

Abstract

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Lanna Kings of Chiang Mai

This study analyzes the evolving position and authority of the Kings of Lanna who ruled Chiang Mai during the Mengrai Dynasty (A.D. 1296-1578) and the Chao Jed Ton Dynasty (A.D. 1782-1939). It will examine the contribution of each king to the Kingdom.

Before the rise of the Mengrai Dynasty in the plains between the mountain valleys, local kings in each region ruled their territories independently. Then in A.D. 1296, King Mengrai, the first king of Mengrai Dynasty, centralized the city-states of Lanna into a unified kingdom and established Chiang Mai as the center.

King Mengrai inherited a decentralized Thai state, based on small communities where the king and his citizens were closely entwined. During his reign, King Mengrai centralized power, installing the king as a figure of worship. A patron of Lankawong Buddhism, he adopted a distinctly Buddhist approach with international characteristics and attempted to harmonize the beliefs of Buddhism with the Kingdom's government. The kingdom

also became a feudal state. Driven by the King's reforms, the Lanna Kingdom developed a special local character reflected in its politics, economy, arts and culture, language, and traditions, which have been an enduring element of the Lanna region to this day. The Mengrai Dynasty had three stages: an Early Period, the Middle or Golden Period, and the Late Period. The kings who ruled in the Early Period expanded the territories by combining old towns, as well as establishing new towns. The most celebrated king of the Golden Period was Paya Mengrai. In that era, the Lanna Kingdom achieved new peaks of prosperity economically, artistically, and politically. The most famous king was King Tilokaraj. Toward the end of its reign, the king's power and influence declined.

The Chao Jed Ton Dynasty ruled Chiang Mai as a tributary city of Siam. Since it was a tributary city that claimed different traditions and cultures from other regions, the government of Siam allowed Chiang Mai to rule itself quite freely. The Chao Jed Ton Dynasty who ruled Lanna in this period were kings with a local scope. The most well-known king in this period was Kawila, the first king of that Dynasty. He prospered an almost deserted city. There were nine kings in the Chao Jed Ton Dynasty ruling Chiang Mai for 157 years. This dynasty was divided into three periods: during the Early Period, the king's power was strong and the city became increasingly prosperous and peaceful. In the Middle Period, the kings still maintained local authority. Throughout the Late Period, the government of Siam gradually centralized authority, which eventually weakened the king's power and ended its reign in A.D. 1939.