

Political Issues Hidden in the 19th Century Chiang Mai Chronicle

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ABSTRACT

Tamnan Phuen Muang Chiang Mai, or the Chiang Mai Chronicle, is regarded as an historical account of the Mangrai Dynasty during the 13-16th centuries, Chiang Mai during Burmese dominion (1558-1776), and Phraya Kawila's revival of Chiang Mai in 1796. However, within this Chronicle, the Tamnan Phra Non Prua Prang, or story of the Reclining Buddha, which covers the Muang Chiang Mai restoration in the 18th century, is not consistent with historical evidence or the remainder of the Chronicle. This study aimed to analyze why the story of the Reclining Buddha was inserted into the Chiang Mai Chronicle. This study analyzes the Tamnan Phuen Muang Chiang Mai, Lan Na palm-leaf manuscripts, to study the concept of transforming a legend into historical authenticity. We found that these chronicles were copied and rewritten during the 18th and 19th centuries in the reign of King Kawila, ruler of Chiang Mai; he was not a hereditary descendant of the Mangrai Dynasty according to a century-old coherent tradition. Therefore, the Tamnan Phuen Muang Chiang Mai was written to legitimate his succession and demonstrate that he was worthy of ruling the Lan Na kingdom.

Keywords: Historical authenticity, Chiang Mai Chronicle, Political issues, Kawila