

A Study of  
THE NOVELS OF MŌM LUANG BUPPHĀ NIMMANHEMINDA  
(pseud. Dōkmaisot)

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in the  
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Dōkmaisot, aged twenty-two, when she began her writing.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a first attempt to make an extended study of the life and work of a single Thai novelist.

Chapter I supplies the need for a statement about the contemporary setting in which the author worked and about the development of the novel. Although D̄kmaisot is an outstanding figure in modern Thai literature, she remains somewhat apart from her contemporaries and material on which contrasts can be based is required.

The starting point is taken as 1900. This is convenient because at this time literary magazines printing original work heralding the emergence of the novel were beginning to appear.

An account of D̄kmaisot's life is then given. She was the first Thai female professional novelist and it is important to relate her personal life and that of her family to the development of her work.

Chapters III to VIII contain a treatment, descriptive and critical, of thirteen novels. In general a progression through time is followed but this has been departed from in some instances in the interests of showing the novelist's development more clearly.

D̄kmaisot's last and unfinished novel is given separate treatment in Chapter IX. It represents a departure in motive, attitude, and tone from her previous writing eventhough some characters, appearing in an earlier work, are used again. A political motive and criticism directed against the Thai Government, especially in its social policies, appear overtly for the first time.

Chapter X takes the world of D̄kmaisot which has emerged through fourteen novels involving at least two hundred characters and summarizes its attitudes in sections which deal with religious, social, and external influences such as that of the West.

The thesis concludes with an appendix in which the twenty-two other works of D̄kmaisot, including four poems and a play, are briefly considered. A second appendix is a list of life ceremonies referred to in the novels. Appendix three contains comment on Thai terms for "novel".

## CONTENTS

	page
Abstract	2
Note	5
Acknowledgements	6
Chapter	
I Introduction: the Development of the Thai Novel 1900 - World War II .....	8
II The Life of D̄kmaisot .....	75
III The Novels: earlier works .....	123
IV The Next Stage: a trio of novels .....	163
V A New Emphasis: the development of male characters	205
VI Phūdī:(The Gentry) .....	262
VII Two Novels: response to changing conditions ....	302
VIII Nī Lae Lōk!: (This! Is the World) .....	339
IX Wannakam Chin Sutthāi Khōng D̄kmaisot: (The Last Literary Work of D̄kmaisot) .....	384
X D̄kmaisot's World .....	432
Appendix	
i Other Writings of D̄kmaisot .....	493
ii Thai Ceremonies in D̄kmaisot's Novels .....	506
iii Thai Terms for "Novel" .....	507
Bibliography .....	511

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND PLANS

	page
A photograph of D̄kmaisot	frontispiece
The literary movements of D̄kmaisot's contemporaries	73
The Kunjara family tree	74
Audience hall, Wang Bān M̄	112
Pavilion, Wang Bān M̄	113
Chronology of the major incidents in D̄kmaisot's life	120
Plot development of Nī Lae Lōk!	358

## NOTE

The transliteration system used in this thesis is that of the Thai Royal Institute, with some exceptions in the case of proper names where the spelling followed is that generally accepted.

All the dates used in the Thai magazines and books referred to, namely B.E. (Buddhist Era) and R.S. (Rattanakōsin Sok or Bangkok Era) have been converted into A.D. throughout the thesis. The B.E., R.S. , and A.D. dates together with a translation of each title of Thai articles and books are given in the bibliography.

Since D̄kmaisot's novels consist of people bearing different ranks, it is recommended that the explanation of the Thai rank system on pages 458-459 should be consulted.

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## CHAPTER I

## Introduction

## The Development of the Thai Novel, 1900 - World War II

During the second half of the nineteenth century, traditional Thai writing came under the influence of new and unfamiliar features. The old poetic forms became relatively less important and prose writing was extended until gradually it became an important medium for fiction. The considerable changes in style which accompanied this development, were influenced by translations from Mon, Chinese and, towards the end of the century, by Western works. Dōkmaisot's life (1906-1964) and career, though not exceptional in length, covered a period of considerable change in her homeland. It spanned five reigns, from the last struggling years of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) to the early years of the present reign. World Wars occurred, the absolute monarchy disappeared, and the modern 'Thailand' was created out of the old 'Siam'. And in tune with all this, the Thai literary scene underwent a transformation.

A division of the range of development from 1900 to 1940 into four decades is proposed. This does not mean that the situation prior to that time should be ignored, but the view is taken in this thesis that the direct movement towards the novel in Thai really started from that year (1900), when a group of highly educated persons in

Bangkok formed a club in order to publish a magazine with the strange title Lak Witthayā, which means 'plagiarism'. The club was also called 'Club Lak Witthayā'. Among the founder-members were Prince Bidyalankarana, Phrayā Surintharāchā, Chao Phraya Thammajakmontri, all of whom became writers of importance.

Prince Bidya (1876-1944), the founder of the Rajani family, was a son of Prince Bowānwichaichān<sup>1</sup> and Chōm Māndā Liamlek, and a grandson of King Pin-klao.<sup>2</sup> His former name was Phra-ong Chao Rajani Chaemchamrat (written Chaemchamras). At the age of five he was able to read sophisticated Thai literary works, to compose a poem about two fighting tigers engraved on a chest,<sup>3</sup> and even proved to his father, who was sceptical of his gift, that he could read Khmer texts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>(1838-1885) Former name: Phra-ong Chao Yōtyingyot, the second son of King Pin-klao and Chaokhun Chōm Māndā Ēm, invested with the rank of the second King or 'Wang Nā' in the reign of King Rama V.

<sup>2</sup>(1808-1865) Former name: Chaofā Chuthāmanī, the third son of King Rama II and Queen Si Suriyen. He was appointed the second King to reign concurrently with his elder brother, King Rama IV.

For definitions of Chaochōm, Chaofā and Phra-ong Chao see footnote 3, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>This incident is surprisingly similar to that in George Orwell's life, as he told in Why I Write (1947); "I wrote my first poem at the age of five, my mother taking it down to dictation. I cannot remember anything about it except that it was about a tiger and tiger had "chair-like teeth" - a good enough phrase, but I fancy the poem was a plagiarism of Blake's "Tiger, Tiger"."

<sup>4</sup>For details see "Phra Prawat Phrarāṭchawongthoe Krommamūn Bidyalankarana" (the Life of Prince Bidya) of N.M.S. (pseud.), Nakrian Suan Kulāp lae Rūang Khōng Nakrian Mūang Angkrit, (Bangkok: Ruamsān, 1971)

The Prince was sent to study at Suan Kulāp School when he was ten years old, which was considered quite late, but he caught up with his friends and came out first in his class. At sixteen, he started his career as a clerk in the Ministry of Education, and later at twenty became an assistant to the English Adviser to the Ministry of Finance, who recommended the Thai Government to send him to Europe. He travelled with King Rama V to England in 1897, entered Cambridge in 1898, but was called back to Thailand during his second year at university. However, he was so successful in the civil service and as a literary figure that he was appointed the President of the Privy Council in 1928, and the President of the Royal Institute in 1933.

Two years before Prince Bidya left the country in 1895, King Rama V sent Prince Chakrabongse<sup>1</sup> to study in England. With him went also the first seven Thai Government students, including Nokyūng Wisētkun (Phrayā Surintharāchā), Sanan Devahastin (Chao Phrayā Thammasak Montri) and Liam Winthuphrāmanakun (Luang Wilātpariwat) to study Education. While studying there, Prince Bidya met and became friendly with both Nokyūng and Sanan.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that the trend of western novels, especially English, at that time was moving away

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<sup>1</sup>(1882-1920) Former name: Somdet Chaofā Chakrabongse Phūwanāt, full title: Somdet Chaofā Krommaluang Phitsanulok Prachānāt, the fourth son of King Rama V and Queen Sī Phatcharin, the founder of the 'Chakrabongse' family. He was educated in England and Russia.

<sup>2</sup>N.M.S., op.cit., p.208.

from realism towards romanticism, starting with R.L. Stevenson and several other young romancers; H.R. Haggard, S.J. Weyman, Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling, whose works were described thus:

...These books inaugurated a spate of stories that exploited the standard romantic ingredients - exciting adventure, reckless heroes, lovely heroines, exotic settings. Many of the books were historical romances, but they abandoned the ponderous gait of Scott, Ainsworth, and Bulwer-Lytton in favour of the gay vitality of Alexandre Dumas. The dominant note in all of them was a sheer zest for active life which appealed to readers who were depressed by the drabness of realism and the solemnity of problem novels.

These young men must have read several of these novels when they were in England or even brought some back with them to Thailand. Lak Witthayā was born not with any long-term or careful plan to establish it as a professional literary journal, but as a product of their enthusiasm to initiate something new and westernised. Their club, as recorded by Khiaowān (Chao Phrayā Thammasak Montri), was a two-storey building situated in Bān Mō Road, Bangkok. Khiaowān spoke of this place with pride: "Just as a man has an office to house his knowledge and intellect under his hat, so we also have our place for writing literature of a high standard, namely short stories, under the roof in this upstairs room."<sup>2</sup>

It was their custom to get together there once a week

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<sup>1</sup>Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: a Panorama. (London: Constable, 1960), p. 408.

<sup>2</sup>Khiaowān (pseud.), "Māihēt Bettalet", Lak Witthayā, vol.2, no. 12, miscellaneous notes.

for dinner on Thursdays in order to discuss the magazine. The dinner, which might have derived from the tradition of the "Punch Lunch", was called 'Dinner Lak Witthayā'. In celebrating the first issue and the first month of the founding of the club, the menu for the dinner was published in the magazine. It could have been for an amusing purpose perhaps, but it certainly did reflect their westernised attitude, as it listed "Lak Witthayā soup, Mae Wan fish, Kaew Klaep steak, Chingchō potatoes, Nok Kaew beef, etc...."<sup>1</sup> All the names were of course pseudonyms used in their writing.

The purposes and nature of the Lak Witthayā magazine were stated clearly by N.M.S. as:

....to increase the number of monthly magazines in Bangkok...The second purpose is to be a path for old and new scholars to express their ideas and to make them better known. Consequently, writing and translating will develop. At present, we are not quite successful at persuading people to write and translate, but it will come in future. Apart from these two aims, we would like to see more new 'stories for pleasure-reading' ( เรื่องอ่านสนุก )<sup>2</sup> One can say that 'chak chak wong wong' ( ชักชก วงศ์ )<sup>3</sup> stories do not attract much interest from the public nowadays. In my opinion, if one tells a story in verse, the amusement value is likely to be lost. Stories in verse are mostly written for readers to note the metre, and not the content, because as soon as one finishes a page of such stories, one can anticipate that the following pages will be about a young man killing an ogre, marrying his beautiful daughter, having a son, the son kills another ogre .. and so on. I am not

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<sup>1</sup>"Māihēt Bettalet", Lak Witthayā, vol. 1, no.1 (August, 1900), p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>One of the various terms used for 'novel' before 'nawaniyāi' was coined.

<sup>3</sup>A term commonly used for old-fashioned stories written in verse, the titles of which often end with either 'chak' (Sanskrit 'Jakra') or 'wong' (Sanskrit 'Vaṃsa')

saying that they are not good. I myself adore poetry, but the truth remains as I have put it .. There are only one or two short stories produced in a month now. We certainly have time to read more than that.

Most stories in Lak Witthayā are either translated or 'stolen' (adapted) from stories in other languages. Therefore, we are your interpreters for both your serious and pleasure reading..."<sup>1</sup>\*

Prince Bidya (pseudonyms N.M.S., Kaew Klaep, <sup>V</sup>Chingchō) and his friends took charge of particular parts in the magazine; N.M.S. himself the romantic stories, Mae Wan short stories, Wātsanā comics and cartoons, Nok Kaew foreign news, <sup>V</sup>Chingchō logic and maxim; Khiaowān simple stories. Translations of western novels were very popular, especially those of Marie Corelli.<sup>2</sup> Khwām Phayābāt, translated in 1901 by Mae Wan from Vendetta for this magazine, was so successful and well-known that it became the first real landmark in the story of Lak Witthayā and the Thai novel. Thelma was translated by Princess Suksīsamōn Kasēmsī. Maurice Leblanc's Arsène Lupin Series and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles were also translated and published in this magazine. These early writers and their works must have had a great influence on the readers and writers of the later period, because the same type of novels retained their popularity among Thai readers for many decades. Some stories might even have several translated versions.

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<sup>1</sup>N.M.S. (pseud.) Lak Witthayā, vol. 1, no. 1 (July, 1900) editorial.

\* Note: For 'I' and 'my', Prince Phitthayā usually used royal 'we' and 'our' (เรา) both in writing and speech.

<sup>2</sup>(1855-1924) Pen-name of Mary Mackay.

Naturally, when Thai people first began to turn away from their traditional style of writing, i.e. poetry, and to learn about the emergence of an unfamiliar type of fictitious narrative, they could not yet see how the new form could possibly carry an artistic value like their metrical compositions which had been devised for reciting and listening. The new prose writing resembled their folk tales so that stories were what they expected from it. Thus, romantic novels, with exotic adventures and with settings and atmosphere not confined to any particular country or society, served the purpose well. Realistic novels like those of Hardy, George Eliot, or Charles Dickens, which required a certain amount of knowledge about England from the readers, had no place at the outset, or for some decades after.

Lak Witthayā was well established by its second year and the Club could even afford to buy a printing press of its own. But unfortunately it fell into decline that very same year. According to Princess Wiphāwadi<sup>1</sup> Rangsit<sup>1</sup> in the preface to a book printed for distribution at the funeral ceremony of Prince Bidya, it was because in its second year the magazine was distributed free of charge. However, Prince Bidya who did not want to see it disappear, re-started it, and it went on until 1903. There is no clear evidence on the cause of its final discontinuation. Khiaowan wrote in the last editorial that Lak Witthayā had to

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<sup>1</sup>Prince Bidya's daughter, a novelist and at present the Queen's secretary.

cease publication not because the club members were tired of it or were lazy, but because it was criticised too much. Although he tried to make it sound like a joke, any reader could tell from the tone of his language that he was far from cheerful. Presumably, these young and active officials were too busy with their Government work to be tied down by the publication of a magazine. They may have had financial problems too, because even their club building was let, and then sold. Khiaowān himself wrote their last editorial somewhere else, and his intention in writing it was to record the club's whole history.

After Lak Witthayā had failed, Crown Prince Vajiravudh<sup>1</sup>, who considered the disappearance of the magazine a great shame, established the Thawī Panyā Samōsōn (the Wisdom-increasing Club). This Club began publishing a magazine called Thawī Panyā in 1904. The staff comprised princes and high-ranking officials. The Crown Prince himself held the position of the Honorary Secretary. It was in this magazine that most of his works during that period were published; many plays from French and English including Shakespeare, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series, Sax Rohmer's stories, novels based on Sanskrit literature, etc. Some were translated directly, some were adapted, and some were even cast in poetry. A good example of the adaptation is a series of Nithān Chut

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<sup>1</sup>(1881 - reigned 1910 - 1925) later became King Rama VI, Son of King Rama V and Queen Sī Phatcharin, educated at Sandhurst and Christ Church, Oxford.

Thong-in based on Sherlock Holmes. Everything including names and places was changed to fit Thai character and atmosphere.

During his absence from Bangkok in the north for six months in 1905, the Crown Prince appointed Prince Bidya and Chao Phrayā Thammasak to be joint editors in charge of the publication. Seven numbers were issued, and in six, serialised, appeared Chotmāi Chāngwāng Ram, an adaptation of George Horace Lorimer's Letters from a Self-Made Merchant to His Son<sup>1</sup> by N.M.S. Although the original has become rather neglected in the West, this book is still well-known in Thailand. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, it was so well adapted into the Thai atmosphere of that time that there is no trace whatsoever of the western origin. Secondly, the language and style of writing are superbly smooth, with the exception perhaps of the last chapter which was added to it later in Sēnā Sūksā. Thirdly, the subject of the book very much corresponds to old Thai didactic literary works; for instance Pālī Sōn Nong<sup>2</sup>, Sunthōnphū Sōn Ying<sup>3</sup>, etc., and was appropriate for a time when well-to-do families had started sending their children to Europe. If King Rama V's Phra Borom Rāchōwāt Phrarāтчathān Phra Rāтчhā-ōrot (an Instructional Piece Written for the Edification of the Royal Children), written in 1885, shows

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<sup>1</sup>First published in England in 1903, reprinted eight times in the same year, and up to 1932 there had been thirty three reprints.

<sup>2</sup>The Teaching of Bālī to Sugrīva, by Phra Mahā Rāтчhakhrū written in the reign of King Narai.

<sup>3</sup>A Discourse for Women, by Sunthōn Phū

the love, feeling and wishes of a father who is a King, Chotmāi Chāngwāng Ram certainly contains the same of a father who is a commoner, even though they are of different styles.

Thawī Panyā was neither the only magazine published by King Rama VI, nor his first one. His ability as a writer had been shown earlier when he was studying in England. He wrote several play-texts and published a magazine called Looker-on, a forerunner of Samaggi Sara, which is still published regularly in England. In Thailand he also supported the publications of Amphawāsamai (1903), Chotmāihēt Sūa Pā (1911 - 1917), Samutthrasān (1914- 1921). After becoming King, he produced a journal for his model town (Dusit Thānī) called Dusit Samit (1918 - 1924), in which his proto- novel in epistolary form, Huachai Chāi Num (the Heart of a Young Man), was serialised.

The next person whose voluminous work contributed greatly to the development of Thai novel was Liam Winthuphrāmmānakun (commonly called Khrū Liam), another one of the first scholarship students to England. Very little indeed is remembered of him in Thailand today, even though Sukit Nimmanheminda<sup>1</sup> remembers that when he was young Liam was one of the most popular writers.<sup>2</sup> In selecting good translations of Western works to be published after World War II, Phiphop Tangkhanasing, a graduate from Cambridge, insisted on choosing the translation of She by Nok Nōrī,

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 95-96.

<sup>2</sup>In an interview with the author of the thesis on August 27th, 1971.

whose real name (i.e. Khrū Liam) and whereabouts nobody knew at the time.<sup>1</sup> In his Textbook on Writing and Journalism Plūang na Nakhōn wrote about Liam briefly but impressively:

...In French literature you will find stories by Balzac, of a style rather similar to that of Khrū Liam, but of world standard.<sup>2</sup>

Mention of a man and his work in such a manner should have raised curiosity among Thai people, but not until after Liam's death in 1963, did some people of literary rēpute like Khun Wichitmātrā and Chanthit Krasaesin reminisce about this prominent writer.

Liam was born into a court astrologer's family in 1879. From the age of six, he was sent to several schools including Wat Thēpthidā, Wat Mahan, Mrs. Small's school in Phetburi, the Christian High School in Thonburi, the Royal School of Suan Kulāp, and to a special English class of Babū Rām Samī.<sup>3</sup> His chief interests were English and mathematics. In 1893 he joined Nokyūng, Sanan and a few others as the first students at the Teacher Training College.<sup>4</sup> After his graduation in the following year, Liam worked as a teacher at the Rāтчakumān School<sup>5</sup> until he won

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<sup>1</sup> See Yot Watcharasathian, Khwām Penmā Khōng Kān Praphan lae Nakpraphan Thai (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1963) pp. 14 - 16.

<sup>2</sup> See Plūang na Nakhōn. Kham Banyāi Wichā Kān Praphan lae Kān Nangsuphim. (Bangkok: Thai Wattana Panit, 1954) p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> & <sup>4</sup> For details see David Wyatt. "Samuel MacFarland and early educational modernisation in Thailand, 1877-1895" Felicitations Volumes of South-east-Asian presented to His Highness Prince Dhaniniwat Krommamun Bidyalabh on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday, (Bangkok: Siam Society 1965), vol.1 pp. 1 - 16.

<sup>5</sup> For details see Prince Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life, (London: Alwin Redman, 1959), p. 224.

a scholarship to England in 1895. It was in this school that Liam was called 'Khrū Liam' (Teacher Liam) for the first time by pupils who included the future King Rama VI, King Rama VII, and other princes of high rank.

Because of a nervous breakdown, Liam had to return home from England before his friends, in 1897. His second failure followed in 1898, when he was forced by illness to resign from his post in the Ministry of Education. In 1917, Liam re-joined the Civil Service again through the persuasion of a lady who later became his wife, and had conferred upon him the appropriate title of Luang Wilātpariwat (Beautiful Translation) in 1923. It was during the twenty-year interval that he seriously adopted writing as his career. Liam was indeed a Jack-of-all-trades; a poet, writer, translator, musician, and a first-class photographer. His character was said to be that of a true-born teacher, a westernised non-conformist of great humour, and perhaps an eccentric in the eyes of Bangkok people at that time. He was always seen dressed in plus-fours, western jacket, a cap, a scarf, with a notebook and a camera in his hand, riding a bicycle which he brought back with him from England. The reason is that Liam had really lost his heart to England, and always wanted to return to that country. He was even found once attempting to stow away in a liner.

His works showed great variety and all seem to express well his character and interests. First, he published a

magazine Thalok Witthayā in 1900, a little after his old classmates had formed Lak Witthayā. Sāo Sōng Phan Pī, Liam's translation of H.R. Haggard's She in this magazine made no less an impact on Thai readers than Mae Wan's Khwām Phayābāt. It was followed by several other translations of Anthony Hope's romances. One year after his first magazine disappeared, in 1906, Liam single-handedly published another magazine Samrān Witthayā which lasted only one year. By this time, his pseudonyms; Nok Nōrī, Nok Nōi, Nāi Samrān, were well-established.

His parodies with their comic element were very successful. They included, for example, Kuan Ōi (supposed to be an elder brother of Kuan Ū in the Three Kingdoms), Sī Thanonchai Samai Mai (Modernised Sī Thanonchai), Khun Khēhā (Liam's Thai version of Baron Munchausen). Another equally popular parody was 'Chut Naksūp' (a detective series), one of which had the subtitle 'Rūang Krachā Hāi' (the Case of the Lost Wooden Spoon). Prince Bidya himself contributed at least one story, 'Naksūp Private', to this series. These stories were mostly published during the second decade when detective stories were at the height of their popularity, and writers began to adapt and write Chinese stories in modern style.

Liam's experience in taking off other people's works led him to write Khwām Mai Phayābāt (No Vendetta) in 1915, to compete with Mae Wan's work. This novel is indeed one of the first, if not the first, original Thai novel of full length. To counter Khwām Phayābāt, Liam exploited the

non-violent teaching of Buddhism as the background of the story about an unfaithful wife whose husband, instead of being aggressive after finding out about her misconduct, solved the problem and won everyone's hearts by his forgiveness. Liam advertised this story on the back cover of one of his short stories, Wiwā Kap Nāng Pīsāt (Marrying a Female Ghost), in 1915:

Khwām Mai Phayābāt - to interest Thai readers and to be an example for Thai writers. It is an enjoyable story about virtue and evil. You can be sure of (its quality) which need not depend on 'farang' language and ideas. (Buy a copy) for your own pleasure and for the valuable story and style in its 730 pages. It is printed in two hard-bound volumes with illustrations and notes, longer than Khwām Phayābāt, but of the same price.

The next important magazine is Pratū Mai (New Gate), published in 1909 by Khun Saratthathamrong and owned by the Phim Thai Printing Press. Although it acted as a vehicle for poetry, it had great impact on modern Thai writing, for it showed to Thai people that poetry was not yet dead, and that its forms, language, and subject matter could be modernised and developed alongside prose writing. One can also notice the Western influence over this magazine. Even the title, which was called after its location at Pratū Mai, in Bangkok, is in fact a pun upon the notorious Newgate in London. A considerable number of famous poetic works were published in this magazine, including those of high-ranking nobles like Prince Phānurangsi<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nāi Samrān (pseud.), Wiwā Kap Nāng Pīsāt. (n.p., (1915)) advertisement list.

<sup>2</sup>(1860 - 1928) Full name and title: Somdet Phrachao Borommawongthoe Chaofā Krommaphrayā Phānuphanthuwongwōradēt, the founder of the 'Phānuphan' family, the youngest son of King Rama IV by Queen Thēpsirin. He was the creator and the editor of the magazine Court published between 1875-1876.

and Prince Naris.<sup>1</sup> Chit Burathat (1893-1942) also began his works in Pratū Mai.

Chit was a lame alcoholic, but one of the best poets of the Rattanakosin period. As the son of a teacher of Pali, Chit learned to read, write, and recite old literature and religious texts from a very young age. When Pratū Mai was established, Chit was a novice at Wat Thepsirin. His works which appeared in the magazine were so outstanding that at eighteen, still a novice, he was chosen by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab<sup>2</sup> to be one of the four "Rattana Kawi" (jewel-poets, equal to poet-laureates) of the kingdom to write 'chan' a classical and most difficult type of Thai poetry, for the coronation of King Rama VI. In

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<sup>1</sup>(1863-1947) The founder of the Chittraphong family, former name: Phra-ong Chao Chitcharoen, the second child of King Rama IV by Princess Phannarai (Queen Thepsirin's younger sister), raised and renamed 'Chaofā Krommakhun Narisaranuwattiwong' by King Rama V in 1887, and finally made 'Somdet Phrachao Borommawangthoe Krommaphraya Narisaranuwattiwong'. He was one of the most important figures in the administration of the country throughout three successive reigns; Rama V, VI, VII. His positions included Minister of Finance, Defence, the Royal Household, and the Regent. To Thai people in general the Prince is better known for his gifts in music, painting and as 'the great artist of Rattanakosin'. The best evidence of his ability is the Marble Temple in Bangkok.

<sup>2</sup>(1862-1943) The founder of the 'Diskul' family, former name: Phra-ong Chao Disawarakuman, full name and title: Somdet Phrachao Borommawangthoe Krommaphraya Damrong Rajanubhab, the only son of King Rama IV by Chaochom Mandā Chum. His roles in the reign of King Rama V as the reformer of the whole systems of local administration and education gave him the appellation of 'the crown jewel'. His prominent academic interests were history and archaeology. As a result of his vast research and voluminous writing, the Prince was often called 'the father of Thai history'. His major positions also included the President of the National Library (1915) and of the Royal Institute (1926). After the coup d'état of 1932, he went to live in exile for ten years in Penang, from where he mostly wrote San Somdet to Prince Naris. Prince Damrong returned to Bangkok only a few months before his death in 1943.

1913, Chit resigned from the monkhood and began to work for Sī Krung. After that, his name appeared everywhere, in newspapers, magazines, plays, films, etc. His works are mainly poetical, but they were in great demand because otherwise the publications would have contained only unfamiliar prose which did not attract older readers. He was the only contemporary Thai poet whose literary genius King Rama VI recognised as being superior to his own and Prince Bidya's combined. The King personally granted Chit his family name, but never bestowed upon him any title because, so the King himself clearly stated "That's all I could grant him. Giving him fortune would only make him indulge in drinking and die too soon. It's better to keep him alive and listen to his work".<sup>1</sup> However, Chit earned from his writing more than some high-ranking officials of the time. But he never settled down financially, and became extremely poor when the popularity of poetry was on the decline. Nevertheless, all young writers respected him highly, and he himself never turned away from them. The last two writing circles he mixed with were the Prachāmit-Suphāpburut and the Ēkkachon.<sup>2</sup> The poet was described in his later days as a poor man walking barefoot and wearing only a worn-out white shirt and trousers. Chit died of alcoholism, penniless and childless, in a wooden cottage in which he and his beloved wife, Chan, also a poet, had been living with their nephew. Chit's

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<sup>1</sup>P. Watcharāphōn, Chomrom Nak Praphan. (Bangkok: Ruam Sān, 1969), pp. 82 - 83.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 66, 72.

most adored and remembered work is Samakkhīphēt Kham Chan, a true story based in ancient India.

The first commercial women's magazine appeared in 1906, under the title 'Kulasatī' (Lady). Its purpose was clearly stated in the preface:

Since the importance of education has been realised, various magazines have been published. But all of them are magazines for men. Now the number of schools for girls is increasing rapidly, and yet the Department of Education does not show much interest in them. For these reasons I started this magazine for school girls. Its name is Kulasatī, which<sup>1</sup> means ladies and girls of good upbringing and good manners.

Kulasatī published everything considered suitable for girls including proverbs and fables. The stories were either newly written, adapted or translated. Girls were actively encouraged to contribute their works in this magazine; thus it had a corps of female contributors. It was a really good start for women writers, but unfortunately it did not last very long. Luang Chanthramāt, its editor must be praised, however, for revealing the truth about its liquidation while other editors prior to and after him did not dare to speak out or merely gave hints. He gave these reasons for its disappearance.

a. The subscribers did not pay their subscriptions regularly. Some gave their names but never paid.

b. The staff were nearly all civil servants, and so they had little time to contribute.

c. Writers had to be circumspect in speaking and writing because their freedom was still limited.

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<sup>1</sup>Anon., Kulasatī, Vol.1, no.1, (1907 ), preface.

d. There was always jealousy among the publishers instead of co-operation for the advancement of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The language used in these early magazines, compared with that of the later period, was smooth and simple. There were, no doubt, innumerable items of western vocabulary, idioms and expressions for which Thai equivalents had to be coined. In doing so, some writers were better than others. It is noticeable that they tried to invent new compound words instead of using the original English or French ones. At a later stage, the original vocabulary was used. Some expressions which sound perfectly normal Thai nowadays were in fact used jokingly and unintentionally by these early writers; for example the word 'chap rot fai'<sup>2</sup> was used for the first time by Wātsanā of Lak Witthayā for the English 'to catch a train'. He did not use it in his writing, but his colleagues mentioned it just for fun among themselves, and Khiaowan made the incident known to their readers. However, the Lak Witthayā group were proud of the language in their publication and were admired by their readers too:

Some readers have honoured us by saying that the language we use is quite good. It may not flow as smoothly and be as well-regulated as the real 'sayām muay'<sup>3</sup> and may have some western touches, high flown and uneven language, but that is a sign that the language used in Siam nowadays is changing with time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Luang Chanthrāmāt, Kulasatī, no. 2, part II, (February, R.S. 125), note.

<sup>2</sup>Literally, to 'capture, or touch a train'.

<sup>3</sup>Literally 'Siamese boxing', presumably an idiom meaning 'typically Thai', even though grammatically it should be 'muay Siam'.

<sup>4</sup>Lak Witthayā, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 407.

The writers had attempted to devise short and long stories based on their experience in Europe, Thai society and on old literature, but none of them were very successful. N.M.S. himself wrote Thahān Khraçhao Rāchāthirāt (the Knight of King Rajadhiraj) based on the Mon Chronicle. Perhaps if he had written it in verse he might have been very successful as in his several outstanding poetical works, but because it was in novel style he could not make it consistently well written, as one of his readers noted:

I admired the idea of N.M.S. in writing Thahān Phraçhao Rāchāthirāt. It can be seen from the start that he understood how to treat it and aimed at adapting this old and difficult chronicle in order to prove his ability. Unfortunately, he did not succeed in his objective. He introduced the story quite subtly, by describing the playing of games of takrō (cane-ball) and chess according to the war treatise in the former days. But later on N.M.S. could not maintain it. He made words spoken in those days sound like our present language. Rather like a man in an old-fashioned outfit and tall traditional headgear riding a bicycle...

It is better to outline the<sup>1</sup> Lak Witthayā, the use of pseudonyms in Thai writing before moving to the second decade. It started when some nobles and officials led by King Rama V wrote Panhā Khatkhōng (the Riddles) in the Vajiranana Magazine Panha Khatkhong, for pseudonym at that time was "nām faeng", meaning "hidden name". Some of these "nām faeng" were abbreviations of real names, e.g. "N.R." for Prince Naris, some were nicknames and some had no meaning at all, for example, "Tung Tung" of King Rama V. Some writers only used temporary

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<sup>1</sup> Lak Witthayā. Vol., no. 8., pp. 659 - 660.

<sup>2</sup> Issued by the Vajiranana National Library between 1884-1915.

pseudonyms to match the riddles they presented or solved, e.g. 'Wētthanā' (Pity), 'Bit' (Twist) and 'Ai Yā' (Oh dear!)

When Lak Witthayā appeared, the group used the term 'nām pākkā', meaning 'pen name' instead of 'nām faeng'. Each of them had more than one pseudonym for their different types of writing. The reason was not stated but it can be understood that the writers were still limited in number and it would have been boring for the readers to read many stories under the same name in one issue. Pseudonyms which sounded feminine could also give a better balance to literary milieu. Some pseudonyms give us hints as to whom the writers were; for example Phrayā Surintharāchā used 'Nāi Mayūn' and 'Mae Wan'. His real name is Nok Yūng Wisētkun. 'Nok Yūng' means 'peacock', and the Sanskrit word for peacock is 'mayura' which is spelt the same way in Thai but pronounced 'ma-yūn'. The pseudonym 'Mae Wan' has a rather amusing history and had a tremendous influence over the writers of the later period. The word peacock in Italian is 'powane'. The syllable 'pō' in Thai means 'father' or a prefix for masculine gender. Phrayā Surintharāchā thought jokingly that if he added a Thai feminine gender prefix 'mae', 'Mae Wan' would have meant 'peahen'. He used 'Mae Wan' for the first time in translating Marie Corelli's Vendetta. The work and the pseudonym 'Mae Wan' proved so popular that many later writers made it a fashion to being their pseudonyms with 'Mae'; for example 'Mae Sa-āt' (Luang Sārānupraphan), 'Mae Anong' (Mālai Chūphinit). Incidentally, most stories written by these 'Mae' men writers were romantic ones. It is also possible

that they wanted to confuse the readers, making them suppose that the writers who usually wrote romantic novels or love stories were women, and the majority believed it to be so. This moved women writers to write mostly love stories, and made Thai male readers gradually dislike reading romantic novels whose authors were women.

Throughout the life of Lak Witthayā, Phrayā Surinthaṛāchā never admitted that 'Mae Wan' was a man. In writing, he sometimes forgot and used 'phom', a male first personal pronoun. When readers wrote in suspecting that 'Mae Wan' was a man, Phraya Surinthaṛāchā felt amused and made up all sorts of excuses. His colleagues also joined in the joke, even referring to 'Mae Wan' as a married woman, the only woman member of their club.

The situation of the magazines containing novel-type works in the first decade of the twentieth century can be summarized as follows:

- a. There was a swing from poetry to prose, though poetry was still appreciated.
- b. People who initiated the novel were mainly members of the Royal family, nobles, and officials who had been educated in Europe.
- c. Most of the stories were adaptations or translations of western romantic novels.
- d. The style of writing was very similar to that of the West with adaptations and translations, but flat and simple in the case of original Thai works.

e. The language changed from the traditional narrative style of previous days to a smooth and erudite prose.

f. Male writers predominated.

g. None of the editors or writers were professional, and therefore, under various pressures, they were inclined to stop publishing after a few years.

One prominent figure in the second decade, whose initiative in art had direct connection with the development of Thai novel, is the poet Prince Narāthip Praphanphong.<sup>1</sup> In 1916, he published a series of short stories under the title Klōmchit. They consist of both original and translated of Western works. The most popular one which was taken as a model by younger writers is Sōi Khō Thī Hāi, the Prince's adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's La parure.

More famous than his short stories was his share in theatrical innovation. Up to that time, there had been three kinds of modern plays: Lakhōn Phūt (spoken drama) of King Rama VI, Lakhōn-Rabam (dance-drama) of Prince Bidya and Lakhōn Dūkdamban of Chao Phrayā Thēwēt.<sup>2</sup> In 1911, Prince Narāthip established 'Lakhōn Rōng' by adapting elements of the Western opera and plays. It became most successful among commoners, despite the King's disapproval of the idea. Several comic operas by Gilbert and Sullivan were adapted. The most successful of all, and still well remembered, was Sāo Khruāfā, an adaptation of Puccini's Madame Butterfly, which

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<sup>1</sup>(1864-1931) Former name: Phra-ong Chao Wōrawannākōn, founder of the 'Wōrawan' family, son of King Rama IV and Chaochōm Māndā Khian.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 78-79.

the Prince deftly changed into a tragic love story between a young lieutenant from Bangkok and a beautiful Chiangmai girl. The theme of this story remained popular for romantic novels for a long time.

After the disappearance of the Prince's play troupe (Pridālai), there were many more Lakhōn Rōng troupes forming, and they were all warmly accepted by the public. Competition arose. The texts were published and sold cheaply to the audience beforehand. It was this feature which was taken over by another vehicle for the novel - films.

There is no more evidence about the introduction of films into Thailand, than that they were first brought to Bangkok by a Japanese in the reign of King Rama V, and shown in the open-air some time before the first Japanese-owned cinema-house was built. Because the shadow-play is called 'Nang', the moving picture which was also shown on the screen was therefore called 'Nang Yīpun' (Japanese shadow play). This early Japanese film business was later replaced by two companies; Krungthēp, owned by Prince Prīdā Pramōj, and Phatthanākōn, by a Chinese Thai called Siao Sōng Uan Sībunruāng. They were competitors for many years, but eventually amalgamated under the name 'Phāpphayon Sayām' (Siam Cinema). Siao Sōng Uan signed contracts with Pathé and some other companies. They were all serial films, and the audience had to attend them regularly in order to follow the full story. They might enjoy the production, but most did not understand the language, and dubbing had not yet been

introduced. Siao Sōng Uan therefore began to hire writers who knew English and French well to write the stories for him to print and sell before the performance. In this way the audience who might have missed some previous episodes could still follow the story. A small collection of these books are still preserved at the Thai National Library. They are all paperbacks written in a short novel style. The earliest one found there is a Sherlock Holmes story, re-written by In Thianthō for Phatthanākōn in 1913. Two very popular stories, Pauline by 'Jupiter', and Élène by 'Sī Suwan', would be the equivalent of long novels if bound (10 books and 1191 pages respectively).

The 'Sībunrūang' are the first people who took the publishing business seriously. Siao Hut Seng, the founder of the family, was a first generation Chinese Thai. Instead of following his father in the rice business, he turned to literature and journalism in both Thai and Chinese. He founded his own printing press, and Chinese and Thai newspapers, all with the same title - Chinnō-Sayām Warasap. His son, Siao Sōng Uan, also printed film-paperbacks there. In 1912 he established a Thai bi-weekly magazine, Phadung Witthayā, and appointed his daughter 'Jupiter' (Lamōn Sībunrūang) the editor. Her publication flourished for four years before it came to an end for reasons which are not clear; presumably the financial crisis during the War.

Two publishing competitors of Chinnō-Sayām Warasap were Phim Thai and Krungthāp Daily Mail, both owned by Thai

officials. Like Chinnō-Sayām Wārasap they published newspapers and magazines which contain translations, adaptations, short and serialised stories. The Krungthēp Daily Mail compnay's Sayām Muay was as popular as Phadung Witthayā with its serialised adaptation of Arsène Lupin of Luang Ratchatakān Kōson. In order to compete with Chinnō-Sayām Wārasap which printed stories from films, the Phim Thai and Krungthēp Daily Mail began buying stories from the public and published them in paperback. Thus, they advanced another step in the development of the novel in book form.

Sayām Muay disappeared in 1913. Fortunately, Sukrī Wasuwat, a keen journalist, started Sī Krung magazine in the same year. Several writers and their stories, for example Luang Ratchatakān and his Arsène Lupin, had a chance to continue in this magazine. It stated clearly from the start that Sī Krung "does not aim at profit ... (but) wants its subscribers to read it for pleasure and information", and that "Our readers must not think that we writers are experts in Western languages for most of us have been educated in Thailand".<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, the Wasuwat family later established their own realm of film production under the same name as their magazine. The first commercial Thai films were produced there, and the business of printing film-paperbacks was also

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<sup>1</sup>Sī Krung, vol.1, no.1 (September 1st, 1913), preface and pp. 120 - 125.

undertaken. The Sī Krung therefore became another centre of writers and artists, old and new, including 'Sī Suwan', Chit Burathat, Chawalit Setthabut, 'Saeng Thōng' (Luang Bunyamānopphānit)<sup>1</sup>, and Khrū Liam.

Despite the clear explanations of the editor about the writers, there began to be complaints from readers that the translations and adaptations were not up to the required standard, and also that they wanted to read more original Thai works. One can also see that there was a transformation in the types of writers, from princes and nobles to others, comparatively less confident and more self-taught and practised. The writers of the previous decade had either turned to academic, classical writing, or were too occupied by their official work to contribute to these new magazines. Prince Bidya, for example, was appointed Director of the Royal Mint in 1907, Director of the Department of Auditing and Accounting in 1910, and Director of the Department of Statistics in 1916. However, busy though he was, the Prince never completely abandoned writing. He produced a number of tales, and articles, and in 1916, he published Phra Non Kham Chan, a beautiful poetical work taken from the Nala and Damayanti episode in the Mahabharata epic, and in 1918 Nithān Wetān, a series of tales based on Sanskrit stories, etc.

Two great writers whose names will always be impelling in the history of modern Thai literature, Sathian Kōsēt and

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<sup>1</sup>Saeng Thōng was later very famous with his original novels humourous series Khun Thūk, and especially with his translations of the complete classical works of Sanskrit literature of F.W. Bain.

Nākhapraphīp, also began their work in this decade.

Sathian Kōsēt is a well-known pseudonym of Phrayā Anuman Rajadhon and Nākharathīp of Phra Sāraprasoet. The former was born in 1888 and the latter in 1889. Phrayā Anuman was educated in a missionary school and Phra Sāraprasoet in a Buddhist monastery. When they first met, Phra Sāraprasoet was still in the monkhood, an expert on Pali, Sanskrit, Khmer, Singhalese, whereas Phrayā Anuman was a keen scholar in several modern fields. The person who introduced them was Khun Sōphit Aksōnkān, who was also a scholar and an owner of Phimthai Printing Press. It was Khun Sōphit who suggested that both writers should translate and write classical works starting with Hitopadesa from the English version by Sir William Jones, followed by Sir Richard Burton's The Arabian Nights, Marryat's The Pacha of Many Tales, Boccaccio's Decameron, and several Sanskrit classics. Khun Sōphit ordered all these books directly from England for his friends. After collaborating with Phrayā Anuman for three years, Phra Saraprasoet resigned from the monkhood in 1919, took a job in the Ministry of Education, and later became an advisor of Pali and Sanskrit to King Rama VI. He died in 1945 and Phrayā Anuman in 1970.

All their works except for Kamanit, Soraida, and a few other stories are classical. But they had a great impact on the language and style of writing of Thai people whose fondness for oriental classics still lay deep.

We can now summarise the characteristics of the evolution

of the novel in this period as follows:

- a. The elite writers of the previous decade disappeared almost completely.
- b. The new group of writers was inferior to the previous ones so far as their educational background was concerned.
- c. Complaints about translation resulted in the increasing production of more Thai original stories.
- d. Films had a great effect on writing, and paperbacks printed for their performance constituted an aspect of the development of the Thai novel.
- e. Apart from the film paperbacks, most, if not all short stories and serialised novels were printed in magazines.
- f. Although the magazine-owners claimed that their purpose was not profit, compared with Lak Witthaya or Thawipanya, these new periodicals were business-like
- g. Men writers still predominated, but there were more women writers than before.

The third decade of the century saw a growing interest in public education following the first proclamation for elementary-education and the foundation of Chulalongkorn University. Secondary schools, especially those in Bangkok, began competing with one another in various aspects. At least ten of them published journals. More important was their students' initiative in producing classroom-magazines, under the supervision of teachers who were mostly renowned writers of that time.

This phenomenon is significant because it was these teenage writers, particularly from Thēpsirin, Suan Kulāp and Assumption College, who later constituted the first corps of modern Thai novelists. To tell their story is indeed to describe how the struggle of the majority of Thai authors to seek recognition in society.

At Thēpsirin School, between 1921-1922, Kulāp Sāipradit, Prince Ā-kātdamkoeng, Cha-ēm Antarasen in the seventh form, and Sot Kūramarōhit and Sanit Charoenrat, one year junior, issued the classroom-magazines Sī Thēp and Darun Sān. A year after, they became confident enough to send their writings to Sap Thai and Sēnā Sūksā. However, while most of them were hoping either to go abroad or to further their education in university, Kulāp set his heart on being a writer. He sought advice from "Kaeokān" (Thōngkham Rongkhasuwan), who encouraged him to translate and adapt several episodes of a film for Siao Sōng Uan's film-magazine Phāpphayon Sayām (1922-1924).

Coincidentally, Kōson Kōmola<sup>V</sup>chan (pseudonym Sī Ngoenyuang) opened his translating office in the same year. These students joined him, and began to work as a group identifiable by the way all their pseudonyms begin with Sī; Kulāp - Sī Burāphā, Cha-ēm - Sī Sēnan, Sanit - Sī Surin, Charan Wutthathit - Sī Chomphū, etc. After their graduation, even though they had little money, Sī Burāphā and some of his friends decided to open a school of their own. They obtained help from Taengmō Wanthawim, an owner of a printing

press, who found a humble wooden house for them and provided them with all necessary facilities for teaching. These keen young teachers divided their business into two sections; the School of Combined Teaching (Rōngrian Ruam Kān Sōn), and the United Translation Office (Samnakngān Ruam Kān Plae) the responsibility of Sī Ngoenyuang.

Although the business prospered at first, later it declined for lack of money. To keep the business going, the teacher-writers began to write and translate for magazines. Taengmō, after subsidising them for some time, suggested that they should start their own magazine on his printing press; so they published Thotsawān Bantoeng<sup>1</sup> in 1923. But only seven numbers had been issued before they claimed that the printing machine was out of order. In 1924, they were still trying hard to survive by producing film-paperbacks. Teaching gradually became too heavy a burden, less enjoyable, less profitable. At the same time the teachers were becoming more committed to their writing. In the end, there were four of them left; Sī Būraphā, Sī Chomphū, Mālai Chūphinit, and Sī Sēnan. In 1925, Taengmō's patience ended and the group dispersed to gather together again towards the end of the decade.

The popularity of the film-paperbacks reached its peak

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<sup>1</sup>In P. Watcharāphōn, Chomrom Nakkhian, R. Wutthathit gave the title of the magazine as Sān Sahāi, but no publication of that name has been found. The seven issues of Thotsawān Bantōeng whose owner was Taengmō Wanthawim and contributors were the Sī group are still preserved in the Thai National Library.

in 1924 when at least one hundred stories were adapted for the Sayām Cinema. There are several reasons why they were so warmly welcome. These books propagated films and vice versa, for the audience could understand the film better, and those who did not have a chance to see could still enjoy reading them. The writers too, had to create neither stories nor plots. It was even easier than direct translating because they could interpret what they saw in their own ways, and that gave them a chance to show their ability at writing at the same time. The risk of being criticised was also small since nobody would be able to compare their books with the original texts, as Butsarākham stated in 1929 in Prāp Duay Mat (To Conquer with Fists):

...In 'translating and telling' film-stories, one cannot possibly make it correspond exactly to what we see or hear on the screen, one merely remembers and translates correctly important parts. I wrote this story for the Khasēm Cinema because I think it is quite amusing and not in any way difficult. There is no need to compete with anybody in writing and selling as used to be the case. I therefore decided to try. Whether the story is good or bad, it has been written according to the original story, and it is up to you to judge ...<sup>1</sup>

Anticipating a good profit, book-shops and individuals who could not afford to produce magazines began to form groups in order to publish paperbacks. In Bangkok alone there were at least seventy groups. Any story they got hold of and thought good enough was printed and sold cheaply

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<sup>1</sup>Butsarākham (pseud.), Prāp Duay Mat (Bangkok: Khasēm, 1929), preface.

to meet public demand. Consequently, writers became greater in number and the quality of the publications became low. In Phachon Khwām Rak, <sup>V</sup>Chittrāphirom, the author confessed that he had originally intended the story to be read amongst his family, but was later asked for it to be printed.<sup>1</sup> There were also quarrels and arguments between writers and publishers over the plots and even the titles of the books. In a situation such as this it was very difficult for the readers to select good stories, but after some time only better writers with improved works remained. Sī Būraphā is a good example in this matter. In sharp contrast to his confidence at a later stage in his career, he wrote the following passage in the preface of his first original Thai work in 1924:

....This is my first Thai story which had the honour to be published and sold. I am a new face to you and I am afraid that you may not accept me. For this reason I have to<sup>2</sup> explain (about the book) and introduce myself ....

From our present day viewpoint, the style and language of these small paperbacks appears almost pathetically high-faluting. Each writer did his best to write in ornate language which he thought would sound elegant. It might have fitted well had it been employed for the interpretation of old literature, but for modern stories it sounded absolutely wrong. In ornamenting their writing, the writers larded it with Sanskritic and poetic vocabulary in the manner

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<sup>1</sup>Chittrāphirom (pseud.), Phachon Khwām Rak (Bangkok: Pramuansān Sāmakkhī, 1924), preface.

<sup>2</sup>Sī Būraphā (pseud.), Khunphī Mālaeo (Bangkok: Khana Ruam Kān Plae, 1924), preface.

of traditional poetic styles. For instance, they called the sun "Suriya Deva", and instead of just "at sunset", they would say "at the k̄āla when Suriya Deva drives his chariot away to disappear behind the divine Sumeru Mountain".<sup>1</sup> Direct translations of English were exploited. Although they sounded foreign and carried no meaning, the authors did not bother to find Thai equivalents. Expressions which the writers of Lak Witthaya would never have used, included translations of "darling", "yours", "sincerely yours". This style of language which was contemptuously called "samnuan sip satang" (ten-satang language), stayed with Thai writing for almost three decades. Sī Būraphā himself was not an exception. His Songkhrām Chīwit (The War of Life), published in 1928, is excellent as far as story, ideas, and characters are concerned, but the language, especially the dialogue, was too frequently inappropriate to the character.

The theme of these short novels too, was mainly love and tragic love. The heroes and heroines were young people who considered love most important, for which they could sacrifice rank, name and parents. This feature resulted in the slowness of Thai people accepting novels as art or literature. Teachers and parents began to think of novels as being dangerous for their female pupils and daughters. Whereas English novels were used in schools, Thai books of any kind, apart from textbooks, were confiscated if found by

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<sup>1</sup>Sōnklin (pseud.), Chaokhun Luang Lōk (Bangkok, 1924), p.1.

teachers. Although most writers were men, their books appealed less and less to men readers, and that later led to a misconception that novels were for women only and also mainly by women.

In the field of journalism, an attempt to bridge the gaps between writers and readers of different generations and educational levels came from Chae Sētthabut, a resigned civil servant. In 1921, he gathered together his friends who were writers and teachers to publish Nakrian (The Students, 1922-1926). His goal was achieved; the magazine became very popular among students and pupils. For adult readers, Chae issued Tū Thōng (The Golden Cupboard, 1924-1925). Contributors included various types of popular writers. To maintain the link with the more conservative and exclusive readers and authors, Chae edited Phim Thai Printing Press's Sap Thai (The Thai Voice, 1921-1927) which was one of the popular magazines of the decade. King Rama VI strongly supported this magazine, sending his own works to be published in it. Unfortunately, Chae lost his magazines because of the low subscription compared with the high cost of printing. Sap Thai too disappeared after the death of the King.

The most important magazine of this decade was perhaps Thai Khasēm, owned by a partnership of the same name. Its editor, Luang Sansāra<sup>̄</sup>akit, stated the objects of the publication as:

To support writing, poetry and prose. To act as a trial ground for both experienced and newly practised authors. To promote co-operation between writers and

readers. Politics and personal affairs are not intended to be our concern. All<sup>1</sup> stories will be delightful for polite readers ....

Thai Khasēm united a massive group of writers. King Rama VI had several of his later works published here. From time to time, a whole issue contained only his work and nothing else, for instance Phra Ruang, Phra Kiattiroṭ, Sāwitri, N.M.S. and Prince Naris came back on to the scene with their poetry and beautiful illustrations, Sathian Kōsēt and Nākhapraphīp with celebrated novel Kāmanit. "Mae Sa-āt", "Phatthanaphaet", followed by many new writers, contributed translations and adaptations of western detective stories and romances.

It was in Thai Khasēm, volume four, December 15th, 1927 that the pseudonym "Dōkmaisot" appeared for the first time representing a woman author of a one-act play Difō (Frightened). And then, after a gap of almost two years, her first novel, Sattrū Khōng Chāolōn, (Her Enemy) was published on June 15th, 1929, followed by lesser pieces and short novels.

Although her work was improving rapidly with the passage of time, and with greater output and increasing length, Dōkmaisot was not a top writer at that early stage. One reason was perhaps that she was overshadowed by a contemporary M.C. Ā-kātdamkoeng Raphīphat, whose masterpiece, Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit (The Circus of Life) was published and sold by Thai Khasēm in 1929. It was a really fresh advance in the history of the Thai novel. None of Dōkmaisot's works at that time received such warm admiration as that of Prince Ā-kāt:

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<sup>1</sup>Luang Sansāraṅkit, Thai Khasēm, vol.1, no.1 (April, 1924) editorial.

Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit is a story written with a strange plot, the kind of which Thai writers have never produced. It may be considered as the first of its style in the Thai literary world. The story, which is suitable for readers of all classes and ages, is about the deep love of a Thai for a foreigner, and about exciting adventure in the life of people of various walks. You will be taken to see exotic places in the world, the big theatre or the newspaper business, and the social circles in civilised countries. At the same time, it will give pleasure as well as moral teaching. I am sure, too, that you will agree with me that a story like this by a Thai author has never yet been written. Perhaps there may be more in the future, but still I dare not guarantee that they will be better or even as good. I have read it and can assure you of the qualities I have mentioned. It makes me think of our Thai Khasēm members, who are keen on reading pleasant and educational stories, for we will not be able to give you such a good story in a few days or perhaps will never at all. Therefore, you are commended to read Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit now. Three baht and fifty satangs per copy sounds expensive, but it is hard bound with five hundred and fifty-six pages of good quality paper. You will change your mind and think it's cheap afterwards. It is our sincere wish to enable you to read this novel; Thai Khasēm will sell it to you at three baht a copy, plus forty satangs for postage.

In the next issue the magazine declared that the cost of the novel had returned to its original price, adding a further comment on its value:

Even if it cost as much as four or five baht, it should not be considered expensive, because a story such as this is, I dare say, the first of its kind in Thailand. Both the language and style are excellent, and nobody has ever written so well before. This novel will be a 'teacher' (model) for readers and writers to improve their reading and writing ...<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that a paperback of that period cost only about twenty-five to fifty satangs.

Prince Ā-kātdamkoeng Raphīphat was the sixth child of

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<sup>1</sup>Wīnā (pseud.), "Antawāthī", Thai Khasēm, vol. 6, no.4 (August 15th, 1929), pp. 529 - 530.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol. 6, no. 5, (September 15th, 1929), p. 700.

Prince Rāṭchaburī,<sup>1</sup> born on November 12th, 1905 in Bangkok. He was educated at Assumption College, Thepsirin School at the same time as several of the 'Sī'<sup>2</sup> group, and later went to study Law in England in 1924, and in the U.S.A. It is not known whether he completed his studies.

Lakhon Haeng Chīwit was sensational not only because of its novel quality, but many readers were convinced that it was the Prince's own story, and he was accused of defaming his family. In publishing its continuation the author corrected the misunderstanding:

Novels are stories written with imagination. It is only that I have made it very close to the fact. This is what most Thai readers have not come across and it caused suspicion. The reason for my using our homes at Sāmsen and Bāngchāk as the settings is that I want the description to be realistic. Please understand that Lakhon Haeng Chīwit is neither a true, nor the story of Prince Ā-kāt. However, I wrote about an unfortunate man and about newspapers abroad because they are the only life circle I have seen and know well, and want to write about them as realistically as possible...

One distinguishing difference between Prince Ā-kāt and Dōkmaisot in their writing development up to 1929 is that the first started his writing with a long novel and its success made an immediate impact in the country, whereas the latter initiated her writing with short stories and

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<sup>1</sup>(1874-1920) The founder of the 'Raphīphat' (written Rabibhadana) family, full name and title: Phrachao Borommawongthoe Krommaluang Rāṭchaburī Dirēkrit, former name: Phra-ong Chao Raphī Phatthanasak, the fourteenth child of King Rama V. He graduated in Law from Oxford and later became the Minister of Justice and was recognised as the father of Law studies in Thailand.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>M.C. Ā-kātdamkoeng Raphīphat, Phiu Lūang Phiu Khāo, 5th ed., (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), preface, pp. 1-7.

gradually developed towards longer works. Prince Ā-kāt's Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit was followed by Phiu Lūang Phiu Khāo (Yellow Skin, White Skin) and Wimān Thalāi (Heaven Destroyed) in the first two years of the fourth decade. Phiu Lūang Phiu Khāo is the continuation and end of Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit, and Wimān Thalāi is a collection of his short stories. Both Prince Ā-kāt and Dōkmaisot are certainly better as long novel authors than as short story writers. Nevertheless, in comparing their short stories, Dōkmaisot includes in hers varied elements not to be found in those of Prince Ā-kāt, especially the comical.

Their intention in writing was also different from the outset. Dōkmaisot began writing when she was well supported financially by her brother, to satisfy herself, and because she wanted young people to have something suitable to read. But Prince Ā-kāt took writing as his career. According to M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, the Prince informed Prince Nakhōnsawan,<sup>1</sup> his uncle, of his wish to ask for financial help to print

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<sup>1</sup>(1181-1944) The founder of the 'Bōriphat' family, full name: Somdet Chaofā Krommaphra Nakhōnsawan Waraphinit, former name: Somdet Chaofā Bōriphat Sukhummaphan, the second child of King Rama V by Queen Sukhumān Mārasi, educated at Suan Kulap School and later in England and Germany. During the reign of King Rama VI, Prince Nakhōnsawan modernised the whole administration of the Royal Thai Navy, and was conferred upon the title of the Admiral of the Fleet, and later, after the death of Prince Phisanulok, Field-Marshal of the Army. He became the most influential and loved figure in the reign of King Rama VII with the most important positions as the Minister of Defence, Interior, and the Governor of the capital. After the coup d'état of 1932, he was seized and deported to Java, where he died of heart trouble. Prince Nakhōnsawan was very keen on art, music and literature. One of his successful literary works is his translation of Inao from Malay into Thai.

Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit, because as yet there was no publisher who published long novels. Prince Nakhōnsawan granted him a large sum of money and that was how Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit came to be read.<sup>1</sup>

Another good writer Thai Khasēm produced was Song Thēphāsit, who started to send his works to be published while he was still studying in England. His short stories were very popular with their modern, realistic plots, subjects, dialogue and language. Some of his best works are Nam<sup>V</sup>Chai Khōng Nārā (Nārā's Good Heart), Khwām Ngām Mai Mī (Beauty Does Not Exist) and Nam Siang (The Voice). Song died when he was only twenty-eight, before he could produce any good long novels.

One year after the birth of Thai Khasēm in 1925, one of its contributors, Luang Sārānupraphan, began a weekly magazine, Sārānukūn. Before that, he had been writing for several magazines and been an editor of Sēnā Sūksā lae Phāe Witthayāsāt (1915-1929, 1951-in progress). His readers remembered him well for his translations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's series, and his own stories of the same type, especially Phrae Dam (The Black Scarf) and Nā Phī (The Ghost-face). Phrae Dam was so popular that its author was dubbed by his addicted readers "Luang Saraphraedam", (Luang Sārā black scarf). Even when Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit occupied the interest of Thai people, Luang Sārā was still proud of his work for, as he once said, "Prince Ā-kāt's Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit was almost as good as my Phrae Dam."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, Siam Rath, 4 September 1972, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>See Suwit Sangyōkha and Prathīp Mūannin, Wannakam Patchuban lae Kān Susān Muanchon (Lopburi: Witthayālai Khrū Thēpsatri, 1972), p.70.

Despite Sārānukūn's popularity, Luang Sārā could not continue issuing it with the same frequency. He had to change it to a bi-weekly and publish more serialised classical stories. Even then, it did not survive its financial difficulties and came to an end in 1929.

Between 1929-1927 magazines in Thailand sprang up like mushrooms. Some were by experienced hands who could not afford to abandon their writing, and some came from the adventurous attempts of younger people. Several of the latter, for example Thong Thai, Phlapphlā Chai, Chuan Phloen, Wichit Lēkhā, Roeng Rom, Chaloem Chao, though good in content, could not sustain even for one year. However, they must be praised for their courage and conveyor-belt activity, distributing this new kind of writing to people in the street more and more. While the older writers turned back to their civil service jobs and only contributed their classical stories occasionally, these young writers began to take writing seriously as their profession. Their education was considered good enough, even though they had never been abroad. Western romantic novels were no longer brand new for a great number had been translated, and read at school. The reading public were now requesting original works. All this, plus their youthful enthusiasm, were enough to drive these young men to find ways and means to test their ability. Because the cost of publication was very high and famous magazines like Thai Khasēm had their own regular contributors, the only two possible ways for them were to establish their own journals and newspapers, and to sell their works to commercial publishers, who seemed to make a good profit at the time. In a situation such as this one can

imagine how hard the young writers had to struggle to earn a living and make a name. They might have plenty of endurance, but most of them were poor. It was in this decade that the expression "nak praphan sai haeng" (writers with empty guts) appeared in a hurtful and sarcastic sense. They accepted it, and it has become a popular theme of many romantic stories. Some of them, for example Sī Buraphā, later fought back against that painful saying in his Songkhrām Chīwit (The War of Life). In order to survive, these writers produced all sorts of stories: historical, romantic, humourous, serialized long novels, translations adaptations, and even some nearly obscene stories. In this manner, they gradually lowered writing from its respected eminence. Those who did not know English or French well, but were capable of Chinese, began to translate Chinese stories, which became popular almost immediately. The demand was so great that later the writers had to produce their own stories retaining only the style and concealing from their readers the truth. Two well-remembered writers and their Chinese-style novels were "Chek Min" and Huanliang Chōprakān with their Cheng Hōng Hao Nā Dam (Black-faced Cheng Hōng Hao) and Chan Bō Mao. It is said that some magazines like Lak Muāng and Krō Lek could survive and be popular only because of these Chinese and Chinese-style fiction. The most interesting feature of their development was that some writers eventually added Thai elements to their stories, historical as well as modern ones, as in San Thēwarak's An Pen Thīrak Haeng Hēman (Winter Love) and Phuang Phayōm's Lī Wan and Lī Bun.

It should be taken into consideration here too that Thailand, in the second half of this decade, had moved towards the end of the age of aristocracy. Young men began to choose a career they loved instead of seeking rank and fame in the civil service as traditionally practised. Their independence of profession contributed strongly to their wish to be independent politically at a later stage. With their own pens and publications they began to express their political ideas in their writing, sometimes too radically and in a way that writers of former periods would never have done. This attitude is seen clearly even in the names of magazines, for example Bangkok Kān Mūang (Bangkok Politics), Krō Lek (Iron Armour), Thai Num (Thai Youth). Writers began to be sued and imprisoned for what they wrote and this type of struggle was to continue for a long time yet.

Nevertheless in 1929, the last year of the decade, one of the most interesting incidents in the development of the Thai novel occurred when the Suphāpburut Group (The Gentlemen) was formed to publish the magazine of the same title. Its birth was really a further step forward by the "Sī" group and their friends. After their entire dispersal to work for various magazines following the failure of their magazine and translating business, Sī Būraphā who by that time had already produced Mān Manut (The Fiend), Huāchai Prātthanā (The Desires of the Heart), and Chīwit Somrot (The Marriage), began to re-assemble his friends to produce the new magazine with the help of Op Chaiyawasu, a famous writer of humour, and Phong Rangkhawōn, the owner of

Aksōnnit Printing Press. This time they were much better prepared and experienced, and were joined by a large number of other writers.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that all the contributors appear later to have taken up writing as their career. Another conspicuous characteristic of the group was that it included no high-ranking officials, nor members of the royal family.

They were successful; the magazine broke all sales records, the stories were warmly welcomed, and the writers were energetic. Soon Sī Būraphā, the editor, and Mālai Chūphinit, the assistant editor, were famous and respected by the new writers. Suphāpburut was nearly two years old when Sī Būraphā resigned and the editorship was taken over by Mālai. In 1931, Mālai too resigned and the magazine ceased publication temporarily before its rebirth towards the end of the next decade.

Another incident which marked the popularity of prose fiction in this decade was the contest organised sometime between 1927 - 1929 by T. Ngekchuan, a businessman who had published a large number of paperbacks. Unfortunately, not much of the details can be traced, except that the winner was Phrōm Samretprasong (pseudonym "Kulāp Khāo" : White Rose).

Considering the general writing atmosphere of that period, a sharp contrast of opinions between the younger and older generations was still obvious. Older writers never recognised the new style of writing. They would send their works which became smaller in number and remained mainly academic and

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<sup>1</sup>See Plan 1, p. 73.

classical to some specific magazines and newspapers like Witthayāchān (1902 - in progress), Sap Thai, and Thai Khasēm whose owners and editors were their friends and were not too modern in outlook. Kāmanit, which was a product of this decade and accepted as a good novel based on a classical story, was criticised by Prince Damrong in his letter to Prince Naris because:

"The books Kāmanit and Kāmanita Sūtra are the same story. My copy is a complete one (the story comprises two parts: On Earth and In Heaven). I understand that Phrayā Anumān and Phra Sārāprasoet rewrote the Mahayana Sutra in an "adaptation" style and did not just translate it directly. Although they referred to the Sutra, they in fact combined the idea from Mahayana with Pathomsompho (i.e. Pathama Samabhodi Katha, the life story of the Lord Buddha), then adapted it in the style of a western novel to suit the setting which was in India. That is why it is interesting."

At the time when Prince Damrong made that criticism (1939) he was living in Penang and admitted that novels were what he read every night before going to bed.<sup>2</sup> It is possible too, that he did not praise Kāmanit much as a good novel because Prince Naris, judging from his writing below, did not seem to appreciate novels.

"Speaking about the reading public, whether the books are Kot Monthianbān Phama<sup>3</sup> or what, they are very small in number. Most subscribe just to throw them away. If you want to attract a large number of readers, you have to publish love stories, which are now called "ruang roengrom". I understand that they are taken from western "novels". But they are not for distribution. Westerners themselves love novels, don't they? No matter how many thousand copies they publish, they are sold, whereas books containing knowledge cannot be printed in great number. They won't sell."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Prince Narisaranuwattiwong and Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, Sān Somdet (Bangkok: Khurusaphā, 1952), vol. 17, pp. 161 - 162.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vol. 23, p.249, vol. 24, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>i.e. The Burmese Court Law, written by Prince Damrong after his visit to Burma in 1936.

<sup>4</sup>Naris and Damrong, op.cit., vol. 9, p.288.

"I have seen another pathetic thing; it's a "rūang ān len" (story for pleasure reading). The author wrote about country people, but the picture of the hero on the front cover was of some "mister" wearing what we call a "phuang mālai" (round necked) shirt. The woman too was illustrated as a "madam" in evening dress, the type worn by fashionable western ladies."

Siwasariyānon (Phra Wōrawēt Phisit), in trying to persuade the staff of Roeng Rom to revive the tradition of weekly meetings set by the Lak Witthayā two decades earlier, wrote:

"We cannot really devote ourselves to the magazine because most of the writers have regular jobs which constitute their real occupation. If they want to concern themselves more with writing, they will have to take time off to do so, which is difficult and may cause trouble. If they turn to writing altogether and make it a profession, they certainly cannot earn enough to live on because the number of readers at present is only a handful. The cost of printing is high, and the profit, if there is any, is very scanty. The situation is different from that in big countries with large populations, good education and where reading is considered like a kind of food. In a country like that a good book can make its author rich. Undoubtedly, their writers can be professional. When they want to write a story, say a love story, they will study it thoroughly so as to make their writing impressive, and the book will become popular. When the requirement for books is high, books will be sold in great numbers, and surely competition will follow. Consequently, when one wants to write one must do one's best to make it realistic and not superficial. Even so, they are criticised and sometimes harshly.

Our famous writers, for example Sī Wuwan, O.N.K. Nākhaphathīp, Sathian Kosēt, Phatthanaphaet, all have their regular professional jobs. We may call them "Nak Khian" (writers), but they are only dilettanti,<sup>2</sup> because writing is just their hobby, not their career."

It is clear that Phra Wōrawēt did not think highly of the younger generation's writing nor recognise journalism as another occupation apart from civil service that could be seriously

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol. 18, p.140.

<sup>2</sup>"Siwasariyānon", "Maihēt Bettalet", Roeng Rom vol. 1, no. 8, (February 15th, 1927), pp. 2093 - 2098.

adopted. With contrasting ideas such as these in existence, the magazine like Sap Thai and Thai Khasēm were specially important because they were the real link; a compromise between the two groups. One person who made this feature possible was undoubtedly King Rama VI, who loved poetry and did not despise novels, and who by that time did not publish any magazine of his own. His death in November, 1925 was therefore deeply felt by all writers.

The characteristics of the Thai novel in the third decade can be summarised as follows:

- a. There were more original works than before but most were of western style.
- b. Writers assembled in groups, either in order to seek recognition or for a commercial purpose.
- c. Translations and adaptations, as well as original short novels, were published in the same manner as the cinema paperbacks.
- d. A great number of magazines were published but most of them did not last long.
- e. Novels appealed more to less educated people than before, but the standard of writing, especially of language, was lower.
- f. Most new writers were young, educated in the country, and very keen on taking up writing as a career.
- g. M.C. Ākāt damkoeng began his exotic novels, Dṛk maisot her family-life novels, Song Thēphasit modern short stories and Sī Būraphā his social stories.
- h. The death of King Rama VI was a great loss to Thai writing circles.

i. The magazines and the paperbacks are very much like a sieve sorting out good writers for the following decade.

One year after the birth of Suphāpburut, 1930, its counterpart, Nārīnāt (The Ladies' Guardian), was issued by a group of women led by Miss Sumon Kānchanākhom, the editor. This magazine published several good novels, but, unfortunately, it came to an end after two years of popularity because of the inflation in the country.

The liquidation of Nārīnāt and the disappearance of Prince Ākāt in 1932 thus marked a gloomy start to the Thai novel of the fourth decade.

After the publication of Wimān Thalāi (Paradise Destroyed) that year, the Prince was reported dead in Hong Kong of malaria. Some said he committed suicide by drinking poison. Whether it was an ordinary death or suicide, Prince Ākāt left the country for some mysterious personal reason and nobody has ever made it clear. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj implied once that the Prince's fiancée was a cause of his grief, but only her initial "S" was given.<sup>1</sup> That they should quarrel, as he said, over the engagement ring provided by Prince Nakhōnsawan,<sup>2</sup> sounds too superficial. There is a considerable belief among Thai people today that the Prince is still alive, living incognito.

Throughout the following nine years of the decade, the country was in a state of political, economic and cultural restlessness; the coup d'état of June 24th, 1932, the rebellion in 1933, the abdication of King Rama VII in 1935, the nationalist

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<sup>1</sup>M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, Siam Rath (September 4th, 1972), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>See footnote 1, p. 45.

Pan-Thai Movement under F.M. Pibulsonggram's regime from 1938, the Indo-China crisis in 1940, all culminating in World War II and the Japanese occupation.

Before the coup of 1932, while Prince Ākāt was at the height of his fame, Dōkmaisot, who had so far been in his shadow, published Khwāmphit Khrang Raek as a serial in Nārīnāt. This novel brought her out from obscurity, and illustrated how far she had developed in subtlety of characterisation and unity of construction within a few years. The setting of this novel is very narrow indeed, but at the same time it proves that the world of human relations is at least as vast a field as the 'around the world' setting of Prince Ākāt.

The second successful woman-writer of this decade was K. Surāngkhanāng (real name Kanhā Khiangsiri). Her first work, Mālinī, was serialised in Daily Mail Wan Chan in 1929 when the author was only eighteen years old. After another two short novels, Lūk Rak Lūk Chang (The Favourite and Hated Children), and Krōngkān, she produced her masterpiece, Ying Khon Chua (The Prostitutes) in 1937. Her method of collecting material for this novel, as disclosed later, was shocking for a young respectable lady at a time when social work had not yet been introduced. She actually spent time observing the life of prostitutes in a brothel. Ying Khon Chua was the sad story of a country girl who was seduced and brought to the capital by a brother-agent. In her dark world, she found a real friendship and humanity in one of her fellow prostitutes, and eventually learned to really love a man. While she was

pregnant, and while her illegitimate child was young, it was her friend who earned money for their support through her low and degrading profession in the hope of seeing the baby grow up in a decent way. But this self-sacrificing woman became ill and died of tuberculosis. The only way the young mother knew to earn enough to help her sick friend and to feed her baby was to resume her old profession. After some time, she too became fatally ill with the same disease. The father of her child found her too late. After all he had been married. The only thing the dying woman asked him was to bring their daughter up and conceal from her the background of her mother.

The tone of K. Surāngkhanāng is different from that of Sī Būraphā. She wrote to reveal the truth in an attempt to seek sympathy for suffering humanity, whereas Sī Būraphā wrote with a feeling of bitterness and resentment. K. Surāngkhanāng let her characters be beaten by misfortune and the injustice of life and society, but Sī Būraphā made them revolt and fight to the end with high and firm aims.

Other two contemporary women-writers whose names should be mentioned here were "Khae Na Wangnōi" (Somphōng Siritwong) and "Wannasiri" (Mōm Phiu Suksawat). Khae Na Wangnōi was a nurse, and had been successful with her realistic short stories and short novels. But not until she moved to live in Songkhla, a beautiful seaside resort in south Thailand, after the War did she produce long novels. Wannasiri's family-life type of novels too became popular after the War.

Even at this stage, it is still not possible to analyse the development of the Thai novel, without studying closely

the situation of both newspapers and magazines, for the obvious reason that a large body of good novelists had been moving forward strongly by that channel.<sup>1</sup> Most of them could not afford to have their works printed directly in volumes. By serialising them first, they earned enough money, and if the stories proved popular enough, they could have them published later for a better monetary return. There were several categories of newspapers and periodicals at this time, judging from their purposes. Some, Thai Khasēm, for example, maintained their old purpose to publish stories and articles which contained no political motivation. Some aimed at expressing the people's opinions about the country, the government and politics. And some, mostly magazines, were varied in their aims and content in order to both publicise their ideas and, at the same time, please their readers who wanted to read for pleasure. The most popular magazine towards the end of the third decade had been Suphāpburut, whose founder and editor, Sī Būraphā, and assistant editor, Mālai Chūphinit were two journalist/writers to whom all younger writers looked up to as their teachers and supporters. The following account will display tremendous influence, initiative and leader, of Sī Būraphā as well as stories of several writers and their works.

One year after Sī Būraphā left Suphāpburut to establish Thai Mai, Mālai Chūphinit joined him, together with "San Thēwarak" (San T. Komolabut), Sī Surin and Chōt Phraepan. This time Chōt was persuaded to write Yōt Khunphon (The Greatest

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<sup>1</sup>See also Plan 1, p. 73.

Warrior) under the pseudonym 'Yākhōp' (i.e. Jacob). This work had its inspiration in the Burmese chronicle during the reign of Tabinshwehti. To what extent Sī Būraphā had influenced Yākhōp, and how much his friend appreciated his guidance and persuasion, can be seen from the writing of Chōt in the preface of his masterpiece Phūchana Sip Thit (The Conqueror in Ten Directions, i.e. Bayin-naung)<sup>1</sup>:

...Sī Būraphā suggested that I should write a type of story wanted by readers. But at the same time he reminded me to serve readers with pleasure and the beauty of literary art, and not just cling tight to the chronicle. I believed in the opinion of this writer, and believed also very firmly in his idea that I should employ the pseudonym "Yākhōp" which I had been using for my humorous stories, in writing this adapted chronicle, so that I could make the readers doubt whether and how I could complete this love-and-war-story. I therefore began Yōt Khunphon with one strict rule to give pleasure to my readers rather than to follow the original text. Eight thousand lines of Yōt Khunphon was based on eight lines of historical information.

Writing this passage makes me think of what Phūchana Sip Thit has given to me, and reminds me of those to whom I owe my gratitude. Sī Būraphā is the first person I think of. He encouraged me, guided me to write, and yet supported me with thirty-five baht per month. That amount of money was the first sum I earned from writing Phūchana Sip Thit. I also think of "Mae Anong" (Malai Chuphinit), for he not only gave me encouragement but also gave the novel its title which I consider auspicious to my career....<sup>2</sup>

Other good evidence comes from a comparatively young novelist, Yutthisathian (real name Yot Watchrasathian). He revealed that he admired Sī Būraphā, and his two novels, Prāp Phayot (Subjugation of Pride) in Suphāpburut and Yōt Prātthana (The Prime Desire) in Thai Mai, so much that he wrote to tell him of his wish to

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<sup>1</sup>The title of the complete work of which the first part was Yōt Khunphon.

<sup>2</sup>Yākhōp (pseud.), Phūchana Sip Thit, (Bangkok: Phadung Sūksā, 1963), vol. 1, preface.

be a writer. Sī Būraphā's encouraging reply gave Yot inspiration. After sending a few stories to various magazines and having them accepted, he sent his first long novel Awēchī (Hell) to Sī Būraphā. While waiting for the result, Yot told himself:

"...This time I aimed at Thai Mai whose editorial staff were those of Suphāburut, with Sī Buraphā as a leader. It was a group for every member of which I had great respect and admiration. Therefore, I firmly intended to use my writing ability to join them. I did give myself the definite condition that their approbation of my story would be my success in the examination to be a qualified novelist. After one week of anxiety, my heart swelled with joy - yes, there was my story in Thai Mai."<sup>1</sup>

Sī Būraphā and his colleagues had worked for Thai Mai for only one year before the trouble began once more, and he chose to resign rather than bow his head to some influential person as the patrons of the magazine wished him to. Of course Thai Mai at that time was owned by a group of Chinese and Thai businessmen, and Sī Būraphā kept writing too much about politics. Soon after he left, Luang Vichitr Vadakarn<sup>2</sup> for some unclear reason left the

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<sup>1</sup>Yot Watcharasathian in Prakāt Watcharāphōn, Chomrom Nak Praphan, (Bangkok : Ruamsan, 1966)

<sup>2</sup>(1898 - 1962) A diplomat, politician and prolific writer. His works between 1934 and World War II were chiefly influenced by his political positions, especially as the Director of the Fine Arts Department, assigned by F.M. Phibulsonggram to 'plant the tree of nationalism' through plays and music. He also published a magazine called Duang Prathip (the Light). His successful long novels written after the War included for example Huang Rak - Hao Luk (The Abyss of Love), Dokfa Champasak (Princess of Champasak) and Lek Lang Khaen (The Shaft of Vengeance ).

For details of his life and work see Council of Ministers of Thailand, Vichitr Vadakarnnusoṅ (Bangkok, 1962)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take over the editorship. That incident made Sathit Sēmanin, the last of Sī Būraphā's friends at Thai Mai, leave the magazine to remain unemployed for some time before Sī Būraphā reformed their circle.<sup>1</sup> Sī Būraphā himself went to work for Sī Krung and Sayām Rāt for nearly two years, and Mālai established a new magazine called Phū Nam (The Leader) for M. Ismail. After the coup d'état of June 1932, Sī Būraphā began to call his friends back to form Prachā Chāt (The Nation), a weekly magazine owned by Prince Wan Waithayakorn.<sup>2</sup> All of them considered this publication their university and the Prince their 'senior teacher', for it was here they felt secure for the first time, and for a comparatively long period

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<sup>1</sup>In Nūng Satawat Nangsuphim Thai (Bangkok: Bamrung Sān, 1967) pp. 453-454, Salao Rēkharuči gave the name "Luang Vichitr Vadakarn" but only said with an undertone that he moved to Thai Mai for "some unclear reason".

Sanit Charoenrat (Sī Surin) in Ō Wā Ānā Prachārāt (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1964), pp. 102 - 103, used "the skilled hand" and wrote: "Soon after Kulāp wrote "Humanism", another anti-Thai Mai strategy was exploited underground, when "a hand from the inner circle" came in as a shareholder and deviated the policy or the "compass" of Thai Mai so that it no longer be a thorn in the Absolute Monarchy."

cf. In Council of Ministers, ibid., vol. 2, pp. 45 - 50, Sathian Phantharangsī said that Luang Vichitr transferred the ownership of the Wiriyānuphāp (his printing press that published Duang Prathīp) to Thai Mai. But he failed to explain clearly the reasons Luang Vichitr resigned from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and took up the editorship of Thai Mai.

<sup>2</sup>(1891 - ) A scholar and diplomat, son of Prince Narāthip (see p.29 ) educated at Marlborough and Balliol College, Oxford.

For details see Samākhom Sangkhommasāt, Wan Waithayakorn (1971), pp. 7-8.

of six to seven years. Prince Wan established his magazine with the aim of enlightening Thai people about constitutionalism and democracy. Although entertainment including novels was only one of the various components of the magazine, several good novels originated here. The most popular light romantic, but substantial and entertaining novel was San Thēwarak's Bandai Haeng Khwāmtrak (The Steps of Love). Meanwhile, instead of adapting or translating western adventure stories, Mālai wrote Chāi Chātrī with some elements of the old Thai work Khun Chāng Khun Phaen. Most successful of all was their inclusion of Yākhōp's Phūchana Sip Thit where other magazines would have translations of Chinese, or Chinese-style stories. It was serialised throughout the life of Prachā Chāt, and when completed, became the author's masterpiece as well as one of the literary treasures of the nation. Few fictitious characters have ever assumed such an identity in the minds of the Thai readers as Chadet (Bayin Naung) in Phūchana Sip Thit. It was at this time too, that Sī Būraphā, the editor of the magazine, was at his best as a novelist with his two works; Songkhrām Chīwit and Khāng Lang Phāp.

Songkhrām Chīwit (The War of Life) was written in 1932 in an epistolary form; the correspondence between a beautiful girl who had once been rich, and a poor clerk who, with the encouragement of a writer called Dusit, was obsessed with bright ideas for the future. Later the girl became a film star and decided to marry her rich director for only one reason; she had learnt the difference between being rich and poor and preferred to be materialistically rich to idealistically

poor. The description of the settings, and the characterisation are superb. Dusit Smittōpakōn, the writer, was a set character with definite characteristics, brought in from the author's previous works. The language in this novel can be criticised as being unrealistic. Sī Būraphā had not completely shed the unrealistic ornate language, a characteristic which he had shared with other writers of the third decade.

Khāng Lang Phāp (Behind the Painted Picture) was written in 1933, after Sī Būraphā had been to Japan. The beauty of Mount Fuji inspired him to write this sad novel. It is a love story of an enchanted Princess, Kīrati, aged thirty-five, a wife of an old man in his sixties. During their holidays in Japan she fell in love with Nopphōn, a young Thai student of merely twenty-two, and he with her. Being aware of the differences, Kīrati firmly concealed her feeling within her heart, but Nopphōn confessed his love passionately when they were alone together one day in a village called Mitake near Mount Fuji. The flame of love in his heart tormented him only a short time and died down soon after Kīrati and her husband left Japan. Years later he came back to Thailand only to find that he had been engaged to be married by his parents, and Kīrati had been suffering from tuberculosis. The last time they meet, Kīrati succeeds in making Nopphōn recall all the past events, by dressing up in the same kimono she had worn on the day at Mitake, and by presenting to him her own painting of the scenery with them in it, as his wedding present. Nopphōn is torn with remorse, whereas Kīrati is content with his realisation of her love, before her last breath.

It is a magnificent piece of writing of Sī Būraphā. The scene and the atmosphere are properly dramatic. For once he does not use class distinction as the background to the story, but the difference between a man and a woman and between people of different ages are exploited instead. Except for a few places, the language in this novel is precise and emotionally moving.

Mālai Chūphinit (1906 - 1963) decided to be a writer when he was about twenty. Soon after the "Sī" group separated, he resigned from his teaching post in order to edit Thai Tai in Songkhla. Like his close friend, Sī Būraphā, Mālai wandered from one magazine to another, and eventually in 1945 became a partner, a columnist and an adviser to Phim Thai for whom he worked until he died of lung cancer. He was given appointments and granted honours that no other Thai writer had ever received, including being a member of the House of Legislature, a representative to several international meetings, and a lecturer at Thammasart University where he had conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.Litt.

During his thirty-eight years of writing, Mālai produced several good novels and not less than three thousand short stories and articles. His translations included works by Marie Corelli, Galsworthy, Anatole France, Maupassant and Thomas Hardy. As for his original works, Mālai with his female-sounding pseudonym "Mae Anong" began writing stories seen from woman's viewpoints, for example in Lōn Khū Khrai ? (Who is She ?) in 1926, Nām Lōn Khū Ying (She is a Woman) in 1928, and his

first popular novel, Koet Pen Ying (Being Born Female) in Suphāpburut in 1929. Unlike Sī Būraphā who mainly focussed his theme on class distinction, Mālai's childhood in a provincial town, his interest in old literature, and his keenness for hunting, inspired him to write novels of various types. Instead of crying for social justice, he made his characters fight in their own tough and quiet way for better recognition, as Rān did in Thung Mahārāt. His ability in rewriting old literature like Khun Chāng Khun Phaen and Phra Lō, is seen in Chāi Chātrī and Ai Lō. His most successful hunting story Lōng Phrai is justifiably considered a Thai Allan Quartermain work. Sometimes Mālai interestingly blended these themes together in realistic novels, especially in his Chua Fā Din Salāi (Till the End of Heaven and Earth).

His most beautiful realistic novel was perhaps Phaendin Khōng Rao (This Land of Ours) which was serialised in several magazines, starting with Prachāmit and completed in Sayām Samai, eight years after.

Phaendin Khōng Rao is certainly one of the best Thai novels which does not require full knowledge of the Thai way of life to be appreciated. The story is about three sisters of differing characters, but whose lives were fastened to their old home. Atcharā, the eldest one, had been engaged to Rāchēn, who upon his return from abroad found her conservative manner unbearable, and thus raped her. Later, he became passionately in love with the youngest sister, Phakkhinī, and she with him, despite her marriage to Thātrī, a middle-aged owner of a plantation in the south. They committed adultery, and Phakkhinī eloped with

Rāchēn only hours before his wedding was due.

Phakkhinī loved her lover devotedly, even after finding out that he was evil. Thātrī, after searching everywhere, found her working as a prostitute in Pāknam Phō. He vainly pleaded with her to go back to her family. At last Phakkhinī was deserted by Rāchēn, and after suffering for a long time from disease, she returned to die in her husband's arms and to ask for forgiveness from Atcharā, who had been living half-dead with Thātrī and her illegitimate son by Rāchēn. When all the wounds seem healed and Atcharā is about to marry Thātrī, news about Rāchēn being arrested arrives. Atcharā dies of a heart attack.

Having seen all the problems, Sāisawan, the middle sister, decided to disconnect herself from the entanglement. She and their old father moved to live in a remote provincial town. Their home was auctioned off, and it was Thātrī who bought it, only because he knew how much Phakkhinī had been attached to the place.

Thailand was fortunate that the 1932 coup d'état passed without bloodshed. But its consequences had considerable impact on the development of writing. A law was passed to limit the freedom of newspapers and magazines. All writings were censored, newspapermen were arrested, printing presses were closed. The newspapers and magazines which had previously supported the revolutionaries turned against them, including Prachā Chāt. King Rama VII, in his memorandum to the government when asked to return as a constitutional King proposed several conditions, one of which concerned directly the right of publication:

A. Real freedom in speech and publication.

It has appeared that any newspaper whose speech did not please the Government was closed, and those who were against the Government had to stop their business. The Daily Mail is an example. From now on newspapers should be allowed to express their opinions and to criticize the Government's policies. They would be closed only when they obviously incite uprising. Before the existence of the constitution, the newspapers had much more freedom than at present.

I want you to stop arresting people on the grounds of "making slander against the Government". At present they have to be extremely cautious of what they say. It is what they call "the slip of the tongue"

The freedom in clause A. must be under the Constitution and a frame (limitation) should be drawn up.

King Rama VII abdicated on March 2nd, 1935. Political prisoners, many of them writers, were sentenced to imprisonment until 1936. The most powerful man during that time was Luang Phibulsonggram. In 1938 he became Prime Minister. Thai people began to fear that the government would turn to totalitarianism or even dictatorship. More severe censorship was imposed upon magazines and newspapers. Prachāchāt, as well as many other magazines disappeared after being closed time and again. However, in 1938 Sī Būraphā and his friends revived Suphāburut and combined the business with a daily newspaper Prachāmit (The People's Friend). The Suphāburut-Prachāmit group produced a great number of novels, and was joined by several good novelists whose works flourished in the following decade, including Ing-ōn, Suwat Waradilok, Phuang Phayōm, Sot Kūramarohit, Nitayā Nāttayasunthōn, Duangdāo, etc. They also

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<sup>1</sup>Chālī Iamkrasin, Buanglang Phra Pokklao Sala Rāchasombat, (Bangkok: Pramuansan, 1973), pp. 127 - 128.

supported Chit Burathat as well as they could, though still poorly.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the political restlessness did give birth to two great works: S̄ S̄thabut's The New Model English-Siamese Dictionary and Nimitmongkhon's Khwāmfan Khōng Nak Udomkhati.

S̄, was a graduate of geology at Manchester, England, and had been very keen on writing since young. M.R. Nimitmongkhon Nawarat, whose name ironically means "good omen", was a prince, a soldier whose education was supported by Prince Nakhōnsawan.<sup>2</sup> Both S̄ and Nimitmongkhon were arrested and imprisoned on charges of high treason in 1932. Together with Lui Khīrīwat of The Daily Mail, and Phrayā Sarāphai, a famous journalist, they were sent to Bāngkhwāng prison. There, they met Lt. Chongkōn Krairoek who had been producing Written Magazine containing news from outside. Nimitmongkhon immediately followed the idea by issuing a weekly written magazine, Namngoen Thae (The Real Blue: the colour of the prisoner's uniform). Eight prisoner-writers contributed. Stationery was smuggled in, and the magazines were smuggled out to friends and relatives. The two friends secretly connected up electricity and had a secret hole in the ceiling to hide their appliances and manuscripts. In order to obtain the news, they even managed to make a radio using a condensed-milk can and wire as a condenser. Seventeen numbers were produced before it was discovered, and all the manuscripts burnt. Meanwhile, S̄ who was small in stature but great in works, completed the three massive volumes of his dictionary.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chart 1, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>See footnote 1, p. 45

In the same prison, Phrayā Sarāphai wrote Fan Čhing Khōng KhāphaČhao (My Real Dream), whereas Sō wrote a political novel B.E. 2481 (A.D. 1938), and Nimitmongkhon Bun Tham Kam Taeng (Merit Made: Karma Embellished) and Wan Nī (Today). Fan Čhing Khōng KhāphaČhao got lost, B.E. 2481 was burnt. Bun Tham Kam Taeng and Wan Nī were safely smuggled out and survived until 1938, only to be used as evidence in their author's second conviction, eight months after he had been released from Bangkhwang. This time he was sentenced for life.

Imprisonment could not prevent Nimitmongkhon from writing. In 1939, he wrote a beautiful realistic novel Khwām Fan Khōng Nak Udomkhati (The Dreams of an Idealist) in English. The manuscript was found, translated, and adjudged by the government a dangerous piece of writing. As a result, Nimitmongkhon was sent to the notorious Tao Island in the Gulf of Siam. Its prisoners were only released in 1944 after F.M. Pibulsonggram lost his political power. Nimitmongkhon then patched up Khwām Fan Khōng Nak Udomkhati from his memory. This time he wrote it in Thai, and had it published. The first edition was not popular, but at least it was not destroyed. Nimitmongkhon could have been one of the great novelists had he not contracted malaria and tuberculosis during his imprisonment. He live a carefree life only another four years and died in 1948 at the age of forty, six weeks before his only child, M.L. Chainimit, was born. Chainimit published the novel the second time in 1970 with the new title Muang Nimit (The City of Nimit or the Utopian City), together with his father's memoir. It was warmly welcomed.

Khwām Fan Khōng Nak Udomkhati was the story of Rung, a graduate of Biology, an ex-prisoner who had been released from prison by mistake in 1938. While unemployed, his girlfriend, who had been unfaithful, died. Rung intended not to touch politics again, and instead, turned his aim towards trading. When Phong, his close friend, also an ex-prisoner, was accepted by a stationery company and himself by a Western firm, they exchanged jobs. The stationery company was owned by an Indian, whose employees, Indians from India, were content with their low salaries. Eventhough Rung was patient, his endurance evaporated after six months. During his second term of employment he refused a girl who was sincere towards him, but whom he could only think of as a sister. Moreover, Phong loved her. Later, Rung met Uraiwan and fell in love with her at first sight. Uraiwan encouraged him to write which he did successfully. The ideas which Rung expresses either to his friends or in his writing concern politics, religion, psychology and biology. He discussed music and literature enjoyably with Uraiwan. Although Rung knew that Uraiwan also loved him, he dared not propose to her because of his poverty. Later when Phadung Witthayā offered to send his manuscript of "The Sight of Future Siam" to be printed in Shanghai, and promised to pay him a large sum of money, Rung proposed to Uraiwan. To his utter surprise, she instantly refused for very interesting reasons; he was one day too late; she worshipped his honesty which had been proved up to that day and ceased to exist as soon as he became better off, his ideas too, especially towards love and marriage, were only "the dreams of an idealist". Phong told him that very same night that

several writers had been arrested again, but Rung was sure that his publisher never published anything which would irritate the government; therefore his manuscript would be safe. He was going away from Uraivan and from Bangkok the next morning, when policemen appeared and arrested him at the quay; Phadung Witthayā had been ransacked, his manuscripts had been found and treated as an anti-government document written in English ready to be sent abroad for publication. And Rung himself was trying to escape.

The style of writing with appropriate flashbacks, the characterisation, the language, both in description and dialogue, are all splendid. Nevertheless, the novel can only be appreciated by educated readers, for the subject matter and the treatment require some basic knowledge of Thai politics and history of that period. Apart from that, the author refers to several western scholars together with their works.

While a modern man like Nimitmongkhon was recording his avant-garde ideas, Prince Bidya returned to the scene at the age of fifty-eight. After his retirement in 1933, the Prince found himself in restless mood, and the only remedy was to pass his time writing. That was how, in 1934, his residence at Pramuan Road in Bangkok became the office for the newspaper Pramuan Wan, and the weekly magazines Pramuan Māk, and Pramuan Sān. They were quite popular until 1943, when the printing-press was destroyed by bombs. Prince Bidya's last work and masterpiece Lilit Sām Krung (The Three Capitals) was completed only a few months before his death in 1944. Except for some members of his family, the Prince's magazines did not produce

any new writers, presumably because young professional writers did not send in their works. In the Thai National Library there is a torn copy of a novel Nī Mai Phon (Inescapable) by Č.Č.R. (M.C. ČanČhirayu Rajani ?) which was originally published in Pramuan Wan in 1936. The style and language are very modern, rather similar to those of Prisnā, the manuscript of which was saved from fire in 1944 by its author, Prince Bidya's daughter, Princess Wiphāwadi Rangsit. Prisnā became popular after the war and has been translated into English.

One Thai writer whose name should be mentioned despite his living abroad, is Prince Chula Chakrabongse, the only son of Prince Phisanulok. Apart from some short stories, Prince Chula's works were mainly history and biography, both in Thai and English. Not until the end of this decade did he think of writing long novels. His first attempt was Lūksāo Māk or Sām Sāo (Many Daughters or The Three Women), the theme of which was taken from Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. The Prince's major contributions to the development of the Thai novel were his criticism and the novel contest of 1938. He and Prince Wan kept stressing the importance of literary criticism, though with little response. His novel contest of 1938 attracted much attention from Thai novelists, but well-established writers like Sī Būraphā, Mālai, or Dōkmaisot did not submit entries. The winner of the contest was 'Āsā' with Nōng Sāo (The Younger Sister) which never really became famous.

Sot Kūramarōhit was another successful writer who began his writing at the end of this decade, after his return from

Peking in 1936 and his resignation from his post in the Ministry of Education. First he worked for the Suphāpburut-Prachāmit, and then published three magazines; Ēkkachon (The Individual), Rung Arun (The Dawn), and Silapin (The Artists). None of these magazines survived the crises. However, Sot's well-known novel based on his Peking experience, Pakking Nakhōn Haeng Khwāmlang (Peking, the City of the Past) in Ēkkachon established his name. Sot is the last of his generation from Thēpsirin School who still writes vigorously. But most of his works are political.

Summary of the characteristics of the fourth decade.

a. There was a strong tendency towards realistic and social writing.

b. Attempts were made by young writers to seek recognition and to adopt writing as a permanent career.

c. These young writers were not of high-ranking families, and most were educated up to a pre-university level, thus they were not required for government service as much as those who had been abroad.

d. Failures of well-intentional magazines, e.g. the Suphāpburut, are due to the fact that they were not self-supporting financially.

e. Cheap romantic stories were still preferable among the majority of readers. Good magazines with more serious and substantial stories but without rich sponsors, e.g. Ēkkachon, therefore had to cease publication.

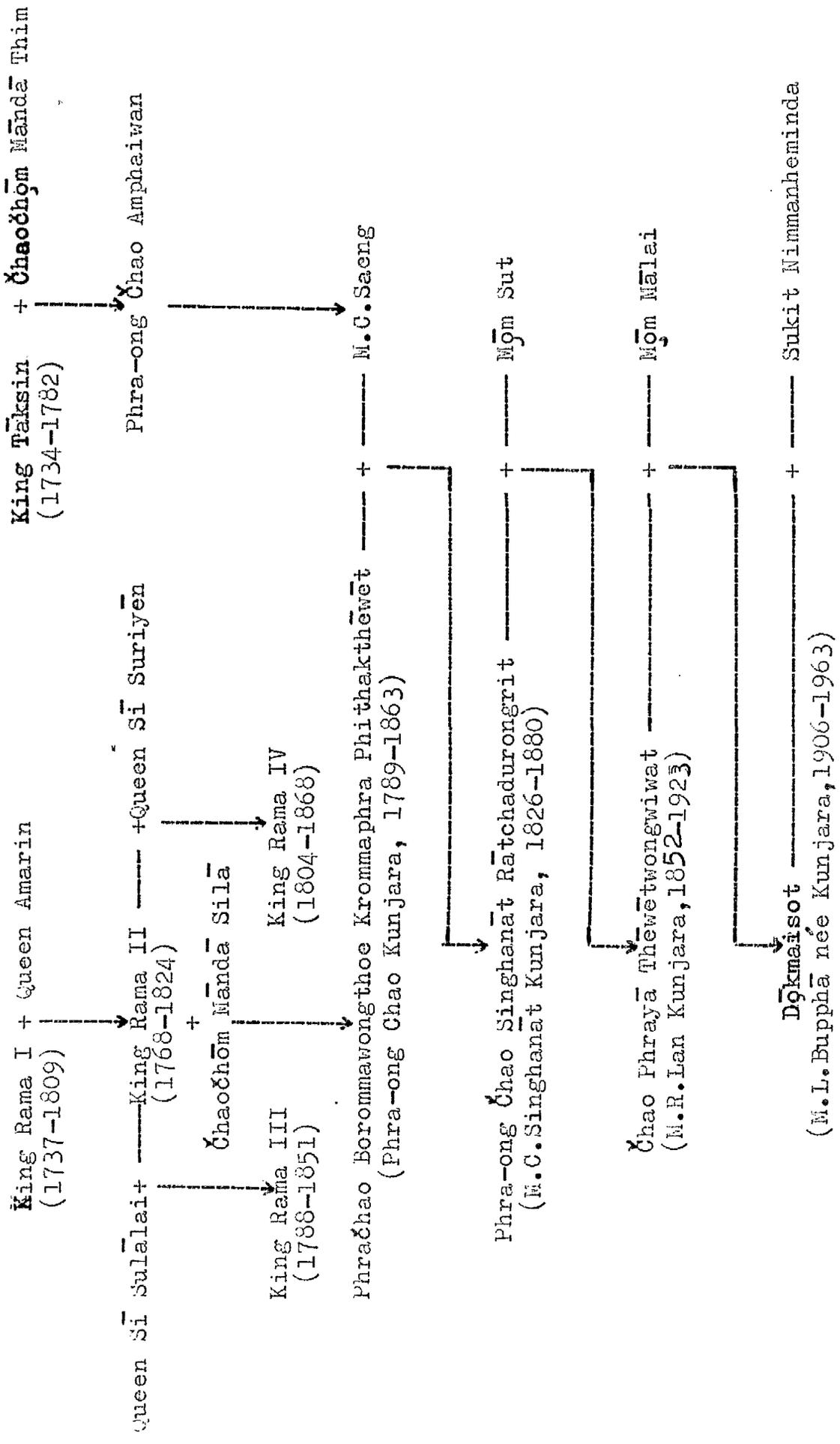
f. Political changes in the country had great impact on the novel.

g. There were more women-writers than in the previous decades, several of whom were accepted by the men-writers who still predominated.

72B.

For an alternative treatment of the  
development of the novel in Thailand  
see: Wibha Senanan. The genesis and  
early development of the novel in  
Thailand. University of London,  
Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis





King Taksin (1734-1782) + Chao Chōm Mānda Thim

Phra-ong Chao Amphaiwan

M.C. Saeng

Mōm Sut

Mōm Malai

Sukit Nimmanheminda

Dōkmaṁsot (M.L. Bupphā nēe Kunjara, 1906-1963)

Phra-ong Chao Singhanat Ratchadurongrit (M.C. Singhanat Kunjara, 1826-1880)

Chao Phraya Thewetwongwiwat (M.R. Lan Kunjara, 1852-1923)

Phra Chao Borommawongthoe Krommaphra Phi thakthēwēt (Phra-ong Chao Kunjara, 1789-1863)

Queen Si Suriyen

King Rama II (1768-1824)

Chao Chōm Mānda Sila

King Rama III (1788-1851)

King Rama IV (1804-1868)

King Rama I + Queen Amarin (1737-1809)

## CHAPTER II

## i. The Life of Dōkmaisot

Dōkmaisot was born into one of the most distinguished families in Thailand, the Kunjara<sup>1</sup>. Prince Phithak<sup>2</sup>, the founder of the line and Dōkmaisot's great-grandfather, was a son of King Rama II and Chao<sup>V</sup>Chōm Māndā<sup>3</sup>Silā. He was also a younger half-brother of King Rama III, and an elder half-brother of King Rama IV.

Prince Phithak served his two brother monarchs as the Director of the Court Entertainment and Commander of Cavalry. His contribution to the architectural art was the renovation of two beautiful monasteries in Bangkok, Wat Thēwarāt Kunchōn and Wat Suthat Thēpwarāram.

After his death, his son by Mōm Chao Saeng<sup>4</sup>, Mōm Chao Singhanāt, was made Phra-ong Chao Singhanāt Rāтчadurongrit by King Rama V. Like his father, Prince Singhanāt was a royal favourite, of both King Rama IV and King Rama V.

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<sup>1</sup>pronounced "Kunchōn". The name and its spelling were conferred upon request by King Rama VI on July 2nd, 1913. For details see Chao Phrayā Thēwēt Wongwiwat, Khō Rāтчakan Nai Krom Mahātlek (Bangkok: 1957), preface.

<sup>2</sup>(1789-1863) Full name Phra<sup>V</sup>chao Bōrommawongthoe Krommaphra Phithak Thēwēt. Former name: Phra-ong Chao Kunchōn.

<sup>3</sup>The term "Chao<sup>V</sup>Chōm" was used as the title of a king's wife who was born a commoner. If she bore a child, her title would be "Chao<sup>V</sup>Chōm Māndā", and her child would be a "Phra-ong Chao" and not a "Chao<sup>V</sup>fā" (celestial prince) whose mother was a high-ranking princess. Prince Phithak was "Phra-ong Chao Kunchōn", whereas King Rama IV was "Chao<sup>V</sup>fā Mongkut".

<sup>4</sup>A granddaughter of King Tāksin (the King of Thonburi) and a daughter of Phra-ong Chao Amphaiwan.  
See also plan 2, p. 74.

He was in charge of the cavalry as his father had been.

The most prominent personality in the Kunjara family was Chao Phrayā Thēwēt, M.C. Singhanāt's son by Mōm Sut, who was a daughter of a lower ranking official, Khun Phat-hōng, the owner of the Bān Mō market, adjacent to the Bān Mō Palace. He was born in the reign of King Rama IV, and was called by the King 'Lān', meaning 'grandson'. Because of this, nobody bothered to give him any other name and he was known as M.R. Lān Kunjara. Although his royal status was not considered very high, King Rama V favoured him so much that he personally arranged both his tonsure and later Buddhist ordination ceremonies. As a youth, M.R. Lān was a page in the Grand Palace. Later he became King Rama V's confidant and right hand man and was made Chao Phrayā Thēwēt Wongwiwat in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

The effects of modernisation were first really felt during the reign of King Rama V. It was during this period that the government was radically re-organised along modern lines. Chao Phrayā Thēwēt was a man of exceptional ability. It was under his administration that changes were made in irrigation, agriculture, communication, land tenure, municipal affairs, etc. When the Ministers' Council was formed, Chao Phrayā Thēwēt was appointed President of the Council. He was also a member of the King's Privy Council,

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<sup>1</sup>For the details of the royal promotion announcement see: Prince Sommot Amraphan and Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, Ruang Tang Chao Phrayā Krung Rattanakōsin, (Bangkok: the Royal Institute, 1931), pp. 101 - 103.

a Thai emissary to Europe,<sup>1</sup> and successively head of four different ministries. The best evidence of the King's confidence in Chao Phrayā Thēwēt was his appointment as the guardian of Crown Prince Mahā Wachirunnahit.<sup>2</sup> The reputation of Chao Phrayā Thēwēt as a person who contributed most to the prestige and fame of his family is best seen in a letter of King Rama V, dated August 2nd, 1881, to Phrayā Wisut Suriyasak<sup>3</sup> in England:

... Krommamūn Prāp<sup>4</sup> always wants to see his son keeping the name of his family in high repute as Phrayā Thēwēt has done for the family of Krommaphra Phithak. It is one thing your father has wished for and always wanted to compete with...<sup>5</sup>

However, to the Thai people in general, Chao Phrayā Thēwēt's reputation in drama, music and literature overshadowed his work as an administrator. The family's long connection with the arts started with Prince Phithak. He had his own dance troupe which was renowned during several reigns. Its

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<sup>1</sup>For details see: Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, Sadet Thawip Yurōp P.S. 2434, (Bangkok: Fine Arts Department, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>The eldest son of King Rama V by Queen Sawangwatthana, the nearest direct heir according to the Chakri rules of succession, born in 1878, promoted the first heir-apparent on whom was conferred the newly promoted title of 'Makut Rāchakumān' (the Crown Prince), in 1886. He died of typhoid in 1894, and the title was assumed by Prince Vajiravudh, who later became King Rama VI.

<sup>3</sup>Former name: M.R. Pia Malakul. He was made Chao Phrayā Phrasadet Surēnthrāthipbōdī in 1913 by King Rama VI. For details see: Sommot Amaraphan and Damrong Rajanubhab, op.cit., pp. 122 - 127.

<sup>4</sup>(1843-1898), son of Somdet Chaofā Mahāmālā, and a grandson of King Rama II.

<sup>5</sup>King Rama V and Chao Phrayā Phrasadet Surēnthrāthipbōdī, Phra Ratchahatthalekhā Lae Nangsi Krāpbangkhomthūn, (Bangkok: Siwaphon, 1961), p. 275.

teachers were also teachers of the royal dance troupe. M.C. Saeng herself was a famous singer of the period. Chao Phrayā Thēwēt inherited from his grandfather and his father this dance troupe which he kept at his residence. He himself, as a Director of the Court Entertainment, was responsible for official occasions. But he was faced with great occasional difficulties because of the limited number of entertainments available; for instance, the Court Entertainment Department had only the Khōn (the mask dance drama), the Nang (the shadow play), and the puppet show. Apart from these the only type of stage performance was the old-fashioned type of dance drama performed only in the palace. King Rama V did not take much interest in this kind of performance. Therefore, Chao Phrayā Thēwēt was well equipped to introduce something new in Thai theatrical circles.

An innovator friend who had a great influence in drama was Prince Naris.<sup>1</sup> Both he and Chao Phrayā Thēwēt were fascinated by western opera and concert. Under the influence of these two types of western art and the Thai classical dance, they introduced a new type of Thai dance drama. Lengthy and repetitive parts in dancing and music were cut out and the actresses themselves sang. Because it was very successful, Chao Phrayā Thēwēt built his own playhouse in the premises of his residence. He had a sign 'Dūkdamban Theatre'<sup>2</sup> put up in

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 1, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>The name 'Dūkdamban' can be misleading because it coincides with an ancient type of performance 'Chāk Nāk Dūkdamban' from which 'Khōn' is believed to have emerged.

order to stop people from calling it 'Chao Phrayā Thēwēt Theatre'. The first performance at this theatre was in 1899. Many plays in this genre were written for this dance troupe including Sangthōng, Khāwī, Inao, Sang Sinchai, Chanthakinnarī, Rammakīan, etc.

Chao Phrayā Thēwēt had at least forty wives (in his case they were called 'Mōm'), most of whom were also dancers. M.L. Bunlūa Thēpphayasuwan, his youngest daughter, wrote frankly in her autho-biography about this phenomenal characteristic of her father:

My father was well known in his time for having many wives. I believe that it is because he was both amorous and economical, because among his forty wives or more, as we used to count them, only five or six were not his dancers. Not<sup>1</sup> all of them were living with him at the same time.

His senior wives or senior teachers of the troupe taught his younger wives and his children. Some of these teachers later worked at the national dancing school of the Fine Arts Department. Their influence is still tremendous, for example, when M.L. Bunlūa went to Laos and was invited to see the performance of the national dancing school there, she recognised immediately that the dancing movements were influenced by some of her step-mothers.<sup>2</sup> This artistic and highly cultural atmosphere at Wang Bān Mō (Bān Mō Palace) was to be reflected vividly in Dōkmaisot's novels later on.

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<sup>1</sup>M.L. Bunlūa Thēpphayasuwan, Khwām Samret Lae Khwām Lomleo, (Bangkok: Watcharin 1971), pp. 4 - 5.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., pp. 26 - 28.

Dōkmaisot's mother, Mōm Mālai was a beautiful young actress in the troupe. Her father was a lower ranking official called Khun Chamni, and her mother was called Suk. Khun Chamni died when Mālai was very young, and her mother took her to live with Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt's chief wife. She appeared to be good at dancing and singing, and later became a young wife of the Čhao Phrayā.

Once, there was a performance of 'Inao' in which Mālai, who had usually played the role of Sangkhāmaratā, was given the role of Wiyāsakam. In the story Wiyāsakam was beaten by Sangkhāmaratā in a single combat. But this time Mālai went on and on with the fighting and refused to fall down on the stage. The orchestra, not knowing what to do, went on playing. Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt had to go behind the stage and order both actresses to stop. Mālai's uncontrolled behaviour was due to the fact that her co-actress had become another favourite wife of her husband, and her arch-rival in everyday life.

Although Mōm Mālai was defeated on the stage, she was too proud to yield in real life. Soon after that incident she left Wang Bān Mō and never returned, leaving her three-year old daughter, Dōkmaisot, with her mother, Mōm Yāi Suk, and her husband.

Dōkmaisot was born at Wang Bān Mō, 128 Asdang Road, Bangkok on February 17th, 1906. Her real name is M.L. Bupphā Kunjara. 'Bupphā' means 'Fresh Flower', which is also the meaning of her only pseudonym 'Dōkmaisot'. Her mother,

Mōm Mālai, later wanted to remarry but insisted on having a divorce certificate from her husband first, although traditionally this was not necessary at the time. Eventually, she obtained one. It is not clear whom she thereafter married, but she went to live in the palace of Prince Phetchabūn<sup>1</sup>, and taught classical dancing to his troupe. Although Dōkmaisot met her mother only a few times, she loved her dearly and she never blamed her for leaving her and her father. Mōm Mālai died when Dōkmaisot was still young. Prince Phetchabūn kindly arranged the cremation ceremony and had a small casket made in the shape of a drum to contain the relic and handed it to Dōkmaisot with his own hand. Dōkmaisot was so attached to her mother that she kept that small casket with her all her life. Her loss of maternal love seemingly influenced Dōkmaisot's later life and her novels a great deal.

That a religious theme frequently appears in her novels is perhaps due to her childhood and upbringing too. The earliest religious influence on Dōkmaisot's character was her grandmother who took care of her in her father's home. She was a very religious person, wore white and observed the Buddhist precepts all the time.

The second separation in her life came when Dōkmaisot was only five years old. Princess Chom<sup>2</sup> wanted to adopt M.L.Wong

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<sup>1</sup>(1892-1923) Full title and name: Somdet Chaofā Krommakhun Phetchabūn Intharachai, former name: Somdet Chaofā Chuthāthutrādilok, the founder of the "Chuthāthut" family, the eighth son of King Rama V by Queen Sī Phatcharin. He was educated in England and a graduate of Cambridge. The Prince devoted his life to a teaching career as a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University, the Director of Phō-chāng School of Art, and as official of the Ministry of Education.

<sup>2</sup>A daughter of Prince Wongsāthirātsanit who was a younger half-brother of Prince Phithak.

Kunjara, and bring her up in the Grand Palace. Chao Phrayā Thēwēt refused instantly because she was his favourite daughter, and he did not believe in sending his daughters to be trained in the Palace. When M.C. Chom turned to Dōkmaisot and asked for her instead; Chao Phrayā Thēwēt agreed. There is no evidence as to how Chao Phrayā Thēwēt felt towards Dōkmaisot, but it seems clear that she was not a favourite child.

Since Somphop Chantharapraphā<sup>1</sup> published Chīwit Dut Thēpnīyāi Khōng Dōkmaisot (A Life Like a Fairy-Tale of Dōkmaisot) in 1966, it has been generally accepted that Dōkmaisot had an unhappy childhood. On February 17th, 1971, in a discussion on Dōkmaisot's novels at the Thai National Library, Wilāt Manīwat<sup>2</sup> compared the novelist's childhood to that of Prince Ākāt-damkoeng Raphīphat<sup>3</sup> and concluded:

.. I dare not use the word 'depressing, sorrowful, and bitter' of her life when she was young, but would like to use the word 'melancholy' instead..<sup>4</sup>

On the same occasion, M.L. Bunlūa denied it and defended her father at length.

.. Speaking about whether or not her childhood was distressing, it could be true perhaps in the case of another family. We, our father's children, are people

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<sup>1</sup>He was brought up by Dōkmaisot in Wang Bān Mō until his graduation in Mining Engineering from Chulalongkorn University. He is now an official at the Department of Mining, but famous as an historian, biographer, and a playwright.

<sup>2</sup>A well-known journalist, the husband of a woman novelist, Nityā Nātyasunthōn (see Chapter I, p.66 )

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 43- 44.

<sup>4</sup>The Thai National Library. Kān Aphiprāi Ruang Nawaniyāi Khōng Dōkmaisot, February 17th, 1971, p. 21

who never let ourselves be distressed. Even if our father did not love us, we would have acted as though it was not important - 'The less he loved me, the more I had to do things to attract his attention.' So, the less he loved us, the better it was, for we would have a chance to surprise him. When Princess Chom took M.L. Bupphā to be brought up in the Grand Palace, our father did not agree at all. He did not like life in the Palace and never wanted his daughters to be brought up there, whatever the conditions. He always wanted us to be at home. We had our own home, so why should we go and live with other people? So we could not be very depressed. Because our father was like that, we always behaved ourselves in such a way as to show him that 'although you do not love me, I will still behave as one of your children in the house.' And we all did that. The favourite children were usually quiet, because otherwise the less favourite ones would create all sorts of unexpected things. Nevertheless, our father was very fair in giving us education. Princess Chom simply adored Dōkmaisot and did not want her to come out to live with us at home. But every year too, our father asked to have her back. We usually went to the Grand Palace on the water festival day to pay respect to a high-ranking princess whom we called 'Grandmother Princess', and after that we would go to visit Princess Chom. My mother informed the princess straight away that our father wanted M.L. Bupphā back, but the princess would always ask us to wait until M.L. Bupphā was nine. And when she was nine the princess again asked to postpone it until she was ten. The following year our father said that it could not be delayed any longer because he wanted his daughter to study so that she would not be less educated than her brothers and sisters. Princess Chom cried while reproaching our father for being unkind to her .... To some less favourite children, he might seem to be distant. Mōm Mālai herself was not a little aggressive. She did not leave the palace quietly, but in serious dispute. For that reason, father took less interest in a child whom her mother had deserted, but never neglected her. Three days after she came back home, Dōkmaisot was as naughty as all the rest. Naughtiness is in the blood of all of us. Our father wanted his daughters to be able to do everything like his sons, paddling, riding, and playing all sorts of games. He encouraged us to take part in these activities ..... He praised his daughters but pressed his sons, which was quite usual with nobles in those days. Let me make it clear here that it is not true when people say that the nobles brought their children up in a way that they would be very happy. On the contrary, they made them suffer so that they would be prepared for difficulties. All my brothers and sisters were taught to paddle, to farm, to plant

rice, to keep the lawns, etc. However, we did not do it with a depressed feeling but with enjoyment. Our home had a large compound, 25 rai of land. It is therefore impossible that any of us could feel unhappy.

When Dōkmaisot was taken to live in the Grand Palace, she was five years old. M.C. Chom was not a very high-ranking lady in the court of King Rama V. Her duty was to deal with writing, reading and preparing the prayers. Apart from court manners, Dōkmaisot was trained to observe everything carefully and to memorise correctly. The following story was told by Dōkmaisot herself to her sisters and brothers. One day she went to see a royal tonsure ceremony. M.C. Chom asked when she came back -

"On how many fingers did the princes and princesses wear rings?"

Dōkmaisot remembered seeing rings glittering on their fingers, so she replied

"Ten fingers"

M.C. Chom snatched her hands and folded her fingers one by one, four on each hand, while saying

"This one, this one, and this one...."<sup>2</sup>

And that was how Dōkmaisot learned that each prince and princess wore eight rings in the Sōkan ceremony. M.L. Bunlúa also said that every time Dōkmaisot came out from the Grand Palace to visit her family, she was dressed very neatly like a palace lady, with her hair properly done, her face carefully powdered, and wearing embroidered slippers, whereas her brothers and sisters were dirty and muddy, from playing the fields at Klong Toey. These characteristics of Dōkmaisot being observant, neat, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-26.

<sup>2</sup> Somphop, op.cit., pp. 31-32.

For details of the training and punishment of children in the palace see: Prince Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life, p. 233.

meticulous, are seen clearly in all her novels.

By the time Dōkmaisot left the Palace, Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt had retired and moved to live at Klong Toey in a suburb of Bangkok, leaving Bān Mō Palace to his eldest son, M.L. Warā Kunjara.<sup>1</sup> Prince Naris, his close friend, came to stay at his residence from time to time, and eventually he too bought land there and built Tamnak Plāinoen.<sup>2</sup>

Her life at home with her family seems to have been a happy one. Everyday she went with her sisters to school in carriages, accompanied by one of her stepmothers. In the afternoon, they came home and played together. At night, the praying hall would be lit bright with lamps. It was the time of the daily family gathering. Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt would pray there with all members of the family. The younger members would sometimes be rewarded with some money. In the free evenings, they would organise and perform all kinds of plays and dancing. The first written works of both Dōkmaisot and M.L. Bunlūa were short plays. Most of them could dance as well as remember the tunes and words from old songs and from the Dūkdamban playtexts. Sometimes, when Dōkmaisot did not take part in the acting, she would be a stage-manager arranging the smaller members of the family for the performance. This amateur group was watched and criticised frequently by Prince Naris.

The School Dōkmaisot and her sisters went to was St. Joseph's Convent, which was one of the best for girls in Thailand. According to M.L. Bunlūa, Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt was

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<sup>1</sup>(1878-1954) Later appointed Phrayā Thēwēt Wongwiat

<sup>2</sup> San Somdet (Prince Naris's Correspondence with Prince Damrong (1932-1943) was mostly written from this place.

not in the least worried that his children would be converted, and was broad-minded enough to listen and criticise any question concerning religion raised by them. He himself was a close friend of a Catholic priest, the headmaster of Assumption College in Bangkok. D̄kmaisot finished in the highest class of the school with French as her major subject. French Essays are said to have been her favourite written at great, even excessive length.

One interesting piece of information about her days at school which is concerned directly with her life as a novelist was told by M.L. Bunl̄a:-

...During the time she was studying there, Sister Margarite was the one who taught her the way to think. The Sister used an indirect method of training, in that she recommended her pupils to read good novels. The French novelist whom D̄kmaisot liked most and always mentioned when she was young was M. Delly.

Despite her comfortable home-life and good education, D̄kmaisot was aware that she was not a favourite child of her father. She might have been too straightforward and too bold in speech, and did not know how to please him. One example of this was when Chao Phrayā Thēwēt asked her which she preferred; to live with him or to be in the Grand Palace with Princess Chom. D̄kmaisot answered that she felt more comfortable in the Palace. Her answer made him leave the room right away, and everybody condemned her for her stupidity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, Op. cit., pp. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.41.

Somphop Chanthrapraphā, who believes that the writer was hard-pressed when she was young, states that Dōkmaisot expresses the depth of her feeling in her novel 'Nit', when Chalao said to Nit:

"Dear Nit, all my life I have not had happiness as you understand it. I have of troubles too. Just think, how many wives my father has, and stepmothers and stepchildren are not any different from mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. I always suffered from other people .... You said that I am observant; that's why I have to tell you the truth. Because I have had a great deal of unhappiness, I can therefore easily identify other people who are unhappy. Sometimes suffering is also useful, Nit, it makes some people better."

Chao Phrayā Thēwēt died in January 1922, not long after Mōm Mālai's death. The cremation ceremony took place at the Phra Mēn ground under the King's patronage. It was the highest honour the family could have received. The family including Dōkmaisot, now eighteen, bereaved of both parents, moved back to live at Wang Bān Mō with Phrayā Thēwēt, the new leader of the Kunjara, who was at that time the Director of the Royal Household. Another severe loss soon followed when Mōm Nuan, Dōkmaisot's kind stepmother and guardian died. M.L. Wong, her friendly and close elder sister, had also married and gone to live with her husband. However, the brothers and sisters were all well looked after. Those who were still studying continued with their studies.

Like his father, Phrayā Thēwēt was a very handsome and respectable gentleman. His name and position made him one of the most popular figures in the Thai high society and he also

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nit. (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), pp. 128-129.

had close contact with westerners, especially diplomats and business people. Almost every week there were at least one or two receptions at his palace. Wang Bān Mō in the reign of King Rama VI was, therefore, a real centre of the Thai elite. Phrayā Thēwēt's stables were very big, if not the biggest in the country, and all members of the family were keen on riding, as Prince Naris recalled "I remember once we went to Chonburi, Chao Phrayā Thēwēt's family went out riding together. They dubbed people who cannot ride 'chao nāk'<sup>1</sup>. Phrayā Thēwēt did not appear in exclusive society with his wife alone, but took his brothers and sisters too. In this way, Dōkmaisot came to learn with her critical eyes of all sorts of people and their behaviours, all providing her with raw materials for her writing.

Judging from photographs, and from various descriptions Dōkmaisot in her youth was a quite beautiful woman; slim figure, fair complexion, oval face with large bright eyes and a well-shaped nose. However, many critics who knew or met her agreed that her outward appearance contrasted with her real characteristics as evident in her writing, for she seemed quiet and unforthcoming, showing little awareness of things around her. When she was in her mid-thirties, Wēthāng, also a writer,

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<sup>1</sup>Naris and Damrong, Sān Somdet, vol. 22., p,235,

The term 'chao nāk' is for a young man before he enters the chapel on his ordination day. He usually wears white, and will encircle the chapel three times on a strong man's shoulders. This is perhaps to symbolise the renunciation of Buddha when he left his city on horseback.

described Dōkmaisot as looking as young as twenty to twenty-five but with her reserved and serious way of speaking, sounding as old as thirty-five to forty.<sup>1</sup>

After she had finished her study, Dōkmaisot would have liked to become a teacher, but her brother would not allow that, for fear that people would say behind his back that he was not able to support his sister after their father died and so she had to earn her own living. Indeed, Dōkmaisot seemed so keen on teaching when she was young that she kept encouraging her only younger sister, M.L. Bunlūa; to adopt it as her career. She revealed much later, in 1948, that she firmly believed that it was a useful and honourable profession, but never really loved it:

"....Sincerely, I don't like teaching much, but<sup>2</sup> still hope and dream to go on with my writing ...."

It was during this time that Dōkmaisot, not wanting to pass her time in luxurious ease, began her writing life. Her early works, which were all published in the Thai Khasēm<sup>3</sup> magazine, between 1929 - 1930, include Difō (Frightened), Praphēnī Khōng Chāo Kō Khōsikā (Customs of the Corsicans), Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn (Her Enemy), Nitnit Nōinōi (Bits and Pieces), Nūa-khū (The Life-partners), Nit, Romance Sōn Rūang Čing (A Romance based on a True Story).

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<sup>1</sup>Wēthāng, Chīwit Kān Praphan Khōng Dōkmaisot, (Bangkok: Thai Silpī, 1940), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, op. cit., p.89.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 42-46.

In the same year, 1930, the public life of Phrayā Thēwēt ended when he resigned from office. This proved fortunate for Dōkmaisot because she could accompany him to several places in the country. Phrayā Thēwēt had a country home built in Phetburi<sup>1</sup> and the family moved to live there for a few years, and came back to Wang Ban Mō only occasionally. Before that, Dōkmaisot had travelled only twice, to Singapore<sup>2</sup> with her siblings, and to the northeast<sup>3</sup> with her elder sister and brother-in-law.

Her first long novel, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, was serialised in a woman's magazine, Nārīnāt<sup>4</sup>, in 1930. Kam Kao was published in Thai Khasēm in 1932, during the revolution, followed by Nāng in 1934, after the uprising of 1933.

Her short stories, criticisms, poems, and articles appeared in various magazines. All her long novels after Khwāmphit Khrang Raek were printed in large volumes instead of instalments in magazines.

The revolution of 1932 did not change her style of writing as it did with most of her contemporaries. Dōkmaisot only mentioned it briefly in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān (1935), and added it to flavour the dialogue in Phūdī (1937). What

<sup>1</sup>Phetburi is the setting of Romance Sōn Rūang Ching and Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt.

<sup>2</sup>The sea route to Singapore was used in Nit.

<sup>3</sup>Phimāi, Saiyōk and Khōrāt in the northeast were chosen as the settings of her short story Nūa Khū.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 54-55.

really changed was the situation within her own family, due to the fact that the Kunjara, despite its reputation, had never been a wealthy family. Their big building was demolished and replaced by Bān Mō cinema-house<sup>1</sup> in 1927. It was the best cinema in Bangkok at the time. Dōkmaisot and her two sisters, M.L. Chalaem, and M.L. Bunlūa, moved to live in a small house, an annexe of the audience hall. When Sālā Chaloem Krung and other modern cinemas were built, Bān Mō cinema was converted into a playhouse for modern drama troupes and eventually for 'likē'<sup>2</sup> performance. The three sisters returning from Phetburi in 1935 moved once more to live in a small wooden house, only eight metres from the playhouse and four metres from the Palace's kitchen. The financial situation of the family was worse than before. In order to help their brother and other dependants, Dōkmaisot worked harder on her writing, whereas M.L. Bunlūa earned money teaching. However, in these circumstances, amidst surroundings with elements of old and new, and within earshot of the drums, gongs, and trumpets of the theatre, Dōkmaisot produced all her long novels.

Her health declined gradually, during and after World War II. The symptoms were rather complicated, but the cause is understandable. Dōkmaisot was an extremely patriotic person; thus she suffered badly from nervous strain during

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot chose it as a setting for an important scene in Sātrū Khōng Chaolōn.

<sup>2</sup>A kind of dance drama.

the Japanese occupation of Thailand. It is said that during the bombing of Bangkok she looked strangely solemn and self-controlled. Instead of screaming with fright and running into a shelter, Dōkmaisot went into the old audience hall of her great-grandfather, and sat there alone quietly on the floor until the bombing was over. From that time she was attacked successively by sickness, persistent headache, bronchitis and worst of all, her nerves.

In 1944, the family evacuated to Ayudhya, and later to Bāngpa-in and did not return to Bangkok until the following year. Dōkmaisot became more solemn and spoke less and less. More sorrow was added when her sister, M.L. Āphā, and her close friend, M.L. Chup Čhanthrapraphā died of tuberculosis, followed also by the death by cancer of Khunying Prik Warunrit, for whom she had great respect.

Too short was the peaceful interval after they returned to Bangkok in 1945, and before the worst loss shared by the whole nation occurred. The young King Ananda (Rama VIII) died of a gun wound on June 9th, 1946. In a letter to Somphop, Dōkmaisot talked about herself:

...I used to be like you, Somphop, afraid that bad things would happen to people close to my heart. After the War, there were some good signs that I might be well again. I don't think I have told you that I sat once at the same table as His Majesty at a Red Cross tea party. I still remember vividly his manner when I was presented and while we were having tea. His death made me ill again. This is all because of my old craziness. Whenever there was anything bad concerning our country, I had to be desperately crazy, always.

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, op.cit., pp.89 - 90.

After that, all letters D̄kmaisot wrote contained mainly three subjects; the situation in the country, her writing, and her illness. The following letter, dated October 29th, 1948, shows well how hard she tried to fight against her dismal situation:

....Don't ask me about my work. There is no progress at all. I fell ill again but don't be alarmed, it is not very serious. I shall have to wait until 1949 first before my bad sign will be over, which means I will have altogether four unlucky years. And then eight good years will follow. I might as well just accept it and stop brooding over the types and causes of the diseases I am suffering. According to my horoscope I will recover next month. Perhaps it will be true because the new doctor I went to for treatment seems to be good. I was injected, prescribed for, forbidden and recommended to do several things. He is fresh from the States. He told me not to read biography or history, but did not say that I should not write. However, I feel sick every time I try. Even at this very moment, while writing to you, I am very sick. The oculist said after examining me that I should have a thorough check, and then the doctor who checked me said that I should see an oculist. How funny!

Despite her illness, D̄kmaisot still produced some short stories and began writing her last novel in 1948. But her manuscripts had to be copied by Somphop. In the hope of gaining strength away from the capital, she brought her work with her to Songkhla where Somphop was working. There she had the good companionship of Somphop, his wife, and some other friends including Khae Na Wangn̄i,<sup>2</sup> but unfortunately, it was a hard monsoon and she could not bear the thunderstorms. It was in that town, however, that D̄kmaisot's horoscope was read by an excise officer, who assured her that it showed a marriage

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, op.cit., pp. 92 - 93.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter I, p. 56.

sign, and to a man of high rank, perhaps a minister. His forecast caused great mirth, for nobody would have dreamt then that Dōkmaisot would get married, let alone six years after.

From 1949 to 1952, her condition did not improve. She stopped writing but could not stop worrying about the situation around her. For example, in a letter to a close friend in Phetburi, Sōi Thippathat, Dōkmaisot wrote about how she had been anxious for the newly born Crown Prince<sup>1</sup>, and how relieved she felt after several astrologers had read his horoscope. In that year, she vainly tried her best to recommence her last novel. It seemed as if her health allowed her to write only up till then, and suddenly her life was changed by two novel features; her love and marriage.

Somphop Chantharaphā mentions in his biography of Dōkmaisot that the novelist had been loved and proposed to many times by officials, businessmen, people of royal descent, and even foreigners. She refused them all, Somphop hints on the grounds that some were not the type of man she liked, because she was aware of the status of her father, and because she was the only child of her mother. He also reveals that Dōkmaisot did not feel anxious about marriage because she had seen many unhappy cases among people she knew and in her own family. The last reason was undoubtedly true, especially

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<sup>1</sup>i.e. the present Crown Prince Wachirālongkōn.

in the case of her own parents, the outcome of which deeply influenced her attitude. Perhaps she was afraid that the same situation might happen to her, as she once said to Somphop:

"I don't know whom I could ask to bring up my child."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, as he says that some of the proposers were from the royal family, the claim that Dōkmaisot was always concerned for her family status sounds rather doubtful. M.L. Bunlūa at last disclosed the cryptic remark. The fact was that Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt never consented to the marriage of any of his daughters. He did not forbid men coming into his palace, and was quite friendly with his sons-in-law after they had arranged the wedding themselves, but if they asked for his permission he would firmly refuse. Therefore, his daughters had to make up their own minds whether it was risky or not. Some of them married good men and some met with complete failure. Nobody knows his real reason, but M.L. Bunlūa said it could be the result of something which happened once in her family, when Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt agreed to engage one of his daughters to a friend's son who was studying in Europe, but the son then returned home with a European wife.

In 1953, while Dōkmaisot was striving hard against her illness, Mr. Sukit Nimmanheminda, M.L. Bunlūa's friend, stepped into her life with a proposal of marriage. He is a member of

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, op.cit., p.124.

a well-to-do Chiangmai family, and a graduate in Physics from England. Like his parents, who were business people but keen on literature, Mr. Sukit did not confine his interests only to the subject he had studied. He is actually better known as a writer, a poet, a librarian, and an administrator. Before 1953, he worked as a librarian at Chulalongkorn University, and for a period as Secretary to the same institution. On the political side, he had once been a Minister of Industry. However, at the time mentioned, he was not holding any important post in government or the civil service, but was only a teacher at his own school in Bangkok, Sukit Witthayālai.

Although Dōkmaisot admired his honesty, courage, and intelligence, she postponed her answer until the following year for a strong reason; he had just divorced his first wife.

After that incident Mr. Sukit got a teaching post at the University of California, San Francisco. Dōkmaisot's health became so much worse that she was admitted twice to the Bangkok Nursing Home, before she eventually decided to go to Australia for treatment on May 22nd, 1954. When the time was up to give her answer to Mr. Sukit, he sent a letter to her in Australia. Dōkmaisot agreed to fly to San Francisco to marry him there. Only her brother, Phrayā Thēwēt, was informed of the news. Nobody knows the reasons for her decision, whether it was because

of her loneliness, or her faith in him. Whatever her reason D̄kmaisot had certainly been recommended by her doctor to find a companion, as she said in a letter dated November 11th, 1952:

I do not want to make soundings deep into my mind or recent thoughts, and only wish that everything would pass without my paying attention to it..... There is nothing much to say except that the doctor came and urged that he really wanted me to live with someone whom I like, who is good at talking so that I would hear only amusing stories. He explained that nervous problems are, not different from physical disease .....

D̄kmaisot flew to San Francisco in September 1954, and was met by Mr. Sukit at the airport. He took her straight to the Thai Embassy to register their wedding. It was a simple wedding compared with the ceremonies she had described in detail in her novels; no spilling of blessed water, no monks, no music and no reception. In their beautiful hotel suite, while unpacking their luggage, Mr. Sukit threw away all her medicines with the confident explanation that she would never need them any more.

Despite his conviction, D̄kmaisot soon fell ill again and they travelled back to Thailand by way of Europe. In Bangkok, the news of her marriage surprised everybody. Nobody had expected that D̄kmaisot would make up her mind at the age of forty-nine. Some people, Princess Phunphismai Diskul and Princess Phatthanayu Diskul<sup>2</sup>, for example, were

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 106 - 107.

<sup>2</sup>Prince Damrong's daughters. Princess Phunphismai is President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

disappointed, although they had been given a hint before, because they had expected Dōkmaisot to be one of the women in Thai society who would prove that unmarried women could also be self-supporting and able to contribute good things to the world.

However, Dōkmaisot's married life was a successful one. Apart from being a scholar, her husband was very interested in ornithology. During the first few years together, all Dōkmaisot had to do in Bangkok was to accustom herself to their new home, his school, his large library, and his aviaries. Although Dōkmaisot was strong enough to do the housework, her mental condition did not improve much, and that meant she could not do what she loved most - writing. Soon she began to worry that if her illness persisted, her husband would be unhappy. In a letter to Mrs. Sōi Thipphathat, she wrote:

...It seems that I have not written to you for a hundred years. Writing and reading to me now are the most difficult things to do. I cannot even finish a newspaper, not to mention a book. Khun Sukit must be very irritated because I do not know anything about human society nowadays. He has to read to me. Despite this, he is very proud of me. He always says that I am a good wife and I am everything that he loves with all his heart. I tell you this so that you do not misunderstand that I am being such a burden that Khun Sukit will be tired of me. In fact, I can work physically as well as before; it is my brain that does not work .....

and to Somphop she wrote:

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, op.cit., pp. 130 - 131.

....The only problem that makes me unhappy now is my health, especially my brain. It refuses to remember anything ... Another thing is my mind. Whenever I am not pleased with anything, it seems to be so important a matter that I can hardly control my manner. That is why I am unhappy and quite often want to commit suicide. I am also afraid that my companion with whom I am living, will be very anxious. He is as kind to me as before, or even more. If only I were not disturbed by this nervous illness, our marriage would be a very successful one. Now I cannot read longer than ten minutes. It makes me sick ....

In 1957, there was a coup d'état in Thailand. After a temporary government was nominated, there was a general election in order to form a legal government. Mr. Sukit was the leader of the Sahaphūm Party, and later was elected an M.P. for Chiangmai. During the period of electioneering, Dōkmaisot did her best to help him, even travelling with him to Chiangmai. The Sahaphūm Party held a majority in the Parliament, but the military council refused to accept it. They insisted on having Mr. Pote Sarasin as Prime Minister, and when this was refused, General Thanom Kittikhachon was appointed to the post. Mr. Sukit became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economics.

Thus, there was no longer Dōkmaisot, the writer, but the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand. It was a drastic change in her life. She had to work harder, adjust herself to her new mode of life, and of course fight against what disgusted her and her husband most, corruption. Princess

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 132 - 133.

Phunphismai, in a letter to Somphop Čhanthrapraphā dated July 21st, 1957, wrote:

...Two days ago, Khun Phā (M.L. Bupphā) came to see me. She looked better. This is nothing to do with politics, and she told me she took no interest in it. Only one thing she asked of her husband, that no money of the Party must come into the house. I also told her that if ever they become rich, I will never speak to them again ...

There is no doubt at all about her and her husband's integrity. Dōkmaisot herself always said "I would choose to die rather than to live and do bad."<sup>2</sup> There are two clear-cut pieces of evidence that bear witness to Dōkmaisot's anti-corruption attitude. For a long time, ever since she was young, she wished to have just a small house of her own. If she or her husband accepted only one large bribe, no doubt she could have had not a small house but a mansion as large as she wanted. Not only were all the unclean offers returned, but her husband would use rude words with the donors, no matter who they were. Dōkmaisot awaited a share of her father's estate to the end of her life, when the big piece of land at Khlong Toei had still not been sold. Therefore, she never had enough capital to build her own home.

The second piece of evidence is a letter she sent to Somphop Čhanthrapraphā in Songkhla:

... I would like to borrow a sum of ฿ 10,000 - 20,000 with a low interest of 1 - 1.5%. Do you think you can help me with it? It is rather urgent, though not extremely. If you can help me, let me know when I

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 136 - 137.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.144.

can have it, and if not, please tell me quickly. But don't worry about it too much, and don't you dare engage in any corruption for me. I have to tell you too that Khun Sukit must not know about it. It is my own affair before I married him and I do not want him to have anything to do with it. In the meantime, I will give you the copyright of one of my novels as a guarantee just in case I die before I can pay you back ...

Although her life was rather busy, it was good for her in a way, because she was distracted from time to time from her illness. If only she could have written again at that time, her readers would have had a chance to read novels of a different character from those she had previously produced. But Mr. Sukit held his Government positions for only one year before there was another coup in 1958. D̄kmaisot's role as the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister ended. But there was one more role, the last one, awaiting her when her husband was appointed Ambassador to India.

They went to New Delhi in November 1959. What with tiredness and weakness from the journey and all the arrangements she was struck down by influenza in January 1960. Doctors were consulted and several diseases diagnosed. Another reason for her feeling depressed was that she was not fond of social life, but as she could not escape it, she forced herself to fulfil it. If everything was smooth and successful, she was happy. But since most the time she was ill and became a burden to her husband instead of his helper, D̄kmaisot felt very guilty.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 140 - 141.

Mr. Sukit was a perfect husband. He showed his deep care and anxiety constantly. Before, there were many people who were sceptical about their married life because they had very different characters. But they changed their mind later. Somphop Chanthrapraphā himself admitted that if Dōkmaisot were without her beloved husband, she might have died long before that. Dōkmaisot adored and trusted him wholeheartedly. She kept quiet when she heard that people gossiped about or disagreed with her marriage, and insisted:

...Khun Sukit is a perfect gentleman. If I had married another person who came into my life at more or less the same time as Khun Sukit, everyone would have agreed, because he has everything that one wants. But no, I could never stand his old fashioned ideas ..

... I got your letter just half an hour ago. Khun Sukit brought it in to me and volunteered to open and read it. I think this is the time when we have to meet and talk. Do you think that I have changed my way of life ? It is not true, I am still walking exactly in the same way and more firmly because now I have a companion to walk with - a companion who is very strong and steady. Now I can dismiss all doubts I had before. I used to fear that I was crazy all alone, because nobody supported me, but now, at every step, I have someone waiting to tell me that I was right or I should not do it ..<sup>2</sup>

However, Dōkmaisot never fully recovered from her illness. She improved from time to time and then relapsed again. Her husband took her to see interesting places in India in the hope that changes of scene would help her. But it only

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.189.

made her feel worse. She could not walk long distances because of her heart. She could not eat anything slightly indigestible because of her poor stomach, and she could neither read nor write because of her nerves. Her luxurious life as the wife of an ambassador did not do her any good. Whenever her husband was with her, she felt secure. But if he was away, she would feel sad, deserted and lonely, so badly that she would plead with her friends and relatives to accompany her. D̄kmaisot became so dependent that once, on September 4th 1960, while she was writing to Mrs. S̄i Thiphathat, her husband came in with a Thai newspaper which contained the news that he might be appointed a Thai representative to the U.N. meeting, she wrote down immediately in the letter:

...Khun Sukit may have to be the leader of the Thai delegates to the U.N. I have just heard from him and am trying to deceive myself that it is not true, because he told me that it is not definite yet. But it is true, and he has to be away for three months. Please, Khun S̄i, come quickly, I need friends...

Another letter to M.L. P̄ng Malakul also shows her desperate need of friends:

...If I had a lot of money I would buy a plane ticket, give it to somebody who is going to Thailand to take to you, and ask him to bring you to me here ..<sup>2</sup>

There were a few times when D̄kmaisot became concerned for her husband and thought of going away just to give him

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.164.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.170.

a new chance. She told M.L. Pōng Malakul her plan and when there was no answer, she wrote again:

...You have not answered me about my plan to live with you when we are old. When I say 'old' I do not mean decrepit; only about sixty. I will say goodbye to society and will not concern myself with it any more, especially men ...

She also asked M.L. Chin Kunjara to ask the soothsayer for her "Please ask him how many more years I am going to live with Khun Sukit".<sup>2</sup> Despite all these problems, Dōkmaisot still hoped to live long, wrote long letters to her friends and relatives expressing her ideas, and did her duty as well as she could. Her old desire to own a house was still with her. It already was incredible that she could have lived so long suffering from all these diseases simultaneously: anaemia, cardiac infarction, exhaustion of psychological trait, hypothyroidism, coronary thrombosis, rheumatism and gout. She suffered from influenza again at the beginning of 1963, and this time she could not fight against it. The doctor gave her oxygen for many days, until on January 14th he left a cylinder with Mr. Sukit. The next day Dōkmaisot could not eat anything. On January 16th she was well enough to ask her husband to return the oxygen cylinder. But at the first hour of the following day, January 17th, 1963, she collapsed in front of her bed. Her husband took her up, but it was too late to save her life.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 184 - 185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.184.

That was the end of D̄kmaisot. Her body was cremated beside the Jamna river. Her relics were to be kept with her mother's at Wat Phō in Bangkok. Her Buddha image was placed upon the altar at her husband's home. Her niece, Mrs. Suntharī Chomthawat, inherited the copyright of her works and later gave it to the Thai National Library at the opening ceremony of 'D̄kmaisot 's Day' Exhibition at the Library on February 17th, 1971.

ii. The Writing of D̄kmaisot: Influences and Method

D̄kmaisot's artistic talent was an individual gift, which, with a few years of practice, enabled her to establish her name and style of writing well among her contemporaries. She may have read and liked the works of Western novelists, including Scott, Jane Austen, Guy de Maupassant and Romain Rolland, but does not seem to have been influenced by any of them, especially in her long novels. Delly's<sup>1</sup> novels, which are said to have been read frequently by D̄kmaisot when she was young may have had some influence upon a few of her early works, for example Sattrū Khōng Chaolōn and Bupphēsanniwāt. But Delly's novels are described as being 'romans sentimentaux, excellent conduits, plein de péripéties dont la fin est toujours heureuse, et destinés a être mis entre toutes les mains'<sup>2</sup> so there cannot be much similarity to D̄kmaisot's long novels

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<sup>1</sup>A joint pseudonym of Frederic Petitjean de la Rosière (1876-1949) and his sister Jeanne (1875-1947).

<sup>2</sup>André Bouring Jean Rousselot, Dictionnaire de la littérature française contemporaine, (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1966), pp. 85 - 86.

which are all serious and realistic.

On the other hand, Dṓkmaisot enjoyed reading Inao<sup>1</sup>, the religious writings of Mahā Mēk Amphai<sup>v</sup>charit<sup>2</sup>, and humourous series of P. Intharapālit.<sup>3</sup> The characteristics of these works; beautiful language, morality, and humour, are no doubt important elements of Dṓkmaisot's novels.

Because she did not belong to any group of writers, nor shared her style of writing with other writers in the country, it is preferable to examine the influences which formed her method of writing in relation to the various social circles to which she belonged. If Dṓkmaisot is positioned at the centre, she will be surrounded by three circles, each of which represents one society; Wang Bān Mṓ and the Grand Palace, St. Joseph's Convent, social milieu.

The characteristics of the central point are those of Dṓkmaisot herself, meticulous, exact, observant, economical, clever, patriotic, amusing as much as serious.

The first circle, i.e. her life with her family and Princess Chom, made her knowledgeable in Thai drama, literature, music, tradition and customs, to a level that no other Thai writer can equal.

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<sup>1</sup>A beautiful poetical work by King Rama II based on a Javanese Panji Tale.

<sup>2</sup>A Buddhist scholar and a writer who was later arrested on political charges at the same time as M.R. Nimitmongkhon and Sṓ Sētthabut. (See pp.67-70.)

<sup>3</sup>(1910-1968) A prolific writer whose three types of work had charmed the whole nation for at least ten years after World War II: The Phon, Nikṓn, Kimnguan comical series, The Sua Dam, Sua Bai Outlaws series, and his love stories.

The second circle, i.e. her schooling period at St. Joseph's Convent, forms a stepping stone to her career as a novelist. It was at this stage, when she was aware of the shortage of good reading materials for Thai teenagers, she made its remedy her first purpose of writing. With friends from various backgrounds, her social life expanded. The atmospheres of her first and second social circles were at opposite poles; being brought up a Buddhist at home and taught Christianity at school; singing old tunes and practising Thai dancing at home, writing French essays and reading Western works at school, etc. This is perhaps what made her a broad and critically minded person.

The vast areas of Thai society which Dḡkmaisot came to be acquainted with in her second circle and really only experienced at all after the completion of her education, could have convinced her that her novels could attain heights only if they dealt with the society she knew best - that of the aristocracy.

In comparison with M.R. Nimitmongkhon, Sī Būraphā, or Sot Kūramarōhit, Dḡkmaisot certainly did not attempt much to express idealism or ideology in her novels. However, it does not necessarily mean that as an individual she did not possess any, but the nature of her novels did not leave space for it. Even in her last novel, she was more of a political and satirical novelist than an idealist.

When it comes to her method of creating the stories, the same principle of analysis can be exploited; that is to say, D̄kmaisot drew with her pen within the frame of the relationship between human-beings and their society. In other words, she had insight into how individuals of different natures acted and reacted to one another, how society influenced them, and how they responded to it.

D̄kmaisot was the first professional Thai woman-novelist, and proved her ability when Thai people by and large were still sceptical about earning a living by writing. When Wē-thāng asked "Do you think that writing novels can be a profession?", D̄kmaisot firmly replied "Why not?"<sup>1</sup> She proudly called it her profession in a letter to Somphop encouraging him to write:

I must find time to read ... and books written to compete with mine. When I said I must find time, I mean to find time to work hard, because reading books which we do not enjoy is indeed a hard work. But, by duty, I should always read, so as to know the development of our writing. Taking no interest in reading is wrong, for<sub>2</sub> to me it means paying no attention to my own profession.<sup>2</sup>

Presumably D̄kmaisot began considering writing her career after she stopped serialising her work in magazines and started publishing them herself instead. As all the responsibility was hers, she naturally had to be most careful with the standard of her products. At least, they must not

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<sup>1</sup>Wē-thāng, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, op.cit., p.211.

be taken by the readers as outmoded. She might choose not to publicise herself, to work quietly and single-handedly, but she certainly possessed a strong sense of competition. Her writing above shows to a certain extent her method of writing; she studied the surrounding situations in order to make her works appeal to the public. This fact is stressed by Ranchuan Intharakamhaeng, a critic and admirer of D̄kmaisot's novels, after she had met and talked to the novelist in India. D̄kmaisot disagreed with her remark that with an experience and talent such as hers, D̄kmaisot should be able to produce her novels again anytime. She explained that it would take her a considerable length of time to study the interest of the public and the trend of the novels, before she could produce a work of good quality.

Following is a passage from D̄kmaisot's letter dated August 26th, 1948, bearing witness to her attention to the public and their criticism:

....I wonder if my language and style of writing will be accepted by the public nowadays. I have heard they talk so much about the good and bad styles of writing, but no criteria have ever been drawn. I myself after fifteen years of writing cannot explain it either ...

Despite this, her criticism of Somphop's first novel, M̄tukh̄am (Women) clarified what she considered essential in writing novels:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

The story and idea are good. They are quite realistic. But the way you present them (outlining the plot) is not subtle enough ... Dr. Sāi (a character) is almost too good a human-being. He lacks life and feelings which will move the reader to the point that they would want to tear the book or to pinch somebody hard .... Nuanchan (a character) is an extremely selfish girl, but again, she does not wake the readers up, and make them want to scream aloud. The same with all other characters, they are like people in the world but lifeless ...

If we publish it without altering the flaws, it will become another story among scores of novels nowadays, which have good themes, but written in a style not up to the required standard.

It could well be because I am too meticulous and exact that I think that the book should not be published yet....<sup>1</sup>

Apart from these important components of the structure of the novel, one quality of Dōkmaisot's stories which is unique among Thai writers is her language. Every word, clause, and sentence are clear, precise and simple. The use of punctuation, which is rather ignored by her contemporaries, also always gives rhythm and adds flavour to her writing. For example, she gave the title of Ni Lae Lok ! with an exclamation mark, which is neglected by the publishers of later editions. Without the sign the title can be translated just as This Is the World, but what the author meant was a remark to arouse feelings of sadness mixed with understanding in the reader that This! Is the World. Dōkmaisot considered total command of language most essential for her writing. Nevertheless, M.L. Bunlā revealed that Dōkmaisot's careful style of writing owed a great deal to the instruction of Luang San Sārakit, the editor of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., epilogue, pp. 209 - 212.

Thai Khasēm:

Dōkmaisot's language, which everybody considers as being excellent, would never have been of that standard without an editor like Luang San Sārahit. He read every word carefully, and if there was anything he considered not perfect, he would send it back for her to alter. Sometimes they had a long discussion before Dōkmaisot would agree to alter it. Not only on the language did Luang San sometimes express his critical opinion, but also on traditions and manners.<sup>1</sup>

In writing, Dōkmaisot thought of the story, gathered the information, outlined the plot, and worked out the details first before she started it. Concerning the setting, unless she knew the place well enough, Dōkmaisot would never mention its name, or otherwise would keep herself away from having to describe it. She never produced two works concurrently. The titles were always chosen after completion. Although she did not have a definite schedule of writing, Dōkmaisot was always punctual in sending her manuscripts to the publishers. That was why Bupphēsanniwāt was written even while the novelist was travelling on a bullock-cart in the rough country of northeast Thailand.

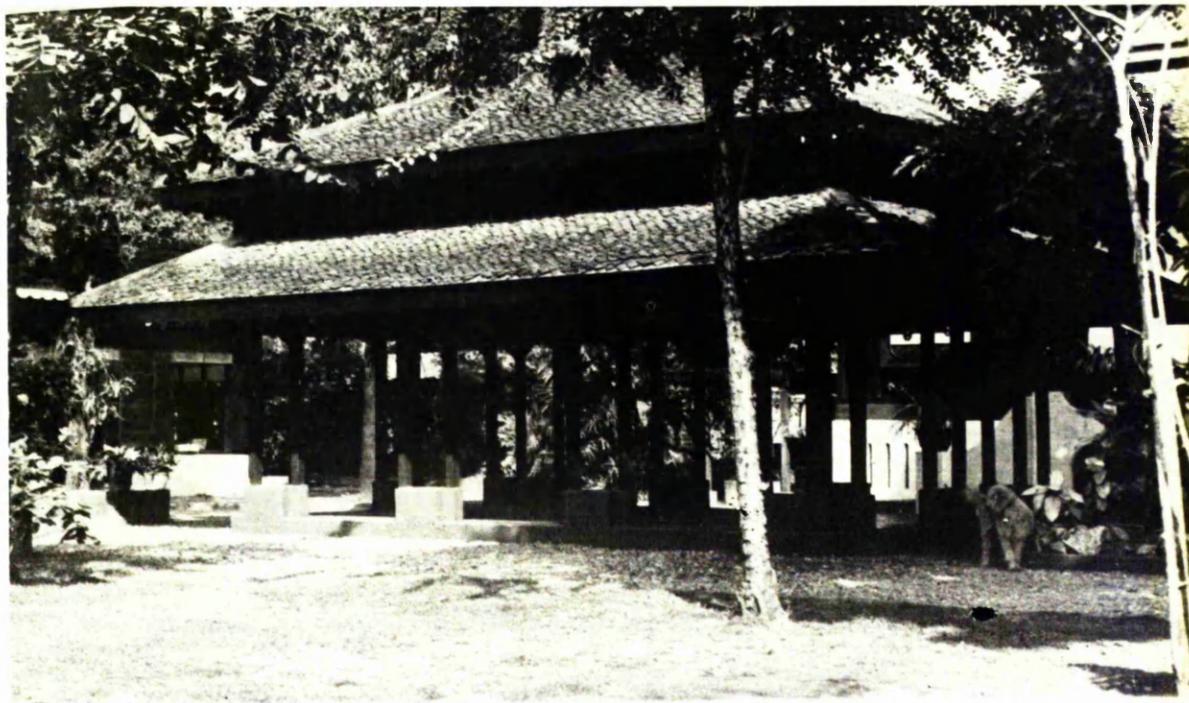
At Wang Bān Mō, Dōkmaisot could write both in the day-time, and at night, in her own room, at the pavilion, or in the audience hall of her great-grand father. To take a break or clear her mind, she usually smoked or took a walk around the lawns. Because her handwriting was not beautiful and typing disturbed her concentration, she made a fair copy

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<sup>1</sup>"Ramlūk Thāng Dōkmaisot", Prachāthippatai, March 9th 1971, p.9.



The audience hall at Wang Bān Mō. Dōkmaisot wrote her novels here in the day time.



The pavilion at Wang Bān Mō where Dōkmaisot worked at night. Ni Lae Lok! was completed here at 5 a.m.

of the original manuscript by dictating to Somphop, especially in times of her illness. Her patriotic and economical character is seen even in her stationery; one dozen pencils, an eraser, a pen-knife, and writing paper of foolscap size, all of which had to be Thai products, bought from Thai shops. (This attitude, however, changed later.)

### iii. D̄kmaisot's position among Thai writers

1929 is a very important year in the development of the Thai novel, for three incidents occurred to mark the liberation of writers from the previous style of romantic stories; the forming of the Suphāpburut group<sup>1</sup>, the publication of Prince Ākāt's Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit<sup>2</sup>, and the serialising of D̄kmaisot's Sattrū Khōng Chaolōn. It may be a mere coincidence that almost all the writers involved were born around 1905 or 1906, and were educated in Bangkok up to pre-university level. Although Prince Ākāt did not join the staff of any magazine, he had been a close friend of the founder-members of the Suphāpburut group, especially Sī Buraphā. D̄kmaisot alone was working individually in the secluded atmosphere of Wang Bān Mō, and Prince Ākāt's early death left her the more conspicuous writer producing a particular kind of novel in contrast to her male contemporaries.

Nobody has ever explained why D̄kmaisot never joined or

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 54, 55, ff.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 42-46.

worked for any magazine. But from her life story it can be assumed with certainty that, as a daughter of Chao Phrayā Thēwēt, and a younger sister of Phrayā Thēwēt, she had to be most careful with her name. If teaching was considered unsuitable for her by her family<sup>1</sup>, working with a magazine would have been quite out of the question, particularly when writers were no longer held in the sort of respect N.M.S. and his colleagues had been; but were only people 'with empty guts'.

While her contemporary writers were turning their aims more and more towards political writing, Dōkmaisot continued her novels about the élite, and seemingly completely turned her back on what was going on. Her writing sounds more serious too, but in connection with life and not politics. Her husband, Sukit Nimmanheminda, disclosed that Dōkmaisot had no confidence in the governments after the revolution of 1932, because she believed that they were driven towards change by their personal hatred for individuals, and had no other motives.<sup>2</sup> It should not be surprising, therefore, that she had no high opinion of writers who first supported the revolution and later turned against the government.

There may be several explanations as to why Dōkmaisot began publishing long novels herself after 1932. She certainly had to have enough capital, and confidence that

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>In an interview with the writer of this thesis on August 27th, 1971.

her books would sell well. Prakāt Watcharāphōn claimed to know from a reliable source that the author wanted to have close supervision of the printing.<sup>1</sup> Wēthāng pointed out the difference between Dōkmaisot's and other writers' works as a result of her being able to work and publish freely:

Dōkmaisot has no fixed time for writing, but will write when she has spare time and really wants to. This method is therefore different from that of writers who have to squeeze out their work day by day within a limited time and under compulsion. In the case of Dōkmaisot, her works have been meticulously checked and rechecked from the beginning to the end before they can be printed and bound. Of course, the product of such a procedure is neat and beautiful, but it is almost impossible for Thai writers in general nowadays to follow.<sup>2</sup>

Another possible reason was that Dōkmaisot had noticed the instability of the magazines and newspapers during that period, and did not want to see her stories halted half way through, or have to move from one journal to another as had been the case with some writers.

One direct result of her action, which was probably less obvious at the time, was that it enabled her to write independently, whereas her contemporaries had either to let the government's policy lead their pens or to resign frequently in order to retain their freedom. Dōkmaisot did not just cease serialising her novels, but never sent any of the shorter writings to a commercial magazine for at least five years. To arrange to have a short novel published

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<sup>1</sup>P. Watcharāphōn, Ngān Chīwit Khōng Nakpraphan Sīsip Nāmpākā, (Bangkok: Phadung Sūkṣa, 1962), pp. 157

<sup>2</sup>Wēthāng, Chīwit...., p. 40.

in a daily newspaper, Phiu Luang in 1937, Wēthāng went himself to meet Dōkmaisot at Wang Bān Mō. Nevertheless, all he obtained was the author's permission for him to reprint Bupphēsanniwāt. By 1940, Dōkmaisot had become very popular, and her novels received critical attention to an extent unequalled by other writers since the publication of Lakhōn Haeng Chīwit. But she still chose to keep herself out of the limelight. Some readers did not even know whether their favourite, 'Dōkmaisot', was a man or a woman. However, her contemporary writers did not write to praise her directly as they had done with Prince Ākāt or Yākhōp. Sa-nguan Chūphinit said that her husband Mālai, admired R. Chanthaphimpha, but never thought much of Dōkmaisot.<sup>1</sup>

In his third meeting with Dōkmaisot at Wang Bān Mō, hoping to acquire information to write about her, Wēthāng was confronted by an aloof refusal to explain, and she simply reversed his questions throughout their conversation. For example, Wēthāng was certain that Dōkmaisot could remember the title of her first translated work (The Customs of the Corsicans), but she did not bother to tell him. She concluded abruptly that his guess at her age as forty years old was correct, although she was at the time only thirty-four. Following are passages from their conversation which reflect Dōkmaisot's unco-operative and stern attitude towards other writers. It is also important to note that for 'I' Dōkmaisot used 'Chan' instead of 'Dichan' which would have

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<sup>1</sup>In an interview with the writer of this thesis on September 11th, 1971.

sounded less condescending.

- Dōkmaisot "I don't think you should write about me and I don't want you to."
- Wēthāng "I did not mean your story or your private life, but you 'life as an author'."
- Dōkmaisot "What do you mean by 'an author' and 'life as an author'?"
- Wēthāng (after pondering over several Thai equivalents of the English words 'novel' and 'novelists')  
"I mean one such as you and yours."
- Dōkmaisot "Then surely you can write about it yourself."
- Wēthāng "There are certain things that I cannot, unless I make guesses which may turn out right or wrong."
- Dōkmaisot "That's why I don't want you to write about me in this respect. The works I have produced are not all so marvellous that I should make myself known, or that anyone should write about me. Why don't you choose somebody more deserving?"
- Wēthāng "I have, and you are my choice."
- Dōkmaisot "I want your reason."
- Wēthāng "Because you are popular at present."
- Dōkmaisot "What about other well-known authors, aren't they popular? For example those in your group."
- Wēthāng (knew that Dōkmaisot meant the Suphāpburut group. He made it clear to her that he wanted the readers to know about her ideas in writing.)
- Dōkmaisot "As for my ideas, you can read them in my stories. I don't want in the least to include anything more than what I have expressed in my novels. But if you want to criticize them, do, by all means. I am quite prepared to listen to you."

(Wēthāng could only laugh when he heard Dōkmaisot mention the word 'to criticize', because, as he quoted Prince Wan's article, literary criticism in Thailand was very much under-developed.)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Prince Wan Waithayākōn, "Wannakhadī Wichān", Mahāwitthayālai XVI, 7 (May 1938), p.226.

<sup>2</sup>Wēthāng, op.cit., pp. 9-15.

In summing up her position, one can say that D̄kmaisot was a lonely figure among the Thai writers of her time. Her style of writing, which was different from that of others, her portrayal of the aristocratic class in a period when most writers wanted to abolish it, and her personal position in Thai society, made her contemporaries seemingly indifferent to her and her works. Although W̄thāng spoke rather proudly of having D̄kmaisot's work published for the first time in a daily newspaper, he also stressed his being inferior to her in age and writing experience. This implied perhaps that other writers older than him would not have interviewed her. The critics of D̄kmaisot's novels too were not her contemporaries, but graduates from Chulalongkorn University. Nobody between 1930-1950 tried to adopt her style or admitted to be influenced by her in anyway. Not until after 1950, when the literary milieu had changed, did her works, now considered classics, have much impact on younger writers, especially Somphop Chantharapraphā, Chūwong Chāyachindā<sup>1</sup>, Wilāt Manīwat<sup>2</sup>, and R. Chanthaphimpha<sup>3</sup> whose works Mālai Chūphinit admired. What is most interesting is that Professor Kulāp Malikamāt disclosed that, when she was young, her teachers at St. Joseph's recommended her to read D̄kmaisot's novels, which means that St. Joseph's Convent, which had earlier persuaded D̄kmaisot herself to read French novels, later chose the works of D̄kmaisot, for their pupils.

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<sup>1</sup>Chūwong's Tamrap Rak are dedicated to D̄kmaisot. For details see: Chūwong Chāyachindā, Tamrap Rak (Bangkok: Khlang Witthaya, 1969), vol. 1, preface.

<sup>2</sup>See: Chāngkai, (pseud.) "Nakpraphan Satri Nai Lōk Nangsū Mtang Thai Thī Khāphačhao Rūčhak", Siam Rath (Jan. 4th 1954) pp. 5, 12.

<sup>3</sup>See: Thai National Library, Kān Aphiprāi..., p. 16.

## Chronology of the Major Incidents in D̄okmaisot's Life

- 1906 Birth at Bān M̄ Palace.
- 1909 Parents separated.
- 1911 Taken to be brought up in the Royal Grand Palace.
- 1915 approx. Reunited with family at Khl̄ng Toei.  
Education at St. Joseph's Convent.
- 1923 Death of Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt Wongwiwat.  
Returned to Bān M̄ Palace.
- 1924 Completed her studies at St. Joseph's Convent.  
M.L. Bunlūa went to study in Penang.
- 1925 Death of King Rama VI.
- 1926 Phya Thai Palace was converted into a club.
- 1927 Bān M̄ Cinema was built.  
D̄if̄, and  
Prāphēnī Kh̄ng Čhao K̄ K̄sikā published in  
the Thai Khasēm.
- 1928 Travelled to Singapore, then to  
North East Thailand.  
M.L. Bunlūa returned home.
- 1929 Sattrū Kh̄ng Čhaol̄n\*,  
Nitnit N̄in̄oi, and  
Nāa Khu published in the Thai Khasēm.
- 1930 Phrayā Thēwēt resigned from the Civil Service.  
Moved with family to live in Phetburi.  
Nit\*  
Romance S̄n R̄ang Čing\*  
Phr̄ttikan Kh̄ng Phū Rak Khwām Pen S̄t, and  
Khwāmphit Khrang Raek\* published in the Thai Khasēm.
- 1931 Bupphēsanniwāt\* in the Čhuay Kāchāt.

- 1932 June 24th revolution.  
Kam Kao\* published in the Thai Khasēm.
- 1933 Royalists' uprising.  
Sām Chāi.\*
- 1934 Nūng Nai Rōi.\*  
Nāng in the Thai Khasēm.  
Mūa Klap Chak Dū Rūang Voltaire in Chūn Chumnum.  
Fai in the Suan Kulāp.  
Duang Chaksu Khōng Than Phūphiphāksā in Sī Somdet.
- 1935 Abdication of King Rama VII.  
Moved back with family to Bangkok.  
Chai Chana Khōng Luang Narūbān.\*
- 1937 Nationalism initiated.  
Second general election.  
1/500 in the Mahā Witthayālai.
- 1938 Phūdī.\*  
Uara Nāng Sing in the Sāi Panyā.  
Kān An.  
Sī Chuamong Nai Rotfai in the Mahā Witthayālai.  
First Nithān Kham Kāp in the Suan Sunantha.  
Luang Pibulsonggram came to power.
- 1939 World War II.  
Japan's Greater East Asia co-prosperity Sphere.  
Pan-Thai Movement.  
'Siam' changed to 'Thailand'.  
Cultural Law declared.  
Ubatthēt.\*  
Mō Ngū Tāi Phrō Ngū, Mō Fan.... in Anusōranī-phadungrat.
- 1940 Thailand-French Indo-China crises.  
Thai-Japanese Pact.
- 1941 Japan's 'mediation'.  
Japan's invasion and occupation.  
Nī Lae Lōk!\*  
Second Nithān Kham Kāp in the Prachāchāt Satri.
- 1942 New style of Thai spelling declared.  
Nanthawan.\*  
Third Nithān Kham Kāp in Ekkachon.  
Bombing of Bangkok.

- 1943 Moved with family to Thonburi during heavy bombing.  
Began suffering from nerves.  
Fourth Nithan Kham Kap in the Rotfai.
- 1944 Evacuated Bangkok with family to Ayuthya, then to Bang Pa-in.
- 1945 End of World War II.  
Returned with family to Bangkok.
- 1946 Death of King Ananda Mahidol.
- 1947 Ruang Ying Sat in the Rung Arun.  
Anna Kap Phrachao Krung Siam in the Rung Arun.  
→ Pholamuang Di in the Ekkachon.  
Khon Chai Bun.
- 1948 F.M.Pibulsonggram resumed power.  
Planned to write her last novel.\*
- 1949 → Began her last novel.
- 1953 Another attempt to finish the last novel.
- 1954 Travelled to Australia for treatment.  
Draft copy of the last novel sent back and left unfinished.  
Travelled to the United States to marry Mr. Sukit Nimmanheminda.
- 1955 approx. Returned to Bangkok.
- 1957-58 Deputy Prime Minister's wife.
- 1959 Ambassador's wife in New Delhi.
- 1963 Death in New Delhi.

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The arrows indicate incidents, or locations, and the novels in which they figure.

For all other works except the novels (asterisked) see also appendix i , pp. 493-505.

## CHAPTER III

## The Novels : early work

In this chapter the first four short novels are considered: Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn (1929), Nit and Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing (1930), and Bupphēsanniwāt (1931).

The literary art of Dōkmaisot, who had so far published very little<sup>1</sup>, was still in an early stage of development. She was not yet writing novels of the length which she later achieved. Nevertheless, both Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn and Nit have the scope to be called novels rather than short stories. The other two works were classed by publishers as 'rūang san'-short stories. However, both extend over a good length of time, and in terms of structure go far beyond the relation and development of a single incident. Therefore it seems best to treat them together with the first two acknowledged novels.

It is noticeable from the start that Dōkmaisot calls on her own experience in physical location and human and social environments and this is a characteristic which lends a sense of descriptive realism to her work eventhough, at this stage, she does not always have a sure hand as far as credibility of incident and human relationship is concerned. We find an effect almost of melodrama in these novels.

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<sup>1</sup>See plan on p. 120.

Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn : Her Enemy

This novel was first published in instalments in the Thai Khasēm from June 15th to September 15th, 1929. Fifteen years later, the Thai Red Cross Society reprinted it in one volume for charity purposes. In the first revised edition published by the Hō Witthayākān in 1951, Dōkmaisot explained clearly that she had previously intended to correct various deficiencies but later decided to keep it as it first appeared, except for some minor changes in the language.

List of characters

Phrayā Maitrīphithak	a rich widower, owner of a textile company, who, before his retirement, had been Ambassador to the United States.
Mayurī Wibūnsak	22, his only daughter and child by his half-Thai half-American wife (deceased).
Phrayā Bamrung Prachākit	a widower, retired civil servant, friend and cousin of Phrayā Maitrī, owner of a teak company in Sawankhalok.
Prasong Wibūnsak (Prasom)	28, his only son and child, a graduate from France, manager of the teak company, and Mayurī's fiancé.
La-ō	a doctor of Chinese descent, Mayurī's boyfriend.
Luang Prasoet Samphan	a young official in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ex-Secretary to the Royal Embassy in London, Prasong's close friend and under a debt of gratitude to him for saving his life from a fire.
Praphā	his younger sister, Mayurī's friend.

## Synopsis

Mayurī was seven years old when her father was appointed Thai Ambassador to the United States. Being a widower, Phrayā Maitrī had to leave his daughter in the care of Phrayā and Khunying Bamrung. Mayurī and Prasong were brought up together as brother and sister, and they became very attached to one another, so much so that their parents engaged them to be married when they grew up. Three years later, Phrayā Maitrī paid a visit to Thailand and upon his return took his daughter with him to the United States. The two children never met again for another twelve years.

Prasong, at eighteen, was sent to further his studies in France. For fear that his son might indulge himself abroad especially with girls, Phrayā Bamrung revealed to him the proposed marriage to Mayurī. Prasong, who had felt great affection for his second cousin, accepted this and remained faithful throughout. On completing his studies after seven or eight years in France, Prasong came home and worked as manager in his father's teak company.

But everything was different with Mayurī. Twelve years in the United States as daughter of an Ambassador had made her a proud, spoilt, and westernised young woman. Phrayā Maitrī however did not tell her of the engagement until they had returned to Thailand and he was reminded by Prasong through his father. Mayurī refused to recognise the arrangement, making it clear that she would marry a man of her own choice. Phrayā Maitrī therefore had to write to tell Phrayā Bamrung that Prasong was free from the bond, politely adding that Mayurī would not be allowed to marry any man without Prasong's consent.

Whereas his father did not seem to mind letting Mayurī go, Prasong, on the contrary, decided to win her back, and in such a way as to meet her own conditions too. Her refusal did not hurt only his heart, but also his pride, for he had heard from some source that she had been going out with another man. In the same letter Phrayā Maitrī had asked Phrayā Bamrung to find for him a capable secretary. Prasong saw his opportunity here and began his plot. He asked his father to write

to Phrayā Maitrī saying that the young man he required would be sent to Bangkok, and that as far as Mayurī was concerned Prasong asked to be given six months for decision.

Soon after that, Prasong, who had grown a moustache in order to disguise himself, appeared at Phrayā Maitrī's home as 'Prasom'. He found his fiancée a beautiful but condescending woman, and her boyfriend, La-ḡ, a medical doctor of Chinese blood. Prasom feigned indifference to her beauty which everyone else admired. He was outwardly uncompromising, undeterred by her position as his employer's daughter, and dared even criticise her condescension outright. This made Mayurī very angry and looked at him as 'her enemy' at first though her anger gradually turned to surprise and disappointment. Despite his conceit, she found his behaviour towards her sometimes puzzling. Once, he gently kissed a rose that had dropped from her blouse on the floor, and as soon as he realised that his action had been noticed 'Prasom' kissed her violently, then refused to apologise. At her birthday party, Mayurī learned that 'Prasom' was a close friend of Luang Prasoet, her friend's brother. Even more surprising was his giving her a present that turned out to be an old photograph of a girl and a boy (themselves), which on the following day he asked to have back because it was as dear to him as his own heart. He refused to accompany her anywhere, but would follow in secret to give her protection. At the Phya Thai Palace Club, where Mayurī went with La-ḡ, 'Prasom' involved himself in a fight, and knocked a man into a pond because he criticised his fiancée's character behind her back. He also rescued her from a car accident in which La-ḡ had involved her by his drunken driving. The conflicting behaviour of 'Prasom' continued and made Mayurī more and more perplexed. While her confidence in La-ḡ decreased she began to wonder whether her fiancé could help her out of all her troubles. But at the same time, she was not sure whether she was in love with 'Prasom'. Having noticed signs of his influence over her, 'Prasom' purposely heightened the tension. One day he invented for Mayurī and her father a newspaper report about a man who committed suicide after finding out that his fiancée had eloped with another man.

Mayurī was shocked when 'Prasom' gave his opinion that, if he were that man, instead of taking his own life, he would kill both lovers. Not only that, but 'Prasom' was stern and unfriendly with her, and tried to hurt her pride by flattering Praphā in her presence. Her pride came to an end one evening when both of them were invited by Luang Prasoet and Praphā to their home. 'Prasom' laughed, chatted, and danced with Praphā, paying absolutely no attention to Mayurī. In the cinema she noticed that 'Prasom' sat next to Praphā and enjoyed himself talking to her friend. Mayurī went out to telephone La-ḡ, who came straight to collect her, his hopes of her revived. But realising he was wrong, La-ḡ turned destructive. He proposed to take Mayurī to his place saying that his sister, Phayḡm, wanted to see her. In his study, he made Mayurī unconscious with chloroform, and was about to rape her when 'Prasom' turned up, just in time to save his fiancée.

After the incident, Mayurī repented of her own conduct. When 'Prasom' reminded her of her fiancé, she expressed a wish to meet him, even though deep down she knew that she loved her father's secretary whose position was lower than hers. Mayurī waited in great suspense until the appointed day came, and 'Prasom', having shaved off his moustache, appeared in front of her as Prasong Wibūnsak.

In analysing Sattrū Khḡng Čhaolḡn, one has to bear in mind that it is the first attempt of an author aged twenty-three, and intended to be suitable for young Thai readers. The story which is about how a man tames his westernised fiancée is undoubtedly less interesting and exciting than several stories of the same period, especially Prince Ākāt's Lakhḡn Haeng Čhīwit or Sī Būraphā's Lūk Phūchāi<sup>1</sup>. The theme of characters disguising themselves is quite common in old Thai literature. What the common Thai readers of that period

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter I, p. 73

might have found novel were the description of an exclusive place like the Phya Thai Palace, and the life-style of upper-class people, as well as the behaviour of westernised young people.

Dōkmaisot's judgement of her own work in 1951 justifiably considered the basis upon which further criticism might be made:

When I agreed to let the Hō Witthayākān publish this novel, I was hoping to improve it by altering the style, language, and plot. But after examining it closely, I found that the deficiencies concerning the plot itself are too numerous to be changed. To correct them all would be to rewrite the whole story or to write a new novel based on Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, and if done, to say "Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn is Dōkmaisot's first novel" is no longer valid. So far as the style of writing and language are concerned, I have altered them as much as I can to reduce your annoyance. Even so, I still feel it is far from smooth, especially in places where either more serious or lighter toned words are needed. For these reasons, I must apologise to you, my readers, for all the faults in the book you are holding in your hands.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the story and the plot, the device used to unravel the problem, i.e. the double identity of the hero, make the novel with its dramatic elements unrealistic. There is no sub-plot and the pre-plot is not convincing enough. It is impossible for fathers who love their children devotedly to forget about their engagement, especially Phrayā Maitrī, who sees the affair between Mayurī and La-ō growing strongly day by day. There is no reason why Prasong, a faithful fiancé with a forceful character, should not have had contact with Mayurī during those long years.

The development of the story is not subtle, especially when compared with the author's later novels. Dōkmaisot builds up all the incidents too obviously instead of letting

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn (Bangkok:Hō Witthayākān, 1951), pp. (1-2).

them develop gradually and naturally. She also seems to be willing to sacrifice for melodramatic effect a number of attitudes which would be expected by the Thai reader if he was thinking in terms of what is realistic in his own society. M.L. Bunlúa discloses how the book has been criticised in the family:

When Dōkmaisot wrote Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn and published it in the Thai Khasēm, it did not attract much attention from the readers, apart from the family and some friends. Most of us laughed at it. Dōkmaisot was still too young and hardly experienced about life, but she attempted to write about a subject of which she was ignorant - a man trying to rape a woman by tying her hands and feet. Our brothers laughed and thought it was funny. After that Dōkmaisot never again touched what she did not know about...<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it is unrealistic, but worse is the method by which the novelist arranges the incidents leading to it; Mayurī telephoned La-ō to collect her from the cinema; they argued while driving; he took her to his study; made her unconscious with chloroform; and suddenly 'Prasom' broke in from nowhere to save her from being raped. That is the end of one chapter. In the following chapter, Dōkmaisot brings the reader back to see what has happened to 'Prasom' before he turns up at the door of La-ō's study. Dōkmaisot's problem is to keep up the pace of development towards the major events (i.e. the attempted rape) between La-ō and Mayurī where the appearance of 'Prasom' at the last moment is vital. But she needs also to detail simultaneously (which she cannot do) the process of 'Prasom's arrival to the rescue. So she writes two chapters - the rape first - the events leading to 'Prasom's arrival second. Technically, a flashback can be inserted in a conversation

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<sup>1</sup>The Thai National Library, Kān Aphi-prāi..., p. 34.

at a later stage, and it will be a more fitting device than putting the clock back between chapters. E.M. Forster writes about writers having to be conscious about time:

The author may dislike his clock. Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights* tried to hide hers, Sterne in *Tristram Shandy* turned his upside down. Marcel Proust, still more ingenious, kept altering the hands, so that his hero was at the same period entertaining a mistress<sup>1</sup> to supper and playing ball with his nurse in the park.

In writing these chapters, Dōkmaisot may even have hated the clock for she cannot hide it behind her, nor conceal it with anything. While pressing on with Mayurī and La-ō's activities and their whereabouts almost every fifteen minutes, the author does not want to sacrifice another realistic event; 'Prasom', like Bangkok people in general, going to have supper in the Chinese quarter after the film. Therefore, she fails to be convincing regarding time, and 'Prasom's asking Mayurī about the time they arrived at the study, seemingly to make sure of her safety, is an evidence of the author being conscious of the matter.

As for the language, which the novelist admitted was not smooth, it could be that her over-concern with correctness made the dialogue less natural. Having been brought up and educated in the United States, it is not convincing that Mayurī could have had the sort of command of the Thai language as she appeared to have in the story. The sharp contrast of Mayurī and Nut in *Kam Kao* makes *Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn* even more unrealistic. Throughout the story there is only one French expression, when Prasong calls Mayurī 'Marjorie, ma fiancée',

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<sup>1</sup>E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p.37.

with a footnote explaining the meaning, the amusing purpose of using it, and apologising if the reader found it irritating. whereas Nut is quite convincingly conversant with English and introduced English expressions into her speech.

Another evidence of Dōkmaisot's lack of experience in writing this novel is her getting too involved with the story and the characters. Very often a reader finds not only unfitting dialogues but also the novelist herself coming out to call for his attention. This is most obvious when she tries to analyse Mayurī's mind after her first meeting with "Prasom":

My dear reader, if you are a man you should ask your wife or your younger sister, or an elder sister whether the thing I am going to say next is true or not. If you are a girl, then please ask yourself.

I declare that almost all girls, and indeed all girls who know that they are pretty, supposing that there is a man who dares to look down on them by a glance, by what he says, by a gesture or in any other way, as for example showing indifference and contempt, all such girls will want - will want oh! so much to be the one to touch his heart, will want to have him think her his favourite in beauty, elegance, in attractiveness and everything at all, and will want to have him tell her of his admiration. If he falls in love with her, so much the better. And then she will refuse that love of his with words and actions that show she thinks him only a little better than a scrawny cat so that she can revenge herself for his insult. 1

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 52-53.

Nit

Nit was first serialised in the Thai Khasēm in 1930, first published in book form in 1936, and since then has been reprinted several times by several publishers.

List of characters

Phrayā Surasaen Songkhrām	a retired general and nobleman, honest and kind.
Khunying Surasaen Songkhrām (Chan)	his wife, a gentle and rather worrying person.
Nit	18, their only child and daughter, an innocent and cheerful girl who has just left school.
Phrayā Wichai Chānyut	Phrayā Surasaen's friend, also an ex-general.
Khunying Wichai Chānyut	his wife, selfish and calculating.
Luang Thanasān	28, their only son, a young civil servant, graduated from Europe.
Rasmi	25, Khunying Wichai's niece, in love with Luang Thanasān.
Chalao	Nit's friend and confidant, daughter of Chao Phrayā Nakkharin.
Chalāt	Chalao's brother.

Synopsis

After the engagement of their daughter to Luang Thanasān, Khunying Surasaen began to feel anxious about how Nit was going to be treated by Khunying Wichai. Phrayā Surasaen, on the contrary, had full confidence in Nit. Both knew well that Phrayā and Khunying Wichai wanted their daughter to marry the latter's son because they were about to become bankrupt and the Surasaen wealth could help to keep them from that disaster. Phrayā Surasaen consented to the marriage because Phrayā Wichai was his old colleague. But there were other facts of which he and his wife were not aware; Luang Thanasān agreed to marry Nit because he had been rejected

by his cousin, Rasmī, while she, for fear of losing him forever, had decided already to win him back.

Their intrigue was discovered on Nit's wedding day when Phrayā Surasaen overheard Luang Thanasān, the groom, promising Rasmī that Nit would be his wife only in law. It was all too late. The best he could do at the last moment before the ship took the couple away to Singapore for their honeymoon, was to remind his only daughter to be brave and confident that no real evil can come to her.

Nit shed tears almost the first moment she was alone with her husband. She could not understand why Luang Thanasān was so indifferent, and how he could call her 'the destroyer of his love'. Although Nit never informed her parents of the state of affairs, she implied in her letters to them how painfully she yearned for their parental love.

After the honeymoon, Nit moved to live in Phrayā Wichai's home where she was badly treated by her mother-in-law, and totally forsaken by her husband. She did her duty as a wife properly while Luang Thanasān openly continued his affair with Rasmī. He never stepped into his wife's room, but Nit often found him and Rasmī alone in his bedroom. On his birthday, Luang Thanasān threw a book Nit gave him into a waste-paper basket because she had inscribed it: "to my dearest husband". Nit could not go anywhere or do anything without being upbraided by Khunying Wichai. Before long Nit became a different person - quiet and unhappy.

Chalao was the only person who noticed the situation. She suggested that Nit should be herself as much as possible, and argue if she had to. Nit did her best, and found that she was happier, but the situation remained the same. She was successful, however, in plotting to take her husband with her to holiday at Hua Hin with her parents and Chao Phrayā Nakkharin's family.

Hua Hin gave Luang Thanasān an opportunity to see how good and lovable his wife was. He was almost jealous of Chalāt who was very friendly with Nit. However, his passion towards Rasmī was still very strong, and he lapsed into

infatuation again soon after they returned to Bangkok.

A few months later, during a big festival in Bangkok, Nit was not well and was left alone in the house when Chalao visited her. Having learnt that Luang Thanasān was not paying any attention to his sick wife, but instead had an appointment with Rasmī to collect her at her home that evening, Chalao made a simple but effective plan; Nit had to go to her parents' home to wait for her there, and send the driver back when Chalao drove up in Chalāt's car. The two friends then went out, and driving to several places, parked the car by the lane leading to Rasmī's house. Luang Thanasān, while driving past, recognised Chalāt's car and saw his wife sitting in it, laughing cheerfully with someone whom he could not see clearly because of the dark. He assumed from what the driver told him that the person was Chalāt. His jealousy was aroused. He went straight to them and pulled Nit out. After he realised that it was Chalao, his jealousy turned to anger and embarrassment. Luang Thanasān drove home fast, forgetting that Nit was ill and had only a thin blouse on.

Chalao came a few days later hoping to hear from her friend an amusing account of the previous night, but instead found Nit very ill with pneumonia. Phrayā Surasaen came to fetch his daughter immediately. Luang Thanasān was called to sign the divorce document. He repented and pleaded for forgiveness but was firmly refused by Phrayā Surasaen. In the end, it was Chalao who helped him to meet Nit. She forgave him and the marriage continued on a happier basis.

### Story

After a gap of less than a year since she wrote Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, and with only two small pieces in between, Dōkmaisot produced Nit, the story of which is almost opposite to that of the first novel. It concerns real Thai life and customs. The leading male and female characters do not know one another before, but agree to the marriage arrangement

made by their parents. Instead of making the marriage the finale, Dōkmaisot makes it the beginning of all the troubles. The third person added to cause trouble and be defeated in the end is this time a woman.

The atmosphere in Nit is also more moving than that in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn. All types of love are included which makes the flavour more interesting.

However, the first and biggest flaw in the story can be seen easily, that is, Dōkmaisot does not explain why Nit is disliked by her mother-in-law. She does not run away with Luang Thanasān, nor marry him against her will, but to save his family from financial disaster. The author describes Phrayā Wichai as being hen-pecked, and having nothing much to do after his retirement but play music. It is most possible therefore that it is Khunying Wichai alone who deals with their business, which is a very common feature in Thailand. The marriage of Luang Thanasān and Nit could also well be her plan. In that case, there is no reason why she should express her disapproval of Nit's manner so openly even before the engagement. There may be a great number of unscrupulous people everywhere, but in the case of Khunying Wichai, it is too unconvincing, and not in tune with her cunning and calculating nature.

Although she no longer calls the reader to listen to her comment directly as in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn in this novel, Dōkmaisot has not quite achieved an artistic detachment, and is still very much the inventor of the incidents. One feels that the novelist herself is both Nit in asking for sympathy and Chalao in planning for victory. This makes the story

unconvincing and obviously pre-arranged.

### Theme

The theme of Nit is the complexity of Thai family life concerning marrying off their children, and the relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. Compared with Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, it can also be said that the theme of Nit is the result of marriage without mutual love and understanding.

Beneath these clear themes, the novelist hints at for the first time, though not directly, the practice of polygamy among the Thai elite, a feature which becomes central in her later works. It was perhaps in revulsion against this background that the young author at first created only monogamous families, and made the characters of the younger generation pursue their modern way of life.

### Plot

Although the plot moves along one line, the larger number of characters makes the skeletal plot structure flesh out more than that of Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn. Nit and Luang Thanasān both have parents who fully manage their lives. Rasmī is more persistent and dangerous than La-ō, and Dōkmaisot needs some people from outside to solve the problems - Chalāt to make Luang Thanasān jealous, and Chalao to get rid of Rasmī and to change Luang Thanasān.

Nevertheless, Dōkmaisot is not quite successful in gathering the loose ends of the plot-threads. The reader is content with the situation between Nit and her husband, but knows nothing about what happens later to Rasmī, Chalāt, and

Chalao. Of course, Dōkmaisot could not continue for she had made her time in the novel limited. At the same time, it proves that a novelist like her would, at an advanced stage, need a longer duration of and vaster space in exploring the life in Thai society.

### Characters

The development of individual characters, and the relationships between them are subtly interwoven with the plot and theme in this novel. Nit's western type education causes some problems at the beginning. Her mother, who foresees the disapproval of her mother-in-law-to-be, wants Nit to be more traditional. But when Nit accepts the arranged marriage, which is a traditional Thai and un-westernised practice, it involves her in all the complexity of Thai tradition straight-away. Nit has inherited her father's character but lives in her husband's family, and so her own character gradually changes, and the main part of the story, thus, is concerned with human feelings.

The difference between the two families involved is tremendous, despite both being élite. Nit's family is father-dominated, whereas Luang Thanasān's family is dominated by his mother. The friendship between the fathers and the opposite natures of their personalities have a great effect on the story. The clash between the characters and families is the basis of the story.

Luang Thanasān's involvement in the intrigue with Rasmī is also caused by family complications. Her family background with a disabled father and a poor education makes Rasmī feel insecure about her future. Dōkmaisot attempts here to

analyse the influence of literary environment over the development of a young girl in her teens. This of course is a direct attack by the author on most Thai writers during the third decade of the century.<sup>1</sup>

At that time Rasmī was only fifteen years old, and her thoughts were those of a half-child, half-adult. She had to leave the large mansion of her aunt to live with her parents in a small house. Khun Prāp, her father received only a small pension from the Government, and could not afford to hire servants. Rasmī had now to do what she did not even have to touch before. Besides the heavy housework, she was constantly irritated by her father and his changeable moods.

Only when she went to visit her aunt for a few hours at a time, and when she had a book in her hands did Rasmī feel happy. Unfortunately both features of her leisure did her no good at all. The books she read were those which had been written by writers who were without scruple. They only wanted to sell them quickly in order to make money, and never stopped to think about their contribution to bad habits building up among young people. Just the sight of the pictures on the covers is unacceptable enough and when you open the books to read the stories, they give a most disgraceful impression to the mind. They were all for arousing erotic feeling, and were most unsuitable for young girls to read. The heroes were always men obsessed with resentment and vengeance, which should be ruled out for people who called themselves Buddhists. The heroines were women who considered love more valuable than honour and virginity. These people normally lacked public respect, but their stories aroused the readers' sympathy, so much so that they would agree with the wrong-doing. We all learn young that familiarity forms habits. In this way, Rasmī, who had been accustomed to such heroes and heroines, began to be led astray by them.

Her second happiness; talking with her aunt, or more correctly, listening to her aunt talking with friends, had an equally bad effect. The Khunying, like most ladies, loved gossiping. To identify other people's faults, whether serious or not, and make them sound worse than they were was their main happiness. Their conversations were full of maligning and blaming friends of the same sex. Admiration for other people was rare. As has been mentioned, Rasmī had to abandon her education in mid-course, and the moulding of behaviour she had received at school when young was not strong enough to withstand the new influence. Therefore, the reader can certainly imagine what sort of a woman she would be later.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See also Chapter I, pp. 40, 47-48.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nit, pp. 38-40.

One major characteristic of Dḡkmaisot's novels, the technique of using contrasts was also initiated in Nit, especially with regard to the characters. Nit is seen by her parents and everybody as a childlike and lovable girl, who does not pay much attention to her beauty, while Rasmī is described through Nit's eyes as 'a woman of twenty-five, tall and slim, who puts on airs and graces while walking, her hair done into a large bun, too large it seems for her long neck to support...'<sup>1</sup> Both descriptions of course fit well with their character.

The improvement of Dḡkmaisot's technique is also seen in the way she introduces Luang Thanasān. Instead of creating unnecessary people to describe him as she has done with Prasong in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, the author pictures him in Nit's recollection while she is sitting absent-mindedly in front of the mirror, minutes before he comes to dinner with her family. Luang Thanasān is not a Prince Charming like Prasong, but a tall, thin, pale-faced man with a pair of sad eyes. He is the first character through whom Dḡkmaisot shows how easily a person can become a victim of his own weakness, and be prevailed upon by infatuation rather than reason and conscience.

#### Language and setting

Although Dḡkmaisot had already shown her particular talent with the Thai language in the previous two lesser pieces published after Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, it is in Nit that she, for the first time, employs fully that gift which is recognised by all Thai readers as 'Dḡkmaisot's language'.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

It is unique to the extent that a critic, Khunying Somrōt Sawatdikun, remarked that it cannot be translated into English.<sup>1</sup> In Nit Dōkmaisot began including old sayings, satirical expressions, and inserting old songs with witty words fitting well with the atmosphere of the story. For example, as soon as Nit saw her husband and Rasmī sitting together intimately, she changed the words in the song she had been singing for her friends to "Whatever suffering a woman has, it is not so painful as when her husband has a mistress".<sup>2</sup> Or when she was asked by Luang Thanasān's parents to sing, Nit chose a song telling the story of two baby birds being blown away by a storm, one to be found by a hermit and lead a happy life, the other falling to a bandit and living a wicked life.

The dialogues in Nit are usually long but very convincing. A wide range of adjectival and adverbial terms are exploited for the tones of the voice, a laugh, a smile, the grinding of teeth, the compressing of lips, condescending, insulting, hurtful, painful glances, etc. A good example of her loving language is in a letter Nit wrote to her parents during her honeymoon with Luang Thanasān.

...I wish you were here, leaning on the rail where I was standing just now. Father stood on one side, mother on the other, with me in between the two. I remember how mother was looking at father with love and adoration, and father at mother with deep love. It is the most adorable sight in the whole world. And then, when both pairs of eyes were cast on me, I felt covered with a kind of ray, a warm and magical ray, which could protect me from any danger. At such a moment, I am far from this world, that is, I can do whatever I want to without being afraid that it will be wrong or I will be blamed by anyone. Being far from you like this, I am lonely, more and more. I

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<sup>1</sup>The Thai National Library, Kān Aphiprāi..., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 108.

imagine that a blind man, who has been led by someone and suddenly is left alone, must have the same feeling I am having at this moment... I long to be in your arms, to see your eyes which shine with kindness, to tell you everything which is in my heart...1

This can be paralleled by its charming description of Nit, her husband and her baby on her birthday a year later, when Dōkmaisot's aptitude for describing children, particularly babies, at this stage of her life, is given full play.

### Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing:

#### A Romance Based on a True Narrative

The Thai Khasēm magazine published this novel for the first time in instalments from October 15th to December 15th, 1930. It has been reprinted several times since then and bound together with other short stories of the same author under the title Phū-klin.<sup>1</sup>

It is only in its serialised edition, however, that the following dialogue preceding the story appears, together with the footnotes explaining the Latin passage and the word 'romance'.

<u>reader</u>	'Why must you give it an English title?'
<u>author</u>	'To make it suit the period.'
<u>reader</u>	'The period of giving a story an English title?'
<u>author</u>	'No, the period of mixing English and Thai in conversation.'
<u>reader</u>	'What do you mean by that?'

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<sup>1</sup> Dōkmaisot, Nit, pp. 71-72.

<sup>2</sup> See also Appendix i, and footnotel, p. 493.

- author 'I believe that there is not even one person in a hundred Thais nowadays who does not add some English words in his ordinary conversation as well as in business.'
- reader 'But speaking and writing are not the same, "verba volant, scripta manent"'.  
.
- author 'So, this story will make history in Thai literature.'
- reader 'So, its author is rather crazy?'
- author 'Just as you like.'

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The word 'romance' may have several meanings, but in this case it means 'a composition of a fictitious narrative'. Therefore, to translate the title as 'Rūang Pralōmlōk Sōn Rūang Čhing' is just good enough.<sup>1</sup>

#### List of characters

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Phrayā Nōrarāt            | a retired civil servant of high rank.  |
| Khunying Nōrarāt<br>(Sōi) | his wife.  |
| Chawī                     | 21, their adopted daughter, a daughter of Phrayā Wōrakān Bamrung and Čhōi (deceased).  |
| Sumon                     | 17, their only child of the flesh.   |
| Wat Purintharawong        | 28, a rich man of good disposition and noble family who had wasted his time and money until he fell in love with Chawī. He had two young children by his servant-wife. |
| Luang Phinit              | 30, a judge in the Ministry of Justice.  |
| Čhamnong                  | his wife, Chawī's half-sister.   |
| Waen                      | Chawī and Sumon's nanny.   |

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, "Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing", Thai Khasēm, No. 7, (October 15th, 1930).

## Synopsis

Phrayā Wōrakān decided to let his brother, Phrayā Nōrarāt, adopt Chawī, his daughter by his young minor wife, Chōi. The reason for the adoption was that Chōi had had several children before Chawī but none of them survived. Chōi was convinced that Chawī might die too unless she gave her away. Phrayā Nōrarāt and his wife too had been childless, and it was a general belief that if the couple adopted a child, soon there would come a 'jealous baby'.

Their hope came true; Sumon was born four years later. However, Chawī was consistently cherished by her adopted family even after her real parents were dead. She was sent to one of the best schools in Bangkok, and upon completion of her studies, she was given the position of mistress of the house. Sumon meanwhile was sent to study in a convent in Penang.

At nineteen, Chawī met Wat, a friend of her elder half-sister, Čhamnong. He fell in love with her and tried his best to win her heart by asking Čhamnong and Waen to act as matchmakers. Although she did not hate him, Chawī had her reasons for refusing his proposal. No one understood her. At first, they thought that it was only because Wat had had two servant-wives and two daughters, but after the wives had left and his mother had taken away the children to live with her, Chawī still gave a negative answer. Čhamnong found out eventually that she disapproved of Wat's easy-going way of life. Being questioned further, Chawī pointed out that there were several occupations crucial to the country from which Wat could choose a career. By this she implied the need to dispose of the surplus of fertile land, in view of the poverty of Thai farmers, and the wealth of Chinese capitalists.

Wat disappeared from Bangkok for a few years, which was long enough to make everybody, including Chawī herself, forget about their ordeal. He travelled up and down the country, went over to Indo-China, Java, and Malaya, and eventually returned home with fresh and firm ideas about his career. He bought a plantation in Phetburi, settled down there, and

engaged himself in the palm-sugar industry as well as in other enterprises. His success coincided with the retirement of Phrayā Nōrarāt and Sumon's return from Penang. Phrayā Nōrarāt took his family to holiday in various places on the Gulf of Siam. Wat heard of their arrival and rushed to invite them to his home in Phetburi. Chawī realised that Wat had proved to her his ability, and that his personality had changed naturally in a way that she had always desired. At the same time, she was afraid that having been rejected by her previously Wat might turn to her sister instead.

But Wat also proved himself a faithful lover by making a new proposal of marriage. This time Chawī agreed, and after their wedding they went to live in Phetburi.

### Story

As the title implies, there are two layers of the story; a fictitious romance and true incidents overlapping one another. The romance part is only a thread sewing together parts of the background including the characters, the settings and the events. Dōkmaisot must have been so impressed with the beauty of the Phetburi countryside that she wanted to record it in detail. But instead of just describing in ordinary narrative form, she cast it in the form of a novel, a technique romantic novelists are accustomed to use.

A great number of similarities between the incidents in the novel and in the author's life cannot be mere coincidences. The story takes place between 1927 and 1930. When Wat fell in love with Chawī in 1927, Sumon had gone to Penang and two and a half years later, in 1930, she had returned home without a career. In the author's real life, M.L.Bunlūa went to study

in Penang in 1923, and returned home in 1928, at the age of seventeen, the same age as Sumon. She was the only younger sister of Dōkmaisot, the only one in the family who went to study in Penang, and upon her return went to live with her family in Phetburi because Phrayā Thēwēt did not allow her to pursue her studies in Bangkok.<sup>1</sup>

The author says that Phrayā Nōrarāt resigned from the Civil Service in 1929 and took his family on holiday. Phrayā Thēwēt too resigned from his post about the same time and moved his family to Phetburi.<sup>2</sup> They travelled widely, even visiting the Karen and Lao Song tribes.<sup>3</sup>

And when Dōkmaisot starts telling about Chawī's life, she writes:

Chawī was the eighth child of Phrayā Wōrakān Bamrung. Her father had many wives, but never raised any of them to receive the title of 'Khunying' from the King. He appointed his senior wife 'lady of the house'. Chawī's mother was Chōi, one of the younger wives of the Phrayā. 4

Of course, such was the practice of Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt himself,<sup>5</sup> and this peculiarity of his is mentioned again in Dōkmaisot's later novel<sup>6</sup>.

The fear of ghost which M.L. Bunlāa mentions in her auto-biography<sup>7</sup> too is attributed, rather irrelevantly, to Sumon.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Bunlāa, Khwām Samret..., pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter II, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>See Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt, Khō Rātchakān..., preface.

The Karen is a mountain tribe, quite well-known as brave fighters, inhabiting the western frontier of Thailand, the Shan States and Lower Burma. The Lao Song is a tribe of the Lao people, living mainly in Phetburi and Rātburi provinces.

<sup>4</sup>Dōkmaisot, Romance Sōn Rūang Čing in Phū-klin (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>See Somphop, Chīwit..., p. 23.

<sup>6</sup>i.e. Phūdī, see Chapter VI.

<sup>7</sup>See Bunlāa, op.cit., p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 67.

Thian Sin, the second-generation Chinese, the owner of the rice mill in the story may also be based on the same person mentioned by M.L. Bunlāa in her book as a clever Chinese, the owner of a saw-mill whom Dōkmaisot met and talked to in Phetburi.<sup>1</sup>

Even the real name of Khunying Nōrarāt is Sōi, the same name as the novelist's close friend in Phetburi.<sup>2</sup>

### Plot and theme

Two thirds of the story is dominated by the record of travelling. Consequently, the theme and the plot are inferior to the setting. The rhythm of the story development is rather unorganised. This is again due to the fact that the author becomes more enthusiastic to describe places as the story goes on than to be concerned with the plot as intended at the beginning. After learning that Chawī is an adopted daughter, whose real parents die a few years later, and of Sumon's return home as a cheerful blooming young woman, the reader will naturally anticipate exciting incidents. But all are only false alarms; nothing occurs as a result. The plot therefore is very weak, and without the beautiful description of the scenery, the taste of the work would be quite insipid.

### Setting

Unlike Dōkmaisot's first two novels, Romance Sōn Ruang Ching moves only in 'space' and not in 'time'. The novelist goes on writing about places, and the story comes to an end presumably when she has exhausted material derived from her family tour of the province. The writing, nevertheless,

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<sup>1</sup>See Bunlāa, op.cit., p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>See Somphop, op.cit., p. 100.

testifies to her descriptive powers, and can be justifiably adjudged the best guide book ever written for that ancient town, Dōkmaisot writes about everything - the rivers, mountains, monasteries, houses, market-places - then colours it all with wit, humour, legends, customs, etc.; even the natives' brogue and bucolic style of living are included. The part of her narrative most admired by Thai critics is her description of palm-sugar making through the eyes of the Bangkok visitors and Wat's explanation. But the chosen example below shows better the rich descriptive vein which Dōkmaisot taps in this novel by using contrasts:

From the foot of the hill, they ascended a lofty concrete staircase to the monastery. On the left were groups of small houses for monks, and on the right were clusters of pine trees. They walked straight to the gate; there, a charming chapel was situated on the top of one of the hills. The light of the full moon caused its whitewashed walls to shine in contrast to everything around. The chapel thus looked as if it was floating in the air. Going nearer into the courtyard, they saw light from lamps and candles shining brightly through the windows. Inside, it was crammed with people listening to the sermon... It was more an impressive sight than merely beautiful. The light from the hanging lamps and from the candles on the altar shone brightly all round, illuminating the large Buddha image, and the gilded patterns on the walls and ceiling. There were scores of large beeswax candles wreathed with fresh and colourful flowers, arranged by the villagers as best they could. Together with the yellow robes worn by the monks, and the gilt and lacquer pulpit-platform, everything was wonderfully vivid and pleasing. Moreover, all the faces gathered there were equally solemn and calm. The "ubāsok" (men), old and young, all wore oldish but clean clothes. The "ubāsikā" (women) who were nuns were in pure white, whereas the young country girls had dressed in bright colours. The Lao Song girls wore black skirts ringed with white stripes. Their plain black jackets were decorated with shiny silver buttons from waist to collar. On top, around their bodies and over their shoulders were sashes of dark pink or bright orange, contrasting with the jackets and buttons. Their hair was decorated with flowers of the same colours as the sashes. They were all sitting with legs crossed at the side, hands clasped, eyes fixed on the monk sitting on the platform,

listening to the story of the Lord Buddha. Except for the voice of this monk reading the text, there was no other sound in the chapel. From time to time his reading was interrupted by the spluttering of the candles. The air in the chapel was rather close, but they who were totally absorbed in the Dhamma, did not feel it.<sup>1</sup>

### Characters

Like the plot of the story, the characterisation of this novel is inferior to that of the first two novels. The novelist seems to introduce all characters in detail at the outset making them inter-dependent. But Chamnong, after being introduced to the reader by the author, and introducing Chawī and Wat, is sent to live with her husband some nine hundred miles from Bangkok and never appears again. Sumon too does not carry any important role in the story, after the author has made her background sound interesting and important as 'a jealous baby' and 'a student from abroad'. The reason for all this are perhaps the plot which has been pre-arranged for Chawī alone, and time is not given for the novelist to manipulate the characterisation.

However, it is in this story that Dōkmaisot first attempts to write about a typical Thai family at the time when polygamy was still widely practised, something which later becomes a prominent feature of her long novels. She also tells about the attitude of modern Thai women towards this tradition; none of them liked it, but they did not really mind as long as they had separate establishments or a serial arrangement. This is different from their predecessors who thought more of whether they would be recognised as chief

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 165-167.

wives or not. As Chawī's nanny assures her about Wat and his servant-wives:

'...Oh! Those low women! Khun Wat told me he would reject them all. One has already gone now, and the other is such an idiot...That's why he has to have a wife...Their children are both girls, five and four. Both are living with their grandmother. Khun Wat never has anything to do with them...' <sup>1</sup>

There are two Wat in the story; the first is polygamous and a rich man-about-town, disapproved of by the author; the second is created from the same person but possesses every firm aim in life - a real fighter and one of Dōkmaisot's favourite types. His character, which in the end is concluded by Chawī as '-completely changed, except for the way he chews betel-nuts ', has been described at the beginning through Chawī's recollection as follows:

She saw the form of the man whom she had met for the first time at Luang Phinit's house. He was beautiful with a pale face, clean, soft complexion, slim and with rather a soft manner like that of a woman. He spoke slowly, and his lips were always red for he constantly chewed betel-nuts. Wat was the only child of a rich and good family. His father died when he was still very young, widowing his mother when she was only twenty-five. She cherished her only son too much, and the result was that Wat did not have as full an education as he should have had. He grew up, and became a dandified young man who thought and did everything superficially. Elegance was what he cared about most. Chawī knew that he had worked in the Royal Household before he moved to various ministries but that he had never held any fixed post. Nevertheless, he did not seem to mind, but was quite contented with a job that did not confer much responsibility. He still spent his time in a luxurious way. His wealth, family, and his good nature helped make him a popular figure in high society...<sup>1</sup>

Chawī cannot be called a round character, but she presents the author's ideas about the occupation of Thai people, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-33.

the description of her as a child displays well Dōkmaisot's fondness for writing about babies and children.

When Chawī was a little girl of four, beginning to copy and memorise, she noticed that there was something strange in the woman she called mother. One day Chawī woke up and found herself alone in bed. She cried and screamed for attention. After some time, Yāi Waen, her nanny, dashed in and closed her mouth firmly, whispering and motioning to her. Chawī was taken to a tub next to the kitchen and left alone. From there, she looked up to the balcony of the big building and saw people walking to and fro. They all looked unusual; some were frowning, some were whispering, and some were making gestures. Soon after that there was chaos, and kapok flew out from one room. Chawī laughed seeing the white light thing flying out in all directions. Then...Oh dear!...She curled herself as much as possible into the tub and hid her head behind the tub-edge. When Chawī slowly raised her head again ...Oh dear!...That man who is standing on the balcony... he has red hair, white eyes, and a scary long<sup>1</sup> beard. In his hand is a big cane, and he is limping<sup>1</sup>...Father told Chawī once that he had only one leg. Yai Waen also said that he ate children, especially those who cried...Today Chawī cried first thing after waking up... Oh yes!, Yāi Waen must have called him here to eat Chawī...There! He is coming down this way...Quick! Run!...Chawī got out from the tub and ran into the kitchen...A large water jar was there...She got into it and sat there with her heart throbbing fast... 'But why hasn't he spoken?' Usually he spoke abruptly and Chawī could not understand him, but she could remember his voice!...'Why hasn't he come yet?'. She stood up and looked around the kitchen...'Wow! What is that, on the plate in front of the stove?'. '...Roasted prawns !...Getting a little nearer...'What a nice smell!' She had not had a grain of rice this morning...Looking at the door, there is nobody there...um! um! um! one! two! three!...Someone is coming this way...That won't do...She got up and looked out of the door...'Ooh! Yai Waen! She is coming back.' Chawī snatched a stick of roasted prawns, ran out and got into the tub.

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<sup>1</sup>Implies a European doctor.

That was not the only time that Chawī was surprised...For several days, she was not allowed into the room of her mother as before. Until, one day, she went in and saw her mother sitting on the bed with father beside her. Her mother called her in, but when Chawī was about to sit in her lap, she pushed her out and father also forbade her, saying that mother was not well. A few minutes later Chawī heard a sound like when mother tore yellow material to make robes for the monks. The sound came from a small mosquito-net next to where father was sitting. She had just noticed that there was a lovely little net in her mother's room...'Father playing with a doll? Perhaps mother bought him one. My little sister doll is sleeping...' Father opened the net and Yāi Waen lifted something out... Oh! What is it? It has a face, a red face! eeh! It had a red body and shrunken skin like that of great grandma Puk whom Chawī used to go to visit at Hua Lampong<sup>1</sup>. Mother turned to Chawī and said, 'That is your sister.'... What? What sort of sister is that?... Mother allowed Chawī to look at it closely...'Yes, sister also has hands too, but they have wrapped her in white cloth.'<sup>2</sup>

Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing can be appraised as a short novel with good descriptions of the settings and atmosphere realistic dialogue, but with an unorganised plot and lack of character developments. However, it carries the author's messages; her ideas regarding the occupation and daily life of Thai people.

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<sup>1</sup>A district in Bangkok.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 14-17.

Bupphēsanniwāt<sup>1</sup>

This novel was first published as a contribution to the Thai Red Cross Society's publication Chuay Kāchāt, in 1931. In 1937, it was reprinted in the Phiu Luang newspaper<sup>2</sup>. After that, the story was classified by publishers as a short story and bound together with other short works of the same author under the collective title Busbāban.<sup>3</sup>

List of characters

Phra Anurak Rāṭchamaitrī (Wisut Wisuttaphong)	an exceedingly proud official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the eldest son of Phrayā and the former Khunying Trīphopphāi (deceased).
Nāng Anurak Rāṭchamaitrī (Amphōn Wisuttaphong)	his wife.
Wirat and Wimon Wisuttaphong	his younger sisters.
Sačhī Thammawilāt	19, his half-sister, the only daughter and child of Phra Kōmāraphat (deceased) and his wife, the former Khunying Trīphopphāi.
Wisān Wisuttaphong	5, son of Phra and Nāng Anurak.
Phrayā Wičhān Nitisāt	a kind lawyer, the eldest son of Phrayā and Khunying Mahāsombat (deceased).
Khunying Wičhān Nitisāt (Ubon Watcharin)	his generous and good-hearted wife.
Yanyong Watcharin	27, his younger brother, a kind-hearted bachelor.
Luang Bōrihān Sukkhaphāp	a doctor, close friend of Phrayā Wičhān and Phra Kōmāraphat.

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<sup>1</sup>For the meaning see p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>See also chapter II, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>See also appendix i, p. 493.

### Synopsis

Khunying Trīphopphāi had been a widow with three children, Wisut, Wirat, and Wimon, before she remarried; her second husband was a doctor, Phra Kōmāraphat. Her first husband, Phrayā Trīphopphāi, was a very arrogant man of the Wisuttaphong family. He married her not because he loved her but because he wanted an heir. He died when Wisut was only thirteen, leaving his wife and children in the care of his domineering mother. Wisut heard about his mother's second marriage when he was studying abroad. He and his sisters who had been brought up to esteem their name ceased to love and respect their mother from that time. They never tried to understand how much their mother had been oppressed by their father and grandmother.

After eight years in Germany, Wisut returned home to a job in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was later made Phra Anurak Rāтчamaitrī. He married Amphōn who was no less proud and selfish than himself.

Nāng Kōmāraphat had a daughter, Sačhī, by her second marriage. Later, her second husband died and she herself became seriously ill with tuberculosis. She died without making a will, but with a dying command for Sačhī to move to live with her half-brother. Because they had never recognised her as their sister, but just as living evidence of their shame, Sačhī was despised and ill-treated by everyone. She qualified as a nurse but her brother would not allow her to go out and earn money. Her nephew, Wisān, was her only happiness. Phra Anurak took advantage of the situation to advertise the sale of Sačhī's house. Although Luang Bōrihān wanted to help Sačhī, he could do nothing but tell the story to Phrayā Wičhān and his family. Yanyong overheard the story and subconsciously became so interested in her that he dreamt of her that night.

Meanwhile, Phra Anurak wanted a driver to work for him temporarily while his own driver was ill. So Yanyong disguised himself as 'Kaeo' or 'Yong' and was accepted for the post. He came to know Sačhī better, pitied her, and fell in love with her. Luang Bōrihān was asked to act as an agent in

buying the house and to ask for Sačhī's hand to marry 'Phrayā Wičhān's brother' would bring him into close contact with an influential high-ranking person. But his consent would also mean that Sačhī would be better off than his family and his sisters, which was the last thing he wished to see. Amphōn had no doubt about turning down the proposal. Eventually she persuaded her husband with a remark which struck right on target: "It is still not clear whether Phrayā Trīphopphāi's grandson will have a Fiat when he grows up, but a grandchild of Phra Kōmāraphat will certainly have a Rolls."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, Luang Bōrihān was told the next day that Sačhī had been engaged to marry someone else. On the same day, Amphōn first hinted, then made it clear to 'Yong', that she and her husband were willing to give Sačhī to him, their driver. Yanyong and everybody on his side were very angry. They decided that another plan must be made to free Sačhī from the cruel couple, and it must be done cautiously because the girl had not yet come of age. Yanyong, as Yong, revealed to Sačhī that Čhao Phrayā Mahāsombat's son who loved her had bought the house back for her, and asked for her hand, but had been refused by her brother on the grounds that he had promised to marry her off to his driver. 'Yong's evidence was a letter from Luang Bōrihān. The only truth he concealed from her was his real identity. He also urged her to escape from her brother as soon as possible.

Sačhī ran away the next morning without knowing that 'Yong' was also moving his belongings out of the house at the same time. The plan was to convince Phra Anurak and Amphōn that the girl had run away with the driver. At the railway station, Sačhī was met by Luang Bōrihān and Yanyong as himself, and was taken to stay at Phrayā Wičhān's home.

Their plan proved successful. Phra Anurak came to inform Phrayā Wičhān about what he understood to be an elopement, and added that he would not bother to follow them. Although Sačhī was ashamed of her brother's conduct, she sent invitation cards to him and his wife on the occasions of her engagement and marriage to Yanyong. Phra Anurak tore the

first card into pieces, but his better judgement told him not to ignore the second invitation. He and Amphōn turned up at the wedding ceremony and even gave Sačhī's a cheque for the amount of money they had received for the sale of the house. Yanyong agreed with his bride to give the sum to Wisān who had been her sole companion during her hard time.

### Story, theme, and plot

'Bupphēsanniwāt' is a Pali compound word 'pubba+sañ+nivasa' meaning 'the state of living in company with others in former existences'.<sup>1</sup> In the case of man and wife it is believed that the power of 'bupphēsanniwāt' will bring them together in the present life despite differences and distance. The word is as commonly used by Thai people as the term for a couple united by such power, 'nāa-khū' (literally, paired flesh) which is also the title of one of Dōkmaisot's short stories written in 1929.<sup>2</sup> The English expression 'marriages are made in heaven' perhaps carries the nearest meaning to the word 'bupphēsanniwāt'.

Like Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing, Bupphēsanniwāt has been classified as a short story, possibly on the grounds of its comparatively short length (157 pages). In fact, the story concerns the lives of people of two generations with a previous situation, the cause leading to current happenings, the effect thus extending beyond the limitations of incident, usually regarded as an essential characteristic of the short story.

The theme of the story is the defeat of villains by their own mis-doings, which is a common Buddhist teaching, and in this case, the the defeat of villains rather than the triumph of good people; or the defeat of villains by good

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<sup>1</sup>G.B.McFarland, Thai-English Dictionary (Stanford University Press, 1944), p.485.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix i , p. 497.

people. The author must have meant to have Phra Anurak and Amphōn defeated in every way from the outset, for she made the official ranks of Yanyong's father and brother one step higher than those of Phrayā Trīphopphāi and Phra Anurak himself. For this reason the Wisuttaphongs who esteemed their name and looked down upon others could not do so with the Watcharinṅ and when Sačhī won in the end it was an all round victory.

As in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, Dōkmaisot, in Bupphēsanniwāt exploits the device of the hero disguising himself to be near the girl he loves. The plot is very simple, especially when compared with Khwāmphit Khrang Raek which had been written and completed a short time before the publication of Bupphēsanniwāt. There is a touch of either old Thai literature or the Western fairy-tale, particularly that of Cinderella about it. One aspect of Thai society, its strong attitude towards the hierarchy of the civil service, is also seen.

The author has divided the story into eleven chapters. The incidents concerning the previous generation which formed the solid background of the Wisuttaphong family are treated as flashbacks at appropriate places in a conversation in chapter two, after Phra Anurak and his sister's hatred for Sačhī and indifference toward their mother have been seen obviously but without explanation in the first chapter.

Chapter three sees the beginning of Yanyong's plan to help Sačhī. There is too big a coincidence at this point. His dream of her is possible, but his learning from a servant soon after he gets up about the convenient job with Phra Anurak is far from convincing. The common use of dreams in

traditional Thai literature to confirm a love situation should be noted. The following two chapters are more interesting, with Sačhī's appearance for the first time, Yanyong's first impression of her, and a flashback account of his background and failure in education. In chapters six and seven, Yanyong becomes more attached to Sačhī, and Luang Bōrihān goes to buy the house and to ask for Sačhī to marry 'Phrayā Wičhān's brother'. Chapters eight and nine are about Amphōn planning to destroy Sačhī's future. The plans to free Sačhī and counter-attack Phra Anurak legally are undertaken by Yanyong in chapter ten, and everything is revealed to Sačhī in chapter eleven.

Compared with the arrangement of actions in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, Dōkmaisot's technique in this novel is greatly improved. Her over-consciousness about 'time' and 'incidents' disappears; the story therefore develops in a much more relaxed and convincing manner.

#### Setting, language, and characters

These three features in Bupphēsanniwāt are related. The story takes place in Bangkok alone and mostly in two houses, those of Phrayā Wičhān and Phra Anurak. Dōkmaisot does not describe the countryside this time, perhaps she has used up all her raw material about the scenery, perhaps she has become more confident in developing her story in "time" rather than in "space", or perhaps she has come to realise that there are some other interesting features, particularly the comic, into which she can apply her descriptive talent.

In fact Dōkmaisot's humour and her gift in picturing the character's idiosyncrasy have been seen from the very

beginning of her writing life, in Dīfō<sup>1</sup>. Later, while excluding the comic element almost entirely from her first three novels she maintain it in her short stories, first in the innocent language and naughtiness of the children in Nitnit Nōinōi<sup>2</sup>, then in the character of Khun Thoet, a bald headed fat father, constantly puzzled by his son's behaviour which he thought was too westernised, in Phrattikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt<sup>3</sup>. A character in Nūa-khū, in fact the hero, has this faintly comic nature though he himself is not an amusing person. His short sightedness is exploited by the author as a means of attracting a girl.

When we arrive at Bupphēsanniwāt, we find that Dōkmaisot moves beyond the superficial in introducing the comic quality. She is able to draw the story out of these characteristics of the hero and also engages in comic criticism of the Thai way of bringing up children. This element of the comic, once developed, appears in certain characters in later novels, for example, Wichai in Nūng Nai Rōi and Chit in Nī Lae Lōk!

Yanyong is a rich, kind-hearted man, but so far as his aim in life is concerned, he is certainly vague and not as vital as a hero usually is. However, his position in life fits the plot and were he any different, it would only make the story far less realistic. To his elder brother and sister-in-law, his behaviour is, as the author concludes "more like that of a big boy than of a young man".<sup>4</sup> He never bother to

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, p. 42, and also Appendix i , p. 493.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix i , p. 500.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 497.

<sup>4</sup>Dōkmaisot, Bupphēsanniwāt in Busbāban (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), p.128.

do anything substantial, although he can be very efficient if he wants to. This character of Yanyong is quite comparable to that of Praphot (Ḷt) in M.R.Kukrit's Sī Phaendin ((A Life) in the Four Reigns, written in 1954). But whereas M.R. Kukrit leaves it to the reader to think of the cause of Ḷt's seeming aimlessness and lack of perseverance, DḶkmaisot states clearly in an amusing tone that in the case of Yanyong it is partly the result of his rich background.

...Yanyong was born into an aristocratic family, well established in wealth and honour. From childhood he had never really learned the meaning of the word "difficulty". Nevertheless, he was kind and sympathetic, which is very different from most fortunate people who are so used to happiness that they cannot estimate other people's suffering and always think that it is not serious. As a youth, after finishing high school, Yanyong chose to enter the police, but his grandparents and his father objected to the idea giving as a reason that it was too risky a profession. (His mother had died when he was only eighteen months old). His second choice, to be a sailor, was equally opposed. They were afraid that he would be drowned! Usually, the opposition of the family to a child's selection of a career has a bad rather than good effect, and it is worse if a child has been spoilt all his life like Yanyong. Once his most important decision has not been approved, he ceases to be interested in doing anything at all. Yanyong became undependable. When the older generation gave their advice he listened, but became self-indulgent again behind their back. At last, his father wrote to his elder son, who was studying in Germany. His son suggested his sending Yanyong abroad in the hope that living far from home and among other people would remind him of his duty as a son of his country. Once more the elders in the family waved their hands in opposition: "Oh no! He will have to cross the seas, the oceans. Our grandson will have to risk his life". But this time Chao Phrayā Mahāsombat agreed with his elder son; Yanyong had to go to Europe and he could make his own choice of the country and subjects to study. Yanyong chose England, but refused to choose a subject. His father therefore decided for him; Law. Yanyong left Siam at the age of sixteen and was away for six years. Nothing was heard of him except that he had had three car accidents, because each time he sent a telegram asking for extra money. The first time he hit a child, then an old man, then an old woman. After the third accident, his father call him back because the senior members of the family were afraid that Yanyong himself would be run over by a car!

Yanyong returned home speaking English fluently, smoking non-stop, and singing songs like an Englishman. Apart from this he had no other qualification. His father pleaded with him to apply to do Law again. Yanyong agreed, but after he had failed three times in succession, and after the death of his father, he resigned and stayed at home wasting his time in luxury.

His elderly relatives were not anxious about his playboy life as long as he did not indulge himself in drinking or associate with bad companions, or destroy the property of his parents. They were rich enough for their descendants to be able to live happily even if they chose nothing as a career.

Such was a common idea amongst the older Thai in former times. <sup>1</sup>

All other characters in Bupphēsanniwāt are described clearly and convincingly. But because the story is comparatively short and less realistic, they are not fully developed. Sačhī may be the focus of the story but the situations and her quiet personality make her a flat character. Throughout the story other people talk about her, think about her, love her, hate her, whereas she herself acts very little. In comparing Sačhī with Walai or Amarā in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, it is evident that so far as the characters are concerned, the value of Dōkmaisot's novels lies in her power to describe the complicated ones. The more complicated they are, the better her writing becomes, and it is also noticeable that her stories in which the female leading characters are simple, tend to be lacking in intensity.

To sum up, this story shows some signs of the development of the author towards successful novel writing but is itself not fully developed.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-151.

Summary of the characteristics of Dōkmaisot's first four novels.

None of these four novels can be definitely categorized as novels of action or novels of character. They all tend to fall into the first category if judged by the following criterion of Edwin Muir, "The romance, the novel of action, as it makes the reader suffer occasionally, and as its first object is to please, must end happily."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the scene is confined in these novels to one social circle; characters influence events and vice versa, the qualities which belong to dramatic novels.

The plots of these short novels are simple owing to the fact that the author has created the knots before the actual story takes place. Thus, she has no opportunity to knit gradually a chain of events together till it reaches the point of tight entanglement, whence she can then proceed to the resolution in a realistic way. Besides, she has limited the duration severely and designed all to end well. Consequently, everything is prearranged, the sort of design which E.M. Forster considered false.<sup>2</sup> The final crises are seemingly very grave: the attempted rape of La-ḡ, the dangerous illness of Nit, Ghawī's fear that Wat would choose her sister instead of her, Saḥī's running away, but no reader will feel them serious, realising that they are only the preludes to the romantic ending of the stories. In three out of four stories, the author employs the use of disguise as a device in solving the plots. This no doubt reduces the realistic value of

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London: Hogarth, 1963), p.19.

<sup>2</sup>E.M. Forster, as quoted in Muir, Ibid., p. 12.

the novels.

It is possible that Dōkmaisot was very conscious of her limited knowledge about places outside Bangkok, and was therefore very desirous of extending the space of the stories to provincial towns, the attempt of which turns out to witness more to her descriptive power than to contribute literary value to her works. The description of the scenery in Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing and of various ceremonies in Nit demonstrate from the start her command of Thai and her talent for narrative writing.

As for her characterisation, it is obvious that Dōkmaisot was fond of writing with irony and humour. Whenever the dialogue is written with wit, satire, and irony, she does it splendidly. But if the character is flat, and the situation is not exciting, she seems impatient to pass over it quickly, or otherwise fails to make her language realistic enough. This is so with Sačhī and her situation in Bupphēsanniwāt in particular.

By and large, the plots, the themes, and the characters are less interesting than the portrayal of Thai society which forms the background to all the stories. Nevertheless the development of Dōkmaisot as a dramatic novelist is foreseeable, using the term in the sense intended by Edwin Muir. We see the elements to be fused more effectively in her later works appearing in a separated and less organized way in these early works. These elements are as follows: the clash between modern and traditional ideas in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn; the characterisation in Nit; the descriptive power in Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing; and the background of élite Thai family life in Bupphēsanniwāt.

## CHAPTER IV

## The Next Stage: a Trio of Novels

It has proved convenient to treat Bupphēsanniwāt with the first group of short novels eventhough, from the strictly chronological point of view, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek appeared a year earlier in serial form. It is with Khwāmphit Khrang Raek that Dōkmaisot began to develop her writing on a large scale. Although this novel was followed in 1932 by Kam Kao, a short but compact, well-planned work, the longer novel becomes the norm for Dōkmaisot from Khwāmphit Khrang Raek. Sām Chāi appeared in 1933 and Nūng Nai Rōi in 1934.

In this chapter Khwāmphit Khrang Raek and Kam Kao will be considered together, not with the novels of 1933 and 1934 but with Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān which came out in 1935. With this treatment, there is opportunity to see characters developed through more than one novel. The personae of Khwāmphit Khrang Raek and Kam Kao are different from each other but some main characters from each appear in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān. During the very productive years of 1930-1935, Dōkmaisot was producing short stories and novels which were unconnected by plot or character, but by 1935 she evidently formed some impulse towards the saga type in which she could develop earlier characters in new environments and associations. This she did in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān, and this development is therefore an aspect of her work as a novelist which is worthy of special notice.

Khwāmphit Khrang Raek: the First Mistake

Khwāmphit Khrang Raek was first published in instalments in Nārīnāt, volume I, number 1, November 8th 1930 to volume II, number 3, December 31st 1931. The second and fourth reprints in one volume in 1935 and 1950 were published by the author herself. The third reprint was published by Chira in 1941, and in more recent years it was reprinted by Prae Pittaya and the Thai National Library.

Sumon Kānchanākhom, the editor of Nārīnāt wrote the following passage concerning this novel which proves that Dōkmaisot had established her name already with her earlier works:

I am sure that whoever opens at page nine will remark "Here is a Dōkmaisot's story". Of course I will smile and Dōkmaisot too will smile. This story will continue for a long time yet. Even the author does not know when it will end.<sup>1</sup> However, for this first instalment alone, Dōkmaisot sent in to us four folios, which is quite long. The author had to write it in limited time, therefore small mistakes are unavoidable. However, I am certain that you will gain pleasure from reading the story, just as you would from the meaning of the author's name...<sup>2</sup>

On asking several readers of Nārīnāt, it appears that they were all quite addicted to this novel. This is supported by a reader called "Lak" who sent her letter to the editor of the magazine and had the following reply:

I have received a letter from "Lak" who says that after reading Khwāmphit Khrang Raek by Dōkmaisot she had no strength left to write, for whatever she wanted to write about, Dōkmaisot has already included in her story...I think Dōkmaisot will be sorry to hear this and will to apologise. I also have a feeling that "Lak" is a writer. If so, couldn't she write

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<sup>1</sup>This comment is in contrast with the method of writing of Dōkmaisot. See Chapter I, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>Sumon Kānchanākhom, Nārīnāt, I, 1 (November 8th 1930), editorial.

something for us? And I wonder why she is afraid that Dōkmaisot will leave Nārīnāt? That is impossible, as long as the reader still want her...1

After the final instalment had been published, the editor wrote the passage below for the reader:

I would like to say something about Khwāmphit Khrang Raek which has now been completed. It ended in such a way that all of us must cry for its continuation. There have been many people asking for a second part to the story with the same characters, but in a different setting. Well, it's up to the author. If the author has similar idea, we certainly will have a chance to read it. Although the story has finished and the name Dōkmaisot has disappeared from Nārīnāt, I can assure you that after a rest Dōkmaisot will write again for Nārīnāt.<sup>2</sup>

List of characters:

Phrayā Thammasān Sōphon	a wealthy and high-ranking official.
Khunying Thammasān Sōphon	his wife.
Nāng Phadung Phānitchakit (Som)	their eldest daughter; mother of two children.
Yot	their only son; a graduate from England.
Walai	their most beautiful daughter, aged 21.
Amarā	their youngest daughter, aged 19; sickly but clever and kind.
Phrayā Sīsupphawēt	Another high-ranking official; wealthy and polygamous.
Khunying Sīsupphawēt	his wife.
Luang Prāmōt Witthayākān	their eldest son, a railway engineer, aged 29.
Amnuay	their second son, friend of Yot. He was brought up by his grandmother.
Pramuan and Urai	their daughters, younger sisters of Luang Prāmōt and Amnuay.
Luang Narābān Banthoeng (Phot)	close friend of all Phrayā Thammasān's children, and in love with Walai.
Phra Phadung Phānitchakit	Som's husband, friend of Luang Narābān.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 1 (November 8th 1931), editorial.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 3 (January 12th 1932), editorial.

Nāng Salyakit Prīchā (Čharoen)	friend of Walai and Som, cousin of Luang Prāmōt.
Luang Salyakit Prīchā	Čharoen's husband, friend of Luang Narābān.
Phra and Nāng Kamčhat Thuraphāi	distant relatives of Phrayā Thammasān in Songkhla.
Čhamlong and Samruay	Luang Prāmōt's first and second secret wives.
Rian	Phra Kamčhat's and later Phrayā Thammasān's driver.

### Synopsis

Phra and Nāng Kamčhat Thuraphāi who lived in Songkhla took their relatives from Bangkok to Penang. They were Phra Phadung, his wife, Som, and her two younger sisters, Walai and Amarā. On Penang Hill they met two Thai men; Luang Prāmōt and his younger brother, Amnuay, who had just returned home from Europe. While Amarā criticised both brothers sharply about their wearing European clothes, Walai struck them, especially Luang Prāmōt, as a charming, clever and cheerful person.

After their second meeting at the Royal Turf Club in Bangkok, Luang Prāmōt showed his interest in Walai openly. But his cousin, Čharoen, who was a close friend of Walai later told her the truth that Luang Prāmōt was living with a girl who had eloped with him in the house next to hers. Instead of stopping their relationship, Walai decided to win Luang Prāmōt's heart, as a result of which she came to make her first grave mistake. With the advantage of her parents, Phrayā and Khunying Thammasān, knowing his parents, Phrayā and Khunying Sīsupphawēt, their relationship developed speedily and they eventually became engaged.

Amarā alone disagreed with the affair for the reason that she was against polygamy and did not wish to see her own sister being the cause of separation between Luang Prāmōt and Čhamlong whom she considered his wife and not his mistress. She tried in vain every possible way to stop

the marriage. When the wedding came, she could only wish that what she had been afraid of would never come true.

Luang Nartbān was another person who was broken-hearted by the marriage. He had been a good friend of her family and had loved Walai since she was still a schoolgirl.

After a year of marriage Luang Prāmōt and Walai had a son whom they called Nū. Everything went on smoothly until Khunying Thammasān was critically ill with pneumonia and Walai had to stay over at her father's home to help Amarā and Som nurse her. She found out by chance one day that Luang Prāmōt was flirting with Samruay, her maid, whose duty was to look after Nū. Her pride was shaken but Walai managed to conceal it at that early stage.

Khunying Thammasān died only eight days before the return of Yot, the only son of the family, from Europe. During the mourning months Walai could not go out with her husband. This annoyed Luang Prāmōt tremendously. Soon he began to be seen here and there with other women. In the hope of re-attracting him, Walai began applying make-up on her sad pale face, but still she had to wear black and could not appear with him on social occasions. After finding out about misconduct between Samruay and Luang Prāmōt, Walai quietly sacked her.

Her decision seemingly improved the situation because Luang Prāmōt became a good husband and father again. However, he still stayed out late at night giving her the reason that he was very busy at his office. The reality was revealed one day when Luang Prāmōt took Walai and Nū to visit his parents. His sister, Urai, a careless outspoken girl, told Walai that she Luang Prāmōt going to a film with two other women. Luang Prāmōt admitted it and promised that he would not do it again.

All this time Amnuay had been in love with Amarā. With Yot as a strong supporter, everything went on smoothly until one day after Amnuay had confessed his love the Amarā, Walai took her son back to live with her father. Walai's decision came after she learnt from the servants that Samruay

did not in fact go anywhere, but was taken by Luang Prāmōt to live with Čhamlōng. She herself also saw them once in a restaurant. Walai insisted her husband choose between her and his mistresses, and when he refused to answer, she made up her mind to leave him. Phrayā Thammasān, being monogamous himself, was very angry with Luang Prāmōt and went straight to talk to his parents. Naturally, he met no sympathy from a man with twenty minor wives, and his Khunying who had become so inured to the practice. The next morning Luang Prāmōt went to Phrayā Thammasān's home to ask Walai to bring their baby home, which she refused firmly to do. Provocatively, he returned the divorce document to Walai without his signature but with a note saying that it was not his wish to divorce her, but if she wanted to remarry, she could do so any time.

The only person who really sympathised with Walai was Amarā, eventhough the result of the separation had automatically wrecked her relationship with Amnuay.

The situation should have revived the hopes of Luang Narābān of marrying Walai. But unfortunately Phrayā and Khunying Sīsupphawēt had already declared that, as soon as Walai remarried, Nū would be taken away to live with them, a situation Walai could not accept.

Following their refusal to request Amarā's hand for Amnuay, Phrayā and Khunying Sīsupphawēt half-forced him to marry a girl they chose for him. Amnuay escaped the ordeal by becoming a Buddhist monk for a period. Amarā too refused All proposals. After resigning from the monkhood, Amnuay went to ask help of Luang Narābān about Amarā. Luang Narābān encouraged him to go and talk to Phrayā Thammasān while he himself would ask his friends, Som and her husband, to support him.

With the help of Yot, Amnuay followed the suggestion. Phrayā Thammasān was dumbfounded at first, but after consulting his eldest daughter and her husband, he consented to the marriage. Walai did her best to help arrange the ceremony, but was at the same time very sad about herself. During the

ceremony, she went alone into the quiet garden and cried bitterly without realising that Luang Narūbān had been nearby. He pleaded with her to marry him promising to love Nū as his own son. But Walai had firmly decided not to commit any action that might lead to a second mistake.

### Story

Khwāmphit Khrang Raek takes place in Bangkok from 1927 to 1930. The story is told in narrative form in fifty-six chapters, without any flashbacks as usually occur in the author's long novels.

Unlike her previous works in which Dōkmaisot emphasized dramatic action and beautiful settings, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek deals mostly with human relationships as influenced by society and long practised traditions. The characters move about within the compounds of a few houses and restaurants in Bangkok. The two settings outside Bangkok; Penang Hill and Hua Hin briefly used are undoubtedly chosen to add more information about the leading character, Walai. Instead of writing in detail about the places, the author focuses on personalities and their thoughts. It is in this novel that Dōkmaisot reveals fully for the first time the way the pre-war Thai élite lived, how much their behaviour was coloured by their social position, and how similar they were to people in the street so far as the basic motivations of human beings are concerned. In order to give balance to the limited settings, the novelist describes beautifully several social occasions, the ordination, wedding and cremation ceremonies.

### Theme

The theme of this novel is the polygamy problem and its clash with the modern ideas of the younger generation. There are at least ten characters representing various opinions about the practice; Phrayā Sīsupphawēt could not tell the exact number of his wives, while his son, Amnuay, contemptuously condemned it as "an evil practice"<sup>1</sup>. Being born herself into a heavily polygamous family, Dōkmaisot avoided asserting directly her anti-polygamous opinions by quoting and commenting at length on the Lord Buddha's words which she interprets as being opposed to the practice<sup>2</sup>.

### Plot

The background outline of the story is the clash of personalities, family life and influence over the children. Phrayā Sī was polygamous, and his family, save Amnuay, accepted the idea, whereas Phrayā Thammasān believed in monogamy and had an ideal family life.

Among the younger generation, there is a contrast between brothers to begin with; Luang Prāmōt is traditional and polygamous, Amnuay modern and monogamous. The two families together with their differences are represented by Luang Prāmōt and Walai. Their failure and the family complications cause Amnuay and Amarā's unhappiness. Their marriage in the end is made possible by Luang Narūbān who has always wished to marry Walai but is left disappointed at the end of the story.

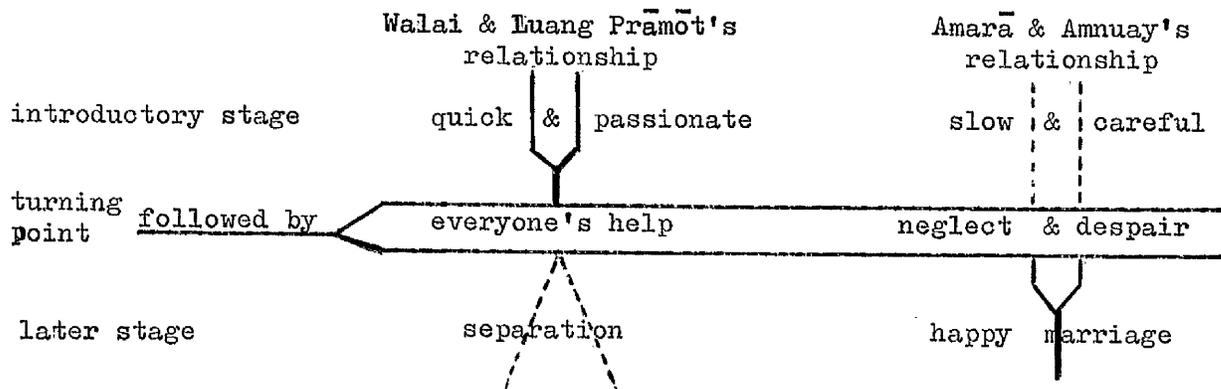
The characters of Amnuay and Amarā are too important to call their situation a mere sub-plot. The development of their relationship runs independently and differently

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, p.657.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 566-568.

in its nature from that of Walai and Luang Prāmōt, and is perhaps more interesting too. Dōkmaisot made the break-down of Luang Prāmōt and Walai's marriage coincide with Amārā and Amnuay's realization of their mutual love in chapters 32 and 33 - the turning point for both couples. Thenceforth Amārā and Amnuay were helped out of the difficulties by Luang Narūbān and Walai separated from Luang Prāmōt.



The development of the plot pattern of Khwāmphit Khrang Raek is very subtly knit by Dōkmaisot's using not only the main characters mentioned, but all the minor characters realistically drawn to help contribute their share as components of society of the novel.

### Characters

The real value of Khwāmphit Khrang Raek is perhaps the characterisation. All characters; from the youngest, Nū, to the oldest, Phrayā Sī's mother, from a driver to a 'phrayā' and from a mistress to a 'khunying', are realistic, not only their characters can be seen, but even their voices can be imagined from the description. Dōkmaisot's exploitation of her command of Thai is seen in this novel at its best.

The novelist creates four young people; two sisters and two brothers, each pair of tremendously contrasting character. The flirtatious sister married the philanderer

brother, and the 'progressive' but conservative younger sister married the younger brother who had similar beliefs. The failure of the first couple and the success of the latter is not merely accidental but the result of the clash and harmony of natures - a foundation of human inter-relationships.

As suggested by the title, Walai is no doubt the heroine of the book. She is loved by all the men in her world; her father, brother, husband and admirers, even the drivers. But she certainly is not a darling of Dōkmaisot, nor of critics and readers whom the author allows to see her, inside-out. Ranchuan Intharakamhaeng<sup>1</sup> describes her as "a craver for forbidden objects"<sup>2</sup>. Where her father and Luang Prāmōt saw her innocent, lovable and charming, the reader might well consider her insincere, flirtatious, selfish and even deceitful. Physically, she is again beautiful in men's eyes, whereas the author herself does not expect her readers to see Walai in the same way, but justifiably through Amarā's opinions:

If each part of her face is individually judged, none is very beautiful. Her nose, lips, eye-brows and the shape of her face are just attractive. But why is she so charming a person? It must be because of that pair of sweet and sharp eyes which their owner always intends to make shine with liveliness. Whenever Walai smiles, she does so with her eyes more than with her lips and when she laughs, her eyes even become brighter. Besides, Walai makes herself more attractive with her listening attention. She never makes 'a mistake'. Whether it is in a conversation with relatives, close friends, or with acquaintances whom she knows superficially, Walai knows how to select her words to suit the occasion...<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A well-known Thai educationist, librarian, critic, an admirer of Dōkmaisot's novels, and the author of Phāp Chīwit Čhāk Nawaniyāi: Pictures of Lives from Novels.

<sup>2</sup>Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng, Phāp Chīwit Čhāk Nawaniyāi (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1970), pp. 301-318.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek (Bangkok, 1950), pp. 51-52.

Therefore, Walai is an artist who knows how to improve her personality. At the same time she possesses other artistic talents; singing, embroidery, designing and flower arrangement, all of which can be admired by other people. But she never sweeps the floor, dusts the furniture or cooks the food as Amarā does daily.

If viewed from the angle of the men in the book whose eyes are closed to the real Walai, or from the fact that every human being has improbable corners, the comments on Walai by the reader, critics, as well as by the author herself might well be considered envious. As Walai herself condemned Amarā when the latter severely reproached her with her inappropriate conduct, " I bet you can't achieve half of my success should you try to emulate me. That's why you envy me."<sup>1</sup> Indeed Amarā used to try to follow her sister's example and was not successful, for forcing herself in that manner is not in her nature. Amarā alone knows thoroughly that Walai's charm is artificial and that she uses it as a weapon to defeat her opponents and at the same time to get what she wants. While with men Walai casts her eyes down innocently as if to conceal her shyness, with Amarā, she expresses her motivation openly.

"Certainly I want to be praised as much as possible by everybody I meet. I want them to love me and not to say anything behind my back. I always try to do my best at that and I know full well that I can do it easily." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.37.

<sup>2</sup>Loc.cit.

Walai does not care what women think of her as long as she is admired by men. She pays no attention to Amarā's warning about Luang Prāmōt, shrugs in the dark at Som's complaints about her conduct, defies her mother's suggestion about her clothes, laughs challengingly when Čharoen tells about Luang Prāmōt's wife. She even dares talk so playfully with the driver that her elder relative, Nāng Kamčhat, spits out her betel-nut juice several times in disgust.

Walai, "a proud swan", who never makes "a mistake", becomes obsessed with pride and self-estimation, and it leads to her "first mistake", which breaks her wings and gives her the severest lesson in her life.<sup>1</sup> The readers realise her pain, have compassion for her, but they cannot help thinking that she deserves it. Altogether, this female character of Dōkmaisot is very dynamic; one who arouses liking, disapproval and sympathy in the reader simultaneously.

Amarā is the opposite of Walai. Physically, she is thin, pale, sickly, and unattractive. Her manner is completely without pretence. Her lack of feminine charm is made worse by her short temper, her too straightforward way of speaking and her lack of interest in clothing. Khunying Thammasān always retorted to her husband in defence of Amarā when he admired Walai's skills:

"Yes, Walai is her father's daughter, she knows all the arts, but never knows how to enter the kitchen. She knows how to eat but not to cook. Amarā is her mother's daughter, she knows only how to cook and nothing else."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The idiom "a swan with broken wings" (หงส์ปีกหัก) is what a Thai reader would compare Walai with, but in the story and to Luang Narūbān, Walai is still like "a white water-lily whose beauty never lessens, although it has been tarnished."

See Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 674.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

The following is another good example of the differences of the two sisters' character:

(Phrayā Thammasān said to Walai while they were in the garden),

"Your mother is going to take you to Phrayā Sī's party. It's a big party and they have many guests; you must be beautiful."

Walai was apparently listening to him with attention. Both hands were holding bunches of flowers, pressing them to her breast, so that the anthuriums of various colours partly covered her face, hiding her contented smile from her father. All he could see was a pair of crystal clear black eyes under the black eyebrows looking at him through the gap between the flowers. What a delightful picture...

At the same time, the youngest daughter of Phrayā Thammasān was in the kitchen with her mother. She was sitting on a low stool cutting chicken to make 'sweet and sour' for breakfast. Khunying Thammasān was peeling potatoes and chopping them into small dices. When everything was ready she let Amarā cook it while she watched her. On the other side, a male servant was fanning a stove with a kettle on it. A moment later the sweet and sour was poured into a large serving plate. A servant put a tray underneath it. The Khunying turned to the cook and scolded her for not scraping the burnt toast properly. Amarā took them from her and scraped them herself skilfully, while her mother looked on, smiling contentedly. After the toast was arranged on the plate, the Khunying said,

"Your father is going to take you to Phrayā Sī's party. Your diamond pendant needs polishing, Amarā. You'd better take it to the Chinese shop."

Amarā frowned disapprovingly. Without a word she walked to a water jar...

Walai could not persuade Amarā to go shopping with her and their mother. Amarā watched her sister taking all the material out of the wardrobe boredly. To her all her dresses were good enough or even too good for the occasion. When the car went out of the gate, Amarā was standing by the window, with an uninterested smile on her pale face. After a while, she picked up a novel by Sir Walter Scott, her favourite writer, sat down in a chair and read it happily. <sup>1</sup>

Although Amarā possesses no beauty that other people would admire, she was well-loved for her kindness. She

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-99.

firmly believes that the admiration of other people was nothing compared with sincerity. Her straightforward and rather tactless way of speaking too is a result of her conviction of the priceless virtue of truth. Nevertheless, as a young woman of nineteen, her speech such as that below cannot be considered charming by any standard.

(She asked Luang Prāmōt on Penang Hill)

"Why do you dress like a European?"

"Because otherwise I would have to wear a 'phā-nung'<sup>1</sup>. It's not practical and must look strange. I am afraid that people here will run after me just to look at my 'phā-nung'", answered Luang Prāmōt.

"Are you ashamed of it?"

"Not really, but I don't like looking peculiar."

Amarā laughed at him without consideration and then said,

"For years Siam has been trying to make herself known to other nations. But Siamese people - they borrow European clothes to wear as soon as they step out of the country. What about that? And when they put them on, they are mistaken for Chinese, Malay, or Japanese straightaway, and not even once taken for the wearer of the costume."

...

"When you first saw me in the train what did you take me for?", Luang Prāmōt asked.

"A Chinese."

"And Amnuay?"

"A Malay."

"That must be because Amnuay is a little darker than me. I shouldn't have introduced myself, really. Otherwise we may have heard you comment on us."

"Not necessarily.<sup>2</sup> I have no interest in any Chinese or Malay here."

Amarā was strongly against the marriage of Walai to Luang Prāmōt, not only because she knew that her sister only wanted to be successful, or because she did not like the

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<sup>1</sup>See footnote 2, p. 226

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp.10-12.

character of Luang Prāmōt, but mainly because she sympathised with his previous wife. Amarā was laughed at and thought to be too pessimistic by everybody. But when the marriage broke down, it was she again who had to suppress her disappointment in order to help Walai.

So far, Dōkmaisot has created many female characters and none of them is like Amarā. She is not created as a heroine in the conventional sense, that is to say she is not beautiful. But she is certainly Dōkmaisot's favourite. Through her the author shows her readers that goodness in human nature is much more important than the outer appearance, that a plain girl like Amarā could be successful in life as much as a beautiful one like Walai could fail. In many ways, Amarā has the characteristics of the author herself; being sickly, straightforward in speech, fond of reading, etc. The contrast between Walai and Amarā is maintained to the end of the book; Walai's loneliness and sorrow, and Amarā's marriage. If the last scene is reserved for the main characters as is usually the case in a novel, Amarā and Amnuay then are as important, or almost as important as the characters Walai and Luang Prāmōt.

Luang Prāmōt may be considered the hero of this novel because he married Walai and always managed to set something going in the novel's action. But he is also a villain. Amnuay occupies several delightful scenes in the story, and is as equally cherished by the reader as Amarā, but he does not prompt events as Luang Prāmōt does. Luang Narābān, though very likeable, is secondary in role to Luang Prāmōt, and after all he is the loser throughout.

Dōkmaisot described Luang Prāmōt only rather superficially and leaves all questions about his thoughts unanswered. Possessed of the social graces, good education, good position and a good income, he is bound to be a confident person. But Luang Prāmōt does not appear in any way conceited or snobbish. The extent of his villainy is that he is a philanderer and a dishonest husband. Unless he is of shallow mind and unformed character, it is hard to think that a man like him could be so attached to women like Čhamlōng and Samruay that he chose to keep them and desert his wife and son. Worse than that, Luang Prāmōt is undeterred by scandals, criticism or any moral obligation. Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng, who seems to hate this character as a human being, calls him 'a man with the brain and tricks merely to deceive and destroy women; to whom the words "shame" and "moral conscience" have no meaning as soon as he is no longer in front of the public'.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps Dōkmaisot herself does not know this male character well and only forms him from inexplicable models she has seen. Very often the reader would feel that either Luang Prāmōt's speech is not in tune with his character, or that his character is completely unstable.

In contrast with Luang Prāmōt, Amnuay is kind, responsible and monogamous. The possible reason for their differences is that Amnuay was brought up by his grandmother and not his parents. He can be considered as representing the protest of the younger generation against the traditional practice of polygamy, whereas Luang Prāmōt, practising polygamy, may be assumed to accept it. If the novel is used to demonstrate the nature of polygamy in the society and the

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<sup>1</sup>Rančhuan, op.cit., pp. 310, 315.

relationships that develop together with attitudes of opposition, it can be done in terms of the present generation of young adults. There is no need for an historical component which perhaps explains the unusual absence of the 'flashback'.

Kam Kao: Previous Karma

Kam Kao was first published in instalments in Thai Khasēm in 1932, and is the last novel of Dōkmaisot to be serialised.

List of characters

Nut	a lovely and cheerful girl of twenty one, returned to Siam after having been brought up in England.
Amphōn	her elder sister, aged twenty four, surly and withdrawn.
Phrayā Rattanawāthī (formerly Khun then Luang Suraphot Phičhān)	Thai Ambassador at Court of St. James, adoptive father of Nut and Amphōn.
Khunying Rattanawāthī (Sawong)	48, his sophisticated wife who brought Nut and Amphōn to Siam.
Phong Kalyānawēt	32, a lawyer, younger half-brother of Khunying Rattanawāthī.
Āt	real father of Nut and Amphōn, close friend of Phrayā Rattanawāthī.
Sunthōn	a distant yong relative of Khunying Rattanawāthī, known to Nut in England, and in love with her.
Luang Bamrung Prachārāt (Chat)	Āt's younger brother, lives in Langsuan.
Chom	his wife.
Luang Prakōp Thurakān	their eldest son, the district chief.
Chalao, Chaluay, Chalōng, Chalō	their daughters and sons.
Chat	Luang Bamrung's nephew.

### Synopsis

Amphōn and her younger sister, Nut, were brought up by Phrayā and Khunying Rattanawāthī in England while Phrayā Rattanawāthī was serving as the Thai Ambassador. The two girls grew up to be beautiful young ladies but of very different characters; Amphōn very serious and sceptical, Nut cheerful and frank.

After they returned to Bangkok, Sunthōn, Nut's boyfriend whom she had known in England and who had promised to marry her suddenly ceased their relationship. Amphōn knew the reason but could not tell Nut. Phong, Khunying Sawong's half brother, was another person who understood the situation but could not do anything. Apart from that, he loved Nut but the girl thought of him as her real uncle.

One day, a letter came from Langsuan, a small district in south Siam asking Khunying Sawong to take Amphōn and Nut there. At first, Nut thought it was to be a holiday, but later she was surprised to see Amphōn packing all her belongings, and hear her say that she would not come back to Bangkok again.

It was revealed to Nut by Amphōn in Langsuan that the sick man they went to visit was their natural father who had come out from prison after being sentenced for a long time on a charge of killing his father-in-law. The fact was that Phit, a daughter of a well-to-do man, was not allowed to marry Āt, an army officer she loved. Āt of course was the father of Amphōn and Nut. Phit ran away with him with the help of Āt's close friend, Luang Suraphot, who became Phrayā Rattanawāthī. After giving birth to Amphōn and Nut, her father discovered their whereabouts and tried to force her to leave Āt. Āt, who was a little drunk that day, came home and when he saw the scene, shot the man dead without realising who he was. Phit then died instantly from a heart attack. Before Āt was sent to prison, he asked Luang Suraphot to bring up his daughters and educate them, which Luang Suraphot promised to do. When this heart-breaking incident happened Amphōn was three and half years

old and Nut still a baby.

Amphōn also revealed the fact that Khunying Sawong had told all the young men who had been fond of Nut and herself the story of their lives and then they all turned away from them.

Nut was shocked to know the truth. She refused to go back to Bangkok with Khunying Sawong but determined to stay in Langsuan with Amphōn. However, it took her many days to overcome her feeling of embarrassment about having an ex-prisoner as her real father.

Phong was the only person for whom the revelation of their past turned out to be good fortune, because Nut was no longer his niece but a young lady with whom he had been all the time in love. They marry eventually.

Story, theme, plot, and characters.

Despite its short length, Kam Kao is a fully developed novel, and among Dōkmaiso's works is unique in various ways. The title, 'Previous Karma', may make the reader think that the story evolved from the author's moral consciousness. But actually the story has no deep moral connection or morality, at least is not used in the same integral manner in character development as in the novelist's longer works.

The title occurs at a crucial point in the text where Amphōn has just revealed the family secret that the parents are foster parents and the so-called 'uncle' is the real father. At this point she says:

"It's our 'kam' - what can we do? It is good that you should know the truth - it is important truth about our father. My anxiety at being the one to tell you is relieved. The truth is the truth. We shall never be able to escape that. But please do understand that although our father has been condemned for a crime, he is no bad man - no criminal. On the contrary, he

has a goodness which we ought to respect. It is only 'past kam' which caused him to let his anger get out of control - just on one single occasion, and that has given rise<sup>1</sup> to this terrible aftermath of trouble for us all."

Here, at its lowest, 'kam' can be translated as 'fate'. In fact, it represents the consciousness common to all minds trained in Buddhist beliefs that there is continuous causation and result running through a series of lives. This does not so much indicate the acceptance of fate as provide a consolation, an understanding and even a guideline for attitudes to life and action. There is of course a conventional element in the expression since it is so frequently on the lips of Thai people. The idea, however, lies behind the plot and perhaps helps to form its dramatic strength in the author's mind.

The theme of Kam Kao is love and separation, not as they appear in a common love story, but realistically in a human being's life. They include love and separation between Nut and Amphōn and their real and adopted parents, between Āt and Phit, and even further back to between Phit and her parents. The reasons are different from one another and are all interesting; parental love and sacrifice, the realisation of non-consanguinity, passion, and traditional barriers.

The real value of the book lies in the force of its salient plot, with a definite action to which everything contributes and an end towards which all things move. Dōkmaisot has shown in this novel her ability to build up

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Kam Kao (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), pp. 118-119.

the atmosphere towards a climax in the middle of the story, maintaining its intensified value while solving outcome possibilities. To begin with, the reader is introduced straightaway to the main characters rather than to the society they live in. All the plot that remains is their mysterious behaviour towards each other which instead of widening the framework as usual, gradually narrows it up to the climax. The reader will feel from the start that there is something somewhere waiting to crush Nut's too lively, too smooth and optimistic nature, and it must be something serious too. The strange behaviour of Phong, Khunying Sawong and Sunthōn is a herald. But what Dōkmaisot really exploited is the technique of contrast, and in this case, between Nut and Amphōn.

There is no sub-plot supporting or moving along with the main one. The strangest aspect of the plot is that at the moment when the present story reaches its climax, the whole story of Āt and Phit appears, not like a vague reminiscence or a mere flashback, but rather a superimposed picture over the sorrowful Nut and Amphōn, giving a very touching impression.

Kam Kao is the only novel of Dōkmaisot in which Thai society in general is not portrayed. It is not a progressive accumulation of social but purely of personal relationships that creates the incidents and forms the plot. There is also a confinement to one circle, one complex of life, producing naturally and intensification of action which is built up in a given time as is always the case with a dramatic novel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London: Hogarth Press, 1963), pp.42,58,ff.

As for the characters, they are all well designed to suit the preciseness of the story. They and the plot are inseparably knit together. The given qualities of Nut, Amphōn and Khunying Sawong, and even those in the past, Āt and Phit, determine the action. The effect of the action on them is, however, comparatively limited. It is on Nut that the strongest, almost the only effect is seen and that creates of her a more developed character than any of the others.

Nut, Amphōn and Khunying Sawong have equally important roles in the action, but Nut is undoubtedly the centre of the story. Her characteristics of being cheerful, extrovert and modern, are associated with her not knowing the family secret. Having created successfully an intricate character like Walai in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, it could not have been very difficult for Dōkmaisot to draw Nut realistically. At least, she did not have to bother about Nut casting her eyes downwards to conceal her feelings, or to choose ambiguous words and sentences for her. Instead of describing Nut's character all at once as she had done with Prasong in Sattrū Khōng Chaolōn, Dōkmaisot's technique was mature enough that she only needed insert a short passage relevant to the situation from time to time. For example, she wrote about Nut's idea of love as follows:

...Nut was a straightforward person. When she loved and respected anybody, she did so with her heart, not her head. Once she loved, she firmly believed that the person would<sup>1</sup> always do everything correctly and be reasonable...

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p.48.

And unlike the way she monopolized the description of Mayurī or Rasmī, Dōkmaisot now began to apply her technique of making her characters inter-dependent, and of releasing the description little by little at the appropriate places through people's eyes, impressions and through various circumstances. For instance, when Phong sneaked into the garden and saw Nut sleeping on a deck chair, the author took an opportunity to describe her:

...He gazed and gazed at her with excitement and surprise. "She is a real beauty," Phong thought, "beautiful both when awake and asleep, but how surprisingly different they are from one another."<sup>1</sup>

And once again in Langsuan, her beauty was admired by other people. Nut, eavesdropping behind a door, saw the sick man (her real father) lying in his chair, holding her photograph and later pressing it against his heart, while Amphōn who was sitting beside him said,

"There are very few people who can look as beautiful as Nut when dressed up, and there is<sup>2</sup> nobody who, seeing her, will not admire her beauty."

However, Nut is not a type of young Thai girl who would please the eyes of the conservative Thai elders of that period for, as the author stated:

Old people mostly thought that her manner was too unconventional, unlike their daughter and grand-daughters who were soft and gentle. Some of them even censured her behind her back for being 'flirtatious'. That was simply because of her manner which was more Western than Thai. They never stopped to think that Nut had been educated and brought up among Westerners all her life, and they<sup>3</sup> were Western women of the twentieth century too.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 377

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

Nut is older than Nit, but being brought up in the West makes her less sensitive about Thai customs. While Nit argues with her parents-in-law, fully realising their feelings towards her, Nut does with her mother in her innocent way:

"Mother, do you know Sunthōn's mother?"

"Yes", Khunying Sawong answered abruptly. Nut was quiet for a little while and then asked again,

"Do you think that his mother will like me?"

A strange smile appeared on Khunying Sawong's face while she answered,

"Never."

Nut's eyes showed her utter astonishment. It is very unusual for a mother to adjudge with certainty that other people would dislike her daughter, and with such satisfaction as appeared at that moment in the Khunying's eyes. Nut was stunned and then asked with forced laughter,

"Why? There is nothing wrong with me. Just think, I am your daughter. If there was anything wrong, you must have put it right."

Her innocent eyes, and her tone of confidence in her mother had softened the Khunying when she said,

"Yes, there is something about <sup>you</sup>. Your manner is absolutely unacceptable to the Thai."

"Ah, is that my fault? <sup>1</sup> I was brought up in Europe. I can't help it." <sup>1</sup>

Amphōn's revelation of the secret changes Nut and she increases in importance as the story develops until it is all about her; the shock, the re-adjustment of loyalties, and the happy outcome with Phong.

Amphōn is created in contrast to Nut from the start. Her knowledge of their parents' story makes her a gloomy, introverted and bitter person, so much so that she can act as the catalyst of the plot, with the duty of handing over the secret to her sister. Physically, Amphōn is described

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-22.

as having large and unfriendly eyes with thick eyelashes. The novelist uses only one sentence to give a picture of Amphōn's behaviour towards other people:

She walked into the room with an inimical and reserved air as if to remind everybody there, "Don't come near me. I don't want to be your friend!"<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the story Amphōn speaks about her own character only once with Nut, and it reflects enough her serious nature. As she says, "All my life I never do anything just for fun, but always think of the reasons and consequences."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, her change to a more relaxed mood when she was among her cousins in Langsuan and after she had disclosed the secret to Nut, gives Dōkmaisot a good chance to develop her character in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narābān.

Khunying Sawong is a much more psychologically complicated person due to the fact that she had no children of her own and cannot fully accept her foster children. Thus she becomes a difficult character to create. The author gradually conveys a picture of Khunying Sawong in four stages; through Nut, Amphōn, Phong and her psycho-analysis. Nut thinks of her as a wonderful mother; kind and thoughtful. Amphōn believes the Khunying to be merciless. Phong, in arguing with her about Sunthōn and Nut, considers her action hypocritical. And the author at last speaks about her subconsciousness into which Phong cannot probe.

There is an old saying comparing the action of a type of women with that of a crow - loving only her own babies and sparing no thought for others'. They are large in number and by no means belong to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

the lower class. Anyway, it is naturally impossible to hope for one who thinks of himself first to care for what is not him or his.

Nut grew up under the care and instruction of Khunying Sawong, and with her patience and endurance. Her physical beauty and character developed with her age. As a young girl Nut sometimes annoyed the Khunying with her childish obstinacy and naughtiness, and sometimes pleased her with her obedience. She was the Khunying's life and friend in time of leisure and work. In time of sickness, they nursed one another. Whenever Nut expressed her love to her, the Khunying was proud of herself as a mother. Although these feelings are similar to those between a mother and a daughter, Khunying was always conscious of the fact that Nut was not her real child. There were times when Nut's expression of love bored her, Nut's cheerfulness irritated her and she was hurt hearing people admiring Nut.

But Khunying Sawong was a firm and strong-minded woman. She had encouraged her husband and agreed with him in giving their promise to Nāi Āt. Therefore, she had to do her best to keep her word. As for the meaning of love, the childless Khunying had nothing to measure whether her affection towards Nut was equal to that of a mother for her real daughter. Without the deepest and limitless maternal love and compassion, her consideration was neither deep nor sharp enough to understand how much her adopted daughter had suffered twice from failures in love...<sup>1</sup>

Socially, Dōkmaisot describes Khunying Sawong as:

... having a manner well-suited to any social circle. Her personality was presentable. Her poise was exceptionally dignified. She was as good a speaker as a listener. Among modern people she was equally modern. When she was with those who were strict with customs and traditions, she was one of them. And as soon as she was among foreigners she was suddenly<sup>2</sup> able to resume her manner as an ambassador's wife.

With these abilities and her mental conflict over love of her adopted children, it should not be surprising that Khunying Sawong is irritated by Nut's language and too westernised manner, especially when she keeps in mind all the time that the girl is twenty-one and not nineteen years old as everyone understands.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-149.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

It should be noted at this point that, so far, Dōkmaisot, in creating westernised female characters, makes them daughters of ambassadors. This testifies to the author's consciousness that in those days Thai parents were still too conservative to send their daughters abroad, and unless she made them the ambassadors' daughters, they would not be realistic.

Although these female characters are well developed, Dōkmaisot, for some reason, keeps all male characters quiet. Sunthōn appears and then fades away completely. Phrayā Rattanawāthī is only mentioned. Phong may be considered the hero of the story, but still he is not a figure who precipitates the action, but only contributes to the happy ending.

Another important feature which gives Kam Kao its realism is the characters' names. Thai people usually name their children by using the letters from their own names, thus Āt and Phit call their daughter Amphōn. Nut's name must have been given to her by her adoptive parents later for it bears no letters from Āt and Phit. Dōkmaisot's care is seen here too when she describes the last meeting between Āt and his daughters before he was imprisoned. She does not mention Nut's name, but simply says, "Nāng Yaem, the wet nurse, holding Amphōn with one hand and carrying Amphōn's younger sister, aged four months in the other, took them to visit their father in prison".<sup>1</sup>

#### Setting and language

As in her earlier works, Dōkmaisot's enthusiasm for describing the countryside is felt again in this novel.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

The country house, though it belongs to the district chief, is furnished in spartan style; the lack of hygienic conveniences is noted by Nut. More picturesque is the author's description of Nut's southerner cousins in their "phā-nung" and vests, chewing betel-nuts, but wearing as much jewellery as they can. There are three effective levels of contrast implied here - the westernised Thai (Nut), the Thai élite in the town and the Thai élite in the country, superior in position but still bucolic.

Of all Dḡkmaisot's novels Kam Kao is the simplest as far as language is concerned. This is mainly because of Nut whose Thai is poor, and the near speechlessness of Amphḡn until the climax releases her tongue. Dḡkmaisot must be praised for consistency in maintaining the simplicity of the dialogue as well as the succinct description without reducing the value of the novel, but adding to its realistic nature.

In conclusion, Kam Kao is different from all other novels of Dḡkmaisot, and its value is not fundamentally social but it attempts to display a universal quality, such as can exist in any society in any corner of the world, eventhough the immediate setting is specifically Thai.

Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān : The Triumph of Luang Narūbān

Dōkmaisot published Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān for the first time in 1934 and first reprinted it in 1941.

In all editions, Nut's frequent use of English for realistic effect is explained in the preface and a translation is also given in footnotes.

All leading characters in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek and Kam Kao appear in this novel with the addition of Phat, Luang Narūbān's adopted son.

Synopsis

Nut accompanied her solicitor husband to Nakornsawan where her elder sister, Amphōn, was a teacher in a government school. They had with them a letter of recommendation from their friends, Amarā and Amnuay, to the Governor of the province, Luang Narūbān. The couple, particularly Nut, were very impressed with Luang Narūbān's personality. Soon they became very friendly and their regular meeting at Nut's boat-house gave Luang Narūbān a chance to know Amphōn better.

In Bangkok, everybody, including Amarā and Amnuay, tried vainly to reconcile Walai with Luang Prāmōt, who by this time repented of his past conduct and had left his mistresses.

As soon as Phrayā Thammasān told him of his wish to visit historical places in the northern provinces, Amnuay, with his wife's cooperation, began his plan; he persuaded the Phrayā to take Walai with him, to base his tour at Nakornsawan, and to travel there at the same time as Luang Prāmōt who was to take up his post as chief railway engineer, - all was to enable Luang Narūbān to mediate between the

separated couple.

Despite his intention to resist Walai's charm, Luang Narūbān was easily bewitched once again and seemingly more hopeful than before. At first Walai suspected his friendship with Amphōn, but this was soon wiped out when her brother, Yot, came up to Nakornsawan with advice from Luang Narūbān to get to know Amphōn.

One evening, Nut and Phong arranged a dinner for their friends. Not knowing the past story, they also invited along Luang Prāmōt who was only too glad to accept the invitation, and did not bother to reveal the truth to his hosts beforehand. Nut and Phong were quite puzzled by the sudden change of atmosphere and everyone's reaction as soon as Luang Prāmōt stepped into the boat-house. Everything was explained to them by Luang Narūbān the next day.

Amphōn was as serious and quiet as usual. Her solemnity dismayed Yot, and he began to see their incompatibility. It happened to be Luang Narūbān who saw her by chance one night, during their boat trip, in a beautiful night dress and in a relaxed manner which impressed him a great deal, though without attachment. A few days after the trip, Phong who had gone to Bangkok on business came back with a message for Amphōn from Phrayā and Khunying Rattanawāthī, saying that they wanted her to resign from her job and return to the capital. He also brought a letter from Amarā and Amnuay to Luang Narūbān, in which Luang Narūbān was asked to take the opportunity to reunite Walai and Luang Prāmōt. The letter was forwarded to Walai and once more Luang Narūbān was very happy because she gave him a firmly negative answer to the reconciliation. Walai realised that she could not

marry Luang Narūbān because her father would never approve of the idea; but she did not want to lose him either. She urged Yot to court Amphōn, and even dared propose to Luang Narūbān a Platonic friendship. That was another object of Walai's jealousy when she mistook him for Luang Narūbān's illegitimate child. She indirectly reproached Luang Narūbān in front of Nut and Amphōn, which made him more sure of her love for him.

Nut wanted to help Luang Prāmōt, and did not support Yot because she had a secret wish to match Luang Narūbān with her sister.

Walai's real feeling was revealed one evening when Nut and Phong invited her, Luang Narūbān, and Yot to dinner. Before that, there had been another party to which both Luang Narūbān and Luang Prāmōt were invited. While crossing the river, Luang Prāmōt fell into the water between the teak logs and was rescued by Luang Narūbān who dived down and pulled him out in time. A false rumour spread around very quickly. Luang Narūbān crossed unseen to Nut's boat-house by a sampan just in time to see everyone's reaction when they first heard people shouting the news. All of them were startled when one boat-man shouted that he was drowned, and then Walai screamed and fainted when another boat-man who had ferried him shouted back that the drowned man was not the Governor but the chief railway engineer. The sudden disappointment made him react to her in a harsh and sarcastic manner.

For several days Luang Narūbān avoided meeting his friends and tried to overcome his sadness. Being encouraged again by Amarā, he decided to speak openly to Walai about

Luang Prāmōt. As usual, Walai did not admit the truth, and instead, tried to convince him that he had every reason to hope for her. But this time her pretence did not work. Luang Narūbān arranged for Luang Prāmōt to come to talk to her when she was alone. At last they were reunited and Walai decided to move to live with her husband in Nakornsawan after first returning to Bangkok with her father.

Nut and Phong also went back to Bangkok, followed by Amphōn who was hoping that she would be allowed by her parents to come back to teach in Nakornsawan.

After his correspondence with Amarā and being invited again and again by her, Luang Narūbān took his leave, went to Bangkok, and stayed with Amarā and Amuay. This provided Amarā an opportunity to play matchmaker between him and Amphōn. Amphōn revealed her life story to Luang Narūbān before he made a decision. Like Phong, Luang Narūbān did not mind it, and they were married in the end.

#### Story, theme and plot

Whether or not Dōkmaisot realises the impression given by this novel, the reader who follows closely the development of her writing, feels that Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān is produced as a result of two main factors: the author's enthusiasm to record her time in Nakornsawan, and her wish to reward her two characters, left rather unkindly from earlier novels, with matrimony. Another conspicuous feature is perhaps the author's convictions on Buddhism which she expresses through Amarā.

The triumph of Luang Narūbān, as the title suggests, is indeed 'virtue triumphant', which is the moral theme

of this novel. If the book is read only for pleasure, Amphōn symbolises the meaning. But if the author's analysis of Luang Narūbān's mind, using the Buddhist method of psycho-analysis, is carefully considered, one will see that it is the victory he gains from freeing himself from infatuation and selfishness.<sup>1</sup>

The work is about one hundred pages shorter than Khwāmphit Khrang Raek. The plot is comparatively simple. This is due perhaps to the fact that all entanglements in the characters' lives have been resolved in Kam Kao, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, and in the four-year gap between the two earlier novels and the last one. The reader can anticipate the happy finale of the story, not exactly from guessing the author's plot, but rather from the feeling that the wish of Amarā, Amnuay, and Nut will be achieved. What Dōkmaisot really has to devise are the ways Walai charms Luang Narūbān, and an incident which is serious and convincing enough to break him away from her in the end. These the novelist does splendidly; Walai is still 'artistic'; Nakornsawan is the largest and most crowded river junction in Thailand where accidents from water-borne transport can easily happen.

#### Character

The characterisation of this novel is also comparatively thin. Luang Prāmōt is no longer an exciting character, as he describes himself to Amarā,

"I used to be like a fire once, burning my own home and family down to ashes. But now I am just the

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<sup>1</sup>This is given in an eight-page discussion (pp.521-528) and is expressed in Buddhist philosophical terms particularly contrasting 'čhai' (heart) and 'čhit' (Pali citta - mind).

the water which will do no harm to anybody, and only intend to give coolness and freshness to extinguish the burning poisons until they are completely gone."<sup>1</sup>

Nut and Phong are living together happily. So are Amarā and Amnuay with their twin babies. Phrayā Sisupphawēt, his wife, and Khunying Sawong no longer control their children's lives. Nevertheless, their contributions to the story are worth considering.

The most interesting character of all - indeed the centre of the story, is still Walai. Amphōn, in the strict sense, should be called the heroine. But she is completely passive and her virtues are negative virtues, lacking any strength to cause events or move the plot. The author's problem is to keep their characteristics consistent and at the same time to develop the story. In doing so, Dōkmaisot makes Amarā and Amnuay relight the spark in Walai by sending her to meet Luang Narūbān. From there Walai moves energetically by herself. Her character never changes. Her relatives and friends in Bangkok notice that she becomes more cheerful after Luang Prāmōt has rejected his mistresses and made clear his wish to be reconciled with her. On the surface she feigns to take no interest in the situation, but deep down, Walai enjoys her triumph over him. In Nakornsawan, she has another chance to prove her power over the second man in her life, Luang Narūbān. The history repeats itself in her eyes; she still loves her husband, but as long as Luang Narūbān does not fall to any other woman her pride and self-importance are maintained. Walai resumes her old technique of 'never making a mistake'. Luang Narūbān is their host; no one will

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān (Bangkok: Chira Phānit, 1941), p.260.

blame her for pleasing him, at the same time her action is meaningful and suggestive enough if he cares to notice. For example, during their boat trip once, Luang Narābān was feeling ill from the gun-wound and could not wear his jacket. Walai insisted on lending him her scarf, while she clutching his jacket to her breast saying that she would use it if the weather turned cold. Or when she was asked to sing, Walai purposely chose 'A Golden Swan' with the word about a woman refusing a man, eventhough he was as high as 'the bird of paradise', because she was old and had already been married.

Walai's selfishness, pride, and egoism never decrease. Her duty is to defeat men and their defeat is her happiness. It is therefore the duty of those to flee from her trap or to realise its danger. Her poisonous charm is eventually realised by Luang Narābān, as he remarks, "A witch! always too dangerous to be near."<sup>1</sup>

The situation with Amphōn is different. Dōkmaisoṭ needs all characters, especially Nut, to push her forward, even only to make her speak long sentences. Nevertheless, Amphōn is not like the tableau-vivante Saḥī in Bupphēsanniwāt. Her quiet character is more like a question mark to which everybody wants to know the answers. Because she is Nut's sister and her appearance was scarcely described in Kam Kao, the novelist can develop her as much as she likes in this novel. Amphōn is still reserved and serious, especially to people whom she does not know well, as Yot remarks with Luang Narābān,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.522.

"I can't stand her. She talks to me like an aunty, or even a granny sometimes. I don't want a wife who would behave toward me like my aunt or my grandmother."<sup>1</sup>

But Luang Narābān has a different opinion. Dōkmaisot writes about his impression of Amphōn in comparison with Nut and Walai as follow:

That night... Luang Narābān was standing at the window, smoking comfortably. The moon in the sky reminded him of the young woman he had just left (Nut). He saw in his imagination her sweet and innocent face floating in the moonlight in front of him, and her cheerful voice still echoed in his ears. "What a lovely girl! No wonder her husband loves her so much. May her happiness never be destroyed by him like..." Suddenly a picture of another woman (Walai) appeared. She was not angelic and amiable like Nut, but intriguing and alluring... His winged thought flew across the rivers, forests, and mountains as quick as lightning, and as soon as he was aware of it, Luang Narābān recalled Nut and went on to her sister, Amphōn.

Yesterday, at Nut's boat-house, he noticed the likeness of the two sisters. But the difference of expression in their faces made him look at Amphōn longer than usual.

They were of the same height. Their faces were of oval shape, but Amphōn's was a little wider and longer. Their noses, mouths, were alike. Both had beautiful eyebrows. Amphōn's eyelashes were thicker and longer. Her eyes were larger too. The expression in them was as different from the other's as that of the sun from the moon, as dusk from dawn, as red from white, or even as fire from water. Nut's eyes were crystal clear, sweet, and soft while Amphōn's sharp, piercing, and rather forbidding. Altogether, Nut's face was the face of a young and innocent girl who had been all the time well-protected and taken care of, and Amphōn's showed the character of a person whose thoughts and feelings were old for her age and who had faced and fought her problems all alone.<sup>2</sup>

Dōkmaisot does not need to worry about Amarā's appearance in this novel. The Chinese soothsayer in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek is correct in forecasting her life, Amarā is now happy and healthy. She is no longer the plain, short-tempered youngest daughter and sister, but a loving mother who smiles

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 698

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 240-242, cf. previous description of Amphōn, pp. 186-187.

happily while snatching a 'sabai'<sup>1</sup> to wrap around her body after suckling her twins and at the footstep of her husband. She and Amnuay do not go to Nakornsawan themselves, but are still very influential in the story; they decide the lives of the main characters. The descriptions of their family scenes on various occasions, especially on the 'tham khwan dāan' day<sup>2</sup> of the twins, are most charming.

If Amarā and Amnuay are the inventors of the plot, Nut and Phong are indeed the mechanism. Dōkmaisot keeps Nut exactly the same as in Kam Kao. Her kind, cheerful, and frank character is in sharp contrast with Walai's trickery and Amphōn's solemnity; thus she freshens the atmosphere of the novel. This time Phong does the duty, which has been once the responsibility of Khunying Sawong - reminding Nut of her too cheerful behaviour. Her Thai is improved but she still mixes up the idioms and always literally translates English sentences into Thai.

Luang Narābān, the hero who wins everyone's heart in the story, does not appear an exciting character. Although the author tells us of one of his bad traits, namely being over confident at times, she loads him with so many virtues that he becomes rather unrealistic. To his townsfolk, he is their kind Governor and a gallant leader, and to his Bangkok friends, his behaviour is without blemish. For these reasons Thai critics always choose him as an example of Dōkmaisot's goody-goody male characters. In short, Luang Narābān is

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<sup>1</sup>A former style of upper garment for Thai women; a long piece of cloth worn around the upper part of the body under the arms, and crossed over the left shoulder. For details of the fashion see M.R.Kukrit Pramoj, Sī Phaendin 6th ed. (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1963), pp. 165-166.

<sup>2</sup>A religious ceremony for one-month old babies.

a likable person, but as a character in a novel he is passive.

Finally, a moral point can be seen in the need for discipline in society, certainly a feature in the moral system of Thai Buddhists. We see the selfish, self-indulgent individualism of Walai especially and of Luang Prāmōt contrasting with the ordered life of Amārā and Amnuay. This must be taken as an essential aim of the author.

If this is joined with the freeing of Luang Narūbān from 'self', again in contrast to Walai who remains unfree in this sense, we can see the power and extent of the moral comment which Dōkmaisot wished to make.

### Settings

On first reading the settings seem to dominate compared with Kam Kao where they are a colourful accompaniment to events though carefully integrated to illustrate and intensify the way of life of the characters concerned. But in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān there is no highly developed plot so that the settings are even more definitely used by Dōkmaisot in relation to the nature of the characters who are in psychological interaction.

As in Kam Kao, the same method of presenting three effective levels of setting contrast is exploited in this novel, but with much more colourful description. Dōkmaisot knew Nakornsawan province quite well through her close relative who was a teak-dealer there.<sup>1</sup> Sukit Nimmanheminda has also revealed that the author toured the town thoroughly, even went into a casino in disguise, before writing the book.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thai National Library, Kān Aphiprāi..., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview with the writer of this thesis on August 27th, 1971.

These experiences, combined with other information she might well have heard from her other relatives who were governors of provincial towns, are certainly enough to enable her to write about the outlaws, the gambling, legal cases and of course the accidents caused by the teak transportation at Nakornsawan.

The vivid descriptions of each spot the characters in the novel visited displays D̄kmaisot's narrative power and command of Thai language. Contrasting rhythms in it can be felt all the time, starting from the scene in the Governor's residence with its spacious and shady compound, then a scene with noisy canal traffic, disorderly raft houses, the properly arranged and well-cared-for boat-house of Nut, followed by the market scene and again back to the small peaceful bungalow of Amph̄n. The friendly way of life of country people is also seen, for example, when Nut, after finishing her routine housework, crosses over to the next boat-house by way of a single-board bridge to chat with her neighbours, and when someone crosses over to hers with a bowl of curry. Nevertheless, D̄kmaisot does not just describe them but criticises them strongly:

There, the boat-houses were floating still in rows: large ones, medium ones, small ones, even minute ones which looked like toy houses. They were all decorated with flowers and small shrubs. This shows the Thai characteristics of being fond of flowers and born gardeners.

But another aspect is evident from the way they arranged their belongings inside the houses; paddles, rice jars and pickle-jars are put at the far end of their sleeping quarters; clothes were on their toilet-stool; perfume bottles above the cupboard; books on the sewing machine; hands of bananas in the rice basket; salted eggs were in the same basket as garlic and onion; hunks of coconut fibre in the bamboo basket for charcoal; on the outer platform were jars of tamarinds; upturned spittoons were drying on the rail; flower pots, water jars, bowls scattered everywhere. Broken pots and jars

containing flower-shrubs were always being moved. The best they would do with them was to put them into uneven rows and on various levels. Here, one will find another truth about Thai people; they love luxurious beauty, but possess no sense of order and take little interest in tidiness. 1

This is of course in contrast to Nut's boat house:

The boat-house which Phong and his wife rented from Nāng Thongklom was different, not because of its owner, but because it had been rearranged by Amphōn so that it would be comfortable for a young couple from Bangkok. All the cooking gear was kept in a small room, leaving a spacious and airy room as a bedroom with only a few necessary things in it. The bed, a wardrobe and a dressing table were in their appropriate places.<sup>2</sup>

When it comes to the description of the shopping centre, there is certainly an air of anti-Chinese prejudice in the novelist's tone. The description emphasises commerce:

The town planning was suitable for an area with congested traffic. There were rows of small shophouses for business and living. The big buildings were for larger businesses such as restaurants, hotels, saw-mills, ice-factories, all of which are built in a style preferred by Chinese traders: tall and large with flat roofs and wide sun roofs, painted in garish colours.

Inside the shops which were packed with utensils, cloths, and leather goods, one could see that all owners were Chinese. There were not less than three Chinese barbers, one large and clean dentist's shop run by a Chinese. A Chinese photography shop, with Chinese photographers, was decorated gaily with photographs of Thai teenagers in various poses. The largest hotel in the town with ten storeys and at least fifty rooms had a Chinese manager. The only ice-factory which supplied ice to all the houses and shops also belonged to a Chinese and had a Chinese manager. 3

Despite her tone, Dōkmaisot is no less satirical with the Thai's easy-going habits. As she points out in her observations during the boat trip to Bōraphet Lake:

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 85-87.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

Before getting to a small canal leading to Bōraphet Lake, there was a reservoir. The canal was rather narrow and winding. On both sides were rice fields and meadows. The Khem Luang (name of the boat) went past a number of paddy-boats, each of which was heavily loaded with rice paddy, leaving only a small square space of half an arm'slength for the front paddler. The back space was slightly larger. It was for the rudder-holder, the children, babies, and for keeping the cooking gear.

Most children were chubby, dark-skinned, with big round eyes. Their black hair was tied in plaits, or top-knots and some were shaven. All were naked as though to show their tummies which were big and round up to their chests.

If the persons in the front and the back of the boats were of different sex, the woman would be Thai and the man Chinese, or at least a grandson of a Chinese, or a Chinese son-in-law. This can be justifiably assumed from the fat old men whose faces and complexions did not reveal their foreign race, but then they had pigtailed on their heads. These men would sit comfortably in the back space. If the boat had women in both positions, they were Thai. One could even guess correctly that there would be a Thai man sitting cross-legged, half asleep by the paddy heap. The most he would do would be to move his fingers feeding his baby or to lend a hand to a child to hold when it wanted to sit on the edge for some purpose...<sup>1</sup>

Dōkmaisot's attitude towards the clothing of Thai people, which reflects her being patriotic, is again expressed in this novel, even more directly than when she did through Amarā in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.<sup>2</sup>

Some Bangkok people, civilized and modern, were waiting to greet their equally civilized friends (at Pāknam Phō railway station). They wore modern clothes: European shorts or trousers, or Chinese trousers with European jackets. All looked puffed-up in their garments, which were made by foreigners' hands, including the weaving, cutting, sewing and the laundering. Meanwhile, country people - the Thais, who were not yet baked with the light of civilization, were waiting for their country friends. They were contented with their 'phā-nung' made from the material produced by the hands of of Thai people, also from weaving to laundering.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 200-201.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 176.

Those who came for the goods (the Chinese) seemed very mean in covering their bodies. Four fifths of their skin was left open to the air. As soon as these people set foot in the area, all sorts of noises broke out from their clogs, spitting, and shouting. It was as noisy as with a Chinese opera troupe. <sup>1</sup>

In brief, each of the trio of novels has its own characteristics even though the works are of a saga type, and Dōkmaisot's art is stressed in different ways. In Kam Kao the novelist concentrates mainly on the story whereas in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek she scrutinizes human foibles and relationships, and in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān her world has been expanded to embrace the style of life outside her class and the influence of Buddhism over Thai people.

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<sup>1</sup> Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 263.

## CHAPTER V

## A New Emphasis:

the development of male characters.

Between 1933 and 1937, the period marked historically by the struggle between the royalists and the revolutionaries, the retreat of the nobles, and the emergence of nationalism,<sup>1</sup> Dḡkmaisot wrote three long novels and several short works, all of which centre on the male characters<sup>2</sup>, a method she never attempted before. The titles of the three novels, Sām Chāi Nūng Nai Rōi, and Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān (which has been treated in Chapter IV) all testify to her new emphasis.

Sām Chāi: Three Men

This novel was the first of Dḡkmaisot's not to be serialised in a magazine. The author first published it in August 1933, and it has been reprinted several times by several publishers.

The story is divided into two parts each of which will be treated separately, as their characteristic features are different from one another. Part one concerns the story of the leading characters in their childhood against the background of their family. Part two deals with the same group of people as adults.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 54-55.

<sup>2</sup>See Chronology of major incidents in Dḡkmaisot's life, pp.121-122. See also Appendix i, pp. 495-497, 500.

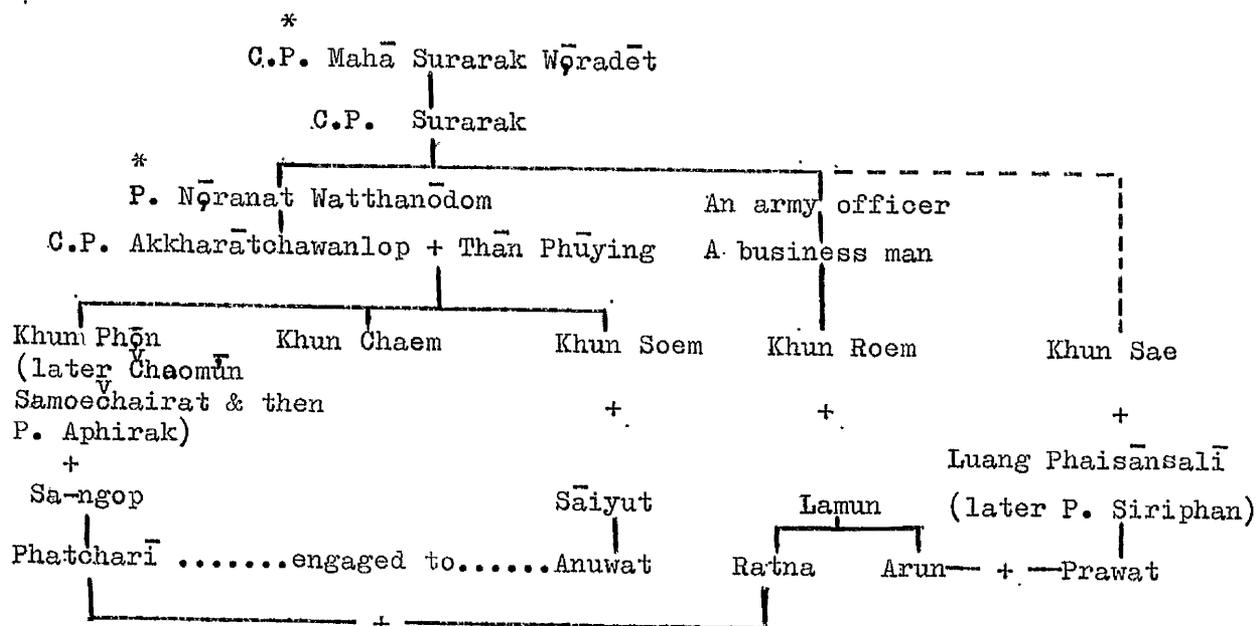
Part IList of characters<sup>1</sup>

Thān Phūying Akkharāṭchawanlop	an elderly widow of high rank, the most influential person in the Pawuttikun family, whom everybody addressed as "Than thī hō" <sup>2</sup> .
Čhaomūn Samoečhairāt (Phōn Pawuttikun)	38, her son, the present head of the family, a popular official in the Department of the Royal Household, informally addressed as "Khun Phranāi".
Chaem Pawuttikun	36, her only daughter, a mysterious lady, addressed as "Khun thī hō".
Khunnāi Sa-ngop Pawuttikun	Čhaomūn Samoečhairāt's wife, sister of Sāiyut Pawuttikun (deceased).
Phatcharī Pawuttikun	4, the only daughter and child of Čhaomūn Samoečhairāt and Khunnāi Sa-ngop
Anuwat Pawuttikun	10, the orphan son of Soem (deceased) and Sāiyut, brought up by Čhaomūn Samoečhairāt and Khunnāi Sa-ngop.
Lamun Pawuttikun	a simple country widow of Roem Pawuttikun.
Ratna Pawuttikun	8, her only son, born and brought up in Ayuthaya until the death of Roem.
Arun Pawuttikun	3, her only daughter.
Luang and Nāng Phaisānsālī	a government official and his wife (née Sae Pawuttikun).
Prawat Amōraphan	7, their son.
Yōi	a loyal maid, daughter of Čhaomūn Samoečhairāt's wet nurse.
etc.	

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<sup>1</sup>See also the Pawuttikun family tree, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>Literally means "the Lady at the residence of the noble". Her husband, after his death, was referred to as "Čhaokhun nai kōt" (the Čhaokhun in the spired funeral urn), because his body was kept in the gilded urn bestowed by the King until the cremation day.



### Synopsis of Part 1

After the death of her husband, Roem Pawuttikun, Lamun took her two children, Ratna and Arun, to live with Chaom̄n Samoeṭchairat in Bangkok. They were given their own room in a large house belonging to Thān Phuying and Khun Chaem. Everyone in the house was kind to them. Khun Phranāi, his wife, their daughter, Phatcharī, and their nephew, Anuwat, were living separately in a big new building in the front part of the compound. Although the children were third cousins, Ratna and Arun were not recognised as relatives of the same status. Even the servants never called them "Khun" as they did with Phatcharī and Anuwat. Another boy who always came to play there was Prawat whose mother was also a lady of the Pawuttikun family. Ratna had been bullied by Anuwat since the first day he arrived. Unless the insult became too much to bear, Ratna who was younger but tougher would do his best to ignore Anuwat. However, Phatcharī and Prawat were friendly with him. Ratna attracted them with his country folk tales and with the toys he invented such as a train, a telephone,

\* C.P. = Chao Phrayā, P. = Phrayā

For details of conferred civil service titles see pp.458-9.

"Chaom̄n" (formerly "Cham̄n") has nothing to do with "M̄n", but is the title for the top of the five ranks of the royal pages, subject to one of the four "Chāngwāng", who were "Phrayā". These "Chāngwāng" too must not be mixed with ordinary "Chāngwāng" who were the princes' low-ranking pages.

a stove, etc. These toys eventually impressed Khun Phranāi and he decided to send Ratna to a school run by American missionaries.

His reason for neglecting the boy's education was not because he was unkind to him or his mother. Nāng Lamun and her children were accommodated in their old home, therefore they were automatically considered to be Thān Phūying's responsibility. Except for Khun Phranāi, the family had been separated into two parties: that of Thān Phūying and of Khunnāi Sa-ngop. The split in the household's unity originated from a time before the marriage of Khun Phranāi and Khunnāi Sa-ngop. When he was only Khun Phōn, his parents had betrothed him to a friend's daughter. Later, his younger brother, Khun Soem, fell in love with a girl called Sāiyut, and through them Khun Phōn came to know Sa-ngop, Sāiyut's younger sister. He fell in love with her and began to evade his marriage to his chosen fiancée. It was not until after the marriage of Khun Soem and Sāiyut when that truth was discovered. The engagement was broken and Khun Phōn was free to marry the girl he loved. But Thān Phūying could never fully accept a daughter-in-law whom she had not chosen herself. Although Khunnāi Sa-ngop had a higher social status when her husband was promoted to a higher rank, it did not make her the most influential woman in the household, nor could it make Thān Phūying less powerful. Yōi was another person, who, despite her humble origin, never paid respect to Khunnāi Sa-ngop.

Khun Chaem was a very quiet and mysterious person. Ratna was constantly conscious of being stared at by her and in a strange manner. Even she never talked to him, Ratna believed that they could come to understand one another very well.

Three years later, Anuwat completed his high school education and was sent to further his studies in England. Ratna was called to take his place at the dinner table and in the family's carriage. The servants began to address him as "Khun Ratna". The changes never made him forget his real position and how he had been treated before. One person who

was very pleased to notice Ratna's proud character was Khun Chaem.

Phatcharī was sent to study at a boarding school, St. Joseph's Convent. Ratna and Prawat completed their high school education in the same year. Prawat won a scholarship to Europe. This made Ratna think more of his future and made up his mind to become a businessman.

## Part 2

### List of characters

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Ratna Pawuttikun                    | 28, a keen mechanical engineer and a self-made businessman, interested in land and construction development.  |
| Anuwat Pawuttikun                   | 30, a graduate of chemistry from England and the heir of the Pawuttikun family.   |
| Prawat Amōraphan                    | 27, a cheerful and carefree young civil servant, also graduated from England.   |
| Phatcharī Pawuttikun                | 24, a beautiful and clever fiancée of Anuwat, now living with her father and aunt after the death of her mother and grandmother.                                      |
| Arun Pawuttikun                     | 23, a gentle, timid, and dependent younger sister of Ratna.   |
| Čhao Sawatwong na Phanomsuang       | friend of Ratna, an heir to Čhao Si-uthai's large fortune, engaged to a girl chosen for him by his father,  |
| Laddā Nētisathian                   | his fiancée, a former girlfriend of Anuwat.   |
| Nōi Udomphinit                      | 18, a heart-broken girl whose parents had to take her away to Čhao Si-uthai. His death saved her from being his minor wife, but did not free her from Čhao Sawatwong. |
| Chaem Pawuttikun                    | an unmarried lady who loved Ratna as if he was her own son.   |
| Phrayā Aphirak Narābōdī             | (formerly Čhaomān Samoečhairāt).  |
| Phrayā and Khunying Siriphan Phisai | (formerly Luang and Nāng Phaisānsālī).  |
| Lamun Pawuttikun                    | mother to Ratna and Arun.   |

Yōi

the former servant who had moved out to live in the country but often came to visit her former employers.

### Synopsis

After Anuwat and Prawat had gone to Europe, Ratna was ordained as a Buddhist monk for a period, and after resigning from the monkhood, he informed his uncle of his wish to be a businessman. At first Phrayā Aphirak was not pleased, but later agreed. Ratna started his career as a clerk in an American firm. Two years later he was sent to study Mechanical Engineering in the United States for five years. When the second part of the story takes place the three cousins have returned home. Anuwat and Prawat are working for the government. Anuwat is living with his uncle but in a separate house. Ratna is renting a small wooden house and living there with his mother and sister.

In spite of their different temperaments the three men always went out together. Anuwat twice met Laddā, his former girlfriend, by chance. She told him that her fiancé, Čhao Sawatwong, neither cared for her nor gave her much support after the bankruptcy and death of her father. Their marriage was postponed because he was still in mourning for his father.

It was true that Čhao Sawatwong did not love Laddā, for his father had chosen her while he was still studying in France. When he returned home, he found, among his father's young women, a girl called Nōi who was quite attractive and still a virgin. Čhao Sawatwong tried to persuade her to become his minor wife, but the girl refused. She pleaded with him to let her go and told him that she had a boyfriend who was seriously ill. Instead of being sympathetic with the poor couple, Čhao Sawatwong mentally tortured them so much that when the boy died Nōi had a nervous breakdown. Having seen the result of his cruelty and realised the meaning of real love, Čhao Sawatwong repented all he had done and did everything he could to save her life. Nōi recovered and responded well to his kindness and love for her.

Prawat, who had sharp eye for girls but had never become

seriously involved with any of them, finally took a liking to Arun. He asked for her hand from Ratna in his usual playful way. Ratna took it as an insult, and broke off their friendship when he found out that Arun had disobeyed him and been in touch with Prawat behind his back.

All this time, Ratna himself had been deeply in love with Phatcharī and she with him, but both concealed their mutual feeling. It was Phatcharī who had tried vainly to persuade Anuwat to renounce his indulgence in girls and drinking, and who had sought financial help from Khun Chaem for Ratna's business investment.

When Phrayā Aphirak told Phatcharī that she was to marry Anuwat, Phatcharī refused to obey him, giving the reason that she loved Anuwat as her brother. Khun Chaem was asked to persuade her niece to agree with the proposal. Knowing the truth and fearing that history would repeat itself, the old lady did the opposite. She even challenged her brother saying that if the groom had been Ratna, Phatcharī would never have refused. The brother and sister then quarrelled, and the past story, the result of which made Khun Chaem love Ratna devotedly was recounted. Chaem and Roem had been in love with one another for some time before her parents found out and Roem was sent back to his family in Ayuthya. Being forced to marry another man she did not love, Chaem attempted suicide, but was found by her brother, Phōn, first. No one dared force her again after that, and Khun Chaem remained a sad unmarried woman since.

Ratna was questioned by his uncle and was also asked to persuade Phatcharī to marry Anuwat. It was difficult for him, but his pride and gratitude forced him to tell Phatcharī that he was in favour of the marriage. Having heard that from Ratna, Phatcharī lost all her hope and from that time did not try to avoid the proposal.

At first Anuwat too could not make up his mind. He loved Laddā and to be married to her must be much more exciting than to Phatcharī whom he had known all his life. But on the other hand Phatcharī could be a very good wife who would make him a proud husband, which was also what he wished. However,

Laddā had a fiancé and their marriage, as far as he knew, was not very far ahead. Anuwat tried hard to impress Phrayā Aphirak and Phatcharī by stopping drinking and going out at night. The wedding was prepared.

All these incidents happened at the same time that Čhao Sawatwong was trying his best to win Nōi's love. The more Laddā expressed her jealousy, the more he disliked her, and eventually he broke the engagement. Her anger turned to revenge. Laddā thought of various plans to murder Čhao Sawatwong by using Anuwat's hands, but before the plans could be achieved both she and Anuwat were killed in a car crash.

Prawat married Arun and had a son. Ratna married Phatcharī and became an heir of the family.

### Story and plot

If the structure of the novel is to be studied or taught by a Thai, Sām Chāi is highly recommended to be used as an example. Dōkmaisot has presented, unconsciously of course, in the first chapter of the novel what can be taken as a good introduction to some aspects of the genre. Ratna, a boy of eight began his folk tale by saying:

"And then--and then, there was a rich man, and then--"<sup>1</sup>

and the author commented on his narrative power:

It is impossible to count the number of that word (and then-) from his lips, but 'the Golden Goby'<sup>2</sup> must have been a very enjoyable story, for Khun Nū (Phatcharī) sat still, frowned, listened to him attentively, and paid absolutely no attention to the calls of her maid...<sup>3</sup>

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1 & 3

Dōkmaisot, Sām Chāi (Bangkok: Khlang Witthayā, 1949), pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup>A folk tale, rather common in South East Asia. The story is about a perpetual escape of a girl from her step mother and her daughter by being reborn into several successive living forms.

Then this little and innocent characters were interrupted by the servants. Before they stepped back into their own 'real' world, Prawat said to Ratna:

"Tell us more next time, will you, will you?"<sup>1</sup>

There is no difference between Ratna's "and then--and then" and that of E.M. Forster in his defining of "story", nor does Prawat's request show a different wish from that of Scheherazade's husband<sup>2</sup>. But when the plot of the actual novel with the past and present incidents, and future anticipations being artistically reshuffled, is considered, one can see by comparison the distinction between "plot" and "story". As E.M. Forster says:

A plot cannot be told to a gaping audience of cave men or to a tyrannical sultan or to their modern descendant the movie-public. They can only be kept awake by 'and then - and then' they can only supply curiosity. But a plot demands intelligence and memory also. 3

The plot of Sām Chāi is tightly knit from beginning to end. The first part, which, if published separately, would be a good children's story, is very charmingly written. On the surface, it seems as if the author only tells how little Thai children of a good family lived, played, fought, and so on, but underneath she depicts vividly the various ways of bringing up children, the influence of the background and environment, and the class differences between them which can be understood from the personal pronouns they used, the

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<sup>1</sup>D̄kmaisot, op.cit., p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Forster, op.cit., pp. 35, 48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

ornaments they wore around their top-knots, the roles they took in acting. As a technique of D̄kmaisot in writing, this first part helps build up the development of the story, the plot, and best of all, the characters.

In the second part, all the younger characters save Phatcharī and Arun, have been abroad. The three new figures, Laddā, Čhao Sawatwong, and N̄i are brought in to contribute important roles which lead to the serious climax of the story. Each of these three has his and her own problems which have been made for them by their parents, and with a revived affair between Laddā and Anuwat, all the characters are chained together. D̄kmaisot is superb in building up the situations and gradually intensifying them. The last and tightest two entanglements, Phatcharī being compelled to marry Anuwat and Čhao Sawatwong wanting to marry N̄i, occur at the same time, with Ratna and Laddā going to be left out. Ratna's pride and gratitude prevents him from taking any action, but Laddā is free and cruel enough even to kill a man. The entanglements are not unravelled but cut with one knife and at the same time - the car crash. A little less careful reading at this point can make a reader think that D̄kmaisot has made herself omnipotent, producing an accident to save the good and punish the bad, and also that her plot is not convincing - the crash occurred at exactly the same time as Čhao Sawatwong drove past them so that Čhao Sawatwong can telephone Ratna and the latter can rush to inform Phatcharī and her father. This testifies very much to E.M. Forster's word : "a plot demands intelligence and memory also"<sup>1</sup> What actually happened in

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<sup>1</sup>Loc.cit.

Sām Chāi is not an accident, but a result of an abortive murder attempt by Laddā. Anuwat, though very weak, is no murderous villain. He and Laddā were already half-drunk when they went out for the late night drive. Let us surmise that there must have been an argument or even a fight between them at the moment when they saw Čhao Sawatwong's car coming from the opposite direction; with Laddā demanding Anuwat to run into Čhao Sawatwong's car; Anuwat, with his moral conscience refusing to obey her; the struggle to get hold of the steering wheel caused the car to swerve; - the crash into a tree was the result. Dōkmaisot's trick of art is obviously seen here. After gripping the attention of the reader with Laddā's plan to kill Čhao Sawatwong with poisonous bacteria which Anuwat unwillingly promised to get some for her from his laboratory, the novelist suddenly ends the chapter (chapter XXII), then switches the scene to Phatcharī when she learns about the crash from Ratna two hours later (chapter XXIII). This is not because the author is incapable of describing violence or death, for her ability is seen in her later novels, but by skipping it in Sām Chāi she can produce a much more dramatic scene, and at the same time surprise the reader as his anticipation of pre-meditated murder turns out to be wrong. Anuwat never obtains the poison. The car crash occurs and although Dōkmaisot does not indicate a deliberate attempt to murder by the car crash, nevertheless the poison incident has attuned the reader's mind to suspicion and the novelist has created a tense dramatic effect subtly and almost by default. However, in Chapter XXIII, an air of menace is deliberately created by giving Phatcharī a sleepless night during which she hears a harsh-toned

echoing bell and the call of a bird of ill omen.

The plot of Sām Chāi can therefore be drawn as below:

A traditional family

- 1) Ratna's problems of rank and recognition in the Pawuttikun family.
- 2) Anuwat is betrothed to Phatcharī and their marriage will make him heir of the Pawuttikuns.
- 3) Phatcharī's filial obedience and Ratna's gratitude to her father hinder their marriage.

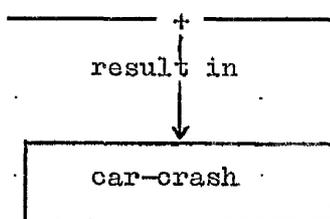
4) Anuwat's weakness

Another traditional family

5) Laddā is engaged to the heir of the Phanomsuang family, Chao Sawatwong, who loves Nōi.

6) Čhao Sawatwong jilts Laddā. She then works on Anuwat and plot evil against Čhao Sawatwong.

7) Laddā's treachery and vindictiveness



The ironic fatality resolves problems 1, 2, 3, and frees the intended victim Čhao Sawatwong to marry Nōi.

There is no external climatic action in this novel except in the comparatively mild form of the Western influence. But there are many more exciting and adventurous incidents than in the previous novels. This is due mainly to Laddā's character. The situation of Nōi also helps make everything more serious. The three kinds of conflict, namely man-against-man, man-against-personal environment, and man-against-himself, which form the motive force of the plot are seen clearly in the role of one character - Ratna. The environment here is not natural,

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VI, p. 279.

but man-made: tradition, prejudice and social justice.

The conflict has a close link with another characteristic of the plot - contrast. The poor and helpless Nōi attracts the rich and wilful Čhao Sawatwong. The weak Anuwat is infatuated with the aggressive Laddā. And lastly, the extrovert Prawat loves and marries the timid, retiring Arun.

### Theme

The main theme of this novel is the influence of tradition and society over human relationships.

Sām Chāi reveals clearly that beneath the changing society of Thai people towards westernisation, tradition in relation to family bondage is still strongly maintained. The older generation try desperately to retain their influence and to force other people to abide by the custom, whereas the younger generation are seeking their own identity through their own effort. Phrayā Aphirak himself has disobeyed his parents in marrying his wife, but when it is his turn as a father he values his promise to the dead people higher than the happiness of his own daughter.

In fact, Thai society has not long become more free from their old tradition of marrying off young couples without the mates knowing one another. One reason for the decline of the restriction is the effect of the fight of women for their better position. In Sām Chāi too, Khun Chaem, Phatcharī, and Nōi, all fight in their own feminine ways, and win in the end. Nevertheless, the triumph of the younger generation does not mean that they achieve it without having to bear in mind that morality, gratitude, good customs, and manners are most important. Khun Chaem successfully refused to marry the man her

parents had chosen for her, but she decided to remain unmarried rather than commit anything which might bring shame to her family. Ratna had to balance all the time between his head and heart, rationality and emotion. He realised well that in fighting against man and environment, he would prove a winner only when he could endure all the difficulties and establish himself socially and financially. The hardest fight of all, however, is against himself. Being the proud man that he was, Ratna had to struggle hard with himself in order to restrain his anger when he was looked down on by Anuwat. His love for Phatcharī and his hope of marrying her might have been this most powerful motivation for achieving success in his career and recognition from the family, but at the same time the emotions she roused within him were the severest challenge in his conflict with himself. Whenever there was the least sign of achieving his aspirations at the expense of others, though indirectly, Ratna was ashamed of himself. His conflicts, therefore, are framed within moral limits, especially according to the teaching of the Lord Buddha, and, consequently, in a close and careful consideration, Sām Chāi is a novel with moralistic realism and social responsibility as the theme.

#### Characters

As the title suggests, the author undoubtedly wishes to centre her story on the three male leading characters.<sup>1</sup>

Ratna, as an eight year old boy, is described as of medium size, dark skin, round forehead, snub nose, prominent

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<sup>1</sup>The writer of this thesis is told by Princess Sasiphatthana Bunnag that Dōkmaisot wrote this novel after her nephews had returned home from abroad.

lips. His eyes were black and piercing, his hair was combed and done into a top-knot, and when he came to Bangkok, Ratna had already lost five front milk teeth. His country look and wild manner became objects of fun and insult for Anuwat as soon as they met. In his teen, Ratna's character was, as Yōi always complained to Khun Chaem, "strangely reserved", something of which the latter in fact approved.<sup>1</sup>

Ratna developed all the characteristics he had possessed and in such a way as to drive him to a bright future. As a Thai businessman he had a long way to go to prove himself, especially to a person like Anuwat, who used to say to him when Ratna was about to change before they went out together:

"...You can go like that. There is nothing wrong with it - for a company clerk." 2

The injustice, offence, and prejudice he had received could have made a strong character like Ratna into a pessimist and opportunist. But he was not. As he said to Phatcharī once:

"...Are you afraid that I will become an unscrupulous merchant who can never be parted from his abacus, and thinks nonstop of how to gain? Don't worry, I am the Lord Buddha's follower, I know the Middle Way." 3

In terms of a character in the novel, Ratna as a boy is much more interesting than as an adult. This is due to the fact that he had gentry blood in him but was not recognised by his relatives, his behaviour therefore always caused surprise. But as an adult, his character, which has been confirmed, can be summed up in one sentence: "I must prove to all of them that I am a Pawuttikun", and by that he means he must be rich and good. Ratna never betrays his wish - thus he cannot really precipitate the actions.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

Anuwat is Dōkmaisot's round and interesting male character, created to be in opposition to Ratna. Since youth he had been tall and handsome, with a fair and delicate complexion - the essence of so-called "phūdī" (gentry). He was bright but very spoilt and destructive. As a man, Anuwat's character is described as:

...constantly changeable. He looked unyielding, but very often he was indecisive. He was quick-tempered, but sometimes very inert. When angry, Anuwat was very cruel, but he could also be sympathetic when he was in a good mood. He was arrogant towards other people, but careless about his own manner; intelligent, but not wise; diligent when he wanted to work, but awfully lazy when he did not. Good and bad natures were mixed in him to an extent that no one, not even he himself, really knew him...<sup>1</sup>

The most conspicuous characteristic of Anuwat is his arrogance and disdain for other people. Even his job and the staff are thought not good enough for his qualification.<sup>2</sup> When Phatcharī tells him the names of her friend and her father Anuwat comments upon them in disgust:

"My god!," Anuwat put both hands on his head, "I could see her long pigtailed as soon as you mentioned the word 'Kim'<sup>3</sup>...What? Phra Wisētphānit<sup>4</sup>'s daughter? A slave! His son is worse". He smiled in disgust, "I met the rogue once or twice in England, never dream to associate with him." He looked up proudly, "when we met here, he was about to come in to shake hands with me, but I turned away pretending not to see him, and the chap did not know what to do... Actually the father is much better than the son...even with his clumsy Chinese manner, he is quite respectful towards me...You really want to go there! Do you intend to be friendly with those upstarts whose family names are just two days old?... They have been made higher only because of their money, therefore, only those who worship money worship them... I think you make friends with people

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 126-127.

<sup>2</sup>Here the novelist attacks Thai graduates from abroad who look down upon their own country and people.

<sup>3</sup>Reference to Chinese.

<sup>4</sup>The name implies a merchant.

too easily. That woman too, what's her name, Phra Sombat<sup>1</sup>'s daughter? Her grandfather was only a fish-gravy trader, and yet you can be her friend..."<sup>2</sup>

To portray a psychologically complicated and emotionally changeable person like Anuwat is a difficult task and is possible only when the novelist knows the character thoroughly, understands his complexes, and possesses enough talent to make everything clear and convincing. With Dōkmaisot's technique of making the characters inter-dependent, we learn that Anuwat drinks heavily and indulges himself with girls although we are not allowed by the author even once to follow him to where he spends his night-life. Instead, to avoid writing about what is not ladylike (though she may know it well<sup>3</sup>), but at the same time to let the reader know that the activities are going on behind the scene, Dōkmaisot deftly inserts some relevant remarks in a conversation or creates some consequences at a later stage. For example, we learn first from Phatcharī in her conversation with Ratna that on the night of the ball at the Royal Bangkok Sports Club Anuwat returned home very late and completely drunk. Then we learn more and much later from Prawat, when he takes a sum of money to Ratna, that after the ball Anuwat went to 'a certain house' and later scrambled out in haste by the window leaving behind him a cigarette-case which Ratna will receive in exchange for the money.

Anuwat is beaten by his own weakness and infatuation in the end, but his contribution to the plot of Sām Chāi is most

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<sup>1</sup>The name implies wealth.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 133-134.

<sup>3</sup>This is assumed from M.L. Bunlāa's writing: "I liked talking to my nephews who were older than me because I could ask them even the most secret and personal questions, and they would always answer me, their aunt, without feeling embarrassed..."

See Bunlāa, Khwām Samret..., p. 62.

essential and Dōkmaisot's success in portraying him testifies to her ability in creating male characters and her preference for the round ones.

Prawat is the youngest of the three, described first as a rather plump boy with round face, round eyes, and fair complexion. His life is always smooth and surrounded by kind and understanding people, so much so that he becomes a carefree, open, kind and optimistic person. As a man he is very different from his two cousins. While Anuwat is a dandy, Prawat is always ready to go out in creased trousers, a jacket with only one button fastened and after stroking his hair with his fingers a few times. Anuwat takes no interest in his job, but Prawat's record of work with the Government is without blemish. Anuwat looks down on most girls but becomes easily infatuated with Iaddā, whereas Prawat likes girls but hates to be tied down to marriage. Ratna is serious, and Prawat is playful. While Ratna holds to the Lord Buddha's teachings, Prawat admits that his only proverb is "Enjoy ourselves, for tomorrow we die."<sup>1</sup> His character, which is similar to that of Yot in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, displays realistically several aspects of the privilege of Thai men at that time. Prawat is not the only son of his father, but is recognised higher than his siblings solely because he is the only child of Khunying Siriphan. He too has a son by a servant, but when Ratna asks him about the baby, he simply answers:

"That boy? I am wondering myself whose child he is! ...It isn't a secret. Both my father and mother agreed that he is my child. So did many other people. How funny! I don't understand how they came to learn about it, and I alone did not realise..."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 404-405.

Even if the boy had not died, it did not necessarily mean that Arun would refuse to marry Prawat because of him. She is not like Amarā in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek who will take the conduct of a man seriously. Prawat may not have direct connection with the main plot, but he is not a mere background character either, for he is presented everywhere in the story from beginning to end, lightening the atmosphere and giving balance to everybody and everything with his easy-going characteristic. Without him Sām Chāi would certainly become too serious a novel.

Phatcharī, a favourite female character of a Thai critic, Professor Kulāp Mallikamāt<sup>1</sup>, is a flat character. She remains the same throughout the story, beautiful, clever, and well-protected. Her emotion, if there is any, is always under her self-control. It is true that as a model woman she has to conceal her feelings from other people, but still as a character in a novel, she should have been more exposed to the knowledge of the reader, unless her complete emotion control conceals a secret as has been the case of Amphōn in Kam Kao, which is not the case here.

However, Phatcharī plays an important role as a static centre for the story. She is there to solve everyone's problems. But when it comes to her own problem, Phatcharī cannot do anything to help herself and Ratna, which means she has no force to move the plot and the novelist has to depend on another female character who possesses a stronger character - Laddā.

Laddā is one of Dōkmaisot's well-formed and interesting female characters. Her portrayal reminds us of Rasmī in Nit. The author must have intended to contrast Laddā with Phatcharī

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<sup>1</sup>See the Thai National Library, Kān Aphiprāi..., pp. 51-52.

from the start, for Laddā possesses all the opposite characteristics to Phatcharī; being exposed to life, seductive, reckoning, ambitious, and unfaithful. Phatcharī lives in a large building whereas Laddā and her mother have only a small dirty house. Even in their appearance, Phatcharī has the eyes as bright as the twinkling stars, but Laddā's eyes are turned up, with the white part rather yellow. Dōkmaisot does not simply create Laddā born wicked, but describes her poor background which must have had a strong effect over her life. Her parents were gamblers and later became bankrupt. At sixteen Laddā was engaged to Čhao Sawatwong, and without meeting him. She resembles her father in hoping for the best of everything, and her mother in being jealous and strong in character. Laddā loves nobody but herself. Anuwat is only meant to be her supplier of money until the day of her marriage to Čhao Sawatwong is announced. Her ambition and unfaithfulness make her lose both her fiancé and the fortune, and desire for revenge causes the loss of her life.

Khun Chaem is the most important character of the older generation. Her mysterious behaviour in part one makes us want to find out more about her. Her appearance, mode of dress, and manner also contribute to the typical atmosphere in a Thai aristocrat's home. In part two, Khun Chaem is no longer mysterious but becomes a much more important figure whose past experience has made her understand the younger generation and their problems. The author speaks of the descendants of Čhao Phrayā Mahā Surarak as being determined and of strong personality. Khun Chaem must have inherited such qualities too, perhaps more than some male members of the lineage like Anuwat and Khun Roem.

Setting and atmosphere

Dōkmaisot must be greatly admired for her narrative power in describing the scenes and atmosphere in Sām Chāi. One possible reason for the vivid description is that the places must have had real models, perhaps the Wang Bān Mō and the Kunjara's residence at Khlōng Toei themselves<sup>1</sup>. In part one the reader has the feeling of knowing every corner of the house, and its vast shady compound. The children's playground was the lawns, a thatched pavillion by the lotus ponds surrounded by the mango, guava, and rose-apple trees. The description of the "hō" is even more interesting than that of the large new European-style building of Phrayā Aphirak. It is actually a group of small wooden houses built on stilts, joined together by a large open floor. In the middle is a platform called "hō nang" or "hō klāng" (sitting or middle hall). This place is more pleasant when described in connection with the atmosphere as seen through the eyes of Ratna, a little boy of eight:

After leaving Khun Nū (Phatcharī) and Prawat, Ratna went straight up into this house and to the corridor on the right in front of his quarters. Nāng Lamun was sitting there, folding betel leaves. The little boy lay down putting his head on her lap.

"Mae čhā (sweet mother, dear), I am hungry."

"Where have you been, naughty boy?" a threatening voice came from the next room, "asking for food, eh? Have you taken a bath? Come on here, this way." The sentence ended with Yōi appearing at the door.

Ratna's face lost its colour. He got up, looking at his mother as if to ask for help, but Nāng Lamun only nodded to him to hurry off. The boy, therefore, had to obey her.

"Look at your hands and your feet, as dirty as a cat in the kitchen. And just look at your top-knot. It can't have been combed for years," Nāngsāo (Miss) Yōi spoke while crawling out to the open floor. She then sat on the low step, forcing the boy to sit down on the floor between her legs. Ratna went paler and paler and

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II, pp. 83-85.

cried. Being made to sit down by Yōi was a bad signal - a top-knot combing! Ratna hated nothing more and considered it a torture and punishment without having done anything wrong. Today it was not too bad, because she only undid the knot and combed it without pulling the hairs around it. Nevertheless, Ratna could not smile. He had a feeling that his forehead which so far had been normal was pulled up to his head and also that his eyebrows were five inches higher than they should be. His face seemed to be stretched everywhere.

After that he was ordered to take a bath. The bathroom was next to the kitchen on the other side. Ratna hated it. It was a long way to walk, especially when he was hungry. He could run there in a flash, but "Thān thī hō" was sitting on the middle platform. She would beat his ankles. He might also take a bath in the rain water in the jar in front of the room, but Auntie Yōi would be watching him and might rub him with turmeric and lime<sup>1</sup>. It would be much worse than walking to the bathroom.

Having taken off his shirt and trousers and left them in the corridor, Ratna took with him a copper bowl. Next to the middle hall, he went past a room which belonged to "Khun".

Ratna was sure that "Khun" had no name, or if she had one, it must be the same as "Thān"'s, because the servants called her "Khun thī hō". "Khun" was much more beautiful than "Thān". She was younger and her complexion was soft and creamy as if rubbed with turmeric. She always wore printed "phā-nung"<sup>2</sup> and pleated "sabai"<sup>3</sup> of light colours. Her hair was wavy and shining with hair oil. She combed it upward in a round shape. Her fingers were long and clean, unlike those of anybody Ratna had seen...

When Ratna wanted to go to the kitchen or to take a bath, he had to walk past "Khun"'s room. Almost every time he would see her sitting there in front of her room. Sometimes she was folding betel leaves or handkerchieves, and sometimes she was perfuming "kadangngā" with scented candles, then finely tearing the flower petals. Every time when she looked up at him, Ratna walked more quickly and bowed his back (out of respect)...<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The mixture was used as skin balm.

Cf. Prince Damrong's relating of a similar treatment he used to received from Dōkmaisot's grandmother in Wang Ban Mō in Naris and Damrong, Sān Somdet..., vol. XXV, pp. 167-168, 182.

<sup>2</sup>A long piece of cotton or silk ("phā-muang" or sometimes just "muang") worn as lower garment by wrapping round the waist, twisting the edges between the legs and fastening it up behind with a belt. The style of wearing, which was formerly applied by both sexes, is called "čhōng krabēn" (see the following page). Later, in King Rama VI's reign, the woman's fashion changed to a straight, simpler style as that of the Northern Thai or Lao women, and this is called "phā-sin" or "phā-thung (sack-cloth).

<sup>3</sup>See footnote 1, p. 199.

<sup>4</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 37-40.

Among the children's entertainments there was a play<sup>1</sup> which reminds the reader of Khun Chāng, Khun Phaen, and Nāng Phim<sup>2</sup> acting when they were young and the story turned out to be very much like their real lives. The same occurs in Sām Chāi. Ratna organised the children to perform this play one rainy day. Phatcharī, as a princess, was on her way to ask permission from her father to go into the wood with her maid, when she was stopped and taken away by Nēn Manī, played by Ratna. Anuwat, as an ogre, came in and took her from Nēn Manī. The two boys then fought, each refusing to be beaten. The performance, therefore, came to an end.

Another interesting description in this first part is that of girls and women's fashion towards the end of King Rama V's reign. The following are descriptions of the three year old Phatcharī on the house-warming day and her mother before she went to an ordination ceremony:

The girl was wearing a red silk cloth in "čhōng krabēn" style. The edge of the cloth at her knee was uneven (implying that she was innocently unaware of her clothing). Her blue vest was trimmed with lace inserted with ribbon of the same colour. The ribbon was tied into bows hanging down on her front and both arms. Her top-knot was encircled with a "phutthachāt"<sup>3</sup> garland, tucked in with a gold pin set with emeralds. Around her neck was a gold chain with a gold pendant also set with emeralds and rubies. Her wrists and ankles were fully decorated with beaded wristlets and anklets adorned with gold cockle charms, all were imbedded with rubies. She also wore a ring on each of her ring and little fingers.<sup>4</sup>

Khunnāi Sa-ngop was wearing a light green embroidered silk "čhōng krabēn" and white silk blouse. The blouse was decorated with open-work, binding and trimming lace, and buttons. The collar was square and the sleeves were of elbow length. It was tight-fitting at the waist, and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the activity of the Kunjara children, Chapter II, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>in Khun Chāng Khun Phaen, a masterpiece of Thai literature. For Mālai Chuphinit's adaptation of the work see Chapter I, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>A small white and fragrant flower similar to jasmine.

<sup>4</sup>Dokmaisot, op.cit., p. 20.

joined there with a loose lace skirt covering down to the hips. The seam where the blouse and the lace skirt joined was concealed with an elastic belt with gold buckle set with diamonds. Across her shoulder was a crêpe silk sash of the same colour as her "phā-nung". This sash was fastened to the blouse with four pins; a very valuable emerald pin at her left breast, an enamelled pin engraved with diamonds over her shoulder, a diamond pin of medium price at her shoulder blade, and a ruby pin of approximately the same value at her right waist.

Her shoes were black, pointed, with two to three inch high heels. There were two rows of three buttons on each of them, one dozen buttons in all. Her stockings were also black with a pattern from the uppers up to her knees. She carried a betel case bound with gold straps, and with gold handles.<sup>1</sup>

In part two, the old setting at the "hō" with its atmosphere of former times disappears. The social life of the characters bring in new settings for example the Phya Thai Palace, the Royal Bangkok Sports Club, the theatres, etc. The description of the ball at the Royal Bangkok Sports Club must have been written from the author's memory and experience since her family possessed the best stable and her brother was an active member of the Club. It is quite interesting to read about how the Scottish community arranged their gathering on St. Andrew's Day in a far away place like Thailand.

Two play troupes of very different natures are included in Sām Chāi. The first one is a professional troupe from Malaya, performing with western music and dance. The author has recorded certain scenes which one seldom sees nowadays in Bangkok. There are still girls selling "puang mālai"<sup>2</sup> everywhere in the evening especially near the theatres and people usually buy them for placing on the altars or hanging in their cars. But Dōkmaisot describes that young men in those days bought them to take into the theatres:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-85.

<sup>2</sup>Garlands of jasmines delicately strung in patterns with rose petals or other kinds of flowers.

When Ratna followed them in, Prawat was teasingly arguing with the flower girl. It was because her face was creamy white with powder and she wore a fashionable 'shingle' hair style. The girl looked shy, cast her eyes down and glanced sidewise. Well, that is good enough to cheer him up when he was lonely.

"Sir, one 'salang'<sup>1</sup> for a garland of this size is not at all expensive." Her voice was high.

Prawat selected the garlands and raised each of them to his nose.<sup>2</sup> They were jasmine garlands with eight strings of 'lanthom'<sup>2</sup> and they were all of the same pattern and quality. But Prawat actually intended to admire the girl's face more than the garlands themselves. He eventually said,

"I didn't say they are too expensive. They are certainly reasonable, but I fear that once they are taken out from here the sweet fragrance will disappear."

"In that case I can't help it," the girl answered glancing away from him.

Prawat chose three garlands and paid her seventy-five 'satangs'<sup>3</sup>. He handed out to each of his cousins. Anuwat refused saying that he did not want to be 'a street beau'. Ratna accepted one and realised that the girl had raised the price, at least ten 'satangs' on each garland...

When they left the theatre soon after, Prawat stopped at the shop again, handed the garlands back to the girl and said,

"As I had guessed, the scent disappeared as soon as they were taken from the owner. That won't do. Here they are, I give them back to you."<sup>4</sup>

The second troupe is the Thai Khasēm, performing at the Misakawan Garden. The title of the play was not given, but the place, the troupe and the performance did exist. The owner and the manager was, in fact, Luang Sansārakit, the editor of the Thai Khasēm, to whom Dōkmaisot owed her success as an author.<sup>5</sup> The play they performed were mostly King Rama VI's with the King

<sup>1</sup>A quarter of a baht; twenty-five satangs.

<sup>2</sup>A kind of flower.

<sup>3</sup>A coin, a hundredth part of a baht.

<sup>4</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 111-112, 115.

This feature of courtship involving flowers and flower symbolism is very traditional and can be found generally in folk songs, classical songs, folk tales, as well as in old literary works. Sometimes flowers are used instead of written messages between lovers. This is made possible because various flowers have names with meanings suitable for the purpose, e.g. 'rak' (love), 'čhampī' (remembering the years), 'sōn chū' (hidden lover)

<sup>5</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 41-46, and Chapter II, pp. 89, 111.

himself taking part from time to time.<sup>1</sup> The performance was therefore very exclusive, and Dōkmaisot was very realistic in making Phatcharī and Arun go there in formal dresses.

There are several other interesting descriptions in Sām Chāi, for example the scenes in Čhao Sawatwong's home with a large mansion in the front for himself and his younger sisters, a long wooden house in the back for his father's minor wives, and a "reserved house" in between the two for Nōi. Altogether, this novel is very colourful so far as the settings and atmosphere are concerned.

### Language

The splendid atmosphere in Sām Chāi is due mainly to the language Dōkmaisot employs. The dialogue is natural and well suited to the speakers' individual characteristics. A large number of people ranging from as high ranking a person as "Thān Phūying" down to the servants of various ages in this story makes it particularly useful for studying the relationship between the Thai language and class. Apart from addressing one another as uncle, brother, sister, and so on, there are at least fifteen terms for "I" and about ten terms for "You". All of them can either mark the difference in social status, however fractional, or tell the moods of the speaker. A reader notices that when Ratna, Prawat and Anuwat talk they use the word "I" differently:

"Does that mean we have to sit in this damned room of 'kae' (you)?," Anuwat asked taking down his legs from the back of the chair.

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<sup>1</sup>King Rama VI's appellation "Mahā Thīrarāt" (i.e. Maha Dhira Raja - the Great Learned King) was promoted by this troupe when they were reluctant to put his real name in the programme. For details see Čhūa Satawēthin, "Somdet Phra Mahā Thīrarātčhao kap Phāsā lae Nangsū" Phāsā lae Nangsū, 5 (November 1972), pp. 1-20. For the shock and impression of Thai people at this incident see, for example, Kukrit Pramoj, Sī Phaendin, vol. II, pp. 111-118.

"'Thoe'(you) are right," Prawat answered seriously, then turned to Ratna, "if we are not mad enough to go out in the rain, we should be content to sit dry in this room."

"Rubbish!," said Anuwat angrily. "Can both of 'kae' swear that 'kae' are pleased to sit here...If one day 'kae' were imprisoned, do 'kae' think that 'kae' could make yourself accept the situation?"

"'Phom' (I) would, if 'phom' could see no way out," Ratna answered.

"If the earth is still spinning in the same manner next year, and nothing changes, 'Chan' (I) will be ordained to please my mother. She's really been pressing me," said Prawat.

"Seriously?" Anuwat asked, "'Kan'(I) am afraid that 'kae' will dream of ...hm... you won't have even time to throw away the yellow robe."

Prawat laughed and said nothing. Ratna walked back to the middle of the room, picked up a cigarette and said,

"It won't be like that, Khun Prawat. When 'khun' (you) are in the monkhood, the study of the Vinaya and the Dhamma,<sup>1</sup> together with the influence of the robe 'khun' will be wearing, will make 'khun' forget all those things. 'Phom' had that experience before, and felt that the period of four months was too short." <sup>2</sup>

Therefore, Anuwat uses 'kan' for 'I' and 'kae' for 'you', whereas Prawat uses 'Chan' and 'thoe', and Ratna uses 'Phom' and 'khun'. Only Thai people can readily feel the difference between these words, and appreciate the suitability for the characters to whom they related. Anuwat is the oldest and has a characteristic of looking down on other people, the term 'kan' for 'I' expresses enough familiarity and at the same time the state of not being inferior. The term 'kae' for 'you' shows either familiarity or the inferiority of the person he is speaking to. The words 'Chan' and 'thoe' which Prawat uses with both Anuwat and Ratna are suitable for one who is friendly and of the same level as his cousins. But the pronouns 'Phom' and 'khun' of Ratna are used deliberately to keep a distance between

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<sup>1</sup>Vinaya - the code of ethics or the discipline for monks.  
Dhamma (Dharma) - the Truth.

<sup>2</sup>Dokmaisot, op.cit., pp. 102, 103, 104.

the speakers and express formality. As soon as the person whom he talks to is Yōi, Ratna calls himself 'Chan', and this term, though the same as the one used by Prawat, now carries the tone of superiority.

It is noticeable too that the word 'yes' and particles showing politeness vary a great deal, in accordance with the addressees and the speakers. All these show the sensitiveness of Thai people towards the system of rank and seniority. Phatcharī unconsciously learned her position in the house from the time she was four. She knew that she was 'gentry' and so was Anuwat because everybody addressed them with an honorific 'Khun' and as gentry she was told not to use the terms like 'ai' or 'ī' which are 'phrai'(lower-class) language. Ratna had been previously given an honorific 'phō' which was the same class as Phatcharī's servant-playmates. But the boy himself instinctively realised that he was not a servant, though he was not 'Khun Ratna' and this too is expressed in the language:

"Khun Nū (Phatcharī) is the princess," Ratna assigned the roles for the play, then turned to Paeo, a servant girl, 'kae' (you) are the maid... 'Chan'(I) will be Nēn Manī... 'kae' (you) are the father... and 'kae' (you) are an attendant..."<sup>1</sup>

Ratna never lowered himself. Even with Anuwat he called himself 'Ua', whereas Paeo, for example, would never dare call herself anything else but 'Bāo'(servant):

"Please stop there, 'Khun'Nū and talk to 'bāo'(me) supposing that 'Bāo' am your Maid." <sup>2</sup>

Those terms are seemingly trivial, but in fact they are most significant, especially in a novel dealing with society like this. The problem of these personal pronouns, honorifics,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

and particles proved so acute in Thai writing that many writers had to leave their novels unfinished when the Government under F.M. Pibulsonggram passed a law compelling them to use only certain terms.<sup>1</sup>

Despite D̄kmaisot's clear and precise language, a strong influence of traditional poetic writing is evident in various places in Sām Chāi. For instance, she describes Phatcharī before she goes to the play as follows:

The beauty of Phatcharī was comparable with that of a blooming rose - graceful and eye-catching. Beautiful was her blue dress, the colour of which suited her skin and the style of which suited her willowy body. Beautiful were the adornments around her round neck and wrists. Beautiful were her slim straight legs in silk stockings of cream colour. Beautiful were her small and convexed feet in gold satin shoes. Beautiful was her creamy complexion. Beautiful was her flawless face. Beautiful were her eyes shining with intelligence. Beautiful were her lips with a gentle smile. Beautiful was her bearing when she talked. Beautiful were/manners of movement. /her And beautiful were her small tapering fingers holding her silk scarf...<sup>2</sup>

Besides this Sir Walter Scott's Talisman,<sup>3</sup> N.M.S.' Kanoknakhōn are mentioned and a romantic poem by King Rama V is quoted in Sām Chāi. Before this novel Sir Walter Scott has been mentioned already in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek as Amarā's favourite novelist.<sup>4</sup> Kanoknakhōn is a masterpiece of N.M.S.' poetic works based on two Sanskrit literary works. In it, there is a most splendid scene of a prince meeting a beautiful girl rowing her boat with a silver paddle in a lotus pond on a night of full moon. There is some similarity in Sām Chāi;

<sup>1</sup>See pp. 319-321.

<sup>2</sup>D̄kmaisot, op.cit., p. 238. The full traditional similes are not produced however. Another good example of the same influence in the use of flower symbolism, see p. 229.

<sup>3</sup>Talisman was translated by M.L. Bunlāa in 1966 under the title Silāthan.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter IV, p. 175.

Dōkmaisot chooses the night of full moon for Ratna and Phatcharī to confess their love to one another. The tranquillity of the night and the beauty of nature in the moonlight are charmingly described, and particularly Phatcharī's sparkling eyes are not different from the blessed pair of the girl in Kanoknakhōn. The referring to the moon as the witness of love too, reminds the reader of either Kanoknakhōn or the romantic scene between King Chaiyasēn and Matthanā in King Rama VI's Matthanaphāthā.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The King wrote this play in 1923 during his convalescence. The style is quite similar to his other plays based on Sanskrit literary works such as Sāwitri and Sakuntalā. The theme is, as the title suggests, the pain and disquietude of love. The story, which the King invented himself, is about the birth of the first rose on earth, comparable with the Greek mythological story of Narcissus.

Nāng Nai Rōi : One in a Hundred

This novel was first published by the Kklang Witthayā in 1934, reprinted twice by the same publisher in 1941 and 1959, and by the Phrae Pittaya in 1962.

The character of Wichai, the hero of the story, was critically considered by Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng as one life in her series of Phāp Chīwit Čhāk Nawaniyāi (Pictures of Lives from Novels) under the title 'Wichai-Phū Chana (Wichai-the Winner) published by the Phrae Pittaya in 1965.

In 1951 Mr. Junjiro Nishino, the present Director of the Toyomenka (Thailand) Ltd., with the help of Mr. Thawin Wongthongmāk translated the novel into Japanese and had it published in the same year in Tokyo by Kokuren Shuppan-sha. under the title Hyakuchu no Hitotsu,<sup>1</sup> a fact unknown in Thailand.

List of characters

Nāng Sīwichai Bōrirak (Khunnāi Čhūn)	the capricious and domineering widow of Phra Sīwichai Bōrirak.
Luang (and later) Phra Atthakhadī Wichai (Wichai)	37, her eldest son, a widower, a judge, who has moved back to Bangkok from Songkhla.
Lt. Chat	25, her youngest son, just returned from abroad and in love with Anong.
Chuang, Chot, Chit, Chōi	her daughters.
Luang Sak Ronnachit	Chuang's husband and a close friend of Wichai.

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<sup>1</sup>In correspondence with the writer of this between  
November 1973 and January 1974.

Luang Wirōt Kasētkit	husband of Chot.
Phra Wiwit Wannakān	husband of Chit.
Samān	Phrayā Udom Wōrakān's son whose marriage to Chōi cut him off from the family.
Urai	Samān's half brother.
Āchan	22, Urai's full sister.
Luang Thurakit Kamčhōn	Urai's husband, friend of Wichai.
Khun Maen and Khun Mian	kind spinster twin sisters, younger sisters of Phrayā Nititham Sunthōn (deceased).
Somphong, Sawaeng, Čhamlōng	Phrayā Nititham's three eldest sons.
Prasit	his fourth son whose keen observation is hidden under his simple, nervous look.
Anong	24, his youngest child and only daughter.
Phrayā Rānrōn	a high-ranking official, a hen-pecked husband, the distant relative of Luang Sak.
Khunying Rānrōn (Mayom)	his wife, friend of Khunnāi Čhūn.
Sa-ngat	Phrayā Rānrōn's son by his minor wife, brought up by Khunying Mayom, in love with Anong.
Sa-āng and Phayōm	their two youngest daughters.
Udom and Toem	friends of Čhamlōng, in love with Anong.

### Synopsis

After soliciting contributions from his elder sisters, saying that he would go to see Wichai in Songkhla, Chat went on holiday with his friends in Hua Hin, and only joined Wichai on the train back to Bangkok from there. Anong, who did not know the true story, left her friends and went back with him. She tried unsuccessfully to make a conversation with Wichai during the journey. At the destination, Khunnāi Čhūn, her

daughters and sons-in-law were excited at Wichai's return. At the same time, they were amazed seeing Chat walking away hand-in-hand with Anong.

At home, Wichai learned that Samān, whose marriage to Chōi against his family's will owed a great deal to him, was very ill and Chōi was in great difficulties financially. Khunnāi Chūn told him that she was planning to marry Chat off to Sa-āng, a daughter of Phrayā and Khunying Rānrōn. Wichai also learned that the owners of a new house next to his were twin sisters called Khun Maen and Khun Mian.

At the home-coming dinner arranged for him by his friends, Wichai met Somphong and Prasit by chance and became friendly with them.

Meanwhile, Anong's brothers were all trying to persuade her to marry their friends; Sawaeng in particular, wanted her to marry Sa-ngat so that Khunying Rānrōn would consent to his marrying Phayōm. The problem was that Khunying Rānrōn was too old-fashioned to think of letting Phayōm marry before Sa-āng, and that was why she tried to match Sa-āng with Chat, whose mother was her friend and gambling partner.

Somphong, however, did not mind Chat, especially after knowing that Wichai was a judge like him. He and Anong invited both Chat and Wichai to dinner at their mansion one Sunday. Wichai, in his absent-mindedness, mixed up the date with another invitation and went there one day earlier, while the brothers and sisters were entertaining other guests, mostly very westernised people. His behaviour that day made Anong uncertain about her first impression of him as a simple and old-fashioned man. It also made her want to know him better. On Sunday, Wichai was reproached by Luang Sak for not turning up at their party the previous night, and while Somphong appeared to fetch him to his home once more and Wichai was preparing himself, he was called to see Samān who was dying.

After the dinner, Chat proposed to Anong and she politely refused saying that he was still too young. Meanwhile, in Chōi's home, Wichai promised Samān before the latter's last breath that he would look after Chōi and their daughter, Nit.

That very same night and on the following days during the funeral services, Wichai met Čhan and was instantly attracted to her.

Wichai took his younger sister and four-year old niece to live with him. Seeing her kind brother being pressed and blamed by their mother day after day for not persuading Chat to marry Sa-āng, Chōi was unhappy. She often avoided her mother by going to see her former teachers, Khun Maen and Khun Mian. Soon she became friendly with Anong, who after learning more about Wichai had become very fond of him. Although Anong concealed her feeling from others and only gave vent to it in her diary, her nervous brother, Prasit, surprisingly observed it. On the house-warming day of Khun Maen and Khun Mian, Chat proposed marriage to her again, but this time Anong did not just refuse him, she even urged him to accept Sa-āng to please his mother and at the same time to help her brother and Phayōm. Before Wichai left the house of the twin sisters that day, Prasit surreptitiously handed him photographs of Anong, saying that his sister loved him and not Chat as everybody thought. Wichai did not accept the pictures and only laughed at Prasit. He did not hate Anong, but simply never thought that contrasts could attract. After all he had photographs of Čhan to admire.

Wichai and his friends were planning a meeting between schoolmates. He himself was to write a play. In their gathering one evening at Luang Thurakit's home, Wichai was about to confess his love to Čhan, when Chat was sent to summon him to the orchestra and the latter took his place next to Čhan. Everybody except Wichai noticed the growing friendship between Chat and Čhan with uneasiness. Luang Sak mentioned it to his wife, who at first did not believe him but later related it to Chōi. Meanwhile, Khunnāi Chūn took a further step about Chat, half-forcing half-requesting Wichai to lend all his money and to pawn the land he bought for Nit, so that she could engage Chat to Sa-āng.

On her twenty-fourth birthday, Anong and her brothers arranged a big party to which at least fifty guests were invited including Wichai, Chōi, and Chat. The present from

Wichai, half a dozen lipsticks, which her aunts interpreted as his disapproval of her modern behaviour, made Anong really want to know Wichai's attitude towards westernisation.

That night Sawaeng took to the party both Phayōm and Sa-āng. And to everyone's surprise Chat came with Čhan. Anong felt amused at the coincidence, but Wichai was anxious about Čhan who was not used to that type of society. He therefore decided to stay there later than he intended, and that gave a chance to Anong to talk to him at great length for the first time. They had an intelligent discussion of various topics, mainly led by Anong in accordance with her hidden wish to know him better. Later, when Wichai was alone with Čhan, he expressed his ideas on the very subject Anong wanted to hear but did not have time to make Čhan stop feeling embarrassed about her Thai costume. But the girl only yawned with boredom before he could finish talking about it.

Anong's diary is now all about Wichai. At the same time she noticed her third brother's interest in Sa-āng. Therefore when she was pressed again by her brothers about their friends, Anong solved all the problems by persuading both Sawaeng and Čhamlōng to go and woo Phayōm and Sa-āng together.

Several birds were killed by that one stone; Phayōm would now marry Sawaeng, Khunying Rānrōn would undoubtedly favour the rich Čhamlōng to the poor Chat, and Chat himself would be free from the unwanted bond.

But Wichai suffered badly. He was still thinking that Chat loved Anong and that he would help them. Chōi's revelation of what she had heard from Chuang did not make Wichai aware of the situation either. Not until he went to see Luang Thurakit a few days after Anong's party did he realise it himself when Chat brought Čhan to him saying that they wanted to be married.

Chōi was furious with Chat. After urging Wichai vainly to take no notice of what the young couple had asked him, giving as reason that it would be against their mother's will, Chōi went to talk to Anong, hoping to make her win Chat back.

But she was disappointed: Anong did not love Chat. What Chōi did not realise was that Anong was very hurt to hear that Wichai loved Čhan.

The situation became very tense for Wichai. He forced himself to talk to Urai about engaging Čhan to Chat. Khunnāi Chūn also pressed him hard about Sa-āng because she had heard that Čhamlōng was approaching the girl. On top of that, Wichai began to be attacked by his old illness, his nerves. Eventually, he decided to tell the truth about Chat and Čhan, and what he had done for them to his mother. As a result, he was strongly reproached and accused by his mother saying that it was all because he did not want to give her his money.

His sisters tried to heal the conflict. Anong also did her best to help indirectly; Khuning Ranrōn announced the double engagements of her two daughters soon after, even before that of Chat and Čhan.

Wichai's self-restraint came to an end after the engagement of Chat and Čhan. Even so, with his kind nature, he suppressed his pain in order to talk to Anong whom he thought weaker and heart-broken also, being unaware that he was actually expressing his own feelings. Anong understood his intention and urged him to explain to her how to conquer one's grief, which Wichai did. She then retorted that he should apply what he had said to himself.

Wichai's eyes were opened to his own ignorance. The pain in his heart lessened, but still it was too late- his over-strained nerves broke down.

His condition remained critical for five days, during which time Prasit always came with food specially prepared by his aunts and sister. One day he left an envelope with Chōi for Wichai. Anong herself took courage to face the unfriendly Khunnāi Chūn and came to visit the patient. Wichai gained consciousness while they were left alone and Anong was gazing at him.

When Wichai saw what was written on the creased paper in the envelope Prasit left for him, he was utterly amazed, then flurriedly hid it from Chōi. The page is full of signatures

'Anong Atthakhadī Wichai' in various forms, and Prasit must have found it in his sister's waste paper basket.

With Wichai's insistence, the wedding between Chat and Chan took place as planned and during his convalescence. Being alone that afternoon, he walked to see Khun Maen and Khun Mian, but found Anong there instead. Their conversation over the story of Matthanaphāthā<sup>1</sup>, which she was reading, led to Anong's confession of her love and admiration for him. Her sincerity, sympathy, and sweetness softened his heart. Nevertheless, Wichai gave her one month to reconsider her feelings. Anong was strongly rebuked by her aunts for what she had done, but she never changed her mind.

Her intention to learn about Wichai's opinion about westernisation remained with her until the day she had to give him her answer. But this time she asked and he explained like two people who were going to share everything in life together.

#### Story and theme

Except for their similarity in centring the stories upon the male characters, as has been mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Nūng Nai Rōi is different from Sām Chāi in all respects: more relaxed in atmosphere, lighter in subject matter, more colourful in description, and more modern in outlook. There is neither hatred nor contempt between people of different classes. Whereas Yōi in Sām Chāi suddenly becomes reluctant to address Nāng (Mrs.) Lamun as 'Mae Lamun'<sup>2</sup> as she usually does, just because the latter's

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<sup>1</sup>See footnote 1, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup>'Mae', which also means 'mother' (see for example on p. 225), is as sensitive prefix to women's names. It can either show the superiority and slight contempt of the users, or the familiarity between the speakers.

son, Ratna, who belongs to the gentry, is presented, Wichai can talk kindly and friendlily with his Chinese servant who never addresses anybody as anything else but 'it'<sup>1</sup>. The characters' only uneasiness comes from a family dispute caused by a wilful hot-tempered but well-intentioned mother, and unlike in Sām Chāi none has to be every minute mindful of his behaviour in order to maintain his social prestige. The comic element, with which Dōkmaisot has gradually flavoured her novels, reaches its height in Nūng Nai Rōi. It appears in the story as a whole, in the characters' idiosyncracies, and best of all in the dialogues. It seems that the novelist has left behind her the social prestige and rigidity of the gentry and writes Nūng Nai Rōi from a relaxed view of life. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind that that attitude is only temporary, for in Phūdī, the novel to be considered next, she takes her readers back to an even more rigid social circle.

Nūng Nai Rōi can serve a reader many purposes. He can be amused by various comical scenes and characters, can look more critically at changing Thai society, can see life from different angles, and learn some aspects of practical Buddhism. The story is very lively and moves at more or less the same rhythm from beginning to end. There is no cutting short or making brief of some elements of the plot even when the novel is drawing toward its close. It is really one of Dōkmaisot's novels by which Thai people are deeply impressed. In its dramatised version there is a much-loved song with the same title in praise of the hero; it compares him with a diamond of purest water, the most precious of all gems. The song

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<sup>1</sup>See Dōkmaisot, Nūng Nai Rōi (Bangkok: Khlang Witthayā, 1949), p. 703, ff.

written by Wichai in the story is also popular with a tune adopted from a Thai classical song.

Throughout the story Dōkmaisot shows us her technique of making each point more distinctive by using contrasts. This applies in everything: setting, characters, incidents, and even thoughts. As regards the incidents, the author also uses many a twist and makes her readers sigh with exasperation at his faulty anticipation; only to find perhaps that what he had imagined does come to pass after all but much later on and to better effect. A good example of this is in chapters twenty one and twenty two, when Anong receives half a dozen lipsticks as a birthday present from Wichai and decides to get his opinion about modern fashion for women out of him that night. A reader will certainly expect a long discussion between them on the matter. Wichai does talk about his opinions but to Čhan, who begins to be fascinated by western clothes and has no critical mind to listen anyway. Not until toward the end of the story is Wichai asked by Anong to speak again and he does so, this time to the right listener.

There are several layers of theme in Nūng Nai Rōi. From the overall layout, the result at the end of the story, and even from the meaning of the title which points to Wichai, one can say that the theme is the triumph of virtue. But beneath that lie many others:-the Thai family of which the bonds are tight, the changing of Thai society towards westernisation including the pushing forward of the new generation and an attempt to hold it back by the older generation. One important theme is the choosing of husbands and wives at the turning period when children think themselves free to select

the ones they love and parents think their judgement coming from greater experience in life is correct.

In the end when the author crisscrosses the couples and a conservative man marries a modern girl and a modern man marries a conservative girl, we see that the change is not the kind associated with a liberal idea of progress but the kind found in the conservative idea of progress, that is to say they develop within, not outside their social tradition. They all have to change with time and circumstances. Dōkmaisot lets us understand that Čhan is ready to step forward to keep up with Chat and Anong is also ready to adjust herself as the wife of Wichai. Because the surface turbulence and disturbance is so vividly presented the reader feels the danger that may arise from the conflict of different social ideas and changes

### Characters

Nūng Nai Rōi is a densely populated novel of Dōkmaisot, eventhough there is no mention of the long-established family trees as in Sām Chāi. Very often a reader has to turn the pages back to find out for sure that who is who, who is younger or older than who, and what the history and character of each person. The action takes aplace at the time when the new generation began dominating Thai society. The two Phrayās whose names are mentioned as fathers have no roles left whatsoever. The retirement of Khun Maen and Khun Mian to live separately from their modern niece and nephews shows well the retreat of the older generation. Interestingly, however, the remaining influence of the older generation is of women and not men. None of these Phrayās' children feel that they must

do this or must not do that because of the rank of their fathers. They can say and do what they like, Luang Sak, for example, will criticise Khunnai Chūn behind her back to Wichai, and snap at her in person; he thinks it is justified and he does it without bad intention. The social gap between people in this story is less of ages and ranks, but more of the degrees of westernisation, which are seen in the types of education they pursue, the food they eat, the parties they arrange, the sports and music they play, and of course their modes of dress, especially of women. Anong's brothers, in recommending their friends to her as possible husbands, bring up only their appearance, their jobs, and whether they have many brothers and sisters or not, and never mention whose sons they are, and whether they are by major or minor wives of the fathers.

All characters, leading as well as background ones, can be divided into two main categories: the traditionals, e.g. Wichai and Čhan, and the moderns, e.g. Chat and Anong.

Thai critics have expressed differing opinions about Wichai, mainly whether or not he is realistic. Wichai may annoy the reader from time to time with his over-generosity, but on the whole he is loved. Teachers choose him as an example of a good person. Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng praises him highly and called him 'Wichai the winner'.<sup>1</sup> And Mr. Junjiro Nichino states clearly that what interests him most in Nūng Nai Rōi is the character of Wichai.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, M.L. Bunlāa criticises the portrayal of Wichai as belonging to life as

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<sup>1</sup>Rančhuan, Phāp Chīwit..., pp. 121-131.

<sup>2</sup>In his letter to the writer of this thesis, dated January 7th, 1974.

it should be and not as it is:

'I do not want us to place Dōkmaisot on the altar. Writers must always be under criticism...Some of her characters, Phra Atthakhadī Wichai for example, are too good. He possesses virtues, true, but we must not forget that he also has bad traits; he is weak, yielding, and lacking in self-confidence. He gave up the girl he loved because his brother loved her. Then he loved another girl simply because she loved him. I don't think Dōkmaisot, in choosing a man for herself, favoured one with that character...<sup>1</sup>

Dōkmaisot created this hero as a middle-aged widower without the physical charm of his younger brother, or the pleasing manner and speech of Luang Prāmōt in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek. Worse, he suffered from forgetfulness and nerves. Wichai was the eldest son of the family, and grew up 'with the instincts of a person who firmly believed in gratitude and respect for parents'<sup>2</sup>. He learned to sympathize with and make sacrifices for other people when he was very young, giving up his studies and his hope of being an officer in order to help his mother in the house and look after his siblings during their hard time, supporting Chat for the study of the subject which he himself had had to reject, helping his sisters to marry the men they loved, although it was against their mother's will. When the story takes place, everybody in his family, despite their being adults, still takes advantage of him all the time, as they know well that he is kind and loves them.

It is difficult to say definitely whether Wichai is a round or a flat character. Perhaps Dōkmaisot herself, in

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<sup>1</sup>The Thai National Library, Kān Aphiprāi..., p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 34.

creating this male character, is conscious of the fact that he has been endowed with too many virtues and has shown only the virtuous side to the reader, for she later tells us through Anong that Wichai is also changeable and capable of surprising us. The gradual change in Anong's opinions of Wichai testifies to the novelist's preference for round characters, and to her wish to develop an uncertain figure like Wichai into a round one. First Anong comments upon Wichai with Somphong and in her diary:

"A country official! (He must be) most old-fashioned in thoughts!... He is impossible, as nervous as a buffalo. We nearly died trying to make a conversation and yet there was not a word from him. How awful!"

Then she thinks:

"What else could he be but Chat's underling?... What did he find so funny about it? Even a child would know that that remark was wrong. Or doesn't he? Is he so foolish?... Perhaps he doesn't know that to do better than laugh..."

Is he really an ass, or a tiger pretending to be an ass?..."

And then she remarks

"I think you'll act (in a play) well... You always act without having to step up on the stage... We all have to act to a certain extent. The one whose behaviour irritates other people most is the one who doesn't know how to act at all. And the one who never irritates anybody is the best actor".

And eventually she concludes in her diary:

"I have met and known many people but none is as interesting as Phra At (Wichai). He can change his face; one moment he is old-fashioned and awkward, the next moment he seems active and witty. Last night too he was unusually smart and dressed up better than usual. He was quite sharp-witted, even knew how to play with words. Perhaps he was fully prepared for it. His clever way of flattering did not irritate me. But his face when he smiled or laughed looked so innocent, almost stupid, even worse than Phī (brother) Prasit. He seems to be without any pretence. But the lipsticks... They are still the question... How can one person appear in so many ways. Clever! He must be very clever to be able to do that- much better than Chat

who is gay, sociable, and sweet-tongued, but knows nothing about acting. While his elder brother can be both a child and an adult, Chat is constantly childish...<sup>1</sup>

Although Anong is clever and critical-minded, what she says, or more correctly Dōkmaisot says above, is not convincing enough to change the picture of the man. Rather, it adds to his already many idiosyncrasies a comical impression. To the reader, Wichai possesses his virtues from the beginning and maintains them to the end. He is static, never acts on impulse, nor expresses strong emotion. Therefore, the plot cannot be invented from him as it has been done, for example, from the inner change of Luang Prāmōt in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek. The change in his expression which Anong sees can be only like, quoting Edwin Muir, 'a familiar landscape, which now and then surprises us when a particular effect of light or shadow alters it, or we see it from a new prospect'<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps Wichai falls into the category of characters E.M. Forster calls 'a flat pretending to be round'<sup>3</sup>.

Another way to look at Wichai is not through Anong or anybody else, but through the tone of Dōkmaisot herself. He represents her faith in Buddhism. The quotation from the Dhammapada at the beginning of the story summarizes Wichai's character in that matter:

Akkodhena jine kodhañ, asadhuñ sādhuñā jine, jine kadariyañ dānena, saccena alikavādināñ.	Overcome anger by loving-kindness, evil by good; Overcome the stingy by generosity, and liars by truth. 4
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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 136, 137, 139, 224, 227, 468, 469, 489.

<sup>2</sup>Muir, op.cit., p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Forster, op.cit., p. 85.

<sup>4</sup>The translation is from Narada Maha Thera, Dhammapada; Text and Translation (Calcutta: Maha Bodhi Society, 1962), p. 164.

And the Pali passage at the end is the nature of the reward  
Wichai receives:

Dadañ mitañ t̄ani Ganthati                      The giver binds friendship  
dadañ piyo hota racanti nam bahu.              and is cherished by people.

The referring to the Lord Buddha's words in the story  
from time to time in connection with Wichai's state of mind  
also shows Dōkmaisot's intention. Also on occasion, the author  
enters the story and comments directly:

'The engagement (of Chat and Chan) had passed and their  
wedding day was drawing near. The burning in Wichai's  
heart became worse with time. The beautiful face of  
his sister-in-law to-be haunted him day and night. Her  
shy, coy smile and glance made his heart swell and throb,  
then squeezed it cruelly like huge iron pincers. When-  
ever Chan appeared in his imagination, Wichai tried to  
get rid of her image, telling himself that he did not  
sorrow at losing her - a girl whom he had sacrificed for  
her own and his brother's happiness. But that was only  
what he told himself in order to keep his mind in its  
purity. The very same trained mind, however, became  
unbalanced when the owner failed to be aware of it.  
Then it became poisonous to himself like rust that  
originates in iron and at the same time erodes it.

A man like Phra Atthakhadī, whose mind was controlled  
by the Dhamma, could cut down the three causes of "kilēt"<sup>1</sup>  
greed, hatred, and lust, for he knew that by them a man  
is led to immoral action. But his love was tender, gentle,  
gradually but profoundly developed, with the hope and  
intention to protect, cherish, and honour the person he  
loved. Wichai was never aware that even that type of  
love could bring severe torment. He was now very much  
like a soldier slipping into a battlefield without any  
weapon to protect himself, and without any strategy to  
free himself from the cruel hands of the enemy. The  
sorrow in his heart was like a fire burning intensely,  
ready to flare up at any time.

.....  
He sat there sadly for a while, paying no attention  
to the bitterly cold wind and the mosquitoes that sucked  
his blood. His heart which fixed on one person only,  
was split with pain. His original nature, that of an  
ordinary human being, fevered his mind. Meanwhile, his  
cultured mind consoled him. All the Dhamma headings  
which had passed before his eyes rose up before him.  
But they could not withstand the power of love. Wichai  
thought of another heading, kept repeating it to root  
it in his heart, but the force of yearning affection  
distracted him again and again...

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<sup>1</sup>Pali "kileśa" - moral defilement or impurity as the  
cause of "dukkha" - sorrow.

.....

The conversation in the past hour came back to his thoughts. What he had said was recalled clearly little by little, with the wording and meaning appearing to his mind like a reflection in the mirror appearing to the eyes of a man. This world is situated in the law of impermanence. The path of human life proceeds with the power of the previous "karma"; thus human beings have karma as their refuge. If the karma is undertaken by a man for the benefit and happiness of his fellow human beings, that karma is pure. Wichai must have always realised this truth, otherwise he would not have been able to explain it to Anong. But why should he himself still have a sorrowful heart? How strange! All the Dhamma are as old as the earth itself, and yet never out-of-date. They are what a man can reflect upon, can appreciate, and what an enlightened man can give to other people. But at the same time, some people do not listen to them, or they may have heard but do not understand them, or they may understand but are not enlightened. This could be because some human-beings are too ignorant, too conceited, or are the slaves of attachment which blinds their hearts. Happiness! Yes, human-beings wish it every moment of their breath, but when the way leading to it is seen, they turn away from it.

So far as Wichai was concerned, he had studied the Dhamma for relieving suffering at a worldly level and should be able to employ it at any time. But when it is really needed, it seems as if he intends to ignore it, or can only remember it vaguely, and that is why it is not of full use. Not until loving-kindness came to his heart, making him want to explain the Dhamma to another sufferer, was its value deeply realised, while he was trying to concentrate on it so as to rearrange the passages. Wichai suddenly became aware of the truth and was amazed at his own ignorance.

All this should remind us of the Lord Buddha's words:

"Sabbadanam dhammadanam jinati (The gift of Truth excels all gifts)"<sup>1</sup>

Compared to Ratna of Sām Chāi, Wichai belongs to another world. Both are tough but in two completely different ways. Both suffer from love, but one is helped out by circumstances and the other has the way forward pointed out to him by someone else who is younger, less admired, but perhaps wiser.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 659-662, 682-684.

Chat is lively but very shallow, irresponsible, and, as Anong says, constantly childish.<sup>1</sup> As a character he is flat, and is placed there to be in contrast with Wichai in behaviour and with Anong in serious thinking. His selfishness, however, is used by D̄kmaisot to move the plot forward since Wichai is prevented by his moral unchangeability from doing so.

Anong is D̄kmaisot's most controversial female character, a combination of several of the author's previous characters: Mayurī in modern outlook, Nut in cheerfulness, Khunying Sawong in social manner, Amph̄n in ideas about marriage. Her physical beauty is as Chat describes to Wichai:

'Don't you think she is beautiful? Every part of her, her feet, legs, waist, shoulders, is marvellous Her face may not be that beautiful, but there is nothing ugly...She is broad-minded, popular - isn't that enough yet? Or do you mean her money? 2

Certainly Wichai did not mean her money but perhaps the qualities of the housewife which he thought would be found in a sheltered and conservative girl like Čhan and never in Anong. Chuang, his sister, also thought the same:

'She knows nothing (about the house work) but driving here and there, having only male friends. Wherever she goes, there are at least three men with her. And just look at the way she paints her eyebrows, her eyes, and her lips! A geckho! And her blouse! Why does she bother to wear any at all?' 3

Intérestingly though, all the men in the story, old and young, do not blame, but instead understand her. Wichai says, 'She can be tamed',<sup>4</sup> and Phra Wiwit, 'She is an orphan. Her mother died when she was still very young, and she has been spoilt by her father and brothers, that's all'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>D̄kmaisot, op.cit., pp. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 392.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 161-162.

In letting us know Anong as she really is, Dōkmaisot also uses the technique of making the characters concerned interdependent. Through her four brothers we learn that Anong is very able and understanding in coping with difficult people and situations. Through Chōi we see her as an open, cheerful, and talkative girl. And for her intelligence, sound judgement, and personal feelings we read from her diary. Anong is very strong and circumspect especially in dealing with the opposite sex. That is why she remains independent all the time even when she is surrounded by men who want to win her heart. While Chat's idea about marriage is only 'I like a beautiful woman',<sup>1</sup> Anong makes hers clear, 'Once I am married, I want to live with my husband all my life with mutual love and understanding'.<sup>2</sup>

The most unconventional action of Anong is her proposal of marriage to Wichai. This proves at the same time the writing ability of the novelist in turning something difficult, almost impossible, into a plausible and even touching scene.

As for Čhan, the reader and critics agree that through her Dōkmaisot expresses her disapproval of the 'blank beauty', and as a writer, her dislike of flat characters. It has been seen once in Bupphēsanniwāt when the novelist was seemingly tired and bored in having to tell the reader about Sačhī herself from beginning to end. In Sām Chāi, she certainly much prefers to describe the vindictive Iaddā to the timid Arun. Čhan is the most beautiful of all, very much like a young enchanting princess stepping out of old literature. Her beauty is blooming and natural, but her character is, as Chōi criticises, 'like

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 259.

kapok or cotton wool in the wind'.<sup>1</sup> The critic Professor Kulāp Mallikamāt points out the difference between Čhan and Anong with some comment on the author's technique of using contrast:

'Some characters in Dōkmaisot's novels may be not realistic enough, or too realistic, or too contemptible, but they always appear in pairs, good and bad. The author is really superb in presenting this theme...Anong is juxtaposed with Čhan. Both are of opposite characteristics; Anong is sociable, modern, and very clever, whereas Čhan only beautiful and nothing else...'<sup>2</sup>

Despite her being a flat character, Čhan is the force of the plot attracting Chat from Anong and repelling Wichai in Anong's direction.

Considering the four main characters carefully once more at this point, one will see that the seeming compatibility between Wichai and Čhan, and Chat and Anong as seen from their outlook at the beginning is superficial, and is only a result of the environment. The levels of intelligence which are more important, especially in the case of Anong, are hidden underneath. The real reason for the attraction and repulsion of each pair also lies there. Anong is repelled by Chat's shallowness in the same manner as Čhan by Wichai's seriousness which delights Anong.

Setting and atmosphere

In Nǎng Nai Rōi the contrasting features are not confined only to the characters, but are also in the setting and atmosphere. There are contrasts between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, which have not been blended from the beginning as in Sām Chāi. The characteristics of the old and the new directly concern the characters and their development. The older generation are irritated by the younger and vice versa. Chat, for example, does not like the atmosphere in his home with his old-fashioned mother as the most influential person; he therefore spends most of his time among his friends outside. At the same time Khun Maen and Khun Mian, who cannot control their modern nephews and niece, take refuge in flight. They build their own home far away from them. Anong explains one of their reasons to Chat:

'They are tired of us. We are noisy and do things which people of our generation including me consider good, but they cannot stand them... When we have parties, for example, my brothers drink with their friends and I dance. Sometimes we over enjoy ourselves and make a loud noise, both girls and boys. My aunts get annoyed seeing and hearing us. On weekdays when we have no special occasions, my brothers always argue among themselves and quarrel with one another, and I myself go out with various friends. My aunts cannot really forbid us, because we have been spoilt by our father. Therefore, to get rid of the problem they just left us and pay no attention to anybody. 1

The most contrasting two places are the houses of Wichai and Anong with the atmosphere in them. When Wichai first moved back from Songkhla, the house was controlled by his wilful mother, who is old-fashioned and never approves of the new

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 340-341.

changes. As Dōkmaisot often criticises directly and implies in her description, Thai people love beauty and art but lack system and order,<sup>1</sup> Khunnāi Chūn admires beautiful furniture, about she never thinks of the appropriate place for it. For instance, she keeps Wichai's bookcases in the storage room, and her dining room is filled with what should be kept in the storage room. Khunnāi Chūn always welcomes her guests with a betel-nut case in a traditional Thai manner. There has never been parties in the same style as those in Anong's house. If Wichai and his friends have something to discuss or celebrate, they go out to Chinese restaurants, where they can drink, laugh, talk, scold, swear as they like. Vivid pictures of the Chinese restaurants in Bangkok and their atmosphere are given in this novel.

Anong's house, in which she lives with her four brothers, is a large building with a porch and the twenty seven steps of a marble staircase leading to the first floor. There are a spacious dining room, sitting room, and hall large enough to have ballroom dancing and an orchestra. Each of the brothers presumably has his own quarters and private servants. The description of Anong's private sitting room alone is enough for us to understand how rich and modern she is:

It was a room in the Sukkhaniwāt mansion with its furniture of modern designs. Leather armchairs were large and so low that if a person sitting in it was taller than five foot, his knees would be higher than his head. The square table is a very simple one, as though the carpenter only cut four or five pieces of wood, joined them together, then called it a table. The sideboard too looked low and heavy, comparable to a dwarf with an immense head. There were table and ceiling lamps, vases, paintings, and various odd things.

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<sup>1</sup>See for example pp. 201-202.

...Anong was half sitting half lying in one chair. Scattered at her feet and around the chair were fashion catalogues. In her hands was another one which she was opening page after page. Eventually she stopped and stared at one of the strange modern evening dresses.

Suddenly Anong heard someone walking outside the room. She threw down the catalogue and ran towards the door.

'Somphong!; she called out gladly, 'I'm waiting for you. Are you on the way in or out?'

'I've just come back now. Why do you want to see me?', Somphong asked while embracing and kissing his sister on both cheeks. Anong smiled, putting both arms around his neck as she answered,

"I want a catalogue."

"Oh! Is that all? What's wrong with the one we bought from Badman the day before yesterday? Can't you use it?"

"I can't," Anong answered, pulling his hand, "come in and you'll see that they are all rubbish."

They walked in hand-in-hand and when Somphong saw the catalogues scattered around the room, he laughed out loud.

"Good lord! And what are these? Aren't they enough?"<sup>1</sup>

In chapter six there is a good description of how these rich young people live together and how spoilt they are.

It was an unusual Sunday for everybody in the Sukkhaniwāt house because their four masters, Somphong, Sawaeng, Čhamlōng, Prasit, and the mistress, Anong, were going to have lunch together. Such an occasion was so rare that when it did occur the whole house was in turmoil. The kitchen was filled with young male servants surrounding the cook and demanding their masters' favourite dishes.

"Where is Khun Somphong's curry?"

"Where is Khun Sawaeng's soup?"

"Where is 'yam yai' for Khun Čhamlōng?"

"Where is 'ma-āk hot paste' for Khun Somphong?"

"Where is 'lime' fish-gravy for Khun Sawaeng?"

"Where is 'dried shrimp hot paste' for Khun Čhamlōng?"

No one paid any attention to the dishes already prepared and placed on the table in the kitchen. The cook pushed away to one side her baby whom she had been suckling, picked up a knife and peeled the garlic. Her eldest daughter scooped up some fish paste, put it in the mortar hurriedly, not noticing that she had pulled in too the edge of her mother's sash. The mother snatched it back and the baby pulled and put the edge in her mouth.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 194-196.

The mother then had nothing around her upper part. Her husband jumped in to fan the fire and her son-in-law helped chop the vegetables. The waiters hurried them again. The cook scolded her baby, the mortar, the chopping board, the knives, the pork, the charcoal. It was as noisy as if the kitchen was about to tumble down.

In the dining room, Somphong and Chamlong were in their clothes ready to go out. One was sitting at the table, staring at his empty plate. The other one was walking around the table with his hands pressed into his back. Chamlong in his casual garments was standing by the window reading a newspaper. Prasit was sitting at the door with his hands around his knees and his eyes half closed.

"It doesn't seem that our lunch today will be ready before four o'clock," Sawaeng grumbled.

"They didn't know that all of us would have lunch at home," Somphong made the excuse.

"It isn't the cook's business whether we are in or not. Her duty is to have the food ready on time. Look, there is not a single dish yet!"

Chamlong folded the newspaper, walked to the window near the kitchen, and shouted,

"Hey! Isn't there anything ready yet? Bring something in immediately. We are damned hungry, don't you know?"

"Hi! I am very hungry too," Prasit mumbled.

"In fact it's just past one o'clock," Somphong said.

"What do you mean, one o'clock? It's nearly two," Somphong argued.

"Hi! anoth...another forty minutes to two."

"Your watch is damned old. Better send it to a junk shop."

Chamlong continued reading his newspaper for a while, then looked up and said,

"Why hasn't Anong come down yet?"

Somphong got up, walked to the staircase, and called out loud, "Anong! Anong! Come down for lunch!"

"Anong! Anong!," Sawaeng shouted many times louder, "Come down and eat the plate and the tablecloth."

At the same time three male servants brought in the rice and five dishes. Chamlong and Prasit went straight to their places. Sawaeng put rice in his plate. Somphong looked at the dishes on the table and turned away angrily.

"There is no hot curry," he said, then turned to stare at the servants, "Haven't I told you that whenever I eat in there must be hot curry. Are you all deaf or hasn't the cook got any ears?"

The servants looked at one another, and one of them said, "Your curry is coming sir. The cook is putting it in the dish now."

"Why is she just putting it in the dish now?" the master asked in an angry tone, "There is no need to cook it today. It could have been prepared yesterday. Why should it be ready later than the other dishes? Go in and get it now - no need to put in the dish; bring the whole pot."

A servant dashed in almost at the same time as another servant came in with the curry.

"Tell the cook that from now on there must be hot curry in the kitchen always, ready every time I want it."

When the first master was quiet, the second master began, "Damn it! The soup is bloody tasteless,"

"Put some fish gravy in," Somphong said.

"Now? It'll be as bland as water used for washing a bald head!"

Before the second master finished the sentence, the third master remarked, "Why is this paste so thin?" He turned to a servant, "tell the cook to make it thicker. If she has nothing to put in it, tell her to put in dust from shoes or anything, only don't make it so thin that I cannot dip vegetables in like this."

"Here is your thick paste. It's damned smelly with dried shrimps. I don't understand why you want them put in," Somphong said and pushed the dish away from him.

"Bring it here," Sawaeng ordered his servant, "and take away this bloody thin one."

"Ba! There is garlic in this gravy for the omelette."

"Without garlic how can it be delicious," Somphong said slowly.

"Hi! hi! not...de...delicious, must be with garlic."

Sawaeng looked at Prasit and asked, "can't you try to say some words of your own?"<sup>1</sup>

Every time the brothers quarrel Anong has to act as judge, to calm them down, and to arrange everything herself to avoid the problems. This is in contrast with the situations in Wichai's home. He, Chōi, and Chat never quarrel and whenever their mother is moody and quarrelsome, Chat, who is as modern as Anong, never takes any interest in her, but will go out of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-87.

the house to enjoy himself with his equally modern friends.

There is also a sharp contrast in modes of dress between the two groups of people who can be divided by their backgrounds, their present surroundings, their upbringings, the difference in age, and whether or not they have been educated abroad. For example Anong always wears western clothes which irritate someone like Chuang<sup>1</sup>, whereas Čhan still goes to a western-style party in traditional Thai costume.

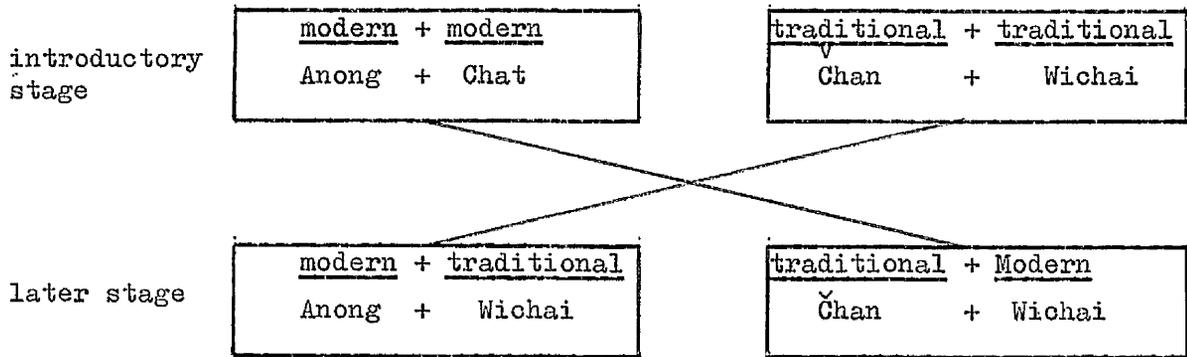
For recreation the modern group play golf and tennis, go to films, dance to western music, and the traditional play badminton and Thai card games, go to 'la-khōn' (plays), and enjoy the 'mahōrī' (Thai orchestra). When Chat courted Anong, he held her hands, kissed them, and spoke to her straightforwardly, but Wichai only admired the photographs of Čhan, wrote poems praising her beauty, and expressed his feelings through the music he played and the song he sang in his heart.

### Plot

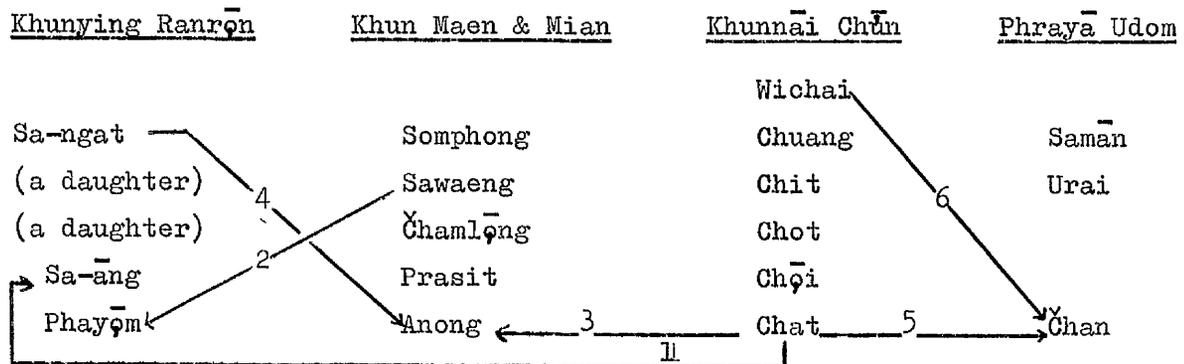
As the story has a great number of characters and all are joined by a complicated series of interlocking actions, there are several patterns of the plot-lines. The most prominent, however, is that one which links the four leading characters. The development of the plot can be seen at two stages; the introductory stage with the modern Anong and Chat and the traditional Čhan and Wichai attracting one another, and the later stage when the opposites attract.

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 251.

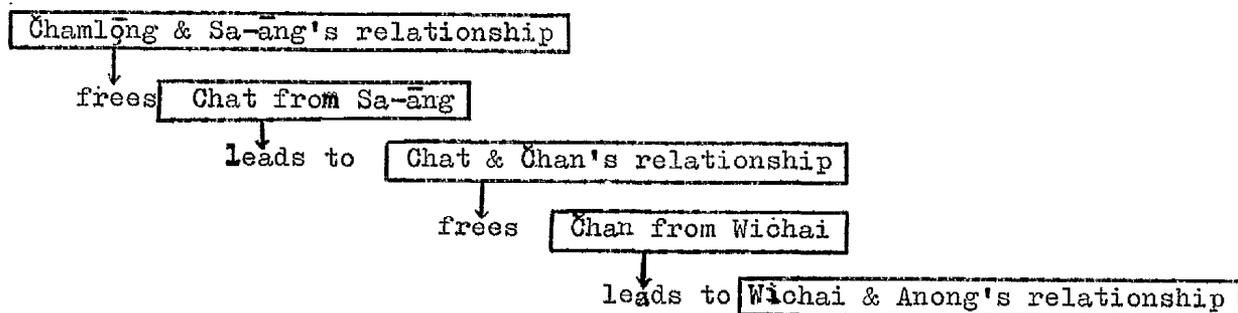


The criss-cross outline does not happen only as a result of the decision of the characters involved of the main plot. The moving force comes from other characters who try their best to manipulate other people in order to achieve their own selfish aims. Four sets of brothers and sisters, their elderly parents and relatives, and the chain of their inter-relationships are clearly seen below:



The first force comes from Khunnāi Chūn's wish to marry Chat off to Sa-āng (1). Khunying Rānrōn agrees because she wants Phayōm to marry Sawaeng (2). Because Chat refuses to follow his mother because he likes Anong (3), Sawaeng tries in vain to persuade Anong to marry Sa-ngat (4). Because Anong refuses to marry both Chat and Sa-ngat, Chat turns to Chan (5), whom his brother loves (6). When the plot threads are knit together up to the above stage, Anong, the strong and independent character, solves the problems simply by matching Chamlōng

with Sa-āng. Thus another chain is formed:



So far as the contribution of the characters to the plot is concerned, Anong provides the firmest line, the back-bone of the plot. Wichai produces the emotional and sympathetic effects and at the same time helps to confirm Anong's faith in human virtue. Chat and Čhan may be weak in character, but their relationship forms not merely a sub-plot, but an introductory plot which integrates with and strengthens, even leads to the creation of the main plot, i.e. relationship between Anong and Wichai. The effects caused by the fleshing-out of the plot skeleton, e.g. the actions of Prasit, do not just add flavour to the story, but strongly support the characterisation.

In conclusion, it can be said that in Sām Chāi and her other previous novels, Dōkmaisot gives the picture of how Thai people upon their return from the West act in their own society, and in Nūng Nai Rōi how the Thai in the country react to them. Their encounter results in an amalgamation of two ways of life. There is the danger of a chaotic or at least a conflict situation developing, but this does not happen. The changing relationship of the characters and their final associations brings harmony to the conflicting ideas of traditionalism and modernization. This can be seen as one of the author's intentions and in Nūng Nai Dōkmaisot resolves possible conflict between differing cultural ideas more definitely than in any other novel.

## CHAPTER VI

## Phūdī : The Gentry

This novel was first published by Dōkmaisot herself on March 25th, 1938. After that it was reprinted many times by several publishers. The character of Wimon, the female leading figure is included in Ranchuan Intharakamhaeng's Phāp Chīwit Čhāk Nawaniyāi<sup>1</sup> under the title "Wimon - Phūdī"

List of characters

Phrayā Amōnrat Rāčhasuphit (Mongkhon)	a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Justice; artistic, arrogant, and polygamous.
Khunying Sae	his first wife, modern and well-educated woman of good family.
Khunying Wong	his second wife chosen for him by his parents.
Nāng Phrōm	his vulgar servant-wife of whom Khunying Wong could not get rid because of her children.
Wimon	21, his daughter by Khunying Wong, the younger twin sister of Wiphat who is studying in England.
Mālī and Mānop	19 and 17, his children by Nāng Nāk (deceased).
Ōt and Paeo	8 and 7, his youngest children by Nāng Phrōm.
Phrayā Pholawat Wiwitthakārī (Chuan)	34, a high-ranking official, qualified in Chartered Accountancy in England.
Khunying Pholawat Wiwitthakārī (Sāisawat)	his sick wife.
Sumon	9, their son.
Udom	Khunying Sae's nephew, in love with Wimon.

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 172.

Phra and Nāng Bōribhān Wētchaphan	Phrayā Amōnrat's half brother and his wife.
Sutčhai	their eldest daughter.
Phrayā Bōrihān	Phrayā Amōnrat's friend.
Khunying Bōrihān	his wife, and aunt of Khunying Pholawat.
Čhongrak and Čharūn	their sons.

### Synopsis

Phrayā Amōnrat had two chief wives, Khunying Sae and Khunying Wong, and several minor wives. His six children were born to three mothers: Wiphat and Wimon by Khunying Wong, Mālī and Mānop by Nāng Nāk, Ōt and Paeo by Nāng Phrōm. Khunying Sae had had a daughter too, but the girl died when she was only two years old. Because of the dream Khunying Sae had that her child would come back with her brother and the resemblance between Wimon and Khunying Sae's baby, every one tended to believe that Wimon was the dead girl reborn with her twin brother. Wimon had been brought up and trained by Khunying Sae with great care and love, so that the girl called her "mother" instead of Khunying Wong, whom she called just "Khun".

Later, there was a row in the family over the rank of the chief wife. Khunying Sae was the first one to become tired of the situation. She retired to Chanthaburi and settled down there helping her brother in their fruit plantation. Khunying Wong later decided to leave Phrayā Amōnrat and went back to her own home in Thonburi. Instead of raising Nāng Phrōm to any higher position, Phrayā Amōnrat waited until Wimon completed her education and was old enough to take charge of the house. The young girl who had been moulded by her stepmother did her duty perfectly. Her beauty and wealth made other girls envious, especially Sutčhai, her first cousin. Among her admirers were Udom, Khunying Sae's nephew, and Čhongrak, Phrayā Bōrihān's son. Wimon met Udom when she was about fourteen and he seventeen. Both imagined then that they were in love with one another. Before Udom left for England to pursue his studies, he gave Wimon a ring which

Khunying Sae forbade her to wear until she completed her education. When Udom was called back to Bangkok, he found himself really in love with Wimon while she was doubtful whether she had ever loved him.

On Wimon's twenty-first birthday, Phrayā Amōnrat arranged a big party for her. Khunying Sae sent her a sapphire necklace and a long letter of instruction. As if it were a forewarning, Phrayā Amōnrat wrote his will that night and read it out to Wimon, who though half listening promised to abide by it. The next morning he died.

His death changed Wimon's life completely because the property he left was not as large as everyone had expected. Khunying Sae alone knew that her husband had lost his money in business investments. The will also stated clearly that the four younger children could not claim their shares until they came of age, and before that Wimon alone could have full authority to look after them, bring them up and keep for them their properties until Wiphat came back from England.

In spite of the elders' disagreement, Wimon decided quickly to do everything which would enable her to keep her brothers and sisters together and to help Wiphat complete his studies; the funeral services were reduced from one hundred to seven days, their brand-new car was sold, the servants had either to leave or to move to live with Khunying Wong and Khunying Sae, and eventually the family moved to live in a small wooden house which had once been their servants' quarters and their large mansion was let.

Soon Wimon's rich admirers and friends ceased their friendship with her. Parents stopped wanting her to be their daughter-in-law. Even Sutchai no longer envied Wimon her good fortune, and began speaking boastfully about parties she had been to and to which Wimon had not been invited. Wimon was not bothered; she lived economically with her brothers and sisters. Many things she had never touched before Wimon began to do with her own hands, washing, ironing, and looking after Q̄t and Paeo. There were times when the heavy burden made her tense and rigid with her siblings. Fortunately,

her correspondence with Khun Sae and the latter's guidance helped her adjust herself to the situation in time. Another person who sympathized with her and did his best to help her in every way was Udom. But soon afterwards he was appointed Third Secretary to the Thai Embassy in London, and Wimon was left alone with all the responsibility. Before leaving, Udom gave her a diamond ring to replace the first one which she had absent-mindedly given to the undertaker to put in her dead father's mouth. Wimon accepted the engagement and promised to wait for him, chiefly to encourage Udom and because so far she had never met anybody she liked better.

The couple who rented the house were Phrayā Pholawat and his wife, who was suffering seriously from tuberculosis. Their only son, Sumon, a sickly child, became friendly with Q̄t and Paeo, and followed them to their home, got to know Wimon and soon was attached to her. The house was also a rendez-vous for Čharūn and Mālī. Mānop too became a young friend of both the Phrayā and Khunying. Through these people Phrayā Pholawat learned about Wimon and her situation. They met one another by chance only a few times. His secret interest in her was firmly concealed in his heart.

The problems started again when Phrōm, who had seemingly been quiet and obedient, demanded her and the shares of Q̄t and Paeo left by the will, and when Wimon refused, she sued her and asked for the legal protection of her children. Meanwhile, Mānop, who had been very helpful, began to go out with girls and paid less attention to his studies. Mālī too caused a scandal by going out day and night with Čharūn and his parents refused to recognise their relationship.

Phrayā Pholawat helped Wimon out of her difficulties both directly and indirectly; Mānop was hired to teach Sumon, Phrayā and Khunying Bōrihān were talked into allowing Čharūn to marry Mālī, and after Phrayā Amōnrat's will was studied carefully, Phrōm's solicitor was persuaded to withdraw the case because he would never win it. It was the first time since her father's death that Wimon felt happy and protected.

The private life of Phrayā and Khunying Pholawat is

most sympathetic. The Khunying was usually kind and friendly, but the incurable disease made her emotional and psychologically complicated. She sincerely asked her husband to help Wimon, but whenever he expressed the slightest interest in the girl, her jealousy rose. Therefore everything Phrayā Pholawat did for Wimon had to be kept secret. The ring on Wimon's finger, however, helped make the Khunying feel secure.

Khunying Sae came to Bangkok to keep Wimon company during the hard time. She also became very friendly with Khunying Pholawat and eventually was successful in persuading the sick woman to hire private nurses.

While the situation was improving, Udom died in England of appendicitis. Wimon was shattered and everyone shared her grief. The news however was concealed from Khunying Pholawat for it also meant Wimon's freedom. The sorrow was soon followed by other news; Wiphat was awarded a scholarship. It was Phrayā Pholawat who suggested to the Ministry that it should support him.

When all the difficulties were over, Wimon took her family to Chanthaburi with Khunying Sae for a holiday, leaving Phrayā Pholawat with his sick wife and the struggle in his heart.

#### Story, theme, and moral and didactic values

Phūdī is chosen for a reading assignment in several institutions of university level including Teachers' Training Colleges and the Royal Cadet Academy. There may be several reasons for the selection but one of them is, as the title implies, its didactic value. Khun Nilawan Pinthōng<sup>1</sup> in her criticism on Phūdī, said:

Phūdī is a story for serious reading<sup>2</sup>, because its author clearly aimed at teaching morality and

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<sup>1</sup>A writer, critic, and at present the editor of the Satrī Sān magazine. She graduated from the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. After working for some time for the Government, she resigned in order to be a professional writer and journalist. She had once been the Secretary to the Thai P.E.N. Club, and was awarded the Magsaysay Award in 1961.

<sup>2</sup>The critic implies her opposition to the term "nangsū ān lēn". For details see Appendix iii, pp. 508-509.

manners. In conversation with a certain learned person, I completely agreed with his (her) remark that Dōkmaisot is in fact a preacher outside a pulpit... The only difference is that the listeners neither have to sit with their hands clasped together at their breasts, nor to worship her with flowers, candles and joss sticks, but can sit or lie down to read it after a meal or whenever they can spare the time. In this story, the author taught about how to be real gentle people...<sup>1</sup>

The author's purpose of teaching morality in Phūdī seems well supported by her quoting of the teachings of the Lord Buddha both at the beginnings of the story and each chapter. But this aspect will be treated later because if only the title had been something else, the real theme, which is over shadowed would have showed itself distinctively; that is the failure and frustration in love of all characters in the story, of the older as well as the younger generations. This, in my view, is the real theme and its successful treatment by the author is the reason for the literary achievement of the book.

Khunying Sae was extremely daring in making up her mind to marry Phrayā Amōnrat in the first place, when she fully realised that she would have to share her husband with another woman. She risked her future, her family's reputation for her true love. Eventually, she pulled herself away from him, not as a loser, but because she was tired of the married life and deeply understood the disquietude that resulted from the sexual obsession of her husband.

Khunying Wong loved her husband and aimed at winning his love so blindly that she even directly encouraged Phrayā Amōnrat to practise polygamy. This peculiar and unnatural action of hers did not reward her as she had hoped. Instead, it drove her away from him and her children.

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<sup>1</sup>Khun Nilawan Pinthōng, "Wičhān Rūang Phūdī", Mahā Witthayālai, XVI (May 1938), p.234.

As for Nāng Phrōm, her children alone saved her from being chased away by Khunying Wong. Her title as a servant-wife only made her position more difficult. She was no longer a real servant, but at the same time she was neither recognised by anybody as a Phrayā's wife, nor could she behave like one.

Phrayā Amōnrat was provided by the tradition with the opportunity to gain true love as well as to indulge his sexual desires widely. When his true love in the form of Khunying Sae left him, he had no one to hold or look up to and therefore became self-indulgent till the end of his life.

The love of the characters of the younger generation is more difficult and sympathetic. It is forbidden by all sorts of problems, physical, moral, professional, and financial. None of them is successful in love or marriage.

Phrayā Pholawat lived with his wife without any physical contact. Although he was still a responsible and kind husband his sensual feeling towards her had died down. All he could see waiting for them was her death. Getting to know Wimon was like the rain pouring over the parched land. She was full of life, youth, hope, plans, and physically she was a contrasting picture to the emaciated body of his wife to whom his eyes and arms had been accustomed for a long time. However, his hope for Wimon was only a vague one. A little over expectation would at once make him an unfaithful and dishonest person.

Khunying Pholawat was the most tormented person of all. It was only physically that she could not fulfil her duty as a wife. Her heart was still flooded with love, passion, and possessiveness towards her husband. The more serious her

illness was, the stronger her feelings became, and whenever she thought of her death, she would imagine her husband falling to another woman simultaneously.

As far as love is concerned, Wimon had been deceiving herself from the beginning. Real love never occurred in her heart before, until she met Phrayā Pholawat. She might have given a promise to Udom and accepted the engagement ring but she did not love him. When it came to Phrayā Pholawat, Wimon had to conceal it tightly in her heart and not even admit it to herself, for each had his and her own bondage.

Udom loved Wimon wholeheartedly and lived with his hope to marry her until he died.

The character of the love of the younger generation is in reverse to that of the older generation. It started off with problems and it is possible that the resolution could have brought in a successful marriage, whereas the older generation had no difficulties in the beginning but marriage proved later a failure.

The marriage between Wimon and Phrayā Pholawat would be possible only when Udom and Khunying Pholawat were no longer there. Dropping both of them would only make too obvious the intention of the author to form a happy ending, *Dōkmaisot* therefore chose to drop only Udom who was young and strong and keep Khunying Pholawat. Phrayā Pholawat and Wimon must not reveal their love more than that, and Khunying Sae must not show less kindness and friendliness towards Khunying Pholawat otherwise the level of virtue would be lessened. Even the reader will have to restrain the wish to see Wimon and Phrayā Pholawat getting married. The cry of the reader for the author to continue the story as it had been done before with Khwāmphit

Khrang Raek<sup>1</sup> is also impossible, and all because it would only mean the death of Khunying Pholawat. Such an event would remove all tension and a continuation would have little dramatic value. The critic, Nilawan Pinthōng, has however taken the view that Dōkmaisot had a continuation in mind and proposed the way by arranging the death of Udom.<sup>2</sup>

The term "phūdī" is usually applied in connection with "mī ngoen" (having money) and "mī trakūn" (having lineage). This makes the literal meaning, i.e. "good man", distorted, at least it causes people without money or lineage not to be recognised as "phūdī". Dōkmaisot wanted to put right the incorrect understanding and to prove that the quality of gentility is judged by behaviour and not by money or family. This intention of hers is clearly seen in the quoting of the Lord Buddha's works from the Dhammapada at the beginning of the novel.

Na jatahi na gottena	Not by plaited hair, nor by family,
na jacca hoti brāhmano,	nor by birth does one become a Brahman.
yamhi saccan ca dhammo ca	But in whom there exist both Truth
so sucī so ca brāhmano.	and Righteousness, - pure is he,
	a Brahman is he. 3

In Thai literature there is a great number of didactic works, for children, for girls, for kings, and officials. All are theoretical and idealistic. Sombat Khōng Phūdī (Properties of a Cultured Person) by Čhao Phrayā Phrasadet Surēnthrā Thipbōdī<sup>4</sup>, written in 1913 is also a pure text for school children to memorise. But Phūdī of Dōkmaisot includes the teaching in application and practice by realistic characters with flesh and blood, anger and jealousy, love and desire.

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IV, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Nilawan, op.cit., p. 231.

<sup>3</sup>The translation is from Narada Maha Thera, op.cit., p.295.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter II, p. 77.

As in Sombat Khōng Phūdī, the code of ethics in Phūdī can be divided so as to cover the "traī Thawān" (i.e. tri davāra: the three doors) namely the body, the speech, and the mind. It is craftily included in the story both directly and indirectly. The direct teachings are perhaps what makes this novel seemingly more didactic than other works of the author. They appear in the letters of Khunying Sae, the teaching of Phrayā Amōnrat, and in Wimon's replies to Sutčhai on various occasions. The instruction of Khunying Sae is always inserted at an appropriate time and place as if to make the reader understand the problems and the solutions when they really happen. It is written succinctly, precisely, and in a gentle and soothing manner, so that a critic, Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng, wrote:

We gain pleasure and at the same time are startled. The author touches in the readers a realisation of the "knot" of desire in themselves. Khunying Sae pointed out for us see how the Lord Buddha's teachings could get rid of the flame of cravings or decrease its power.<sup>1</sup>

As they are different in character, Phrayā Amōnrat's teachings are in sharp contrast to those of Khunying Sae in their nature and subjects. They are short, pompous, without any religious or moral touch, but dealing straight with social qualities. For instance, on their return from a funeral ceremony a few days before his death, he looked at his daughter's feet and said:

"...Nowadays people dress themselves for a funeral ceremony in the same fashion as for a film or theatre. The more civilised they are, the more careless they become. Having seen those girls I am wondering if you have followed their example...

According to the rule, one must be dressed for other people and not for oneself. Therefore, whoever observes the quality of the gentry must dress himself correctly

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<sup>1</sup>Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng in Somphop, Chīwit..., preface.

for the place, the occasion, and sometimes the position of the host must be taken into consideration too." 1

Although she had been trained by Khunying Sae, Wimon inherited her father's character of being reserved and sharp-tongued. Her word to Sutchai, though containing teachings, is rather harsh and unkind, especially after she had given her cousin her beautiful dress.

"You have said yourself that I am poor. So we can speak equally now. Please tell those people who think like you that there are two kinds of poverty; that of a desparate wretch and that of a member of the gentry. The first is desparate both in money and thought. They never think of any suitable and correct way to overcome misfortune, but go on being envious of other people and grumbling about poverty. Being poor as a 'phudī' means lacking in money only, but never in thought. However difficult the situation is, they will never sit still and let other people trample on their heads, and will never beg for anything from anybody." 2

The second type of moral teaching needs more careful observation and consideration. The teaching of the Lord Buddha called "the six directions" or the behaviour of an individual towards his parents, husband, wife, children, masters, and subordinates, for instance, is fully included in Phūdī. The most distinctive and interesting one particularly from the present day viewpoint is how Thai gentry treat their servants. Two opposite attitudes are represented by Chongrak and Khunying Sae in their conversations with Wimon, first when the hardship began and second when it was over.

"...Keeping swarms of servants in the house too was practised widely among people in former days. I don't see any advantage in it. It should be abolished. In the West, a large family in a huge mansion has only two servants to do all the housework. But here in 'Muang Thai'...I know some families who still keep even

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Khlang Witthayā, 1950), pp. 277-278.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

<sup>3</sup>i.e. Thailand.

decrepit and disabled servants. It's ridiculous, just a waste of room and money."

"There are several people like that in this house too," said Wimon. Her tone and face changed, but Chongrak was not aware of it. He continued her sentence,

"That's why I sympathise with you. We must not follow those ancient people's example. It's a waste of money and they only make the place look dirty."

Wimon's face turned red. She sat straight up, answered coldly while laughing,

"Taking care of old and disabled servants in the house is a practice of all who are Thai gentry." <sup>1</sup>

"...One more thing, mother. When I come back from Chanthaburi I'll bring back with me Yāi Phūak (Grandma Phūak) and Pā Hōm (Aunt Hōm). I don't have to suffer now, father's old servants must come back and die with me."

Khun Sae looked at her daughter with the utmost affection. Wimon's last sentence proved her behaviour as that of real Thai gentry. Because of her gratitude to her parents and ancestors, Wimon therefore extended her kindness, generosity and love to those who had had connection with them. <sup>2</sup>

Looking back from now to the time when Dōkmaisot wrote Phūdī with the biggest political changes in Thai history had passed and the age of aristocracy had ended, the novel is exposed to a criticism from another angle. Dōkmaisot did not merely wish to teach about "phūdī" but to emphasize the fundamental quality required of the gentry, perhaps because she saw it threatened after the revolution of 1932. Her interest in politics, which she had sporadically added in her works after the country changed to constitutional monarchy, appears more evident in Phūdī, particularly in the long conversation between Phrayā Amōnrat, Luang Hān, and Chongrak, in which at one place the high-ranking man remarked satirically after Chongrak said that he chose teaching as a career because he had no knowledge to play with politics,

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 281-283.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 740-741.

"Why? Look at Khun Luang Hān<sup>1</sup>, he is a soldier and yet he can sit in a political chair... You won't find easily people who are strongly for this and that. I am sure that most are strong only in guarding their 'rice pot'<sup>2</sup>"<sup>3</sup>

Although Dōkmaisot has turned the life of Wimon upside down to the state of "gentry in poverty", she is not really successful in interpreting the Lord Buddha's words, but rather proves another old Thai saying, "Pure gold remains pure even when dropped in the mud." Arguments can still be raised from the point of view of people of ordinary class that Dōkmaisot looks at the quality of "phūdī" from an aristocrat's standpoint and does not make clear her opinion of people of good disposition but low-birth. Compared with Sēnī Saowaphong's Pīsāt<sup>4</sup> (The Ghost), in which a good lower-class man made a strong counter-attack on the so-called "phūdī", Dōkmaisot's Phūdī certainly looks more of a dramatic than a social novel representing Thai society. This view had actually been taken by Khun Nilawan Phinthōng only two months after its first publication, and despite the critic's admiration of the plot and style of the book:

...Compared with Siam as a whole, Dōkmaisot's society is merely a small corner, or otherwise a tiny circle containing a handful of people. And from the description, their education, manners, and mode of life are only a superficial civilisation floating above a vast rough area outside it...<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Implying the rise to political power of soldiers. F.M. Pibulsonggram was also a "luang".

<sup>2</sup>meaning "one's position" or "one's benefit".

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 62, 64.

<sup>4</sup>Sēnī Saowaphong is a diplomat writer whose works are very warmly welcomed by Thai people at present. Pīsāt was first published in 1960, and was translated into Russian by L. Morev in 1966.

<sup>5</sup>Nilawan, op.cit., p. 234 and as quoted in Čhetanā Nākhawatchara, "Wannakhadī Wičhān lae Kānsūksā Wannakhadī", Wan Waithayakorn (Bangkok: Social Science Society, 1971), Vol. I, p. 2.

Plot

Phūdī is divided into fifteen chapters. In the first six chapters the story of the older generation dominates, particularly in chapter four (pp. 130-191), in which the polygamous life of Phrayā Amōnrat is fully related. The plot may have his death as the starting point but in the actual treatment of the novel it does not occur until chapter five. The flashback events revealing relationships of the older characters is in some ways more interesting than the main story, for it forms almost another circle of life altogether, with Khun Mongkhon as the hero, Khun Sae the heroine, Khun Wong and Nāng Phrōm other leading figures.

Nevertheless, the story of the younger generation is a good example of unity in a novel, showing strict and relevant limitations with regard to time, place and characters. The main plot is comparatively simple. It runs along one line throughout, not straight but without effects from sub-plots. The outlines concerning the main characters are not really intertwined. That of Wimon can be divided into four parts, each with a rhythm of its own:

_____ /+++++++ /----- /_____			
happy time with her father	difficult time with problems & responsibilities	better time with the help of Phrayā Pholawat	happy time for Wimon with financial problems solved.

The line of Phrayā Pholawat is sadder and with less hope of happiness throughout the story. It runs closely parallel with Wimon's like a musical accompaniment. Other two supporting lines are those of Udom and Sutčhai. But they are mere faint dots without any dynamic force.

More careful consideration of the outline of the plot shows that Dōkmaisot used death to punctuate the novel and introduce change from one state to another; first the death of Phrayā Amōnrat at the opening of the harsh and difficult period of Wimon's life, then that of Udom at the changing of the rhythm back to a peaceful and happier one. Should the author want a happy ending for the novel, the third death, i.e. of Khunying Pholawat, is unavoidable. But since Dōkmaisot is not an escapist nor her novels written for escapist readers, Khunying Pholawat remains alive and the story is left for the readers to imagine as they will. Phrayā Pholawat's problem is not solved but a hint of hope for the future is however the note at the end of the novel, rising from the fact that he will see Wimon again after the holiday.

#### Setting and atmosphere

Phūdī has the most limited physical area of all Dōkmaisot's novels. The whole story is confined within one place only, a large building belonging to Phrayā Amōnrat and its servants' quarters. There are no scenes in provincial towns or in restaurants, no entertainments, no games or sports of any kind, even the dinner party on Wimon's birthday is a rather uncomfortable one, full of condescension and flattery, contempt and jealousy, and it is on the whole a prelude to death. Nevertheless, the reader is neither oppressed by the narrowness nor feels that the novelist is lacking in descriptive power. The narrow setting therefore becomes an enjoyable aspect of the book, and, as regard the author, Dōkmaisot has shown in this novel her confidence in dealing with human consciousness, describing the setting only when necessary and always in tune

with the character's state of mind. Her technique in this respect in Phūdī is seen in three different forms; the narrative description of the actual physical settings, the blending of the environment and human feelings, and the symbolical use of contrast.

First of all there are some interesting similarities in the descriptions of the large buildings in Sām Chāi and Phūdī and perhaps the Wang Bān Mō itself:

Khun Phranāi had demolished his old large wooden house, and replaced it with a modern building. It was a beautiful, tall, square building which Siamese people of that period would certainly look at with interest...<sup>1</sup>

...The building had been remodelled several times, but not to the extent of pulling it down or rebuilding it. The owner had altered and added parts of it at will until it was in its present state... In all, the sitting room of this house was in a condition far from the knowledge and understanding even of "the new Siam"<sup>2</sup>...<sup>3</sup>

If the descriptions were without the words "demolition" and "remodelling", they would not be lacking in any way, but the mentioning of them proves Dōkmaisot's realism in portraying the life of Thai aristocrats during the time of her writing. In Sām Chāi it gives the sense of the old establishment of the family. In Phūdī it also supports the characteristics of Phrayā Amōnrat, the details of which will be studied later. The ideas perhaps occurred to the novelist after what had happened in her own home. There were demolitions of the buildings in Wang Ban Mō in 1927 and 1935. Phūdī itself was written during the Kunjara's rather hard time and when Dōkmaisot was sharing a bedroom with her sisters in the small annexe to the old audience hall.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sām Chāi, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>implies Thailand after the revolution of 1932.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, pp. 33-34.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter II, p. 91.

The main setting of the story, however, is in the servants' quarter. Dōkmaisot seemed to have a vivid picture of the small wooden house in her mind and enjoy writing about it. This fits in with her life-long and unfulfilled wish to have a small house of her own, and with how she, when she had a separate room for the first time in Wang Bān Mō after the War, kept arranging and decorating it until Phrayā Thēwēt remarked: "There is only gilding left to be done".<sup>1</sup> The description is vivid in details and gradually increased in length until in the end the reader feels familiar with every corner of the house.

As for the scenes which were written to be in tune with the mood of the character, Dōkmaisot used as a technique the fact which she herself mentioned: "In fact, it was her own mind that made her appreciate the beauty of the surrounding nature".<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when Wimon could not yet see any way out from her financial problems, the novelist began the description of the scene as follow:

That night, there was no moon and the sky was without stars. It made the heart of a sad person gloomier...<sup>3</sup>

But when the house was completed, Udom decided to go to England for their future, and the day of their quiet engagement came, everything was different:

It was a night of full moon. The moon and the stars lit the sky brightly. The weather was clear and cool. Flowers in the pots gave out sweet fragrance. It seemed as though all nature joined together in rendering pleasure to the lovers...<sup>4</sup>

Telepathy and bad omen before death appear in both Sām Chāi and Phūdī. To describe them Dōkmaisot exploited also

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II, p. 100 . See also Somphop, Chīwit... pp. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 610.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.288.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.367.

the night, the stillness and the moon. As she wrote in

Sām Chāi:

That night, it had been unusually warm since dusk. There was no breeze even to move the tips of the trees. All of them, big and small, with thick and thin and delicate leaves were dead-still. The weather was close and dreary. The sky was completely black, without moon or stars. Even the floating clouds could not be seen ...Ngāng!...ngāng!...the sound of the bell was heard, echoing and piercing through the dark...Phatcharī started, "Two o'clock! So late and Anuwat hasn't returned yet."

It was not the first time that Anuwat was late, but it was the first night that his fiancée had been waiting for the sound of his car for more than two hours. She was nervous - perhaps because she was tired or because of the close weather and the darkness and the stillness. Her heart beat fast. A profuse sweating spilled all over her body. Phatcharī felt dreadful and shaken as if bad omens were surrounding her...Saek!...A "saek" bird<sup>1</sup> shrieked and flew swiftly past the roof. Her hair<sup>2</sup> stood on end and she abruptly retreated from the window.

and in Phūdī:

Wimon had been sleeping for some time before she had a strange dream - a hand shook her and woke her up so hurriedly that she could hardly breathe, and when she opened her eyes, a man, covered with blood all over, was standing in front of her. Whatever it might have been, Wimon sat up, panting, trembling and sweating profusely.

Looking out through the mosquito-net, she saw a long stream of moonlight shining through the window into the room. With one hand on her heart, which was beating hard, Wimon sat still trying to calm herself. But she could not. Her body still quivered as if she had fever. She pressed the switch by the pillow, and when the room was lit she stepped out of the mosquito-net and stood trembling in the middle of the room.

"A dream! I must have been dreaming," she told herself again and again, "but what a terrible dream!"

Usually Wimon was not a coward nor easily frightened. After telling herself repeatedly that it was only a dream, she tried to smile at herself. She looked around the room but saw nothing unusual, and from the window, the sky was as clear as before she had gone to bed. Everywhere in the compound of the house was quiet. But such a complete quietness and tranquility was an enemy to the nerves for in the quietude Wimon's eyes saw the long black shadows of the trees moving. She turned back quickly to the light,

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<sup>1</sup>A kind of birds beleived to fly out at night bringing an omen of death to the house it flies and cries over.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sām Chāi, pp. 575-576.

stood still, trying to suppress her fear. As soon as the illusion had gone Wimon thought of her father and immediately she felt qualms inside her. She looked into the direction of the library and saw the light. "I must have slept only for a short while before the dream, father hasn't gone to bed yet, he is still writing...". Even so ...Wimon turned the lock open and had walked out of the room only a few steps when she heard a certain sound that made her feel that her inside had turned into ice...<sup>1</sup>

The exploitation of contrast in the atmosphere of Phūdī is also quite remarkable. The story begins with the end of a life, at dawn, and after what the dead man would have considered a hilarious night. The ending, on the contrary, is hopeful, but takes place at dusk, after a tormenting separation. In writing it, Dōkmaisot coloured the scenes with realistic atmosphere by describing very symbolically the surroundings, for example, the storm is compared with human emotion, sunshine with hope.

As in Sām Chāi and later in Nī Lae Lōk!, Dōkmaisot chose the early hour of the day for the death scene in Phūdī. The timing provides her with contrasts between the no-return of one life and the awakening of all other living beings. The lengths of the descriptions in the three novels too gradually increased; only one sentence in Sām Chāi: "Anuwat died at dawn ...The bright sunlight shone through the window..."<sup>2</sup>, longer in Phūdī, and fully in Nī Lae Lōk!<sup>3</sup>. In Phūdī she wrote following a long heart-breaking scene of Wimon trying to save her father's life:

Alas! Wimon had never seen a body in the state when life was leaving it. She did not know that all the blood vessels which had struggled their best the moment ago had now stopped. Only the vein in his throat still throbbed as a sign of the very last drop of fighting. His eyes were dry, lifeless...and when the real end came, Wimon saw tranquility on his face. That was to tell her that the thread between his life and body had been broken

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, pp. 192-194.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sām Chāi, p. 587.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter VIII, pp. 367-369.

and would never be joined together again.

...The weather was chill. Outside, the morning star was shining high in the sky, now beginning to be bright. Crows were cawing waking each other to fly out for worms. Inside, in the bedroom of Phrayā Amōnrat, a candle was flickering by his head. It was only a tiny flame compared with the bright white rays of the dawn...A group of people were sitting on the floor, some with their hands clasped round their knees and some with them folded over their breasts, sobbing and wailing with immeasurable sorrow. They were all overwhelmed with the feeling of cold outside and inside them so much that it nailed their limbs and every part of their bodies, preventing them from moving.

Three hours passed. The sky seemed likely to remain gloomy and overcast all day. The weather in winter was normally dry and fresh though cold. But today it was chill and wet as in the rainy season. How similar it is to the unlimited impermanence of human life.<sup>1</sup>

The closing scene, the tone of which is often overlooked by young and romantic readers, with the lonesome Phrayā Pholawat in it is even more moving, not only because of the feeling of frustration the reader shares with him but mainly the precise, meaningful and touching words used, together with the rhythm in the sentence. Following is a translated excerpt of the scene:

That same evening, the day seemed to reach its close early. The sky was overcast and the dark heavy rain-clouds were moving quickly. The weather was miserably cold and strong wind swooped at an irregular pace. Phrayā Pholawat stood leaning against the window frame with his hands folded over his breast, looking down at everything within the fence around the little house. The gale force wind gusted past the big tree, making the branches shake, sway, then bend like a man stooping and hiding his face in grief, and when it blew across the roof, it sounded as if someone was sobbing. The doors and windows of the little house were firmly shut, as though to remind everyone that its owner had deserted it without any feeling of attachment...

...When the boat was leaving, he shook hands with her, looking at her with meaning from the deepest depths of his heart. But the girl did not seem to understand...

His kind deeds had only resulted in making that little house within the hibiscus fence quiet, lonely, and sad to look at... The weather became close and heavier

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, pp. 198-201.

The sky grew darker and darker. Phrayā Pholawat's feeling was in tune with the surrounding; sad, frustrated, lonely, dismayed, lost, and tired of himself... He dropped his arms and walked away with determination.

A Western tune with English words was heard clearly from the neighbouring house:

.....  
 When skies are cloudy and grey  
 It's only grey for a day  
 .....  
 Just remember sunshine always follows the rain  
 .....

A tired smile appeared on his lips. "Not bad," he thought, being quite pleased with the philosophy. It was shallow and easy but still a philosophy, revealing clearly the truth about the world and human life. As darkness having brightness as a counter-partner, the sorrow of a man would be resolved by his feeling of content.

...That little house would not be closed forever. Within fifty days at the longest, life would return to it. Every tree and leaf of grass would be fresh once more. And...and then the golden ray after the rain storm would appear in Phrayā Pholawat's heart..<sup>1</sup>

One very interesting and informative scene in Phūdī, of a kind which no other Thai novelist before Dōkmaisot had ever included in his work, is the traditional funeral ceremony of Phrayā Amōnrat, which no doubt the author based on that of her father, Čhao Phrayā Thēwēt, in January 1923.

By late afternoon, everything was ready for the bathing of the corpse. The hall, which only the night before had been used for entertaining guests invited to a happy party celebrating birth, was now prepared for a ceremony in relation to extinction, and the place where the dead body would be kept.

The body was lying on a gilded, carved bed with curve legs, dressed in civil servant's uniform; dark blue "muang" white jacket, white stockings and black shoes. The right hand rested over a bowl for the pouring of water.

By the side of the bed to the west was a small curve-legged stool belonging to the same set as the bed. On it were a golden tray containing a gold mask, a silver water bowl from the King, and another golden tray containing a jar of turmeric, a jar of scented-water, a comb, betel-nut, flowers, joss-sticks, and candles.

Farther off were an altar for an image of Buddha, rugs laid for the monks, and a case of religious texts.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 749-750, 755-756.

The funeral ceremonial officials for civil servants were sitting in an orderly way by the wall in the direction of the corpse's feet. Closest to the bed was a lady aged about fifty in black "phā-nung", white blouse and a scarf across her shoulder. Although the dark glasses concealed her bruised eyes, the way she pushed them up to wipe her eyes frequently told everyone that (Khun Wong) never stopped crying since she stepped into the room.

Relatives and friends of the dead man were arriving in mourning garments. Each had with him a bottle of scented water. The younger guests were mostly Wimon's friends. Some of them, those who had heard the news, wore mourning clothes. Those who turned up in colourful dresses and with birthday presents, because Wimon had forgotten or did not have time to tell them, had to go back.

The bathing ceremony was led by a high-ranking member of the royal family. He first sat down facing the direction of the Grand Palace, paid homage three times, then poured the water from the carafe on the shoulder of the corpse which the ceremonial officials had lifted up to a sitting position. Meanwhile, the oboe-player began the music with the high grating pitch of lamentation in harmony with five pairs of "chana" drums<sup>1</sup>. The two sounds made everybody shudder with chill and sorrow. The prince combed the hair of the corpse, then broke the comb into two and put it back in the tray. Other people then went in consecutively to ask for forgiveness from the dead man.

When it was over, a large black curtain was drawn from one side of the room to the other, dividing the death bed from the front part. The ceremonial officials went behind the curtain in order to dress the corpse and put it in the coffin. They clothed him in long trousers, a blouse with "lotus petal" collar fastened in front with ribbon, and gloves. The hands were put together at his breast, with a cone-shaped vessel containing flowers, candles, and incense sticks, inserted in between. A betel-nut was put in his mouth. While picking up the gold mask from the tray, an official looked round for another object. It was not there. He turned to one whom he thought was among the hosts, and asked,

"The ring. Do you wish to put the ring in his mouth?"  
Nāng Bōribān turned to Wimon,...

"A ring for putting in your father's mouth."

Without thinking, for she was herself almost out of her mind, Wimon took off the ring from her finger and handed it to her aunt. The official received the ring and put it in the corpse's mouth, covered the face with a white triangular cloth bag, fastened the mouth of the bag firmly at the neck.

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<sup>1</sup>A kind of Javanese drum used in Court processions and in processional rites for the dead. (G.B. McFarland, Thai-English Dictionary, p.58).

Having been dressed, the body was wrapped, bound, and placed into the inner coffin. The sound of the hammering of the nails on the lid of the coffin painfully pierced the feeling of the listeners for a while longer. When it was properly sealed, the inner coffin was lifted and put into a carved gilded outer coffin before being installed on the prepared bench. In the front were gilded trays supporting the pillows to which the medals and orders were fastened. Trays and vases of flowers, candle-sticks and wreaths were placed around in decoration. Four five-tiered umbrellas were fixed at the four corners of the coffin...<sup>1</sup>

### Characters

Three generations actually appear in Phūdī, the older, the younger, and the children generations. The story is based on human inter-relationship to such a degree that all the characters are seen in terms of their merits and defects as fathers, mothers, children, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends, and not just individuals living independently

The first impression a reader would have of the members of the older generation in this novel is the confusion resulting from the practice of polygamy in Thai society before the family law was introduced. This theme had been employed before in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, but the author did not tell how it happened and it is accepted by Thai people in general. In Phūdī she let the reader follow the whole course of the practice in detail; the ideas, causes and results of it.

Because this practice formed an interesting aspect of pre-War Thai life, a long excerpt from chapter four of this novel, containing also some characteristics of Phrayā Amōnrat and his wives, is translated:

All his life, from his youth to his retirement, Phrayā Amōnrat Rāchasuphit, a member of the Supreme Court, had a great number of friends. There were two topics concerning him that they often talked about;

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 210-215.

first, what qualification he had that enabled him to have two wives of equal rank of "Khunying", and why none of them had "the Order of Chulachomklao"<sup>1</sup> conferred upon them, eventhough they were both of good families. Phrayā Amōnrat could answer the second query clearly and easily with laughter, "Because they kept arguing over it, that's why." Actually, he always wanted to laugh whenever he talked about his wives.

But the answer to the first question was too confusing to make clear in just a few words. Čhaokhun therefore had to choose the appropriate occasion and audience, that is to say he would talk about it only to close friends and when they were under some kind of power, which caused their blood to circulate more strongly than usual?

"Once I was a fine young man, quite handsome and dignified," he would start the story. "My father was a Phrayā of Golden-tray rank? My "tā"<sup>4</sup> was a "čhao sua"<sup>5</sup>. Should it still be very surprising that I could have two wives within three days."

"I have heard that your first wife is the one chosen for you by your parents, is that correct?," his friend would ask.

"What? My first wife?," Phrayā Amōnrat would repeat the question, "I myself do not know which one is my first wife. Mae Wong was chosen by my father, but she was married to me two days after Mae Sae. Mae Sae was also married to me officially but we arranged the ceremony ourselves. The elders did not have a hand in it. Therefore, the weight is balanced and how can one of them be higher than the other."

Following was the story of the Čhaokhun and his two wives at the time when he was only Khun Mongkhon.

When Phrayā Amōnrat said that he had been handsome and dignified, he meant that he had been attractive to women. By saying "My father was a Phrayā of Golden-tray rank" he meant that he belonged to the gentry. And when he continued "My tā was čhao sua" he meant that he was very rich. It is quite natural that anybody with those three qualifications would be welcomed to any society, because they are the qualities that can be easily seen and heard of without the help of reflection and analysis. Once a person is warmly welcomed by society, it means that he can easily achieve what he wishes because liking always brings along with it giving, conferring, proposing, and consenting. If the recipient is self-controlled, he will receive them with mindfulness, and will know the suitable limits of his desire. But if he has a nature

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 461.

<sup>2</sup>i.e. alcohol.

<sup>3</sup>Traditionally in old Siam conferred ranks had accompanying rights to symbolic and practical objects, e.g. trays, weapons, etc.

<sup>4</sup>Mother's father. Father's father is "pū".

<sup>5</sup>meaning Chinese millionaire.

which is unaware of his own mind, he will certainly receive them with overjoyfulness and infatuation, and that will cause pride and over self-estimation. His craving will be augmented without limit and he will try all possible ways to get what he wishes although it would make him forget humanity from time to time.

And what else would a man fully equipped with those three qualifications desire most if not the opposite sex?

While studying Law, Khun Mongkhon agreed to be ordained as a Buddhist monk at his parents' request. That was because the ideas which might lead the children to disobey their parents, especially rich and influential parents, had not yet sprouted up in their heads, and because parents' anger also meant the failure of their future. Khun Mongkhon was in the monkhood for three months, then left it to continue with his studies. He also found himself engaged to be married to Khun Wong, a young girl his parents chose for him during his monkhood.

Preparing a bride for a son who was merely twenty and had not completed his studies showed that his father wanted him to settle down to family-life quickly. But Khun Mongkhon was even quicker than his father, for he had already fallen in love with a girl by the time when he had completed his high school education.

His fiancée was a girl of equally good family. Her father's family had been high-ranking officials for several generations. They owned a large house by Bangkok Noi canal.<sup>1</sup> Her mother came from a rich family who owned plantations and rice fields along the Chao Phraya river at Bangkhēn.<sup>2</sup> Khun Wong was the only child of the family. She was rather plump with a creamy complexion and the soft and smooth manner of the gentry. Her education was only enough to be able to read and sign her name, because her parents had never sent her to any proper school. However, she was skilful at woman's work, ranging from cooking, baking, sewing mattresses, to more refined work like flower arrangement, making sweetmeats, peeling plums<sup>3</sup> and sewing "bāi si"<sup>4</sup>. All this she was taught regularly by her mother.

Khun Mongkhon's girlfriend was equal with Khun Wong in family status. But their education and way of life were as different from one another as if they were of different generations. Khun Sae was educated at Suan Sunanthalai.<sup>5</sup> She read, wrote, and spoke English "as well

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup>

Suburbs of Bangkok.

<sup>3</sup>The peeling of "ma-prāng", similar to a small plum, involved the turning back of the skin and subsequent cutting of it into delicate patterns. The Kunjara family was particularly renowned for this skill. See Bunlūa, Khwām Samret..., p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>A tiered stand made mainly of banana leaf trays containing food offerings, used in family ceremonial. The term "bāi si" (blessed rice) is of Cambodian origin.

<sup>5</sup>Dōkmaisot's elder sisters were educated at this school. See Bunlūa, ibid., p. 7. For the foundation of the school see Wyatt, op.cit.

as a man"! She was good at cooking both Thai and European food, and was clever at choosing patterns and making her own clothes. Khun Sae also painted, embroidered and dyed silk well.

She was dark, slim, gay and fashionable. Her manner and personality were suitable for sitting in a chair as much as on the floor. She walked/<sup>as</sup> gracefully as she crawled<sup>1</sup>. Khun Sae preferred reading books, discussing and listening to general knowledge to sitting seriously with embroidery work.

Being the only daughter and having a rather out-of-date mother, Khun Sae was trained by her father directly and indirectly to be able to do everything that he wanted her mother to do and she could not. As her father's beloved daughter and good friend, Khun Sae accompanied him everywhere she could. She was able to entertain their guests, male, female, old, and young. Apart from that, Khun Sae could go in a car with only one servant or chaperone!

That was the reason why when she grew up, even with wealth and a well-known father, Khun Sae was not wanted by any mother of any status to be her daughter-in-law. She was also looked at by men with fear and puzzlement. But, speaking about young men they have always been the same since ancient time: being fond of young women whom they can easily approach, for convenience is always desirable.

Khun Monkhn was not an exception and he was more lucky than other young men because Khun Sae loved him as much as he loved her...

If anybody expected Khun Mongkhon to be shocked to learn about his engagement to Khun Wong, he or she would be completely wrong. His strange feeling, should there be any, was only because he wanted to know if his fiancée was beautiful. After knowing who she was and recollecting their occasional meetings, he felt amused and thought of ways to have both women as his wives at the same time.

Whether or not because Khun Mongkhon and Khun Sae had been husband and wife in their past lives, she lost her father, the only person who could guide and control her, especially at the time when she needed one. He died while Khun Mongkhon was a monk.

One week after Khun Monkhn resigned from the monkhood he came in mourning clothes to show respect to the dead man and to visit his girlfriend. He told her about the engagement: that it had been arranged by his father without his knowledge. How hurt she was while listening, he never tried to discover. Khun Sae herself did not express it but sat still for a while before asking him,

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<sup>1</sup>referring to the Thai court custom of approaching royalty or seniors by a crawling movement.

"Then why do you come back to me?"

As has been said, children in those days never thought that to disobey their parents directly was possible. No matter how conceited and confident they were, it would never be enough to make them forget the respect for parents. Therefore, the idea of asking Khun Mongkhon to break the engagement did not occur to Khun Sae. Khun Mongkhon did not neglect to describe his love and faithfulness for her so that she would not feel too heartbroken. He eventually concluded,

"I will not love her more than you and I will not make you show respect to her."

His words haunted her for many days before Khun Sae made up her mind, saying to herself "All right!". The most important thing for a wife is that she must not be under another wife. Apart from that it depends on the ability of individuals. As "to accumulate wives" was a kind of game for men, "to compete with one another for the husband's favour" was a game for women. The better wins. Who could make her husband love much, she is better, and so she wins. Khun Sae never feared Khun Wong at competing in this game. Khun Wong! A daughter whom parents confined from the moon and the sun! A daughter in a coconut shell!<sup>1</sup>

Khun Sae planned everything for her life wisely. People would have no chance to say in the future "Khun Wong was a married wife and Khun Sae only eloped with him." She had to have a wedding ceremony as well and it had to take place before that of Khun Wong. It was rather risky for Khun Mongkhon. Therefore it had to be arranged only a few days before he married his fiancée. Khun Sae herself was in mourning for her father and the ceremony could not take place just yet.

For these two reasons, Khun Mongkhon delayed his marriage to Khun Wong until the end of the year. Finally, they were married eleven days after the funeral ceremony and only two days before Khun Wong married Khun Mongkhon.

(Being asked about the reaction, Khun Mongkhon laughed.)

"It was not very amusing. The ceremonially wedded wife refused to eat anything for several meals. I had to console her. But once she ate, things were easier... My father said I was cleverer than he was. My father-in-law said I was capable of retaining the prestige of the male sex. My mother was neutral. The worst of all was my mother-in-law. She felt for her daughter and was even more jealous...Both my wives were awfully jealous of one another but in different ways. Mae Wong broke pots and pans. No servant could face her in her bad temper. But it always happened behind my back, except when she really could not control it. Mae Sae was different. She never showed it in front of other people, but when we were alone I would be reproached non-stop."

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<sup>1</sup>(idiom) meaning that Khun Wong was unsophisticated. The world to her was small and sheltered like a coconut shell but complete for her.

It is true, though it sounds peculiar, that Phrayā Amōnrat's practice of polygamy began with the suggestion of his father and was urged by his own wife and mother-in-law who had been jealous of Khun Sae. As Dōkmaisot told:

Only one day after Khun Mongkhon got promotion and received a salary of three "chang"<sup>1</sup>, his father mentioned in front of Khun Wong's parents,

"Mongkhon, they say that having two wives is forbidden, You have a higher salary now, why not find the third one, so that you may have children."

Everybody laughed, but within a month after, Khun Wong's mother sent a girl aged about fifteen or sixteen to be her daughter's chamber maid!... After a short period that woman showed unusual symptoms which she herself insisted meant that she was going to have a baby. Everyone including Khun Mongkhon was very glad. But when five or six months passed without any physical change in her, Khun Wong scolded her and called her "a shameless deceiver". Everybody shared her anger and agreed with her to chase Phrōm away partly because Phrōm had created hatred in all of them. Khun Mongkhon alone opposed the idea with the reason that it might have been an accident, not a plan... Soon Phrōm showed the symptoms again but this time Khun Mongkhon cut it short from the start, saying,

"Whether you are pregnant or not, you can live here. So don't try to provoke other people."<sup>2</sup>

Phrayā Amōnrat might tell his story to his friends in a cheerful tone, but he in fact repented his action. His sexual obsession was only an evidence of his psychological weakness, for he practised it more widely after Khunying Sae, whom he looked up to, had left him. His last message to his eldest son showed well his opinion on polygamy in the end:

"Tell your brother not to have many wives. It is most difficult. If he cannot resist it, because young men nowadays are not any better than those of my time except in being more hypocritical, tell him to have only wives not children..."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>An old Thai currency value.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, *op.cit.*, pp. 130-144, 147-153.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 125.

Thai critics agree that the author modelled Phrayā Amōnrat partly on her own brother, Phrayā Thēwēt, especially his love of art. Somphop Chantharaphā also gave his opinion on this matter in connection with the Bān Mō theatre which was considered first-class in Bangkok during 1927-1930:

... It is not surprising because Phrayā Thēwēt was a man of high taste. The garden in Wang Bān Mō can still be a good evidence of this. His cultivated character is suitable for Phraya Amōnrat in Phūdī.<sup>1</sup>

In a book published to commemorate the funeral ceremony of Phrayā Thēwēt, he was described in one place as:

...being fond of inventing new and strange things, and hating to follow other people's example, especially in the modes of dress and in the art of decoration...<sup>2</sup>

This corresponds very much with Phrayā Amōnrat's words in Phūdī:

"I myself enjoy everything which is out of the ordinary ..I don't mind changes. Just look at my house, I am always altering it. It may not improve much, but at least I enjoy doing it."<sup>3</sup>

Other comparable descriptions of the two are also very clear. Phrayā Amōnrat's introducing of himself as having a "Phrayā" father and a "Chao sua" grandfather is not different from the life of Phrayā Thēwēt, except that Chao Phrayā Thēwēt was one step higher in rank than Phrayā Amōnrat's father<sup>4</sup>. Phrayā Thēwēt's opposition to the country's new administration<sup>5</sup> is also expressed through Phrayā Amōnrat in a conversation with Luang Hān, an M.P., and which made the latter remark:

<sup>1</sup>Somphop, Chīwit..., pp. 63-64.

<sup>2</sup>Thēwēt Wongwiwat, Khō Rāchakān..., preface.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 59, 64.

<sup>4</sup>See pp. 548-549.

<sup>5</sup>See Chapter II, p. 90.

"You must be terribly conservative"<sup>1</sup>

It is clear once again in this novel that Dōkmaisot preferred an able woman with modern education and with a sense of adaptation like Khunying Sae to a timid one like Khunying Wong.

The most important personality of the younger generation in Phūdi, who is also the centre of the story, is Wimon. It is no use to look back for a female character of Dōkmaisot with similar characteristics. There is not one. She is of the same age as Nut, but Nut is cheerful and innocent and Wimon is sharp and shrewd. Compared with the frank and sociable Anong, Wimon is hypocritical. Anong walks hand-in-hand with a man in public but guards herself strongly when being alone with him, Wimon is reserved to all men but had a date with a boy when she was only fourteen and let him put a ring on her finger. Perhaps she is as proud as Walai, but of her birth and not her charm. She appears to different people differently. Her father simply adored her. Khunying Sae loved her and thought of her as a lovable creature, but she also admitted that Wimon was wilful and stubborn.<sup>2</sup> Khun Wong, her real mother, even said once that her daughter was born the wrong sex.<sup>3</sup> Khunying Pholawat praised her beauty and ability but expressed the opinion that Wimon was "astute".<sup>4</sup> Phrayā Pholawat thought Wimon was unblemished but there was the time when he saw clearly the glow of revenge in her eyes against Phrām.<sup>5</sup> Before giving her used dress to

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 64 cf. Bunlāa, op.cit., pp. 66-70, and Thewēt Wongwiwat, op.cit., preface.

It is also important to note that Dōkmaisot wrote Phūdi soon after the second general election in Thai history, at which several of her contemporaries, especially those of the Prachāchāt circle, were contenders.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 259, 389.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 495

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 614.

her first cousin, Wimon scornfully made Sutčhai say the sentence her father always used, "If he is rude enough to ask, who will be rude enough not to give?"<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Wimon is the heroine of Phūdī, is the character Dōkmaisot chose to show the quality of gentility, not because she was more gentle than her other leading characters but because she was the only one whose sudden change in life made a "phūdī in poverty". And in view of the art of the novel that change makes Wimon revolve, showing us all her facets instead of an unchanging surface, - a round character,<sup>2</sup> the delight of Dōkmaisot's narrative power.

The most frustrated woman in Phūdī, however, is not Wimon, but Khunying Pholawat. This character, whom Khun Nilawan Pinthōng in her criticism ignored, is justifiably appraised by M.L. Bunlūa as one of the best characters ever created by Dōkmaisot, and this is due to her difficult and complicated characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

Khunying Pholawat's position in Phūdī is difficult to fix. She is the wife of the hero but not the heroine. There have been, of course, a great number of novels of which the heroes are already married when they met the heroines. The wives are usually wicked or insane and are got rid of in the end as in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre or Daphne Du Maurier's Rebecca which greatly influenced Thai novelists of a later period, especially Duang Dāo<sup>4</sup> in Khēhāt Sī Daeng (The Red Mansion) and Čhintarā in Saengsūn (The Mansion of Sunshine). But

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>2</sup>Muir, op.cit., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>The Thai National Library, Kān Aphiprāi..., p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter I, p. 66.

Dōkmaisot, like D.H. Lawrence, realistically keeps her to cause frustration to all parties, and in the case of Phūdī to cause the display of moral and human strength by both Wimon and Phrayā Pholawat. Whatever her position may be, Khunying Pholawat is certainly a character the description of whom needs both passion and the artistic detachment of the author.

Before, she was sociable, sporting, and beautiful, but the incurable ailment killed it all. When the story takes place she was only an emaciated patient confined to bed day and night. Her long illness had turned her into a mentally complicated and jealous woman despite her kind nature. Dōkmaisot has created her superbly well. She never describes anything except through what the character says, how she raises her voice, how she twists other people's words, and even how she arches her neck and her back painfully when coughing. She masochistically insists on seeing Wimon, and already on the second occasion she keeps the girl until her husband comes back. She then tells him laughingly as if she is very happy after having completed her commitment:

"Where are you going? Don't go away, you are tired. Come and listen to 'sister' (she meant Wimon)...Today 'sister' will have dinner with you... Go and have a bath. Make yourself comfortable. Don't worry, 'sister' won't run away. She won't have anything to eat if she goes home. I have told Mālī to cancel her dinner already."

...

Ten minutes later Khunying Pholawat's room was quiet except for the sound of a mosquito-whisk in the hand of a servant flapping mosquitoes for her mistress who was lying on a couch. Khunying Pholawat closed her eyes but her brain was far from being at rest, nor could her mind be. She kept thinking of everybody and everything, as a person whose body was ill but whose bruised and worn out mind was not, but only difficult to control would think. Suddenly she started, opened her eyes, then looked at the servant hesitatingly for a while before ordering,

"Go downstairs and see who is having dinner with Čhaokhun!"

The servant came back two minutes later.

"With Miss Mālī, Miss Wimon, and Miss Sutčhai, madam."

"Why were you so slow?"

The servant could not answer because she had been straight down and back without stopping to talk to anyone.

"Where is Čhaokhun sitting?"

"At the head of the table, madam."

"His usual place?"

"Yes, madam."

"Who is sitting near him?"

"Miss Wimon, madam."

"Where? Left or right?"

"Right, madam."

"Who sit on his left?"

"Miss Mālī, madam."

Khunying closed her eyes and opened them again before long.

"You go down again. See how Čhaokhun looks...Whether he is smiling? Give me the whisk."

The maid went as she was ordered. But this time when she came back Khunying Pholawat asked,

"Why were you so quick? What could you have seen?"

"I saw Čhaokhun, madam. His face is as usual."

"You devil! You went only for one second, how could you see whether he was smiling or not. Go down again immediately and see at whom Čhaokhun is smiling and what they are talking about?"

Nāng Phiu was undoubtedly thinking of her mistress in a way that she could not tell anybody but her servant-friends. She disappeared for quite some time until Khunying was tired of waving the whisk. However, when she came back Khunying Pholawat did not say whether she was quick or slow, but asked quickly,

"Now?"

"Čhaokhun was smiling, madam."

"You see, that's what I think! At whom?"

"At Miss Wimon, madam."

"Damn you! How do you know, there are several of them?"

"He was looking in her direction, madam. I saw quite clearly. He kept smiling."

"What were they talking about?"

"About a sampan, madam."

"What about it?" "Tell me quickly."

"Miss Wimon said that she was afraid of being robbed by a sampan-man and was worried about her little sister and brother because they could not swim. She said that she had been frightened to death and never before in her life had she gone anywhere alone."

The pale hands under the blanket became gradually shaky. The heart within that dried-up chest beat hard. Khunying Pholawat rasped in her throat: "How she fawned on him ingratiatingly".<sup>1</sup>

Normally, Dōkmaisot describes the romantic scenes more sweetly than passionately. It was for the first time that in depicting Khunying Pholawat she wrote sensitively of the effect of emotion and frustration. The best example is when the Khunying was questioning her husband about Wimon, trying to make him admit that Wimon was beautiful and he had been attracted to her. Phrayā Pholawat at the same time was thinking of the way to help Wimon about Mālī and Čharūn. He unexpectedly said,

"To me the only beautiful woman in the world is my wife - Sāisawat Pholawat Wiwitthakārī."

And in a flash, before Khunying Pholawat could have time to think whether she should be glad at his word, he went straight to her tightly clasped her body with both arms to his breast and put his face on her head.

A sudden piercing sensation surged all over the Khunying's body. Her exhausted heart beat fast and tremblingly when her thin dried-up chest, all skin and bone, was tightly endosed in his warm and strong arms...

But before her state of reverie faded and even before she could realise what was happening - for the passing of an incident is slow or quick depending on the person to whom it occurs - Phrayā Pholawat stood up near the couch and as if his mind now had no connection whatsoever with his feelings while embracing her, said,

"Khunying Bōrihān has never visited you since we moved out here."

Khunying Pholawat opened her eyes slowly, puzzlingly, like a patient having just regained consciousness. The face in front of her became indistinct like a blurred photograph...

"Who?," she asked in trembling voice.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 558, 559, 566-570.

"Khunying Bōrihān... I am going to see her and tell her that you sent me there."

She sighed. Khunying Bōrihān! Going to see Khunying Bōrihān!! How could she possibly think of such thing in a moment like that!!! Some sort of feeling moved up and stuck in her throat. The sweet, deep, and absorbed feelings in her heart disappeared completely... A man! Khunying Pholawat's husband!

Her eyes which had once shone with intelligence and cheerfulness and were now dry, almost lifeless, stared at the speaker as if she wanted to swallow all that was him, that related to him, concerned him, into her heart. When their eyes met, his face changed a little. The indifference of a moment earlier disappeared. After looking at one another for a while he asked,

"Aren't you feeling well?"

Khunying<sup>1</sup> Pholawat suddenly laughed with resentment and sorrow...

It is quite likely that Dōkmaisot had a model or models in creating Khunying Pholawat for the vivid description of the sufferer from tuberculosis she gave is beyond mere invention. Perhaps they were her own sister and her close friend whose death of that disease deeply affected her.<sup>2</sup>

Once again in this novel Dōkmaisot is criticised by Thai critics as being too idealistic. Khun Nilawan Pinthōng writes: "What Phrayā Pholawat does, though not totally impossible, could be done only by someone almost unbelievably good."<sup>3</sup> The novelist herself even promotes his virtue further at the end of the story by saying that it is not significant whether Wimon realised who had helped her because "Phrayā Pholawat committed good actions for the sake of goodness alone and for nothing else", - the same Buddhistic statement made by Luang Narūbān in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.<sup>4</sup> It reflects clearly the novelist's faith in Buddhism and her understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 450-453.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter II, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>Nilawan, op.cit.

<sup>4</sup>See Dōkmaisot, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, p.931.

meaning of the teaching - the result of a good action is already in itself and a pure merit means not to expect any reciprocation. It may lighten the atmosphere, console and give some hope to the characters and the reader, but to apply it with Phrayā Pholawat, who never appears anywhere in the story to be interested in the religion, only makes the whole thing unconvincing. As Khun Nilawan Pinthōng, in the same article, interestingly comments:

...And it is that goodness of his that lessens the goodness of the novel... Phraya Pholawat has invested a great deal already, regards must come in future - Khunying Pholawat is waiting every minute for death to come and take her away and Wimon no longer has a fiancé.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, what is really novel and noteworthy in Dōkmaisot's portrayal of this male character is her exclusion of his family background from the description and the inclusion of his academic qualification and early days of office. Both features are very different from her usual practice and there must be an explanation or explanations for it. At least it shows her attitude towards the behaviour of "students from abroad", which has become more serious and realistic. Before, all of them were just sophisticated, even a failed one like Yanyong in Bupphēsanniwāt could become a hero. It was in Sām Chāi that Dōkmaisot first admitted that a highly intelligent graduate from England like Anuwat can fail in the civil service as a result of his over self-estimation. Then in Nūng Nai Rōi the students from abroad namely Chat and Somphong were almost ridiculed and both could not compete with, for example, Wichai who had been educated in Thailand. And before she goes as

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<sup>1</sup>Nilawan, ibid.

far as making a barely educated person call "students from abroad""fools" in Nī Lae Lōk!<sup>1</sup>, we see her analysing the case of Phrayā Pholawat and pointing out the way to success to those modern men:

Whoever sees how Phrayā Pholawat bows down to show respect to Phrayā and Khunying Bōrihān, if he has enough intelligence and knowledge a out the way to live life in this world, will stop wondering why he could have the title of "Phrayā" conferred upon when he was only thirty-four and is now holding the position equal to Head of Department.

It is not that he came to realise the importance of honouring people worthy of respect before understanding thoroughly his country and nation. Twelve years ago, after his return from England as a chartered accountant, Nai Chuan brought his pride along with him everywhere he went, in public, in isolated places, in the "high" and in the "low" places. With his heart, he created from the letters A.C.A. a sky-high throne with him seated upon it looking downward at the twelve million population of the country, like a mightly mountain overshadowing all the earthy hills and mounds with its massive size.

The Lord Buddha has stated the three types of people worthy of respect: those who are high by birth, by age, and by qualification. But before, Nāi Chuan never imagined himself having met with any of them; meeting one who was high by birth, he considered that birth had nothing to do with a person, meeting one who was high by age, he thought that age did not make one person better than others, and meeting one who was high by qualification, he considered his not lower than anybody else's.

And at that time, whenever Nāi Chuan stood up to bow or raised his hands to show respect to anybody, he did it as if to tell that person "I have seen you. Are you well?", and not with his regard for him.

One type of people who must have felt life most bitter are those who are highly qualified academically, confident and proud of their qualification, but cannot find the way to make use of it. Nāi Chuan himself almost fell into that category because of his pride and self-confidence.

But he must have done something good previously, for its result delivered him to work under one person, who was really high in birth status, superior in age, and who possessed eminent goodness. That one was so kind and compassionate that very often he suffered because of other people, and so firm that no disastrous storm could shake him, or even make him move. The work and advantages of the country were what he valued higher

than anything else in the whole world, including his own happiness and satisfaction in life. In terms of manners he was considered the most refined of all the nobles. With firm endurance, he overlooked Nai Chuan's pride and paid attention only to his knowledge and ability which no one could deny. He ordered him, compelled him, and refined him with his own excellent behaviour, then chained his heart with the excellent chain of virtue. With his heart being chained and subjected to the chain-owner, Nāi Chuan therefore became Phrayā Pholawat. <sup>1</sup>

Another explanation to the novelty rising from the above description is perhaps a mere assumption. Never before did Dōkmaisot narrow the clues to her possible model so much as that of Phrayā Pholawat - being one of the first two Thai chartered accountants from England, graduated twelve years before Phūdī takes place, i.e. between 1922-1923, and was thirty-four in 1935 and already a Phrayā with a position equal to Head of Department. Her description of the noble who changed Nāi Chuan is also very cryptic, especially when its exclusion would not cause any lack. Perhaps she intended to avoid writing about Phrayā Pholawat's family background because the model was too vivid for her to do so, and describing it from imagination would only betray her own consciousness of the fact that she knew.

Considering the secondary characters in this novel, Dōkmaisot is rather inconsistent in portraying them, particularly when compared with those in Nāng Nai Rōi. Udom had been warmly welcomed by Phrayā Amōnrat before he went abroad, but was looked down later without substantial reasons. His incomplete education was the result of the change in the family and not his lack of ability. His appointment as Third Secretary to the Embassy later on proves sufficiently his qualifications. There are no other reasons why Udom should

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, pp. 465-468.

flinch from other guests at Wimon's birthday party and constantly be conscious of his presence being an irritation to Phrayā Amōnrat except that the criteria of being "phūdī" in a social sense were artificial; the established "phūdī" would not recognise the newly rich without lineage, namely the Chinese, but they could easily drop their own members from the category simply because of their misfortune. The most controversial point in the story which no critic, for some reason, has ever touched upon or attempted to criticise is the engagements of Wimon to Udom and Mālī to Čharūn. It would be most unusual even today, let alone thirty years ago. For what reason did Dōkmaisot let her most strictly-mannered leading character, Wimon, do and allow her sister to do what nobody would approve of and is against the tradition when both Khunying Sae and Khunying Wong were still living? Why didn't anyone reproach them and Wimon even congratulated Mālī and Čharūn who undertook their engagement by a roadside? Whereas Sutčhai was constantly branded a "non-phūdī" though her complaints of social injustice are justifiable; why should she and her family be poor only because her father was born to a minor wife and Phrayā Amōnrat to the chief wife of her and Wimon's grandfather. Even Wimon admitted later that "Sutčhai knew how life was and she was ignorant".

Dōkmaisot tells the truth about Thai society but instead of attacking it, she presents a stronger, truer and long-lasting criterion - the words of the Lord Buddha. In this way Sutčhai is seen as a real "non-phūdī" because of her own behaviour and nothing else. The novelist does not reject the social and family lineage position and the behavioural aspect of being "phūdī" but seems to add to these the essential of quality of moral strength which is referable to the teachings of the Lord Buddha.

## Language

There is no doubt that the language in this novel fits the story well. But because Phūdī is concerned with hardship and frustration in life, and because all the main characters are those who have been trained and cultured to restrain their feelings, to act and speak with cautiousness, the language is inevitably harder than that in the author's previous novels, especially Kam Kao. (SWhereas Nut would speak straightforwardly in her easy half-Thai, half-English language, Wimon might only imply her feelings with her smile or her glance, or even keep quiet and mock at other people inside. Very seldom indeed is it that the reader will find a light, sweet and pleasant description as in Sām Chāi. Even in a romantic scene between Wimon and Udom, the author deliberately adds or omits words, clauses, and sometimes makes the characters pause or suddenly stop the flow of their sentences, to create suitable atmosphere and ambiguity.

Another characteristic which makes the language in Phūdī different from Dōkmaisot's other novels is the putting of words and clauses in single inverted commas or with other special marks. This appears on almost every page, and the purpose is to draw the attention of the reader towards hidden meanings, intensification, and very often euphemisms. These words and clauses include both common Thai and newly coined terms, and all are full of significant meanings.

It is therefore justifiable to say that Phūdī requires the full attention of the reader in order to really enjoy the taste of the language. Listening to it will not give full appreciation and the visual effect of the printed page is necessary. Perhaps it even needs readers with a considerable standard of knowledge of both the language and society.

## CHAPTER VII

## Two Novels: response to changing conditions

Ubattihēt and Nanthawan were first published in 1939 and 1942 respectively. Chronologically Nī Lae Lōk! is a product of 1941, but because of its difference from the other two and their mutual similarities, it is more convenient to treat Nī Lae Lōk! separately in the following chapter and before the unfinished novel which is its continuation.

The first common characteristics of Ubattihēt and Nanthawan is that the author does not give any hint at all of the time represented in the stories which is most unusual for Dōkmaisot. It seems as though she intended to avoid it, for even the letters written by the characters are without dates. The reason for this is presumably her sincerity. Dōkmaisot always portrays the life in Thai society during the time of her writing or only a few years prior to that at the most. Therefore, if she was not ready or did not wish to do the same during the period of political transition or of the aristocrat's difficulties, it would be certainly wiser to exclude the circumstances altogether, and the best solution is not to mention the dates.

Concerning the settings in both novels, Dōkmaisot strangely made the events occur concurrently in Bangkok and in the country but whereabouts she did not mention. This again points towards the assumption that the novelist wanted to avoid describing Bangkok as much as possible.

The plots, the themes and several other features are



quite comparable. But these will be considered in detail after the synopses.

Lastly, the two novels in the eyes of Thai readers are on the whole inferior to the other works of Dōkmaisot. This is judged from the facts that Thai critics seldom refer to them in whatever aspect and from the opinions of readers in general, eventhough 'Makkhawān' wrote a criticism on Ubattihēt soon after it was published in 1939.

### Ubattihēt: the Accident

#### List of characters

Phra Wanasāt Kōson	a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Forestry.
Nāng Wanasāt Kōson	his talkative wife.
Suntharī	25, his daughter by his first wife, brought up by Khun Nūang and Khun Arun after her mother's death.
Pračhit	25, the only child of Khun Nūang and Khun Arun, three days younger than Suntharī. He was educated in France.
Luang Prasoet Wētchasāt	a kind doctor, a widower.
Praphan	20, his son, a student of Engineering.
Ngāmphit	18, his daughter, a plain looking girl, first year student of Arts.
Lamčhiak	his young mistress.
Nāng Lamyai	Lamčhiak's mother.
Khun Čhamnong Phithakrāt	a low-ranking official, head of a district in Kanchanaburi. <sup>1</sup>
Khunnāi Choei	his wife, aunt of Praphan and Ngāmphit.
Luang Anēk	the Governor of Kanchanaburi, a widower.
Songsī	his daughter, friend of Ngāmphit.

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot did not give the name of the province, but from the clear description it is Kanchanaburi.

Suthat

a doctor, friend of Pračhit,  
interested in Suntharī.

Luang Chān, Anuchāt, Saeng, Maen, Sing Pračhit's friends.

### Synopsis

The pre-plot, i.e. the story of the strange relationship between Suntharī and Pračhit, which the author gradually build up as the story develops and related fully in chapter nine is as follows.

Suntharī's mother died one week after giving birth to her. Four days before that Khun Arun gave birth to Pračhit and his twin sister, who lived only for one day. Khun Arun and her husband, Khun Nūang therefore asked to have Suntharī adopted and brought up together with their son. The matrimonial bond, though never formally agreed between parents, is assumed by everyone. The death of Khun Nūang and his wife without making a will and Khun Nūang's last words asking them to look after one another also imply their wish quite clearly.

The story begins in a torrential rainstorm one night when Pračhit's car collided with Luang Prasoet's. Luang Prasoet, who was on his way home from his mistress, died. Pračhit was shaken but unhurt. He paid a sum of money to the dead man's family and was willing to help his children.

But he had no opportunity - Khunnāi Choei, Luang Prasoet's sister, came from Kanchanaburi to arrange the funeral ceremony. Seeing no use of education for the girl, she forced Ngāmphit to leave the university and to go to live with her. The house was let and Praphan went to live with his student-friends. Ngāmphit's life was changed completely. On top of her grief, her aunt always scolded her and complained that she was stupid, lazy and ignorant of all housework and traditional manners. Her hen-pecked uncle-in-law seemed to be sympathetic but his kindness later turned out to be indecent. The most torturing times each day for Ngāmphit were when she saw the schoolchildren going to and returning from school.

In Bangkok, Suntharī was living happily in the same house as Pračhit. She was a respectable teacher of her pupils,

the mistress of the house, and a centre of interest of her admirers. Her only anxiety was Pračhit who was spoilt, irresponsible, and sometimes childish. Apart from that he always made indirect approaches to her, and she had to find ways to evade his attention and at the same time guard her own heart from falling in love with him.

Suntharī heard about Ngāmphit having to give up her studies from one of her new pupils. She and Pračhit went straight to Luang Prasoet's home but found that it had been let and the woman who spoke rudely to them surprisingly knew nothing about Praphan.

Their search for the bereaved girl was delayed furthermore when Suntharī was ill with influenza. Meanwhile, Pračhit had a new friend, Luang Čhēn, who took him to a house he rented for 'a special purpose'. It was Luang Prasoet's house. Through Luang Čhēn, Pračhit successfully traced Praphan. But when he and Suntharī went to see him, the nervous man did not tell them much about Ngāmphit except that she was living with their aunt. Pračhit was very annoyed but Suntharī was patient and clever enough to leave Praphan her address in case he needed help.

In Kanchanaburi, the new Governor arrived with his only daughter. All the lower officials were doing their best to win his favour, especially Khunnāi Choei who even supplied them daily with special dishes and found servants for them. Meeting her old friend, Ngāmphit had a chance to talk about her unhappiness and her wish to continue her studies, and even to go for a picnic and a trip together. Both friends decided to study by themselves. Praphan was asked to send some textbooks to his sister by post. The poor man had to go to Suntharī for money.

During that summer vacation, Suntharī, her teacher-friends, and some students organised a trip to Saiyōk waterfall in Kanchanaburi. Pračhit who had at first planned to go with them changed his mind at the last minute simply because he could not bear to miss his golf matches.

With Songsī's help, Ngāmphit was allowed to join the

party. During the trip, which took several days, she met and became friendly with Suntharī.

Upon her return to Bangkok, Suntharī learned that Pračhit had brought his mistress, Lamčhiak, into the house. Her pride was hurt and her reaction was immediate; Suntharī decided to join another party of teachers and students in Hua Hin on the very next day. Three weeks later she returned, feeling strong and firm enough to face Pračhit and to cope with the situation.

The rainy season came and Phra Wanasāt was recommended by Dr.Suthat to take a holiday in Hua Hin where he himself and Luang Chān were also going. Suntharī joined her father and his family. There, she learned from her friend that Lamčhiak was in fact Luang Prasoet's mistress and not her younger sister as Nāng Lamyai had lied to Pračhit. Hua Hin also gave Suntharī an opportunity to know Dr.Suthat better and notice that he was very interested in her. Meanwhile in Kanchanaburi Ngāmphit was very ill with typhoid. Her letter was forwarded by Pračhit to Suntharī, who decided straight away that the girl had to be taken away from her cruel aunt. Dr.Suthat and Luang Chān went with her and they eventually persuaded Khunnāi Choei to allow Ngāmphit to go to Hua Hin and be Dr.Suthat's patient. Suntharī's intention to help Ngāmphit went as far as matching her with the doctor. But she changed her mind when Pračhit who knew the facts about Lamčhiak, suddenly turned up. Pračhit finally came to love Ngāmphit and Suntharī accepted Dr.Suthat.

#### A criticism

As has been mentioned earlier, Ubattihēt attracts less interest from Thai readers than other novels of Dōkmaisot. "Makkhawān" is the only person who has written a criticism of it. He admitted that it was the first work of Dōkmaisot that he had read and therefore could not compare it with other works. On the other hand, his writing can be also treated as the immediate and spontaneous opinion of a reader

and therefore it can provide some reasons for the lower popularity of the novel.

"Makkhawān" praised the meticulousness of Dōkmaisot, admired her language, and adjudged the work one of the good ones produced during the time when novel of high standard were scarce. But with regard to other features the critic interestingly wrote:

...The method the author used in developing this story is similar to that employed by Edgar Wallace. But Wallace's stories are thrillers and do not deal with life. The characters take turns in appearing in the scene without any connection between them. Then they are finally brought together in an event which forms the climax of the story. This style of ending is not appreciated in Thai novels which are mostly about life. The narrating of events and the releasing of the characters incoherently as such can puzzle the reader because some people appear only once then just fade away. Nevertheless, the novelist is not to blame, for two reasons: these characters are forced by the circumstances in the story to disappear, and their duty when they appeared previously was only to support the leading characters, so when they no longer have any role they have to be cut off. These small defects are to be found in all stories even those by experienced writers...

One thing that struck me about this novel is that the author is less just than she ought to be, especially in outlining the plot. If one man kills another man, deliberately or not, the writer should make him suffer according to what he has done. But in this story the killing seems to be of no consequence. Everything concerning that character still goes on smoothly. In my opinion, this flaw is crucial and it can easily make the story, no matter by whom, seem nonsense.

In our society the custom concerning the relationship of a man and a woman is rigid. But, as a historical film would be tasteless if made exactly according to the chronicle, our novels too would become insipid if tradition and custom have to be maintained at every step. A touch of westernisation should be allowed as it does not make the characters unrealistic.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Makkhawān (pseud.), "Wannakhadī Wičhān Ruang Ubattihēt Khōng Dōkmaisot", Mahāwitthayalai, XVII, 5, (January, 1940), pp. 673-674.

### Story and style

Compared with Dōkmaisot's other works, the story of Ubattihēt lacks intensity. The story does begin in fact with a very dramatic scene, of a kind which the novelist had never written before. From the description the reader feels the cold, wet weather, sees the sheets of rain pouring down, and hears the thunderstorm. Such an exciting start certainly makes the reader look forward to equally exciting events, and in that he will be disappointed because there is nothing of the sort happening again throughout the story. Both children of Luang Prasoet yielded to fate without a word of argument, which is unusual for people with a university education. Pračhit himself on the same night was able to rid himself of the vision of the dead man simply by getting his foster sister to massage his bruises. Presumably that is what "Makkhawān" found unsatisfactory when he said that Pračhit got off too easily. But he might also think too much in terms of 'karma' (intended action)<sup>1</sup> and 'vipaka' (effect), and forgot that this was only an 'accident' and not 'karma' in the strict Buddhist sense because there was no 'cetana' (intention) in it.

The story itself, if compressed, is very simple in substance. The subsidiary stories into which the novelist branches out, for example the friendship between Songsī and Sawong and the behaviour of Pračhit's friends, contribute nothing to the main plot, and can also bore the reader. Moreover, Dōkmaisot allots very little role to Dr. Suthat, who later marries the heroine. There are also too many coincidences which had never been Dōkmaisot's tradition; Sunthari's new

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<sup>1</sup>See also p. 182.

pupil was Ngāmphit's friend, Luang Ūhēn, whom Pračhit met as a stranger, turned out to be the tenant of Praphan, Songsī suddenly appeared as the Governor's daughter in Kanchanaburi, and in the worst instance of all Pračhit learned the facts about Lamčhiak at the same time as Suntharī heard about it from her friend who happened to be farming in Hua Hin and whose husband's father was the former landlord of Lamčhiak and her mother.

As for the development of the story, which "Makkhawān" finds rather puzzling, it might well be so, had the novel been published in instalments. Dōkmaisot divided the story into two parts. Part one, which comprises twenty-five chapters, narrates the incidents up to the point when Suntharī learnt about Lamčhiak living in the house. Part two with its six chapters includes the story on its way to resolution, as the critic said, "they are finally brought together in an event which forms the climax". Ubattihēt is not the first story in which Dōkmaisot keeps the situations going concurrently in two places with hundred of miles in between them. She did it before quite subtly in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān.<sup>1</sup> But in this novel she moves the story between the capital and Kanchanaburi alternately as if to maintain a regular tempo. The first two chapters are shared equally by the two families involved. Then Ngāmphit and Praphan occupy chapter three and Pračhit and Suntharī chapter four. From chapters five to seven the story moves back and forth starting with Ngāmphit and ending with her. Four chapters after that take place in Bangkok, followed by another four chapters in the country.

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter IV, p. 200.

From chapters sixteen to twenty the author moves the story alternately again before finally giving three chapters to Kanchanaburi and two to Bangkok.

Although the pattern is quite regular, the rhythm which one can feel while reading it is not clear enough. Some parts, usually those which take place in Bangkok and between Praçhit and Suntharī are much more exciting and intense than when the book deals with Praphan or Ngāmphit. "Makkhawān" might think that the story lacked the unity of time and place. But as he admitted that he had not read other works of the novelist, he could not possibly have noticed Dōkmaisot's consciousness about rhythm and balance in atmosphere. She may have become conscious of the lack of intensity in the story, and therefore balanced it with the description of life in the country. Another possibility is that the author had visited Saiyōk waterfall and the areas around and wanted to record it as she had done previously with Petchburi in Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing.<sup>1</sup>

#### Theme

The theme of Ubattihēt which is prominent but overshadowed by the rather less interesting quality of the story, is human relationships including matrimonial problems, clashes between traditional and modern ideas, moral obligation, impact of seniority in the Thai way of life, and individual passion and pride. Although this is the third story in which the proposal of their children's marriage is made by parents, the situations are similar only in the outlook. In Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, Mayurī revolted against the practice, won and

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter III, pp. 146-148.

was won in the end. Phatcharī in Sām Chāi was forced to accept the proposal and then helped out by changes in the situation. But in Ubattihēt the couple were not compelled by anybody nor were completely tied down, only they did not know how to break away or whether it would be the wise thing to do. The need for something dynamic to interfere and break the ice is of course the outline of the plot.

Like Kam Kao, the pre-plot of Ubattihēt has been set before the actual story begin and it awaits some incident to happen in order to change it. The author chose the death of Luang Prasoet as the starting point. His death brings into the scene Ngāmphit, Praphan, and Lamčhiak. Ngāmphit's life is turned upside down after that but Suntharī and Pračhit still do not change, for whatever would change them must free Suntharī from two tough bonds: the assumed engagement between her and Pračhit and her own attachment to him. She had to cut them twice before they were really broken. First when she found out about Lamčhiak and again in Hua Hin when she persuaded Pračhit to marry Ngāmphit and herself accepted Dr.Suthat.

Ubattihēt is the second novel of Dōkmaisot, the first being Phūdī, in which the author uses the death of the father as the opening of the story. The consequences are however very different from one another. In Phūdī the death of Phrayā Amōnrat proves the strength of Wimon and its affects only his own family, making Wimon out off the outside world In Ubattihēt the death of Luang Prasoet wrecks the life of his children, causes a complete change in another family, and brings outside people into his daughter's life.

The pattern of the marriages in the end is quite similar to that in Nāng Nai Rōi: the sportive Praċhit marries timid Ngāmphit and the sociable Suntharī marries the shy Suthat

### Characters

The best and the central character of Ubattihēt is Suntharī. The development of her character is what really raised the standard of this novel. Suntharī belongs to the same category as Anong, Khun Sae, and Phatcharī, that is to say Dōkmaisot's favourite type. She is understanding, sympathetic, sociable, adjustable, but at the same time self-controlled and of good judgement, all of which are the characteristics the author values higher than appearance, which in the case of Suntharī, like Anong, is just pretty enough. She is the second female character of Dōkmaisot, after Amphōn in Cheichana Khōng Luang Narābān, who has a career. Like the author herself, Suntharī teaches French in a high school.

In "Makkhawān"'s criticism it is not clear whether he agreed with or was against the over-westernised characters like Suntharī and Praċhit. Living with Praċhit and being surrounded most of the time by his friends, Suntharī can listen to their stories and to their language without being shocked. She drinks with them, discusses with them, and goes out with them. The dangerous time for her is not when she is among them but whenever she is left alone with Praċhit in their home. Every time the author describes the scene when they are together at night, the reader will feel awkward and afraid for Suntharī. Her self-control and realisation of his real character alone save her from being softened by his flirtatious manners, ambiguous words and implication.

Praĥhit is not unique. His character, as Suntharī summed up, "very attractive physically, but there is nothing serious inside", has been that of several characters earlier including Yot, Prawat and Chat. All his friends, whom the author has created to support the character of Suntharī alone, are all men-about-town, either married and irresponsible or badly in debt. Praĥhit once told Suntharī about his friends, "they are all barbarians, confining their wives to their homes and then enjoying themselves out everywhere".

It is important however to note that the reserved quality of people of an exclusive group is very much relaxed in this novel. Suntharī's father is only a 'Phra' and not a 'Phrayā'. Praĥhit's parents are without any title. There is no tracing of their friends' families, whether they are aristocratic or not.

The older generation seems to retreat from the scene almost completely. Two characters who are of some significance are Nāng Wanasāt and Nāng Choei: the first is a chatter-box and is used to give a comic element to the story; but through the latter Dōkmaisot portrays the way of life of the conservative country people. Nāng Choei is punished by the novelist for her cruelty by becoming an object of ridicule when she expresses her ignorance about literature, Buddhism, education, and when she shows her fondness for materialistic wealth and for flattery.

Ngāmphit is important so far as the plot is concerned. But as a character she is flat and only moves with outside pressures; she is like a robot by her aunt's order and more lively in Songsī's company. There are times when the reader

feels that the author cannot wait to make Ngāmphit sporting, naughty, and cheerful, and that of course only makes the characterisation rather inconsistent.

Nevertheless, through Ngāmphit's eyes and thought, and in tune with her sorrow, Dōkmaisot painted the following picture of the quiet and peaceful scenery of Kanchanaburi, using a technique comparable to that of Nirāt<sup>1</sup>. Although the passage is not very helpful in giving realistic information about Ngāmphit, it is quite interesting from the language point of view, as a semi-poetic exercise.

Ngāmphit got up from where she sat and went to stand on the back verandah, leaning her elbows on the rail. A dove was cooing from somewhere nearby...the same voice as the one she had heard that morning as if it had not stopped cooing from morning till evening.. What was that tree? How big and tall it was, growing on the bank of the river, with flocks of birds, hundred in number, flying up and down and around it making a loud noise...What was the bird hopping on the ground then flew swiftly to one side and disappeared? There they came again in couples...Where are you going, birds? Dear birds, you are so tiny...your wings are powerful... your legs are strong...you can sing, hop and fly whenever you want to...What merit have you gained to win such freedom? A tiny boat floating slowing down the river with a man sitting in the front, a woman at the stern steering it; a child sitting in the middle stretching his legs towards his father but turning his face to his mother... A father, a mother, and a child are together...They may be happy or unhappy, yet they are together... But Ngāmphit has no one at all.

coo huk coo! coo huk coo! The doves are cooing again! Yes, you doves, you can coo, you can fly, what crime have you committed that made them imprison you? There! a bamboo raft coming from the south and they are poling up north...Oh raft! please take me with you. No matter if the sun is hot, the current is rapid, the wind is strong, the storm is violent, the dews are falling, or the rain is pouring...I will come with you.

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<sup>1</sup>A genre of Thai poetry, the themes of which are travelling, love and separation.

\*Dōkmaisot's satire upon Thai men's behaviour should be noted here. cf. p. 203.

coo huk coo! coo huk coo! Oh you! doves, your feathers are so beautiful, your voices are sweet, your wings and legs are as strong as other birds, but can't you fly and glide like them?...Yes, yes, they caught you and caged you because you coo so sweetly. What sin had you committed in the past that gave you a gift so dangerous to yourself? Your dwelling-place is high and your eating grounds vast. But why are you now confined in a cage?

cruk croo cruk! cruk croo cruk! Dear doves, whom are you calling, your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters, or your friends? You had better not coo, for you will only lose your voice. Same as me, though you call till your throat is sore, or cry till you lose your voice, or sob till your life-thread is broken, you will never be able to come out of the cage...

Father! Ngāmphit suddenly felt as though her heart was broken at that moment...<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the setting and atmosphere, it is for the first time does Dōkmaisot attempt to write about how people of a low ranking official class, especially those in provincial towns, bring up young girls. But to speak fairly the method, a part of which is translated below, used by Nāng Choei was not in any way more strict than that of conservative Thai parents nowadays. The superstitious belief about the higher and cleaner state of men than women has not been totally abolished. It sounds as if they are backward people only because normally all of Dōkmaisot's characters are of rich, well-educated, and modern families in the capital.

What made her aunt criticise her very often was her routine work, all of which her aunt considered to be very simple and believed that every girl of her age should be able to do, but almost every time Ngāmphit did not do it in a way which her aunt thought correct.

For instance, in cleaning the rooms, before Ngāmphit swept the floor she had to dust the furniture first and in doing so she used a piece of cloth for dusting chairs tables, and beds, then she dusted a dressing table with the same cloth, keeping another cleaner duster for glass bottles and jars. Her aunt said that was wrong because

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Ubattihēt (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), pp. 86-87.

chairs are 'low' and a dresser is 'high', they should not be dusted with the same piece of cloth, and that Ngāmphit should use a duster for jars and bottles with the dressing table.

In washing too, Ngāmphit thought that every item could be soaked, soaped and scrubbed together in one container except for the pieces of which colours were not fast. But her aunt considered it a most embarrassing mistake. She could not imagine anybody would be able to do such thing as Ngāmphit - soaking her uncle-in-law's garments, especially his shirts together in the same basin with hers especially her skirts. In ironing, if an iron had just been used for ironing her or her aunt's skirts, she could not use it to iron men's clothes, not even the shirts of a boy whom her uncle-in-law and her aunt brought up as a half-relative half-servant. Even in arranging the clothes which she had ironed and folded her aunt shrieked, "What an idiot you are!", when she saw that Ngāmphit did not separate her uncle-in-law's clothes but piled them up with her skirts. Not only that, she even put her skirts over his shirts!

Ngāmphit was given a small wardrobe in which to put her personal things. She tried to arrange it in such a way that she could put in as many things as possible. Incidentally, it happened that the space inside was suitable for her to put her skirts on the top shelf and her blouses and handkerchiefs on the lower ones. Her aunt considered it not auspicious and ordered to rearrange it.

Apart from these, Ngāmphit was promoted to do other work which her aunt thought that a girl of her age should know already but which Ngāmphit did not know, for example folding betel leaves, peeling areca nuts, cooking rice and curry, and making curry paste...1

Another interesting Thai custom included in this novel is the funeral rite of an accident victim, which in this case of the poor Luang Prasoet. This together with earlier descriptions of the much grander funeral ceremonies of Phrayā Amōnrat in Phūdi<sup>2</sup> and of Khunying Thammasān in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.<sup>3</sup> provide an almost complete information about Thai customs concerning death.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 141-143.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter VI, pp. 282-284. See also Dōkmaisot, Phūdi, pp. 208, 258-260, 275-276.

<sup>3</sup>See Dōkmaisot, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, pp. 689-697.

When a person was killed in an accident his death was considered a premature one. If the dead person when alive, was neither rich nor well-known, the best way to deal with the funeral ceremony his relatives could think of was to deposit his body in a monastery, and this was in fact the usual practice.

(There were many people who sympathised with Luang Prasoet's family, because he had been a kind doctor. But their sympathy was short-lived and superficial.)

His coffin was installed in a rickety old rest-house in a monastery. The decorations were only odd vases; the enamelled ones were stained, the glass ones were clouded and thick with scum. They contained artificial flowers made from cloth dipped in wax, so crumpled and dusty that no one can imagine what colours and what sort of flowers they had originally been intended to be. The only source of light was an electric bulb which was not less dirty than any other glass object in the place. The lead which hung from the ceiling to the bulb was old and colourless. There were knots and loops along it, which was quite usual, for the users always wanted to hang it in various places and to move it up and down.

The only beautiful thing in this temporary funeral place was the orchid wreath over the coffin. Although thirty-six hours had passed, the flowers were still fresh and beautiful. It helped to make the place look a little better.

Tonight was the third night that the body had been here and it would be the last night of the traditional funeral services.

At one side of the rest-house, near the wall, four women were sitting together. The first one was Luang Prasoet's sister who had just come from a country town a few days ago. The second woman was Luang Prasoet's cook. The third was his neighbour, whose gratitude for the dead was still well remembered; her young son had been cured by him only a month before. The last one was Ngāmphit, the only daughter of Luang Prasoet.

Far away from them, near the door on the other side, there were two more women. The old one was the mother, and the beautiful young girl was her daughter. Nobody knew who they were nor from where they came.

The four monks were resting leisurely in their places. One lolled on a mat with his legs stretched in front of him. The second assumed a semi-recumbent position on a pillow. The other two sat on a long bench chewing betel-nuts and talking cheerfully. Their robes had slipped down and the upper part of their bodies were fully to be seen.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot's criticism of the unmindful behaviour of the monks is noted here.

On the steps in front of the rest-house, Luang Prasoet's gardener, the keepers of the rest-house and of the mortuary, and a supporter of the temple were enjoying themselves playing chess. Praphan, the only son of the dead man was walking aimlessly below.

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 Next morning, about ten o'clock, after the offering of alms to the monks, and the service, there was a lifting of the coffin to put it in the mortuary where it would be kept over a year or years. It was really just a 'lifting' with four men who carried and placed it on a platform next to other coffins which had already been kept there for some time.

(Pračhit came in time to help Ngāmphit who had fainted. Praphan tried to stop him from going to the place, but Pračhit insisted on laying the wreath himself.

They walked towards the mortuary, or more correctly a shed with brick walls and galvanized iron sheet roofs. There was a group of fifteen or sixteen people in mourning clothes standing nearby, and a man was closing the door of the mortuary.

Praphan felt more and more uneasy, so much so that it affected his pace, and when he spoke to Prachit, his voice was rather unnatural,

"The body is in here."

"In here!" Pračhit exclaimed unintentionally. His eyes expressed his utter surprise. He looked at the place with consideration, "very large...", and when turned to the group he spoke louder, "I came a little late. I knew that the ceremony would be in the morning, but I forget to ask about the time...Would it be very difficult for you to open the door and let me in?"

Several pairs of eyes looked at him from head to toe. The key-holder answered him politely,

"It's not difficult, sir, but inside it is dark. I have closed all the windows."

"That doesn't matter"; Pračhit said rather bluntly while he stepped forward.

But when the creaky door was opened, Pračhit stopped suddenly before he went in. It was so dark that his eyes could not see anything. He smelled something peculiar. Someone laughed by his side, and a hand seized his arm. He was half pushed half led forward. With his nerves tensed, Prachit walked along perplexedly. He heard the same voice saying "Here it is." and the sound of a hand touching wood. Assuming that it was the coffin, Prachit laid his wreath, bowed his head once quickly, turned back and<sup>1</sup> walked towards the door without taking a single breath.

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<sup>1</sup>Dḡkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 24-27, 31-32.

Nanthawan: The Forest of Joy

When Nanthawan was first published in Bangkok by the Khōchitmēt printing Press in 1942, Thailand was in a peculiarly chaotic situation. The Government's unrealistic plan to build up the nation including the promoting of Pan-Thai Movement was at its height following the Indo-China crisis with France and the passing of the Cultural Law (วัฒนธรรม) in 1941, enforcing people to become modernised and westernised in their modes of clothing, speaking, and behaving. The Japanese occupation of the country in December 1941 did not change this outlook. Two most controversial actions of the Government were their order for women to wear hats, their slogan for the nation to have complete confidence in "the Leader".<sup>1</sup> Thus the expressions "Hats lead Thailand to great power" (หมวกนำไทยไปสู่มหาอำนาจ) and "Trust in the Leader saves the country" (เชื่อผู้นำชาติพ้นภัย) later were used sarcastically by Thai people to denote the epoch.

In September 1942 the National Cultural Council was set up, one aim of which was to promote literary work including novels.<sup>2</sup> But under such pressures the goal could not possibly be achieved. Novelists who wrote about the rough or rural life had to stop simply because the language they had been using and which suited the characters was considered impolite by the Cultural Law. All names and pseudonyms needed the approval of the authority that they were suitable for the sexes, otherwise

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<sup>1</sup>F.M. Pibulsonggram first used the word in his army journal, the Yutthakot, in 1934.

See Thian Pathīpasēn, Chōmphon P. Khunsak Phū Rai Phaendin (Bangkok: Phatthanā Kānphim, 1963.), p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 381.

they had to be changed.<sup>1</sup> Civil ranks and titles too were later abolished. Writings of all types had to be censored by the Department of Public Relations. The freedom in writing which all writers especially journalists had hoped for before the country changed to the constitutional monarchy became very limited. As Sanit Čhareonrat wrote:

...Every letter in each line of the novels, articles, and miscellaneous writings sent by a newspaper to the Committee for censorship seemed to shock them, as if it was deliberately chosen by the enemy. In novels sentences were crossed out. (And) when the publication came out with blanks, they considered that we were complaining about their action to the people. Then we were ordered not to leave spaces but print the sentences close together despite the crossings-out. They simply did not realise the terrible difficulties their easy sounding order gave to the printers...Although the journalists were most cautious, realising the hazardous situation, several were arrested and imprisoned...<sup>2</sup>

Sī Būraphā, Sī Sēnan, and several other writers were imprisoned during that time, and were released in 1944.<sup>3</sup> Dōkmaisot was safe as far as her name, pseudonym, and her being an isolated writer are concerned. Her interest in politics which she had been expressed spasmodically in the dialogues since Nūng Nai Rōi and did not show in both Ubattihēt and Nanthawan, was seen hidden in her poems the themes of which

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Čhurī Mōrākun who sang the "Song of Hats" (see Chapter IX, p.391) was ordered by F.M. Pibulsonggram to change her name to Manthanā Mōrākun, and her colleague had to change his well-known pseudonym, "Kaeofā", meaning "the sky's beauty", to "Thuaiifā", which absurdly means "the sky's cup", just before his play was broadcast simply because the Committee considered "Kaeofā" feminine sounding. See Anusōn Suntharāphōn Krop Rōp Sāmsip Pī (Bangkok: Surat Kanphim, 1969), pp. 31-32, 61.

For Dōkmaisot's satire see Chapter IX, pp. 396-397.

See also Prince Naris and Prince Damrong, Sān Somdet, Vol. XXIII, p.38.

<sup>2</sup>Sanit Čhareonrat, Ō Wā..., pp.238-239, 248.

<sup>3</sup>Thian, op.cit., pp. 112-122.

were claimed to be from European tales.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the first edition of Nanthawan did not escape the fate Sanit Chareonrat mentioned. Eight years after that, in 1950, appeared the second edition of the novel with the spelling and language put back to their old styles. How the two editions differ from one another can be seen from the preface to the second edition:

...A gentleman who was in the United States during the War in the East and who came back to Thailand less than a year ago, complained to me recently that since he had been reading my novels, he never felt confused as he had when he read Nanthawan. He also pointed out that the book was in many ways irritating, ranging from the spelling to the use of pronouns. I explained to him that in 1942 all literature was under the supervision of the Department of Public Relations, within the framework of the Cultural Law. Nanthawan was censored and altered before it was published. But he did not listen to my explanation nor try to understand it. Now there is an opportunity to have Nanthawan published for the second time. The reader who got a headache because of it and thought of its author in the same way as the gentleman mentioned will see the real and original Nanthawan as it was written. So please find yourself able to change your opinion about its author.

Dḳkmaisot  
January 1950.

List of characters.

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Banlḳ   | 31, a rich widower with twin children by his second wife.  |
| Phḳranḳ | 24, a beautiful, quiet woman whose mother is dead and who was oppressed by her stepmother.                       |
| Ḳhitrḳ  | 34, a kind, well-educated woman of good family, married, with two children, a close friend of Banlḳ and Phḳranḳ. |
| Ḳhareon | 39, Ḳhitrḳ's husband, very kind and understanding, but rather tactless.  |
| Sḳngsḳ  | Banlḳ's first wife whose marriage lasted only four months. Flirtatious and unscrupulous.                         |

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix i, pp 498-499.

Luang and Nāng Čhamnong	Phōranī's father and stepmother. He is rather hen-pecked and she sharp-tongued and sometimes crude.
Khunnāi Lamduan	Banlū's grandmother, kind and aristocratic.
Kōng and Pōng	Banlū's twin son and daughter.
Sanē	Banlū's friend.
Mukdā, Phaithūn, Mōrakot	Banlū's sisters.
Wichit	Phōranī's admirer.

### Synopsis

Banlū was a rich widower and an heir to a large fortune. He divorced his first wife, Sōngsī, soon after their marriage for some trivial reasons, that produced a strong psychological effect. His second wife died after giving birth to their twin children, Kōng and Pōng. Instead of choosing to be a civil servant as other young men of well-to-do families, Banlū decided firmly to engage himself in farming somewhere up-country. His two children were left in the care of their great-grandmother and their aunts who seemed to compete with one another in spoiling them.

Banlū came down to Bangkok occasionally to visit his grandmother and his children. Seeing more and more the twins' indiscipline, he made up his mind to bring them up himself and to find them a nice mother. His grandmother and his sisters each had a girl in mind for him, but Banlū politely refused them all and left the task of selecting his third wife to Čitrā, his old friend whose sound judgement he trusted.

Čitrā was three years his senior, married with two children and expecting the third one. Her husband, Čhareon, was far from being handsome but very kind-hearted and responsible. Čitrā was brought up and educated in Europe. She possessed all the qualities Banlū admired. Years before her marriage to Čhareon, Čitrā and Banlū had met on board a ship from Japan to Thailand and since then became good friends. They adored one another but the difference between their ages barred Čitrā from marrying him. Later on Banlū became infatuated with Sōngsī. Čitrā, who had known the woman well, tried to stop him and asked him to promise her not to marry

Sōngsī in the following six months. Banlū broke his word and their marriage proved a failure. He was ashamed of himself but Čhitrā remained his best friend. Banlū came to know Čhareon by chance, after the latter had been offensive to him as being typical of Thai men who destroyed the reputation and stability of their aristocratic family by their spendthrift ways.

Almost immediately after Čhitrā proposed the name Phōranī Banlū asked her to be his matchmaker. Nevertheless, when Čhitrā went to do her duty for the first time, she could do nothing more than puzzling the girl by telling her that someone was interested in her. One reason for this was because she herself was not certain about Banlū's feelings. It was Čhareon who went and talked to Luang Čhamnong who agreed with the proposal without hesitation because he had been in financial difficulty for some time. Therefore, Phōranī became the fiancée of a rich man whom she had never met in her life.

Their engagement was celebrated glamorously. Phōranī was wrong in inviting Wichit and his sister as her only guests, because Wichit was drunk and Banlū saw him trying to kiss her. His suspicion and jealousy rose. After their simple wedding Banlū went back to his country home leaving Phōranī and his children with his grandmother.

For Phōranī, whatever made her free from her stepmother was sheer good luck. Khunnāi Lamduan was kind and Banlū's children became very attached to her soon afterwards.

One month later Banlū came down to Bangkok and took them to his plantation. He gave Phōranī the authority of a housewife and she did her duty perfectly. There was no romance between them. Banlū could not overcome his suspicion about Wichit and his past experience was too big a scar to allow him to become too attached to his third wife. Phōranī too, tried to think of herself as a bought or hired housewife. Although their feeling of attachment to each other quietly developed, outwardly they were unfriendly and cold toward one another. The breaking moment of the tense situation came when Banlū went to the station to meet Čhareon, who wanted to spend a holiday at his plantation, and found that he was not alone but with Sōngsī. They met by

chance in the train and Sṅngsī suddenly decided to come with Čhareon to see Banlǎ and his wife.

Banlǎ realised immediately how much he cared for Phṛranī and was afraid that she would misunderstand him. Two telegrams were sent straight away to Bangkok to his sisters and Čhitrā. All of them came, followed by Sanē, Banlǎ's friend. While Banlǎ was very concerned about her feelings and felt almost jealous of Sanē, Phṛranī was more and more irritated by Sṅngsī's behaviour. Her thinking of herself being hired by Banlǎ became very hurtful as tiring days passed.

Her endurance came to an end after the party left and Banlǎ was sent for by his grandmother. Phṛranī decided to leave him, but her feeling of responsibility for the children made her postpone the plan. Meanwhile, she learned that her husband loved her from his letter and from a song he taught the children to sing. But not until he came back and told her himself did Phṛranī change her mind and stay.

### Story

Nanthawan contains less of the story than all other works, short and long, of Dṛkmaisot. There are no problems in the characters' lives whether from their own behaviour or outside pressures, thus the chained or inter-dependent happenings which make a story attractive do not exist. One couple, Čhitrā and Čhareon, are happily married. They matched their friends who are quite prepared to be married; one wanting her independence, and the other a housewife and a mother for his children. Again there is no hindrances. But a novel cannot consist merely of realistic dialogues and beautiful description, no matter how much ideas are put into them. The backbone story must develop, but with limitations imposed on the characters and setting as in Nanthawan, the author has no effective context in which to develop it organically but has to think up a series of artificial incidents. This type of organisation made the

events appear too obviously pre-arranged and manipulated by Dōkmaisot instead of her letting them occur naturally as she usually does in other novels. An example is the treatment of Wichit - his sudden appearance and disappearance.

In comparing Nanthawan with Nī Lāe Lōk! (1941), two questions arise: why could not Dōkmaisot in Nanthawan explore life and society under political pressures more thoroughly when she, as is proved later, was capable of doing so, and if it was her wish as a novelist not to write about politics, the view shared by George Orwell,<sup>1</sup> why did not she simply set the story in different atmosphere altogether, say life during the previous reigns? The answer is perhaps because she could not do it with political pressure limiting the freedom of her pen. Ranks had been abolished, the new rules concerning terminology would certainly destroy the sensitivity of the language denoting the official hierarchy and class system prior to the revolution. It is clearly noticeable that there is not a single official holding a title higher than "Luang", which was of course the former rank of the Prime Minister. Dōkmaisot said that Banlā's mother was a "Khunying" which means that his father was a "Phrayā", but both his name and rank were not mentioned, which is unusual for Dōkmaisot who traces the family of Ratna and Phatcharī in Sām Chāi for five generations. More unusual is the fact that Banlā's grandmother, the most influential person in the family and the only survivor of the older generation, is only a "Khunnāi", a common term for calling a "Luang"'s or a "Khun"'s wife. Presumably the novelist was conscious of her putting the old lady in the

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<sup>1</sup>George Orwell (pseud.), Writers and Leviathan of Selected Writings, edited by George Bött (London: Heinemann, 1968), pp. 90-98.

same class as the vulgar stepmother of Phōranī, because it does not appear even in a single instance that she refers to Khunnāi Lamduan formally in which case the rank would have had to be revealed.

Dōkmaisot describes Čhitrā as a daughter of "an important high-ranking and rich man who had held a position in several countries in two continents in the West for ten years,"<sup>1</sup> - an ambassador undoubtedly, and she does not say that he is dead, but neither his name nor his rank (at least that of Phrayā) is given.

Another unconvincing event in the flashback which can be explained only by the impact of politics on the novelist is that six years before the story takes place Banlū and Čhitrā, who had been educated in Europe, travelled back home from Japan.

It is clear now that a novelist like Dōkmaisot who confines her works to the life of a handful of people of an exclusive class in a small country like Thailand, cannot write without freedom. This also proves that a writer who derives his subject from contemporary life, no matter how small the represented circle is, if he is a good writer, embodies and explores deeply various aspects of life which will make any man-made wall look petty and superficial.

#### Theme

It is difficult to pinpoint the real theme of this novel. Perhaps love and marriage is the nearest. This is supported by its story of a type which became very common at a later period and still remains so up till the present time; several Thai critics contemptuously brand it "literature of a stagnant pond".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nanthawan, (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), p. 221.

<sup>2</sup>See for example Chaloeesak (pseud.), "Patirūp Nawaniyāi", Taifā Mtuang Thai, 146 (January 6th, 1972), pp. 5, 57-58.

Nevertheless, Nanthawan is close to that danger only in its rather pretentious love theme. The clear portrayal of Thai élite life is still maintained. Ideas about the occupations of Thai people are also dealt with in the story. During that period, 1941-1942 in particular, the Thai Government tried hard to promote agriculture and home industry through journals, broadcasting, songs, Even an official film was made to publicise the project.<sup>1</sup> It does not mean however that Dōkmaisot intended to contribute her novel to the plan, for she had proposed her own ideas as far back as 1930 in Romance Sōn Rūang Čing and Nūa Khū.<sup>2</sup>

In this novel Banlū decides to engage in farming, raise poultry, and to produce fertilizer. For women he once considered entering catering. Certainly Dōkmaisot had no practical knowledge nor experience of farming to enable her to portray the life of Thai farmers like, for example, Mālai Chūphinit. Her agriculturalists were therefore aristocrats who after realising the importance of that career shunned the society of the capital to set examples as civilized farmers. They still ate European food, read good books in Thai and foreign languages, slept in soft, clean beds. Banlū even provided his wife with piano and organ and she played Western classical music. Instead of having to plough the soil with water-buffaloes, cut trees with axes, harvest with sickles, Dōkmaisot's farmers had tractors, bulldozers, trucks, and all the necessary machines. This indeed must have sounded high-flown to the Thai in the forties. But justice must be done to Dōkmaisot for she did not pretend to know or to write about what she was ignorant of, but was

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<sup>1</sup>For Dōkmaisot's satire upon the matter see Chapter IX, p. 392.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter III, p. 143, and Appendix i, p. 497.

daring enough to propose what was almost impossible at the time - farming as a career for aristocrats. How far had she already gone from their traditional practice of being courtiers and civil servants? Not until nearly three decades later, and after her death, did her ideas about these careers become true. In Thailand now upland farming and catering are prosperous, fashionable, and well recognised. "Bunlūa" (M.L. Bunlūa Thēpphayasuwan) in her novel, Thutiya-wisēt (1969) also made her female leading character with royal blood take up catering as a career seriously. Only the traditional rice farming, the occupation for which Chai in Nūa-khū left the capital, has not yet been much improved.

### Plot

The overall plot is like that of Cinderella and the Handsome Prince. Whether or not the novelist was conscious of it she did mention the name Cinderella twice in the story. First when Čhitrā went to talk about Banlū to Phōranī:

"But if the man possesses good financial status already, he has no need to think of yours. He would be interested only in your virtue and looks--"

"You mean like Cinderella? But still Cinderella had to wear her glass slippers to the ball so as to meet the prince. And me--," Phōranī said and laughed.<sup>1</sup>

The second time was when Banlū was talking about his fiancée to Čhitrā after meeting her for the first time:

"You know, Čhitrā, I thought I would meet--," he looked in the direction where Pride and Prejudice was lying, "-Miss Jane Bennet. But it turned out to be Cinderella instead."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> He first saw Phōranī in her plain clothes doing house-work. See Ibid., p. 253.

There are not many forceful incidents that can really capture the minds of the readers, like, for example, what shocked Nut in Kam Kao. The two major incidents which cause and end the problems of their romance; the behaviour of Wichit at the engagement party and the Sōngsī's self-invitation to the farm, are not convincing. Why did Phōranī have to invite Wichit, her former boyfriend, and his siter as her only two guests when she claimed to be in contact with friends and teachers at a convent whom she did not invite? It is also very hard to believe that Sōngsī, who was travelling back home to her second husband, would suddenly change her mind and follow Čharoen just to see her ex-husband and his new wife, much as the author describes her as having a very bad character.

Nanthawan is the fourth novel of Dōkmaisot after Sām Chāi, Nūng Nai Rōi, and Ubattihēt, to which the author applies the theme of "the attraction of opposites" in dealing with marriage. She has created two couples from contrasting backgrounds: Čhitrā and Banlū are from rich, aristocratic, well-educated families whereas Phōranī and Čharoen share a much lower-class backgrounds. The author then pairs them by age instead of background.

There are no conflicts between generations nor social problems like polygamy in this story. The plot which is rather simple goes along on one level only, without any sub-plot or exciting interlocking actions.

Compared with Dōkmaisot's other works, the rhythm in this novel is not at all good and is very much out of tune with the happenings. Wherever descriptive power is needed,

for example in the children's quarrel or in Banlū's home, the reader feels the pleasant and regular rhythm. But when the situation becomes tense and the reader begins to feel uneasy, the rhythm is not strongly stressed and what the reader has expected turns out to be only a false alarm. This is due perhaps to D̄kmaisot's consciousness of the artificial events she has prearranged for the story. The best example of what is meant by rhythm in this sense is a comparison between two similar incidents in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek when Walai sees Luang Prāmōt with Samruay and in Nanthawan when Banlū sees Wichit. In the first, the reader is warned before hand that something serious is going to happen, only he does not know when and how. But when it really occurs he feels as if he heard a sudden drum roll, thus giving an impression of intensity. In the latter situation, the effect should be at least the same or even more with a sudden surprise, but instead, the drummer misses the instrument and the reader only shakes his head in disappointment. This quality of Nanthawan is of course the disastrous flaw in the book and it reminds a critic of the words of E.M. Forster concerning the design of the novel:

"When I began A Passage to India, I knew that something important happened in the Malabar Caves, and that it would have a central place in the novel - but I didn't know what it would be."<sup>1</sup>

### Characters

There is no other girl in the whole range of D̄kmaisot's novels who is not a real leading character but whose description and actions are as prominent in the story as those of Čhitrā

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<sup>1</sup>E.M. Forster, Writers at Work, the Paris Review Interviews, edited by Malcolm Cowley (New York: 1958), pp. 26-27, as quoted in Katherine Lever, The Novel and the Reader (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 36.

in Nanthawan. Most scenes in Bangkok are in Čhitrā's sitting room, a hotel dining room where she, her husband, and Banlā are having dinner, or in a music shop where Čhitrā is helping Banlā choose some records for Phōranī. The description of Banlā's country home is delayed until the arrival of Čhitrā. Even in everyone's thought, there is always Čhitrā. She occupies most of the dialogue and thus is the dominating influence on the language used by the author in this story - straightforward, easy, precise, and witty.

Her character can be described as a mixture of Nut when older and Khun Sae when young. Čhitrā is very realistic, a woman of flesh and blood, passion as well as reason. She and Banlā are real friends, that is true, but there are always traces of their past impressions of one another. Banlā still teases her, embraces her, and kisses her hand, which is not a Thai custom. It is Čhitrā who tries to avoid whatever would lead to thoughts, feelings, or memories of each other, and Banlā knows it. In her home Čhitrā is an excellent housewife and mother, and at parties she is very sociable. Through Čharon we see her as a loving wife and through Banlā a witty and modern woman. Banlā himself notices the difference between Čhitrā and other traditional women like his sisters, the instance of which reminds us of Khun Sae and Khun Wong in Phūdī.

...Banlā was happy to see his sisters get along well with Phōranī and be informal with Čhitrā. Usually, they and Čhitrā are like people who had just a superficial association with one another. He also knew that they disliked Čhitrā because Čhitrā called her husband only "Čharon" without the preceding "Khun" to show her respect for him, and Čhitrā was not interested in his sisters because they had nothing to talk about. "The world" to his sisters was limited by their relatives, friends and her attendants, whereas to Čhitrā it was as vast as the earth itself. If Čhitrā talked about "the world" to his sisters, they would have the symptoms of

of people who were lost, or being blind from birth, would never be convinced that there was a thing called "light". And if they showed their "world" to Čhitrā, she would also have the symptoms of a person who was forced to watch a performance she had seen several times...<sup>1</sup>

Not only that Čhitrā is seen through other characters, she is also given the duty of introducing to us everyone in her life. Dōkmaisot describes Čharoen's appearance and character simultaneously and very subtly through the eyes and heart of Čhitrā while they are sitting together with Banlū in a restaurant:

...He was not attractive in anybody's eyes. His face was rough and weathered. His skin was dark...and compared with the man who was sitting next to him, they were as different as the sky and the earth. But Čharoen was faithful, honest, frank, and understanding. Therefore it was not difficult to please him. Čhitrā loved him because he had those qualities and she had loved him more and felt more and more concerned about him everyday that they had lived together. He too, never lessened his love and anxiety for her...<sup>2</sup>

Banlū is perhaps the most snobbish hero of Dōkmaisot. He is the only son of the family and therefore has been spoilt since youth. He has grown wilful, conceited, and over self-confident. His failure in marriage has taught him a lesson and made him more circumspect. Even so Banlū looks down on people in the street who, in his critical eyes, are following blindly the stream of modernisation. While in Bangkok Banlū had his meals in expensive restaurants, but in his plantation, leads a very simple life among his workers. Without Čhitrā our impression of him will never change for we will never know that he is also romantic, playful, and amusing.

Čhitrā liked his mien, Whatever he was doing, walking, standing, sitting, he never lacked dignity and refined manners. Banlū could easily break women's hearts by just letting them admire his charm without showing them his contempt or that he was mocking them

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 566-567.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-77.

inside...Čhitrā herself realised well his charm and always thanked him for not using it to ruin women...<sup>1</sup>

However to move forward a flat character like Phōranī is a heavy, awkward, and tedious burden even for a lively person like Čhitrā. The portrayal of Phōranī is reminiscent of Sačhī in Bupphēsanniwāt.<sup>2</sup> When living with her father and stepmother, she was suppressed so badly that she just worked, worked, and worked, as Banlā said, like Cinderella, and Čhitrā kept trying to convince him of Phōranī's other characteristics:

"She is beautiful...She is amiable...She is able...  
She is traditional...She is mature...She is reasonable..."<sup>3</sup>

Dōkmaisot seems relieved as soon as Phōranī is freed from her stepmother, and she begins changing her almost straightaway; Phōranī now cooks and eats European food, and plays Western music. But the change is only superficial, her feeling insecure in married life still ties her tongue. This time Dōkmaisot has neither Čhitrā nor Čharoen to help her develop Phōranī. She therefore turns to link the girl's thoughts with psychological analysis especially according to Buddhism, but because it does not fit the girl's character, the writing lacks intensity, and Phōranī remains inarticulate throughout the story.

#### Setting and atmosphere

Nanthawan may be inferior to Dōkmaisot's other works in several ways, but she describes the setting and atmosphere splendidly. Contrasting scenes like Bangkok and the countryside, noisy shopping centres and the quiet and peaceful house of the aristocrats, the atmosphere in the home of the less well-off Luang Čhamnong and the rich and modern one of Čhitrā, are

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 406-407.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter III, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., 86p. 86, ff.

presented alternately. The story starts in two noisy shopping areas of Bangkok. Through Banlū as he sits waiting in the car for his friend the reader sees the crowd, the traffic, feels the heat, hears all sorts of noises. Moreover, he sees them with critical eyes. At one place Thai women are criticised sharply and directly:

...Ninety per cent of women in the other area dressed themselves fashionably or in a very up-to-date way whereas in this area there were mixtures of all sorts, fashionable, too modern, and those who did not care about fashion, equal in number. There were also those who thought themselves to be following the fashion cleverly, but in fact they were very much on the wrong track, and this last sort was greater in number than the previous one...<sup>1</sup>

Then Banlū takes us to a luxurious dining room in a hotel where he meets Čharoen by chance. From that point the story proceeds either at Čharoen and Čhitrā's home or in the hotel dining room. Dōkmaisot makes us see how these high class people in Bangkok live. They play bridge and listen to Western classical music. Their snack is liver pâté sandwiches. Čhitrā reads Jane Austen, etc. Such scenes may not be appreciated by many Thai readers for the atmosphere seems pretentious and too westernised. Many ordinary readers may not know who Jane Austen is, or terms like "little slam", "no trumps". They may think the author has over estimated her readers or supposed that they should understand when Banlū says to Čhitrā:

"Oh yes! Martha! Don't you know the Last Rose of Summer? Everyone knows it."

"Yes, I do, but I forgot that it is by Flotow," Čhitrā laughed, "I even have it at home. We should take these two as well, so it will be a complete set. "Ah! So pure". She raised her head in a romantic manner to tease him. Banlū smiled and suddenly he reached for a record and handed it to her.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

"Please take this one to couple with Verdi's Rigoletto, 'Woman is Fickle'."

"I have it," Čhitrā said coquettishly, "Whatever it is, if it scolds women, you always like it." <sup>1</sup>

Although the common Thai reader cannot understand what these people were talking about, he still has to admit that Dōkmaisot was sincere, honest and realistic: people of that class lived like that. She wrote what really happened and this did not mean that she recognised the existence only of those people. On the contrary, if the same thing was practised by those who pretended to appreciate it or thought wrongly that it would improve their status, Dōkmaisot would certainly attack them in a sarcastic way. No matter whether it is the Thai or the European way of life, appropriateness is what she takes as the criterion.

This Thai-European style of life is presented alternately with completely different scenes like the scene in the home of Banlū's grandmother. The author brings us back to a typical Thai aristocrat's house where the real Thai atmosphere is still all-pervasive, totally different from that of Čhitrā and Čharoen. In front of the old lady, we feel its slowness, coolness, gentleness from the way people of the younger generation crouch down to show respect to her, ask and answer her questions politely, and even from the embroidery she is working on. Kōng and Pōng also help make the atmosphere more lively and enjoyable, especially on the day Banlū's sisters makes a rendezvous for him to meet their friends, and the children have to be presented too. The author begins the chapter with the most delightful and vivid description of the nanny and her

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 400.

assistant fighting with the two children while bathing them. Nobody who reads these part can refrain from smiling. It seems very clear that the author herself was amused while writing it. She starts with the nursemaid turning the tap and running the water into a large jar at full force, but while she is rubbing the girl with soap, the boy covers the tap with his hands, the water then splashes in all directions and on to the nursemaid's face. The girl first complains but when the nursemaid lets her go to wipe the water from her face, she joined her brother at the tap. Then chaos starts. The nursemaid shouts at them while calling her assistant to help her. Instead of stopping they stamp their little feet while shouting "crabby nanny! crabby nanny!" The boy is pulled out one way. While she is being scrubbed, Pōng hears her brother shout in rhyme "skinny granny Pōng! skinny granny Pōng!" At first she does not answer back because the servant is grabbing her arm quite tightly, but when she sees the boy stretching his neck and shoulders to show his ribs and shouting again "skinny granny Pōng!" her patience comes to an end. She pushes her belly forward and swells it up as much as possible and cries "greeny tummy Kōng! greeny tummy Kōng!"

After that the servant fight with the boy to comb his hair properly while the girl sneaks into her aunt's bedroom, powers her face, puts lipstick on her lips but also messes it on to her cheeks, and then attempts to walk with an air in front of the mirror.

Every time the two children appear on the scene we shall feel weary with their mischief and smile at their cleverness and innocence. Dōkmaisot must have a keen eye for children,

since she describes them down to minute details, using simple, picturesque language. None of the Thai novelists can compete with her in this respect, especially in Nanthawan where she has made the children the real force of the plot, i.e. Kōng and Pōng's indiscipline makes Banlū decide to find for them a mother.

We have already seen Dōkmaisot's attempt to find different settings for her works, but because her knowledge of the countryside was inadequate, all she could do was to make some characters visit places outside Bangkok, including Singapore, Penang, Korat, Songkhla, and a few others. Wherever she herself stayed any length of time in a place, in Phetburi for example, she would give a vivid description of it, usually as a setting of a short novel. However, in Nanthawan the author does not say exactly where the plantation is situated. Perhaps it is written from her imagination, or a mixture of her imagination, memory, and record of travel. The tense situations between Banlū and Phōranī enables her to avoid writing in details about the place. Čhitrā's visit is brief, what she sees and what delights her heart is only beautiful and peaceful scenery which the author like Dōkmaisot can easily write from pure imagination or memory:

At dawn of the next day when the sun began to shine cheerily upon the earth, Čhitrā was standing on the verandah looking around at the scenery, amazed and excited. She had just felt that she had woken up in the home of highly civilized people, but now she was conscious of herself standing and gazing at nature in the jungle. There were large trees of all varieties, each was not small than half a yard in circumference. They grew in clusters, in rows, in groups, everywhere. Their features looked sullen as if to assure themselves of being born as jungle trees and to maintain their freedom, careless of any human feeling. Some stood independently stretching branches and twigs over the ground as if they were expressing their good acquaintance with people and and ready to give them shade and coolness. Birds soared

up from the branches and then glided down again in groups, in couples, and in flocks. Their songs were varied in tune, some sounded like chattering and some were very musical.

Āchitrā stood still for a long while feeling happy and joyful, before she heard someone's footsteps approaching. It was Banlū. He walked in quiety to her. Āchitrā stretched out her left hand from under her pale orange kimono sleeve to him. He held it and stood by her side.

"Most beautiful," Āchitrā whispered. She was looking straight at the scenery in front of her. "If we believe in auspicious locations as our ancestors did, I am sure that you will become prosperous from this land."

His smile was the answer, the same as with her when she uttered those words without looking at his face, and without him looking at hers. There are times when the sweetness of nature causes harmony of feeling between two friendly hearts without the help of words or action as a link of persuasion. Āchitrā and Banlū stood together for a long time until she broke the silence.

"Now I no longer doubt that someone like you, who was born not knowing the meaning of the word hardship, can stay in this jungle home for so long each time, and never get tired of it. It is because your jungle is such an enchanted forest."

He was still outwardly silent. In fact, he was thinking of the word "hardship" she had just said to him, which was what he had had to face all the time in the last two years; hardship in selecting the place and in making his ownership legal; hardship in making friends with the local inhabitants in order to have their labour, their co-operation, their willingness to sell their rights over the land - all of which were difficulties that made Banlū think of suitable tactics to solve them. At the same time they must not be tactics which would give him a chance to exploit people of less intellect or which deviated from morality. His physical difficulties were also tremendous, no water for a bath sometimes for several days; sleeping with animal smells and stuffiness;<sup>no</sup> luxurious food, no regular meals; etc. When these mental and physical difficulties combined, they affected his feeling a great deal. The account was too detailed for him to relay to Āchitrā on such a quiet, peaceful, pleasant morning. <sup>1</sup>

It must be this "enchanted forest" from which Dōkmaisot takes the title of this novel, for the meaning of the word "Nanthawan" is "forest of joy" or "pleasure ground of God Indra".

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 509-513.

CHAPTER VIII

Nī Lae Lōk! : This! Is the World

This novel was first published by the Niphon Printing Press in July 1941 in one volume and republished in 1952 and at other times.

Because of controversy, research has been made to check the existence of a Japanese translation of this novel and the possibility that it won an Asian novel contest in Japan, as is believed in Thailand. Unfortunately, none of the three appropriate sources of information namely Mr. Junjiro Nishino<sup>1</sup>, the National Diet Library<sup>2</sup>, and Osaka University of Foreign Studies,<sup>3</sup> has offered any evidence concerning the claim.

Nevertheless, the possibility in this matter should not be ruled out entirely for the evidence on the Thai side is not without basis. The writer of this thesis heard about it for the first time in 1955 from Mrs. Somarat Čhantharaphā<sup>4</sup> who knew Dōkmaisot well and presumably had been told by the novelist herself.

On January 18th, 1963, one day after Dōkmaisot died in New Delhi, the Siam Nikōn (a daily newspaper issued in Bangkok) wrote an obituary in which at one place it says: "...particularly Nī Lae Lōk! was sent to an Asian novel contest in Japan during

<sup>1</sup>The translator of Nāng Nai Rōi (see Chapter V, p.235) in correspondence with the writer of this thesis.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence between Mr. A.D.S. Roberts of the Bodleian and Mr. R. Kato of the National Diet Library between December 1973 and March 1974.

<sup>3</sup>Correspondence between Professor Yoneo Ishii and Mr. Osamu Akagi of Osaka University of Foreign Studies between March and August 1974.

<sup>4</sup>Wife of Somphop Čhantharaphā, the then headmistress of Waranaree Chaloem School, Songkhla, Thailand.

the War and was awarded a prize."<sup>1</sup> Somphop Chantharapraphā, in his biography of Dōkmaisot, also mentions its winning "an international novel contest."<sup>2</sup> But in both writings as well as in several others that followed there are no details at all on the contest, the translator, or the translation. This of course makes everything sound sceptical, particularly when the Japanese translation of Nūng Nai Rōi is not known to Thai people,<sup>3</sup> and when all about the English translation of Pholamuang Dī in Span<sup>4</sup> is always quoted correctly.

Another interesting and strong argument still remains however; both Mr. Sukit Nimmanheminda and M.L. Bunlūa Thēpphayasuwan insist strongly on the existence of the whole incident. Mr. Sukit mentioned the Asahi Shimbun, but was not certain whether they were the organiser of the contest or the sponsor of the novel's entry. M.L. Bunlūa clarified further that nobody, not even Dōkmaisot herself, took any interest in it because of the bitter feeling Thai people had towards the Japanese after the occupation of the country.<sup>5</sup>

M.L. Bunlūa's reason for the novelist's ignoring of the matter coincides with the fact that the public was informed of the incident only after Dōkmaisot's death.

The Asahi Shimbun directories to publications in Tokyo and Osaka during the war years have been examined, but nothing relevant is found. The conclusion of the quest therefore cannot

<sup>1</sup>Anon., Siam Nikōn, Friday, January 18th, 1963

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, Chīwit..., p. 62.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter V, p. 235.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix i, p. 502.

<sup>5</sup>A letter from Mrs. Maenmas Chavalit, a writer, critic and the present Director of the Thai National Library, to the writer of this thesis dated July 17th, 1974.

be satisfactorily drawn, and the mystery, if there is any, can be disclosed only if the reason for the novelist's permission to have her work translated and sent in for the contest, is found. Perhaps there are some political elements attached to it, because D̄kmaisot was a patriot and Nī Lae Lōk! was a product of the pro-Japanese period. Asahi Shimbun itself had a branch in Bangkok, and, according to Professor Yoneo Ishii, after making awards to some Japanese writers, they were planning to expand the contest to writers of other nationalities.

List of characters

Phrayā Suramontrī	an old, blind ex-general, head of a family.
Khunying Lamun	his daughter, wife of Phrayā Phiphat Phanlop (deceased)
Montrī (nickname Yai) and Bu-ngā	Khunying Lamun's eldest son and his wife, parents of Sura.
Pachā (nickname Lek)	her second son, in love with Sārī.
Āhintanā, Lekhā, Salyā (nickname Nōi) and Khanitthā	her daughters, all single.
Phrayā Sanphakit Nithēt	a high-ranking official, head of another family.
Khunying Luan	his wife.
Yuphā (nickname Yai)	their eldest daughter who has refused several proposals, close friend of Salyā.
Sārī (nickname Klāng)	their second daughter, interested in Pachā.
Sīsa-āng (nickname Uap)	their third daughter, married and lives apart from the family with her husband.
Surāngrat (nickname Lek)	their youngest daughter.
Kamchōn	Sīsa-āng's husband.
Lt. Winai	a young naval officer of ordinary family background, in love with Surāngrat.

- Lt. Cdr. Thawit Sakunmai a naval officer, the youngest son of Luang Thēp Aksōn (deceased), educated in England and Denmark. At the age of one and a half he was adopted and brought up by his youngest great-uncle, Phrayā Anuthat Thēpwičhān (deceased), who was childless. While Thawit was studying in England there was a serious quarrel between Phrayā Anuthat and his brother, and Phrayā Anuthat changed his family name from "Singhathat" to "Sakunmai" (New Family). Thawit, his heir, was ordered to use the new family name and cut off all contact with his cousins.
- Chit Unkasēm his friend, son of his wet-nurse.
- Sarōt a young man of good family, friend of Montri.
- Samut Montri's friend, a civil servant, son of a rice-field owner in a provincial town. He was educated abroad and is living a dissipated life in Bangkok.
- Sanōng also Montri's friend, a civil servant in the same office as Samut, the only son of the rich widow Khunnāi Sap.
- Chuanchom an obese, ill-mannered friend of Bu-ngā, the only child and daughter of a millionaire, Luang Tankoson.
- Phan a cook in the home of Phrayā Suramontri.
- Khāo her husband, another servant.
- Čhīp a cook in the home of Phrayā Sanphakit.
- Bunplūk a personal maid of Sārī, recommended to the family by Phan.
- etc.

### Synopsis

The story takes place in Bangkok in the first half of 1940. Bunplūk, a new maid was taken to report to her mistress, Sārī, while the four sisters were preparing themselves to go to a film with their mother and Kamčhōn. She quickly learned from Čhīp the characters of her new master and mistresses; Phrayā Sanphakit was kind, but reserved, Khunying Luan was sharp-tongued and Yuphā, the eldest daughter, was very orderly. When Bunplūk went over to tell Phan the news that she had been

accepted, the latter boasted again as she had always done about her mistresses that they were all beautiful save "Khun Nōi". She said Khun Nōi was "different from all the others, not at all beautiful and so serious. Even Khunying is afraid of her." But Khāo argued, saying: "I love Khun Nōi most. She may not be beautiful, but she is very kind and simple."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, in the cinema before the performance, Yuphā and her party were seated next to a big man who had been sitting there alone comfortably listening to the music and waiting for his friend. He was Thawit Sakunmai and his friend was Chit Unkasēm. Thawit and Kamčhōn remembered vaguely that they had met before in England. Chit, who came late, also knew Kamčhōn but it was not convenient for Thawit to inquire about him.

After the cinema and while they were waiting for their supper in a restaurant, Yuphā asked Kamčhōn about the two men they had just met. He could not tell her about Thawit, but about Chit he said: "He is Tā Chit whom everyone in the whole town knows... He doesn't have to be a son of anybody. Being himself is sufficient; a broker, a solicitor, a trader. There seems to be nothing that he is not."<sup>2</sup>

Outside, they met all their neighbours except Salyā. "She is being a good girl as usual,"<sup>3</sup> Lēkhā told Yuphā about her younger sister. And Montrī, when asked about the film they had seen, said, "A little too serious. If Nōi had come, she would have liked it."<sup>4</sup> All this time, Surāngrat paid no attention to the conversation, but to her lover, Winai, who was standing on the opposite side of the road looking at her.

After supper, on their way to see Sarōt in order to ask him to join them in a game of tennis the next day, Montrī and his wife argued about Salyā as being the person who destroyed Pachā's hope for Sārī. Bu-ngā took sides with Pachā and called Salyā's revelation of Pachā keeping a secret wife to Yuphā "insinuation".<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, Pachā was telling his sisters in their home that he had met Chit by chance in another restaurant and their dinner had been paid for by a rich man called Thawit...

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<sup>1-5</sup> Dōkmaiset, Nī Lae Lōk (Bangkok: Nippon, 1952), pp. 28, 45, 56, 56, 62.

Sakunmai. They all laughed at Thawit's surname which means "new family", understanding incorrectly that he was of Chinese descent, then asked one another about the meaning of his given name before referring to Salyā again as "a learned person" who would certainly know the answer.

Even when Khanitthā was lying in bed, Salyā had not appeared. Khanitthā could hear her discussing Buddhism and Christianity with their blind grandfather in the next room. Salyā did not go straight to bed after her tiring day but instead spent some time in her favourite corner at the end of the verandah reading a novel by an Italian author and was absorbed into the story until very late. One reason for her not going to the film with her family, apart from wanting to nurse her old grandfather, was that she had heard about the tragic end of the story. Salyā was not at all a strong person. She suffered from nerves and heart disease.

On the following day and successive Sundays the tennis court in the home of Phrayā Suramontrī became a courting place of young men and women. Montrī brought his new friends, Samut and Sanōng to meet his younger sisters. Both men showed their interest in Āhintanā and Lēkhā, but also realised that they became less important as soon as Sarōt, who had been a regular visitor of the family and later stopped, came back. Sarōt was more handsome, richer, of better family and better education than Samut and Sanōng. Originally, Montrī intended to match him with Salyā, his favourite sister, but her lack of feminine charm repelled him. This time the youngest sister, Khanitthā, was madly in love with him. Although Āhintanā was quite fond of Samut, she still preferred Sarōt and was always irritated by Khanitthā's obvious interest in him. Chit also went there from time to time but his visit was a mixture of several purposes; his secret liking for Salyā, his friendship with the blind man whom he claimed to have known for a long time, and his business.

Salyā was the best tennis-player in the family, but she often missed playing or had to stop half-way because of her anxiety about her grandfather. She felt embarrassed seeing her sisters, who had little interest in the game, being busy

competing with one another in attracting their male guests by wearing shorts and serving them snacks. Once she went with them to a Chinese restaurant after the match. Her three sisters agreed without hesitation to be taught to dance by the three men. Montrī and Sarōt tried unsuccessfully to persuade her to do the same. Salyā could not overcome her self-consciousness. Thus, she was left alone, feeling lost and neglected, before she noticed/<sup>Chit</sup>sitting with his friends. He came to her, but his bad manners and half-drunk behaviour only made her feel worse. However, on their way out from the restaurant, Salyā noticed the refined manner of "Chit's friend" when he gave way to her and her sisters to walk out of the room first. Minutes after that, in the cinema, Salyā changed completely. She enjoyed the music and beautiful pictures on the screen, while all her sisters and their male friends were talking flirtatiously in whispers.

Another time Salyā would be happy was when she visited and was visited by Yuphā to whom she could talk about anything ranging from their families and society in general to the Nobel Prize winning novel she had just bought. There had been a hope once before Montrī met Bu-ngā that he might marry Yuphā. Salyā liked Yuphā's well-disciplined family, was impressed by Kamōhōn's advanced ideas, and now she was sincerely glad to hear that Winai had been promoted and would ask for Surāngrat's hand again from Khunying Luan.

Meanwhile, Samut became very attached to Čhintanā, despite her obvious interest in Sarōt. But to ask her to marry him was impossible unless he had a home of his own. Worse than that, a much more urgent problem awaited a solution; a final demand notice from a solicitor for him to pay his debt. Samut eventually turned to Chit whom he had looked down upon. Chit grasped his opportunity to get revenge by lending Samut a sum of money large enough to pay his previous debt, to buy the land and the house, for which of course he was the broker.

Chit's supplier of capital was always Thawit who never agreed even once with his plan nor could refuse to sign a cheque in the end. Chit was not only his friend, but very much like an anxious elder brother, a most loyal servant,

a faithful solicitor looking after his properties and investment. Thawit used to ask him once about the granddaughters of Phrayā Suramontrī. Chit brusquely answered: "...Three of them are beautiful...but not so good. Don't waste your time going to see them. They seem-- eager to have husbands. I don't like them. Another one is better, but she is not beautiful and possesses no airs and graces."<sup>1</sup>

Despite what he said, Chit took Thawit to the house of Phrayā Suramontrī one Sunday evening and left him to be entertained by Salyā, who, after missing the tennis match, was taking a walk alone. Salyā was very surprised to find "Mr. Sakunmai" every inch a gentleman, with a proper Thai accent, and knowledgeable about art and literature. Thawit too enjoyed her company.

Winai was refused once more by Khunying Luan. His endurance came to an end and he insisted that Surāngrat had to choose between him and her family. Salyā was told the news and began to feel anxious about the circumstances. She also noticed that something unusual was going on in her own family; Pachā was cheerful, more friendly and once she saw Phan and Bunplūk coming out of his bedroom.

On the first birthday of Sura, Montri and Bu-ngā arranged a party. Among the guests was Chuanchom, an ugly, obese daughter of a millionaire, Luang Tankōson. Bu-ngā was asked by Luang Tan to find for her a husband, which was indeed a difficult task. Salyā was embarrassed by Chuanchom's disagreeable manners, puzzled to see her own sisters develop social and fashionable manners so quickly, while she could not adjust herself to the atmosphere at all. Sarōt however tried again without success to make her dance.

Two days after, Salyā went to see Yuphā only to find a tense situation in that family; Surāngrat had run away to marry Winai with the encouragement of Yuphā, and Phrayā Sanphakit was very angry with his wife for concealing the whole story from him. Salyā disapproved of what Yuphā had done, but she could not help being astonished at the vagaries of human

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

relationship. The news remained a delicious piece of gossip for some time especially in Salyā's family until they all met Winai and Surāngrat by chance and agreed that he did not in any way deserve the charge. Soon after that incident, Phrayā Sanphakit allowed his youngest daughter and son-in-law to visit her sisters.

Chit now managed to find a house for Samut. Bu-ngā helped him arrange a house-warming party to which several friends were invited, including Chuanchom. Čhintanā was disappointed to see that it was only a small wooden house. Salyā did not go with them but was at home entertaining Yuphā and her sisters and brothers-in-law. Seeing Surāngrat and Winai, she began to wonder about the criteria of right and wrong, the conflicting results of observing old tradition and being decisive in choosing one's own way of life.

Sārī, who had been in contact with Pachā secretly through Phan and Bunplūk for some time, now agreed to marry him. But Pachā had to get rid of his secret wife first by paying her a sum of money. Again, Chit was the person who helped him out by lending him money with cruelly high interest. Two couples Sārī and Pachā, Lēkhā and Sanōng were engaged. Yuphā did not seem to worry about her being the still single eldest sister, whereas Čhintanā became very envious of Lēkhā. She took more care of her appearance and assumed a more winning manner. Samut's jealousy and upset were her consolation. Chit alone knew the truth that Samut worried because he had no chance to marry her nor to free himself from debt. His second chance of revenge came when Bu-ngā mentioned Chuanchom at the tennis court one afternoon. He contemptuously suggested Samut accept Luang Tan's sumptuous offer to the man who married Chuanchom.

Like other men, Thawit became a regular visitor of Phrayā Suramontri's family. He admired the beauty of the three sisters but enjoyed talking to Salyā. He found for her books and records she liked. Friendship and love were growing and flourishing in Salyā's heart. Sarōt, too, did not lose interest in her, despite his flirting with Khanitthā and sometimes with Čhintanā.

The day of the grand reception came, organised by a society of which Sarōt was one of the committee-members. Everybody went. Salyā was almost transformed in her beautiful dress. She enjoyed herself thoroughly watching the play, listening to the music. Even when they started dancing, she did not feel lost as before because there were several other women including Yuphā and her sisters who did not dance. Sarōt admired her change in appearance but was later annoyed by her refusal to dance with him. Of course he was the hero of the occasion whom girls particularly Čhintanā and Khanitthā wanted to dance with. But to Salyā, Thawit, who was among his friends in a far corner, was the most dignified. Samut was driven out of mind by all his worries, Chit's insult and Čhintanā's mocking eyes while she was dancing with other men. With another urging from Bu-ngā for him to dance with Čhuanchom, he abruptly followed her suggestion and after a while came back announcing to the party that they were in love. His words stunned everybody and was an unbearable insult to Čhintanā. Now she had to win Sarōt from her younger sister, and in the end she won.

Khanitthā was heart-broken. Salyā alone understood her, comforted and consoled her tenderly while others were busy preparing for the weddings of Pachā and Lēkhā. She pleaded with Pachā to take Khanitthā with them to Hua Hin.

Čhintanā's happiness and success made Salyā ponder once more over the way of the world, that it was suitable only for people who persevered in whatever they desired. Nevertheless, regular visits from Thawit gave her time to blush and to feel happy. She was his source of knowledge about Buddhism and customs and he her happiness. When the summer holiday came and Yuphā asked her to go with her family to Hua Hin, Salyā was reluctant. Her grandfather was ill and she did not want to be far from Thawit.

Phrayā Suramontrī recovered, Pachā, his wife, mother and sister returned to Bangkok in time for Salyā to go with Yuphā. She was delighted when Thawit told her that he too was going to Hua Hin and on the same day, to pay his respects to his uncle on "Songkrān" day<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>An old Thai New Year or the Water Festival Day, which falls between April 12th and April 15th.

The story of Thawit was related after Phrayā Sanphakit asked him about the person whom he was going to see.

Salyā had been in Hua Hin only for three days when a telegram came calling her back immediately. Fourteen hours after she arrived her grandfather died from pneumonia.

One day during the mourning period, Chit proposed marriage to her. Salyā refused instantly and later became frightened of the thought that Chit might have informed Thawit about his decision and that Thawit might like Chit so much that he could make a sacrifice even of his love. She longed for Sunday to come, but only to learn that Thawit had gone back to Hua Hin to see his uncle for some personal reason.

It was Yuphā who finally told Salyā of Thawit's reason for going away; he went to ask his uncle to come and ask for Yuphā's hand, and Yuphā agreed to marry him.

Two days later, during the night, Salyā died from a heart attack without the slightest sympathy from anybody.

### Story

Nī Lae Lōk! is of the same length as Khwāmphit Khrang Raek the two longest of Dōkmaisot's novels. The time represented is known from the news Salyā read to her grandfather. Thus on her very first appearance she reminds her grandfather of the news in the previous day papers: "...The tension is a little relaxed. But it has been like that for sometime, hasn't it?"<sup>1</sup> Then one Sunday (Chapter XV) she read from the stop-press: "War breaks out. German troops invade Poland..."<sup>2</sup> The story, thus, begins a few weeks before September 1939 and goes on until summer 1940. The exact date of the end of Nī Lae Lōk!, that is the deathday of Salyā, the preciseness of which is seemingly unimportant to the story, was told in the novelist's last novel as June 14th 1940.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

After considering carefully the difference in style of Nī Lae Lōk! from its continuation, one can see the intention and cleverness of the author in choosing the date Paris fell into German hands, two days after Thailand signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Japan, France and Great Britain. In other words, it was the dead-line for her to write without touching politics in the country in which nationalistic actions followed almost straight-away with the claiming back of territories from French Indo-China.

Unlike in her last novel, the novelist dissociated political situations in the country from this story, and as in Ubattihēt her hidden satire on nationalism is found in only one place. In Ubattihēt, Suntharī cried out in surprise while laughing when the snack was served:

"Oh look! How patriotic the prawn crackers-seller is! Those national flags are all fish-crackers... Do you mind the food with colours painted on it like that? I don't, but I hate it."

He looked at her and smiled...<sup>1</sup>

In Nī Lae Lōk! the author mocked the idea that brought the changing of the name from "Siam" to "Thailand", through Chit's relating his experience as a tourist guide:

"I've told you, there are things, in our own home which even if we don't know, we must try to find something to say about them. But mind you I was cornered once. They asked me the meaning of the word "Thai" written on a placard, and I said "Thai" means 'Thai' or what they called 'Siam' before, and we write it in front of the shop to tell everyone that it is a Thai shop and does not belong to a foreigner". They argued that it was unreasonable and said that they don't do that in other countries. Of course shops in Thailand were Thai shops. Only if they were not Thai shops should there be signs telling the customers..."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Ubattihēt, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nī Lae Lōk!, pp. 983-984.

Nī Lae Lōk! is different from all other novels of Dōkmaisot in various respects, the most distinctive of all is the portraying of Thai society in which Dōkmaisot showed it as it really was - changing - and not from the stand-point of an aristocrat who had been so far looking only within the narrow boundaries of an exclusive class, or a little wider but from a superior stand-point. Perhaps she had come to realise that the influx of modern ideas was too strong to be stopped by a handful of members of the old elite. The modernised behaviour of Thai girls; dancing, playing tennis, golf, reading novels, listening to Western music, feeling freer in choosing husbands, are seen at full force in this novel. It was also the time when the "nouveaux riches" began to have their stable position in society, when a son of a "phrayā" had to borrow money from a lower-class and a master from a maid or an Indian watch-man.<sup>1</sup>

Another remarkable feature of this novel with regard to contemporary events is the obvious interest of the author and her personal attitude towards the War in Europe. Unlike scores of other Thai novels with situations in the country during World War II as backgrounds, written after the tumultuous incidents had passed,<sup>2</sup> Nī Lae Lōk! includes varied opinions of Thai people about the Allies and the Axis. In fact, the date of each major happening in the story is marked not with the situations in Thailand itself but with what was going on in the West. The blind ex-general Phrayā Suramontrī clearly took sides with Germany. He often told Salyā about incidents during World War I; the Emden, his German friends in Thailand being

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<sup>1</sup>Night-watching and money-lending are still two popular occupations of Indians in Thailand today.

<sup>2</sup>For example, Sot Kūramarōhit's Rayā, Mālai Chūphinit's Muang Nimit (A Utopian City).

arrested, and his visits to them in prisons. He praised the Germans when he told Salyā:

"The Russian troops capitulated. The officers, all nobles, were slaughtered. It is said that even the Empress cried." <sup>1</sup>

And after Salyā read from newspapers the reaction of the British and the French to the German invasion of Poland, he commented:

"No more than threats! They only talk, talk, and talk, and when it really happens they never do a thing. Look at what happened to Czechoslovakia, the Germans didn't waste their time boasting but acted straightaway. How can a boaster possibly compete with a doer?" <sup>2</sup>

But while Phrayā Suramontrī in his dark world, "was planning his strategy to attack the Maginot Line"; Phrayā Sanphakit, on the other hand, "was doing the same with the Siegfried."<sup>3</sup> The younger generation too often talked about the War but with detachment and completely unaware of the possibility of its spread to the East. Montrī and Samut even made a bet about the final outcome. Salyā, perhaps reflecting the author's own views, was the only woman in the story who showed concern in the situations. While Yuphā just accepted that "as long as human beings are ordinary human beings, there will always be wars", Salyā was anxious:

"Oh dear! how terrible! Men will begin killing each other again. Don't you think those "farang" (Westerners) are crazy? They are so civilized, so reasonably, and yet so fond of killing one another, - the act of babarians ... It's true that ordinary human beings still possess 'kilēt'<sup>4</sup> and it's this 'kilēt' that causes their crazy actions. I always wonder why we, all human beings who

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 426.

It is probable he was referring to the Tannenberg incident (see B.W. Tuchman, August 1914 (London: Constable, 1962), pp. 284-302)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.420.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.230.

<sup>4</sup>See footnote 1, p. 249.

hate and are afraid of pain and death, still incessantly cause killing..."<sup>1</sup>

Salyā obviously took sides with the Allies for she was "pleased to hear Montrī comment that Russia, after taking an initial advantage of other people's efforts, was bashed on the head by a child 'Finland'", and before that when her grandfather supported the Germans, she did not argue but "believed firmly in the strength of the French army...and of the Maginot Line..."<sup>2</sup>

As far as the story is concerned, it is also an account of the last ten eventful months of Salyā's life, the only real tragic story of the author. Somphop Čhantharapraphā revealed that Dōkmaisot wrote this novel very carefully.<sup>3</sup> Wilāt Manīwat admitted that Chit was his favourite character in Thai novels.<sup>4</sup> And Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng analysed the life of Salyā and called her "an unfortunate woman".<sup>5</sup> Although several critics have written about the characters of Nī Lae Lōk!, none of them has taken a close look at the marvellous theme and plot of the novel.

### Theme

Superficially, the theme of Nī Lae Lōk! is love and separation. But the impression one has after reading it is much sadder than other novels on the same theme, even those with the death of the leading characters at the end. Several questions rise throughout the course of reading, including why it is that the most virtuous one has to suffer, be disappointed

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 230-231.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 422.

<sup>3</sup>See Somphop, Chīwit..., p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>See p. 639.

<sup>5</sup>See Rančhuan, Phāp Chīwit..., pp. 427-459.

and die. Yuphā, in the continuation of this novel raises the same question while sitting at her friend's grave: "Why must someone like Nōi die?"<sup>1</sup>

Compared with Dōkmaisot's other long works, Nī Lae Lōk! represents modern society, the restlessness of which gives no peace in the minds of the characters to consider religion. None of them is a monastery-goer like characters in Sām Chāi. The male characters never think of being ordained for a period as Buddhist monks, as is traditionally practised, but are busy thinking of fulfilling worldly and materialistic desires, all of which produce turmoil in mind and heart. Nevertheless, they achieve their goals whereas the one who desires least and often thinks of religious teachings fails.

Judging from the tone in the title, "This! Is the World", and the mental and physical sufferings of Salyā together with the Pali quotation at the end of the story, the real theme lies deeper than one sees; the impermanence of all nature. Salyā's life - her birth and status, her plain appearance, her illness, her sorrow and her death - only symbolises that truth.

Aniṅgā vata saṅkhārā	All material things are impermanent.
uppādavayadhammino	Rising and decaying are their phenomena.
uppajjitvānirujjhanti	They rise and then fall away.
tesaṃvupasamo Sukho. <sup>2</sup>	Their cessation is happiness.

The quoting of proverbs, sayings and religious teachings by Dōkmaisot in her works from the beginning up to Nī Lae Lōk! reflects well her attitude towards life as it gradually develops in seriousness. In Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, for example, Yot.

<sup>1</sup>See Dōkmaisot, Wannakam Chin Sutthāi (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nī Lae Lōk!, p. 936.

The Pali passage is partly from the Maha Parinibbana Sutra.

speaks of his only personal precept, "Thou shalt not be found out", and the novelist was still vigorous enough to criticise the long-established traditions and practice by using the teachings of the Lord Buddha as criteria.<sup>1</sup> Then, in Sām Chāi Nāng Nai Rōi, Phūdī, and Chaichana Khōng Luang Narābān, the quotations are mostly didactic. But in Nī Lae Lōkī, her tone changes completely; it is rather dismal but with deep understanding. The quoted Pali passage is commonly known to Thai people in association with death because the monks usually recite it at the funeral services. But Dōkmaisot certainly realises the meaning well, for in the last sentence of the novel, she employs meaningfully three religious terms:

...Her "chīwit" (jīvita - life) is extinguished, her "chit" (cita - mind) is cut from "sangkhān" (saṅkhāra - component parts or members of the body) floating into the brightness of the next world." 2

If the above passage quoted is considered further and more deeply, the word "dukkha" (suffering) will follow straight away, and its causes (birth, growth, decay, illness, death, separation from the objects one loves, hating what cannot be avoided, craving for what cannot be obtained) underline the life of Salyā, despite her virtues.

But, put in psychological terms, dealing with the human and personal aspect, we see Salyā as primarily a witness, an observer of events that surround her involving others and their relationships, but still unable to enter the scene effectively even when she knows intellectually and with emotion even that she should be involved.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IV, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 936.

## Plot

All the incidents which form the strange plot of this novel are absolutely well-knit step by step, with the problems resolved one by one until the two who become leading characters, Chit and Salyā, end in disappointment in one case and death in the other. It seems simple when the author moves the story on at gatherings of her young characters at the tennis court and parties each weekend. But the intricate web is spun with great subtlety each time. The men gather, then disperse, leaving the results of the meeting to the female characters who do not go to work outside to think, discuss and then plan things for for the next occasion - an introduction to the happenings at the following weekend. If during any weekdays there are visits or talks between them, it certainly means important consequences to follow. Compared with her earliest novel, Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, Dōkmaisot's technique of writing has undoubtedly reached a peak of maturity. A close examination of the turning of incidents and reference back to them in later conversations in the novel shows complete exactitude on the part of the novelist.

Should Nī Lae Lōk! be dramatised, one weekend would be like one act, sub-divided into small scenes by special meetings during weekdays. The settings would be always the same; at the tennis court, in a restaurant, in Phrayā Suramontri's bed room, and at parties. And the action would be so clearly understood that one could see where each character sat, stood, how Čhintanā and Lēkhā made eyes at men and the men's response, how Khanitthā rushing down the staircase to greet Sarōt slipped, etc. None of them, not even a servant would appear without contributing to the story or to the characterisation. Dōkmaisot seems to use in this novel the technique of sending a herald

or sounding a fanfare to make the reader alert before the appearing of the main characters. The first four chapters, for example, are actually her preparation to release Salyā onto the stage. Within it there is the similar but smaller scale process of introducing Sārī through Bunplūk, Thawit through Pachā, Chit through Kamōhōn, and Winai through Yuphā. Chuanchom is not announced by any character but by her giggle and her shrieking voice calling herself most inappropriately "Nū" (a little one or a mouse) before Salyā sees her as a fat ugly girl. To continue the idea of the novel as a play: before the end of each act, the author always leaves some people or a situation which will be linked coherently with the following act. For example chapter twenty-five ends with Chit infuriating Samut by suggesting him that he should marry Chuanchom. The reader will long to know the result which eventually takes place toward the end of chapter twenty-six, at a ball when Samut, when all his ways-out from financial disaster have been closed by Chit, makes himself ridiculous by proposing to Chuanchom.

Chit, in fact, through his activities, especially money lending has the effect of a catalyst in several relationships. Samut borrowing money from Chit causes him to want to marry the rich Chuanchom instead of Āhintanā; Pachā can marry Sārī only after paying off a former female associate with money borrowed from Chit. He is also used to introduce Thawit to Salyā.

This goes part of the way to explain the unusual structure of Nī Lae Lōk! The main characters appear to be those who run through most of the story - having their problems set out, developed and in most cases solved.

Chapters	Weekends	Weekdays	Approx. dates	Incidents
1-8	1		Aug. 1939	Families A & B <sup>1</sup> introduced (with relationships between Winai and Surangrat, Pacha and Sari, and Salya's health). Thawit, Sanong and Sarot mentioned only by names.
9		Friday	"	Differences between Salya and her sisters Friendship between Salya and Yupha
10	2		"	Sarot appears. Flirtation between Chintana, Lekha, Khanittha and Samut, Sanong, Sarot.
11-14		Mon. & Tues.	"	Winai plans to ask for Surangrat's hand - Salya informed Samut's private life and financial difficulties. Sanong's life with mother.
15	3		Sept. 1st, 1939 <sup>2</sup>	Salya introduced to Thawit by Chit Samut approaches Chit for help.
16-17		Thurs.	"	Chit lends money to Samut. Surangrat's dilemma - Salya informed. Sari and Pacha relationship revived.
18	4		"	1st birthday of Sura. Chuanchom introduced.
19		Wed.	Sept. 27th, 1939 <sup>3</sup>	<u>Surangrat-Winai problem resolved by elopement</u> - Salya informed.
20	5		Oct. 1939	Samut postpones paying interest to Chit. Surangrat-Winai happy marriage.
21-22			Nov. 1939	Sari agrees to marry Pacha. Pacha borrows money from Chit. Surangrat forgiven by father - Salya informed.
23	6		Dec. 1939 <sup>4</sup>	Thawit introduced to Family by Chit.
24	7		"	Samut's house-warming party. Sanong proposes to Lekha. Chuanchom reappears.
25	8		Dec. 39-Jan. 40	Sari - Pacha engaged. Lekha - Sanong engaged. Sarot's invitation to a Club Ball. Chit demands interest from Samut and urges him satirically to marry Chuanchom.
26-27	9		Jan.-Feb.	Club Ball. Samut proposes marriage to Chuanchom. Chintana's disappointment. Flirtatious manners of Sarot with Chintana, Salya, and Khanittha Salya - Thawit closer relationship begins.
28			"	Sarot makes a final decision about the girl he wants to marry.
29	10		"	Salya asks Yupha to join her circle.
30	11 & Wed.		"	Salya and Yupha meet Thawit by chance.
31	12		Mar. 1940	Chintana - Sarot engaged. Khanittha is heart-broken.
32	13 & Tues.		Mar. 1940 <sup>5</sup>	Salya - Thawit attachment. Thawit plans to pay his respects to his uncle in Hua Hin. Yupha asks Salya to go to Hua Hin with her family.
33	14 & weekdays		end of Mar. 1940	Phraya Suramontri ill, then recovers. Salya and Thawit promise to meet in the train.
34	15		Apr. 13th, 1940 <sup>6</sup>	Salya, Yupha, Thawit, Chit in the train to Hua Hin.
35			Apr. 15th - Jun. 1940	Phraya Suramontri dies. Chit is refused by Salya. Thawit proposes marriage to Yupha. Salya dies.

Chit is their only common friend.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Families of Phraya Suramontri and Phraya Sanphakit.

<sup>2</sup> See Dikmaiset, Si Lao Lok, pp. 419-420. Salya reads a stop-press announcement 'German troops invade Poland'

<sup>3</sup> See Ibid., p. 532. Salya reads 'Warsaw collapses. Poland falls to Germany'.

<sup>4</sup> See Ibid., p. 627. Montri comments 'After "taking advantage of other people's efforts" the Russians were "bashed on the head" quite hard by a "child" or the Finns'.

<sup>5</sup> The only discrepancy in the dates in this novel is noted here. A careful examination proves that the day Thawit visited Salya and talked to her about the customs of the Songkran Day (the Water Festival) is in late March 1940. But Thawit asked Salya the following question, "Should I go to see your grandfather? I haven't met him since (we talked about) the Germans invading Denmark". The actual historical incident of course did not occur until April 8th, 1940.

<sup>6</sup> The date is assumed from Thawit going to Hua Hin to pay his respects to his uncle on the Songkran Day, which usually falls on April 12th or April 13th.

<sup>7</sup> For the deathday of Salya see Dikmaiset, Wannakan Chin Sutthai, p. 6.

Yet there/other characters like Chit who considerably <sup>are</sup> affect the development of the story and yet are not fully inside it - or inside it and yet in a sense, because of their function in providing, for one thing, an aspect of continuity, they are outside the narrow conflicts of the relationships between the characters we follow at the start.

This is even more true of Salyā though she is not a catalyst. Rather, she is a kind of witness for much of the story. The plan shows how many events are reported to her and this helps the continuity effect.

However towards the end of the story, for about chapter twenty-six - Salyā moves into the centre of the stage with Thawit and Yuphā who, also, have been on the sidelines.

This is an extraordinary device of the author. The characters, families A and B, whose relationships the reader has become involved with and has seen develop fully, now fade out in favour of the trio plus Chit whose relationships provide the climaxes of the story. These characters have been known to the reader but only in a shadowy way - they suddenly burst onto the stage. This plot analysis and plan attempts to show that there is no accident in this but a highly sophisticated set of intentions developed by the novelist as a writer of mature skill.

#### Main characters

In a conventional sense, the hero and heroine of this story would be Thawit and Yuphā. But Salyā and Chit are the real leading characters, the central figures who provide the unity of the happenings. Both are excellent creations of Dōkmaisot.

Salyā shares no similar characteristics with the novelist's earlier women: the cheerfulness and innocence of Nut and Nit, the charm and determination of Walai, the social manners and adaptability of Khunying Sae, Čhitrā, and Suntharī, the wilfulness of Wimon, the western outlook of Mayurī and Anong, the beauty of Phatcharī, the insipidity of Sačhī, Ngāmphit, and Phōranī. The only person who can be considered rather close to Salyā is Amarā in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, plain in appearance, physically weak, conservative in behaviour, modern in thoughts, and fond of reading. One big difference between them which is most important psychologically is that Amarā is impulsive and straightforward and Salyā an introvert.

In analysing this character, Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng's criticism, "Salyā Phū Wātsanā Nōi (Salyā - an Unfortunate Woman)" is used for comparison.

Presumably the critic employed the term "wātsanā" (Pali and Sanskrit- vasana) for the life of Salyā because Salyā herself used to ponder over its meaning in relation to her rich, influential but blind grandfather. Salyā's definition of the word as "happiness as a result of previous merit" might not satisfy the critic and make her quote the meanings given in the Thai Dictionary which include the above and some other more religious and philosophical meanings. Rančhuan concluded that Salyā was lonely because she was delicate and precise in thinking and doing, and that she never achieved anything she wished because she was too embarrassed to express her desire to other people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rančhuan, op.cit., pp. 427, 433, 435.

The opinions are justifiable, but being lonely, responsible, exploited and refined cannot be a total description of Salyā and cannot make her so interesting a character. The critic only looked at her with sympathy from inside as the author allowed her to see and not as an outsider looking at her fairly, with detachment from social viewpoints. Salyā may have been very helpful as her grandfather once said, "Nōi is my eyes, my hands, my legs and my head, everything."<sup>1</sup> She may have been very reasonable, and knowledgeable, as her sisters constantly said satirically and may have possessed a number of qualities, but she also has complexes. All the qualities which she has and the reader sees are carried to the extreme; too sensitive, too responsible, too helpful, and too honest. She is over self-conscious, self-critical, self-abasing, and she lacks the ability to adapt herself completely. Because she is uncompromising and the world does not compromise with her, Salyā has to suffer. She may have some sense of humour, but it is only sustained as long as she is not involved in it. For example, at the party of Bu-ngā and Montrī, when she first sees Chuanchom and hears her calling herself and being called "Nū", Salyā thinks, "If I had a shape like that, I would curse everyone who called me 'Nū' . Then when she sees the second "Nū", Salyā wonders "Why that woman who is in the 'Nū' age, has a body as flat as a plank." But when the third "Nū" appears, Salyā is dumbfounded because it is her own sister, Khanitthā, picking up the fashion so quickly.<sup>2</sup>

Salyā may criticise other people in her thought but when it is her turn to be looked at or be the object of interest, even in her own home, she becomes uncomfortable and nervous.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 829.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 521, 525.

Dṛkmaisot writes about the conflicts in Salyā's state of mind at various moments superbly vividly, as when Salyā has to sit alone in a restaurant because she does not want to dance:

Salyā sat alone, looking lost and helpless. She began to breathe with uneasiness, imagining every pair of eyes turning to stare at her simultaneously, making her uncomfortable and not knowing what expression to put into her face and how to conduct herself.

Looking round, she saw several types of people. Some were not properly dressed or were not behaving well and from what she had heard the place had very mixed customers. Sitting all alone made her feel as if she had been taken there to be neglected.

Apprehensions occurred in her mind and heart. She was embarrassed, hurt and angry, but could not lay blame on anyone. A voice whispered from the depths of her heart that she had a right to be embarrassed but had no right whatsoever to be hurt and angry.

If she was allowed to do just what her heart told her, Salyā would cry. Her brain was also telling her "You are superfluous. You are not wanted by anybody. You followed them here without being invited."<sup>1</sup>

When Sarōt, a good-mannered man, comes to sit with her, Salyā becomes anxious again. This time in a different way:

She is thinking how to find some suitable way to stop herself being an obstruction to his pleasure. She will not dance, at least not tonight. It is impossible for her to eliminate the long established disgust in her heart within an hour. But as long as she refuses to dance, that gentleman will have to keep her company and his pleasure will be destroyed.

But on the other hand, if she were to dance, one of her sisters or her sister-in-law would be left alone...<sup>2</sup>

Salyā know the cause of her awkwardness but she cannot get rid of it as she pondered over it once at another party:

Then she thought of a remedy for her feeling out of place or her imagining that other people saw her being obstructive. Her idea was that such feeling stemmed from self-consciousness, from which the desire for other people's attention again emerged, and if it was not fully met, the feeling of being offensive would occur. The thought that she had some faults and was not worthy.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 305-307.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

of anybody's interest, then the wish to go away would follow...<sup>1</sup>

Rančhuan, in the same article, defined the word "friends" for Salyā as people with mutual understanding, feelings, opinions, and tastes, and said that from there the further step in relationship, namely love, could take place. For that reason, the critic wrote, Salyā could not accept Sarōt, and her friendship with Thawit was most meaningful.<sup>2</sup>

But one cannot put the blame on Sarōt for he certainly saw Salyā's virtues, understood her feelings when her own brothers and sisters took no notice of them, but he had his own opinions and tastes about the woman he wanted to marry too. There, the contrast in their ideas exists. Sarōt did try hard from beginning to end to persuade Salyā to improve her appearance, style of clothing, her attitude towards modern society, but his attempt was fruitless. The following is a good example of Salyā's idiosyncrasy and Sarōt's endurance:

"It can't be much fun to dance with someone who doesn't know how to... I want the guests to enjoy themselves and don't want any of them to waste his time carrying or dragging - I mean dancing with me is just like dragging a block of wood."

Sarōt mumbled disapprovingly while frowning. He had never heard any woman make such an unpleasant comparison of herself... Her lack of female airs in her speech annoyed him. Looking at her more attentively, and seeing no sign of carefulness or particular attention to her clothes, Sarōt became irritated. Her hair had been permed but the style was so common. Her lips must have been painted but the colour, when compared with that on other girls, was too pale. Her eye-brows were naturally thick and well-curved, but without being beautified. Her nails were neither too long nor too short, smooth and clean, but as pale as her skin. The clothes she was wearing too, covered her figure completely, leaving nothing to attract the eyes and rouse attention.

Suddenly he asked, "have you ever noticed that nowadays girls are more clever at dressing up?"

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 507.

<sup>2</sup> Rančhuan, op.cit., pp. 436-437.

"yes, they are," Salyā agreed, "not only that, they they know how and do it beautifully too."

"Don't you think that women should make themselves beautiful all the time?"

"Of course, it's their duty," she answered firmly.

"Why?"

"Why?!", she repeated, looking up at him, "because... I don't know, don't you like beautiful women?"

"I certainly do. Not only women. I like everything that is beautiful."

"See, that's why."

He wanted to ask her directly why she, after realising the reason, never tried to make herself attractive. But being afraid of losing good manners, he made the indirect remark,

"In that case, those women who do not care about their beauty are unkind to other human-beings."

"You can say so. But it may also be because they realise that they won't be beautiful even if they try. Therefore it's better for them to keep it that way, so they can say I am not attractive now because I don't want to be. Wait and see when I want to."

He stared at her, pondering while frowning that the course of half a year had not changed her, not a bit. His silence, the look on his face and his strange gaze annoyed Salyā...<sup>1</sup>

Sarōt was not the only one who could not understand her. Thawit, who shared her liking for music and art, did not know the answer either. Chit alone saw some potential beauty in Salyā, as he answered to Thawit's question:

"I'll tell you what, Salyā is not without beauty. None of her sisters' eyes are as beautiful as hers. It's only because she hasn't taken interest in herself--"

"Possibly, but - she is not very much like a woman."

"Which means she does not have the artificial manners of her sisters." <sup>2</sup>

Of course 1940 was the period when everything in Thailand was moving fast towards modernisation. What had been once monopolized by the upper class had begun to evade their clasp since 1937, when the word "sākon (universal)" became a suffix

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 511-512, 514-517.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 681.

of everything western or westernised, for example, "chut sākon" (western man's suit), "dontrī sākon" (western music)<sup>1</sup>. The aristocrats therefore had to escape the influx of the commoners' imitation by leading fashion more quickly, or otherwise preserving and guarding strongly the real aristocratic way of life.<sup>1</sup> Most chose the first way, including Salyā's family, and that is what she could not catch up with and could not adapt herself too. While her sisters led the fashion of wearing shorts and felt proud of their legs, for example, Salyā felt the chill in hers under her long skirt. And when Khanitthā told their anxious mother that she felt comfortable and cool in their low-cut western-style dress, Salyā said: "Don't worry mother. Mine covers me up to the nape of my neck."<sup>2</sup>

As for Salyā's feeling towards Thawit, Ranchuan concluded that Salyā was contented with the friendship he gave her, giving the reason that she was afraid to hope for anything more than that because her hope and its fulfilment always ran parallel.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Sākon" had become a much favoured expression during the first regime of F.F. Pibulsonggram. It was intended to convey approval in connexion with the modernizing (westernising) programme of the Government. As a member of the more sophisticated old elite, Dōkmaisot introduces a note of irony. This is especially to be seen in the short story 1/500.

"Once Nāi Chōt understood that the word 'sā-kon' meant 'all over the world'. When the world became narrower and every thing is 'all over the world', Nāi Chōt had to change his understanding and now he understood that the word 'sākon' meant 'cheating'. Dōkmaisot, 1/500, Busabāban, p. 289

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nī Lae Lōk!, p. 703.

<sup>3</sup>Ranchuan, op.cit, p. 438.

The critic was wrong and that conclusion led to another and graver mistake when she wrote about the cause of Salyā's death as if it had no direct connection with Thawit, but because she had to lose her best friend, Yuphā:

...Seeing and talking to Yupha was the only happiness left for Salyā. The last day of her life, the day when her heart stopped beating was when Yuphā brought the news of her engagement to Thawit, that young naval officer. Yuphā is always lucky! Yuphā is fortunate in appearance, family, wealth, and love from her parents, sisters, and from the man she loves!!...1

The critic's firm view prevents her from observing the existence of Salyā's hidden love. Salyā loved Thawit, was very attached to him and thought incorrectly that the feeling was mutual. When he looked at her, she did not feel annoyed or uncomfortable as she did with Sarōt but it made her "blush until her face was pink and a strange feeling ran in her veins all over her body."<sup>2</sup> Learning about his family background, Salyā could not conceal her glee, for it meant no family barrier between them. When Chit proposed marriage to her, Salyā was still thinking that Thawit might have sacrificed his love for his friend. Salyā died, not because Yuphā was getting married but because Yuphā was getting married to the only man she had ever loved.

Her love for Thawit was not really extended from friendship as Ranĉhuan suggested. He struck her from the first time they met and after that, like Khanitthā seeing Sarōt, Thawit was the most dignified person in her eyes<sup>3</sup>. And like Yuphā, Salyā loved him because he was Thawit, or for the sake of love and nothing else<sup>4</sup>. Her introvert nature made Salyā conceal

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<sup>1</sup>Ranĉhuan, op.cit., p. 440.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 868.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 720, 729.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.930

her feelings from other people; her love, disappointment and everything, and that is perhaps what made her over-imagine that Thawit also loved her. To Thawit, Salyā only made him want to have a female companion in his home, whereas Yuphā roused his wish for a wife.<sup>1</sup>

Salyā's love is the strongest tragic aspect of Nī Lae Lōk! Somphop Čantharapraphā, writing after Dōkmaisot's death, imagined Salyā's death in the novel to be like that of the author - not only because she died of the same disease but presumably because of some other similarities perceived between the lives of the novelist and this female character:

Two nights later, Salyā woke up late at night with a feeling of something heavy pressing over her chest. She wanted to push it off; but her arms refused to move. She struggled but every part of her body did not function. An awful fear occurred in her mind. Salyā shrieked, but no sound came out off her throat. With all the strength left to her she lifted herself up, but was exhausted after her head had hit the head of the bed and her back still rested on the pillow.

A sign of death appeared to Salyā; she was going to die of a heart attack, without a single person knowing it and without any treatment; she heard a gasping and groaning sound echoing from her own heart; she felt cold and tired to an extent that no living man had ever felt... For a while she was frightened beyond any fright.

A sign of death appeared to Salyā; she was going to die. An instinct for the survival of soul and body exhorted her to struggle but unsuccessfully. Yes, without doubt she was going to die.

"That pitch-dark thing? What bright flash? Is that death? That dreadful cold, chill, and iciness! Where does it come from? Is it certain that I am going to die? ...Perhaps it is. Oh! Thawit! Thawit! Yuphā!

"What is that bursting in my head, causing in me such pain, such anguish as no living man has ever experienced? What is that ghastly pitch-dark thing, looking more frightening than anything one has ever encountered? And what is that dim light which gradually spreads into a long vast bright ray?

"Is it death? And what is death?"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 926-927.

Salyā smiled. "Yes, the bright ray is a luminous sign of death!..." Death is the detachment from the old body. The difficulty of dying lies in the struggle of 'life' when it is about to leave the body. But what had this body given to Salyā? In a flash of the mind before a person opens the door of the 'body' to the next world, Salyā saw vividly the whole course of her past life.

A child was born a daughter of the family. Her parents loved and took care of her as much as nature and responsibility compelled and expected them to do. With her love of studying and having fought to obtain it, she completed her high school education. As a teenager she dreamt of pursuing her education at a university. But it was only an empty dream for her parents did not see the advantage of it. As a young woman, she wanted to be a teacher, fought for it, won it, but it lasted only one year because she could not bear the lack of discipline in the school where she taught.

In regard to relationships with other people, she was a recipient of their problems for they would turn to her only when they were in trouble and turn away to enjoy happiness among themselves. She was useful to an old disabled man, but death took him away from her.

Her life, in the most important aspect that life holds, the one which unites progress and failure, the setting up and breaking down<sup>1</sup>, was full of disappointment, loss, and error... "Sarōt, Chit, Thawit, oh! Thawit! Yuphā! Yes, that's right, I am a loser all round. I am beaten by the world. This world is not for me..."

"What is it that squeezing my chest? It is crushing and wringing my heart painfully?" ...

The stars had disappeared. The moon was absent from the sky. The breeze was cool, fragrant, fresh, and pure... It was dawn, for the cocks were crowing, crows sounding noisily, birds singing sweetly, flowers unfolding their petals sending out their scent. The leaves of the trees were unfurling. The whole world was waking up from darkness to light, but Salyā's life was becoming dimmer and dimmer. When all nature is getting up from stillness to life, is it still possible that Salyā is dying?

An instinct for self-protection was urging Salyā to find a refuge... "Mother! Mother! Help me please, I am going to die this very moment..."

No fear, pain, anguish, nor struggle left in her. Her mind fled to and dwelt anxiously on those who also needed protection...

"Nit (Khanitthā), Nit will become a minor wife of Sarōt. Nit will share a husband with Chintana. Nit will separate them from one another. Nit, my only little sister, if only I could live longer, I would protect you, but I am dying..."

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<sup>1</sup>She is avoiding the use of the term for love.

It was completely dark again and then bright, chilly and then warm. Salyā was so comfortable that no living creature could possibly be as comfortable... Dark again... bright again...dark again... and then glowing bright. The silver rays were shining gloriously!... No more love, anxiety, yearning. Her flame of 'life' was fading away and away. Suddenly she thrilled as no one had ever thrilled before - and only once. Then the bright rays shone brilliantly and her 'life' was extinguished, her 'mind' was cut off from the 'body' floating into the brightness of the next world.<sup>1</sup>

The next important character in Nī Lae Lōk! is Chit Unkasēm. He is a favourite character of another critic, Wilāt Manīwat, as he writes in his criticism on K. Surāngkhanāng's Phanthiphā (1943):

The author (K. Surāngkhanāng) intended to draw a complete and most beautiful picture of the life of Phanthiphā (a character) in Phanthiphā like Dōkmaisot had done in her portrayal of Salyā. But instead I prefer the characterisation of Chalāt Thanyalak (a character) and I like him as much as Nāi Chit in Nī Lae Lōk! This does not mean however that the pictures of Phanthiphā and Salyā are not good enough, but perhaps because the less attention the novelists gave to Chalāt and Chit had surprisingly made them more distinctive...<sup>2</sup>

To speak fairly of the characterisation of Salyā and Chit, they are equally difficult to draw and need equal ability in the author, but two completely different techniques. Dōkmaisot depicts Salyā from inside like someone she knows as well as herself, whereas Chit is merely her acquaintance and therefore only his appearance, manners, and speech are seen and heard. Both of them need great narrative power from the writer; a complete knowledge of Salyā's consciousness and confused psychological states of mind, and a vivid, picturesque, consistent description of Chit.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 931-936.

<sup>2</sup>Wilāt Manīwat, "Aphiprāi lae Wičhān" in K. Surāngkhanāng, Phanthiphā (Bangkok: Ruamsan, 1969), preface, pp. 12-13.

Chit has the character that Thai people would conclude as "being too slippery to be caught" or "rolling round like a smooth round log polished with oil". His symbolising of the change of social strata in Thailand makes him a particularly interesting character of Dōkmaisot. Physically, Chit is seen through Salyā's critical eyes as "having no physical charm or personality, rather trembly when he speaks", and when he walks with the dignified Thawit Chit reminds Salyā of "an actor monkey".<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, when it is to do with his business, Chit is as hard as nails. He seems to have masses of energy to dash here and there acting as a broker, agent, lending money, finding clients for solicitors, selling lands, houses, even tennis rackets. He grasps every chance to make money, as he admits: "It's my way of earning a living...That's right, I can't let the opportunity pass, otherwise my stomach will cry."<sup>2</sup> His method which make Thawit scold him once "You are worse than a blood-sucking leech", are cruel and tricky and it is always done in such a way that the hand of the law can never reach him.

Dōkmaisot never talks about Chit's education. Presumably, he was self-taught. His lack of formal education and training always makes him an object of ridicule. For example, when he tries to imitate Thawit in loosen his necktie by pulling one of its ends, he often pulls the wrong one and it chokes him instead. When he wants to use a proverb or a saying, he is always wrong, as he quotes once, "The Lord Buddha says we have to make haste killing first those who want to kill us."<sup>3</sup> And when he wants to join an academic discussion, he only shows his ignorance of the subject, for example, he says once that

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 125, 703.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 188, 190.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

Liège is situated on the seaside and the Germans want it because they can shoot their cannons from there across the Channel.

Such are Chit's characteristics known to most people in the story. His better-recognised social status through his profession makes them address him as "Khun Chit" but they still refer to him behind his back as "Tā Chit"<sup>1</sup>. The worst thing Chit ever commits in their eyes, should they have known it, would have been his proposal of marriage to Salyā, a Phrayā's daughter. The scene, though short, is interesting both from psychological and literary points-of-view; the author presents an encounter of an extrovert (Chit) with an introvert (Salyā), lets the first talk and the latter think as they should according to their natures while she herself only relates the account to us:

Chit sat down, started clicking his fingers a few times, then spoke, stammeringly at first and more quickly later,

"In fact...I shouldn't say this to you now because... you are in mourning...but...but I do not mean that you must do anything straightaway, only to let you know before hand. ...I am like a wild horse, but all good horses must be wild-;" he shook his legs so tensely that the chair was also shaken, "It's the rider that is most important. If the rider is good, the horse will be under control and will take its rider everywhere, up the mountain, down the lake, across water and fire. It will go everywhere, with the right rider...I consider you a good rider. I have noticed your character for some time and decided to let you ride. I will be your war-horse, going with you everywhere you want. You don't have to worry about anything at all-"

He paused with a long sigh. Salyā was silent, gazing at him with utter puzzlement. She was not sure what he was talking about.

And for a man who is proposing to a girl, there is nothing worse than a return by her of a look without understanding. Nāi Chit began to click his fingers again vigorously and shake his legs more and later said,

"Whatever and however much you want to call from me, I'll agree. Let alone my money and properties, even myself you can use to do anything. My house where I am living

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<sup>1</sup>For definition see p. 380.

now is rather shabby, but if you agree I will build a new one. There are lots of beautiful pieces of land, you can choose which one you like. I will do everything appropriate for you. I have realised that you are as valuable as a jewel and when you are with me you will never look down on my mother or my relatives. A wild horse when tamed is so good to ride, you know. He will be wild only with other people, but with his master he will obey even if he rides him into the flames."

Strange mixed feelings, such as she had never had before in her life appeared to Salyā: angry, disgusted, amused and sympathetic. She said, feeling it unbearable to look at his face,

"You should not speak to me about this. First because I am in mourning and secondly because...because...I don't like--"

"I know you would say that because you are not a modern person like your sisters. But I have nobody to speak for me. I can neither eat nor sleep much nowadays. I don't know why I keep dreaming of you all the time. I love you, pity you. Seeing you cry the other day, I also wanted to cry. I just don't want to touch any work now, wanting only to finish our business first. I have several big jobs waiting, and when get the money, whom should I bring it to if not you...If you can't give me your answer today, you can give it to me some other time. I'll wait. Before, I liked you as a friend, but later it changed. If you do not like me yet, I'll wait and won't press you--"

"Don't wait and don't hope for anything from me--," Salyā could not continue her sentence, feeling a hurt in her heart for him. But Nāi Chit was not as easily dismayed as she thought. He said,

"But once I want anything I must try until I get it, no matter how long it takes me. Even if you don't like me today, you will like me in the future. Whatever you want, I'll find for you. Whatever you want me to be, I'll be... Think carefully Khun Nōi, it is not that easy to find someone like me. Once I have loved, I can die for you. Once I am grateful I am really grateful. I'll do anything no matter how hard. I can exchange my life with yours and die for you." <sup>1</sup>

There are several angles however from which to view this round character. Chit may be cruel to those who look down on him, but he is generous, well-principled, reliable, loyal and certainly very grateful. Whenever he receives an

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 914-916, 917, 918, 919.

expensive and rare gift like "birds' nests"<sup>1</sup> from his customers, he gives it to Phrayā Suramontri instead of keeping it for himself only because he knows that the old man likes it. He severely reproaches Samut and Sanōng for blaming Salyā's sisters behind their backs. Chit could have lived in the same mansion as Thawit who by tradition should take care of his wet-nurse, Chit's mother, but he would rather have a house of his own and even be responsible for his other relatives too. Every time the novelist describes how Chit serves Thawit with loyalty, half-forces and half-urges him to look after himself and his property, Chit could become a pitiful darling of the reader easily.

In terms of his function in the novel, however comical and pathetic he is as a man, Chit is the weaver of the plot-threads. Nobody in the story knows his mind but he has a share in everyone's life, or, in other words, he sparks all dynamic forces in this novel.

With Chit, Dōkmaisot has liberated her characterisation of male characters from being "too idealistic", and with Salyā from the convention of creating heroines beautiful, and adorable. Perhaps a trace of her previous tradition in Ni Lae Lōk! is seen in the portrayals of Thawit and Yuphā. With these two figures Dōkmaisot maintains her usual technique of using contrast in characterisation.

Thawit is opposite to Chit in all respects, being tall, dignified, rich, generous, well-educated, and every inch a gentleman. He appears so calm even an inactive person that in

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<sup>1</sup>The edible sea-swallow's nest found in island caves along the southern sea coast of Thailand. These remarkable nests consist essentially of mucus which is secreted by the salivary glands of the birds and which dries and looks like isinglass. These are made into a soup which is very highly esteemed, especially by the Chinese. (McFarland, *Siamese-English Dictionary*, p. 701.)

the end, when he suddenly decides to marry Yuphā, the novelist has to tell the reader herself that "actually Thawit was very impatient. Once he made up his mind to do anything, he would do it straightaway, and never stop doing it until it was completed".<sup>1</sup> Mentally, Thawit is compatible with Salyā and he realises it, but, as the author says, "some people do not wish for their own replicas"<sup>2</sup>, Thawit therefore chooses Yuphā. Yuphā and Salyā, despite their friendship and common interests, are different in temperaments. Yuphā thinks less and acts more than Salyā, and consequently she is more decisive and happier.

All the secondary characters, which are as abundant as in Nūng Nai Rōi, are realistically described and developed. But unlike those in Nūng Nai Rōi, whose function is only to support the character of Wichai, they partly form the plot and more importantly form society in the novel. The "background" characters, namely the servants, are greater in number than in Dōkmaisot's previous works, but they will be closely looked at in connection with other features of this novel.

#### Atmosphere, setting, and language

Unlike Ubattihēt and Nanthawan, Dōkmaisot in Nī Lae Lōk! escapes neither from Bangkok nor the contemporary period of time. She may have purposely avoided political situations in the Kingdom but she certainly does not turn her back on the fact that the age of aristocracy is really moving fast towards its close. The society portrayed therefore is that of Thai aristocrats encountering a rapid stream of social change.

Compared with the atmosphere in the author's other works, one's first impression of Nī Lae Lōk! is the rather "non-phūdī" social behaviour of the so-called "phūdī". The comparatively

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 923

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 925.

lower-class characters, Chit, Samut, Sanōng, Bu-ngā, Chuanchom hold their ground quite firmly with the help of their money, education, and position in the civil service, It is the turn of the "phūdī" to stoop down to them though unwillingly. Girls stop sitting in an orderly posture on the floor stringing garlands or singing old tunes but go out with men in the evening and dance with them, not at the Phya Thai Palace, but in public night-clubs to western jazz music, with professional partners sitting not far away. Those who are still conservative and cannot join them are only the unhappy odd ones out. When the author makes Salyā and Yuphā complain about the disagreeable behaviour of their siblings and friends, their voice is quite faint. Salyā, when being put off by Chit's manners, can only look away and sigh. Meanwhile the lower-class criticism of the higher-class grows stronger and stronger. For example, Chit calls Samut names for looking down on him and for trying to raise his position to a higher-class with the only qualification he has - being a student from abroad. Samut himself is furious when he is among Chintanā and her sisters who keep talking about their aristocratic family. Chit alone is above all these social assumptions, having neither an inferiority complex nor bitterness against them, but being realistic and understanding. To him, Salya's sisters are "damned proud"<sup>1</sup> but he does not care, for virtue and not beauty is what he expects in the girl he wants to marry. Education - Chit cannot care less, as he scolds Thawit:

"Go on with your theories. I have had enough of them... I understand well enough that they'll leave you with only one undergarment. Your stomach may be stuffed with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

knowledge, you may have trains of followers running along to die with you, and you may be a "phūdī" for seven generations, but you have no ability to look after your property." <sup>1</sup>

As to the status of the aristocrats too, Chit is not its worshipper for it is more than clear to him, who knows their "behind the curtain" activities, that they are just ordinary people, for instance when he speaks of Salyā's parents, Phrayā and Khunying Phiphat Phanlop:

"A gambler all round... His land and house, he pawned them and the grandfather (Phrayā Suramontri) redeemed them...A woman of that age, disappearing from morning till night, where else could she go if not to gamble... Oh yes, both husband and wife, but not to the extent of ruining themselves..."<sup>2</sup>

With the older generation of "phūdī" disappearing and their descendants becoming less conscious of their social exclusiveness, Dōkmaisot has shown in this novel the strong emergence of the new middle class. Three instances which can be considered the triumph of the new class are the elopement of Surāngrat with Winai, the marriage of Lēkhā to Sanōng, and the failure of Chintanā to win Samut because of Chuanchom's greater wealth. Moreover, the author also portrays the more definitely low-class people in contrast with the two upper ones. Indeed she does so in this novel more vividly than in her other works. The servants become a prominent component of the atmosphere, being allotted the duty of introducing their masters and mistresses, criticising their behaviour, and at the same time presenting the activities of their circles parallel with but below their employers. The reader sees for example in Sām Chāi how Khun Chaem used to sit folding betel leaves, and in Phūdī how Phrayā Pholawat used to welcome Khunying Sae with

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 199-200.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 184, 188, 634.

a rug for her to sit on, tea, cold water, a betel-nut case, and a spittoon.<sup>1</sup> This time the comparable custom is performed by Čhīp and Bunplūk because their employers have already stopped chewing betel-nut but, rather, offer their guests tea, cake, and other delicacies. This type of contrast with the substitution of a simple ceremony for the former complex aristocratic form and most importantly the switch of participants is an interesting feature of Nī Lae Lōk!:

They talked while walking to the wooden house which was the servants' quarters. Nāng Čhīp led the way up and called Bunplūk to follow her.

Nāng Čhīp went into the inner room, walked straight to the mosquito-net, looked through it while saying,

"Now, that terrible girl Tō, has she slept?"

Realising that the girl was not there, she opened the net harshly, murmuring,

"She has gone out again, leaving her sister alone. How bad this child is."

Then she turned to the wooden wall, picked up a Loatian bowl and a cigarette tin filled with lime, took them outside. Placing them in front of Bunplūk, she said,

"Have some betel-nut."

In the bowl there were one and a half green areca nuts, a file of betel leaves, a tiger-balm compact containing lip salve, a dark-red napkin, two coppers, and several lumps; its owner could not tell whether the last were metal or not because they had been kept there for so long that their story was forgotten.

Nāng Čhīp peeled off the green and the white skin of the nut, put them in her mouth between her upper lip and her front teeth first, then she scooped out the meat of the nut from its shell. She then pasted some lime on a betel leaf, tore it into two, placed one half on the other, rolled it and chewed it with the nut.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these "back of the house" people contribute more than their usual duties to the atmosphere of Nī Lae Lōk! Chintanā's conversation with Phan about her male guest reflects her behaviour which is inappropriate to a "phūdī". Bunplūk used to express the condescension of a Thai, even of a lower-

<sup>1</sup>See Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p. 634.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 11-13.

class, towards the Chinese. She chooses to support herself by being a servant of a Thai family rather than living with her mother because, as she says, "I hate my stepfather. He is Chinese."<sup>1</sup> Samut's maid, Monthā, and Pachā's secret wife whose identification is not told, also play important roles in the story, one as an agent for borrowing money for her master and the other as an obstruction to his marriage. The description of Monthā is given by Dōkmaisot as clearly as in a photograph - a fat, dark, dirty-skinned, uneducated, ill-mannered woman to whom Chit refers as "an ogress" and Sanōng as "that thing".<sup>2</sup>

Society for this people is also changing. Only the older ones remain loyal to their employers. Some younger ones have the chance to be educated. Dōkmaisot adds an ex-servant of Thawit in order to present the change in social class eventhough he bears no significance as a character. The man, who has made his way up to the rank of lieutenant, meets Thawit in a restaurant and purposely ignores his former master and even shows bad manners towards him. It is annoying to Thawit but the latter understands that the man is driven by his inferiority complex. Perhaps the author chooses him to be the kind Thawit's former servant to strengthen the view that gratitude is an important feature of Thai society, and also to be in contrast with Chit who never leaves Thawit and remains loyal throughout.

Several categories of the middle class are included in Nī Læ Lōk! represented by those who are neither of the "Phrayā" nor of the servant class; Sanōng and his mother - a well-to-do and real Thai family but of the lowest rank, Samut - a man of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 381, 767.

country landlord origin raised up by his education abroad, Chuanchom and perhaps Bu-ngā too - the nouveaux-riches of Chinese origin, and lastly Chit - a self-made man fighting his way up from a servant's class without much education.

Dōkmaisot deals with these people characteristically using all the usual criteria, mannerism, etiquette, modes of dress, and language. She never lets a meal pass without adding sentences like: "Then Nāi Chit raised a little bowl of fried rice to his mouth, eating the rice with chop-sticks non-stop for a long while," or "Everyone started eating and criticising the soup. Thawit did not start, but waited until Yuphā finished serving."<sup>1</sup>

The sensitiveness of the Thai language is what really enables Dōkmaisot to write about class distinctions accurately, though still from an aristocrat's standpoint. A little keen observation will tell a reader the class to which each character belongs in the eyes of the author, chiefly from the terms of reference which are innumerable and used by the Thais in a very complicated system.

To begin with, the peculiar title-prefixes "Nāi" and "Nāng" which are official equivalents of the English "Mr" and "Mrs" are practically avoided in conversation, and the neutral and more polite "Khun" is the substitute. "Nāi" and "Nāng" then are reserved for inferiors, servants, for instance. If they are used with third persons, they will express contempt or dislike. Therefore, Dōkmaisot never mentions Thawit, Sarōt Montrī, Pachā, Kamchōn's names with "Nāi". Winai was mentioned with "Nāi" first, then without. The term is attached to Samut

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 188-189, 824-825.

and Sanōng most of the time. But Chit is never without it except when he is present in person: "Pachā and Nāi Chit..., Thawit answers Nāi Chit..." but, "Nāi Chit turned abruptly to Nāi Chuai...". Nāi Chuai is of course a servant.

Chit is therefore called "Nāi Chit" by Dōkmaisot, "Khun Chit" by people in the story in conversation, but he is "Tā Chit" when referred to. "Tā" here conveys an uncertainty of the speaker about the real position of the mentioned person, but there is in it a touch of condescension.

The lack of knowledge of the people in the story about Thawit makes him a very interesting symbol of class discrimination in Thai society, not only between the Thais but also between the Thais and the Chinese. Initially, he was referred to as "Tā Thawit" because they thought he was Chit's brother, then "Tā sia" (sia - Chinese millionaire) as a result of his being rich and generous. One of the first things which makes Salyā unsure about Thawit is his correct pronunciation of certain Thai sounds, especially the letter "R" which the Chinese usually pronounces "L".<sup>1</sup>

Like the young Phatcharī in Sām Chāi being taught not to use "Ai", "Ī", with the servant,<sup>2</sup> none of the girls in Nī Lāe Lōk! ever uses them. But "Ai", "Ī", third personal pronoun "man" and numeral "tua" (normally used with animals) and some other terms are always used by Chit with those who look down on him. As he speaks about Samut with Thawit, who does not join him in blaming the man:

"I wonder what Ai Samut wants from me? Man (he) thinks so highly of himself as a student from abroad and of me as a man in a coconut-shell<sup>3</sup>. Are all of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 232.

<sup>3</sup>For the definition see footnote 1, p. 288.

them so marvellous? I have met so many 'tua' of 'ai ngang (buffalo-like fools)' who have spent several years abroad." <sup>1</sup>

The type of things the characters say is another criterion. This may not be so difficult to notice or to feel as the terms of reference, but it still requires a careful distinction between styles of speaking of individuals and the influence of their class. The time and the place must also be taken into consideration. Chit's characteristics of speech are almost unbearable to the high-class. He makes manners seem like hypocrisy and sincerity merely like rudeness. His consistency makes him seemingly different and lower than Samut and Sa-nōng who are suave and flattering in front of his friends and speak about crude topics behind their backs.

Chuanchom is the least refined of all as far as speaking is concerned. This of course implies her being of Chinese descent. Even Bu-ngā, who is not that refined herself, comments on Chuanchom's behaviour:

"She is actually good-hearted, but her parents did not teach her properly, and let her behave rather indiscreetly. She speaks loudly and tactlessly. Everything that belongs to her is of this and that price. She does not know how to admire other people's belongings without asking the price." <sup>2</sup>

Samut himself is struck by Chuanchom's ill-manners when she goes to his house-warming party and opens her conversation by asking him why his house is an old one, whether he has inherited or bought it and for how much and even remarks:

"Ugh! (the area) is not even one an a half 'rai'. How small! It's almost impossible to breathe." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 189.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 718.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 650. 'Rai' is a square surface measure equal to 1600 square metres.

No Thai of whatever class will say that sort of thing .  
 Chuanchom is not aware of her bad manners even when Montri  
 snaps at her so strongly that Bu-ngā chokes:

"Why should it be impossible to breathe. Its owner  
 is small." <sup>1</sup>

The real high-class people are self-restrained. They  
 may feel it, but the aristocratic blood in them makes them hold  
 their tongues or say the opposite to what they really think  
 especially in public. For example, after Samut has declared  
 his decision to marry Chuanchom, Chintanā, who later becomes  
 frantic in her bedroom, is the first person who controls herself  
 enough to congratulate them.

It will not be justifiable, however, to take as a type  
 the things the high-class talk about Salyā's discussion of  
 Listz, Mendelssohn, Verdi with Thawit, or a Nobel Prize winning  
 novel with Yuphā, eventhough they can never be a topic of  
 conversation between servants, because there have been several  
 gentry characters who do not appear to sing or know much about  
 Western culture.

The most significant quality of the language in Nī Lae Lōk!  
 is the dialogue which is most appropriate to the characters'  
 temperaments, and is kept consistently so throughout. Unlike  
 Ngāmphit in Ubattihēt or Phōranī in Nanthawan whose inarticu-  
 lateness left to the author a tedious task to tell the reader  
 of their thoughts, most characters in Nī Lae Lōk! are seen in  
 the round, and their speech by itself gives a clear picture  
 of the speaker. For example, Chit always speaks curtly, bluntly  
 with swear words and slang expressions whereas Thawit speaks  
 calmly and sluggishly. Chit always says "I hold" when he wants  
 it to mean "I think", and Dōkmaisot keeps it specially for him

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 650

throughout the novel.

Besides the disappearance of children's language and laughter from this novel, the romantic love scene does not exist either. Instead of a sweet or even semi-poetic style in some cases, Dōkmaisot employs a precise, serious and gripping style of writing especially with Salyā's states of mind which predominate in the story. Even the quotations are not from old sayings, songs, or old literature, but from profound religious philosophy.

It can be said therefore that the trend of language both as used by the characters of different classes and by the author in the novel as a whole is changing, and that the changes are signs of the aristocrats' retreat. In real life, the most controversial and virtually impossible action levelling the language of all classes was attempted less than two years after the story of Nī Lae Lōk! in the form of F.M. Pibulsonggram's Cultural Laws.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, concerning the setting of the novel in the strict sense, all the happenings are chiefly confined to a few houses and restaurants in Bangkok. Should Dōkmaisot want to describe the countryside as she used to do, Nī Lae Lōk! could certainly provide her with a good chance. But this time she does not seem to be anxious to do this. Winai has an orchard somewhere just outside Bangkok, Samut comes from a provincial town, but none of the places is described. She lets Sarot go away from Bangkok, and in the end Salyā, Yuphā, Thawit, Chit to Hua Hin without really letting the reader see what they saw, but deftly proceeds with the incidents in the capital which directly concern all of them.

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 421-422, ff.

## CHAPTER IX

Wannakam Chin Sutthāi Khōng Dōkmaisot

(The Last Literary Work of Dōkmaisot)

The above title was not given to the novel by its author, but by the Prae Pittaya printing press with a reference to Col. Sučhit Siksamat<sup>1</sup> revealing Dōkmaisot's intention to make it her last and best work. It is written clearly in the manuscript that the novelist began writing it on Tuesday, July 12th, 1949. One year before that Somphop<sup>V</sup> Chantharaphā received the author's letter, dated August 26th, 1948, in which she mentioned this novel:

.... Have you any interesting stories which happened during the War to tell me? In my new novel the curtain rises in 1940 and falls in 1945. I do not yet know how the performance will turn out. I already have the plot, the beginning and the end,<sup>2</sup> but the story in between is still incomplete.

Although the gap between Nanthawan and this novel is as great as seven years, Dōkmaisot had certainly accumulated the material for her last work at least as far back as 1940, when she wrote Nī Lae Lōk !, of which her last work is a continuation. Her routine during those days was to observe the world situation from newspapers, discussions, and radio. Newspapers are said to have piled up in her book cases. She also consulted documents in the National Library.

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<sup>1</sup>A friend of Dōkmaisot, a graduate from Chulalongkorn University, a writer and poet.

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, Chīwit ..., p.91

Dōkmaisot tried hard without success to complete it in 1950 before she went to stay with Somphop's family in Songkhla in 1950.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, in 1953, she had to enter the Bangkok Nursing Home for treatment, leaving her writing unfinished. When she came out, feeling better physically, she still could not continue it. As she wrote in a letter:

...He (an astrologer) said that I would be able to work well and that my work would be completed within 4 - 5 months. I doubt it, because it does not seem to be possible at the moment. Before I went into the hospital, the story was left somewhere in mid-chapter, and since I came out, I have been unable to remember the plot I planned to write ...<sup>2</sup>

In the same letter she stated that, after she had taken great pains to translate a short story just to keep a promise she had given a publisher, her nerves were "creased and crumpled", her memory "deteriorated almost to a degree of senility", and she was "almost incapable of doing anything, even to understand and speak the language of human beings".<sup>3</sup> In the manuscript itself she wrote dismally in pencil "January 1953 - began rechecking and rewriting it. For how much longer can I write, I do not know."<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, Dōkmaisot made a third attempt to finish it during a second spell in the Bangkok Nursing Home, for she needed money to go for treatment in Australia in May 1954. But once more she failed.

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, op.cit.p.112.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 108 - 111 .

<sup>4</sup>As quoted by Yot Watcharasathian in Dōkmaisot, Wannakam Chin Sutthai, Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1964, Preface.

She took the manuscript with her to Perth, but it was eventually brought back to Bangkok by her nephew when Dōkmaisot herself went from Australia to San Francisco to marry Mr. Sukit Nimmanheminda.

According to Somphop Chantharapraphā, Dōkmaisot had intended the book's publication to coincide with the F.M. Pibulsonggram's second period of office after the War. F.M. Pibulsonggram lost power totally and finally in 1957, but Dōkmaisot could not finish her novel in time. After that she made no effort to finish it, because, she claimed, without F.M. Pibulsonggram as Prime Minister the book was no longer amusing and also because M.R. Kukrit Pramoj had already portrayed Thai society during World War II in his celebrated novel Sī Phaendin. Most probably these reasons were simply her own justification, for even without them, it is most unlikely that she could have completed it on account of ill-health.

In 1964, one year after her death, Prae Pittaya printing press published this unfinished novel for the first time, together with a play Chaomae Sāa (The Tiger Queen) understanding incorrectly that it was unpublished work of the author. It is a rather fine piece with a style and language similar to that of Dōkmaisot. Somphop noticed later that the setting, a place in northern Thailand, had been described too clearly and correctly to have been written by Dōkmaisot who had not been to the location. Eventually, the writer turned out to be Luang Raknarāthōn<sup>1</sup> and the copy had been handed to the

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<sup>1</sup>Husband of Suntharī Chomthawat, Dōkmaisot's niece who inherited the copyright of her novels.

publisher by mistake.<sup>1</sup>

As D̄kmaisot, in writing her last novel, used historical events in Thailand prior and between World War II as the background of the story and did it meticulously, a brief account of the situation by two historians is quoted here for a general comparison.

A big change occurred in 1939; the Pibul Government decided to drop the name Siam both in T'ai and in European languages. In T'ai Prades Sayam was altered to Prades T'ai, and in English the name was Thailand with the equivalent form in other languages. In 1940 there was another important announcement that the year was not to end on March 31st as before, but, to conform with universal practice, it would end on December 31st. Thus the Buddhist era year of 2483 had only nine months, and A.D. 1940 and B.E. 2484 began simultaneously on January 1st.

War had broken out in Europe on September 3rd, 1939, and as expected, Thailand declared her neutrality. There was great anxiety in the country as it was expected that sooner or later Japan would come in on the side of the Axis. Non-aggression pacts were negotiated between Thailand and Britain and France and were duly signed.

The year 1941 saw in Thailand a more aggressive form of nationalism directed against the French in Indo-China, which led to a war between the French and Thailand. This abortive war ended with Japanese mediation which was soon followed by Japanese occupation of French Indo-China with the agreement of the Vichy French Government. This, as Field-Marshal Smuts later said, turned the whole Western defensive system of Singapore and South-East Asia into an impracticable plan. By the end of November the Japanese began their threats against Thailand, and the events which took place everywhere on December 7th - 8th have passed into world history. On December 9th it became known that the T'ai Government had ordered all resistance against the Japanese to cease, and it is still little known throughout the world that heroic and costly fighting continued in the south for some time ...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For details see Somphop Chantharapraphā, Khon Kap Nangsū; "Dae Winyān Khōng D̄kmaisot", Social Science Review, vol. 3 no. 4, (March, 1966), pp. 41 - 42.

<sup>2</sup>Prince Chula Chakrabongse, Lords of Life, (London: Alvin Redman, 1960), pp. 327 - 329.

P'ibun also started a campaign to inculcate Western manners and social practices, and a series of pamphlets was issued to explain government policy in this connection. Both sexes were required to wear European shoes and hats in public, and a Westernized version of dress was prescribed. Efforts were also made to stop the practice of chewing Betel. The education system was brought under the strictest control ...

In foreign affairs efforts were made to win concessions from the Western powers by threatening to co-operate with Japan. Much closer economic relations were formed with that country, and Japanese goods began to flood the Siamese market. Siamese irredentism was stirred up, particularly, against French Indo-China, and demands were made for the restoration of the Cambodian and Laos territories, which France had forced Siam to yield in the earlier period.

The outbreak of the second World War in 1939 and the consequent concentration of Britain and France upon the German menace enabled P'ibun with Japanese Assistance - it was officially called 'mediation' - to regain much territory. After the Japanese landings in the following March the French ceded the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siemreap, together with the Laotian territory to the west of the river Mekong.

Instead of playing off Japan against the Western Powers, P'ibun had now sold himself to the Japanese. He and a small group of high-placed officials adopted a policy of full co-operation with Japan, the natural result of which was the declaration of war by Siam against Britain and the United States on 25th January 1942.

### Characters

All characters in Nī Lae Lōk! save Salyā and Phrayā Suramontrī, appear in this last novel. Yuphā is now married to Thawit.

### Summary

Since the work is comparatively short and very different in nature from other novels of the author, the story will be summarized chapter by chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>D.G.E. Hall, A History of South-East Asia, (London: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 681 - 682.

Chapter 1

Yuphā chose to visit Salyā's grave on her first wedding anniversary, instead of accompanying her husband, Thawit, to a grand reception given by the Prime Minister and his wife at the Rose Palace. The tranquility of the atmosphere of the graveyard reawoke her memories of all that had happened to her since her best friend died of a heart attack on June 14th, 1940. She took the sight of a passing monk as an auspicious omen for the future happiness of her marriage. Then her thoughts were interrupted by her awareness of the world situation, and she was surprised how much the momentous events had affected her life and marriage.

She and Thawit had been engaged at the time when Japan's newly elected Government were announcing their plans to establish a new order in the Far East in relation to politics, economics and culture. In order to achieve their plans they had to win the war in China, to co-operate with Germany and Italy, and to discuss with Britain the closing down of the road linking Burma with south China. There were rumours about the possibility of the United States interfering in Indo-China should it be threatened by Japan, and the evacuation of European women and children from Manila, Hong Kong and Malaya. Phrayā Sanphakit was so anxious about the events outside and inside the country that he showed little interest in arranging the wedding of Yuphā and Thawit.

July and August 1940 passed with increasing rumours about Japan seeking power and territory in Indo China, the East Indies, Malaya and the Philippines. There were also anti-British demonstrations in Tokyo.

In September, there were incidents between Japan and France, followed by a rumour that the United States was establishing a military base in Singapore. Phrayā Sanphakit became more worried; even Yuphā thought that her father took everything too seriously, for there was not a single sign of trouble in Thailand. On the contrary, the country, especially Bangkok, was lavishly engaged in all kinds of festivity. The Government was attempting to turn the country towards modernisation and westernisation in all respects. Even though there were announcements by the Voluntary Red Cross Unit, the Association for Air Attack Prevention and Relief, and so on, they were extremely trivial compared with the exciting plans of the Government.

Not until the conflict between Thailand and French Indochina over territory had become serious, giving rise to skirmishes, did Thawit make clear his wish to marry Yuphā as soon as possible, fearing that he might be sent away from Bangkok. Phrayā Sanphakit resigned from the civil service for the sole reason that 'I cannot join them'; i.e. he could not agree with the Government's policy.

## Chapter 2

Yuphā arrived at her father's home to find her three younger sisters, (Sārī, Sīsa-āng, Surāngrat) and Pachā waiting for her on the lawn in front of the building. Everyone admired her hat, especially Pachā who was a great supporter of the idea of modernisation. The conversation over the new fashion in hats contained several pointed remarks by Surāngrat whose husband, Winai, was also strongly critical. Inside, Yuphā found her father and her two brothers-in-law poring over maps and discussing the battles in Europe. At the time, the German army had been besieging Leningrad for several months. Pachā was sure that Germany would win, but Winai vehemently disagreed.

When they came outside, the three sisters and Khunying Luan were talking to Chintanā and Khanitthā. Chintanā, who always considered herself a leading woman of fashion in

high society, wanted to display her outfit, hat, gloves, stockings, and her hair style, and to boast about the party she and her husband, Sarōt, had just been attending at the Rose Palace. Yuphā invited Khanitthā to the Chinese restaurant with her party. At first Khanitthā refused because Sarōt was coming to have dinner with her mother, but she eventually changed her mind.

### Chapter 3

The Chinese restaurant. On the surface, it seemed just like any party of close friends and relatives. Initially, the conversation ranged over general topics. But then the men turned to the more serious subject of the war in Europe. Meanwhile, Khanitthā, who had all this time been feeling out of things, was imagining the dinner at her home with her mother, Chintanā and Sarōt. She still loved him passionately. Even to this day, Khanitthā was unable to read the meaning in his eyes when he looked at her, but "they were still the same pair of eyes that gave her both sweetness and bitterness every time they met".

The conversation and thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the "Song of Hats", coming from a radio in the house opposite the restaurant. The response to the song was immediate; Kamchōn went straight to close the window, and at the same time the radio's owner tuned to some other station. But criticism of the Government and its policy did not stop there. What 'Nāi Man and Nāi Khong'<sup>1</sup> had said on the radio and what the Prime Minister intended to do as an example for modern Thais, were heatedly criticised. Thawit did not join in this criticism but Winai and Surāngrat did not miss a chance. Pachā was the only person in the group who agreed with the Government's plans.

(Chit told them that it had been said that the Prime Minister would resign)

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<sup>1</sup>Two radio broadcasters who propagated F.M. Pibulsonggram's policy.

Surāngrat exclaimed with mock surprise and excitement.

"Oh dear! Has some lady been wearing the wrong style of hat again .... Perhaps he was upset about the ranks of "Thān Chao Phrayā" or "Thān Chao Phrayā Ying" or whatever they are. It is said that the idea has been opposed because it sounds farcical."

"Who opposed him?" Kamchōn asked with great interest.

"You seem to know all that's going on, Lek," said Yuphā.

"I don't know exactly who, but it must be somebody of a similarly exalted rank, otherwise who would dare."

"But the matter of the new ranks is still under debate." Kamchōn explained seriously. "I read in a newspaper only a few days ago that a Minister had said there would be a discussion in the next cabinet meeting!"

"Well, maybe it's because he has been appointed as a primary school teacher." Winai said, putting on a serious face for Kamchōn. "They applied to teach in Bāngkhēn at the beginning of the month, didn't you know, both of them, Thān Phūchai and Thān Phuying. Perhaps they have now been posted - wait, let me continue about our 'Leader'. He still has lots of work to do. He may be busy with the film which the Air Force plans to produce. The whole plot was devised by him and he himself will take part as a farmer. Whether true or not, that's what the papers are saying. But I personally believe that it is true, because I had heard Nāi Man and Nāi Khong saying that the Prime Minister intends to go out rice farming next year. The film he has written is entitled "Bān Rai Nā Rao". Perhaps he is going to wear boots while ploughing the soil, like they do in the West."

"But I think it has more to do with the position of the Commander-in-Chief," Kamchōn said thoughtfully. "There might have been someone advising him that if the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief were the same person, there would be a dictatorship."

"But isn't it a dictatorship now?" asked Surāngrat. "They even pursue us in our mosquito-nets, I tell you. A mother of a young baby came out from her mosquito-net without a vest and was arrested by the police...."

(Pachā burst out contemptuously)

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Thian Pathīpasēn wrote "As regards the appellation 'the Leader', there was a heavy rumour at that time about Luang Pibul wishing to be a dictator" in his Chomphon P. Khunsak Phū Rai Phaendin, (Bangkok: Phatthana Kānphim, 1964), p. 99.

"I think dictatorship is ideal for Thai people because they are lazy and disorganised. No matter how excellent the policy is they will never follow it without being forced. That is all because they have become so accustomed to being tyrannized by the nobility. Now, those who love criticizing are forever finding fault with everything. It's because there is no 'fully ripe coconut' nowadays."<sup>2</sup>

The last sentence was undoubtedly meant for Winai and Surāngrat. However, before the couple had a chance to respond, Yuphā and Sīsa-āng had already brought Chit into the conversation, talking about the government policy to increase the population. When Chit, who was the only bachelor in the party, said that one reason for him remaining single was that he could not afford a wedding ceremony, Pachā rebuked Winai through Chit:

"What an idiot you are! Why not just register your marriage and pay nothing?"<sup>3</sup>

Chit, upset at being called an idiot, retorted pointedly:

"But some people do have to pay for it secretly. Or don't you know about such things."<sup>4</sup>

#### Chapter 4

This chapter is divided into three small parts. The first part concerns Chintanā's behaviour and how Sarōt felt towards her. It centres on their dinner with Khunying Lamun. Chintanā herself was beautiful, up-to-date and, in Sarōt, had a rich and handsome and well-educated husband. All of which, in addition to her high opinion of herself, was enough to make her an extremely arrogant woman. She loved parties, competitions and fashion shows, and so far the grandest reception she had attended was the one at the Rose Palace that very afternoon. She was not convinced that Yuphā could have refused the invitation to such a social occasion,

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<sup>1</sup>This is said to be an ancient form of punishment in which a coconut was forced into the mouth of a convict who committed defamation.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, The Last Novel, pp. 71 - 76

<sup>3</sup>For relevant incidents see pp. 346-347.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 347.

until her husband confirmed it. Sarōt had often felt that "in her beauty there was something missing or perhaps something excessive. What it was he could not decide and it continually bothered him."

The second part deals with Khanitthā who, after returning from the restaurant, was comparing herself with other people. She could not help thinking of herself as unwanted and of others as loved and well protected by their husbands. When her thoughts turned to Sarōt and Chintanā, her heart was burnt with jealousy. Khanitthā sincerely believed that if it had been Salyā and not Chintanā who had married Sarōt, she would not in the least be jealous or unhappy. But it was Chintanā to whom Sarōt fell, and it was not because of real love or that he had been attracted by her virtue, but because of her intriguing allurements.

The third part concerns Yuphā and Thawit after their return home from the party. They discussed various topics including the possibility of the War spreading to Thailand. Thawit did not answer his wife's question about the party at the Rose Palace, but reflected upon it disapprovingly. And while they were talking about their wish to have children and the fact that the situation did not permit it, Yuphā discovered that her husband had a temperature.

#### Chapter 5

Throughout the following week Thawit was ill with typhoid. Once recovered, his home was full of friends and relatives visiting him. Their conversation included various topics concerning relevant happenings inside and outside the family and the country, as well as their feelings and criticisms. Phrayā Sanphakit and Winai regularly brought news of the war in the West. At this time General Sir Alan Cunningham, brother of Vice-Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, C.-in-C. Mediterranean Fleet, had been made Commander of the Eighth Army and was reported to be sure of establishing

contact with the troops in Tobruk.<sup>1</sup>

That day, Sunday 23rd November, 1941, Winai brought a naval officer to visit Thawit. Having left them alone, he went out to join Yuphā, KamChōn, Sīsa-āng, Pachā and Khanitthā. Chit came in with his mother, Nāng Klīp, who, as soon as she got in, took off her hat and skirt, which she was wearing over her 'Chongkrāben'.<sup>2</sup> Her wearing both a skirt and Chongkrāben in order to abide by the law made everybody laugh, save Pachā.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Roger Parkinson, Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat, (London: Hart Davis MacGibbon, 1973), pp. 312-316.

Dōkmaisot's meticulousness at this appropriate point has been carefully checked. The dates and events which she cleverly inserted in the conversation between the characters on Sunday, 23rd November 1941, correspond exactly with those in historical documents. The following are two good comparisons between Dōkmaisot's and Parkinson's writings:

Dōkmaisot: Yuphā:(referring back to the days when Thawit was critically ill, Wednesday 19th - Friday 21st November 1941) "Father is very happy because the British troops are advancing in Africa .... When did Winai sneak in to see you yesterday?" (p.119)

Parkinson: "It now seems certain that the enemy was surprised" reported Auchinleck that Wednesday night, and he added "I myself am happy about the situation." (p. 315)

Dōkmaisot: Thawit: "He came in only for a few minutes to give the news about Lt. Gen. Cunningham, Commander of the 8th Army, and his elder brother, Admiral Cunningham ...And what else? All about the North African campaign. Oh yes, it is believed that the main corps will be able to contact the garrison in Tobruk either today or tomorrow." (pp. 119 = 120)

Parkinson: Meanwhile Cunningham had been persuaded the offensive by Tobruk garrison should be launched early on the 21st, sooner than planned; Friday, 21st November, therefore promised the full British-German clash. In London, news from Cairo was received with optimism... Auchinleck reported on the 22nd: "Prospects of achieving our immediate object, namely, the destruction of the German armoured forces, seem good." (p. 315)

<sup>2</sup>See footnote 2 , p. 226.

Then there was sharp criticism of the Cultural Law which specified an individual's routine, and Winai refused to stay for lunch for the reason that he had taken little notice of the Law the day before:

".... Anyone who does not know Section 11 of the Cultural Law will never know how to live. You know, we Thais have been living as a nation for seven to eight hundred years and never knew before how many meals a day we should have, or how many hours we should sleep each night. We never knew what we should do with ourselves or at what time, until the present Government graciously decided to tell us on September 8th. How did we not realise it?"<sup>1</sup>

After Winai had left, Yuphā asked Khanitthā about the magazines she had been reading. Khanitthā's reply announced two more names in the story, Samut and Chuanchom, and at the same time continued the previous conversation's criticism of the changing society:

".....They are full of news about the 'old charcoal'<sup>2</sup> of Chintanā and his wife: "Khun Samut is competing against Khun Soemsak in the tennis tournament for the Prime Minister's cup .... Khun Samut was seen at Hua Lamphong station .... A gold necklace, second prize for Khun Chuanchom in a fashion contest at Suan Amphōn .'<sup>3</sup> See, all of these magazines mention their names ..."

The conversation continued to air a number of grievances: the Government's regulation concerning the changing of personal names; the petrol shortage in the country; corruption and the high cost of living. It began with Yuphā referring to her maid as 'Chaisawāt'<sup>V</sup> and not just 'Chai'<sup>V</sup>. The Cultural Law required men and women whose names were too short, or considered unsuitable for their sexes, to change them. Chit refused to change his name, or even its spelling.

"I don't know what to change it to or why I should do so. Whether I change it or not I am still simply my ordinary self.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p.134

<sup>2</sup>meaning 'previous lover or love affairs'.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p.137

"Well, you never know Khun Chit. The difficulties you told us you had in buying petrol might have been because the people concerned did not like your name and decided to cause you inconvenience."

"It has nothing to do with my name, Khun Yai (Yuphā), but with how to run things properly. The rule about petrol rationing is simply their excuse. If you do not know how to manage things, your tank will always be empty, but if you know, and<sup>1</sup> have enough money, you will have ample petrol."

Finding themselves alone together afterwards, Yuphā and Sīsa-āng expressed their opinion about Khanitthā and her unladylike way of speaking. They also discussed Winai and Surāngrat. Yuphā wanted them to come to live with Phrayā Sanphakit and Khunying Luan so that they would be able to cut down their expenses, but at the same time she was afraid that Winai would disagree, and that eventually bitter quarrels would occur between him and Pachā.

#### Chapter 6

At the home of Montrī and Bu-ngā, Pachā and Khanitthā had come to visit, after going to see Thawit. Bu-ngā was shallow and coarse as usual. This time she complained about the soaring cost of living and then reproached her husband, his brothers and sisters for their extravagant habits. Montrī and Pachā argued about the war in Libya and Russia. Pachā was very annoyed when Montrī supported the Allies and forecast that if the German troops failed to reach Moscow within the month (November, 1941), they would have no hope for the next six months because of the hard winter. The argument came to an end when Bu-ngā suddenly interrupted:

"Really, I wonder if Mr. Hitler and Mr. Jo (presumably Joseph Stalin) have ever decreed that the cooks wear hats."<sup>2</sup>

#### Chapter 7

The early morning of December 8th, 1941. Yuphā who had been very happy because Thawit was recovering quickly, got

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.167.

up remembering that she had dreamt of Salyā.

From the top of the staircase, she saw Chaisawāt, her maid, carrying a breakfast tray for Thawit, stop and talk to Nāi Chuay, another servant. Further down, there were two more servants, one with a tea-cloth in her hand, the other with a broom. All were talking in an excited manner. Nāi Chuay came up and informed her that the Japanese had landed at Bāng Pū. Yuphā at first laughed and even made a joke about it "Don't worry, they only came to swim"<sup>1</sup>, but soon she was trembling with fear and excitement and wondering what to do with Thawit, who had to be confined to bed for at least another week. Phrayā Sanphakit, who all this time had been ridiculed by everyone for being over-anxious about the situation, arrived with definite news about the disembarkation of the Japanese troops. He ordered her to be prepared in case they had to evacuate Bangkok and go to live with Winai's family in their orchards. While he walked away wearily hoping to get more news, Yuphā thought:

"At fifty-five, they will never allow you to go to war, father."

She was in Thawit's bedroom, wondering how to remove some papers from a cabinet without him asking questions, when Chit broke in and before she could stop him, loudly informed Thawit of the news:

"Well, they have come now, the Japanese. It is said that they landed at Bāng Pū at dawn today. I drove as far as Phra Khanong and saw nothing unusual. I just saw the Chinese shops and they are open. You know, I ordered a cup of coffee and was charged twenty stangs for it.<sup>2</sup> I intended to drive on to see what was happening at the Department of Fuel, but when I arrived at Sa Pathum the radio was broadcasting that the Government was discussing the situation, so I came here instead."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Pibulsonggram Government had just converted the marshy land at Bāng Pū into a seaside resort.

<sup>2</sup>An implication of the Chinese's opportunism and indifference to the fate of the nation is seen here.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 190-191.

Phrayā Sanphakit arrived just then, looking pale and solemn. Having seen Chit, he said to Thawit:

"You must have been told already. The Japanese attacked several places simultaneously at two o'clock this morning, the Philippines, Hawaii, Singapore, Hong Kong. They have landed here at Songkhla, Pattani, Pračhuap and Bāng Pū, and came overland via Pibulsonggram province. There were heavy clashes everywhere until half past seven, when the Government announced a ceasefire, and that orders should be awaited. At the moment negotiations are in progress."<sup>1</sup>

Thawit was at first dazed, then abruptly sat up to get out of bed, but his father-in-law urged him to lie down again, saying "You cannot do anything on your own." The room then became dead silent. As the author concludes:

...It was a moment when an intelligent person could not use his intelligence, nor an educated man, his knowledge. Therefore, it was a moment when the mental state of a person who<sub>2</sub> was both intelligent and educated was about to burst.<sup>2</sup>

#### Chapter 8

Later, on the same day, in Khunying Lamun's home. Pachā had gone out to observe the situation, since he did not believe that the Japanese, who, like the Government, he considered to be a "great friend" ( หนานมิตร ) could have offered such an insult to Thailand. Khunying Lamun was telling Khunying Luan how she had been scared of the news, when Montrī and Bu-ngā arrived after going shopping for necessary provisions. Montrī, who had been upset about the situation, said to the two women:

"What else can we do but give them access, just like Denmark has done?"

But Pachā soon came back, looking very confident and unworried:

"Japan is still our 'great friend'...A statement will be issued this afternoon, but the news I have been told is correct. Japan and Thailand will continue their friendship."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 201 - 203.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

"Great friend!" Pachā shouted "How could our great friend send troops into our country. There were heavy clashes in several places. It's time to stop dreaming. The Japanese have never known how to be anyone's 'great friend'. Look at what they did to China, and China was their teacher! Look how much they learnt from the Chinese. Even their alphabet! And we!.... Who are we? !! 'A great friend'! Japan! Are you mad!"

Pachā took no notice of his brother's angry remark, and instead threw a piece of paper at Bu-ngā to support his words of confidence. Bu-ngā laughed when she read it because the spelling, the tone, grammar, idiom and sentence structure were all wrong. It was the very first leaflet distributed by the Japanese army to the Thai people. It asked the Thais to co-operate with the Japanese in eliminating Western power in the East and warned them not to obstruct the Japanese troops in any way. The feelings of Khunying Lamun and Khunying Luan fluctuated back and forth as they listened to the two brothers. They were chilled with fear by Montri's words, and then felt greatly relieved when they listened to Pachā.

The incidents of that day were talked about, discussed and criticised by Thai people of every profession, age and class with fear and uncertainty about the future. One example of this is described by the author, but not without another attack on the Cultural Law, which is contrasted with everything else in the scene. Khunying Luan and Sārī were walking back home past Nāng Plaek's grocery.<sup>2</sup>

Bunplūk was standing there talking to her mother. She was wearing a type of man's hat which was commonly worn among people in the northeast. Between her fingers was a cigarette which she had taken the opportunity to extract from a packet which, in a shop like that of Hong the Chinese, was lying open to customers. Nāng Plaek

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-203.

<sup>2</sup>This minor character appeared before in Ni Lae Lōk! without any important role. But in the last novel her name becomes more significant, probably an intentional use of the first name of F.M. Pibulsonggram which means "the odd one".

was wearing a black sarong and a white blouse, which was completely unbuttoned, clearly revealing her breasts under the loose vest. She was standing with one hand on her hip and the other in a toffee jar, about to take out the sweets and count them for a little boy, aged about eight, who was looking up at them, open mouthed, while listening to what Bunplūk was telling her mother...

When they saw Khunying Luan, Bunplūk quickly stubbed out her cigarette and walked out to join them, while Nāng Plaek complained to Khunying Luan:

"She told me that you are going to move out of Bangkok, What can people like us do? Where can we go?"

Khunying Luan did not answer because she tended to believe Pachā's optimism. However, to some people who really felt concerned about the safety and integrity of their country, the situation was extremely serious. What had happened was only the beginning of much worse to come. Phrayā Sanphakit's reaction to the situation became evident when he and Khunying Luan were having a cold lunch together. Khunying complained about the cold food which her husband himself had told the cook not to bother to warm. Meanwhile Phrayā Sanphakit could hardly eat anything:

...He forced himself to chew, to swallow, unaware of the taste. His most prominent feeling, above all others, was that of sorrow and bewilderment. Apart from Thailand, what other country had ever been so disgraced? The enemy had attacked by land, sea and air at the same time. He believed that nowhere else had suffered such a fate...

Thawit is another example. That night he was given sleeping pills. Even so his deep conscience made him sleep half-dreaming, half-waking. The reactions of some other Thais are described through his delirious state.

...Thawit was in a state of half-thinking and half-dreaming. Perhaps he really was dreaming, but it

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.214.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.220.

seemed as if he was thinking of what he had heard and seen during the past eighteen hours of the day. He saw Phrayā Sanphakit's face as he reported the serious news, and saw the sudden change in it when he destroyed his self-deception with only three words "The Japanese are not blockheads". He saw himself getting up with a sudden start and then lying down again completely confused. He saw Winai crying like a baby while complaining bitterly "We let them pass, we let them pass, after boasting so much that we would fight to the last drop of our blood. Their ruffian's blood is no better than that of a dog! How can we continue living? Where can we hide our faces?" He saw the signs of depression and weariness in the eyes of Bunrōt when he looked at him. It was burnt and dry like that of a jungle newly scorched by a forest fire. He saw the nearly uncontrolled emotion in the seemingly cool and calm manner and conversation of the doctor, his friend. He saw Luang Phithak, his neighbour, whose reaction was like that of a clown, at once both sad and amusing, relating how the Japanese horses had hooves three times larger than those of Arab-bred Thai horses, and wore coloured blinkers; and how the Japanese transported their troops into Thailand from Pibulsonggram province to Bangsū, by taking the tyres off the trucks and driving them along the railway line. He told how his wife and children threw their chairs and bedding into the well so that the Japanese could not make use of them....The worst of all, which made Thawit delirious, groaning and gasping for breath so painfully that his nurse, Sīsamōn, had to get up and look at him frequently, was when Thawit found himself swimming in the sea with a gigantic Japanese warship bearing down on him. Or another time, when the Japanese tyre-less trucks drove past, crushing his head, and the big-hooved horses trampled over his body leaving behind their unpleasant odour. The splitting pain in his head became worse and worse during the night...

More dramatic is Khanitthā's reaction. She had no one to turn to and it was her duty alone to take care of her mother. The situation and her own frustration made the poor girl wish for the worst:

...."Of course, at a time of emergency like this they all have their husbands to console and protect them. Rōt! Dear Rōt! (Sarōt)." Twenty years old, of fair complexion, yet her face looked pale and sickly. Her

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-223.

long and nicely rounded neck, usually so straight with the pride of youth, now looked weak and almost collapsed with exhaustion. Brm..Brm..Brm.. (She looked up and saw the plane) There! "The Rising Sun" in the sky...Her neck was straight once again. Why is there no bombing? Why is there no shooting? Why is there no fighting, or killing? Come on! Kill! Fight! Kill and fight! Make it confused and tumultuous, so that there will be death, destruction and separation, which will mean the end of everything..

The author finally remarked on the general reaction to the Government's decision after the strange and unclear event, in the following terms:

....From the second hour of the day to the thirteenth and fourteenth hours, people in the capital did not know what they should do and they still sat with their wives at lunch tables, full of food. Their servants were waiting on them as usual...<sup>2</sup>

#### Chapter 9

In Khunying Luan's home some time later. Pachā was busy putting up both the Thai and Japanese flags on the front gate when Lekā came to visit her mother and younger sister. She and Sanōng had been stranded at the home of Sanōng's great-aunt, somewhere in the country, during the crisis, for she was heavily pregnant and Bangkok was considered unsafe for her. Khanitthā was very glad to see Lekhā because she too disliked Bu-ngā, disapproved of Pachā's ideas, and was jealous of Chintanā.

Sārī returned from seeing her parents, bringing depressing news of her father and Winai discussing the hard time to come.

"Father said that from now on we will have to be ready to live in the same way as our ancestors, at the beginning of King Rama IV's time."

Lekhā correctly interpreted this to mean having no electricity, no water-supply and no motor-cars. But when she expressed her fear of the possibility of the British bombing Bangkok, Pachā scolded her angrily for believing the rumour:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 211-212.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p 220-221.

"How ridiculous! With what are the British going to bomb? With the Japanese after them, their planes won't even have time to take off, let alone come bombing them in Thailand."<sup>1</sup>

They were joined later by Chintanā and Sarōt. Chintanā did not appear in the least anxious about the situation. When Sārī told everyone more news about Winai getting five huge water jars for his father-in-law and Phrayā Sanphakit thinking of digging a shelter, Chintanā made a casual remark which upset Sarōt tremendously:

"Everyone is scared of this and that. I alone don't care. You know, Rōt, your cousins told me the other day that on the day the Japanese landed and went past their home, your uncle cried."<sup>2</sup>

"He did not cry out of fear. My uncle was a soldier and had never dreamt that in his life he would see foreign troops strolling around in the land that our ancestors helped to found ... and he did not cry as such. He only wore dark glasses to conceal his feelings from other people."<sup>2</sup>

But his wife did not sense his irritation, and went on telling her family about Montrī and Bu-ngā whom they had met on the way:

"I didn't listen to what Montrī said because I was talking to Bu-ngā about my dresses. It's terrible there won't be a Constitution Day festival this year, and I won't have an opportunity to wear my five new dresses."<sup>3</sup>

The situation and the bitterness given to her by Chintanā and her husband in the past made Khanitthā respond to her sister's foolish chatter in a strange manner. Instead of trying to compete with Chintanā as before, she said frankly that she wished something really bad would happen. When Sarōt asked her what she would do and where she would go, the poor girl, depressed and heavy at heart, answered:

"I'll find my way out somehow, and if the worst comes to the worst, I may join my sister Nōi (Sālya)."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.229.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.246.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.247.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.249. Sālya, heroine of Ni Lae Lok! who died.

Chapter 10

Although their names appeared frequently in the news as a fashionable couple, Samut and Chuanchom did not live together lovingly. He looked down upon her, did not love her and did not honour her, not even as a man to a woman. Chuanchom was reproached by her father for being slow in taking presents to the Japanese troops, but instead of giving her his advice, Samut contemptuously said "Take them three tons of arsenic". Therefore, Chuanchom went to consult Bu-ngā what it was and where she could buy it. When asked why she was doing that for her father, the ugly, obese, ill-mannered girl answered:

"My pa said that all his friends had already given them gifts. Our Government wants us to be friendly with the Japanese because they are going to get our territory back for us."

Despite their disapproval, Bu-ngā eventually suggested Chuanchom should give them fruit.

Chapter 11

Towards the end of December 1941. Thawit is commenting on the situation in the East in a conversation with Yuphā:

"...Hong Kong surrendered on December 25th. The British are bluffing terribly. Who would believe that they could only hold Hong Kong for two weeks? They claimed that it was because of the lack of water. The Americans are also shamefully beaten. They are like people who paint pictures of tigers to frighten the cattle."<sup>2</sup>

Among the Thais, there must have been increasing suspicion and divided opinions, especially among politicians, soldiers and civil servants. Some resistance activities had started against the Japanese. Yuphā was afraid that her husband would express his opinion too openly, but did not dare to warn him directly. Instead, she cleverly broached the subject by referring to Winai:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.254.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.270. cf. Parkinson, op.cit., p.342.

"I suppose you have realised by now who is who in your office. Please be careful about.." She was about to say 'slip of the tongue' (โผล่หู ) , but suddenly changed direction: "If you meet Winai, please warn him. I fear for Lek. Winai is very restless these days. Last night I read in the newspapers that it is now the same as during the Indo-China crisis; anyone who disagrees with them is a rebel or a spy. Those two men, one of whom had an aristocratic name, were arrested on charges of joining the newspapers in persuading people not to obey the orders of the Commander-in-Chief and to resist the Japanese. Winai is not so extreme, that's true, but it's the 'slip of the tongue' that we must beware of. From the time I was a teenager until we were married, I have noticed that this kind of danger has always appeared every two or three years, especially during 1938-1939<sup>1</sup>, and quite frequently during 1940-1941. Please help me, I don't want to see Lek crying her eyes out."<sup>2</sup>

Late that morning, before Yuphā went out to visit her parents, Chit came with several boxes, bags and crates. His opportunism as well as his loyalty to Thawit are clearly seen here, together with other situations in Bangkok concerning people in general.

"I got them free of charge. The Japs occupied a European department-store. When they cleared the shop, they inadvertently dropped some things, and two of my boys at home work there. (To the servants) Hey, don't unpack that box, wait! We'll have to repack it properly later. That one too; don't unpack it. (To Yuphā) But perhaps you want some for your sisters. That box is 'kaprun' (he meant prunes) and the small bag is sultanas. These are not exactly my gifts - well, they are in a way; I bought them for you, but you have to pay me back - two dozen White Label, two dozen Black Label, three bottles of Axe, I mean brandy. All these things are going to be more and more expensive. That's why I hurried to buy them for you, otherwise we may not be able to get them at all. From now on we are not going to get what we used to get from abroad - the Japs have closed the Gulf. Just look at the petrol. They said before that we would have enough on ration. Then they made it twenty-five litres per day and then ten litres, and now you won't be able to find a station with any at all. It's only because I have the eyes of a hawk, that we have any. Now, I have

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<sup>1</sup>For a relevant situation see pp. 65-66.

<sup>2</sup>Dḡkmaisot, op.cit., pp. 273-275.

heard more news. The Japs themselves have said that the war might last as long as ten years, because they are going to lay down new rules in this area. Damn the Japs! What are the damned rules they are going to produce? Why don't the rascals do it in their own country? Why must they impose them in another people's land and cause us trouble?"<sup>1</sup>

At Khunying Luan's home, Yuphā found her mother, Surāngrat and their cook discussing sugar, which they could not buy from the shop of Hong, the Chinese, because Pachā wanting to be the 'eyes and ears' of the Government and to be a good citizen, had gone and threatened Hong for putting up the price. Khunying Luan was in favour of Pachā as usual, and her tone was a little irritated as she told Yuphā about Winai and the favour he had been receiving from Phrayā Sanphakit.

Behind their mother's back, Surāngrat explained to Yuphā and Sīsa-āng how their mother still disliked Winai. She had been angry when Phrayā Sanphakit had bought an oil-lamp for Winai, because Winai and Surāngrat had a small baby, and even more annoyed when their father expressed his approbation for Winai, because he had also bought several dozen candles.

This chapter ends with Sīsa-āng telling them about Kam<sup>V</sup>chōn:

"That night, the twelfth, when the Prime Minister broadcast, I woke up when my hand accidentally touched his pillow and it felt wet. At first I thought it was his sweat, but when he pushed my hand away, I realised there was something wrong - it was his tears. He was embarrassed at first, but seeing that he could no longer hide it from me, he cried like a baby."

Yuphā: "It was the same with Winai on the eighth. It's the first time I've seen a man crying like that. I still do not know what my Thawit is going to be like."<sup>2</sup>

## Chapter 12

It was during the night that the first bombing of Bangkok by the British started. The incident is described through the eyes and feelings of Khanitthā, who could control herself quite

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 278-280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 299-300.

well until it was over and Phrayā Sanphakit came to visit them. Before taking him to see her mother and without thinking who she was talking to, she suddenly poured out her fear and anxiety.

The story was left unfinished at this point.

There follows an extended translated extract from the last chapter of the unfinished novel as an example of the style of this work. The description is vivid as always with D̄kmaisot at her best, the human relations are carefully organised, but it can be seen from this example how external events dominate the presentation - human inter-relations take a less prominent position than is usual in the author's work.

A peculiar sound and vibration the like of which Khanitthā had never before experienced, woke her up from her slumber with a start. Fully awake, she heard a hoarse and trembling noise in the next room. Once more the peculiar sound and vibration occurred. This time the young girl realised what it was. Her heart trembled: every part of her body seemed to malfunction, but her mind was still well under control. Again and again that sound and vibration came. Khanitthā heard a voice, a harshly shouting voice of a man "Don't be silly! If it is a bomb, there must have been an air-raid warning." But Khanitthā had already walked away from the voice, and now her fingers were drumming on the door of her mother's bedroom, she called:

"<sup>V</sup>Chamnian! <sup>V</sup>Chamnian! Open the door! Why did you lock it?"

The hoarse trembling voice answered her

"Nit, have the bombs come? Ooh! I am cold."

"No one knows what it is yet mother....<sup>V</sup>Chamnian, <sup>V</sup>Chamnian!" Khanitthā raised her voice. Then in a muffled voice, "Why on earth did you have to lock the door?"

"I told her to lock it myself, dear.."

Even before she finished the sentence, the wailing sound of a siren was heard. Khanitthā felt as if her heart was becoming a lump of ice, but at the same time she was becoming aware of her determination to fight for her life and to protect her dependant from danger.

She banged the door with both hands until she heard the pulling of the bolt. Khunying Lamun was sitting on the edge of the bed, the opening in the mosquito-net framing her face. Her hair hung in disorder on her forehead and around her ears. Khanitthā walked straight to her, held her arm with her left hand, put her right hand under her armpit, then half lifted and half pulled her from the bed. Khunying moaned and murmured but Khanitthā did not listen for she was determined to take her mother away from the tall building. Not until Khunying stood firmly and resisted any attempt to move her did Khanitthā understand what she had said and took her to the toilet.

It was a time when one minute seemed like a month and five minutes one year. Restless calls, not loud, not at all loud, but filled with excitement, nervousness and dread, mixed with the footsteps, thud! thud! thud! causing a dull heavy echo everywhere, and fading away in the direction of the staircase. The lump of ice in Khanitthā's heart grew harder and bitterly cold, so much so that it pierced her whole body. Her mother did not seem able to touch anything, even the nearest things she had been using everyday. Khanitthā had to hand them to her. After she helped her up from the seat and was half pulling, half supporting her to the staircase, she heard her mother moan. She stammered "Who said that the Japanese are going to protect us, and what is this?"

Khanitthā heard herself answer her mother quickly and harshly just as Pachā had recently spoken to Sārī. Then Sārī had cried and Khanitthā had tried not to listen.

The moon of the eighth waning, near the crack of dawn was seen clearly showing only a crescent curve. There was no ray, no colour, and no light. The sound Brm! Brm! Boom! Brm! Boom! Boom! Boom! and a murmuring sound, hoarse and trembling sounds, a groaning sound, an intimidating sound, even the screaming and whining sound of a baby in bad temper, which came along from groups of people gathering in front of the porch, along the walls of the building and from under the trees, were all equally annoying. Time passed leaving only the sound Brm! Brm! then the humming disappeared; the hoarse and trembling sounds, the groaning sound and the intimidating sound also changed their tone. A bright tangerine colour broke through the mist slowly on the horizon. The safety signal was heard, startling everyone once more. A man's voice saying "Safe" with an air of authority as though the speaker himself was the signal-maker, helped everyone sigh with relief.

After that came the chatting, telling and retelling, rumours about this and that, the reaction of human beings who had just survived the shadow of death. Some said they had not been frightened so as to erase the awful dread they had just discovered within them. Some, muttered of the awe, fearing that it would come back again. Some were really indifferent, perhaps because they were fully aware of the danger or, conversely, ignorant of it. All these people, each group, each individual were noisily arguing, discussing and agreeing with one another at length. Then came a break of stillness when they returned to their own places. Khanitthā handed Tim (her niece), who was sleeping on her shoulder to her nurse, while Pachā pushed away his wife's hand, put on a serious air and walked purposefully towards their garage. Sārī asked him imploringly

"Please do not go away, Lek, they may come back..."

Khunying Lamun pleaded with him:

"What in heaven's name do you want to go to see? It's better to keep me company."

This demonstration of weakness of the two women, only made Pachā more determined. He answered brusquely without looking back at the beseeching voices, and without slowing down his pace.

"No! I must go and see with my own eyes! They have come and I must see what they have done to us..."

Khanitthā felt her anger, her violence rise. She shouted after him:

"How can you go out like that, brother Lek. Without your jacket, hat and shoes you'll soon end up sitting foolishly in gaol, and when there is bombing again, some will be dead and done here, no doubt."

It had an effect. Khunying Lamun was suddenly strong enough to get up: she stepped forward until she saw his back, and spoke to him with an almost imperative tone:

"Come back, Lek. I said come back to me first. Where are you going and what for?"

The morning was already nice and bright. The look on Pachā's face when he turned to his mother made Khanitthā want to laugh: it was the look of a person, angered at this interruption to his most important work. Without waiting to listen to their argument, Khanitthā walked away quickly, following the servant carrying her niece to the building and ordering the girl to take care of the baby as usual.

About half an hour later, while she was sitting at her dressing table, Khanitthā heard her mother brusquely scolding the servants. Khunying was boiling with rage because Chamnian had come and informed her that the rice porridge was not yet done. After the mistress had yelled at her harshly,

"What? It isn't cooked yet? I am starving to death!"

the maid replied "The cook has only just lit the fire, madam."

Khanitthā picked up her watch from the table and looked at the time. Pondering over the recent events, she fastened the watch around her wrist and told herself "Just in case it comes back, I'll know the time."

Her mother raised her voice louder and louder, complaining that she was an old woman being forsaken by everyone. Annoyance and anger came over Khanitthā again. She forced herself to sit there, make up her face and comb her hair a little more hurriedly, then walked to her mother's room. She turned the lock and pushed the door open easily. The two women were sitting in the room.

"It is only past seven, mother, and usually you have your breakfast at eight or even half past sometimes."

Khunying Lamun stopped abruptly with surprise but only for a moment, for it was not in her nature to yield.

"But today I woke up very early, so I must be hungry. The servants have seen me, they have no consideration."

"I do not think so, mother. We were all frightened - Chamnian, have you told them that Khunying is very hungry?"

"Yes, mistress."

"She told them, but they have only just lit the fire... How much longer do I have to wait for my breakfast? .... Oh dear, what sins have I done in the past to bring this on me? I've never seen anything like this before. What is going to come next? Why didn't I die with you?..... Khunying wiped her tears with the edge of her vest and moaned.

Khanitthā turned away and looked through the window. The weather was fresh and clear, neither too cold nor too hot, but a lonely and dreadfully cold atmosphere was oppressing her heart. The word 'you' from her mother's lips meant her father ..... "Dear father!" .... Khanitthā

suddenly saw in her imagination a picture of him putting his arms around her shoulders, patting her on the head saying "Come on, come on, don't cry, darling. Mother hasn't said anything." and then saying "Don't cry darling, don't, I'll buy it for you...."

Almost in the same moment Khanitthā remembered Sarōt, felt the touch of warm breath on her ear and his whisper:

"Your ear looks like a tiny lotus petal surrounding its pollen. It looks very delicate and I really want to ask for your permission to touch it. It must be as soft as silk.."

But she did not see only him - a picture of Chintanā appeared. Her sister was giving herself the airs of a beautiful woman, holding Sarōt's arms, keeping hold of him, as if to remind the whole world "He is mine! He is mine!" Khanitthā turned back to her mother thinking of what she had been like three hours ago, how she was completely without control, how much her words showed how impossible it was for her to help herself.. Chintanā must have been exactly the same. While the planes were buzzing in the sky and the bombs were furiously exploding, Sarōt must have been holding her, supporting her with great care, comforting her with sweet words, to calm her down just as Khanitthā had done to her mother. Perhaps... perhaps there was more than that because Chintanā was a woman and Sarōt was a man, Chintanā was of the weaker sex and Sarōt was strong physically and mentally; and above all she was his wife and he her husband.

Feeling as if she was being burnt fiercely with fire, Khanitthā turned back and walked suddenly out of her mother's room.

Some possibilities of the author's outline: the setting, characters, and plot of the story

To the point where the story is left unfinished, the first bombing of Bangkok on January 24th 1942, the general setting is in Bangkok and more or less the same places as in Nī Lae Lōk!, i.e. in the homes of Phrayā Sanphakit, of Khunying Lamun, of Thawit, and in some Chinese restaurants. It is quite possible that if the story had been longer the setting would

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 304 - 315.

have been extended outside Bangkok. There are several possibilities as to where it could have moved. On December 8th, 1941, when the Japanese troops first landed, Phrayā Sanphakit was planning to move his family, including Thawit and Yuphā, and also asked Khunying Lamun and her family to be evacuated to Winai's orchard. The location was not mentioned but to Bangkok people the word "orchard home" usually means either a place in Nonthaburi or Thonburi, two towns adjacent to Bangkok. Phrayā Thēwēt, at the early stage of the bombing by the British, took his family, including Dōkmaisot herself, to live in their orchard in Thonburi until the situation became too dangerous to remain in Bangkok or nearby.

Khunying Lamun did not plan to move out of the capital at first because Pachā was so sure that the British would never bomb the city. Later, Khanitthā mentioned to Lēkhā about their land at Rangsit, some thirty kilometres from Bangkok. Lēkhā had been stranded at the home of her husband's great-aunt, the whereabouts of which are not specified, but the great-aunt told her the story of her ancestors preparing themselves for the war with the Burmese. The location therefore could have been somewhere up the Chao Phraya river, perhaps near Ayuthaya. Thawit was very ill at the time, but Yuphā, when asked by her father, said that Thawit had inherited several estates in various places from his great-uncle.

Therefore, the author had provided herself with choices of setting to which she could move her story. It is probable, however, that she would have chosen Winai's orchard first for the reasons that; a. being the nearest, it was the likeliest place to move to in an emergency; b. Phrayā Sanphakit and Winai had prepared the place for the purpose; and c. the strongest

reason of all, is that Khunying Luan was not on a very good terms with Winai, and a warm welcome from him and his family would heal their past conflicts.

All characters might later have assembled somewhere in Ayuthaya or Bāng Pa-in, to where the author herself and her family took refuge and lived for some time.<sup>1</sup>

In this story D̄kmaisot cleverly used her many characters with their different temperaments to represent various reactions of the Thai people towards the Government and the Japanese occupation. Phrayā Sanphakit, the character who looked at the situations most seriously, is no doubt a representative of the author herself or people like her. Winai and his wife, Surāngrat, were people who disagreed with the Government and were radical and critical enough to ridicule them. Thawit and Kamch̄n were in a higher position and forced to be calm, less critical though fully affected. Chintanā symbolised those who were pleased with the idea of modernisation and westernisation. Pachā one of those who blindly supported the Government and even agreed with all the Japanese proposed. Bu-ngā, Khunying Luan and Khunying Lamun were people who confined their interests only to themselves and their families. Chuanchom and her father were definitely going to develop into being the opportunists who would think of their wealth before the integrity of their nation.

Two characters who most probably would have developed prominently in this last novel are Chit and Khanitthā. If Chit, with his occupation and wit, had developed into a Sērī Thai,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II, p. 92, and Appendix i, pp. 502-504.

<sup>2</sup>The Free-Thai Movement formed by Thai people in the United States and Great Britain during the War and later co-ordinated their underground activities with their members in Thailand under the supervision of Pridi Phanomyong who was at that time the Regent.

he could have been an important agent of the Movement and perhaps a man wanted by the Japanese. Khanitthā, who was the only single girl left in the story, was sure to have developed into an important character. If the prediction Salyā made before she died was going to come true, Khanitthā would become a minor wife of Sarōt.<sup>1</sup> Judging from all the descriptions of her, it could well happen, because she still loved Sarōt passionately. Sarōt himself still looked at her with some hidden meaning, while Chintanā always made him think that she was not a perfect wife. If these people were forced by the air attack to leave Bangkok and live together in the countryside, the assumption would be justifiable. On the other hand, the author had begun to make Khanitthā a fuller character than she had been in Nī Lae Lōk!; more responsible, braver, more thoughtful, and more and more like Salyā in various respects. If she continued to develop in that way to the end of the story, or even if her serious mistake taught her a lesson of life, Khanitthā might have ended by being a twenty-five year old woman to whom Chit proposes marriage.

These are of course merely assumptions. But one thing to be sure of is that the activities of the Free Thai Movement were likely to have been included, with some of the characters being members.

One more question remains to be answered; why did the author make her last novel a continuation of Nī Lae Lōk!. She did it before with Kam Kao, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek and Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān,<sup>2</sup> but the situation with the last novel is different. Its main object is to give a picture of Thai society during the World War and not to be concerned only with the lives

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VIII, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter IV.

of individuals. Dōkmaisot wrote Nī Lae Lōk! without anticipating the future of the country, therefore she could not have envisaged continuation. Nevertheless, Nī Lae Lōk! is the most appropriate of all to be developed into the last novel. Firstly, it has a great number of characters of various occupations, temperament, education, and personality. Secondly, in Nī Lae Lōk! the author had already made these people interested in the world situation, therefore, it was easy to make them feel more concerned with their own country. Lastly, the time represented may also be an important factor. Nī Lae Lōk! represents the period of early 1940, the last novel can therefore continue from there naturally.

As it is clear from her letter to Somphop Čhantharaphā, Dōkmaisot intended to make this last novel cover the period from 1940 to 1945 or in other words to cover the whole period of World War II. Therefore, it would have been her longest as well as her first novel that had not dealt simply with a small elite society, ignoring all external incident, but which drew in all the outside factors of the War, the consequences of which affected people of all walks and classes of life.

After the coup d'état of June 24th, 1932, the aftermath of which had great impact upon Thai writers, Dōkmaisot continued writing without touching politics. Nī Lae Lōk! itself took place in the first half of 1940, but the author only made reference to the situation in the West. And in Nanthawan (1942) she closed her eyes completely to politics and had her hero renouncing life in the capital to start a farming career. It is true that Dōkmaisot wrote this last novel when the Government's rigidity with writers had passed, but her prime wish to complete it when F.M. Pibulsonggram was still in power is daring enough because that period, which is called "the dark age", was soiled

with filthy activities committed under the influence of Pol. Gen. Phao Sīyānon.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that Dōkmaisot might have thought that being a woman would be adequate protection, as she wrote in a letter to Somphop Čhantharaphā:

I agree with you that we all die once and therefore should die leaving something useful to the world. But I still want to remind you that you are a man, no one will spare you their attention. If what you say irritates them, your mouth will be the cause of your death. I am a woman and eventhough I rebuke them so much that my name is included in their black or red list, nobody will take it seriously...<sup>2</sup>

But she was certainly wrong, for it was revealed later that her driver at the time was a police spy sent by the Government to observe her family. From the following letter, it is quite obvious that Dōkmaisot's ideas of patriotism changed after the revolution, revived in a new form during the Japanese occupation, and indeed she combined the two stages of her attitude in the last novel: ridiculed the Thai Government and reflected Thai society during the War:

I know that when I was young I was extremely patriotic. Fortunately, the revolution people taught me the lesson that being fellow-countrymen means nothing if it conflicts with personal benefit. Despite that, when the Japanese landed I was half mad, and have been so until now. Had I not had such a strong faith in the Lord Buddha's Dhamma, I would have shot myself a long time ago...<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the internal situation of a small country like Thailand, it is of little interest perhaps to anybody who is reading about the incomparably greater events of the War. One may only learn that the Japanese troops landed there on the same day as Pearl Harbour was unexpectedly attacked, and that

<sup>1</sup>For details see Chit Wiphāsathawat, Phao Sārāphāp (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1964).

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, Chīwit..., pp. 80-81.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 191-192.

Thailand easily relinquished to the Japanese passage to Burma and Malaya. The lengthy building of the notorious bridge over Khwae N̄qi<sup>1</sup> may perhaps linger in one's memory more than any other incident. Thai people prior to that were diverted from following the world situation by the Government propaganda urging modernisation of the country and the embracing of all the lands inhabited by the Thai race in a so-called Pan-Thai Movement. This coincided with Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere of Greater East Asia under Prince Konoye. When the conflict between the Governments of Thailand and French Indo-China over territory arose in September 1940, triggered off by some trivial events, both Governments agreed to have Japan act as mediator. During that time the British and Americans had already forecast the next movement of Japan in Indo-China:

The British believed that, if the Japanese decided to risk war with the British Empire and the United States, they would try to overrun South-East Asia and Indonesia, that they would be unable to do so without capturing a base on the east coast of the Kra Isthmus or the Malay Peninsula, and that therefore the best defence would be to station at Singapore a fleet strong enough to dominate the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea...

Broadly, the conclusions reached were that the conquest of Malaya would be difficult unless the invaders captured a port in Siamese territory at an early stage; that Singora<sup>2</sup>, Patani, and Kota Bahru were likely landing places.<sup>3</sup>

D̄kmaisot must have been one of an extremely few people in Thailand who have been so concerned with the country. She had started noting everything down in her diary a long time before the War in the East began. As Somphop Čhantharaphā quoted some relevant parts:

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<sup>1</sup>Better known in the West as "the River Khwai". The word "khwae" means "a tributary river".

<sup>2</sup>i.e. Songkhla.

<sup>3</sup>Basil Collier, A Short History of the Second World War (London: Collins, 1967), pp. 268, 285.

July 19th, 1940 - Whether or not Prince Konoye will accept the premiership depends on whether the military accept his propositions. If they don't, then the Prince will not accept it. The senior statesman wishes him to be the Prime Minister.

July 24th, - The Japanese Government has been formed, Prince Konoye is the Prime Minister, Lt.Gen. Hideki Tojo is the Minister of Defence.

August 4th, - The Japanese Government has issued a long announcement, which amounts to a statement that Japan is at a most important turning-point; that Japan must establish new rules for the East; that Japan must adjust her administration, economics, and culture so as to be in line with the advancement of the world.

...

January 25th, 1941 - The Vichy Government has agreed to let Japan mediate in the conflict between Thailand and French Indo-China.

....

February 5th, 1941 - America keeps an eye on Japan in connection with her mediating over the conflict. They said that Indo-China would be a strategic spot in Japan's advance to Malaya and the Philippines... <sup>1</sup>

Eight days before the landing of the Japanese troops in the country, while a tense discussion, anticipation, and reckoning were developing among politicians behind the scenes, while the British Matador Operation<sup>2</sup> to enter Thailand and block the border was delayed by Sir Josiah Crosby's fears of infringing Thai sovereignty,<sup>3</sup> and while the Thais were preparing themselves for the Constitution Day festival as Dōkmaisot had written in her novel, the author herself anxiously recorded in her diary the news she had heard from the B.B.C.:

China said that the Japanese had been building a road leading to Yunnan and it is going to be a concrete road. It will take them approximately two months to complete it.

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, op.cit., pp. 72-74.

<sup>2</sup>Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, C-in-C Far East's proposed movement into Thailand to forestall the Japanese. For details see Parkinson, op.cit., pp. 320, 325-327.

<sup>3</sup>Sir Josiah Crosby was at that time the British Ambassador to Thailand. For details see Sir Josiah Crosby, Siam: the Crossroad (London: Hollis and Carter, 1945), pp. 128-139.

Reuter said there was a report from Singapore that the preparations of the Japanese in Indo-China had been increased. The French in Indo-China who used to welcome the talk of Kurusu now believe that the Japanese will move forward and may invade Thailand. Although it is said that Thailand has some modern weapons, nobody really knows the truth about it. A report from Shanghai said that 30,000 soldiers from China are progressing towards Hainan, and a fleet with several cruisers are moving south...<sup>1</sup>

Of course D̄kmaisot, as a novelist and not a historian, would be very unrealistic had she included in her novel the details of the situation which she herself had closely followed. Instead she cleverly made Thawit ill with typhoid, had Winai move to live with Phrayā Sanphakit, and even put the latter's radio out of action; all this, one week prior to the landing of the Japanese troops. With these three people, who were the most likely to be keen on learning about the situation, kept ignorant, there was a chance for her to describe how Bangkok people were puzzled when they first heard the unexpected news, thus creating a more dramatic effect of total surprise.

Another very good example of D̄kmaisot's subtlety is in her relating a great number of incidents going on in Thailand and the Far East through Yuphā's recollection in chapter one, and those in the West through Thawit in chapter four. This technique simultaneously serves her several purposes: bridging the gap between Nī Lee Lōk! and the last novel, making the reader aware from the beginning of the different treatment she is going to give, presenting historical facts, criticism, and satirical attitudes. Nevertheless, a careful reading will also tell the reader that D̄kmaisot was conscious of her new style of writing, for before opening each of the two episodes mentioned she introduced, very subtly of course, a passage showing the

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<sup>1</sup>Somphop, op.cit., p. 76.

chain of human relationships regardless of races and nationalities. First Yuphā pondered over her engagement and marriage to Thawit:

It was hard to believe that the world situation had delayed Thawit from marrying her and it was equally hard to believe that it was also the world situation which later hurried him to marry her. But it was true, and it still puzzled her when she looked back. 1

Then Thawit thought of his family planning which had been delayed by the War:

"An Indian pundit says that everything in the universe is one. There is not a drop of water which has no connection with the ocean, and there is not a single moment of human thought which has no relation with all human beings on earth...Isn't it strange...that we, who are as unimportant as ants, can or cannot have a child depending on the world situation" 2

#### Dōkmaisot's satire

The first impression of the reader after reading this unfinished work is that the author never lets slip a chance to make a satirical remark, but always with humour. The bitterness is felt only where the instinct of love for homeland and national pride are concerned. Her satire so far is focussed on three parties: F.M. Pibulsonggram himself, the Government policy towards modernisation and nationalism, and Thai people who believed in the Government's ideas.

The criticism of F.M. Pibulsonggram and his Government policy begins on the first page of the novel with Yuphā having to hold onto her hat in the wind. Following this the novelist describes events in the country and later on takes a closer more specific look at them - how the Government laws and projects were put into practice, how people responded to them and so on. It is clear that Dōkmaisot was opposed to these policies and

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Wannakam..., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

and certainly did not have a high opinion of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, she described everything with detachment. The characters may have been her mouthpiece, but the reader feels that what they say is consistent with their personalities and is not conscious of their being manipulated by the author. Another aspect of her satire is to make her readers contain their laughter, while nodding with understanding or sudden realisation. However, it never makes them really angry with the politicians. That, at least, is the effect on this reader. The effect on the Government of the time and in particular on F.M. Pibulsonggram himself, however, would have been very different if the book had appeared then. Dōkmaisot's remarks would have been considered contemptuous because she ridiculed their ideas, made a farce out of their attempts to put them into practice, and made clowns out of them themselves. It is easy to imagine a politician defending himself when attacked, but to have done so against the satire of Dōkmaisot would only have made him more ridiculous. She never exaggerated. The Cultural Law really was enacted; Nāi Man and Nāi Khong did broadcast; and the film "Bān Rai Nā Rao (Our Farmhouse and Rice Field)" was indeed made (it even starred a young lieutenant in the Air Force, who is now Air Marshal Dawee Chullasapaya). The texts of the songs urging people to wear hats are given in full at appropriate places, interspersed with descriptions of the audience's reactions. However, Dōkmaisot had so far made no mention of anyone specifically by name. Instead she used their recognised titles, like "the Leader", "Thān Phūchāi", and "Thān Phūying", which in fact is of greater satirical effect.

When F.M. Pibul came to power, the absolute monarchy had already collapsed as an institution. These young officials

were in time only to have the title of "Luang" conferred upon them. Perhaps it was of no importance to a man, especially a military man, whose name, in any case, could be preceded by his military rank. For example, F.M. Pibulsonggram was better known as "Field Marshal" than as "Luang". But how could he only be a "Luang" when his wife, Mrs. La-iat Pibulsonggram, had a higher title? She was the first Thai female commoner, who, as wife of the Prime Minister, participated in various activities in support of her husband's policies. Previously only a chief wife of the "Chao Phrayā" could be called "Thān Phūying", and because of that the "Luang" husband of "Thān Phūying La-iat Pibulsonggram" was peculiarly unofficially addressed as "Thān Phūchāi".<sup>1</sup>

Another aspect of Dōkmaisot's satire is somewhat obscure but no less important in terms of her technique in writing a novel about society. Although she describes the various reactions of Thai people in high society to the F.M. Pibul's Cultural Laws, she does not neglect to give a picture of the lower classes. Nāng Plaek and Hong's grocery shop would have been hot and without a fan, nevertheless she still had to wear a vest and blouse. The decreē hardly made her more beautiful, since she had to unbutton her blouse and wear her vest loose. Nāng Klīp wore a child's hat, and a "Chōngkrabēn" under her modern skirt.<sup>2</sup> Bunplūk also wore a hat; not a beret, or a straw hat, or a wide-brimmed hat, but one such as is worn by people in the northeast, the poorest part of the country.

<sup>1</sup>See Dōkmaisot, op.cit., p. 100. (His, Your, Lordship)

The correct term is "Thān Chāokhun". "Thān Phūchāi" is only a literal opposite of "Thān Phūying (Her, Your, Ladyship)" and it can be sarcastically translated as "His, Your, Gentlemanship"

<sup>2</sup>Chōi, M. R. Kukrit Pramoj's best female character, did the same in Sī Phaendin.

See Kukrit, Sī Phaendin, vol.II, p. 614.

Looking back to the odd old days, another member of the Kunjaras, M.L. Bunlāa says in her auto-biography:

I could not believe till this day that all those incidents which affected the Thai way of life during the War could have been created by one person only. Abolishing chewing betel-nuts was quite a reasonable thing because it stopped the dirty spitting of the juice...<sup>1</sup> But what on earth could the reason be for forcing the whole nation to wear hats like Europeans... I believe that that influential man had stupid friends and clever enemies. Stupid friends consistently agreed with him and clever enemies encouraged him until he forgot himself and behaved like a madman. Perhaps it was his stupid friends who wanted to wear hats and needed his support. He was not aware of himself and nobody warned him. He should have been warned from the start before he became too powerful and no one dared to speak to him...<sup>2</sup>

Although Dōkmaisot only fully turned to satirical writing in her last novel, her potentiality as a satirist had been seen before in her lesser pieces some years back. In her best humorous story 1/500,<sup>3</sup> there are several passages which can make one skip or think that they are irrelevant to the description of the male character, Nāi Chōt, whom the novelist is depicting, unless he has followed the course of her writing and noticed the hints of her attitude towards the situation in the country:

From youth Nāi Chōt knew the meaning of the word "nation" and loved his "nation" as much as every drop of blood in his body. But when it came to the period when the word "nation" had<sup>4</sup> a quality of the pink tablets or of Mō Mi's snuff-powder,<sup>5</sup> even extended to mean "a colour of the skin", Nāi Chōt wished that he had been born in the deep jungle of Africa...<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is most probable that Dōkmaisot had several amusing stories about the betel-nut addicts since she had made the servants in Nī Lae Lok! betel-nut eaters (see p. 377)

<sup>2</sup>Bunlāa, Kwām Samret..., p. 99.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix i, pp. 495-496.

<sup>4</sup>The term used by Thai people for a kind of pain-killing tablets.

<sup>5</sup>The most popular snuff-powder in Thailand, said to cure several illness.

<sup>6</sup>Dōkmaisot, Butsabāban (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1962), pp. 289-290.

Nāi Chōt used to be very friendly with "turtles"<sup>1</sup> - that kind of creature they kept in the ponds and fed them whenever they liked. He was interested in them and always wanted to do his best to help them. Because he was well aware that "turtles" had no voice, he therefore never suggested to them to cry out but to stand up on their own two feet. But "turtles" could not do so properly for through all their generations they only knew how to crawl. Nāi Chōt only felt sad. Until it came to the period when "turtle" were poked, they were startled and suddenly were out of control like an elephant in must. Nāi Chōt then caught "turtle-sickness".<sup>2</sup>

Another strong humorous satire in 1/500 is when Nāi Chōt took his wife, Chuang, to the 1937 Constitution Day fair. Seeing lacquerware and black lumps of dried "rak" (lacquer resin) displayed in a glass case in one shop with an explanation "Rak M̄ang Thai"<sup>3</sup> (Thai lacquerware), Chuang kept asking her husband: "Who love M̄ang Thai?". Of course "rak" also means "to love". The couple almost quarrelled before Chuang realised her misunderstanding and laughed at herself:

"Oh I see!... How could I know it when nowadays people are shouting 'Rak M̄ang Thai!+Rak M̄ang Thai!' everywhere. Who shouts it, I know he loves his country. But seeing it written there, I was just wondering if the glass case knew how to love anything".<sup>4</sup>

Indeed it looks like an ordinary joke, but in fact a grave political satire is hidden there, and D̄kmaisot was very daring to write it so. "Rak M̄ang Thai" was a very popular song written by Luang Vichitr Vadakarn in 1937 for his nationalistic play, Rāchamanū. Prince Chula Chakrabongse, who visited Thailand that year, also saw the performance and made a comment upon it in his auto-biography:

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<sup>1</sup>A turtle is believed to be a stupid animal, so it becomes an expression for a stupid person. D̄kmaisot never looks down on farmers who very often are hurtfully compared with stupid "buffaloes". Her "turtles" here are therefore not the farmers but politicians and she was not sick of the farmers but of politicians. It should be noted too that the strong political satire is written from a point of view of a person with a high social status than "turtles", presumably the novelist herself, and not really as Nāi Chōt who is a poor man living in a rented terrace house.

<sup>2</sup>D̄kmaisot, op.cit., p. 290. <sup>3</sup>See footnote 3, p. 427.

<sup>4</sup>Op.cit., p. 375.

...Luang Vichitr also wrote several modern songs with the themes and tunes that rouse patriotism. Songs like "Rak Mueang Thai" (Love Thailand) and "Laem Thong" (The Golden Cape) were popular and easy to remember. But the writer must admit that all his plays are too historical and nationalistic. 1

As regard her disapproval of the idea of nationalism, D̄kmaisot spoke of it in her last novel in connection with the actual events:

In her opinion, judging from the activities of the Government, high officials, and that group of people who were more influential than their fellow-countrymen, or in other words, those who were in close contact with the Government, the country was engaged with all sorts of celebrations, competitions, rebuilding, and construction. Some were said to be for the preservation of art and culture. Others were for beauty and display, for example the demolition and reconstruction of Rajadamnern Avenue and the buildings along it.<sup>2</sup> Nobody, even those with an average brain like hers would consider what they saw as preparations for war.

It is true that there were some announcements about the organisation for defence and relief for damage suffered in the air attacks, but this had been continuous news for the last two or three years and now nobody really took any interest in it.

The Red Cross Society too was organised and women were asked to volunteer their help, It was no doubt popular among Thai women. They talked about it and criticised it, but their criticism made one think of its activities more as an entertainment than a relief society in war-time.

And although there was news about a crash course, devised by the army in order to produce more officers and technicians, it was incomparably less popular than the news about the Prime Minister's plan to build up the nation. His plans included the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare, community co-operations, the passing of the state codes of conduct, the opening of the jungle for cultivation, irrigation programmes, a communication programme, which would cost millions and millions of baht.<sup>3</sup> Compared with all these, the news from the army was but a little steam from a kettle amidst a massive amount of rain in a rainy season.

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<sup>1</sup>Chula Chakrabongse, Koet Wang Parut..., vol. III, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gen. Net Khemayothin's reminiscence of Bangkok upon his return home from France.

Gen. Net Khemayothin, Chiwit Nai Phon (Bangkok: 1967), pp. 53-55.

<sup>3</sup>The present Thai currency.

There was also a proposal of an M.P. from Ubol Rajadhani which was widely criticised and some people "related" it to the world crises although it was clear from the debate that the case was only a matter of internal politics and world affairs were drawn in just to support the proposal. Then followed the news that fifty or sixty M.P.s had volunteered to fight in the front line if the war really occurred. The reaction to this was that people smiled knowingly.

Next there was an announcement of another new law; changing New Year's Day, accompanied by programmes to commemorate the Constitution Day!...

Despite all this, Yuphā's father kept thinking and talking about coconut oil lamps, soap, and flints.

Indo-China crisis!

Yuphā did not know how or when it happened. First of all she heard that the Thai Government had claimed their right to the territory on the left bank of the Mekong River from the French Government. The news was widely spread within a short time. Those who knew the north-east country well enough commented sarcastically: "What do they want it for? The people who live on the land we own already are eating frogs and lizards!"

But a certain person<sup>1</sup> explained that it was necessary for the building up of the nation, the plan to make Thailand a great power and have revenge on the French for what they had done in "R.S. 112"<sup>2</sup>. However, people only talked about and discussed it as if it was not a serious or important matter, until one day, all of a sudden, it became so significant that every group of people made it the topic of their conversation. It began with official news about Nāi Chanthā being shot dead by a Vietnamese policeman, and a Thai plane being shot down by the French in Thai territory. The newspapers were furious. The "Khana Lūat Thai" (Thai-blood Party) distributed their circular showing their anger, making some people wonder whether "Mūang Thai"<sup>3</sup> had been so advanced that its citizens had the courage of expressing their political opinions about international affairs. At the same time they were hoping that the Government

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<sup>1</sup>From the context, it could well be Luang Vichitr Vadakarn in his speech "The Losing of Thai Territories to France", delivered on October 17th, 1940, in which at one place he said explicitly: "We have to become a great power, otherwise we shall be in peril". The building-up of the nation was also referred to and the claim that the people were already eating frogs and lizards was counter-attacked.

<sup>2</sup>For "the R.S. 112 incident", or what is called "the Pāknam incident" see Hall, *op.cit.*, pp. 591-612.

<sup>3</sup>"Mūang Thai" (the country of the Thais) has been commonly used as the name of the country for a long period of time. It is the natural Thai term and includes no foreign-derived element. Dōkmaisot employs the term "Mūang Thai" here to make it contrast with F.M. Pibul's "Thailand" which she purposely put in English. In fact most members of the royal family preferred to use the term "Siam" in English.

would calm the situation. But six days after the action of the "Khana Luat Thai" appeared in the newspapers, news of the monthly press-conference convened by the Leader of the Government captured the interest of those with critical minds. The Leader of the Government said to the newspapermen: "...Foreign newspapers supported the idea of claiming back our territories and the whole question is trivial when compared with the problems of economics, the military, and culture which are all very important. For we are now 'Thailand', and unlike before, we are now a great country". On the very same day there was other news in the papers about the university students planning a demonstration in support of the Government's claiming back of the territories. The Director of Thammasat University<sup>1</sup> went to request the students to abandon the idea. The same thing happened at Chulalongkorn University... But only three days later there was a demonstration in which the students carried posters which might have shocked people of their parents' generation, but which were welcomed by the Government.

... (Newspapers, various groups, and ordinary people expressed their opinions and the Chulalongkorn University students arranged a torch-light demonstration. Thawit, Yuphā, and her sisters went to see them)...

Yuphā could not guess Thawit's feelings while he was leaning on the car watching those people walking past him. But when a Chinese woman, aged about fifty, standing among the big group of Thai and Chinese next to him, shouted loudly while waving "Hurrah! Hurrah! Emerald Buddha! Hurrah! Hurrah! Emerald Buddha!", Thawit turned to laugh with Yuphā and said: "I wonder whether she knows who they are and what they are doing?"

The slogans on the students' posters were not different from those of other demonstrators, that was to urge the Government to use force. After that, the Indo-China situation became more and more sensational and confused. People with critical minds began to wonder about what had happened and would happen next. The stronger the voice of support the weaker grew the voice of criticism... Then the latter disappeared almost completely, only being mentioned and discussed among relatives and close friends. Even this was heard only in the homes of those whose education had equipped them with wide knowledge. Phrayā Sanphakit's worries about his country had turned into complete despair. His family began hearing him mentioning resignation from the civil service...<sup>2</sup>

Except for the case of the Chinese woman whom the author may have created to symbolise the voice of a mob, there is nothing imaginary in the above writing. Somphop Chantharapraphā, a participant in the Chulalongkorn students' demonstration confessed

<sup>1</sup>i.e. Luang Pradist Manudharm or Mr. Pridi Phanomyong.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Wannakam..., pp. 24-34.

that he enjoyed the occasion and did not think of anything at all while shouting "Hey! Hey! Pākse<sup>1</sup> is ours!". He related the incident to Dōkmaisot but his guardian did not feel amused. On the contrary, she looked grave as she remarked: "And what will come next?" Somphop admitted that he had not bothered to think about it. That was why when Thailand had to relinquish it again later, he did not really feel upset.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Luang Vichitr Vadakarn who, as a strong supporter of the Pan-Thai Movement,<sup>3</sup> officially recorded the cases of Nāi Čhanthā and the shooting down of the Thai plane,<sup>4</sup> Dōkmaisot described them as if the tumult had stemmed from "a drop of honey"<sup>5</sup> and was only the voice of a mob. This, Thian Pathipasēn, in his biography of F.M. Pibulsonggram, reveals that it was he and some of his journalist friends who started it. They had heard about Nāi Čhanthā being shot dead, while they were sitting in a coffee shop. They seriously considered it to be the beginning of bloodshed between the Thais and the French and went straight to express their opinion to the Prime Minister late at night, but were stopped by Thian's elder brother, the Prime Minister's secretary, who did not accept their opinion as the voice of the general public. So the journalists joined forces to sensationalise the news in their papers. The only writer who disagreed with them was Kulāp Sāipradit (Sī Būraphā) for the reason that it would only be like "throwing petrol onto a flame or drawing enemies into the house".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A town on the Mekong, now in Laos. <sup>2</sup> Somphop, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Clearly seen from his writings, especially the following sentences from a song in his play *Nānčhao* (1939): "But our brothers are still scattered in various places. If only we could gather all Thais in the world together, our nation would be the great Thai."

<sup>4</sup>Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thailand's Case* (Bangkok: 1941) pp.7, 72.

<sup>5</sup>An idiom derived from folk-tale well-known in Thailand.

<sup>6</sup>Thian, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

Thus, the two leading novelists, Sī Būraphā and Dōkmaisot believed that the claiming of the territories and conflict with the French would be of no advantage to the country. Another writer who at the time was writing his books in Cornwall, England, Prince Chula Chakrabongse, also wrote about the events with anxiety:

...I read in a newspaper sent from Thailand about news of the Government asking women to wear hats from June 19th. It made me think that the Thai Government were unafraid of the War...

The news which made me particularly anxious during this month was the war between the Thais and the French. It did not seem to end, and I was afraid that the French would send planes to bomb Bangkok and destroy our beautiful historical buildings which are so dear to me. 1

Dōkmaisot chooses Pachā to be a target of her ridicule on people who believed in F.M. Pibulsonggram and his policies. Following the Japanese occupation of the country and the Government's request that people be friendly towards them, the author tells us that it was only traders who were more interested in their business than in the country, such as Chuanchom's father, Luang Tankōson, who obeyed the announcement. Moreover, such people did not waste any time either in courting favour with the Japanese. By this time confidence in the Pan-Thai ideal had waned considerably and only a few foolish people, such as Chuanchom, still believed Government statements that the Japanese would return their territories. There is the possibility that Dōkmaisot at a later stage might have exploited her sarcasm on the Japanese in Thailand themselves since there was a number of stories told at the time.

Lastly, mention must be made of works comparable with this novel by other writers particularly Sot Kūramarōhit's Rayā,

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<sup>1</sup>Chula Chakrabongse, op.cit., pp. 160, 135.

Mālai Chūphinit's Muang Nimit, and M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's Sī Phaendin. Sot focussed his story on the patriotism of Thai people, represented by a young man called Rayā, against the Japanese. Mālai created the tangled love of the people who at the same time engaged themselves in the underground Free-Thai Movement. Sī Phaendin alone includes the situation of Thailand under F.M. Pibulsonggram's regime. It is interesting to note that both M.R. Kukrit and Dōkmaisot related the events with an amusing tone. One major difference is perhaps that Dōkmaisot gives herself plenty of space in the story gradually to develop the story while M.R. Kukrit only makes the whole course a phase of the changing society that Plōi (the leading character) saw and lived with in her life time which spanned the four reigns, as the title suggested.

As time went on Dōkmaisot perhaps understood, consciously or not, that her main impulse to write the unfinished novel had not been to continue the story of the relationship between the characters of Nī Lae Lōk! in a new situation. It was the situation itself and the social and political pressures resulting from the Pibul regime that had caused her such great excitement and deep indignation and distaste that she was inspired to write. In the end, when her work was held up by illness, she came perhaps to lose all her impulse to continue with a novel which, so long after the events, would have concentrated only on temporary happenings in history and could never develop the same power of treatment and understanding of human relationship which dominates her best work.

## CHAPTER X

## Dōkmaisot's World

Among her contemporaries Dōkmaisot restricted her portrayal to a single class - the élite, and never broke out from that strong social wall, except in a few short stories, the length of which enables her to write without having to sustain inconsistency. With at least thirty-five families and two hundred people, there is enough scope to consider the totality of her novels as "Dōkmaisot's world", in the sense it is used by Percy Lubbock in reference to Tolstoy:

... Genius of his sort generally means, I dare say, that the possessor of it is struck by special and wonderful aspects of the world... So it is with Balzac, and so it is, in their different ways, with such writers as Standhal and Maupassant, or again as Dickens and Meredith; They all create a "world of their own"...<sup>1</sup>

and by Walter Allen in reference to Hardy:

...Hardy's view of life, which dictates the way we react to his characters, is implicit in every sentence he writes. The reader is simply not free, as Mrs. Leavis seems to imply, to fill the outline of the characters as he pleases ... Every novelist, then, gives us in his novels his own personal idiosyncratic vision of the world...<sup>2</sup>

Between two contrasting ways in which a novel may be written; to write it in the first person or from the standpoint of omniscience<sup>3</sup>, Dōkmaisot has no reluctance to choose the latter way by which means she can concern herself with various sets of people, and series of events.<sup>4</sup> The fact that she restricted these sets and these events to manageable range.

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<sup>1</sup>Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Allen, The English Novel; a Short Critical History (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), pp. 16, 17.

<sup>3</sup>See W.S. Maugham, Ten Novels and Their Authors (London: Heinemann, 1954), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Of all her works, Difō and Sī Chuamōng Nai Rotfai (see Appendix I, pp493-493), are the only two in which she writes in first person.

helps us to see not only her world as she described it and peopled it with characters but also her view of the world. If there is to be some wholeness and unity in a writer's work there is bound to be a set of views and attitudes which provide the basis for the reality of the characters, for their sense of life. In concluding this thesis, various aspects of Dōkmaisot's view of the world will now be taken and examined.

### i. Influence of Buddhism

Doubtless, Dōkmaisot's faith in Buddhism was profound and her study of the religion was serious. The best evidence of this is perhaps her letter to Somphop in which she admitted that her nervous strain after the War was so severe that: "Had I not had such a strong faith in the Lord Buddha's Dhamma, I would have shot myself a long time ago".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, being brought up in a family whose leaders were broad-minded about religions, and being educated in a Catholic school for more than ten years, her belief could not have been narrow.

What makes all her writing different from that of her contemporaries in this matter is perhaps her isolation and refusal to follow the current trend of attitude towards the novel, which was, as Sī Būraphā said, believed at one time that the only duty of the novelist was to give pleasure to the reader - that attitude which led to the misconception of the word "novel" and which made people who were not well-off think that novels are only for rich people.<sup>2</sup> It was not until a decade after Dōkmaisot had restricted her writing to her "world" that writers began to think that society and morals were parts of their responsibilities in writing. As Sī Būraphā

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IX, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup>For details see Sī Būraphā, Lūk Phūchāi, 4th ed. (Bangkok: Odeon Store, 1944), note, pp. 5-6.

who agreed wholeheartedly with the change, revealed, with a further sharp comment on art and truth:

...But even aesthetics and morality, there are still some people who argue that it is not the business of the novel to deal with them, nor its duty to promote them, that novels concern the dreams of the novelists alone, and that the reader must let the novelist lead them to wherever he wants to, even to the deepest hell, because "art is something high and pure, and artists are like the riders of a Garuda flying high over the clouds". Sometimes these people go so much further so that art becomes like "Sankhata Dhamma" or even "Nibban", that is to say it has no beginning, no end, no source, and no limit, or like something deepest and most miraculous. Well, their words are all quite interesting and convincing, and perhaps they would be most soothing to the writers too if in them there is one more thing, which is missing, - truth! <sup>1</sup>

Despite her interest in literary trends,<sup>2</sup> Dōkmaisot never joined them nor expressed her opinions about them. Thai readers and critics seem to agree that her novels are all based on her conviction in Buddhism. Wilāt Manīwat, for example, stresses the point by referring to the fact that Dōkmaisot often quotes Pali passages at the beginnings of the stories or the chapters. Khun Nilawan Pinthōng agrees with the remark that Dōkmaisot is "a preacher outside a pulpit",<sup>3</sup> and also makes the critical point that the novelist's good characters tend to be too idealistic. The characters whom these critics always raise to support their claims are Luang Narābān and Phra Atthakhadī Wichai. But the matter is not quite as simple as that, and the claims are not really justifiable as will be seen later. Dōkmaisot, like Jane Austen, is a moralist,<sup>4</sup> no doubt about that, but she is not a religious propagandist. All her works seemingly have a close relation with Buddhism,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter II, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter VI, p. 267.

<sup>4</sup>Allen, op.cit., p. 109.

but that only means, in the real Buddhistic sense, the realisation of the truth of life and nothing else. And as Western writers writing about life in Western society, consciously or not, portray life in Christian society, Dōkmaisot too, as a realistic novelist, could not separate Buddhism from her portrayal of Thai society; all traditions, customs, ways of thinking, behaving, teaching, of Thai people stem principally from that religion. Even so, none of her characters is a monk. Amnuay in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek is the only one who was ordained as a Buddhist monk in the story, but everything about him stopped at that point and was resumed after he resigned from the monkhood. There is not even one monk or authoritative religious person who preaches a sermon or to whom the characters go for explanation or consolation. Moreover, the parts which concern religion reflect best how and sometimes how wrongly Thai people interpret their religion. And ironically, the two kindest characters mentioned are those who suffer most in all Dōkmaisot's novels, which should not be the case if one looks at them superficially, but the author clearly scrutinizes the cause of their suffering according to Buddhist psycho-analysis and lets us see their ignorance.

Like other features in her writings, Dōkmaisot's inclusion of her religious ideas grows with the passage of time and with the length of the works. The first four short novels and Kam Kao are all romantic stories, written when Dōkmaisot was between twenty-three and twenty-six years old, before any serious strain affected her way of life. The leading characters are all young and cheerful people. Among them, Chawī in Romance Sōn Ruang Ching is the only one who appears to read a religious text-book, but it is only a basic text for

schoolchildren, Phra Phutthačhao Tratsarū Arai (What Was the Lord Buddha Enlightenment?) by King Rama VI. Nut always exclaims "Phra Anitčhang!" (Lord - impermanence), a peculiar Thai-Pali phrase she imitates from Phong without learning the meaning. And Phong is the only hero in those five stories who refers to the teachings of religion, but only once and only for consoling Nut:

"Christianity teaches people to love their fellow human-beings as much as themselves, and our Buddhism teaches people to have 'mettā' (loving-kindness) towards other people as much as a mother's 'mettā' for her child!"<sup>1</sup>

Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, Sām Chāi, and Nūng Nai Rōi, all deal with complicated lives and society, and therefore are suitable for the novelist to include some aspects of Buddhism and its influence over Thai people. However, she does not lace any of them with quotations or interpretations. In Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, there are only three places where she brings in Buddhist ideas; when Walai's over self-confidence began to be shaken, when the author explained her anti-polygamy opinion, and when Luang Narūbān told of his reason for doing good without hoping for anything in return to Amarā. It is interesting to note that Luang Narūbān remains heart-broken throughout the story whereas Ratna in Sām Chāi, a tougher and more shrewd man, but who is equipped with an understanding of life according to Buddhism, is able to overcome his worldly problems and to control himself to help other people in time of distress.

Nūng Nai Rōi, the novel which caused most argument in the matter, has, in fact, no character who knows Buddhism well. Anong did not even offer food to the monks or make any kind of merit-making as traditionally practised on a birthday, but

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Kam Kao, pp. 197-198.

organised a full-scale European style party instead. The three virtues of Wichai which make him, as Khun Nilawan says, too good as a human being, are his kindness, gratitude, and inability to be angry. Again, he is not like that because of his up-bringing in a strict Buddhist family nor has he been ordained as a monk, but was simply born a kind, grateful, and calm man. Here, in this novel, Dōkmaisot has shown one very important feature of Buddhism; to call oneself a Buddhist without knowing the way out from suffering means nothing, and in this way, Anong whom no one in the story admired but with her clearer mind and her way of looking at problems with detachment can sum up the cause of Wichai's grief as his lack of self-awareness, whereas Wichai himself after a long religious self-scrutiny cannot see the way out.<sup>1</sup>

Then, in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān, Dōkmaisot became more critical about people who called themselves Buddhists without really understanding or intending to learn about the religion. An answer to the question as to why someone like Luang Narūbān must suffer and someone like Ratna in Sām Chāi is more successful is given: Luang Narūbān has neither studied Buddhism nor been ordained as a monk. At the same time, the author makes it clear that in Buddhism men and women are equal in learning and practising the religion. Amarā, a once short-tempered person, understands the Dharma well enough to point out the way of happiness to a respectable and kind man like Luang Narūbān who knows only how to help other people but not himself.

In Phūdī, Dōkmaisot's world is filled with what can be

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nāng Nai Roi, pp. 659-684. See also Chapter IV, pp. 249-250.

collectively called "dukkha" (suffering); separation, death, illness, frustration, etc. Khunying Sae symbolizes the way out from them according to Buddhism. By realizing the way of the world, she is strong enough to tear herself away from the flame of desire and to help the youngers and the weak.

Ubattihēt gives the author an opportunity to mock those who believe blindly in Buddhism. Nanthawan contains nothing religious, but the hero, Banlā, like Suthat in Ubattihēt, represents, though rather unfittingly, an ideal man in Dōkmaisot's world interested in Buddhism despite being educated abroad. This is very much in contrast with the situation of Luang Narābān who had never been abroad but some how never came to learn thoroughly the religion. The way the novelist attributes religious interest to the two men is almost unnoticeable, but nevertheless very subtle, and it is quite evident on both occasions that interest in religion is one characteristic of people in her world. In Nanthawan, Phōranī, on her first morning at the plantation and while tidying Banlā's rather disorderly and and dusty study room, saw "four hard-bound books with the titles in Roman letters telling the story of the Lord Buddha and the teachings in Buddhism"<sup>1</sup>, and Suntharī in Ubattihēt, on her first visit to Dr.Suthat's home and while waiting for her friend in an upstairs room, peeped into an adjacent room which was ajar and saw "a small altar the size of which suitable for the room, with a small golden Buddha's image covered with a glass dome upon it. Two pairs of vases were full of flowers, candles in the candle-sticks, and incense-sticks were stuck in the jar."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nanthawan, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Ubattihēt, p. 363.

The ultimate truth of life in this world, namely death, is seen in Nī Lae Lōk! with Salyā taking her leave of Dōkmaisot's world. Here, the novelist's deep understanding of Buddhism is seen; the religion can give hope to a person even at the very last moment of "life" while "body" and "mind" struggle with anguish; - Salyā died happily and with detachment.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not Dōkmaisot's contemporaries studied Buddhism as seriously as her, their faith in the religion as it appears in their works is equally firm. In Malai Chūphinit's Thung Mahārāt, one of the hero's aims in life is to support the religion by building and renovating chapels and pagodas in the village monasteries.<sup>2</sup> The most moving episode in Sot Kūramarōhit's Rayā<sup>3</sup> is when Rayā and Sōi were married in the jungle in front of a deserted Buddha's statue, without a monk or a registrar, but with the most senior man in the "good but unwanted" group scooping up the rain water from the palm of the statue and pouring it on their heads as the blessed water.<sup>4</sup> It is only when the religion is abused or misinterpreted by society that these writers express their opinions differently. Sī Būraphā and Dōkmaisot are the best two for comparison. From his writings,<sup>5</sup> Sī Būraphā is a devout Buddhist too, but he is sometimes very angry with his characters and criticises their religious activities almost violently especially when they draw a line between classes by using the religion which is meant to abolish all class distinction. The best example of his attack

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VIII, pp. 367-369.

<sup>2</sup>See "Riam Eng", Thung Mahārāt, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Kāonā, 1970), pp. 48-49, ff.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter IX, p. 431.

<sup>4</sup>See Sot Kūramarōhit, Rayā (Bangkok: Phanfā Phitthayā, 1970), vol. III, pp. 2246-2254.

<sup>5</sup>See for example Sī Būraphā, Lūk Phūchāi, pp. 17-27.

on such people comes from Songkhrām Chīwit (The War of Life)<sup>1</sup>. Ra-phin writes to his girl friend, Phloen, telling her of an incident he came across one morning; a well-to-do woman who offered food to the monks every morning was asked for a scrap of the left-over food by an old beggar and his little grandson, both wearing rags:

"Lady, I am begging for your kindness, please give us some food, just for a meal, and some old clothes enough for us to wrap our bodies in this cold weather."

She stopped and looked at them a little before she answered, "you had better go ahead. The food I have here is only for the monks."

The old man begged: "I am not asking for such a good food as you are offering the monks. The food for your pets is good enough for us."

She looked annoyed while answering, "I loath pets you know. There is no pig or dog or any other animal in my youse. You had better go ahead."

The old man begged further, "We have walked past two houses and found nobody offering food to the monks. Seeing you doing that, I am sure you will have some pity for wretched animals like us."

"Why? If I offer food to the monks, must I give something to some people like you as well? Do you think you are as valuable as the monks?"

The old man answered her humbly, "I only intend to say that you are kind-hearted."

"But has that anything to do with you? Don't you know that I offer food to the monks because I want 'merit' so that after death I'll go to heaven. I am not a millionaire or multi-millionaire to<sup>2</sup> donate my money without hoping for anything in return."

It was Ra-phin who later took off his shirt and gave it to the little boy, saying that it was from someone who could give without hoping for anything in return. Of course what the woman did, said, and hoped is completely non-Buddhistic, but commonly found in Thai people, and what Ra-phin did and said was exactly what the Lord Buddha taught.

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 61-62.

<sup>2</sup>Sī Būraphā, Songkhrām Chīwit, 8th ed. (Bangkok: Phadung Sūksā, 1965), pp. 20-21.

But Dōkmaisot, again like Jane Austen,<sup>1</sup> is never angry with her characters, but shows contempt for ignorance and complacency. Even for that one has to read between the lines and notice her undertone. The part which is comparable with the above writing of Sī Būraphā is perhaps from Chaichana Khōng Luang Narābān, when Amarā and Amnuay arranged a "tham khwan dhan"<sup>2</sup> ceremony for their twin. It began with Amnuay's grandmother offering food to the monks. She was so old that Amnuay had to help hand her everything to place in the monks' bowls, but:

The grandmother had to place everything in the bowls and bags with her own hands. Here, the most important part of the offering ceremony is here - doing it with her own hands and not a single thing must be forgotten. Offering only rice and not other dishes to go with it would give her ample rice but less dishes and sweet in the next life. And why should she offer only food and not taking an opportunity to touch and offer other things so that her "merit" would be augmented, when they were all there and ready for the purpose...<sup>3</sup>

Dōkmaisot never wastes her time nagging people in her world who never pay attention to religions, but she will find someone like Amarā to explain Buddhism to Luang Narābān whom she, from the tone, does not seem to blame when he admits:

"Truly, I worship this religion (Buddhism) because it is handed to me by my parents. I call myself a Buddhist, abide by what it teaches, support it only because I am a governor and religion has a big role in administration... Personally I have never received any direct benefit from the religion, not even once. I am clinging tightly to the world and cannot see any way to detach myself from it." <sup>4</sup>

The most ignorant person in terms of religion in Dōkmaisot's world and who becomes the victim of the novelist's severe

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<sup>1</sup>See Allen, op.cit., p. 110

<sup>2</sup>See footnote 2, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, p. 247.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 630.

mockery is perhaps Nāng Čhamnong in Ubattihēt. Like a great number of Thai people, she believed that fictitious places like 'Phra Thaen Dong Rang' (the throne in the 'rang' or 'sala' wood)<sup>1</sup> in Kanchanaburi were authentic and despite her natural cruelty, she believed that by climbing up the steps to the throne on the top of the mountain she had gained "merit" and lengthened her life:

"And how did you feel when you reached the top?"

"Oh my heart was so clear, sir, and how happy I was thinking of the Lord Buddha! Eventhough I can't see him in person, I have seen the bed upon which he entered 'Nibban'."

The Governor held his smile, and asked,

"And did you ascend the 'Cremation Mountain'?"

"Yes, I did," she answered firmly, "It is said that the mountain is so high that most people cannot reach the top and that some become too exhausted on the way, because the more you climb up, the higher the steps grow. I didn't have any trouble and reached the top in no time at all."

"How many steps altogether did you make?"

"Ninety-six sir."

"Oh! So you are going to live very long! And after coming down, did you ache or not?"

"Not at all sir. How could I, after climbing up to show respect to the place where the Lord Buddha was cremated." ....

"What do you think of the 'Vihara' (pavillion) covering the throne?"

"It's beautiful sir, not too high, and properly built. Don't you think sir that the person who built the 'Vihara' must have gained lots of merit, because otherwise the throne would have been exposed to the rain and the sun, and the birds will make it dirty?"

"Oh! I don't think that the birds in that area will make the throne dirty. Even the trees understood, the

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<sup>1</sup>There are a great number of places like this in Thailand. People build several impressions of the Lord Buddha, for example the foot-print, the shadow, the death-bed, etc. then attach traditions and miracles to them. Phra Thaen Dong Rang is one of the very famous places to which Buddhists make pilgrimage.

the grass cried, the 'rang'trees bent towards each other forming a dome to give shade. So, there is no reason for the birds not to know it!"

Nāng Čhamnong, not knowing how to answer, was silent.<sup>1</sup>

The underlined are of course quotations from religious literary texts, which are too difficult and sophisticated for someone like Nāng Čhamnong to understand.

In conclusion, Dōkmaisot's purposes in including Buddhism in her novels were as follows:

- a. to describe the Thai way of life, their traditions, behaviour and all that relates mainly to their belief.
- b. to criticize Thai people about their interpretation of the religion and their non-Buddhistic ideas.
- c. to avoid committing her own opinion directly when she was against any long-practised customs, for example, polygamy
- d. to show her conviction in Buddhism, but indirectly and not in any way as a propagandist.

And these purposes are expressed in the following ways:

- a. through description by the author herself. This includes clearly the details of all the ceremonies, the characters' thoughts, and the cause and effect of the situations.
- b. through the conversations and correspondence between the characters. This serves her second purpose well especially the letters between Amarā and Luang Narūbān, and between Wimon and Khunying Sae.
- c. through quotations from Pali texts, proverbs, and old literary works. There is no definite rule as to where she would insert them; but depending on suitability, at the beginnings of the chapters, the stories, at the end of the novels, and often they were quoted by the characters.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Ubattihēt, pp. 247-248.

ii. Attitudes towards love, marriage, and sex.

Love - before her death, Salyā fixed her mind on it:

" - the most important aspect life holds, the one which unites progress and failure, the setting up and breaking down."<sup>1</sup>

Marriage - Phatcharī told Ratna of her opinion about it:

"You were completely wrong in thinking that I want to marry someone rich. Compatibility and mutual understanding are most important for people who want to share 'happiness and distress' together all their lives." <sup>2</sup>

Most of Dōkmaisot's characters, especially female ones are revolutionaries; they refuse arranged marriages which were still generally accepted at the time. The winning of a girl's love, therefore, is often a theme of Dōkmaisot's short novels with marriage as the finale.

Although love and marriage end novels conveniently and most readers do not object to it,<sup>3</sup> Dōkmaisot, in her longer and more serious works emphasizes that love and marriage are in fact impermanent. This is also the case with some of her contemporaries like Sī Būraphā, Prince Ā-kāt, and Mālai Chūphinit.

"When human beings love they try to get something. They also try to give something,...and this double aim makes love more complicated than food or sleep. It is selfish and altruistic at the same time..." <sup>4</sup>

And it is from there the novelist chooses the type of love he prefers for his characters. Dōkmaisot never commits herself to the type which she favours, but rather accepts both and often attributes them to her characters like Luang Prāmōt and Anong. Prince Ā-kāt is Dōkmaisot's contemporary whose observation of the difference between Eastern and Western

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter VIII, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sām Chāi, p. 683.

<sup>3</sup>Forster, op.cit., pp. 62, 63.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

cultures makes him separate marriage from love, and stress that while love has no bounds marriage has several. In his Lakhon Haeng Chīwit (The Circus of Life) and Phiu Luang Phiu Khāo (Yellow Skin - White Skin), Wisūt Supphalak and Maria Gray love and understand one another, but agree that they should not be married:

...Real love means to give and sacrifice. The blood of the yellows and the whites can never be really mixed.<sup>1</sup>

So, their relationship eventually turned into Platonic friendship.

But Ra-phin in Sī Būraphā's Songkhram Chīwit objects to the idea of Platonic friendship.<sup>2</sup> To him, love is an experience that can occur in one's heart easily, but to nurture it to marriage needs faith, endurance, and strength enough to sustain social barriers. Very often Sī Būraphā's characters fail but not without the author making the reader sympathise with them, hate the injustice of society, and feel bitter with human relationships. What really attracts the reader in his writing as far as love and marriage are concerned is not his idea but the language, in which he cleverly presents contrast of emotions.

The character of love and marriage in Mālai Chūphinit's world is perhaps best for comparison with that in Dōkmaiso's. Like D.H. Lawrence, Mālai connects love and beauty with sex, never looks down on sex, or thinks of it as an immoral side of life, nor is he afraid of it.<sup>3</sup> His characters face all problems bravely and fight to the end for what they want. The tragedy which always appears in his stories is mostly due to the fact that the characters cannot find both love and successful sexual

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<sup>1</sup>M.C.Ā-kātdamkoeng, Phiu Luang..., p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Sī Būraphā, Songkhram Chīwit, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>D.H. Lawrence, "The State of Funk", Selected Essays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), pp. 109-113.

life in their own couples. In his world marriage cannot completely tie down men and women. Whenever desire becomes too powerful to control, they will struggle to get rid of the bonds, or at least to get what they want temporarily by committing adultery, eloping, or becoming promiscuous. While Sī Būraphā's Kīrati accepts her ill-fate,<sup>1</sup> Mālai's Phakkhinī in Phaendin Khōng Rao (This Land of Ours)<sup>2</sup> leaves her middle-aged husband and elopes with the man she loves and who is the fiancé of her own sister. She admits her unforgivable act but never repents it:

"Because he is my god. As long as my heart is still faithful to the person I love, believes in him, worships and obeys him, our bodies mean nothing more than the flesh which will decay away one day, nor do the curses, scandals, and all forms of sufferings, torments, or pain mean --"

"Don't forget another god Phakkhinī," said Thamrong (her legal husband).

"No, I never forget my mother. She is the god for whom I can sacrifice my flesh, blood and my life, more than for him. But the meanings are different. My mother is my god of heaven-on-earth, whereas he my god of hell-on-earth."

"Phakkhinī!"

"Yes, he is my god of hell-on-earth," she stressed, "You know, for him I can do even more than this. I can even do something worse than selling myself as a prostitute, in exchange for money that will put him in a safer place. For him I can spend my life in this way forever without feeling ashamed, embarrassed or bitter, because it is my own life." She clasped and twisted her hands so hard that the bones bulged up, "Yes, we - he and I will live together in that deep hell - our heaven, all our lives as hell-creatures should do. We will snatch the happiness as much as we can, even that happiness is only bits and pieces left over from other people's daily life." <sup>3</sup>

Compared with these writings, Dōkmaisot's works seem mild, cold, and unadventurous. One reason is that all her

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup>see Chapter I, pp. 64-65.

<sup>3</sup>"Mae Anong", Phaendin Khōng Rao (Bangkok: Khurusaphā, 1972), vol. II, pp. 194-195.

her characters, as well as the stories, lie within the framework of tradition and a particular social class which has long been developed into some kind of institution. None of the married women in her world is given the chance to go out of the boundaries of tradition to love a younger man like Kīrati, or snap the tough thread of marriage to elope with another man like Phakkhinī. Their husbands may be polygamous and they may hate the practice, but their lives always move in that circle. Another reason is that the members of that world has little to worry about as long as there is no outside pressure. They have plenty of money, food, servants, friends, and of course opportunities to look for suitable husbands and wives. However, looking at her works as a whole, they give a complete picture of Thai tradition from courting to marriage. We know that people in that class were brought up in such a way that they will automatically look for girls and boys of the same level, which perhaps was not difficult at the time. Parents seemingly had control of their children in choosing their life-partners, but in practice children were also asked for their decision. The attitude of the individual grows more and more important as the old tradition fades away. Mayurī, Amarā, for example, refuse firmly to marry men they do not love. Walai has her own amorous ways to tempt her victims. Wimon, the most reserved of all, decides by herself to accept the engagement ring from her boyfriend. Anong, Čhintanā, and many others go as far as to search for men themselves. Men too are rapidly changing their attitude. Polygamy is less and less practised and has become a sign of psychological weakness. In other words, Dōkmaisot, in her world, wants to eliminate unsuitable and old-fashioned practices, promote freedom and equality for

for men and women in choosing husbands and wives, but she is also in favour of preserving social and moral standards.

As far as sex is concerned, Dōkmaisot's world is even further away from that of Mālai. She seems to be "Victorian" - avoiding "any detailed treatment of the animal side of human nature"<sup>1</sup>. Actually the words "Animal nature!" were used by Banlū in Nanthawan to curse the feelings inside him, when he, upon finding Phōranī sleeping alone in the room prepared for his children, was hesitant to leave her.<sup>2</sup>

It is very interesting to consider why with the existence of promiscuity, polygamy, elopement, and even rape in her novels, Dōkmaisot did not write much about sex. She even avoids describing the wedding nights of several couples, Luang Prāmōt and Walai in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, Ratna and Phatcharī in Sām Chāi, for example. The wedding scenes between Chawī and Wat in Romance Sōn Rūang Čhing is added simply because the author wants Wat to talk to his bride about his ideas with regard to the occupations of Thai people. Is it because Dōkmaisot was then an unmarried woman and therefore was not brave enough to write about sex, or was she really incapable of such sentiment, or did she consider her writings above the earthy level?

The first answer to the question is that her style prevents her from writing about sex. She always has full control of everything in her books and never sacrifices the real themes

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<sup>1</sup>David Cecil, Early Victorian Novelists; Essays in Revaluation (London: Constable, 1966), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>See Dōkmaisot, Nanthawan, pp. 374-375.

simply for the sake of pleasing sentiment.<sup>1</sup> She skips the description of the wedding in Khwaṃphit Khrang Raek because there has been and would be enough romantic scenes between Walai and Luang Prāmōt, and in any case the real theme is that their romance is going to end. It is much better therefore to describe incidents during their honeymoon which are sweet and at the same time to show the stubbornness of Walai which will later on become a cause of their separation.

Dōkmaisot is always economical with words; she would always go for the precise and meaningful rather than the lengthy and maudlin. A few sentences she says about Thawit's decision to Yuphā in Nī Lae Lōk! are more than clear that Yuphā sexually appeals to him and Salyā does not:

...He enjoyed talking to Salyā... But Yuphā excited him, roused his manliness. He wanted everything in her and every part of her to be his...<sup>2</sup>

Language is another important reason. Traditionally, the Thais set as a rule that a good literary piece must contain four "rasas"<sup>3</sup>, one of which is love or sex or what is called "nārīprāmōt" (literally "ladies' delight")<sup>4</sup>. Poets used to

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Q.D. Leavis' criticism of Jane Austen's writing:

"But the highbrow novelist who 'creates' characters at all is apt to produce personalities that do not obey the the literary agent's rule..., that do not lend themselves to fantasizing but cause disturbing repercussions in the reader's emotional make-up"

Q.D. Leavis, Fiction and the reading public (London: Chatto, 1968), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nī Lae Lōk!, pp. 296-297.

<sup>3</sup>Generally, "rasa" means essence or flavour. In literature it defines the prevailing sentiment, keynote, tone or mood of a work. For details see Benjamin Walker, An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism (London: George Allen, 1968), Vol. I, pp. 330-331.

<sup>4</sup>The other "rasas" are "saowarotchani" (admiration or praise), "phirōtwāthang" (anger), "salapangkaphisai" (sorrow). For details see Pīang, Prawat Wannakhadi..., pp. 23-27.

Cf. Nine "bhavas" (emotion) and nine "rasas" (mood) in Sanskrit literature. For details see Walker, Loc.cit.

describe metaphorically sexual feelings or activity by comparing them with all sorts of phenomena of nature; rivers, seas, skies, rain, flowers, the behaviour of bees, butterflies, fish, etc. Ironically, when it comes to prose, especially the novel, the genre nearest to real life, there is no suitable place for such description; such a technique will only create pathetic fallacy, and the use of everyday language, will lead to vulgarity. The problem became acute just when Dōkmaisot was in her teens and then, when she began writing, the writers, many of whom were her contemporaries, seemed to compete with one another in using erotic language. The young Dōkmaisot, at twenty-three, despised it and attacked them directly in Nit.<sup>1</sup> However, no one, presumably not even Dōkmaisot, can deny that the writings of Mālai Chūphinit, for example his Tān Yōt Duan (The Truncated Palm-tree)<sup>2</sup> is a marvellous work. Mālai knows how to make ordinary prose as powerful and symbolical as the verse of earlier poets. The following is an example of Mālai's writing of a love scene in Thung Mahārāt (The Mahārāt Plain) which blends a description of sexual activity with nature:

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Tān Yōt Duan is the story of a couple who lived together in a lonely remote village, as husband and wife but without physical contact. The husband, realizing his wife's frustration, did not mind that she committed adultery, as long as she did not love any of the men she slept with. But when she found both love and sexual satisfaction in a bandit who was being hunted by policemen, he became very jealous. The story ends with tragic death of the husband by the wife and the wife and her lover by bullet-wounds from the police.

"Truly Champā (his wife's friend), I love Sutchai (his wife) as I have never loved any woman in my life, and I would rather die than to do the slightest thing which might hurt her. But I want you, and have been wanting you since the night we met at the Mae Sī dance at Chief Phūn's home."

She came to realise just then that her five-seamed jacket was being pulled off with force, when the shivering air and thickening mist touched her naked body. But what would the soil, the sky, and the air still mean, and what would the pricking of the dried, soft, but rough straw still matter, when his heart was beating answering hers, fast and out of rhythm? Would those things be any longer important when his big and hardened hands wandered everywhere on her body, when his warm, broad chest had covered the mist, the dew, the sky from her eyes and her lust-darkened consciousness.

Beside the straw-stack where the smell of the dried straw was floating in the air, mixed with the fresh, clean and pure fragrance of the newly parched land fissured by the sun like the soul of the Goddess Rice Mother; in the lonely vast rice plain, where piles of paddy, rice sheaves and stubble were scattered around; where the dim flickering lights from the clusters of houses in the front, on the left, and the right could be seen; but when the bright red colour of Thong-kwāo flowers seen in the afternoon was swallowed into the darkness of the night and the grey mist that concealed the stars and the blue sky above; her dark shadowy form was trembling and shuddering in ecstasy, before it came to be still and totally immobile. Yet her body was still warm all over, soft to his hands and drenched with feelings...<sup>1</sup>

Although Dōkmaisot never writes or talks about it explicitly like Mālai, she must have realised well that besides love there is "sex appeal" between a man and a woman, - the sort of fire that can make even the plainest person beautiful.<sup>2</sup> The lower-classed Samruay can attract the philanderer Luang Prāmōt from his beautiful wife, Walai. The nervous and helpless Nōi chains the rich Chao Sawatwong's heart. Dōkmaisot's description of Amara in Amnuay's eyes on their wedding night may be short but meaningful: "Amnuay's fiancée was not good-looking but his bride is most lovely." Her novel which deals directly with

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<sup>1</sup>"Riam Eng", Thung Mahārāt, pp. 129-130.

<sup>2</sup>D.H. Lawrence, "Sex Versus Loveliness", Selected Essays, p. 15.

sexual frustration is Phūdī. Khunying Pholawat's sexual desire has not altogether died down especially when her husband is so noble and handsome; but she herself can no longer light the fire of sex inside him. The novelist brings in the duty, responsibility, morality, and humanity to help Phrayā Pholawat control his feelings towards another woman and his expression towards his own wife. The most he would do was turn away from his wife while admitting to himself that "the sight of the bony sick woman when she frowned was most unattractive."<sup>1</sup> But Mālai never evades description. The same Rūn in Thung Mahārāt is bitter with his wife; the words of D.H. Lawrence "When the ~~sex~~-glow is missing, and she moves in ugly coldness, how hideous she seems..."<sup>2</sup> are appropriate here.

Years elapsed... Sutchai no longer paid attention to her appearance or clothing. Her response to his love and desire had almost no meaning except that she considered it her duty. He was a demander, and she a giver. There was no more coyness, pretence, or acting in order to rouse his feelings.

"Like a dead body...like a corpse...", once Rūn complained with bitterness and disappointment before getting up, putting on his clothes and going out. And she thought "He does not want me...because I have now lost my youth and beauty..."

There was nothing of the former Sutchai left in her. Her hair which had been fine and clean with its natural smell once, was now dirty with dandruff and seldom combed. Her complexion which had been fresh and smooth, challenging hands to touch, was now coarse and weathered with the sun and hard work. Her breasts had lost their previous firmness. Sutchai lay there like a deer putting her neck on a block, ready to be chopped off by the hunter; like a slave waiting for her master's order; like...everything alive but a woman waiting for a man to express his love to her, or a wife waiting for a caress from her husband!

Rūn held his breath, forced himself to kiss her cold and shrinking cheeks...<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p.431.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence, op.cit., p.16.

<sup>3</sup>"Riam Eng", op.cit., pp. 513-514, 517.

As regards the racial discrimination of Thai people at that time, it was mainly against the Chinese. Among the Thais themselves D̄kmaisot includes in her works three levels social attitude: between the official class themselves, between the officials and their subordinates, and between town and country people.

The class system in Thai society portrayed by D̄kmaisot shares several characteristics with that of the English before the second World War:

...But no one in England feels them (everyone between the capitalist and the weekly-wage earner) to belong to the same class, and the distinction between them is not a distinction of income but of accent, manners and to some extent, outlook. Anyone who pays attention to class differences at all would regard an army officer with £1000 a year, as socially superior to a shop-keeper of £2000 a year. <sup>1</sup>

However, because in Thailand those who are rich are usually Chinese traders or at least their descendants, therefore a sharp division exists not only between an officer and a shop-keeper, but also between a Thai officer and a Chinese shop-keeper. In other words the Thai aristocrats maintained and put a fence around their snobbishness, a mixture of manners and something describable as culture, whereas the Chinese, after a long struggle for financial establishment, lived well and were ready to seek better recognition in society.

King Rama VI's reign (1910-1925) was the period when ranks and titles according to occupations were given extremely generously by the King himself. This may have created more people of rank, but at the same time it inevitably diluted the meaning and value of the system. A large number of rich

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<sup>1</sup>Orwell, "The English Class System", op.cit., p. 70.

Mālai can write in that style because the type of people he creates permits him to do so; people like Rūn, or like Phakkhinī who, as the novelist says, "never allowed her life to be dictated by anyone but her own heart... a real daughter of nature, as free as the sky and the air of her birthplace."<sup>1</sup> As soon as Mālai turns to write about the élite-class, in Koet Pen Ying (Being Born Female)<sup>2</sup> or even the behaviour of Atcharā in Phaendin Khong Rao for instance, he makes them all self-restrained, even more than Dōkmaisot's characters.

In brief, in the world of Dōkmaisot there is love, marriage, sex; they also exist in the novels of her contemporaries. The crucial point is that in Dōkmaisot's world these important elements are treated with artistic detachment and with full regard to moral and social responsibilities.

### iii. Class, rank, and racial discrimination.

Dōkmaisot's world reveals clearly, exactly, and to an extent no other Thai writers have ever done, information about rank and racial discrimination from the point of view of Thai aristocrats. Her novels are particularly interesting because she produced them at the time when the age of aristocracy in Siam was about to end, and because she was sincere with the reader. At the same time, she may be easily taken as an arrogant and class-conscious person by readers who are strongly against social inequality. But what she herself was really like is not an essential consideration, for it is her "world" that the reader should look at.

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<sup>1</sup>Mālai, Phaendin..., pp. 34, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter I, p. 64.

Chinese tradesmen also had titles conferred upon them with suffixes or prefixes signifying their origin and occupation. Two good example of these people in Dōkmaisot's novels are Phra Phisētphānit (excellent trader) in Sām Chāi and Luang Tankōson (good Tan) in Nī Lae Lōk!. Rich people, like the two characters mentioned, do not contribute much to the stories, but to the change of class differences by sending their children to good schools and abroad. Education gave a chance to their children to become friendly with the children of aristocratic Thai families. But it could not prevent them from being looked down on by the Thais. Anuwat, an orphan, whose father had died before receiving any title, not even a "Luang", but whose uncle was a "Phrayā" and grandfather a "Čhao Phrayā" looked down upon Phōngsī and her father simply because they were "upstarts whose family-name is just two days old".<sup>1</sup>

The following conversation between Pachā and his sisters, which Dōkmaisot used in introducing Thawit to the reader in Nī Lae Lōk! clearly reflects some attitudes of Thai aristocrats towards the Chinese:

"That 'sīa' is called Thawit. I met and talked to him today for the first time..."

"But the word 'sīa' is usually an appellation for a Chinese millionaire, isn't it?," Lēkhā asked.

"Yes, but I could not find anything Chinese in this fellow Thawit."

"Why do you call him 'sīa' then?," Lēkhā interrupted...

"Well, I only follow other people's example. They said that when the chap was studying abroad he was such a spendthrift --"

"Oh, he is a student from abroad-," Čhintanā remarked.

"Why? Is it always necessary that an extravagant person must be a Chinese?," Lēkhā interrupted again...  
 "Aren't there sons of rich aristocratic families?"

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter V, p. 220.

"There are some, but they are not as rich as the 'sia'," Pachā answered.

"What is his family-name?" Čhintanā asked with a rather intelligent air, "We can always tell from it."

"Sakunmai,"<sup>1</sup> answered Pachā laughingly.

"How new?" Lēkhā asked.

"How could I know-"

"Come on, tell us, so that we will know how new it is," said Čhintanā with as an intelligent air as before.

"I have told you - Sakunmai. That's his family name, Mr. Thawit Sakunmai."

Khanitthā suddenly burst into laughter, saying,

"Oh dear! There is no doubt then. He is definitely a 'sia'."

Some feeling similar to a regret appeared in Lēkhā's heart. She became quiet while Čhintanā remarked as if with sympathy,

"He is afraid that other people would not know that his family is a new one! Poor thing!"<sup>2</sup>

In Sām Chāi, an amusing conversation between Prawat and his mother also clearly how condescending some Thai aristocrats were over the Chinese:

"Who is the girl? A daughter of any 'čhao sua'<sup>3</sup> shop-owner?"

"What make you think that she is a 'čhek'<sup>4</sup>'s daughter, mother?"

"I don't know. You have been going to god knows how many houses of the officials, but never fallen in love with any of their daughters. They are all as fat as jars, you said. Now you have come to tell me that you are in love with a girl; I should guess, it's a 'čhek''s daughter. In fact, 'čhao sua''s daughters are quite beautiful, you know, white faces, wearing long earrings, sitting in beautiful cars. And they are all rich too. Some 'phūdī''s daughters are good-looking too, but they are not as rich as the Chinese."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, family names and wealth are two obvious objects of prejudice which the Thais had towards the Chinese.

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<sup>1</sup>Sakunmai - new family.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nī Lae Lōk!, pp. 66-68.

<sup>3</sup>čhao sua - Chinese millionaire.

<sup>4</sup>čhek - Chinese

<sup>5</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sām Chāi, p. 627.

The financial status of the Chinese does not seem to deter the Thai much. Instead, they are sensitive about the inability of the Chinese to pronounce "r" properly and their often dropping the "l" sound, and they always take it as a criterion in judging whether a person is a Thai or a Chinese. For example, Salyā was greatly surprised hearing Thawit, whom her brother and sisters called "sīa", pronounced "riaprōi" (orderly) correctly.<sup>1</sup> Wimon corrected her younger brother who pronounced "klōm" as "kōm": "Why do you pronounce it 'kōm' like a Chinese child?"<sup>2</sup>

Despite all these and the fact that a "phūdī tok yāk" or an aristocrat who has fallen upon hard times is better recognised than a rich Chinese, mixed married between Thai nobles and women of Chinese descent are not uncommon.<sup>3</sup> Only the result of such marriages does not change in the least the Thai way of life, except that the children may refer to their Chinese ancestors as a testimony of their wealth, as Phrayā Amōnrat in Phūdī always did.<sup>4</sup> But Wimon, a "phūdī tok yāk", never mentioned her Chinese great-grandfather and her behaviour was completely Thai. No reason was given by Dōkmaisot, but the frank confession of Kumut Chandruang in his auto-biography is perhaps relevant:

"My father told me that A-kong<sup>5</sup> was a kind gentleman but he had a Chinese manner which we considered awkward."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Dōkmaisot, Nī Lae Lōk!, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> See Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p. 416.

<sup>3</sup> See for example M.L. Bunlāa Thēpphayasuwan, "Khō Khit Chāk Chotmāi Chāk Māng Thai", Siam Rath Sapdā Wichān, XVII, 7

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter VI, p. 285. / (August 9th 1970), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> A-kong - Chinese grandfather

<sup>6</sup> Kumut Chandruang, My Boyhood in Siam (New York: John Day, 1940), pp. 28-29.

Sī Būraphā is the one who, unintentionally perhaps, seems to attack straightforwardly the system like that in Dōkmaisot's world:

"I later learned that Nāi Kēyūn's father had been a 'čhao sua' before he had a title conferred upon him. Then Nāi Kēyūn's younger sister happened to become a Phra-ong Čhao's wife, not long before Nāi Kēyūn was accepted at the Department and before their father was promoted to the rank of 'Phra'... I consider it most strange and unfair, for it is not in the least my fault that my sister is not a prince's wife and my father died before he could become a 'čhao sua' or a man of rank, or both..."<sup>1</sup>

Except for a brief friendship between Mayurī and Ia-ō in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, Dōkmaisot never attempted to present a love theme between a Thai and a Chinese, as San Thēwarak or Puang Phayōm did in their novels.<sup>2</sup> She may be a little sarcastic with their being money-minded and their behaviour, but she never looked down on their occupations. Her description of the life in the boat-house in Čaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān can perhaps be taken as the most prominent forum for the author's critical ideas on this subject in which she praised the Chinese for their endurance and diligence, and sarcastically criticised Thai men who were too easy-going.<sup>3</sup>

"The doctrine of rank," which "conceives of social inequality as a stepped pyramid in which the upper ranks number few individuals and the lower many, so that social promotion commonly means an ascension into ever narrower limit,"<sup>4</sup> is seen at full play in Dōkmaisot's world. Titles in Siam before it was abolished altogether in 1942 were from the

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<sup>1</sup>Sī Būraphā, Songkhrām Čhīwit, pp. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter I, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter IV, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup>George Watson, The Study of Literature (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 175.

top downwards: Somdet Čhao Phrayā, Čhao Phrayā, Phrayā, Phra, Luang, Khun, Mān. None of Dōkmaisot's characters reached the title of "Somdet Čhao Phrayā"; and she was very realistic about that because so far extremely few people had attained that exalted rank. The founder of the present Dynasty, King Rama I, before his enthronement, held the rank of "Somdet Čhao Phrayā". In other words, the rank of "Somdet Čhao Phrayā" was the highest in the land, save the King. There are six "Čhao Phrayā" in all Dōkmaisot's works, and only one was still living,<sup>1</sup> the other five were only referred to as ancestors.<sup>2</sup> Most fathers, dead as well as alive, held the title of "Phrayā". The only leading character who reached that title when he was still in his mid-thirties was Phrayā Pholawat in Phūdi. "Luang" was the most common rank held by the male characters of Dōkmaisot. "Phra", the rank between "Phrayā" and "Luang" is found less frequently. If it was held by a father, he would be considered a little inferior or "slow" in climbing up the hierarchy than other fathers. If it was a person of the younger generation on whom it was conferred, he would be certainly a very capable official, for example Wichai in Nūng Nai Rōi.

The titles below "Luang" were considered insignificant and were usually held by old or retired minor civil servants who had been promoted to these ranks because of their long service. These people, and their descendants, Khun Prāp and Rasmī in Nit for example, were not counted as "phūdi". Phōranī in Nanthawan also had a father of "Luang" rank. Therefore, in order to raise her to a "phūdi" class, Dōkmaisot had her born

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<sup>1</sup>i.e. Čhao Phrayā Nakkharin in Nit.

<sup>2</sup>i.e. Prasong's grandfather and great-grandfather in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, Čhao Phrayā Mahāsombat in Bupphēsanniwāt, Čhao Phraya Surarak and Čhao Phrayā Akkha Rāčhawanlop in Sam Čhai.

to a mother of higher status.

All the titles were carefully given by Dṛkmaisot; each had a meaning closely suited to the position held by the appropriate character. Thus, Čhao Phrayā Mahā Surarak Waradēt (the great tutelary god (or hero) with blessed power) was a commander in the army, and Čhao Phrayā Mahā Sombat (the great treasure) was a millionaire aristocrat.

The preciseness of Dṛkmaisot in disclosing facts about the life of these people with titles really enlightens the reader not only about the modes of their manners, language, thoughts, but also how deeply the whole class system was coloured by snobbishness and romanticism. We know that between people of "Phrayā" rank they addressed one another as "Čhao Khun" and their wives "Khunying". For inferior people, in age as well as in rank, the terms "Čhao Khun" and "Khunying" were reserved for the third pronoun only. They must not in any case address them with such terms but with "Tai Thao" (under your feet). The words "khṛap" or even more humble "khṛap kraphom" for men and "čhaokha" for women, the equivalents of English "yes sir, yes madam" were on everyone's lips. A slight mistake would easily prick their snobbish sensitiveness, and a stern, contemptuous and sarcastic expression or look would follow, such as that which Wimon gave after she had heard Čhongrak wrongly addressing her father as "Čhao Khun" instead of "Tai thao"<sup>1</sup>.

Among the aristocrats themselves the degree of class sensitivity was not relaxed. In some cases it was carried to the extreme, as for example it was practised by someone like Phra Anurak in Bupphēsanniwāt, who had been educated for many years in the West. He disregarded his own mother and refused

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<sup>1</sup>See Dṛkmaisot, Phūdi, p. 44.

to recognise his younger half-sister because his stepfather was only a "Phra", one step lower in rank than his "Phrayā" father. In Nit, Luang Thanasān was jealous when he noticed his wife's friendship with Chalāt, a son of Čhao Phrayā Nakkharin, and his immediate thought was: "Why should she care about me? Surely it's better to be a daughter-in-law of a Čhao Phrayā?"<sup>1</sup>

According to Dōkmaisot, Thai children from aristocratic families learnt about their status from the time when they were very young and could even distinguish the "high" from the "low". They were addressed by the servants as "Khun Nū" (the little masters or mistresses) and taught to call themselves "Nū" with the equals and "Chan" with the inferiors. Wisān, a five-year old son of Phra Anurak in Bupphēsanniwāt asked his aunt, Sa-čhī, why she was only "Ā Čhī" (ā - aunt) and not "Khun<sup>2</sup>Ā Čhī", and he was firm in identifying himself as "Khun Nū Wisān Wisuttaphong"<sup>3</sup>.

Great care and correctness with regard to ranks distinction are also seen in Phūdī. Officially, Thai ladies with the rank of "Khunying" are either those who are awarded the order of "Chulachomklao"<sup>4</sup> or those who are wives of "Phrayās".<sup>5</sup> In practice, only the ceremonially wedded ones can be called "Khunings", and only the one whom the husband brought to the investiture can use her husband's title. In the case of Phrayā Amōnrat, two wives were ceremonially wedded, therefore they were both "Khunings", but none was brought to the investiture, so

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nit, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup>See pp.231-2 for the use and meaning of "Khun".

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Bupphēsanniwāt, pp. 134-135.

<sup>4</sup>The order was founded by King Rama V in 1882 to commemorate the centenary of the Chakri Dynasty. For details see Chula Chakrabongs, Lords of Life, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup>See Mōm Thawīwong Thawanlayasak, Kiriya Mārayāt Nai Kān Chai Thōikham Nai Rāčhasamnak ( Bangkok, 1968), p. 47.

there was no a "Khunying Amōnrat". In fact, the quarrel in the family which eventually led to a separation and broken home was caused by a misunderstanding of someone of no consequence about the title "Khunying Amōnrat". Phrōm, the servant-wife was addressed by all servants in the house as "Nāi"<sup>1</sup> and never as "Khunying".

In the same novel, Dōkmaisot revealed in detail how the servants in the house of a noble were treated by their employers. Usually in each family the servants outnumbered the masters. The reason is not that they were all required, but rather because a great number of them, even after the abolition of serfdom, did not want to leave the family they had been serving for most of their lives. They had accepted their position, felt contented with it, and above all had become loyal to the employers. They could marry and have children, and all were still provided with food and shelter. When Wimon decided to move from the big building to live in the servants' quarters, one problem which tormented her greatly was that all the servants had to go away. The novelist did not describe the reaction from the younger servants who at least could look after themselves, but the reaction of the old ones:

"Miss, is it true as they are talking now that you are going to chase us away?... Don't you pity helpless old people like us at all? I lived here with 'the Senior Master' when your father was not yet born. I even bathed and fed your father..."<sup>2</sup>

The subdivisions within the servants, especially the maids, according to their duty is quite interesting. There were at least four levels; the wet-nurse, the children's play-

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<sup>1</sup>"Nāi" in this case does not mean "mister", but is perhaps a derivation of "khunnāi" (madam). M.L. Bunlāa reveals that all her father's minor wives were addressed by people in the palace as "Nāi". See Bunlāa, Khwām Samret..., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p. 295.

maids, the personal maids, the cooks and servants for odd duties. Usually one family had one wet-nurse and she was not really considered a servant, but a person to whom the family felt indebted and grateful. She had the right to train, spoil, and even to punish her young masters and mistresses. Thawit in Nī Lae Lōk! called his wet-nurse "mother", and considered her son, Chit, his friend. Yōi in Sām Chāi is another good example. She was a daughter of Phrayā Aphirak's wet-nurse, and later became a personal maid of Phrayā Aphirak's mother. She could converse with her mistresses who were of "Thān Phūying" and "Khun" ranks, reproach them, even beat Ratna and refuse to pay respect to her master's wife.

Each daughter of the family usually had her own personal maid. They were called "ton hōng" (a lady's maid). The wife also had one "ton hōng" and several ordinary maids. These "ton hōngs" often became minor wives of the master of the house; for example Phrōm in Phūdī. The children born to these servant-wives were inferior to their half brothers and sisters who were the children of the chief wives, as Phra Bōribān was to Phrayā Amōnrat. The resulting injustice was the real cause of jealousy and hostility Sutčhai had towards her cousin, Wimon.

The children's play-maids, or babysitters were subject to the wet-nurse when the children were still very young. They might become the mistresses' personal maids later on. Some of these maids played important roles in Dōkmaisot's novels. Bunplūk, for example, was the go-between for Sārī and Pachā in Nī Lae Lōk!, so was Waen for Wat and Chawī in Romance Sōn Rāang Čhing.

Each master too had his own personal male servant. Through these servants the novelist often expressed her sense

of humour as she did through Chuay, Thawit's servant, in Nī Lae Lōk! and through a Chinese servant of Wichai in Nūng Nai Rōi.

Although these servants lived in the same compound as their employers, they led an entirely different life. Among the servants they spoke the style of language which was considered of a lower level but would automatically change to a polite and humble style as soon as they talked to their masters. The employers who considered themselves "phūdī" always maintained a gap between themselves and their servants. They never talked to them much except to give them orders. It was taken as a rule for the masters and mistresses not to discuss, to tell, or to argue their personal affairs in front of the servants. Therefore, when Dōkmaisot described a conversation between Samut and his grotesque maid in Nī Lae Lōk! or between Nāng Chamnong and her cook in Nanthawan, she implied that the employers were not "phūdī".

Education also separated "masters" and "servants". It is this feature that makes Sēnī Saowaphong attack the élite in his Pīsāt (the Devils)<sup>1</sup>:

"I am not ungrateful. But the present world is not the same as that of forty or fifty years ago. I am old and cannot go anywhere. But my daughter, that Nang Nit, I will never allow her to be a "slave" any more. I have had enough of it."<sup>2</sup>

And by that the servant Phūn means he has sent his daughter to school. But Wimon in Dōkmaisot's world defended the Thai tradition strongly:

"Taking care of old and disabled servants in the house is a practice of all who are Thai gentry." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See footnote 1, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup>Sēnī, Pīsāt, pp. 72-73.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p. 283.

About the difference between town and country people Dōkmaisot wrote it in two ways: linking country life with her ideas about the occupations of Thai people, and revealing the attitudes and opinions of townspeople. In her world, the aristocrats from Bangkok think of their fellow-countrymen as being old-fashioned, unsophisticated, primitive as far as hygiene is concerned, ignorant about the outside world, and very uneducated. Indeed, these townspeople set themselves as the standard by which they judge other people. Wherever they go they bring along with them their modern Bangkok mode of life. Khunying Sawong, Nut, and Amphōn having their usual European afternoon tea in Lang Suan is perhaps not too bad, certainly when it is compared with Luang Narūbān giving a European dinner to his minor officials in Nakhonsawan. It gives a chance to someone like Nut who is absolutely westernised to criticise and look down upon his guests who are not familiar with Western table-manners. It may be realistic when the opinion comes from Nut, but on the part of the country people, it is cruel and contemptible.

It is evident in Dōkmaisot's novels that she noted the way minor officials and country people showed their respect to their superiors with surprise and disapproval.<sup>1</sup> In Romance Sōn Rūang Čing, Phrayā Nōrarat tries unsuccessfully to persuade Nāng Chom, their kind hostess, to sit on a chair while talking to him. Nāng Čhamnong in Ubattihēt not only sits on the floor while talking to the Governor, but even orders her niece, Ngāmphit, to show respect to her former classmate because the latter is the Governor's daughter.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Phrayā Thēwēt's disapproval of the practice being maintained after the country has changed to democracy. See Bunlāa, Khwām Samret..., p. 68.

Townpeople like Luang Narūbān and Amarā, as it appears in their correspondence in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān, look down upon the lack of understanding about hygiene of country people. Chawī and Sumon hold back their laughter and look at one another knowingly when they see the photographs on the walls of Nāng Chom's sitting room in Phetburi:

They were photographs of old as well as young people. Some were fully and properly dressed in their uniforms. Some were in casual costumes. There was also a photograph of an old gentleman wearing plain "phā-nung" and "rāтчapataen jacket<sup>1</sup>, with all buttons fastened, but he had forgotten the hook on the collar. And his hat was still on his head! He was sitting erect on a bench with his right and left hands resting on his right and left knees. His posture was similar to that of a dancer paying respect to the king.

Another photograph was of a woman aged about forty, wearing plain "phānung" and lotus-coller jacket with a row of buttons from the neck to the waist. Around each wrist there were at least five bracelets. She also wore "dōk makhāa" earrings<sup>2</sup>. The way she sat was exactly the same as the gentleman already mentioned...

Sumon and Chawī were very interested in two other photographs with a signature "Pleng" underneath. Both pictures were printed on the same paper to make it look as if two people were photographed together. One of them wore an American cowboy costume with a hat, top-boots, a shirt, and leather belt. A gun hung at her side. The way she stood was not bad: one hand in her trousers' pocket, the other hand crossed behind. She wore a wrist watch with a wristlet chain over the shirt cuff. The watch matched well with a large gold chain around her neck. The other person in the picture was dressed very fashionably. A round hat with the base not wider than one inch was placed just over her ears. Her blouse had a collar and was decorated with ribbon. Her skirt was of knee length. She wore white socks and black shoes definitely bought from Luang Praditbāthukā's shop.<sup>3</sup> The gold chain, and the wrist watch were the same ones as worn by the "cowboy". Whether or not the "cowboy" was wearing a bracelet and a ring on her left hand was not known for she held her hand behind her. But the twin lady in the photograph was touching her cheek with her finger, and her bracelets and rings were clearly

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<sup>1</sup>White tunic with a mandarin collar and five buttons. "Rāтчapataen" is a strange derivation of compound words "raja" and "pattern".

<sup>2</sup>A style of earring, the shape of which is similar to that of an egg-plant flower (dōk makhāa).

<sup>3</sup>A well-known shoe shop in Bangkok during the reigns of King Rama VI and King Rama VII. Praditbāthukā - shoe-maker.

seen..."<sup>1</sup>

Nut too is reluctant to make friends with her cousins in Langsuan because they are very little educated, take the least care about their clothing, and even have reddish teeth from chewing betel. Dōkmaisot always described these teenage country girls as:

...wearing a half-old half-new "phā-nung". Their bodices were trimmed with lace, and they had no jacket on. Each of them had a large gold chain around her neck, and there were several wristlets around her wrists. They even wore diamond earrings...<sup>2</sup>

The above description is also that applied to Čhuang in 1/500. What Dōkmaisot wanted to say is that country people do not care much about costumes, but are very eager to adorn their daughters with jewellery in order to show their financial status. Doubtless the novelist considered the ideas very strange and funny. The favourite needlecraft of these young girls is always crocheting lace for their bodice-trimming. Dōkmaisot must have intended to make her readers see the difference between country and town girls like Walai, Phatcharī, and Yuphā, who pass their spare time stringing garlands, arranging flowers, making delicacies, or peeling and cutting fruit, all of which requires skill and art. While Chahai and Chalao in Kam Kao, and Čhuang in 1/500 keep their cotton and sewing things in cigarette tins, Amarā in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek is given a leather embroidery case as a birthday gift, and the children in Sām Chāi use "Sīpāpā"<sup>3</sup> cigar boxes as their toys.

<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Romance Sōn Ruang Ching in Phū-klīn, pp.134-135.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Kam Kao, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>i.e. Mr. C. Papayanopoulos, a Greek, the owner of the best and most expensive cigar factory in Siam before the War. See Sathiankōsēt, Fūn Khwām Lang (Bangkok: Sūksit Siam, 1967), p. 308.

Not until towards the end of her writing life, during the Second World War, did Dḡkmaisot have a chance to write justly, realistically, and with confidence of her knowledge about life among the peasants in a style different from her previous works. The country people in Pholamḡang Dī (A Good Citizen)<sup>1</sup> might still be considered unsophisticated and uneducated but the novelist reflects that they are at the same time free people, both in action and thought, and perhaps more practical and sensible than their townspeople friends.

Monarchy is another important feature of Dḡkmaisot's novels. Her world is populated mostly by the official class or the "khā rāḡchakān" (literally - the slaves of the King's mission), therefore the King must exist to preside over them. And because of that, Dḡkmaisot's novels are so realistic that there is no room for her to colour them with romanticism of princes and princesses as has been done by her contemporaries and most Thai writers of later periods. Despite her being a member of the royal family, Dḡkmaisot did not create even one character of royal blood. Whenever she mentioned the King in her novels, he was the actual "King of Siam", i.e. King Rama VII, and not just a fictitious one. Several of her male characters worked in the Department of the Royal Household, they were therefore quite close to the King. Phūdī is the last novel in which Dḡkmaisot mentioned the royalty. After that she never referred to the monarchy again because the young King Ananda was living abroad. However, a few sentences in reference to the King in Phūdī testifies well to her exactitude in writing her novels. Wiphat, the eldest son of Phrayā Amḡnrat ceased being the King's scholarship student when the story takes place, because, as his father said: . . . . .

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix i, pp. 502-504.

"Yes, he was granted the King's scholarship before. But now His Majesty has abdicated, I therefore have to support him myself." <sup>1</sup>

Of course both King Rama VII's abdication and Phūdī take place in 1935.

Comparing the above writing of Dōkmaisot with the following writing of Sī Būraphā from Prāp Phayot (Subjugation of Pride), one can see clearly how much Dōkmaisot respected the monarchy and how much more careful she was than her contemporary in referring to that institution:

"What is your family name?"

"Dusitsamit"

"Dusitsamit?", she repeated, "How peculiar! How did it become synonymous with Dusitsamit magazine?"

"It's the Dusitsamit that became synonymous with my family name, because my family name had been established first."

"So your family is a long-established one?"

"It should be so."

"But why I have never heard of it before. This is the first time ever. Why isn't it as well-known as other families?"

"I have never made an investigation of it and cannot see why I should do so... It could be because my ancestors were not very amorous." <sup>2</sup>

Considering the whole course of her writing once more, three stages of the decline of class consciousness in Dōkmaisot's world can be summed up and in the novelist's own words as follows:

First, in Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn (1929), Mayurī said to "Prasom" with exceeding pride and condescension:

"I must remind you that bosses in Bangkok are not like those in the country. Our country still has Kings, nobles, aristocrats, commoners, masters, and servants... This is not America where everyone is conceited enough to think that all are equal." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Sī Būraphā. Prāp Phayot (Bangkok: Phadung Saksā, n.d.) pp. 18-19. For Rama VI's Dusitsamit see Chapter I, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, pp. 46, 47.

Then in Phūdī (1937), after the revolution and the King's abdication, Dōkmaisot still defended the state of being "high" by birth, though her voice became less defensive and not as firm as before:

"Having good birth and good education are not without importance as some people always like to say. Being well-bred actually helps make a man "gentle". Education also helps him to understand the real meaning of "being gentle".<sup>1</sup>

And finally in her last novel (1947-) Dōkmaisot had no hope left that the class prestige of the elite would survive and she did not retain it in the same way. The aristocrats like Khunying Lamun now spoke admiringly of the newly emerged ruling class without lineage, and Yuphā and her sister could only "look at one another and turn away" when they heard the higher-class Khanitthā and the lower-class Chit speak the equally "low" language.<sup>2</sup>

#### iv. Modernisation and westernisation

When Dōkmaisot began her long novels, the social life of her family in connection with Westerners had come to an end after Phrayā Thēwēt resigned from his position because he did not feel happy with the situation during that time. It was indeed a time of difficulties: King Rama VII was faced with political and financial problems as well as with his failing health. Young men were seeking for constitutional monarchy. The discontent with social injustice resulting from the previous reign was considerable, and urgent changes were planned in order to save the country from becoming bankrupt. One of the very first things the King was compelled to do was

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phūdī, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Wannakam Chin Sutthāi, pp. 142, 147.

to cut down the Civil Service. That was the real sign for young men that the time had come for them to seek careers outside Government Service and perhaps to concentrate on industry and commerce.

One obvious social tendency towards westernisation in the form of material change was at the Phya Thai Palace. Only a few years before it had been an exclusive place of the King and his courtiers, but in 1926 it was converted into a club for European and Thai people of so-called high class. Dōkmaisot recorded its glamorous atmosphere for the first time in her first novel, Sattrū Khōng Čhaolōn, which proved her exactness about events. Elec Waugh wrote about how he passed his time there in 1926:

...The Phya Thai Palace was now a country club and in the evenings I sat out by the tennis courts, drinking a gin sling. The women were given pillow-cases in which to put their legs as a protection against mosquitoes...1

One year prior to that Somerset Maugham went to Siam and had noticed some westernised elements of the city as he wrote:

...The Chinese live their lives apart and indifferent to the western capital that the rulers of Siam have sought to make of this strange, flat, confused city. What they have aimed at you see in the broad avenues, straight dusty roads, surrounding this conglomeration of sordid streets. They are handsome, spacious and stately, shaded by trees, the deliberate adornment of a great city devised by a king, anxious to have an imposing seat, but they have no reality...3

Going further back to the reign of King Rama V, all signs of modernisation and westernisation were initiated in

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<sup>1</sup>Alec Waugh, Bangkok; the story of a city (London: W.H.Allen, 1970), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>W.S.Maugham, A Gentleman in the Parlour (London: Evergreen Books, 1940), p. 163.

the Grand Palace. The move of it from that centre to a more open place like Phya Thai Palace in the following reign made someone like Chōi in M.R. Kukrit's Sī Phaendin (The Four Reigns)<sup>1</sup> who had been living in the Grand Palace sigh with mixed feelings of sadness, regret, and realisation of the inevitability of change.<sup>2</sup> Phlōi, her friend, who went out to live with her rich husband, a courtier of "Phrayā" rank, looked at the confusing changes in society with puzzlement; the mode of dress of both men and women, the freedom of young people, and the worst of all - the King acting with his fiancée on the stage as lovers. Although Phlōi disapproved of it and was frightened, she had to admit that modern young people possessed ability and self-confidence, and there would no longer be any power to stop them walking forward towards westernisation.<sup>3</sup>

Dōkmaisot's characters were of one generation after Chōi and Phlōi. When the second wave of social change came in 1932, spreading western and modern ideas wider than the capital and down amongst commoners, it was their turn to ponder upon it in the same way as Chōi and Phlōi had done. Because Dōkmaisot was realistic, critical, and sincere, her novels therefore were like reflections of life during the period of transition. She herself did not just watch the development, but was drawn back to the traditional style of life with her brother's family, as she wrote about Khunying Sōi, the wife of an official who had resigned, not retired, in Romance Sōn Ruang Čing:

...She stopped dressing up like a "Khunying" now. Her hair which had been grown long and done in a popular fashion was now cut short in a traditional style once more.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter IX, p. 431.

<sup>2</sup>Kukrit, Sī Phaendin, Vol. I, pp. 384-387.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 273-278, 434-435.

<sup>4</sup>Dōkmaisot, Romance Sōn Ruang Čing, in Phū-klin, p. 54.

And in Phruttikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt<sup>1</sup>, Dōkmaisot's description of Thoet Rattanānon, an elderly gentleman living in Phetburi is not different from her own brother in the photograph taken in Phetburi:

... He wore a dark brown cotton sarong, woven locally. His cotton jacket was of "kuihōng" style<sup>2</sup>. He had a broad-brimmed straw hat, and in his hand was a huge silver plated walking stick...<sup>3</sup>

The situation therefore enabled Dōkmaisot to compare various sides of Thai society, in the capital as well as outside. The western influence especially in women's fashion must have had spread quite widely, because even Thoet Rattanānon's servant was wearing a "shingle" hair style.

The westernisation of Thailand as reflected in Dōkmaisot's novels started, unmistakably, with the sending of sons to study in the West. She is right too in writing that most of these men, after returning home and behaving in a western fashion for some time, would be absorbed back into the Thai's much easier way of life which provided them with all social prestige. Only three men are exceptions, Anuwat in Sām Chāi, Chat in Nūng Nai Rōi, and Thawit in Nī Lae Lōk!. The first one looks down on his own society, the second continues behaving like a westerner, careless of what other people say, the third one tries his best not irritate conservative eyes and keeps quiet when he cannot adjust himself or agree with traditional ideas. Of course Thawit, the most westernised, but the most considerate, was the most successful one of the three in maintaining his

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix i, p. 497.

<sup>2</sup>Loose-fitting jacket, the type worn by the Chinese, and Thai men in the north.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phruttikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt in Busbāban (Bangkok: Præ Pittaya, 1962), p. 28.

identity as a Thai who accepts western ideas.

The more interesting manifestation of modernisation comes from the female characters as their social change is far more controversial and noticeable. Most of them were educated in modern convents in Bangkok, but lived in conservative and strictly mannered homes. They laughed at people who were old-fashioned, and disagreed with those who were too westernised. For example Amarā who was usually modern in thoughts was disgusted by a woman she and her sisters saw at a racing club, because she was wearing a tight-fitting western dress and painted her face very heavily.

"Oh dear, what is that?"

"A Paris doll. Who on earth bought and brought it here," Amarā said while frowning.

...

"Oh dear, whose daughter is she?," Nāng Salyakit complained, "Don't the parents feel irritated at all? Look, how can she put on make-up in public like that?"

"Perhaps they don't," said Som after some consideration, "The parents must be equally 'farang'<sup>1</sup>, so they can stand it."

"Come on! You always put the blame on 'farang'. Why don't we take good 'farang's example?," said Amarā, feeling unbearable, "Men, after coming back from abroad do not know how to show respect, do not know how to sit properly, giving reason that they are 'farang'. But does a refined westerner sit putting his legs up no matter where and not thinking of other people's heads, for example on the rail in the box at the theatre? Our women too adopt only 'sour' (unacceptable and improper as a result of being too modern) characters; painting their faces and their lips. What about their knowledge in house-keeping and their intelligence? I really want to know whether we have ever thought of following their example. Perhaps ten in a hundred." <sup>2</sup>

Therefore, these Thai women of good families moved towards modernisation and westernisation in a moderate way, gradually evolving with acceptable techniques.

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<sup>1</sup>A term commonly used by Thai people for westerners in general.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, pp. 27, 28-29.

The awakening of modernisation as it appears in Dōkmaisot's world exists in several layers, some are conspicuous and affect society as a whole, some are very intricate and need careful scrutiny. Education, entertainments, music, sports and games, language, fashion in dress, are good examples of the surface layer of the change. Education was obvious. Entertainments were changed from old fashioned performances to films and dancing, first in the places like Phya Thai Palace, Royal Bangkok Sports Club, and later, as in Nī Lae Lōk!, on a dancing floor in Chinese restaurants where professional partners were also presented. Before, Walai sang old tunes, Wichai played Thai musical instruments, later Čhitrā and Banlā talked about western classical music. They were all keen on western sports and games like tennis, golf, bridge, whist, etc. Even badminton was considered old-fashioned. Their language was not an insignificant evidence of westernisation. Nut is the best example, with her mixing English with Thai and her awkward direct translations. Yot always exclaimed and quoted sayings in English. Suntharī and Prachit even conversed in French.

The first less obvious clash for and against western ideas is in the choosing of husbands and wives for young people and sons and daughters-in-law by parents. Girls surely liked smart, well-educated, westernised men, qualities which they had no difficulty in finding for many men of their class had been abroad. Men did not have much problems in this respect either, because all girls were being modernised and westernised either in thoughts or looks. The problem lay in the fact that despite their being modern, their Thai attitudes were still deeply rooted in the depth of their characters. In Thai atmosphere western-educated men like Thawit and Chat found serene, modest

charm in conservative Thai women like Yuphā and Čhan. Modern women like Čhitrā and Anong too eventually chose Čharoen and Wichai who were educated in Thailand, comparatively poor, and considered first as old-fashioned. This feature of "the attraction of opposites" provides D̄kmaisot with her technique of using contrasts in the plots of her novels.

The parents' ideas in this matter were a little confused.<sup>1</sup> Take Nāng Sīwichai and Khunying Rānrōn in Nāng Nai Rōi for example. The first wanted to pull away her son, Chat, from the modern Anong and marry him off to the latter's daughter who was traditional. Khunying Rānrōn responded well at first because Chat, though poor, was one of the most popular and westernised men in Bangkok. Chuang said to Wichai, her elder brother who was better than Chat in all ways except for his education in Thailand: "You have no chance...because you are not a student from abroad."<sup>1</sup> That is the reason why when Čhamlōng who was both foreign-educated and rich turned up, Khunying Rānrōn did not hesitate to let Chat go.

The mode of eating; food and table manners, too was a symbol of westernisation. If a reader does not look at D̄kmaisot as being realistic, what she writes about this aspect can seem very snobbish indeed. No Thai reader, even today, will approve of what Khunying Siriphan said to Ratna in Sām Čhāi "I am so afraid that Prawat will find for me a daughter-in-law who does not know even how to use knife and fork."<sup>2</sup> In all her fourteen novels, the families of "Phrayā" rank had tea in the western manner, Their breakfast usually comprised both Thai dishes and English breakfast. On her birthday, Anong

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<sup>1</sup>D̄kmaisot, Nāng Nai Rōi, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>D̄kmaisot, Sām Čhāi, p. 654.

arranged a western-style party with western food. Čhitrā and Banlā who were of the "upper" high class, if high class is still subdivided, went to luxurious hotels for their lunch and dinner whereas Salyā and her brothers and sisters who mixed more with less-prestigious people went very often to Chinese restaurants. This does not mean that people of high class looked down on Thai food but European food was one thing that people of lower class could never afford. Perhaps it showed also their lack of discipline and care about money. A comparison is drawn here between Thai food of the rich and the poor when Anong's brothers demanded their favourite dishes which eventually meant they ended with at least ten varieties on the table,<sup>1</sup> whereas in Nanthawan, Phōranī had to examine carefully what the servant had bought from the market while her step-mother complained incessantly about the price. It is noticeable that all the families of lower than "Phra" rank did not have teas and ate only Thai food. Wimon, after the death of her father, packed all her china in boxes and seldom used it. Instead of tea, bread, butter, cheese, she and her family had to be content with home-made Thai sweetmeats.

After the revolution of 1932, westernisation spread out to the man in the street. Commoners had their chance to elevate themselves though superficially. Nāi Chōt in 1/500 no longer believed in herbal medicine and laughed at his wife and neighbour who still interpreted dreams and believed in palmistry. One of Nāi Chōt 's "westernised" friend is described in a very comical but realistic way as follow:

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter V, pp. 256-258.

He was considered most "smart" while walking in Sarānrom Garden<sup>1</sup> in his "met"<sup>1</sup> suit, and while swinging himself a little to keep in step with his friend of the opposite sex. Whether or not the bottom of his trousers was baggy, and whether the iron-creases were straight from his thighs past his knees down to the middle of the end of the legs, or they actually started from the sides of the hips to the sides of the legs, was not important. His jacket pockets were definitely flat, whereas his trouser pockets were swollen up because both hands were always put in them very carefully... No, not because he was afraid that what he had inside them would fall out, but that if someone put his nosy hand in them he would find only the material, three coppers, and nothing else!

And those three coppers would be most valuable after their owner had separated from his girlfriend...

Having come out of the Garden, he would stop near a water-ice stall of a Chinaman, look round to make sure that nobody was looking at him, then turn abruptly to the stall-owner and order most quickly most softly, but not too quickly nor softly for the Chinaman to understand,

"Čhek, one satang of ice."

This type of man really deserved the word "smart". He had a different suit every year, not suit for several years like others, because after the last night of the fair or perhaps even before that, the suit which he had used would no longer be his burden. There were always those of the Chinese race, his refuge and the refuge of many others, waiting to relieve him of it, even to pay him for letting them do the favour. <sup>3</sup>

Dōkmaisot mocked them with her keen observation, but at the same time she wrote it with great sense of humour. In Phrattikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt<sup>4</sup> she told how some Thai parents of good humour took their westernised children.

... Khun Thoet was sitting cross-legged on a red cushion near a silver water bowl and a silver "trumpet-mouthed" spittoon. He washed his mouth and his hands with the water in the bowl, then began eating. Prasit was still sitting absent-mindedly in front of him.

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<sup>1</sup>King Rama VI's private palace, built for him when he was the Crown Prince Vajiravudh.

<sup>2</sup>i.e. "mess"-jacket. Dōkmaisot was imitating the Thais' pronunciation of English.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, 1/500 in Busabāban, pp. 360-361.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix 1, p. 497.

Khun Thoet chewed while looking at his son, feeling rather irritated with his manners. Eventually he turned to Lamduan (a servant) and scolded:

"Hey, why didn't you place the fork and spoon for the master? You never remember- how can he eat with fingers like me, he is 'farang'"

(After the meal Prasit refused to go with his father to see a girl his father wanted him to marry.)

"How peculiar this son of mine is! No interest in girls. I wonder whom he resembles. Does anyone behave like him - refusing to meet his own bride. He even asks me to see her instead - 'farang'."

This adjective "farang" was Khun Thoet's favourite term to dub his son every time he could not understand him. For example when Prasit washed his hands with soap and water before having his meals, he called him "farang", and Prasit was 'farang' just the same when he did not bother to wash his hands at all like today.<sup>1</sup>

Was Dōkmaisot herself for or against westernisation? In some places she was very conservative and in some other places she seemed to be westernised and modern. She praised Anong at her western style birthday party, but was sarcastic with Phōngsī's party on a similar occasion.<sup>2</sup> She did not object to Anong's western and expensive tastes in clothes, but despised the girl at the Royal Bangkok Sports Club and was very satirical with Āhintanā who followed blindly Pibulsonggram's fashion and who looked down upon everybody she considered old-fashioned.<sup>3</sup> Dōkmaisot described Phatcharī while dancing at the Royal Bangkok Sports Club very charmingly and made Āhintanā and her sisters look rather non-"phūdī" when they danced in Chinese restaurants.

Perhaps the answer is that Dōkmaisot loved propriety and ingenuousness. It will be wrong and unfair to say that she praised only her circle and was condescending to other.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Phrattikān..., pp. 28-30.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter V, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter IX, p. 414.

people. She did not oppose to Nut and Chitrā's western behaviour because they were brought up in the West and were good by nature. She liked Phatcharī and Suntharī because both knew how and when to balance Thai tradition with westernisation. She approved of Anong's social ability because the girl knew how to behave in a proper western manner on an appropriate occasion. She certainly disagreed with people who forgot themselves, their culture and manner, and copied the westerners without judgement. In the case of Phōngsī, the novelist made her criticism very strong because she did not agree with the Chinese who thought that they could be better recognised by being westernised with the help of their money.

In Nūa-khū<sup>1</sup>, a short story, Chai, a rich man who decided to engage himself in farming instead of being a civil servant, gave his opinion about girls in words which no doubt express the sentiments of the author herself:

"...Nowadays Thai women are trying to make themselves opposite to the old saying 'Women are buffaloes, men are human'. But they only make everything worse. They want to be independent like western women without realising that a person will be independent only when he can situate himself in the right place and adjust himself to suit the world around him. That is real independence..."<sup>2</sup>

Her observation of the wide gap between modern Bangkok and under-developed provincial towns, together with her opposition to hierachy in occupations make Dōkmaisot's view different from that of her male contemporaries. While Sī Būraphā was creating characters of poorer class to attack injustice in society, and while people in Malai Chūphinit's

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix i, p. 497.

<sup>2</sup>Dōkmaisot, Nūa-khū in Phū-klin, p. 274.

world were busy building themselves in various parts of the country, Dōkmaisot proposed her ideas at an administrative level, practically, realistically, and far-sightedly, such as that she put in Phong's mouth in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narābān:

"I am the only person here who is not a civil servant and yet I would like to propose my ideas to you, Khun Luang and Khun Yot because I am sure that both of you will become important people in future. Our young men who come back from abroad, no matter how high their degrees are, should be sent to work in provincial towns for a period of time first before being given important posts. Let them know the real condition and situation of their country. Most students who return home after spending several years abroad, think that Siam means Bangkok or otherwise Bangkok means Siam. I used to think so myself. It is a grave mistake and can be disastrous to the country. Befor we went abroad, we were too young to be interested in anything else apart from our subjects. Then, after studying in other countries for some time, we tend to forget our own home, imagining that we are not different from Westerners and that all our countrymen are not different from us. It is therefore the duty of the Government who are wise and experienced to compell these young people to re-study their own country..."<sup>1</sup>

In brief, having noticed various currents of westernisation and modernisation, Dōkmaisot was aware of the danger of culture borrowing.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Chaichana..., pp. 562-563.

v. Thai readers and Dōkmaisot's world

When Khun Nilawan Pinthōng wrote her critical article on Phūdī in 1938, she revered Dōkmaisot as a religious teacher, admired her art in weaving the plot, but about her world, there is a tone of dissatisfaction in the critic's words:

...Compared with Siam as a whole, Dōkmaisot's society is merely a small corner, or otherwise a tiny circle containing a handful of people...<sup>1</sup>

Literary criticism was almost unknown in Thailand then, therefore Khun Nilawan could not see, as Walter Allen saw in Jane Austen's works, the fact that the novelist of that type needs limitation<sup>2</sup>, and she could not anticipate that that limitation would later attract some readers and repel others.

Almost twenty-two years after Khun Nilawan's criticism, Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng gave her impression of Dōkmaisot's works also with a particular reference to Phūdī:

The first imagining a teenage girl had after reading (Phūdī) was whether she would be lucky enough to become a beautiful, brave, and independent heroine like Wimon, and whether she would have someone like Phrayā Pholawat, a wealthy aristocratic gentleman, as an admirer.

Later, the same reader picked Phūdī up for the second time when she was an adult. Not only did she find the previous pleasure maintained, but there was also enjoyment in reading the beautiful and informative descriptions...

The third reading gave her a new opinion of Dōkmaisot as an able psychologist, who understood the juveniles, and who could advise teachers and guardians how to deal with adolescents in their care...

And years later, the same reader read Phūdī again in her leisure time. She found all the tastes preserved, and with a greater experience and better judgement gained from reading a great number and varieties of books, she was pleased to notice that the novelist did not draw the life-lines of Phrayā Pholawat and Wimon to meet one another, but instead left it to the reader to gather

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<sup>1</sup>Nilawan, op.cit., p.234 See also Chapter VI, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup>See Allen, op.cit., p. 109.

together the loose ends.

Phūdī has now been read by that reader many many times already, and she understands the story thoroughly. Even so, as a person feels obliged to visit his friend who has been away for several years, she cannot help picking Phūdī up and reading it again and again, and yet she has never been disappointed; Phūdī is and always will be Phūdī...<sup>1</sup>

On February 17th, 1971, Professor Kulāp Mallikamāt, in a panel discussion on Dōkmaisot's novels in Bangkok, added in a statement, which is similar to that of Rančhuan, what can be considered the opinion of the younger generation towards Dōkmaisot's writings:

I first read Dōkmaisot's novels thirty or forty years ago, and still enjoy reading them now. I have read them so much and so often that I can quote from memory some parts and some dialogues. My students are recommended to read them, and my children are also urged to do so... Dōkmaisot is a writer who haunts the hearts of all generations; when I was young, they entertained me one way, and with the passage of time, they now delight me another way. Her writing therefore never stops growing, but develops with the age of the reader...

To Khun Wilāt<sup>2</sup>'s question as to how the students at Prasānmit<sup>3</sup> and those whom I teach think of Dōkmaisot's books, ... I can assure you that all of them, no matter at which institute, read her novels with appreciation. I myself have made a survey of their favourite authors, and Dōkmaisot comes first...<sup>4</sup>

Indeed readers like Professor Kulāp and Rančhuan, who "... read great works... read the same work twenty or thirty times during the course of their life", who "mouth over their favourite lines and stanzas in solitude", and to whom "scenes and characters from books provide them with a sort of iconography by which they interpret or sum up their own experience"<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>Rančhuan Intharakamhaeng, "Dōkmaisot", The Thai Library Association Bulletin III, 4 (October-November-December, 1959), pp. 46-47.

<sup>2</sup>i.e. Wilāt Manīwat, see p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>i.e. the present Sīnakkharinthrawirōt University.

<sup>4</sup>Thai National Library, Kān Ahiprāi..., pp. 30, 31.

<sup>5</sup>C.S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1961), pp. 2,3.

are literary and few. M.L. Bunlūa was the first critic who raised the question of the less literary or the "many"'s opinion of Dōkmaisot's world. She herself has criticised in detail several works of modern novelists, especially Bō-tan<sup>1</sup>'s Āhotmāi Āhāk Mūang Thai (Letters from Thailand)<sup>1</sup> and Krisnā Asōksin's Rūa Manut (The Human Boat)<sup>2</sup>. But she never really makes a full or fair criticism of Dōkmaisot's novels. "I am in a difficult situation," she said once, "If I say that Dōkmaisot is marvellous, people will say that I said so because she is my sister. But if I say that she is not good, they will again say that I blame even my own sister."<sup>3</sup> So far, her comments on Dōkmaisot's writings appear rather on the attacking side. This may well be because M.L. Bunlūa wants to counter-weigh other critics's admiration for Dōkmaisot in order to raise the Thais' standard of criticism, which has not been much developed since Prince Wan's article published in 1938.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, after Professor Kulāp's words, she immediately made a sharp and contradictory remark:

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<sup>1</sup>Bō-tan is a pseudonym of Suphā Lūsiri, a young graduate at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. She began writing novels in her third year at the University. Āhotmāi Āhāk Mūang Thai was written in 1968. It won the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation's best novel award in 1969. The work is written in epistolary form and concerns the life of a Chinese immigrant in Thailand.

For M.L. Bunlūa's criticism see M.L. Bunlūa Thēpphayasuwan, "Khō Khit Āhāk Āhotmāi Āhāk Mūang Thai", Siam Rath Sapdā Wichān XVII (August 2nd 1970), p. 12 ff.; (August 9th, 1970), p. 15 ff.; (August 26th 1970), p. 19 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Krisnā Asōksin is a pseudonym of Mrs. Sukanyā Yānāranop, the author of many popular novels. Rūa Manut is not a good work as far as the plot and characterisation are concerned, but it reflects well the restless Thai society of the present time. The novel is the second Thai work to be awarded the SEATO's Prize.

For M.L. Bunlūa's criticism see M.L. Bunlūa Thēpphayasuwan, "Hua-liao Hua-tō Khōng Wannakhadī Thai" in Wan Waitayakorn..., pp. 101-102.

<sup>3</sup>Thai National Library, op.cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter II, p. 118. See also Mahā Witthayālai XVI, 1 (April 1938), p. 233.

"I used to assign a reading and criticism of Nāng Nai Rōi. Some students said that they could not see anything special in it, and some that there was nothing at all that attracted them... Hearing Professor Kulāp say that her students appreciated Dōkmaisot, I wonder if it was actually the examination marks they were after?..."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, Wilāt caused the discussion to deviate, otherwise an interesting comment on Dōkmaisot's readers could have been considered for the first time. Both Professor Kulāp and M.L. Bunlāa were correct; some students admired Dōkmaisot and some did not, depending on what type of readers they were.

There has not been an exhaustive survey of fiction and the reading public in Thailand as has been done in England by Q.D. Leavis,<sup>2</sup> from which an assessment can be justifiably drawn. Nevertheless, 2, 845 filled questionnaires used by Dr. Ute Glockner in her survey in Bangkok alone<sup>3</sup> make Dōkmaisot's position in the modern Thai literature clear enough. The first striking result is that the first five most widely read authors; M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, Dōkmaisot, Yā-khōp, Mālai Chūphinit, M.C. Ākāt-damkoeng, all belong to an earlier period, with Kukrit a little junior in age.

Dōkmaisot ranks second, with the highest vote surprisingly coming from Thammasat University where most students are men instead of from Chulalongkorn University or the Teachers' Training Colleges where there are more women and where some of her works are text-books. In the Glockner survey her novels appeal most to readers of the over thirty-one and, again

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<sup>1</sup>Thai National Library, op.cit., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Q.D. Leavis, Fiction and the Reading Public (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>Ute Glockner, Literatursoziologische Untersuchung des Thailändischen Romans im XX. Jahrhundert. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Philosophischen Fakultät der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg i. Br., Freiburg, 1967.

surprisingly, of the eighteen year-old groups. Overall her women-readers nearly four times outnumber her men-readers. While Kukrit's book, Sī Phaendin (The Four Reigns)<sup>1</sup> retains the first position as most read novel, Dōkmaisot's most popular novel in the survey, Phūdī, comes eighth. Another four popular novels of Dōkmaisot that appear in the list of forty-five titles (translations of 007 are excluded) are Nūng Nai Rōi (thirteenth), Nit (twenty-third), Chaichana Khōng Luang Narābān (thirtieth), Kam Kao (thirty-fifth), and Nī Lae Lōk! (forty-third).

No Thai will deny the value of the two massive volumes of Kukrit's Sī Phaendin, and that the works of the first five most read authors deserve the places. But a little further analysis of Dōkmaisot's position must be made. Among the forty-five most read novels by twenty-nine authors, there are more by Dōkmaisot than by anyone else, and seven out her eleven novels<sup>2</sup> should be considered very high indeed, especially when compared with, for example, four novels by Roslārēn<sup>3</sup> selected from scores of works she has produced. Except for Prince Narāthip,<sup>4</sup> Čhao Phrayā Thammasak Montri,<sup>5</sup> and Sathian Kōsēt,<sup>6</sup> whose works selected are actually translations and short-stories, and set-texts for schoolchildren, Dōkmaisot is among the four earliest and truly professional novelists chosen. Kukrit's Sī Phaendin was written long after Dōkmaisot had published her last completed work (Nanthawan). And the plots of his second and third novels, Phai Daeng (Red Bamboo) and Lāi Chīwit

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 341.

<sup>2</sup>not counting Bupphēsanniwāt and Romance Sōn Rūang Čing which are bound with short stories, nor the last novel which had not been published at the time of the survey.

<sup>3</sup>One of several pseudonyms of Wimon Čhiamčharoen. She ranks seventh in the list.

<sup>4, 5, 6</sup>

See Chapter I, pp. 29, 10, 34, respectively.

(Lives), fourth and fifth in the list, are not original,<sup>1</sup> and his last chosen work, Phūan Nōn (The Bed-time Companion) is not a novel but collection of short stories.

Taking these considerations together with the fact that Kukrit has been the most popular Thai journalist for at least two decades, the owner of two most popular daily newspaper and weekly magazine, Siam Rath, the staff of which were one of the two journalist circles to whom Dr. Glockner distributed the questionnaires,<sup>2</sup> his name is bound to be better known than that of other writers. But at the same time, the facts make the four earlier writers, who were dead by the time of the survey Yā-khōp, Mālai Chūphinit, M.C. Ā-kāt, especially Dōkmaisot, the only woman-writer among the first five, more distinctive.

Since the people in Professor Kulāp's survey were her students of Thai literature, and in Dr. Glockner's mostly educated people, an attempt has been made to appraise the opinions of readers in general of Dōkmaisot's world, regardless of age, occupation, or level and field of education.<sup>3</sup> The result is quite interesting.

Several readers who were house-wives,<sup>4</sup> aged between sixty- and seventy, said that when they first read Dōkmaisot's

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<sup>1</sup>Phai Daeng has the plot of Giovanni Guareschi's The Little World of Don Camillo, and Lai Chiwit of Thornton Wilder's The Bridge of San Luis Rey. However, it is important to note that Kukrit adapts these two works with great effect, leaving no trace whatever of their foreign elements. Phai Daeng has been translated into English and Japanese.

<sup>2</sup>The other circle is the Phim Thai (see Chapter I, pp

<sup>3</sup>These were personal enquiries involving about fifty individuals.

<sup>4</sup>Most who were asked for opinions were women. Thai men seldom read novels, especially those which are written by female authors. Men who read novels are either writers of some sorts or students who are assigned to read them.

See also Glockner, op.cit., p. 227.

serialised long novels, it was, to them, a completely new thing, new taste, a pleasing experience.<sup>1</sup> They still read them because that "world" was still real to them and made them remember the good old days. A student of literature at Silapākōn University, Bangkok, revealed that her family had a complete set of Dōkmaisot's works because her grandfather, a retired official of medium rank, believed firmly that by reading Dōkmaisot's novels his grandchildren would learn thoroughly about the "world" of Thai aristocrats. Those who had been living in England for a long time or most of their lives treasured Dōkmaisot's works. Being asked for the reasons, one of them spontaneously remarked: "I can read them again and again and yet never feel tired of them. I know what will happen to those characters, how they will act and re-act, but it still seems new to me each time I read." Another one even admitted that the "world" of Dōkmaisot was like a link between her and her country.

However, the most interesting opinions came from the young novel-addicts, aged between eighteen and twenty-five, not students of literature trained to appreciate good writing, but those who would sacrifice their pocket money to rent novels from book-stalls, and buy several story-magazines weekly. Some had read one or two of Dōkmaisot's novels, some had seen the television performances, and some - at least had heard of her and tried to read her but never finished. Their first response to the request for their opinions was either silence or some expressions of uneasiness. Being asked if they would pick

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Lewis, *op.cit.*, p. 3: "The first reading of some literary work is often, to the literary, an experience so momentous that experiences of love...can furnish a standard of comparison."

Dōkmaisot's novels from the shelves where there were also books of other authors like Thommayanti, Kanokrēkhā, Busayamāt, and Krisnā Asōksin, none would. Dōkmaisot's works to them, they said, were too "high", and those who read Dōkmaisot were "academic snobs". Two friends, both nineteen, agreed with one another that of all the writings in Phū-kin and Busabāban they loved Mō Ngū Tāi Phrō Ngū, Mō Fan... most. This is not surprising; Mō Ngū Tāi Phrō Ngū, Mō Fan... is the only work of Dōkmaisot written with a style rather similar to that of the present day's romantic stories. One said that she needed a great effort to complete a novel of Dōkmaisot; she had to read every letter, notice every sign, and most difficult of all, she had to think. Another one said that when she read Dōkmaisot's work, she had to enter Dōkmaisot's world. Once this was done, she liked it, got lost in it, became addicted to it, whereas reading novels by those names mentioned, one could take the world away from the books and re-create it as one liked in one's imagination. As far as the dialogue is concerned, to them, Dōkmaisot did not speak but the characters, who were so realistic; whereas in other novels, the stories of which the young readers said they could always anticipate, not only did the novelists speak, but they did so in the way the readers wanted them to.<sup>1</sup> They also admitted that there was less than ten per cent "truth" in those popular novels, but that was what they wanted - romanticism. They did not like serious novels with frustration and death as finale like Phūdī or Nī Lae Lōk!. "But one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Maugham, Ten Novels..., p. 13: "...And just as behaviour should proceed from character, so should speech. A woman of fashion should talk like a woman of fashion, a street-walker like a street-walker, a racing tout like a racing tout and an attorney like an attorney. (It is surely a fault in Meredith and Henry James that their characters invariably talk like Henry James and Meredith respectively.)..."

recent most popular novels, Thommayantī's Khū Kam,<sup>1</sup> also has death and separation in the end?" One of the persons questioned argued: "But that is different. There is still something romantic in that death. If Angsumālin (the heroine) did not love Kobori (the hero, a Japanese captain), his death would bring Manat (the former and faithful lover) back to her. Now it appears clearly in the end that she loves her foreign husband, and even if he died, they will meet one another again in heaven."

On the whole, Dōkmaisot's world to them was upper-class, the members of it are high-born, and so realistic that they could not imagine themselves a hero or a heroine, but mere observers.

Being asked about Dōkmaisot's contemporaries, these young readers knew very little about them, even though they were greatly impressed with excerpts they were shown. Their ideas of the reasons for the lack of popularity of those good novels are strikingly interesting. They were never broadcast on radio. Television seldom dramatised them. Very few had been filmed. And most crucial of all, book-stalls which rent novels, the greatest suppliers of novels to readers in Thailand, never displayed them. While hundreds of romantic novels were piled up for the reader to choose and browse through, novels by Mālai Chūphinit and Sī Būraphā for example might not be available at all, or otherwise the stall-owners had to fetch them out from some dusty dark corner.

The fact is that these readers say, as one articulate person questioned put it: "They give us a dream". Dōkmaisot

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<sup>1</sup>Khū Kam (The Ill-fated Couple), which takes place in Bangkok during the second World War, concerns love-hate relationships between a Thai woman and a Japanese officer whom she was forced by circumstances to marry. Their mutual understanding came too late; he died in the bombing of Bangkok by the British.

does not. These "escapists" require a romantic stimulus from the cheap novels they read. They want sentimentality, even a maudlin romantic atmosphere. This does not mean that they would be attracted to the realism of sexually explicit stories. That is not the type of sensuality the readers are seeking. They do not wish to be titillated. This would be one extreme. D̄kmaisot, however, is at the other. She demands a serious commitment of the mind. The readers we are speaking of and they are a big slice of Thai readership, wish only for a stimulus to the imagination. This is different from enjoying oneself in an act of the imagination which takes one into another world complete in itself. To a reader of education and intelligence D̄kmaisot is an entertaining writer but her works are more than "entertainment".<sup>1</sup>

Another reaction of the type of reader who is satisfied by the novel of sentimentality and romance is simple curiosity. They want to know "what happens next", not as a result of a well-worked out plot developed through good characterisation but rather "what happens next" in terms of successive incident. This is a wish for emphasis on narrative. As such it links with the fundamental desire for a good story which is not restricted to Thai readers. It is world-wide but it is also traditionally Thai.

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<sup>1</sup>Used in the sense given by C.S. Lewis, op.cit., pp. 91-92:

"If entertainment means light and playful pleasure... If it means those things which 'grip' the reader of popular romance... A good book will be more; it must not be less. Entertainment in this sense, is like a qualifying examination."

And by W.S. Maugham, op.cit., pp. 13-14:

"And the more intelligent the entertainment a novel offers, the better it is."

The type of Thai society out of which Dṓkmaisot made a "world" no longer exists in Thailand. But very often an observant reader will find certain components of her world appear in the works of other Thai novelists today. For example, people created by Chūwong Chayachindā speak Dṓkmaisot's language.<sup>1</sup> The philosophy behind the old and uncommon song "rūa manut" (human boat) sung by two children in Nanthawan has been applied with the restless present day society by Krisnā Asōksin.<sup>2</sup> Even the symptom of a dying girl in Roslarēn's Ngao (The Shadow), what she sees and how she feels, is not much different from that of Salyā in Nī Lae Lōk!.<sup>3</sup>

But, Dṓkmaisot's world is hers alone and always will be for, like Charles Dickens world made out of Victorian England, her world is also "a complete world with a life and vigour and idiom of its own, quite unlike other world there has been".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter X, p. 484.

<sup>3</sup>See Roslarēn (pseud.). Ngao. (Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, 1967). Vol. II, p. 526.

<sup>4</sup>See Humphry House. The Dickens World. (Oxford: O.U.P., 1969). p. 224.

A P P E N D I C E S

## i. Other Writings of Dōkmaisot

Originally, her short stories, two out of which have been treated as short novels in this thesis, and miscellaneous works were published in magazines, mostly those which were issued by schools. Later they were re-published in four volumes under three titles:

Ruam Rāngyoi Khōng Dōkmaisot (Miscellaneous Writings of Dōkmaisot), two volumes.

Phū-klin<sup>1</sup>

Busabāban<sup>2</sup>

In 1962 the Prae Pittaya Printing Press redivided and published them in two volumes, retaining the titles Phū-klin and Busabāban. There are in fact at least three more pieces which have not been included in the bound volumes: Dīfō (Frightened),<sup>3</sup> Praphēnī Khōng Chāokō Kōsikā (Customs of the Corsicans),<sup>4</sup> and a translation. The title of the third piece remains to be identified. However, from a letter by the author in which reference is made to it, it would seem probable that it is her last short work.<sup>5</sup>

There are several reasons why her smaller works should not be overlooked. Firstly, in some of them, Nāa Khū, for example, the author's attitudes and ideas about rice-farming as carried out by Thai people were expressed more directly

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<sup>1</sup>A name of a style of Thai flower arrangement.

<sup>2</sup>meaning "flowers and leaves" or "a book of flowers (i.e. Bupphā or Dōkmaisot)".

<sup>3</sup>Published in Thai Khasēm, December 15th, 1927, pp.1279-1282.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vol.6, no.4, August 15th, 1929, pp.455-457.

<sup>5</sup>See Somphop, Chīwit..., p.111.

than in her long novels. Secondly, when all writings are listed chronologically, they provide information concerning Dokmaisot's life and society. Lastly, in the words of Katherine Lever "By reading all the works of an author in the order of composition and in the context of his experience, we become aware of the power of imagination which transforms facts into fiction, of the power of imagination which can be controlled and projected, and of the power of response to changing conditions,"<sup>1</sup> Dokmaisot did adapt what she had seen and heard, and embodied this in her writing.

Her miscellaneous works can be roughly divided according to their form and nature as follow:

a. Humorous stories:

Māa Klap Chāk Dū Rāang Voltaire (After seeing the Film Voltaire), 1934, 11 pages.

1/500, 1936, 98 pages.

Sī Chuamōng Nai Rotfai (Four Hours in the Train), 1938, 20 pages.

Mō Ngū Tāi Phrō Ngū, Mō Fan... (A Snake Charmer Dies of a Snake, a Dentist...), 1939, 32 pages.

b. Romantic short stories:

Nāa Khū (The Couple), 1929, 76 pages.

Phrattikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt (The Acts of Those Who Love to Remain Single), 1930, 59 pages.

Nāng (She), 1934, 89 pages.

c. Articles:

Silapa Khū Arai? (What Is Art?), undated, 5 pages.

Anna Kap Phrachao Krung Sayām (Anna and the King of Siam), 1947, 19 pages.

d. Four poems, 1938, 1941, 1942, 1943, 2,2,2,5 pages respectively.

## e. Didactic stories:

Nitnit Nqinqi (Bits and Pieces), 1929, 20 pages.

Fai (Fire), 1934, 41 pages.

Duang Chaksu Khong Than Phuphiphaksā (The Judge's Eyes), 1934, 3 pages.

## f. Translations:

Uarā Nāng Sing (Uara the Lioness), 1937, 40 pages.

Kān Ān (Reading), 1938, 5 pages.

Ruang Ying Sat (Hunting), 1947, 15 pages.

## g. Social short stories:

Pholamuang Dī (A Good Citizen), 1947, 42 pages.

Khon Chai Bun (A Kind-hearted Man), undated, 16 pages.

It depends on what criteria one adopts if the above g groupings are to be accepted. Take 1/500 as an example, the story certainly shows Dōkmaisot's ability as a humorist as well as as a satirist and a writer on the life of lower class people. If analysis shows that the work deals with Thai society, the work should perhaps be regarded as a social story. The first response of a reader is to enjoy the funny side of the book, so we should at this stage take into consideration the basic intention of the writer. It looks more of a social story than it really is only because Dōkmaisot makes a sudden break with her usual practice of writing about the elite. Two years before 1/500, she wrote Nung Nai Rōi (One in a Hundred), meaning "A Rare One", and the title was written in letters. But 1/500 was in figures, and the expression is commonly understood by the Thai to mean "One of Five Hundred Types of Craziness". In the story, which is about the life of a rather poor but educated husband and of his better-off but uneducated wife, Dōkmaisot used the term "crazy" or "mad" in several places and even said in one

place "Mad, you must be mad. You ought to go to Pāk Khlōng Sān now".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, underneath its humorous quality lies concealed a serious political satire.<sup>2</sup>

It may also be noted that seven qualities of these lesser works are those constantly appear in her long novels; comic appeal, romantic and realistic features, analytical criticism, didactic intention, linguistic accuracy, satirical elements, and a concern for social problems.

Māa Klap Chāk Dū Rāang Voltaire is about a man who, after seeing a film, dreams that he becomes a Thai 'Voltaire', producing inspiring works, and is admired everywhere. The dream ends when he falls off the chair and his dog, his aide-de-camp in the dream, barks, and his roommate laughs at him.

The setting for this story and 1/500 is the poor quarter near Wang Bān Mō. It is therefore possible that the author had observed how the poor talked amongst themselves and how their lives were spent.

Sī Chuamōng Nai Rotfai is an amusing account of what one could have seen, imagined, assumed and concluded while sitting in a train. The writer wrote it from a man's viewpoint, and even began by saying "I have heard before that there is no boredom worse than getting tired of one's wife".<sup>3</sup>

Mō Ngū Tāi Phrō Ngū, Mō Fan... implies that just as a snake charmer dies from involvement with snakes, a dentist too can meet his death (meaning in Thai "be cornered" or "tied down") of his concern with teeth. The story is about a romance between a dentist and his patient.

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, 1/500 in Busabāban, p.316.  
Pāk Khlōng Sān is the location of the first mental hospital in Bangkok.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter , p. 424-425.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Sī Chuamōng Nai Rotfai in Phū-klin, p.515.

Nāa Khū, Phrattikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt, and Nāng are long short-stories, with light subjects, yet not without a content of ideas. Nāa Khū is an account of a girl's trip from Bangkok to the northeast of the country. Incidentally, she finds her true love in a man who rejects the luxury of life in the capital to start rice-farming in a provincial town. This story was written after Dōkmaisot's long journey to the northeast with her sister and brother-in-law, Phrayā Phetchadā. It was the first work in which she attempted to describe fully the setting outside Bangkok. It also reveals that the author had from an early stage in her writing strong views about how agriculture should be earned on, not from the point of view of Mālai Chūphinit, i.e. farmers must fight in order to raise their position in society, but from her own position as a well-to-do person; she felt that farming, especially rice-farming, should achieve fuller recognition and be regarded by all as a serious and honourable calling.

Phrattikān Khōng Phū Rak Khwām Pen Sōt and Nāng are both about love at first sight which seems to go wrong for a short while and then achieves a happy ending. The former is more amusing and convincing than the latter.

In Silapa Khū Arai, after giving various examples of so-called artistic products, Dōkmaisot concluded that the meaning of the word 'art' depends upon the time, the place and public opinion.

Dōkmaisot's criticism of Hollywood's Anna and the King of Siam is particularly interesting since she was herself a member of the royal family, but very seldom mentioned the monarchy and never gave any hint revealing her attitude towards that institution. She wrote this article after having

read several criticisms in magazines and newspapers. Her intention was to give the true facts about situations which many people were sceptical. Dōkmaisot wrote it as a Thai, of course, but without partiality towards any side. She did not protest that the way in which King Mongkut had been portrayed as an individual was wrong, but explained that certain things could not possibly have taken place at Court, for example the burning alive of Phra Palat and Thapthim, and the barbarous table manners of the King. In the conclusion Dōkmaisot gave her opinion that the production was like a combination of an "Indian drama, a Chinese opera, and a Western film", with the character of Anna as "the sole greatest stateswoman of genius in the history of the country's development".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the writer did not miss a chance to criticize the bad qualities of Thai people, especially their too easy-going ways.

Throughout the whole course of her writing, Dōkmaisot produced surprisingly few poems, although all that she composed were excellent. The themes of the four short pieces in Phū-klin, according to the writer herself, are of Western origin. The metres are of 'kāp'<sup>2</sup> style. The subjects, and the language, are such as to make them sound ironic and satirical. The first piece concerns a king who limps because of corns on the sole of one foot. The 'royal pattern' is followed by all his retinue until it becomes the fashion and usual practice. One day, an old noble walked straight in without limping. The courtiers laughed while the king asked the poor man his reason for not following the tradition. The explanation was that the old noble suffered badly from corns

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<sup>1</sup>Dōkmaisot, Anna Kap Phraçhao Krung Sayām in Phū-klin p.358 and p.347.

<sup>2</sup>Sanskrit 'kavaya'.

on both soles so that he walked with a limp in both legs, and it was for that that they saw him walking erect.

In the second poem, the writer relates a paradoxical teaching she heard in her schooldays; a good woman must possess the characters of a snail, an echo, and a clock, loving her home, being perspecuous, and being punctual; but at the same time she must not be like them in their being ostentatious, argumentative and quarrelsome, boastful and vain.

The themes and styles of the third and the fourth poems are very much influenced by either La Fontaine<sup>1</sup> or Aesop; they concern a falcon and a swallow, and the election of the animals. However, after examining Ennis Rees' Fables from Aesop (New York: O.U.P., 1966) and La Fontaine's Fables contes et nouvelles (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1948), it is clear that D̄kmaisot did not directly borrow her stories from the collections. Neither are these stories of Indian origin known in Thailand. We have a case here of the frequent Thai tendency of adaptation rather than adoption. The underlying theme, the language, together with the dates of of publication, i.e. 1942, 1943, cannot help but make the reader wonder whether D̄kmaisot intended them as political satire. In the dialogue between the two birds, for example, the writer wrote "It is a natural law that the great power will defeat the weaker. Because you don't eat me, you must therefore be eaten."<sup>2</sup> In the last poems, after various kinds of animals had stated their qualifications, a monkey and a

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<sup>1</sup>The writer of this thesis was told by Sukit Nimmanheminda that La Fontaine was one of D̄kmaisot's favourites.

<sup>2</sup>D̄kmaisot, Nithān Kham Kāp in Phū-klīn, p. 314.

parrot boasted of their suitability for the leadership since they resembled human beings and were able to speak the human language. The assembly then chased both animals away, giving reasons as follows:

"Don't ever listen to them, those who possess a shameless nature. Why should we, happily living as animals, imitate human beings? They are just useless 'copying tigers', scoundrels who are fond of imitating one another. We cannot keep them, otherwise we will be in peril, and will certainly be looked down upon by the wise. No, we must not have them - such an evil-minded copying team." 1

It is too much to believe that Dōkmaisot did not use the phrases "great power" and "copying tigers" in these two poems without hidden meaning at a time when Thai people were being compelled by F.M.Pibulsonggram's Cultural Law to wear Western clothes and hats. It is also interesting and perhaps significant that the third poem was sent for publication to the magazine edited by the radical journalist, Sot Kūramarōhit, Ēkkachon<sup>2</sup>.

The three works with didactic elements are very different from one another in all respects. Nitnit Nōinōi is a charming tale within a tale, told by a grandfather to his little grandchildren on the open platform of their home on a night of fullmoon. Fai, which was first published in Suan Kulāp School magazine, was obviously intended for teenage boys. The story concerns three young schoolmates, who had just completed their pre-university course and were preparing themselves for university entrance examination. While Chāa and Somchai were studying hard, Sākun, the youngest son of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp.318-319.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter 1, p. 72.

a rich 'phrayā' was indulging himself drinking and keeping company with girls in dance-halls. He attempted to persuade his two friends to join the activities, but fortunately, Ch̄ua's cousin and guardian who had been sent to work in a provincial town, came to Bangkok in time to save them from disaster. He took Ch̄ua and Som̄chai to observe what dance-hall life was really like. Ch̄ua and Som̄chai tried their best vainly to make S̄akun change his ways. S̄akun failed to turn up for exams and became more involved with a dancing girl, and was eventually disowned by his family.

Duang Chaksu Khōng Thān Phūphīphāksā is the shortest, but the most serious of the three. It is about a virtuous judge who was able to take his eyes out, and would do so every time he presided. One morning, before going to court, he ate a kind of pickle his wife bought from the market, and liked it very much. Later, in the court, after taking his eyes out as usual, he heard the name of the pickle-seller announced as the accused. Because he could not forget the delicious taste of the dish the verdict he gave was bias. As a result, the eyes could not be re-installed and the judge therefore remained sightless all his life.

All the three translated works of D̄ḡkmaisot are from French, including Kān Ān, an excerpt from Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf.

Uarā Nāng Sing, of which the original title and author remain to be identified, is a very touching story of an orphan lion-cub, Uarā, brought up by a white man in Africa. Her loyalty and gratitude to him were greater than the call of the wilderness, which otherwise could have saved her from imprisonment, loneliness and death in a Paris zoo.

Dōkmaisot stated clearly that she translated Ruang Ying Sat from a story by Guy de Maupassant. Unfortunately, the original title was not given, nor the story found included in Guy de Maupassant's Complete Short Stories (London: Cassel, 1970). The shooting - an act of 'murderers' to hundreds of animals in the wood - a sport to a few 'human beings', is described through the eyes and feelings of a young partridge.

Dōkmaisot's gift for narrating and command of Thai as seen in these two translations are tremendous. Her language flows as smoothly as in her other works, showing no trace of difficulty on the part of the translator in selecting words to fit foreign expressions.

Perhaps the best products of Dōkmaisot's miscellaneous writings are her two short stories: Pholamāng Dī (A Good Citizen) and Khon Čhai Bun (A Kind-hearted Man). The first had been chosen to be translated into English and published as one of four Thai short stories in an Australian magazine, Span<sup>1</sup>. The story takes place in a village on a bank of the Chao Phraya river, about two hours from Bangkok by train, slow moving because this is the time of the War in the East. Sommāi took his wife, Somčhit, his son, whose real name had not been settled between the parents, and a distant relative, to live there temporarily because Somčhit was pregnant and Bangkok was being bombed heavily. They got on well with

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<sup>1</sup>Edited for the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers by Lionel Wigmore (Melbourne: F.W.Cheshire, 1958). The other three Thai works are Manat Čhanyong's Shoot to Kill, P.Chaya (Prince Prem Burachat)'s On My Short-sightedness, and J.Kasem Sibunruang's The Golden Goby.

the local people who remained faithful to their typical Thai way of life, being helpful, generous and friendly to one another. However, the evacuee couple were sometimes conscious of and bewildered by the viewpoints of country people. Somchit was annoyed every time their neighbours called their son 'Daeng' because it was the most common name for dogs in the village. She urged her husband to decide about the boy's real name, but Sommāi or Māi was still fussy about it, fearing that names given by a monk would not fit in with the Cultural Law.<sup>1</sup>

The difference in viewpoint between those brought up in the capital and habitual country dwellers is seen to best advantage in the passage where working cattle belonging to the couple's neighbours are stolen the night after the ordination ceremony of the son of the family. As an educated man and being unaware of the local practice, Sommāi reported the incident to the district-chief the next morning on his way to work in Bangkok. In the evening he was amazed to discover that the owners of the cattle were perfectly willing to borrow a large sum of money with which to pay the thieves and were glad to get the oxen back that way. Worse than that the owners were angry with him for reporting the matter to the official. In fact, rice farmers always valued their cattle highly and were well aware that if they reported the case, the animals would be slaughtered, and this would only mean that it would be dearer for them to buy new cattle than to pay the ransom. They were angry with Sommāi because they

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<sup>1</sup>Here Dōkmaisot was again ridiculing F.M. Pibulsonggram's ideas of Westernisation even though he was by that time out of power. Sommāi had to cut the first syllable of his name, Som, off, and give it to his wife who had been called only 'Chit' in order to comply with the Law.

had not only lost the money but had also been scolded by the district-chief for conniving at theft. Only then was Sommāi enlightened: understanding that there was not a complete right or wrong decision in the case. The local people had only the 'most suitable' way out. He worked out a similarly suitable means to reach a reconciliation with them; he asked Somčhit for a sarong and a jacket. She, of course grumbled, but allowed him to take them to the the old woman, the owner of the cattle.

It is said that although Dōkmaisot had become serious and bitter about both the situation in the country and with her family even before the evacuation, she could still joke with her siter's family in Ayudhya occasionally. But in Bang Pa-in and back in Bangkok she grew very serious,<sup>1</sup> and by the time she wrote Pholamāang Dī in December 1947, her illness had begun. As she wrote:

I am writing a simple short story and would like to finish it within the month. But it does not seem to be possible. My health does not help me at all...<sup>2</sup>

The date and place of first publication of Khon Čhai Bun is not mentioned. However, from the description of the story, from the phrase "It is only a few months since most of the citizens of the world were freed from the state of intending to kill one another"<sup>3</sup> and from the description of the scene in Bangkok, the time must be soon after the War in the East had finished. Sommāi who got involved in the incident could be the same character as in Pholamāang Dī.

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter II, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Somphop, Chīwit..., p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Dōkmaisot, Khon Čhai Bun in Phū-klin, p. 625.

He was buying some fruit for his wife and child while a poor woman was shouting that a pickpocket had just snatched her money. Sommāi saw the thief, a woman, pushing her way out of the crowd in his direction. He grabbed her and was able to return the money to the old woman. It was after that, when the pickpocket was arrested that he noticed that she was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. Sommāi went into a coffee shop and while having a drink began to wonder why anyone in such a helpless state would commit a crime whose success depended on being able to achieve a swift get-away unless she was driven to it by necessity; perhaps her husband was dying and she had no money to feed him and her young baby; perhaps she was a widow whose mother was critically ill; perhaps she was going to give birth to her next baby in the cell, and what about her family?... At last Sommāi decided to go to the police station. As he was leaving, his friend, who was a policeman at the same station, arrived and persuaded him to sit down again. The policeman, after ordering a drink, began complaining about a woman thief, who turned out to be the same woman as the one involved in the present case. The woman was a real thief and had been arrested before Sommāi felt the relief of one awakening from a bad dream.

The story was only sixteen pages long, but was the only one written in this style by Dōkmaisot. The surprise twist in the end is quite a common feature of good short stories, especially of those by Guy de Maupassant. Therefore, it would not be surprising if Dōkmaisot, who evidently had been reading a great number of Western works, should have adopted the technique, eventhough her theme is original.

ii. Thai ceremonies in Dōkmaisot's novels

1. "Tham khwan dūan" ceremony in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān.
2. Naming the infants in Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūbān.
3. Birthday ceremonies in Nit and Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.
4. House-warming ceremonies in Sām Chāi and Nūng Nai Rōi.
5. Engagement ceremonies in Nit and Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.
6. Wedding ceremonies in Nit and Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.
7. Ordination ceremony in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.
8. Celebration of the bestowal of royal order of merit in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek.
9. Funeral ceremonies in Khwāmphit Khrang Raek, Phūdī, and Ubattihēt.

iii. Thai terms for "novel"

Although the English word 'novel' is found used in transliteration as early as 1886 in King Rama V's letter to Prince Wachirayān Warōrot,<sup>1</sup> explaining about the controversial story of Nangsū Sanuk Nāk by Prince Phichit Prīchākōn,<sup>2</sup> its Thai equivalent, 'nawaniyāi' was invented only recently during the War, in 1943.

Prior to that, the Thai used, for any type of prose fiction, one of the following terms: 'nangsū' (writings or books), 'rūang' (stories, written as well as told), 'niyāi' or 'nithān' (tales), and later qualified them with 'ān len' (reading for pleasure or reading for fun).<sup>3</sup> Then adjectival qualifying terms were added to them during the first three decades of the twentieth century including, for example, 'roengrom' (pleasing), 'pralōm lōk' (world-soothing), 'pralōm

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<sup>1</sup>(1859-1921) King Rama V's half brother, a poet who was ordained young and later became Holy Patriarch and a founder of the country's modern education.

<sup>2</sup>(1855-1910) King Rama V's half brother, who was at that time Chairman of the Vajirañāna Library, and later Minister of Justice.

Nangsū Sanuk Nāk, which was published in the Vajiranana Wisēt, volume I, number 28, 1886, is about four young Buddhist monks of the royal monastery, Wat Bōwōnniwēt, discussing what they want to be after leaving the monkhood.

The Holy Patriarch, Prince Pawarēt, uncle of the King and Prince Phichit, was very offended, fearing that the public might misunderstand, and believe that the incident really occurred in the monastery of which he was the abbot. The King was disturbed, Prince Phichit was reprimanded, and the story was left unfinished. In a letter to Prince Wachirayān, after expressing his concern about the matter, the King attempted to explain that he knew that Prince Phichit only "intended to imitate farang's novels!"

For details see King Rama V and the Holy Patriarch Prince Wachirayān Warōrot, Phra Rāchahattha Lēkhā (Bangkok: 1929) pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, chapter I, p. 52.

chai'(heart-soothing).<sup>1</sup> When the attitude towards the novel began to change, that is when the object became to provide more than mere pleasure and the writers came to consider social morality part of their responsibility,<sup>2</sup> terms like 'rūang banthoengkhadī', 'rūang sāra banthoeng' came into use, applied rather loosely in an attempt to make them comparable to 'wannakhadī'(literature) and to imply that they contained 'khadī' or 'sāra'(sense or essence).

Dōkmaisot was one of the writers who seemed to be unhappy with the two words and instead employed only 'nangsū' or when it was unavoidable, the English terms 'novel' and 'romance'. Even in the footnote defining the word 'romance' she merely seemed ready to accept a compromise in remarking that 'Perhaps "Rūang Pralōm Lōk Sōn Rūang Ching" is just good enough'.<sup>3</sup>

Wē-thāng relates how, in an interview granted him by Dōkmaisot in 1940, she asked him to define the word 'nak praphan'<sup>4</sup> which he used with her, and how he thought of all the terms used to mean the type of writing of the 'nak praphan' and eventually when it came to her type of stories he used the English 'novel or fiction'.<sup>5</sup>

Khun Nilawan Pinthōng, in her criticism of Phūdī also strongly objects to the term 'rūang ān len', especially as

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 51.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Sī Būraphā, Lūk Phūchāi 4th ed. (Bangkok: Odeon, 1953), epilogue.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter III, p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> Formerly, this term embodied 'authors' of any kind of writing, poetry as well as prose, but later and at present it means 'novelists' or 'fiction writers'. After the War, San Thēwarak proposed the Sanskrit-derived 'praphanthakōṇ' (prabandhakara), but was unsuccessful in getting it adopted.

<sup>5</sup> Wē-thāng, op.cit., p. 10

applied to the type of stories written by D̄kmaisot.

Phūdī is considered to belong to the type of book called in English 'novel'. But in Thai, we have so many words that I do not know which is most appropriate. The common and easy one is 'r̄uang ān len', but it is misleading because there is a great number of stories which are written for serious reading. For example, most of good stories in western languages. Phūdī cannot be classified as 'a book for reading for fun' and I understand that its author also intended that it should be read as a serious work...<sup>1</sup>

Despite their objections, the terms 'r̄uang ān len' and 'r̄uang roengrom' continued to be used. S̄ S̄ethabut, in 1940, made them equivalent to 'novel' in his New Model English-Thai Dictionary.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest use of the word 'nawaniyāi' is found in an article by Prince Wan Waithayakorn,<sup>3</sup> "Wannakhadī Wiphāk: Rotniyom Wannakhadī" (Literary Criticism: Literary Taste)".

When I went to study in a school abroad...I noticed that except for textbooks set by teachers, my schoolmates also read newspapers, and nawaniyāi both in book form and serials in magazines. I followed their example and gained pleasure from those short stories and nawaniyāi...<sup>4</sup>

Prince Wan at that time was editor of Wannakhadī Sān, a magazine issued by Wannakhadī Samākhom (Literature Society) under the Cultural and Language Project of F.M.Pibulsonggram between August 1942 and December 1944. The Prince had been inventing a vast terminology for various subjects, administration, economics, politics, and literature, by transposing Latin terms into Sanskrit or Pali.

The transposition of 'novel' into 'nawaniyāi' is in fact easy and direct; from English 'novel' (new) into Sanskrit

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<sup>1</sup>Khun Nilawan Pinthōng, op.cit., p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter I, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>4</sup>Prince Wan Waithayakorn, "Wannakhadī Wiphāk: Rotniyom Wannakhadī", Wannakhadī Sān, II, 1, (August 1943), p.84.

'nava'(new), then prefix it to the already existed 'niyāi' (tales).

In the writing quoted, however, Prince Wan seems to use the term 'nawaniyāi' quite confidently and without any word of explanation, making one wonder if it had been used anywhere previously. A search was made in back numbers of both Wannakhadī Sān and Prachāchāt,<sup>1</sup> but no reference was found. In 1942, Prince Wan still used 'rūang ān len' and even in the April 1944 issue of Wannakhadī Sān, he still wrote 'rūang ān len or nawaniyāi'.

The term achieved full acceptance and it superseded all previous words almost immediately, perhaps because the leading writers of the time, the Suphāburut-Prachāmit, Wilāt Manīwat,<sup>2</sup> Yā-khōp,<sup>3</sup> Sī Būraphā,<sup>4</sup> and Ing-ōn,<sup>5</sup> for example, used the term in their writings shortly thereafter.

It is important to note that although 'nawaniyāi' is generally and officially used, it has not been included in the Royal Institute's Thai Dictionary.

<sup>1</sup>See chapter I, pp. 60-61.

<sup>2</sup>See Wilāt Manīwat, "K.Surāngkhanāng:Phūt Thūng Kān Taengngān Khōng Thoe", Nikōn Wan Athit (1944), as quoted by K.Surāngkhanāng, Ying Khon Chua (Bangkok: Ruamsān, 1969), pp.447-459.

<sup>3</sup>See "Āk Yākhōp Thūng Ing-ōn" in Ing-ōn, Ruam Niyāi Rak (Bangkok: Ing-ōn, 1948), pp.1124-1136.

<sup>4</sup>He wrote clearly, "Reading nawaniyāi or what was called and is still called by some people rūang ān len..." in Lūk Phūchāi (Bangkok: Odeon, 1953), epilogue p.8.

<sup>5</sup>See Ing-ōn, Āk Nārī Thūng Nārī (first published in Prachāmit, 1944), in Ing-ōn, op.cit., p.603.

In a letter to the writer of this thesis, dated September 19th, 1974, Ing-ōn and San Thēwarak state their belief that Prince Wan is the inventor of the word 'nawaniyāi'.

i. Works of Dōkmaisot: editions used.

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- Chaichana Khōng Luang Narūban: The Victory of Luang Narūban. Bangkok: Chira Phanit, B.E. 2484 (1941).
- "Dīfō: Frightened", Thai Khasēm, December 15th B.E. 2470 (1927).
- Kamkao: The Previous Karma. Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, B.E. 2505 (1962).
- Khwāmphit Khrang Raek: The First Mistake. 4th ed. Bangkok: Dōkmaisot, B.E. 2493 (1950).
- Nanthawan: The Forest of Joy. Bangkok: Prae Pittaya, B.E. 2505 (1962).
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