

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Being one of the traditional countries in the Far East, Thailand has her own majestic traditions inherited from generation to generation such as way of life, culture, food, language, and the art. Performing arts such as *Likay*, *Lakhon*, or *Khon*, being traditional, are influential sources of Thai film in early periods. Throughout the history of Thai cinema, there had been glimpses of Hollywood influences in style, technique and narrative. Starting with the **Traditional Era**, in which the first glimpse of Hollywood influence is evident in the use of technique such as visual and sound, the films of that time contained many subplots and there was no clear-cut or clearly defined genre. Such formula was inherited from the traditional performance which revealed the impact of the government control imposed by the 1930 Film Act as a means to censor and ban any film featuring inappropriate subject against the regulation. The formula in the early days - the result of the traditional convention and the archaic Film Act - was known as '*nam nao*', a close relation to Melodrama of the West. As stated by Rutnin (1996: 187),

*"The phra ek nang (film heroes) and nang ek nang (film heroines) were the idols of film audiences. The stories still kept to the same vein as traditional lakhon: romantic, melodramatic, and idealistic."*

Later on, in the events of major political uprising (1973 and 1976), Thai people had more public freedom. With the change in political situation, Thai filmmakers who went to study abroad or gained higher education took this opportunity to produce films depicting social concern theme. Upon coming back, they combined their filmic knowledge, obtained mainly from Hollywood, with the Thai context. For instance, M.C. Chatrichalerm Yugala used the 'flashback' - the technique originated by Hollywood and was still foreign to most Thai filmmakers - in his film, *Kao Chue Kant (Dr. Kant, 1973)*. In this so-called **Progressive Period**, Thai film industry received the government support in the form of increasing import film tax. This led to a short boycott by Hollywood distributors. However by 1981, the influx of Hollywood movies again caused high competition in Thai movie market. Thai filmmakers took refuge in teenager film which seemed to be the only way out. At any rate, Thai filmmakers still confronted serious problems concerning the popularity of Thai films among Thai audience. With a great volume of Hollywood films imported to Thailand in comparison to much smaller output of feature films produced locally, Thai moviegoers seem to enjoy the imported "stuff" more than the local product. According to Duangta Deangpradab (1978: 87-97), most moviegoers turn to foreign movies because the quality of Thai film, content or technique wise, is not as good. Instead of spending money on Thai films, they would rather spend on foreign films to get better quality product at the same price. Besides, the content of Thai films in this period was not very much different from those of the past. Thus, the audiences do not have much choice

for good Thai films. M.C. Chatrichalerm Yugala, a famous Thai director, suggests that though a small number of Thai films have to compete with foreign movies in the movie theaters, there should be more quality films among them so that Thai films can survive in the market (Pattanasit Thooptien (ed.), 1999: 24).

Since Thai society has undergone constant changes over time; Thai cinema, too, has been transformed from one formula to another to fit the changes throughout the century. The bond between the society and the film industry is evident, because the filmmakers need to produce films that can satisfy the majority of the audience. Consequently, a reform in filmmaking was urgently needed. According to Pensiri Sawaitviharee (1998: 96) the major target for Thai films is teenagers. Chawana Pawaganun (1996: 110-115) further elaborates that teenagers go to the movies every week especially on Fridays and Saturdays which categorize them as the major movie consumers. Producers from one of the major production houses in Thailand - RS Film Production - have clearly defined teenagers as the target group of Thai films and plan to entertain that particular group (Pensiri Sawaitviharee 1992: 98.) Therefore, the content of films made by the company during the years 1985-1993 i.e. **Transitional Period** were closely related to teenagers' lives more or less. In addition, the music video-like presentation, a postmodern form of communication, and the visuals taken directly from Hollywood movies with which the Thai teenagers are familiar, are applied to the production of the film

(Ibid.) Apart from changes in technique from conventional to contemporary, there are also several changes in the narrative such as the adoption of the mainstream genres and characterization. By comparison, the plot and multiple sub-plots which are generally found in Thai films become rare. Thus, with the newly adopted style and content, Thai filmmakers are obviously influenced by current Hollywood movies which eventually lead to the acceptance of contemporary Thai films among Thai audience.

Since 1995 there have been several “quality” movies with improved technique and style released to the theaters. As mentioned in chapter II, these films prominently featured the music video-like presentation i.e. the film’s editing style creates a quick abrupt movement. They are also differentiated from other films by being identifiable to a certain genre of Hollywood in terms of storylines. *303 Klua/ Lka Akad* is the first film of **Contemporary Period** that shares exact formula with an established genre of Hollywood, namely, the horror genre. *Cloning: Khon Copy Khon* is another breakthrough in Thai film industry that can be identified with the action-thriller genre and is concerned with scientific experiment – a subject matter unknown to most Thai films. The two selected films are treated in this research as the representatives of contemporary Thai films which follow Hollywood’s **action-thriller** and **horror** prototypes. This can be detected through content i.e. plot, theme, characterization, etc. and style i.e. mise-en-scene, camera work, editing, special effects, sound, etc. The analysis of the two films and the comparative study

with Hollywood elements reveal the existence of an ultimate influence of the mainstream movies. Hence the hypothesis stating that Hollywood films have influences on contemporary Thai film belonging to **action-thriller** and **horror genres** is proved to be accurate.

The imitation of Hollywood movies is a common practice among contemporary Thai filmmakers. This is confirmed by several directors in the following statements. As stated by Adirek Wattaleela, several RS directors originally descended from music video production. Their works such as music video and advertisement obviously imitate foreign movies. In filmmaking, it is believed that the imitation of the movies is a means used by filmmakers to ‘pay homage’ to the great movies of the past (Ibid: 106.) Another director, Pen-Ake Ratanarueng, who is an explicit example of Hollywood-influenced film director, explains that Martin Scorsese, a director whom he likes very much, influences his style of filmmaking. Since he was young, he has seen only the mainstream movie (by this director). Therefore, he cannot help inserting its elements into his films (Ibid: 76.)

Interestingly, while Thai film industry has made a move towards upgrading the quality of film by inserting Hollywood elements, other forms of visual entertainment such as *Likay* and TV drama series, still keep the traditional formula, i.e. ‘nam nao’ in their production. It seems that since *Likay* and TV series have no competitor in the market as Thai films do, thus, the need

to survive in the market is unnecessary. We still find the same theme, plot, and characterization cycling in such entertainment forms.

In conclusion, in order to gain recognition in the world market and win popularity among the major movie consumers, i.e. teenagers, there is no way for Thai moviemakers to prevent westernization in their movies. However, it is a good sign that the changes, influenced by Hollywood movies, have made progress in Thai movie by enhancing the quality of Thai films and recently leading Thai films to regional and international recognition. In addition to that, since Thai films targets on teenagers, it is unavoidable that the films should correspond to their unique lifestyle.

As a suggestion for further research topics, a number of other interesting issues relating to the influences of Hollywood movies need in-depth study. For example, it should be interesting to find out the relationship between the filmmakers' biographical data and the exertion of Hollywood influences. The topic relating to the influence of Hollywood movies on Thai teenagers should be another topic of interest to socio-cultural scholars. In addition, the role of the censorship Board towards the trend of Thai film industry should be explored in further detail since it is a vivid form of state control in this era of explicit freedom and globalization. Last but not least, it is necessary to examine whether the 'nam nao' genre of Thai film can survive in this highly competitive market where the Hollywood movie is dominant.