

Thesis Title                      The Social Status of Thai Women in the Novels  
   of Dok Mai Sod and K. Surangkanang (Between  
   B.E. 2475-2493)

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#### Abstract

This thesis is an analytical descriptive and documentary research. It studies the social status of Thai women through novels. The researcher wants to perceive the social status of Thai women during 1932-1950 by using novels as resources, focusing on the novels of Dok Mai Sod (B.E. 2488-2506) and K. Surangkanang (B.E. 2454-        ). The reason for choosing the two novelists' works is that we can find woman issue in their novels more than in other novelists' works of the same period. Moreover, the two novelists portrayed women of different classes, i.e., Dok Mai Sod presented the image of high class women while K. Surangkanang presented middle class women.

In high class family, Dok Mai Sod notified that the general duty of a mother was to bring up her babies, look after

them until they got married. Dok Mai Sod also gave the readers the portraits of the modern educated mother who performed as a mother and also as a friend to her children. For K. Surangkanang, she acknowledged the readers that besides bringing up her babies, a mother in the middle class gave priority to her babies' education. She permitted her daughter to choose her husband under her supervision. However, K. Surangkanang suggested that middle class mother was conscious about monies for her daughter's husband.

As wife, Dok Mai Sod informed that high class wife suffered a lot when her husband had more than one wife at the same time. On the other hand, a modern wife would claim for the equal status with her husband and liberate herself from her husband's control. The additional qualifications of good wife were that she should know well how to play sports, how to dance and how to know people in society. K. Surangkanang notified that middle class wife generally managed all household affairs and acted as friend to her husband, sharing sorrow and happiness with her husband. Besides, she must be honest to her husband. If not, she must be blamed seriously from the society. However, K. Surangkanang made a suggestion about adultery that problems between husband and wife should be seriously discussed and considered from facts before making judgement and blame on women.

In the two novelists' works, daughter obeyed her parents and relatives and looked after them when they got old and sick. The status of a daughter was better since they had better education. They had self-confidence and had their own way of life. Then, they dared to break some old tradition such as the arranged marriage or getting married without parental consent .

With regard to educational status of Thai women, it was upgraded in accordance with the educational expansion. In the novels of Dok Mai Sod and K. Surangkanang, it is found that woman in general have better education, i.e., the female characters' education was above the primary level, they learned foreign languages and home economics. However, both novelists agreed that women in high class had better chance than ones in middle class to study overseas.

For economic status of women in the novels, it is noted that the educated women in the middle class always worked outside, but not the ones in the high class, because of the attitude in the high class society which did not like women to work outside together with the favorable economic situation. If they worked, they would work as a teacher. On the contrary, women in the middle class worked in various occupations, such as, teacher, secretary, writer and other part-time works as money lender or land broker.

Concerning the political and legal status of women, from studying the novels of the two writers, there was not much clear reflect on these matters. It might be that there was not much awreness in politics and legal right for women at the transitional stage of the political system. However, the writers had given the pictures which are contrary to the old norms, i.e, limiting Thai women's behaviour, such as asking husband for a devorce when the husband had a mistress.

Due to modernization and the newly founded democratic government in Thailand, women had chances to share activies in society. As seen in the novels of Dok Mai Sod and K. Surangkanang, high class women shared many aotivities in society, such as, sport or dance party with freedom to make friends with men. Whereas, K. Surangkanang portrayed middle class women to have selfconfidence and be pround of themselves with a new idea to have responsibility to society. They started to depend on their own and not on their marriage as ever.

From the study of the biography and novels of the two writers, it could be found that Dok Mai Sod and K. Surangkanang are writers who have high responsibility to the society. They portrayed their own experiences, thoughts and ways of life in the novels. Moreover, both writers are the first female writers who emphasized the importance and recognition of the female characters. It can be said that the two novelists had an intention to claim the right and liberty of Thai women.