

# King Rama V's Travelogues: The Distribution of Modern Knowledge<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The idea of foreign nations has been introduced in Thai literature since a long time ago. However, the information presented in the past was mostly irrelevant. In the past, Siam was believed to be the center of the world. Foreigners were inferior to Thai people. Especially in the early Rattanakosin era, western nations were described as completely strange.

However, the information about foreigners in King Rama V's writings is different from any other works of the same era. In his works, Siam is not the center of the world. All details and information are described matter-of-factly with careful analysis and study. In the books, King Rama V points out the connection between new knowledge and the country's status, as well as suggests the ways to make use of the knowledge from other nations to develop Siam to become compatible with them.

During the critical time when stability was crucial for the survival of the country, King Rama V emphasized on educating his people and providing them with knowledge that they needed to learn. Not only the formal education system, his writings became another important tool the king used to distribute modern knowledge to the reader.

**Keywords:** King Rama V, modern Knowledge, Literature

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## Introduction

For hundreds of years, Thailand has developed good relationship with countries in Southeast Asia and other parts of the continent, those in the Middle East, as well as those in the West. In the past, Thai people referred to foreigners as “People of Twelve Languages.”(Thawisak Pheuk-som, 2003: 113) The term “twelve languages” became a generic word that was used to refer to foreign people as a whole although they consisted of more than twelve nationalities and used more than twelve languages.

Foreign cultures and nations have emerged in Thai literature since a long time ago, especially during the reigns of King Rama III and King Rama IV. During the time, there were a number of literary works that introduced the idea of foreigners, including *Tamrap Thao Srichulalak* (*Nang Noppamas*), the epic poem *Phra Aphai Mani*, the pictorial poems *Foreigners in Siam* (at Wat Prachetuphon Wimonmangkhararam) and *Nirat London*. One interesting observation about these stories is they were all produced during the western colonialism in Asia and when the neighboring countries of Siam had, one by one, been occupied by western countries. Therefore, it is interesting to see how foreign people were portrayed in Thai literary works.

This article aims to demonstrate changes in strategies used to refer to other nations in Thai literary works to show the changing attitudes of Thai people towards foreign nations. During the reign of King Rama V, his majesty produced some records about foreigners and foreign countries. They are travelogues rendering his visits to foreign countries. When considering carefully, the information about foreigners and foreign countries in King Rama V's travelogues are presented differently from other literary works during the early Rattanakosin era. In this case, it can be said that the information in King Rama V's travelogues is *modernly* portrayed.

## Literary Works with Traditional Knowledge and Information about Foreigners

Foreigners were mentioned in Thai literature for the first time in

*Tamrap Thao Srichulalak (Nang Noppamas).* (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 59) At the beginning, the book describes about foreigners and languages they use, Nang Noppamas, the narrator of the story, suggests that mankind has been divided into different groups according to the language each of them uses. Also, the book mentions about cities in Jambu Dwipa. There, some of the cities have developed good relationship and trade among one another regardless of their differences. The book portrays various patterns of relationship countries and lands are connected. It is clearly shown that there are a lot of foreign lands and people in the world. In this book, the structure of the world is described in accordance with the Buddhist theory of Three Worlds in which Mount Meru is believed to be the center of the world. However, other data and details about the world are described in a modern way or matter-of-factly. Namely, the book suggests that the world is not divided into four *dwipas*: Jambu Dwipa, Ketu-mala Dwipa, Uttara-Kuru Dwipa, and Bhadraswa Dwipa as it is said in the theory of Three Worlds, but there are different groups of people living together in one world. Nithi Eawsriwong comments that it is the pleasure of the author to present the “real” world rather than the “surreal” one that is told in *Three Worlds According to King Ruang*. (Nithi Eawsriwong, 1995: 433)

Another literary work that includes the idea of foreigners within the story is Sunthon Phu’s *Phra Aphai Mani*. The settings of the story consist of different lands, and characters are of many races. At present, it is widely accepted that *Phra Aphai Mani* is rather different from other Thai folktales in many aspects, such as the description of the sea in the story. Suchit Wongthet suggests that the sea in the story is not the Gulf of Thailand which is in the east of the country, but a sea in the west which covers Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal, or Indian Ocean. (Suchit Wongthet, 2002: 198) Also, Sunthon Phu included some characters that are not Thai within the story, such as Nang Laweng Wanla who is one of the main characters. And not only Nang Laweng Wanla, there are a lot of supporting characters in the story that are from different nations. For example, at the beginning of the story, Phra Aphai Mani and his son are shipwrecked and struck at Koh Kaew Phitsadan with many other people from various

different races. The situation forces Phra Aphai Mani and his son to learn new languages in order to survive. Suchit Wongthet suggests that different races from every corner of the world are gathered and mentioned in *Phra Aphai Mani*. Therefore, it is not wrong to call this epic poem an international tale. (Suchit Wongthet, 2002: 219) From the analysis, it can be seen that *Phra Aphai Mani* portrays a journey to the west side of the country, the relationship among people from different countries, and a multicultural society. As Father Pipo said, “Here comes the age that races combine. Look at the Lord of Langka’s child as an example.” (Sunthon Phu, 2001: 325) Therefore, *Phra Aphai Mani* is another Thai literature that presents the story of foreigners and reflects the confrontation with westerners of Thai elites. (Thiwisak Pheuksom, 2003: 16)

Later, in the Reign of King Rama IV, Mom Rachothai, who was expert in English language, was appointed as the royal interpreter to accompany Thai royal envoy to deliver King Rama IV’s letter and presents to Queen Victoria of England in 1857. He recorded his journey in the form of a literary work called *Nirat London* (The Journey to London). The travelogue narrates Mom Rachothai’s encounters with foreigners during his journey to London and describes about people and places Mom Rachothai experienced when he arrived in London. It can be said that *Nirat London* is the first literary work that illustrates western people and countries from the real experience of the author. Considering the content, the book tells the story about western people, towns and cities, knowledge, technologies and material development in a foreign country from the view of the author. In his view, western civilization is *strange*. As it can be seen in the story, the author describes things that cannot be found in Thailand and he has no idea what they are with the words “strange,” “weird,” and “odd”. For example, during his visit to a museum, Mom Rachothai commented that everything there were all *weird*. (Mom Rachothai, 2010: 35) This suggests that although Mom Rachothai was familiar with English language and was appointed the royal interpreter, he possessed only little of modern knowledge. Therefore, the information about westerners in *Nirat London* is described through the traditional

view and knowledge of Thai people towards foreigners. The pictures of western countries and people are strange things and cause great wonder to the author.

From the analysis, it is clearly shown that although the above three literary works present different stories, and foreigners play different roles in each, all three stories signify a similar concept about foreigners. The stories suggest that there are a lot of different people and countries beyond the kingdom of Siam, and regardless the fact that the stories were not intentionally written to inform or provide knowledge about foreigners, they are evidences that in the early Rattanakosin era, Thai people were interested in people who were different from them, and realized about influences of foreigners, especially westerners, who intruded the region for different proposes they had in the past. It showed the awareness and caution of Thai people about changes that were happening to the society.

Another worth-mentioning literary work about foreigners in the early Rattanakosin era is the pictorial poems *Foreigners in Siam* inscribed at the cloisters of Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkharara, which is honored as the first university in Thailand. Around the temple provided various valuable inscriptions that are referred to as the *Encyclopedic Inscriptions* and the temple itself is called the *University in Stone*. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 104) Wat Phra Chetuphon has always been served as an important source of knowledge of Thailand. At the temple are provided various kinds of knowledge that were often taught particularly among selected families and clans. This valuable knowledge is partly recorded in written form, while the rest is shown through the artifacts. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 17) However, all the knowledge found at the temple is only a representation of the whole knowledge of Siam. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 109)

The pictorial poems *Foreigners in Siam* are a set of poetry inscriptions telling the story about 32 different races. The overall descriptions of the poetry are about physical appearance, costume, spiritual beliefs, characteristics, and talents of each race. Analyzing the overall contents and the presentation of the poetry, it can be seen that these

pictorial poems describe general appearances and major traits of each foreign nation in order to differentiate them from one another in the aspects of physical appearance, costume, geographical location, religions, and talents. Apart from clear descriptions of each nation, the poems also express different attitudes towards the races. The tones or attitudes that are used to describe the races can be divided into the following:

The first group is the descriptions about western races. The tone used in the descriptions of these races is neutral. Western people are described to dress similarly to the British. (There is no description about British people in the poetry.) These people are skilled at navigation and military. The descriptions show a slight insult in the part describing that western people practices Christianity.

The second group is the descriptions about Indian and Arab races. The tone used in the descriptions of these people implies skepticism. The descriptions emphasize that these people practice Islam. They do not eat pork and have fearsome physical features.

The third group is the descriptions about Siam's neighboring races, such as Khmer which is Siam's vassal state. The tone used in the descriptions of these people show the superior status of Siam over them.

The last group is the descriptions of African races. The tone used in the descriptions clearly shows insult. They describe that these people are rather ugly with very dark skin.

On the other hand, Thai people are described very beautifully in the poems. The description depicts the elegance and prosperity of the realm. The Kingdom is said to be respect by everyone. Local people are beautiful, and clothes are so gorgeous as if they are made by angels.

It is obvious that the descriptions of foreigners in the poems are rendered from the viewpoint of Thai people at that time. This indicates that Thai people in the early Rattanakosin era looked at foreigners differently from race to race. Evaluations are clearly shown in the descriptions. Their appearance was judged by their physical appearance and clothing, and their spirituality was judged by their religion practices under the standard of Thai people who were, at the same time, the evaluators.

Studying the descriptions about foreigners in the pictorial poems, it is found that information about the world is no longer based on the traditional knowledge of Three Worlds. Among the descriptions of 32 nations, “the picture of Thai people” is one of them. This seems to imply the equality in the relationship of Siam and other nations. And at the same time, it shows that Thai people looked at the world evenly. Siam was a part of the same global society with other nations. However, Thai people still judged other nations by their own standards. In the pictorial poems, major traits and features of foreign nations are chosen to show differences of foreigners comparing to Thai people, and described them with a tone implying superior status of Siam over them. Especially in the descriptions about westerners, the poems reflect the attitude of Thai elites in the early Rattanakosin era towards their relationship with westerners that they did not think of westerners as more superior to them in any ways. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 136) This was an attempt to show that Siam was not inferior to any western nations.

General characteristics of westerners in the pictorial poems were identified with British qualities, or it can be said that British characteristics were used as models for understanding the otherness. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 134) This clearly depicts the limitation of knowledge about western nations of Thai people at the time. Because of the limitation of knowledge, they could not distinguish detailed characteristics or unique traits among western nations, so all the western nations were generalized with British characteristics. Moreover, knowledge and information about foreigners, especially about westerners, are likely to come from their observations of foreigners in Siam and conversations with western travelers because none of the creators of the poems had ever been outside the kingdom of Siam.

From the analysis, it can be seen that there was an attempt to provide knowledge about other nations among Thai people. However, the knowledge shown in the descriptions is limited in many ways including the traditional concept of Brahma-Buddhist cosmology that binds secular knowledge with religious beliefs, the limitation of modern knowledge

of the poets, and the presentation of the knowledge. As a result, the knowledge about foreigners presented at the time was limited, insufficient and rather inaccurate.

Thawisak Phueksom suggests that the pictorial poems *Foreigners in Siam* is the first ethnography in Thailand. In western culture, ethnographies are an attempt to understand the otherness which, in their sense, includes primitive and tribal people, non-western races, pre-literate tribes and non-historical people. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 118) Indirectly, the writings are the studies about nations, communities and societies that are inferior to them. This kind of studies is to emphasize the superiority of those who conduct the studies. As a result, western countries became a symbol of civilization. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 119) So to say, ethnographic writings were produced to govern their vassal states and suppress local people in the vassal states. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 120)

According to Thawisak's suggestion that the pictorial poems *Foreigners in Siam* at Wat Phrachetuphon is the first ethnography of Siam, it can be seen that the poems were written in the same fashion with western ethnographies about the eastern world. Namely, in the poems, Thai people looked at foreigners as strangers. Thai people were more civilized than any of them. Moreover, it is obvious that Thai people considered them "the others," and thought of them as different and inferior to Thai people, especially those who did not practice Buddhism.

### **King Rama V's Travelogues: Modern Knowledge about Foreigners**

During his reign, King Rama V was well aware of the significance of the world outside the kingdom of Siam. His vision implies changes of concept and paradigm of self-reflection and power relations with other nations which were no longer limited to the kingdom's colonies and rival kingdoms. With the adoption of technological culture and western way of thinking, (Sunet Chutintharanon, 2001: 219) the concept that the kingdom's royal palace and capital where the king of all kings lived was the center of the universe both in secular and spiritual ways was defied. (Sunet Chutintharanon, 2001: 219) The capital of Siam was no

longer the center of the universe and the kingdom needed to develop good relationships with other nations.

In the early days of his reign, King Rama V visited various neighboring kingdoms including Singapore, Java, Burma, and India. Each of them had become a western vassal state. The visits helped the king acknowledge the development those western countries brought to their vassal states as well as the administration measures they used for governing them. (Piyanat Bunnak, 2006: 53) After that, Siam was undergone an immediate reformation and modernization process. (Chanwit Kasetsiri, 2003: 9) King Rama V also visited a very faraway land, Europe, twice. Whether his visits were for political or personal purposes, the king seized those opportunities to see the real settings of western civilized countries and the true governors of the vassal states in order to bring back all the knowledge he gained to enhance the stability and capacity of his own kingdom. Dhida Sarahya explained that at the time, there was a trend in traveling. It became a means in acquiring an empirical knowledge about things and places. (Dhida Sarahya, 1997: 129) According to the concept, the king's travelling provided him opportunities to learn about his kingdom and others alike.

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab explained about advantages of travelling that "There are two obvious benefits of travelling. Pleasure is one, and knowledge is the other." (Damrong Rajanubhab, 1997: 20) The pleasure from travelling is the enjoyment people have when seeing and witnessing people, places and things that they have never seen, while the knowledge from travelling was described by King Rama V that there were three ways to acquire knowledge: by one's own experience, by others' experience and by carefully reflecting about the subject. (Damrong Rajanubhab, 1989: 21) The king believed that people should try acquiring knowledge by themselves, not from experiences of others.

Traditionally, *Nirat* is a genre employed in order to describe the author's lives and experiences during a journey. The focus of this type of writings lies on the lamentation and remorse for his/her lover the author express. However, his majesty's writings are rather different from other

writings of the same. King Rama V wrote travelogues rendering events and things he witnessed during his visits to foreign countries to provide knowledge about those lands for people who did not have an opportunity to visit those places themselves. Although information about foreign countries in the king's travelogues is not academically described, it helps readers learn more about the places all the same. King Rama V emphasized on explaining information about other nations in modern way. Namely, the information and knowledge in his majesty's travelogues are presented reasonably and matter-of-factly. Details are carefully researched and retraceable. Information is analyzed and linked with up-to-date situations in the country. Also, he suggests various ways to make use of knowledge from other countries for the readers' benefits.

### **King Rama V's Two Months in Java: New Perspectives on Javanese People**

Considering how much knowledge about Javanese people Thai people had before the reign of King Rama V, it can be assumed that some of Thai people might have heard about them before. Dome Krai-Pakorn mentions about an ancient map in the manuscript of *Three Worlds According to King Ruang* kept in the National Library of Thailand. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 70 –71) In the map, there are the places called *Mataram Noi*, *Yakphaktra* and *Achae* which are presumed to be the cities of *Masrum*, *Jakarta* and *Acheh*, respectively, in the north of Sumatra Island. (Dome Kri-pakorn, 2002: 70–71) In the manuscript, there is a mention of Javanese people in the section that explains about nations and languages. Different languages and groups of Indian-Arab people are described, and Javanese people are one of the groups that are mentioned. Moreover, there were some literary works about Javanese people in the late Ayutthaya era including *Dalang* and *Enau*. Later, in the early Rattanakosin era, the knowledge about Javanese people was likely to become wider due to King Rama II's play *Enau*. Although the play was commonly known among upper-class people, it can be said that the play proved the fact that Thai people had information about Javanese people

to some extent via literary works. In *Tamrap Thao Srichulalak (Nang Noppamas)*, Arab Muslims are divided into various groups according to the language they use. *Javanese Muslims* is one of them. This indicates the knowledge about Javanese people in another aspect. It shows that Thai people knew that Javanese people were real, not just a fictional nationality or a fictional setting of the famous play *Enau*.

The above three examples about Javanese people contain knowledge about geographical, cultural and ethnic knowledge about Java nation. The information about the geography of Java Island presented in the books was based on the belief in the Buddhist theory of Three Worlds. (Dome Kri-pakorn, 2002: 104) On the other hand, the cultural and ethnic information about Javanese people was adjusted to be suitable for Thai people regardless the use of Javanese names, settings and cultures. This means that the play *Enau* does not reflect actual features and cultures of Javanese people, but it only depicts that Javanese people is one of the Arab Muslim ethnic groups.

In the early Rattanakosin era, literary works that were produced after the release of King Rama II's *Enau* and before the reign of King Rama V indicated that knowledge and information Thai people learned and/or heard about Javanese people was partially connected to the play *Enau*. For example, in Sunthon Phu's *Ramphanphirap* (1846), the narrator of the story sleeps and dreams of travelling through a lot of countries including India, Bengal, Ceylon, Malaysia, and Java. When talking about Javanese people, the narrator links the subject to events and characters in the play *Enau*. Therefore, it can be assumed that the play *Enau* is the representative of Javanese people in Thai people's perspective during that time.

Another example is Mom Rachothai's *Nirat London*. In the story, the narrator describes his journey with some mentions of "Enau", "Java", and "Indians". Regardless of the norm of *Nirat* in which a narrator shows his lamentation about being separated from his lover, and compared his separation with a separation of characters in a literary work, Mom Rachothai compares his separation with that of Enau and Bussaba in the

play *Enau* because the town of Tani was the home of the ethnic group called “Indians”. This emphasizes that the perception of Thai people, at the time, about Javanese people was connected to the play *Enau*. The features of characters in *Enau* were believed to be the features of real Javanese people. When Thai people thinking of Javanese people, they thought of *Enau*. For example, Mom Rachothai referred to Java Island as *Enau*’s homeland. In *Nirat London*, the descriptions of Javanese people can be divided into two patterns. The first pattern is those written according to literary writing norms. For example, the narrator describes that Javanese women’s beauty cannot be compared to Bussaba who is an imagery woman with great beauty that cannot be real. Therefore, this pattern of descriptions is not considered a description that means to depict real appearance of Javanese women. The other pattern is authentic descriptions of Javanese people and people on Sumatra Island. The narrator mentions that Sumatra people are fierce, but it is a comment that the narrator claims he heard from British people.

Considering the status, job position and knowledge, Mom Rachothai was a royal interpreter and was appointed an envoy to deliver the king’s letter and presents to England. He had to be expert in English and possess adequate knowledge. However, the mention of Java Island as *Enau*’s homeland and information a Javanese people from westerners’ accounts can confirm that Mom Rachothai had very little knowledge about Javanese people. This ensures the fact that before King Rama V’s journeys, Thai people had very little knowledge about Javanese people, and the knowledge was generally connected to characters in the play *Enau*. In other words, Thai people did not have any other knowledge about Javanese people, except from the knowledge from the play *Enau*. (Dome Kri-pakorn, 2002: 108) Therefore, it can be concluded that during that time, Thai people knew about Java nation only superficially. (Dome Kri-pakorn, 2002: 104)

In King Rama V’s travelogue *Two months in Java* (Prince Damrong Rajanubhab explained that his majesty had originally meant to publish the travelogue as a book. However, the publication was delayed,

and it was finally published in 1925 after his majesty's death), (King Chulalongkorn, 1973: preface) he presents information about the background of Javanese people in various aspects including the group's history, geography, cultures, traditions, as well as folklore and literature. His majesty traveled to Java and recorded everything he encountered in the travelogue. This is considered a new way to deliver knowledge about Javanese people. Moreover, the book provides a lot of information beyond the knowledge about Javanese people Thai people had learned from the play *Enau*. In this sense, it can be said that King Rama V's travelogue presents information about Javanese people broader than before.

However, King Rama V sometimes uses information in *Enau* as background information in order to explain and introduce new details. His empirical knowledge and experience during the journeys are compared and connected with the information in *Enau* which Thai people have already been familiar with. The narration technique the king used is considered a modern way of knowledge distribution.

King Rama V studied and asked for information from local people. In the book, he explains that the story of *Enau* of Javanese people is similar to the story of *Phra Raong* in the Northern Chronicles of Thailand. *Enau* is believed to be a real person in Javanese history, but his story has been told differently from place to place. The stories can be divided into different versions, and no one can tell which version the real story is. Therefore, it cannot be decided whether the story of *Enau* that was told among Thai people in the late Ayutthaya era is accurate or inaccurate although the details of the story are different from the other versions in Java because the story of Enau has been told differently even in Java itself. King Rama V points out that the story of Enau is really significant to Javanese people. The story relates with Javanese history. It is a national legend that depicts the story about Javanese royalties in different cities which can be linked with the history and origin of local historical sites, religious practice, traditions and cultures of Javanese people. The story of Enau connects to every aspect of Javanese society so closely that they cannot be separated.

The information about the origin of Enau that his majesty received from his journeys to Java revealed many different aspects and expanded the knowledge about Enau because before King Rama V's travelogue, although Thai people had known about the story of Enau, it meant nothing but a story of a Javanese person or an "Indian". The travelogue shows that King Rama V examined the story of Enau from many perspectives. For example, he studied the historical aspect of the story to understand the origin of the story of Enau in Thailand. He compared and contrasted various versions of the story in Java in order to find similarities and differences among them, and also studied the social aspect of the story to identify the influences of the story on Javanese society. The information and knowledge from the king's study is so thorough that it can be categorized as literary knowledge. Moreover, the way King Rama V connected new knowledge about Javanese people with Thai people's background knowledge of Enau can be considered another way to promote knowledge among people by connecting new information with an old one. The old information Thai people had about Javanese people is a part of their authentic experience, so it will help them understand new information presented in the travelogue better.

In conclusion, it can be said that King Rama V wrote the travelogue *Two months in Java* in order to inform about Java Island which had been occupied by Holland. As a result, various kinds of developments, technologies, and innovations from Holland were delivered to Java. Knowledge and understanding about those technologies and developments were crucial for Siam and Thai people since they would be vitally useful in reforming Siam. King Rama V's travelogue brought about authentic knowledge and understanding in a modern way and provided different knowledge about Javanese people that Thai people had never known before.

### **King Rama V's Klai Baan: Modern Knowledge about the West**

King Rama V was the first Thai monarch who had visited Europe during the reign. He visited Europe twice in 1897 and 1907, respectively.

During his second visit in 1907, he wrote 43 letters and named this set of letters *Klaibaan*, and was published as a book after his majesty had granted the permission during his journey back from Europe. For the second visit to Europe, King Rama V recorded his journey starting from his departure from Bangkok by Mahachakkri to Singapore and boarded the ship *Saxon* to Europe. The king visited many different European countries including Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France, England, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway, and recorded stories about those countries thoroughly.

From the reign of King Rama V onward, it can be said that the attitude of Thai elites was changed. They accepted, without any doubts, that the real center of power and civilization was in Europe. The expertise in physical knowledge and modern technologies were new standards to evaluate the greatness and civilization of a nation. (Sunet Chutintharanon, 2001: 220) Therefore, if Siam would reform the nation, the country needed to study western modern technologies to develop it and become compatible with them.

King Rama V witnessed that western countries were developed and civilized in various aspects. The development and technologies in the western countries were the result of their people's interest in learning new things and perseverance which were something King Rama V believed his people can also achieve. The king emphasized that the perseverance was the quality that made the westerners greater than any other nations. Therefore, what Thai people needed to do was to study western knowledge and technologies to develop the country to stand on the same level as them.

Studying King Rama V's scripts carefully, it is obvious that except for the messages his majesty would like to communicate with Thai people, he expected to describe his journey and what he had encountered during his travelling to the lands that were different from Siam in almost every aspects including geography, weather, environment, settlement, architecture, people, as well as knowledge and technological development. This can be considered a modern way to distribute knowledge about western countries through his experiences to Thai people.

Comparing King Rama V's *Klai Baan* with other literary works

mentioned in this article, it can be seen that knowledge about foreign people and nations in King Rama V's work is different from the rest. Contents and techniques the king applied to introduce information in his work are different from before which is due to the changes in attitude and understanding about the relationship among different groups of people in the global society. In King Rama V's book, each nation does not live all by itself without any relationship with other nations as it is shown in the pictorial poems at Wat Phra Chetuphon. Moreover, his majesty depicts the relationship among nations that live together, and the fact that Siam is no longer the center of the universe. (King Rama V himself needed to travel away from his kingdom seeking for knowledge and developments somewhere else.) Also, the book illustrates the appearance of real people who do not dress ideally in beautiful fancy costumes as described in the pictorial poems. Tawisak Phueksom suggests that the costumes described in the pictorial poems seem to be costumes for formal and official ceremonies, or costumes used in theatres or shown in museums. (Thawisak Pheuksom, 2003: 132)

In addition, information and data in King Rama V's *Klai Baan* are managed systematically. The king applies a modern explanation system to describe concepts and stories he found during the journey. Stories about foreign people and nations, especially western, are described differently from the way Thai people had done. Knowledge about western people and their countries described in the travelogue includes information about each nation's geography, society, history, politics, science, arts, and cultures. All information in the book is gathered from his majesty's empirical experience. In other words, all foreign and interesting information in the travelogue is explained and summarized rationally and scientifically by his majesty himself unlike Mom Rachothai's description in *Nirat London*.

From the analysis, it can be concluded that King Rama V's *Klai Baan* is not just a travelogue that narrates the journey to Europe of his majesty. It contains knowledge about many foreign countries, especially western ones. The king used his writing to spread the knowledge about other nations to Thai people. Although in the past, there had been

several literary works presenting stories about westerners, but it is obvious that information about westerners in those works were mostly limited, superficial and inaccurate, and were told through the eyes of Thai people that had believed Siam to be the center of the universe and had evaluated the relationship with foreigners based on that kind of belief. The idea of Siam as the center of the universe was completely not in accordance with the flow of the events at the time. Siam was facing with the influences and power of those western countries who wished to take over Asian nations, variety of new patterns of relationship with foreigners, the country reformation, and the crucial attempt to ensure stability of the country. As a result, Thai people needed to have knowledge about those western nations whom Thai people accepted to be far more developed and influential than other countries in the world. Thai people had to learn and try to understand how and why those countries became civilized in order to develop Siam to be compatible with them.

## **Conclusion**

King Rama V ruled the country wisely and helped Thailand escape from becoming a vassal state of a western country. One approach that the king emphasized to ensure stability of the country is developing the country to become compatible with western nations, especially in the aspect of human resource. King Rama V focused on providing education and knowledge among people in the country in order to build and foster learning ability into the reader and help them able to apply their knowledge for benefits of themselves, family, society and country as the king once mentioned that “Those who are educated and make use of their knowledge wisely are those who deserve to be called the people of Siam.” (King Chulalongkorn, 1965: 18) The knowledge mentioned by King Rama V was modern knowledge that was taught more systematically and academically which includes the study of technologies of foreign countries. Apart from the formal education system, literature was another tool King Rama V used to educate his people with modern knowledge.

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