

RAK THI TONG MONTRA: A MODERN INTERPRETATION OF PHRA LO IN THE RATTANAKOSIN PERIOD¹

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Abstract

Rak Thi Tong Montra [Magic Love] is written in the form of novel by *Thommayanti*. The story line of this novel is still the same as that of *Lilit Phra Lo*, a well-known traditional Thai literature in the Early *Ayutthaya* Period. Though the plot is kept, many changes are made to suggest the writer's new themes and purpose. *Thommayanti* tells the story by using the younger princess to narrate the story in the form of a memoir. Due to *Thommayanti*'s purpose, some changes in characterization are made and some events are inserted.

While the idea of karma is stressed in *Lilit Phra Lo*, the vengeance of *Somdet Ya* is focussed instead in this novel. Thus the love story is changed into revenge though the tragic end of the hero and heroines is well kept. In this novel a lot of poetry from *Lilit Phra Lo* are quoted to express the writer's deep appreciation of the classical literature. It is a good example of the influence of Thai classical literature on the creation of modern literary work.

Introduction

*Lilit Phra Lo*³ is a well-known Thai classical literature composed in the Early *Ayutthaya* Period. There are many reproductive works of *Lilit Phra Lo* in the Rattanakosin Period which shows how well-known *Lilit Phra Lo* is and how much Thai people appreciate it. *Rak Thi Tong Montra* is one of these reproductive works.

This paper aims at studying the presentation of a traditional literature, *Lilit Phra Lo*, in *Rak Thi Tong Montra* which is written in a popular form of contemporary work, a novel, with the writer's modern interpretation. The influences and continuation of the traditional Thai literature on this work will be examined.

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This paper³ is divided into 6 parts:

1. *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: its background
2. *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: a rendition *Phra Lo* in the Rattanakosin Period
3. *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: the latest novel version of *Phra Lo*
4. *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: a new version of *Phra Lo*
5. *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: a modern interpretation
6. *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: the influences of poetry from *Lilit Phra Lo*

³*Lilit Phra Lo* is one of the well-known Thai classical literature which, is according to most Thai scholars nowadays, was composed in the Early Ayutthaya Period. Some scholars indicate that its story comes from *Along Chao Samlo* or *Opiam Samlo* or *Upiam Samlo*. However, I do not agree with them because the story is very different. *Along Chao Samlo* is the love story of *Samlo* and *Nang Opiam*. *Samlo* is a travelling trader, who comes to *Opiam*'s city to meet with her. Before getting back home, he promises to marry her. Later on *Opiam* is pregnant so she leaves for his city. When she arrives, *Samlo* is trading in another city and *Opiam* is chased away by his mother though she is about to give birth. *Opiam* delivers on her way back home and her child dies. She is seriously ill when she arrives home and finally dies too. As soon as *Samlo* knows about *Opiam*, he sets out to look for his wife. When he finds that she has been dead, he commits suicide. After their deaths, *Samlo* and *Opiam* become stars shining side by side in the sky.

Rak Thi Tong Montra: Its Background

Thommayanti is a pseudonym of Wimon Siriphaibun, a well known Thai novelist. She wrote *Rak Thi Tong Montra* in a form of a novel of thirty seven chapters presented to the readers chapter by chapter in a fortnightly magazine, *Khwanruean*, in the year 1966 and 1967. In the year 1968 all the story of this novel from the beginning to the end was first published by *Bamrungrasan* Publishing in a binding of a pocket book. This novel is quite well known. The latest, the sixth edition, is printed after the year 1994. [The year of this latest edition is not indicated.]

Rak Thi Tong Montra : A Rendition of Phra Lo in the Rattanakosin Period

Rak Thi Tong Montra is not the first Thai literary work which is reproduced from *Lilit Phra Lo*. There were already twelve literary works before *Rak Thi Tong Montra*. All of them were written in the Rattanakosin Period since the reign of King Rama I to the present time. These twelve works are one didactic *Khlong*, five dramatic plays or *Bot Lakhon* and *Bot Lakhon Phut*, one *Lilit* which is a

genre of poetry composed of *Rai* and *Khlong*, two tales written in the form of *Klon* or *Khamklon*, and the other three works in the form of a novel.

The only one didactic *Khlong* is *Phra Lo Son Lok* composed by an unknown poet in the reign of King Rama I.

The five dramatic plays four of which are *Bot Lakhon Ram* and the other is *Bot Lakhon Phut* are as follows:

1. *Bot Lakhon Rueang Phra Lo Noralak* composed by *Kromphraratchawangbowon Mahasakdi ponsep* in the reign of King Rama III
2. *Bot Lakhon Rueang Phra Lo* composed by *Chao Phraya Thewetwongwiwat* and *Luang Monyothanuyok* in the reign of King Rama V
3. *Bot Lakhon Rueang Phra Lo* composed by *Nai Chin* in the reign of King Rama V
4. *Bot Lakhon Rueang Phra Lo* composed by *Phrachaoboromawongthoe Kromphranarathippraphanphong* in the reign of King Rama V
5. Magic Lotus composed by *Prem Chaya* in the reign of King Rama VIII

The only one *Lilit* is *Lilit Phra Lue* written by *Luang Simahosot* in the reign of King Rama IV.

The two versions written in *Klon* are *Phra Lo Kham Klon* by Captain *Luang Thuai Han Raksa* and *Phra Lo Lert Lop* by an unknown poet in the reign of King Rama V

The three novels before *Rak Thi Tong Montra* are *Phuean Phang* by *Yakhop* in the reign of King Rama VII, *Rak Thi Thuk Moen* [an unrequited love], a thirty-chapter novel, composed by *Nittaya Nattayasunthon* in the year 1955 in the reign of King Rama IX and *Phra Lo Chabap Roi Kaeo* by *Sa-nguan Chotsukharat* in the year 1960 in the present reign. As mentioned before, *Rak Thi Tong Montra* is written during the years 1966 and 1967 and after *Rak Thi Tong Montra*, there are still many versions of *Phra Lo* in the reign of the present king such as *Bot Lakhon Rueang Phra Lo* by *Suthiwong Phongphaibun*, *Pra Law The Magic Lotus* by *Suraphon Wirunrak*, *Lodilokrat* by *Phatthrawadi Sitirairat* and *Phra Lo Roi Kaeo* by *Non Narakon* etc. So *Rak Thi Tong Montra* is one rendition of *Phra Lo* or *Phra Lo* tale among the various versions in the *Rattanakosin* Period.

Rak Thi Tong Montra : The Latest Novel Version of Phra Lo

Rak Thi Tong Montra written between the years 1966-1967 by *Thommayanti* is the latest novel version of *Phra Lo*. The other versions are *Phra Lo*, *Phuean Phang* by *Yakhop* in the year 1933, *Rak Thi Thuk Moen* by *Nittaya Nattayasunthon* in the year 1955, *Phra Lo Chabap Roi Kaeo* by *Sa-nguan Chotsukharat* in the year 1960.

The main story of *Rak Thi Tong Montra* and its details, come from the well-known traditional Thai literature, *Lilit Phra Lo*. And though *Thommayanti* has not stated what was the inspiration of her work, the use of point of view and the attitude of the writer shows that it is influenced by *Rak Thi Thuk Moen*, a novel which was written in the year 1955 by *Nittaya Nattayasunthon* who asks for sympathy for *Phra Lo*'s wife, *Laksanawadi*.

Nittaya Nattayasunthon tells the story through the hero's wife, *Laksanawadi*. Thus, the viewpoint is different from *Lilit Phra Lo* which uses omniscient point of view. While *Laksanawadi* is telling the story, she can inspire sympathy for herself. So the readers easily feel

sorry for her in losing her husband, *Phra Lo*, due to the intrigue of the two princesses who bring destruction to *Phra Lo* and *Laksanawadi*.

Thommayanti's choice of point of view and attitude towards the heroines of the story is undoubtedly influenced by *Nittaya Nattayasunthon*, the author of *Rak Thi Thuk Moen*. The narrators of these two novels are character-narrators, *Laksanawadi* in *Rak Thi Thuk Moen* and *Phangthong* in *Rak Thi Tong Montra*. It seems that *Thommayanti* wants to make excuses for the two princesses who are the objects of accusations by *Nittaya Nattayasunthon*. This idea can be seen in the introduction of this novel as quoted in the following example.

หลังจากที่ข้าฯ ดาษไปแล้ว
จะเป็นสิบปี...ร้อยปีหรือพันปีก็ตาม...
คงจะมีสักวันหนึ่งที่จะมีคนมาพบ
บันทึกนี้เขาจะได้อ่านความจริง
เกี่ยวกับเรื่องราวระหว่างข้าฯ เพื่อนแก้ว
แพงทอง...กับท้าวเธอผู้ทรงนามว่า
ลอคิลกราช!

ก่อนที่จะมีคนพบบันทึกนี้ ชื่อเสียง
ของข้าฯอาจจะหมองมัว ข้าฯอาจจะ
ถูกประณามมิให้อ่านเขียนอย่างในฐานะ
หญิงโสด เจ้ามารยา ผู้เอาชนะหัวใจชาย
ด้วยมนตรา! ข้าฯจะไม่แก้ตัว
ด้วยประการใดทั้งสิ้น แต่ขออ้อนท่านให้

อ่านบันทึกนี้จนจบ คราวนี้ท่านอาจจะ
อภัยให้ข้าฯ ได้สักหน่อยนิตก็ยังดี...
บางทีท่านอาจจะให้ความเห็นใจข้าฯ
ได้บ้าง...(หน้า 5)

After my death, may be
ten years, one hundred or one
thousand years later on, there
will be some day that someone
will find this memoir.

He will then know the truth of
our story, *Phueankaeo*
Phangthong and the king,
Lodilokrat.

Before this memoir is
found, our reputation
may be tainted. We will
be condemned as cunning
women who win a man's
love by magic incantation.
We will not make any
excuse, but will beg you
to read this memoir. And
you may forgive us, even
only a little bit and
sympathize with us.

Thommayanti expresses her sympathy
for the two princesses, *Phueankaeo* and
Phangthong. *Thommayanti* gives the
role of the narrator to *Phangthong*, the
younger princess who is one of the main
characters in the story. She narrates the
story by writing a memoir, beginning

with the scene in which she, her elder
sister and their lover are going to die by
Somdet Ya's orders. After that she goes
back and tells about the past in order to
link all events altogether. The novel
begins:

ข้าฯชื่อแพงทอง...และสตรีผู้มีใบหน้า
ละม้ายคล้ายคลึงกับข้าฯที่ยืนอยู่ตรงช่อง
พระเกลไนนั่น เพื่อนแก้ว...
ขณะนี้บันทึกตอนสุดท้ายของข้าฯ กำลัง
จะยุติลง แสงขวาลาบริบหรี่และ
กระดาษาที่ม้วนอยู่ข้าง ๆ ข้าฯ
ก็วางอยู่เป็นกองโต ปากไถ่ใน
มือของข้าฯ สั่นสะท้านเพราะอ่อน
เปลี้ยเต็มทนจนข้าฯ ต้องวางไว้
ชั่วคราว เอนหลังพิงเขนย
ทอดสายดาไปสู่อท้องฟ้าเบื้องนอกซึ่ง
อีกในไม่ช้า ข้าฯ ก็คงจะไม่มิวนได้ชม...
...ถึงแม้จะรู้อวสานของตัวเอง
ได้ดี ข้าฯ ก็ยังอดตัวสั่นนิด ๆ
ไม่ได้ ภายนอกเสียง ฝีเท้ามา
ฝีเท้าคนเป็นจำนวนมากดังสับสน ...
ข้าฯ ตะแคงหูฟังอย่างเงิบ ๆ ...ครั้งนี้เป็น
การรวมพลเพื่อเข้าโจมตีเป็น
ครั้งสุดท้าย และก็จะเป็นวาระ
สุดท้ายของข้าฯ เช่นกัน

เสียงคนกลุ่มหนึ่งไร้ออกเสียง
กระหึ่มบานประตูซึ่งถึงแม้จะมั่นคง
แต่การที่ถูกกระหึ่มอย่างจัง ๆ
มาตลอดคืนหลายครั้งหลายหนเข้า

ท้ายสุดก็เริ่มหวั่นไหว...ประตูบาน
ใหญ่เริ่มมีรอยแยก...ผู้ที่ยืนชิดข้า
จนได้ไออุ่นนี้คือลอดิลกราช และ
เบื้องขวานั้นก็คือผู้ร่วมสายโลหิต
ของข้าเอง...รอยแยกนั้นกว้างพอแล้ว!

เสียงโห่ร้องกึ่งฟังไม่ได้ศัพท์
แสงได้สว่างจ้า! ข้า! เพื่อนแก้ว
แพงทอง...ขอลา! (หน้า 6)

My name is *Phangthong*
and the lady at the window
whose face is a reflection of
mine is *Phueankaeo*.

Now I am writing the
last part of my memoir.
The lamp light is
almost extinguished.
Many rolls of *Sa* paper
lay near me. The pen in
my hand is trembling
because I am too tired
and have to place it
down for a while. I recline
on a pillow, looking at the
sky outside. Soon I will
not have time to see it
again ... Though I know well
my end, I can not help
shaking a little bit. There is
a confusing sound of men
and horses outside...
I silently strain to hear the
sounds. They are going
to attack for the last time.
It will be my last day too.

I hear the breaking of
the door by a group of soldiers.
Though this door is sturdy,

it is finally shaking after
a lot of hitting. ... The big
door begins to crack.

The man who stands so
close that I can feel the warmth
is *Lodilokrat* and the woman
who is on the right is my
own twin sister. The crack
at the door is wide enough.

The shouting of
the soldiers is loud and
confusing. The torch light is
very bright. We, *Phueankaeo*
and *Phangthong* have to
bid farewell.

Thommayanti's original idea of having
Phangthong write a memoir in order to
narrate the story is different from most
Thai traditional literary works which are
told by the poet, the omniscient narrator
who does not feel sympathy to any
character. As a narrator, *Phangthong* can
well explain her ideas, feelings and
reasons of her deeds and thus can well
ask for sympathy from the readers since
she herself takes part in the story.

Rak Thi Tong Montra : A New Version of Phra Lo

As *Phangthong* narrates the story, many
details are changed, compared to *Lilit*

Phra Lo. These are the outstanding characteristics of this new version.

First, *Thommayanti* changes the names of *Phra Lo*, *Phra Phuean* and *Phra Phang* in *Lilit Phra Lo* to *Lodilokrat*, *Phueankaeo* and *Phangthong* who are twin, not sisters as indicated in *Lilit Phra Lo*.

Second, the opening scene in this novel is different from *Lilit Phra Lo*. This novel begins with the last day of *Phangthong*'s life, when she is finishing her memoir which tells about her life, her sister's and *Phra Lo*'s. The tragedy in this scene is the result of *Somdet Ya*'s resentment. But *Lilit Phra lo* begins with the war between King *Mansuang* and King *Phimphisakhon* which causes *Somdet Ya*'s resentment because King *Phimphisakhon*, her husband, is killed in this war. During the attack of the enemy and the burning of the weapons hall, *Somdet Ya* encourages *Phueankaeo* and *Phangthong*, her two grandchildren, to swear to get revenge of their grandfather's death, or they hope to die by weapon or by fire. And from time to time, she reminds the princesses not to forget their words.

Third, King *Mansuang* is shot by King

Phimpisakhon's son, *Phichaiphisanukon*, before drawing back his troops to his country although this event does not exist in *Lilit Phra Lo*.

Fourth, in this novel, the resentment of *Somdet Ya* is strongly stressed and is very important to the development of the story though *Thommayanti* still keeps the theme of love story of the hero and heroines in *Lilit Phra Lo*.

Fifth, *Thommayanti* increases the role of some characters in *Lilit Phra Lo*; *Somdet Ya*, *Phra Nang Darawadi*, the princesses' mother, *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* and even *Phra Lo*. For example, *Somdet Ya* plays important roles before the war begins. Her sadness at the gathering of all people in the royal court before her husband goes to defend his country is emphasized. *Phra Nang Darawadi* takes care of her city, commanding the soldiers to resist the invasion of the enemies while the king and his son, her husband, are fighting against King *Mansuang* outside the city. *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* is the guardian god of *Mueang Song* and he helps *Somdet Ya* to avenge her dead husband by giving her a magic wax to anoint the two singers' lips so that their singing will capture the hearts of the listeners.

The using of this magic wax is added to this novel to make it convincing because *Phra Lo*'s infatuation with the princesses after hearing the song praising their beauty is quite nonsense to the readers nowadays. Moreover, *Phra Lo*'s victory over King of *Phayao* is added. The new King of *Phayao* is an ally of *Somdet Ya* in her plot to kill *Phra Lo* etc.

Sixth, the two princesses can see what happened to *Phra Lo* in his country in the witch's and *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*'s magic bowl. Thus they can see *Phra Lo* and fall in love with him. Some incidents seen in the magic bowl are:

เพื่อนแก้วพระพักตร์หมองคล้ำ
“ถึงเวลาทำงานของเราแล้วแพงทอง
ลอดิลกราชถึงเขตลำน้ากาหลงวันใด
วันนั้นงานของเราเริ่มขึ้น!
พี่สังหรณ์ใจน้กว่างานคราวนี้
เธอกับพี่คงจะต้องใช้ชีวิตเป็นเดิมพัน
เสียเป็นแน่แท้! เธออยากดูภาพมาหา
ในตอนนีกับพี่ไหม?

พระพี่เลี้ยงทั้งสองพลอยนั่งอันไป
ด้วยกระแสน้ำไหลเชี่ยวกรากในตอนนั้น
พุ่งปราดบิดเป็นเกลียวหมุนคว้างอยู่เบื้อง
พระพักตร์และดาขาวไม่ฝาด
สายน้ำนั้นขุนขึ้นแดงราวกับสีโลหิต!

ท้าวเธอเซพงะไปปะทะหินใหญ่
ทางเบื้องพระปฤษฎางค์ จึงเอน
พระองค์ลงพึงพิงไว้ พระพักตร์ขาวซีด
ราวกับกระดาษ ส่วนพระพี่เลี้ยงนั้น
ลงจะดูทานออกมาเต็มเสียงเป็นแน่

ครั้นวางพระโอรสน้ำ เียนวน อยู่มา
เห็นแก่ตาแดงกล เลือดข้อม
หลุดระทดทน ทุกข์ใหญ่ หลวงนา
ถนัดตั้งไม่ร่อยอ้อม ท้าวท้าวทับทรวง

เพื่อนแก้วเอื้อมพระหัตถ์ไปแตะใจ
น้ำมันต์ทันที เงาภาพจึงจางหาย...

(หน้า 267-268)

Phueankaeo's face
turns dark. "It is time for us
to work. As soon as
Lodilokrat comes to the
Kalong River, our work will
start! I have a premonition
that this work has our lives
at stake! Do you want to see
what is in the magic bowl
with me now ?

The two attendants are
also speechless. The torrential
stream swirls before their eyes
My eyes are not mistaken.
That stream is as red as blood!

He staggers backwards
and stumbles against big stone
behind his back and rests on it.

His face is as white as paper. His two attendants exclaim in fright.

[Quotation from *Lilit Phra Lo*:

Upon his words, the stream whirls in a frenzy, red as if coloured with blood, before his eyes. His mind is full of suffering as if a hundred trees fall on his chest.]

Phueankaeo immediately stretches out her hand to touch the holy water bowl, so the vision disappears.

This give the princesses a chance to know what is happening to *Phra Lo* and how to help him from the terrible plan of *Somdet Ya*.

However, *Thommayanti* still keeps a lot of details from *Lilit Phra Lo* especially the important ones. For example, a *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*'s student who volunteers to guide the princesses' two attendants to go to the residence of *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*; the name of the two elephants, *Plai Thiam Lom* and *Phayu*, on which the princesses' two attendants ride to meet *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*; the hero's name, *Siket*, while he disguises himself as a brahman; the spell that *Pu*

Chao Saming Phrai uses to lure *Lodilokrat* to the princesses' city; the statement of *Lodilokrat*'s attendants to advise their king to be patient with the inconveniences of staying in a rural area of the princesses' country and so on. The following examples are quoted to support the above discussion.

Thommayanti inserts the princesses' order that their two attendants ride *Plai Thiamlom* and *Phra Phayu* to the residence of *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* in her novel.

...เพื่อนแควนั้นทรงสั่งเสียแต่เรื่อง
การเดินทางอย่างรอบคอบ

“เบิกเอาช้างคันชื้อ เทียนลม ธพี
กับพระพายุพลันสม ชื้อแท้
เทียมใจเลิศแหลม ผิย่าง มั่นนา
เร็วเร่งเร็วนักแล เลิศด้วยดินพลัน

อาศัยพระบรมราชโองการ
ของทูลกระหม่อม เพื่อนแคว
ให้เบิกพลาช:เทียนลม กับ
‘พระพายุ’ ซึ่งเป็นช้างคันที่มี
ฝีเท้าข่างเร็วทันใจผูกถูก
เทียบไว้ให้พี่รินพี่โรย (หน้า 205)

Phueankaeo plans carefully for this journey.

[Quotation from *Lilit Phra Lo*:

Please ask for the royal
elephant, *Thiamlom* and *Phra*
Phayu which are as
fast as their names.]

By the king's order,
Phueankaeo has *Plai*
Thiamlom and *Phra*
Phayu, the fastest royal
elephants, tied with
a seat on their back to
prepare for *Phi Ruen*
Phi Roi's journey.

Thommayanti also inserts *Phra Lo*'s two
attendants' words to remind *Phra Lo*
to be patient and try to feel happy during
the difficult journey through the forest.

...ท้าวเธอทรงหยุดพระราชดำเนิน
เอื้อมพระหัตถ์ไปเด็ดดอกหญ้ามา
ทรงพิจารณา...สีพระพักตร์สลดลง
ราวกับทรงคำนึงถึงสิ่งใดสิ่งหนึ่ง
และดูเหมือนพระทีเสีียง
คงจะกราบทูลขอความอย่างใด
เพราะทำให้สรวลออกมานิดๆ
พลางยกดอกหญ้าขึ้นจกดพระนาสิก
แล้วเสียบไว้ที่ผ้าโพกบนพระเกศา

ยามไร้เด็ดดอกหญ้า	แซมผม พระเอย
หอมบ่หอมทัดม	ดั่งบ้า
สุกรมล้ำดวงชม	เชยกลิ่น พระเอย

หอมกลิ่นเรียมโอ้อ

กลิ่นแก้วติดใจ

(หน้า 276)

He [*Phra Lo*] stops
walking to, pick a wild
flower, which he contemplates
for a while. His face turns
sadden as if it reminds
him of something. It seems
that his attendants
say something to him
which makes him laugh
a little while lifting
the wild flower to his nose
and then puts it on his turban.

[Quotation from *Lilit Phra Lo*:

In time of hardship,
pick up a wild flower
to decorate your turban.
Though without sweet smell,
place it behind an ear
and smell it like mad.
Admire *Sukrom*
and *Lamduan* flowers
during the hard time.
Oh! how sweet
Kaeo flowers smell!]

In addition, sometimes though
Thommayanti does not quote the poetic
writing from *Lilit Phra Lo*, she keeps
the meaning and expresses in her own
words. This can be seen in the narration
when *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* visits the

two princesses. In *Lilit Phra Lo*, the description of the poet is as follows:

ตามองเสือบพริบ เห็นเสือ
กลับเป็นแมวแถวราชสกุลลักษณ์
มลักเห็นโฉมปู่เจ้า แปรรูปเฒ่า
หงอกสกาบ คิ้วขาวขนตาเผือก
กลับตระเหลือกเป็นบัว ... (หน้า 366)

When looking at the tiger, it turns to be many cats lining up very beautifully. They see *Pu Chao*, who is an old man with white hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes, turn into a young man.

The paraphrasing of the above description in the novel is as follows:

...ควันรูปลอยวนเวียนอยู่รอบ
ตั้งทองราวกับเป็นสิ่งมีชีวิต
ทำให้หัวใจของทุกคนเต้นระทึก
ถึงหวาดหวั่นถึงยินดี และถึงอยากรู้
อยากเห็น ท้ายสุดภาพที่ปรากฏบนตั้งทอง
ก็เริ่มเห็นเป็นรูปเงาต่าง ๆ ขึ้นแรกเป็น
เสือตัวใหญ่หมอบอยู่...ชั่วครู่ภาพนั้น
ก็เลือนหายไปกลายเป็นภาพชายชราแก่
ค่อมผมและคิ้วขาวราวปู่เฒ่า...ท้ายสุด
ภาพที่เห็นโดยแจ่มชัดกลายเป็น
ภาพของหนุ่มน้อยรูปงามผิวพรรณสดใส...
(หน้า 33)

...The joss stick smoke is floating around in the air as if it were alive. This makes everyone's heart excited, half frightened, half pleased, and very curious. Finally, they see a vague form on the golden bed. First, the form appears to be a big crouching tiger. After a while, the tiger turns into a humpbacked old man whose hair and eyebrows are as white as cotton.... At last, it changes into a vivid picture of a bright-complexioned young man...

Rak Thi Tong Montra : A Modern Interpretation

Thommayanti's modern interpretation of *Lilit Phra Lo* is seen in *Rak Thi Tong Montra's* theme and characterization.

The tragic love of *Phra lo*, *Phra Phuean*, and *Phra Phang* in *Lilit Phra Lo* is due to their own karma. Like other Thai literature, the karma of a character sets the direction of his destiny. The idea of karma is strongly stressed in *Lilit*

Phra Lo as can be seen in *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*'s words when he agrees to help lure *Phra Lo* to the princesses; he says that the hero and heroines have to meet because of their karma. In addition, it can also be seen in *Phra Lo*'s words when he tells his mother that his karma forces him to leave his city to the princesses'. *Somdet Ya*'s vengeance at the end of *Lilit Phra Lo* is not considered the cause of the hero and the heroines' death. On the contrary, the idea of Karma is given less importance in the novel. Instead, *Somdet Ya*'s resentment is stressed and it is the key factor to the development of the story. The love of the hero and heroines is planned by *Somdet Ya* as part of the plot to take the hero's life. *Somdet Ya*'s words during the war shows vividly her resentment.

...วันหนึ่งนครแมนสรวงจะต้องให้
หนี้การกระทำครั้งนี้ด้วยเลือด
ด้วยชีวิต! อา ท้าวแมนสรวง
พระนางนาฏบุญเหลือ...สักวันหนึ่งข้าจะ
ให้บทเรียนแก่เจ้าด้วยน้ำตาเช่นกัน...
เจ้าจะใคร่จึกกับความเจ็บปวดจาก
การที่ต้องเสียคนที่รักสุดชีวิตไป...
เจ้าจะใคร่เหมือนข้า...เหมือนข้า! (หน้า 41)

...some day Nakhon
Mansuang shall pay the
debt of this war with
blood, and lives! Oh!

*King Mansuang, Phra
Nang BunLuea...*
some day I will make you
know with tears this
lesson as well... You
will know the pain of
losing someone dearest to you
You will know as I do
...as I do!

She also tries to cultivate the resentment in her grandchildren's mind, to remind them not to forget that *Mueang Mansuang* is the important enemy of their country. This can be seen in *Somdet Ya*'s words to her grandchildren after her husband has led his troop to war outside the city and later on it can be seen again when the weapons hall is burnt down by the enemy. In addition, she forces the two princesses to swear to take revenge for her. If they break their vow, they will die by fire or by weapons.

จำไว้นะเพื่อนแก้ว แพงทอง...
นครแมนสรวงเป็นศัตรูของเรา!
เป็นศัตรูที่เราต้องทำลายล้างทุกวิถีทาง!
(หน้า 27)

Remember, *Phueankaeo
Phangthong ...Nakhon
Mansuang* is our enemy...
the enemy we have to
destroy in every way.

ดูครองพระเกลสนั้น เพื่อนแก้ว แพงทอง
ดูไว้ให้ดี...จำจารึกไว้ในหัวใจให้มัน!
จำถึงความพินาศของนครสรองไว้ให้ดี!...
(หน้า 41)

Look through that window
Phueankaeo Phangthong.
Look and engrave in your
heart the destruction of
Nakhon Song

เพื่อนแก้ว...แพงทอง...รับปากกับข้า
ได้ไหมลูก...รับปากกับข้าว่าจะจำภาพนี้
ไว้แก่แก่นไผ่...ให้สาสมใจ!

.....
สาบานต่อหน้าไฟ...ต่อหน้า
หอศาสตราคมที่กำลังพินาศอยู่นั้น
สาบานว่าจะแก่แก่นไผ่และจะเป็น
ศัตรูต่อนครแมนสรวงจนวันตาย!

.....
สาบานด้วยว่า...ถ้าวันใดเจ้าทวนคำ
สาบานนั้น เจ้าจะต้องตายด้วยไฟ
และคมอาวุธอย่างศาสตราคมนั้น!

.....
จำไว้นะลูก เพื่อนแก้ว แพงทอง...
อย่าลืมคำสาบานในคืนนี้ อย่าลืมความ
เจ็บปวดชอกช้ำที่นครสรองได้รับ อย่า
ลืมเสียงร่ำไห้ของพลเมือง...(หน้า 42-43)

Phueankaeo...Phangthong...

Can you promise me?
Can you promise that
you will remember this
scene so that you will
avenge my husband's
death to please you.

.....
Swear before the fire,
before that weapons hall
which is burning down.
Swear that you will get
revenge for me, and be the
enemy of *Nakhon Mansuang*
until your dying day.
.....

Swear as well whenever
you break your vow,
may you die by fire or by
weapon as those in the
weapons hall.
.....

Remember, *Phueankaeo*
Phangthong, don't forget
your vow this night.
Don't forget the embittered
pain of *Nakhon Song*.
Don't forget the crying of
the people.

Thus it can be said that the
princesses' death is also caused by their
vow breaking. *Phangthong* also
suggests that the result of breaking a
vow affects them. when she is attacked
by *Somdet Ya's* soldiers.

The strong emphasis on *Somdet Ya's*
resentment makes it very convincing

why *Somdet Ya* orders the soldiers to kill *Phra Lo*. In *Lilit Phra Lo*, *Somdet Ya*'s resentment is vaguely presented though it is quite reasonable that the war causes the resentment. *Thommayanti* explains this point very clearly.

Somdet Ya's resentment begins when her husband has to leave her to fight against the invaders. It becomes stronger when her husband is killed. It reaches the peak when *Phra Lo*'s victory over King of *Phayao* is glorified. Her resentment is strongly stressed throughout the story. While the karma of the hero and the heroines is focussed in *Lilit Phra Lo*, the karma of the hero and heroines and the fruit of misdeeds of their ancestors, King *Phimphisakhon*'s death caused by King *Mansuang*, though mentioned in the novel, are not emphasized.

In our modern time, most people do not believe in karma, a traditional belief which was very important in the past. So *Thommayanti* decreases the role of karma in her novel and gives more emphasis on the idea of resentment instead. The idea of resentment and vengeance are generally seen and easily understood by the people nowadays. The victims of revenge are heard and seen in the newspapers or in

a lot of incidents in our society. Thus the resentment and vengeance of *Somdet Ya* is the cause of the tragic love and destiny of the hero and heroines in *Rak Thi Tong Montra*. *Somdet Ya*'s resentment is beyond any reason. She wants to kill *Lodilokrat* to give in return a pain of losing a beloved son to his mother. During the war between *Thao Chueng* and *Lodilokrat*, she wants *Lodilokrat* to be defeated without realizing that her desire is very dangerous to her own country. Besides, she lures *Lodilokrat* to be killed in her country without any thought of her two grandchildren's reputation in unshamefully luring *Lodilokrat*, a married man to be their lover. At last, not only *Lodilokrat* but also her two grandchildren are her vengeful victims. Actually, her life is also the victim of her resentment and revenge because she, King *Phichaiphisanukhon*'s step mother, is severely punished to death by the king, the princesses' father.

Thus it can be concluded that the grandmother's resentment and vengeance which are not much focussed in *Lilit Phra Lo* is a strong motivation in this novel and replaces the idea of karma in importance.

Due to the grandmother's desire to get revenge, *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* uses incantations to lure *Lodilokrat* to leave his city to meet the princesses.

In addition, it is not only the resentment of the grandmother but also that of the princesses and that of the princesses' father too which cause the death of other people. The grandmother's resentment causes the hero's and the heroines' death. The resentment of the king afterwards cause the death of the grandmother and of the soldiers who help the grandmother to kill *Lodilokrat*, the two princesses and their four attendants.

As for characterization, *Somdet Ya* in this novel is very clever. As soon as she hears the song praising her grandchildren's beauty created by the princesses' attendants, she gets the idea of using this song to lure *Phra Lo*, her enemy's son, into her hands. She plans very carefully, step by step. She asks *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* to make wax to anoint the singers' lips so that the song they sing will make *Phra Lo* crazy about the princesses. Later on she asks *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* to use his magic power to make *Phra Lo* unable to resist the desire to meet the princesses. She

also knows well the encounter of the princesses and her enemy in the garden and later on in her grandchildren's palace because they all are in her eyes. Finally she can kill *Phra Lo* as she wishes. *Thommayanti* carefully shows that the two princesses in her novel are different in characters. The elder, *Phueankaeo*, is like a man. She likes to study governing and fighting. Besides, she dislikes poetry and stringing flowers. In contrast, the younger, *Phangthong*, can do well all woman's works and is very fond of literature. This is different from the original story in *Lilit Phra Lo* in which the two princesses always have the same words and behaviours which are very unrealistic for readers in the modern time. Besides, as *Phangthong* is the narrator of this novel, *Thommayanti* inserts a lot of poetry that contributes to her narration which is very consistent with her character. It is appropriate justification for the use of poetry in this novel.

Moreover, the use of *Phangthong* as narrator is not only consistent with her character but also gives the readers a feeling of knowing someone's real life or experience. Because *Phangthong*, herself, participates in the events or knows well all incidents happening in

her country and in *Lodilokrat's* country. *Thommayanti* uses the alms bowl of *Pu Chao Saming Phrai* and the water bowl of the witch as magic instruments for *Phangthong* to see all events happening to the hero in his country and on his way to the princesses' city. This technique allows the author to give readers important details continuously through the narration of *Phangthong*. Moreover, *Phangthong*, has a chance to express her and her sister's ideas, feelings, and motivation. As a result, the two princesses are obviously sympathetically portrayed. In addition, the princesses send their followers to find out where *Phra Lo* is on his way to their country, so they can know well about him. Besides, seeing the vision of *Phra Lo* in the bowl, the princesses especially *Phangthong* fall madly in love with him. This point is very important because it is quite nonsense for people nowadays to fall in love with anyone one has never seen. This is also *Thommayanti's* modern interpretation. The readers know how *Phangthong* feels in the conversation between *Phueankaeo* and *Phangthong* when the former asks the latter why she is so worried about *Phra lo*. *Phangthong* says it is a pity that *Phra Lo* whose face is so beautiful will die young. Evenmore, the princesses's feeling of

shame to love a married man, is quite a modern idea. In our modern society fidelity and polygamy are unacceptable. In the past, most kings can have many wives, so can *Phra Lo*, as a great mighty king. The princesses can be his wives if their father allow them.

Rak Thi Tong Montra : **The Influences of Poetry** **from *Lilit Phra Lo***

In this novel, the writer inserts a lot of poetry from *Lilit Phra Lo* which suggests that she has studied the text in details. Pieces of *Khlong*, *Rai* and *Klon* from *Lilit Phra Lo* are integrated in the novel from the beginning to the end. A self-appraisal, the evaluation of the work by the poet himself is quoted as if it were *Phangthong's* self-appraisal after she finishes her memoir. Quotations from *Lilit Phra Lo* especially appear in the important scenes such as the descriptions of *Phra Lo's* beauty, the two princesses' beauty, the battles, of *Phra Lo's* vow at the *Kalong River*, all people's grief over the deaths of the hero and the two princesses and so on. [Examples of quotation from *Lilit Phra Lo* that appear in *Rak Thi Tong Montra*: A self-appraisal of the poet who writes *Lilit Phra Lo*]

เป็นศรีแก่ปากผู้	ผจงฉันท
คือคุ่มมาลาสร	เรียบร้อย
เป็นดนิมประดับกรรม	ทุกเมื่อ
กลกระแจะตองน้อย	หนึ่งได้แรงใจ
	(หน้า 6)

It is propitious for the poet who carefully composed this work which is as beautiful as a well-strung garland, an ear decoration and perfumed powder, a dash of which is so inspiring.

[Poetry of Khlong praising the beauty of Phra Lo.]

รอยรูปอินทร์หยาดฟ้า	มาอาจกลั่นหล้า
แหล่งให้คนชม	แลดู
.....	
เดือนจรัสโพยมแจ่มฟ้า	ผิได้เห็นหน้า
ลอราชไสรดูเดือน	ดูแล ฯลฯ
พระโอรสงามยิ่งแค้น	สวดอยู่เขี้ยวขะแย้ม
พระโอรสโองามครุ	บารนี้
	(หน้า 4)

ขับชอขอรราชเทียร	ทุกเมือง
ฤาเล่าพระลือเลื่อง	ทั่วหล้า
โฉมบาทพิตรเปลือง	ใจโลก
สาวหนุ่มฟังเป็นบ้า	อยู่เพ็ชงโหยหน
	(หน้า 130)

Maybe Indra comes
from heaven in full
manifestation of his
beauty to win people's

admiration on earth.

If one has never seen his
face, just look at the bright
full moon. It is as lovely
as his face.

His lips' more beautiful
than a drawn picture,
always seem smiling.

How exceptionally
beautiful those lips are!

The singing of the
song praising Phra Lo's
beauty is heard in every
city and widely spreads
throughout the world.

His beauty captures
people's hearts.

All maidens, hearing the
song, yearn like mad for him.

[Poetry of Khlong praising the beauty of the two princesses.]

ทุกเมืองมีลูกท้าว	นับมี มากนา
บ่เปรียบสองกษัตริย์	พี่น้อง
พระแพงเมืงศรี	สวัสดียิ่ง คณนา
พระเพื่อนโฉมขงหย่อง	อยู่เพ็ชงดวงเดือน
โฉมสองเหมือนหยาดฟ้า	ลงดิน
งามเงื่อนอัปสรอินทร์	สู่หล้า
อย่าคิดอย่าควรดวล	ถึงชาก แลนา
ชมขะแย้มทั่วหน้า	หน่อท้าวมีบุญ
หมื่นขุนล้วนหน้าสำ	หัวเมือง ก็ดี
อย่าใครอย่าคิดเคือง	สาวทไหม

สมภารส่งสองเรื่อง สองรุ่ง มานา
สองราชควรวาทไธ ธีราชผู้มีบุญ
(หน้า 133)

Among beautiful princesses
in all titles, none is as
beautiful as the two
sister princesses.
Phra Phang is the
most beautiful and
Phra Phuean is as bright
as a full moon. These
two princesses are like
Apsara descending from
heaven to the human world.
No one should bemoan
because it is impossible to
have them as his beloved.
So just look at them
and admire them who
are the king's daughters.

All government officers
in all cities, should not
fancy them and suffer in vain.
Their unsurpassing beauty is
the result of their good
deeds in the past.
They are meant only
for the great mighty king.

Poetry of Khlong describing battles.

...ให้อึงอุคเอาไชย เสียงปืนไฟ
กึกก้องสะเทือนท้องพสุธา

หน้าไม้ดาป็นดาช ธรุสาต
ศรแผลง แข็งดอแข็งง้าง ...
(หน้า 47)

A loud shouting for
victory of the soldiers
is heard. A resounding
of firearms shakes
the land. Soldiers
with crossbows and guns
in hands are advancing.
Arrows are shooting
out. Strong soldiers
fight against each other.

*Poetry of Khlong describing the grief
of the people due to the death of the hero
and the two princesses.*

สมภยัตริย์พระญาติให้ อึงอุค อยู่นา
สบสำสาวสนมทรุด ท้าวให้
ปวงนางกำนัลสุด ถึงไพร่ เมืองนา
คนหนึ่งฤาอดได้ เกลือกกลิ้งกลางดิน
(หน้า 197)

เสียงไห้ทุกราษฎร์ให้ ทุกเรือน
อกแผ่นดินดูเหมือน จักขั่ว
บ่เห็นตะวันเดือน ความมืด มัวนา
แลแห่งใดเห็นน้ำ ข้อมน้ำตาคน
(หน้า 104)

The king and his cousins
are weeping loudly. All
concubines drop down and
cry. Royal maids and
servants bemoan their deaths,

trashing on the floor.

The people in every
house shed their tears.
The city's heart seems
to turn upside down.
The sun, the moon,
and the stars are not seen.
The water everywhere is
the tears that flow.

The appropriate insertion of the poetical works from *Lilit Phra Lo* contributes to the development of the story. For example, when Phueankaeo asks the witch in a Hindu temple, *Thewalai*, to use her magic power to release *Lodilokrat* from *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*'s incantation, *Thomma-yanti* quotes the words of this witch from the same scene in *Lilit Phra Lo*.

ไม่ต้องช่วยเราสองพี่น้องหรอก
ขอเพียงแต่ช่วยเจ้าหลวงแห่ง
แมนสรวงก็พอ เล่ห์ปะทะกับเล่ห์
กลแก้ด้วยกล มนต์ก็ต้องแก้
ด้วยมนต์เช่นกัน !
...ชายฟังสารชายสั้นหัว ชายเคยลง
แต่ตัว หัวตัวชา ชายจกลองเจ้าหล้า
บ่ได้หลานเฮ...จะลองใคร
ใครก็มา จะหาใครใครก็ได้
เวนแต่เจ้าฟ้าเจ้าแผ่นดิน ฐิติลปฐิติศาสตร์
ฐ มีอำนาจมีบุญ คุณดูไกลท่านไท้

ลอรานั้นฤาได้ อาจเยื้องฤาถึงเสนา ...
เพื่อนแก้วทรงฮึดฮัดขึ้นมาทันที
แต่ทำไมถึงได้เกิดเรื่องนี้ขึ้นได้
หากฐิติลปฐิติศาสตร์ ฐมีอำนาจมีบุญ?
...หมอว่าในไฉน หั่วแห่งหล้า
ผู้ใดใครจักเทียมจักคู่ ปู่เจ้าบุสมิงพราย
รว่าให้ตายก็ตายทันเห็น รว่าให้เป็นก็
เป็นทันใจ จะลองใครใครก็มา
จะหาใครใครก็บ่อยู่ จะไปสู่อานไส
ไฉนจะนำไป ... (หน้า 188-189)

It's unnecessary to help us. Help the king of *Mangsuang*. Tricks are to be used against tricks, deception against deception, magic against magic.

...After listening to the princesses, *Yai*, the witch, shakes her head and says that she has tried her magic only on ordinary people. She can't use it with the king. If she orders anyone to come to her, none, except a king, can resist. A king has a lot of knowledge, power and merit. He is beyond my power. So I can't use magic with him.

Phueankaeo says angrily, "Why can this happen,

if he has a lot of knowledge and merit?"

The old woman replies that in this world none can compare to *Pu Chao Saming Phrai*. He can command anyone's death or put him back to life.

If he wants anyone to come to him, none can resist his order. If you would like to see him, I will lead you to him.

Conclusion

Rak Thi Tong Montra, a novel originated from *Lilit Phra Lo*, is presented in the form of a popular modern work, a novel, for the readers of modern time. *Thommayanti* intends to tell the story from the point of view of *Phangthong*, to inspire sympathy for *Phueankaeo* and *Phangthong*, the heroines of this novel. While the poet of *Lilit Phra Lo* stresses the idea of karma, *Thommayanti* gives more importance to vengeance. In order to make her novel convincing for readers in our modern society, a lot of details are added and the change in characterization of important characters and interpretation are made. *Somdet Ya's* resentment is strongly stressed as the

main cause of all events in the story. Her plan to avenge *Phra Lo* is presented in details step by step, so the readers can see clearly how she achieves it. This can be considered a new interpretation of *Phra Lo*. The narration and the characters in this novel are more convincing to readers nowadays than *Lilit Phra Lo* because modern society and Thai beliefs are very different from those in the past. The idea that karma affects one's destiny is not much accepted by people at present. On the contrary, the resentment and vengeance can be easily understood because they seem to have rationality. Thus *Thommayanti* changes the love story to a vengeance story, but still keeps the tragic ending of *Lilit Phra Lo*. This novel is inspired by *Rak Thi Thuk Moen* as the same kind of narrator, the character-narrator, is used. However, different characters are chosen to tell the story. While *Laksanawadi* is the narrator in *Rak Thi Thuk Moen*, *Phangthong* who of course has a different view narrates in *Rak Thi Tong Montra*. Both writers would like to seek sympathy for their narrators who seem to be opponents. Moreover, *Thommayanti* wants to argue against *Nittaya Nattayasunthon's* accusation of the two princesses for causing *Phra Lo*

and *Laksanawadi*'s tragic destiny. This novel is much influenced by *Lilit*. A lot of poetical works in the form of *Rai* and *Khlong* in *Lilit Phra Lo* are well inserted in this novel. Some are used to develop the story. This shows how much *Thommayanti* appreciates *Lilit Phra Lo* and intends to introduce *Lilit Phra Lo* to the modern readers in a popular form of the time. This novel is a good example of Thai traditional literature in a modern form with a modern interpretation suitable to the readers' interest and beliefs nowadays.

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