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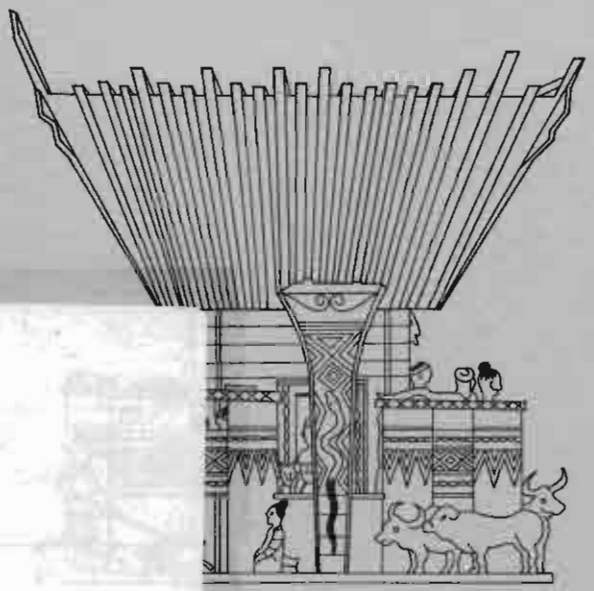
TAI CULTURE

International Review on Tai Cultural Studies



TAI SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY PROJECT

SEACOM SANGSAN
Joint Edition

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Joint Edition

This thematical issue of TAI CULTURE is a joint production of **SEACOM**, Germany and **SANGSAN** publishing House, Thailand.

TAI CULTURE is an International Review on Tai Cultural Studies including such fields as language/literature, history, society, anthropology, religion, arts and lifestyle of Tai peoples in Southeast Asia and neighbouring regions.
The journal presents information and analyses of significant problems and trends in Tai Cultural Studies. Thus, it welcomes contributions from associated disciplines.

Library: *Southeast Asia (population and minorities): Assam/China/Kambodia/Laos/Myanmar/Thailand/Vietnam. culture/society/anthropology/ethnology/religion/linguistics/arts*

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Cover: *Dian Culture* - ancient house architecture on the lid of a bronze cowrie-container, found at Dian Lake of Kunming, Yunnan, Southwestern China, dated back to the Western Han period [206 B.C. - 24 A.D.].
Some Thai scholar believes that Dian Kingdom was an ancient Tai kingdom, some argues it was of the Yang (Karen), some other reconstructs it as having an Austro-Asiatic connection, probably of the Proto-Lawa, whos identical features formed part of the major characteristics of the shared cultural heritage of the Bai-Yues, the aborigines of South China.

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TAI CULTURE

International Review on Tai Cultural Studies

TAI SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY PROJECT

EDITORIAL

The idea to have cooperation-issues of TAI CULTURE together with other research institutions and projects was born during a meeting between Prof. Dr. Cholthira Satyawadhana from Rangsit University, Thailand, and the editors of TAI CULTURE early in 1997. Our joint goal was simple - to enhance international cooperation in the field of Tai Studies. A short time later, a cooperation inititative between the Research Project on the "Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples", headed by Prof. Chatthip Nartsupha, Chulalongkorn University Bangkok, and **SEACOM** Berlin was organized. Now it is a reality with this thematical issue of TAI CULTURE.

Both publishers - **SANGSAN** Publishing House and **SEACOM** - are very proud to be able to present the actual result of the non-governmental Thai-German cooperation project despite it was often complicated and hard work, and our Guest Editors and we had to communicate and to work together over far distances.

Acknowledgments

The publishers wish to express their special thanks to the Thailand Research Fund and Prof. Chatthip Nartsupha for their kind permission to edit the articles, which are all taken from the TRF funded "Research Project on the Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples".

SEACOM and the editors of TAI CULTURE also thank the Guest Editors and all the contributors of this issue for their efforts and their hard work to make the original Thai texts available in English.

SEACOM especially thanks **SANGSAN** Publishing House for their support and their willingness to cooperate with us. Without the support of **SANGSAN** Publishing House this thematical issue would not have become a reality.

We thank all Editorial and Advisory Board Members and assistants for their help.

All the cooperative partners in this issue hope that the readers will enjoy reading the latest and not yet published research results from the Thailand Research Fund's Project on the "Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples".

Regular readers will recognize some physical changes in this issue. These changes were caused by the difficulties to edit the journal from very different places - Bangkok and Berlin - and perspectives.

Future issues

Our next TAI CULTURE publication will continue with a thematical issue dealing with the influence of water on Tai societies and the development of administration systems, especially the *baan-müang* system. In this context, some aspects of small-state-building and questions of popular Tai religions will be looked upon. Additional contributions are kindly welcome until August 15th, especially on the Dai and Zhuang in Southern China and the Shan in Myanmar, book reviews and translations from Tai languages which fit the theme:

"*Baan Müang* - Administration and Ritual"

Actual information on TAI CULTURE, an overview of contents of back issues and selected articles can be found in the internet under **www.seacom.de**
We please all our readers and contributors to note that the postal address of **SEACOM** Edition has changed. The actual address for all contacts is:

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Critical remarks, questions and suggestions for improvement of the journal or for future thematical issues are also kindly welcome under this address or via internet.

Berlin, in May 1998

Oliver Raendchen
- General Editor -

Michael Kobsch
- Chairman, **SEACOM** -

INTRODUCTORY GUEST EDITORS' NOTE

Acknowledgment

The theoretical conceptualizaton of this "Introductory Editorial Note" has been '*in practice*' in an on-going Research Project: ***"Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples"***, starting from the year 1995. Being gradually developed and reshaped, it was launched recently as an "Introductory Presentation" paper by Dr. Chatthip Nartsupha and as a "Keynote Address" on behalf of Dr. Chatthip by Dr. Cholthira Satyawadhna at the ***International Co-workshop on the Projects of "Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia" (Kyoto University) and "Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples" (Chulalongkorn University)*** at Chiang Mai Orchid Hotel, Chiang Mai, Thailand, during March 28 - 29, 1998.

The **Co-Editors** of this issue, honorary invited as **Guest-Editors** of **SEACOM**: Prof. Dr. Chatthip Nartsupha and Prof. Dr. Cholthira Satyawadhna, would like to thank the **Thailand Research Fund** for supporting and sponsoring the ***"Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples Project"***. The five research articles which formed a major part in the **Special Issue** of TAI CULTURE, Vol. III, No. 1; June 1998, were either a part of the project or were produced by scholars who have been members of the project.

Additionally, in co-operation with the ***"Hundred Best Thai Books in the Past Hundred Years Project"***, another research project also funded by the **Thailand Research Fund**, we would like to thank Acharn Wittayakorn Chiangkul, Project Director, and Miss Gessanee Maneerut, translator, both lecturers at Rangsit University, for their kind supports.

In particular, our thanks and appreciation go to Mr. Oliver Raendchen, General Editor of TAI CULTURE, Mrs. Jana Raendchen and their colleagues in **SEACOM**, who initiated and contributed this **International Review on Tai Cultural Studies** to the internationals, as well as generously collaborated with us to edit and launch the ***Special Issue on Tai Social and Cultural History*** to our international scholars and friends.

This **Special Issue** was thoroughly edited via internet, all facilities were generously provided by **Rangsit Internet and Computer Centres** in co-operation with the **Thai Studies Programme (International)**, **Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rangsit University**. We owe our great debt to Rangsit authorities and all technical assistants involved.

Chatthip Nartsupha
Cholthira Satyawadhna
(Guest-Editors)

VALUES, PERSPECTIVES, AND DIRECTIONS OF THE "Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples' Project"

Chatthip Nartsupha, Chulalongkorn University
Cholthira Satyawadhna, Rangsit University

Tai Studies investigates the different cultural and historical experiences of various Tai ethnic groups in Southeast Asia and its periphery, such as the Tai Ahom of Assam in India, the Shan of Shan State in Myanmar, the Tai Neue of Dehong in China, the Tai Lue in China and Laos, the Tai Dam, Tai Dang and Tai Khao in Sipsong Chu Tai, Tai groups in the eastern region of Upper Vietnam, the Zhuang and the Dong of Kweichou, Hunan and Kwangsi in China, etc. There are altogether approximately 30-40 million Tai speaking groups residing outside the Kingdom of Thailand. This figure is equivalent to approximately half of the total population of Thailand at present.

The Research Project on "Social and Cultural History of the Tai People" has been to study the cultures of those various Tai (Kadai) speaking groups in comparison with the cultures of the Thai people in Thailand, the only identical group whose social and political structures are equivalent to other modern nation-states in Asia. The objective of our Project is to seek for more understanding of all Tai ethnic groups by comparing one particular group to others.

Values of Tai Studies

Tai Studies have both theoretical and scholastic values, as well as the potential to maintain cultural value. In studying the Tai ethnic groups, we could gain at least four primary benefits, i.e.,

1.Theoretical value: the Tai speaking groups residing in widespread geographical locations, ranging from the Kwangsi Province of China, to the Assam State of India. They have been living in differing climate and interacting with other cultures and peoples, despite their common geographical locations and origins.

At present, the Tais seem to have had distinctive characteristics to each other due to their migration and constant contact with other cultural traits and political domination which have influenced them during the long course of history.

A comparative study of most Tai speaking groups would increase our understanding of the original features of their identities, which have been in common, as well as empirical knowledge about the individual characteristics of each particular Tai ethnic group.

2. The second benefit is that it enables us to gain more understanding of the Thai (Siamese) culture in the rural areas of Thailand, as there are still many similarities between the Thais in rural Thailand and the Tais outside Thailand. One prominent feature is that, both the rural Thais in Thailand and the Tais outside the country have a shared belief system in ancestral and natural spirits. There have been similar rituals found between both sets of Tai-Thai groups, where people in the community gathering to support the vital spirits or call for the essence of certain community members who have been seriously ill, literally in Tai/Thai *hong khwan* or *suu khwan*.

Linguistically, there are also some common grounds between the Tai groups in Southeast Asia.

At times, there have been more linguistic similarities between the rural Thais of Thailand and the Tais of Southeast Asia than the commonalties between the rural and the central Thais in Thailand.

The connections among most Tai and Thai groups seem to be evident. However, to mark and link these connections has been neglected by scholars and specialists on Tai Studies of various disciplines. For example, archaeologists failed to attempt comprehensive and holistic accounts of the Tai migration and/or expansion in the long course of history although evidence showed that there have been more than 30 million Tai speaking population outside the territory of present-day Thailand. Part of the reasons for this missing link is that archaeologists have tended to be biased in viewing that contemporary Thai (Siamese) culture, as we know, is more likely a product of Indian, Khmer and Mon cultures.

To understand the history of the Thais, then, the ancient Mon and Khmer (Khom) cultures have been focused by Siamese scholars for the past several decades. In fact, the identical Tai culture found outside Thailand has more than a simply equal claim as being the shared cultural root of the Thai (Siamese) culture.

Likewise, the ruling class dominant culture, the consumerist culture and urban culture have undergone dramatical social changes. It is the rural Thai - be this Thai folk culture only - which possesses the most visible shared identities between the Thais and other Tais.

3. Such research perspectives and direction could positively impact the study of local development and of community cultures in Thailand. Viewing the histories of the various Tai groups may shed light on the original and identical characteristics of the people who have now become Thai. Additionally, if we contributed to establish this connection, through a reconstruction of the original Tai culture, the ethnohistory of some particular Tai groups and revive its positive, and communal aspects. We may then clarify a sort of social consciousness, cosmology, belief system, social structure including political organization and other specific shared identities for the Tai ethnicity in general.

These cultures are now being confronted by Western influences. While material progress, although science and technology are not inherently negative things, when they are applied to the Tai societies without an awareness of their negative effects, much damage has been done to the community's orientation and consciousness which are so characteristically Tai. Researching the cultural connections among the Tais could encourage a socio-political validity that would give the Tai groups more dignity and power to defend their cultural identities as well as integrity, and keep balance of their community orientation including psychological and spiritual preservation while accepting new elements from other cultures and societies.

In researching on the Tais speaking groups outside Thailand's national boundaries, we can still see many of these earlier values, which have been preserved and been functioning to serve every individual in the entire community.

4. The studies along these research perspectives and directions should benefit the conservation, revival, and development of Tai culture as a whole in the future. This is particularly helpful to those Tai groups which are currently suffering from being political 'minorities'. For these groups, the preservation of their own culture, collective and mutual understanding and assistance among all Tai groups, either political minorities or majorities, would give them strength and power to defend their cultural life-ways. This would, then, promote a level of cultural independence, self-determination and self-rule.

Moreover, dynamically, each Tai group can pass on the best cultural traits it has initially developed from outside to other Tai groups. The Tai in Thailand can transfer western technology to the lesser-exposed Tai groups in other countries, and in return, benefit from this arrangement by learning from them about its lost communal and spiritual traits.

This mutual help through intra-Tai transferring of culture, would strengthen Tai cultures everywhere and allow the Tai civilization to thrive and flourish in the global village and the novel world order.

Perspectives on Tai Studies

Our research project on Tai studies entitled ***"The Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples"*** supported by the **Thailand Research Fund (TRF)** has been going on for almost three years, from 1995/1996 to the present.

The project has brought us to four main areas of findings and perspectives that will contribute to the future realm of Tai studies.

1. The Tai culture probably has its own linear of cultural development. In *"The Original Characteristics of the Tais"*, Jitr Phumisak, our Thai distinguished scholar, proposed the idea to use comparative history to study Tai culture. He pointed out that Tai culture had its own identity, which was distinctive from either Chinese or Indian identities, yet was influenced by the two. Accordingly, we have applied this comparative history approach to our project.

Recent studies of the Tais in Yunnan, by both our project's Thai scholars and Chinese scholars, have revealed specifics about a Tai ancient political organization called the Mao Kingdom, existing before the 15^{th}–16^{th} centuries. The vicinity of the Kingdom covered the Western Yunnan, and the Shan and Kachin States of Myanmar.

This confederated state was founded over 1000 years ago, and has been mentioned in both Chinese and local chronicles and legends. Important historical places, and shrines of its heroes and period, can still be visited. This evidence can prove the existence of Tai communities earlier than the Sukhothai period.

The Mao Confederation had existed for more than five centuries, and was later divided into two parts in the 16^{th} century; one was occupied by the Chinese and the other by the Burmese. Later on, three major wars between the Chinese and the Tai destroyed the confederation.

Evidence showed that the peoples in both parts at present are Tai speaking. They speak Shan dialect and write Shan script and are still conscious of their Tai-ness. It is possible to visit Muang Mao by air, 45 minutes from Kunming, flying west to Mungtse (Muang Khon), or from Rangoon to Mandalay, and then continue by land to Muang Mao on the Chinese side of the Myanmar-China border.

Myanmar named its country after the Myanmar ethnic group, its majority; the Tai group including those previously of the Mao kingdom, accounts for about one-third of total population of the country who was treated as the minority.

The Tai culture of the Mao Confederation can be traced back to the Yue culture, at present being studied by Dr. Cholthira Satyawadhna, a Thai scholar in our research project. According to this, Professor Huang Hui Kun (1992), a Chinese historian, wrote an important book, **From the Yues to the Thais**. He mentioned that Tai language was used by the Yue people in their songs, recorded in Chinese characters representing Tai phonemes, words and structures which could be traced back over 2000 years.

Originally, Yunnan had no Chinese. The Chinese lived in the Huang He River Valley. The people who lived south of the Yangtze River at that time were called in various names at differing times throughout the centuries.

When we extract the Tai from the Chinese and Indian traditions, a new perspective emerges. There seems to be a greater connection between the Tai and the Mon-Khmer speaking groups and hill peoples of Southeast Asia and to the other peoples of Mainland Asia. The East may be composed of three overwhelming cultural influences: Chinese, Indian, and a yet to be named cultures located at the periphery.

According to our on-going research, Tai culture seems to have much related to Vietnamese and Japanese cultures. Tracing back to the Western Han Dynasty, the Vietnamese have also shared their ancestral root with the Yue people of South China. In Japan, some scholars believe that Japanese ancestral line has been derived from some particular groups of Yue peoples, who, in this case, migrated to Japanese islands by sea. Japan has also been engaged in rice culture, connected to the South of China. Their original culture might have have been developped from the Yue culture, mixed alongside with other cultures of peoples who were living in the peripheries of China.

More research has to be done on the relationships and interactions in the long course of history of these peoples. Particularly, the close link between Thai and Austro-asiatic cultures will be theoretical reconstructed by our Thai researcher and it will be more apparent if we de-emphasize our cultural connections with China and India as it has been directed and studied in the past decades.

2. The Tai culture has much of the characteristics of an ancient community. The family institution seems to be strong, significant and continuously functioning,

as does the community and the rituals dealing with kinship, mutual aid, and kind-heartedness.
In our historical study of the Ahom, we found each of these traits. On the top layer, we saw the image of various Hindu gods, but underneath lay the beliefs in ancestors and nature, as well as the importance of family and community.

3. From our study of the social and cultural history of the Tai peoples in the areas inhabited by the Tai above-mentioned, if we leave out the state, we can see two layers of culture.
Lying at the bottom layers are the specific cultures of various ethnic groups, the Lawa, Palaung, hill tribes, etc., existing at a village community level. But at the upper layer, the Tai culture is important. It has been integrated and widely used by all other communities of different ethnic groups.
A nation does not have to be featured of one particular ethnicity and composed of peoples of the same kind. What is important is that communities have been in touch with one another in *'la longue duree'*, experiencing shared historical heritage, cultural roots and utilizing a common language with differing dialects. They have been living in a locality nearby each other, to the extent that they have had and continued to share the common. Such phenomenon is obvious in the case of the Tai in the South of China and the Tai in Upper Assam.
This has important ideological implications. Village community, folk culture and/or peasant life-way can be the major contributor of 'dominant culture' of a nation-state. Tai culture can be treated in that special position, being so identical at both national level and village level.

4. A study of a social history of the Tai groups has led us to reconsider the extensive Tai social and cultural spaces. It has implications for Thailand's economy, culture, and politics, as well as for the surrounding regions.
If we consider Thailand as not simply a state, but as a code of Tai culture, this cultural dimension can lead us to effective Thai-Tai economic relations. The implication would be the new perspective of different kinds of political grouping in the future.
Another dimension is the establishment of various kinds of Tai peoples networks, which transcends state boundaries. A political area does not have to mean an expansion of the nation-state power. The Tai should be able to discuss public policies across the state power.

Research Directions

For those who have followed up the development and progress of our school of thought from the very beginning until now, may be well aware that this school started to be distinguished firstly in the realm of Siam's economic history from the national level to the village level.

After having had an understanding on Thailand's economic base, we further studied on the Thai culture in order to understand Siam's superstructure and its realm of ideology.

Having conducted a number of tough fieldworks, we have more understanding on the values of Thai peasant communities which have cultural ties and identities in a broader sense. We, then, moved forwards to study Tai cultures and communities outside Thailand. National boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia and the states, in our view, may bit by bit wither away in the long course of future history. The remains are cultural identities of the peoples of Southeast Asia. Among the shared cultural heritage and identities of the peoples of Southeast Asia, the ethnic Tai identity has been one amidst the strongest.

Supported by Thailand Research Fund, our Historical Political Economy School today has built up a broad network to extensive studies on the Tai culture and ethnicity of various groups in many countries of Southeast Asia. It is expected that the study will lead to a better understanding of the extensive Tai cultural areas across national boundaries.

On the basis of long-term documentary research plus contextual analysis and interpretation of ancient texts as well as conducting field research in various Tai communities in and outside Thailand, it may be foreseen that the team researchers would excel their thinking, broaden their vision and perspectives, sharpen their theories and approaches, counter arguments, strengthen their capabilities and develop methodologies of their research team until they could achieve the ultimate goal, i.e., the establishment of various kinds of Tai peoples' networks, in terms of economy, culture and politics as well as any progressive activities, which transcend state boundaries.

It should be noted that, in our vision and way of thought, *'a Tai political area'* does not mean an expansion of a nation-state power, like Thailand, in particular. Ethically, it is also remarkable that the pursuit of academic excellence of our school has never isolated from the grass-roots, the poor people of various groups and cultures. With heart-felt understanding of the ethnic grass-roots, with just perception of communal values, with good sense and sensibilities of 'human touch', and particularly, with idealistic philosophical ground as witnessed by

papers presented in this Special Issue on **Tai Social and Cultural History**, we may look forward to the coming scenario of the research project, from one phase to another, in co-operation with local and international researchers, like with the researchers of the Center of South East Asia of Kyoto University, with Thai and international participants who have shared interest in Tai Culture and Ethnicity as well as the "Inter-ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia", in the International Co-Workshop reported in this Special Issue and with **SEACOM** as witnessed by the co-editorial work and publication in co-operation with **SEACOM**, Germany.

As elsewhere, the making of Mainland Southeast Asia has been in fact the *struggle* of peoples to *survive*. Along the process of either economic, political or cultural survival, there have always been *'winners and losers'*. In the context of SEA, and the Tai-Yunnan periphery, during the Chin Dynasty, the Warring States period and the Han Dynasty, the Tai and several ethnic groups among the Yue, not excluding some ancestral ethnic groups in present-day Korea, Japan, and Vietnam were the *'losers'*, while the Chin and the Han Chinese were the *'winners'*. When the Tai further expanded westward, southward and eastward, there appeared the *khaa*, the Mon-Khmer speaking or Austro-asiatic groups, who had been the great *'losers'* of SEA, while on the contrary, the Tai-Lao had become the *'winners'*. Research directions of many projects on peoples and cultural diversities of Southeast Asia have revealed the *'benefit'* groups and clarified the *'lost history'* and *societies* of many *'losers'* whose indigenous cultures and identities have been well-conserved, survived, and handed down, from one generation to another generation with pride in a very modest, simple, but also complex way. The assuming *'hidden'* identities of the aboriginal *'losers'*, should also, in our view, be *unveiled*, studied, and researched in a more appropriate way when compared with research and studies of the past decades.

It is our concern that the studies of the Tai and inter-ethnic relations of Southeast Asia in the next decade should pave way to a ***'paradigm shift'*** of historical and anthropological studies of Southeast Asian multi-ethnic and multi-cultural regions. While we hope for the possibilities of the Tai in this *'no-boundary region'* to be able to discuss public policies across any state powers, one may even dream for an atmosphere and circumstances of the so-called *'public hearing'* which is, of course, a very *'ambitious'* dream.

We would propose to campaign for a ***'paradigm shift'*** in our way of thoughts and approaches on studying peoples, societies and their interactions in Southeast Asia. Let us dream for the *'impossible dream'* that perhaps one day, not only the Tai ethnic groups, but also those *'losers'* of Southeast Asia could have a *'free association of dialogue'* of economics, politics and cultures across national boundaries and state powers.

Our discovery and sojourn for truth in this **Special Issue** of TAI CULTURE which has been the results of the long-term documentary research on ancient texts as well as the tough field investigation by our research team as above-mentioned would somewhat serve our purpose. We stand firm that the study of any *micro unit* of society cannot deviate itself from the eco-politico-cultural context in the long course of history. A *synchronic research* has to go together with *diachronicle research* as in Braudel's term - *"la longue duree"*. Although we focus on both *'winners'* and *'losers'* whose power may have shifted from time to time, it is our hope and expectation that we will win at the end in order to understand the complexities of Southeast Asian societies and cultures in terms of their interactions in *'la longue duree'*.

This sojourn is, of course, we strongly believe, our objective goal, direction, and commitment of our further research.

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THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE OF AHOM HISTORY[*]

This article discusses five topics:

1. *The importance of the knowledge of Ahom history;*
2. *The state of knowledge of Ahom history at present: the English and the Assamese schools;*
3. *The state of knowledge of Ahom history at present: the Tai school;*
4. *The knowledge of Ahom history from reading the Ahom Buranji and other Ahom documents in the Tai language;*
5. *A direction for the study of Ahom history in the future.*

I. The importance of the knowledge of Ahom history

At present there are about 2 million Ahom people. They are the largest group of population in the Upper Assam region of India, which in total has approximately 7 million people.[1] The Tai Ahom people migrated from Muang Mao north of the Shall state in the 13th century. They crossed over the Patkal mountain range to settle in the Brahmnaputra river valley.[2] A study of this group of people is important in at least three ways:

1. This group of Tai people did not have much contact with other Tai groups over a long period. Therefore their historical documents reflect many archaic elements of the Tai tribe, which have been lost or obscured among other Tai groups. They belong to a Tai society and culture which does not have Buddhism. They retain beliefs in natural and ancestral spirits. Their class

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[*] A paper submitted to the 'International Seminar on Tais of North East India and Their Relation to Other Tais of Southeast Asia and China', organized by Ban Ok Pub Lik Muang Tai (Eastern Tai Literary Association), February 7-8, 1995, Dispur, Assam, India.

[1] This is an estimate made by the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai Association. The exact figure is unknown, because the Indian government had not made a population census categorized by Ahom ethnicity since 1931. Professor Nomal Gogol estimated that the Ahom population was 1.3 million, see Nomal Gogoi. Tai People of India: Their Language and Culture. in *The Tai.* Vol. 1, Chu-Ka-Fa Year 766 (A.D. 1994), p. 21.

Nang Pratashlata Buragobain estimated that in 1989 there were 1.07 million Ahom, see Nang Pratashlata Buragohain. Spatial Distribution of the Ahom Population. in *The Tai.* Vol. 1, Chu-Ka-Fa Year 766, p. 64.

In 'The Ahom Population in Assam: A Spatial Analysis of Growth and Distribution', a paper presented to the 5th International Conference on Thai Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, London 1993, Nang Buragohain mentioned that the Ahom were concentrated in the districts of Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Golathat, Dhemaji, Tinsukia and Lakhimpur.

[2] Sir Edward Gait. *A History of Assam.* 1926; 2nd edition reprint, Guwahati: Lawyer's Book Stall, 1992, p. 73.

division depends much on ethnicity. A study of this group of Tai people will help us to search for the original roots of Tai society and culture.

2. This group of Tai people was able to establish a large kingdom. They created a state of which the Tai tribe was the ruler. At one time their kingdom had an area approximately half of the present-day Thailand. The kingdom was independent for 600 years from the 13' to the 19' century. This Ahom kingdom was the largest Tai kingdom besides Ayutthaya. As the kingdom was in existence for a long time, it because the depository of a highly developed culture in the forms of manuscripts, buildings, rituals and customs. The Ahom were different from other Tai groups which had attained only the level of development of principalities. The Ahom people had their own writing and they liked to record their history. Their chronicles are mines of knowledge of ancient Tai society and culture.
3. At present the Ahom and other Tai tribes in Assam are very active in the study of Tai history and language. The government of Assam has a policy to teach the Tai language. A budget has been allocated to hire 200 Tai language teachers for elementary schools in Upper Assam. The revival of the Tai language, both spoken and written, and the promotion of Tai culture has been going on forcefully in the Upper Assam area. The spearhead of this movement is the 'Eastern Tai Literary Association' (Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai). The Association arranges cultural meetings, researches and publishes books. Its aim is to establish the Upper Assam area as an Ahom state, separate from Assam, within the federation of India.[1] Research on Tai history and culture in Assam has significance beyond its academic role. It contributes to the foundations of a new Tai nation in India on an age-old heritage.

II. The state of knowledge of Ahom history at present: the English and Assamese schools.

Knowledge of Ahom history has come mostly from works by the British and the Assamese. These works have the following characteristics:

1. They consider Ahom history as only a part or a period of the history of Assam.
2. They utilize Assamese, Persian and English documents as source materials.
3. They consider Assam to be within the culture area of India. They see only the dominance of the Hindu religion especially that of the Vaisnavite school.

In brief, they tend to view Ahom history as a part of Indian history especially in terms of culture, religion and language.

[1] From interviews with members of the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai Association.

The first and the most classical work on the history of Assam is Sir Edward Gait (1863-1950)'s *A History of Assam*[1], published in 1905. Gait was an Englishman, holding the position of honorary director of the ethnographical works of Assam. He divided his book into 18 chapters, chapters 1-4 on the pre-Ahom history of Assam, chapters 5-9 on Assam under the Ahom, chapters 10-13 on other kingdoms in the hill areas on the border of Assam, and chapters 14-18 on the history of Assam from the Burmese conquest to British rule. Gait considered Ahom history a period in Assam history, spanning from 1228 when Sukapha (reigned 1228-68) led Tai soldiers from Muang Mao to settle in the Brahmaputra valley, to 1826 when Assam came under British rule. Even though Gait had no other historical studies to draw on, his book was remarkably thorough and mature. For primary sources, he utilized mainly Assamese chronicles, supplemented by Persian documents from the Mogul dynasty which fought against the Ahom, and by English documents of the East India Company. In particular, Gait used the Ahom Buranji chronicle in the Tai language, which he had translated by a team of learned Ahom priests.

Gait gave weight to the role of the Ahom in the history of Assam. He pointed out that the Ahom unified the Brahmaputra valley under one single administration, a situation never before achieved. The Ahom also were successful in defending their country against the Mogul. They stopped the Mogul from conquering further to the East. However, Gait's primary objective was to write a history of the land of Assam, not a history of the Tai Ahom. Therefore he started the book by recounting the influence of Brahmanism and Aryan culture in the land of Assam before the advent of the Ahom. He then went on to narrate the interaction of various ethnic groups after the arrival of the Ahom, the domination of Hindu culture and the Sanskrit-based Assamese language from the 16th century onwards, and finally the establishment of British rule in the 19th century. All these periods form one historical sequence.

After the work of Sir Edward Gait, the most important research work on the history of Assam belongs to Professor Suryya Kumar Bhuyan (1894-1964) of Cotton College, Guwahati. He was a founder of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (DHAS). He was moving force behind the work of this department in the collection of historical chronicles. He became the director-general of the department in 1933 and remained in this position until 1957 except for a period when he was on study leave at the School of Oriental and African Studie in London. In England, Professor Bhuyan studied the documents on Assam kept at the India Office Library, and wrote a thesis under the supervision of Professor H. H. Dodwell.

[1] Sir Edward Gait. *A History of Assam.*

Professor Bhuyan wrote in total 40 works including histories and edited collections of chronicles in English and Assamese.[4] His important works in English were his thesis *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826* (1947)[5], *Lachit Barphukan and His Times* (1947)[6], *Studies in the Literature of Assam* (1955)[7], *Atan Buragohain and His Times* (1957)[8], and *Studies in the History of Assam* (1965)[9]. He also translated the Tungkhlungia Buranji[10], an Assamese chronicle on the 1681-1826 period when Assam was under the last Ahom dynasty named Tungkhungia. The translation (from Assamese to English) was first published in 1933.

Bhuyan's works in Assamese were also very valuable. They included editions of the Assam Buranji, a collection of chronicles in the Assamese language; the Deodhai Asam Buranji, a chronicle of Assam under the early period of Ahom rule; chronicles of the lands on the border of Assam including the Kachari Buranji, the Jayantia Buranji, and the Tripura Buranji; and the Kamrupar Buranji which narrated the wars between Assam and the Mogul. Professor Bhuyan has given us a detailed account of events in the Ahom kingdom, especially of politics at the end of the 17th century. In this period of crisis, there were struggles for state power among various groups of officials, several kings were dethroned, and the Mogul armies were on the attack. Professor Bhuyan showed that the Ahom were excellent fighters. He also showed that Ahom officials were prone to quarrel seriously among themselves. They executed their fellow Ahom opponents and their families mercilessly. Bhuyan used the wealth of detail in the Assamese chronicles to bring Ahom history to life. At the same time, his works had a strong academic foundation in primary sources.

Bhuyan believed that Assam had been an inseparable, organic part of India since antiquity. Assam was a case study of Hinduization - the process whereby the cultures of indigenous peoples gradually yielded place to Hindu culture. Ahom kings supported Hindu priests, built temples, and allocated land to the temples.

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[4] Maheswar Neog. Foreword. in: Suryya Kumar Bhuyan. *Studies in the History of Assam.* 2nd edition, Gauhati: Omsons Publications 1985; S. K. Bhuyan. Preface. in: S. K. Bhuyan. *Anglo-Assamese Relations, 1771-1826.* Gauhati: Lawyer's Book Stall 1974.

[5] S. K. Bhuyan. *Anglo-Assamese Relations, 1771-1826.*

[6] S. K. Bhuyan. *Lachit Barphukan and His Times.* Gauhati 1947.

[7] S. K. Bhuyan. *Studies in the Literature of Assam.* Gauhati: Omsons Publications, reprint, 1985.

[8] S. K. Bhuyan. *Atan Buragohain and His Times.* 2nd edition, Gauhati: Lawyer's Book Stall 1992.

[9] *Tungkhungia Buranji* or *A History of Assam, 1687-1826 A.D.* Compiled, edited, and translated by S. K. Bhuyan. Guwahati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies 1990.

[10] S. K. Bhuyan. *Studies in the History of Assam.*

[11] *Tungkhungia Buranji* or *A History of Assam, 1687-1826 A.D.* Compiled, edited and translated by S. K. Bhuyan. Guwahati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies 1990.

The Brahmins returned these favours by attributing the dynasties a descent from the Hindu gods.[12]

Therefore, even though Bhuyan studied the events of the Ahom court in detail, he did not write Ahom history from the angle of an Ahom consciousness. Rather he wrote a history of Assam during the time it was ruled by the Ahom. And in his opinion, Assam during that time had already come under the domination of Hindu culture.

The most major work on the history of Assam is the 5-volume set *The Comprehensive History of Assam* (1990, 19911 19929 1993, 1994)[13]. This work also treats Ahom history as simply a period in the history of Assam. The editor of the set is Professor H. K. Barpujari. The contributors include dozens of leading scholars of India. Only two of them are Tai Ahom, namely Professor Jogendra Nath Phukan and Dr Romesh C. Buragohain.

Compared to the works of Gait and Bhuyan, the *Comprehensive History* gives relatively little weight to the role of the Ahom. Two of the five volumes are devoted entirely to the period of British rule. The second volume on political history of Assam under Ahom rule gives too much coverage to the Ahom-Mogul wars. The third volume on the administration, ecology, society and culture of Assam under the Ahom, is the most disappointing of all. It makes very little use of Tai Ahom documents. It considers only the Hindu part of Assam. It has been written from the Indian viewpoint, not from the Tai perspective.

Besides the major works of Gait, Bhuyan and Barpujari, there are other general works in this Assamese school of history, such as N. N. Acharyya: *The History of Medieval Assam* (1966)[14], N. K. Basu: *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826* (1970)[15], Sarbeswar Rajguru: *Medieval Assamese Society, 1228-1826* (1988)[16], Debabrate Dutta: *History of Assam* (1989)[17] and other specialized works such as Lakshmi Devi: *Ahom-Tribal Relations* (1968)[18], H. K. Barpujari: *Assam in the Days of the Company, 1826-1858* (1980)[19], and Ramesh Chandra Kalita: *Assam in the Eighteenth Century* (1992)[20].

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[12] S. K. Bhuyan. Indian History Congress. in: S. K. Bhuyan. *Studies in the Literature of Assam.*: S. K. Bhuyan. Assam Through the Ages. in: S. K. Bhuyan. *Studies in the History of Assam.*

[13] H. K. Barpujari (ed.). *The Comprehensive History of Assam.* Vols. I-V, Guwahati: Publication Board Assam 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994.

[14] N. N. Acharyya. *The History of Medieval Assam.* Gauhati: Omsons Publications, reprint, 1984.

[15] N. K. Basu. *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826.* Calcutta, Pustak Bhandar 1970.

[16] Sarbeswar Rajguru. *Medieval Assamese Society, 1228-1826.* Nagaon, Assam: Asami 1988.

[17] Debabrate Dutta. *History of Assam.* revised 4th edition, Calcutta: Sribhumi Publishing Company 1989.

[18] Lakshmi Devi. *Ahom-Tribal Relations.* 2nd edition, Guwahati: Lawyer's Book Stall 1992.

[19] H. K. Barpujari. *Assam in the Days of the Company, 1826-1858.* 2nd edition, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications 1980.

[20] Ramesh Chandra Kalita. *Assam in the Eighteenth Century.* New Delhi: Omsons Publications 1992.

Most of the existing Ahom history relies for its source materials on the Buranji (chronicles) written in the Assamese language. The tradition of recording historical events is a special characteristic of the Tai people. They differ in this respect from the other peoples of India, most of whom have never recorded their histories.[21] The chronicles of Assam were originally all written in the Tai language.

But from the 16th century onwards, they were written in Assamese. (Some were still written in the Ahom language until the end of the Ahom kingdom in Upper Assam in 1838.) Assamese was originally the local language of the Brahmins who taught Hinduism in Assam. The language was rooted in Sanskrit, and developed in the process of the spread of Vaisnavism to be an indigenous language of Assam. Forty-four manuscripts of the Assamese Buranjis have been kept at the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of the state of Assam. They were written by officials and scrutinized by the state. Most of them were short notes on political events of each reign, especially on successions and wars. Very little space was given to economy and culture.[22] The Assamese Buranjis do not reflect Tai thinking because they were written in Assamese, the language of the Hindu religion of Assam.

Another major source for these histories are Persian documents on Assam dealing with the wars between the Ahom Kingdom and the Mogul empire in the 16th-17th centuries. The wars lasted for 150 years, and yet the Moguls were not able to overrun Assam. The most imnportant Persian document was Fathiya-I-Ibiriyah written by Shibabuddin Talish, a historian who accompanied the Mogul army. He recorded the lives of the Ahom in 1660 AD in detail: "...The Ahom cultivated rice. Their country was not open. There were no markets. The kings adhered to

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[21] S. K. Bhuyan. Assamese Historical Literature. in S. K. Bhuyan. *Studies in the Literature of Assam.* Bhuyan referred to Sir George Abraham Grierson in *Linguistic Survey of India.* (Vol. I. Part 1, Introductory, p. 156) who said that the Ahom were proud of their tradition of history writing, which was generally lacking in India. See also Sir George Abraham Grierson. Tai Group. in *Linguistic Survey of India.;* reprinted in *Tai Language and Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary.* Delhi: Ajanta Prakashan, n.d.; p. 4.

Sir George Abraham Griersom said that 'The Ahoms have left at least two important legacies to Assam: the sense of the importance of history, and the system of administration.' See a similar judgement by S. K. Bhuyan in his article already mentioned in this footnote in *Studies in the Literature of Assam.*, p. 33, and the explanation of Maheswar Neog in 'Foreword.' of Lila Gogoi. *The Buranjis. Historical Literature of Assam.* Guwahati: Omsons Publications 1986. Praphulladatta Goswami. Assam's Cultural Role in the Context of India. in: B. Datta Ray (ed.). *Social and Economic Profile of North-East India.* Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation 1978.

[22] S. L. Baruah. A Comprehensive History of Assam. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers 1985, p. 44; B. B. Hazarika. The D. H. A. S.: An Appraisal of its Activities. in: B. B. Hazarika (ed.), *Souvenir. Golden Jubilee Celebration (1928-1978),* Gauhati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies 1978-1979.

Hinduism, but the people were not strong believers in any particular religion. They were competent warriors. They were good wood carvers."[23]

These histories also rely on English documents. The East India Company records, dealing with the relations between Assam and Bengal in the latter period of the Ahom kingdom, are kept at the India Office Library, London. The Government of India documents for the period up to 1873 are held at the National Archives in Calcutta, while those for later periods are deposited at the Indian National Archives in New Delhi.[24] John Peter Wade, a medical doctor who accompanied an English expeditionary force, wrote *An Account of Assam (1784-1800)*[25] giving a picture of Ahom rule from direct experiences. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton wrote *An Account of Assam*[26] recording the socio-economic picture of Assam in the beginning of the 19th century. Buchanan-Hamilton had no direct experience of Assam but based his work on the accounts of Assamese people who fled to Bengal.

The place for research into the history of Assam is the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of the state of Assam (DHAS). The Department is located at the Panbazar market in the centre of Guwahati. It was established in 1928. The atmosphere of the Department is not Tai. In the past all the directors of the Department with the exception of Dr Lila Gogoi, were Assamese. The best books for guiding research into the primary sources of a history of Assam are Lila Gogoi: *The Buranjis, Historical Literature of Assam* (1986)[27] and *Souvenir: Golden Jubilee Celebration (1928-1978)*[28] which commemorates the 50th anniversary of the DHAS.

The current state of knowledge of the Ahom, as it emerges from these major historical works, may be summarized as follows. The Ahom society and culture were Asiatic. Its economy was self-subsistence, based on rice production. The state was already in existence, claiming to be the sole owner of the land. The people called *paik* had to contribute corvée labour to the state for three months in a year. The state did not manage affairs inside the village. The state allotted land to officials, but the land reverted back to the state when the officials retired. Each *paik* received approximately three acres of land to cultivate without having to pay taxes. The corvée labour was already considered as a tax. There were also

[23] Jadunath Sarkar. Assam and the Ahom in 1660 A.D.; in *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. Vol. 1, 1915, pp. 179-195.
[24] S. L. Baruah. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. p. 52.
[25] J. P. Wade. *An Account of Assam*. ed. Benudhar Sarma, Sibsagar 1927.
[26] Francis Hamilton. *An Account of Assam*. (ed. S. K. Bhuyan). Gauhati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies 1963.
[27] Lila Gogoi, The *Buranjis, Historical Literature of Assam*.
[28] B. B. Hazarika (ed.), *Souvenir. Golden Jubilee Celebration*.

slaves, who were mainly prisoners of war or captured hill tribesmen. The Ahom worshipped the spirits of the ancestors and the spirits of nature such as the sky, the mountain, the river, the wind and the rain. They believed that the spirits of people who had just died stayed on in their houses to protect their offspring. The spirits of those who had died a long time ago returned to the sky.

These findings suggest that the ancient Tai society was an Asiatic type and that the ancient Tai culture revolved around worship of nature and ancestors. However, the general histories of Assam point out that in Assam before the entrance of the Tai Ahom at the beginning of the 13th century, Aryan culture was already established, especially the Sakta doctrine which taught that power in this universe came from women particularly the goddess Kali (or Parvati). The followers of this doctrine performed their rituals by killing animals and human beings as offerings to the goddess Kali at the Kamakhya temple on Nilachala mountain near Guwahati. The Kamakhya temple had been a sacred place for a very long time. Five hundred years before the in-migration of the Ahom, there was a kingdom named Kamarupa in the land which later became Assam. When the Ahom extended their power from Upper Assam to Lower Assam, the Ahom accepted this Sakta doctrine and later the Neo-Vaisnavite doctrine of Hinduism. The Ahom began to lose their religion and their former language in the 15th century. They turned to worship the gods of the Hindu religion instead of their ancestral spirits. They used the Assamese language instead of the Tai language. The Asiatic system of the econorny and society continued until the period of British rule. Then taxes replaced corvée labour, the economy was opened to trade, and tea was planted in Assam for export.

In sum, mainstream Assam history argues that the Tai Ahom culture became 'Assamese' through the processes of Sanskritization and Hinduization. The process was peaceful and progressed with the consent of the Ahom who were being absorbed. Professor Maheswar Neog, a past president of the Assam Literary Association (Asam Sahitya Sabha), made a speech at the annual meeting of the association in 1974 saying that:

> 1) Assam was not an original settlement of any particular tribe. Assamese culture was a blend of the cultures of many tribes, including the Ahom. Any attempt to separate the Ahom from the Assamese was a fantasy. Assamese culture had already absorbed Ahom culture.
>
> 2) The Ahom were able to rule their kingdom for 600 years precisely because they had given up their language and their way of life. They freely and voluntarily adopted the language and religion which all the other tribes in the area could accept. Therefore, the process of losing their former religion and language was a natural process, which took place especially in Lower Assam

where the Ahom extended their rule over a society in which Hindu culture was already established.[29]

The line of thinking underlying Maheswar Neog's interpretation has become the dominant view of Assam history. Therefore the Tai people, the Tai culture and the Tai language are not considered central to the history of Assam. The central pole of the history of Assam is the Aryan, Hindu culture and the Sanskrit language. The history of Assam tells of the emergence of a distinct centre of this culture in the northeast region of India. Even the period of the British rule is a short period, brought to an end by the triumph of Indian nationalism.

Works on cultural and religious history conspicuously emphasize the influence of the Hindu religion in Assam. The readers are made to believe that the Ahom, the Tai culture, language and religion have all been totally absorbed. There is no Tai consciousness left. There are no other beliefs or rituals except Hinduism.

We can cite, for example, the works of Prof. Satyendranath Sarma: *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 AD)* (1989)[30] and Prof. Maheswar Neog: *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Assam* (1965)[31]. These two works describe the revival of Hindu Vaisnavism by Sankaradeva in Assam in the 15th century. Sankaradeva (1449-1569) taught the people to worship only Visnu (incarnated as Krishna) by chanting, singing and calling the name of Visnu with loyalty. There was no need to sacrifice animals. Neo-Vaisnavism was a religion of the masses. All believers had the opportunity to reach salvation, irrespective of tribe or caste. Ordinary people had the opportunity to read religious texts in Assamese, not in Sanskrit. Sankaradeva and his disciples wrote songs, plays and prayers. They established temples (Sattra) with large prayer halls (Namaghar) in various villages. This school of Hinduism was able to reach the villagers through literature, dances, drama, music, and painting, which were used as media of propagating this doctrine. Neo-Vaisnavism was the means for the Assamese culture and religion to spread to everyone and to every corner of the Ahom kingdom, especially the plain areas of Assam. Those as the Ahom, who had not previously been Hindu, now turned to Hinduism. The many Hindu-Assamese architectural structures and literary works which survive until today are the evidence for this process.

One Dutch Historian, Professor Barend J. Terwiel of Hamburg University, is deeply interested in Ahom culture. He wrote a two-volume work on *The Tai of*

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[29] Chatthip Nartsupha, Ranoo Wichasin, Renoo Arthames, Norignutch Chandrabhai. *Mung-nun-sun-kham* [in Thai]. Bangkok: Sangsan 1991.

[30] Satyendranath Sarma. *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 A.D.)*. Guwahati: Pratima Devi 1989.

[31] Maheswar Neog. *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Assam. Delhi:* Motilal Banarsidass, reprint, 1985.

Assam (1972, 1981)[32]; an article 'Ahom and the Study of Early Tai Society', submitted to the second Thai-European seminar at Saarbrücken on June 14-18, 1982; an article 'The Origin of Mankind in Ahom Literature', submitted to a research seminar on the culture of the Tai-speaking people held at Chiangmai University on December 7-8, 1991; an article 'Reading a Dead Language: Tai-Ahom And the Dictionaries', published in the journal *Souvenir* (1990)[33] of the Ban Ok Pub Lik Muang Tai; and a book with Ranoo Wichasin: *Tai Ahoms and the Stars* (1992)[34].

Professor Terwiel can read the Ahom language and hence his works go deep into the belief and magic of the Ahom. The other important difference between the works of Professor Terwiel and those of other scholars of Assamese history is that Assamese scholars study Tai Ahom separate from other Tai groups, while Professor Terwiel clearly gives attention to the link among the various Tai groups. But Professor Terwiel agrees with the Assamese scholars that the language, culture, and religion of the Ahom are dead. He comments that recent academic works which attempt to show the common root between Ahom culture and Thailand culture are rather superficial.[35]

Professor Terwiel studies Ahom culture and language rather as a remnant from the past of an extinct nation, not as the historical momentum of a nation from the past to the present and on to the future. In this regard we can classify him in the same group as the Assamese historians who study Ahom history only as a period of a history of Assam.

III. The state of knowledge of Ahom history at present: the Tai school.

A group of Tai Ahom historians have studied Ahom history with an approach opposite to the English and the Assamese school. They study Ahom history separate from the history of Assam and the history of India. They see the Tai culture and language as distinct from the Hindu culture and Assamese language. These Tai Ahom historians are few in number. Their viewpoint is in the minority. A small number of Thailand's historians and linguists support the work of independent Tai Allom historians. They would like to link Ahom study to other Tai studies.

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[32] Barend J. Terwiel. The Tai of Assam and their Lifecycle Ceremonies. Part I. *Southeast Asian Review*. Vol. IV, No. 1, August 1972; B. J. Terwiel. The Tai of Assam: Sacrifices and Time Reckoning. *Southeast Asian Review*. Vol. VI, No. 1-2, January/December, 1981.

[33] B. J. Terwiel. Reading a Dead Language: Tai-Ahom and the Dictionaries. *Souvenir* (Guwahati: Ban Ok Pub Lik Mioung Tai 1990).

[34] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin (translated and edited). *Tai Ahoms and the Stars. (New* York: Southeast Asia Program, 1992).

[35] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahoms and the Stars., p.* 5.

This group of Tai Ahom historians have interests in the fields of religion, ritual, language, culture and politics. Dr Padmeswar Gogoi (1907-1979), a reader at Guwahati University, wrote *Tai-Ahom Religion and Customs* (1976)[36], showing that the Ahom had their own religion and their own rituals. Their objects of worship included: *chum-fa-rung-sang-muang,* a sacred idol of the Ahom nation; *om fa* meaning the sky; and many other spirits including *lengdon.* The forms of worship performed by the Ahom priests included animal sacrifice, and the calling of life essence. The Ahom had their own special ceremonies such as the *cak-lang* marriage ritual. In the *cak-lang* ceremony Ahom history from the Buranji was recited in the Ahom language, along with the family histories of the marrying couple. After the recital of the histories, the bride placed the *hangdang* sword of the Ahom in the two hands of the bridegroom. The bridegroom declared that he would follow the ideal of the ancestors and would protect the land with all his strength.[37] In addition, Padmeswar Gogoi mentioned that the burial custom and the offering ceremony to the ancestral spirits are still observed until today by the priest class and the Cao-dang family of executioners and guardians of the capital Garhgaon.[38] Padmeswar Gogoi wrote another book *The Tai and Tai Kingdoms: With a Fuller Treatment of the Tai-Ahom Kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley* (1968)[39] which was the first book to examine Ahom history as a part of the history of the Tai nation and its various kingdoms. Padmeswar Gogoi was courageous as the academic circle of Assam had been dominated by the Hindu Brahmins. Also in the field of ritual study, another Ahom scholar, Prof. Jogendra Nath Phukan, of the Department of History, Guwahati University, wrote articles on 'The Meaning and Significance of the Title Chao-pha (Svargadeva)' (1978)[40] and 'Francis Buchanan's Description of the Ahom Coronation: Reconsidered' (1983)[41]. This coronation ceremony was an old ceremony. The king was dressed in full attire, with the *chum* divine image hung from his neck. He was seated on the upper story of a raised wooden house. He took a bath *(ab-nam)*[42] An Ahom

[36] Padmeswar Gogoi. *Tai-Ahom Religion and Customs.* (Gauhati: Publication Board, Assam 1976).

[37] Lila Gogoi. Bu-Ran-Ji. in Romesh Buragohain (ed.). *The Lost Trails. A Study on the Tai Peoples* of Northeast *India.* Vol. I (Dhemaji, Assam: Ban Ok Pub Lik Mioung Tai 1994), p. 5; Padmeswar Gogoi. *Tai-Ahom Religion and Customs.* pp. 63-87.

[38] Padmeswar Gogoi. *Tai-Ahom Religion and Customs.* p. 88.

[39] Padmeswar Gogoi. *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms. With a Fuller Treatment of the Tai-Ahom Kingdom in Brahmaputra Valley.* (Gauhati: Gauhati University, Department of Publication 1968).

[40] Jogendra Nath Phukan. The Meaning and Significance of the Title Chao-Pha (Svagadeva). *Bulletin of the Assam State Museum,* No. III, 1978.

[41] J. N. Phukan. Francis Buchanan's Description of the Ahom Coronation: Reconsidered. in *Krishna Kanta Hangui Felicitation Volume.* August, 1983.

[42] An Ahom Buranji manuscript kept at the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati (hereinafter DHAS).

priest cited a sacred prayer and gave a name to the new king. The king made sacrifices to the spirits. This ceremony was recorded in the Ahom Buranji.[43]

In addition, Prof. Phukan wrote his Ph.D. thesis submitted to Guwahati University titled 'The Economic History of Assam Under the Ahoms' (1973).[44] He mentioned that the settlement of the Ahom transformed the river valley of the Brahmaputra from swamps into rice fields with irrigation. This was a great economic transformation, a significant contribution of the Ahom to the entire population of Assam.[45] In the past, Prof. Phukan was a prominent leader of the Ahom cultural revival movement. He was the secretary of the Tai Historical and Cultural Society of Assam.

In this realm of religion and ritual the most important intellectual of the revival movement of the Ahom at present is Chao Nagen Hazarika. He wrote a short article 'The Ahom Philosophy of God' (not dated)[46] arguing that the Ahom have their own god, and their own religious text called *lit-lai-peyn-ka-ka* which is the very beginning of the Ahom Buranji. In addition he wrote a book in Assamese, *Chakari Pheti Buranji* (Cobra History) (1990)[47], which sold more than 5,000 copies. In this book Hazarika narrated the history of the downfall of the Ahom and attributed the downfall to the Ahoms' acceptance of the Hindu religion. He claimed that Assamese culture was Ahom culture. He asked all the Ahom to give up Hinduism and to return to the former Ahom religion which was the worship of the sky. He called this Ahom religion *Phuralung*.

Hazarika not only wrote books, but also performed old Ahom rituals himself, including cow sacrifice which was strongly prohibited by Vaisnavite Hinduism. Because of his prominent role in religious revival and because of his daring writings, Hazarika has been threatened with assassination many times.

In the field of language and culture the work of Chao Amyakhen Gohain, head of the Tai diploma program at Dibrugarh University, is very interesting. He wrote 'Issues in Tai Language', printed in *The Lost Trails, A Study on the Tai Peoples of Northeast India* (1994)[48]. He argued that the Ahom had maintained relations with the Tai in Burma through the first 300 years of their settlement, and hence the Tai

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[43] The manuscript mentioned in footnote 42.

[44] J. N. Phukan. The Economic History of Assam Under the Ahoms. Ph.D. thesis, Gauhati University 1973.

[45] J. N. Phukan. The Economic History of Assam Under the Ahoms. pp. 198-200.

[46] Nagen Hazarika. The Ahom Philosophy of God.. n.d.

[47] Nagen Hazarika. *Chakari Pheti Buranji* (Cobra History), 3rd edition (Guwahati: Chukafa Research Centre, 1993). Chao Nagen Hazarika (*1943) is an important member of the Board of Executives of the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai Association. He is an ideologist of the movement for Tai cultural revival. He proposed the motto of the Ahom: 'We revive, we survive'. At present he is a civil servant of the state of Assam, responsible for district administration. His life history can be read in Chow Bharat Konwar (ed.). *The Golden Moment, a Souvenir Published on the Occasion of Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Chow Nagen Hazarika's Birth.* (Sibsagar, Assam: Nang Usha Buragohain 1993).

[48] Chao Amyakhen Gohain. Issues in Tai Language. in Romesh Buragohain (ed.). *The Lost Trails.* Vol. I, pp. 14-23.

language had flourished in the Ahom kingdom during that period. When Sukapha (reigned 1228-1268) took his army into Assam, he found Tai who had been living there already. The Ahom Buranji called them 'those who were already there' *(phu-kow-an-kao)*. In the reign of Sukapha there was an exchange of envoys between Muang-nun-sun-kham (Assam) and Muang Mao. In 1382 Sudangpha (reigned 1397-1407) recorded that it had been already eight years since his kingdom exchanged envoys with Muang Mao. The implication was that during the 140 years between these two reigns there was continuing contact between these two Tai kingdoms. Suhungmung (reigned 1497-1539) and Sukhampha (reigned 1552-1603) both married Tai wives from Muang Mogaung. As a result, more Tai from Mogaung migrated to live in Muang-nun-sun-kham. But after 1638 Muang Mogaung came under the rule of Burma and there was a civil war in the Ahom kingdom. The Ahom priests lost their power in the court. The Tai language started to be neglected. During the latter part of the 18th century the Tai Khamti, Phake, Khamyang, Aiton and Turung migrated from Burma to settle in Assam. They brought both the Tai language and the Buddhist religion into Assam. These latter groups of people have preserved the Tai language until today. Moreover, they are still in contact with the Tai in Burma. For example a Tai priest from Burma, U Kandama Mahasthavir, came to teach the Tai language and Buddhism in Assam from 1883 to 1934. His remains are still kept at Nam Phake village in Dibrugarh district until today. It was unfortunate that in the eightteenth century the Ahom were not very eager to contact these late migrant groups of Tai people to revive their language and culture. Before the Second World War these groups probably totalled several hundred thousand people.

Among the Ahom the priest class *moo* has made the greatest effort and has played the most important role in the preservation of the Tai language, culture, and historical consciousness. Until the kingdom was lost to Britain completely in 1838, they wrote the Ahom Buranji in the Tai language. They tried to preserve Tai customs like the coronation *het-chao-nang-muang*[49], the calling of life essence *rikkawan*, examination of the legs of the fowl *tang-kai-do, do-duk-kai, tang-ta-kai-do*[50], the marriage ceremony *plong-chu-plong-sao*[51] and spirit sacrifice *khaek-phi, me-dum-me-phi, me-phi-me-sang*[52]. Once during the reign of Suyeopha or Lakshmi Singh (reigned 1769-1780) there was a quarrel between the Ahom priests and the Hindu Brahmins on the question of whether one should

[49] *Ahom Buranji,* a manuscript photographed from Ban Khao Tack village, Sibsagar district, Assam. p. 27 g, no. 9 (27g/9) (hereinafter referenced as *Ahom Buranji (KT)).*

[50] *Ahom Buranji (KT)* 18 g/1; Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua, translated and edited, *Ahom Buranji From the Earliest Time to the End of Ahom Rule.* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1930), (hereinafter referenced as *Ahom Buranji),* p. 370; *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 40 g/8.

[51] *Ahom Buranji,* pp. 290, 387.

[52] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 56k/4 25k/4 13k/9.

bury or cremate the former king. The Ahom priests insisted on burial as practised in the past. Suyeopha had to yield to the advice of the Ahom priests. An effigy of the former king was made to be buried.

Even though the spoken and written language of the Ahom became Assamese, the priests and the common Ahom people continued to use the Tai language in the prayers of various rituals until today.[53] Professor Normal Chandra Gogoi of Tinsukia College has collected these Ahom mantra along with English translations in *Tai Ahom Mantra* (1994, not yet distributed).[54] These prayers are recited during the offerings to the spirits of the fire, earth, wind, sky, ruling princes in the past, deceased kings, and so on. The prayers invite the spirits, which may have wandered elsewhere, to come to the place of worship. They give details of the offerings including sacrificial animals, raw or cooked meat, rice, vegetables, fruit, milk, honey, ginger and salt. In addition, the priests also prepare clothing for the spirits. They tell the spirits to take a bath and rub themselves clean. The spirits are then dressed in beautiful clothing. After that the priests will ask the spirits to protect their descendants who comne to rule in this part of the world. The priests will ask for longevity, lives free of disease, security and prosperity for the kingdom. All these requests are made in the Tai language.

It is this priestly class which has consciously preserved and handed down over generations the Ahom language and customs. Though they became poor after the kingdom was lost to the British, they continued to fulfil their responsibility as the intellectuals of a nation. They were the initiators and supporters of the Ahom cultural revival movement. They established the Tai language school at the Patsako village, Sibsagar district. In 1955 when Dr Banchob Pantumetha visited this village, the school had been abandoned.[55] Subsequently the priestly class led by the high priest, Dambarudhar Deodhai Phukan (1912-1993) of Patsako, proposed the establishment of an Ahom cultural revival society. The Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai (the Eastern Tai Literary Association) was founded at Dhemaji on

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[53] *Ahom Buranji*. p. 325. Sir George Abraham Grierson stated that the Assamese language replaced the Ahom language at the beginning of the 18th century. About 1720 it was no longer necessary for Hindu office-seekers to learn the Ahom language. Sir George Abraham Grierson said: 'It probably remained the spoken language of the Ahoms themselves until towards the end of the eighteenth century, and of the Deodhais for about fifty years longer.' S. K. Bhuyan wrote in 1930 that Rai Sahib Golapchandra Barua was the only man then living who had a scientific knowledge of the language, and there was no immediate likelihood of a successor stepping into his place. S. K. Bhuyan predicted that within another 20 years (that is by 1950) at the latest no man would be found who knew the Ahom language, and the manuscripts written in the language of the old rulers of Assam would become like hieroglyphics beyond decipherment by any future antiquarian and linguist. Sir George Abraham Grierson. Tai Group. in *Linguistic Survey of India*, reprinted in *Tai Language and Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary*. p. 5; S. K. Bhuyan. Assamese Manuscripts. in S. K. Bhuyan. *Studies in the Literature of Assam*. p. 58.

[54] Nomal Chandra Gogoi. Tai Ahom Mantra. Mimeograph, 1994.

[55] Banchob Pantumetha. *Kale mantai*. Bangkok: The Pen Association 2504, p. 31.

April 8, 1981.[96] The Association revived the activities of the Tai language schools at Patsako and 350 other villages in all areas of Upper Assam. The Association pressured the government of Assam to teach the Tai language at primary school level. In 1993, the government hired 200 Tai language teachers. At Dhemaji there is an Ahom intellectual Sudoifa Thaomnuang (Nagen Bargohain) who has written a very good textbook of the Ahom language, which has been officially adopted for use in schools.

The Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai holds a cultural gathering almost every year. About 100,000 Tai from all groups in Assam participate. The 11th gathering was held at the village of Namrup in February 1994. The Association regularly issues books and pamphlets on culture and academic matters. An important work in English issued by the Association is *The Lost Trails. A Study on the Tai Peoples of Northeast India* (1994), edited by Dr Romesh Buragohain. This book is the first collection of articles which view Ahom history from the Ahom standpoint. The Association organized an academic seminar on 'The Tai of Northeast India' at Sibsagar on February 6-9, 1995. The long-term objective of the Association is to re-create the state of Tai Ahom or Muang-nun-sun-kham within the federation of India. The Ahom state will have a close cultural relationship with the Kingdom of Thailand and other Tai states, especially the Shan states and the Dehong province of Yunnan. The Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai has its headquarters at Dhemaji. Its secretary-general and one of the founders, Professor Chao Puspa Gogoi, is most able.

Two particular historians deserve mention for their independent writings and distinctly Ahom standpoint. Mrs Swarna Lata Baruah of the Department of History, Dibrugarh University, Upper Assam, wrote *A Comprehensive History of Assam* (1985)[97], showing that the Ahom have their own cultural identity. She wrote clearly and comprehensively using a Marxist approach. Dr Romesh Buragohain, professor of history at Lunglei College, Mizoram, edited the book *The Lost Trails* (1994) already mentioned. He also proposed a theory of Ahom state formation in the article titled 'Tai-Ahom State Formation: Role of Conquest and Irrigation in the Origin of the Tai-Ahom State' (not dated)[98]. In the opinion of Buragohain, the Ahom kingdom was born out of conquest and the mobilization of manpower to construct dikes on the Brahmaputra to irrigate the surrounding valley. The Ahom state was an Asiatic state in line with the theory of Karl Wittfogel.

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[96] Chow Nagen Hazarika. Ban Ok Pub Lik Mioung Tai. in *The Tai*. Vol. 1, pp. 1-7; *The Tai*. Vol. 1, p. 68.
[97] S. L. Baruah. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*.
[98] Romesh Buragohain. Tai-Ahom State Formation: Role of Conquest and Irrigation in the Origin of the Tai-Ahom State. n.d.

Other Ahom scholars lean toward Ahom nationalism. Several have written in the Assamese language. Around 1930, Hiteswar Barbaruah published *Ahamor Din* (The Days of the Ahom) on the subject of the Ahom administrative system. Around 1950, Chao Sarbananda Rajkumar published *Itihashe Soaura Chahata Bachar* (Six Hundred Years of Historical Days) on Ahom history. Dr Lila Gogoi wrote *Tai-Samskriti* (Tai Culture) on the culture of the Ahom, Khamti, Aiton, Turung and Kamyang; and *Beli Mar Gal* (The Sun is Set) on the struggle of the Ahom against the occupation of the Aryan during the last period of the kingdom. Dr Aran Baruah wrote *Ahomar Sachan Pranali* (The Administrative Systems of the Ahom), and Professor Jatin Bargohain wrote *Asoma Artha-Samajik Abostha* (Socio-Economic Conditions of Assam). The latter is a Marxist interpretation of the social history of the Ahom kingdom.[xi]

Dr Girin Phukan (*1944), a professor of political science at Dibrugarh University, is an Ahom scholar who can most clearly explain the problems of the Ahom nation. In the article 'Identifying the Nemesis' printed in the book *The Lost Trials* (1994), Dr Girin Phuikan argued that Britain not only destroyed the administration of the Ahom, but also intended to demolish the Ahom society, polity and economy. Most importantly, Britain wanted to break the spirit of the Ahom. The British were afraid that the Ahom who had ruled Assam continuously for 600 years would revolt against their rule. As a result, the former ruling class in Assam was wiped out more completely than in other parts of India. The high-caste Assamese Hindus, who had gradually assumed powerful roles in the Ahom kingdom over the previous three centuries, dealt another blow to the Ahom. They warmly welcomed the arrival of the British, and cooperated with them to suppress the Ahom. The British looked on the Ahom as antagonists, and never appointed them to important positions. The British revoked the corvée system *(paik)*, thus immediately making the official Ahom class poor. The high-caste Assamese seized the opportunity to assume power and status under British rule. They derided the Ahom who fell from power. The Ahom were reduced from a ruling to a backward class. Their contribution to the birth and development of Assamese society was forgotten.

According to Girin Phukan, the majority of the Ahom came to realize that their adherence to Hinduism was a fundamental cause of their downfall. The Ahom increasingly felt conscious of their identity, distinct from the high-caste Assamese Hindus. The Ahom leaders knew that the problem of Ahom identity

[xi] Hiteswar Barbarua. *Ahamar Din*. (Gauhati, 1981); Sarbananda Rajkumar. *Itihashe Soaura Chahata Bachar*. (Jorhat, 1980); Lila Gogoi. *Tai-Samskriti*. (Gauhati, 1981); Lila Gogoi. *Beli Mar Gal*. 1983; Chao Puspa Gogoi. Tai Ahom Studies in Assamese Language. Paper presented in the seminar on Ahom Studies at Silapakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand on 21st August, 1994; Chao Puspa Gogoi. Tai Studies in Assam. in *The Tai*. Vol. I, pp. 9-19; Chao Puspa Gogoi. Contribution of Scholars to Tai Studies in Assamese Language in Assam. Mimeograph, n.d.

was connected to the question of the autonomy of Assam. They believed that if Assam had more autonomy, it could stop the influx of the non-Mongolians (i.e. Aryan Hindus) into Assam. If Assam was more autonomous, the Ahom and other Mongolians (e.g. the hill tribes in Assam) would become better in status. Therefore in the 1940's some Ahom leaders cooperated with other Mongolian tribes in Assam to work for a more independent Assam.[60]

Through their acceptance of Hinduism, Girin Phukan concluded, the Ahom common people had allowed themselves to be positioned at the lowest levels of the caste hierarchy - as outcastes, lower even than the Sutra caste. At the time when the Ahom were in power, the Brahmins attributed a high status to the Ahom royal families based on mythical descent from the Hindu gods. Hence the rulers were blinded to the long-term consequences of adopting Hinduism. In addition, the Ahom became divided along the lines of Hindu sectarian rifts. This division was an important cause of a civil war among the Ahom, called the Moamariya revolt, which lasted intermittently from the middle of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th and which made the kingdom weak and vulnerable to Burmese and British inroads.

Since the 1940s, scholars of Thailand have also taken an interest in the history and culture of the Tai Ahom. Their works have supported the idea that Ahom society and culture have their own identity. Thai scholars have argued that Ahom culture was similar in parts to Thai culture in Thailand.

We can divide Thai scholarly works on Ahom into two groups. The first focuses on the Ahom language. The second deals with Ahom society and culture. But the two groups have the same objective. They have studied Ahom in order to understand ancient Tai society and culture. They want to understand 'the roots of the language, culture and society of Thailand.

In the field of language, Professor Banchob Pantumetha (1920-1992) was a pioneer. She wrote *Kale mantai* (1961)[61] which is a travel-cum-linguistics book about her experiences in Assam in 1955. Professor Banchob saw the value of Ahom historical documents, but believed "the Ahom language had been completely dead for a century... No one can understand the Ahom scripts to the degree that they will become useful for research on language and history... The documents have value as old materials only... Anyone who wanted to be a professional in this area, would have to devote at least half of their life to it in order to be successful..."[62]

[60] Girin Phukan. Identifying the Nemesis. in Romesh Buragohain (ed.). *The Lost Trails*. pp. 173-7.
[61] Banchob Panthumetha. *Kale mantai*.
[62] Banchob Panthumetha. *Kale mantai*. pp. 10-11; 226-31.

Professor Dr Prasert Na Nagara (*1919) fulfilled the wish of Professor Banchob. He patiently studied the Ahom language by himself until he was able to read Ahom texts. He compiled the *Tai Ahom-Thai dictionary* (1991).[63] One of his students, Acarn Ranoo Wichasin, wrote her dissertation on *Tai Ahom Palaeography* (1982)[64] and has been reading the Ahom Buranji in the original Tai. A graduate student in the field of Thai inscription at Silpakorn University, Ranee Lertleumsai, wrote a lengthy article on the 'Myths of the Ahom' (1994).[65] She has proposed new readings and interpretations of some Ahom texts. At the moment she is writing her M.A. dissertation on Ahom myths under the supervision of Professor Prasert and Acarn Ranoo.

From the time of Professor Banchob until today, the study of Ahom language has made progress in Thailand. This progress has begun to help the Thai in Thailand to understand better the meanings of ancient Thai words and concepts. The advancement of Ahom learning in Thailand may also play a part in reading and understanding Ahom historical documents, and in reconstructing the pronunciation of spoken Tai Ahom.

Works in Thailand on Ahom culture and society tend to have a nationalist flavour and purpose, namely the definition of a greater Tai culture spread over a broad geographical area. Phraya Anumanrajthon (1888-1969) wrote in Thai *The Story of the Tai Nation* (1940).[66] In this book he described the origin of the Tai people based on the opening passages of the Ahom Buranji. Luang Wichit Wathakarn (1901-1962) published *A Research on Tai Nation* (1961)[67] in Thai, which was in fact a partial translation of the book by Sir Edward Gait. The best of the early Thai works on the Ahom was *Visiting Tai Ahom, Our Blood Relatives* (1954)[68] by Sarnath, the pen-name of Sang Pattanothal (1915-86). Sarnath explained Ahom history in detail including the administration and culture of the Ahom. Sarnath made the readers of his book feel that the Ahom were the relatives of the Thai in Thailand. The Ahom had set up a separate kingdom, and after the kingdom was lost, had been persecuted by the Hindus and by the British. The Thai in Thailand should try to help their relatives in Assam, by establishing close relations. Sarnath said that our people over there 'volunteer to receive the Thai culture of Bangkok... Blood is thicker than water.'[69]

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[63] Prasert Na Nagara (trans.). *Tai Ahom-Thai Dictionary*. (Bangkok: Silapakorn University, 2534).

[64] Ranoo Wichasin. Tai Ahom Palaeography. M.A. thesis, Department of Oriental Languages, Graduate School, Silapakorn University 2529.

[65] Ranee Lertleumsai. Myths of the Ahom. A report for the course on Tai scripts outside Thailand. Tai inscription section, Department of Oriental Languages, Graduate School, Silpakorn University 2537.

[66] Phraya Anuman Rajthon. *Story of the Tai Nation* [in Thai]. (Bangkok: Nonthaburi, 2511).

[67] Luang Wichit Wathakarn. *Research on the Tai Nation* [in Thai]. (Bangkok: the Thai Army, 2513).

[68] Sarnath. *Visiting Tai Ahom our blood relatives* [in Thai]. (Bangkok: Sathirpab, 2497).

[69] Sarnath. *Visiting Tai Ahom our blood relatives*, p.6.

Chit Phumisak (1930-1966) made an important academic proposal: we should study the archaic characteristics of the Thai by the method of comparative history of the culture of various groups of Tai people, including the Ahom.[70] Chit's view was different from Dr Banchob's. Although he had not seen the Ahom documents inscribed on bark, which Dr Banjob had, he believed that it should be possible to study and understand Ahom written documents. He suggested: 'At some time in the future, we may be able to obtain Tai Ahom texts... for our study... We will then find clues... to understand many things that are still unexplainable in Thailand today![71]

Professor Wilaiwan Kanittanan has utilized this approach of comparative cultural history to study the concept of *khwan* (life essence) in the Ahom Buranji. She wrote an article 'A Linguistic Approach to Kwan: an Ancient Tai Belief' (1981)[72] with a very important conclusion: the calling of life essence was a genuinely ancient Tai ritual. Chatthip Nartsupha, Ranoo Wichasin, Renoo Arthames, and Nongnutch Chandrabhai also try to study along this line of comparative cultural history in the articles 'The Beliefs and Rituals of the Tai Ahom: From the Reading of the Ahom-Buranji in Tai' (1985)[73] as well as 'Tai Cultural Revival in Assam' (1991)[74] and in the book *Muang-nun-sun-kham* (1991)[75].

The entry of scholars from Thailand into Ahom studies has helped the Tai school of Ahom history in at least two ways. In the first place it has given moral support for cultural struggle. The attempt to connect Tai Ahom culture to the Thai culture of Thailand is very important for the Ahom people. The culture of Thailand is living proof of the strength, endurance, modernity and force of Tai culture. The example of Thailand makes the Ahom people confident that Tai culture can be as prosperous as Hindu culture. At the same time the Ahom people may be able to borrow some vital and thriving elements of Thailand's culture to help the Ahom revival movement and to complement Ahom culture in the realms of knowledge, language, and custom. The Ahom can study their own history with greater awareness of Ahom identity, with greater confidence, and with greater forcefulness. The Ahom will understand that their nation and culture have the potential to

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[70] Chit Phumisak. The Characteristics of Archaic Tai. in Chit Phumisak. *Oath-Taking Ceremony and New Thoughts on Thai History of the Chao Phraya River Valley* [in Thai]. (Bangkok: Duangkamon, 2524).

[71] Chit Phumisak. Oath-Taking Ceremony. in Chit Phurnisak. *Oath-Taking Ceremony and New Thoughts.*

[72] Wilaiwan Kanittanan. A Linguistic Approach to Kwan, an Ancient Tai Belief. Paper presented to the Conference on Thai Studies, New Delhi, 24-7 February, 1981.

[73] Chatthip Nartsupha and Ranoo Wichasin. The Beliefs and the Rituals of the Tai Ahom: From the Reading of the Ahom Buranji in Tai. *Thammasat Journal.* Vol. 14, No. 4, December, 2528. This article was revised from a paper submitted to a seminar on 'Lanna Studies: History and Archaeology', 28-30 January, 2528.

[74] Chatthip Nartsupha and Ranoo Wichasin. Tai Cultural Revival in Assam. Paper presented to a research seminar on the study of the societies and cultures of Tai speaking people, 7-8 December, 2534 at Chiangmai University.

[75] Chatthip Nartsupha, Ranoo Wichasin, Renoo Arthames, Nongnut Chandrabhai. *Muang-nun-sun-kham.*

develop and prosper. The study of Ahom history is not a study of something already dead or dying. It is the study of a nation and culture, undertaken with a clear objective. Ahom culture is an independent culture with its own direction.

This approach to Ahom history is radically different to the Assamese school which used to dominate historical study in Assam. The Assamese school made the people believe that Tai culture was already dead or had lost its dynamism. That kind of historical study made the Ahom lose heart. They had no will power to fight back. Hindu culture was thus able to dominate the mind of the Ahom.

The contribution which moral support from Thailand can make to the Ahom struggle was exemplified in the founding of the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai on April 8, 1981. This Association now plays the key role in the Tai cultural revival in Assam. The founders have stated that they conceived the idea to form the Association as a direct result of their meeting with Thai scholars from Thailand at a conference in New Delhi on February 25-27, 1981. By participating in that meeting, Ahom intellectuals became aware of the identity and importance of the history and culture of the Ahom. After they returned to Assam they had their own meeting and resolved to establish the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai.

Besides providing moral support, the participation of Thai scholars has brought a new approach into the Ahom history circle. This approach is the intra-Tai comparative history. This approach gives more opportunity to historians in Assam to explain the traditional characteristics of Ahom society and culture. Knowledge of the history of other Tai groups may help solve problems in Ahom history. We will give two examples, one on social institution and another on language.

Historians of Assam have long debated what was the origin of the agrarian system and the manpower control system of the Ahom. After studying the corresponding systems of other Tai groups, this question can now be answered. Professor Jogendra Nath Phukan utilized the comparative history method in his dissertation 'The Economic History of Assam Under the Ahoms' (1973). He showed that in the Ahom kingdom all land belonged to the king, who distributed it to the people to till. The size of each holding depended on the official rank of the holder. The right to the land lasted as long as the holder retained his official rank. The state levied no land tax but the people had to contribute corvée labour for three months a year through a system of rotation. In Siam the system for distributing land and commanding corvée labour was essentially the same as those found in Upper Assam. Professor Phukan proposed that this system is a distinctively Tai system, which the Ahom had brought with them from Muang Mao. This system was different from that operating in Lower Assam, which had

been influenced by Mogul practices. In Lower Assam there were private property rights on land, land taxation, and a land market.[76]

The origin of the Ahom script is another historical problem which has become much clearer through comparative study. A scholar from Muang Mao has confirmed that the Muang Mao characters and the Ahom characters are almost the same. Eighty per cent of the words are the same in both languages. Someone who can read Tai Mao writing can also read Tai Ahom writing.[77] It can therefore be concluded that the Ahom script originated from the Tai Mao script.

IV. The knowledge of Ahom History from reading the Ahom Buranji and other Ahom documents in the Tai language

Knowledge of Ahom history from Tai documents is only just emerging. It results from new attempts to read such Tai documents as the Ahom Buranji chronicle, the Ahom legends about the origin of the universe *pun-ko-muang* or *lai-ko-muang*, prayers to spirits, prayers in the calling of life essence *khwan* and astrology texts. This knowledge has given us a picture of Ahom society and culture as an early *sakdina* (Tai pre-capitalist) system, different from the system of Mogul India.

Ahom society and culture was founded on an ancient concept of the community. But the Ahom kingdom expanded to encompass several different ethnic communities. In this respect Muang-nun-sun-kham became more complex than the smaller Tai principalities in the Shan states, Sibsongbanna, Muang Thaen, Muang Luang Prabang, Muang Vientiane, and so on. The Ahom kingdom was possibly more developed even than the ancient state of Muang Mao in the sense that the kingdom was more centralized. But the kingdom did not reach the level of Ayutthaya which had a prosperous trading economy and complex differentiation of official functions. The Ahom kingdom is an interesting case. It shows how Tai society and culture was able to develop to the level of a kingdom while still retaining the traditional belief system from the communal period called *phuralung* (the big sky). This development took place without the supervention of Buddhism or Hinduism. The Ahom kingdom can serve as a model of Tai society and culture developed to the stage of early *sakdina*.

The Ahom Buranji and other Tai documents show that Tai society and culture had their own identity, distinct from the Hindu society and culture of India.

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[76] J. N. Phukan. The Economic History of Assam Under the Ahoms. pp. 198-9; J.N. Sarkar. The Land System and Revenue Administration. in H. K. Barpujari (ed.). *The Comprehensive History of Assam*. Vol. III, pp. 87-104; Chatthip Nartsupha. Meeting a Tai Ahom Historian [in Thai]. *Thammasat Journal*. Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2525.

[77] From an interview in August 2537 with Assistant Professor Zhao Hong Yun, a Tai of Chae Fang, Dehong district, Yunnan province. Professer Zliao Hong Yun is attached to Yunnan Institute of the Nationalities, Kun Ming.

Knowledge from the Ahom Buranji and other Ahom documents supports the Tai school of Ahom historical study.

In the realm of the economy the Ahom Buranji give us a picture of Muang-nun-sun-kham as a low land full of river tributaries, such as *nam-yen* (cold water, Sessa)[78], *nam-khun* (muddy water, Gabharu)[79], *sup-nam-ha-khwae* (meeting place of five river tributaries, Panchanadi)[80], *sup-nam-ha* (meeting place of five small rivers, Hamukjam)[81], *khwae-nam-luang* (big river tributaries, Barnadi)[82], *nam-rup/nam huk* (the sixth tributary, Namrup)[83]. The biggest river was the *dao-phi* or *saeng-dao* (the Heavenly Star, Brahmaputra)[84]. The Ahom Buranji mentioned that there were floods, '*nam-thum-chae-thum-chung* (the river flooded the town and countryside)[85], *nam-thum-nam-yeng*[86] (the water flooded, water was everywhere). Travel was principally by boats *rua*[87], though horses and elephants were also used. This description is consistent with the present geography of Assam which is a low land with heavy rainfall and a humid climate unlike the dry Hindustan plateau of India. The Ahom Buranji recorded that the Tai people had a heritage of using water to irrigate rice land. When Prince Luang and Prince Lai descended from heaven to Muang Ree Muang Rum, they rode on elephants to see the settlements. They blade dikes and distributed water to rice land in these settlements.[88] Professor Jogendra Nath Phukan pointed out that the Ahom converted the swamps surrounding the Brahmaputra river into rice farms using ploughs *thai*[89] to prepare the soil for sowing paddy *wan-khao*[90]. At Habung in Upper Assam there were three rounds of rice planting in a year *na-sam-ruang*[91]. The Ahom ate rice as their main food. Ahom documents mention many different forms of rice: baked rice *khao-ping*[92], red rice *khao-daeng*[93], burned rice *khao-tchii*[94], broken rice *khao-taek*[95], sweet rice *khao-mun*[96], rice pieces *khao-bin*[97], food prepared from dry rice *khao ro*[98] and rice sweets *khao-mao*[99]. In addition

[78] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 5g/6.
[79] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 10k/1.
[80] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 91k/4.
[81] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 37g/4.
[82] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 101g/7.
[83] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 10g/4
[84] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 21g/4.
[85] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 10k/6.
[86] *Ahom Buranji (KT)* 10k/1.
[87] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 92g/2.
[88] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 7k/3-4
[89] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 54.
[90] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 64.
[91] *Ahom Buranji* (KT) 10g/9
[92] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 20.
[93] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*. Tai Ahom manuscript kept at DHAS, p. 2.
[94] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 20.
[95] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*.
[96] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 20.
[97] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 20.
[98] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 20.
[99] *Tai Ahom - Thai Dictionary*. p. 20

there were other kinds of food such as ginger *khing*[100], salt *klua*[101], chilli *prik*[102], sesame oil *man-nga*[103], duck *pet*[104], chicken *kai*[105], areca nut *mak*[106], and betel leaves *phlu*[107].

The economy of the Ahom was on the same level as that of the Tai elsewhere. They had progressed beyond swidden agriculture and had settled in the low land to plant wet rice *het-na-muang-lum*. This was different from the various hill tribes of Assam, such as the Nagas *maen*,[108] Dafalas and Miris *kha-kang-lai*, or those who lived in the forests and planted rice on the hills *kha-thuan-na-doi*.[109] These hill tribes practised swidden agriculture and searched for forest products.

The Ahom also made yarn and weaved their own cloth. They planted cotton *kui*[110], spun yarn *kwak dai*[111], raised silk cocoons and weaved. The weaving tools included the loom *kii*[112] and the wheel *kong*.[113] Household weaving made the Ahom self-sufficient. When Mahatrila Gandhi came to Assam in 1921 he made a speech admiring the flourishing home industry in cloth making in Assam. As the Ahom grew rice and also wove cloth, they did not have to depend much on external trade.[114] The markets *kat*[115] in the Ahom kingdom dealt mostly in areca nuts and betel leaves (*kat-mak-mu*).[116]

In the realm of administration, the Ahom system was an early version of *Sakdina*. On the one hand there were traces of the communes. And on the other hand the institution of the state was clearly evident. The large number of official titles signifying government by senior persons is evidence of the lingering importance of the communal system. Such titles include *thao* (elder)[117], *phuke* (elder or Barua)[118], *thao muang luang* (elder of the big town or Birgohain)[119], *thao muang* (elder of the town or Gohain)[120], *phuke luang* (senior elder or Barbarua)[121]. The

[100] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. Tai Ahoms and The Stars. p. 67.
[101] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. Tai Ahoms and The Stars. p. 67.
[102] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. Tai Ahoms and The Stars. p. 67.
[103] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*, pp. 3-23.
[104] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*, p. 3.
[105] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*, p. 3.
[106] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*, p. 3.
[107] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*, p. 3.
[108] *Ahom Buranji Sg/5*.
[109] *Ahom Buranji 60g/3*.
[110] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*. p. 68.
[111] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 5.
[112] *Tai Ahom-Thai Dictionary*, p. 7.
[113] *Tai Ahom-Thai Dictionary*, p. 9
[114] Mahatma Gandhi. Conditions in Assam. In: Satis Chandra Kakati. *Discovery of Assam*. (Guwahati: Badan Ch. Barua, 1991), pp. 6-8.
[115] *Tai Ahom-Thai* Dictionary, p. 3.
[116] *Ahom Buranji*. (KT) 100k/7; Jadunath Sarkar. Assam and the Ahom in 1660 A.D. in *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. Vol. 1, 1915, p. 194.
[117] *Ahom Buranji*.(KT) 4k/6.
[118] *Ahom Buranji*.(KT) 38g/9.
[119] *Ahom Buranji*.(KT) 4k/6.
[120] *Ahom Buranji*.(KT) 4k/6.
[121] *Ahom Buranji*.(KT) 71k/1.

phuke title had many subdivisions, such as *phuke raidang*[122], *phuke hua chang* (elder who supervises the elephants)[123], *phuke chao ye* (elder who takes care of the rice storage)[124], *phuke phu du kai* (elder who takes care of the chickens)[125], *phuke chang sara* (medical doctor)[126], *phuke chao dang pa plong* (elder who supervises a forest)[127], *phuke phu feng kan ham* (elder who carries a palanquin)[128]. The officials as a group were called *poi thao tang muang*[129], a meeting of all the old people of the town. Any decision at the highest level needed consultation of many people *rang kan pong kan*[130]. These titles and practices suggest that the administrative system originated from the ancient communal system in which rule rested with the elders.

At the same time, the institution of the state had already emerged. Power was in the hands of the king *chao fa* and officials known as the *thao tang lai*[131], *phuke phukong*[132] or *phuwa phuprong*[133]. The most important of the officials were the three Dangarias *sam chao phuprong*[134], namely the Buragohain *chao prong muang*[135], Bargohain *thao muang luang* and Barpatragohain *chao sung luang*[136]. The Buragohain and the Bargohain had to be appointed from the families which migrated to Assam with Sukapha, the first Tai Ahom king. The sons or younger brothers of the king were usually sent to govern important towns such as Tipam, Namrup, Sairing, Kachari (Timisa), Dibrugarh (Ti-Fao). These positions were called *chao lung* (or Raja).[137] Below the three Dangarias there were the following positions in descending order:

thao muang, *phukan luang* (Barphukan)[138], *phukan, phuke luang* (Barbarua)[139], *phuke* (Barua), *phu kin muang* (governor of town, Rajkhowa)[140], *hua heng* (one who commands 1000 persons, Hazarika)[141], *hua pak* (one who commands 100 persons, Saikia)[142], *hua sao* (one who commands 20 persons, Bara)[143]. This was a

[122] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 40g/1.
[123] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 64k/9.
[124] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 83k/9.
[125] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 86g/1.
[126] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 87g/1.
[127] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 84g/1.
[128] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 140k/3.
[129] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 11k/7.
[130] *Ahom Buranji*, (K?) 11k/7.
[131] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 20k/1.
[132] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 140g/5.
[133] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 17g/4.
[134] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 65k/9,
[135] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 31k/1.
[136] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 5g/4,
[137] Ranoo Wichasin. 'The Tai Ahom rank of Chaolung: a study based on the *Ahom Buranji*'. Paper presented at the International Conference on Tai Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, 3-6 July 1987.
[138] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 122g/8.
[139] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 59g/13.
[140] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 9g/8.
[141] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 40g/5.
[142] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 15g/2.
[143] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 37k/7.

system of control of manpower. The Buragohain had 10,000 persons under his command[144], the Bargohain 4,000[145] and the Barpatragohain 6,000[146].
The Phukan positions were sub-divided according to the various kinds of duty. The Tai names for these positions indicate the scope and functions of the Ahom government:
phukan na (supervisor of the rice fields)[147],
phukan phai rua (supervisor of boats)[148],
phukan phu tham kham (judge)[149],
phukan phak kud (supervisor of vegetable farms)[150],
phukan khwae (supervisor of river, tributaries)[151],
phukan doi (supervisor of mountains)[152],
phukan tun rung dam (supervisor of Kalibars)[153],
phukan sung rua (supervisor of boat docks)[154],
phukan phu tu khao (supervisor of rice barns)[155],
phukan sairing (governor of Sairing)[156],
phukan tai sun kluay (supervisor of the Tai people in the banana forest)[157].

Phu kin muang was the title of the governor of a certain town, for example *phu kin muang kler* (Sadiya)[158], *phu kin muang chae nong kham*[159], *phu kin muang chae rung*.[160]
The *hua sao* positions were sub-divided into *hua sao kan ham*[161] (palanquin carrier), *hua sao chao kai* (chicken raiser)[162], *hua sao chao dang* (executioner)[163], and so on.
Many features indicate that the administrative system revolved around the control of manpower. Official ranks were linked to the numbers of people under their control. Under the manpower control system, every *luk tai* (person)[164] was allotted to a *khing* consisting of four households or *mo khao* (rice pot)[165], and then to a division *khel* (a

[144] N. K. Basu. *Assam in the Ahom Age*. (Calcutta: Pustak Bhandar, 1970), p. 108.
[145] N. K. Basu. *Assam in the Ahom Age*. p. 108.
[146] N. K. Basu. *Assam in the Ahom Age*. p. 108.
[147] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 141g/8.
[148] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 59g/1.
[149] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 285.
[150] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 290.
[151] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 290.
[152] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 290.
[153] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 79k/5.
[154] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 91k/3,
[155] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 129g/ 1.
[156] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 91g/4.
[157] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 107g/2.
[158] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 108g/2.
[159] *Ahom Buranji*, (K7) 112g/7,
[160] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 54k/5.
[161] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 366.
[162] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 366.
[163] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 366.
[164] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 7-21, 9g/7.
[165] B. Barua and N. N. Deodhai Phukan. *Ahom Lexicons*. (Gauhati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies 1965), p. 128.

Persian word meaning department) according to function. This system of manpower control, along with the distribution of land according to official rank and the requirement of corvée labour, are clearly similar to the *sakdina* system in Siam. But the Ahom version retained more elements from the ancient communal system. The names of the official positions support this assertion, and also the division of official functions which was not as elaborate as in Ayutthaya.

The Ahom system was fundamentally different from the Indian caste system which divided people in all aspects of their lives according to their relationship to gods and according to strict instructions of the Hindu religion.

When the Ahom expanded to Lower Assam, they encountered the Hindu political system in which the king was a god, far removed from the people, and the Brahmins served as the king's advisers on ritual. Some aspects of the Hindu system were subsequently adopted in the Ahom kingdom. The Ahom kings started to call themselves by the names of gods - Svargadeo (one who comes from heaven). Hindu names were used for various official positions. Caste was introduced and differentiation of official ranks became more refined. Rituals became more elaborate and included worship of Hindu gods. Siam went through a similar process. The Tai of Ayutthaya were influenced by the Indianized Khmer. In late Ayutthaya, kingship became more based on divine right.

In the realm of culture, the traces of the ancient communal system are most evident. In the ancient period, the natural environment and the family had fundamental roles in the culture.

People worshipped nature and ancestors. The *phuralung* religion of the Ahom gave the highest place to the sky god *faa*.[166]

Other important spirits included *faa nua hua*[167] or *lengdon*[168], god of lightning *sang kam faa*[169], *faa bot rum sang dam*[170], god of the rain *chao sai fon*[171], goddess of star light *nang sang dao*[172], *leng* sang[173], god of construction *lao-khree*[174], and the sun *khun ban*[175].

In addition the Ahom paid respects to other natural spirits such as god of the earth *phi-din*[176], god of the wind *phi lom*[177], god of the fire *phi fai*[178], god of the mountain

[166] Ranoo Wichasin (trans.). 'The Calling of Khwan in the Coronation of Su-Het-Peng-Fa', in: *Language and Inscription* [in Thai]. (Bangkok: Faculty of Archaeology, Silapakorn University, 2532), p. 116; *Ahom Buranji*, p. 3. The use of the word *Phuralung* for the religion of the Ahom follows Nagen Hazarika. 'The Ahom Philosophy of God'.

[167] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 57k/2.

[168] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 7g/3.

[169] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 2.

[170] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 3.

[171] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 5.

[172] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 3.

[173] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 6.

[174] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 4k/6,

[175] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 18.

[176] Manuscript No. 1194 B, kept at the DHAS.

[177] Manuscript No. 1177 B.

[178] Manuscript No. 1178 B.

phi-doi[179], god of the moon *phi-duan*[180] and god of the clouds *phi khung chan mok*[181]. There was an idol called *chum fa rung sääng müang*[182] which was believed to represent *faa*. The Ahom king had to keep this idol in an exalted place, that is in the *chum* house[183] near to the palace. At Rangapur *(chae muan* or town of fun) during the coronation ceremony *het chao nang muang*[184], the king had to bring the *chum* out, worship it, and hang it from his neck. If there should occur any unnatural phenomena such as a lunar eclipse *kop klun düan*[185], solar eclipse *kop klun wan*[186], earthquake *ing-san*[187], thunderbolt on the spirit house *faa phaa rüan phii*[188], a rain of blood *fon tok pen lüad*[189], two suns *wan ook soong luuk*[190], two moons *düan ook soong luuk*[191], stones which float *hin luang fu*[192], a comet *dao khon fai ook*[193], a star signifying bad omen *dao kham muang ook*[194], bad omen for the king or the country *kööt kiu khun kiu müang*, it was necessary to worship the sky and perform rituals to ward off the bad omen *kää kiu*[195].

In addition to nature worship, the Ahom worshipped their ancestors by making offerings to the spirits of the ancestors *phi dam*[196]. The *phi dam* were kept in the house. Before doing anything important such as construction of a new town, offerings had to be made to the spirits, and the future predicted through the ritual of examining the legs of the fowl.[197] Anyone who had violated the customs and sought purification, also had to make offerings to the spirits and ask forgiveness from his ancestors and from his community. The feeling of the Ahom of being one with their ancestors appeared in the oath-taking ceremony among officials (in the reigns after Chao Kamyang or Gobar in 1675). The officials swore that if they did not obey the orders of the king, they and their ancestors should go to hell.[198] Another story shows the importance of the institution of the family and kinship. The heavenly god *faa nua hua* proclaimed that there should be no sexual relations between a father and a daughter or a daughter-in-law, a nephew and an aunt, a man and his sister-in-law, a son and his mother, and so on. These rules were very strict in order to preserve the institution of the family. Other parts of Ahom Buranji mentioned cases of sexual

[179] Manuscript on Astrology kept at the DHAS,
[180] Manuscript on Astrology kept at the DHAS.
[181] Lik-Khaek-Khao-Kam. Manuscript No. 1184, kept at the DHAS.
[182] Ranoo Wichasin (trans.). 'The Calling of Khwan in the Coronation of Su-Het-Peng-Fa'. p. 116.
[183] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 5k/9,
[184] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 27g/9.
[185] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*. p. 86.
[186] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*. p. 86; *Ahom Buranji, p.* 283
[187] Manuscript on Astrology from the Tai Museum. Sibsagar, Assam; *Ahom Buranji*. p. 283.
[188] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 283.
[189] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 293.
[190] *Ahom Buranji, p.* 293; B. J, Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahom and The Stars. p.* 84.
[191] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin, *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*, p. 84; *Ahom Buranji. p.* 293.
[192] *Ahom Buranji, p.* 293.
[193] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 33k/6; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 283, 293.
[194] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*. pp. 55-7.
[195] B. J. Terwiel and Ranoo Wichasin. *Tai Ahoms and the Stars*. pp. 42-5 1.
[196] *Offering to the Spirits of Charaideo*. p. 3g.
[197] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 40g/8.
[198] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 126k/3.

wrongdoings between brothers and sisters and between a man and a woman who had a common grandfather. These people had to be punished.[199]

The Ahom worship of nature and ancestors is a belief system different from Aryan Hinduism. The relations between man and god in a society reflect the relations between human beings in that society. *Phuralung* is a belief system based in an ancient communal society, while the Hindu religion originated in a slave society. In *phuralung* the gods are natural elements and have no specific forms. They are the sky, the moon, the sun, the mountain, and the river. The ancestral spirits are the souls of people known to the community. Both *faa* and *phii* are familiar. But in Hinduism the gods and goddesses such as Siva, Visnu and Paravati appear in the form of humans. Man relates to these gods rather as a slave to a master. These gods require elaborate rituals, admirations, and sacrifices. As long as the Ahom state upheld the *phuralung* religion, the king, priestly class, and officials were not separated from the common people. Even over the surrounding hill people, the Ahom ruled with consideration with the result that the Ahom were well accepted by the hill people. But after the Ahom state accepted Hinduism in the 15th century, Ahom society started to have castes, to pay high regard to the Brahmins, to accept Hindu rituals such as in the coronations and cremations of the king. The *phuralung* religion reflects a Tai society where class differentiation was not developed much and different communities coexisted. Hinduism reflects Indian society where class and caste distinction were clearly marked. Indian society was a society with slavery which later became an Asiatic state society. The mental foundations of the Ahom may have been different from those of the Indians and the Hindu Assamese.

In Ahom cultural history we read about the attempts to resist the domination of Hinduism. The Ahom Buranji recorded that during the reign of Sunenpha (reigned 1744-51) Ahom priests asked the king to construct a wooden house for the coronation on grounds of tradition *fing pu pan on*[200]. When a comet appeared in the reign of Surampha (reigned 1751-1760), the Brahmins recommended the king to stay at Chae Muan, but the Ahom priests recommended the king to stay at Tai-Muang. The king followed the advice of the Brahmins.[201] In the reign of Suyeopha (reigned 1769-1780) there was a question whether one should bury or cremate the body of the late king. As already mentioned, after the real body had been cremated, Suyeopha agreed to have an effigy of the late king buried according to Tai custom. This king Suyeopha tended to follow the advices of the Brahmins in many rituals. The Tai priests recorded all these struggles between them and the Brahmins in the Ahom Buranji.[202]

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[199] *Ahom Buranji*, (KT) 6g/1-2 and 115k/1; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 15-17.
[200] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 280.
[201] *Ahom Buranji*, p. 284.
[202] *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 325-6.

We can conclude that to read the Ahom Buranji and other Ahom historical documents in Tai tells us that *müang nun sun kham* still possessed archaic elements inherent in its society. The Ahom society worshipped the natural environment and ancestors. Class differentiation was not too much developed. But over the 600 years of the Ahom kingdom, Tai society had developed into an Asiatic system with a state separate from the community. The state divided and distributed land to the people according to their ranks, and required the people to contribute labour to the state. Over this period, the penetration of Hinduism accelerated the Tai state's transformation towards an Asiatic state. Hindu ideology supported a class and a caste society. However as Hinduism and the caste system were not native to the Upper Assam area, their influence was felt most at the level of the state rather than throughout society as a whole. The common people still held on to the Tai beliefs. Archaic characteristics continued. The Tai Ahom still believed in the *phuralung* religion; at the same time they adopted Hinduism of the Neo-Vaisnavite doctrine. We can detect these archaic characteristics by reading the Ahom Buranji and other ancient documents in the Tai language.

Where are the old Ahom documents kept? How many manuscripts are there? What subjects do they cover?

The Ahom documents are kept at the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (DHAS) of the state of Assam at Guwahati, at the Tai Museum at Sibsagar, and at houses of the common people, especially those of the priestly class. The members of this priestly class have inherited these manuscripts since the period of the Ahom kingdom. The members are concentrated at the villages of Patsako and Akhoya in Sibsagar district of Upper Assam. The majority of the manuscripts deal with cosmogony, the earth and history. There is a custom to copy these manuscripts by hand. The manuscripts are sacred books to be handed down to descendants to preserve. Other kinds of manuscript are astrology books, calendars, and books on rituals, omens and the ways to ward off bad omens, prayers in offerings to spirits, prayers in the calling of life essence *lik khaek lik faa, lik rik khwan*. These manuscripts are important handbooks for daily living for all from the king down to the common people. There are also a few more recent literary writings which relate to the past lives of Lord Buddha.

It is not certain how many Ahom manuscripts have survived. At the DHAS there are 300 Tai manuscripts. Approximately half of this number are Ahom manuscripts. At the Tai Museum in Sibsagar most of the 30 or so manuscripts are Ahom. There has not yet been a full survey of the Ahom manuscripts still kept in private homes. Professor Puspa Gogoi, the secretary-general of the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai, thinks there may be 1,000 manuscripts in existence. But many may be copies of the same document. Professor Puspa Gogoi has already identified 150 manuscripts. These manuscripts were written on sheets of

tree bark. Some have only a few pages, but some stretch to more than 300 pages.[203]

The Tai Ahom people are trying to study these ancient manuscripts with translation help from experts on the Tai language from other Tai groups. The important translators of Ahom documents working at the DHAS Ahom section are Chao Nabin Shyam Phalung, an Aiton Tai, and Nang Ye Hom Buragohain, a Tai Phake. Both read the Allonn language very well. Since 1795, Ahom scholars have compiled several dictionaries to aid the study of Ahom documents:

1) *Bar Amra* (1795) compiled by Tengai Pandit;[204]

2) *Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary* (1920) by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua;[205]

3) *Ahom Lexicons* (1964, 1991) compiled by B. Barua and N. N. Deodhai Phukan;[206] and

4) *The Assamese-English-Tai Dictionary* (1987) by Chou Nomal Chandra Gogoi.[207]

Besides these Tai Ahom dictionaries, one has to use Shan and other Tai dictionaries. Each year the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai arranges a large cultural meeting among various Tai groups, attended by tens of thousand of people. The Association issues a yearly commemorating journal *Souvenir* in three languages (Tai, Assamese and English). At present, the knowledge of Ahom language is advancing. Ahom authors have written short stories which have been published by the Association as pamphlets *Kham Seng* (1992)[208], and in book form *Moang Fi* (1993)[209]. Chow Nagen Hazarika was the editor of *Kham Seng* and the author of *Moang Fi*. *Kham Seng* contains many articles but the majority of them are in Assamese. *Moang Fi* contains thirteen Tai songs written in the Ahom language and the Ahom script. It can be regarded as the first Ahom literary work of a new era.

V. A direction for the study of Ahom history in the future

At present the society of Assam is developing towards capitalism as Assam becomes more open to the outside world. The middle class has emerged. This middle class has two segments. First, there are Tai-Ahom who are descendants of the middle-level officials of the old kingdom of Assam. These families took up

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[203] *J. N.* Phukan. 'A Note on the Contents of the Tai Manuscripts in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies.' in B. B. Hazarika (ed.). *Souvenir: Golden Jubilee Celebration (1928-1978).* pp. 14-18; Puspa Gogoi, Nomal Gogoi. *An Introduction to Tai Language and Literature.* (Dhemaji, Assam: Chumphra Printers, 1989); Puspa Gogoi. *A Glimpse of Tai Literature in Northeast India.* (Dhemaji, n.d.).

[204] The manuscript is kept at the DHAS.

[205] Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua. *Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary.* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1920).

[206] B. Barua and N. N. Deodhai Phukan. *Ahom Lexicons.* (Gauhati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, 1965).

[207] Chau Nomal Chandra Gogoi. *The Assamese English Tai Dictionary.* (Tinsiikia, Assam: Nang Nirada Gogoi, 1987).

[208] *Kham Seng.* Edited by Chow Nagen Hazarika. The Journal of the Ban Ok Pub Lik Mioung Tai, July 1992. *Kham Seng* means the words of the gods. For the bibliography of recent works on the Ahom in Tai, Assamese and English see Nang Masurn Aideoo (Fie). 'The Recent Publications on the Ahoms: A Bibliography', in *The Tai,* Vol. I, pp. 85-91.

[209] Chow Nagen Hazarika. *Moang Fi.* (Dibrugarh, Assam: Ban Ok Pup Lik Mioung Tai, 1993).

education in the schools set up by the British, and continued to serve as administrators and professionals. Second, there are outsiders who have migrated to Assam since the advent of British rule. Several families of well-educated Bengalis came to work in the civil service of Assam during the time of the British rule. The owners of the tea plantations and other capitalists are mainly Indians from far away states especially Rajasthan. Both the capitalists and the middle class people of the Bengal origin hold to the Hindu culture and Assamese language. The emerging capitalism in Assam is an Assamese capitalism, which is linked to the capitalist system of India.[210]

In this process the Ahom have a problem. What role should they play? The majority of the Ahom want to develop their own Ahom society in the Upper Assam area, and to uphold their Tai culture. They believe that the development of Assamese capitalism will force them to play a subordinate role. They can be only the white collar workers or the farmers. The majority of the Ahom think this way. But among the Ahom middle class including officials, professionals, businessmen, and politicians, the view is not so clear. In part they are tempted to collaborate with the development of the dominant Assamese capitalism. In part, they too wish to preserve a distinctly Ahom culture and identity. If they emphasise more on the second option, then they will be able to develop Upper Assam an economic, political and cultural centre in its own right, centred on Sibsagar, separate from the Assamese centre in Guwahati. Upper Assam has tea plantations and petroleum. If the Ahom have more autonomy, Upper Assam under the Ahom can progress more rapidly and can simultaneously preserve the traditional administrative system and Tai culture. To achieve this result, the Ahom middle class needs to come closer to the common Ahom people, to the other Tai groups, and to the hill people and other Mongolian peoples in Upper Assam. The Ahom need to turn more to the East, and to increase their ties with South East Asia and Thailand.

A study of Ahom history is therefore very important for the construction and preservation of the Tai consciousness of the Ahom. Ahom history has an identity of its own and is a body of knowledge of its own. It should not be absorbed totally into the history of Assam or the history of India.

Comparative history and comparative philology may be the most appropriate methods to apply to Ahom studies. As already mentioned, a comparative study of Tai histories may help solve important questions in Ahom history. In order that Ahom historical study will not be totally absorbed into a history of Assam, one should also study Ahom cultural history as part of the cultural history of the Tai

[210] Manorama Sharma. *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony.* (Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1990), pp. 111-34.

people as a whole. An intra-Tai comparative history of culture may be a suitable way to approach Ahom history.

In addition a study of the written Ahom documents is very important to understand Ahom history and culture. It is a foundation to construct an autonomous Ahom history and culture. To understand Ahom language and culture we should make a comparative study with the Tai Mao or Tai Nua as these languages are closer to the Ahom than other Tai variants. In Assam itself the Aiton language is nearest to the Ahom language. The Ahom may rely on the help of the Aiton in reviving the language.[211]

For a study of Ahom history, academic and cultural cooperation between the Ahom and the Thai of Thailand is useful. As the Ahom no longer use the Tai language in everyday speech, and have only just revived the use of written Ahom, Thailand's language scholars will be able to help the Ahom to understand better the meanings of many words, to reconstruct the pronunciation, and to develop new words.[212] At the same time the Thai in Thailand can receive help from the Ahom in searching for the roots of our people: As we in Thailand have progressed, we have come away from our traditional culture in some areas.

The Ahom in Assam are very active in the revival of Tai culture. They have asked for a certain level of autonomy in administration. They have made rapid progress in the study of Ahom history, and created a very lively academic milieu in the state of Assam today. This is most meaningful to the existence of their people, which is also our people.

Thank

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[211] Chatthip Nartsupha and Ranoo Wichasin, 'Tai Cultural Revival in Assam'.
[212] ibid.

Ranee Lertluamsai:
Faa - Khwan - Müang. THE WORLDVIEW OF THE ANCIENT TAI: A Study of the Tai Ahom Documents

translation from Thai: Linda Puritz

This research is a modified excerpt from the thesis, "A Tai Ahom Myth", by Ranee Lertluamsai. The work was originally done as a partial requirement for her master's degree in Thai language at Silpakorn University, in 2539 B.E. The original thesis and this revision were supported by the Project on the Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples, funded by the Thailand Research Fund.

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The main objective of the research is to synthesize and analyze the belief system of the ancient Tai Ahom, through historical documents, which chronicle this category of ideas and relate it to their social and cultural development. It is hypothesized that the Tai Ahom have preserved and maintained their ancient beliefs, still inheriting ideas and beliefs. This is a tradition common to many other Tai groups, whom also have common roots with the Ahom, dating since before the 17th century, B.E.

Prior to the age of Buddhism, the ancient Tai Ahom had already created an origin myth, which they accepted as an explanation for the earth's origins and the origins of all natural phenomena. The particular myth expressed the power and influence of supernatural phenomena in the Tai cosmology. Overall, it described the origins of humankind, human civilizations, and customs.
The early Tai Ahom were a branch of the Tai Yai [Tai Luang] civilization, which had occupied what are now parts of China and Burma. This group held their origin myth, which included an origin of the ruling dynasty. The Mao nobles from this civilization migrated to the low-lying areas in the Assam State of India near the Brahmaputra river, during approximately the 18th century, B.E., to become the Tai Ahom.

This study looks at many Tai Ahom documents, which were written in the Tai Ahom language. It is a history of the original Tai Ahom origin myth, as confirmed and explained in their historical documents. These ancient modes of thinking and worship are viewed within the greater social context and can be compared to the present day Tai Ahom societal structure and belief system.

The contents of this myth also links the Ahom to other Tai groups, whom have similar stories. These groups include the Tai Dam and Tai Lao, the Tai Yai groups of the Tai Mao and Tai Nua [Nüa], the Tai Lue and the Tai Kern [Khün], and the Tai Siam group.

Methods used in this research emphasize the study of the structure of the universe and cosmos, as perceived by the groups in their ancient origin myths. These myths can be reconstructed and examined, and their similarities and differences compared.
The structure of the cosmology of the ancient Tai Ahom gives us an insight into their complete worldview. It reflects different things. The worldview represents many cosmological structures and unites them, explaining the universe and its origins according to them, as well as the origins of the Tai Ahom society.
Strengths in this research work lie in its discussion of the ancient chronicles of the Tai Ahom, whereby knowledge from these documents are further transmitted. Central to this knowledge is the importance of bringing back the ancient *müang*. This "bringing back" can occur through the simple translation of the ancient documents into Modern Thai.

Chapter one of Golap Chandra Barva's publication, *Ahom Buranji*, and G.A. Grierson's "*Pa Luang*" from An Ahom Cosmogony, are good sources of knowledge about notable ancient Tai worldviews. The authors of these two works have read the original documents in Tai and translated them into English. Another document, "*Lik Ka Muang*", which means origins of the [city], provides a path to understanding the ancient Tai systems of worship and their early myths. Ahom documents have been translated into Thai, but still follow the subject's essential principles and provide a complete explanation of the vocabulary. These works all provide opportunities for the interested scholar to learn more about ancient Tai ways.

Likewise is this opportunity available from reading this particular thesis. "*Lik Ka Muang*" is the basis of the thesis research and of this revision, stressing the importance of bringing back, or revival, of the [city] and the issue of Prince Pate with the Golden Axe. Ancestors and important immortal, supreme gods, were important to the Tai Ahom, and are still respected to this day.

This historical myth discusses the early Tai Ahom village and the circumstances surrounding their lives, including society and government unit construction. It includes the following:

1. The gathering of housing groups (villages) in order to pay tribute to or to render a regular service.
2. Physical construction of a town or [city], through pioneer work such as clearing away jungles to create a space for the [city] and to cultivate rice fields.
3. Establishment of a downtown area, with a residential area with scenery that allows the observance of ancient beliefs.
4. An area for the ruling base, including the Prince's (monarch) residential area surrounded by groups of other royals and lesser nobles in the various [cities]. The village groups control the water irrigation and conservation systems.

Studies of these written documents help to increase the ability of researchers to summarize and explain the knowledge and beliefs of the Tai Ahom. The strength of this particular thesis research work includes the presentation of the historical record on Prince Pate with the Golden Axe. It is hoped that the translated reading still follows the original subject and fully records and explains the vocabulary. It provides a good opportunity to verify two important Tai Ahom Buranji, Chapter 2 and "A Chronicle of the Tai Ahom", in The Ahom Buranji, translated by Ranoo Wichasin, in 2539 B.E.

New materials used in this thesis' research and its revisions came from original Tai Ahom documents that were translated into Thai (formerly translated into English). The focus of the works is the principle of protection, whereby the traditional ancestors would protect the [city] by occupying and ruling it.

A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research work, "*Faa - Khwan - Müang*: The Worldview of the Ancient Tais: A Study of the Tai Ahom Documents", resulted in the following important findings, which contribute to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing the Tai structure of the universe as manifested in the ancient ways of the Ahom. They are:

1. There is a starting point (1450 B.E.) to where a group of Tai Ahom may have migrated into a river area in India during the Chinese Tang Dynasty (1161-1450B.E.). Presently, there is a Tai group that lives there.
2. The myth concerning the development of the society in the Assam State has been reconstructed in order to explain the nature of the *winjaan* spirit.

   The reconstruction reflects beliefs in general, as well. It emphasizes the *winjaan* of the community, which reaches a holy [city] with a white rocky mountain that has turned golden. It is surrounded by smaller mountains, whose position forms the corners of this world. There is a river source with golden water. The final time period of this myth reflects the development of societies with ranks and levels.

Translator's note: The *winjaan* is the spirit which lies dormant during life and carries all accumulated merits and demerits into the next life cycle.

A Survey of the Structural Development of the World

Physical Structure 1

The structure of the heaven and "Mrs. Ingke", meaning the structure includes Father Sky and Mother Earth.

Meaning: Natural things with a spirit hold meanings about sex, which are productive and bountiful.

Development of Society: Ancient societies worked with the land, and the social organisation was centered around an ancestral family system.

Physical Structure 2

The structure behind "*faa - khwan - müang*" is a piece of sky, made from a spider web that covers the [city]. In the beginning, the *khwan* of the sky held the highest position, using its energy to connect the sky to the [city]. It was made up of other khwan spirits, as well, such as mountain *khwans*, forest *khwans*, and [city] *khwans*.[1]

Meaning: The *winjaan* spirit of the community is one with nature.

Development of Society: The community gathered together to work the farmlands and guard the [city]. They carried out other activities, such as building homes and weaving cloth.

Physical Structure 3

According to the origin myth, the structure of the golden rocky mountain was originally a white, rocky mountain that turned gold. It is part of the origin myth which includes a river with golden water where flocks of hornbill birds live. The golden rocky mountain features a cave, with a burning fire inside, set on top of a cliff.

Meaning: The capital city of Chaiyaphum has inherited this aspect from the ancient Tai: it is still one with nature.

Development of Society: The myth cites the power and influence of an immortal deity in the case of the first dynasty that ruled the people in a northern territory. Likewise, the Sakdina society fundamentally organized society into classes based on what a group's point of origin is and to what tribe they belonged.

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[1] Translator's note: The *khwan* spirit is the spirit responsible for personality, character, humor, health. If the *khwan* leaves the body of a human or of a phenomena in which it possesses, this body can not survive.

Physical Structure 4:

Immortal gods and deities from the heavens originated from the first ruling family of an area. There is a big tree that covers the spiritual lifeline of the [city], like a protective coat (*süa* in Thai; literally blouse or shirt, but used to refer to spirits that cover and protect an area). The [city] is linked to the sky, or heavens. The spiritual lifeline of the city sits at the golden mountains, making it "the city of the golden, rocky mountain".

Physical Structure 5:

The taro colored cliff is surrounded by mountains which form the [city's] pillars. In the center is a heavenly [city], or paradise, which sits on a white mountain. Satellite [cities] wrap the capital city. The city is the center of this universe structure, and is covered with the sky, or heavens. This sky is like a rooftop, featuring a naga serpent, running down the sides as a protector, or like an elephant who stands to support the sky.

The spiritual lifeline of this heavenly [city], and the lifelines of the satellite [cities], all ascend into the sky to meet the gods. This is called "the Sky supports the [city]".

Meaning: The city of Chaiyaphum acknowledges the existence of a deity from their society.

Development of Society: During the Sakdina society, the kingdom was centralized.

The central axis of the structure is the *müang* "city", which was covered by the sky. The city's spiritual lifeline sustains the *khwan* spirit like a web. This spiritual lifeline which holds the *khwan* is comparatively equivalent to the *winjaan* spirit of the [city] in terms of its free and independent power and influence.

A normal *müang* [city] must have a *khwan*. In a *müang* that is not normal, the *khwan* will drift, coming and going, to and from the [city]. This affects its lifeline and is the point where the *khwan* of the [city] will unite with the *winjaan* of the [city].

It is noted that having many categories of *khwan* spirits is like grasping at tufts or clusters of something. There are three important types of *khwan* spirits, namely

1) the group *khwan*,
2) the *khwan* of silver and the *khwan* of gold, and
3) the *khwan* of the elephant and the *khwan* of the horse (auspicious elephant and auspicious horse).

All of these *khwan* spirits collectively contribute to the formation of the khwan of the *müang* [city].

Additionally, there are the *khwan* of the home (*khwan* of the village), which includes the *khwan* of the slaves or servants, as well as the *khwan* of the cow and the *khwan* of the buffalo (auspicious cow and auspicious buffalo), the *khwan* of silver, of gold, and of many other properties.

The structure of heaven [the sky], the *khwan*, and the *müang* [city], is central to the structure of the universe, according to each Tai Ahom origin myth. In this arrangement, the three pieces of *faa* (heaven) [sky], *khwan*, and *müang* [city] unite into a single unit.

Heaven/"Sky"

Publications recognize the sky system as part of the natural environment that the entire society deals with. Nature is rich in resources used for production. Likewise, the tribal ancestors, royal deities, and other gods, including rulers and governors, receive their roles from nature.

"Sky" in Tai Ahom specifically includes the entire sheet of sky, the whole atmosphere, orbiting stars, and gods, monarchs, and other rulers. Accordingly, the sky is the giver of natural power and moral authority to royalty and the *müang* [city's] governors. This makes the sky a moderator of the highest gods, whom rely on the appearance of power and influence from nature. The sky stays a bright, splendid color, and radiates health, as it protects its governance by covering the *müang* [town]. As a great god figure, the sky strictly maintains the climate as well as illuminates the entire sky.

"The early morning sky". Princely deities and *theewadaa* gods can be divided into two categories:

1) the immortal god or deity who represents nature, namely the sun, the moon, frost, clouds, water, and breezes; and
2) the god from the ruling family, and who is a tribal ancestor.

The *süa*, or protective coat spirit, which covers the [city], is like a *theewadaa* god, guarding over an entire and fixed region. One müang [city] can have many coats, but there is one large *müang* coat that is prominent. It covers the entire area, and is an ancestor.

Other ancestors appear as spirits when, as tribal ancestors of the land, they die unusual deaths and become ghosts. The types include household ghosts, and others, and take a long time to move on. The clan of this ancestor must propitiate to the spirits in heaven in order for the clan to continue on.

The prince (monarch) of this region faithfully descends from the early, dusky hours of the morning to become a leader. The prince formally administers the society and influences the group of royals and lesser nobles in the various cities.

The *khwan* system's ideal is to contact with the *winjaan* spirit internally. This will allow it to hold energy, power, and influence. Many categories list characteristics which represent the energy and influence of institutional groups. The social development of the society is sustained by the society's *winjaan*. The *khwan* delivers good results to the society, but still lacks a force in which it can combine with.
The *khwan* can be held from the outside. Its aim is to strengthen the society so it will have energy and power. Together, the *khwan* and the society can hold this energy and power. The structure of societies and kingdom domains *(müang)* of every size consist of this spiritual lifeline at its corners, and the *khwan* must lay low within the area of the lifeline of the *müang*. Its manner must be representative of the [town's] *müang's winjaan*.
The lifelines of one thousand *müang* [cities] are equivalent to the *winjaan* spirit of the largest kingdom *(müang)*. And this *winjaan* spirit remains central to the corners of each *müang's* [city's] lifelines. Basically, the lifeline of this largest *müang* [city] is the *winjaan* spirit to all of the satellite *müang* [cities]. They distribute and spread, and according to the myth, are at the corners of the universe.

The *khwan* of a society can be divided into two levels, namely the *khwan* of the *müang* [city] and the *khwan* of the home ([village] *khwan*). Both levels also consist of smaller *khwans*. Together, they characterize bodies of energy, power, and influence, which contribute towards the [city's] social development.

The *khwan* of the [city] is also composed of the *khwan* of the group of lords, the *khwan* of silver and of gold, and the *khwan* of the auspicious elephant and auspicious horse. The first *khwan*, of the group of lords, as well as lesser nobles and [city] governors, combine to represent the *müang* [city's] government. The *khwan* of silver and the *khwan* of gold eat well, then the *müang* will be prosperous. Finally, the *khwan* of the auspicious elephant and of the auspicious horse will combine to symbolize the military.

The *khwan* of the home (village kwan) is made up of the *khwan* of servants, able-bodied young men, auspicious cows and auspicious water buffaloes, and the *khwan* of silver and of gold. The cow's *khwan* and the water buffalo's *khwan*,

helps out in the fields, making work more productive. The *khwan* of silver and of gold fills the silos and barns with rice.

Müang

Questions addressed by the *khwan* system concern governing, production, and health. It acts as an enveloping sheet which connects the physical scenery into the sacred *müang* system, which is spiritual.

The word *müang* in the Tai Ahom language has several connotations. Namely, its scope includes the area of governance, within the country, territory, earth, and universe. In this case, *müang* means governing unit. The Tai Ahom still support this connotation. Their word for müang [city] is *jueng*, which is the same word used by the Tai Yai. The [city's] system, as a governing unit, is then further divided into larger and smaller levels.

Society or **nation**, as in a **nation of people** is *müang baan* in Tai Ahom, which has the equivalent meaning as *baan müang* in Thai. This term represents the largest grouping of people, including villages and [cities]. It is close to the concept of a state.

Princes stayed in central *müang* [cities], which became known as noble cities as a consequence. The city, or *jueng*, was like an ordinary city made up of village groups that had expanded. Downtown areas were always the centers of these cities, housing the palaces, government offices, and gold reserves. The home of the prince was accessible. The city's governing unit might use physics, meaning they might sustain the city through the consolidation of former beliefs and ecology arising from the city, as if the city had a life. The city was considered sacred.

Accordingly, a well-drafted city plan divided the provincial area into busy downtown sections and withdrawn ends. Extremely important sacred points had to be kept high above ground and would face in a northerly direction. The province had highlands, such as hills and plateaus, all facing north, where they acted as the head point protecting the region.

The city was still set up as a royal, walled city, with a governing organization. A large tributary from a large water source ran by, and a big tree covered this city, with the large coat *süa* of the city. This *süa* was a fixed protector of the city, the royal palaces, and the shrines of immortal gods and deities.

A city established as a commoner's city was sometimes called a kitchen city, Their inhabitants were called citizens. The heart of the city had markets, banana

plantations, and gardens. Paddy fields and homes were on extensive pieces of productive farmland. The small slave villages were located on an irrigation ditch. Village groups were called "Chawng"[1] or "Chawngkawnam", and were responsible for looking after the water system.

The structure of the sacred city is an image found in all Tai Ahom religious traditions, all relying on the structure of the universe. Accordingly, it is covered as with a roof, and is surrounded by mutually assisting [cities], in different corners of *faa* [the sky] forming a quadrilateral floor.

Every city has a spiritual lifeline. It floats in the open air and increases in energy. A complete picture of the lifeline of the [city] belief connects it from the high hills and mountains, of the entire province, straight up from the expanding city to the sky. A doctor or knowledgeable person might enter a form and fly to survey the lifeline of the city from far above. The Tai Ahom truly did establish a palace in the sky, or shrine to worship the regional *theewadaa*s.
The sacred part of the city was established in the center, at the origin point of the kingdom *(müang)*. The capital city, which was royal, was set up with the potential to expand to a point where the kingdom's ancestry could glow. In the chronicles, it was called the city of the golden rock, and was compared to a paradise or heavenly city, established upon a taro colored cliff, on the white mountain which turned gold.
Procedures to make a place holy was expressed in ancient origin myths. For example, the king ceremonies of paying respect to the sky and to the gods, spirits and visiting ancestral spirits, are often done on the mountain.

The Tai Ahom worldview is an attempt to connect the three concepts of *faa, khwan, müang*. This idea is tested in worshipping ceremonies that emphasize the society and state ideology. Two important ceremonies include the calling of the *khwan* and the coronation of a new monarch.

The calling of the *khwan*

This ceremony seeks to recapture a lifeline, including the lifeline of a city. Various *khwan* deal with the lifeline of a müang [city], and they must be stable and secure. If a city has a condition which is not normal, the kwan from this lifeline will become loose and drift away. When this happens, the lifeline will shudder, shake, and tremble all the way down to the city, causing an unstable and insecure society rife with wars and hostilities possibly even in its own downtown.

[1] According to TAI CULTURE's transcription it is *choong* and *choongkoonaam*. (The editor).

Citizens will rebel, quarrel, kill, and droughts and famines will ensue, allowing sicknesses to originate and spread, killing people, elephants, horses, and water buffaloes, as well as monarchs and important persons. A formal ceremony to call the *khwan*, by the entire society, must be held to stabilize the situation and correct the imbalance. Through this ceremony, the entire society calls the *khwan* of the society to return to the lifeline of the *müang* [city] again.

In the Tai Ahom language, the word "auspiciousness" is used to call the *khwan*, as well as "to have auspiciousness return" and "turn around *khwan*", with turn around meaning to ask or to beg for.

This ceremony is used on all levels of society, regardless of rank. It stresses the mobilization of many groups of people. These groups come together to perform a single purpose, essentially to strike a balance between nature and people or the community, between resources and production and manufacturing, between rulers and citizens, and between ancestors and descendants. In an effort to secure prosperity and health for all citizens, the energy and power of various institutions of village *baan*, city *müang*, government, military, economics, manufacturing, and production, all must be strengthened. Ahom documents note the calling of the *khwan* ceremony was performed in order to secure or unite the *müang* [city, society]. It had the potential to create intervals in crisises, like wars, hostilities, and riots.

Organized within rural boundaries or on rice fields which border the city, the royal court had to send the city expert of ceremony, to every village to conduct the calling of the *khwan*. In these cases, the monarch was the direct organizer. This situation appeared once during the final phase of the Tai Ahom kingdom.

Present day Ahom society still holds group ceremonies of calling the *khwan*, particularly when someone is sick spiritually or physically. Various Thai and other Tai societies also hold ceremonies to call the *khwan* of individuals and of the [city]. Each Tai group has similar worldviews connecting the *faa* [heaven; sky], *khwan* [soal; life essence] and *müang* [town; city; kingdom; society...].

Relationships exist between the various Tai groups who live in different regions, because they all hold this calling of the *khwan* ceremony.

The *khwan* can appear in two areas on the body: in the head and through the heart. The general consensus is that the *khwan* in the head lies in the top part. This allows it to spread down to other parts of the body, and it can enter and exit the body itself through this point in the head. If it does the latter, the person will get sick. This location is parallel to the *khwan faa* (*khwan* of the [sky]), as it

appeared in the first origin of time and structure. The words used to call the lifeline of a [city] back are also used to call the lifeline of a person back.

The *khwan* through the heart is referred to as the lifeline of the heart. "Lifeline of the heart" means life or *winjaan* spirit in the Tai Yai language. Many agree that the lifelines appear as hair spring fibres, which join together with the sky. Calling to the *khwan* of this region of the body involves tying a cotton thread to the wrists of the sick person. This also serves to keep the khwan bound in when it does return. The string represents the lifeline of the heart, and ceremony participants of relatives and friends tie the strings as a symbol of their personal wishes for the person to receive better health soon.

In addition to calling the *khwan* to rectify a situation, the ceremony is sometimes held strictly to bless or to celebrate. One example is the coronation ceremony of a new monarch. A part of the ceremony is calling the *khwan* home to make things productive and replete with health for people, and to make rice production bountiful and successful.

Coronation Ceremony

The coronation ceremony of the Tai Ahom monarch consisted of many small ceremonies. They were related to the ancient origin myths. The lifeline of the [city], which holds the *khwan*, is of the highest order of importance. The prince must walk from the *müang*'s capital to the sacred city of Charaideo to invite the lifeline of the *müang* to emerge from the cave with the burning fire. The lifeline will be placed in a house on a very high ground. The ceremony is symbolic of the *faa - khwan - müang* order.

Following the ways of the ancient origin myth, this ceremony is an exact copy of the chronicles which describe the ancestral monarchs. At the cave with the burning fire, above the golden cliffs, a new monarch stands and grasps at the lifeline of the *müang*, connecting it to *faa* [the sky] on the mountain above the cliff.

In order to perform the meaning of this, the new monarch accepts the assignment to watch over and maintain the *winjaan* spirit of the society, and has the duty to uphold the ideals of the ancestor in correctly maintaining the order.

A ceremony which reconnected the lifeline of the *müang* were also found in the historical writings. This particular ceremony had to be performed twice when an evil crisis struck the society. The term used is "cut", as in a cut in the lifeline of

an individual, group, or *müang*. A cut it an individual's lifeline of the heart meant the person was dead. Likewise, a cut in a group or *müang*'s lifeline meant it would face damage or ruin, as well. The ceremony reconnects the cut lifeline, or *winjaan* spirit. After the calling of the *khwan* ceremony failed, during the time of the Tai Ahom kingdom, this ceremony was held at the time of the great civil war at the end of the dynasty.

The worldview of *faa - khwan - müang* is an original belief system of the Tai tribe. It was extremely important during the social development of the small community into a large-scale society, with each small community still maintaining its own autonomy.
Documents report the history of Prince Pate with a Golden Axe, who held meetings with lords and lesser nobles that resulted in policies to expand society by uniting village groups.
Presently, the worldview has survived, having also been inherited down through the generations by the Tai Dam in Vietnam, in addition to the Ahom. The beliefs of these two groups stay on the rim of that of the various other Tais. The Tai Yai and Tai Lao have accepted Buddhism as a major belief system. With variations based on location, country, and region, different Tai villages who have accepted Buddhism still also accept the original worldview and hold many ceremonies that deal with the *khwan* spirit.

All together, this worldview is still important for the individuals as a way to come together collectively as a strong community. Through these ceremonies, many villagers are mobilized, and their purpose is common: to work together against a crisis, in the same way they did in the past. Ceremonies as a remedy for various crisises are used as part of their major belief system. Buddhism and other systems with new meanings, such as science, can not support these crisises with an explanation. So the people turn to the order of *faa - khwan - müang* and use the community's energy as an important force. The approach of community energy is something that Buddhism and science do not emphasize.

The *faa - khwan - müang* worldview is a potentially circular belief system. When this system is combined with that of the Chinese, connections appear, namely the Chinese axis of earth-human-sky. Practitioners of this belief system break into sects, but the fundamental structure remains the same, featuring Mt. Sumaru, which supports their universe and enters the sea of milk. The sky, or the Sumaru mountain pillar, and the sea, are components of this structure.

The developmental history of this system reveals links to that of the ancient Tai Ahom's origin myths, and can trace the history of the system's strengths and influences. Specifically, the spider was respected because it represented the sky, or resembled a god from the Chinese Tung dynasty. The doctrine shows the [city's] municipal borders to be at the Himalaya mountains, with the population groups distributed to the north of the low-lying Irrawady and Salawin river valleys. This should be associated with the structure of the golden mountains, after the structural adjustments brought the elephant, naga serpent, and crab to support it. The spirit of "Mrs. Ingke", or Mother Earth, represents and reflects the physical power and strength of the Hindu religion during the time period when the Tai Ahom entered the low-lying area of the Brahmaputra river's tributaries.

Accordingly, this adjustment resulted in groups that had a harmony with this belief system and the system of other beliefs.
They still maintain this *faa - khwan - müang* structure, and it remains in harmony with their other belief systems. Among the Tai groups, this worldview can survive as a minor belief system. Only with the Tai Dam has it survived almost perfectly, at the societal level, as it had been observed in the past.

Yos Santasombat[1]

KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE IN DAIKONG

Introduction

Since the late 1960s, there has been an indigenous development of ethnographic writing among Thai scholars who intend to understand their own society and culture. These are exemplified in recent works by Akin (1969), Shalardchai (1984), Anan (1984), Chattip (1984), Chayan (1984), and Yos (1996) among others. A steady development of anthropology in Thailand has accompanied a growing concern in the marginalization of local peoples and their cultures under the impact of capitalist transformation and globalization. The work of Thai anthropologists, as Tanabe[2] has noted, has therefore tended from the very beginning to be a sociological praxis that is inseparably associated with the development of their own society and culture.

In recent years, growing interest among Thai scholars in other Tai groups outside Thailand as exemplified by the works of Sumitr (1980), Bunchop (1983), Chattip and Renoo (1995), Anan (1995) among others, also reflects the commitment underlying their academic practice as well as the search for comparative materials among other Tais living in the neighboring countries.

Implicit in these ethnographic writing is also a seach for primordial meaning, an attempt to construct the distant past by studying the geographically distant. The construction/discovery that the Tais too have an authentic culture – just as exotic and primitive as any tribal society in the anthropological literature, that we too have supernatural beliefs, rituals, tales and legends susceptible to structural analysis, all of which can be found in the ordinary life of our Tai neighbors who share with us a common ancestor – represents intellectual movements which are meaningful at present to the Tai nation as a whole.

During the past decade, students of Tai studies have devoted much attention to the origin of the Tai race, the historical development of the Tai states, similarities and differences in languages and dialects, and customs and practices among different groups of Tai in various localities. What is missing is the ethnographic accounts of Tais living in different social formations, their family and kinship systems, economics, politics, rituals, cultivation, and everyday life; how they think and feel about their lives and their world, and how they define themselves not only in the present and immediate past, but also potentialities in the future. My research in Yunnan is an attempt to bridge this gap by way of presenting an

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[2] Tanabe (1991: 2-3)

ethnographic account of one of the least studied groups of Tai, namely the Tai Daikong.

This essay is an attempt to provide an ethnographic description of the family, marriage and kinship systems of the Tai Daikong.[3] My data and arguments are derived mainly from a brief field research in Lak Chang village, Muang Khon (Mangshi), western Yunnan, during the summer of 1997. It should be emphasized that this essay is about one single community and the extent to which it is representative of Tai Daikong as a whole varies greatly depending on the focus of inquiry and the kinds of abstractions involved. While all Tai villages in Daikong share many obvious characteristics, it is also true that certain differences in social organization and mood that distinguish Lak Chang from some neighboring Tai communities seem to reappear consistently in other parts of Yunnan as well. It is hoped that when enough detailed ethnographic studies are available, it should be possible to work out a useful description and generalization based on sound comparative criteria of the Tai social life.

The Setting

Lak Chang vilage today is home to some 203 households with 962 inhabitants. The village is located about 8 kilometers northeast of Muang Khon. The village proper has been enlarged in response to population increases but still retains many of its original features.

Lak Chang village, approximately 2 kilometers on dirt road off the main highway, can be seen clearly from it across a vista of rice paddies. Each of the paddy fields surrounding Lak Chang is planted at a slightly different time so that the fields ripen in succession, creating a patchwork of iridescent jade and golden greens. Streams of water run from the main irrigation canals and waterways onto the paddy fields. Lak Chang enjoys a semitropical climate with cool, relatively dry winters and a warm, moist summer monsoon season that allows for the planting of crops all year round. Cash crops which are intermixed with the rice paddy fields on a rotating basis include wheat, sugar cane, beans and water melons. Vegetables such as mustards, tomatoes, cucumber, peas, cabbages, squash and green beans are grown all year round for domestic consumption. All surplus produce are invariably sold at the open market in Muang Khon.

Lak Chang village is situated amidst the tranquility and scenery of the surrounding area. Standing in the rice field near the village one can see a rim of hazy blue mountains on every direction as one's eye sweeps the horizon. When

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viewed from a distance, the village stands imposingly above the glittering, lushly green rice paddy.

In spite of the village's scenic surroundings, the layout of the village itself is like that of most Tai villages in this region, rather chaotic with an apparent lack of concern for planning and space utilization. Dirt roads and narrow alleys zigzag through back corners of haphazardly scattered houses or turn into field paths. Pigsties and outhouses, unaesthetic in sight and stench in smell, block the main thoroughfare at the heart of the village.

Like most Tai villages in the great plain of Muang Khon, the shape or layout of Lak Chang is that of a nucleated village: houses are built close together to form a compact settlement cluster. Within the village proper, there is a general absence of green spaces and even space between dwellings. Tight discernible clusters of houses are grouped together in the middle of the rice fields. Lak Chang peasants typically surround their rice fields with groves of bamboo which serve to demarcate Lak Chang from the neighboring villages.

A small spirit house *chao baan* stands at the village entrance. Previously, it is reported, every household had a small spirit house made of bamboo with a thatched roof. But today, spirit houses have all disappeared.

Buddhism, however, is still an integral part of the Tai social life. Many Buddhist monasteries in Daikong, including the one in Lak Chang, were burnt down during the Cultural Revolution. Today, a new monastery is being built in the middle of the village. Temple-building has become a major cooperative affairs among Lak Chang villagers. All households are called in to "make merit" and to contribute labor and construction materials for the new monastery.

Traditionally, house-building was also a cooperative affairs: relatives, friends and neighbors joining to cut bamboo, to weave the wall mats, to make the roof thatch, and to erect the house. In earlier days, Tai houses were usually built almost entirely of bamboo. The houses were raised on piles a few feet above the ground to avoid damp and flood. The floor was made of split bamboo and the walls of bamboo mats. The roof was thatched with grass.

Nowadays, however, the architectural character of Lak Chang and other Tai villages in Muang Khon is strikingly similar to the Chinese. The houses are basic in planning organization and building construction. For most part, walls are laid out forthrightly in a single rectangular grid. Older homes are of tamped earth construction, with concrete floor and gray-tile roofs. Newer homes are usually built with brick on foundation of stones taken from the hills nearby. Most residences are constructed around courtyards along the four lateral sides. The single-storied main building typically has three rooms, a family room and two bedrooms. The multi-purpose family room serves as a living quarter, a dining

room, and a memorial hall to honor the ancestors. Here, portraits of ancestors and pictures of family members are hung on the wall above an altar that faced the main entryway. On ceremonial occasions, such as those accompanying mourning or wedding rites, the wooden partitions that separated the rooms are removed to enlarge the space, opening the rooms to the gallery in front. Tradition prescribes that the elder, married brother resides in the east room and younger, unmarried brothers or sisters in the west room with the parents. Kitchen is placed in the eastern wing room to signify a good omen – following the sun rising from the east, the family itself is to grow. In older homes, a partial second level, generally of wood construction, is sometimes added on the west and the front buildings. The resulting loft space is accessible by a steep wooden stairway or a ladder and is used as a granary for rice storage. The ground level is utilized in a number of ways: traditionally, a loom was kept here, and even though weaving has been given up, many households still have a loom under the house. The open area also serves as work-room where farming equipment and firewood are stored and buffaloes and pigs raised.

Most of the village families have wells in their household compounds. Water drawn from the well is used for cooking, drinking and washing dishes. Bathing is done on a flowing water way or irrigation ditch. Human evacuation is done away from the house, and no latrine is found within individual compounds. Public latrines are built overhanging fish ponds, flowing waterways or irrigation ditches running through the village. Young children use any spot at the edge of a waterway as toilet. Yet village sanitation is good, for the irrigation ditch flows continually and villagers do not use this ditch water for cooking or drinking.

The dress of the Tai in Daikong is fairly uniform in a general sense, but not in detail of color and pattern which vary in different towns and localities. Today, the man's dress tends to be western in style, if not in manufacture. Men and boys wear Western-type shorts, trousers, shirts and jackets. These are purchased from the stalls of Chinese merchant in the market of Muang Khon. Loose baggy trousers of Tai origin still are worn by the older men.

Village women, on the other hand, have not adopted Western-style clothing, to some extent. The woman's dress consists of a blouse and a dark-colored (usually black) *pasin* skirt. This is a piece of long cloth sewn in a tube and folded at the waist and held in place by a belt. Pants and European-type dresses may be found on special occasions among the young unmarried women of the village. But for everyday wear, a blouse and pasin skirt can be regarded as the regular costume of

the Tai women. Married women, however, always wear the characteristic Tai dress: with a blouse, a *pha sin* skirt and a turban.[4]

Young Tai women usually let her hair grow to shoulder length. But once settling down as a married women, she adopts the hair style of the mature women of the community. Married women usually put up their hair in a knot at the back of the head and cover it with a turban. The size and color of the turban vary greatly in small detail in different parts of Daikong. In Muang Khon, the turban of a young married women is often merely a pink or other light-colored cotton scarf wrapped around the head. The color of the turban will become darker as the woman grows older. For field work or for wear to the market town, a soft strawhat with a wide floppy brim is worn on top of the turban and tied under the chin. Apparently, women's dress is still one of the most distinguishing marks of the Tai group in Daikong.

Another distinguishing mark of the Tai group is the tattoo. Traditionally, Tai men tattooed their body extensively from the neck to the ankle. The designs and patterns of tattoo were believed to have the effects of charms. Today, most Tai men still have their body tattooed in some isolated parts, especially on the thighs, on the legs down to mid-calf, on the belly, the back, or the arms and hands.

During the past two decades, villagers have witnessed a considerable amount of changes in Lak Chang. The market economy is beginning to pervade every corner of social life in the village. Elsewhere in China, the increasing demand for agricultural produce to feed the growing urban population brings about a sharp increase in the price of farm produce which is a great incentive to production. More and more cash crops are produced directly for the market. The whole process of agricultural production has come under the influence of the market and agricultural productivity has increased tremendously. Increasing productivity raises the income of Lak Chang villagers and is beginning to bring about a sharp increase in consumer spending. The village economy is undergone a complete transformation.

With the introduction of electricity in the late 1970s, demands for television set and other electrical appliances have skyrocketted. Motorization has also made tremendous progress during the past decade. The construction of new roads has allowed many convenient and novel commodities to flow in. Most peasant households now own a small motorized farm truck which serves as a good facility to transport agricultural produce from the village to the market. The social distance between Lak Chang and Muang Khon has been remarkably shortend because of this transportation development.

A turban is an indicator of marital status among theTai women.

All kinds of manufactured goods, from soap, toothpaste, and cigarettes to motorcycles, have become daily necessities. These changes in consumption pattern means that most peasant households find themselves in a situation in which more and more cash must be earned and spent to meet the needs of everyday life.

Lak Chang has never been an isolated village; the peasants always considered themselves to be a part of Muang Khon, and have always had contacts with the *chau faa*[5] and the market. During the past decade, however, the peasants' contacts with Muang Khon and the outside world have intensified. Every five days, the women take bamboo chopsticks, baskets, bananas, mustards, cabbages, watermelons, and other agricultural produces to the open market in Muang Khon. Their motorized farm truck allow them to buzz over the country roads to Muang Khon in just twenty minutes.

Links to the outside world are also provided by the omnipresent Chinese television sets which bring forth the events of local and national significance. Increasing links and access to the world outside Lak Chang, however, does not necessarily mean that the peasants are interested in it. Most villagers have only a slight idea of the world beyond Muang Khon. Many of them knew that the *Maan Tai (Shan)* were fighting against the Burmese army and they knew that there were *phii noong müang thai* (Thai brothers and sisters) who live in Thailand. The villagers' knowledge of the outside world is not increased by their compulsory six-year primary education in the village school. The only language of instruction is Chinese and the school teachers teach mostly by rote learning, which gives no encouragement to originality. The result is that the children emerge from primary school semiliterate at best. They can converse in Chinese but very few can read or write fluently. None of the children continue their education beyond the primary school. Worse of all, the Tai written language has not been taught for a few decades, and now only a handful of villagers, mostly elderly men, can read or write in Tai. Those who can read seldom do, and the village culture is becoming an illiterate culture.

After four centuries of Chinese domination, the people of Lak Chang and Daikong have been under the authority of the Chinese government officials, have been taught Chinese in schools, and have been subjected to pressures, directly or indirectly, which tend to acculturate them to the Han culture emanating from Kunming and to assimilate them into the national Chinese society dominated by

[5] *Chau faa*, literally means "Lord of the Sky", was the traditional ruler of Tai states in Daikong and the Burma-Yunnan frontier areas.

the Han Chinese. These forces have had their effect, and the village is now definitely a part of China.

Nevertheless, the Tais have not forgotten their ethnic identity, established during many centuries of independent existence. The villagers still speak *kham tai* (Tai language), which is intelligible, but with difficulty, to a Thai speaker. The villagers distinguish themselves from the Hans, who serve as government officials over them and who, at times, look down upon the Tais with ill-disguised disdain as *"Pai-I"* (barbarians) having uncivilized habits and queer customs.

The villagers view the Chinese, whom they call by the derogatory term *khai*, with mixed emotions. The Chinese own almost all grocery shops and department stores in Muang Khon and are the middleman and brokers who collect the peasants' agricultural produce and ship it to Kunming. On the one hand, the Tais admire the industriousness and the business ability of the Chinese. But on the other hand, they are envious of the political power that the Chinese have over them. The Han represent progress, modernity, power and prestige and hold the leading position in the government; and villagers admire them as much as they resent them.

The Tai peasants are also aware of linguistic and cultural differences between themselves and the many ethnic groups, especially Jingpo, Palong, Lisu, and Ashang, who live in the mountains surrounding Muang Khon. Their attitude toward these ethnic groups is clouded with an air of confident superiority. A mixed marriage between a Tai and other ethnic groups, including the Han, has never taken place in Lak Chang.[6] "We are a proud people", says Sam Fong, an elderly villager, his eyes gaze at the lushly green rice fields in front of him, "as proud as a peacock"[7]. A proud people they certainly are.

The Family and the Village Community

The primary unit in Tai village society is the family household. Basically, this household is a small-family type, which consists of father, mother and children, and sometimes grandparents. At times, the family household becomes a small extended family; for example, when a son's wife comes to live in the house, and when a child is born to this marriage. Once a young couple have become parents, they usually start a household of their own. Only one son will remain in, and eventually inherit the family household.

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[6] In the Kachins Hill Area where Leach did his field work, he noted that intermarriage between the members of different ethnic groups, especially between the Tais (Shan) and Kachins, is very common. This observation, however, does not apply in the case of Tai Daikong.

[7] The peacock is one of the most important cultural symbols of the Tai ethnic group.

The household is the basic unit of the village community. All village cooperative activities center around the family household rather than the individuals. The village community is not organized into formal neighborhood units or divisions,[1] but informal neighborhood groups do exist for labor exchange in transplanting and harvesting. These groups are determined basically on a geographical basis within the village, for neighbors often work with each other, but the labor-exchange group may also include kin and friends from all parts of the village. Religious ceremonies, temple-building and upkeeping, funerals and weddings, and repairing of the village roads and irrigation canals are done by the community as a whole.

Every Tai village is a distinct community; spatially, historically, and socio-economically separated from other villages. The people who reside in Lak Chang, for instance, feel a special bond and unity because of their common residence; they speak of *phii noong Lak Chang* and identify themselves as brothers and sisters of Lak Chang.

Village unity is enhanced by endogamous marriages. Over 90 percent of the men and 95 percent of the women marry within the village. This makes Lak Chang a special kind of kinship unit in which almost every villager is related by consanguineal and affinal ties of diverse kinds. All villagers address each other by appropriate kinship terms. They are grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, siblings, children and grandchildren to one another, and appropriate behavior follows the terms of address.

The Tai kinship system is a cognatic system. Descent is reckoned through both parents and every individual is equally related to the relatives of both. Even though the family name comes through the father who is the head of the family, both maternal and paternal kinsmen are recognized and both are equally related to the family.

Family Relations

In Tai village society, it is morally incumbent upon the young to render esteem and offer homage to their elders. This holds not only for kin, but also for non-kin, and it applies not only to members of different generations but to age differences within the same generation. Hence, in the Tai address system, the honorifics which precede proper names are systematically age-graded, depending on whether the person addressed is of lower, the same, or a higher age grade than the speaker.

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[1] Cf. Potter (1976: 36-47).

This same attention to absolute and relative age is found in the kinship terminology as well. Generation is a distinctive feature of every kin term. More than that, all kinsmen within the same, the first ascending, and the first descending generations are also differentiated according to relative age. Thus, father's elder brother *lung* has a different term from father's younger brother *aa*, older sister *phii sao* or *phii naang* has a different term from young sister *noong saao*, and so on.

The age-graded kinship terms primarily reflect differences in the rights and duties associated with elder and younger kin, which are based on moral obligations. A younger brother, for example, has the moral obligation of paying homage to an elder brother, and the elder, in turn, has the moral obligation of caring for the younger's children during his absence or after his death. Hence, not only are older and younger brothers designated by different terms, but so are father's elder and younger brothers, and for exactly the same reasons.

In Daikong, as in almost all other societies, the closest ties of biological kinship are those found among the members of the family, the primary relatives of parents, children and siblings. In the family the father occupies the highest position and demands a marked form of respect. For example, the father has his own seat at the dining table, and the wife and children who walk pass by must do so with his or her body politely bent. The position of the mother, on the other hand, is one of affection and tenderness rather than one of authority that demands rigid form of respectful behavior.[9]

Though the outward expression of authority should come from the man in his role as the head of the family, in the husband-wife relationship, the wife's opinion is often consulted, since Tai women in general have a considerable range of freedom of action, play an important role in economic matters, and men do respect their opinion.

Grandparents by virtue of their seniority in age demand deference and respect. Their advice and wishes should be followed. In lesser degree the same holds true with regard to one's elder siblings and other senior kinsmen. There is a strong sense of obligation on the part of the children to support and look after their parents in old age. Tai are dutiful children, and treat their old parents with kindness and reverence.[10] Grandparents help look after the house and little grandchildren. In return grandchildren dutifully serve their grandparents when they require help, such as escorting them to the monastery where they may spend

[9] Cf. Pattaya (1959: 202).
[10] Milne (1910: 76).

their time in peace and quiet, in meditation or in performing religious ceremonies.[11]

In the Tai family, parents are not only the child's most important kinsmen, but they are the focal points for the rest of the kinship system. It is the bond with his/her parents that forges the child's bonds with other kinsmen, that recruits him/her to membership in labor-exchange groups, and that creates for him/her a network of bilateral kindred.

The parent-child bond is the strongest of all kinship bonds. It should be noted, however, that its strength varies according to the various dyads – father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, mother-daughter – that comprise it. This being the case, family relations within each of these dyads must receive special attention. The focus here, however, is on the cultural norms and expectations which govern these dyadic relationships, rather than on their expression in actual behavior.

For both parents, the attachment to the son is held to be stronger than to the daughter, a belief which parents generally explain by reference to the son's greater attention to them as they grow older. Daughters, they point out, will eventually get married and leave home. Sons – and their dutiful wives – on the other hand, will care for them when they are old, do their washing, cooking, and so on. Regardless of sentiment, this greater attention on the part of the son is culturally constrained by the sexual division of labor on the one hand, and by prescriptive institutional arrangements on the other. The latter arrangements not only determine certain forms of parent-son interaction, but they themselves are institutionalized expressions of the cultural conception of, and the normative emphasis on, the strength of the parent-son bond.

For example, there is the custom of newlyweds residing postnuptially with the groom's parents. There is also the custom of the youngest son living permanently with his parents and caring for them until they die.

Despite these cultural conceptions of, and parental expectations concerning, the son, it should be noted in passing that in everyday life the parent-daughter (especially the mother-daughter) bond is very strong. Daughters continue to provide invaluable service to their parents even after their marriage. It is not uncommon for a married daughter to return home and assist her mother at times of illness, or during funerals and wedding ceremonies when helping hands are greatly needed.

If the parents' relationship to the son is conceived to be closer than that to the daughter, the relationship of children of both sexes to the mother is thought to be more intimate than that to the father. From earliest childhood, the father is more

[11] Milne (1910: 87).

remote than the mother, and since, normatively, the father is the primary locus of authority, he often engenders a feeling of fear which sometimes persists into adulthood. Although both parents may punish and even beat their young children, fathers do so more frequently and severely. Thus, children and teenagers will seldom go to father when they have a problem, or when they are in trouble, for his initial response is expected to take the form of criticism if not punishment. Often, they approach their mother, or an aunt or uncle, instead, and the latter will then broach the matter to the father for them. Sometimes the reluctance to approach the father is extreme[12], as in the case of Sam Fong's grandson, Kong, who, when he wished to marry his present wife, asked his mother to speak to his father on his behalf. This, of course, is an extreme case, but even in the more typical cases the child's relationship to the father include a greater degree of respect and deference than of intimacy and affection.

If the father is viewed more as a figure of authority, one who must be treated with deference, the mother is viewed more as a nurturing figure, and a source of affection. The mother-child bond is not only conceived to be stronger than the father-child bond, but, if cultural expressions are to be taken seriously, the mother may be said to be viewed as the pivotal person in the family. The task of child-rearing is thrusted solely upon her shoulder and the mother imprints a great influence on the children. "If the child commits evil", as a Tai saying goes, "the mother is to blame". Because of her greater importance to the child, it is believed that a child should not be deprived of his mother. Hence, in the case of divorce (which is very rare) children are allowed to live with the mother only to return to the father's household when they are fully grown.

Although the tie to the mother is held to be an especially close one for children of both sexes, its behavioral expression is particularly evident in the mother-daughter relationship. Even when the daughters move out and live with their husbands in separate households, mothers and daughters are constantly visiting each other. Daughters go to their mothers above all others with their problems, mothers and daughters are close confidants, mothers take care of daughter's children and so on. To care for her daughters' children is the mother's responsibility, but the care of her son's children, as Sam Fong's wife, Kham, put it, is the responsibility of his wife and her mother. Indeed, the mother-daughter bond, is the keystone of the Tai family. Marriage does little to attenuate it, and it serves as the chief linkage between households.

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[12] Milne (1919: 76) has also noted a similar reluctance to approach the father among the Tai Yai in Burma, and made the following observation: "A son who wishes to marry may not inform his father direct, but ask his mother or sister to do so".

Second in importance only to the parent-child bond is that between siblings. If mutual assistance and aid are normative expectations in all kin relationships, they are especially strong in the sibling relationships. The responsibilities and expectations inherent in the sibling relationship can be differentiated into sex-specific and age-specific responsibilities.

In childhood, the elder sister is important for younger siblings of both sexes, and in adulthood, the elder brother is especially important for the younger sister. In childhood the elder sister is a surrogate mother for her younger siblings. When mother is absent – when she is busy working in the fields or going to the market – it is the elder sister who cares for them, nurtures them and plays with them. A typical scene in Lak Chang is a young girl, even of seven or eight, carrying a younger sibling on her back, giving him food, or preventing him from falling into the waterways. The elder brother, on the other hand, is a surrogate father. He has the moral obligation to watch over his sister and guard her virtue until she is married.

On all accounts, the relationship between siblings of opposite sex is especially close, to some extent they are confidants. The elder brother gives advice to his sister and vice versa. In a sharply segregated society where young men and women (unless they are siblings or cousins) sit at separate tables during a feast and in most social gatherings, the sister plays a crucial role as a match-maker for her brother. In fact, "no love affairs could commence," as one peasant woman put it, "and no marriages could take place without the assistance of his sister (and/or female cousin) and the blessing of his mother". Since the mother lives with her son in old age, she usually makes her preferred choice of daughter-in-law known to her son. This by no means implies, however, that marriages are fixed and romantic love is reproached. On the contrary, courting is freely allowed in Tai village life. Young men and women have many opportunities to meet discretely and court in the fields during transplanting and harvesting, and on religious ceremonial days or other festivities.

There are, however, important social and cultural constraints on the marriage arrangements, if the choice of his marriage partner is deemed undesirable by the mother. For instance, the mother may refuse to talk to the father on his behalf. On all accounts, then, the brother usually consults his sister on this matter, and the sister plays a crucial role in the selection of her brother's marriage partner. She approaches the girl he desires and if the girl entertains no fancy for him, she tells his sister directly. As a rule, the initiative for establishing a relationship between a boy and a girl is exclusively the boy's, for however much she may be attracted to a boy, there is no socially approved means by which a girl can take the

initiative directly. If a girl likes a boy, she may talk admiringly about him to her girl friends, with the expectation that they, in turn, will report her feelings to the boy's sister and eventually to the boy. Even the boy seldom attempts to contact the girl directly for fear of being turned down and losing face among his peers. The boy normally approaches the girl through a go-between. Generally, he chooses his sister for this function. His sister then tries to contact the girl and tell the girl of his love, or he may ask her to deliver a love-letter to her. If the girl reciprocates the boy's wish, she may invite him to her house for a visit, and the relationship between the two begins from there.

The sibling relationship is a special one in Tai social life. Siblings are expected to come to each others' assistance in time of need, and to participate in the celebration and commemorations associated with birth, marriage, death and so on. Both physically and financially, the assistance and participation of siblings at a wedding or funeral is all but automatic.

Choice of a Marriage Partner

Marriage is a highly desirable institution in Tai peasant society. In Lak Chang, for instance, only one male (aged 50) and two females (aged 43 and 45) had never married. The small percentage of unmarried adults in Lak Chang is an indicator of the desirability and structural significance of marriage in the Tai social life.

The parents are very concerned that their children make good marriages, boys' mothers, especially, being on the lookout for a good match for their sons. To be sure, the family plays an important role in the initiation of a marriage and in the choice of a marriage partner. Although a marriage can be initiated by the parents, it can be effected only with the consent of the children. What is meant by "parental arrangement" is that the parents – and it is always the boy's parents who make the first move – initiate the negotiations, subject to the approval of the children.

Just as parents will not, and cannot, compel a child to marry against his will, children are similarly loathe to choose a spouse against the parents' will. Parental approval or disapproval of a marriage depends to a large extent on the degree to which the child's choice is consistent with the following criteria, listed in descending order of importance. First of all, it is preferred that the intended spouse should be a Tai. Lak Chang as well as other Tai village parents strongly oppose marriage to a non-Tai. In fact, there are no inter-ethnic marriages in Lak Chang. A second preference is that the intended spouse should be a fellow villager. This emphasis on village endogamy is based on several considerations. One does not know a stranger as well as a fellow villager; parents prefer that their

child live close to them after marriage; and finally a stranger is never fully integrated into his spouse's village. A third parental preference in regard to a child's marriage is that the intended spouse should be older than the intended bride by at least 2-3 years. Tai girls are seldom married before the age of sixteen, and if they do not fall in love, they often remain unmarried until they are eighteen or twenty. The average age in Lak Chang is about eighteen. Men marry at the age of twenty or twenty-two. Aside from important differences in sexual maturation between males and females, a marriage in which the wife is the elder spouse is considered inappropriate because it would cause important confusion in the sex and age respect categories; on the one hand, females are expected to show respect to males but, on the other hand, the younger are expected to show respect to their elders. Preponderantly the ages of spouses in Lak Chang conform to the expected pattern.

Based on the degree of parental approval or disapproval, the Tai classify the ways in which marriage may be contracted into three types:

(1) the couple fall in love and the parents happily approve of their children's choice, (2) the parents grudgingly consent to their children's choice and

(3) the parents arrange the marriage with the consent of their children.

When the girl finally agrees to the boy's marriage proposal, he returns to his home and asks his mother to tell his father. If satisfied, his father asks an intermediary – usually an elderly man – to visit the girl's parent in order to discuss the proposed marriage.[13] Should her parents give their consent, the next step is for his parents to approach the girl's parents and discuss the amount of bridewealth. A certain sum of money must be paid by the groom's father to the father of the bride, the amount of money varying according to the "social distance" between the two families.[14] If the groom is a fellow villager, and his father is a close friend of the bride's father, the amount ask is not large, usually 15,000 Yuan [15] is at first suggested as the price by the father of the girl, but after much bargaining, 10,000 Yuan may be accepted. The total amount of money must be paid a week before the wedding day. In addition to the money, the father of the groom is expected to contribute a substantial amount of pork and whisky to the bride's father for the wedding feasts.

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[13] The use of an intermediary seems to be a standard practice among many Tai groups, including those in Thailand, as well as in China. See Spiro (1977: 180).

[14] In earlier times, a ceiling for the bridewealth was normally set at 500 Yuan by the Chaopha of Muang Khon, and the bride's father could not ask for more than 500 Yuan in exchange of her hand in marriage. But in recent years, the amount of money paid for brideweath has been skyrocketting. A groom's father could pay as much as 12,000 to 20,000 Yuan for bridewealth.

[15] Approximately, 8 Yuan = 1 US$.

Before the date of the wedding can be fixed, the horoscopes of both bride and groom must be carefully studied, many visits being paid to the astrologers or "wise men" of the village.[16] When a propitious day is chosen, invitations are sent by the parents of the young couple to bid their friends and relatives come to the wedding feasts.

The Wedding in Lak Chang

During the third week of our first visit to Lak Chang, the house of Liu was suddenly bursted with activities. Sam Fong's eldest grandson, Kong, was about to get married. Friends and relatives came pouring in to help prepared for the wedding. Unlike their counterparts in the Shan states of Burma, [17] the marriage among the Tai Yai in Daikong takes place with a great amount of ceremony. The wedding feasts are normally held for three consecutive days. All in all, twelve meals are offered to the guests.[18]

In Tai social life, the purpose of the wedding is publicity in the better sense of the term. It is the announcement of a new relationship in which society, as well as the two families themselves, is interested. For this reason, there are a ceremony, receptions, and witnesses. The wedding creates status, rights and opportunity. It gives the couple the opportunity to achieve a new degree of mutuality. The wedding is a major vehicle for the couple's expression of mutual commitment. Therefore, it has a personal as well as a social function.

In theory, the most important participants in a wedding are the bride and groom. But in reality, the wedding debacle often reflects dominating personalities or social ambitions in the parents. Exploiting the wedding to serve parental needs is facilitated by the fact that the groom's parents traditionally pay the wedding expenses. In actual practice, the parents are in the middle of wedding preparations, while the young couple remain on the periphery.

For the young couple, the ceremony marks the beginning of a new way of life. Marriage and parenthood both hinge on this event. The wedding can be properly labeled a "rite of passage" for it is the culmination of careful planning, the fulfillment of childhood dreams, and the high point in many a girl's life. Though handicapped by the Tai tradition of masculine unemotionalism, the groom, too, often finds his wedding deeply significant.

Although the wedding makes a tremendous difference in the lives of the couple, it marks a turning point for parents as well. When their first child is married, the

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[16] Cf. Milne (1910: 78).

[17] Cf. Milne (1910: 75-84).

[18] Tai villagers normally eat four meals a day: breakfast *(kao kon);* lunch *(kao pul);* supper *(kao poi)* and dinner *(kao kam).*

wedding ends the child-rearing stage and begins the "launching" phase in the cycle of family living. With their last child the launching process is completed.

For parents of the bride, their daughter's marriage is a kind of bereavement. There is a joy of course in the child's happiness. But when she leaves home, a void is left behind, even though the family ties are unbroken. Home is still the place to go for a visit or in times of trouble. After marriage, however, the child shifts her loyalty, her dependence, and her home base. As a result, life never looks quite the same again to the parents.

For the groom's parents, the wedding is a major social event and provide an opportunity to create a social display and to make a distinctive impression in the village circles. A large wedding should not be a burden that the groom's parents could not readily bear. After all, the family name is at stake. It is the face-saving, prestige-seeking personality that moves the Tai villagers to put a great deal of money and effort in organizing social festivities. And Kong's wedding is no exception.

A week before the wedding, Kong's parents called on his wife-to-be's parents to discuss the brideprice and the details of the wedding ceremony. The whole wedding process was planned rather in haste since the girl was already pregnant.[19] The brideprice was agreed at 11,000 Yuan, including 1,050 kilograms of pork and 250 bottles of rice wine.

As the wedding day drew closer, the house of Liu became even more chaotic. Preparation for a wedding involves innumerable details and activities, especially for the groom's household: the furnishing of the bridal chamber, the making of home-brewed rice wine, the preparation of the wedding feasts, and etc. Kong's old bedroom was refurnished and turned into the bridal chamber. The bamboo wall that separated his room from the family living room was torn down and replaced with a new one. A new coat of white color was painted, and brand-new red curtain was hang on all the walls. Kong's uncles were busy with the making of his new bed. The Tai villagers believe that the bridal chamber must be totally refurnished for the wedded pair. The bed, mattress, bed-sheets, blankets, pillows, coverlet, mosquito net, and other bedroom decor should be brand-new.

Two days before the wedding, tables, chairs, cooking utensils, rice bowls and other dining paraphernalia were prepared. About 25 tables were set up within the household compound. A temporary fire place was made in the open air behind the household kitchen, and the women of the family, female cousins and relatives gathered round the kitchen and the cooking pots, helping to prepare the food.

In recent years, premarital sexual relationships have become more common among the younger generations of Tai villagers. If an unmarried girl is pregnant and the father of the child does not intend to marry her, she is considered disgraced.

There was much cooking to be done, and they were to cook almost continuously for three days during the wedding.

The wedding feasts were held separately at the houses of the bride and the groom. Separate invitations were sent by the parents of the couple to bid their friends and relatives come to the wedding feasts. It was almost as if the entire village was temporarily splitted into two friendly camps, friends of the bride's and the groom's households, even though in actual practices these two groups had a great deal of overlapping members.

Guests arrived at the groom's household in the early morning of the wedding day, and the first meal of the day being prepared for them. As the guests enter the groom's household, each made a cash contribution which was used to help defray the expenses. The amount of each contribution was recorded so that the delicately balanced system of reciprocity may be maintained. The guests then proceeded to the household compound and were greeted by the family members. They were invited to sit down and enjoy a sumptuous meal with rice wine. The feasts went on and on from early morning until midnight, and guests would come and go as they pleased. Younger villagers, especially friends of the groom, who had time to spare could stay and party all day long.

Early in the evening of the second wedding day, the bride's father sent his "presents" over to the groom's household. It is customary that the bride's father spend at least one-third of the bridewealth buying gifts to the wedded couple. The presents are mostly household items: cooking utensils, mattress, blankets, cupboards, stereo, television set, bicycle, and etc. All the gifts were displayed in the middle of the compound so that they could be seen by all the guests. If the gifts were too little, the bride's father would loose face among his fellow villagers.

At about six o'clock in the evening, the groom's friends came to his home to escort him to the bride. In front of the procession went musicians, with drums, gongs and flutes. After the band came the "escort girls" *sao hub* who went to greet the bride and escort her back to the groom's household. Dressed in finest Tai costume, the escort girls usually consist of two married women and two unmarried ones. After the escort girls came several elderly men, friends of the father of the groom, then the groom and his friends. When they reached the house of the bride, the elders were the first to enter and they asked the bride's parents that she should be brought to her husband. The custom is that they should ask for her three times. Twice the father refused the request, saying that he had changed his mind and preferred to keep his daughter a little longer at home; the third time he sent her mother for her. Now the bride had a part to play, and she refused to leave her bedroom. The young married women who were part of the escort girls

went to her, begging her to come with them to her husband who was waiting for her. At first she told them to back off, and started to weep bitterly. It is considered correct behavior for a bride to shed many tears or at least pretends to do so. At last they persuaded her to go to her father, who placed her hand in the hand of the groom saying, "Here is your wife, you may take her."[20]

The ceremonial fetching of the bride by the groom and his party was now almost over. The process was on its way back to the groom's household. The band went first as in the former process. The newly married pair did not walk together: the groom, with his escort girls, preceded by the elderly men, followed the band, then the bride with her escorts. Another set of escort girls *sao song* – two young married women and two unmarried ones – was added to the procession. The bride's parents and all her relatives remained in their own home.

There is no special form of dress for bride or groom. Kong, the groom, wore a brand-new, western styled suit and tie, while his bride was in her finest Tai costume. Her skirt was of black cloth with velvet bands near the foot; the skirt was decorated with panels of woven silks of bright colors. The jacket was of pink colored silk with high collar hiding the throat. Her powdered face was covered with red silk and the dangling pearls of her headdress.

When the wedding procession approached the groom's household, they were greeted by a cheering crowd and the loud noise of firecrackers. The groom waited for his bride in front of his house and when she arrived, he took her hand and led her to the family living room. There, the bride and groom kneeled side by side facing sets of seated village elders, the groom's grandparents and parents. A village elder instructed the couple to worship the elders and the groom's parents, to prostrate themselves before them, to request their formal approval for their marriage, and to beg their forgiveness for any offense they might have dealt them. The parents and the most senior elder signified their approval by saying *juu dii kin waan* which expressed their hope that health, wealth, longevity and happiness be vouchsafed to the couple.

After the ceremony, the bride was escorted to the bridal chamber. Two red candles were placed on a stool near the bed. The candles were to last out the night. So was the oil lamp under the bed. They were symbols of their long life together. A red silk quilt was spread on the bed. The bride, still in her wedding gown, sat on the edge of the bed, her head bowed a little and waited for the groom. The groom, however, did not see his bride until the small hours of the morning as his friends tried their best to keep him outside the bridal chamber. This was part of the ceremonial obstruction to the completion of the wedding. In

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Milne (1910:81-82).

addition, the groom was prevented by the bride's party from entering the bridal chamber until they were paid a ransom. It is customary that the groom should overcome all the ceremonial obstruction and complete the wedding by entering the bridal chamber and removed the bride's headdress.[21]

The day after the ceremonial fetching of the bride, the wedding feasts continued for the third day. On this day, the bride, dressed in appropriate costume for a married woman, may appear from time to time to help out in the kitchen, and the guests could get a glimpse of her. For the first time in her life, her long black hair was combed back, knotted into a chignon, and covered with a pink turban, the symbol of a married woman. By the end of the third day, the wedding feasts were over.

Tai wedding is a purely civil contract, and in no way a religious function. Monks are never invited nor are they present at the ceremony. The wedding is merely a public announcement of the couple's intention of living together as man and wife. The wedding is nevertheless a very important ceremony in the eyes of the Tai villagers. A marriage which is not arranged by the family is not a marriage. And a girl, despite her upbringing and the prestige of her family, is not respectable if she enters into marriage unauthorized and unrecognized by the families of both sides. For the parents, and especially the girl's parents, elopement is a cause of such intense shame that they will often agree to their daughter's marriage, despite their disapproval of her intended husband, just so she will not elope.

The wedding is also important for other practical and culturally defined functions as well. First, the wedding represents the only unambiguous means of announcing to the village that the couple intend to live together as man and wife. Second, the wedding is the only means of publicly declaring that the parents of the couple have consented to their marriage. As such the wedding establishes the fact that the couple are truly married, no one can contest the rights of inheritance by which, in the event of death, the property passes, first to the surviving spouse, and then to the children. Even more importantly, the wedding represents the only means of establishing a new household, and a new membership in the village community. Only by means of a "proper" marriage, the couple and their children can be assured of a fair share of farm land which will be allocated to them by the village land committee.

For the parents, the most important culturally defined functions of the wedding are related to the ever-present Tai motives of prestige-enhancement. In Tai

[21] A great many wedding symbols: the headdress, the red candles, the lamp, and the firecrackers, to name just a few, have been influenced by the Han Chinese.

village society, prestige derived from wealth is directly proportional to the magnitude of conspicuous display, including both conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste; and there is little doubt that for the groom's parents, at least, the wedding provides an opportunity for significant social display, because it is they who finance the wedding. Thus the cost of a wedding in Lak Chang, a village whose annual average family income is 12,000-15,000 Yuan, ranged from 25,000 to 30,000 Yuan.[22] In short the cost of a wedding is twice the annual income of the average village family.[23]

What is impressive about these figures is that the primary expense of the wedding has no relationship to the ceremony itself, but rather to the food offered at the wedding feasts. Since wealth-derived prestige is a function of conspicuous display, the greater the number of guests, the more refined the quality of the food served, and hence the greater the expense of the wedding feasts, the greater the prestige value of the wedding. By the same token, the greater in number and the more expensive the wedding presents are, the greater the prestige of the bride's parents.

Sex and Marriage

In Tai village society where premarital and extramarital sexual relations are either prohibited or difficult to achieve, sex is one of the most important motivational bases for contracting a marriage. This does not mean that Tais are especially concerned with sex. On the contrary, the Tai villagers, like most other peoples, view sex and marriage as intimately related, sex being one of the prime motives for, and an important ingredient of, marriage.

Most Tais in Lak Chang assert that of all drives the sex drive is the strongest and the most intense. The men admit that the intensity of the sex drive diminishes with age; as people grow older, other drives, first economic and then religious, become stronger. In any event, most Tais, both male and female, are agreed that sex is a strong drive, although it is one in which a woman has more self-control. Men, on the other hand, have low threshold for sexual temptation, and if the conditions are propitious, a man will sleep with any woman he can lay his hands on.

There are two primary expenses of the wedding: one is the brideprice (approximately 10,000-15,000 Yuan) and another is the expense of the wedding feasts (approximately 15,000-20,000 Yuan).

The magnitude of the wedding expenditures is not unique to Tai village society. The wedding is an occasion for conspicuous display of wealth in many societies of South and Southeast Asia. Spiro (1977:189) notes that in Burma, the cost of a wedding is equal to the annual income of the average village family, and Indian weddings, according to Mandelbaum (1970:115) are often more lavish than the Burmese.

The low threshold for sexual temptation among men explains why, in ideal terms, a male and a female are prohibited from being alone together. It is assumed that all men will be sexually tempted if they are alone with a woman. If a man and a woman are seen together, especially at night, it is simply taken for granted that they are sexually attracted to each other. Hence proper women will not be seen with a man outside her village unsupervised by her mother or brother.

Furthermore, there is a strong cultural emphasis on modesty concerning bodily exposure. The Tai consider it shameful to be seen nude, and one of the most impressive feats of young village women is their agility in changing into fresh clothing, after bathing or washing their hair at the village waterways without exposing any part of their body. Modesty concerning bodily exposure does not apply, however, to married women, who are often seen semi-nude when nursing a baby. When the weather is hot, it is not uncommon for elderly women to wear neither turban nor jacket. The upper skirt is sometimes discarded and the under skirt is tied very tightly under the arms by a string which is knotted across the chest. When a Tai woman is working in the field, for instance, she is not ashamed to be seen in this undress attire. Elderly women sometimes work nude to the waist but one rarely sees young women in a semi-nude condition.

In addition, there is also a cultural emphasis on modesty concerning the discussion of sexual matters in mixed company. Although sex is a favorite topic of conversation in unisex associations, and although sexual banter and obscene sexual humor expressed in double entendre, is permitted in certain contexts in sexually mixed group (for instance, at the wedding feasts), serious sexual discussion is never engaged in the presence of the opposite sex.

It is paradoxical that despite the strong emphasis on modesty concerning the discussion of sexual matters or the bodily exposure, Tai cultural values concerning sexual relations are neither puritanical nor restrictive. Even though, in ideal terms, premarital sexual behavior is regulated, and virginity, especially in girls, is highly valued. But in reality, young men and women have a great deal of freedom; and though such freedom rarely tends to promiscuity, premarital sexual relations and pregnancy is not uncommon in Tai villages. Indeed, it is considered quite normal for a young woman to have several boyfriends. The parents' major concern is for their girl to avoid giving birth to an illegitimate child.[24] When an unmarried girl is pregnant, then, the immediate problem at hand is to arrange a marriage between her and the father of the child. If the father is known who does not intend to marry her, she is considered disgraced.

[24] Metford (1935: 199); quoted from Pattaya (1959:203)

Although the unwed girl's child is not stigmatized, her parents are. Hence the values concerning sexual modesty are transmitted fairly early from mother to daughter and sexual education is thoroughly given to teenage girls. Daughters usually learn from their mothers about the origin of babies, how to behave and control themselves in front of boys. From early childhood, girls are taught how to behave in a lady-like manner, they are prohibited from using obscenities. Girls freely discuss sexual matters with their mothers, aunts and grandmothers, while boys learn about sexual behavior from friends and elder brothers.

Among the various forms of sexual behavior, only heterosexuality is found in Lak Chang. Other forms – homosexuality, various perversions, and rape – are absent. In general, village sexuality consists of normal, heterosexual behavior, typically with one's spouse. Extramarital sexual activities and adultery[25] are considered a grave offense for both men and women.

Family and the Life Cycle

An important culturally defined function of the marriage is to produce offsprings. In recent years, the number of children a village family could have is regulated by a strict birth control policy whereby the Tai, as an ethnic minority group, could only have two children per family. This means, in effect, that the size of the family has become considerably smaller, with an average of 4-5 persons per family.

Tai villagers firmly believe that children are given as rewards for merit done by the parents in previous existence. When many children are born in a family, they show that the parents in their previous lives were known for their kindness and charity and for their good deeds among far-away and forgotten generations of men and spirits. [26] On the contrary, to have no children is a very deplorable state. It signifies that either husband or wife, or both, have been sadly lacking in merit in previous existence. The baby is a sign of moral respectability, a proof of excellence of the past lives of the parents.[27]

Therefore when a baby is born it receives a warm welcome in a Tai home. An ideal Tai family today consists of the parents and two children, a boy and a girl. A boy brings more gladness into the family than a girl, as all Tai believe that a

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[25] Adultery is very rare in Tai village society. According to one village elder I interviewed, there is only one known "adultery" case in Lak Chang during the past several decades, the one in which the husband was having an affair with the wife of his closed friends. Both were subsequently banished from the village.

[26] Milne (1910:31).

[27] It is interesting to note here in passing that childless mothers are often instructed by the village elders to make a tiny baby doll, dressed in beautiful costume, and hang it near the Buddha image in the monastery. It is believed that by so doing, the good spirits who carry the souls of the children to their mothers may see and understand the message.

man stands on a higher stage of existence than a woman, and a son is expected to inherit the family household, carry on the family name and take care of the aging parents in their golden years. A woman, however, also holds important place in the family, and therefore a baby girl is also cherished and welcome.[28]

Birth usually takes place in the home. During and immediately after the delivery, the household is filled with female relatives: mother, sisters, nieces; and friends who come to help with the cooking, cleaning and other household chores. During the birth, the husband and all the male relatives are not allowed inside the room. The wife's mother or an aunt, and a midwife help during the delivery. When a baby is born, she is made to cry by patting or by pouring a little cold water on her head. When she has made her voice heard, her grandmother or her aunt gives her the first bath by pouring warm water over her and rubs her gently. Then she is dried and dressed. Her little stomach is wrapped with a strip of cloth, and a silk scarf is twisted round her head. A large needle is attached in front of the scarf to ward off bad spirits.

When the mother has rested for a little while her baby is handed to her, and the baby may have her first meal. The mother will afterwards feed the baby at any hour, day or night, whenever she cries, she is fed.

After the baby is born, a fire is lighted near the mother and is kept burning day and night in all weathers for 29 days, during which time she is not expected to do any housework so has a quiet time to rest and grow strong. Her mother, an aunt, or a sister stays with her and helps with the cooking and taking care of the baby. It is also the time when the woman learns the art of mothering from her mother. The practice of *juu fai* or lying near the fire, or "roasting"[29] is common among the Burmese and the Thai[30] as well. In childbirth there is discharge of blood and filthy matter; this is regarded as impure. The purpose of *juu fai* is thus to clean[31] the mother of impurities and perspiration in the body. Lying near the fire is "cleansing with fire," as a village midwife put it, "in order to dry up the things which are impure."

While lying near the fire, the young mother undergoes a number of post-partum medical-cum-psychological treatments. Every morning, her mother prepares a medicine ball by pounding salt, tamarind leaves, turmeric, and other medicinal

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[28] Indeed, when two boys are born to a Tai mother, she often bemoans of a daughter she is deprived of. A daughterless mother often develops close relationship with her nieces, or later on in life, her granddaughters.

[29] Milne (1910:33).

[30] Anuman Rajadhon (1961: 146).

[31] Tai villagers regard childbirth as an impurity. If anyone approaches and witnesses a childbirth, she is rendered impure. Therefore, a man cannot come within the area for fear that his charms tattooed on his body will lose their efficacy.

herbs, and wrap them in a cloth and tie them tightly, forming a ball for massaging. The ball is then dipped in a warm liquid medicine that has been mixed and rubbed it all over the body, especially the breasts and the nipples. Tai villagers believe that immediately after the birth of a child, the mother's breasts contain hard lumps which hurt and cannot be touched. In order to relieve the pain and facilitate the flow of milk, the lumps must be massaged daily until the pain gradually lessens and disappears.

After massaging with the ball, the young mother's body is pressed with a salt pot. The salt pot is prepared by putting salt into a clay pot covered with a lid and heat it until the salt in the pot pops and crackles. The whole pot is then wrapped in a cloth, leaving enough of the ends to gather in a bunch for carrying. The salt pot is then pressed on the young mother's body, especially rolling it over the pubic mound, believing that this practice causes the womb to shrink and return to its "cradle," i.e., to its original position. After the massage, the young mother baths in the liquid medicine and then washes it off with warm water. The entire procedure is repeated daily until she emerges from the fire a month later.

During the whole period of lying near the fire, the young mother is prepared a special diet. Normally she eats boiled rice with salt or dried fish and hot vegetable soup. She is not allowed to have anything cold and must also take special medicine for the blood. Doors and windows in her room must always be kept closed, for it is feared that even a gentle breeze could cause a fever. The susceptability to fever and cold is said to be due to the fact that the young mother is still weak. Traditional wisdom also has it that bad spirits may slip in through the open doors and windows.

A Tai father plays very little role during the birth of his child, and after the birth, he is given to perform a simple ceremony of burying the afterbirth, that is, the placenta and the umbilical cord which has been severed by a piece of newly-cut and sharpened bamboo. The afterbirth are washed, rolled in a banana leaf, put in a bamboo cup, and buried it under a tree. The ceremony is simple and carried out in a pleasant and gentle manner, for this is believed to affect the future temper and well-being of the child. When the father takes the cup containing the afterbirth to bury it, he has a superstitious way of carrying it. For instance, it is believed that the father should shift the cup alternately from left to right, saying that when the child grows up, the child may be ambidextrous. If he carries the cup in only one hand, the child will be handy with only that hand. Burying the afterbirth at the base of a tree is said to be a superstition that it is a cool and shady place, and the child will live in happiness and have a long life like a tree. Sometimes Tai villagers bury the afterbirth under the stairway of the house, believing that by so doing it will bring more children and prosperity to the family.

The birthday of the child, that is, the day of the week on which he or she was born, is believed to be most essential to the child's happiness in after-life. There are many beliefs connected with this day in many activities throughout the life of the person. Such activities range from house-building, garden planting, business transaction, and marriage, to a more mundane activities such as hair- and nail-cutting, in all of which the birthday would determine the lucky or unlucky day for the undertaking. For instance, a man born on Saturday should not marry a girl also born on Saturday, otherwise the couple will spend the rest of their lives in poverty and sorrow. The birthday is therefore very important in Tai social life.

After the baby is born, the parents adhere to a strict post-partum sex taboo and sleep in separate rooms for at least a month. When the baby is one-month old, there is a ceremonial washing. The parents, the baby, the midwife and other relatives who were present when the child was born, go to a village waterway where the mother washes herself from head to foot, washes her baby, and pours water over the hair of her husband and the midwife. The mother is now purified and may assume her conjugal role and household duties again.

After the ceremonial washing, a feast is made for the naming of the baby. Parents invite their friends and relatives to be present and the food is prepared by the midwife who helped the mother when the baby was born. When the guests arrive, each drops a little present – a small cash contribution of 1-5 Yuans – into a small jar. Then the guests proceed to admire the baby, taking care not to say that the child is beautiful or big, for that might bring bad luck. Instead they make nice little speeches to the parents, saying *juu dii kin waan* – may you and your family live in good health and prosperity. When all the guests have arrived, the village elders pour water over the baby, and the midwife ties white cotton thread on the wrist of the baby. Sometimes, a small coin is pierced and strung on it, with the idea of having tied the prosperity and locked it. The midwife then gives her blessing to the baby, saying *juu dii kin waan.* The mother washes the hands of the midwife and the baby is now ready to receive his name. A village elder ties cotton thread round the baby's wrist, and tells him the name that has been chosen for him, usually by his grandfather or his father.

After the child is named, the midwife or the child's grandmother then shaves the first hair of the child, leaving a clump at the top of the head, saying that it protects the top of the head which is still thin. The hair that is shaved off is placed in a lotus leaf and floated on the water, or is thrown away, which ever is convenient. In shaving the first hair, it is customary for the parents to make an offering to the *chau baan* or the village spirits. The naming of the child, the shaving of his hair, and the offering to the village spirits are all a part of the

process whereby the new-born child is now registered as a full member of the family and the village.

In after-life, a child who suffers many illnesses or accidents may have his or her name changed more than once to puzzle the evil spirits that are tormenting him or her. Some symbolic ceremony is sometimes performed by throwing away the child and finding it again at full-moon, by giving it to a visitor who sells it back to the parents or by mock burial.[32] Tai villagers believes that all ills, sickness, and accidents come from evil spirits. When a child suffers many illnesses, a village wise man or a diviner may advice that some symbolic ceremony is performed. For instance, the child may be dressed up as one of the opposite sex, the child's name may be changed, or the parents may pretend that the child is lost or stolen. If there is no baby to torment, the spirits[33] will certainly be deceived and leave the house.

Tai boys and girls play together and are treated alike until they are five or six years old. From seven to twelve children of both sexes begin their formal education at the village school where they are taught reading and writing, arithmetic, geography and Chinese history. Chinese is the only language of instruction.

When they are not at school, children, especially girls, are expected to help with the household chores; they are taught to sweep the floor, cleaning the house and washing the clothes. Tai children today have been quick to adopt modern-style dress, which is greatly influenced by the Chinese. Boys now prefer to wear pants, T-shirt and sneakers, while girls wear western-style dress of brilliant colors, and when they go out or go to town they wear slacks and shirts instead of their traditional *pha sin.*

After completing the sixth grade, boys and girls – now teenagers – become more and more segregated. Village boys and girls become young men and women between the ages of fifteen and sixteen. Young men and women are recognized social statuses in Tai village society. A boy is considered to have reached manhood when he has been tattooed. Until he has enough courage to endure the painful and trying operation, his status is that of a child. Tai men are always tattooed, the norm is to tattoo both legs from waist to knee, the thighs being completely covered with an elaborate design in dark blue. This ornamentation may be continued to the ankles. The backs and chests of boys are seldom tattooed. Tattooing on the legs is chiefly practiced as a decoration; it is a sign of manhood, no girl recognizes the fact that a youth is a man of a marriageable age

[32] Milne (1910:37-39).

[33] Traditional beliefs in evil spirits continue to persist in Tai village society today. For more details on the Tai religiuous beliefs and rituals, see Chapter 5.

until his legs can show the blue markings. Designs, added from time to time on the arms and shoulders are charms to ward off evil spirits or accidents. Love-charms are tattooed on the tip of the tongue.

No ceremony marks the passing of childhood into womanhood. A girl becomes a *saao* when her body matures enough to be noticed by young men, who validate her new status by starting to flirt with here. A marriageable girl wears no turban but let her long and shining hair hang loose over her shoulders.

As in all societies which allow young people some choices in their marriage partners, the years of courtship in Tai village society are bittersweet. There is the fun and excitement of the courtship and the eternal flirting, gossiping and teasing. There is also the painful lack of confidence of parental approval. But once two lovers are able to get married, the marriage usually lasts until death do them apart. Divorce is very rare in Tai village society.

As husband and wife grow old, they spend more time in prayer and meditation. Women in their late 40s cease to wear bright colors; their *pha sin*, blouses and turbans become a uniform black. Old people become caretakers of the houses and small children, and spend much of their spare time at the village temple. Old people normally are active in the religious affairs of the village. They spend more time at the temple in meditation and performing small service in the care-taking of the temple, such as sweeping the floor and arranging flowers at the altar.[34] They also take the leading part in the performances of religious feasts.[35]

Old age confers a distinct social status in Tai village society. Even though old people lead calm and placid lives, they are respected by virtue of their seniority as well as by the wealth of knowledge and wisdom acquired by long years of experience. In fact, the "elders" are the most important leaders in Tai village society. They are present in, and chair, all important religious and social activities, from the naming of the baby, the weddings and funerals, to land allocation meetings. Each of these elders has an entourage – members of his family and kinship group – which is the basic structural feature of the Tai village society.

To be a Tai villager is to be a member of a family and kin entourage of an elder, whose basic constituents are the family households – the land holding units of the village society. The family households are also residential units in Tai village society which reinforce and are reinforced by ties of cooperation, neighborliness, and political alliance. The family thus remains the cornerstone of the Tai village society in Daikong.

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[34] Milne (1910: 86-87).
[35] T'ien (1949: 46-48).

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Suwit Theerasasawat[1]

TRADING AND COMMERCE OF THE LAOTIAN PEOPLE IN THE MEKONG RIVER BASIN FROM THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE TO 1975[2]

The government of the French Imperialist in Indochina came to an end when French troops surrencered the Fort of Dien Bien Phu to the Vietminhs on May 7, 1954. Laos gained full independence from France, but also most immediately dissension among the Laotian leaders began to develop. Soon it became an open war between the Pathed Lao (The Left) and the Right wings of the Laotian Independence Movement. The Left, with its base in Hua Pan, had the support of Red China, the Soviet Union and North Vietnam. The Right, in the other hand, was backed by the U.S., Thailand and South Vietnam (Phuwadol Tongprasert, 1992, 40, 45-50). The civil war in Laos from 1955-1975 had a great effect on the economy of the country. There was a production labor shortage and the abandonment of countryside. The people were left in poor health, education and outmoded means of communication.

The present paper concentrates on trading and commerce among the Laotian people in the Mekong River Basin from the time of Laotian independence in 1954 to 1975 in order to show the part of Laos that was farther from the battlefields. During this period, the ancient economic system, that is to say, the village barter economy, survived along with the small-, medium- and large-scale commercial activities. To avoid the lengthening of this paper, trade around towns and the Thai involvement in commercial activity along the Mekong River will not be discussed. Rather, it will concentrate firstly on the bartering and then moving to the small-, medium- and large-scale commerce, respectively. The greater part of information in this paper was obtained from interviewing Lao informants which had direct experience with trading or had seen such activity before.

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1. The Bartering

There are two points to be discussed in this categories: causes that led to bartering and methods of bartering among Laotian people along the Mekong River Basin.

1.1 Causes of bartering

a) Different terrain and varied amoung of rainfall.

Such natural factors deprived some areas of natural resources which are essential to the life of the people. For instance, the Laotian people in the area opposite to Pakmoon on the Thai side lacked salt deposits. They were forced by circumstances to trade forest goods which were abundant in Laos for salt from the Thais in Kong Jiam District. Likewise, the Thais in Kong Jiam, an area where a greater part of the terrain comprises of rocky soil and hend, poor rice harvest, were apt to trade salt and fish from the Laotian people in the opposite subdistrict of Ban Na Thaew Village (Tong-in Chabasri, 1997, FN 2/64). The people of Ban Nongbok Village, Nongbok Subdistrict in the Province of Khammuan, because of periodic drought, were often in short supply of rice. As a result, they had to trade torches, fish, crabs and mollust for rice from the nearby villages (Siwer Kaensook, 1997 FN 6/64).

b) The tradition of settlement of various tribes of Laos.

Some tribes, for instance, the Khas were inclined to settle around the hilly terrains for 1-3 years before moving on again. These peoples did not practice wet-rice farming but preferred the quick-maturing variety of rice which often resulted in an inefficient yield. Some tribes did not know how to weave their clothes. However, they were good hunter for animals and forest goods. They therefore traded monitor lizards and chickens for rice and cloth fromthe Laotians around the Mekong River banks and its branches (Boonkong Pimjak, 1997 FN 2/110, Luen Yuenyong, 1997 FN 3/130).

c) The scarcity of rice farm land.

Because the greater part of the land area of Laos was mountainous and heavily forested, wildlife and forest goods were plentiful, but the rice harvest was always inadequate, as can be seen from Table 1 which shows that seven out of ten villages with 30% of households and over could not produce enough rice for consumption. There was an average of 40.3% of the households that could not produce enough rice for consumption. Furthermore, the presence of great number of wild animals, such as wild hogs, elephants and rats means the worsening of

the situation because these animals devastated the villagers' rice plots and hence poorer harvest (Khoon Sujimongkol, 1997 FN 6/146).

d) The civil war.

The war between the Left and the Richt which lasted for two decades (from 1955-1975) had resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. Great numbers of men were conscripted and thus caused farm labor shortage. Mr. Jitti Rasinuwongs, age 61, of Na Thaew Village, Na Thaew Subdistrict, Pakse District revealed that almost all the able-bodied men were drafted to war. Some families lost 2 or 3 men, mostly to the Right-wing armies. A lesser number joined the Left-wing armies of Prince Suphanuwongs. The ratio of the Right:Left armies was 2:1. During the war therefore only the aged, women and children were left in the villages (Jitti Rasinuwongs, 1997, FN 2/91). The need for more ment for the Right-wing armies had become so acute that they had to resort to deception. The villagers were tricked to a free open-air movies. Then, in the middle of the show the men were indiscriminately seized by the soldiers and immediately transported to the battlegrounds (Khamton Saensombat, 1997, FN 3/103). These scenes surely illustrate the shortage of labor to work on the fields.

Table 1
Total households and the number of households which were not able to produce enough rice for consumption

Villages names	Total House-Holds	Households that couldn't produce enough rice for consumption		Dates of incident	Sources
		No. of households	%		
1. Baan Khamtao, Müang Champhone, Khwaeng Sawannakhet.	100	90	90	1957-1966	FN 3/112
2. Baan Nongbok, Müang Nongbok, Khwaeng Khammuan.	600	300	50	1972	FN 6/59-60
3. Baan Veunesung, Müang Thakaek, Khwaeng Khammuan.	15	12	80	1973	FN 6/69-71
4. B. Kaengsao, M. Paklai, K. Sainjabuli.	70	60	86	1971	FN 6/103
5. B. Dong, M. Donghen, K. Sawannakhet.	80	0	0	1951	FN 6/158
6. B. Tha, M. Thabok, K. Bolikhamsai.	40	30	75	1964-74	FN 7/139
7. Baan Kaoliao, Müang Sikhôôtabong, Khwaeng Wiangtjan.	300	90	30	1958-71	FN 7/142
8. Baan Büngtalai, Tasaeng Büngtalai, Khwaeng Sawannakhet.	320	20	6	1971	FN 7/158-9
9. B. Saifong, M. Saifong, K. Wiangtjan.	150	15	10	1964-74	FN 7/209
10. Baan Pakngüm, Müang Phônsin, Khwaeng Bolikhamsai.	100	70	70	1954-76	FN 7/219
Average	**171**	**69**	**40.3**		

1.2 Methods of bartering

When there was a need for necessities the villagers would gather whatever they had to trade for the things they needed from the nearby villages disregarding national boundaries. This is due to the fact that prior to 1975 (the time of the Communist takeover) peoples of both sides of the Mekong River could cross the border freely. There was no requirement for a passport or a visa. The peoples free to come and go at will. This free border-crossing helped save the authorities of both sides a lot of time and expenses because there were numerous villages along both banks of the River. Furthermore, very often that the peoples were related. They crossed the River to visit each other like living in one community as the following illustration will show.

The village of Ban Tha, Prabat Subdistrict, Thabok District, Borikamsai Province in Laos, was a small community with only 40 households in 1984. All the families made a living on we-rice farming, but the annual yields were quite insufficient. So, the families had to do the dry-rice (quick-maturing rice) farming along the steep terrains which yielded even poorer harvest. Even with this supplement farming the families still could not gather enough rice to sustain themselves. The villagers had cut the bamboos to weave cooked rice containers and traded them for rice from other Thai villagers on Nongkeo Village, Ratanawapee Subdistrict, Ratanawapee District, Nongkhai Province in Thailand which was close to them and had ample rice surplus. When they went trading, they often went in groups of around 3-5 persons each. When they reached a likely house (judging from the large rice barn), they put a weaved rice container on the terrace. The owner of the house would then filled up the container with rice. The trading villagers emptied the rice into his basket and left the weaved rice container to the owner of the house. The traders went from house to house until they had collected enough rice. Beside using weaved rice containers to trade for rice, the Laotian villagers also used bamboo shoots, rattan shoots and roasted wild animal meet such as birds, squirrels, chipmunks, pheasants and monitor lizards in their trading. To prepare a lizard, the villagers would roast it and slice it into smaller pieces. They then tied the slices around 9-10 slices to a bundle. One lizard made around 9 bundles. One bundle of roasted lizard meat brought around 1.5 - 2.0 kg of rice by trading. A peasant also brought roughly the same quantity of rice as one bundle of lizard meat. However, there were no fixed rates of exchange. It depended almost entirely on the will of the givers which always returned more than what was offerered to them both in terms of quantity and value. The givers were happy to do so because they realized that in giving more than they were given they had helped their fellow human beings out of hardship. Furthermore, when they suffered the same fate, they would do the same thing by

trading for what they needed from people in other villages, too. In the case of people of Ban Tha Village, thirty out of forty families had to continuously trade for rice from other villages (Khan Khansai, 1997 FN 7/135-139).

Table 2 shows an example of rate of exchange in kind. Table A in the Appendix gives a detail of goods frequently used in the exchange. When these goods are classified (as shown on Table 3, it is apparent that 65.91% of traded goods were foodstuff such as rice, fish, wild animals and vegetables, while 1/3 of the goods that were brought for exchange were non-foodstuff. These included coffee, tabacco, catechu, cotton, silk and readymade clothes. Utensils such as spoons, bowls and clay pots also were some of the items occasionally used for trading. When we consider the goods that were traded by the villagers, it is apparent that rice came at the top of the list. Fifteen out of twenty villages traded something for rice. The second item of significance was salt (9 out of 20 villages traded for it). The third item was fresh fish (8 out of 20 villages traded for it). The fourth item was bamboo shoots (7 out of 20 villages traded for it). The fifth item was salted fish (6 out of 20 villages traded for it).

Table 4 shows a list of 26 items (or 59.09%) of goods which were frequently used for exchange for other goods. There were ten items (or 22.73%) of goods which were traded from other villages. However, there were 8 items of goods which were frequently traded among the villages. There was only one out of 20 villages that used money as means of exchange (Koon Sujimongkol, 1997 FN 6/146).

Table 2. Rate of exchange for goods

Areas of Exchange		Exchanging Rate	
Villages (A)	Villages (B)	Villages (A)	Villages (B)
1. Baan Nakeo, M. Pakse, Khwaeng Champassak, (Laos=L)	Dan V., Khong Jiam D., Ubonrajathani P., (Thailand=T)	1 muen* of paddy rice	1 small bowl of salted fish
2. Baan Sok, Müang Khantabuli, K. Sawannakhet, (L)	The Khas' village (L)	1 muen of paddy rice 1 new shirt	1 Monitor lizard (ca. 2 kg in weight) 1 small Mon. lizard
3. Baan Khamtao, Müang Champhone, K. Sawannakhet, (L)	The nearby Baan Phônsin and other villages (L)	1 ear of pineapple 1 small bowl of mushroom	1 basket of salt (ca. 5 kg) 1 small bowl of salt
4. Baan Phôn Hin Hae, Müang Mahachai, K. Khammuan, (L)	Nearby villages in Laos and Thailand	1 muen of paddy rice	3 baskets of salt (18 kg)
5. Baan Pong, Müang Hiin Puun, K. Khammuan, (L)	Nearby villages in Laos	1 kg of fresh fish 10 torches	1 muen of paddy rice
6. Baan Tha, Müang Tha Bok, K. Bolikamsai, (L)	Nearby villages in Thailand	1 Pheasant 3 Squirrels	1.5-2 kg of milled rice 2-3 kg of salted fish
7. Baan Kao Liao, Müang Sikhôtabong, Khw. Wiangtjan (L)	Nearby Villages in Laos	1 kg of bamboo shoots ½ kg of smoked fish	1 kg. of milled rice 3 kg. of milled rice
8. Baan Sithaan Tai, Müang Sii Sathanaak, K. Viangtjan (L)	Villages in Thailand	1 bunch of bananas	1 small bowl of salt
9. Baan Chanakam, Müang Chanakam, K. Wiangtjan (L)	Villages in Thailand	1 large bowl of milled rice 10 kg of paddy rice	3 tus (a fish of the mackerel kind) 10 chunks of molasses
10. Baan Donmen, Müang Kaen Tao, K. Sainjabuli (Laos)	Nearby villages in Laos	1 kg of salt 1 kg of salted fish	½ muen of paddy rice ½ muen of paddy rice

Sources:
1) FN (Field note) 2/75 (V.2 P.75); 2) FN 3/130; 3) FN 3/126; 4) FN 6/17; 5) FN 7/56; 6) FN 7/139-140; 7) FN 7/147; 8) FN 7/71; 9) FN 6/97; 10) FN 6/205;
* 1 muen = 12 kgs.

Table 3. Kinds of goods used for trading.

Categories	Items	%
1. Foodstuff	29	65.91
2. Non- Foodstuff	15	34.09
- Habitual goods (catechu, areca nuts, etc.)	(4)	(9.09)
- Woven goods	(3)	(6.82)
- Utensils	(4)	(9.09)
- Others	(4)	(9.09)
Total	44	100.00

Sources: Table A (Appendix)

Table 4. Items of goods frequently used for trading

Categories	Items	%
1. Goods frequently used for trading	26	59.09
2. Goods frequently received in exchange	10	22.73
3. Goods frequently used for trading and received in exchange	8	18.18
Total	44	100.00

Sources: Table A (Appendix)

2. Commercial Activity

Five areas of Laotian commercial activity along the Mekong River Basin will be discussed in this section, i.e., the causes that gave rise to the Laotian commerce or production for trade, reasons why commercial activity in Laotian villages lagged behind that of villages in Northeastern Thailand, small-scale commerce, medium-scale commerce and large-scale commerce, respectively.

2.1 Causes that gave rise to Laotian commerce or production for trade

The influence of capitalism.

The capitalist system was brought into Laos through Thailand after the construction of railroads from Bangkok to Nakorn Rajsima in 1900, to Warinchamrab, Ubol Rajathani Province in 1930 and to Nongkhai in 1956 (Sanguan Ankhong, 1986, pp. 176, 181, 183). Many Chinese people opened ricemills and shops alongside newly opened railway stations (Wilas Photisarn, 1993, pp. 279-332). Some Thai merchants (or the so-called Nai Hoi) brought forest goods from the Laotian side into the town of Khemaraj. From there, the

goods were sold and transported to Ubol Rajathani, Yasotorn and Amnajjareon to be resold. Some goods were shipped by train to other destinations. In the upper Northeastern part of Thailand, the Laotian and Thai merchants transported forest goods such as areca nuts, rattan, herbal medicines and resin, from both sides of the River around the Luang Prabang, Chiangkhan and Pakchom areas to Nongkhai. Warinchamrab, therefore, was a port of embarkation for forest goods from Southern Laos to Bangkok, as was Nongkhai for all forest goods from Northern and Central Laos to Bangkok. (Ta Sinsuay, 1997, FN 2/128-131, FN 3/2; Chob Srisura, 1997, FN 7/237).

2.2 Why did commerce in Laotian villages lag behind that of villages in Northeastern Thailand?a) The problem of transportation.

The greater part of Laos is mountainous while the greater part of Thailand's Isarn (The Northeast) is flat. It therefore costs Thailand less to construct a road. In addition, there were railways that connected southern Isarn with Bangkok from 1930 onwards. Others connected Northern Isarn with Bangkok from 1956 onwards. There were no railways in Laos. Even the Mekong River had limits because there were cataracts at several places such as *kääng liiphii*. During the French colonial rule, a 5-km railroad was constructed to connect the area north and south of that *kääng liiphii* cataract, making it accessible to transportation. However, during the drier season, numerous cataracts re-emerged around the areas from Chiangtaeng to Luang Prabang, such as the Kaeng Kabok cataract south of Chiang Taeng, the Kaeng Khemaraj cataract, the Kaeng Kabao cataract, Kaeng Kapuang in That Phanom District, the Kaeng Pong cataract in Ban Paeng District, the Kaeng Ahong cataract in Pakkard District, the Kaeng Fa and Kaeng Jan cataracts between Nongkhai and Chiangkan, the Kaeng Tongchoom cataract between Ta Due and Luang Prabang, etc. (Term Wipakpojanakit, 1987, pp. 681-685; Sri Suriya, 1997, FN 7/119). These cataracts prevented transportation along the Mekong River. There were just a few roads in Laos. The first road connecting Laos with Cambodia and Vietnam was constructed in 1937. It used to take at least six days to travel between Pakse and Saigon by boat, but the new road shortened the travelling time to only 12 hours by car (Robequain, 1944, p. 102). The construction of roads in other areas took place very slowly. Because shipping was inconvenient, shipping cost was very high and hence there was very little commercial activity. It also constrained the growth of commerce from growing faster.

b) The small population.

In 1937 there were only 1.012 million people in Laos, while the total population of the French Indochina was 23 million (Robequain, 1944, p. 21). In the same year, Northeastern Thailand alone had a population of 4.952 million (Suwit Theerasasawat and Dararat Mettarikanont, 2538, p. 255). The small Laotian population limited the amount of money available for commerce. Furthermore, Laotian communities tended to scatter sparcer than those in Isarn. A random sampling of Laotian communities between Dontal District and the 16°45′ latitude north indicated that, within this entire area of 58 km long and 5 km wide on either side of the River (total 290 square km on either side), there were 49 communities on the Thai side (an average of 5.91 sq. km per one community), while on the Laotian side there were 31 communities (an average of 9.35 sq. km per one community). A second sampling of the area from Ban Donsawan to Ban Dua in Muang District of Nongkhai showed a similar result. Within the area of 100 sq. km (20 km long and 5 km wide on either side of the River), there were seven communities on the Laotian side (an average of 14.29 sq. km per one community). On the other Thailand side of the River, there were 18 communities. It is evident from these samplings that the density of Laotian community was much smaller than its Thailand counterpart, i.e. around one-half to one-third. The Laotian population of this area also was one-fifth of the population on the Thailand side of the River. These facts clearly contributed to the slow progress of Laotian commerce when compared with Northeastern Thailand.

2.3 Small-scale commerce

Small-scale commerce in this paper was the commercial activity which did not require continuous effort on the part of the villagers and almost no capital funds were involved. Because the villagers were rice producers and forest goods gatherers, they would sell their goods only when there was a surplus. They did not buy these goods from other people for commercial purposes. Furthermore, they owned either small or medium plots of farmland. Table C of the Appendix shows that there were 33 kinds of merchandise sold by the villagers which included their own farm produce, domesticated animals, forest goods and fish. There was little processed merchandise such as distilled alcoholic beverage, noodles and other sweets. Marijuana was also available but was expensive and illegal. Table 5 shows that 57.58% of merchandise involved in this type of small-scale commerce consisted of foodstuff and 42.42% non-foodstuff. About 39.39% of the merchandise was sold in Laos, while 36.36% was sold in Thailand. Only about 24.25% of the merchandise was sold on both sides of the River.

Table 5. Merchandise of small-scale commerce.

Categories	Items	%
1. Foodstuff	19	57.58
2. Non- Foodstuff	14	42.42
3. - Rattan, Rattan products and wood	(3)	(9.09)
4. - Woven goods	(2)	(6.06)
5. - Habitual goods	(6)	(18.18)
6. - Others	(3)	(9.09)
Total	33	100.00

Sources: Table C (Appendix)

Table 6. Merchandise of small-scale commerce, by place of selling.

Categories	Items	%
1. Laos	13	39.39
2. Thailand	12	36.36
3. Both Laos and Thailand	8	24.25
Total	33	100.00

Sources: Table C (Appendix)

The village of Baan Müang Ngön, Müang Ngön District, Sainjabuli Province is an illustration of the small-scale commercial activity. Prior to 1968, this area was covered with thick forest. Forest goods were in abundance. When the harvest season was over, the villagers usually went into the forest to gather forest goods such as rattan. They made rattan chairs and transported them on the elephant back to be sold in the town of Lomsak in Petchaboon Province in Thailand. One elephant could carry as many as 20 chairs. The price of a sitting chair was 200 Baht each, and a reclining chair would bring Baht 500. About 30-40 people in Baan Müang Ngön Village made rattan chairs to supplement their incomes. Some villagers made rattan strands of approximately 6 - 10 meters length and sold them at Baht 20 per coil. About 100 other villagers hunted for *maak neng* nuts (bastard cardamom) in the woods. There were two varieties of bastard cardamom. The dried, pink variety was cheaper and sold at Baht 500 per kg, and the dried, black one sold at Baht 800 per kg. Other 20 villagers acted as middle men and sold these nuts in Lomsak, Thailand. The buyers in Lomsak in turn resold them to cosmetic factories in Pattaya, Cholburi Province in Thailand (Somjit Butrdee, 1997, FN 6/193-4).

Baan Lao Phoo Chai Village, Chomchäng Subdistrict, Thakhäk District, Khammuan Province, was a large community with about 200 households. The people subsisted mainly on rice farming. However, about 20 families grew marijuana clandestinely in the woods. At that time (1968-1975) growing or consumming marijuana was legal in Laos. People had been growing it for ages. The villagers started the marijuana planting season during the 8th month of lunar calendar (rainy season). When the plants grew up to the suitable height, they were cut and dried in the sun to make them ready for the Thai buyers. Because marijuana is an illegal drug in Thailand, it has to be shipped clandestinely across the River by hiding it beneath piles of dried tobacco in the boat. From the time of the Thai merchants' involvement in marijuana trade it could no long be considered small-scale commerce because it required larger sums of money to do the business. The Thai merchants sold the marijuana to American G.I.s stationed in Nakhoon Phanom - the major consumers. Growing and selling marijuana thus became the major source of income for the people of Baan Lao Phoo Chai. When the G.I.s returned home they took marijuana with them and introduced it to their fellow Americans. That caused a steep rise in price of the drug. This profitable trade therefore led some Thai citizens to start growing marijuana on Thai soil in 1977. In the areas around Tha Uten, Sri Songkram and Phone Sawan Districts, there was a politician who was known as *Phoo Phet*. He was the biggest financial backer of marijuana growers in his domain. *Phoo Phet* bought dried marijuana from his agents at Baht 400-800 per kg and transported it to the seaport of Rayong. From there the goods was smuggled into the U.S. Once it reached its destination one kg of dried marijuana could bring Baht 50,000-150,000 per kg in cash. This lucrative trade faced little interference from local and state highway police because they were bribed by *Phoo Phet* to cooperate (Yai Wongpochai, 1997, FN 6/26 - 46; Suwit Theerasasawat, 1987: 201-2).

2.4 Medium-scale commerce

Medium-scale commerce is commercial activity of well-to-do farmers who, while doing rice farming, also engage in commerce. Some of these ex-farmers had quit farming and turned to do only trading. Their means of transporting goods to selling places were leave-covered boats or animal-drawn carts. They also hired some villagers to assist them on each trip. Their merchandise included forest goods such as bastard cardamom, resin, herbal medicines, wood oil and foodstuff such as salt, dried chilli peppers, sugar, rice, and agricultural tools.

What makes medium-scale commerce different from small-scale commerce is that there is more modern merchandise for sale than at the former, such as food

seasoning powder, shoes, carbonated soft drinks etc., which is typical capitalistic merchandise. (see Table D in the Appendix for more details).

When arranged in categories, the merchandise revealed 17 items of foodstuff or 39.54%, while the non-foodstuff made up 26 items, or 60.46%. These 26 items of non-foodstuff can be separated into 7 groups, i.e. forest goods (16.28%), woven goods and other related items, stationery, fuel, iron tools, habitual goods, and others. However, if these merchandise were arranged according to the sources of production and marketplace, goods of Thai origin sold in Laos ranked top (44.19%). The second topmost item were goods made or found in Laos but sold in Thailand. The last items were goods made and sold in Laos, as shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Merchandise of Medium-scale commerce.

Categories	Items	%
1. Foodstuff	17	39.54
2. Non- Foodstuff	26	60.46
3. - Woven goods and related materials	(3)	(6.98)
4. - Habitual goods	(2)	(4.65)
- Stationary	(3)	(6.98)
- Fuel	(3)	(6.98)
- Iron tools	(3)	(6.98)
- Other forest goods	(7)	(16.28)
- Others	(5)	(11.63)
Total	43	100.00

Sources: Table D (Appendix)

Table 8. Merchandise of medium-scale commerce, by place of origin and marketplace

Origin and Marketplace	Items	%
1. Produced and sold in Laos	8	18.60
2. Produced in Laos, sold in Thailand	9	20.93
3. 3. Produced in Thailand, sold in Laos	19	44.19
4. 4. Both 1 and 2	4	9.30
5. Both 2 and 3	1	2.33
6. Both 1 and 3	2	4.65
Total	43	100.00

Sources: Table D (Appendix)

Baan Thuat Village, Champhoon District, Sawannakhet Province of Laos gives a vivid illustration of medium-scale commerce activity. The scene took place between 1947-1957. Villagers in Baan Thuat, having reaped their rice and stored it in the *baan*, joined other groups on a trip to villages along the Sesung River to buy torches (made from sap of gum trees and other flammable materials), or cotton. A cart could carry 200-300 *lüüm* (10 torches to a *lüüm*). They sold these torches to people of high-ground villages that did not have gum trees to make torches. The latter bought torches at the price of one *lüüm* for 5 Kip (Laotian currency), and sold them at 1.5 or 2 Kip each. On each trip they sold the merchandise for about 5000 Kip and so made a profit of about 3,500 - 3,700 Kip (100 kips to Baht 4.00), or about Baht 140-150. If they hired one helper, the profit would become less. When they were on the trip, they either stayed overnight at a temple or at the village headman's house free of charge. They could also ask for some cooked rice, chilli peppers, salt, and salted fish from local residents who were always helpful. Beside buying and selling torches and cotton, these villagers sometimes also bought pigs. They bought pigs from people in their own village. When they had collected enought pigs (about 20-30 pigs), they would drive them to Champhoon District about 12 km away. From Champhoon the pigs were transported in a truck to Sawannakhet about 50 km away for sale. In Sawannakhet the pigs were sold to another pork dealer who sent them to a slaughterhouse (Riab Guangjampa, 1997 FN 3/49-50, 59-60).

Another case concerns the waterway commerce of the Luang Prabang merchants during 1956-1969. Their main means of shipping was a banana-leaf covered boat of about 16-24 m long and 2-2.5 m wide. It took six to twelve persons to punt the boat. In order to carry more merchandise and for safety reasons, bamboo floats were fastened to the boat. On the downstream trip, the merchants brought forest goods, such as rattan, acacia catechu, bastard cardomom, herbal medicines, scented woods, eaglewood, resin and wood oil, to be sold at Nongkhai. From Nongkhai they continued on to Paak Ngüm to buy salted fish, dried fish, wild animals, resin and wood oil from villages along both sides of the Mekong River. They brought the merchandise upstream to sell in Nongkhai again. After getting rid of these goods, they bought readymade goods and salt to be sold in Luang Prabang. In this way, Nongkhai had become a center for Thai and Laotian goods before they were shipped to Bangkok. The town also acted as a distribution center for goods from Bangkok to people in the area. However, it was possible for the Luang Prabang merchants to engage in such commerce only during the rainy season when the rising tides overflowed the sand dunes and cataracts along the River.

2.5 Large-scale commerce

Large-scale commerce concerns very rich merchants - the majority of whom engaged in the timber business. For instance, Thai merchants from Mukdaharn invested huge sums of money in the timber business in Sawannakhet Province in Laos during 1971-1975, and 1980 till present. Many Thai and Japanese merchants set up sawmills in Sainjabuli Province to prepare timber for the Japanese market during 1964-1975. A Chinese merchant (Peng Hong) run three large sawmills in Central Laos during 1970-1975. His enterprise destroyed large numbers of valuable timber trees most of which were Para Rubber, Hopea, Kabaek (a tree of the family Dipterocarpaceae), Daeng, Pradoo (Pterocarpus), Tae, Makha (Ormosia) trees, etc. The circumference of these trees were 300 cm or even larger. The sawmills were situated at Baan Hai Village close to the mouth of the Ngüm River (opposite to Ban Nong Kung Village, Ponepisai District, Nongkhai Province of Thailand). When the trees were cut down they were made into logs of about 6-8 meters long each. Then the logs were piled up by elephants ready for transport to the Baan Hai Sawmills by truck. There the logs were converted into planks and transported to the Chetta Timber Store in Vientiane for sale (Sri Suriya, 1997, FN 7/124-127.

3. Summary

The history of Laos during the two decades from the time of its independence in 1954 to 1975 when it has become a socialist state represents a period of political and economic change. On the one hand, there was a war between the Left and Right-wing armies competing for the control of Laos with the victory going to the former. On the other hand, it shows close cultural and economic ties between the two peoples of both sides of the Mekong River, namely the Thais and the Laotians. Although they had been separated by the French colonists since 1893, peoples from both sides of the River continued to trade and do commerce with one another as before. People from the northern part of Laos (the Sainjabuli and Luang Prabang Provinces) sold their forest goods to the merchants of Nongkhai and bought from them salt and readymade goods. The *Kha* tribal people traded forest goods for rice and clothes from the Laotians. Goods that were traded the most included foodstuff because the Laotian people could not produce enough food for their own consumption. When modern commerce first started among these peoples, trading continued, although it gradually gave way to commerce. Small-scale commerce was the farmers' ways of supplementing their incomes by selling their surplus produce, by spending their free time hunting for forest goods and animals to sell, or by fishing for fish to sell. The major merchandise in this small-scale commerce was foodstuff. Medium-scale commerce involved both rich

Laotian farmers and the ex-farmers who became full-time merchants. Although the major merchandise in this category was foodstuff, one could see the increasing demand for readymade goods from Thailand. There were a lesser number of enterprises involved in the large-scale commerce. A few Chinese, Japanese, Thai and Laotian capitalists invested huge sums of money in the exploitation of natural resources, mainly timber for export.

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Khamtan Saensombat (Laotian), age 45, Baan Sompoi Village, Sompoi Subdistrict, Chanthabuli District, Sawannakhet Province.
Sitthi Rasinuwong (Laotian), age 61, Ban Nakeo Village, Nakeo Subdistrict, Pakse District, Champassak Province.
Chob Srisura (Thai), age 67, Ban Gloom Pattana Village, Goodbong Subdistrict, Ponepisai District, Nongkhai Province.
Tong-in Chabasri (Thai), age 68, Ban Dan Village, Khong Jiam Subdistrict, KhongJiam District, Ubolrajathani Province.
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Somjitr Booddee (Thai), age 65, Ban Chiangkan Village, Chiangkan Subdistrict, Chiangkan District, Loei Province.
Siwet Kaensook (Laotian) age 40, Baan Nongbok Village, Nongbok Subdistrict, Nongbok District, Khammuan Province.
Yai Wongpochai (Laotian), age 46, Ban Laopochai Village, Chomchaeng Subdistrict, Kham Muan Province.
Aan Krongtri (Laotian), age 63, Ban Kaentao Village, Kaentao Subdistrict, Kaentao District, Sainjabuli Province.

Appendix
Table A. Goods frequently traded.

Kinds of goods frequently traded	Villages involved in trading																			Total villages
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1. Bamboo shoots	/						/	/		/							/	/		/	7
2. Fresh fish	/	/					/	/	/	/								/			8
3. Rice	*/	*	/	/		*	*/	*	*	*	/	*		*			*	*		*	15
4. Pepper	*						/			/			/								4
5. Acacia catechu	*									/											2
6. Salted fish	*					*								/	/	/	*				6
7. Salt		/			*	/	*			*			*	/	/	*					9
8. Preserved fish			*																		1
9. Hemp			/												*						2
10. Silk			/																		1
11. Animal hides			/																		1
12. Monitor lizards				*																	1
13. Ready clothes				/											/						2
14. Chickens				*																	1
15. Pineapples					/																1
16. Mushrooms					/													/		/	3
17. Rattan tops						/		/									/			/	4
18. Torches						/	/	/	/				/	/							6
19. Mollusks									/												1
20. Crabs									/									/			2
21. Dried fish										/								/			2
22. Betel leaves										/											1
23. Wild vegetabl.										/											1
24. Molasses											*										1
25. Mackerel											*										1
26. Cotton												*									1
27. Sesame seeds												*									1
28. Sqirrels												/					/				2
29. Chipmunks												/					/				2
30. Bamboo rats												/									1
31. Egg-plants												/									1
32. Maize												/									1
33. Birds															*		/				2
34. Coffee															*						1
35. Bananas																/					1
36. Sugarcane																/					1
37. Herbal medicine																/					1
38. Rice containers																	/				1
39. Wild chickens																	/				1
40. Tobacco																		/	/		2
41. Spoons																			*		1
42. Bowl																			*		1
43. Pots																			*		1

Symbols: / Goods of the trading villages * Goods traded from other villages

Sources for table A: Village 1: FN 2/39-40; 2: FN 2/64; 3: FN 2/75; 4: FN 3/130; 5: FN 3/126; 6: FN 3/143; 7: FN 6/17,22; 8: FN 6/56; 9: FN 6/64; 10: FN 7/74; 11: FN 6/97; 12: FN 6/111, 146; 13: FN 6/165; 14: FN 6/205; 15: FN 7/5; 16: FN 7/71; 17: FN 7/139-140; 18: FN 7/147; 19: FN 7/209; 20: FN 7/221-222

Table B. Community density per land area of both sides of the Mekong River

	Area on Laotian side	Area on Thai side
A) Land Area from Dontal District to 16°45' Latitude N, total distance 59 km.		
1) Total land area (in sq. km)	290	290
2) Total number of communities	31	49
3) Average land area in sq. km. to one community	9.35	5.91
B) Land area from Ban Donsawan Village to Ban Dua Village, Muang District, Nongkhai Province, total distance 20 km.		
1) Total land area (in sq. Km)	100	100
2) Total number of community	7	18
3) Average land area in sq. km. to one community	14.29	5.55

Source: Dept. of Military Map Service, Serial No. 1501S Register No. NE 48-9 and NE 48-14, scale 1:250,000. Data in A) collected in 1983, B) in 1980.

Table C. Merchandise of small-scale commerce

List of merchandise	Villages engaged in commerce																Total villages
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
1. Resin	L																1
2. Rattan	L																1
3. Acacia catechu	L																1
4. Betel leaves	L																1
5. Timber	L																1
6. Pineapples	L																1
7. Bananas	LT																1
8. Bamboo shoots	LT																1
9. Mushrooms	LT																1
10. Fish	LT					L							L				3
11. Black pigs			L														1
12. Chickens			L														1
13. Cows				LT	L										L		3
14. Water Buffaloes				LT	L												2
15. Rice					L								L	L			3
16. Marijuana						LT											1
17. Cotton							LT										1
18. Garden Vegetables							LT										1
19. Rattan chairs								LT									1
20. Bastard cardamom								LT			L						2
21. Kapok									LT								1
22. Wild animal meat									L								1
23. Sesame seeds										LT							1
24. Red beans										LT							1
25. Jute										LT							1
26. Maize										LT							1
27. Tobacco											L	LT			LT		3
28. Coffee											L						1
29. Mung beans												LT					1
30. Distilled whisky																L	1
31. Noodles																L	1
32. Sweets																L	1

Symbols: **L** Merchandise made and sold in Laos; **LT** Merchandise made in Laos but sold in Thailand

Sources: Village 1: FN 2/74-75; 2: FN 3/24-25; 3: FN 3/111-2; 4: FN 6/9; 5: FN 6/18-19; 6: FN 6/20-21; 7: FN 6/95-96; 8: FN 6/193-194; 9: FN 6/199-201, 206-207; 10: FN 6/256-258; 11: FN 7/4; 12: FN 7/114-115; 13: FN 7/153-154; 14: FN 7/159; 15: FN 7/211-212; XVI: FN 7/221-227

Table D. Merchandise of Medium-scale commerce

List of merchandise	Villages ingaged in commerce (all in Laos)											Total villages
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1. Salt	TL											1
2. Rice	TL	TL					L	TL				4
3. Chili Peppers	TL										LT	2
4. Sugar	TL									TL		2
5. Dried sweets	TL				TL	TL						3
6. Dyes	TL											1
7. Food seasoning	TL									TL		2
8. Carbonated soft drink	TL					TL						2
9. Cloth/readymade clothes	TL	TL					TL	TL	TL			5
10. Kerosene	TL	TL				TL		TL				4
11. Torches	LT		L									2
12. Cotton		TL	L									2
13. Soap bars		TL								L		2
14. Knives		TL										1
15. Pickaxes (farming tool)		TL										1
16. Spades (forming tool)		TL										1
17. Pigs			LT	L					L			3
18. Cows				L				L	L			3
19. Exercise books					TL							1
20. Pencils					TL							1
21. Slate					TL							1
22. Distilled whisky					L	L						2
23. Benzene/diesel oil						TL						1
24 Tobacco						L						1
25. Limestone							LT					1
26. Water buffaloes								L	L			2
27. Ducks								L				1
28. Chickens								L	L			2
29. Hides								L				1
30 Rattan								L			LT	2
31. Bastard cardamom								L			LT	2
32. Matches								TL				1
33. Shoes								TL				1
34. Vegetables										L		1
35. Fish soy sauce										TL		1
36. Acacia catechu											LT	1
37. Herbal medicines											LT	1
38. Fragant Wood											LT	1
39. Resin											LT	1
40. Wood oil											LT	1
41. Fish											LT	1
42. Salted fish											LT	1
43. Wild animals											LT	1

L Merchandise made and sold in Laos; **TL** M. made in Thailand but sold in L.; **LT** M. made in L., sold in Th.

Sources: Villages 1: FN 2/73-74, 80-81; 2: FN 3/32-35; 3: FN 3/40-50; 4: FN 3/70-71; 5: FN 3/85; 6: FN 3/142, 6/7-8; 7: FN 6/9, 23, 81; 8: FN 6/9; 9: FN 6/158, 163; 10: FN 7/215; 11: FN 7/237-242.

Ratanaporn Sethakul*

LAN NA HISTORY IN THE *L* CHRONICLES

To study the early history of Lan Na, historians rely very much on chronicles, particularly the ones called by David Wyatt the '*tamnan* of the distant past'[1]. According to him, these historical works deal with the early states of extreme northern Thailand and the adjacent areas in the period prior to the thirteenth century, or in other words, the protohistorical period of Lan Na. These chronicles are uncertain of date, unknown of origin and authorship. The most interesting and frequently referred to are *Tamnan Muang Suwankhomkham, Tamnan Singhanawatikuman, Tamnan Muang Ngoenyang Chiang Saen* and *Tamnan Suwankhamdaeng*. Since we can not find enough archeological evidence to study the history of that period, a serious investigation of chronicles is much needed. These chronicles are very unique in styles and contents. *Tamnan Muang Suwankhomkham* or the chronicle of Suwankhomkham city deals mostly with the legendary origins and history of a state, possibly located in the extreme north-central region of the Indochina Penninsula, in the Mekong valley. This city was referred to as a historical antecedent of the succeeding [cities] *müang*, namely Chiang Saen.[2] The imaginary *Tamnan Singhanawatikuman* deals with the founding of Chiang Saen. This legend is followed by *Tamnan Muang Ngoen Yang Chiang Saen*, telling the history of the pre-*Lan Na* period from its mythical origin down to the founding of Chiang Mai by King Mangrai in 1296. *Tamnan Suwankhamdaeng* is different from those three legends already mentioned. It deals mostly with the native communities before the founding of Chiang Mai city in the Ping River valley, the relationship between the *Lua* and *Tai* and the assimilation of both cultures as the basis of the *Lan Na* or *Yuan* culture.

These chronicles, however, are still inadequate to answer many historical questions about the proto-*Lan Na* history, its socio-political system and its relationship with other Tai states in the Upper Mekong region. Studying the chronicles of other Tai states, particularly of the *Lü* in *Sipsong Panna* can help clarify some historical puzzles and fill the textual gaps. This paper is an attempt to categorize and analyze the *Lü* chronicles and to exemplify how historians can utilize them in studying *Lan Na* history.

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[1] David K. Wyatt, *Chronicle Traditions in Thai Historiography*, in Studies in Thai History (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books 1994), p. 6.

[2] Sanguan Chotsukkharat, *Prachum tamnaan Lan Na Thai*, (Bangkok: Odeon Store 1972), p. 33.

The *Lü* Chronicles

The *Lü* chronicles were traditionally written on *bai laan,* palm leaves and *phap saa,* thick hand-made mulberry papers. The *Tai Lü* of *Sipsong Panna* and the *Yuan* of *Lan Na* speak the same dialects, different only in tones. The alphabets are exactly the same, thus revealing their close cultural links. *Sipsong Panna* was formerly as rich for *bai laan* and *phap saa* munuscripts as *Lan Na.* Unfortunately, a large number of them were destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960's. During that period, monks were disordained, temples were turned to villages' rice storages and people were forced to abandon religion.[1] Most of the manuscripts presently found were recently copied from the old ones or rewritten from the memory of the elderly people. It is extremely difficult to find old original copies which belong to the pre-communist period. Thai scholars found several *Lü* chronicles compiled or rewritten by the former *Lü* monks who took refuge in many *Lü* towns in the Kengtung state of Burma and Thailands border towns.

Historical works in *Sipsong Panna* are generally known as *khaao, nithaan and phüün*, literally meaning stories, folktales and history. Originally, they took the form of oral tradition and later on were written down. The purposes of recording or rewriting the chrionicles are to remind people of their historical origin, to apprehend the past and to gain merit.[2]

From my survey research, the *Lü* chronicles can be at least categorized into three groups according to their contents and styles. They are the myths of creation of civilization, the chronicles of localities and principalities and the religious chroncles including the chronicles of temples, pagodas, Buddhist images and footprints.

The legends of creation of civilization are the epic history, derived from the oral tradition. These works are the combination of myth, poetry and religion. They are narrative and descriptive in style and full of miracles and imagination. Historians need much effort and sympathy to apprehend their way of folded and symbolic communication. One may find only little concrete historical data from these chronicles. An analysis of their contents can offer some very useful historical information or at least some historical insight hidden behind the mythical stories. Significantly, these *Lü* chronicles separate themselves from Buddhist historical framework for they are concerned mostly with Hindu gods and local supernatural beings. They are an attempt to answer the questions about the origin of human beings and the establishment of human civilization. In addition, they function as a

[1] Interviewing the villagers of Ban Don Tan. Chiang Rung, 12th April, 1985.

[2] Thawee Sawangphanyangkun. *Tamnaan phüünmüang Sipsoongphanna.* (Chiang Mai: Suun Nangsüü 1986), p. 16.

model and justification for all human activities from birth to death. To name some of them, they are *Pathomkap Inthraphayap*, *Pathomkap Phrom Sang Lok and Pathomkap Faimang Lok*.[5]

The chronicles of localities and principalities are concerned mostly with the origin of a particular city and a geneological account of successive rulers. In *Lan Na* they are called *tamnaan baan* and *tamnaan müang*; but *phüün baan phüün mü ang* in Sipsong Panna. They, however, are the mixture of mythical stories and historical records and can not avoid the Buddhist historical tradition applied in every Buddhist state in mainland southeast Asia.[6]

The religious chronicles possess a strong religious overtone. The composers were concerned very much with linking the localities with Buddhist history and relating the foundation of cities, villages and sacred shrines to Buddhist prophesies and mythology. The *phrachao laep lok* or the story of Buddha's travelling around the world, is quite popular. Although the Buddha's visit to the *Lü* cities in *Sipsong Panna* is mythical and unintelligible, this imaginary visit enhances the importance of those places in the views of the devout Buddhists. Chronicles of the *phra thaat* or pagoda containing Buddha's relics are interesting for their presentation of local history for they include the local oral tradition into the Buddhist narratives. The legend of *phrathaat choomthoong* reveals the struggle between Buddhism and animism, telling the story of how the native people were converted to Buddhism and why Buddhism must be preserved as the state religion.[7] Similar to other Buddhist states, *Sipsong Panna* has numerous chronicles about Buddha images, pagodas and temples. People reproduce the copies of these chronicles by hiring the former monks to rewrite the stories on the *phap saa* and donate them to the temples in order to gain merit.

Studying the *Lü* chronicles, I found that firstly their contents are not limited to the specific history of the *Lü* but include the history of the other Tai states, particularly Lan Na, secondly they reflect the Tai historical tradition, and finally the political and social system of the Tai states are clearly presented. I would like to emphasize my study of the two chronicles; the *khaao nithaan Khaa Sisan Monma* (the story of the Sisan Monma slave people)[8] and *phüün müang Sipsoong Phan naa* (the history of *Sipsong Panna*).[9] Their concise stories are as following:

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[5] Chao Mahakhanthawong. *The Lü Legends of Creation of Civilization*. Manuscripts.

[6] For more details about the Buddhist histrical tradition, look at Anan Ganjanapan: *Early Lan Na Thai Historiography: An Analysis of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Chronicles*. M.A Thesis, Cornell University 1976.

[7] Interviewing Chao Mahakhanthawong, 3th May, 1995, Chiang Rung, Sipsong Panna, PRC.

[8] Lamun Chanhom (transcribed). *Khaao nithaan Kha Sisan Monma*. Manuscript.

[9] Thawee Sawangphanyakun. *Tamnaan phüünmüang Sipsong Panna*. (Ching Mai: Suun Nangsüü 1986).

Khaao Nithaan Kha Sisan Monma

God Indra wanted to establish and glorify Buddhism in the region of *Sipsong Panna*. He then ordered a deva to disguise himself as two peacocks sending the message to the Chinese and Burmese kings, ordering them to search for the absent son of the king of Withaharat and bring him back to rule *müang Paranasinoi* and thus establishing Buddhism there. *Chau Suwanbuachum* was found and identified as such. Before he could rule the state, the native ruler must be defeated and the kings of China and Burma must set up the coronation to legitimize his power.

The chronicle also mentions *Phraya Sommut* who was a god-reincarnated king who played a crucial role in setting up the *hiit khoong* (the customary laws and regulations) for the people; so they could live together in peace. Finally, it tells the stories of the relationship between *Sipsong Panna* and other nearby *müang*.

Phüün müang *Sipsong Panna*

This chronicle starts with a female community called *Müang Maeya Ma Kwai Lü ang*. This community existed before the founding of Chiang Rung, the capital of *Sipsong Panna*. In that unidentified date, there were a few native communities in the area of the later Chiang Rung. They were small, uncivilized and frequently harassed by the monsters until the coming of the foreign heroes who relieved them from the peril and ruled them. The chronicle mentions the Tai tradition of *saang baan pääng müang*, (founding the village and city) by the *chau faa* Wong's sons. His second son was the founder of Chiang Rung and made an agreement with his brothers who ruled the nearby states to demarcate the territory of Sipsong Panna as recorded therein. There were many great kings who were said to be relatives of the other Tai kings, particularly King Mangrai of Lan Na who was said to be the grandfather of *chau* Saeng Tô, whose story was very similar to *phayaa* Choeng, the great king of many Tai-speaking groups. This chronicle also includes the *tamnaan phrachau Laep Lok* to signify the importance of Chiang Rung and other cities and villages according to the Buddhist tradition. The story of Buddha preaching his religion and converting people and other beings is included as an important part. The final part is about the succession of the *Lü* kings from *phayaa* Choeng to *chau mom* Kham Lü, the last king of *Sipsong Panna* before the communist revolution.

From the two chronicles described above, we can see clearly the Buddhist historical tradition popular among the Tai states. Both legends start with Buddhist time and referring to Buddha's travelling around the world in order to signify the importance of people and places mentioned in them. The *khaao*

nithaan Kha Sisan Monma deals mostly with the very early history of *Sipsong Panna*. It is full of myth and attempts to legitimize the political and social system of the *Lü* which is very similar to other Tai states. Unlike the creation myths which emphasize the origin of universe and human beings, this legend is devoted considerably to the founding of the *müang* culture, originated by the *Lü* who subjugated the native people. It legitimizes the *Lü* authority over the natives by utilizing Buddha, God Indra and the god-reincarnated king as the founders or supporters of the Buddhist *Lü* system.

The *phüünmüang Sipsong Panna* is the combination of *tamnaan* and *phongsawadaan* since it starts from the early mythical stories followed by the stories of kings and their political acitivities and ends with the contemporary history of the *Lü* in the middle of the twentieth century. It interestingly describes the social development of the people inhabited in this region, from *Müang Mae Ya Ma Kwai Lüang* which was the matriarchal society to Alawo Suantan, the patriarchal one. Influenced by Buddhist ideas, women were believed to be inferior to men, thus any communities ruled by woman were uncivilized in the Buddhist points of view until they converted to Buddhism and turned to the male rulers. This chronicle is concerned more with the political activities and a succession of kings. It contains more dates which need careful checking.

Lan Na history in the *Lü* chronicles

There is much interesting information in the *Lü* chronicles which can be utilized in studying *Lan Na* history. I would like to point out just two things from the two chronicles mentioned above: the importance of the *Lua* and the close relationship of *Lan Na* and *Sipsong Panna*.

Lua: an important component in the *Lü* and *Yuan* Chronicles

The *Lü* and the *Yuan* chronicles alike, usually narrate the creation of Tai civilization in the midst of the non-civilization *Lua* who were called *khaa*, meaning slaves. These people were the natives of the northern part of mainland southeast Asia.[10] They scattered in the southwestern part of China, northern part of Laos, Thailand and Burma. In the Tai chronicles, they are called *Lua*, *Lawa*, *Thamil*, *Tamila* and *Milakhu*, the owners of the land. Since they were less civilized, they were conquered by the outsiders or intruders who brought in the *müang* culture to replace their village or tribal culture.

[10] Hans Penth. *Khwam penmaa khoong Lan Na Thai.* Lan Na Thai, (Chiang Mai: Thiphaneet 1984), pp. 4; 11 and *Nangsüü Chietchukiat Naai Kraisri Nimanhemin.* (Chiang Mai: Trirongkaanphim 1982), p.69-70.

The chronicles show how the *Lü* strengthened their power by forming an alliance with the *Lua*, the ruled who overnumbered the ruling. Three strategies were applied; first the intermarriage between the *Lü* and *Lua* ruling families, second, pleasing the *Lua* by allowing them to observe their own ways of living and to practice their own belief beside Buddhism and third adopting the *Lua* culture, particularly worshipping the deceased *Lua* rulers as the guardian spirits of the state.[11]

The historical information about the *Lua* in *Lü* chronicles helps support the importance of the *Lua* in *Lan Na* history. Both *Lü* and *Yuan* chronicles repeat the same message. They personify the *Lua* as *Yak* or giants and savages. The *Yak* in *Lan Na* and *Sipsong Panna* were defeated by Buddha, converted to Buddhism and after their death the *Lü* and the *Yuan* worshipped them as the great guardian spirits of the states.[12]

While the *Yuan* chronicles seem to neglect to identify the importance of the *Lua*, the *Lü* did quite explicitly. The *Lua* in the *Lü* chronicles were not primitive and savage as shown in the *Yuan* ones but only relatively less advanced than the Tai. They confirm the fact that before succeeding in conquering the *Lua*, the Tai accepted much *Lua* culture, particularly the belief in spirits[13] and even establishing kin connection with the *Lua* chiefs in several towns.[14] *Tamnaan Chammathewi* mentions the marriage between Queen Chammathewi's sons with the daughters of *khun luang* Wilangkha, the man whose request for marriage was turned down and was killed by the beauty of the Queen.[15]

According to the *Lü* chronicles, King Mangrai of *Lan Na* could be a son of the *Lua* king who uplifted himself by getting married with the *Lü* princess from Chiang Rung. If we recognised King *Lawachangkrarat* who founded *Hirannakhon Ngoenyang* or *Chiang Saen* as *Puchao Laochok* the chief of the *Lua* at *Doi Tung*[16], the later successive rulers of Chiang Saen could possibly be the *Lua* who later on assimilated themselves with the Tai and created the *müang* culture. It should be noticed that from *Lawachangkharat* down to King *Mangrai*, the name of the kings of Chiang Saen started with the word *lao* which can be also pronounced *lawa*, with the exception of *Khun Chom Pharueng*.[17] King *Mangrai* with unknown reason received his name from his grandfather King *Rung Kanchai* of *Sipsong Panna*, and the kings after him had their names different from each other.

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[11] Lamun Chanhom. Ibid, p. 165-166.

[12] They were *Alawakasoda* of Chiang Rung and *Pu Sae Ya Sae* of Chiang Mai.

[13] Sanguan Chotsukkharat. Ibid, p.143.

[14] Lamun Chanhom. Ibid, p.188.

[15] *The translation of Chammathewiwong phongsawadaan müang Hariphunchai*. (Chiang Mai: Nakhoon Ping Kaanphim 1987), p. 43.

[16] Prachakitkorachak. *Phongsawadaan Yonok*. (Bangkok: Phraephitthaya 1972), p. 228.

[17] The name list appears in *Phongsawadaan Yonok*.

Baan phii müang noong*: the brotherly relationship of *Lü* and *Yuan

The *Yuan* chronicles contain very little information about relations with other Tai states in the Upper North. The early period of *Lan Na* history is devoted to the unification of the *Lan Na* kingdom, the founding of Chiang Mai, the establishing of Buddhism and the boundary extension. It is exclusively the story of the internal affairs of *Lan Na* kingdom. From the *Lü* legends, we find a very close relationship between the *Lü* and the *Yuan* especially in the early period of *Lan Na* history. At the lower level, there are oral traditions, narrating the stories of King *Mangrai* 's father coming to *Sipsong Panna* and planting a Bothi tree as a sign of friendship[18] and also the Baan Mong village close to Chiang Rung worshipped *phii chau faa Mangrai* as their guardian spirit of the village[19].

At the upper level, the ruling class of both states probably came from the same ancestors. The *Lü* chronicles, supported by the *Kon* and *Yong* ones, insist that Phaya Choeng, the great king of *Sipsong Panna*, sent his first son to rule *Lan Na*.[20] It is likely that the Tai who settled down in this region came from the same origin. Many chronicles mention the *chau faa Wong*'s sons who left their country to found new states of their own. Investigating this point seriously, we can probably tell the origin of the Tai and Thai people, the question which is unendingly argued among the Thai and foreign scholars. Many chronicles agree that the ancestors of the Tai and Thai moved from somewhere to settle down in this region with the native *Lua* but they do not clearly state the names of the places. Some of them even name the places with Pali names, imitating the names of the cities in Buddhist chronicles which arose more confusion and suspicion.

The relationship between *Lü* and *Yuan* was based on the kin connection and political interest. King *Mangrai*, the *Lü* chronicles say, offered yearly tributes including a golden howdah, a silver howdah, a golden gourd to contain water, 20 embroidered mattresses and blankets to his grandfather, King *Rung Kanchai* of *Sipsong Panna*. In return, he received 20 horses, 20 cows, 20 mules, 20 blankets, 20 steel cutlass and 100 piculs of salt produced in the Mo-hsieh region.[21] The *Yuan* chronicles never mention this relation. It is possible that the *Yuan* chronicles were dominated so much by the Buddhist tradition that they ignored the secular information and emphasized more on religious affairs. The golden age of the historical literature was the same period as the religious ones and the monks were the only historians in those days.

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[18] Interviewing Chao Mahakhanthawong, 4th May 1995.

[19] Interviewing the villagers of Baan Mong, Chiang Rung, 11th April, 1985.

[20] Thawee Sawaengphanyakum, Ibid., p.68.

[21] Sai Sam Tip, Ibid., p. 90.

One important thing that the *Yuan* chronicles hardly mention, is the *Lü* and *Yuan* alliance in fighting the Mongol before and during King *Mangrai*'s period. Information from the *Lü* chronicles supported by the Chinese documents shows that after Khubilai Khan succeeded in annexing *Sipsong Panna* in 1290, he ordered the attack on *Lan Na* in 1292. The *Lü* chronicle states that the king sent his big army to fight with the numerous *Hoo* who at that time was the Mongol but could not stop them. *Phaya Su*, his oldest son suggested to send his adopted son, *Ai Saeng Tô* to fight the Chinese army. *Ai Saeng Tô* not only dispersed the intruders but could capture *Muang Hoo*. He then got married with the Chinese princess and became king. This *Lü* information is relevant to the Chinese documents, stating that King *Mangrai* and the king of *Sipsong Panna* cooperated in invading the Chinese border.[22]

The Chinese or Mongol invasion mentioned in the *Lü* legends can provide another reason why King *Mangrai* founded several cities on to the southward. The location of Chiang Saen, the former capital of *Lan Na* kingdom was very appropriate in term of economy, very good fertile land, abundant supply of water and easy accessibility both by land and water from every direction. It had been, until early 19th century, the trade center for the long-distance trade caravans from the North which traveled by the traditional land route from *Tali* to *Lan Na*, passing through Puer, Semao, Chiang Rung, Muang Luang, Muang Lem, Chiang Tung, Muang Len and Chiang Saen.[23] However, it could be easily captured by the Chinese because it was located too close to the Chinese border and because the route to Chiang Saen was very familiar to the Chinese. Facing the Mongol aggression, King *Mangrai* probably was cpmpelled to choose between economic interest and political safety. He then moved his capital to Chiang Rai in 1261[24] and still looked around for a better location for his new capital until he found the best one on the Ping river valley for his Chiang Mai in 1296.[25] The *Yuan* chronicles describe quite long in details about the excellence of its location according to astrological aspects. The underlying reason why King *Mangrai* chose this place could be other than what the legends state. Some scholars believe that King *Mangrai* made an oath of friendship with King *Ramkhamheng* of Sukhothai and King *Ngammuang* of Phayao because he wanted to be safe at the rear while he fought with the Chinese.[26] He also moved his capital to the inner part since he realized the Chinese military threat which would always

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[22] Ibid., p. 92.

[23] U. K. *Schomburgk to Lord Russell*. F.O. 69/21, 18th June, 1860.

[24] Arunrat Wichiankiew. *Kaan wikro sangkhrom Chiang Mai samai Rattanakosin toon ton taam tonchabab hailaan nai phaak nüa*. M.A thesis, Chulalongkorn University 1975, p. 62.

[25] Ibid., p. 63.

[26] Thawee Sawaengphanyangkun. *Withesobai khoong Phaya Mangrai*. Lan Na Thai, p. 60-63.

continue from time to time. Although the *Yuan* chronicles do not mention any serious threat from China, the king's hesitance to stay at the new capital gave a hint. King *Mangrai* and his successors still stayed at Chiang Saen and Chiang Rai when they became kings and used Chiang Mai as *müang lük lüang*, meaning city of the crown prince until the reign of King *Pha Yu* (1334-1366)[27]. It could be that Chiang Mai was not grown up enough. The population was too small to be the capital but the king prepared to use it as the retreat place or the source for supply in time of war with the Chinese or any enemy coming from the North.

There are many other interesting historical data in the *Lü* chronicles which are useful for studying *Lan Na* history. Historians, however, face the same problems as in studying other Tai chronicles. We need the proper perspectives and methods of historical criticism to understand them. We need sympathy, time and effort to disclose the historical facts which are hidden behind imagination and faith. Chronicles are not simply the record of what had happened in the past but the expression of an organized idea, thus the record of the intelligence of the people who created those legends. The comparative study of the *Lü* and *Yuan* legends can give a clearer picture and deeper understanding of the early history of the *Sipsong Panna* and the *Lan Na* kingdoms and furthermore the early history of the Tai and Thai people.

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FOLK WISDOM, SPIRIT CULTS, AND POWER CHANGE OF THE LUA AND MUANG AT THE BOE KLUEA SALT MINE OF NAN PROVINCE

Foreword

The first draft of this research paper was presented in the International Conference on "Spirit Cults in Southeast Asia" at the Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, in 1992. I thank all colleagues who gave comments and suggestions, particularly Prof. Shigeharu Tanabe, who kindy invited me to join this very interesting and enjoyable Conference. I have kept this paper for some years, not let it published though I have had chances, in order to understand more and make certain about the argument about the Boe Kluea Salt Mine Case including the Lua of Nan as successor of the Lwa of Lanna. Also I have done few more field investigation in this field area. Recently, I had another chance to update and refresh my argument in December 1997, when Phayap University together with the Nan Civil Society, honoured me to give a talk and discussion on the "Lua of Nan", a panel discussion with Dr. David Filbeck who has also conducted many fieldworks over twenty years as myself, on 19 December 1997, in the Conference on "Reconstructing the History of Muang Nan: A New Body of Knowledge". Finally, in this conference, my proposal to reconsider the Lua and the Thin of Nan as being of the same kind, and these Mon-Khmer speaking group and subgroups have been the aborigines of Muang Nan and Lanna, have been very well accepted by the conference attendants, Nan elites, and particularly Dr. Filbeck, who had argued with me for over years. I appreciate very much indeed his scholarly spirit, and would like to thank for the warm welcome and well acceptance of my long-term argument on the Lua identity in Lanna among scholars, colleagues, local elites of Nan, as appeared in Krungthep Thurakit Newspaper's Critical Forum: "Dr. Chlthira Satyawadna Who Has Been Grateful to the Lua of Nan (KTN: 30 December 1997) and Report: "The Historical Space for the Lua of Nan" (KTN: 7 January 1998). May I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Ratanaporn Sethakul, the Phayap University's Chair-organizer of the said conference, who provided me a chance to clear the argument and unexpectedly we could gain such fruitful outcome. My most sincere thanks go to Khun Yuwadee Maneekul, Krungthep Thurakit's journalist, who contributed her time and energy to follow up the conference and further joined the field investigation at the Boe Kluea Salt Mine of Nan Province, then wrote a fine critical essay and a report on the Lua of Nan and my research on these people. Her contribution has been not only for academic sake but also for the sake of the Lua/Lwa, the aborigines of Lanna.

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History and anthropology both spring from the same impulse, the curiosity to understand human, their society and their process of social creativity. Braudel says concordingly:

> *"There is no society, however primitive, which does not bear the 'scars of event' nor any society in which history has sunk completely without trace... "*
> (Braudel 1958: 36-37).

My paper focusses on one particular field area – the *Boe Kluea*[1] Salt Mine of Nan Province where I did my intensive field work in 1988. However, the ethnographical data I present in this paper was cross-checked with all my field notes gathered from the adjacent field areas during my life in the remote highland of Lua territoty in *Thung Chang-Pua* Districts of Nan Province in 1978-1982.
I conducted more field investigations consequently in 1992, 1994, 1996, and most recently in 1997.

In 1988, the *Boe Kluea* Salt Mine has appeared to be occupied by Muang citizens.[2] *Khao Cham*, the spirit medium, who claimed himself to be *khon muang* and spoke *kham muang* fluently, seemed to be the highest authority who had power and controlled the Salt Mine. My field investigation showed that the spirit propitiation, belief and practices were more likely *Lua* than *Tai* (*Yuan/Lue*).
Though spirit cults have received much attention in ethnographic studies of Northern Thailand and the subject has sparked intense debate among scholars as occurred in the special issue of **Mankind** (1984), the most problematic issue has not been solved. Each synchronic research on lowland Northern 'Thai' cults have left out the historical process of the interethnic relations of the areas resulted in the misunderstanding of ethnic identities, particularly, the intermingling between Northern Thai and Lua cults.

In my PhD. thesis (Cholthira 1991), I refer to the so-called Northern Thai who are the subjects of the extensive literature about contemporary spirit cults in the region of the former Lanna kingdoms. I agree with those anthropologists such as Turton (1984), David (1984) and Cohen (1984) who assert that these spirit cults are organized around matrilineal descent groups and provide a venue for leadership by women and social control by females. The question I pose concerns the identification of this population as 'Tai/Dai/Thai'. I have no doubt that for many generations the people of Northern Thailand have called themselves 'Thai',

[1] [the editor]: In TAI CULTURE's way of transcription it would be *boo klüa* or *boo küa*.
[2] Usually the Muang of Lanna have been understood as being ethnically Tai/Thai.

but it is equally true that they distinguish themselves from the central Thai both linguistically and in many other cultural ways.

Much of both 'Tai/Dai/Thai' and ***Lua*** system of belief are centred around spirits. In turn, these system are invariably associated with various forms of social organization, types of social relations, relative power and ritual performances. My studies on the spirit cults of the *Muang* and the *Lua* at the *Boe Kluea* Salt Mine lie principally in investigations of 'no-textual' knowledge, in other words, folk wisdom or popular knowledge, discursive practices, legends, myths and the unveiling of systems of power and enabling institutions (Said 1979; Foucault 1972, 1977). The production and reproduction of popular culture are also taken into account in order to analyze the folk traditions and their relation to dominant ideological structures. Along this line of analysis, the research paper would show how spirit cults at the *Boe Kluea* Salt Mine may be viewed in terms of anthropological conceptualizations of *folk wisdom* in relation to the notion of *power*. Moreover, it may also be argued that *power* might have been shifted from one dominant structure to another through the long course of history, nevertheless, the original collective identity persists without its ethnic labels. Taking the *Boe Kluea* spirit cults as a case study, although 'Lua-ness' and 'Tai/Thai-ness' have intermingled both socially and culturally, separate identities may be distinguishable through scholarly analysis.

Boe Kluea Salt Mine of Nan Province (A.D. 1988)

In 1988, the ***Boe Kluea*** Salt Mine, covering two *tambon* (county) called ***Boe Kluea Nuea*** (North) and ***Boe Kluea Tai*** (South), was thoroughly controlled by the Thai authorities, both military (Ministry of Defence) and police (Ministry of Interior). Its historical scene was that the area of Pua District where these two counties situated was fully involved with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT)'s insurgency as the Headquarter of CPT liberated zone during the year 1968-1982. By the end of the year 1981, this 'peaceful' area had been disturbed by various functions of governmental sections, particularly the military operation of the Third Army of Thai Government (TATG). All Communications with the outside world were cut off, villages and their cultivated field were heavily attacked and bombed by the TATG's air-forces. Since 1983, the area was overrun by the TATG, under the governmental policy: "politics preceding military" of the "66/2523 Policy" of Prem Tinasulanond's Government. In 1987, official data from the Ministry of Interior showed that there were 56 villages in ***Boe Kluea Nuea*** and 22 villages in ***Boe Kluea Tai***, all were Thin (in Thai Terms; see Filbeck 1971, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1978, particularly 1987, 1989) or Lua villages

(in the people's terms; see Cholthira 1991: 45-66). Not less than 2,568 Lua families were registered to be indigenous inhabitants of Boe Kluea, only 16 Thai families were recorded to live among the Lua citizens (Ministry of Interior 1987: 62-63).

The data showed that the Lua were perhaps the forecomers, if some may not be happy with the terms 'aborigines' of Boe Kluea. However, the Thai claimed to be the salt mine-owner, their power over the salt mine expressed in terms of spirit cults and their knowledge in making salt, *tom kluea.*

There were two salt wells, called *Boe Plaay* (last) and *Boe Kao* (first), in ***Boe Kluea Tay***; these two wells were commonly known as *Boe Luang* (big/royal). Another three salt wells were largely known in ***Boe Kluea Nuea***: *Boe Wen, Boe Nan, Boe Yuak...* On my field trip in 1988, the strategic road built by the authorization of the military for 'security' reason has already cut through *Boe Luang* of ***Boe Kluea Tay***; the other three salt wells of ***Boe Kluea Nuea*** were then more remote. However, the centre of the ***Boe Kluea*** cults has been at *Boe Luang* where I did intensive field investigations in various perspectives.

Popular Knowledge of Making Salt and Practices

The popular knowledge of making salt at the ***Boe Kluea*** Salt Mine seems to be claimed by local people of the area. It is one of their routine in a year-cycle. Every year during the dry season *naa laeng*, i.e., from January to April, the period when the people are free from their yearly harvest, peoples from every direction in the vicinity will make their trip to ***Boe Kluea***. Before starting the process of making salt, they will perform a spirit propitiation to please the Salt Mine Spirits. Only after having given offerings to the Spirits led by the head of shamans, peoples are allowed to 'cook' salt (*tom kluea*).

Most salt wells are about 5-12 metres deep from the ground level. The salty water from the surface has to be taken out as it is too mild. The standard quality of the salty water is believed to be almost at bottom of the well. Therefore it really takes time to wait for the new amount of water which comes from underground. Buckets of salty water are then poured down to a huge metal pan (in 1988). I was told that in former times, natural containers such as bamboo trunk was used to cook the salt. It may be seen that salt is made in a very simple way, waiting until salty water was boiled and salt was dry, packing it in baskets called *sawian kluea*, then selling it. The price of the salt is 20 Baht per bag, each bag has approximately 10 kilograms.

I was confirmed by a *Yuan* civilian who was the Head (*kamnan*) of ***Boe Kluea Tai*** County that those who cooked salt were only *Phuu Yuan*, the salt products were sold to *Lua* consumers who inhabited 'on the mountain' (*Lua bon doey*). It was said that the price of salt in 1988 was 5 Baht higher than that of the former year. (Informant: *Naay Kham Lamnai*, *Kamnan* of ***Boe Kluea Tay***: 18/2/1988)

Two Headmen, *Phuu Yai Laa* of *Baan Sapan* and *Phuu Yai Careun* of *Baan Boe Luang*, confirmed accordingly that the ***Boe Kluea*** spirit propitiation is held every year in the fifth month of Northern Thai (*raem kao kham duean haa*), it takes four days to finish the whole process. Not much detail has been told by these three 'Thai' authorities, particularly if my questions emphasized on spirit cults. Most of the questions were then passed on to another so-called authority, a ritual specialist called *Khao Cham*.

Boe Kluea Spirit Cults

The name of this *Khao Cham* is Naay Oey Lookaa. In his 77 years of age, he was also called in Yuan terms, *Phoe Uy*[1], which means senior man or grandfather.[2] I was told that he had been the village *Khao Cham* for over twenty years. If this was true, it seems to me that he had been in this position since 1968 or a few years before. It may then be interpreted that he had performed his ritual duty since the CPT controlled the area. While three former authorities claimed themselves to be *Yuan*, it was noticeable that the latter committed himself as being *khon muang*. From my field experience in Northern Thailand, I would put a question mark on those who admittingly claimed themselves as *muang* citizens; there seem to have something behind the smoke screen.

Khao Cham is a very ancient traditional institution, whereas village headmanship is probably a much more recent office in Nan Province. Though there may have been several *Khao Cham* in a village whose duty is to take leading part in many rituals in everyday life, a village *Khao Cham* is the most influential male member of the village ritual life. He is naturally a senior man who enjoys a high status and a high prestige owing to his age, his experience and his reputation for sound reasoning. By virtue of his office, his authority is, however, limited to the religious field, but he may also have great influence in political matters.
Naay Oey Lookaa, the village *Khao Cham* of Baan Boe Luang, therefore was supposed to be the most influential office of the *Boe Kluea* area, his 'power'

[1] [the editor]: In TAI CULTURE 's way of transcription it would be *phoo ui*.
[2] He is still alive when I met him during my last field trip in 1997 in the age of 87.

covered five salt wells in Pua District of Nan Province. He informed me that it was because the Royal Spirit of *Boe Kluea* possessed him and insisted him to be his spirit medium. From the possession, he learned that there have been twelve *Phii Boe Kluea* (Spirits of the salt mine) altogether; he himself was responsible for only six Spirits of *Muang Pua*. They are listed in order as follows:

1. *Cao Saang Kham* - She was *Cao Luang Nan*'s wife;
2. *Cao Luang Pua* - He was *Cao Saang Kham*'s younger brother;
3. *Cao Som* - He ruled *Muang Pua* together with his wife;
4. *Cao Soey* - He also ruled *Muang Pua*;
5. *Cao Luang Paen* - He ruled *Muang Pua*;
6. *Cao Som Paak Nam* - She came from *Wiang Saa*.

According to this informant, Cao Luang Nan had no reputation in taking care of people, on the contrary, his wife, Cao Saang Kham, was largely known as being very efficient, and just; she was highly respectable for her judgment.

The names in the list and the real figures cannot be overlooked in my view as this bit of pieces of information may later form a thorough image of the past, the local history which has been almost forgotten by state authority, but is well preserved and recorded in local ritual traditions.

Amazingly, the private properties of *Cao Som (Paak Nam)*, the last Spirit of Boe Kluea, have been well protected by this ritual leader. He showed me what he called '*khrueang khrua*', literally 'domestic utensils', of *Cao Som*; they were two pieces of tubular skirt, one piece of chinese silk - a delicate fabric with floral patttern in violet, a red traditional shirt, a pillow, a spear, a sword, a betal container (*uk maak*) and a food tray (*khan took*).[1]

All these interesting things have become sacred materials which were used in the spirit propitiation at *Boe Luang* once a year. Chickens are sacrificed the first year, a pig for the second, and a buffalo for the third. Totally, in every three year-cycle, a male black buffalo, a dog, a pig, twelve chickens, two pairs of huge candle and eight packs of small candle are offered to the *Boe Kluea* Spirits.

There are more details that may strike us, according to this informant, which is also similar to what I have heard from some *Lua* in the mountain – children were

[1] All these stuffs have been well preserved in the same cottage even in 1997 when I checked during my last field trip.

sacrificed by the Lua in order to please the ***Boe Kluea*** Spirits. This was frequently practised in former times particularly in the far north area, i.e., the ***Boe Kluea Nuea***. Two salt wells, *Boe Haan* and *Boe Ket Sawaa (literally means the 'area of the Lawa people')*, were closed by the indigenous folk in order to stop human sacrifice. Nowadays, though there is no more human sacrifice, remnants of *Lua* traditions still exist in the ritual performance, such as, bulls or buffaloes are sacrificed and their horns are usually hung in front of the ritual pavilion. Dog sacrifice is still practised – as the mattter of fact, the *Lua* of *Hang Dong* in *Chiang Mai* still cut the dog's ear and tail (but let it free) to combine with other offerings in order to please their ancestral spirits of female line.

The ethnographical data above-mentioned have led us to some other related issues, i.e. who was in fact the creator of this popular knowledge – the female sacred cloth of ***Boe Kluea*** Salt Mine may give some clues for our inquiry, and to what extent power in this territory has been shifted and even subverted through the course of history.

Muang Boe: Whose Territory? Whose Knowledge?

Mc Carthy (1900) first marked "M. baw" at the beginning of the *Nan River*, it was designated as being the site of salt wells and having enormous production of salt. Mc Carthy also described that during that period, for highlanders, the price of salt was comparable to gold (Walailak 1991: 117). Walailak Songsiri followed Mc Carthy's track until she reached "M. Baw" in 1991. At *Baan Boe Luang* she found eight villages of those who called themselves *khon muang* (Walailakk 1991 : 120). She viewed that *Boe Luang* villagers were probably heirs of *Tai Lue* who migrated from *Muang Boe Hae* and *Boe Luang* in Sipsongpanna, Yunnan Province, where there have also been hill salt production. It was this group of *Tai Lue*, in her view, who brought with them the knowledge of salt production to *Boe Luang* in *Nan Province*. Her 'supportive' evidences were beliefs and rituals, i.e., city pillar cult, annual offering to city *(muang)* spirit, and house *(baan)* spirit cult which, in her terms, were that of linear spirit cult (*kaan napthue phii pen saay trakuun*); according to these 'supportive' evidences, she referred to Bunchuay Srisawat's work on **Thai Sipsongpanna** (1954, 1955) without any details (Walailak 1991: 121-122).

Walailak argued that the *Tai Lue* were no doubt brought to this site for specific purpose, to produce salt. I would argue that the knowledge of producing salt in this specific region was originated by the local people themselves. The belief system and spirit cults mentioned by Walailak are common with those of the *Tai*

Lue in *Sipsongpanna* in many aspects, but if we read all Tai Lue chronicles critically, we will come across many historical events, no mattter how mythical it is, which showed that the *Lua/Lwa* of *Mon-Khmer* speaking group were the aborigines of the region, then were overthrown or sabotaged by the *Lue*. The beliefs in house pillar or *cai baan*, literally village heart, and city pillar or *cai muang*, literally city pillar, are also common among *Mon-Khmer* speaking groups in the Thai-Yunnan periphery. My field investigation among the *Palaung* (*Puu-laang*) in *Yunnan* along the *Palaung-San* and *Awa-San* mountainous range at the China-Burma border in 1988 showed that the *Palaung*, another *Mon-Khmer* speaking group of Palaungic branch, still strongly believed in the sacredness of the village heart (in terms of three stones, similar to any *Lue* village in *Sipsongpanna*). The *Wa* at the China-Burma border also believed in the holy stone pillar, called *Sao Hin Sao Phaa*. Such belief, in my view, is probably part of Austroasiatic and Austronesian shared cultural heritage which originated in the prehistory period as reconstructed by Paul Mus (Mus 1933). It may also be proposed, according to my on-going research on the topic "Bai-Yue, Aborigines of Southern China: The Ancestors of Southeast Asian Peoples", that the concept and ritual of this belief system has been in fact the shared cultural heritage of the Bai-Yue of Southern China.

Walailak's contribution to the studies of *Boe Kluea* issue is her documentary research on history of the region. She showed that in 1450, *King Tilokaraja* of Chiang Mai with his soldiers came to ***Nan*** and conquered this city in order to control his power over *Boe Maang* where there were salt – a sort of tribute called *suay khaa* (Walailak 120; **Phongsaawadaan Muang Nan**).

Geographically, *Boe Maang* signifies a salt well of the *Maang Creek* and the *Maang Creek* is the only one creek that is closest to *Ban Boe Luang*. The date evidently showed that peoples in Northern Thailand in the past made use of the salt mine even before the *Lue* migrated to this area in about 200 years ago. Popular knowledge of salt production would occur there among the indigenous folk rather than being imported by the so-called 'civilized' *Tai Lue*, in Thai term.

Walailiak's archaeological evidence is also valid and strongly supports my argument. She found out that in front of *Boe Luang* where an official hospital was build in 1990 by the Thai authority, an archaeological site was buried under the new building. However, in this area, *Lanna* ceramics of *Wiang Kalong*, *Pong Daeng*, *Mon Om* (*Phayao*), *Boe Suak* (*Nan*), *Srisatchanalai*, and even of the

Ming period were found. Approximately, it should be dated in between the 16th-17th century (Walailak 1991:120).

This archaeological site may be comparable to those found in the between border. Srisakra (1987: 85-65) suggests that several ancient communities in Northern and North-Western Thailand were supposedly *Lua/Lawa* communities. Among the rich finds in the north and west from *Mae Hong Son* down to *Kanchanaburi Province*, not even a single religious objects has been known as Buddhist or Hindu. The majority of these are pottery: *Sangkhalok* wares from the kilns in *Sukhothai*, *Srisatchanalai*, *Sankamphaeng*, *Wiang Kalong* and *Muang Phan*; and include Chinese ceramics of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties. Similar to *Boe Luang* archaeological site at the Thai-Lao border, metal artifacts have also been discoverd from the burials, such as bronze limepot and iron javelins and swords. Judging from the finds, Srisakra insists that it seems to him the grave makers had close contacts with the people in the lowlands, who had enjoyed a technically highly advanced culture. He views that these sites had been former communities of the Lua/Lawa from the 14th-16th century, i.e., the first half of Ayuddhaya period (Srisakra 1987: 54-65). The Lua/Lawa must have been the most significant highland group who lived on the communication route that connected the Lanna Kingdom with other territories. It seemed to him that various ceramics from the northern part of Thailand were brougth to the mountains to trade with the abundant forest products of the Lua/Lawa.

What then were the precious 'forest products' of the indigenous highland?
I have referred elsewhere to the most ancient written source about the *Lua/Lawa*, i.e., the inscription on the base of the Siva image at *Kamphaeng Phet*, *Caruek Thaan Phra Isavara* (1510) (Cholthira 1987; 1991: 136). This dates back to the sixteenth century and states that, according to the new law, sale of cattle to the *Lua/Lawa* was forbidden. It may be arguable that the Lua/Lawa mentioned here were the same ethnic group of people who lived in the mountainous range who had traded with lowlanders for quite a long period of time. However, my interpretation is that a large number of cattle had been sold to the *Lua/Lawa* probably for their carts, i.e., for their caravan trade which was a major operation along the mountainous ranges across the borders of northern highland principalities. Though we lack any accurate account, presumably this caravan trade must have had a strong economic and political impact on Thai communities in the lowland, before the inscription reported the prohibition. This issue is related to the reconstruction of *Lua/Lawa* economic history which, with not much

accurate data, it may be interpreted that the *Lua/Lawa* economic situation in the past was not in so bad condition as it appears at present.

The importance of the cattle and the *Lua/Lawa* caravan trade together with *Lua/Lawa* archaeological sites has been noted and discussed in order to set up our first dimension of *Lua/Lawa* ethnohistory. In my view, the area of *Thung Chang-Pua* Districts which the *Lua* inhabit nowadays, particularly the *Boe Kluea* or *Salt Mine* area, was not as remote as at present. Rather, it was indeed a strategic site in the past through which every power 'centre' – *Burma*, *Lanna*, *Lanchang*, *Chiang Rung* (*Sipsongpanna*) – had to pass in attempts to dominate the rich natural resource, salt, for both everyday consuming and military purposes. As there have been a number of salt wells in *Pua* as mentioned, I would suggest that the indigenous people, mostly *Lua*, had made use of them for generations. The salt in this strategic site was said to supply the needs of the whole of *Lanna* extensively before 1950. During the war-time, these salt wells became more importance for military strategy, as hundred of thousands of soldiers need salt as well as rice.

As my field investigaytion showed that there have been not less than six spirits of salt mine at *Boe Kluea* to which the Lua and *khon muang* pay their homage every year and among the list of names of the Salt Mine Spirits, there seem to have order of inheritance, or at least, a sort of succession among kins or siblings, I would argue that a pattern of social organization was established at *Boe Kluea* or *Muang Boe* in the past. Walailak's field data showed that there was also *Phii Muang* spirit cults held by the local peoples in the fifth month every year; 36 *Phii Muang*, literally city spirits, were said to possess the spirit mediums, mostly female. The cult takes three days and three nights; in former times, it took seven days and nights to please the city spirits (Walailak 1991:123). If this piece of information is correct, it suggests that there may have been at least 36 state-rulers known in the realm of folk memory and state history has been well preserved by folk wisdom in terms of spirit cults.

While some suggested that wet-rice cultivation created state-formation, Srisakra proposed that,

> *Salt and metal were in the past the major factors of interethnic relations, the economic exchange both within the community and among other external communities. Paddy fields were not the origin of states. Salt and metal originated states, a state-formation of several ethnic groups...*(Srisakra 1991: 98-124)

According to my field data, it may be noticeable that among those six spirits of *Boe Kluea*, there was one who was believed to be a female *Burmese* authority, called *Cao Saang Kham*, the just queen most revered by the local people even until nowadays. This may be interpreted that *Boe Kluea* Salt Mine of *Pua District, Nan Province*, had been occupied by the *Burmese* during the long period of *Burmese* domination (1558-1774). It is suggested that the *Boe Kluea* region was first occupied by the Lua. Lua traditional state had alrealy emerged because of the rich natural resource, salt.

Later, historical evidence showed that the *Boe Kluea* 'state' was conquered by *King Tilokaraja* of *Chiang Mai* in 1450 as already mentioned. Further, this strategic site was conquered by the *Bermese*, power had been changed, and shifted from one to another during the *Lanna* crisis, 1558-1774. In 1782, King Rama I of Siam ruled Bangkok and further established Siamese power in *Lanna*. It was perhaps during this circumstance that the *Lue*, of *Sipsongpanna* were forced to settle in the *Lua* area at *Boe Kluea*. Through '*la longue duree*' (Braudel 1958), history of the region is unveiled, not by any institutionalized authoritative written texts, but by the study of popular knowledge of salt production and the spirit cults involved. Braudel was totally correct, he said:

> *Normally, traditional history is concerned with breaking down time past, for short time span, for the individual and the event. The new economic and social theory of history pushes cyclical movement in the forefront of ethnographers. We may find a history to be capable of traversing even greater distances, a history to be measured in centuries, i.e., the history of the long, even of the very long time span, of the longue duree.* (Braudel 1958: 27)

Within this framework of study, a theoretical assumption may be raised – there are, so to speak, transformational laws of social relations and productive relations which must be discovered. This is in accordance with Marx's assertion that, *"social relations appear to us as of they were relations between things"*, in Marx's view, *"in depth there lay relations between human beings"*.

But the studies of the *longue duree* often seems troublesome and full of complications. It may be suggested that to give it a place in the heart of ethnographical research would entail more than a routine field work studies. For an ethnographer, acceptiong the *longue duree* entails a readiness to change the methodology of field work and research, the attitudes and a whole reversal in way of thinking, i.e., a new paradigm of thought, and even the style of presentation of the thesis and the anti-thesis.

This is the point at which I try to free myself to get out of the conventional style of ethnographical research, shifting from a short-time span ethnography to reconstructing a longer-time span ethnography or even an ethnohistory of people whose history was lost, distorted, and stolen.

On the basis of these combining studies, the economic base which is the internal dynamic force, the salt production of Boe Kluea citizens, the social structure and organization may be clarifiled, and finally the local history, folk wisdom, and ethnohistory may be reconstructed as much to the truth.

My analysis of *Muang Boe*, territorial spirits and popular knowledge of the region, shows that no study of a society could succeed without being set in its historical context. The *Boe Kluea* community is seen in relation to the whole complex of district and towns surrouding it, as well as to those communities of neighbouring states or countries. In such way, we are now coming closer to the dialectic of time spans, in its own way, to achieve an explanation of this society in all its reality, both historical and contemporary.

Textiles in Boe Kluea Ritual Context

In the Thai-Yunnan periphery in particular, from the courts to indigenous mountain villages, textiles play complex and vivid roles in the ceremonial lives of these Southeast Asian peoples. Among many different ethnic groups, there are practices to show that textiles in ritaul context, as well as costume identify the 'self' ; moreover changing of costumes in the course of time in ritual ceremonies may be a mean of expressing a new identity. Obviously, the ancient concept of new costume signals a new start in life. Mattiebelle Gittinger (1990) shows many cases in *Java* and *Sumatra*:

> *The parallel of the transition of bride and groom to the married state and of the cloths from unpatterned to a common pattern has a unique poetic quality. Only a society in which costume and textiles have a special role could evolve such a striking metaphor.* (Gittinger 1990: 51)

Throughout the Thai-Yunnan periphery, cloths are used in various sacred activities to ensure wealth and prosperity of individuals and social groups, including the stability of states. Particularly, in central Thailand, ritual cloths may appear as prescribed pieces of Buddha's clothing for the three seasons, such as the case of the Emerald Buddha at the Royal Temple, in *Wat Phra Kaew*, Bangkok. It is only the king who can perform the sacred duty, changing the Buddha's cloth to suit for each season of the year-cycle. In Cambodia, *Khmer*

textiles, in terms of *phaa sompak puum*, in Thai, appear as wall hangings, depicting Buddha image or figures and story in ***Vesantara Jaataka***.

In Northern Thailand, Laos including Sipsongpanna of Yunnan, ritual textiles appear as Buddhist temple banners, called *tung* with elephant, horse, *singha*, and some other mythical and floral designs. Although ritual textiles range from highly decorative accounterments, such as gold and silver brocade technique, to modest fragments such as simple weaving, their physical details, tecniques and designs are unique to specific groups. In other words, the physical forms of textiles offers a powerful symbolic instrument that many different groups recognized. *Phrae Waa* is typical of the *Phuu Thai* of Kalasin Province and Sakon Nakorn Province; *Sin nam lai* is used among the people of Nan Province; *Sin mat mii* is worn by the Southern Isan; *Sin mii hol* is unique among the Mon-Khmer speaking people of Surin Province; and *Sin tiin cok* is woven and worn by those who were called '*Lao*' in Northern Thailand, particularly the *Phuu Yuan*, and some other 'so-called' *Lao* groups of *Haat Siaw* (Sukhothai) and *Khuu Bua* (Ratburi) in Central Thailand.

Considering the complexity of the costume traditions that have evolved around 'weavers' and 'wearers' in both social and ritual contexts, it may not be surprising to discover the ritual role of textiles in the ***Boe Kluea*** spirit propitiation. But what may strike us is female tubular skirts of unidentified groups form a significant role in the spiritual performance, particularly the spirit possession. Among the pile of female skirts for ritual duties at *Boe Luang*, none of them are those of the *Tai Lue* or *Yuan* weaving identities, such as the '*chok*' technique (didcontinuous supplementary weft and/or warp) which is well-known as identical to the *Yuan* and both *'chok'* together with *'laay koe?/laay luang'* (tapestry weaving technique) which is particularly identical to the *Lue*. Apart from the shawls in square and rectangular patterns, amazingly most of the ritual female skirts are *sarong* depicting *batik* designs. Although there is a number of newly machine-print *sarong* and one may argue that they are there to form part of the ritual because such fabrics are easy to purchase, the existence of two ancient *sarong* with stunning patterns indicates that this is not the case. I hypothesize that modern *sarong* appear to have their role in the *Boe Kluea* ritual only because, in order to follow and keep on the tradition, it has to be *sarong* to join the sacred cloths which seem to be the heirloom textiles of this territory. If this is the case, the owner(s) of these inherited sacred cloths were not *Tai/Dai*, neither *Lue* nor *Yuan*.

Robyn Maxwell (1990) asserts,

> *Since traditional textile production in Southeast Asia was exclusively the task of women, textiles are able to show history from a different perspective by reflecting a female view of the contact between different cultures and are an alternative to the princely epics of war, succession and dominance. Textiles also remind us that many cultures and traditions existed outside the powerful court centres and kingdoms that dominate most accounts of Southeast Asian history. Many of the fabrics... provide valuable information about life in some of the more isolated and remote locations in Southeast Asia not directly in contact with the centres of international power and trade.* (Maxwell 1990: 24)

It is also suggested that perhaps the most difficult influences to assess are those of any one Southeast Asian culture upon its neighbours. Interregional influences have existed since prehistoric times, and while changes in textile design have often resulted from the political hegemony of a particular group during certain periods, most have been subtly absorbed and have passed undocumented. Maxwell insists,

> *"however, the important role of decorative textiles establishing group identities has contributed to great diversity of colour, pattern and style.* (Maxwell 1990: 24)

My argument is that the spirit mediums, either male or female, in the ***Boe Kluea*** social context, have tried their best to preserve their ethnic identities through their ritual, and ritual cloths, particularly female *sarong*, formed part of their identical preservation without any ethnic label, but with distinctive physical form, technique and designs.

Apart from the *Chinese* fabric, I pay attention to two ancient *sarong* which have been well protected together with some other domestic properties and weapons on the sacred shelf by the *Khao Cham* of the *Boe Luang* community. By all means, they are doubtless the heirloom textiles inherited from a female authority in the past. The similar technique, colour, size and their function indicate that these two skirts came from or were made from the same place and period. The first piece depicts 'sun' and 'cosmology' motifs and the design is obviously of Indian origin (This is agreeable with Robyn Maxwell, personal communication, Canberra 1990). The second one depicts semicircle and rectangular patterns in a symbolic manner. The design of this particular piece is very stunning, truly unique, and fantastically poetic.

The message of design is often extremely complex, even the local people and the ritual expert cannot explain and interpret. At first glance, the design of semicircle, rectangular with floral patterns in it may seem nothing more than

appropriate design of aesthetic value. But on closer examination, its meaning in the larger social and cultural context reveals itself.

It may be seen that, from the basic 'weave' the batik maker has created a wonderful range of design. The pattern on the skirts suggests that they were probably worn by a female member of high status and the clear design reminds us of a batik *geringsing* pattern. Such pattern in Indonesian ideological world is credited as being protective or fortunate, as *Fraser-Lu* (1990: 71) describes:

> *A batik geringsing pattern, consisting of a series of nucleated semicircles placed close together like fish scales, was at one time considerred effective against sickness, so it was often worn in the hope of keeping illness at bay.*
> (Frazer-Lu 1990: see also Djoemena 1986:12)

Also, the *geringsing* double *ikat* from *Tenganan, Pageringsingan, Bali*, due to the purifying rituals, according to Fraser-Lu, is credited with the ability to heal and may be used to wrap the sick in addition to magical and protective powers; *geringsing* cloths also serve as banners and flags during ceremonies.

I am not claiming that the pattern of the Boe Kluea sacred cloths is that of *geringsing* in *Indonesian* terms, my attempt is to read the symbols and to interpret the ideological structure occurred in the ritual cloths. By all means, the semicircle pattern stands for fish-scales, but the rectangular pattern may be interpreted in various ways. I would interpret that the pattern stands for land, and even for rice-field with irrigated system. Therefore, in this special piece of cloth, several pieces of paddy fields stand in front of us. While red colour signifies soil, blue may stand for water and the red floral pattern both in the fields and the fish-scales symbolizes fertility of the territory, i.e., 'full of fish as well as full of rice' (as mentioned in the so-called ***King Ramkhamhaeng Inscription***: *'nai naam mii plaa, nai naa mii khaaw'*. Metaphorically, colour may also have deeper meaning : red and blue play important role in ritual cloth, including several national flags. Red singifies life, sacrifice and triumph; blue normally stands for royal status, also as being equivalent to Lord of Nature (blue sky and blue water). As these two sacred cloths are unique in deep red and blue, I would suggest that they might have been made in India. Indian mordant-painted and printed cottons traded to Southeast Asia is, according to Maxwell (1990: 347), unique in deep reds and blues, probably dating from the mid-eighteenth century and stored as an heirloom in central *Sulawesi*. These two *sarong* probably made by handspun cotton, with natural mordants and dyes in mordant painting, batik technique, may have been important to this territory long before the *Tai Lue* of *Sipsongpanna* settled in the vicinity.

The antiquity and distinction of such designs help to explain the unusual associations among various ethnic groups who came and interacted socially, culturally and economically at this strategic site, the salt mine of Northern territory. The local power centre may have been the aboriginal Lua, the Austroaiatic stratrum, who owned the fertile land, the rich natural resource-salt, only found themselves decimated in times.

Female Sacred Cloths: Women's Status and Authority?

Female skirts, in Thai terms, *phaa nung/phaa thung/phaa sin*, are usually downgraded in Thai ideological structure as being '*low*' and '*dirty*' and even '*untouchable*'. On the contrary, male skirts may be used for any purposes, from head to toes, in any space and time. Fraser-Lu (1990) writes:

> *In Burma and Thailand, no self-respecting man would intentionally walk under a woman's sarong hanging on a clothes-line or pole. In Thailand, it is not fitting that the head, the most sacred part of the body, should brush against the nether garment of a woman. Folktales abound in Burma of Samsonesque heroes who have been lured by a temptress into losing their supernatural powers by inadvertently passing under a woman's sarong. In a popular Burmese folktale, a vindictive consort reduces her husband, a formerly charismatic king, to the laughing stock of the kingdom by sewing replicas of his 'magic eyes' along the hem of her skirt.* (Fraser-Lu 1990: 70)

If the sacred skirts of Boe Kluea really belonged to the said Burmese queen, called *Cao Saang Kham*, who was *Cao Luang Nan*'s wife (or consort), according to Burmese tradition, as well as any '*Tai*' tradition, her skirts should not have been revered and placed higher than men's shoulder. I cast doubt on this piece of information and strongly believe that the story of the sacred skirts has been reproduced due to power change in the course of history by folk 'cunning' wisdom. It may be hopeless to find out who was the exact owner of these sacred skirts and what ethnicity she was. But it is probably valid to argue that only in the society where women have high status and authority that female skirts could take significant role in ritual context.

My PhD thesis (1991) demonstrates the validity of the *Lua* view that their own history is part and parcel of the politics of the *Lua/Lawa* states that have developed and declined in the *Lanna* region and further north (see some parts of the argument in Cholthira 1997: Tai Culture Vol.II, No.2 December 1997: 6-29). What distinguishes them from the rest of the regional population is the fact that their society is an organization of matriclans and has been remarkably conducive to the emergence of matriarchs. It may well be that such distinctive institutions became firmly entrenched among the ***Lua of Nan*** during prolonged periods when they eschewed alliances with outsiders and withdrew their support for *Yuan*

centres of power, when the latter became excessively exploitative or themselves declined with the advance of the modern Thai domination. It is possibly the case that matriliny and matriarchy developed as village institutions with the 'devolution' of the traditional *Lanna Kingdom* (See Cholthira 1990 : 75-101). My argument is that the ***Lua of Nan*** including those of ***Boe Kluea*** salt mine have defied the dominant lowland states in their effort to preserve their identity and culture. Oral tradition suggests that such resistance has taken a physical form at least four times over the last two hundred years; they were *Suek Maan*, *Khaa Tdjae Revolt*, *Phii Bun Lua Revolt*, and Communist *Lua* Insurgency (illustrated in Cholthira 1991: Chapter 3, 4, and Appendix A). *Lua* assertion of collective identity has been later expressed in terms of custom, belief, spirit cults without ethnic label. The *Lua-Tai* assimilation is the product of a long economic, sociological and political history. One result of this process is that many of residents of Northern Thailand are unaware that the *Lanna* traditions which they recognize and revere have originated in *Lua/Lawa* culture which they themselves deem to be 'primitive' and 'uncivilized'. Such traditions include the rituals of the city pillar - *Sao Indakhila* homage to *Lanna* (*Lawa*) territorial spirits *Puu Sae-Yaa Sae*, the *Phii Mot-Phii Meng* dancing rituals, and the matrilineal ancestral spirit cults among the northern local people who now call themselves *Khon Muang*. The spirit cults at the ***Boe Kluea*** salt mine of Nan Province are indeed also a strong case.

My main approach has been directed at the socio-cultural process of salt production, reproduction of local history in relation to village concepts of gender and hierarchy, and particularly power. The textiles's form, function and meaning are analyzed to link with the assumption that the ***Boe Kluea*** of Nan Province are the remnants of *Lua* social system which matrilineal spirit cults are still practised among the ***Lua of Nan*** nowadays. My further illustration on *Lua* legendary tale concerning the origin of salt wells would give a supportive view for my hypothesis.

Tanmnan Boe Kluea : Legendary Tale and Myth in Oral Tradition

Dessaint (1973; 1981), in his studies on the *Thin/Mal* or the ***Lua* of *Nan***, claimed that it was this group of people of Mon-Khmer speaking who controlled the salt trade throughout northern Thailand and Laos:

> *Salt is collected by a simple technique in two communes near the head-waters of the Mae Nam Nan, namely Baw Kluea Nuea and Baw Kluea Tay. Until recent years, salt, which is rare in the mountains of southern China and northern South-East Asia (there is still a high incidence of goiter in these areas), was used as an exchange standard.*

> *In the not very distant past, the* ***Mal*** *living around the salt wells of Nan province controlled the 'salt trade' by ox caravan or on elephant back throughout a large part of northern Thailand and northern Laos.* (Dessaint 1973: 16).

Later in 1981, he still confirmed his view:

> *Salt, as an exchange commodity, is a major source of cash or rice... It was often used as an exchange standard.*
> *In the not very distant past, the* ***T'in*** *living around the salt wells in the northern part of Nan province largely controlled the 'salt production' of the area. Lowlanders used to come to get salt in exchange for rice or other commodities. They took it by zebu caravan or on elephant back to other parts of northern Thailand and northern Laos. This was a slow method of transport – ox caravans went from Muang Nan to Boe Kluea Tay in twelve stages, that is in twelve days – but it was a very profitable activity for the lowlanders who organized and led these ox caravans until recent times.*
> *In Muang Nan, they sold it for several times what it had cost them in Boe Kluea Nuea or Boe Kluea Tay.* (Dessaint 1981: 122).

Although no references were mentioned; it may be interpreted that Dessaint might have gathered such information from his field research. Chusit (1981) gave a supportive data for Dessaint's claim. His research on the ox-caravan trade of Northern Thailand shows that populations of Northern Thailand before 1914 consumed salt which came from three directions:

1) sea salt from *Malamaeng* (Mataban?);
2) hill salt from *Boe Kluea* of *Pua District*, Nan Province;
3) sea salt from Bangkok.

According to him, the hill salt from Pua was largely comsumed in Nan and all other parts of Northern Thailand including Laos; the Shan and Hoe caravans also came to take salt from this area, including traders from *Muang Phaan, Phayao, Lampang, Chiang Kham, Chiang Khong, Pong*, and *Theung*.

My field research in 1986 supports that even the people of *Muang Ngeun, Saiyaburi* at the Lao Border comsume the salt of *Boe Kluea Nuea* until present time. I was told by an officer that according to local history he gathered from the local people, they believed that it was *Phra Cao Saang Kham* who built *Boe Yuak* (a salt well at *Boe Kluea Nuea*); this piece of information is in accordance with the field data in 1988 at *Boe Kluea Tay*, the difference is while *Cao Saang Kham* was the wife of *Phra Cao Nan* according to the spirit cults at *Boe Kluea Tay*, this figure became the Burmese prince who was sent by his father to rule Nan during Burmese occupation (Informant: Sa-at Panyadeja 1986, personal communication, at *Boe Kluea Nuea*). A Buddhist temple called *Wat Boe Yuak* was also built by this Burmese ruler. As for *Boe Nan*, it was *Phra Cao Yoet Nan*

who built the well, later he built another one, *Boe Wen. Phaya Hua Lek* who was well known as *Cao Phoe Khoemue Lek* among the Northern Thai (see Chalardchai 1984) was also said to have contributed a salt well at *Baan Saleh* (a Lua county on the hill) but failed.

At *Boe Kluea Tay*, my field note in 1986 shows that it is strongly believed by the local people that about 700 years ago, when *Cao Luang Phuu Khaa* and *Cao Luang Pua* were still good friends, they let their elephants walk and wander around the campus of Pua. In one month, they found out that the elephants were eating something called in Thai terms, *din poong*, literally means soil from salty pond. The elephants-caretaker (*khwaan chaang*) brought the water with him and let *Cao Luang Pua* taste it; it was salty. The Pua ruler then investigated by boiling the salty water, resulted in an amount of salt of perfect quality. From that time on, *Cao Luang Pua* invited *Cao Luang Phuu Khaa* to cook salt together with him and the citizens of these two *muang* had made use of this salt mine since then (Cholthira 1987: 190-191). If this legend is valid, it may be claimed that knowledge of salt production in this area was indigenous rather than imported as suggested by Walailak (1991).

Legendary tales and myth often refer to the role of great ancestors or gods in the discovery of important skills or invention, such as the art of spinning and weaving and the invention of many sacred designs or the discovery of the most fundamental objects upon which a culture is founded - staple foodstuffs such as rice, domestic animals such as buffaloes, and the basic raw materials from which clothing is fashioned such as cotton (For example of such origin myths, see Nooy Palm (1979) on the Toraja; Ellis (1981) on the Ifugao; Niessen (1985) on the Toba Balak; for the case of Mon-Khmer speaking group, see Cholthira (1991) on the Kroem's invention of stone-castle, and paddy field). *Lua* wisdom also refers to the role of a *Lua* grandmother who was the origin of salt and salt wells at *Muang Pua*. Gathering from my fieldwork among the Lua on the revolutionary base of Nan Province during the year 1978-1982, the myth of salt mine origin of the ***Lua* of *Nan*** flows as followed:

> *Once upon a time, a long time ago indeed when people still lived together, having communal life, both production and consumption, at that period the Lua did not know what salt was. Later a grandmother, called Yaa Lua, took cooking as her duty for the Lua commune. Whenever she cooked, the food was very delicious, Everyone praised her and wanted to know what kind of ingredients she added into her cooking food. Two men secretly watched her while cooking and amazingly, they found out that in fact the lady used the water she bathed to cook food. This secret was told and spread off but no one seemed to believe. So she was oftenly watched until it was no more secret.*
>
> *The people then held a meeting without her attendance and it was decided by majority vote that she should be punnished by execution. The Lua used a spear to kill her but she could run away.*

> *Terribly hurt and bloody, she reached two wells: Boe Nan and Boe Wen. The blood flew down the well until the wells were full of bloody water – these wells later became the salt wells of North Nan. Grandma Lua still run away until she reached Boe Yuak, she spat into the well, that is why the water in Boe Yuak is salty until now. She further escaped southward and died at Boe Luang, i.e., Boe Kluea Tay nowadays.*
> (Lua female informants: Mae Phoeng and Lua comrades in the Nan Revolutionary Base, 1978-1982).

It was also explained by the Lua stock that the salty water in *Boe Wen* and *Boe Nan* were red because of *Yaa Lua's* blood, but salt made from *Boe Yuak* and *Boe Luang* were white. The mythical *Yaa Lua* died at *Boe Luang*, therefore *Boe Luang* eats human. Every year, pigs, chickens and dogs are sacrificed but every three or four years, there have been human sacrifice to appease the spirit of *Yaa Lua*. First-born babies to ten-year-old children were normally offered to the spirit of origin. It was even described that banana, sugar-cane, rice and meat were put in a weaving basket, called *krathong*, and placed at the four corners of the well. If it was a human sacrifice, a bit of blood, human heart, lung and liver were also put in the *krathong*, then offered. If there was a necessity to seek human for sacrifice from a faraway land, only a bit of blood and a tip of ear were needed (Cholthira 1987: 191).

Among the Lua on the mountains range, it was believed that human sacrifice for the *Boe Kluea* spirit propitiation had been consistently practised, then was given up when the CPT controlled the area about twenty years ago. A Lua grandmother told me frankly that outside the revolutionary base, such practice still occurred. Once she came across an outsider who seemed to be the ritual expert's follower; she strongly believed that the guy was of Lua stock who resided outside the revolutionary base and came to steal babies in the base. She picked up a firewood and threw it to the guy, he was hurt and ran away.

Though the myth of the upland Lua in the more remote area may reveal itself and the indigenous knowledge of salt production was recorded in terms of myth, one may argue that Lua version of salt origin is also a reproduction of Lua system and their idcological structure. I would believe that antiquity, sincerity, simplicity in Lua version of salt origin and its associated sacrificial rituals can proudly show that, this 'subjugated popular knowledge' is by no mean borrowed from outsiders or imported by new settlers. While the 'matrilineal' Lua ideological process is still at work, no one can take the sacred female *sarong* down from the spirit shrine of the Boe Kluea Salt Mine of Nan Province.

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INTERNATIONAL CO-WORKSHOP ON THE PROJECTS ☯ "Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia" (CSEAS, Kyoto University) and ☯ "Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples" (Chulalongkorn University)

Chiang Mai, Thailand; March 28-29, 1998

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Yukio Hayashi

Conducting empirical field studies in mainland Southeast Asia was impossible until the middle of the 1980s except in Thailand. Due to the end of "Cold War", however, the region has entered into a new era.

Foreigners are gradually being permitted to visit Thailand's neighboring socialist states, those which are opening their markets to the outside world. Academic networking has also begun especially among the countries along the Mekong, and inter-regional cooperation across national boundaries has been rapidly developing.

With this background, current research on Tai peoples and their neighbors across national boundaries is entering a period of mushrooming growth. The related academic interest in comparative perspectives is shared not only among foreigners, most of whom are historians, linguists and ethnologists, but also among native intellectuals trying to reconstruct their past in a broad sense, seeking cultural identity. In particular, the nation-wide project of "Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples" led by Professor Chatthip Nartsupha, Chulalongkorn University, is one of the biggest among them. This project is publishing many research results including some important document studies. Moreover, this project has links with other groups of intellectuals in foreign countries. It makes a great contribution to Southeast Asian studies in general, too.

In Japan, young Japanese scholars who are interested in Southeast Asian societies and cultures, especially those who have studied ethnic groups in the region, came together at the first seminar on "Inter-ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia" January 6-7, 1995. This small gathering was held at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies [CSEAS], Kyoto University. Most of the participants were active, young field workers, who later became a small research group with financial support from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture,

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from April 1995 to March 1997. During the next two years, graduate students and PhD candidates who were studying several groups in mainland southeast Asia and southwestern China got together in 12 seminars in total. Some of the papers presented in these seminars have been compiled and will be published as a special issue of "Tonan Ajia Kenkyu (Southeast Asian Studies)" the journal of CSEAS, Kyoto University (1998, vol. 35, no. 4).

It must be said that we did not try to impose or jump into a new paradigm in terms of one single theoretical perspective. To the contrary, we have tried to encourage different perspectives in understanding the cultural diversity in the region. Therefore, our views are basically descriptive in form. What we have shared here, however, is that various realities of each ethnic group should be understood in relation to the particular locality in the region.

With such a background, the idea of this international workshop arose in March, 1997, in some conversations with Thai scholars and the core members of the young Japanese group. We confirmed with each other then that we should exchange not only data obtained but also our viewpoints. This international workshop, therefore, had its central aim the introduction and sharing of their research findings and related ideas, trying to overcome boundaries of countries and disciplines. Furthermore, this workshop was the first attempt to realize future cooperation not only between Thailand and Japan but also among all scholars interested in how the Tai and their neighbors across national boundaries are building new formulation of ethnic diversity in the region. Sharing our experiences and knowledge, and to fostering the exchange of ideas in regard to the subject, it was hoped that this workshop also offered an opportunity for all participants to form personal ties and above all to exchange ideas and projects from which future progress will derive.

The workshop had forty participants the first day and thirty five the second. Unfortunately, Professor Chatthip, a co-organizer of the gathering, could not attend due to illness, but Professor Cholthira Satyawadhna (Rangsit University) participated as the representative of his project.

Associate Professor Theeraphan Luangthongkham (Chulalongkorn University) also attended as representative of the Thai Research Fund. Participants came from numerous countries as well as from Chiang Mai, such as Professors Rujaya Abhakorn and Anan Ganjanapan (Chiang Mai University), all of whom added to the lively exchange of ideas and discussion. Various kinds of data were presented and many subjects were discussed. Among them, the dialogue between historians and anthropologists seemed to be of importance. On the other hand, questions about how the situational approach to ethnic groups and their identity could be integrated into the historical/substantial approaches still remain.

We enjoyed a fruitful meeting for two days. I believe that the main purpose of the co-workshop was fully realized due to the kind cooperative friendship shown by all the participants. At the same time, dialogue in relation to the subject has not come to a finish, but has just started for future cooperation.

Program of the Workshop carried out on March 28, 1998 (9:00-18:30)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Hayashi, Yukio (CSEAS, Kyoto University): "The Scope of the Inter-ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia."

Cholthira Satyawadhna (Rangsit University): "Welcome Speech."

Chatthip Nartsupha (Chulalongkorn University) "The Values of and Perspectives on Tai Studies." *(* paper distributed)*

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Volker Grabowsky (National University of Laos): "On the History of Muang Sing (Laos): The Fate of a Lue Principality."

Ratanaporn Sethakul (Payap University): "Lan Na History in the Lu Chronicles."

Aroonrut Wichienkeeo (Chiang Mai Rajabhat Institute): "The Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai."

Baba, Yuji (Mie Prefectural College of Nursing): "Being Lue, and Not Being Lue."

Hasegawa, Kiyoshi (Gifu University for Education and Languages) and

Yang Guanyuan (Yunnan Institute for Nationalities): "Cultural Identity and Ethnic Boundary of the Tai Nuea in the Yunnan-Burma Periphery."

Takatani, Michio (Hiroshima University): "An Anthropological Analysis of Burmanization of the Shan."

March 29, 1998 (9:00-17:45)

Thavesilp Subwattana (Mahasarakham University): "The Relation and Conception of Thais to the word *Lao*."

Songkoon Chantachon (Mahasarakham University): "Looking Laos through Buddhism."

Hayashi, Yukio (CSEAS, Kyoto University): "Differentiation and Involution of Ethno-Regional Lao Identity in Northeast Thailand and Lao P.D.R."

Prachan Rakpong (Chiang Mai Rajabhat Institute): "Tai Dam (Black Tai) in Lao P.D.R.: Important Rituals and Beliefs."

Hayami, Yoko (CSEAS, Kyoto University): "Mobility and Interethnic Relationships among Karen Women and Men in Northwest Thailand: Past and Present."

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Yoko Hayami

A co-workshop between two projects, one from Japan (funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, ended in March 1997) and the other from Thailand (funded by the Thai Research Fund), was held in Chiang Mai through the cooperation of leaders of the two projects, Associate Professor Yukio Hayashi and Professor Chatthip Nartsupha, and scholars based in Thailand.

The workshop reflects the recent extensive as well as intensive studies on Tai peoples and their neighbors across national boundaries, from Thailand, Burma, Laos, and southwestern China. Such studies have been carried out by scholars from across disciplines and nationalities. Thai intellectuals have, since the 1980s, been trying to reconstruct their past, seeking cultural identity. The Japanese half of the workshop is a project which began in 1995 by scholars interested in understanding inter-ethnic relations in the region based on data gathered from the field. The workshop was an opportunity for these varied perspectives, nationalities and contributions to gather together, share each others new findings and ongoing research. It was the beginning of a concerted effort at furthering understanding of history and culture in mainland Southeast Asian and the neighboring regions.

Unfortunately, Professor Chatthip himself could not attend due to health reasons, but Professor Cholthira Satyawadhna (Rangsit University) participated in his place as representative of the project and added her own insights to the project, and Professor Theeraphan Luangthongkham (Chulalongkorn University) attended as representative from Thai Research Fund.

Thirty-five to forty participants gathered from numerous countries as well as from Chiang Mai, such as Professors Rujaya Abhakorn and Anan Ganjanapan (Chiang Mai University), all of whom added to the lively exchange of ideas and discussion. It was a valuable opportunity for all participants not only to share each other's views and information, but also to get to know each other and form the basis for future cooperation. In the words of the organizers, as basis and starting point (for future academic cooperation in the age of globalization, trying to overcome the boundaries of countries and disciplines) it was a stimulating and promising workshop.

"HUNDRED BEST THAI BOOKS IN THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS Project"

[B.E. 2419-2519]

Supported by *The Thailand Research Fund (TRF)*

Project Director: *Witthayakorn Chiangkul*
Launched by *Cholthira Satyawadhna*
Translated by *Gessanee Maneerut*

Having spent more than a year looking for outstanding literary works which deserve to be read, a group of experts have finally identified what they believe to be the "Top 100" among the entire Thai books.

Back in 1836, a team of American missionaries opened Thailand's first printing house, revolutionalising the literary culture of the Kingdom of Siam and publicizing many more books. For about 162 years, Thai readers have continued enjoying the evergrowing list of books published on many diverse topics. However, the wealth and breadth of Thai literature is so huge that if you ask many Thai what books they would consider as "a must" to read, they will be at a loss to come up with a definitive list.

The above is one of the major reasons why Mr. Witthayakorn Chiangkul, a writer, thinker, social critic and, Director of Social Research Institute, Rangsit University, embarked on the mammoth task of identifying the top 100 must-read Thai books. The ultimate aim is to give Thai readers some guidance on the best of their country's various fields of literary heritage.

In late 1996, after securing around one million baht from the Thailand Research Fund, Witthayakorn Chiangkul brought together a team of academics to work on the "One Hundred Books Thais Should Read Project". On this matter, he said,

> *"We do not aim at awarding or honouring particular books, but promoting the reading habits of Thai people, and introducing them many excellent but largely forgotten ones."*

He also mentioned that in the west, institutes like universities and literary societies regularly drew up recommended reading lists from various fields. However, through the past time, Thai readers have not shown any enjoyment for such guidance. In addition, he said the last time an official national book selection list drawn up by the ***Wannakhadii Samôôsaun***, a literature club, was during the reign of King Rama VI in 1910-1925. Included on the "must-read"

books list were ***Lilit Phra Lau*** in the poetic travelogue section, ***I-nao*** (dramatic literature) and ***Saam Kok*** (Chinese historical fiction).

In the intervening decades, many thousands more books have been written with different tastes and styles and only "annual book awards" are what bookworms have relied on to help them discover new or even old literary works.

The project was not without controversy, Witthayakorn Chiangkul recalled,

> *"Some of those in the literary circle questioned and asked if we could manage such a sophisticated task of screening so many books while some doubted the value of making book selections. However, we believe in our objective and we, no matter how, would be on the move."*

Accordingly, despite its doubters, after the project was started, it has received support from many other book lovers, who recommended good reads as well as offered access to such "hard-to-get" from their personal collections.

Witthayakorn Chiangkul invited a group of experts, which included scholars, editors, librarians and writers, to join the project. The experts were divided into two teams; one was responsible for reading and screening the books and the other guided the first team-work and made comments on it. Both groups met on a monthly basis to discuss the recommended ones. About this, Witthayakorn Chiangkul said,

> *"Apart from the committee members' recommendations, we also asked many other academics and bookworms for their suggestions."*

In all, the screening committee took a good look at hundreds of books and spent many more hours pouring over them and to highlighting the must-read classical ones, the project also identified literary works which reflected an overview of Thai society. A part of the objective was to list Thai Studies books, said Witthayakorn,

> *"We'd like to offer a guide, so if anybody was interested in the Thai society, generally or specifically, especially from an evolutionary perspective, the list could lead them to the right direction."*

Moreover, the high quality of many non-fiction books were placed on the list as what Witthayakorn said,

> *"Many non-fiction and academic writers of the past were just as competent at writing as authors of literary works. Accordingly, the list covered some good examples of the great non-fictions."*

The book list was classified into two categories; literary and non-literary sections. Each category, itself, was broken down into sections. The literary selection included sections for poetry, plays, novels, short stories, and compilations, and the non-literary covered sections of history, religion and philosophy, sociology and anthropology, politics, science and economics, and, science and natural science. Witthayakorn explained the process,

> *"First, we screened them by evaluating their significance under the rough framework of categories and categorized them afterwards. As it turned out, our list consisted of 55 books in literary, and 45 in non-literary."*

For qualified books on the list, they had to be written in the Thai language during A.D. 1867 to A.D. 1976. The dates were significant; 1867 was the year King Rama V ascended the throne - a turning point during the modernized period of the Thai society and 1976 was the year of a political bloodshed - another crucial date in the Thai history.

Other criteria for book selection included good use of language, creativity, social reflection, non-bias, popularity, and public recognition of the writer within Thai culture. Regarding to this, Witthayakorn Chiangkul said,

> *"We tried to consider the 'one-writer-one-book' as a guideline, but there were such exceptions as Jitr Phumisak because three of his books,* ***Kawii Kaanmuang*** *(Political Poetry),* ***Chôôm Naa Sakdina Thai*** *(The Real Face of Thai Feudalism),* ***Khwaam pen maa khoong kham Siam Thai Lao lae Khom, lae laksana thaang sangkhom khoong chueue chonchaat*** *(History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao and Khom, and the Societal Characteristics of Their Ethnonyms), were chosen due to his versatility. Moreover, a place had also been found on the list for the traditional folk tales which had been survived for many centuries through story-telling and had only been set down on paper in more recent times. Such good example is Srithanonchai, the famous folk tale about a tricky guy, appearing in many written and folk versions and we choose it because it reflects the wisdom of rural Thai."*

In addition, he introduced some more interesting selected books, such as,

> *"Books by multiple writers were also included, for example,* ***Kaamanit****, the romantic novel with a Buddhist theme by Sathiankooseet and Naakhaprathiip. Although it is a translated version from Karl Adolph Gjellerupís Kaamanit novel, the book enjoys such popularity and influence that you should not miss it. There are other interesting selections written by non-Thai writers, such as* ***Pratimaakam Thai*** *(Thai Sculpture) by Professor Silpa Bhirasri, an Italian artist/educator who founded Silpakorn University. We also listed* ***Prawat Kotmaai Thai*** *(History of Thai Laws) by a Belgian lawyer, R. Langart, both of which were written in Thai. The selected non-literary works, whose authors are anonymous, include Phraya Suriyanuwat's* ***Saphayasaat****, the first Thai Economics text, and* ***Phaethayasaat Songkhrau****,* an early traditional medical science text."

When the selective list drew a lot of comments from those in the literary field when it was publicized at the end of last year, Witthayakorn said,

"Comments questioning the selections are inevitable, however, we won't alter the list as we've already made our decisions based on the reason that changing the list to please everyone would be an endless task. However, we would include interesting comments people made in our research paper."

Witthayakorn Chiangkul expects to undertake a similar project in the future to indentify the must-read books for children and young elite. However, he acknowledges that amidst the current economic climate, to get financial support for it would be difficult. Aside from the relief of accomplishing such a huge commitment, he seems to be delighted in the task on a personal level.

"The project drove me to read old books, which had been ignored for a long time. Books which describe the evolution of Thai society.

On the other hand, he said the project had also highlighted Thailand's poor archiving system.

"Some of the books, even those just twenty years old, were hard to come by as many, not available in government libraries, had to be borrowed from private collections. Ironically, none of the committee members have all 100 selected books. I've got about 40 titles. No one or no institution has the entire collection in hand."

Witthayakorn Chiangkul and his team discussed the project on March 29 at the National Book Fair, in Bangkok. A conference for launching the project was held in June in collaboration with Thammasat University Library. The event will coincide with the opening of Thammasat's new Pridi Phanomyong Library Building.

As a result of the project, an anthology of must-read books is to be published. The 500-page-anthology will feature a brief background on the selected works and their authors and an overview of literary development in Thailand in the last 162 years.

The complete list of "Hundred Best Thai Books of the Past Hundred Years" is as follows:

POETRY & PLAYS	WRITERS
Prachum Khlong Lookaniti (1917)	Krom Phrayaa Deejaadisaun
Seephaa Srii Thaonchai Chiangmiang	[Anonymous]
Niraat Noong Khaai	Luang Phatthanaphongphakdii
Saamakkhii pheet Khamchan (1907)	Naay Chit Burathat
Matthana-phaathaa (1923)	King Rama VI
Khlong Klaun Khaung Khruu Theep (1942)	Chaophrayaa Thammasakmontrii
Bot Laakhoon Rueang Phra Loo (1953)	Krom Phra Naraathip-Praphanphong
Khoop Faa Klip Thoong (1956)	'Utcheenii'

Rau Chana Laeo Mae Jaa (1974)	'Naay Phii'
Bot Kawii Khaung Plueang Wannasrii	Plucang Wannasrii
Kawii Kaan Mueang (1974)	Jitr Phuumisak
Kaviiniphon khaung Angkhaan Kalayaanaphong (1964)	Angkhaan Kalayaanaphong
Jong Pen Aathit Muea Uthai	'Thawiip-waun'
Khaup Krung (1971)	Raat Rang-raung
Phiang Khwaam Khluean Wai (1974)	Nauwarat Phongphaiboon

NOVELS

Lakhaun Haeng Chiiwit (1929)	Mom Jao Aakaatdamkeung Raphiiphat
Kaamanit (1930)	Sathiankôôscet - Naakhapratheep
Damrong Pratheet (1931)	Wee-thaang
Phuu Chana Sip Thit (1939)	'Yaa-khaup'
Nueng Nai Rauy (1934)	Daukmaisot
Baang-Rajan (1936)	Mai Muangdeum
Ying Khon Chua (1946)	'K. Suraangkhanaang'
Phon Nikaun Kim-nguan	'P. Intharapaalit'
Peking Nakhaun Haeng Khwaam Lang (1943)	Sot Kuuramalôôhit
Rau Likhit - Bon Lumsop Vaasitthii	R.Janthaphimpha?
Mueang Nimit (1948)	M.R. Nimitmongkhol Nawarat
Maesaay Sa-uen (1971)	O. Chaiwaurasin
Patthaya (1951)	'Daowhaang'
Phaen Din Nii Khaung Khrai (1952)	Sriirat Sathaapanawat
Mahaabandit Haeng Mithilaa Naakhaun (1964)	Yaem Praphatthaung
Piisaat (1957)	Seenii Saowaphong
Sii Phaen Din (1954)	M.R. Khuekrit Praamôôt
Thung Mahaaraat (1964)	Maalai Chuuphinit
Lae Pai Khaang Naa (1955)	'Sriibuuraphaa'
See-phlee Boy Chaw Rai (1969)	Rong Wongsawan
Tjotmaai Tjaak Mueang Thai (1970)	Bôôtan
Khao Chue Kaan (1971)	Suwannii Sukhonthaa
Saang Chiiwit	Luang Wijit-waathakaan
Tawan Tok Din (1972)	Kritsanaa A-sôôksin
Sauy-thaung (1974)	Nimit Phuumthaawaun
Piraap Daeng (1974)	Suwat Wauradilok
Luuk Isaan (1976)	Khamphuun Buunthawii

SHORT STORIES

Nithaan Weetaan (1918)	'N.M.S.'
Tjap Taay	Manat Janyong
Ruam Rueang San Khaung P. Buuranapakaun	P. Buuranapakaun
Ruam Rueang San Khaung S. Thammayot	S. Thammayot
Phlaay Maliwan [and other short stories]	Thanaum Mahaapaoraya
Phuu Dap Duang Aathit [and other science fictions]	Jantrii Siribunraut
Yuk Thamin [and other short stories]	Isaraa Amantakun
Rueang San Chut Mueang Rae [and other short stories]	Aa-jin Panjaphan

Faa Bau Kan [and other stories] Lao Kham Haum
Phuean Kao Saneu Intharasuksrii
Chan Jueng Maa Haa Khwaam Maay Witthayaakaun Chiangkuun
Humourist's Short Stories Humourist
Khon Bon Tonmai [and other short stories] Nikhom Raayawaa

NON-FICTION

HISTORY

Prawat Kotmaay Thai R. Langart
Nithaan Bôôraanakhadii Somdet Krom Phrayaa Damrong-Rachaanuphaap
Chôôm Naa Sakdina Thai Jitr Phuumisak
Kabot Rau. Sau. 130 (A.D.1960) Rian Sriijan and Neet Phoonwiwat
Jau Chiiwit Phra-ong Jau Julajakraphong
Saan Thai Nai Adiit Prayut Sitthiphan
Prawatisaat Thai Samai 2352-2453 B.E. (A.D.1809-1910) Chai Rueangsin
Sangkhom Thai Nai Samai Ton Ratanakôôsin 2325-2416 B.E.(A.D.1782-1873) Akhin Raphiiphat

RELIGION/PHILOSOPHY

Phra Prawat Tratlao (1924)
Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirayaan Varôôrot on court and monk life.
Panyaawiwat (1952) Samak Burawat's book on intellectual evolution.
Phra Trai Pidok Chabap Prachaachon (1958)
Suchiip Punyaanupharp's book, a digest version of holy Buddhist scriptures.
Buddha-Dharma (1971) Phra Dhammapidok's book on Buddhism.
Idappajjayataa (1973) Buddhadaasa Bhikkhu's writing on his Buddhist philosophy.

LITERATURE/LANGUAGE

Wannakhadii Lae Wannakhadii Vijaan (1943)
Pioneer literary expert ,Wit Siwasiriyaanon, on literature and literary criticism.
Pratimaakam Thai (1947) Silpa Bhirasri's book on Thai art and sculpture.
Witthayaa Wannakam (1963) Prince Narathipphongprapan's look at literature and linguistics.
Oe Waa Aana Prachaaraat
Sanit Chareonrat's record of the journalism and social circles of the 1940s.
Khwaam-ngaam Khaung Silapa Thai (1967) Nau. Na Paaknaam's book on Thai art.
Phaasaa Kotmaay Thai (1968)
Thaanin Kraiwichian's fascinating book on the language of Thai law.
Wannasaan Samnuek Compilation of literacy criticism by Supha Sirimanond.
Wanwaithayaakaun Chabap Wannakhadii Wijaan (1971)
Literary Criticism by Jetanaa Naagavajara and M.L. Bunluea Thephayasuwan.
Saeng Arun 2 (1979)
Compilation of architectural articles by Saeng-Arun Ratakasikaun.

SOLIOLOGY/ANTHROPOLOGY

Praraja Phithii Sipsaung Duean (1911)
King Rama V chronicles on the traditional, monthly royal customs.
Saan Somdet Compilation of correspondence between Prince Damrongraajaanuphaap and Prince Naritsaraanuwattiwong on cultural subjects.
30 Chaat Nai Chiang Rai (1950)
A look at northern ethnic groups by Bunchuay Sriisawat.
Thianwan (1952) Sa-ngob Suriyin's biography of the pioneering Thai modern thinker.
Kaalee Maantai (1961) Anthropological linguistics by Banjop Panthumethaa.
Bhaarata Witthayaa (1967) Karunaa and Rueang-urai Kusalaasai's look at India.
Fuen Khwaam Lang (1968)
Phrayaa Aunmaanrajathon's synthesis of cultural and social subjects.
Nithaan Chaaw Rai (1972)
Sawat Janthanii provides miscellaneous knowledge on folk history.
Khwam-pen-maa Khaung Kham Siam, Thai, Lao, lae Khaum lae Laksana Thaang Sangkhom Khaung Chue Chon-chaat Jitr Phumisak's historical linguistic research on the origins and history of the Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khaum and the Identity of Their Etnonyms.
Autobiography of Mom Sriphromma Kridaakaun (1979)
An autobiography of a distinguished modernized lady from Northern Thailand.
80 Pii Nai Chiiwit Khaung Khaaphajau
An autobiography of a social thinker and cultural expert.

ECONOMICS/POLITICS

Saphayasaat (1911)
The Kingdom's first book on Economics, in courtesy of Phraya Suriyaanuwat.
Buenglang Kaan Patiwat 2475 B.E. (A.D.1941)
Kulaap Saaypradit highlights the start of democracy.
Thai Kap Songkraam Lôôk Khrang Thii Saung (1966)
Thailand and the Second World War as told by Direk Chaiyanam.
Santiprachaatham (1973) A compilation of social comments by Puay Ungphakoon.
Haa Pii Parithat (1973) A compilation of editorial articles in Sangkomsart Parithat Magazine written by Editor -Sulak Sivaraksa.
Khwaam Pen Anijjang Khaung Sangkhom
Social comments by Pridi Phanomyong.
Thaan Pridi (1974)
Duean Bunnag profiles Thai statesman and ideologist Pridi Phanomyong.
Wan Mahaapiti A special publication by the Students' Association of Thammasat University to Commemorate the events of October 14, 1973.

SCIENCE/NATURAL SCIENCE

Nangsue Sadaeng Kitjaanukit (1867)
Thailand's first natural science book by Jaophrayaa Thiphaakorawong.
Phaethayasaat Songkrauh A compilation of pioneering traditional medical textbook by the royal court doctors of King Rama V.

Thammachaat Naanaa Saat (1961)
A wealth of zoological knowledge by Boonsong Leekhakun.
Khabuankaan Kae Jon A series of Prayuun Janyaawong's illustrated newspaper columns from 1976 to 1978. Topics include plants, food and daily life related to science.

30 ETHNIC GROUPS IN CHIANG RAI

[First Edition 1947]

by Bunchuay Srisawat [*B.E. 2460]

Reviewer: *Pornpilai Lertvicha*
Translator: *Gessanee Maneerut*

A "culture" is always abstract and ambiguous among those who are eager to understand it. It is a non-stop process and very dynamic. It has been moving along a new track towards social challenges all the time. Its changes depend on logical senses and ways of thinking of the people in each period. "Culture" is what people always refer to when encountering such a certain situation as hesitation, being held back, or even resistance to changes amidst the era of globalization. Accordingly, the current movement occurring right now is a clear evidence which hints that the influence of being a "no-boundary zone" is really a 'hot issue' in the Thai social context. To move towards such 'obscure' direction creates a trend of 'objection', screaming for conserving, restoring, and rescuing the so-called 'Thai culture' in order to keep it survive forever.

On this matter, Bun-chuay Srisawat mentioned in the introduction of his book as follows:

> *"I am always worried that our younger generations might not realize or care about the existence of our traditional cultures any more. There are a lot of Thai people who do not even know that there have been other groups of people existing in Thailand and still have followed their cultures until now. In addition, there have been a variety of hill-tribe people settling down here and there, in the forests and along the mountainous range in the north of Thailand. Many of them have still carried on their exotic cultures. Accordingly, I have spent my leisure visiting them, investigating their ways of living and reviewing my experience in this book."*

Actually, it was quite surprising that Bun-chuay Srisawat did mention about cultures having been forgotten little by little since the time of his trekking and hiking along the mountainous range of Northern Thailand, around B.E. 2490 (1947). At that time the country's condition was quite peaceful. However, it was the period that traveling and trading were still under-developed, especially in the

remote areas or countryside. Due to this, it indicated that Bun-chuay did make the right prediction about the happenings in 40 or 50 years later on and what he foresaw has been greatly progressing at the moment. Now, when cultures having been ignored and omitted by later descents, there has been such a strong demand to research and retain them, and therefore, the communities turn to play a significant role to retain and bring back those forgotten cultures.

With a drive of big concern about the traditional cultures and enthusiasm, Bun-chuay took a journey by car, by cart, and even on foot through fields and forests, from one mountain to another aiming at the remote areas along the borders connecting to Shan State of Burma (Myanmar), Yunnan of China, and Indo-China to make a record about life-styles, societies, economy, and cultures of more than 30 ethnic groups in Chiang Rai.

30 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Rai provides a clear view of life styles of a wide range of peoples in the periphery such as Tai Yai, Kheun, Tong-suu, Lue, Haw, Lua (Lawa), Karen or Yang, Maew (Hmong), Kha, Yao, Khae, Musor, etc. The focus of this record covers issues of house settlements, ways of living, life styles, languages, thoughts and beliefs, etc., such as dispositions, foods, cultures, worships, arts, and songs.

In his discovery, Bun-chuay emphatically described about the worship of holy spirits and sexual relationships of different groups. These topics create a high interest among local people in general. Actually, it is because the story of sex is an everlastingly mysterious issue that everybody is curious and eager to understand about clearly.

Due to the focus on worshipping holy spirits and arranging of sexual relationships of each particular group, it gives readers a clear concept that relationships among badness, goodness, right and wrong are tied up closely with the period. Moreover, it reflects such a sense that the standard, people in each society agree to follow, varies from society to society or culture to culture. Therefore, the differences of beliefs depend on the descents and environments. Accordingly, the matter essence can be taken as an example providing a good revision what a community, once used to be simple, sincere and free from western influences, looks like.

Bun-chuay Srisawat was a very observant and neat person with a sharp memory. His record gave enough details for readers to understand general characteristics

of each ethnic group. He knew exactly what to choose, what to tell, and what unnecessary to mention about, starting from the very first step he visited a village or a community. And because Bun-chuay Srisawat's background covered the Thai history, local literature, and Thai music, it supported him with a clear vision to specify and differentiate characteristics from one culture to another. This causes **30 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Rai** to be more attractive, persuasive and inspiring for readers to follow.

Luang Vijit Vaathakarn commended that Bun-chuay Srisawat was good at selecting interesting aspects as well as considering what to review in his book. In addition, he also inserted illustrations which made it more beneficial for both readers and humanities students to learn from his book.

Looking back into this era, there is a good question who and how would be able to handle such ethnological study here and there, not only some, but covering thirty different ethnic groups due to numerous obstacles to encounter such as strictness of theoretical approaches, difficulties in collecting data in the sense of remote areas and differing languages, and rare possibilities to get funds for research.

Nevertheless, Bun-chuay Srisawat said that he did it "at his leisure"; he spent his free time researching and collecting information for his book. On top of being an established scholars, he also belonged to one of the well-to-do families in Chiang Rai Province and accordingly, he had enough supports; time and funds, to handle his field work.

There was a critique about the illustrations in **30 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Rai**. Based on some anthropological and ethnological theories, it was criticized that the presentation was neither clear nor correct. However, it gave an overview and comparisons of various characteristics and ways of living among different cultural groups clearly enough. Readers who are northerners do have advantage over those from other parts of the country due to the local dialects used in some sections of the book. Actually, it was inevitable to avoid inserting local languages in this book as it was written by a local man and told about life story of local people. Different groups in Chiang Rai were filled up with a set of factual information recorded exactly the way it was, through Bun-Chuay's view. Anyhow, some parts arouse such theoretical conflicts as summaries on habitual characteristics of typical cultural groups like diligent, lazy, polite, quiet, or lively which represented an identity of a specific group. By theory, it is believed that

quick assumption like what written in his book cannot be made. Fortunately, Bun-Chuay is not a specialist in humanities and therefore he has got a high response from readers who enjoy factual, exciting, lively, and strange stories of thirty cultural groups without crossing any "prohibited" section. Because his style of writing is not theory-based, accordingly, his presentation is quite direct, simple, and free from theoretical constraints, this makes it enjoyable and worthwhile to read.

It is known in general that Bun-Chuay has written a variety of books about different other groups living in the northern part of Thailand and his very first volume is **Chao E-Kor** (Akha). This book was firstly publicized in series in **Pleon-jit Magazine**. Later on, more books like **Thai Sip-Song Pan-Naa**, **Lue-the Tai in China, The Tai in Burma**, **The Laos Kingdom**, **Vietnam**, **Chiang Mai and the North**, **The Hill Tribe People in Thailand,** etc. appeared to the public, one after another. Bun-Chuay said among his works, the most favorite of his was **30 Ethnic groups in Chiang Rai**. In addition, this volume hits the market as one of the highest printings and makes him well-known as an outstanding Thai among overseas people (**11 VIPs of Thailand**: 2508).

Bun-Chuay mentioned that,

> *"According to history, people in the Central part of Thailand migrated from the North and through the time, they have mixed with other ethnic groups for survival and gradually, they do not belong to the North any more. Therefore, should a history record or a chronicle of my hometown be written by them is not fair for my ancestors. The pure northerners should know better about their hometown." (p. 33)*

There are two other writers, Sa-nguan Choti-sukkharat and Chum Na Bang-Chang who agreed with Bun-Chuay's view and they also commended that history of the Northerners has been distorted accordingly.

30 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Rai is regarded as a pioneering piece of work, which reflects sincere and unprejudiced study about life of its author. The presentation in this book is taken as an example of a model of field research about ethnic and cultural groups in different periods for students later on.

KAALEE MAAN TAI

[First Edition 1961]

by Banjop Phanthumetha [B.E. 2463 - 2535]

Reviewer: *Cholthira Satyawadhna*
Translator: *Gessanee Maneerut*

Kaalee Maan Tai is an interesting book written by Dr. Banjop Phanthumetha, a knowledgeable Thai linguist, who specialized especially in Tai dialects of different regions. *Kaalee maan tai,* in Tai Khamti dialect, means "Visiting a Tai village". This book was written in a journalistic style during the author's field research to study about the Tai in the Assam State of India in A.D. 1955. The prior objective of this journey was to study and compare whether there were more diphthongs in Ahom dialect than those used in present day Thailand (by the Siamese). To specify certain objective like this is a method of linguistics studies. It was understood that if the study was successful, its result would lead to a better understanding about the Tai ethnicity as a whole. However, a quotation in Dr. Banjop's Memo (April - May 1955) confirmed that,

> *"The findings about Ahom language was not successful as expected because I could not access those who were knowledgeable about and able to speak the language. However, I have learned something that even the Ahom themselves did not realize about because they overlooked it."*

Due to what mentioned above, the Memo of the journey to visit Tai communities in Assam, is not a text on language studies. However, certain Tai words and the author's interesting observation were inserted in it. This book has been highly recommended for those who are interested in Ahom Studies because the words or expressions analyzed, were exposed in the actual Ahom's social context and culture. Accordingly, the description of sites, events, and persons was lively which caused it to be an interesting text dealing with some particular Tai dialects in Assam. It was one of the easiest linguistics books on local Tai dialects when comparing to others, which were studied through a scientific method, a systematic way but reflecting a hard tone.

Firstly ***Kaalee Maan Tai*** was issued and publicized in **Satree-Saan Weekly Magazine** in series. Later on, the complete **Memo** was gathered and published for the first time in 1961 by the Language and Book Association of Thailand [*Samaakhom Phaasaa lae Nangsue haeng Prathet Thai*] and it was highly recommended as being a new dimension of Thai language and Tai dialects studies in the field of Comparative Linguistics.

The **Memo** described not only the journey and the field investigation of Tai dialects, but also other related details such as life style, ways of living, beliefs, thoughts, food and costumes, including social relations and status of the Tai speaking groups in family level, village level, and in a nation-state level of India. At that period, India was just newly converted to be a British colony. **Kaalee Maan Tai** was then a **Memo** which reflected feelings, thoughts and attitudes of its author, a female Thai academic. Therefore, it was highly recognized as a valuable documentary which exposed the earlier Thai view on cultures, folklore and anthropology during the pioneering period.

However, Dr. Banjop Phanthumetha was not the first Thai scholar who did an exploratory study about ways of life and living style of the Tai of Assam who later on were called "Tai Ahom". Only a year and a half before the journey, Khun Sangh Phatthanothai, whose pen-name was "Saaranaat", visited the same region and informed his experience in a book called **Visit The Tai Ahom: Our Blood Line** (Saaranaat, Sathiara-phaap Publishing House 1954).

Before this, Bunchuay Srisawat, a lawyer by profession, also a Member of Parliament (House of representatives) of Chiang Rai, wrote and issued a documentary book describing about ways of living, traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups including those who immigrated from several places outside Thailand and finally settled down in Chiang Rai. It was taken as one of pioneering books in anthropology and ethnology, which played an important role in the Thai academic arena later on. This book was called **30 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Rai** [***Saamsip Chonchaat nai Chiang Raay***] (Bunchuay Srisawat 1950). Interestingly, there were three distinguished scholars, General Commander P. Phibulsongkhram, Luang Vijitvathakarn and Khun Charn Isarangkul, writing introductions to this book.

It may be said that during a decade before B.E. 2500, there had been a significant trend occurring in the Thai academic arena, i.e., a broad investigative study on languages, cultures, and ways of life of the Tai groups in various regions. Those taking part in this study, covered both national leaders and specialists in Thai language and literal studies. This sort of study was paused occasionally due to social and cultural changes in Thailand and world politics of the Superpowers. However, such trend has been going on, though not so flourishing, by the impact of an on-going search for 'truth' of a number of important thinkers, writers, and academics, resulted in creating a new trend to research about Tai and Thai academically and widely, currently known as having both 'Thai Studies' and 'Tai

Studies' at present. Jitr Phumisak, a distinguished scholar in Thai language and arts studies was one among those who bridged over this knowledge. (Find more details in the **Review** of the book named, **History of the Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom and the Societal Characteristics of these Ethnonyms**, written by Jitr Phumisak in B.E. 2501 - 2507 while in prison, first edition: B.E. 2519.)

In **Kaalee Maan Tai**, Dr. Banjop Phanthumetha indicated clearly in her introductory chapter about her interest in Tai Language and its dialects and her experience in having participated in several meetings on Comparative Thai Linguistics of different regions for about ten years. In addition, she said that, she had got a high inspiration from a book entitled **The Thai Race**, written by a missionary, Doctor Dodd, describing his interesting journey to Southern China where he had met many Tai speaking groups in different regions. It was this particular book which drove her there and influenced her writing. This was obviously shown in her quotation,

> *"Therefore, I, myself, as a history teacher at that time, have made a strong determination to visit those people in person in order to gain reliable facts."*

As mentioned above, Doctor Dodd's book called **The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese**, compiled by his wife in 1923, was translated into Thai by Luang Niphetnitisan in 1968. Doctor Dodd's book not only had a strong influence on Dr. Banjop's inquiry but also gave an inspiration to another two Thai senior academics, as it was referred in a book called **Story of the Thai Race [*Rueang khong Chaat Thai*]** (1940) by Phraya Anuman-Rajadhon or "Sathien-koset" who wrote an introduction to another book called **Research on the Thai Race** [***Ngaan Khon-khwaa Chonchaat Thai***] written by Luang Vijitvathakarn (Royal Thai Army Edition: 1973). And it was Luang Vijitvathakarn who wrote an "Introducton" to the book: **30 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Rai**, as afore-mentioned.

Though **Kaalee Maan Tai** was a **Memo** describing an experience in India, it reflected a sense and scenario of the "Tai" countryside with an atmosphere which was so familiar with the traditional and rural "Thai" life-style in Thailand. Most of the people, in Dr. Banjop's view, shared "Thai" ways of living. A good example of "Thai" tradition was welcoming the guests which Dr. Banjop mentioned in her **Memo** as follows:

> *"It was strange to see that when I requested for food, the host didn't show any feeling of annoyance at all. In opposite, they cooked a kind of curry called /**kaeng phet khai luuk kheuy**/, which was quite tasty for me though there was no such kind of food like this to buy*

in that local area. This incident reflected a traditional "Thai" custom to welcome guests though it was such a sudden visit."

Dr. Banjop was good at observing, memorizing and taking notes, even insignificant details. A good supportive circumstance was when she was eating a kind of newly harvested rice and it was quite sticky, she told the Ahom friends about sticky rice in Thailand. Since that moment, she had learned that they also had sticky rice which was called in Assam language *Borajawal rice*. From such knowledge, she connected its name to the way the Tai Ahom constructed their buildings. It was said that they attached the bricks together by using *borajawal* liquid, which in fact, was sticky rice liquid. Such findings of Tai mentality in Assam provided a great support on 'knowledge' which was integrated and related to the construction of temples and royal palaces in Siam. The example indicated that she had drilled and discovered "Rice Culture" in the community of a Tai group outside Thailand. It indicated that accumulative Tai mentality had been transferred to the later generations of different regions. From this, later academics found out how the ancient pagodas in Thailand were built during an early period from the pericarp of sticky rice in the mixture used to build up the pagoda's basement. The findings was regarded as a new body of knowledge in Thai archaeology.

The description of the Tai village in Assam in **Kaalee Maan Tai** gave a clear vision of the Tai social features: a scenario of people living along the river bank, conducting wet-rice cultivation. Tai houses and Tai temples formed major components of community's structure which could not be separated. Tai houses were built on stilts, having a high open basement *taay thun* and an open extension *nook chaan*. In addition, Tai people also grew vegetables and fruit gardens nearby their residence.

A particular site mentioned was the Tai Phaakee Village, located by the Hok River's bank. Some part of Dr. Banjop's nice description was:

"We were walking along the Hok River when we saw a scenery of local Tai Ahom houses built along the river bank in Nam Phaa-kial Village. It reflected a nature of "Thai" people who liked to live along the river. We had to walk for a long distance from the main road and what we saw was Tai houses, built in the same style as houses in the rural areas of our country, having high open basement and extensive outer space. The house itself was made of wood as well as the floor. Some houses were made of bamboo and was called ***/faak/****. (They pronounced the sound /f/ with a low tone instead of a high tone.) Most houses were surrounded by gardens of vegetables such as taros, white gourd, pumpkins,* ***/buap/*** *and* ***/baun/*** *which they called* ***/maun/****.*

*From the word they pronounced **/maun/** instead of **/baun/**, we learned that they could not pronounce "b" but "m" and the findings made it easier and quicker for us to understand their dialect.*
In connection with religion, it was necessary for Tai Buddhists to have a temple where they could perform religious practice, therefore, there was at least one temple in each village. Some stood only the main buildings and there were no shelters for monks. Some main buildings of the temples, such as one in Nam Phaa-kial Village, were made of wood and looked like an open public house. Certain part of the wall was fixed for monks to live in while the open part was the space left for male and female Buddhists to pray and hold the meeting. The beautiful violet flowers surrounded the areas in front of the temple." (pp.43-45)

For readers who are interested in language study will enjoy comparing Tai-Thai (Siamese) terms and idioms, such as:

A Siamese expression: *khau wat khau waa*; */khau waa/* means 'making merit during rainy season';

in Siamese term: *tham bun khau phansaa*; in Tai Phaakee term, */buat waa diau/* means 'to ordain for three months', in Siamese term: */buat phansaa diau/*.

What we gain from reading this book is more knowledge in Tai language and a broader dimension of hidden meaning of words and expression which current Thai people in Thailand might perhaps have forgotten.

For Tai cuisine, it is interesting to learn that the Ahom prefer not to take food made of coconut milk. However there is a certain tradition to eat shrimp paste and pickled fish */kapi?/* and */plaa raa/* in Siamese term. But the Tai Ahom terms shrimp paste */kapi?/* as */paa-nao-?an-nun/* and pickled fish */plaa raa/* as */paa-nao-?an-too/*.

There is an interesting structural composition of Tai compound words such as, the way they call 'soul/spirit', in Siamese */vin-yaan/*, as */saay-cheueu/* which is */saay-chai/* in Siamese,

and call 'pulse', in Siamese */chiipha-jaun/* as */jeueu-mueue/* which is */jai/*[heart]-*/mueue/* [hand] in Siamese.

The Ahom also have "hand language", an actual traditional "Thai" custom like */?ao-ngan/* which is the way a junior should move his/her hand down a little bit then turn the palm up to show humbleness and politeness when receiving any giving from a senior. In Thailand, it is regarded as a social manner that a junior should perform when dealing with a senior in a formal ritual or ceremony. But for the Ahom, it was their everyday life's social courtsey. A situation was described in her **Memo** as follows:

*"I especially enjoyed talking to Mrs. Aap **/Naang ?aap/** in Khamtii dialect. I took it as an opportunity to practise my language at the same time. Actually, Naang Aap looked pretty, fair in complexion and clean. She did not look as old as others with the same age except for her throat which was growing big like general Tai people here (**rôôk khauau phauauk**). When I walked upstairs and reached the house-parlor, the host invited me to sit on a bench. They might be afraid that I was not familiar with sitting on the floor. Others including an old woman and Naang Aap were sitting on the floor. As soon as I sat down, Naang Aap sat on her knees and handed me a tray of areca **/phaan maak/** which is according to Tai custom. I was quite surprised when Naang Aap used her left hand touching the right hand in an **/ao-ngaan/** manner while handing the tray to me. I did not expect that these Tai people would practise in the same way (as the Siamese) while they were more than 2,000 miles away from us. I was overwhelming to see beautiful Tai culture like this still survived amid multi-ethnic environment through hundreds of years."* (pages 96-97)

In addition, **Kaalee Maan Tai** also covered widely meaningful content. It was such a valuable **Memo** that "Sathian-koset" (Phraya Anuman Rajadhon) wrote an introduction to. Below here is a quotation from his introduction:

*"It would be better if readers should find out what was described and how fantastic it was in **Kaalee Maan Tai** by themselves. Only once in my long life-time of reading, could I find such a good book that really satisfied me like this."* (special page 11)

Graduated from Chulalongkorn University, gaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in Thai language and literature, plus a Certificate in Secondary School Teaching, Dr. Banjop worked for the Thai government as teacher for a while before she was granted a scholarship from the Government of India to further her doctoral study in linguistics. She attended course-work at Pharanasi University, India. With her strong background in linguistics, she turned to be a specialist both in Thai - her mother tongue, and in Sanskrit - an ancient Indic language like Latin in Europe.

Because she could speak Hindi as well, she had a strong determination to take a trip to do a field research in India in order to investigate Tai language in Assam. Although she had no experience living among strangers, she could manage to satisfy her expectation. She was regarded as a well-recognized female researcher who started doing field research to investigate history, language and culture of the Tai ethnic groups outside Thailand during that pioneering period.

"Sathien-koset", Founder of Language and Book Association of Thailand [*Samaakhom Phaasaa lae Nangsue*] and first President of the Association, wrote a highly-respected recommendation for Dr. Banjop as follows:

"Through history, there had been some brave 'men' who were courageous enough to intrude into such a dangerous, difficult and barren places. However, those people in the past were usually strong male (phuu chaay ok soong sook thang nan). There has been no such a woman who would dare to go alone. It is because men usually are such adventurous

creatures whose nature is tough enough (chaay noon klaang din - kin klaang reuan). In contrast, women are always those who take care of the household (ying khaa khaung kao - fau reuan lang). Anyhow, now women have broader vision because they, like men, dare to go through dangers and difficulties in remote areas. A clear evidence is ***Kaalee Maan Tai****. This book was written by Dr. Miss Banjop Phanthumetha describing her experience while she was conducting her field studies about Tai language in Assam State, in B.E. 2498."*

The content in **Kaalee Maan Tai** does not cover only knowledge in Tai language and dialects but also cultures and ways of living of different Tai groups in Assam as mentioned above. Actually, Dr. Banjop's **Memo** in **Kaalee Maan Tai** is characterized as an anthropological study and may be regarded as a pioneering one among anthropological studies of Thai scholars. In relation to this, "Sathien-koset" compared it to a research work written by Dr. Margaret Mead, a well-known American anthropologist, who investigated a group of cannibal islanders in the South Sea, the Samoa. In his view, formerly, there were only 'brave men' who volunteered to go there. To do this field research, Dr. Banjop got a fellowship from Asia Foundation and some other support from Graduate Women Association of Thailand. After that, she went to do other field research on the Khamti-long, in Kachin State of Myanmar (Burma at that time) and also studied about the Tai-Mao in Shan State of Myanmar. Moreover, when the Republic of China opened itself and re-established relationships with Thailand, Dr. Banjop, who was quite senior at that time, was invited to join Her Highness Princess Kallayaniwatthana's visit to Yunnan. According to this trip, she had another good chance touring to Sipsong Panna (*sipsoong phan naa*) - visiting the (Tai) Lue, and also to De-Hong - visiting the Tai-Neua in Southwestern China (see **Yunnan**, Princess Kallayaniwatthana 1986; B.E. 2529).

Dr. Banjop Phanthumetha is a model of female scholar whose pioneering spirit, effort, and dedication deserve respect and recognition from others. She devoted most of her life to study and research on languages, cultures and history of the Tai groups inside and outside Thailand. Her work and dedication did have a great impact on the direction of Tai Studies in Thailand, such as the language studies of the Tai Ahom in various aspects initiated by Prof. Dr. Prasert Na-nakorn in some years later, followed by Dr. Wilaiwan Khanit-thanan's linguistic research and Acharn Ranoo Vichasilp's **Ahom Buranji**. Jitr Phumisak, a radical Thai outstanding scholar, also got some inspiration from **Kaalee Maan Tai** and referred to it when writing his famous book (**History of Terms** 2519).

It is certain that researchers in the Project of "Social and Cultural History of the Tai People" led by Prof. Dr. Chatthip Nartsupha, have been strongly influenced

by **Kaalee Maan Tai** and Dr. Banjop's pioneering spirit. They seem to do well furthering an in-depth documentary and field research along this track.

HISTORY OF TERMS: SIAM, THAI, LAO, KHOM, and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms

[First Edition 1976]

by Jitr Phumisak [B.E. 2473-2509]

Reviewer: *Cholthira Satyawadhna*
Translator: *Gessanee Maneerut*

Jitr Phumisak, author of **History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom, and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms** [***khwaam pen maa khong kham sayaam, thai, laaw, khaum, lae laksana thaang sangkhom khaung chue chonchaat***] has been referred to as a famous "people's social thinker and writer" or "people's cultural hero" or "elite revolutionary", and so on. His heroic deed was well recognized as described in a song composed by Surachai Chantimathorn or "Ngaa Caravan", leader of the "Caravan Band" which has been one among the most famous "music for life" bands in Thailand. A part of the song says:

"He was dead in a forest and fame.
The name Jitr Phumisak will never die,
To learn about him is what people claim,
His heroic candle will everlasting shine..."

History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom, and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms was the last work of Jitr Phumisak, who used a pen as a weapon to fight for people's sake. It was organized and written in time of his imprisonment between B.E. 2501-2507 (1958-1964) as a political prisoner at Ladyao Prison during the dictatorial period ruled by Sarit Thanarat. Inspite of having had such a short time working seriously on academics as a student in Arts in the *'Devalaya'* (Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University), he managed to write his very first work called **The Real Face of Thai Feudalism [Chôm Naa Sakdinaa Thai]** which was published for its first time in a Special Issue: **Nitisaat 2500**.

Chôm Naa Sakdinaa Thai was a major pioneering work created while he was studying in the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, during B.E. 2493-2500 (1950-1957). This period covered his probation session because of being *'Yoon Bok'* (being thrown down from the stage of the CU' s conference hall as a punishment from senior students for being so radical). His work during his

middle period reflected a characteristic of socialism, and was published in a cultural critique column of some daily newspapers.

The last work of Jitr, **History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms**, characterized as a genuine research work. The book consumed the longest time (around 7 years) but was completed amidst the most limited constraints that was during the time of his imprisonment; without freedom and independence. However, it turned out to be the most outstanding and proved the real academic quality in him. Moreover, it enabled him to be recognized as a knowledgeable person in arts, history, and archeology, as well as in literature, as he managed to blend various fields of knowledge and disciplines together which made his research even more interesting, with a strong sense of theoretical approaches and well-rounded. He was also successful in presenting such an integrated work which Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri, a historian after his period, wrote an admiration for his book on an occasion of its first publication under the Project of Social Science and Humanities Texts in B.E. 2519 (1976):

"It is the best research and analysis we've ever had for Thai Studies."

While writing an introduction for this book in B.E. 2519, Dr. Kasetsiri said,

"This marvelous piece of work actually needs no introduction at all because it can tell history and significance by itself and it is believed that there is no such writers or academics who are widely knowledgeable on this point like Jitr Phumisak."

Mr. Phumisak was set free from Ladyao Prison in B.E. 2507 (1964). A year later, he made a turning point in his life by leaving the city for the jungle to continue fighting for what he believed. He spent his life living in the Phuu Phaan Mountain Range until the day he was shot dead in the woods on May 5, 2509 (1966) at the age of 36.

History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms was written based on a widely study through various texts and references related to archeology, arts, literature, ethnology and anthropology. It was believed that he might have gained supports from his relatives or friends who secretly passed on needed information to him during his six-year imprisonment. There has been no information whether someone might have a chance to read his book before he moved into the forest except for Khun (Mr) Supha Sirimanonda, a senior journalist who passed away. Khun Supha was one among those pioneers of Marxism, Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism, Social Realism and especially, Marxist Political Economy Theory. He was the translator of a famous

book: Marx's **Capitalism** and also writer of a book on literary criticism: **Wannasarn Samnuek** (Consciousness of Literary Message).

Khun Supha, one among Jitr's most revered senior colleagues, received the manuscript of ***"History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom and the Societal Characteristics of These Etnonyms"*** in Jitr's hand-writing, more than 300 pages thick, from Jitr himself when coming to say goodbye before 'entering into the forest' [*khaw paa*] to fight for his ideology. It was understood that Khun Supha well realized the significance of this invaluable academic research as he kept it proper in a sealed box, then buried in the area of his house for almost ten years. After the military dictatorship and later on when the political atmosphere was more relaxed and younger scholars were eager to learn more about his life and work which was after the crisis of people's uprising on 14 October 2516 (1973), Khun Supha passed on the information about Jitr's thoughts and his ideology, his life story and written works. Being approached and interviewed by 'younger generation', he firstly introduced Jitr's literary art work called ***"Art for Life, Art for People"*** which Jitr wrote in his pen-name *"Thiipakorn"* for Piroon Chatvanichkul and Thanya Chunchadatharn, younger writers and journalists, who belonged to the Group of Literature for Life [*klum vannakam phuea chiiwit*]. These two youngsters got the manuscript via Khun Thanong Satthathip, a senior journalist, and have it published. Accordingly, it was regarded as his first series collection which was publicized in B.E. 2515 (1972).

For the manuscript of ***"History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms"***, Khun Supha might have thought that it was such a well-done research on history, literature, and linguistics, so he handed it to Cholthira Satyawadhna, at that time, lecturer in Thai Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, the same institution of Jitr Phumisak. The young female lecturer was inspired by Khun Supha and his progressive friends outside the 'Devalaya' to learn about the amazing life and work of Jitr Phumisak which were concealed as if it were a 'mystery' in the Faculty of Arts. Having learned about the biography of her 'controversial' senior in Arts and his works, she did some research on, and officially publicized his life and work for the first time in series in the magazine called **Aksornsart Picharn** [**Arts Review**] (3: 11 April-12 May, 2519/1976), run by the Student Club of the Faculty of Arts. Later on, the whole series about Jitr's life and work were gathered and published in her book called **Wannakhadii Phuea Puang Chon** [**Literature for All People**] (Cholthira Satyawadha 2519/1976, first published by Academic Division, Chulalongkorn University Student Union).

Actually at that time, the Committee Members of Project of Social Science and Humanities Texts, Social Science Association of Thailand, consisted of Dr. Puey Ng-phakorn - President, Saneh Chamrik - Vice-President, Dr. Kreuk-kiat Phiphatseritham - Member and Treasurer, Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri - Member and Secretary, including other well-known Committee Members: academics, social thinkers, writers such as Acharn Sulak Sivarak, Dr. Wit Witsathavet, Dr. Sombat Chanthornwong, etc. including Cholthira Satyawadhna. This team seemed to form a set of Committee Members who were politically non-bias, ethically, and academically brave.

Khun Supha Sirmanond, following the suggestion of Cholthira, who was entrusted the hand-written manuscript of ***"History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom, and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms"*** proposed it to the Executive Committee of the Text Project. With consent, the Committee assigned Dr. Charnvit Kasetsiri and Dr. Sombat Chanthornwong to evaluate the writing and the result came out that the two readers confirmed its value. Accordingly, it was proceeded to the Committee and successfully gained approval to be publicized and published in BE. 2519 (1976) in a paperback form, only a couple of months before the "6 October 1976" coup d'etat occurred.

Waves of the Thai social and political changes passing by, Jitr Phumisak has turned out to be a 'cultural hero' of Thai elites who stood up for the democracy of his country and yearn for peace and prosperity of the people.

After the "6 October 1976 crisis", an uncountable number of people were dead in both city and countryside, following the glory path of him. In the same way, in the Thai academic arena, there were young elite, learned scholars, school teachers and university lecturers, including politicians who followed the track he had pioneered.

Until today, it seems that there have been no younger scholars who could create such interesting, deeply-rooted, widely-concerned and challenging work based on the stand point and benefits for the people, comparable to Jitr Phumisak. However, it is noticeable that the *'Devalaya'* had never officially provided any honorary recognition to him, its old student, as an outstanding specialist in Arts, although it did to a number of honorable alumni during the passed ten years until recently.

History of Terms: Siam, Thai, Lao, Khom and the Societal Characteristics of These Ethnonyms was written on the basic principles of Comparative Historical

Linguistics which was while a beginning stage of this sort of studies. It might be heavily difficult and boring for readers in general. However, Jitr Phumisak did try to point out the roots and origins of the significant terms, *"Siam", "Tai-Dai-Thai", "Lao"* and *"Khom"* which hinted ethnical differences. He indicated weaknesses, incorrect thinking and learning procedures in the past and used these terms to trace back the origination of Tai people systematically. Particularly, an analysis of history of the terms *"Ne? Siam-Kuk"* and *"Phala-Lavo"* inscripted at the Angkor Wat's corridor was considered as "the most exciting and stunning" academic findings. (Charnvit Kasetsiri, "Introduction" 1976)

It was then the baby stage in the academic circle when a number of historical chronicles in this book was interpreted and evaluated seriously. As it takes, it might be the very first brick laid previously for those historians in any school of thought to reconsider 'Thai history' and 'ethnicity' more closely. Dr. Charnvit mentioned that the book was useful as it was a particular type of 'new knowledge', an invaluable historiography, free from the wide range of all conventional arguments which only relied on historical annals recorded in either state or court documents [*phongsaawadaan*]. Such kind of historiography overlooked the significance of local chronicles and legends [*tamnaan*]. Jitr's recognition of the local cultural heritage and historiography has been passed on and developed consistently until today. The body of knowledge, Jitr Phumisak had and ways of his study, reflected his highly respect in ancient archives, but with sharp critique on the falsification or distortion; both compliments and complaints, turned his book to be so outstanding and unique. The "rebel spirit", seeping through every single word he wrote, was an unbeatable but an in-aggressive one, containing a sense of "academic" and radiating his humbleness and sincerity. Although Jitr Phumisak realized that he had achieved in creating an invaluable academic job, with modesty, he said:

> *"My writing was done under a highly constrained and inconvenient condition. Accordingly, I am quite sure that it must contain a lot of weaknesses caused by an inadequate base of information and references. Therefore, comments and critiques from readers/researchers are welcomed to bring correction and completion to my work. I prepare to take full responsibility for those mistakes I have made and I am also ready to correct them if one could provide proper recommendations and more convincing evidence."*

The past twenty years have proved an unfadeable value of Jitr Phumisak's master-piece of work. The new 'knowledge' on Tai/Thai studies has grown up. New evidence and information gained from the field research in the residential areas of the Siam, Tai, Lao and Khom should be able to top up the body of knowledge which Jitr Phumisak compiled in his book systemetically. And it may be forseen

that those arguments and agreements could be tackled with more concrete theoretical and data bases.

Interestingly, this book consists of a variety of superb contents with fascinating investigative and interpretative pro-and-con details in each section. However, what new academics should not overlook but concentrate more carefully is the important point mentioned in the introduction part of the book written from the true feeling of Jitr Phumisak which said:

> *"It is noticeable that those, who have tried to trace back the source and meaning of the term **"Siam"** in the past mostly set a start based on their 'patriotism'... For me, the sense of 'nationalism' and historical facts are sometimes in conflict. Therefore, I grounded my research on certain historical facts, not the sense of nationalism. However, I do not close the door for the negative meaning and welcome only the positive."*

The cry from his heart and ways of study as mentioned previously are expectedly to, more or less, inspire the Tai/Thai Studies learners and experts to think and reconsider more openly and seriously. Especially, for those Tai/Thai Studies scholars whose philosophy based on dialectical materialism like him, should also try to investigate and do some self-criticism, following the thought and way of study of Jitr Phumisak, in order to measure and cross-check the research direction and methodology of their school of thought as to how effective they are, and whether it is really on the right track.

Jitr Phumisak's remark and way of study, which have a characteristic of "Dialectics", reflect clearly out of his introduction as said:

> *"Researchers in the past always went into this conflict by grasping weak questions irrelevant to the development of social lives and economy of Thai society and related nations. In my opinion, an analysis or investigation of linguistic and historical issues should not be omitted or put aside, or else we might miss the definite solutions".*

Rules of materialistic relations, integration of opposite sides of conflicts or contradictions and rules of social and economic development of Thai society including "related nations" and some other "social structures", as described in his book including his crystal-clear view represented, will lead to a better understanding of the Tai/Dai/Thai societies and communities outside the Kingdom of Siam, including those in the Thai nation-state as he specified in a clear system in his book as follows:

> *"I refer to the trace of the **"Siam"** in Assam with an objective based on linguistics and history, not the sense of nationalism. I do not mean to dreamingly assure that they, the alive and dead, are to be **"Thai"** or fall into a reverie about gathering those ethnical **"Tai"** into "the great Thai Kingdom", without any references. I realize with my common sense that within a nation-state, it always consists of multi-cultures and multi-nationalities and has a combination of minority groups. Such feature is quite common and inevitable. However, the question is as to whether those multi-groups belong to the same unity of territory, economic and political structure and system. And we have to accept the fact that Thailand, at present, has an integrated population in the same way."*

The International Conference on TAI STUDIES

July 29-31, 1998

Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

The Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development (ILCRD), Mahidol University will host the international conference on Tai Studies during July 29-31, 1998 at the Royal River Hotel, Bangkok. The main purpose of the conference is to provide an international forum for scholars from different countries to present and discuss various aspects of Tai Studies.

The conference features a brief introduction to "The studies of Tai in China by the ILCRD" presented by the Director of the ILCRD, Khunying Suriya Ratanakul, keynote speeches, plenary sessions, and paper presentations.

The keynote speeches on July 29, 1998 include three topics, i.e., "The Tai langauge family and the comparative method," "The language corridor: New data from Vietnam" and "The origin of Saek: Iimplication for Tai and Vietnamese protohistory" delivered by Anthony Diller, Jerold A. Edmondson, and James R. Chamberlain respectively.

The plenary sessions focus on interesting issues of Tai Studies, such as status of Tai studies and Tai migration patterns. The topic of the first plenary session on July 30, 1998 is "Current studies of Tai outside Thailand." The invited speakers of this panel are distinguished scholars from variuos institutions, namely, Pranee Kullavanijaya (Chulalongkorn University), Theraphan L. Thongkum (Chulalongkorn University), Zhang Gongjin (Central University for Nationalities, Beijing), Sumit Pitiphat (Thammasat University), Ratanaporn Sethakul (Payap University), and Wilaiwan Khanittanan (Thammasat University). The moderators of the panel are Robert Bauer (Hong Kong Polytechnic University) and Chatthip Nartsupha (Chulalongkorn University). The topic of the second plenary session on July 31, 1998 is "Tai migration patterns in interdisciplinary perspective." The session will bring outstanding scholars from various fields of Tai Studies together and present their views of Tai migration patterns. The invited scholars include Jerold A. Edmondson (University of Texas, Arlingtion), linguistics; Srisak Vallibhotama (Silpakorn University), history and archaeology; Cholthira Satyawadhna (Rangsit University), socio-cultural anthropology; Samerchai Phulsuwan (Thammasat University), physical anthropology; and Siraporn Na Thalang (Chulalongkorn University), Folklore. The moderator of this session is Carol Compton (University of Wisconsin, Madison).

Papers to be presented at the conference are submitted by scholars from fourteen countries, i.e., Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China, Mienma, India, Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong, U.S.A., Canada, Russia, Germany, and Australia. There are 68 papers dealing with five Tai and outlier groups residing outside Thailand as follows:

1. Southwestern Tai: Tai Ahom, Tai Phake, Tai Ai Ton, Lao, Tai Phuan, Tai Ya, Tai Lue, Black Tai, and White Tai
2. Central Tai: Cao Lan, Tay, Tho, Nung
3. Northern Tai: Zhuang, Bouyei, Saek
4. Kam-Sui: Kam/Dong
5. Kadai: Lachi

The papers are categorized into eight groups as follows:

(1) Language and linguistics: 22 papers

The language and linguistic papers can be subcategorized into seven subgroups as follows:

No.	Names of researchers	Paper titles
	(1.1) General description of language	
1	Alexander J. Sokolovski (Russia)	The necessary of teaching and learning Tai language and culture in Russian Far Eastern State University
2	J.N. Phukon (India)	Ahom language from 13rd to 18th centuries
3	Ryuichi Kosaka (Japan)	A southwestern Tai dialects in Tianxin, China
4	Zhizhi Zhou (China)	Zhuang language and Wa
	(1.2) Phonetics and Phonology	
5	Christopher Court (USA)	The "Gedney boxes" (the comparative Tai tone diagram) for Thailand, Laos and Malaysia: Some suggested emendations
6	Ken Gregerson and Jerold A. Edmondson (USA)	Some puzzles concerning Cao Lan
7	Rungpat Roengpitya (USA)	Can a perceptual experiment reflects tonogenesis in Tai?
8	Wenyi Yu (China)	Phonological study on the difference between Tai and Bouyei language
	(1.3) Word, Sentence, Discourse	
9	Carol Compton (USA)	Uses of pronouns and kinship terms in Lao performance texts
10	Kathryn M. Howard (USA)	Situated uses of the Thai perfect
11	Margaret E. Milliken (USA)	Classifying classifiers: the classifier 'gij' in northern Zhuang
12	Nick J. Enfield and Grant Evans (Australia and Hong Kong)	Tai is not a language, Tai is not a nation: Transcription of Tai languages in the SEA areal context
13	Rudolf Reinelt (Japan)	Speech act verbs in Tai languages
14	Shoichi Iwasaki and Foong-Ha Yap (USA)	The "give" construction in Thai and beyond: A cognitive and historical perspective
15	Somsonge Burusphat (Thailand)	Discourse functions of auxiliaries in the Bouyei origin myth
16	Zhou Guoyan (China)	The origin and the development of the "disposal" form in Bouyei language
	(1.4) Language classification	
17	Theraphan L. Thongkum (Thailand)	A classification of the Tai people in northwest Vietnam
	(1.5) Orthography	
18	Long Yaohong (China)	The Dong orthography
19	Luo Yongxian (China)	Early Tai scripts: Data from Chinese sources
20	Robert S. Bauer (Hong Kong)	The writing system of ancient Zhuang language
	(1.6) Computational linguistics	
21	Faiza Al-Ani (Australia)	New waves in statistical and computational linguistics
22	Udom Warotamasikkhadit (Thailand)	Thai spelling reform for data processing

(2) Settlements and migration patterns: 5 papers

23	John Hartmann (USA)	The linguistic evidence for the origins and spread

		of Tai irrigated rice agriculture
24	Le Sy Giao (Vietnam)	Characteristics of distribution of Tai peoples (Thai language family) in the north of Vietnam
25	Liu Yan (China)	A short report on the Dai nationality southward migration
26	Solot Sirisai (Thailand)	Origin of the rice culture and its relation to Tai speaking people
27	Thangal H. Abid (India)	Settlement of Tais of northeast India: A brief study

(3) Society, culture, and politics: 6 papers

28	Bhabananda Buragohain (India)	Inspiration for revival of the Tai Ahom: A trace for survival through struggle, association, and culture
29	Em-on Chittasobhon (Thailand)	A comparative study of Thai culture through Thai masterpieces
30	Lin Compton (USA)	Methodological options and challenges in the recovery of the indigenous knowledge of Tai people
31	Prasanta Saikia (India)	Impact of arecanut on socio-cultural aspect of Ahom community
32	Shahab Setudeh-Nejad (Malaysia)	Cosmic kinship and social structure among Tai and their kinship groups in southeast Asia
33	Trinh Dien Thin (Vietnam)	Thailand culture with Vietnamese social integration of Vietnamese community in Thailand

(4) Belief, ritual, and religion: 11 papers

34	Charles Pyle (Thailand)	Toward a Buddhist theory of language
35	Chow Nagen Hazarika (India)	The religion of the Ahom Kings
36	Dao Chenghua (China)	A tentative study of Dai Ya's marriage
37	Hoang Luong (Vietnam)	The position of buffalo in funerals of Lachi people in Vietnam
38	Khampeng Ketavong (Lao)	Animism melting of Lao ethnic culture in the Nkay plateau and periphery (middle Laos)
39	Minati Chutia (India)	Religious aspects of Tai Ahom in Assam
40	Oliver Raendchen (Germany)	The Tai Lak: ritual and socio-political functions
41	Paul T. Cohen (Australia)	Luc guardian spirit cults in Muang Sing and Nan: A comparison
42	Pratashlata Bura Gohain	A glimpse of traditional Ahom Rituals
43	Yang Quan (China)	Sax, the Goddess of the Kam people
44	Yun Fan (China)	Research on the Dais' tattoos in Xishuangbanna of China

(5) Folk wisdom and literature: 4 papers

45	Aimya Hhang Gohain (India)	Proverbs and Saying among the Tai Phakes
46	David Holm Leopold (Australia)	A cosmogonic text from Donglan (Guangxi)
47	Dipali Gogoi (India)	A comparative study of the folk stories of Assam and Ahom and other Tai ethnics of Assam with the folk stories of Tais of Thailand, Shan States, Laos, and Sibsongpanna of China
48	Donna Synder (China)	Folk wisdom in Bouyei proverbs and songs

(6) Architecture, arts, music, and handicrafts: 8 papers

49	Bhim Kanta Boruah (India)	Achitecture of the Ahoms of Assam

50	Michael C. Howard and Be Kim Nhung (Canada)	Dress and ethnic identity among the Tai-speaking people of Vietnam
51	Norman Geary, Ruth Geary, and Yaohong Long (China)	Dong singing
52	Ornsiri Panin (Thailand)	Houses and religious buildings in the vicinity of Muang Chiang Rung
53	Patricia Cheesman (Thailand)	Introducing Muang Han textiles
54	Sakchai Hirunrux (Thailand)	Free-reed musical instruments of Tai speaking people
55	Sandra Shamis (USA)	Tai textiles: A window on the Tai world
56	Sara Davis (USA)	Buddhist song-tales and singers (zhang-khap) of Sipsongbanna, China--a field report

(7) History and anthropology: 7 papers

57	Cholthira Satyawadhna (Thailand)	The Kam (Dong) of Hunan: An anthropological reconstruction
58	James A. Placzek (Canada)	The big picture: South East Asia as the cradle of Asian civilization
59	Jaya Buragohain (India)	Reference to Aitons in the chronicles of mediaval Assam
60	Kamal Gogoi (India)	The Tai monuments of India: A geographic study
61	Somsak Pramnakij and Vadhana (Thailand)	Discoveries in Thailand to trace Asian ancestors
62	Tatsuo Hoshino (Japan)	A history of ethnonomy Phuan in Daic, Vietnamese and Chinese sources
63	Yu Wen (China)	An overview of the historical formation of Xishuang

(8) Ethno-cultural and language contact: 5 papers

64	Gerald Fry (USA)	Cultural and linguistics preservation in the Lao People's Democratic Republic: The survival and sustainability of Lao Lum culture
65	Girin Phukon (India)	State of Tai culture among the Ahoms
66	Puspadhar Gogoi (India)	Evaluation of original Tai cultural heritages among the Tai Ahom and Assam in the light of their ethno-cultural contacts and exchanges with other ethnics of notheast India
67	Sahai Sachchidanand (India)	The Laotians and their perspectives about others
68	Suwilai Premsrirat (Thailand)	Contacts and influences between the Tai and Mon-Khmer speaking groups in Northern Southeast Asia

The conference will end with a summation and floor discussion moderated by a prominent figure of Tai Studies, John Hartmann (Northern Illinois University).

It is hoped that the conference participants will get a wider knowledge and a better understanding of Tai and outlier groups residing outside Thailand, and the conference will encourage more interdisciplinary studies of Tai-speaking people which may provide a clue to such controversial issue as the origin of Tai race.

Reported by Somsonge Burusphat
Chair of the International Conference on Tai Studies

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TAI STUDIES

The International Conference on TAI STUDIES

Bangkok, July 29-31, 1998

The conference is related to the Tai peoples who reside outside Thailand, namely, Lao, Black Tai, Lue, White Tai, Shan, Ahom, Dai, Tài, Tho, Nung, Zhuang, Bouyei, Ong-Be, Saek, Kam (Dong), Sui, Maonan, Mulam, Mak, Then, Ai-Cham, Lati, Laqua, Hlai (Li), and Gelao.

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