

The Influence of Ziska (The Wheel of Karma) on the Novel Phitsawat

Kannapohn Puyatorn^{1*}

¹ Independent researchers, kannapohn.p@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author: kannapohn.p@gmail.com

Citation: Puyatorn, K. (2026). The Influence of Ziska (The Wheel of Karma) on the Novel Phitsawat, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 11(2) 573-579. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v11i2.4973>

Published: August 06, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of the novel Ziska (Kongkwian) on the Thai novel Phitsawat. The main objectives are to analyze how Ziska influences Phitsawat and to explore the distinctive characteristics of both novels. The findings show that Phitsawat is indeed influenced by Ziska. A comparative analysis of plot, characters, setting and atmosphere, narrative techniques, and thematic ideas reveals several important similarities between the two works. Both novels feature female characters Sarochinee and Princess Ziskawho appear in ancient-style clothing, creating a sense of mystery connected to the past. In addition, the palace or house associated with these characters is portrayed as mysterious and unsettling in both stories. Another shared element is the presence of strange and frightening paintings that contrast sharply with reality. Furthermore, sacred or supernatural beings play an important role as witnesses to the final moments of the characters, reinforcing the spiritual dimension of both narratives. A distinctive feature of Ziska is its integration of social criticism, along with its emphasis on the consequences of karma. Although Phitsawat is clearly influenced by Ziska, it also has its own unique characteristics. Phitsawat strongly reflects Thai cultural identity, particularly through the concept that hatred should be ended through forgiveness rather than revenge. In addition, the use of a homophonic title adds a special literary dimension to the novel. These features demonstrate the creativity of Thamayanti in adapting foreign literary influence into a narrative that is harmonious with and meaningful within the context of Thai society.

Keywords: Ziska (The Wheel of Karma), Phitsawat, Literary Influence, Comparative Study.

INTRODUCTION

The novel *Vendetta*, translated by Phraya Surinthaecha under the pseudonym "Mae Wan" from Marie Corelli's English novel *Vendetta*, was published in the journal *Lak Witthaya* in 1900. It is widely acclaimed as the first complete Thai novel (Ditthayan, n.d., p. 72). The translation of this novel had a profound impact on the development of Thai literature, inspiring the singing drama (*Lakborn Rong*) *Vendetta* in 1913. Furthermore, it encouraged Thai authors to create novels featuring Thai characters and settings while incorporating conceptual and stylistic influences from Western literature (Ditthayan, n.d., p. 81).

In addition to *Vendetta*, several other works by Marie Corelli such as *Thelma*, *Wormwood* (translated as *Thao Sawai*), *The Treasure of Heaven* (translated as *Sombat Amarin*), *The Sorrows of Satan* (translated as *Khun Khlang*), and *Ziska* (translated as *Kong Kwian*) have exerted a significant influence on Thai literature. These influences led to the production of both literary translations and adaptations within the Thai context.

Literary adaptations of Marie Corelli's works can be broadly categorized into two types: adaptations that retain the original plot structure, such as *Kha Khong Khon* (*Value of a Person*) and *Khaon Usasang* (*Before Dawn*); and adaptations that merely borrow core plot elements, such as *Ngao* (*Shadow*) and *Phitsawat* (*Blood & Treasures*). In the case of *Ngao*, authored by Roslaren (Thamayanti), the storyline and key characters were adapted from *The Sorrows of Satan*. However, certain narrative progressions remain somewhat disconnected from the cultural context of Thai society.

Regarding Thamayanti's *Phitsawat*, the narrative revolves around the vengeance of a female spirit murdered by her husband, a theme that mirrors Corelli's *Ziska*. Preliminary studies reveal that *Phitsawat* shares several other elements with *Ziska*, including character development and narrative techniques. Consequently, the researcher aims to systematically examine the intertextual influence and relationship between these two works.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the literary influence of the novel *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* on Thamayanti's *Phitsawat*.
2. To study the distinctive characteristics of the novel *Ziska* and its English-to-Thai translation context.

Research Hypotheses

1. The novel *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* serves as the primary prototype for the novel *Phitsawat*.
2. Although *Phitsawat* was influenced by *Ziska*, it possesses distinct individual characteristics, such as adapting settings to align with Thai culture and reformulating core concepts to conform with Buddhist philosophy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Thai literature as a body of work influenced by Western literary traditions has consistently drawn interest from scholars. In particular, research on translated and adapted novels from the early Rattanakosin era to the contemporary period highlights their vital role in shaping modern Thai fiction.

Ditthayan (n.d.) studied the development of the Thai novel and demonstrated that translations of Western fiction especially the works of Marie Corelli played a pivotal role in shaping Thai narrative forms. The translation of *Vendetta (Khwan Phayabat)* is regarded as the inception of the fully realized Thai novel, serving as a key benchmark for constructing Western-style plot structures, character development, and narrative techniques. This study further notes that Corelli's novels inspired both literary translations and adaptations within Thai society.

Several comparative literature scholars have observed that adapting Western literature into Thai is rarely a matter of simple translation; rather, it constitutes a process of "cultural transformation." While authors tend to retain the original plot architecture, they systematically recontextualize characters, settings, and ideological frameworks to align with Thai societal norms. Most notably, Western cosmological or Christian concepts are often replaced with Buddhist doctrines, such as the laws of *karma*, retribution, and the cycle of rebirth (*samsara*).

Regarding the literary oeuvre of Thamayanti, numerous studies highlight her signature technique: adopting Western structural frameworks while filtering them through a Thai worldview. Her narratives frequently emphasize moral dimensions, karmic consequences, and inter-life bonds. Research on her novel *Ngao (Shadow)* adapted from Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* reveals that while Thamayanti preserved the core plot, she recalibrated its religious and cultural undertones to resonate with Thai readers.

However, scholarly research focusing directly on the intertextual relationship between *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* and *Phitsawat* remains limited. Most existing literature addresses Marie Corelli's influence on Thai literature only in broad terms, lacking a systematic comparative analysis of plot architecture, characterization, narrative strategies, and thematic concepts between these two specific works.

Therefore, this research holds significant academic value as it bridges a crucial gap in current literature. It elucidates the process of literary transmission from Western fiction to Thai creative writing, explaining how Thamayanti adapted influences from *Ziska* to craft *Phitsawat* into a unique masterpiece deeply embedded in the Thai cultural context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, adopting a comparative literature research approach combined with textual content analysis. The primary objective is to examine the literary influence of the novel *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* on Thamayanti's *Phitsawat*. The analysis focuses on investigating the intertextual relationship between the two novels across five key dimensions: plot architecture, characterization, setting and atmosphere, narrative techniques, and core thematic concepts. This approach aims to elucidate the process of literary transmission from Western fiction to the creation of Thai creative literature.

2. Sample and Selection Method

The primary data sources were selected through purposive sampling, based on the documented intertextual relationship between the two works. The core literary texts analyzed in this study are the Thai translation of Marie Corelli's *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* by Amarawadee and Thamayanti's *Phitsawat*. Additionally, the researcher examined relevant academic books, journal articles, secondary literature, and prior research on comparative literature, literary influence, and the authorship of both writers to provide supportive context for the analysis and discussion.

3. Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study is a textual analysis data-recording framework developed by the researcher, grounded in comparative literature theory and narrative analysis. The framework encompasses five key structural components of literary prose: plot, characters, setting and atmosphere, narrative techniques, and core themes. This instrument ensures a systematic gathering and categorization of literary data aligned with the research objectives.

4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was executed in the following sequential phases:

1. Conducting a comprehensive review of literature, textbooks, academic articles, and prior research regarding literary influence theories and comparative literature methods.
2. Undertaking an in-depth reading of both *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* and *Phitsawat*.
3. Recording data systematically according to the predefined analytical framework.
4. Categorizing the collected data into distinct literary elements.
5. Verifying the completeness, coherence, and validity of the data prior to analysis and synthesis.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to qualitative content analysis combined with comparative analysis. The researcher analyzed textual evidence from both primary sources based on the predefined thematic categories: plot, characterization, setting/atmosphere, narrative techniques, and underlying concepts. Comparative analysis was then applied to identify similarities and divergences, thereby articulating the precise nature of the literary influence manifest in *Phitsawat*. Finally, findings were synthesized with theoretical frameworks and secondary literature to ensure academic rigor and validity.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Analysis of the Influence of *Ziska* on *Phitsawat*

The findings from the comparative study between *Ziska (Kong Kwian)* and *Phitsawat* reveal a clear intertextual relationship between the two novels. This influence manifests at both the structural level and across specific narrative elements, including plot architecture, characterization, setting and atmosphere, narrative techniques, and core thematic concepts. Although the two works were authored in different eras, countries, and cultural contexts, the author of *Phitsawat* skillfully adapted core elements from *Ziska* to suit the Thai societal context. This adaptation resulted in a distinct and highly acclaimed work recognized as a valuable masterpiece in Thai literature.

The analysis indicates that this influence extends beyond merely borrowing plotlines; it also encompasses atmospheric construction, character roles, supernatural mechanics as narrative drivers, and the employment of karmic retribution and reincarnation as central thematic anchors. Rather than directly copying the source material, the author of *Phitsawat* used *Ziska* as a foundational blueprint, reinterpreting and expanding its concepts to align with Thai history, cultural beliefs, and societal values.

The observed influences can be categorized into five distinct dimensions: (1) Plot architecture, (2) Characterization, (3) Setting and atmosphere, (4) Narrative techniques, and (5) Core thematic concepts.

1. Influence on Plot Architecture

The structural progression of both novels demonstrates striking alignment, particularly in how supernatural events, memories, and karmic consequences bridge the past and present.

Both *Ziska* and *Phitsawat* open with the introduction of a beautiful, mysterious woman whose presence immediately triggers intrigue in the male protagonist. Neither female protagonist reveals her true identity initially; instead, they gradually exhibit behaviors that evoke an unexplainable sense of familiarity in the male lead. This feeling sparks a quest for past-life truth, serving as the central catalyst for the narrative.

As the plots unfold, both leads experience supernatural phenomena, such as past-life visions, recurring dreams, anomalous paintings, and revelations from secondary characters. These elements function as "connectors" between past and present existences, leading the characters toward self-realization.

In the middle section of both works, narrative tension is sustained through incremental information disclosure. The authors withhold complete truths, choosing instead to reveal evidence sequentially through events and dialogue. This technique creates suspense and maintains reader engagement by aligning the audience's discoveries with those of the protagonist.

Toward the resolution, both novels share a common climax: the full revelation of past-life truths, followed by a confrontation between the reincarnated figures, ultimately culminating in the resolution of vengeance through karmic retribution. Although the specific resolution mechanics differ, both stories share the same overarching trajectory: a journey from *ignorance* to *revelation*, concluding with the *cessation of karmic debt*.

Furthermore, both novels position romantic love as the origin of conflict. Past-life love that ended in betrayal and murder necessitates a reunion in the present life. Consequently, the plot is driven primarily by interpersonal relationships rather than external events, allowing readers to observe character emotional development and grasp karmic concepts deeply.

While *Phitsawat* introduces major contextual shifts such as relocating the historical setting from Ancient Egypt to Ayutthaya, recontextualizing character backgrounds to fit Thai history, and infusing Buddhist philosophy the core structural framework clearly derives from *Ziska*.

Table 1: Comparison of Plot Architecture between *Ziska* and *Phitsawat*

Analytical Dimension	<i>Ziska</i> (Kong Kwian)	<i>Phitsawat</i>	Nature of Influence
Opening	Begins with the appearance of a mysterious woman.	Begins with the appearance of a mysterious woman.	Highly Consistent
Inciting Incident	Past-life love, betrayal, and murder.	Past-life love, betrayal, and murder.	Highly Consistent
Plot Progression	Sequential revelation of truth.	Sequential revelation of truth.	Direct Influence
Temporal Connectors	Dreams, paintings, and supernatural phenomena.	Dreams, paintings, visions, and supernatural phenomena.	Similar Patterns
Climax / Resolution	Past-life truths revealed; karmic debt repaid.	Past-life truths revealed; vengeance resolved.	Adapted to Thai Context
Ending	Judgment by karmic consequences.	Forgiveness and karmic resolution combined.	Re-aligned with Buddhist Philosophy

Table 1 demonstrates that both novels share near-identical narrative structures across all phases. The primary distinction lies in the ending of *Phitsawat*, which was recalibrated to align with Buddhist doctrine and Thai cultural values, illustrating creative adaptation rather than literal imitation.

2. Distinctive Characteristics and Characterization in *Ziska* and *Phitsawat*

The analysis of characterization shows that *Phitsawat* drew significant influence from *Ziska* regarding character roles, archetypes, structural functions, and interpersonal dynamics. The author adapted these character models to fit Thai societal norms, enhancing realism and cultural resonance while preserving their essential narrative functions.

The primary characters in both works comprise a female lead, a male lead, and a truth-revealing secondary character whose interactions drive the narrative toward resolution.

1) The Female Lead

Both female leads share striking similarities: they are mysteriously beautiful, elegant, commanding, and enigmatic. Princess Ziska in *Ziska* and Sarochini in *Phitsawat* are both spirits of women killed by their lovers in past lives, returning to resolve unfulfilled vengeance.

However, the author of *Phitsawat* refined Sarochini's character to reflect Thai ideals of womanhood. Beyond her steadfast love, Sarochini embodies unyielding loyalty to her nation, religion, and monarch taking on the duty of protecting the realm, a dimension absent in Princess Ziska. Furthermore, Sarochini experiences complex internal struggles between "love" and "vengeance," making her emotionally multifaceted and reflective of the Buddhist principle of letting go (*Upekkha* / Renunciation).

2) The Male Lead

The male leads in both novels serve identical structural functions: individuals who committed past-life transgressions and must face their karmic consequences in the present.

Armand Gervase in *Ziska* represents a man driven by passion and ambition, leading to the betrayal and murder of his lover. In *Phitsawat*, Akkanee plays a similar structural role as the bearer of past-life karma. However, the author developed Akkanee with greater human depth, emphasizing remorse, self-awareness, and acceptance of his karmic debt, rather than depicting him solely as a recipient of punishment. This growth highlights themes of redemption and forgiveness.

3) The Truth-Revealing Character

Both novels incorporate a secondary character who bridges past and present, enabling the lead characters to comprehend supernatural occurrences.

In *Ziska*, Dr. Maxwell Dean studies Ancient Egypt and supernatural phenomena, offering intellectual explanations for extraordinary events. In *Phitsawat*, Chetha uses historical evidence and investigative reasoning to link past and present occurrences. Though their specific approaches differ, both characters fulfill the same narrative function: resolving mysteries and establishing narrative plausibility for supernatural elements.

4) Interpersonal Relationships

The relational dynamics in both works progress along a shared trajectory: originating from *love*, devolving into *vengeance*, and resolving through *karmic truth*.

In both narratives, the female lead endures a long period of waiting, while the male lead initially lacks past-life memory. This asymmetry generates emotional conflict until the truth is revealed, shifting their dynamic from fear, suspicion, and hatred toward acceptance and karmic closure.

Table 2: Comparison of Characterization between *Ziska* and *Phitsawat*

Character Archetype	Ziska (Kong Kwian)	Phitsawat	Analytical Findings
Female Lead	Princess Ziska	Sarochini	Enigmatic female leads who died in past lives and return to settle karmic debt.
Male Lead	Armand Gervase	Akkanee	Perpetrators of past sins who must confront karmic retribution.
Truth-Revealer	Dr. Maxwell Dean	Chetha	Explains supernatural phenomena and links past to present.
Relational Dynamic	Love leading to betrayal and revenge.	Love leading to vengeance and forgiveness.	Structural alignment in relationship dynamics.
Character Arc	Focuses on karmic retribution/punishment.	Focuses on remorse, repentance, and letting go.	<i>Phitsawat</i> expands concepts to align with Buddhist doctrine.

2 illustrates that character functions in both novels align across multiple dimensions. However, *Phitsawat* introduces greater character complexity by embedding Buddhist philosophy and Thai cultural values into their arcs, demonstrating creative synthesis over direct copy.

DISCUSSION

1. Discussion of Objective 1: To Analyze the Influence of *Ziska* on *Phitsawat*

The findings confirm that *Phitsawat* was directly influenced by *Ziska* across plot structure, characterization, setting, narrative techniques, and core themes. Key shared elements include bridging past and present through supernatural phenomena, introducing a mysterious female protagonist seeking closure, employing incremental truth disclosure via dreams and artifacts, and using karma and reincarnation as central thematic anchors.

However, the findings also demonstrate that the author of *Phitsawat* did not engage in literal copying. Instead, key structural components were selectively adapted to resonate with Thai historical, cultural, and religious contexts. Changes included shifting the historical backdrop from Ancient Egypt to the Ayutthaya period, grounding the story in Thai historical events, aligning character motivations with Thai societal values, and weaving Buddhist principles into the plot.

This demonstrates that literary influence is not mere imitation, but rather a creative process of selection, transformation, and recontextualization. Through this process, *Phitsawat* maintained its distinct identity while drawing foundational strength from *Ziska*.

2. Discussion of Objective 2: To Examine the Distinctive Characteristics of *Ziska* and *Phitsawat*

Despite shared structural elements, both novels possess distinct characteristics reflecting their authors' cultural backgrounds and philosophical worldviews.

Ziska is distinguished by its critique of Western society, its exploration of karmic consequences, and its heavy reliance on Ancient Egyptian mysticism and afterlife beliefs, resulting in a gothic-philosophical mystery novel.

Conversely, *Phitsawat* excels in localized adaptation. By embedding the narrative within Ayutthayan history, it highlights themes of patriotism, loyalty to the monarchy, and the Buddhist maxim that "*hatred is never ceased by hatred, but by love alone*" (Nahi Verena Verani). Unlike *Ziska*, which focuses heavily on punitive retribution, *Phitsawat* emphasizes forgiveness and spiritual release. Furthermore, the title *Phitsawat* deeply encompasses love, tragedy, vengeance, and karmic consequences, cementing the novel's literary value and enduring popularity in Thai society. In summary, while *Phitsawat* derived foundational influence from *Ziska*, its synthesis of Thai history, Buddhist cosmology, and unique literary craftsmanship establishes it as an independent and culturally significant masterpiece.

CONCLUSION

This study, titled *The Influence of the Novel "Ziska" on "Phitsawat"*, aimed to examine the literary influence and distinct characteristics of both works. The findings reveal that *Phitsawat* was directly influenced by *Ziska* across multiple dimensions, including plot architecture, characterization, setting and atmosphere, narrative techniques, and core thematic concepts.

Both novels exhibit striking structural similarities. The narratives open with the appearance of a mysterious woman connected to the male protagonist's past life. The plot progresses through the incremental disclosure of past events via dreams, memories, artwork, and supernatural occurrences, ultimately culminating in the resolution of central conflicts and karmic retribution. Furthermore, both authors employ structurally parallel characters, select historically significant settings to evoke mystery, use poetic devices and symbolic elements to bridge past and present existences, and reflect shared themes of karma, love, vengeance, and reincarnation.

However, despite these influences, the author of *Phitsawat* skillfully adapted and expanded the source material to align with Thai societal contexts. By seamlessly integrating Thai history, cultural norms, and Buddhist doctrines, *Phitsawat* achieved a distinct creative identity that highlights unique Thai literary values. Meanwhile, *Ziska* remains an influential foundational prototype in Thai literary history, illustrating the dynamic process of adopting, reinterpreting, and recontextualizing foreign literary influences into culturally valuable creative works.

Recommendations

Practical Recommendations

1. **Educational Application:** The findings can serve as instructional material in courses such as Thai Literature, Comparative Literature, and Translated Literature to help students understand literary transmission, adaptation processes, and creative recontextualization across differing cultural contexts.
2. **Literary Creation:** Authors and creative writers can utilize this study as a guide for creative adaptation learning how to draw inspiration from prototype works without resorting to imitation, while tailoring content to align with contemporary social, cultural, and ideological values.

3. **Public Promotion and Advocacy:** Educational institutions, libraries, and reading advocacy organizations can disseminate these findings to foster public appreciation for comparative literature, cross-cultural exchanges, and the broader values embedded in literary traditions.

Academic Recommendations

1. **Comparative Expansion:** Future studies should undertake comparative analyses between *Ziska* (*Kong Kwian*) and other Thai novels centered on themes of past lives, karmic beliefs, or supernatural phenomena to map broader patterns of literary influence.
2. **Transmedia Adaptation Analysis:** Scholars should investigate adaptations of *Phitsawat* across other media formats such as television dramas, feature films, or digital media to examine how narrative elements, character arcs, and core themes are translated into contemporary media and received by modern audiences.
3. **Theoretical Integration:** Future research should incorporate alternative theoretical frameworks, such as Intertextuality, Adaptation Theory, or Literary Influence Theory, to offer multi-faceted perspectives and further enrich the field of comparative literature.

REFERENCES

- Corelli, M. (1970). *Kong kwian* [Ziska] (A. Amarawadee, Trans.; 3rd ed.). Phrae Phittaya.
- Fine Arts Department. (1977). *Prawat nakkhian* [Biographies of writers]. Religious Affairs Press.
- Ladda Thanathattakam. (n.d.). *Khon chiwin cha sin fai* [Before life's flame expires]. Saengdao.
- Nachat Prachachuen. (2015, June 22). *Roo pai mot* [Ask anything] column. Khaosod Online. http://daily.khaosod.co.th/view_news.php?newsid=TURONWIZVXdOakExTVRJMU1BPT0=&ionid=Y25Wd1lXbHRiMIJs&day=TWpBd055MHhNaTB3TIE9PQ
- Thamayanti. (2015a). *Phitsawat* (Vol. 1, 12th ed.). Na Ban Wannakam.
- Thamayanti. (2015b). *Phitsawat* (Vol. 2, 12th ed.). Na Ban Wannakam.
- Wannachai Phinet. (1996). *Kan sueksaเปรียบเทียบนิยายผจญภัยเรื่อง King Solomon's Mines กับนิยายเรื่อง Phet Phra Uma* [A comparative study of the adventure novel King Solomon's Mines and Phet Phra Uma] [Master's thesis, Mahasarakham University].
- Winita Dittthayan. (n.d.). *Itthiphon khong Marie Corelli to wannakam Thai* [The influence of Marie Corelli on Thai literature]. n.p.
- Angkana Sukwiset. (2001). *Nawaniyai naeo suepsuanสอบสวน: Itthiphon khong chut Sherlock Holmes thi mi to chut Poirot lae Nithan Thong-In* [Detective fiction: The influence of the Sherlock Holmes series on the Poirot series and Nithan Thong-In] [Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University].