

“Preface” to The 20 Best Novels of Thailand

Saturday 27 June 2020, by [BARANG Marcel](#) (Date first published: 1994).

To PRESENT “THE TWENTY BEST NOVELS” OF ANY EUROPEAN COUNTRY OR even of a relatively young nation such as the United States would be preposterous. To select “the twenty best novels of Thailand” arguably is not. The novel in Thailand is a recent western import; the first truly Thai novels were written only seventy years ago. The body of available work is relatively small, a few thousand volumes, the bulk of which were scribbled to offer (very) light entertainment — The Thai have an overwhelming predilection for *bao samong* entertainment, ie entertainment ‘light on the brain’, so light indeed that much of what foreigners consider light reading is heavy going for Thai readers, prompting a respected Thai critic to poke gentle fun at those learned professors who expound in earnest on the hidden messages of the likes of Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* or AJ Cronin’s *Citadel*.] and can be dismissed outright. Sorry to say, Thai novels of high literary octane number only in the hundreds.

I have endeavored to select the best twenty, out of a preselection of a hundred provided to me by ten “professional readers” (professors of literature, literary critics, writers) and from my own reading, which was guided by the novels featured in various manuals of literature and literary criticism written in Thai, English or French. I also read most of the novels written by each of the eighteen authors selected, to check the validity of the preselection and understand the evolution of each writer, as well as most of the novels published since our project started in January 1993.

The choice of Thai literary experts was both deliberate and happenstance. I asked for and received the help of several recognized authorities in the field of literature—and I do apologize to those I failed to identify due to ignorance on my part at the time. A few university professors of literature attending a seminar on translation of Thai short stories organized by linguistic activists from the cultural team of the French embassy were also kind enough to forward their own contributions. The eclectic choice of these women was substantially different from that of the acknowledged experts in that it strongly favored female romance writers of popular appeal, whose novels came to account for a good third of the hundred titles preselected.

I assessed all the novels which were recommended, as well as about another hundred novels. By assessing the novels, I mean that I read them as discriminatingly as I could, with the rule that, no matter how dull or lame they would turn out to be, I would read a minimum of one hundred pages. If, within one hundred pages, a novel is unable to show its mettle, capture and hold the reader’s attention, then why bother with it. And so it was that I read about two thirds of all the novels from start to finish, even though in too many cases it was merely to see how the disaster would end.

To my distress, I found it easy to discard a great many works, even among those recommended by more than one expert. The reasons, I believe, had less to do with personal talent than with the lack of a proper literary environment. Too many seasoned Thai novelists make beginner’s mistakes. Put bluntly, from a literary-minded foreigner’s point of view, no more than fifty Thai novels of any genre or period qualify as flawless classics to be read by this and future generations for pleasure and intellectual profit, as distinct from yarns that are leafed through to kill time or perused out of academic or otherwise specialized interest.

With the aim of selecting the very best Thai novels, not merely the good ones, in order to translate

them into English over the next few years - the raison d'être of the THAI MODERN CLASSICS program—I trimmed the list down to twenty titles. Why twenty rather than ten or thirty? Because I decided to make the selection broad but to keep it of manageable size - and also because I am not sure I could find an extra ten titles I would care to translate.

I have tried to choose independently of my own tastes. Among the novels selected, I have a few favorites, and a few others are not entirely to my liking. Nevertheless, the critic in me believes that all are outstanding and definitely worth translating for the world to read. I am not naive or cocky enough, though, to profess that mine is the definitive choice, because, in the final analysis, there is no such thing: objectivity, like perfection, is an aim man tries to approach but never reaches. Personal taste aside, one's choice is valid only to the extent of one's own knowledge and sensibilities. Discriminate reading, like literary criticism, is an exercise at once objective - observing the various elements of a tale like a mechanic takes apart a car engine - and subjective: keeping attuned to feelings, musings and undercurrents as imponderable as the music of the spheres. To the extent that subjectivity is involved, these are indeed "the twenty best novels of Thailand" according to Marcel Barang.

The basic literary criteria that guided my choice are familiar to most western readers but still appear to elude many Thai readers, writers and even critics. These criteria are strictly literary, not political or moral. Politics and morals have their own media. Propaganda and zealotry are the death of fiction. A novel may well preach social revolution or salvation of the soul (or damnation or conservatism, for that matter) but it is neither a poster nor a pulpit and should not be assessed as such. To measure literature with moral or political yardsticks is more than irrelevant - it is misguided and harmful.

The first criterion is quality of language, by which I mean not merely correct syntax and precise semantics (you'd be surprised, even by some of the best pens!), but more importantly style, a certain way with words that enchants, tickles or stuns and creates by its very magic a world of its own, complete and unique.

A novel is a work of art crafted with words only, to which sloppy syntax or pedestrian prose are terminal diseases; prosaic language, pest; euphemism, cholera. Style is a rare gift that knows neither sex nor social origin. Some of the best stylists in the kingdom are women writers, who, alas, waste their talent in otherwise insipid yarns that tabulate heartbeats and propound lofty views about dripping faucets. Elegance of the pen is neither a prerogative of the aristocracy (indeed the best Thai writers these days belong to the middle class) nor a matter of high-sounding phrases and big words. If the tone and context are right, there is nothing wrong with slang terms or swearwords - the froth of the language broth - and nothing wrong either with newly coined words that make sense, if used sparingly. In any case, good style of whatever grace-smooth or crunchy, spicy or fragrant, earthy or ethereal, baroque or terse, jazzy, funky, racy or classic- is a sine qua non for good fiction.

With one of the most musical and subtle languages on earth, and centuries of popular and courtly juggling with words, Thai writers have an innate feel for the phrase that flows (too much or too fast sometimes), and hundreds of Thai novels would qualify in terms of style, but the trouble is, too many qualify on that count only.

The second criterion is internal coherence, the difficult balance between form and content and between the various components of the work. A novel is a story (plot) told by means of description (of things, places, people), narration and dialogue (or monologue). In mixing these elements, there is no set recipe, and creative writing consists precisely in coming up with new organic blends, in which the total is more than the sum of its parts. That "more" is the literary charge; the greater the charge, the greater the novel. If the total is equal or nearly equal to the sum of its parts, then forget it, the

novel is a waste of time.

Plots provide plenty of occasions to flounder. A plot can be strong and gripping or weak and potentially boring, but it must be coherent: you cannot launch a story in one direction only to change course and start all over again (unless this keeps recurring as part of a clear pattern which eventually tells a different tale altogether); or ditch the hero or heroine way before the end (unless it happens to be a family saga in which new heroes take over as a matter of course); or build one half in a smooth blend of fictitious elements only to cram the other half with official documents, newspaper clippings and the like, stalling the action and smothering the characters. Authors can get away with the most outrageous views if they manage to blend them with the narrative, but to interrupt the action with solid chapters expounding even the most cogent thoughts or with side plots of little or no relevance to the main course are sure ways to kill the balance of a novel: these adjuncts stick out like sore thumbs, and do indeed rate thumbs down.

In telling a story, the pace, whether slow or fast, must be sustained—although the slower the pace, the more likely the reader will be bored, which definitely happens every time a plot gets sluggish or stalls.

Settings and characters also must be coherent, both within the story - how consistent are they? how indispensable to the plot? —and by comparison to the real world: are they lifelike? are they believable? Only a mad character may behave in an erratic manner: it is expected of him; when a sane one does, the reader is shocked unless he is told why, or at least forewarned. That people in real life do behave erratically all the time is no excuse: verisimilitude, the stuff of fiction, is not truth, merely its appearance; happenstance is part of real life, yet artificial in fiction if unannounced. It is the author's job to make the erratic, the fortuitous, the incongruous plausible. A man who does not believe in spirits yet wakes up one morning as a medium is not credible without some sort of explanation or warning. Endings sometimes ruin very good yarns, when for the sake of a final fillip, the hero is made to do the opposite of what, on the evidence of the rest of the story, he must do.

A novel is an exercise in make believe which presents not the real world but a world that could be real—complex, lively, three-dimensional. Not all novels are realistic in treatment but all, even the most ethereal, must be grounded in hard fact to be at all credible. Without a realistic base, the most wonderful flight of fancy won't take off. Ghosts need houses to haunt, and the closer they come to your bedroom, the better they scare you; so, let's see the bedroom first, and hear the floor creak. Even magic realism, so fashionable these days, starts from a recreation of the real world before magic takes over. Stream of consciousness, automatic writing and other hip writing techniques make for exciting pyrotechnics but they become gratuitous exercises if they are not harnessed to a realistic frame of reference—something the proponents of art for art's sake never seem to grasp.

Too many Thai novels, I found, are dripping with honey and rosy beyond belief. There are cultural and ideological reasons for this. Thai culture is nonconfrontational in essence and, for the sake of social harmony, the Thai will always try to see only the "good side" of things and feign to ignore problems as long as they can: this works to some extent in real life, but applied to the novel, it means fatal blandness.

Countless romances fall into this credibility trap, as do most autobiographical works recalling early youth out on the farm or up on the range. Besides being usually plotless, these recollections of days past are so full of nice souls caught up in petty dramas that they end up sounding at once rosy, drab and trite. Furthermore, politically minded writers left and right tend to create heroes that are truly out of this world. When a hundred radical students are locked up in a tiny cell for a month over two hundred pages and not one of them goes mad at his sweaty and stinking fellow inmates, we are indeed in the presence of saints or angels, not of full-blooded young men. When every ten pages or

so the protagonist of a novel swears dedication to Duty and praises Nation, Religion and King, we yawn and close the book. In this type of crusading literature, angels are wont to confront devils, and heroes to tackle villains—where are the real men? Novels should never be studies in black and white, but as multicolored as life itself.

For all their good intentions and bleeding hearts, the disembodied zombies of most “literature for life” offerings are less believable than ET or Mickey Mouse, and a lot less endearing.

The same principle of coherence and verisimilitude applies to dialogue, which is a paramount device to enliven a tale, speed the action along and give depth to the characters involved. If there is nothing more dreary than contrived conversations, and nothing more exhilarating than spirited ones, too much of even excellent dialogue is not such a good idea, as you end up with a hamburger without beef - a play or film script rather than a novel.

As for specialized knowledge, too little is just as bad as too much. A novel involving lawyers should explain the law and court proceedings well enough to have us rooted to the bench until the trial ends, yet nobody wants to read the civil code chapter and verse. However well written, the exchange of blows between kick boxers over dozens of pages will thrill but the most dedicated fans, and all hut cultured cattlemen will enjoy an offering of a thousand and one tips on how to raise buffalos.

The third criterion is vision, meaning both scope and originality. Scope applies not only outward as a macroscopic view of society revealing the breadth, depth and specificity of a fictional world, but also inward, as a microscopic study of the self exploring the depth and complexity of man. The world outside and the world within are both legitimate raw material for fiction, and as in life are best combined—which is why the art for life—art for art’s sake debate is so debilitating, impoverishing fiction by oversimplifying and setting up fences where there should be none.

The greatest works of fiction change your perception of the world and of yourself. They may not have great numbers of protagonists, cover huge geographic or historical grounds, or depict outstanding events such as war or epidemics: great literature is not a question of numbers or bulk; it is merely a matter of sharpness and originality of vision, reaching far out there for the truths and ways of the world as well as deep inside for the lies and emotions of man.

Each generation begets a few novels that seem to encapsulate the perceptions of the times, but these works only last if they remain relevant to later generations by offering them values common to all of mankind: you do not keep reading Cervantes, Richardson, Tolstoi, Balzac and all the other greats for what they tell you of their times but for what they tell you about yourself. Too many novels, though magnificently written and expertly balanced, lack scope and intellectual seasoning. They feel hollow and flat. Once you have read them, you are none the wiser and wonder what all the fuss was all about.

The last criterion, specific to this undertaking, is international compatibility. None of the novels selected is culture specific. Even though some of them have an important Thai cultural dimension, this Thai texture can be translated, with the help of the odd footnote, in such a way that foreign readers can still relate to the stories without missing a quiver of the local bamboo mouth organ (notice I didn’t write *khaen*).

There is, however, a small body of very good but culture-specific novels which defy translation or even transposition and which I had to reject. This is the case for example of “Bunluea”’s *Suratnaree*, published in 1971, a fantasy which tells of an island-state in which women hold power and men are relegated to women’s traditional duties save child-bearing. To readers familiar with Thai cultural mores, it is a very funny, thought-provoking satire of male-dominated society, but it would be

meaningless to outsiders without a surfeit of learned footnotes which would spoil reading pleasure.

Another example is *Jao Jan Phom Horm*, which I would translate as Lady Jane of the fragrant mane to respect the spirit if not the letter of the title. Written by “Marla Khamjan” [*Mala Kamchan*] and crowned by the 1991 SEA Write Award. [1]

This novel written in sonorous prose tells the story of a northern Thai princess who makes a pilgrimage through the jungle to Burma’s Golden Rock to decide which of her two lovers she will betroth. This highly literary exercise is written in a mixture of Thai and northern Thai dialect (the text is littered with linguistic footnotes) and all along plays on central and northern Thai myths and legends. This amazing cultural maze defies transposition in another language—though I understand one learned dare devil is attempting a French version of it. [2]

THE TWENTY NOVELS PRESENTED HERE ARE EXTREMELY VARIED IN FORM, content, atmosphere and import, and by and large mirror the richness and ebullience of the Thai novel, which is still in its adolescence.

The first part of the anthology provides a bird’s eye view of today’s literary environment—or rather lack thereof- as well as a brief presentation of Thai classical literature and of each of the twenty novels, from a social, political and literary perspective. Fiction is not produced in a vacuum: every novel is a result of and contribution to literary history and has its own way of reflecting both the personality of the author and sociopolitical realities at the time of writing.

To write a comprehensive history of the Thai novel was not my purpose. There are dozens of minor masters out there whose novels would be instructive to appraise and take apart; some writers have had an influence in the world of letters out of proportion with the quality of their works; literary schools and groups have come and gone, not necessarily in step with historical changes—but to record all this in some detail would have meant at least another tome, which might not be of great interest outside of Thai studies.

It was only once I was done selecting and putting these novels into perspective that I was struck by two facts: one is that a whole generation of good novelists has gone missing. I did not engineer the disappearance or rather the literary mediocrity of authors born between 1921 and the end of the Second World War—a string of “paternalist” field marshals saw to that, so much the pity. Maybe there is a lesson here for all to ponder. The other is that, contrary to a fashionable feeling in Thai literary circles these days, the contemporary novel is neither dead nor moribund: nine major works have been born in the last fourteen years, appearing almost on a yearly basis, and there is no compelling reason to fear that the well is about to dry up.

The second part of the anthology presents each of the twenty novels, with a brief biography of the author, a summary of the plot laced with short extracts to wet readers’ appetites, and a brief critical assessment of each work to show its social relevance, main strengths and shortcomings. In writing the biographies of dead novelists, I have had to depend on existing documentation, which is abundant on celebrated authors but scarce and vague on others who have long been ignored or neglected. Hence differences in treatment which are all too obvious and regrettable.

The two parts of this anthology can be read independently, as can each book section in the second part. So do browse around by all means! As this is not an academic work, I have dispensed with a bibliography, but all the books I have found useful are duly mentioned in footnotes. The back issues of two defunct literary magazines, *Loak Nangsue* (Book World) and *Tharum Nangsue* (Book Lane), and of one ongoing one, *Writer Magazine*, have been of particular use, including as a source of most of the photographic portraits of writers on which the sketches illustrating this book are based.

The translation of all the excerpts are my own, except one, “Nikhom Raiyawa” [Rayawa]’s *High banks heavy logs (Taling Soong Sung Nak)*, for which I used and very slightly edited Richard Laird’s excellent version [3].

This brings me to the sorry topic of translation into English—not to mention other languages I know nothing about, such as German and Japanese, which seem to have welcomed a greater body of Thai fiction than English.

THAI LITERATURE, AND MORE SPECIFICALLY THE THAI NOVEL, HAS BEEN very unlucky in terms of exposure to the outside world. Despite the massive presence of Westerners on Thai soil for the past forty years or so, few have become fluent enough in the vernacular to read Thai fiction with discerning pleasure and fewer still have felt the need to share their enthusiasm with fellow English speakers.

As a result, besides a handful of collections of short stories, fewer than ten novels have ever been translated into English. It is only in recent years that two good translations of excellent novels have seen the light of day [4] As for the rest, either the novels that were well translated were far from outstanding [5] or those that were outstanding were maimed in translation. *In Four Reigns*, the English rendition of Khuekrit Prarmoat’s *See Phaendin*, published by Duangkamon [6], noted Thai translator “Tunlajan” [Tulachandra] did a creditable job of condensing the masterpiece, but spoiled it by taking upon herself the role of cultural tour guide, peppering her text with mentions such as “At that time, we Thais thought that...” that are not in the original and leaving behind more than one hundred Thai words and phrases for foreign readers to memorize, I presume—from countless repetitions of the basic *mai pen rai* (‘never mind’) and *sanuk* (‘funny’) to convoluted formulas in court language.

With *Letters from Thailand*, DK, 1977, American Susan Fulop Morell took an ego trip on “Boatan” [Botan]’s Jotmai Jark Mueang Thai by rewriting this less-than-wholesome novel to her satisfaction, padding up a wee bit here, pruning a big chunk there. Since the major weakness of the book is in the unbelievable about-face of the hero who, widowed at the end, decides to wed his sister-in-law, of whom he has disapproved all along, the translator went about correcting that, and presto! added to the hero’s reactions to show that his feelings for the lady were actually not so simple. Under the name Susan Fulop Kepner, she took similar liberties with Khamphoon Bunthawee’s *Look Eesam*, a good introduction to Northeastern food fare but a boring and trite novel crowned by the 1979 SEA Write Award nevertheless. Her version, *A Child of the Northeast*, was published by DK in 1988.

As for Australian Laurie Maund’s semiliterate translation of Chart Korpjitti’s *Khamphipharksa*, which he published in Bangkok in 1983 under the title *The Judgement*, the least said about it the better.

At the time, the few thousand expatriates who were able to lay their hands on these English versions were so grateful that they existed at all that they closed their eyes to their shortcomings, but the world at large may be forgiven for thinking that there is no such thing as good Thai literature.

By publishing accurate literary translations of Thailand’s top twenty novels, THAI MODERN CLASSICS hopes to change such a perception.

Because these translations are meant to be read primarily for enjoyment by people who may not even know where Thailand is located -left of Vietnam, man, below China’s paunch - I have opted to use as few words in Thai as possible and keep footnotes to the bare minimum. These novels are rich enough in local color without having to doll them up with allegedly untranslatable terms for cheap effect unmeant by the author. So, words used to designate people (*ai, ee, yai, noo, phor, mae, phee, nong* and the like), which are so much part of the way the Thai express themselves but tell nothing

to outsiders, have been and will be deleted as a matter of course (or translated in a roundabout way whenever possible), and titles of nobility will be translated with rough equivalents on an ad hoc basis (see note below).

For a variety of reasons, we are using American English, and Webster's New World Dictionary (Third College Edition) as our linguistic bible. Regrettably, the lack of older dictionaries will on occasion lead us to commit a serious literary crime called anachronism, for which I can but plead guilty and do apologize.

Literary translation is a difficult exercise demanding probity and modesty on top of a good command of both languages involved. *Traduttore, traditore*. The Italians got it right: the translator is a traitor; to translate is to betray—to betray words and phrases in one language for different phrases and words in another, in the name of the higher loyalty due to the original meaning and to the original style.

Each language has its own genius, its own way of composing a sentence, its own idioms, colloquialisms, etc, and a certain amount of grammatical and syntactic manipulation is inevitable to achieve a fair transmutation. But there are limits to what a translator is allowed to do, as his paramount task is to stick to the original as much as possible. Literary translation is not a mere question of rendering the meaning accurately, as for any official or commercial document: it is also a crucial question of style. Real writers are style-conscious and agonize over the right word and the right rhythm, and they are entitled to a faithful rendition, which seldom goes word-for-word, of course, but should not extend to the complete rewriting some translators try to pass off as "creative" translation.

The only creativity I know in translation is in sticking to the original phrasing as much as possible and yet managing to produce a text that flows like the original but does not sound translated - that does not smell of milk and butter, as the Thai say. It is a craftsman's labor of love, not the legerdemain of a failed creator squatting over someone else's text. And it is the only approach that allows not just the tough yet manageable performance of one translator translating one novel with one style but the damn near impossible exploit of one translator translating twenty different novels with twenty different styles. How successful I have been in such a foolhardy undertaking is for readers to judge.

A QUARTER CENTURY AGO, MY MENTOR CLAUDE JULIEN, THEN EDITOR OF *Le Monde diplomatique*, a man and a professional for whom I have the greatest admiration and respect, used to teach us, cub reporters, that our foremost duty was to be disrespectful—not that he wanted us to be impolite or unduly aggressive, but that we should take nothing at face value and never fear sacred cows.

This "duty of disrespect" lesson has stuck, perhaps only too well. The flippant and at times sarcastic tone I have adopted in these pages is meant to lighten serious matters and should not be mistaken for 'disrespect' in the common sense. Rather the opposite, in fact:

I would like readers everywhere to share my passion for literature, impatience with local sacred cows and faces without value, and admiration for those writers who have achieved excellence against so many odds. And I would like the Thai among them to realize how *sanuk* literature can be once it is free of the boring drone they remember from their days of forced labor on school benches.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly are in this country too—why not say so? And if they still shoot the messenger and his horse, well, so be it. *Chang khao parai*—oops, I mean: *mai pen rai!*

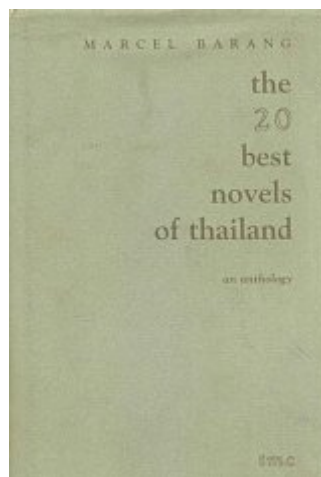
Bangkok, 31 August 1994

Marcel Barang

Thai titles of royalty and nobility

THAI ROYAL LINEAGE FADES OUT OVER FIVE OR FOUR GENERATIONS, FROM JAOFA (CROWN PRINCE[SS], CHILD OF A KING) AND PHRA ONG JAO (CHILD OF A KING BORN OF A MINOR WIFE OR CONCUBINE; ALSO, CHILD OF A JAO FA, HENCE GRANDCHILD OF A KING), MORM JAO (CHILD OF A PHRA ONG JAO [MOM CHAO OR MC]) TO MORM RARCHAWONG (MR) AND MORM LUANG (ML). FUTURE GENERATIONS ARE ALLOWED TO ADD NA ... (NA AYUTTHAYA, NA SONGKHLA...) TO THEIR SURNAME TO DENOTE ROYAL ORIGINS. ALL OF THE ABOVE TITLES TRANSLATE AS PRINCE OR PRINCESS. THE CHILDREN OF A PRINCE AND A COMMONER (ADDRESSED AS MORM) LOSE ONE RANK.

TITLES OF NOBILITY, WHICH WERE CREATED IN THE MID-15TH CENTURY, WERE ABOLISHED IN 1932. THEY WERE, BY DESCENDING ORDER OF IMPORTANCE: JAO PHRAYA, PHRAYA, PHRA, WANG, KHUN, MUERN, PHAN AND THANAI. ROUGH EUROPEAN EQUIVALENTS WOULD BE DUKE, MARQUESS, EARL OR COUNT, VISCOUNT, BARON, BARONET AND KNIGHT. THESE TITLES WERE BESTOWED ACCORDING TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE HELD. UNLIKE EUROPEAN FEUDAL TITLES, THEY WERE NOT HEREDITARY AND COULD BE REVOKED AT THE KING'S PLEASURE. ALL TITLES CAME WITH LAND, 8,000 ACRES FOR A PRINCE, 4,000 FOR A JAO PHRAYA, DOWN TO 10 ACRES FOR A COMMONER. AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BEGAN RECEIVING SALARIES INSTEAD OF LAND.



P.S.

• This preface has been retyped by Marcel Barang's friend CJ Hinke for a wider audience. Thank you.

Footnotes

[1] The so-called SEA Write Award (Southeast Asia Writers Award), sponsored by the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, Thai Airways International and a few other business concerns, has been given every year since 1979 to an outstanding literary work from each of the six countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines. For each country, prizes are given on a rotating basis to a novel, a collection of short stories and a book of poems published in the last three years (formerly five years). Thus, a Thai novel is crowned every three years. In Thailand, a seven-member selection committee assesses the dozens of works submitted and short-lists four or more of them. Out of this list, a seven-member jury makes the final choice. Both committee and jury are composed of writers, literary critics and academics. The award triggers sales in the tens of thousands, which means instant wealth for both the author and the publisher. No doubt because of the high financial stakes, the award has become very controversial in recent years, although much of the objections raised are unfair, not to say self-serving.

[2] Claude Fouquet, a French lecturer at Thammasart University, who did a creditable translation of Khamphoon Boonthawee's mediocre *Look Eesam - Fils de l'I-siin*, Fayard, Paris, 1991—the only Thai novel translated into French so far, besides Chart Korpjitti (Kobjitti)'s sophisticated tale, *Rueang Thammada*, translated by Marcel Barang as **Une histoire ordinaire**, Editions Philippe Picquier, Paris, 1992.

[3] *High banks heavy logs*, Penguin Australia

[4] *High banks heavy logs* and "Seeboorapha"'s *Khang Lang Pharp*, translated by David Smyth as *Behind the Painting* [and *Other Stories*] (Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1990).

[5] Gehan Wijeyewardene did skilful translations of two bad novels by Khammam Khonkhai : *The Teachers of Mad Dog Swamp* (Khroo Bam Nork—Rural Schoolteachers), published in 1982 by University of Queensland Press, St-Lucia, Australia, and *Teacher Marisa (Kha Rarchakam Khroo)*, Pandora, Bangkok, 1984.

[6] Editions Duang Kamol or DK probably in 1981 (no date given)