

FILM OR FLICK? : BUNDIT RITTAKOL'S YOUTH FILMS AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIO-  
CULTURAL TRANSITION IN THAILAND

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

บทคัดย่อและแฟ้มข้อมูลฉบับเต็มของวิทยานิพนธ์ตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา 2554 ที่ให้บริการในคลังปัญญาจุฬาฯ (CUIR)  
เป็นแฟ้มข้อมูลของนิสิตเจ้าของวิทยานิพนธ์ ที่ส่งผ่านทางบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย

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are the thesis authors' files submitted through the University Graduate School.

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

Faculty of Arts

Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year 2014

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สาระหรือบันเทิง? : ภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่นโดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกล ในฐานะภาพสะท้อนการเปลี่ยนผ่านทาง  
สังคม-วัฒนธรรมในประเทศไทย



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาไทยศึกษา

คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

ปีการศึกษา 2557

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Thesis Title	FILM OR FLICK? : BUNDIT RITTAKOL'S YOUTH FILMS AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIO- CULTURAL TRANSITION IN THAILAND
By	Mr. Thanayod Lopattananont
Field of Study	Thai Studies
Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D.

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ธัญยศ โล่ห์พัฒนานนท์ : สารหรือบันเทิง? : ภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่นโดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกล ในฐานะภาพสะท้อน การเปลี่ยนผ่านทางสังคม-วัฒนธรรมในประเทศไทย (FILM OR FLICK? : BUNDIT RITTAKOL'S YOUTH FILMS AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIO- CULTURAL TRANSITION IN THAILAND) อ.ที่ ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ผศ. ดร. คารินา โชติรวี, หน้า.

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยครั้งนี้คือ การศึกษาภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่นโดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกล โดยอาศัยสมมติฐาน ว่า ภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่นโดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกลเป็นงานที่แฝงความคิดเชิงขัดแย้งต่อการเปลี่ยนผ่านทางสังคมช่วงระหว่างปี พ.ศ. ๒๕๒๓-๒๕๕๓ มากกว่าจะเป็นงานที่มุ่งตอบสนองความบันเทิงเพียงอย่างเดียว วิธีการวิจัยประกอบด้วยการ วิเคราะห์ภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่นซึ่งกำกับโดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกลจำนวนสิบเรื่องควบคู่กับการศึกษาภาวะเปลี่ยนผ่านทาง เศรษฐกิจและสังคมในช่วงเวลาที่ภาพยนตร์ออกฉาย รวมทั้งการรวบรวมบทสัมภาษณ์บุคคลผู้ใกล้ชิดกับบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ ถกลเพื่อให้ได้มาซึ่งข้อมูลประกอบการเชื่อมโยงภาพยนตร์กับบริบททางสังคม

ในยามที่สื่อหลักจำนวนไม่น้อยนำเสนอเนื้อหาสอดรับกับกระแสแห่งการเปลี่ยนผ่าน ภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่น โดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกลกลับสวนกระแสที่ว่าด้วยยุทธวิธีการนำเสนอสามประการคือ หนึ่ง การสร้างตัวละครวัยรุ่นโดย เฉพาะตัวละครหลักให้มีคุณลักษณะที่พึงปรารถนาสำหรับคนไทย โดยตัวละครมักจะยึดถือชนดั้งเดิมหรือปฎิเสธวิถี ชีวิตของคนรุ่นใหม่ สอง การนำเสนอสังคมสมัยใหม่ในด้านลบโดยอาจจะให้ตัวละครฝ่ายร้ายเป็นตัวแทนของความ ทนสมัยหรือกำหนดให้ความเสียหายบางอย่างมีที่มาจากวิถีชีวิตทันสมัย สาม ย้ำเน้นความเป็นไทยแบบดั้งเดิม เช่น ชีวิตแบบเกษตรกรรมที่ดูงดงามหรือความศรัทธาในพุทธศาสนาแบบไทยๆ บริบททางวัฒนธรรมลักษณะนี้มักจะ ปรากฏในเรื่องพร้อมกับตัวละครหลักประหนึ่งย้ำเตือนให้ผู้ชมได้ตระหนักถึงเอกลักษณ์ไทยที่ไม่ได้เกี่ยวพันกับความ นำสมัย ด้วยเหตุนี้ ภาพยนตร์วัยรุ่นโดยบัณฑิต ฤทธิ์ถกลจึงเป็นกลุ่มงานที่ทวนกระแสการพัฒนาทางสังคมและ เศรษฐกิจในยุคหนึ่ง โดยมุ่งส่งเสริมแนวคิดแบบท้องถิ่นนิยมเพื่อถ่วงดุลการเปลี่ยนผ่านไม่ให้เป็นไปตามแนวทาง โลกาภิวัตน์อย่างสมบูรณ์ ซึ่งถือเป็นภาพสะท้อนความหวงแหนวิถีชีวิตที่เรียบง่ายแม้จะอยู่ท่ามกลางความ เปลี่ยนแปลง

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

สาขาวิชา ไทยศึกษา

ปีการศึกษา 2557

ลายมือชื่อนิสิต .....

ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก .....

# # 5480533022 : MAJOR THAI STUDIES

KEYWORDS: BUNDIT RITTAKOL, YOUTH FILMS, SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSITION

THANAYOD LOPATTANANONT: FILM OR FLICK? : BUNDIT RITTAKOL'S YOUTH FILMS AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIO- CULTURAL TRANSITION IN THAILAND. ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. CARINA CHOTIRAWE, Ph.D., pp.

This research is aimed to study Bundit Rittakol's youth films based on the hypothesis that all the films transcended mere entertainment, as was typical for youth films, but had a deeper meaning that reflected a resistance to change in Thai society during the 1980s-2000s. The research attempts to prove this hypothetical possibility through an analysis of the content of ten Bundit's youth films, along with a review of the economic and social transition of Thailand in that period. In-depth interviews with persons who were able to provide insight into Bundit Rittakol's life and work were also undertaken to obtain supporting information.

While a number of mainstream media outlets seem to have provided content supportive of the changes, Bundit Rittakol's youth films seem to be speaking against this transition. Three themes can be detected in Bundit's youth film to support this statement. The first is the projection of central youth characters having what many consider to be 'desirable' characteristics. They mostly conform to traditional Thai behavior and reject the changing lifestyle. The second theme concerns a negative portrayal of modern society in which elements indicative of socio-economic modernism and change are associated with characters in antagonist roles or which result in unfavorable consequences. The final theme stresses what Bundit considered positive images of mainstream Thainess, such as an idealized agricultural lifestyle or Thai Buddhist faith. At times, some specific cultural contexts are depicted in association with key characters as if to remind the audience of Thai identity from an unmodern perspective. Based on these findings, Bundit Rittakol's youth films do not compromise in every respect with the trend of socio-economic modernization, but to encourage localism against globalism. This indicates a typical nature of being Thai which is to refuse to abandon the unsophisticated Thai way of life even in the midst of change.

Field of Study: Thai Studies

Academic Year: 2014

Student's Signature .....

Advisor's Signature .....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D. who kindly agreed to be my advisor and gave willingly so much of her time to develop my research skills in every way. I would also like to give special thanks to Professor Siraporn Nathalang, Ph.D. and Associate Professor Suchitra Chongstitvatana, Ph.D. for their continuing encouragement and vital support throughout my doctoral studies. I am greatly indebted to Associate Professor Sunait Chutintaranont, Ph.D. and Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D. for extensively widening the scope of my knowledge of research into film as well as to Professor Sakda Punnengpetch, Ph.D. who will always be remembered for his generous guidance and specialized assistance.

I gratefully acknowledge my debts to all the staff at the Thai Study Centre, especially to Mr. Porntep Tochayangkoon and Mr. Surapon Sirimunkongsakun who never refused me a helping hand whenever I was confronted with a difficult problem in the technical field. Assistant Professor Narupon Chaiyot, Ph.D., Mr. Pisal Pattanapeeradech, and Miss Thanathorn Rittakol are those persons who spring to mind for their ready help in detailed aspects concerning the subject matter of my dissertation. Mr. Sanchai Chotirosseranee and Mr. Wanlop Sangjoy deserve my special thanks for the way they helped me to increase my collection of data required at a critical stage of my research.

I would be most neglectful if I did not single out Mr. Frederick B. Goss who taught me the precision needed in my use of language at difficult times and for his honing of some of my arguments. Assistant Professor Sasiphan Bilmanoch, Ph.D. and Mr. Atit Suwande, Ph.D. will always be remembered for their kind agreement to be my referees, thus allowing me to be part of the Thai Study Program, so will the Film Archive (Public Organization) and ENITS - the two funding bodies who generously honored me with their approval of grants. I am also desirous of including my acknowledgement to Wing Commander Robert Langton RAF Retd, a close friend of many years, who never failed to encourage me to complete my research and had faith in me.

Finally, I cannot thank sufficiently my dearest mother, Mrs. Pawanee Pilae, and my sister, Miss Artitaya Lopattananont, Ph.D. for their unstinting support both material and spiritual during the prolonged period of my research without which I would never have completed this thesis. I remember fondly my dear father, Mr. Nares Lopattananont, for the way he instilled in me the will to confront and overcome difficulties and hardships over many years. He was and is a guiding light in my life.

This dissertation is inspired by the films of Mr. Budit Rittakol – one of the most prolific directors in the history of the Thai cinema. I can only hope that this work is a worthy tribute to him and his contribution to Thai youth film.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 General Background

Youth films are viewed essentially as a lucrative film genre, with production that requires only a low budget, appealing young actors, and a moderate sized film crew, while returning huge profits. Despite a notion of insignificance, youth films have long been a subject of interest by Western scholars, such as David Considine, Timothy Shary, and Roz Kaveney, whose studies of American youth films bring to light the image of America predominant in films, as much as the misrepresentation of the young (Driscoll, 2011: 4-5). From what Robert C. Bulman posits in *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture* (2004), some youth films can be a good reflector of the society they feature. It is, therefore, plausible to examine youth films for an understanding of their social significance.

In Thailand, the term ‘youth film’ is equivalent to ‘*nang wairun* [หนังวัยรุ่น]’, the content of which deals primarily with adolescents and their romantic and humorous circumstances. The very first director who gave birth to Thai youth film was Somboonsuk Niyomsiri, publicly known as Piak Poster. His film, *Wai A-luan* [วัยอลวน] (1976), can be considered the debut of Thai youth film, as well as confirming that this new genre would be viable in the domestic market. *Wai Onlawon* was not only successful at the box office, but also encouraged the making of youth films in subsequent years (Cheeraboonya Thasanabanchong, 2010: 229). Arnon Mingkwanta (Poj Arnon) and Somjing Srisupab (King) are among the prominent directors who followed in the footsteps of Piak Poster garnering fame from the production of films of this kind. Even Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol decided to make youth dramas: *Sia Daai* [เสียดาย] in 1995, followed by its sequel, *Sia Daai 2* [เสียดาย 2] in 1996 (Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 2009: online).

None of the aforesaid names can, however, compare to Bundit Rittakol whom this researcher considers to be one of the prolific directors in the youth film category. Bundit has produced the most youth film, ten films directed by him alone and two as co-director, which has not be matched to date. The entire list of his youth films is shown in the following table.

Year of Release	Title
1. 1986	<i>Khu Wun Wai Wan</i> [คู่เว่นวัยหวาน]
2. 1988	<i>Bunchu Phu Narak</i> [บุญชูผู้น่ารัก]
3. 1989	<i>Bunchu Two, Nongmai</i> [บุญชูสองน้องใหม่]
4. 1990	<i>Bunchu Five, Nueahom</i> [บุญชูห้าเนื้อหอม]
5. 1991	<i>Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui</i> [บุญชูหกโลกนี้ดี ออกสุดสวยน่ารักน่าอยู่ถ้าหุ่ย]
6. 1991	<i>Ko Cha Pa Na Ko*</i> [โก๊ะจำปานะโก๊ะ]
7. 1992	<i>Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep</i> [อนึ่งคิดถึงพอสังเขป]
8. 1992	<i>Choh Wela Ha Ko*</i> [เจาะเวลาหาโก๊ะ]
9. 1996	<i>Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two</i> [อนึ่งคิดถึงพอสังเขปรุ่นสอง]
10. 2003	<i>Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang</i> [ชื่อชอบชวนหาเรื่อง]
11. 2008	<i>Bunchu I Love Sara Ou</i> [บุญชูไอเลิฟสระอู]
12. 2009	<i>Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying</i> [อนึ่งคิดถึงเป็นอย่างยิ่ง]
	* Bundit is a co-director of this film.

Table 1 youth films directed by Bundit Rittakol

From the list, *Bunchu Phu Narak* was an enormous hit, grossing 14 million baht – much more than any other youth films produced earlier. This unanticipated income paved the way for the making of the *Bunchu* series, which never failed to capture the audience’s attention. In 1989, *Bunchu Two, Nongmai*, after surpassing its prequel to hit 16 million baht in ticket sales, won the Suratsawadee Royal Film Award for Best Picture. Three years later, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* brought Bundit the title of Best Director and the film itself was voted Best Film. The two awards came from both Supannahong Film Award ceremony and Bangkok Critics Assembly ceremony. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* also enjoyed significant popularity despite its lack of magnetic stars. Reversely, many actors/actresses in the film became very famous subsequent to the showing of the film.

The focus on ‘Bundit’ herein is not to promote the substantiality of his filmic achievement, but to advance the scholarship regarding his youth films in a socio-cultural context. As mentioned earlier, youth film has some social and culturally significant

meaning, beyond mere entertainment. There is, for that reason, the potential to expound upon Bundit Rittakol's youth films from a perspective beyond the films being just blockbusters.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Thai youth film is often perceived simply for the entertainment it provides. If the film is not a realistic drama, such as *Sia Daai 1*, *Sia Daai 2* or *The Love of Siam* [รักแห่งสยาม] (dir. Chookiat Sakveerakul, 2007), it rarely receives scholarly consideration. This problem derives from the dominant perception about Thai films which has permeated amongst the educated and urban audiences:

Before entering the twenty-first century, a majority of Thai films would be considered to be of low quality, or over dramatic and corny, what Thais call 'Namnao'. The plots were light, and production quality was not a major concern.

(Raksarn Wiwatsinudom, 2010: 270)

As explained, Thai audiences have had a low regard for Thai films, dismissing any films made with the typical convention used by Thai film makers. All of Bundit Rittakol's youth films, on the surface, comply with such conventions: the use of a simple chronological narrative, slow editing, and Thai style jokes which concentrate on the misuse of words to create unexpected meanings; the climaxes always come out in the form of a funny chase scenes, such as seen in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, where many elements looks unconvincing. His youth films can, thereby, be regarded as old-fashioned or clichéd.

However, a closer look indicates that Bundit Rittakol's youth films have a greater function other than common entertainment. They do so by featuring the cultural authenticity of young people, rather than according to some imagination. In addition, his films depict social reality in terms of the location settings, and repeat traditional convictions and values, such as friendship, education, and forgiveness. It can be said that Bundit Rittakol conformed to the convention of Thai filmmaking, while zeroing in on some purposive messages with reference to Thai society and culture. Some of such references are made explicit on screen, while some require analysis in order to be understood clearly.

Not many scholars have addressed this potential of Bundit's films. Other than works by Cheeraboonya Thasanabanchong (1991, 2010) and Manoch Chummuangpak (2004), good scholarship into Bundit Rittakol's youth films is virtually absent. According to Boonrak Boonyaketmala (2009: 30), Thai academia generally holds a limited worldview concerning film studies, in that most simply understand that film is just a tool for relaxation without any social significance. This research is, thus, an opportunity to explore the link between this group of youth films and Thai society in order to discover a deeper meaning in the films, rather than merely as 'marketing' or 'entertaining' devices.

### **1.3 Research Question**

How do Bundit Rittakol's youth films serve as a reflection of the socio-cultural climate in the period in which they were made and released?

### **1.4 Hypothesis**

Bundit Rittakol's youth films made and released between 1986-2009 demonstrate features of youth characters in defiance of salient behaviour/attitude found in general Thai youth, such as, materialistic, individualistic, competitive, capitalistic, and less idealistic. This reflects a resistance to change within the context of Thailand as a country in transition with the influence of globalization, liberal economy, and democratization.

### **1.5 Definition of the Key Terms**

All the terms discussed herein are the words positioned in the thesis title, namely, Bundit Rittakol, youth film, and socio-cultural transition.

#### **1.5.1 Bundit Rittakol**

Bundit Rittakol is a Thai movie director whose fame emanated from the making of youth films as already discussed. The incorporation of his name in the title serves to specify a group of films to be studied.

### 1.5.2 Youth Films

According to the earlier discussion, a youth film has the story which centres around youth characters and their experiences. Driscoll (2011) provided a key provision of regarding an understanding of the teen genre in *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* as a contribution to this definition. She proffers to understand the content rather than form or style:

Teen film is generally thought more interesting for what it says about youth than for any aesthetic innovations, and is represented as closely tied to the historically changing experience of adolescence. There are certainly narrative conventions that help define teen film: the youthfulness of central characters; content usually centred on young heterosexual, frequently with a romance plot; intense age-based peer relationships and conflict either within those relationships or with an older generation; the institutional management of adolescence by families, schools, and other institutions; and coming-of-age plots focused on motifs like virginity, graduation, and the makeover.

(2011: 2)

Even though Driscoll uses the term ‘teen film’ – not ‘youth film’, her explanation should not be considered a problem as the two terms have a joined meaning in many dimensions, except age. ‘Teen’ is strictly used by theorists to denote the age of 13-19, while ‘youth’ is used to denote a much wider age span, 15-24, or thereabouts, sometimes without a specification of age. Nonetheless, the two connote the period of growing into maturity which is precisely the visible feature of the central characters in all the films to be examined in this research.

### 1.5.3 Socio-cultural Transition

This term refers to the gradual changeover in terms of society and culture during the 1980s-2000s – the period covering the release of Bundit Rittakol’s youth films. It is, to be precise, the transformation caused by the intense focus on liberal economic

development as influenced by globalization and democratization. In this way, Thailand changed from a traditional or agrarian society to an industrial one. It is considered widely that the new form of society brought about new behaviour and attitudes, including changes to social interaction. ‘Chapter 2: Thai Society in Transition’ provides a comprehensive discussion of the socio-cultural transition over the three decades.

### 1.6 Research Objectives

- To identify salient features of youth characters and socio-cultural settings in Bundit Rittakol’s youth films.
- To analyse Bundit Rittakol’s youth films as a reflection of Thai society and culture in a period of transition (1980s – 2000s).

### 1.7 Scope of Research

This research studies the youth films directed by Bundit Rittakol alone. *Ko Cha Pa Na Ko* and *Choh Wela Ha Ko* are not included because they were made under the direction of Jaedee Supakan and Pipat Payaka, in addition to Bundit.

Some of the films in the *Bunchu* series are not considered either. They are *Bunchu Seven, Rak Ter Kon Dieow Dta-lot Gaan Krai Yaa Dtae* [บุญชูเจ็ด รักเธอคนเดียวยวตตลอดกาลใครอย่าแตะ] (1993), *Bunchu Eight, Peua Ter* [บุญชูแปด เพ้อเธอ] (1995), and *Bunchu Ten, Ja Yoo Nai Jai Sa-mer* [บุญชูสิบ จะอยู่ในใจเสมอ] (2011). The central characters in the first two films are physically and behaviourally adults, thus these two films transcend the spectrum of the youth genre to be purely comedy. The last film was directed by Kiat Kitcharoen after Bundit Rittakol passed away from a heart attack.

In terms of time range, this research focuses on the transition of Thai society during 1980-2010, as it is the period in which Bundit Rittakol’s youth films came out to the film market (1986-2009). The films to be studied can, hence, be grouped according to the period of their cinema release as shown in the following table.



1980s	1990s	2000s
<i>Khu Wun Wai Wan</i> (1986)	<i>Bunchu Five, Nueahom</i> (1990)	<i>Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang</i> (2003)
<i>Bunchu Phu Narak</i> (1988)	<i>Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui</i> (1991)	<i>Bunchu I Love Sara Ou</i> (2008)
<i>Bunchu Two, Nongmai</i> (1989)	<i>Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep</i> (1992)	<i>Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying</i> (2009)
	<i>Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two</i> (1996)	

Table 2 Bundit Rittakol's youth films categorized by decade

## 1.8 Research Methodology

The research explores the content of the films with respect to how each speaks against the social changes that occurred over the three decades. Discussion and exploration of two more areas are also included in this research: socio-cultural transition and Bundit Rittakol as an artistic creator of the films, to form a foundation.

### 1.8.1 Document Research

In connection with the research regarding the socio-cultural transition, published and unpublished documents containing information about the transitional process during the 1980s-2000s have been consulted. Such documents include books, essays, presentation papers, statistics, and online sources. The document research concludes with an analytical synthesis of the selected data, leading to a reasoned account of social changes in Thailand during that period.

### 1.8.2 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were undertaken with a group of persons who could deliver good insight into Bundit Rittakol's life and work style. This method helped obtain unpublished data to help understand Bundit Rittakol's worldview to help support the hypothesis.

### 1.8.3 Content Analysis of Film

Analysis, generally, means breaking up the whole to discover the nature, proportion, function, and interrelationships of the parts. Film analysis, then, presupposes the existence of a unified and rationally structured whole.

(Boggs and Petrie, 2004: 6)

In this research context, content analysis of film concentrates on the film components that can be related to the subject of the research. They are as follows.

- Plotlines – brief summary of the stories and conflicts
- The portrayal of youth characters – central youth characters and supporting youth characters
- The contexts in which youth characters are positioned – setting locations, living conditions, and supporting characters, such as guardians and professors
- Any type of specific signifier – props, dialogues, etc.

All these elements are examined to see how they are used in each film to create a message of resistance to the changes in society. Some socio-cultural references are integrated to assist the examination of the components. A conclusion is then drawn to prove the validity of the hypothesis.

## 1.9 Literature Review

The following review is divided into seven parts. Each part discusses relevant academic background.

### 1.9.1 The Studies of Film in a Socio-Cultural Context

Studying film in a socio-cultural context has been carried out with respect to cinema studies or cultural studies where the film medium is proved to be socially and culturally significant. *Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change* by Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004) analyzes Indian mainstream cinema to bring out the cinematic influence on the native and diasporic audience is a good example. Another example is

*Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979* by Cook (2002). In this work, an examination of the socio-economic and technical contexts of American films produced in the 1970s is conducted. The work presents a set of interesting results, one of which concerns the effect of cultural and political situations upon filmmaking, bringing to light how much the film industry and the three contexts are interrelated.

Although it seems feasible to study film with regard to socio-cultural surroundings, the question is whether such studies can really be considered in the domain of Thai cinema since Thai film is considered to be more significant in marketing terms rather than society or culture. In *Haunt, Love, Confusion in Thai Films: The Cinema of Thailand in Three Decades (1977 – 2004), Focusing on Ghost, Romantic, and Post-Modernist Films as Case Studies*, Kamjohn Louiyapong and Somsuk Hinviman (2009: 1) express their concerns at the outset that Thai film is frequently disregarded owing to the notion that it is destined just for entertainment. In addition, Thai film seems to be matched with ‘mushy’ content (or ‘nam nao [น้ำเน่า]’ in Thai) in most people’s view with obsolete form and content. Even so, these two authors have successfully shown the unseen depth of Thai film hidden within three genres: horror, romance, and post-modern films. They point out that Thai film is made, in fact, in conformity to the middle class, therefore, many films showcase middle class identity and supremacy and work like a voice for this particular class of people.

In a similar way, Patsorn Sungsrì’s *Thai Cinema as National Cinema: An Evaluative History* (2004) proposes to understand the nature of Thai film from its early history up to 2004. By using a context-based and text-based approach, the author discovers that the three pillars – nation, religion, and monarchy – are a good basis for comprehending the nature of cinema in Thailand.

In *The Ideology of Love in Popular Thai Tragic Romance, 1997-2007* by Pram Sounsamut (2009), a more specific understanding of Thai film is addressed. This work explores the dominant romantic ideology in Thai tragic romance through the studies of film. The underlying ideology is to have faith in love, to love, and deem love as a basic need for living, no matter if love would end in pain or contentment. Simultaneously, Pram affirmed that a kind of compassionate love (or ‘metta’ and ‘karuna’ in Buddhist terminology) is also a key part of the ideological representation found in the sample of Thai tragic romances.

Like Pram's work, *Monsters in Contemporary Thai Horror Film: Image, Representation and Meaning* by Ji Eun Lee (2010) puts a specific focus on Thai horror films made in the contemporary era. This work examines a representative sample of Thai horror films with reference to local culture, society, and politics. Parts of the findings show that modern Thai horror films reflect several problems and issues, portraying the shared concern or angst which is divided into four areas: (1) distress from the IMF crisis and a tense society; (2) anxiety of natural catastrophes, including virulent diseases; (3) lower social status for men compared to women whose social status seems better and (4) political disorder.

To conclude, these studies indicate that it is not always necessary to read film only for its entertainment value. Many films contain elements of social consciousness or mirror a reaction to some mounting social trend, meaning that their value as part of a research study includes an ability to understand social issues or culture, in addition to pleasurable experiences. Bundit Rittakol's youth films should, for that reason, be analysed as a reflection of Thai society and culture.

### 1.9.2 Studies of Youth Films

The following review looks specifically at the youth genre, starting from youth films in general and ending with Thai youth films. The aim is to confirm that the significance of films as discussed earlier can also be discovered in this genre which looks rather like a commercial product with no profundity.

In a doctoral dissertation *Frontier Mythology in the American Teen Film*, Harper (2008) seeks to understand the true significance of American teen film based upon the question of whether the general meaning of the genre is really 'about' and 'for' young people, as is believed, or is something more significant when considered in the context of the United States. After a long course of research, it was found that other than being 'about' and 'for' youth, American teen film relies on storytelling wherein a concept of youth is unambiguously American and historically contingent. He argues that American teen films feed the idea of being American to a young audience.

Prior to Harper, Shary and Considine (2002) looked into American youth films produced in the 1980s and 1990s in *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*. The two authors focused on films made with the

following generic themes: school, delinquency, horror, science, and romance. Their aim was to examine the way youth and their concerns are represented, the way their representational images have evolved over the years, as well as the way youth films reflect and influence people's anticipation, including anxiety, concerning individualities of young people and their social positions. The conclusion is, while some youth films carry on the replication of youth sexuality and aggression, most youth films in the past have demonstrated a variety of youthful experiences, as well have been sympathetic to the particular trials that the youth have to confront.

For Thai youth film, Zhongnian (2010) performed a study of ten Thai films with university settings made in the latter half of the 2000s. The prevalent image of some staple characters, such as parents or professors, is discussed. For example, parents are prepared to give full support to their children rather than forcing them to go along a given path. Conflict with parents is, thereby, not a major theme in Thai campus youth films produced in the specified period. Thai campus youth films also feature no interruption or severe discipline imposed by university professors. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn from Zhongnian's study is the projection of youth's self-reliance.

Based on the review of these studies, the film medium can certainly be related to the context to which it belongs. No exception is given to the youth genre. At the same time, the review clarifies that the youth genre can work as an element in defining youth in a specific temporal or spatial context and mirrors the perceived behavioural characteristics of the youth or at least which the majority of the public expect.

### 1.9.3 Bundit Rittakol's Youth Films

The following three sources are more connected in some form or manner to Bundit Rittakol's youth films. Firstly, Cheeraboonya Thasanabanchong (2010: 230-231) discusses the significance of each *Bunchu* film as part of her article, 'A Study of Themes in Contemporary Thai Teenage Films'. From her discussion, all the *Bunchu* films contain a theme that reflects Thai society. The theme about youth's adolescent love can be found in the first and second *Bunchu* film. Thai university life, with the idea of friendship, abounds in the third film. The fourth film, essentially a continuation of its prequel; shows the bond amongst university friends, plus the fierce competition in the city area.

Cheeraboonya shows that the first four *Bunchu* films are not pure comedies as in the general notion. They have socio-cultural genuineness which is worth attention.

Another work by the same author is a Master's thesis titled *The Analytical Study of the Characteristics of Thai Popular Youth Movies* (1991). This thesis provides fundamental knowledge regarding youth film through an emphasis on form and style. Nine films from different directors are taken as representative samples, including *Bunchu Phu Narak* and *Bunchu Two, Nongmai*. It is found that many films supply the concept of camaraderie whereby the young have shared dreams, generosity, and sacrifice. *Bunchu Phu Narak* and *Bunchu Two, Nongmai* are amongst the films with a strong intent to show this aspect.

In the thesis titled *The Narrative of Thai Popular Comedy Film Series "Bunchu" and the Director's Creative Approaches*, Manoch Chummuangpak (2004) discusses that the making of the *Bunchu* series was based on the conventional narrative found in Thai film productions – uncomplicated stories, plus insertion of drama and Thai style humor. Simultaneously, the *Bunchu* series can be identified as good quality films through the incorporation of social concerns, especially, ones that Thai people regularly experience, such as a lessening of generosity. In tandem with the preceding two works by Cheeraboonya, Manoch's discussion of *Bunchu* series well supports the argument that Bundit Rittakol's youth films merit further research.

However, none of these three research works addresses the argument hypothesized earlier. Their studies do not cover all of Bundit Rittakol's youth films from *Khu Wun Wai Wan* to *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying*, only the *Bunchu* films are emphasized. This leaves a large gap concerning the youth genre by Bundit Rittakol, as well as affirming that successful attestation of the hypothesis can help fill an area of cultural studies with an interesting body of knowledge regarding cinema.

#### 1.9.4 Film Analysis

To understand why film analysis is needed in this research context, the assertion by Boggs and Petrie (2004: 7) merits consideration. The two posit that film analysis smoothes the path to conclusions on a film's implication and significance. Such analysis provides an awareness of the film's text, including a new depth of understanding through examination of plot, mood, character, structure, including the central ideas that may be

about moral implications, the truth of human nature, social problems, the struggle for human dignity, the complexity of human relationships, coming of age, and a moral or philosophical riddle (2004: 20-29).

A wide range of theories can be referred to in the course of analysis in order to understand Bundit Rittakol's youth films. Auteur theory is one with the utmost relevance.

According to Kolker (2006: 135-136), auteur theory was first introduced by French critics and brought to the US by an American film critic named Andrew Sarris. The theory highlights the director as the supreme creator of films whereby a director's films share a similar style and content in reflecting the director's uniqueness – especially the way the director interprets and reproduces the world. Looking at any films through the concept of auteur theory will end in an understanding of the director's worldview which can be an indication of the function and/or message of the director's films.

Dick (1978: 135-140) elaborates on why the director holds a position of an auteur despite the fact that filmmaking can never be achieved without crew members. This is because while the director produces a film through collaboration with the crew, the film is still under the director's command and artistic control. Dick also explains that while the key features of an auteur works together with others and look for diversity, their motifs are generally unchanged. In consequence, it is possible to see the thematic continuation across a director's films, no matter what genre they cover.

Boonrak Boonyaketmala (2009: 33-34) is a Thai film scholar who is well-known for his criticism with the use of auteur theory. He asserts that there are three phases for a critic to follow, namely the genetic phase, immanent phase, and judgmental phase. The last two phases concern the consideration of the film's components and critic's judgment, respectively. However, the two phases have to be developed from the genetic phase in which a critic searches for an origin of the film's content through a study of all the crucial factors, including budget, marketing, socio-cultural conditions, and authorship. His mention of the authorship shows that a director's individual style and worldview is a major determinant of the film.

Aside from auteur theory, the analysis of Bundit's youth films in this research incorporates the concept of semiotics and semiology. According to Hayward (2006: 344), the term semiotics was coined by a Swiss linguist named Ferdinand de Saussure – then, adopted by the American philosopher C.S. Peirce – to signify the reading of signs produced within a society:

Given that there are social or cultural productions *other than language* which produce meanings (for example sport, games), that is there are other sign systems, semiotics became a useful tool with which to analyze the process of meaning production in such sign systems as literature, cinema, television and advertising and, ultimately, other forms of popular culture (pop songs, dress codes etc.).

(2006: 345)

Dick (1978: 166-167), writing about semiotics and the film medium, states that the former is a way of approaching the meaning of the latter via signs and codes.

*How to Read a Film* (Monaco, 2000: 64-65 cited in Bennett, Hickman, and Wall, 2007: 11) argues that the film medium may not have systematic grammar like language. However, film possesses a system of 'codes' which works like an extra channel for communication. That means not all the messages in film can be instantly comprehended unless semiology is applied.

The question arising at this point is how semiotics operates in an analysis of the text of a film. Blandford, Grant, and Hillier (2001: 209) suggest that the meaning in a given film can be attained with cultural reference available in the context that the film is made. In other words, the hidden message – or connotation – should not be decoded by personal interpretation solely, but by the interpretation based on good familiarity with society and culture to which that film belongs.

In support of Blandford, Grant, and Hillier, Boggs and Petrie (2004: 71-72) provide an explanation of how a filmmaker constructs a signifier. They explain that if a filmmaker wishes to imply something, they will rely on an item whose connotation can be identified by the majority of the audience in a certain culture – for example, using a dove to communicate peace. The two authors write about another type of symbol that has a different derivation. They explain that a filmmaker creates such symbols with reference to the context of the film itself rather than the shared culture. To do so, a particular symbol is projected with a special meaning in its first appearance, such as person or a feeling, to create familiarity with the audience. The re-appearance of such symbol will then be interpreted as already hinted.



No matter what the signifier is called – ‘symbol’, ‘sign’, or ‘code’ – it gives an indirect meaning which then requires a careful reading to understand the film text. The preliminary research suggests that Bundit Rittakol’s youth films employ such signifiers. They are generally micro components, such as props and location settings, whereupon the interpretation is necessary. The second type of signifier, as discussed by Boggs and Petrie, does not appear in Bundit’s films. The decoding of signifiers, therefore, depends on knowledge of Thai society and culture.

### 1.9.5 Thai Society and Culture

The review in this part is to explore the social condition in Thai society, particularly, in the 1980s-2000s. This discussion forms a fundamental understanding of Thai society in transition before a broader discussion in Chapter 2.

Narong Sengpracha (2001) provides a picture of the Thai society ahead of the advent of the third millennium in *Thai Living*. He states that the majority of the Thai population resided in the rural areas and Thai society took shape mostly under the agricultural format. More of the population was farmers, rather than industrial workers. Some others were traders and service providers. Holding on to monarchical system, patron-client relationship, and less political participation were the key identities of the society.

In *The War of Change: Alternative and Survival for Thai Society and Politics in the New Millennium*, Chaowana Trimas (2000: 13-21) discusses the features of Thai society similar to Narong. However, he also describes the changes and the determinant of change. He maintains that Thai society was originally a working class society; people accepted the supremacy of the ruling class and had little or no participation in political affairs. Patron-client relationships were the core element in maintaining the social fabric. Kinship was the bases of the society, as was social stratification. Original thinking was restricted within the concept of predestination rather than free reasoning. Then, Thai society changed without appropriate planning, resulting in an array of unwanted outcomes, one of which is failure of cultural preservation. Only two determinants have played a leading role in Thai social change. One is the state or ruling class; the other is multinational enterprises.

Unlike these two authors, Chaiwat Thirapantu (1995: 58) laid emphasis on the crisis of Thai society in *Chaos Theory and a Crossroad for Siamese Society*. He asserts that, with an attempt to be industrialized, Thai society has faced a severe ecological crisis in tandem

with a cultural crisis. Both crises were accelerated by the advance of information technology. Chaiwat also refers to an eminent social critic, Prawase Wasi, who has established the notion that Thai society is confronting the fourth crisis happening from the inside – the first crisis was the ancient war with Burma, the second was the confrontation with Western imperialism, and the third was the Cold War, all from the outside. This is what he terms ‘self-destruction’ resulting from, for instance, a gap between the poor and the rich, a gap between the city and countryside, pandemic HIV, and ecological deterioration. However, the most crucial problem is a cultural crisis or the loss of an ethical system and basic beliefs because of intense concentration on modern development. His discussion points to the view that the price of modernization is change to society, culture, and the environment.

In the seminar titled ‘*Urban Culture: Urban Community and Change in Bangkok and Its Perimeter*’, organized in July 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, 1994 by the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, Silpakorn University,<sup>1</sup> Thirayuth Boonmee focused on the topic of ‘city culture’ in Bangkok. He maintained that ‘city culture’ no longer existed in Bangkok, as the lifestyle of Bangkokians had changed rapidly with the changing economic environment, a series of entertainment venues (regardless of the appropriateness of the form of entertainment), and moral conflicts. His words confirm that there has been a high degree of change which affected the living conditions in Bangkok, which is an area where residents most conformed to the modern lifestyle.

Similar to Thirayuth and the other cited authors, Phra Dhamma Pidok (2001a: 19) has discussed what he deems the negative side of change in Thai society. According to Phra Dhamma Pidok, the lifestyle in accordance with original Thai culture has disappeared, while some beliefs have faded away. Many traditional activities are performed merely by form, while their meaning has been distorted. The discussion uses the Songkran festival (Thai New Year) as an example. As he contends, Songkran is now being practiced only for unconstructive fun. The concept of merit is absent, while thoughtfulness has vanished. Thereby, people enjoyed the festival just to amuse themselves. This is, in his viewpoint, a cultural breakdown coming as a consequence of globalization and acceptance of consumerism (2001: 20).

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<sup>1</sup> At the time, the centre still belonged to Silpakorn University.

Srisak Wallipodom (2000) is another person who has expressed his concerns about Thai society and culture in the modern era. He points out that most people – regardless of class or social standing – have turned themselves to be pursuers of the new living goal which is only economic advancement. They want to attain more income, more wealth, more power and more honors, while having fewer interests in a sustainable form of society and/or culture. Such a change has brought forth the normalization of immorality and crime.

Interestingly, Prasop Rattanakorn (1995: 10), writing about his memory of the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Bangkok, states that there was a group of individuals urging the government to call for appropriate action against the dominance of foreign culture. Prasop's writing highlights the fact that cultural problems became an issue from the 1980s.

According to Kanoksak Kaewthep (2000: 112), the need to tackle the problem was apparent to a number of concerned people, such as Prawase Wasi, who offered the concept of 'Buddhist agriculture' as an alternative way of development. Sometimes, the means of managing the problem comes about in a more aggressive form, such as the gathering of the locals against the Nam Jone Dam project in Kanchanaburi Province.

After plenty of problems have come to light, even certain state agencies started to doubt the direction of the socio-cultural changes. According to Preecha Piampongsarn and Kanjana Kaewthep (2000: 156-157), The Office of National Economic and Social Development Board issued a statement in 1996 that Thailand had been experiencing unbalanced development in which finances and material goods gained first priority, while people's living conditions were widely overlooked. As well as a reduction of natural resources, the unbalanced development caused families, communities, and the entire society to be unstable. The board puts forward the idea about an 'ideal' society which incorporates, for example, peace, a blissful lifestyle, strong family institutions, social justice, and a reliable community.

The review in this part indicates that Thailand had an agricultural form of society before it underwent the process of change for the purpose of modernizing the country – that is to say, industrialization of the economy, as well as espousing globalization. A number of authors stress that such a process had an impact on the traditional features of Thai society and they agree that traditional moral and ethical behaviour was overpowered by the new living conditions stemming from consumption and entertainment that appears,

in their view, to be a threat to what they believe is needed for a happy society – a site where good social interactions and recognition of morality, ethics, and local culture are widely seen.

#### 1.9.6 Globalization

In the preceding section, the matter of globalization is mentioned. The following review explores the issue of globalization in a variety of ways to understand the term beyond ‘the interconnection amongst countries’.

According to Anan Kanchanapan (2001: 4-11), globalization is a phenomenon by which many parts of the world are connected in terms of culture to assist transnational trade. Within the current of globalization, people are urged to adhere to consumeristic behaviour to energize businesses both from inside and outside Thailand.

Rangsan Thanapornpun (2001: 161) believes that globalization functioned like a pathway for the liberal economy to be planted in Thailand. The liberal economy brought about free trade free investment, free manufacturing, and free flow of money, not only for the economy, but a free society came about as well.

Saneh Chamarik (2001: 110-111) explains that globalization after the Second World War resulted from an endeavor to locate a union of industrialized countries to avoid the battle as in the war. Globalization, thus, came in the form of a free market system with support from the IMF, World Bank, and GATT, all of which fostered the development of trade, finances, and various kinds of technology development. He stated that globalization is equal to an attempt to connect the world in pursuit of international trade.

As an economist, Pasuk Phongpaichit (2001: 65-66), asserts that globalization is more important than other processes in connecting the world since multinational enterprises are the main players in everyday production, investment, finance, or communication. What needs to be kept in mind is that these main players have significant control over important institutions, including people’s general lifestyle. Heavy advertising and wise marketing strategies are the elements for achieving such control.

Thirayuth Boonmee (1993: 40-41) puts forward an idea about globalization in *The Turning Point of the Era* where he explains that globalization is a complex process that can impact every country at a rapid and intensive level (he bases his explanation on the comments from scholars in various fields). For him, globalization is founded on the news

revolution that connects the world with the same news items and reports. Globalization also reduces cultural barriers through promotion of global culture whereby political philosophy, concepts of humanity, conservation, and freedom in every part of the world are not different from one another. Globalization in Thirayuth's view causes global reorganization of economic activity. Investments, production, trade, and services are connected worldwide like a single network.

To conclude, the concept of globalization is explained in a variety of ways depending on one's views and from what angle. Nonetheless, the concept appears to be founded on the theory that globalization is a global process intended for the creation of a global village<sup>2</sup> wherein every country is linked by trade and communication, which has a immense contribution to the change of socio-economic structure, plus local culture. As well, globalization makes way for the flow of new cultural trends, as well as the arrival of new economic routines, which creates a shift of people's attitudes and behaviour, along with their living patterns.

### 1.9.7 The Youth

At this juncture, the review will move to the issue of youth which forms the main part of Bundit's youth films. Prior to looking into youth in the Thai context, the review will look at youth on a continental scale to see, as a general background, how they have been affected by the shifting conditions, as in Thailand.

According to Gale and Fahey (2005: 1-6), globalization has had a great impact on youth in Asia by encouraging a specific type of economy which has led to changes in lifestyle. For example, young people have devoted a much longer time to their education, causing them to get married at a later age and deciding to have fewer children. At the same time, economic security has become their first concern.

According to Atal (2005: 9), young people were, in fact, never that important in the societal dimension until the 1960s when they showed their capacity for uprising in the West. This caused the governments to turn their attention to monitoring the political influence held by youth. Nevertheless, the admiration of the uprising in the West

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<sup>2</sup> This term is first mentioned by McLuhan in McLuhan, M. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: Mentor, 1964, pp. 43.

encouraged youth in the other territories, including those in Asia, to follow the same movement to oppose the political regime in their countries. Partly, this was to express unity with Western youth; partly, this was to showcase their dissatisfaction over failed development stemming from an attempt to modernize countries to match the West. Atal's assertion can be a perfect start for understanding youth in Thailand. In this way, Offenhardt's *Student Activism in Thailand from 1973 to 2006* (2006) must be discussed to develop such an understanding.

*Student Activism in Thailand from 1973 to 2006* is a research work examining Thai student activists in two generations, starting with the October Generation who initiated the political movement in the early 1970s, which conforms exactly with Atal's assertion, leading to the uprising during the Thanom-Praphass period. Then, the study focuses on the activism amongst the generation which the author calls 'the Millennial Generation' to see if this generation kept hold of the students' activities as regards socio-political matters. The study found that that student activism did not completely vanish from Thai society and reoccurred under Thaksin's governance, particularly in the 2005-2006 demonstrations in which some students undertook a variety of means to show their resistance against the Thai government. Students took part in the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) to express concern about the collapse of civil society. Their activism is, nevertheless, found to be unlike that of the October Generation. They were inclined to act within the legal limits or in the democratic tradition. In the end, the author comments that the new generation of students has shown their character, self-determination, and motivation to be involved in public and political issues with a strong respect towards the institution of democracy.

Some Thai academics have, however, raised a question regarding the potential of young people, especially in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, in their exploration of change in youth. Firstly, Rajanikorn Setihoe (1989) gives a brief account of her study of Thai youth in the 1980s in *The Structure of Thai Society and Culture*. She finds that considerable change, both in city or rural youth, has been noticeable. Examples include wearing uni-sex fashions (or the way of dressing with no expression of gender), department stores as leisure destinations, consumption of fast food, or frequenting discotheques. In her view, these activities are the growing trend detected from the Thai youth culture.

According to Chitsanu Tiyacharoensri (1989: 43-44), the situation of youth in the last half of the 1980s was worrisome. 5,445 children and youth were detained in Juvenile

Observation and Protection Centers. Those who were most inclined to commit a crime lived in the city areas and slums. In 1985, 30,000 people under 16 years old were prostitutes. 74% of all prostitutes were people aged 15-25 and the percentage was likely to increase due to economic tension, deception or coercion, and the belief that prostitution can be a source of good income. It was also found that children and youth had low interest in religion owing to failure of family, school, and religious institutions in implanting what considered as proper teachings.

In group seminars, 'Social, Economic, and Political Shift and the Effect towards Youth' (1989) and 'Youth's Living in the Changing Society' (1989), the discussants did not include many positive sides of youth in their conclusion. They all identified that youth were being transformed to be less competent with more problematic natures, such as violence or self-centeredness, which would never be beneficial to society in the long run.

According to Chanita Rukspollmuang (1985), youth problems did not emerge in the late 1980s as reviewed, but began in the late 1970s and continued across the decades with contribution from the process of modernization.

Nevertheless, Kongkaew Charoenaksorn (1985) asserts in the article 'An Approach of Promoting Ethics in Thai Youth in this Decade (1980 – 1990)' that youth in the 1970s were more capable of generating cultural and political resistance as shown in the October 1973 incident. They could challenge the state, as well as go against their seniors whom they saw as corrupt.

The foregoing content deals with the data and ideas with regard to youth in the 1980s. The following concentrates on those in the 1990s and 2000s.

Chanpen Chooprapawan and her team made an attempt to compile data about youth in the 1990s and reported in *The Review of the Knowledge on Children, Youth, and Families in Thailand and Suggestions for Policy Mapping and Research* (1998). Examples of those data are as follows:

- Up to 10 young people were found to pass away every day – mostly in road accidents.
- Only 1 in 20 could complete their education at the university level whereas 3 in 5 needed to work to support their families.
- Most of those who had sufficient money would not be hesitant in spending it all because saving was not their concern.

- Peer pressure played a role in promoting inappropriate behaviour such as smoking, drinking, drugs, and sex.
- Only 1 in 5 read in their spare time, while 4 in 10 liked to gallivant or smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol.
- Premarital sex increased, as did out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
- Finally, unemployment proliferated, because only 2 in 5 who received degrees succeeded in finding jobs.

What is interesting in this work is the citation of an unnamed thinker over the crises of Thai society. It is said that Thai society was in its fourth crisis which is self-destruction induced by the course of modernization. Self-destruction resulted in environmental and cultural damage, plus attitudinal and behavioural change. People strived for fame, adhered to wrong values, and admired materials and wealth. Morality was in decline, while crime was common.

As for the youth in 2000s, one can look at the research by Ladda Mo-suwan, et al. (2004). They found that children and youth aged 10-18 had low capacity in terms of creativeness, including the recognition of morality.

Pattara Sa-nga, et al. (2004) addressed the cause of youth problem by looking into the family institution. They discovered that the new economic setting propelled a number of families into financial hardship, whereupon numerous families were no longer an appropriate site for the youth development.

Nichara Ruengdaraganond and the Holistic Development of Thai Children Study Group (2004) conducted a study of cognitive development in adolescents. They administered a screening intelligence test with reliance on 8,871 children aged 1-18 years as their sample size. They concluded that the majority of the sample failed to go above the average scores, and as the sample was older, their scores diminished. This is indicative of the poor cognitive development in Thai youth.

Sirikul Isranurug, et al. (2004) carried out studies to detect the level of psychological development in youth. They found that living skills improved with age. However, creativeness and moral development were, reversely, decreasing. Again, fighting and substance abuse were the most behavioural risk found in the sample when they were older.



In *A Learning That Suits Thai Society*, Ekawit Nathalang (2001: 97-98) expresses his view under the topic 'Thai Children and the Present Problems' that the new generation of people grew up in an environment dissimilar to that in prior days. People lived in the society of 'post-modernism' in which ways of living and knowledge systems were more diverse and complex. In this sort of society, the young generation endured separation from their communities, relatives, natural environment, and traditions which increased their chance of straying. Ekawit points out that their mentality was not safe because of rising violence, drugs, and material temptation, while high individualism and hedonism was habitually found. Although young people could learn and adapt themselves to the world, they often did it in a perfunctory fashion. They were prone to change.

The question is then what sort of youth is needed in Thai society. To reach an answer, the subsequent review revolves around youth's characteristics that are seen appropriate in the Thai context.

In *Desirable Characteristics of Thai Youth* (1982), Sucharit Pienchob conducted a survey to obtain views from general respondents concerning ideal Thai youth. The results are varied, but can be briefly understood that males had to be strong, creative, or virtuous, while females were expected to possess qualities in accordance with ideal Thai girls – that is to say, courteous, appreciative of the beauty of nature and arts, and obedient to seniority.

The summary of the seminar titled 'Anticipated Features of Thai Youth for the Future' (1989: 40-44) proffers aspects of the ideal youth generally in coherence with the findings in Sucharit's research. The examples of ideal behaviour are good interpersonal relations, adhering to the seniority system and reasonability. Aside from these, the discussants expected youth to be capable of maintaining cultural stability with preservation of local culture and tradition or realizing the merits of Thainess.

To see the expected behavioural characteristics from the state's angle, Chanita Rukspollmuang (1985: 2-4) writes about the state's policy mapping with regard to the development of youth. It is revealed that mental and physical health, cognition and personal ability, and having a good career were the required youth features. The youth were also expected to display a good attitude about life, be responsible for cultural preservation, keep hold of social ethics and justice with realization of social responsibility. The rest bears a resemblance to those in the earlier review.

From these proposed profiles of the ideal youth, young people are expected to be very traditional, as well as being capable of resisting change. The latter visualizes a fear of future uncertainties coming from the youth's weakened recognition of Thai culture and society. The following review clarifies why the youth have become one of the utmost concerns when mentioning change.

In *The Development of Children, Youth, and Women*, Palanee (1995: 45) discussed the basic concepts of youth development in which she makes clear that youth were the age period overlying that of immaturity and maturity whose duty should strictly be adoption of cultural heritage.

From the article 'Policy and Youth Development' by Nisa Xuto (1985: 34), the problem and importance of youth was underscored in the 5<sup>th</sup> Economic and Social Development Plan. Development of their education, public health, food and nutrition, and social welfare were targeted. In connection with the idea of value orientation, the implementation of concepts such as ethics and virtues were embraced. This information shows that youth are a part of the primary concerns for the state from as early as the 1980s because the failed development of youth means the construction of an incompetent population.

To conclude, many studies of Thai youth provide the characteristics of the young generation which the cited authors regard as undesirable. Social change is referred repeatedly as the origination of such characteristics. It can be understood that the overall image of Thai youth during the 1980s-2000s was unpromising in the eyes of many social critics who wanted to see them growing up with, for instance, high modesty, capability of reasoning, and respect to their parents and the seniors. Parts of these features are needed to facilitate the nation's development which can also be seen in some other countries. Some features are fairly specific for a Thai context because they concern matters of culture and patterns of living. Accordingly, knowledge on this topic is a reliable basis for understanding why the central characters in Bundit Rittakol's youth films are portrayed in such a way and why the hypothesis about resistance to change is valid.

## 1.10 Thesis Structure

### 1.10.1 Chapter 2 Thai Society in Transition

This chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of how Thai society in the 1980s-2000s changed from being agrarian to being industrial and how such change impacted youth's attitudes and behavioural patterns.

The discussion starts with an historical background heralding the changes, followed by the process of change in the last three decades covering urbanization, industrialization, and capitalist expansion. As for the question of youth, there is discussion regarding youth before the 1980s, followed by a discussion of youth during the 1980s-2000s. This is to show how youth transformed when social change gradually intensified. At the end of the chapter, the aspects of mainstream media will be discussed as a contributor of change, including the attempt to resist it.

### 1.10.2 Chapter 3 Bundit Rittakol's Youth films in the 1980s

The third chapter deals with analyses of three Bundit Rittakol's youth films release in the 1980s – *Khu Wun Wai Wan*, *Bunchu Phu Narak*, and *Bunchu Two, Nongmai*. The aim is to make clear how the film content is related to social resistance.

To do so, each film will be discussed in accordance with the theme of resistance to show clearly that the director bases the representations of all the central characters on the desired ideal features of Thai youth. Those characters who do not have such features have to endure hardship owing to their failure of meet such features, followed by self-correction. Chapter 3 also discusses where the central characters are placed connotes the resistance to change in two ways: firstly, by laying emphasis on positive Thainess to promote the appreciation of rural living; and secondly, by demonstrating the unfavourable side of modernity to mirror the problems of economic development.

### 1.10.3 Chapter 4 Bundit Rittakol's Youth films in the 1990s

The fourth chapter covers four Bundit Rittakol's youth films release in the 1990s, following the aim and format shown in the previous chapter.

The discussion of all the films brings to light that two films – *Bunchu Five*,

*Nueahom* and *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* – resemble the films released by Bundit in the 1980s in terms of social resistance. However, the other two, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* and *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two*, are different. The first emphasizes Thai youth in a fairly beautiful context in the virtual absence of modernity. This can be interpreted that, without modernity, youth can be in a better condition. While the second stresses the negative dimension of the modern context and the way it causes the central characters to struggle with their youthful development. Despite the dissimilarity of representations, all four films have a message in opposition to change.

#### 1.10.4 Chapter 5 Bundit Rittakol's Youth films in the 2000s

This chapter focuses on the last three Bundit Rittakol's youth films release in the 2000s with the same purpose and format of analysis as in Chapter 3 and 4. The films comprise *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang*, *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou*, and *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying*.

The discussion leads to an understanding that the use of ideal youth characters, plus the highlighting of Thainess, are still Bundit Rittakol's key strategies. What is different from all the previous films is the representation of the corrupt modern context. This becomes more evident and intense in all the films released in the 2000s through the depiction of violence, illegal activity, and mutual ignorance, as though economic modernization has brought Thailand to the peak of an unfavourable society.

#### 1.10.5 Chapter 6 Conclusion

The last chapter will draw conclusions from all the aforementioned chapters to validate the hypothesis. In this respect, the conclusion will recapitulate the representational themes in an attempt to show that none of the films in this group contain a storyline and/or images that support the transition to an industrial society or liberal economy. They do not promote the success of attaining wealth, materials, or personal achievement, but rather emphasize good awareness of virtuous or moral matters, plus that of maintaining traditional Thai culture. This leads to the affirmation of the hypothesis – Bundit Rittakol's youth films reflects resistance to change in Thai society in the 1980s-2000s.

### 1.11 Summary

This research aims to explore Bundit Rittakol's youth films beyond their role to amuse and entertain by questioning how his youth films reflect the realities of Thai society which not only forms the backdrop of the story, but also the period of their production and cinema release. The research is, thus, based on the hypothesis that the youth films in this study promote resistance to change, meaning that the films reflect a negative view of the socio-cultural changes engendered by the course of modernization in the late 1980s to the end of 2000s. The films point to a division of views. While modernization is regarded highly as an approach to attaining a level of modernity, some people consider modernization to be socially and culturally threatening.

As well as contributing to greater scholarship on aspects of Bundit Rittakol's youth films that have not been explored, the research should bring about a greater understanding of their significance. This will change the commonly held view that they are just typical Thai style comedies, as well as promoting studies of other similar groups of films wherein a link with socio-cultural contexts can be discerned.

## Chapter 2 Thai Society and Thai Youth in Transition

### 2.1 Thai Society before the 1980s-2000s

#### 2.1.1 General Condition

Based on Riggs' explanation,<sup>3</sup> Thai society was originally a traditional society wherein people's lives depended on nature (Paibul Changrean, 1971: 4). Some scholars recognize that Thai society was an 'agrarian society' in which the lives of many locals were attached to cultivation. They typically adopt some kinds of social interaction to aid in their crop growing and such interaction resulted in tight relationships, generosity, forgiveness, or whatever was capable of strengthening their unity. Being agrarian can be seen through rituals and ceremonies such as tam kwan kaa0 [ทำขวัญข้าว], raek naa kwan [แระกนาขขวัญ], or hae naangmaew [แห่นางแมว], the themes of which revolve around agricultural activities (Narong Sengpracha, 2001: 23).

Apart from these social aspects, the familial aspect is another question to consider. According to Rajanikorn Setihoe (1989: 96), the extended family is the most common form of family unit found in the traditional social mode. Extended families are a mix of generations comprising parents, children, grandparents, and, sometimes, close relatives. The extended family is an integral part of Thai society by which the young are well provided with love and care, including proper instruction in ethics and customs (Manus Wanitchanon, 2007: 29). For many thinkers, this form of family can help prevent adolescence from delinquency.

Thai society is also praised continuously for its serene quality. The belief in peaceful living, law of karma, mercy, and forgiveness pervades the society (Narong Sengpracha, 2001: 24); therefore, an aggressive approach to any conflict is supplanted mostly by conciliation, which embeds the image of being a compromiser in the notion of being Thai.

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<sup>3</sup> Riggs, F. W. A Model for the Study of Thai Society. In *Thai Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 1 (April 1961), p. 10

### 2.1.2 The Initiation of the Liberal Economy as a Precursor of Change in the 1980s-2000s

Much of the social condition as discussed in the foregoing gradually disappeared after Thailand took the course of modernization starting in the era of King Rama IV. To understand modernization in its simplest sense, the description by Charlton and Andras (2003: 3) should be looked at.

Modernization originally referred to the contrast and transition between a 'traditional' agrarian society and the kind of 'modern' society that is based on trade and industry.

Formerly, Thailand generally relied on a closed economy or self-sufficiency. After the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855, the close economy was substituted with free trade whereby a number of foreign countries could operate their businesses with Thai merchants and the domestic economy began to change. Rice growing increased, for example, from 14,400 square kilometers in 1907 to 28,800 square kilometers in 1917, and was furthered to 40,000 square kilometers in 1942 as rice became a significant export (Krikkiat Phipatseritham, 1979: 202).

The second phase of modernization came subsequent to the end of World War II when Thailand turned its attention to the further stage of economic development. According to Kanoksak Kaewthep (2000: 95), this happened in the period of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat who implanted the first National Economic and Social Development Plan in accordance with suggestions by the World Bank and a consultant team from the US. Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat thought that agriculture would never produce better income, compared to industry (Sirinya Jorntes, 2006: 31). Therefore, he decided to initiate an open economy with reliance on the market system. Key changes were the reformation of macroeconomic management and industrial development (Nipon Puapongsakorn, 1999: 3). By this, the plan was designed to create a pathway for foreign investments to play a role in the new economy as specified in its development approach.

Promote private investment in the industrial sector, especially those that use domestic materials or whose products meet high internal

demand..... The State will not establish new businesses to compete with the private sector.

(National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: 18).

## 2.2 Thai Society during the 1980s-2000s

### 2.2.1 Neo-Liberalism, Globalization, and Democratization as a Driving Force of the Liberal Economy

Neo-liberalism has been promoted ever since the postwar era by the US and UK to function as a new route for economic development (Samchaiy Sresunt, 2008: 36). The core idea is a denial of economic control carried out by the state. It is recorded that the US encouraged international organizations, such as the IMF (the International Monetary Fund), GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), the World Trade Organization, and the World Bank to persuade each member state to run their economies using neo-liberal policies to minimize the state's economic management. Such neo-liberal policies were pursued at an intense level starting in the 1980s when Thailand could not avoid accepting financial aid from the World Bank and the IMF which compelled the government to accept the idea of free competition.

While neo-liberalism can be regarded as one of the origins of the change in the Thai economy, one phenomenon in promotion of such change was globalization. According to Jiradej Mokkahasmit (2007: 110), time and space has been compressed by telecommunication technology since the post-Cold War period, leading to the easy flow of information across territories and generating the state of globalization in which each nation is interconnected in trade, culture, and politics. Saneh Chamarik (2001: 108) explains that, subsequent to World War II, the growing strength of nationalism in many colonies caused globalization to be attached to the 'liberal economy' with the assistance from the World Bank, the IMF, or GATT. The new form of globalization became a capitalism-based process by which the world was unified underneath similar economic regulations (Samchaiy Sresunt, 2008: 27). Because globalization is seen as a modern trend, the discourse concerning globalization in Thai society often revolved around 'catching the trend' – or to



think the same and perform the same – which induced Thailand to be part of this movement with full acceptance of the liberal economic system.

Globalization is, however, understood sometimes as the distribution of goods, services, human resources, and values to varied places around the globe (Somchai Pakapaswiwat, 2012: 277). In cultural terms, the new form of globalization is, hence, the homogenization of global consumption whereby people consume the same brands foods, music, fashions, or movies. Either in the West or the East, everyone knows McDonald's, Nike, Adidas, or Coca-Cola because of heavy advertising and the plethora of sales locations (Samchai Sresunt, 2008: 46-47). This can be seen as a kind of standardization of new living influenced by manufactured goods. In any event, Thailand has relied on the stream of globalization, allowing much of the society to share with others the routine of a liberal economy and, subsequently, the spread of popular culture.

At this regard, it is important to understand that the change could not have emerged with such high intensity unless there was a process of democratization to fuel liberal values in many perspectives, including the economy. The very basic concept of democracy concerns individual's freedoms, one of which is the right to run personal businesses.

The idea that there is a strong connection between capitalism and democracy has long existed and indeed accompanied the history of both phenomena. However, it has been held in two contrasting versions, namely the conviction that there is a natural link between capitalism and democracy, on the one hand, and the conviction that these two phenomena are naturally in tension with each other, on the other hand. The former idea, most versions of which would indeed not refer to 'capitalism' but rather to 'market society', have their origins in the assumption that political liberalism, the normative political philosophy that supports liberal democracy, and economic liberalism, the normative theory that suggests the enhancement of the 'wealth of nations' if markets reign freely, are nothing but two sides of the same coin.

(Wagner, 2011: 6)

It can be said that democracy and the liberal economy are in the same package in various ways – faith in the former smoothens the way for the latter.

In Thailand, economic development in accordance with the concepts of neo-liberalism was influenced by such faith as shown in the governments of that period. For example, General Chatichai encouraged the policy called ‘turning the Indochina battlefield to trading markets’ which stimulated Thai businessmen to explore the markets in Indochinese countries (Yong, 1988: online) and he initiated financial liberalization by accepting Article VIII of the IMF’s Articles of Agreement in exchange for loans to be used in the development of numerous projects (Satieen Jantimatom, 1998: 218-219). Anand began ASEAN Free Trade and ran policies in promotion of a capital market, free industrial competition, and free trade that he claimed to be under fairer conditions (Weerachat Chumsanit, 2006: 161). Chuan established measures to encourage export of goods and services, such as providing credits for exportation, offering packing credits, and hastening tax refunds to exporters during his second term in office (The Prime Minister’s Office, 2000: 146). Thaksin made use of economic patriotism whereby he promulgated the importance of the domestic market and consumption to expand the economy and also advocated taking on debt to boost domestic spending (Medhi Krongkaew, 2009: 27-29).

No records indicate that the Thai economy during any of the Prime Ministers (1980s-2000s) changed its routine from being a liberal economy to any other. Suffice it to say, every government has been similarly desirous of having more industries to foster manufacturing advancement to develop the economy as much as to obtain acceptance from the democratic community.

### 2.2.2 Contextual Transition

The following aims to present the socio-economic phenomena that came about as a consequence of Thailand modernizing within the liberal economic environment. Such phenomena can be divided into three categories: urbanization, industrialization, and capitalist expansion.

Anuchat Pongsomlee and Ross (1992: 11) have suggested that urbanization in Thailand has followed a pattern commonly found in the Southeast Asian region in which a single metropolitan city grows to overpower the others. Such a city will rapidly expand by mass migration. In the case of Thailand, Bangkok is the metropolitan city with the highest

density of buildings, housings, and flourishing trade. Such characteristics emerged in the 1980s when urbanization of Bangkok was more evident in terms of physical development than population growth (Watanabe, 1993: 11). Shop houses, department stores and housing estates appeared in profusion and turned the city into a place for dynamic consumption and leisure. When more people came in, more buildings, such as condominiums or offices for rent, were built. With such a basis, Bangkok developed more and more into a center for major activities such as communication and transportation with the equipped infrastructure (Anuchat Pongsomlee and Ross, 1992: 10). It can be seen that the city grew to be the largest base for the nation's economic advancement with concentration of trade and industries, as reflected in the saying 'Bangkok is Thailand'.

Industrialization is the second phenomenon to be considered. Thai industrialization is, as a matter of fact, a state-driven process with the Board of Investment of Thailand as the administrative body responsible for running the strategy.<sup>4</sup>

Industrialization in Thailand was intended to boost exports of manufactured goods owing to the belief that great quantities of industries would put an end to poverty or unemployment. Those industries to gain first priority from the state were recognized a strategic sectors, comprising food manufactures, textile/leathers, automotive equipment, basic metal products, papers, paper products and publishing (Ninomiya, 1988: 23).

The main part of the Thai industry had been agriculture and fishery-based. The operation of mining, chemicals, heavy and light industries was added after intensive promotion (1988: 2). The new area included labor-intensive manufacturing such as clothing, footwear, leather products, furniture, toys, jewelry, and electronics (Archanun Kohpaiboon, 2006: 102). The growth of these industries proceeded with satisfaction whereby the rate of employment in the industrial sector increased. During 1970-1985, the industrial sector had only an 8% share of domestic employment, but reached 13.6% and 15.1% in 1991-1995 and 1996-2000, respectively, owing to the firm adherence to labor-intensive manufacturing (2006: 102). These numbers reflect how economic development shifted attention from agricultural businesses, unless they concerned industrialized activities.

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<sup>4</sup> The detailed function of the board and its actual effectiveness is available in Shain, M. L. Thailand's Board of Investment: Towards a More Appropriate and Effective Rural Investment Promotion Policy. In *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, pp. 141-182. Vol. 3 No. 1, 1994.

As a result, the 1980s-2000s was no longer a period in which the agricultural sector played a dominant role in the Thai economy, as indicated by the following table.

(Millions of Baht)

Sector	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Agriculture	152,852	169,895	226,046	383,074	431,081	700,380
Manufacturing	139,936	224,456	618,472	1,116,261	1,449,598	2,268,623
<b>Difference of the Value</b>	<b>12,916</b>	<b>-54,561</b>	<b>-392,426</b>	<b>-733,187</b>	<b>-1,018,517</b>	<b>-1,568,243</b>

Table 3 comparison of value in agricultural and manufacturing sector (based on the statistics from 'Table 2: Gross National Product by National Income at Current Market Prices by Industrial Origin', pp. 18-19, in *National Income of Thailand, New Series 1970-1987* and 'Table 3: Gross Domestic Product at Current Market Prices by Economic Activities', pp. 84-85, in *National Income of Thailand, Chain Volume Measures: 1990-2010 Edition* publicized by Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board)

Capitalist expansion, the last phenomenon to be discussed, refers to the enlargement and strengthening of an economic system in the mode of capitalism. In the case of Thailand, the Thai economy was in decline by both external and internal factors in the early 1980s. The government needed to employ a set of schemes according to capitalist principles to revive the economy. Industrial promotion was one of the schemes whereby foreign investors were attracted to establish manufacturing operations in Thailand so as to fuel domestic businesses and, thereby, increase national income, as well as raise the rate of employment. During the promotion period, Japanese investors, as well as from Taiwanese and Hong Kong, put their capital in a variety of businesses, such as textiles, garments, canned foods, and jewelry, from the mid-1980s onwards (Warren, 1997: 163). Their investments helped improve the economic situation to a large extent with profitable sales of manufactured commodities. The encouragement of tourism in 1980, 1984, and 1987 as an additional source of income was also incorporated. Expansion of the Thai tourism industry, especially in 1987, necessitated the construction of more hotels, while the expansion of tourist related businesses, restaurants, and airlines was also in great

demand (Niramol Suthammakit, 2008: 176). Tourism promotion returned in the end of the 1990s in the form of the Amazing Thailand 1998-1999 campaign. This was intended to renew the same success, as well as rebooting the economy after the second economic crisis.

The growth of the industrial and service sectors at the end of the 1980s smoothed the path to substantial expansion of the capitalist economy in Thailand, especially, in the first half of the 1990s. With an increase of reserve funds, the government announced many projects in promotion of further economic development, such as projects for relieving traffic congestion in Bangkok, including expressways, toll-ways, the Bangkok Mass Transit System, and development of ports in many areas (2008: 177). At the same time, communication businesses were transferred to the private sector in the form of Build-Transfer-Operate agreements to handle the rising demand for telecommunications and wireless services (2008: 178). All these efforts are in line with encouragement of the economy on the capitalist basis which embodies heavy investments, job creations, and autonomy of the private sector.

As one of the last measures, the government decided on loosening the foreign exchange system, leading to a massive influx of capital (Laird, 2000: 95). Most of the funds were, however, diverted to unsustainable investments such as the stock market and immovable properties. The result of this was a bubble economy with the rise in asset prices and an excessive supply of real estate properties. The consumption of luxury goods was common amongst the rich, as well as the middle class, causing an escalation of the current account deficit to 8.2% of GDP in 1995 (2000: 92). The last half of the 1990s was, thus, remembered as a period of economic hardship before the reemergence of a capitalist boom in the early 2000s to which Thaksin Shinawatra and his government played a contributory role.

As explained by economists, Thaksin employed an array of policies to stimulate economic development. All his policies, despite differences in detail, were devised on the basis of boosting consumption amongst the people – from the rich down to the grassroots (Kosit Panpiemras, 2008: 3). A set of surveys conducted by the National Statistical Office of Thailand are a good indicator of how effective his policies were. The data shows that the average debt in Thai households changed from 31,387 baht in 1994 to 82,485 baht in 2003 (Medhi Krongkaew, 2009: 43). That means more consumption and higher spending (as indicated by household debt in table 2.2, along with increased borrowing, happened in

accordance with Thaksin's intention. One could say that capitalism was refreshed to be in a more dominant form under his governance.

Since then, no matter who came to power and how they dealt with economic policies, the structure of the economy has not changed. Industry, service, and general business have remained the prime activities by which heavy consumption and investment remain intact.

Income/Expense/Debt	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2009
Household Income (Baht/Month/Family)	12,150	13,736	14,963	17,787	18,668	20,903
Household Expense (Baht/Month/Family)	9,848	10,889	12,207	14,311	14,500	16,205
<b>Average Household Debt (Baht/Family)</b>	<b>124,560</b>	<b>134,529</b>	<b>160,781</b>	<b>181,033</b>	<b>184,330</b>	<b>221,199</b>

Table 4 household debt during 2000-2009

(based on National Statistical Office's chart, Household Debt: National Impact [หนี้สินครัวเรือน : ผลกระทบระดับประเทศ]. Available from: [http://service.nso.go.th/nso/nsopublish/citizen/news/news\\_58.jsp](http://service.nso.go.th/nso/nsopublish/citizen/news/news_58.jsp))

### 2.2.3 Key Changes as a Result of Development

The advantages of development and/or becoming modern have, in any event, been identified by a variety of academics. Jansen (2001: 361), for example, gives a positive aspect regarding the development before the 2000s saying that it substantially lessened the degree of poverty. 30% of Thais had been reported to be under the poverty line before, but the percentage dropped to slightly over 10% in the 1990s (the number of the poor dropped to somewhat less than 8 million people from around 12 million in the previous twenty-five years). McGregor, Camfield, Masae, and Buapun Promphakping (2008: 14) assert that development created an opportunity for better pursuit of wellbeing. In city areas, the image of females as the leader of their households also escalated, suggesting a shift of gender roles from patriarchy. Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, et al. (2010: 3) stated that the

new society connected the locals to the global cultural current which targeted the elevation of living standards in many dimensions. Such culture promoted production for business purposes, including the employment of information networks and more reliance on international cooperation. Realization of human rights in tandem with cultural differences became an issue for reaching a higher level of civilized society, whereas knowledge and research progressed with serious awareness.

One of the best sources of data with reference to change in the three decades are the reviews of the past development provided in each National Economic and Social Development Plan. The review is based on comprehensive observation by state officials with precise figures and facts. Starting with the seventh plan (1992-1996) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: 1), some satisfactory results were shown in response to development in the previous years. It can be seen that the financial situation of the country around the end of the 1980s was successfully stabilized. Individual income was sufficiently increased – for instance, per capita income increased from 21,000 baht in 1986 to 41,000 baht in 1991, leading to better purchasing power, plus an upgrading of living standards. Economic stability was also instrumental for the expansion of the industrial and service sector which brought about a rising employment rate by which higher wages could be attained. It was reported that average employment growth was 554,000 persons per year for the period of the sixth plan and the unemployment rate fell to 0.6 in 1991.

The review in the eighth plan (1997-2001) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: i) describes a continuation of the spectacular improvement during the seventh plan. Communication technology became an outstanding focus because Thailand successfully entered the age of information technology. It was reported that Thais had no problem in obtaining desired information, helping even small units in the society have bargaining power as never before. Simultaneously, Thailand was more familiar with transnational ideas vis-à-vis democracy, human rights, equal treatment between genders, or environmental conservation, all of which are the fundamental basis for modernization.

The ninth plan (2002-2006) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: ii-iii) contains a review in the similar vein, even though the economic situation in the earlier years was full of serious tension as a result of the 1997 economic crisis. It was written that the country was able to achieve the collection of capital necessary for more

development. The country had a suitable climate for the application of key reforms in the socio-political sector, including decentralization of the nation's administration. In democratic terms, freedom progressed further by the 1997 constitution which inspired wider participation in both national and communal issues. Such expression brought about attempts at prevention of corruption.

Noticeably, the use of the ninth plan took place under Thaksin's governance when the country experienced the second peak of economic development during the 1980s-2000s. An array of problems occurred at the end of the plan owing to political disputes. Even so, some positive signs emerged as a consequence of the ongoing development. As indicated in the eleventh plan (2012-2016) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: iv) which looked back to the general condition in the 2000s, a trend of political awareness could more readily be seen amongst the Thais. A huge number of people became interested in social issues, including matters about state power, whereas general circumstances were still advantageous for development to proceed.

In addition to these positive views, some unfavorable products have emerged out of the on-going economic development.

..... economic development has brought about remarkable differences between life in the city and life in the countryside. We see pictures of young people migrating to the city, the exploitation of natural resources in the country for the benefit of city growth and development, the emergence of marginal groups such as laborers, street hawkers and slum dwellers, all of whom come from the countryside, and whose culture becomes labelled as low-class. The migration of labor, a vital resource for rural society, into the city, causes that rural society to collapse, while the city rapidly expands.

(Sunate Suwanlaong, 2006: 208)

While urban-rural disparity has been a classic example of the effect of development (focusing on the urbanization part), many scholars are capable of identifying other problems too. McGregor, Camfield, Masae, and Buapun Promphakping (2008: 14) point out that a modern lifestyle has brought about the reduction of social interaction amongst people in the same community, no matter if they were neighbors or relatives. Krittinee



Nuttavuthisit, et al. (2010: 3) gives a more detailed discussion, saying that the past development that connected the country within the global cultural current granted precedence to a materialistic and/or consumeristic lifestyle and such lifestyle has often resulted in a weakening of local identity, plus replacement of social relationships with an 'each man for himself' mentality.

In each National Economic and Social Development Plan, a broad range of socio-economic problems is also documented. As summarized by the seventh plan (1992-1996) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: 2-3), it can be seen that the manner of living has been converted in accordance with modern values and attitudes, but recognition of morality, local culture, spiritual activities, including the traditional way of living has declined. The percentage of some criminal acts has decreased, but many cases have turned out to be more serious. Poverty in the city area and informal urban settlements were worrying issues. It can be theorized that these problems emanated from the socio-economic changes with the emphasis on the industrialized and urbanized way of life. Aside from this summary, the seventh plan calls attention to the increasing difference of income distribution between the poor and the rich or the rural and urban. The income share of the wealthiest groups of households rose from 49.3% in 1975/1976 to 54.9 in 1987/1988, while the income share for the poorest group of households declined from 6.1% to 4.5%. The lowest rate of income belonged to agricultural workers, accounting for approximately half of the national average income.

All the subsequent plans describe negative effects of the development similar to the seventh plan. For example, the ninth plan (2002-2006) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: ii) uses the term 'imbalanced' with respect to the development that has occurred, which has produced an unsatisfactorily improved quality of living. The ninth plan also revealed the seriousness of protracted corruption found at every level with identification of centralized and ineffective politico-economic administration, plus an ineffectual legal system. In the eleventh plan (2012-2016) (National Economic and Social Development Board, n.d.: iv), what was deemed as urgent issues include low quality education, low child intelligence, health-risk behaviours, and low labor efficiency. Further improvement of social services could be seen, but not necessarily beneficial to some underprivileged groups due to a shortfall in access to services. Income inequality, poor access to resources, declining ethical and moral values, and misdeeds, such as gambling and drug use among young people, were all problems found in the 2000s.

As commented by Plaew Si-Ngen (2014: 5), a senior Thai columnist for *Thaipost*, development focuses too much on materialistic advancement, rather than on human resources. In his viewpoint, Thais try to imitate whatever people in developed countries accomplish, particularly, in terms of material goods, but in the absence of discipline. This has caused the problems that the cited sources have identified.

## 2.3 Thai Youth in the Realm of Transition

### 2.3.1 The Youth before the 1980s

The discussion of the youth before the 1980s is significant in highlighting how youth during the 1980s-2000s were different as compared with the former generation and how they were shaped by society wherein most people gave priority to the course of modernization.

Prior to the advent of 1973, young people could be understood collectively as very traditional. They were trained to accept politeness, modesty, obedience, and well-mannered behaviour. They were taught to follow social values to conform themselves with the rest of the society, namely, generosity, mercy, and forgiveness. Their obligation was to do things strictly in compliance with the guidance from their parents because it was believed that they would receive success, while any sign of disobedience would be considered thankless. The reflection of this belief can be seen in the mainstream saying ‘*derm taam lang poo yai maa mai gat*’ – literally translated ‘it is safe to follow the ways of one’s senior’ (Lertporn Parasakul, 1973: 6).

According to Nantawan Sushatow (1973: 131-135), another traditional behaviour of young people was the obligation to comply strictly with sexual mores, especially, amongst the female youth. They had to protect their virginity, as much as keeping themselves away from any close contact with males.

There is also some indication that plenty of young people developed an interest in social issues. University students were eager to change their behavioural patterns from pure enjoyment to social cares because of mounting awareness of the changing world, including that Thai society wanted to see them bear more responsibility. Acknowledgement of social activities amongst youth at the higher education level could not, therefore, be avoided (Benja Jirapattarapimol, 1973: 45). The most fashionable activity

was remote camping to help undeveloped villages – for instance, educating hill tribes or familiarizing those tribal members with modern living (Tuernjai Chiewpakdee, 1973: 118-119).

When 1973 arrived, student activism started to take place and changed the direction of Thai youth. Based on an explanation by Zimmerman (1974: 509), the 1973 activism arose from an extended protest against the import of Japanese goods in 1972. There were students from many higher educational institutions taking part in this demonstration with the overt condemnation of Japan as ‘economic beast’ (Surasilp Amornsurasiri, 2001: 89).

The Thung Yai Scandal in April 1973, served as a catalyst for further steps in youth’s activism. Young people received an opportunity to work together with the press in urging the government to penalize the state officials who illegally hunted wild animals in Thung Yai. In June of the same year, a huge protest against the banishment of nine Ramkhamhaeng University students was arranged by an organization called the National Student Centre of Thailand after those nine students had made a caustic remark when Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn (the premier at the time) and Field Marshal Praphas Charusathien declared the extension of their service in office.

Then, the government issued an order to detain a group of activists, including Thirayuth and five other students, for their distribution of leaflets publicizing their cause. A massive uprising by students and the public took place at the Democracy Monument in October 13, 1973 to try and force the government to release all the activists. The government yielded to the crowd’s demands, but it was too late. Fighting already had broken out and lasted through October 14-15 before ended in Field Marshal Thanom and Praphas fleeing Thailand (Zimmerman, 1974: 511-512).

From that time onwards, students became accustomed to the concept of social responsibility. It can be seen that they have shown good spirit in many occasions, such as, using exhibitions and books in addressing the adversity of the rural sector (Samrerng Yanggratoke, 1985: 6). However, they turned into extreme leftists which looked very threatening to people at the time, drawing attacks from the media, military, ruling class, and capitalists (Nibhondh Chamduang, 1986: 223). Students were unaware of the hatred against them, so they staged a demonstration once more within the Thammasat campus to showcase their rejection of Field Marshal Thanom’s endeavour to re-enter Thailand. This resulted in bloodshed on October 6, 1976 in which they were portrayed as a serious

threat by the media, army, and ruling class (Sulak Sivaraksa, 1983: 348), and many of them were brutally slaughtered. Some were imprisoned whereas some subsequently joined the Communist Party of Thailand. That proved to be the end of young people's politico-social supremacy ahead of the heavy modernization during the 1980s-2000s when the youth changed their worldview to the direction away from that of their predecessors.

### 2.3.2 Youth during the 1980s-2000s

Sulak Sivaraksa, analysing Thai students in the 1980s, observed that they were discouraged from individual thinking, but encouraged to have an imitative tendencies (Nibhondh Chamduang, 1986: 200-206). From Sulak's analysis, it can be understood that the 1980s youth were being weakened in their thinking ability to prevent the recurrence of student activism. Urbanization, industrialization, and capitalist expansion were found to be equally contributory factors in altering youth's behaviour by shifting from that of politico-social activists to being consumers. In this way, youth behavioural features – style, culture, and mind-set – are the issues to look at.

As explained by Rajanikorn Setihoe (1989: 97), the youth in the 1980s possessed a shared culture which would start from the city area before spreading to the rural. The city youth would initiate a new trend by which they absorbed the latest fashions for pleasurable consumption. Ice skating rings, bowling centers, and discotheques became the venues for their meeting. Some of them engaged in drugs or racing in conjunction with the new popular culture, such as hard-rock music. As for the rural youth, it is explained that they would try to be as trendy as the city youth, no matter if their financial status supported such a lifestyle. This is a consequence of the new economic context in which services and products, such as modern garments, films and songs, and coffee shops were incessantly offered to the young customers.

The change in family structure is recognized widely as a co-factor. Extended families as found in the previous society turned into nuclear families on account of economic factors (1989: 96-99). A nuclear family is the simplest form of family that can be maintained with the least cost. It consists of parents and, in most cases, only a few children. But this form of family is often seen as insufficient for building strong interpersonal relationships. As parents have to concentrate on their work to ensure the adequacy of earnings to support the whole family, they leave their children either at

schools or at home without close care from senior relatives. It is understood that the youth lacked love and warmth as a result of this family format and very little understanding between them and their guardians could be established, leading to a shift of their behaviour, as will be discussed in more detail.

Not only the general youth culture, the custom of student's camping, as in the earlier decade, was transformed. According to Sompan Tachaatig (1985: 25-26), students in 1980s and beyond no longer first learned about the rural areas, why they were going there, and for whom. Originally, the camping trip would commence with exhaustive exploration of problems in remote villages, followed by an enthusiastic journey to the destination with a long stay. They would undertake needed construction, such as schools, toilets, underground wells, and community centers, in exchange for learning about the rural life. However, the new camping trips incorporated group entertainment with no comprehensive exploration. The constructions were often of no use to the villagers – the camping trip turned into a tourist activity rather than genuine development. This camping tradition essentially reveals the nature of the 1980s youth as entertainment lovers.

Rajanikorn Setihoe and Sompan Tachaatig adds to the collective picture of the youth as reflected in the group discussions titled 'Youth's Living in the Changing Society' (1989: 53-59), which is of tremendous help in visualizing the young population in the realm of the 1980s social and economic transition. Starting with the city youth, the discussants were unanimous that their life went on without a clear direction. As for rural youth, many of them were part of disadvantaged families. Their development either in educational or professional terms failed to emerge as one would expect. Regardless of city or rural, young people engaged in similar practices such as free sex, materialism, aggression, or drug use.

In an attempt to explain why youth features came to light in such a way, explanation of factors was given in a group discussion titled 'Social, Economic, and Political Shift and the Effect towards Youth' (1989: 32-38). The discussants linked urbanization, industrialization, capitalist expansion, including democratization in Thailand, to the new youth nature. They regarded that these phenomena brought forth living conditions whereby the youth were exposed to an abundance of what some considered unfavorable climates in which high levels of individualism, competition, materialism, or capitalism could affect their recognition of behaviour that is traditionally seen as proper in Thai society.

The socio-economic environment in the 1990s continued from the preceding decade. No significant change in the behaviour of young people was recorded.

From a report by the Board of Educational and Training Development for Teenagers (1992: 22-27), growing concerns about the young were clear. It is written that the number of young people aged 15-19 with psychological problems dramatically increased – 12% annually in 1988-1990. There was a high rate of suicides amongst those aged 15-24 as well. The youth's inadequate thinking abilities and poor emotional development was regarded to be a major threat because it produced a state of over aggression or despair, leading to a rise in escapism through drug use and teenage sex. In terms of values, their belief in diligence, saving, and patience declined, whereby they were less interested in moral and ethical development such as responsibility, group unity, awareness of what is thought to be right or wrong, sincerity, and justice. Moral principles were not seriously regarded. Decreasing pride in Thai traditions was highly detectable. It can be seen that young people were keen on using Thai slang and unlimited acceptance of foreign culture, while their praise of local wisdom could rarely be found.

Research findings obtained by Saksri Boribanbanpotkate and Surapone Ptanawanit (1995: 102-104) validated the concerns about the youth. These researchers discover that children and, especially youth, had a greater inclination to commit crimes. Escalating cases were mostly serious offenses, such as robbery, murder, attempted murder, assault, and rape. Interestingly, the new social surroundings were found to be connected to youth's criminal motivation. Stealing, robbery, and other petty crimes, have a tight relationship with economic factors – poverty, insufficient income – and familial conditions –broken homes, underprivileged families. Peer influence, in addition to personal emotions, is the most likely causes for other cases, except narcotic offenses which frequently are connected to a lack of understanding in families.

The next finding was obtained by Janya Settabut, Anchalee Varangrat, and Jirakit Boonchaiwattana (1998: 78-79). The three researchers conducted a survey of youth covering 2,306 representatives from 10 provinces (1,066 of them from city areas and the rest in rural areas). According to their survey, young people roamed the city, kept spending, and were less interested in being responsible members of society. The findings also disclosed the popular way of relaxation amongst the representative group was with entertainment media, such as television, video, and radio. In terms of values, no signs

showed that they wanted to advance their abilities or develop themselves, unless with respect to peer socialization. Moral standards meant nothing to them (1998: 120).

A work by Chanpen Chooprapawan, et al, (1998: 14-26) helps to understand youth's behavioural features in the 1990s that the quest for the industrial economy, with a concentration on export-oriented manufacturing, was the main cause of youth's new behaviour. Only a small minority were able to profit, while the poor suffered with only a small proportion of the income gains, including those young who were part of the poor sector. Many of the young were forced, in this way, to terminate their schooling in order to earn a living.

An analysis of causal factor concerning change in youth's behavioural nature by the Board of Educational and Training Development for Teenagers (1992: 36-40) pinpointed some of the negative consequences of Thailand's economic strategy, noting that every government focused excessively on economic growth or GDP. Even though income distribution was emphasized in the government policies and the percentage of income per capita as shown in GDP increased, the income gap – normally left out of GDP – increased as well. This resulted in economic struggles amongst the rural/agricultural people which included a large number of the young.

The 2000s is the last decade for the examination of the youth's behavioural nature. According to Surasilp Amornsurasiri (2001: 82-88), low income continued amongst Thai families. Even so, the young seemed to embrace luxurious inspiration rather than moderate spending. They regarded their society as less-developed and were inclined to be independent or self-willed, pursuing their own needs. Some of them separated themselves from familial constraints by living apart from their families. As well, young people favoring using well-known consumer items with the constant need to update on what came out to the market, such as clothes, handbags, and electronics, in order that their living style was kept in trend. In case their budgets were not adequate, they would rely more on their parents. Otherwise, they engaged in prostitution to obtain money.

According to Sompong Jitradub (2004: 7), the Education Center for Disadvantaged Children (from the original title 'Soonkansuksa Pue Dek Doi-O-Gad', Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University) carried out an ethnographic study amongst the youth populations whose image was not well accepted, covering drug addicts, prostitutes, and delinquents in the entertainment venues in Bangkok, Chiang Rai, and Yasothon. The study was undertaken in the first year of the 2000s and revealed several troublesome features of

the youth, such as lack of self-confidence, impatience, preference for comfort, and the liability to attainment of materials devoid of moral awareness. Sompong (2004: 3-11) gives a comprehensive explanation of these troublesome features that they came out of the state of materialism and consumerism that fed the youth with a high demand for material goods. Youth were thereby ambitious, extravagant, self-indulgent, and consumer oriented.

Amornwit Nakornthap (2004: 20-21) points toward youth's modern behavioural features, such as excessive consumption, casual sex, and drug use. He states that youth, either at the high school or undergraduate level, spent heavily on belongings and entertainment. Over 50% of the young people carried pagers, mobile phones, or fat burn pills. It was found that they went to discotheques once a week, purchased new outfits 2-3 times a month, and bought new shoes once a month. They could spend up to 5,000-7,000 baht in a month despite their limited monthly budget – approximately 3,000-4,000 baht. In case the amount of their budget did not match the desire to spend, they would engage in commercial sex as an alternative source of income.

Sappasit Kumprabhan and Sujitra Kaewseenuan (2004: 42-43) put emphasis on the emotional characteristics of young people. From their assertion, aggression was rising at a dramatic level. It was found that assaults by students were more prevalent owing to increasing emotional instability, plus depression, with family and friends propelling youth into unstable mindsets. The former could be because of strict parenting or over pampering. Vulnerable relationships in families were also a classic origin of the youth's unfavorable activities by encouraging them to rely more on friends who could possibly have delinquent behaviour. Youth's behaviour was, in this way, modeled to be in compliance with the group, regardless of ethics or virtues.

A case study titled *1,800 Communities in Bangkok Metropolitan: Livable or Dangerous?* is another research by Sompong Jitradub (2007: 160-161) with the aim to examine the living conditions where the youth were reared. 50% of all the chosen communities were found to be of poor quality. They were unclean, excessively crowded, or polluted. Their living environments were unsafe for children and youth with the ready availability of things such as drugs, game shops, snooker clubs, football betting, and pornographic materials. Many young people in such areas could not continue their education owing to a lack of funds. They were at risk of being exposed to unsafe behaviour by their own communities. The more serious behaviours, such as burglary, group battles, rape, or narcotics use, were discovered as well. It is estimated that each



community had around 15-20 delinquents with 30,000-40,000 delinquents found in 1,800 communities.

### 2.3.3 The Desirable Attributes of Thai Youth

In Thailand, expectation for young people has long been generated by elders who see potential adults in young people. The following are the concepts concerning ideal for youth in the Thai context, which can help assess to what extent modernization in Thailand has distanced the youth in the 1980s-2000s from such expected qualities, as well as forming a foundation for further analysis in the chapters dealing directly with Bundit Rittakol's youth films.

The first piece to begin with is the research reported by Sucharit Pienchob (1982) undertaken in a form of survey of social attitudes. The results can be understood briefly as in the following two tables, with a clear separation between males and females.

Males						
Personality	Thinking	Character	Human Relations	Emotion	Culture and Custom	Moral and Ethics
- Be strong - Be healthy - Be active - Be a good leader and follower	- Make decisions wisely - Take initiative - Be creative - Be curious - Be eager to learn - Seek knowledge from various sources	- Have emotional stability - Be perseverant - Be industrious - Be hard working	- Be co-operative with others - Get along with people from different ages/sexes - Be friendly - Be helpful	- Have emotional stability - Have self-control - Be lively	- Maintain and promote Thai culture - Use Thai language effectively	- Be fair - Be grateful - Be brave - Have courage to do good deeds

Table 5 desirable characteristics of male youth

Females						
Personality	Thinking	Character	Human Relations	Emotion	Culture and Custom	Moral and Ethics
- Dress properly - Be polite - Be lively - Be frank - Have good manners	- Be reserved - Be sensible - Be optimistic - Be eager to learn - Seek knowledge from various sources	- Be honest - Be kind - Be punctual	- Be co-operative with others - Get along with people from different ages/sexes - Behave properly	- Have self-control - Be lively	- Appreciate the beauty of nature and arts - Understand and maintain Thai culture	- Be fair - Be grateful - Accept seniority

Table 6 desirable characteristics of female youth

The second piece is taken from an analysis of thoughts, beliefs, and expectations summarized by the Board of Educational and Training Development for Teenagers. No gender specification is incorporated as in Sucharit's research. The result of their analysis can be put in five categories shown on the next page.

Learning	Society	Democracy	Thainess	Social Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be logical</li> <li>- Be truthful</li> <li>- Be visionary</li> <li>- Have an analytical mind</li> <li>- Be aware of change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be moral</li> <li>- Realize good/bad</li> <li>- Have ethical courage</li> <li>- Be modest</li> <li>- Be sincere</li> <li>- Be merciful</li> <li>- Be generous</li> <li>- Be selfless</li> <li>- Be grateful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have good awareness of democracy</li> <li>- Respect rights, liberty, opinion of others</li> <li>- Obey laws</li> <li>- Be self-disciplined</li> <li>- Realize consolidation</li> <li>- Be accountable</li> <li>- Have courage to express the right view/action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have pride in being Thai</li> <li>- Be able to select and apply new cultures</li> <li>- Serve locality</li> <li>- Stay loyal towards nation, religion, and king</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be self-reliant</li> <li>- Be innovative</li> <li>- Be active</li> <li>- Be patient</li> <li>- Be careful</li> <li>- Be economical</li> </ul>

Table 7 desirable characteristics of male and female youth

Further to the information in the tables, the analysis covers general characteristics as well, for instance, to have good health, be joyful, take good care of oneself, be aware of the proper consumption, be aware of potential accidents, and avoid bad deeds, illness, and drugs.

## 2.4 Contribution versus Resistance to Change

### 2.4.1 Mainstream Media as a Main Contributor

When taking a closer look at the matter of youth, their behaviour was found to be transformed with influence from the mass media. The Board of Educational and Training Development for Teenagers (1992: 49-50) stated that the mass media took a direct role in shaping youth's character and thinking. Plenty of content was available on television and in print medium the content of which included sexually arousing messages or violence, with some entertainment programs made with aggressive images and the promotion of troublesome values. Sompong Jitradub (2004: 3) contents that change in the youth came

about from the free flow of Western lifestyles, plus the current of consumerism and materialism cultivated by the mass media. Amornwit Nakornthap (2004: 22) is not hesitant to give similar comment that mass media has been a contributory factor of the mounting current of individualism and materialism, providing intense advertising concerning luxury items. At the same time, presentation of young celebrities to catch the attention of the teen audience has been prevalent. This has stimulated many young people to make every attempt to enter the media industry in search of fame and easy money.

Television is the media outlet identified by many scholars as a leading contributor of social change. In addition to weekly series, popular programs such as talk shows, variety shows, and other types of entertainments proliferated (Kriengsak Charoenwongsak, 2000: 31). These shows had little concern about development or social change because their sole objective was to entertain the home viewers in conjunction with advertising products, businesses, and services from relevant sponsors. Kriengsak analyzed that the TV programs had a propensity to perpetuate attitudinal and behavioural change, particularly in the young audience, with the tacit promotion of consumerism and/or materialism. This can be exemplified by the case of game shows wherein the contestants compete against each other to win prizes such as cash or luxury items.

Newspaper is the second medium with plenty of contribution to change. Based on interviews with some foreign experts by Busakorn Kosolsirilak, Thidarat Rakprayoon, and Sudawee Pattanapisudtichai (2001: 82-83), they found that Thai newspapers have not dealt appropriately with the changing social and economic environment. Journalists were found to remain faithful to those who gained the rightful ownership of the newspapers and preserving the public good was never their first obligation. In addition, each newspaper typically featured eye-catching news items, such as crime and entertainment, because of fierce competition in attracting readers.

Interestingly, a research project by Duncan McCargo, a professor at University of Leeds, brought to light that Thai reporters were compelled to perform their assigned duties without permission to express personal opinions (Pravit Rojanapruk, 2002: 12). This finding obtained from the study of *Thairath*, *Matichon*, *Manager*, and *Siampost* could be considered to represent the newspaper industry in general. In this way, it is difficult for the journalists to work on the question as to how Thailand was affected by the course of modernization, even if they desire to do so.

While it can be argued that television and newspaper did not play an adequate role in stimulating an assessment of the impact of past development, advertising appears to be the means of communication changing beliefs from self-reliance to consumerism. According to Kriengsak Charoenwongsak (2000: 51), advertising has a high potential of boosting personal consumption of goods and services. A study of print advertising by Lerluck Srikasemsira (2000) unveils that a combination of tactics with the intention of creating emotional appeal has been the means in doing so. Research by Saovalak Asavatevavith (2000) discloses that the tactics used for television commercials, such as the application of jingle music, color tone, or the product itself, were elements to arouse the interest of brand personality. In this way, advertising connects consumers through a variety of creative methods to enhance the attractiveness of goods and services, while, according to research by Christina Delos Santos (2003), advertising has to be made as attractive as possible to increase the sales volume of the product.

Film is another medium to discuss. Hollywood film is best known for its potential of transporting American value or lifestyle around the world (Kriengsak Charoenwongsak, 2000: 37) and can familiarize filmgoers in different territories with representations of the modernized world. The propagation of Hollywood stars and their lifestyles also helps demonstrate the positive notion of luxurious living attached to the image of high-class vehicles and extravagant accommodations. People in every place where Hollywood film and stardom are well acknowledged can easily be influenced to believe in ways of living after the fashion of Hollywood.

In between the 1980s-2000s, Thailand was one of the places where Hollywood was widely known. Some fact reveals that massive number of Thai filmgoers stayed loyal to the Hollywood trademark.

Historically, Asian markets have not been very significant for Hollywood, insofar as they have not generated anywhere near as much revenue for the studios as have European and Latin American markets. This began to change in the 1980s and especially the 1990s. Today, Hollywood movies take about 96% of the box office receipts in Taiwan, about 78% in Thailand, and.....

(Klein, 2003: online)

Apart from Hollywood, Hong Kong films were another group of films imported heavily in the 1980s to the early 1990s. Based on data provided by Boonrak Boonyaketmala (1992: 77-78, cited in Patsorn Sungsi, 2004: 150), 945 films made in Hong Kong were approved for nationwide release during the 1980s by the Film Censorship Committee of Thailand, surpassing Hollywood with 792 films allowed by the same body. Although the dominance of Hong Kong films continued only until 1993 (Hays, 2008: online) and did not compare to that of Hollywood in the long term, Hong Kong films often project violence through the repeated screening of action and gangster films that incorporated bloody fight scenes, fancy gun play, and aggressive chase scenes, while some films might also have promoted the consumption of Hong Kong popular culture.

It is, nonetheless, recognized that Korean films have had a much greater impact than Hong Kong films. In the 2000s, the phenomenon by which Thais were crazed about the culture of Korea as never before emerged by the influx of Korean pop music, television series, and films. In 2006, for instance, Thailand became the second largest overseas market for Korean films with 13.6% export figures (Magnan-Park, n.d.: online). With the increasing consumption of Korean films, in tandem with the overall entertainment from the Korean entertainment industry, there existed a successful 'Korean Wave' – a kind of soft power that can influence local people socially and culturally (Chamanan Wonkboonma, 2009: 8). The result is the rejection of domestic culture among the young and an attempt to be modern as propagated through this type of film medium leading to increased spending for hairdressing, makeup accessories, or even cosmetic surgery in replication of famous Korean stars.

As for Thai film, the protagonists in many films produced during the 1980s-2000s were generally proponents of competition, materialism, or capitalism. An outstanding example is *Pooying Konnan Cheu Bunrot* [ผู้หญิงคนนั้นชื่อบุญรอด] (dir. Wijiit Kunawut, 1985) in which the quest of wealth is represented as the way out of despair; or *Wongsaakanaayaat* [วงศ์คณาญาติ] (dir. Jazz-Siam, 1987) whose theme is based on the idea of individualism and brands the extended family as primitive and problematic. Many youth films focused on the depiction of youth culture with the incorporation of themes about romance. Youth protagonists were designed to cope with love problems often in a way reported in Pram's

research<sup>5</sup>. They were less concerned about social issues than romantic matters. Examples are *Lohk Tang Bai Hai Naai Kon Dieow* [โลกทั้งใบให้นายคนเดียว] (dir. Rachen Limtrakun, 1995) and *The Love of Siam* (dir. Chookiat Sakveerakul, 2007). These sorts of films promote the predominant attitude and behaviour of the youth found in the 1980s-2000s. Accordingly, it can be understood that Thai films, though not all, did not project a clear resistance to the economic and social changes in Thai society.

#### 2.4.2 The Group of Resistance

Resistance to the socio-economic development and changes, as has been previously detailed, has been shown by a ‘group’ of traditionalists encompassing intellectuals, artists, media practitioners, or politicians, who are concerned about the undesirable results of the way Thailand was undergoing economic development. Their efforts are loosely formed and not undertaken in a unified fashion, but to provide scholarly opinions to attempt a shift in the economic and social development process.

According to Preecha Piampongsarn and Kanjana Kaewthep (2000: 159-165), the resistance can be categorized according to the difference of conceptual foundations. The first is ‘community culture’ stemming from the collaboration of such thinkers as Phra Dhampidok, Wibool Kemchaloem, Prawase Wasi, Chattip Natsupa, Ekawit Nathalang, and Naowarat Pongpaibul. The ‘community culture’ group has generally declared a negative opinion of the process of globalization. They are critical of globalization for weakening Thai communities, as well as causing unnecessary dependence on the international economy and technology. The way out put forward by this camp is the self-sufficiency economy in conjunction with Buddhist economics, insofar as Thai society must integrate its economic system into ‘spiritual culture’, and generosity, with mutual assistance of people in each community being promoted. The ability to live in harmony and balance with nature, plus living modestly, must also be included to sustain moderate consumption of natural resources, as well as the right conservation of nature. The last point stressed by this camp is a revival of Thai identity, such as culture, local wisdom, roles of the Buddhist

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<sup>5</sup> *The Ideology of Love in Popular Thai Tragic Romance, 1997-2007* – previously mentioned in Chapter 1, pp. 27.

temple (in terms of education or knowledge sharing as it was in the past) and the privilege for villagers to make their own decisions.

The second group of resistance covers 'democratic liberalism' which encompasses intellectuals and retired bureaucrats including such people as Chai-Anan Samudavanija, Amorn Chantarasomboon, Saiyud Kerdphol, and Ammar Siamwalla. The central tenet of this group is political reform in promotion of popular opinions. They do not object to the concept of the liberal economy, but support sharing fundamental decisions at every level – from the state to the community. Globalization in the eyes of this camp is an inevitable current. They believe that Thailand ought to adapt itself to globalization, rather than react with unanimous rejection – for instance to join the free market economy with transparency or to recognize a community as a secondary dynamism for social advancement.

While the foregoing is a broad picture of resistance, the following will focus specifically on key individuals whose work on change in Thai society has been consistently publicized.

Phra Dhamma Pidok (1998: 2-5) has always linked the modern aspect of Thai society to the mismanagement of the nation's development. He points out that Thailand has emphasized too much on the borrowing of money and materials from other countries instead of relying on internal resources. The emphasis, as such, has facilitated control of the Thai economy and society by a transnational force, while indulging in some relentless consumption as seen in the forerunner of 1997 economic crisis. What came after are the unresolved problems, both in economic and social aspects.

Phra Dhampidok also identifies the economic development as unsustainable by which life, society, and the environment are disintegrating (Preecha Piampongsarn and Kanjana Kaewthep, 2000: 163). He reasons that no correct balance of the three has been achieved; one component has been advanced without regard for the others. He refers to the case of the Thai tourism industry, whereby he notes that people gained profits from the coming of foreign visitors, but prostitution and deforestation for construction of tourist sites increased as well. Phra Dhampidok propounds to tackle this problem with individual's diligence, mercy, modesty, and self-improvement.



Prawase Wasi<sup>6</sup> (1998: 13) is a person who has spoken out with a similar viewpoint as Phra Dhamma Pidok. As he points out, Thailand was developed on ‘compartmentalized’ approach – the term he coins to denote the development devoid of comprehensive consideration of economy, politics, culture, environment, and people’s mind as a whole. In this way, Thailand has aimed primarily at the increase of wealth – no matter if at the expense of other components such as the mind, society, or environment, bringing forth a weakening of significant social institutions and morality. The solution Prawase has given concerns the promotion of what he deems to be good Thai culture to soften socio-cultural change.

Ekawit Nathalang has expressed no contention against his two colleagues. However, he also has proposed the need to inform people of the ongoing crises. He saw that many are disconnected from social reality (Phra Dhamma Pidok, 2001b: 119). He believes that when people are acquainted with the exploitation brought about by liberal capitalism, they would be able to pull themselves out of the economic illusion. Further to this, he endorses the self-sufficiency economy in opposition to mainstream development. Self-sufficiency, for Ekawit, can promote ways of living with good awareness of frugality, plus good respect towards other living creatures, whereas industrial capitalism does not.

Similar to Phra Dhamma Pidok, Prawase Wasi, and Ekawit Nathalang, Srisak Wallipodom<sup>7</sup> (2011: 216) has opined that economic policies determined by every central government have turned Thailand into what he calls a ‘for-sale country’ in which everything, such as labor, land, religion, culture, or natural resources have been exchanged for monetary profits or material goods. In the end, Thai people have become less disciplined with a weakening of ethics, while young people are seen in an unfavorable light with visible lusts and misbehaviours. He contends that these problems are derived from the acceptance of the capitalist value and living goals that only target economic advancement. This has caused people to be desirous of more income, wealth, power and

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<sup>6</sup> First published in an article written for the occasion of ‘Year of Culture and Development, 2538 B.E.’ by ONCC (the Office of the National Culture Commission)

<sup>7</sup> An article titled ‘Tee Nee Prathed-Thai: Rut Rai Sungkom’, first published in a newsletter Lek-Prapai Wiriyanan Foundation, Issue 80, September-October 2009.

honor, regardless of decreasing moral awareness and high criminal activity (Srisak Wallipodom, 2000).<sup>8</sup>

All the cited individuals are the epitomes of the resistance movement detectable in the publicized sources. Although it looks as if such resistance has been espoused all along by social critics and scholars, there has been a sign of resistance revealed outside the academic circle too.

According to Prasop Rattanakorn (1995: 10-11), General Prem Tinsulanonda is well-known for his tacit campaign against the social changes in the 1980s, before such changes were yet to be more intensified in the 1990s and 2000s. During the celebration of Bangkok's Bicentennial in 1982, a group of people submitted a letter calling for a boost of recognition of Thai culture after the substantial arrival of foreign culture. Their call was seriously acknowledged and ended in the establishment of the Thai Cultural Promotion Foundation (renamed later in 1995 as the Statesman Foundation) where General Prem held the post of chairman. One of its missions was to advocate Thai culture.

The heart of non-scholarly resistance is, nonetheless, discovered most often in popular music, especially, in the category of songs for life. The messages can clearly be noticed without any need to decode. Sometimes, the aim is at voicing concerns about social impact rather than against modernization. An outstanding example is a song titled *Dae Num-Saao Poo Raao-raan* [แต่หนุ่มสาวผู้ร้ายราน] (literally, *To the Young Who Are Injurious*) by Charan Manopetch. The theme is critical of Thai society which forces youth to be unnecessarily competitive until they lose their direction and end in deep sorrow. Other songs of a similar sort can be found in the collection of popular bands such as Caravan, Carabao, Hope, or solo artists such as Pongsith Kumpee or Rittiporn Insawang. Many of their songs share the same theme which is to yearn for a virtuous spirit ruined by the changing context of Thai society. Interestingly, Charan Manopetch joined in the production of Bundit Rittakol's youth films in the *Bunchu* series as a composer and singer of the film scores and songs. The preliminary research finds that the latter has direct meaning about youth characters in relation to behavioural and attitudinal issues.

In the world of film, the question of film and social consciousness during the three decades from 1980-2010 is yet to be addressed in depth. By far, Bundit Rittakol's youth

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<sup>8</sup> An article titled 'Sungkom Thai Kub Karn Pleanplaeng Tee Untarai' published in *Muang Boran Journal* Year 6, Issue 2 (April-June 1990)

films are found to be part of the resistance movement. This is clear from the preliminary analysis of the film contents discussed in the first chapter, as much as by his worldview. Bundit once expressed that Thai director should produce films with the realization of being Thai – no need to follow the style used abroad, but to remain Thai, perhaps, in a modern version (Wimolrut Arunrojsuriya, 2004: online). His interview in ‘Talk to Bundit Rittakol’ (n.d.: 26-31 cited in Cheeraboonya Thasanabanchong, 1991: 191) is also confirmation of how to use film to show a resistance to change. He said that he would like Bunchu to be a model of a person who retains good original Thai values. This represents his thoughts as a scriptwriter.

According to Thanathorn Rittakol (Interview, 28 January 2015), Bundit’s only daughter, Bundit’s works can be put into four categories:

- films which Bundit was totally in charge of the making and funding;
- films which Bundit made under contract with Five Star Production;
- soap operas (during the decline of Thai cinema); and
- films which Bundit directed after his returned to the film industry.

A study of Bundit’s profile indicates that the first category ended in marketing failure. Thereafter, he sought to work with the support from production companies such as Five Star Production in order to sustain his filmmaking career. The question then arises as to whether his aforementioned thoughts have really been applied to all the youth films he made because the films were supported by production companies which had a commercial interest in maintaining amusing content, not necessarily the content Bundit preferred. According to Nuntana Kumwong, Bundit’s wife, Bundit tended to adhere to his own views in creating the films, even though those views might not be favored by his sponsors; and he often changed the content secretly whenever he had the script written (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online). This leads to the conclusion that Bundit was virtually in full control of the script and rarely allowed anything to distract his inspiration.

It is also confirmed that mere entertainment was not Bundit’s primary preference. Based on assertions by Thanathorn (Interview, 28 January 2015), Bundit ought to direct a film in favor of the majority of Thai film audiences – 2 or 3 films approximately – to gain support for directing the type of cinema he preferred. This is important in showing how much Bundit paid attention to the making of serious content films more than just

entertainment movies. Based on the talk about Bundit's youth films by Narupon Chaiyod (Interview, 21 January 2015), who played the role of Chuey in some *Bunchu* films, Bundit was very serious about social matters and his many films emphasize human beings, social equality, and promotion of, what he thinks, good social norms. He adds that many messages in Bundit's films were made unambiguous for the audience to absorb.

Similar to Narupon, Kritsanapong Nakthon (Bundit's long-time colleague) said that, for Bundit, film was not solely an entertainment product, but also a record of history or a social reflector. Bundit hence tried to begin with a message before designing ways of entertainment, (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (1), 2009: online). Nuntana is another person coming to the same conclusion, insofar as Bundit did not focus only on entertainment as generally understood. She often read her husband's scripts and saw an attempt to insert some serious messages into the films (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (1), 2009: online).

Regarding the message Bundit intended in each film, Pisal Pattanapeeradech (Interview, 12 January 2015), who worked under Bundit's direction, comments that Bundit always referred to the cultural context in every piece. His works, thus, reflect cultural reality instead of being based on pure imagination. As related by Kritsanapong Nakthon, Bundit's *Kon Dee Tee Ban Dan* [คนดีที่บ้านด่าน] (1985) originated from his listening to Kritsanapong hum a theme song of a development camp [ค่ายอาสา]. The song is called *We Volunteered for Development with Joyful Mind and Union* [เราอาสาพัฒนา ใจเริงร่าและสามัคคี] which has a meaning about social accountability (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (1), 2009: online). According to Santisuk Promsiri, who played the role of Bunchu, Bundit often said that a film should give something meaningful aside from amusement; therefore, a profound theme was included in all the films directed by Bundit which, Santisuk thinks, stress common aspects of humans, as well as presenting kindness. Santisuk points to the case of the *Bunchu* films, explaining that, if all the gags are removed, the films would be about the self-sufficiency economy (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online).

A detailed account, however, needs to be explored through film analysis to support the relationship between Bundit's youth films and change since no one has ever related the two on an exhaustive scale. It is only known that, as exemplified above, he often had proposals or an intention running counter to some socio-cultural conditions that many scholars and thinkers have viewed as problematic. Thanathorn (Interview, 28

January 2015), however, supplied a warning that many elements of the films are there unintentionally due to some limitation of the shooting. In other words, many components do not necessarily have purposive meaning such that they can be interpreted. It can, even so, still be considered that most of the components in the film reflect an inner desire to communicate something in particular, especially if they repeatedly appear in the content of the film. The next chapter will start looking into the first three youth films released in the 1980s to show how Bundit's youth films address socio-cultural issues.

## 2.5 Summary

The preceding parts have explored – by facts, figures, and arguments provided in the existing literature – a Thai society in transition during the 1980s-2000s with a focus on change in youth. In so doing, the analysis examines the social condition, both before and during, the three decades to consider why change took place, as well as how intense it was.

The socio-economic development, in the mode of the liberal economy, intensified in the 1980s with the impact of neo-liberalism, globalization, and democratization. The administrative style used by each government helped development to proceed, with the intensification accelerating the change in Thai society from being agrarian to being modern whereby hybridization of agricultural and industrial lifestyles have permeated all over the country. People have become more economically active and culturally adapted to suit the new climate, leading to, for example, a reduction of family size, migration, adoption of foreign culture, and technological dependence. Many young people were found to differentiate themselves from the former generation who were outstanding at cultural compliance and, then, socio-political activism. Based on the cited authors, the youth appear to have embraced the new cultural and social environment centering upon greater consumption and pleasure-seeking, including challenges to existing social controls. The review of the relevant research suggests that this change has been maintained by adherence to the ongoing development process to which the mass media has made an enormous contribution, but has failed to gain the acceptance from the traditionalists. While some see less significant impacts of change and thus generally support the developments, others would prefer to see a different direction and have shown resistance.

## Chapter 3 Bundit Rittakol's Youth Films in the 1980s

Chapter 3 discusses the films produced in the 1980s: *Khu Wun Wai Wan* (1986), *Bunchu Phu Narak* (1988), and *Bunchu Song Nongmai* (1989) with the aim of showing that these three films transcend the limits of entertainment as indicated in the hypothesis. In so doing, it focuses on the themes of representation of each film which can be different according to the designed plot, but share the same concept with regard to change.

### 3.1 Khu Wun Wai Wan

*Khu Wun Wai Wan* relies on a mainstream plotline whereby the story is more like a typical youth film than the other films made by Bundit Rittakol. On the surface, the film includes a representation of the new youth culture and the changing context of modern Thai society. Most of the scenes pertain to city residents who base their way of life on modern traditions. The analysis brings to light that *Khu Wun Wai Wan* is, in fact, dissimilar from other prevailing youth films through a combination of representational techniques that project implicit resistance to the social transition that emerged in about the mid-1980s.

#### 3.1.1 The Fruit of Defiance to the Expected Traditions

The central characters are Meen, Jeab, Jaeng, and Aom. Meen (see picture 1) is designed to be a delinquent who has a selfish, disobedient, and unconscientious nature. He fails in his romantic relationship with Jaeng because of his insincerity and none of his acquaintances show admiration for him. In addition to Meen, the key youth characters, namely, Jeab (see picture 1), Jaeng, and Aom (see picture 2), imitate youth in the modern culture in breaking the anticipation of how young people should behave in some scenes of the film. This brings them trouble that they need to manage arduously. In this respect, *Khu Wun Wai Wan* conveys the idea that non-traditional behaviour is not a pathway to contentment. This can be deemed to be a message speaking against the general aspects of mainstream youth behaviour considered to be improper in Thai society in the mid-

1980s, as discussed in Chapter 2. To back up this finding, all the four characters will be discussed in more detail.



Picture 1 Jeab and Meen (left and right respectively)



Picture 2 Jaeng and Aom (left and right respectively)

Meen is in a billiard game with an adult and looks very drunk in the opening scene. Then, his uncle expels him from the house because of his addiction to billiards and bad habit of always coming home late at night. He is unable to find a new place until he meets Jeab to whom he lies that his homelessness results from his uncle's cruelty. He is allowed to live in Jeab's house and becomes Jeab's new friend. Instead of improving his behaviour, Meen continues his unethical behaviour, as shown in a conversation with Jaeng when he professes that, if he wants to win, he would do whatever to gain the victory, regardless of the suitability of the approach. In this way, he helps Jeab court Aom with a

dishonest trick, which is ultimately unsuccessful. He arranges an incident by which Jaeng and Aom are harmed by delinquents and then he shows up to guard the two in order to gain the appreciation of Jaeng, resulting in their relationship being broken after the truth is revealed. Meen also has a fierce fight with Pansith in their first scene at a vocational school. His professor decides to transform the fight to be a boxing match so that they can carry it on under the rule of sport. Meen changes the fight style to kickboxing, after which his professor blames him for not respecting the rules. Whatever Meen attempts is never fruitful because it is dishonest and unfair.

Jeab is, in fact, the character whose behavioural features look highly traditional according to the concept of proper Thai youth. His only mistake is to engage in a romance that is not considered appropriate for young people in the Thai context, as discussed in Chapter 2. Jeab handles his romance with childish behaviour in many scenes, whereupon he endures disappointment time after time. In the first scene of his meeting with Aom and Jaeng, Aom expresses her dislike towards him because of his overly playful character. In the scene of their next meeting, Jeab tries to please Aom by cleaning her car without permission, but his washing messes the car with too much soap, ending in Aom's frustration. Jeab is successful in love in the middle of the story when Aom gives him a chance to prove himself. However, their relationship has a problem after he sees Aom with her male friend. He runs away in tears instead of seeking the truth, causing many worries to the other three characters and unnecessary anguish. Jeab's experience with romance is of importance in communicating the bitter outcome of thoughtless behaviour.

Jaeng and Aom resemble Jeab in that they are not delinquents like Meen. The two characters, however, get in trouble whenever they fail to meet the required norms in accordance with the concept of desirable youth, as discussed in Chapter 2. Their clearest fault is to engage in young romance without proper awareness of love. The case of Aom can be understood from the foregoing discussion. She should really try to endure Jeab's unreasonable burst of emotion before resorting to tears. For the case of Jaeng, she thinks of her love as a perfect feeling until she realizes that Meen has tricked her. She then becomes full of regret, leading to a sorrowful split between Meen and her.

What needs to be considered, in addition, is the lifestyle of the central characters which tends to conform to the young people in 1980s Thai society. When Jaeng emotes to Aom over Jeab's troubles, they do it in a stylish restaurant over expensive drinks. They also wear modern clothes in many scenes, with trendy accessories. With respect to



Meen, as well, he uses expensive clothes, such as leather jackets, jeans, and training shoes. He spends his money freely for conspicuous consumption in some scenes. It appears as if all three of these characters pay heed to materialism and consumerism, rather than contemplation of their future or the impact the changes of Thai society are having on them. Thereby, they yield to the corrupt surroundings, rather than challenging them, resulting in unfavorable circumstances. The conflict between the school and Jaeng/Aom is a good example – these two characters never think of exposing a cheat of the scholarship test, even though this will cause them a loss of benefits. With respect to Meen, he himself is an example of someone who is spiritually corrupt. He keeps lying, using violence, and breaking the law, all of which never brings him any happiness.

### 3.1.2 Promotion of Expected Behaviour of Youth

In the preceding discussion, the four central characters suggest how refusal to comply with the expected norm brings about unhappiness. It is also clear that all four characters work together to remind the audience of the expected characteristics of Thai youth. Meen is set to be rewarded with social acceptance after a transformation of his attitude and behaviour, thus highlighting the advantage to be gained by normative compliance. Jeab is represented as an exceptionally kind, forgiving, thoughtful, and ethically courage character, whereas Jaeng and Aom generally keep their daily living within the bounds deemed appropriate for the young. The implicit function of these three characters is to suggest how the youth should behave. The second finding is, in consequence, *Khu Wun Wai Wan* promotes the expected elements of youth and their lifestyle by way of the four central characters. This can be deemed an attempt to speak against the mainstream youth culture by which young people were no longer interested in complying with established tradition. .

The first character that will be discussed is Meen. His characteristics considered desirable by Thai society comes to light in the middle of the story when he starts to receive kindness and forgiveness from Jeab and turns into a giver, rather than solely a taker. After his transformation, he starts to receive acceptance from the people whom he loves. When his plot is revealed in the end of the second sequence, followed by a broken relationship with Jeab's family, Meen feels deep regret. He comes to the decision to be more selfless. He then accepts to be Pansith's replacement in the boxing

competition despite his hand injury. In the end, he rushes to help Jeab upon finding out that Jeab is being hunted by Wongwai. The result is reconciliation with Jaeng, including her family. From the case of Meen, *Khu Wun Wai Wan* communicates the idea that a young person, such as Meen's character, can never survive with true contentment unless traditional behaviour, as expected in Thai society, is properly exhibited.

The promotion of the ideal youth is much clearer to the audience when looking at the character of Jeab. Although Jeab possesses a secondary role as compared to Meen, he has an exceptional feature which later stimulates Meen's conscience. At their first meeting, Jeab shares his breakfast with Meen, as well as offers him a place to stay. In the second scene at the billiard club, Jeab reminds Meen of the law that they are not allowed to be in the club. Once he knows that Meen goes to the billiard club because of financial difficulty, he is not hesitant to lend Meen money. Finally, Jeab is the sole character who opens his heart to Meen after the plot is revealed. This results in a continuation of their friendship, as well as a complete change in Meen's behaviour the next day.

Jeab's thoughtfulness can also be seen in a scene set in an asylum. Jeab is the only patient who is not insane, but he never detests the other patients. He even plays with them kindly. Jeab can be considered an example of a thoughtful and caring young person.

What is interesting about Jeab's character is that he could be considered a representation of Bundit's own personal nature. According to Nuntana Kumwong, her husband Bundit Rittakol was very kind and sincere toward his friends (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (1), 2009: online). As she sums up, he would lend a hand to anyone who asked him for help (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online). Consistent with Nuntana's words, lead actor in *Bunchu* films Santisuk Promsiri has described Bundit as a generous and brave person. He was an open-minded director, listening to everyone, and would sometimes organize a shooting just to provide a job for his subordinates (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online). In a similar manner, Thanathorn Rittakol asserts that her father was considerate to everyone. Even though he had the top position on the filmmaking team, he never ignored taking care of his subordinates (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online). In addition, Bundit provided assistance to such entities as the Thai Film Director Association or the Speech Training Association of Thailand (Thanathorn Rittakol, Interview, 28 January 2015).

Further analysis suggests that Jeab can be identified as a character with high recognition of ethics because he is courageous enough to fight against some wrong doing in which he is not originally involved. This is evident in the situation in which he helps Jaeng over the unjust scholarship test. He puts himself at risk in order to expose the cheating being carried out by the school professors, who intend to help Wimol pass the test in exchange for Wongwai's money. As a consequence, he has to deal with the revenge of Wongwai until the truth is completely proven, while other students do nothing to encourage an investigation of the test cheating.

Jaeng represents a typical young person with ideal notions. She often gives her first priority to studying and/or reading as would be expected in the Thai context. In a couple of scenes, Jaeng is portrayed as a young person whose bond with her family can never be weakened. In one of the scenes, she brings her grandfather a cup of coffee and then chats with him joyfully while watching him fish. Furthermore, Jaeng is very courteous in accordance with the general expectation of girls. She never argues with the seniors of her acquaintances. The way she dresses or makes up does not look overly unorthodox. Jaeng is, in this way, filled with the expected traits of Thai youth and never experiences hardship, as in the case of Meen. It can be concluded that Jaeng was created to suggest the idea of clean, wholesome Thai youth, although parts of her attitude and behaviour may need some further improvement.

The depiction of Aom resembles Jaeng in terms of familial bonds. Aom stays with her mother who has a walking disability. Aom takes very good care of her and remains obedient. The sole difference between Aom and Jaeng is their attitude toward education. Aom is not depicted as a hardworking student similar to Jaeng. Even so, it is undeniable that she keeps herself within the bounds of clean youth through her avoidance of all the enticements that could distract her life, such as drugs, sex, and gambling. The way she behaves does not cause her difficulty, as in the case of Meen.

*Khu Wun Wai Wan* also accentuates the concept of the group over individuals, including the way maintenance of the group should be carried out, which is highly indicative of an interdependent society. After the four characters assemble as a united group; they have many joyful moments that enhances their group relationship, as well as their puppy romance as shown in a scene at Dan Neramitra ('Magic Land' – the name of a popular Thai amusement park in the 1980s and 1990s), wherein they engage in playful banter with each other. When Meen enters the rematch with Pansith, the rest are there to

hearten him. In the final two conflicts, which are about Meen and Jeab, the story includes all of the central characters in solving the conflict. *Khu Wun Wai Wan*, therefore, stresses social interaction in the form of the group, rather than focusing on either couple, which becomes the cinematic convention in Bundit Rittakol's youth films released in subsequent years.

Information from a set of interviews is important in helping form a conclusion that interdependence was a basic personal feature of the director and thus could have been an intentional message being transmitted to the audience. According to Pisal Pattanapeeradech (Interview, 12 January 2015), Bundit had the basic nature of someone who practiced mutual reliance. He was quite an easy man with no arrogance and his care for friends or team members was noticeable. According to Nuntana Kumwong, Bundit was determined to work for the Thai Association of Youth before entering the film industry (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (1), 2009: online). The association is an organization where he undertook tasks such as in a mobile medical care unit. Kritsanapong Nakthon asserts that after Bundit started his directing career, he was attached to the concept of teamwork rather than forcing the team to do as he ordered (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (1), 2009: online). He was overtly democratic and never clung to the conventional division between superior and subordinate. The filmmaking team thereby carried on their jobs in a friendly atmosphere with an exchange of ideas. Santisuk Promsiri (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online) says that Bundit became his beloved and respected director because he never minded sharing any difficulties with the team.

The matter of romance, as discussed in Chapter 2, has been seen as an undesirable part of youth culture. However, in this film, it can also be seen that their romance is represented as a message of how the youth should handle their love to fit the norm. In the film, Jaeng-Meen and Aom-Jeab never handle their love in an overly-advanced manner – no public displays of affection, no kissing or engagement in anything pertaining to sexual relations. They tend to have fun like normal teenagers. What is to be highlighted is that their romantic relationship revolves around the issue of honesty, rather than a desire for eternal love as in other mainstream films. Jaeng feels disappointed with Meen's deceitful heroic action. Meen is then impelled by her discontent to turn over a new leaf. Youth romance in this film is, therefore, portrayed in a way that avoids portrayal of extreme emotions that could place the central characters on the wrong track, such as

out-of-wedlock pregnancy, or suicide from disappointment in love. After all, their romance is a matter of understanding and forgiveness – Aom understands Jeab’s eccentric behaviour; Jaeng forgives Meen after he admits his guilt. All these comport with the Buddhist concept of Metta (loving-kindness) and Karuna (compassion). Moreover, the film tends to signal that youth romance is never a primary concern, as can be seen in the case of Meen and Jaeng. Once they reconcile, they pay all their attention to the protection of Jeab, rather than sharing a sweet romantic moment.

As a final point, Jaeng, Aom, and Meen were created to represent the expected routine of Thai youth – that is, to be part of the compulsory education system. Many scenes depict the three making their journey to or doing activities at their educational institutions. Jaeng and Aom belong to the general education line, while Meen follows the path of vocational school. The image of Jaeng in relation to her school is ‘reading’ and ‘perfect uniforms’. For Meen, he always has a T-square in his hand and is dressed in a grey gown. Although Meen is made out to be very naughty, no scenes show him abandoning his class. Laziness in the three characters is never present either. It can be said that their studies seem to take priority over personal joys, which is a tacit promotion of faith in the Thai education. As explained by Somwang Pitiyanuwat, et al. (1998: 9-10 cited in Phra Amnaji Autthakamo (Noinil), 2011: 10), Thai people are expected to concentrate on their studies in order to enhance their knowledge, achieve a degree, and, thereby, secure a career. Education or knowledge is symbolized with tremendous wealth in a classic Thai poem composed by Phraya Srisunthornwohan (the original words are ‘มีวิชาเหมือนมีทรัพย์อยู่นับแสน’) to mean that, as long as one is well educated, he or she can be confident of successful earnings. This is why it is believed that the youth should undertake responsibility for their education and the way the three characters react to their educational endeavours validates this belief.

### 3.1.3 Modern but Corrupt Society

*Khu Wun Wai Wan* reflects modern Thai society in a dark tone in that a number of the adult and young characters are found to be very obsessed with materialism and consumerism. They never think of the appropriateness of their approach to obtaining whatever they desire. Proper actions are disregarded, while the depicted surroundings, which are representative of modern culture, do not seem to encourage many of the youth

characters to be on the right track. The film communicates that Thai modernity in the mid-1980s was a source of moral and ethical corruption. Bundit's concerns about society are also evident in a talk with Wimolrut Arunrojuriya (2004: online) regarding his making of *The Moonhunter* [๑๔ ตุลา สงครามประชาชน] (2001). He says that he wanted to see Thai film directors pay heed to existing social problems because the film medium is, in his eyes, influential enough for bettering society in some way and film could be a vehicle for a special message to be passed on to the viewing audience. In this manner, Jeab, Meen, supporting youth characters, supporting characters, and a number of location settings are some of the many elements displaying a society in decline.

With respect to Jeab, it can be seen that his eccentric characteristic is not liked by anyone, even though Jeab is the character filled with care and conscience. For example, Aom rejects Jeab because he does not look like the others in the way he acts and the strange things he does, and Meen's schoolmates wonder whether Jeab is really insane. Throughout the story, Jeab has almost no friends, except Meen. Jeab's situation signifies the trend whereby people pay attention to exterior looks other than a beautiful mind.

In addition, what Jeab says can be seen as critical of the socio-economic developments taking place in Thailand. In the first scene with Jeab and Meen, Jeab babbles about his ideas:

“People nowadays are going crazy. They are psychotic, aren't they? They scramble for careers...scramble for education...scramble for the same thing, don't they? Why don't they think of something innovative? Or think of progress –things no one has ever thought of. For instance, buffalos never work more than 4 months in a year. They are then unemployed for 8 months. Do you understand the word ‘unemployed buffalos’? This is a loss of economy and to society. The government should seek a solution to unemployed buffalos”.

This piece of dialogue sounds like crazy ranting of words, but it can be seen as an attempt to reflect the disenchantment with the socio-economic development in the 1980s insofar as unabated development continued in an unsustainable way and changed the members of the society to be insipid and overly competitive. The word to highlight is ‘buffalo’, which could mean ‘farmer’ – in addition to its literal connotation being ‘stupid’ as shown

in a Thai figure of speech – ‘as stupid as a buffalo’ (โง่เหมือนควาย). In that case, the mention of ‘buffalo’ is meant to impugn the Thai state for mismanagement of the economy, causing Thai farmers to miss out on their total potential.

Another piece of dialogue showing this comes from the scene in where Jeab is arguing with Meen after the dishonest plot is revealed to everyone. Meen feels very sorry for his actions. He says that he has already given Jaeng a new necklace. Jeab replies:

“No one wants your necklace. Remember! We are not dependent on material things, but care”.

This dialogue is intended to speak against materialism, denoting that material things will never give genuine gratification that is equal to kind attention.

The character of Meen exhibits significant meaning regarding the changing context of the 1980s, similar to Jeab. Meen reflects the problem of delinquency in society and how ‘modern’ society contributes to such a problem. This is evident in the scene where he is abandoned by Jaeng and Aom after his plot is revealed. Jeab punches him in his face. He then begs Jeab for understanding and warmth, which he has never had, showing that he grew up in less than ideal surroundings. Confirmation of this is in the second scene of the film when his uncle expels him from his house instead of using a kinder method that might have fostered Meen’s sense of goodness. The character of Meen, hence, displays the weakening of familial bonds which sends Meen off on the wrong track.

Supporting youth characters are used variously as an indication of corrupt society. Some of them have to be discussed as a group, while some can be referred as individuals.

Por Ped is the son of a rich landlord near Jaeng’s house. With his immense wealth, Por Ped and his minion seem to do nothing aside from bumming around all day. They both do not take class like Jaeng or Meen. Their only role is to court Jaeng, at which they fail.

Similar to Por Ped, Wimol is a daughter of Wongwai – a millionaire who is highly honored because of his wealth. Wimol is neither smart, nor well-behaved. She is self-willed and aggressive. In her first scene, she looks down upon Jaeng and Aom. She is also the reason for the cheating on the scholarship test.

In addition to Wimol is a group of vocational students. They can be divided into two sub-groups. One is Meen’s group. The second group is his foes, led by Pansith. Both

friends and foes are portrayed to be violent, as well as having low ethical standards. Their most noteworthy feature is verbal profanity. The group of friends cooperates with Meen in deceiving Jaeng and Aom to admire Meen. The group of foes likes to ridicule Meen, leading to fighting and hatred between the two.

From these data, no supporting youth characters meet the expectations as previously detailed of the desirable characteristics of youth established in a Thai context. The important point to note is their background. Por Ped and Wimol exhibit undesirable habits, despite coming from a rich background. The vocational students stick with violence, even in the school area. That means their environment lacks rigorous control, appropriate socialization, and high moral standards. The inclusion of these characters can be an attempt to communicate that economic modernization does not always end in moral or ethical advancement. In this manner, *Khu Wun Wai Wan* calls attention to Thailand's modernization through the negative image of the youth characters.

In addition, some of the supporting characters reflect the idea that Thai society is in decline, including Wongwai and the headmaster, including some of the school teachers.

Wongwai is a man of wealth, power, and fame. He always appears dressed in a neat suit with a necktie. What he has in mind is the desire for honor irrespective of the means to gain it. He asks the headmaster to help his daughter pass the scholarship test in exchange for a large sum of money. He reasons that winning the scholarship means a great honor to him. When his guilt is uncovered, he does not express any regret, but becomes mad and seeks revenge.

Similarly, the headmaster and other school professors break the rules of morality just to obtain monetary profit. During the negotiation with Wongwai, the headmaster keeps urging Wongwai to increase the amount for her to help his daughter pass the test. Once the test takes place, she and other teachers secretly complete an answer sheet on behalf of Wongwai's daughter. None are ashamed of themselves when their guilt is revealed.

Interestingly, after the headmaster reaches an agreement with Wongwai, she offers him a handshake – a gesture which is considered a part of Western culture. For Thais, a handshake signifies civilization, but its existence in the film is in connection with some immoral conduct, working like a remark that the attempt to modernize Thailand – in order to be as civilized as the West – is nothing more than duplicating the template. When considering the character of the American invigilator, this observation is clearer. The



American invigilator cancels the scholarship test upon his suspicion of cheating. He confirms the innocence of Jeab before a policeman. He also fights Wongwai in the end. His appearance in the film suggests civilization in terms of spiritual advancement (honesty and justness) which is not evident in Wongwai and all the aforesaid characters. It can be said that Wongwai, the headmaster, and school professors mirror how economic progress makes no contribution to moral and ethical development.

Some of the background settings have connotation concerning modern Thai society in the 1980s. Those background settings include a billiard club, a sports club, and a stylish restaurant (see picture 3, 4, 5) which were popularized, especially amongst the middle-upper class, during the aforesaid decade.

The billiards club is present in a couple of scenes where the audience can see the naughty behaviour of Meen. The atmosphere is filled with gambling, drinks, cigarettes, and shouting. All the extra characters who join the club are adults, but none of them reject the presence of Meen, although they know that Meen is not supposed to be there. The club itself violates the law by allowing gambling to take place. What to underline is that billiard club is not originally part of Thai culture.



Picture 3 the billiards club



Picture 4 the sports club



Picture 5 the stylish restaurant

The sports club and restaurant are locations where the central characters visit during their spare time. Each of these places looks quite modern and rather expensive for the average youth to afford. In one of the restaurant scenes, for example, *Within You'll Remain* (a popular song by Tokyo Square in the last half of the 1980s) is played during the scene. There are also black and white images of classical Hollywood stars, such as Marilyn Monroe, hanging on the wall. Each table is decorated with dazzling flowers in a lovely pot. In contrast to the setting, both the restaurant and sports club are used as background settings for the central characters to recount their troubles caused by Meen.

Considering these representational approaches, the film pairs the imagery of modernity with moral and ethical decline. This reflects a view that the way Thailand has developed has a significant relationship with social problems.

#### 3.1.4 Representation of a Non-Modern Perspective

*Khu Wun Wai Wan* tends to portray the good aspects of Thai society before the socio-economic advancement. This can be seen from the scene set in the slum and the asylum; the scene that projects mutual help, which is the type of social interaction that is considered part of traditional Thai living; the character of the grandfather; and the use of a Thai style house. These elements either adhere to the image of being Thai, or have no reference to modern tradition. They convey positive feelings to the audience to mark the unseen value of being un-modern.

The slum is the neighbourhood where Jeab escapes from Wongwai in the middle of the story. Only poor wooden houses with old zinc roofs can be seen in the area. Normally, a slum is recognised as a source of poverty or misdeeds. However, the slum in *Khu Wun Wai Wan* turns into a place of safety for Jeab. The bodybuilders who are training

there help vanquish Wongwai on behalf of Jeab. They do this with encouragement from a balloon seller whom Wongwai disparages in an earlier scene. In conventional storytelling, Jeab should only be saved by the protagonists, perhaps Meen or Jaeng. However, this convention is disregarded by a twist of images; Jeab survives from Wongwai by the extra characters deemed unimportant to the conflict and, significantly, in the place where living condition looks unimproved in the modern concept. This shows that personal security can come out anywhere and anytime – not necessarily when socio-economic modernization is accomplished. Much like the slum, the asylum is typically imagined as a place of sadness or depression in combination with insanity. The use of the asylum in this film breaks this cliché. Once Jeab is in the asylum, he seems to be in a safer place as sensed by his lovely interaction with the patients (see picture 6). No one can hurt him, nor is there anything suggestive of violence or ill temper, unlike in the outside world where he confronts threats emanating from his intent to uphold justice. Patients from the asylum play a similar role as the group of bodybuilders. Insofar as the patients follow Jeab, who is running away from Wongwai's subordinates, to the stadium and their actions, in conjunction with the coming of the police and the American invigilator, help prevent Jeab from an assault at the very end of the story.



Picture 6 Jeab playing with the patients

Mutual help is considered a tradition inherited from the agricultural economy and is put in the film as a solution to the problem that Jeab confronts. A number of characters, including the key youth characters, the American invigilator, patients from the asylum, and the police, take part in the rescue mission almost on an equal level (see examples from picture 7, 8). Individualism or heroism is completely destroyed. This indicates the significance of an interdependent society, as in the Thai saying 'samakkhi

khue phalang’ which might be translated into English as “united we stand/divided we fall”.



Picture 7 the American invigilator versus Wongwai



Picture 8 the patients from the asylum chasing away Wimol

The grandfather (see picture 9) is a well-to-do person, similar to Wongwai. He is a family man whose warmth can be sensed in many scenes. He allows Meen to stay in his house with Jeab. He forgives Meen for his thoughtless behaviour in the final sequence. He looks after Jeab and Jaeng with great concern. In one of the scenes, Jaeng blames Jeab for coming back late at night which causes the grandfather to wait up for him. Her dialogue shows that the grandfather sticks with the tradition of being together as found in extended families. The difference between the grandfather and Wongwai is that he seems to represent the old tradition through his manner, costumes, and properties, such as wearing a Thai-style casual shirt or having Thai-style furniture in his house, while Wongwai embodies the modern customs. The grandfather also has moral awareness which

Wongwai does not have. Therefore, the character of the grandfather represents the aspect of being Thai in a good way.



Picture 9 the grandfather

Aside from the grandfather, the house (see picture 10) where Jeab lives serves a similar function. The house he lives in is separated from his grandfather's and, interestingly, is a Thai style house raised up from the ground floor on stilts with no luxurious furnishings. Jeab's house is the only residence that reflects traditional housing; whereas none of the unethical characters, such as Wongwai, are shown residing in such a dwelling. The function of the house could be to reflect Jeab's preference for simplicity and/or rejection of current trends, such as living in a modern townhome. However, it cannot be denied that Jeab himself is also a key character. Pairing Jeab with such a style of house, hence, put Thai architectural identity in spotlight.



Picture 10 Jeab and Meen in the Thai house

### 3.2 Bunchu Phu Narak

This film is about the character of Bunchu which is revealed to be based on Bundit himself. Narupon Chaiyod (Interview, 21 January 2015) indicated that Bundit grew up in the rural area and adventured to the city to complete his studies like Bunchu. According to Santisuk Promsiri, who played the role of Bunchu, Bundit really used his own experience in making the script and Bunchu is the character inspired by his memory of leaving the rural area for education in Bangkok (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online).

The analysis of the film indicates that *Bunchu Phu Narak* sends out a message against change in Thai society similar to the message in *Khu Wun Wai Wan*. The message in this film is, however, more understandable owing to the use of plotline, characters, and some other ingredients that are completely different from the mainstream convention, whereas *Khu Wun Wai Wan* still builds in a popular plot. The matter of youth, urbanization, and the depiction of Thainess that is integrated into the story is evidence backing up this finding.

#### 3.2.1 Emphasis on Ideal Youth

Bunchu and Moree take the role of protagonists. These two often appear with the supporting characters, namely, Kummoon, Waiyakorn, Yoi, Nara, and Chuey. The focus of attention is shared amongst these characters in most of the scenes and no characters really overpower the other, leading to the inference that youthfulness in *Bunchu Phu Narak* links inextricably to 'group'. It is found that the representation of all these characters is different from that in many youth films and contrasts with the dominant image of the 1980s youth. Each of the characters has ideal in their thinking and performance. The discussion below will look into their personal features, socialization, lifestyles, youth romances, and some convictions to validate this finding.



Picture 11 Bunchu

Bunchu (see picture 11) is a character with clear inclination to exhibit characteristics of rural people. He has a Suphan Buri accent, which sounds funny for many Thais and can evoke a picture of rural characteristics because it is not the central dialect used in Bangkok. He often appears in simple outfits which give him the appearance of a country bumpkin. Even so, he possesses personal features that are impressive for Thai people. Firstly, Bunchu moves to Bangkok following Bunlom's order, without indicating whether or not he is happy with such order; it can only be seen that he never thinks or does anything in defiance of Bunlom. Secondly, no scenes depict Bunchu as an aggressive young man, other than in the fight against the ruffians to save Moree. Thirdly, Bunchu is highly courteous to everyone. He always ends his sentence with the ending particle 'ja' to display politeness. He even pays respect to a cashier with a Thai 'wai' (pressing the hands together in a sign of respect) in the scene of his application for the tutorial class. Fourthly, Bunchu shows himself to be a strict follower of Buddhism. He often mentions Buddhist teachings in Pali. After he moves to Bangkok, Bunchu does not dismiss the tradition of giving alms to monks either. Fifthly, Bunchu never shows a sign of rejecting his country background or changing his manner to look like a city resident. This is evident when Bunchuay encourages Bunchu to be like a Bangkokian, but Bunchu chooses to remain the same. Finally, Bunchu feels down every time he sees Moree accompany Ngentra, but he neither expresses his displeasure to anyone, nor does he allow it to hamper his duty, which is to complete the entrance exam.

These elements indicate that Bunchu's character is obedient, harmless, kind, helpful, and courteous. His faith in Buddhism is very strong and he never follows modern



trends. He also has the ability for self-control, which was not so evident in the vast majority of the 1980s young generation.



Picture 12 Moree

Moree (see picture 12) is the opposite of Bunchu in terms of social background. She is a Bangkok teenager whose luxurious outfits, residence, and socialization can be sensed throughout the story. However, despite her wealthy living, Moree matches Bunchu in meeting the expectations of Thai youth. She is highly courteous. Every time she is on the screen, the audience will only see her friendliness to every character, regardless of their social class. She always honors her interlocutor with a mellifluous, well-educated voice. As well, her reaction towards Bunchu in every scene they are together shows that Moree has a kind heart, not less than Bunchu. She does not, for example, reveal any signs of disregard, particularly when it is clear that Bunchu hails from a remote village. She even helps Bunchu cross the street because Bunchu is not used to the busy streets in Bangkok. Forgiveness is another aspect seen in the character of Moree. After the chaotic fight at the birthday party, one would guess that Moree would be extremely angry about Bunchu's mistake. However, the next scene depicts Moree pacifying Bunchu in a private conversation.

Yoi, Nara, Chuey, Kummoon, and Waiyakorn (see picture 13) are the main supporting youth characters who colour the story with their amusing nature. When they are establishing a friendship in their first scene, Kummoon chats with Chuey despite their unfamiliarity with each other. The conversation then includes more characters, namely, Yoi, Nara, Waiyakorn, as well as Bunchu, whose backgrounds are all completely different –



Kummoon is from northeast Thailand, whereas Chuey and Nara are from the north and south, respectively. Throughout the story, they never use violence, other than to help Bunchu deal with the ruffians, such as in scenes at a pizza restaurant and a publishing house. None of them are depressed about life and any mistakes within the group never frustrate them. Arrogance cannot be detected from any of their dialogue or actions. They do not, in other words, show off their richness or smartness to impress or put down each other. In summary, they are young people with unaggressive, cheerful, friendly, and ordinary natures.



Picture 13 the group (from left to right: Waiyakorn, Kummoon, Nara, Chuey, and Yoi)

When considering the characters both in the leading and supporting roles, it is found that they usually have amusing conversations; engage in simple, inexpensive recreation; and act interdependently. Their amusing conversations appear in many scenes, which emerge mostly in the form of Thai style jokes in which the misuse of words is the essence. All of them have the inclination to keep laughing in order to enhance the joyfulness of their talk. Their engaging in inexpensive recreation is obvious after Moree joins the group. For example, they fly kites and play Frisbee together. Then, they make a journey to Bunchu's hometown in order to relieve their tension from their academic pursuit. All these activities can be seen as quite conventional, as well as economical when compared to the new trend, i.e., playing popular music, bowling, roaming around the famous neighborhoods like Siam Square. Their interdependence is evident in the fight against Toeng and his subordinates in the second and third sequence, which indicates that

none of the main characters are hesitant to join the fight or are afraid of injury. This implies their decision to base their friendship on mutual help.

In terms of lifestyle, none of the central youth characters conform to the new living convention, in that they spend most of their time in preparation for the entrance exam. They attend the tutorial school on a daily basis and focus on intensive reading to build up their knowledge; this is particularly represented by Bunchu and Chuey. During their spare time, Bunchu and the group often use the cafeteria as a place of meeting – not a fast food restaurant; Bunchu travels by bus – Waiyakorn uses a bicycle. Interestingly, there is a shot of a huge billboard advertisement for a Tina Turner concert. Then, the next shot shows Bunchu and Moree watching *likay* (Thai style folk theatre). The twist can be seen as a joke as much as this is an indication that the two characters are not interested in wasting their money on extravagant entertainment. Moreover, they tend to avoid meeting at lavish places or entertainment venues. Expensive consumption is not part in their everyday life; their lifestyle is not colorful or exceptionally adventurous. However, such a lifestyle looks highly beneficial, from a traditional point of view, for young people whose obligation it is to complete their education.

The only romance in the film happens between Bunchu and Moree. It is rather unilateral love in which Bunchu deeply fancies Moree, while Moree neither rejects nor accepts it. The way they both treat their romantic situation is highly admirable in the Thai society, abounding with self-control and conscience in which Bunchu and Moree do not struggle with their relationship, as is the usual convention in a mainstream film.

Bunchu does not allow his romance to ruin his given duty. Once Bunlom expresses her concerns about him and Moree, he realizes that he should concentrate on the exam more than puppy love. He then recommences his rigorous reading and even declines Moree's invitation to her garden where he can be with her in private. After he sees Moree leaving with Ngentra at the end of sequence two, he becomes extremely sad, but reveals to the group that he would rather do anything to lessen his mother's sadness, meaning that he treasures his mother's concerns above his romantic feeling. It is also important to note that he can control his emotions with respect to romance in every aspect; thereupon, he does not exhibit any resentment that may affect his friendship with Moree. When Bunchu finds out that he has failed in the exam while Moree has passed, he is generous enough to congratulate her, as well as offer her a meal as a special treat for the success. Differently, Ngentra is neither interested in Moree's exam result, nor happy

about it. He is only concerned about his own exam achievement and becomes mad at her after knowing that he has failed. By this comparison, Bunchu's romantic feelings are founded on good care for Moree and his own personal conscience, while Ngentra's feelings are more like a passion for Moree's beauty.

For Moree, it seems as if she is out of Bunchu's league owing to her beauty and social class. Even so, she never expresses her dislike towards him. Every time Bunchu approaches her for a chat, she responds courteously. She talks to him cordially during the first meeting outside the wharf, despite not knowing him. Aside from this, no scenes depict Moree flirting with Bunchu which might cause him enormous distraction. She only gives him a friendly smile and that is all. It can be said that the way she copes with Bunchu's feeling meets the requirements in Thai society for young females.

As commented by Nuntana Kumwong, Bundit did not fit the type of a romantic person and he was not expressive and neither was he the type to engage in public displays of affection (What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final), 2009: online). His anti-romantic behaviour is confirmed by Thanathorn Rittakol (Interview, 28 January 2015) who further explains that, for Bundit, love is an acceptance of differences and mutual respect rather than creation of an amorous moment. This could also be the reason why the matter of romance is portrayed in an ideal manner in this film.

The last issue to be discussed is the dominant beliefs as interpreted from the dialogue and actions of the central youth characters, including the communication between Bunlom and Bunchu. From the main plotline, Bunchu goes to the capital just to attend the entrance exam. After his application for the tutorial class, he engages in a conversation with Waiyakorn, whereby the audience learns that Waiyakorn has taken the exam for many years just to try and win a place in medical school. Other characters are committed to passing the exam in a similar way, without any thoughts about alternatives in case they do not succeed. In the opening sequence, Bunlom urges Bunchu to focus on the exam. She says to him that the degree will bring the entire family great pride. Then, in the last half of sequence two, she repeats her wish to see him succeed. From the point of view of Bunlom, the duty of young people should be nothing more than achieving a higher education. As for Bunchu, it is his responsibility to do as said by his mother. According to Narupon Chaiyod (Interview, 21 January 2015), Bundit himself seems to have been a devoted believer of the Thai education system. Bundit supported him to pursue his postgraduate study in a foreign country, despite the making of *Bunchu Five, Nueahom*

lying ahead. This is why the central characters in both this film and *Khu Wun Wai Wan* are shown being committed to their education. It is undeniable then that the central youth characters are, as can be concluded from these data, made to promote the belief in higher education in which qualification for a place in a state university is a supreme goal.

### 3.2.2 Critical Image of Urbanization in the Late 1980s

*Bunchu Phu Narak* is composed of different plot lines. One of them tends to be critical of urbanization in the late 1980s, insofar as the protagonist – Bunchu – struggles in the city environment during his preparation for the entrance exam. By this plot line, the city residents are depicted as very mean, causing Bunchu to be uncomfortable living in Bangkok. However, Bunchu can survive with his innate decency and harmlessness. In this regard, *Bunchu Phu Narak* offers a visual comparison between rural and urban life in a way that the former embodies moral and ethical advancement (to be discussed in the next section), whereas the latter does not. Some supporting youth characters, other supporting characters, background elements, as well as some specific signifiers are elements in the film that create a negative portrayal of urban space.

Regarding the supporting youth characters, the ones deserving discussion are Ngentra (see picture 14) and Toeng (see picture 15).



Picture 14 Ngentra



Picture 15 Toeng

Ngentra appears in the story as Moree's companion. He possesses the features of youth with an urban lifestyle. He dresses fashionably, drives an expensive car, and spends his money freely. He likes to impress Moree and her friends with his wealth, as shown in the pizza restaurant scene when he proposes to pay for the meal.

Interestingly, Ngentra's character is filled with selfishness and envy, in contrast to his modern appearance. For example, Ngentra rejects Moree's request to offer Bunchu a ride in his car in the first scene between Moree and Bunchu. He reasons that the space is too small to let Bunchu in the car. At the birthday party, Ngentra is jealous of Bunchu and is not hesitant to cooperate with Toeng in humiliating Bunchu – they trick him to cut the birthday cake without permission from the host. Finally, Ngentra is very upset with his exam failure, whereupon he becomes aggressive towards Moree, indicating that his own interest and problems always comes first. The name Ngentra means 'money' and it cannot be denied that the way he is portrayed look unimpressive. Ngentra can be understood as connotation that prosperity does not always come with good spirit.

Toeng is a delinquent who earns his living through a business of publishing and selling textbooks or sheets around the tutorial school. He always appears in trendy outfits with stylish caps and chewing gum. The presentation of him, similar to Ngentra, is suggestive of the new socio-economic influence by which people were interested in Westernizing their appearance. However, Toeng is a rude, selfish, arrogant, violent, and mean character. He can be considered a message against the way Westernization was adopted in Thai society in that it did not embrace moral or ethical improvement.

Toeng's undesirable features can be perceived in all the scenes in which he appears. In the cafeteria, Toeng refuses to share the same table with Bunchu, and scolds

him, telling him to find another spot. He often uses the word 'ku', which means 'I', but is an impolite form of first person term of reference in the Thai context. He dishonors Moree by flirting with her willingly. He also says to his subordinates that he will do whatever to capture her heart, albeit just for fun. He plots the situation in which Ngentra, Moree, and their friends are threatened by his cohorts and then he appears to protect them to make a heroic impression. At the very end of sequence two, he orders his subordinates to abduct Moree at night and keep her in the publishing house. These elements are sufficient to conclude that Toeng's role is to underline adoption of foreign culture in the urban space, which was more in terms of look and appearance rather than absorbing some of the desirable aspects of the culture being adopted such as discipline, honesty and creativity.

Bunchuay and Manee are the other supporting characters to be discussed. According to the study of their backgrounds, actions and dialogue, they project an 'urban' element in a manner that shows modernity at the cost of one's spirit.

Bunchuay moves to Bangkok in accordance with Bunlom's wish. Originally, he is supposed to further his studies, but falls into a romantic relationship with a woman who becomes Bualoy's mother and later leaves him. Bunchuay continues his life in the capital. He invests in a business at a Chao Phraya wharf with money from Bunlom. During the story, Bunchuay tries to be like a smart Bangkokian, as well as tries to eliminate his rural image in order to fit the city environment. The study of his character suggests that, while he turns his back on his rural origin, developing himself to be a better person in terms of being kind and caring, such as Bunchu, is not his primary interest. In one scene, he brings Bunchu to the tutorial school and teaches him about urban behaviour – to not do anything too foolish, as well as to try to have genteel manners. In another scene, he learns of Bunchu's feeling towards Moree and urges Bunchu to eliminate all his rural quality to impress her. His words in both scenes mirror his desire to challenge the rural way of living. When he first talks to Manee, he hides the truth that Bualoy is his daughter to give the impression that he is single in order to capture Manee's attention. He then tries to engage in conversation with Manee, in which he implicitly praises himself. His interaction with Manee indicates that he is a character with a slight shade of self-interest.

The character of Manee is created to be a wealthy working woman whose place of residence is Bangkok. She owns a huge bungalow surrounded by a wide lawn with plenty of plants, flowers. She looks dignified, wearing elegant outfits, cosmetics, and accessories. In contrast to the aura of urbanity, Manee is somewhat unkind, unreasonable and lacks

emotional control. During the fight in the party scene, Manee slides off the table by accident and Bunchuay saves her from falling on the floor. However, Manee hits him in the face with extreme anger and drives Bunchu and his group away without any attempt to find out the truth. In the end of sequence two, Manee believes that Bunchu arranged the abduction of Moree only because it is reported that one of the kidnappers speaks the same dialect as Bunchu. She hurriedly takes policemen to Bunchuay's house in order to capture Bunchu. There, she acts forcefully to Bunchu and Bunchuay, while refusing to listen, no matter how they reason with her. Once Bunchu is proven innocent, no scenes show her apologize for the misunderstanding.

The use of the city background has various meanings. Sometimes the background is just a cinematic component without significant meaning. However, at other times, the background is there to indicate some negative connotation, such as the bus station, the walkway to the tutorial school, the school itself, and Toeng's printing shop. Such background settings work together to emphasize the decline of personal conscience in the urban arena.

The bus station and walkway are the first two elements introducing typical troubles in the urban area. The bus station appears at the beginning of the second sequence where Bunchu leaves some of his belongings with Bualoy to look around for Bunchuay. Very quickly, a thief takes the belongings while both of them are not looking. The walkway scene comes into the story not long after and is the location where Bunchuay teaches Bunchu to act properly. Two teenagers quickly walk pass them uttering many swear words. These two background settings show that safety of one's property is in danger once entering Bangkok, while offensiveness can easily be seen.

The tutorial school contributes to the emphasis on educational beliefs in most of the story. According to Rajanikorn Setihoe (1989: 49) and Somboon Tanya (1999: 135), Thai people think of education as an acceptable path to better life and prestigious career. They often determine that their children will be as well educated as they can. However, the school serves to depict the business of academics as well. This is evident in the scene in which Bunchu has a pile of sheets and books put in his hands by Toeng's subordinate on the date of his application for the tutorial class (see picture 16). He understands that they all are given to him without charge, but a moment later, he is terrorized to pay. At the same time, there is a shot of students buying the materials for their studies (see

picture 17). All these situations communicate that gaining knowledge in the urban area has a high price and knowledge is a channel to richness.



Picture 16 academic business (Bunchu is imposed sheets and books)



Picture 17 academic business (students are buying sheets and books)

The printing shop is funded by Toeng and operated by a group of delinquents and ruffians. The place itself gives the impression of a capitalistic venture because it supplies academic materials in exchange for profit. In the printing house, the audience can only hear crude conversation among the workers. During the climax of the story, the printing shop is turned into a party site full of light, color, and drinks, and reveals a high level of amorality when Moree is sexually harassed there. Pop music, costumes, a discothèque, arm wrestling, etc., shown during the party can be interpreted as representatives of foreign culture. Their existence in the party creates the message that the trend of adopting



foreign culture in the city area has a significant relationship with a denial of previous Thai culture, as well as moral concerns.

The signifiers of this argument to be discussed include certain dialogue, location, and prop. Bunchu's conversation with Moree after the fight in the birthday party is a good example, implying the problem with urban people, as much as voicing that urbanization is not always equivalent to civilization:

“I am sorry. I apologize. I am inexperienced. I am truly sorry. I did not think people in Bangkok would be this mean.”

The location and prop are a pizza restaurant and birthday cake respectively, both of which indicate the coming of foreign culture. Pizza is considered an Italian dish, popularized in Thailand around the mid-1980s amongst urban residents – the youth in particular. After Moree, Ngentra, and two other female friends enjoy their pizza, Ngentra is attacked by ruffians (see picture 18, 19) as plotted by Toeng, leading to the scene of the first mayhem. The birthday cake is a central component in the party scene. Toeng and his cohorts, including Ngentra, mislead Bunchu by telling him to serve the cake to the elders who have joined the party (see picture 20). This causes Bunchu to cut the cake without permission from the host. He is then blamed by the attendees, while receiving a scornful laugh from the three. Suddenly, Nara initiates the chaotic fight because of his fury at witnessing Bunchu's embarrassment. Serving birthday cake is not originally a Thai tradition, and cake itself is not deemed a Thai sweet either. Based on these elements, signs of foreign culture are matched with improper behaviour to imply the mindlessly way of cultural adoption in Thailand. As suggested by Udomporn Yingpaiboonsuk and Premwadee Karuhadej (2011: 1), Thai people copied foreign culture without consideration of what deserves to be accepted. They tend to, in other words, merely follow the form of foreign lifestyle, rather than taking into consideration their ethical and moral development, as represented by the American invigilator in *Khu Wun Wai Wan*.



Picture 18 Moree, Ngentra, and friends leaving the pizza restaurant



Picture 19 ruffians attacking Ngentra around the front of the pizza restaurant



Picture 20 Bunchu being told to cut the cake during the birthday party

### 3.2.3 Promotion of Thai Identity

Amid the growth of the free economy, some identity was considered old-fashioned, as well as underdeveloped. In *Bunchu Phu Narak*, certain old-fashioned identities are represented throughout the story, including agriculture and rural life, and some living traditions. Parts of such identities are presented from a positive angle, whereas other aspects appear in the film to stress the idea of what is socially or culturally distinctive. The conversations between Bunchu, Bunlom and Bualoy, the rural and urban

background settings, including some dialogue, make clear how this idea has been executed.

It can be seen that Bunchu not only backs up the concept of ideal youth, but also projects an optimistic view regarding agricultural and rural society. As discussed before, Bunchu represents the young generation from a rural space as shown by his clothes, dialect, and manner. In having an agrarian image, he depicts an important role from which the audience can sense civility and benevolence. As well, he never changes himself to fit the economic modernization, even though his rural nature becomes an obstacle in some situations, but instead manages the continuation of his studying as expected by Bunlom. With the combination of a lovely character with a rural background, Bunchu delivers a good feeling about agriculture and the rural environment, challenging the concept of modernization that is primarily focused on industrial capitalism at the expense of the traditional agriculture economy.

Interestingly, the concept of an *everyman* character can be applied to Bunchu to understand the link between Bunchu and promotion of Thai identity. Everyman refers to the character designed to represent the ordinary person, originating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century English allegorical play titled *The Summoning of Everyman* (Merriam-Webster, 2015: online). Throughout the story, Bunchu is an average Thai male with whom the audience can identify easily. His name sounds very traditional in terms of pronunciation and meaning. In Thai, *Bun* means 'merit' (in fact many Thai names often start with the word) while *chu* denotes 'elevation'. The name Bunchu, as a whole, can be understood as loftiness of merit and reflects the Thai belief about karma whereby people feel compelled to conduct good deeds to achieve a high level of virtue. This type of name is rarely found amongst people with urban backgrounds. Aside from his name, his face, speaking style, belief in Buddhism and clothes convey a sense of Thai ruralness which reminds the audience of an agricultural society prevailing around the period of the film's screening. This is why Bunchu is a purposively created character. To be precise, he is in the story to highlight the common ordinariness of Thai people.

Bunlom and Bualoy are created to represent the 'rural' in a similar mode. They both connect the audience with a feeling of kindness and sincerity.

Aside from stressing educational beliefs, Bunlom is included in the story as an old rural character with religious faith, as well as being kind-hearted. In the opening sequence, there is a shot of Bunlom offering food to monks at the paddy field,

together with Bunchu and Bualoy. In the second sequence, Bunlom welcomes Moree and the group during their visit to Bunchu's village. She eagerly provides drinks and food for them. Thereafter, Bunlom discerns Bunchu's feeling toward Moree. She could rebuke him, but opts for avoidance instead. She gives him the choice of coming back to grow rice with her in case he is not successful. The tone of her voice does not contain force that may hurt Bunchu.

Bualoy is a little rural girl whose thoughts are not yet overwhelmed with a modern lifestyle. She has a strong Suphaburi dialect in common with Bunchu. Her overall appearance looks neat and clean. It is shown that Bualoy can distinguish what is deemed proper and improper in the Thai context. In the first sequence, Bualoy joins the conversation between Bunchu and Bunlom. She realizes how Bunlom expects Bunchu to conduct himself. Therefore, she warns Bunchu of the undesirable consequence of his romance after seeing him with a photo of Moree. During the first conversation between Bunchuay and Manee, Bualoy is sitting next to Bunchuay to help him collect travel fares, indicating her kind intention to be of help. Interestingly, no scenes depict Bualoy annoying Bunlom, Bunchu or Bunchuay. She does not ask for toys or sweets, either at home or outside, such that one could say that she is not a peevish child. Bualoy's actions are found to be obedience to Bunlom; she often appears in the story to remind other characters, such as Bunchu, of appropriate behaviour. Her character – in conjunction with Bunlom's – produces the impression that rural people have admirable natures.

In addition, these two characters can also be understood through the concept of everyman, similar to Bunchu. It is found that they not only related a good feel toward the rural image, but also bring agricultural identity to the fore. Bunlom means being surrounded with merit; whereas Bualoy refers to the name of a popular sweet dish (small rice balls in sweetened and thickened coconut milk), having been adopted into the Thai culinary culture and modified to suit the local taste. The two share similar appearance and faith. They do not use makeup or fashionable clothes. They believe in the law of karma or conform to social taboos; urban demeanor is not part of their character.

The rural background plays a role in showing the beauty of the local in the absence of economic modernization. This setting, such as rice paddies, Bunchu's house, and the local community, is filled with peace and good spirits, which is absent in the representation of Bangkok.



Picture 21 rice paddy in the early morning

*Bunchu Phu Narak* begins with an image of a rice paddy (see picture 21) in the early morning. The paddy looks fresh and virtually free from the uproar as in the city, with no threats or miseries seen. According to Thanathorn Rittakol (Interview, 28 January 2015), Bundit had a continuing bond with the rural area, forests, rivers, mountains, or canal. He once revealed that he wanted to have a house in the rural area. Although the rural atmosphere originated from Bundit's personal preference, the employment of the rice paddy in this mode repeats the agrarian identity as much as stressing the exquisiteness of agrarian society.

Bunchu's house is not built in a style that replicates modern-style housing, but instead has the same structural details as framed by traditional Thai architectural concepts. The house is elevated from the ground to facilitate air flow and to store harvests or livestock beneath. A large indoor space designed for family gatherings is a prominent part. The house is unpainted. Electric appliances, such as a television, refrigerator, electric fan, are not found, only baskets in numerous sizes. In the opening sequence, his house is the place where Bunchu, Bunlom, and Bualoy are having a meal together (see picture 22). They eat with their fingers, the food composed of different dishes to complement a portion of rice in their hands. They clean their fingers in a bowl of water after finishing the meal. The combination of the house and the eating routine is the living style that prevailed before economic modernization. The point is that Bunchu is the protagonist who never foregoes such an outmoded lifestyle or reveals any signs that such a lifestyle is unfavorable. His acceptance of such a lifestyle reminds one of the perceived uniqueness and blissfulness of Thai rural culture, which, according to Decharut

Sukkumnoed (2011: 76), is in opposition to the modernization theory that speaks against the value of the rural sector.



Picture 22 Bunchu's house and the atmosphere inside



Picture 23 communal interaction

The local community harmonizes with the paddy field and the house in a way that makes the community look very Thai, but delightful, particularly the center of the village to which Bunchu, Bunlom, and Bualoy belong. In the opening sequence, all three characters walk along the community to reach a minibus. A marching band walks through the community, followed by the image of the three characters greeting their acquaintances (see picture 23). They interact with one another in a relaxed manner. The simplicity of communal lifestyle can also be seen from a number of the extras in common casual clothes and sarongs, as well as a row of old wooden houses aligned with the street. Economic difficulty is not shown in this representation, despite being essentially undeveloped. Only a good mood predominates.



Picture 24 the riverside house (from the entrance)

The riverside house (see picture 24) in Bangkok owned by Bunchuay only looks classier than the house in the rice paddy owing to the inclusion of furniture and traditional decoration, but without luxurious items that are a sign of conspicuous spending. The windows and doors are carefully situated to assist the circulation of air, thereupon no air-conditioners comes into view in any of the riverside house scenes. The walls are also decorated with Thai design. The riverside house is the home for Bunchu while he prepares for his exam. Given the focal nature of the house, its existence in the film helps emphasize the recognition of a Thai way of living; whereas, if Bunchu resided in a mansion or newly constructed townhouse, the emphasis would have been on socio-economic development.



Picture 25 the Chao Phraya River

The Chao Phraya River (see picture 25) seems to be a major location in *Bunchu Phu Narak*, appearing in many sequences with different purposes. For example, the river includes images of hotels, skyscrapers, and fine restaurants in order to communicate the difference between the city and the rural village, as well as the rise of extravagance during the period of economic development. Sometimes, the river highlights the depiction of an inexpensive lifestyle by which people travel by cheap ferries and boats, while the rich will only use a private car. The Chao Phraya River has been a part of the socio-economic environment in Thai history since the Ayutthaya era when it functioned as a main channel for commercial contacts between the locals and foreigners, as much as being a fertile site for agricultural activities (Paladisai Sitthithanyakij, 2012: 175-177). The repeated use of the river as a setting has an implicit purpose, instead of using a business zone such as Silom or Sathorn which could well exhibit the economic superiority of the city. The purpose is to recall a sense of Thainess by way of a historical memory of the importance of the use of waterways, rather than the new economic imprint, i.e., cars and roads, that feeds the process of modernization.

The dialogue that is in promotion of traditional Thai identity can be seen from Bunlom and Nara. One is about Thai belief as regards love; the other concerns agricultural activities:

With respect to love, Bunlom says:

“What I am most concerned is about women. You must avoid.....  
Otherwise, you will feel sorry for your choice of a woman.”

This bit of dialogue is spoken by Bunlom during her conversation with Bunchu in the opening sequence and shows that Bunlom does not like to see her son get involved in any romantic relationship because he is required to study and is too young to deal with love. Her words reflect the traditional belief that obligates men to be careful of women, especially when they are not fully mature. In the scene where Bunchu is dreaming about Moree in his reading room, Bualoy uses similar words to remind Bunchu of his duty. Kritaya Archavanitkul (2011: 57) asserts that Thai society has strict control regarding sexual contact or love. Such control is often maintained by planting orthodox thinking or discourse in the minds of the young, such as do not fall in love while studying, youthful sexual relations is not permitted, etc. Romantic relationships in the new social context are,



however, considered to be less controlled. The repetition of the dialogue, therefore, indicates a traditional belief in defiance of easy-going romances.

Regarding agriculture, Nara says:

“It is all right to be a farmer. I am proud of it, because a farmer is comparable to the backbone of the nation.”

Nara says this in the end of sequence two when Bunchu grumbles about his exam failure that he would be a farmer for all his life. The words sound old-fashioned, especially when the free economy was transforming Thai society into an industrialized society. One would not expect such a thought to be spoken by a young character such as Nara. Therefore, the dialogue is in the film intentionally to connote the dignity of an agrarian society.

### 3.3 Bunchu Two, Nongmai



The success of *Bunchu Phu Narak* not only smoothed the path to the production of *Bunchu Two, Nongmai*, but also heightened the confidence of repeating the critical representation supporting the view challenging the changing context of Thai society. Everything in the film looks, therefore, almost the same as in the prequel, except the focus on the problem that is switched from delinquency to economic hardship. This can be seen as an attempt to express defiance to the new socio-economic situation.

#### 3.3.1 Reuse of Upright Youth Characters

All the central youth characters, both in protagonist and supporting roles, are used again to communicate an image of incorruptible young people. Those characters are Bunchu, Moree, Chuey, Yoi, Nara, Kummooon, and Waiyakorn, who take on the central roles. This can be seen as a continuity of the desirable attitudes and behavioural patterns of the characters. At the same time, this can be seen as a repetition of the message in opposition to the undesirable characteristics of Thai youth that are likely to increase the fears amongst the traditionalists who prefer to see young people as being compliant.



Picture 26 Bunchu talking to a senior monk

Bunchu's nature remains precisely the same as in the prequel. In the first sequence, Bunchu converses with a senior monk in Pali (see picture 26). His words – such as 'parents are like Brahma for their children' or 'intelligence is more supreme than any kind of property' – clearly indicates his understanding of key Buddhist philosophies. He is also friendly to everyone, including the newly introduced characters, such as Prapun, Bunma, and Ae. Every piece of his dialogue, as well as his manners, conveys a sense of modesty. When he first talks to Prapun, for example, he keeps smiling and calls himself 'phom' – a polite Thai word meaning 'I' – in preference to 'chan' whose meaning is the same, but sounds informal. What is outstanding about Bunchu is, however, his adherence to interdependence, as exemplified by his helping with Moree's fundraising in the middle of the story. Even in the situation when he is most depressed, he does not ignore helping those who are in need of assistance, such as giving aid to an unknown man whose car is broken on the street or pacifying Ae on Valentine's Day. That means Bunchu is still a strict follower of Buddhism, with a high degree of friendship, politeness, and concern for others.

It should also be noted that his second enrolment in the entrance exam derives from Bunlom's desire. Opposing Bunlom or any of his senior acquaintance, such as Maha Jam, is not seen in any of the scenes. His intention to hurt the feelings of others or express jealousy towards 'Oh', a senior student who has a close relationship with Moree, is not shown. If not necessary, Bunchu never opts for violence. Finally, Bunchu does not use foreign words in any of his dialogue or entertain himself at a pub during the night. He only continues his adherence to local culture, as seen by the way he speaks and acts. He

even carries a rural style basket, both in the opening and ending sequences, despite having the chance to use a fashionable suitcase as do city youth. Accordingly, obedience, emotional control, and ability to resist the new cultural trend can be perceived from the character of Bunchu.

As well, the character of Moree exhibits no change in personal features. She continues to be kind and friendly, self-controlled, forgiving, and courteous. Being kind and friendly can be exemplified by her expression of delight upon seeing Bunchu during the scene of their first meeting. She is now a rich city girl studying in a famous university, surrounded by new friends, while Bunchu is still a young, rural guy belonging to no institution. Therefore, there is possibility that she could ignore him. Self-control emerges from the situation in which Manee unkindly shouts at Moree only because her sister asks for sponsorship (Manee is in an extremely bad mood). However, Moree neither counters Manee aggressively, nor feels slighted which could ruin their sister relationship. Forgiveness becomes evident in the camping scene where Bunchu and his group spoil her camping expedition, leading to anger amongst her team. Again, Moree does not blame Bunchu and his group for messing things up, even though she has the right to do so. Finally, her courtesy can be perceived from her always speaking in a pleasant voice. She never shouts or screams and her clothes and personal manner appear polite.

The outstanding features of Moree in this film, nonetheless, turn out to be a sense of responsibility and sincerity. Her sense of responsibility comes to fore after she cannot find 10,000 baht in funds for a development club she belongs to. She is determined to resign from the administrative team of the development club because she has given a promise to everyone to obtain such an amount, but she fails. Also, when she finds that the club's money is missing in the final sequence, she tries not to accuse anyone of taking the money. She even makes a decision to withdraw from the university if she cannot regain the funds. Her conscience is clear from her daily actions. As well, she keeps performing university activities and attending classes without engaging in any romantic relationship. When Bunchu presents her a red rose, she realizes his feeling towards her. However, she indicates to him the relationship she feels more comfortable with is being a friend. At the same time, she does not express any affection for anyone else, although it looks as if she could be in love with Oh. In this way, her character works like the reflection of a young character who keeps in mind what is of primary concern.

Kummon, Yoi, Nara, Chuey, Waiyakorn, and Prapun also portray the incorruptible features of the main youth characters in the following way.

None of the scenes shows them bringing their own problems into the group discussion. This can be illustrated by the case of Yoi and Nara. Yoi is not successful at receiving Nok's attention. He is not, nevertheless, too serious about his romantic failure. As for Nara, he takes courses at Ramkhamhaeng which is an open university – which means he did not pass the entrance exam – but Nara never expresses any anxiety about this. The audience only sees Yoi and Nara being included in the rest of the group, laughing, especially when they are together.

All the central characters are included in solving the key problems instead of allowing the character in the leading role to manage the problem on their own. For instance, they cooperate with Bunchu in helping Moree find 10,000 baht in sponsorship or in tracking down Bunma to get back the club's money. It is important to understand that they do not share the same universities or faculties, but these differences never stop them from providing assistance whereby they often provide care for a member of the group.

Harmlessness and simplicity are two other features found in the characters. Looking harmless, they are not depicted as delinquents, other than in the fight against Manee's employees and against the ruffians who take the club's money. Instead, they are very welcoming to everyone. This is why Ae appears with them in the end, despite the fact that she is not an original member of the group, as well as Oh, whom the group previously dislikes because of his closeness to Moree. Their simplicity can be seen by the fact that, no scenes show them exaggerating about their educational institutions or new lifestyle, either to friends in the group or someone else.

As an entire group, including Bunchu and Moree, they have a tendency to go against the mainstream youth culture documented in the late 1980s. They refuse Western culture popularized in the urban area. They keep meeting at inexpensive places, such as Pi Pong's food stall. The food they often order includes noodles, fried rice, etc., considered to be common dishes in the Thai context. They often relax by gathering as a group, which can be at any place, such as a food stall, university's cafeteria, or in a public space. None of the scenes shows them enjoying themselves at a department store, ice-skating ring, or any of the typical places frequented by the city youth.

It can be seen that they base their group on beautiful friendships and encouragement, while the typical youth in the society are reported to be more and more

individualistic. Bunchu's difficult situations are the best examples. After Bunchu is banned from entering the library, Moree, and Yoi console him at the cafeteria. They try to encourage Bunchu to be optimistic about his return to work in the library. In the end, Bunchu waits for his exam results late at night and the entire group is there with him. They make a call on his behalf, as well as give him their support.

Mutual help and providing assistance to those in need is another dominant belief carried by the central youth characters exhibiting their good features. One scene shows Bunchu helping to collect the roses that have fallen on a bridge, and another scene shows him pushing a broken car on a street to help get the vehicle started. Moree offers to help Manee, as do Bunchu and the rest of the group. Bunchu and the group join together in seeking sponsorship for Moree's development club, despite having nothing to do with the club. Waiyakorn is even asked why he does this for Thammasat (Moree's club), instead of Kasetsart University where he studies. Waiyakorn reacts to the question with unwavering intention. He says that, as long as the money is used for development, the institution should not be a problem. In the final sequence, Bunchu and the group help Moree find the stolen money, regardless of their tiredness or physical injury. It can be said that Bunchu, as well as the other characters, do not mind helping people with whom they are not acquainted. Sometimes, they get involved in serious problems that are not really their concern. Their actions serve as a reminder of young people during the period of student activism (1973-1976).

Interestingly, some of Bundit's own decisions in life and behaviour can be considered indicative of a worldview in which he himself preferred to give priority to society regardless of the self as reflected through the central characters in this film. According to a report by ASTVManager, while suffering from a kidney failure Bundit was once offered special care under the auspices of Her Majesty the Queen. The director was appreciative but decided to write a letter politely declining Her Majesty's very kind offer, explaining that he had no desire to jump the line of those waiting for a kidney transplant and that he himself had sufficient money for the cure (*What Is Hidden in the Films of Bundit Rittakol? (Final)*, 2009: online). This suggests how concerned he was for the society at large.

The interesting point about being ideal youth is, however, the way the central youth characters handle romance, which becomes a more prominent issue than in the prequel. Apart from an emphasis on the case of Bunchu and Moree, romantic matters of

the other youth characters are incorporated as well, with none of them ending with sweet loves. On the other hand, none of them is devastated by their failed love lives. This creates a picture that romance is not really an indispensable matter for them.

For Bunchu's romance, his personal emotion is eventually overcome by recognition of responsibility. After he continues his romantic feeling for Moree, he is urged by Yoi to use Valentine's Day as a chance of winning her heart. Listening to Yoi's advice, he gives Moree a red rose, but Moree gently declines it. She said that it will only be accepted for friendship. In spite of the disappointment, Bunchu performs his daily duty, including assisting people whom he meets on the street, while continuing his friendly interaction with Moree.

At the time Bunchu fails in love, Moree conforms to the idea of virginity and does not engage in romantic matters, either in a passive or active role. From the beginning of the story, Moree is nice to Bunchu, as she is so to everyone. Simultaneously, she does not do anything with the intention to lure him. On Valentine's Day, she tells him the truth about her feelings. Although her words could break the relationship between her and Bunchu, there is not even a single situation indicating that they are embittered with each other. Moree keeps being friends with him. She gives him a book to read for the entrance exam, even after disheartening him on Valentine's Day. In the end, Moree joins the group in travelling to his village, only to tell him the good news about the exam results.

Romance for the other youth characters is shown in a similar fashion. Yoi is punched by Nok after he gives her a red rose. Chuey describes his feeling towards the girl he fancies, but she yawns and looks bored. Kummoon seem to be more fortunate than Bunchu, Yoi, and Chuey. The girl whom he courts accepts all the flowers he buys for her. However, the scenes coming after do not show any progression in their romance, but shows their interests in the problems of friends, as illustrated in the last mayhem and the hearing of Bunchu's exam results.

### 3.3.2 Emphasis on Higher Education

Aside from portray ideal youth, *Bunchu Two*, *Nongmai* also emphasizes higher education as the ultimate accomplishment for young people. The way the central characters are shown in combination with university backgrounds suggests this, as well as with the supporting youth characters. Instead of showing delinquency, the supporting

youth characters appear in educational contexts by which they join the central characters in giving implicit inspiration regarding the belief in obtaining a university degree.

The first way of showing this is to link all the central youth characters with images of state universities. In so doing, *Bunchu Two*, *Nongmai* repeatedly shows every main character in university locations and all of them are in the right uniforms, including Moree and Yoi – in fact, Thammasat University is not as strict about its dress code for students as other universities, but the film tends to present Thammasat student characters in tidy uniforms to stress this symbol of Thai education. Some situations are put in the film to strengthen the image of the main characters as eager learners as well. For example, Waiyakorn talks about the information from his lecture during the meeting of the group. He then shows them samples of worms, about which he has just attended a lecture – the use of worms is really a joke, but it is a joke with an intellectual perspective. Bunchu is the only key character who goes to no classes. However, he keeps studying with suggestions and helps from Ae and Moree. The story about his studies is placed in the end of the film which is indicative of how education is a significant issue since the end of the story is conventionally preserved for the most prominent problems and conflicts only. In addition, there are scenes of Yoi and Moree joining the university activities to promote the picture of the university lifestyle. Moree participates in the development camping club whereby she cooperates with other students in running the project about improving facilities in a remote village. Yoi sings a university song in front of his mates to test his voice for the selection of a faculty cheerleader. Only joy can be seen from their activities.

Oh is one supporting youth character who shares the same faculty as Moree and is Moree's new close friend. He has a smart manner, plus a good-looking face. His behaviour, however, contradicts his looks. He does not help Moree when she is in a critical situation, such as fundraising for the development club or the loss of the money, for which he has been assigned to look after, not Moree. In the latter instance, he even blames Moree without mentioning his guilt. It can be said that he possesses antagonistic features in opposition to Bunchu – similar to Ngentra versus Bunchu in *Bunchu Phu Narak*. The point to be made about Oh is that Bunchu, Moree, and the group do not confront him for his selfishness at all, while Oh himself does not do anything harmful to them. Surprisingly, there are a few scenes depicting his friendship with Bunchu, i.e., joining the group in making a journey to Bunchu's village just to inform him of the exam

result. His existence in the story and the way he reacts to the main characters breaks the tradition of protagonist against antagonist, leading to impression about youth's reconcilability. What to notice is the fact that Oh is a student and his presence is often attached to a university background. This implies that university society is a site devoid of permanent hostility.

Ae is another character who sheds light on the good side of university life. Ae is a student at Thammasat University, first appearing in the Valentine's Day scene. She is in tears because of her failure in love with a student she fancies, but later recovers with Bunchu's offer of friendship. After that, she conforms to the expected nature of Thai youth whereby she does not mention her romance again, nor do anything to generate affection from Bunchu. She spends her life like the others, studying and being with friends. She gives Bunchu advice when he is preparing for the entrance exam. She is also with Bunchu and the group when they all wait for the result to be announced late at night. Her character, after knowing Bunchu, suggests how university is a site to gain new experience, as exemplified by her friendship with Bunchu and the group – which gives her the chance to be free of regular youth problem, such as romance.

Other extra youth characters in the film also stress higher education as the primary duty of young people. The analysis shows that all the extras in this film are portrayed as young people whose priority is the attainment of a degree. They travel to the university, carry textbooks and sheets, undertake university activities, and dress in tidy uniforms). The majority of the film shows their presence on the campus. Moreover, no scenes show them making any trouble, such as fighting or gambling, or buying expensive items. Compared to uneducated delinquents, such as Toeng in *Bunchu Phu Narak*, the presence of the extra youth characters in this film shows the implicit merit of the university in that they are properly educated, so they are not a problem.

### 3.3.3 Recalling Thainess

Much like *Bunchu Phu Narak*, the depiction of cultural identity in this film contributes to the conclusion regarding Bundit Rittakol's youth films as indicated in the hypothesis. Throughout the story, Thainess from a classic notion comes up on the screen at frequent intervals, mostly about agriculture or ruralness as expressed by some supporting characters and their background. Thainess from other perspectives is also



represented with respect to cultural distinctiveness as can be seen through some urban background settings, plus certain signifiers. The following provides a detailed discussion how such Thainess is communicated in the film.

Bunlom, Bualoy, Maha Jam, a senior monk, and Bunchuay are included in the story as representatives of the rural Thai folk not to mention Bunchu himself whose character is a positive example of having a rural nature. It can be seen that each of these characters appears morally and ethically superior to the characters with urban backgrounds, such as Manee. They are very traditional according to the way of living in the Thai agrarian society. Their contribution to the message of resistance to change is to show a good sense of simplicity and/or a positive example of those from rural society.

Bunlom is the main reason why Bunchu registers for the second entrance exam. Bunlom represents a typical rural person according to her dialect, costumes, and manner, while her inclusion in the film does not tarnish the image of rural people. She provides great care to Bunchu and Bunchuay, even though they do not behave to her complete satisfaction. She has a firm faith in Buddhism by which the audience never sees her violate the five precepts or engage in harmful conduct. Upon first learning that Bunchu did not succeed on his second try, she shows no aggressive reaction to Bunchu, despite immense disappointment. Bunlom's overall character creates the impression of kindness and honesty.

The representation of Bunchuay in this film is changed from *Bunchu Phu Narak*. In this film, he is more a representative character of rural people, not a city man who believes in the supremacy of being a Bangkokian. The actor, Suthep Prayoonpitak, replaces Nirut Sirichanya, in playing this character. The new Bunchuay uses a Suphanburi dialect, as do other abovementioned characters. He is sincere with everybody and possesses a fairly rural manner – being polite, harmless, and not so smart. The main difference from the first version is that he no longer expresses his favour for acting so urban or looks down upon those who are rural. He takes care of Bunlom when they all visit Maha Jam. He looks after Bunchu during his second stay in Bangkok. The good feel of an extended family can be felt from the way he treats his family. It can be seen that the change in the nature of Bunchuay's character is to deliver a positive image of rural people as those who stand firm in their roots.

The representation of Bualoy looks very simple, but results in the constructive image of the rural similar to Bunlom. No scene depicts her as a naughty little child with

wayward behaviour, such as screaming for toys or any kind of troublesome manners that may irritate the elders. She is highly obedient. Her main dialogue is “you will be sorry for your romance”, said to Bunchuay in the early part of the story after seeing him flirts with female passengers. This mirrors her conscience in terms of distinguishing what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate. To conclude, Bualoy’s character appears to be a linkage of a rural nature and good recognition of social expectation.

Maha Jam (see picture 27) has been in Bangkok for a long time, but he is regarded a representative character of rural people owing to his dialect and manner, especially, betel nut chewing. He is often seen given moral and philosophical advice. For example, he tells Bunchu during their first meeting that studying is for increasing the stock of knowledge, not for increasing one’s ‘beauty’, which can be understood to mean that education is not something to show off how good you are. He also tells Bunchu not to deal with women in a romantic fashion and accepts the request to watch over Bunchu, despite the fact that he is not his relative. The character of Maha Jam reflects the tradition of interdependence amongst the rural people, as much as communicating intelligence from the rural point of view.



Picture 27 Maha Jam (facing the audience) during his first meeting with Bunchu and his family



Picture 28 the senior monk

The senior monk (see picture 28) appears in only the first sequence. Similar to the prequel, he talks to Bunchu in Pali concerning Buddhist teachings. His role in the story is as Bunchu's advisor. He offers Bunchu to be with Maha Jam in order that Bunchu will not be on his own and fall into the problem as in the prequel. In this respect, his character is indicative of the relationship between the temple and layman that can still be found in the rural areas, inasmuch as the former bears the responsibility of guiding the latter. As explained in Chapter 2, this is what is expected by the 'community culture group' who theorizes that the relationship used to be, and should still be, a part of mainstream Thai culture and society.

Some location settings make a similar contribution to the promotion of ruralness, which are the typical locations found in rural areas depicted in a manner that equates the rural area with a space of spiritual beauty and the ideal Thai way of living. The sense of peace, merriment, and morality covers the overall atmosphere, while hardship in living is absent. Rice paddies, Buddhist temples, plus Bunchu's house are the settings used in this mode.

The rice field is used to introduce the rural area, having a quality suggestive of an agrarian society because it shows communal interaction, such as the gathering of farmers in typical and clean farmer attire. The setting itself looks simple, with images of rice stacks, green fields, and a wide space abounding with trees. Despite the primitive look, there is no representation of adversity or intolerable poverty as frequently represented in mainstream Thai films. This is more evident when Bunlom and other farmers are resting together having a chat in which no one calls for a better life.

The temple is another setting used in the introduction of the rural area, representing an undisturbed space where Bunchu and the senior monk discuss the matter of the entrance exam. Buddhist teachings are inserted in the discussion. The sound of birds singing fills the scene. Much of the background is composed of trees and rivers to communicate natural perfection, whereas a similar mood never appears in scenes of modern Bangkok.



Picture 29 Bunchu's house

Bunchu's house (see picture 29) appears briefly before the end of the first sequence. As in the prequel, the house is a Thai style house elevated from the ground. The space inside looks expansive, with the props expressing rural living, i.e., a pannier, mats, a lamp, and an old picture of Bunchu's father on the wall. The connotation coming out of this scene is somewhat comforting, as well as the cultural uniqueness inherent in the Thai architecture.

As previously mentioned, *Bunchu Two, Nongmai* does not represent Thainess within the limit of the rural or agriculture only, but also communicates Thainess by some urban elements, including the Chao Phraya River and the riverside house owned by Bunchuay. The former serves as a huge signpost of Bangkok, covering various locations such as a wharf, bridges, and the riverbank. Scenes of the river are shown at various points from the beginning to the end of the story. The use of the Chao Phraya River has a profound meaning by which the audience can see Bangkok in historical and cultural terms, rather than merely thinking of the city as a modern area. For the riverside house, even though it is located in the modern context, conveys almost the same meaning as the

house in Bunchu's village, although it appears more elegant with Thai decorations as in the first film. The house is the residence for rural characters such as Bunchu and his family whose lifestyle seems clearly original, uncomplicated, and uncompetitive. Both the house and river could be regarded as a tool for emphasizing identity in terms of traditional landmarks and/or lifestyle.

The signifiers in promotion of Thainess in spiritual and cultural terms include the Thai universities and lotuses. Some universities are intentionally projected in the opening sequence – Kasetsart University, Ramkhamhaeng University, Silpakorn University, and Thammasat University. On the surface, these universities are just an indication of where each character is studying for a bachelor's degree. On a more profound level, all of the universities can denote the individuality of Thai society from an academic angle owing to the fact that they have been part of the Thai educational system for decades and they are places which a majority of the young often target for their higher education. The meaning about self-sufficiency, social accountability, and agrarian society is given via some of their extant components, i.e., buildings or philosophy, as described below. Lotuses are an element that concerns the matter of localization, which will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent discussion of the universities.

Kasetsart University reminds one of the socio-cultural roots of Thailand. The name means agriculture and the school was founded for advancing knowledge in agricultural science. The image of the university during the opening sequence shows the simplicity of a student's lifestyle. Each of the students is down-to-earth, travelling by bike rather than going by a posh car. Their uniforms look very tidy and clean. In the scene where Bunchu visits the Faculty of Agriculture, a three-wheeled vehicle is selected to be a means for his university tour. Therefore, Kasetsart University in this film could represent Thai culture and/or the rural spirit encompassing self-sufficiency and cultivation.

Ramkhamhaeng University uses the name of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great who is attributed with invention of the Thai alphabet and promotion of democratic system. The image of Ramkhamhaeng University could have the similar connotation as Kasetsart University, which is more about the socio-cultural origins of Thailand. Interestingly, the introduction of Nara incorporates some slogans that appear on billboards in the background: 'We Will Never Neglect Each Other'; 'Krasae Dhamma Party: Promote Society, Promote Academic'. Both point to issues of social responsibility.

Silpakorn University is the location for introducing Kummoon and Chuey. Kummoon studies for his BA at the Faculty of Archaeology, while Chuey studies at the Faculty of Architecture. The catchphrase of the Faculty of Archaeology can be translated to English as ‘Human Studies, Progressive Excavation, Linguistic Specialization, and Art-Cultural Preservation’ (Faculty of Archeology, 2005: 6); that of the Faculty of Architecture is ‘Thai in Wisdom – International in Creativity’ (Faculty of Architecture, 2012: 5). It is found that both faculties give the impression of cultural recognition.

The story focuses on Thammasat University when introducing Yoi and Moree. The Dome at the campus of Thammasat University is shot as a symbolic building for many seconds. Thammasat University itself has a long history, especially, with respect to social activism, which can be understood according to key political incidents, such as 14 October 14 or 6 October 6, including the popular slogan translated to English – ‘I love Thammasat because Thammasat teaches me to love people’. The shape of the Dome is regarded as intentionally unique and refers to cultural independence because its designed was determined to not imitate or employ the principles of foreign art (Thammasat University, 2007). As a result, Thammasat University could signify socio-political memory and defiance to cultural Westernization.

The last signifier to be discussed is the use of a lotus. Kummoon joins the tradition of Valentine’s Day, as do Bunchu, Yoi, and Chuey. He gives a girl a lotus and then a rose. He says that the rose comes from *Ubon Ratchathani* (his hometown) and, to convey sincerity, he also has to give a lotus which is the symbolic flower of *Ubon Ratchathani*. Although his action and words look strangely incoherent, he has localized the tradition of Valentine’s Day by the use of local elements like a lotus which is also a symbolic flower for Buddhism. One matter to note is that Kummoon is shown as being successful in his romance while using such element, while the other three characters use foreign elements, roses, and fail. The lotus, therefore, could be considered a special signifier stressing Thai cultural identity.

### 3.3.4 Undesirable Aspects of Modernity

*Bunchu Two, Nongmai* resembles the prequel, as well as *Khu Wun Wai Wan*, in criticizing Thailand’s socio-economic modernization by the negative portrayal of some of the characters – Bunma, Manee, Manee’s employee, and Manee’s secretary – and location

settings showing such economic development – Manee’s office. Some signifiers also exist in the film to reflect ideas arguing against the ongoing modernity. The image of modern society becomes, in consequence, attached to spiritual weakness, unlike the rural society where Bunchu is from.



Picture 30 Bunma apologizing for his misdeed

Bunma (see picture 30) is a character from countryside. He bears a resemblance to Bunchu in many respects, such as having a nice manner and polite outfits. He first appears in the scene in which he and Bunchu report for duty at Thammasat University. Throughout the story, he has friendly interaction with both Bunchu and his group. Bunma, however, steals money from the development club in the story’s climax, causing Moree, Bunchu, and the group to run after him in order to get the money back. After Bunma is arrested, he seeks a chance to explain to Bunchu with tears:

“I did not intend to steal anyone else’s property. I’ve never thought of being a thief. But my family has no house to live in; no money to pay our debts. Our rice paddy has been taken. My family must confront a difficult life in Bangkok. My brother and sister cannot go to school. I hope you understand me, Bunchu.”

Suddenly, Bunma’s family enters the scene and burst into tears. Their clothes, movement, and words are expressive of rural life and adversity as explained by Bunma.

On the surface, Bunma's role provides a chance for Bunchu, Moree, and their group to demonstrate their interdependence. Some insights about Bunma can, however, be gained from Thanathorn Rittakol (Interview, 28 January 2015) who reveals that Bunma represents Bundit's adherence to moral principles. Bunma looks like a poor, pathetic character and he has to be jailed as a consequence of his stealing of money. In Bundit's point of view, poverty and/or misfortune should not be a reason for committing crimes. Even so, it cannot be denied that Bunma's role suggests an unfavourable consequence of economic development. When Thailand was enjoying booming businesses and industries around the early period when General Chatichai was Prime Minister (also the period when this film came to the cinema), it was reported that a large majority of the poor people did not really benefit from the perceived prosperity. Somboon Siriprachai (2009: 197-200), for example, identified the development as an unfair phenomenon whereby only the rich gained increased income, whilst the poor faced living hardship. The presence of Bunma serves to be a reflection of such identification.

The character of Manee repeats the undesirable features of urban people as in the prequel. When she is furious, she listens to no explanation. She allows only her emotion to take control of her thinking. For example, she meanly refuses apologies from Bunchuay after their misunderstanding at the wharf. She also screams at her secretary who serves as a messenger between her and Bunchuay in the early part of sequence two and shouts at Moree when being asked to help with sponsorship of the development club. Overall, she sticks with a competitive life (because she has an advertising agency company), as well as handling her troubles completely without calmness.

Manee's employee appears in only two scenes. His manner communicates a negative notion of the urban environment to a large extent. He negotiates with Manee for an increase of his salary. When he fails, he becomes very fierce and threatening. After Manee receives help from Moree and her friends, he tries to obstruct them on the grounds that no work can be done until he and the other workers move all their belongings. The way he talks to them is disrespectful, resulting in a fight between the group and the workers under his control.

Manee's secretary is present in a short scene in which Bunchuay makes an effort to reconcile with Manee. The secretary has to carry a message and an apology gift (a cake) to Manee on behalf of Bunchuay. At first when Bunchuay talks to her, she replies with unkind words and unfriendly eyes. It can be understood that Bunchuay is not a smart



urban man, thereupon she does not bother to show any respect. This can be deemed as a reflection of the view that there is a tendency in the modern city to not show respect for anyone with a rural impression, no matter who they are in reality.

The setting that is representative of modern society within the urban domain is Manee's office (see picture 31), which is used three times in the story. Two of them are the situations when Bunchuay makes efforts to impress Manee with his apologies for the incident in which Manee is accused by Bunlom that she flirted with him for free entrance to the ferry. The other one is about the conflict between Manee and her reckless employees. They argue with each other on the matter of salary; her employees would like to have higher pay but Manee refuses to do as they request. All of these scenes, however, show interaction in which the characters, aside from Bunchuay, are unwilling to compromise or negotiate. The reaction of these characters is full of arrogance and impoliteness. The office is, in this manner, a location for showing the other side of advancing to modernity because it communicates that people are more aggressive, ill-mannered, and less generous.



Picture 31 Manee's office (Bunchuay is asking Manee's secretary to pass the cake to her boss)

Further to the setting, some props are used as special signifiers to produce a negative connotation about the ongoing Westernization: one is cake, the other is roses.

Cake is present in the scene where Bunchuay makes an effort to express regret towards Manee; he offers a big cake with the words 'I am sorry' written on it. Manee throws the cake out the window (see picture 32), which hits the head of a luckless passer-by. Similar to the birthday cake in *Bunchu Phu Narak*, the apology cake is associated with destruction or conflict. As previously analyzed, cake is traditionally a Western sweet. The

incorporation of the cake in depicting Manee's fury can be a comment on the ugliness of Thai way of Westernization and/or modernization.



Picture 32 Manee throwing the cake out of the window with fury before it falls on the head of a passerby

Roses are used by Bunchu, Yoi, and Chuey on Valentine's Day to express their loves to the girls whom they like, namely Moree, Nok, and an unnamed girl, respectively. Giving roses to communicate love is a tradition from the West. In a previous scene, Yoi tells Bunchu to be confident in the rose. Nevertheless, all ends in unexpected rejection or failure. Moree says to Bunchu that she will accept the rose as an expression of friendship. Nok does not say anything, but punches Yoi, followed by tearing the rose into pieces to make him realize that she neither likes him, nor appreciates the method he employs. For Chuey, he bores the girl with a slow and protracted speech while offering her a red rose. The sole reaction he receives from her is a yawn. The rose, in this context, connotes that modernization and/or Westernization does not always bring forth anticipated success.

### 3.4 Summary

In the last half of the 1980s, as described in Chapter 2, Thai society began to experience an expanding economy and, in return, it underwent a more rapid socio-cultural shift.

*Khu Wun Wai Wan* came to the cinema in 1986 with a theme showing how young people should adhere to expected tradition and how they pay the price for noncompliance. By attaching moral and ethical superiority to the characters, settings, and

traditions unrelated to modernity, *Khu Wun Wai Wan* implies that modern society has many social problems. Suffice it to say, much of the representation in this film reflects the need to revise the way Thai society has changed in order to protect the concept of appropriate behaviour of youth and the proper way of being Thai.

A similar reflection is much clearer in *Bunchu Phu Narak*. While Bunchu, Moree, and their friends occupy roles that show ideal teens, urbanization is made to appear troublesome with the depiction of unethical behaviour by some characters who enjoy an urban lifestyle, bringing about an impression that some of the city residents are not truly civilized and economic modernization does not necessarily bring forth moral or ethical enhancement. On the contrary, the depiction of Thai identity, which lessened in significance during the 1980s, is represented in a good light as emphasized by the dialogue and the settings for the central characters that supports the appreciation of the virtues of Thainess.

*Bunchu Two, Nongmai* came to the cinema only a year after the prequel to continue the story about Bunchu and his friends, all of whom are depicted as a group of ideal young people with tacit promotion of higher education as a site for youth development. To oppose the socio-economic shift in the late 1980s, the notion of Thainess is recalled through a combination of filmic elements. The signs or images suggestive of modernity are represented in a way that connotes a 'quick-tempered' and 'uncompromising' nature as shown in Manee's conflict. However, the most outstanding element is Bunma's theft caused by the necessity to help his poor family. This projects the image of unequal development – the process by which the poor remained disadvantaged despite the discourse that Thailand was emerging as the new economic tiger of Asia.

## Chapter 4 Bundit Rittakol's Youth Films from the 1990s

This chapter continues the discussion, focusing on the films directed by Bundit that were released during 1990-1999: *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* (1990), *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* (1991), *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* (1992), and *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* (1996). The aim of the chapter is to show that Bundit's 1990s youth films continue to espouse the view against the changing social and economic environment in Thai society.

### 4.1 Bunchu Five, Nueahom

At the time *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* was released to the cinemas, the Thai economy had already become noted throughout the world for the impressive growth figures. The growth rate was around 12% a year from 1988 to 1990 (Coxhead, 1998: 1). The country's strategy was to become the economic center in the region (Nipon Puapongsakorn, 1999: 7). Instead of providing a story that promotes or implies support for the ongoing development, *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* repeats the theme of opposition to the social changes that were occurring, with an extra emphasis on the matter of the state of democratization.

#### 4.1.1 Projection of Desirable Youth

The depiction of the central characters in *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* is similar to the prequels. Although Bunchu again plays the protagonist role, he is frequently joined by Moree and their group, particularly when he copes with the key conflicts. As well, they all have almost the same personalities. Bunchu and the entire group are in the film to project, as well as promote, the inherent ideal quality of youth, as discussed in Chapter 2, similar to the first two films. The nature of their characters is, nonetheless, more like a reminder of the generation from the late 1970s. They are undergraduate students, belonging to the top state universities. They work together to rectify a problem experienced by a new character named 'Ou'. There is a slight change in that Bunchu and Ou play a more dominant role, while Moree and the other members of the group are

placed in a more secondary role, as seen by their lesser involvement in the conflict. The character of Nok can also be included in the group. The discussion, hence, focuses on the personal aspects of Bunchu and Ou, and then analyses Moree and the gang, followed by the overall picture of the group.

It is evident that Bunchu (see picture 33) remains essentially the same as in the two prequels. He has the standard attributes of a naïve and pleasant young man, rather than having a smart or modern look. He is never shy to show himself as a strict Buddhist. He not only has faith in Buddhism, but also sufficient knowledge in Buddhist teachings that he integrates when he gives advice to friends. Bunchu never fails to pay respect towards his seniors, such as Bunlom, the monk of his acquaintance, or Maha Jam. At the same time, he still follows Bunlom's wish to complete a degree in Bangkok, showing that he always keeps in mind the tradition of obeying his elders. Even with his friends, Bunchu honours them with a polite, friendly manner and inoffensive reactions. He reasons with a friend that it is important for him to speak nicely in order to comfort the listener.

As in the first two films, Bunchu shows concern for anyone who experiences some trouble, as well as taking some action to help. In the early scenes, for example, he tries to stop a fight between two students he does not know, which is, in fact, just a rehearsal in the drama club. Then, he takes the troubles to help Ou get back home despite a scheduled party with Moree and the gang. This causes him to miss the fun with his friends, but he never feels sorry. He also offers Ou a free lunch and keeps himself updated on her hardships, including making every effort to improve her situation. It can be said that he represents a young man who is never hesitant to cope with the other's problems.



Picture 33 Bunchu (right) talking to Ou (left) about her financial problem

In addition, Bunchu refuses to accuse anyone when he is discredited by an anonymous team during the election campaign. He says that he has no proof which indicates his high degree of integrity. At the same time, he never thinks of changing his rural appearance – including his Suphanburi dialect and common dressing style, all of which make him a somewhat humorous character. This is exemplified by a short scene when he plays table tennis game where he dresses in a full student uniform. In this regard, Bunchu serves an exemplar of an ideal young person.

Ou (see picture 33) is a new character deemed very significant to the film narrative because she serves as the centre of conflict for which Bunchu and the group are obliged to take part. Originally, Ou was from a rich family, but struggles with some impairment to her financial situation. Even so, she does not go on the wrong track to rectify her situation, such as to become a prostitute or selling drugs. This demonstrates one of the required attribute of the ideal youth, which is to be patient and keep oneself within the limit of moral and ethical standards. What Ou has in common with Bunchu is to embody the exemplary qualities of youth – obedience, courtesy, and thoughtfulness. Below is a sample of her nature.

Ou never opposes her mother. She moves to the UK in accordance with her mother's wishes, despite her success in obtaining student grants and having a joyful companionship with Bunchu and his group. She also speaks in a soft manner and is obisant in all the scenes she appears. When her finances are restored, she does not show any false pride in herself as seen from her courteous regard for Bunchu. As well, she reveals her wish for giving grants to someone who deserves money. In addition, she does not hesitate to meet Moree to explain the truth when she finds out that Bunchu has a relationship crisis with Moree because of her – Moree thinks that Bunchu fancies Ou. Ou is, consequently, equal to Moree in projecting how ideal female youth should act.

Moree and the group (see picture 34) are similar to Bunchu and Ou in terms of being good youth in a traditional Thai context. When they are together, each of them maintains idealized behaviour or manners, such as forgiveness, sympathy, kindness, and not discriminating against anyone either within or outside the group – maintaining unity is still an important part of their qualities.

Interpersonal relations and group interaction that show their joyful and/or undisturbed friendship is still the main channel for depicting some of the ideal traits of all

the central youth characters. For example, when Bunchu starts his life at Kasetsart University, Waiyakorn acts as a caretaker for Bunchu. He guides Bunchu around the area of student clubs to help him learn of their specifics. In the party scene, the group gathers and joyfully asks each other about their progress, as well as animating the meeting with jokes. After the party is over, Moree wonders about Bunchu's absence from the party. She goes to Bunchu's dormitory with Waiyakorn to find out why he did not come. Waiyakorn tries to reason on behalf of Bunchu, but suddenly Moree sees Bunchu walking with Ou, whereby she misunderstands their connection and starts to cry and Waiyakorn rushes to inform Bunchu of Moree's distress. At one point when Bunchu is struggling with campaigning for his candidacy, Moree and the rest of the group offer their help to Bunchu. They cooperate in producing posters for the campaign and distributing leaflets to help Bunchu. They make no aggressive reaction to the denouncement by the other candidates that they are outsiders. Thereafter, they accept both Ou and An to be part of their group, before helping Bunchu overcome a problem with the student grants.



Picture 34 the group discussing Bunchu's election campaign

The above examples point to the type of interpersonal relations and group interaction highly admired in the Thai context. Firstly, the group welcomes everyone, no matter what class they belong or how rich or poor they are. In this manner, Bunchu is never excluded from the group, even though he does not have a high social background and Ou is admitted into the group with support or encouragement from the group members, so is An. Secondly, they stay together at all times, no matter if the situation

they encounter is filled with contentment or obstacles. This shows the sincerity of their friendship by which they act together in helping Bunchu and Ou battle the error of student grants, plus help in the election campaign. Thirdly, the unity of their group does not depend on shared benefits. It is rather the spirit that keeps each of them together. They hold on to forgiveness, kindness, and understanding. In addition, whenever they are together, they create a delightful atmosphere rather than showing off their wealth, property, success, or the like, as well as maintain their considerate regard for one another. Fourthly, even though they are not from the same university, the difference of their universities never impacts their group relationship. Finally, their group never refuses good interaction with people from outside the group and never creates any problems for others.

The research finds that, in many scenes, general interaction outside the group where the central characters, such as Bunchu, are present also stresses the aspect of good Thai youth. For example, wherever Bunchu goes, he receives plenty of friendly greetings from friends and he does the same to them. Sometimes, he pokes fun at other students with Thai-style teasing. After the election is over with the result that Bunchu and Janpen lose, they both congratulate Raewat on his victory, in spite of their fierce competition. All these actions give the message of how social interaction amongst the youth should be carried out in the quest of a harmonious society.

What should be highlighted again is the picture that all the central characters spend their life within expected limits in terms of decent/acceptable behaviour as deemed by society. They do not deal with drugs, sex, crimes, prostitution, or any activities unsupported in the traditional view. During the story, Bunchu engages in sport-related activities, such as tug-of-war, student cheer, and table tennis, and does it in a playful manner, rather than as a serious competition. In addition, it is shown that he, as well as many other youth characters, focus on their university life and are part of selected extra-curricular clubs which is the setting for many scenes. In the case of the gang, they often assemble at places that are simple and safe rather than places such as clubs, pubs, and bowling alleys, where youth in real life enjoy frequenting. Somporn Thepsitha (1985: 13-19 cited in Smit Sara-Ubol, 1991: 72-75) once divided the problem of youth ethics into 15 categories, some of which involved inappropriate lifestyle, such as sexy dressing, over spending at coffee shops, expensive meals, high priced vehicles, and drugs. Therefore, it can be seen that the lifestyle of the central characters portrayed in the film contrasts sharply with the real lifestyle of young people. This leads one to conclude that the



portrayal of the central characters is intended to promote a proper life in opposition to the growing trend among the youth.

Youth romance is the next issue to be addressed. In *Bunchu Five, Nueahom*, the only element of youth romance concerns the relationship between Bunchu and Moree, which starts with Moree sighting Bunchu being at the roadside with Ou. She suddenly thinks that Bunchu has rejected her and immediately leaves the campus in tears. Waiyakorn, who is present at the scene, hurriedly informs Bunchu of what has happened. Then, Bunchu tries to go to explain his association with Ou to Moree, but his request to see her is rebuffed before he has any chance to tell her the truth. The tension in their relationship escalates almost to the point of breaking. Nonetheless, Bunchu retains his hope for restoring his relationship with Moree and keeps patient all along.

In the typical narrative of a youth film, the matter of romance troubles such as this would be developed more and more to be resolved only at the climax all as part of the central thematic conflict of the story. *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* dismisses this convention by granting room for the character of Ou to take part in the conflict. As soon as Ou knows that Bunchu experiences hard times with Moree, she goes to Thammasat University to see Moree alone. Moree could be mad at Ou, but she stays calm and allows Ou to give a sincere explanation of the truth and the conflict is resolved. The rest of the story is about the student election and the problematic grants. Therefore, the romantic conflict does not dominate the story, indicating a promotion of the belief that youth are not the age for serious love, as suggested in the classical saying ‘Ya Ching Sug Kon Haam’ (or ‘Early Ripe Early Rotten’). Sirikul Isranurug and Wanna Taechawanichpong (2000: 9-16) reported that sex before marriage among university students gradually increased in around the 1990s, leading to an expansion of venereal disease and unprepared pregnancy, as much as bringing their education to a halt. The way romance is represented in *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* appears to reflect opposition to the tendency for teenage romance.

The simplicity of managing the romantic problem also contains a noteworthy implication. After Moree listens to Ou’s explanation, her understanding of Bunchu immediately returns and the conflict is resolved. This shows that Moree relies more on reason and less on emotion. For Bunchu, he is never upset with Moree for misunderstanding. He only awaits a chance to reconcile with her, pointing to his ability for emotional control as well. Their response to the problem results in a quick solution that

the audience would never see in a typical youth film and suggests that youth should use reasons in the context of love.

Bunchu's expression of his personal determination is another exceptional aspect presented by the youth character in the central roles. In a scene where Bunchu chats with Maha Jam, Bunchu is asked what his major study is going to be. Instead of mentioning a popular discipline, Bunchu opts for 'pesticides'. Maha Jam praises Bunchu for his choice because Maha Jam sees that pesticides will equip Bunchu with knowledge and training necessary for assisting Thai farmers. As confirmed by Prawase Wasi, unbalanced development has caused the rural sector to encounter the potential for collapse (Phra Dhamma Pidok, 2001b: 99-100). The conversation between Bunchu and Maha Jam can be interpreted to promote that youth should pay attention to the rural sector which was long ignored by the state and the rest of the Thai society during the period of intense economic development. This interpretation can be confirmed by a short scene of Bunchu's election campaign poster whose key messages consist of 'agricultural justice group' [กลุ่มเกษตรธรรม] and 'fairness of budget arrangement' [เพื่อความเป็นธรรมในการรับทุน]. In fact, such attention used to be given during the period of student activism. According to Samrerng Yaengkratog (1985: 6), students during 1973-1974 were determined to publicize rural people's adversity of being a marginalized group through channels such as books and exhibitions.

Finally, all the central youth characters tend to convey to the audience the idea of interdependence. Apart from the election campaign, all the central youth characters cooperate in managing the problems in the chaotic event. At the very end of the film, Sayun's friend releases a truck shown at the Kaset Fair. Everyone is then put in uncontrolled circumstances because the truck moves unstopably and without predictable direction. Many of them try to help, but fail. Even so, they all keep going until the chaos is over. The research indicates that this is an expression of interdependence in opposition to individualism. Heroism is, thus, not shown and every character joins in solving the problem at an equal level. None of them abandons the problem for their own comfort. To conclude, all the central youth characters continue to be representative of interdependence as they are in the first two films

#### 4.1.2 Democratization

*Bunchu Five, Nueahom* was the first film to incorporate an element of satire on the state of Thai democracy. This element is found in scenes of the conflict over the grant that is tackled through the student election in which the audience can see how much all the candidates, except Bunchu, are highly motivated to be the victor. They do whichever they can to reach their goal, even to attack Bunchu with hostile speeches. At the same time, there is no indication that the other candidates are really worried about the incorrectness of the grant approval, as is Bunchu. Their actions match those of Thai politicians in many general elections. The best election to be cited was the one that took place on 24 July 1988 – the latest general election before the release of the film in 1990. According to data in *Democracy for the People* (The Government Public Relations Department, n.d.: 134-136), some of the election offenses committed in the 1988 general election were similar to the actions of the candidates in the film. The offenses cited in the 1988 election included acts of defaming other candidates and candidates causing the electors to slander other candidates. These wrongdoings are often conducted by Thai politicians whose intention is to earn a victory without ethical considerations. In the view of Thai people, Thai elections have not yet improved in terms of fairness. This could be a reason for including a plot element of problematic democracy in the film.



Picture 35 Janpen



Picture 36 Raewat

In the student election, one character, Janpen (see picture 35), tries many ways to achieve victory, not all of which are considered fair and sincere. For example, he persuades Bunchu to side with him only because Bunchu is well-known amongst the voters and, thereby, can help him get elected as president. He offers the vice-president post to Bunchu if he wins. However, Janpen refuses to get involved in the amendment of the student grants program as requested by Bunchu. He reasons that he cannot trouble Sayun (the amendment would cancel Sayun's receipt of the grant), because Sayun is an influential voter. During the campaign, he attracts voters with policies about entertainment, as well as attacking Bunchu, who has turned into his rival, with a hostile speech. All these are indicative of Janpen's overwhelming desire for victory whereby he is ready to pursue all means to advance his campaign, no matter what. In addition to the campaign, he is inclined to be a pleasure seeker full of self-inflating pride. He overstates his qualities to oppress other people, indulges in useless entertainment, and yearns for a greater social status.

The character of Raewat (see picture 36) comes across as much more admirable than Janpen with an appearance of being a serious, knowledgeable student. Despite this appearance, Raewat is another representation of undesirable young, similar to Janpen because he thinks of Bunchu solely in terms of potential to increase the popularity of his team. He asks Bunchu to join his team in exchange for anything Bunchu would like. However, he refuses to help Bunchu over the matter of Ou, claiming that he has nothing to do with the problem. When the campaign starts, he uses a speech tacitly to discredit Bunchu, who becomes a rival candidate. He says that the university requires an experienced student leader, not a person who appears good, friendly, and favourable. In an athletic contest in which candidates compete against one another, Bunchu slips on a

banana peel thrown by Raewat, which shows that Raewat is not really a caring, honest person. The story makes clear that Raewat has no concern about others such as Janpen. What he is concerned about is only presenting a good personal image in order to triumph in the election, without really being serious about being a good leader.

In tandem with these two characters, some minor youth characters project a negative image of Thai democracy. In the early phase of the campaign, no student voters express their satisfaction for Bunchu. One student comments harshly that nobody wants an old-fashioned representative like him to represent the students in the faculty. Another student questions Bunchu as to why he wants to amend the regulations regarding the grant, remarking that the existing one is already good which indicates that they do not pay attention to the problem of the grant approval at all. It seems they do not support Bunchu only because Bunchu represents outmoded qualities from an agrarian perspective. They seem to be saying that such characteristics are no longer suitable for the modern society. At the same time, their ignorance of the grant problem suggests a lack of public awareness – and that they do not bother to deal with anything unless it gives them some advantage. *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* appears to present a critical reflection on Thai democracy in which many voters tend to consider the candidate's smart looks and populist proposal, rather than their true capacity and suitability of policies. In other words, the film raises the question of whether Thais are well prepared for the democratic system of government.

This issue is furthered when Bunma returns to the story. Bunma says that policy is the most important factor in gaining votes. However, policy for Bunma means vote buying, causing Bualoy to moan loudly that he is destroying democracy. This works as a critique of the fact that Thai democratization has not implanted the real concept of democracy in the minds of voters. At the same time, this reflects changes in the people's nature to be more materialistic by which money is superior to political principles. According to information compiled by Permpong Chaovalit and Srisompob Jitpiomsri (1988: 64-67), vote buying has become more and more accepted in Thailand's democratic system. The elector often casts their vote for the candidate who offers them the highest amount of money. Bunma's words, in this fashion, is another explicit reference to the problem facing Thai democracy.

### 4.1.3 The Stress on Socio-Cultural Identity

Socio-cultural identity in *Bunchu Five*, *Nueahom* refers to the recognizable aspects of Thai society and culture presented through mainstream channels, i.e., novels, arts, and teachings. Based on the assertion of Srisak Wallipodom (2000: 54), during the recent changes in Thai society, recognition of local culture has been in decline. As a reaction to the belief that such decline is real, socio-cultural identity in this film is stressed to enhance an appreciation of agrarianism, ruralness, and the uniqueness of the Thai way of living, as well as the Thai way of higher education. The rural characters – Bunlom, Bunchuay, Bualoy, and Bunma – the character’s rural backgrounds, campus/student life, as well as parts of Bangkok are employed to deliver the picture of what is thought to represent something that is specific to Thai society.

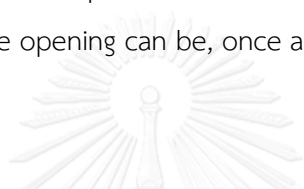


Picture 37 Bunchuay, Bunlom, Bualoy, and Bunma walking together as a family in the Kaset Fair

Bunlom, Bunchuay, Bualoy, and Bunma (see picture 37) not only enhance the story with their funny outdated mannerism, they are also a window on the basic decencies of rural society, so is Bunchu. They play their part with pure optimism, harmlessness, and mutual care. In the third sequence, Bunlom, Bunchuay, Bualoy, and Bunma wander around the Kaset Fair together as a family. Care for one another, as in the extended family, can be easily noticed from the way they interact with each other, which is not seen in the characters with urban backgrounds. It is also evident that they avoid aggression in all their conflicts and have a tendency to dwell on the most hopeful outcome, as their

world is free of cruelty. The situation in which Bunchuay knows of the relationship between Manee and Professor Sutto is a good example. Bunchuay goes to Sutto's workplace to meet him face-to-face, but Bunchuay does not threaten him with force or mention anything about Manee. Instead, he only tries to create a situation where he can act as the hero to help Manee in some difficult situation in order to catch her fancy, but the plan does not work.

In *Bunchu Sam Jum Jak Mae* (which is a kind of short film included at the beginning of *Bunchu Five, Nueahom*), an image of a rice paddy (see picture 38) in the early morning is used to introduce the background of the key character as in the other movies in this series. The rice field provides a picture of rural nature not yet threatened by urban growth. The rice paddy in the opening can be, once again, interpreted as a reminder of agrarianism.



Picture 38 rice paddy in the opening scene



Picture 39 Bunlom talking to her acquaintance who is in the dance parade



Then, the story moves to typical rural settings in which plenty of indications of traditional Thainess appear. The first one a Thai dance parade (see picture 39), albeit incongruously starting the scene with *La Bamba*, a Mexican folk song popularised in the early 1990s. The dancers are in Thai style casual attire with powder on their faces. The background is full of rows of wooden houses, along with spectators who are witnessing the activity. After that, there is an image of friendly interaction amongst Bunchu, Bunlom, and a couple of residents, including a senior monk. Bunchu has a short conversation with the monk in Pali concerning Buddhist teachings. At the end of the scene, Bunlom instructs Bunchu to bear in mind the rules, namely not to dishonour his family, bring back a degree, be diligent, avoid romance, do not misbehave, and pray before going to bed.

In the abovementioned, all the action and the atmosphere is shown with utter joy. The interaction amongst the characters contains no hostility or unfamiliarity as in some urban scenes. The conversation between Bunchu and the monk or Bunchu and Bunlom denotes adherence to morality and social taboos which are absent in the scenes of modernity such as those set in Bangkok. All the events and settings in the rural scenes tacitly stress the integrity and pleasantness in the rural village, rather than looking down on it.



Picture 40 general atmosphere in Kasetsart University campus





Picture 41 Waiyakorn and Bunchu (second and third from the left) riding bicycles within the campus

It is very interesting to find that agrarianism is not stressed through the rural scenes only, but also on the campus (see picture 40, 41). All of the campus scenes portray peace and tranquillity, totally detached from chaotic living showing green parks and a disciplined lifestyle. The campus is a believable reproduction of the rural way of life, particularly, when it is revealed to be Kasetsart University, the first word of which means agriculture. In addition, this university is well-known for its aim to produce capable graduates for agriculture as a major economic sector, with its early teachings limited only within the fields of crop production, fishery, forestry, and cooperative (Kasetsart University, 2012: online). The use of Kasetsart University as a setting highlights the rural background of both the protagonist and the country.

In addition to the campus setting, there are the university student traditions. In *Bunchu Five, Nueahom*, these traditions consist of a welcoming ceremony (see picture 42) and the seniority system. A welcoming ceremony is put in the first sequence to inform the audience of the commencement of Bunchu's life in the university. The ceremony looks harsh and dirty, but essential for uniting the new students. The film puts an emphasis on the convention of the seniority system in the scene where Sayun offensively mentions Bunchu, but one of his friends warns him to hold Bunchu in esteem because Bunchu is already a third-year student. These traditions are rigorously practiced in Thai higher education. Although depiction of these traditions work as part of the background, their presence in the film is to evoke recognition of a student culture that is gradually being overshadowed by new cultural tendencies which are, as explained by Rajanikorn Setihoe (1989: 99), full of alluring elements such as fashionable attire, bars, fast food, and drugs.



Picture 42 Janpen being forced to keep a lime in his mouth as part of the welcoming ceremony

Bangkok is normally recognised as the heart of economic and technological modernity in Thailand. Many scenes set in Bangkok in *Bunchu Five*, *Nueahom*, however, refute such a notion by the use of locations where Bangkok's modern look is deemphasized in order to deliver another view of the city. Such locations include the Chao Phraya River (see picture 43); Pi Pong's food stall (see picture 44) and a Thai restaurant instead of a fast food place; Thai style houses, such as Bunchuay's riverside house (see picture 45); and the Kaset Trade Fair which depicts simple shopping joined by people from different classes. None of these settings seem to highlight the economic supremacy of Bangkok, as is detailed in the part about urbanization in Chapter 2. They rather show a living style looking very Thai, such as travelling by boat along the Chao Phraya River.

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Picture 43 Chao Phraya River as an introductory scene of Bangkok



Picture 44 Pi Pong's food stall



Picture 45 Bunchu and Bunma in Bunchuay's riverside house

#### 4.1.4 Criticism of Modernity in the Urban Space

Prawase Wasi (1998: 13-14) has expressed the view that development or modernization aims primarily at the increase of properties or wealth no matter if done at the expense of other components such as individual's mind, society, and environment, leading to the weakening of social institutions and morality. Prawase identifies this as 'unsustainable development'. Along this line, *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* is filled with critical representations of modernity, particularly in some scenes of Bangkok that are shot in a way that the audience can sense the typical modern lifestyle, such as rush hour and luxurious spending. In addition, those Bangkok scenes feature actions intended to represent ethical or moral decline. Some elements are combined to give an implicit message regarding the economic situation. To validate this inference, it is important to look into the youth antagonist, along with some of the supporting characters, the meanness of Bangkokians, and Bunchu's election campaign.



Picture 46 Sayun (second from the right) drinking with friends

The youth antagonist is Sayun (see picture 46). He exploits his underprivileged background in taking advantage of the student grants program and misuses the money for personal pleasure. In his first appearance, he speaks proudly about his deceitful application for the grant. He boldly reveals in public that he likes to spend money for food and drinks with his friends. After Bunchu declares a wish to amend the student grants regulation to preclude applicants such as Sayun, he attacks the reputation of Bunchu instead of repenting his own actions. He orders his friends, for example, to create a false campaign in the name of Bunchu so that the voters will mistake it as Bunchu's bad behaviour. He and his friends are the cause of the disorder in the final sequence; one of his friends releases the ploughing truck in which Bunlom and Bualoy are sitting because they are irritated with Bunchu and the group for detecting Sayun's misuse of the grant money. All of this points to the low degree of ethical behaviour in Sayun. He is interested solely in self-pleasure without any thoughts about 'right' or 'wrong', including what outcome he will encounter. What should be highlighted is the connection between Sayun and a modern lifestyle; he spends money for personal pleasure, such as drinking in an expensive restaurant. This makes Sayun resemble Toeng in the first *Bunchu* film in relaying the proposed idea that modernity can be morally and ethically damaging, particularly, to the youth, because it induces them to focus on consumption regardless of the suitability of their expenditures.

Some supporting characters function similar to Sayun. They are ignorant of traditional norms and some of their actions look morally unethical. The point is that many of these characters have an urban, high society background.



In the first sequence, Manee (see picture 47) is mad at Bunchuay after being stuck in a speed boat provided by Bunchuay. Although Bunchuay attempts to rescue her, Manee carries on with her extreme anger. Once Manee meets Professor Sutto, whose appearance is much smarter and more modern than Bunchuay, she is immediately attracted to him. What happens thereafter is teasing romantic overtures with Professor Sutto until she finds out that Professor Sutto already has a girlfriend. In a scene at the Kaset Fair, Manee continues to be flirtatious towards Professor Sutto despite knowing his relationship status. Therefore, Manee represents the image of a modern woman whose morality contrast with her outer appearance. She has an inappropriate romantic attraction for Sutto that signifies her self-centred attitude. At the same time, she maintains her unfriendly actions towards Bunchuay no matter how much Bunchuay tries to comfort her.



Picture 47 Manee during her flirtatious moment



Picture 48 Professor Sutto in the same moment

Similar to Manee, Professor Sutto (see picture 48) is a character exhibiting immature conduct. He represents the image of an educated person who naturally

receives admiration from the people around him. Many of his actions are, nonetheless, indicative of dishonesty and lack of care. In the second sequence, Bunchu seeks help from Professor Sutto in an attempt to amend the regulation of the student grants. However, Professor Sutto rejects Bunchu with the reason given that the regulation is already well established. Later, he declares that he refuses to help because he does not want to engage in any complicated matter that may harm his career. Professor Sutto also hides the truth about his girlfriend from Manee until his girlfriend shows up. In the last sequence when Manee asks him to guide her around the Kaset Fair, he is still happy to be with her. It can be interpreted that Professor Sutto has a problematic awareness of ethical behaviour, similar to Manee. He is concerned about personal gratification, without thinking of the impact on other people, such as his girlfriend or Ou.



Picture 49 Professor Sutto's girlfriend

The scene where Professor Sutto's girlfriend (see picture 49) first appears adds to the negative reflection of modern society to an equal degree. In that scene, she is deceived by Professor Sutto's colleague that he might not be in the office – in fact, Sutto is there, but having a sweet moment with Manee. When Professor Sutto shows up with Manee at the university, the same colleague play jokes with him about the romance, instead of providing a serious warning of how inappropriate his conduct is. Actions such as these imply the links between modern society and decreasing sincerity.

The last supporting character to be discussed is Ou's mother (see picture 50). All of the scenes in which she appears point to her firm belief in the class system categorized by wealth. In one scene, she tells Ou that Bunchu is from the lower class, while she and Ou are above him in social status. She enjoins Ou to avoid contact with him. A mind-set

such as hers tends to exemplify the pettiness of rich urban residents who are dominated by money and materialistic thoughts.



Picture 50 Ou's mother

Again, with reference to Bangkok, many locations are made to represent a modern lifestyle. The most common settings are crowded walkways where no one pays attention to each other. Scenes such as that in Bunchu's hometown would be relatively unknown. A scene of a bus serves a similar purpose. When Bunchu travels by bus, the conductor treats the passengers poorly. He attempts to pack them into a tight space using harsh, impolite language. Then, he signals the driver to hit the brakes of the bus abruptly so that it skids, squeezing all the passengers together. The nature of city residents is more evident in the situation when Ou accidentally bumps a girl. She is scolded over and over again by the girl's mother, even though she has apologised. Bunchu witnesses the situation and his sympathy for Ou drives him to compensate her bad luck with a free taxi ride. When the taxi arrives at Ou's house, he finds that his wallet has been stolen by a pickpocket, presumably on the bus. The taxi driver shows his displeasure upon knowing the circumstance because he only thinks of the fare (see picture 51). Ou tries begging her mother for money to help Bunchu, but her mother refuses saying that the amount she has is not enough. All these tend to point to the negative side of modern Bangkok, portraying how care and responsibility are absent from Bangkokians, even though they are considered to be more developed than rural people.



Picture 51 a taxi driver being upset with Bunchu



Picture 52 Bunchu's poster

As a final point, Bunchu's campaign stresses assistance for poor Kaset students in the name of the Agricultural Group. When Bunchu runs a campaign with Nara, Ou, and Moree, he uses a megaphone, speaking from a three-wheeled bike. He says that he will help Kaset students who are in poor financial difficulties, regardless of their study results. He uses a poster (see picture 52) showing the title 'Agricultural Group' and its intention to promote justice. Bunchu's campaign implies some message concerning the matter of development, as the term Kaset as used by Bunchu can be translated as agriculture. Therefore, to help 'Kaset' can mean to lend a hand to farmers. Moreover, it is evident that the agricultural sector has not been given serious attention in the development process because it is not seen as a prosperous sector, unlike industry, services, or finance. Accordingly, Bunchu's campaign works as criticism against the unfair treatment in the management of the Thai economy, with the reiteration of Kaset or agriculture in the



campaign serving as an affirmation of agrarian significance above industry or other aspects of modernity.

## 4.2 Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui

The fourth in the series of *Bunchu* films conveys a message speaking against the way Thai society has changed in terms of society and the economy. Many characters are in their late youth and they confront problems and issues prevailing in the modern environment, such as dishonest colleagues, business competition, and job applications. Even so, they manage to work out correct solutions with conscientious thinking.

### 4.2.1 Stepping into Adulthood with Ideal Qualities

The way of promoting the ideal concept of youth has changed slightly from the previous films. Bunchu is still depicted as an ideal young person, while the other characters in the gang, except Moree, are destined to struggle with becoming adults. Bunchu looks much more mature and conscious of his decisions, but some of the gang allows themselves to fall into insincere romances as they are leaving their youthfulness. The outcome is inevitable sadness, plus the first fragmentation of the group as there is conflict over the same woman. Only Bunchu remains unhurt and develops into a conscientious young man in that he fits firmly into the concept of desirable youth. Nonetheless, every central youth character learns to adapt in order to cope with the hardship of being an adult in terms of work, love, and life. Tongdee – a newly created character who is Bunchu’s slightly younger cousin and who follows the wish of his parents to see him obtain a university degree in Bangkok – is the only character slow at adapting because of his naivety, but is able to succeed in the end. Overall, *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* promotes how the youth should behave in both general and difficult situations and sheds light on the preparation of young people for crossing the line to become an adult.

Bunchu (see picture 53) is now a young person who is about to complete his undergraduate studies and begin working life. Bunchu brings Tongdee to Kasetsart University when he first arrives and always takes good care of him during his studies in Bangkok. He keeps showing his concerns about Tongdee. Every time Tongdee is missing from home, Bunchu will immediately search for him. When Tongdee has a romantic

problem with Lalita, Bunchu does not leave him alone. He repeatedly reminds Tongdee of a young person's obligation to study and think of other people. This indicates the heightened degree of maturity possessed by Bunchu and shows that Bunchu is ready to be a reliable adult who can bear more responsibility for people under his care.



Picture 53 Bunchu and Tongdee during their arrival in Bangkok

There are also some situations depicting Bunchu's capacity for self-control in the face of personal emotion. The first one is a situation in which everyone fanaticizes about Lalita after being deceived into believing that she is courting them personally. Bunchu is the only character who knows what Lalita is up to because he can control his fascination in Lalita. The second situation is regarding Tongdee and Lalita. Tongdee is obsessed by Lalita, which makes him fail many courses. His parents are mad upon seeing the results, but Bunchu calms them down and begs for a second chance. When Tongdee escapes from his house in Suphan Buri to meet with Lalita in Bangkok, Bunchu searches for Tongdee himself until he sees Tongdee returning with a gloomy expression, caused by the fact that Tongdee realizes already that Lalita does not really like him. Bunchu expresses no aggressive reaction, only showing sympathy for Tongdee instead of rebuking him for causing trouble.

Interestingly, in the scene where Tongdee talks to Lalita about Bunchu, the audience learns that Bunchu has been ordained since he was 12 years old to fulfill a vow he made to his mother. Tongdee also relates that Bunchu is an honest and trustworthy person. He will only express what he thinks without lying and he would have certainly gotten married or become a rich person if he had remained in Suphan Buri rather than

coming to Bangkok. Tongdee's words help to stress Bunchu's ideal qualities. Firstly, Bunchu is an obedient son who has entered the monkhood, as well as being determined to attain a university degree in accordance with his mother's desire instead of pursuing his own desires. Secondly, Bunchu is a person to whom people can give their trust – lying is never part of his nature.

Another ideal quality evident in Bunchu is thoughtfulness. Subsequent to Lalita's lying that Moree may be in trouble for hiring him to be her model, Bunchu emphatically declines Moree because he does not want to cause Moree any difficulty. As soon as he realizes from Prapun that Lalita has made up the story, he rushes to tell Moree about his misunderstanding and expresses the wish to help her. He does not mention any payment, not even once. Another example is in a riverside pavilion where Bunchu and the gang are discussing the future of Bunchu and Moree. Bunchu tells everyone in the gang that he does not want to choose either Moree or the senior monk. In that situation, choosing 'Moree' means he will remain in Bangkok and continue his romance with her; whereas following the advice of the senior monk signifies his intention to go back home to work in the rice field since the monk urged him before to bring knowledge back to his hometown. The determination to not reject the monk shows how much he is thoughtful about others, apart from just Moree.

The last aspect of Bunchu's nature is to stand firm over his personal convictions. As stated above, Bunchu is hesitant about his own future. He loves Moree, but Moree is in Bangkok. The only way to be with her is to stay and work in Bangkok after his graduation. Nonetheless, as seen in the previous movies in the series, his conviction is to assist people in his hometown with his newly obtained knowledge about cultivation. When the story reaches the climax, he resolutely drops the job application for careers in Bangkok, meaning that he gives up the chance of being close to Moree in order to fulfill his convictions.

While Bunchu still carries on with his university life, Moree has already graduated and started a job in an advertising company run by Manee. Sufficient data in this film indicates that Moree resembles Bunchu in portraying the way young people should act, as in all the previous *Bunchu* films. Moree never shows any disrespect towards Bunchu, even though she now is professionally superior. She is kind to him in every scene they are together. When Bunchu gives her a Valentine's gift, she does the same to him, saying that it is a gift on the occasion of "Thai Valentine's Day" (see picture 54). The gift is neither a card nor a rose, as in the standard Western tradition, but a pen. Moree does not look

down on anyone either. She shows herself to be a working woman who never dislikes her own job or complains about hard work. Although Moree has become an office woman, she never loses her courtesy and social ethics. In a scene wherein Bunchu asks Moree about their future, Moree says they both must allow more time to themselves in order to learn about the world. Following that, she expresses her delight upon learning of Bunchu's decision to go back to work in his hometown. She says it is a better choice than having a stagnant career in Bangkok. She also reaffirms the close bond between her and Bunchu in order to cheer him up.



Picture 54 Moree giving Bunchu a Valentine gift

All these data point to Moree ideal qualities in her late youth. Given her career in the city, she is willing to forego friendship with everyone, including Bunchu, to concentrate on her advancement in a new environment wherein competition, new people, and prosperity abound. However, Moree maintains her nature as previously depicted in the first three films in the *Bunchu* series. She exhibits kindness, thoughtfulness, gentility, patience, and a logical mind. The gift she gives to Bunchu on Valentine's Day also indicates her intention to adapt the adopted tradition rather than joining in it blindly without thinking of making any changes, unlike Lalita who will be discussed in the later part.

Tongdee (see picture 53) dresses very neatly in every scene he appears with an old-fashioned hairstyle and never offends people. He has a simple manner, albeit quite

talkative, including having a Suphan Buri accent. At the same time, he possesses all the similar characteristics as Bunchu has shown in the previous films, namely, sincerity, innocence, and courtesy. He is regarded an intelligent young man, but the strength of his convictions may not compare to that of Bunchu because of his obsessive thinking about Lalita – a woman with whom he is deeply in love. His love becomes so intense that the results of his first year studies are not admirable. He even ignores his parents and lies to Bunchu on behalf of Lalita in the third sequence. Despite going off on the wrong track, Tongdee eventually confesses his wrongdoings and controls his feeling about Lalita in the end. It can be said that his presence in the film projects a picture of polite youth, as much as the possibility of how a naïve young person can be manipulated by people like Lalita. Even so, he is successful at rising above his wayward behaviour after being shaken by romantic illusion. He is, thus, another character created to be in conformity with the ideal young person having well-mannered behaviour and courage to challenge and overcome a detrimental personal desire.



Picture 55 the group and their joyful meeting in the early story

For the group (see picture 55), Yoi, Kummoon, Prapun, and Chuey are the new graduates. The first three start their careers similar to Moree, while Chuey continues his studies in Germany. Waiyakorn and Nara still carry on their courses like Bunchu. All of them can be seen as representing young people in late youthfulness. Aside from the group interaction, which will be discussed later, they are made to typify ideal young people who are about to begin their mature life.

However, before that, they are destabilized by the romantic crisis with Lalita. After each of them is fooled into thinking that Lalita is offering them sweet affection, they have a tendency to be willing to sacrifice their friendship for it. Prapun, for example, shows his anger every time the others utter their feelings for Lalita. Moreover, they all keep dreaming of having a passionate moment with Lalita whenever they are alone. Once the truth is revealed, they immediately reunite and vow to not risk having their gang disintegrate again. Thereafter, they act as in the previous series, despite the difference of their educational and work backgrounds. They are kind, well-behaved, and thoughtful. No scenes depict their propensity to harm people or to join a career considered to be improper. In the situation in which Bunchu is selected to be a model, all of them are not jealous of Bunchu's opportunity. It can be said that the entire gang is successful at following the right track which turns them into reliable adults who are not dominated by excessive materialism or social competitiveness.

Youth socialization in this film is represented by group interaction and a few background settings. When Bunchu arrives at his faculty, he is greeted by his friends as usual. Bunchu reacts to that greeting with enthusiasm. During a party in the first sequence, they ask about the progress of each other. None of them exaggerates their life. Then, Chuey gets a call from Germany where he is studying for his Master's degree and all of them strive to pick up the line in a confused, but funny way. When Moree needs casual models, all the gang determined to help her without requesting any pay. In the middle of sequence two, Bunchu realizes the insincerity of Lalita. He attempts to reveal Lalita's actions by making each of the gang members realize that they all are being deceived by Lalita. Everyone believes Bunchu. After Bunchu is hurt by a group of models supervised by Lalita, the gang take care of him. The gang assembles twice at the riverside pavilion next to Bunchuay's house. They discuss the relationship between Moree and Bunchu. Each of them proposes a plan for Bunchu to be with Moree. After Bunchu returns to his village, the gang visits him there. They play joke like children. Three out of the four scenes of mayhem occurring in the film include depiction of the gang's cooperation in coping with the disorder. The first one is a fight between the gang and Lalita's models. The second one is Bunchu's driving in his village, and the battle for Bunchu's employment contract with Lalita's team is the third.

From the above, the interaction of the central youth characters represents the way of creating an ideal youth society. Firstly, they do not treat each other like strangers.

They continue with their understanding, laughing, and thoughtfulness every time they are together. Secondly, they try to meet on a regular basis to sustain their friendship. Each meeting concerns some assistance regarding the distress of a member of the gang. The meetings are filled with jokes and enjoyment to relieve everyone from stress.

Understanding and unity is also part of their socialization. Some of the situations, such as Bunchu's injury from fighting with Lalita's models, can in fact be removed from the story. However, these situations project the deep care within the group. Overall, the interaction of the young people is made to appear ideal, rather than mirroring the disconnection amongst the young in the 1990s whose behavioural features are discussed in Chapter 2.

The lifestyle of the central youth characters can be divided into two categories. The first is university lifestyle, wherein the young people comply with standard conventions about their education, insofar as they are courteous students and diligent at studying. Bunchu and Tongdee signify this by their formal and tidy uniforms, constant reading of textbooks, and going to campus for their lectures. In addition, no characters spend money on luxurious items. None of them travel by expensive cars. They either walk or ride bicycles. The other sort of lifestyle belongs to the gang members who have already finished their studies, when no restrictions are imposed on them as before. They can, thereby, do anything they would like. The characters, however, dress like working people and concentrate on their work without engaging in any kind of unnecessary spending. The only thing they do is be together and poke fun at each other, as they are still just young adults. An attitudinal or behavioural shift does not occur despite their transition to adulthood.

The point to be focused on is youth romance as seen from the relationship between Bunchu and Moree, the gang and Lalita, as well as Tongdee and Lalita, some of which serves as a source of the key conflicts.

With respect to Bunchu and Moree, their romance continues almost without any trouble. They begin with an exchange of gifts on Valentine's Day. Then, Lalita intervenes in their relationship by attempting to deceive Moree that she is having a sweet loving moment with Bunchu. Moree is not angry with Bunchu, although she seems to believe this is true. She then sees Bunchu in person to warn him about Lalita's assertion. Bunchu firmly denies any romantic relationship with Lalita. Immediately, they both understand what is going on. In this manner, their management of the romantic problem helps indicate the necessity of listening more than insensible emotion.

In the last half of the story when Bunchu is about to graduate, he talks to Moree about their future. Moree does not deny her feelings for Bunchu. At the same time, she encourages Bunchu to resist the idea for working in Bangkok just to be with her. She believes Bunchu is needed in his hometown more than in the capital. She advises Bunchu to allow some time for both of them to be more mature as well. In the end, Bunchu decides to pursue his convictions. This proves that their romance is detached from individual passion.

The case of the gang and Lalita or Tongdee and Lalita shows that the male characters are quite innocent about love similar to most real young people. They all treat love and romance as if it is real and will end happily ever after. They have been, therefore, surpassed by Bunchu and Moree in terms of addressing personal romance. However, they can overcome the power of their own feelings to stick with the reality in the end. Yoi, Nara, Prapun, and the rest of the gang do so after Bunchu's reveals Lalita's nature. Tongdee is the only character who fails to be realistic until he cannot be patient with Lalita's pretence in the third sequence. Therefore, we can see that the central characters still represent exemplary youth in romantic terms.

Established personal convictions as frequently held in the Thai context are made clear through the characters of Bunchu, Tongdee and Chuey. At the riverside pavilion, Bunchu tells the gang that he will go back to Suphan Buri to grow rice and to help farmers improve their productivity, as he has declared he would do in the early films. He refers to the senior monk who enjoins him to not leave his home, but to follow his firm intentions. Then, the story cuts to the situation wherein Bunchu arrives at home and works tirelessly in the field. Bunchu is, hence, made to embody the belief that the young must serve their local community, as discussed in Chapter 2. Differently, Tongdee and Chuey show the audience a person with the conventional duty to finish their studies. Tongdee is admitted into the Faculty of Fishery, whereas Chuey goes to Germany to continue his higher education. As reflected in Chapter 2, the youth are expected to learn eagerly and keep seeking knowledge.



#### 4.2.2 Evocation of Socio-Cultural Identity

Much of the film is shot with elements that are not intended to form the story only, but also to evoke the memory of socio-cultural elements as a result of the angst of losing some existing identity. It can be seen that the idea of agricultural origins, as well as promotion of the traditional way of Thai living, are incorporated into the film, often with an aura of peace and contentment. The early 1990s was a time when social and economic change seemed to be far more intensified than in the 1980s owing to the economic recovery and an expanding economy. This can explain why the matter of Thai identity is re-addressed in *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui*. This issue can be seen through some of the supporting characters, the use of rural background settings, some Bangkok locations, and some traditional activities and interactions.

The supporting characters include Bunchuay, Bunlom, Bunchu's relatives, and the senior monk, not to mention Bunchu who plays the protagonist role, as well as contributions to evoking the rural identity. The depiction of Bunchuay is similar to that in the previous films, particularly in terms of his personality characteristics. He is undisciplined and easily lured by enticements, but still has concern about others. When the gang is reunited, he is the first person to ask for the future protection of friendship within the group. He is also kind enough to drive the gang to Bunchu's village at the end of the second sequence. Bunlom and Bunchu's relatives – Tongdee's parents – represent rural people with respect to their togetherness as an extended family. Although there is some element that they have begun to think as urban people, as exemplified by their craze for a university degree, they maintain rural traditions such as faith in Buddhism or mutual assistance. They do not wear expensive clothes, despite having considerable wealth. Even though the senior monk has quite a small role, compared to the abovementioned characters, his presence is very significant to the conflict of Bunchu. After Bunchu hesitates about his future, the senior monk gives Bunchu critical advice that his future should be determined by the necessity of work, not personal emotion. He comments that he will feel pity if Bunchu uses his knowledge in Bangkok which is already filled with intellectual people. Every character in this group suggests loyalty to an agrarian society including unity, interdependence, simple living, agricultural activities, as well as maintaining rural customs.

The character of Bualoy can also be seen to further the film's expression about the benefits of a rural life. Throughout the entire story, Bualoy is innocent and fully aware of what is considered to be right and wrong in a Thai context. It can be seen that Bualoy functions the same as in every *Bunchu* film, insofar as she reminds the main characters of the conventions they are supposed to follow. She gives direct or indirect criticism against actions that diverge from the tradition she knows. In this film, she says to Tongdee after seeing him dreaming of Lalita, that he will be sorry for his romance, which means she does not think Tongdee is ready for love. After her disappointment in seeing Bunchu, as well as Tongdee and Bunchuay, indulge in women of their dreams, she advises Bunchu to tackle the problem. She warns him that he should do whatever he needs to do so as not to be fooled, because he is already an adult. These words connote the problem of self-control exhibited by the three, especially Tongdee and Bunchuay. It can be seen that, once again, Bualoy is a conscientious young girl. Her actions and words are well linked with the image of rural people and their adherence to social norms.

Another character to be included in this discussion is Tongdee. If the concept of everyman is applied, it will be clear that Tongdee also represents the ordinariness of rural people, who have been overlooked in connection with socio-economic modernization. The name Tongdee is old-fashioned, and sounds very Thai. It can literally be translated as 'good gold', connoting 'prosperity' or the something similar. The appearance of the actor, including the way he is on the screen with outfits, props, and hairstyle, also looks simple and conveys a sense of naivety. This agrees with the general aspects of Thai rural people.



Picture 56 Tongdee and Bunchu (first and second from the right) being accompanied by their parents



Picture 57 a parade

The first image of Thainess is seen in the conventional opening with a peaceful picture of an undisturbed natural setting in a rice paddy in a remote village. Then, the following scene shows Bunchu and Tongdee, accompanied by their parents, making their journey to a minibus to leave the village (see picture 56). During the journey, they encounter a parade for a Kathin ceremony (see picture 57) with a classic pastoral song titled *Jaa Kor Kor Reeb Kor* [จะขอ<sup>พี่</sup>รีบขอ], meaning *hurry up and propose, if you wish to marry me*. There are only old people who have joined the parade wearing simple outfits – shirts and jeans. One of them asks about Bunchu’s and Tongdee’s journey. Tongdee’s mother speaks with pride that she is sending Tongdee to Bangkok to study at Kasetsart University. Then, they meet the senior monk. They all squat before the monk and the monk blesses Bunchu and Tongdee. At the minibus, Bunlom tells Bunchu to be diligent;

Tongdee's father says he will buy Tongdee a car if Tongdee can achieve a degree. However, Tongdee's mother says 'no' to that promise. She teaches Tongdee to concentrate on his studies and ignore all kinds of improper entertainment and girls.<sup>9</sup> She also asks Bunchu to look after Tongdee on her behalf.

This opening sequence connects the audience with elements of Thainess not usually seen in an urban context. The image of the rice field introduces agricultural society wherein strong social bonds remain. The journey to the minibus and the discussion at the minibus shows that the two young characters are still watched over with concern by their parents. The conversation during the Kathin parade demonstrates communal closeness, while the short meeting with the senior monk portrays the strong relationship with Buddhism. Aside from the elements of rural interaction, the opening scene is shot in an actual location with undistorted background, costumes, and props, which provides a reality of rural community by way of rows of wooden houses, ordinary clothing, undeveloped roads, and old motorcycles. These are typical aspects of rural areas found almost everywhere.



Picture 58 Bunchu and other farmers taking a joyful break from work

Scenes of rural society return in the middle and end of the story. Bunchu goes back to his home after he finishes his studies and Bunlom welcomes Bunchu with a military band. This shows how much Bunchu's success is appreciated by Bunlom, as well as showing an outdated rural tradition of expressing gratitude. The other scene is a combination of images in a rice field in which Bunchu cooperates with a group of farmers

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<sup>9</sup> Girls are seen as bad in the old tradition.

to grow rice. Elements, such as happiness, mutual help, farmer outfits, and green backgrounds, fill the scene (see picture 58). Everything looks idyllic, despite the notion that rice cultivation is a relatively unprofitable job in Thai society. The audience can also perceive more of the rural environment from the situation wherein the gang and Moree visit Bunchu. The setting encompasses archetypal rural components such as a Thai-style water jar, a Thai house with an open space underneath, chicken houses, straw, and an uncrowded atmosphere. No serious conflicts are portrayed as part of the setting, apart from the incident in which Bunchu causes damage to Bunchuay's car. In the ending, Moree is left alone in the Bunchu's village where she and Bunchu ride buffalos across a field.

The rural representation as detailed serves to remind the audience of the seemingly authentic condition of country life, which represents local aspects from the agricultural angle. This contrasts with the image of the city in that the way the rural setting is presented is realistic with natural settings. The data also indicates that much of the rural environment looks very typical. However, the rural image is such that the audience can feel positive about human nature in that there is visible contentment in every relationship with love and joy rather than hatred and jealousy which creates the image of rural society as a place free of ethical or societal degradation.



Picture 59 a shot of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha

Many of the scenes set in Bangkok are also devoid of the undesirable effects of modernity. In the introductory scenes set in Bangkok, there is an image of Sanam Luang as a landmark of Bangkok, followed by the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (see picture 59),

which is a typical representation of the nation's identity, particularly, in the dimension of religion and the monarchy (Teerawat Cha-um, 2011: 1-2). Bunchuay's wharf and the riverside house are on the screen regularly. In one sequence, the house is shot at an angle so that the audience can see the pictures of His Majesty King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit hanging prominently above the entry (see picture 60) which reflects a traditional element of a Thai residence. It is also noticed that most of the outdoor locations or walkways are not necessarily suggestive of Bangkok's modernity. The scene where Yoi makes his journey to a party is an example. There are only wheelbarrows along the walkways and general shop-houses. Restaurants where the characters have their meals are either an unknown place or Pi Pong's food stall. No fast food or famous restaurants are put on the screen. The Chao Phraya River, bridges, ferries, and wharfs are used frequently and the settings are sometimes not so attractive with images of old factories with rusted galvanized sheets. A riverside pavilion is used twice as a meeting spot of the gang, with the background just the river on which a long boat appears occasion.



Picture 60 Bunchuay's riverside house

To conclude, Bangkok in this film seems to be just a place for the key characters to accomplish their studies and assemble. The settings let the audience see a relatively normal side of Bangkok, without shopping malls or any kinds of lavish places that connotes the advantages of a liberal economy. Landmarks or locations which do not seem to be in trend are incorporated sporadically. Similar to the representation of



Bangkok in the previous films in the *Bunchu* series, the view is a Bangkok of the lower-middle class, with the least demonstration of elements of the liberal economy and where typical tradition living is added to strengthen the idea of socio-cultural specificity.

The inclusion of some Thai traditions in a number of scenes of the key characters also has a contributory role in evoking a sense of Thainess. Having meals with family is an example. There is a scene of Bunchu eating a meal with Tongdee (see picture 61). The menu consists of typical Thai food such as rice, soup, and curry; Western foods are not presented on the table. After finishing the meal, Bunchu makes the Thai salute of respect towards the dish before him to express his appreciation of the rice as Thai people are taught to be indebted to rice. Rice is considered part of the cultural identity since rice is the main staple in the Thai eating culture, accompanied by a set of side dishes (Walker, 1996: 3). When he passes a temple, he does the same to show his reverence to Buddhism.



Picture 61 Bunchu and Tongdee having a typical Thai meal

There are two situations in which the Thai way of expressing sincerity is depicted. The first one is when Moree is in doubt if Bunchu is having a romantic relationship with Lalita. Bunchu denies this with a vow that he will accept a hit of lightning if he has lied. The second situation is the conversation between Bunchu and Tongdee regarding Lalita. Bunchu enjoins Tongdee to stay away from Lalita and asks him to swear that once he breaks his promise, lightning will strike him.

The Thai way of greeting is another tradition often presented. The audience will frequently see the first meeting of each character with Thai ways of greeting. In the scene

wherein the gang visits Bunchu, his mother, Bunlom, is greeted by the gang member in the traditional Thai way, followed by her reception in which the entire gang is invited to enter the house, served glasses of water, and invited to eat, reflecting the tradition of welcoming guests deemed significant in traditional Thai social interaction. The inclusion of these elements appears to be an attempt to remind the audience of the Thai way of living, especially when they are performed by the key characters.

#### 4.2.3 A Consequences of Change

The image of modernity often comes with problems or suggests a relationship between the ongoing modernity and some troublesome issues. As commented on by Thai scholars, such as Prawase Wasi, an attempt to progress to what Thais think as ‘modernity’ often overwhelms their ethics and basic beliefs (Chaiwat Thirapantu, 1995: 48). Similar to this comment, the portrayal of some supporting characters, location settings, and certain signifiers in this film are evidence for the belief that socio-economic development was not progressing with full ethical consideration.



Picture 62 Manee (left) in a serious discussion with Lalita (right)

Manee (see picture 62) has a slightly different role from the previous films. She does not trouble Bunchu or Bunchuay as before, but offers the two a chance for some work. Even so, the portrayal of Manee concerns the features of city people whose first priority embraces material goods and competition. This can be seen from the majority of her lines and actions which involve her own business. By that, Manee experiences stress



quite often, making it possible to conclude that her works is an indication of how a modern lifestyle, such as hers, and peaceful happiness cannot easily come together.

Similar to Manee, Lalita (see picture 63) represents the stereotypical nature of city people. Lalita always enters the story wearing sexy dresses showing more of her flesh than general women would normally do. She decorates herself with visible makeup and expensive accessories. In this way, she should be viewed as a modernized woman who has freed herself from the old taboos with a look that can draw attention from men.



Picture 63 Lalita

From the beginning, Lalita makes flirtatious conversation with the group, including Tongdee. She uses a sweet voice along with touching, which is usually deemed inappropriate for Thai women, especially as considered from the viewpoint of traditionalists. An example is the situation when Prapun and Lalita are walking together to the studio. Lalita tries to provoke him with sensual talk. She grasps his arm and ends the conversation with false admiration of Prapun. However, it is not only Prapun, everyone in the gang experiences the same attention from Lalita. The incident that really making them all crazed about Lalita happens on Valentine's Day when Lalita send cards to every single one of them to cause them all, except Bunchu, to mistake her feelings. After her insincere love is revealed, she shows no signs of remorse. She declares that she does everything for her own fun and she does not care who knows the truth. Lalita carries on her trickery to take revenge on Bunchu. She tricks some insightful information out of Tongdee about Bunchu. Then, she pretends before Moree that she is having an affair with Bunchu. Later,

Lalita tells Manee and Moree to not use Bunchu as a model, even though it is an order from their customer – a foreign businessman. She says to Manee and Moree to lie to the foreigner that Bunchu has not turned up so that Bunchu will be excluded from this job and she can use her own models in place of Bunchu, which will allow her to have some share of the fee. Manee and Moree do not agree, so Lalita approaches Bunchu herself and lies that Moree wants to hire him to be a model, but the foreign businessman has specified that other models be used. Her words cause Bunchu to decline Moree's offer of the model job until Prapun corrects his misunderstanding later.

Near the end of the story, Lalita persuades Tongdee to trick Bunchu into signing an employment contract with the foreign businessman that will force him to work under her supervision, not Manee and Moree. Bunchu is taken in because of his belief in Tongdee and Lalita's cajolement. He is also incapable of understanding the English message in the contract. In the final mayhem, Lalita gives up her right to the contract by Tongdee's insistence. She says, however, she does not like anyone to force her to do anything and she does not like to surrender easily.

Lalita is a dominant antagonist in the story. Her characterization shows that she is inconsiderate and obsessed by competition. She will undertake any means to triumph, both in work and in romance, most of which involves deception. She is not interested in whether anyone will be hurt, nor does she repent her actions. Her attitude and behaviour seems to conform with some explanation about urban people in the 1990s generation. They have decided to liberate themselves from the old traditions, although the way they do so looks unethical, as commented by Thirayuth Boonmee (1994: 143-144), who said that the city area has turned into the site where people spend life often in the absence of ethics. It is interesting to note that Lalita is the first female antagonist in Budit's youth films. It looks as though she was put in the film to relay the message that socio-economic modernity has brought forth a shift in gender roles, both in constructive and worrisome ways.



Picture 64 Lalita and her subordinates

Lalita's subordinates (see picture 64) include a group of models and the office staff. They resemble Lalita in embodying the mean-spirited side of Thai people who are happy to adopt modern looks but not ethics or generosity. With respect to the models, after the eruption of argument between Lalita and Manee/Moree, one of the models is angry, swears loudly and kicks a light. His action provokes a fight, during which all the models show their ruffian tendencies in contrast to their smart appearance. The staff members appear in the final scene of mayhem where Bunchu, Manee, Moree, and the entire gang request cancellation of the contract managed by Lalita. The staff work together to defend the contract, even though they know its deceitfulness. The existence of these characters, even though just a small role, is indicative of a decline in ethics in exchange for profits, meaning that ethical behaviour is inconsequential to their decision. Therefore, the portrayal of their natures is a supplementary emphasis on the view that parts of modern lifestyle have been embraced with little concern about ethics and kindness.



Picture 65 the new lottery seller shouting at Yoi who is running away



Picture 66 the old lottery seller (in a black suit with a red tie and sunglasses)

The lottery seller is the last extra character to be discussed. On the walkway to the party, Yoi sees a new blind seller of lottery tickets (see picture 65) who tells him that the old seller (see picture 66) won a 12 million-baht prize from the remaining lottery tickets and has become a rich person. Then, Yoi sees the old seller approaching in a tidy suit with a lavish car and personal servant. Yoi feels surprised upon sighting this, but does not forget to tease the new seller, as he did to the old seller in the previous series. The new seller curses loudly, as well as taking off his glasses, angrily speaking out that he is not a blind person, as Yoi understands.

Two elements from this situation should be considered. The first is regarding the old seller. Instead of saving money to be more self-sufficient, he use it to project a better social status by the possession of unnecessary belongings and the conspicuous demonstration of wealth. His suit, car, and servant are indications of an expensive lifestyle. In the next Bunchu film titled *Rak Ter Kon Dieow Dta-lot Gaan Krai Yaa Dtae*, he turns into a poor lottery seller again. The continuation of this character in the two films makes clear how his spending is unsustainable. The second element is the new seller. He does his job under the guise of a blind man in order to seek sympathy from pedestrians. In this way, his character reflects the business reality in which low ethical standards drive the desire to achieve good sales.



Picture 67 a meeting for an advertising business

In terms of settings, modernity can be perceived in the scene set in Manee's office at the advertising agency, which is decorated in a modern style with expensive furniture, office equipment, and arty images. The staff members only pay attention to their own businesses; close interaction and cooperation, such as seen in Bunchu's hometown, disappears. The first scene in the office includes a situation in the meeting room (see picture 67) where Manee, Moree, Prapun, Lalita, and some extra characters are seriously talking about winning the contract from the foreign businessman. They are eager to be hired because of the considerable benefits. Lalita says that, to attract the foreign businessman, they must create a better presentation than their rivals. She proposes to spend up to 200,000 baht in order to achieve the goal. Her discussion indicates her intense degree of competitiveness in the desire to attain monetary benefits. Above all, none of the characters can avoid stress in doing their business, which indicates that life in the changing economic setting does not always end in ease and continued happiness.

*Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* also expands on the perceived flaws of socio-economic modernity by stressing its failure in the scene wherein Bunchu waits to apply for a job at the Office of Agricultural Economics. In that scene, Bunchu and a number of extra characters queue up (see picture 68). One of them moans about the fierce competition to land a job in Bangkok. He says that his family lives there, so he cannot go anywhere outside the capital city. The atmosphere looks disorganized with people who are trying to hand in their application. One character suddenly shouts at



another character (off-screen) to not cut the queue. Then, he is pushed out of the position where he stands and two staff members enter the scene and drag him away. Bunchu tries to maintain his position in the queue, but no one listens. Another character tells Bunchu exactly the same reason he is there as the aforementioned character. Finally, Bunchu figures out that he belongs in the rice fields in his hometown.



Picture 68 competition for job application

This situation shows the audience the unrecognized reality in the urban areas. Chapter 2 discussed how the capitalist expansion and urbanization developed without well-planned direction, creating imbalance between the large urban areas like Bangkok and the other areas, which led to massive migration from the latter to the former. An oversupply of people could not be avoided, causing an array of troubles in the urban space. Bunchu's involvement in the above scene helps demonstrate the struggle of the middle-class as occurred in Thai society in the 1980s-1990s and pinpoints the failure in matching liberal economic development with fair distribution of income, careers, and all necessary resources. In addition, the image of the man being dragged out of the room by two staff members without listening to any explanation of why he is pushed out of the queue communicates how people in the urban society, such as the two staff members, often have a rude and harsh manner.

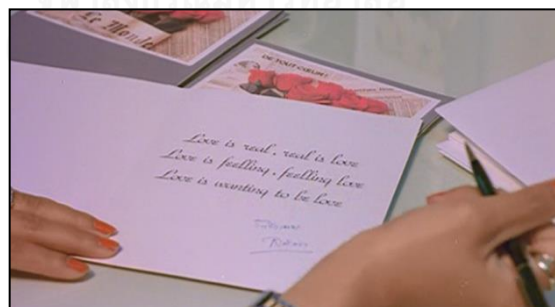
Aside from the living difficulty as discussed, some cultural imitation is paired with relationship problems in some of the scenes by the use of props and costumes.

The first scene of mayhem, in which Prapun harasses the gang during the shooting for the advertising presentation, is an illustrative case. Prapun and the other male gang

members who are deeply in love with Lalita gradually lose their friendship. This is shown by Prapun moving the safety block at the bottom of the hill while Bunchu and the gang are riding down from the upper part with skateboards, causing turmoil because the skateboards move around uncontrollably. In addition, during the mayhem, all the gang's members wear garments in vogue, consisting of jackets and caps with a clear display of English letters (see picture 69). Bunchu is the only character attired in a jacket without any English letters. Depicting such problems with the incorporation of props and costumes that have a popular look can be a suggestion of a view against the way foreign culture is adopted by Thais.



Picture 69 a costume before the first mayhem



Picture 70 Valentine's Day cards used by Lalita

Similar representational method is repeated in the situation regarding Valentine's Day when Lalita wants to deceive the gang into believing that she fancies each of them. She decides to send them Valentine's Day cards – the orthodox method found in Western society. All the cards she picks contain English messages with an image of a rose on the front (see picture 70). Those Western style cards weaken the unity of the group after they

receive them. However, the unconventional gift of a pen for Valentine's Day given to Bunchu by Moree induces no troubles. Moree tells Bunchu that it is only a gift for a "Thai style" Valentine, as she puts it. In this respect, the cards can be interpreted as a negative sign of cultural imitation in which the Thais practice foreign tradition only to show that they are modern/fashionable without thinking of developing their conscience, ethics, or worldview. As a consequence, they bring about many problems from their lack of required mental attributes as depicted by Lalita who uses the cards to deceive the group only for personal pleasure.

### 4.3 Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep

The early 1990s was a successful period for high school films. A good example is Somjing Srisupab's *Rolling Stone* or *Kling Wai Kon Por Son Wai* (1991) which achieved significant theatrical box office earnings. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* is another film concentrating on youth characters during their high school period. This film came to cinema, however, with content and style different from the mainstream convention. Instead of promoting popular youth culture shared amongst the young audience, the film promotes a nostalgic image with the use of the typical high school environment found in Thailand.

#### 4.3.1 Remembering High School Youth Culture

Unlike all the previously films made by Budit Rittakol, there is no character in the protagonist role in this film because there are many characters with central roles whereby they share conflicts or a series of events almost at an equal level. In the beginning, those characters are divided into two opposing groups: science students and art students (see picture 71, 72). No background information is given why the two dislike each other. The majority of characters from the group of science students are male, while females dominate the group of art students. The science students often annoy the art students first, followed by humorous revenge. The analysis will focus on all of them as a single group, which leads to the finding that their presence in the film is to evoke the memory of high school based on the belief that it is unique and nostalgic.

The personal behaviour of the central youth characters is not that impressive as compared to the key characters in the *Bunchu* films. They all seem to lack good



discipline. In the scene where Pattama first enters the class of science students, for example, most of them are chatting, sitting, or playing disorderly while they wait for her to arrive. Another example is from a scene in which one of the teachers, Tong-Aeg, introduces himself to the art students. At the time, some students are being punished by Mrs. Nualsri who has ordered them to run around the sport field. Tong-Aeg asks for a volunteer to call them back to the classroom, whereupon many of the students volunteer in a very disorderly manner just to get out of class even for a short time.



Picture 71 science students (Mrs. Nualsri is the fourth from the right)

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Picture 72 art students

As a whole, the central characters have different kinds of personal behaviour. Aegachai, Koe, Tui, and Pae are mischievous; Yo often swears whenever people touch her; Toon is talkative; Tae is flirty; Nune is impetuous; Pee is sleepy and many others are exceedingly wordy. As well, they always talk to each other impolitely, but never in an aggressive way. In the first half of the story, none of the central characters is represented as attentive students, often hanging around just for amusement. What to be noticed is, however, that the misbehaviour is not just a part to enhance the amusing elements of the story. The analysis finds that their behaviour has significant meaning about the high school experience because it is not represented as a worrisome problem, but rather as a sort of social norm associated with good fun to remind the audience of high school life Thailand in which education is pursued alongside memorable enjoyment. The description prior to the opening scene supports this assertion:

The making of this film was based on real experiences from many periods and many high schools shared by the scriptwriter, co-scriptwriters, and workers on other teams whose recollection of high school days persists with realization that those days can never be returned. The script was adjusted to fit the high school environment in the present.

The specialness of high school life also arises out of regular interaction among the students through enjoyable group conversations. When there is no class, the art students often sit around the area underneath the school building for amusing conversation (see picture 73). In the beginning of the second sequence, they discuss romance. When Taew walks pass them with a bunch of roses in her hands, everyone talks about Taew, followed by some irrelevant topics in which no serious subjects are raised. They try to poke fun at each other during the conversation. The group conversation is a way of maintaining social connection found amongst high school students.



Picture 73 art students in a daily group conversation

In addition, students, regardless of art or science, tend to work together in every activity to showcase unity. The science students often deal with two kinds of activities. The first one is to invent plans for teasing the art students, including their school professors, which they do without disagreement from any of the group members. The second one is to jest with the female students or court the students of their choice, especially before they develop some romance with students in the other group in the last sequence. Although it can be interpreted that they just want to show their manliness by this sort of group activities, it is clear that their activities help them to be together for to maintain their group bond. As for the art students, their activities are not as playful as that of the science students. Aside from joining group conversations, they cooperate in making cake for the academic fair. Their teamwork continues smoothly without any disputes. Therefore, none of the members in the two groups do things alone to show off their personal capability and none of them express any disagreement in doing the intended activities. This represents how friendship during high school is defined by the idea of group unity, in addition to amusement.

The young people in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* engage in immature, adolescent love consistently, especially in the first half of the story. They consider love to be part of their youthful experience, thus, many characters treat love as a necessary obligation. In the first half of the story, many male students court the girls whom they find attractive. However, many of them do it just for fun, other than Jong and Berm who will be discussed later. For the female students, they do not show any intention to love anyone, but some of them express romantic feelings as if they demand someone to offer

them sweet love. The following are examples of the content indicative of their high school love value.

At a bridge in the city centre, Tae make amorous advances towards a girl from a different school. When it is clear that she is also liked by a group of delinquents, Tae does not hesitate to run away from her. No sorrow for his decision is expressed, meaning that he is not serious about his feelings. Similar to Tae, in the first half of the story, a group of male science students jest with unfamiliar female students while they walk together in the school. Then, they make some time to court girls at the same bridge as Tae. The same group of science students also utilise the academic fair to deceive girls from another school by setting up an astrological computer and altering the prediction to mislead the girls into believing that they are destined to be their mates, but they fail again. They do not, however, show any signs of disappointment after each failure. The last example is in the situation where Yo discusses with Toon the question of why male students in their school are not interested in them. Toon explains that they are not beautiful, sexy, or smart enough to trap the males. Then, Toon tries to teach Yo to act like an eye-catching girl.

From these examples, the characters are not determined to have real love, similar to a committed couple. They just pursue love as an amusing part of their youthfulness. At the same time, they have the inclination to adhere to this activity only to show their peers that they have some intention to be successful in love in order to lift up their personal confidence. By this, their love solely reflects the reality of high school adolescents and how their love value is conventionally pursued. At the same time, this shows that love as such never leads to a successful romantic end. The depiction of less than serious high school love – in conjunction with the other high school culture – recalls the memorable aspect of Thai youth within the general education system.

#### 4.3.2 Promotion of Ideal Qualities

Some ideal features enjoyed by the central youth characters can be seen in a number of situations. They can be categorised as having group loyalty, avoidance of violent conflicts, care and concern for others, obedience, avoidance of extreme delinquency, self-improvement, as well as compliance with an admirable lifestyle in the Thai context. Some of these features are implicitly represented, while some can be clearly perceived.

The first feature to discuss is their loyalty to their own group. It is clear that they always give first priority to the group, no matter if that will cause them trouble. For example, after being shamed by the science students in the first sequence, the art students inflict revenge by dropping boxes of chalk on the heads of the science students, followed by hitting them with a ball. However, the ball knocks into Mrs. Nualsri by accident. Mrs. Nualsri shouts at the art students with extreme anger. The entire group agrees to be punished together rather than revealing the name of the student who hurts her. In addition, it is found that the depiction of individualism that may overpower the image of the group does not appear in the story. As explained by Pisal Pattanapeeradech (Interview, 12 January 2015), Budit always joined the queue for lunch instead of having a separate meal as conventionally done by other directors. When he was ill, he even shared his special food with the team to show that he was not above them. His action reflects the belief in equal relationships and togetherness and this belief is passed to the audience through the group in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*. This can, however, be seen as an implicit rejection of individualism and/or the importance of the self to show that the central characters foster the idea of group harmony as well.

Although both science and arts students are represented as troublesome in the beginning, it should be noted that no scenes depict their use of aggression that can seriously injure one another or cause emotional anguish. Their school lives are full of laughs and joy and devoid of serious delinquency.

Exhibiting care and concern for the other group members, or even the opposite group, is another outstanding feature seen throughout the story. In the beginning, a character named Tui from the science group, is depicted as a person who can accept any kind of physical pain on behalf of his friends. Then, in a scene where the art students are trapped, the science students risk their lives to help them without thinking of any previous conflict between the two sides.

The next remarkable feature is their inclination to be obedient adolescents. In all the classroom scenes, for example, the audience only see them being receivers of comments, criticisms, and lectures delivered by teachers. The students never challenge them. Although there is one scene showing a science student harassing Mrs. Nualsri in a playful manner, they all submit to punishment willingly. As for their relationship with their guardians, no scenes show any rebellious actions towards their parents. The audience can even perceive a good bond between some central characters and their guardians. For

instance, Yo brings along her father to the academic fair. She holds him with care and hires an art student to draw a picture of her and her father.

In tandem with these four features, all the central characters appear in neat uniforms for the most part. The girls wear long skirts, have tied up or short hair styles, while the boys keep their shirttails in their shorts. No strange accessories supplement their uniforms, either in or out of school. In addition, they do not skip class – not even once. That indicates their acceptance of their schooling. There is no depiction of the lack of use of narcotics or fighting within the same group. This is the reason why no central characters can be considered delinquent.

The last feature is self-improvement. Jong gives repentance to Tong-Aeg and a few more characters after he commits an offense act. He then changes himself to be more self-controlled with better understanding of right and wrong. After Tong-Aeg's departure, the central characters realize their inappropriate past behaviour. It can be seen that many of them develop an awareness of paying proper attention to their studies, rather than thinking of fun.

This analysis of their ideal qualities can help understand how the youth characters are made to promote the idea of good youth in the Thai context. From the beginning to the end, the audience sees the young characters make their journey to school and spend most of their lives at the school. Not a single scene shows conspicuous consumption, such as buying fast foods or using makeup accessories or expensive entertainment. In the first sequence, the science students play football together. In the ending sequence, a short picture of both the science and art students recreating is shown, but many scenes depict both groups of students in the classroom, listening to lectures. Throughout the story, they are inattentive in some scenes, but become surprisingly diligent in some other scenes. The male students spend their lives outside the school courting girls from other schools. Nonetheless, they do not make this into a serious habit. A few scenes depict Aegachai and Nune making a journey to the school together by walk – not riding in a vehicle. Similarly, no other characters are shown with luxurious cars. These data show that the central characters have an inclination to attach themselves to an expected lifestyle without the use of drugs, sexual intercourse, violence, or gambling; their lifestyle is very simple with no extravagances.

### 4.3.3 Remembering Thai High School

School teachers and the high school setting, in conjunction with school traditions, play a very significant role in this film in representing a typical Thai high school. All these elements are depicted in an authentic, traditional manner in contrast to the trend of Thai schools in the 1990s which were more likely being transformed in connection with the new socio-economic movement. It can be seen that such authenticity serves to recall the memory of Thai-style high schools to the audience.

Many of the school teachers are depicted as agencies of power in controlling all the events in the school, reflecting the tradition of surrendering authority to the senior members of Thai society. The utmost power in any one school is often held by a single teacher whose extreme severity can frighten students into submission. In *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*, it is the character of Mrs. Nualsri (see picture 74) who scares the students the most. Mrs. Nualsri acts as a promoter of Thai traditions as seen in a scene where she orders every student to prostrate themselves to volley balls because they all have shown disrespect towards the volley balls. Other teachers function similar to Mrs. Nualsri in terms of representing Thai traditions. Interestingly, there is nothing that shows that their actions are antagonistic toward the central youth characters; however, this element of the film helps the audience remember the atmosphere of being in a Thai high school.



Picture 74 Mrs. Nualsri



Picture 75 the school

The school in this film is a major place for the central characters to gather and typifies the typical state high school in Thailand. In the opening sequence, the general atmosphere of the school is shown through the static image of school buildings, clean roads and passages, including green trees (see picture 75). The overall mood is peaceful until the students start to walk into the scene as they are arriving at the school. All of them are in neat uniforms. Some carry textbooks; some hold school bags. They enter either as a group or on their own. Then, the typical images of setting and tradition as found in plenty of the Thai state high schools are depicted throughout the story.

Within the school, spatial reality is the most outstanding point. Representative constituents include a general classroom containing up to 50 students, a home economics room, a science room, and the teacher's office. All of these elements are generally open-air with dark-tone wood windows and doors. No colourful decorations are presented, unless it is a board for sharing news or school information. Aside from the room zones, there are sport fields, the cafeteria, and a flag pole – the classic element for training students to be loyal to the nation.





Picture 76 art students listening to the lecture by Tong-Aeg

School traditions are also depicted in an ideal and typical way. Firstly, the traditional punishment for mature students is not cruel, such as lashing. Students are only ordered to run around or clean the room. Secondly, each student holds on to the practice of obeying the teachers. When they are in the classroom, most of them will only listen to the lecture and take notes (see picture 76). No questions concerning the lecture are asked by the students. Thirdly, students dress themselves in the correct uniform. They do not dress or bring items prohibited by the school regulations. Gathering to show respect for the national anthem is incorporated as a typical school tradition and serves to stress the standard ritual as regards one of the three pillars – Thai nation – which takes place daily at 8 o'clock in the morning with the school broadcasting the national anthem. Finally, the right gender contact is shown, either amongst the students or between the teachers and the students. This can be seen from the scene where Tong-Aeg is warned by his mentor about his closeness to Taew, as it is considered inappropriate for a teacher to stay too close to a student, particularly a male teacher and a female student. The final sequence where the school director expresses his concern about student romances also indicates the belief in keeping the distance between the two genders in a Thai context.

The data show that the portrayal of the school is a replication of a typical state high school in Thailand. It is, in fact, unambiguous, as from the introductory message prior to the start of the story, in that the filmmaking team relied on location shooting rather

than on a back lot,<sup>10</sup> insofar as they used Yupparaj Wittayalai to be the setting.<sup>11</sup> The general appearance of the school looks, therefore, realistic through the presentation of a genuine image of a school. The school traditions are shown in a way that calls to mind a real school experience with lifelike representation which looks unique as Barrow (2013: online) asserts:

Life in a Thai school in some ways is quite similar to other schools around the world. However, the fascinating Thai culture helps contribute to some intriguing differences.

*Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* has achieved the depiction of such differences by the projection of a Thai school atmosphere described in the cited data. The depiction of the school can, hence, be considered to be evoking the memory of the distinctive aspects of a Thai high school.

#### 4.3.4 Promotion of Cultural Individuality

Aside from reminiscence of the Thai high school, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* is similar to all the previous youth films of Bundit in promoting traditional Thainess over Thainess in the modern construct. The analysis finds that such traditional Thainess is depicted in a form of habits, traditions, beliefs, lifestyle, ideology, and social taboos. This is significant crucial factor which distinguishes the film in combining the high school theme with cultural identity.

The plot concerns two key conflicts – namely, the problem between students in two groups and Jong’s hatred of Tong-Aeg. The research finds that these two work together in signifying some messages with reference to the (ideal) features of being Thai.

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<sup>10</sup> Backlot refers to a space for set constructions as seen in *The Legend of Suriyothai* (dir. Chatrichalern Yukol, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Yupparaj Wittayalai is the first state school in Chiang Mai Province founded in 1899 by King Rama V following His Majesty’s attempts at educational expansion. The name of the school has royal connections – meaning that the school belongs to Somdej Phra Yupparaj (the position of the heir apparent to the throne). This information is taken from History of Yupparaj Wittayalai in [http://www.yupparaj.ac.th/pages/about\\_ycr.php](http://www.yupparaj.ac.th/pages/about_ycr.php).

The first conflict, the war between the art and science students, takes place essential without rancour and ends in reconciliation after they all share in the mess from an exploding cake, followed by the science students rescuing the art students from an attack. The conflict in the second conflict reaches a climax when Jong intentionally cuts the brake of Tong-Aeg's motorcycle, causing Pattama and Mrs. Nualsri to be hurt when they use that motorcycle. Instead of reporting this to the police, Tong-Aeg decides to forgive Jong, as well as conceal the truth to protect him from prosecution. Jong, then, changes from that time onwards.

There are two points to be extracted from these two conflicts. Firstly, they are ultimately resolved with forgiveness and understanding. Secondly, neither conflict highlights any characters as an individual hero; even in the second conflict when Tong-Aeg confronts Jong, he is accompanied by Korkit and two other students. All the characters show during the peak of the conflicts that they are not interested in vengeance or individual promotion, but adhere to the principles of mutual help and understanding that can bring forth satisfactory solutions. It can be concluded that the two conflicts serve as a channel for promoting the concept of interdependence, forgiveness, kindness, avoidance of violence, and compromise, all part of the idealized Thai way of living.



Picture 77 students prostrating the volley balls

In one scene, the art and science students use volley balls to pass messages of love, and then Mrs. Nualsri forces them to prostrate themselves to the volley balls (see picture 77). She preaches that a ball is like a teacher; it is prohibited to disparage a ball by writing anything inappropriate on it. Her words reflect the tradition of honouring

educational materials in Thai society, which has gradually become unimportant in the modern context. This tradition arose from the concept of 'kharawa' or respect in Buddhism, which refers to realization of and serious thought about values and the significance of persons and items leading to a sincere expression of such feelings (Phramaha Muad Sukadhammo (Chomsri), 2004: 150).

In the ending sequence, Berm handles his broken hearted feelings by relying on a spirit board (a kind of Ouija board) (see picture 78, 79) after he is certain of the relationship between Nune and Aegachai. The film does not give any details of his questions for the spirit. However, the audience can comprehend that he uses the spirit board to obtain answers about love. The point is the spirit board reflects a long connection between Thai society and belief in ghosts. As a tradition, the Thai people accept the existence of spirits and angels with the idea that some of them can be harmful while the others remain kind to humans (Department of Religious Affairs, 2009: 8). The kind spirits are often invited to provide answers to unsolvable questions in the form of a spirit board. Even though Thailand has been modernized, the belief in ghosts has never faded. The analysis shows that the use of a spirit board in place of a popular method, such as picking off the petal of a flower to predict love, is another attempt to reflect, as much as recall, cultural authenticity.



Picture 78 Berm using Ouija board



Picture 79 a close-up shot of Ouija board

The image of Thainess outside the domain of the school is seen through a number of physical settings. Similar to all other youth films made by Bundit, the outdoor locations are set in a natural, green environment.

With respect to housing, all the central characters' houses are Thai style wood houses, made with unpainted wood, having simple balconies or airy rooms. None of the houses look expensive or attempt to symbolize the character's luxurious living. No images of large household appliances are included. In the scene where Tae is visited by the art and science students after the attack (see picture 80), the audience can see that the house is depicted exactly as in the foregoing description. They all sit on a mat rather than expensive furniture, signifying the traditional Thai means of gathering.



Picture 80 an example of a Thai house

A Thai style minibus (or *song thaeo*) and pedicab can be seen in the story. Pattama uses a minibus when she comes back from school, while the audience can see

the pedicab four times, inserted occasionally throughout the film without identifying any characters. However, it can be understood that a group of students use the pedicab when they make a journey to their homes (see picture 81). The characters do not, in this way, use classy cars or any kinds of stylized vehicle indicating financial superiority. They rather stick with simplicity that is representative of the lifestyle of the majority.



Picture 81 the pedicab

For the image of the city,<sup>12</sup> the camera tends to record only the parts devoid of modern appearance. In the scene where Tae and/or a group of science students court the girls from a different school, the city river was selected to be the usual location for this situation (see picture 82), similar to the bridge on the Chao Phraya River as the customary choice in the *Bunchu* series. As the background of the bridge does not necessarily give the impression of economic progression, the city river, a forest, and unappealing old wharf are only moderate size. The city in some other scenes shows Thai architecture, such as a scene in which Aegachai and Nune walk together to the school. The film does not give any indication of the specific place in the backdrop, but the audience can easily sense local Thai arts from its design. The rest of the city scenes are filled with images of the daily lifestyle of the lower-middle class. Everything looks simple rather than luxurious and economically complicated.

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<sup>12</sup> The introductory credits state that the location is Chiang Mai, so it can be understood that the city in the story is Chiang Mai.





Picture 82 the city river scene where art and science students courting girls from different school

Therefore, the off-school locations are similar to the school in contributing to the projection of being Thai in the absence of a modern feel. The film depends, evidently, on the depiction of what can be seen in everyday life which is gradually being forgotten after the introduction of liberal economic development.

With reference to general conviction, the image of the central characters, plus all the supporting characters, being at school throughout most of the story helps reflect the Thai belief in general education. According to this belief, young people need to bear in mind that their duty is mainly to spend their time at school, as well as being diligent in order to be a successful student and – conventionally – satisfy their elders, such as their guardians or teachers. In one of the scenes, Mrs. Nualsri scolds the art students for their fun and conflict with the science students. Parts of her words urge the acceptance of educational beliefs:

“The most worrying thing for me is your future. You are going to leave in a couple of months. Instead of thinking about your future, you only dally and have incessant quarrels, especially with those who study science, giving me a headache.”

These words convey the belief that the art students will surely be futureless as long as they fail to realize the importance of diligence. Another example is in a scene where Berm and Aegachai present Nune a birthday gift at her own house. At the time, Nune is reading in her room. The impression coming out of this scene is Nune's understanding of being a hard-working student in accordance with the belief in education. There are, in fact, other options for her to occupy her time, such as going shopping or watching television, which were the prevalent leisure activities of the young population in the 1980s-1990s. Apart from this short scene with Nune, the transformation of both the science and art students from being playful to attentive learners after the departure of Tong-Aeg contributes to the significance of such beliefs. This comes with the narrative that their situation is now better. These examples well clarify the film's message that conformity to traditional education beliefs will only bring good reward.

The next belief that represents the aspect of being Thai is that mature love is inappropriate during when students are in school. There are, in fact, numerous romances in the film. The ones to be discussed are that between Taew and Jong, the romantic success amongst the science and art students in the ending sequence, plus that between Berm and Nune.

Jong has a very strong liking for Taew. He tries his best to pamper her whenever they are both at the school. However, Taew has a feeling of attraction to Tong-Aeg. She tries to be close to Tong-Aeg by whichever means she can think of. The extent of their love grows more and more along the development of the story until it is too strong to control. Jong loses his consciousness and performs an evil act to hurt Tong-Aeg, while Taew allows her despair – coming from the knowledge that Tong-Aeg has already a girlfriend – to overcome her cheerfulness. She ends in a suicide attempt. This is sufficient to show that both characters take their romance in a very serious manner.

While Jong and Taew fail in love, other characters develop their teenage romance by an array of interesting strategies. The science students use origami as a channel for passing their message of love to the art students whom they fancy. Then, they use volley balls on which they write sweet messages and direct the balls to a group of art students, leading to a disorganized correspondence by way of the volley balls. With tireless perseverance, they succeed in pairing themselves with the targeted girls. Their relationships are, on the surface, different from that of Jong and Taew. A number of cuts show that the two sides have gratifying moments, and some scenes show that they stand



firm on their relationships. In the exam scene where the art and science students have to do a test together, for example, Tae is caught cheating and is then taken out of the room. Yo, who is declared to be his girlfriend and is also in the same room, decides to leave the test just to follow him. In the ending sequence, the relationship of some pairs is briefed for the audience, indicating that none of them continues to the period of their adulthood, including Tae and Yo.

From the beginning of the story, the audience is informed that a science student named Berm falls in love with Nune. He tries to court Nune by every means, but Nune does not like him. Then, he makes an effort to please Nune with help from Aegachai who agrees to be his matchmaker. Aegachai negotiates with Nune to consider Berm while they walk to the school together. He composes a courting message on behalf of Berm and sends it to Nune a couple of times. Surprisingly, Nune becomes Aegachai's girlfriend in place of Berm. Berm is frustrated, but he does not go down the same path as Jong. His friendship with Aegachai and Nune remains. After they all become adults, Berm marries Nune. Berm and Nune are the only couple from the school who can really be together. However, it is significant to note that this unforeseen union did not carry over from their high school age.

From these data, youth romance in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* does not accord closely with youth romance in which maturity suppresses emotion, as that of Bunchu and Moree in the *Bunchu* series. In the case of Jong and Taew, they respond to their feelings as if it is their sole commitment and they cannot stand the pain of their broken hearts, whereupon they react to it with destructive actions. The rest of the central characters are obsessive with their romance not less than Jong and Taew as exemplified by the case of Tae and Yo. Even so, they cannot adopt real love until they become adults. For Berm and Nune, their romance is a one way love. Nune disregards Berm while they are in high school. However, the surprise is that they are get together as a married couple in the end. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*, in consequence, makes clear that they all do not succeed in their earnest love, although no detailed reasons are supplied. It can only be understood that they are too young to realize that 'love', in fact, requires more effort, such as self-control and understanding, than personal emotion. When they lack such effort, there is no way to succeed. The key message coming out of the portrayal of romance in this film is, therefore, the failure to approach love appropriately will result in fruitless romance. More importantly, high school is not a period for serious love, as

suggested by the case of Berm and Nune. The relationship of these two is not developed from adolescent love, but mature thinking coming after they reach adulthood. In other words, the youth should hold firm to the given routine – studies and appropriate leisure activities – rather than dealing with love which is never deemed a necessary part of young people’s social practice in the Thai context.

The issue of love and romance is repeated once more by way of Tong-Aeg’s conversation with the art students prior to his leaving. He says that no one is wrong to love or to be loved. However, they will have to admit to having untimely disappointment because of a lack of consciousness and emotional control which will allow love to ruin joyful life or other kinds of love amongst family and friends. He urges the students to be more aware of their juvenile love:

“You just know love. You must try to preclude it from ruining the good parts in your life, because love is not the sole thing for your future.”

His dialogue not only confirms the validity of the above interpretation, but also provides an image of the Thai worldview concerning love matters.

#### 4.3.5 Negative aspects of Change

Unlike *Khu Wun Wai Wan* and all the *Bunchu* films, the negative representation of modernity to signify the rejection of liberal economic progression and/or some cultural imitation is less evident. This is because *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* tends to place emphasis on the communication of Thainess through student characters and some socio-cultural icons such as places and traditions. However, there are few scenes providing a reflection of modern issues.

Subsequent to running away from Mrs. Nualsri who knows their misuse of the computer in the astrological forecasts, the science students are about to hide themselves in an exhibition room. They send Berm into the room first, but Berm collides with a statue of a red devil by accident, thereupon Berm replaces the statue with his own body painted and made up to resemble the broken one. Then, by a big piece of paper hanged on his body, the act of Berm imitating the devil-liked statue is made to represent AIDS (see picture 83). Interestingly, the reference to AIDS is also put in the beginning of *Bunchu Five*,

*Nueahom* which was released to the theatre two years earlier. At the time of the cinema release of both films, AIDS was one of the diseases of most concern coming with the impression of a problematic society because one would not be infected with HIV unless they had unprotected sexual intercourse or recycled needles during use of narcotics. The statue provides the audience with the notion of a problematic society in accord with the statement about the fourth crisis by Prawase Wasi.<sup>13</sup>



Picture 83 the red devil



Picture 84 exploding cake

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 34.



Picture 85 students being messed with the cake

The second representation is encoded in the scene where a cake (see picture 84, 85) erupts by the mischievousness of the science students. As discussed in *Bunchu Phu Narak*, cake is not an original Thai dish. There is no record of when cake was introduced to Thailand; it is only known that cake is a dish popularized in the West before Asia. Therefore, cake in this film, similar to cake in the previous youth films, can be viewed as a code for the problem of cultural imitation. The point to consider is cake becomes a channel for ill-considered students to embarrass their opponents and ends in a chaotic, messy explosion instead of being peacefully shared. Based on this situation, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* seems to imply that, sometimes, cultural imitation does not bring about constructive results because Thai people imitate only the form of foreign culture, as exemplified by having the cake, but not the content, i.e., to use the cake for a joyful gathering that can enhance the group's relationship.<sup>14</sup>

The existence of ruffians (see picture 86) in the story has implicit meaning regarding socio-economic modernization. They often appear in modern costumes such as jeans, vests, shirts, or sneakers. No traditional Thai outfits are used by this sort of character. The employment of foreign style outfits or props engenders a similar impression as for the delinquents in *Bunchu Phu Narak*. That is to say, some people who imitate foreign culture do not maintain ethics/morality because they are too concerned about showing off how

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<sup>14</sup> This is similar to the use of Valentine's Day cards by Lalita in *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui*.

much they are modern and fashionable without thinking of moral or ethical development or appropriate use of the culture they imitate.



Picture 86 ruffians

#### 4.4 Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two

Aside from entertaining the cinema audience, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* speaks against the modern socio-economic environment at a more serious level. The heart of the story concerns the behavioural problems of youth. The newly adopted youth culture and changing lifestyle are identified as major contributing factors. The tone of the film seems a little darker, compared to Bundit's first film, as well as all the *Bunchu* films. This can be an indication of how change is a point of concern in Bundit's seventh youth film.

##### 4.4.1 Outcome as a Consequence of Undesirable Behaviour

The behaviour of young people has been the matter of concern for scholars as reflected in the discussion of the 1990s generation in Chapter 2. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* revolves around such concern with how the new behavioural trends can induce unpleasing consequences with a set of central youth characters are used to deliver this message. As can be seen, the central characters appear in two groups. One comes from rich families; the other are from poor ones (see picture 87, 88). The poor

family group consists of Dui, Tam, Kongwut, and Thana. The rich family group comprises Pibulsak, Burin, Panu, Somchai, and Erawat. There are also Oat (see picture 88) and Ning (see picture 89) – additional female characters whose role may not be as dominant as the rich and the poor, but they are a significant part of the story. They all have a relatively modern look with individualistic, competitive, and materialistic behaviour, as compared to the key characters in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*. In addition, none of them, except Ning, are portrayed as being particularly competent. They have an array of problems which they do not try to fix, causing a series of obstacles to both themselves and people around them.

To start with, they are in complicated conflicts many times. In the opening sequence, Kongwut argues with Burin, leading to a challenge for a fight between the two sides. Then, the rector forces them to take part in the marching band. Burin says that he can play anything that the poor students do not play, whereas the poor students moan about being in the same band as the rich students. The day after, Burin and Kongwut compete against one another to play the snare drum. Then, Kongwut deliberately throws a drum stick at Burin's head. His action increases the hostility between the two, leading to revenge in which the rich students trick the poor students to remain in the building after school and then they lock all the entrance doors so that the poor students cannot get out. These examples show that the two sides do not use any reason to resolve their conflict, just have the inclination to rely on violence or bullying.



Picture 87 the rich students (from left to right – Erawat, Burin, Pibulsak, Somchai, and Panu)



Picture 88 the poor students and Oat (from left to right – Kongwut, Tam, Oat, Thana, and Dui)



Picture 89 Ning (in the middle)

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Self-control is the second aspect to look at, in which it is found that they do not control their emotion or thinking, resulting in thoughtless talk or actions in many scenes. For example, when they first meet Rae, Tam tells Rae unabashedly that he does not want to deal with any instruments in the brass family because he is afraid of his cheeks will become misshaped. In a scene where other members of the band teach the central characters, Burin boasts that he is already good at beating the drum and it is an electric drum he uses. The portrayal of this undesirable characteristic continues in the middle of the story. In camping scenes, Somchai, Thana, Tam, and Kongwut show off to the girls who witness their rehearsal, making their performance out of step. Later, Pibulsak and some other rich students distract the practice of the girls with a remote control plane just for fun. Pibulsak even goes further by leaving the camp without permission after he is

punished by Rae. The problem of self-control reaches its peak after a failed performance in the provincial fair. Dui satirizes the rich, inducing a fierce argument among the band members. Although Rae asks them to stop, they do not listen.

Thirdly, the central characters are depicted to be self-centred. In a scene where the rich students wander in the department store, for example, they talk about setting up a pop band to enhance their own reputation, while the poor students discuss where to have a tasty meal rather than about the marching band. Another example is the case of Tam. When Rae blames Tam for his incompetence in using the mouthpiece for the brass instrument, Tam says to Rae that he is happy to change to any musical instrument that is not difficult to use. At the camp, Oat unburdens her mind with Tam saying that, whether she concentrates or not, she always makes mistakes in using the baton. She concludes that the baton is the problem, not her. These examples all show that they are only concerned about themselves. They avoid all kinds of hardship and do not accept the need for self-improvement.

The next point is weak realization of ethical and moral behaviour. Erawat is excluded from the band at the beginning because of his father. He goes against this by writing a fake letter in the name of his father stating that he is allowed to join the band. When Pibulsak first calls Kath, he tells a lie that he is calling from home and has urgent business to meet with her. In fact, he is already at the meeting point and he only wants Kath to come out to see him. The next example comes from the case of Kongwut. He learns of his brother's sadness of having no money to play with friends. He then steals a piccolo and sells it for money to comfort his brother.

At this juncture, no matter whether they are rich or poor, the central characters tend to have the same social interaction. They are likely to stay as separate groups and their criterion of grouping is economic background – the rich never mix with the poor. Within the group, they keep talking nonsense at all times. When the poor students know that Tam has fallen in love with Oat, they only chat about the relationship between Tam and Oat, while the rich students have a conversation about Pibulsak and Kath. Some characters interact with the seniors of their acquaintance in an impolite manner. In the first sequence, Erawat squabbles with his father. In the middle of the story, when Rae punishes Pibulsak, Pibulsak argues unyieldingly that the punishment is unfair to him. The last case is Kongwut who aggressively shouts at his parents upon knowing that they did not allow his younger brother to buy toys. Some scenes show that the central youth



characters are not considerate towards people outside their groups. The rich students complain about having training by junior students, so the way they react to those students is full of arrogance. One more example can be taken from Pibulsak. After he runs away from the camp, he challenges a truck driver by standing in the middle of the road. He says to himself that it must be the truck that gives way to him. Based on these data, the social interaction of the central characters appears troublesome as compared to the youth characters in the other films previously released. The point to be highlighted is that there is a greater similarity between the characters in this film and real youth. It is possible that the way they interact with other characters is no more than an imitation of new youth culture in which social bonds are being replaced with group interests and/or self-importance.

The lifestyle of the central youth characters bears a resemblance to that of the youth in the actual society, which tends to be very materialistic and occupied with consumerism. In the first scene of the rich students, they come to school in expensive cars. It is narrated that they bring along personal pop musical instruments, all of which are very expensive. When they are away from school, both the rich and the poor students wander the department store and seem to spend extravagantly. Pibulsak is the clearest representation of high materialism and consumerism among the rich. When he courts Kath, he buys her expensive flowers, followed by costly activities. At the camp, he brings along a remote control plane to exhibit his richness. Among the poor, Kongwut represents the same aspect as Pibulsak. Despite the financial problem of his family, he insists on buying toys for his brother. He dares to steal the piccolo from the school to fulfil his goal. He also says to his brother that he is ready to provide whatever his brother wants.

Youth romance is another issue showing a negative element of new youth behaviour. Pibulsak is ready to fancy Kath and pursue his feelings in a way that he treats it seriously – which means he rejects the tradition behaviour expect of young people to avoid mature love. Throughout the story, Pibulsak devotes all his efforts and money to dating Kath (see picture 90). The way he speaks to her is filled with sweet words not suitable for the people at his age. He buys her flowers. He calls her whenever he misses her. It appears, however, in the last part of sequence two that Kath has never thought of him beyond being a friend. She introduces her boyfriend to Pibulsak and tells her boyfriend that Pibulsak is only her music fan. This ending brings Pibulsak an unexpected

broken heart as much as indicating that youth romance should never go beyond the expected limit.



Picture 90 Pibulsak giving a flower to Kath in front of Ning

Youth personal convictions in this film are not conveyed clearly to the audience. Nonetheless, the interpretation of the action and dialogue unveils the popular conviction inherent in the mind of the central youth characters which is to achieve fame in the music industry. This is shown in the first half of the story when all of them have an interest in being pop musicians. The rich characters bring along their electric musical instruments to the school, whereas the poor students use simple ones. They talk about music, as well as speak of their likeness and capacity for playing pop music.

This mirrors the dreams of youth in the mid-1990s which was to be famous, and shows the influence of the entertainment industry which has changed the way youth identify their life goals. Interestingly, having such beliefs does not direct the central characters to any kinds of progress as none of them takes up a career in music the story. It looks as though their convictions are just unrealistic dreams.

Finally, their awkward behaviour brings about ongoing disunity from the beginning to the end. At the start, the audience can see that unity is not apparent between the rich and the poor students. Their division comes from the difference of financial backgrounds. The rich students often have expensive items, whereas the poor students use inexpensive ones. Neither side appreciates the lifestyle and manners of the other. When they ought to work together in the marching band, they choose to maintain their mutual hostility. This gets them nowhere, aside from repeated failures until they realize in the very end

that they are too negligent and, thereby, have to change their outlook. Then, they focus on responsibility rather than individual preference. It should be recalled that unity is one of the key problems of youth debated by scholars as detailed in Chapter 2. Reportedly, youth in the 1980s-1990s are socially fragmented. They dismiss group consolidation and have more interest in obtaining individual advantage, which some consider to be a result of the new socio-economic environment. It can be understood that the film's tacit function is to promote unity in opposition to social fragmentation and excessive individualism.

#### 4.4.2 Compliance with Established Tradition

Ning is the sole character shown to be ideal from the beginning to the end, whereby she is very competent at coping with any problems. The central characters start to develop some desirable characteristics around the middle of the story. The most prominent characteristic is their learning from their past mistakes and endeavouring to overcome the problem of being selfish which urges them to seek accord with each other before ending in unexpected triumph. It can be understood that the central youth characters in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* still comply with general expectations in the Thai context, even though they seem much inferior to those in the prequel in terms of personal behaviour. Importantly, once they change themselves to be more conscientious, they are successful at overcoming their hardships, meaning that acting in line with established tradition behaviour will bring only good results.

Beginning with Ning, she is the character who fancies Pibulsak. However, she never has a tearful moment or goes on the wrong track when Pibulsak disappoints her. All along, Ning shows herself to be diligent, other than dreaming about amorous success. At the end of the second sequence, she even encourages Pibulsak to be aware of his responsibility to the band. This makes Ning the most self-controlled of the characters, and one who well recognizes what should be the first priority.

After Rae berates the band for the failed rehearsal during the camping, the rich students plan to play with a remote control plane. Erawat is the only character who rejects the plan. He starts realizing that he needs the intense practice rather than having fun with friends. Therefore, Erawat represents a young person with a determination for self-development. Interestingly, he is the first character on the rich side who expresses

the wish to reconstruct the band after the embarrassment at the provincial fair. This is in a scene when he is informed of Rae's resignation and he tells the other members that they all cannot surrender.

On the poor side, Tam and Thana – despite their overly playful natures – seem to be the least troublesome characters. They are encouraging, especially when the band has the unsuccessful show. Throughout the story, they never start a fight with the rich students or anyone else. When Oat first accepts that she is inefficient at being a drum major, and causes a huge mistake in the provincial fair, Tam and Thana console her with thoughtful reasons. Tam explains that it is everybody's fault and, whatever happens, they must keep trying. Thana compares the situation to selling soymilk. He says that, when the soymilk spills from the cup, the seller can refill the same cup. For him, any failure can always be amended. As for Kongwut, he repents his actions concerning the stealing of the piccolo, showing that he is brave enough to admit his guilt before the rector.



Picture 91 Pibulsak being rescued

Regardless of the specialty of any central characters, all the rich and poor students have good realization of the need for mutual help, especially when they are in crises. For example, once they know that Pibulsak has had an accident, they promptly throw away their discord to rescue Pibulsak (see picture 91). They all follow him to the hospital, as well as greet his return with cheerfulness. In the scene after Rae's resignation, the poor students come to see the rich students to propose the reconstruction of the band. This ends in their assembly at Rae's house to request his return to the school. Kongwut is the only character who does not join the band in the final performance; however, the film depicts him embracing Burin after the success of their show, displaying the unity between

Kongwut and the rest of the band. Interestingly, during the scene of the final performance, more trouble occurs. Erawat feels neglected by his father who mocks him ahead of commencement, so he runs away. Then, he realizes his intention to not mess up and goes back to the band. Later, Kath appears with her boyfriend, distracting Pibulsak. However, Ning stabilizes him by telling him to concentrate on the show. These depict how each of the characters is instinctively encouraging to one another during the critical period.

In terms of romantic relationships, some characters – Tam, Oat, and Ning – deal with this in a quite traditional fashion, bringing them no trouble. It is shown in the very beginning that Tam fancies Oat, stealing the picture of Oat from the school's board, leading to the first conversation between the two. Interestingly, Tam and Oat neither show their jealousy for the other, nor cause any romantic problem. Tam even heartens Oat when she is in despair. In addition, their romance is carried out in a way inconsequential to their joyful life because it is just a common, immature love. As for Ning, she likes Pibulsak, but Pibulsak never reacts to Ning nicely. In spite of receiving no positive feedback, Ning remains patient with Pibulsak. The only time she really blames him is when she persuades him to join other students in asking Rae to come back and Pibulsak indelicately refuses. Therefore, Ning does not place romance above the band and her trainer. When Pibulsak repents his behaviour, he becomes nice to Ning and it is told in the end of the story that they are together when they grow up. It can be said that youth romance in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* follows that as in the previous Bundit's youth films in not supporting romantic relationships that may distract youth during their education. All the cases, including Pibulsak and Kath, well validate this conclusion. In the case of Tam and Oat, plus Pibulsak and Ning, they do not encounter any unbearable depression stemming from their relationship because their relationship is founded on good recognition of the inappropriateness of romantic interaction.

In tandem with the above, belief in education remains the tacit key belief, as in the prequel. Throughout the story, the central youth characters appear in high school uniforms, with much of their lives belonging to studying and school activities. At the end of the story when they have all become well-behaved young people, the audience can see them being diligent at both practicing for the marching band and studying. The final scene, when they are already adults, reveals that they all acquire stable careers. Panu is a lieutenant colonel, while Dui and Tam work in a gallery and the stock market, respectively.

This conveys the idea of the need to remain in the educational routine, as well as the message that their belief in education – despite their interest in being pop musicians – saves them from having lower-income careers. In this way, the belief in education is projected and is combined with the view that general education is the way to improve youth.

What is to be noticed in the end is the absence of worrisome delinquency. It cannot be denied that the representations of all the central characters is devoid of extreme behaviour, such as sexual intercourse, narcotics, drinks, street fights, or night life. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two*, hence, resembles the prequel in basing the central youth characters on the concept of clean youth.

#### 4.4.3 Localization in a Catholic School

Unlike its prequel, the school setting has been changed from a Thai state school to a Catholic school (see picture 92, 93). However, the Catholic school is depicted to be another intrinsic part of the Thai education system. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two*, thus, repeats the emphasis on the memory of high school as in the prequel with the incorporation of aspects indicative of a Thai high school. The only difference in the schools in the two films is the religious setting, as the school in this film is governed by a Christian religion, unlike the non-faith setting in the first film.



Picture 92 the school atmosphere



Picture 93 a symbol of the school and Thai nation

The first Thai aspect of the school is the terms used for referring to the school's teachers. The students call the rector 'bra-der', deriving from the original term 'brother' – a fellow member of the Catholic church. The school's teachers are called 'mas-ser', which is a distorted form of 'master' or schoolmaster. These sorts of terms were not invented specifically for this film, but are elements emerging in the culture of the Thai Catholic schools around the country.

In the opening sequence, all the components of a typical Thai school are represented: students in Thai style uniforms – in this film, it is blue shorts/skirts and white shirts with a name/surname above the chest; their fear and/or respect for the teachers, particularly the ones with a fierce look; a flag pole; and football as a male recreation during the break time. In the final sequence, there is an image of students diligently listening to a lecture and taking notes without any questions or challenge (see picture 94). This exhibits the convention in which students are the complete follower of their seniors. In the office of the rector, the images of His Majesty the King is hung on the wall, reflecting the tradition of holding the King and the Queen in the highest regard, as well as the Thai identity in the institution of the monarchy (see picture 95). Hence, the overall image of the school delivers a sense of being Thai, rather than a complete imitation of the foreign school.



Picture 94 representation of diligence



Picture 95 the rector's office

The school teachers include Rae, the rector, and Master Juab. Of them, Rae is the most important character, whereas the rest have a secondary role. His function is, even so, more outstanding in stressing spiritual beliefs which is discussed below in 4.4.5 Traditions and Thai Identity. As for the rector (see picture 95), he is described in the opening sequence as a kind person. In one of the introductory scenes, he even kicks a football with students. He always appears in white outfits representing his involvement in the Christian Church. As for Master Juab (see picture 96), he is a school teacher who is always strict toward the students. He represents the school norm in the Thai context in which one or more of the teachers must maintain their severeness in order to keep full control of the students. Therefore, Master Juab – in spite of his small role – emphasizes the typical Thai school which is to rely on a forceful professor, such as Nualsri in the prequel. As a whole, each of these characters, in conjunction with the abovementioned elements, creates a strong memory regarding the Thai Catholic school.





Picture 96 Master Juab

#### 4.4.4 Rejection of the 1990s Social Tendencies

It is undeniable that the main plotline features the conflict about social class differences. Such differences have been engendered by the process of economic modernization, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a problem of unfair income distribution. This appears to indicate that *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* advocates a rejection against the new living context, as do the previous films. The film's conflict is not, however, the sole ingredient suggesting the view that is in opposition to the changes. Some supporting characters, background locations, and props also serve a similar function in denouncing what went on in Thai society in the mid-1990s.

Beginning with Kath – she represents a modern young person who seems to not comply with the given youth tradition. Kath has a Western look with a fashionable lifestyle and career. She is introduced to the audience as a famous singer surrounded by teenage fans (see picture 97). She always has lavish clothes with colourful makeup. By some of her dialogue and actions, she seems interested in fame and material goods, and does not fit in with traditional beliefs. She looks down on the marching band because she thinks that it is not modern music performing. She is never worried about contact with men. The point to be considered is her role in the plotline. Kath causes amorous troubles for Pibulsak, affecting his performance in the marching band. The portrayal of Kath, thus, implies a negative impression of young people who copy foreign lifestyles and thinking without considering the appropriate behaviour, as discussed in Chapter 2.



Picture 97 Kath (second from the left) giving her autograph to fans

The next character to look at is the rector. His preference of honour and reputation overpowers his sense of what is right. In this way, he insists on the preparation of the band for the provincial and school fair, while paying no attention to Rae's report that the performance of the students is yet to be qualified. He pressures Rae to add new players in a very short time with the claim about past fame. Rae has no options apart from following the rector's wish which ends in the shameful performance at the provincial fair. It can be argued that the rector is created to be a person influenced by the changing context of Thai society. His manner reflects the nature of people during the rise of the free economy who craved praise or sought fame and fortune.

With respect to the guardian characters, Erawat's father (see picture 98) is a cabinet minister whose social status is highly regarded in a Thai context. In the scene of his argument with Erawat in the private car, Erawat gets irritated by his words, so he leaves the car at a red light. His father is then provoked to come out of the car and shout at him. When the green light comes on, his parked car causes a traffic jam. A policeman comes into sight to clear the road, but he looks at the policeman with extreme anger instead of feeling sorry for the trouble he has caused. Another example is in the scene when Rae asks Erawat to leave the band. Erawat refuses, but Rae insists because it is his father's intention and he is a minister, as well as a senior alumnus of the school. These examples indicate the nature of Erawat's father as a person obsessed with power.



Picture 98 Erawat's father



Picture 99 Tam's parents



Picture 100 Kongwut's parents

In contrast to Erawat's father, Tam's parents (see picture 99) appear to be very lenient. Every time they are on the screen, the audience will only see their craze about Tam. They often take photos of Tam, as well as admiring him as a smart or skilful boy. In a scene at a provincial fair, they keep following Tam during his performance. When the attendees of the fair start booing the band, Tam's parents praise their son enthusiastically, showing that they only have a good view of their son.

Kongwut's father and mother (see picture 100) represent people who struggled with financial difficulty in the midst of economic boom. The narration in the opening sequence reveals that they used to be rich, but they have become working class and need to work harder to earn for the entire family. Their first scene depicts their conflict with Kongwut. Kongwut's brother is desperate for money to buy toys. Kongwut blames his parents for letting his brother cry, whereas his father argues that it is unnecessary because their family is too poor to spend on items such as toys. In another scene, Kongwut's parents beg the rector to keep Kongwut in the school after the rector decides to banish him. His mother reasons tearfully that Kongwut has committed his infraction only because he loves his brother and she feels frustrated that she has not enough money for her children as she used to. Her dialogue is very significant in showing their failure in being able to adjust Kongwut to the new financial situation.

Thana's father (see picture 101) is present in only two short scenes. Similar to the case of Kongwut, Thana's father needs to fight to make a living. He sells soymilk on the street where food stalls are prohibited. Thereby, he has to keep an eye out for the municipal police. After school, Thana must help his father with this tiring business.



Picture 101 Thana's father

Generally speaking, all the guardians tend to mirror the reality of being a parent during the era of the booming economy. Although they have different aspects, all of them seem to be the origin of the troubled natures of the central youth characters. Erawat's father is too strict and lacks understanding. Tam's parents seem to overindulge their son. Kongwut's parents are trapped in monetary hardship which causes distance between them

and their children. Thana's father experiences the same condition, whereupon Thana's life is more or less stressful.

Some off-school background settings are found to contain a message regarding the changes of the 1990s Thai society as well. The first one is the roadside where Thana's father sells soymilk. The way it is composed in the film communicates the economic tension during the 1990s. It is made clear that no food stalls can be located along the roadside, but Thana's father ignores the rule because the roadside is too profitable for him to abandon. He will only move his food stall if the municipal police come. The atmosphere of the roadside thereby unveils the economic climate during the 1990s by which everyone had to do anything to survive, regardless of their sense of right and wrong.

The department store is the next representation to be discussed. The atmosphere inside is full of lights, colours, and crowds of teenagers – particularly from the high school. They wander around, enjoying shopping and eating no matter if their parents have financial difficulty. Many shops may be considered to be wasteful in the eyes of traditionalists. In this respect, the image of the department store well denotes the new youth culture which is to seek pleasure in a manner that involves spending money, rather than doing sports, reading, or social volunteering.

The review of the data leads to the conclusion that some of the off-school background settings have implicit meanings concerning the change of Thai society. The roadside – where soymilk is present – and the department store seem to be critical representations of the 1990s economy. The former shows the uneasy living conditions of the working class. The latter is instrumental in highlighting the everyday life of young people which makes almost no contribution to their personal development.

The use of props begins with the opening sequence in which all the rich students come to the school by expensive cars, whereas other students just walk in. They also bring along electric music instruments. Similar to many youth films released previously, these modern materials are matched with negative features of the characters, namely, arrogance and self-centredness. The rich students own the materials, making the rich students look quite unpleasant in the eyes of the audience. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* uses such modern materials as a sign of the undesirable change in society.

#### 4.4.5 Traditions and Thai Identity

In tandem with rejecting the changing trends in Thai society, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* incorporates the depiction of what is deemed ‘Thainess’ into the story. Much of this depiction concerns traditions in support of the communal concept as seen by the ‘community culture group’. Accentuation of being Thai, such as taboos, ethics, or living style, are included to back up the acceptance or compliance with the expected identity. The following discussion makes clear how this is accomplished in the story.

As well as the major conflict, this film relies on a few minor conflicts that are indicative of an interdependent society. An example is when Pibulsak is in a road accident which brings about a rescue mission in which all the characters – both central and supporting – take part. Rae thanks teachers from another school for helping him save Pibulsak. One of the teachers replies that everyone is like neighbours; they must be mutually dependent. The actions in this example and the teacher’s words reflect the idea of interdependence or the belief that people in the same area should provide mutual assistance.

The supporting youth characters include the students in the Catholic school and those from the girl’s school with whom the central characters make friends during the camping trip. The former group features obedient young students who conform to the tradition expectations of Thai youth which is to spend their lives in school, as well as to pay respect to their seniors such as school teachers. In many scenes, they dress themselves in tidy uniforms, together with conforming to the seniority system. Interestingly, none of them are portrayed as trouble makers like the central characters. The only case is Toon – a student in grade 7 – who is forced by the rich students to help them take revenge on the poor students. However, he is punished thereafter by Master Juab. The group from the girl’s school is depicted in a similar fashion to the boys. None of them are rude or disobedient towards their seniors. In the camping scene, they are consistently diligent at the marching band practice. What is noticeable among them is their engagement in adolescent love. For example, their teacher orders them to not stay near the boys, although they still welcome the contact from the central characters. They do not, however, do this in a sexual way and, whenever the central characters perform in

their marching band, some of the girls appear in the scene to cheer them rather than entice them.

The character of Rae (see picture 102) serves as an exemplary figure with a high conscience. Rae tirelessly teaches the central characters to be aware of what they should do or avoid. In the camping scene, for example, he orders them to watch their behaviour towards the girl school in the nearby area. He urges them to focus on their mission of forming a fine marching band, as well as telling them about the importance of cooperation. When it comes to his attention that some characters are not really interested in the band, he makes a decision to not compel them with the imposed duty, and he calls the rector to ask for permission for the central characters to return home without any punishment. This indicates his understanding of the wishes of the students. Once it is proved that his new band has failed in the provincial fair, he accepts the entire fault whereby he submits his resignation to the rector. However, after the students show their unity in asking him to come back to rebuild the band, he does not waver to do so.



Picture 102 Rae



Picture 103 two unnamed teachers from the girls' school

The teachers from the girls' school (see picture 103) have similar features as Rae. They maintain a high awareness of moral or ethical conduct. They teach their students to be determined about joining the band and to remain focused. They are not hesitant to help Rae rescue Pibulsak. When Rae's marching band performs in the two fairs, they are there to show support. Their representation also involves the proper function of Thai females. In one scene, they order the female students to not accost the male students from the Catholic school during the camping. This shows their conformity to the idea of the appropriate demeanour of Thai women. Therefore, the film promotes responsibility and recognition of local customs through Rae and teachers from the girl's school.

With respect to locations, Rae's house (see picture 104) has quite a significant role in suggesting the idea of Thainess. Despite the economic development whereby modern-style houses were popularized, Rae's house appears to be a conventional Thai house. The house is elevated from the ground, made of hardwood and not painted. The garden contains a huge cart, decorated with local trees, flowers, and rocks. The entire setting looks in contradiction with the image of modernity, but conforms to native Thai architectural design. The message obtained from Rae's house can be an emphasis on an identity against the rise of the modern lifestyle. This works together with the school setting to project a local aspect which is losing its importance because of the growth of industrial capitalism and Westernization. Interestingly, Rae is an important character in the story, portrayed as a very kind person. The way his house is depicted as being traditional Thai could be seen as an attempt to pair Thainess with benevolence, while the central youth characters are matched with popular culture during the depiction of their troublesome behaviour.





Picture 104 Rae's house (students asking him to come back to supervise the band)

Two sets of dialogue are considered to be a tacit message against the concept of individualism and capitalism which came about during the period of economic modernization. In the early phase of the camping trip, Rae says to the band members that, in the band, no one is a hero or villain. Everyone is each other's good part. Then, they try marching. A few girls from the other school come into the scene to witness their rehearsal. Many of the characters lose their concentration looking at the girls, as well as show off their ability at the expense of the band's performance. Rae stops the rehearsal, and then lectures them that success of the band requires cooperation, not showing off. After the achievement of the band in the third sequence, a voiceover narrates that the band's unity results in success. They fly to many places to enter competitions and, eventually, win a title in Holland. If they had still been divided by class – rich against poor as in the beginning – their remembrances of their school would never have been happy. This voiceover happens with the image of many central characters chatting joyfully during their return to the school as alumni. Both sets of dialogue work together in drawing attention to the merits of unity. The first ones signify the superiority of good teamwork over individual ability or heroism. The second ones denote the fruit of achieving such teamwork. They all seem to suggest a belief in the merits of interdependence.



Picture 105 the pedicab and convertible car

Throughout the film, the long-shot of a pedicab and convertible car filled with a group of teenagers is shown at least three times. Both vehicles are not relevant to the conflict and it is not clear who are the characters in those three shots. The first time, the audience can only see a pedicab parked on the way up a hill while the rider is fixing its wheel. Then, a car comes into the shot, struggling to move forward. In the second shot, the car is completely broken down, while the pedicab is still parked there. The driver of the car is upset, so he gets out and kicks the car. For the last shot, the pedicab is going up the hill slowly. The car remains broken, but is being pushed by the passengers up the hill (see picture 105). Each shot is analogous to Thai society. The car represents materialism, whereas the pedicab is equal to simplicity or plainness. All the shots signify that material goods or luxury items do not necessarily bring people to the targeted endpoint, but cooperation does – the classic tradition in an agrarian society. This meaning is more evident in the last shot of the film after the success of the central characters. The pedicab is an outmoded means of transportation, but its ability to reach the top of the hill is not less than a car. In the same way, being Thai does not mean remaining inferior to modernity.

#### 4.5 Summary

Thai society went through many changes in the 1990s with an increasing degree of hope in socio-economic superiority, particularly, in the first half of the decade. Four Bundit's youth films were released to the cinema in this period.

Being the first of his film in the 1990s, *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* carries on the promotion of young people in the ideal concept to speak against the growing trend of the new youth culture. One of the features of the characters is, however, activism reminiscent of the students in the late 1970s. Together with the concept of ideal youth, the film places emphasis on the representation of being Thai in many aspects to challenge the imitation of foreign culture. Concurrently, a negative representation of modernity is integrated into the film to comment on the ongoing development of the economy. Even so, highlight should be given to the part about the student election which connotes that Thai democracy has not been carried out in a reasonable mode.

*Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* continues the promotion of the expected behaviour of Thai youth, focusing on the transition to being a working adult. The bond within the group is considered the most outstanding issue. They can revive their friendship after the unexpected fragmentation in the second sequence. *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* also repeats the same implication as in the former series, which is to stress the quality of being Thai through elements projecting socio-cultural identity. In contrast, any components reflecting socio-economic development are put in the film with a negative impression. The obvious example is the character of Lalita.

In contrast, *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*, with reference to change in Thai society, is rather a projection of the traditional aspects of a Thai high school as an expression of localism. The first aspect derives from the student characters who well reflect high school youth culture through their pattern of socialization, plus their personalities. The second aspect emerges from the school itself with contributions from the realistic depiction of the school teachers, teaching and activity areas, plus the school traditions. Despite not exhibiting perfect behaviour, many of the student characters could still be considered fine youth because of their conformance with social expectation. This means they have a clean look and avoid extreme delinquency. Another theme of representation is to rely on a projection of the socio-cultural identity, such as belief in education and a Thai way of life. Interestingly, to back up the validity of some Thai

beliefs, the film highlights how young people suffer misfortune if they fail to meet with the expected norms, as exemplified by Taew and Jong who are overly crazed with love which is deemed improper for young people. Finally, a few references to economic modernization are seen in some minor situations to imply that modernity is accepted without ethical and moral awareness.

The representation of youth in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* is changed from that in the former film. This film looks much more serious and its focus goes to the critical depiction of youth in relation to socio-cultural transition in the 1990s. In so doing, the central youth characters are created to portray how young people's attitudinal and behavioural patterns have been shaped by the new living context – popular culture, a shift of familial relationships, material consumption – are continually found. However, promotion of mainstream Thainess or localism has a place in the film to encourage the recognition of being Thai that is held as true and highly valued, which encompasses the Thai Catholic school system, ethical standards, lifestyle, or whatever is suggestive of local identity. The change of the central characters from being misbehaved to being conscientious youth, leading to firm unity in forming a successful marching band, is the most outstanding element in the story. Unity is believed to be part of the backbone of Thainess, as mentioned in the Thai national anthem. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two*, thus, proposes an idea about what the youth need to do amid the currents of a changing environment.

## Chapter 5 Bundit Rittakol's Youth Films in the 2000s

### 5.1 Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang

The production of this film took place when the Thai economy was driven along the track called 'Thaksinomics' – a set of economic policies coming with the concept of increasing personal affluence, consumption and disbursements. At the time, young people were still developing their likings for the new socio-economic condition and did not feel obligated to follow the given youth traditions or taboos. The study of the film suggests that, after the long pause from release of *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* in 1996, Bundit's production of youth films followed the previous convention in terms of sending a message of opposition to the mainstream change, which at this period, was the change influenced mainly by Thaksin's economic policies.

#### 5.1.1 Traditional Youth

Portrayal of a protagonist who conforms to the expected behaviour of Thai youth, as discussed in Chapter 2, is the major theme found in this film. Regardless of cowardice which is his only weakness, the protagonist named Chop can be seen as a polite and peace-loving graduate with a firm belief in Buddhism. He does not engage in unprincipled activities such as drinking, smoking, or gambling. In the last half of the film, he has more of a public service mind, improves in self-development, and stands firm in his lifestyle which implies some meaning about self-sufficiency, plus living happily. Aside from this, Chop has the aspect of acting properly by not taking advantage of a close relationship with a woman he knows for sexual favors. The following is the detailed discussion of these findings.

Chop's introductory scene, wherein he converses with Inthu-orn's father, projects his polite and peaceful nature. He ends his sentences with the word 'krub' to express polite modesty. He tries to maintain a modulated voice during his conversations, even though Inthu-orn's father shouts at him or is inclined to kill him after seeing him in bed with Inthu-orn – Chop and Inthu-orn are not engaging in any sexual activity because being in the same bed is only an accident. The subsequent scenes of Chop also display his nonthreatening behaviour. As it appears, Chop is humble in front of his sister, brother-in-

law, or any strangers, including a rude motorcar mechanic, even though none of these characters are kind to him. There are also a number of scenes stressing how much he is not inclined to violence to indicate his peaceful nature. In a scene when he walks back to his home, for example, he deceives a vicious man, who is about to punch him, into believing that he has an eye problem, thus implying he is no threat). He does this to beg for sympathy and prevent a brawl. Interestingly, Chop learns to be more and more aggressive in addressing his problems in the last half of the story, but he opts to revert to his peaceful nature in the end. According to a survey in 2001 by Suwanna Ruangkanhasetr, et al. (2005: 229), violence became more common amongst the young generation. It was found that up to 31.5% of Thai adolescents, for example, engaged in violence outside their school; while 28.9% engaged in violence within the school property. The representation of Chop can be considered as a way to show a counter voice to the fierce nature of the young in the early 2000s.

Chop's Buddhist beliefs can be seen from two scenes. In the first scene, he tells Inthuorn's father that he is the president of the university's Buddhist club and he adheres to the five precepts on weekdays, but the eight precepts on weekends. His explanation also points to his experience in which he has won trophies concerning chanting. What is to be highlighted is that he looks exceptionally kind and calm during the explanation, in spite of the possibility that he could be attacked at any moment. This corresponds to the teaching about maintaining a peaceful mind in Buddhism. Then, his Buddhist beliefs are re-manifested in a scene before a fight at a tea house. Narin tells Chop to find a man whom she has hired to fake a fight with him. Immediately, Chop opts to give alms to the monks to cheer himself up, while no other characters do such in any other scene. This action would appear to confirm his ties with Buddhist faith.

Having no vices, Chop says to Inthu-orn's father that he does not prefer the night life, meaning that he prefers the traditional way of living, such as studying and taking part in student activities, rather than drinking or seeking a prostitute. At a papaya-salad food stall, Narin thinks that Chop is too much of a coward to initiate a quarrel, so she encourages him to drink some liquor in order to bring out his naughty side. Chop, without experience drinking alcohol, gulps down the entire glass in seconds as if he is drinking water. He has a hangover the day after vomiting and makes a resolution that he will never touch liquor again for all his life. These two situations imply his unfamiliarity with all typical vices, including drinking.

Chop's public service mind becomes apparent in two scenes. In a scene on a bus, the bus conductor unkindly rejects an old couple because they do not have sufficient money for the entire journey. Although they ask for mercy, the conductor does not care. In the same scene, a male passenger molests a woman who is travelling on her own. She cries out, but no help is given. Chop then stands up against the conductor and the salacious passenger. He points a gun – a faked one wrapped with clothes – at the two troublemakers, as well as telling them how to behave for the sake of others.

In a scene at a petrol station, Chop fights with a local godfather whose gang threatens to destroy the whole petrol station where Chop and others are staying, following a conflict between his children on one side and Chop, Narin and some other men in the petrol station on the other side. After a chaotic battle, Chop sprays some petrol with the fuel pump on the godfather and threatens to burn him. He sarcastically asks if the godfather thinks that no one dares to defy him, which in other words, is asking why the godfather does not make himself kinder or more considerate in order to live with others happily. Knowing that there is no way to win, the godfather gives up and apologizing for his intimidation. Chop immediately let him go. In fact, Chop can run away from the petrol station at any time, but he makes the decision to remain there in order to combat the gang. Then, he uses psychological means to evoke the godfather's conscience rather than really injure him. Chop's decisions and words from these scenes can bear out his attention to social matters.

The matter of self-development can be interpreted from the entire story. At the beginning, it is clear that Chop dislikes violence and he avoids a fight even though he might disgrace himself. In the end, he turns into a brave man who fights for ethical behaviour. He also develops his understanding about romance and life. He thinks all along that he loves Inthu-orn. However, he comes to the decision to refuse Inthu-orn after finding out that they both require more time to ready themselves since marriage is too soon for them.

Chop also promotes self-sufficiency in giving up the opportunity to share the immeasurable wealth and power of Inthu-orn's father as a result of his decision to put off the marriage. No scenes, however, show that Chop is saddened by his decision. He moves to Narin's house in a remote village where a luxurious lifestyle is absent. There, everyone resides in traditional dwellings surrounded by natural forest. No signs of poverty

or financial adversity are depicted. The tone of his voice in his last conversation with Narin projects that he is extremely happy with such simple living.

Being a person who understands proper behaviour, Chop never exploits the opportunity to request either Inthu-orn or Narin for sexual favors. In the opening sequence, Inthu-orn and Chop find themselves in the same bed. She also hugs him on occasion, urges him to get married, and talks to him with a sweet voice. This reflects her unrestrained closeness to Chop, as much as the fact that there is always a chance for Chop to sleep with her, but no actions or words suggest Chop's decision to do so. As for Narin, she approaches Chop for a free trip to Chiang Rai. She is with him all the way, both in private and public. She follows him everywhere and looks after him when he makes a false step. However, Chop does not misuse her friendship for sexual favors. He takes good care of Narin to the point that she saves him from imprisonment. All these details show his recognition to how to treat a woman with respect to the avoidance of sexual objectification.

#### 5.1.2 Joyless Society

*Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* is very explicit, compared to all the previous youth films, at conveying a tacit criticism against change in Thai society by the noticeable portrayal of a corrupt society in contrast to the notion that Thai society has been properly developed. As mentioned, at that time, Thai society was experiencing socio-economic changes through the application of Thaksinomics. The unemployment rate in 2003 was, for example, lower than that in 2002, and it was believed that Thailand had already surpassed many other Asian countries in economic terms (Yongyuth Chalamwong, n.d.: 509). This induced confidence amongst the Thais, plus the notion that a higher level of living comfort was available to people in all classes. This film takes an opposite view with portrayal of immense aggression and lack of moral concern because of the characters' adoration of money, power, and material goods. Generosity, happiness, compromise, or the like is virtually nonexistent. Within this portrayal, many of the youth characters – presumably at the age above 20 – spend their lives in defiance of the expected youth behaviour as discussed in Chapter 2, behaviours such as studying, seeking personal stability, take a good care of one's parents, and self-control. Rather, they are dishonest people whose interests involve mainly their own comfort. All these result in an image of a



miserable and depressing society in the film, as well as highlight the director's disparagement of the changes that have taken place. The detailed discussion to back up these findings is in the following.

Beginning with the youth characters, it is obvious that Inthu-orn tries to protect Chop from her ruthless father, as well as encouraging him to fight for their love. In the end, her nature is turned upside down. She not only disagrees with Chop on the issue of marriage, but also provokes her farther to punish Chop, causing Chop to run away. Her actions reflect the image of a selfish young woman without a will to be more mature. She only expects Chop to follow her romantic desires, while expressing no interest in self development as seen in Chop – the person whom she claims as her lover.

Inthu-orn is not the sole youth character who turns her back on the expected behaviour. At the end of the story, there is a gang of young motorbike riders in jean or dark tone jackets engaging in motor racing at the petrol station. Their race is very noisy with engine sounds, plus yelling and talk filled with rude words and offensive manners. This annoys all the people who are at the petrol station. The trouble intensifies when Narin throws a seat at one of the riders. This leads to a brutal assault against Narin and Chop, before they are driven away. Then, the gang's leaders rush to tell a local godfather, who is also their real father, to take revengeful action. They are, in this way, unprincipled young who have no concerns about how others will suffer from their behaviour, including no intention to abide by the law.

In tandem with the undesirable features of some of the youth characters, aggression is the thematic backdrop generating the image of an unpleasant social environment. Aggression can be seen from an array of characters, such as, Chop's sister and brother-in-law; Inthu-orn's father and his gang; and the godfather and his gang. Aside from this list, some extras – regardless of whether they are good or bad – also exhibit an aggressive aura. None of them uses conciliation in solving their conflicts. They do not consider peace, mercy, or forgiveness either. On many occasions, abiding by the rules means nothing to them. They are, thereby, not afraid of breaking the law if that can bring them satisfaction. The first example is Chop's sister and brother-in-law. They both keep shouting, even in situations where everything looks all right. The opening scene, nonetheless, show a more violent reaction amongst the supporting characters. Inthu-orn's father orders his subordinate to kill an unnamed man who presumably has done something to displease him. Not long after, a man whom he employs to track and take

photos of Inthu-orn appears with an incomplete set of pictures. He orders his subordinates to put that man to death just because of this tiny mistake. What comes out of scenes such as these is the portrayal of people's cruelty. They do not exhibit any kindness, thereby the social setting in the film turns into one of violence and lawlessness.

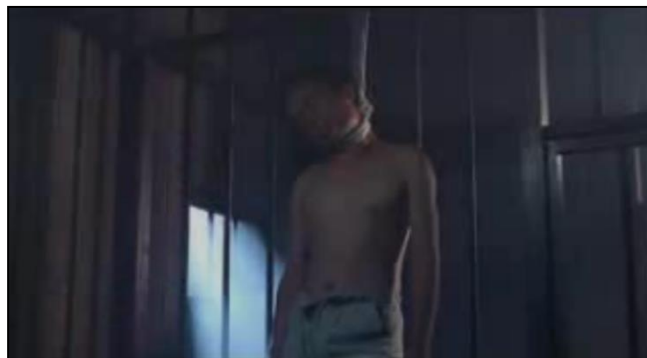
What also conveys a picture of joylessness, in combination with aggression, is the state by which some supporting characters are too concerned with money to give heed to moral and ethical advancement. The example to begin with is Chop's sister who owns a beer wholesale shop. She shouts at him upon his arrival at home that he must find a wife who can assist in her business. Later, when Chop is taking a shower, she shuts off the main water supply and cries that the water fee is too high for her to bear because she cannot achieve good sales of beer last month owing to the customer's preference for other popular retailers. In this respect, her ill temper has a significant correlation with the desire for a larger income. The most remarkable case is, however, the incident in which Chop and Narin have a car accident in the last half of sequence two. The only ones to come to the scene are the nearby villagers who dismantle the car and take away the engine, including other belongings, to sell. Chop comes to the decision to invade the village in order to fight and retrieve the stolen goods. During the fight, there is a shot showing a sign with the message 'Nueng Mooban Nueng Palitapun' (or One Village; One Product) written thereon (see picture 106). This message appears to satirizes the policy under Thaksinomics called 'One Tambon; One Product'. The policy is often thought of as an approach to wealth. However, there is only a desire for wealth leading to the crime (stealing) in this film. The message 'Nueng Mooban Nueng Palitapun', in combination with the crimes committed, work together to reflect the view that the craze about capitalism can be a causal factor for the weakened morality in Thai society.



Picture 106 a satirical sign of Thai politics

Another aspect of the joyless society is the weakening of ethical courage, which is shown by a number of the characters who have fears of performing good deeds. For Chop and Narin, for example, following the car accident and the unexpected thievery, they have nothing left, whereupon they must solicit a free ride. On the main street, no cars pick them up and there is a quick scene of a woman telling her husband who is driving a car not to stop for Chop and Narin. She reasons that it is too risky to allow strangers to get in at night. The next example is in the bus scene wherein Chop experiences the unkind conductor, as well as the salacious passenger. No passengers oppose the action of both characters. Everyone just stands still while witnessing the situation.

As a final point, a short situation in a scene in a prison strengthens the image of an unhappy society. In the prison, Chop must share a cell with a group of cruel prisoners, together with a silent gay person. Whatever those prisoners say or do often ends in a violent punch which makes Chop quite fearful. This situation seems to portray that the society has lost the sense of loving-kindness because aggression has become fully normalized. The story then cuts to a night scene in which Chop sees the dead body of the gay person who has hung himself (see picture 107). No reason is given by any dialogue or actions. Only a few sentences can be heard from the warden saying that suicide should not be done because this world is still beautiful and livable, although this seems to contradict the social condition shown in the film. His words work as a sort of sarcastic remark about society, while the suicide functions as a sign of hopelessness about the fierce world.



Picture 107 the gay prisoner committing suicide

### 5.1.3 Ideal Thainess as an Alternative to Change

While the film portrays a social climate that looks quite miserable, there is also a message about ideal Thainess occasionally inserted in the story. It can be seen that happiness is most perceptible when the protagonists are in agricultural settings or engaging with traditional Thai customs. Generosity and understanding are clearly evident in a scene at a Thai Buddhist temple, when personal security and success appears where sacrifice and mutual help is depicted. Positive representation of agriculture, Thai customs, Thai Buddhism, and interdependence implies that adherence to such cultural tendencies is meant to be in opposition to the changes occurring in the society. According to Kanoksak Kaewthep (1999: 83-84), the ‘community culture group’ is a leading proponent of this view of Thai cultural. They believe that Thai society should develop with rigorous adoption of an agrarian lifestyle, follow Buddhism, and embrace interdependence, rather than being completely modernized in replication of the West. Their belief is that this will induce ethical and moral advancement, as well as lessen problems such as aggression and unkindness resulting from the mainstream socio-economic development. It can be understood that *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* endorses this idea about Thainess in accordance with the ‘camp of community culture’.



Picture 108 Chop and Inthu-orn in joyful Songkran



Picture 109 Inthu-orn dancing in a rice paddy



Picture 110 Chop and Inthu-orn teaching rural children to sing and dance

Firstly, the theme about happiness is revealed through three flashbacks: Chop and Inthu-orn during the Songkran Festival; Inthu-orn dancing cheerfully in a paddy field; and Chop, Inthu-orn, and the children being together in a playful recreation (see picture 108, 109, 110). All of these scenes contain background settings denoting Thai customs and/or agrarianism in the absence of technological or an urban feel. In the first flashback, Chop and Inthu-orn are in traditional costumes with huge jasmine wreaths around their neck. Inthu-orn has powder on both of her cheeks. She carries a big silver bowl with Thai-style design, filled with fresh water. At the back, Lanna flags can be seen, together with lots of greenery. Inthu-orn moves towards Chop to splash water on him, while many other people jump for joy by splashing water on one another. This flashback depicts the Songkran Festival in a very old fashion manner, which is opposite to the image of Songkran in modern cities where it is common to see women wearing sexy dresses, alcohol being consumed, sexual liberties being taken, water guns used, and yelling. The second and third flashbacks are slightly different in that they project happiness in an agricultural setting. In the second flashback, Inthu-orn dances with a jolly face. She slowly spins in a

wide rice paddy. There are Thai houses, cows, and green plants appearing in the frame. As for the third flashback, the setting is almost the same as in the second one with the image of a large green field, including a few dwellings located therein. Chop, Inthu-orn, and a group of children are liberating themselves from constraints by singing and dancing. Based on the suggestion by Sutsan Suttipisan (2008), what is deemed to be Thai identity is most likely opposite to what is ‘trendy’ or ‘internationalized’. The three flashbacks make concrete and underline the contentment of being Thai during the time Chop is experiencing social aggression. Their position in the film, hence, reveals an emotional contrast of something happy versus depressing, bringing forth a positive picture of Thainess.



Picture 111 Nain and Chop in her village



Picture 112 the longshot of Narin's village

In addition to the flashbacks, happiness is communicated through the ending where Narin meets Chop at her home (see picture 111, 112). After accomplishing the challenged by Inthu-orn's father to make a journey to Chiang Rai to meet Inthu-orn where he must fight anyone to prove his masculinity, Chop is brought to Inthu-orn's home by her father while Narin returns to her village with a broken heart – because she already loves Chop. Upon arriving at home, she receives a warm welcome from her father, even though

she left without permission to pursue a romance with an unapproved lover. Her father invites her nicely to have a meal inside the house, which is generally considered to be a sign of 'forgiveness'. His pleasure is concealed within his smooth voice. Then, Narin meets Chop standing nearby and learns that Chop has refused the wedding. The atmosphere in the ending becomes more and more contented until the film credit comes up. The contentment emerges in a scene wherein the location reflects the socio-cultural roots of Thailand – a remote village where people live a simple and peaceful life, as is the case of Bunchu in *Bunchu* series. Their dwellings are just rural houses; their clothes look very local. Women wear sarong; men wear fisherman pants. All their shirts are made of cotton. When Narin meets her father and Chop, both male characters are doing handwork with woven hats. These props, sets, costumes, and extra characters reproduce a socio-cultural identity from a non-modernized angle in combination with simplicity and happiness.

The theme about generosity and understanding is interpreted from the temple scene where Chop is totally drunk and turns into an irritating person. During the night, he wakes up and staggers towards the monk's dwellings alone. He sings a song that gets on everyone's nerve whereby the abbot calls a temple boy to handle Chop. Surprisingly, the abbot enjoins the temple boy not to harm him, but to shower him so that the alcohol effect will be weakened. Chop is then safe from physical attack and is allowed to continue to sleep. This type of representation mirrors the role of the temple by which monks give assistance to laymen, as well as turning the temple into a place of mental refreshment based on kindness and compassion in accordance with Brahmavihara or the series of four Buddhist virtues. It can be understood that the temple scene serves as a visual message in support of Thai Buddhist culture. For some thinkers, the temple should never be detached from the community, even if it is in the period of intense economic development (Kanoksak Kaewthep, 1999: 84; Office of the Board of Education, Thailand, 2001: 3-6)

The images of interdependence are emphasized in the last half of the film. The first comes from the relationship between Chop and Narin on one side and a truck driver, including some unfamiliar people, on the other. In mid-story, Chop and Narin have a road accident caused by the racing of two trucks. When Chop meets the truck driver face to face in the petrol station scene, Chop threatens the driver with a faked gun, as well as telling him about the need to share the road. Rather than becoming enemies, the driver

and Chop decide to cooperate in fighting with the gang of young riders after Chop and Narin have tried on their own, but have failed. No reasons are provided why they become the same team, although perhaps one could interpret this as a message about forgiveness which can lead to mutual assistance. Their attempt to fight the riders draws more support from other people in the petrol station leading to victory. The representation of interdependence is continued in the final sequence. The local godfather, whose children are the key leaders of the riders, is furious about the attack against his children. He and his gang gather in front of the petrol station and terrorize everyone with a threat to destroy the whole place. It looks as though Chop, Narin, and the others ought to surrender. However, most of the people in the petrol station work together once more under a plan devised by Chop. They use burning oil tanks as their primary weapons, ending in another victory. Aside from these two situations, the truck driver volunteers to take Narin home because of the friendship gained during the battle. Also, Chop has been supported to accomplish the task by Narin all along. Without mutual help, both Chop and Narin would have found it more difficult to arrive at their destination. This means that *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* sends out the message that conforms with the classic saying 'Samakkee Kue Palang' (or 'united we stand/divided we fall') to stress the significance of interdependence.

#### 5.1.4 Punishment for Breaking Expected Behaviour

One more theme of resistance is the retribution coming from non-compliance with the expected youth behaviour. Narin is the major character representing this theme. Inthu-orn and the young riders also provide a similar reflection, but theirs are not as strong as Narin. In general, young people are expected to be obedient, as well as realize the normative behaviour expected of them which embraces morality, self-control, frugality, and, particularly, the avoidance of unnecessary romance. However, the aforesaid characters seem to close their eyes to this mode of behaviour and, according to the story, none of them are rewarded as they wish. For Chop, his engagement in a romance with Inthu-orn, despite the fact that he is not ready for love (which he realizes as shown by his proposal to postpone the wedding in the end), drives him into the tough mission given by Inthu-orn's father before ending in a separation. In this respect, *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* stresses the way young people are supposed to act within the expected limits,



although in a reverse perspective also depicts that ignorance of the expected behaviour can be disastrous.

Narin is a young, rural woman who performs a blatant act against the traditional expected behaviour of female youth. She leaves her home in pursuit of a dreamy romance with an unidentified male character. However, Narin first appears in the beginning of sequence two as a hitchhiker. She imposes on Chop to join his journey to Chiang Rai (her hometown), no matter whether Chop feels uncomfortable with the situation. She allows herself to be close to Chop at all times without being concerned about the appropriate physical distance between male and female that is held in the Thai context. Once she knows that Chop is on a mission to prove his masculinity, she does not hesitate to instruct him how to challenge people, as well as helping to plot the fight in which Chop is predetermined to be a victor. Narin also has a materialistic, consumerist attitude. This is interpreted from her clothes comprising of a jeans jacket, a white sleeveless top, a long skirt in a pink color, and brown leather boots, which are clearly high in price (see picture 113). In a shot, she is sitting on a roadside in the first half of the story and declines a truck driver's offer for a free ride. She reasons that a car is more preferable – her meaning is that the truck is inelegant compared to a car. It is interesting that when the film ends, Narin's youthful life ends in disappointment. She is dumped by the man whom she left home to follow. Then, she suffers the moment of Chop being taken away by Inthu-orn's father, after her affection for him is made clear. It looks as if she gains nothing from her unorthodox adventure – neither true romance nor lavish living. Her unethical and dishonest assistance to Chop in the first half of the story also is without result.



Picture 113 Narin in stylish outfits

However, Narin changes her attitude, while not entirely, in the final sequence. She helps Chop fight the riders and the local godfather despite the realization that he will surely leave her. She does not hold him back before the arrival of Inthu-orn's father either, although engaging in some histrionics could easily be done. Finally, she returns home in a truck, as well as resumes her life in the rural village. It is clear that she is now paying attention to thoughtfulness rather than indulging herself with personal romance. She also ignores the luxurious lifestyle. These changes in her manner end in a happy conclusion. They include forgiveness from her father, reunion with Chop without intimidation from anyone, and being able to live in a non-aggressive society. In this regard, the film not only highlights the penalty for acting against the norms of youthful behaviour, but also communicates that compliance with the accepted behaviour will bring about a good result.

Regarding Inthu-orn, her attitude about love resembles Narin's in some way. She disregards the view that a woman must suppress her romantic expression; thereupon, she keeps revealing her craze for Chop. In the beginning, she and Chop are found sleeping in the same bed. They both are in the student uniforms. No coitus is suggested, but their closeness looks almost the same as a married couple. Later, Inthu-orn overtly touches Chop, such as hugging him after he is saved from the killing by her father's subordinates. She encourages Chop to fight for love, as well as gives him a necklace as a reminder of their relationship. All her passionate reactions to Chop are done even in front of her father. In typical mainstream Thai films, such loving expressions as Inthu-orn's represents true love and often leads to many obstacles before a successful amorous relationship or, otherwise, a tragedy. However, Inthu-orn's case does not proceed along this convention. Chop proposes to postpone the wedding plan to allow some time for their understanding of the world, causing Inthu-orn to be angry. Thus, the character of Inthu-orn projects the aspect of rejecting norms of youthful behaviour which is about how females should be careful of love and how she should be sorry for not following this norm.

As discussed, the young riders create disorder in the petrol station by their motor racing. They swear at each other and use force against Narin and Chop, who cannot stand the boisterousness, ending with violent expulsion from the petrol station. The young riders imitate teen bikers whom society typically identifies as being thoughtless, ill-disciplined, as well as lacking in proper morals and ethics. Also, their image of being gangsters, which is the opposite of the notion of ideal Thai youth, fails to have any positive

ending. As for Chop, the only mistake he makes is to be too close to Inthu-orn and not contemplate the suitability of his romance. He, therefore, has to prove his manliness to show that he is able to look after Inthu-orn. Throughout the film, he experiences only problems, i.e., a broken down car, unexpected assault, and robbery, before coming to the conclusion that marriage is not his target. *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* contains an unspoken conclusion to back up the view that failure to comply with the expected norms of youthful behaviour will be punished.

## 5.2 Bunchu I Love Sara Ou

2008 is marked as a year when political unrest began; the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) engaged in a persistent demonstration to bring down a coalition government under the support of Thaksin Shinawatra. This highlighted widespread divisions of the Thai people who showed their preference or opposition to the ruling government. In the midst of the clash, most of the young people associated themselves, as in the early 2000s, with the new youth culture as discussed in Chapter 2 and illustrated widely in a number of mainstream youth films. *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* is, however, the only film standing firm in showing resistance to the changing social environment through the main youth characters who reject the new cultural trends, while the idea of speaking against the politico-economic conditions of the late 2000s, as well as the promotion of ideal Thainess, is inserted in the story.

### 5.2.1 An Idealized Youth Character

The use of a character from the rural space who completely preserves the attitude and behaviour that is in accordance with the concept of ideal youth is reemployed in projecting resistance to the changes taking place in Thai society. Bunchoke (see picture 114) is the character with such features. He takes the role of protagonist and drives the story with his major participation in the film's key issues. He has rural features which are representative of some opposition to modernity. At the same time, he has an idealistic nature reflecting a standpoint against the stream of youth culture in the late 2000s, which encompasses adherence to Buddhism, mercy and benevolence, politeness, friendliness, calmness, deference, obedience, and social accountability.

Bunchoke's rural features are manifested through his dialect, naivety, and clothes. As shown, Bunchoke always speaks with a Suphan Buri dialect which, according to Nittakan Kunwatcharakit (2013), often sounds funny for many Thais and conveys the sense of being rural, plus being outdated. His naivety can be seen from the event in which he is deceived by two little children named 'Kratae' and 'Kraten' after he first arrives in Bangkok and, then, is induced to sleep. As to his clothes, he uses a neat shirt with common trousers, unlike the city youth whose outfits always look colorful and stylish.



Picture 114 Bunchoke

With respect to his adherence to Buddhism, it is clear that Bunchoke is designed to be a strict Buddhist. After he leaves the monkhood to fulfill Moree's wish, he never neglects his practice of Buddhism. Whenever problems occur, he immediately mentions Buddhist guidance, as in the last sequence when he influences Bunchu and Moree with the concept of kindness to help Pim and her two sisters. He never breaks the five precepts in any of the scenes. On the first night in Bangkok, he meditates and chants which means he always bears in mind the teachings and exercises in relation to Buddhist convictions.

Bunchoke's mercy and benevolence is demonstrated by his reaction to the sadness of other characters. In the beginning, he does not hesitate to feed Kratae and Kraten who moan about their hunger. When he realizes that he has been tricked by the two and lost his bag with a sum of money, he never expresses fury nor seeks revenge. He only tracks them down to get back the bag (because it belongs to his mother, Moree). In

the scene when he first negotiates with Pim, the existing guardian of the two, to regain the bag, he proceeds very gently, whereas Prapaan and Yon speaks with anger. Bunchoke keeps his forgiveness after he learns of their being orphans as well. As well, no scenes depict his use of violence, except one in which he tries to protect himself and Pim from the youth gang. He, nevertheless, avoids fighting whenever he can rather than counterattacking.

Politeness is one of the most outstanding of Bunchoke's characteristics shown in the story. He constantly speaks with a sweet voice, using respectful words similar to his father in the former series. In the first meeting with Prapan, Nara, and the others, Bunchoke talks with them nicely, ending every sentence with the word 'Ja' to mark his humble disposition. He never shouts at his friends or anyone he comes across, such as Pim or the youth gang, even in situations where he has to endure their unkindness. Bunchoke also dresses graciously, no matter that he looks like an unimaginative, rural person. In the middle of sequence two, everyone helps Bunchoke to purchase new clothes. It seems that they try to change his appearance with the fashionable youth clothing. All the scenes coming after, nevertheless, show Bunchoke in the same style of clothing as in the beginning. He wears a common shirt and trousers or shorts. He also keeps his dress shirt tucked in and tight against his body. This can be another sign of his politeness.

Bunchoke's friendliness can be discerned from his interaction with friends and everyone outside the group, such as Pim. Once Bunchoke is introduced to Ning, Yon, Prapaan, and Aen, he quickly develops friendships with them all. He welcomes their company without being jealous of their livelihood, which sound far more interesting than his. He even admires them for whatever they do for a living. Then, he gets to know Pim, whose little sisters have caused him to be in trouble. He chooses to give Pim kindness, instead of hatred, in every occasion he is with her.

Being calm in spite of the heated situation can be seen from Bunchoke's encounter with serious events. When he first chases Kratae and Kraten, for example, he accidentally hits Pim who holds him up with provocative conversation to help the two escape. Without realizing her hidden purpose, he is calm enough to not pay any interest to Pim's words. He only begs her to let him go. Bunchoke then learns of the relationship between Pim and the children. He is no longer hesitant to go after the three until successfully reaching them at their home. Pim shouts at him and denies the accusation

about the two children. Even so, Bunchoke remains tranquil while Prapaan and Yon, who accompany Bunchoke, do not. Much like the reaction to Pim, when Ning blames Bunchoke following her discovery of the pictures of Pim in his textbook – presumably, Ning fancies Bunchoke – he does not respond to her angrily. He decides on compromise with Ning to restore the friendship on a later day.

Compared to the youth characters such as Ning, Yon or Prapaan, Bunchoke seems to be the sole character who shows proper deference to others. He neither squabbles with Moree, Bunchu, nor with any other senior character, no matter how much they have disrupted his life by their own determination of his future – Bunchu wants him to prolong his monkhood, while the others hope to see him as a university student. It is only depicted that Bunchoke remains humble in front of them, listening to their words quietly. Similar deference is, nonetheless, almost absent in the characters of Ning and Yon. Ning shouts at her father to close his mouth during the debate on Bunchoke's future regarding the faculty he should target. Yon talks to his father in an impolite manner in his introductory scene. He even calls him 'fatty' at the end of their conversation. There is also a brief shot of Bunchoke performing the Thai 'wai' before entering the examination room. He says to his friends that this is to show his respect towards masters (understood to be celestial beings). All these highlight Bunchoke as the character with strong recognition of respectfulness.

As well, Bunchoke has no rejection of the direction of his elders concerning his future. He agrees to ordain according to Bunchu's direction. Then, he leaves the monkhood at Moree's request. Throughout the story, he never turns down suggestions about discipline he should be focusing upon as offered by Bunchu's friends. At one point in the story, everyone gathers at Bunchu's house to continue their recommendations about his field of study. Each of them holds firm to the opinion that Bunchoke should study the discipline with which they are familiar. Pi Pong suddenly comes into the scene to inspire Bunchoke to learn cooking and work for him. The reflection from this scene is Bunchoke's inclination to obey his seniors. The most distinctive feature of Bunchoke turns out to be his courage to do what he deems to be correct regardless of the view of others. As previously discussed, Bunchoke loses his precious bag because of Kratae, Kraten, and Pim. However, the more he learns about them; the more he realizes their living hardship. When the abduction of Pim happens under his eye while he is about to enter the examination room, he immediately departs the exam to run after the car in which Pim is

captured without any request for help. He is injured and misses the opportunity to take the exam, but nothing shows that he feels pity for this. Bunchoke even contacts the social care center which is taking care of Pim and her sisters. The three characters are looked after by the center before staying temporarily with Bunchoke in Suphan Buri. In so doing, Bunchoke troubles himself to ask Yoi and the other senior characters to certify the three so that they can obtain an approval of release. Then, he pleads with Bunchu and Moree to admit the three. Foregoing personal obligations to address the troubles of others, such as the problem of Pim, is sufficient to conclude that Bunchoke has quite a strong sense of social responsibility, similar to his father.

### 5.2.2 Conscientious Youth Characters in Supporting Roles

Although it may seem that Bunchoke is the sole youth character with an idealistic nature, the main supporting youth characters, such as Ning, Aen, Yon, and Prapaan (see picture 115), also have some exemplary traits and behaviour. They all live in Bangkok where young people are motivated to absorb popular culture, such as high spending on material goods and fashions, and are generally more concerned about themselves. A study of the film content, however, suggests that the four characters are different from mainstream youth to a certain extent. They are highly interdependent rather than being overly individualistic. They seem to be self-reliant in seeking extra income, but that does not turn them into disobedient young who are too proud of themselves. Some of them can control their emotions like Bunchoke, particularly, in situations of their relationship problems, which contributes to the maintenance of their interpersonal bonds. Constructive lifestyles in accordance with the expectation of Thai youth can also be detected from their gatherings, as can avoidance of serious romance. By these characteristics, all four represent the wish to challenge the trend of Thai youth prevailing in the capitalistic society.



Picture 115 (from left to right) Bunchoke, Prapaan, Yon, Ning, and Aen

As soon as Bunchoke is in need of support, such as housing or educational guidance, Ning, Yon, and Prapaan do not mind helping him, even though they know that they would receive no rewards from their engagement in Bunchoke's affairs. They first find a place for a short stay. Aen – Ning's workmate – is not hesitant to offer her grandmother's house upon hearing that Ning and the rest of the group desperately need shelter. On the days after, they all give further assistance to Bunchoke to purchase clothes and try to accompany him wherever he goes in order to ensure his safety. During preparation for the exam, they are side by side with him to encourage his reading (see picture 116). When Bunchoke spots Pim in public and follows her, Yon and Prapaan keep him company until the three arrive at her apartment. Both Yon and Prapaan also talk to Pim on behalf of Bunchoke. When Pim is in danger and Bunchoke rushes to rescue her, none of them are reluctant to join him in undertaking such a dangerous mission. In the end, Yon, Prapaan, Ning, including Aen, are hurt from engaging in the fight against the youth gang, but they neither complain, nor blame Bunchoke for his decision. These are the reasons for concluding that the entire team bases themselves on an interdependent relationship.





Picture 116 Bunchoke (standing on the right) being tutored by the group

The issue of self-reliance – in the absence of excessive pride – is evident from the representation of the background of the characters, plus their daily activities. Prapaan is introduced to the audience in a flamboyant costume, carrying a violin while standing on a pathway. This gives the understanding that he plays music in exchange for money from pedestrians. Not long after, Ning and Aen are shown in staff uniforms, working behind the counter in Chester's Grill restaurant. Prapaan, Yon, and Bunchoke have seats nearby while discussing what they can do to earn extra income. Yon is the only character represented without indicating his job, but in his discussion with Prapaan and Bunchoke, he tells the audience that he too works a part-time job for additional money. He accepts all kinds of work as desired by his employer. All this background information is of importance in revealing the change in Bundit's youth characters, inasmuch as the characters have developed into more mature individuals concerned with personal finances, whereas other characters in the former youth films do not have such concerns.

Furthermore, it can be seen that they spend most of their time together in the house provided by Aen, cooking for themselves and doing other activities on their own. Even so, they are not overly confident in themselves that might convert them into noncompliant adolescents. Although it may be seen that Prapaan, Ning, and Yon annoy their parents with immaterial arguments, no scenes show any serious conflict with their parents. They even do as requested. The assistance given to Bunchoke is a prime example.

The next point to be discussed is from the situation in which Ning gets angry with Bunchoke and, thereby, scolds him in front of Aen, Yon, and Prapaan, as well as upsetting everyone with her insensible outburst of emotion. It all begins with Ning seeing the photo of Bunchoke and Pim inserted in Bunchoke's textbook. She understands that Bunchoke intentionally keeps it because of his love towards Pim. No depiction indicating Ning's romantic feeling is in any earlier scene, but it can be assumed – absent clear evidence – that Ning may be jealous. Once Bunchoke, Yon, and Prapaan come back home, Ning's fury is suddenly exposed with unkind words. In this instance, Ning's performance looks utterly furious, because it is full of emotion rather than reason. Such a performance could easily be countered with ill-tempered words, especially from Yon and Prapaan who have no knowledge about the photo. However, the two characters react to it calmly, as does Aen. None of them argue, apart from asking her to calm down. The reconciliation occurs the day after when Bunchoke approaches Ning to apologize and explain his keeping the photo. Yon and Prapaan then come into the scene to restore the friendship amongst them all with joyful laughing. They can, therefore, be marked as desirable young with their notably calm features.

These characters come with the depiction of a lifestyle deemed appropriate in Thai society. According to data from Office of Promotion and Protection of Children, Youth, the Elderly, and Vulnerable Groups (2008: 52), young people in the new society have a tendency to be highly consumer oriented, undisciplined in spending, and sexually risky, while admiration of their lifestyle is hardly mentioned. As for the film, all the scenes with Ning, Aen, Yon, and Prapaan depict their daily activities as expected amongst the young. They all give mutual help whereby they never fail to accommodate one another with what is needed. This is exemplified by Aen's offer of the house or close consultation with Bunchoke regarding his examination. Some of the scenes project the image of them engaging in joyful recreation to strengthen their relationship. They banter during their spare time; they chase one another playfully and dance like funny children; the males play football with people not in their group, while the girls cheer them from the sideline. There is also a shot Prapaan mentioning Yon's major program of study while he himself talks to his father about doing a master's degree. This implies that they both accept their academic obligation – specifically higher education. Finally, any sort of undesirable behaviour, such as drinking, gambling, going to the pub, bowling, or purchase of luxurious accessories, is not shown in these four characters, not in the least.

As a final point, the issue of romance is shown in the main supporting characters in a manner that romantic relationships are almost absent and, therefore, not influential. From the Thai Health Promotion Foundation's data, up to 37% of vocational and higher educational students during 2008-2009 admitted that they had already had some sexual experience (Pimrat Thammaraksa, 2011: 92), which suggests that youth romance in society had risen to a level one would never have anticipated in the past, as well as how it has become an urgent issue. For Ning, Aen, Yon, and Prapaan, their romantic relationships are different, which do not show up within the group or with everyone else outside the group. There is only a short situation of Ning showing her emotional response to Bunchoke that the audience may understand as a sign of love. However, the story holds nothing relevant to love matters. The audience can only see the continuation of the assistance of the main supporting youth characters for Bunchoke, plus their unbreakable friendship. The interpretation of this leads one to the conclusion that Ning and all the three are inclined to accept the behaviour by which young people are expected to not devote themselves to any sort of mature love, but to focus upon the proper maturation of their emotion and thoughts.

### 5.2.3 The Discontent and Corrupt Perspective of Modern Society

Modern society in *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* is projected mostly in Bangkok. Modern society is economically developed, with unrestricted cultural flow. According to Kasikorn Research Center (2013: 2), Bangkok is a colorful metropolitan area with interesting diversity, which serves as a center of trade, shopping mall, fashion, tourism, cultural source, entertainment, and so forth. With the intermingling of business and culture, Bangkok was awarded the World's Best City Award in 2008 and 2010-2013. In spite of these positive aspects, modernization in this film has a similar feel to that in *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* in that it looks rather ugly with a combination of undesirable images. Firstly, Bangkok – as the representation of modernity – is shown to be a very busy place without good interpersonal relations. Secondly, the film portrays delinquency, including juvenile delinquency, together with a state of lawlessness whereby personal security is in doubt, as being quite normal and common within the area of Bangkok. Sometimes, Bangkok is portrayed as a place of difficult living. In addition to the setting of Bangkok, there are signifiers, plus dialogue, that expresses the socio-democratic problems to connote the

negative side of modern politics too. *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* is, therefore, critical of the state of modernity with the implication that it is not so perfectly beautiful.

A busy feeling is conveyed through the typical views of Bangkok which look overcrowded or extremely active. The early scenes of sequence two are examples of this. After the story starts with scenes of the rural atmosphere for approximately 10 minutes, the film cuts to an introduction of the city with Moree talking to Prapun on the phone. Moree is in the rural area, while Prapun receives the call in Bangkok. The audience can easily perceive by their phone conversation the level of busy condition in the modern context from a comparison of the two locations. Bangkok is filled with noise pollution in combination with heavy traffic, while the rural village looks completely opposite. Another example is Bunchoke's endeavor to capture Kratae and Kraten on Rajdamnern Avenue. The place is crowded with pedestrians and cars, whereby he cannot catch the two in time. Further to the busy condition, Bunchoke finds himself waking up alone on a public bench after being drugged, meaning that no one takes an interest in him during his loss of consciousness. He is also sworn at by a tuk tuk driver upon knowing that he has no money to pay for the ride during his attempt to chase Kratae and Kraten. These situations project an image of modern society's inconsideration, as much as the general level of busyness and activity in the urban environment.

Delinquency, plus juvenile offending, being quite common and normal can be seen from the representation of the youth characters in the city area, although not the characters in the main supporting roles, such as Ning, Aen, Yon, and Prapaan, which involves many kinds of misdeeds. Kratae and Kraten take part in criminal activity aimed at a naïve victim like Bunchoke. Their elder sister also deceives lecherous men on a regular basis, which she does for money despite being still a high school student. There is no indication of the criminal nature of the three characters at first sight because they look too young to perform serious crimes and they are in school uniforms which leads the audience to complete trust in their harmless appearance. In addition to crime, they have behaviour that looks improper in Thai society in many ways. Pim, for example, is antagonistic toward Bunchoke every time he approaches her, regardless of his polite manner. Kratae and Kraten often speak discourteously like adults. The sense of delinquency is, however, intensified in the film's climax in which a large group of delinquents besieged Pim, followed by a cruel assault (see picture 117). Aside from the depiction of delinquents, it can be seen that no parts of the story focus on the young character in the ideal fashion,

unless it is the central youth characters which gives a somewhat negative impression about youth's life in the modern society.



Picture 117 an assault on Pim who is crouching (Bunchoke also lies on the floor with her)

Along with delinquency, lawlessness arises from some dramatic situations which suggest that crime frequently takes place in the capital city. Pim, Kratae, Kraten, Aeng, and the youth gang are the characters contributory to the portrayal in this dimension. The first half of sequence two, for example, shows Pim begging to a wealthy stranger for tuition fees in a crowded department store. She uses her teenage appearance, plus an imploring voice, to arouse his sympathy to help until she has a chance to take his banknotes. Realizing that he has lost the money, the stranger cries for help very loudly, but no one stops her. Only Bunchoke runs after her, but fails. Then, a short scene of Aeng playing a computer game is inserted to inform the audience that Aeng is a gang leader whose team carries out illegal activities around the area where Pim and her sisters operate. Aeng speaks coolly to his gang members to monitor Pim and remove her as soon as she intrudes on their zone again. In this example, Pim, Kratae, Kraten and Aeng act as though they are above the law. At the same time, no officials or city dwellers appear to check their behaviour.

Apart from lawlessness, Pim, Kratae, and Kraten deliver a sense of difficult living to emphasize the toughness of life in the modern society. As discussed, the three often rely

on their innocent look to deceive people. It is, however, revealed in the middle of the story that they are forced to do so in order to survive living in the urban environment because they are all orphans. In the last half of sequence two, a shot of Pim bringing her sisters back from school is placed in between Ning's conflict with Bunchoke. It is the dusk time. There is only Pim taking care of the two while they walk along the street. These details provide the cause of their problems, together with the message that life in the city is not always easy. Many city residents need to do whatever to live on without moral or ethical awareness, especially, if they are young people who lack proper oversight and protection, such as Pim and her sisters.

The preceding discussion reveals how modernity is negatively portrayed in an explicit way. However, implicit portrayals are found in the form of signifiers, comprising some signs, technology, and dialogue.

The sign of McDonald's contact number which represents Western culture appears behind Kratae and Kraten after their involvement in Bunchoke's drugging (see picture 118). Bunchoke's failure to catch the two happens in front of a huge signboard of McDonald's also (see picture 119). Thereafter, technology, such as online chats and computer games, are included when Pim is baiting her victims and Aeng converses with the gang members. This can be interpreted as signs and technological props that point to the belief that there is a relationship between the existing modernity and unethical deeds.



Picture 118 sign of McDonald behind Kratae, Kraten



Picture 119 sign of McDonald behind Bunchoke

Some dialogue provides a comment on modernity with a reference to democracy. The first one is in Yoi's phone call to Yon in which he enjoins Yon to see Nara and Prapun in search of Bunchoke at the Democracy Monument. Yon replies annoyingly that he has no idea where the Democracy Monument is. Yoi immediately shouts, asking him whether he does not know the monument or does not know democracy. Yoi's words work like a tacit criticism of Thai politicians and their supporters who are thought to have mishandled Thai democracy during the 2000s political conflicts.

Another set of dialogue worth discussed is in the middle of the second sequence. Pi Pong tells Yoi to stop selling the Thai sweets because, for Pi Pong, the sweets are of poor quality. Yoi responds that quality is unimportant as long as his products are still popular. Upon hearing that, Nara asks if Yoi is still concerned about the nation, democracy, and Thainess. Nara continues that, if he is really concerned, he must quit selling the sweets. All these pieces of dialogue are not really coherent, but seem to intentionally reflect on the obsession with populist policies during the Thaksin era. Yoi stresses popularity above quality, while Nara mentions nation, democracy, and Thainess, which do not appear to involve sweets at all. This reminds one of the theory as concluded by Anek Laothamatas (2006: 152) that populist policies are deficient in genuine value and often undertaken to the detriment of the extant socio-cultural values.

Some dialogue with similar criticism also comes out in the end of sequence two. Aeng makes an effort to threaten Pim to not step into his zone. To do so, he references patron-client relationships to explain that he is the one who oversees the area. He says that aide-de-camps supervise the country; village headmen supervise the province; deputies' sons supervise the districts; SAO Councilors (Sub-district Administration



Organization) supervise the sub-districts; election campaigners supervise the villages. This explanation carries a sense of contradiction with democratic principles, as much as pointing the audience to the idea that Thailand has fallen into a structural problem during the period of democratization.

Further insight can be gained from Thanathorn Rittakol (Interview, 28 January 2015) who described Bundit's appreciation of the social context. According to her, Bundit often discussed socio-cultural matters with her and he had a good understanding of politics, as much as feeling involved in it. His thoughts vis-à-vis Thai political issues were, for instance, reconciliation with the wrongdoers is impossible, and neutrality is not needed if such neutrality blurs the line between good and bad. This can be a reason why the above bits of dialogue sound out of context. Each of them, purposively, highlights the view about political problems in modern Thailand. It can be said that *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* has a negative viewpoint of modernity, both in the social and political realms.

#### 5.2.4 Preference for Thainess

*Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* is similar to all the previous films in incorporating the image of traditional Thainess propagated through a variety of traditional channels such as novels and soap operas. As proposed by Sikarat Aemkosa (2012: 74), the desired social features of being Thai in terms of behaviour include being 'disciplined', 'accountable', 'self-sufficient', and 'conscientious in defending the Thai cultural identity'. An analysis of the film finds that a similar idea of 'Thainess' is represented through the settings, props, locations, and characters who are emblematic of 'good' to encourage an appreciation of being Thai in such view, consisting of interdependence and indestructible unity, compromise, agrarianism, and holding education in high regard, while some cinematic elements are included to promote the idea of localization and the recognition of being Thai from a historical and/or cultural perspective.

After Bunchoke disrobes from the monkhood and is sent to Bangkok, Moree makes a phone call to Prapun to request him to look after Bunchoke. Not a single word from Prapun expresses his hesitation or even rejection of the request. When Prapun persuades Nara to help, Nara does not decline either. They both eagerly search for Bunchoke at the meeting point (Rajdamnern Avenue). As they struggle with trying to identify Bunchoke, no sign of giving up is shown. Yoi, who cannot join their mission, assigns Yon to assist the two



on his behalf. This is one of the examples showing how interdependence is designed to be a distinguishing feature of the key supporting characters. Aside from this, three scenes depict long funny meetings which are reflective of their strong friendship. In the first meeting, Bunchu is informed of Bunchoke having disrobed. Instead of being angry with friends for hiding the truth, he asks them all to be of help concerning Bunchoke's examination. The second meeting focuses on the topic of Bunchoke's academic discipline, as does the last one. Everyone proposes an idea of what Bunchoke should be studying. Their talk is full of joy and unity which makes interdependence very prominent in the story.



Picture 120 Moree arguing with Bunchu about Bunchoke's future

Compromise is evident through the conflict between Bunchu and Moree (see picture 120). Bunchu is depicted as a father who has a great desire to see Bunchoke be a monk forever, while Moree would like to see Bunchoke study in a state university. In the beginning, Moree has Bunchoke disrobe without Bunchu knowing. Therefore, the audience can expect him to be angry when he finds out the truth, but it appears that he dismisses such emotions once he knows. He rationally settles the difference of opinion between him and Moree, whereupon their relationship continues contentedly. Normally, compromise usually does not come with such ease, particularly, if the conflict is founded on a sensitive issue such as Bunchoke's future. However, *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* breaks this perception through the way this problem is solved. The intent is to stress how compromise can be beneficial to a relationship. Simultaneously, Bunchu's and Moree's

handling of the conflict reminds one of the basic nature of Thai people as compromisers. As Supattra Kornurai (2011: 128) asserts, Thai people have adhered to 'compromise' in accordance with their Buddhist belief and this turns compromise into part of their daily custom.

The image of being Thai is attached to an agrarian life owing to the fact that much of Thai society is located in the rural area. Being Thai has, however, been redefined because of the economic changes. People are now likely to imagine 'Thai' more in the sphere of economic prosperity flourishing in services, finances, and industries, rather than as the land of cultivation. *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou*, however, contests, this redefinition through the presentation of an agricultural lifestyle being blissful and trouble-free for Bunchoke, Bunchu, and Moree. Broadly speaking, the presentation centers around the rural area (see examples from picture 121, 122) embracing the green rice fields, simple living, communal interaction, the use of Bunchu as an everyman character, and traditional custom, such as a Buddhist ordination parade. All are the element precisely used in the former Bunchu films. Adversity, poverty, and crime are eliminated from the presentation to engender a good feeling of being agrarian. In the film, Bunchu and Moree urges Bunchoke to realize the importance of growing rice. They say that, in whatever situation, a rice paddy is not only an inherited property, but also a duty to carry out. Bunchu then explains the natural beauty of the rice field to stimulate the recognition of agricultural roots. These presentation techniques are used in an attempt to link the perception of Thainess to socio-economic activity, specifically the aspect of an agricultural life.



Picture 121 communal interaction



Picture 122 the green rice paddy

Belief in education is implied in the story through the main characters, both in the protagonist and supporting roles. The examples include Moree's wish to see Bunchoke in a university, the mention of Yon's study of advertising, and Bunchoke's task of taking the examination to gain a place in the targeted institution. It can be noticed that education in this film refers to higher education as emphasized in advice given to Bunchoke. There is also an image of Bunchoke and his friends visiting the state universities, such as Silpakorn University or Thammasat University, in the end of sequence two. Pursuit of higher education is a customary conviction found in Thai society (Looking into the Educational Problem of Thailand Concerning a Long-Rooted Value, 2013: online). The matter of education provided in the story can, hence, be interpreted as a reminder – in addition to a reflection – of Thai belief in education.

Whilst all the foregoing deals with the promotion of Thainess from a social dimension, the film also has elements of Thainess from a cultural and historical dimension. This can be seen through the use of location settings for the main youth and adult characters which frequently contain images of Thainess. They are Rajdamnern Avenue, the Chao Phraya River, and the house supplied by Aen.

Rajdamnern Avenue recalls Thai history with reference to cultural modernization under the reign of King Rama V. Chatree Prakitnontakarn (2008) asserts that Rajdamnern Avenue serves the function of a civilized backdrop of Siam as presented to the international community and is a tangible symbol of being upgraded to an advanced, modern society. Chao Phraya River is a cultural signifier that is a prominent feature of Thailand involving socio-economic activities as discussed in the analysis of *Bunchu Poo Narak*. The house has Thai style design, made of wood and even has a haunting image suggestive of the belief in ghosts in Thai society.

The promotion of Thainess is quite unambiguous in the scene of Pi Pong's riverside restaurant where Nara orders a serving of American fried rice, but Pi Pong serves it in a little Thai ceramic tray that looks old-fashioned and contradicts the perceived image of the food (see picture 123). Pi Pong says that it is his policy to promote Thai identity. In a later scene, while Bunchoke wander in a department store with other supporting youth characters, he gives an explanation about the name and application of the monk's robes according to the Thai tradition. These two situations are not really relevant to the major issues of the story, but only be understood to strengthen the recognition of Thainess.



Picture 123 American fried rice in a Thai ceramic tray



Picture 124 Aen's birthday party

The point about localization should also be considered further. Similar to the case of *Bunchu Two*, *Nongmai* and *Bunchu Six*, *Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui*, two scenes in *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* convey the idea of localizing foreign culture to resist the trend of change in terms of cultural consumption. Both scenes were shot on an actual location – Chester's Grill, a fast food restaurant occurred as a result of a pop phenomenon of McDonald or KFC. The overall atmosphere in both scenes mirrors life in the urban space where people are accustomed to fast food in addition to traditional Thai dishes sold

by street vendors or in old wooden restaurants. In the first scene, Ning and Aen sing and dance to promote products/services available in Chester's Grill. This could be deemed product placement for Chester's Grill (because the making of *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* was sponsored by Chester's Grill as well). Nevertheless, localization is obvious by the incorporation of the song titled *Grilled Chicken* [ไก่ย่างถูกเผา] that many Thai students practiced to sing for an amusing activity, as well as enhancing their joyful togetherness. *Grilled Chicken* functions as a reminder of youthful cultural identity within the new living context. At the end of sequence two, a birthday party for Aen (see picture 124) is held in the same location. There is a beautiful cake with candles. Prapaan and Yon play music on a violin and guitar. Then, everyone sings a song. Some dance; some only clap their hands. All components in the situation are not representative of being Thai, except the song *Reward for a Dreamer* [รางวัลแด่คนช่างฝัน] that is a very famous song from the songs for life genre composed by Charan Manopetch. Songs for life is a local type of Thai song whose content often deals with social matters. Like the case of *Grilled Chicken*, *An Award for a Dreamer* helps add a sense of being Thai to create a picture of how modernity could be pursued in a way that cultural identity does not entirely vanish.

### 5.3 Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying

This film was released during the period of political uncertainty. Parts of the Thai public wanted a government under Thaksin's supervision after his People Power Party was dissolved near the end of 2008 and replaced by a Democrat-led coalition government. The United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, as a leading activist body, was successful at drawing supporters known as the Red Shirts to stage a demonstration in Bangkok. Their powerful gathering could mirror how much the Thais had a firm belief in Thaksin and his approach to governing which involved the boost of economic activities in various ways. *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* presents a view in opposition to this tendency, as in the previous films. The film relies more on the cinematic convention of the *Anueng* series with the intention of accentuating the negative effects of capitalism.

#### 5.3.1 Youth in the Classic Perception

Similar to other films in the *Anueng* series, the protagonists are presented as a group. They are again divided into art and science students with some level of hostility

against one another. The art students group is very playful, whereas the science students are relatively compliant and self-disciplined. Both groups unite through an informal sport event. The art students consist of Tae, Jocho, Haeng, Ngim, Yalae, Numwa, and Toeng who acts like the senior leader of the group. Aum bears the same role as Toeng for science students, with Fin, Lian, Leang, Jaeng, Yui, Kratig, and Nun under her control. A study of the characters indicates that they are not young people with a highly traditional nature, such as Bunchu or Bunchoke, but they still possess the typical features perceived as unique and praiseworthy in a Thai context. They are attached to a profound regard for the high school, seniority system, firm friendship, avoidance of a lifestyle considered to be inappropriate for young people, avoidance of aggressive fight, forgiveness, and unity. The absence of heroism, including some light engagement in youth romance, can also be seen as their key behavioural features. These findings confirm that Bundit's last youth film portrays a view opposing the youth behaviour commonly found in the 2000s, as discussed in Chapter 2, with the representation of young people in an ideal way.

When the school is about to be abandoned, the central characters renew their profound regard for the school which implies their firm sense of 'gratefulness' to the place where they were previously educated. Phramaha Boonkong Gunadharo (2005: 14-15) gives the view that gratefulness is an admirable aspect of Thai culture that has been integrated into all aspects of Thai customs and traditions. The profound regard by the characters for their school, thus, gives an image of conscientious young people with good realization of gratefulness in accordance with this long-established cultural practice. Such regard is represented through a series of events after it is revealed that the school will be demolished. Tae learns of the school demolition from Toeng in the beginning of sequence two. He promptly tells some of the art students in the next scene, leading to an agreement that they will return to the school to camp out as a commemoration rather than a day visit. There, they meet the science students camping in a classroom with the same purpose. The depiction of their regard for the school is more apparent when the story reaches the point at which the school is being pulled down. Each of them makes an effort to delay the demolition in order to allow some time to seek donations. For example, they make up a ghost story to frighten the workers who have already moved in. They try to use anesthesia when the ghost story fails. Then, they carry out fundraising to purchase the school to restore the teaching.

Respect for seniority can be seen through the daily interaction by the central characters. As an example, when the art students first meet up at the school playground, they react to Toeng, who is much older, with a courteous expression of regard, such as giving a 'wai' or adding a prefix of 'brother' to his name every time they converse with or mention him in order to confirm their submission, something that, while quite common in everyday life, is not always seen in other youth films. Their belief in the seniority system is not only shown within the group to which they belong, but is also seen in the scenes where they all make contact with other senior alumni. They engage in very polite communication, no matter if they succeed or fail; they keep bowing and smiling as manifestation of their deference, except the situation in which Aum is verbally harassed by some salacious alumni who cause her to be angry.

Regarding their firm friendship, although they have already started their higher education whereby some of them are no longer together, they still are able to re-establishing their friendly reciprocal actions. At the start of sequence two, Tae walks out of Silpakorn University with painting accessories, indicating that he, as well as the other characters, has been in different groups – presumably different classes, faculties, or universities. Then, the art students, including the science students, follow their plan to visit their old high school. Each side contains exactly the same members, excluding Toeng and Aum, as presented in the first sequence where a summary about their high school time is given to the audience. At the camps, they respond to one another joyfully. Exaggeration of self-importance to the detriment of their friendship cannot be found. As well, they often play jokes or perform in fun relaxation whenever they are together. A very unambiguous connotation of their firm friendship is, however, their singing of Low-So's *Rao Lae Nai (I and You)* on the first night of the reunion between the art and science students. The song contains lyrics in promotion of lasting relationships even if there are many obstacles ahead.

The avoidance of a lifestyle deemed improper for the young can be validated by the following scene. At the first night of their camping, there is a shot of Toeng rummaging through an ice bucket. Tae, Haeng, and Jocho watch his action attentively, as well as guessing that he is searching for a bottle of Singha Gold – a famous brand of Thai beer. Seconds later, the answer turns out to be a big bottle of milk which signifies, in this context, Toeng's realization of healthy living (see picture 125). Based on the data by National Statistical Office, alcohol consumption was quite a serious problem found

amongst the youth during the 2000s – particularly, those aged 15-24 years old (Somphol Vantamay, 2009: 354). Toeng's action works like a message of anti-drinking for the young generation.



Picture 125 Toeng showing a bottle of milk to other students

It is also found that other central characters are neither depicted drinking nor engaging in activities such as gambling or smoking, despite the notion that university students may be accustomed to doing so, which means that *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* portrays all the central characters with behaviour devoid of typical vices. One of the minor situations in the ending can confirm this inference. Yalae, Haeng, and Jocho are offered bottles of beer by a senior alumnus whom they ask for a donation. That alumnus is drunk in the end while the three characters remain sober. They do not, in the least, touch the beer.

Aside from the avoidance of the undesired activities, all the central characters seem to detach themselves from a luxurious lifestyle or heavy spending. They opt for camping at the school rather than staying at a hotel and wander the school during the day. They take showers with loincloths and bowls which exhibits simplicity. They also engage in easy recreation, such as playing music around a bonfire or hand reading, while luxury items or purchase of material goods is never a topic of their discussion, either at the bonfire or anywhere else. These are clearly unmistakable representations in opposition to the actual youth culture which, according to Amara Soonthorndhada, et al. (2005: 19), includes a desire to consume goods or materials.



The avoidance of aggression between the two groups is highly reflective of the belief told through the national anthem that Thai people prefer peace. In *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying*, the art and science students have disliked each other since their secondary education. When they meet again at the high school, they fail to develop companionship. This begins with Jocho, in the company of Tae and Haeng, flirting with Jaeng, but in a manner that makes the group of science students feel irritated. Fin and Lian, therefore, drive them away with harsh words. The story continues with the art students annoying the science students through impolite courtships. The unfriendliness then escalates to a dramatic point when Fin can no longer stand their behaviour. He knocks down their tents and other belongings as punishment. This provokes the art students to ruin the flowers planted by the science students in return. It appears as if both sides are going to go on a rampage. Suddenly, the prospect of aggression is broken with a scene of a comical rugby competition leading to a reunion between them. In this manner, they have reached an agreement to depend on sports as a way out of their conflict. For some of the audience, switching from a serious conflict to a fun sports event might seem impressive, but utterly unconvincing. It is, however, inserted in the story on purpose to promote the ideal concept of youth who opt for a rejection of unnecessary violence, even in the midst of a fiery confrontation. According to Vineekarn Kongsuwan, et al. (2012: 179), violence in the 2000s was a worrying issue, especially amongst high school students, with a dramatic increase in percentage.

In conjunction with the abovementioned, forgiveness becomes another outstanding element after the reunion takes place. As discussed in the preceding, they have had a discordant relationship since their high school education. The art students often liked to incite anger amongst the girls from the science discipline by unfavorable words. They put a snake-head fish in a little pool where the science students were keeping fish, causing their fish to be eaten. The science students are not hesitant to take vengeance. They order various fast food in the name of Tae. The art students enjoy the food until it is revealed that they must pay for the whole lot, whereupon each of them runs away. When they meet again, they carry on the discord. The art students tease the science students with playful courtships, while the science students give them no regard. Having considered this long-rooted animosity, it can be said that forgiveness is invented to be part of their behavioural pattern. Otherwise, their reunion will not easily emerge at the end with the rugby match.

Unity is very apparent in the last half of the story. As soon as both sides establish their friendship, they cooperate tirelessly in trying to save the school regardless of the obstacles they face. For example, the male art and science students propose the ghost-story scheme with the aim of scaring away the demolition workers to give themselves some time to collect money for buying back the school. The scheme fails completely, but they keep on with the use of inhalational anesthetic recommended by Kratig after which they rearrange the position of each demolition worker – a wife of one worker is moved to the side of another worker – while those workers are in deep sleep. This is to induce a misunderstanding among the workers that their wife/husband are dishonest, followed by fragmentation of the entire demolition team. Once their attempt becomes successful, they hurriedly go through the yearbooks to find potential graduates who may be interested in making a donation. A set of shots concerning their contact with those graduates show that, even though they cannot achieve the expected result, they always move on together. What is to be discerned from these situations is their exceptional harmony. Even if they experience continuous failure, they stick to mutual assistance and avoid a clash of ideas that may hamper their collaboration. Interestingly, unity is encoded at the end of the rugby match by the race between Fin and Tae in reaching the school's flag. They both grasp the flag at the same time before raising it together above their heads which is a sign of unity.

The foregoing discussion not only points to a sense of unity, but also a finding that *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* has a theme of anti-heroism. Firstly, no characters cope with the obstacles alone; they hold firmly to teamwork by which one devises a plan and the others follow up responsively. Secondly, the person who turns out to save the school is Setthawat – a character in a minor role, not the characters in the central roles like Aum, Toeng, or Tae. Setthawat is present briefly in the scene where Aum and some science students ask him for a donation. He promptly vanishes with no promise to help before reappearing out of the blue in the end. He addresses everyone that the school has been bought back. The point of anti-heroism is to project mutuality – the prime concept of the *Anueng* series.

As a final point, youth romance is belittled compared with the mainstream youth films made in the same period. Very few scenes portray romantic relationships amongst the central characters. On the first day of their camping, Lian secretly approaches Num Wa to express his feelings. Num Wa neither declines nor accepts. At night, Tae asks the

spirit board if Nun is in love with him, while Jocho questions whether Jaeng is his soul mate. The answer is ‘no’ to both of them. In the morning, Ngim leaves a love note for Kratig which is torn into shreds by Kratig upon reading the message. Then, the succeeding story does not show any of these male characters doing anything to advance their romantic desire, unless it is about teamwork and friendship. All these situations work to minimize youth romance, as well as to imply their compliance with the belief that love is not the first priority for young people.

### 5.3.2 Specificity of the Thai School

‘Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya’ is the school mentioned earlier, being operated under the supervision of an unnamed foundation. Its presence in the first sequence provides the history regarding the central characters during their high school years, whereupon the audience can sense the bond between the students and the school, in addition to the joy spreading throughout the entire atmosphere. The school in the second and third sequence is however fated to be demolished after the foundation encounters an irresolvable financial collapse, but simultaneously becomes a site where the art and science students form a connection. An analysis of the film finds that the school apparently highlights Thainess in the educational dimension. Its physical aspects, as well as atmosphere, can be considered to be culturally unique and representative of typical local Thai schools.



Picture 126 Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya

The setting is the location of Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya itself (see picture 126), covering every element appearing within the school domain. As shown throughout the story, Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya has a vast playground with a tall national flag pole. Amplifiers are hanged on the school building, expectedly, to assist the announcement of the national anthem after which the students and school professors gather at the playground to express their loyalty to the nation – the compulsory tradition for schools in Thailand. Most buildings are made of wood and painted with unvarying color. The classrooms look very conventional through the simple combination of individual wooden desks and green chalk boards. No striking decorations and/or technological items, such as air conditioners, televisions, or projectors, are in the classrooms. At the same time, there are no images of luxurious shop houses or entertainment venues in the school area. In the scene of the graduation day, a B.E. 2551 cutout is shown on the stage to indicate the approximate period of the film. B.E. 2551 or 2008 A.D, including a few years earlier, is the time of intense change when many schools in Thailand had already abandoned the structural features as shown by Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya for the more advanced buildings or teaching equipment. Hence, the intention to evoke the idea of how many schools used to look comes forth from the depiction of Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya.

As well, what to be noticed is a slogan shown at the base of the flag pole. In English the slogan read ‘Excellent Learning; Good Behaviour; Good Sport Skills; No Fear of Hardship’. Such a slogan reflects the Thai school culture whereby every school incorporates objectives beyond customary education and presents them in the form of a concise statement. Those objectives often correspond to the typical expectations of Thai youth.

Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya functions as a reminder of the usual notion of a traditional Thai school which is a place for, aside from academic pursuits, implanting the realization of Thainess from the standpoint of the three pillars – king, nation, religion, particularly nation as indicated by the flag pole – and Thainess in the absence of modernity, similar to the school which looks very common rather than innovative in technology or building structure, plus instilling expected youth behaviour into the mind of the students, as in the aforesaid slogan. All these conform with the desired features of the young as specified in Thailand’s core curriculum announced in 2008. The features include

loyalty to nation/religion/king, self-sufficiency, discipline, eagerness to learning (Ministry of Education, 2008).

The student characters are shown for approximately 10-minutes in the first sequence to provide an exhaustive picture of the school setting. They include all the central characters, plus some extras. Similar to the setting, the student characters take the audience back to the belief in what constitutes a typical Thai school, which is filled with joys and good images of students, such as concentration on the lecture or friendship. It can be seen that the students deal mostly with two kinds of activities when they are at the school, namely, studying and playful relaxation. For studying, the students in the science discipline seem to be very attentive to their lectures. The art students are mostly distracted by their love of enjoyment; they throw things around, but never disrupt the class. As for relaxation, the art students, for example, assemble at a pavilion to make joking courtships, whereas the science students opt for a more constructive recreation, such as a tiny group dance. The other students do various hobbies. Some of the scenes show, however, the science students becoming wayward, as do the art students. They play football in the classroom, while the art students jump across the railing, causing both groups to be penalized – they are ordered to run around the flag pole to expose themselves to ridicule. The climate, nonetheless, looks amusing rather than gloomy. When all of the students are due to leave after finishing their studies, they write their name together with a short message of memory on each other's shirts to demonstrate the promise of friendship. Hilarity dominates the event (see picture 127). This representation of the students, therefore, reflects the typical Thai school environment, specifically, in a positive angle in which the students have no problems with classes and enjoy their high school life without any engagement in destructive diversion such as sex, drugs, or wild parties.



Picture 127 funny gathering before leaving the school

Teaching methods that portray the common picture of Thai education are put in two short scenes inserted within the first sequence, beginning with a scene of the students in the science discipline listening to a lecture of, presumably, physics. The teacher keeps explaining by writing key words and equations on the board. She occasionally asks the students questions to stimulate their listening, while the students themselves take notes and answer the given questions. They do not inquire further with any curiosity. Similarly, the lecture for the art students proceeds in a fashion that the students do exactly what the professor orders. It is an English class in which the professor explains the use of vocabulary. She asks them to repeat the pronunciation after her. No scenes depict them researching further in other sources. All this is a teaching method prevalent amongst the local high schools in Thailand. According to Climer, et al. (2009: 1), this is called traditional rote-memorization method of teaching, which appears to be very outmoded and, thereby, requires serious revision. Regardless of the value judgment, its inclusion in the film not only reveals how the central characters were educated, but also delivers the feel of being Thai in educational terms.

Lastly, the relationship between the school and the students is depicted in a way that people have pride to belong to the institution and will never forget where they graduate from, no matter how much time has passed. This is a noticeable aspect of schooling as seen in a Thai context. At the outset of sequence two, the central characters do not hesitate over the visit to their school in order to experience the high school atmosphere for the last time. Many of them recall the good memory through various activities; Toeng

walks around slowly to witness every part of the school building before sitting quietly in a classroom. He looks at a message of friendship left on the chalk board: 'Tomorrow, will we still love each other?' Later when the two groups regroup, there is a shot of Aum speaking in disappointment about why the school is going to be demolished in spite of its significance. Her words can be interpreted that the school works as a station for educating, as well as to bring together people from various backgrounds. Another example is the process of demolition. Haeng bursts out in fury upon seeing the dismantlement of the school, while the science group begs for a short pause. It can be noticed that these situations are in the film on purpose to project the bond of central characters with the school in order to highlight the culture of expressing love towards the institution one belongs.

A number of supporting characters play a role in redoubling the impression about such bonds in the last half of the film. During the search for donations, Aum and Toeng appear in the reunion party of the 17<sup>th</sup> generation students – another situation revealing the high school nostalgia or the bond with the school as an educational center. The most unambiguous situation materializes in the end where the demolition process is resumed. The central characters stare at the school hopelessly. Suddenly, a large number of the unknown characters from the old to the young come into the scene to look at the school. No one is interested in each other. Toeng starts singing the school song, followed by other central characters and then every single one of those new comers. This indicates that in the past they all used to study at Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya and, in consequence, their love towards the school has never faded.

### 5.3.3 Society under the Dominance of Capitalism

As indicated in the thematic conflict, the school is to be replaced with a department store because it cannot survive financially. No one pays attention to reviving its operation because of the likelihood that the school will never generate adequate profits to sustain the business. The central characters are, therefore, determined to fight against this condition. The analysis of the film suggests that *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* contains implicit criticism against capitalism through the representation of a society where negligence and monetary pursuits overpower values such as thoughtfulness

and accountability, which can be seen as a consequence of too much attention paid to obtaining a satisfactory economic reward.

Two teams of the demolition workers are in the film. Both teams undertake their job without any pity and they commonly connote the importance of money. When the first team arrives at the school, one of the characters, who seems to be their employer or connected to the one who purchased the school, enjoin them to pull down the school building with care so that some materials can be exchange for money at good prices. On the day after, they start dismantling the building as if the school has no meaning to them. Not long after, the first team is tricked to move out and the second team enters the school with more professional tools to ensure the accomplishment of the demolition. Nobody on the demolition team responds to the actions of the central characters and others alumni who gather in front of the school building. It can be said that all of the workers do the job purely for the pay regardless of any emotional effects. As well, debris from the school is valuable only in monetary terms as expressed by the aforesaid enjoyment. This connotes the supremacy of money in the capitalist society.

Some alumni resemble the demolition workers in projecting the negative side of the capitalist society. It would appear they can be interpreted as a reflection of the view of how people in such a society are more concerned about themselves and how such people may even be devoted to the quest of sensual pleasure without any thoughts about morality. As soon as the central characters are successful at delaying the demotion process, they separate into groups to meet with different alumni for donations. The first scene of their mission begins at a busy intersection with the BTS an indication to the audience that Bangkok is the location of their financial sources. Being in the capital, nevertheless, ends in no success despite the high potential of available funds. Haeng, Ya Lae, and Jocho meet a senior alumnus in his office. The meeting between the two sides commences with cordial greetings, followed by cans of beer being put on the table. The three readily refuse the beer. It is not clear whether or not they succeed during the meeting. There is only an image of the alumnus being drunk and Haeng, Ya Lae, Jocho accompany him to his house. For the other central characters, their contact with various alumni is also inconclusive. When they all come back to the school, their complete failure is revealed in the dialogue with Aum that they look too young to solicit donations. However, their disappointment cannot, compare to Aum's who is sexually discriminated against by one of the alumni. He guarantees the contribution but in contemplation of



sleeping with her. His dialogue also contains words of dishonor; he asks her to determine the price of her body. All these details can help in understanding the capitalist way of living portrayed in the film. Ignorance and unethical pleasure-seeking would appear to be relatively prominent, whereupon the society in *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* is not necessarily as ideal as one would expect.

Unlike the preceding characters, the foundation administrators take part in the tacit criticism against capitalism in the role of the people who are not capable of making profits. They appear only in one short scene where they explain the cause of disposing of the school to Aum. The first administrator (a male) says that the foundation is in huge debt and they have tried many methods to manage, but have not succeeded. He stresses that every matter involves money. Then, another administrator (a female) speaks in support of the first one. She says that the foundation would never sell the school if it had stronger finances. The third administrator (a female) immediately clarifies that their students do not come from wealthy backgrounds, so the foundation neither sets high tuition fees nor calls for additional charges to secure the school's operation. The first administrator wraps up the conversation with an emphasis on the significance of money. He says, without money, the school cannot be revived and he reuses the words 'every matter necessarily involves money'. From this, the foundation administrators appear in the film to carry the message that money has developed into the supreme factor for living. Only those who are skilled at profit making will survive, while those who perform like the administrators will fail.

Long before the above meeting takes place, some dialogue regarding capitalism can be heard from the short conversation amongst the art students. In the first scene of their visit to the school, Ngim questions disappointedly, after he is informed that the school has been operated for a hundred years, why the Fine Arts Department has neglected the conservation of the school. Toeng sarcastically replies that no one will. This tends to reflect that society at that time has already turned into a place where everything is assessed by monetary profit, while other values, such as cultural or spiritual, are less considered. Because the school cannot produce satisfactory profits, as can a department store, it has to be eliminated.

#### 5.3.4 Preferred Thainess versus Modernity

In tandem with the Thai school, parts of the film lay emphasis on what is deemed representative of Thainess against the notion of modernity. Kukrit Pramoj emphasized that Thainess consists of the King, Thai-style ruling, language, arts, and the known customs (Saichol Sattayanurak, 2005). The analysis reveals that a wide range of elements, in combination with representation techniques, are applied in *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* to put a spotlight on this type of Thainess.

Sethawat is a minor character giving the impression of an overly elegant person. His appearance and role puts a spotlight on Thainess along the lines of the classic perception. Firstly, his costume has features of the royal pattern invented in the reign of King Rama V. Secondly, he speaks in an old-fashioned style, as if he is in a play. Both costume and way of speaking looks eccentric, but they help convey a message regarding adoption of foreign culture, as in a scene of Sethawat moaning about the loss of Thainess in the new social context. He says to the science students that people these days like to be Westernized as soon as they are rich and they tend to forget their own roots. He also says that his family has been rich for very long without the need to imitate the West.

What to underline here is Setthawat's role in solving the main conflict, rather than the central characters. He joins the last sequence with the news about his purchase of the school, which breaks the cinematic convention that allows only the protagonists to solve the problem. However, it can be noticed that his management of the problem can urge the audience to think of Thainess from a victorious angle. According to Anuthee Dejthevaporn (2012: 100-101), globalization after the end of the Cold War has created a group of new capitalists – led by the Shinawatra family – with high capacity for building and expanding their share of power. Their rise disturbed the perceived image of Thainess through the propagation of the idea that sounded socially and culturally innovative as reflected in Thaksinomics, but caused the concept about 'being Thai' to be old-fashioned in some respects. Accordingly, it can be said that the solution given by Sethawat, whose image is already attached to what is deemed Thai culture, communicates that being Thai can also be good.



Picture 128 Sethawat's house

From the internal setting and atmosphere, Sethawat's house (see picture 128) is the second element projecting Thainess through the aristocratic residence as seen in the old era. Aside from being built with Thai architectural design, this house has a wide open living space – called a hall – to indicate the owner's wealth or social dignity.

It is a tradition for senior aristocrats to have a hall, *ho kwang* or *ho naa*, at the front of the main unit. The name is derived from its positioning, which cuts across the main unit. The hall, used as a reception chamber, is a distinctive part of the main unit .....

(Wattana Boonjub, 2009: 20)

Within the house, his employees wear traditional outfits, as does Sethawat. They maintain noble etiquette at all time. One of them walks around slowly and carries a gong which is hit occasionally to inform the time. In one of the shots, Sethawat reasons with the science students that the house has a Thai semblance because he and his family wish to conserve the recognition of Thainess. As stated by Jayanin Chitranukroh and Vorasun Buranakarn (2006: 129), living routine, culture, including architecture (as exemplified by the house), are all affected by the growing strength of globalization coming with technological advancement. The house, as a result, works together with the character of Sethawat in highlighting the image of being Thai, which has been supplanted by modernistic culture. However, being Thai in this sense is more profound than being just 'Thai', because the image of being Thai does not represent simplicity, as in other films, but luxuriousness. This

then tears apart the idea that being Thai is equal to poverty or that only modernity can halt the lack of wealth.



Picture 129 science students playing Ouija board



Picture 130 the ghost of Mali

From the perspective of belief in ghosts, *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* includes the spirit board (see picture 129) in the early part of sequence two, as well as a legend of Mali (see picture 130) as a reflection of archetypal Thai beliefs. On the first night of their camping, the art and science students opt for the spirit board after they look for a more exciting recreation. They invite the spirit of Mali – a legendary ghost in Mattayom Wutti-Dhewa Wittaya – to possess the board. A variety of questions is given to Mali and returned with the answer sounds credible to both the art and science students. Mali is depicted once more in the last part of sequence two. Yalae tells a scary story about Mali to the demolition workers, while Jaeng presents herself as the legendary ghost. Their task ends in failure before the manifestation of the real Mali who climbs the wall and hangs herself in a haunting manner to show the central characters that she does exist and, thereby, they should not make fun of her. The spirit board, as well as Mali, in this respect, are represented as being true. It can be understood that *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* is acknowledging the belief in supernatural experiences. Based on research on the belief in ghosts implicated in the Northern terminology conducted by Patinya Boonmalert (2011),

the belief in ghosts retains a tight relationship with local people at all levels as seen in the belief in grandpa-grandma ghost (Phi Poo-Ya) and water source ghost (Phi Khun-Nam). This is sufficient to indicate that Thai culture and the belief in ghosts are inseparable, even in the scientific era. Because modernity refutes the supernatural, an attempt to defy modernity can be viewed as the reason why *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* incorporates the ghost matter into the story.

In addition, Mali is represented clearly in a mythical mode. This conforms with the Thai belief that any long-founded institution always has a famous ghost attached to it. According to an article titled ‘Haunting Legends for Halloween 2013’ (2013: online), it is almost an inevitable tradition amongst the youth to learn of the narrative of scary spirits passed on across generations. A famous example is the legend of the red elevator at the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy, Thammasat University. It is told that a number of students were brutally killed in the elevator during October, 1973, and because of the gruesome circumstances surrounding their death their spirits continue to dwell there. Hence, to interpret that the legend of Mali works like a reminder of this cultural trait is practical.



Picture 131 Ya Lae

As a final piece of evidence, the character of Ya Lae (see picture 131) makes a contribution to the portrayal of Thainess through his name and representation. Starting with the name, ‘Yalae’ has a nationalist implication in connection with King Rama VI. In ‘Visiting “Sanamchan”, Paying Tribute to “Yalae” the Loyal Dog’ (2012: 59), Yalae is a symbol of love and loyalty towards the king. He is a royal dog fed by King Vajiravudh and named after the character of Jarlet from *My Friend Jarlet* written by A. Gols Wdrthy and E.B. Narman. *Jarlet* has the feature of self-sacrifice. However, the meaning of Yalae

connotes respect and loyalty to the king. What is to be taken into account is the political situation around the release period of *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying*. Thaksinomics, as well as Thaksin himself, are perceived among the anti-Thaksin camp as a threat to the monarchy. Using the name 'Yalae' can, therefore, be a sarcastic message against such a threat. Moreover, Yalae mostly appears in outfits indicative of the Thai youth culture. He arrives at the school in a student uniform and wears the scout uniform the next day. He decides to use the Army Reserve Force Student uniform while performing the task about the ghost legend. Yalae, in this respect, represents what is believed as authentic youth culture, as much as hinting at honesty towards the king – an expression of Thainess from an angle of the three pillars.

#### 5.4 Summary

The 2000s – both during the Thaksin or post-Thaksin era – was concerned with continuation of development on a greater scale which can be seen in that the young generation and the entire society were being weakened. All Bundit's youth films released in the 2000s responded to such a view with representations intended to stimulate the audience to rethink modernity and the newly adopted living habits.

*Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* attempts to tell the audience that the thriving economy has not produced a good society in that the protagonist has highly traditional behaviour and deserved punishment is given to all the youth characters who defy the established behaviour expected of them. Then, the film promotes mainstream Thainess – particularly in the dimension of self-sufficiency – by which simplicity appears to produce happiness over prosperity and the audience can perceive Thai culture, such as Buddhism and customs, from a pleasurable angle.

Five years later *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* was released with a similar rejection of the known modernity. The film reuses the protagonist whose features are designed to look rural, but are faultlessly ideal in combination with the main supporting youth characters who may not be equally perfect, but are socially conscientious. The film portrays the negative side of modernity through the unpleasant image of the urban area and implications of regressive democratization, as well as emphasizing the inherited Thainess through various aspects, such as the character of Bunchu and Moree.

As a final piece, *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* was released to continue the view in defiance of the 2000s social context. The film narrates a story about a high school through a group of the youth characters whose attitude and behavioural features are reminiscent of young people in the old days. The film highlights mainstream Thainess through representations of the local school, costumes, and signifiers, which are capable of projecting and/or implying traditional Thai culture. As well, the film portrays unaware acceptance of capitalism as a threat to good basic attributes such as care and generosity.



## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Bundit Rittakol earned a name for himself as one of Thailand's leading directors from making youth films. He directed 10 youth films on his own and cooperated with other directors in producing another two films of the same genre. Some of these works ended in recognition with awards, such as in the best film category, in addition to becoming tremendous box office hits. There has been, however, little examination of his youth films undertaken to reveal their significance in terms of social consciousness. The prevailing notion of Thai films – especially those that conformed to the typical conventions and style, including Bundit's youth films – could be one of the reasons for this, inasmuch as the function of Thai film is seen as no more than to entertain its audiences.

To prove whether Bundit's youth films offer meaningful content in tandem with entertainment, this research looked into each of his films using the theory that the film medium can be a reflector of the society and culture it depicts. The following research question was designed to embark on the study; how do Bundit's youth films serve to reflect Thai society and culture during the period of their production and cinema release. The question led to an initial study suggesting that Bundit's youth films exhibit a message in opposition to the socio-cultural climate during 1986-2009 – the period when all of his films were officially screened and when Thailand was in the process of economic development driven by modern politico-economic concepts. Therefore, it was hypothesized that Bundit's youth films contain a reflection of resistance to change within the context of Thailand in transition under the influence of a liberal economy, globalization, and democratization.

To validate the established hypothesis, three methods have been taken. Firstly, it is to study Thai society in transition with document research. Literature concerning socio-economic development from various perspectives was collected to form a picture of what happened during the 1980s-2000s, a period in which Bundit's youth films were released in Thai cinemas. Secondly, people who were acquainted with the director himself and able to shed light on Bundit's work, namely, his family members and co-workers, were interviewed to obtain Bundit's personal data to supplement the study. Thirdly, the film contents were analyzed with the concept that nothing is unintentional in the films,



whereupon both verbal and nonverbal components were examined, such as plot, theme, script, dialogue, characterization, imagery and symbolism. The analysis was applied to only the youth films made by Bundit alone, all of which were grouped according to the decade of production – 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. The group of the 1980s films comprise [1] *Khu Wun Wai Wan*, [2] *Bunchu Phu Narak*, and [3] *Bunchu Two, Nongmai*. The group of the 1990s films include [4] *Bunchu Five, Nueahom*, [5] *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui*, [6] *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*, and [7] *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two*; while [8] *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang*, [9] *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou*, and [10] *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* are in the group of the 2000s films.

From the aforesaid three methods, Chapter 2 argues that Thai society was originally a traditional or agrarian society in which local lives depended largely on nature and cultivation which could be perceived via rituals and ceremonies concerning agriculture. People in this type of rural based society tended to stay as a group emphasizing interdependence and compromise in order to maintain a community spirit and tight-knit sense of togetherness. Around the last half of the 1980s, the influence of a liberalized economy, globalization, and democratization caused Thailand to affix itself to heavy development, culminating in greater urbanization, industrialization, and capitalist/consumerist expansion. As a result of this development, Thai society changed rapidly from agrarian society to a more modern version in which agricultural and industrial lifestyle intermingled. People became more economically active and adapted themselves to suit their new living context. This resulted in such things as, the reduction of family size, adoption of foreign culture, enhanced technology and so on. Within this climate, most of the youth differentiated themselves from the former generation – to be precise, youth in the 1970s whose personal behaviour/attitude used to be highly traditional before many turned to socio-political activism in between 1973-1976. But the youth in the following generation rather enjoyed the new culture focusing on consumption, pleasure-seeking, challenges to existing social controls, including freedom.

According to a review of scholarship in the media discipline, the mass media could be seen as a contributory factor in the change in both youth and the general living context. Television, commercials, newspaper, and movies operated in much the same manner. They either publicized content in promotion of change or rarely provided any idea or information in opposition to change. This encouraged some people to propose a review of the recent economic and social developments. The most evident group was

scholars and thinkers who viewed that Thai society was changing in an ineffective direction and, thereby, creating a profusion of social problems. Nevertheless, some entertainment media exhibited an expression of resistance to change, the clearest being artists in the category of “songs for life” who often criticised the new living context through their lyrics. Many directors responded to this transition through varied film genres and in varied ways as well. Bundit is, however, the one whose many films are highly outstanding at the subject matter about the youth and the way they deal with that transition.

Chapter 3-5 discuss Bundit’s youth films in response to the hypothesis. All the three provide the sub-themes of the films with reference to change. Based on an analytical synthesis of those sub-themes, all ten films share some similarity in an attempt to address change of Thai society. To understand how they do so, they should be divided in two groups – *Bunchu* and non-*Bunchu* films. The *Bunchu* films focus on the projection of outstandingly ideal youth characters for the Thai living context and underline agricultural society as a prominent social identity. Problems of urbanization appear in most of the films in this group to reject the development theory that disregards the rural sector. The non-*Bunchu* films comprises *Anueng* films, *Khu Wun Wai Wan*, and *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang*, the stories of which do not rely on the plot about ‘rural versus urban’ as in the *Bunchu* series and most of the key characters in this group are not as benign as *Bunchu* or *Bunchoke*. The group of *Anueng* films reflects localism through the picture of a Thai high school. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* is more specific than the other two in depicting youth’s problem and modern society with a corrupt perspective, as are *Khu Wun Wai Wan* and *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang*.

Regardless of the group, all Bundit’s youth films promote the ideal concept of youth through the central characters. The central characters either have ideal quality in themselves, as shown by *Bunchu*, *Moree*, and the group in the *Bunchu* films, or suffer by breaking the rules of good youth behaviour, followed by self-improvement, as exemplified by *Meen* in *Khu Wun Wai Wan* or the key high school students in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two*. Ideal attributes that are repeatedly communicated are responsibility for education, awareness of appropriate youth romance, interdependence, group unity, forgiveness, compromise, and belief in Buddhism. Interestingly, in spite of the characters in the protagonist role, heroism is absent in every film, with instead the incorporation of mutual assistance in tackling conflicts. In all the *Anueng* films, the protagonist is unidentifiable because the main characters come as a group to convey a sense of

togetherness. These images contrast clearly with the characteristics of youth in the 1980s-2000s, while conforming to the proposal about the ideal Thai youth as presented in Sucharit Pienchob's research, such as maintaining discipline and self-control, being accountable, or creative.

Along with the promotion of ideal youth, images of socio-economic modernity are portrayed as ugly or as a source of problems. An example is *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* wherein some extra characters are overly obsessed with money and personal pleasure and cannot think about morality and taboos, or *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* whose scene of the city is filled with juvenile offenses. Sometimes, signifiers suggestive of modernity appear in scenes of conflicts or bad situations as if they are telling the audience that there exists a relationship between socio-economic modernity and behavioural/attitudinal problems as pointed out by scholars such as Prawase Wasi. The use of cake in causing trouble to a group of student in *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* can well be an illustration of this idea. This can be interpreted as a message that the recent social and economic change should be reconsidered.

The research indicates, as well, that all of Bundit's youth films support the idea of conserving what is deemed cultural identity. Images suggestive of being Thai are represented frequently in connection with the central or important characters, particularly the decent characters, such that being Thai is easily recognized by the audience, for instance the typical Thai school in all the *Anueng* films. Sometimes, being Thai is depicted in combination with a happy or positive mood, such as friendly interaction in the rural village in the *Bunchu* films. Sometimes, signifiers of being Thai provide positive meanings, such as the character of Sethawat in *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* who represents past Thai culture, but is the one to save the school from the demolition, connoting Thainess from a superior angle. This can be an attempt to speak against the idea that the old cultural identity is outdated and of no importance for modern society.

In sum, representation in support of the recent social and economic changes to Thai society regarding the new living concept, the new economy, and the new youth culture, as explained in Chapter 2, is not dominant in Bundit's youth films. This should be recognized as Bundit's signature as well as way of portraying his abstract thinking which has been hypothesized as a form of resistance to change. Some situations from the sixth episode in *Bunchu* series can be referred as an example to support this summary.

Bunchu is hesitant if he should work in Bangkok just to be with Moree. He is in the queue to submit his application. The atmosphere looks intense and implies fierce competition and density of population in the urban area. Having realized that, Bunchu drops the application form in the bin and makes a swift decision to return to his village. He bids goodbye to Moree. Interestingly, Moree does not persuade him to remain in Bangkok, but encourages him to leave the city and return to his village to fulfill his dreams which is to help farmers in his village by sharing the knowledge he has gained from studying agriculture in the university. Bunchu meets with his mother in the paddy field. She too does not persuade him to live in Bangkok unlike parents in general who would rather see their children in an urban atmosphere aiming for social elevation and higher status. Bunchu works in the paddy fields with other farmers. He is seen wearing a simple farmer's costume suit with traditional *Pa Chaoma* around his waist. Cooperation and contentment dominates the scene.

These situations point to the significance and the merits of an agrarian society from an idealized, even bucolic, perspective. It is hence sufficient to say that Bundit is a representative of those, such as in the group of community culture, who favor an idea of localism. His youth films can also be a qualified case study for understanding how the film medium reacts to the issue such as globalization or new youth culture.

It should however be understood as well that Bundit's youth films do not show resistance towards the trends of globalism in an extreme way, but rather to soften the current of being 'global' with a local image. As it appears, each of the films offers an idea of conserving what is deemed a socio-cultural origin while allowing many key characters to go along the modern trend of living in some measure as exemplified by the case of Bunchu who studies pesticides – a modernized piece of knowledge – in pursuit of bettering cultivation in his village.

As a result, this dissertation has endeavored to explore a new area of Thai cinema and its social consciousness as an academic contribution. With a focus on youth films directed by Bundit Rittakol, this dissertation makes clear that his youth films are not intentionally commercial or mainstream despite their popularity. All the films are filled with convictions, worldviews regarding socio-cultural direction other than conforming to

the typical representation which may revolve around an achievement of modern living. While the existing literature about Bundit's youth films argue that his youth films promote desired values such as generosity or friendship, this dissertation gives a new depth of understanding with a thesis that they are part of localization to resist the current of modernism and/or globalization, which is, precisely, the reason for his youth films to advocate such ideal values.

Some limitations of the research should be noted. The director passed away in 2010 and he was not a person who always spoke out or documented his opinions, thus insightful data about his original intentions are not necessarily available. The views presented in the previous chapters were obtained from those who lived or worked with him. Aside from this, there is no readily available information on how Bundit defined the concept such as Thainess or Thai identity. What is deemed as Thainess in one film may not necessarily be the same in another film. The only way to derive an answer is to interpret the films with reference to Thai society/culture which varies according to place and time.

As a suggestion for future research, other films made by Bundit Rittakol – no matter if they are in the drama, action, or comedy genre – could be examined regarding whether the contents deal with the matter of cultural and economic transition, as do the youth films, and how they do so. This will lead to an understanding of all the films made by Bundit in connection with the socio-cultural context. Films made by other directors could also be studied regarding how they might be related to society. Some of these films may have the same reflection as Bundit's youth films; some may carry an opposite role. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Thai films are remembered mostly for their entertainment function. Many of them are recorded in the history of Thai cinema without clear explanation of their social or cultural relevance. Hence, any research that can reveal such relevance will bring the unseen picture of Thai film medium to the fore. As exemplified by this research, Bundit's youth films have successfully been proved that they can be considered as a group of cultural products in which entertainment is not the sole function, but also a mirror of social transition and, importantly, of a view against such transition.

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## Biography of Bundit Rittakol

### General Information:

Bundit Rittakol was born in 1951 in Ayutthaya Province. He studied at Assumption College Si Racha, followed by Assumption Commercial College, from which he graduated in 1971. He was a volunteer for the Youth Association of Thailand in 1973, taking jobs at charities, social care organizations, and a royal medical unit.

Bundit began his working career as a journalist for *The Nation* – an English language daily newspaper. He reported of the 14 October uprising which was featured in *The Nation* dated 15 October 1973.

In 1975, Bundit switched to being a film critic for a weekly magazine titled *Prachatippatai* [ประชาธิปไตย or Democracy] after the magazine's former critic, Sila Yingsukwattana, died. His penname was Tongfan [ทองฟาน]. He then started a career in film production as a scriptwriter. His first script was based on the novel *Botun* directed by Saneh Komarachun. He participated in scriptwriting for Kom Ackadech's *Sua Pookhao* [เสื่อภูเขา, 1979] and accepted scriptwriting jobs, most of which were for films by Chalong Pakdeewichit, Charin Nunthanakorn, and Kom Ackadech. He was also an assistant director for many films, such as *Botun* [โบตัน] (1975), *Sua Pookhao* (1979), *Ai Pang Ror For Tor* [ไอ้ฟาง ร.ฟ.ท.] (1982), *Tong 2* [ทอง 2] (1982). Although Bundit joined the film industry, he admitted that he had not studied film before and his knowledge about making films was surpassed by many other directors. In this way, he approached his job merely with personal sense, plus experience.

Bundit's first film was *Kadchueg* [คาดเชือก] (1984), made with a two million baht budget. After its screening in Bangkok, the film attained only two to three hundred thousand baht ticket sales. Owing to an irresistible desire for filmmaking, he decided on directing a second film titled *Khon Dee Tee Ban Dan* [คนดีที่บ้านด่าน] (1985), with a two hundred thousand baht budget. This film brought him enormous profit loss. His continuous profit loss led to career difficulty thereafter. According to Nuntana Kumwong, his period of failure derived from an intention to make films not in favor by audiences. He never liked the popular style of representation, even



though it could guarantee marketing success. Whenever he produced an unconventional film, he maintained the idea that a filmmaker could only do their best and the audience would be the judge. Five Star Production negotiated with his financiers to alleviate the situation. He then commenced his work with Five Star Production before being successful (in terms of income) with his first youth film titled *Khu Wun Wai Wan*. He became more famous from the making of the *Bunchu* series which popularized the actors, Chintara Sukapat and Santisuk Promsiri. The film of which he said that he was proudest is revealed to be a drama about rural life titled *Duay Klao* [ด้วยเกล้า] (1987), made to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Accession to the Throne. The story revolves around a group of farmers in northern Thailand and their hardship caused by drought.

Bundit passed away on 1 October 2009 due to heart failure that occurred while he was having hemodialysis.

#### Works:

The first list includes only Bundit's feature-length and short films.

1. *Kadchueg* [คาดเชือก] (1984)
2. *Mue Nua Maek* [มือเหนือเมฆ] (1984)
3. *Khon Dee Tee Ban Dan* [คนดีที่บ้านด่าน] (1985)
4. *Khu Wun Wai Wan* [คู่ขวัญวัยหวาน] (1986)
5. *Duay Klao* [ด้วยเกล้า] (1987)
6. *Panyachon Kon Krua* [ปัญญาชนกันครัว] (1987)
7. *Bunchu Phu Narak* [บุญชูผู้นำรัก] (1988)
8. *Bunchu Two, Nongmai* [บุญชู 2 น้องใหม่] (1989)
9. *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* [บุญชู 5 เนื้อหอม] (1990)
10. *Hong 2 Run 44* [ส.อ.ว.ห้อง 2 รุ่น 44] (1990)
11. *Ko Cha Pa Na Ko* [โก๊ะจำปานะโก๊ะ] (1991)
12. *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui* [บุญชู 6 โลกนี้ดีออก สุดสวย นำรักนำอยู่ ถ้าห่วย] (1991)
13. *Choh Wela Ha Ko* [เจาะเวลาหาโก๊ะ] (1992)
14. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep* [อนึ่งคิดถึงพอสังเขป] (1992)

15. *Bunchu Seven, Rak Ter Kon Dieow Dta-lot Gaan Krai Yaa Dtae* [บุญชูเจ็ด รักเธอคนเดียวตลอดกาลใครอย่าแตะ] (1993)
16. *Kalla Khrung Nueng Muea Chao Nee* [กาลครั้งหนึ่งเมื่อเช้านี้] (1994)
17. *Hop Rak Ma Hom Pa* [หอบรักมาห่มป่า] (1994)
18. *Bunchu Eight, Peua Ter* [บุญชู 8 เพื่อเธอ] (1995)
19. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two* [อนึ่งคิดถึงพอสังเขป รุ่น 2] (1996)
20. *Satang* [สตางค์] (2000)
21. *The Moonhunter* [14 ตุลา สงครามประชาชน] (2001)
22. *Sab Sua Tee Lumnarn Kasut* [สาวเสื่อที่ลำน้ำกษัตริย์] (2002)
23. *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang* [ชื่อชอบชวนหาเรื่อง] (2003)
24. *Ou-kabat* [อุกกาบาต] (2004)
25. *Phra Sua Dek Kai Wog* [พระ เสือ เด็ก ไก่ วอก] (2006)
26. *My First Report* [ข่าวที่ไม่สำคัญ] (2007)
27. *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou* [บุญชู ไอ-เลิฟ-สระ-อู] (2008)
28. *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying* [อนึ่ง คิดถึงเป็นอย่างยิ่ง] (2009)
29. *Mahanakhon* [มหานคร] (2009)

The second list of Bundit's works consists of television soap operas which he made during the period he departed the film industry.

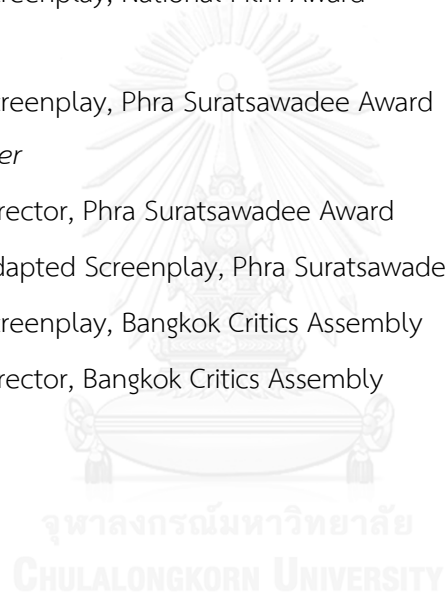
1. *Jamsai Wai Kanong* [แจ่มใสวัยคะนอง] (1996)
2. *Rak Kam Klong* [รักข้ามคลอง] (1997)
3. *Bun Tang Kai* [บุญตั้งไข่] (1997)
4. *Bunchu* [บุญชู] (1998)
5. *Samud Sud Kobfa* [สมุทรสุดขอบฟ้า] (1998)
6. *Tutor Mor: Mai Rean Mai Penrai Kor Kae Jai Trong Kun* [ติวเตอร์มอร์ : ไม่เรียนไม่เป็นไรขอแค่ใจตรงกัน] (1999)
7. *Nangsao Poradok* [นางสาวโพระดก] (1999)

#### Awards:

The list below refers to awards given to Bundit as a filmmaker, not awards given to Bundit's films.

1. *Duay Klao*
  - Best Screenplay, Suphannahong Film Award

2. *Hong 2 Run 44*
  - Best Screenplay, Phra Suratsawadee Award
  - Best Screenplay, Bangkok Critics Assembly
  - Best Director, Bangkok Critics Assembly
3. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep*
  - Best Director, National Film Award
  - Best Director, Bangkok Critics Assembly
4. *Kalla Khrung Nueng Muea Chao Nee*
  - Best Director, National Film Award
  - Best Screenplay, National Film Award
5. *Satang*
  - Best Screenplay, Phra Suratsawadee Award
6. *The Moonhunter*
  - Best Director, Phra Suratsawadee Award
  - Best Adapted Screenplay, Phra Suratsawadee Award
  - Best Screenplay, Bangkok Critics Assembly
  - Best Director, Bangkok Critics Assembly



## Brief Story

### 1. *Khu Wun Wai Wan*

Meen is expelled from the house by his uncle (his guardian while he studies in Bangkok) because of his addiction to billiards. He gets to know Jeab who is kind, sincere, but eccentric and friendless. Meen tells Jeab that he has nowhere to live because of his uncle's cruelty. Then, Jeab asks his grandfather (Jeab's guardian) to allow Meen to stay with them.

Meen has feelings for Jaeng (Jeab's sister), while Jeab himself fancies Aom (Jaeng's close friend). However, Jaeng dislikes Meen owing to his naughty appearance and Aom frowns on Jeab because he often acts strange. Meen is not liked by some of his schoolmates either. The leader of those schoolmates is Pansith. In the first scene at Meen's school, he fights with Pansith after Pansith mocks him. The school professor stops the fight, but turns it into a boxing match after they refuse to compromise. Meen breaks some rule of the boxing, whereupon he is blamed for his unfairness.

Jaeng and Aom are about to join a scholarship test. They accidentally overhear a secret deal between the headmaster and Wongwai in which the headmaster is happy to help Wongwai's daughter pass the test in exchange for money. Jaeng becomes disheartened. Jeab reveals the cheating that happens on the day of the test, leading to cancellation by an American invigilator. To cover up, the headmaster accuses Jeab of trespassing and defaming the school. The police officers send Jeab to an asylum because it seems that he is mentally ill, but Jeab escapes at night. With sympathy, Aom allows Jeab to hide at her house. She also gives him a chance to be her boyfriend. As for Meen, he plots a situation in which Jaeng and Aom are threatened by delinquents and he will rescue them. This ends in romantic development between Meen and Jaeng.

One day, Jeab sees Aom talking to her male friend and he misunderstands their relationship. Then, he runs away, causing concern to Aom, Jaeng, and Meen. Jeab reunites with Aom after he calms down. But a split develops between Jaeng and Meen after it is revealed that Meen has tried to deceive her with the deceitful plot. Meen feels sorry for his guilt. He comes to a decision to not disappoint anyone again. He agrees to be a replacement for Pansith in a boxing competition despite having a hand injury (he punched a door angrily upon Jaeng's leaving). With encouragement from Jeab, Jaeng forgives him.

Wongwai appears to seize Jeab and sends him back to the asylum. From the asylum, Jeab runs away to the national stadium where everything turns chaotic. Wongwai and his subordinates hunt Jeab. Meen, Jaeng, and Aom are there to help Jeab, as well as the patients from the asylum who think that they are having fun. Later, policemen arrive with the American invigilator who backs up Jeab's innocence. The invigilator overcomes Wongwai in their personal fight. Wongwai and his subordinates are arrested, while Jeab is safe.

## 2. *Bunchu Phu Narak*

Bunchu is a young, rural man whose personality is nothing more than a strong Suphan Buri accent, simple clothes, and a polite manner. Just after he leaves the monkhood, he has to move to Bangkok with Bualoy (his little niece) to take the entrance exam as desired by Bunlom (his mother).

In Bangkok, Bunchu is looked after by Bunchuay (his brother and Buayloy's father). Bunchuay tries to educate Bunchu on urban living, as well as bring him to a tutorial school where he meets Moree – a courteous Bangkok girl who lives with her rich, but hot-tempered sister, Manee. At the school, Bunchu becomes friend with Kummoon, Nara, Yoi, Chuey, and Waiyakorn.

Bunchu makes an effort to be close to Moree because he falls in love with her at first sight, but Moree is often accompanied by Ngentra. Toeng, a delinquent who controls a printing business nearby the school, also likes Moree. One day, Kummoon, Nara, Yoi, Chuey, and Waiyakorn encourage Bunchu to follow Moree to a pizza restaurant. There, Moree, her friends, and Ngentra are threatened by a group of ruffians. This is a plan set by Toeng whose intention is to protect Moree from the ruffians to gain her appreciation. However, Bunchu and the group join the fight as well. Moree invites everyone to her birthday party to thank them all.

During the party, Toeng and Ngentra are jealous of Bunchu. They deceive Bunchu to serve the birthday cake without Moree's permission. Nara is furious upon learning of their deception. He initiates a fight by which the party turns into a chaotic event and Manee is extremely angry. The day after, Bunchu apologizes for messing up the party. Moree pacifies Bunchu and decides to join their group. Apart from doing activities together, Bunchu, Moree, and the rest of the group agree to take a break at Bunchu's remote village in Suphan Buri. Bunlom notices Bunchu's feeling towards Moree, so she

reminds him of his obligation to study and Bunchu changes himself therefrom. He keeps reading rather than having fun with friends. Even so, he cannot pass the exam.

Moree is abducted by Toeng and Bunchu and the rest of the group risk themselves to rescue her. Another chaos occurs as policemen arrive at the scene to arrest Toeng and his gang. Moree is safe but Bunchu is sent to a hospital. When Bunchu recovers, he makes a decision to go back to his hometown. Moree rushes to meet with him and cheer him up so that he retries the entrance exam the next year.

### **3. *Bunchu Two, Nongmai***

The story starts at Bunchu's hometown where many farmers make fun of his exam failure. Bunchu makes the decision to return to Bangkok for another try. He is, however, advised by a senior monk to work with Maha Jam (the senior monk's friend) during his stay in Bangkok so that he is properly controlled.

After arriving in Bangkok, Bunchu meets with Maha Jam at Thammasat University library. Maha Jam agrees to watch over Bunchu. Later, Bunchu meets with everyone who are now university students. Moree and Yoi are at Thammasat University. Kummoon and Chuey attend Silpakorn University. Waiyakorn and Nara study at Kasetsart University and Ramkamhaeng University, respectively. Bunchu gets to know Prapun who later becomes a member of the group. Moree, however, appears with a new friend named Oh whose look is far smarter than Bunchu. The two work together in a development club.

Moree turns anxious when she cannot raise a 10,000 baht budget for the club, as she promises to other members that she will be responsible for doing so. Bunchu and the group cooperate in raising that amount of money until they succeed. Moree is impressed by the group's contribution, especially Bunchu. Bunchu's romantic feelings towards Moree are reignited.

Bunchu is prohibited from helping Maha Jam in the library because he is not an official worker of Thammasat University. He has to submit an application for a vacancy at the library. Meanwhile, Yoi persuades Bunchu to relax at a village where Moree and her club do their activities and Bunchu agrees. Once they reach the village, they spot smoke coming out of a kitchen where Moree is cooking and rush to extinguish the fire. Their good wish causes a mess for everyone. Bunchu apologizes for troubling Moree. She is, once again, not angry with him.

Back in Bangkok, Bunchu gets to know Bunma while they both are admitted to work at Thammasat University. Bunma is introduced to the group.

Manee's workers want a raise in their salaries, but Manee refuses to do so due to her limited budget. They withdraw from her company. Moree asks her friends to help Manee complete the remaining work to get some pay that can be kept as her club's money. When everyone gathers at Manee's company, the workers come up and interrupt them. Bunchu, Bunchuay, and the group arrive with the intention of helping Manee, but it all ends in a chaotic fight between the two sides.

On Valentine's Day, Yoi urges Bunchu to give Moree a red rose. Bunchu believes in Yoi's advice which ends in Moree's revelation that she only thinks of Bunchu as a friend. Thereafter, Bunchu meets Ae who fails in love with a student she fancies. Bunchu offers to be Ae's friend as they have similar disappointment. Since then, Bunchu works very hard for his exam with encouragement from Ae and Moree.

Prior to the exam, Bunma steals the club's money because of his financial hardship. Bunchu, Moree, and the group go to Kasetsart University, where Bunma has hidden himself, to take back the money. Mayhem occurs around the campus until Bunma is captured. Bunma confesses that he did not want to do it if it is not for his family.

Bunchu attends the exam for the second time. The result is his second failure. Bunchu travels back to Suphan Buri with Bunlom the next day. A telegraph is delivered within a minute after Bunchu leaves informing that he has gained a place at Kasetsart University because some applicants cancelled. Everyone rushes to Bunchu's village in Suphan Buri to let him know the good news.

#### **4. *Bunchu Five, Nueahom***

The third Bunchu film is preceded by two short features titled *Bunchu Three, Jum Jak Mae* and *Bunchu Four, Pee Nueng*.

In *Bunchu Three, Jum Jak Mae*, Bunchu is about to travel to Bangkok to enroll in Kasetsart University. Bunlom cautions Bunchu how he should behave during his reading for a BA. She talks protractedly, causing Bunchu to miss the minibus that will take him out to the city. He must go back to prepare for the journey the next day.

*Bunchu See Pee Nung* begins with showing the general atmosphere in Kasetsart University. Waiyakorn and Bunchu are cycling on the campus. When Bunchu puts his bike

in the bicycle parking, he unintentionally makes other bikes tumble down like falling dominoes. They both run away from the scene.

The story changes to *Bunchu Five, Nueahom* where Bunchu keeps to the university life with guidance from Waiyakorn. His rural manner makes him a well-known student. The relationship between Manee and Bunchuay is then inserted in the story. The two are having a loving moment in a speedboat. Bualoy is sitting therein. By curiosity, Bualoy drives the boat out to the Chao Phraya River, while Bunchuay is on the wharf. The situation ends in the unexpected stop of the boat by which Manee falls into the river. When Manee gets to the land, she is extremely angry with Bunchuay. However, she is stunned by the smart look of Professor Sutto (Bunchu's lecturer) who is also there with Bunchu and the group.

The story cuts to Kasetsart University. Bunchu has a chance to know Ou – a courteous first-year student who has just lost her chance to obtain a student grant to Sayun. Bunchu learns that Sayun misuses the money, so he is determined to enter the race for student president to pave the way for amendment of the grant regulations. To do so, he must compete with his two friends – Janpen and Raewat.

While he is concentrating on Ou's problem, Moree mistakes that Bunchu is courting Ou. This compels Ou to meet Moree in person in order to explain the truth. She also asks Moree to support Bunchu in the election campaign. Thereafter, Moree and the entire group put their efforts to help Bunchu win the election.

Manee tries to improve her relationship with Professor Sutto who already has a fiancée. Professor Sutto is inclined to give hope to Manee only for fun. Bunchuay is informed of their romantic relationship. He makes an attempt to regain Manee's attention by deflating the tire of Manee's car so that he has a chance to offer his help to Manee. The plot goes wrong when Manee sees him releasing the air out of the tire. She feels angrier with him.

Bunchu is defeated in the election. He meets the sponsor of the grants himself to reveal that their money is getting into the wrong hands. However, he is required to bring along some witnesses to confirm his words. No one helps him apart from the group. Despite that, he is required to produce evidence to back his words. Bunchu and the group agree to do so.

During the Kaset Fair, they all take a photo of Sayun buying beer with the given money. The mission is successful, but Sayun is furious. He chases them before his mate



releases the brakes of the ploughing truck in which Bunlom and Bualoy are sitting to mess up the fair. The event is suddenly in turmoil because the truck moves uncontrollably. The situation returns to normal after the truck collides with a tree. Everyone is safe. Sayun is punished for his wrongdoing.

Ou receives approval to be awarded the money at long last, but she has to move to the UK after her financial problem is unexpectedly solved. She comes to the campus to thank Bunchu for his kind help as well as to tell him that the grant should be passed to the other candidate who is in need of money.

##### **5. *Bunchu Six, Lok Ni Di Ok Sutsuai Narak Nayu Tha Ngui***

Bunchu is in his final year while many in his group have already started working. Aside from studying, Bunchu has to look after Tongdee – his courteous, but naïve cousin who just began his first year at the Faculty of Fishery, Kasetsart University.

Everything is going all right until the coming of Lalita whom Manee employs for her business. It all starts with Bunchu, Bunchuay, Tongdee and the group helping Manee in a video production for an advertising job. This video is to be presented to her potential customer known as ‘the foreigner’. During the filming, Lalita keeps signaling a false romance to each of them just for fun, causing the group to mistake that Lalita is in love with them, leading to the group’s disintegration. Bunchu is the only person unaffected by Lalita’s deception because he remains faithful in his feelings for Moree. He decides to unveil her dishonesty to restore the group’s unity. Even so, Lalita does not give up her deceitful amorousness. She pretends before Moree that she is in love with Bunchu just to break the relationship between the two. But both Moree and Bunchu can understand each other. Right now, everyone realizes Lalita’s insincerity, except Tongdee whose passion for Lalita is unstoppable.

The foreigner is pleased to employ Manee. He requests that Manee must have Bunchu as a model in the commercial. Lalita disagrees with the foreigner’s opinion. She tries to exclude Bunchu from the job but fails. Her performance triggers a fight between her and Manee’s side, followed by her withdrawal from Manee’s company.

The story turns to the matter of Bunchu’s future. Bunchu is completing his studies, therefore, he is in serious doubt about whether he should remain in Bangkok so that he can be with Moree or go back to his village to fulfil his dream. He opts for the first

choice before discovering that his hometown is short of a knowledgeable cultivator such as him whereas Bangkok is already crammed with potential graduates.

In the end, Lalita tricks Bunchu to sign a contract under her supervision which will force Bunchu to work for herself, not Manee. Tongdee takes part in the deception because he cannot resist his feelings towards Lalita. Once the group knows what is going on, they all cooperate in fighting Lalita to gain back the contract. Tongdee cannot stand his misdeeds anymore. He asks Lalita to hand over the contract. Lalita sympathizes with him, so the contract is returned to Bunchu.

#### **6. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep***

This film does not allow any characters to outshine the others. The theme is simply the depiction of youthful life during high school age with incorporation of a variety of characters.

The story begins with some science students embarrassing some art students, leading to a series of childlike revenges between the two groups. While having unfriendly interplay, three intern teachers, Tong-Aeg, Pattama, and Korakit, are admitted into the school. Tong-Aeg tries to develop a good relationship with the students through his kindness, but one of the art students named Taew takes it wrong. She begins to fancy Tong-Aeg more and more, while Tong-Aeg himself is not suspicious of her action.

The shift of the situation commences when the school director issues an order to all the students to organize an academic fair. The science students plan to humiliate the art students once more by putting fire crackers on the cake prepared for the fair by the art students. Unexpectedly, the director invites the art students to light the candles on the cake together with the science students. By that, many students and school professors are covered in the messy cream from the exploding cake. Upon knowing that the wrongdoers receive the fruit of their action, there is only laughter and, unexpectedly, the disunity between the two is weakened from that time onwards.

The strong relationship is even built up after the science students do not hesitate to rescue the art students from a combined attack outside their school. The attack derives from the attempt of the art students to woo girls from another school which dissatisfies some ruffians who are also attracted to the girls. Romantic relationships between the girls and boys grow more and more, whereupon the school director

expresses his concerns about the problem that may arise from excessive adolescent romance.

The pleasant situation is however interrupted by an unforeseen event. Jong – a student who falls in love with Taew – is upset to see Taew approaching Tong-Aeg. He comes to the decision to cut the brake cable of Tong-Aeg's motorcycle to hurt him. Nonetheless, Pattama and another school professor named 'Nualsri' use the motorcycle immediately after the impairment of the braking system. They have an accident in place of Tong-Aeg. Jong repents his intemperate behaviour after Tong-Aeg decides to not report the matter to the police.

On account of the widespread misapprehension of the relationship between Tong-Aeg and Taew, Tong-Aeg makes a decision to let Taew know his wedding plans with Pattama. Taew cannot bear the truth. She tries to commit suicide by drugging herself. She survives, but Tong-Aeg encounters suspension of his internship which is determined by the school director to preclude Taew from seeing Tong-Aeg. Previous to his departure, Tong-Aeg comes into the classroom where the art students are gathered and teaches them to be conscious of romantic matters. When he leaves, the art and science students stare at him cheerlessly.

Finally, the story concludes that none of them succeeds in carrying on their relationships with the ones whom they are dating. Even so, they do not fail to keep their friendship until they grow up.

### **7. *Anueng Khitthueng Pho Sangkhep Run Two***

The story is about the reconstruction of a marching band in a Catholic school in Chiang Mai. Two groups of high school student are discordant with each other because of their different family backgrounds – the rich versus the poor. One day, they are in a serious argument that is about to cause them a heated fight. The rector stops it and forces them to join a marching band of the school so that they can learn unity and friendship.

Rae is a school teacher who is in charge of the band. He makes many efforts to educate them on working in the band. However, the two sides keep opposing each other and some of them do not concentrate on practicing as they are supposed to. Unexpectedly, the band is scheduled to perform in the provincial fair, followed by the school fair. Rae has to bring the entire band to a remote camp to prepare the band for

the two fairs. There, another marching band from a girl school has already arrived to do similar training. Many of the students, both from the rich and poor, have fun and flirt with the girls rather than developing themselves. Pibulsak – the most quick-tempered student from the rich – receives harsh punishment together with his friends after they distract the training of the girls with a remote control plane. Pibulsak is angry, so he runs away from the camp. He has a road accident on the way whereby he falls down a hill. Everyone from the rich and the poor, including teachers from the girl school, cooperate in rescuing him. Thereafter, the conflict within the two groups eases.

Nevertheless, the band is not well equipped. A good piccolo is also missing. This causes the band to make a shameful performance in the provincial fair. They fight against each other once more. Pibulsak and another member from the rich side quit the band. Rae feels guilty for his failure, so he decides to resign from the school. While the situation is getting intense, Kongwut – a student from the poor side – confesses before the rector that he stole the piccolo and sold it for money. He survives from banishment, but only in exchange for his change of class and resignation from the marching band. Simultaneously, all the other students repent their misbehaviour. They cooperate in asking Rae to come back to the school to work with them one more time. Rae accepts their request. From then, they become self-disciplined, leading to the beautiful success in the school fair as well as in grand competitions.

#### 8. *Chue Chop Chuan Ha Rueang*

Chop is a very polite and nonviolent young man. He is found sleeping in the same bed with Inthu-orn (his girlfriend), whereupon he is threatened to be killed by Inthu-orn's father. However, he receives a chance to prove his love towards Inthu-orn. He must make a journey from Bangkok to Chiang Rai to meet with Inthu-orn within seven days. On the way, he must engage in fights with anyone to show that he is manly enough to be her lover and then they will be allowed to live together as husband-wife.

Chop departs Bangkok with a stranger named Narin who also wants to go to Chiang Rai. She misunderstands that Chop is gambling with someone, so she proposes to help him in exchange for the rewarded money. At first, Chop refuses Narin and drops her on a roadside. He admits her company later when he meets her again by accident.

On the next day, Narin pays for a man who is happy to be defeated by Chop. But the plan becomes unsuccessful when Chop looks for a fight with the wrong person. The

two run away from the scene before retrying with another man named Jonny. Jonny agrees to pretend that he cannot fight Chop. When they both perform their fake fight in public, Jonny turns up dead because of a chronic disease. Everyone thinks that Chop has killed him and Chop is put into jail. Narin hurries a doctor to perform an autopsy in order to prove Chop's innocence. Finally, Chop is released and the two resume their journey. Narin adjusts the plan. She tells Chop to drink liquor to switch his personality from polite to violent. Chop gets drunk very quickly. He unintentionally throws a glass at a nearby table where a group of women enjoy their meals and drinks. This provokes those women to attack Narin. She has to take Chop out to a safer place.

One night, Chop and Narin are in a car accident. The two are safe but there are a large group of unknown villagers coming to the scene who dismantle their car, as well as taking away anything that can be sold. Chop turns angry for the first time. He and Narin invade the place where those villagers reside to regain their belongings. They both fight the villagers before escaping to the main road to get on a passing bus. There, Chop is furious with an unkind conductor and salacious passenger who frighten other passengers. He drives them away. Then, the bus has to park at the petrol station for the night because the road is damaged. When everyone is about to sleep, a group of young riders comes to have a motor race within the petrol station. Narin cannot stand the noise. She throws a seat at those riders, ending in a fierce attack against her and Chop. Other passengers help the two fight back and they all successfully get rid of the riders. However, the riders ask a local godfather to avenge Chop, Narin, and everyone in the petrol station. The godfather brings along his underlings and threatens to destroy the whole place. Chop and everyone cooperate in fighting against the godfather until they gain another victory. Suddenly, Inthu-orn's father appears with his admiration for Chop's mannish action. He takes Chop to his house while Narin witnesses Chop's departure sorrowfully.

Narin goes back to her home in a remote village. Unexpectedly, she sees Chop over there. Chop explains that he refuses to marry Inthu-orn because he does not think they both are ready for it. The two reunite.

### **9. *Bunchu I Love Sara Ou***

Bunchoke, the son of Bunchu and Moree, has been ordained as a Buddhist novice and is about to leave for a pilgrimage. Bunchu is very happy with Bunchoke's ordination, but not Moree. Moree wants to see Bunchoke taking course in a university. She asks

Bunchoke's master to allow him to leave the monkhood while Bunchu is away. Then, Moree sends Bunchoke to Bangkok to prepare for the exam.

Moree asks Prapun and Nara to look after Bunchoke during his stay in Bangkok. However, they pick up the wrong Bunchoke whereas Bunchoke himself is drugged and his belongings taken by an anonymous person. It is clear that two little girls named Kratae and Kraten whom Bunchoke met earlier are involved in this offense. Once Bunchoke wakes up, he tries to catch the two girls, but Pim (their sister) appears to delay Bunchoke from reaching the two. Later, Bunchoke meets Prapun and Nara who are searching for him with help from Prapaan (Prapun's son), Ning (Nara's daughter), and Yon (Yoi's son). Prapun and Nara leave Bunchoke with the three. Later, Aen (Ning's workmate) offers that everyone stay together in her grandmother's house where they have fun together.

One day, Bunchoke spots Pim at the department store. She deceives a man for free money. Bunchoke runs after her until they get into a photo booth which automatically takes pictures of them. Pim escapes again. Bunchoke can only keep the photos as evidence of her identification. After Pim goes, Aeng (a leader of a criminal gang) is told by his underling that Pim intrudes their zone (an area where they carry on criminal acts). He gives an order to everyone to keep an eye on her.

As for Bunchu and the group, they gather at Pi Pong's riverside restaurant. Unexpectedly, Bunchu is informed that Bunchoke has turned into a layman. No one dares to explain the truth, except Moree who just arrives. Instead of arguing, Bunchu agrees with Moree and urges the group to advise Bunchoke on the matter of his education.

Once again, Bunchoke sees Pim repeating her deception for money. He tracks her quietly together with Yon and Prapaan. Finally, the three get to her apartment. Bunchoke makes an attempt to negotiate with Pim to retrieve his important belonging, which is a bag given by to him by Moree. Pim denies the accusation. Prapaan and Yon speak out that they will report to the police officer. Upon hearing that, a nearby housekeeper begs them for forgiveness. She explains that Pim and her sisters are orphans and they have to do it just to survive.

Ning finds the photos of Bunchoke and Pim in Bunchoke's textbook. Ning becomes furious because she thinks that Bunchoke is in love with Pim. When the three come back, Ning shouts at them angrily. The day after, Bunchoke explains to Ning that the photos are just to identify her. The two immediately reconcile.

On the examination day, Pim is abducted in front of Bunchoke while he is about to enter the exam room. Bunchoke makes a decision to skip his exam to help Pim. Ning, Aen, Yon, and Prapaan join the rescue too. In an abandoned factory, Pim is surrounded by Aeng's young underlings. They attack Pim brutally. As soon as Bunchoke gets there, he begs them for Pim's freedom, but none of them listens. The rest of the group appears to lend a hand to Bunchoke. Finally, the gang is defeated. Pim returns the bag to Bunchoke and stays in a social care center together with her two sisters.

Later, Bunchoke goes back to his village in Suphan Buri. He brings along Pim and her sisters. Bunchoke explains the past situation to Bunchu and Moree along with asking them to allow Pim and her sisters a short stay, which Bunchu and Moree do not mind.

#### **10. *Anueng Khitthueng Pen Yangying***

The story begins with the school memory in which high school students enjoy their educational life. The focus is a group of students from the art and science discipline. The art students look a little mischievous, while the science seems diligent. The art students often irritate the science students, while the science students are never hesitant to revenge. Even so, both sides do not engage in any serious conflicts. The final piece of memory is their graduation ceremony, followed by a gathering where everyone writes down the name on the others' shirts. The atmosphere is filled with laugh and fun.

The film cuts to the present day, and the art students, who already have become university students, are informed of the news that a businessman has bought their school and is aiming to demolish it to build a department store. With high regard for the school, the art students decide to camp out for a few nights in the school area to recall the atmosphere one last time. There, they meet the science students doing the same activity with the same intention. Both sides fail to establish a friendly union because the art students use an annoying style of speaking disliked by the science students. What comes after is, however, their joy of running around and performing amusing recreations.

The second day, the art students carry on a teasing conversation with the science students. One of the science students reacts by disarranging their tents. The art students immediately ruin the flowers planted by the science students in return. The situation turns serious. Unexpectedly, the two sides opt for an informal rugby match as a way out of their conflict. The art students are trickier, so they win the game.

At night, the two sides camp at the same site. They sing happily around the campfire to express their unity. Suddenly, a group of demolition workers reaches the school. The party ceases. The demolition process starts in the morning, awakening all the students. None of them can bear such an image whereupon they come to the decision to try to revive the school. They go to the foundation which previously operated the school and are informed that the school has to be sold because of an insoluble financial difficulty. The only way to halt the demolition is to find an adequate amount of money to buy the school back, so all the students work together seeking donations. Sethawat is the wealthiest alumnus whom the students first ask for contribution. Unexpectedly, Sethawat leaves them in the middle of the meeting without prior notice. The students try to delay the demolition process by scaring the workers with a ghost story at night, but the scheme fails. Then, they drug the workers using anaesthesia and swap the position of each worker's partner who is having a deep sleep to cause a quarrel amongst the workers when they wake up. This scheme is successful. Then, the art and science students travel around searching for money the next day, but none of them succeeds.

In the morning, the second team of the workers arrives. The demolition is resumed without any apparent way to stop it. All the students witness the image of the school hopelessly. Other alumni gather around. They all start singing the school song with tears in their eyes. Suddenly, Sethawat appears with the good news that he has bought the school back. Therefore, the teaching can continue and the school is no longer destroyed.



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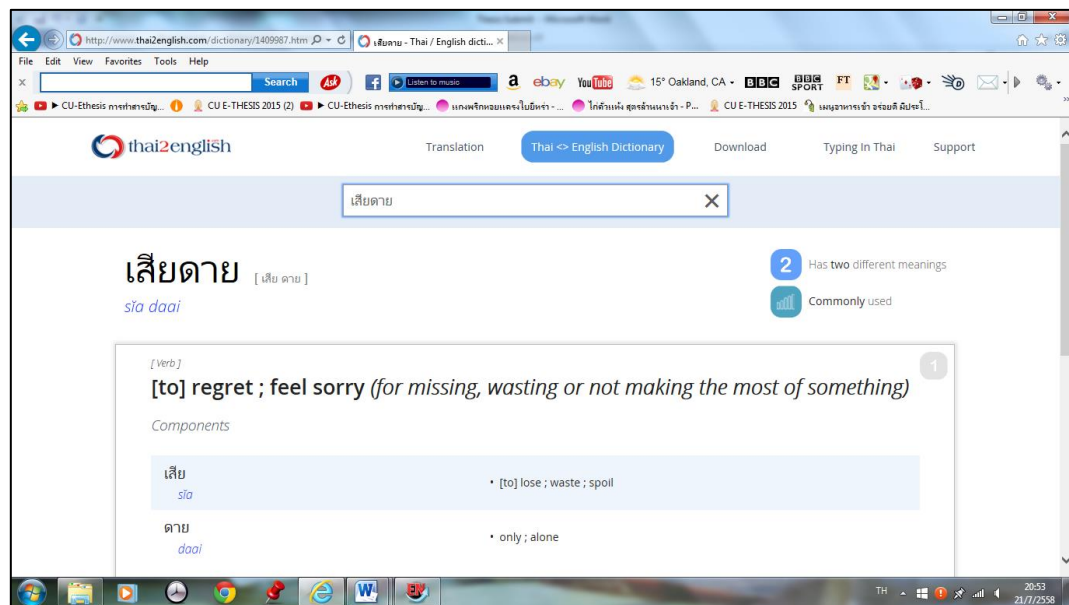
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## Transliteration

To transliterate from Thai to English, the website of Thai2English was used primarily throughout the dissertation.

<http://www.thai2english.com/online/dictionary/>



However, some Thai names such as those of the cited authors or directors were written as they had previously been publicized in various sources.

## VITA

Thanayod Lopattananont is a graduate in film, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Thammasat University. He completed his MA in European Cinema Studies, University of Bath, the UK, in 2002 and started his teaching career at Discipline of Film and Digital, Faculty of Communication Arts, Kasem Bundit University where he was also assigned to assist in an MA program in Film-Video. He was a teaching member of Discipline of Film, Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University and responsible for designing a curriculum of New Media of which he acted as a head. He enrolled in PhD in Thai Studies, Thai Studies Center, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, in 2011.

