

Lanna Art

(Circa 13th-20th centuries AD)

☆ **Lanna** (which literally means: One Million Thai Rice Fields) was a kingdom in the north of Thailand around the city of Chiang Mai. It consisted of several partly independent city-states.

The former Kingdom of Lanna was located in what is now the area of eight Northern provinces of Thailand: Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphoon, Mae Hong Sorn, Nan, Payao, and Prae.

The chronicles of the origin of "Lan Na" to "Chiang Saen" lies on the Mae Kong River. Its first leader named "King Mengrai", ascended to the throne in 1259. He extended the kingdom from the borders of Laos to Lamphum. According to an ancient inscription, Haripunchai was seized by Phraya Mengrai, who then built Chiang Mai as his kingdom's capital. The construction, which started in B.E. 1839 (1296 A.D.) was witnessed by Phya Ngum Muang of Phayao and Phra Ruang of Sukhothai. Apparently, the three kings were close friends and their kingdoms were so closely related that they were like a consolidated nation. Territorial boundaries made no difference to the peoples of the three kingdoms, who enjoyed an exceptionally active trade relation. As a memorial to such friendly links, a monument of the three kings was built and they now stand immortalized in front of the Chiang Mai City Hall.

Lan Na flourished for over 200 years. Its arts and literature rose at the peak, especially in the middle of 15th century, the King Tilokoraj period. Chiang Mai in this period was also chosen as the navel of the eight world synod of Theravada Buddhism. However, after the death of King Tilokoraj, the kingdom suffered from internal conflicts. Lan Na weakened because of wars with Sukhothai's successors.

☆ **Lanna Art** demonstrates the continuation with the art before the Lanna Period or Chiang Saen. The art in this period started its formation since the time of King Meng Rai the Great, who was the 25th king of the Lao Dynasty in 1261 AD. The city of Nopburi Sri Nakhon Ping Chiang Mai was the capital in 1296 AD.

The Lanna Art can be divided into 4 periods. They are 1st Period-the Establishment of the Kingdom (1261-1355 AD), 2nd Period-the Prosperity of the Kingdom (1355-1547 AD), 3rd Period-the Burmese Colonial State (1558-1774 AD) and 4th Period-the Thai Colonial State (1774-1939 AD).

The upper northern area of Thailand is the center of different families of artisans, which has been affected by the political and environmental realms. Thus, the Lanna Art can be divided into the following artisan families:

1. The artisan family from the capital of Chiang Mai (13th-20th centuries AD)
2. The Chiang Saen artisan family of Lanna period (14th-18th centuries AD)
3. The Chai Prakarn and Fang artisan families (15th-18th centuries AD)
4. The Nan artisan family (14th-19th centuries AD)
5. The Haripunchai Artisan family of Lanna period (14th-18th centuries AD)
6. The Phrae and Lampang artisan families (15th -18th centuries AD)
7. The Phayao artisan family (15th-18th centuries AD)

Pure Lanna art developed when the kingdom was independent. Lanna has its own unique art, culture, and language, much different from that of the Siamese of Central Thailand. Lanna came under Burmese rule and later under Thai rule. Lanna once had close relationships with the Tais in Chiang Rung (the Tai Lue of Sipsongpanna Prefecture in Yunnan, China), Chiang Tung (the Tai Kheun of Chentung, Shan State, Burma), as well as Lan Xang (*Chang* in Thai), which is now in the Lao P.D.R.

The art of Lanna is not as well known as Sukhothai but its style is unique and appealing. The Buddha statues during these periods had their subtle differences. Like Sukhothai, bronze was the favoured medium for Lanna sculptors. An early Lanna image gives the impression of strength and virility. It is seated with legs overlapped in yogic position and the hands are in the gesture of subduing *Mara*. A narrow waist line waistline offsets an inflated torso. Large curls and a prominent hairline frame a round, fleshy face. The garment covers the left shoulder with a short flap ending above the left nipple. The later lanna Buddha takes on a slimmer body, has oval face and the flap of the garment ends above the waistline.







Lord Buddha's Footprint , mother-of-pearl inlay and gilt.
Lan Na Art Style with and inscription dated 1794.



Replica of Regalia, Lan Na, 17th century AD. Silver High.
Found in the Hod district, Chiang Mai



The Beautiful Scripture Repository of Wat Phra Sing Woramahawihan,
Chiangmai, Lanna Architecture



Bronze Buddha in Royal Attire in 'Subduing Mara' (Maravijaya) Posture, circa 18th century AD.



Buddhist Banner, Lan Na Art Style, 20th -21st centuries



Wooden Buddhist Scripture Box, Lan Na Art Style, 19th century.



Buddha Subduing Mara, Lanna art, 15th - 16th centuries.
From Wat Phra Chao Lan Thong, Chiang Saen District, Chiang Rai.



Head of Buddha image (Phra Saen Swae) Bronze,
Lan Na Art, 14th - 15th century



Bronze Buddha in Meditation posture resting on a Hastilinga (mythical bird)
base, circa late 16th century AD.



Flame, Lan Na Art, 16th centuries Retrieved from the Mekong River,
Chiang Saen District, Chiang Rai Province



GALA FACE, Lan Na Art, 14th - 15th centuries From Wat Pa Sak,
Chiang Saen District, Chiang Rai Province



Monochrome White Glazed Buddha Shrine, Lanna art, 15th - 16th centuries.
From Wiang Ka Long kiln, Wiang Pa Pao District, Chiang Rai.