

Earthquakes in Old Lan Na : A Part of Natural Catastrophes

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ABSTRACT

Old Lan Na had its share of natural catastrophes like other subtropical regions. Missing rains, inundations that ruined crops, floods that covered cities with river sand, even whole settlements that sank in flood water, etc., had been experienced.

In this contribution, earthquakes shall be the topic. Since modern times, we know that Lan Na is in a part of the globe where underneath, tectonic plate movements produce shocks and tremblings on the ground surface but the ancient people of this region did not have that knowledge. They ascribed such events to supernatural forces. After writing became available, some of these events were noted down. Here shall be mentioned a few examples, without trying to interpret them in scientific or engineering terms.

It seems that in Old Lan Na, earthquakes were (and still are) probably rather frequent but mostly moderate, seldom violent; at least their overall damage seemed to have been relatively minor, presumably due to local architecture and building materials.

Key words: Earthquakes, Lan Na history, Natural catastrophes

INTRODUCTION

During the past few years, many natural disasters occurred and were publicized, in various parts of the world, also in Thailand's northern part, in Lan Na. Drought, inundations, tsunamis, earthquakes, too much heat, too much cold, no wind, too much wind, no cloud, sky too much clouded are a few examples. Added to that were environmental, personal, financial or general economic calamities. Some people have become quite inclined to believe that we are now approaching a *kaliyuga*, an era of general misfortune, or that we are already living in it, possibly caused by our own misdeeds, personal *karmic* sins, or by man-made changes in global weather conditions. That view is countered by others who claim that (1) global changes in weather and geological conditions have always occurred; (2) natural disasters occurred in the past just as well, possibly even more than at present because in the meantime man has tried to prevent them, for instance, with dams and irrigation; and (3) present-day disasters get to be known quicker and in more detail than in the past because of modern rapid news communication, while journalists additionally try their best to make bad news more grisly than necessary.

In the following pages, I shall deal with one type of these catastrophes. I shall concentrate geographically on Old Lan Na, and subject-wise on earthquakes. Earthquakes in Lan Na are a fairly well-known matter because some of them, in the past, were quite "famous",