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The significance of the Inao during the reign of King Chulalongkorn

A transitional period in the Thai Panji tradition

THANEERAT JATUTHASRI

ABSTRACT¹

There are two main versions of the Panji story in the Thai literary tradition, entitled *Inao* and *Dalang* respectively. Both versions were first composed at the Thai court in roughly the eighteenth century and have provided inspiration for Thai arts ever since. Of the two stories, the Inao has become much more popular than the Dalang. The most influential Inao work was composed by King Rama II (r. 1809-1824) and his reign is widely accepted as the heyday of Inao. There was also another period of time in which the Inao theme was popular: the reign of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910). This article is an examination of the presentation of the Inao story during the reign of King Chulalongkorn and also presents an assessment of the significance of these Inao works to the Inao tradition. The findings of this article reveal that, during this period, the Inao story was presented in an increasingly diversified number of art and cultural works in both traditional and new styles. These Inao works marked a significant turning-point in the Inao culture and indicate that not only was the reign of King Chulalongkorn “a Golden Age” of the Inao in Thailand, but it was also “a transitional period” in the Thai Panji tradition.

KEYWORDS

Inao; Panji; the reign of King Chulalongkorn; a transitional period.

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1. INTRODUCTION²

The Panji story,³ or the Panji theme, originated in East Java and subsequently spread to many regions of Southeast Asia. The Panji story was introduced to the Thai royal court around the eighteenth century in the late-Ayutthaya period, during which two daughters of King Borommakot (r. 1732-1758) composed two Thai Panji versions, entitled *Inao* or *Inao Lek*, and *Dalang* or *Inao Yai*, intended to be performed as Lakhon Nai, the court dance-drama. The Inao and Dalang stories have been a crucial part of Thai culture ever since although, of the two stories, the Inao has become much better known than the Dalang and has provided the inspiration for creating many kinds of art since then.

The early Bangkok period, between the reigns of King Rama I (r. 1782-1809) and King Rama III (r. 1824-1851), is considered to be the heyday of the Panji story in Thailand, as there is an abundance of evidence of the number of Inao works created during that time, in literature, paintings, and performance. Furthermore, during the reign of King Rama II (r. 1809-1824), a complete Inao play was composed by the King and its performance was re-developed, reaching its zenith. The Inao by King Rama II is the most complete and influential version of the Inao literary works and has been praised as the best work in the Thai dance drama genre.

However, as said the Inao theme also enjoyed a renaissance during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910), known as King Rama V, but this is rarely mentioned.

King Chulalongkorn is regarded as one of the greatest kings of Thailand. His reign was distinguished by extensive social development and significant reforms in various areas, including the administrative system, military matters, the education system and the abolition of slavery, problems which were prioritized both to consolidate the dynastic state and to ensure that Western colonialism did not get a foot in the door.

In the areas of art and culture, there was also an extensive change in which the “old” and “new” concepts of art and culture were mixed and represented. Traditional art and culture were still alive at that time, but much of it was adapted into new forms and styles, in which Western art and culture had a remarkable influence.

In the midst of such reforms and the mingling of cultural phenomena, it is interesting that the Inao story was more than ever very popular and came to the fore as a crucial source of various kinds of art and culture. Therefore,

² This article is partly based on my presentation for the ninth EuroSEAS Conference in Oxford on 17 August 2017, in the panel on “Panji and cultural patterns in Southeast Asia (1)” convened by Lydia Kieven. Some points in this article were also presented as a part of my lecture at the Panji Seminar at Indonesian National Library in Jakarta on 11 July 2018. I would like to thank Professor Emeritus Cholada Rueangruglikit for her useful comments on the draft of this article. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable remarks.

³ S.O. Robson (1971: 12) explained the term “the Panji story” as: “Hence, when one speaks of the Panji story or the Panji theme, one means a group, type or genre of works”. In this article, the term “the Panji story” refers to a group of works dealing with the Panji theme according to the explanation of Robson.

the popularity and significance of the Inao theme during the reign of King Chulalongkorn deserves further study because it was such a significant time for the Panji tradition in Thailand. However, no previous research has been conducted on those points, with the exception of a thesis by Davisakd Puaksom (2007), which covers the Panji theme during the reign of King Chulalongkorn in the sixth chapter, but focuses only on King Chulalongkorn's voyages to Java, which demonstrated the influence of the Inao story on the King's perception of Java and Indonesia and did not focus on the significant role of the Inao theme within Thai society during that time.

2. OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1 OBJECTIVE

Hence now the time has come for this study to examine the presentation of the Inao story and the significance of the Inao works during the reign of King Chulalongkorn to the Inao tradition.

2.2 HYPOTHESIS / ARGUMENT

This article proposes that the reign of King Chulalongkorn was one of the most flourishing periods of the Inao story in Thailand, and that, as a transitional period, in this time marked a major turning point in the Thai Panji tradition.

3. THE INAO BEFORE THE REIGN OF KING CHULALONGKORN (MID-EIGHTEENTH TO MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY): THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE INAO TRADITION IN THAILAND

The hundred or so years which stretch from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century comprised the first period of the Inao tradition in Thailand. The phenomenon and development of the Inao story during this period can be divided into two sub-periods as follows.

3.1 THE INAO DURING THE LATE-AYUTTHAYA PERIOD (MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY): THE PERIOD OF THE RISE OF INAO

As previously mentioned, the Inao tradition in Thailand commenced in the late-Ayutthaya period after two princesses, daughters of King Borommakot (r. 1732-1758), had composed the two Thai Panji versions, the *Inao* and the *Dalang*, in the Klön verse form to be performed as plays in the court dance-drama or Lakhon Nai. Chaofa Mongkut, the younger princess, composed *Inao*, while Chaofa Kunthon, the elder princess, composed *Dalang* (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 103). Prior to the *Inao* and the *Dalang* being composed by the two princesses, there is neither evidence for nor any historical records of the Panji story in Thailand or that Thai people had ever known the story.

According to Bunnawat Khamchan, written by Phra Mahanak during the reign of King Borommakot, Lakhon Nai Inao was performed by female court dancers at a festival venerating the Buddha footprint in Saraburi in

1750 (Bunnawat Khamchan 1987: 24). Hence the Inao play must have been composed prior to that year.

Discussing the origin of the two Thai Panji versions, Prince Damrong Rachanuphap (1862-1943) in his *Tamnan Lakhon Inao* ('The history of Inao'), the Panji stories came to Ayutthaya via the Melayu people. This assertion is based on hearsay evidence that a Melayu royal maid from Pattani narrated the Panji stories to the two princesses, inspiring them to compose the Inao and Dalang plays (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 103). Stuart Robson theorized that it was likely that the Panji stories came to Ayutthaya via Malay sources, as there is evidence of contact between Ayutthaya and Pattani (Robson 1996: 43-51).⁴ However, there is also a probability that the Panji stories might have been brought to Ayutthaya directly from Java. Puaksom (2007: 95-96) argues that the Panji tales were probably introduced to Ayutthaya by Javanese people or by Thai people who had spent some length of time in Java. The reason given is that, "It is clear that there was a considerable number of Javanese residents in Ayutthaya in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and that the Ayutthaya court regularly sent dispatches to Batavia and even to the Mataram court" (Puaksom 2007: 95). In a nutshell, there are many possible ways by which the Panji stories, which originated in Java, came to Ayutthaya – via Melayu people, via Javanese people or even Thai people who had lived in Java for a period.

Now the time has come to look at Lakhon Nai, which is the first form of the two Thai Panji stories. Before the Inao and the Dalang were composed, the themes were based solely on the Ramakien and Unnarut Indian epics (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 11). Therefore, the emergence of the Inao and the Dalang in the late-Ayutthaya period undoubtedly expanded the Lakhon Nai's repertoires.

Lakhon Nai is the court dance-drama which belongs to the king. It is an overwhelmingly royal entertainment and is still occasionally performed as part of royal ceremonies. Only royalty and a few high-ranking courtiers were permitted to have their own Lakhon Nai. The Lakhon Nai of the king was performed by female dancers, while those of other members of the royal family and courtiers had to be performed by male dancers; an all-female dance-drama was the sole prerogative of the king.⁵

⁴ Stuart Robson (1996: 50-51) has proposed that the medium through which the Panji stories were transmitted from the Melayu maid to the two princesses should be studied in greater depth. The quotation is as follows.

One can speculate on the *form* in which the Malay maids at the court of Ayudhya would have possessed their Panji stories. Are they likely to have carried Malay manuscripts with them? Are they likely to have been literate at all? Is it not more likely that they reproduced the stories in detail from memory, that is, in an oral form? In other words, if there were no original written text, then the basis would have been stories as produced in performance. In that case a study of the repertoire and language of the wayang Jawa of Pattani and Kelantan might be more fruitful. (Robson 1996: 50-51).

⁵ Later, in the reign of King Rama IV (r. 1851-1868), the King gave royalty, courtiers, and common people permission to hold all-female dance-dramas similar to that of the king (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 172-174).

The repertoires of Lakhon Nai are solely based on Ramakien, Unarut, Inao, and Dalang. The reason only these four stories are permitted in the performance might be that the heroic deeds and ideal images of the hero, who is always a great divine king (or prince), are an indirect way of praising and supporting the monarchy and the position of the king, who was the original owner of the performance. Likewise, the reason the Inao and Dalang stories were later included in Lakhon Nai might be that the ideal portrayal of the hero of the tales suited this concept and function so well.

Lakhon Nai consists of music, dance, and drama with choral singing accompanied by a Pi Phat ensemble. It focuses on representing the beauty and refinement of court arts, namely: dancing, singing, music, costumes, and language. The dance style and movements in Lakhon Nai are slow, sophisticated, and graceful. The plays for Lakhon Nai generally contain long, elegant descriptions appropriate for chanting and highlighting the dancing skills of the performers. The themes, for instance, are descriptions of the natural scenery, places, troops, and the bathing and dressing of the main characters.

A comparison of the Inao and Dalang stories reveals that they share the same theme as a Panji story, replete with love, disguise, and the adventurous journey of the hero and heroine: Prince Inao of Kurepan and Princess Butsaba of Daha. However, the two stories are significantly distinct in their details, that is to say that they are clearly different Panji versions. For example, in the Dalang, the main role of Prince Inao is that of a puppeteer (*dalang*), this is the disguise he adopts in most parts of the story, whereas in the Inao, the main role of Prince Inao is a warrior and he never assumes the guise of a puppeteer. Another example of the difference in detail is that, in the Dalang, the woman who was the first love of Prince Inao was a gardener's daughter, killed at the command of Prince Inao's father because he did not want his son to be entangled with a woman of lower status. Father was determined that he should marry Princess Butsaba.⁶ In the Inao, the first love of Prince Inao is a princess and she is not killed, but is accepted as one of Inao's consorts.

3.2 THE INAO DURING THE EARLY-BANGKOK PERIOD (LATE-EIGHTEENTH TO MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY): THE PERIOD OF THE REVIVAL OF INAO

In 1767, the Ayutthaya kingdom became embroiled in a war which had a huge impact on art and culture, including the dance-drama. The manuscripts of the Inao and Dalang plays, and of the other two Lakhon Nai's plays, the Ramakien and the Unnarut, were fragmented after the fall of Ayutthaya.⁷

⁶ This motif in the Dalang resembles the so-called "Angreni motif" appearing in some Javanese and Malay Panji versions, in which a common woman, who was the hero's first love, is put to death by the hero's father or mother who wishes him to marry another girl. Robson called this motif a "tragic prelude" (Robson 1969: 11).

⁷ No complete and clear manuscript of the Inao and Dalang plays of the late-Ayutthaya period has yet been found. So far, only a few fragment manuscripts of the Inao and the Dalang have come to light and these are presumed to have been composed in the Ayutthaya period. For example, King Chulalongkorn examined the literary style of a fragment manuscript of the Inao found in Nakhonsrithammarat province and presumed that it was possibly the Inao play of the late-Ayutthaya period (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 107).

Nevertheless, the plays were revived in the early period of the Bangkok (Rattanakosin) kingdom.

In the reign of King Rama I, the plays of Inao and Dalang were revived by the King for Lakhon Nai performances. Only seven episodes of King Rama I's Inao survive today, but the Dalang is complete and the most complete version is still extant. Prince Damrong Rachanuphap presumed that the Inao and Dalang by King Rama I might have been revisions of the surviving Ayutthaya works, as some parts of the plays reveal traces of the Ayutthaya court language and literary style (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 132). However, as no Inao and Dalang plays of the late-Ayutthaya period have not yet been rediscovered in their entirety, a comparative study of the Ayutthaya and King Rama I's versions cannot be made.

Later, in the reign of King Rama II,⁸ the King recomposed a complete Inao play as he wanted to demonstrate its literary value and polish the performance of the Lakhon Nai. Notably, the performance of Lakhon Nai Inao (Images 1 and 2) was also developed to reach its zenith under this King's supervision.



Images 1 and 2. Lakhon Nai Inao performed at Mahidol University in 2009, organized by the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University. (Photograph by Thaneerat Jatuthasri, 2009).

⁸ The reign of King Rama II is lauded as "the Golden Era" of Thai dramatic literature and classical dance-drama because of the creation and training of royal dance-drama troupes, which set the standard for Thai classical dance-drama up to the present day (Rutnin 1996: 68).

The Inao play by King Rama II is the best-known and most complete version of the Inao among Thai literary works and was praised by the Wannakhadi Samoson (the Thai Literary Association) during the reign of King Rama VI (r. 1910-1925) as the best work among Thai dance dramas. The Lakhon Nai Inao of King Rama II became a model and set the standard for the Lakhon Nai Inao thereafter. This Inao play by the King has remained a significant work, contributing to the Inao art and culture up to the present time.

An examination of the plot and theme of the Inao by King Rama II reveals that it entails a typical plot and theme of the Panji story, dealing with the love, separation, disguise, and an adventurous journey of both the hero and the heroine. The Inao story is set in Java, in which there were four major kingdoms: Kurepan, Daha, Kalang, and Singhatsari. The kings of the four kingdoms are siblings. Inao, the crown prince of Kurepan, and Butsaba, the princess of Daha, are betrothed by their parents. Despite their betrothal, they have not yet had a chance to meet each other so, when Inao meets another woman, Chintara, the princess of Many, he breaks off his betrothal to Butsaba and remains with Chintara. Later, Inao and Butsaba meet for the first time. They fall in love with each other, but then an inauspicious event causes their separation. This ushers in their adventurous journey in search of each other in which they hide their identities by adopting disguises. After a long journey, Inao and Butsaba meet, recognize each other, and are happily reunited.

Apart from the plot and theme, the Inao also shows connections with the Javanese Panji versions in other aspects such as the names of the hero and the heroine.⁹ The name "Inao" relates to "Inu Kertapati" in the Javanese versions, and the name "Butsaba", which is a derivation from the Sanskrit "Puspa" and means flower, relates to "Sekartaji" in the Javanese version in which the word "sekar" also means flower (Robson and Wibisono 2002: 660).

Despite these correspondences, Thaneerat Jatuthasri (2009, 2018) argues that the Inao also contains distinctive characteristics of Thai court dramatic literature. Notably, the play is outstanding in its artistic use of language and descriptions. In this it follows the Lakhon Nai tradition which enhances the literary beauty of the text and gives the dancers ample opportunity to display their skills; the play comprises many attractive scenes just waiting to be transformed into highly skilled dances, such as the scene in which Inao wields and brandishes his "kris" (Javanese dagger) to catch Butsaba's eye. This is a wonderful opportunity for the dancer who represents Inao to highlight her great skill in dancing with kris. Historically, the play reveals many aspects of Thai court culture in its portrayal of the main characters, including the royal Thai cremation ceremony, the royal top-knot cutting ceremony, and the royal Thai coronation ceremony. It can be said that the Inao story is immersed in regality also be an essentially different characteristic from the Javanese Panji stories which seem to be more popular stories with an emphasis on

⁹ For more details and examples of the connection between the Inao and other Javanese and Malay Panji versions, see Thaneerat Jatuthasri (2009, 2018).

the environment of common people. A comparison of this particular matter would be a satisfying topic for further study.



Images 3 and 4. Scenes from the Inao story on a lacquered and painted screen, a court art created during the early Bangkok period (late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century), and now kept in the Bangkok National Museum. (Photographs by Thaneerat Jatuthasri, 2016).

To sum up the context of the creation and the presentation of the Inao during the two sub-periods mentioned above, the Inao has mainly been performed in the royal context and its fame has been principally restricted to royalty and courtiers. However, apart from being mainly performed as Lakhon Nai, the Inao is also presented in other kinds of court art. For example, the story has been sung in He Klom Phra Bantom (a royal lullaby), in Mahori (a traditional Thai ensemble), and in Sakkawa Len Thawai Na Thinang (singing of the Klom Sakkawa verse form in the presence of the King). The Inao story has also inspired court poets to compose many literary works in various genres. Among these works are Inao Khamchan by Chaophraya Phrakhleng (Hon), Nirat Inao by Princess Kamphutchat, Nirat Inao by Sunthonphu, and Lilit Inao by an anonymous poet. In the visual arts, a number of paintings based on the Inao story were created at the behest of the kings or of other members of the royal family. Examples include an Inao painting on a partition wall in the palace of Princess Thepsudawadi, the eldest sister of King Rama I (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 106), an Inao painting on a window in the Hall of the Reclining Buddha in Phra Chetuphon Temple created at the behest of King Rama III (Image 5), and the Inao mural paintings at Sommanat Temple created at the behest of King Rama IV in honour of his beloved queen, Queen Sommanat, who loved this story very much (see Images 6 and 7).



Image 5. Scene from the Inao story on a window in the Hall of the Reclining Buddha in the Phra Chetuphon Temple, created during the reign of King Rama III. (Photograph by Thaneerat Jatuthasri, 2011).



Images 6 and 7. Scenes from the Inao story in the mural paintings in Sommanat Temple created during the reign of King Rama IV. (Photographs by Thaneerat Jatuthasri, 2012).

4. THE INAO DURING THE REIGN OF KING CHULALONGKORN: CHANGES AND PRESENTATION

The period from the reign of King Rama IV, known as King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868), to the reign of King Rama V, known as King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910), is considered to have been a time of reform and modernization of Thailand. These measures were undertaken to consolidate the dynastic state as well as to fend off the threat of Western influence which was strongly expanding in Asia, including Siam (Thailand).

Focusing on the reign of King Chulalongkorn, an extensive modernization took place in various fields, impinging on the national administration, economy, education, and culture. Indeed, this reign was the most significant transitional period in Thai society and it transported the country into the modern era. It was a remarkable time in which the two worlds, the old and the new, combined (Rutnin 2008: 84).

In the fields of art and culture the reign of King Chulalongkorn was also a remarkable time of change in which "old" and "new" concepts of Thai art and culture met and mingled. Although the traditional arts and culture were kept alive and preserved, much was adapted and created into new forms and styles which were heavily influenced by Western culture. Consequently, it was a crucible for many different kinds of art.

Mattani Moj dara Rutnin describes the Siamese modernization under King Chulalongkorn as follows.

The Fifth Reign reflected the attempt of a modern monarch to have the best of two worlds, the old and the new, the *farang* and the Thai. Siam was to be the modern leader of the peninsula and the dignified, respectable "East" in the eyes of the West. (Rutnin 1996: 115).

In the midst of these changes, it is interesting that the classical Inao story was very popular and was presented and reproduced extensively in many kinds of art and cultural works, such as song, performances, literary works, the visual arts, academic writing, journals, printed books and encapsulated in metaphors. Therefore, this period of time can be considered the heyday of the Panji theme in Thailand.

The importance and presentation of the Inao theme at this time can be seen in the four main areas of: (1) art, (2) international relations, (3) literary studies, and (4) expressions of worldview and social criticism. These are discussed in turn below.

4.1 INAO STORY IN ART

In the area of Thai art, the Inao story was a popular repertoire for various kinds of art as well as inspiring the other tales and artworks.

4.1.1 *A repertoire of both traditional and new kinds of art*

During this period, the Inao story was presented in a greater variety of art

forms than ever before, including both traditional and new kinds of art, such as singing, performance, literary works, and visual art. The main reason for its great popularity might have been that the King, who deeply appreciated the story of Inao and did his best to preserve the traditional art of Inao. Despite this devotion, he nevertheless also supported and encouraged artists to reproduce Inao in many other artistic forms.

Below are four examples of the traditional and new kinds of art presenting the Inao during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.

- *Singing*

During the Fifth Reign, the Inao story was sung in many types of court singing. These include Mahori and Sakkawa for the traditional form and Mahori Prasom Wong for the new form.

As in the earlier period, the Inao story was still part of the ordinary repertoire of traditional music and singing such as Mahori, a traditional Thai ensemble, and Sakkawa Len Thawai Na Thinang, or the singing of the Klom Sakkawa verse form in front of the King. For example, there is evidence that Sakkawa Inao was performed by the elites in front of King Chulalongkorn at Sanam Chan Palace in 1872 and at the Borommawong Itsawararam Temple in 1877 (Prachum Bot Sakkrawa 1966: 9-15, 97-101).

The new form of the Inao story was sung in Mahori Prasom Wong (so-called “concert”), a mixed musical ensemble. The Mahori Prasom Wong was a new kind of music and singing created by Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The singing of the Inao in Mahori Prasom Wong was arranged at the behest of King Chulalongkorn so that it could be featured on certain special occasions, such as in the welcoming banquet for Prince Henry of Prussia, who visited the Thai court in 1899 (Phongsuwan 2010: 126).

- *Performance*

Examples of Inao performances of this period, most of which, with the exception of Li-ke Songkhrueng (a folk performance), were produced in the court context, include the Lakhon Nai, the Lakhon Duekdamban, dialogues for Lakhon Nai, and the Li-ke Songkhrueng.

Lakhon Nai Inao, or the court dance-drama of Inao of both the King and the elites, was still practised and performed in the traditional style of King Rama II by adapting King Rama II’s Inao play. This information ties in with the role of Inao as a court entertainment as it had been in the earlier period. For example, there is evidence that the Lakhon Nai Inao of the King was arranged to be featured in royal ceremonies, such as in the celebration of (i) a royal white elephant in 1872, (ii) the centenary of Bangkok in 1882, and (iii) a welcome-home party on the occasion of King Chulalongkorn’s return from his long voyage to Europe in 1897 (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 197-199).

Looking at the Lakhon Nai Inao of the elites, it seems that many

dance troupes of the elites performed the story, including those of Prince Narathippraphanphong, Prince Singhanat, and Thao Ratchakitworaphat (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 203-207). For instance, it is recorded in a historical manuscript that the dance troupe of Prince Singhanat performed Lakhon Nai Inao for King Chulalongkorn at a Thai new year's party in 1879 (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 1935: 2).

During this period the Lakhon Nai Inao made a marked contribution to the tradition of Inao court dance-drama which has continued ever since, because the court dancers trained and performing at that time became an important group of dancing masters of Inao who inherited and passed on the knowledge to the next generation of dancers.

Apart from the traditional performances described above, the Inao story was also presented in other new kinds of performance created at that time, such as Lakhon Duekdamban, the dialogues for Lakhon Nai, and Li-ke Songkhrueng.

Lakhon Duekdamban, or the opera-oriented dance-drama, was created in this period by Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong and Chaophraya Thewetwongwiwat (M.R. Lan Kunchon) by blending the traditional Thai dance-drama with Western opera. The Inao story became part of the repertoire of the performance whose play was composed by the prince.

In addition, King Chulalongkorn also composed the Inao story as dialogues intended to be used in conjunction with King Rama II's Inao play for the performance of Lakhon Nai, staged at the celebration of the centenary of Bangkok in 1882. It is the first written dialogue for Lakhon Nai to contain extended conversations and humorous content. The dialogues of the Inao are, therefore, distinct from the traditional dialogues of Lakhon Nai, which are brief and do not contain humour.

Furthermore, during that period, the Inao story also began to appear as a folk performance, Li-ke Songkhrueng. Li-ke Songkhrueng is a kind of Thai folk dance-drama created during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The Inao story was presented as Li-ke Songkhrueng, as there is evidence that Li-ke Songkhrueng performed by Mom Suphap's troupe staged the Inao story for the first time in 1907 (Virulrak 1996: 35).

• *Literary work*

A number of literary works based on the Inao story were also composed during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, some for performance, as described above, such as the Inao play composed by Prince Narathippraphanphong for court dance-drama, and the Inao play composed by Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong for Lakhon Duekdamban. Others were for reading, for instance, Khlong Rueang Inao and Nirat Inao.

Khlong Rueang Inao, or the Inao in the Khlong verse form, was composed by Prince Alangkan. This Inao work was published in copies of the magazine *Vajirayana* during 1885-1886. The content of Khlong Rueang Inao was drawn from the scene in which Inao kidnaps Butsaba and takes her to a cave up to the scene in which Butsaba is separated from Inao by a god. Khlong is one

of the classical Thai verse forms. However, the presentation of the Inao in the Khlong verse form throughout the entire work was non-existent before Prince Alangkan composed Khlong Rueang Inao. Therefore, this work can be considered to have been “new” in the Inao literary tradition at that time.

Nirat Unakan was composed by Phraya Itsaraphansophon (M.R. Nu Itsarangkun) in the Klom verse form and presents the lamentation of Unakan (Butsaba in male disguise) after she is separated from Inao by a god. Nirat is a classical genre of Thai literature. It is a kind of love poem infused with sadness and longing for one’s beloved; some record the poet’s personal love life, while others present the feeling of the characters from well-known tales, such as that of Phra Ram in the Ramakien. Although some Nirat works in the earlier period presents the lamentation of Inao about Butsaba, such as Nirat Inao by Princess Kamphutchat and Nirat Inao by Sunthonphu, no Nirat Inao had focused on the lamentation of the female character before. Therefore, Nirat Unakan by Phraya Itsaraphansophon is quite distinct from the earlier Nirat Inao works.

The literary works of this period featuring Inao were composed not only new works composed as shown above, but the classical texts of Inao by King Rama II and Dalang by King Rama I were also first published during that time. The Inao play by King Rama II was first published in 1874 by Dr Samuel John Smith’s Press and subsequently republished many times by other presses during that period, while the Dalang play by King Rama I was first published in 1890 by the Nai Thep Press (see Image 8 for some printed books of the Inao of King Rama II).



Image 8. An example of some printed books of the Inao of King Rama II, published by the Panitsupphaphon Press during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. (Photograph by Thaneerat Jatuthasri, 2019).

- *Visual art*

Turning to visual art, a great number of paintings based on the Inao were created in this era among them the works of Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong and Rot.

There are two Inao paintings for which clear evidence exists that they were the works of Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong (Image 9). The first painting, created in 1887, depicts the scene in which Butsaba is bathing in the stream on Mount Wilitsamara (Charoenwong 2006: 419). The other one, bearing no date, depicts the scene in which Inao orders Prasanta to play wayang for Butsaba, disguised as a nun (Phongsuwan 2010: 163). These two paintings blend together traditional Thai and Western styles of painting.

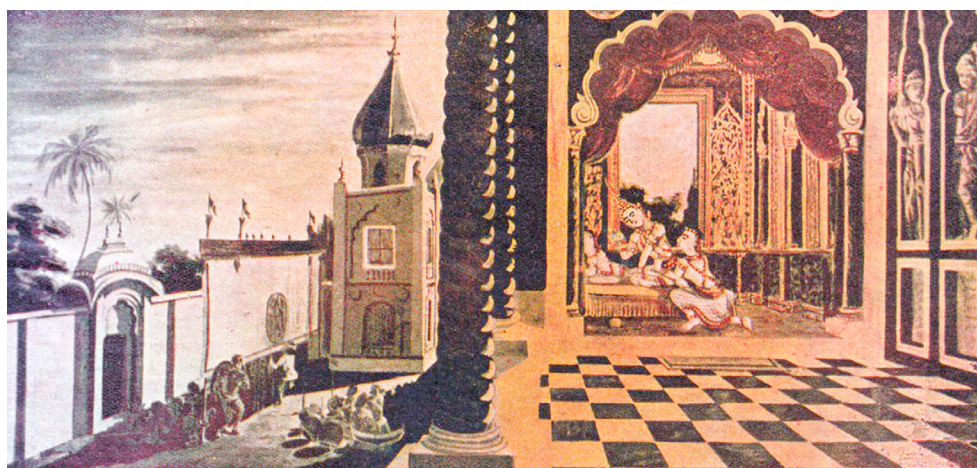


Image 9. An example of the Inao painting (undated) by Prince Naritsaranuwattiwong. (Phutthaloetlanaphalai 1921: 142).

Rot's Inao paintings were created in a Samut Thai, or a folded Khoi paper book, which is now kept at the National Library of Thailand (see Images 10 and 11). The book contains twenty-seven paintings depicting the same number of scenes from the Inao story. The first page of the book mentions that volume contains works from the royal collection painted by Mr Rot in 1880 for the "Ho Museum" or the national museum inside the palace.¹⁰ Most of this set of paintings are in the traditional Thai style but using a Western art perspective.

Another example is the set of Inao paintings created at the command of King Chulalongkorn to mark the royal cremation ceremony for two sons, a daughter and royal consort in 1887. This set of paintings depicting various scenes from the Inao story was created by anonymous artists. For example, the scene in which (i) Inao kidnaps Butsaba and takes her to a cave, (ii) Panyi (Inao in disguise) engages in a cockfight with Unakan (Butsaba in male disguise),

¹⁰ King Chulalongkorn ordered a museum be established inside the Grand Palace for the first time in 1874. This was later moved and developed into the present-day National Museum (Royal Institute 1926: 1).

and (iii) Panyi fighting against Yaran, Butsaba's brother, in disguise (Chulasai 2005: 141). After the royal cremation ceremony, these Inao paintings were moved to decorate the wall of the Varobhas Bimarn Residential Hall in the Bang Pa-In Palace.



Images 10 and 11. Examples of some Inao paintings by Rot created in 1880. (Samut Ruppaph Rueang Inao, Khoi Book Number 22: 21, 27).

4.1.2 *Inspiring other tales and artworks*

Apart from being part of the popular repertoire of art, at that time the Inao story was also the inspiration for the creation of a new tale in the Thai literary tradition, the story of Ngo-pa created by King Chulalongkorn in 1905.

The story of Ngo-pa is composed in the Klon verse form and is a tragedy about a Negrito love triangle in which the two heroes fight for the heroine, and all three die in the end. The King was principally inspired to compose this story by his interest in the culture of the Negrito people in Southern Thailand, but was also obviously influenced by certain elements of Inao, for instance, the motif of the hero kidnapping the heroine and taking her to a cave, the love triangle, the role of the heroine's brother and some quotations from the Inao of King Rama II.

The principal reason for the influence of the Inao on the Ngo-pa must

probably be sought in the deep appreciation King Chulalongkorn had for the Inao story. The King composed the Ngo-pa while being treated for malaria at the Vimanmek Mansion for eight days. During his illness, as the Inao story was one of his favorite tales, the singing of the Inao of King Rama II was arranged to entertain the King (Sadap Ladawan 1983: 48-49).

The Inao story also influenced the setting and description in the Thep Wilai story, composed by Phraya Senaphubet (Sai Sarobon) in the Klon verse form during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. One of the settings in the Thep Wilai story is a mountain on which are a cave and a shrine. The cave alludes to the cave in which Butsaba was kept after her kidnap by Inao and the shrine alludes to the shrine visited by Inao and Butsaba (Senaphubet 1931: 146-147). The poet of the Thep Wilai also portrays the cave and the shrine in a fashion similar to those in the Inao of King Rama II, so much so that the readers would have recognized them as being the same places.

Besides influencing other tales, the Inao story also inspired other artworks created during this period, for example, it inspired the name given to one shape in which ivory boxes were made. In 1902, ivory-box collecting became a popular hobby among royalty and courtiers in Thailand, so more and more new ivory boxes were ordered and created. King Chulalongkorn was very interested in collecting ivory boxes and was considered a leading expert (Chantharangsu 1986: 12). Furthermore, the King designed many new shapes for the ivory boxes. One of them was a short plump shape resembling a shortened persimmon. The King named boxes in this shape "Song Choraka", which simply means "Choraka's shape" (Chantharangsu 1986: 12). The name "Choraka" is derived from a famous character in the Inao story who is short and plump.

4.2 INAO STORY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the Inao theme also played a role in international relations, seen most explicitly in the King's voyages to Java.

King Chulalongkorn journeyed to Java three times, in 1871, 1896, and 1901. The first trip was an official visit, whose purpose was to build a better relationship with Java as well as to observe the political system and the administration of the European colonists from which the King brought back knowledge which would help him reform Thailand. The subsequent two trips were in a private capacity when the King was recuperating, organized to help him relax and regain his health.

During his voyages to Java in 1896 and 1901, the King wrote journals in which he recorded his daily activities and all the information he had acquired. His 1896 journal clearly reveals that the Panji story was one of the significant topics into which King inquired, seeking its origins and any other information he could elicit from the local elites, such as the Regent of Bandung, the Sultan of Yogyakarta, and the Regent of Tosari.¹¹ There were also some events during

¹¹ Besides the Panji story, King Chulalongkorn also expressed interest in other aspects of Javanese history and culture. For example, the King brought a large collection of *batik* back to

the journey which indicate that the Javanese elites were aware of the King's appreciation for and interest in the Panji theme, so they organized a Panji performance and provided information about Panji especially for him.

For instance, when King Chulalongkorn visited Bandung, one of the topics about which the King conversed with Raden Adipati Manunyaya, the Regent of Bandung, was the Panji story. The King records in his journal that, after having inquired about traces of the Panji story with the Regent on the first day they ran out of time, so the King made another appointment with the Regent specifically to talk about Panji the next day. On that day, the Regent also ordered the Wayang Wong Panji to be performed during dinner in the hotel for the pleasure of the King (Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 2012: 127). This would seem to suggest that the Regent realized how much the King was interested in the Panji story.

Later, when King Chulalongkorn visited Yogyakarta, the Panji story was also a significant topic of conversation the King had with the Sultan of Yogyakarta. The Sultan must have been aware of the King's interest in the story, so he offered to give the King more Panji information a bit later. In return, the King offered to write down the Thai Inao story for the Sultan (Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 2012: 185). A few days after this, the Sultan gave the King a summary of Prince Panji's genealogy and story according to Singkolo Chronicle. Furthermore, the Sultan offered to give the King Javanese Panji manuscripts, but the King declined to accept them because no one in Thailand was able to read the language, and the King believed it would be more useful to keep those manuscripts in Java rather than in Thailand (Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 2012: 203-204).

It certainly appears that the Panji theme and the King's interest in and appreciation of the story provided an important medium for building a good relationship between Thailand and Java. It seems that the Panji theme was not only a source of learning and exchange of cultural knowledge between the two countries, it also helped people to get to know each other better and led to good impressions of one another.

4.3 INAO STORY IN LITERARY STUDIES

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the King extensively reformed and modernized education in Thailand in a bid to make it more systematic and available nationwide. Both the King and the members of the elite were very enthusiastic about and interested in learning and acquiring new knowledge in various fields, ranging from history, science, culture, religion to literature. The upshot was an outpouring of academic writings on these subjects, to which the articles published in the magazine *Vajirayana* bear witness (Chitsanga 2009: 69).¹²

Thailand following his trips to Java. For details of the collection, see Dale Carolyn Gluckman and Sartarat Muddin (2018).

¹² The articles in *Vajirayana* can be divided into three categories of knowledge: royal rituals, local knowledge, and Western knowledge (Chitsanga 2009: 213-215).

In the midst of this explosion of learning, Thai literary studies explicitly appeared on the scene, as the King and elites wrote many articles which studied and discussed Thai literature. One of the literary tales in which they were interested and paid attention to was the Panji story, including the Inao, the Dalang, and other Panji versions.

Most of the works on Panji studies were written by King Chulalongkorn himself. Indeed, King Chulalongkorn was probably the first Thai scholar to analyse and discuss the story academically. For example, in his critique published in 1908, the King considers a fragment manuscript of Inao found in Southern Thailand and comments that it might be an older version of Inao from the Ayutthaya period (Damrong Rachanuphap 1965: 107).

One very important work in this field is King Chulalongkorn's journal, written during his trip to Java in 1896. According to the King's journal, the Panji story was one of the most significant topics occupying him and he had had opportunities to inquire about it among local elites, as described earlier.

In the journal, the King collects many versions of Javanese Panji stories, discussing their origins and cultural aspects, describing performances and making comparisons between the Javanese and Thai versions. For instance, during his stay in Yogyakarta, King Chulalongkorn recorded in his journal that he had been told the legend of a river on Merapi Mountain. Near this river there had been a fight between Panji and a king in which the king was killed by Panji. The king's wife then immolated herself. After her sacrifice, their ashes were released into the river, which was later named *bela*, which means "to die for another person" (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 2012: 216). King Chulalongkorn comments in his journal that the legend is very similar to the scene in the Inao story in which Panyi (Inao in disguise) fights King Butsina on Mount Parapi. After King Butsina is killed by Panji, Darasa, the queen of King Butsina, immolates herself on the mountain. The King says in his journal that he tried to ask local people the name of the king and queen in the legend in order to compare them with those in the Inao story, but no one could remember.

Another example is the descriptions the King gives of the Wayang Wong Panji he had seen in Bandung and Solo and the Wayang Golek Panji about which he had been informed in Garut (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 2012: 106, 127, 289). The Panji Wayang Wong in Bandung, according to the King, contained the scene in which Prabu Wiyaya (Candra Kirana in male disguise), who had become the king of Bali, sent a letter asking for the princess who was Panji's consort, with the stipulation that, if Panji refused, Prabu Wiyaya would make war. When Panji saw Prabu Wiyaya's handwriting in the letter, he suddenly fainted as he recognized the hand as that of Candra Kirana, his beloved. Panji then took an army to face Prabu Wiyaya on the battlefield (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 2012: 127-128).

After King Chulalongkorn collected the Javanese Panji versions and had obtained some Panji information from the local elites, he concluded that the Panji story was somehow related to Javanese history and that Panji had

really existed. However, as the story was a very old tale, it had been subject to variations and been fantasized into various versions, so the connection between the story and history was quite blurred. Nonetheless, the various versions of the Panji tale shared the same theme: the extensive power of the hero, Panji, in Java and beyond (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 2012: 218-223).

The knowledge and information about the Panji story provided in the King's journal can be considered academic, not simply data collecting. The King says in his journal that he had written down the information he had learned about the ancient history of Java and the traces of the Panji story because he wanted readers to know the origins and genealogy of Prince Inao, whom he considered to be his literary friend (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 2012: 191). This says a great deal about how much the King had been impressed by the Inao story.

4.4 INAO STORY AS AN EXPRESSION OF WORLDVIEW AND SOCIAL CRITICISM

Pertinently, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the Inao story appeared as an expression of a particular worldview and indeed social criticism, which is clearly shown in various examples.

4.4.1 *Inao story as a metaphor to express feeling or ideas about situations*

In some writings by the King and other elites, the Inao story is used as a form of metaphor to express their feelings or ideas about certain situations. For example, when King Chulalongkorn took a trip to Saiyok Waterfall (Kanchanaburi province) in 1877, he wrote in his journal that the beauty of the cave and a stream with fountain at the waterfall reminded him of the cave scene in the Inao of King Rama II in which Inao kidnaps Butsaba so that she will remain with him. In the description of the scene, there is a stream with a fountain near a cave. In the King's opinion, the stream and fountain at Saiyok Waterfall were very similar to that of the stream in the Inao's cave scene. King Chulalongkorn presumed that King Rama II might have been inspired by this same cave and stream when he wrote his description of the cave scene in his Inao play (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 1912: 160).

Another example is from the journal of Princess Sutthathipphayarat, kept during her voyage to Java in 1901, accompanying her father King Chulalongkorn. The Princess records in her journal that, on 2 July 1901, the King and Thai courtiers accompanying him took a train from Solo to Surabaya. After passing Gunung Wilis on the train, the Princess describes Mount Wilis as being very big and resembling Mount Wilitsamara, which is described in the Inao of King Rama II. The Princess writes that she is quite sure that the Thai royalty and courtiers on the train who saw Mount Wilis also compared it to Mount Wilitsamara in the Inao story, as some people had recited the verses from the Inao play describing this mountain aloud (Sutthathipphayarat 1958: 61).

Actually, the use of the Inao story as a metaphor or an allusion can also be found in the earlier literature. But in the past, the Inao metaphors had often

been used only in a romantic sense to express feelings of love but, in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, the Inao metaphors were extended to convey ideas about certain situations.

4.4.2 *Inao story as aliases for elites*

The names of certain characters of the Inao story were also used as aliases by some elites during that period. For example, when Prince Boriphath returned to Thailand from studying abroad, many female courtiers were so impressed by his handsomeness that they called the Prince “Inao” (Yingmat 2003: 34-35). The use of this alias indicates that the handsomeness of Inao in the Inao story was an idealization and still impressed Thai female courtiers at that time, hence they used his name to praise Prince Boriphath.

4.4.3 *Quotations from the Inao by King Rama II were used by some elites to express their thoughts and feelings*

At that time some quotations from the Inao by King Rama II were quoted by certain elites to express their thoughts and feelings. For example, Thao Worachan, a royal concubine of King Mongkut, who was the head of the women’s court during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, often quoted the verse, “If the Daha kingdom were to be lost (by war), it would shame the ancestor gods” in order to teach her children and grandchildren to behave appropriately and to uphold family honour (Phitthayalaphruetthiyakon 1964: 42).

4.4.4 *Inao story as a medium for criticizing Thai society*

Pertinently, during that period, the Inao story was also used as a medium for criticizing Thai society, evidence of which can be found in the dialogues of Lakhon Nai Inao composed by King Chulalongkorn to be staged during the centenary celebrations of Bangkok in 1882. In the dialogues, the King adapts some characters of the Inao story to satirize and criticize some groups of contemporary Thai people, as shown below (Chulachomkloachaoyuhua 1977).

- Choraka was adapted to satirize those Thai people who had embraced Western culture without having any genuine knowledge of it.
- Choraka was also adapted to satirize those Thai people who were afraid of Western surgery.
- Some of Inao’s soldiers were adapted to satirize those Thai people who were besotted with liberalism.
- Some of the behaviour of Butsaba’s lady-in-waiting was adapted to satirize court ladies who were obsessed with Western fashion and products, such as clothing, jewellery, sport, fruit and food.

The characterization in the dialogues by King Chulalongkorn are also a reflection on the variety of Western influence on Thai society at that time.¹³

To conclude, the reign of King Chulalongkorn was a period in which the

¹³ For more details about the distinctive characteristics of the dialogues in Lakhon Nai Inao composed by King Chulalongkorn, see Cholada Rueangruglikit and Thaneerat Jatuthasri (2019).

Panji/Inao tradition in Thailand flourished; it was a time in which the Inao story achieved greater popularity and was spread into various areas. Apart from serving as a staple in the repertoires of the day and the inspiration for the creation of a wider variety of art than ever before, Inao became a topic of literary study, was wielded to express ideas and criticize some kinds of people and it helped facilitate the development of a friendly relationship between Java and Thailand. As a result, at the time the Thai Panji tradition marked a significant change from the past, as will be described in the following topic.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INAO WORKS CREATED DURING THE REIGN OF KING CHULALONGKORN TO THE THAI PANJI TRADITION

As a consequence of the wide-ranging presentation of the Inao during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, this period can be considered the “Golden Age” of the Inao story in Thailand. The contemporary Inao works created and represented also brought about a major change in the Thai Panji tradition. This change has persisted and continues to have an influence today; it can be seen in many ways.

5.1 A TURNING-POINT FOR THE CATEGORIES OF INAO ART

Although some of the Inao art works created in the reign of King Chulalongkorn were still in the traditional forms and styles of earlier period, such as in Lakhon Nai, Mahori, Sakkawa, and Nirat, other works were produced in new forms and styles which had never appeared before, such as in the Mahori Prasom Wong, Lakhon Duekdamban, the dialogues for Lakhon Nai, Khlong verses and even Li-ke Songkhrueng (a folk performance). Those new Inao artworks marked a major turning-point in Inao art as they increased and extended the kinds of art representing the Inao, as well as exemplifying the adaptation of the story. Many kinds of them still exist and continue today. For example, Lakhon Duekdamban Inao (Images 12 and 13) and Li-ke Songkhrueng Inao, which were initially created during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, are still performed today.

The varieties of the Inao art works created and presented at this time reflect a new concept, demonstrating that the Inao story could to be adapted and applied to various new styles; there was no constraint dictating that the story be presented only in a traditional way or an old style of art. This new concept was accepted and has remained influential up to now, with the Inao theme being transformed into many new forms of art, such as TV drama, cartoons, stage plays, pop songs, and novels.

One major factor leading to this changing concept might be that many new styles of art were created during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, and the Inao story was selected and adapted by artists for representation in these art forms. Hence, the Inao appeared in a greater diversity of art forms than before.



Images 12 and 13. Lakhon Duekdamban Inao depicting the scene of Butsaba and the candle prophecy,¹⁴ staged by the Fine Arts Department at the Thailand Cultural Centre on 4 March 2013, during the SPAFA Seminar and Performances of the Panji/ Inao Traditions held in Bangkok. (Photographs by Thaneerat Jatuthasri, 2013).

5.2 A TURNING-POINT FOR THE PANJI VERSIONS IN THAI SOCIETY

The academic writings on the Panji story which first appeared in Thailand during the reign of King Chulalongkorn introduced new versions of Panji to Thai society. There are five Javanese Panji versions narrated in the journal King Chulalongkorn kept during his trip to Java in 1896, and there are two Javanese Panji versions collected in *Phongsawadan Yonok*, an academic book written by Phraya Prachakitkorachak (Cham Bunnak) in 1906.

The versions collected in those works provided useful information and inspiration for some Thai poets, who drew on some of the Panji versions collected in the works. For example, Nueangnoi Chuto (1954) composed *Khamklon Rueang Luk Inao*, the story of Inao's son, named Kudalalin, in the Klon verse form, based on a Javanese Panji story collected in *Phongsawadan Yonok* by Phraya Prachakitkorachak (Cham Bunnak).

Pertinently, many of the Javanese versions of the Panji story which were introduced to Thai society through academic writings, especially those in the King's journals, also played a role in sparking the interest and curiosity of Thai people, setting them searching for more versions so as to translate them into

¹⁴ The candle prophecy, as represented in the Inao story, is an ancient Thai ritual. For more details about the popularity and significance of the scene of Butsaba and the candle prophecy, see Stuart Robson and Prateep Changchit (1999).

Thai. For example, Khun Nikonkanprakit (Bin Abdunla) translated a Malay Panji story entitled Phongsawadan Inao Chabap Arinakkhara (the Inao version of Arinakkhara) into Thai, produced between 1918 and 1919. Prince Boriphat translated Hikayat Panji Semirang into Thai in 1938, and Prince Thani Nivat translated Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang into Thai in 1941.

5.3 A TURNING-POINT FOR THE PANJI/INAO STUDIES IN THAILAND

Detailed information about the Panji/Inao story described in contemporary academic writings, especially those of the King, have provided Thai people with authoritative information about the Panji story relating to many topics, touching upon its origins, cultural aspects, characteristics, manuscripts, performance, and the similarities and differences between the Javanese and Thai versions. Moreover, the King's study of a fragmentary manuscript of Inao found in Southern Thailand has provided knowledge of the Inao in the late-Ayutthaya period that has contributed to the history of Inao. Both directly and indirectly, these works have expanded the knowledge of the Panji/Inao story among the Thai people and laid the foundation for Panji/Inao studies in Thailand.

These academic works also sparked the curiosity about the Panji/Inao among other Thai elites and scholars, and the upshot has been a virtual flood of publications of further academic writings about the Panji/Inao story. For instance, Tamnan Lakhon Inao, created by Prince Damrong Rachanuphap in 1921, describes and discusses the origins and characteristics of the Javanese Panji story, as well as the history of the Inao and Dalang stories in Thai society. Wichan Rueang Nithan Panyi Rue Rueang Inao, penned by Prince Thani Nivat in 1941, describes the origins of the Panji story, brings together some Javanese and Malay Panji versions, and makes a comparison with other Thai versions. Finally, Wikhro Sap Chawa Nai Rueang Inao, written by Luang Khurunitiphisan in 1969, analyses and explains Javanese words in the Inao story.

5.4 A TURNING-POINT FOR THE AVAILABILITY OF THE INAO

In the reign of King Chulalongkorn, not only was the Inao presented in the court context as in the earlier periods, it also explicitly entered the domain of the common people as there is evidence that the Inao story became a popular part of the repertoires of Li-ke Songkhrueng, a folk dance-drama, first created at that time. Moreover, the two classical texts of the Thai Panji story, the Inao of King Rama II and the Dalang of King Rama I, were first published. This enabled the stories of Inao and Dalang to reach a far greater general public than they had in earlier times.

Hence, the publication of the Inao and the Dalang was possibly a major reason for the greater spread of access to the general public of the two Thai Panji stories than ever before, both directly, as the two stories reached a wider circle of readers, and indirectly, as folk dance-drama troupes could buy the texts to adapt in their performance. The printed version of the Inao was much

more popular among readers than that of Dalang. Proof of this assertion is that the former was reprinted many times by various publishers and might also have reached an audience abroad in Laos. According to a study of the Lao Panji story, entitled *Innao*, by Jatuthasri (2016: 175), there is a probability that the Lao *Innao* was composed in Luang Phrabang between the late-nineteenth to the early-twentieth century, which corresponds to the reign of King Chulalongkorn of Thailand. The Lao poet might have had the chance to read the printed version of the *Inao* of King Rama II and have been inspired to compose the *Innao*, as many aspects and details of the *Innao* obviously coincide with those of King Rama II's *Inao*.¹⁵

6. CONCLUSION

For over two hundred years the *Inao* has been an important part of Thai arts and culture. This article demonstrates that the reign of King Chulalongkorn was a crucial moment in the Thai Panji tradition – a time in which the *Inao* theme was widely distributed and was influential in various areas of art and culture. It marked a turning point in the Thai Panji tradition which has remained with us ever since.

During this period, not only did the *Inao* appear in the court context, it was also explicitly extended to the general public. The *Inao* was no longer presented in its traditional form, various new forms and styles were introduced. There were not just two Thai Panji versions, the *Inao* and the *Dalang*, many new Panji versions were also introduced to Thai society through the writings of the King and the elite. The *Inao*, of course, appeared in various kinds of art, importantly, it also existed in the areas of literary studies, international relations, expressions of worldview and social criticism.

This leads to the question of why the *Inao* theme flourished during this period. This article proposes four main reasons: (1) the universality and appeal of the *Inao* story as a romantic, heroic tale which exerts a timeless attraction on people's hearts; (2) the interest of King Chulalongkorn and the elite in the story, causing the *Inao* to be transmitted and presented in various art and cultural forms; (3) the journeys to Java of the King and the elite, extending their interest in the Panji/*Inao* and increasing their opportunities to acquire new knowledge about the story; and (4) the first publication of the classical text of the *Inao* extending the story to a much wider audience.

To conclude, over the long period of time since the *Inao* story first came into existence in the late-Ayutthaya period, the reign of King Chulalongkorn stands out as “the Golden Age” of the *Inao* in Thailand, and also represents “a transitional period” of the *Inao* tradition; it is the time in which the story began to expand to reach a wider range of forms and roles, allowing its traditions to be significantly strengthened.

¹⁵ The Lao *Innao*, an anonymous literary work, was written down in four Phap Sa, or four folded mulberry-paper books, the first book of which was published by National Library of Laos in 1970. The *Innao* was composed in the Khlong San verse form. The story begins with the episode in which Charaka asks an artist to draw a picture of Butsaba to illustrate the episode in which *Inao* defeats King Kanangning (Jatuthasri 2016: 293).

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