

On Nature and *Naga*:

A French Ecofeminist Analysis of Khamiliasichomphu's *Nakha Kiawchan*

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Abstract

Nakha Kiawchan, a recently released paranormal romance novel in 2023, was written by the bestselling author Khamiliasichomphu. The novel gives vivid details about characters' sexuality as well as discussion about Nature during historical Lanna teak industry in the 19th century. Due to its heavy ecological leaning and critique about male-female relationship, this novel can be regarded within an ecofeminist framework presented by Françoise d'Eaubonne, as ecofeminism considers both subjects inseparable. The term 'ecofeminism' was coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne and will be used as a theoretical framework in literary analysis. Despite being written since the 70s, d'Eaubonne's critique proves its lasting relevance in analyzing and understanding gender roles and man-nature relationship in this novel. *Nakha Kiawchan* offers an interesting mix of traditional gender roles, the contradicting of values between the liberating and feminist Lanna matriarchy and the patriarchal and oppressive *Kheud* customs. The novel gives readers the descriptions of natural resources, natural disasters, as well as supernatural beings representing Divine Nature – all connected and can be discussed within d'Eaubonnian ecofeminist views. This article announces its much-needed breakthrough study in Thai literature, contemporary corpus and ecological writings published in 2023.

Keywords: Nature, Ecofeminism, Romance literature, Fantasy, Lanna, Françoise d'Eaubonne, Paranormal romance, Thai literature, Contemporary literature, Gender

Introduction

This paper's corpus comprises a best-selling Thai paranormal romance *Nakha Kiawchan* by Khamiliasichomphu (pseudonym translated as 'Pink camellia') and brief mentions of her other prose fictions. Khamiliasichomphu is one of the best-selling Thai romance authors nowadays. Her works focus mainly in paranormal romance with Thai-Hinduist mythological beings as male protagonists while female protagonists are usually northern women. The use of Northern dialect in dialogue and representation of life in the northern region of Thailand has become Khamiliasichomphu's distinguished elements that readers enjoy. The writer,

identified herself with the feminine pronoun, already had works published with Sugarbeat publishing, a famous romance publishing house affiliated with Sataporn Books publishing house, one of the biggest market shares in Thai press. Khamiliasichomphu first uploaded and shared her works in online reading platforms such as Readawrite.com and Tunwalai.com, gathering around thousands to hundred thousands views in each novel. Several of her works got published and she also self-published regularly since 2021. To name her works respectively according to time of publication: *Mantra Saming**¹(April, 2021), *Chanthra Asura* (June

¹ Book titles with asterisk signify that the book was first published by Sugarbeat Publishing House in hard copies and e-book versions within the first year of publication while the book titles without the asterisks were self-

published. Now all the digital copies of the marked works are sold under the name of Khamiliasichomphu, the original owner.

2021), *Daraka Wayu* (July 2021), *Aiyari Sitaman* (October 2021), *Chanthra Montra* (February 2022), *Duangjai Waisawaha** (July 2022), *Keson Ratchasi* (June 2022), *Phailin Nilakan**(December, 2022), *Nakha Kiawchan** (February 2023) and *Detective Rose* (April, 2023).

The novels all belong to paranormal romance, ranging characters inspired from

1. Thai and Tai-Kadai ghost stories (found in all of her works, especially in *Mantra Saming* whose hero is a *Saming* or Thai weretiger and *Daraka Wayu* whose hero is a human sorcerer apprentice and the disciple of said *Saming*)

2. Hindu-Buddhist mythology (found in all of her works especially in *Duangjai Waisawaha* whose hero is a Garuda, *Pailin Nilakal* whose hero is a god of Underworld and *Chandra Asura*, whose hero is an Asura or a giant) to

3. European fantastical creatures (mostly found in *Chandra Montra* whose hero is a Fenrir- inspired shapeshifter or a werewolf).

Nakha Kiawchan set itself apart from other urban fantasy and contemporary works of Khamliasichomphu, being her only historical and paranormal romance, with its eco- consciousness leaning. The novel particularly discussed in great detail about 1. the characters' sexuality 2. many professional and recreational uses of natural resources and 3. natural disasters and supernatural threats to local humans. It is worth examining how these elements intertwine with the help of ecofeminism framework as ecofeminism questions Gender and how capitalism, likened to Patriarchy, destroys the balance of human- nature sustainable cohabitation.

Objective

This paper aims to

1. analyze the characters' sexuality and human-nature interactions in the novel to examine the ecofeminist leanings of *Nakha Kiawchan*, especially with Françoise d'Eaubonne's framework

2. adding a new piece of ecofeminist study by analyzing *Nakha Kiawchan*, Thai paranormal romance literature by contemporary writer in academic corpus as both d'Eaubonne's writings and paranormal romance genre are less studied in Thailand

Method

The study is qualitative research, collecting and analyzing data from mostly literary corpus. By using thematic approach, the article discusses its findings in detailed descriptions. This paper examined the novel *Nakha Kiawchan* with French ecofeminism, especially Françoise d'Eaubonne's works as a theoretical framework. The elements in the story such as the characters' gender roles and interaction with nature will be discussed to determine their relevance to ecofeminism. The novel *Nakha Kiawchan* is a historical and paranormal romance. The paranormal romance genre in Thailand by contemporary writers is rarely discussed in academia due to prejudice about contemporary literature and romance/ erotica genre. Furthermore, ecofeminist applications with literary corpus in Thailand are still developing. By using lesser known French ecofeminist like d'Eaubonne, the relevancy of the pioneer and crucial texts of the ecofeminist movement, this article aims to offer a new insight in Thailand literary study landscape.

Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that directly questions the interconnectedness of gender, race, nature and hierarchy as they are all subjected unfairly to patriarchy. The term 'écoféminisme' was firstly coined in 1974 in *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (*Feminism or Death*), a critical book by the French activist writer Françoise d'Eaubonne (1920- 2005) . D' eaubonne remains to this day as one of the pioneer essayists and activists whose critique about the Patriarchy- driven capitalism and its detrimental use of resources still has impact and relevancy in the ecofeminist field. As many sociopolitical movements happened in France during May 1968, the 70s emerged many women activists and feminist writings. D' Eaubonne herself had a most prolific writing period between 1972-1978, where her canonical works were published as well as her active presence in feminist, LGBTQ+ rights and ecology marches. After *Feminism or Death*, d'Eaubonne later developed her proposal in her more theorized essay *Écologie/ Féminisme: Révolution ou mutation?* (*Ecology/Feminism: Revolution or Mutation?*). But due to d'Eaubonne many militant articles and support of the radical movement and her thinking much ahead of her time, her contributions were less mentioned or studied in academia during her time to this day. She was more

appreciated in anglophone countries than in France. Ecofeminism at a global scale has found its echo in the 1980-90s by women scholars in the USA and now the movement has vast theories and applications on an international level. Although some scholars raised concerns about the contradicting views of ecofeminism, especially dichotomy and essentialism which may question even feminism itself, many scholars state that the richness of ecofeminism should be celebrated. This paper thus adopted d' Eaubonnian proposals to rediscover the pioneer works and see their relevances since ecofeminism directly discusses the bond between gender and nature exploitation, elements greatly portrayed in *Nakha Kiawchan*.

Synopsis

Around the middle of 19th century in Lanna, Kiawchan, a young woman from a local rich merchant family receives her father's missive to join him at Tan Chua's lodgings. She, as well as Mime, her companion, and other servants in her caravan travel through the forest with great difficulty. Tan Chwe a rich Burmese teak seller and plantation supervisor of a British company invites her to join his hunting voyage and later reveals his wish to marry her to his eldest son, Win-Ou. Kiawchan, however, falls in love with 'I-Ngiaw', a mysterious Tai hunter in her caravan. After fulfilling Kiawchan's many commands and also saving her from ferocious supernatural beings, 'I-Ngiaw' confesses that he is Asirachata, the sacred 8-headed albino Naga and guardian of nature. Kiawchan, despite being shocked, continues to love him. She is in much distress, disgusted by endless killings of animals from Tan Chua and his men, and the sexual harassment of Win-Thwe, Tan Chwe's youngest son. After that, due to excessive tree-cutting, the British timber plantation site and the lodgings are flooded. Win-Thwe dies while Win-U, homosexual, eloped earlier with his male lover. Tan Chwe is murdered by the greedy father of Kiawchan but Tan Chwe's new wife is falsely punished. Asirachata then takes Kiawchan and her people to another location near actual Chiang Mai and settle down there. The couple is married together but never have children together because of their different races. They help Mime, now their close friend and neighbor, raising her five kids. Kiawchan's father becomes mentally ill after

constantly losing his newborns and his new wife. He then is brutally lynched until death by the locals.

In the last three special chapters, Kiawchan is reincarnated as a rich girl who celebrates her highschool graduation with her classmates in a luxury resort in Chiang Mai. She is peer-pressured to join a ghost-hunting game and also a ouija board session. She later is sexually harassed by a male classmate possessed by the ghost of Win-Thwe, awakened by the ouija board game. As the resort is near the spirit house of Asirachata, his spectral form appears to fight off all the menace for Kiawchan and also informs her that he has been waiting for her return since the death of Lanna-period Kiawchan 100 years ago. Kiawchan thanks Asirachata for his help. She feels impressed by his caring nature and his supernatural powers but she decides to live her life before coming back to the resort to give him an answer. Asirachata vows to wait for her return forever — just like a naga that serenades the moon (thus the novel title).

Nakha Kiawchan was one of her recent publications, released in January 2023. It was later revealed in Khamiliasichomphu's online free-reading platforms Tunwalai.com and Readawrite.com that *Nakha Kiawchan* was the first tome of the series. *Detective Rose*, released in April 2023, was a detective spin-off from the series. The novella tells a love story of Chula Nakha (Little Naga), the younger brother of Asirachata, and Rose, the best friend of Prapai, heroine of *Duangjai Waisawaha*. The novella shows a short scene of a failed attempt of Chula Naga convincing Asirachata to go back to their mythical kingdom but the reason behind Asirachata's self-imposed exile is left unclear in the novella. The writer claims that Chula Naga's story will be written later in another long-form novel just like her other novels. After *Detective Rose*, the series continues with a sequel novel of *Nakha Kiawchan*, named *Nakha Khiangchan*, available freely on Tanwalai.com and Readawrite.com. It is an ongoing project of Khamiliasichomphu, continuing the love story between Asirachata and newly-reincarnated Kiawchan. Surprisingly there is a Naga sister of Asirachata who bears grudges to the unknowing Kiawchan. As the novel is not finished by the time of this study (currently 20 chapters), it is not determined whether the Nakhee (female Naga) is really Asirachata's long-lost blood sister or there are some plot twists. As other works of the Naga series focus more on the

characters' love story than environmental concerns, this research deemed appropriate to use only *Naga Kiawchan* as corpus. With 601 pages in total, *Naga Kiawchan* offers vivid pictures of many interesting topics.

Result

The results of this study are divided into 4 thematic observations from the corpus.

Thematic observations from the corpus

The study can be categorized into 4 parts of analysis:

1. The focalization of female characters: *Nakha Kiawchan* as Women's Writing and feminist writing ?

By studying *Nakha Kiawchan*, it brings to mind that the novel with its female protagonist-driven narrative could be regarded as Women's writing. Theoretically, Women's writing or Women's literature is a term used to distinguish literary works written by women with focus about women's identity in consideration. Especially in an ecofeminist framework, Women's writing can be a valuable insight to the real and fictional experience and psyche of women in a capitalist society. In this regard, Khamiliasichomphu's works can be counted among Women's Writing: All of Khamiliasichomphu's works have female narrator/heroine as the main focus of narration. So it can be said that the female writer had great care into creating relativity to her female audience as most readership of romance is women. She also used the third person point of view with various degrees of omniscience to give the reader a full comprehension and objectivity of the story. However, it cannot be said clearly that Khamiliasichomphu's writing is a feminist writing, since most of her heroines, to the time of the study, have little to no sense of self and they do not have awareness about societal pressure they are given. The writer also did not offer much critique about the unfairness of gender roles in most of her works — it has to be deduced. The heroines usually define themselves by being in love and gain confidence from masculine

protagonists (especially in *Mantra Saming* and *Duangjai Waisawaha*). Moreover, they are confined within a tradition of being an ideal and extremely obedient daughter/granddaughter despite suffering some mistreatments from parents or kin. Kiawchan, the protagonist of *Naga Kiawchan*, sets herself apart from other heroines of Khamiliasichomphu as the female character idolizes her deceased mother and has constant verbal fights with her lazy father regarding his new wife and his sneaky matchmaking in order to get rich off her. Apart from the heroine Aiyari from *Aiyari Sitaman* and Rose from *Detective Rose*, Kiawchan is the only heroine who openly defies her father to the point of family estrangement. The female voice is interestingly portrayed in the novel. Khamiliasichomphu also explained in the foreword of her novel that she tried to create scenarios as close to historical facts as possible about Lanna's way of life and Kiawchan represented the old folkways of matriarchy (and animism) of Lanna losing to the newer (Hinduist-Buddhist) patriarchy². Kiawchan is in some ways not as subversive or radical in a contemporary point of view. She clearly enjoys her privileges (physical, financial and social) and thinks it is fair that her female servants have to wait on her all the time. So Kiawchan is a confident young woman who fights for her own destiny but does not fight for equality. She protects her servants from other's mistreatments but her servants must be at her disposal at all times. In short, Kiawchan is a kind character but not a feminist character. To summarize, despite being Woman's writing with female protagonist-driven narration, Khamiliasichomphu's writing is still not a feminist writing. With the exception of the female protagonist of *Aiyari Sitaman*, Khamiliasichomphu's works rarely present feminist characters nor feminist critique in her narration.

2. Men and women sexuality and dubious consent

In d'Eaubonnian ecofeminism, Patriarchy is an oppressive system that unjustly controls human and natural resources. So women suffer from lack of access to resources or from lesser social status than men in society. Furthermore, women also suffer from patriarchal interference of their sexuality and

² Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.4

reproductive rights. In our corpus, the 19th century Lanna setting gives Kiawchan the traditional local power in Matriarchy to choose her own lover/husband yet the old custom (*Kheud*) about “keeping her honour” aka abstinence before marriage or risking the wrath of ancestor ghosts prohibits Kiawchan, as an adult, full authority over her own body. So it is very interesting that in the period Lanna setting, despite having Matriarchy that allows the female protagonist her inherited wealth and business from her mother and grandmother, Kiawchan still has to obey an animistic law that resonates with patriarchal values. As Mernissi (2002) explored in the article about virginity and patriarchy in *Women’s Studies International Forum Journal*, “Like honour, virginity is the manifestation of a purely male preoccupation”. This contradicting nature of traditional customs is reinforced several times by Mime, the close companion of Kiawchan who keeps overprotecting “the reputation” of Kiawchan. All men in their presence are mocked by Mime, judging them never good enough for her mistress. Several scenes of Mime’s constant chaperoning and male deprecation might be a reaction to counterbalance aggressive male characters but these actions clearly are not what is considered feminism in today’s standard that supports equal rights.

However, in *Nakha Kiawchan*, some scenes of intimacies between Kiawchan and Asirachata should be commended because of the consent of both parties. But sadly in the sequel of *Naga Kiawchan*, *Nakha Khiangchan*, the hero seems to ignore Kiawchan’s consent at times as he entered her dreams and forced her to have erotic visions to remind her of their relationship in Kiawchan’s previous life.

Goldblum, feminist academic and younger colleague of d’Eaubonne, underlined that at the end of Françoise d’Eaubonne’s *Le féminisme: l’histoire et l’actualité (Feminism: history and today)* in 1972, d’Eaubonne did not only conclude feminists theories that she studied but also announced her own theory that female liberation is sexual liberation (Goldblum, 2017, p.194). Françoise d’Eaubonne observed that the rapport between men and nature is indeed the relationship of men and women. She then clarified that the rapport (or more precisely the abuse) of the man- nature/ men-women relationship fueled by patriarchy and capitalism (that is patriarchal) is the reason that the world is facing

its end. By causing exploitation and overpopulation, patriarchy and capitalism is causing great harm to nature and women. In *Ecology/ Feminism: Revolution or Mutation?* (1999), d’Eaubonne further elaborated that men take away women’s autonomy over their bodies by taking over the control of birth control. Women, as well as nature, can not have full authority over their capacity to give or not to give life. Capitalism forces them to always produce and deplete the natural resources.

It is also worth mentioning that Thai romance and its subgenres (historical, paranormal, erotica, etc.) are predominantly written by female writers and enjoyed by mainly female readership. Moreover, traditional heroines — married or not — do not seem to enjoy their sexuality/enjoy their intimate moments with their lovers by fear of propriety and censorship. Many Thai romance novels traditionally omit even tame intimate moments and especially steamy scenes in order to not be penalized by pornography prohibition rules. As time goes by and people’s mentality changes, sex has become a main selling point of contemporary literature no matter the genre it belongs to. Yet romance, for a long time criticized as ‘too sentimental’ ‘too feminine’ or ‘useless’ — suffers greatly from misogyny. Learning emotional maturity as well as one’s connection with sexuality through fiction is as important as having intercourse because it all revolves around a sense of self, sexual discourse and politics. Novels usually portray or can fight against sexist discourse. All of Khamiliasichomphu’s prose belongs to paranormal romance with sexually explicit content (erotica) but it is a shame that most of her characters do not pay attention to consent. Many male protagonists of hers do not stop when the word ‘no’ is uttered by female characters. They still charm or coerce the women. The women in novels also say ‘no’ even when they enjoy moments of intimacies with the male protagonists out of traditional ‘propriety’, perpetuating the dangerous practice of blurry consent and power imbalance. Only in *Nakha Kiawchan* that Asirachata clearly states that Kiawchan must take the first step since their first private moment together (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.143-144) and he will stop whenever she wishes to stop. But contradictorily, when he asks if Kiawchan wants to be seduced and serenaded, Kiawchan repeatedly claims she does not know what he meant (and cannot give him a clear answer) while being fondled and enjoying the

moment of passion (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p. 155-156). This semblance of mutual respect and equality approach regrettably disappears in the sequel *Nakha Kiangchan*. It can be deduced that the inconsistency stems from contradicting philosophies in Lanna folkways portrayed in the novel. On one hand, matriarchy allows Kiawchan and other female characters to choose their lovers/husbands. On the other hand, 'Kheud', a reputation and social hierarchy that is patriarchal — controls and shames women's sexuality.

However, it is interesting that the writer includes a homoerotic trope into the novel. Win-U, the eldest son of Tan Chwe is gay. Described as handsome, perfect-mannered and kind, Win-U comes out to refuse his upcoming forced marriage with Kiawchan. He elopes with his male lover in the end of the novel. The heroine wishes them success and even Win-U's rebirth as her blood brother. However, since the coming-out of Win-U is only to Kiawchan's eyes, there is not enough material to discuss homosexuality portrayed in *Nakha Kiawchan*. In brief, *Nakha Kiawchan* offers the reader an interesting representation of struggles between Lanna Matriarchy (and Feminism) and patriarchal *Kheud* by portraying male, female and LGBTQ characters' relationship. Sadly, female sexual liberation, endorsed by d'Eaubonnian ecofeminism, is portrayed only in some consensual scenes between the protagonists and only suggested in a dialogue between the homosexual couple before the consent is disregarded in several scenes in *Nakha Kiangchan*, the sequel published online in 2023 and in print in 2024. So, in light of feminist consideration, the novel portrays an ambiguous mix of the male and female protagonists claiming their own sexuality with various degrees of consent from parties during intimacies.

3. Gender roles and social politics

This observation was closely linked to the previous observation. What is more interesting is that the novel also repeats traditional Lanna gender roles such as women must know how to sew and weave, make their own clothes, cook and home-keep while men hunt or farm. It is mentioned that Kiawchan learns these skills from her late mother, hinting that Kiawchan is 'eligible for marriage'. But, in reality, Kiawchan never has to cook or work in any single moment in the novel. It is

always Asirachata and her servants who do the housekeeping or basic everyday tasks for her. Kiawchan never has to work all her life because she is extremely wealthy. Her maternal family owns cotton plantations and rice fields and sells the agricultural products as well as runs textile factories. Her family also owns boats and elephants and prefer these more comfortable means of travel to regular people's horses and cows (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p. 10). It is also mentioned that her family has close ties to elite families of Chiang Mai, giving them money in exchange for exclusive trading privileges. (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.13) So it can be said that in order to not conform to female gender roles (marriage and housework), one just needs to have more wealth and adopt 'masculine' gender roles (i.e. being the breadwinner). Compared to Kiawchan, other female characters all have daily struggles due to inferior financial and social status. Mime and Sunkham (a child), servants who work under Kiawchan's employ, risk 'deadly cold' by cooking breakfast in open air in the morning everyday and fishing by hand in cold water (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p. 94- 95, p. 180- 182). Khwansi, also interested in Asirachata, is heavily shamed by Kiawchan not only because of her romantic interest, but also because she is 'only a regular peasant, a mere daughter of an elephant herder and a cook in the teak plantation' (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p. 25), according to Mime. Fongkham, Kiawchan's new stepmother and old female servant of Kiawchan's family, was whipped by the order of Kiawchan because Fongkham betrayed Kiawchan's mother by seducing Kiawchan's father. Even though the adulterous couple got married after the death of Kiawchan's mother, Kiawchan constantly degrades Fongkham as a homewrecker. Kiawchan still loves her father, endorsing gender and personal bias. The heroine, who is a wealthy woman from her many businesses, is almost forced-married with Winthwe. She is just richly dressed and looks impeccably beautiful in many chapters but never speaks about her work, only that she has to dress well to 'upkeep the honour of being the daughter of *Satuy* (a wealthy merchant) of Chiang Mai. The reader never knew how the heroine and her family run their businesses, only that they are so rich that her father can afford to do nothing but get appointed nonetheless as a counselor of a governor of Lanna. So it is interesting to

see the bias in the narrative between two rich families whose son and daughter are almost force-married.

Jaifai (2017) stated that Lanna culture can be studied with an ecofeminist lens and Lanna philosophy is not binary or in duality. But in *Nakha Kiawchan*, the binary opposition is very clear. Even when the novel presented several glimpses of a homosexual couple, the gay characters are portrayed with ‘feminine’ quality and somehow endorse the binary stereotype. Both Win-U and his lover are described with the words like ‘polite’, ‘handsome’ or ‘sweet-faced’ as if homosexuality was merely linked to polishness or good looks because the only other well-dressed and good-looking character in the novel is the heroine Kiawchan. The heterosexual male characters are all described as ‘mascular’, ‘love weapons and hunting’, ‘aggressive’ or ‘rough-looking’. The hero, Asirachata, is most described as ‘clear-eyed’ or ‘innocent’ but his very considerable height and muscular build tower over other characters in the novel. The word ‘big-bodied’ is also the most frequently used for Asirachata. According to the ecofeminist worldview, the women struggle in a patriarchal society that seeks to control their sexuality, in parallel with the male dominance towards Nature and its production. The novel distinguishes its characters clearly by physical appearances and characteristics tied to mostly male-female duality. It is interesting to note that important male and female characters are all described in terms of physical attractiveness and male-female relationship, corresponding to the romance genre with heteronormative undertones. The biased gender roles are mostly used as the norm that protagonists adhere to rather than defy.

4. Nature, teak industry and environmental critique

This novel is rich in numerous passages about the beauty of lush forest, waterfalls and birds chirping so it can be considered as an ecopoetics writing – writings with pastoral or natural elements portrayed in a sublime manner. But the ecocriticism in the novel is yet to be seen because the nature in the novel is mostly described as it is ‘useful’ in an anthropocentric point of view. In the first chapter Kiawchan and her servants travel through the forest to go to Tan-Chwe’s teak farm, yet she only pays attention to her surroundings just because the wild orchids are beautiful as her potential hair

ornament and she asks a hunter to pick it for her. According to the Khamiliasichomphu’s foreword (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p. 3-5), the novel was written with mostly ecopoetics inspiration: the writer loved reading about hunting (or adventure) novels and thus translating her love of nature and its atmosphere in this novel as well as her love for her community’s history. Even though she admitted that real trekking in the forest was much more difficult than the trekking and hunting trip portrayed in her novel. The writer also clearly stated that the setting of the novel was around 1857 where Lanna was not annexed to Siam. The local and sustainable folkways which are animal-hunting and honey harvest only as food are endorsed by Asirachata and Phran Tom (Hunter Tom), the Tai hunters. But interestingly, due to survival, the hunters are hired by the rich Tan-Chwe and his hunting troops to be their guides for trophy-hunting. Though Tan-Chwe kills a guar to eat, he treats it as an exotic medicine according to an old belief and never prohibits his son, Win-Thwe, from killing wild animals for fun. Not only the flora and fauna, the waterfalls are described as glistening and glittering ‘as jewels’ and are important just because they are where Kiawchan and Mime can take a bath and Kiawchan can have private moments with Asirachata. All elements of nature in this novel are very human-focused.

Goldblum (2017) emphasized that d’Eaubonnian ecofeminism proposes the destruction of capitalism or the collapse of abusive systems as a solution to environmental concerns. d’Eaubonne straightforwardly stated the ‘growing demographic cadence’ is ‘madness’ and ‘environmental destruction’ is ‘crime’, caused by patriarchal cultures. This exploitative use of natural resources is numerously commented on in *Nakha Kiawchan*.

It is worth mentioning that even the novel offers some critique about sadistic killing-spree of wild animals by Win-Thwe, it is used merely just to demonstrate that Win-Thwe is a violent and completely unrepentant character who later tries to rape Mime and Kiawchan. Furthermore, the novel presents passages of critique about excessiveness or overconsumption in Tan-Chwe’s house (huge lodgings, luxurious house decors, many wives to count, a son who is homosexual and another son who is abusive, hints about massive tree farm and tree-cutting) but what is more interesting to

note is that the excessiveness, toxic patriarchy and heavy capitalism leanings of Tan-Chwe are portrayed as a moral default than a systematic abuse of capitalism.

In addition to hinting critique about excessive teak farming, though the novel mentions stumps and logs carried to Bangkok by the river, it does not show the direct link between the huge plantation and the natural disaster in the end of the novel. The flash flood is only described between chapter 41-43 as a logical result of 3-days heavy downpour. In chapter 41, the rising tide is even “favorable to Tan-Chua because it is easier to carry logs to clients in Bangkok. Since there was no rain for quite a time, Tan-Chua must be in a hurry. There are so many logs to deliver.” (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.457) and for Kiawchan, the sound of the gong to tell the time “sometimes can be confused with the sound of timbers-falling.” (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.457) But the heroine and the novel still do not state clearly about the immediate danger of excessive deforestation. The flash flood is merely a natural disaster from heavy rain. But the study of Wattananukorn (2018, p.7) clearly stated otherwise: the teak industry in Lanna during the late 19th century to early 20th century caused deforestation and land erosion. A decade-long practice of using elephants to carry huge logs and then float them into the river to travel to Bangkok caused rapid land erosion and made the Serm river and the Li river shallow and changed the waterways irrevocably. Yet in *Nakha Kiawchan*, the flooding is very similar to divine intervention or a biblical deluge, Win-Thwe and his men are not spared while Kiawchan and her people are protected by Asirachata in his naga form, the spirit guardian of the nature himself (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.477). Again, this flood is portrayed more as a poetic justice or divine punishment than ecocriticism. Moreover, the flood serves as an homage to the Lanna’s prior flood history and echoes the myth of the founding royal family of Lanna. It is believed that prince Singholwat and his people migrate from India and wander in the mountains. Naga, disguised as a bhraman, guides the prince and his subjects to a safe place (actual Chiang Mai). In *Nakha Kiawchan*, Asirachata reveals that he is older than 1,200 years old, older than Samantrapradesh and the founding of Hariphunchai (Lamphang) (Khamiliasichomphu, 2023, p.368) and then he gives an oath to Kiawchan that he will love and stay loyal to her forever. The link between the new

leader and the naga is apparent when Asirachata guides Kiawchan and her people into a new plot of land. As it is much farther away than the flooding area, many travel-weary servants of Kiawchan left. Only Kiawchan and a small group of hers arrive at the actual Chiang Mai and rebuild their lives successfully, reinforcing the founding myth of Chiang Mai and its newly-migrated but worthy people. As the setting is in historical Lanna teak industry in the 19th century, natural resources are used, wild animals are hunted down, as well as excessive agriculture are heavily used by the male characters in the novel with only some exceptions from sustainable hunters like Asirachata and Phran Tom. Thus the heavy rain, landslides and floods in the end of the novel are all logical consequences of the excessive deforestation as well as poetic justice – reinforcing the d’Eaubonnian radical proposal to destroy the male-dominated capitalism altogether. In conclusion, the novel offers its interesting dynamics between men and women and LGBTQ characters as well as the divine-human and nature interactions. Despite being a supernatural romance novel and having only brief passages of description fitting the ecofeminist focus, the novel still offers readers interesting and various elements between gender politics and ecological awareness that is rich for study and interpretations.

Suggestion

This paper presents itself as a brief study of a contemporary writer in Thai historical and fantasy romance genre by analyzing literature with ecofeminism proposed by d’Eaubonne. Khamiliasichomphu’s entire oeuvre or works of other new Thai popular writers can be studied in further research since many popular and a new generation of writers are facing prejudice from academia that contemporary works might not be corpus-worthy. French ecofeminism, though one of the early movements in ecology and feminism in international academia, is admittedly Euro-centric. Various arguments and evolving frameworks have been added to ecological studies and feminism studies since. Some scholars have applied and adapted d’Eaubonne’s thoughts while many refuted. The concept of Spiritual ecofeminism and also the Divine Feminine concept of late can serve as a possible rationale with Khamiliasichomphu’s works and other Thai Eco fiction in further studies. Ecofeminism in general needs to be

studied in parallel with Gender Studies and present in academic writings as well as the public's understanding because it is not only a theoretical concept but also a praxis. Climate change and the rise of toxic patriarchy in many countries are an urgent matter that ecofeminism can be the key to build awareness and necessary changes.

Conclusion

Nakha Kiawchan is an interesting novel, richly-detailed with the characters' sexuality, human-nature relationship, local history and the supernatural. This novel possesses much potential as not only a new historical and paranormal romance but possibly an ecofeminist fiction in Thai literature. However, glimpses of ecocriticism and feminism are sacrificed in the novel in order to create sentimental drama and poetic justice with hints of an anthropocentric ecopoetics. Khamiliasichomphu is an active and recently-debuted writer. *Nakha Kiawchan*'s sequel *Nakha Khiangchan* was recently published as well as other sequels planned in the future. The writer's conceptual leanings can still evolve. Moreover, this study only aims to highlight some d'Eaubonnian ecofeminist considerations about *Nakha Kiawchan*. As people nowadays are more concerned about environmental issues, there is a possibility in the future that more new pieces of ecofeminist writing can be added into Thai literature corpus.

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