EPITHETS REFERRING TO CHARACTERS IN THAI POETIC WORKS

Warawat Sriyabhaya¹

Abstract

This article is a study to classify the epithets referring to the characters in four Thai poetic works. The study results revealed that there are two groups of epithets to be found. The first one is epithets to praise characters by referring to their valuable entities, their dignity and their beauty. The second one is epithets to inveigh against characters. These epithets focus on the characters’ ethnicity, negative characteristics, ugly physical appearance, and worthless elements. The use of epithets is the poet’s strategy to express meaning and emotion in their poetic works. Moreover, the use of epithets through various words makes the literature more colorful and enhances emotional feelings in the readers.

Introduction

One of the aims of Thai literature is to entertain readers. According to Raksamani (2007: 633), literature is a work of art created from a poet’s emotions, which allows poets to express their emotions through their works and encourages readers to share the same emotions. There are many techniques that poets employ to express their emotions or feelings through their works. One important technique which can precisely convey the poet’s emotions to the audience is an epithet, a nominal phrase used to point out the important characteristics of characters such as their physical appearance, behavior and ethnicity, or to show if the character are praising or inveighing against someone. In this article, the epithets referring to characters are analyzed to investigate the emotions and feelings of the characters, and their creators, the poets.

As far as data collection and data analysis are concerned, the selection of Thai literature for this study was based on the following characteristics: narrative discourses or folktales with two characteristics: contingent temporal succession and agent orientation (Longacre, 1983), literary works with an exact written date and time, based on History of Thai Literature (Na Nakhon, 2002), main protagonists, who can be human or nonhuman; literary masterpieces of the Early Ayutthaya Era, the Thonburi Era and the Ratanakosin Era with these mentioned characteristics. The selected Thai poetic literature with the above characteristics are as follows: Lilit Phralo (the Early Ayutthaya Era), Sumutthakhot Khamchan (the Middle Ayutthaya Era), Lilit Phetmongkut (the Thonburi Era) and Khun Chang-Khun Phaen (the Ratanakosin Era).

In accordance with Halliday and Hasan (1976), the references were classified into three types: 1) Personal References: personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns 2) Demonstrative References: this, that, these, those, here, there, now, there. 3) Comparative References: same, such, similar, other different else, so-, as-, equally-, more, fewer, less etc.

Based on the framework of Halliday and Hasan, this study focused on personal references which were divided into three types. The first one was the personal

¹ Lecturer, School of Liberal Arts, University of Phayao, Thailand
pronoun including the first person, the second person and the third person pronouns. Another type was zero terms. The last type consisted of kinship terms, occupation terms, proper terms, epithets, etc. However, the only epithets to be studied in this paper had to be obviously found; furthermore, according to Chanawassa (1986) and Burusphat (1994), the epithets had to become one of the major language forms to contribute the poets expressing the characters’ emotion appropriately and two enhancing the aesthetic value of their work.

Types of Epithet Referring to Characters in the Four Thai Poetic works

There were two main types of epithet referring to characters in the four literary works. They were the epithets used to praise characters and to inveigh against them.

The epithets to praise characters

The epithets to praise characters were found in three different types, namely, epithets referring to characters’ valuable qualities, dignity and beauty.

The epithets referring to the characters’ valuable qualities were pronouns denoting valuable qualities both concrete and abstract items such as jewels, money, loved ones, goodness, etc., as shown in the excerpt from Lilit Phralo below. The epithets were used to introduce the two main characters, Phraphuen and Phraphaeng.

χημι3 (2) ηηαπο1 πηααπ ρπηαπ1 πηEEN; χακ2 τηαι1 λEEN3 χηοοη5 λααη3 λααη4/ (Lilit Phralo 2002: 388, 392)

In the excerpt above, “(2) thaaaw phian3 thaaaw pheeji” or Phraphuen and Phraphaeng are called “(1) but2 sut2 sa1 waat2 ka1 sat2 sooη5 phra4 ηοηi” (the two beloved daughters of the king.) This pronoun implies that Phraphuen and Phraphaeng are being praised because they are very important to the King, their father.

Some examples of the epithets are found in Samutthakhot Khumchan, Lilit Phetmongkut, and Khun Chang-Khun Phaen, respectively:

/paa/1418 1 nan4 (phra4 sa1 mut2 khran4 fayi...
doo1 cay1 luuk3 keew3 klooy1 sa1 moos... dooy (3) phra4 luuk3 keew3 ka1 sat2 trii/ (Sumutthakhot Khumchan 2007: 133)

In the example, “(2) luuk3 keew3 klooy1 sa1 moos” (my beloved son), and “(1) phra4 luuk3 keew3 ka1 sat2 trii” (my precious jewel prince) refer to “(1) phra4 sa1 mutz” or Pharsamutthakhot who is the protagonist. These pronouns imply that Pharsamutthakhot’s father, who is the King, praises his son as his valuable possession.

/p1?οη1 phra4 phet4 mon1 kut2 choom5 chaat2 soos phon... chom1 chooms (2) no2 ka1 sat2 saan3 ... khuan1 pen1 (3) pin2 look3 lam4 laat4 ka1 satz/

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(Lilit Phetmongkut 2001: 155-156)

In the excerpt from *Lilit Phetmongkut*, “(2) น้าตา saat2 saanj2” (the crown prince) and “(3) ปิน lao4 ka1 sat2” (the greatest king) refer to “(1) ภราท sa1 muth2” or Phraphetmongkut.

(1) laan1 yaa2 kuu2 koon2 nai1 hoon3 rian1
(2) thoon1 prai1 sii5 keew3 phi3 koon3 fans4 raay4
ci11 klee3 theam1 nai1 sii5 ponz2 pian3 kamon1 phi3 leew41 keew3 phian3 rian1
caw3 naps2 wan1 leew4 ca22 lian3 pen1 pii1 pay1/
(2007: 26)

In the example, “(2) keew3 phi3” (a precious diamond), and “(3) keew3 phian3 rian1,” (the valuable jewels in the house) are used to refer to “(1) thoon1 prai1 sii5” or Thongprasri when Khun Krai, Khun Phaen’s father, expressed his admiration to her because of his coming death.

The examples above obviously indicated that the language forms showing the characters’ valuable qualities are pronouns referring to both concrete and abstract things. The concrete ones mentioned are diamonds, precious stones, silver, gold, gold ornaments and beloved persons as well. The abstract ones refer to goodness, beauty and neatness.

Another type of the epithet praising the characters are those referring to the characters’ dignity. We can see some examples of them in the excerpts from *Lilit Phralo*, *Sumutthakhot Khamchan*, Lilit Phetmongkut and Khun Chan-Khum Phaen, respectively.

(2002: 26)

In the above excerpt, “(1)thaaw4 thay4 thi5 raat3 phuu3 mii1 bun1/...” (the greatest king), “(3)coom1 raat3” (the greatest king), and “(4)coom1 phi4 caw3 chan4” (the owner of the elephants, great animals which serve as the king’s carrier) are different epithets to honor “(2) loo1 raat3” or Phralo

/aa3 (1)thaaw4 phuu3 son1 rit4 thi1 braa1 krom/
kiat2 saay5 sa1 deen1 dee1 choo1 cha1
yaa1 sit2 thi4
sa1 yeen1 ?a1 rin1 raat3 thuk4 phay41 ...
(2) caw3 nan4 mii1 choom5 khi1 ca22 pr
a1 loom1/
(Sumutthakhot Khamchan 2007: 170)

In the excerpt, “(1)thaaw4 phuu3 son1 rit4 thi1 braa1 krom2 kiat2 saay5 sa1 deen1 dee1
choo1 cha1 yaa1 sit2 thi4 sa1 yeen1 3a1 rin1
raat3 thuk4 phaay1 (the mighty king with
power and honor, fearful to enemies) refer
to “(2) caw3” or King Rommanyaburi.

/thuk4 phaay1 (the powerful
King of Chiang Mai) refer to “(1)
caw3 chian1 may2” or The King of Chiang
Mai.

In brief, the language forms showing the
characters’ dignity are pronouns meaning
having dignity and fame or referring to
wealth, greatness and bravery. These
language forms, used as epithets referring
to the characters in Thai poetic works,
contribute to increasing the aesthetic value
of the works.

The third type of epithet to praise the
characters was those referring to the
characters’ beauty. Examples of these
epithets were indicated in the following
excerpts from the four works of Thai
poetic literature.

/dua/1418 4 phra/1041 4 phun4
leat3 lop4 phoo1 khay1 ma1 hay5 sa1
wann5...
raat4 sa5 (phra4 3on1 phun4 son1 tham1
khoo5 deel1 cha4 nay1 saan5 wa4 (3on1
dee2
khron1 3on1 weet3 chian1 may2 ma1 hay5
sa1 wann5
thaaw3 yu2 nay1 sat2 sut2 ca1 rite than/
(Khon Chang-Khon Phae 2002: 589, 593,
395)

In the excerpt, “(2) phra4 3on1 phun4 son1
phop4 leat3 lop4 phoo1 khay1 ma1 hay5 sa1
wuans” (the greatest ruler), “(3) phra4 3on1
phun4 son1 tham1” (the righteous king) and
“(4) son1 deel2 khron1 3on1 weet3 chian1
may2 ma1 hay5 sa1 wann” (the powerful
King of Chiang Mai) refer to “(1) phra4
caw3 chian1 may2” or The King of Chiang
Mai.

In the above excerpt, “(2) dua” (the moon)
refer to “(1) lop1 raat3” or Phralo
in order to praise his handsomeness.
Moreover, “(5) duan1 dian1” (the full bright moon) refers to “(3) phra4 pheen2” or Phra Phaeng and “(4) phra4 phian1” or Phra Pheun due to their beauty.

(1) me6 phuu3 mii1 naa2 khh1 si7?2 ?an1 ria1 chayv5…
so1 naa1 koom1 bo02 woon1
phi93 thum1 ma1 dii1 ?an1 choom5 chaa1 law5/
(Sumutthakhot Khamchan 2007: 168, 170)

In the example, “(1) me6 phuu3 mii1 naa2 khh1 si7?2 ?an1 ria1 chayv5” (the woman who is like a shining moon) refers to “phi93 thum1 ma1 dii1” or Phinthummadidi.

(1) naan1 khray3 chit4 chom1 thay4...
phra4 ni1 yom1 kham1 phi2 lian4 daa2 day3
(2) nut4 nia4 klan3
nee6 khlaw4 khlii1 chaa51/
(Litit Phetmongkut 2001: 181)

In the above excerpt, (2) “nut4 nia4 klan3” (a woman with fair complexion) refer to “naan1” or Pathummawadi.

(1) naa1 caa1 ke6w3 taa1 khoc5 phi3 ?aay5
kra1 ray1 lo4y1 duan3 khap2 sia5 aay3 
phia5 rak4 (1) phi93 pim3 ca2?2 tii1 hay3 ton1 
taay1
phi93 wen4 waay1 wan1 nii4 day3 phop4
(2) naa1 phi93 mee5 ca2?2 liim1 lo1
thuk4 wan1
saa5 ra1 phan1 ruan1 ree1 ca2?2 hee5 haan2 ...
(3) caa3 naa1 ploot2 yoot3 raa4 khaoc5
phlai1 ke6w3
day3 maa1 le6w4 mee3 yaa2 khap2 hay3 
klap2 niis/
(Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 89, 97)

In the above example, “(2) naa1 phi93” (a very attractive woman), and “(3) caa3 naa1 ploot2 yoot3 raa4 khaoc5 phlai1 ke6w3” (Phlai Keaw’s perfectly beautiful woman) refers to “(1) phi93” or Phim.

In the above examples, the language forms referring to beauty are pronouns indicating both male and female characters’ good works. These epithets imply praise of the characters and enhance the literary works’ aesthetic qualities.

In the study, it was found that many epithets referring to the main characters in the four literary works were used to praise the characters because of their value, dignity and beauty and strengthened the works’ aesthetic qualities. Furthermore, another type of epithet which contributed the works’ value was those inveighing against the characters. They are shown in the following section.

Epithets inveighing against the characters

The second major type of epithet found in the study were epithets inveighing against the character. However, a detailed study of the four literary works indicated that
there was no invective in *Lilit Phralo, Lilit Phetmongkat* and *Samathakhot Khamchan* because all of them were about the royal court and the royal families so, any impoliteness was prohibited. As a result, only *Khun Chang-Khun Phaen*, which is about ordinary people’s lives in which people are able naturally to express their anger with invective, displayed many epithets inveighing against the characters. In the study of epithets inveighing against the characters, four different types were found, namely, epithets focusing on the characters’ ethnicity, their negative characteristics, their ugly physical appearance and worthless things or animals.

The characters’ ethnicity was used in epithets inveighing against the characters because some ethnicities which are presented in *Khun Chang-Khun Phaen* are not powerful and were not admired by other ethnic groups. We can see some examples of these epithets in the following excerpts.

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f/aa/y2 waa3 nuan1 naa91 si6 maa1 laa1 khi11 naa4 nit4 thraa1 koo3 fay2 fan5 waa3 loo1 sa?2 len3 naam4 sam6 raa1 khra1 khen but1 sa1 ban1 dook2 ni6 duu1 phi5 thaa1 pluk2 o?ii1 maa1 kee3 fan5 waa2 ?aa1 rom1 ?ii1 maa1 chom1 waa3 fan6 khoor6 naa1 dii1...

siis maa1 laa1 waa3 woo3 o?ii1 moo1 thoo2 ?aa1 phua5 phoo7 ma1 phuu3 may5 pen1 phon6 niis le6 san3 chaat3 phra1 thi3 nay5 mi1 sen3 phi6 na1 moo1 o?ii1 moo1 can1 ray1...
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phra1 phi6 cito waa3 duu1 o?ii1 moo1 thoo2 sak2 nay2 ?oo3 ca2 lae4 pen1 klaak1 klian3 chaat3 o?ii1 moo1 naa91 pen1 hene kee3 ki1 naam4 kha1 nin3 may3 ?aw1 pay1 hay3 yoo2 taal/

(Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 632, 367, 646, 654)

In the excerpt, Srimala inveighs against her servant, “(1) o?ii1 moo1” or I-Mei, who is Mon, by addressing her as “(2) o?ii1 moo1 thoo2” and “(3) moo1 can1 ray1” (damned Mon) and “(5) o?ii1 moo1 naa91 pen1” (a funny faced Mon).

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/o?ii1 ssoo3 faa4 tua1 san2 ?ua2 sna1 nok4 hok2 peen3 tsoy2 kra1 thal4 phla2 khaw2 rian1 thoo7 prai o?ii1 waa3 o?ii1 haa2 laaw1 tham1 chaaw5 ciaw1 o?ii1 ma1 xhi3 rian2 rian1 thee1 peen3 kleep3 hay3 prai le4 thal4 rian1 kra1 thal4 kra1 thoo7 tsoy2 klian3 olaaw1 can1 ray1...

kee1 prae2 naa1 taap1 moo74 ma1 roo11 waa3 pay1 tam1 ra1 ?aa1 ray1 o?ii1 ssoo3 faa4 waa5 (s)laaw1 loo1 pay1 le4w4 waa5 nxe3 nmo1 kra1 ray1 loo1 pen1 nak2 naa...

tham1 yaa3 waa3 meec2 ma1 priap2 prae1 waa5 o?ii1 laaw1 paa2 paak2 khooen1 ma1 nak2 naka1 koo3 phra1 mi1 o?ii1 chaaw5 o?ii1 laaw1 loom1...

roo71 ta1 koon1 khoor3 baan1 ?ii1 khaam3 hak2 ?ii1 cet2 roo74 maas yia1s bia1 ma1 lias raka
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In the second example, “(2) ?ii waa laaw” and “(3) laaw can ray” (a damned Laotian) refer to “(1) sny3 faa (Soifa), another wife of Phra Wai) when Thongprasri, Pra Wai’s grandmother, and Srimala, his chief wife, inveigh against Soifa. Moreover, “(5) laaw (a Laotian), “(6) ?ii laaw paa” (a Laotian from the wilds). “(7) ?ii laaw loon” (an extremely rude Laotian), “(8) ?ii laaw don” (a Laotian from the mountains) and “?ii laaw don” (a Laotian from the wilds) is used to refer to “(4) ?opi sny3 faa” or Soifa.

The second type of epithet inveighing against the characters are epithets focusing on their bad characteristics including their badness, stubbornness and arrogance. Some epithets are shown in the following excerpts.

/duu duu pen day3 ku waa thoon,...
?ii sene thay2 can ray cav that min... dau phet ni1 kaa2 khin nay1 ?aa1 com1 ruup1 naa1 naa1 pho2 sny3 pay1 ri1... cay1 may3 sis1 sak2 thaw3 sem3 phom3 min1 ni1 thay2 yin3 kwaaw thay2 ?opi thay4 min1...
kuu1 ca?2 haas mia1 hay2 yaa2 ?aa1 lay1

In the excerpt, “(1) waa thoon” (Wanthong) is called “(2) sene thay2 can ray cav that min” (an extremely wicked and vicious woman), “(3) thay4 min” (a woman from a whorehouse), and “(4) yin kaa la kiz nii ?ii phet sa yaa” (a whore) when King Phanwasase inveighs against her because she cannot decide if she would like to live with Khun Chang or Khun Phaen.

/okhun phaen khin waa3 mee1 yaa1 dau...
In the above excerpt, “(2) ʔaay3 baak kaam!” (a satyr), “(3) ʔaay3 haap” (a brutal man), “(4) ʔaay3 khiii thooy2” (a man of base actions), and “(7) ʔaay3 taay1 hoon!” (a demon) refer to “(1) and (6) khun chaan!” (Khun Chang). These epithets are used to inveigh against Khun Chang by Wanthong and Sriprajan because he has told them that he would like to get married to Wanthong.

The characters’ ugly physical appearance also serves as the third type of epithet to inveigh against the characters in Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. Some epithets are revealed in the following excerpts.

/dooot lonj phiin klaaj thiik khaanj pay1 seerj fay1 raaj1 sai waan2 naa3 tat2 maan3 kooj1 way4 leew4 khlay1 khlaa1 post2 munj hens naa3 (caaw3 wan1 thoont...)

/miin1 jaam1 teee ruup3 cuup3 may3 hoorn5 ʔiitii naa3 moo3 kon3 moo3 ʔiitii khoon5 thip2 tok2 caak2 tianj khanj1 kan1 lonj hay3 man1 khoonj chiit1 wit pay1 yay1 miin/

(Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 294-295)

In the above excerpt, “(2) ʔii1 naa3 moo3 kon3 moo3 ʔii1 khoon5” (an ugly woman with a black face and a long neck) refers to “(1) caaw3 wan1 thoont” (Wanthong). Khun Phaen uses it to call Wanthong, his wife, when he finds that Khun Chang had become her mistress.

/faay2 ʔiikhuns chaan2 naaj3 taw5 may3 khaw3 klay3

rooj1 hay3 naa3 khaaw5 raaw1 khap2 phiis...

(2) ʔaay3 huas5 phuu1 phom5 klianj3 khin3 thianj4 pay1

thiis luuk3 thuuun1 muun1 heet2 phons ton3 plaay1...

naaj3 rooj1 hay3 yia1 day1 ʔaay3 chip4 haay5

(3) ʔaay3 chaat3 chu3 huas5 laan4 ka1 baan1 laay1

khom1 caʔ2 taay1 leew4 yan1 som1 bon2

nin1 thaa1...

(4) ʔaay3 chaat3 chu3 huas5 laan4 pra1 caam1 kuun1...

day3 len3 kan1 ʔiik2 laʔ2 may3 laay1 laʔ4

phraʔ4 ca1 miin2 way1 waa3 waa5 (ʔaay3 huas laan4...

ʔii1 teet teej khaaw3 khanj2 ʔaw1 khaaan3 chiik2

(ʔaay3 huas laan4 maas1 ʔii2 leew4 khaas way3/

(Khun Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 877-878)

In this excerpt, “(2) ʔaay3 huas5 phuu1 phom5 klianj3” (a man with a big and bald head), “(3) ʔaay3 chaat3 chu3 huas5 laan4 ka1 baan1 laay1” (a damned bald man with a disease of the scalp), “(4) ʔaay3 chaat3 khaa3 huas5 laan4” (a damned and bald man), and “(5) and (6) ʔaay3 huas5 laan4” (a bald man) refer to “(1) khun chaan!” or Khun Chang. All epithets mentioned express Khun Chang’s extremely ugly appearance, especially his baldness.

The last type of the epithet inveighing against the characters are epithets which represent worthless things or animals.

Epithets Referring to Characters in Thai Poetic Works
Some epithets are shown in the excerpts below.

(1) จารีต เลื้อย หน้ากาก เหลือง และ (2) สั้น ตา น้ำลาย (Khuń Chang-Khun Phaen 2002: 1038-1039)

In this example, (1) จารีต เลื้อย (Sroifa) is called “(2) สั้น ตา” (a useless spoon), and “(3) สั้น ตา” (a poor and valueless woman) by Phlai Chumphon, Phrawai’s son, when he finds that she has used a magical device to make Phrawai love her.

These language forms used the epithets to inveigh against the characters display some negative meanings such as, blaming, looking down upon or scorning. These epithets help to accentuate the beauty of the language in Thai poetic works.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was found that the epithets of the characters in the four literary works were classified into two groups namely epithets praising the characters and the epithets inveighing against them. Praising was indicated with epithets referring to valuable entities, the character’s dignity and their beauty. As for the invective, the epithets focused on the characters’ ethnicity, their bad characteristics, their physical appearance and the worthless things. The epithets praising the characters were obviously employed in all four of the chosen pieces of literature but the epithets inveighing against the characters were stated, remarkably, only in Khun Chang-Khun Phaen. This is possibly because the other three literary works studied are about the royal families and it was improper to include impoliteness in the works, whereas, Khun Chang-Khun Phaen is a
piece about the lives of laymen reflecting the way of life, language usage and beliefs of folks in that time. When, it was common for ordinary people to express their anger verbally by inveighing against each other. Overall, the two types of epithet obviously reveal the writing ability of the poets in employing literary language to express their meaning and emotion in an appropriate manner, thus enhancing the aesthetic value of their works.

References


