

Abstract

Nang Nak: negotiated meaning in popular cinema has its primary hypothesis that popular cinema may not be the static text imposed by the creator, thus not a text with absolute power in manipulating the audience's perception and interpretation.

In this study, the author has tried to write an ethnography of **Nang Nak**, Thai movie which broke the country's box office last year. The ethnography is based on cultural studies' framework and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of practice. Both concepts have enabled the author to understand rich and complex process of the construction and interpretation of the movie's text.

Data from several talks with the film's staffs and some of its audience has revealed that the construction of meaning among these people varies to their cultural background and social roles, especially in the realm of (1) production and consumption of cinema and (2) perception about the story of Mae Nak Prakanong. Such diverse backgrounds condition individuals' interpretation of 3 main themes: religious belief, love and image of the past. These sets of meaning have undergone the process of negotiation from the beginning of the movie's production to the evaluation of **Nang Nak** by its popular audience. Hence none of the meanings is represented or interpreted without conflict.

The main meaning presented in **Nang Nak** is constructed under the conflict of its making, between those who provided economic source and those who praised the creativity of art. The satisfaction of individuals' limited roles and the expectation of the movie's popularity however encourage the process of negotiation. Yet the popularity which actually took place last year was not to praise the staffs' potential in satisfying the mass' needs. The audience of **Nang Nak** also interpret and value the 3 main concepts differently, according to how intense each has knowledge on cinema and on the story of Mae Nak Prakanong. Such difference has demonstrated that cinema is not the field of domination. It is the realm of struggle between individuals of cultural differences, which is practiced through the evaluation of meaning. Negotiation is a part of individuals' identification, of how they evaluate their everyday practice, of how they exercise their superior over some others.