

The Relationship of the Two Kings of Northern Siam with the Pagan Dynasties

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Abstract

This paper will be studied the relation with the northern Siam and Pagan dynasties in the 13th century A.D. It will be examined history, geography and religion studying which is based on secondly sources. This paper will also be considered archeology remain such as Wat Chet Yot (Seven-spire temple) and Mahabodhi pagoda in Pagan. And King Mangrai, who was the northern King of Siam, has known to have visited Pagan during the three Tai/Shan brothers ruling in Pagan.

It seems clear that Burma, through its intermediary Chiang Saen, played a certain part, while the new impetus of Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka, which at this time penetrated the heart of Siam, duly left its impression on the new form of Buddhism now to be modeled. I feel satisfied that in the main, the Sukhotai style is a natural evolution from the former school. The true Sukhotai type is thus a blend of Chiang Saen and Sri Lanka. We can observe that from 1290 A.D. to 1487 A.D., the two kings in northern Siam had established a relationship with the Pagan dynasties which led in particular to a modification of Theravada Buddhism.

Keywords: King Mangrai Northern Siam and Tai/Shan brothers Pagan Dynasties and Sri Lanka Theravada Buddhism

Introduction

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Buddhist Research Institute of MCU for organizing on the 7th International Buddhist Research Seminar on cultural geography in Buddhism which is being organized in MCU Nan Buddhist College, northern Thailand. So, this paper will be related to the fact that the two kings in northern Siam (northern Thailand) had a close relationship with the Pagan dynasties (upper Burma) for many years. They were a link between the Tai/Shan people of Burma and the Siamese of Siam: and all three (Shan, Lao and Siamese) were derived from the same Tai stock which originated in what are now the Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sze-ch'uan, Kwei-Chow and Kwangsi. Firstly, I would like to give an account of King Mangrai, who made himself a master of practically the whole of northern Siam, and his brother King Khamherng, who was in power of Sukhotai. Secondly, I will also

examine the main purpose of the two kings' connection with the Pagan dynasties in Burma.

In 1290 A.D., King Mangrai paid a visit to Pagan, which was then under nominal Chinese sovereignty but in reality in the hands of the Tai/Shan chiefs.¹ Arriving on its southern frontier, King Mangrai was met by a dignitary that one the three Tai/Shan brothers had sent out to determine the king's intentions. King Mangrai assured him that he came not to plunder but rather to obtain for his kingdom some of Ava's famous craftsmen in metal. He was given five hundred families of goldsmiths, silversmiths, and coppersmiths whom he settled in various parts of his kingdom, including Chiang Tung, recently which is located eastern Shan State, in Burma. If, as Luce believes, the Lanna ruler at this time assisted the Tai/Shan brothers in conquering at least four districts of the Kyaukse region, it may have been from that region that these craftsmen came. In the same period, a group of Buddhist monks arrived with two relics of the Buddha which they presented to King Mangrai. The king enshrined them in lavish fashion and dedicated to their upkeep vast amounts of rice and land, including five hundred Mon families who had come from Homsawati.

In 1292 A.D., King Mangrai established his residence on the spot he had carefully selected as the new site for his capital, the 'new city' Chiang Mai, which remains the centre of northern Thailand to the present day. King Mangrai consulted at length with his brother rulers, Ngam Muong and King Khamherng, concerning the plan of the city and its layout and defenses, but its actual construction began in 1296 A.D.

For the next decade, King Mangrai was almost constantly preoccupied with the threat the Mongols posed to the Tai world. He, indeed, was a major military target for them. The Chinese were aware of his support of the three Tai/Shan brothers of Pagan. This may have had its origins in King Mangrai's alliance with the Mon people in Homsawati. The King Mangrai reflected his desire to maintain some scope for his activities among the Tai/Shan east of the Salween. The Chinese authorities in Yunnan seem to have regarded King Mangrai as the most important Tai chief throughout the wide region that included the Chiang Tung plain and the Shan State east of the Salween, as well as the Tai Lu and Lao regions of the Mekong. King Mangrai's mother, after all, was the daughter of the ruler of Chiang Hung. He seems to have had some continuing influence in that state: Phayao, Sukhothai, Homsawati, and Pagan. By this time he brought back with him artists and artisans to Chiang Mai. Pagan is 350 miles from Chiang Saen and 300 miles from Lampun across hilly country.²

In 1296 A.D., with the help and guidance of his brother chief, King Khamherng, who was the chief of Phayao, paid a visit to Pagan.³ At that time the real power in upper Burma had passed to the Tai/Shan people. The

¹ Wyatt, *Thailand A Short History*, p. 42.

² Lefevre-Pontalis, *L'Invasion Thaie en Indo-China*, p. 110.

³ Le May, *A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam*, p. 110.

Pagan dynasty remained in Tai hands,⁴ most notably the Kyaukse district, the fertile, well-irrigated, rice-growing region upon which the economy of Pagan depended, especially with the loss of the Mon provinces in the south.

By 1298 A.D., the year in which King Khamherng died. The Lanna kingdom included Lampang, Lamphun and as far as Tak in south, the Phai valley in the west, and Muong Nai, Chiang Tung, now Shan State in the Union of Burma and Chiang Hong in southern China.⁵ Sukhotai controlled most of the area to east, including Phrae, Phayao, Nan and Lung Praban.

We are inclined to accept as a fact that the Chiang Mai Tai/Shan helped in the occupation of Kyaukse by the Tai/Shan Buddhists.⁶ In the autumn of 1299 A.D., in Ranun kharuin to west of Kyaukse a dedication was made by the King Siriraja, who has conquered all his enemies. The king is mentioned nowhere else. We suspect he may have been a member of the old Burmese aristocracy who, after Klawewa's dethronement, made a stand against the Tai-Shan occupation of Kyaukse (Kloksa), with some temporary success on the west side of the river Panglaung. In the meantime Magatho (in Siamese) or Wareru (in Burmese), who was the governor of Mataban, and King Mangrai came to blows with him. In 1287 A.D., he married his daughters to King Mangrai with a town on the Me Niam as dowry, and peace was concluded.⁷

There is another temple on the outskirts of Chiang Mai near the Chang Kien stream of Doi Suth'ep which may well be attributed to King Mangrai, namely Wat Chet Yot (Seven-spire temple). This temple is a copy of the Mahabodhi temple in Pagan,⁸ built early in the thirteenth century by Htilo-Minlo. The last of the Burmese Builder-Kings and itself an imitation of the famous temple at Buddh Gaya in Bihar. King Mangrai is the only king of northern Siam known to have visited Pagan. Although there is no record of its foundation, it was already considered an ancient monument when discovered by Tilokaraja in 1453 A.D.⁹ The latter founded an *Arama* there and planted a sacred ficus; later he built a *vihAra* and in 1487 A.D. his successor rebuilt the *stupa*. It is probably from this time that the seated figures on the outer walls date, as they are typically Tai-Shan in style.

Now we turn to the King Mangrai's brother King Khamhurng, who may justly be called the first Tai king of Siam. In the middle of the thirteenth century Sukhodaya and Sawankalok were under the control of

⁴ Wyatt, Thailand A Short History, p. 45.

⁵ Michael, Lanna, Thailand's Northern Kingdom, p. 13.

⁶ Luce, The Early Syam in Burma's History, The Journal of the Siam Society, 46 (2) p. 153, Wyatt, Thailand A Short History, p. 44.

⁷ Le May, A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam, p. 110.

⁸ Le May, A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam, p. p. 111.

⁹ Michael, Lanna, Thailand's Northern Kingdom, p. 17.

a Khmer governor and somewhere in the vicinity were two unidentified petty states. Muong Rat and Muong Bang Yang were ruled over by two Tai-Shan chiefs, Bang Klang Sao and P'a Muong. Pa' Muong had received a Cambodian title and had married a Cambodian princess. The origin of the rising is still obscure, but suddenly P'a Muong and Bang Klang Sao, having joined forces, simultaneously attacked both Sukhotai and Sawankalok. Little resistance was offered, and, once Sukhotai was occupied, Bang Klang Sao Tai-Shan was crowned king by his friend and ally, P'a Muong, under the title of Sri Indrapat-indraditya. King Khamherng founded the Tai state of Sukhotai, sometime known as Sukhodaya, which was destined, within fifty years, to achieve sovereignty over practically the whole of Siam except the north, but which within a hundred years, was to give way to the new Tai/Shan dynasty when they established the capital in Ayutthaya, 150 miles farther south. Indraditya has since been immortalized by the Tai-Shan under the name of P'ra Ruang, their national hero. Secondly, the Kings Indraditya and P'ra Ruang had easy communication with the Pagan dynasties at the time of the Tai-Shan governor in upper Burma about the thirteenth century. The three Tai-Shan brothers could maintain relations with the mainspring of its Buddhism, Sri Lanka.¹⁰ Northern Siam, under King Mangrai, remained independent. There was always a strong bond of friendship between the two kings. By this time, the Tai/Siam chiefs of U-t'ong in southwest of Ayutthaya, either independent or under the sovereignty of the Khmer king.¹¹ There were undoubtedly strong Tai elements all over the country that were glad to acknowledge a Tai/Siam overlord.¹² King Mangrai died suddenly in 1317 A.D., leaving a succession dispute. His second son Sai Songkham succeeded him briefly, handing over the throne to his son Saeng Phu and retiring to Chiang Rai in 1318 A.D.

King Mangrai's youngest son, who had been sent to rule Muong Nai, which is now in the Shan States in the Union of Burma, decided to claim the throne for himself. In 1319 A.D., he seized it from his nephew, who retreated to Chiang Rai to join his father. Three years later, Saeng Phu's brother, Nam Thuan, overthrew the usurper. In 1324 A.D., Saen Phu was re-installed on the throne of Chiang Mai by his father and ruled for another decade until his death in 1334 A.D. His son Kham Phu succeeded him but lived for only three more years when the throne passed in turn to his son Pha Yu, who moved the capital for a few years to Chiang Rai. In 1339 A.D., Chiang Mai once more became the capital of Lanna, this time for good. Sukhothai, meanwhile, had fallen into decline with the death of King Khamherng, and control of Phayao passed to Lanna.

It seems clear that Burma, through its intermediary Chiang Saen, played a certain part, while the new impetus of Theravada Buddhism

¹⁰ Myanmar, Land of the Spirit, p. 47.

¹¹ Wood, *A History of Siam*, p. 53.

¹² Le May, *A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam*, p. 113.

from Sri Lanka,¹³ which at this time penetrated the heart of Siam, duly left its impression on the new form of Buddhism now to be modeled. It is only reasonable to suppose that the Chiang Saen type of Buddha image had been well known among the Tai of the Sukhotai region for many years past. I feel satisfied that in the main, the Sukhotai style is a natural evolution from the former school. We held the same opinion that we should still like to think so. We cannot now sustain that conclusion. Still, accepting the Chiang Saen type as the base of the Sukhotai School, there are obviously other influences at work. There is no doubt that the origin of these should be sought in Sri Lanka. The true Sukhotai type is thus a blend of Chiang Saen and Sri Lanka. We can observe that from 1290 A.D. to 1487 A.D., the two kings in northern Siam had established a relationship with the Pagan dynasties which led in particular to a modification of Theravada Buddhism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Tai/Shan people were weary of the constant fighting in Nan-Chao they spread throughout south-east Asia, which places the commencement of the Tai/Shan domination in Pagan Dynasties from 1287 A.D. to 1555 A.D. In this periods are not mythical but chroniclers are based on to explain that they were dominion in Burma in different events. There is no controversy among the sources about the assertion of the Tai/Shan brothers dominion in Burma in this period. They showed a strong relationship with northern king of Siam. It was true that the Tai/Shan developed a common racial consciousness by the process of socio-cultural interaction and Sri Lanka Theravada Buddhist tradition which is mentioned on the above.

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¹³ Wyatt, Thailand A Short History, p. 31.

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