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The Cave Scene Or Bussaba Consults the Candle

Within Southeast Asia a certain amount of borrowing of literary themes has taken place, but not many examples have been studied in detail. A recognized case of such borrowing is the Panji theme, which originated in Java, was popular for a time in the Malay-speaking world, and from there was transmitted to Thailand in a new guise, namely the tale of *Inao*.

It is a reasonable assumption that during the process of borrowing certain adaptations will have occurred. This certainly applies to the somewhat fluid material of the Panji theme, where ample scope seems to have existed for the exercise of creativity on the part of its new authors and audiences. It is the nature of such adaptations that forms an interesting subject for investigation. On the one hand, one would expect the new environment to exert a clear cultural influence, but on the other, the nature of the mediums of expression may also be a factor to consider.

This paper will select just one scene from the Thai tale of *Inao* and look at the ways in which it has been depicted in a range of mediums, from songs and poems to plays and paintings, from the popular to the classic. It will then attempt to indicate the significance of this scene for a Thai audience, at the same time noting what seems to be a specifically Thai contribution, in relation to what was borrowed from earlier models.

There is a song which is well known to most Thais, with the title of 'Bussaba Sieng Thien'. The verb *sieng* (low tone) means literally 'to take a chance', 'to guess at', and here it refers to trying to test what the future holds, by the use of a candle, *thien*. The idea of getting one's fortune told is very familiar to Thais, and there exist many methods of doing this.

People know the words of the song, or at least can recognize its distinctive melody. It has been popular since it was first recorded about 30 years ago

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by Laddawan Prawatwong, and it is her version that can be bought on cassette.

The song is very romantic, and anyone can feel its sweetly plaintive appeal. Bussaba is betrothed to Inao, but does not know whether he will be true to her, while Inao does not know if Bussaba is able to love him at all, in view of what he has done. Furthermore, because of their circumstances, they are unable to meet.

A translation of the song is offered below. By way of introduction, however, it should be explained that the setting is thought to be a dark cave. In this cave there stands an image of Lord Buddha. Bussaba lights a candle and pays homage to the holy statue, in the hope that Lord Buddha will grant her prayer, namely that Inao should love her and her alone.

At the same time, it is the candle which will give a sign as to whether her wish will be granted or not. She wants it to burn strongly and brightly, showing that his love for her will be true.

บุษบาเสียงเทียน

เทียนจุดเทียน พระพุทธรูป
ตัวข้า บุษบาขออธิษฐาน
เทียนที่เวียนนมัสการ
บันดาลให้ หทัย สัมปวาธนา
คลจจิตเหนา ไ้เขมารักข้า
ขอองค์พระปฏิมา เมตตา ช่วยคิดอุ้มชู
ขอเทียนที่เวียนนวม ดลฤทัยสิงสู่
ให้องค์พระเด่นเด่นดูอย่าได้วิกลายคลอน
อ้อองค์ พระพุทธรูป ตัวข้า
บุษบา ขอกราบ วิงวอน
ข้า สวตมนต์ ขอพระพร

วิงวอนให้ หทัย ระเด่นปรานี
รักอย่า เคลือบแฝง
ดั่งแสงเทียนรืบริ
ขององค์พระเด่นมนตรวิ
โปรดมิจิตนิกรเมตตา
ขอเทียนที่เสียงทนาย
ดลให้คนรักข้า
รักเพียงแต่บุษบา
ดั่งข้า นั้งใจ

The Thai text of the popular song 'Bussaba Sieng Thien'

Translation of the song 'Bussaba Sieng Thien'

1. 'The lighted candle is homage to Lord Buddha,
And your humble servant Bussaba makes a wish:
2. This candle which brings homage,
Let it ordain that my desire will be fulfilled,
3. Inspire the mind of Inao, so that he may come to love me,
May the holy statue have mercy and assist me with support,
4. I ask that the candle raised in homage may inspire his heart to stay,
Give the Prince tender feelings, never let them wander.
5. O Lord Buddha, your humble servant,
Bussaba, bows low in deep entreaty;
6. I recite prayers and beg your favour,
I implore you to let the Prince take pity on me,
7. Let his love be no mere lip service,
Like this candle's flickering flame;
8. I beg that Raden Montri (= Inao)
May be pleased to cherish thoughts of tenderness;
9. I beg that the candle that tells us of our future
May grant me my beloved,
10. That he may love Bussaba alone,
Just as my heart is firmly fixed on him.'

The two characters mentioned in the song, Inao and Bussaba, are so well-known to Thais as to be proverbial lovers. Most people will be aware that their story is told in a very long and much admired poem written by King Rama II (ruled 1809-24), under the title *Inao*. This literary version is closely linked with the classical theatre, and it is probably the latter, rather than the printed text, which over the years has been instrumental in making the story (at least certain episodes of it) familiar to a wider public.

Although *Inao* is the work of a famous Thai king, Thais realize that the story has been borrowed, and that the action is set in another country, namely Java, and that the characters are therefore also Javanese. In fact, 'Inao' is a common jocular name for Indonesia, so close is the identification.

In order to find out more about the identity of these two characters, and the circumstances they find themselves in, one should go back to the *Inao* of King Rama II. A very brief summary of the opening part follows.

Inao is a son of the king of Kurepan by his first (highest-ranking) wife. He is also known as Raden Montri. Bussaba (pronounced Butsaba) is a daughter of the king of Daha by his principal wife. On her birth, the king of Kurepan sent betrothal gifts on behalf of his son, so the two cousins would be married in due time.

When Inao was aged 15, his grandmother in the kingdom of Manya passed away. He was delegated by the kings of Kurepan and Daha to represent them at the cremation. In Manya he met the daughter of the king, Jintara(wati), and immediately fell in love with her. Following the ceremonies, he did not wish to return home, but was ordered to do so by his father. So before leaving he sent a love-letter to Jintara. The king of Kurepan decided to expedite Inao's marriage to Bussaba in order to avoid any more problems.

Inao, however, was unwilling to concur, and took leave to go hunting. Having left the palace, he and his followers changed their names and adopted disguises. During this time he won two captive princesses. Then they headed for Manya, where the king (aware of his identity) received him well. There he took the opportunity to enter Jintara's bedroom and make her his wife. She in turn was sympathetic to the two captive princesses – and in this way Inao got three wives.

Inao was then ordered by his father to come home for his wedding to Bussaba, but he sent a message back that he was unwilling. The king of Daha was disappointed, and Bussaba felt she had been put to shame. So she would be married off to anyone who proposed. The king of Joraka, a very ugly man, heard this and proposed, so the king of Daha was forced to accept.

Meanwhile the king of Kamang Kuning also wanted her for his son, and was willing to fight for her. Hence the king of Daha was obliged to ask his relatives for aid, and in this way Inao was ordered to head for Daha. In the ensuing fight the attackers were driven off, and Inao killed the king of Kamang Kuning. In the palace of Daha he caught sight of Bussaba, and immediately regretted his former actions. Joraka arrived too late to help defend Daha. Inao was now forced to try to find a way of preventing the marriage of Joraka and Bussaba; the king of Daha was sympathetic to his plight, but had already given his word.

It was at this point that the king of Daha, his wives and followers went out to the mountain Wilismara to make offerings and worship the image there. Inao joined the party, and the Madewi (king's second wife) suggested to Bussaba that she go before the image and find out about her fate using lighted candles. There were to be three of these candles, one for herself, the one on the left for Joraka, and the one on the right for Inao.

In order to get a picture of what happened, and how it has been perceived in the past, we are lucky enough to have a visual depiction in the form of a mural in a temple. Murals have been an important Thai art form, and scenes from not only specifically Buddhist works but also works of classical Thai literature are often illustrated in them (Matics 1992).

The scene we are concerned with here covers just one panel in a series,

each of which apparently shows an episode from the *Inao*. The murals are to be found in Wat Suthat, Bangkok, not in the main temple (*wihaan*), where the walls are covered with depictions of the lives of the Buddha, but in the Ordination Hall (*ubosot*). Here there are 26 tall windows, on either side of which six panels can be seen. Each window has heavy wooden shutters which, when open, cover the paintings. Unfortunately a number of the murals have now been obliterated, or badly damaged, by the effects of the weather. The paintings at each of the 26 windows contain scenes from Thai literary sources.

The scenes from *Inao* are to be seen at the first window on the right from the entrance, and the one we are interested in, the 'cave scene', is second from the top on the left-hand side. The higher panels are very hard to see from floor level, and the lower ones have been severely damaged. These murals of Wat Suthat have been described in a book compiled by Waldemar C. Sailer on the occasion of the cremation of Somdet Phra Buddhacarya at Wat Thep-sirintharawat, Bangkok, in 1983, on the basis of information from Dr Niyada Lausuthorn, and the help of this work is gratefully acknowledged here.

In this scene we see on the left a golden image in a meditative posture, with close behind it (on the left) a princely figure, apparently hiding behind

A mural at Wat Suthat, Bangkok, showing the 'cave scene', reproduced by permission of Waldemar C. Sailer

the image. There is another figure to the left again, but without the tall head-dress of a prince or princess. To the right a figure is holding a lighted candle in the right hand and lifting it toward the image. This figure also has the tall head-dress of royalty, and may be a princess. Behind her are two servant figures with hands raised in homage. To the right of them again is a tree, and above their heads what looks like an overhanging rock. In the background, faintly silhouetted against the dark wall, we see three bats.

A remarkable detail in this painting is the head-dress of the image. This diverges clearly from what is normal for a Buddha image, whether Thai or other. When consulted on this point, the monk Chao Khun Phipit Dhamma Sunthorn, Secretary to the Abbot at Wat Suthat and an expert on the subject of murals, expressed the opinion that the artist had intended to depict a Buddha image in a non-Thai style, in keeping with the setting of the story. Instead of the usual hair curls of the Buddha, we see here what is apparently a hat or helmet. The image is unlikely to portray a Hindu deity, in view of the meditation posture of the hands and the golden colour (the colour used to depict the Buddha in murals).

These murals were painted on the orders of King Rama III (ruled 1824-51), and the ceremony to celebrate the completion of the Ordination Hall was held in 1847, so the paintings must date from before that year (Sailer 1983:27). It is interesting that all the scenes are taken from secular literature, without any direct reference to Buddhism, and yet were used for a sacred building. There is no doubt that such themes are of secondary importance, compared to the life of the Buddha. Nevertheless, perhaps as a tribute to his royal father, King Rama II, who was a highly esteemed man of letters, King Rama III ordered that these murals be placed in the building. One may assume that aesthetic considerations were prominent in the King's mind. In any case, it is clear that this mural depiction of the scene is datable and is posterior to the literary text, so that a connection is quite possible.

Rattiya Saleh has made a comparative study of the Malay Panji stories and the Thai *Inao* of King Rama II. She attempts to sketch the history of the Panji-Inao theme in Thai, suggesting that it reached Ayudhya via Patani in the mid 18th century (Saleh 1988:43-4). This is a credible hypothesis, as it takes account of historical contacts as well as the continued existence of the theme in the shadow theatre (*wayang Jawa*) in the Malay-speaking region of southern Thailand. The history of the Panji theme and its transfer from Javanese to Malay to Thai is the subject of a recent paper (Robson 1996) and need not be discussed here.

Saleh's comparison involved nine Malay texts, selected to illustrate a range of possible links. These texts were analysed into episodes and compared with the Thai version. Then the names of all the characters were also

compared. The aim of these exercises was to find out which version might have formed the original of the Thai one. The results were negative, however: 'Setakat ini persoalan pokok mengenai naskhah asal yang menjadi dasar kepada *Inau Lek*, terutamanya CIR2 yang menjadi model kajian ini belum dapat dipecahkan' (So far the main question of which version was the basis of the Inao Lek, in particular that of Rama II which is the basis of this study, has not been able to be solved; Saleh 1988:181). The well-known Thai scholar Prince Dhani Nivat, on the other hand, was of the opinion that the Malay prose work *Hikayat Kuda Semirang Seri Panji Pandai Rupa* (as summarized by Poerbatjaraka in 1940) may have been the basis of the Thai version (Nivat 1947:100). Clearly this problem needs to be addressed anew with a fresh look at the Malay and Thai texts.

In Saleh's analysis, the episode from the Rama II version that we have been discussing here is said not to correspond to a similar one in *any* of the Malay stories (Saleh 1988:117). If this is correct, then it shows that the 'cave scene' is an original creation of a Thai author, and if that is so, then the ideas found there should be interpreted in the light of Thai culture.

Which brings us back to the candle. The scene in which the candle occurs appeals to its Thai audience because of the romance, as well as the boldness of Inao's conduct (see below), and perhaps also because of a universal human desire to find out what the future holds in this uncertain world, and whether one's dearest desires will be fulfilled.

As explained by the monk at Wat Suthat, the candle symbolizes the uncertainties of life: it can burn brightly, indicating success and prosperity, or it can go out ... Belonging by nature to the realm of light and darkness, the candle is linked with the unseen world. For example, if a candle suddenly goes out, it is said that a ghost is passing by. And if a candle produces a lot of molten wax that runs down, this means 'tears' in future.

At the beginning of an important new undertaking, it is always the Thai custom for those involved to light a candle and pray for success. This also happens at the marriage ceremony, when the bride and groom each light a candle, this act symbolizing the new life they are beginning together.

These ideas are confirmed by the text of another version of the song discussed at the beginning of this article, said to be older, which bears the title 'Lao Sieng Thien'. This appears to be in a more literary style than the popular song. It makes quite clear how the candle will predict the future relationship of the pair. Bussaba says:

1. 'O holy image of Lord Buddha, your humble servant bows her head to you,
2. Divine being who dwells in the light of the candle, hear me,

ล่อเลี้ยงเทียน

อ้อองค์พทธา ปฏิมาข้าน้อมเศียร

เทพประจำแสงเทียน พังข่าเลี้ยงเทียนวันทา

ด้วยกุศลผลกรรม ขอจงโปรดนำให้สมอุรา

ขอความปรารถนา ขอจงข้อมดั่งสัจจาที่มุ่งไฉน

มาตรแม้นรักข่า จินนหมอบสมสมาน

เทียนจงโชติขั้วฉายย์ ดังคำอธิษฐานทันใด

ถ้าหากรักของข่า ถึงตอองอุปราคาฉายไป

แสงเทียนสุดใจ จงดับดับไปต่อหน้าบัดนี้เลย

The Thai text of the song 'Lao Sieng Thien'

3. As I consult you with reverential salute.
4. Through the merit and fruit of my deeds,
5. I beg that these may lead to the fulfilment of my heart's desire;
6. I beg for my wish,
7. As befits the truth that I have fixed as my goal:
8. If it should be that my love flourishes and grows, and that we shall be united,
9. Let the candle instantly burn bright and clear, in accord with the words of my vow.
10. But if it should come about that my love must

11. Fail and fade away, the glowing candlelight
12. Will go out and disappear, here before my eyes. So be it.'

There are a few points here that should be explained. Firstly, the image to which the (unnamed) speaker's homage is addressed is definitely a Buddha image (*putthapathima*). Secondly, it is not the image itself which is consulted, but a 'divine being' (*thep*) that dwells within the candle. And thirdly, the transaction ('vow', *athisthaan*) is facilitated by the speaker's 'merit' (which, according to Buddhist theory, is built up through good deeds), so that attention is drawn to this first, before stating what is being asked.

So, what did happen in the cave? In order to see how it was visualized in the 1990s, we are fortunate enough to be able to refer to a dramatic performance held on Thursday, 28 March 1996, in the Auditorium of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. This was given by students of the Fine Arts Department of the University as part of their academic work, under the directorship of Associate Professor Suraphol Wirunrak.

This performance was in the dramatic genre of *lakhon nai*, described as follows: 'Classical dance-drama, traditionally performed by the ladies of the Inner Court (Fai Nai) exclusively for the king and the inner circle of the royal

1. Bussaba (right) raises a candle while addressing the statue

court. The dance is very refined and sophisticated. The plays performed in this style are the *Ramakien*, *Inao*, and *Unarut*. At present, only *Inao* is performed.' (Rutnin 1993:275.)

The actors enact the story in dance, while a female chorus chants the narrative passages to a musical accompaniment. There is also dialogue, spoken by the actors. The text used for this performance was identical with the *Inao* of King Rama II (as printed on many occasions). The costumes were in the 'Ayuthia' style, in contrast to some other performances, where the 'Javanese' style of costume is preferred. (An illustration of the latter can be seen in Rutnin 1993: colour plate 9.) All the actors were female.

The program comprised four scenes selected from the *Inao*. These were:

1. The leave-taking from Jintara;
2. At the shrine;
3. Cutting flowers and flashing the kris; and
4. Homage to the holy image.

Some comments on these scenes may be useful.

Scene 1

This is a famous scene, noted for its pathos. Inao tells Jintara that he has received an order to go to Daha, and he shows her the royal summons that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, she suspects that she is being abandoned for another and tries to hold him back. Inao insists on going, and then she utters a song, in which she reproves him for his faithlessness, referring to the impermanence of love.

Scene 2

After winning the war against Kamang Kuning, Inao goes to see the King of Daha and meets Bussaba for the first time. He falls in love with her on the spot. When the King of Daha, his wife and Bussaba go to Wilismara Mountain, Inao asks permission to follow them. When the King of Daha stops to allow his men to rest, Bussaba and her maid-servants arrive to pay respect at the shrine. She dances to honour the beauty of the shrine. In this scene the dance is regarded as being in the most beautiful style.

Scene 3

There are two points here. Firstly, in the performance Inao cuts a flower from a bush and 'writes' on it with the point of his kris. The message is one of love for Bussaba, and must be taken to her. The bush on stage had tiny leaves. In the text, however, we learn that Inao writes on a *panan* (Malay and Javanese *pandan*) flower. This is a well-known convention in Javanese literature,

2. Madewi (right) addresses the stue while Bussaba looks away shyly

because the *pandan* has a big flower, and the petal covers are large enough to be written on, while a scratch shows up as black, making the medium suitable for love-letters composed on the spur of the moment (Zoetmulder 1974:135-7). Apparently this convention and the *pandan* were unknown in Thailand.

Secondly, Inao uses his kris to let Bussaba know of his presence in the garden by brandishing it in the air, so that it 'flashes'. This is stated in the text and was depicted on stage. From a Javanese viewpoint, though, it may seem strange, as a kris is never polished and could not possibly reflect light. Perhaps this again is a Thai invention.

Scene 4

As this is the scene of most interest here, let us give a more detailed account of what happens. The context is supplied from King Rama II's text.

Madewi consults her faithful servants about the events that have taken place and wonders whether Bussaba will be married to Joraka or Inao. 'I shall go and pay respect to the statue. That will probably solve this pressing matter.' So they all proceed to the mountain and, arriving on the slopes, they see men playing noisily. Madewi stops and tells the servants to send them away quickly, so that they can pass. It is Raden Montri (Inao) and his companions.

3. Inao (right) takes Bussaba's hand, while she reaches out for Madewi (left)

Inao and his brother Prasanta run and hide in the *wihaan* (temple), secreting themselves behind the statue (*phra pathima*). Madewi and Bussaba now arrive at the pavilion on the edge of the hermitage (*aram*), and the servants are left sitting outside. Only four are allowed in to carry the offerings.

On stage right is a large statue on a dais, with offerings in front of it. Inao and his brother can be seen standing behind it. The only other stage props are three large, round columns. Madewi pays respect and lights candles, mentioning the names they represent: one for Bussaba, the one on the right for Inao, and the one on the left for Joraka. 'May these three be taken as a test', she says. Madewi tells Bussaba not to be shy and to do the test with her own words, in order to make it clear which man she will belong to: if to Joraka, let Inao's candle go out, but if to Inao, then let his candle burn brightly and Joraka's go out. Bussaba says she feels very shy if she has to say such a thing, and just sits there. Madewi and the four servants comfort her: 'We are the only ones here – nobody is in the *wihaan*. Summon up your courage. Then you will know this matter clearly. Listen, I will teach you.' So, after paying respect, Bussaba repeats Madewi's words.

Inao is listening to Bussaba's words and answers immediately from behind the image: 'Bussaba will belong to Inao without doubt. Joraka is not

of noble birth – if they were to marry, it would be dangerous.' The ladies do not realize that this is Inao speaking, but imagine it is the image, and so they are very excited and happy. Madewi says: 'In all my life I have never heard anyone say that a god (*phra ben jao*) can speak. Perhaps this is because of my daughter (Bussaba)'s merit. I have no doubt about this.' Each of them makes an obeisance in the direction of the image, and then Madewi answers it: 'You speak thus, but I am still puzzled, because Inao does not like her. That is why it has happened like this, and Inao has been living with Jintara.' This time the image does not answer, so Madewi turns to Bussaba and says: 'I have asked many times, but it does not reply. Probably my merit is not sufficient. You should ask yourself – use the same words again.'

Bussaba bends her head and then repeats the question. This time the statue answers straightaway: 'Joraka is not of noble descent: Inao and Bussaba both belong to those of divine family (*wong thewa krayangan*). In the past they were certainly a couple. Therefore have no doubt of his love for her. Now Inao has followed her to the mountain, because he loves her so much.' And at the moment he says this, he stirs up a flock of bats which fly out and put out the candles with their wings.

(At this point in the drama, several children clad in black ran out and extinguished the candles.) Inao tiptoes out and sits down beside Bussaba. In the dark he is afraid he might sit next to the wrong person, but when he hears her voice he is sure. He touches and caresses her body. Bussaba is very frightened and reaches for her 'mother' (Madewi), saying: 'A man's hand is touching me. It is very dark, please help me.' Madewi imagines that the statue is teasing her, and tells Bussaba not to make a fuss: 'I myself am touching you. Whoever else would dare to intrude in this place?' When the four servants hear Bussaba's words they are very surprised and go crawling about looking for candles. Sangit finds a candle and lights it. Seeing Sangit coming, Inao walks off and hides behind the statue again. He peeps out and, seeing how frightened she is, thinks to himself: 'I didn't realize how much I love her'.

Once more Madewi teaches Bussaba to ask the statue, and she says: 'You said that Inao has come here because of love. But I still have many doubts about this. Inao left Manya because Daha was in danger, not because of love. He has come here to pay respect to the statue and will then return to Manya.' Inao (the statue) answers: 'If you do not believe my words, next time don't come making offerings to me!' He whispers to Prasanta to keep on stirring up the bats till he comes back. He then stirs up the bats, the lights are put out and nothing can be seen. Inao tiptoes out and this time picks up Bussaba and takes her on his lap and fondles her breasts. He kisses the perfume of her body. Bussaba cannot escape and calls loudly for help: 'I think Inao has probably come here to pester me. No matter how much I pinch him, he ignores it.' Madewi is shocked and asks Praseran to go and light a candle. Three times

4. Inao (right) seizes Bussaba in the dark

the candle goes out at the door because of the bats flying about. Finally she covers it with a wooden tube to protect it. Bussaba slides off onto the floor, but Inao still has her hand.

Madewi is very angry and asks why he has acted so impudently and insulted them so much: 'You think that because of your high rank you can do such a thing. Even though I myself am here, nevertheless you are not afraid.' Inao says he has known Bussaba since they were young: 'She is my fiancée. Why did you give her to Joraka? You are all inflicting this on me.' Madewi says: 'Yes, we were planning for you to marry, but you said you didn't want her. Since then, the relationship between you has been broken. When Joraka came to claim her, the King of Daha agreed to give her to him. And now you have insulted her like this!' Inao retorts: 'Who holds any letter stating that I am not interested in Bussaba? Show me where it is! I love Bussaba very much. I am going to fight Joraka. If I lose, she will return to him. If I die, I will not regret it!'

Seeing that Inao is serious, Madewi tries to calm him, saying: 'If you love her, then you should consult us, not make her ashamed. Please do not be so stubborn – I will help you. If the King of Daha and his wife know about this, they will be angry and you will not get Bussaba. Think about it carefully. Goodness triumphs over everything.' Inao asks Madewi to keep her promise

to help him get Bussaba, otherwise he will not release her hand. So Madewi and the four servants promise solemnly in front of the holy image. Inao then asks them to exchange ornaments. He takes off one of his own and passes it to Madewi for Bussaba. Bussaba ignores it. Madewi then takes an ornament from Bussaba and gives it to Inao. At the end of the scene they all pay respect to the image and leave the place.

Towards the end of this scene the theatre's electrical supply suddenly failed. As a result, the speeches of the actors were scarcely audible, and the doors had to be opened to let in some daylight. The candles really were needed to provide light. This incident gave the drama unexpected effect.

The intended setting of this scene is not made explicit, except for the large columns, which might suggest a temple rather than a cave. The text uses the word *wihaan* (temple), whereas the term for 'cave' (*tham* or *khuha*) does not occur. The statue adopts an unusual pose, being seated on a platform but with one foot resting on the floor. Judging from its form, it is definitely not a Buddha image of the Theravada tradition (the current one in Thailand). When asked, the director said he had based it on an image of Avalokitesvara (a Mahayana Bodhisatva embodying compassion). It is indeed somewhat reminiscent of the famous bronze Avalokitesvara originating from Wat Wieng, Chaiya, now to be seen in the National Museum in Bangkok – but with the arms and crown complete! He had done so, he said, in order to make the image more appropriate to the story. It has to be remarked that in the Javanese Panji stories such an image would have to be of a Hindu deity, as Buddhism features nowhere in them, so that the use of a Buddha image is already an adaptation.

The text does not refer to a Buddha image, but uses the term *phra ben jao*, which means 'god' and is the word used in Christian circles for God. This is a clear indication that King Rama II did not intend to place the story in a Thai setting, but rather a foreign one.

The *Inao* of King Rama II represents an interesting example of the retelling of a theme borrowed from a foreign source. Even though it has not yet been possible to point to an original, *Inao* itself deserves to be made the subject of closer textual study, in order to determine which parts or elements are Thai and which not. It has been said, for example, that it is an illustration of Thai culture of the Ayuthia period, but this needs to be defended. On the other hand, apparently Thai audiences are fully aware that *Inao* is non-Thai, and expect allowances to be made for this, as in the case of the shape of the image.

Extant versions of the Malay and Javanese Panji story do not seem to include a 'cave scene', although hermitages on mountains are certainly visited in the course of the story. As we have seen, the text of *Inao* mentions only

a temple, not a cave. However, as early as the reign of King Rama III, the painter at Wat Suthat interpreted the scene as taking place in a cave rather than a temple. It is true that bats live in caves, but they could equally well inhabit a temple. The idea of cave and temple combined is possible, as there are many instances of this, a good one being Wat Tham Phimuk in Yala Province in southern Thailand. This cave-temple contains many Buddha images, the largest being a reclining Buddha in the Ayuthia style, thought to cover a much earlier one. The idea of Bussaba consulting the image of the Buddha in a cave may have entered the storytelling tradition through such an example.

These remarks have focused on a few details from a large corpus of data with the aim of highlighting the shifts and transformations that can occur when a literary theme is borrowed from one culture by another. Even though Bussaba and Inao (or their equivalents) may have been long forgotten by the majority of Indonesians, they are still alive and well in the minds of Thais, who have taken them to their hearts in their own way and made them the subject of representations in various mediums – classical literature, dance-drama, murals, and even a popular song.

In all of these we see not only the romantic nature of the theme brought to the fore, but also, perhaps more importantly, a belief in the ability of the unseen powers dwelling within the Buddha image and the candles to provide guidance and give some indication of what lies ahead amidst the uncertainties of life in this world. This seems to be the real message of the 'cave scene'.

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