

The Present Stage of Knowledge on “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”

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Abstract

“Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”, a royal composition in His Majesty King Phutthaloetla Naphalai, is one of Thailand’s important traditional literatures. It has been more specially praised than other literatures, as it is also considered a “textbook”. Many academics and students have studied it in several aspects, including (1) the history and the connection to other editions of Inao, (2) performances and adaptations based on the literature, (3) language, literary arts, and communications, (4) characters, (5) social and cultural conditions, and (6) others. Since literature and politics have been inseparably connected, throughout the past four decades many Thai literatures have been examined to find what political contexts are infused between the lines and what are the implications. However, it appears that “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” has not been studied in such contexts, so it very much deserves such consideration.

Keywords: “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”, State of Knowledge, Literature Review

Primers of “Inao”: Before It Became “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”

Davisakd Puaksom (2017), in his book titled “A Genealogy of Inao: Questions of the Tongue, the Fluidity of Signs, and a Journey into the Panji World” which was adapted from his doctoral dissertation on “The Pursuit of Java: Thai Panji Stories, Melayu Lingua Franca and the Question of Translation” (Puaksom, 2007), as well as other studies on “Inao” or “Panji” (such as Rajanubhab, 1921: 77; Nivat, 1956: 113; Robson, 1996: 39; Robson & Changchit, 1999: 579; Salleh, 2009: 13; Kieven, 2017) agree that Inao was originated from East Java, or the area that has now become the country of Indonesia, during Majapahit Kingdom around the fourteenth century (Rai, 2013). This is before it was spread to other surrounding islands and the Malay Peninsula (Yousof, 2013), Thailand (Narkkong, 2013; Jatuthasri, 2013b), Burma (Mon, 2013), Laos (Jatuthasri, 2010, 2013a), Cambodia (Pakdekham, 2009, 2011), Singapore (Pong, 2013), and possibly even the Philippines⁴ (Puaksom, 2007: 40, 2017: 55). Based on the research by Salleh (2009: 13), Inao was originated locally, and it might have been born before important the Indian literatures, which have later played a very prominent role, “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata”. With its popularity throughout Southeast Asia, Inao is a source of shared culture in the region, or what Adrian Vickers (2005) calls “a Panji civilization in Southeast Asia”.

⁴ Reynaldo Ilete (cited in Puaksom, 2007: 40, 2017: 55) comments that we “can even add parts of the Philippines to this civilization, judging from structural, thematic and other affinities between the Panji and the Tagalog “Adarna” tales.”



Figure 1 The Majapahit Empire

Source: Kieven (2017: 3)

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1921: 81-82) describes the history of Inao in Thailand starting with its first evidence, which appeared during the reign of King Barommakot over Ayuddhaya. The King's daughters, born with Her Royal Highness Sangwal, including Princess Gundhol and Princess Mongkut, had female aides, who were of Malay origins descended from war detainees from the township of Pattani. Pleased with these aides of Malay origin telling the story of Inao, each of the Princesses composed a play of Inao. Both telling the story of Inao, these plays, one called "Dalang" and the other called "Inao", are often known as the "Greater Tale of Inao" and the "Lesser Tale of Inao", respectively. Prince Dhani Nivat (1947: 101 cited in Puaksom, 2007: 74, 2017: 72), on the other hand, has cited the statement of Adolf Bastian, a German academic who had travelled to study Khmer literature around the early nineteenth century, that "the epic Inao was brought in by Yaiyavo, a moslem woman, to Ayudha and thereafter translated from Javanese into Siamese by Prince Chao Kasat-kri for presentation on the stage."

However, when Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand (2009: preface) went to stay in Bandung, Indonesia following the Siamese revolution of 1932, he translated "Panji Semirang" from the original in the Malay language, and found that it is consistent with the Thai version of Inao only in terms of the names of the towns, the names of the people, and the names of the family and that it is quite different from the Thai version in terms of the story in comparison with either the Greater Tale of Inao or the Lesser Tale of Inao. The reason behind the differences between versions may have been because people who first told the story in Siam could not remember what the story actually was to the extent that the plot was distorted from the original, but this reasoning seems implausible because the differences are too stark to have been attributed simply to a failure of memory. Rather, it may be reasoned that the early audience of the story in Siam found that the original plot line as published into a book was not sufficiently enjoyable, and eventually adapted the story as they felt pleased. Another possible reasoning is that there have been many stories having shared this similar plot, spawning into many versions. It is believed that the latter reasoning is highly likely.

This conclusion is also consistent with the suggestion of Puaksom (2007: 74, 2017: 72) that it is highly plausible that the Panji tale may have spread into Thailand via the several Java communities in Ayuddhaya. Particularly, Thaneerat Jatuthasri (2009: 323; 2015: 213) suggests that when comparing the Thai version of Inao and the 33 editions of the Java-Malay Panji tales, it can be inferred that the Panji tale upon which the Thai version of Inao is based

may not be singular but various editions may have been mixed to make the Thai version of Inao, as it appears that none of the Panji editions has the story that for the most part matches Inao specifically. Rather, the Thai version of Inao is, here and there, consistent with one edition of Panji or another; some are consistent with the Java version, the Bali version, or the Malay version. Moreover, Ayuddhaya and Java has a long-established relationship in various forms, and there is evidence that the Java performance arts were admitted as part of the royal entertainment. In a document of a French missionary written by Gabriel Braud, it is stated that King Petaraja was so especially pleased with the Java dance that he requested for assistance from the Dutch East Indian Company to bring in Java dancers from the Mataram King (currently Yogyakarta of Indonesia) (Jatuthasri, 2009: 56). For that evidence, Jatuthasri felt that the Panji tale coming in during the Ayuddhaya era may not have arrived via Malayu through the township of Pattani as previously believed, but may have arrived from Java as well. The plays, Dalang and Inao, written by the two princesses in His Majesty Barommakot (or even Prince Chao Kasat-kri, as suggested by Prince Dhani Nivat-author) should, therefore, have the origin and derive their inspirations from several editions and sources of Panji tales, or both Java and Malay, rather than solely from the edition told by the royal aides from Pattani (Jatuthasri, 2009: 58).

In consideration of the material from “Bunnawat Kham Chan” by Maha Nak at Ta Sai Temple during the reign of King Barommakot, “Inao Kham Chan”, written by Chao Phraya Phrakhlung (Hon) when he was still Luang Sorawichit during the Thonburi era, as well as the poetry and the drawing early in the establishment of Ratanakosin, they all referred to the Lesser Tale of Inao. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1921: 83-85), therefore, pointed out the Lesser Tale of Inao has long received greater praises than Dalang or the Greater Tale of Inao since the Ayuddhaya era, and thereafter Plueng Na Nakorn (2002: 288) also pointed out that since the poetry of Dalang or the Greater Tale of Inao was still rough, and the title and the name of the characters were not familiar, it has not received much popularity.

However, together with the collapse of Ayuddhaya in 1767, the original draft of “Sepha Khun Chang-Khun Phaen”, which may have actually existed (Jermittiparsert, 2013: 87) as well as other literatures, including both the Greater Tale of Inao and the Lesser Tale of Inao, were also destroyed or lost (Wirawong, 2015: 230), before later getting reconstructed, reproduced, or reworked by a committee of court poets presided over by King Phutthayotfa Chulalok (Rama I) (Puaksom, 2007: 43-44, 2017: 59-60) into “Dalang” (Chulalok, 1971) and “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” (Chulalok, 1966). King Rama I did fix the composition but only for the parts that were defective (Rajanubhab, 1921: 106), which means that the whole composition ended up being incongruent and unfit for theater. King Phutthaloetla Naphalai (Rama II), therefore, redid the entire composition with an intention for this composition to be the basis for use in the future (Rajanubhab, 1921: 112-113).

In this regard, King Phutthaloetla Naphalai selected the royal family members and the government officials who had expertise in poetry to serve as consultants, for example, King Nangklao (Rama III) when he was still Kromma Muen Chesadabodin, Prince Jui, and Sunthorn Phu. His Majesty King Phutthaloetla Naphalai’s composition method was to ask the consultant poets to take responsibilities for sections that he would not compose by himself, and the sections which the King already composed or the poets finished would be read in the meeting of poets, where further improvements may be made to the composition (Rajanubhab, 1921: 114-115). When the composition was finished, the King may ask Prince Jui to bring out a mirror, in front of which the King would choreograph and rehearse the corresponding dancing. He would also consult with Mister Tongyu and Mister Rung to adjust the choreography until it became satisfactorily beautiful. If parts of the poets remained unsatisfactory, adjustments may be made to the composition. When Prince Jui finally decided

on the choreography, he would rehearse it with Mister Tongyu and Mister Rung, so that they could practice the royal performance at the Rim Ton Son theater and practice it with King Phutthaloetla Naphalai in the audience. The King may critique the choreography once again, and it was here that the performance would be considered settled into certain formats (Rajanubhab, 1921: 119-120).

For “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”, which was considered the composition of King Phutthaloetla Naphalai (2000), Prince Damrong Rajanubhab explained that, originally, Doctor Smith at Bangkokorlam has obtained the draft of Somdet Chaophraya Sri Suriwongse, which was published and released in 1874. Other publishers then took after Doctor Smith, without examining the original draft, and it was critiqued that there were many discrepancies from the original. Also, if this was allowed without any resolution with the original, it was feared that the composition would be damaged. Chaophraya Phra Sadet Surenrathibodi (Pia Malakul), when he was still Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, the director-general of the Department of Education, then initiated collecting King Rama II’s composition of Inao, and intended for the composition to be examined and permanently published. This was not successful, with the work only reaching where Inao enters Jintara’s room at the township of Manya. It was not until the end to the reign of King Rama V in 1913 that the composition, as far as it had been collected, was published (Naphalai, 2000: b-c).

When King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) asked the Committee of the Vajirayan National Library to gather the royal compositions and publish them as the national record, the Committee gathered, cleaned, and published the compositions in King Rama II, leaving unpublished only Inao, because Inao constituted a large volume that the National Library could not publish by its own resources and there was no offer to publish the issue. In 1920, the King’s aunt, who was also the mother of Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand, Sukumala Marasri Agararajadhevi, wished to publish Inao as a party favor for her birthday. In 1921, the Committee, therefore, published “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”, a composition in King Rama II, the Vajirayan National Library edition, by editing from four of the editions in total, including (1) the official publication belonging to King Rama V, (2) the edition belonging to Sukumala Marasri Agrarajadhevi, (3) the edition of Chaophraya Phra Sadet, and (4) the edition of the National Library (some gathered from the books of the royal palace while some gathered from the book of Somdet Chaopraya Borompichaiyati), with Prince Damrong Rajanubhab and Prince Kalayanaprawat serving as editors. The Princes also asked Sukumala Marasri Agararajadhevi to also assist in the editing work. The editing method was that if the composition differed from one edition to another, the version according to the official publication would be upheld. If the wordings differed, the decision would be made based on the congruence of the texts (Naphalai, 2000: d-e).

The Importance of “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” in the Thai Society

It is anonymous that among the different editions of Inao in the Thai society⁵, “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”, the royal composition by King Rama II (which, from here on, would be called “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”) is the most pleasing (Sajjapan, 2002: 141), outstanding (Kloakliang, 2014: 30), well-known (Jatuthasri, 2009: 65), and praised (Puaksom, 2007: 46, 2017: 62). Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand (2009) praised it in the preface of “Inao, the

⁵ For instance “Dalang”, the royal composition in King Rama I (1971), the translated edition such as the “Chronicles of Inao, the Ari Nagara edition”, which Prince Damrong Rajanubhab asked Bin Abdullah (1977) to translate from the original Malay version in Yawi alphabet to the Thai language in 1918, “Inao, the translated edition from Hikayat Panji Semarang” by Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand (2009), “Inao Malay” which was translated and edited by Bongsprabandh (1987) from the Malay Panji tale “Prince Segelwanangpati”, and the newly-edited edition, including “Four Editions of Inao” which was edited by Thongbai Tanmanee (2008).

translation from Hikayat Panji Semirang” that “among the traditional Thai literatures, there is few that touched and caught our hearts more or as much as Inao... as the poetry was adapted to beautifully suit the use in theater; in term of dancing, it was created for unique and gorgeous dance; in term of group choreography, it was made so beautiful for the theater; in term of singing, it was arranged in ways that are so pleasing to the ears; in term of poetry, it was incomparably beautiful; in term of theater, it is complete with all five components of theater, (1) beautiful characters, (2) beautiful dancing, (3) beautiful singing, (4) beautiful music, and (5) beautiful poetry, which make for complete bliss and joy born from senses of vision and hearing.”

Along the same line, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab pointed out in “the explanation on Inao play, the Vachirayan National Library edition” that among the popular dancing plays, there seem to be no other plays that are equal to the King Rama II edition of Inao... because it is a well-written book in terms of plot, poetry, and theatrical designs. In fact, all compositions in King Rama II are all perfect, but in other compositions, His Majesty King Rama II only did compose when a royal play was scheduled, which is unlike Inao, where he did the entire composition himself” (Naphalai, 2000: a). For this reason, in 1916 the Royal Society of Literature rated “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” as one of the best eleven books⁶ and as being one of the top Thai dramas in verse (Ketmankit, 2015: 17).

Aside from such literary importance, “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” has also been considered by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab as being more textbook-like than other dancing plays, especially with regards to Thai traditions. Because the traditions appearing in the composition, such as the christening of a royal newborn, the royal funeral, the ceremony for state visits, the bathing ceremony, and the head-shaving ceremony, have all strictly been based on the royal traditions, with only slight adaptation to suit the story line, such as monks have been replaced with hermits. The composition was also founded upon the traditions prevalent in the country and the characteristics of the people at the time, which has made the composition highly educational for students of traditional Thai culture (Naphalai, 2000: a-b), as seen from the study of “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” in several dimensions, which would be later addressed.

Synthesis of Literature Relevant to “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”

An exploration of literature pertinent to “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” finds that most of them are domestic. Most are also dissertations of Master’s degrees in the Thai language or in education at two universities, including Chulalongkorn University and Srinakharinwirot University. They can be categorized into six major groups as follows.

1) On the history and the linkage with other editions of Inao, beside “Legend of the Inao Dance”, a composition in Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1921), which is the major explanation on the history of this literature in the Thai society, the research of this type tends to involve the history of Inao. For example, a doctoral dissertation on “A Study of the Dramatic Poems of the Panji Cycle in Thailand” by Khomkhai Nilprapassorn (1966) conducts a comparative study between “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” and “Dalang” and another three Malay Panji editions, and finds that “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” is similar to “the Chronicle of Inao, the Ari Nagara edition”. However, Rattiya Saleh (1988), in her master’s dissertation on “Panji Thai dalam Perbandingan dengan Cerita-cerita Panji Melayu”, compares “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” with nine editions of Malay Panji as well as “the Chronicle of Inao, the Ari Nagara edition”,

⁶The other ten books are: “Phra Lo” for the best in lilit; “Samutkhot” for chan; “Mahachat Klonthet” for kap (raiyao); “Khun Chang-Khun Phaen” for klon (sepha); “Sam Kok” for nithan (a story composed in prose); “Phraratchaphiti Sipsong Duan” for an essay; “Matthanaphatha, or the Romance of the Rose” for a drama in chan; “Huachai Nakrop” for a spoken drama; “Phranon Kam Luang” for a classical verse; and “Nithan Bengkholi” for a translated piece.

and finds that there are similarities and differences among them such that they may have been translated from or rooted in another edition of Panji that is older than the nine editions selected for the study.

Jatuthasri (2009) writes the doctoral dissertation on “Inao of King Rama II: The Making of the Panji Cycle into a Masterpiece of Thai Court Drama Literature”, where it is studied how “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” was strategically built into a top literature for the royal theater, and finds that, when compared with another 33 editions of Panji tales, “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” has maintained the plot of Java-Malay Panji tale as well as the consistency with the tradition of a literature for the royal theater, without conflicting with the Thai culture. In its construction, “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” was made into a literature for the royal theater in such a way that the tradition of Thai literature and Thai royal theater can be seamlessly infused with the Panji tale, reflecting the wisdom and the intellect of the poets in taking in and reconstructing a foreign story and its consequent success in creating unique joy and value in the final piece.

In addition, Jatuthasri (2010, 2013a) also attempts to point out that not only has the culture been imported into Thailand, Thailand also exported the culture and the civilization to neighboring countries, such as Laos, in the research “Thai and Lao Panji Stories: Connection with Distinction” and ““Inao” the Lao Panji Story: The Transformation of the Thai Panji Story into a Lao Literary Work”. The research finds that “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” is influential to the Lao edition of Panji tale as well as the Khmer edition, the latter claim of which Santi Pakdekham (2009, 2011) establishes in the research “Relationships between Early Thai and Khmer Plays” and “The Comparative Study of “Inao” in Thai and Khmer Versions”.

2) On performance and adaptations for different types of performance, Arada Sumitr (1973) explains in her master’s dissertation “Lakhon Nai of the Royal Court in the Reign of King Rama II”, which studies “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” as a literature for theater and finds that this literature is excellent for a dancing performance, and the composition can be interpreted in ways that corresponding royal theater can be enacted properly, beautifully, and joyfully. The literature is also of high value both in terms of materials and arts, which affect the mind and the intellect of the readers and the audience. Later master’s dissertations by, for example, Supavadee Potiwetchakul (1996), Rungnapha Chimput (1997), and Vanpinee Suksom (2002) limit their interests and study only the traditional uses of dance props, male weapon dance, and dance patterns, respectively.

As for the adaptations for other types of performance, the master’s dissertations of Jakasuraksha Jantrawong (2006) studies the adaptation of Inao to a television series script, which was broadcast on Channel 3 in 2003. It was found that the story, the characters, the scenes, and the language had been changed somewhat, but the television script can still fully maintain the main plot line, the main story, the feature of each character, and the beauty of the language, as well as the literary, philosophical, and performance-artistic values. This is similar to the research by Supak Mahavarakorn and Prit Supasetsiri (2012), “The Transformation of Inao”, which studies the adaptation of “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” to “Bot Cheracha” (the dialogue), “Bot Lakhon Duek Damban” (the Duek Damban dance drama play), and the television series “Sut Huachai Chaochai Thewada”. It is found that each of these editions still retains important features, including the plot, the main characters, and the important scenes of the original edition, while also creating features that suit the timing and the type of play of each edition.

3) On language, literary arts, and communication one of the first literatures to study “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” in these dimensions is the master’s dissertation “Is Dancing Play a Literature?” by Nilprapassorn (1954), where it is found that even though the dance play was

composed for the purpose of performance, it did not leave out the literary value. The composition still contains flavors that evoke emotions, beautiful and profound language, and various knowledge that lift a play script to the literature status.

Later studies on the subject are, for example, the master's dissertation of Nuanjan Rattanakorn (1974) on "Love Sayings from the Thai Literature in Poetry during the Reign of King Rama II of the Rattanakosin Era", which gathers and categorizes the love sayings from the Thai literature in poetry during the reign of King Rama II, including "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao", in order to create an index for searching. Yada Arunaveja (1983)'s "Comparisons in Lakhon Nai of King Rama II" finds that the metaphors in "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" stand out with the languages being simple, the meanings complete, and thoughts as well as visions clear. Werapan Chaikere (1990)'s "Communication in Thai Literature Inao" finds that the characters have various formats of communications; the messages are both of opinions and facts; the media are diverse, making them suitable to the various circumstances; and the communication is successful. Supatcharintara Watanapan (1994)'s "The Characteristics of Javanese and Malay Loanwords in the Thai Classical Plays Entitled of "Dalang" and "Inao"" finds that loanwords from the Javanese and the Malay languages are general words, except for some that had been borrowed from Sanskrit such that the pronunciation and the meaning have changed. Changes in loanwords also involve the changes in their syllable structure, such as a decrease or an increase in the number of syllables, a change in the pronunciation, and a change in the meaning. Supak Mahavarakorn (1997)'s "The Creation of Emotion in Inao of King Rama II" finds that "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" stands out in its building of touching emotions and its stirring the emotions of the readers, as its character-building, the dialogues, and the scenes are all so well-connected.

4) On characters, one of the first dissertations paying interests to studying the characters in "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" is "Kings in the Thai Literature" by Suwakon Chongtrakul (1970), which finds that the monarch appearing in this literature is not entirely ideal, but possesses both superior and inferior qualities, with more superior qualities than the inferior ones. Phiraphan Boonphokaew (1989), in his master's dissertation, on the "Behavior Analysis of Phra Wessandara, Phra Loh, Khun Phaen and I-Nao: An Ethics Approach" affirms the idea that Inao seems to be more like one of the common people and, therefore, exhibits both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. He also further analyzes that Inao can be said to possess one good behavior, while possess seven bad behaviors.

Aside from the abovementioned dissertations, more books and articles are found to have studied "Inao", including "Inao: The Outstandingly Gorgeous" and "Inao: Stubborn Thanks to Love" by Nida Meesuk (2003, 2005), "Inao: The Man who is Blind with Love" by Sunan Chanthawimalueng (2008), and "Inao: A Portrait of the Hero as Both Lover and Warrior" by Sasiras Sindhuvanik (2016). Some books and articles focus primarily on "Bussaba", especially the following four pieces, including "Bussaba" by Reunruetai Sajjapan (2002), "Bussaba: The One Whose Love Life is Destined" by Chanthawimalueng (2003a), "Unakan: A Combination of the Images of Thai Hero and Heroine" by Jatuthasri (2006), and "Read Inao: In Suspicion of "Bussabong" of "Bussaba"; What Cup are they?" by Pramin Khruathong (2015). Another literature concerns the analysis of Sriyatra and Wiyada, namely, "Sriyatra-Wiyada: Firm-hearted Man and Woman" by Chanthawimalueng (2003b).

5) On the society and the culture, the master's dissertation by Buangam Attapan (1974) on "An Analysis of Inu, a Classical Drama Written by Rama the Second, with an Emphasis on the General Conditions of Life as Portrayed by the Play" is one of the first literatures that has brought "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" to study in the social and the cultural dimensions. The author's analysis points to Thailand's royal traditions and the country's conditions and its citizens, while making connections to life in other countries (Java), which appears in the

literature. Similarly, the article by Meesuk (2004) on “The People in Inao”, which affirms that this literature can clearly reflect the Thai society, especially the people in the early Rattanakosin era. The master’s dissertation of Vassachon Reakwande (2005) on “An Analytical Study of Social and Cultural in “Inua” the Drama Composed by King Rama II” provides details on classes, interactions among members of the society, social institutions, social order, and culture, where it addresses issues of traditions, norms, and beliefs that appear in the literature.

Not only has Inao been explored in several literatures with regards to the social and the cultural conditions of Thailand, Puaksom (2007, 2017), starting from his doctoral dissertation, has attempted to bring out another aspect of this literature, that is, its serving as a cultural linkage within the traditional Southeast Asia, which is helpful in understanding the Java- Malay world as an important frame of mind for Thailand’s elite class when it comes to Java and Indonesia.

6) Beside the studies in the five aspects as summarized above, it is found that “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” has also been studied in other small aspects. For example, the master’s dissertation on “A Study of Inao for Teaching Thai Language” by Duangrudee Boonchan (1973) finds that the plot of “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” has shared some qualities with the folk play during the late Ayuddhaya era. It also contains outstanding languages, and reflects the image of elites during the Rattanakosin era as well as various norms. The research article on “The Development of a Role-Playing Game for Learning the Inao Story of Suk Kramang Kuning” by Panuwat Sirikan and Pongpipat Saitong (2017) constructs a learning game, assesses the satisfaction of the students in that game, and finds that the students are highly satisfied. “The Cave Scene or Bussaba Consults the Candle” by Stuart Robson and Prateep Changchit (1999) suggests that the “cave scene” is an original creation of a Thai author, so the ideas found there should be interpreted in light of the Thai culture. Another example is the article “Inao: Hundreds of Tricks, Love Attraction, and Classic Literature from “Java” to the “Siamese Royal Court”” by Wilairat Yongrot and Thawatchai Ongwuthivage (2012), which describes the wall murals at Somanasrajaworavihara Temple, Bangkok.

Political Thought: The Knowledge Gap of “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”

It is mostly agreeable that poetry is a part of Thai literature that was not born independently. Alternatively, it can be said that it was not born from the emptiness. (Rohrberger, 1968: 8 cited in Sattayawatthana, 2007: 50) but born from the social, the political, and the cultural contexts (Wirawong, Attaviriyapap, Nagavajara, Kweng, Sangkrachang, Chitchamnong, Imsamran, Watpada, Masawisut, Sajjapan & Khamson, 2001: 3). With the reason known or unknown to the poets themselves, the poets may be influenced by the society, which may be why the social influence can always be noticed in the literature (Siwasariyanon, 2001: 205- 206). Chonthira Sattayawatthana (2007: 50) expresses her confidence in this regard that “regardless of the nationality or the language of the literature, every literature is always born to respond to the various human needs”, and the matter is only that what the literature is “for” or “against” (Arpornsuwan, 2013: 23) even in terms of the national security (Suwannarat, 1977).

Particularly, for politics, Somkiat Wanthana (1981: 415-416) suggests that the literature may be a channel to study history of the schools of thought in Thailand, and if it is seriously studied, it may provide a more interesting result than other sources because the materials describing the society at any given time may appear in the literature more than in other documents. Nidhi Eoseewong (2012: 6-7), emphasizing on the value of literature with regards to the study of history in the Rattanakosin era, suggests that the literature serves as a mirror that reflects the society based on which the literature is constructed, and this mirror reflects

only some important parts of the society, including the feelings in people's hearts and the norms in that certain era. Even though these issues are important, they are not often addressed in the writings of the Thai people because they are not popular issues among the Thai people. The literature that reflects the norms, the feelings, and the visions of people in various eras, without the intention of the writers, therefore, serves as valuable evidence in the study of history of schools of thought, of which other evidence may be difficult to find.

The book "Political Thoughts and the Thai Society"⁷ by Sombat Chanthrawong and Chai-Anan Samudavanija (1980) is considered pioneer in undertaking the study of important Thai literatures, such as Traibhumi-Phra Ruang, Mahachatkamluang, Rajaniti, and Sritanonchai, and it serves as a guideline for later studies, such as "Political Views from Isarn (Northeastern) Literature" by Jaruwat Thammawatra (1980), "Political Thoughts in Tripitaka" by Preecha Changkhwanyuen (1991) "Lessons on the Government of the Thai People from the Southern Literature" by Eoseewong (1995), and a research project under the funding for research sector by Thailand Research Fund (TRF Senior Research Scholar) in 2007 on "The Discussion of the Royal Compositions: Nai-in, Who Do Good Deeds Behind People's Back, Tito, and Mahajanaka"⁸ by Surapongse Sotanasathien (2011a, 2011b, 2011c). Some of the graduate research in this topics include a doctoral dissertation by Sotanasathien (1983) on "Ramkien: A Political Interpretation" as well as many master's dissertations, such as Thida Vatanaul (1976)'s "Political Thought in the Plays of His Majesty King Vajiravudh", Jumboj Kumsong (1996)'s "Literature, Power and Madness: A Political Analysis of Power and Khun Suwan's Literary Works", Pairart Taidparnich (1998)'s "The Political Thought of the Three Kingdoms in Relation to Machiavelli's the Prince", Santikorn Vorawan (1999)'s "Political Implication in "Sritanonchai"", Taweesak Pinthong (2003)'s "Novels and Thai Politics from 1964-1979: The Study of Relationship between Novels and Politics", Suwimon Issarathanachai (2003)'s "Political Thought in Thai Literary Works: A case Study of Si Phaen Din (Four Reigns) of M.R.Kukrit Pramoj", Kittisak Jermsittiparsert (2009)'s "Political Implication in "Sepha Khun Chang-Khun Phaen"", and Chanida Srihamart (2011)'s "Raiyaomahavessantarajataka by Chaophraya Phrakhleng (Hon): Translation for Perception". "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" has widely been accepted as one of the country's important literatures, has its own place in politics, and has been selected "a good book" during the absolute monarchy regime (Limapichart, 2008). For the political reason that the literature might not be good or appropriate for democracy, as it is viewed as the story of the elites, not the people, the book was almost removed from the textbook list during the regime change in 1932 (Debyasuvann, 1996: 204-205). Chanthrawong, a political scientist who had initiated studying political thoughts from the literature, also once comments that the royal compositions in King Rama II, including "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao", may have been infused with political awareness. Even though "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" has been involved in both accolades and controversy with regards to its political interpretation, the study of political thoughts in "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" has not been done (Eoseewong, 2012: 57). The review of related literature shows that there has been no study of "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" to establish on the political awareness or the "political thoughts" that appear in "Bot Lakhon Reung Inao" as to what these thoughts are and how they are significant.

⁷ Later, in 1997, Sombat Chanthrawong publishes some of his work into a book "Critique of Political and Historical Literature", while adding some new materials, such as Venice Wanich. The book is published again in 2004, to which the study on the Romance of Three Kingdoms, the Chao Phraya Phra Klang (Hon) is added.

⁸ Separately published into three books, including Discussion on the Royal Composition, Tito, Discussion of the Royal Composition: Nai-in, Who Do Good Deeds Behind People's Back, and Discussion on the Royal Composition, Mahajanaka.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The review of the stage of knowledge with regards to “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao” finds that the background of this literature in the Thai society has been increasingly reconciled, from what was previously believed in the “Legend of the Inao Dance” by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab to a new, broader hypothesis about the importation of the Panji civilization into Thailand. For it also serves as a textbook, several academics and students studied it in various aspects, including the background, the linkage with other editions of Inao, the performance, the adaptations to other types of performance, the language, the literary arts, the communications, the characters, the social and cultural status, and others. Moreover, as literature has an inseparable relationship with the society, the culture, and particularly, the politics, it has been suggested that it may serve as a tool in studying the political thoughts. With a belief that literature provides evidence to many contexts of the Thai society during the early Rattanakosin era, which people were not keen on recording, there have been, in the past four decades, numerous examinations of the Thai literature to find the political thoughts hidden between the lines of the literature as well as their implications. Nonetheless, there is none of such treatment for “Bot Lakhon Reung Inao”, and for this reason, it deserves the same treatment as well.

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