

Chapter 3

Data Analysis

In this chapter, the two selected novels, *Ghosts* of Senee Saowaphong and *That Woman's Name is Boonrawd* of Botan, will be analyzed in order to examine the main female characters that are presented in each novel. The examination regarding each character's family, educational, and social background, including their characteristics, attitude, and decision making will be the fundamental data for findings and discussion in the next chapter. Moreover, the plot and settings of each novel will be included so as to clearly understand these two characters.

3.1 Rachanee from *Ghosts*

3.1.1 Plot

Rachanee is the leading female character of the story. She is from high-class noble family with all family members strictly cling to the traditional value. She insists on continuing her study in the university and working outside after graduation against her parents' will whereas her sister has only a primary school education and has to stay home and be under control of her parents and grandmother. Besides, her other sisters' marriages with the rich and appropriate men are arranged by her parents.

Rachanee has Kingtien as a best friend. She is from a middle-class family. That is why she is not welcomed while visiting Rachanee's home. However, they are still best friends. After graduation, Kingtien works as a teacher at the government school in Bangkok. Then, she decides to move to the countryside in the Northeastern Thailand and devotes herself as a teacher in the rural area.

Rachanee works at the Burapha bank by receiving assistance from Jittin, her friend's brother. She knows Sai, a lawyer from poor and working class family who is Jittin's friend. They meet often since he is a lawyer of the bank where she works. Their relationship has gradually developed into love. Sai is strongly upholding justice. He assists in a lawsuit of farmers in his hometown and denies a bribe from the capitalist.

However, Sai is not welcomed when Rachanee introduces him to her family since her parents want her to marry Kraisri, a well-educated man from western country, who comes from an aristocratic family. Rachanee's father invites Sai to have dinner with all the family members and his aristocratic guests with an intention to embarrass and insult Sai. Rachanee feels so regretful for this event. She decides to leave her family and moves to the Northeast. She intends to devote herself to help people in the countryside of the Northeast with Kingtien.

3.1.2 Settings

This story is set in the 1950s, approximately twenty years after the revolution in 1932. At that time, the majority, particularly high-class people, was still clinging to the traditional value in which people were divided into social classes rooted in the feudal system of the past hierarchical society. Therefore, this results in the conflict between the traditional values and modernity adopted from the western countries. It also leads to the conflict between people from different social classes.

The main setting is Bangkok, the center of development and aristocratic society. The setting is important in presenting the modernization and western civilization that extremely contrasts to the rural area, for example the theatre, movie, and western clothes and cosmetics are introduced as fashionable. It is also outstanding in presenting the difference between the city and the countryside that is caused by imbalance development and the conflict between high-class and working class people caused by the traditional belief.

However, the setting of the countryside is narrated often through memory and experience of Sai, the leading male character. Rural people and their lifestyle are described in order to introduce the problems and conflict presented in the story such as the conflict between farmers and the capitalists or the problem of poverty, hardship, exploitation, and the lack of development, and they later inspire Rachanee to participate in the rural development.

3.1.3 Character

Physical Appearance

Rachanee is a beautiful woman. She represents a high-class woman from aristocratic and well-off family who is well-educated from the famous university in Bangkok and more outstanding than general women. In the story, she is called 'Dawk Fa' that is a metaphor for high-class, exalted, and beautiful woman.

Characteristics

She is quite confident and reasonable. She can judge between right and wrong. Although she lives in the traditional environment, she chooses to perform in the right way and deny the incorrect traditional one, for example she does not want to stay home, spend an empty life, and wait for someone to marry like her sisters.

Furthermore, she is insistent. She insists on continuing her study in the university level and work outside after graduation. Although her parents and grandmother disagree and try to object to her idea, she insists on achieving her intention. Moreover, she insists on standing for the right thing. For instance, she thinks that it is not wrong to play with the servant's children and associate with people from lower class such as Kingtien and Sai. Besides, she wants to be independent. She wants to have freedom to do many things such as choosing her own marriage partner and, particularly, choosing the way to live her own life.

Family Background

Rachanee is from an aristocratic family whose members cling to the traditional values in which the aristocrats should associate with equally well-off people in the same class. Her father is a noble who is extremely proud of his family and social rank. He is the citizen of the old world who refuses to open his eyes to the new society. For instance, he usually greets Rachanee's friends with the question like "*Whose child are you?*" (p.198) to ensure that his daughter will merely associate with the elites. Furthermore, he has the idea that because women obtain high education and work outside, they have different idea from the traditional framework and reject the dignity. This is reflected through Rachanee's opinion:

Her father thought that because she studied in the university and associated with contemporaneous boys and girls, association with friend who was not brought up by an aristocratic family made her have deviant idea. For a boy of low class family, he judged with hatred that he wanted to take a shortcut to become an aristocrat by marrying a girl from a rich and aristocratic family. (p.10)

Her mother and grandmother are the traditional women who stay at home tending to their husbands. Particularly, her grandmother sticks obstinately to the values of the traditional world until the very end. She dissuades her granddaughters to continue education and forces them to be traditional woman as Rachanee describes her sister:

Rachanee's grandmother objected her granddaughter to study in high school because she could not bear it if her granddaughter would wear shorts and did something like dancing outdoors that was called 'exercise' or 'sports', a course of modern curriculum. For this reason, Rachanee's sister graduated only from a primary school. She had to stay and always sit modestly near her grandmother. She had spent this empty life for many years before she got married. Then, she moved from grandmother's cage to the new one. (p.11)

Her mother is also a traditional woman but she is more understanding than Rachanee's grandmother because she realizes that many things have changed from the past. Thus, she does not object if Rachanee will extend her education in the university. However, she still follows the traditional values and disagrees if Rachanee will make friends with people from all ranks:

"How can a person become an aristocrat if he is not born of noble ancestry? Aristocracy should run in someone's blood. A person with a commoner's blood will remain a commoner." (p.205)

Darunee, one of Rachanee's sisters, is an important person who has a great influence on Rachanee. Darunee spends her life in the traditional way. She does not obtain high education and stays home being under control of her parents and grandmother. They arrange her marriage with a rich businessman. Although he is not from a noble family, he is acceptable for her family due to his wealth and social fame. However, she is not happy with the traditional life and suffers from her husband's polygamous behavior as she talks to Rachanee:

"Being born female is such a calamity." Darunee said in a sad voice.

"Staying with parents, we have to obey them and relatives. After getting married, we are under power of husband. You know that I married him not because of love but parents' agreement. I accepted it as an obedient daughter. At that time, I thought that marriage was a better way to escape from a boring life in this house. I might be more independent but it's like freeing myself from one chain only to get caught in a new, much heavier one." (p.45)

From the excerpt, Darunee fails in her marriage life. Simultaneously, her life is an illustration and lesson for Rachanee to realize that the traditional way of life and wealth do not always bring a good and happy family life.

Educational Background

Rachanee is luckier than her older sisters as she has a chance to continue studying in the university. She graduates with a Bachelor of Arts from a famous university in Bangkok. This makes her have job opportunity and know how to depend on herself. Because of high education, she obtains a good job at Burapha Bank. She has a chance to learn about the business and the outside modern world that is very different from her home.

Social Background

Although it is twenty years after the government shifted to a democratic form, the aristocrats of the privileged social class are still over the rest of the people. In the

same way, the social status of Rachanee is quite higher than general people. She is classified into a high rank of society due to her beautiful outer appearance and aristocratic and rich family as she is described at the beginning of the story:

For most people's opinions, she was not inferior to many beautiful women in the society. She was born in the aristocratic family descending from noble ancestors since the Ayutthaya period. (p.9)

The excerpt implies that the aristocracy is in her blood. In fact, Rachanee is aware of the status difference, especially between hers and that of others. In her home, she is superior to other servant's children because she notices that she always dresses in the cleaner and better clothes and has more toys. In the university, she is superior to some friends such as Kingtien, her best friend. Kingtien has to work to support her family while Rachanee does not have to work at all for the rest of her life because her family is wealthy enough to take care of her. However, while working at Burapha Bank, her job position is better than other female colleagues, for example Churchawee, her colleague, who envies her higher qualifications.

When she has a conversation with Sai, he compares her to 'Dawk Fa' (flower in the sky) and 'Chao Fa' (people from the sky) which are metaphors for high-class people from aristocratic and wealthy family. He also calls himself 'Chao Din' (people on earth) which stands for general working class people.

Attitude and Decision Making

Rachanee's parents judge people from social classes and wealth. They think that aristocrats should associate with equally wealthy people in the same class or status while she has a positive attitude toward equality, especially social equality. For instance, she expresses her opinion to Sai when he compares her to the sky and himself to earth:

"This metaphor is exaggeration. I've never thought to compare myself to the sky. I think I'm general and walk on the street like others. Everybody can make friends with others with sincerity, not because of

family, social status, or wealth. I think people's worth is from virtue."
(p.78)

From the excerpt, she thinks that people should not be classified into different classes. She has the idea of equality that she does not have to associate with only the aristocrats as her parents always implant her with this traditional idea. Therefore, for her decision making in association with friends, she thinks she has freedom to know people from different classes. She emphasizes on the virtue of people more than wealth, aristocratic family, and social rank.

Studying in the university, Rachanee has many friends of all ranks such as Kingtien. She is from a poor working class family that makes Rachanee's parents dislike her. However, while visiting Kingtien's house, Rachanee feels that the house is full of love and close relationship among the family members, and she finds these more important for family than money, wealth, or social fame.

For her decision making in association with men, she chooses to associate with a man by considering his personality, not family or social status. For example, she chooses to love Sai although he is from a poor family instead of Kraisi, a western-educated man from a wealthy and aristocrat family. She does not care about Sai's social status. This is revealed through Rachanee's mind:

Honestly, Rachanee did not care about the difference between him and her. She thought that she could make friends with everyone. Social status or family did not matter to her but virtue of a person was the most important for friendship. (p.195)

3.2 Boonrawd from *That Woman's Name is Boonrawd*

3.2.1 Plot

Boonrawd, the main character, comes from a poor family in Paisalee district, Nakornsawan. Her parents work as farmers by having rice cultivation as the main income of family. Since her father passes away when she is young, she spends her life with poverty and adversity. Due to the lack of money, she has no opportunity to

continue studying after graduating from a primary school. Besides, the rice field has been unproductive for a couple of years, and she has many younger brothers who are studying.

When she is sixteen, Boonrawd's mother sends her to work as a pittance in a small Chinese restaurant in the market. While working there, she is sexually and physically abused by her employer. That is why she runs away from that restaurant. She seeks refuge with her former teacher and lives there in a worker and au pair status. She has an opportunity to further her education in the evening after finishing her day work.

Then, Boonrawd moves out and works at a restaurant in Takhli Air Base that is used by the United States as the base for Vietnam War. She meets Robert, an American engineer who is a civilian employee at the base. He is interested in Boonrawd and likes to talk with her at the restaurant. Thus, she is misunderstood and accused of being a rented wife, or a prostitute, like many women in that place. However, she tries to ignore the insult and works so hard. Later, she resigns from the job there because she has a quarrel with her employer. She decides to run a bakery at her home and sells bread to the nearby groceries and American soldiers in the Air Base.

Thereafter, Robert seriously proposes her a marriage. She decides to marry him without a ceremony despite the accusation of being a rented wife. However, it is a real marriage that both of them consider it permanent. After that, Boonrawd raises and supports her brothers until they finish education. She founds the lathe mill for family business, and it becomes the biggest mill in the district. She supports her sister who used to be a rented wife, and adopts her sister's two sons, born from black and white American soldiers. Finally, she moves to stay abroad with Robert due to his work.

3.2.2 Settings

The novel was written in 1981 but the story is set in the late 1960s. At the beginning of the story, the setting is Paisalee district in Nakornsawan where Boonrawd works and stays with teacher Orapin. Here, she is a representative of many

rural women who have to leave their hometown and earn money from selling labor in order to support the family.

The next setting is Takhli district in Nakornsawan, particularly Takhli Air Base where she works at the bar-restaurant and meets Robert, her American husband. Moreover, this setting is important because at that time Thai government allowed the American troops to station in Thailand and use Thai air bases for Vietnam War in exchange for economic, industrial, and military development of the country. It becomes the center of development and opportunity. This stimulates Thai women to struggle for trade and financial opportunity, and many of them become a rented wife or prostitute.

3.2.3 Character

Physical Appearance

Boonrawd is the main character who is the representative of a general and rustic woman in the modern world. She is not beautiful as being described through teacher Orapin's eyes:

She has dark complexion with big and round eyes. She is tall and skinny with broad shoulders. (p.14)

From the excerpt, the writer intends to present Boonrawd as a working class woman. The dark complexion and the broad shoulders represent a hard working poor laborer. Moreover, she is usually dressed in loud colors such as red, orange, or yellow that extremely contrast to her dark complexion.

Characteristics

Boonrawd is quite different from the traditional woman. She describes herself to Robert, her husband, as contrasting to the traditional woman:

“The ideal Thai woman that man likes is a good housewife with good manner, speaks only a few words, and should be attentive to her husband, innocent, and timid, not a bold girl like me.” (p.116)

In contrast, Boonrawd has no quality of the ideal woman. She is independent and outspoken. She stands for the right thing although she has to offend others or even her mother, for example she controls her mother's expense because her mother usually wastes money on the useless things. Boonrawd refuses to be a rented wife though it brings a lot of money. Furthermore, she can fight for herself if she does not do anything wrong, for example when her boss at the restaurant misunderstands and accuses her of going to Bangkok with Robert. Actually, he gives her only a pick up home. They have a serious quarrel, and finally Boonrawd does not surrender and decides to quit the job.

Another admirable characteristic of Boonrawd is that she is patient, diligent, and ambitious. She works so hard so that she can earn money and depend on herself. Although she is not attractive in men's eyes, she is strong-minded and dependable to others. Moreover, Boonrawd is a good and responsible person. She supports and takes care of nearly all of her family members. She also plans for and teaches her brothers and other family members to depend on themselves and can support others as she does. That is why teacher Orapin admires her as a 'golden-hearted' woman.

Family Background

Boonrawd comes from a poor and working class family in the rural area of Paisalee district. Her father passes away. Her mother is a vulgar, sly, and lazy woman who pampers her sons and ignores her daughters. The major income of her family is from the rice field with labor of family members. However, after the death of Boonrawd's father, the rice field is not good due to the lack of important leader and the drought caused by unpredictable weather. Boonrawd's older brother gets married and move to his wife's place. He ignores his mother and the whole family. Her older sister, Boonlam, is a rented wife. She has two sons. One was born from black American soldier and the other from a white American soldier. Both later become Boonrawd's adopted sons. Boonrawd supports her three younger brothers - Boonsin, Boontam, and Boonting. She provides them education and work and teaches them to depend on themselves.

Educational Background

Boonrawd does not obtain high education. Due to the lack of money and support, she has no opportunity to continue studying after graduating from a primary school. Additionally, she has many younger brothers who need to study. Thus, she has to work to support her family. However, she is ambitious and dreams for a better life. When she works with teacher Orapin, she spends evening time to further her education and learns cooking from teacher Orapin so that she can earn from cooking some day. Later, when she moves to work at Takli Air Base, she spends her free time to study English language so as to be useful for her work. It is noticeable that she does not obtain education formally but she struggles to study and get some useful knowledge by herself.

Social Background

Boonrawd is from a poor family. She is a representative of low working class woman. She is considered to have lower status than others mostly because of her job and her physical appearance. While she works as a housemaid, her status is as a servant that makes her lower in the eyes of other people. Then, when she moves to work at the Air Base, she is insulted as a rented wife or prostitute. No one believes in her integrity, even her mother or her boss, the owner of the bar-restaurant where she works. When she moves to stay with Robert, an American engineer, without the wedding ceremony, everybody assumes that she is a rented wife certainly. She has to be so patient to the insult even from her own mother:

“So here’s the smart Boonrawd, living with a farang and not even getting paid for it!” These were first words of greeting of her mother. “The whole district is talking about it. I don’t know where to hide my face. All my daughters become prostitute.” (p.139)

She feels that she is inferior to other people because she is always oppressed and insulted. When she works in a Chinese restaurant, she is oppressed and sexually exploited. When she works as a housemaid, her status is as a servant. People insult her family because her sister is a rented wife. When she lives with Robert, people

think that she ends up just like her sister. She suffers from the insult and this lower status. Therefore, she struggles to change her status by working so hard and founding her own business. She thinks that if she is successful in her work, people will respect her. So, what she wants is only to be equally respected and accepted as part of the society.

Attitude and Decision Making

Boonrawd has a strong attitude toward equality. She believes that man and woman are equal. She believes in gender equality as she expresses her opinion to teacher Orapin:

“Woman and man have two hands and feet equally. I’m not beautiful but I can depend on myself, and I’m happy with that. I believe that the smart person should be able to stand on one’s own and must be dependable to others as well.” (p.29)

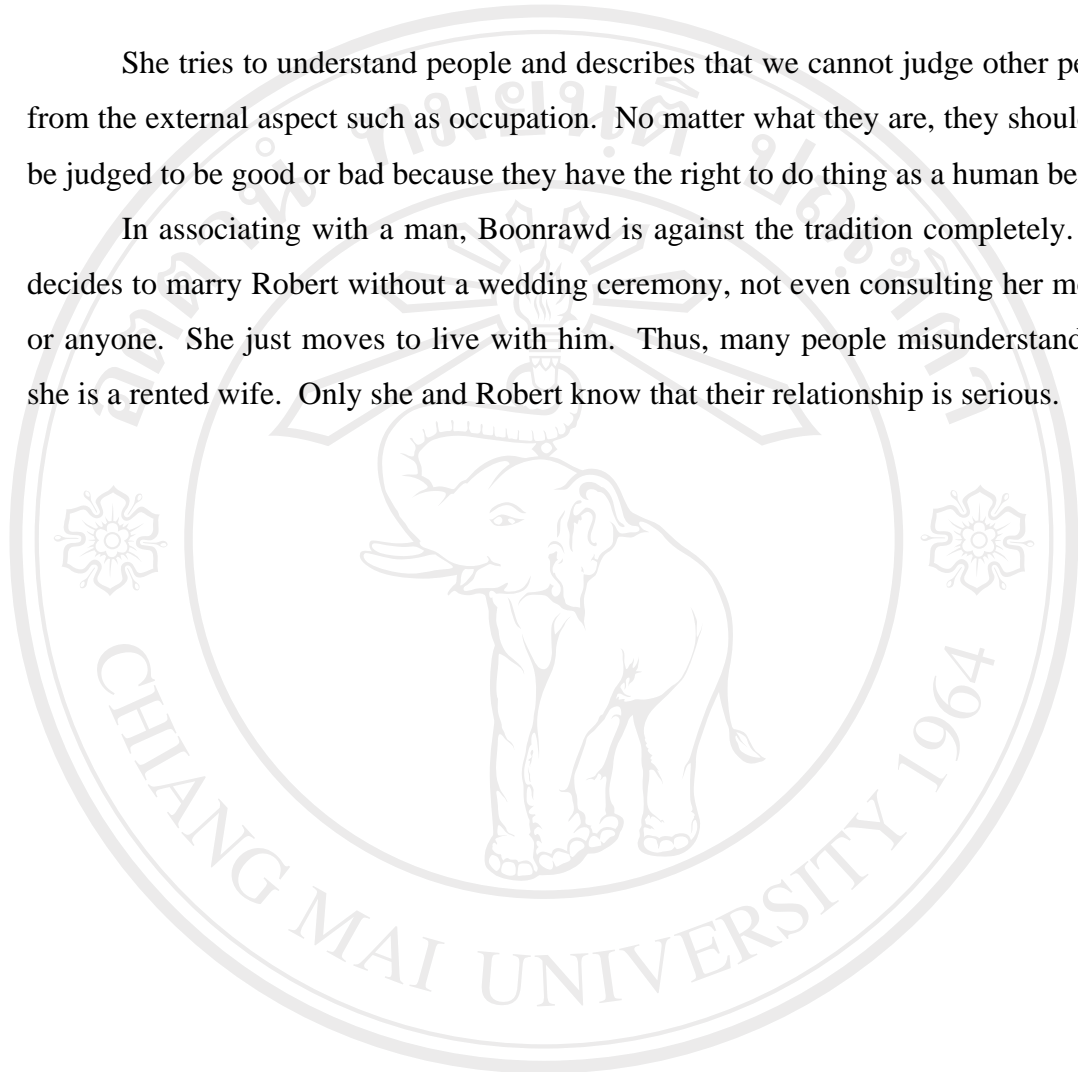
She thinks woman can work as well as man can do. Thus, her attitude is against the traditional framework that woman is the follower and depends on her husband. For Boonrawd, she can depend on herself and support her family. She thinks that woman should work both inside and outside the house while man can help do housework as well. Importantly, woman should depend on herself, not only on husband. Furthermore, she thinks that everybody is equal as human being and as part of the society. Each person has right to do anything. They should not insult or blame one another as she talks to her sister about the prostitutes:

“...I think they have right to do what they want. If no one can help them, they have to help themselves. We have different levels of ability. Some can work hard but some can’t. If they choose an easy way to get money, they shouldn’t be judged to be evil. Anyway, we have different levels of intelligence. I can learn cooking or lathing as Sin but someone can’t. Some can’t do even cooking. So, they can’t do anything else except

selling flesh. If there're buyers, there're sellers, too. I don't understand why we have to blame only the sellers.” (p.281)

She tries to understand people and describes that we cannot judge other people from the external aspect such as occupation. No matter what they are, they should not be judged to be good or bad because they have the right to do thing as a human being.

In associating with a man, Boonrawd is against the tradition completely. She decides to marry Robert without a wedding ceremony, not even consulting her mother or anyone. She just moves to live with him. Thus, many people misunderstand that she is a rented wife. Only she and Robert know that their relationship is serious.



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