Romancing the War: Genre Memory and the Politics of Adaptation in *Sun & Sunrise* (2013)[1]

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Abstract

This article analyzes the frequently revisited Thai filmic myth, *Khu Karma* ("star-crossed lovers"), in terms of genre memory and the politics of adaptation, with special reference to *Sun & Sunrise* (dir. Leo Kittikorn Liaosirikun, 2013). Since the launch of the film, *Sun & Sunrise* has faced a tremendous negative reception from devotees of the novel on which it was loosely based. They have complained that the new film has abandoned the conventional historicity of the "Khu Karma" myth to which previous adaptations were faithful. *Sun & Sunrise* retold the story as a teenpic, including many common features of that genre. By tailoring it to suchgenre, the film implies a relationship between marketing and the Thai star industry. However, Kittikorn's *Sun & Sunrise* also exemplifies a capacity to combine a war film and a teenpic while making space for the triumph of the director's signature theme: the ties between teenagers and violence.

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Introduction

Annette Khun and Guy Westwell defined a "romance" as "a cross-media genre of popular fiction in which a positively-portrayed love relationship (conventionally male-female) dominates plots, mood is predominantly sentimental or emotional, and love is presented as a saving grace." In point of fact, the romance has a long history before the age of modern media, and, apart from the love relationship, romances used to be crucially connected to Greek war heroism, chivalry and medieval ideology in the European context.

In the Thai context, most romances since the 15th century feature a similar plot: a prince and a princess are torn apart by their *karma*, or sinful deeds done in their past lives from a Buddhist perspective. The plot typically features the protagonists' trials and tribulations in the form of adventures, wars, battles against monsters, and finally, *dei ex machina*. Hence, wars have inspired romances in the Thai performing and screen culture, particularly since the age of nation-building under the waves of Western colonization in the Southeast Asia.

The relationship between war and romance was frequently revisited by Luang Wichit Wathakan. As director of the Department of Fine Arts, he produced numerous history plays to promote nationalistic ideology. *Lueat Suphan* (*The Blood of Suphanburi*) has been one of the most popular play since 1936. The play was adapted and screened in 1951,however this film has unfortunately been lost. In 1979, another film version by Cherd Songsri was launched. *Lueat Suphan* follows the intimacy between a Burmese soldier and a Thai woman captured as a prisoner of war in Ayutthaya period. The soldier secretly emancipates his lover and her family from the cruel oppression of other Burmese soldiers. His actions eventually earn him the death penalty. The woman he loves later becomes a leader in the fight against the Burmese.

The forbidden love between the Burmese soldier and the Thai woman has circulated in the Thai cultural circuit along with Luang Vichitr Vadakarn's other historically-embedded narratives in popular print media and school textbooks. The theme song of the play and the film was also anthologized in the arts primary education curriculum.

Lueat Suphan addresses the importance of memory and imagination. The two concepts are deeply linked as Emily Keightley

and Michael Pickering have argued: "imagination is vital in reactivating memory, and memory is vital in stimulating imagination." The imaginative quality of memory, thus, throws memory back to the dichotomous perception of history and memory proposed by memory scholars. Although some historians or scholars do not acknowledge memory as a historical source, memory can inspire writers in certain cultures to recreate their own memory in the form of historical fiction. Strong empirical evidence is offered by Damayanti or Khunying Wimon Siriphibul, whose war romance, *Khu Karma*, has become one of the most popular myths about World War II in Thailand.[3]

Damayanti developed her historical consciousness through Luang Wichit Wathakan's *International History Encyclopedia*, first published in 1929. Inspired by Luang Wichit Wathakan's creativity, Damayanti never fails to pay homage to him and his works before starting her daily writing routine.[4] In her novel, *Khu Karma*, Damayanti refabricates the Buddhist morals of traditional Thai romances, interracial romantic relationships and nationalistic messages. The novel was first published serially in *Sri Siam Magazine* beginning in 1965. The pocketbook edition was subsequently printed in 1969.

Khu Karma is known as the most popular example of World War II Thai fiction; there is still no other work which outshines it in terms of circulation and popular reception.[5] The novel has been reprinted 16 times, most recently in 2013, and there are more than 12 adaptations of it in other media formats, including as a radio drama on NHK in Japan. *Khu Karma*, therefore, boasts the most frequent remakes compared to

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[3] The pen name *Damayanti* or *ทมยันตี* can be found transliterated in other ways: *Thommayanti* and *Tommayanti*. The penname itself refers to a female protagonist in Hindu mythology: Damayanti. My transliteration maintains reference to its alluded sense. *Khu Karma* was transliterated from *คู่กรรม* in Thai. The transliterations can vary: *Khoo Gum, Khoo Kam, Khu Kam*, etc. *Khu Karma* literally means star-crossed lovers. In this article, the transliterations conform to system of Thailand's Royal Institute. Still, I decide to transliterate *กรรม* as *Karma* to maintain Buddhist connotation.

[4] Wisawanart, *How to Write a Novel in Damayanti's Style* (Bangkok: Na Ban Wannakam, 2005): 23, 28,148.

[5] For example *Din Nam Lae Dok Mai (Soil, Water, and Flowers),* the war novel published in 1990 by Seni Saowapong, another of Thailand's national artists, has circulated far less widely, and has not been adapted to other media.

other Thai World War II films. In this article, I call the many variations of *Khu Karma* as the "Khu Karma myth."[6]

The Myth of *Khu Karma* (1973-2013) and Genre Memory

The novel *Khu Karma* tells a bittersweet love story between Kobori, a Japanese Navy man, and Angsumalin, a university student who lives with her single mother and grandmother in Bangkok Noi, Thonburi district. Intimacy between Kobori and Angsumalin develops when he provides her with protection from air raids. Angsumalin feels internally conflicted because of their racial differences and because she has already promised herself to Vanas, her first love. Vanas left before the outbreak of the war to pursue his education in the United Kingdom, where he decides to join the Free Thai Movement. Moreover, Angsumalin's father, Luang Chalasinnuraja, is a high-ranked officer of the Free Thai Movement working with the British and American Allies. A nationalistic mentality inflicts more pain on Angsumalin when she and Kobori are forced to get married for the sake of international politics between the Thailand and Japanese army. Before giving birth to her first child, Angsumalin fails to express her true feelings to Kobori. At the end of the story, an air raid against Bangkok Noi takes Kobori's life, with "*anata o aishite imasu*"or "(I) love you" being their last exchange in Kobari's death scene.

The reputation of the *Khu Karma* myth can be proved by its several adaptations across mediums and periods. As mentioned before, in Thailand, the adaptations of *Khu Karma* can be found in feature films, television series, parodied versions in television shows, on professional theatre stages and on school amateur stages, to name but a few. Some of the well-recognized adaptations are presented in the table below:

[6] In this article, when a specific adaptation is mentioned, the year is indicated in parentheses if there is no English title. If the English title is given by the film director, I use it.

Year	Production Company/ Sponsors	Director	Stars
1970	Channel 4 Bang Khunphrom and Sri Thai Drama	Therng Satifeaung	Meechai Viravaidya (Kobori) Bussaba Naruemitr (Angsumalin)
1972	Channel 4 Bang Khunphrom and Sri Thai Drama	Therng Satifeaung	Chana Sriubol (Kobori) Phanit Kantamara (Angsumalin)
1973	Jira Bantheong Film	Sonphong Thimbuntham	Nart Phoowanai (Kobori) Duangnapha Attaphornphisan and Li Jing Zhou (Angsumalin)
1978	Channel 9	No data	Nirut Sirichanya (Kobori) Sansanee Samarnworawong (Angsumalin)
1988	Five Stars Production	Ruj Ronnaphop	Warut Woratham (Kobori) Jintara Sukphat (Angsumalin)
1990	Channel 7	Phairat Sangwaributr	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Kamonchanok Komonthiti (Angsumalin)
1995	Grammy Film	Euthana Mukdasanit	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Aphasiri Nitiphon (Angsumalin)
2002	Bangkok Theatre (musical version)	Suwandi Jakraworawut	Seigi Ozeki (Kobori) Theeranai Na Nongkhai (Angsumalin)

2004	Channel 3 and Red Drama	Nophadol Mongkholphan	Sornram Thepphithak (Kobori) Pornchita Na Songkhla (Angsumalin)
2007	Bangkok Theatre (musical version)	Suwandi Jakraworawut	Seigi Ozeki (Kobori) Theeranai Na Nongkhai (Angsumalin)
2013	Channel 5, Exact, and Scenario	San Kaewsrilaw	Sukrit Wisetkaew (Kobori) Neungthida Sophon (Angsumalin)
2013	M39 Studio	Leo Kittikorn	Nadech Kugimiya (Kobori) Oranate D. Cabelles (Angsumalin)

Table1: Major adaptations of *Khu Karma* on screen and stage

The first adaptation of *Khu Karma* appeared on television in 1970. Another television adaptation was locally broadcasted in Khon Kaen province. The two television adaptations, however, were not capable of perpetuating the legacy of the *Khu Karma* myth alone. They were publicized before the rise of the television era after the political upheaval in the 1970s. The first two film adaptations were, however, both launched in 1973. One was made for Thai audiences, the other for Hong Kong movie fans, although the Hong Kong version has never been screened. The 1978 television version starring Nirut Sirichanya and Sansanee Samarnworawong was not quite as successful as the film produced by Five Star Productions in 1988, for which Jintara Sukphat won a *Tukkata Thong Award* or Thai Best Actress Award for her role as Angsumalin.

Nevertheless, the most phenomenal *Khu Karma* adaptation was the series broadcasted on television Channel 7 in 1990 starring Thongchai McIntrye and Kamolchanok Komolthiti. The series

prompted are printing of the novel and the publication of critiques, interviews and scholarship on *Khu Karma* and the history of the Second World War in Thailand. The success of *Khu Karma* in 1990 brought Thongchai back for another portrayal of Kobori in the 1995 film adaptation, *Sunset at Chaopraya*. This version was the first production of Grammy Films, a new studio implanted by GMM Grammy Entertainment, one of the most influential multi-entertainment companies in Thailand. Despite Thongchai's huge fame as a widely successful singer for the company, and the 50th anniversary commemoration of the end of World War II in 1995, the film failed to earn as much as expected. After 1995, *Khu Karma* appeared on-and-off in screen culture. Modest versions of *Khu Karma* reunited the myth with its audience nine years later in 2004 on Channel 3 and on the cinema screen. This represented the second attempt of GMM Grammy through its subsidiary companies, Scenario and Exact, to regain a positive reception of *Khu Karma* adaptation by choosing Sukrit Wisetkaew, a famous singer, as a leading character in this production. *Sun & Sunrise* is the latest film adaptation of the myth, and has been one of the most controversial adaptations – Anchalee Chaiworaporn remarks: "it can be regarded as the bravest film adaptation in Thai history."

Figure 1: Film poster for *Sun & Sunrise* at the 27th Tokyo International Film Festival in 2014

Various adaptations of the *Khu Karma* myth are encoded with previous forms, including conventions of Thai romance, the début of interracial romance in the form of the Burmese-Thai romance of the 1930s, and the continual circulation of the myth in Thai screen culture. When a newer version of *Khu Karma* is launched, memory of other versions is revived by the press and the audience. For this reason, textual fidelity always matters in adapting a myth. Criticism against *Sun & Sunrise* can offer supporting evidence for my observations. The primary concern of critics had seemed to focus on the fidelity of the adaptation to the original text and the casting of the earlier film versions. Some sample criticisms include: "the film is concise. Nadech's acting is good but not really impressive.

The new actress's inexperienced acting, and narratives distorted from the original texts, do not make for an appreciative reception" and "although I am impressed by some scenes and temporal settings, I think this version does not meet the expectations of the novel's fans."

In this way, the legacy of the *Khu Karma* myth has been drawn from a shared code or a collective expectation among audience members. This phenomenon recalls the implications of "genre memory" proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin in his book, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963). The Bakhtinian conception of genre memory focuses on dialogism or dialogue – the ongoing addressivity and historicity of language. Bakthin argued: "All utterances take place within unique historical situations while at the same time contain 'memory traces' of earlier usages – meaning not that any utterance can be decoded to reveal earlier usages but the specificity of every term is the product of a long historical development."

Although rooted in literary studies, Bakhtin's idea about genre memory has been widely applied in memory studies and film studies. Jeffrey K. Olick, for example, studied 8 May 1945, commemorations in the Federal Republic of Germany. He found the dynamism of commemoration maintained through the preservation of rituals and reference to familiar elements across several periods. Olick also argues that commemorative processes are "always fundamentally dialogical." He valued the Bakhtinian view of dialogism "as a principle for the study of all sorts of cultural productions" which "are shaped as much by the ongoing mediations between past and present, context and utterance as are commemorative practices." While in the film studies context, Robert Burgoyne explored the relationship between memory, national myth and cinematic representation. His vision was to "set up a complex dialogue between the sedimented memories of history and nation preserved in these genre forms and the alternative narratives of historical experience they bring into relief." Scholarly experiments based upon the conception of genre memory in different areas reaffirm that genre memory is applicable in this study. To address in a simpler sense, genre memory is a memory related to genre "as a system of expectations and conventions that circulate between film industry, film texts, and film goers."

Two types of memory are shared in Thai mnemonic communities: war memory and genre memory. The *Khu Karma* myth has overwhelmed its reproduction, rescreening and restaging. The myth has been popularized in both the romance genre and in the genre of Second World War memory. Apart from the horizon of expectation shared among the audience, Damayanti once declared her own demand for textual fidelity:

> I think it's strange when I find someone making some changes to the original text. I believe letters are sacred. Whoever dares to distort someone else's writings—mine or another's, they rarely have any success. In Sanskrit, they call a pen *aksara janani*. It means "mother of letters." If a mother gives birth to her letters that way, we must maintain her will.

The restrictions imposed by the myth and the author's appeal meant that the director and screenwriters of *Sun & Sunrise* took a risk in adapting *Khu Karma*. I, therefore, adopt Bakhtin's genre memory in interrogating the memory stored and restored in the films and television series as sites of memory. Through genre memory, I also seek to examine some distinguishing features defined by the directors, stardom, the screen industry, the socio-cultural context and the memory culture of certain periods. To prove my argument, in this article I have selected Kittikorn's *Sun & Sunrise* (2013) as a case study. The shuffled generic elements of the film and their paratext are explored to see how the film challenges both its source text and previous adaptations as genre memory. This way, the politics of adaptation should be unveiled.

From "Historical" Romance to "Teen" Romance

Representations of the past first appeared on the Thai screen in the 1930s and later became popularized in the 1950s. Casual Thai audiences, then, assessed the historical settings of a film as the essence of a *phapphayon ing prawattisat*, or a historical film. In film productions, thus, *khwam pen prawattisat*, or historicity, can both value and devalue a filmic text. Thai mainstream history celebrates the heroic deeds of Thai ancestors in warfare. Thai historical films and television series demand a high budget to remediate their historicity.

Historicity has a close relationship to verisimilitude. Under the eyes of the Thai casual audience, verisimilitude itself makes an appeal for a positive popular reception through its claim to authenticity. Such notion should be influenced by the "modern Western historicity" that frames mainstream historical films. It consists of "the image as authenticating document" and "the image as diegesis."

The *Khu Karma* myth was first launched for Thai spectators in the 1970s. The first two versions were not impressive in terms of reconstructing historicity. The film version in 1973 was influenced by the official memory of World War II found in non-literary sites of memory, such as history books, including *Thailand and World War II* written by Direk Chainam, Thailand's former minister of foreign affairs, and social studies textbooks produced since the late 1950s. In the early stages of reproducing the memory of the Second World War in Thai contexts, the war was presented as a reflection of world politics. The unimpressive efforts at achieving historicity in the first film led to heightened concern about historicity in the later adaptations of *Khu Karma* myth.

The interplay between the historicity of the adaptation and the official war memory constructed by the Thai state endorses some recent scholarship arguing that "mnemonic practices expresses neither the past nor the present, but the changing interactions between past and present." Undoubtedly, the Baktinian notion of language influences ideas of intertextuality in post-modern research. Cinematic techniques, such as pastiche or montage, can be understood through Bakthin's broad conceptualizations. Because of its popularity, the *Khu Karma* myth maintains a set of shared codes among its reading public and audience members. The directors of all adaptations must be aware of those shared codes that are shown in the historicity reconstructed in the films. Two key techniques maintained in all adaptations are the inclusion of old film footage and radio reports concerning World War II events and some monochromic shots.

Figure 3: Old film footage in *Sunset at Chaopraya* (1995)

Figure 4: Old film footage in film teaser of *Sun & Sunrise* (2013)

Sun & Sunrise (2013) acknowledges the conventional historicity of the *Khu Karma* myth only in its film teaser aired in February 2013 that showed monochromic footage of military aircraft over the Bangkok skyline, a Thai-Japanese military parade in front of the Grand Palace in Bangkok, and a horseback procession of high-ranking Japanese soldiers. This footage and Kobori's voice narration in Japanese are placed side by side. In the film, the footage is replaced by a dolly zoom shot of Kobori sleeping on a train filled with Japanese soldiers. He slowly awakens. Kobori's narrating voice switches to Thai, which synopsizes the background story of the war and the Thai-Japanese relationship.

> "*Konichiwa!* My name is Kobori. The year is Showā 16 (1941) I'm on my journey to Thailand during World War II as the chief engineer in charge of sending reinforcements to Burma. During that time, the relationship between Japan and the Thai army was

> full of ambiguity. At first, we were supposed to cross through Thailand. […] If Thailand didn't let us cross, we would conquer the country! Yet Thailand allowed us to cross through. So, to defend Thailand has become our mission. My uncle issued a command to his army to station ourselves in Thailand and to blend in. The situation may seem very sensitive."[7]

Surprisingly, after the synopsized narrative, the whole train transforms into a cartoon-like animation. Zooming out, the train proceeds across a map of Bangkok, passing many landmarks, including the Grand Palace and the Memorial Bridge. The train then stops at the shipyard station near Angsumalin's home. The film plays with the conventional historicity, particularly the typical series of political events, at any point in the story.

Figure 5: Animated elements in the opening scene of *Sun & Sunrise*

Acknowledgement of the importance of historicity in the conventional adaptations can be seen in efforts to insert chronological details about incidents during the war, and the realistic representations of lives and cultural policies under the Phibun Songkhram's regime. In *Sun & Sunrise*, the realistic details of costume, for instance Kobori's military rank, are maintained. The film boasts keen awareness of historicity by correcting some small false elements found in the novel and other adaptations. For example, there was no Japanese navy sent to Thailand during the war; Kittikorn transforms his Kobori into a soldier. The audience should believe that the film "does not have any

[7] Translation by the author.

pretense to the referential truth of its story or characters." Still, the film undermines its chronic historicity by anachronisms. Subtly, the most anachronistic element is the costuming. In spite of significant research on realistic Japanese soldier uniforms mentioned earlier, the film instead parodically shows Che Guevara-like hats of the 1960s and styles of female costumes that differ from the other adaptations.

While the film highlights the local industry in the setting, a feature that is neglected in other variations of the myth, even this opportunity to develop historicity is bypassed. In *Sun & Sunrise*, most of the people in the Ban Bu community of the Bangkok Noi area inherited the craftsmanship of metal bowl making. The sound of pounding metal bowls is featured in the film during Angsumalin's secret mission to save a prisoner of war. Yet the sonic features *per se* are unrealistic since they sound melodic. In addition, instead of supporting the historicity of the film, the radio report in *Sun & Sunrise* about Vanas, who is arrested by the Thai police on his return to Thailand because of his role in the Free Thai Movement, is played during a fast motion scene depicting Vanas walking to his trial. The alternate sonic and graphic representations of the *Khu Karma* myth imply the director's objective of challenging the conventional. They also indicate the shift in the director's focus from the "historical" to other features.

Janet Harbord proposes that our conception of genre has arisen from the relationship between film, marketing, audience and other related contextualized cultural practices. She argues: "The concept of genre lies at the cusp of discourses of production and institutions, of aesthetics and classification, of audiences and cultural values." Thematically, Kittikorn's *Khu Karma* adaptation can be situated in the aftermath of a nostalgic trend in Thai society dating from the first decade of the new millennia, in which teenagers were at the center of entertainment consumption.

Observing advertising statistics, Jira Malikul, director of several Thai teenpics and CEO of production for the GTH film company, concluded that in 2012, 80 percent of audiences were 15-21 years old. The Thai film industry reacted by attempting to navigate the terrain of the demands of teenagers as a target group. Nostalgia and teenpics

are a recurrent combination found in market-driven global film culture, as Sarah Neely argues about Hollywood. She calls the phenomenon, "culture's obsession with looking back."

Thai film culture, under the influence of Hollywood film culture since the Cold War period, is not exceptional. Kittikorn's interpretation is experimental compared to previous adaptations of *Khu Karma*. Yet, his interpretation was also conditioned by marketing. A teenpic interpretation of the *Khu Karma* story may have attracted a strong segment of film audience, which were mostly between 18 and 21, but the filmsimultaneously challenged the conventional perception of *Khu Karma* among mature audiences and mainstream fans of the novel.

In fact, Kittikorn introduced a number of significant differences between *Sun & Sunrise* and other adaptations. First, in terms of characterization, Kittikorn's version of *Khu Karma* reduces the roles of Vanas and Angsumalin's mother, grandmother and neighbors. In the novel and other adaptations, Angsumalin's stubborn personality is perhaps shaped by her broken family. For this reason, she strives for independence from her father through hard work. Representations of nationalistic and patriotic consciousness among the other Thai characters, including Vanas, in other versions also presented her with a dilemma. Kittikorn's Angsumalin does not look "suppressed" by her emotional reluctance and by social expectations as she is in other versions. Kobori, as the narrator in Kittikorn's film trailer, read as the film's paratext, does not reveal much of his background. The immediate cause of the heartache of the main characters is confused feelings. Angsumalin's journey to the tragic ending is her rite of passage; the loss of her true love symbolizes her loss of innocence. The audience knows that she faces great responsibilities as a mother in her life ahead. As a teenpic, in contrast, *Sun & Sunrise* does not explicitly "deal with traditional themes of the relationship of youth to authority (either the family or to an educational institution)," but instead hews closely to the very core themes of the teenpic genre and/or cultural productions for teens: the problems of "growing up" and "maturity".

To portray the teen protagonists, genre memory from Japanese teenpics and *manga* is appropriated with a critic naming *Sun &*

Sunrise "*Khu Karma* from Harajuku". The film tries to retain Japanese exotic touches through casting Japanese supporting actors, Japanese film scores, and the unique design of Kobori's love scene, all based upon *tatami* culture. In building Angsumalin's character, the film develops the traits of Austenian heroines from the novel. In the film, Angsumalin resembles female protagonists in Japanese teen *manga* or *anime* destined to be *tsundere*: "the character type that is initially distinguished by a tough and emotionless demeanor but progressively turns out to be sensitive and innerly troubled."

Figure 6: Fan art for *Sun & Sunrise* intertwined with the genre memory of the Japanese *manga*

Apart from his twisted historicity, to rebrand *Khu Karma*, the director eliminated or eclipsed most of the most well-known motifs of the *Khu Karma* myth: Angsumalin's traditional Thai house, promises made earnestly beneath a riparian cork tree, mystic fireflies and the

melancholicmelodies of Angsumalin's Chinese cymbalo. The director claimed: "We maintained only the core of the story. That's why we credited Damayanti's story, not her complete novel."

When adapting a literary text into film, the production can be marketed to two quite separate types of audience members: the film-goers, or teens in Kittikorn's case, and the readers of the original texts. Here, I argue, the other adaptations tried to appeal to Damayanti's readers, whereas *Sun & Sunrise* targets teen film-goers as its target group. Thus, Kittikorn's version highlights Angsumalin's and Kobori's roles at the expense of other characters. Minimizing textual fidelity, the film maximized its profit from the stardom and fandom of its primary star, Nadech. Generic direction, which left the film's success dependent on its "stars," is discussed in the next section.

Teen Stars and the *auteur*

Film critic Donsaron Kowitwanitcha explains that a sea-change occurred in the Thai film industry after the death of Mitr Chaibancha in 1972. At that time, production shifted from the 16 mm. system to the 35 mm. This new era of Thai cinema was hit soon after by the socio-political crisis resulting from the October events of 1973 and 1976 – massacres sponsored by the military. Teenpics after these crises depicted university student lives and the problems of teenagers instead of criticizing social inequality and the roles of university students as intellectuals. The number of teenpics has expanded concurrently since the 1980s with the rise of the star-making business in Thailand. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the star-making business, or *maew-mong* in Thai, grew in concert with the production of teenpics. Teenpics function as a platform for new-born stars before they expand their career paths to other sections of the entertainment industry. One of the most successful star-makers of the 1990s was Poj Anon, who started the craze formixed-race stars in the Thai media. The legacy of Poj Anon, the genre memory of Thai teenpic culture, lies in Kittikorn's *Sun & Sunrise*.

Nadech Kugimiya and Oranate D. Cabelles signed contracts with A. Supachai, Thailand's star-making company since 2008 that

supplies stars for the television, advertisement and film industries. Due to contracts with stars drawn up under the studio system, when the director picked Nadech first, Oranate was offered as part of a twin-package from A. Supachai. Casting these two stars follows the Thai teenpic legacy in terms of selecting young and mixed-race actors, but it goes against the casting pattern of previous adaptations.

Year/ Adaptations	Stars	Stars' Ages during Film Screening
1973 (Film)	Nart Phoowanai (Kobori) Duangnapha Attaphornphisan and Li Jing Zhou (Angsumalin)	27 No Data No Data
1988 (Film)	Warut Woratham (Kobori) Jintara Sukphat (Angsumalin)	19 23
1995 (Film)	Thongchai McIntyre (Kobori) Aphasiri Nitiphon (Angsumalin)	37 24
2013 (Film)	Nadech Kugimiya (Kobori) Oranate D. Cabelles (Angsumalin)	22 19

Figure 7: Stars and their ages during film screening

Although some viewers have attacked Oranate for her weak acting skills, the ages of the stars have not been criticized. The ages of Nadech and Oranate, on the other hand, efficiently offer the benefit of verisimilitude, conforming closely to both the ages of typical characters in teenpics, as well as the characters in Damayanti's novel. Ironically, enchanted by stars in previous film versions of *Khu Karma*, most commentators did not question the propriety of casting actors as Kobori and Angsumalin.[8]

In *Star Studies: A Critical Guide*, Martin Shingler proposes several elements of star quality: glamour, photogeny, phonogeny, expressivity and acting talent. These qualities are all combined within

[8] The eldest Kobori appeared in the 1995 version; the director solved the problem by deeply illustrating the character's deep background and life experiences to justify his "not-quite-young" looks.

Nadech, A Supachai's star product. Nadech, half-Austrian, half-Thai,was adopted by a Japanese business man and his mother's sister; his surname comes from his surrogate father. As a young teen star, Nadech's glamour was equaled by his evident morality: his expressions of gratitude to his surrogate parents, his self-representation as a decent Buddhist and his simplistic modesty. Nadech's glamour is defined and localized in a Thai context. His photogeny is proved by his appearance on several magazine covers and in dozens of advertisements over his career andis verified in the original film soundtrack of *Sun and Sunrise*: "Angsumalin", with his acting talent recognised by several institutions.

Nadech is a star according to the demands of the film industry, the teenpic genre, marketing, along with popular expectations for young stars that have existed in the Thai context since 2000. His Japanese name and successful role as Kobori earned him unique social and cultural capital. He has turned into a representative of Japaneseness in the Thai entertainment media, as he starred as the son of a Yakuza boss in a popular television drama in 2014.

Figures 6-7: Nadech asa representative of Japaneseness in a commercial and in an ad for a television drama in Thailand

On the other hand, according to Shingler's criteria, Oranate lacked star quality in the judgment of many viewers. She was labeled by some audience members as the main flaw in *Sun & Sunrise*. Indeed, she is still struggling on screen, although now staring in the leading role of a television series. Her youth and naïve looks may conform to the feminine ideals of the teenpic genre in Thailand but, as a star, she was given nicknames by Thai press such as "The Frozen Princess" and,along with the actor in her television series, "The Granite Couple."

However, the decision to produce *Khu Karma* in the teenpic genre was not driven only by the demands of the marketing and star industries; problems faced by teenagers, including violence, are major interests of Kittikorn's. Exploring Kittikorn's work, I found that seven of his eleven films concern teenagers centrally. Most of them problematized teen lives and violence along the parameters of sex, race, class and age. Since his first film, Kittikorn has also raised problems related to generational gaps. A film that brought him fame early in his career was *Goal Club*, another film related to teenagers, football gambling and Thai hooligans.

Year	Film Titles
1999	18-80 Buddy
1999	A Miracle of Ohm and Somwang
2001	Goal Club
2002	Saving Private Tootsie
2005	The Bullet Wife
2005	Ahimsa Stop To Run
2007	Bus Lane
2007-2013	King Naresuan the Great *dir. second unit
2008	Dreamteam
2010	That Sounds Good
2013	Sun & Sunrise

Figure 8: Kittikorn's achievements (M39 Studios)

The teenpic genre itself arose from the marketing conditions and the growth of the film industry in the global context as films in the

teenpic genre successfully fit the conditions. Nevertheless, I argue that Kittikorn's works are not "genre films" simply geared by the industry.

Sun & Sunrise can be read as a representative part of the whole Thai teenpic industry, as I explained before. Nonetheless, as an auteur, Kittikorn does not neglect to inscribe his signature in the film. For this reason, Kittikorn's *Khu Karma* was tailored as not another adaptation of the *Khu Karma* myth – the greatest retelling of World War II in Thai popular memory and screen culture – nor as a common teenpic in the Thai entertainment circuit. *Sun & Sunrise*, as a Thai war teenpic, can instead be interpreted as another piece of Kittikorn's legacy.

Sun & Sunrise purposefully turns its back on the Damayanti's readers despite Damayanti's comments in interviews and positive feedback on the film, which were widely circulated in the media and included on the DVD package. To make a film targeting the teen audience and pursuing the director's style preferences can be considered a win-win negotiation. This may imply the current condition of Thai film culture. Whether Thai directors conform to marketing needs or they shape the tastes of the audience according to their own preferences is a question worth exploring further.

Concluding Remarks

In any remake of the *Khu Karma* myth, textual fidelity and genre memory, in Bakhtin's sense, play a dominant role in terms of reception. These are the first criteria appraised by mainstream audience members,including fans of both the novel and of adaptations on screen. The interpretation of the myth in *Sun & Sunrise* earned a significant amount of negative criticism. In this respect, a critic notes in comparison between *Sun & Sunrise* and *Pee Mak* (Banjong Pisanthanaku, 2013), adapted from a Thai folk legend: "the re-interpretation can be pursued if there are no referential source e.g. novels. That is why the oral narratives facilitate their re-interpreted adaptations."[9] Such notion can be debatable because *Sun & Sunrise* challenges or violates not only the genre memory of the novel, but also the previous adaptations stored in the memory of the majority

[9] Anchalee 178.

of the viewers. However, Kittikorn turned this film version from an "historical" romance to a teen romance, gaining the attention of the stars' devotees.

Noticeably, Kittikorn's *Sun & Sunrise* does not casually reshuffle the prioritized elements of the *Khu Karma* myth without acknowledging the existence of the conventional historicity. The film, therefore, reaffirms its director's well-researched reinterpretation of the *Khu Karma* myth as he successfully refocused generic codes, adding anachronistic elements and eliminating clichéd motifs. The film verifies Kittikorn's signature – teen problems and violence – by not only unfolding the significance of authorship and the star industry in studying Thai cinematic adaptations, but also illustrating how the past can be reconstructed from perspectives of the present.

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