

The Legend of King Naresuan (History & Movie)

The story of the Black Prince dates back to the historical Ayutthaya period. Prince Naresuan (in Thai: Ong Dam, อังดำ อังสุว) was born 1555 in Phitsanlunok, Thailand. His brother Ekathotsarot was called the White Prince. In contrast to his brother, he was more lenient and less rigid. Naresuan was captured by the Burmese and thus raised with the Burmese royal princes, among them Crown Prince Mingyi Swa, in Pegu. Naresuan was an intelligent boy who was educated in the style of early modern warfare by the Burmese.

King Naresuan



King Naresuan memorial in Ayutthaya
(photo credit: Peerapong Prasutr,
wikimedia.org)

The legend of **King Naresuan** has been filmed and directed by HSH Prince Chatrichalerm Yukol in six parts from 2007 till today, starring Wanchana Sawatdee as Naresuan. The 6th and last part will be featured in August 2015. The first part released in 2007 deals with the Black Prince's childhood.

When the Black Prince was a young man, the Burmese King trusted him to such extent that he gave him permission to train an army of captured Thai soldiers. The Prince affectionately called his men Naresuan's Wild Tigers. Thus, the Wild Tigers became increasingly powerful and one day they defeated the Burmese army returning triumphantly back to Siam. Soon after this event, the Black Prince became King Naresuan of Siam thus reclaiming sovereignty. This is mainly what the second part of the film series is about.

Hence, his first major challenge was with the Burmese who were his former hosts. A giant enemy force of Burmese soldiers threatened the border between Siam and Burma. Naresuan ordered his people in the north to withdraw and burn their rice fields. The farmers thus fled to Ayutthaya and the new king turned every able-bodied man into a soldier.

To both Siam and Burma, the war was very painful. However, neither army would give in to the other. One day, King Naresuan's war elephant was startled and hence ran madly into the enemy lines. When the dust from the elephant's hoofs cleared, the King realized that he was facing his enemy, the Burmese crown prince.

The King was surrounded by a large force of enemy soldiers. The Burmese prince could have ordered his death but instead accepted Naresuan's challenge to a duel. This is the Elephant Battle in which the two opponents fought with swords and spears from the back of the elephants. The legend tells that when the Burmese prince urged his elephant forward, Naresuan swung his sword and wounded the prince who soon died from the injury.

The King thus declares an armistice while the Burmese soldiers removed the body of the slain prince from the battlefield. It seemed that the King admired his opponent whom he had been forced to kill. Thus, on their battleground he built a memorial chedi to honour the Burmese prince Mingyi Swa, his

childhood friend. This fight took place on 25 January 1592 at Nong Sarai field in Suphan Buri.



Don chedi memorial, Suphan Buri Province, Thailand (photo credit: Heinrich Damm, wikimedia.org)

With their crown prince killed, the Burmese had no one to lead them and thus they lost heart for battle. In consequence, they withdrew their forces and for a while the Burmese and the people of Siam enjoyed a time of peace. King Naresuan died in 1605 at the age of 49.

Finally, I must confess that I'm not such a great fan of historical movies because I often find them too strenuous. In particular those movies that deal with a lot of fighting and warfare. However, I was very much interested in the story of King Naresuan, thus the movies came in useful for me ☐

Yours, Sirinya