representation.

1.6 Research methodology

Using a critical method rooted strongly in Freud and Marx, Wood and his colleagues touch on the idea of the monster in terms of a basic theory of the "return of the repressed," i.e., the tendency of the horror film to express simultaneously a rejection of sexual repression along with all other strictures imposed by capitalism.

This study is mainly based on documentary research, using various written materials, ranging from research papers, theses, as well as general film studies, social studies and cultural studies documents. My research methods will also include a close-reading of the horror films and additional background research as essential.

The scope of this research is only Thai horror films released on the screen from 1999 to 2008, which has been called the 'second golden age of Thai film' and

when many film scholars and film experts agree that Thai film significantly changed and experienced substantial technical development. In 1999, two horror films were released, in 2000 there were none, in 2001 two horror films and in 2002 six horror films were released. However after the year 2003, there have been approximately 40 films released through the screen each year and 30% out of all films released correspond to horror films, including all kinds in the sub-horror genre. The horror genre is one of the immutable three codes – action, horror, comedy - for producing a hit at the box office for Thai moviegoers. Thus, sufficient material has been published to demonstrate that the cinema is the most influential, most socially important medium of our time.

In accordance with these research purposes, films were chosen for the research in order to examine social and cultural contexts. Films were chosen from each year, except 2000 when no horror film was produced. The criteria in selecting the films were: first, their originalities – sequels to hit movies or another version of the same story, but less successful, were excluded; second, their critical or commercial success; most of them were highly ranked for box office receipts, as well as being critically successful; third, their representation of cultural tradition. These films seem to contain sufficient ideas and images of Thai belief and cultural tradition, and I will show the embodiment of a ‘social, political and cultural unconscious’ of the current society through these films. The list of Thai horror movies to be used in this study is:

Title	Year	Director	Rank	Total Gross *
<i>Nang Nak</i>	1999	Nonzee Nimibutr	1	\$4,500,000
<i>Phi Sam Baht</i>	2001	Oxide Pang, Pisut Praesangeam		
<i>Rongraem Phi</i>	2002	Anukul Jarotok		
<i>Takhian</i>	2003	Chalerm Wongpim		
<i>Buppha Ratri</i>	2003	Yuthlert Sippapak		
<i>Khun Krabi Phi Rabat</i>	2004	Taweewat Wantha	19	\$121,100
<i>Long Khong 1</i>	2005	Pasith Buranajan, Kongkiat Khomsiri	9	\$730,200
<i>Ban Phi Sing</i>	2007	Monthon Arayangkoon	10	\$1,346,634
<i>Faet</i>	2007	Banjong Pisanthanakun, Parkpoom Wongpoom	7	\$2,040,003
<i>Long Khong 2</i>	2008	Pasith Buranajan, Kongkiat Khomsiri	5	\$1,483,738
<i>Ban Phi Poeb</i>	2008	Phongchayuth Sirisukongsa		\$408,288

(Box Office Mojo, International film site: Online)

This study is to develop a typological approach to a predominant idea in a popular film genre so as to provide a springboard for further investigation of the idea's social and ideological implications. To achieve this, the critical method used will rely on a careful examination of a given film's themes, with citation of specific evidence from the film's text, rather than simple visual analysis.

* From 1999 to 2003 official totals are not computed

1.7 Definitions of terms

Thai Horror film (nang sayongkhwan): Horror film is a movie that strives to elicit responses of fear, horror and terror from audiences and has many kinds of sub-genres, such as comedy horror, slasher. Thai horror film, in this study, includes every sub-genre, particularly horror plus comedy and melodrama plus horror, even comedy, melodrama and horror combinations, all recognized as horror film.

Monster: is any of a large number of legendary creatures that usually appear in mythology, legend, or horror fiction. The word originates from the ancient Latin *monstrum*, meaning "omen", from the root of *monere* ("to warn") and also meaning "prodigy" or "miracle". In this study, monsters combine ghosts, the undead, creatures, demons or human beings who have evil minds.

Ghost film (nang phi): is a movie in which ghosts appear in the scene. Not every ghost film is horror film.

Comedy horror: is a type of horror film in which the usual dark themes are treated with a humorous approach.

1.8 Limitation of the study

This study has been limited to Thai horror films produced in the period between 1999 and 2008. However, for chapter 2 to arrange and understand Thai horror film, the history of Thai horror film is scanned roughly. Due to the lack of data and information about Thai horror film, the study partly relied on interviews and storytelling of Thai film experts.

1.9 Significance of the research

1. This study can provide a better understanding of Thai horror films and will help to formulate the factors that determine the horror genre.
2. This study will not develop new theories of film. However, it can provide an academic interpretation of Thai horror film that enhances a refined understanding of Thai society.

If horror movies use the collected fears of our society, then what exactly do those horror films say about the society as a whole, and how does the changing subject matter of what is considered a horror film reflect the changing fears and worries of a society entering a new millennium? Perhaps an easy way to show how horror movies change with the times would be to track the changes in the subject matter of horror films from the earliest movies from each specific sub genre to the current standard-bearers of the horror archetype. These movies, after all, are meant to scare the viewer and to fulfill the public's desire to be frightened, so naturally the movies that scare humans will change in response to the changes in the ideas that scare.

1.10 Notes on spelling

Thai film titles in this thesis have been transliterated phonetically in accordance with the principle of Thai Romanization by transcription method as proposed by the Royal Institute, Bangkok in 1954.

However, in case that film title in Thai uses English or any other non-Thai languages as a part of its title, transliteration is in accordance with the English spelling. For example, ชัตเตอร์กดติดวิญญาณ was transliterated into “Shutter Kot Tit Winyan” instead of “Chattor Kot Tit Winyan”. Names of films in transliterated Thai

with italic, and transliterated name of director(s), and production year are given in the first reference in each chapter, however only the Thai title is used afterwards in the same chapter. Therefore, in the first reference of ชัตเตอร์กดติดวิญญาณ in each chapter, it will be *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* and only Thai transliteration, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*, is used afterwards in the same chapter.

Thai words and names have been spelled as ones widely known or accepted in English written documents, including newspaper and internet articles. For example, ลีเก is 'likay', not 'like'. Romanized name of mainstream Thai film directors are in accordance with imdb.com and pantip.com, database-like contemporary Thai cinema information website in both Thai and English. Conventionally, Thai people are referred to by their first names, while Westerners are referred to by their surnames. In the references, Thai authors are listed according to first names.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Chapter II

Overview of Thai Horror Film

2.1 Definition of Thai Horror Film

Genres are dynamic. They change. (Turner, 1988: 121)

In studying Thai horror film, the definition of such proves to be one of the most complicated and contentious problems. In Thailand, the term ‘horror’ was rarely used until the 1980s. However, as globalization and the phenomenon of trans-culture developed in the 1990s, and as Thai film industrialized and developed, Thai films also needed terms to describe and standardize its film genres, primarily for commercial and academic reasons. Since the beginning of the information age, or perhaps the computer age, people have increasingly obtained information about movies from the internet or other electronic media without necessarily going to the theater. Accurate, broad, detailed information is, therefore, requisite.

In this light, Thai films have come to be classified by genres of western criteria, in particular, Hollywood, with the ‘horror’ genre translated into the Thai language as ‘*sayong khwan* (สยองขวัญ). However, ghost film (*nang phi*, หนังผี) is the term that has been traditionally used in Thailand instead of *sayong khwan*. In fact, most Thai horror films contain some sort of ghosts, and the roles of ghosts in the films were universal until Thanit Jitnukul’s *Khon Len Khong* was released in 2004. This film and a few subsequently released horror films, such as *Long Khong 1, 2* (aka *Art of the Devil 2 and 3*, dir. Pasith Buranajan & Kongkiat Khomsiri, 2005 and 2007) and *Chomkhamangwet* (aka *Necromancer*, dir. Piyapan Choopetch, 2005), was made without the appearance of ghosts appearing, although ghosts continue to remain a key element of Thai horror films.

The definition of the Thai word '*phi* (ผี)' is quite complex, although it is usually translated simply as 'ghost'. 'Ghost' has been defined as an apparition of a dead person believed to appear to the living (Simpson and Weiner, 2010). However, in Thailand, ghosts emanate not only from dead people, but from anything in nature, such as animals or trees. Also, it should be noted that not all ghosts are horrific monsters, because, according to Thai beliefs, there are both bad and good ghosts. However, a monster, as generally defined in horror film, is someone or something to harm or to threaten people, no matter whether human, ghost, undead like zombie or something between human and animal, human and nature, the living and the dead, following the notion of Carroll (1990: 42-3).

As Andrew Tudor explains, vampires, werewolves, zombies and the rest are part of the conceptual apparatus of any horror movie audience. Science, the supernatural and the psyche refer unproblematically to 'real' elements of this genre world (1989: 7). Furthermore, ghosts can be seen in every genre of films. For example, in *Ghost* (dir. Jerry Zucker, 1990), Patrick Swayze performs as Sam who was killed and became a ghost to protect his fiancée Molly, from a killer; however, no one has labeled this film as a horror film, because the ghost in the film is good, appears as a good-looking man similar to before he died, and even tries to help people. The ghost in *Ghost* is not the symbol of a threatening monster, but an angel of love, thus, the movie *Ghost* is a romance, not a horror film. The Thai movie *Patihan Rak Tang Phan* (aka *Deep in the Jungle*, dir. Thirawat Rujinatham, 2008), starring Jesadaphorn, is a story about the love between a human man and a snake woman in the *Naga* tribe. Even though having the form of a human body, the woman is not a human, but a creature in Thai or Indian mythology, called a *naga* (*nak*), which generally refers to a large serpent like being. Arguably, the spirit of a snake in human form in the film, unlike ghosts in many other horror films, evokes the sympathy of the audience. This film is classified in the fantastic genre by the producers of the film, Phranakorn Film. In this perspective, as many film critics and scholars have noted, the 'threat' of a monster is a very crucial factor in the classification of the horror genre.

According to a film critic and writer Tim Dirks:

Horror films are unsettling films designed to frighten and panic, cause dread and alarm, and to invoke our hidden worst fears, often in a terrifying, shocking finale, while captivating and entertaining us at the same time in a cathartic experience. Horror films effectively center on the dark side of life, the forbidden, and strange and alarming events. They deal with our most primal nature and its fears: our nightmares, our vulnerability, our alienation, our revulsions, our terror of the unknown, our fear of death and dismemberment, loss of identity, or fear of sexuality (Dirks, 2009: online).

The widely known work of Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990: 39), states that the characteristics of monsters are a compound of ‘threat’ and ‘impurity’. The monster may be psychologically, morally, or socially threatening. The monster is an important part of the iconography in horror film, with horror films having offered numerous features and types of the monstrous. Accordingly, in the course of this study, ghosts are included as monsters of the films covered, no matter how they appear, but only if they are threatening to people.

Another problem in defining Thai horror film is when horror is combined with other genres, such as comedy or romance. In the case of Thailand, comedy-horror film has been in the main stream for quite a long time. However, many scholars and critics do not agree that comedy-horror is a sub-genre of horror, since, in the case of Thai films in particular, the films combine too much slapstick and humorous action, sometimes even more than the dreadful scenes. On the other hand, some scholars and critics agree that while some comedy-horror films are not appropriate to be classified as horror films, a large portion of such films deserve to be presented as horror. However, the criteria are clearly very subjective and vague. Many filmmakers self-claim their comedy-horror films to be in the horror sub-genre, and, when a film is released as a DVD or a VCD, it is sometimes clearly printed with ‘horror’ on the box,

even though funny costumed ghosts and many familiar faces of comedians are presented on the cover. Examples of such films include *Ban Phi Pob*, *Phi Hua Khat* (aka *Headless Ghost* 2002), *Buppha Ratri* (dir. Yuthlert Sippapak, 2003), *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* (aka *SARS War*, dir. Taweewat Wantha, 2004), *Variety Phi Chalui* (aka *Ghost Variety*, dir. Adirek Wattaleela, 2005), *Koi Thoe Yom* (dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2006) and *Koi Thoe Gay* (aka *Ghost Station*, Yuthlert Sippapak, 2007).

Comedy-horror films are the most popular type of horror film in Thailand, and a characteristic that distinguishes Thai horror film from other countries, including Hollywood. Of course, hybrid genres are a common phenomenon of the films of many other countries, occurring for some cultural reasons, but mostly for commercial purposes. In the case of Thai horror film, while there must be some commercial intent, the cultural reasons appear to have more of an impact. Peter Nellhaus (2007: online) introduced the Thai word ‘*sanook* (สนุก)’, commonly translated as ‘fun’, as an important factor to be a successful film in Thailand. ‘*Sanook*’ is essential in virtually every aspect of being a Thai, both at work and leisure. Therefore, the films that Thai audiences favor, naturally, must also be ‘*sanook*’. Glen Lewis (2005) states that *Nang Nak* (dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999) was the only ghost that included *likay*, but was dropped in the 1940s because the ghost, Nak, frightened audiences too much. It seems that for Thai people, ‘*sanook*’ and ‘*sabai*’, meaning ‘easy’, are powerful concepts in their daily lives. Therefore, Thai audiences want to see horror film for fun, and, consequently, the film must not only be scary, but it should also contain comic lines, even slapstick action is fine, and startling audiences is most welcomed. This is the way many comedians appear in Thai horror films; essentially making their roles in the horror film exactly the same as how they act on TV comedy programs or on the stage in cafés*.

*Cafés, in Thailand, are dinner theaters, where you can eat, drink and enjoy various performance arts, especially Thai traditional pop (*luk-thung*, ลูกทุ่ง), stand-up comedy, and Thai dance.

From the perspective of Thai belief and culture, this problem can be understood. It is quite a common sight in Thailand to see shops on the streets being open with shop owners preparing flowers, food and incenses to offer to spirit houses and Buddhist icons in front of the shops. The shop owners are praying for safety for that day and making offerings to their ancestors, the spirits of the terrain (*chao thi*, เจ้าที่) or, perhaps, their tutelary deities. Along the road in the countryside, one can see large trees tied up with colorful cloth along with various fruits and foods under the tree, which are offerings from villagers to the spirit of the old tree for the safety of the village. No matter where, in the city or country, Thais live together with unseen spirits everyday in this way in the animistic belief that every thing, even an inanimate things, has its own spirit. This belief is taken in stride in living with ghosts (*phi*) or spirits (*winyan*, วิญญาณ) which is divided into both benevolent and malevolent spirits such as phi banphaburus (ผีบรรพบุรุษ ancestral spirit), phi ban phi mueang (ผีบ้าน ผีเมือง city spirit), phi pop (ผีปอบ), phi ka (ผีกะ), phi pong (ผีพง), phi krasue (ผีกระสือ), phi kamode (ผีโขนด). Ghosts or spirits do not live apart from the human world, but they live together with people everywhere. It means that ghosts are not only horror object but also can be a friend of human or even an object of fun. With this reason, ghosts in Thai horror films are not always a fear factor, but sometimes can be a comical character.

Compared to western horror history, the Thai horror genre began under inferior circumstances. According to literature critic Arada Premphant, western horror stories or gothic novels are a respectable genre of literature. However in Thailand, such stories are just a form of entertainment, as Thai readers merely look forward to being amused by the horror story. They do not look for any level of literature or a work of art, even though there are many well-written horror novels (Matichonbook, 2009: online). Therefore, a key difference between the horror genre in western, as well as other countries and in Thailand is that while the western horror genre is typically

gruesome and fearful, for Thai horror stories writers walk in step with the taste of Thai readers and mix in elements of ‘*talok* (ตลก, funny)’.

Of course film can also be said to be visual literature, since the first step of filmmaking is writing a narrative, which is going to be a script for a film and quite often that film script is based on a novel. In fact, many films are adapted from novels, for example, *Ban Phi Pob*^{*}, *Rongraem Phi*^{*}, and those who are horror novelists have written scripts for horror movies as well. These horror novels were popular among Thai readers, however, they were treated such like a chapbook, and no doubt that horror films based on these novels were also taken as B-grade. The readers were largely teenagers, and they enjoyed to be scared, but at the same time they looked forward to fun and laughter.

Genres change, as Turner states, and genres have often developed for commercial as well as cultural reasons. According to film expert Kamjohn Luiyaphong (2006), Thai horror films started to be combined with the comedy genre from the late 1970s when Thailand was influenced significantly by other countries, especially Hollywood. Educated people no longer believed in ghost stories; horror film needed to change and the horror genre met comedy at that time. When Thai legendary ghost Mae Nak met western culture, it provoked odd laughs (*Mae Nak America*^{*}), and when a western monster came to Thailand, it became funny familiar ghost story (*Dracula Tok*^{*}). Characteristics of the comedy-horror films started with importing western concepts of horror monsters, which were mixed with Thai ghosts or Thai folktales. This strategic hybrid trial succeeded and the successful transformation of horror films has continued in popularity until the present.

* The novel ‘Ban Phi Pob’ is written by Hem Wechakorn (1903-1969) who was a great artist and writer.

* The novel Rongraem Phi is written by Athachinda in 1967.

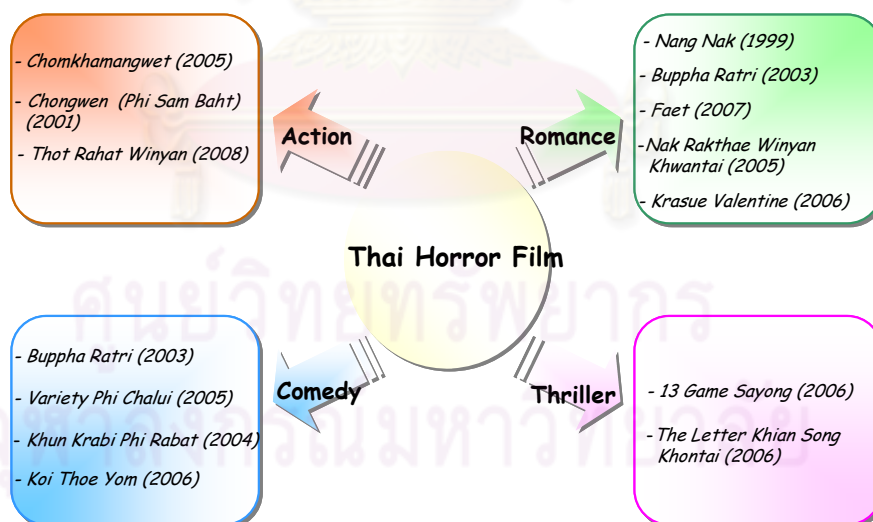
* Directed by Lek Kitiphaphorn, 1975

* Directed by Lotok, 1979

Horror film is intended to arouse fright in audiences with the story usually dealing with some sort of collective fears. Tudor (1973: 139 cited in Hutchings, 2004: 5) presented the notion that a genre is what we collectively believe it to be, and Back Moon-im (2008) stated that audiences want to see something new from horror film, but it should be something familiar at the same time. This indicates that horror films should be regarded on a cultural basis, along with collective memories and fears, and, if this crosses a cultural border, it can be new, but fail to arouse fear which is the ultimate purpose of horror film. Therefore, even if the way of sweeping blood to the screen is adapted, for a horror film to be successful, the substantial object of fear can not be changed.

Thai horror films combine not only comedy, but also other genres such as romance, drama, thriller, action, and even combining more than two genres together.

Chart 2.1. Hybrid Thai Horror Genre



Even though many films are difficult to classify into a genre, to categorize Thai horror films combined with the comedy genre, there needs to be a premise on the general characteristics of such films in order to be able to classify them. For instance,

Variety Phi Chalui directed by Adirek Wattalila, is full of freaky, funny ghosts, and because of the very famous comedian actor Petchai Wongkhamlao and many other funny characters in the film, the more they act seriously, the funnier, rather than scarier, the film runs. Even so, the film has registered its genre as a ‘*sayong khawn* (horror)’ in *Chaloem Thai* of *Pantip.com*, a popular movie website in Thailand, and in IMDB (Internet Movie Data Base), although one is hard pressed to say that it is a horror film. *Koi Thoe Yom* directed by the Thai famous comedian and actor Jaturong Mokjok, was ranked 5rd in 2006 box office receipts. In the film, a child ghost appears and startles villagers. The head monk is played by Jaturong, and many other funny characters appear. However, much of the sounds and background colors of the film are characteristic of the horror genre. *Buppha Ratri* contains melodrama, romance, and comedy in the film, but no one can deny that it is a horror film. After seeing the film, audience remember the main storyline, which is more of a horror than a romance between the main actress and actor, with the most impact coming from scenes that are not the funny parts, mostly played by comedians, but the blooded vengeful scary moments are created by a ghost.

When horror films are filled with lots of blood and gore, they are often more disgusting than scary. The real fear comes after coming home, in the bed time, even in a dream, not necessarily in the theater. While seeing the horror film, monsters or ghosts startle by showing up suddenly with freaky sounds. Even if they appear in humorous ways with funny make-up and the audience laughs while seeing the movies, no one wants to meet such monsters or ghosts in real life. However, they can crawl up to visit us in the dark night when we are alone, because they are already settled in our unconscious and our memories. The greatest fear is our imagination; it is about what can happen or what our imaginations can come up with (Hour.ca-Stage-Fantasia: online). From this perspective, what makes something scary and frightening is not what is seen, but what is believed. Consequently, it is the narrative that classifies whether a film is in the horror genre, rather than the visual scenes on the screen.

As many film genre theories and film scholars' notions have made clear, it is difficult to define or limit horror film due to its hybrid and dynamic characteristics. A genre is, after all, a social construction, and as such it is subject to constant negotiation and re-formulation. That means, of course, that a genre's boundaries can never be defined once and for all. They are definitionally blurred, and for that reason any attempt to research a genre cannot hope to provide strict criteria for identifying its products (Tudor, 1989: 6). But those films that are difficult to categorize into a genre are often less successful. As such, film genres are also useful in areas of marketing, criticism and consumption. Therefore, this study will attempt to scrutinize how and what social, political, and cultural contexts define Thai horror films rather than the elements or criteria of Thai horror film as a genre.

2.2 Characteristic elements of Thai horror film

Tudor (1986: 180) notes that a genre is a relatively fixed culture pattern. It defines a moral and social world, as well as a physical and historical environment. By its nature, its very familiarity, it inclines toward reassurance. He further notes that horror movies are rather less widespread and more openly sub-cultural in their appeal. Hypothetically, Thai horror film has its own characteristics which can be differentiated from horror films of other countries, especially western horror films. This is so notwithstanding the fact that modern society has changed rapidly, with integration and globalization a remarkable phenomenon at the moment, making it is possible to listen to the news half a world away in a few minutes. The Thai horror film has unique and peculiar characteristics rooted in Thai traditions, beliefs, and values that can be seen through narratives.

2.2.1 The comic

Interestingly, Kitano (2001: online) stretched Aristotle's cathartic emotions as the basis of tragic pleasure applying the object of imitation theory into comedy. Aristotle places the complex plots higher not simply because they arouse pity and fear, established somewhere as the tragic emotions. From the fact that comedy is an imitation of the inferior action derives the requirement that it should represent a complete and whole action with magnitude and must have the same constitutive elements as tragedy. And he claims that comic catharsis can be located in the Aristotelian theory of comedy, which corresponds to the tragedy. The comic catharsis of action is a catharsis from *yovgo*". It ensures that the object of the comic action is an 'error,' purified of the bad intent that *yovgo*" contains. This error thus becomes ridiculous. The comic ridiculous aroused in this way is purified of *fqovno*" because comedy speaks of the universal and does not make invectives of particular persons. It does not have painful element mixed with its pleasure. Finally, this ridiculous aroused in the audience in the theatre is purged by the comic laughter. This arousal and purgation of the ridiculous in comedy is useful for the realization of the mean in relation to the ridiculous (Kitano, 2001: online). In Freud's theory of humor, jokes happen when the conscious allows forbidden thoughts that society suppresses, recognizing that jokes may say more about social life at a particular time than about particular people; he turned this into an investigation of why people joke together, expanding in his economical psychic perspective with discussions of social cohesion and social aggression. He, thus, pointed out that jokes are basically a catharsis and release, but not stimulation (Freud, 1960). After all the theories on humor or the comic, the comic can create a catharsis as what horror does. In this perspective, the combination of comedy and horror is the perfect way to give catharsis to the audience, as well as amusement.

Archivist and film-historian Dome Sukwong said that it is true that horror films have been loved by Thai audience for a long time, but comedy, romance and

tragedy are also contained in the horror films. Ghosts in films often appear with humorous features. Thai horror film can make people laugh, cry, or be scared, and have even been used as educational tools. This is similar to Thai food, such as *tom yum kung*, which has all tastes in one dish. This also can be said to be one of the characteristics or preferences of Thai people (Interview, April 2007).

Many Thai horror films seem to belong to the comedy-horror genre, despite increases in the number of serious horror films in the 2000s. Furthermore, the more successful Thai horror films typically combine these genres, for example *Buppha Ratri*, *Koi Thoe Yom*, *Phi Mai Chim Fan* (aka *Vow of Death*, dir. Piyapan Choopetch, 2007). Therefore, monsters in Thai horror film have many comical characteristics and many famous comedian actors and actresses take roles in horror films. It is assumed that comedy horror hybrid films have gained popularity since the 1980s when over a hundred low budget, B-grade films were produced.

Thais love of the comic has a long history. Sathien Thapthip, a dubbing actor, reflecting on the Hasadin produced version of *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* (1933) said that it was quite scary, but it also had a fun part in the film. In the scene that:

A man paddles a boat. When he sees a woman, he heads to her with something else in mind. Mae Nak asks him if he is not scared of ghosts, then he answers that he is not scared. He comes closer to her fast, Mae Nak asks him to come out of the boat for a chat, and he asks where her house is, she answer that her house is right behind the temple over there. When she points, he looks along with her fingers, then he turns his head back to see her, the woman has become a ghost with a pale face and he is frightened so he jumps down to the water (Thapthip, 2009: online).

Sathien adds, everyone in the theater laughed out loud and released their tension for a short time. The use of the comic in Thai horror film seems to have long history and to be an important element of horror film.

Comedy-horror film is a sub-genre of horror film that has been widely accepted. It is also called 'teenage horror film,' since the main target audiences has been teenagers. Teenage horror films have content that is often ostensibly violent, gruesome and horrifying, but it is argued that both producers and audiences treat them as examples of humor or comedy. They are deemed to be fantasy films, so not unsurprisingly realistic slices of life, are not to be taken too seriously. The horror – the blood, the gore, the monster, the acts of violence – is meant to be funny not frightening. The popular parody series of *Scary Movie* films are a good example of this genre. In Thai horror films, horror genre that combined comedy and teenage elements appeared for the first time in the late 1970s (*Phi Puean Rak**), and many teenage horror films were produced in the 1990s, for example, *Ja-e Phi Hua Khat* (dir. Praphan Phethintr, 1990), *Ai Khun Phi* (dir. Chana Khraprayoon, 1991), *Sayong Kois* (dir. Phisuea Thoranong, 1992), *Sayong Kuens* (dir. Daurung Thanachai, 1993).

If comic catharsis does exist as the proper effect of comedy, it must inhabit the comic emotion created by the comic plot, as it did in the case of tragic catharsis. In tragedy, a catharsis of tragic emotions (pity and fear) assumes the catharsis of tragic pathos. According to Aristotle, the basic formula for comedy has had more to do with conventions and expectations of plot and character than with a requirement for lewd jokes or cartoonish pratfalls. Aristotle suggests that comic figures are mainly "average to below average" in terms of moral character, perhaps having in mind the wily servant or witty knave who was already a stock character of ancient comedy. He also suggests that only low or ignoble figures can strike us as ridiculous. However, the most ridiculous characters are often those who, although well-born, are merely pompous or self-important instead of truly noble (Kitano, 2001: online). For the comical effect, reality is generally excluded. Most incidents have the merely possibility to happen in real life, thus slapsticks and nonsense acting is essential. Most Thai comedy-horror films are unreal or surreal. Actors or actresses in comedy-horror

* Directed by Neramitr, 1978

films dress in humorous way or wear funny make-up, keep falling down, being startled and sometimes appearing with gross features.

A sequel of the movie *Ban Phi Pob* is full of comical characters; even the ghost itself is far different from those with the usual gory horrific features that shows up in front of the villagers and makes them startled. *Phi Pob* is a liver-hungry ghost, eating human organ meat, however, which manifests itself as a grandmother in normal country woman's costume (Galloway, 2006: 13). Later *Phi Pob* gets modern help such as using a balloon (*Ban Phi Pob 6*, 1991) or a skateboard (*Ban Phi Pob 7*)* to fly and chase the villagers; the use by *Phi Pob* of this new equipment, rather than supernatural power, being the comic element.

Due to the fact that horror films reflect social problems, collective fears and repression, comedy combined with horror usually takes on satirical narrative. For example, *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* sarcastically portrays an incompetent government covering up the facts, and *Koi Thoe Yom* presents the venerable monk who abandons his wife and unborn son in his secular life.

With the same faces, similar characters, and clichéd plots reiterate over and over, Thai audience started to look elsewhere for entertainment, and some of them turn their back on comedy-horror film. Since the early 2000s, Thai horror film has been more fearful, gory, and gruesome. However, the copy for the poster for *Ban Phi Poeb* (dir. Phongchayut Sirisukhongsa) released in 2008, says that it is a unique Thai styled hilarious ghost film, which has faded out, coming back with tons of jokes, and advocates comedy-horror genre as one of the prominent Thai characteristics. Interestingly, this film proved to be a commercially success.

From 1999 to 2008, while young directors who recently graduated from film studies or who have studied abroad seem to be pursuing a more serious genuine horror

* Directed by Srisawat, 1992

genre, comedy-horror film has been continuously produced and has maintained their popularity.

2.2.2 The Melodramatic

Melodramatic plots with heart-tugging, emotional storylines usually emphasize sensational situations or crises of human emotion, failed romance or friendship, strained familial situations, tragedy, illness, neuroses, or emotional and physical hardship within everyday life. Victims, couples, virtuous and heroic characters or suffering protagonists (usually heroines) in melodramas are presented with tremendous social pressures, threats, repression, fears, improbable events or difficulties with friends, community, work, lovers, or family. The melodramatic format allows the characters to work through their difficulties or surmount the problems with resolute endurance, sacrificial acts, and steadfast bravery (Dirks, 2009: online).

As a film genre, melodrama features a protagonist who is pitted against forces beyond their control, yet is vindicated in the end, in part because they display admirable qualities that evoke the audience's sympathy and admiration (Curran, 2005: 235-45). The typical plot structure for a melodrama in Thailand follows this form. A young beautiful girl in the village falls in love with a gentle, good-looking man. However, their love does not seem to go well because a bad rich guy or villains in the town coercively violates her body and she is killed by accident or intentionally. But, the love story does not end. She becomes a ghost to stay with her lover and at the same time her vengeance against the villain starts. However, the story always ends up in tragedy. Because she is from another world where the humans do not belong, they cannot co-exist, cannot make love, and cannot even touch each other. Furthermore, her lover begins to be scared of her, rejecting her forever from loving him. Her trials to get his love back are sad, implacable, and sometimes gruesome. In the end, she has

to accept the situation and goes to the spiritual world in tears. Audiences feel sympathy for her and share their tears with her.

A large number of Thai horror films seem to have been under the rubric of 'melodrama' for their plots, leaning heavily on romance, love stories, conventions or sentimentality. Particularly with respect to the Thai horror films adapted from Thai folktales or legendary ghost stories, plots of the stories are mainly linked to the love story between a female ghost and a male human. For instance, *Nang Nak* directed by Nonzee Nimibutr, is another version of *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, which is an old well known Thai legend. Many critics claim that the *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* story is a love story more than a scary, gory horror story, even though for the past 80 years *Mae Nak* has been represented as a fearful female ghost. As he was promoting *Nang Nak*, the director Nonzee, often claimed that he was inspired to remake the legend to redress what he perceived to be what was lacking from previous film and television versions of the tale. His vision of the legend recovered what he described, to richly misleading effect, as a 'realistic' treatment of the love between Nak and her husband, Mak (Nonzee, 1999 cited in May Adadol Ingawanij, 2007). The promise of a fresh interpretation of the protagonists' love, and the heavily promoted claim of an unprecedented level of visual verisimilitude in the sense of creating enframed images brimming with evocative period details, promised a stimulating encounter with a new kind of *thai sakon* filmic experience (May Adadol Ingawanij, 2007).

Not only in old legend or folktales, but also in recent horror films love stories between ghosts and humans have continued. In *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* (dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Wongpoom, 2004), the female ghost sticks to a man whom she once loved. This very humanlike ghost had been bullied when she was a human, but when she meets the man who was willing to be her friend, she falls in love, and after she is gang-raped by some boys in the university and killed, she refuses to leave him alone, but stays with her only love and friend. The scenes in which Thun and Natre have a date, such as walking together in the woods, making love, and

laughing with each other are quite romantic and sweet, which are contrary to the final scene in which Natre is sitting on Thun's shoulder.

The love stories in *Wong Pisat* (aka *Dark Water*, dir. Jaran Wongsajja, 2007) pass through two generations – a father and a daughter. A father has lost his wife who was killed by the head of villains in the village, and his only daughter, Nuan, is everything for him. Soon after she falls in love with an undercover policeman from Bangkok, and gets pregnant. The son of the wife's murderer, the head of the gangsters now, loves Nuan, and finds out that she is pregnant. He gets angry because of his jealousy and unintentionally kills Nuan. Nuan comes back as a vengeful ghost. After her revenge is over, her body is founded by her lover, the young policeman from Bangkok.

Love stories between a rich man and a poor girl have been a main theme of soap operas, which are like the dreams of housewives and market sellers. This Cinderella type love story is often adapted in horror films, such as *Buppha Ratri*, even though the narrative usually develops in a different way than the typical soap opera. A university student Buppha, from outside of Bangkok, has had a painful past in that she has been abused by her stepfather. One day, she meets a good-looking boy, Ake, who is the son of high class rich father. She is pregnant soon after, but when she tells this to her boyfriend, she is discarded. In *Rongraem Phi* (aka *The Hotel*, dir. Anukul Jarotok, 2002), a successful and upstanding executive, Nareuban, falls in love at first sight with Sarapee, the daughter of a poor farmer. He hesitates to propose to her because of his age, but he finally asks her to marry him and provides his fortune to her. On the day before the wedding ceremony, she runs away with her secret lover, causing Naruban to commit suicide leaving doubts in the mind of the audience.

Another major theme in the melodramatic plot of Thai films is the love story between a married man and a young girl. This minor wife (*mia noi*, เมียน้อย) theme reflects the problems of Thai social structure and at the same time male sexuality. The minor wife as well as the prostitute story, has also been an important part of the horror film in that it shows distress and anxiety of a marginalized group of women. In *Khon*

Len Khong, young pretty girl, Boom, is a mistress of a middle aged married man. After she gets pregnant, she is gang-raped and she loses her baby.

2.2.3 Sexuality

Sex and horror have been intertwined since about the year dot, and will continue to be so for quite some time to come. But actual depictions of sexual activity is a different matter altogether. In many ways sex plays as an undercurrent in horror fiction. Sexual expression can point out some of the environmental factors of the genre, the company it keeps. It is not difficult to watch a random selection of horror movies and see the voyeuristic intent.

In Thai horror films, the issue of sexuality arose since the Film Act of 1930 in that films containing elements prejudicial to public morals were strongly banned. Repressed sexuality needed an outlet, which was found in horror film. Filmmakers used tricks to represent sexuality, such as the way female ghosts were shown in very thin nightgowns that reflected their bodies or when a female animal doubled as a transformed monster, their naked body was exposed. As the film expert Manat Kingchan mentions, the sequels of movie *Phrai*, or half-human half-animal films in the 1970s and 1980s, such as *Nang Phaya Ngu Phi* (dir. Suriyon Duanthongdee & Dau Burapha, 1984), *Sane Nang Phrai* (dir. Kaithip, 1984), *Nang Suea Saming* (dir. Phayung Phayakun, 1986), *Athap Suea Saming* (dir. Nammon, 1990), are mostly combined with the pornography factor (Interview, September 2009).



Figure 2.1. *Athap Namman Phrai* (1983) / *Itruet Namman Phrai* (1984)

Sexuality has mainly been discussed in terms of feminism study. Considering a Freudian perspective, the female sexual desire has been repressed comparing to the male's, especially in Asian countries, and, in a Foucauldian view, Linda Williams asserts that the narrative focus on the woman is to investigate and explain herself because, for men, her pleasure is "alien" and unknowable, since it is not readily apparent via ejaculation (1989: 9-19). As Foucault's sexuality and power, sexuality of certain groups, particularly minor groups, has been defined, evaluated and manipulated by ideology and power. In the case of western countries, historical examples such as campaigns for anti-homosexuality in the 1950s, social problems about child pornography in the late 1970s, and instigating homophobia using AIDS after the 1980s by rightists, clearly presents how easily moral panic concerning sexuality can happen and how sexuality can be used in politics (Joo, 2004).

The idea of sex and horror combined attracts significant automatic morality. Outright sexual aggression such as rape is often represented in Thai horror film. The victim in the earlier part of the film will mostly be a woman. Women in the films are raped or gang-raped by villains, or sometimes their lovers, and then killed or commit suicide. The victims become vengeful ghosts. Women in the Thai horror films are degraded in sexually explicit material. Nudity creates women not as human characters, but merely as objects for male sexual gratification. Thus, sexually explicit material teaches men that they may use women as they will. In other words, this imagery

provides conceptual ideas that will produce behavioral effects: not treating women as people or even abusing and raping them (Staiger, 2005: 179-85).

Nudity is one of the manifestations of sexuality, although many critics and audiences claim that it is hard to see nudity in today's horror films. In *Tamnan Krasue* (aka *Demonic Beauty*, dir. Bin Bunluerit, 2002), when Dao is possessed by Arawathi, a Khmer princess's spirit, and transforms into a krasue, a flying ghost with intestines, her head is pulled out from her body and her breasts are exposed. In *Rongraem Phi*, a woman who escapes from her violent husband comes to the hotel where she takes a shower, and, of course, she is shown naked. In *Tukae Phi* (aka *Lizard Woman*, dir. Manop Udomdej, 2004), when Khwan, a female writer haunted by the spirit of Tukae after she visited Tukae's house, and transforms into a Tukae-human, her body is slightly exposed and when she is hospitalized, she has a fit, tearing off her patient suit and her breasts are released.

Dirty jokes about sex abound in Thai horror films as well, in particular, comedy-horror films. Sexuality in *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* is unhindered and quite bald, full of obscene talk, nasty sex scenes, and lewd implements. Khun is a worrier who has a mission to save the young daughter of a rich and high-ranking father. When Khun meets the young daughter in school uniform, he asks her to have sex with him instead of compensation. In a scene where Khun's master and a female doctor have sex, the humor of *The Naked Gun* (1988) is quite evident.

Female sexuality is revealed through horror film as well, with female characters in more recent horror films being more intrepid and daring. The third story of *Phi Sam Baht* (aka *Bangkok Haunted*, dir. Oxide Pang, Pisut Praesangeam, 2002), *Namman Phrai* (aka *Black Magic Woman*), is about a woman who is fascinated by the sexual desire for a man. She uses *namman phrai** to seduce men. Her loneliness

* Namman phrai is magical water or oil, which is extracted from human blood, especially a women's. In the film, this spiritual oil is used to seduce men, when men drink or are splattered with this oil, their spirits are seized by women who use it to satisfy their own desire.

becomes an appetite for men, and she picks her sex partner night after night from the night club. In *Long Khong*, the teacher, Phanor, has a sensual body and her sexual desire is no less than her appearance. Although she is a married woman, she has sexual relationships with other men, even in school. Female sexual desire for successful, good-looking men is well represented in *Suai Lak Sai* (aka *Sick Nurses* 2007). Five to six female nurses have the same goal, that is, a handsome, young doctor. Every nurse in the film has a secret love affair with this one doctor, who already has a fiancée, a male into female transgender. The sister of this transgender girl also has an affair with her future brother-in-law, and, furthermore, she gets pregnant. In the scene where this younger sister seduces the doctor, her sexual desire exceeds her moral conscience and sisterhood. This reflects a very strong and powerful female sexuality in modern society.

Women's sexuality in the narrative of Thai horror films can be found from the early 1960s. Women in horror films are relatively free to express their sexuality. In *Chao Mae Takhian Thong* (dir. Rangsi Thasanaphayak, 1966), Phikun, who kills herself because she has lost her virginity, shows her powerful sexual superiority after she becomes a ghost. When Than Chao, her master, comes to expel her malicious spirit, Phikun taunts Than Chao, grabbing his penis. In *Phut Haeng Khwamrak* (dir. Chutima Suwannarat, 1969), Sithong, phi Pob, loves Athapon who does not love her, and Sithong avenge Athapon and his family. She first possesses Athapon's 4-year-old daughter, who sits close to him, giving flirtatious smiles in his arms. She, then, possesses the body of Athapon's wife and has sex with him.

Recently, Thai horror films have included homosexuality in their narratives; for example, *Phi Khon Pen* (aka *The Victim*, dir. Monthon Arayangkoon, 2006), *Koi Thoe Gay* and *Suai Lak Sai*. According to Robin Wood (1986), homosexuality is an element of 'otherness' which can be represented as monsters. Most sexually explicit material includes some same-sex coupling (usually between two women rather than men) and multiple-partner sex (Knight and Alpert, 1967; Waugh, 1992). In *Phi Khon Pen*, homosexuality between lesbians, a middle aged single female doctor and a

famous beautiful actress, is presented. The love of the doctor for the actress ends up with the murder of the actress and this is the beginning of a tragedy. Her love for the actress is one-way and nothing more than covetous. In *Koi Thoe Gay*, homosexuality between both lesbians and male gays is presented. As mentioned above, in *Suai Lak Sai*, a man who loves a male doctor decides to become female and has a sex change operation. He transforms into a perfect beautiful woman, but the lover does not give his heart to him yet. When he is killed by the people in the hospital, this transgender becomes a monster.

2.2.4 Buddhism

No matter how rapidly society has changed, Buddhism, one of the three pillars of Thai unity, continuity, and identity,^{*} has remained a powerful mentor for Thais. The majority of Thais profess to be Buddhist, with Buddhist precepts ruling their daily life.

Many Thai horror films reflect the Buddhist value of Thais and Buddhist monks in the films often play the key role of problem-solving to repel the ghosts or bad spirits using Buddhist powers. Buddhist temples are often the safety place for the victims, although in some recent horror movies malevolent and vicious ghosts invade the temples and confront the monks.^{*} In particular, for Thai horror films based on Thai folktales or legends, the roles of monks are absolutely necessary and crucial for finishing the narratives. In *Nang Nak*, after Nak faces down the head monk several times, Nak accepts to go to the spirit world peacefully, holding back her tears and love for her beloved husband, Mak. The monk wins; Buddhism rules the people's life,

^{*} The three pillars being Nation, Religion, and the King – religion being for all practical purposes Buddhism. (Mulder, 2000) Page 92.

^{*} In *Nang Nak* (1999), Mak hides himself at the temple, but Nak the ghost chases him and breaks into the temple, and flies on the ceiling of the sanctuary hall.

even a ghost. In the end of the film, Mak, on a boat with a shaved head is leaving the mundane life to become a monk.

Meredith McGuire (2001: 255) states that religion is not only an experience of power but often also results in the sense of being empowered. She pointed out that religion has had a direct impact on legitimating gender caste stratifications, e.g. through religious laws, and an indirect impact through rituals and symbols that reinforce ideas of women's inferiority. According to her, religion legitimates what is proper for male and female moral norms regarding sexual behaviour, physical activities, domestic ways of life etc. Patriarchal relationships are exemplified in religious symbolism where male deities are of a higher rank (McGuire, *ibid*:132-6). In the Thai Buddhist context, cultural products are based on the traditional essence of Theravada Buddhism that is, according to Suntaree Komin, one of the leading social psychologists in Thailand:

... to escape from the clutches of karma and the cycle of rebirths, by separating oneself from the world of illusions, and thereby gaining wisdom and insight into the karmically conditioned world, underlying the phenomenal world; and ultimately reach nirvana (Komin 1990: 173 cited in Malikhao)'.

In fact, not only in Thai horror films but also Thai films imply the idea of Buddhist karma and rebirth.

If any scene in a film is determined by censors to be harmful to Buddhism, that film has to cut the pertinent scene or the film cannot be released to the public in Thailand. *Saeng Satawat* (aka *Syndromes and a Century* 2007) directed by Apitchapong Weerasethakul, was ordered to cut a few scenes in which a Buddhist monk plays a guitar and a Buddhist monk is seen playing with a remote-control flying saucer, with the reasoning that they ridiculed Buddhist monks. The horror genre, *Koi Thoe Yom*, caused a problem whether to be released to the public due to the fact the film contained a Buddhist monk abandons his unborn son and girlfriend. However,

the film was released without any scene being cutting and ranked 5rd in box-office receipts in 2006.

In *Koi Thoe Yom*, the head monk is a revered man in a village, he is also the best adviser for the villagers, so people in the village like to visit him and consult with him. One day a ghost boy shows up and the peaceful and calm village is disturbed and villagers tremble with fear. The ghost boy appears because he feels lonely and wants to find his parents. The head monk is appealed to by the villagers, so he tries to solve the problem. However, surprisingly, the fact that the head monk is the ghost boy's father is revealed. He consoles his son, the ghost boy, who he fathered before going in the monkhood and does not know the existence of. Soon after this film was released, it caused quite an issue because of the matter that a monk has a son whom he abandoned.

In *Phi Khon Pen*, Nan is taking care and raising the small children of her own brother who was suddenly killed and then she is also killed by the same gangsters who murdered her brother. However, she stays with the children to keep faith with her brother, without letting known her secret. But her secret, that she is really dead, is revealed not long after, when her body is found. A monk in a temple lets Nan and the children have a chance to meet for one last time, and then he commands her soul to Buddha. Nan goes to the spirit world peacefully and the problem is solved.

Ghosts or spirits of humans manifests Buddhist beliefs, such as rebirth. Instead of the belief in a God's heaven or apocalypse of western Christianity, in Buddhist belief, humans have innumerable lives, although reborn in different features and different time, sometime in the shape of an animal, insect, spirit or ghost, depending on virtue and evil doing. Even though storylines and plots are now more plausible and realistic, and narrative styles are more fashionable and sensible owing to the development of cinematic techniques, the underlying motifs of Thai horror films have not much changed. Most motifs of Thai horror films from the former times and the present stick to 'good deeds provide for a good life, bad deeds for a bad one (ทำดีได้ดี

ทำชั่วได้ชั่ว)’, in both the horror genre as well as others. This cause and effect theme is one of the important principles in the life of Thai people, which is primarily based on Buddhist beliefs. *Traibhumikatha*, written by *Phraya Lithai* of the *Sukhothai* Dynasty, presents well the cosmology of Thais: There are gods, human beings, and creatures (*pret*, เปรต) in the universe and what they are at the present is determined by what they did in previous lives. Animistic belief that there are others beings living in the world besides human, Buddhist causationism, and social context together provide the basis for Thai horror films.

2.2.5 Supernaturalism

Supernatural films are ones that have themes that include gods or goddesses, ghosts, apparitions, spirits, miracles, and other similar ideas or depictions of extraordinary phenomena. They may be combined with other genres, including comedy, science-fiction, fantasy or horror. Interestingly, however, until recently, supernatural films were usually presented in a comical, whimsical, or a romantic fashion, and were not designed to frighten the audience. There are also many hybrids that have combinations of fear, fantasy, horror, romance and comedy (Dirks, 2009: online).

Ghosts are the most important element for Thai horror films. Thus, most Thai horror films can be said to be supernatural films. Even if no ghosts appear in the film, the black magic of monstrous women, spirit doctor’s chant, and eccentric mysteries, full of gory and eerie scenes are almost essential for the Thai horror films.

In *Kon Len Khong, Boom*, a young pretty girl who has a secret affair with a middle-aged high class man who already has his own family, is dumped by him after being gang-raped and almost killed while she is having a baby, which she lost due to a car accident by her secret man’s intention. She decides to take revenge with

superstitious power. A spirit doctor takes her unborn baby and then casts a *luk krok** according to her wish for evil spells over the family. The film has notably gory and disgusting special effects. When the eldest daughter visits her younger brother in the hospital, a spell turns his room into a snake pit with hundreds of eels covering the floor, his bed, breaking out of his body, and spewing from his mouth. In *Kon Len Khong*, superstitions, animistic belief and black magic of traditional Thailand appear. The sequels of *The Art of Devil* (*Khon Len Khong*, *Long Khong 1*, *2*) represent various types of black magic and Thai traditional beliefs.

Tamnan Phi Krasue by Bin Bunluerit tells a ghastly revenge tale from the ancient past; Arawati, a Khmer princess, is forced to marry the conquering tyrant of the new Thai regime, but is in love with one of his soldiers. She is then sentenced to death after being caught in a hidden love affair with the young soldier and is burnt alive, yet not before she has magical incantations spoken over by a Khmer priestess. Although she is burned at the stake, this Khmer magic enables her soul to remain unharmed in her head and bowels, which escape as she is transformed into the Southeast Asian Horror, the *krasue* (aka P'Graseau, or Penanggalan in Chinese), a witch with a flying head. At the same time in another village, another young woman named Dao, who just happened to be her identical twin, dies by black magic because she rejected the advances of the son of the village sorcerer. Arawati's soul occupies Dao's corpse in order to stay alive on earth, and at night, her head and entrails leave

* The movie is set in the past when having faith or believing in *luk krok* was very common. Although it is rare in this day and age, it still exists in some areas of Southeast Asian. Professor Prakhong Nimmanmirm recorded in 1999 that *luk krok* is an item that is used in black magic; *luk krok* is made from a full term human baby, fully developed, but is extremely small in size (neonatal baby), which dies shortly after birth and often times, with both the mother and baby dying during the birthing process. The mother or owner will then take this *luk krok* and sprinkle it with Ka Minh power (drying agent) that is golden yellow with in color to preserve the *luk krok* as part of a drying process. The *luk krok* is then placed in a sacred location, where the owner can worship it. It is believed that *luk krok* will bring them luck and prosperity. If by chance, there is any bad omen or luck drawn near, then the *luk krok* will tell or warn the owner in advance. (Thai (Lao) Baby Ghost Spririt (Luk Krok): Online), 2009. Source <http://nyenoona.wordpress.com>

Dao's occupied body to drift in the air looking for prey. Another *krasue* story, *Krasue Valentine* (aka *Ghost Valentine*, 2006), was made by a shrewd director, Yuthlert Sippapak, who is well known as the director of *Buppha Ratri*. A beautiful nurse starts a new job in an old hospital, but she finds her unfolded past there that she is a *Phi Krasue*.

Phi Sam Baht is comprised of three horror stories in omnibus style. All three short stories (*Thon Khaen Nang Ram* aka *Legend of the Drum*, *Namman Phrai* aka *Black Magic Woman*, *Jong Wen* aka *Revenge*) are about superstition, posthumous events, and spiritual matters. In the first story, *Thon Khaen Nang Ram*, Jieb a young girl, who lives in 20th century Bangkok, receives a suspicious old drum by post, and then suddenly she is sent back through time to 1917. The second story, *Namman Phrai* is a sequel of *Namman Phrai*, which is made from extracting dead women's blood. Male victims are attracted to Paen by her black magic oil, and Paen gets men whenever she wants. However, men who have sex with Paen, are haunted by the spirits of the dead women, and Paen herself also dies because of her excessive sexual desire.

Besides Buddhism, animism, with ancestor-worship, is the primitive belief of the Thai and their neighbours as well, and this formed the first layer of Thai religion. Later came Buddhism and the Thai adopted it as their state religion. Unlike their neighbours the Burmans, the Thai inherited a fair proportion of Hinduism through the influence of the Cambodians who were in former days a highly Hinduized people. Whatever cults and beliefs are adopted by the Thai, and are readily modified to suit their temperament and surroundings. When they adopted Buddhism, they greatly modified their basic belief of animism into the fold of Buddhism. Likewise when they embraced Hinduism, they adapted it as a subordinate to the former (Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, 2009: 25-26).

In terms of narrative, storylines and plots, Thai horror films are relatively framed. Most horror films are tied up with old legendary ghost stories or folklore

handed down by tradition, for example, *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, *Phi Krasue*, *Phi Pob*, which have been revived numerous times through the screen and TV. Apparently, Thai horror film has a relationship with ghost stories that have been transmitted by general idea or the common sense of Thais. Both those who tell a ghost story and listen to a ghost story rely on certain expectation that the main character and situation should be both familiar and new to them at the same time.

According to Thanatat Kongthong, Thai horror movies have presented various types of folklore, signifying the continuation of the past and changes suitable for present lifestyles. The film productions have been made in response to the foreign film market favor. A significant amount of the folklore presented in every film conveys social meanings of the Thai society in terms of the preservation of Buddhist cosmology; the belief in karma; feminine gender and sexuality; concepts of power and the loss of power; conflicts between the worlds of science and magic; the crisis of modernity; the struggle between Thainess and Western influence; the collision between culture and the religious combination; and the criticism of public morality. Folklore in Thai horror films also has a significant role in developing the Thai film industry in three ways which are the introduction of folklore in film production; the presentation of Thai identity; and the seeking of selling points for Thai films in global market place (2008).

2.3 History of Thai Horror Film

In 1933, when Hollywood films came to Thailand in overwhelming numbers, *Frankenstein* made its successful debut as the first film of the horror genre released in Thailand. This would give Thai filmmakers ideas for ghost films in the Thai sense and many Thai filmmakers produced Thai legendary ghosts and Thai styled vampires and monsters copying from *Count Dracula* and many other Hollywood horror films (Chamroenrak Thanawangnoi, 2001).

The first Thai film to have a ghost is presumed to be the short film *Mai Chuea Nammon Mo Phi* produced by the Red-Cross Siam (Thai Red-Cross at present), for the purpose of enlightening the public to stop being a victim of witch or spirit doctors to cure their diseases but to seek medical treatment. It was released 27-30 August 1927 at Phathanakarn Theater, right after *Chok Sung Chan** ended and this is also presumed to be the first short film of Siam; however, its plot is not so interesting to seduce audiences to come to the theater, so it is recorded as an unsuccessful film (Thai Film Foundation, 2009: Online).

In the Thai horror film history, *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, produced by Hasadin Phaphayon, therefore, is officially recorded as the first Thai ghost film. It was released to the public during 9-11 April 1933, adapted from the well-known Thai gothic myth that Nak is a female ghost who died during labor along with her unborn baby, but refused to leave her beloved husband, Mak. Thai audiences flocked to the theater to see this Thai ghost, who was more popular than western monsters, such as *Count Dracula*, thus Hasadin Phaphayon moved the showing to other theaters several times to release *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*. Because this movie had a constant stream of attendance, *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* was produced by the same title in 1936 and released for four years consecutively.

The second ghost movie is Sri Krung production's *Pu Som Fao Sap* (1933), about a grandfather who refuses to leave his worldly possessions and wealth behind. It was also adapted from a Thai folk tale involving a certain location. This is regarded as the first Thai modern film in which all the actors and actresses wear western style costumes, since at that time Thailand had changed its political structure. Also, at that time, Hollywood used a double system separated into two cameras; one for filming and the other one for recording voices (synchronize motor). *Pu Som Fao Sap* is the first Thai film to use this system and a colored screen, even though the color was very simple and not that clear, and was released at Sala Charlerng Krung and Phathanakarn

* The first Thai film which was produced by Thai director and staffs, released in 1927.

theaters. For better or worse, *Pu Som Fao Sap* and *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* had broken new ground, establishing the horror genre in Thai films.

Since those two groundbreaking horror films were released to the public in 1933, until 1950 there were not many horror films made except two or three *Mae Nak* stories and *Phrai Takhian* (1940), inspired by an old Thai folk tale related to the spirit of a Takhian tree. However, according to film expert Manat Kingchan, there were many attempts to produce horror films, though most of them were copycats of *Mae Nak* stories and the quality of the filming was very low. However, with the lack of awareness of recording, many precious data has vanished and film scholars in Thailand have to rely on someone's memories from the films they saw in their childhood (Interview, September 2009).

World War II was a difficult time for Thai film production because of the shortage of films. Instead, hundreds of Hollywood films came to Thai film market and the number of Thai cinemas increased dramatically. However, after the war ended, Thai domestic film came back to life; in the years after 1950 more than 50 films were produced every year. Along with the restoration of Thai film production, the numbers of horror genre film also gradually increased.

Even though the first Thai television station opened in 1955, the film industry still maintained its popularity with various genre and stories. In 1950 the number of films produced increased suddenly by 47 films. Since then, more and more films were produced every year. During this period, few Thai horror films were produced, but for the few that were, the main motif still stuck to ghost stories of Thai folktales, such as *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* and *Takhian*. In 1958, the most famous *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, starring Preeya Rungrueng, appeared. Besides *Mae Nak* stories, a western styled monster appeared in the Thai film *Sak Phi Dib* (dir. Sot Sriburapharom, 1952), a vampiric ghost who threatened people, assumed to have been influenced from Dracula.

In the 1960s, monsters in horror film became more varied. Human bodies combined with animals appeared in this period. The animals in the films were bound

by the species in folklore or legend. Awe-inspiring, but very common kinds of animals in Thailand were created with gory features to threaten human society. *Nang Maeo Phi* (dir. Rat Setphakdee, 1960) is a story about a woman possessed by a cat spirit. A cat, in particular a black cat, has been believed in as a spiritual and intelligent animal by Thais and it is traditionally said that when a black cat jumps across a coffin, the spirits of the dead in the coffin comes back to life. This cat's tale is widely known in Asian countries, such as in China where Chinese believes that a cat has nine lives or a Japanese vampiric cat which possesses someone's body. *Ngu Phi* (dir. Rat Setphakdee, 1966) is another film in which a bestial human appears, that is a snake ghost that possesses a woman and threatens village people. A snake, especially a great cobra is believed in as a deity of water in Buddhism and Hinduism, also called a naga (or nak). The deity of Naga is a guardian of the Buddha, however there is no trace of how and since when a snake has been combined with a woman. In terms of naga, Nak of Mae Nak also has the meaning of a snake. *Tukae Phi* (dir. Pradit Kalapcharuek, 1969) is a story about the spirit of a gecko, originally created as a novel. *Ai Khangkhau* (1960) is a half-human half-bat, *Plalai Thong* (dir. Rat Setphakdee, 1969) is a spirit of an eel.

After *Sak Phi Dip*, monsters imported from other countries appeared in Thai horror films, such as *Fu Manchu* (1960) and *Decha Phi Dib* (dir. Sombat Methanee, 1968). *Fu Manchu*,* as is evident from the title, is a story about a Chinese monster, which seems to be a copy of the western idea, and in *Decha Phi Dib*, a vampiric ghost appears. Humans possessed by evil spirits, not a fearful ghost itself, began to appear in Thai horror film, such as *Manut Phi Sing* (1960). Not only a human, but also

* Dr. Fu Manchu is a fictional character first featured in a series of novels by English author Sax Rohmer during the first half of the 20th century. The character was also featured extensively in cinema, television, radio, comic strips and comic books for over 90 years, and has become an archetype of the evil criminal genius while inspiring the Fu Manchu moustache. The character of Fu Manchu became a stereotype often associated with a Yellow Peril. Scholars contend that the character is built upon a well-known structure of racist and imperialist assumptions about Manchurian Chinese.

inanimate objects possessed by evil spirits becoming menacing beings also started to be seen. *Tukata Phi* (dir. Rangsi Thasanaphayak, 1960) is a possessed doll ghost and *Rakhang Phi* (dir. Pradit Kalayacharuek, 1968) is a spirit in a bell. Deities in Thai myth became ghosts in the film, such as *Kinari* (1969)* and *Nang Kwak* (dir. Phandam, 1969)*. Although the motif of horror film was more diverse than in previous periods, narratives of the horror films were still in the boundary of Thai folktales. For instance, *Phi Thong Klom* (1968) is similar to the ghost Mae Nak, in that a woman dies during delivery with her baby and becomes a ghost.



Figure 2.2. *Rakhang Phi* (1968) / *Rakhang Phi* (1985)

During the 1970s, Thai horror novels were also popularized and many horror novels were adapted to be films. All time artist Hem Wechakorn reclaimed horror novels, along with the technology of printing, which were disseminated to the public in the late 1930s; many horror writers such as Narong Chanreuang and A. Atthajinda developed horror literature in Thailand. These horror novels were featured in horror film so, consequently, Thai horror films significantly developed in terms of narratives, even though the ghosts that appeared in the films looked like clumsily worked

* Thep Kinari (เทพกนิรี) is one of the loveliest of the Himmaphan beings. Described as a beautiful half-woman, half swan, with the head and torso of a woman yet below the delicately tapered waist she has the body, tail and legs of a swan. Kinari also has human arms and the wings of a swan. Source www.himmaphan.com

* Nang Kwak (นางกวัก) is a spirit or household divinity of Thai folklore. She brings prosperity.

wooden dolls. Beside legendary Thai ghost stories, horror fictions emerged through the screen. Such as *Kaeo Khon Lek* (dir. Jittin, 1971) by Tri Aphirum and *Rongraem Phi* (dir. Seanyakorn & Somwong Thimbuntham, 1975) by A. Atthajinda and many horror fictional films were released and succeeded commercially.



ฉายครั้งแรก 29 ธันวาคม 2514 ที่ เอ็มโพรี



Figure 2.3. *Kaeo Khon Lek* (1971) / *Rongraem Phi* (1975)

However, while the numbers of film increased, the restraints on film making were stronger. After the 1930 Film Act was enforced, films containing sex, violence, and morally hazardous scenes were strongly banned. Thus, filmmakers intentionally turned their interests to teenage film and, once they had succeeded, many epigonic films followed. For a while, there was only teenage film. Thus, adults needed to find something else to relieve their repressions and at the same time filmmakers needed to make money. The horror genre proved to be a good solution to both demands; that is to give satisfaction to audiences, especially male adults by starring sexy actresses. Chalida said that Thai horror films could be an exit for Thai people from the restraint of society especially sexuality (Interview, April 2007).

Notwithstanding this restraint, the number of films increased; 117 films were released in 1976 and 161 films were released in 1978. Audiences were mostly teenagers, therefore, the horror genre tended to be combined with comedy. At the same time, many horror films were made for audiences in the countryside. There are two main reasons why film productions looked for audience in the country: first, such

films needed only a small investment to produce given their low quality; second, people in rural areas still believed in the existence of ghosts, while urban residents were more educated so they tended to believe less in ghosts.

Horror movies adapted from horror novels such as *Kaeo Khon Lek* (1971), *Chum Thang Phi* (dir. Prawit Leelawai, 1975), *Rongraem Phi* (1975) were produced many times. *Mae Nak* ghost stories were made six times in different versions. Since 1975, Thailand's scariest ghost *Mae Nak*, appeared not just in fearful feature, but in funny style, and sometimes *Mae Nak* is not limited only to being Thai, but foreigners also turned to the *Mae Nak* ghost, such as *Mae Nak America* (1975). *Mae Nak* also broke outside of Thailand, such as *Mae Nak Buk Tokyo* (dir. Thanachai Chinothai, 1976). *Mae Nak* typed ghosts, female ghosts who died during giving birth, also were produced such as *Khan Phi* (dir. Rom Bunnak, 1975).



Figure 2.4. *Mae Nak America* (1975) / *Mae Nak Buk Tokyo* (1976)

Bestial human were also getting more varied, for example, *Khangkhao Phi* (dir. Kriangsak Ruekchana, 1971), the spirit of a bat, *Sao Mapa* (1976), a female werewolf, seemingly influenced from werewolf story in Europe or Hollywood movie, *Mia Sua* (1976), the spirit of a tiger. The spirit of a cat was still used, such as *Phet Ta Maeo* (dir. Pradit Kalapcharuek, 1972).



Figure 2.5. *Phet Ta Maeo* (1972) / *Manut Mapa* (1987)

In 1977, the Thai government imposed a heavy tax on imported films and this led to the mass production of Thai film, which seemed to be another ‘golden age’ for the Thai film industry, but most films produced were low-grade and low-budget. The Sarit-Thanom ‘dictatorship’ era between 1957 and 1973, was a period when the film business thrived, including the cinema business, the foreign film trade and the production of Thai films, because films were still the favorite entertainment of the masses and they were cheap. This led to a greater demand for local film production in order to fill the 700 theaters all over the country. The number of films increased from an average of 80-100 films per year in the early 1970s, to 120-160 films. While, in the publishing industry, horror stories were almost vanished because the government strictly controlled publishing and distribution during Thammasat student uprising (‘Spirits: Creativities from Beyond’ Exhibition at TCDC, 2010).

With respect to narrative, after 1977, horror films transformed their figures to be much friendlier, combining them with comic characters as their main target audiences was teenagers. Another group of audience for the horror film were people in the rural areas, which where was relatively underdeveloped compared to Bangkok and where traditional culture and cultural belief was maintained better than in the city. Except for seeing movies at open-air theaters (*nang klang praeng*, หนังกลางแปลง), there was not much leisure activity in rural areas. As well, going to the theater had meaning more than just seeing a movie. The theater was a place of entertainment, a meeting point of villagers, even a dating place among boys and girls in the village. In

Variety Phi Chalui (aka *Ghost Variety*, 2005), a man and his son are sitting at an open-air theater and watching a ghost movie, while a large audience gather together sitting on the yard, laughing when a ghost in the film teases villagers.

Ghosts were no longer fearful objects, but were even called a friend, for example, *Phi Puean Rak* (dir. Neramitr, 1978). The western monster, Dracula, as well, is represented with a funny, stupid look, starring a familiar face, such as Thai comedian actor Lor Tok in *Dracula Tok* (1978). It is not that horror film had not been combined with comic elements before, however, from then on, comedy-horror films provided an assortment of sub-genre of horror.



Figure 2.6. *Phi Phuean Rak* (1978) / *Dracula Tok* (1978)

During the 1970s and 1980s, the narratives of horror film did not change very much. Films about old ghost fairy tales were produced, for instance, *Waew Siang Namman Phrai* (dir. Rangsi Thasanaphayak, 1982), *Krasue* (dir. Komintr, 1982), *Athap Namman Phrai* (dir. Komen Sakseni, 1983), *Nang Nak Phitsadan* (dir. Lek Duangthongdee, 1985), *Phrai Takhian* (dir. Suriyon Duangthongdee, 1987), *Mae Nak 30* (dir. Suriyon Duangthongdee, 1987), *Mae Nak Allawat* (1989). Only the titles were changed, but sequels of the original films that were a commercial success were produced consecutively, for instance, *Athap Namman Phrai* (1983), *Aphinihan Namman Phrai* (1984), *Itroet Namman Phrai* (dir. Komen Sakseni, 1984), *Mae Mo Namman Phrai* (dir. Komen Sakseni, 1985). Half-human half-beast stories became

more varied, because of the influence of other countries, for example, *Nang Phaya Ngu Phi* (1984) and *Manut Mapa* (1987).

In the early 1980s, the number of films produced dropped noticeably to 100 films a year. This is because Hollywood distributors began to flood Thai theaters with American movies after a short boycott. With increasing competition from Hollywood movies, Thai films had very few places to fit in the theaters. Moreover, the increasing quality of the four television stations, together with an additional station, the Public Television run by the Public Relations Department, as well as the home video market, distracted Thai moviegoers to a significant degree. Therefore, the Thai film industry changed its strategy to start a new non-horror sub-genre, 'teenage comedy', to solve this problem. Films made during this period focused mainly on teenage lives in senior high school. However, the films made had formulaic plots and uninspired content, with the primary aim to boost singer-actor stars. Amidst the growth of foreign movies, it was believed that the "Thai movie was dead". The mainstream Thai films turned to serve entertainment purposes and, consequently, enjoyed large audiences, featuring a copycat of the teenagers' lifestyle as their main subject matter.

By 1981, Hollywood studios sent films to Thailand again after a three year boycott owing to the Thai government imposing a tax. However, this did not much impact the Thai film market, because as many Thai films as before were produced, in average over a hundred films per year during the 1980s. But this mass film production resulted in the quality of film being lower, with low budgets, and audiences were divided into two groups, such as the rural and the city. Horror films were made focusing on audiences in rural areas, while city people enjoyed Hollywood films.

In the 1980s, directors who were educated in film from US made their debut and socially conscious films were produced by these directors, such as Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol. Some horror films began to imply socially conscious matters, getting out of the obsolete typical type of story and clichéd narrative. For example, in *Pisat Mia Noi* (dir. J. Suwanruet & Saen Surasak, 1981), a female monster, similar to many other horror movies in Thailand, appeared in the film. However, the woman

who died and became a ghost is a second wife or a minor wife (*mia noi*) who generally represents the dissolute, insatiable libido, in contrast to the first wife (*mia ruang*, เมียหลวง) who stands for the chaste, pure, devoted woman, representing women's status in the patriarchal society. In fact, a minor wife in the narrative of Thai horror film in previous periods appeared incessantly. Even if featured as normal pretty women, they represented another type of evil as monstrous women, as well. They continuously slander the first wives or daughters of the first wives; they are greedy for money and status; and they even have a big appetite for sex, for example, *Chao Mae Takhian Thong* (dir. Rangsi Thasanaphayak, 1966).



Figure 2.7. *Pisat Mia Noi* (1981) / *Chao Mae Takhian Thong* (1966)

From the beginning of the 1990s, the production of Thai film decreased in numbers appreciably, 113 films were produced in 1990, but two years later production was cut down almost in half from the previous year, and only 10 films were released in 1999. There are three reasons for Thai film's decline: first, television was popularized so people could enjoy entertainment at home; second, as various and high-technology Hollywood films inundated Thailand, Thai audiences had multiple choices to see what they wanted; third, Thai audiences were tired of low-grade, Thai films with low-budgets.

Horror film production also reduced sharply after 1991, only eight films were produced in 1992, four films were produced in 1995, and finally in 1996 there were

zero horror films produced. However, in comparison with the total numbers in previous periods, the status quo of horror film was maintained.

Table 2.1. Genre of the film release in 1990–1996

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Human drama	18	21	17	21	15	14	13
Comedy	17	12	26	20	9	15	13
Action	35	28	16	15	16	8	5
Horror	25	35	8	8	13	4	-
Pornography	18	11	24	-	-	1	1
Total	113	107	91	64	53	42	32

(Source: Suthakorn Santithawat)

The very famous *Ban Phi Pob*, which was remade 13 times between 1989 and 1995, first appeared in this period, and *phi Pob* often appeared with other ghosts, for instance, *Krasue Kat Pob* (dir. Phlawut, 1990), *Dracula Choe Pob* (1991), *Mae Nak Choe Phi Pob* (dir. Jarin Phrahomrangsi, 1992). *Ban Phi Pob* (1989), based on the horror novel of Hem Wechakorn, was produced as a B-grade film, its main audience was people in rural areas. This film earned money from the other provinces, but it was not that successful in Bangkok. Through the 13 remakes of the *phi Pop* story, actors and actresses have not changed much and sometimes even starred comedians such as Ekaphan Banleurit, Trirak Kandee and Sumo Kik. Due to this film's great commercial success, many copycat films, or films that had *phi Pob* as a subject, were produced in the early 1990s. Most sequels of *phi Pob* were combined with comedy, with famous comedians taking roles in every *phi Pob* movies, such as *Pob Phi Hian* (dir. Atchaklap, 1990), *Pluk Phi Ma Chi Pob* (dir. Jarin Phrahomrangsi, 1992).

From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Thai horror films tended to be combined with comedy. Almost every horror film in this period was mixed with comedy, as it seemed that spooky fearful horror films were not in the interest of the main stream. These comedy horror films were sometimes merged with teenager films, for example, *Ai Khun Phi* (1991), *Sayong Kois* (1992), *Ho Hue Hue* (dir. Khomsan Triphong, 1992). In terms of storyline, some films reflected teenager's daily life in those days and often dealt with teenager's problems and family problems, for example, *Pi Nueng Phuean Kan Lae Wan Asachan Khong Phom* (dir. Somjing Srisuphap, 1993).



Figure 2.8. *Ai Khun Phi* (1991) / *Sayong Kois* (1992) / *Sayong Kuens* (1993)

During the 1990s, Thai horror film changed in narrative and filming technique; in particular, the films produced since 1993 were challenged by the emergence of modern movie houses equipped with multiplex screening systems pioneered by EGV in 1994. These modern movie theaters led to a dramatic change in film style and narrative, as well as cinematic technique. This cinematic technology led monsters or ghosts in the development of horror films; special effects made ghosts in the film more plausible and realistic; they were flying, climbing the wall, appearing and disappearing freely. Sound effects supplied piercing shriek and dreadful music made audiences in the theater startle and feel more fearful.

However, Thailand experienced an economic crisis in 1997. This economic crisis brought hardship to the Thai film industry and made the situation worse. Large and small investors of Thai films gave up the film business; it was obvious that the Thai film industry was diminished and depressed. However, soon after the economic crisis in 1997, Nonzee Nimibutr's *2499 Anthaphan Khrong Muang* (aka *Daeng Bailey and His Gangsters*) and *Fun Bar Karaoke* by Pen-ek Ratanaruang were released to commercial and critical success. These two films sparked Thai filmmakers again and shed light on the Thai film industry. In 1999, Nonzee's *Nang Nak*, opened a new era of Thai film, including Thai horror film, by earning 150 million baht at the box office, breaking the record for box office receipts in Thai film history. As a result of this film's huge success, the Thai film industry revived from the economic crisis of 1997 and, Thai film had 'second golden age'.

From 1997 to 2001, approximately 10 films were produced per year. However, the number of Thai film increased from 2003 until 2008, averagely more than 45 films produced every year.

2.4 Thai horror film in 1999-2008

In the period 1999-2008, Thai horror film significantly changed in narrative and cinematic technique. There were dramatic ups and downs in both the Thai political and the economic situation. After the 1997 economic crisis, while the early 2000s economic situation bounced back fast, the Thai film industry also turned around to experience a new era of Thai film history. In every each year since 2003, an average of 45-50 films were released. While Thai films, such as *Suriyothai* (2003), *Ong-Bak* (2003), *Faen Chan* (2003) were big successes at the box-office domestically, Thai films also became well-received internationally. In particular, *Sut Saneha* (aka *Blissfully Yours*) of Apitchatpong Weerasethakul received an awarded from the Cannes Film Festival in 2002, and *Ong-Bak* was released in many countries, such as

Japan, US, France, bringing popularity to Muay-Thai boxing all over the world. Together with globalization, there has been the trans-culture phenomenon and thus the Thai film industry has been significantly influenced by other countries, as well as Thai film has had influence outward.

In 2002, Thai, Hong Kong and Korea collaborated to produce a horror film, *Arom Athap Akhat* (aka *Three Extremes*, dir. Kim Ji-woon, Peter Chan, Nonzee Nimibutr, 2002), which affected the horror films in all three countries. This Pan-Asian collaboration in film business was aimed mainly at commercial effects, and moreover promoted the trans-culture phenomenon and cultural interchange among Asian countries. The fact that Asian countries that shared the IMF trauma, picked the horror genre as a means of cooperation had significance, and its resonance and impact on Asian film industry roused the revival of horror film in each Asian country.

Since the early 2000s, Thai horror film has significantly changed into a more serious horror genre from comedy-horror. Many critics agree that this is because Thai horror film has been influenced from other countries, especially Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. Thai horror films have changed to be more fearful, gory, and gruesome than before, while comedy-horror film remains firmly entrenched and still amuses audiences. However, horrific horror film has consolidated its position at the same time in Thai film market.

The period from 1999 to 2008 is classified as a new period in horror film. Of course, Thai folktales and old ghost stories have continued to take a great part of the horror films. However, with respect to narratives, many new approaches for horror have been made. Mae Nak was revived again in 2004 (*Nak Rak Thae Winyan Khwamtai* aka *Ghost of Mae Nak*) after Nonzee's *Nang Nak* in 1999, with a story totally different from other sequels of *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*. Two *krasue* stories were released in 2002 (*Tamnan Krasue*) and in 2006 (*Krasue Valentine*), both having different plots. Due to the fact that there is no specific pattern of *krasue* story, except the feature of the *krasue* ghost being the flying head of a female with intestines trailing behind, *krasue* brings a greater variety of narratives, but *krasue* ghost film

have proven less popular than *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* on that account. In 2008, Mae Nak appeared one more time, along with almost every Thai traditional ghost, through animation (*Nak the animation*). Nak, in the animation film, is no longer a fearful ghost, but a lovable and cute little girl, she is even a patriotic ghost for Thailand, fighting with alien monsters, such as the ghost that crawls out of the TV screen, a reminder of Sadako of *Ring*, 1999. The very famous Phi Pob also visited audiences in 2008 (*Ban Phi Pob 2008*) to remind old memories of decade ago with the same plot of old versions. *Rongraem Phi* (2002), *Takhian* (dir. Chalerm Wongpim, 2003), *Tukae Phi* were remade, however, the storylines of these films are more solid, with the features of ghosts in the films more realistic owing to cinematic technology being far more developed.

Table 2.2. Thai horror film box-office index 2004

Rank	Title	Total Gross (USD)
1	Shutter Kot Tit Winyan	2,584,600
2	Khon Hen Phi 2	521,900
3	Phi Chong Air	497,200
4	Khon Len Khong	454,500
5	Athap Kae Bon Phi	308,900
6	Six Hok Tai Tha Tai	278,800
7	Tukae Phi	246,900
8	Khon Phi Pisat	204,000
9	Khun Krabi Phi Rabat	121,100

Table 2.3. Thai horror film box-office index 2005

Rank	Title	Total Gross (USD)
1	Buppha Ratri 2	1,708,500
2	Chomkhamangwet	879,300
3	Variety Phi Chalui	834,200
4	The Eye Infinity	730,800
5	Long Khong	730,200
6	Narok	512,900
7	Rab Nong Sayongkhwan	485,200
8	Nak Rak Thae Winyan Khwamtai	116,800
9	Khon Ratuek Chat	77,700

Table 2.4. Thai horror film box-office index 2006

Rank	Title	Total Gross (USD)
1	Koi Thoe Yom	1,609,247
2	Dek Ho	1,186,500
3	La-Tha-Phi	929,728
4	Phi Khon Pen	908,435
5	Sop aka Acharn Yai	603,082
6	Pen Chu Kab Phi	527,537
7	Krasue Valentine	347,800
8	Colic: Dek Hen Phi	277,435
9	Game Sayong 13	121,100
10	The Letters Song Khon Tai	164,166
11	Phi Yak Klab Ma Koet	120,000
12	Lang-Lok-Lon	104,423

Table 2.5. Thai horror film box-office index 2007

Rank	Title	Total Gross (USD)
1	Faet	2,040,003
2	Ban Phi Sing	1,346,634
3	Body # 19	928,176
4	Phi Mai Chim Fan	629,759
5	Koi Thoe Gay	620,876
6	Poeng Mang Klong Phi Nang Manut	426,623
7	Sui Lak Sai	384,135
8	Phi Chang Nang Athap NamkhamKamchanot	373,713
9	Phi Liang Luk Khon	354,786
10	Winyan Lok Khontai	244,512
11	Chumthang Rotfai Phi	180,797
12	Wong Pisat	

Table 2.6. Thai horror film box-office index 2008

Rank	Title	Total Gross (USD)
1	Si Phraeng	2,435,026
2	Long Khong 2	1,483,738
3	Program Na Winyan Akhat	1,394,256
4	Long To Tai	890,499
5	Phi Tawan kab Achan Tabo	545,216
6	Ban Phi Poeb	408,288
7	Thot Rahat Winyan	319,301
8	Ban Phi Pob 2008	290,463
9	Patihan Rak Tang Phan	237,402
10	Saphai Brue... aw aw	139,062

The characteristics of Thai horror films in this period can be divided into four types: first, hybrid horror film, meaning horror mixed with comedy or romance or action, e.g. *Buppha Ratri*, *Variety Phi Chalui*, *Koi Thoe Yom*, *Phi Mai Chim Fan*, *Ban Phi Pob 2008*; second, horror film adapted from old ghost stories or folktales, e.g. *Tamnan Krasue*, *Takhian*, *Tukae Phi*, *Nak Rak Thae Winyan Khwamtai*; third, slasher film, which typically involves a psychopathic killer, set away from mainstream civilization or far from help and often involving sex, e.g. *Khon Len Khong*, *Long Khong*, *Athap Kae Bon Phi* (aka *The Commitment*, dir. Montri Kong-Im, 2004); fourth, psychological horror film, which relies on fears, guilt, beliefs, and the emotional instability of the characters to build tension and further the plot. In psychological horror films, the object of horror does not look like a monster, but rather a normal human being, whose horrific identity is often not revealed until the end of the story, e.g. *Dek Ho* (aka *Dorm*, dir. Songyos Sugmakanan, 2006), *Faet* (aka *Alone*, dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Wongpoom), *The Body #19* (dir. Paweem Purikitpanya, 2007).

Today, the sources and stories of Thai horror films have been welcomed by Hollywood and other countries. For example, *Khon Hen Phi* (aka *The Eye*, dir. Oxide and Danny Pang, 2002), directed by Oxide Pang and Danny Pang, was remade to *The Eye* (2008) by David Moreau and Xavier Palud, starring Jessica Alba, and *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* by Banjong Pisanthanakun and Pakpoom Wongpoom was remade to *Shutter* (2008) by Masayuki Ochiai.

2.5 Summary

The most distinctive aspect of Thai horror film can be said to be its hybrid nature. With political and cultural reasons, Thai horror film combines elements of other genres, and this hybridity has become an important characteristic of Thai horror film. The prominent characteristics found in this study are; the comic, melodramatic, sexuality, Buddhism, and supernaturalism.

Comedy-horror film is probably one of the most popular genres among Thai movie-goers throughout the Thai film history. However, since the early 2000s Thai horror film has become more serious and fearful than in the earlier period. Today, characters and motifs are more varied, together with the development of cinematic technology and narrative styles.



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Chapter III

Images and Meanings of the Monster in Thai Horror Film

“We live in a time of monsters. Monsters provide a key to understand the culture that spawned them.” (Cohen, 1996)

The monster is an important part of the iconography of horror films, with horror films having offered numerous features and types of the monstrous. Film critics and scholars have analyzed and examined the monsters in horror films using psychological, historical, and cultural methods, as well as many other approaches. The widely known work about monsters of Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), states that the characteristics of monsters is a compound of ‘threat’ and ‘impurity’. The monster may be psychologically, morally, or socially threatening; impurity involves a conflict between two or more standing cultural categories. Thus, it should come as no surprise that many of the most basic structures for representing horrific creatures are combinatory in nature.

The author of *Monster Theory*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996), asserts that the ultimate definition of a monster is something or someone who has a psychological effect on a person that invokes fear. The method by which a monster does this is subjective, but there are a few basic principles monsters tend to follow. First, monsters have various physical aspects that make them monstrous. Monsters tend to be deformed in some manner or have a kind of half-human aspect to their physical appearance. This ranges from monsters such as circus freaks with body deformities, to monsters like Dracula that are not normal humans, but have a basic human form. They are often large and have the capability of causing harm to humans, whether physically, emotionally, or psychologically. Monsters cannot be put into set classifications of animals or humans, but cross those lines of categorization. Monsters, such as satyrs, cannot be defined as human or goat and are, therefore deemed monstrous. Monsters, characteristically, are messengers of evil. Monsters cause harm to humans or animals

and often perform the work of Satan or a devil. They cause suffering, death and destruction and their actions lead to complications in our otherwise simple lives. They do not bring about a common good, but fight against peace and the lawful order of society. We fear them because they show us that we have reason to fear them. We can see the evil they cause and the pain they inflict; monsters threaten what is normal. They force us to go beyond what is comfortable and routine and examine the inner depths of our minds. They force us to evaluate why we fear them and their actions, and, in doing so, we have to understand parts of our mind and personality, parts that often we would prefer to hide from the world. Monsters often embody what we hate most in ourselves. Monsters stem from the inner workings of our mind and can often be used as displacement or as a symbol of some childhood regression. They become scary because we know that if we have to face that monster, we have to face what is scary and real to us.

Monsters that appear in horror films have their obvious and rigid characteristics, mostly relevant to evil. However, outward features of monsters are relatively varied, and, hypothetically, are differentiated by each culture; here 'monster', there 'normal' (Prescott, 1996). For example, on 22 June 2009, the story of a little girl in India was aired on the National Geography Channel. The story was about a four-year-old young girl who had surgery to remove six of her arms and the operation was successful. Now she is a normal child, but when she was born she has eight arms on her body. While this generally sounds monstrous, for her parents and for some Indian people she was a reincarnation of Lakshmi, a Hindu Goodness and consort of Vishnu. This little Lakshmi was worshipped by thousands of Indian people rather than suffering disdain or fright.¹

Monstrosity is bound to social norms, mores and culture, and at the same time collective fear is originated with incidents and traditions which people in the same society or terrain share. Therefore, objects of fear reflected in horror films are spatial

¹ See figure 3-1 p. 71


and temporal memories of a group of people, rather than an individual. Each culture has created the configuration of the monster. When collective fears cross the cultural boundary, temporal or spatial gaps produce unpredicted results; thus horror characters have developed and adjusted themselves in order to maintain their horrific features. At present, the phenomenon of globalization has surged. In Asia, Pan-Asian thought has been dominated by pop-culture, such that in the horror film genre, the black, long-haired female ghost (Northeast Asian typical type of ghost, e.g. Sadako of *Ringu*^{*}) is enough to evoke fear for any Asian.

Figure 3.1. Girl born with eight limbs in India

Girl Born With Eight Limbs Thrives in India
 Doctor: 'It Has to Be Some Kind of Divine Intervention'

By BOB BROWN
June 13, 2008

In a remote village in the Bihar region of northeast India, in October 2005, a woman named Poonam Tatma gave birth to an extraordinary child -- a girl with four arms and four legs who was destined to become famous worldwide.



The newborn was the image of a multi-limbed Hindu goddess named Lakshmi, who is worshiped as a deity of wealth and good fortune. And so the child was also named Lakshmi. "After she was born, for a whole month crowds of people came to see her," Tatma said. "It was said that Lakshmi had been born here."

Lakshmi with her mother Poonam.

The concept of rebirth in Buddhist belief, combined with Thai animistic folk religion's belief that all creation in the universe have spirits, has produced various creatures and ghosts. These creatures and ghosts can be divided into 'good' and 'evil',

* Ring (Japanese:Ringu) is a 1998 Japanese horror mystery film by Hideo Nakata, adapted from the novel of the same name by Koji Suzuki, which draws from the Japanese folk tale Banchō Sarayashiki. The film stars Nanako Matsushima, Hiroyuki Sanada, and Rikiya Otaka as members of a divorced family, each cursed by a videotape. The film was later remade in the United States as *The Ring* (2002).

and both have often appeared in Thai folk tales and films. For example, Khun Chang Khun Phaen is assumed to be the first classic literature in which ghosts appear in the story (S. Plynoi, 2002: 9), such as Phrai, Kuman Thong, and the ghost of Wanthong. Monsters in Thai horror films are mostly evil ghosts, whatever they were when in their human life. Ghosts that appear in the films are mostly victims who were murdered or died unexpectedly, and then become vengeful and ruthless ghosts after dead. Klausner (1993) explains some prominent ghosts feature in Thai culture;

The most feared ghosts 'arise' from the corpses of those who have died violent deaths. In former times, falling from a tree, being eaten by a tiger, dying in pregnancy, being strangled or stabbed to death; all would have qualified. Today, being run over by a hit-and run driver or murdered by a 'hired gun', two of the more prevalent forms of violent death, would make one prone to the fate of roaming the earth in the frightening shape of these malevolent predators. Those who die violent deaths traditionally have been buried rather than cremated, and sacred chants and incantations used to forestall the ghosts of these dead arising to plague the living (Klausner, 1993: 358).

The gender of ghosts in Thai horror films is mainly female. It is female ghosts that primarily threaten people and relentlessly seek revenge in the horror films. Of course, women are naturally physically less superior to men, thus they can easily be a victim for bad men. However, if one considers that horror film has been treated as B-grade or low quality, this matter seems to be more complicated. Because horror film has low quality, it can include to female monsters, or, perhaps, because the female monster is considered low grade, maybe that is why she is qualified to be a protagonist in the horror film (Baek, 2008: 19). Therefore, the fact that women have been typified as evil in Thai horror films is provocatively research-worthy, and different from feminism studies with regard to western film. Feminism theory in Hollywood horror films is mainly associated with female victims, since the monsters

in the films, largely slasher films, are psychopathic males. In Thai horror films, on the other hand, women are the monsters inflicting murder or mayhem. Interestingly, the one who is the decisive factor causing the female ghost to become a monster, is mainly a male wrongdoer; however, her revenge is not limited to the wrongdoer, but the fury of the female monster leads to the killing of every member of the family (*Khon Len Khong*), a group of his friends (*Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*), or his neighbors (*Nang Nak*). This gives the reason why the female monster must be eliminated in the end; because they cross over the line of morality and the sympathy of audience, becoming a 'threat' to society and mores.

Edward Ingelbreten states that every monster is, essentially, a political entity; that our production of monsters is part of our broader political understanding of the world and part of our notions of good and evil. Some initial evidence for this claim can be found in the observation that horror film tends to become more popular during times of social upheaval (1998: 24-34). Paul Wells (2000), for instance, asserts that the history of the horror film is essentially a history of anxiety in the twentieth century. When the culture is in turmoil, for some reason audiences flock to horror films. Monsters particularize individual and social fears. Horror monsters have also been interpreted as expressions of, or as metaphors for, socially specific fears and anxieties. From this perspective, monsters help audiences (and perhaps film-makers as well) to engage with and come to terms with those fears.

In addition, Robin Wood offers a more politicized engagement with the horror monster, one that seeks to combine the Freudian psychoanalytical concept 'return of the repression' with Marxist ideas about social oppression. For Wood, the monsters in horror film are expressions of social and psychological repression that can reveal truths about the political and social structures within which we all live (Wood, 1986). He also suggests that in his own culture, the concepts of 'Otherness' are immanent and admits the sense of distances if it states the theme of horror film itself; however, many critics and scholars agree that it is still probably the best method to explain the

horror genre. In his research, he mentions eight concepts of ‘Otherness’ in his culture: other people, woman, the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic groups within the culture, alternative ideologies or political systems, deviations from ideological sexual norms, and children.

Exploiting Wood’s ‘Otherness’, many film scholars have developed a monster theory; for example, Ruth Waterhouse (1996: 26-39) stresses that it is the fact of monsters as Other, as contrasted with the subjectivity of Self, that classes them as alien in some way, though they do not include an aspect relevant to most “monsters”; it is the emotive impact that they make as Other, usually terror or dread, while an aura of mystery also surrounds them. The response to a monster may be influenced by any or all of the aspects of the semantic field, and may be modified within the discourse, as when by the end of *Frankenstein* the monster excites pity as well as revulsion; but the terrifying impact that a monster has on both the protagonists within the text and the audience/reader is an important part of the overall signification of the term.

Although the ‘Otherness’ theory of Wood has been derived from Hollywood 1970s horror films, it is true that his ‘otherness’ has significantly influenced many film scholars and it is one of the most practical methods in analyzing horror films. In this chapter, therefore, I will use the ‘Otherness’ of Wood to examine how monsters are created in Thai horror films, adding and subtracting from his list in accordance with the particular characteristics of Thai horror films. But first, a classification of monsters will be made by various angles, such as outwards and inwards of monsters.

3.1 Images of the monsters

“We humans aren’t the only beings roaming this world, but the spirits are also living among us” - Pen-ek Ratanaruang (Kong Rithdee, 2009:14)

3.1.1 Ghost

The ghost is the primary horror object in Thai horror films. Most monsters in Thai horror films are ghosts, apparitions of dead people, and, as noted above, mainly female. Ghosts in the Thai horror films have a vast range of meaning. The Thai word ‘phi (ผี)’ is generally translated as ‘ghost’, and ‘*nang phi* (หนังผี, ghost film)’ is a widespread term used instead of horror film (หนังสยองขวัญ, *nang sayong khwan*). Etymologically, some conceive that ‘phi’ comes from the word ‘*phit* (มืด)’ which means ‘shadow’, while others assert that ‘*phi*’ transfers from ‘*phie* (ผี)’ which indicates a dead person. According to Phraya Anumanrachathorn, a Thai authoritative philosopher and scholar, ‘*phi*’ has been divided into both good and evil, and definitely refers to not just dead people. In the A-hom Thai language, ‘*phi*’ means ‘*tewada* (เทวดา)’ translated as ‘god or angel’, in Yai Thai, it means ‘*a-manut* (อมนุษย์)’ translated as ‘un-human’ and it is divided into both ‘good’ and ‘evil’ as well. Consequently, to summarize the definitions; first, ‘*phi*’ can be ‘good’ and ‘evil’, second, its power or position is beyond human, and third, its body is different from humans. H.R.H. Phraongchao Srisaowaphang notes that there are two kinds of ‘*phi*’; one that has a seeable body, e.g., *phi reuan* (ผีเรือน, house ghost), *phi pa* (ผีป่า, forest demon / jungle spirit), *phi khamot* (ผีโขมด, will-o’-the-wisp), and one that is invisible, e.g., *theparak* (เทพารักษ์) or *thewada nopkhro* (เทวดานพเคราะห์), which is a deity of the terrain (S.Phlainoi, 2000).

Barbara Leitch Lepoer (1987: online) states that phi in Thai Buddhism are the spirits included in the rather heterogeneous category of phi, thought to have power

over human beings. This category includes spirits believed to have a permanent existence and others that are reborn from deceased human beings. Phi exists virtually everywhere – in trees, hills, water, animals, and the earth. Some are malevolent, others beneficial. The ghosts of persons who died violently under mysterious circumstances or whose funeral rites were improperly performed constitute another class of phi; almost all of these spirits are malevolent. In contrast, the ghosts of notable people are said to reside in small shrines along the roads and are referred to as “spirit lords.” They are often petitioned in prayers and can enter and possess the bodies of mediums to give oracles. Among the more important of the spirits and ghosts is the evil phi pop (ghoul spirit), which, at the instigation of witches, can enter human beings and consume their internal organs.

Synthetically speaking then, *phi* or ghost means good and evil spirits including dead people, both visible and invisible. While bad and malicious spirits dominate Thai horror films, some good spirits appear and protect the protagonist or other characters as well. In *Hian* (aka *The Unborn*, dir. Bhandit Thongdee, 2002), a scary female ghost shows up, but she protects the female protagonist who is in the same situation of her. Furthermore, this female ghost takes the role as the protector of a collapsed moral system of present society; in this film, she warns the female protagonist not to try to abort her baby. However, her appearance is quite threatening to the protagonist and audiences. She squats under the bed, jumps up in front of the protagonist, floats and flies intimidatingly. She is in white pajamas, with disheveled long black hair, pale, white face and bleeding, dark circled eyes. This image of a ghost is, to some extent, the pan-Asian horror character. In *Phi Liang Luk Khon* (aka *Ghost Mother*, dir. Thorathon Siriphanwaraphorn, 2007), Nantha is the aunt of three children. She is killed by gangsters who killed her brother, the children’s father. However, she comes back as a ghost because of the promise to her brother that she would take care of the three children. Every night she does housework and makes

pathongko.* She plays the role of mother to the children, but at the same time she brutally avenges the murderer of herself and her brother. Thus, it can be said that she has double characteristics in the film; she is visible for the children, but invisible for the other people; she is a good mother for the children, but inhuman for the gangsters. Her appearance to the children has not changed from when she was a human. The thing that distinguishes her from being a human is that her body is extremely cold.

Most ghosts in horror films are evil, even if they are good with some people, but their brutality, monstrosity, and grotesque is mostly toward bad people, but, inadvertently, innocent people are sometimes included, and they are excessively gory and fearful. Therefore, ghosts in Thai horror films can be generally assumed to be bad, evil, and threats.

Ghosts that appear in Thai horror films can be divided into several types by gender, age, human or un-human.

1) Female, male, and the third gender

The types of ghosts by gender can be categorized by female, male and the third sex or hermaphrodite. The sheer number of female ghost in the horror genre is a phenomenon over all Asian countries. This can be explained by the nature of women's status in Asian society, being generally underprivileged compared to that in western countries as women's status in patriarchal societies is typically inferior to men. Under these circumstances, women have been repressed and, according to Freud's notion 'return of repression' of women, is manifested through the screen. However, I suggest that the female ghost is also a 'return of repression' of men in Thai horror films and I will analyze this in a following section of this chapter.

* Fried dough originated from Chinese food that Thais like to eat for the breakfast with coffee or milk.

In contrast, male ghosts have not appeared very often and are not as fearful when compared with female ghosts. One of the most famous horror films in which a male ghost appears is *Rongraem Phi* (aka *The Hotel*, dir. Anukul Jarotok, 2002). A rich and venerable old man, Luang Naruban, is betrayed by Sarapi a young beautiful girl, and kills himself to be reborn as a ghost to take revenge on Sarapi's family a few decades later. His apparition is in the same appearance as he when died, an old man in a high-leveled governmental officer's uniform. He looks more like a man in love than a vengeful ghost. In *Phi Mai Chim Fan* (aka *Vow of Death*, dir. Piyapan Choopetch, 2007), a male ghost also appears. He is a deity of a Banyan tree* which is located at Soi Fang Mongkhon and is well-known for fetishes. Whatever people pray for, their wishes come true. His spirit seems very generous, but at the same time this spirit has another side that is brutal in nature. A dog urinates on the tree in which he dwells, and then the dog is found dead in front of the tree. The owner of the dog is angry and swears at the deity, and then she becomes crazy. He stabs people and causes people to get electric shocks. Cruelty of the male ghost in the film is not defeated by a female ghost. The male ghost in the film appears in an old-styled military uniform. Male ghosts in Thai horror films appear to love uniforms as they fight for their honor, reputation, or credit. This reflects the repression of men from the struggle to survival in social life, which seems to be relatively more serious than for women.

Gay and lesbian people form a minority culture in Thai society; this group has been presented in Thai film for a long time, however they usually do not have a chance to be the main character. Homosexuals usually play supporting characters to the heroes and heroines as assistants and also as comic relief (Patsorn Sungsi, 2004). The third sex or bisexual ghost has often appeared in recent horror films. In the

* In Thai's belief, every big tree in a forest is supposed to be the residence of a tree spirit either male or female. A tree with no such economic value, as the papal and banyan trees for instance has a male spirit called rukha thewada (รุกขเทวดา) or tree guarding spirit. When a tree felled, its spirit or essence is superstitiously believed to be still in it (Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, 2009: 209). See also Page 83-4.

comedy-horror film *Koi Thoe Gay* (aka *Ghost Station*, dir. Yuthlert Sippaphak, 2007) a hermaphroditic ghost is located at a ruined gas station on the outskirts of a city. A gay couple, Wut and Yai, move to the gas station dreaming of their newly happy marriage life. But the station is haunted by a crazy mischievous ghost which entices them. The ghost in the film is able to disguise itself as a man or a woman – although mostly manifesting as a woman – and can even become an animal such a dog or a cat. Another example is the ghost that used to be a boss of gangsters and becomes a zombie by being infected by SARS No.4, in *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* (aka *SARS War*, dir. Taweewat Wantha, 2004). He was a wild tough man, but after he is infected, he becomes a young school girl and has sex with the male protagonist. With respect to this type of character, such ghosts can be effeminate (*Chumthang Rotfai Phi* aka *Train of the Dead* 2006) or shrewish (*Koi Thoe Gay*).

2) Young and old

The type of ghosts can be divided into three age groups; fetus or unborn baby and children ghosts, adult ghosts, and old aged ghosts. A fetus ghost has special power, with the best known one being that from the Thai historical romances *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*. This kind of fetus ghost is called ‘*kuman thong*’, which is known as a sacred spiritual being and a valuable asset for those who own one, and can be greatly beneficial to the owner.

The *kuman thong* was one of the most powerful items that Khun Phaen has, beside his sword and grayish horse. After Khun Phaen and Nang Boukrey, the daughter of Mernharn, become husband and wife, she becomes pregnant. One day, Meunhan gets upset with Khun Phaen, his son-in-law; therefore plots to kill him by letting Nang Boukrey put poison in his food. Luckily, Khun Phaen has Hoong Phrai (ghost spirit), and it warns him that his wife is trying to poison him, and he should not eat her food, therefore saving his life. This outrages Khun

Phaen, and he then seeks revenge by plotting to kill his wife for her baby so he could make it into *kumanthong* (or golden boy). Before killing her, he has to ask his wife for her baby; this is according to the instruction and guideline of how to make *kumanthong*; that the *kuman* (dead baby) has to be given by both parents. Since Khun Phaen is the father, all he needs is for the mother to give him her baby (Nye Noona, 2008: Online).

In *Khon Len Khong* (dir. Tanit Jitnukool, 2004), Boom, a young unwed mother, aborts her baby after a malicious car accident caused by the baby's father. She gives the fetus to a spirit doctor (หมอผี, *mo phi*) to cast evil spells over the family. Even though the fetus ghost does not appear its supernatural power is evident throughout the film.

Besides *kuman thong*, there is another baby ghost called '*luk krok*', which has similar power of *kuman thong*. In the past, having faith or believing in *luk krok* was very common. Although it is rare in this day and age, it still exists in some areas of Southeast Asian. Professor Prakhong Nimmanmirn recorded in 1999 that *luk krok* is an item that is used in black magic. *Luk krok* is made from a full term human baby, fully developed, but is extremely small in size (neonatal baby), which dies shortly after birth and often times, with both the mother and baby dying during the birthing process. The mother or owner will then take this *luk krok* and sprinkle it with *kaminh* powder (drying agent) that is golden yellowish in color to preserve the *luk krok* as part of the drying process. The *luk krok* is then placed in a sacred location, where the owner can worship it. It is believed that *luk krok* will bring them luck and prosperity. If by chance there is any bad omen or luck drawn near, the *luk krok* will tell or warn the owner in advance (Nye Noona, 2008: Online).

In *Koi Thoe Yom* (aka *See How They Run*, dir. Jaturong Mokjok, 2006) a baby boy ghost shows up and startles people in the village. He is allegedly a fetus, but he is larger than he is supposed to be. He barely wears any cloths, his skin is bluish pale

and very thin, so that his blood vessels and sinew are reflected. He makes villagers scared and to shiver, but he does not intend to harm any people.

Almost every school has shared a similar ghost story since universally students have repressions of studying and the future. In *Dek Ho* (aka Dorm, dir. Songyos Sugmakanan, 2006) young school boy, Chatree, meets a weird friend at a school dorm. They get close and Chatree feels sympathy for him. However, Chatree finds he is not human, but an apparition of a previous student of this school named Wichian, who committed suicide in the school pool. This boy ghost looks as normal as other students, but he appears only at night. A common trait of these baby ghosts and children is that they do not have the intention to harm people, but they appear in front of the people because they feel lonely. However, in the third story of *Si Phraeng* (2008), *Yan Sang Tai* (aka Tit for Tat, dir. Paween Purikitpanya) a child ghost begins to perform atrocities no less than an adult ghost. The rage and brutality of this little boy is no longer the perfect symbol of 'innocence', but just another type of monster.

Exemplary of Thai horror film that has an aged ghost is the very popular movie series *Ban Phi Pob*. In 2008, the classical *Ban Phi Pob* was revived. Phi Pob in the new version of *Ban Phi Pob 2008* was the same as the old one and the storyline was not changed significantly. In the film, an old grandmother is possessed by a malevolent ghost who eats young women's intestines. In *Chumthang Rotfai Phi* (aka Train of the Dead, dir. Sukhum Mathawanit, 2007) an old woman's apparition haunts a young knave, who, in a burglary, accidentally murdered this woman. The woman is old, but she gets horrific power after she dies, as she appears with scary nightmarishly features to afflict the bad doer.

Interestingly, ghosts never grow older. At the moment they become a ghost, their time also stops. Ghost also cannot change their fashions; what they wear when they die will be their permanent clothes. With white pale faces and skin, dark circled eyes, bloodstained body, while they look creepy and scary these seem to be more decorative devices rather than to threaten, although this does indicate how they were killed and how miserable they are.

3) Humanoid or bestial human

According to anthropology, the traditional animal-double inhabits ambiguous areas of the social structure domain, habitually presiding at funerals and ghost sacrifices. It has been suggested that the animal-double presides over areas of social and cultural life that are by nature ambiguous, unpredictable, and dangerous. Some societies accept it as a matter of certainty that many people have secret animals, like the tinger* living inside their bodies. These are either people with the power to assume temporarily the form of an animal, or animals that can assume a human form (Brottman, 2004: 264-282).

Abjection, another concept used when referring to monsters, is described as a process integral to the formation of the self, one that involves the exclusion of those elements that might threaten or undermine the individual's sense of themselves as a distinct entity. Hence various bodily fluids and substances passing from inside the body to outside become abject inasmuch as they breach the body's borders (Hutchings, 2004). In Thai horror films, humans often combine with animals. In the concept of Thai ghosts, besides apparitions of dead people, people who are possessed by a ghost are also included in the category of ghost. According to Thai beliefs there are some animals that are treated as spiritual things. In fact, everything is believed to have spirits, whatever it is animate or inanimate. This animistic belief creates many fairy tales and fables that have been transmitted for a long time. Animals in fairy tales act like human or humanoid, sometimes they have special power, such as being able to transforming themselves into a human. For example, *Kinari* is a well-known animal, body double in Thai classical literature, the upper part of the body is a woman and the lower part is a bird. There are some animals, such as a cat, a snake, a tiger, that are

* A creature living inside of every human, feeds on fear and is controlled by screams, in the movie *The Tinger*, a horror-thriller film, released in 1959.

believed to possess special power as spiritual things. The beliefs relevant to these animals in Thai folklore are:

Cat: If a cat, especially a black cat, crosses over the coffin at the funeral, the dead inside of the coffin is haunted and the apparition of the dead hangs around where he or she used to live. In Chinese folklore, a cat is definitely spiritual animal and it has nine lives. Not only in Asian countries, in medieval Europe a cat was believed to have spiritual relationship with witches, so many cats were killed just like witch-hunting until King Louis VIII (1187-1226) (Krubannok.com, 2009: Online).

‘Phet Ta Maeo’ is one of the popular talismans among Thais, which originally made from cat’s eye. When a cat in glaucoma dies, the cat’s eye would become hard like a stone. Thais believe that anyone belongs this cat’s eye stone will have special power and this cat’s eye stone brings luck (Somporn, 2010: Online).

Serpent: The Thai term ‘nak’ or ‘phayanak’ means gigantic serpent. The belief of ‘nak’ originated from India where ‘nak’ is a deity of the river and people worshiped it. Several folktales about serpent are prevalent all over Southeast Asia, such as a phayanak living at ‘pa himaphan’ or ‘phayanak’ living under the Mekhong River. On the contrary, a serpent in western belief is treated as a vicious evil. The record about gigantic serpents can be traced from Triphumphraruang in that it has the ability of disguise itself as human with its name on land being ‘cholasa (ชลสา)’, translated as ‘coming from water’ (Krubannok.com, 2009: Online).

Gecko: The sound of a gecko forebodes bad luck. If a gecko sounds more than five times, a certain disease is coming. If a gecko cries more than six times, the owner of the house will be in trouble..... (Horoscope, 2009: Online).

Tiger: A long time ago, there was an atrocious and frenzied tiger that ate many people. One day, the tiger was haunted by the dead that the tiger had eaten, and this is called ‘*suea saming* (เสี้ยวมิง)’ (TLC Thai, 2010: Online).

The scene in which a black cat crosses over a coffin is quite familiar in Thai horror films (*Nang Nak*, *Phi Liang Luk Khon*, *Phi Khon Pen* 2006). In the earlier period, people possessed by a cat appeared in the Thai horror films (*Nang Suea Dau* 1985, *Pisat Maeo Dam* 1991), but in the period from 1999 to 2008, no Thai horror films have featured the cat spirit.

Tukae Phi is one of the famous monster stories based on a horror novel. Tukae is a Thai word for gecko, a common animal in Thailand. The first *Tukae Phi* movie was released in 1969, and the same titled, but different plotting movie, *Tukae Phi*, directed by Manop Udomdej, was released in 2004. In the film, a woman writer is haunted by the spirit of a tukae when she gets a strange wooden casket from a reader of her books in Chiang Mai. She comes back home to Bangkok with that wooden casket and she feels her body and spirit seized by the gecko monster. When she transforms into a reptilian monster, her teeth get fangs, her body turns into a quadruped animal, but her beautiful face is not changed. In Thai horror film history, this type of monster, such as half-human half-beast, has been argued to be associated with sexuality. Unlike the female sexuality of Hollywood films such as *The Cat People* (1982),* half-human half-beast in Thai horror films are rather related with the revelation of male sexuality. As mentioned in chapter two, the period when bestial humans appear in the horror genre for the first time is when Thai films were under the strong restriction of censorship. In particular, films that had sexual scenes were banned from being released or the problematic scene had to be cut out. Horror film is

* Robin Wood points out that *The Cat People* is centered on the repression of female sexuality in a period where the monster is almost invariably male and phallic (p.183). The focus of *The Cat People* is on the fear of a sexually aggressive female, in the guise of a cat, unrepressed and on the prowl. It is a film that is almost progressive in its treatment of women.

a perfect exit for an audience's sexual desire, especially the male audience. Furthermore, horror film with bestial humans, mostly starring sexy actresses, is a good excuse to express sexuality; on the other hand audiences, in particular male, can satisfy their sexual desire.

Needless to say, a serpent is an animal that appears most frequently in Thai horror films. The fact that the female ghost, 'Nak', is the most popular movie sequel of *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* does not seem to happen by coincidence in that Nak lives by the river and later she obtains supernatural power. Conjecturing from Thai belief of serpents, aka nak, or naga, Nak in the films is supposedly related with the serpent spirit.



Figure 3.2. *Tukae Phi* (2004)



Takhian (2003)

In addition to the fusion between human and animal, there are monsters combining human and nature, such as a tree and water, most probably coming from Thai animistic beliefs. In *Takhian*, human features are combined with the spirit of an old large tree. The first horror movie of *Takhian* was released in 1966 (*Chao Mae Takhian Thong*). Takhian is the name of tree, on which a woman hangs herself on a Takhian tree in the first film. Her miserable spirit cannot go to the spiritual world, but inhabits the tree. Thus, people have had the connotation that the Takhian spirit is female. There is another possibility that explains why Takhian spirit is female. It is known that around a Takhian tree it is always clean, as if a diligent housewife sweeps

the garden everyday; so people believe that there must be a woman spirit residing in the Takhian tree. Eventually, people created ‘Nang Takhian (Ms.Takhian)’ with detailed features that she is very beautiful wearing in Thai traditional *sabai* (สไบ) and *phathung* (ผ้าถุง), looking like an ordinary village girl in the forest. But whenever she feels her territory has been invaded, she suddenly turns ruthless (Wikipedia, Online). Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, a great scholar as well as a popular author, mentions regarding Nang Takhian or Lady Takhian in his essays that in the imagination of the people, Lady Takhian usually takes the form of a beautiful maiden who sometimes makes a wailing and piercing sound when the tree, her abode, is felled. Unforeseen and mysterious calamities will befall the person or persons who destroy her abode. A Takhian tree growing near the bank of a river with its roots protruding above ground is to be avoided, for the Lady Takhian of that tree is a fierce one. Whoever relieves himself near the base of her tree will suffer from ulcers. To add to the belief, Takhian is usually found in a temple where all sorts of ghost stories emanate (2009: 318-319).

Phi Mai Chim Fan is also about the spirit of a dead man manifested as a tree. This male ghost lives in a Banyan tree and has uncanny power that makes people’s wishes come true. The reason why he is stuck to the tree is that he perished in front of this tree. This Banyan tree was cut to make toothpicks later in the film, but the supernatural power still hung around.

4) Haunted place

Ban Phi Sing (aka *The House*, dir. Monhon Arayangkoon, 2007) is a haunted house that has human features. The house is often adopted in Thai horror films, as well as Hollywood horror films. However, if the house is to be haunted, there are some prerequisite: first, isolation. It has to be located away from the city so that people can not ask for help from other people and merely survive in the house; if it is in the forest, it is perfect. Second, antiquity – an old thing that has a long and varied

history. It is believed that old things have humanlike spirits; the older they are, the greater the power. Third, hugeness. The house should have many rooms that offer hiding places for both ghosts and victims. The antique and evil house is the genre's physical representation of this theme. Inside are monsters frequently described as germinated from past events, however remote (Hutching, 2004). The haunted house in *Ban Phi Sing* is set up by these three conditions; it is a large, old wooden house set in a rural area, and there is a horrible story hidden in the house. *Koi Thoe Gay* and *Dek Ho* are other prominent examples of this category. Peter Huntchings (2004) notes about the metaphoric meaning of the house in the horror films that:

The house itself can also be characterized in psychoanalytical terms. The hidden room features in this respect as an expression of something that has been repressed psychologically by the characters associated with the house. Within the Freudian approach, things repressed do not simply disappear but remain present, albeit hidden, within the mind, just as the hidden room, an irrefutable sign of a past crime, waits patently behind a wall for the inevitable moment of its discovery, a moment which marks the return of the repressed.

Wong Pisat (aka *Dark Water*, dir. Jaran Wongsajja, 2007) is a horror film in which a spirit under the water appears. The narrative of this movie is typical for a Thai horror film in the past. The overall immanent idea is overt Thai animistic belief under the slogan of "All the water has spirits". Nuan is a pretty young girl living with her father and a grandfather. Her mother died after being gang-raped by villains in the village and then her body was thrown into the river flowing along the village. But her body is not found in the end, and the villagers believe that the river is haunted by her spirit. Unfortunately, Nuan is also killed by the villains in the village similar to her mother, becoming a ghost of the water.

“Some places are like people: some shine and some don’t”

- Dick Hallorann, *The Shining*

Some places are believed to be sacred places but not for humans, such as around the Takhian tree, and the Kamchanod forest in *Phi Chang Nang Athap Pa Kamchanot* (aka *The Screen at Kamchanot*, dir. Songsak Mongkolthong, 2007). According to Traibhumikatha, there is a domain for spirits. In *Phi Chang Nang Athap Pa Kamchanot*, whoever goes inside the place called the Kamchanot forest will be, attacked by dark shadowy spirits and killed. The old engineer of a theater, who has lived in that place for long time, mumbles that “we shouldn’t be involve where does not belong to us humans”. *La-Tha-Phi* (aka *Ghost Game*, dir. Sarawut Wichiansar, 2006), was the most-talked about when the film was released because it featured stars from Academy Fantasia. The film is about an ancient war museum in Cambodia that was used as a Khmer Rouge prison twenty years before. Thousands of innocent people were tortured and killed there during the Cambodian war in the 1970s. Now the museum is abandoned, and no one dares to step inside because the place is believed to be haunted. In other words, the place belongs to the spirits of dead people, not human. Every contestant who enters inside is killed one by one with no survivors since they have crossed over the border where one is never able to come back.

3.1.2 Diabolic human

While most Thai horror films are ghost films, some horror films include monstrous humans. The monsters are human, but they attain supernatural power through certain routes. They have superpowers and use these uncanny powers to create mayhem or kill people for revenge, or sometimes for greedy purposes, including sexual desire. *Dek Hen Phi*, directed by popular Hong Kong brother directors, Oxide and Danny Pang, is the story of blind girl who has the ability to see dead people. *Chomkhamangwet* is a science-fiction thriller horror film about people

doing the uncanny. The most malicious female monster can be considered to be Boom in *Khon Len Khong* and the teacher, Panor, in *Long Khong* (aka *Art of the Devil 1 and 2*, dir. Pasith Buranajan & Kongkiat Khomsiri, 2005 and 2007). These movie series are really slasher films totally different from earlier Thai horror films. In *Sop* or *Achan Yai* (aka *Cadaver* 2006), two types of monsters appear; the apparition of the dead and a human monster, a cold blooded killer. In addition, *Body Sop #19* (aka *Body*, dir. Paween Purikitpanya, 2007) presents a psychopathic killer. This film is also full of atrocities, inhuman and disgusting scenes similar to the slasher films mentioned above, but this film can be distinguished from Hollywood's psychopath horror films in that cross concepts between reverie and real object are shown throughout the entire film, even giving audiences illusions. This film is also reminiscent to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in that Cholasit, who is a student struggling with nightmares and hallucinations, and the Doctor, who is a rational and respectable man, are the same person; Cholasit implies a sense of guilt, while the Doctor means the ego who expresses an ugly unconscious.

Faet (aka *Alone*, dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun and Parkpoom Wongpoom, 2007) is another Self-Ego typed horror film. Siamese twin sisters, Pim and Ploy, are very close. However, after Pim falls in love with Wee, a handsome boy, their sisterhood is broken. Finally they decide to have an operation to divide into two bodies, even if it means taking a big risk, and Ploy dies during the operation. But the film has a big reversal plot; Pim is not really Pim but she is Ploy who has disguised herself as Pim, and she is haunted by the real ghost of Pim. Pim in the film represents both Pim, who is a good and adorable girl, and Ploy, who is a selfish and jealous bad girl. Her face inside burning flames in the later part of the movie does not look like a weak adorable woman any more, but a ruthless monster.

In *Suai Lak Sai* (aka *Sick Nurses*, dir. Piraphan Paoyont, Thodsapol Siriwiwat, 2007), except for one ghost, the rest of the nurses and a doctor are considered to be monsters as well. All of them are killers, morally soiled, and sexually distorted.

Diabolic human monsters have appeared since the late 1990s, influenced by Hollywood horror movies. Starting with the horror-thriller *Cloning* in 1999, human monsters first appeared in Thai horror films. Similar to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, M7, the clone of Niwat, comes out of a cell of Niwat as the result of an illegal scientific experiment. However, considering the name M7 can be reckoned as a sort of cyborg, not as a human being. In any event, Niwat represents “good” and “self”, while M7 represents “evil” and alter “ego”.

Tanit Jutnukul’s *Khon Len Khong* appeared as a new styled Thai horror movie, combining outlandish taint and Thai traditional devilism. This horror film, without ghosts, was commercial successful and critically acclaimed so that a series of this slasher film has been produced. From it legitimate horror genre films with a Thai style have been created amidst a plethora of ghost narrative based horror films. The monstrous humans do not wear leather masks and do not use any weapon, such as a saw, but their atrocities or absolute powers are beyond any human’s.

3.1.3 Characteristics of the monster

As Beal states, monsters are conglomerations of many different forms of otherness – cosmological, political, psychological and religious otherness, monsters or the monstrous have different features and characteristics, while they have sameness from one to another culture. So it is that one culture’s gods can become another culture’s monsters. This is one way to look at the history of western colonialism, making monsters out of other people’s gods. Americans and western Europeans often have made their monsters from other people’s gods, that is, from the gods of unfamiliar, “other” religious traditions. In fact, monsters on the silver screen often reflect a long history of western European reactions to religious ideas and practices that diverge from the familiar and normative (2002: 103-4).

Beal adds that the politically and religiously conservative function of the monstrous is to encourage one to pull back from the edge. The monster is a warning

or portent, demonstrating what to avoid, and remonstrating with anyone who would challenge established social and symbolic boundaries. Without denying that this is often the conservative aim of monstrous horror, and without denying that this is also often its achieved effect, it cannot be denied that horror swings us both ways, soliciting both conservative and radical impulses. Perhaps this is because the monster is never entirely outside or other; can never be a purely negative image of us and our world (2002: 195-6).

In the term of religious background, Thai horror film is definitely different from western horror film; 95% of Thais are Buddhist, whereas most western people are Christian. And if considering that Thai cosmology is deeply related to Buddhism, the characteristics of monsters can not be the same as in Hollywood horror films.

Thai horror films in the decade from 1999 to 2008 have immensely developed, especially due to the development of cinematic technology, so that horror monsters are more tangible, scary, and realistic. Although the narrative of the films have been more varied than in the previous periods, large parts of the films have relied upon old Thai legendary ghost stories. Besides revivals of Mae Nak, phi krasue, and phi pob, many films stick to the past, both narratively and thematically. Malicious female ghost still play the important role, and the main motif of 'cause and effect' covers up through most of the horror films. Thus, I have examined the narratives of Thai horror films to find out what are the characteristics of the monsters.

1) Living in the past

A dancing *likay* woman in traditional Thai costume often appears as an object of fear in Thai horror film. They put white powder on their faces, red lipsticks on the lips, with garlands over the head and wearing traditional Thai dancing costumes. This beautiful face sometimes produces fear, with dancing girls being associated with ghosts or monsters in many Thai horror films, e.g., *Athap Kae Bon Phi* (aka *The Commitment*, dir. Montri Kong-Im, 2004), *Phi Mai Chim Fan*, *Arom Athap Akhat*

(aka *Three Extremes*, dir. Kim Ji-woon, Peter Chan, Nonzee Nimibutr, 2002), *Thon Khaen Nang Ram* (The Arm of Thai dancer) of *Phi Sam Baht* (aka *Bangkok Haunted*, dir. Oxide Pang, Pisut Praesangeam, 2002), *Phi Khon Pen*. In addition, traditional Thai music and dance are sometimes used as cinematic background, e.g., *The Wheel of Three* (2002), *Poeng Mang Klong Phi Manut* (aka *Perng Mang The Haunted Drum*, dir. Nuttapeera Chomsri, 2007). Most of these films do not depict why the revenant dancing girls come back to haunt innocent people. The victims are there by chance and accidentally receive mediums, such as an old drum. The unrelenting apparitions from the past are revived for the satisfaction of their grudge, but the linkage between monsters and the victims is not always very clear.

The revenant from the past incessantly comes to see the people in the present. The linkage between them and the victims in the present represents karma; what you are now is what you were before. Karma is beyond time and space; you have to pay for what you did in a previous life, even though you do not know at all. Sometimes you have to take responsibility for what your parents or ancestors did in the past. This ‘cause and effect’ theme is represented over the whole of the Thai horror movies.

In Thai culture, according to Niels Mulder, there are three different concepts of time which inform the behavior of the people. The first concept of time expresses the idea of continuity, which links life from the ancestors to the contemporaries, and spans across generations from ancestor to descendants and successors. This notion transmits generational wisdom, traditions and experience, and spans the past, through the present, with the future. The second notion of time used by the Thais emanates Animism. At the root of this notion is a belief held by many people that a large cloud of “diffuse amoral power” is permanently floating around them, and that specific “short term” contracts must be made with the protective powers of good spirits to ensure safety and protection against its influence. The third perception of time is interpreted according to the theory of karma. It is understood that the present fate of each individual is determined by actions of the previous life. Since the present actions cannot affect the immediate or short range events in one’s life, this perspective of

time frequently results in fatalism, or an attitude of resignation towards the present, hoping that the future will be better (Mulder, 1985 cited in Kapur-Fic, 1998: 48-50).

Regarding the sin that people commit, drastic chastisement follows in the films. Unlike ghosts in the films of the previous period that forgive the wrongdoers and leave peacefully to where they belong, monsters in this period are not stoppable and kill the wrongdoers and even innocent people. Earlier in this period, monsters visited to finish their undone missions or to appeal for their mortifications; however, monsters have become more venomous and brutal in the later period. Monsters now return for the 'satisfaction of their grudge'; transformed into monsters for 'revenge to the wrongdoers'. Nak in *Nang Nak* wants to remain for her love, even though she accidentally kills some innocent village people, but in the end she accepts to fade away from the human world. The female ghost in *Hian* shows up in front of Por to petition her death, not for scaring purposes. Buppha in *Buppha Ratri* (dir. Yuthlert Sippaphak, 2003) seems as if she would like to stay in her apartment forever. Although she kills her ex-boyfriend and betrayer, she still stays in her room. Her grudge lasts long through a series, with *Buppha Ratri 3.1* and *3.2* having been released, and it may be a never ending horror story.

The head monk of the temple in a village was a father, but he does not know he has a son. Without knowing that his ex-girlfriend was pregnant, he left the secular home. Now he is a venerable monk. But in the end he realizes that the fetus ghost who makes disturbances in the village is his own son (*Koi Thoe Yom*). In *The Letter Khian Song Khon Tai* (aka *The Letter of Death*, dir. Kapon Thongplap, 2006) a young transfer student was tormented by all his classmates. One day, he tripped on someone's leg and slipped down the stairs and no one saw him after that day. Fifteen years later, the classmates are killed one by one. The little boy in the past has returned and begins to take revenge.

Ghosts from the folktales, revenants from the past and karma are the most important motif of the narratives in Thai horror films. Bak Moon-im (2006) argues that the horror film is based on its own culture and collective memories. Thus

narratives of horror films are not supposed to be wholly new, there must be some linkage to our memories; at the same time there must be something different added so as to intrigue audiences. In this sense, horror films are to some extent related to nostalgic stories.

The nostalgia in some films can fuel conservatism, in that many of the new films suggest that in our devotion to the now, to the modern, we have created an agonistic and antagonistic culture of narcissism and have lost something that held us together, something that gave our lives a sustaining cohesion and “value”. The flip-side of nostalgia will show up in such films as a discontent with, or a suspicion of, the new as decadent, malevolent, morally inadequate.

2) Ambivalent monsters

In Hollywood horror films, the character of monsters seems quite clear. No ambiguity, no contradiction, they just threaten, horrify and kill people without any excuse or reason from the beginning to the end. In Thai horror films, the character of the monster is more complicated. Mostly they start as a victim, soon they become a monster to harm or kill people, but in doing so their characteristics are still ambivalent, and in the end they return to good. Therefore, monsters in Thai horror films are not always the same and are not the only monster in the film. Many monstrous characters appear through the film, thus various confrontational structures can be represent in the film. In this section, I examine character of the monster looking through confrontation happening in narrative of Thai horror film.

2.1) Gender confrontation

Confrontational female and male opponents can be found universally, not only for Thai horror films, but also for Asian horror, as well as western horror films. Especially in an androcentric and patriarchal society, such as Asian countries,

including Thailand, women's social status is inferior to men and women are more oppressed than men compared to western countries. Under these circumstances, manifestation of monstrous woman in the horror film is natural and no doubt that it is a 'return of repression'.

The most common plot of Thai horror films is that a young pretty girl is raped and killed by the villains, but her chargin spirit cannot leave and begins to avenge the wrongdoers. Here, a confrontational form between female and male is generated. The weaker woman in human life becomes physically stronger and more powerful than the man and pays back as much as she suffered from them. Supernatural power and black magic are essentially accompanied when woman punishes man.

The castration anxiety of Freud has often been referred to in horror films. Women are often portrayed as antagonists, which can be seen as a reflection of men's pathological fear of women, their power and menstruation, resulting in castration anxiety in Hollywood horror films (Murray, 2009). Women in Thai horror films are mostly the object of fear, and at the same time they are the object of sexuality. For men in anxiety of castration, women are always the object of fear as 'Otherness'.

Confrontation between female and female has a different aspect from female and male. Supernatural power or black magic does not have significant meaning in this relationship, because as compared to a male, the physical relationship between woman and woman is equal and thus, they do not have to rely on supernatural power.

In this confrontational form, the woman is not usually the direct wrongdoer, but mostly a conspirator. Nonetheless, to form a confrontational relationship between female and female is presumably due to the fact the film is produced from a male perspective, in that in the end the male is the last survivor, even though he is the wrongdoer, e.g., *Suai Lak Sai*. Mulvey (2005) argued that in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, the role of making things happen usually fell to the male protagonist, while the female star occupied a more passive position, functioning as an erotic object for the desirous look of the male. Woman signified image, a figure to be

looked at, while man controlled the look. The case of Thai horror films are a bit different from Mulvey's argument in that the male usually does not take the role of protagonist in Thai horror film. However, although the death is not the ultimate atonement, the survivor of the male may imply men's supremacy.

In *Hian*, the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is represented. This conflict is very common in Confucianist cultured Asian countries, such as Korea. In *Khon Len Khong*, a minor wife wields her supernatural power over the whole family of her ex-secret lover, who gang-raped her with his group of friends and killed her baby. First, she kills him, and then she inhumanly kills his first son and every member, one by one. Confrontation between female and female here signifies female's defiance to the family system, that is, the mechanism of patriarchy, not just the wrongdoer or a certain individual.

2.2) Monster vs. Hero/Heroine

Thailand is the country in the world with the highest percentage of population as Buddhists; the government quotes 94% of the 62 million Thais as Buddhists (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2009: Online). However, it is often claimed that Thai women are discriminated against by Thai Buddhist law. Thai horror films usual end with a Buddhist monk repulsing the malicious female ghost and saving the village people from the devil. As a Catholic priest exorcists a little girl possessed by devil in *Exorcist*, a Buddhist monk takes the role as a hero or savior in Thai horror films.

The confrontation between monster and Buddhist monk here is inevitable. Adam Knee (2005) writes about Nak's defiance in the face of various levels of patriarchal power in Nonzee's *Nang Nak*. Her spirit repeatedly shows an indifference to the apparatus of the patriarchal Buddhist state; indeed, her very existence is an affront to Buddhist epistemology, as she is a ghost and thus a holdover from earlier belief systems that have tenaciously continued to coexist with Buddhism in Thailand.

Nak repeatedly ignores the injunctions of the local head monk, whose rituals seem utterly irrelevant to her. “Scaring the monks is a sin,” he reminds her when she appears on the ceiling of the temple. However, when he goes on to insist she stop bothering Mak, she responds, “I listen to no one.”

In Thai horror film, the monster or the bad takes the leading role in the narrative, not the hero/heroine or the good. Ironically, most monsters regret their bad things by themselves in the end, thus, the hero/heroine’s role is much less important. In other words, monsters do not always act like a monster; they are not just eliminated or expelled by the hero/heroine, but they turn to be good. Due to the fact that most monsters in Thai horror films are ghosts and they have supernatural power, it is not easy to see a human hero or heroine who can win over a monster. Thus, the only way to win over a monster is to move them emotionally or make them regret their sins, and only someone who is beyond human power, such as a god, or the Buddha in Thai horror films, can do that.

In Thai horror films during 1999-2008, a new trend of narratives has often been presented. Unlike the earlier Thai horror films that ended with winning over the monsters, these movies remain unsettled; monsters are still there, for example, *Buppha Ratri*, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*, *Long Khong*, *La-Tha-Phi*.

2.3) Good vs. Evil

Opposition between good and evil is one of the essential elements in horror films. Evil in horror films is an important device in the narrative. Philosophically, how to define good and evil has always been questioned. The world’s religions and social/cultural norms provide a variety of answers to this question. Therefore, evil is bound to society and culture, and all good is based on evil.

In a Buddhist society, such as Thailand, Buddhist doctrine has a great influence on the distinction between the good and evil in Thai social values. Most Thais place little emphasis on the achievement of nirvana, whether as a final state

after many rebirths or as an interior condition. What is hoped for is an improved condition in this life or the next. In Thai thinking, the ideas of merit and demerit, so essential to the doctrine of karma, are linked linguistically to those of good and evil; good and merit are both *bun* (บุญ); evil and the absence of merit are *bap* (บาป). The Theravada idea of karma charges the individual with responsibility for good and evil acts and their consequences. Thais do not rely solely on the accumulation of merit, however gained, to bring that improved state into being. Other forms of causality, ranging from astrology to the action of spirits of various kinds, are also part of their outlook (Babara Leitch Lepoer, Online).

In Thai horror films, however, the dividing line between good and evil is not quite so clear. It seems as if there is no forever good and evil. One-time a good man becomes maliciously evil; a favorable neighborhood yesterday changes abruptly today. Every character has both good and evil sides in one body, and the evil side is rather more emphasized than the good side. In *Wong Pisat*, Nuan is a beautiful-hearted young pretty girl in a small village until she dies because of her best friend's betrayal. After she becomes a ghost, she is the terror of the neighborhood. She kills villains and her friend brutally and frightens the villagers. Nanta, in *Phi Liang Luk Khon*, is a perfect aunt for the children and the neighborhood. But after she is murdered by gangsters, she mercilessly kills everyone who was involved with her and her brother's death. In *The Letter Khian Song Khon Tai*, Seri is a well-behaved, humble and polite young man who is working at the post office. When he was young, he looked friendly and nice to his classmates, but he was the most devilish doer behind horrible incidents. One more time, he chooses the evil side in order to kill his grumpy boss.

Horror films represent the bad side of human nature, and in this sense, horror films can be defined as the story of evil. Good in the horror film is an opposite concept of evil, and it does really depend on how evil it is in the film. In other words, good is the human opposite to the ghost, men is the opposite of women, and I is the

opposite of the Other. Obviously, evil is associated with ‘Otherness’, and, thus, good and evil can be listed as the following:

Good	vs.	Evil
Human		Monster (ghost, bestial human, creature)
Men		Women
I		The Other
Majority		Minority
Normality		Distinction
Thai		Foreign (farang, or other Asian)

Urban and rural also confront each other in some horror films, for example, *Takhian*, *Wong Pisat*, *Ban Phi Pob 2008* and *Ban Phi Poeb*; urban implies development or civilization and rural implies un-development or un-civilization; urban signifies westernization while rural means tradition. A highly-educated, smart young man from the city (Bangkok) appears in all these four films, he is mostly on the good side, but he easily becomes ineffective against local ghost or villains. Mostly, local heroes or heroines are the ones who can save the villagers from the malicious evils which belong to the village. Urbanization or westernization can be used as a device to emboss “Thainess” or “Thai tradition”, however, in conclusion, there are no urban and rural confront standing for good and evil confrontation.

2.4) Monsters vs. Victims

Inevitably, victims, or potential victims are the most numerous horror movie characters. Tudor claims that it is difficult to generalize about the kinds of character typifications available for modern horror movie victims. In the emergence of ‘everyperson’ as the genre’s non-monstrous centre of gravity, we can certainly see the differentiation of the horror movie’s traditional character resources, an infusion of

character types from elsewhere in popular culture. But the net effect of such developments is to absorb the horror movie's dramatis personae into a more general character pool, in which anybody can be made into a narratively convincing victim (Tudor, 1986).

In Thai horror films, victims in zombie movie such as *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* are anonymous people. Many people inside the building become victims and they also become zombies by being infected with SARS No. 4. In *La-Tha-Phi*, all 11 contestants who enter the mysterious place in Cambodia are killed. All protagonists are killed by invisible souls and no one survive. Even though all people who enter the place are killed by vengeful ghosts, the film implies that the human greedy for money and fame is more dangerous and harmful than a ghost, and we can be the monster. The female ghost in *Program Na Winyan Akhat* (aka *Coming Soon*, dir. Sapon Sukdapisit, 2008) revenges to kill every member of the audience who sees the movie. This film takes copyright infringement or pirate CDs as a main subject, which is currently an issue in pop-culture or entertainment, warning the audience to infringe on the copyright can harm other people, even oneself. So, the monster is not only the old lady ghost who is killed in filming, but also all of us who infringe other's rights without any conscience thought; victims are not only the people who are killed in the film, but also all of us who are have our rights infringed by someone's unintentional doings.

However, the victims in most Thai horror films are represented as recipients of appropriate punishment. They are seen to 'getting what they deserve'. This is well represented in Tanit Jitnukul's films, such as *Narok* (aka *Hell*, dir. Tanit Jitnukul, 2005), and *Long Khong 1* and *2*. Victims and monsters in the films are thoroughly followed by their karma, and their roles are switched over and over.

3.2 Representations of the monster as Otherness in the Thai horror films

Marxist film scholar Robin Wood presents the concept of ‘Otherness’ as it operates with American culture, of its relation to repression and oppression, and of how it is characteristically dealt with. He mainly analyzes Hollywood horror films, especially from the 1970s; nonetheless, his ‘Otherness’ has been adapted and used in understanding horror films so far. Here I extract Wood’s ‘Otherness’ to adapt it to Thai horror films, and examine what is the ‘Otherness’ of Thai people, and how this is related to ‘repression’ of Thai society.

Dr. Rom Hirunpruk of Ramkhamhaeng University, in an article on “Racism and Social Discrimination”, makes the following observation:

If we consider racism as a severe form of discrimination based on the perceived racial attributes of an individual, I know many Thais, from their own expressed opinions, who sound just as racist as people of other nationalities I have come across. However, the real danger is that there are many more Thais who discriminate on criteria other than race, such as gender, political ideology, religious beliefs, accent and dialect, food preferences, lifestyles, or socioeconomic rank within Thai society. Many of them are not even aware that they do discriminate against other people based on these criteria. Many do not see discrimination as a problem as far as they are concerned since they are not the ones who suffer from it, rather they are the ones exercising it.”(1994)

Dr. Rom also claims that Thais are very conscious of their position within a hierarchy, be it family, place of work or business. Boundary lines are deep and clear and no one is allowed to overstep them; the behaviour of those who do is not acceptable, inviting retribution. Hence this form of discrimination among Thais is extremely prevalent. And he further says:

What is also interesting is the reverse discrimination of the Thai mass media and entertainment industry in the past decade towards people of mixed Asian and Caucasian parent-age and now even towards Afro-Asians. It could be obvious to most that the Thai public accepts western forms of physical beauty, especially the Caucasian look, judging from the number of Thai beauty queens, models, movie stars and singers with these qualities, which are sometimes acquired through cosmetic surgery.

Because Thailand was never colonized by any foreign power during the height and might of European colonialism in Southeast Asia, Thai society has never been decultured by the imposition of foreign values and, in fact, Thai people have been quite successful in preserving and protecting their culture, religion, traditions and other values of their national heritage. This then is the foundation of their pride and the source of unique aspects of Thai nationalism, which is more culturally than ethnically based (Kapur-Fic, 1998: 45). Thus, Thailand never faced a challenge of ‘forced modernization’, with its both positive and negative aspects, and hence allowed many modern day problems to go unresolved, some even to grow, such as problems related to women. Therefore, hypothetically the ‘Otherness’ in Thai horror films is different from western and other Asian countries, and it has unique features.

3.2.1 Monstrous Female

Wood explains that in a male-dominated culture, where power, money, law, and social institutions are controlled by past, present, and future patriarchs, women as the Other assumes particular significance. In patriarchal societies, especially in Asian countries, women’s status in society is relatively inferior to that of men, the anatomy and capability of women is easily ignored, particularly women’s sexuality. Horror is one of the least respected genres of cinema, and yet it portrays much of today’s culture and values within its context.

In Thai horror films, social structure and norms are well described, moreover, social problems at the time are mainly the motifs adopted. In political circles, which have been male-dominated for a long time, a female minister is nominated and many women are working in high-ranking positions in business and government. However, there are still considerable numbers of young women degenerated into being trifled with men by their own wishes or unwillingness. Monsters in Thai horror films are mostly female and most of them are sexually abused or murdered by male villains before becoming a ghost with a powerful rage. Some of them are based on traditional old Thai ghost stories, some are adapted from novels and some are influenced by films from other countries.

The most famous female ghost in Thailand must be *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, which has been revived more than 20 times through TV and the screens since 1936 when the first *Mae Nak* ghost appeared at the theater. This old, legendary ghost is believed to be a legacy of Thai culture. Today, people merely believe in the existence of ghosts, however, this ghost story gives the impression of being a realistic event because of its actual location and the time to which it refers. The shrine of Mae Nak is still located by the Phrakhanong canal, at Wat Mahabut, and many people and tourists visit there to console their sorrow and unfulfilled love in this life. In *Nang Nak*, *Mae Nak* appears in a different way from previous films. First, she has short hair, which is based on historical evidence that women's hair style was short during the 1800s, while *Mae Naks* in the previous films are long-haired and feminine looking. Unlike the other female ghosts with loosen long hair and raised eyes, she looks more humanlike.

Besides female ghosts, there is another type of monsters that appears in Thai horror films, which are beautiful women who are wholly human beings, but have supernatural power by black magic with an evil mind. Similar to witches, not devils, they are analogous to the cruel evil serial killers in Hollywood horror films, although they are not usually psychopaths. The way of threat is distinguished from Hollywood films in that they kill the victims with black magic, such as enchantment, or tearing a

cursing dummy. The female monsters in *Khon Len Khong*, *Long Khong 1* and *2* are examples of this type.

Beauty seems to be one of requirements for female monsters in Thai horror films. Monstrous women use their beauty to seduce victims, mostly male, so beauty is a strong power and strategic necessity. Monstrous female in Thai horror films, no matter whether they are ghost or human, are beautiful and sexy. This is, of course, because most Thai horror films are commercial films and filmmakers aim for the effect of star power or eroticism, and, at the same time, this is a reflection of the repression about beauty of the present people in Thai society. This repression of beauty is well reflected in *Suai Lak Sai*. Nurses working at a hospital have some dark secrets in that they sell human internal organs. Six female nurses and a male doctor enthralled by beauty, brands, and trends in fashion, kill patients to extract organs without any feeling of guilty. One of the nurses constantly eats cakes and food, but before going to bed, she throws up all what she has eaten in order to maintain her slim body. Another one among the nurses is a sort of brand-aholic, she is crazy for brand-name bags, and in the end she dies covering her favorite luxury bag in her head.

Many of the women are shown half clothed and hyper-sexualized, taking away the audience's ability to sympathize with them because they are seen as less valuable to society. Classic slasher films usually show a direct cause and effect link between sex and death, with murder serving as a symbolic punishment for any kind of immoral intercourse. This symbolism illustrates a kind of unconscious moral lesson to the viewer.

Laura Mulvey's book, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (1975)', is one of the most referred to sources in feminism studies. In this book, Mulvey argues that mainstream cinema is organized around a male gazing at and mastery over the female body. The women in cinema function as a site of visual pleasure, but at the same time they are also a source of anxiety for the male spectator. This is because the woman lacks a penis and therefore represents for the male the possibility of castration. Steve Neale argues that the horror genre is primarily concerned with anxieties about

castration. He relates this in particular to the centrality within the genre of the monster, a figure that in various ways embodies a form of difference which horror narratives strive to manage and contain: 'Hence the monster may represent the lack, but precisely by doing so it in fact functions to fill the lack with its own presence, thus coming to function as a fetish, simultaneously representing and disavowing the problems of sexual difference at stake' (Neale, 2004: 356-369). Similarly, Karen Hollinger argues that the fact of most movie monsters being male is 'an expression of the connection between the image of the monster and the filmic representation of castration anxieties' (Hollinger, 1996: 297).

In the scene in *Nang Nak*, when Nak cooks dinner for Mak, her beloved husband, she stretches her arm grossly longer to pick a lime that has fallen on the ground. Audiences shriek at its grotesquery, but it is a very important part of the movie because Mak realizes that Nak is a ghost. Nak, who used to be a beautiful woman in prior scenes, changes into a horrific ghost and, at this point, audience are reminded one more time that Nak is different from human beings. The motif of 'cause and effect' throughout Thai horror films reduces monstrosity of ghosts to some extent, or converts into sympathy to ghosts, but surrealism and fantasy of supernatural macabre infliction of ghosts arouses animosity of audiences or interacts to provide indulgence to wrongdoers for audience.

Khon Len Khong is a legitimate horror film that is quite brutal. The identity of Boom, who is the main character in this film, is not a ghost but a human being. However, she has supernatural power from black magic she obtained by asking a spirit doctor for a *kuman thong* that was once her baby from a secret lover killed in a car accident. The methods of killing in these films are unlike Hollywood horror films, but tend to involve the ones they were acquainted with in a former life, be they lovers, relatives, friends or enemies. Boom is a beautiful young girl, who has a secret love affair with a married man. She does this for the promotion of her social status and for money, but not for love. When she gets pregnant, she intends to use her baby to threaten her lover. However, he does not accept her as his family because he also

thinks of her as a tool for his sexual desire. She is raped and almost killed by him and his friends and her revenge begins. She uses her beauty to seduce the man's son. In the end she kills all the members of the man's family. But she also gets punished for her guilty desire for money and sex. Glen Lewis (2005) notes that the female temptress as a murderous ghost is common in Thai ghost movies, but the twist here is the element of implied incest when Boom becomes involved with the family's eldest son after her aborted affair with the father. *Mia noi* (minor wife) remains a common source of conflict for Thai families. This film portrays the mammonism of Boom, and may be a substitute for young people, capitalism and the sexual desire of the secret lover, a high ranking middle aged male, and the prejudice against appearance, polygamy, incest, and the breaking of other social norms, but yet remain deeply beneath the surface, biding the time to be vented.

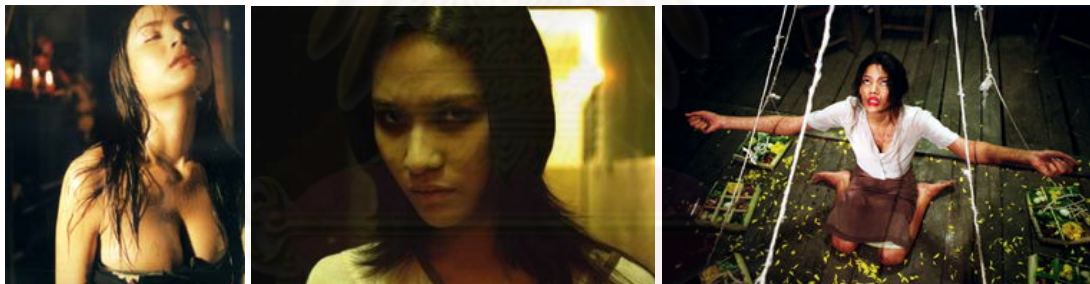


Figure 3.3. Boom, *Khon Len Khong* (2004) / Buppha, *Buppha Ratri* (2003) / Panor, *Long Khong* (2005)

Interestingly, and different from Hollywood horror films, the monsters in Thai horror films are mostly female, as has been mentioned several times above, and the victims of outrageous female monsters can also be women in many Thai horror films. Even if the female monsters are played or killed by a male, in the end the revenge is often with another woman or another female monster. In the later part of *Hian*, the target of the monster in the film switches to the female doctor, who is the mother of the spirit's lover and murderer. Interestingly, the film shows that the female monster

threatening Por, who is the protagonist in the film, in the first part of the movie diverts to another female monster, not a male, in the later scenes.

Kamjohn Luyaphong (2006), a Thai film expert, argues that the existence of female monsters reminds us that we were once living in a matriarchal society where women were the key players in the social structure. This remained until the adoption of Buddhism and Brahmin doctrines, which shifted the power from females to males. In Thai tradition, a ghost can be a protector and an antagonist. But women are generally chosen to be vengeful female monsters to represent bad deeds and misconduct against social norms. As the world has evolved, this meaning has become more fluid. In today's patriarchal society, the female image is often portrayed as a reflection of male desire. Male characters, especially comedians, can verbally tease female ghosts or even touch their breasts. In many movies today, we still see female ghosts in see-through pajamas and postures that suggest sexual rapture. This would seem to have a tendency to devalue women's status in society, as well as perpetuate chauvinism.

As with Mae Nak, the female ghost who dies in pregnancy has often appeared in Thai horror films. In *Hian*, directed by Bhandit Thongdee, Por is beaten by a drug dealer and wakes up in a hospital to discover that she is pregnant. While there, she is haunted by a female spirit who was raped and killed while pregnant. The female spirit comes out to ask for help to get revenge of her own, but at the same time, she is a protector of the baby that Por tried to abort. In *Khon Len Khong*, directed by Tanit Jitnukul, Boom is a beautiful young girl, who has a secret love affair with a married man. When she gets pregnant, she is dumped by her secret lover, and he even tries to kill her, but she loses her baby and becomes a vengeful monster with supernatural power through black magic by a spirit doctor. *Buppha Ratri* is also exemplary of a scary vengeful female ghost who died while pregnant.

Giving birth is the prerogative of women; women are weak, but mothers are strong. Maternity, thus appears to be another detonator for normal women to become monstrous in Thai horror films. Pregnancy is one of the most blessed of gifts;

however, it turns to be an omen for inappropriate couples, such as Boom in *Khon Len Khong*. When she gets pregnant, she tries to use her baby to upwardly mobile her social position. She claims large amount of money from her secret lover. However, when she loses her unborn baby, her wrath culminates and changes into evil. It is ambiguous whether her vengeance starts because she has lost her baby or because she has lost the effective means to promote her social status.

The perpetual gender power struggle within society and culture does not allow the female to overcome the male in physical combat, but the female is in no way as weak an Other as the female of the Self (Waterhouse, 1996: 36). Women have been under pressure by oppressive men, or sometimes among women, or by discrimination in favor of men in patriarchal Thai society. Women who are socially repressed and physically weak become uncanny and destructive absolute monsters in the films, using their beauties and supernatural powers to commit mayhem or kill the wrongdoers, but also innocent people.

3.2.2 Male bourgeois

Even if it is a male-dominated culture colonized by bourgeois ideology, the repression of men can be as much as for women. A rich man in the upper class who is venerable, generous and even good-looking incessantly appears in horror films, not as a good man, but an evil doer. In *Rongraem Phi*, Luang Naruban is a retired government officer, who is rich and respected in the village. Apparently he is a perfect dream man, even if he is elderly, and if we take a closer look at his life, after his wife dies, he lives like an ascetic and puritan. However, it is not difficult to imagine that how hard he has restrained all of his avarice and desire behind his stoic life. The movies that have motifs about the eruption of a puritanical person's repression, in other words Freud's "return of repression", are easily found in stories about the Catholic priest who becomes a devil in Hollywood films and Park Chan-

wook's* latest movie, *Bakjwi* (aka *Thirst*, 2009), of a Catholic priest who becoming a vampire.

Luang Naruban, after his fiancée, Sarapee, runs away with Pun, a young man in the village, loses all what he has kept for his life, such as honor, faithful and respect. But he bequeaths his whole fortune to the two run away and kills himself, leaving something of an enigmatic story behind. While he does not abandon his honor, that is, the repression of social credit, at the same time, it is the beginning of the payoff of his grudge. Two decades later, he is reborn as a vengeful ghost and his revenge starts with the betrayer's children. Likewise the story in which a monster annihilates the whole family of the wrongdoer, the revenge over a generation, that is, the unpaid grudge is expressed this time by a male monster.

Thai society is definitely a hierarchical society, like many others in Asia; the king represents a father figure, with many members of the royal family taking leading roles at all levels of society. It seems to be difficult to be upwardly mobile in Thai society with some reasons being religious repercussions and social structure. People earn more respect with increasing age, wealth, and education. As a general rule, a subordinate listens to, serves, and follows the directions of his or her superior without comment or question. In return, the superior takes care of the subordinate as a mentor of sorts. To place one in relation to another, Thais will ask questions that may seem rude, but are not meant to be; for example, one may be asked about age, salary, and marital status.

The bourgeois male in Thai horror film has sometimes been produced as a violent outlaw. It is hard to classify this type of monsters or criminals to metaphoric form of a 'return of repression', however it seems more like reflection of social problems which happen quite often in real life. In *Khon Len Khong*, the rich

* One of the most popular film directors in Korea. He is also a director of *Old Boy* (2003) which won the Grand Prize of Jury from Cannes Film Festival, and he also won many prizes from various international film festivals.

successful married middle-aged man, who has a minor wife, is very violent, immoral, and a sexual pervert. He commits a crime by raping his minor wife with his group of friends, tries to murder her and his own baby without compunction. An intelligent and high-class young man in *Ban Phi Sing* appears as a monster consumed with so much jealousy he murders his wife. A young and competent doctor is presented as an erotomania and killer for his own opulence. In *Sop* aka *Achan Yai* (aka *Cadaver*, dir. Duloisit Niyomkul, 2006) a generous and respected professor and medical doctor in the university commits murder and falls in forbidden love with his young student.

Male monsters in Thai horror films are very brutal and immoral and, although they do not play the main part of in many of the narratives, they are contributors to causing the scary incidents perpetrated by female monsters.

Due to the belief in karma, which is assumed to come from the Buddhist belief in 'cause and effect', Thai people rarely excessively covet other people's wealth or situation. They believe what they are at present is caused by what they did in a previous life; someone in a better situation deserves to be blessed with what they have because of some good deeds they did in their previous lives. If they do something good in this life, they will be compensated by being reborn in a better situation in the next life. However, at the same time, someone who is in a higher rank, a better status, or is more powerful, is a fearful object. In a hierarchical society, the relationship between people is subordinative and society is colonized by bourgeois ideology. Bourgeois needs an apparatus to control the proletariat, and under this circumstance, the proletariat often appeared as a monster in horror films in the past, such as *Frankenstein* in Hollywood film. Yet, while modern Thai society is hierarchical, people have been changed both inward and outward, and social ideology also has been transformed. In this prospective, the fact that the bourgeois is represented as a monster in the horror films implies that Thai social structure has been meaningfully changed.

3.2.3 Other cultures

In Hollywood films, the perpetual vampire Dracula is often referred to as the exemplary of fear of other cultures. Film scholar Kedall R. Phillips (2005) asserts in his book 'Projected Fears' that:

.....but many Americans continued to feel threatened by European immigrants who had flooded into the country in the years prior to the First World war. While the war years had reduced the flow of immigrants into the United States, as Bill Hing notes, "At the conclusion of World War I, immigration again began to increase. Widespread fear of inundation by a flood of immigrants from the war-devastated counties of Europe developed. The isolationist mood of the period and a severe postwar depression augmented the already strong sentiment for further restrictions.".....This fear of immigrants, particularly European immigrants, was fueled by more than just economic protectionism (i.e., the desire to reserve jobs for "Americans").

Dracula himself, of course, is dramatically foreign. His accent is extreme and his mannerisms peculiar. When we first meet the count his oddity is striking.

Wood notes that if other cultures are sufficiently remote, no problem, they can be simultaneously deprived of their true character and exoticized; if they are inconveniently close, we have the example of the American Indian. Obviously, cultures can antagonize each other when they first encounter each other. However, now that the world has been globalizing and one in Asia knows what has happened in a small city somewhere Europe, it seems as if the whole world is in a one-day life zone.

From diplomatic history, Thai people have been quite open and permissive to other cultures. According to Thai tradition, King Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai (1279-1300) was proficient in the art of cultivating friendly relations. He has often been described as a brilliant diplomat, establishing cordial relations with the Emperor of

China. By the time of the Bangkok period (from 1782), which coincided with the period of western colonialism, foreign affairs became an increasingly prominent feature of the Kingdom's activities, leading to the conclusion of a series of treaties with foreign powers in the reign of King Mongkut or Rama IV (1851 - 1868). Western culture had been introduced to Thailand a long time ago, and at present, Thailand is one of the most popular countries for western tourists to visit, especially European. Nevertheless, western cultures have tended to be treated by Thai people as morally un-venerable, in particular, sexually indecent.

In the New York Times on March 20, 2007, the title 'Xenophobia in Thailand on the rise' was posted. As noticed from the title, it reported about racism and xenophobia in Thailand, and cited cases and interviews from Thais:

On the southern resort island of Phuket, roadside billboards, written in English, advertise million-dollar condominiums — this in a country where a schoolteacher is lucky to bring home a few hundred dollars a month. In northeastern Thailand, men from Germany, Switzerland, Britain and other Western countries live with their Thai wives on neatly groomed streets that stand out from ramshackle neighboring villages.

"I've seen so many old farangs with young Thai women," said Nattaya Rattanamanee, 31, an accountant working at a hotel on the resort island of Samui, using the Thai word for Westerners. "These old farangs damage the reputation of Thailand; they turn Thailand into a land of prostitutes." (Fuller, 2007)

Long one of the most open and accommodating destinations for tourists and businesspeople in Asia, the well-advertised "land of smiles" is showing signs of a subtle frown directed toward foreigners. "As foreigner crime has increased more and foreign investors and companies have more power of influence in Thailand during past decade, there has been a trend that suggests rising economic nationalism," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor of political science at Chulalongkorn University

(2007). Furthermore, as the concepts about foreigners, especially Westerner, are related to sexuality or sex, sometimes foreigners are blamed for sexual diseases in Thai horror films.

In *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*, by Taweewat Wantha, the insolent *farang** played by Andrew Biggs, is beginning to spread the disease, SARS No. 4. This disease is transmitted by a bite from the host, and whoever is infected becomes a zombie. The incident mainly happens at a night club, a symbol of western pop culture, where young Thai people get together and shake their bodies to western rhythms and get drunk with whisky and drugs. Slapstick and dirty toilet jokes run throughout the whole story. As well, some sort of “nationalism” is represented in the film; for instance, the “Stop Virus Bullet” made in Thailand or the use of the very famous motto by Thaksin’s government, “One Tambon One Product”. When Thai film is associated with ‘nationalism’, it is also referred to ‘Otherness’. For example, *farang* means foreigners or foreign, especially western people, used in both good and bad ways. In particular, SARS No. 4 is originated from Africa, and a mosquito, which is the host of this disease, by chance flies into Thailand by a vessel from Africa. The *farang* in the film is brutally rude, and he shouts insults to his Thai employees and neighbors. After he comes back to his apartment as a blood-thirsty zombie, he starts chasing his neighbors. Residents become zombies because of him, and his appetite for blood does not stop at people, but even a snake that a neighbor raises.

* The Thais refer to all foreigners living in or visiting the country as ‘farang. There are many theories concerning the origin of this word. For example, one theory claims that the word is an Arabic derivate; second believes that the term was used to refer to the French to whom large territorial concessions had to be made by King Chulalongkorn in 1893 and 1904 to preserve sovereignty of Thailand. ‘Farang’ are not treated with what could be called racial discrimination, they are treated just “differently”. (Kapur-Fic, 1998: 46)



Figure 3.4. Farang zombie (Andrew Biggs) in *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* (2004)

Kamjohn Luiyaphong (2007), a Thai film expert, notes that there is political allegory between phi pob and Isan (and Lao). In *Ban Phi Pob* (1989), the protagonist is an old female aged-ghost who scares and startles villagers. Later, the male protagonist, who is a doctor, comes from Bangkok to expel the phi pob; however, the phi pob will not go and, furthermore, constantly spreads her species to younger women, despite the endeavors of the male protagonists, even a male spirit doctor. Victory of the phi pob represents two meanings; first, the power of female ghosts in Isan society; second, a triumph over Bangkok. Phi pob represents Isan, fighting to protect the traditional culture of Isan and Lao. Phi pob, as the female, also represents the vulnerable local people in Isan competing against the strong and powerful central government system, which is the male, particularly from 1987 to 1997, when Thailand changed into a more industrialized and centralized society during what has been called the golden era of Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs).

Even though Cambodia is a neighboring country, their culture is reflected as ‘Other’ in Thai horror films. Cambodian language is spoken by malicious monsters when they curse the victims (*Khon Len Khong*), and old Khmer letters are tattooed on the bodies of the spirit doctors. In *Tamnan Krasue*, a Khmer princess, Arawathi, becomes a phi krasue living as a young Thai girl in a small village in Thailand.

La-Tha-Phi is about 11 contestants on a reality TV show who must stay in an abandoned military prison where atrocities took place years before. The film was controversial because the setting closely matched that of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum where the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia tortured prisoners. Cambodian-like ghosts kill every contestant one by one without clear reasons. The Cambodia

government remonstrated with the Thai government about this film, which depreciated Cambodian history and banned its release in Cambodia. The series of *Art of the Devil* (*Khon Len Khong*, *Long Khong 1*, *Long Khong 2*) presents Khmer black magic covering evil deeds. People in the films chant Khmer language to curse and kill people and incantation to get something they want. This Khmer black magic is stronger, more dreadful, and evil. A Cambodian student posted an opinion about the stereotype of Cambodians in Thai movies on a community website:

I've watched quite a bit of Thai movies in the past and some today and what I've noticed is the Thai directors like to stereotype us Khmers as people who use black magic (asian voodoo) and anything that involves curse and spells. For example I was watching this movie called "P" the main character was suppose to be a Khmer chick from a poor small Thai village who became a bar girl to get money so she can help her sick grandmother. She was using magic to get her revenge. In another movie I watched called Art of the Devil 2 the sexy lady teacher was chanting Khmer words every time she cast an evil spell. I am not trying to stir anything up but is that how people in Thailand view us? It's not just these two movies but in many other Thai movies. I just can't name them right now (Thewiseguy, 2009: Online).

Knee (2006) analyzes *Pob Wit Sayong*, directed by Heamarn Cheatamee, saying that the film's reference to foreignness includes an Afro-Thai character, Kong, whose face, in its physical difference, initially scares one of the male protagonists when he unexpectedly encounters him in a library. While the film's sexual anxiety is related to, among other things, modern teen sexual mores in an age of AIDS, and more particularly to female sexual desire, this anxiety is also linked to a concern over foreign socio-cultural influences; not surprising, given that foreign forces are often held to blame for various modern problems in Thailand in a rage of popular and governmental discourse. For example, in the eyes of many, foreign media influences

are the key to the loss of tradition among youth, and foreign money is what has reshaped Bangkok into a modern metropolis, one teeming with tourists who may bring negative moral influences, not to mention sexually transmittable diseases. One linkage the film establishes between sexual panic and the influence of things non-Thai rests on the fact that one of the first of *Ger's* promiscuous conquests is evidently Afro-Thai. In one of the film's many crude, throwaway gags, *Ger* pulls out a magnifying glass to disappointedly examine the man's genitals once he disrobes; a gesture that engages racist stereotypes to simultaneously indicate the lascivious nature of the young woman's sexual appetite and links such appetite with foreignness.

3.2.4 Ethnic groups

Zee-Oui (dir. Nida Suthat Na Ayutthaya and Burani Ratchachaiyaboon, 2004) is a horror-thriller film based on a true story. *Zee-Oui* was a serial killer and cannibalistic Chinese immigrant to Thailand in 1946. He, in the film, kills children and makes soup with their organs and then eats them to solve his health problem with a folk therapy from an unproven traditional belief. This middle-aged man, who can barely speak the Thai language, represents the repression by Thai people of Chinese in Thailand. At the present, the ratio of Chinese immigrants is 14% of population of Thailand (CIA World Factbook, 2010: Online). However, many Chinese are high ranking and engaged in politics, have social status and commercial supremacy. Most Chinese immigrants are entirely assimilated into Thailand at the moment, but many of them constitute a Chinese ethnic community, make their own territories in each province, such as Yaowarat in Bangkok, and show of their power in vast areas in Thailand.

The period of the background of *Zee-Oui* is the late 1940s to the early 1950s, during the period of Field Marshal Phibunsongkram's premiership (1937-1957), when Thailand saw the Chinese as an enemy. Thai scholar Sulak Sivarak suggests that during this period Thai people were taught by Phibulsongkram's government to hate

the Chinese because Phibun was trying to increase the solidarity of the Thai race and create the belief that Thailand was a great nation (Siwalak, 1999: 104). It has only been in the past ten years that the government has allowed the teaching of putonghua or Mandarin Chinese. After more than half a century of suppression, the government is now enthusiastically promoting the teaching of what was once called the “communist language”, requiring at least 5,000 language teachers from China (Kavi Chongkittavorn, 2007: Online).

Wood’s notion that acceptance can be in either of two ways: either they keep to their ghettos and don’t trouble us with their “otherness,” or they behave as we do and become replicas of the good bourgeois, their otherness being reduced to the one unfortunate difference of color. For example, we are more likely to invite a Pakistani to dinner if he dresses in a business suit (1986). Interestingly, Zee-Oui is a Chinese immigrant, but he is a poor proletariat without any good skill or ability, cannot even speak the Thai language well, having nothing but his body. The reason why he became cannibalistic was owing to Chinese folk remedy that if one eats children’s organs, one can get a strong body, or it can cure some kinds of disease. Thai people feel aversion to him as “Other.”

3.2.5 Homosexuality and bisexuality

Thailand has been labeled a ‘gay paradise’ in Asia. It is easy to see ‘*katoei* (กะเทย)’* in the street, as well as the ‘Miss Tiffany’ beauty contest for transgender people every year. Many famous *katoei* actors (or actresses) and scholars appear on TV, and many movies having homosexuals as a main theme have been released in Thailand. Nonetheless, the status of sexual minorities seems as tenuous as ever, as they are restricted from social systems and often have to struggle for identity.

* Men dressing and acting as women

Thailand, at least in Bangkok, seems quite open to acceptance; however, stereotypes are perpetuated on TV or films where they are portrayed as nothing but a flock of facetious and loud people; although, in a positive way, they are mostly the friend of the main actress, caring for and assisting the protagonist.

Although homosexuality is considered abnormal by many people under the mainstream concept of sexuality, it was neither regarded as serious misconduct nor subject to severe punishment in Thai history. Homosexuality was prone to gossip and gentle ridicule rather than serious penalties or death sentences, according to the foreign memoirs. A number of Siamese court ladies were lesbian, but faced no penalty. A law issued during the reign of King Rama V (1868 to 1910) imposed punishment for sodomy by men against women, not between men and men, according to Chalidaporn's research (Pichaya Svasti, January 2009).

The questioning of the ambivalence and contrast in ideology of homosexuality is how gay, lesbian and bisexual people could be "the other" in this 'gay paradise'. Peter A. Jackson and Gerard Sullivan (2000) explain the social context of homosexuality in Thailand that:

In parallel with Thailand's rapid economic development, the Thai gay subculture has also bloomed in the past decade and a half. In 1997 almost 20 monthly Thai language gay magazines competed on newsstands across the country, and also in 1997 the first edition of an English language magazine for lesbians and gay men was published in Bangkok. While tolerated in certain contexts, male and female homosexuality remains unacceptable behaviors in Thailand. Jackson (1989, 1995) has described the psychological, interpersonal and social difficulties faced by Thai homosexual and transgendered men and has developed an account of anti-homosexual sanctions in Thailand. These are not based on legal or religious interdictions as in the West, but rather on cultural norms of appropriate and inappropriate masculine or feminine behaviors..... While there is no gay, lesbian or transgender rights movement in Thailand, some gay and lesbian organizations have been formed in established the Fraternity for AIDS Cessation in Thailand,

or FACT, which conducted HIV/AIDS education activities among gay men. Also in the early 1990s, Anjana Suvarnanonda and a small group of other Thai lesbians established the Anjaree group to give a public voice to issues concerning Thai lesbians and to organize social activities for isolated “women-loving women”, and now has several hundred members throughout Thailand.

Jackson also adds in his book *‘Dear Uncle Go: Male Homosexuality in Thailand (1995)’* that from the late 1980s, Thailand suddenly emerged as a “shock-horror” country with HIV; thus, AIDS provided a focus for the previously diffuse anti-homosexual sentiments, as homosexual men were publicly labeled as the “source” or “origin” of HIV infection in Thailand. A number of Buddhist writers were involved in this stigmatization of homosexual men, drawing on Buddhist teachings to construct arguments against homosexuality that contributed to the fear and angst surrounding much public discussion of HIV/AIDS in the country in the late 1980s.

There has not been any legal sanction or relevant laws relating to homosexuality in Thailand. Presumably, the number of homosexual has increased as their voices have been louder at present. However, as long as relevant laws to protect homosexual rights have not been established, we will continue to see transgenders crying at the physical examination for the army, and homosexuals will live as ‘the other’.

Recent Thai horror films express homosexuality relatively directly or indecently and more seriously. According to Anneke Smelik (2000), homosexuality in cinema has been there since the movies began. Homosexual characters could be seen in films – as they still can be today. However, their presence has characteristically been coded, while gay characters have been taunted, ridiculed, silenced, pathologized, and more often than not killed off in the last reel. Smelik refer to Dyer’s stereotypes explaining that stereotyping works in society both to establish and to maintain the hegemony of the dominant group (heterosexual white men) and to marginalize and exclude other social groups (homosexuals, blacks, women, the working class).

Stereotypes, then, produce sharp oppositions between social groups in order to maintain clear boundaries between them.

Koi Thoe Gay, a parody of *Koi Thoe Yom* and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) directed by Ang Lee, is Yuthlert Sippapak's recent comedy-horror film. Two homosexual couples appear in the film, one is a male couple and the other is female. Udd and Yai are a gay male couple who love cowboy movies and move from the city to a rural area to have a more intimate, rustic setting for their relationship. However, Udd then finds that Yai is having an affair with Tangmo, a local woman who has a lesbian lover, Jenny. Neither Yai nor Tangmo are aware of either of their sexual histories, but Udd discovers the affair and plans to have anal sex with Yai's grandfather out of revenge. However, none of them know that the grandfather is a zombie and lives with some scary spirits. Besides homosexuality, there is the age's sexuality expressed by Yai's grandfather.

Unlike comedy films in which homosexuality is lascivious, ridiculous, misbegotten, homosexuality in Thai horror films represents the grave, normative, and to some extent the insatiable, although comedy-horror such as *Koi Thoe Gay* is as much a comedy as a horror. *Phi Khon Pen* (aka *The Victim*, dir. Monthon Arayangkoon, 2006) is a labyrinthine ghost movie. Among the intertwined stories in the film, female doctor Fai, who loves actress Min, manifests herself as a killer of Min, whom she loves, due to jealousy. This lesbian killer is shown as sophisticated, rich, and intelligent, but at the same time self-indulgent and morbid.

In *Suai Lak Sai*, three same-sex or bisexual couples appear; a female-female couple, a male-male couple and transgender female-male couple. Tawan who is killed by six nurses, including her own sister, and her lover, Dr. Ta, becomes a vengeful ghost, but surprisingly she was a male homosexual who had a sex change so that he could marry Dr. Ta. With that ambiguous sexual identity, the ghost of Tawan looks something hermaphroditic with elusive features, plus part Japanese horror cartoon character. The ghost Tawan is not she or he, but a creature with asexuality.

Nuch, in *Long Khong*, is coupled with Te, as high school girlfriends. This lesbian couple is the first target of the monstrous woman, Panor, their teacher. Unlike the other victims, the reason why Nuch and Te are killed by Panor is not clear, except perhaps because Nuch wears low-cut tops and short pants, with colorful manicured long fingernails, and she is a lesbian. Te and Nuch are not monster in the film, however, they are social mores breakers, at least through the eyes of teacher Panor, so that is why they die by the monster. Even though they are only victims, the film focuses on the homosexuality of this young lesbian couple and implies this as the reason why they are killed, and it might represent that homosexuality is the fatalist factor among 'Otherness' in present Thai society.

3.2.6 Children

As with women, children are also relatively weak in physical and social position. As Wood notes, children are the most oppressed population; the repression of children must be as much as their oppression. Not only in Thailand, but universally, children are under the shadow of adults because children are still growing and their mental and physical states are quite changeable and unstable. They are young enough not to know good and bad, right and wrong, that is why they are often involved in crimes such as a drug trafficking and prostitution. The exact number of child-prostitutes in Thailand is not known, but Thailand's Health System Research Institute reports that children make up 40% of prostitutes in Thailand.

However, poor and isolated children have not been adapted in the Thai horror films. Children who have appeared as a monster or a medium in the horror films are school boys, not girls as of yet, or otherwise, as an unborn baby aborted before their naturally birth.

Children have figured prominently in horror film as ghosts. *Dek Ho*, directed by Songyos Sukmakanan, contains a very familiar ghost story about a school dorm where a child ghost is hovering about. In *Koi Thoe Yom* by Yongyooth Thongkonthun,

an unborn baby ghost startles the village people by wandering around the village where his biological father lives as a head monk. *Yan Sang Tai*, directed by Paween Purikitpanya, which is one episode of *Si Phraeng* (aka *4bia*, 2008), also tells the story of a school boy's curses, a boy who had been bullied by a group of friends at school.

Children, or babies, as monsters appearing in Thai horror films are mostly victims of adults. They were once abused by adults, mostly their parents, or discarded before being born. They show up because they are lonely or they want to be loved. Children monsters in Thai horror films are relevant to family problems; domineering father, blindly loving mother, conflicts with half brothers or sisters. Direct or indirect experience in sexuality in a child's growth has an impact on a child's unconsciousness, becoming a fear or repugnance that can lead to images of monsters. This is implied in *Dek Ho* in that Chatri, a young boy, finds his father having an affair with a maid in the house one night. It is the moment that adds loathsomeness to hatred regarding his father and, later at the school dorm he feels sympathy from a boy ghost hanging around the school, a ghost that actually he has created by himself.

Except *Yan Sang Tai*, ghost children are not dreadful and do not intend to harm people. Ghost children appear because they feel lonely, they need to talk, and want to be taken care of by others. The ghost child in *Yan Sang Tai* is quite brutal, as much as adult monsters in other horror films. While the monster in *The Letter Khian Song Khon Tai*, waits until the victims grow up, the victims are classmates when they were young and the monster was their victim at that time. This movie depicts the ugly hidden nature of humans, whether adults or children.

3.2.7 Machines and New technology

“The Industrial Revolution and its consequence have been a disaster for the human race.” – Ted, Kaczynski*

In modern society, everything changes with super-rapidity attributed to new technology, especially IT. Sometimes a day equals a year and not knowing about a new model of mobile phone, new IT term, or the latest internet feature, means you are a lame duck, or you are treated as a hopelessly out-of-date person. It is no doubt that many people have technology phobia, technophobia, which has been observed to affect various societies and communities through the world. In some of these cases, the new technologies conflict with established beliefs, such as personal values of simplicity and modest lifestyles. *Frankenstein* is an example frequently selected of a movie that expresses this technophobia idea. What is unknown can give anxiety and fears to people and offer ideas for a horror film motif.

Another anxiety has grown up together with the development of technology; alienation. The more the dependency on machine civilization has grown, the weaker human relationships have become. Modern people spend most of their time with a computer, chatting with friends on-line, working with computerized systems, and even seeing movies and TV shows through the computer monitor alone in their own rooms. Modern people live with their mobile phone, talking to friends all day, and even while sleeping, holding their mobile phones in their hands.

Something invisible manifested through photographs is quite a familiar story. Long ago, when the cameras were first introduced, people believed that the machine would deprive the soul of someone who had their photo taken. Some people believed

* Dr. Theodore John "Ted" Kaczynski (born May 22, 1942), also known as the Unabomber (University and Airline Bomber), is an American mathematician and social critic, who engaged in a mail bombing spree that spanned nearly 20 years, killing three people and injuring 23 others.

that the camera could take the apparition of dead people. On account of these ideas about machines which makes images, such as TV, video camera, and still camera, many horror films with these machines as a motif to arouse fear have been produced, e.g., *Ringu* (1998), *One Missed Call* (2007), *The Phone* (2002), with the movie *Ringu* becoming a textbook of this kind of horror film. In Thai horror films, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* (2004) is a movie that takes the camera as a motif, with a grudging ghost that appears through photos.

In *Ngao* (aka *Happiness*) directed by Yongyooth Thongkonthun, another episode of *Si Phraeng*, a ghost turns up via a mobile phone. The film brings up two motifs of fear; the relationship between human and machine, in this case the mobile phone, and the solitude of humans in modern city life. A young woman, stuck in her apartment due to a cast on her leg, communicates with the outside world via a mobile phone and text messages. The mobile phone, her only friend in this situation, however, suddenly turns into a monster through an invisible spirit that has a young man's voice. The enigmatic voice that defines itself as a friend, appeals to her loneliness and drags her to death in the end so that they can be friends forever. From the Thai belief in "ghosts everywhere", now there is a ghost connected via the mobile phone.

Despite all the positive aspects that science has provided for humanity, there is still an inherent distrust towards members of the scientific community. There is just something about scientifically minded or medically minded people that strike an ill chord with the lesser-educated people of the world. *Cloning: Khon Copy Khon* (1999) is about scientific advancement in pursuit of human experiment. Cloning experiments are one of the most controversial topics at the present time, with two separate ideas; one acclaims that it is the future technology for humankind, and the other opposes it being unethical and inhuman. Even though many agree that cloning is high technology for future human life, the fear of the side effects is inevitable. This fear of future technology induces Niwat, a computer programmer and victim of an illegal cloning experiment to fight with the other Niwat, M7, Niwat's clone. This catastrophe starts with Dr. George, the creator himself, and soon involves others who are not

within the parameters of the experiment. But there is Somjate behind the illegal scientific experiment, the owner of a hospital, who wants to maximize profit from the cloning.

The belief that science is dangerous is as central to the horror movie as is a belief in the malevolent inclinations of ghosts, ghouls, vampires and zombies. Tudor analyzed Hollywood horror movies and found that science is postited as a primary source of disorder, and many horror films are given flesh in the person of a ‘mad scientist’ (Tudor, 1989: 133).

3.3 Summary

Monsters in Thai horror films are mostly ghosts and mainly female ghosts. Although not as frequently as female ghosts, male ghosts also appear, and recently gay people have often appeared in horror films as monsters. In Thai belief, a ghost is more complicated and unique, rather than what is usually conceived of as a dead person or an apparition. A ghost in Thai meaning includes bestial human (half-human, half-animal), spirits of nature, such as a tree, and some spiritual places, such as a haunted house, as well as dead people or apparitions. Diabolic humans appear in recent film, and their brutality and evil doings are extreme and grotesque.

Elaborating on Wood’s ‘the Otherness’, seven types of ‘the Otherness’ of Thai society, that appear in Thai horror film are examined in this study; female, bourgeois men, other culture, ethnic groups, children, homosexuals, and new technology and machines.

Monsters in Thai horror films have originated from the past. That means that monsters appear from what they have done or what they have been in the past, and this is thoroughly relevant to Buddhist belief, such as karma. For that reason, the characteristics of monsters are ambiguous. For example, physically weaker women are mostly victims in the human world, but they can become monsters after death.

Thus, for whatever reasons that women become monsters, women usually play an evil role. Nevertheless, men do not always play the good part. Men in many horror films survive until the end, even though they are bad and wrongdoers.



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Chapter IV

Social/political and cultural contexts represented in Thai horror film

“The history of the horror film is essentially a history of anxiety in the twentieth century.” (Paul Wells, 2000)

“Horror films are our collective nightmares.” (Robin Wood, 1986)

Upon entering the 21st century, the most effective theme in horror film is the fear and anxiety of the fast metamorphosis caused by technological development and the unforeseen results from the information and communication technological revolution. In the late 1990s, apocalyptic phenomena, along with the fear of the millennium, such as “Y2K Bug”, had tremendous influence all over the world. Predictions of its potential effects ranged from disabled financial institutions and failures of essential infrastructure services to the utter collapse of modern society. Some took the predictions of technological failure even more seriously and many apocalyptic films were produced reflecting these predictions (Phillips, 2005; Hutchings, 2004).

However, the millennium or apocalyptic phenomena did not have much effect on Thai horror film because of two definite reasons; first, given that the state religion of Thailand is Buddhism, there is a different cosmology from the apocalypse of Christianity and Thailand officially uses the Buddhist calendar in daily life, even though the computerized business and banking systems still had to suffer the anxiety from the “Y2K Bug”; second, Asia, including Thailand, had its own particular problem, that is, the 1997 Asian financial crisis – sometimes called the 1997 IMF. Most Asian countries suffered from this economic crisis for several years, with the 1997 IMF leaving a mark of trauma on every genre of film. For example, Tum, in *Ruang Talok 69* (aka *Sixtynin9* 1999), directed by Pen-ek Ratanaruang, is fired from a financial cooperation during the 1997 IMF and gets involved in dirty crime; *Satang*

(2000), by Bandit Rittakol, reflects people in adversity and poverty overcoming the hardship; the purpose of the film was to console and cheer up the people in the hard time of the 1997 IMF (Production note, 2000: Online). In addition, many other films that were produced during the years shortly after the economic crisis reflect the 1997 IMF trauma.

By 2001, Thailand had recovered from the financial crisis and the Thai film industry also revived from its recession. Since 2003, an average of 45 films have been released per year – although the number of films produced has been much less compared with the 100 films produced in the earlier period. However, film scholars and critics assert that Thai film significantly developed in its cinematic technology and the narratives of the film, which was also a change from the earlier period. As film critic Nanthakhwang mentions, “Now the bubble in the Thai film industry has gone, and only what is essential is left” (Interview, 2005).

A burst of Thai horror film started with Nonzee’s *Nang Nak* in 1999, which, coming together with the economic revival, continued its popularity. The narrative trend of Thai horror film from 1999 to the early 2000s can be said to have follow “tradition” or “nostalgia”. But since 2004, Thai horror film began to have various cinematic styles and narratives, with more individual issues rather than political issues, such as “Otherness” from gender and sexuality. Thai horror films have become more serious and grotesque, the laughing matter having been gradually deflated from the horror films. Many film scholars and critics agree that this is because Thai horror film has been influenced by Japan, Korea and Hong Kong horror films, owing to brisk cultural exchanges among Asian countries as a part of Pan-Asianism.

Meanwhile, domestic political turmoil continued and the economic situation was poor for years after the economic revival from the 1997 IMF. In addition, catastrophic natural disasters, such as the 2004 tsunami, floods year after year, and pandemic diseases, such as SARS and avian flu, have had significant impact. The anxiety and fear of the people for not only national crises, but also small and large

social crimes and immoral incidents have continued to increase with these anxieties and fears assumed to be reflected in horror films in one way or another.

In this chapter, I scrutinize social and cultural contexts, including the economic crisis and political issues, in some outstanding Thai horror films; *Nang Nak*, *Phi Sam Baht*, *Rongraem Phi*, *Buppha Ratri*, *Takhian*, *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*, *Long Khong 1 and 2*, *Bang Phi Sing*, *Faet*, *Ban Phi Poeb* and *Si Phraeng*, and examine how these issues are represented along with the allegorical relationship between them.

4.1 Trauma from the 1997 economic crisis

- *Nang Nak* (1999) / *Phi Sam Baht* (2001) / *Rongraem Phi* (2002)

Bak Moon-im (2006) claims that the IMF trauma opened the door to the imagination of another horror world which is different from before the IMF. Asian countries under the IMF management system had to change and transform their socio-economic and political systems. The IMF urged reform of the political system and the restructuring of the domestic economic system. As well, people needed to adjust to the globalization of the world economy. Reform and restructuring inevitably served to cut excess from the existing systems, which brought fear and anxiety to the people. This restructuring or reorganization has been represented in contemporary Korean horror films.

The Findings reveal that the economic crisis of 1997 caused the high popularity in horror movie production. The economic crisis has also stimulated patriotism, a revival of the past and the values of locality that have been presented through various forms as well as an upward trend towards the cult of god and holy being worshipped in the country. This phenomenon is directly relevant to the content of Thai horror movies which have been made according to tales and stories of local beliefs. The insertion of local beliefs, folklore and culture in various aspects was

aimed at demonstrating the identity of locality and Thainess. This is also applicable to the content of the supernatural made in response to the public favor of the mentioned period (Thanatat Khongthong, 2008). In the same context, Hiiemäe explains the function of legend in her article, saying that legends present us a complex system for manoeuvring around the world filled with mythological dangers. Narrative samples with frightening ending should prevent a person from repeating the condemnable deed, helping thereby to escape a similar punishment, whereas legends that end happily for the main character illustrate the need to follow certain moral standards. The aim of the legends, obviously, is to mediate something more and not just imitate a real situation – the narratives are interpretations or elaborations of facts and can become accepted and understood in traditional narrative communication only as such (Hiiemäe, 2004: 65-80). During the period of hardship, it is natural phenomenon to consolidate morality and mores, and paradoxically horror films are used to reduce fear and anxiety in accordance with legend or folklore narratives.

According to May Adadol Ingawanij (2007), from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, history flooded commercial Thai cinema as never before. In general, Ingawanij situates the heritage films released after the 1997 economic crisis as a symptom of what political theorist, Kasian Tejapira, conceptualizes as the schizophrenia of Thailand's culturally hegemonic bourgeois strata: the urban white-collar middle class who simultaneously yearn for Thainess and global prestige in globalization (Kasian, 1996).

Since the late 1990s until the early 2000s, epic and mythological films became increasingly prominent in Thailand. Nonzee's *2499 Anthaphan Khrong Meuang* (aka *Dang Bailey and Young Gangsters*, 1997) which was a big hit at the box-office after the long term recession of Thai film industry, is the story of Thai gangsters in the 1950s. Many film studies have touched upon 'Thai nationalism' and 'Thai identity' as an issue from an academic standpoint. In the late 1990s, when the economic crisis swept over the country, the Thai film industry attained its renaissance and 'Thai nationalism' became increasingly visible. Thanit Jutnujkul's *Bangrajan* was released

in late 2000, just prior to the January 2001 national election. *Bangrajan* was based on the brave, but vain, battle by the villagers of Bangrajan who fought against Burmese invaders in the war of 1767, prior to the sacking of the capital at Ayutthaya (Sunait, 2000). *Bangrachan* rapidly became a success, grossing more than 150 million baht and it became the largest box office earnings of any Thai film up to that time. The success of *Bangrachan* was soon overshadowed by the long-awaited release of another historical epic, *Suriyothai* by Than Mui (M.C. Chatri Chalerm). Costing 400 million baht, the epic film was the most costly and ambitious Thai movie ever made. The film received unprecedented official support, as well as one of the most costly marketing campaigns in Thai film history. *Suriyothai* earned 500 million baht at the box office and set a new box office receipt record. These two films are both nationalistic in their orientation and both can be read as warnings about the danger of national disunity (Glen, 2003). *Ong-Bak*, a film about ‘muay Thai (Thai boxing)’, was released in 2003. This very Thai film was a huge success in many countries, creating a ‘muay Thai’ boom worldwide, making Tony Jaa a world star with this film. In the same year, *Fan Chan* by six new directors, was a box-office hit, bring up a nostalgic look back at the childhood friendship of a boy and a girl growing up in a small town in Nakhon Sawan province in the 1980s.

With respect to the horror film genre, starting with *Nang Nak* in 1999, the stories of legendary Thai ghosts, folktales, and old familiar ghost stories were revived through the screen; for examples, *Phi Sam Baht* (2001): three ghost stories which are very familiar to Thais; *Tamnan Krasue* (aka *Demonic Beauty*, dir. Bin Bunluerit, 2002), a phi krasue story, *Phi Hua Khat 2* (2004), the first version of which was released in 1980; *Rongraem Phi* (2002), based on a horror novel from the 1970s, first produced on film and released in 1975; *Takhian* (dir. Chalerm Wongpim, 2003), a female ghost who haunts a Takhian tree and produced as a film many times before; *Tukae Phi* (aka *Lizard Woman*, dir. Manop Udomdej, 2004), based on a horror novel, the first film being released in 1969.



Figure 4.1. *Rongraem Phi* (2002) / *Phi Hua Khat* (2004) / *Tamnan Krasue* (2002) / *Tukae Phi* (2004)

As well as the restoration of horror film, Thai films revived along with Thainess in the period of this collective trauma, i.e., when the IMF management system was imposed. The 1997 economic crisis started in Thailand and then rapidly spread over Asia. Many people lost their jobs during 1997 to 1998 because of the financial crisis. Therefore, this economic crisis created the product of ‘fear’ and there must have been some healing treatment for Thai people to strengthen Thai national unity. As Kendall (2005) has noted, when the culture is in turmoil, for some reason audiences flock to the horror film. Perhaps, during these times of general social anxiety, the horror film functions to shock its audience out of their anxiety. Anxiety tends to promote a sense of helpless fear, while on the other hand, it provides an impetus for change. In this sense, horror’s encounter with Thainess might have been the best choice for the time. Horror films were produced during the Great Depression, with the implication being that the films offered an escape into an unreal world away from the depredations of a grim economic reality (Hutching, 2004).

4.1.1 Economic contexts *

At the start of the 1990s, a combination of trade expansion, private investment, and tourism provided powerful driving forces that gave Thailand three consecutive years of double-digit economic growth. However, the economy began to slow down toward the mid 1990s as a result of unsustainable exports and tough competition in the world market. In the late 1990s, Thailand's economy suddenly faltered under its heavy financial burden – export growth almost came to a standstill, the international financial position worsened, the baht weakened, and Thailand went into its worst recession in recent history. By early 1997, the Thai economy was in serious crisis in many areas. Several short and long term measures were introduced to revive certain sectors and slow the decline of others. Economic growth for 1997 was estimated to be negative and forecasts for 1998 suggest a GDP decline of 7-8 percent. A \$17.2 billion loan was arranged through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), along with a reform package aimed at macroeconomic stabilization and to tackle the serious problems of the financial institutions. As reported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, more than half of the workers who had been laid off by October 1997 were women. Unemployment, excluding the seasonally inactive labor force, is estimated to have risen to 1.1 million persons in August 1998, up from 293,000 persons in August 1997. Since most of the jobs lost came from labor-intensive industries such as textiles, garments, shoes and leather goods, a high proportion of the unemployed were women. Between January and October 1997, 647 Thai companies reported 32,214 layoffs. Of those companies, 181 cited a permanent shutdown of operations, 44 cited temporary shutdowns and 130 blamed it on cuts in production (Encyclopedia of Nations Thailand Poverty and Wealth, Online). After the 1997–1998 currency crisis, millions

* Asian Development Bank [Online], 1998. Source www.adb.org; Thailand Development Research Institute [Online], 2001 Source www.tdri.or.th; Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, Thailand: Economy and Politics (UK: Oxford University Press, 2002).

of people were unemployed and impoverished and it was not until 2001 that Thailand regained momentum over the baht and economy. Restructuring and reform were undertaken by every level of society. The Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai of the Democratic Party was discredited with the 1997 economic crisis, and in the 2001 election, Thaksin Shinawatra replaced him.

4.1.2 Cultural contexts

1) The Nostalgic turn

Disappointment of the present makes us look back to the past; instability of the present makes the past beautiful. Nostalgia films portray the past as a simpler, purer, and more wholesome time. Memories of the past carry with audiences not only a strange juxtaposition of present and past, but also bring an inherent sense of loss. Whether memories of joyous events or grievous moments, the act of remembering is always an experience of the distance between where we are now and where we were then. The term 'nostalgia' has overtones of separation between 'there in the past' and 'here in the present'; in other words, nostalgia is based upon the premise of the overt contrast between the past and the present. In fact, according to western studies, the reason why the notion of this word as a kind of disease changed into a term of psychological status is because of rapid severance of rural and urban, tradition and modernity due to the modernization process (Moon, n.d.: 328-350).

Anchalee states that the new-generation directors of New Thai cinema, who started to emerge a few months before the Asian economic crisis in 1997, represent the Asian values in their works; on the surface, this generation tends to break up of the Thai film culture, but at the same time, they always call for the seeking of the perfect family, home and the longing for the good old days (2006). For example,

Nang Nak bears the aesthetic logic of the nostalgia film in Fredric Jameson's* definition (Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 1999; 2000). Its aesthetics are not representational as such, but consists of the de-differentiated combination of an array of 'texts' signifying either the *boran*, the national *geist*, or both and is in anticipation of the spectator who is now inscribed as being, simultaneously, both 'modern Thai' and the 'virtual tourist' (May Adadol Ingawanij, 2007).

2) Escapism

A Chicago writer wrote an interesting article about how escapist movies become more appealing in a bad economy (Latham, 2008). It is commonly accepted that in times of hardship we turn to fantasy films and fiction for succor. There is the popular cliché in times of economic gloom, people turn to "escapism". In 1930s America, so the cliché goes, people flocked to the cinema and theatre to forget their misery in brash, bright musicals and films. While horror has received much critical attention, other types of fantasy are often rejected as being merely "escapist" – a term generally associated with works of art that one is not supposed to take seriously. In this regard, most fantasy films are considered escapist because they temporarily transport viewers to impossible worlds and provide unrealistic solutions to problems. Fantasy films are defined to be films with fantastic themes, usually involving magic, supernatural events, make-believe creatures, or exotic fantasy worlds. What is

* Jameson is a literary critic who equates the nostalgic turn in 1970s cinema with a tendency towards cultural pastiche – the combination of old images and themes – that signaled the failure of the generation's inventiveness. The way nostalgia film or *la mode rétro* represents the past for us in hyperstylized ways (the 50s in George Lucas's *American Griffitti*; the Italian 1930s in Roman Polanski's *Chinatown*); in such works we approach "the 'past' through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image, and '1930s-ness' or '1950s-ness' by the attributes of fashion". The "history of aesthetic styles" thus "displaces 'real' history". Jameson sees this situation as a "symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way."

different for horror films is that horror films include ‘threat’ and ‘impurity’, according to Noël Carroll’s notion.

In this respect, most Thai horror films are combined with elements of fantasy in that Thai horror films are mainly composed of supernatural ghosts, uncanny powers and mythical creatures, such as *pret* (เปรต) Restoration of horror film during the economic crisis in Thailand, thus, had more meaning in that Thai horror films from 1999 to the early 2000s implied ‘escapist’ narratives.

In an article in the Bangkok Post, Kong Rithdee introduces the term "Village Escapist Cinema" to describe the movies put out by Phranakorn Film, the makers of such contemporary classics as *Phi Hau Khat 2*^{*}, *Hua Lut Family*^{*}, *Luang Phi Teng*^{*}, *Luang Phi Teng 2*^{*}, *Taeo Te Tin Raboet*^{*} and *Khrobkhrua Tua Dam*^{*}. The company’s mind-numbing comedies and horror comedies feature generally the same cast of TV and cafe comics, doing the same schtick, running and screaming from the same non-scary ghosts in movie after movie. The plots are usually nonsense to begin with, and by the end are pretty much jettisoned, so all that is left is a loosely strung-together collection of double entendres, idiotic puns and scatological sight gags that are so bad they actually smell (Kong Rithdee, Jan 2009). The types of movies that Phranakorn makes have always been around. It is just that the New Thai Cinema movement (or Thai New Wave) that internationalized Thai film in the late 1990s and early 2000s was part of a resurgence of the domestic industry, that had fell into the doldrums in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s.

Even though other film productions tended to upgrade to the ‘taste’ of urbanized audiences at the moment, surrealistic and absurd comic elements still

* ผีหัวขาด 2 (2004) director: Komsan Treepong

* หัวหลุดแฟมิลี่ (2008) director: Jaroen Aonlamai

* หลวงพี่เท่ง (2005) director: Note Choenim

* หลวงพี่เท่ง 2 (2008) director: Bamroe Phongintri

* แด้วแตะดินระเบิด (2009) director: Phot Anond

* ครอบครัวตัวดำ (2007) director: Note Choenim

remain in the horror film genre, and this implies ‘escapism’ of reality, which is one of the most frequently cited reasons by film studies for going to see horror films (Storey, 2003: 82).

3) The Conservative turn

The turn to the nostalgia corresponded with a rise in conservative philosophy and phenomenon. Home, family, and the oldies were incited as the solution of trauma from the financial crisis along with religious ideas, particularly Buddhism. Buddhist notions of karma and rebirth are profoundly conservative in the way they legitimise prevailing social structure and hierarchy. It is as if one’s place in life was determined by natural law. This does not mean that social change and mobility are impossible, for one can never tell how one’s karma will work out. By showing compassion for others, helping them where possible, they may well be in a position to return the favour later (Strart-Fox, 2006). In Thai Buddhist society, one person by virtue of wealth, social position or level of education will play the dominant role. The Thai family in a village has usually a strong patriarchal system in which mother plays an important role, especially in managing money and socializing children (Karpur-Fic, 1998: 61-2).

During the late 1990s until the early 2000s, the disrupted economic situation created big changes in the social structure and systems (Pattana Kitiarsa, 2007). Most companies reduced their size by restructuring, with many people suddenly losing their jobs. Men, as the head of household, after losing their job, lost their authority. These men incompetent from losing charge of family finances, are well reflected in the films in this period. Notwithstanding, the films emphasize home and family, encouraging men, especially family men, and building good wife’s image up.

Buddhist morality and ethics were also strengthened. Morality tales are one of the last shared languages of the world; using a metaphorical story has relevance to most of the societies in the world. Like the science fiction and fantasy genre, horror can make a commentary about events in the world without any direct narrative link to them.

4.1.3 Reading Films

1) *Nang Nak*

The film's approach evokes nostalgia for both a past era in Thai filmmaking and a still earlier era in Thai history. In the opening sequence, the film produces assorted historical background scenes so that audiences are able to easily access the world in their memories and the film can be a trustworthy entity, not just an absurd old ghost story. The film precisely informs about the time being 1868 and some historical evidence follows, such as a total solar eclipse in the opening sequence, which really happened in 1868 during the reign of Rama IV, or the appearance of the historical personage of the Buddhist monk Somdej Phra Buddhajarn*. Ingawanij (2007: 183) analyzed that the vision of the eclipse calls forth from Thai viewers their collective memory of the nation's past, or the idea conventionally held about what this episode signifies in the master narrative of the nation. King Mongkut, Rama IV, died from malaria right after the phenomenon of the eclipse, and this historical fact is superimposed on the present national crisis, such as the IMF. The foreboding opening image evokes audience's collective fear and induces a link with a fear of the present.

Nang Nak portrays Thai men under the oppression of men's duties, in particular, men's oppression in times of national hardship. In the film, war carries adversity, which can be compared with the 1997 financial crisis. Mak has to leave his pregnant wife to participate in a war. War has been male-dominated in the history of human life, men expand the territory and power with a war, but at the same time war is the crossroads between life and death. Mak gives up his role as a father and husband and chooses patriotism for the cause of the nation. With the IMF, many people lost their jobs and men as the head of the family, were under pressure or their

* Somdej Toh (1788-1872; B.E. 2331-2415), known formally as Phra Buddhacharn Toh Phomarangsi, was one of the most famous Buddhist monks during Thailand's Rattanakosin Period.

authority was tarnished. Even though Mak enters into a war leaving his family behind, a strong sense of responsibility for his family and his love for his wife supports him to survive in the infernal battlefield. When he comes back from the war, he takes the role as a family man, such as working in the field, gathering wood, fixing the broken stairs in the house. However, Mak suffers from the trauma of losing a friendship, unfulfilling patriotism, and the rejection from going into the monkhood. After he comes back from the war, a phantom of his friend, Am, who died in the battlefield, clings to Mak and appears incessantly. He feels guilty that only he survived from the war and he could not save his friend. Incompetence and the inability of men as paternal forces in the economic crisis are reflected in the situation of Mak at the war in that he is also in a deadly situation and cannot save his friend from death.

In particular, the first scene of *Nang Nak* has beautiful scenery consists of children swimming in the water, small boats rowing on the river, old styled wooden houses along the river, which might remind audiences of those clean and peaceful days. The scenes that depict old innocent days are repeated throughout the whole story. For instance, Nak ploughs the field with a buffalo; Nak delivers her baby with a midwife's help, relying on the old traditional method without modern medical knowledge; every villager, including Nak and the head monk, chew betel nut, so when they open their mouths to talk, the inside of their mouths are all black colored.

Mak, in the previous film or folktale versions, does not have such a big role in the narrative, in that he is shown deserting from the barracks, or as a coward frightened by his ghost wife. However, in the Nonzee's version, Mak is a more important character than in the earlier films. Mak serves the country, leaving his loving wife in pregnancy. He comes back from the battlefield after he is severely injured and then assumes the role in taking care of his family. Empowering Mak's role in Nonzee's *Nang Nak* is due to the film's focuses on Mak and Nak's love story according to the director's explanation (Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999), but men's burden in the difficult situation is also embodied through Mak's role. The pressure and paternal responsibility of Mak is illustrated in the scene when, as soon as Mak heals from his

wounds, he returns to his home, even though Somdej Toh, who saved Mak's life, suggests that he ordain to become a Buddhist monk.

Nak, as a wife and mother, works hard instead of Mak, as a husband and father, during the time Mak is in the battlefield. Nak plows the fields, working the same as men; however, she does not abandon her maternal responsibilities. She takes care of her child until she dies and she still keeps her loyalty to her husband. The film insinuates the exemplary ideal of woman through Nak.

Nang Nak stresses morality which people can easily lose in difficult times, especially during financial hardship. Nak dies during labor, and even worse, the midwife commits an immoral crime by stealing the ring from the finger of Nak; which is why the midwife is the first victim murdered by the ghost Nak. Nak kills people who reveal her secret to Mak, or who try to break her relationship with Mak. For her love, many innocent village people die. She also lies. When Mak is told the story that Nak is a ghost, she accuses the villagers that they are jealous of her. However, Nak's excessive brutality must be taken down because she crosses over the boundary of morality.

The solution that *Nang Nak* suggests is Buddhism. One of the main pillars for Thai national identity, Buddhism saves Mak's suffering from war trauma and his ghost wife. While Nak is giving birth with a midwife's futile superstitious help, Mak gets his life back with a Buddhist monk's ritual ceremony. Nak dies, while Mak survives. In the original version of the folktale *Nang Nak* or the movies *Mae Nak Phrakhanong* of the earlier period, a spirit doctor or novice repels the ghost Nak instead of a Buddhist monk, although the stories presuppose Buddhism is behind it. However, Nonzee's *Nang Nak* presents Buddhist as a salient part of Thai society.

After Mak has a severe injury from the war, he is sent to be under the protection of Somdej Phra Buddhajarn, who saves Mak from the brink of death, showing that sacred Buddhist medicines and chant can save Mak's life. Somdej Phra Buddhajarn appears again in the climax of the film. Although neither a Brahmin spirit doctor, nor the head monk of local temple, can save the victims from the outrageous

ghost Nak, Somdej Phra Buddhajarn appears suddenly from the misty forest and terminates the scary event and saves the villagers. Somdej Toh seems to be not only a Buddhist monk, but he also substitutes for the monarchy; first, the head monk in the village cannot save them, but a monk of virtue, Somdej Phra Buddhajarn can save the village; second, the head monk is unable to save Nak's life – when Nak asks the head monk's advice about her bad feeling, the head monk gives a charm to Nak and says “you are safe from all evil things”, but she dies and becomes a ghost. However, Mak, on the brink of death from the severe wounds from the war, has his life saved by Somdej Phra Buddhajarn. In the final scene, Mak can be seen in Buddhist robes sitting on a boat with a peaceful face rowing a boat along the river. Mak leaves the secular world to devote himself as a Buddhist monk; he finally finds peace of mind.

The narrative of Nang Nak is a quite traditional type of Thai horror movie in that it contains melodrama, supernaturalism, and Buddhism. But significantly, Nang Nak is “healing film”, which is different from Hollywood horror films. Most Hollywood horror films show how to destroy monsters, while Thai horror films, in particular Nang Nak, focus on how to save a ghost or how to relieve its pain. In the final scene, Somdej Toh chants to lay Nang Nak to rest in peace and then scoops out a part of forehead bone to respect her love and soul forever. He keeps the piece of bone himself, and until today the rumor of the piece is widespread but no one knows where it is.

2) *Rongraem Phi*

Rongraem Phi also provides images of a specific time and place. The main character lost one leg and his loving wife during World War II, and later he meets a new love in Nakhon Nayok province. He wears old styled government official uniforms, and his palatial mansion in Nakhon Nayok looks to be of the classical European style of architecture. *Rongraem Phi* is a classical horror story, based on A.

Atthajinda's novel from the 1960s, which was produced as a movie for the first time in 1975.

Luang Naruban, in *Rongraem Phi*, is a retired government official in a village in the outskirts of Bangkok. In his real life, he is an old widower and lame in his right leg, but a respected and venerable high ranked rich man. He has honor and riches, but a lack of love. He lost his wife during World War II together with his one leg and has lived alone being lonely. When he comes back from Bangkok to his hometown after he retires, he sees a beautiful young girl in town. Soon he falls in love with her and proposes to her to marry. On the night of the wedding, his fiancée Sarapee runs away with a young man, Pun, whom she loves and Luang Naruban is left alone humiliated and disgraced in front of many villagers. The rest of his life does not mean anything to him. He decides to kill himself, planning horrific revenge in the future. Twenty five years later, Luang Naruban is born again as a ghost. In this surreal life, he does not have to live a pretentious life to retain his dignity and honor, because he is a ghost and people can not see him. He can be as monstrous as he wants because he is no longer a venerable government official.

Luang Naruban is an old man limping with no right leg. He has to walk with a stick, an incapable old man now. His disabled body infers a lethargic men's situation in a financial crisis. Although he is rich, his property can not save his honor. He proposes to Sarapee to marry, who is crying thinking of her young lover, and says, "Don't cry. Marry me then I'll give you all I have." He offers her everything he has, but it is useless for Sarapee, a young woman. She runs away with a young man, Pun, who she loves.

Luang Naruban was a gentle and venerable man in the village. But his present situation is no longer acceptable because he kills innocent people and his revenge is over the boundary of morality. His revenge starts with a young lady who comes into the hotel at night. She is running away from abuse of her husband. The hotel people understand the situation, so they allow her to stay at the hotel. But she also has a secret love affair with another man. Then, Luang Naruban's ghost kills her because of

her unforgivable sin, at least for Luang Naruban. She is murdered because of ‘what she deserves’, while her husband is also found dead in his car on the way back home. The next victim is a discourteous worker. Thus, Luang Naruban is a vengeful and malicious ghost, but at the same time he, so far, is also a guardian of morality. However, soon he becomes excessive, his rage breaks forth, and now his victims are no longer related to morality. He kills the housekeeper and every member in the hotel one by one. He becomes a real monster and a target that must be eliminated.

Rongraem Phi is a film reminiscent of many Thai traditional beliefs. For example, a black cat comes up on the dinner table suddenly, and an owl flies into the house through the window from somewhere and dies. Spirit doctors are invited to expel bad spirits one after another, but the power of the bad spirits is much stronger.

Sarapee and Pun betray their savior, thus their children fall into danger. In the middle of the film, a monk appears and says, as if giving a sermon, “If it will happen, it must happen. Everything in the world is linked to karma. You can’t stop it.” These words show the theme of the film as relevant to the Buddhist doctrine of ‘karma’.

3) *Phi Sam Baht*

The Thai title ‘*Phi Sam Baht*’ means ‘three baht ghost’, following the title of comic books of ghost stories a long time ago. Thai comic books in the past cost one baht per book and three ghost stories are adopted in the film, thus the name *Phi Sam Baht*. This omnibus styled ghost film contains three familiar ghost stories in Thailand. The first story is one of the most adopted subject matter, an old Thai drum and a Thai dancer coming back from the past. In the opening scene of the first story, a delivery man reads a comic book about a ghost story in the backside of a truck, with a ghost watching from the dark corner. This scene makes audiences suddenly look back to their childhood when they were young and every time they read a ghost novel or comic book, or listen to some ghost stories, they felt as if something was there in the dark or behind a curtain and they shivered when there was a little sound or motion.

The second story is about ‘namman phrai’, known as a magical potion in Thailand. This ‘namman phrai’ is one of the ‘sequelisation’ themes of horror that accelerated in the 1980s, appearing regularly alongside ‘*Mae Nak Phrakhanong*’, ‘*Takhian*’ and ‘*Phi Pob*’. The title of the film and each subject certainly picked something familiar to the audience in order to arouse nostalgia, which also can help one escape from hard time with surrealistic and imaginary story, even though it is only two hours long.

Pan, in the second episode of *Phi Sam Baht*, is a beautiful young lady, but her real life is not as bright as her beauty. She has to put up with a jam-packed boat every morning to go to work; she does not have a boyfriend. Her life seems to be boring, thus she goes out with her girl friends to night clubs every night to seek something exciting. But pleasure is not for her yet. Pan lives next door to a middle-aged lady whose life looks to be full of delightful moments. She brings home young handsome men every night, and surprisingly those young men seem to fall seriously in love with her. She hands over her secret love potion ‘namman phrai’ to Pan when she moves out from the apartment. Pan tries to use it on a man she meets at the night club one night and finds that it works. All of sudden her love life is changed. Whoever Pan wants, she can have them if she uses the ‘namman phrai’. The story is quite moralistic, although scenes and camera shots in the film are very titillating and sexual.

Vinai, an old retired soldier, is a husband of Gunya, a young pretty girl in the third story, ‘*Chong Wen (aka Revenge)*’, of *Phi Sam Baht*. Vinai is portrayed as a man who is incapable of love. When he was younger, he served the country, but now he is an old man who cannot love his beautiful wife. He lolls around with his big fat body all day, never going out from his small room. Yet he always swears at his wife and hurts her severely. The man, who has lost his ability to earn a living and the productive capacity to have his own child, is living a distorted, perverted, and miserable life. This can be compared to men under financial problems, such as the IMF, they lost their jobs, their authorities in the family declined, and then were finally incapable as a man. When he finds his wife is pregnant with her former boyfriend, Tongin, he skewers his wife’s vagina with a long sharp stick to make her fall in the

same situation as himself. He is only a useless devilish social evil now. He dares to answer “I have a right to do it” to detective Nop’s question “How could you beat and abuse your wife in 3 months of pregnancy?” Gunya makes all three men who had hurt her lethargic. Men’s power and status are beneath woman.

Gnod’s features are terribly distorted. With his monstrous face, he always covers his body and face with a blanket. He lives in a small hut apart from the house, and no one wants to deal with him even his own parents. But a pretty little girl Paga is always good to him. Gnod’s body represents the loss of order that might come from transgression. Gnod metaphorically portrays social outcasts. The story tells how society drives anyone toward destruction.

As compared with *Nang Nak*, *Phi Sam Baht* suggest Buddhism more indirectly. The three stories of *Phi Sam Baht* focus on ‘cause and effect’, which is one of the primary Buddhist doctrines. Everything what you have now comes from what you have done in the past. This very simple but powerful concept is associated with not only these films, but also almost all Thai horror films. In *Phi Sam Baht*, because of Pan’s sexual desire, she dies and suffers even in her grave. Every man who torments Gunya is killed or imprisoned by the ghost Gunya.

Nang Nak, *Phi Sam Baht* and *Rongraem Phi* can be defined as morality tales in that they have a supernatural element and they are based on a didactic theme. The monstrous figures in the films have long served as warrants for the systems of morality – if you cross the boundaries of morality, these figures await you.

4.2 Fear of natural calamities and pandemic diseases

- *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat (2004) / Takhian (2003)*

Natural calamities and pandemic diseases have occurred repeatedly throughout the history of human beings everywhere in the world. Even though technology and scientific civilization have progressed, yet many people in the world still suffer from natural calamities and epidemic diseases.

Throughout centuries human fear has induced the emergence and formation of folkloric phenomena. It is characteristic of human nature to fight against fear, trying to reduce or prevent it, and this aim reverberates in the folk narratives. The mediation for fear in folklore does not, however, provide a tradition carrier relief from these fears, but proposes solutions to handle them (Hiimäe, 2004: 65-80). Sharrett notes in his PhD. Dissertation (1983) that folklore has described society's attempts to pretend that evil is an external force visited on the community, or in the Calvinist tradition, a disease brought about by the individual's falling out with God. Whereas, even narratives about dying of plague often contain an idea that doing the right thing helps to escape the disease, reflecting both the harsh historical reality as well as the ideal solution of a dangerous situation in Thai horror films. B. Kerbelité, a Lithuanian folklorist (1998: 16), claims that the outcome of an individual's conflict with creatures of the otherworld depends directly on the person's conduct. Narratives were also the only place, where solutions that have no logic in reality would function perfectly.

In medieval Europe, the outbreak of the plague spread throughout the Mediterranean and Europe, and is estimated to have killed 30% to 60% of Europe's population, reducing the world's population from an estimated 450 million to between 350 and 375 million in 1400. This has been seen as the creation of a series of religious, social and economic upheavals which had profound effects on the course of European history. Donald G. McNeil's essay in the New York Times says, in medieval Europe, Jews were blamed so often, and so viciously, that it is surprising it was not called the

Jewish Death. During the pandemic's peak in Europe, from 1348 to 1351, more than 200 Jewish communities were wiped out, their inhabitants accused of spreading contagion or poisoning wells. The swine flu outbreak of 2009 has been nowhere near as virulent, and neither has the reaction. But, as in pandemics throughout history, someone gets the blame – at first Mexico, with attacks on Mexicans in other countries and calls from American politicians to close the border (Mcneil, 2009). Every event has cause and effect, but when people fail to find the reasons scientifically, they have the tendency to blame others; someone or something has to become a scapegoat. In the old days, people often tried to accuse others with religion, such as Satanism or the devil in western countries. Natural calamities and pandemics have produced many horror films on the theme of apocalypse, for example, *28 days later* (2000), *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* (2004), *The Plague* (2006). Interestingly, in Hollywood's horror films, pandemics or plague disease mostly feature as zombie type monsters due to the characteristic that a zombie virus spreads quickly and can be infected by physical contact such as biting.

Knee (2005) claims that *Pob Wid Sayong* (aka *Body Jumper* 2001) implies a warning of AIDS. While the film's sexual anxiety is related to, among other things, modern teen sexual mores in an age of AIDS, and more particularly to female sexual desire, this anxiety is also linked to a concern over foreign socio-cultural influences – not surprising, given that foreign forces are often held to blame for various modern problems in Thailand in a rage of popular and governmental discourses. For example, in the eyes of many, foreign media influences are the key to the loss of tradition among youth and foreign money is what has reshaped Bangkok into a modern metropolis, one teeming with tourists who may bring negative moral influences, not to mention sexually transmittable diseases.

To support this, quoting from gothic theory, the gothic is mutable because it is bound to historical moment, constantly reworking the material of the past in terms of the cultural fears of the present. As cultural formations change, in terms of social, economic, and technological developments, so also do the fears they generate in the

social imagery. Thus, Bela Lugosi's version of *Count Dracula* (in Tod Browning's *Dracula*), appearing in 1931, resonates with an American inter-war nervousness about its renewed relation to Europe after the long period of political isolationism in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Gary Oldman's Count from *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Coppola, 1992), when we first see him dragging a bloodied razor across his tongue, produces a much more uncanny effect, for his Dracula speaks to the anxieties and thrills associated with social transgressions that are recognizable to an early 1990s audience. The razor pulled across the tongue indicates our somewhat uncomfortable fascination in the 1990s with erotic piercing and cutting (as the pragmatic tongue is resignified by the razor as a site of perversion) while it simultaneously draws on the powerful fear of disease transmitted through blood in the era of HIV and AIDS.

In Thai horror film, apocalypticism is rarely reflected in narratives because it is believed, due to the different culture, in particular religion – Buddhism. However, the fear of disasters and pandemics is represented with various features.

4.2.1 The historical background

The AIDS pandemic came to the Thai public's notice in 1984. It has since spread from men who had sex with men, to injecting drug users, to sex workers, to the male population at large and finally to the partners of the males and their children. A survey conducted in 2002 by UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO found that, at the end of 2001, there were 650,000 infected adults (i.e. 15-49 years of age), 220,000 of these were females. In addition, there were 21,000 infected children (0-15 years) and the ratio of males/females who live with HIV/AIDS has shifted from 4:1 to 2:1 during the last decade (Patchanee Malichao, 2004). AIDS has been one of the most impactful and crucial disease in all over Thailand so far.

In 2003, severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) started in Asia and resulted in a global alert being issued by WHO on March 12, 2003. The outbreak of

SARS in Asia caused adverse social and economic impacts in the region, especially in the tourism and transport sectors.

Disease epidemics or outbreaks are considered as major unexpected factors, which might affect the tourism industry, one of the most remarkable economic and social aspects in Thailand. The impact of SARS in developing Asia revealed the chain of effects in the economy, such as inflows of foreign tourists falling sharply, which leads to cuts on both sides of the balance-of-payments service account and more losses in travel-related jobs. Ultimately, all these channel effects have an impact on GDP growth. The outbreak of SARS in Asia caused minus growth of GDP Thailand (-0.9) in 2003. In the last two decades, Thailand has enjoyed increasing international tourism receipts, from 2.68 percent of GDP in 1980 to 5.93 percent in 2002. However, the GDP share decreased to 5.25 percent in 2003, owing to the reduction of inbound tourists as a consequence of the SARS outbreak during the period from March to June 2003. Tourism income increased from 145 billion baht in 1994 to 312 baht in 2003. Tourism income increased with the diminishing growth rate: 12 percent before the 1997 Asian financial crisis; 9 percent during the period 1998-2002; and the lowest level, 8 percent, was in the year 2003. The number of tourists to Thailand increased from 81,340 in 1960 to 10.08 million in 2003. However, Thailand experienced negative growth in tourist numbers in 1976, 1983, and 1991 when there were political conflicts within the country or in the region, and again in 2003 owing to the unexpected outbreak of disease (Steinmueller, 2005: 14-22).

No less than a year after becoming free from the SARS fear, another epidemic disease attacked throughout the world. In September 2004, Sakuntala Premphasri, an 11-year-old Thai villager, and her mother, Pranee Thongchan, died from bird flu. Days later, the girl's aunt, Pranom Thongchan, also became ill. In the same month, a 26 year old Bangkok woman died from bird flu. The death toll of avian flu raised fears among Thai people immediately. Southeast Asian countries and China had great losses and Thailand was the one of the countries that had the biggest losses economically (Hamilton, 2004).

On December 26, 2004, the Indian Ocean Earthquake Tsunami swept throughout Southeast Asian countries. The Thai government reported 4,812 confirmed deaths, 8,457 injuries, and 4,499 missing after the country was hit by a tsunami caused by the Indian Ocean earthquake. The Thai authorities estimated that at least 8,150 are likely to have died. The popular tourist resort of Phuket was badly hit. The economic impact of the tsunami on Thailand was considerable, though not as great as in poorer countries such as Indonesia or Sri Lanka. Thailand has a liberalized, flexible and robust economy, which has shown powers of rapid recuperation after previous setbacks. The sectors most badly damaged were tourism and fishing. The beach resorts along the Andaman Sea coast were extensively damaged, and the rebuilding of the infrastructure took several years. Many Thai-owned hotels and other small businesses were ruined, and the Thai government provided large amounts of capital to enable the recovery of the private sector. This tsunami caused Thai economic growth to slump 4.5% (Royal Thai government, 2005: Online).

Besides natural calamities, great and small disasters by human error occur incessantly. In 24th September 1990, Phetchburi road was enveloped with the flames from a gas truck explosion. From this incident, 59 were dead, 89 were injured and over 40 houses were burnt along the street (Ramruak 19 years, 1990: Online). About ten years later, this horrible incident was represented in the horror movie, *Khon Hen Phi* (aka *The Eye*, dir. Oxide and Danny Pang, 2002), by Pang brothers in 2002.

Strong economic growth has brought some environmental problems to Thailand. Over the last decade, Thailand has been increasingly threatened by the problems of industrial wastewater, hazardous wastes, natural resources degradation, worsening air and water pollution and a decline in the level of biodiversity.

Despite the annual southwest monsoon, Thailand is subject to drought, particularly in the northeastern region. As of 2002, Thailand had less available water per person than any other country in Asia, and nearly one third of its water was 'unsuitable for human consumption.' Like air pollution, water pollution is most serious in the populous Central region, with high levels of industrial and domestic

wastewater. The depletion of the water table around Bangkok has led to land subsidence. Water pollution has become obvious in many areas. In 1997, hundreds of thousands of fish and other aquatic life in the Nam Phong River died as a result of industrial river pollution. Large amounts of arsenic were found in the groundwater in the Nakhon Si Thammarat province, a result of mining industry in the area (Gill, 1997: Online).

4.2.2 Reading films

1) *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* (2004)

Ostensibly, *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* is based on the fear of SARS. This film is a comedy-horror film that depicts the victims of the SARS virus as zombies and contains lots of sarcastic remarks and satire on political and social issues. An influential rich businessman with corruption; a schoolgirl full of conceit in a Japanese styled school uniform; a female minister trying to sweep the irregularities of societies under the carpet – her features reminding one of the former minister of the Public Health of Thaksin's government wearing black frame of glasses and formal suits; teenagers whooping it up in psychedelic lights stepping with western pop music in addition to drinking alcohols and drugs; a big farang (foreigner) living in Thailand, but looking down Asians (Thais), and so on.

In the film, the most fearful thing is to become a zombie. Richard Greene (2006) states that films about the Undead,* such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dracula**, *Nosferatu* (1922), and *White Zombie* (1932) trade on this most terrifying

* The term used by Bram Stoker in his novel *Dracula* (1897). In Richard's notion, the Undead includes all vampires, mummies, and ghosts, most zombies, some skeletons, and miscellaneous other animated corpses.

* *Dracula* (1931), *Dracula* (1958) (alternative title: *The Horror of Dracula*), and *Dracula* (also known as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*) (1992)

prospect; they threaten us with the possibility of becoming Undead ourselves. There is no shortage of examples of zombie and vampire films of characters that either kill themselves or ask others to kill them so as to avoid becoming Undead. Being Undead is generally regarded as a worse state than being dead. In *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*, swordsman Khun Krabi tries to kill himself when he is infected by the SARS No.4 virus; he chooses death rather than the life of a zombie.

The film points to ‘foreignness’ as a scapegoat. SARS No.4 starts from somewhere in Africa, and the host who brought the disease is ‘farang (foreiner, especially westerner)’. Thailand, which used be a clean and pure zone, is infected by the epidemic disease by ‘foreignness’. Anyone infected becomes a vampiric zombie. These zombies are not limited to only humans, but any animal can be infected and become a zombie also, such as a python. This python is recognized as Burmese, which was a neighbor’s pet of the ‘farang’ zombie. By Larry Hauser’s notion (2006), zombie animals, as conceived by Descartes, are indistinguishable from our pets, wildlife, and cattle, because they are our pets, wildlife, and cattle. Hamish Thompson (2006) claims three general justifications for zombie termination as follows: a) they are (or are very close to being) brain-dead; b) because of their radically altered life goals, what personality is left lacks the same personal identity as the original individual, releasing it from prior obligations; and c) after zombification they are usually homicidal cannibalistic killers (Thompson, 2006: 28). He also adds that the sharpest moral challenge often arises when a character is faced with the realization of the altered state of a loved one and the choice of either terminating the loved one, who is thus transformed, or being transformed oneself. In *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*, Khun Krabi knows that he is infected by the zombie virus, he tries to kill himself to save the girl whom he loves and so others will not be infected. Dr. Diana runs a blockade to the building that is already infected by the zombie virus in order to save innocent people, including zombies who were human before.

The victims who become zombies are morally degenerated. Most of them are infected with the virus while they are dancing, drinking and doing drugs at the

nightclub in the basement of a building where the first farang host lives. Villains and bad guys are depicted as sexual perverts, thus, the only one survivor from the disease is Khun Krabi, because he is a virgin.

In zombie horror movies, association with a particular place seems to give an opportunity to control fear, or at least to prevent it to a certain extent. Or, in other words, excessive fear for some danger is projected outwards and is associated with a particular location. An individual, then, did not have to keep the fear inside him, but the feeling of danger and fear was transferred to this place (Jeggler 1990: 62). Fear of ghosts, for example, was not felt everywhere, but in particular building, ruins or graveyards, which were renowned for being haunted. As to the more recent media-based narrative tradition, localisation is analogously applied to murder and crime scenes. In the film, the incident happens in the building. People who become a zombie cannot go outside of the building because a building is blockaded by the Thai government to prevent the disease spreading out to the country. Zombies inside the building instinctively and ravenously attack and suck up blood on and on. When a number of bloodthirsty zombies realize that there is no more human fresh blood, they try to go outside of the building, but the government plans to explode the building. Khun Krabi, Liu, Master Tape and Dr. Diana are the last human being who are left in the building, but they encounter another obstacle besides the zombies, which is the government that is supposed to protect them.

In the film, the epidemic of SARS No.4 is regarded as a human-error. The supercilious government assures that Thailand is utterly safe from SARS No.4, and tries to cover up the fact that there is an outbreak of the epidemic zombification virus, while determining to sacrifice people's lives in the building to save the people outside, and, in the end, is apparently accused also of spreading the SARS No.4 virus. People in the building have to fight with people outside whether they are villains or good people.

2) *Takhian* (2003)

Phi Takhian is a popular subject matter in the horror movie genre, along with Mae Nak Phrakhanong, phi krasue, and phi pob. The Takhian ghost movies were made several times in the previous period, mostly relevant to female sexuality, but Takhian in 2003 focuses on a different theme. If Takhian ghost movies in the previous period portrayed the resentment or grudge of women, Takhian in 2003 emphasized the selfishness of human beings and the power of nature.

In the film, people destroy nature under the banner of civilization. People cut trees indiscreetly for construction dam, with nature being devastated by the actions of people. But the ghost in the film does not seem to be bad or evil. The Takhian ghost is like a guardian of the forest, by extension, nature. The beginning is when Wittaya tries to cut a Takhian tree and the Takhian ghost gets outraged to get back at him and other members of his team. The Takhian ghost tries to protect green nature from the mindless human beings.

The first victim is Wittaya's friend, who comes to hunt animals in the forest. He is killed under the charge of profanity to nature, especially the spirit of the trees, in that he urinates on the tree, even though others to dissuade him. Those who try to cut the Takhian tree are all dead or injured. Even Wittaya gives offering and consoles the spirit of Takhian, but her rage does not stop and she kills him. Whoever does not respect nature, they are killed without mercy.

Under the water, there are many of 'the Undead' suffering from the polluted water. They are the victims of dam construction and, at the same time, of destroying nature by humans. When Porn paddles a boat along the river, Nang Takhian is playing on the trunk swings. Nang Takhian smiles at Porn at first, but suddenly Nang Takhian screams out with pain and says "Please stop hurting me, it's too painful." It is clear that Nang Takhian represents the forest or to expand on that, nature.

Thong Kam is young man from the Karen tribe. He is identified as a pure, honest and upright man who stands for the disadvantaged compared to the men from

Bangkok or more civilized people in the city. The powerless Karen people who love nature and are innocent must leave their home to move to the infertile land on the mountain because of dam construction. Their lands are getting smaller and more barren, just like nature. Not only is their residence taken away but also the village people are devastated and sexually abused by workers from Bangkok. The innocent Nosoeng, who loves Thong Kam, is raped and killed by workers from Bangkok.

Trai, an engineer from Bangkok, is engaged to Porn, a daughter of Wittaya. He gets involved in shoddy dam construction and he covers up all the bad effects from it. The water is polluted and villagers get sick. But because of his bad decision at first, the situation gets worse and worse environmentally. He becomes a monster. His bad conduct is unstoppable. He harpoons a little child, beats Wittaya and tries to kill Thong Kham and Porn. His immoral conducts bring about Nang Takhian's wrath and he is killed by Nang Takhian. But at the same time Nang Takhian is also exploded by the bomb which Trai prepared, and the scene in which Nang Takhian dies is portrayed similar to one in which wasted oil is spilt from the factory. This oil stain covered the sea and the bodies of villagers and workers from Bangkok fill the seaside along with dead fish and birds.

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4.3. The matter of the female

- *Buppha Ratri* (2003) / *Long Khong 1 and 2* (2005, 2008) / *Ban Phi Sing* (2007)

There is not much question that Thailand is a male-dominated, patriarchal society, with political and corporate leadership in the hands of men. On the other hand, the power of Thai women, especially in rural societies, lies in their domestic role as the mother-nurturer (Keyes, 1985). Women in Thailand look at the role of motherhood as an ideal. A woman's status really changes to being an adult at the point of childbirth, after which she is recognized semi-formally as *mae* or “mother” (Keyes, 1984; Pyne, 1994). Some have made the argument that Thailand in ancient times was a matrilineal society; however, since the Sukhothai period, Thai society is recorded as a patriarchy and women's status was inferior to men until 1932 (Benedict, 1952: 40).

The fight for the protection and/or recognition of women's reproductive rights has been slow to develop in Thailand compared with Western countries. The traditional view of men as protectors, leader and breadwinners, and women as followers, homemakers and mothers, remains pervasive, despite the fact that many women now work outside the home. From an early age, girls are taught to help with the family's domestic chores and to take care of younger siblings. In contrast, boys, particularly in rural areas are encouraged to assist their fathers in the fields and to run errands outside the home (Thomson and Bhongsvej, 1995)

The variety and extent of women's nurturing responsibilities are superbly illustrated in two studies in two vastly different contexts: Penny Van Esterik (1982) depicts the household and religious responsibilities of well-to-do women in western central Thailand; Susanne Thorbek (1988) details the endless household duties of the slum-dwelling women in Khlong Toey, Bangkok. Since the economic climate changed in the 1960s and 1970s, women have accounted for almost half, and sometimes more of the large number of rural Thais who migrated to the cities in order to augment the family income (Keyes, 1984). Today, women account for 80 percent of total employment in the ten largest export industries, and 45 percent of the

manufacturing work force (data cited in Pyne, 1994). Over the years, Thai women have made significant contributions in the arts, education, and commerce. With higher education, women have also risen to leadership positions in the middle class. However, the “glass ceiling” still exists for women in academic and corporate settings, as evident by the fact that, although there are many women in high positions, a man still occupies the topmost position of most organization.

Women in Thai horror film have mostly two faces; one is of the frail and submissive woman, and the other is as a cold-blooded and powerful woman. They can have both characters in one body, and these two characters are mainly separated at the time of living and posthumously. When they are living as a human, they are physically weak and obedient to men; however, after their deaths, they utterly change into monstrous ghosts. Most women are physically weaker and inferior to men in real life, but after dying from some horrible incidents such as rape or murder, they have supernatural power and an unbreakable body, sometimes without shape. Most well-known plots in Thai horror films are as follows: ordinary, and perhaps, vulnerable women are menaced by some horrible thing which is a figure with its face hidden. It generally becomes clear that the horrible thing is in fact the victim of some long hidden injustice about which no one speaks. Since the injustice is hidden, women must suffer; once the protagonists work out the cause of the initial problem, it is possible to lay the unquiet spirit to rest/slay the vile monster by setting right the initial injustice. It is reasonable to assume that most Thai horror stories represent some trauma affecting women in a male-dominated society.

Thai horror films that are dominated by female ghosts are often claimed to show the patriarchal Thai society and inferior status of women. In the traditional Thai horror films, most narratives are composed of a story of physically and socially weaker women, who die under a false charge, and are reborn as a ghost with supernatural power to avenge the assailant, mostly men. Female ghosts in the earlier films appear because they want to tell about their unjustified deaths, while female ghosts in the contemporary horror films appear for revenge. In the past, they would

ask someone to help to vent their spite; while today, female ghosts take revenge by themselves without anyone's help, in addition to being ruthless and brutal. In their revenge, sometimes innocent people are killed by the furious women, as the raged and irrational women get more and more brutal and grotesque. Now they are not just a woman, but they have become an object of fear, or 'the excessiveness', which must be suppressed.

4.3.1 Social contexts

1) The extension of feminism – Female sexuality

Women's issues started to be seriously discussed in academic institutions after the 14th October 1973 incident, the political event that sparked the democratization movement in Thailand (Somswasdi). However, systematic studies of gender and sexuality in Thailand are relatively new. Mostly spurred by the HIV epidemic, the majority of data on sexual behavior was collected in the early 1990s in response to public health demands. Although considerable data have been generated, critics have pointed out that synthesis on a conceptual level is still needed. Also missing is the documentation of the ancient sexuality in this region, which would have provided a historiographic insight into the dynamics of the Thai sexuality over time (Taywaditep, Eli & Pacharin).

Chalidapon who teaches at Thammasat University's Faculty of Political Science reports in her recent research that sexuality in old Siam was much more open and diverse than we think,

As a matter of fact, we have no foundation for beliefs that gave importance to virginity. This is because men in Siam would move into their wives' houses after their wedding, unlike in the Western world where bloodlines and inheritances were and are still passed via paternal kinship... The Siamese were actually practical about virginity. There were beliefs against premature sex, but this didn't

mean an absolute guarding of virginity as a sacred thing. They could have sex with their lovers if they were sure about future commitments. A few ancient documents on people's ways of life and beliefs in Siam confirm that sex was not limited to marriage and that women didn't have to preserve their virginity until the wedding day (Pichaya Svasti, 2009).

And she adds that women's sexuality contains different meanings for different social classes. To the elite, marriages were for forging political alliances, stability and power and focused on the importance of legitimate children. Upper-class ladies were, therefore, brought under control sexually and sexual misconduct would be subject to serious punishment.

In a hierarchical society such as Thailand, where people diligently make obeisance to persons of a higher status, this meant that some women in ancient times showed their husbands extreme courtesy, which today would be reserved for elders, teachers, or monks. In the past few decades, lower-and middle-class women have increasingly worked outside of the home while continuing to be in charge of the household chores and child care. Men, however, have not been expected much to adopt the household responsibilities; it is still uncommon to expect married men to take on the same extent of responsibilities as their wives in cooking, cleaning, and parenting. In middle-class families, the women's double responsibility is usually helped by live-in parents or, if they can afford it, maids. In families with lesser means and no live-in parents, the burden on the women can be significant and often becomes a commonly cited cause of sexual disinterest and marital discord (Dumronggittigule, Sombathmai, Taywaditep, and Mandel, 1995).

One of the most consistent findings from sex research in Thailand is that minor wives and commercial sex are common sexual outlets for men of all ages, social standings and marital statuses. This tolerance of married men's extramarital sex is merely a part of the larger double standard regarding sexual practices, which mandates different rules for men and for women. As confirmed by studies on child-

rearing practices, Thai parents train girls more strictly than boys in the behaviors that are part of gender roles (Archavantikul and Havanon, 1990). Girls are taught that a good woman remains a virgin until marriage and continues to be emotionally and sexually faithful to her husband afterwards. As adolescents, Thai fathers are known for being particularly protective and possessive of their daughters, exercising great control over their friendships with teenage boys (Thorbeck, 1988). For boys, however, sexual abandon is accepted or even encouraged. As Sukanya Hantrakul notes: “Culturally, Thai society flatters men for their promiscuity... Women’s magazines always advise women to tolerate the situation and accommodate themselves to it” (1983 Sukanya Hantrakul cited in Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am, and Sethaput, 1994).

The image of Thai women in terms of sexuality can be divided into two types; ‘bad girl’ and ‘*kulasatrii* (virtuous woman)’. Historically, the Thai tradition has defined a *kulasatrii* as proficient and sophisticated in household duties; graceful, pleasant, yet unassuming in her appearance and social manners; and conservative in her sexuality; while the stereotype of a ‘bad girl’ is a woman who is jealous and manipulative, and sexually flirtatious (Taywaditep, Eli & Pacharin).

In contemporary Thai horror film, women’s status has been upgraded from that shown in the previous films, such as being a doctor, professor, or teacher, but the image of women as the object of sexuality is more furtive and violent. Monstrous women in the films are not *kulasatrii* any more, but they are more active and provocative in their sexuality, sometimes even more than men.

Unlike feminism theory in western horror films, images of female ghosts or monstrous women in Thai horror films can be considered by two dimensions; first, the return of women’s repression under the patriarchal society and family structure; and second, the manifestation of men’s fear as threatened by the extension of feminism in contemporary society.

4.3.2 Cultural contexts

1) Family horror – The faltering family / The broken maternity

According to William J.Klausner's (2000) argument, Thai family structure was quite different from western countries in that the obligation to one's parents is a cultural and moral imperative in Thai society, with family tightness and blood ties being very strong. However, owing to the economic, social and geographic mobility of a highly competitive industrialized society, as Thailand is today, family structure and family characteristics are considerably changed. As results of this social change, family members have a tendency to be separated. Children go to the city for the purpose of studying, separating them from their parents in the province, or parents living in a city, send their children to the grandparents' home in the province for economic reasons.

Besides economic reasons, families are broken due to divorce. According to a report of the National News Bureau of Thailand Public Relations Department from May 2007, Thai divorce rates are increasing. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Development and Human Security revealed that the latest information from the Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior, indicates that in the last 10 years, Thailand's divorce rate has increased from 10 percent in 1994 to 26 percent in 2006. 89,153 married couples filed for divorce last year. Oddly enough, the most significant drop in marriages was in the Northeastern part of Thailand. The government fears that it shows a weakening in Thailand of the family institution or a loss of faith in the family unit.

2) Sexual threats

The Deputy Prime Minister reported that domestic violence is increasing, with 14,000 women and children have been physically abused in 2007. Close relatives or family members are responsible for up to 40% of physical violence. The Deputy

Prime Minister encouraged family members to engage in group activities in order to peacefully resolve disputes and strengthen family relations (NNT (National News Bureau of Thailand Public Relations Department), 2007: Online).

Foundation for Women in Thailand reports in its research about Thai women that about 37% of women in Bangkok and 46% in the other provinces who experienced physical violence never tell anyone about their experiences. Among the women who did tell someone, most of them turned to their immediate family members and friends for support. Only 10% in the other provinces and 20% in Bangkok turned to external sources, e.g. police or health providers, for help. The main reasons for seeking help are because they could not endure the suffering any longer and they were badly injured (Foundation for Women, Domestic violence and women's health in Thailand, 2003: Online).

According to research data of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, there are nine social problems at present in Thailand; drug, poverty, AIDS, safety of life and property, education, family, mental and moral problem, public health, and the underprivileged class. In August 2004, Rachaphat Suan Dusit University surveyed 3,179 people in various occupations and classes from 15 provinces about urgent social problems in Thailand and the result were:

Table 4.1. Thais most urgent social problems (2004)

Teenagers trapped in pleasure-seeking	34.86%
Sexuality; prostitution, rape, pornography	26.93%
Insecurity of life and property; robbery	13.18%
Deception of children and teenagers	11.20%
Stress, Suicide	9.81%
Game addict, violence of students, drug and etc.	4.02%

There is one more interesting research questioning done by Suan Dusit, again in January 2009, which also covered the same questions about social problems in Thailand. This time 5,474 were surveyed nationwide:

Table 4.2. Thais most urgent social problems (2009)

Drug	20%
Murder, thieves, bandits	19%
Sexual threats, rape	17%
Corruption	15%
Vice	10%
Fraud, Deception	9%
Brawls	8%

Figure 4.2. Violence against women

Violence against women remains a threat in Thai society

Pongphon The Nation Publication Date: 15-08-2008

Reports of violent abuse of Thai women and children have increased. The Public Health Ministry's One Stop Crisis Centre was informed of about 20,000 cases last year.

"Violence, including sexual violence, remains an everyday threat for women and girls," Dr Chanvit Tarathep, director of the Bureau of Health Service System Development, said yesterday (Aug 14).

The health ministry's records for 2007 show that 8,172 women aged over 18 and 9,579 girls suffered abuse last year.

The ministry found some 109 elderly people, both men and women, had also suffered violent abuse by relatives or family members.

A researcher at Mahidol University's Population Research and Social Institute, Kritaya Archavanichkul, who has conducted studies on domestic violence against women, said she had found 17,529 news reports on violent attacks on women over the past 10 years.

Some 64 per cent of these related to sexual violence, such as rape or women who had been harmed. Some women had retaliated by cutting their husband's organ.

Kritaya has found that females of all ages were vulnerable. The youngest girl reported raped (by a family member) was 13 months, while the oldest woman raped was 105 years old.

Meanwhile, the youngest boy who suffered abuse was six years old and the oldest man abused was 83.

"Most of women and girls were raped by family members and friends," Kritaya said.

Meanwhile, 721 students were interviewed in Pathum Thani for a study by Ramathibodi Hospital's Domestic Violence Knowledge Management Centre.

Dr Ronnachai Kongsakont, who conducted study, said 65 per cent of respondents said they had experience of domestic violence in their family. And 83 per cent of these students said they had suffered depression, loss of self-control, addiction to narcotic drugs, compulsion to gamble and self harm because of this violence.

Kritaya said she would ask the national health commission to submit a proposal on sexual health, which she hoped would help reduce the level of violence in Thai society.

The proposal includes a plan to promote sexual health and women's health, plus a massive campaign to educate the public, government agencies and the media to try to stop domestic violence and violence against women. It would be a key measure to help the public understand the issue better and to eliminate violence.

"The question is why does Thai society still ignore violence against women? The ignorance about violence against women in society is a kind of violence itself.

"We have to eliminate this attitude from our society and help each other to improve," she said.

As can be seen from the above data, sexual threat is as serious as the number one social problem. For Thai horror films that primarily have women as the main characters, sexual threats are the trigger of the horrible story. Gang-raped scenes are often represented in horror, such as *Khon Len Khong*, *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan* (dir. Banjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Wongpoom, 2004), and *Wong Pisaj*; adultery and the minor wife theme is not a surprising event in Thai society; *Khon Len Khong*, *Dek Ho*, and *Long Khong*; teenager's free sex ideal and abortion which is considered as its consequence, are by and large well-used subject matter for Thai horror films, such as *Hian*, *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*, *Yan Sang Tai*, *Sop* aka *Achan Yai*, and *Suai Lak Sai*.

4.3.3 Reading film

1) *Long Khong 1 and 2 (2005 and 2008)*

Long Khong is a sequel of the film, *Art of the Devil* (English title), following on the commercial success of *Khon Len Khong* (*Art of the Devil 1*, dir. Tanit Jitnukool) released in 2004. According to the dictionary definition, *Long Khong* means to try to use a thing with magical power. Thus, as can see from the title, *Long Khong* is full of black magic, supernatural power and superstitious belief. The storyline of *Long Khong 1* and *2* is related to each other, with the second part explaining the background of the first.

The monstrous woman in the film is Panor, who is a local school teacher. Many men in the village fall in love with her due to her femme fatale-like sexual attraction. First, Ta's father, who already has a happy family, falls in love at first sight. While Panor comes to teach his wife's sister, Phen, for the school entrance exam at his home, their relationship develops and the love of Ta's father for Panor becomes deeper and stronger. Panor's flirtation is no less than Ta's father, as she throws meaningful words to Ta's father, "You are so warm and gentle. And look like a family man", and she does not shake his hands off. Finally, Ta's father poisons Ta's

mother with the support of his own mother; Ta's mother dies leaving her secret diary to Ta. After the death of Ta's mother, Ta's father and Panor get married.

If one considers her occupation as a school teacher, her sexual conduct transgresses the bounds as to be hazardous. Karpur-Fic states about the Thai concept of a teacher that the individuals in the roles of teachers are accorded an exalted position because they personify self-reliance, wisdom and moral independence. The source of their special attributes is rooted in the perception which sees them as benevolent and wise, who impart knowledge, and who are supposed to be good to the students. We are eternally indebted to them for their kindness and guidance and should honor and respect them. A teacher has no special powers of his own, except that they are good and benevolent, and because they depend on someone higher for protection, which is rooted not in morality but power. He also adds that teachers, as well as mothers in particular, are believed to be the most dependable and full of love and kindness. However, one is cautioned against outsiders, and to be aware that they may have powers, and use them, to retaliate if their ego is bruised [Kapur-Fic 1998, 55-6]. Panor has a secret love affair with the gym teacher of the same school. They have sex in the classroom and in every corner of the school. Panor has sexual relationships with her students. One of Ta's friends, Por, also is one who has a relationship with Panor. Her sexual misconduct is now unforgivable. She is not just a woman who broke one family, but also a breaker of social norms. But, she often shows her identity as a teacher, which presents the ideal image of a woman. Apparently, it represents a gap between reality and ideals, and 'repression and oppression' of ideal woman in Thai society. In preparing for her revenge, Panor changes her clothes to formal suits suitable for a teacher from the casual cloths. Her formal suit empowers her social status; her status is no longer as Ta's stepmother but as a sophisticated authorized teacher in a formal suit. When all five children visit her house in a Khmer village, she cooks foods for them and says, "I really want to teach at the school again when I see you all." Her life at the moment is no more than a village woman, and her aspiration and resentment are reflected on those words. While

her repeatedly saying, “Don’t be afraid. I’m teaching you correctly, and then you can be a good boy/girl” inculcates her authority as a teacher and her superior power over the students.

Not only is adult female’s sexuality exposed, but also female teenagers’ sexuality is as strong as the adults. Kim is at present a medical student. Of course, she was a good student when she was in high school. She is a pretty and virtuous young lady from relevantly the upper class, as good as to be called ‘kulasatrii’. But she is the one who uses black magic power on Ta to make him love her.

Ta is obviously a problem boy. He does not do well in study, fights often so as to be caught by the police. Panor, as the stepmother of Ta, is often called from the police station to pick up Ta. The relationship between Ta and Panor does not seem like mother and son. For Ta, Panor is just a monster who stole his mother’s position; while for Panor, Ta is an obstacle for her successful family idealism. Panor is an immigrant Khmer assimilated into Thailand, and the best way of assimilation is to make a family. But Ta is the son of the former wife of her present husband.

Panor was an ugly little girl from a Khmer village. She was different, so she was continually beaten and bullied by her classmates. Thus, young Panor decided to borrow black magic from a Khmer spirit doctor. She asked that everyone would love her. She became the most attractive woman in the village. Her wish comes true and men in the village fall in love with her. Ta’s father, the gym teacher, young student Por and many other men no matter what their age, have sexual relationships with her. But Ta’s father is the only one who Panor selects by her own wish. The gym teacher and Por also use black magic to make love with Panor from their sexual desires.

In the superstitious ceremony to call back the spirit of Ta’s mother, the scene presents a gory, grotesque and disgusting atmosphere. Black wizard Ja Dit makes an order for Phen, who is the sister of Ta’s mother and a nurse, to take something out from Panor’s body through her vagina. Phen push Panor’s belly strongly over and over and some slime flows out from her vagina. And then Phen holds big tweezers and put them into Panor’s vagina to take Panor’s womb out. Ja Dit burns it to

exchange the two spirits. The womb is the origin of birth, the beginning of life and women's privilege as well. To take out the womb implies eliminating femininity, and destroying the family. Panor cannot have her own flesh and blood. Considering the meaning of family for Thais and Panor's idealism of family, it has a more significant meaning. For the payback of Panor to Phen, Panor attacks Phen's womb, which has a baby in it at the moment.

The way of revenge of Panor is 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,' which seems relevant to the main theme of 'All evil doing have a relation to each other.' This is the thread of connection with the Buddhist doctrine of 'cause and effect.' If the underlying threat of *Long Khong 2* is Panor, in *Long Khong 1*, Ta is the center of the narrative. Ta is a boy who lost his own mother by his father's misconduct, but accuses his mother's death on his stepmother Panor. Panor is also Ta's teacher, thus, for Ta as a little boy she is a formidable antagonist.

2) *Buppha Ratri* (2003)

Buppha Ratri is a young woman who suffers hardship and frustration. She was sexually abused by her stepfather since she was very young. The absence of a father as her protector made her life miserable, she was not even protected from her mother either. Her family is unable to give her shelter and rest, but is only a hotbed of suffering. Because of this trauma, she is always dismal and depressed. She cannot trust people, because she knows that even her parents cannot protect her. But one day, she accepts a man, who manipulates and deceives her. His name is Ake, who is the son of a rich family. He devotes himself to her for a month just for a bottle of whisky as a bet with his friends. But without knowing the truth, she opens her mind to him. Even after Ake tells the truth, she trusts him continuously. She also agrees to abort a baby because she believes Ake's promise that they will get marry after they graduate from the university, which is a lie and she is abandoned by her lover again. The guilty conscience of Buppha from aborting her own baby is portrayed in the scene when the

ghost Buppha suffers bleeding from her vagina, crying out loud every night in her room. She is one of the mothers who cannot protect her own child like her own mother, and at the same time she is a home wrecker.

Buppha Rahtree is not a revenge story of a grudged ghost as in earlier female ghost movies, but rather the story about 'family'. She is depicted as a horrific monster that threatens the neighborhood, but she does not do mayhem or kill any innocent people. When Ake comes back to her, she welcomes him warmly. Although Ake is the one who had Buppha abort the baby, she cares for him like her own husband in order not to break her family. She protects her baby's father from another girl's seduction by cutting his legs off.

Ake is also an exemplary of the faltering family. He is the son of millionaire parents. But he is spoiled, addicted to drugs, alcohol and sex. Money cannot save him; money is a part of his ruin. Ake's father forces Ake to go abroad regardless of Ake's intention. His father is patriarchal, while his mother is a traditional woman of the upper class in Thai society. Ake's mother never raises her voice to her husband, but quietly cares for her spoiled son. Even though Ake has a mother, she cannot protect Ake from his patriarchal father and from the external dangers. Ake's family is another example of 'absence of maternity'. Every time when Ake falls in a bad situation, he talks with his mother first, but he gets nothing to help him. Facing Ake, her son's death, she is just helpless.

In the opening scene, Ake narrates, "If she were a book, it is a book which no one has opened before." The narration of Ake insinuates men's ideology about the 'virginity' or 'innocence' of women. Buppha becomes the target of a boys cruel bet because she seems to be innocent. She never smiles, she does not have any friends, she does not have any boyfriend either; she appears to be the perfect kulasatree to maintain chastity. However, ironically, she lost her virginity a long time ago by a family member. Ake's romance for the chastity of woman is represented in the ending scene as well in Ake's narration, "Her name means Night Flower. And I'm the only one who can feel the scent of the flower."

3) *Ban Phi Sing* (aka *The House* 2007)

The location where the film takes place is a private house. A house is supposed to be a comfortable and safe place. But Chalinee's house is unable to provide rest for her. While she, a heavy smoker, is smoking in her own house, as soon as his husband Phanu comes back home unexpectedly, she has to hide the cigarettes embarrassingly. Even in her own bedroom, she is not fully free and comfortable because her husband whines to her to make love with him in order to have a baby. However, Chalinee, who thinks her work is a priority, feels that a baby would just be a big burden.

Chalinee, a documentary reporter of a broadcasting company, covers a cold-blooded murder case that happened six years ago. To cover the story, she visits the crime scene of that incident, that is, medical doctor Chalerm's house. It is on the outskirts of Bangkok, looks big and antique, very old and even dismal. A house, mostly a palatial mansion, is often used as the background of western gothic films or classic horror films. Dr. Chalerm's house is closed tight and deserted. Chalinee infiltrates the house without the janitor's permission, goes up to second floor and gets into the room where a woman in a blue dress was standing near the window that Chalinee saw from the outside through a labyrinthine corridor.

The house is a far distant world from the ideal house in the film. The situation in which a house is not an ordinary, comfortable and private place any longer due to the appearance of a ghost, in other words, the haunted house, is the manifestation of 'The Uncanny' that Freud asserted. Not new and unfamiliar, but familiar and old; there is no place more suitable than a house to present the situation in which hidden fear from oppression is revealed.

In these types of horror films, the house that is presumed to be owned and governed, driving people inside the house to the corner of fear and tries to own and control the body and mind of the resident. The private place that should be behind the curtain strays from the cognition of the resident and changes abruptly to be an

inscrutable object; the familiar thing becomes an unfamiliar object to cause psychological disorder and to maximize insecurity and fear unexpectedly.

Psychologically and physically, the entity inside the fearful place has always been a woman. Because the house is a private place, and comparing to men who are in charge of public life, women have been imprinted as the entity who stays in the private place, therefore, people who stay in the house or housekeeper has been a woman. Chaline, in the film, has rejected the mission of a woman. While Chaline works actively outside the house, she is consumed by the responsibility and guilt that she cannot play her duty inside the house.

Women who play the role of a man, and reject the role of a woman and mother are considered by men as an object of fear. Men who refuse the role of patriarch are scared of women, and at the same time are jealous of women. In the film, husband Phanu presses his wife Chaline to play the role of a mother. But she cares more for her outside work than being a mother, thus Phanu starts to suspect Chaline's of a love affair with her work colleague, producer Chen. Phanu loses his reason due to his jealousy in the end, trying to kill his wife similar to the murder case from six years ago. Men's awareness of a crisis disguised as jealousy is well represented in the film. They lose their patriarch role, inviting ruin upon themselves in the end. Dr. Sant killed his wife, Dr. Phusarat, and is incarcerated in prison; Dr. Chalerm also killed his girlfriend, Jamjuree, who was a university student and is incarcerated in prison. Chaline's husband, Phanu, tries to kill Chaline, but he becomes the one who is killed in the end.

Woo Mi-sung (2004) asserts that in western films, the leitmotif of the absence of the patriarch as the core of fear and the origin of nightmares is presented repeatedly in order that audiences reconfirm the traditional value of patriarchal ideology in their unconsciousness as they leave the theater. However, *Ban Phi Sing* represents the anxiety of the change in family value in present days. In the film, both men and women are the victim and the assaulted. The monstrous 'Otherness' in the film can be the faltering family itself.

4.4. Political unrest

- *Faet* (2007) / *Ban Phi Poeb* (2008)

“Political or ideological difference is as much a catalyst to monstrous representation on a micro level as cultural alterity in the macrocosm.” (Cohen, 1996: 8)

Past Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was embroiled in several controversies upon assuming power after the 2001 election. These controversies included alleged conflicts of interest due to his family's holding in Shin Corporation and a violent crackdown on drug dealers. However, none of these controversies caused significant damage to his popularity, and he became the first elected prime minister to serve a full term, subsequently winning re-election in January 2005.

The 2006 Thailand coup d'état took place on Tuesday 19 September 2006, when the Royal Thai Army overthrew the Thaksin government. The coup d'état, which was Thailand's first non-constitutional change of government in fifteen years, followed a year-long political crisis involving Thaksin, his allies and political opponents and occurred less than a month before nation-wide House elections were originally scheduled to be held. It has been widely reported in Thailand and elsewhere that General Prem Tinsulanonda, Chairman of the Privy Council was the mastermind of the coup d'état. The military cancelled the upcoming elections, abrogated the Constitution, dissolved Parliament, and banned protests and all political activities (Bangkok Post, September 2006 – January 2007; The Nation, September 2006 – January 2007).

4.4.1 Cultural contexts - Invisible power rules

Thai politics is not only about political one-upmanship through money, power and guns, it is also about the battle of black magic.

The ritual took place last month in Chiang Mai at Wat Umong, where a trance medium told the red-clad crowd presided over by Gen Chaisit Shinawatra – Thaksin’s cousin and former supreme commander of the armed forces – that the fugitive politician was in a past life a ruling prince warrior in an unknown northern principality under the names of Jao Moon Muang and Jao Sin, who killed and burglarized in warfare with Burma.... This rite is just the latest in a series of black magic wars waged by both parties, said Wassana,... the pro- and anti- Thaksin camps were often dismissed as sheer nonsense.... Interestingly, the 2006 coup was also linked to the King Taksin tale, although it is a completely different version from that held by the pro- and anti-Thaksin camps (Sanitsuda Ekachai, 2009).

For Thais, Cambodia or Khmer incantations are fearful and a symbol of supernatural power. Khmer civilization has been a mysterious wonder much of its long history. However, it is a well known fact that the present day Cambodia is in a poor economic situation and has a less developed social environment. As neighboring countries, Thailand and Cambodia have a close relationship, but after the Preah Vihear temple dispute occurred the two countries have hitherto had an acute antagonistic relationship.*

* Preah Vihear temple listed as World Heritage Site in July 2008 by UNESCO. But this has caused a territorial dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, and the conflict is still unsolved.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's wife Bun Rany yesterday hosted a huge ritual at the Preah Vihear temple to bless the country with good luck and to give it power against the backdrop of a dispute with Thailand over the area surrounding the temple. The Cambodian ritual at the Preah Vihear temple raised fear among many Thai people, who say it could bring bad luck to Thailand. The anti-government People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) leaders last night led thousands of their supporters in a rival ritual to protect the country and block any ill effects from the Cambodian one. Many Thais believe some Cambodians have expertise in black magic. Thai people in Si Sa Ket and nearby provinces who heard about the Cambodian ritual at the Preah Vihear temple persuaded others to wear yellow, a color they say will help the country stave off the effects of the ceremony. (Bangkok Post, August 3, 2008)

According to the international press, Thailand has the distinction of being one of the biggest markets for collectors of antique amulets, especially *jatukam*. This is actually an industry that has a significant impact on the country's economy. In 2003 there was a 40 percent increase in demand for the ancient amulets that coincided with Thailand's recovery from the 1997 economic crisis. The Nation reported on 8 December 2003 that collectors of antique Buddhist amulets pushed profits at related businesses to almost 10 billion baht that year, a 40% rise since the gloomy post 1997 economic crisis. The Kasikorn Research Centre estimated that the trade will grow 10 to 20% per year on average. According to a report in Kao Sod newspaper, 28 May 2007, there were over 1,000 models of Jatukam, a non-Buddhist form of amulet, with roughly 55 million distributed across the country, racking up a total of 22 billion baht in amulet sales since the end of last year.

In Thailand, amulets, which are believed to offer magical protection against bullets and other violence, are sought after by those involved on both sides of the country's war on drugs. At election time, the amulet industry becomes very active. Many political parties will issue them wholesale in the months before an election to encourage citizens to vote the way the gods intend. All over the country, extra staff

will be employed to meet the expected upsurge in imprecations and incantations (Marmur,1998: Online).

Local newspaper reporter Jirat Prasertsup described regarding Jatukam fever that in Thailand different models of Jatukam were named "Immediately Rich", "Rich without Reason" or "Expolding Sky Rich", titles that have added to the hype surrounding the charms (Jirat Prasertsup, 2007: Online). One owner was involved in a serious accident but miraculously survived and stories spread like wildfire about the protective power of the sacred amulets. The quiet storm of belief in these amulets became a raging typhoon, sending prices sky high. The September 2006 coup manifested a period of political turmoil, economic uncertainly and social instability in Thailand, making many Thais uneasy. The more insecure people became, the more they sought out objects reputed to have supernatural powers that would bring them good fortune, and in this case, those objects were Jatukam amulets.

From amulets to superstitious rituals, to teenagers' voodoo dolls, life in Thailand is like a wonderland in a fantasy movie. Most horror films contain supernatural power and the uncanny, and believe it or not, real life in Thailand seems to exist with invisible power. It is not a new story that someone survived from a gun shot with a bullet-proof amulet around his neck, a driver was intact from a car turning over, and some politicians won the election thanks to rituals. But the most important thing is whoever uses the magical power, it brings responsibility, and Thais know it.

Figure 4.3. Prime Minister can boast of his Thai amulet

PM protected by amulet shield

By Traithep Krai-ngu
The Nation on Sunday
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Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva can boast of only one notable piece in his Thai amulet collection - the Luangpor Thuad M16 - while the other prized specimens are "on loan", an expert says.

Following speculation that he was wearing light armour for self-protection under his shirt due to the political turmoil, Abhisit unbuttoned his shirt to show journalists 10 amulets around his neck.

The public especially amulet enthusiasts wondered what was in the premiere's collection.

Abhisit reportedly had been given several outstanding examples, so his collection could be worth an eight-digit figure.

However Democrat MP for Bangkok, Thana Cheeravinij, who frequently visits the Sunday Moradok Thai amulet club at Pantip Plaza's Mall Ngam Wongwan branch, said Abhisit was Western-schooled so he was not into Thai amulets.

When Abhisit first took the top job, he had none of the highly-regarded Benjapaksi amulets, but only the "Luangpor Thuad M16" anointed at Pattani's Sai Khao Temple in 1991, which was the only one that could impress enthusiasts, he said.

Other significant amulets the premiere obtained later on were "ones that people lent to him to wear for a period of time". They include the Jatukham Ramathep amulet's Lakmuang 1 edition anointed in 1987, which Democrat MP Thepthai Senpong lent to Abhisit, and the Luangpouthuad Wat Changhai clay amulet anointed in 1954.

Law expert Sukit Pulsrikasem said amulet lending needed to take into consideration the period of time because an indefinite lending period could be the equivalent of giving as a gratuity.

Thanadech Rakchueep, an expert in Jatukham Ramathep amulets, said the Jatukham Ramathep amulet's Lakmuang 1 edition anointed in 1987 at Nakhon Si Thammarat's Phra Mahathat Temple was highly valuable.

Especially those with a black colour body and tints of silver could have fetched Bt1.8 million each during the Jatukham Ramathep craze of 2007, he said. Even with the price dropping to Bt800,000 to Bt900,000, most of those obtaining this edition would not want to part with it because they it was regarded as the "super Jatukham Ramathep amulet", he said.

Chainarit Panthong, an expert on Buddha statues and amulet enthusiast association's Phra Luangporthuad amulet, said the Luangpouthuad Wat Changhai clay amulet anointed in 1954, especially the "large A Hua Khid print edition" amulets in good condition, could be worth Bt5 million each.

The "large B print edition" amulet was worth about Bt2 million to Bt3 million, while the "large C print edition" was worth about Bt1 million to Bt2 million, he said.

The Luangpouthuad Wat Changhai clay amulet anointed in 1954 could appreciate in the future because it was regarded as a highly revered talisman among people, especially Trang residents, he said.

As for the Luangpor Thuad M16 that the premiere owned, many southern amulet collectors agree that it was "highly experienced" and "believed to bestow on the wearer the outstanding feature of immortality". It was nicknamed "M16" because of a story in which the amulet wearer was shot at with a M16 assault rifle until all of his shirt was torn but the bullets could not penetrate his skin.

This amulet anointed by Phra Ajarn Nong Thammaphuto was worth from hundreds of baht to over Bt1,000.

Chainarit said the low price was because the amulets were mass made. The amulet's reverse was printed with "Nor 72", meaning that Phra Ajarn Nong made them when he was 72 years old.

The giving of a Buddha amulet as a souvenir and for self-protection was reportedly popular among Thais from the past until the present time. Some villagers offered them as a gift to Abhisit on several occasions.

On January 2, during Abhisit's visit to the Tha Chin riverside community in Nakhon Pathom's Nakhon Chaisri district, Lor Khiewkhamchin, 79, presented him a Luangpu Boon amulet and a Luangpu Pherm (First Edition) amulet from Klang Bang Kaew Temple, both worth over Bt100,000, to show moral support.

On March 20, while Abhisit was conferring awards to the outstanding health volunteers of this year at Muang Thong Thani, one of the recipients, Payom Kaewwongchan, handed him a Buddha amulet.

She said in an interview that she gave the premiere the Luangpouthuad clay amulet from Pattani's Changhai Temple as a sacred gift that would protect him from all harm and let him serve as the prime minister for a long time.

On November 23, Democrat MP for Bangkok Samart Maluleem invited venerated Thai tattoo master Ajarn Noo Kanphai to meet the premier at Government House. The master also gave the premiere and his bodyguards a medallion inscribed with five lines of sacred Thai scripture and a Luangpouthuad clay amulet from Pattani's Changhai Temple.

4.4.2 Political contexts - Political polarization

After the re-election of Thaksin in January 2005, the political situation strikingly divided into two parts; pro and anti Thaksin, or red and yellow shirts. Sonthi Limthongkul, a Thai media mogul and old friend of Thaksin, established the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) under the slogan "fight for the King", wearing yellow as their official color. PAD is largely composed of urban upper/middle class, royalists, some journalists, academics and intellectuals. While the majority of pro-Thaksin protesters are composed of poor rural dwellers, especially from the Northeastern (Isan) and Northern part of Thailand. These people benefited most from the populist policies of Thaksin. They also heavily depend on government subsidies. They were less sophisticated and less educated than the PAD (Suksamran, 2010).

The dichotomy of the nation had come to the surface gradually. The 18th military coup took place by a junta led by Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin on September 16, 2006. However, the People's Power Party (PPP: formal Thai Rak Thai Party) recruited Samak Sundaravej and he became Prime Minister in January 2008. Nevertheless, the conflict between the two sides reached an extreme. The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) on August 26 besieged Government House, Thailand's seat of power, vowing to occupy the manicured grounds until Samak resigned. However, the PAD protests only escalated after Samak resigned when the Constitutional Court found him guilty of being paid to host a cooking show while acting as Prime Minister. Somchai Wongsawat, brother-in-law of Thaksin Shinawatra and a member of People's Power Party, succeeded Samak as Prime Minister on 17 September 2008. In November 2008, PAD moved to Suwannaphum International Airport to urge Somchai's resignation and the airport was closed. In December, the PPP was eventually dissolved by the Constitutional Court and its executive members, including Somchai, were prohibited from politics for five years for vote-buying committed by Yongyuth Tiypairat. After Abhisit Vejjajiva, a leader of the

Democratic Party, took power, stability in the political and economic situation was expected; however, the phenomenon of division into two parties has remained serious.

Being divided into two parties does not mean only pro and anti-Thaksin. It has become a color battle – yellow versus red, and regionalism – northeast and northern part versus central and southern part of Thailand. The conflict between the two sides has still continued to the present.

4.4.3 Reading Film

1) *Faet* (aka *Alone*, 2007)

According to the assertion of Allison Pingree, the first Siamese twins, Chang and Eng*, were used in an ideology of democracy and domesticity in America, as “United Siamese Brothers” (Pingree, 1996: 92-114). Chang and Eng, conjoined below the chest arrived in Boston in August 1829. They died in 1874, but during their life – and after their death – Americans viewed, read and collected lithographs, newspaper articles, cartes de visit, satires, poetry, drama, photographs, novels, and cartoons regarding the twins, and even dressed as them for masquerade parties. From its national beginning, the United States has been subject to political debates generated by the paradoxes of division and unity, of democratic individualism and sameness. This conflation of the “inseparability” of Chang and Eng with an agenda of national unity continued in the majority of material on the twins created in the 1830s and 1840s.

Thomas Nast, one of the most vocal antagonists of socialism, published his political cartoon “The American Twins.” The cartoon depicts two white men standing side by side, one wearing a worker’s apron and wielding a hammer in his well-muscled arm and the other clad in a suit and top hat and carrying a bag of money. Connecting the men at their chests – at precisely the location that connected Chang

* Chan (จัน) and In (อิน) in Thai

and Eng Bunker – is a band containing the phrase “The Real Union.” The caption of the cartoon reads, “United we stand, Divided we fall.” (Wu, 2008: 29-55)

Thai movie *Faet* was released in 2007, the year after the military coup d’etat by junta Sonthi Boonyanakarin. Coincidentally, *Faet* is a horror film about conjoined twin sisters, and, in this perspective, *Faet* can be said to be a film that implies the division of the nation. In the first scene of cutting a birthday cake into two parts with a sharp knife on Pim’s birthday party, it foreshadows Pim’s dark past as a Siamese twin; but at the same time it appears that the Thai political situation is reflected. The anxiety about the dichotomy of Thais is seen throughout the film.

Siamese twins are not one, but neither exactly two. The relationship of Siamese twin is closer than other twin brothers and sisters due to the fact they are inseparable, and even if they can be separable, it must be by taking a life-threatening risk for the operation. At present, news of successful operations to separate Siamese twin is sometimes issued, but the risk is yet high. Pim and Ploy were born as conjoined twins. They share the center of their body (stomach) together, making it too risky to separate them. They used to be very close to each other; Pim as a tender and caring sister, while Ploy was tough but fought for her sister Pim. They were a perfect match, but with the appearance of a handsome boy, Wee, their sisterhood is broken with jealousy. Wee and Pim love each other, but Ploy also loves Wee at the same time. Ploy who does not win Wee’s love gets angry with Pim who wants to take a risk to take a separate operation after a big fighting between them for the first time in their lives, and Ploy happens to kill Pim unintentionally. They have to take an operation to save Ploy’s life, and finally Ploy and Pim are separated. However, one is dead and the other is alive. Pim and Ploy like to say to each other, “we will be together forever.”

However, due to their fate that they are inseparable, Pim comes back to her sister, even though she does not belong to the human world, and whispers to Ploy, “We will be together forever.” Pim perhaps comes to be together, not to threatening or accuse Ploy for mistakes or for living Pim’s life.

In the opening sequence, a mother is making her daughters' cloths which are stuck together. They look like two, but also one. When Pim, who is really Ploy, comes back to her house in Thailand, she opens her closet. All the cloths are two same ones and two same shoes. Even a music box, it has two ballerinas circling while music plays. Pim takes off her cloth to take a shower. There is a big deep scar on her stomach. Even though she is alone now, she cannot erase the scratch from her past.

Pim wants to cut the connection with her twin sister. So, she left her own hometown to move to Korea since Ploy had died. When she gets a phone call from the doctor in Thailand that her mother has fallen in a critical condition, she says to Wee, "I don't want to go back to Thailand. I don't want to go home." Pim does not want to listen to the music that Ploy liked. She rejects all the connections to Ploy.

However, Pim meets Ploy's apparition every time when she looks into a mirror after she comes back home in Thailand. The dead Ploy appears ghastly; she is in pajama, her body is badly rotten, or sometimes she is bleeding. But Pim sees Ploy sneering at her from the mirror. Pim thought she was alone, but she has never been alone, she has been always with Ploy because they cannot be separable. While Pim walks on the beach alone, suddenly she looks back and finds there are two sets of footprints walking side by side. When one is sick, the other takes the medicine instead. They used to be always together, wherever they go and whatever they do, they even love the same man.

When they are separated into two, even though one is dead, and Pim comes back to her hometown, Pim becomes a monster, which is quite different from what she has been for last few years in Korea. She is haunted by her sister, Ploy, but not really, she actually is Ploy. So, Pim has suffered from her other self. They are not exactly two, but one in fact. After Pim knows that Wee asks his psychiatrist friend to come to their house for a diagnosis of Pim, Pim runs out of the house with embarrassment and drives out of home, but accidentally she hit their loving dog, Lucky. After Lucky died, Pim buys another dog, but with same appearance. She keeps calling the dog as Lucky, but Wee makes her realize that the dog is not the same

Lucky. In the end, she kills the dog and throws it in front of Wee and says, “This dog cannot be the same as Lucky, right? What is your problem? The face is the same, the body size is the same, then why this cannot be the same one?” This is the moment that she realizes not only the difference between herself and her sister, but also the same destiny of the conjoined twin.

The house in the film is a big darkish green mansion alongside the beach. This European colonial styled house looks old, antiquated and has a long history. Inside the house is also colored with a dismal green and decorated with dark wooden furniture. The house is where the twin sisters spent their childhood and it used to be a happy and warm place, however, after they are separated into two, the house becomes horrific and unendurable for Pim. Pim left her house for quite a long time, but inevitably she has to come back. When she is alone in the house, she suffers from the apparition of her dead sister. Pim looks insecure and unstable. Pim feels the absence of her twin sister. She cannot free herself from this precarious state, because she cannot be perfect without her conjoined sister. In the last scene, the house burns down. The place where they were born and spent their childhood is burned out. Pim, who is locked up inside a cupboard, tries to get out, but her sister comes to her and lies down by her side. They die together inside the house while it burns down. The house seems to be a metaphor reflecting the country. The house could imply anxiety of the future of the country divided into two during the present political situation.

2) *Ban Phi Poeb* (2008)

In 2008, two old phi pobs came back; one is exactly the same *Ban Phi Pob* – *Ban Phi Pob 2008*, and the other is just a little bit different *Ban Phi Poeb*. As mentioned in the chapter 3, Kamjohn Luyaphong analyzes the political allegory between the movie series of *Ban Phi Pob* and animosity of Northeast residents toward Bangkok, whereas the appearance of phi pob in the late 2000s suggests conflict and confusion between development and conservation of tradition or locality through the

uproar by Bangkok people visiting Isan. Regarding Luyaphong's theory and, while Thai horror film has a plethora of serious horror films, the return of *Ban Phi Pob* story has significant meaning in political way.

Ban Phi Poeb begins with the narration of a grandmother in the village of Doi Sangob (ดอยสงบสุข); there is a Phi Poeb living in the village. Phi Poeb is much stronger and more malicious than Phi Pob. The ghost is getting more ruthless, but there will be young blood coming from Bangkok and they will save the village in the end. Unlike the name of the village, there is something bad and unpeaceful happening inside village.

Somphot who runs for the committee of Tambon Council, buys off the vote of villagers and plays all kinds of superstitious beliefs, such as hiring a witch to chant for him and buying expensive charms. He is supposed to be rational and caring of other people, but he does not care for anyone, has an affair with Chao Mae, fetishizes amulets and he is a powerless father and husband in his family. He collects amulets and likes to ask the appraised value of amulets from Sian Noi, who is a fake appraiser of amulets. He and his followers' behaviors are irrational and ridiculous, and their superstitious rituals seem to be absurd happenings that belong to under-civilized villages in Isan; however, highly-educated politicians who manage the country in the developed city undertake exactly the same conduct. In other words, Somphot and the villager's absurdity throughout the movie sarcastically represent the present political situation.

Many kinds of folk beliefs relevant to horror story are represented in the film, such as phi fa*, a black cat crossing over a coffin, and nang mai. These scenes have nothing to do with the main subject, phi poeb, but are just equipment to show reckless conducts and folk beliefs of village people. The film represents the dullness and thoughtlessness of village people. Even phi Poeb in the film looks dumb and stupid.

* Phi Fa is another name of 'thewada' in north and northeast of Thailand. Phi Fa is a strong and powerful spirit and is able to cure ailing patients. They are usually a woman.

Phi Poeb always chases the fresh blood of villagers, but is always hungry too because she misses all the time.

A group of university students and a professor come to the village to research Phi Fa. They do not seem to be interested in their research, but only in dating with girlfriends or boyfriends. Most of them concentrate on sex too much and they are also irrational and stupid, no less than villagers. However, Nat is the only one who does not have a partner and his is the one who repels the vicious phi Poeb as the grandmother foretells. He gets a crystal ball from a monk and he uses it to repel phi Poeb in the end.

Isan, the location of the film, is portrayed as a peaceful and quiet place externally, but, internally, it is full of irrational, nonsensical and benighted things, while the people from Bangkok are sexually decadent, stupid and timid. Notwithstanding, the students from Bangkok save the village, and it seems as if Bangkok wins. But, Tha, one of the students, is possessed by phi poeb in the end. The village in Isan is now back to being a peaceful place, but Bangkok will be in trouble with phi poeb, which was originally based in Isan.

4.5 Summary

Thailand from the late 1990s to the 2000s has been in a politically and economically tumultuous, as well as socially and culturally, period. Thai horror films selected in this chapter represent Thai people's collective fears and anxieties during this period, and the monsters in these films are embodiments of contemporary Thai values and beliefs.

Nang Nak, *Phi Sam Baht*, and *Rongraem Phi* represent trauma from the 1997 financial crisis; *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* and *Takhian* are about the fear of natural calamities and pandemic diseases; *Buppha Ratri*, *Long Khong 1* and *2* and *Ban Phi Sing* imply social problems, in particular family matters; *Ban Phi Poeb* and *Faet* relate to political turmoil.

Chapter V

Conclusion

This study aimed to illustrate how the images of monsters are projected in Thai horror film and to examine the allegorical meaning of monsters with regard to Thai cultural tradition; and to investigate the social and cultural contexts of Thai horror film and to analyze how they are represented in the fictional world. My approach involved using the concept of Thai 'otherness', which was elaborated from Wood's notion of 'return of repression', and premised upon the notion that the monster in horror film is an embodiment of culture.

In horror films that have dealt with collective fears and beliefs, there can be found differences in images of monsters and how the monsters are created. Whereas Hollywood's horror film mainly relates to Christian beliefs, the images of the monsters in Thai horror film are created upon the basis of Thai cultural tradition and beliefs, such as Buddhism and Thai animism. Horror film usually implies social, political or cultural problems and issues. Society or natural calamities in Thai history that have had a deep impact are assumed to be projected in Thai horror film by metaphoric representation.

Thai horror film is definitionally blurred because of its hybridity, and for that reason it is difficult to provide strict criteria to identify its genre. In this thesis, I have suggested that the 'threat' of a monster is a crucial factor in the classification of the horror genre. On the other hand, it can be said that 'hybridity' is an important characteristic of Thai horror film. As archivist and film-historian Dome Sukwong said Thai film is similar to Thai food, such as tom yum kung, which has all tastes in one dish; Thai horror film is not only to scare audience, but also to make people laugh and cry at the same time.

Thai horror film is often combined with comedy, and a large number of Thai horror films seem to have been under the rubric of melodrama for their plots, leaning heavily on romance, love stories, conventions or sentimentality. Not just for Thai horror films, but also world-wide, the horror film genre has been intertwined with

sexuality. In Thai horror films, the issue of sexuality arose since the Film Act of 1930, in that films containing elements prejudicial to public morals were strongly banned. Repressed sexuality needed an outlet, which was found in horror film. Nudity, in particular female, and dirty jokes about sex are often presented, and some horror films present a carving that symbolizes the penis. The most distinct difference from Western horror film is the representation of Buddhism in Thai horror film. Thai horror film, in fact most Thai film, involves Buddhist beliefs, that is, karma and rebirth. Ghosts appear in almost all Thai horror films, and can be tied to the supernatural. Dead people comes to living people to take revenge for their wrongful deaths, and most of them have supernatural power. Even if they are not a ghost, but a living human, they have the ability to use black magic. Their uncanny power is an important factor in making them a horrific 'threat'.

Due to the fact that the main target audience is rural residents, rather than urban dwellers, Thai horror film maintains local beliefs, traditions, and folk culture. However, since the early 2000s, Thai horror film has significantly changed into a more serious horror genre from its comedy-horror nature, through influences from Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong horror films. Monsters in these films are no longer funny, but are more grotesque, vengeful and gruesome than ever before. Thai horror films released after 2004 have tended to have endings in which the monsters in the films do not die or get punished (e.g., *Tukae Phi*, *Long Khong*). This is mainly, of course, because of commercial reasons, in order to be able to produce a series of the popular horror film or to save the budget of production. Another possibility can be the influence from the pessimistic and apocalyptic tendency of foreign horror films. However, the most significant factor can be the effect of Thai Buddhism, in that Buddhist ideas, such as 'cause and effect' or karma, are well represented.

Monster as social metaphor

Monstrosity is bound to social norms, mores and culture, and, at the same time, collective fear originates with incidents and traditions that people in the same society or terrain share. Therefore, objects of fear reflected in horror films are spatial and temporal memories of a group of people, rather than of the individual. Each culture has created the configuration of the monster. When collective fears cross the cultural boundary, temporal or spatial gaps produce unpredicted results; thus horror characters have developed and adjusted themselves in order to maintain their horrific features. The concept of rebirth in Buddhist belief, combined with Thai animistic folk religion's belief that all creation in the universe have spirits, has produced various creatures and ghosts. These creatures and ghosts can be divided into 'good' and 'evil' and both have often appeared in Thai folk tales and films.

The ghost is the primary horror object in Thai horror films. While bad and malicious spirits dominate Thai horror films, some good spirits appear and protect the protagonist or other characters as well (e.g., female ghost in *Hian*, Nantha in *Phi Liang Luk Khon*). Notwithstanding that they are good or the guardian of a certain group of people such as family or family system, or that they do not harm innocent people, the reason why the film must be called horror film containing these ghosts is because of their 'abnormality'. Their appearance is 'threat' and 'fear'. However, most Thai horror films provide the background or the reason why and how the ghost which has a good spirit, or, even a horribly malicious ghost, has become evil. Utilizing this device, Thai horror films can evoke the audience's sympathy to the ghosts and this represents Thai Buddhist belief of 'cause and effect' or 'karma'. This also can be said to be the most significant difference between Thai horror film and Hollywood horror film, in that there is no evil without any reason in Thai horror film, whereas ruthless serial killers often appear without any explanation or background in Hollywood horror film.

Ghosts can be divided into three types by gender; female, male and the third sex. Female ghost are the main character in Thai horror film. Women are physically inferior to men so they are easy to become a victim of a bad man in the human world. However, they gain supernatural power posthumously and avenge the men or wrongdoers. Male ghosts have not appeared very often and are not as fearful when compared with female ghosts. Most male ghosts appear in uniforms such as government officer or military (e.g., *Rongraem Phi*, *Phi Mai Chim Fan*). The reason they became ghosts is mostly related to the ‘betrayal’ of love or friendship, rather than physical abuse or love as with female ghosts. While the third sex or bisexual ghost has appeared in recent horror films, gay people usually appear as supporting characters to the heroes and heroines, as assistants and also as comic relief (Patsorn, 2004. In recent horror film, gay characters have finally taken the main role; however, they usually are featured as comic characters or with facetious features (e.g., *Koi Thoe Gay*, *Chimthang Rotfai Phi*).

Horror objects are often combined with animals, trees and places, such as old house and forests. Interestingly, these supernatural beings mostly embody female features no matter whether being a serpent, takhian tree, or house, and are usually based on Thai folktales and folk beliefs.

In recent horror films, diabolic humans appearing as a horrific monsters are no less than ghosts. Most of them have supernatural power to kill or mayhem people. The significant characteristics of these films are the ‘Self-Ego’ typed psychological horror film, which are reminiscent to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This is a relatively new trend that implies “The most fearful thing is that I am a monster.”

Using the method of Robin Wood to analyze the monsters in horror films, I examined ‘the Otherness’ of Thais, which can be considered an important concept in the creation of the monsters in Thai horror films. Monsters in horror films are portraits of our fears, and the evil of our minds, which can change following time and place. However, at the same time, they are representative of the ‘collective memories’ that

we share in a culture and society; thus monsters that horrify us are based on our own particular culture and society. The Otherness in Thai horror films includes:

1) **Monstrous female** - Wood explains that in a male-dominated culture, where power, money, law, and social institutions are controlled by past, present, and future patriarchs, women as the Other assumes particular significance. In patriarchal societies, especially in Asian countries, women's status in society is relatively inferior to that of men, the autonomy and capability of women is easily ignored, particularly women's sexuality. Monsters in Thai horror films are mostly female, no matter whether they are ghost or human. Beauty and a sexy appearance seems to be one of requirements for female monsters. This is a reflection of the repression about beauty of the present people in Thai society.

2) **Male bourgeois** - Even if it is a male-dominated culture colonized by bourgeois ideology, the repression of men can be as much as for women. A rich man in the upper class who is venerable, generous and even good-looking incessantly appears in horror films, not as a good man, but an evil doer. Thai society is definitely a hierarchical society, like many others in Asia. The upper class men should be an ideal man in the society; a family man, voluntarily a holy man (*nakbun*), a morally innocent man. The repression comes from the 'good man' complex, such as what they should look like, and this is well represented in Thai horror films.

3) **Other cultures** - From diplomatic history, Thai people have been quite open and permissive to other cultures. Western culture was introduced to Thailand a long time ago, and at present, Thailand is one of the most popular countries for the tourists to visit from all over the world. Nevertheless, Western cultures have tended to be treated by Thai people as morally un-venerable, in particular, sexually indecent (e.g., *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*, *La-Tha-Phi*).

4) **Ethnic groups** - Only one Thai horror movie about an ethnic group in Thailand could be found. *Zee-Oui* is a horror-thriller movie based on a true story about a serial killer and cannibalistic Chinese immigrant to Thailand in 1946.

5) **Homosexuality and Bisexuality** - Thailand has been labeled a 'gay paradise' in Asia. Many famous and successful katoei actors (or actresses) and scholars appear on TV, and many movies having gay characters as a main theme have been released in Thailand. Nonetheless, the status of sexual minorities seems as tenuous as ever, as they are restricted from social systems and often have to struggle for identity. Although homosexuality is considered abnormal by many people under the mainstream concept of sexuality, it was neither regarded as serious misconduct nor subject to severe punishment in Thai history (Svati, 2009). Homosexuality in Thai horror films represents the grave, normative, and to some extent the insatiable, although comedy-horror such as *Koi Thoe Gay* is as much a comedy as a horror (e.g., *Phi Khon Pen, Suai Lak Sai*).

6) **Children** - As with women, children are also relatively weak in physical and social position. Children who have appeared as a monster or a medium in the Thai horror films are school boys, not girls as of yet, or otherwise, as an unborn baby aborted before their naturally birth. Children, or babies, as monsters appearing in Thai horror films are mostly victims of adults. Children monsters in Thai horror films are relevant to family problems; domineering father, blindly loving mother, conflicts with half brothers or sisters. Direct or indirect experience in sexuality in a child's growth has an impact on a child's unconsciousness, becoming a fear or repugnance that can lead to images of monsters (e.g., *Koi Thoe Yom, Dek Ho*).

7) **Machines and new technology** - It is no doubt that many people have technology phobia, technophobia, which has been observed to affect various societies and communities through the world. In some of these cases, the new technologies

conflict with established beliefs, such as personal values of simplicity and modest lifestyles. Another anxiety has grown up together with the development of technology; alienation. The more dependent on machines civilization has grown, the weaker human relationships have become. Fear of machines and new technology creates a monster which shows up via the phone, TV, or on video tape (e.g., *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*, *Ngao*, *Cloning: Khon Copy Khon*).

Characteristics of the monster are definitely relevant to the Thai Buddhist idea of 'karma' and 'rebirth'. Revenant events from the past incessantly come to see people in the present. The linkage between them and their victims in the present represents karma; what you are now is what you were before. Karma is beyond time and space; you have to pay for what you did in a previous life, even though you do not know at all. Sometimes you have to take responsibility for what your parents or ancestors did in the past. Monsters in Thai horror films are ambivalent. Monsters are 'threat' and 'evil', but at the same time they are also victims. Examining through confrontation in a relationship, four types of confrontation are found; gender, such as female vs. male, female vs. female; monsters vs. heroes/heroines; good vs. evil; monsters vs. victims. In the confrontation between female and male, supernatural power and black magic are essentially accompanied when a woman punishes a man, because women in human life are physically inferior to men. However, supernatural power or black magic does not have significant meaning in the confrontation between female and female. In this confrontational form, the woman is not usually the direct wrongdoer, but mostly acting as a conspirator. In Thai horror films, Buddhist monks largely play the hero to solve the problem or to repulse the malicious female ghost. However, in recent horror films, Buddhist monks do not take the role as hero any longer, but has remained as an important part and present motif of the movie.

The noticeable characteristics of the recent Thai horror films are: first, the monsters do not die or leave the human world, but they still live with human until the end of the movie (e.g., *Shutter Kot Tit Winyan*, *Buppha Ratri*, *Program Na Winyan*

Akhat); second, there is no hero/heroine fights with the monsters, there is no good, only evil (e.g., *Buppha Ratri*, *The Unseeable*, *Long Khong*).

Social/political and cultural allegory in Thai horror films

A burst of Thai horror film started with Nonzee's *Nang Nak* in 1999, which, coming together with the economic revival, continued the popularity of this old story. The narrative trend of Thai horror film from 1999 to the early 2000s can be said to have followed 'tradition' or 'nostalgia'. But since the mid 2000s, Thai horror film began to have various cinematic styles and narratives, with more individual issues, rather than political issues, such as 'Otherness' from gender and sexuality. Thai horror films have become more serious and grotesque, the laughing matter having been gradually deflated from the horror films. Meanwhile, domestic political turmoil continued and the economic situation was poor for years after the economic revival from the 1997 IMF. In addition catastrophic natural disasters, such as the 2004 tsunami, floods year after year, and pandemic diseases, such as SARS and avian flu, have had a significant impact. The anxiety and fear of the people of, not only national crises, but also small and large social crimes and immoral incidents, have continued to increase with these anxieties and fears assumed to be reflected in horror films in one way or another.

The IMF trauma opened the door to the imagination of another horror world. There has been a tendency for 'Thainess' or 'nostalgia' to be represented in horror film, and this trend continued until 2002. *Nang Nak*, *Phi Sam Baht* and *Rongraem Phi* are exemplary films that represent the trauma of the 1997 financial crisis and contain 'nostalgic' elements. *Nang Nak* is the another version of the legendary Thai ghost story *Mae Nak Phrakhanong*, *Phi Sam Baht* is adapted from three ghost stories taken from Thai comic books in the past that cost one baht per book, this omnibus styled ghost film contains three familiar ghost stories in Thailand; *Rongraem Phi* also

provides images of a specific time and place, which is a classical horror story, based on Atthajinda's novel from the 1960s, and this film was produced as a movie for the first time in 1975.

Natural calamities and pandemic disease have occurred repeatedly throughout the history of human beings everywhere in the world. Throughout centuries, human fear has induced the emergence and formation of folkloric phenomena. *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat* is based on the fear of SARS. This comedy-horror movie depicts the victims of the SARS virus as zombies and contains lots of sarcastic remarks and satire on political and social issues. Throughout the history of human being, there must be a scapegoat for pandemic diseases or plagues. This film points to 'foreignness' as a scapegoat. *Takhian* emphasizes the selfishness of human beings and the power of nature. In *Takhian*, people destroy nature under the banner of civilization. People cut trees indiscriminately for dam construction, with nature being devastated by the actions of the people.

At the turn of the 21st century, women's social status has significantly developed. As women's status and roles have changed, social structure, in particular family structure, has changed. In the traditional Thai horror films, most narratives are composed of a story of physically and socially weaker women, who die under a false charge, and are reborn as a ghost with supernatural power to avenge the assailant, mostly men; while today, female monsters are more aggressive and active especially in expressing their sexuality and desire. Images of 'mother', who are believed to be the most dependable and full of love and kindness in tradition, are no longer represented in horror films; moreover, mothers do not care of their children, they abort their unborn baby, or they impose their outside work, which was mostly monopolized by men before, rather than family matters. Men's anxiety for women's higher status or fear of the erosion of traditional values, specifically family, are implied in recent Thai horror films, and, for that reason female monsters in horror

films are depicted as more fearful, brutal, grotesque, and excessive. In *Buppha Ratri*, Buppha is a university student who was abused by her step-father. But she is deceived by the spoiled son of a rich family. She aborts her baby and then she dies from excessive bleeding. However, her feeling of guilty for her unborn baby and her desire for a perfect family keeps her staying at her apartment even after she has died, and she lives with her dead lover forever as if her wish in the end.

Ban Phi Sing (aka *The House*, dir. Monthon Arayangkoon, 2007) represents the anxiety of the change in family values in present days. The monster in the film can be the faltering family. Husband Phanu presses his wife Chalinee to play the role of a mother. But she cares more for her outside work than being a mother. Phanu's anxiety invites atrocious results, and, as with other wife-killers, it brings tragic consequences; while wife Chalinee survives, she lives full of torture in return for rejecting the perfect family.

The monstrous woman Panor in *Long Khong 1* and *2* is portrayed as one of the most malicious and ruthless characters among Thai horror film history. She is a teacher and mother. But at the same time, she is a family breaker, sexual pervert and invader. Considering her social position and the fact that she is a mother, Panor is a symbol of faltering traditional values and collapsing family structure in modern society.

From the beginning of the 2000s until the present time, Thailand has struggled with political turmoil. Conflicts between the ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and anti-Thaksin groups has grown to cover the whole country, and at last Thailand seems to be separated into two parts; the reds vs. the yellows; North and Northeast vs. Bangkok and the South; new elite and proletariat vs. the privileged and elites. *Faet*, released in 2007, is the story of Siamese twin sisters, which is often referred to as 'unity' according to the "United Siamese Brother – Chang and Eng" idea, based on the American history of Siamese twins, Chang and Eng, and was emblematic of America's unification due to "inseparability". Siamese twin sisters,

Pim and Ploy, were born conjoined at their stomachs. They were very close, loved and cared for each other until they met a handsome boy, Wee. They fell in love with this boy at the same time and at last they fought to win his love. But Ploy inadvertently kills Pim, and Ploy lives without Pim, disguising herself as Pim, for several years in a foreign country. However, their inseparable destiny calls Ploy to come back home and Pim and Ploy meet again.

Horror film is defined as the story of anxiety and fear, but because of its popularity and marketability, successful horror film needs to share spatial and temporal experience or memory. Due to the fact that the image of a monster or object of fear is based on cultural boundaries, here 'monster', there 'normal', horror films are a good medium to represent cultural values, social problems, and political anxieties. Thai horror films portray social, political and cultural changes and conflicts through the images of the monsters and their characters, and the motifs of the Thai horror films are definitely related to Thai values and beliefs no matter how they change.

Direction for future research

This research synthetically covers a wide range of Thai horror film as related to many film theories. Obviously there is need for more specific and detail study of the Thai horror film. This dissertation focuses on the images and characteristics of monsters and social, political and cultural context of the films, however, there still needs to be an analysis of the narratives of the films. In a macroscopic perspective, it would be valuable to make a comparative study of horror films of Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, to further the study of Asian horror film.

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ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



Appendices

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Filmography

Thai films from 1997 to 2008

Thai Title	English Title	Year	Director
<i>Ta Fa Likit</i> (ท่าฟ้าลิขิต)	<i>Won is Running?</i>	1997	Oxide & Danny Pang
<i>ไนน์ตี้อ็อค เดลิกเปิดโลง</i>		1997	เฉลิม วงศ์พิมพ์
³⁰³ <i>กลัว/กลัว/อาฆาต</i>		1998	สมจริง ศรีสุภาพ
<i>Nang Nak</i> (นางนาก)	<i>Nang Nak</i>	1999	Nonzee Nimibutr
<i>Cloning Khon Copy Khon</i> (โคลนนิ่ง คนก๊อปปีคน)	<i>Cloning</i>	1999	ปิติ จตุรภัทร์
<i>Pob Wit Sayong</i> (ปอบหวีด สยอง)	<i>Body Jumper</i>	2001	Haeman Chatemee
<i>Phi Sam Baht</i> (ผีสามบาท)	<i>Bangkok Haunted</i>	2001	Oxide Pang, Pisut Praesangeam
<i>999-9999 To Tit Tai</i> (999-9999 ต่อติดตาย)	<i>999-9999</i>	2002	Peter Manus
<i>Khon Hen Phi</i> (คนเห็นผี)	<i>The Eye</i>	2002	Oxide & Danny Pang
<i>Tamnann Krasue</i> (ตำนานกระสือ)	<i>Demonic Beauty</i>	2002	Bin Bunluerit
<i>Phi Hua Khat</i> (ผีหัวขาด)	<i>Headless Hero</i>	2002	
<i>Rongraem Phi</i> (โรงแรมผี)	<i>The Hotel</i>	2002	Anukul Jarotok
<i>Arom Athap Akhat</i> (อารมณ์ อาถรรพ อาฆาต)	<i>Three Extremes</i>	2002	Nonzee Nimibutr
<i>Khon Bok Phi Ba Pacha Taek</i> (คนบอกผีบ้าป่าช้าแตก)	<i>Chaos At The Graveyard</i>	2003	Jaran Wongsujjaa
<i>Khon Sang Phi</i> (คนสั่งผี)	<i>Ghost Delivery</i>	2003	Tiwa Moeithaisong
<i>Takhian</i> (ตะเคียน)	<i>Takhian</i>	2003	Chalerm Wongpim
<i>Buppha Ratri</i> (บุปผาราตรี)	<i>Buppha Ratri</i>	2003	Yuthlert Sippapak Thammarak Kamuttmanock
<i>Sanghon</i> (สังหรณ์)	<i>Omen</i>	2003	
<i>Lob Phi Phi Mai Lob</i> (หลบผี ผีไม่หลบ)	<i>The Ghost Hunter Project</i>	2003	ทองก้อน ศรีทับทิม
<i>Lon</i> (หลอน)	<i>Lhorn</i>	2003	Arphichard Phonpairoj
<i>Hian</i> (เฮี้ยน)	<i>The Mother aka The Unborn</i>	2003	Bhandit Thongdee
<i>Six Hok Tai Tha Tai</i> (Six หกตายห้าตาย)	<i>Six</i>	2004	Nasorn Panungkasiri
<i>Khun Krabi Phi Rabat</i> (ขุนกระบี่ ผีระบาด)	<i>SARS War</i>	2004	Taweewat Wantha

<i>Khon Phi Pisat</i> (คนผีปีศาจ)	<i>Evil</i>	2004	Chukiat Sakveerakul Buranee Rachjanibun & Nida Suthat Na Ayutthaya
<i>Zee-Oui</i> (ซีอูย)	<i>Zee-Oui</i>	2004	Tanit Jitnukul
<i>Khon Len Khong</i> (คนเล่นของ)	<i>Art of the Devil</i>	2004	Oxide & Danny Pang
<i>Khon Hen Phi 2</i> (คนเห็นผี 2)	<i>The Eye 2</i>	2004	Banjong Pisanthanakun, Parkpoom Wongpoom
<i>Shutter Kot Tit Winyan</i> (ชัตเตอร์ กตติวิญญาน)	<i>Shutter</i>	2004	บิณฑ์ บรรลือฤทธิ์
<i>The Kron Kuan Kuan Phi</i> (เดอะโกรน กวน กวน ผี)	<i>The Grone</i>	2004	Manop Udomdej
<i>Tukae Phi</i> (ตุ๊กแกผี)	<i>Lizard Woman</i>	2004	Tiwa Moeithaisong
<i>Phi Chong Air</i> (ผีช่องแอร์)	<i>The Sisters</i>	2004	Komsan Treepong
<i>Phi Hua Khat 2</i> (ผีหัวขาด 2)	<i>Headless Hero 2</i>	2004	Montri Kong-Im
<i>Athap Kae Bon Phi</i> (อาถรรพ์แก้บนผี)	<i>The Commitment</i>	2004	Oxide & Danny Pang
<i>Khon Hen Phi 10</i> (คนเห็นผี 10)	<i>The Eye 10</i>	2005	Piyapan Choopetch
<i>Chom Khamang Wet</i> (จอมขมังเวทย์)	<i>Necromancer</i>	2005	Tanit Jitnukul
<i>Narok</i> (นรก)	<i>Hell</i>	2005	Mark duffield
<i>Nak Rak Tae Winyan Khwamtai</i> (นาครักแท้ วิญญาน ความตาย)	<i>Ghost of mae Nak</i>	2005	Yuthlert Sippapak
<i>Buppha Ratri 2</i> (บุปผารাত্রี 2)	<i>Buppha Ratri2 aka Ratri Returns</i>	2005	Pakphum Wongjinda
<i>Rab Nong Sayongkhwan</i> (รับน้องสยองขวัญ)	<i>Scared</i>	2005	Pasith Buranajan, Kongkiat Khomsiri
<i>Long Khong</i> (ลองของ)	<i>Art of Devil 2</i>	2005	Adirek Wattaleela
<i>Variety Phi Chalui</i> (วาไรตี้ผีจลย)	<i>Ghost Variety</i>	2005	Mona Nahm
<i>Khon Ratuek Chat</i> (คนระทึกชาติ)	<i>The Remaker</i>	2005	
<i>13 Game Sayongkhwan</i> (13 เกมสยอง)	<i>13 Beloved</i>	2006	Chukiat Sakveerakul
<i>Krasue Valentine</i> (กระสือวาเลย์ไทม์)	<i>Ghost Valentine</i>	2006	Yuthlert Sippapak
<i>Koi Thoe Yom</i> (โกยเถอะโยม)	<i>See How They Run</i>	2006	Jaturong Mokjok
<i>Colic: Dek Hen Phi</i> (โคลิค เด็กเห็นผี)	<i>Colic</i>	2006	Patchanon Thammajira
<i>The Letter Khian Song Khon Tai</i> (เดอะเลตเตอร์ เขียนส่งคนตาย)	<i>The Letter of Death</i>	2006	Kapon Thongplap
<i>Dek Ho</i> (เด็กหอ)	<i>Dorm</i>	2006	Songyos

<i>Pen Chu Kab Phi</i> (เป็นชู้กับผี)	<i>The Unseeable</i>	2006	Sugmakanan Wsit Sasanatieng
<i>Phi Khon Pen</i> (ผีคนเป็น)	<i>The Victim</i>	2006	Monthon Arayangkoon
<i>Phi Yak Klab Ma Koet</i> (ผียากกลับมาเกิด)	<i>Re-cycle</i>	2006	Oxide & Danny Pang
<i>Lang-Lok-Lon</i> (ลาง-หลอก-หลอน)	<i>Black Night</i>	2006	Tanit Jitnukul
<i>La-Tha-Phi</i> (ล่า-ท้า-ผี)	<i>Ghost Game</i>	2006	Sarawut Wichiensarn
<i>Sop aka Achan Yai</i> (ศพ aka อาจารย์ใหญ่)	<i>Cadaver</i>	2006	Duloisit Niyomkul
<i>Koi Thoe Gay</i> (โกยเถอะเกย์)	<i>Ghost Station</i>	2007	Yuthlert Sippapak
<i>Chumthang Rotfai Phi</i> (ชุมทางรถไฟผี)	<i>Train of the Dead</i>	2007	Sukhum Mathawanit
<i>Body Sop 19</i> (บอดี้ ศพ 19)	<i>Body</i>	2007	Paween Purikitpanya
<i>Ban Phi Sing</i> (บ้านผีสิง)	<i>The House</i>	2007	Monthon Arayangkoon
<i>Poet Mang Klong Phi Nang Manut</i> (เปิดมาง กลองผีหนังมนุษย์)	<i>Perng Mang The Haunted Drum</i>	2007	Nuttapeera Chomsri
<i>Phi Chang Nang Athap Pa Khamchanot</i> (ผีจ่าหนัง อภรรพณ์ ป่าคำชะโนด)	<i>The Screen at Kamchanod</i>	2007	Songsak Mongkolthong
<i>Phi Liang Luk Khon</i> (ผีเลี้ยงลูกคน)	<i>Ghost Mother</i>	2007	ธรรต สิริพันธ์วรภรณ์
<i>Phi Mai Chim Fan</i> (ผีไม้จิ้มฟัน)	<i>Vow of Death</i>	2007	Piyapan Choopetch Banjong
<i>Faet</i> (แฝด)	<i>Alone</i>	2007	Pisanthanakun, Parkpoom Wongpoom
<i>Winyan Lok Khon Tai</i> (วิญญาณโลกคนตาย)	<i>The Spiritual World</i>	2007	ธราเทพ ทิวสมบุญ
<i>Wong Pisat</i> (เว้งปีศาจ)	<i>Dark Water</i>	2007	จรัญ วงษ์สัจจะ
<i>Suay Lak Sai</i> (สวยลากไส้)	<i>Sick Nurses</i>	2007	Piraphan Laoyont, Thodsapol Siriwiwat
<i>Thot Rahat Winyan</i> (ถอดรหัสวิญญาณ)	<i>Soul's Code</i>	2008	อัศจรรย์ สัตโกวิท
<i>Bang Phi Pob 2008</i> (บ้านผีปอบ 2008)	<i>Ban Phi Pob 2008</i>	2008	บรรหาร ไทธนบูรณ์
<i>Bang Phi Poeb</i> (บ้านผีเปิบ)	<i>Ban Phee Perp</i>	2008	พงศ์ชยุดม ศิริสุข องศา
<i>Program Na Winyan Akhat</i>	<i>Coming Soon</i>	2008	Sopon Sukdapisit

(โปรแกรมหน้า วิทยุณอาณาเขต)

<i>Phi Ta Wan Kab Achan Ta Bo</i> (ผีตาหวานกับอาจารย์ตาโบ)	<i>The Ghost and Master Boh</i>	2008	วรพจน์ โปธิเนตร
<i>Long Khong 2</i> (ลองของ 2)	<i>Art of Devil 3</i>	2008	Pasith Buranajan, Kongkiat Khomsiri
<i>Long To Tai</i> (โหลงต่อตาย)	<i>The Coffin</i>	2008	Ekachai Uekrongtham
<i>Saphai Brue</i> (สะใภ้รื้อ)	<i>Saphai Breu...aw aw</i>	2008	Tanit Jitnukul, Seree Phongnithi Yongyuth
<i>Si Phraeng</i> (สี่แพร่ง)	<i>Si Phraeng aka Phobia</i>	2008	Thongkongtoon, Paween Puritpanya

Thai horror (ghost) films before 1997

Thai title	Director	Year
แม่นาคพระโขนง		1933
ปู่โสมเฝ้าทรัพย์		1933
พรายตะเคียน		1940
ลูกนางนาค		1950
ลูกนางพระโขนง		1950
วิทยุณรักของนางนาค	รังษี เสวิกุล	1951
ชาติผีดิบ	สด ศรีบูรพารมย์	1952
ปีศาจคนองรัก		1956
แม่นาคพระโขนง	รังสี ทศนพยัคฆ์	1959
นางแมวผี	รัตน์ เศรษฐ์ภักดี	1960
ตุ๊กตาผี	รังสี ทศนพยัคฆ์	1960
แม่นาคคีนซีพ	อนุนาศ บุนนาค	1960
ยอดผี		1960
มนุษย์ผีสิง		1960
ผีพยาบาล	ประดิษฐ์ กัลย์จาฤก	1960
ปีศาจเครื่องบิน		1960
ไอ้ค้างคาว		1960
วิทยุณรัก		1962

วิญญาณรักแม่นาค	รังสี ทัศนพยัคฆ์	1962
นางสมิงพราย	ส.คราประยูร	1963
ภูตพิศواس	ประทีป โกมลภิส	1964
แว่วเสียงยุงทอง	ประทีป โกมลภิส	1965
เจ้าแม่ตะเคียนทอง	รังสี ทัศนพยัคฆ์	1966
มีอนาง	ส.อาสนจินดา	1966
งูผี	รัตน์ เศรษฐภักดี	1966
ปีศาจเมียน้อย	เจริญ สุวรรณถนุ	1966
ลูกกรอก	สุพรรณ บวรณพิมพ์	1967
นางพรายตานี	นครินทร์	1967
เจ้าแม่ปานทอง		1967
แก้วกาสทอง	รังสี ทัศนพยัคฆ์	1967
ระฆังผี	ประติษฐ์ กัลย์จาฤก	1968
พรายพิศواس	ฉลุย ศรีรัตนา	1968
7 ป่าช้า	เกรียงศักดิ์ ฤกษ์ชนะ	1968
แม่นาคคะนองรัก	เสน่ห์ โกมารชุน	1968
ภูตแห่งความรัก	ชุดิมา สุวรรณรัต	1969
รัก-ยม	พันดา	1969
ปีศาจเสนาหา	พันดา	1969
ยอดรักยุงทอง	ประทีป โกมลภิส	1969
เดชนางพราย	เกรียงศักดิ์ ฤกษ์ชนะ	1969
คฤหาสน์รัก	ประกอบ แก้วประเสริฐ	1969
กินรี		1969
ปลาไหลทอง	รัตน์ เศรษฐภักดี	1969
อภินิหารอาจารย์ทอง		1969
ตุ๊กแกผี	ประติษฐ์ กัลป์จาริก	1969
นางกวัก	พันดา	1969
เจ้าแม่สาริกา	เชษฐ ชัยชนะ	1969
ปาฏิหารย์นางพราย	สนม วังใน	1969
แม่นาคพระนคร	พระองค์เจ้าอนุสรรมงคลการ	1970
พระจันทร์แดง	เนรมิต	1970
ลูกผี		1970
โลงแตก		1970
แม่ย่านาง	เนรมิต	1970

วิญญานดอกประดู่	อนุนาศ บุนนาค	1970
ภูตเส่นหา		1970
เจ้าแม่สไบทอง	วินิจ ภัคดีวิจิตร	1970
กายทิพย์	ไพรัช กสิวัฒน์	1970
ค้างคาวผี	เกรียงศักดิ์ ฤกษ์ชนะ	1971
จำปาทอง	วิจารณ์ ภัคดีวิจิตร	1971
นางพรายจำแลง	นครินทร์	1971
แก้วขนเหล็ก	จิตติน	1971
เพชรดาแมว	ประดิษฐ์ กัลป์จาริก	1972
คุ่มนางฟ้า	จิตติน	1972
กระสือสาว	ส.เนาวราช	1973
คังตะเคียน	กิจติพงษ์ เวศภูญาณ	1973
ดรณีผีสิง	เกรียงศักดิ์ ฤกษ์ชนะ	1973
แม่นาคพระโขนง	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1973
ดอนโขมด	วินิจ ภัคดีวิจิตร	1973
แม่นาคอาละวาด	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1973
จอมเมฆินทร์	เสนอ คราประยูร	1973
ครรภ์ผี	โรม บุนนาค	1975
วิญญานโลกีย์	รังสี ทัศนพยัคฆ์	1975
ขุมทางผี	ประวิทย์ ลีลาไว	1975
โรงแรมผี	แสนยากร-สมวงศ์ ทิมบุญธรรม	1975
แม่นาคอเมริกา	เล็ก กิติพราภรณ์	1975
ผีสาวฮีสทีเรีย	ดวง	1975
แม่นาคบุกโตเกียว	ธนาชัย ชีโนทัย	1976
พรายกินรี	सनาน คราประยูร	1976
ทองลูกบวบ	วิจิตรรัตน์	1976
๗ อภรรพณ์	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1978
แม่นาคพระโขนง		1978
ผีเพื่อนรัก	เนรมิต	1978
วิญญานรักแม่นาคพระโขนง	แดง(เสนีย์)โกมารขุน	1978
แดร์รักคู่ล่าต๋อก	ล้อต๋อก	1979
ตะเคียนคนอง	รังสี ทัศนพยัคฆ์	1979
ผีหัวขาด	วิธิต อุตสาหจิต	1980
ภูตพิศवास	แสนยากร-เมตตา รุ่งรัตน์	1980

ผีตาโม่	โกมารชุน	1981
เงินปากผี	ชนะ คราประยูร	1981
ป่าช้าแตก	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1981
อาจารย์โกย	แสงอาทิตย์	1981
ปีศาจเมียน้อย	จ.สุวรรณฤทธิ์-แสน สุรศักดิ์	1981
แว่วเสียงนางพราย	รังสี ทัศนพยัคฆ์	1982
กระสือ	โกมินทร์	1982
แก้วขนเหล็ก	สุรียน ดวงทองดี-วินัย วิเศษศิริ	1983
อาถรรพณ์น้ำมันพราย	โกเมน ศักดิ์เสนีย์	1983
ยันต์สู้ผี	น้ามนต์	1984
นางพญางูผี	สุรียน ดวงทองดี-อนันต์ ชลวนิช	1984
ผ้าโลง	น้ามนต์	1984
อภินิหารน้ำมันพราย		1984
เสน่ห์นางพราย	กายทิพย์	1984
ทหารเกณฑ์เจอผี	สุรียน ดวงทองดี-ดาว นูรพา	1984
นางพรายคะนองรัก	ศุภร์ 13	1984
เดชผีดิบ	กายทิพย์	1984
ค่างคาวทอง	น้ามนต์	1984
อิทธิฤทธิ์น้ำมันพราย	โกเมน ศักดิ์เสนีย์	1984
ผีเอ๊ะเอ๊ะ	นฤชา	1984
ระฆังผี	น้ามนต์	1985
ปาฏิหาริย์กุมารทอง	พलयแก้ว	1985
จอมเมฆินทร์	นฤชา	1985
เจ้าแม่ตะเคียนทอง	นฤชา	1985
นางนาค ภาคพิศดาร	เล็ก ดวงทองดี	1985
แม่หมอน้ำมันพราย	โกเมนทร์ ศักดิ์เสนีย์	1985
หม้อแม่นาค	สนธยา ดวงทองดี	1985
มือปืนผีสิง	พยุ่ง พยกุล	1986
ระบำผี		1986
หักเหลี่ยมแดร์ริคูล่า	สมวงศ์ ทิมนุญธรรม	1986
นางเสื้อสมิง	ดอกฟ้า	1986
พรายตะเคียน	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1987
ภูตเส่นหา	ศุภสิทธิ์	1987
ผีเจ้าเล่ห์	กามเทพ	1987

ตะเพียนทอง	เสนีย์ โกมารขุน	1987
โลงแตก	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1987
แม่นาค 30	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1987
เดชอีล่ายอง	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1987
มันแอบอยู่ในหอ	ประยูร วงษ์ชื่น	1987
คีนปลอยผี		1988
ปีศาจสีเงิน		1988
มือปืนผีดิบ		1988
บ้านผีปอบ	ศรีสวัสดิ์	1989
ผีสองนาง	ฤทธิ์รงค์	1989
แม่นาคอาละวาด		1989
7 ป่าช้า ตอนผีแหกทอ้ง	เล็ก ดวงทองดี	1990
กระสือกัดปอบ	พลาวุฒิ	1990
กระสือซิ่ง	เพิ่มพล เขยอรุณ	1990
เจ้าสาวเที่ยงคืน	แสนยากร	1990
ตะเคียนคู่	สุรียน ดวงทองดี	1990
ตันทาน้ำมันพราย	กามนิต	1990
ตันทาพระจันทร์	สันติ เอนกนन्द	1990
ท่านผีเพี้ยน	สุขุม เมธาวนิช	1990
บ้านผีดูด	สปาร์ก	1990
บ้านผีปอบ 2	ศรีสวัสดิ์	1990
บ้านผีปอบ 3	ศรีสวัสดิ์	1990
บ้านผีสาว	เสนีย์ โกมารขุน	1990
ปอบผีเฮี้ยน	อัจกลับ	1990
ปลุกมันขึ้นมาฆ่า 3 จ๊ะเอ๋ผีหัวขาด	ประพนธ์ เพชรอิทร์	1990
ปีศาจแมงมุมสาว	วันชนะ	1990
ผีล่าออย	ไนซ์กาย	1990
ผีแม่มาย	ประวิทย์ ชุ่มฤทธิ์	1990
พรายคะนอง	สุรียน	1990
ภูตเวจี		1990
มันลุกขึ้นมาอ้อน	ประยูร วงษ์ชื่น	1990
แม่นาคคีนชีพ		1990
ลูกกรอกคะนอง ตอนปลุกป่าช้า	มนต์ โกเมนท์	1990
อาถรรพณ์ตุ๊กแกผี	วาสุเทพ โอศิริ	1990

อาคารพณเสื่อสมิง	น้ำมนต์	1990
บ้านผีปอบ 4		1991
บ้านผีปอบ 6		1991
มือขาวอาถรรพ์	พรพจน์ กนิษฐเสน	1991
ปลุกมันขึ้นมาพืดผีกัด		1991
บ้านผีทะเล้น		1991
ปอบผีฟ้า	พยุง พยกุล	1991
ปอบหยิบ		1991
ปีศาจแมวดำ		1991
ผีย้ายวัด		1991
พรายตานี		1991
พันธุ์ผีปอบ '34		1991
มันขึ้นมาจากโลง		1991
สงครามผี		1991
สุสานผีปอบ		1991
ไอ้คึดผี	ชนะ คราประยูร	1991
เขียนล่าปอบ	วันชนะ	1992
บ้านผีปอบ 7	ศรีสวัสดิ์	1992
บ้านผีปอบ 8	ธงทอง	1992
ปลุกผีมาจับปอบ	จรินทร์ พรหมรังสี	1992
พันธุ์ผีปอบ 3	อัศจรรย์	1992
แม่นาคเจดีย์ปอบ	จรินทร์ พรหมรังสี	1992
โรงเรียนกำจัดปอบ	ชาย มีคุณสุด	1992
สยองก้อยส์	ผีเสื้อ ทรวง	1992
จระเข้ผีสิง	ฤทธิณรงค์	1993
บ้านผีปอบ 9	อรุณสวัสดิ์	1993
บ้านผีปอบ 10	อรุณสวัสดิ์	1993
ผีแม่มาย 3	จรินทร์ พรหมรังสี	1993
สยองกินส์	ดาวรุ่ง ธนะชัย	1993
ดงสมิง		1994
นักฆ่าดาปีศาจ		1994
บ้านผีปอบ 11	อรุณสวัสดิ์	1994
บ้านผีปอบ 13	อรุณสวัสดิ์	1994
บ้านผีหัวขาด		1994

ผีแม่ม่าย 5		1994
ผีไม่กลัวสัปเหร่อ	จรินทร์ พรหมรังสี	1994
แม่นาคพระโขนง		1994
เสกหุ่นไล่กามาล่าปอบ		1994
อยู่ดีดี ผีมาเยือน		1994
ภูตพิศवास	จรินทร์ พรหมรังสี	1995

Thai films (Other genres)

Anthaphan Khrong Mueang (2499 *อันธพาลครองเมือง*, aka *Dang Bireley's and Young Gangsters*, dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, 1996)

Bangrachan (*บางระจัน*, dir. Tanit Jitnukul, 2000)

Faen Chan (*แฟนฉัน*, aka *My Girl*, dir. 365 Film, 2003)

Ong-Bak (*องค์บาก*, dir. Prachya Pinkaew, 2003)

Patihan Rak Tang Phan (*ปฐิหารยรักต่างพันธุ์*, aka *Deep in the Jungle*, dir. Thirawat Rujinatham, 2008)

Saeng Satawat (*แสงศตวรรษ*, aka *Syndroms and a Century*, dir. Apitchapong Weerasethakul, 2006)

Suriyothai (*สุริโยไท*, dir. Chatrichalerm Yukol, 2003)

Sut Saneha (*สุดเสน่หา*, aka *Blissfully Yours*, dir. Aphitchaphong Weerasethakul, 2001)

Other countries films

28 Days Later (dir. Danny Boyle 2002, US)

Blair Witch Project, The (dir. Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sánchez 1999, US)

Cat People, The (dir. Paul Schrader 1982, US)

Chachushin ari (aka *One Missed Call*, dir. Takashi Miike 2003, Japan)

Harry Potter (dir. Chris Columbus, 2001 ~ , US)

Jangwha Hongryeon (aka *A Tale of Two Sisters*, dir. Kim Ji-woon, 2003, Korea)

Ghost, The (dir. Jerry Zucker, 1990)

Lord of the Rings, The (dir. Peter Jackson, 2001, 2002, 2003, US)

Naked Gun, The (dir. David Zucker 1988, US)

Bakjwi (aka Thirst, dir. Park Chan-wook, 2009, Korea)

Phone (dir. Ahn Byoung-ki 2002, Korea)

Plague, The (dir. Hal Masonberg 2006, US)

Resident Evil: Apocalypse (dir. Alexander Witt, 2004)

Ringu (aka Ring, dir. Hideo Nakata 1998, Japan)

Scary Movie (dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans, 2000, US)

Wispering Corridors (aka *Yeogogoedam*, dir. Park Ki-hyung, 1988, Korea)



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

The Plot Summary

1. *Nang Nak*

The storyline of Nonzee's *Nang Nak* is similar to twenty earlier versions. In King Mongkut's reign, Nak's husband Mak goes off to fight in a war. Nak works hard in the room of her husband, while Mak also has difficult time in the battlefield. Mak gets severely injured and is sent to Somdej Phra Buddhajarn. In the meanwhile, Nak goes into labor with her baby, but she and the baby die in the process. Mak survives with Somdej Phra Buddhajarn's help and returns home to Phrakhanong. His loving wife Nak and his son Deang are waiting at his house and all seems well at first, but then he is told by a neighbor that Nak died in childbirth while he was away. Mak refuses to believe this and threatens his neighbor. Next, when he is visited by the local monk who tells him the same thing, the scene is shown through the monk's eyes as he sits next to an empty baby's cradle covered with cobwebs. Mak, however, sees his living child there. The local people now feel threatened, as they blame Nak's presence for fierce storms that wreck the village. In one of the most famous scenes, as she cooks dinner, Nak drops a lime through the floor of their hut, but then she reaches through the floor to get it, extending her arm fantastically. Mak sees this and flees in terror amid another storm. He takes shelter in the temple where the monk performs a protective ceremony for him. In the meantime, a group of young men angrily burn Nak's hut. She emerges enraged, clutching her shrouded baby and brings the flames down on them, then appears upside down in the temple. Outside, a spirit doctor is exhuming her grave to retrieve her mummified corpse. He starts to smash it with a rock, but Nak forces him to strike himself in the face instead. The monk of virtue, Somdej Phra Buddhajarn, and his novice then come to her grave. Her mummified corpse returns and the novice steps into the grave to chisel out part of her skull, releasing her spirit with a terrible rush. Mak enters the monkhood and the final scene shows him sadly paddling his boat away.

2. *Phi Sam Baht*

Three young women gather in a coffee bar in Bangkok to tell and discuss three original ghost stories with each other.

Thon Khaen Nang Ram (aka Legend of Drum): In Bangkok, the young Jieb receives an ancient drum not listed in the order from the truck of a logistic company. She calls her former professor, Arkom, who identifies the markings for good luck that she describes and tells the story of the orphan, Paga. In 1917, the renowned music teacher Jangwah-Chuem and his wife Peng raise the beautiful Paga, who was the daughter of a member of a musical troupe, with their deformed son, Gnod. Paga is a good and loving sister and daughter and becomes a great beautiful dancer. No one wants to talk to Gnod, even his own father, Chuem, except Paga. When Paga falls in love with the handsome Fond, who is an artist of promise in the palace troupe, the jealous Gnod and she vanish from their village. Jieb, in the present day, dreams about a mysterious dancer over and over; even in the daytime, she sees the dancer. One night, when Jieb's husband comes home from a business trip, the dancer welcomes him instead of Jieb, and she takes him down to the water. Luckily, Jieb is in time to hear the splash from the river, and she dives to save her husband. Jieb runs inside the house to get towels, but when she tries to go outside, the doors are all locked. She decides to cut the drum and she finds Paga's arm there. Paga's apparition shows up close to Jieb and suddenly it is blacked out. The next morning, Jieb brings a towel to cover her husband as if nothing ever happened.

Namman Phrai (aka Black Magic Woman): Pan lives her life alone in an apartment in the outskirts of Bangkok. She is a gorgeous and beautiful office lady, but her life is lonely and boring. On the contrary, her next-door neighbor seems full of joy, although she is older and not very attractive. One day, Pan receives a sample from her

next-door neighbor of a love potion (*namman phrai*) that makes the user irresistible to men. Pan does not know that the essence is made of the blood of dead women and she uses it on a man in a nightclub, who becomes an insatiable lover. However, when Pan and the man have sex that night, the man suffers from an unidentified female spirit all night, and before the dawn, he throws up unknown green slime, falling down on the floor of Pan's toilet. He is brought to the hospital and stays in a coma for several days without any reason. His father brings him out to a temple and asks a Buddhist monk to cure his son. In the meanwhile, Pan spends every night at the night club to find a sex partner and console her lonely soul. One night, she meets Tim, who is a charming acquaintance on the boat every morning's on the way to work, but who already has a fiancée. From the first sight, Pan feels attracted to him, but he seems not to care about her. So Pan decides to use the *namman phrai* on him and she finds the price of the aphrodisiac. That night Tim comes to be with Pan and they have passionate perfect love. Pan's life is not lonely any more. She loves Tim and Tim comes to see Pan at her apartment every night in a hypnotic condition. One night, after Tim and Pan make love, Tim goes out to buy some drinks for Pan, but he does not come back because he is killed by a car on the way to the shop. On the next night, Tim comes to see Pan again with a gaunt looking carrying an ax. Pan is scared to see that and runs into the toilet, but Tim breaks the door with the ax to come inside and professes his love for Pan. In the dark night at a cemetery, Pan and Tim lie together under the ground, and Tim still whispers to Pan's cold body, "I come to love you forever."

Chong Wen (aka Revenge): Detective Nop is in charge of the investigation of the death of a woman named Gunya who was found hanging in a distant storeroom. He does not accept his chief's position of suicide, as he is convinced that it is a murder case. He investigates the husband of the victim, Vinai, and her former boyfriend, Tongin. With Dr. Jade's help, Nop finds autopsy evidences that Gunya's death was not suicide. He is suspicious of Gunya's husband, who is an old retired soldier, and finds that Vinai abused Gunya and beat her while she was three months

pregnant. Nop judges that Vinai is the murderer of Gunya, and breaks into Vinai's house and kills him intentionally. But soon after, he discovers that Vinai was not the murderer, but Tongin was, so Nop goes after Tongin, who is going to run away abroad to escape his company's corruption problem. But Nop kills Tongin intentionally as well, and says "No one can survive if they hurt Gunya." Nop becomes a hero, and he visits the place where Gunya died to console her spirit. However, suddenly TV news reports that there is a video tape found that shows Nop killing both suspects and he becomes a murderer now. The truth is that Nop is another former boyfriend of Gunya, although he left her without any reason. Nop is also one of the men who hurt Gunya. Gunya really did commit suicide. She stacked big ice cubes, climbed on the top of them and hung herself. She is the one who creates all these incidents. When Nop is arrested, Gunya is staring from under the roof.

The three girls finish telling their ghost stories, criticizing each other's story. A waiter comes close to Jieb and asks her to pay the bills. There is only Jieb sitting on the sofa in the cafeteria. She comes out from the cafeteria and it is raining outside. She starts to run in the rain. Suddenly her hair is fluttered in the wind. The backside of her head has another face; that is the face of Paga.

3. *Rongraem Phi*

Luang Naruban left a will and then killed himself. Twenty five years later, Parinya and Pattama come back from England to their father Pun, living in a hotel in Bang La Moong near Pattaya, which Pun and his wife Sarapee inherited from Luang Naruban. Pun and his brother Pleng are running this hotel after his wife Sarapee died. The hotel is old so they decide to ask a young architect, Visut from Bangkok, to renovate the hotel. One rainy night soon after they are gathering together, a lady comes to stay at the hotel and then a man, who claims to be her husband, comes after her to the hotel. Everyone notices from their conversation that the lady is being

abused by her brutal husband, so Pun throws him out and lets the lady stay at the hotel, even though the hotel is under renovation. On that night, the lady is found dead hanging by her neck from a fan in the ceiling, and her husband is also found dead in a car. Pun's fingerprints are found in the car making Pun the suspect for the murder case, but Pun runs away in his small boat. Workers are killed one by one and Pleng, possessed by a malicious spirit, is killed. The housekeeper, Jerm, is possessed and tries to kill the chief of police who is staying at the hotel for the investigation. A few days after going missing, Pattama is found at the beach in a coma without any reason. Thus, the chief of police brings a spirit doctor and witch doctor to expel the evil spirit, but the evil is too strong for them. With the spirit doctor's help, Pattama recovers, but there is no way to repel the evil spirit. Meanwhile, Tium, who is Pun's old friend, comes to see them and tells the story about Luang Naruban, Pun and Sarapee.

Luang Naruban, a retired government official was a rich and respected senior in the village. He lost his wife during an attack by the Japanese army during World War II, and lived alone to keep his faith and dignity. But soon after his coming back from Bangkok to his hometown, he fell in love with a young beautiful girl, Sarapee and proposed to her to marry him. Sarapee could not possibly reject his authority and power, so she answered 'yes'. On their wedding day, Sarapee and her lover Pun ran away together. Deeply hurt, Luang Naruban killed himself, leaving a sealed envelope with his lawyer. According to Naruban's will, Sarapee and Pun inherited the hotel from Naruban exactly three years after Naruban's corpse is moved to a burial site. The truth is that before he died, Luang Naruban studied supernatural power to be reborn, and his spirit is reborn to revenge the betrayers and their family. In the end, Pattama looking like her mother, Sarapee, kneels down and asks forgiveness for them, shedding tears. Luang Naruban who has true love for Sarapee, sees her tears, and accepts to forgive their sin and disappears with the wind.

4. *Khun Krabi Phi Rabat*

Thailand's leading health official, Public Health Minister Ratsuda, declares Thailand free from the SARS virus and that Thailand's superior technology and medical research will prevent the disease from reoccurring in the kingdom. However, far away in Africa, there has been an outbreak of a mutant type 4 strain of the SARS virus, which causes patients to turn into bloodthirsty zombies. A hornet carrying the virus from Africa hides in an airliner and lands in Thailand. It flies into the open window of a farang (Andrew Biggs)* driving a car and stings the man on the back of his neck. The man becomes patient zero in the outbreak of SARS No. 4. He returns to his apartment building and infects others in his building. The SARS No. 4 virus spreads out very rapidly. Almost every resident of the building and the people at the basement nightclub are all infected now. Among the zombified creatures is a giant Burmese python named Albert. Meanwhile, schoolgirl Liu is kidnapped by a gang led by a transvestite named Yai, who dresses as a sexy woman in a bikini. Liu's father, an influential and rich businessman, does not wish to involve the police, so he turns to his old friend Master Thep. Thep, injured from his last outing, assigns his top student swordsman, Khun Krabi, to rescue Liu. Krabi soon finds himself at the building, where he sees Liu and attempts to rescue her, but is then stopped by Yai and his men, and then they encounter the zombies in the apartment building. Master Thep, sensing his student needs help, goes to the building just as the Health Ministry has sent in some men and a woman doctor, Dr. Diana, who for some reason is wearing bondage gear under her bio-containment suit. She has a trial vaccine that she hopes will cure the zombies, but instead only makes their heads explode. Then Khun Krabi attempts to use his magic sword, but its batteries are low and it does not function.

In the meanwhile, Krabi rescues Liu; Krabi and Liu fall in love with each other and have a romantic moment, but then they encounter a pregnant woman who

* An Australian journalist and author and television personality in Thailand

has turned into a zombie and now her baby also is a zombie. The fetus flies out of her womb and bites Krabi, who turns into a zombie himself. He is so distraught that he tries to kill himself by drinking household chemicals. In a stroke of luck, however, the combination of chemicals does not kill Krabi, but in fact cures him from the SARS No. 4 virus.

At this time Liu is eaten by the giant zombie python, but Master Thep saves her and also retrieves some batteries from the snake's stomach, which had been swallowed earlier, so the sword works again. Finally, the building is set to explode – part of the containment plan by the health minister – but Master Thep has a remote control that stops the explosion.

In the ending sequence, it is revealed that Liu is in fact the transvestite Yai, wearing a rubber mask, meaning that Krabi lost his virginity to a man. An animated back story reveals how Yai found Liu's clothes. Later it is revealed through another animated segment that Liu survived the struggle with Yai, and that she and Krabi will live happily ever after.

5. *Takhian*

A village chief Wittaya and his party hide in the trees in the dark night in the deep forest while hunting animals. One of his party urinates just anywhere and this offends Nang Takhian,^{*} the spirit of the tree, which then kills every members of the party. Wittaya who survived, decides to revenge Nang Takhian and he orders his men to cut every tree in the woods including the Takhian tree. Anyway, all the trees are going to be cut for a dam that is under construction. The clearing of the trees is almost finished, only the Takhian tree is left, but every man who tries to cut the Takhian tree fails in their mission. Worse than that, the wrath of Nang Takhian is getting more and

^{*} In Thai animistic belief, takhian tree is a kind of sacred thing, which has a deity or spirit named Nang Takhian. (S.Phlainoi, 2000. *Legend of Thai ghosts*)

more fierce. After some men die, Wittaya cuts the Takhian tree by himself with an electric saw. Finally, the Takhian tree falls in blood, which flows to the river. In the meantime, Wittaya is forced to take care of his friend's son, Thong Kam, who is from the Karen tribe.* As a young man, Thong Kam falls in love with Wittaya's daughter, Porn, who has just graduated from Bangkok, but Wittaya prefers Trai, a civil engineer who came from Bangkok to their village to coordinate the building of the dam. When the dam is completed, the village is flooded so every villager of the Karen tribe must evacuate to the upper part of the mountain. However, the land they get in compensation is infertile and poor. As Wittaya's wish, his daughter Porn and Trai have a happy engagement, while Thong Kam who lost his village and love, desperately moves to the top of the mountain with some friends. One day, Norsung, who loves Thong Kam, visits Thong Kam's hut, but Thong Kam is not there, only some villains, Wittaya's men, who come to her, gang-rape and then kill her. Thong Kam in rage runs into the construction site alone and shoots the villains. Wittaya and his daughter and Trai arrive just in time and find out what happened. Suddenly, one of the villains takes Porn hostage and hides under the Takhian tree, which is already cut down. But, Nang Takhian possesses Porn's body and recovers its strength again. Thong Kam saves Porn, but Porn becomes a permanent sleeping princess. Wittaya decides to re-plant the tree stub again in order to appease the soul of the Takhian and hopefully break the sleeping spell on Porn. However, hidden threats still lurk in the forest. The dam has a crack for some unknown reason, so Trai and his friend engineer dive down underwater. There, Trai and his friend see many dead people and Nang Takhian in Porn's body. The cut down Takhian tree is hitting the wall of the dam and Trai tries to bomb Nang Takhian. Wittaya and Thong Kam follow after them, blocking Trai from doing this. When Nang Takhian is about to smile, the bomb is exploded by Trai and Nang Takhian's dies, bleeding green blood. However, furious

* The Karen, known for in Thailand as Kariang or Yang, are some languages and many ethnic groups in Burma and Thailand. The Karen make up approximately 7 percent of the total Burmese population of 47 million people.

Nang Takhian comes after them and kills Trai and Wittaya. The dam, in the end, collapses, and water sweeps the whole village. Many villagers die, but Thong Kam and Porn are alive to witness the scene of catastrophe caused by human error.

6. *Long Khong 1*

Childhood friends, Por, Kim, Te, Nuch and Ko, visit Ta in their home village for a summer vacation. Ta waits for his friends at the train station and takes them to his home along the natural waterway. At the small Khmer village near his home, Panor, their high school teacher and Ta's estranged stepmother, lives peacefully like other villagers. The five children, except Ta, go to see Panor, and each of them think about what happened two years ago in their minds without saying a word. Nuch receives a phone call from her parents that her father is in the hospital, so she leaves to her home in Bangkok alone first. After they come back to Ta's house, dreadful things keep happening to them. First, to Kim, while changing her shirt alone in the room, the door and windows suddenly open and close on their own. She brings foods for a cat in the house, but the cat runs away. She chases the cat and then sees a scene in which Ta's grandmother is eating the cat's fresh intestines. When they are having dinner, which Panor made for them, they find Nuch's torn body in the chicken soup and they throw up. Te, possessed by the spirit of Panor, swears at the other children and continuously suffers from apparition of dead people. The six children run away into the room where Buddha images are displayed, where they bend down and pray for their safety. But the malicious spirit seems to be stronger and more powerful than their wishes. Ko suddenly falls down and numerous geckos crawl out through his body. The two boys that are left, Ta and Por, decide to go to the Panor's house in the forest, and the two girls, Te and Kim, stay at Ta's house. But Te also dies in a miserable death, as Kim goes screaming out into the forest. Ta listens to Kim's screaming and runs to find Kim, while Por is left alone in the forest, and is brought to Panor's house. She tortures him until he is dead. When Ta and Kim run into Ta's

house from the forest, they receive a phone call from Nuch's uncle via Nuch's cell phone near the house. Ta and Kim survive and the police, who receive notice from Ta and Kim, attack Panor's house. Kim is hospitalized and Ta stays with her all the time. Kim asks Ta to be her boyfriend again, and they look happy now. At the very moment, news about Panor is aired on the television, reporting that the local police have found Ta's corpse from under the river along Ta's house. A few minutes after, Kim falls out from the hospital building, while the burned black Ta whispers to her, "You are the one who wants us to stick together."

7. Long Khong 2

Ta comes back to his grandfather's house, where grandfather, grand-grandmother, aunt Phen and the aunt's husband are living together. The house is located in the middle of a salt field and the corpse of Ta's mother is kept in a salt storage. Ta's mother was poisoned to death by Ta's father who had an affair with Panor. Panor was asked to be a tutor for Phen to take an entrance exam for nursing, and as soon as Ta's father saw young and beautiful Panor, he fell in love with Panor.

At present, Phen is working at the hospital near home, where Panor is hospitalized due to a mental disease. As soon as Ta comes back home, Phen and her husband secretly bring patient Panor to their home. Panor wakes up in the salt storage, all of Ta's family members are gathering together to prepare some kind of black magic with Panor. There is a superstitious ceremony to call the spirit of Ta's mother to possess Panor's body because they want to make Ta's mother be reborn through Panor's body. With the help of black wizard, Ja Dit, who is a retired soldier, the ceremony is successful and the spirit of Ta's mother comes back through Panor's body. Meanwhile, Ja Dit is looking for 'Thep sam ta (three-eyed god)' to make him immortal and stronger, which he found from Panor during the ceremony.

Panor, possessed by the spirit of Ta's mother, becomes a benign and loving mother again. However, owing to the dead spirit, Panor cannot eat human food but

eats offering for the spirits. She visits her husband and brutally kills him. While she is coming back home, she is kidnapped by Ja Dit, who wants ‘Thep sam ta’, but Ta sees this scene and chases after them to save Panor. As soon as she is free from the ropes that tie her up, she kills Ja Dit and brings Ta home. But she already has her own spirit back and her ruthless revenge starts with Ta’s grandfather. She inhumanly kills every member of Ta’s family one by one, and Ta is also burned to death. Panor goes back to her house along the river after her revenge ends. A boat is paddling forward to the house where Panor is sitting. A head monk is sitting on the boat, and says “All evil doing are related to each other.” When Panor was young, she was bullied by her classmates, so she went to see Khmer spirit doctor and asked him that everyone would love her. One year later, Ta is waiting for his friends at the train station. The story of *Long Khong 1* has started.

8. *Buppha Ratri*

Buppha Ratri is a university student from a family in the country, who has a dark past given that she had been raped by her stepfather when she was very young, which is why she cannot easily open her mind to anyone. However, by destiny she falls in love with Ake, who is a spoiled young man from a rich family and she gets pregnant. But Ake makes a toy of her, and although she knows that Ake has abused her, she forgives him. From the force of his father, Ake has to go to study abroad, and since he is scared of his father, he forces Buppha to abort their baby. The next morning, he leaves Thailand, and Buppha, left alone in bad health, dies from severe bleeding within a month, but she is not willing to leave her room until Ake comes back leaving a word that he has bought *jok* for her. She becomes a vengeful ghost and stays in a small room in an old apartment owned by a parsimonious middle-aged lady in the outskirts of Bangkok. The apartment building is getting dilapidated and the residents start to leave. The landlady is in economic hard times and the rest of the residents try to expel the ghost Buppha from the building. First, she asks a spirit

doctor, who is well-known around the neighborhood for his strong spiritual power, to come to manage the situation. But he is a just swindler, so fails in his mission. Next, she asks another spirit doctor, but all are vain attempts. Even a Christian father comes to try to expel her, but also fails. While, Ake, in England, who is severely addicted to drugs, comes back without his father's permission. Ake comes to see Buppha because he feels guilty for her without knowing that she is not a human being. Buppha welcomes Ake warmly and it seems that everything is going well. But the young girl at the jok bar in front of the apartment building follows Ake trying to seduce him, and Buppha bursts into a jealous rage at both the young girl and Ake. Both of Ake's legs are cut by Buppha, and the girl from the jok bar is about to have her leg cut when a spirit doctor from Cambodia enters in her room and saves the girl. After a raging fight, the spirit doctor is able to expel Buppha's spirit from her corpse and he brings her corpse out of the city. But the incantatory paper on her corpse is blown away and she gets her strength back and goes back to her apartment. She is living in her room as usual again with Ake, who has become a ghost sitting in a wheelchair, and most surprisingly, Ake's father tells the truth on the phone that Ake is dead in England from a drug overdose a month ago.

9. *Ban Phi Sing*

Chalinee is a documentary reporter of a broadcasting company. She has to cover a murder case from six years ago again. She visits the house of the crime scene where medical doctor, Sant, killed his wife, Phusarat. The house is old and dreary on the outskirts of Bangkok. But the house is closed tight and the janitor does not allow her to go inside the house. At that moment, she sees a woman in a blue dress watching outside through the window from the second floor. Chalinee, thus, infiltrates the house to investigate the case for her reporting.

After coming back from the house, she is haunted by the apparition of the woman of the house, thus she decides to interview the murderer Dr. Sant in prison.

But the labyrinthine murder case gets more complicated, and she discovers another murder case which happened in the same house. The murder was committed eight years ago when Dr. Chalerm killed his girlfriend, Jamjuree, a university student. She goes to interview Dr. Chalerm in prison, but she becomes the one who is questioned by him about the house. She is told that there is some strange and dreadful strength of the house that made them to be a murderer.

Chalinee's husband, Phanu, suspects her of having a love affair with her work colleague, producer Chen. One day Phanu follows after her to go to that house, and the strange spirit haunts Phanu. He tries to kill Chalinee in the end, but he is killed accidentally. Chalinee is sitting on a chair in a daze in the room with tears.

10. *Faet*

Pim is born as a conjoined twin at the stomach with her sister, Ploy. Pim is very sweet and protective of Ploy. However, it is Ploy who throws rocks at a group of children who are taunting them. While staying in a hospital, Pim and Ploy meet a boy named Wee. Although both love him, Wee only returns Pim's affections, which makes Ploy angry and jealous. Finally Wee recovers from his illness and is able to leave. As he is getting into the car, Wee decides he wants to see Pim one last time. Since the twin's room is on the second floor, he decides to call to her. As much as Pim wants to see Wee, Ploy will not get out of bed. Wee is upset and leaves. Angry and in tears, Pim demands that she and Ploy be separated. The twins have an operation to separate them, but Ploy does not survive.

Several years later Pim, who is now living in South Korea and has a happy marriage with Wee, receives a phone call from Thailand that her mother has had a stroke. When Pim and Wee return to Thailand, Ploy comes back to haunt her. Curious, Wee looks into Pim's family affairs. In a stroke of irony, Wee finds that Pim is actually Ploy. Revealed in a flashback, Ploy strangled Pim in a jealous rage after Pim demanded they be separated. In order to save Ploy's life, doctors had to amputate

Pim's corpse from Ploy. Ploy assumed Pim's identity in order to be with Wee. Throughout the film, Pim's ghost is actually trying to tell Wee of this. Ploy's mother who knows of her actions as well, tries to tell him, but is unable to talk due to her weakened state. After confronting Pim, Ploy takes Wee hostage, but not before killing her mother. However, Wee escapes, and the ensuing fight with Ploy causes the house to catch on fire. Wee escapes, but a shelf falls on Ploy. Trapped underneath, Pim's ghost confronts and holds her down, taking Ploy with her as burning debris rain down around them. In the end, Wee visits Pim's grave, apologizes, and places a necklace on her tombstone.

11. *Ban Phi Poeb*

A grandmother Chom predicts that Phi Poeb will come back soon, and it will be more malicious and strong than Phi Pob. But there will be a hero repels the Phi Poeb. However, the committee of Tambon, Somphot and his assistants do not care of her saying. Phi Poeb was Phi Fa, who was devotional and good shaman for villagers. But one day on her way back home, she could not stand starving, so stole offering for 'chao thi (deity of terrain)'. And then she became Phi Poeb who has to eat fresh intestines of animals. But bloodthirsty Phi Poeb starts to attack villagers one by one, and people in village are scared of Phi Poeb. One day, a group of university students and a professor who was born and raised in the village, Doi Sangob (Peaceful Hill), come to research Phi Fa to this village. But they finds out Phi Fa is the same one of Phi Poeb and the whole village begins hide and seek play. Some villagers are killed by Phi Poeb already. One of the students, Nat, got the crystal ball from a monk before, and he knows this ball can defeat the Phi Poeb. At the funeral, Phi Poeb comes to temple and kills villagers taking advantage of their sorrow. But all students plan to catch the Phi Poeb, take her underwear off and push the crystal ball into her vagina. At last, the Phi Poeb is burnt and reduced to ashes. The students save the village and

they come back to Bangkok. On their way back, one of the student, Tha, turns around and smiles. But her face becomes Phi Poeb.



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Biography

Ji Eun Lee was born in Seoul, Korea. She graduated Busan University of Foreign Studies with B.A. in Thai Studies, and she graduated Hankuk University of Foreign Studies with M.A. in Thai linguistics. As soon as graduating her M.A., she moved to Bangkok, Thailand to study further about Thailand. Then she graduated Thammasat University with M.A. in linguistics of Thai language course in 2002. She started to teach Korean language Srinakharinwirot University and Kasetsart University in Bangkok, and then she worked as a full-time lecturer at Srinakharin Wirot University for two years. During her working as a lecturer at university, she published translating books from Korean to Thai and made her career as an interpreter for International conferences. She also experienced to work as a staff for filmmaking such as *Typhoon* (dir. Kyung-taek Kwak), *Invisible Waves* (dir. Penek Ratanareung), *Alone* (dir. Bangjong Pisanthanakun & Parkpoom Woongpoom) and more. She enrolled in Ph.D. in Thai Studies program at Chulalongkorn University in November 2006.

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