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Women, sexuality and political achievement in Thai society and Thai literature

Orathai Piayura

Abstract

Thai culture discourages involvement in politics, especially by women. In addition, a fear of being scandalized by political competitors leads many Thai women with high competence not to get involved with politics. Instead of illustrating the real situation of female politicians, Thai women writers choose to show a different picture. Politics and politicians in works composed by Duangjai and M.L. Bunluea Theppayasuwan belong in an ideal or fantasy world. This fantasy is comparable with female fantasy about sex. Just as female sexual fantasy arises from an unconscious desire about female sexuality that cannot really happen in reality, political fantasy is the same. Sexual oppression leads to female sexual fantasy and political oppression leads to female political fantasy.

Background: Women in Thai society

The Siamese formerly had a proverb which was in every man’s mouth, “Woman is a buffalo, only man is human.” (Cited in Sor Plainoi, 2001)

The above quotation is used by Helen Barrett Montgomery in her book Western Women in Eastern Lands (1910) to illustrate the roles of women in Thai society in previous times. Thai women were compared with a buffalo because all the work women had to do at that time was manual work. Women had to work in the rice field and looked after everybody in the family by doing all the housework. Women were not expected to be educated or to help with administration and politics (So Phlainoi, 2001: 17–8). This view on Thai women is confirmed by Susan Kepner in her

introduction to *The Lioness in Bloom*. She argues that the perception of Thai women changed from the proud and courageous image of a woman who could mount a war elephant in the early Sukhothai period to the comparison with elephant’s hind legs four centuries later. The rigid class system in the Ayutthaya period extended to gender. Women, as inferiors, had to serve parents, husbands, and children who were superiors (Kepner, 1996: 2). The submissive roles of Thai women as mentioned by these academics illustrate that Thailand is a male-dominated country where women are controlled within a patriarchal society. The roles of women are limited within private space to such domestic tasks as cleaning, cooking, and rearing children. In contrast, men are allowed to be active in public space and participate in politics and administration.

The role of Thai woman as a submissive housewife, however, has gradually changed. The major turning point came in the reign of King Rama IV after the signing of the Bowring Treaty on 18 April 1855. This treaty introduced free trade and new rules of trading which had a major impact on the Thai economy and society. Production for the market increased. Women were affected as they were expected to be educated and participate in the productive labor force. In addition, policies for economic and social development were launched to upgrade the country, including through education. Women from the upper and middle class were encouraged to be educated from then on (Office of the Prime Minister, 1981: 3–16).

The roles and status of women gradually changed. Education spread to rural areas. Women gained more opportunities to work in different fields. The status and competence of women gained greater social acceptance, and women were expected to be treated as equal to men. The electoral law of 1933 gave women the right to vote and the right to stand as candidates for the parliament and senate. That was the first opportunity to participate in politics and administration at the high level (Panatda, 1988: 57).

However, decades later, still only small numbers of women participate in politics. According to the Thailand Office of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the Southeast Asia Region, the proportion of females among MPs increased from 5.60 percent in 1996 to 11.34 percent
in 2006, and only 5.88 percent of elected members of local government are female (Isra Institute, 2007). Ang-kap Kosriphon (n.d., 1) found that, up to the year 1995, the numbers of women who had been elected as MPs and senators were 143 and 63 respectively, against 5,820 males.

Women and political constraints

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick (1974) explains low female participation in politics in terms of constraints and discrimination. Firstly, there are physiological constraints. According to Charles Darwin, when humans were forming the first communities in primitive times, men seized leadership and subject women to their control. In addition, Kirkpatrick proposes that differences in hormones make women naturally gentle and men naturally tough, restricting the role of women in the community. Secondly, there are cultural constraints. Kirkpatrick proposed that culture determines the psychological characteristics, biological society, and gender patterns in different societies. These cultural constraints act in women's subconscious behavior. Thirdly there are role constraints. Different cultures determine different roles for women. Women as a mother and wife play a different role from women as a politician. Thus, women have to work hard to adapt from one role to another. The last constraint is male conspiracy, in particular the prejudice of men in the ruling class who wish to keep power in their own group and exclude women from political society (Kirkpatrick, 1974: 217). Kirkpatrick's observations hold for many societies but especially in Thailand where cultural constraints are strong.

Despite the freedom to gain education and participate in politics, Thai women have struggled to enter the high levels of the political arena, unlike in neighboring countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines. In 1986, Corazon C. Aquino became the first female president of the Philippines, and in 2001, Megawati Soekarnoputri became the first female president of Indonesia. In Thailand, the highest political position ever achieved by a woman is that of minister. Besides, the current female ministers have risen to these posts because their brothers, husbands, or male partners were banned from politics for five years. The inability of women to
penetrate the high levels in Thai political society results from two aspects; Thai political culture and sexuality.

**Thai political culture**

According to Henderson (1971), Thailand selectively adopted Western political culture and legal institutions and practices while the Thai political system was oriented primarily towards stability and preservation of traditional values. The result is that the Thai government continues to regard its mission as paternal leadership which does not require the people’s assistance, participation, or involvement. The observation of Henderson is confirmed by Akin (1978, cited in Natta, 2008: 97) that there is a little to indicate the Thai government’s efforts to initiate any form of participation, much less self-initiated or authentic participation in which participants have greater responsibility in assessing their own needs and in finding their own solutions through the mobilization of local resources. The people are not traditionally considered to be responsible for the maintenance of local problem-solving institutions, for initiating programs, or for asserting their rights to form and maintain such organizations autonomously, or for taking control over resources and institutions which they previously had no control.

Besides, Thai people have an intense desire to avoid anything to do with government. According to Insor (1963, cited in Natta, 2008: 97), Thai people believe that government is an evil; that oppression and misrule are natural; that it is futile to stand up against the government even on legitimate grounds; and that one’s duty is to please one’s superior. Similarly, Nils Mulder contends that Thai people have no sense of equality:

Legality exists on paper, but equality before the law has been very weakly developed and the concept of human rights is only vaguely understood. (Mulder, 2000: 6)

Mulder explains his claim that Thai people’s lack of a sense of equality derives from the influence of Thai values:

Thai cardinal values (e.g. respect for seniority, gratefulness for benefits and recognition of obligation) contrast starkly with doctrines holding that men are born equal, have rights vested in
their being human, and should be judged according to the same standards. Moral equality and citizens’ responsibility for the public interest are extremely difficult concepts to imagine on the basis of Thai experience. (Mulder, 2000: 7)

These beliefs and values, together with the government’s inactive role in enhancing participation, results in most people having no wish to be involved in politics, which is regarded as properly the affair of politicians or the ruling class. Politics is seen as dirty and involvement in politics as contamination (Wilson, 1962). The phenomenon is, however, changing slowly. According to Siriyupa (1990), the old political culture has changed slowly since the increase of political participation by the middle class and the involvement of local people in various development projects. Lek (1990) explains that once people benefit from participation, they start to participate more in the government’s projects and activities. Change in Thai political culture seems to have accelerated over the past few years due to the activities of the National United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship or the UDD and the People’s Alliance for Democracy or PAD.

However, before that recent political phenomenon, both male and female in Thai society participated little in politics due to their beliefs and values. This political culture is one reason for the limited number of women participating in politics, and the limited number who achieve success in politics. The second reason lies in sexuality.

**Women politicians and sexuality**

According to *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*, the current common-sense definition of sexuality is the naturalistic one of a biological inner drive or impulse embedded in the individual, based on Freud’s notion of the libido. The term is sometimes used to refer to sexual orientation or identity (Andermahr, Lovell, and Wolkowitz, 2000: 128). However, sexuality also covers aspects of personal and social life which have erotic significance, not only individual erotic desires, practices, and identities but also the discourse and social arrangements which construct erotic possibilities at any one time (Jackson and Scott, 1996: 2). *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* defines sexuality as the social process
which creates, organizes, expresses, and directs desire. Feminism believes that forms of sexuality are not innate but reflect political and cultural institutions that affect the condition of individual life and consciousness. Some feminists claim that female sexuality is only really represented in lesbian relationships, while others argue that this romanticization of a “pure” form divorces sexuality from issues of power (Humm, 1999: 262).

In Thai society, talking or writing about sex is considered to be improper, especially among women. Rachel Harrison contends,

To be considered as morally good, Thai women are not supposed to have autonomous sexual desires, less so act upon them or act them out. Talking or writing about sex is considered culturally and morally improper (Harrison, 2000: 88).

This claim is confirmed by a Thai academic, Siriporn Sriworakarn that:

“Sex issues,” especially “sexual intercourse,” are dirty and embarrassing things that one should not reveal. This idea is influenced by the teaching of the Buddha that sexual desire is craving and the cause of unhappiness. (Siriporn, 2003: 137–8)

From time to time, woman politicians are scandalized over sex issue, not only by male politicians but also by other female politicians, as in this example:

On 25 January 2005, during the general election campaign, Khunying [a title equivalent to Lady] Sudarat Keyuraphan, the vice leader of the Thai Rak Thai party, said that “Mr. Banharn must be especially worried about Bam (Miss Janista) because he seems to visit her every night. Miss Janista has no need to worry because the party leader is already worried about her a lot. (Manager Online, 15 December 2005)

This report appeared in an online newspaper. One lady
politician was insinuating that another was having an affair with her party leader. As the leader is a married man, his wife, Khunying Jaemsai Silpa-archa, had to respond when questioned by the press;

คนพูดก็เป็นลูกผู้หญิงด้วยกัน แต่ทำไม่ที่นักการเมืองหญิง ต้องออกมาพูดอย่าง

Thisspeaker(KhunyingSudarat)isalsowoman.Whydowomanpoliticianhavetocomeoutandsaysuchthings? (ManagerOnline,15December2005)

Khunying Jaemsai went on,

คนนั้นจิตใจตัว จิตใจตัว ไม่สุจริต การลงการเมือง การที่จะมาชาติคนกัน
อย่างนั้นนั้นเป็นเรื่องไร้สาระ ทำให้คนมอง การเมืองว่าเป็นสิ่งสะทกปาก คนรู้
ใหญ่เลยไม่อยากลงมากบล้อกอีกแล้ว ทั้งๆ ที่ บางคน มีความรู้ความสามารถ แต่
เจอเรื่องอย่างนี้เข้าสังเกตทาย เพราะไม่เคยแต่อย่างตีนแบกออกต่างๆ ว่าซิน

That person has a low mind, low mind, not high enough. To take
part in politics, throwing mud at one other is nonsense. It makes
people think politics is dirty and makes the new generation afraid
of getting involved even though some have the knowledge and
ability. Just experiencing such matters makes them nervous
because they have no experience, though, to tell you straight, I’m
used to it. (ManagerOnline,15December2005)

The above news report smeared the reputations of both Janista
and Banharn, but the impact on Janista was heavier as she is a
woman in a male-dominated society where women’s behavior is
controlled by men. This control operates through social values,
traditions, beliefs, and other forms of culture created by men.
Rachel Harrison points out,

Such a response must be considered within the context of Thai
cultural prescriptions for the “good” behaviour for women.
Contemporary Thai society has retained many elements of the
traditional views pertaining to the role of women expressed in
religious, legal and literary texts alike. (Harrison, 2000: 89)

Apart from being controlled by patriarchal society, a good
woman is supposed to be monogamous and sexually well-behaved.
A woman having an affair is seriously condemned. Harrison
explains that female sexuality only has a place within the safe confines of a permanent and honorable relationship, i.e. marriage (Harrison, 2004). Khunying Sudarat was deliberately manipulating cultural attitudes to the disadvantage of her competitor in an election campaign.

Another example is the case of Dr. Nahathai Thewphaingarm, a single MP from the Thai Rak Thai party. There was a rumor that she was pregnant and that the father of the child was a high-ranking executive of her party. The rumor appeared in a Thai daily as follows:

ก่อนหน้านี้เว็บไซต์ www.thaiinsider.com ของนายเอกยุทธ อัญชลีนุตร ผู้บริหารเครือโอรีเจนเตล  zar ได้กระทำว่ามีนักการเมืองหญิงชื่อเหล่าน อ. มีความสัมพันธ์กับผู้บริหารระดับสูงในพรรคไทยรักไทยจนถึงครมได้ประมาณ 4-5 เดือน ทำให้ น.ส.ณัฐพยัค ซึ่งมีชื่อเล่นว่า “อ” ต้องออกมาแถลงปฏิเสธข่าวดังกล่าว โดยชื่อว่าถูกการเมืองล้างหน้าจนตกเป็นเหยื่อของเรื่องนี้

Previously, www.thaiinsider.com, the website of Mr. Ekkayut Anchanbut, an executive of Oriental Mart Group, spread the news that a female politician with the initial “O” had an affair with a high-ranking executive of the Thai Rak Thai party, and was four or five months pregnant. Miss Nahathai, a female politician with the nickname “Or,” had to call a press conference to deny the rumor. She believed she was a victim of political trickery. (Khom chat luek, 16 December 2005)

In tears, Nahathai spoke to the press as follows:

ไม่เคยคิดว่าในชีวิตข้างสู่การเมืองต้องมีแรงดึงดูดในเรื่องที่ไม่มีภูมิ
ความจริง คิดเป็นเพราะที่จะทำงานการเมืองในฐานะผู้หญิง เช่นมาด้วย
ความตั้งใจและอยากบอกผลกับผู้คนหลัง โดยเฉพาะผู้หญิงคนอื่นๆ ได้รู้ว่า
การเมืองไม่ใช่สไตล์อย่างที่ทุกคนเข้าใจ งานการเมืองไม่จำเป็นต้องจำกัด
เฉพาะผู้ชายเท่านั้น ทุกครั้งที่ลงพื้นที่มีคนสอบถามว่า ทำงานการเมืองเจอ
ปัญหาอุปสรรคหรือไม่ คิดเป็นบอกเสมอว่าไม่มี วันนี้ผ่านไป 5 ปี ก็ไม่รู้ว่ามีคำ
ใดเอ่ยออกมา เพราะในทางการเมือง เมื่อถึงวันที่ต้องเผชิญแรง
ต้องใช้ เทียบผู้หญิงคนหนึ่งมาเล่นกับผู้ชายคนนี้เรียกว่าหรือ” น.ส.ณัฐพยัค กล่าวด้วยน้ำตา

60
"I never imagined that when I became a politician I would have to hold a press conference about nonsense stuff like this. I had good intentions when I first entered into politics. I wished to tell other women and younger generations that politics was not as dirty as they thought and that politics should not be limited for men only. Every time I visited people in my constituency, people asked me if there was any obstacle to being a female politician. My reply was always "No." Today, five years have passed. I don't have anything to say. In politics, when it comes to a tough time, do they really have to use woman as a victim?" Miss Nahathai explained tearfully. (Khom chat luek, 16 December 2005)

This kind of accusation would not happen to male politicians because it would not have the same impact as on female politicians. To ruin the reputation of male politicians, it is more common to use accusations of corruption. To provoke a sex scandal about a male politician may not have any impact because male sexual misbehavior is common and it has been accepted from the Sukhothai era until the present that men are legally allowed to have more than one wife. According to the Phra aiyakan laksana phua mia (law on husband and wife), dated to 1361, there were three categories of wife—mia klang mueang (married wife), mia klang nok (minor wife), and mia klang thasi (slave wife)—and no legal limit on the numbers. Men could have as many wives as they wished (Dararat, 2002: 63). Although this law was cancelled a long time ago and a new law on marriage enacted in 1935 restricted men to a single wife, men's attitudes and behavior changed little. As polygamy has a long tradition in Thai society, a male politician misbehaving about sex is not a great deal. Therefore, the issue of sexuality is not often chosen as an issue to attack a male political enemy. In contrast, the issue of sexuality is rather effective as a weapon to destroy a female politician. Kirkpatrick (1974), it is right to claim that there are constraints to discriminate women from politics. However, in Thailand, the physiology, conspiracy, and role constraints cited by Fitzpatrick seem to have less impact than the cultural constraint, especially the culture about sexuality, which really put the nail in the coffin for female participation in politics. To achieve a high level of success in politics is nearly impossible. Most women politicians who have
become ministers have had help from their husbands or male relatives. For instance, Pansiri Kulnartsiri, a school teacher who had never been an MP before, suddenly became a vice minister of public health because her older brother, Somsak Thipsuthin, a power broker, proposed her for this position.

It seems to be normal and accepted that men are in charge of politics, and women can only be successful with their support. This fact should be illustrated in Thai contemporary literature as it is widely accepted that literature and society are reflections of each other (Trisilpa, 1999: 5).

Women writers and Thai political literature

According to De Bonald, literature is an expression of society (cited in Wellek and Warren, 1973: 95) yet Thai female authors write about the influence of men on the success of women politicians and pretend not to know about the problematic issue of sexuality. There is no Thai literature that presents this issue. Thai women writers not only avoid writing about sexuality as an obstacle for women politicians, but also create an ideal characterization of women politicians as an escape from reality.

The first modern literary work by a female writer about politics was Surattanari by M.L. Bunluea Theppayasuwan. The story is about a non-existent, ideal country called Suwanrattanathawip or Surat. In this country, women are the superior rulers in charge of public affairs whereas men are inferior beings, consigned by women to take care of domestic affairs only. Everything in this novel is opposite to what actually happens in real-life Thai society. For instance, married women in this ideal country are called *sami* (husband, originally an Indic term meaning “owner”) while married men are called *priya* (darling). This story, however, is a fantasy. The author does not intend to ‘express the society’ of Thailand but has more satirical intentions (Bunluea, 1973). The following quotation is an illustration of gender and politics in Surat:

ในกรุงพระประแดง ความแตกต่างระหว่างเพศหญิงเพศชายทั้งในการศึกษาและด้านเหตุนั้นที่ต่างกันไม่ได้ส่งผลกับการปกครองแต่ในขณะปัจจุบัน ซึ่งมีจำนวนมากที่ต่างกัน มีผู้ชาย 15 คน มีผู้หญิง 5 คน
In Amonpura city [capital of Surat], there is not much difference in education and occupation between man and woman. But in the cabinet, there are fifteen women and five men. (Bunluea, 1973: 23)

This is a mirror image of the Thai cabinet which has never had more women than men. The lack of women achieving high status in politics is due to Thai political culture and Thai culture about sexuality as discussed earlier. M.L. Bunluea Theppayasuswan, however, chooses not to illustrate the realistic phenomenon, but an idealistic one. The way she chooses to write about an ideal society where women are more powerful than men could be interpreted as the author’s fantasy. M.L. Bunluea was born in an elite family and educated abroad. She was rather successful in her career as she became dean of Silpakorn University in 1970 and the vice president of the College of Education, Bangsaen Campus in 1959 (Literature and History Division, 2004). Being a woman of strong character in Thai patriarchal society must not have been easy for her. It could be argued that M.L. Bunluea was oppressed by being a woman in Thai society and wished to see change. As it was not possible for her to achieve in real life, she composed a fantasy novel as a means of release.

Another woman writer who wrote about an ideal life of a woman politician was Duangjai (pen name of Prathumphon Watcharasathian). She composed a realistic novel about a woman politician with the intention to ‘express the society.’ Ratthamontri ying (Female minister, 1976) is about Anuri, aged forty-eight, a perfect woman who is good-looking, intelligent, graceful, kind, nice to everybody and also a good housekeeper. She used to be a secretary to her husband when he was still alive and her husband was the managing director of a company. When her husband died, she has to look after the company and is successful as its manager. Later on, a former employee of the company goes into politics and asks Anuri to join his party. The party leader, who is also the prime minister, invites Anuri to be a minister because she is well-known in the society as her husband used to take her out to participate in many social events. Anuri wins praise for performing on par with male ministers, or even better on some matters.

Although this story is written with a realistic style, the female
character seemed to be an ideal woman, a woman that can hardly exist in reality. Pornsawan Suwannathada describes this ideal image of Anuri as follow:

Anuri possesses a perfect feminine character. She is good at housekeeping, cooking, and taking care of people. She is kind and respects other people including those who are in a lower status. Therefore, she is loved by everybody close to her both in her family and at work. As to education, although she was not a university graduate, she went to a foreign school. She likes to seek knowledge all the time. She reads both Thai and foreign books and enjoys talking to the experts in the field. This makes her work successful and draws praise from the leader of the government. Her perfection includes her timeless beauty, stable financial status from her late husband, power base from recognition during her marriage, and the ability to help the leader of the family in administration. These are the factors to create such a flawless and good-at-everything woman as if she is an ideal woman executive. (Pornsawan, 2009:114)

Duangjai makes Anuri a special woman who can become a minister which not many women can.
Anuri was a widow because her husband died. She became a managing director of the company after his death. She used to work as a clerk, an accountant, a secretary and then a widow.... Anuri used to take many roles in life, starting from being a clerk, an accountant, and Kamthon’s secretary. Since Kamthon died, she took over his role as managing director of the company. And now, this very same Anuri has just been elected as an MP, one of not many female MPs. (Duangjai, 1976: 18–9)

Apart from creating an ideal woman who can hardly exist in reality, Duangjai seems to be blind about the constraints imposed by male conspiracy as observed by Kirkpatrick. Her insensitivity is illustrated in the following extract when she composes a scene in which the prime minister praises the competence of Anuri.

You know, Anuri, women of whatever country are always followers, not leaders. But in politics, women can always soften the situation. Do you see? Sri Lanka, Argentina, India, and Israel have women prime ministers who are as good as men. (Duangjai, 1976: 102)

Apart from creating an ideal female character, Duangjai has also created an ideal male character, who is open minded and can accept women’s ability.

The creation of an ideal status of women in an ideal country like Surat in Surattanari of M.L. Bunluea Theppayasuwan and the ideal female character like Anuri as a woman minister and the ideal male character like the prime minister in Ratthamontri ying of Duangjai is a political fantasy comparable with female sexual fantasy.

Orathai Piayura
Women's fantasy: Sexual fantasy and political fantasy

According to Wright (1992: 87) fantasy is a complex articulation of both the subject and its unconscious desire in a shifting field of wishes and defenses. However, feminists have not always acknowledged this insight, and fantasy occupies an ambiguous place in feminist discourse. Radical feminists tend to be suspicious of fantasy, encouraging women to repudiate sexual, especially heterosexual, fantasies modeled on dominance and submission (Jeffereys 1990; MacKinnon 1987). Psychoanalytic feminists have shown an interest in relating women's fantasy to a form of oppression whereas Rosemary Jackson (1981) has examined the subversive potential of fantasy as a literary genre. (Andermahr, Lovell, and Wolkowitz, 2000: 91)

Although the issue of female fantasy has been an important element in modern feminist studies, women's fantasy is not a new phenomenon.

In my thesis (Orathai, 2005) I argued that the issue of women's fantasy was already presented in Thai classical literature dating back to the early nineteenth century, such as in Khun Suwan's Pra Maleh-theh-thai. The female fantasy of Khun Suwan is seen in the way a hero and a heroine are brought together. In Thai traditional writing, the female and male characters are mated with divine help, usually by a god bringing a male character to a female character's bedroom. Controversially, Khun Suwan makes a god bring the female character from her bedroom to sleep with the male character in the jungle. This may be because Khun Suwan is a court lady and, having spent most of her life in the court environment, the world outside must have been very challenging for her. Therefore, she imagines being taken outside the court to meet a man. This was considered humorous to people of her time. Kepner analyzed Khun Suwan's imagination as follows.

Phra Malethethai is a female fantasy of sexual adventure and escape from repression; the intervention of the god Indra absolves her of responsibility. The name of this heroine, "Talaeng-kaeng", can be literally translated as "the place where the prisoner is to be executed", by which Khun Suwan suggests that a woman's safe, chaste bedchamber is a prison. (Kepner, 1996: 10)
In modern Thai literature an example of women’s fantasy can be seen in Sidaorueang’s *Fan rak khong Sai-rung* (The love dream of Sai-rung). In this story, the main female character is a married woman who is attracted to her male neighbor and imagines herself to be his lover. The story ends as she feels heartbroken when he sends her his wedding invitation. However, this story does not have any sexual love scenes. A more extreme fantasy is found in Sujinda Khantayalongkot’s *Jai duang pliao* (Lonely heart). Her female characters are controversial enough to have the fantasy of sleeping with a man and asking him for a kiss in reality. Creating female characters that are able to sleep with many men could be called a fantasy for a Thai woman because it is an unacceptable practice in the society (Orathai, 2005: 172).

The issue of sexuality is oppressive for Thai women and sensitive for Thai female politicians. Political achievement for women is obstructed by the issue of sexuality and men’s conspiracy. To succeed in politics without being exploited over the issue of sexuality could well be an unconscious desire of Thai women. This unconscious desire was expressed in the form of female fantasy by Duangjai and M.L. Bunluea Theppayasuwan. The difference is that the fantasy is about politics, not sex. M.L. Bunluea expresses her political fantasy by creating an ideal country called Surat where women are superior to men, women work in the public domain and men in private domestic space, and women can reach the high levels in politics. There are more women than men in the Surat cabinet. These are all opposite to the realities of Thai society where M.L. Bunluea actually lives. Similarly, Duangjai composes a novel of political fantasy where the main female character is a perfect woman who succeeds in life and politics, winning acceptance from the male prime minister.

Perhaps both Duangjai and M.L. Bunluea are not satisfied with the roles and status of women in Thai political society and Thai patriarchal society in general. Therefore, they create a fantasy society and fantasy political phenomenon to fulfill their dreams and imagination like the expressions of female sexual fantasy composed by Khun Suwan, Sidaorueang and Sujinda Khantayalongkot.
Women, sexuality, and political achievement

Notes

1 This paper was presented at the Fifth International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, 2–5 August 2010, University of Cambridge, England.
2 Leader of the Chart Thai (Thai Nation) party.
3 Janista Liwchalermwong, a former movie star, was a member of the Chart Thai party.
4 For example, in February 2009, Withoon Nambut had to resign as minister social development and human resources after accusations of distributing bad quality tinned food on relief works. See http://www.boybdream.com/manager-news-content2.php?newid=13011

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