HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THAI LITERARY CONVENTIONS: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

by

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Chapter I: Introduction

1. **Background:**

A part of the study of the Thai traditional literature is to learn about the language, thoughts, culture and society of the former times which persist until todays. A part of the culture is expressed through literary conventions. They form the basic and indispensable knowledge of the study of literature.

2. **Purpose:**

2.1 To study Thai literary conventions in terms of their history and development.

2.2 To generate a search for new approaches to the study of Thai literature.

2.3 To prepare a new reference book for all levels of Thai literary study.

3. **Scope:**

Due to the time limit, only the poetical genre is selected in order to narrow down the scope of study to a level of manageability. Additionally, under the demands of metricalogy and poetical styles, literary conventions are more discernible in poetical works than prosaic ones.

4. **Definition:**

For the sake of clarity, the writer will give definitions of some words here.
4.1 **Sociolinguistic**: "the study of language in relation to society..." (R.A. Hudson, 1980: 1).

4.2 **Tradition**: "a mode of behavior or standard produced by a group as distinct from an individuals; and serves to intensify group conciousness and cohesion." (Julins Gould & William L. Kolb, 1965).

4.3 **Convention**: "a practice, usage or rule of conduct or behavior on what may or may not be done by members of a given group or community." (Julins Gould & William L. Kolb, 1965).

To sum up, the writer defines the convention as an expression of tradition within the contexts of Thai society and culture.

**Chapter 2: A Chronological Description of the Thai poetical literature**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, only the poetical genre of Thai literature is selected in order to narrow down the scope of study. The study covers the periods of Sukothai up to King Rama VI of the Bangkok Period. (Prior to the overwhelming dominance of prose in the Thai literary production). The Thai literature under our study is divided into 6 periods: Sukothai, Early Ayudhaya, Medieval Ayudhaya, Late Ayudhaya, Thonburi and Bangkok.

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In conclusion, various types of poetical literature were produced during the period from Sukhothai up to Bangkok.
They are plays, didactic literature, religious literature, stories from the Jataka, Niras literature, Lilit literature, Pleang Yaw and other miscellaneous genres such as the Klong and Klon.

Chapter 3: The Categorization of Thai literary conventions

Folkways is the ways that people in society do things in daily life. Though folkways maintain no legal authority, they also help providing order to the society. Convention is somewhat like folkways.

As said in the chapter 1, the conventions are an expression of tradition. In creating a literary work, the poet usually makes use of traditional rules in order to express his feeling or belief; as if the rules are codes with meanings which are readily intelligible to the readers. The literary traditions prevailed in Thai literature are centered on the themes of love, sorrow, rites, thoughts and sense of beauty. These forms of expression licensed by traditions can be called "literary conventions".

3.1 Conventions for the expression of love:

The expression of love is often met in the poetical works, because love is the symbol of natural feelings of human beings. However in the didactic literature, women are often told to keep her feeling of love from being noticeable. They have no right to express this kind of feeling, unless they want to invite contempt upon themselves.