



INTRODUCTION

1. Background

History is a look at the trails of activities of human beings. Every nation, country or ethnic group, has its own history, either written or unwritten, which has been handed down from generation to generation. Especially in the case of written history, its nature is decided by such factors as the thought of the times, political situations and the intention of the writers or authorities that the writers belong to. It is thus meaningful to learn about the political and social situations under which that history was written as well as to learn the content of history itself.

When history is incorporated into the educational framework as a subject, its nature becomes clearer, since we can see what kind of historical figures and facts are selected to provide information for the next generation.

With regard to Thailand, written history or historiography was initiated and shouldered by two groups of leaders; religious leaders, namely Buddhist monks, and political leaders represented by the court.¹ The latter took the form of phongsawadan and eventually became the main stream of Thai historiography, which has still influenced historians of the present age. (The tradition of historiography will be dealt with in

¹ นิธิ เอียวศรีวงศ์, "200 ปี ของการศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์ไทยและทางข้างหน้า" ใน กรุงแตก พระเจ้าตากฯ และประวัติศาสตร์ไทย - ว่าด้วยประวัติศาสตร์และประวัติศาสตร์นิพนธ์, กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์มติชน, 2538. หน้า 2.

Chapter 2.) Reflecting such situations, the main body of history is composed of transitions of dynasties, while social history, regional history, and the life of folk people are not principal matters of concern. Being affected by this trend of history writing, history education is also marked by the same characteristics.

In the context of modern education, the structure of history education has largely depended on political situation, value, and ideology. First of all, history is treated as something that the people of the nation share as a common heritage which functions to support their sense of unity.

In order to make this point clear, let us refer to the results of a comparative study of Thai and Japanese present curricula of secondary education (focusing on social studies) that this writer has previously done.² The two curricula³ appear to be very different in the way they deal with the concept of nation. The Thai curriculum is rather positive in fostering the consciousness of being a Thai citizen. It emphasises the responsibility of a citizen, and tries to teach the importance of people's cooperation in developing the nation. The Japanese curriculum also intends to make students aware of Japanese tradition and culture, and to cultivate the sense of belonging to the nation, however, these themes emerge less frequently. In this sense, the Thai curriculum is more conscious of the nation.

²"Comparison of Thai and Japanese Curricula of the Secondary Education," paper for Independent Study under the guidance of Dr. Wit Wisadavet, (course number 110703, Thai Studies Section, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University), September 1993.

³Latest curricula of Thailand issued in 1990 and Japan issued in 1989.

This point of difference is a result of Thailand's and Japan's different historical backgrounds. As for the Japanese history curricula, little stress is put on factors like "nation," "unity of the people" etc., due to the stigma of pre-war education which led Japan to totalitarianism. Education promoting "nationalism" is still unacceptable to the Japanese people.

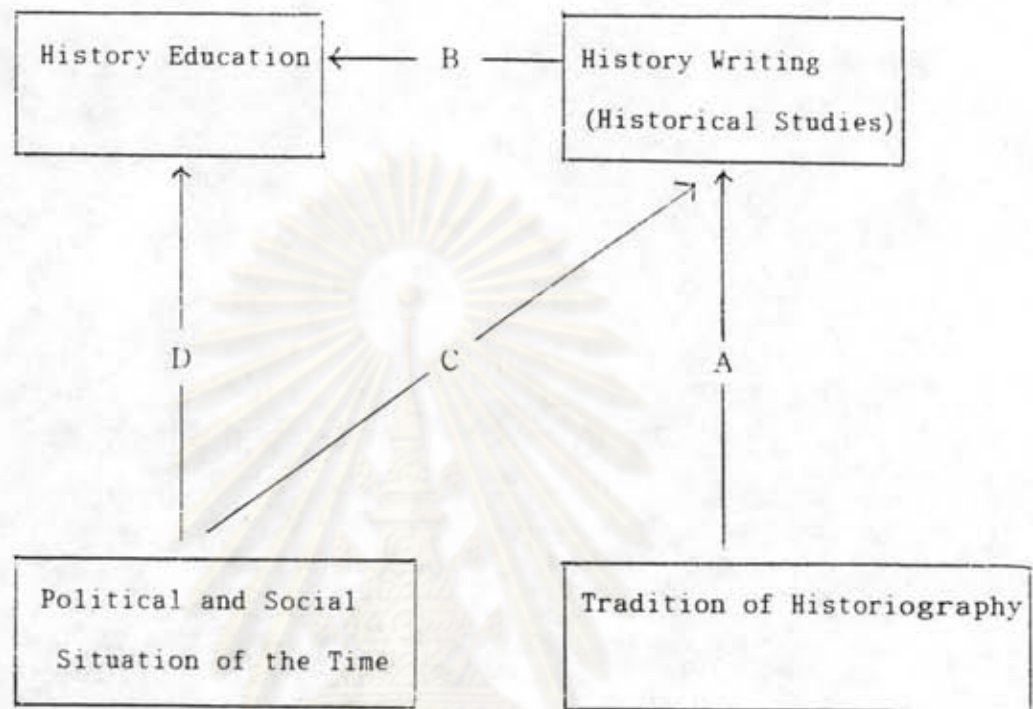
On the other hand, it has been a crucial matter for Thailand to unite citizens of different ethnic or regional origins under a single polity throughout the process of modernization, particularly when the nation faced external pressures as in the periods of Western colonization and during World War II. Emphasis on Thai nationality in education can be regarded as one of the means used to promote national integration.

This case shows that each country has its own agenda and goals for education, and history education has been directed in accordance with them.

2. Hypothesis

The direction of history education is, partly or mainly, determined by the political and social needs of a country. At the same time, the nature of traditional history writing itself influences the contents of history education. The following diagram shows the framework of the hypothesis of this study.

Fig.1.1: Interrelations concerning history education



First, conventional historiography, which basically consists of tracing the line of dynasties and rulers, still exerts influence on present historians. The direction of history education is then affected by the impact of history writing. (See the arrows A and B.) In other words, history writing is the vehicle by which traditional historiography influences history education.

Second, political and social situations of the time form the basis of the production of history writing as well as decision making in history education. (See the arrows C and D.) While the influence of traditional historiography reaches history education indirectly, political and social situations affect history education directly. This is because history education is administered as a part of national education schemes, reflecting the educational aims at that time.

Of the four arrows in the illustration, the arrow D is the main concern of this study. That is to say, the chief hypothesis is that the contents of history education are influenced by political and social situations. In other words, the state of history education is a reflection of national goals based on the political and social conditions of the time.

3. Research Methodology

Based on the hypothesis described above, the purpose of this study is to examine the transition of history education in the context of Thailand's social and political development since the period of education reform under the initiation of King Chulalongkorn. In order to clarify the interrelations between history education and the socio-political background, it is necessary to compare one stage with the others. Therefore, the historical approach is taken in this study. --- How has history education changed its form, structure and contents? If the social and political backgrounds of each period have affected the style of history education, how can we observe it from the curricula and textbooks? --- This is the main theme of the thesis.

With regard to time span, the beginning of this century to the present time will be dealt with. As for the initial period (early 1990s), when history education was not established well, detailed examination of the contents of history education is quite difficult. It is barely possible to discuss how history education was placed in the whole structure of education, due to limited literature. However, for the later period, particularly the past three decades, a series of curricula and textbooks are the main sources used to illustrate the changes in the contents of history education.

History education as discussed in this thesis refers to that of the secondary school level. The reasons why this level was originally chosen are:

As the role of secondary schooling is to complete the general education before students proceed to universities, contents of history education are much more specialized and detailed than those of the primary school level, which are rather simplified with the purpose of simply enlightening pupils. Therefore, more fruits can be expected through the process of examination of textbooks of secondary school level. On the other hand, suppose that we were to deal with the study of history at the higher education level, this would become the analysis of the history studied by historians and students majoring in history. This thesis is focused not on historical studies done by academics, but on history education provided to the general public, its transition and relation to various social and political circumstances. By examining the contents of history education at the secondary school level, we can see how Thai history is taught to Thai citizens.

Nevertheless, as a result of basic research on the theme of this thesis, the writer found it inexpedient to place such restrictions upon the level of education throughout the discussion. History education is framed and put into practice from the primary level to the secondary level along the same principals, on the basis of coherent educational policies. Thus, the whole picture of history education cannot be revealed by dealing with history education at the secondary school level alone. Further, it is also not easy to draw the line between characteristics of higher education and primary and secondary education, since the characteristics of history education of these levels are rather similar.

Taking such conditions into account, the writer decided not to limit her study to the secondary school level in Chapter 3, which deals

with the development of history education. Otherwise, it would be impossible to follow the process of forming history education as a whole. Practically speaking, the lack of information on history education for the early period forces us to take this method. If we put a strict limitation on the level of education, there would not be sufficient data to discuss the issue.

However, Chapter 4, which examines the contents of history education of the past thirty years, focuses on the secondary school level, carrying out the writer's initial aim.

The time period set for detailed examination is three decades owing to the following reasons. First, as a result of interviews with several historians,⁴ it became clear to the writer that over the past twenty to thirty years, both history education and historical study went through drastic changes. According to Plublung, it is also during this period of time that a critical spirit was cultivated and demonstrated in historical study.

Secondly, concerning the history of education, a National Council of Education was established in 1958 with the purpose of drawing up long-term educational policies for the country. It marked the start of a new phase of education in Thailand. Therefore, here in this thesis, curricula issued after the creation of this organization will be the subject of examination.

⁴Wutdichai Moolsilpa, personal communication, March 23, 1995.
Plublung Kongchana, personal communication, April 19, 1995.

In examining the contents of history education of various periods, comparison will be made on some topics. For example, how much importance is attached to a certain point, the way in which it is presented, and so on. Also, the construction of the courses of study is a point of remark. For example, how does history education trace the history of Thailand? Does it follow the "axis of time" from ancient times to the modern ages and so on.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย