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KEY WORD : EPIDEMIC DISEASES/COMMUNITIES OF CENTRAL THAILAND

VORANART KEOWKERI : EPIDEMIC DISEASES IN THE COMMUNITIES OF CENTRAL THAILAND (1897-1932): A HISTORICAL STUDY : ASST. SUVADEE THANAPRASITPATTANA, 173 PP. ISBN 974-581-729-5.

Epidemic disease outbreak has long been one of the more critical problems of Thai society, bringing with it great loss of lives. Since Thai elites during the pre-modern era lacked basic public health knowledge, they often could not prevent the recurrence of disease outbreaks.

During the reign of Rama III, the King and the Thai elite started acquiring western knowledge and technology, including modern medicine, and in particular, etiology, and thus realized that diseases originated in microbes, not in karma or supernatural power.

From this scientific basis as well as an awareness of the critical role of human resources in national development and social reform during this reign, a rudimentary epidemic disease prevention program was introduced. This was accomplished through the proclamation of a number of royal decrees on sanitation and public health, and through the establishment of health quarantines and modern medical facilities throughout the country.

The effort of the government in preventing the outbreak of epidemic diseases, though initially not well understood by the public at large, has helped lay down a solid foundation for later development of both outbreak prevention and public health in Thailand.