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TABI-TABI PO: SITUATING THE NARRATIVE OF SUPERNATURAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHILIPPINES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Paolo Miguel Vicerra¹
Jem R. Javier²

Abstract

Folklore, such as the narratives of the supernatural, functions as a vehicle for elements of culture such as belief systems, ideologies and shared memories. This study explores the changes undergone by Philippine narratives of the supernatural vis-à-vis the urban development of the community where they thrive. It is demonstrated that the characters of the narratives of the supernatural are perceived to be of equal or even higher stature than those of members of the rural communities. With the locality experience changes brought about by urbanisation, this folklore is inevitably modified to suit the people’s environment and sensibilities, by reappropriating new functions and roles in the community. A different impression is observed in the context of the urban community; but, the collective sense of respect evoked by the urban dwellers has endured. This is the form which the latent belief system among Filipinos has taken, one that forges their common identity.

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Introduction

The steady flow of population, which is usually brought about by the diaspora-oriented behaviour of some people due to socio-economic reasons, paints a complex picture of any locality. As a result, it is inevitable to rethink the concept of “community” because of the ever-changing composition of the geographic space. From the sociolinguistic notion of community (Labov 1966 and Corder 1973), which indicates a spatial interconnectedness among members through a shared speech tradition, the definition of community has been reshaped to mean a social group that is held together by a “shared dimension of experience” (Saville-Troike 2003: 15) and “frequency of social interaction patterns” (Gumperz 1968: 463). This reappropriation responds to the recent phenomenon whereby advancements in technology have not only hastened communication but have also bridged the geographical gaps among different peoples and, consequently, various cultures.

Seeing culture as an adaptive mechanism of human beings that becomes their way of life, it is interesting, then, to explore how the elements of culture respond to rapid and constant changes in the social and geographic space. Shared memories, for instance, are assimilated because of the incorporation of new knowledge and experience. These memories, which are encapsulated in various material and immaterial cultural artefacts, such as rituals and folklores, are in effect, a rich source of data as regards the people’s beliefs, customs, traditions and value systems. With this in mind, this paper attempts to investigate the interrelationship between community development, packaged within the term urbanisation, in the
Philippine milieu and how some dimensions of shared memory among its members have been reshaped by changes in their lifestyle. Emphasis will be given to current narratives which are considered ‘folkloric’.

Folklore consists of narratives which are common to a community and are retold between members. Often, through word of mouth, these narratives are passed on from one storyteller to a listener, who later on becomes the new storyteller. One theme of folklore are narratives of the supernatural, tales in which the plot typically includes human beings interacting with those from the other-world.

The corpus that is to be analysed for the urban folklore is from the True Philippine Ghost Stories (TPGS) series published between 2002 and 2006. It is a collection of narratives of the supernatural experienced or retold by contributors from all over the country. It should be noted that most, if not all the stories published in the series, have been extracted from the larger corpus of stories of the said type on the World Wide Web. The question of a story’s authenticity as "folklore" and not having been simply "written" by a writer may be debatable but it is arguably an effective means of relaying horror narratives. This is expounded below whereby the series relevance to the landscape of folklore studies in the Philippines is significant. Although it has to be questioned that this particular series has as great an impact as the whole genre the TPGS series had been selected due to the length of its publication period while others were discontinued or had irregular intervals of release.

As this is a contextual study, the milieu of urbanisation in the Philippines is presented as is a subsequent discussion of the effect on the multicultural nature of Philippine ethnolinguistic picture. It is within this area that the development of horror narratives has become consequential but with the curious lingering of a latent conceptual belief of man, nature and spirits being co-existent.

**Folklore as an expression of shared belief**

Animism, or anitism, is a persistent belief among the different ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines (Delbeke 1928; Covar 1998; and Tatel 2005). It is a belief system that perceives the elements of nature to contain a spirit that coexists with a physical body, similar to the nature of the human being. This facet of Filipino cosmology is expressed through its concept of *kaluluwa*, or the life spirit. The death of a person, based on pre-colonial cosmology, entails his spirit departing from its corporeal counterpart and most likely traveling along a river into the afterlife (Alcina 1668; Magos 1986). It is also noteworthy that the term *kaluluwa* is a cognate of the term *dalawa* ‘two,’ which implies co-existence with the corporeal body. Apart from the spirits of nature and of men, there are also supernatural creatures which ‘co-dwell’ with the former. Together they belong to an endless maintenance of balance through a process of give and take. For this reason, believers perceive eventualities as blessings or punishments, depending on how they have behaved in the eyes of the supernatural. A balance is normally kept through the process known as ritual, which, in this context, is defined as “...a transactional event that binds the individuals of a given community and the inhabitants of the spirit world together in a web of memory, with notions of responsibility and the primary value of survival and well-being or in a continued existence via ideas or
conceptualizations of “balance”” (Hussin 2013: 1). The established relationship between humans and the spirits of the elements of their community is manifested as follows:

“The relationship between humans and spirits is governed by explicit rules, primarily regarding land use. Humans must first ask their permission before cutting down, their tree-abodes, burning their mountains, or destroying their anthills. In order to plant or build on their territory, or even to pass through it, one has to recite a formula or perform a ritual. According to native theory, failure to observe these rules will result in physiological illness, insanity, or death.” (Ramos 1971b: 64)

The Filipinos’ respect to their surroundings is manifested in their regard of themselves as mere co-inhabitants of the locality, along with nature and supernatural beings (Hussin and Santamaria 2008). They acknowledge territories even of those which they cannot see. This high regard of nature is sometimes seen by others as paganism (Tatel 2005), or the worship of inanimate things but the belief that spirits lurk around one’s surroundings results in their revering, and not venerating, nature.

What this reflects is the relationship between man and nature: parts of nature, animals and plants, become the dwelling places of spirits where they manifest their influence. Filipinos acknowledge the forces that surround them and on whom they depend for their well-being and/or misfortune (Delbeke, 1928). Acknowledgment of these forces drives Filipinos to pay utmost respect to nature and the spirits that live within it. This is, furthermore, equated to banal na takot; a kind of fear that is fuelled by the inability to fear in accordance with the spiritual exchange of benevolence and harm.

The social control of the narratives that contain the abovementioned world-view is consequently bound by tradition. Viewing the world as something that also has life has had an impact on Filipino medical ideology. Tan (1987) classifies this into three categories: (1) personalistic, which involves sickness due to soul loss; (2) mystical, which involves sickness that is caused by sorcery and spirits; and (3) naturalistic, which involves sickness due to stress and infection. Medical ideology not only involves how people view the causes of sickness it is a way of seeing how a community views the world itself and this point to the acknowledgment of communities in the Philippines that the world is alive and can affect humans, sometimes in ways that can cause harm.

What is observable in this reading of history and culture is that there is a sort of struggle between humans and the spirits and supernatural creatures. There is a power relation for everything that is in this world and even beyond it. Cannell (1999) inquired into this relationship. What was observed with the Bicolanos was that in order for them to live in harmony with the spirits, whether the latter are of lower or higher origin, people had to pay respect to them. Rituals are a large part of the paying of respect, e.g., offering prayers, having séance conversations with the dead to let a spirit and its family make peace with each other so as to vanquish whatever it is that might hinder the spirit from going on to the afterlife. If these rituals are not accomplished, the spirits and creatures may cause harm to humans. This is how
the power relation is manifested as a social control for people to avoid doing harm to nature and everywhere else and the narratives are the effective means of conveying the social control across the communities.

The aforementioned twelve categories that Ramos (1990) supplies verify this. All of the creatures, whether they are of colonial influence or not, were made to be substantiate the view of the people that everything is connected through their spirits. The engkanto lives in the woods, caves, and stony places. The dwende lives essentially in trees. The aswang are bound to the earth. The Kapre and tikbalang live far from the dwellings of people suggesting places untouched by humans. The sirena lives in streams and other bodies of water. The other categories such as the mangkukulam are also dependent on the earth in order that the spirit of nature for their sorcery may work.

There are many manifestations of the supernatural creatures in different ethnolinguistic groups. Cannell (1999), for instance, presents in an ethnography of Bicol the different manifestations of the belief in spirits. There are ‘spirits of men’, the tawo; ‘the spirit of the recently dead’, or kalaq; and those that are ‘harmful [beings]’ such as the aswang. This world-view is not limited to the Bicolanos; in fact, throughout the archipelago, many other ethnolinguistic groups present similar ideas to those presented above, among other creatures of the metaphysical world. Licauco (2000) mentions three general classifications of such beings: lesser spirits, supernatural beings and a supreme being. Meanwhile, Ramos (1990) mentions 85 and classifies them into twelve groups: demons, dragons, dwarfs, elves, ghouls, giants, merfolk, ogres, vampires, viscera suckers, weredogs, and witches. He uses the term “lower mythology” for these creatures (p. x). The linguistic diversity of the Philippines dictates that some of the creatures are called by various names in the respective ethnolinguistic community, for example, the Tagalog bangungot, a dark fat man who lies on top of people who have overeaten is called batibat among the Ilokanos. Another creature is the manananggal of the Tagalog, a woman-like creature that can detach her torso from her limbs and fly to prey on people, is called wakwak by the Visayans. This type of classification is also used by Pacis (2005) in her inquiry into the modern retelling of Tagalog narratives.

A similar typology of such spirits or anito is affirmed by Demetrio, Cordero-Fernando, and Zialcita (1991). The anitos are entities that have a life force; those that belong in higher mythology are called major anitos and minor anitos belong to lower mythology. Creatures of lower mythology are creatures that people believe to cause harm. This is different from those of “higher mythology” which are generally beneficial to the community (Ramos 1990). The creatures of lower folklore or mythology are ascribed to the rural setting and they are said to dwell in open fields and forests (Pacis 2005). Those of the lower mythology, as Ramos (1990) has indicated, live among humans and have feelings. If they are harmed or, offended, they can cause harm, therefore they should be appeased and befriended. Such a belief in creatures, which dates back to the pre-colonial period, has survived beyond colonial times in spite of the fact that during the Spanish occupation, lowland communities were pacified through religion. The integration of local cosmology and that of
Catholicism is worth noting. Rafael (1988) argues that the concepts of heaven, hell and sin intruded into the belief system of the Filipinos. The new religious order was embraced but elements of the existent cosmology were incorporated. The belief in the endless predation of the aswang still exists even in the afterlife based on local cosmology but “heaven” is meant as an escape from this possibility.

Ramos’ 1990 categorisation is based mainly on the abilities and the physical attributes of the creatures. Most of them have attributes that are non- or superhuman. The kapre has a part of his body that is horse, the mananaggal has wings, and the sizes of the giants and the elves. The ones with human attributes like the witches are portrayed as not very pleasant to look at. These creatures represent the spirit of the environment. They give physicality for the spirits so that they can be made concrete and instil images that can evoke “pure fear” instead of banal na takot.

The identified creatures entrenched in folklore are important to the community where they ‘exist’ to act as a social control: “…the beliefs in these creatures can be useful in embodying the content of education and can serve as an internalized brake on conduct” (Ramos 1971a: 180). Having the concept of power acknowledged is an effective means of maintaining the conduct of the community and holding the people back from going against tradition, which translates into a breach of the metaphysical contract. Narratives about the kapre getting angry when he is disturbed are evident. When the tree where he lives is cut down, he can do terrible things to the people who have caused the disturbance. Respect is projected by the performing of a ritual in which the natural environment is central. When a mound of soil is in a field for instance, passersby will excuse themselves by praying, tabi tabi po, in order that they may eradicate any disturbance they may have caused to the nuno dwelling there. Necessarily, the traditions surrounding the creatures and their environment are sustained and transmitted to new members via the narratives.

The conditioning environment: Rural-to-urban transformation

A dichotomy of urban-rural classification is presented to deter highly intricate elaborations. These broad categories are sufficient for the discussion instead of being particular and including such a category as semi-urban, or rurban (Shryock et al. 1976). For the topic, urban can be determined based on population, primary economic activity, and specific laws. In the Philippines, population is the central criterion; the place must have a minimum of 2,500 inhabitants and the density should amount to 1,000 people per square mile (Siegel and Swanson, 2004). This population-based criterion is associated with other factors especially the economic activity and lifestyle of the people. Hawley (1971) further defines urban as both a process and a place that is vastly dependent on resources, population and the economic base. Furthermore, it refers to both: “…the whole of the organisation that is based upon a settlement which may be a city or something closely resembling a city” (ibid.); and “the quality of life that is typically found in the city” (Panopio, Cordero-MacDonald and Raymundo 1994: 323). The city is characterised as a unit of analysis consisting of a collection of buildings, activities and socially heterogeneous individuals clustered
together in a relatively large and dense space (Clark 1982 and Morris 1968). While an area is subjected to urbanisation, changes in the elements of the locality begin to take place:

“As the population concentrates in relatively small areas in space, so the forms of social and economic structure and organization which are appropriate for rural living break down, and are replaced by new patterns and relationships more suited to urban needs. At first, these changes are restricted to and are experienced by those actually resident in the city, but over time, they diffuse to and are adopted by those living in rural areas, so that the whole of society becomes dominated by urban values, expectations and life styles.” (Clark 1982: 72)

Though this may be a generalised view of urbanisation, it has somehow occurred starkly in the urban primacies of the Philippines. According to the United Nations (2002), the Philippines was one of the fastest urbanising countries when in the 1950s, only about a fourth of the country was deemed to be urban, but in 2000 this had increased to almost 60% of the country. What had brought this on was the changing economic landscape which encouraged more people to migrate into selected cities. As a consequence, the focus of somehow improved social and health amenities led to disparities between the rural and the urban spaces (Ogena 2005). What this entailed was that people in urban areas continued to increase and the lifestyle of the country was ever changing.

A densely populated area produces an alienating effect among its people. Man-made structures, for instance, not only geographically divide members of the population but they also establish interpersonal barriers (Morris 1968). Co-dwellers are literally separated from each other creating a relatively weak bond among them. Members of the community remain cramped in their own space where they live, work and undertake their regular activities.

An increase in population diversity – an indicator that the locality is undergoing or has reached urbanisation – implies that any resident would have difficulty knowing others personally. This is in contrast to rural living which is characterised by having close ties between members of the community (Clark 1982). Since people recognise their locality as being confined in a small specific town or barrio, the tendency is to know and be in constant contact with others. An interpersonal relationship is established and maintained for a long time and as long as the families stay within that specific place.

The cultural underpinnings dictate a change in the adaptive mechanisms of humans to their environment and the situation in which they exist. New ways of interaction within the population are brought about by the changes in the said mechanisms. However, as Wirth (1964) has argued, social contacts in the city are largely "impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental" (qtd. Morris 1968: 16); therefore, the resident is more likely to regard social contacts as "means to his own ends" (p. 17). They are unable to be made contact with everyone else because of the massive number of people. That people are geographically proximal does not mean they are socially close and most social contacts in the urban setting are
rather superficial. It is only possible to build relations with few specific individuals who share similar interests and lifestyles. This is not difficult for Filipinos who come from different ethnolinguistic groups. Even though the different locations where they come from have diverse expressions of belief through oral traditions, there is still a shared core belief system that will eventually bring them closer. In relation to that paradox of population growth and members’ social contacts, it is almost impossible to gather the city dwellers in a single space. Therefore, indirect communication such as via the mass media is more often relied on by residents to convey and receive information even within the locality.

The transformation of the community from rural to urban brings about drastic changes in the landscape and the culture of a society. As mentioned earlier, changes in the needs of people in an urbanising community results in an alteration in land use. The need for company in a community is replaced by the need for economic stability. One property that differentiates the urban from the rural community is what Wirth (1964) terms the pecuniary nexus, that is, urban people tend to see all goods and services in terms of a common standard, e.g., money. This is the implication of a widespread belief that people can be tempted to do almost any labour if the salary that they are talking about is good enough. Furthermore, due to the fact that many people are pouring over a small urbanising space, resources such as building materials, land and food and water, among other eventually become scarce and this results in competition.

For this reason, in the context of the Filipino society, alienation is not only experienced by members of the city with one another but people are also become more and more alienated from an environment that is considered to be part of the community itself. The attitude toward it is “deep and kind” in the rural space but it is the opposite for urban spaces. The natural environment becomes somehow disregarded and becomes a "means to an end."

Metamorphosis of the narrative

The narratives about mythological creatures, as Ramos has said, “…are fast being forgotten” (1990: xi). The term “forgotten” may be misleading; they may not have been forgotten but are attributed to a specific setting – the rural. One reason for this is the transition of the rural space into an urban area. Most, if not all of the stories about lower mythological creatures are set in rural spaces – they live in soil mounds, trees and in mountains. Ideals are consequently changing among the people who are moving or have been exposed to the urban environment. The way they perceive their world, as expressed in the narratives, is also different because of the change in their environment. The kapre and the dwende, for instance, have lost their place in narratives that circulate in the urban environment.

Ultimately, because of the dense population brought about by urbanisation, the traditional narratives of the supernatural are not “forgotten” but, rather, are transformed. They are assigned new representations to fit the population’s new environment and sensibilities. They appropriate narratives to be pertinent to their society and serve their function.

There is a shift in how people live and view the world starting from the rural and moving toward the urban; diminished or
lost interpersonal relations and familiarity with place. Since the city brings about impersonal relations among people, their alienation creates anxiety about the urban space. Not all the places are familiar for individuals and this creates a feeling that that place is not “theirs.” Familiarity with place inside the city is limited and therefore uneasiness toward these places develops. Another alienating factor is the fact that it is densely populated. Too many unfamiliar faces are in the streets and they become part of the uneasiness of the unknown (Tuan 1979).

With this in perspective, there is a part of culture that becomes misplaced – the narrative. The creatures that Ramos (1967) identified do not have their space in the urban setting. One manifestation of this is that such attitudes of the rural are deemed by the educated and sophisticated urban population to be the product of ignorance and simplicity (Pacis 2005). Moreover, the uneasiness and insecurity brought about by urbanisation has in effect, signalled the appropriation of certain traditions. Narratives, which will now be called the horror narratives, operate as a way of decreasing the alienation because it tends to find a commonality between them. This tradition is channelled not by word of mouth any more but already through the mass media. The medium through which they are passed on is urbanised and belongs to the modern worlds of publication, cyberspace and telecommunications.

The corpus of these horror narratives is from TPGS series, which currently has 27 volumes; published from 2002 until the present. The prolificacy of the series is important to note because this is something of a test of its viability for the publisher. What this affirms is that there are followers of TPGS because it provides what they expect from the books; that is, to be aware of the frightful stories that the series claims to have concrete referents.

This series is a compilation of contributions through the correspondence of “authors” with the publishers. Most of the authors of the compilations are the contributors through the Internet, whose identity they may withhold. Although the question of the series’ authenticity as “folklore” and not simply “written” by a writer may be debatable nevertheless, it is arguably an effective means of relaying this type of narrative. With the advent of a writing system and publication, recording this type of folklore has become possible. Since the book claims that people can contribute their own stories, readers of the series tend to think that what has been published is actually true. If the book is able to publish such an extensive collection of stories, one can say that it is meeting its purpose. Still stemming from the readers’ thinking that the material conveys authentic narratives, it eventually becomes folkloric.

The TPGS series presents contributions that have been sent to its publisher by virtually anyone. This is an indicator of its folkloric nature since affirming the origin of the stories may or may not be done. What appears is what the contributor knows about the event and how he has written it. Two stories, The phone call (1) and The Haunting at Conchita Cruz Drive (2), have been extracted from the corpus and summarised to give an illustration:

(1) A girl’s mother has just died. Then one day, her child’s friend receives a call saying take care of my daughter. The friend recognizes the voice; it belongs to a dead person. (Ting 2004)
(2) The story starts with a group of young people who are into racing cars and are in Conchita Cruz Drive. When they are about to speed off down the street, they saw a black car. What they see inside that car horrifies them; two people are covered with blood. They go straight to a house nearby to ask for help and then the house owner explains to them what they have actually seen. That place, Conchita Cruz Drive, has been a popular drag race spot over the past decades. One night, a black car ridden by a couple named Eric and Jenina was in the middle of a race and they had an accident there. (Maniego 2002)

What can be seen in (1) above is the ability of the spirit to do what she can when her corporeal counterpart is still alive – utilise technology, talk with people, and still take care of her child. Meanwhile, example (2) shows how people say that spirits manifest themselves whenever they want to warn others of danger. It is also noticeable that most of the characters the series has presented are the spirits, with different ways of manifesting themselves.

(3) The spirit can have its presence felt; through knocking at doors or even just as a chilly wave of air.

(4) Spirits can manifest themselves through media such as photographs or even computers. They are able to make themselves known to others (particularly humans who claim to have a “third eye”) that they are there in that certain space.

(5) The spirit can be physically present in the vicinity. Examples of this kind are the glowing red eyes that are seen peeking through holes and the lady dressed in white without a face.

Relating to the operationalisation of folklore, one may notice that there are attributes of ‘authorship’ for some example as in (1) and (2) but, these are false. This attribution stems from the information that is shared by the person as to how they heard it. In the entire series covered by the analysis here, there are recurring story lines with slight differences in characters and locations within the cities but the essential elements of the narrative are present. And this is how it is appropriate here that these, even if they are in a published medium, can be deemed as examples of Philippines folklore.

Emphasis has been given on the individual’s alienation within his locality. To remedy this, the horror narratives then act as a way of binding the individualised person to the community. Horror narratives bring them together and let them share their own folklore. The former also contributes to the history of places where an unverifiable “truth” is contained. General descriptions of structures such as schools and dilapidated building that have been built on former cemeteries are just some examples of how the historical nature of certain spots within the locality of their being are explored and related to members of the community. Elements such as the characters of these narratives become frightening because the sense of familiarity toward them is shown. It is not
just the “unknown” that is frightening but what people do not know about the familiar things that create the sense of fear. Moreover, fear is successfully instilled among the listeners to the horror narrative because of the fact that the characters are “living with” the audience and that anytime, under any circumstance, these characters could attack them. As can be observed from the data collected, the coexistence with the human dwellers and the unpredictability of the attack of the horror narrative characters are what typically cause urban settlers to appease such beings.

Differentiated commonalities

The loss of the natural environment and the establishment of a man-made environment have created an impact on the characters presented in the narratives. Stories about the previous creatures are no longer told and they have been replaced with spirits. These spirits are those of humans who no longer have a kind of exclusive attachment to the natural environment such as trees; they already have manifested themselves as living in the distinct objects and spaces of the urban, such as telephones and the internet. This fact, in effect, has two implications. On the one hand, people in the urban area accept the said objects to be part of their “environment,” as part of their worldview. They have been accommodated to fit the space that became void when the natural environment was taken out to make room for infrastructure and technology that are the components of urbanisation.

On the other hand, since there are no longer supernatural beings, the classification presented above is not applicable for the description of the characters of the narratives under discussion. What surfaces is the need for a categorisation that will capture the portrayal of the “horrific” elements in the stories while perceiving them as being in a setting that has been urbanised. After such a process, many aspects of the rural community are altered if they are retained. Some, however, endure the transformation since they largely affect the population; an example of this is the horror narrative that frightens its listeners. In relation to this, some creatures of rural horror remain even though they have undergone some changes in their characteristics.

The multo ‘ghost,’ or the imprint of the kaluluwa, typically dominates horror in the urban society. Its manifestation, or pagpaparamdam, never fails to cause fright to the witnesses within the story and to the latter’s audience. However, the multo in urban horror has goals different from that of the rural narratives. Whereas the creatures of the latter cause harm to trespassers, the spirits of the urban narrative, typically, simply want to convey messages to humans, because of the belief that people who die but still have unfinished business on earth will wander as a ghost.

Pagpaparamdam is also a mechanism with which to take revenge on offenders. There are many horror stories in the urban setting wherein the ghost appears to have itself felt or even seen because something offensive or unlawful has been done by its human offender. Physical harm, which is what the rural creatures used to do, is no longer necessary. Too much fright can prompt an urban person to behave himself and act according to norms.

Perhaps, the common story of people who have been cursed because they have passed by creature-imposed "prohibited
zones” is more likely a residue of the rural horror narrative tradition. Creatures, such as the kapre and dwende still demand for respect for their private space, and if this is not shown, they will cause fright and/or harm.

Technological advancements that have been introduced into the urbanised community have, in effect, explained phenomena which were previously perceived as mysterious. An example of this is the creature bangungot that used to cause difficulty in sleeping (Ramos 1990). Medical studies such as that of Chua (2002), present the bangungot rather as an illness in which the symptoms are almost the same as told in the rural society. The characters of the horror narrative have thus been demystified.

In spite of the changes born of reappropriation and demystification, the characters of the narratives of the supernatural have nevertheless retained their raison d’être – social control. It remains that people should respect these spirits and should not trespass upon their territory. Or when such spirits want to communicate with the physical realm, the living person should make time to help or they might keep on making their presence felt and even harm members of the community. This is the aspect of the narrative of the supernatural that has remained even though the medium is now print or cyberspace; and in spite of the fact that the supernatural beings may have undergone transformations vis-a-vis the urbanisation of their locality.

Conclusion

Narratives of the supernatural respond to the remaking of the locality. The changes that the communities have undergone under the process of urbanisation have, in effect, transformed the setting and the characters and their respective raison d’être within the narratives.

The power relation between Filipinos and their perception of the physical world has been demonstrated and this may even be rooted in pre-colonial societies. Rural communities viewed spirits and beings as their equal and at times as of a higher stature because of the magnitude of their effect on the community and its members. In urban narratives, this sense of respect had endured even though the setting had been developed into a mostly man-made surrounding. Spirits still belong to particular spaces and there are instances of their entering, albeit violating, such territories. This is the form which the latent belief system among Filipinos has taken, one that forges their common identity.

Identity can point to its authenticity. Even if a culture undergoes massive changes physically or otherwise, there is a part of it that will remain unchanged. This will provide people with a bond that they know they have, even though they cannot expound on it. Change will occur. What has been demonstrated here is that narratives, being an element and a means of perpetuating culture, become transformed depending on their functional existence for the society.

References


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Abstract

This article is responding to 2 questions: 1) what roles do the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng (Chao Ong Luang) _LOC(ก/afii59744;/afii59723;/afii59735;/afii59725;/afii59687;/afii597.7;/f71.;/afii59693;/afii59688;/afii597.5;/afii59684;/afii59715;), the sacred narratives found near the Thai-Lao borderland in the Pak Hueng community of Chiang Khan District, Loei Province, Thailand and in the Pak Nam Hueng community of Ken Thao, Xayabouly Province, Laos, play in constructing a physical sacred space and a spiritual sacred space through personal symbols, objects, places and rituals, and culturally, what do they communicate?; 2) what roles do the dynamic sacred narratives on Chao Pho Pak Hueng play in constructing a social space for the Thai-Lao borderland people in relation to the social and the political contexts? The analysis was based on symbols, symbolic meanings, concepts of sacred space and social space.

1. Introduction

The findings indicate that the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng were sacred narratives that reflected their meaning through the following symbols:

1) Person: Chao Pho Pak Hueng, the ruler of Panjanakhorn, ( mensaje) was Chinese (race: Haw). He played a significant role in bringing a sacred Buddha image into the community.

2) Object: Phra Siangthaai, (พระสิ่งท้าว) or the Buddha of prophecy, a Buddha image which was considered a sacred object. Phra Siangthaai was believed to be a son of Chao Pho Pak Hueang.

3) Place: the estuary of Hueng River (เมืองพี) and Wernkham (วินดี) ; it was believed that the estuary was the place where the cave of Chao Pho Pak Hueang’s treasures that were under protection of his son were located; Wernkham was the place where Phra Chao Ton Luang (หลวงเจ้าทวัง) was sunk.

4) Sacred rituals: Bai Si Su Khwan (บ้าฮิ้วขวาน) (the ritual of welcoming), Liang Pee (ลียงปี) (the ritual annual feast for spirits) and Suang Huer (สุ่งฮูร์) (the ritual of boat racing) were like meeting places between Chao Pho Pak Hueng and his followers. These symbols helped to construct the sacred spaces both physically and spiritually through the concepts of Buddhism and primitivism. They represented a sense of the cultural root of Lao: Lan Chang, Luang

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Phrabang. The concepts and the sense were reproduced through the narratives and *Heet Khong* (ข้อง) (customs and traditions) for the purpose of security in the community. Moreover, it has been found that the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng had some dynamics in relation to the social context. The politics along the Thai-Lao border also played a role in building a sense of history and ethnicity which, in the early stage of settling the communities, concentrated the minds of the people on the newly established space and tied them together. During the reign of King Rama V, there was a change of nationality to Thai. Clues to the conflict and the argument with the state authorities over the acceptance of the new nationality are also reflected in the myths. However, the myths and the rituals concerning Chao Pho Pak Hueng were symbols representing the community identity. Such practices were passed from generation to generation and tied the minds of people from both sides of the Hueng River together. As a result, the spiritual space and the social space constructed a unity of the peoples across the borders of Thailand and Laos.

2. Background of the Pak Nam Hueng Communities

Hueng river is an important river in the northeastern region of Thailand. Some parts of the river in the Na Haeo District, Dan Sai District, Tha Li District, and Chiang Khan District of Loei Province, in Thailand and in the Bortaen District, Ken Thao District in Xayabouly Province, Laos, are treated as the natural border between Thailand and Laos. The river originates from a mountain in the Na Haeo District of Loei Province in Thailand. It joins the Mae Khong River in the Pak Hueng community of Chiang Khan District in Loei Province, Thailand. The Pak Hueng community on the right bank of the river consists of three villages: Ban Na Jaan, Ban Tha Dee Mee and Ban Khok Ng-ew in the Pak Tom Subdistrict of Chiang Khan District in Loei Province, Thailand. The Pak Hueng community on the left bank of the river consists of three villages: Ban Boun Kla, Ban Mai Wernkham and Ban Huay La which are all in Ken Thao District of Xayabouly Province of Laos.

There are some myths concerning the estuary area of the Hueng River on the left bank. According to a study by Saratassananan (1992: 37-43) on the myths and the history of Pak Hueng town, there was a deserted town called Panjanakhorn (ปั้นจันทร์) or Pengjaan town (เมืองจ้าน) ruled by many rulers from generation to generation; and there was a ruler who had a beautiful daughter named Khamkong (คำคมongs) One day, a weird phenomenon occurred when a huge rainbow came and ate a lot of people in the town. The ruler and his people except for the daughter left the town. Her father put her in a big drum for safety. Panjanakhorn became a deserted town. Many days later, a handsome young man called Thao Khatanam (ท้ากทานาม), who was originally from Krung Srisattanakhanahut (กรุงศรีสัททนาคphan) (Vientiane) came to the town. He was a brave young man. Before leaving for the town he had killed a giantess who gave him a magic stick before she died. The magic stick would bring death if its head were pointed; while the other end would bring life if it was pointed. Thao Khatanam found that there were no people in the town, so he walked into the temple and beat the drum to see if anybody was still there. To his surprise, he heard a scream from the drum and when he opened it, he found a beautiful woman–Khamkong - inside. He had saved her life.
When Thao Khatanam had killed the huge rainbow, before it had died, it had given him a magic object. He used the magic stick to point to all the bones and the skeletons around the town to and bring them back to life and make them human again. When all the people who had escaped from the town heard the good news, they came back to the town – Panjanakhorn. Later, Thao Khatanam married Khamkong and returned to rule his own town: Vientiane.

From the historical dimension, Panjanakhorn town or Pak Hueng town was founded by Paya Julanee (มาเรีย) who led his people from the north to establish their own town. The Lan Chang chronicle states that the town was set up in B.E. 2225 (1682). In B.E. 2238 (1695), Luang Phrabang and Vientiane split into two kingdoms. Luang Phrabang established Pak Hueng and Chiang Khan (the former Chiang Khan) as its border towns. Vientiane also appointed Chiang Khan (the former Chiang Khan) as its border town.

In B.E. 2321 (1778), the late Thonburi period (ดอนบุรี), Thailand merged all the towns in Lan Chang kingdom and directed more people to settle in Pak Hueng. Afterwards, the king of Thailand designated Pak Hueng a colony of Nam Paad (Utaradit), which was a major town at that time, so that Pak Hueng would be free from Luang Phrabang.

Between B.E. 2369 and 2370 (1826-1827), the King Rama III period, there was a Vientiane rebellion which was defeated by the Thai army. As a consequence, more people from the left bank of the Mae Khong River were brought to settle down on the right bank of the river in Pak Hueng. The King Rama III assigned Phra Anuphinard (อนุพินทราบ) (a ruler who was the forefather of the Kruathongdee family) to be the first Pak Hueng ruler and the town was then renamed ‘Chiang Khan’.

Between B.E. 2417 and 2418 (1874-1875), the former Chiang Khan, which was on the left side of the Mae Khong River (in Laos), was invaded by the Haw ethnic group. A lot of people from the former Chiang Khan moved to the new Chiang Khan (Pak Hueng town). However, it was not considered to be the right place, so the town was moved to Ban Tha Naa Jaan village and afterwards was given the name Chiang Khan, which exists in Chiang Khan District at present.

In B.E. 2436 (1893) (year of 112 of Rattanakosin Era), the land on the left side of the Mae Khong River was taken over by the French. People from ancient Chiang Khan did not want to submit to French government, so some of them moved to settle in the former Pak Hueng town and some moved to the new Chiang Khan. Until the year 2446 (1903), the land on the right side of the Mae Khong River opposite Luang Phrabang was taken over by French. Pak Hueng town on the left side of the river was also taken over by the French. The people then moved en masse to settle down in the new Chiang Khan and Pak Hueng became a deserted town.

According to myth, Pak Hueng is a town with long history and clues to its settlement in each period. The town was divided when Lan Chang was split into two kingdoms using the Hueng River as a natural border. During the Thonburi period, King Taksin had merged the two kingdoms into one. He directed more people to live in Pak Hueng and renamed the town ‘Chiang Khan’. In the reign of King Rama V, there was a war with the Haw ethnic group which caused people to move from the former Chiang Khan to the
present Chiang Khan (Ban Tha Na Jaan). So, Pak Hueng became deserted. When the French colonized Laos, the Hueng River was used as a border between Thailand and Laos.

For the Ban Tha Dee Mee (บ้านท่าเดี๋ยม), Ban Naa Jaan (บ้านนาจาแนก) and Ban Khok Ng-ew (บ้านละคร้าง) communities, it is recorded that their ancestors emigrated to the right side of the Hueng River because of the war with the Haw ethnic group. People escaped from the land in increasing numbers and left the town an almost abandoned place. During the period that Laos was under the control of the French government, the community was firstly settled in Ban Pak Tom (บ้านปักทอง). Because of an outbreak of contagious disease, the people moved again to Ban Na Jaan, Ban Tha Dee Mee and Ban Khok Ng-ew where they established their farmlands, which have renamed villages to this day. For the Ban Boung Kla (บ้านบุ้งคล้า), Ban Huay La (บ้านห้วยลาน) and Ban Mai Wernkham (บ้านมาวิ่นห้วย) communities in Laos, it was perceived that, after the war with the Haw ethnic group, the people moved to the right side of the Hueng River. However, they crossed the border to work on their farms on the left side of the river as usual. After the change of Laos’s administration in B.E. 2518 (1985), people were no longer allowed to freely cross the border for farm work and the farmlands became deserted. Subsequently, the Lao government gave an opportunity for people to take over the land and set up a community during the years 1983-1989 (Saenphansiri, 2010).

3. The Myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng and the Construction of Sacred Space

A sacred narrative is a supernatural narrative. It is related to a belief and faith in god or religion that the people of the community have, and is evident in the sacred words used when mentioning to their god or religion. A study of myth leads to the study of the meaning or the underlying meaning of a narrative which may be in the form of symbols, myths or rituals. Therefore, myth is considered a kind of communicative system that enables us to understand and perceive the cultural dimension of people in each ethnic group and society (Hongsuwan, 2007: 3). In addition myth plays a role in explaining the origins and the identity of an ethnic group. Ritual has a role in providing education and training in social order to the people of a community in order to maintain the behavioral standards of society. It is also a solution for the people who feel uncomfortable with the social regulations (Na Thalang, 2009: 363).

The new perspective in studying myth as a narrative considers that the narrative deals with the construction of the meaning of things. The science of narrative is, therefore, related to symbol which is one of the important elements in forming meaning. As it is also involved with power, the new perspective of narrative seeks to ask why those meanings are formed. As the word ‘sacred’, it refers to the events, the country area and the space and time that are different from that of ordinary life. It reveals the existence of a supernatural power as a bridge crossing from the past to the present, from this life to the next life, to the god world, to the ghost world, to the spiritual world and to the eternal world. These powers exist in
different forms such as the natural environment or objects built by human beings, most of which are represented by symbols, traditions, rituals and performances (Kaw-anantakul, 2003: 2). In conclusion, the sacred narrative is an element forming the meaning of a thing and leads people to feel or witness a supernatural power, a power that is not to be found in real life. The tight relationship among the sacred narratives, the meanings of things and supernatural power plays a highly significant role in creating a sacred space and a social space. Referring to Eliade (1961: 20-29), the sacred world is in another dimension overlapping with the real world. It is boundless. It is timeless. It is the world of religion. For example, the entrance of a church is like a linking point between the ordinary world and the sacred world. The sacred world has symbols, rituals and sacred words. The miracle is also another link between the two dimensions. It makes the sacred world a sacred space. In the same way, the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng communities have a significant role in creating a sacred space both physically and spiritually through personal symbols, objects, places and rituals in order to communicate cultural meaning and to construct the social space which will be described as follows:

3.1 The Diversity of the Myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng

Based on both documents and the memories of the people in the communities on both sides of the Hueng River, there is a diversity of the narratives on the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng or Chao Ong Luang as follows:

**Myth 1:** Chao Pho Pak Hueng travelled from Luang Phrabang after the war with the Haw ethnic group (as related by the local people, they believe that the group was Haw (ฮอ) from the evidence of the accent spoken by the spirit through a medium). He left the town with his family and four children. When he reached Panjanakhorn or Pengjaan town, he rescued the princess – Khamkong – from a huge hawk that ate humans as its food. The princess then became his wife (Boonphrom: 2010).

**Myth 2** Chao Pho Pak Hueng’s parents lived in Ting cave in Luang Phrabang. During the war with the Haw ethnic group, he and his family together with Phra Siangthaai (พระศิษย์ท้าว) and Phra Chao Ton Luang, escaped from the town by raft along the Mae Khong River until they reached the estuary of the Hueng River, and his wife had an argument. The raft was wrecked and Phra Chao Ton Luang happened to drop into the water at Wernkham (เวร์nkham). His wife left him for her family at Ban Pha Laad (บ้านปากแลด) (in Laos). As for him, he acquired a second wife named Eakkai (เอกกิ). Later, his first wife came back and they lived together in Thailand (Hompheang: 2010).

**Myth 3** When the Lan Chang kingdom was divided into two parts, the people emigrated to Pak Hueng. They made a gold horse. Later, they were robbed by the Haw ethnic group but when the robbers arrived at the estuary of the Hueng River, they felt thirsty and drank the water from the river. The water gave them a severe stomachache and they all died. They became sacred spirits watching the estuary which was called Pak Nam Hueng.
Phra Chao Panjaraj (พระชัยพานจา) ruled Pak Hueng town. When there was a war with the Haw ethnic group, the ruler moved his people from the town. He also brought Phra Siangthaai with him and kept the image in Ban Tha Dee Mee while Phra Chao Ton Luang was taken to Chiang Khan. However, on the way to the town, the raft was wrecked at Wernkham. Phra Chao Ton Luang was dropped into the water and sank beneath Mae Khong River. During the trip to Panjanakhorn, it is believed that Phra Chao Panjaraj was killed by the Haw ethnic group at the estuary of the Hueng River (Tunming, 2009: 69-70).

**Myth 4** Chao Pho Pak Hueng was ethnically Haw. He escaped with his four children and two wives from the war in Luang Phrabang. He carried Phra Siangthaai and his son named Thao Kong (ทอง) along with him. Another version of this myth says that Chao Pho Pak Hueng and his followers travelled along the Mae Khong River in order to take his treasures for donation in constructing Phra That Phanom (พระธาตุพนม). However, the Phra That was finished before his arrival so he desired to bury the treasures at Pak Tom. Unfortunately, he was killed before he could fulfill his desire (Tunming, 2009: 72-74).

**Myth 5** Chao Pho Pak Hueng was a leader of Haw ethnic robbers. He invaded Pak Hueng town and was killed by the Thai army in the area called Pak Hueng. His soul then stayed in the estuary of Hueng River (Sapha: 2010).

**Myth 6** Chao Pho Pak Hueng with his four children escaped from the war with the Haw ethnic group to live in Ban Tha Dee Mee, Thailand. He used a stick to carry the two baskets of his children and a Buddha image called Phra Siang. The baskets were so heavy that the stick became bent (which is ‘kong’ in Lao language). Another version of the myth tells that, when the Lao people lost their faith in him, he emigrated to Thailand with his son and Phra Siangthaai, a Buddha image (Tumsongkram: 2010).

All the myths about Chao Pho Pak Hueng are sacred narratives. Therefore, the narratives related to objects, places and rituals on Chao Pho Pak Hueng are also sacred and help to create a sacred space physically and spiritually through the following symbols:

### 3.2 Chao Pho Pak Hueng (Chao Ong Luang): Sacred Spirit

The diversity of the Chao Pho Pak Hueng myth in 3.1 presents the characteristics of Chao Pho Pak Hueng as a great robber and also a ruler. As a great robber, Chao Pho Pak Hueng was described as a leader of Haw ethnic robbers who came to steal a gold horse at the estuary of Hueng River and died there. In another myth, it is believed that he was killed by Thai soldiers as described in the story where Chao Pho Pak Hueng was the leader of Haw ethnic robbers that came to attack the towns around Hueng estuary and Chiang Khan but was beaten by the Thai army and died at the estuary of Hueng River. His spirit lives there. Another version of the myth tells that after the Lan Chang kingdom was divided, people emigrated to live around the Hueng River estuary. There they made a gold horse and later, Haw ethnic robbers came to take all the treasures of these people. When the robbers arrived at the Hueng River estuary, they felt thirsty so they drank...
water from the river. After drinking, they had a bad stomachache and died at the estuary of the river and remained there as sacred spirits.

The role and behavior presented, on the other hand, was narrated in three versions. In the first, it was believed that Chao Pho Pak Hueng was Phra Chao Panjaraj who ruled Panjanakhorn and built Wat Luang, Phra Chao Ton Luang, Phra Siang, Phra Yaem and some Jataka allegories. During the war with Haw ethnic group, conducted on elephant, Phra Chao Panjaraj took treasures to hide at Ban Tha Dee Mee. He wished to move the big Buddha image called Phra Chao Ton Luang to Chiang Khan by raft. While transporting the Buddha image, the raft was wrecked at Wernthong and Phra Chao Ton Luang sank into the Mekong River at Pak Hueng estuary. After moving all the children, old women and treasures to hide them at the foot of the hill in the south of the town, Phra Chao Panjaraj returned to the war. No matter what the Haw robbers did to try to kill him, he did not die. He was immortal and could not be killed because he was an honest person who truly believed in Buddhism, and had the protection of magic against death. Finally, in order to save all his people, he surrendered to the robbers and told them to stab a wood stick into his anus which was the only way to kill him. After he died, the robbers dug for the hidden treasure but because of a magical phenomenon, the treasure could not be retrieved (Tunming, 2009: 72-74).

In the second, it was believed that Chao Pho Pak Hueng or Chao Ong Luang was a great ruler in Luang Phrabang who ruled Panjanakhorn and built Wat Luang, Phra Chao Ton Luang, Phra Siang, Phra Yaem and some Jataka allegories. During the war with Haw ethnic group, conducted on elephant, Phra Chao Panjaraj took treasures to hide at Ban Tha Dee Mee. He wished to move the big Buddha image called Phra Chao Ton Luang to Chiang Khan by raft. While transporting the Buddha image, the raft was wrecked at Wernthong and Phra Chao Ton Luang sank into the Mekong River at Pak Hueng estuary. After moving all the children, old women and treasures to hide them at the foot of the hill in the south of the town, Phra Chao Panjaraj returned to the war. No matter what the Haw robbers did to try to kill him, he did not die. He was immortal and could not be killed because he was an honest person who truly believed in Buddhism, and had the protection of magic against death. Finally, in order to save all his people, he surrendered to the robbers and told them to stab a wood stick into his anus which was the only way to kill him. After he died, the robbers dug for the hidden treasure but because of a magical phenomenon, the treasure could not be retrieved (Tunming, 2009: 72-74).

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Likewise, the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng is also presented as Thao Khatanam (ท้าวคัดนาย). Chao Pho Pak Hueng (Thao Khatanam) was the ruler of Luang Phrabang who escaped in the Haw War with five children: Euey-Phrommajaree (อี้หย่าฝ้ายมาจารี), Aai Kong (อาี้คง), Aai Phudao (อาี้พุดดาว), Aai Siang (อาี้สิ่ง), and Aai Thao La (อาี้ทาล่า). Together with his son, Aikong, and Phra Siangthaai he sailed along Mae Khong River on a raft until they reached Panjanakhorn which was a quiet place without people and he decided to land at the town. In Panjanakhorn, he found Khamkong hidden inside a drum. He helped her and she told him the story of a gigantic rainbow coming to eat all people in the town and how she had been hidden inside the drum by her father. Before that time, the drum had had to be beaten three times a day in order to protect the town people from the gigantic rainbow. Phra Chao Ong Luang killed the gigantic rainbow by cutting its tongue and he used his resurrection stick to resurrect the town people and Khamkong’s father. Later,
Khamkong became his ladylove. The myth was then the story of *Champa Si Ton* (กำหนดแห่งชุมชน) (Boonphrom, 2010).

It can be explained that the roles which Chao Pho Pak Hueng had as the leader of the Haw robbers who stole treasures from the community and then forced with bad phenomenon and died, and the role as a Haw robber who was killed by Thai army were created to describe his characteristics in relation to the history of the Haw war based on the bias and hatred that the people had towards the Haws in wartime. It can be interpreted that the myth was used to explain the characteristics of Chao Pho Pak Hueng, who was Haw, in using Chinese when possessing the medium. When time had passed and the community had been built, the belief in the sacred ancestor spirit was created to tell the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng as the ruler. It can be seen that the myth was created in order to suggest that he was the hero in Haw wartime who sacrificed himself for his people or to tell that he was a true observer of the precepts, a Bodhi who gave a great support to Buddhism. More importantly, the myth was created in correlation with the story of Phra Siangthai which was the holy Buddhist image of the community. It was told that Chao Pho Pak Hueng was the one who brought Phra Siangthai into the community and Phra Siangthai was like his son. For the goodness and the power of Buddhism, the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng developed from a bad spirit to a good spirit which related to Hongsuwan (2007: 6) who stated that at the beginning of legend contained in various Tai stories, there would be bad characters such as *Yak* (giant) and ghosts who were to be believed the representatives of evil, ethnic groups without precepts, and all manner of scary things. However, in the last part of the stories, those things were taught to believe in Buddhism and to do good things and became dharma practitioners. So the image of the *Yak* and spirit without the precepts were the representatives of the bad, and the image of the *Yak* and spirits with Buddhist precepts in mind were the representative of the good. It can be seen that the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng explained that he was a Haw who robbed the town but he became the hero of the community because he was a developed spirit.

Considering the stories of the role and the behavior of Chao Pho Pak Hueng or Chao Ong Luang as the ruler in the context of the history of the creation of Hueng River estuary community, the stories described the way of life that the people had and their experiences in war, unending emigration and secession. The legend of Chao Pho Pak Hueng would be presented depicting him as king of the deserted Panjanakhorn at Pak Nam Hueng. He was an ethnic Haw but he was a Buddhist and the creator of invaluable community property. During the war, he was a war-hero, a leader who protected the people and their property so his role and behavior was presented as that of a Bodhisattawa named Khatanam who conquered the gigantic rainbow and revived the Panjanakhorn people. This is the legend of the royal spirit in the Pak Nam Heung community that was constructed by relating their hero to the legend of Panjanakhorn through his role as a ruler in local history during the Haw war at the Pak Nam Hueng where the hero fought with the Haw robbers to the death. The legend is related to community property that are Phra Yam and Phra Siang and Phra Chao Ton Luang as their king who became a creator and a benefactor to Buddhism and the legend that is related to local literature and spread widely along
the Khong River was that he is like the Khatanam Bodhisattawa who is brave grateful and believes in Buddhism.

His behavior and his role as a ruler indicate that the legend or myths created an identity and a sense of unity for the Pak Nam Hueng community; that is, the people who lived in the Pak Nam Hueng area of Thailand are refugees from Pak Hueng town on the left bank of the Hueng River or are from the old Chiang Khan (Chanakham). Whatever the reasons were for them to move to Thailand, war, to escape from French colonization and seeking for a new homeland, when they came and settled down in a new place, they needed spiritual refuge and a community identity to explain the roots of their identity so people in the community had their own myths and memories to explain that they were from Lan Chang or Luang Phrabang and they had come to Pak Hueng or Panjanakhorn which was deserted owing to Haw war. Pak Hueng is the place which had been governed by rulers and the Pak Hueng people have their own supernatural ancestors. According to their myths, Chao Pho Pak Hueng was a king from Luang Prabang and his parents lived at Ting Cave but he immigrated to Panjanakhorn with Phra Siang and Phra Chao Ton Luang and rescued his mistress Khamkong.

It can be interpreted from these myths that the Pak Hueng people created them to explain the community identity and give a sense of ethnic unity and a sense of ethnic history which is related to their local literature – Thao Khatanam (ท้าวคัมภีร์), and to Ting Cave at Luang Phrabang with the myth of Pha-Hung (พะหุง) at Pak-U (ปากอุ้ย) where mistress Khamkong hid in the big drum to keep safe from the rainbow and where the people were killed by the rainbow. The myths are also related to the history of the Haw war and inform them about their ancestors, the roots of their community, their Laotian ethnicity and their ancestor who was a great and brave ruler of Luang Phrabang. The occurrence of the Haw war drove their ancestors to move to take over the abandoned town of Panjanakhorn.

The myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng reflect the lives of people in a state of war. They are separated from their families, relatives and spouses. When their country is at peace, their relatives can discover each other and immigrate to live together in a new land. The myths are symbols communicating to the coming generations that it is decidedly hard to settle down and create a community in a state of war because relatives become estranged from one another. So, it has been said in the myth that it plays a good role in recording the traces of the religious conflict and ethnic group conflict. It is the record of Thai ancestors’ attitudes which have been passed on to the coming generations in the form of myth instead of in the form of fact; so myth is for communicating a “message” through a symbol system with the complexity of a thinking and belief system (Jaruworn, 2006: 394) so the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng explain the important background to the Pak Hueng community in Thailand, their long history, their ancestors and the roots of Laotian ethnic group from Lan Chang kingdom.

In conclusion, in the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng it is believed that he was either a king or a Haw robber. The researcher considers that the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng as a robber would be the former version and the version of Chao Pho Pak Hueng as a ruler was told later. The
change of time, the foundation of the community and the belief in the ancestor spirits may have influenced the content of the myth highlighting the role of Chao Pho Pak Hueng as a hero who sacrificed himself for his people and had a true belief in Buddhism. It can be said that the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng have played a role in creating a community identity and a sense of ethnic history for the people living at Pak Nam Hueng.

3.3 Pak Nam Hueng and Wernkham: Sacred Places

Sacred places are related to the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng because there is a myth about Pak Nam Hueng telling of the cave of Naga. In the cave, Chao Aai Thao La was the guardian of the estuary of the Hueng River and the treasure that had sunk in the water at the time the raft had been broken. It was also Wernkham (หวั่นคำ), a place in the Mae Khong River near the estuary of Hueng River where the Phra Chao Ton Luang (Buddha image) sank. There was a narrative in the communities that, previously, when the water in the river was high, there would be a loud noise which was believed to be caused by a current of the water hitting the Buddha image under the river. When the tide was low, people who went fishing would be able to see the image. Narratives on the Buddha image and the sacred places were created in relation to the myth. That is the Buddha image or the treasure was guarded by Chao Pho Pak Hueng, the owner. It represents a link with the former perception of the Naga, Chao Aai Thao La whose cave was at the estuary of the Hueng River, and the perception of Buddhism. The two perceptions were linked and applied to the myth in order to explain that Wernkham and Pak Hueng were scary water areas. No one dared to invade these places. The treasure buried there, as told in the myth, belonged to the community as a whole. At the estuary of the Hueng River on the Thai bank was the place where the house of Chao Pho Pak Hueng’s spirit resided. It was a respected place for people travelling by the Hueng River in the past. People who travelled by boat would take off their hats and pour some liquor into the river or they would phanom Mue (ผันมาว) (putting the palms of hands together and bowing the head close to the tips of the fingers) to show respect to the spirit when passing by the area. This was regarded as a symbolic ritual to be performed when entering into the sacred spaces.

To define the meaning of these sacred spaces is to delineate the area in the ordinary world as the area of spirits or a sacred space by relating the Buddhist dimension to the former viewpoint. Wernkham is the place of Phra Chao Ton Luang, a Buddha image that was a treasure of Cha Pho Pak Hueng. The estuary of the Hueng River is the place of treasure and the cave of Chao Aai Thao La, a Naga. Kaw-anantakul (2003: 2) indicated that in the process of creating a sacred space there were many sacred spaces. It could be a natural area such as under a big tree, a cliff, a mountain or an invention of humans. These things are mediums that people in each culture select as a means that leads to the answer of how the supernatural power exists. The estuary of the Hueng River and Wernkham then could signify the sacred space of the spirit: Chao Pho Pak Hueng, and Chao Aai Thao La. When people passed by, they would pay respect and try not to do things that were not allowed. People witnessed the communication with a sacred person and could request for protection and wishes from the space. In turn, if anyone did
something that was prohibited by the supernatural power in the area, that person would be punished by death.

3.4 Sacred Objects

According to the myth, Chao Pho Pak Hueng brought Phra Chao Ton Luang and Phra Siangthaai Buddha image into Pak Hueng estuary together with his sons. The images were in one basket and his sons were in the other basket. The two baskets were put at each end of a stick for balance. However, because of the heavy weight, the stick bent. The word ‘bent’ in the Lao language is ‘kong’ which later became the name of his son, ‘Aai Kong’. Phra Siangthaai was like a child to Chao Pho Pak Hueng. Before organizing any religious event or ritual, Pho Saen had to worship and inform the image. The narrative on the sacredness of Phra Siangthaai tells that once the religious hall in the temple was burnt down no harm was done to the Buddha image. Another was about a thief who tried to steal the image but became faint hearted and failed to do it and, also, the story of a Chiang Khan ruler who was afraid of losing Phra Siang, so he moved the image to Chiang Khan town but, when he arrived at Pak Hueng, suddenly, the weather became stormy. So, the image was taken back to the former place. These sacred stories were a combination of the two dimensions of the primitive and the Buddhist perspectives joined in order to create the significance of Phra Siangthaai in terms of symbol or as a representative of the Lord Buddha. The image was also regarded as a child of Chao Pho Pak Hueng. Aai Kong and Aai Phudao, two of the four sons of Chao Pho Pak Hueng were the guardians of the image. This implied a relationship between the power of the Lord Buddha and of the spirit; one which was flexible depending on how the people defined its meaning. If Phra Siang’s status was as Chao Pho Pak Hueng’s child, it would show that the power of spirit was stronger than that of the Lord Buddha. However, the Buddha’s power was able to turn the evil into a good spirit.

The construction of the meaning on the sacredness of Phra Siangthaai, the production of the narratives on the miracle and the magic of powers of Phra Siangthaai which no one could own and even the leader with foremost power of the town as sacred narratives signified that Phra Siangthaai was not only a treasure of Chao Pho Pak Hueng, it was also a treasure of the community since their ancestor was the one who brought it to the town. Communications, by signifying the sacred space through the sacred objects, reflected the roots of the people in the Pak Hueng community. They had had a long faith in Buddhism since ancient times. Therefore, they had the right and power to possess the sacred Buddha image. This can be related to the saying that the symbolic narrative was constructed to signify its meaning in relation to power. The new perspective of narrative then poses the question on why the constructed meaning is signified like that. (Kaewthep, 2010: 252)

3.5 Sacred Rituals

All year round, there are significant rituals related to Chao Pho Pak Hueng and his followers as follows: in the 6th lunar month, there is Bai Si Su Khwan (บ้านศุก่อน) (the ritual of welcoming) for Chao Pho Pak Hueng and his followers; in the 7th lunar month, there is the Liang Pee ritual (a ritual of feast for spirits), the feast is conducted via the medium and is treated as a ceremony for the spirits; at the end of
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Buddhist lent (the 1st day of the waning moon of the 11th lunar month), it is a tradition for the community to have a long-boat race to please the spirits. Such rituals reflect the culture and the sense of Laoness rooted in the Lan Chang kingdom. The Bai Si Su Kwan ritual does not only reflect the concept of Khwan or soul which is the primitive perspective of Tai-Lao ethnicity but it is also the meeting space among the sacred souls. Liang Pee (/afii59687;/afii5973.;/afii597.5;/afii59744;/afii59717;/afii59733;/afii59753;/afii59714;/afii59687;/afii597.7;/f7.2;) is a ritual of feasts for the spirits to show that the community is grateful to them as they are the respected ancestors who are bringing all the fruitfulness, and joy to the community before starting the New Year which is before the Buddhist Lent period. The Linag Pee is also the space for the reunion of all the descendants of Chao Pho Pak Hueng. The ritual reflects the root of Laoness and the high culture in the royal palace of Luang Phrabang. The communication is done through mediums. The priority in taking possession of the medium is based on seniority: father, mother and the young, respectively. The young will show respect to their seniors. On meeting, all the mediums will embrace one another as if they were from the same family while Chao Pho Pak Hueng sits on the highest seat under protection of the left Saen (/afii5971.;/f7.a;/afii59725;/afii59745;/afii59722;/afii597.5;/afii59691;/f7.b;/afii5973.;/afii59714;) and the right Saen (/afii5971.;/f7.a;/afii59725;/afii59745;/afii59722;/afii597.5;/afii59682;/afii59719;/afii5973.;) (Saen means a person who is assigned to serve Chao Pho Pak Hueng, one sitting on the right and one on the left). For security purposes, the two Saen will taste all the food and drink before it is offered to the Chao Pho. The favorite ritual of Chao Pho Pak Hueng is boat racing. It has been said that the result of the race does not be a matter to him, what he wants is to have his descendants get together and have the race because it was the tradition of the King of Laos in the ancient time. It is also part of the culture of the river-based community people to have a boat racing to worship to the Naga. Singyabut (2010: 142) indicates that Boon Suang Huer (บูนสุข thuận) or the boat racing tradition is an activity performed in the Khan River during the 9th lunar month. As it was regarded as a royal tradition, it was named Phra Rajaprapaynee Boon Yueng Khan (พระราชประพายณ์บูนยุงกัน) (the Boon Yueng Khan Royal Tradition). It is sometimes called the Ritual of Khan River (/afii59745;/afii59713;/f7.a;/afii597.5;/afii59753;/afii59757;/afii5973.;/afii59684;/afii5973.;/afii597.5;) which is considered another sacred tradition. However, joy can also be found in the tradition. Taking into consideration the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng, it reveals some corresponding clues that the Chao Pho emigrated from Luang Phrabang and his parents were in Ting Cave at the estuary of the U-river, so, undoubtedly, the ritual reflects the root of Lan Chang Laoness.

The rituals of Chao Pho Pak Hueng have been reproduced to pass on the ideology of Lan Chang Laoness. They play a role in maintaining the ethnic identity, explaining the ethnic roots and the cultural strategy used in getting community members together. The role of myths in social tradition viewed by Bascom (1965: 279-298) that there is a relation between myth and ritual. A myth is a narrative which is make-believably true in ancient times. It is treated as a sacred narrative and always has some relation to the belief in God and ritual. Ritual is also significant to a culture in creating the identity of an ethnic group or of a community. A particular ritual will be related to a particular ethnic group or a particular community that created that ritual. Therefore, to humans, ritual is an important cultural strategy as it gives support to let them live their lives with psychological and social security. It can be concluded that belief and myth are
important elements in explaining the origin of a ritual.

The sacred narratives of Chao Pho Pak Hueng analyzed through the people the places, the objects and the rituals indicate that Pak Hueng communities are meaningful physically due to their spiritual richness in the dimension of Buddhism, Brahminism, and primitive perspectives. In the view of Vallibbodom (2010: 12-36 ) on the creation of sacred space, he points out that the physical space is meaningful to the settlement of any community as space cannot exist without meaning to human beings. On the contrary, human beings always signify a geographical space based on the geophysical conditions supportive to the settlement of a community. Therefore, every social culture attaches a sacred meaning to any spaces with a unique geographical condition. In the same way, the myths of the Pak Hueng communities are related to the history of their emigration, the fight against the difficulties of life on a land which was divided into two separate kingdoms and the separation from homeland, family and kinship. The settlement of a new community needed stability and identity. The community then created the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng to emphasize history and reproduced the stories from the past in order to pass on the ideology, power and ethnic identity to the younger generation. Tresidder (1999: 141) views the creation of a sacred space as the creation of cultural, social and historical treasures. It is a place of community identity. The sacred narratives and rituals at the Pak Hueng communities reflect the root of Laoness in Lan Chang, Luang Phrabang. The stories have been reproduced over and over from ancestors to descendants. They have been continued through community tradition in order to maintain community security in the new land. The creation of the sacred space is a combination of the primitive perspective and the Buddhist perspective. The combination is a clue to community thoughts that are full of the belief in spirits, Naga, giants and monsters. These supernatural things were, afterwards influenced by the stronger power, Buddha’s power. They developed moral characteristics and, though there is an acceptance of the Buddha’s power, the primitive perspective is still to be found perfectly mixed with the new belief in Buddha. This is considered a typical aspect of Thai myth as viewed by Jaruworn (2006: 389). He points out that the conflicts reflected in the myths are through the paradigm of the characters in the myth. The conflicts are mostly found between human beings and supernatural power, the conflict between the belief in the primitive perspective and that in Buddhism. The creation of sacred space through the symbols: people, objects, places, and rituals in the Pak Hueng communities is the change of physical space to spiritual or mental space which is a kind of strategy in creating social space of the Pak Hueng communities which will be explained as follows.

4. Dynamic of the Myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng and the Construction of Social Space

Based on the myths and the history of the Pak Hueng communities, the people living on the right bank of the Hueng River in Thailand believe that their ancestors were from Panjanakhorn who had emigrated to and from Thailand, on and off, and eventually settled down in Thailand and became Thai people. The Hueng River became a natural border between the two countries: Thailand and Laos. The
brotherly relationship between the two was also discontinued for a period of time. However, the Hueng River presently is no longer a border between two countries but it is a river symbolizing the relationship among people living in Hueng communities. The dynamics of the Hueng community settlement has been reflected through the dynamics of the sacred myths and the narratives on Chao Pho Pak Hueng as follows:

4.1 The Myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng, the Construction of Identity and the Public Sense of the Communities

The people living in the Pak Hueng community in Thailand are the group that emigrated from the other Pak Hueng community and the former Chiang Khan (Sanakham) which are on the left side of Hueng River in Laos. No matter what was the reason for them to leave their homeland to seek a new land for settlement, when they settled down as a community, they needed protection to psychologically secure their lives and needed the creation of an identity to explain their history, background and roots. Therefore, the community created narratives from their memories of their past experiences that they were from Laos, Lan Chang, Luang Phrabang. Due to the war with the Haw ethnic group, their ancestors had emigrated to Pak Hueng town or Panjanakhorn which was a deserted town. The town had been ruled by many rulers from generation to generation. Their ancestors possessed some magic and part of the myth said that Chao Pho Pak Hueng was a king from Luang Phrabang. His parents lived in Ting Cave. He moved to Thailand with two Buddha images: Phra Siang and Phra Chao Ton Luang. During the trip, he found a town called Panjanakhorn and happened to help the princess, Kham Kong. Some versions say that Chao Pho Pak Hueng’s ethnicity was Haw. He was about 13 feet high. He brought some sacred objects with him on the way to Thailand to help in constructing Phra That Phanom. From the myths, we can infer that the purpose of creating the narratives was to express the community identity and to create an ethnic and historical sense among its members. The strategy involved local stories like Thao Khatanam, a story that linked Ting Cave in Luang Phrabang which contained the narrative of Pha Hung (Hung cliff) in Pak U River. The story was about a woman named Kham Kong who hid inside a drum. The people in the town were all eaten by a monster. The myth was also linked to the history of the Haw war in order to explain the Lao ethnic roots of the community. It was reported that their ancestor was the king of Laos, Luang Phrabang, who was brave. However, because of the war with the Haw ethnic group, their ancestors moved to rule Panjanakhorn which was a deserted town. He became the ruler of the town for acceptable reasons.

The myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng also reflect the lives of people during the war which brought them separation from family and the desire to seek for a new safe place for settlement. Based on the myths, while travelling to escape from the war, Chao Pho Pak Hueng had an argument with his wife and the raft which they used for travelling happened to fall apart. They were separated and had new families of their own. Later, they came back to live together and settled down on the land on the right side of the Hueng River in Thailand. The myths are symbols to communicate to the younger generation about their ancestors’ lives during war period. As has been said, myth plays a role...
in recording a history of conflicts in
different dimensions, and religions and
ethnic groups. In comparison to the written
record, myths have collected more detail on
the perspectives of Thai-Tai ancestors in
ancient times and have passed it on to the
younger generations. It is therefore a
communication of ‘information’ through a
symbolic system. It is even more
complicated as it includes many aspects
and dimensions of thought and belief
(Jaruworn, 2006: 394). That is why Chao
Pho Pak Hueng is most significant to the
Hueng community in Thailand.

The Pak Hueng community on the left side
of the Hueng River in Laos was just
established around 30 years ago. The
people living there are from different
places and from several ethnic groups.
There are some narratives that serve to
create the community identity. It said that
in the last life, Chao Pho Pak Hueng used
to live in Panjanakhorn. The treasure, Phra
Chao Ton Luang, which was under the
water at Wernkham and Chao Pho Pak
Hueng all used to be at Panjanakhorn
before leaving for Thailand. So, the people
still pay respect to Chao Pho Pak Hueng as
it is understood that he was their ancestor
in the last life. The new community at
Wernkham was named Wernkham Village
and this shows that the community defined
itself based on the myths in order to
explain their right to set up the community
in that place and imply to their ethnic root.

They took the meaning of the space by
using the name ‘Wernkham’ which is the
sacred place with which to name their
community. They created a sense of unity
among the different races to include the
Lao Lum (ဗိုလ်မီး) (Lower Lao) and the Lao
Therng (ဗိုလ်နီး) (Upper Lao) and the
highland Laos by motivating people to
have the same respected sacred spirit in
order to bind the people minds as one.

The sacred narratives of Chao Pho Pak
Hueng during the beginning of the
community establishment indicated the
roles of the sacred myths in creating the
ethnic identity, the sense of unity and the
sense of the ethnic roots of those people.
This aspect concerns with the study of
Wangkeeree (2008: 391) on the literature
in Dan Sai, Lom Sak, and Lom Kao
Districts. The findings indicate the
creation of the identity of the Lao in
Luang Phrabang in the early period of
emigration and are related to the historical
sense of the emigration, the community
establishment and the respect for the Lao
hero from Luang Phrabang. The creation is
not just to define their identity and to have
a community history and background but
it also constitutes the claim to have the
right over the new land which includes
emphasizing the ethnic sense of the Lao
from Luang Phrabang which will always
remain in their minds.

4.2 The Myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng,
the Response and the Negotiations with
the Thai Government

The Pak Hueng community people became
Thai citizens after the Haw ethnic war
during the reign of King Rama V and they
had to accept all the Thai authorities.
However, their sense of their ethnic roots
still remained. The myth indicated that
Chao Pho Pak Hueng died in the estuary
of the Hueng River because of the Thai
army. During his travels to Chiang Khan,
he brought along Phra Chao Ton Luang as
he wished to place the image in the town
as a safe place. However, his raft was sunk
before reaching the town. Chiang Khan
was considered a safe place for the image
because it was the center of authority. The
sacred narrative of Phra Siang, a child of
Chao Pho Pak Hueng, states that no one
was able to steal it and this implies that the
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Pak Hueng community in Thailand had a sense of being of Lao ethnicity even though they had already become Thai citizens. They were controlled by a central authority that had tried to possess the community treasure and to rule the community. The myths were therefore created to reflect their acceptance of and their negotiations with the Thai authorities and also to express their right to protect the highly valued treasure of their ancestors.

The myths have not only reflected the negotiations that the Pak Hueng community in Thailand had with the state authorities but the rituals related to Chao Pho Pak Hueng also indicated the creation of a social space for the Pak Hueng community in Thailand and in the Ken Thao Province of Laos in B.E. 2518 (1975) (before the revolution in Laos). There were some narratives found in Ken Thao Province such as the story of their ancestors who came from Panjanakhorn – Pu Lan (ปู่ลำ) and Ya Ng-onk (ยายกอง) (Grandpa Lan and Grandma Ng-onk) and the story about a medium of Chao Pho Pak Hueng and a medium of Chao Pho Ken Thao (องครักษ์ผ่าน) and his followers. Even though the two communities have been separated into two towns from different countries, whenever and wherever there are any traditional events held, the mediums of Chao Pho Pak Hueng from the Pak Hueng communities will always participate in the events which are, for example, the Bai Si Su Khwan, Buddhist event of the 7th lunar month. Such practices show that the communities have faith in the same spirits, share the same ethnic roots and come from the same hometown. This creates a sense of unity among these people. The unity acts as a tool in co-constructing a social space for them in order to negotiate with the authorities of the two states. The use of custom and tradition as a strategy for building friendship over the borderland was studied by Thongkhanarak (2008: 105). According to this study, during the year B.E. 2480 (1937), Boon Phawate (บุญท้าว) was a significant religious event in a village in Mueang District, Nakhorn Phanom Province. The event was held annually. It was the opportunity for family members who lived in long distance places to come back home because they could not visit the family so often because of the poor transportation. Some lived in Laos and had to travel by boat across the Mae Khong River to join the event. It was a time of family-reunion. The study of Petkham (2010: 144) found that the beliefs and the rituals of Phi Chao Huen Sam Phra Ong (พี่เจ้าฮัณสมพระอง) or Hor Chao Tong Kwang (หอร์เจ้าต่งวางแผน) in Nakhorn Phanom Province was one of the processes in creating a sacred space to maintain the existing economic and social areas. It also continued the social relationship network in the lower Mae Khong area.

4.3 The Myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng and the Nationality Change to ‘Thai’

As time has passed, the people of the Pak Hueng community in Thailand have changed their nationality to ‘Thai’ and accepted being governed by the Thai authorities. However, their ethnic sense of being Lao, Lan Chang still remains. This can be seen through the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng or the former Chao Ong Luang, after he escaped from Luang Phrabang to Thailand during the time of war. Because the people in Thailand did not pay respect to him, his spirit house was built at the estuary of the Hueng River in...
Thailand and that, he was named Chao Pho Pak Hueng. After settling in Thailand, his wife (named Oob Kaew, นางอับศิลป์), his brother, and relatives from Laos also moved to join him in Thailand. Chao Pho Pak Hueng was Chao Pho Pu Lup (เจ้าพ่อปู่)’s brother. He was the person who brought Buddhism into the community. He did not like I-sarn performances or the Morlum (ธงมอร์ลุ่ม) on Nang Kham Kong (ชั่งมาคิ้ม) and Sung Sin Chai (สิงห์ศิริ). A narrative said that Chao Pho Pak Hueng disliked Aai Pak Kwang (อัย่่่ก็ะแก้ว) (Aai Tongkwang living in the estuary of the Krading River) who was his son-in-law; so, he hid his daughter called Phromajaree at Ken Thao town. The story indicated that the myth and the narrative were changed and pointed to the reason why these people moved to Thailand, a land of peace and freedom. They became Thai citizens because they had built a kinship relationship with Chao Pho Pu Lup (a royal spirit guarding Dong Lan in Phupaan mountains). They denied their Lao ethnicity through the myth of Naang Kham Kong and they rejected Aai Pak Kwang, a Naga, who had some relationship with their origin in Lao. Wongtase (2000: 4-5) opines that the myth of Urangkhathat (อุระงเรากิจ) indicates that Naga was a symbol of the ethnic people who originally resided in Nong Sae (หนองใส่ in the south of Yunnan Province, who emigrated in small groups to settle along the banks of the Mae Khong River and ended up at Kaeng Li Phi (แควนนี่) which was the end of the waterway made by Naga. In other words, it was the story of the people who emigrated to the Mae Khong area in the northeastern part of Thailand.

The refusal Lao ethnicity implies a political issue because the Hueng River was the border between the two countries. The people residing on the right bank of the Hueng River were Thai citizens according to the building of the nation state and the people refused to be Lao ethnics as is reflected in the myth. There are different versions of the myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng because it was modified by incorporating the concept of Buddhism into the myth to make the space more refined. This is how they created their identity in the new land to identify their higher civilization. This was the strategy to make their myth a Buddhist story.

The dynamic aspect and the role of myth, as mentioned above, constitute the nature of the narrative that the communities invented based on the original story. The invention was modified in some parts to suit the local environment and social context at each period of time. The major purpose of these narratives was to repeat and reproduce the story of the past with a combination of ideology, power and ethnic identity (Hobsbawm, 1998). The Pak Hueng communities changed to become ‘Thai’ and ‘Lao’ according to factors of social and political context that have changed through the passage of time. The myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng have shaped the ideology of Lao ethnicity from Lan Chang. The rituals and the myths about Chao Pho Pak Hueng have built up a unity among Thai people, among Lao people, and also between Thai and Lao people. The myths explain the ethnic roots and the characteristics of the people residing at the banks along the Hueng River. Kaewthep (2010: 266-267) states that a narrative has the function of shaping the original ideology and making it sustainable, in building a unity in society in explaining the phenomenon and
supplying facts on the characteristics of the people, nation, things, places and actions which is the new paradigm in storytelling.

4.4 The Myth of Chao Pho Pak Hueng and the Present Construction of Social Space along the Thai-Lao Borderland

Currently, the Pak Hueng communities on the banks of the Hueng River still maintain a relationship in spite of the fact that there is a border (the Hueng River) dividing them. They still have the same daily life activities involving crossing the river back and forth. People from Laos will cross the river to shop at the local market on the river bank in Thailand every Wednesday and Sunday. Some are workers on farms in Thailand. Whenever there are any traditional events, the people from both river banks will always get together to celebrate. They have the same faith in Chao Pho Pak Hueng who will guard them when travelling no matter whether by waterway or land-way, solve problems, eliminate all difficulties, be reliable on economic issues and safeguard the communities’ treasures.

Because Chao Pho Pak Hueng is considered a highly respected ancestor to the people of the two communities, the people have always shared a sense of kinship. They will join ceremonies together such as Bai Si Su Khwan, and Liang Pee. Together, they will donate to the Liang Pee feast. The most important activity is participating in the boat racing at the end of the Buddhist Lent period (Auk Phansa, ๑๐ธันวาคม). One narrative suggests that, at first, the boat race was organized only on the river bank in Thailand. The purpose was not for competing but only to please the Chao Pho Pak Hueng. Later, the people on the river bank in Laos who also had faith in the spirit participated in the racing. The local administrative organization (Pak Tom Sub district) has allocated a budget to support the activity since the year B.E. 2540 (1997). The boat racing or Suang Huer has become more meaningful and enjoyable and a greater number of people from both river banks have joined the activity. The unity of the two communities is, thus, stronger.

The myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng are symbols linking the people from both river banks together. When Lao people say Pai Hor (ไปหอรี่) (go to the spirit house), everyone in Pak Hueng will understand and facilitate travelling across the river. It can be concluded that the belief in the Chao Pho Pak Hueng spirit represents the local power to respond or negotiate with the state authority over the borderland.

The belief in Chao Pho Pak Hueng and his follower, Chao Aai Thao La, who was a guardian of Phra Chao Ton Luang – the Buddha image sunk in the water at Wernkham, Mae Khong River led the people in Ban Mai Wernkham (เวียนทองคำ) community, Laos, to understand that the Buddha image remained under the water. When they learned that a group of state officials and Chinese people would come for the image (between March and April B.E. 2553 (2010), they felt that the image belonged to them. The villagers consisted of a village leader and some followers who had worshiped the spirits of Chao Pho Pak Hueng and Chao Aai Thao La for protection of the treasure. Arising from this situation, there are stories told by the villagers from time to time. One example is the story of a giant snake that was opening its mouth wide to protect the
Buddha image when one of the group members dived into the water and tried to get the image. There were at least 3-4 people who died trying to rescue the image from under water but it did not even move in spite of the fact that it was light (Bodhiwan, 2010). These are the sacred narratives and sacred rituals related to Chao Pho Pak Hueng. They suggest the local power that the communities have used for negotiation with the unrelenting state authority invading their social space. The myth is a piece of local wisdom to protect their community treasure. The Pak Hueng community in Thailand has also produced some narratives to make the situation more sacred. For example, the Buddha image in Wernkham has already been moved to Phra Yai in Phu Fah, Thailand. The one under the water at Wernkham is just a body without a sacred spirit. This can be considered to be a fight for significant space and to reduce the sacredness of Chao Ong Luang in order to respond to the power of the right possessor.

According to the above information, the myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng have a dynamic aspect in relation to the social and the political context of the people residing along the banks of the estuary of the Hueng River. The dynamic has been processed since ancient times to the present but they still hold on to a sense of their ethnic roots. The sacred spirit of Chao Pho Pak Hueng is respected in the two communities. They have participated in the same rituals regardless of the national border that divides them into two communities of two nations. They have considered the border as ‘the matter of authority’ not their business; so the social space of the two communities is undividable. Kaewthep (2001) states that social space is a special space constructed in relation to the society and it serves as a tool of control, social space construction, identity and culture among marginal people. It has been selected to reproduce and produce differently. It is a means of control and, hence of, domination and power in order to construct a space for itself and the ethnic group. In the same way, the construction of a spiritual space combines the primitive perspective and the Buddhist perspective on the physical area of the Hueng River, especially, at the estuary of the Hueng River which has been constructed as a sacred space that is actually a social space for the two communities residing along the Hueng River banks both in Thailand and Laos. The space serves as a tool of control against the state power which divides the group into ‘Thai’ and ‘Lao’ or others. However, the separation cannot be completely successful. The space has changed based on values and the social production of meaning and it could be said that it has dynamic aspect. As a result, the sacred narratives have been affected and changed in the same way.

5. Conclusion

The myths of Chao Pho Pak Hueng are narratives on the spirits of sacred people well known by the people in the Pak Hueng communities in both sides of the river, Thailand and Laos. The sacred narratives allow the sacred spaces to exist both physically and spiritually. The development of the sacred spaces has been processed through Chao Pho Pak Hueng, the sacred Buddha images, the estuary of the Hueng River and Wernkham, and the sacred rituals in the communities. The myths make a contribution in constructing the sense of ethnic root – Laos, Lan Chang in Luang Phrabang. The communities’ ideology has been reproduced through
local traditions. The myths are dynamic in relation to the social context during the period of community settlement on the new land when the sense of community history and their ethnicity were established. The myths also reflect the Thainess of the community people and their acceptance of and negotiation with the state authority of Thailand. Currently, the myths and the rituals related to Chao Pho Pak Hueng allow the sacred spaces to exist and they are still in practice and function in strengthening the spirits of the people on both sides of the Hueng River and create a social space for them. The unity of the two communities over the Thai-Lao borderland has been founded.

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“BANGKOK” IN CONTEMPORARY THAI LITERATURE: GLOBALIZATION, TOURISM, AND CONSUMERISM

Suradech Chotiudompant

Abstract

The paper aims to investigate how Bangkok is represented in contemporary Thai literature, including those works by such authors of renown as Chamlong Fangcholachit, Prabda Yoon, and Paritas Hutangkul. Through the perspectives of these contemporary authors, Bangkok has been used as a poignant setting to showcase the problems and conditions of urbanism in Thailand. The paper aims to focus on three main issues of representation, which are not completely separated but closely intertwined: (1) Bangkok as a hub of globalization, where cultural forces, especially those from the West, clash with local knowledge and wisdom; (2) Bangkok as a major tourist destination, where the tourist’s imagination of Bangkok and Thailand as an exotic place jars with the realities they actually face upon their arrival; and (3) Bangkok as a city of capitalism and consumerism, where urban people define themselves through their conspicuous consumption. Contemporary Thai literature, especially those works in the last two decades, make manifest the complexity of these three issues as well as how these issues affect urban dwellers in their everyday life.

Introduction

It goes without saying that over the past decades Bangkok has expanded both in economic and cultural terms. An increasing number of tourists from all over the world choose Bangkok as both a main tourist destination or as a central point of transit before moving on to neighboring countries such as Laos, Cambodia or Myanmar. Major transnational companies such as Tesco, Boots, McDonalds, and KFC have prospered in this city of angels and the number of incoming companies is on the increase. The presence of this Western influence is jarringly juxtaposed with local places that have lasted for more than a century, such as the Grand Palace, Sanam Luang and major temples in the older part of the city. Exemplary is the case of Khao San Road, which has been a popular haunt for backpackers because it is lined with cheap accommodation and bars that boast big-screen televisions showing a range of English-language programs from Hollywood blockbusters to international football matches. This road, which has been transformed into a walking street frequented by tourists traveling on a shoestring, is so popular that it has featured in several Hollywood films such as The Beach and Hangover II. However, one should also take into account the fact that this road of world renown is located right in the older part of Bangkok, just a stone throw’s away from age-old temples, such as Wat Bowonniwet, whose atmosphere of awed sacredness has provided a sanctuary for Bangkokians since King Mongkut was the first abbot in 1836 prior to his

This juxtaposition is by no means new in contemporary Thai culture and various literary works written by contemporary authors, be they Thai or international, have addressed the multiple forms and dimensions of the East-West encounter by different literary means and with varying perspectives. International authors have extensively fictionalized Bangkok. Figures such as John Burdett, Stephen Leather, Christopher G. Moore and Timothy Hallinan may be little heard of by those studying contemporary literature from the West, but for those in the know, these authors have revisited Bangkok so many times in their fiction. Through their pen (or to be more technologically accurate, their keyboards), Bangkok has been transformed, and to a certain degree stereotyped, into a mysterious, dark place distinguished by dirty alleyways, incredible traffic jams and sleazy bars, peopled by femmes fatales, ghosts, criminals, ladyboys and kick boxers. Their publications can be easily purchased in South East Asian airports and English-language bookstores in this region. However, this essay aims to focus on a different group of lesser-known literary works, those written by Thai authors, which probably cannot be found except in quality Thai bookstores. Evidently less well known, let alone translated, these contemporary Thai works enjoy only a limited readership. My argument here is that, though being disseminated in a limited circle and little recognized in the international sphere, these works take issue with Bangkok in more different ways than one and more often than not display the various perspectives of concerned locals who have seen modernizing changes that have taken place in the capital city and have transformed it into an unfamiliar, uncharted terrain that begs for constant reorientation. Clearly but productively overlapping, globalization, tourism, and consumerism will be three major points around which I will illustrate how Thai authors have addressed these changes.

Globalization and Mobility: Bangkok as an Alienating Place

Even though there have been arguments that Bangkok has been modernized since the reign of King Mongkut or Rama IV, the process has yet to be completed. Part and parcel of the modernizing process, globalization is a central issue, especially when we consider how Bangkok has been open to international interventions, be they economic, political, or cultural. Encompassing various interdisciplinary issues including economics, political science, and the humanities, globalization is, in my opinion, a useful contextual springboard from which we can effectively discuss the social implications of contemporary Thai literature and explore the degree to which these literary works are concerned with present-day Bangkok’s urban conditions.

Globalization is a complex term and various scholars have attempted at a definition. For Malcolm Waters, it is ‘a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social, and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly’ (Waters 2001: 5). The shifting sense of geography becomes a major issue for Waters, as globalization means a significant improvement in telecommunications.
technology and the aviation industry. We can traverse the world in a shorter span of time and this has changed our perception of space. This reduction in time makes people aware that their ‘world’ is increasingly smaller in phenomenological terms and this is related to what Roland Robertson calls ‘the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole’ (Roberson 1992: 8).

For Anthony Giddens, globalization entails two significant processes: the distanciation or separation of time from space and disembedding. Giddens believes that our contemporary society is different from the premodern one in which space and time were fundamentally linked to our rhythms of daily life. At present, the perception of time and space is no longer an empirical experience, but one that is reliant on the mechanical clock, the time-zone system, and global maps (Giddens 1990: 17-21). For Giddens, such a systematication of time and space is part of the modernizing process that translates the whole world, until then perceived as the Tower of Babel, into a rhizomic network of interconnections. This is related to the second process called disembedding, by which Giddens means ‘the ‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across time and space’ (Giddens 1990: 21). Two mechanisms have been instituted to help promote disembedding: symbolic tokens and expert systems. The former means the devising of universal media of exchange, such as the system of currency exchange, and the latter concerns the dissemination and distribution of repertoires of technical knowledge across the globe. These two mechanisms are instrumental in the translation of global complexity and disparity. For these theorists, the world in which we are now living increasingly resembles the ‘global village’ that Marshall McLuhan prophesied (Carpenter and McLuhan 1970: xi).³

Given all these definitions and explications, there must be at least two further remarks: one is that globalization theory should pay more attention to the unequal power relations among nations. Another remark indicates how this inequality generates complex interactions that by no means connote homogeneity in their nature. According to Arjun Appadurai, globalization should not be regarded as the equal and even distribution of global flows, as we may have witnessed from the mushrooming of McDonalds and Starbucks worldwide from Seattle to Beijing, since these flows are in fact disjunctive and multifarious. He argues that:

The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries). Nor is it susceptible to simple models of push and pull (in terms of migration theory), or of surpluses and deficits (as in traditional models of balance and trade), or of consumers and producers (as in most neo-Marxist

³ It should be noted here that, despite the term’s widespread currency, it was first mentioned, almost in passing, in an introduction to the aforementioned anthology of communication studies, when McLuhan discusses the influence of media, especially television, in creating the effect of simultaneity of event reporting to everyone at the same time, thus transforming the world into a global village.
Instead of static models presupposing a dichotomy of power relations, Appadurai advances a more dynamic one by distinguishing five different shifting landscapes on which to study global flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. He goes on to explain that the ‘scapes’ mean the landscapes of different elements that constitute global culture and these are respectively those of people, technology, capital, media and ideologies/counterideologies (Appadurai 1996: 33-36). In this light, global flows are no longer of a one-way, hegemonic direction but clearly multi-directional and highly sensitive to the landscapes which they pervade.

Bangkok, as an urban space, is susceptible to these global flows. The different landscapes that constitute this capital city manifestly and strongly interact with the global flows in this urban context, as the city space is known to be the one in which global flows are perceptibly more intense than in the countryside. However, despite the theoretical possibilities opened to us by Appadurai, the majority of Thai literary works still take issue with globalization in a unidirectional way, i.e. they portray Bangkok as a receiving end of the global flows and these flows are often addressed in a negative light. An typical example is ‘The Witch in the Building’ (‘Mae Mot Bon Tuek’), a short story by Paritas Hutangkul first published in 1997. Paritas talks about a woman who has relocated from her house in the North to live with her sister in Bangkok. Even though her sister claims that she works as a hairdresser, Muansaikham realizes that her main job is prostitution. However, instead of eyeing her sister askance, she wishes to follow her sister’s career path for economic reasons. In portraying Muansaikham’s life and aspirations, the author focuses on describing Thailand as a location where Western influence has strongly made itself felt, since the protagonist is aware of such famous international names as ‘Andy Warhol’ and ‘KFC’ as well as such local entertainment companies such as ‘Grammy’ and ‘RS’, thus connoting how she needs to follow the entertainment and fashion industries in order to be regarded as trendy (Hutangkul 2002: 89).

Her migration to Bangkok should be regarded as a movement toward the center in globalized terms, since the capital city is a place where she can immerse herself in these global flows and subsequently be labeled as a sophisticated urbanite. What Paritas suggests here, to use Appadurai’s terms, is that Bangkok is a site where all the scapes have received and interacted with global flows with a vengeance. Muansaikham and other thousands of immigrants like her represent an important ethnoscapes that makes Bangkok a hybridized state with pockets of immigrants from different regions, not of Thailand alone but of neighboring countries. The situation is made more complex when we take into account the fact that the mediascapes in this city are used to propagate globalized ideologies of neoliberalism that are often in conflict with long-standing local lores. In this case, Muansaikham finds herself subject to

4 Grammy, now known as GMM, and RS are two giants in Thailand’s entertainment industry. They started off in the music industry, introducing new voices in Thai pop music, but now both of the companies have expanded their territories to include TV and radio broadcasting. Grammy, specifically, has recently launched a tour company within its empire.
ideologies such as individualism and the pursuit of wealth, both of which are strongly related to the so-called American Dream, but the institution of such ideologies is not problem-free because the protagonist is also a subject of local beliefs. Hence, it can be construed that Muansaikham is here located at a crossroads, where hegemonic, globalized ideologies are set against local, residual ones. Such an interaction creates feelings of shame and guilt because her aspiration to ‘get rich quick’ means that she needs to take up prostitution, especially given the limited alternatives for social mobility available to single women in Thailand.

As I have argued elsewhere the form of this short story is extremely important (Chotiudompant 2008: 380-95) and it should be added here that the author intends to present the story of Muansaikham as a parody of L. Frank Baum’s Wizard of Oz. Unlike Dorothy, who is on her way to find the Wizard to help her return to her home in Kansas, Muansaikham needs assistance from the Witch in the Building to ‘block’ her heart so that she will not feel remorse or guilt with her new-found career. The parallel is so poignant that one feels that the globalized, i.e. hegemonic North American, narrative of Wizard of Oz is used politically as a critique of globalization, especially when we take into account that the characterization of such an innocent figure as Dorothy is not possible here in Bangkok. Instead of returning to her pristine homeland in the North of Thailand, the protagonist insists on remaining in this urban site where she can prostitute herself.

Globalization in this light brings about a significant flow in ethnoscapes in which an increasing number of people become mobile and, in the case of Thailand, the move is rather towards the metropolis. Like Paritas’s ‘The Witch in the Building’, ‘Adrift’ (‘Khweng’) by Tasanawadi also portrays the living conditions of migrant workers in the City of Angels. Like Muansaikham in ‘The Witch in the Building’, the two protagonists are part of the migrant workers who decide to migrate from their hometowns in the hope of better future. The story, centering on the lives of two Northeasterners or so-called ‘Isan’ people happening to meet in a karaoke bar in Bangkok, takes place on the night of New Year’s Eve. One has been working as a factory worker for five years and the other works as a hostess in the bar. However, the atmosphere on the night of New Year’s Eve is eerily quiet as most migrant workers have returned to their home to celebrate the festival with their families. In their opinion, the departure of people from Bangkok during the New Year festival is ludicrous because there are massive traffic jams both on the outbound and inbound journeys and the returnees tend to spend a lot of money throwing parties for their neighbors and fellow villagers. According to the factory worker:

It is getting harder to find hospitality in our hometown nowadays. The villagers will feast on whoever comes back from Bangkok, like buzzards plucking at corpses. If these guests run out of money and walk past their houses, they will be considered worthless. They will be shunned and not invited to eat at the villagers’ houses any longer. He can’t believe that his hometown which he has left can change this fast. Love and attachments are gradually waning as if they were just superficial illusions. (Tasanawadi 2008: 24)
For some Thai villagers, people who have been working in Bangkok are regarded as relatively rich and are therefore expected to throw parties. The bigger the parties are, the more highly they will be esteemed. However, even though the two protagonists complain about the mass migration during the New Year festival, the tone of their complaint is tinged with ironic bitterness because they feel they have been left behind in the big city and cannot return to their home simply because they do not have enough money.

In this sense, these two people, until then unknown to each other, share certain sentiments of alienation and loss, as they increasingly feel like strangers both to Bangkok and their hometowns. Replying to his question about whether she misses home, Nid the hostess answers: “Home … I have a home but I don’t feel like I have one. I return home but I don’t feel like I have returned to one. My home lost its importance long time ago” (Tasanawadi 2008: 27). Their in-between status and their inability to form a sense of belonging to the place where they live can be seen as a negative consequence of globalization, especially of disembedding. Rendering the issue of distance increasingly irrelevant, disembedding means that traveling and relocation have become increasing commonplace. The popularity of traveling and migration, though on the surface sponsoring the ethics of multiculturalism, also creates a sense of loneliness, as people tend not to stay in one particular place long enough to form their spatial ties.

In ‘Khweng’, this sense of rootlessness is further radicalized by an attachment to nostalgia and a past that is at once imagined and imaginary. Through Appadurai’s mediascapes, both the protagonists try to construct and connect to their roots by frequently referring to look-thung songs, such as ‘Like Rice Waiting for a Sickle’ (‘Muean Khao Khoi Khiew’\(^5\)) and ‘Waiting for Love under the Kradon Tree’ (‘Ror Ruk Tai Ton Kradon’),\(^6\) as well as Yaem Yasothon, a recent film about the lives of Northeastern people. However, the last choice is an interesting case, since the film self-reflexively makes use of playful stylization, to the extent that the Northeast is depicted in an ironic way, connoting that our imagine of the Northeast has been both collective and constructed (Rigg and Richie 2002: 359-371).\(^7\) Although whether or not such an imagine is collective or to what degree it is constructed is of no direct import here but we can discern how much the two protagonists depend on the mass media as a way to construct their homeland so that their rural identity can take root and stand firm against the overwhelming and confusing global flows in the urban space.

Both ‘The Witch in the Building’ and ‘Adrift’ portray the living conditions of migrant workers in contemporary Bangkok. The influence of globalization is evident, as all the main characters of these two stories have relocated respectively

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\(^5\) A song originally sung by Ploenpit Phoonthana about a rural woman waiting for a man to return from the city, like rice waiting to be harvested by a sickle.

\(^6\) A song also about waiting as the male singer expresses his sadness upon looking at the Kradon tree in late April. The tree reminds him of the time that he spent with a woman, who has now forsaken him and the countryside for a new life in the city.

\(^7\) It has been argued that perhaps this imagining of idyllic village life in rural Thailand is indispensable and politically related.
from the North and the Northeast in the hope that the metropolis of Bangkok will give them economic opportunities to help with their social mobility. Their dreams and desires are fostered by the globalized image of Bangkok, rife with global flows from all over the world and transmitted through mass media and advertising. However, such a relocation is never an easy task, as in ‘The Witch in the Building’ where Muansaikham desperately wishes to take up prostitution, which she regards as a shameful job, in order to survive in the city, and as in ‘Adrift’ where the two rootless protagonists are metaphorically cast adrift in Bangkok.

Even though these two stories reinforce Appadurai’s globalization theory in that they illustrate the influence of mediascapes and ethnoscapes and in their contribution to the making of Bangkok as a hybridized space where global flows are seen as rampant, they, by contrast, complicate his theory by showing that what Appadurai (1996) perceives as obsolete, such as the traditional push-and-pull and center-periphery models of migration (32), still operates in these two stories. That is, both ‘The Witch in the Building’ and ‘Adrift’ signal how Bangkok is still regarded as a place of dreams and desire in the eyes of immigrants, whose locales are depicted as barren or unproductive.

Tourism and Transnational Encounter: Bangkok as a Globalized Place

If globalization is an umbrella concept that embraces the totality of contemporary conditions, tourism is certainly one of the major pertinent issues. The growth of airline industries and the rise of economy airlines mean that more and more people travel nowadays. According to Löfgren, the industry of tourism has grown steadily since the 1950s and seven per cent of the global workforce was employed in this industry in the mid-1990s (Löfgren 1999: 6). Tourism is one of the most important businesses in Bangkok and Thailand as a whole, as we constantly see the rise of hotels and boutique resorts catering to the increasing number of tourists from around the world.

In theoretical terms, tourism is a form of traveling and involves a certain degree of intercultural communication and interaction. With tourism, Bangkok is transformed into a dynamic space where foreigners meet with local people and this encounter generates a variety of issues that are raised in contemporary Thai fiction. Prabda Yoon’s ‘A New White Knight in the Heavenly City’ (‘Atsawin Phew Khao Khon Mai Nai Muang Sawan’) directly portrays a white tourist traveling to Thailand and his encounter with the city in various dimensions. Hans, a foreign correspondent assigned to write a story about current political conflicts in Thailand, travels here not only for his job but also to look for the woman he fell in love with two years before when he first came to Bangkok with his wife and two children. Hans believes that their first encounter was fated:

Whilst his family was shopping in a department store, Hans left them to look for a currency exchange kiosk outside. He found one by the roadside and it was there that he met Mai. Standing not far from the kiosk where he changed his euros, she was then not quite twenty years old and had a beautiful Isan look. At first he didn’t notice her until he heard her scream and turned his head in her direction. It
was then that he looked at her face for
the first time and she seemed to be in
the state of shock. A short, thin man
wearing dark glasses and a cap had
snatched her bag and had scurried off
down the road. Hans tried to chase the
snatcher but it was to no avail. The
man jumped onto the back of a
motorcycle and it had disappeared into
the traffic within a few seconds. He
panted and walked back to her to offer
her his apologies. She thanked him for
trying to help and cried in his
embrace. They talked for a while and
Mai said that she would report the
crime to the police but didn’t have any
money left. Hans gave her a wad of
thousand-baht notes and was amazed
at himself giving such a lot of money
to a stranger. Mai gave him a hug and
kissed him lightly on his cheek.
Minutes later they went off to make
love in an old motel in the vicinity.
(Yoon 2012: 48-49)

The lengthy quotation is tellingly
symbolic. His first encounter with Mai
signifies not just a romantic one on a
micro level, but also an unequal power
relation between the West and the East on
a macro level, with the West represented
as a knight in a shining armor giving
succor a helpless girl from the East. This
can be demonstrated by Hans’s dedication
to Mai: he returned to Bangkok to see Mai
three months later and since then had been
sending her money, hoping that it would
stop her from prostituting herself and
relieve her father from massive debts.

This classic fairy-tale would have had a
happy ending if Hans and Mai finally had
got married, but Mai lost touch with Hans
and the main hidden reason for his latest
Bangkok trip was to look for her. His
quest for her is unsuccessful and a British
man he meets in a bar says that he is a
victim of the notorious ‘White Knight’
syndrome that is spreading especially
widely in the group of Western men
encountering wretched Third-World
prostitutes (Yoon 2012: 50). Disillusioned
and heart-broken, Hans is told that Mai is
now probably still engaged in prostitution
and in a relationship with another rich
Western man. The ending of this short
story sees the disillusioned Hans finding
himself in a similar situation:

Behind him, a woman’s scream is
audible. Momentarily he stops
walking and then decides not to turn
back to look. He continues walking.
That scream is heard once again; this
time there is something fearful and
worrying in its tone.
I hope she will be killed, Hans
thinks before crossing the road to a
brighter side. (Yoon 2012: 51)

The whole situation begs a lot of questions
regarding the characters’ nobility and
victimhood. Is Hans really noble in
helping Mai gain a new life, while
deserting his wife and two children? Is
Mai really a vicious Third-world femme
fatale whose seduction and beauty
constantly lures Western men to be her
prey? Or should we contextualize the
whole situation in the landscape of
globalization, where the politics of gender
and romance is deeply intertwined with
the power relations between nation-states?

In this light, Hans’s imagination and the
‘White Knight’ syndrome are part of the
East-West encounter that creates a binary
opposition between the powerful helper
and the powerless victim. To use Edward
Said’s famous postcolonial framework,
this collective imagination can be regarded
as part of the Orientalist project in which
one finds repeated ‘some nefarious “Western” imperialist plot to hold down the “Oriental” world’ (Said 1979: 12). It goes without saying that such an imperialist plot is firmly embedded in the Western imagination and fosters the ‘White Knight’ syndrome, since Western men ‘naturally’ tend to think that Eastern women are in need of help. What complicates the situation is the negotiation of these women, who tend to be aware of this collective imagination and neatly play the role assigned to them. What is important here is not so much whether Mai herself is a victim of the bag snatcher but whether she is aware of the plot and makes use of it. She fits herself perfectly into this role of victim, which she ‘needs’ to play in order to enhance Hans’s nobility as a ‘White Knight’. One may think of Mai as a vicious seducer, but Hans’s violence, especially the desertion of his family, is smoothly and deliberately glossed over by Prabda’s skillful storytelling.

It can be construed here that by depicting both characters thus, the author touches upon the complex relationship between Bangkok and the West in terms of tourism. Hans, in representing the West, is ironically portrayed as a demigod who is ready to “forget” the trappings or attachments that he has in his homeland and emerges as a clean gentleman with no ties whose sacrificial role is overly stressed. Mai, by contrast, represents a Third-World city, readily portrayed as in need of modernization or colonization and the only way she can achieve her agency is through negotiating with the script already prepared for her in the first place. Through Mai, interestingly, Bangkok is no longer a center but a periphery in the wider web of global connections. This peripheral status also means that Bangkok has a limited opportunity to define itself, whilst being violently colonized instead through the process of stereotyping by the West.

While ‘A New White Knight in the Heavenly City’ focuses on a Western tourist who falls in love with a local woman, Kanthorn Aksornnam’s ‘Wonders’ (‘Sing Mahatsachan’) does not place emphasis so much on the figure of the tourist as on the influence his perspective has on local people. In this short story, a man who has recently been dumped by his girlfriend finds himself walking around the old city of Bangkok on a Saturday morning. Exploring Sanam Luang, or the so-called Phra Meru Ground, a vast area in front of the Grand Palace reserved for such grand-scale ceremonies as royal funerals and religious festivals, he looks around and marvels at the beauty of the sights before him: small green benches, people doing exercises, small carts selling drinks, pigeons and tiny gardens. These seemingly insignificant props are made even more mystical and surreal when set against the backdrop of the Grand Palace, whose gilded chedi and exquisitely tiled roofs grace Bangkok’s morning sky.

However, it is not until he sees a tourist taking a photograph that he feels he should do the same. At first, the tourist takes photographs of the Grand Palace. Then, he focuses his lens on a homeless person sleeping on a bench. Inspired by the tourist, the protagonist follows suit and starts taking photographs of various objects around him: the homeless, a pigeon, an ornate pavilion carefully built to house a royal funeral and a stage prepared for a political gathering. He then has a chance to talk to the tourist:
I say to him: ‘Hello. Are you doing all right?’
He replies: ‘Of course. I like Bangkok. It is marvelous.’
The Western man is tall and thin, his hair cleanly cropped with scattered white hairs. In fact, they are rather grey. I ask him: ‘Do you like taking photographs?’ He answers: ‘Yes, of course. There are a lot of things to photograph here. I like taking photographs of people in different places. And you?’
I laugh and then answer: ‘There are a lot of things to photograph anywhere. I like taking photographs of people, both alive and dead.’ (Aksornnam 2010: 173)

Photography is no longer a hobby in this short story but a significant act, especially in terms of memory and spatial orientation. Susan Sontag convincingly argues that ‘as photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure. Thus, photography develops in tandem with one of the most characteristic of modern activities: tourism’ (Sontag 2005: 6). Taking Sontag’s cue, both the tourist and the local man are both insecure: whilst the tourist is outside his own country, thus feeling insecure spatially, the young Thai man dumped by his girlfriend is spiritually insecure and needs to reorient his life now that he is on his own. Therefore, it is no wonder that both of them need to take photographs as photography has become a way in which both of them can take possession of, or reconnect with, the complex world they are encountering.

Sontag begins her book by powerfully suggesting that ‘to collect photographs is to collect the world’ (Sontag 2005: 1) and one can see that the characters in this short story reinforce her argument. Tourism in this sense means to travel afar to gain a fresh perspective through photography and ironically the local man has learnt this from a tourist. It also reminds him of how he once videotaped the naked body of his ex-girlfriend. Even though the video only lasts for seconds, he thinks that ‘her body is one of the world’s marvelous objects’ (Aksornnam 2010: 179). Now that he realizes how important photography is, his videotape of her naked body remains an important life-saving souvenir for him, an object that can forever lead him back to her.

The ending sees the young man remember the tourist wearing a t-shirt that says ‘Not So Black and White’ and he thinks that he should have all the photographs that he has taken developed in black and white, except for those of the royal funeral pavilion and those of his girlfriend’s naked body. What links the two things together is transience: the pavilion will be dissembled once the funeral finishes whilst his ex-girlfriend is no longer in the relationship with him. In comparison to these photographs that will remain colorful in his heart, other photographs of Bangkok will be in black and white since they remain the same, acting like the backdrop against which love and death play their part in contemporary urban life. In this short story, Bangkok is represented as an age-old city, a black-and-white platform where countless tragedies and comedies of people have been staged for hundreds of years. However, what is significant is that this city is vivified by deaths and attachments taking place in its precincts. Tourism, in this sense, is a means by which the locals learn to appreciate the city from a new set of lens, as the author
expands the definition of the tourist to include not only a foreigner coming into a country but also a local who marvels at his or her own country from a renewed stance.

Through tourism, Bangkok in both ‘A New White Knight in the Heavenly City’ and ‘Wonders’ is represented as a multi-layered city related to love and loss. For some white men including Hans in the first short story, Bangkok is the place where they fall in and out of love, disillusioned with dangerous, yet alluring Thai women. For some locals like the anonymous protagonist in ‘Wonders’, tourism means an interaction with a new perspective and eventually the ability to shift to a new way of understanding life and transience. Despite being heart-broken, he is able to learn that his own drama is only a minute part that constitutes Bangkok, but the raw feelings and emotions captured in his photographs do turn Bangkok from a colorless backdrop into such a lively space.

**Consumerism and Commodification: Bangkok as a Capitalist Place**

Closely connected to the issues of globalization and tourism, consumerism is part and parcel of capitalism. Raymond Williams argues that the word ‘consume’ dates from the fourteenth century when its meaning was negative since it was used to mean to use up, to waste and to squander. The word ‘consumption’ in the old days was a name of any wasting disease before it was used to specifically denote severe pulmonary tuberculosis. However, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the word was used neutrally in bourgeois political economy (Williams 1976 78-79). While consumption refers to a general act of using up and spending, consumerism is a specific way of consumption that is related to capitalism, in which people are encouraged to spend money on objects, not just for their use value but also for exchange and symbolic values (Aldridge 2003: 2). According to Jean Baudrillard, we no longer consume objects as such, but what they mean, i.e. the signifier. In his words, what we consume is:

no longer a sequence of mere objects, but a chain of signifiers, in so far as all of these signify one another reciprocally as part of a more complex super-object, drawing the consumer into a series of more complex motivations. (Baudrillard 1998: 27)

What Baudrillard points at is a worrying trend that capitalism has inflicted on the general public, especially more acutely on urban people. Consumerism in this sense not only means an addiction to shopping to the extent that it is elevated to an indispensable ritual of everyday life but also the values and beliefs that people form around such an act of consumption. In other words, objects we consume will be judged against us: our bag, our car, our clothes, our mobile phone, and so on.

With its status as the capital of Thailand for more than two centuries, Bangkok has opened itself to capitalism and consumerism. Shopping centers have mushroomed in this city of angels, ranging from the high-end Paragon to the world’s biggest open-air market of Jatujak, and it goes without saying that one of the most popular hobbies of Bangkokians is shopping. Contemporary Thai literature also focuses on consumerism in the city space of Bangkok and one of these is ‘Adrift in the City (Siam Square Studio)’ (‘Khweng Khwang Klang Nakhorn (Studio Siam Square)’) by Chamlong
Fangcholachit, a veteran Thai author. The setting of this short story is based on the real geographical space of Siam Square, a vast shopping area in the city center near the Siam Interchange Station of the Bangkok sky train system. Siam Square is used as a symbolic space of consumerism in the story and the author clearly divides the area into two parts: a real space and an imaginary one. In the first part, the protagonist walks into Siam Square to wait for his girlfriend and the author here refers to such real places as a bus stop opposite the Mah Boonkrong Center (MBK), a world-renowned shopping center, and the Hard-Rock Café, located right inside Siam Square. As the protagonist has not visited Siam Square for a long time, he is surprised by how much the area has changed, especially the ways in which teenagers loitering in the area dress themselves:

Hundreds of characters aged from 14 to 17 years old walk past each other, their left hands holding the latest models of mobile phones, their right hands carrying school bags. No one walks empty-handed. Almost everyone carries a bag in which one can find his or her latest purchases. They window-shop clothes and shoes. Their hair is deliberately disheveled with some covering their ears and face. If one doesn’t listen to their talk, one may not be able to perceive whether they are from Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or South Korea. From their tone and gesture, one may also clearly discern whether they are male, female, or half-male and half-female. “It’s no longer our Siam Square here.” (Fangcholachit 2011: 14)

In addition to those teenagers whose ways of dressing, talking, and walking are so distinct from the old days, the physical aspect of Siam Square has also changed significantly. The establishment of the Paragon Shopping Center and the Sky Train system, both of which are located directly on the northern side of Siam Square, has transformed the space into one of the most popular meeting points for Bangkok residents and tourists alike.

The ways in which Siam Square has changed beyond the protagonist’s recognition amaze and confuse him. When the protagonist enters a coffee shop and waits for his girlfriend, he is stared at as if he were from another world. It is no wonder that he feels angry and leaves the coffee shop. This is the start of his journey into ‘the parallel world’ of Siam Square, an imaginary, upside-down universe that pushes the capitalist logic to the extremes. First, he finds himself wandering in an alleyway where it is getting darker. Before long, he meets some strange wonders: a talking rat, a parking lot transformed into a flea market selling such impossible or unimaginable objects as the third-page paper, time, shadows, dreams and honesty. The protagonist is willing to give a deposit of 100,000 Baht to buy ‘a dream’ even though he has yet to see what it actually is. In addition, to purchase ‘happiness’, he pays as much as 10,000 baht. It is not until he has finished the transactions in the surreal flea market that it dawns on him that he has forgotten to call his girlfriend. He is even more surprised when he looks at his mobile phone and realizes that he has nine missed calls and that he has not heard any of them (Fangcholachit 2011: 29). What this connotes is the fact that he is so engrossed in shopping that he has forgotten his other relationships and this is probably what the author wants to critique:
we embrace consumerism at the expense of human communication.

Besides, such surreal transactions also point toward the logic of commodification, in which not only a range of objects but also certain beliefs or values can be commodified, since the purchase of certain objects can be related to the possession of certain desirable traits. Nowadays, some people show their love by buying roses for someone they love, and some men smoke cigarettes to flaunt their masculinity. With such logic, people with more money have more options available to them and this in turn helps with their social mobility when they can assume so many roles and acquire not just objects but experiences to enhance their lifestyle. However, what the author here wishes to critique is perhaps this type materialistic world view in which everything is reduced to money, especially nowadays that money can buy objects and objects in turn can lead to certain values and feelings, especially happiness and dreams.

The ending of this short story is therefore telling when he meets the talking rat once again on his way back. She asks him whether he is interested in buying musical notes:

“Musical notes?” he repeats.
“Yes, musical notes. They were found under the staircase here.”
“Apparently you didn’t seem to put any investment in your business, Miss Black-Market Seller.”
The young rat’s laughter is crisp. “I don’t want them to be left lying under the staircase and rotting in the soil.”
(Fangcholachit 2011: 33)

However, when he allows her to give him a peck on his cheek, the rat decides not to sell the notes, but gives them for free. It transpires that the notes are part of the famous song ‘Auld Lang Syne’, which is poignantly used here to denote the spirit of friendship that transcends worldly matters, including in this case consumerism. Even though the poor rat has found an opportunity to sell her goods, she decides not to. Even though she does not earn any money in return, her generosity melts the protagonist’s heart, as he is visibly touched by her friendship and generosity.

While Chamlong uses magical elements to portray the logic of consumerism, Pad Pasikorn uses humor to underline similar issues in his short story, ‘Outdoor, the Slender Type’ (Pasikorn 2009). Pad’s protagonist has just bought a 4WD because of the image the vehicle projects. He first saw and fell in love with the vehicle when it was showcased in a fake jungle in a shopping mall, thereby projecting the image of the driver as someone who is tough, masculine and adventurous. Also, he was attracted to its brochure, which has the vehicle ‘parked sternly in the forest, by a stream and an intimidating waterfall. Sunlight gleams through leaves in various thick and thin rays, some of which penetrate the vehicle’s windshield seeing its full load. Tied on top of the vehicle is an orange kayak whose side runs parallel with the vehicle’ (Pasikorn 2009: 13). However, after owning the vehicle, he dare not drive it, not for fear of rain or road hazards, but because he thinks that his personality is so different from that of the vehicle: in his opinion, he is too ‘immaculate’. He thus spends a month improving his character, buying new clothes and having new haircut, changing his watch as well as having his body pierced to create a rugged masculine look.
However, as the story progresses, he does not use his new 4WD in the forest as he first imagined and intended, but as a normal car that transports him to work and back home in a city full of traffic jams. One of the limited occasions when he can use his vehicle nearest to its ‘projected’ image is when he needs to take his dog, a Siberian husky, to see a veterinarian. Another occasion arises when he needs to drive his vehicle to help his girlfriend from her house, which is badly affected by flooding. After two years of owning the vehicle, he feels proud since it is fearless in face of the floods. Tied to its top is not an orange kayak as appeared in the brochure but a fiberglass boat.

What this story reveals through its humor is how much the protagonist, being typical of middle-class Bangkok residents, falls prey to consumerism. Through fantasy and the innocent belief in images projected through advertising and to the mass media, the protagonist spends two million Baht on a vehicle that ironically does not function to its utmost potential in the urban space of Bangkok. He imagines himself to be an adventurous Indiana-Jones-like hero trekking the forest but in reality he is a regular office worker. Consumerism here is a means of escaping his humdrum life, because owning a 4WD plays a significant role in helping him to create an alternative identity. However, one also sees how influential the vehicle is on him, since he needs to change himself to fit the image of the 4WD driver, to the extent that the logic of consumption is now reversed: instead of owning the objects, we are in fact ‘owned’ by the objects and their constructed images. Hence, it is not too far-fetched to conclude that we become slaves to the objects that we own and need to tailor our lives in relation to them. In this story, Bangkok becomes a consumer society where objects and their related images are so powerful that they exert their influence on the lifestyle of city people.

In both ‘Adrift in the City (Siam Square Studio)’ and ‘Outdoor, the Slender Type’, we can see how Bangkok has been portrayed as a consumer society in which the logic of consumerism can be strongly felt. Not only are people attracted to the commodification of certain values and beliefs, such as dreams and happiness, hoping to have a short cut to their ideal life in ‘Adrift in the City (Siam Square Studio)’, they are also mesmerized by imported objects, such as a 4WD vehicle in ‘Outdoor, the Slender Type’ and use these objects increasingly because of their symbolic status not their real utility. The power of the mass media in creating symbolic meaning for these objects cannot be clearer: the brochure, the television commercial, or even the promotion staged in a shopping mall all contribute to the images firmly engraved on people’s minds. In this light, one can see that, with such a complex system of consumerism, Bangkok is clearly a global city, not only in the sense that goods come from various countries all around the world but also in the sense that the way we consume is increasingly similar to the way the rest of the world does, i.e. through mass media spinning and adherence to symbolic value.

**Conclusion**

From various short stories written by Thai authors over the last two decades, one can discern the complex images of contemporary Bangkok, a city that is now part of the planetary network of international connections. What is interesting is the fact that not only is Bangkok portrayed as being perched on the receiving end of global flows, the
characters, especially the locals, are, to an extent, rendered as powerless in their resistance to these flows. In other words, the reaction on their part is either disconsolate submission to the consequences of globalization with no clear solution in sight, such as those migrants in ‘Adrift’, bitter self-loathing humor as in ‘The Witch in the Building’ or escapist fantasy as in ‘Adrift in the City (Siam Square Studio)’. In this light, the function of these stories is to expose the reader to the mechanisms of globalization, rather than to offer ways to redress injustices and exploitation engendered by such mechanisms.

In a nutshell, from the perspectives of these authors, Bangkok is no longer an idyllic capital, serene and made exotic by local culture, but a multi-layered, heterogeneous city where locals, expatriates, tourists and immigrants all live together and interact on a daily basis. Their interactions are not as smooth as silk as found in contemporary mass media targeted on incoming tourists but are complicated by unequal and unidirectional global flows, expectant normative narrative forms, such as the civilized knight and the barbarous victim, and global consumerist logic. Though disseminated to a limited circle of readers, these stories make manifest human interactions and feelings that are enacted and re-enacted in the vast, sublime landscape of Bangkok. Not only do they portray the difficulties, anxieties, loves and losses befalling people in this globalized age, they, in turn, also bring Bangkok to life and reinforce the image of the city as a daunting yet alluring metropolis.

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Abstract

This paper explores the attitudes towards sexuality embodied in Friedrich Halm’s early Novelle, Ein Abend zu L., and particularly investigates the potentially positive view of homosexuality which it contains. The paper also considers the divergences between this Novelle and its putative inspiration, Alain-René Lesage’s novel, Le Diable boiteux.

Introduction

In a perspicacious and informative article entitled “Friedrich Halm and the Comic Muse” (McKenzie and Sharpe, 1998: 158), Peter Skrine intriguingly hints at a repressed sexual “Problematik” (Halm’s own) incipiently breaking the surface in the 19th-century Austrian playwright Friedrich Halm’s curious transvestite drama, Wildfeuer. Skrine wonders aloud whether the situation presented to the audience’s eyes of a man being romantically and sexually drawn towards another young man (who, unbeknownst to the world and “himself”, is in reality a young woman, dressed as a man) might not constitute something of a “personal confession in disguise” on the part of the dramatist. Wildfeuer does not, of course, provide a satisfactory answer to this question and can only leave the audience guessing.

Much earlier in Halm’s literary career, however – in the year 1828 - this talented writer had composed a noteworthy Novelle of some 19,660 words entitled, Ein Abend zu L., which ranges across sexually provocative material in a much franker manner than his later “dramatic poem”, Wildfeuer, would choose to do.

It is surely no coincidence that Halm always kept this story well hidden throughout his subsequent life, never (as far as I can ascertain) discussing it with family or friends and, never attempting to get it published, still less speaking of it to his later literary mentor, the Benedictine monk, Michael Enk von der Burg, who would assuredly have been shocked and scandalized by the overtly sexual themes deployed across this humorous yet ultimately serious work. Only with Halm’s death in 1871 did the work come to light when found amongst the writer’s papers by his literary executors, Faust Pachler and Emil Kuh. They decided to draw a discreet veil over the story and not to publish it. A similar fate, it might be noted en passant, excluded Halm’s great late Novelle, Das Haus an der Veronabrücke, from inclusion within Paul Heyse’s celebrated anthology, Deutscher Novellenschatz (Heyse, 1876), due to the ‘heikele’ subject-matter of sexual aberrancy which it contained. As for Ein Abend zu L., it did not see the light of publication until some 185 years after its creation. The present article aims to remedy the situation of unjust neglect that has surrounded Ein Abend zu L. and to focus attention on the manner in which Halm’s Novelle deviates from the stylistic and moral stance of its literary predecessor, Le Diable boiteux by Lesage, as well as how the issue of homosexuality is

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discussed in a manner unusual for German/Austrian literature at that time. The article will further look at the issue of the conflict between Enlightenment and Romantic values and the role of the unconscious mind in the enunciation of key themes by the tale’s protagonists.

**Literature Review**

Secondary literature on *Ein Abend zu L.* is vanishingly sparse. This is hardly surprising, in view of the fact that the text was not published until the year 2012.

The chief commentator on the story (albeit in a brief compass) is Faust Pachler. In his excellent biography of the early life of Friedrich Halm, Pachler comments that it is “… durch und durch Nachahmung” (Pachler, 1878: 230) of Alain-René Lesage’s Asmodeus novel, *Le Diable boiteux*.

Pachler’s treatment of the story is, unfortunately, terse and somewhat sloppy: at one point (Pachler, 1878: 230) he mistakenly attributes words to the Devil which are actually spoken by another character in the Novelle (the narrator’s friend, K).

Pachler speaks of the story as one in which the devil “… dem auf einem Balle beim Gouverneur befindlichen Autor das wahrhafte Wesen aller Anwesenden enthüllt, natürlich seinem Charakter gemäß, cynisch nach allen Richtungen, Scham, Ehe u.s.w. verwerfend.” (Pachler, 1878: 230). Here, Pachler regrettably fails to distinguish between the character of the narrator - created by Halm - and Halm the author; furthermore, the devil certainly does not discuss the real nature of all present at the ball: only a small number of guests is “honoured” with the demon’s sardonic commentaries. Moreover, Pachler uncritically takes the tales Asmodi spins regarding the guests as true, whereas Halm’s narrator solely has Asmodi’s word for this – and a devil’s word is not the most reliable of verbal contracts!

Pachler does make one interesting comment, however, but again it is insufficiently nuanced or differentiated to bestow upon it global validity: he states that “… in der Maske des Teufels steckt eigentlich der Autor selbst” (Pachler, 1878: 230-231). Again the reader is unsure whether “the author” refers to Halm or to his literary creation, the narrator. In any case, this remark needs further refinement to justify it and this I hope to provide in a later section of the present essay.

Pachler describes the devil’s gossipy stories as constituting the “chronique scandaleuse” (Pachler, 1878: 231) of the town of Linz (where Halm had been living for the previous two years (Schlossar, Vol. 1, 1904: 9). This may or may not be the case – but Pachler provides no evidence to support his contention. It is not even certain that “L” does indeed stand for Linz; internal evidence from the text (Halm, 2012: 11) which speaks of “Deutschland” possibly undermines this assumption.

Pachler’s final summing-up of *Ein Abend zu L.* is positive but expressed in tepid phraseology: “Die Nachahmung als solche und die Charakterisirung gerade dieses Teufels ist nicht übel,” he writes (Pachler, 1878: 231). As I shall subsequently attempt briefly to show, *Ein Abend zu L.* is too divergent from Lesage’s novel in tone, purport and plot for it justly to be viewed as mere “Nachahmung”. It has its own independent virtues and breathes a wholly different moral air from that of Lesage’s picaresque tale.
Another commentator on Halm’s Novellen is Dietrich Arendt. His doctoral dissertation (Arendt, 1953) is impressive and remains the most detailed monograph on Halm’s fiction to date. Its scope is limited, however, as it focuses solely on the three major Novellen for which Halm is known (Die Marzipan-Lise; Die Freundinnen, and Das Haus an der Veronabrücke). He only mentions Ein Abend zu L. “en passant”, correctly calling it one of Halm’s “ersten novellistischen Versuche” (Arendt, 1953: 20). Unfortunately, Arendt is in error when stating: “Halm hat, abgesehen von fragmentarischen Stücken, nur drei vollendete Novellen hinterlassen” (Arendt, 1953: 14). He is referring here specifically to Die Marzipan-Lise, Die Freundinnen, and Das Haus an der Veronabrücke. Yet these are certainly not the only Novellen which Halm composed and completed. Clearly Arendt had not read St. Sylvesterabend, Das Auge Gottes, Die Abendgenossen, or Ein Abend zu L., for none of these Novellen is “fragmentarisch”; indeed, each is perfectly rounded and complete in itself. Furthermore, Arendt calls Die Marzipan-Lise “[Halms] erste gelungene Novelle” (Arendt, 1953: 22), a viewpoint which cannot credibly be sustained in the face of the earlier and thematically richer Novelle, Das Auge Gottes.

Regrettably, a charge of ignorance, similar to that displayed by Arendt, can be levelled against myself, in that my own doctoral dissertation on Halm (Page, 1988) displays no awareness of Ein Abend zu L.; certainly at that time I had not yet deciphered or read the latter story (the word “deciphered” is unfortunately appropriate when dealing with the handwriting of Halm’s original MSS). However, unlike Arendt, I did not express the widespread, inaccurate view that Halm only produced “three completed Novellen”, since my D.Phil. research focused specifically on Halm’s early, full-scale Novelle, Das Auge Gottes.

If one looks at Halm’s literary style more generally and, particularly, if one considers the mood and tone of Ein Abend zu L., one sees that the latter diverges considerably from those features that are usually associated with Friedrich Halm. Henry and Mary Garland write of Halm’s poetic style of writing: “His poetic writing is a self-conscious tribute to an ideal of beauty, which excluded all that was crass or harsh” (Garland, 1997: 328). The style and content of Ein Abend zu L. are far from expressive of an “ideal of beauty”; indeed, the topics of erotic narratophilia or the dangers of masturbation (touched upon by the Devil) can scarcely be said to fall into this category, any more than can the mention of a character who cannot dance because he is (implicitly) afflicted with syphilis!

Similarly to the Garlands, Schlossar (1904: 90) paints Halm as the “Vertreter einer liebenswürdigen Romantik”. Again, there is little that is “liebenswürdig” in this Novelle – romantic though it be. The overall tone of the conversations between the narrator and the Devil is, from the Devil’s side, tinged with lewdness and leering, and is clearly calculated to shock.

Writing on the sexual subtext of Halm’s drama, Der Sohn der Wildnis, Peter Skrine makes a pertinent comment that could apply equally well to Ein Abend zu L. Skrine (McKenzie and Sharpe, 1998: 149) writes: “… the text … is shot through with insights that anticipate ideas which only came into the open as the century ended and the generation of Freud and Schnitzler revealed the hidden depths of the psyche and the subconscious.” In speaking of
Halm’s drama, *Wildfeuer*, Skrine (McKenzie and Sharpe, 1998: 158) also notes “… a pre-echo of Krafft-Ebing, Otto Weininger, and the Viennese preoccupation with the psychology of sex at the turn of the century”. If *Ein Abend zu L.* displays anything at all, it certainly displays a “preoccupation with the psychology of sex.” It is this moral and psychological seriousness which, amongst other elements, distinguishes it from the frivolities and satirical fun of Lesage’s much lighter work, *Le Diable boiteux*.

According to Faust Pachler, *Ein Abend zu L.* nevertheless takes its inspiration from Alain-René Lesage’s celebrated picaresque novel, *Le Diable boiteux* (1727), of which it is “… durch und durch Nachahmung” (Pachler, 1878: 230). Internal evidence from *Ein Abend zu L.* indicates that Halm did indeed have Lesage’s devil, Asmodée, in mind when he created his own version of the lustful demon, “Asmodi”; yet it is a minor contention of the present article that neither in plot, mood nor devil is Halm’s story mere “Nachahmung” of the work of his illustrious French predecessor.

**Brief Outline of Lesage’s *Le Diable boiteux***

Lesage’s satirical novel constitutes a protracted array of verbal cameos depicting various human foibles. Set in Madrid, it begins in comic fashion with a philandering Spanish university student, Zambullo, escaping out of the attic window of the house of his latest wronged paramour. Zambullo is being pursued by avengers whom the injured lady has hired to force Zambullo to marry her. He finds his way into a garret, where he discovers a little demon, “Asmodée”, corked inside a bottle as the result of a spell cast upon him by a maleficent conjuror. Zambullo releases the devil (who is only two feet six inches in height and is supported by two crutches – hence his sobriquet, the “limping devil”) and earns the latter’s gratitude. The Devil promises to serve Zambullo as his tutelary demon: “Je vous apprendrai tout ce que vous voudrez savoir; je vous instruirai de tout ce qui se passe dans le monde; je vous découvrirai les défauts des hommes; je serai votre démon tutélaire” (Lesage, 1727: 10). The devil then, almost literally, takes Zambullo under his wing; instructing the student to grasp hold of the end of his cloak, he flies out of the window with Zambullo clutching to his coat-tails over the rooftops of Madrid and – through his supernatural power – lifts off the roofs of the houses to reveal the secret goings-on below.

A whole host of adventures ensues, wherein Asmodée discloses to the student all manner of hypocrisy and human failings, from miserliness and lasciviousness to artistic vanity and iatrogenic slaughter. At the end of the tale, Asmodée temporarily takes leave of the student but not before he has so contrived matters that Zambullo is avenged on the paramour who had set a band of roughnecks upon him (at the story’s opening) and is provided with a delightful and wealthy fiancée, amidst hopeful promises that the devil and the student may in the future be re-united. The story ends on a note of marital happiness, as Zambullo weds the ravishingly beautiful heiress whom the devil has procured for him.

**Synopsis of Halm’s *Ein Abend zu L.*

The unnamed narrator of *Ein Abend zu L.* tells of how one winter’s evening he is delayed by inclement weather in the town of L., on his way home from an extended stay in Paris. While waiting for the snowy
weather to improve and for fresh horses to be brought for his carriage, he decides to pay a visit to his old university friend, K., whom he has not seen for six years and whom he knows resides in this town.

The two friends greet each other warmly and begin to reminisce about their student days together. In the midst of their conversation, however, as the town clock strikes 8.00 p.m., K. suddenly leaps to his feet and tells the narrator that he has an important duty to discharge: he has been appointed director of a lavish ball, which is to be held that evening at the governmental palace in celebration of the 40th birthday of the Prince.

The narrator accompanies K. to the Palace, where numerous middle-class and aristocratic couples are present and in whose romantic relationships the narrator expresses a keen interest. He especially desires to gain “tiefe Einsicht in das Wesen der Liebe” (Halm, 2012: 12), yet he is familiar with no one at the ball who could provide him with such information. Feeling isolated and alienated, the narrator begins to drink deeply of the circulating champagne.

At this point a strange little old man suddenly appears beside him and offers to disclose the amorous secrets of the guests present at the ball. He further gives a disquisition on the true nature of love, which ultimately resolves itself into nothing more than an apologia for lust. The narrator listens with fascination, but with growing indignation, as he hears of marital infidelity, mutual erotic narratophilia, masturbation, the unnaturalness of homosexuality, love as the mere satisfaction of the sex drive, and even accidental castration in pursuit of love.

The narrator attempts to oppose the cynical views of the old man but finds the latter’s apparent logic difficult to counter. Adding to the narrator’s sense of the uncanny, the old man appears to be seized by a strange apoplexy whenever any religious theme is broached. Finally, the mysterious stranger inadvertently mentions a certain “Zambullo” whom he had once aided – and immediately the narrator realizes who is standing before him: it is none other than the devil, Asmodi, the protagonist of Lesage’s famous novel (the Halmian narrator has just returned from several months in Paris, the centre of Lesage’s literary operations). The old man confirms that he is indeed this demon and now reveals himself in his true form. The narrator is horrified, makes the sign of the cross three times in the face of the devil and commands him, in the name of the Almighty, to leave. Asmodi then dissolves into an ever-thinning mist, leaving the narrator behind, shaken and shocked to the core.

As the narrator rushes out of the Palace, he encounters a poor, young, tearful couple in an alley who are expressing their sincere love for each other and their trust in God, on the eve of the young man’s departure for his apprenticeship travels. The narrator sees his own view of the reality of true love and religiosity confirmed by this touching example of loyalty, piety and devotion.

The story-teller concludes his narrative by expressing the wish that mankind may one day grow wise and understand the true nature of love.
The Persian and Jewish Myths of Asmodeus

The earliest records of the mythological demon, Asmodeus, extend back to ancient Persia and Zoroastrianism. The name “Asmodeus” is said to derive from Ašma daeva: “demon of lust” (Ashley, 2010: 17). In the Persian tradition, Asmodeus seems to have been conceived of as a disrupter of marriage. (Quanter, 1913: 416-417)

Moving beyond the religious mythology of Persia, the figure of Asmodeus next became chiefly associated with Jewish demonological lore where, analogously, “... he is credited with breaking up marriages and leading people into debauchery” (Ashley, 2010: 17). According to the apocryphal book of Tobit, Asmodeus fell into lust with a woman named Sarah and killed her seven successive husbands, rather than allowing them to enjoy their conjugal rights. He was later seen as the inventor of music and dancing, and was further said to be responsible for “… all the new French fashions” (McGlone, 2009). Particularly interesting in the context of Halm’s Novelle is that Asmodeus was viewed not only as a promoter of lust and gambling, but also as a defender and advocate of homosexuality (Neale, 2010: 31)

When we come to Lesage’s conception of Asmodeus, we read that the latter is a helper of unhappy lovers and a promoter of luxury, gambling and chemistry. Interestingly, Lesage also has his devil say: “Je suis l’inventeur des carrousels, de la danse, de la musique, de la comédie, et de toutes les modes nouvelles de France” (Lesage, 1727: 8). It is not without significance that Halm’s Novelle is set precisely in a luxurious palace, at a lavish ball, enveloped by music, dance and gambling. Halm clearly knew the appropriate ambience in which to make his demon of lust appear.

Contrasts between the Lesage’s Novel and Halm’s Novelle

Lesage’s rather sprawling novel (a novel which, as one critic has indicated, could have continued indefinitely (Levi, 1994: 457) as it chiefly constitutes a random agglomeration of satirical anecdotes) strikingly contrasts with the more concentrated, tighter Novelle-form of Halm’s Ein Abend zu L. Halm’s tale drives relentlessly towards its climax – the revelation of the demonic identity of the mysterious and repulsive old stranger at the centre of the story – whereas Lesage reveals the name and nature of his protagonist in the very first pages of the novel. In Lesage, there is a total absence of suspense and a complete eschewing of clue-dispersal (present in Halm) as regards the true identity of the central character.

Lesage’s Asmodée is essentially a benign, humorous and likeable demon, and Zambullo grows increasingly fond of him. The young student feels sad when forced to part from him and hopes to be re-united with him at a future date (Lesage, 1727: 167). Clearly there is nothing repellant or obnoxious about Asmodée’s personality and aura, as there is about Asmodi’s in Ein Abend zu L. Lesage’s demon is in fact presented as a devil who always keeps his promises and who sincerely appreciates favours bestowed upon him. The same cannot be said of Halm’s demon.

Halm’s Asmodi is indeed radically different - morally degraded, duplicitous, repellant and with a decided aura of the uncanny about him. Unlike his French
predecessor, he evinces a perverted delight in witnessing wayward sexual escapades and infidelity, positively revelling in immorality and debauchery. Whereas Asmodée deplors human sins and failings, Asmodi derives pleasure from them and seeks to promote them to their fullest extent.

As mentioned above, Halm skilfully scatters clues throughout his story as to the true nature of this repugnant old devil: on several occasions Asmodi has a convulsive fit when his interlocutor mentions spiritual matters. Asmodée, by contrast, is never shown as fearful of religious discourse or Christian symbols. He seems wholly indifferent towards Christian notions. His protégé, Zambullo, is also not exercised by ideas of Christian virtue and certainly at no point expresses support for Christian morality or decency. In fact, this hedonistic student has long been devoted to the “demon of luxury, the god Cupid” and affirms to him: “il y a longtemps, comme vous savez, que je vous suis entièrement dévoué” (Lesage, 1727: 8).

Furthermore, Zambullo is delighted to be able to render assistance to the devil (of whose fame he has heard with much approbation) by releasing him from the glass phial in which he has been enclosed. Halm’s narrator would be aghast at the idea of releasing and aiding a demon – as indeed he is horrified when he discovers the true identity of the strange man with whom he has been locked in passionate debate.

Halm’s narrator is, in fact, the opposite of Zambullo in every imaginable way (at least on the surface). Whereas Zambullo is a young libertine, promiscuously enjoying nocturnal flings without compunction and subsequently craving revenge for a perceived wrong done him, Halm’s narrator is more conscientious in his attitudes and behaviour: his student days are six years behind him, and at the commencement of the Novelle he is leaving Paris, with a heavy heart, out of a sense of propriety and the need to renounce the allurements of a voluptuous Polish girl – whereas Zambullo is chased out of the bedroom by those who would force him to “do the honourable thing.”

As a student, Halm’s narrator had been an idealist, striving towards the goal of self-betterment, “von Nebeln der Selbstsucht unumhüllt” (Halm, 2012: 1). Indeed, he has a particular disapprobation of selfishness, referring to it as the “pestartige Seuche des Egoismus” (Halm, 2012: 28). Self-disciplined and mature, the narrator is a serious-minded individual who does not indulge in the frivolities of dancing or gambling (Halm, 2012: 2) and yet who, far from being “superior” in his attitudes, has a pronounced capacity for compassion, such as when he evinces pity towards a corpulent elderly gentleman present at the ball whose rather bloated face and form betray signs of a liver disorder. His feelings of compassion even extend to those who are hypocritical calumniators of the worst kind (Halm, 2012: 10).

More significantly for the thematic “Gestalt” and purport of the tale, its narrator is a deeply religious individual who perceives the world through a strikingly moral and spiritual lens. When plunged into the midst of the aforementioned group of slanderous, malicious gossips, he experiences their raucous laughter as “das höllische Gelächter, das meine Tischgenossen über ein neues hingemordetes Opfer ausstießen” (Halm, 2012: 11). Yet he does not feel himself morally superior to them;
he does not despise these slanderers – rather, he feels a sense of communal guilt or sin, saying to himself: “Ich bin auch ein Sünder wie ihr” (Halm, 2012: 11). It is only the desecration of pure love which arouses moral outrage in him, as will subsequently be shown.

The narrator, furthermore, has progressive political views, ardently wishing to see the advent of world peace, the implementation of a civil constitution modelled on Plato’s republic, and the abolition of world slavery (Halm, 2012: 13).

At the conclusion of his verbal duel with the devil, the narrator confesses that he has been unable to defeat the demon’s offensive vision of a new “morality” and various unsavoury claims through logic and reason but that “… die innere Stimme in meinem Busen, das lebendige und innige Gefühl der Wahrheit, meine ganze Seele sich dagegen sträuben …” (Halm, 2012: 29). In the whole of Lesage’s novel, by contrast, one does not find one sentence, not even a phrase, which reflects such moral probity and sensitivity on the part of the debauched student, Zambullo.

When we turn to the figure of Asmodeus himself, we find considerable differences (pace Faust Pachler) between Lesage’s envisioning of the demon and Halm’s. Firstly, Lesage’s Asmodée is tiny in stature, a midget measuring only two-and-a-half feet in height and possessed of the legs of a goat. These features are absent from Halm’s Asmodi, who, while indeed “zusammengeschrumpft” (Halm, 2012: 12), is still recognizably human.

Asmodée’s clothes are far more eccentric and peculiar than those of Asmodi: the demon’s head is enveloped in a kind of turban of red crape and on top of this are placed some cock’s and peacock’s feathers (Lesage, 1727: 9). Halm’s Asmodi wears no turban but is instead the owner of a hat, crowned, it is true, with some blue and greenish cock’s plumes (an emblem of his vanity and pride). Lesage’s Asmodée wears a cloak painted with all manner of scenes of amorousness and debauchery (Lesage, 1727: 9), whereas Asmodi simply wears a red uniform embellished with gold braiding, and belonging to a national style completely unknown to the narrator (Halm, 2012: 12). The implication is that this uniform is, in fact, alien to the entire world. It is with touches such as this that Halm begins to sow the seeds of suspense: who is this strange individual?

Lesage’s Asmodée has a distinctive voice, but it is not singled out as grating or discordant; on the contrary, it is described as “une voix qui avait quelque chose d’extraordinaire” (Lesage, 1727: 7). In contrast, Asmodi speaks with “eine unangenehme schnarrende Stimme” (Halm, 2012: 12) and has “ein widerlich heisres Lachen” (Halm, 2012: 13), which is lacking in Lesage’s demon.

More importantly, Asmodée is genuinely beneficent, grateful and obliging towards the student, Zambullo, throughout their association, whereas Halm’s Asmodi is typically sardonic, sarcastic and highly critical of the narrator for the duration of their encounter. Asmodi frequently castigates the narrator for being “schwärmerisch” (Halm, 2012: 13) and full of “Vorurtheile” (Halm, 2012: 26). As their conversation approaches its highpoint of conflict and the narrator refuses to subscribe to the demon’s perverse views, Asmodi impatiently tells his moral antagonist:

“In der That, mein Herr! so häufig und lange ich mit jungen Leuten
umgegangen bin, so habe ich doch an keinem den Erbfehler der Jugend, Eigenwillen und Hartnäckigkeit in einem so hohen Grade entdeckt als an Ihnen. Mir thut es leid um Sie, aber die Ausdauer selbst müßte alle Hoffnung aufgeben, Sie von Irrthümern zurückzubringen, die Sie vielleicht bloß deßwegen so hartnäckig verteidigen, weil es Ihnen zu unbequem ist, sich neue Grundsätze anzueignen. In welche unangenehme und traurige Lagen wird Sie dieser Starrsinn noch bringen ...” (Halm, 2012: 28).

Unlike Lesage’s Asmodée, Asmodi is intent on gaining the narrator for the Devil’s side. The French demon, Asmodée, is critically aware of the folly of those who give themselves over to vice, but Halm’s Asmodi constantly attempts to paint a portrait of morality in which virtue equals vice and vice equates to virtue. In his closing words to the narrator, before literally transforming himself into a cloud of infernal smoke, Asmodi makes one final attempt to induce the former to renounce virtue and to luxuriate in vice:

“Du hast mich erkannt, Sterblicher! … ich bin zu dir gekommen, dein Glück zu machen: folge mir, verlaß, was du Tugend nennst, was dich elend und unglücklich macht, und du sollst schwelgen, wie noch keiner deines Geschlechtes geschwelget hat” (Halm, 2012: 30).

It is noteworthy here that the Devil implicitly presents himself as a member of an alien species, significantly different from the narrator: this is no mortal human, but a demon from the smoky depths of Hell itself.

This is, perhaps, an appropriate juncture at which to note that a major difference in “atmosphere” between Lesage’s picaresque tale and Halm’s Novelle is generated by the element of magical fantasy - strongly present in Lesage but largely lacking in Halm. Whereas Lesage’s story involves magicians, magical spells, curses, the capacity to fly through the air and remove rooftops from houses, as well as the power to transform the physical form into that of any person selected, Halm very skilfully shifts the focus of the action from the external realm of the supernatural and the fantastical to the interior sphere of the unconscious - as we shall shortly see.

The Themes of Love and Sex

The central preoccupation of Ein Abend zu L. is the nature of love. The narrator of the story specifically requests the (as yet unrecognised) Asmodi to enlighten him on this topic.

The narrator’s own vision of love may justly be called idealistic-spiritual, tinged with a degree of sentimentality; unsurprisingly, it is rejected as “überspannt” and a “jugendlich schwärmerische Ansicht” (Halm, 2012: 13) by the devil. Despite the latter’s mockery, the narrator is happy to speak of love as “ein so heiliges Gefühl” (Halm, 2012: 14); he insists further upon “die heilige Würde reiner Liebe” (Halm, 2012: 19) and says that it should always be enveloped in a “verklärenden Lichte” (Halm, 2012: 14). He is initially loathe to think ill of the lovers whom he encounters at the ball and is disposed to view their relationships as “zart und rein, ja … überirdisch” (Halm, 2012: 18).

Unlike his demonic interlocutor, Halm’s narrator emphasises the positive qualities
of a genuinely loving relationship and criticises Asmodi for excluding these from his cynical stock-taking of love:

“Die warmen sehnsüchtigen Gefühle des Herzens, das unermeßliche Entzücken, ein dem unsern gleichgesinntes Gemüth gefunden zu haben, die stillen unerschöpflichen und unvergänglichen Freuden, die aus solchen Verbindungen für uns hervorgehen, die Beruhigung, den Trost, die Erquickung, die sie uns in allen trüben Stunden, in Noth und Elend in den Zeiten der Verlassenhin gewähren, alles dies bringen Sie nicht in Anschlag” (Halm, 2012: 24).

When the narrator hears from the demon of the aberrant, promiscuous and morally incontinent life-styles allegedly pursued by some of the guests (who, amongst other erotic practices, enjoy sexually stimulating their spouses by regaling them with lascivious accounts of their recent extra-marital erotic flings), the narrator refers to the perpetrators as “so niedrige Charaktere”, who display an “unwürdiges Benehmen” and “sträfliche Gesinnungen” (Halm, 2012: 19). He views them as shameful desecrators of love and even invokes divine judgment upon them, commenting to the devil: “… wenn ich nicht wüßte, daß uns Sterblichen den Blick in das heilige Geheimniß der Weltregierung verwehrt ist, so würde ich Sie fragen, wie ist es möglich, daß der Herr keinen Blitz heruntersendet, um jene Entheiliger der Liebe zu zerschmettern” (Halm, 2012: 19). Most fascinatingly and unexpectedly, the narrator apparently does not include homosexual love in his strictures, as we shall presently observe.

What precisely constitutes the devil’s view of love? He regards love as nothing more than “Geschlechtstrieb” and deems love relationships and specifically marriage as merely a license for the satisfaction of that same bodily drive. He declares to the narrator: “… die Liebe ist nichts anderes als ein … abgeschlossener Vertrag. Ihr Zweck ist Befriedigung des Geschlechtstriebes” (Halm, 2012: 25); marriage is solely for providing sexual “Freuden, deren Genüß doch der einzige Zweck der Ehe ist” (Halm, 2012: 27).

Some couples, the devil notes, do not possess the sex urge in equal measure; in such cases, the sexually driven person is effectively purchasing sex from his partner, in return for the satisfaction of “anderweitigen Bedürfnisse” which that other person possesses (Halm, 2012: 25). Where the partners experience a sex drive of equal intensity, there one can legitimately speak of mutual exchange rather than purchase (Halm, 2012: 25).

If all people are possessed of a sex drive, albeit of varying degrees of force, then why not simply satisfy these bodily urges through masturbation? The devil answers his own implicit question by stating, “… daß wir uns zu seiner [i.e. des Geschlechtstriebes] Befriedigung, wenigstens nicht ohne bedeutenden Nachtheil der Gesundheit, nicht selbst genug seyn können” (Halm, 2012: 25). This was, of course, the prevailing (erroneous) 19th-century view of masturbation: that it was injurious to the health. One might expect that the devil would advocate masturbation – after all, he is not noted for his devotion to moral or physical health and self-restraint. The reason he does not, of course, is that Asmodeus is not only the demon of lust and sex, but also the devil of marriage-breakups: he wants people to enter into relationships wherein they can use sex as an exchangeable commodity (a “…
Friedrich Halm and the Demon of Sex: An Examination of Halm’s Novelle

käufliche Waare” – Halm, 2012: 24) and then purchase extra-marital sex when the relationship subsequently fails to satisfy their physical needs.

To the devil’s claim that ‘love’ is simply a purchasable commodity, the narrator indignantly observes that brothels must then constitute the temples of real love: “Ich erwiderte [sic] die Anrede des Fremden … nur mit der Bemerkung, daß nach seiner Ansicht Bordelle – die Tempel wahrer Liebe seyen” (Halm, 2012: 25). The demon concurs, indicating that love is nothing more than “der erwachte Geschlechtstrieb” (Halm, 2012: 25), and adds the biting comment that people who subscribe to the narrator’s mediaeval notion of love are mentally ill and should be treated accordingly:


A striking aspect of the exchange between Asmodi and the narrator is that whereas the narrator represents a more romantic, feeling-based defence of love, the devil operates with the dialectical tools of a veritable Enlightenment philosopher. He is predominantly cool, seemingly objective, “reasonable” and detached and characteristically speaks of “folgerechter Schlüsse” (Halm, 2012: 24) with a “kalten ruhigen Beredsamkeit” (Halm, 2012: 13). He presents himself as a wise old gentleman possessed of “reife Beobachtung und Besonnenheit” (Halm, 2012: 14), as well as “Kaltblütigkeit” (Halm, 2012: 23), claiming to be able to provide a rich fund of “Einsicht” (Halm, 2012: 13) and “Erkenntnis” (Halm, 2012: 14). It is thus not surprising that the narrator should turn to him for “Aufklärung” (Halm, 2012: 14). This word is significant and in fact constitutes one of the motifs of the tale (appearing at Halm, 2012: 16, 18, 20): the clash between a putative “Enlightenment” approach to love and that of the “Romantic”. It should be noted in this context that Halm was writing at a time when Romanticism was still a living force on the literary scene of Austria and Germany: just two years earlier, for instance, Eichendorff had published his Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts. Halm himself was born in the year 1806 directly into the temporal heart of the Romantic movement. One of the poets he most admired in his youthful years was the Romantic lyrical poet, Ludwig Uhland; he was additionally influenced by the early poems of Heinrich Heine. Halm’s affinity with broadly Romantic ideas and ideals and his suspicion of ratio-fixated Enlightenment values are evident in Ein Abend zu L.

The devil’s specific form of Enlightenment embodies itself in sharp, chilly intellect – and such cold acuteness of mind is specifically condemned by Halm in his poem, “Dämonologisches: Zwei”. Here the poet speaks of the ‘Kunstgriff’ which the Devil employs to drag man into perdition: excessive emotionality lacking in insight or brilliance of intellect bereft of warmth of heart can lead man to satanic damnation:

Und soll ich ihn mit einem Wort euch nennen, Vernehmt, das ist des Bösen ganze List, Und wird es sein und war's zu jeder Frist, Er läßt in uns sich Licht und Wärme trennen! Bald stiehlt er listig uns des Herzens Schätze, Und schärft und stählt und waffnet unsern Geist; Gefühllos, kalt und darum doppelt dreist, Verstrickt uns Selbstsucht bald in Satans Netze.
Das ist es! Kaltes Licht und dunkle Flammen,
Das ist der Grund, auf dem sein Reich ruht;
Verstandeshelle ohne Herzensgluth,
Gluth ohne Einsicht sind’s, die uns verdammen.

(Halm, 1856, Vol. 1: 89)

Feelingless “Verstandeshelle” is a perfect characterization of Asmodi: he is frosty logic, intellect and rationalisation (albeit of a specious kind) personified and knows nothing of the “treasures of the heart.” His very face reveals his nature: the narrator speaks of the “wohl scharfen Verstand, aber gar kein Gefühl verrathende[s] Antlitz des Fremden” (Halm, 2012: 19). For this demon, marriage is merely the legalisation of lust and when combined with the “prejudice” of morality, constitutes nothing more than a “Fessel und Kette” (Halm, 2012: 23). All such laws relating to morality should be abrogated, he insists. He believes that all men – not just politicians and administrators – should be free to amend and make all laws, including the marriage laws, since they rest on nothing but mere “opinion”:

“Wenn nun Gesetz nichts ist, als Meinung, warum sollte es, da es soviel verschiedene Ansichten auf Erden gibt, nicht auch eine Behauptung geben können, die jener, die das Gesetz aufstellt gerade zuwider ist und warum sollte die letztere dem Gesetze widersprechende nicht auch die richtigere seyn können ... warum sollte also die Meinung, die Gesetz ist, nicht durch die Meinung derer, die Unterthanen des Gesetzes sind, aufgehoben werden können. Und dieses ist auch wirklich der Fall ...” (Halm, 2012: 23).

With views such as these Asmodi falls into the “type” of Enlightenment philosopher manifested (at least in the popular imagination) by such as Adam Weishaupt, of whose secret Enlightenment society, the Illuminaten-Orden, the Abbé Augustin Barruel said: “With respect to Government they had also asserted, that all men were equal and free, and they had concluded that every citizen had an equal right to form the laws ...” (Barruel, 1799: 14). Halm’s devil is an Enlightenment egalitarian – but solely along lustful lines.

An intriguing difference between Asmodi and his idealistic interlocutor, however, manifests itself in the sphere of homosexuality. As was indicated earlier in this essay, Asmodeus has traditionally been viewed as a defender of homosexuality. Halm inverts this attribute, and presents Asmodi as an antagonist of homosexual love. The narrator, by contrast, seems to view homosexual affection in a positive, ennobling light – reminiscent of ideas encountered in Plato, of whom the narrator is an avowed admirer. It is appropriate at this juncture to provide pertinent quotations on the issue from the text itself.

After hearing of Asmodi’s recommendations that the narrator should follow the faithless example of some of the couples at the ball and pursue a path of wanton promiscuity, giving in solely to the sex urge - which for Asmodi is the alpha and omega of love - the narrator reacts by saying that if such an orientation be “natural”, then he would prefer to follow the path of “Unnatur” (Halm, 2012: 22). He then follows this up with a striking comment, remarking:

“Und ist wirklich Geschlechtstrieb Liebe, ja auch nur ihre Bedingung, die ältesten Mythen kennen schon Liebe auch zwischen Männern oder verdiente die unzertrennliche Freundschaft des Pylades und Orest, Kastors und Pollux, Theseus und Pirithous nicht diesen schönen Nahmen?” (Halm, 2012: 22).
The narrator, a votary of Plato, here invokes a series of Greek male relationships whose names are bywords for homoerotic intimacy (writing of Castor and Pollux, for example, Davidson states that gay Spartan couples modelled themselves on this devoted pair - Davidson, 2008: 335). Moreover, Halm’s narrator concedes that, even if the sex drive is the determinant cause of love, that fact does not vitiate the beauty of loving relationships as evinced by these famed mythological male lovers. This is a stunning remark and brings us back to Peter Skrine’s lightly veiled speculation that Halm himself, perhaps, had homoerotic proclivities. I myself (Page, 1988) have delineated a homosexual orientation (whether overt or repressed) as revealed by some of Halm’s early writings. The present work is further evidence that Halm found the topic of homosexuality or homoerotically-tinged relationships of interest and that he certainly did not view the subject in a negative light.

It is quite otherwise, however, with his devil. Asmodi castigates the narrator for being a supporter of something that is contrary to nature and dismisses stories of intimate male friendships as mere inventions of idle poets. He even includes Halm’s favourite poet, Schiller, in this stricture:

“Was ferners die Liebe betrifft, die nach Ihrer Behauptung Männer für einander empfunden haben sollen, so liefert diese Aeusserung einen neuen Beweis für den oft bewährten Satz, daß selbst ein vollkommen und gründlich ausgebildeter Verstand nicht von den Irrthümern schützen kann, zu denen jugendliche Unbesonnenheit und eine gewaltsame Überspannung [sic] des Nervensystemes uns hinhelfen. Glauben Sie mir die Mythen von Pylades und Orest, Kastor und Pollux, Theseus und Pirithous sind eben so gut Fabeln, als das Verhältniß des Marquis Posa und des Don Carlos und nur die Erfindungen müßiger Köpfe, die um Beifall einzurenten, sich nicht scheuten den gesunden Menschenverstand durch ihre abentheuerlichen Fiktionen vor den Kopf zu stoßen, da der ungebildeten Menge nichts so sehr gefällt, als was der Natur und aller Wahrscheinlichkeit am meisten entgegen ist.” (Halm, 2012: 23).

According to Asmodi, belief in the reality and validity of love between men is simply the result of heady youthfulness and an overwrought central nervous system. As with masturbation, surprisingly this demon views intimate male relationships as being linked to physiological disorder and danger. His idealistic interlocutor, however, proves himself to be more liberal in this sphere than the demon of lust to whom he is unwittingly speaking. As remarked earlier, the narrator insists that if Asmodi’s view of love and sex is “Natur”, then he, the narrator, would far prefer to follow the path of “Unnatur”. This is again a striking statement issuing from an aristocratic Austrian (as the text indicates the narrator to be and as indeed Halm himself was) in the year 1828.

The Role of the Unconscious

More than once in this Novelle, the narrator remarks how he finds Asmodi “unheimlich” and “sonderbar” (Halm, 2012: 14, 27, 33). This calls to mind Freud’s famous essay on “Das Unheimliche” (Freud, 1919), in which the Austrian psychoanalyst links feelings of the uncanny with eruptions into the conscious mind of repressed psychical material which the possessor would prefer not to face.
Is it possible that Asmodi represents strata of the narrator’s psyche which have been repressed until now and which, under the influence of alcohol, rise up as veritable hallucinations? Is Asmodi the externalized, subliminally engendered figure on whom the narrator projects his own innermost fears and longings?

It seems permissible to read the story in this light. At the commencement of the tale, the narrator meets up with his old university friend, K., and makes an interesting comment regarding their encounter: “Ein Schatz von Ereignissen, Beobachtungen, und Erfahrungen blieb in unserm Gedächtnisse unbenützbar und unbeachtet liegen” (Halm, 2012: 1). Mental material, left unattended, ignored, is the matrix out of which the later encounter with the devil will spring. As the two friends reminisce, the narrator feels that powerful dreams “umgaukelten” him and his friend (Halm, 2012: 3). Dreams arise precisely from the realm of the unconscious and it is thus fitting that the narrator should tell of how previously buried feelings and ignored memories of past experiences begin to rise up again into conscious awareness: “… alles stieg in frischer Lebendigkeit aus dem Grabe der Vergangenheit zu uns wieder hervor” (Halm, 2012: 2). It is in this mental framework that the narrator sets off with his friend to the ball, where certain “Gefühle tratten in innigere Lebendigkeit aus der Tiefe des Herzens … hervor” (Halm, 2012: 16) and where the demon of lust will rise up before him.

At the ball itself, the narrator repeatedly imbibes the champagne that is circulating amongst the guests. Just minutes before Asmodi makes his unexpected appearance before the narrator’s startled gaze, the latter seems to be lapsing into a dreamy reverie. It is not unreasonable to assume that the narrator is, at this point, teetering on the brink of inebriation and that the apparition of the devil has sprung from his own released unconscious mind. No one else seems to notice Asmodi, even when the latter is gripped by an apparent epileptic fit; it is evident, therefore, that the demon is either a projection of the narrator’s own imagination, or else a supernatural perception to which this sensitive man, loosened by alcohol, has broken through. When the narrator leaves the government palace, at the end of his encounter with the devil, he inwardly comments that he does not care if the other guests think him drunk or deranged (Halm, 2012: 30), and as he makes his way along the dimly-lit alleys, he has to take care not to bump into the houses at his side (Halm, 2012: 31). Halm thus indicates that his narrator is, to say the least, somewhat tipsy.

It is in this state of semi-inebriation that the narrator faces notions and feelings that he would normally exclude from his conscious mind. Again and again during his colloquy with the devil, he feels disgust at the viewpoints advanced by Asmodi, and in the end has to rush out of the brightly lit palace into the darkness of the night outside. This is an enactment of the narrator’s temporary exposure to repressed psychical material, his “enlightenment” of denied desires and his subsequent renewed repression of them when the intensity of their illuminated presence threatens to overwhelm him.

What is the nature of that repressed psychical material? Clearly the desire to live life under the sway of the sexual impulse, to luxuriate in sheer sensuality, unbridled eroticism and unrestrained promiscuity. The narrator is, on the conscious level, a very decent, moral individual. Once his super-ego has loosened its grip, however
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and his inhibitions are dissolved by alcohol, he is confronted with feelings and desires which he normally would reject – at least in part - with disgust and horror. This is the source of the “Unheimliche” which he experiences whenever Asmodi (his own embodied unconscious) is verbalizing the narrator’s deepest dreads, longings and fears. In connection with the term, “unheimlich”, we note too that the narrator of the story is precisely away from his “Heim” – on a return journey - and that he had intended to visit the theatre that night. Instead, he is exposed to the theatre of his own unconscious mind.

Part of that repressed theatre of the unconscious consists of Enlightenment values that the passionate narrator has pushed out of his consciousness and into subliminal regions, from whence they now break forth. The narrator is depicted as ‘schwärmerisch’, a young man given over to extreme and passionate feeling. Such Schwärmerei is a quality and attitude of mind that had been rejected, for instance, by leading Enlightenment thinkers and writers of earlier decades, such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (see his Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts and, not least, his dramatic poem, Nathan der Weise). Halm’s narrator does not wish to acknowledge an inner need for Enlightenment cool-headedness. For him, such things are ‘of the devil’ and thus are rejected, indeed repressed. But the stirrings of his unconscious will not be brooked and these ideas rise to the fore in a distorted form, edged around with heartless chilliness.

It is further in this context of a distorting unconscious that the demon’s rejection of homosexuality must also be seen. At a conscious, rational level, the narrator can see nothing to deplore in the phenomenon of idealised male friendships, as found in the myths of the Greeks and also portrayed by Schiller. Yet it is evident that the narrator chooses not to emphasise the possible physical dimension of such affections. In his unconscious, however, there is the knowledge that such intimate relationships can be more than “platonic” and deep within him there lurks the fear that such attachments are contrary to nature and expressive of a defective inner-emotional world. It is such “homosexual panic” that Asmodi represents as he castigates the narrator for espousing a form of love that is “contrary to nature”.

Yet despite this, Halm’s narrator (a complex and far from uni-dimensional character) finally aligns himself with the path of “Unnatur”, rather than with the devil’s cold dismissal of male love as a mere perverted phantasm. While the narrator could at one level perhaps be seen as a rather conservative figure, rejecting on the conscious plane the sexual potentialities of close male love, this view needs to be balanced against the narrator’s explicit concession that the ‘Geschlechtstrieb’ can truly constitute love or, at least, its precondition and that the noble title of ‘Liebe’ should not be denied such devoted male pairs of whom he speaks (Halm, 2012: 22). It is important to remember that behind the narrator stands Friedrich Halm himself, who at precisely the time of the composition of this Novelle was deeply in love (his early poems make this clear) with his friend and mentor, Herr J. C. von Reich – to whom in fact this and other stories and poems of the period are dedicated (see Page, 1988). By conceding, through his narrator, that the sexual drive aligned to mutual male affection can still be worthy of the name of ‘love’, Halm is presenting a Weltanschauung that is more ‘enlightened’ and progressive than that of the
Devil, for all the latter’s representations of quasi-liberal and distorted ‘Enlightenment’ values. The issue of homo-erotically tinged male bonding and its legitimacy seemingly remained a matter of interest for Halm well into his maturity and manifested itself once more – as Peter Skrine has hinted – in his much later drama, *Wildfeuer*.

**Conclusion**

In view of its daring delineations of human sexuality and repressed sexual urges, its potentially progressive view of same-sex love and general exploration of the human psyche in the grip of passion *Ein Abend zu L.* constitutes a remarkable early 19th-century literary document, providing pre-echoes of psycho-analytical ideas that would take the Western world by storm less than a century later – ideas that issued, of course, from Halm’s Viennese compatriot, Sigmund Freud.

*Ein Abend zu L.*, sounds the opening chords of a theme of aberrant (from the contemporaneous viewpoint) sexual behaviour that would preoccupy Halm throughout his life and rise to a humorous crescendo in *Wildfeuer* and a much darker one in his final great Novelle, *Das Haus an der Veronabrücke*.

In the words of Peter Skrine, in a different Halmian context, it might be asserted of Halm’s early yet daring Novelle that *Ein Abend zu L.*, is indeed nothing short of a “personal confession in [devilish] disguise” (McKenzie and Sharpe, 1998: 158).

**References**


EPITHETS REFERRING TO CHARACTERS IN THAI POETIC WORKS

Warawat Sriyabhaya

Abstract

This article is a study to classify the epithets referring to the characters in four Thai poetic works. The study results revealed that there are two groups of epithets to be found. The first one is epithets to praise characters by referring to their valuable entities, their dignity and their beauty. The second one is epithets to inveigh against characters. These epithets focus on the characters’ ethnicity, negative characteristics, ugly physical appearance, and worthless elements. The use of epithets is the poet’s strategy to express meaning and emotion in their poetic works. Moreover, the use of epithets through various words makes the literature more colorful and enhances emotional feelings in the readers.

Introduction

One of the aims of Thai literature is to entertain readers. According to Raksamani (2007: 633), literature is a work of art created from a poet’s emotions, which allows poets to express their emotions through their works and encourages readers to share the same emotions. There are many techniques that poets employ to express their emotions or feelings through their works. One important technique which can precisely convey the poet’s emotions to the audience is an epithet, a nominal phrase used to point out the important characteristics of characters such as their physical appearance, behavior and ethnicity, or to show if the character are praising or inveighing against someone. In this article, the epithets referring to characters are analyzed to investigate the emotions and feelings of the characters, and their creators, the poets.

As far as data collection and data analysis are concerned, the selection of Thai literature for this study was based on the following characteristics: narrative discourses or folktales with two characteristics: contingent temporal succession and agent orientation (Longacre, 1983), literary works with an exact written date and time, based on History of Thai Literature (Na Nakhon, 2002), main protagonists, who can be human or nonhuman; literary masterpieces of the Early Ayutthaya Era, the Thonburi Era and the Ratanakosin Era with these mentioned characteristics. The selected Thai poetic literature with the above characteristics are as follows: Lilit Phralo (the Early Ayutthaya Era), Sumutthakhot Khamchan (the Middle Ayutthaya Era), Lilit Phetmongkut (the Thonburi Era) and Khun Chang-Khu Phaen (the Ratanakosin Era).

In accordance with Halliday and Hasan (1976), the references were classified into three types: 1) Personal References: personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns 2) Demonstrative References: this, that, these, those, here, there, now, there. 3) Comparative References: same, such, similar, other different else, so-, as-, equally-, more, fewer, less etc.

Based on the framework of Halliday and Hasan, this study focused on personal references which were divided into three types. The first one was the personal

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pronoun including the first person, the second person and the third person pronouns. Another type was zero terms. The last type consisted of kinship terms, occupation terms, proper terms, epithets, etc. However, the only epithets to be studied in this paper had to be obviously found; furthermore, according to Chanawassa (1986) and Burusphat (1994), the epithets had to become one of the major language forms to contribute the poets expressing the characters’ emotion appropriately and two enhancing the aesthetic value of their work.

Types of Epithet Referring to Characters in the Four Thai Poetic works

There were two main types of epithet referring to characters in the four literary works. They were the epithets used to praise characters and to inveigh against them.

The epithets to praise characters

The epithets to praise characters were found in three different types, namely, epithets referring to characters’ valuable qualities, dignity and beauty.

The epithets referring to the characters’ valuable qualities were pronouns denoting valuable qualities both concrete and abstract items such as jewels, money, loved ones, goodness, etc., as shown in the excerpt from *Lilit Phralo* below. The epithets were used to introduce the two main characters, Phraphuen and Phraphaeng.

In the excerpt above, “(2) _thaaw phian phaem_” or Phraphuen and Phraphaeng are called “(1) _kut_” (the two beloved daughters of the king.) This pronoun implies that Phraphuen and Phraphaeng are being praised because they are very important to the King, their father.

Some examples of the epithets are found in *Samutthakhot Khumchan*, *Lilit Phetmongkut*, and *Khun Chang-Khun Phaen*, respectively:

In the example, “(2) _luuk klor_” (my beloved son), and “(1) _phra sa mut_” (my precious jewel prince) refer to “(1) _phra mut_” or Pharsamutthakhot who is the protagonist. These pronouns imply that Pharsamutthakhot’s father, who is the King, praises his son as his valuable possession.

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In the excerpt from Lilit Phetmongkut, “(2) น้า บัตร ผู้ชาย” (the crown prince) and “(3) ปืน ลูกสัตว์ ลาะ บัตร ผู้ชาย” (the greatest king) refer to “(1) พระเจ้า สามัญ” or Phraphetmongkut.

In the example, “(2) เกี่ยว ผี” (a precious diamond), and “(3) เกี่ยว ผีกัน” (the valuable jewels in the house) are used to refer to “(1) ทอง พระเจ้า สิ่ง” or Thongprasi when Khun Krai, Khun Phaen’s father, expressed his admiration to her because of his coming death.

The examples above obviously indicated that the language forms showing the characters’ valuable qualities are pronouns referring to both concrete and abstract things. The concrete ones mentioned are diamonds, precious stones, silver, gold, gold ornaments and beloved persons as well. The abstract ones refer to goodness, beauty and neatness.

Another type of the epithet praising the characters are those referring to the characters’ dignity. We can see some examples of them in the excerpts from Lilit Phralo, Sumutthakhot Khamchan, Lilit Phetmongkut and Khun Chan-Khum Phaen, respectively.

In the above excerpt, “(1) ทำาวุ้ ผู้ชาย สามัญ บัตร ผู้ชาย” (the mighty king), “(3) ซ้อม หัว” (the owner of the elephants, great animals which serve as the king’s carrier) are different epithets to honor “(2) ลำ ผ่า” or Phralo.

In the excerpt, “(1) ทำาวุ้ ผู้ชาย สามัญ บัตร ผู้ชาย” (the crown prince) and “(2) สรุกริม ผู้ชาย สามัญ บัตร ผู้ชาย” (the greatest king) refer to “(1) พระเจ้า สามัญ” or Phraphetmongkut.
In the excerpt, “(2) phra4 son1 phuu3 son1 phuu3 maa1 hay5 sa1 waa5” (the greatest ruler), “(3) phra4 son1 phuu3 son1 pham1” (the righteous king) and “(4) son1 deet2 khran1 ni1 weet3 chian1 may2 ma1 hay5 sa1 waa5” (the powerful King of Chiang Mai) refer to “(1) phra4 caw3 chian1 may2” or The King of Chiang Mai.

In brief, the language forms showing the characters’ dignity are pronouns meaning having dignity and fame or referring to wealth, greatness and bravery. These language forms, used as epithets referring to the characters in Thai poetic works, contribute to increasing the aesthetic value of the works.

The third type of epithet to praise the characters was those referring to the characters’ beauty. Examples of these epithets were indicated in the following excerpts from the four works of Thai poetic literature.

/dian1 ca1 rat2 pha1 yom1 ceem2 faa4 phi?2 boo1 day3 hen5 naa3 (1) lal1 rat2 say4 duu1 dian1 dut2 lea1... thuk4 mian1 mii1 luuk4 thaw4 nap4 mii1 maak3 naa1 boo1 priap2 soong5 ka1 sat2 trii1... phii3 nang4 (2) phra4 pheen4 mee3 mii1 si1 sa1 wat2 yin1 kha1 na1 naa1 (3) phra4 phian4 choom5 yoo1 yin4 yuu2 phian4 (4) duan1 dian1/ (Lilit Phralo 2002: 389, 393)

In the above excerpt, “(2) dian1” (the moon) refer to “(1) lal1 rat2” or Phralo in order to praise his handsomeness.

In the example, (2) “thaw4 thaw4 thi1 raat3 rian4 thaw4 raat3 rian4 thaw4 thi1 raat3 rian4 thaw4 raat3 rian4 thaw4 raat3 rian4” (the powerful king of this land) refer to “(1) thaw4 thaw4 raat3 rian4 thaw4 raat3 rian4 thaw4 raat3 rian4” or King Ratnarubet and King Praphaphak.

In the above excerpt, “(2) caw3 caw3 caw3 caw3 chian1 may2” (the mighty king with power and honor, fearful to enemies) refer to “(2) caw3” or King Rommayaburi.

In the excerpt, “(2) phra4 phaa4 phuu3 kal2 waa5” or King Rommayaburi.

In brief, the language forms showing the characters’ dignity are pronouns meaning having dignity and fame or referring to wealth, greatness and bravery. These language forms, used as epithets referring to the characters in Thai poetic works, contribute to increasing the aesthetic value of the works.

The third type of epithet to praise the characters was those referring to the characters’ beauty. Examples of these epithets were indicated in the following excerpts from the four works of Thai poetic literature.

/dian1 ca1 rat2 pha1 yom1 ceem2 faa4 phi?2 boo1 day3 hen5 naa3 (1) lal1 rat2 say4 duu1 dian1 dut2 lea1... thuk4 mian1 mii1 luuk4 thaw4 nap4 mii1 maak3 naa1 boo1 priap2 soong5 ka1 sat2 trii1... phii3 nang4 (2) phra4 pheen4 mee3 mii1 si1 sa1 wat2 yin1 kha1 na1 naa1 (3) phra4 phian4 choom5 yoo1 yin4 yuu2 phian4 (4) duan1 dian1/ (Lilit Phralo 2002: 389, 393)

In the above excerpt, “(2) dian1” (the moon) refer to “(1) lal1 rat2” or Phralo in order to praise his handsomeness.
Moreover, “(5) duan phim” (the full bright moon) refers to “(3) phra phaeng” or Phra Phaeng and “(4) phra phian” or Phra Pheun due to their beauty.

In the above example, “(1) mee phuon mii naa khii si?ran rian riaa yaa...” (a woman with fair complexion) refer to “(2) woman who is like a shining moon) refers to “(3) woman with great beauty”) refer to “(1) Phra Pheun due to their beauty.

In the example, “(1) mee phuon mii naa khii si?ran rian riaa yaa...” (a woman with fair complexion) refer to “(2) woman who is like a shining moon) refers to “(3) woman with great beauty”) refer to “(1) Phra Pheun due to their beauty.

In the above example, “(2) naan phim” (a very attractive woman), and “(3) caw naam plaa yot rak khoon phlaay keew” (Phlai Keaw’s perfectly beautiful woman) refers to “(1) phim” or Phim.

In the above examples, the language forms referring to beauty are pronouns indicating both male and female characters’ good works. These epithets imply praise of the characters and enhance the literary works’ aesthetic qualities.

In the study, it was found that many epithets referring to the main characters in the four literary works were used to praise the characters because of their value, dignity and beauty and strengthened the works’ aesthetic qualities. Furthermore, another type of epithet which contributed the works’ value was those inveighing against the characters. They are shown in the following section.

**Epithets inveighing against the characters**

The second major type of epithet found in the study were epithets inveighing against the character. However, a detailed study of the four literary works indicated that...
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there was no invective in Lilit Phrala, Lilit Phetmongkut and Samutthakot Khamchan because all of them were about the royal court and the royal families so, any impoliteness was prohibited. As a result, only Khun Chang-Khun Phaen, which is about ordinary people’s lives in which people are able naturally to express their anger with invective, displayed many epithets inveighing against the characters. In the study of epithets inveighing against the characters, four different types were found, namely, epithets focusing on the characters’ ethnicity, their negative characteristics, their ugly physical appearance and worthless things or animals.

The characters’ ethnicity was used in epithets inveighing against the characters because some ethnicities which are presented in Khun Chang-Khun Phaen are not powerful and were not admired by other ethnic groups. We can see some examples of these epithets in the following excerpts.

/faaay2 waa3 naan1 naan1 siii maa1 laa1
khii1 nai4 nii4 thraa1 koO3 faay2 fans
waa3 loo1 sa?2 len2 naam4 sams raam1
khraa1
hens but siu baa nOok niQ duuQ phiQ thaa1
pluk2 siii maoy2 fans waa3 laa1 rom1
siii maoy2 choo1 waa3 fans khoOgs naay1 dii1...

siii maa1 laa waa3 wOoy3 siii moom1 thoy2
waw1 phuaQ phoy2 maaQ phuat3 maa5 pen1
phones
niis leQ sans chaat3 phray2 thii3 nay5 miQ
sen3 phiis ray1 muQ1 (moom1 can1 ray1)...

phra2 phiQ citQ waa3 duu1 (siiQ moom1 thoy2
sak2 nOoy2 toon2 caQ laQ1 pen1 klaa1 kliuQ
chaat3 (siiQ moom1 naaQ pen1 hens kheQ kiuQ
naa1 laQ1 miQ nay1?1 pay1 haaQ yoot2 taa)
(Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 632, 367, 646, 654)

In the excerpt, Srimala inveighs against her servant, “(1) siii moom1” or I-Mei, who is Mon, by addressing her as “(2) siii moom1 thoy2” and “(3) moom1 can1 ray1” (damned Mon) and “(5) siii moom1 naaQ pen1” (a funny faced Mon).

/(1) siiQ waa3 taaQ sanQ ?uuQ nai4 noQ
hooQ peen3 taaQ kraQ thaQ4 phal4 khwar4i1
thoy2 prQ siii rOom4 waa3 siii haQ laaQ
tham1 chaaw1 siQ maa4 khiQ rian4i1
theeQ peen3 kleeQ haaQ prQ laQ4 thaQ4 rian1
kraQ thaQ4 kraQ thoy2 taaQ kliuQ giiQ laaQ
can1 ray1...

keeQ poQ taaQ naaQ moom1 maaQ rOom1
waa3 pay1
tam1 raa1 ?aa1 ray1 (3) siiQ waa3 mooQ1
waa3 waa3 nai1 leQ1 leQ1 leQ4 waa3
neeQ giiQ kraQ ray1 leQ1 pen1 nai2 naaQ...

thaan4 yaa3 waa3 meeQ maa1 priQ prOoy1
wOoy5 siii laaQ1 paaQ khaQ1 maa1 nai2
naQ
koQ1 phra2 miQiQ rauQ chaaw4 siii1 laaQ1
loom1...

rauQ4 taaQ koom1 koom1 baaQ (3) khaQ1 haaQ
?aa1 cetQ rOoy4 maaQ yAA1 baaQ maa1 liQ1
raa4
In the second example, “(2) ?ii laaw1 haaz laaw1,” and “(3) laaw1 can1 ray1!” (a damned Laotian) refer to “(1) sooy3 faa4 (Soifa), another wife of Phra Wai) when Thongprasri, Pra Wai’s grandmother, and Srimala, his chief wife, inveigh against Soifa. Moreover, “(5) laaw1 (a Laotian), “(6)?ii laaw1 paa2,” (a Laotian from the wilds), “(7) ?ii laaw1 loom1” (an extremely rude Laotian), “(8) ?ii laaw1 doon1” (a Laotian from the mountains) and “?ii laaw1 don1” (a Laotian from the wilds) is used to refer to “(4) ?oo5 sooy3 faa4” or Soifa.

The second type of epithet inveighing against the characters are epithets focusing on their bad characteristics including their badness, stubbornness and arrogance. Some epithets are shown in the following excerpts.

/wokuns chaang khii waas mees yaaay dai baa day3 thaang man yaaay lay1 yaaay ray3 (1) ?ii laaw1 thong1... (2) ?ii laaw1 paa2... (3) laaw1 can1 ray1... (4) thong1 laaw1 doon1... (5) laaw1 can1 ray1... (6) ?ii laaw1 paa2... (7) ?ii laaw1 loom1... (8) ?ii laaw1 doon1... ku1t ca5t haa5 min1 ray1 yaaay lay1 yaaay ray3 (Khun Chang-Khum Phaen 2002: 970, 910, 916)

In the excerpt, “(1) ?ii wan1 thong1” (Wanthon) is called “(2) ?ii see1n thong1 can1 ray1 cay1 thong1 min1” (an extremely wicked and vicious woman), “(3) ?ii thaaay3 mian1” (a woman from a whorehouse), and “(4) yin5 laaw1 la1t nii1 ?ii phets sai yaaay” (a whore) when King Phanawas inveighs against her because she cannot decide if she would like to live with Khun Chang or Khun Phaen.

/wokuns chaang khii waas mees yaaay dai baa day3 thaang man yaaay lay1 yaaay ray3 (1) ?ii laaw1 thong1... (2) ?ii laaw1 paa2... (3) laaw1 can1 ray1... (4) thong1 laaw1 doon1... ku1t ca5t haa5 min1 ray1 yaaay lay1 yaaay ray3 (Khun Chang-Khum Phaen 2002: 970, 910, 916)

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In this excerpt, “(2) ʔaay3 baas kaam” (a satyr), “(3) ʔaay3 haaw” (a brutish man), “(4) ʔaay3 khiis thooy2” (a man of base actions), and “(7) ʔaay3 taay1 hoorn” (a demon) refer to “(1) and (6) khuns chaan” (Khun Chang). These epithets are used to inveigh against the characters in Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. Some epithets are revealed in the following excerpts.

/doiız lorn phim klaaŋ thiií khaaŋ nay1 seer5 fay1 raan1 raan1 sai waan2 naa3 taz maan1 kho1 way4 leew4 khlay1 khaa1 poe2 murn hens naa3 ʔaw3 waa3 thooy3...

miŋ1 naam1 teev ruup1 cuu1 may1 hoong3 ʔiií naa3 moom1 kon3 moo3 ʔiií kho1 hong3 thiip2 tok2 caak2 thiaŋ1 kho1 kha1 loŋ1 hay3 man1 kho1 chi1 wuu pay1 yaw1 mií1/ (Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 294-295)

In this excerpt, “(2) ʔaay3 haaw phoms kliang” (a man with a big and bald head), “(3) ʔaay3 chaats huas laam4 kai baan1 laay1” (a damned bald man with a disease of the scalp), “(4) ʔaay3 chaats khaas huas laam2” (a damned and bald man), and “(5) and (6)ʔaay3 huas laamz” (a bald man) refer to “(1) khuns chaan” or Khun Chang. All epithets mentioned express Khun Chang’s extremely ugly appearance, especially his baldness.

The last type of the epithet inveighing against the characters are epithets which represent worthless things or animals.

In the excerpt, “Khun Chang had become her mistress. (Wanthong). Khun Phaen uses it to call Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. Some epithets are revealed in the following excerpts.

/saay2 okhuns chaan1 naam1 gaw5 maya3 khaw3 klai3 ron1 hay3 naa3 haaw5 raaw1 khaap1 phiis...

In the above excerpt, “(2) and (6) khuns chaan” refer to Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. Khun Phaen uses it to call Khun Chang, his wife, when he finds that Khun Chang had become her mistress.

The characters’ ugly physical appearance also serves as the third type of epithet to inveigh against the characters in Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. Some epithets are revealed in the following excerpts.

/doiız lorn phim klaaŋ thiií khaaŋ nay1 seer5 fay1 raan1 raan1 sai waan2 naa3 taz maan1 kho1 way4 leew4 khlay1 khaa1 poe2 murn hens naa3 ʔaw3 waa3 thooy3...

miŋ1 naam1 teev ruup1 cuu1 may1 hoong3 ʔiií naa3 moom1 kon3 moo3 ʔiií kho1 hong3 thiip2 tok2 caak2 thiaŋ1 kho1 kha1 loŋ1 hay3 man1 kho1 chi1 wuu pay1 yaw1 mií1/ (Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 294-295)
Some epithets are shown in the excerpts below.

/khraa1 nan4 naa4 phim1 nim3 sa1 nitz kheen4 cit2 khaat2 cay1 pen1 nak2 naa5 /teep2 lap1 leel1 leel1 hens2 /khun1 chaan1 maan1 fyo5 faa5 faanj rian3 hay3 khaan1 cay1 /sokk1 taoy1 riis ca22 ploom1 phai1 yoom1 phray1 maan5 ca22 koot2 chiji4 maas koot2 minj1 pay1 taay1 sias thee2 /?aay3 haas bia3 naa5 taay1 chen3 nii4 ca22 mi5 mia1 /?aay3 ma1 muan3 maas li14 mays2 ciam1 cay1 mians2 /maai leen2 poom1 ?aatz riz2 waa5 riu1 sut2 ca22 kheen2 khrut2 khaam3 ?aaw2 tha1 leel1 yay2 /kooni3 saw3 riis ca22 thaw3 meen1 kray1 /chini4 hoy3 pray1 ca22 kheen2 seens sa1 ri yoo5 chaat3 chuay1 daan1 ?onk3 ta1 krum2 / (Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 124-125)

In the excerpt, “(2) dok1 taoy1” (Tei flower, a flower devoid of beauty), “(3) aay3 haas bia3” (five cents), “(4) aay3 ma1 muan3 maas li14” (a mango licked by a dog), “(5) ma1 leen2 poom1” (a dragonfly), “(6) kooni3 saw3” (a burned rock), “(7) hini hoy3 pray1” (a wild firefly), and “(8) noo4 ta1 krum2” (Takrum bird, an ugly bird like a vulture) represent Khun Chang when Wanthong inveighed against him because he has paid court to her.

/chum1 phon1 kraep1 tim1 phiis siis maan1 laa1 mii1 chet4 naam3 taay6 huns hans hans maan4 thins2 /sosoy3 faat2 ring4 daa2 phlan1 /?ii5 choon1 ta1 kreen1 klee3 kan1 hay3 daay3 /aay1...

In conclusion, it was found that the epithets of the characters in the four literary works were classified into two groups namely epithets praising the characters and the epithets inveighing against them. Praising was indicated with epithets referring to valuable entities, the character’s dignity and their beauty. As for the inventive, the epithets focused on the characters’ ethnicity, their bad characteristics, their physical appearance and the worthless things. The epithets praising the characters were obviously employed in all four of the chosen pieces of literature but the epithets inveighing against the characters were stated, remarkably, only in Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. This is possibly because the other three literary works studied are about the royal families and it was improper to include impoliteness in the works, whereas, Khun Chang-Khun Phaen is a
piece about the lives of laymen reflecting the way of life, language usage and beliefs of folks in that time. When it was common for ordinary people to express their anger verbally by inveighing against each other. Overall, the two types of epithet obviously reveal the writing ability of the poets in employing literary language to express their meaning and emotion in an appropriate manner, thus enhancing the aesthetic value of their works.

References


Book Review


Achieving justice and equality has always been a struggle. Before women and people of color in the United States could cast their votes and participate in the democratic process, they endured a long and rough fight against the prejudices and biases of a white, male power structure, which defined and restricted them.

W.E.B. Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk* depicts problematic concepts about race and socio-economic conditions that prevented disadvantaged people from overcoming unfavorable conditions and asserting their rights as equal citizens. Widely read in sociology, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in essence, examines what it means to be human, prompting people to re-investigate the past concepts about their race and those of others. The book also suggests actions to liberate the disadvantaged people from imposed restriction.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) was a pioneer African-American scholar who significantly contributed to African-American literature. He was an advocate for racial equality, a fighter for suffrage for people of color and women, and a humanist who believed in the potential of human beings if they are provided equal opportunities and access to education. Du Bois was a source of inspiration for Martin Luther King, Jr., who led the American Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

Originally published in 1903 and subsequently revised in 1953, *The Souls of Black Folk* is the most remarkable work of Du Bois’. The book is a collection of fourteen essays that weave various accounts of African-Americans through discussions of race, politics, education, autoethnography, fiction, poetry and music. Du Bois challenges the misconception of African-Americans as biologically inferior. For him, racial differences were the product of structural social problems, such as the lack of opportunities for blacks in higher education and political participation as well as various other social barriers. This concept of race was inextricably linked with issues of class and social injustice. He pointed out, “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line”. It was the “color-line” rather than biology that set the boundary, segregating the black and white folks.

Du Bois approached the problem of race by investigating the history of African-Americans. In Chapter I, Du Bois examined how the notion of race developed, and how past history shaped the African-American people. He explained the concept of the veil of race, a metaphor of the worldview worn by all the African-Americans, rendering different visions of their power, potential, access to resources, education and economic opportunities. The concept of the veil led to the problem of the color-line. Du Bois also suggested that African-Americans experienced double-consciousness—this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others”. He questioned what it was like to be black—suggesting that racial identity becomes a problem in the context of American culture.

In addition, Du Bois critiqued education and emphasized its importance to human empowerment. He believed that education must develop men. From Chapter III to
Chapter VI, he shared his views on education. He criticized Booker T. Washington, an African-American educator who was the spokesman for blacks at the time. Du Bois disagreed with Washington’s suggestion that blacks should give up their political power, conform to segregation, and use education to develop technical skills. Du Bois argued that these compromises might limit the potential of black Americans. By setting the bar low for black achievement, they put the burden solely on African-American shoulders. In contrast, Du Bois argued, “in fact the burden belongs to the nation, and the hands of none of us are clean if we bend not our energies to righting these great wrongs” (p. 131).

Du Bois also pointed out that socio-economic conditions were changed by the advent of progress and wealth and suggested that the modern economy reorganized means of subsistence for the people of color. “The country is rich, yet the people are poor” (p. 171). In Chapter VII-X, he addressed the lack of land ownership that plagued the people of color, adding more adversities to their livelihood. He highlighted the fact that racial discrimination against African-Americans cast apocryphal stereotypes, portraying them as lazy, gullible, and violent.

In the later chapters, he recounted personal stories of American-Americans in the black Church. Throughout his work, Du Bois’ text is organized around music. The last chapter “Of the Sorrow Songs” discusses the musical legacy of the black folks’ sorrow songs, which were rooted in the miserable life of slavery. He argued that these sorrow songs represented a black folk culture and spiritualism.

What could one do to solve this complex problem of race? Du Bois posited that African-Americans should emancipate themselves by altering their views about being black and developing self-pride. He also advocated for the rights to political participation, education, access to decent job opportunities, and support from state and federal institutions for African-Americans to thrive. Not only would such improvements be good for black Americans but also for American society as a whole.

In essence, Du Bois was a humanist who strongly believed in the potential of people to thrive and flourish. He called for a change in the prevailing discourse imposed by the privileged class, which impeded the progress of minorities. Despite being written a century ago, the book is still relevant; it provides a fundamental on how we look at others as human beings. Du Bois saw people as inherently equal, and as such his message is timeless and universal. He called out the urgency and the significance of our actions to alter pre-established views that suppress marginalized segments of the population.

Reviewed by
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ABSTRACTS IN THAI

TABI-TABI PO: SITUATING THE NARRATIVE OF SUPERNATURAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHILIPPINES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Paolo Miguel Vicerra
Jem R. Javier

Payungporn Nonthavisarut
Pathom Hongsuwan
ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ต้านทานเชื้อโรคที่เป็นที่นิยมในระดับสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมี 1) บุคคลที่มีเชื้อโรค 2) กระรอก 3) โรคเชื้อโรค 4) โรคในสัตว์ 5) โรคในสัตว์ที่มีอัตราการระบาดที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้วมีสีขาวที่สูงสุดแล้
FRIEDRICH HALM AND THE DEMON OF SEX: AN EXAMINATION OF HOLM’S EARLY NOVELLE, EIN ABEND ZU L.

(Prof. Dr. Tony Page โทนี่ แพ็ง)

เกมิชเวิร์ดเป็นรูปประโยคเพื่อศึกษาและวิเคราะห์ทัศนคติเกี่ยวกับกิจสิทธิ์และพฤติกรรมทางเพศในนิยายเรื่องสั้น ‘Ein Abend zu L.’ ซึ่งเป็นงานเขียนช่วงสั้นๆของ ฟรีดริช ฮอล์ม (Friedrich Holm) รวมทั้งวิเคราะห์ทัศนคติในเชิงรายที่แห่งรูปแบบของเหตุการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้นในเรื่องที่ผู้เขียนแสดงออกเกี่ยวกับการรักเพศ เกมิชเวิร์ดวิเคราะห์ปริศนาที่เกิดขึ้นในความแตกต่างระหว่างนิยายเรื่องสั้นนี้กับนิยายเรื่อง Le Diable boiteux ของ Alain-René Lesage ซึ่งให้ร่วมกันกล่าวว่าเป็นแรงจูงใจต่อเรื่อง Ein Abend zu L.

EPITHETS REFERRING TO CHARACTERS IN THAI POETIC WORKS

(นาย华尔ลัต สิริภักย์)

บทความนี้มีวิวัฒนสิ่งสิ่งที่วิเคราะห์หลักๆคือการใช้หน่วยภาษาอ้างถึงตัวแสดงบทบาทในวรรณคดีร้อยกรองของไทย ด้วยการวิเคราะห์หน่วยภาษาที่ตัดสินการวิเคราะห์มี 4 เรื่อง ได้แก่ ลิสต์พลังอ้างอิง, สมบูรณ์ของคำสำคัญ, ลิสต์เจาะจง, และสิ่งที่ชัดเจนที่สุด ได้รับการวิเคราะห์โดยให้การวิเคราะห์ในวรรณคดีร้อยกรองไทยได้ 2 ลักษณะ คือ การใช้หน่วยภาษาอ้างอิงย่อย รูปภาษาที่มี 3 ลักษณะ คือ เรียงลำดับภาษาที่แสดงออกในวรรณคดีร้อยกรองไทย รูปภาษาที่มี 4 ลักษณะ คือ ภาษาที่แสดงความรู้สึกเชิงลบ, ภาษาที่แสดงความรู้สึกเชิงบวก, และภาษาที่แสดงความคิดเชิงลบ, ภาษาที่แสดงความทั่วไป, และภาษาที่แสดงความคิดเชิงบวก. การวิเคราะห์หน่วยภาษาอ้างอิงย่อยที่มีในการวิเคราะห์หน่วยภาษาอ้างอิงย่อย ใช้สังเกตความถี่ในการแบ่งเกณฑ์ ฯลฯ และให้เกิดความหลากหลายในการวิเคราะห์หน่วยภาษาจับทางวรรณคดีที่มีคุณค่าต่อเนื่อง
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TABI-TABI PO: SITUATING THE NARRATIVE OF SUPERNATURAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHILIPPINES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Paolo Miguel Vicerra
Jem R. Javier

This study explores the changes undergone by Philippine narratives of the supernatural vis-à-vis the urban development of the community where they thrive. It is demonstrated that the characters of the narratives of the supernatural are perceived to be of equal or even higher stature than those of members of the rural communities. With the locality experience changes brought about by urbanisation, this folklore is inevitably modified to suit the people’s environment and sensibilities, by reappropriating new functions and roles in the community. A different impression is observed in the context of the urban community; but, the collective sense of respect evoked by the urban dwellers has endured. This is the form which the latent belief system among Filipinos has taken, one that forges their common identity.

“BANGKOK” IN CONTEMPORARY THAI LITERATURE: GLOBALIZATION, TOURISM, AND CONSUMERISM

Suradech Chotiudompant

The paper aims to investigate how Bangkok is represented in contemporary Thai literature with a focus on three main issues; namely, (1) Bangkok as a hub of globalization, where cultural forces, especially those from the West, clash with local knowledge and wisdom; (2) Bangkok as a major tourist destination, where the tourist’s imagination of Bangkok and Thailand as an exotic place jars with the realities they actually face upon their arrival; and (3) Bangkok as a city of capitalism and consumerism, where urban people define themselves through their conspicuous consumption. It is concluded that Contemporary Thai literature, especially those works in the last two decades, manifest the complexity of these three issues as well as how these issues affect urban dwellers in their everyday life.