

Buddhism in Thai Movies: The Holy Man Trilogy

Buddhism is a prominent subject in Thai movies and hence such films are also referred to as belonging to the 'monk genre'. In such movies, Buddhist monks are the protagonists and it is important to note that they also frequently occur in the genre of [Thai horror movies](#). Monks as main characters provide guidance to people seeking their advice. In addition, they also fight and beat evil spirits. However, the Thai Censorship Board claims that Thai movies must generally depict Buddhism with respect and reverence. Otherwise a film might get [censored](#).

The Holy Man Trilogy



Scene from The Holy Man 3, Krissada Sukosol as monk 'Noi' (left), Phra Yoakyake, the abbot and Kittiphong Khamsat as Dek-Wat-Em (right) (photo credit: movie.sanook.com)

Thus, I would like to focus on the comedy trilogy of **The Holy Man**. The first movie of this trilogy is called *Luang Phii Teng* (หลวงพี่เท่ง) and was released in 2005. It deals with a former bad boy and troublemaker who has become a monk. He comes to a small town and resides in the Buddhist temple of this city. There he is facing opposition from a local mafia boss who presents his daughter as a fake spirit medium. It is

a simple but nonetheless entertaining comedy that was the second highest-grossing movie of the year 2005, starring the popular Thai TV comedian Pongsak Pongsuwan.

The trailer is only available in Thai, nevertheless, even if you don't understand, you will get the comic elements ☐ You can also watch the full version of this movie (in Thai) [here](#).

The Holy Man 2 draws on the great success of the previous movie. However, in the second part [King of Thai Rapper Joey Boy](#) has the leading role as the young monk Luang Phi Tet who comes to the small village. He thus replaces his predecessor Luang Phi Teng who has gone to Tibet. He wants to become a forest monk but faces many obstacles. Nevertheless, Luang Phi Tet comes to a temple close to a quarry. Every time there are explosions in the mountain, the temple is damaged with debris and monks have to wear helmets to protect their heads. The situation is dangerous and the monk wants to help.

In fact, Luang Phi Tet is innovative and even renews the way to say sermon. While the abbot sings "Luuk Thung" (ลูกทุ่ง), Luang Phi Tet creates his own Thai hip hop version. Hence, the result is a fun song with Joey Boy, [Buddha Bless](#) and the Gancore Club ☐ The full version of the film is available [here](#) but it is only in Thai.

In 2010, the third episode of The Holy Man 3 (Luang Phi Teng III) was launched. In my opinion this film is the funniest of the trilogy ☐ The movie is about two new monks. One of them is Noi Wongpru (played by Thai-American singer and actor [Krissada Sukosol](#)), a former rock star who decides to enter monkhood because he needs calm and is bored with materialism. He is looking to find peace and tranquillity for he is a stressed and burned out man. The other young monk, Phra Prasert is played by [Buddha Bless](#) singer Gui Oui (Natee Ekwijit).

The abbot reminds Noi of the analogy between a hose splashing

randomly due to water pressure and the restless spirit always wandering. There are numerous funny gags and comic moments when the monks are going out to collect alms. Hence, they also encounter the short chubby boy and very funny comic actor Koeti Aramboy who tries to offer food to the giant monk who has the telling name Phra Yoakyake (Yoakyake Chernyim). In fact, I find the character of Phra Yoakyake truly hilarious ☐ and the name indeed suits him well, since 'Yaokyake' means 'giant temple guard'.

The monks face a lot of adventures. Hence, robbers steal the temple bell and then they also try to behead the Buddha statue and steal the head. The leader of the gang is a Chinese vendor. As a consequence, the monks are really distressed. However, they are also lucky since the main Buddha statue remains intact and is not stolen because it is too heavy.

Akom Preedakul acts as a funny Thai boxing trainer who brings coyote dancers to the temple ☐ There is also a sequence about villagers who flee ghosts thus referring to 1980s and 90s [Thai comedy ghost movies](#).



Noi and biker friend Ed Carabao (photo credit: i.ytimg.com)

Since the head of the Buddha image is stolen, the giant monk Phra Yoakyake disguises himself as Buddha statue in order to trick the robbers and to find out where they hide the bell and

the Buddha head. Finally Noi asks his former bikers friends for help. They are led by Ed Carabao who is the real leader of the famous Thai band Carabao. There is a happy ending because the robbers are captured and the Buddha head recovered. A full version of the movie is available [here](#).

I think the Holy Man trilogy deals with Buddhist topics in a fun and effortless way without being disrespectful, although some scenes might appear a bit silly ☐ Do you know this trilogy?

Yours, Sirinya

(For a comprehensive source about Buddhism in Thai movies click [here](#))