

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn of King Chulalongkorn: Narrative of the Nation's History¹

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Abstract

King Chulalongkorn intended to present the history of the nation in order to indicate the past and the ancestor. He wanted to raise the awareness and recognition of the people in the nation regarding a sense of belonging to the nation and sharing the same national identity by means of historical narratives about Thai ancestors. He brought many royal chronicles back and presented them in the form of a narrative. *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* portrays the origin of the nation since the Ayutthaya period, together with important historical events and heroic deeds of great kings. Moreover, this work illustrates the long continuing progress of the nation and reveals the unity of the people that has been an important key to make the nation secure.

The presentation of *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* to the public in a form of a narrative has raised Thai people's awareness about the nation with regards to obstacles and difficulties their ancestors faced. Therefore, they have pride in the nation and unity among themselves, which are important keys in keeping the nation strong and secure.

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Literature Works of King Chulalongkorn and Narration of the Nation's History³

King Chulalongkorn focused on the nation's myth and history by making a deep and broad study of archaeology with the intention of retrieving and collecting the nation's stories. This is made evident by the fact that the Archaeological Organization was established as the organization to search the nation's archaeology and history, especially the myth of the nation's past.

In a royal speech by King Chulalongkorn at the foundation of the Archaeological Organization, he mentioned that Thai people had very little knowledge about their nation's archaeology:

Therefore, you are all invited to the first organization's meeting in order to realize that we will search the history of Siam. No matter in any region, in any country, any dynasty or in any period. We will collect and compile the story of Siam from the 1000s onward to be the unity of Siam.⁴

³ The term "nation" in Nationalism of Ethno-Symbolism by Anthony D. Smith: Nation - named populations possessing a historic territory, shared myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members. Anthony D. Smith, "Theories of Nationalism: Alternative Models of Nation Formation," *Asian Nationalism*, ed. Michael Leifer (London: Rutledge, 2000): 13. However, academics have had various opinions about the origin of the Thai Nation; for example, some variously claim that the nation was established in the reign of King Rama V after creating the nation's map, or the nation was built during the reign of King Rama VI because of nationalism or political change, or the nation arose in the reign of King Rama VII after the revolution in June 1932. This research refers to Andreas Strum's research results that mention the Nation of Siam was completely established in the reign of King Rama V. See more detail in Andreas Strum, *The King's Nation: A Study of the Emergence and Development of Nation and Nationalism in Thailand*, Doctoral dissertation (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2006).

⁴ Royal speech of King Chulalongkorn: "Archaeology organization's foundation" cited in *Library Wachirayan for the capital* (Rachburi: Fine Art Department, 2000) 119. (Please note that all translations of Thai texts and Thai poems were rendered by the author of this article.)

In his speech, it is evident that King Chulalongkorn intended to collect and retrieve the nation's history because of his desire to express unity by showing that the Thai people had a history together, no matter where they lived, whatever they were, in any reign or period. That means that King Chulalongkorn realized history's importance with respect to the nation.

Anthony D. Smith, a scholar in the Ethno-Symbolism school of nationalism, mentioned regarding a nation's background and history that no nation-to-be can survive without a homeland or myth of common origins and descent,⁵ a notion that is in accord with the speech of King Chulalongkorn who expressed the intent to rediscovery the nation's past.

To show the nation's background is to show the ancestor's memories, history and the past which the Thai people have shared, and which emphasized that the ancestors had a link with each other. Smith called such stories a myth of descent. A myth of descent attempts to provide an answer to questions of similarity and belonging: Why are we all alike? Why are we one community? Because we came from the same place, at a definite period and are descended from the self-same ancestor, we necessarily belong together and share the same feelings and tastes.⁶ Therefore, the definition of succession not only means the succession in heredity, but also means the succession between the people living together since the long past.

Moreover, considering the social context during that period, King Chulalongkorn launched the policy in order to foster the nation's stability and he focused on searching for stories in the past; for example, rewriting the royal chronicles (Chaophraya Thiphakorawong edition) as a chronicle journal or literary work, "*Pharajchawijan Pharajaphongsawadarn*" (royal chronicle review), in non-fiction style presenting the facts and stories from the past.

However, there is another interesting literary work, "*Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*", concerning the stories from the past. King Chulalongkorn presented history not in chronicle style, but more

⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 25.

⁶ Smith 1986, 24.

interestingly in literature style as poetry depicting paintings from the royal chronicles. He created *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* as a tool to present the nation's history.

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: Poems Depicting Paintings from the Royal Chronicles

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn was a royal project of King Chulalongkorn. He instructed the creation of poems and paintings of the royal chronicles of the kingdom.⁷ King Chulalongkorn used these poems and paintings in an exhibition to decorate the royal pyres of his wife and three children at the Royal Plaza in Bangkok in 1887.

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn is composed of 92 painting and poems, forming a combination between literature and painting. For the paintings King Chulalongkorn directed the artists to paint topics selected by himself. The paintings were the combination of Thai traditional and modern art, using western style-realism and perspective, which made them different from traditional Thai art that used mainly gold color and continuous images from top to bottom.⁸ He also directed a painting contest on the nation's history through traditional and modern style.

The poems were composed using four or six four-line stanzas of the *khlung* style. King Chulalongkorn, as the editor, selected the historical events to present himself and directed royal family members and officers to compose the poetry. Moreover, he composed nine poems himself corresponding to the painting numbers 1, 10, 19, 20, 22, 62, 72, 79 and 86.

⁷ Phrabatsomdej Chulachomkhaochaoyuhua [พระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว], *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: Explanation and analysis* (โคลงภาพพระราชพงศาวดาร พร้อมบทขยายความและบทวิเคราะห์) (กรุงเทพฯ: กรมศิลปากร, 2550 (2007)) 1 (In Thai).

⁸ Chulachomkhaochaoyuhua 7.

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: The Narrative's Presentation of the Nation's Background

In the past, the nation's history and background in each period had been collected. Charnvit Kasetsiri has classified the perception of history into three types. First, *tamnan* history is the ancient stories that people could recall.⁹ *Tamnan* history aims to recite the story of the Buddha who disseminated the dhamma and the stories since the introduction of Buddhism into Thailand, in which kings and kingdoms were involved in enhancing Buddhism. Next, *phongsawadan* history is a dynastic story to present a king's important actions, thus focused on the kings rather than Buddhism.¹⁰ The last is *prawatsat* history which searches from evidence to support the writing and which developed from the traditional description chronicle to modern analytical history.¹¹

However, there is another historic writing style known as historiography, which means the study of history by researching critical evidence and evaluating the gathered evidence and information to classify the credible information.¹² The interpretation of the evidence is to find the definition of the evidence, then, an analysis and synthesis of the information is to understand the relationship and the final step is to compose the story of the relationship.¹³

⁹ *Tamnan* history begins with the Gotama Buddha before his vow to reach enlightenment, a time in the distant past before many of the Buddha's births and before he had accumulated the merit required to become the Buddha. Charnvit Kasetsiri, "Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period," *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, eds. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Kuala Lumpur: Published for the Asian Studies Association of Australia by Heinemann Educational Books [Asia], 1979) 156.

¹⁰ *Phongsawadan* history is that of a dynastic chronicle, primarily emphasizing the activities of kings and kingdom. Charnvit 159.

¹¹ *Prawatsat* history is a new style for Thai historiography. Charnvit 162.

¹² Historiography is "the study of writing about history." *Oxford Dictionary* 7th (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 708.

¹³ Saovanit Chulawongse [เสาวณิต จุลวงศ์], "History of Thai Politics in 'Parallel in Democracy' (ประวัติศาสตร์การเมืองไทยใน 'ประชาธิปไตยบนเส้นขนาน')," *Language and Book Journal: Literary Work and History* (วารสารภาษาและหนังสือฉบับวรรณกรรมประวัติศาสตร์) (กรุงเทพฯ: สมาคมภาษาและหนังสือ, 2549 (2006)) (In Thai) 73.

Although, the four types of the perception of history have different styles, all of them have the same purpose, which is to record or present the story of the past. King Chulalongkorn not only aimed to present and spread the nation's history to the public, but also to link Thai people together by the history. Therefore, to rewrite the nation's past seemed to be different from the journal style.

Smith divided the category of rediscovery and reconstruction of the past of a community or nation into two main criteria by which modern ethnic and nations have sought to rediscover or reconstruct their communal pasts: the didactic and the dramatic.¹⁴

The second style is that which was used with *Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*. Smith described the second writing style as to make the story a romance, mystery, drama:

This is the stuff of any nationalist salvation drama. It is important, because it helps to teach us 'who we are', to impart the sense of being a link in a chain which stretches back over the generations to bind us to our ancestors and our descendants. It is also important, because it teach us where we are and who we should be if we are rediscover ourselves.¹⁵

Therefore, according to literature study, *Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* is in the narrative style.¹⁶

King Chulalongkorn initiated *Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* to present the nation's background. Although the title and information of the work was in the *phongsawadan* style, *Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* was considered to be in a different style from the royal chronicle's traditional writing which ran the historical events chronically by era without a link or relationship of the events.¹⁷

¹⁴ Smith 1986, 179.

¹⁵ Smith 1986, 180.

¹⁶ Narrative is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do. M. H. Abrams, *A glossary of literary terms* (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005) 187.

¹⁷ *Phongsawadan* histories usually begin with the foundation of a kingdom and then list the activities of successive kings. Charnvit 160.

However, *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* presented information from the royal chronicle as a narrative about the nation's history.

Although the content of each painting and poem did not link to each other and the *khlong* style presented limitations with respect to explanation and detail of event, *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* has a "plot" that gives the overall idea of the royal chronicle to the reader. Content and character are specified by presenting the behavior of some people and some events, and the narrative strategy intends to present both the ancestor's story and arouse people's conscious in order to consider the fate and troubles of the ancestors. *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* can be classified in narrative techniques rather than as a historical journal by considering the plot, story, and narrative techniques.

1) Plot and Story

In writing *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*, King Chulalongkorn selected some interesting events to present. The 92 poems show the nation's background arrange in order of time from the reign of King Ramathibodi I, (Uthong), through the Ayutthaya period to King Rama III in the Rattanakosin period. Only 11 kings from the Ayutthaya period are mentioned in *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*. Some kings are mentioned in a number of poems, but some are mentioned in one poem only. It is unclear how King Chulalongkorn selected the events to present in *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* and which direction to present the past from the royal chronicles. Even though selecting only some event to present makes the poetry lack harmony with respect to king order, we can understand the plot of *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* in that King Chulalongkorn wanted to present the nation's background from the Ayutthaya Era to the Rattanakosin Era.

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn illustrates the story in three eras: Ayutthaya, Thonburi in chaos, and the Rattanakosin Era, thus showing the succession of each territory and presenting the long existence of the people since the beginning period of the Ayutthaya until the Rattanakosin period. That means that Thailand was outlined

as a nation with a long, continuous history and a history of the territory.¹⁸

The first poem was written by King Chulalongkorn himself, and the framework for the whole project of a 'national history' becomes clear, as it represents the beginning of Ayutthaya.¹⁹ The poem describes the background of Ayutthaya as King Ramathibodi I established a new kingdom.

King Chulalongkorn presented the event in which King Ramathibodi announced Ayutthaya as a new kingdom with a traditional ceremony in order to bring goodwill to the kingdom. During the establishment, a sacred object, "*Sangtaksinawat*", was found.²⁰ The old location was "*Nongsano*" and King Uthong named the new kingdom "*Tawaravadee Sri Ayutthaya*". He was crowned as the first king, named King Ramathibodi Srisunthornborombophit, and the poem described how the Ayutthaya Era lasted for more than 400 years as a kingdom. King Chulalongkorn ended his poem with the connection of the long-lasting power of Ayutthaya and Siam:²¹

This city lasted for 400 years,
He (Ramathibodi I, the founder) is the first king who ruled
Siam²²

The first poem represents the kingdom's establishment and location by presenting the long existence and persistence of the kingdom under a king. In addition, King Chulalongkorn referred to "Siam", using this proper noun of ethnic communities without there being any evidence of the existence of "Siam" as a community in Ayutthaya, nor is there any references to such in any royal chronicles recorded in the Ayutthaya era. Calling the territory or country "Siam" following the peoples staying in the area was firstly mentioned during

¹⁸ Strum 125.

¹⁹ Strum 126.

²⁰ *Sangtaksinawat* is a rare item used in a sacred ceremony to prevent or abolish bad things. Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 17.

²¹ Strum 126.

²² Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 15.

the reign of King Rama IV.²³ Thus, King Chulalongkorn used “Siam” in order to show that there was a community since the Ayutthaya era until the present. “Siam” was considered as a collective name for the group in Ayutthaya until the present, thus, he emphasized the long history of the nation since the Ayutthaya era until the Rattanakosin era. He combined the Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Rattanakosin eras to show that the nation originated and lasted for more than 400 years.

The next poems present the nation’s story similar to royal chronicle writing style, but without mentioning the stories of every reign. In the 92nd and last poem, King Chulalongkorn illustrated the story of King Rama III in the Rattanakosin era. This poem presents Captain Henry Burney, the British Ambassador, meeting the King to negotiate a treaty with the Thai and thank the King for military support in Burma. In this occurrence, King Rama III meets the British Ambassador according to the diplomatic tradition at Amarinwinitchai palace:

1826, Bengkol Governor (England)

Sent the Ambassador, named Henry, to continue the good relationship²⁴

In the last painting, King Chulalongkorn selected this event to end the story in order to present that Thailand did not have any event of war with its neighbors; for example, Burma and Khmer were already defeated, and were colonies of England and France. His aim was to show the important occasion of the nation in which Western countries, which came to gain the benefits from these areas, were

²³ Chalongsuntranon [ชลอง สุนทรวานิชย์], *Siam or Thai: Is the name important? Academic document: The Project of Local University 2/2008* (สยามหรือไทยนามนั้นสำคัญมากจะไหนหรือ? เอกสารวิชาการโครงการตลาดวิชา มหาวิทยาลัยชาวบ้าน 2/2008) (กรุงเทพฯ: มูลนิธิโครงการตำราสังคมศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์, 2551 (2008)) 103 (In Thai); King Rama IV is the first king who spelled the name of his country “Siam” and his profound knowledge of Latin had him sign his kingly title as Rex Siamensis, meaning the king of the Siamese country. Pridi Bhanomyong [ปรีดี พนมยงค์], “From Siam to Thai (ความเป็นมาของชื่อประเทศไทยกับประเทศไทย)”, *เมืองโบราณ [Muang Boran]*, 11:2 (April-June, 1985): 13 (In Thai).

²⁴ Chulachomkloaochaoyuhua 258.

influential to Siam. King Rama III also was concerned with the influence of Western people as can be seen below:

There will be no more wars with Vietnam and Burma. We will have them only with the West. Take care, and do not lose any opportunities to them. Anything that they propose should be held up to scrutiny before accepting it. Do not blindly trust them...²⁵

The use of the term “Bengkol Governor” in the previous poem indicates the immensity of England that had taken over the Bengal gulf, including India, Sri Lanka, and Burma. Furthermore, this poem shows Siam’s progress in traditional diplomatic welcoming ceremonies. The result of the audience was the first treaty with England in 1826, the Burney Treaty, that was a new diplomatic progress in terms of territory and commerce. This was the period in which the West had influence over the Thai nation as never before and changed the community from the past. Since the time of King Rama IV, Thai society changed due to Western influence.

In considering the content from the first painting to the last, even though the events were not continually presented, the plot of *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* presents the nation’s history from the beginning through its growth, decline and rebirth. In the other word, the work presents the story from the Ayutthaya era (King Uthong) to the Rattanakosin era (King Rama III).

As mentioned above, these poems were only a broad analysis. After examination of each event, the writings present not only the succession of the reign, but also the plot of *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* shows how the community lived in each period according to Smith’s Theory.

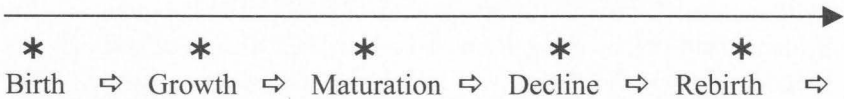
Smith proposes the notion that myth shows a community’s linear development.²⁶ The myth presents the evolution of a community in each step. Each step acquires important events as the cause of a

²⁵ Chaophraya Thiphakornrawong [ทิพากรวงศ์, เจ้าพระยา], *The Dynastic Chronicles Bangkok Era King Rama III* (พระราชพงศาวดารกรุงรัตนโกสินทร์ รัชกาลที่ 3) (พระนคร: องค์การค้าคุรุสภา, 2504 (1994)) 188 (In Thai).

²⁶ Smith 1986, 191.

community's beginning, growth, and decline, and the result of any changes, such as peace or collapse. In consequence, the myth is a story revealing the origins and descent.²⁷

The Idea of Linear Development²⁸



According to Smith's notion, myth represents the story along a period of time. The nation creates a sense of unity among the people because the myth shows every step of important change in the nation's fate.

By analyzing *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* with the idea of linear development according to Smith, it was found that Smith's notion harmonized mostly with the plot of *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* because the well-selected events throughout the story represent the nation's orderly evolution since the beginning, through its growth, decline and rebirth. The linear development appears twice. The first time is in the establishment of Ayutthaya by King Ramathibodi I (Uthong) until the announcement of independence by King Naresuan after the first defeat to the Burmese. The second time is from the reign of King Naresuan through the establishment of the Rattanakosin era by King Rama I. Throughout, the story illustrates the nation's myth of origin and descent, from the beginning, growth, decline and revival, becoming Siam's story of succession.

The first poem describes the nation's beginning by presenting the royal business in the capital and the maintenance of the religion. Poems 7-19 show the events before the first defeat, which was the capital's decline. Next, the events of King Naresuan's retrieval of independence and his extension of power are presented in poems 20-38. This was time of revival of the kingdom. Poems 39-61 represent

²⁷ Smith 1986, 191.

²⁸ Smith 1986, 191.

the kingdom's growth; for example, the Thai Ambassador was sent to France to develop the relationship during the reign of King Narai. This is followed by the kingdom's disorder in the middle and the end of the Ayutthaya era shown by the weakness of the institution of the king, until the age of decline and the second defeat. Finally, King Taksin revived the throne. In the poems 70-88, establishment of the Rattanakosin era by King Rama I is described as a new and brilliant kingdom, in which religion was supported and customs restored. The last poem shows the nation's important change through the introduction of Western countries by the Burney's treaty. This was the emergence of the modern nation; nation in the Western sense.

As mentioned previously, *Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* closed with this event because King Chulalongkorn wanted to present the nation as starting to change after contact with the West and the benefits of business. Moreover, it was a period of emergence into a modern nation according to the Western meaning. However, it is noticeable as to why King Chulalongkorn did not continue the story through the reign of King Rama IV, his father, even though there were many important events, such as the discovery of the stone inscription, social changes, and the accurate calculation of a solar eclipse.

According to Smith's idea of linear development, the poem shows the kingdom's revival under King Rama I until the signing of the Burney Treaty between King Rama III and England, a powerful nation. The Burney Treaty shows the good relationship between Siam and England. On the other hand, this treaty could be implied as another kind of attack by England, although different from the military attack by Burma. It was mentioned in the *Phongsawadan chabap phrarajchahatlekha* (royal autograph chronicle) as:

That time, King (Rama III) doesn't want to agree with the contract. He prefers to socialize with Vietnam. But England sent the request twice. In case of deny the contract, they would get angry. It is difficult to prevent for the reason that England expands closely both by land and marine. So King (Rama III)

decides to agree with the contract. Then he invites Captain Burney to the camp.²⁹

From the royal chronicles, King Rama III appears not to agree with this treaty, signing it only to prevent Siam from attack by England. Although the Burney Treaty resolved the argument between Siam and England about Traiburi,³⁰ Thailand lost economic benefits, such as imported tax collection and foreigner's independent commerce, except rice and opium.

Poem 29, describing the elephant duel between King Naresuan and the Burmese Crown Prince, compares the elephant duel to events in the Rattanakosin era:

Siam escaped from two threats
 First was in King Naresuan, reign
 Second was in Bangkok (King Rama I, reign)
 Both of time, there was happiness³¹

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn presented the two threats and shows that King Naresuan and King Rama I were heroes who fought with the enemy to protect and expand the kingdom. They carried Siam over the difficulties to become peaceful and prosperous.

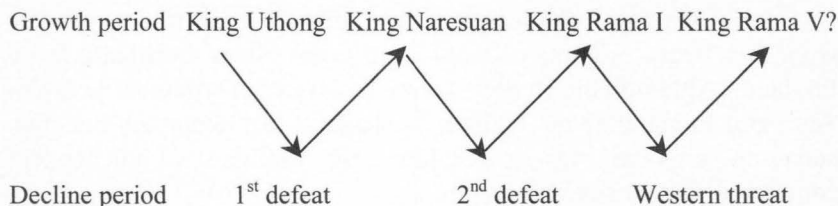
Hence, King Chulalongkorn selected this event as the closing episode because he wanted to show that the city was in a critical period again. This was the third threat to the sovereignty and the territory. Moreover, the revival period happened from the reign of King Rama IV until King Chulalongkorn, who maintained the nation and developed the growth again as shown in the chart below:

²⁹ Thiphakorawong 12.

³⁰ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 259.

³¹ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 87.

Chart Presenting the Critical Period in the Poems Depicting the Royal Chronicle Paintings



The chart above explains the important period of the nation persistence according to the plot and story in *Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*. In the past, during some periods, Siam was prosperous and in some period was in decline. But finally, the city could be revived because of the king's talent.

Therefore, King Chulalongkorn presented the royal chronicle in narrative style with the above plot and story; presenting the history differently as the events developed. In addition, presenting the periods of growth and decline arouses the reader's emotion. The fate, pain, and difficulty of the ancestors, including the brave efforts to prevent the kingdom collapse, invoke the sense of nation and unity for the next generation.

2) Narrative Techniques

Khlóng Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn is composed using a narrative technique of time order. The story is developed by reign since the Ayutthaya period until the Rattanakosin era. However, some events of some kings are skipped. The narrative describes only the event in each painting. The overall work seemed to be without continuity.

Of the 92 poems, almost all the poems follow the same structure: describing the selected events with 4-6 four-line stanzas of *klong* style. The narrative technique is the external and omniscient narrator.

According to this narrative technique, events are told both from the Siam and Burma side. The narrative of the nation's history becomes livelier than the story only from Siam side, as in a royal

chronicles. During the reign of King Naresuan, the poems describe the events in both Siam and Burma. Readers can imagine the story because to make a war, at least two parties are needed, so it is not realistic if only the event in Siam are mentioned in the poem. In particular, the narration describes many of the effort of the Burma's troops to beat Ayutthaya, as in the poems of fighting between King Mahachakkrapat and King Hongsawadee (10-15), King Hongsawadee beating the capital (17), King Hongsawadee crossing the river (18) and King Thammaracha's negotiation (19). These poems explain that even though Siam was defeated by Burma, the kings and ancestors tried with all effort to protect the kingdom so that Burma had to put in more effort to beat the Thai.

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn also presents Burma's point of view toward Siam. The thought of the Burma's leader toward King Rama I is mentioned:

Burma's army leader judge King Rama I
 He compliment him good looking
 He could be the next King
 Burma's army will lose³²

This narrative technique of presenting the thoughts of Burma's army leader toward the Thai army leader emphasizes King Rama I's intelligence. Even the opposite party recognizes and accepts the King's intelligence.

The narrator is from an external, third person point of view, looking from the present period back, reciting the past. The narrator is omniscient and mentions Ayutthaya's existence in the first poem as "This city lasted for 400 years." In addition, the narrator concludes two events as the difficulty periods of King Naresuan and King Rama I.

The narrative technique from an external narrator not only describes the events, but also adds the author's opinion. The last stanza ends with a comment or opinion of the poet:

³² Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 192.

Ayutthaya defeat,
 Even though there will be many people, unity was lacking.
 Even if five people were in a troop with unity
 We could beat and establish Thonburi as the kingdom³³

This narrative technique directs the reader to think along the author's opinion and content. With this technique, *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* motivates the felling of love for and pride in the nation.

Another important narrative technique is to present the loss and ruin of the kingdom to evoke a depressed emotion; even the two defeats are mentioned in the work. On the other hand, the story describes the kingdom's rescue by presenting the bravery of the ancestors to revive the kingdom in the reigns of King Naresuan, King Taksin and King Rama I. They also revived religion, good tradition and custom, thus invokes pride in the nation's history. According to this narrative technique, *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* represents the nation's history positively. Although Siam faced difficult situations, the nation persisted with brave leaders and unity.

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: Presentation of the Nation's Heroes

As Smith mentioned regarding a nation's myth presentation, one aspect that goes together with myths of ethnic origins and descent is the "motif or elements in any national mythology or myths of ethnic origins and descent." One of motifs is the story of a nation's heroes who protect and maintain the nation's independence.³⁴

In *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*, it is evident that the heroes' stories are presented in many statuses, such as a king, a nobleman official and ordinary people. Their bravery shows their effort to maintain the nation's independence.

³³ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 175.

³⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 65.

The outstanding hero is King Naresuan. The work depicts the events of King Naresuan in 17 poems, which represents his story since his youth in the reign of King Mahatammaraja, his father, until his own reign. The event of proclaiming independence by King Naresuan is presented after the first defeat to the Burmese in which King Naresuan became a hero. Every poems show his talent in military exploits, not only winning with the grand troops, but also his special talent shooting with accuracy:

King Naresuan is good at shooting
Burma's crown prince is scared, and then flees away³⁵

Moreover, his bravery also is mentioned. In one poem, King Naresuan is described climbing into King Hongsawadee's camp, amazing King Hongsawadee with his bravery. The same poem summarizes his bravery; the enemy does not attack for a while:

No other enemy attacked for a hundred years³⁶

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn also illustrates another remarkable hero, King Rama I. He is one of the kings who restored the kingdom and built progress, peace, and stability. *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* presents his bravery since he was General Chakkri, who was so proficient in military endeavors that Burma's leader wants to see him:

General Chakkri (the future King Rama I) rides the horse.
Majestically,
Move the troop to the field to present himself to the enemy³⁷

In addition to his expertise in military matters, the work illustrates the important event in which General Chakkri moved the

³⁵ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 70.

³⁶ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 78.

³⁷ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 192.

troop from Cambodia after hearing about the chaos after King Taksin had become insane:

General Chakkri travel back to Thonburi
To conquer the inside enemy
Religion and people had prosperity³⁸

This shows his preeminent bravery towards the kingdom. King Rama I took responsibility for military matters for enemies both outside and inside and represent his remarkable talent. Moreover, after his appointment to the throne, he still fights against other opponents for his people's peace and happiness:

Because of the effort, Siam could be revived³⁹

At the conclusion of this poem, King Rama I is described as fighting bravely in different wars in order to restore the honor of Siam.

Besides the story of the heroic kings, *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* presents the story of a nobleman and official who were the army leaders and ministers who join in the protection of the kingdom from the enemy. The work describes the official as Panthaynorasingha, who is a lower level official and seems not to be important to the kingdom. Panthaynorasingha is the steersman of the royal boat of King Phrachaosue. The steersman, while directing the royal boat, causes the prow to be broken and has to be punished to death. Even though the King forgives him, he insists on receiving the punishment, showing his bravery and loyalty toward the King. Although his bravery does not prevent the kingdom from joining the wars, he secures the King's honor and is a good model of loyalty towards the King. The work depicting the painting emphasizes his action as a good model to the next generation.

³⁸ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 199.

³⁹ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 210.

Nai-khanomtom, a common person, is another good example. In the situation in which Siam was governed by Burma, he is very courageous, fighting with empty hands. King Angwa gives him a compliment due to his bravery:

The Siamese people even in the time of disarray,
having only bare hands, the enemy could not touch them
This picture confirmed the old saying,
that had been said many times,
the Kingdom of Ayutthaya never lacks a good man,
this picture just confirmed it⁴⁰

Nai-khanomtom is a representative of the Thai people who are bold and are not afraid of the enemy. Even though Ayutthaya is defeated, the Thai never lack good people who admire the kingdom.

In addition, *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* illustrates the story of heroines, both queens and ordinary people. Queen Suriyothai is described sacrificing her life for the survival of her royal consort or father and the independence of the kingdom. She dies on the neck of her elephant. Moreover, a common woman, Thaothepsattri, looks after the city instead of her husband, the governor, fighting along side and her sister with Burma to maintain independence.

These stories represent the bravery of women; not only men, but also women are courageous, no matter what social class, queen or commoner. Queen Suriyothai protects her husband who is the leader of the kingdom and Thaothepsattri, as a common citizen, protects and secures the kingdom's independence.

The bravery of heroes and heroines in *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* shows the sacrifice, tolerance, and bravery of the people for the purpose of maintaining the country's independence. This also forms pride in the ancestors and arouses the felling of love for the nation among the people. These heroes and heroines are the representation and role model of good people in every social level. They are ready to sacrifice for the nation.

⁴⁰ Strum 129.

The purpose of the presentation of heroes is to recall the pride in ancestors, to arouse and remind the later generation to realize the trouble and appreciate the ancestor's actions. This also shows that everyone in the nation has the responsibility to protect the nation's honor. As the king, he has to be a leader to maintain the nation's security and shape the country's growth. The nobleman has the responsibility to support and follow the leader or king. Common people need to maintain the country's honor. Even women can protect the nation.

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: The King is the Key Point of the Nation

Considering the plot, story, character, and narrative techniques, the major point in *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* is that the king has always been the heart of the Thai nation. In *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn*, the king is the main character and acquires the importance towards the people and nation's persistence.

The king is the founder of the kingdom and gathers the people in a group. He becomes the leader who brings prosperity to the kingdom in the form of royal business for his country and people.

First, the king has to protect his territory. The stories of kings fighting for their country and people in order to protect the country and expand the territory are often presented. The events in the reigns of King Naresuan, King Taksin and King Rama I are mentioned frequently in *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* reviving the nation and the people's independence.

The war with the main enemy, Burma, is presented in 26 of the 92 poems. The stories imply that Siam can beat the large army of Burma due to the king's talent. Sunait Chutintaranond explains that the 26 poems reflect and describe the adversary.⁴¹ This technique emphasizes the king's talent and grace toward the country. Moreover,

⁴¹ Sunait Chutintaranond [สุนเตร ชุตินทรานนท์], *Bayinnaung (Kyawhtin Nawrahta): King of Burma in Thai Perception* (บุเรงนอง (กะยอติพนรธา) กษัตริย์พม่าในโลกทัศน์ไทย) (กรุงเทพฯ: มติชน, 2548 (2005)) 96 (In Thai).

the poetry presents the events of each king's fighting to conquer the north and south and broadly expand the territory.

The king's other major responsibility presented in *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* is to support the religion by restoring, renovating, installing Buddhist statues, and organizing councils for the revision of the Buddhist canon (Tipitaka) for the purpose of supporting the major principle or core culture of the country. This also indicates that the king is the main religious supporter and that he rules the country with virtue in order to make his people peaceful and happy. Moreover, the king supports and restores the arts and customs as good tradition for the later generations.

The royal duties are to bring happiness to his people and kingdom. *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* emphasizes that the king is the center of the nation and the source of people's happiness. After the second defeat, the country was in a riotous period:

Siam is divided into 6 groups,
and fight each other,
People are not so happy that need to escape from their place⁴²

From the poem, the chaotic period separates people into groups without unity. People are in a difficult situation lacking a king, leader and center of the people.

The work emphasizes the events in which King Rama I is enthroned at the beginning of the Rattanakosin Era and establishes Khrungthaepmahanakorn (City of Angel) as the capital:

King Rama I is the person who reunites the Thai people⁴³

In other words, King Rama I is the center of the Thai people after overcoming the difficult period from the second defeat until the chaotic period at the end of King Taksin. King Rama I is the king who revives the Thai people to be happy and strong and secure.

⁴² Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 180.

⁴³ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 203.

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn represents that the kingdom can persist because of the king. When the king is weak, people will confront a hard period. On the other hand, once the king is strong, the country will grow and people will be happy. Thus, the nation and the king are intimately related.

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: Unity Maintains Nationality

Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn focuses on the ancestor's effort to maintain independence by presenting the hostilities with neighbors, such as Burma, Cambodia and Chiangmai. In particular, the wars with Burma are frequently presented. *Khlung Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* underlines the event of two defeats to Burma showing that Siam was defeated because the people lacked unity.

In King Chulalongkorn's opinion, without unity, the people will be defeated. If Thai people are united, even though less in number than the opponents, they can beat them. General Wachiraprakarn (King Taksin) can defeat Burma many times with less people and can protect the nation's independence:

A key to the success of a nation was solidarity, which he emphasized in one poem written by himself: King Taksin and four soldiers were able to defeat 30 Burmese soldiers because they knew the meaning of solidarity.⁴⁴

In the event of defeats, King Chulalongkorn does not describe the failing, disaster, weakness or melancholy. He selected to present the result of the lacking of unity. Therefore, presentation of two defeats was intended to create the sense of unity and expected the people to love the nation.

Furthermore, the unity of people is emphasized by King Rama I in the event in which the Amrintraphisek throne was burned by a thunderbolt:

⁴⁴ Strum 129.

King Rama I,
 commands to the minister,
 to carry the throne and white umbrella of sovereignty
 from the fire
 the royal families,
 the noblemen,
 including monks every temple,
 help to extinguish the fire⁴⁵

The poem describes King Rama I commanding the minister to carry the throne from the fire and ordering the royal family, the noblemen, official, and monks to help put out the fire. This poetry shows the unity among the people. The throne represents the nation and the king. Once the nation confronts the disaster, if the people take part in protecting under the king's guideline, the nation will be saved from disaster.

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn: Exhibition Presenting the Nation's Narratives

King Chulalongkorn selected *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* to present to the public as an exhibition in a royal funeral where many people joined in the festivities. This exhibition was composed of paintings with descriptive poetry to tell the annals more clearly.⁴⁶ In addition, King Chulalongkorn published this work depicting the royal chronicle to distribute to the people as souvenirs, thus showing his intention to spread this chronicle to the public. Even though this was not the first time to present a chronicle with the

⁴⁵ Chulachomklaochaoyuhua 230.

⁴⁶ The concept of exhibition appeared since the beginning of the reign of King Rama V with a big event: "National Exhibition" in 100th anniversaries, 1882. See more details in Kanthima Sriudom [กันทิมา ศรีอุดม], *From "National Exhibition" to "The Siam Kingdom Exhibition" reflections of Siamese history in the reigns of King Chulalongkorn and King Vajiravudh* (จาก "นาเชนแนล เอกชออิบิเชน" ถึง "สยามรัฐพิพิธภัณฑ": ภาพสะท้อนประวัติศาสตร์สยามในรัชกาลพระบาทสมเด็จพระจุลจอมเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว) (วิทยานิพนธ์อักษรศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาประวัติศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, 2549 (2006)) (In Thai).

painting and poetry, the previous poetry depicting a royal chronicle of Ayutthaya, Thonburi and King Rama I-IV by Monk In (Khrua Inkhong) was not published. Therefore, these 92 poems depicting the royal chronicle painting is the first illustrated narrative of the royal chronicle that was spread widely to the public.

King Chulalongkorn's intention to publish and spread *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* to the public changed the perception on the royal chronicle. Before the royal chronicle was only spread among the aristocracy; however, he distributed the chronicle to common people in narrative form with illustration to enhance comprehension. With the poetry style, words needed to be nicely selected. The rhythm is firm. The words need to represent a deep meaning, emotional and be easy to remember. In using art and literature as a means to present the nation's history, the royal chronicle became a common story. Moreover, King Chulalongkorn not only intended to spread the chronicle to the public, but also to remind the people of the past and to appreciate the King's grace toward the country.

Conclusion

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn is considered as a tool to communicate with the people. These poems depicting the royal chronicle paintings discloses the nation's stories by presenting Siam as it appeared from long ago without separation of the Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Rattanakosin periods. This poetry emphasizes the unity of the nation since the Ayutthaya era and shows the feeling of love for the nation and unity among the people to secure the nation's independence. In addition, the poetry represents the sacrifices of the ancestors in protecting the nation, including the previous kings' talent and grace, thus saving the nation and helping to adjust to the modern period without becoming a colony.

Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn is not only a telling of the nation's history, but also reinterprets royal chronicles in which King Chulalongkorn intended to clarify the meaning of the nation to the people. 92 events were selected in order to explain what the

nation is, what the nation is composed of, what the people's duties are and what protects the nation. King Chulalongkorn linked the nation to the institution of the king because the king takes responsible to supervise, protect, and bring prosperity to the country. The king also becomes the center of the people. Therefore, the stability of the king takes a part in the nation's security. In other word, a stable king means a stable nation.

However, King Chulalongkorn did not force nationalism on the readers unreasonably. He described how the king possesses special talent different from others, such as charisma, bravery, sacrifice, undertaking huge tasks to look after his people and bring prosperity to the kingdom. For these reasons, people need to grant him their loyalty.

In conclusion, King Chulalongkorn reinterpreted the royal chronicle in order to clarify nationalism to the people through poetry and illustrated this with a combination of tradition and modernity. The exhibition was a good solution to spread *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* to the public. The realistic paintings and poetry supported each other to make the story notable. His communication made people remember and instilled interest in the nation's background. *Khlong Phap Phrarajaphongsawadarn* turned the nation's history to be a co-experience among the people in which the common people could have the opportunity to be a part of.

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