

Murder Case Dismissed in Killing of Thai Woman from Denmark

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The coffin decorated in traditional Thai style with photos of Duangsamorn. Now the parents demand that the witch doctor will pay for the funeral costs. Plus one million baht!

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<http://scandasia.com/witch-doctor-convicted-of-murder-of-thai-danish-woman/>

A gruesome murder of a Thai woman, who lived 22 years in Denmark, reached on Wednesday 27 June a new stage. The provincial court in Samutprakarn south of Bangkok dismissed the case against her two alleged killers on the grounds that the key witnesses – the parents of the 42 year old woman – had changed their testimony too many times for their evidence to be credible.

The public prosecutor had tried to prove that the murder was committed by a witch doctor and his assistant while allegedly trying to beat an evil spirit out of the body of the woman. The witch doctor, Mr. Sombat, and his Chinese assistant, Mrs Li-chu, denied that they used any form of violence against the woman.

The judge read the changing statements given by the parents first on the day their daughter had died in January last year, then again when they were questioned ten days later and finally last month more than a year later when summoned as witnesses in the court. The story was different on several points and the father and mother even had conflicting versions of what happened.

What remains clear is, that when Duangsamorn suddenly collapsed that morning on 14 January 2011 in

front of the witch doctor's altar it was not a natural death. When her dead body was examined at the police hospital in Bangkok the doctors found marks from severe beating and kicking all over her body. The photos show that no part of her body was spared. The cause of death was an internal injury, as her liver had been ruptured by the violent treatment.

In the ruling announced by the judge today, the court did, however, not find these marks consistent with the ritual sticks found by the altar, which the prosecution had claimed were used to inflict the injuries.

The public prosecutor now has one month to decide if they wish to appeal the court's decision. According to the lawyer, it is most likely that they will use this option and appeal the dismissal of the case.

In a surprise move, the lawyer of the defendant Mr. Sombat and Mrs. Li-chu was immediately after the ruling contacted by a lawyer hired by Duangsamorn's parents who informed him, that they had just filed a civil lawsuit against Mr Sombat and Mrs. Li-chu. They demanded compensation for the loss of their daughter of 1 million Thai baht, plus compensations for costs incurred of 130,000 baht.

All about the money

This new civil lawsuit reveals with brutal clarity that the whole incident, which in the end cost Duangsamorn her life, was all about money.

In Copenhagen, where Duangsamorn moved when she was 20 years old to marry a Danish man, she had for some years been running an open sandwich shop. It was located in Classensgade in Copenhagen and was reasonably successful so she had decided that she wanted to expand the shop.

To finance the expansion, she would mortgage the house she owned in Khon Kaen which her Danish husband had bought for her years ago. She had been living so long in Denmark that she didn't think it would constitute a problem that her parents lived in the house and they considered it their house, disregarding the fact that it was owned by their daughter.

It is easy to imagine their shock and disbelief when they learned that Duangsamorn was about to put their house at risk for a loan in the bank – an unthinkable act for a good Thai daughter.

Meeting the parents in their home in Khon Kaen – now registered in her mother's name – they claim that she was mentally disturbed from the day she arrived. Evidence points, however, more to the fact that she became disturbed only after the parents learned about her plans to mortgage the house and tried to keep her in their home until she would reveal, where she had hidden the land title deed.

During an interview with the parents in their home, she also said they were upset that Duangsamorn had hidden all the money that she had brought with her from Denmark, before coming home.

One of her friends in Denmark comments, that apparently Duangsamorn had not forgotten that last time she visited the family, her mother had gone through her suitcase and decided to "keep her money safe" for her. She never saw it again as her mother had lent it to her brother-in-law – a police officer who during a previous visit had pulled his pistol and threatened her Danish husband to shoot him.

The first days in Bangkok

Duangsamorn left Denmark on New Years Eve the 31 December 2010. Her husband in Denmark – whom she had a few years ago divorced but at this time had moved back to live with – sent her off to the airport together with a Thai friend.

Next morning, Saturday 1 January 2011, her flight TG951 landed 6.30 in Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport.

She had told friends before her departure that she would go to make merit at Wat Rachathiwat temple in Bangkok and when talking to this friend on the phone from Bangkok, Duangsamorn confirmed that this was what she did. Other information indicates that she was picked up from the airport together with a monk that travelled with her.

“We didn’t know she was coming to Thailand,” her mother says.

“We didn’t know until we got a call from her friend in Denmark. It seems she had gone to the temple with this monk she knew, who had been in Denmark and Sweden,” she added.

Monday 3 January, the parents and other family members went to pick her up at Khon Kaen airport after she had told them that she would be coming.

“She was blurred in her head. It was difficult to understand, what she was saying,” her mother recalled.

“She was crazy, all the following days she didn’t sleep at night and didn’t eat – she only drank a little water sometimes. She was sick all the time until the day she died,” she added.

Spending money

Evidence shows, however, that Duangsamorn on the day she arrived hosted her family to a splendid dinner at the nearby airport hotel, where she paid over the bill of over 3.000 baht with her Danish Nordea bank card.

The following days, she had also been on two shopping sprees with her brother in the local Robinson department store, paying for their purchases with the credit card. She also used her credit card to pay 14.760 baht for four new wheels for her father’s car, signing the slip herself.

Over the next week she further took out 30.000 baht in cash from ATM machines in town.

Asked how a sick person could spend all this money, her mother admitted that sometimes she was almost OK.

“But she got worse and worse,” she said.

Her father added to the interview, that when in the home, Duangsamorn had mostly been sitting upstairs meditating.

“I saw her sitting there and noticed she was stroking affectionately the head of a monk in a picture she had, imagine what a sin she committed doing that,” he added.

When the talk about mortgaging the house started is not clear. But apparently, the issue of the land title deed soon became hot.

Desperation sets in

On Sunday 9 January, around midnight, the parents put Duangsamorn in their car and drove all night through to Wat Khao Sukim, a temple in Chantaburi 470 km south of Khon Kaen.

At the temple Duangsamorn met with the monk that the parents refer to as the “older” monk – compared to the younger monk of the two monks that showed up at her funeral the week after.

Duangsamorn and the monk spoke briefly – but nothing seems to have been cleared. They were told that they could meet again later, but in the afternoon, her parents instead decided to put Duangsamorn back in the car and drive all the 470 km back to Khon Kaen.

During Monday Duangsamorn got more and more sick, her mother said.

Tuesday 11 January in the morning, Duangsamorn tried to escape from the house.

“She suddenly jumped over to the fence and climbed over it and into the street. We had blocked the door and gate, so she couldn’t get out that way,” her father said.

“She was wearing her night dress and was running down the road. We had to run after her and drag her

back into the house. She was completely crazy!”

Later that morning, Duangsamorn’s sister took her to the Ram hospital in Khon Kaen because she complained about pain in her stomach. After the hospital examination she drove her back to the parents’ house.

Ram Hospital confirms that Duangsamorn was checked there that morning. The time in the journal says 10 o’clock. But the hospital could not reveal the name of the doctor and any details of the examination as this was available only for family members. The doctor was not called as a witness during the court hearing, so it is not known if she was showing any signs of violent beatings already at this time.

Help from the witch doctor

On Wednesday 12 January, Duangsamorn’s parents put her in the car and drove to Bangkok to meet Mr. Sombat, the witch doctor they knew from when he previously lived in Petchabun. He had a reputation for being very successful in his treatments against evil spirits.

Mr. Sombat recalls how surprised was, when the parents had pulled up in front of his shop house in Samutprakarn where he today operates a car repair shop on the ground floor and on the fourth floor has his spirit treatment room and altar.

“I had treated Duangsamorn one time already – that was four years ago. She had been using black magic and it had backfired on her,” Mr. Sombat remembered.

“I cured her and afterwards I told her to be more careful using black magic. If you use magic to control a man and at the same time you are unfaithful to that man, it is an opening for an evil spirit to enter and take possession of you,” he explained.

Duangsamorn’s mother remembers that treatment well.

“Mr. Sombat came to our home with all his ingredients of Buddha images and smoke and holy water and drove the evil spirit out of her that time by prayers and spiritual commands,” she recalls.

Asked, if he had at that time used any form of violence, she says:

“No, he didn’t beat her with anything.”

This time, when Duangsamorn was brought to him in Samutprakarn, Mr. Sombat was worried about her state.

“She was acting very strangely. In the car she sat with a blanket over her head. When she got into the house, she was agitated. She asked to use the bathroom, where she got into a fit of rage, pulling out a pipe and smashing the tiles on the walls. When we broke through the door she was trying to push the pipe up in her vagina.”

“I saw her mother had some pills, but when I asked to see what she had given her, she didn’t show me. She said it was prescribed by the hospital in Khon Kaen.”

Eventually Duangsamorn calmed down. Mr. Sombat washed her with holy water and after their dinner together, they all slept. Duangsamorn and her parents slept on the floor in front of the altar on the fourth floor, he slept downstairs.

The evil spirit treatment

Thursday 13 January, they all stayed in the house. Duangsamorn had at one time got into a rage. She had kicked in a door – which was not yet repaired during the interview – and had raced up the stairs in the house looking for a way out.

“Luckily the door out to the balcony was locked with a padlock, so she couldn’t get out and jump,” Mr.

Sombat said.

They had tried to catch her, but she had jumped away from them, then fell on the stairs and rolled down eight concrete stairs and landed on the concrete floor.

In the evening, Mr. Sombat had given Duangsamorn the main treatment.

He had washed her with holy water, then laid her down on the floor on her back, tying her wrists to the left railing and the right railing in front to the altar like in a crucifixion. Her father had held her legs down.

“Standing over her, I commanded the evil spirit to leave her body. I stroked her with my feet gently from her breast and down, chanting the prayers. It seemed to calm her down. She started talking normally. Then her father and mother started demanding that she told them where the money was hidden and where the land title was.”

“I was confused. I didn’t at that time understand what this had to do with anything,” Mr. Sombat told.

“When she didn’t reply her father got angry and started beating her and kicking her. I told him to stop. Her mother told him also to stop saying “we can take care of this at home” as Mr. Sombat recalled it.

That evening, Mr Sombat said he took the ritual sticks – among others an iron rod covered by the skin from a stingray tail – that he kept near the altar down in the room below. He said he was worried that the father would beat her with them.

OK, I will tell you...

The morning Duangsamorn died, Friday 14 January, Mr. Sombat says he woke up as Duangsamorn’s mother came running down the stairs telling him to hurry upstairs. She was afraid that Duangsamorn was about to get out on the balcony and jump.

When he came up, Duangsamorn sat next to a door with iron bars blocking the exit from the ritual room to the balcony outside, clutching and fumbling with the lock.

“She was trying to get out but she was very weak. She said that she could not take it anymore.”

“I lifted her to her feet and led her back to the parents. She sat down in front of the sofa chair and complained of pain in the stomach and chest. But when she got something to eat, she became quite normal to talk to.”

“Her mother then started again about where the money was. Duangsamorn said if she would just let her finish eating she would tell her. Then she suddenly collapsed.”

“It was scary to see how fast after she died that her skin turned all greenish or blue,” he recalls

Li-chu was there that morning. She had been cooking the rice soup they had for breakfast and had gone down to get Duangsamorn some more when she died. It was Li-chu that went to the local police station in person to report the death.

When she came back, Duangsamorn’s mother had instead called her son-in-law, the police officer. After the incidence with Duangsamorn’s Danish husband, he had been transferred to a district in Bangkok. To Li-chu’s surprise, he had already arrived.

“When the Samutprakarn police came shortly after, he told them to leave the case to him and after they had talked a bit, they left and went back to the station. He then took photos all over the house, but didn’t ask us anything about what had happened,” Mr. Sombat says.

When they left, the son-in-law had called in a rescue car from his own district and they took the body to be examined at the Police Hospital in Bangkok.

“The last thing the mother said was, that as they all knew how it had happened, she would not press charges. The son-in-law also seemed anxious to close the case,” Mr. Sombat recalls.

Possibly, the findings at the autopsy made this impossible.

Secret travel plans

The next day, Duangsamorn’s parents picked up her body from the hospital and drove her back to Khon Kaen, where they held funeral rites over her the next five days.

The funeral took place on Thursday 20 January. Somehow the two monks had been informed.

“They came by themselves,” Duangsamorn’s mother recalls.

“Both old monk who travels around and inspects Thai Buddhist temples all over the world and the young monk from Sweden. I don’t know how they found out about the funeral. We didn’t invite them.”

The younger monk had brought a red sports bag with Duangsamorn’s belongings, among others some clothes and the title deed. Bringing the bag from the house to show how it looked, it turned out that the parents still kept some of her things in it. Among others her unused air ticket back to Denmark.

Checking the ticket, it turned out that Duangsamorn had travel plans that she had not shared with anybody else. Her ticket included a flight to Phuket on 21 January and back on 24 January and then the flight back to Copenhagen four days later on 28 January. Who should have been part of this vacation to Phuket was not noted anywhere on her papers.

All about the money

The interview ended about money matters. The parents asked if they should not in fact inherit the money from Duangsamorn’s sandwich shop in Copenhagen that now had probably been sold?

I suggested that her husband in Denmark had probably kept what was left of the estate in Denmark just like they had kept all her valuables that she had brought with her to Thailand.

“But they were divorced,” her mother argued.

“In Denmark if you have lived together for two years, I believe it is considered like a marriage, and they had moved back living together,” I speculated back.

The parents started guessing how many millions her shop would be worth.

I added that actually their house in which we were sitting – now registered in the mother’s name – was bought during the marriage, so maybe the Danish husband was actually entitled to inherit that as well.

Then they all got upset and said he couldn’t claim anything and actually he shouldn’t claim anything, he should instead send money to help pay the cost of the funeral.

This cost is what they now try to get Mr. Sombat to compensate through the civil lawsuit.



The witch doctor's altar where Duangsamorn was tied with one wrist to the railing to the left and the other to the railing to the right. But apparently the treatment was otherwise not violent so she must have sustained her fatal injuries in another way.



The younger and the older international Buddhist monks that came to the funeral although the family had not informed them of the death.