

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIRĀT GENRE IN THAI POETRY

by

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Each line of the following verse was composed by an individual, ad lib, in a poetry competition game.

"Wherever I turn, I feel so lonely.
I long to return to the city.
For you will be lonesome and sad in the night,
Because I am not there to make love to you.
Until now, twelve full days have passed,
The distance from love is breaking my heart.
What am I to do to bring love near.
Oh, so far away, I miss you my dear."

สักรวาแลเหลียวให้เปลี่ยวจิต
เฝ้าแต่คิดคืนหลังยังกรุงศรี
จะเียบเหงาเศร้าใจในราตรี
ตัวไม่มีใครประโลมโฉมสุตา
แต่เบอหนึ่งถึงสิบสองต้องร้างรัก
อกจะหักไกลเบ็ดของเชษฐา
ทำไฉนจึงจะได้พาน้องมา
ไอ้โสฬจากขนิษฐาคิดถึงเอย¹

1) Phrarāchaniphon Ruang Klai Bān: Far From Home, Letters by H.M. King Chulālongkōn to H.R.H. Princess Nipā Nophadon, Vol. 1, Bangkok, 1923, p. 40.

Originally, the Sakawā verse game was an extemporaneous exchange between two or more teams of skilful poets and singers sponsored by the King, Princes and Nobles. The game was played in boats during the flood season. The above verse, however, is the result of the Sakawa game played in King Chulālongkōn's smoking room on board H.M. Ship 'Chakri' on its way to Europe in 1907.

The above verse was improvised by King Čhulālongkōn and his royal brothers and cousins on board ship during their journey to Europe in 1907. This poetry competition game which the King played with other princes reflects the mutual feelings of travellers going on a long journey.

During this journey, the King also stated in daily letters he wrote to his daughter, Princess Niphā Nophadon, that he had started to compose a Nirāt poem. The reason was :

"Prince Pračhak is going mad. He has been teasing everyone on the subject of wives. I was asked to help in the composition of a Nirāt poem. Today I have composed these three stanzas."²

In his next letter the King wrote that he had composed five stanzas more. These stanzas, he said :

"... shall be read during meal times—one stanza for each meal."³

And in another letter the King wrote :

"Today I have nothing to do so I composed some more stanzas for my Nirāt poem."⁴

What then is the Nirāt ?

For many centuries, the term Nirāt has been used in Thai poetry not only as a lexical item but also as a part of other titles as well as a term to differentiate certain categories of Thai poems. The existence of this term suggests that a category of some kind has been observed by Thai scholars and that the term can be used to designate a distinct type of poem. Earlier works which have been recognized as Nirāt poems include Khlōng Thawāthotsamāt, Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai, Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt, and Khlōng Nirāt Nakhōnsawan.⁵ As we can see, Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai and Khlōng Nirāt Nakhōnsawan are distin-

2) Klai Bān, *Ibid*, p. 6.

3) *Ibid*, p. 10.

4) *Ibid*, p. 63.

5) Khlōng Nirāt Nakhōnsawan is a less wellknown poem believed to have been composed in the 17th Century during the reign of King Nārai. The poem is attributed to Phra Srīmahōsot.

guished by the title Nirāt whereas Khlōng Thawāthotsamāt, meaning 'Twelve Months', has been given its title according to the chronology which the poet used as his imaginative source for the journey.⁶ On the other hand, the title Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt—'the Wailing of Srīprāt' is an explicit pronouncement about the emotive attitude of the poet. This poem is also known as Kamsuan Samut and is sometimes referred to as Khlōng Nirāt Nakhōn Srīthamarāt.⁷ There is a fragment of a poem believed to be contemporary with Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt known as Rāchāphilāp Khamchan—'the Lamentation of a Rājā'. This title serves the same purpose as that of Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt. However, when the poem was finally published it was renamed 'Nirāt Sīdā Khamchan'.⁸

The titles of the poems cited above, though bearing a certain relevance to the subject matter of each poem, show that there have been no criteria to justify the names of these poems other than arbitrary ones. This is due to the fact that Thai scholars of literature have until recently been preoccupied with disputes regarding chronology, and with proving or disproving the veracity of accounts that have grown around literary origins and the lives of poets.⁹ Not until later, during the Ratanakōsin period, by which time a group of poetical works, called Nirāt by the poets themselves, reached its flowering and a large number of poems of this kind had been composed, did Prince Damrong Rāchānuphāp attempt to describe the Nirāt poems for the first time on their publication. He wrote :

- 6) It will be classified later that Khlōng Thawāthotsamāt is a precursor of Nirāt rather than a real Nirāt poem.
- 7) The title Kamsuan Samut is found quoted in Čhindāmanī; the 17th Century text book of poetry. For the title Khlōng Nirāt Nakhōn Srīthamarāt see Thanit Yūphō, Prawat Lae Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt, Bangkok, 1968, p. 4.
- 8) Rāchāphilāp Khamchan is found in Čhindāmanī. For Nirāt Sīdā see Wachirayān No. 89, February, 1902, p. 241.
- 9) Disputes and contradictions concerning the life and work of Srīprāt, for instance, include two chronicles (Kham Hai Kān Chao Krung Kao and Kham Hai Kān Khun Luang Hā wat), an article to reconstruct the 'Legend of Srīprāt' by Phrayā Pariyat Thamathādā (Phae Tālalak), and the late Professor M.R. Sumonachāt's query into the official title 'Srīprāt' to try to convince that there might have been more than one Srīprāt after all.

"The group of poetical works called Nirāt are poems composed during long journeys. It could be supposed that these compositions arose from the fact that when a poet travelled by boat he had much free time and had to find something to do in order to avoid being bored. As a man of poetry, he did this by writing poems. It is natural that he described things he saw along the way and related them to his moods and emotions. For instance, he lamented the absence of his loved one and his home. The context of the Nirāt poems develops somewhat in this manner. It has been popular since the Ayuthayā period but the name Nirāt used to designate this type of poem was probably prescribed in the Ratanakōsin period."¹⁰

Other scholars gave similar definitions concerning Nirāt poems. However, Prince Phithayālongkōn added :

"The Nirāt poems use the subject of sadness on love separation as the core. If the Nirāt puts more emphasis on the description of other subjects then these 'other subjects' must be regarded as the surrounding flesh".¹¹

In the West, the Nirāt poems have been described by P. Schweisguth as 'poemes d' adieu' and by E.H.S. Simmonds as 'poems of reflection'.¹²

As a lexical form, it has been generally accepted that the term Nirāt is of Sanskrit origin. It comes from *nira* meaning 'without' and *āśa* meaning 'passion or desire'.¹³ However, it is used in Thai poetry to mean 'separation, to be separated from, or to be without something which

10) Damrong Rāchānuphāp, Prince, Preface in *Prachum Nirāt Sunthōn Phū*, Bangkok, 1922, p. 2.

11) Phithayālongkōn, Prince, *Phasom Phasān : Miscellaneous essays by NMS*, Vol. 2 Bangkok, 1960, pp. 7-19.

12) P. Schweisguth, *Les "Nirat" ou poemes d'adieu dans la litterature siamoise*. JSS. 38/1, 1950, pp. 67-78. See also *Etude sur la litterature Siamoise*. Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1951, where the author discussed Nirāt poems at various places.

E.H.S. Simmonds, *Siamese Dawn Songs*, in *Eos : an enquiry into the theme of lovers' meetings and partings at dawn in poetry*. ed. A.T. Hatto. The Hague, Mouton, 1965, pp. 186-195.

13) The term Nirāt is first found used in Mahāchāt Khamluang believed to have been composed during the reign of King Bōromatrailōkanāt (1438-1458). The contextual meaning of the term implies separation (see esp. Matsī Episode in Mahāchāt Khamluang, Bangkok, Sinlapākōn, 1968, pp. 220-221).

is dearly desired'. In a Nirāt poem a poet may express, with strong feeling and emotion, that he must 'nirāt' his loved one or 'nirāt' something which often veils many feelings and desires and includes a yearning to experience the pleasure of affectionate union or reunion. While making a journey away from home, the lonely poet suffers from this so-called 'Nirāt'. It becomes a poetical complaint telling of the pain caused by it.

How and when the term 'Nirāt' came to be used as a category for poems of separation is unclear. Prince Damrong's suggestion that the term 'Nirāt' as a category was not adopted until during the Ratanakōsin period is indeed doubtful.¹⁴ It has been found that the term 'Khlōng Nirāt' appeared in the 17th Century text book for students of poetry—*Čhindāmanī*.¹⁵ This suggests that along with the existence of three other Khlōng Nirāt poems; Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai, Khlōng Thawāthotsamāt, and Khlōng Kamsuan Sripāt which were composed before *Čhindāmanī*, they formed a type of poem, quite distinct from poems popular at the time, in that they expressed the personal feelings of the poets for the first time. The poets had chosen to become personalized. The fact that the term 'Khlōng Nirāt' was listed side by side with 'Khlōng Kāb', 'Khlōng Khamkām', 'Khlōng Sangwāt', and 'Khlōng Lilit', is a good indication of this. Furthermore, this fact is strengthened by the occurrence of a list of works already in existence before the composition of *Čhindāmanī*. Two of the three major poems of separation; Khlōng Thawāthotsamāt and Khlōng Kamsuan Sripāt, are on the list.¹⁶

The text *Čhindāmanī* also records its recognition of Nirāt as a type of verse form as well as a poetical work.¹⁷ An example of Nirāt was given under the heading 'Phumarā Chantha Nirāt'. As we shall see, the expression in this example implies sadness arising from the separation of a poet from his loved one:

14) Damrong Rāchānuphāp, op cit. p. 3.

15) Phra Hōrāthibōdī, *Čhindāmanī*. See *Čhindāmanī Lem Nung Lem Sōng*, Bangkok, 1969, p. 48.

16) Ibid p. 49.

17) Ibid p. 48.

"I take up food and try to eat,
My eyes brimful of tears, words will not come.
When life has left me cold as stone,
My love for you might cease to be.
Till then my sweet I'll live in dreams, seeing
You come slowly back to me."

พิหัยบกลาชนว่า	จะกิน
ชลเนตรไหลตามริน	บ่อเอือน
ตายสยบชาติใจหิน	หายสวาคี รักเอย
เรียมดำกน้องเอย	คอยคอยคนมา ¹⁸

Further evidence can be found in the third stanza of Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai. The poet implies that he intended to write a poem called 'Nirāt'. His motif derived from 'the pain of absence from his beloved' and he composed the poem in order to 'make it known to all the world for it to think upon'.¹⁹ This stanza comes after the introductory invocation in which the poet prayed to the Lord Buddha and gave the date of his journey, with the second stanza stating the place of destination. Then the following fourth stanza begins the theme of melancholy as the result of separation.

A definite piece of evidence is perhaps the name intended by Phrayā Mahānuphāp for his composition which has become known as Nirāt Phrayā Mahānuphāp Pai Mṃang Čhīn. This Nirāt poem was composed in 1781 on a journey to China when King Tāksin of Thonburī sent an Embassy to renew relationship with the Chinese Court in Peking. The author named his composition 'Nirāt Kwāngtung' as the author himself ended his journey in Canton. However, when the poem was published the present name was given instead.²⁰

18) See Čhindāmanī, Ibid, p. 61. It should be noted, however, that the term 'stone' used in the English translation is not intended to be a direct translation of the Thai word หิน (third line of the stanza). It is realized, of course, that the old Thai expression หินหาย means 'to disappear, to cease abruptly'.

19) Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai, Bangkok, 1924, p. 1.

20) Nirāt Phrayā Mahānuphāp Pai Mṃang Čhīn, Bangkok, 1918, pp. 27.

It is legitimate therefore to say that the term Nirāt as a poetic genre was recognized as long ago as the 16th Century when Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai is believed to have been composed.²¹ However, the more meaningful classification was not made until the Ratanakōsin period. Titles were then given to poems which appeared to fit this category. Many poems have been renamed with the title Nirāt plus the name of the place of destination of the journey. In some cases, however, the name of the author was included in the title for the purpose of identification. Khlōng Kamsuan Sīprāt, for instance, was probably called Kamsuan Samut originally as this name appears in Čhindāmanī. Later, after the poet's death, it would have been reasonable to include his name in the title for identification. The title Khlōng Nirāt Nakhōn Srīthamarāt is probably the product of the later 19th Century style.

Early Nirāt poems represent the pangs of love separation expressed with strong feeling and emotion, which emphasized the element of fear and anxiety that poets experienced as the result of separation. It is a psychological truth that true love awakens or is experienced during separation—and not in union. This feature of melancholic expression as the result of love separation is, indeed, universal. Early analogues of the theme of love in separation are often found in Sanskrit literature, in Kalidasa's Meghaduta (the Cloud Messenger) and Rtusamharam (the Seasons) for instance.²² In Arabic poetry, Phrayā Anumān Rāčhathon has observed that the love in separation aspect of the Qasida is somewhat similar to the Thai Nirāt.²³ In Thai poetry, analogues on the theme of

21) The date of composition of Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai is based on Dr. Prasert Na NaKhōn's study. See Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai, P.E.N. International Thailand Centre, 1960, p. a.

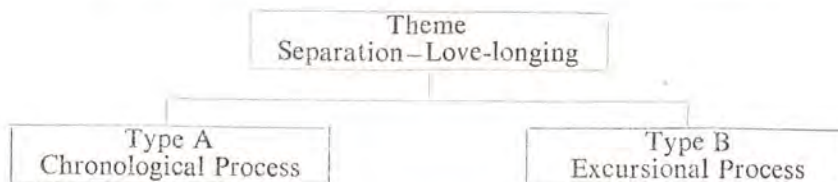
22) The subject of Khlōng Thawāthotsamat especially, bears striking resemblance to that of Rtusamharam in spite of the absence of any direct influence. See Shankar Mokashi Punekar, *The Cycle of Seasons*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 96. For Meghaduta see for instance, *An Anthology of Indian Literature*, Edited by John B. Alphonso-Karkala. Penguin Books 1971, pp. 423-450.

23) For Qasida see A.K.H. Kinany, *The Development of Gazal in Arabic Literature*, esp. Ch. 3, pp. 41-57. See also Phrayā Anumān Rāčhathon, *Fūn Khwām Lang*, Vol 1, 1967, p. 491. In Burmese there is a poetical form called Yadu (Radu) which came into prominence in the latter half of the 16th Century. One of its most characteristic themes is 'the mood of longing and wistful sadness evoked by the contemplation of forest scenes or by being parted from home and family'. See Hla Pe, A.J. Allott, and John Okell, 'Three Immortal Burmese Songs', *BSOAS*, XXVI, Part 3, 1963, pp. 559-571.

love separation can be drawn from many major literary works including works in the Brahmanic and Buddhist traditions. The most wellknown lovers who suffered long separation were, of course, Rāmā and Sīdā in the Rāmākian. A similar fate was shared by many heroes and heroines of stories in the Jātaka.²⁴ The 15th Century epic-romance Phra Lō contains long passages of Nirāt-like themes although the hero in this case was voluntarily separated from his wife in order to search for his other loves. The theme recurs in many other works; Inao, Talēng Phai, etc., which also involve the melancholy theme of separated loves as expressed by the hero.²⁵ This theme of love-longing and separation in these major literary works, however, only form a peripheral part of the whole. The Nirāt poem diverges from these works. It carries forward the theme of love-longing following separation, to form a larger poem and to develop in its own right.

The basic situation in which the poet finds himself is one of separation and this situation together with the emotion of love-longing of which he is strongly aware, provides the motive force for the poem. To designate such poems as Nirāt would result only in an imprecise and thus, in critical terms, inefficient definition. In order to construct a model frame-work within which the Nirāt can be more precisely defined, it is necessary to move beyond the mere theme of separation plus love-longing and examine the process of the poems more closely.

At this stage the following set of models will be proposed.



The theme: Separation + Love-longing serves as the core of the poem. From poems of this theme, two types emerged.

24) Nirāt poets often compare the sadness of characters from the Jātaka with that of their own when separated from love.

25) Some scholars have regarded the Nirāt theme in Talēng Phai as one of the best. See P. Na Pramuanmāk, Nirāt Narin Kham Khlōng, Bangkok, 1960.

Type A: Theme + Chronological Process.

Type B: Theme + Excursional Process.

Chronological process means here that the fundamental formal structure of the poem is expressed in term of time progression. Excursional process means that the fundamental formal structure of the poem is expressed in the form of an imaginary journey derived from literary sources.

To illustrate type A, the chronological process, the poem *Khlong Thawāthotsamāt*. (The Twelve Months) will be taken into consideration first. This poem is believed to have been composed by four court poets of King Bōromatrailōkanāt in the 15th Century.²⁶ It is a long poem of 260 stanzas composed in the *Khlong Si Dan* verse form.²⁷

The poem begins with an invocation in which the poet praises the glory of the Hindu Gods and the King. The invocation is followed by what will be called the 'preliminary to separation'; the praising of the beauty of the poet's beloved expressing his desire for her in connection with the description of parts of her body. It is curious to see how the poet chooses to mention certain parts of the body in describing a woman's beauty. Only sensitive parts which would easily move his readers received their poetical annunciation—the breast, the navel, the hips, etc. It is only legitimate that such intimate parts normally undisplayed, when mentioned in poetical language, would evoke nostalgic reflexes more strongly. It raises the importance of the beloved and therefore the pain of separation is heightened. It is interesting that these poets do not follow strictly the Indian convention commonly found in other Thai poetical works where physical features of a woman are individually related to a set of conventional comparisons.

The poet then compares his own sadness of separation with that of Rāmā and Sīdā and five other pairs of heroes and heroines from the Jātaka stories.

26) Chanthit Krasaeson has insisted that this poem should be attributed to Phra Yaowarāt, King Bōromatrailōkanāt's son. See *Prachum Wanakhadi Thai Phak Phisēt, Thawāthotsamāt Khlong Dan*, Bangkok, 1969, pp. 8-41.

27) For full treatment of the subject see Phrayā Upakit Sinlapasān, *Chanthalak (Poetic Rules)*, Bangkok, 1948.

The core of the poem follows. This part contains the chronological setting. The poet set out on his journey through the process of time starting from the fifth lunar month going through the twelve months of the year ending in the fourth month. In moving through this chronological process the poet described the changes of nature and the natural setting. As the month changes the weather changes and with them the plants change. The strong sun gives heat and drought which in turn burns the poet's heart because of his desire for love. With the rains come the clouds, the wind, thunder, and flood. Indeed, it is a description of the cycle of human lives in the Ayuthayā Kingdom as changes effect the lives of the people, the forest, plants, trees, and vines as well as beasts. These changes bring about changes in human activity both in the city and in the countryside. Upon his arrival at the sixth month, the poet writes :

"The sixth month arrives with heavenly rains.
I think of your beautiful blossoms, my love.
This month we used to share our love and happiness.
Till your soft navel felt the pains.
When thunder roars I feel restless with desire,
My heart so painful as if being torn out.
The month brings news of ploughing,
My heart wilts and tears fill my eyes".

ฤดูไฟศายสร้อย	ฝนสวรรค์
คิดสมาลัยมัลย์	แหล่งน่อง
ฤดูฤกษ์กรรม	รมเยศ
เจ็บกระอุแทบทอง	ทิวสนคือนาง
กระหน่ำฟ้าคะ	โหยหา สวาทนา
ตลควันเจ็บแกลกลาง	ชาตขว้า
แซ่ไขว่ไถนา	ถนั้ มานา
อกระแหงแล้งนา	เนตรนอง ²⁸

28) See Prachum Wanakhadī Phāk Phisēt, op cit, stanzas 50 and 51, pp. 107-108.

Different months bring different activities including festivals, religious ceremonies, games, dancing and singing all of which remind the poet of his beloved.

Other wellknown poems recognized as Nirāt but which in fact characterize our type A include Nirāt Phrabāt by Prince Thamāthibēt,²⁹ and Nirāt Dyan (The Month) by Nai Mī.³⁰

As the treatment of the subject in Nirāt Dyan is somewhat the same as that of Khlōng Thawāthotsamāt, the poem bears no striking significance and will not be discussed here. However, in Prince Thamāthibēt's Nirāt Phrabāt (A Journey to the Buddha Footprint), the chronological process was expanded and refined. There is also the extraction of the natural phenomena, flora and fauna, given separate treatment as an extra section.

The poem has no invocation but begins with the 'preliminary to separation' section. In praising the beauty of his beloved, Prince Thamāthibēt shows his admiration for each part of her body starting from the hair moving gradually downward until he finally reaches her feet showing that he knows every inch of her body. Then the chronological process begins. The poet makes use of every conceivable element of time to express the pain of separation beginning at 7.00 o'clock in the morning—i.e. the first hour of the day according to Siamese reckoning—travelling through the twenty-four hours of the day. The journey continues from Sunday through the seven days of the week then moves on through the twelve months of the year, the three seasons of the year and the twelve years cycle. The last section of the poem dealing with the natural phenomena includes reference to flowers, trees, fruits, birds, beasts, and fish, in that order. Names of these natural elements are

29) Prince Thamāthibēt was the Uparāt (Deputy King) of King Bōromakōt (1732-1758) and is remembered as one of the most prominent poets of his time. He is best known for his composition of Kāp Hē Rya and Kāp Hō Khlōng. Nirāt Phrabāt is also known as Nirāt Thānsōk and Nirāt Thān Thōngdaeng. Here only Nirāt Thānsōk is relevant to our present study as the latter is merely an extensive description of fauna without reference to love and separation.

30) Nai Mī is believed to have been a student of the great poet Sunthōn Phū. He was active during the early reigns of the Bangkok period. His other Nirāt poems include Nirāt Chalāng, Nirāt Phrathāen, and Nirāt Suphan.

related to his memory of the beloved by means of pun and transfer thus establishing a firm conventional model for later Nirāt poems.³¹

To illustrate type B—the excursional process, Nirāt Sīdā will be taken into consideration.³² From the title one can guess that the subject of this Nirāt poem was taken from the epic Rāmākian. It is the journey of Rāmā in search for the abducted Sīdā. The poem was originally called 'Rāchā Philāp' as certain stanzas were quoted as examples in the Čhindāmanī under that name.³³ This evidence implies that the poem was composed during or before King Nārai's reign (1658-1688).

The poem Rāchā Philāp expresses the agony of Rāmā while travelling through the jungle in search of Sīdā. As the journey is an imaginary one, no specific place names can be mentioned even though Rāmā's melancholy is often expressed in connection with the presence of streams, birds, fruits, and trees as they remind him of his past relationship with Sīdā.

Other poems recognized as Nirāt by tradition but must be grouped under our type B include Nirāt Inao by Sunthōn Phū,³⁴ Nirāt Phiphēk,³⁵ Nirāt Phra Rot Mēri,³⁶ and Nirāt Phra Aphaimanī.³⁷

Another model will now be proposed. Here the chronological process is converted into a time scale which is applied to a particular journey. The excursional process goes through a qualitative change which results in the conversion of the character of a literary figure or figures to the poet writing about himself in his own poem.

31) The technique of pun and transfer will be dealt with later in this article.

32) This Nirāt poem was first published under the title 'Nirāt Sīdā Kham Chan'. See Wachirayān, No. 89, February, R.S. 120 (1902).

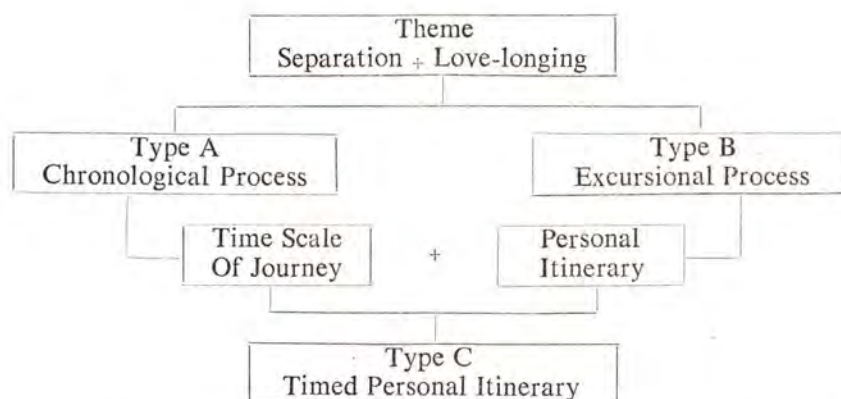
33) See Thanit Yūphō, Khōn (Treatise on Masked Dance Drama), Kurusaphā Series, No. 911, Bangkok, 1964, pp. 130-131.

34) Nirāt poems of this type has been recognized as Nirāt Sommut. See Nai Piyang Na Kakhōn, Prawat Wanakhadī Thai Samrap Nak Sūksā, Bangkok, 1953, p. 401.

35) Manuscript, National Library, Bangkok.

36) Manuscript, National Library, Bangkok. Also a manuscript in the Royal Asiatic Society Library, London.

37) Composed by Nai Chan Khamwilai, published together with Nirāt Tangkia, Nirā Anusāwarī Sunthōn Phū, Bangkok, 1961, pp. 105-164.



The fictional excursion described becomes the description of an actual journey taken at a prescribed moment or period and in a prescribed geographical setting. The poet, in the main, becomes more explicitly personalized as he talks directly of himself. This conversion process results in the emergence of type C, the timed personal itinerary and will be postulated as the true Nirāt type. The theme of love-longing is not, of course, lost. It is the essential basic feature, but the processes involved in type A and B have been refined and particularized.

Two earliest poems of the Nirāt type proper will now be considered. They are Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt and Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai.

The date of composition of Khlōng Kamsuan Srīprāt is still disputed as some scholars have suggested that it was composed as early as the 15th Century but many have argued that it is in fact a 17th Century poem.³⁸ Tradition has it that the poem was composed by Srīprāt, a son of the astrologer of King Nārai's court who was sent into exile to Nakhōn Srī Thammarāt because of the witty but offensive Khlōng poetry he composed

38) An attempt to date Kamsuan Srīprāt to the 15th Century may be seen in M.R. Sumonachāt Sawatdikhun's *Winitchai Ruang Kamsuan Srīprāt*, Wong Wanakhadi, May, 1947. According to Chanthit Krasaesin, however, Kamsuan Srīprāt was composed in the reign of King Phēt Rāchā (1688-1703). See Prachum Wanakhadi Thai Phāk Nūng; *Kamsuan Srīprāt*, Bangkok, 1951. In order to locate the date of Srīprāt's journey, a geographical study has also been attempted. See Mani Wanliphōdom, *Tām Rua Bai Krathing Thōng*, in *Kamsuan Srīprāt Nirāt Narin* by P. Na Pramuanmāk, Bangkok, 1968. pp. 296-307.

as a reply to one of the court ladies in King Nārai's palace.³⁹ It was during this journey that he composed this poem. The poem is supposed to give an account of the journey from Ayuthayā to Nakhōn Sī Thammarāt. However, available material only gives the account of the journey from Ayuthayā southward, along the Chao Phrayā River to just beyond the mouth of the river passing some Islands along the Choburi coast plus a few other places which it has not yet been possible to identify.

The poem can be divided into three sections; the introduction, the journey, and the conclusion. In the introduction section, the poet praised the glory of the city; the physical beauty and splendour of the temples, pagodas and palaces. Then he reveals his intimate relationship with his beloved and the happiness of the people of Ayuthayā. Indeed, the happy life at the place of origin of the journey and the woman with whom the poet was so passionately in love and must leave behind, suddenly made the journey an extremely sad one and thus creates strong nostalgic feelings. Especially for Sīprāt, who was on the journey into exile, not knowing when he would be able to return, the situation is made even sadder. In fact he did not return as he committed a similar literary crime at Nakhōn Sīthammarāt and was executed. This piece of traditional evidence helps to strengthen even more the value of the poem which is already a great work.

The main and most important part of Nirāt is the journey itself. Upon his arrival at each place, the poet recalls the place name. Throughout the poem one has a list of place names as an itinerary of a journey. The meanings of these place names and the objects there serve as the most vital link between the poet and his beloved as he expresses sad emotions and feelings of love-longing through them. The theme of Nirāt recurs whenever a place name is mentioned. The technique of punning may be used to relate feelings to his beloved or the poet may transfer the meaning of the place name or transfer the word directly in order to

39) This traditional evidence was reconstructed by Phrayā Prariyat Thamathādā (Phae Talālak) mainly from Khlōng Kawī Bōrān compiled by Phrayā Trang and Two chronicles; Kham Hai Kān Chao Krung Kao and Kham Hai Kān Khun Luang Hā Wat. His convincing article was titled: Tamnān Sīprāt (the Legend of Sīprāt) which was first published in Withayāchān Journal.

achieve the same purpose. At times, upon arriving at a place, the poet may give descriptions of flora and fauna and relate them to his beloved. He may give straight descriptions of human activities, the history of the people and of the place. While travelling between two places, a nostalgic recollection of the beloved may be revealed.

In the concluding section, the poet gives references to literary characters. It is the fundamental feature of this type of composition that the poet expresses a personal emotion of an amatory nature, and the personal approach is heightened by the introduction late in the poem of characters in literature who are also in a state of separation. It is heightened because the feelings of these characters are compared with the poet's own emotions. This differs from poems such as Rāchā Philāp (type B) in which the literary characters and their supposed emotions prescribed the main motive force.

The poem was perhaps intended to be sent to his beloved as it was addressed to her throughout the poem with the first and second persons used as pronouns. The last stanza helps to support this.

'Keep this letter under your pillow, beloved.
Don't just read it for fun.
Let it be your companion in bed,
Every night, my love, every night.'

สารน ^๕ นช ^๖ แนบไว้	ในหมอน
อย่า ^๗ เผล ^๘ อย่า ^๙ คว ^{๑๐} รเ ^{๑๑} า	อ่าน ^{๑๒} เล่น
ยาม ^{๑๓} นอน ^{๑๔} นา ^{๑๕} งเ ^{๑๖} า ^{๑๗} น ^{๑๘} อน	เป็น ^{๑๙} เพ ^{๒๐} อ ^{๒๑} น
คืน ^{๒๒} คำ ^{๒๓} อย่า ^{๒๔} ไ ^{๒๕} ด้ ^{๒๖} เว ^{๒๗} น	ว่าง ^{๒๘} ไ ^{๒๙} ๔๐

40) Even though it has been suggested that this last stanza was added to the poem at a later date there has been no reasonable ground to support this assumption. The stanza will be regarded as original.

Another early *Nirāt* poem to be considered is *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai*.⁴¹ This poem was originally written in the Northern dialect in the early 16th Century and was converted into Central dialect during King *Nārai*'s reign. In most respects, the poem is similar to *Khlong Kamsuan Srīprāt* especially as regards the structure and the technique employed in the poem. However, there are differences in certain details.

Firstly, the purposes of the journeys are different. *Srīprāt* was banished into exile whilst the anonymous poet of *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai* was on a pilgrimage from Chiangmai to Haripunchai (Lamphūn) to pay homage to the relic shrine 'Phrathāt Haripunchai'.

Secondly, the invocation in *Khlong Kamsuan Srīprāt* is of a Brahmanic nature whereas in the case of *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai* the invocation is Buddhist. Indeed, it is because of this religious nature that the choice of place names in *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai* fell predominantly on names of Buddhist monasteries. The poet, however, made use of these names to relate to his beloved just the same.

Thirdly, the date of the journey was clearly stated in *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai* and more emphasis was given to the place of destination as it was the place of worship. The poet gave detailed descriptions of the relic shrine and activities at night at that site. Night celebrations including various performances were described at great length.⁴²

Khlong Kamsuan Srīprāt and *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai* thus emerge as true *Nirāt* poems in our definition. Both poems were composed in the *Khlong Si* verse form which was more popular and highly regarded among learned and sophisticated Siamese of the upper class who were the exclusive producers of elevated Siamese literature.⁴³ Although it has been said that verse writing was a popular activity even among the

41) The date of composition of this poem is based on the study by Dr. Prasert Na Nakhōn whose work is the only comprehensive study of this poem. See *Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai*, Samākhom Phāsā Lae Nangsū Haeng Prathēt Thai (P.E.N. International Thailand Centre), Bangkok, 1960.

42) This model is reflected in *Nirāt* poems by Sunthōn Phū, Nai Mī, and others when the journeys were of religious or pilgrimage nature.

43) Damrong Rāchānuphāp: Preface to *Prachum Nirāt Sunthōn Phū Lem Si*, *Nirāt Wat Chao Fā*, Bangkok, 1922, p. 1.

lower classes, it was limited to oral forms for the common people were, by and large, illiterate, and their verses were not written down.⁴⁴ This unwritten folk form of poetry was probably in the Klōn verse style. Klōn finally became popular among the court circle in the late Ayuthayā period during the reign of King Bōromakōt (1733-1758) especially in the form of Phlēng Yao (love epistle) composition.⁴⁵

All Nirāt poems of the Ayuthayā period were composed in the Khlōng verse style.⁴⁶ These Khlōng Nirāt poems were composed in the tradition of Khlōng Kamsuan Sripāt and Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai.

The Bangkok and Thonburī periods produced certain changes and development. Only one Nirāt poem was composed during the Thonburī period. This will be dealt with later. During the first two reigns of the Bangkok period, Nirāt poets were often those who were engaged in expeditions to war with the Burmese. King Rāmā I himself composed a Nirāt poem on his expedition to suppress the Burmese at Tambon ThāDin Daeng on the Western border in 1786. Phrayā Trang composed Nirāt Tām Sadet Thap Lam Nām Noi a year after also on an expedition to war. In 1809 Narin In and Phrayā Trang each composed a Nirāt on their expedition, again to fight the Burmese at Thalāng. Their Nirāt poems were composed in the Khlōng verse form and followed very closely the Khlōng Kamsuan Sripāt and Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai tradition.⁴⁷

The greatest innovator of Klōn Nirāt was Sunthōn Phū (1786-1855) who brought Klōn Nirāt to its greatest popularity. Sunthōn Phū is,

44) See Bidyalankarana: The Pastime of Ryme-making and Singing in Rural Siam, JSS 20, 1926, pp. 101-128.

45) Op cit. Damrong Rachānuphāp, pp. 1-2.

46) With an exception of Nirāt Phetburi by Nai Phimsēn which was originally composed as a Klōn Phlēng Yao in the late Ayuthayā period. See Damrong Rāchānuphāp, Ibid. p. 4.

47) Up until the reign of Rāmā VI many Khlōng Nirāt poems had been composed. Their structure and technique are closely akin to Khlōng Kamsuan Sripāt-Khlōng Nirāt Haripunchai tradition. Some of these poems are: Nirāt Mae Nām Noi (Sīt Sripāt), Nirāt Phra Phitthasālī (Phra Phiphitthasālī), Nirāt Luang Nā (Incomplete by Luang Nā ?) Nirāt wiangčhan (Krom Somdet Phra Dēchādisōn), Nirāt Chachoengsao (Kroma Luang Phūwanēt), Nirāt Phra Prathom (KromaLuang Wongsāthirāt Sanīt), etc.

without doubt, the foremost master of Klōn Nirāt writers and his works have the greatest lasting influence. He composed seven Nirāt poems at different stages of his life.⁴⁸ He was born of humble parents but because of his ability to compose poetry he soon became famous and was given a position in the Department of Writers (Krom Ālak) of King Rāmā II. It was during these years that he, on several occasions, improved on some verses composed by the prince (who was to become King Rāmā III) in front of the King and other poets. This no doubt created enmity between him and the prince as both were trying to gain the King's favour. When the prince became King Rāmā III, Sunthōn Phū lost his position. Realizing the danger and adversity that would arise from the loss of royal favour, the poet retired to a monastery.⁴⁹

Two of Sunthōn Phū's Nirāt poems were composed during the reign of King Rāmā I before he rose to fame. All other five poems were composed during the reign of King Rāmā III.⁵⁰ Sunthōn Phū brought to Nirāt many elements, such as the concept of personal history as self reflection, philosophical statements on life and people, social criticism, etc.

Even though Sunthōn Phū still recognized the power of convention set by poets before him, he has partially broken away from this convention by adding to the theme of love-longing other elements he personally yearns for in life or which cause him to feel disillusioned. His expressions of sadness are not solely on the subject of love separation as in former Nirāt poems but his sadness arises also from seeing the ruined city of Ayuthayā or the crack of the concrete at Wat Phukhao Thōng. His heart saddened upon seeing the Mōn women changing their hair style and dresses in order to look Thai and thereby losing their identity. He was bitterly sad when he saw a Thai woman marrying a Chinese man for economic reasons alone. Thus in Nirāt Muang Phet he wrote of Thai women :

48) This is to exclude Nirāt Inao as being under type B in our definition.

49) Much of Sunthōn Phū's biography has been constructed from his Nirāt poems. Important works on his life and works include : Damrong Rāchānuphāp, Chīwit Lae Ngān Khōng Sunthōn Phū, Bangkok, 1933, pp. 441. Chan Khamwilai, Rōi Pī Khōng Sunthōn Phū, Bangkok, 1955, pp. 610.

50) This fact implies that the composition of Nirāt poems is truly a personal affair. During the reign of Rāmā II Sunthōn Phū was more involved in other literary activities and that he did not compose any Nirāt poem during this reign.

“When Thai men asked for their hands in marriage,
They refused, their hearts hard as iron.
But having money to tempt them, like the Chinese,
The iron was heated up and gently softened.”

ไทยเหมือนกันครนว่าขอเอาหอห้อง
ต้องขัดข้องแข็งกระด้างเหมือนอย่างเหล็ก
มีเงินงัดคด้างเหมือนอย่างเจ็ก
ถึงลวกเหล็กกลมร้อนอ่อนละไม⁵¹

And in Nirāt Phra Prathom, he wrote of Khun Phat, a Chinese :

“I admire Khun Phat who is doing well.
He has money and gold and still making more.
His little wife seems to be happy,
Having her hair done so neatly.
She is more fortunate than most Thais.
Nowadays people respect you when you have money.”

น่าชมบุญชนพัตน์ไม่ขัดข้อง
มีเงินทองทำทวีภาษีเสริม
เมียน้อย ๆ พลอยเป็นสุขไรจุกจิก
ได้พนเพิ่มวาสนาเสียกว่าไทย
ทุกวันนมทรพยเขานับถือ⁵²

In Nirāt Myang Phet, upon seeing a Buddha image at Tham Khao Luang (name of a cave), Sunthūn Phū wrote :

“There is a reclining Buddha stretching his legs.
Heartless people have stealthily dug holes all around.
There are cracks in the chests and the legs.
Oh, brothers, why don’t you restore this image.
The entire wall of the shrine has collapsed within the cave.
Alas, when I think about it tears fill my eyes.”

51) Nirāt Sunthūn Phū Lem Nung, Bangkok, 1970, p. 304.

52) Ibid, p. 287.

มีพระไถยาสน์พระบาทเหยียด
 คนมันเบียดเบียนขุคตสงสาร
 พระทรงพงทงพระเพลากราวราน
 โอ้ชาวบ้านช่างไม่สร้างขันธ์บ้างเลย
 ทงผนังพทบอยกับถา
 โฉนหน้าตากกเจียวอกเอ๋ย⁵³

Sunthōn Phū's beloved woman is no longer the type of beauty to be admired as an ideal literary beauty of Khlōng Kamsuan Sriprāt or Khlōng Nirāt Narin. His is a more realistic woman with the typical quality of feminine temperament and passion. In fact he composed his first Nirāt poem following an incident where his beloved's jealousy had stirred up gossip, necessitating his speedy departure from Bangkok. Having left without saying goodbye⁵⁴ his remorse led him to compose the poem which he wished to present to her on his return as a gift of love.⁵⁵ In Nirāt Phrabāt, he wrote that he and his wife were not on speaking terms when he left for the journey.⁵⁶

As a monk, Sunthōn Phū composed two Nirāt poems: Nirāt Phūkhao Thōng and Nirāt Wat Čhao Fā. The poet realized that in composing a Nirāt poem the love-longing element must not be excluded and yet it is understood that monks should refrain from such feelings. Indeed, Sunthōn Phū was well aware of this and in Nirāt Phūkhao Thōng, the poet put more emphasis on the pains arising from nostalgic memories of the past especially the happy past as King Rāmā II's protégé.⁵⁷ He did, however, mention mild love longing and noted at the end of the poem :

53) Ibid, p. 325.

54) Ibid, p. 116 and 89.

55) Ibid, p. 116.

56) Ibid, p. 117.

57) It is also true, however, that both Nirāt poems were composed during the very critical stage of Sunthōn Phū's life and that his depressed state of mind had created such feelings in him. See Prawat Sunthōn Phū in Prince Damrong's preface of Nirāt Sunthōn Phū Lem Nung, Ibid, pp. 27-41.

“Because it is a poetical tradition,
Like cooks who prepare Phanaeng curry,
Must put in all necessary ingredients,
Then add pepper and parsley on top.
So with woman, I put her in for taste.”

ตามนิสัยกาพย์กลอนแต่ก่อนมา
เหมือนแม่ครัวควักแกงแพนงผัก
สารพัดเพี้ยนจนเครื่องมั่งสา
อันพริกไทยใบผักชีเหมือนสีกา
ต้องโรยหน้าเสียสักหน่อยอวยใจ⁵⁸

In Nirāt Wat Čhao Fā, Sunthōn Phū avoids this delicate matter by composing the poem under the name of his novice son, Nū Phat, who accompanied him to Wat Čhao Fā on that journey. Having rid himself of the authorship he could express his feelings as an ordinary man. Upon arriving at Bāng Kranai, the novice flirted with the Mōn girls.

“When I reached Bang Kranai I saw their faces,
Women in boats, selling sugar cane.
No longer typically Mōn in their graces,
They dressed, and styled their hair, like Thais.
But they lacked the Thai careful manner,
And when the wind blew their shawls,
They failed to keep their ‘diverting things’ under cover.
I joked with them, ‘your silk shawls are dipping in the water.
How much are those two pieces of sugar cane?’
They knew what I was up to and said to me laughingly,
‘Little boy, is that why you peep for sugar cane?’
I should have said nothing.
What a pity, let this be a lesson to me.”

58) Nirāt Sunthōn Phū Lem Nung, Ibid, p. 152.

ถึงบางกระโนไค้เห็นหน้าบรรดาพี่
 พวกนารีเรื่ออ้อยเทียวลอยชาย
 คุจรีตติคจะงอนเป็นมอญกลาย
 ล้วนแต่งกายกันไรเหมือนไทยทำ
 แต่ไม่มีกิริยาตัวผ้าห่ม
 กระพอลมแล้วไม่บองบิตของข้า
 จันเตือนว่าผ้าแพรลงเส้นนี้
 อ้อยสองลำนี้จะเอาสักเท่าไร
 เขารูตัวหว่ารว่าพ่อน้อย
 มากินอ้อยแอบแฝงแฝงไช
 รักระหมอยากบอกมือออกไป
 นำเจ็บใจจะต้องจำเป็นตำรา⁵⁹

Sunthōn Phū's Nirāt poems have illustrated certain developments of Nirāt as a genre. Although the technique of puns, transfers, and other ideas arising from the locale have been extensively employed, the conventional theme of separation and love-longing has been partially broken.⁶⁰ Emphasis has been placed on the reflection of the poet's personal experiences of life in general. Place names and objects at each locale have been used to reflect ideas, observations, and attitudes toward human life and society in connection with the recollection of the poet's personal history. Other elements, for instance, etymology of the place names, descriptions of human activities, history of the people and places, and humorous as well as philosophical passages, have frequently been

59) Nirāt Sunthōn Phū Lem Nung, Ibid, p. 244.

60) Sunthōn Phū's first two Nirāt poems, Nirāt Myang Klaeng and Nirāt Phrabāt, contain passages of love-longing in separation as strongly expressed in conventional Khlōng Nirāt poems but in a more realistic context. However, other elements not commonly found in conventional Khlōng Nirāt were already innovated in addition to the love-longing theme.

included, perhaps to stimulate interest and to arouse questioning in the minds of the general readers. Indeed, some of Sunthōn Phū's Nirāt poems were written for the purpose of selling to the public especially during his difficult days. Even though the printing press was already established in 1836 it only printed royal decrees or translations of the Bible but, probably not Nirāt poems. It was possible, however, to lend out manuscripts at a charge for others to read.⁶¹

In this way, Sunthōn Phū brought Nirāt to its height. Nirāt poems flourished during his time. This period and after found many Nirāt poets and many of the poems were written following Sunthōn Phū's style and technique. Two of these poets, Nai Mī and Mōm Rāchōthai, are believed to be Sunthōn Phū's students. In fact one of Nai Mī's Nirāt poems, was at first attributed to Sunthōn Phū because of its similarity to the familiar Sunthōn Phū style.⁶²

Conventionally, the essential feature of a Nirāt poem has been the theme of love-longing and separation. The poet's beloved object is the motive force and the source of inspiration. It is therefore vital that he finds means to express his feeling and to announce his melancholic desire for love. To this effect, poets have provided a specialized technique of 'pun' and 'transfer' to associate a place name he chooses to mention in his itinerary with his beloved object. This is sufficiently convenient because most place names contain meaningful form or forms which can be associated with meanings. When a poet travels through different localities, he picks out their names, mentions them, and he puns or transfers their forms or/and meanings in such a way that the end result becomes a poetic culmination of the poet's expression of melancholy. Whereas flora and fauna are commonly used in this way in major literary poetry as reminders of the heroes love, sorrow, and happiness during their ventures in the jungle, the Nirāt poets have moved a step further by making use of the place names as their reminders.

61) Damrong Rāchānuphāp, op. cit, p. 20.

62) See Thanit Yūphō, Banthuk Rūang Phū Taeng Nirāt Phrathāen Dong Rang (a note on the authorship of Nirāt Phrathāen Dong Rang) in Chiwit Lac Ngān Khōng Sunthōn Phū, op cit, pp. 71-82.

It should be noted, however, that it was, in fact, Phrayā Anuman Rāchathon who discovered the evidence and later suggested to Thanit Yūphō that the correct authorship of this Nirāt poem should be established. See Fūn Khwām Lang, op cit, Vol 1, pp. 491-496.

In order to see how this specialized technique is employed in early Nirāt poems, we shall now consider Khlōng Kamsuan Sripāt in which twenty-six puns and transfers are used out of forty place names mentioned in the poem. Each name of a locale consists of a form (F) which carries a meaning or meanings (M). Therefore FM is the element to be punned or transferred to a special message of love to be transmitted to the beloved object (O). What concerns us now is how the message is transmitted.

The first type of transmission is to transfer both F and M directly without any change. This process will be called a "Direct Transfer".

Thus, direct transfer = FM ————— FM ————— → O

Illustration :

Locale = Bāng Phūt (phūt)

F = phūt (five phonemes, ph, t, u, u, and a falling tone).

M = to speak, to answer.

Upon arriving at Bāng Phūt, the poet thus transmitted this message:

ton mai chalūt lin bō mī mae hā
tham khao nuan nang rū phūt dai

ต้นไม้ชุลลัน บอมี แม่ฮา
ถามข่าวน่านางฤา พุดไต่⁶³

"Trees grow so tall,
Have no tongue at all.
How can they answer me,
With news of my love."

The second type of transmission will be called a 'Direct Pun'. In this process, the F remains the same but the M changes completely to a new meaning (Mx).

63) Prachum Wanakhadi Thai Phāk Nung, op cit, stanza 34. The name of the locale is mentioned in the previous stanza (33). Please note that the transcription given for F is a phonemic transcription based on Mary Haas' system. This is necessary because the fourth type of transmission involves certain processes of phonemic change.

Thus, direct pun = FM ————— FMx ————— → O

Illustration :

Locale = Bāng Čhāk

F = càak (five phonemes, c, k, a, a, and a low tone).

M = Nipa palm

Mx = separation or to be separated from.

lanlung phī lae mā	bāng čhāk
čhian čhāk tī ok rōng	riak nāng hā nāng

ลนล่งฟ้แลมมา	บางจาก
จยรจากตอกรอ้ง	รยกนางหานาง ⁶⁴

"I suffered in anguish and pain,
Until I reached this village of Nipa Palm.
Separated we are, beloved, far far apart,
Sobbing and moaning, I called out in vain."

The third type will be called a 'Semantic Transfer'. The F is allowed to change to any other form (A) but the M remains unchanged or just slightly changed to the synonym of M.

Thus, semantic transfer = FM ————— AM ————— → O

Illustration :

Locale = Krian Sawai

F = sawǎaj (eight phonemes, s, w, j, a, a, a, a mid tone and a rising tone).

M = Mangoes

A = mūaŋ (five phonemes, m, ŋ, u, a, and a falling tone).

Upon arriving at Krian Sawai (Village of Mango Groves), the poet laments :

munh hen nām nā wīng	wian tǎ	lae mae
thanat muang mū nāng fān	fāk čhao	
มุงเห็นนาห้ว้ง	วียนตา	แลแม่
ถนตม้วงมือนางฝาน	ฝากเจ้า ⁶⁵	

64) Ibid, stanza 62.

65) Ibid, stanza 33.

"The waters swirl and rush before me.
Oh, darling, how dizzy I have become,
I dream of seeing your lovely hands,
Slicing up mangoes to give to me."

The fourth type will be called 'Indirect Pun'. This process involves certain changes of one or more phonemes of the F. When the F is allowed to change its shape slightly to Fx, the M automatically changes to a new meaning (Mx).

Thus, indirect pun = FM ————— FxMx ————— → O

This process is characterized by one of the following changes.

- a) by replacement of a consonant phoneme.

Illustration: rian > riam (n > m) เวียน > เวียน⁶⁶

Locale = kɔ̌ Rian

F = rian (five phonemes, two consonants; r and n, two vowels; i and a, and a mid tone).

M = to inform

Fx = riam (five phonemes, two consonants; r and m, two vowels; i and a, and a mid tone).

Mx = I (male speaker).

- b) by tone replacement.

Illustration: naaw > năaw (mid > rising) นาา > นานา⁶⁷

Locale = Bang Tharanao (Tranao).

F = naaw (five phonemes, two consonants; n and w, two vowels; a, and a, and a mid tone).

M =

Fx = năaw (five phonemes, two consonants; n and w, two vowels; a, and a, and a rising tone).

Mx = to be cold.

- c) by adding a vowel phoneme.

Illustration: krùt > krùut (u > uu) กรุต > กรูต⁶⁸

Locale = Bang Krut

F = krùt (five phonemes, three consonants; k, r and t, a vowel phoneme; u, and a low tone).

66) Ibid, stanza 18.

67) Ibid, stanza 20.

68) Ibid, stanza 51.

M = ?

Fx = krùt (six phonemes, three consonants; k, r, and t, two vowels, u and u, and a low tone).

Mx = kaffir lime.

d) by deleting a vowel phoneme.

Illustration: khěen>khěen (ee>e) เข็น>เข็ญ⁶⁹

Locale = Bāng Khēn

F = khěen (five phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, two vowels; e and e, and a rising tone).

M = a shield attached to a forearm.

Fx = khěen (four phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, one vowel e, and a rising tone).

Mx = calamity.

e) by adding a consonant phoneme.

Illustration: bamru>bamruŋ (->ŋ) บมร>บมรจ⁷⁰

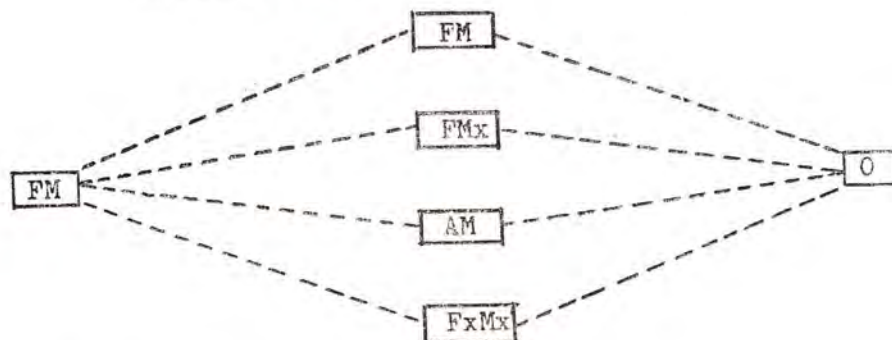
Locale = Bang Bamru

F = bamrù (Seven phonemes, three consonants; b, m, and r, two vowels; a, and u, a mid tone and a low tone).

M = ?

Fx = bamruŋ (eight phonemes, four consonants; b, m, r, and ŋ, two vowels; a, and u, and two mid tones).

Mx = to care for



69) Ibid, stanza 47.

70) Ibid, stanza 44. Note that this addition of a final consonant affected to tone and it changed from low to mid.

It is through these processes that Sripāt chooses to transmit his love messages to his beloved. At each locale, the poet may employ one or more of these processes using any combination he finds suitable.

This technique has served as the model for use in Nirāt composition and has been handed down to later poets especially those who continued to compose in the Khlōng style. Early in the Ratanakōsin period, Phrayā Trang and Narin In composed Khlōng Nirāt poems adhering faithfully to the model set by Sripāt and established themselves as two of the most prominent poets of the period. Their poems have been praised by scholars of Thai poetry for their exceptional skills in Khlōng composition and their works have rightly been placed among literary classics which students of Thai literature must read. These works have served as the liaison which has kept the composition of conventional Khlōng Nirāt alive and continues until Rāmā VI's reign.⁷¹

With the exception of Khlōng Nirāt Suphan, Sunthōn Phū composed his Nirāt poems in the Klōn style. As the Klōn is generally easier to compose than the Khlōng style it suits Sunthōn Phū who took full advantage of this simpler and freer verse form to expose his feelings and ideas with enormous descriptive power. Not only that he makes full use of the conventional pun and transfer technique but he also provides his own technique to suit his descriptive necessity. His beloved object (O) has been expanded to include other objects including the poet's self pity, social degradation as well as denunciatory expression of human injustice. In order to see how this is done, some examples from Nirāt Phūkhaio Thōng will be used for illustration.

- 1) Direct transfer: FM — FM —→ Self desire.

“thūng Bān Mai čhai čhit kō khit ān
čha hā bān mai māt myan prāthanā
khō hai somkhanē thoet thēwadā”

ถึงบ้านใหม่ใจจิตก็คิดถึงอัน
จะหาบ้านใหม่มาทดเหมือนปรารถนา
ขอให้สมคะเนเถิดเทวา

71) The last Khlōng Nirāt poem ever composed is probably Khlōng Nirāt Cha-am by Prince Narāthip which was composed during Rāmā VII's reign. This Khlōng Nirāt poem, however, is far from being conventional.

M = ?

Fx = krùut (six phonemes, three consonants; k, r, and t, two vowels, u and u, and a low tone).

Mx = kaffir lime.

d) by deleting a vowel phoneme.

Illustration: khěen > khě (ee > e) ๑๑๑ > ๑๑๑⁶⁹

Locale = Bāng Khēn

F = khěen (five phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, two vowels; e and e, and a rising tone).

M = a shield attached to a forearm.

Fx = khě (four phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, one vowel e, and a rising tone).

Mx = calamity.

e) by adding a consonant phoneme.

Illustration: bamru > bamruŋ (— > ŋ) ๑๑๑ > ๑๑๑⁷⁰

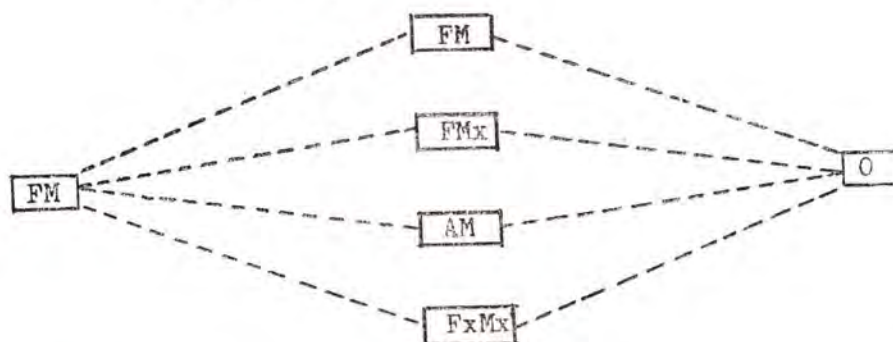
Locale = Bang Bamru

F = bamrù (Seven phonemes, three consonants; b, m, and r, two vowels; a, and u, a mid tone and a low tone).

M = ?

Fx = bamruŋ (eight phonemes, four consonants; b, m, r, and ŋ, two vowels; a, and u, and two mid tones).

Mx = to care for



69) Ibid, stanza 47.

70) Ibid, stanza 44. Note that this addition of a final consonant affected to tone and it changed from low to mid.

“At Bān Mai (New Village) I came to think
That I would find myself a new home I really like.
Oh, heavenly beings please fulfil my wish.”

b) FM — FM —→ Human criticism.

“thung Bāng Dụa ǝ madụa lụa pralāt
bangkoet chāt malaeng wī mī nai sai
mụan khon phān wān nōk yōm khom nai”

ถึงบางเคื่อโถมเคื่อเหลือประหลาด

บังเกิดชาติแมลงหิวมิในไส้

เหมือนคนพาลหวานนอกเย๋อมขมใน

“At Bāng Madụa (Fig Village) how very strange are figs, full
of fruit flies they are inside.
Like an evil man, sweet outside but bitter all within.”

2) Semantic transfer: FM — FM_x —→ Self pity —→ FM_x

“Mā thung Bāng Thōranī thawī sōk
yām wiyōk yāk chhai hai sa-yūn
ǝ suthā nā naen pen phaen phūn
thung sī mūn sōng saen thang daen trai
mụa khro rai kai rao kō thao nī
mai mī thī phasuthā cha āsai”

มาถึงบางธรณีทิวโศก

ยามวิโยคยากใจให้สะอื้น

โศสุธาหนาแน่นเป็นแผ่นพิน

ถึงสัหมันสองแสนทางแดนไตร

เมื่อเคราะห์ร้ายกายเราก็ก่เท้าน

ไม่มีทัพสุธาจะอาศัย

“Coming to Bang Thōrani my sorrow is redoubled,
At this time of trouble I weep and sob.
Oh, Earth, compacted tight into a surface,
So huge, comprising of three worlds,
At this ill-fated time my body is so tiny, just this size,
And I have no territory to live upon.”

3) Puns and Transfers with different objects :

FM — FMx —→ O1 — AM1 —→ O2 — AM2 —
FMx —→ O3

“thung Bāng Čhāk čhāk wat phlat phī nōng
mā mua mōng muan nā mai fā fūn
phrō rak khrai čhai čhūt mai yūt yūn
čhūng tōng fūn čhai phrāk mā čhāk muan”

ถึงบางจากจากวัดพลัดพี่น้อง

มามัวหมองมัวหน้าไม้ฝาน

เพราะรักใคร่ใจจิตไม่ยอคน

จึงต้องฝืนใจพรากรมาจากเมือง

“Arriving at Bāng Čhāk I am far away from monastery and family relations.

I am sad and hide my face, not going against her wish,
Because love for her, who is cold of heart, must be of short duration.
Thus I have force myself to leave the city.”

4) Thought directly carried over.

In some cases, as when the poet passes the distillery, he directs his thought to alcohol and its evil effects.⁷⁶

5) Thought arising generally from the locale, sometimes from immediate observation. At the palace, for instance, the poet's thought of the former King under whom he was happy develops into personal history.⁷⁷ At Kret, Sunthōn Phū observes :

74) Ibid, p. 146.

75) Ibid, p. 144.

76) Ibid, p. 144.

77) Ibid, p. 143.

"Kret—this has long been a village of the Mons. The women there used to pile their hair high on their heads in a bun. But now they take out hairs in a circle round the crown and merely look like dolls. Also they powder their faces and darken their eyebrows with soot—just like the Thai. What a vulgar change to make, untrue for them—like people who throw aside their own manners and ways. Alas—it is true as well that women are of many minds—do not suppose you will meet one of single heart."⁷⁸

Further development of Nirāt poetry can be found in poems involving journeys to foreign countries. The earliest Nirāt poem of this type is Nirāt Phrayā Mahānuphāp Pai Mụang Čhīn composed during the Thonburī period. The author, Phrayā Mahānuphāp, was sent to Peking as a member of the Thai embassy to renew the relationship with the Court of Empepor Ch'ien Lung in 1781.⁷⁹ As only top Siamese officials were allowed to go on to Peking from Canton, Phrayā Mahānuphāp had to stay behind, and it was for this reason that he named his poem 'Nirāt Kwāngtung'. The striking feature of this Nirāt is that the poet devotes the greater part of his poem to the description and the account of his travel while ignoring the theme of love-longing almost altogether. Only at times does he express his sadness upon leaving his city and expresses his love and devotion to the King but not once does he mention his love for a beloved woman. The poet's main concern seems to be to record all events and activities of the mission together with the poet's own observation of the scenery, the living conditions and the people in the foreign land.

In 1857 Mọm Rāchōthai composed Nirāt Lōndŏn. He was an interpreter of the Thai Embassy which was sent by King Rāmā IV to deliver his letter of friendship to Queen Victoria in London.⁸⁰ Like Phrayā Mahānuphāp, Mọm Rāchōthai composed his Nirāt poem in the form of a semi-travel account plus some love-longing passages especially

78) Ibid, p. 146.

79) See Nirāt Phrayā Mahānuphāp Pai Mụang Čhīn, op. cit.

80) Prachum Phongsāwadān Phāk Sī Sip Hā, Ruam Čhot Mai Hēt Rųang Thūt Thai Pai Angkrit (Records of the Siamese Embassy to England in 1857-58), Bangkok, 1927, pp. 228.

when he was back in the hotel room and was alone. While Phrayā Mahānuphāp recorded the merchant ships at the Chinese ports of Macao and Canton, Mōm Rāchōthai gave a description of Portsmouth, and later Dover, together with his fascination with the English material well-beings, such as railways, ships, jewels. As members of important missions, both authors took special interests in recording events and activities concerning their official contacts with their respective hosts. Phrayā Mahānuphāp reported his party's first contact with the Chinese officials in Macao where they were intercepted and followed by a warship of thirty soldiers. And in Canton where they were invited to the reception dinner, long descriptions of the Chinese officials, their guards, the buildings, the social greetings, the feast and the speech by the head of the Chinese officials were given. Mōm Rāchōthai, on the other hand, took special care in describing the English Sovereign, her costumes, the court manners and functions, and Windsor Castle where his party was invited to stay for four nights.

A year later in 1859, King Rāmā IV sent Phra Rāthasombat (Kārawēk Ratanakun) to look for certain jewels in Calcutta. Phra Rāthasombat composed a Nirāt poem to record the account of his successful journey. His poem is called 'Nirāt Kō Kao Kālakatā'.⁸¹ Then in 1887 Nai Waeo composed Nirāt Tangkia—a Journey to Tongkin. The author of this poem was in a similar position to Phrayā Mahānuphāp and Mōm Rāchōthai's in that he served as a secretary to a party of five representatives sent from Bangkok by King Rāmā V to observe the fighting between the French in Indo-China and the Hō rebellion.⁸² Nai Waeo recorded the journey arranged by the French and his party's official contacts with them while travelling in that area. Detailed descriptions of Saigon, Haiphong and Hanoi were also given. And when the journey finally reached the front line, the fighting was reported. It was only when he received letters from home that Nai Waeo expressed his love melancholy.

In these Nirāt poems, the technique of pun and transfer is found to be used but only when the poets were still within the boundary of the Thai Kingdom. This is obvious enough since names of the locales became

81) Klōn Nirāt Kō Kao Kālakatā, Wachirayān Library, Bangkok, 1920, pp. 51.

82) Luang Nōranithi Banchākit, Nirāt Tangkia, Bangkok, 1961, pp. 104.

meaningless to them as the journey reached foreign places and the FM ceased to be useful. On the other hand, foreign elements such as scenery, people and their daily activities, etc., became more interesting and when seen for the first time normally aroused curiosity. The poets cannot help describing these attractive foreign elements and recording them in their poems for their superiors and friends, as well as the public, thus serving not only as reports of their accomplishments, but also as public information.⁸³

After World War II, when the Government started to receive foreign aid from the West, many officials were sent on observation trips abroad and around the world. More Nirāt poems were composed as byproducts of these trips. Some of these poems are Nirāt Rōn Lōk by Saeng Thōng, Nirāt Rōn Raem Pai Rōp Lōk by M.L. Pin Malakul, and Nirāt Rūang Mūang Thai Pai Rōp Lōk by Dutsadi Mālā. These poems are merely travel accounts in poetry as the poets did not use the special techniques of form and expression and became more concerned with recording their own activities while leaving aside traditional ideas and visions of poetical empathy. However, Nirāt Kaolī—A Journey to Korea by Rear Admiral Chuap Hongsakun is praiseworthy.⁸⁴ Like Sunthōn Phū's work, but of a more modern time, his Nirāt is not a mere travel account. It contains ideas and visions which stem from the elements the poet sees and observes on his journey which reflect the feeling of love for his country. Upon seeing a progressive Korean seaport, for instance, the poet thinks of the Thai seaports especially Songkhla which has long been neglected.⁸⁵ His worries and concern upon leaving Thailand are for the Thai people—they are for him the beloved. Before entering the sea at the mouth of the river, he entrusts them to the Government, beseeching it to provide better welfare for them and begging high ranking officials and politicians to stop their corrupt activities. He calls for powerful military men to repent and that they should not lower themselves to be involved in the opium

83) Nirāt Lōndōn marks the first printing of a literary work in Thai in which the author retains copyright but sold the printing right to the press. See Damrong Rāchānuphāp in Prachum Phongswādān Phāk Sī Sīp Hā, Op. cit, p. 106.

84) Phon Rūa Trī Chuap Hongsakun, Ruam Nirāt Tōn Mai, Bangkok, 1969, pp. 207. See also his five other Nirāt poems published in this same volume.

85) Ibid, p. 23.

business.⁸⁶ Upon seeing a Japanese ship, he recalls his relationship with general Nagamura, who was the commander of the Japanese army in Thailand and who was kind enough to tell the Thais of their dangers in siding with the Japanese when the Japanese defeat was inevitable. From this memory he points out to his readers, the danger of the army getting involved in politics which, in the case of Japan, brought destruction to the country.⁸⁷

Like other things in the Thai heritage, the composition of Nirāt poems has become less popular. This is understandable because it would be much more practical to record events of a journey in prose. The composition of a Nirāt poem nowadays has to be encouraged by a special literary club whose purpose is to preserve and to carry on the tradition. Recently, two volumes of Nirāt poems emerged in this manner. The Sunthōn Phū Club published a collection of twenty-five short Nirāt poems called 'Ruam Nirāt Yīsip Hā Rūang' in 1966⁸⁸ and later in 1970, the Bangkok Bank sponsored the composition of 'Nirāt Krung Kao' by inviting 48 poets to compose one Nirāt. Each was responsible for a certain portion of the journey, then they were linked together.

This modern development shows that the idea of Nirāt is deeply held and appreciated by Thai people with literary interests. The best Nirāt poems will always remain as parts of Thailand's literary heritage.

This paper has attempted to define the Nirāt in terms of its essential form, content, and poetic process making it a clearly defined genre. It arose from the poetry of love-longing and in its most modern history it has become, in many examples, a travel account preserving the name Nirāt. But what makes the true Nirāt is the set of special techniques of form and expression used by the poets to link these ideas of travel and love in absence and, even in the greatly changed circumstances of today, some poets have shown that the literary tradition is still alive.

86) Ibid, p. 4.

87) Ibid, p. 22.

88) Samōsōn Sunthōn Phū, Ruam Nirāt Yīsip Hā Rūang, Bangkok, 1966, pp. 352.

89) Sī Sip Paet Nak Klōn Ruam Samai, Nirāt Krung Kao, Bangkok Bank, 1970, pp. 159.