

The Last Century of Lao Royalty

A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY



GRANT EVANS

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Lao royalty's engagement in all the major events of the country in the last century forms a rich and complex narrative. But with the 1975 Communist revolution this history fell into oblivion and has all but disappeared from public memory.

The Last Century of Lao Royalty recovers this history by presenting a wealth of rare documents and photographs that bring to life the political, social, and cultural activities of the members of the royal families. It provides a thoroughly unique perspective on the role of Lao royalty in the modern story of the nation. Royalty was, in fact, a force for moderation, modernization, and democracy during the period of the Royal Lao Government (1947–1975). The last king, King Sisavang Vatthana, for instance, refused to give his imprimatur to a military dictatorship because he was so doggedly committed to constitutional rule. Naturally, there were some aristocratic royals who remained deeply conservative, but others joined forces with radical revolutionaries.

The book begins with a comprehensive historical introduction, followed by short essays on specific topics and excerpts culled from newspapers, personal letters, official reports, and a variety of other sources. Accompanying these is a rare selection of photographs of Lao royalty and royal occasions collected from individuals and archives around the world. This is no royalist hagiography, however. Modern Lao royal history is presented in all of its complicated convolutions, making this volume a key contribution to our understanding of modern Laos.

About the Author

GRANT EVANS was a professor of anthropology at the University of Hong Kong for many years and was co-editor of *Hong Kong: The Anthropology of a Chinese Metropolis* (1997) and *Where China Meets Southeast Asia* (1999). He has published extensively on Laos and Southeast Asia, including *Lao Peasants Under Socialism* (1990), *The Politics of Ritual and Remembrance: Laos since 1975* (1998), *A Short History of Laos* (2002), and edited *Laos: Culture and Society* (1999). He now lives and works in Vientiane.

January 2009
210 x 280 mm
430 + xiv pp. (English)
photographs throughout

978-974-9511-66-4
Cloth
THB 1850 (USD 60)

Keywords

Lao Royal Houses
Royal genealogies
Biographies of royals
Royal Rituals
Royal embroidery

Highlights

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