THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NIRAT GENRE IN THAI POETRY

by
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Each line of the following verse was composed by an individual, ad lib, in a poetry competition game.

"Wherever I turn, I feel so lonely.
I long to return to the city.
For you will be lonesome and sad in the night,
Because I am not there to make love to you.
Until now, twelve full days have passed,
The distance from love is breaking my heart.
What am I to do to bring love near.
Oh, so far away, I miss you my dear."


Originally, the Sakawa verse game was an extemporaneous exchange between two or more teams of skilful poets and singers sponsored by the King, Princes and Nobles. The game was played in boats during the flood season. The above verse, however, is the result of the Sakawa game played in King Chulalongkorn's smoking room on board H.M. Ship 'Chakri' on its way to Europe in 1907.
The above verse was improvised by King Chulalongkorn and his royal brothers and cousins on board ship during their journey to Europe in 1907. This poetry competition game which the King played with other princes reflects the mutual feelings of travellers going on a long journey.

During this journey, the King also stated in daily letters he wrote to his daughter, Princess Niphā Nophadon, that he had started to compose a Nirāt poem. The reason was:

"Prince Pračak is going mad. He has been teasing everyone on the subject of wives. I was asked to help in the composition of a Nirāt poem. Today I have composed these three stanzas."²

In his next letter the King wrote that he had composed five stanzas more. These stanzas, he said:

"... shall be read during meal times—one stanza for each meal."³

And in another letter the King wrote:

"Today I have nothing to do so I composed some more stanzas for my Nirāt poem."⁴

What then is the Nirāt?

For many centuries, the term Nirāt has been used in Thai poetry not only as a lexical item but also as a part of other titles as well as a term to differentiate certain categories of Thai poems. The existence of this term suggests that a category of some kind has been observed by Thai scholars and that the term can be used to designate a distinct type of poem. Earlier works which have been recognized as Nirāt poems include Khlong Thawathot samt, Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai, Khlong Kamsuan Šríprat, and Khlong Nirāt Nakℎōnsawan.⁵ As we can see, Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai and Khlong Nirāt Nakℎōnsawan are distin-

⁵) Khlong Nirāt Nakℎōnsawan is a less well-known poem believed to have been composed in the 17th Century during the reign of King Narai. The poem is attributed to Phra Srimahāsot.
guished by the title Nirāt whereas Khlong Thawāthotsamat, meaning 'Twelve Months', has been given its title according to the chronology which the poet used as his imaginative source for the journey. On the other hand, the title Khlong Kamsuan Sripāt—'the Wailing of Sripāt'—is an explicit pronouncement about the emotive attitude of the poet. This poem is also known as Kamsuan Samut and is sometimes referred to as Khlong Nirāt Nakhon Srithamarat. There is a fragment of a poem believed to be contemporary with Khlong Kamsuan Sripāt known as Rāchāphilāp Khamchan—'the Lamentation of a Rāja'. This title serves the same purpose as that of Khlong Kamsuan Sripāt. However, when the poem was finally published it was renamed 'Nirāt Sīda Khamchan'.

The titles of the poems cited above, though bearing a certain relevance to the subject matter of each poem, show that there have been no criteria to justify the names of these poems other than arbitrary ones. This is due to the fact that Thai scholars of literature have until recently been preoccupied with disputes regarding chronology, and with proving or disproving the veracity of accounts that have grown around literary origins and the lives of poets. Not until later, during the Ratanakosin period, by which time a group of poetical works, called Nirāt by the poets themselves, reached its flowering and a large number of poems of this kind had been composed, did Prince Damrong Rāchānuphāp attempt to describe the Nirāt poems for the first time on their publication. He wrote:

6) It will be classified later that Khlong Thawāthotsamat is a precursor of Nirāt rather than a real Nirāt poem.
8) Rāchāphilāp Khamchan is found in Čhindāmani. For Nirāt Sīda see Wachirayān No. 89, February, 1902, p. 241.
9) Disputes and contradictions concerning the life and work of Sripāt, for instance, include two chronicles (Kham Hai Kān Chao Krung Kao and Kham Hai Kān Khun Luang Hā wat), an article to reconstruct the 'Legend of Sripāt' by Phrayā Pariyat Thamathādā (Phae Tīlalak), and the late Professor M.R. Su-monachān's query into the official title 'Sripāt' to try to convince that there might have been more than one Sripāt after all.
"The group of poetical works called Nirat are poems composed during long journeys. It could be supposed that these compositions arose from the fact that when a poet travelled by boat he had much free time and had to find something to do in order to avoid being bored. As a man of poetry, he did this by writing poems. It is natural that he described things he saw along the way and related them to his moods and emotions. For instance, he lamented the absence of his loved one and his home. The context of the Nirat poems develops somewhat in this manner. It has been popular since the Ayuthaya period but the name Nirat used to designate this type of poem was probably prescribed in the Ratanakosin period."

Other scholars gave similar definitions concerning Nirat poems. However, Prince Phithayalongkorn added:

"The Nirat poems use the subject of sadness on love separation as the core. If the Nirat puts more emphasis on the description of other subjects then these 'other subjects' must be regarded as the surrounding flesh."

In the West, the Nirat poems have been described by P. Schweisguth as 'poèmes d’adieu' and by E.H.S. Simmonds as 'poems of reflection'.

As a lexical form, it has been generally accepted that the term Nirat is of Sanskrit origin. It comes from nira meaning 'without' and a' meaning 'passion or desire'. However, it is used in Thai poetry to mean 'separation, to be separated from, or to be without something which


13) The term Nirat is first found used in Mahachat Khamluang believed to have been composed during the reign of King Boromtraisarin (1438-1458). The contextual meaning of the term implies separation (see esp. Matsai Episode in Mahachat Khamluang, Bangkok, Sinlapakorn, 1968, pp. 220-221).
is dearly desired'. In a Nirāt poem a poet may express, with strong feeling and emotion, that he must 'nirāt' his loved one or 'nirāt' something which often veils many feelings and desires and includes a yearning to experience the pleasure of affectionate union or reunion. While making a journey away from home, the lonely poet suffers from this so-called 'Nirāt'. It becomes a poetical complaint telling of the pain caused by it.

How and when the term 'Nirāt' came to be used as a category for poems of separation is unclear. Prince Damrong's suggestion that the term 'Nirāt' as a category was not adopted until during the Ratanakosin period is indeed doubtful. It has been found that the term 'Khlong Nirāt' appeared in the 17th Century text book for students of poetry—Chindāmani. This suggests that along with the existence of three other Khlong Nirāt poems; Khlong Nirāt Haripunchai, Khlong Thawāthsamāt, and Khlong Kamsuan Sriprāt which were composed before Chindāmani, they formed a type of poem, quite distinct from poems popular at the time, in that they expressed the personal feelings of the poets for the first time. The poets had chosen to become personalized. The fact that the term 'Khlong Nirāt' was listed side by side with 'Khlong Kab', 'Khlong Khamkām', 'Khlong Sangwāt', and 'Khlong Lilit', is a good indication of this. Furthermore, this fact is strengthened by the occurrence of a list of works already in existence before the composition of Chindāmani. Two of the three major poems of separation; Khlong Thawāthsamāt and Khlong Kamsuan Sriprāt, are on the list.

The text Chindāmani also records its recognition of Nirāt as a type of verse form as well as a poetical work. An example of Nirāt' was given under the heading 'Phumara Chantha Nirāt'. As we shall see, the expression in this example implies sadness arising from the separation of a poet from his loved one:

14) Damrong Rachānuphāp, op cit. p. 3.
16) Ibid p. 49.
“I take up food and try to eat,
My eyes brimful of tears, words will not come.
When life has left me cold as stone,
My love for you might cease to be.
Till then my sweet
I’ll live in dreams, seeing
You come slowly back to me.”

Further evidence can be found in the third stanza of Khlong Nirat Haripunchai. The poet implies that he intended to write a poem called ‘Nirat’. His motif derived from ‘the pain of absence from his beloved’ and he composed the poem in order to ‘make it known to all the world for it to think upon’. This stanza comes after the introductory invocation in which the poet prayed to the Lord Buddha and gave the date of his journey, with the second stanza stating the place of destination. Then the following fourth stanza begins the theme of melancholy as the result of separation.

A definite piece of evidence is perhaps the name intended by Phraya Mahanuphap for his composition which has become known as Nirat Phraya Mahanuphap Pai Muang Chinh. This Nirat poem was composed in 1781 on a journey to China when King Taksin of Thonburi sent an Embassy to renew relationship with the Chinese Court in Peking. The author named his composition ‘Nirat Kwangtung’ as the author himself ended his journey in Canton. However, when the poem was published the present name was given instead.

18) See Čhindāmanī, Ibid, p. 61. It should be noted, however, that the term ‘stone’ used in the English translation is not intended to be a direct translation of the Thai word หิน (third line of the stanza). It is realized, of course, that the old Thai expression หิน means ‘to disappear, to cease abruptly’.
20) Nirat Phraya Mahanuphap Pai Muang Chinh, Bangkok, 1918, pp. 27.
It is legitimate therefore to say that the term Nirat as a poetic genre was recognized as long ago as the 16th Century when Khlong Nirat Haripunchai is believed to have been composed. However, the more meaningful classification was not made until the Ratanakosin period. Titles were then given to poems which appeared to fit this category. Many poems have been renamed with the title Nirat plus the name of the place of destination of the journey. In some cases, however, the name of the author was included in the title for the purpose of identification. Khlong Kamsuan Srirat, for instance, was probably called Kamsuan Samut originally as this name appears in Chindamani. Later, after the poet’s death, it would have been reasonable to include his name in the title for identification. The title Khlong Nirat Nakhon Srithamarat is probably the product of the later 19th Century style.

Early Nirat poems represent the pangs of love separation expressed with strong feeling and emotion, which emphasized the element of fear and anxiety that poets experienced as the result of separation. It is a psychological truth that true love awakens or is experienced during separation—and not in union. This feature of melancholic expression as the result of love separation is, indeed, universal. Early analogues of the theme of love in separation are often found in Sanskrit literature, in Kalidasa’s Meghaduta (the Cloud Messenger) and Ritusambaram (the Seasons) for instance. In Arabic poetry, Phraya Anuman Rachathon has observed that the love in separation aspect of the Qasida is somewhat similar to the Thai Nirat. In Thai poetry, analogues on the theme of

21) The date of composition of Khlong Nirat Haripunchai is based on Dr. Prasoet Na Nakhon’s study. See Khlong Nirat Haripunchai, P.E.N. International Thailand Centre, 1960, p. 4.


23) For Qasida see A.K.H. Kinany, the Development of Gazal in Arabic Literature, esp. Ch. 3, pp. 41-57. See also Phraya Anuman Rachathon, Fün Khwám Lang, Vol 1, 1967, p. 491. In Burmese there is a poetical form called Yadu (Radu) which came into prominence in the latter half of the 16th Century. One of its most characteristic themes is ‘the mood of longing and wistful sadness evoked by the contemplation of forest scenes or by being parted from home and family’. See Hla Pe, A.J. Allott, and John Okell, ‘Three Immortal Burmese Songs’, BSOAS, XXVI, Part 3, 1963, pp. 559-571.
love separation can be drawn from many major literary works including works in the Brahmanic and Buddhistic traditions. The most well-known lovers who suffered long separation were, of course, Rama and Sida in the Rāmakian. A similar fate was shared by many heroes and heroines of stories in the Jātaka. The 15th Century epic-romance Phra Lô contains long passages of Nirāt-like themes although the hero in this case was voluntarily separated from his wife in order to search for his other loves. The theme recurs in many other works; Inao, Talêng Phai, etc., which also involve the melancholy theme of separated lovers as expressed by the hero. This theme of love-longing and separation in these major literary works, however, only form a peripheral part of the whole. The Nirāt poem diverges from these works. It carries forward the theme of love-longing following separation, to form a larger poem and to develop in its own right.

The basic situation in which the poet finds himself is one of separation and this situation together with the emotion of love-longing of which he is strongly aware, provides the motive force for the poem. To designate such poems as Nirāt would result only in an imprecise and thus, in critical terms, inefficient definition. In order to construct a model frame-work within which the Nirāt can be more precisely defined, it is necessary to move beyond the mere theme of separation plus love-longing and examine the process of the poems more closely.

At this stage the following set of models will be proposed.

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The theme: Separation + Love-longing serves as the core of the poem. From poems of this theme, two types emerged.

24) Nirāt poets often compare the sadness of characters from the Jātaka with that of their own when separated from love.

25) Some scholars have regarded the Nirāt theme in Talêng Phai as one of the best. See P. Na Pramuangmâk, Nirāt Narin Kham Khlong, Bangkok, 1960.
Type A: Theme + Chronological Process.
Type B: Theme + Excursional Process.

Chronological process means here that the fundamental formal structure of the poem is expressed in term of time progression. Excursional process means that the fundamental formal structure of the poem is expressed in the form of an imaginary journey derived from literary sources.

To illustrate type A, the chronological process, the poem Khlong Thawathotsamat. (The Twelve Months) will be taken into consideration first. This poem is believed to have been composed by four court poets of King Böromatrailokanat in the 15th Century. It is a long poem of 260 stanzas composed in the Khlong Si Dan verse form.

The poem begins with an invocation in which the poet praises the glory of the Hindu Gods and the King. The invocation is followed by what will be called the ‘preliminary to separation’; the praising of the beauty of the poet’s beloved expressing his desire for her in connection with the description of parts of her body. It is curious to see how the poet chooses to mention certain parts of the body in describing a woman’s beauty. Only sensitive parts which would easily move his readers received their poetical annunciation—the breast, the navel, the hips, etc. It is only legitimate that such intimate parts normally undisplayed, when mentioned in poetical language, would evoke nostalgic reflexes more strongly. It raises the importance of the beloved and therefore the pain of separation is heightened. It is interesting that these poets do not follow strictly the Indian convention commonly found in other Thai poetical works where physical features of a woman are individually related to a set of conventional comparisons.

The poet then compares his own sadness of separation with that of Rāmā and Śīdā and five other pairs of heroes and heroines from the Jātaka stories.

26) Chanthit Krasaesin has insisted that this poem should be attributed to Phra Yaowarat, King Böromatrilokanat’s son. See Prachum Wanakhadi Thai Phak Phiseei, Thawathotsamat Khlong Dan, Bangkok, 1969, pp. 3-41.
27) For full treatment of the subject see Phraya Upakit Sínlapasān, Chanthalak (Poetic Rules), Bangkok, 1948.
The core of the poem follows. This part contains the chronological setting. The poet set out on his journey through the process of time starting from the fifth lunar month going through the twelve months of the year ending in the fourth month. In moving through this chronological process the poet described the changes of nature and the natural setting. As the month changes the weather changes and with them the plants change. The strong sun gives heat and drought which in turn burns the poet's heart because of his desire for love. With the rains come the clouds, the wind, thunder, and flood. Indeed, it is a description of the cycle of human lives in the Ayutthaya Kingdom as changes effect the lives of the people, the forest, plants, trees, and vines as well as beasts. These changes bring about changes in human activity both in the city and in the countryside. Upon his arrival at the sixth month, the poet writes:

“The sixth month arrives with heavenly rains.  
I think of your beautiful blossoms, my love.  
This month we used to share our love and happiness.  
Till your soft navel felt the pains.  
When thunder roars I feel restless with desire,  
My heart so painful as if being torn out.  
The month brings news of ploughing,  
My heart wilts and tears fill my eyes”.

Different months bring different activities including festivals, religious ceremonies, games, dancing and singing all of which remind the poet of his beloved.

Other well-known poems recognized as Nirat but which in fact characterize our type A include Nirat Phrabat by Prince Thamathibet, and Nirat Djan (The Month) by Nai Mi. 29

As the treatment of the subject in Nirat Djan is somewhat the same as that of Khlong Thawathotsamat, the poem bears no striking significance and will not be discussed here. However, in Prince Thamathibet’s Nirat Phrabat (A Journey to the Buddha Footprint), the chronological process was expanded and refined. There is also the extraction of the natural phenomena, flora and fauna, given separate treatment as an extra section.

The poem has no invocation but begins with the ‘preliminary to separation’ section. In praising the beauty of his beloved, Prince Thamathibet shows his admiration for each part of her body starting from the hair moving gradually downward until he finally reaches her feet showing that he knows every inch of her body. Then the chronological process begins. The poet makes use of every conceivable element of time to express the pain of separation beginning at 7.00 o’clock in the morning—i.e. the first hour of the day according to Siamese reckoning—travelling through the twenty-four hours of the day. The journey continues from Sunday through the seven days of the week then moves on through the twelve months of the year, the three seasons of the year and the twelve years cycle. The last section of the poem dealing with the natural phenomena includes reference to flowers, trees, fruits, birds, beasts, and fish, in that order. Names of these natural elements are

29) Prince Thamathibet was the Uparat (Deputy King) of King Boromakot (1732-1758) and is remembered as one of the most prominent poets of his time. He is best known for his composition of Kap He Rua and Kap Hoo Khlong. Nirat Phrabat is also known as Nirat Thansok and Nirat Than Thongdaeng. Here only Nirat Thansok is relevant to our present study as the latter is merely an extensive description of fauna without reference to love and separation.

30) Nai Mi is believed to have been a student of the great poet Suthon Phu. He was active during the early reigns of the Bangkok period. His other Nirat poems include Nirat Chalang, Nirat Phrathaen, and Nirat Suphan.
related to his memory of the beloved by means of pun and transfer thus establishing a firm conventional model for later Nirāt poems.³¹

To illustrate type B—the excursional process, Nirāt Sidd was taken into consideration.³² From the title one can guess that the subject of this Nirāt poem was taken from the epic Rāmākian. It is the journey of Rāma in search for the abducted Sidda. The poem was originally called 'Rācā Philāp' as certain stanzas were quoted as examples in the Chindämāni under that name.³³ This evidence implies that the poem was composed during or before King Nārai's reign (1658-1688).

The poem Rācā Philāp expresses the agony of Rāma while travelling through the jungle in search of Sidda. As the journey is an imaginary one, no specific place names can be mentioned even though Rāma's melancholy is often expressed in connection with the presence of streams, birds, fruits, and trees as they remind him of his past relationship with Sidda.

Other poems recognized as Nirāt by tradition but must be grouped under our type B include Nirāt Inao by Sunthīn Phū,³⁴ Nirāt Phiphek,³⁵ Nirāt Phra Rot Mēri,³⁶ and Nirāt Phra Aphaimanī.³⁷

Another model will now be proposed. Here the chronological process is converted into a time scale which is applied to a particular journey. The excursional process goes through a qualitative change which results in the conversion of the character of a literary figure or figures to the poet writing about himself in his own poem.

³¹) The technique of pun and transfer will be dealt with later in this article.
³²) This Nirāt poem was first published under the title 'Nirāt Sidd Kham Chan'. See Wachirayan, No. 89, February, R.S. 120 (1902).
³⁴) Nirāt poems of this type has been recognized as Nirāt Sommut. See Nai Plang Na Kakhōn, Prawat Wanakhādi Thai Samrap Nak Sāksē, Bangkok, 1953, p. 401.
³⁵) Manuscript, National Library, Bangkok.
³⁶) Manuscript, National Library, Bangkok. Also a manuscript in the Royal Asiatic Society Library, London.
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Theme
Separation + Love-longing

Type A
Chronological Process

Time Scale
Of Journey

Type B
Excursional Process

Personal
Itinerary

Type C
Timed Personal Itinerary

The fictional excursion described becomes the description of an actual journey taken at a prescribed moment or period and in a prescribed geographical setting. The poet, in the main, becomes more explicitly personalized as he talks directly of himself. This conversion process results in the emergence of type C, the timed personal itinerary and will be postulated as the true Nirat type. The theme of love-longing is not, of course, lost. It is the essential basic feature, but the processes involved in type A and B have been refined and particularized.

Two earliest poems of the Nirat type proper will now be considered. They are Khlong Kamsuan Sriprat and Khlong Nirat Haripunchai.

The date of composition of Khlong Kamsuan Sriprat is still disputed as some scholars have suggested that it was composed as early as the 15th Century but many have argued that it is in fact a 17th Century poem.38 Tradition has it that the poem was composed by Sriprat, a son of the astrologer of King Narai's court who was sent into exile to Nakhon Sri Thammarat because of the witty but offensive Khlong poetry he composed.

38) An attempt to date Kamsuan Sriprat to the 15th Century may be seen in M.R. Sumonachat Sawatdikhun's Winchak's Winitchai Ruang Kamsuan Sriprat, Wong Wanakhadi, May, 1947. According to Chanthit Krasaesin, however, Kamsuan Sriprat was composed in the reign of King Phet Racha (1688-1703). See Prachum Wanakhadi Thai Phak Nung: Kamsuan Sriprat, Bangkok, 1951. In order to locate the date of Sriprat's journey, a geographical study has also been attempted. See Manit Waniphodom, Tam Run Bai Krathing Thong, in Kamsuan Sriprat Nirat Narin by P. Na Pramuanmik, Bangkok, 1968, pp. 296-307.
as a reply to one of the court ladies in King Nārai’s palace.\(^{39}\) It was during this journey that he composed this poem. The poem is supposed to give an account of the journey from Ayuthaya to Nakhōn Sri Thammarat. However, available material only gives the account of the journey from Ayuthaya southward, along the Chao Phrayā River to just beyond the mouth of the river passing some Islands along the Cholburi coast plus a few other places which it has not yet been possible to identify.

The poem can be divided into three sections; the introduction, the journey, and the conclusion. In the introduction section, the poet praised the glory of the city; the physical beauty and splendour of the temples, pagodas and palaces. Then he reveals his intimate relationship with his beloved and the happiness of the people of Ayuthaya. Indeed, the happy life at the place of origin of the journey and the woman with whom the poet was so passionately in love and must leave behind, suddenly made the journey an extremely sad one and thus creates strong nostalgic feelings. Especially for Sriprāt, who was on the journey into exile, not knowing when he would be able to return, the situation is made even sadder. In fact he did not return as he committed a similar literary crime at Nakhōn Sri thammarat and was executed. This piece of traditional evidence helps to strengthen even more the value of the poem which is already a great work.

The main and most important part of Nirāt is the journey itself. Upon his arrival at each place, the poet recalls the place name. Throughout the poem one has a list of place names as an itinerary of a journey. The meanings of these place names and the objects there serve as the most vital link between the poet and his beloved as he expresses sad emotions and feelings of love-longing through them. The theme of Nirāt recurs whenever a place name is mentioned. The technique of punning may be used to relate feelings to his beloved or the poet may transfer the meaning of the place name or transfer the word directly in order to

\(^{39}\) This traditional evidence was reconstructed by Phraya Prariyat Thamathādā (Phae Talaiak) mainly from Khlong Kawi Būnān compiled by Phraya Trang and Two chronicles; Kham Hai Kān Chao Krung Kao and Kham Hai Kān Khun Luang Hē Wat. His convincing article was titled: Tamnān Sri prāt (the Legend of Sriprāt) which was first published in Witthayāhēn Journal.
achieve the same purpose. At times, upon arriving at a place, the poet may give descriptions of flora and fauna and relate them to his beloved. He may give straight descriptions of human activities, the history of the people and of the place. While travelling between two places, a nostalgic recollection of the beloved may be revealed.

In the concluding section, the poet gives references to literary characters. It is the fundamental feature of this type of composition that the poet expresses a personal emotion of an amatory nature, and the personal approach is heightened by the introduction late in the poem of characters in literature who are also in a state of separation. It is heightened because the feelings of these characters are compared with the poet's own emotions. This differs from poems such as Rāchā Philāp (type B) in which the literary characters and their supposed emotions prescribed the main motive force.

The poem was perhaps intended to be sent to his beloved as it was addressed to her throughout the poem with the first and second persons used as pronouns. The last stanza helps to support this.

'Keep this letter under your pillow, beloved.
Don't just read it for fun.
Let it be your companion in bed,
Every night, my love, every night.'

40) Even though it has been suggested that this last stanza was added to the poem at a later date there has been no reasonable ground to support this assumption. The stanza will be regarded as original.
Another early Nirat poem to be considered is Khlong Nirat Haripunchai. This poem was originally written in the Northern dialect in the early 16th Century and was converted into Central dialect during King Narai's reign. In most respects, the poem is similar to Khlong Kamsuan Sripaṭ especially as regards the structure and the technique employed in the poem. However, there are differences in certain details.

Firstly, the purposes of the journeys are different. Sripaṭ was banished into exile whilst the anonymous poet of Khlong Nirat Haripunchai was on a pilgrimage from Chiangmai to Haripunchai (Lamphun) to pay homage to the relic shrine 'Phrathat Haripunchai'.

Secondly, the invocation in Khlong Kamsuan Sripaṭ is of a Brahmanic nature whereas in the case of Khlong Nirat Haripunchai the invocation is Buddhistic. Indeed, it is because of this religious nature that the choice of place names in Khlong Nirat Haripunchai fell predominantly on names of Buddhist monasteries. The poet, however, made use of these names to relate to his beloved just the same.

Thirdly, the date of the journey was clearly stated in Khlong Nirat Haripunchai and more emphasis was given to the place of destination as it was the place of worship. The poet gave detailed descriptions of the relic shrine and activities at night at that site. Night celebrations including various performances were described at great length.

Khlong Kamsuan Sripaṭ and Khlong Nirat Haripunchai thus emerge as true Nirat poems in our definition. Both poems were composed in the Khlong Si verse form which was more popular and highly regarded among learned and sophisticated Siamese of the upper class who were the exclusive producers of elevated Siamese literature. Although it has been said that verse writing was a popular activity even among the

41) The date of composition of this poem is based on the study by Dr. Prasoet Na Nakhon whose work is the only comprehensive study of this poem. See Khlong Nirat Haripunchai, Samakhom Phasa Loe Nangsri Haeng Phrathet Thai (P.E.N. International Thailand Centre), Bangkok, 1960.

42) This model is reflected in Nirat poems by Sunthon Phu, Nai Mi, and others when the journeys were of religious or pilgrimage nature.

lower classes, it was limited to oral forms for the common people were, by and large, illiterate, and their verses were not written down. This unwritten folk form of poetry was probably in the Klōn verse style. Klōn finally became popular among the court circle in the late Ayuthaya period during the reign of King Bōromakōt (1733-1758) especially in the form of Phlēng Yao (love epistle) composition.

All Nīrāt poems of the Ayuthaya period were composed in the Khlong verse style. These Khlong Nīrāt poems were composed in the tradition of Khlong Kamsuan Sripṛat and Khlong Nīrāt Haripunchai.

The Bangkok and Thonburi periods produced certain changes and development. Only one Nīrāt poem was composed during the Thonburi period. This will be dealt with later. During the first two reigns of the Bangkok period, Nīrāt poets were often those who were engaged in expeditions to war with the Burmese. King Rāmā I himself composed a Nīrāt poem on his expedition to suppress the Burmese at Tambon ThāDīn Daeng on the Western border in 1786. Phrayā Trang composed Nīrāt Tām Sude Tlāp Lam Nām Noi a year after also on an expedition to war. In 1809 Narin In and Phrayā Trang each composed a Nīrāt on their expedition, again to fight the Burmese at Thalāng. Their Nīrāt poems were composed in the Khlong verse form and followed very closely the Khlong Kamsuan Sripṛat and Khlong Nīrāt Haripunchai tradition.

The greatest innovator of Klōn Nīrāt was Sunthōn Phū (1786-1855) who brought Klōn Nīrāt to its greatest popularity. Sunthōn Phū is,

44) See Bidyalankaranā: The Pastime of Ryme-making and Singing in Rural Slam, JSS 20, 1926, pp. 101-128.
46) With an exception of Nīrāt Phetburi by Nai Phimsēn which was originally composed as a Klōn Phlēng Yao in the late Ayuthaya period. See Damrong Rachānuphip, Ibid. p. 4.
47) Up until the reign of Rāmā VI many Khlong Nīrāt poems had been composed. Their structure and technique are closely akin to Khlong Kamsuan Sripṛat-Khlong Nīrāt Haripunchai tradition. Some of these poems are: Nīrāt Mae Nām Noi (Sit Sripṛat), Nīrāt Phra Phīthasāli (Phra Phīthasāli), Nīrāt Luang Nā (Incomplete by Luang Nā? ) Nīrāt wiangēhān (Krom Somdet Phra Dēchā-disēn), Nīrāt Chāchōngkāo (Krom Luang Phūwanāt), Nīrāt Phra Phrathōm (Krom Luang Wongsāthīrāt Sanī), etc.
without doubt, the foremost master of Klōn Nirāt writers and his works have the greatest lasting influence. He composed seven Nirāt poems at different stages of his life. He was born of humble parents but because of his ability to compose poetry he soon became famous and was given a position in the Department of Writers (Krom Ālak) of King Rāmā II. It was during these years that he, on several occasions, improved on some verses composed by the prince (who was to become King Rāmā III) in front of the King and other poets. This no doubt created enmity between him and the prince as both were trying to gain the King’s favour. When the prince became King Rāmā III, Sunthīn Phū lost his position. Realizing the danger and adversity that would arise from the loss of royal favour, the poet retired to a monastery.

Two of Sunthīn Phū’s Nirāt poems were composed during the reign of King Rāmā I before he rose to fame. All other five poems were composed during the reign of King Rāmā III. Sunthīn Phū brought to Nirāt many elements, such as the concept of personal history as self-reflection, philosophical statements on life and people, social criticism, etc.

Even though Sunthīn Phū still recognized the power of convention set by poets before him, he has partially broken away from this convention by adding to the theme of love-longing other elements he personally yearns for in life or which cause him to feel disillusioned. His expressions of sadness are not solely on the subject of love separation as in former Nirāt poems but his sadness arises also from seeing the ruined city of Ayutthaya or the crack of the concrete at Wat Phukhao Thong. His heart saddened upon seeing the Mōn women changing their hair style and dresses in order to look Thai and thereby losing their identity. He was bitterly sad when he saw a Thai woman marrying a Chinese man for economic reasons alone. Thus in Nirāt Muang Phet he wrote of Thai women:

48) This is to exclude Nirāt Inao as being under type B in our definition.
49) Much of Sunthīn Phū’s biography has been constructed from his Nirāt poems. Important works on his life and works include: Damrong Rāchānuphāp, Chitwit Lae Ngān Khāng Sunthīn Phū, Bangkok, 1933, pp. 441. Chan Khāmwiñ, Roi Ph Khāng Sunthīn Phū, Bangkok, 1955, pp. 610.
50) This fact implies that the composition of Nirāt poems is truly a personal affair. During the reign of Rāmā II Sunthīn Phū was more involved in other literary activities and that he did not compose any Nirāt poem during this reign.
“When Thai men asked for their hands in marriage,
They refused, their hearts hard as iron.
But having money to tempt them, like the Chinese,
The iron was heated up and gently softened.”

And in Nirat Phra Prathom, he wrote of Khun Phat, a Chinese:

“I admire Khun Phat who is doing well.
He has money and gold and still making more.
His little wife seems to be happy,
Having her hair done so neatly.
She is more fortunate than most Thais.
Nowadays people respect you when you have money.”

In Nirat Myang Phet, upon seeing a Buddha image at Tham Khao Luang (name of a cave), Sunthi Phu wrote:

“There is a reclining Buddha stretching his legs.
Heartless people have stealthily dug holes all around.
There are cracks in the chests and the legs.
Oh, brothers, why don’t you restore this image.
The entire wall of the shrine has collapsed within the cave.
Alas, when I think about it tears fill my eyes.”

52) Ibid, p. 287.
Sunthôn Phu's beloved woman is no longer the type of beauty to be admired as an ideal literary beauty of Klōng Kamsuan Sriprat or Klōng Nirăt Narin. His is a more realistic woman with the typical quality of feminine temperament and passion. In fact he composed his first Nirät poem following an incident where his beloved's jealousy had stirred up gossip, necessitating his speedy departure from Bangkok. Having left without saying goodbye his remorse led him to compose the poem which he wished to present to her on his return as a gift of love. In Nirăt Phrabat, he wrote that he and his wife were not on speaking terms when he left for the journey.

As a monk, Sunthôn Phu composed two Nirät poems: Nirät Phūkhao Thōng and Nirät Wat Chao Ča. The poet realized that in composing a Nirät poem the love-longing element must not be excluded and yet it is understood that monks should refrain from such feelings. Indeed, Sunthôn Phū was well aware of this and in Nirät Phūkhao Thōng, the poet put more emphasis on the pains arising from nostalgic memories of the past especially the happy past as King Rāma II's protégé. He did, however, mention mild love longing and noted at the end of the poem:

54) Ibid, p. 116 and 89.
56) Ibid, p. 117.
57) It is also true, however, that both Nirät poems were composed during the very critical stage of Sunthôn Phū's life and that his depressed state of mind had created such feelings in him. See Prawat Sunthôn Phū in Prince Damrong's preface of Nirät Sunthôn Phū Lem Nūng, Ibid, pp. 27-41.
"Because it is a poetical tradition,
Like cooks who prepare Phanaeng curry,
Must put in all necessary ingredients,
Then add pepper and parsley on top.
So with woman, I put her in for taste."

In Nirat Wat Chao Fa, Sunthon Phu avoids this delicate matter by composing the poem under the name of his novice son, Nui Phat, who accompanied him to Wat Chao Fa on that journey. Having rid himself of the authorship he could express his feelings as an ordinary man. Upon arriving at Bang Kranai, the novice flirted with the Mloon girls.

“When I reached Bang Kranai I saw their faces,
Women in boats, selling sugar cane.
No longer typically Mloon in their graces,
They dressed, and styled their hair, like Thais.
But they lacked the Thai careful manner,
And when the wind blew their shawls,
They failed to keep their ‘diverting things’ under cover.
I joked with them, ‘your silk shawls are dipping in the water.
How much are those two pieces of sugar cane?’
They knew what I was up to and said to me laughingly,
‘Little boy, is that why you peep for sugar cane?’
I should have said nothing.
What a pity, let this be a lesson to me.”

Sunthorn Phu's Nirat poems have illustrated certain developments of Nirat as a genre. Although the technique of puns, transfers, and other ideas arising from the locale have been extensively employed, the conventional theme of separation and love-longing has been partially broken. Emphasis has been placed on the reflection of the poet's personal experiences of life in general. Place names and objects at each locale have been used to reflect ideas, observations, and attitudes toward human life and society in connection with the recollection of the poet's personal history. Other elements, for instance, etymology of the place names, descriptions of human activities, history of the people and places, and humorous as well as philosophical passages, have frequently been employed.
included, perhaps to stimulate interest and to arouse questioning in the minds of the general readers. Indeed, some of Sunthon Phū's Nirāt poems were written for the purpose of selling to the public especially during his difficult days. Even though the printing press was already established in 1836 it only printed royal decrees or translations of the Bible but, probably not Nirāt poems. It was possible, however, to lend out manuscripts at a charge for others to read.61

In this way, Sunthon Phū brought Nirāt to its height. Nirāt poems flourished during his time. This period and after found many Nirāt poets and many of the poems were written following Sunthon Phū's style and technique. Two of these poets, Nai Mi and Môm Râchōdhai, are believed to be Sunthon Phū's students. In fact one of Nai Mi's Nirāt poems, was at first attributed to Sunthon Phū because of its similarity to the familiar Sunthon Phū style.62

Conventionally, the essential feature of a Nirāt poem has been the theme of love-longing and separation. The poet's beloved object is the motive force and the source of inspiration. It is therefore vital that he finds means to express his feeling and to annunciate his melancholic desire for love. To this effect, poets have provided a specialized technique of 'pun' and 'transfer' to associate a place name he chooses to mention in his itinerary with his beloved object. This is sufficiently convenient because most place names contain meaningful form or forms which can be associated with meanings. When a poet travels through different localities, he picks out their names, mentions them, and he puns or transfers their forms or meanings in such a way that the end result becomes a poetic culmination of the poet's expression of melancholy. Whereas flora and fauna are commonly used in this way in major literary poetry as reminders of the heroes love, sorrow, and happiness during their ventures in the jungle, the Nirāt poets have moved a step further by making use of the place names as their reminders.

61) Damrong Râchânußaph, op. cit, p. 20.

It should be noted, however, that it was, in fact, Phrayâ Anuman Râehathon who discovered the evidence and later suggested to Thanit Yûphô that the correct authorship of this Nirāt poem should be established. See Phû Khwàm Lang, op cit, Vol 1, pp. 491-496.
In order to see how this specialized technique is employed in early Nirat poems, we shall now consider Khläng Kamsuan Sriprat in which twenty-six puns and transfers are used out of forty place names mentioned in the poem. Each name of a locale consists of a form (F) which carries a meaning or meanings (M). Therefore FM is the element to be punned or transferred to a special message of love to be transmitted to the beloved object (O). What concerns us now is how the message is transmitted.

The first type of transmission is to transfer both F and M directly without any change. This process will be called a "Direct Transfer".

Thus, direct transfer = FM \rightarrow O

Illustration:
Locale - Băng Phut (phút)
F = phút (five phonemes, ph, t, u, u, and a falling tone).
M = to speak, to answer.

Upon arriving at Băng Phút, the poet thus transmitted this message:

\[ \text{ton mai chālūt lin } \quad \text{bō mī mae hā} \]
\[ \text{tham khūo nuan nang ō } \quad \text{phút dai} \]

Trees grow so tall,
Have no tongue at all.
How can they answer me,
With news of my love."

The second type of transmission will be called a 'Direct Pun'. In this process, the F remains the same but the M changes completely to a new meaning (Mx).

63) Prachum Wanakhadi Thai Phāk Nāng, op cit, stanza 34. The name of the locale is mentioned in the previous stanza (33). Please note that the transcription given for F is a phonemic transcription based on Mary Haas’ system. This is necessary because the fourth type of transmission involves certain processes of phonemic change.
Thus, direct pun - FM  
Illustration:
Locale = Băng Chæk
F = cãak (five phonemes, c, k, a, a, and a low tone).
M = Nipa palm
Mx = separation or to be separated from.

Ilanlung phi lae mă       băng chæk
chian chæk tî ok rông      riak năng hā nâng

"I suffered in anguish and pain,
Until I reached this village of Nipa Palm.
Separated we are, beloved, far far apart,
Sobbing and moaning, I called out in vain."

The third type will be called a ‘Semantic Transfer’. The F is allowed to change to any other form (A) but the M remains unchanged or just slightly changed to the synonym of M.

Thus, semantic transfer - FM  
Illustration:
Locale = Krian Sawai
F = sawānaj (eight phonemes, s, w, j, a, a, a, mid tone and a rising tone).
M = Mangoes
A = māng (five phonemes, m, n, a, a, and a falling tone).

Upon arriving at Krian Sawai (Village of Mango Groves), the poet laments:

mung hën nâm nă wing       wian tă lae mae
thanat muang mă nəng tăn      fāk chao

64) Ibid, stanza 62.
65) Ibid, stanza 33.
"The waters swirl and rush before me.
Oh, darling, how dizzy I have become,
I dream of seeing your lovely hands,
Slicing up mangoes to give to me."

The fourth type will be called 'Indirect Pun'. This process involves certain changes of one or more phonemes of the F. When the F is allowed to change its shape slightly to Fx, the M automatically changes to a new meaning (Mx).

Thus, indirect pun = FM ——— FxMx ———> O

This process is characterized by one of the following changes.

a) by replacement of a consonant phoneme.
Illustration: rian>riam (n>m) 
Locale = koy Rian
F = rian (five phonemes, two consonants; r and n, two vowels; i and a, and a mid tone).
M = to inform
Fx = riam (five phonemes, two consonants; r and m, two vowels; i and a, and a mid tone).
Mx = I (male speaker).

b) by tone replacement.
Illustration: naaw>n̄aaw (mid>rising)
Locale = Bang Tharan ao (Tranao).
F = naaw (five phonemes, two consonants; n and w, two vowels; a, and a, and a mid tone).
M = naaw
Fx = n̄aaw (five phonemes, two consonants; n and w, two vowels; a, and a, and a rising tone).
Mx = to be cold.

c) by adding a vowel phoneme.
Illustration: krut>kr̄ut (u>uu)
Locale = Bang Krut
F = krut (five phonemes, three consonants; k, r and t, a vowel phoneme; u, and a low tone).

66) Ibid, stanza 18.
68) Ibid, stanza 51.
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M = ?
Fx = krút (six phonemes, three consonants; k, r, and t, two vowels, u and u, and a low tone).
Mx = kaffr lime.

d) by deleting a vowel phoneme.
Illustration: khëen>khëen (ee>e) Fx=këen, Mx=k aff r lime.
Locale = Bang Khëen
F = khëen (five phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, two vowels; e and e, and a rising tone).
M = a shield attached to a forearm.
Fx = khëen (four phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, one vowel e, and a rising tone).
Mx = calamity.

E) by adding a consonant phoneme.
Illustration: bāmrū>bāmrūη (ηηη>ηηηηηηηη) Fx=bāmrū, Mx=bāmrūη.
Locale = Bang Bāmrū
F = bāmrū (Seven phonemes, three consonants; b, m, and r, two vowels; a, and u, a mid tone and a low tone).
M = ?
Fx = bāmrūη (eight phonemes, four consonants; b, m, r, and η, two vowels; a, and u, and two mid tones).
Mx = to care for

69) Ibid, stanza 47.
70) Ibid, stanza 44. Note that this addition of a final consonant affected to tone and it changed from low to mid.
It is through these processes that Sriprat chooses to transmit his love messages to his beloved. At each locale, the poet may employ one or more of these processes using any combination he finds suitable.

This technique has served as the model for use in Nirat composition and has been handed down to later poets especially those who continued to compose in the Khlong style. Early in the Rattanakosin period, Phraya Trang and Narin In composed Khlong Nirat poems adhering faithfully to the model set by Sriprat and established themselves as two of the most prominent poets of the period. Their poems have been praised by scholars of Thai poetry for their exceptional skills in Khlong composition and their works have rightly been placed among literary classics which students of Thai literature must read. These works have served as the liaison which has kept the composition of conventional Khlong Nirat alive and continues until Rama VI's reign.71

With the exception of Khlong Nirat Suphan, Sunthon Phu composed his Nirat poems in the Klong style. As the Klong is generally easier to compose than the Khlong style it suits Sunthon Phu who took full advantage of this simpler and freer verse form to expose his feelings and ideas with enormous descriptive power. Not only that he makes full use of the conventional pun and transfer technique but he also provides his own technique to suit his descriptive necessity. His beloved object (O) has been expanded to include other objects including the poet's self pity, social degradation as well as denunciatory expression of human injustice. In order to see how this is done, some examples from Nirat Phukhao Thong will be used for illustration.

1) Direct transfer: FM --- FM --- > Self desire.

"thuang Ban Mai chai chit kô khit ân
cha ha ban mai mat muan prathanâ
khô hai somkhâ thoet thêwâdâ"

71) The last Khlong Nirat poem ever composed is probably Khlong Nirat Cha-am by Prince Narâthip which was composed during Rama VII's reign. This Khlong Nirat poem, however, is far from being conventional.
M = ?
Fx = krùut (six phonemes, three consonants; k, r, and t, two vowels, u and u, and a low tone).
Mx = kaffir lime.

d) by deleting a vowel phoneme.
Illustration: khèen > khen (ee > e) 69
Locale = Bang Khèn
F = khèen (five phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, two vowels; e and e, and a rising tone).
M = a shield attached to a forearm.
Fx = khen (four phonemes, two consonants; kh, and n, one vowel e, and a rising tone).
Mx = calamity.

e) by adding a consonant phoneme.
Illustration: bamru > bamru (-> η) 70
Locale = Bang Bamru
F = bamru (seven phonemes, three consonants; b, m, and r, two vowels; a, and u, a mid tone and a low tone).
M = ?
Fx = bamru (eight phonemes, four consonants; b, m, r, and η, two vowels; a, and u, and two mid tones).
Mx = to care for

69) Ibid, stanza 47.
70) Ibid, stanza 44. Note that this addition of a final consonant affected to tone and it changed from low to mid.
“At Bān Mai (New Village) I came to think
That I would find myself a new home I really like.
Oh, heavenly beings please fulfil my wish.”

b) FM — FM ——> Human criticism.

“thung Bāng Dūa ō maduā lyā pralāt
bangkoet chat malaeng wi mī nai sai
mīn khon phān wān nōk yōm khom nai”

At Bāng Dūa I came to think
That I would find myself a new home I really like.
Oh, heavenly beings please fulfil my wish.

“thung Bāng Maduā (Fig Village) how very strange are figs, full
of fruit flies they are inside.
Like an evil man, sweet outside but bitter all within.”

2) Semantic transfer: FM — FMx ——> Self pity ——> FMx

“Mā thung Bāng Thūrani thawi sōk
yām wiyōk yāk chāi hai sa-ūn
ō suthā nā naen pen phaen phūn
thung sī mīn sōng saeng thang daen trai
mūa khro rai kai rao kū thao nī
mī mī thī phasuthā chā āsai”

At Bāng Maduā (Fig. Village) how very strange are figs, full
of fruit flies they are inside. Like an evil man, sweet outside but bitter all within.

72, 73. Nirāt Sunthūn Phū Lem Nýng, op cit, p. 146.
“Coming to Bang Thaïrani my sorrow is redoubled,
At this time of trouble I weep and sob.
Oh, Earth, compacted tight into a surface,
So huge, comprising of three worlds,
At this ill-fated time my body is so tiny, just this size,
And I have no territory to live upon.”

3) Puns and Transfers with different objects:

FM — FMx → O1 — AM1 → O2 — AM2

FMx → O3

“thung Bang Čhak čhak wat phlat phi nöōng
mā mua mông mœun nā mai fā fën
phrō rak khrai čhai čhūt mai yūt yūn
chüng tong fën čhai phrāk mā čhāk μuàng”

4) Thought directly carried over.

In some cases, as when the poet passes the distillery, he directs his
thought to alcohol and its evil effects.76

5) Thought arising generally from the locale, sometimes from
immediate observation. At the palace, for instance, the poet’s thought
of the former King under whom he was happy develops into personal
history.77

At Kret, Sunthōn Phū observes:

74) Ibid, p. 146.
75) Ibid, p. 144.
76) Ibid, p. 144.
77) Ibid, p. 143.
“Krët—this has long been a village of the Mons. The women there used to pile their hair high on their heads in a bun. But now they take out hairs in a circle round the crown and merely look like dolls. Also they powder their faces and darken their eyebrows with soot—just like the Thai. What a vulgar change to make, untrue for them—like people who throw aside their own manners and ways. Alas—it is true as well that women are of many minds—do not suppose you will meet one of single heart.”

Further development of Nirat poetry can be found in poems involving journeys to foreign countries. The earliest Nirat poem of this type is Nirat Phraya Mahänuphāp Pai Mùang Čhin composed during the Thonburi period. The author, Phraya Mahänuphāp, was sent to Peking as a member of the Thai embassy to renew the relationship with the Court of Emporer Chʻien Lung in 1781. As only top Siamese officials were allowed to go on to Peking from Canton, Phraya Mahänuphāp had to stay behind, and it was for this reason that he named his poem ‘Nirat Kwângtung’. The striking feature of this Nirat is that the poet devotes the greater part of his poem to the description and the account of his travel while ignoring the theme of love-longing almost altogether. Only at times does he express his sadness upon leaving his city and expresses his love and devotion to the King but not once does he mention his love for a beloved woman. The poet’s main concern seems to be to record all events and activities of the mission together with the poet’s own observation of the scenery, the living conditions and the people in the foreign land.

In 1857 Mom Râchôthai composed Nirat Londyn. He was an interpreter of the Thai Embassy which was sent by King Râmâ IV to deliver his letter of friendship to Queen Victoria in London. Like Phraya Mahänuphāp, Mom Râchôthai composed his Nirat poem in the form of a semi-travel account plus some love-longing passages especially

78) Ibid, p. 146.
79) See Nirat Phraya Mahänuphāp Pai Mùang Čhin, op. cit.
when he was back in the hotel room and was alone. While Phrayā Mahānuphāp recorded the merchant ships at the Chinese ports of Macao and Canton, Mōm Rāchōthai gave a description of Portsmouth, and later Dover, together with his fascination with the English material well-beings, such as railways, ships, jewels. As members of important missions, both authors took special interests in recording events and activities concerning their official contacts with their respective hosts. Phrayā Mahānuphāp reported his party’s first contact with the Chinese officials in Macao where they were intercepted and followed by a warship of thirty soldiers. And in Canton where they were invited to the reception dinner, long descriptions of the Chinese officials, their guards, the buildings, the social greetings, the feast and the speech by the head of the Chinese officials were given. Mōm Rāchōthai, on the other hand, took special care in describing the English Sovereign, her costumes, the court manners and functions, and Windsor Castle where his party was invited to stay for four nights.

A year later in 1859, King Rāma IV sent Phra Rāchāsombat (Kārawēk Ratanakun) to look for certain jewels in Calcutta. Phra Rāchāsombat composed a Nirāt poem to record the account of his successful journey. His poem is called ‘Nirāt Kō Kaeo Kālakatā’. Then in 1887 Nai Waeo composed Nirāt Tangkia—a Journey to Tongkin. The author of this poem was in a similar position to Phrayā Mahānuphāp and Mōm Rāchōthai’s in that he served as a secretary to a party of five representatives sent from Bangkok by King Rāma V to observe the fighting between the French in Indo-China and the Hō rebellion. Nai Waeo recorded the journey arranged by the French and his party’s official contacts with them while travelling in that area. Detailed descriptions of Saigon, Haiphong and Hanoi were also given. And when the journey finally reached the front line, the fighting was reported. It was only when he received letters from home that Nai Waeo expressed his love melancholy.

In these Nirāt poems, the technique of pun and transfer is found to be used but only when the poets were still within the boundary of the Thai Kingdom. This is obvious enough since names of the locales became

82) Luang Nōranithi Banchākit, Nirāt Tangkia, Bangkok, 1961, pp. 104.
meaningless to them as the journey reached foreign places and the FM ceased to be useful. On the other hand, foreign elements such as scenery, people and their daily activities, etc., became more interesting and when seen for the first time normally aroused curiosity. The poets cannot help describing these attractive foreign elements and recording them in their poems for their superiors and friends, as well as the public, thus serving not only as reports of their accomplishments, but also as public information.83

After World War II, when the Government started to receive foreign aid from the West, many officials were sent on observation trips abroad and around the world. More Nirät poems were composed as byproducts of these trips. Some of these poems are Nirät Rŏn Lŏk by Saeng Thŏng, Nirät Rŏn Raem Pai Rŏp Lŏk by M.L. Pin Malakul, and Nirät Rŏng Mŏng Thai Pai Rŏp Lŏk by Dutkădi Mălă. These poems are merely travel accounts in poetry as the poets did not use the special techniques of form and expression and became more concerned with recording their own activities while leaving aside traditional ideas and visions of poetical empathy. However, Nirät Kaoli—A Journey to Korea by Rear Admiral Čhuap Hongsakun is praiseworthy.84 Like Suntbon Phi’s work, but of a more modern time, his Nirät is not a mere travel account. It contains ideas and visions which stem from the elements the poet sees and observes on his journey which reflect the feeling of love for his country. Upon seeing a progressive Korean seaport, for instance, the poet thinks of the Thai seaports especially Songkhła which has long been neglected.85 His worries and concern upon leaving Thailand are for the Thai people—they are for him the beloved. Before entering the sea at the mouth of the river, he entrusts them to the Government, beseeching it to provide better welfare for them and begging high ranking officials and politicians to stop their corrupt activities. He calls for powerful military men to repent and that they should not lower themselves to be involved in the opium

83) Nirät Lŏnđŏn marks the first printing of a literary work in Thai in which the author retains copyright but sold the printing right to the press. See Damrong Răčhănuŏkhŏp in Prachum Phongnăwadăń Phăk Sī Sīp Hăi, Op. cit, p. 106.
84) Phŏn Raus Trī Čhuap Hongsakun, Ruam Nirăt Tŏn Măi, Bangkok, 1969, pp. 207. See also his five other Nirät poems published in this same volume.
business. Upon seeing a Japanese ship, he recalls his relationship with general Nagamura, who was the commander of the Japanese army in Thailand and who was kind enough to tell the Thais of their dangers in siding with the Japanese when the Japanese defeat was inevitable. From this memory he points out to his readers, the danger of the army getting involved in politics which, in the case of Japan, brought destruction to the country.

Like other things in the Thai heritage, the composition of Nirat poems has become less popular. This is understandable because it would be much more practical to record events of a journey in prose. The composition of a Nirat poem nowadays has to be encouraged by a special literary club whose purpose is to preserve and to carry on the tradition. Recently, two volumes of Nirat poems emerged in this manner. The Sunthôn Phû Club published a collection of twenty-five short Nirat poems called 'Ruam Nirat Yisip Hâ Rüang' in 1966 and later in 1970, the Bangkok Bank sponsored the composition of 'Nirat Krung Kao' by inviting 48 poets to compose one Nirat. Each was responsible for a certain portion of the journey, then they were linked together.

This modern development shows that the idea of Nirat is deeply held and appreciated by Thai people with literary interests. The best Nirat poems will always remain as parts of Thailand's literary heritage.

This paper has attempted to define the Nirat in terms of its essential form, content, and poetic process making it a clearly defined genre. It arose from the poetry of love-longing and in its most modern history it has become, in many examples, a travel account preserving the name Nirat. But what makes the true Nirat is the set of special techniques of form and expression used by the poets to link these ideas of travel and love in absence and, even in the greatly changed circumstances of today, some poets have shown that the literary tradition is still alive.

86) Ibid, p. 4.
87) Ibid, p. 22.