

# The Epic of Heroes---On the Creation of Thai Movie of Legend and Epic

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**Abstract:** In 90s of 20th century, Epic movie is the most representative film type in the renaissance of Thai movie, which is mostly based on the classical legend and epic in Thai history and full of the unique feeling of religious and romantic poetry. Based on the origins of Thai epic and legend movie, our research has analyzed its story model and specifications of art as the classical movie model in contemporary Thailand, in order to find out the Thai national idea and the art imagination that shown in the movies.

## 1. Introduction

In 21st century, a remarkable force has shown in the processing of the rise of Thai film, which is the rapid development of Thai legend epic movie (it will be called epic movie in following). This kind of movie can easily gain plenty of popularity, which can easily cross the boundaries and gaps between countries and cultures as the action movies, moreover, it is incline to gain more popularity from the panel group of every movie festival than other type of films. Although there are still lots of disadvantages in such kind of film, people also willing to spend money to watch this sort of film that made by some great scene and remarkable production. As for the content of this kind of movie, the famous battles in Thai history, especially the national anti-invasion campaigns are always the major subject, which pay a lot of attention to forge the national hero figures, and the scene of this kind of movie is always significant and splendid, digital and video technologies are also used a lot in the production, besides, the international mass epic story model is always used to present.

## 2. Heroization of character figure

Like the hero is needed by every nation around the world, people cannot imagine that there is no hero in the epic history movie. Heroism is the permanent topic of the contemporary Thai epic film, and it has become the symbol of Thai national spirit. It is a typical example for Suriyothai, which is praised as the national film of Thailand, its major mission for present is that to fight against the Hollywood movie *Anna and the King*<sup>①</sup>, which is forbidden in Thailand. Whereas, the heroism of epic film is not the patent only owned by Thailand, meanwhile, it is also suitable for the transmission of Universal Value for all people. As the oriental prospect<sup>②</sup>, Thai film on the one hand emphasis the heroism of personal endeavor, on the other hand, it also gives the high praise to the spirit of the sacrifice for the collective.

The first is a divine hero. Most of these works are based on classic mythology in the history of Thai literature. Most of the stories take place in ancient Thailand. Therefore, the description of heroes in the film is often mysterious and legendary. For the needs of the plot, the hero of divine glory is indispensable, which is in line with the secular and satisfying the psychology of the audience. Kunping, who is the hero of Kunpan, is a general who has made great contributions to the country and is brave and brave. He trained the gods and helped his son to crack the Burmese array. In *Mermaid Got Married*, the king has two sons, each of whom has a unique magical power. With the power of the gods, they overcome the difficulties and realize their dreams. Compared with the deification of heroes in *Kunpan* and *Mermaid Got Married*, *The Legend of Suriyothai*, *The Warrior of Ayodhya*, *The Taksin King*, *Tears of the Black Tiger*, *Legend of the Village Warriors*, *The Siam Renaissance*. The heroes in the film are more legendary. The hero's life is full of legends, and some are deliberately fictional and magical. For example, the heroine of *The Siam Renaissance* travels in

different time and space and defends national sovereignty.

Second is the humanization of the hero. If the hero has only masculine power, the appeal is obviously insufficient, and the image of the character is flat rather than three-dimensional. In order to make the hero image round and full, it is necessary to highlight the characteristics of its ordinary people. In the Thai epic film, the humanization of the hero has two main directions: one is the beauty with the hero, and the love is distinct. Such a hero has seven passions and six desires, and he loves to punish evil and promote good. For example, in *Kunpan*, the love story between Niang Yutong and the hero Kunping is described. In the *Warrior of Ayodhya*, Sima and Ken, one is a slave of heroic temperament, and the other is a narrow-minded aristocrat. Win the love with Riley. Although the hero Arden in *Tears of the Black Tiger* is a robber, he is loyal and amiable, and his heart is deeply loved. Second, the benevolent people are pity and respect life. This is reflected in some works featuring female heroes and aristocratic heroes. For example, *The Legend of Suriyothai*, is Queen Suli Yaotai. She is a national hero who sacrificed for the country, and is also a mother. Her love is manifested in the plot of her husband and son (including the children of the bad guys)<sup>③</sup>. A similar humanized hero, also in the performance of the lower-level people's hero the *Warrior of Ayodhya*, will not repeat here.

### 3. The technical spectacle image

Like other commercial-type films, Thai epics also pursue visual wonders and try to reinforce heroes and loves to form a program aesthetic similar to Hollywood, shaping the local cultural context. As a result, large-scale investment, large production, and extensive use of digital technology to create stunning audio-visual effects have become a pursuit. With the rapid development of modern photography technology and computer special effects (also known as CG technology), virtual images are becoming the wings of epic film, lacking the illusory scene under CG technology, Hollywood magic stories cannot be put on the big screen.

The first is to pay attention to the beauty and innovation of photography. Like the current popular Thai commercials, Thai filmmakers are good at using advanced technology, pursuing the aesthetic integration of art design and photography, and striving for innovation – the pursuit of this form of beauty is prominent in mythological epics. Most of the epic films are grand and beautiful, especially in war scenes, which is a major challenge to photography.

Thai epic films such as *The Legend of Suriyothai*, *The Siam Renaissance* and *The Taksin King* are mostly presented in warm colors of Zhu Hong and Qi Huang. The picture is beautiful and full of elegant and simple taste. In the film, there are many shots of the Grand Palace in Bangkok<sup>④</sup>. In order to show its beauty and dignity, dignity and grandeur, the producers have carefully designed and perfected the composition.

Some shots are shot in a variety of ways, and the accumulation of high-quality raw materials lays the foundation for the final computer image synthesis. "*Tears Of The Black Tiger*" is unique among many Thai films in its pop-color style, which makes people unforgettable after seeing it. Its excellent scene selection also plays an impressive role in rendering the environment and atmosphere of the whole film. "*The Siam Renaissance*" war scene is magnificent, the epic story is fascinating, the picture is beautiful and exquisite, and the amazing stunts are shocked. It has won many art awards in Thailand. Although the narrative space and time in the film have changed many times, the director did not explain it too much, but expressed it with the change of picture color. All these give people a sense of novelty and uniqueness, and also reflect the shooting level and innovative ability of Thai films.

Secondly, the popularization and application of digital technology. The use of digital technology to synthesize images has become very common in international film and television. In Thai epic films, this is mainly to show some scenes that cannot be or cannot be presented by camera alone, and these scenes can give people a kind of spectacular visual enjoyment, so it is particularly necessary for commercial blockbusters. "*The Legend of Suriyothai*" a scene in which a member of The royal family ride elephants to lead soldiers to fight against The Burmese army and thousands of

troops and horses, or the scene in which The Thai army sends soldiers to pass The ancient bridge, etc., is shot by multi-layer images and then synthesized by computer.

In Thailand, the story in the literary work "Kunming Kunping" has been put on the movie screen more than once, but the film "Daisyoun" has a new look for this version because of its extensive special effects elements. For example, the general released from his hands to raise a ghost boy to fly into the sky to fight against the enemy Chen wizard, he rode a sword to defeat thousands of troops and horses, the enemy magic rain of fire from the sky to disturb the Thai army and other special effects scenes, which is the work of 30 computer stunt people spent 144 days post-production. In addition to this kind of comprehensive special effects production<sup>⑤</sup>, visual effects based on computer software technology are common in epic movies. "The Siam Renaissance" and "Tears Of The Black Tiger" use CG layered coloring, layered keying and other techniques to make the picture composition delicate and unique, and some virtual scenes are even 3D modeling. In order to present the spectacle of war scenes, heroic feats usually fly in flames and billow in air, which are produced by the light effects and dynamic fluid effects of post-production software and 3d software. However, digital cameras, which have become popular in recent years, have not yet become popular in contemporary Thai epic films.

#### 4. The popular epic narrative

At the end of the 20th century<sup>⑥</sup>, Thai films re-emerged, and a new generation of directors emerged, who paid attention to the use of popular style of film narration. In the 21st century, they have made bold attempts to present the epic story of the film in a way that is acceptable to the public, trying to reshape the past and present of Thailand, trying to modernize the national history and democratize myths in the image. In 1999, "Mae Nak" redisplayed the well-known "ghost love" legends of Thailand in the mirror language of Hollywood epic film, and improved the narrative value and lofty sense of Thai history. The directors of "Monrak Transistor" and "Jan Dara" used popular narration, sexy stars and even taboo "incest" plot to commercially package the film, so as to popularize elite literature and entertain the mass film, which stimulated the sense of self-history and affinity of local audiences and expressed the local consciousness. Therefore, it can be said that the expression of contemporary Thai films on the historical ecology of Thailand in different periods is to use the popular story of an individual's fate to form an allegorical narrative of collective memory<sup>⑦</sup>.

It is also the use of this popular narrative means to make the national spirit of Thai film energetic under the commercial packaging, and also enhance the cultural power of Thai contemporary film.

The first is the traditional straight-line and time-space jump. Based on the narrative model adopted by the Thai epic film, it is a method of storytelling in popular terms. One is the traditional straight-line "linear" narrative. The stories in the film are usually based on the syllabus, and the plot moves forward with time, one by one. Such a common display can be described as the public, although it is easy to accept but it is also easy to be as flat as the running account, so the drama of the film itself is quite important. "The Legend of Suriyothai" and "The Warrior of Ayodhya" are typical. Historical events and heroic destiny advance with time, which is conducive to the great narrative advantage of epic films.

However, the film must also consider the rhythm, otherwise the simple narrative will overwhelm the audience and eventually give up watching the film. In this way, the film needs another kind of narrative mode, which is in line with the montage of the film and is conducive to the setting of suspense and arouses the interest of the viewer to continue watching. In the epic film of Thailand, this narrative can be divided into: narrative omitting time and space and narrative of intersecting time and space. The film "legend of the warlord" is a succinct display of a story spanning three generations. It is used to depict the love entanglement between heroes and several women. The story of "The Siam Renaissance" began in the time and space of ancient Bangkok and modern Bangkok more than 100 years ago. Its narrative style must be crossover and jumping.

Followed by dramatic characters and plot design. As the anti-elite takes the popular film

narrative line, the Thai epic film is necessary to entertain the public and pursue the commercial benefits of the film. Regardless of whether the narrative method is traditional straight-line or time-space jumping, if there is no dramatic character design and plot conflict, the so-called entertainment mass and commercial value cannot be realized. An epic film with a grand narrative character, its character arrangement and the plot is very important. The positive and negative characters in "The Legend of Suriyothai" are the Suriyothai, who is self-denying for the country, and the Sisuda Da, who conspiring to coup. The loyalty and betrayal of different characters form a layered conflict, making the film plot full of drama. The arrangement of characters in "legend of the warlord" is a typical "triangle love" story. In order to get a lover, the struggle for power and conspiracy between the characters has continued. The same is true of the "The Warrior of Ayodhya". The kind and diligent poor boy forms a "dualistic" opposition with the narrow and insidious warrior, and his drama conflict continues in a beautiful woman. "Tears of the Black Tiger" seems to be imitating and at the same time eating American-style western movies. There are good people and bad people in the film, and there are gangs and police in the film.

If the dramatic characters and plot design of the above films are relatively common, then the "The Siam Renaissance" will be much more unique. The protagonist Meni in the film contradicts the two societies of different eras, facing the confusion of modern families and the ancient tragic Love is lost to her. The inner conflict is dramatized in this magic epic, in which Meni forms the antagonism between two characters in different time and space, and the dramatic plot is exactly the true love between Meni and Depp in ancient time and space, which is an irony of the incommunicability between children and their parents in modern time and space.

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