

# A Comparison of Women's Roles as Mothers in *Iliad* and *Ramakien*

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## บทคัดย่อ

อีเลียดและรามเกียรติ์นั้นเป็นวรรณกรรมจากวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างจากสองซีกโลก อย่างไรก็ตามพบว่าวรรณกรรมทั้งสองเรื่องนี้มีความคล้ายคลึงกันในการดำเนินเรื่อง และในวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวกับศึกสงครามเช่นนี้เป็นธรรมดาเป็นธรรมดาที่จะพบเห็นสังคมปิดตาธิปไตยอย่างชัดเจนและแน่นอนเช่นกันว่าเพศหญิงก็ย่อมถูกลดบทบาทและความสำคัญ ถึงกระนั้นเมื่อพิจารณาแล้วจะพบว่าบทบาทหน้าที่ของสตรีในวรรณกรรมทั้งสองเรื่องนี้ยังมีความโดดเด่นและมีอิทธิพลต่อการดำเนินเรื่องอยู่มาก บทบาทหน้าที่การเป็นแม่เป็นหนึ่งในตัวอย่างของบทบาทของสตรีในวรรณกรรมทั้งสองเรื่องนี้ ผู้เป็นแม่ในวรรณกรรมทั้งสองเรื่องนี้เหมือนกันตรงที่ต่างก็ดูแล เอาใจใส่ให้ความรักและปกป้องผู้เป็นลูก แม่บางคนถูกสร้างให้มีอิทธิฤทธิ์เหนือธรรมชาติซึ่งเป็นสัญลักษณ์ให้เห็นพลังของความรักและการเอาใจใส่ต่อลูกของตนหรือแม้แต่ต่อผู้อื่นด้วยในบางกรณี อย่างไรก็ตามมีความสัมพันธ์ที่ลึกลับของแม่และลูกสาวให้เห็นอยู่ด้วยกัน และในขณะที่สตรีที่มีบทบาทเป็นแม่มักจะได้รับการยกย่องให้เป็นผู้หญิงที่ดี แต่ก็มีตัวละครที่มีบทบาทเป็นแม่แต่ถูกตัดสินว่าเป็นผู้หญิงไม่ดี เนื่องจากเหตุผลบางประการ การนำเสนอภาพความเป็นแม่ในวรรณกรรมทั้งสองเรื่องนี้มีความแตกต่างกันและการวิเคราะห์บทบาทของสตรีดังกล่าวได้สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงแนวคิดและอุดมคติของสังคมที่มีต่อแม่ในมุมมองของสังคมไทยและสังคมตะวันตกได้

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### Abstract

Even though *Iliad* and *Ramakien* were from the different parts of the world, it was found that they shared some similarities in their plots. The war-related theme obviously drew clear images of patriarchic societies and women were undoubtedly subordinates. However, women's roles in the two literatures were outstanding and influential. The figures of mothers were examples of women roles in the two stories. The mothers in both literatures were caring, loving, and protective to her child. Some mothers were made that they had supernatural power to apparently illustrate their love and care to their child and, in some cases, others. However, there was a mother whose bond between her and her daughter was broken for a reason. Again, there were some mothers who were considered "bad women" while normally a mother was seen as "good woman". The presentations of a mother figure in the two stories were different, and the analysis reflected the different of ideas and social ideology toward a mother between Thai and western cultures in details.

**Keywords:** *Iliad*, *Ramakien*, women roles, mothers, literature

### Introduction

The very ancestor of our nowadays-called literature was influenced by oral tradition. Stories from ancient era were verbally carried on from generations to generations. Before the arrival of the written language, details in those stories had been quite distorted due to natural limitation of oral communication. Furthermore, it sometimes was teller's intention to gain more attention from audiences. Such manners of interaction between narrators to audiences over years and years varied the plots, characters, setting, and other elements of the stories (Burl, 1976 and Ousby, 1996).

To be specific, tracing back to the empire of Greek civilization where the myth of gods and legend of heroes were originated from, these tales were evidenced in various kinds of historical legacy. Pieces of arts such as paintings, sculptures, architectures, music, and, of course, literature were all linked back to those stories. While so many parts of the myth were considered fiction since there had been no proof so far, they somehow were proofs of the existence of culture, lifestyle, belief, and social ideology of people in the old days as appeared in the ancient stories. In fact, some parts of them were proved for its existence in reality; for example, the legendary city of Troy in *Iliad* was a factual location in Turkey (Wood, 1998).

The original stories were not only retold and carried on from people to people but from place to place, too. Aryan people, or “Kaffe” as called by ancient Greek, and their civilization were found to once live in the land now known as Iran. There had been theories to claim that Aryan were not originally in Iran; instead, one hypothesis proposed that they migrated from somewhere in the northern Europe or central Asia. According to the migration of the people, there was a possibility of carrying with them the cultural asset of the lands they passed. One of the evidences suggested about their moving to India and invasion of the land previously owned by Dravidian (Bunson, 1994). This invasion resulted in the battle between Aryan and Dravidian. When Dravidian lost, they were chased away to the South. This historical fact inspired Valkimi the Hindi hermit to compose the epic verse Ramayana, one of the greatest Indian epics on the battle between virtue and evil.

Ramayana was emerged into Indian's culture; hence the literature was carried on to Siam along with Hinduism hundred years ago. Nowadays, *Ramakien* - the Thai adapted version of Ramayana - was valued as Thai national legacy. The battle between Phra Ram - the avatar of Vishnu - and

Tossakan - the demon king - symbolized the battle between virtue and evil. Kings of Thailand since Ayuthaya era was compared to Phra Ram who was the avatar of Vishnu to extinguish sufferings for his people. Again, Phra Ram was a role model of how to live a life with moral, and Sida, or Sita in Ramayana, was a model of a good woman (Ketpratum, 2008).

### Comparability of *Iliad* and *Ramakien*

Even though the history of Aryan's migration suggested some clues, the myths from the two parts of the world presented some differences. In Hinduism, the religious belief of which influenced the origin of Ramayana and then *Ramakien*, there was an idea of gods created the earth and the universe. In contrast, According to Greek mythology, the universe created the primitive gods, the Titan, before the Olympians dethroned them and took control, for example (Burl, 1976). However, several similarities were found between the two stories.

To begin with, the gods' dwelling in Greek mythology was Olympus which was confusingly described as a mountain or an unreachable place situated somewhere in the universe. It was written in *Iliad* that if he willed, Zeus could hang the earth and the sea on the very pinnacle of Olympus, making the unclear concept of how Olympus was defined. Zeus who was the almighty, the king among all the gods and goddesses used thunderbolt as his weapon (Burl, 1976). This was more or less similar to the concept of Hindi gods that Indra, who also had thunderbolts as his weapon, was the greatest and the ruler of the heaven which was believed to be situated on the top of Phra Sumen, the mountain at the center of the universe (Puangsuwan, 2005).

The next point was the plot of the two stories. The main story line of *Ramakien* was the abduction of Sida by Tossakan; hence,

Phra Ram willed to claim her back (Puangsuwan, 2005). The war hence was emerged for the return of Sida and later became the war of glory between virtue and evil. Similarly, the Trojan War in *Iliad* was started because Paris kidnapped Helen from Spartan King Menelaus. The war went on for more than ten years and grew into the war of both gods and humans in glory of the two cities (Wood, 1998).

The other point was the coincident of the archery related situations. After the great Trojan War, the warriors returned to their homes, except Odysseus. His journey back home was obstructed. In fact, he was believed to be dead and his wife, Penelope, who was waiting for his return was depressive by suitors who wanted her to be their wife. Having faith that her husband would someday return, she never gave in to any proposals. Finally, after being pushed for years, she requested an archery competition in honor of her husband's archery skill. It turned out that her husband arrived in time and won the competition (Gantz, 1993). On the side of *Ramakien*, it was a tradition to find the worthy husband for a noble lady, so Sida's father held the Holy Maha Molee Bow Lifting Ceremony, the sacred bow given by Shiwa, to find a perfect match for his daughter. It was predestined that Phra Ram was the only one to be able to lift the bow up and received Sida as a queen-to-be. However, after the matrimony, Phra Ram was assigned to ordained, so Sida insisted she join his journey into the woods and was finally kidnapped by the demon king. The war in claiming her back was then rising (Puangsuwan, 2005).

The other similarity of the two literatures was laid in the births of the two ladies Sida and Helen. Helen was born from an egg since her mother Leda was lured by Zeus who was disguised into a swan (Bell, 1991). When Sida was born to Mondho, the Queen of Tossakan, she was also put into a "Pa-ob", a round-shaped casket, since the oracle insisted she would bring

destruction to the city of Lanka.<sup>2</sup> This is to say that Sida was born again out of the Pa-ob after the hermit Chanok found her. An egg and a rounded casket gave hints of some idea about the comparability of the ladies.

Another similarity of the two literatures was in the geographical feature of the city of Troy, the city of Prince Paris in *Iliad*, and Lanka, the demon's city in *Ramakien*. It was described in *Iliad* that before King Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, launched his ships to join the Trojan War; he sacrificed a stag to Artemis. Instead, Artemis was angry since it was her sacred animal that was sacrificed. Agamemnon had to sacrifice his daughter; otherwise, Artemis would stop all the wind to deliver his ship to Troy (Wood, 1998). This suggested that the city of Troy was located by the sea and could be an island since the Greek had to reach the city by ships. In a similar manner, the monkey troop of Phra Ram had to construct a road to Lanka by filling the sea with rocks, so the army could cross the sea to Lanka (Puangsuwan, 2005). This could be interpreted that Lanka's geography was similar to Troy.

The aforementioned comparability between the two stories allowed the study to go deep in the comparison of values and ideology of the people in the cultures where the stories were raised. While *Iliad* reflected the western point of view towards society and social construction of the western countries nowadays, *Ramakien* shaped Thai ideology and rooted deep into Thai culture for centuries.

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<sup>2</sup> The truth behind the judgment was that she bribed him with the most beautiful woman on earth the night before the judgment. Also, Athena would give him the greatest battle skill and Hera promised him the land of Asia. In rewarding Paris, Aphrodite gave him support on his abduction of Helen, the Queen of Spartan King Menelaus. This led to the Trojan War in demand of Helen back at first, and then became the war in honor of the two cities (Hamilton, 1867).

## Women's Roles in *Iliad* and *Ramakien*

On the surface, the two literatures were mainly narrating the epic in honor of the two cities and the warriors. Male characters were praised for their bravery and moral as a hero and a role model of an ideal leader. Meanwhile, lesser attention was paid to female characters of both stories, for females usually played minor roles in such a male affair as a war. No matter how minor or unattractive their roles were, female roles in the two literatures carried interesting implications, reflecting viewpoints and social ideology of the different cultures from different lands. In the difference of cultural and historical context, the comparison of the roles of women from the two literatures presents similarities. Women in the two literatures were closely related to the main characters, so their decisions and actions were attributable to the story line and destiny of the male characters that possessed the major influences on the plot of the two literatures. As a result, it could be said that these women characters has significant influences on the plot.

To begin with, the origin of the Trojan War in *Iliad* is the abduction of Helen - the lady of Menelaus - by Paris, the Prince of Troy. However, the origin took place before that. Back to the matrimony of Thetis, the nymph, and Peleus as the command of Zeus, all the gods and goddesses were invited to the feast, except Eris - the goddess of strife and discord. Enraged, the goddess secretly dropped the golden apple down to the crowd. "*The Apple of Discord*" brought quarrels among the goddesses, not because of the charm of the apple itself but the inscription "**ΤΗΙ ΚΑΛΛΙΕΤΗΙ** - *To the Fairest*" on it. At last the three final candidates were Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. Unable to judge the beauty of his queen, daughter,

and sister, Zeus demanded that Hermes bring Paris to be the judge. "*The Judgment of Paris*" was that Aphrodite was "*The Fairest*".<sup>3</sup>

*Iliad* and *Ramakien* were similar in the fact that abduction of the fair lady was the cause of the fight. The abduction of Helen brought about Trojan War. The Abduction of "*Sida*" was the ground of the great war. Again, there was another story behind. Back to when "Phra Ram" was about to reign the Kingdom of Ayodhaya, Gujji - the queen's assistant - incited Queen Gaia-kesi, one of the queens of Dhossaros, the King of Ayodhaya, to request that Phra Prot, her son, reign the city instead. Behind this plan, Gujji aimed to take her revenge of Phra Ram as he used to make fun of her hunched back when he was young. As a result, Phra Ram had to be ordained and wandered in the forest as a hermit, and Phra Lashmn his brother and Sida asked to join his journey. During their practice in the forest, Sida was kidnapped by Tossakan because he was obsessed of her beauty. The war therefore emerged in order to claim Sida back to Phra Ram (Puangsuwan, 2005).

According to the two literatures, women played subordinate yet influential roles. These two wars were emerged because of the abduction of the two wives. Even though the settings of the two stories were in the opposite hemisphere, it was interesting that the roles of a wife in the two epics were similar in many aspects. Besides being wives, women had a role of a mother, too. They were the origins of several main characters and

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<sup>3</sup> When the war emerged she tried to convince her son not to join the war, nonetheless, her son insisted on joining it. She cried for her son so much that her 49 sea nymph sisters came up to console her. Realizing she could never stop her son's decision, she decided to give all the support she could do to him. She went to see Hephaestus and requested he make armor for Achilles. Hephaestus agreed since he was grateful for her nursing him when Zeus threw him down from Olympus. Thetis was the nurse who helped and healed until he could go up back to the dwelling (Bell, 1991).



influence how those characters acted and thought. There were several characters that took the roles of a mother that revealed social values and ideology towards a wife from the different cultures. *Iliad* reflected the characteristics of a mother of the ancient western world, while *Ramakien* presented Thai social values towards a mother in the ancient society.

### Woman as a Mother

A role of a mother was naturally reserved for women. Since men can never enter the area of being a mother, the mysterious role of a mother gained attention of several studies. Rich (1972 cited in Kaewted, 1987) suggested that there were two aspects of motherhood. The first one was of course as a person who biologically gave birth. The other one was in social and cultural aspect. A mother was a politics-related institution. Also, motherhood was related to political dimension. Political power belonged to men and; hence, society was dominated by men, directly by forces or indirectly by ideas. This influential patriarchy yet existed and was constantly imparted through the support from motherhood. This was relevantly applied to *Ramakien* and *Iliad* as well that it was a patriarchic society and everything was male dominated, but women played role behind the success and power of men as a mother which would be later discussed.

Rich (1972 cited in Kaewted, 1987) also suggested that it was an obligation of a mother, not only to give birth and take care of the child, but also to take all responsibilities for everything happened to her child. In other words, a mother was the only one to be responsible for all the things that would happen to the child, physically, mentally, or socially. This responsibility was not limited to only the child but to all of the family members. A woman was to be the resource of a new life. She could be a real woman only when she devoted her body to be a mother first. Giving

birth and taking care of the child were her priority and if she wanted to play other roles, she had to use her own free time after her maternal duty.

To be a mother was not only to give birth, but it included several responsibilities; only mothers who took full responsibility of motherhood would be considered a good mother. Failing to perform such duty, she would be labeled as bad mother (Lui-yapong, 2011). A mother must provide moral support to her child. Her love to her child was unconditional and not judgmental on what her child was or did.

The study of Rato (2005) revealed the concept towards motherhood in Vietnamese literature after the open door and economic reform policy of Vietnam. Motherhood and women were bound together. A woman who had no chance to be in a status of a mother was considered incomplete. She was at a disadvantage and was assumed that she would never find happiness in life. Kasmanee (2005) found in her study that a woman was defined by her role in her family since women roles were limited in her family only.

A major national reform took place in Thai society during the government of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram. The reform of the Marshal included the roles of women as a mother as well. A good mother, giving birth and taking care of her child well, was a part in the national reform paradigm. A mother was to produce many children and provided proper health care to her children so that her children would be the force of the nation (Soithongdee, 2009).

By the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, there had been a major change in women's role as many of them came out to work and played more roles in public. Some of them refused marriage and a husband. The image of a single mom appeared in society and yet criticized for being negative. From the political point of view, these women appeared to cause a problem since a

state had to feed them and their children. However, feminist and sociologist saw this as a challenge to the definition of family (Soithongdee, 2009).

The previous review suggested how important the role of a mother was to society. No matter how women defined or was defined nowadays, the image and roles of a mother was still bound to women since they were physically suitable for birth giving and child nursing. It can be concluded that a universal complete role and responsibility of a woman was to give birth, take care of the child, and to support her child until he were independent. Even though this woman role was under the social ideology formed by men, it supported how crucial the role of the women was.

### Mothers in *Iliad*

It was noticeable that mothers in *Iliad* had the quality of a mother according to the reviewed studies. A mother was to give birth to and to take care of her child. However, while the mothers gave supports to her child biologically, morally, and politically, their children, when grew up, at last became independent (from their mother) and overpowered their mothers, and the mothers had no control over their children any more. In spite of this fact, the mothers were still by the side of their children to help.

In *Iliad*, *Thetis*, the nymph mother of Achilles, was the most obvious representation of ideal motherhood. After her matrimony to Peleus, she was pregnant. She at last gave birth to the baby Achilles. Thetis did foresee the Trojan War, so she protected her son by dipping the baby Achilles into the Styx to strengthen his power and prevent his injury from any kind of weapons. The heel of Achilles that was not touched by the water, thus it was his only weakness.<sup>4</sup> The character of Thetis was therefore the ideal

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<sup>4</sup> Before she became the Lanka's Queen she was serving goddess Parvati, the queen of Shiva, who blessed that Mondho's breast milk possessed healing power.

mother figure who was kind and caring. Not only did she take a good care and provide love for her son, she did care for others too.

The other mother figure presented in *Iliad* was **Leto**, the Titan mother of Artemis and Apollo. When she was pregnant with Zeus, she escaped from Hera to deliver the twin babies in a safe place to protect them from the jealousy of Hera. While Trojan War was going on, the gods and goddesses were also battling for the side they supported. Artemis and Apollo were sided with Troy, and Leto was so to support her children, while Hera and Athena were the major supporters of Sparta. Once, Artemis challenged Hera and Athena for a battle, she was attacked hard by Hera. Knowing she was not a match, Artemis ran to Zeus. Before Hera caught Artemis, Leto blocked Hera and collected Artemis's weapon before following her daughter (Bell, 1991). Leto's actions represent the characteristic of a mother who took care and protected her children as well. Knowing she was not a match with Hera, she however dared to be in Hera's way to protect her daughter.

Apart from the divines, mortal characters also demonstrated the roles of mother as well. The first to mention was **Hecuba** the queen of King Priam of Troy. She was the mother to 50 princes and Paris who abducted Helen from Menelaus - the Spartan King, was one of them. The prophecy declared that the birth of Paris would bring ruin to Troy. As a father and mother King Priam and Queen Hecuba could not kill the baby. The herdsman adopted him after the baby survived nine days of being abandoned on the mountain. As a mother, Hecuba only gave birth to Paris but she did not have a chance to nurse him. However, she of course took full responsibility for other children of hers. The literature described how Hecuba cared and tried to convince Paris not to start the war after they both realized the mother-son relationship, but she failed. She could not

do anything but saw the War took the lives of Paris and her other sons (Bell, 1991). As a mother, her giving birth was one significant quality while her love and care for the children strengthened her role as a mother well. As the reviewed literature suggested, she too was over powered by her sons. She was unable to stop her sons from joining the war. Her advice did not gain approval from them.

*Queen Clytemnestra* was another mother who represented a mother loved and cared for her child. When her husband King Agamemnon sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia to Artemis to gain the wind to send the ships to Troy, she was in great anger. She planned to murder him after his return from Troy. With the conspiracy she had with her lover, Agamemnon was finally slain. However, this murder enraged Electra her daughter who plotted the murder of Clytemnestra with her brother to take revenge of what her mother did to her father (Bell, 1991).

It was obvious that the mothers in *Iliad* were all similar in the way that they gave birth to their children and took care of them. Unfortunately, when the children were grown up, they over powered their mothers. The mother would lose control over their children, eventually. However, their mothers would always love and care for the children. The mother would never hurt her child. Additionally, it was noticeable that when the children did not obey to their mother's words, problems occur, for example when Thetis and Hecuba told their sons not to join the war, they did not listen. And the war finally took their lives.

### Mothers in *Ramakien*

Like *Iliad*, *Ramakien* obviously demonstrated patriarchic society where males dominated; hence, the roles of women were subordinate. In *Ramakien*, however, the role of women as a mother was significant in

many characters. These women influenced the actions, decisions and of course the plot of the story. Not only did they have some influences over other characters, but they had the influence over the whole story.

To portray an image of a mother, **Mondho** was a case to consider. She was the mother of the three main characters namely; Indhrachit-the demon prince, Onkkod-the monkey prince, and Sida. She gave birth to Ronnapak who was later renamed to Indhrachit after defeating Indra the supreme god. Her role of a mother was not only that she gave birth but she took a full responsibility in taking care of her children very well. When Indhrachit was dueling with Phra Lakshmn, Phra Ram's loyal half brother, he knew that he would certainly be defeated, so he negotiated that he return to say farewell to his family before coming back to continue the combat. Seeing her injured son return from the war, Mondho fed her son with her breast milk to soothe him. Indhrachit was recovered because Mondho's milk was blessed with healing power.<sup>5</sup> With his mother's milk, Indhrachit recovered from injury; however, he insisted on returning to the battle to resume his family's dignity. Finally he died (Poonsab, 1981). Mondho was so obviously an ideal figure of a mother who gave birth and took care of her child. Her breast milk symbolized maternal love and care for her child.

In the case of Intorrachit, Mondho performed the full responsibility as a mother. She gave birth to the baby and raised him up. When her child was in trouble, she gave support and tried her best to cope with her child's problem. However, her role of mother was not complete in the case of Sida and Onkkod.

Onkkod was born to Mondho when she was taken by Palee when he defeated Tossakan. She spent time with Palee until she was pregnant.

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<sup>5</sup> Before she became the Lanka's Queen she was serving goddess Parvati, the queen of Shiva, who blessed that Mondho's breast milk possessed healing power.

Later, Tossakan's guru negotiated with Palee's guru to make sure that Mondho was to go back to Tossakan. Mondho was a reward that Shiva gave to Tossakan for his merit in straightening the Krailas mount after it was collapsed. Palee surrendered to his guru's demand but demanded his baby with Mondho. The guru then took the monkey baby out of Mondho's body and kept it in a goat's womb until the day of birth. The baby was named Onkkod in honor of Angkod, the guru of Palee. Mondho therefore had no chance at all to nurse or give care to the baby because she had to leave for Lanka. When Onkkod was sent to Lanka city as a diplomat, Mondho arranged a feast for him according to Tossakan's command. She passed the command to her maidservant, but she herself did not come out to meet her son (Poonsab, 1981).

Another child of Mondho was Sida. When Mondho had eaten the divine food stolen from the ceremony in Ayodhya city, she was pregnant. She later gave birth to a baby girl. Unfortunately, the girl was prophesied that she would bring the end to the city Lanka. Tossakan who was the father then floated her in a casket. Chanok, the hermit, brought her to the city and raised her as his daughter and named her Sida. During the time Sida was kidnapped and was kept in the royal garden of Lanka City, Tossakan and Mondho did not realize at all that she was their daughter (Poonsab, 1981). The mother and daughter then never associated with each other through out the story.

Another example of an outstanding mother figure in *Ramakien* was *Nila*, the mother buffalo of Torraphi. His father Torrapha was the buffalo lord who possessed a thousand of female buffaloes. Once he realized that the new born buffalo was male, he killed it since he was afraid that the calf would grow up and dethrone him. When Nila realized her pregnancy, she fled to deliver her calf in a cave far away. When her son, Torraphi, was born,

she prayed to the guardians of the cave to provide protection to her baby since she had to return to the herd. From time to time she would go for milk feeding. When Toraphi grew up, he challenged Torrapha to combat. After Torrapha was beaten, Torraphi who was too proud of his power was slain by Palee, the monkey lord, eventually. Torraphi then was reincarnated to be Munkaunkun, the son of Tossakan's sibling. With the bond of mother and son, Nila was reincarnated as Rachadasoon, Munkaunkun's mother (Poonsab, 1981).

Similar to Mondho, Nila had no other roles or significance in the story but only to be a mother who gave birth and took care of her child until the son was grown up. However, Nila's mother instinct was so strong that she followed her onto take the mother role for her son in the new life. This event symbolized the powerful bond between a mother and a child.

Other interesting character to refer to as a mother was *Supannamajja* who was a half fish-demon daughter of Tossakan. She was sent to terminate the road construction to cross the sea to Lanka City. When Phra Ram noticed that the many rocks thrown into the sea to construct the road disappeared, he sent his best soldier Hanuman to see what happened. There, Hanuman found Supannamajja leading the fish and the sea creatures to carry away the rocks. It turned out that Hanuman and Supannamajja fell in love. Due to his duty, he had to leave Supannamajja. She then gave birth to the half monkey-half fish baby and named him Majjanu. Supannamajja took the role of a single mother. She took care of the child by herself and she taught him to be grateful to Hanuman as the father. Later, the child was adopted by Maiyarap to whom Majjanu served as the guard (Poonsab, 1981).

Majjanu met Hanuman at last but they had to part again since Hanuman had a mission to rescue Phra Ram. On the way, Hanuman met



*Phirakuan* who was the sister of Maiyarap by whom Vaiyavik, her son, was sentenced to death. Her grief for the approaching death of her son was described in *Ramakien* when she talked to Hanuman. Eventually, she helped Hanuman to secretly get into the city and she was able to save her son after Maiyarap was defeated (Poonsab, 1981).

Speaking of Hanuman, his mother was *Sawaha* who was cursed by her own mother to stand alone on the top of the mountain, standing on one foot, one hand holding a branch of the tree, and her mouth opening. Once the gods realized the destiny of Phra Ram, Shiva sent his weapons into the body of Sawaha. As a result, she was pregnant for 30 years, before she gave birth to Hanuman who was born fully grown. She told Hanuman about his duty to support Phra Ram in the battle against the demons and gave her son a clue of how to find Phra Ram (Poonsab, 1981).

The mother who cursed Sawaha was *Kal-ajjana*. She was in rage when she realized that Sawaha told the hermit father that the other two brothers of her were not born from her father but from the two other gods. She then cursed Sawaha as mentioned above. The curse would be lifted when Sawaha gave birth to a monkey. Knowing his wife had an affair with other men, the hermit cursed Kal-ajjana to be a rock, waiting for the day Hanuman throwing her into the ocean to make a road to Lanka (Poonsab, 1981).

*Sida*, the main female character, was a mother, too. After the war, Sida gave birth to Phra Monkud. Once, she was having a bath in the river, she saw the mother monkey carrying the baby monkey on her back. Sida blamed the monkey of risking the baby's falling off her back. The monkey answered back that she had better carrying her baby with her than leaving her child away like Sida. Nervous and ashamed, Sida then went back to get her son who was taken care of by a hermit. While the hermit was in

meditation, Phra Monkud went out to play. The hermit then created a boy identical to Phra Monkud to replace Phra Monkud. After that Phra Monkud returned from his outing. Sida then had two boys. However, she loved and took a good care of the two equally (Poonsab, 1981).

The aforementioned characters were described as a mother who gave birth and provided love and care to the babies. Some of them took full roles of a mother while some could only gave birth and then abandoned their babies for some political reason. Nevertheless, there was no mother, but one, described as hating or not loving her child at all. While the responsibility as a mother of these women was obviously presented in *Ramakien*, there were some mothers whose responsibility as a mother was not presented in the story.

One of them was *Kakanasoon*-the crow-like ogress. She was described as being a mother of Maris and Sawahu - the demons. However, her actions as a mother how she gave birth or took care of the babies, were not described. Instead, her evil roles were more significant and outstanding. When the Ayodhya royal court performed a rite to request for the heir of the throne from gods, they cooked the holy food and the smell was floating so far that Mondho could smell and really needed to eat some. The ogress was sent to steal the blessed rice from the holy ceremony at Ayodhya City for Mondho. The other time she was mentioned was when Tosssakan wanted to exercise his power over lands on earth. She was sent to disturb the hermits who performed meditation in the woods and finally killed by Phra Ram (Poonsab, 1981).

Like Kakanasoon, *Sammanaka*-the demon sister of Tossakan and the mother of Kumpakas was the character whose role as a mother was not clear. Similarly, her mother responsibility was not mentioned. In fact, she was presented on only her evil. Her husband was accidentally

killed by Tossakan. In her loneliness she wandered in the wood and saw Phra Ram. She suddenly had a feeling for Phra Ram at first sight. She was trying to seduce Phra Ram and attacked Sida because of jealousy. She then was punished by Phra Lakshmi by cutting off her ears and nose. She then ran back to tell Tossakan to help her. That was how Tossakan met Sida (Poonsab, 1981).

In the case of *Ramakien*, there were examples of characters that played roles of a mother such as Mondho, Nila, Supannamajja, Sida, Sawaha, and Phirakuan. They provided love, care, support and protection to their children no matter how the children were born. Nonetheless, there were some mothers in *Ramakien* who were mentioned of as mothers without the details of how she gave birth to or took care of the children. Kakanasoon and Sammanaka were the example. In addition, there was Kal-ajjana who was enraged and cursed her own daughter. This fact suggested that Thai society saw the figure of mother in variety of ways. It was possible that the mother might not always love and care for her children, or it was not always true that a woman who was a mother was a good woman. This is how the mother figures in *Ramakien* were different from the mothers in *Iliad* who always loved and provided protection and support for their children. There was no mention of a mother in *Iliad* who harmed her own child.

It was apparent that magic and supernatural power played roles in both literatures; however, the role of mother was applicable to real life. The roles of mother in both story was relevant to the role of mother nowadays despite its ancient origin. Additionally, the role of mother in *Ramakien* was diverse that there were many kinds of mother while the mothers in *Iliad* were ideal mothers who loved and cared for their children. This difference pointed out the fact that *Ramakien* represented a more authentic social condition than *Iliad*, reflected from the figures of mother from both stories.

### Analysis and Comparison of Motherhood from *Ramakien* and *Iliad* Mother's Responsibility

To be a mother, a woman's responsibility was to give birth to a baby. A woman had to be fertile during a sexual intercourse with a man and so that she could be pregnant. This rule of nature applies to several characters both in *Iliad* and *Ramakien*. Therefore, there must be a husband or a man for reproduction process, for example King Priam for Queen Hecuba, Zeus for Leto, Peleus for Thetis, Tossakan and Palee for Mondho, etc. However, the case of Leda the mother of Helen was quite alternative. It was described that Leda, the mother of Helen, was seduced by a swan, actually the disguise of Zeus, resulting in her delivery of two eggs at first and then four babies were born from the eggs. Helen was one of them. Somehow, it was understandable that the father was Zeus and his divine power explains the odds.

It was even more untraditional that in *Ramakien*, Sawaha gave birth to Hanuman without a father at all. After she was cursed by her mother, Shiva used her body to create the greatest warrior for Phra Ram. He commanded Phra Pai, god of wind, to carry the three holy weapons into Sawaha's body, and then Hanuman was created, coming out of his mother's mouth, fully grown, after his mother's 30 years of pregnancy. Phra Pai was so assigned to be Hanuman's father to protect him; Hanuman would always return from death when he was touched by the wind.

As a mother, a woman does not only give birth to a child, but she has to take care of a child to whom she gave birth. The mother figures from these two literatures performed this duty very well. Thetis loved and cared for her child. Knowing she could never stop her child from going to the war, she gave a protective support for her child. She bathed her son in the Styx, asked for armor of Hephaestus, and pleaded her son to

avoid joining the war. Likewise, when Indhrachit was defeated, Mondho soothed her son's injury by holding him to her breast and fed him by her breast milk. Supannamajja and Sawaha spent only a short time teaching their children how to live their lives without mother. Nila, the buffalo mother, risked her life to give birth to Torraphi and prayed to the gods in the cave to take care of the baby while she was away.

However, in the case of Mondho, Sida was floated in a casket after she was born and Mondho never realized that Sida was her daughter. In *Ramakien*, no one at all knew about this relationship between the two women. However, in criticism, Mondho was referred to as Sida's mother just like Thoranee Goddess, the goddess of earth who did not give birth to Sida but took care of her according to the prayer of Chanok the hermit.

The other son of Mondho, Onkkod, had unusual bond with his mother even though his mother never had a chance to take care of him. Before Mondho was returned to Tossakan, her unborn baby was taken out and kept in the goat's womb instead of the mother until the baby was born. Since then the son and the mother never met until when Onkkod came to Lanka as a diplomat. Still the mother and son did not meet. Mondho stayed in the palace while her maid arranged a feast for her son in front of the gate. Whether or not she had the feeling for mother-child relationship, it was not clearly revealed.

To the point of the responsibility of a mother, it was similar in both *Iliad* and *Ramakien* that the mothers performed their duties quite well except for some mothers in *Ramakien* did not take the full responsibility of being a mother. Nevertheless, that was not their wills to refuse their responsibilities, but it was due to some reasons like in the case of Mondho and Nila, for example. However, in Thai social ideology, a mother would be respected and honored as "a mother" when she took care and protected

her children. The mother who only gave birth to the children without caring for them would not be seen as “a mother”, like the case of Mondho giving birth to Onkkod and Sida, for instance.

### **Mother and Child's Relationship**

It was mentioned that the relationship between the mother and the child was close when the child was young. Mother was the person who was directly assigned to nurse the baby, so the bond of mother-son relationship was strengthened during this process. When the child was grown up however, they were apart. In fact, the children grew apart and their mothers had no control over their children any more. Even so, they still have that loving and caring bond between them. Mondho still gave support to her son like Hecuba tried to stop her son from joining the war. Thetis who felt sad for her son going to the war was like Phirakuan who felt sad when her son was going to be killed. Vice versa, Sida and Onkkod did not have a good relationship with Mondho since she did not take the full responsible as a mother toward them.

On the other hand, there was the case of Kal-ajjana and Sawaha, her daughter, where the bond between mother and child was broken. Enraged by her daughter telling her husband about her affair, Kal-ajjana cursed her daughter to stand on one leg on the top of the mountain. This broken relationship between the mother and her child was not found at all in *Iliad*. Electra killed her mother because of anger in knowing that her mother killed her father. It was not mentioned that Clytemnestra was angry at her daughter's action. She killed King Agamemnon her husband because he sacrificed her daughter Iphigenia to Artemis for the wind to send his ship to Troy City at the first place. That enraged her who was the loving mother.

Additionally, the power of mother's love was strong and protective to her child. Not only was the character of a mother portrayed as a gentle, sweet, kind and caring, some character's motherhood possessed magical power of healing which symbolized the power of love and care of the mother such as Thetis the nymph who healed Hephaestus and Mondho's breast milk that healed Indhrachit. Mondho also learned from goddess Parvati how to compound a magic potion to resurrect the dead soldiers of Lanka.

### Judging Mothers

The literatures indicated Thai and western social values about mothers and considered her role as a good woman. The image of most mothers in both literatures presented kind, gentle, loving, and protective mothers to her child. Characters taking the role of a mother are categorized as "good women". Some characters that were considered "bad women", for example, Kakanasoon, the crow-like ogress, was never mentioned as a mother. Sammanakkha, the sister of Tossakan, were mentioned only of "having a child", but her duty and responsibility as a mother was not recognized. As bad women, they were described as ugly, brutal, and lecherous. Finally they were punished or killed by virtuous characters. This included Kal-ajjana who was curse to be a rock, too.

Being a good woman who performed the role of mother well, these mother characters deserved to live a peaceful life. While Sammanakkha was punished, Kakanasoon was killed, and Kal-ajjana was cursed to be a rock waiting to be made a road to Lanka, Mondho was promoted as the Queen of Lanka when Phipek, Tosssakan's brother sided with Phra Ram. He was assigned to reign the city after Tossakan's death. Similarly, Nila was born again and was the queen of another evil city. Other characters like Supannamajja, Phirakuan, Sawaha, were not mentioned of their

suffering in life.

The example above related the idea that mother would be judged as a good or bad mother by her responsibility on the child. A mother who hurt her own child like Kal-ajjana would end up sadly. This could be the reason why Sammanakkha and Kakanasoon's role as a mother was not mentioned. Since a mother was considered a good woman who should not be killed or ended up in suffering, the mother role of these evil women were not talked about.

It is worth noting that bad mothers who did not love her own children did not appear in *Iliad*, but only in *Ramakien*. In terms of social values, the explanation could be that in western culture people praised their mother and saw the figure of mother as a good person, basically. It was the natural bond between a mother and a child and also a social value to make believe that there was no mother who did not love her own child. Hence, it became a value that a mother deserved praising not punishing since she was a good person.

Due to the religious belief which influenced Thai social construction, *Ramakien* was not only literature for pleasure, but it had long become a guideline of how to live a moral life for Thais. Therefore, to justify how the bad character should be killed or punished, the characters must be made bad. To picture the character as a mother or perform the responsibility of a mother well was to picture the character as a good person who did not deserve a sad destiny. Hence, this could be the reason Kakanasoon and Sammanakha's motherhood was omitted. Only their evil actions were told in the story, so audiences felt they both deserved ending up in sad destiny.

Whether it was an instinct or responsibility, love and care that mother provided for her child resulted in the social value that mother was the one who loved her child the most. Hence, it was a responsibility of the



child to obey and be good to his mother. Mother was the one who would never betray and always support her child. The child who did not obey to his mother would end up sadly such as Paris and Achilles. in *Ramakien* there was the case of a mother Kal-ajjana cursing her own daughter since she revealed the secret of her mother's affair with other two gods. It could be said that Sawaha did not love and obey to her mother; thus, she then faced suffering.

## Conclusion

In the analysis of the mothers in *Iliad* and *Ramakien*, it was found that the values and ideology towards mother were universal. Both in the western and Thai social values, praising the mother figure and cherishing mother-child bond were found. The pictures of mother from both literatures were presented in a similar manner. Mothers are kind, caring, loving, and protective to her children. They were, by nature, the person who gives birth to the baby and, by instinct, the care taker and protector of the baby. Some characters' love and care for her child were illustrated in a supernatural power that embraced her child and, in some case, other people, too.

It was similar that when the child was grown up they would overpower their mother and the mother would lose control over the child. As a result, the role of the mother would no longer be a focus when the character of the child was grown and ready to continue the key actions according to the main plot of the story. The mothers would play roles again when her child was in trouble. Thetis asked for armor from Hephaestus for her son Achilles; Leto hindered Hera from Artemis when her daughter Artemis was about to lose; Phirakuan tried to help her son who was sentenced to death; and Mondho fed her son with her breast milk when he was injured, for instance.

In *Iliad* there were only good mothers who were responsible and kept their duties towards their children. However, in *Ramakien*, it was found that there were some bad mothers such as Kal-ajjana who cursed her own daughter. She then was considered a bad mother and was justified to end up in suffering. It was interesting that the motherhood of such bad characters as Kakanasoon and Sammanakkha were not presented in *Ramakien*. Supposedly, they were drawn to be the example of a bad person who had to end up in bad destiny. To present their motherhood was to suggest to audience their virtuous perspective; hence, *Ramakien* omitted that side of the characters. A mother would be judged mainly by her performance in completing her motherhood, especially in nursing and protecting of her child rather than just birth giving. So to present the maternal area of these two demons was to make audience feel pity for them. A flat character was an easy example to learn from when literature was used to demonstrate morality.

The bond between mother and child was a never-ending story. As a mother, the status of a woman was raised and valued. However, the roles of women are varied and every woman always took more than one role in life. In the literatures, women were mainly chosen to be presented only the side that affected the plot. In reality, every woman was rounded and each side of her characteristic always brought another story. People judged by the side they saw and never spent time to find the hidden side of each other. The main female character Sida, for example, was not only a mother, but she was also a wife, a daughter, a queen, an avatar of the goddess. In Thailand, she was praised for being a role model of an ideal woman. However, if people learned the other side of Sammanakkha and Kakanasoon, they might find that these two characters might deserve praise as well.

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