

Shaded area indicates probable location of Khon Pa village situated in the mountain southeast of Ban Huay Kheng.



EXPEDITION TO THE 'KHON PA' (OR PHI TONG LUANG?)

Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda

Julian Hartland-Swann

On August 5, 1962, an expedition under the auspices of the Siam Society to investigate the *Phi Tong Luang* (ผีตองเหลือง) or 'Spirits of the Yellow Leaves', assembled at Muang Nan. The expedition, of necessity small in number in order to provide the maximum opportunity of meeting the tribe without scaring them off, consisted of three members of the Society under the leadership of Mr. Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda, his secretary, a photographer and a number of bearers. It should be mentioned at the outset that none of the members of the expedition were qualified anthropologists or ethnologists. This article consequently makes no claim in these fields to attempt anything more than a factual presentation of the expedition's findings; only in the linguistic field is any professional assessment attempted and even this has had to be strictly limited in the light of the very slender body of facts discovered.

To place the subject in perspective an outline of the historical background is relevant. In northern Thailand the legend of the *Phi Tong Luang* is ancient and very widespread. They were said to be a tribe of nomads, primitive, shy, suspicious and only rarely seen, who practised no form of agriculture, went around almost naked and lived on a diet of berries, nuts and small animals. They were said to inhabit the deep jungle and to construct no houses except small, temporary, lean-to shelters from a few sticks and palm-leaves. It was in fact these palm-leaves, grown yellow after their few days' use and then discovered by passing Thai hunters, which gave rise to their picturesque name. Up to 1936, however, no qualified observer had ever seen them, although Major Seidenfaden, during the course of his extensive anthropological work in this country as a member of the Society, noted several reports of *Phi Tong Luang* in the Sa valley in Changwat Nan which seemed to confirm some parts of the legend¹. In 1936/7 an Austrian ethnologist, A.H. Bernatzik, in the course of a study of the autochthonous

1. For fullest account see J.S.S. vol XX, part 1, pp 41-48; also mentioned in J.S.S vol. XIII, part 3, pp 49-51 & vol. XVIII, part 2, pp. 142-144.

peoples of South-East Asia, came to Thailand, organised an expedition into an area about 20 miles east of Nan and then claimed to have traced, met and lived with a small group of *Phi Tong Luang*. He published his findings in a book, now translated into English¹. Between 1954 and 1956 two American anthropologists, Weaver and Goodman, also went into the Nan area and reported finding a small group of *Phi Tong Luang*. Apart from this and several chance brief encounters by Mr. Garland Bare, a missionary working in the Nan area at the moment, there has been no further corroborated evidence about these people.

Bernatzik's account, although controversial ever since its publication, is certainly the most detailed and authoritative description of *Phi Tong Luang* and really constituted the main evidence we had to go on before mounting the expedition. We were therefore somewhat disappointed to find several discrepancies between his descriptions and what we observed when we met our own group. These discrepancies will be brought out during this article since in many ways it is on these that hinge the three main problems about our findings: were the people we met really *Phi Tong Luang*; what relation do they have with other *Phi Tong Luang* groups such as those met by Bernatzik, Weaver, Goodman and Bare; and, most important of all, does the actual name *Phi Tong Luang* have a genuine ethnic connotation, or is it simply a loose coining invented by the Thai to cover any strange or remote group of jungle-dwellers. We are able to give authoritative answers to none of these questions. However, as far as the last question is concerned, our own evidence and that of almost every independent account leads to what can almost be regarded as a firm conclusion. The name *Phi Tong Luang* is indubitably a Thai coining (it appears also in the alternative forms of *Kha Tong Luang* in Laos and *Phi Pa* in the Nan area). No group of people in any account has ever admitted to owning the name; Bernatzik's group called themselves *Yumbri*, while our own called

1. 'The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves', A.H. Bernatzik, (Robert Hale, 1958).

themselves *Khon Pa*, at the same time strenuously repudiating the name *Phi Tong Luang*. Moreover, as a glance at our photographic records will show and as later described, our group showed within itself considerable differences in physical appearance and seemed most unlikely to have stemmed from a common stock. It seems clear in fact that the name *Phi Tong Luang* is a name invented by the Thai and used indiscriminately to refer to any unfamiliar people who inhabit the deeper parts of the jungle and who are not members of any recognised hill-tribe or known local community. In itself it has no ethnic, sociological or genuine categorical meaning at all. It is for this reason that we have referred to the group we encountered as *Khon Pa* and not *Phi Tong Luang*.

Bernatzik met his *Yumbri* somewhere in the Wa valley about 20 miles east of Muang Nan. We met our nine *Khon Pa* in the Sa valley about 30 miles west of Muang Nan. We had walked into the jungle north from the village of Fang Min on the Nan-Phrae road and set up a camp in Ban Pa Hung. From here we had sent out a scouting party consisting of two local teachers and the *Phu Yai Ban*¹ all of whom knew the group of *Khon Pa* well, having traded with them over a period of years. This advance party contacted the group after two days' search and had then arranged for them to meet us at an abandoned village called Ban Huay Kum, situated about 10 km. up a small tributary which ran steeply down from the hills to join the Mae Sa. All of us had carefully put on the loose blue smock and trousers worn by the local Thai villagers so that the *Khon Pa* should not be too startled by their first sight of 'farang' and city Thais. To reassure them further we also took with us several of the local Thai village maidens as our 'women-folk'! These girls went forward to one of the less dilapidated of the houses and we were delighted to see the group of *Khon Pa* suddenly appear, weighed down with their mats, baskets, knives and the occasional spear, and make for this house. It was about 11 am., almost immediately there

1. Village headman.

was a burst of chatter and laughter and this continued so vigorously that we lost no time in emerging from the shelter of our own house and joined the woman. There was a momentary pause as our heads appeared above the floor level and the *Khon Pa* nervously fingered the knives at their waists, but talk quickly resumed and after that they betrayed almost no nervousness at all throughout the seven hours we spent with them. In fact one of the earliest and most striking impressions that we received was their spontaneous vivacity and gaiety, shown both by their frequent bursting into song accompanied by dancing and by their constant wit and good humour throughout our questioning. (Bernatzik's *Yumbri* were particularly noted for their extreme shyness and almost lugubrious low spirits.) They were not however either curious or particularly observant. Despite the fact that five of us carried cameras and that we had two tape-recorders and a cine-camera in addition, they took very little initial notice of them and not only sat quite unmoved while we either photographed or recorded them but allowed us to group or pose them wherever we wished. Throughout the day they never asked us a single question about who we were, what we were doing or why we had come. When one of the Thais in our party pointed to Velder and Hartland-Swann and said '*farang*', they appeared to evince neither surprise nor interest and after repeating the word several times in an experimental way they turned away.

To attempt an accurate physical description of them is difficult—both because none of us were trained anthropological observers and also because there was considerable variation among the nine men we met. As far as we could judge they did not belong to any one identifiable ethnic group, although it appeared that they were all of mongoloid and not negrito stock. It is best therefore to attempt to describe the features which they all shared in common and then to qualify this in individual cases. They ranged in age from about 17 to 50 (all ages are estimates since they were unable to reckon their own ages at all) although most of them appeared to



Group of nine Khon Pa, wearing clothes given by advance contact party.



Khon Pa with spear, blade was supplied by our party as a gift, but original point made by Khon Pa has been retained at other end.



Group of three Khon Pa, showing contrasting ethnic features.



Khon Pa dancing.

be in their 30's. They were (with one exception) small men about 5' 2" in height with sturdy well-built figures, particularly well-developed chests and strong shoulders and thighs. Their hair was black, thick and straight, although it was usually matted and very dirty. They wore it quite long, almost to their shoulders, hanging in a slight wave (three of them had cropped it short just by the neck) and most of them had applied some sort of animal grease to it. Their forehead was high surmounting strong eyebrows, though the latter had little trace of bushiness. The eyes were large, mongoloid, with long curling eyelashes, while the nose was generally pronounced, strong and high-bridged with narrow nostrils (three of them had a rather broader and flattened nose). The mouth was generally large with lips which were thickish though not negroid; the body well-built as described although there was some tendency to bowing in the legs. The colour of the skin showed some variation but was in general a pale yellowish tan, quite similar to the colour of the northern Thai. They appeared to be quite healthy with no sign of undernourishment, although they were extremely dirty and smelt highly. Several of them, however, were suffering quite severely from ring-worm on the waist and groin, and two of them had suffered some damage to one of their eyes (one of them explained that he had been stung by a hornet in the eye in early youth). They wore no form of body ornament at all although all of them had the lower lobe of the ear pierced into a half-inch diameter hole which in some cases had actually caused the lobe to break. Four of the group also had a blue tattoo worked onto their chest and back and one actually had a watch tattooed onto his wrist. These tattoos they explained had been done for them by some Thai visiting the valley a few years earlier and was in a conventional Thai pattern consistent with this explanation. They were mostly smooth-skinned though some had traces of body hair on the arms and legs. None of them had beards or any observable facial hair. None of this is in direct contradiction with Bernatzik's physical descriptions of the *Yumbri*, though a comparison of the photographs he took and our own make it unlikely that the two groups are closely related. It is possible that they might have come from a similar original mongoloid stock a long time back, but no more than this.

Unfortunately we had neither the time nor the equipment to take detailed measurements and other vital observations which might have made their origins clear. We can only hope that a later opportunity to do this will present itself.

On their arrival at the meeting place, they were all wearing something in addition to their loin-cloths. They presented an extraordinarily motley sight as they tramped in, one in an old moth-eaten cardigan and a tattered pair of shorts, another in a grubby tee-shirt and two of them with bright pieces of green and blue plastic material flapping grotesquely about their waists. All of this had been given to them by our advance party. They told us that normally they simply wore their loin-cloth, a filthy piece of twisted rag which they either begged or picked up by barter from the Thais. Once provided with the extra 'clothes', however, they appeared curiously loth to remove them when asked and said they were ashamed. Certainly when they left us that evening, having stripped almost every garment off our backs even down to asking for Velder's pyjamas they appeared in high spirits. Gleefully wearing all their trophies they strutted off down the track like a troop of over-decked scarecrows. They definitely wove no cloth themselves, both on their own evidence and corroborated by the Thais, though how they kept themselves warm at night still remains as much a mystery to us as it did to Bernatzik. Unlike the *Yumbri* the *Khon Pa* seemed to possess some skill in handicrafts. They all carried with them a sort of string-bag made from knotted vine fibre, in which they carried tobacco, root pipes, dried banana leaf for rolling cigarettes (which they smoked constantly alternately with their pipes), fire-making equipment (a flint and steel) and beeswax which they used for trading. Almost all of them carried at least one knife tucked into their loincloth. These were small and crudely fashioned with both sheath and handle covered with plaited rattan. One man carried a spear about 7' long and tipped at one end with an unbarbed point, on the other end he had already bound the large forged spear-blade which had formed the chief gift carried by our advance party. They

1. see Bernatzik's 'Die Geister der Gelbern Blätter' (Verlag F. Bruckmann 1938) illustrations No. 58 & 59.

also carried, rolled in a mat, one other shorter spear about 5' long. This had a more complex attachment which looked rather like a narrow bladed hoe or spade implement. Several of them carried lidded baskets on their backs made of dried split rattan and of a design quite similar to those made by several hill-tribes-particularly the Meo. Here the *Yumbri* provide an interesting comparison since they were noted as making baskets of an almost identical design which they had learnt from the Meo. The *Yumbri* also made mats from the same material which again sounds very similar to those brought in by the *Khon Pa* and used by the latter as a staple trading product with the valley Thai. The *Khon Pa* said that they could work iron and were eager to acquire this material, one of the group met by our advance party having specifically requested a gift of an iron bar, which we in fact ultimately provided. We nevertheless had great difficulty in determining any definite product of their forging and, apart from the two crudely fashioned spear-points, all their implements may well have been obtained from local Thai sources and not made by them at all. Other examples of their craftsmanship were available in two small, bamboo, lidded boxes, used to hold tobacco and fire-making equipment; these were carved and decorated with a simple design of stroke patterns and we found similar designs carved on two of their pipes. Their skills were crude and the design simple, but it seems an improvement on the *Yumbri* who, apart from the baskets and mats, attempted nothing in this sphere.

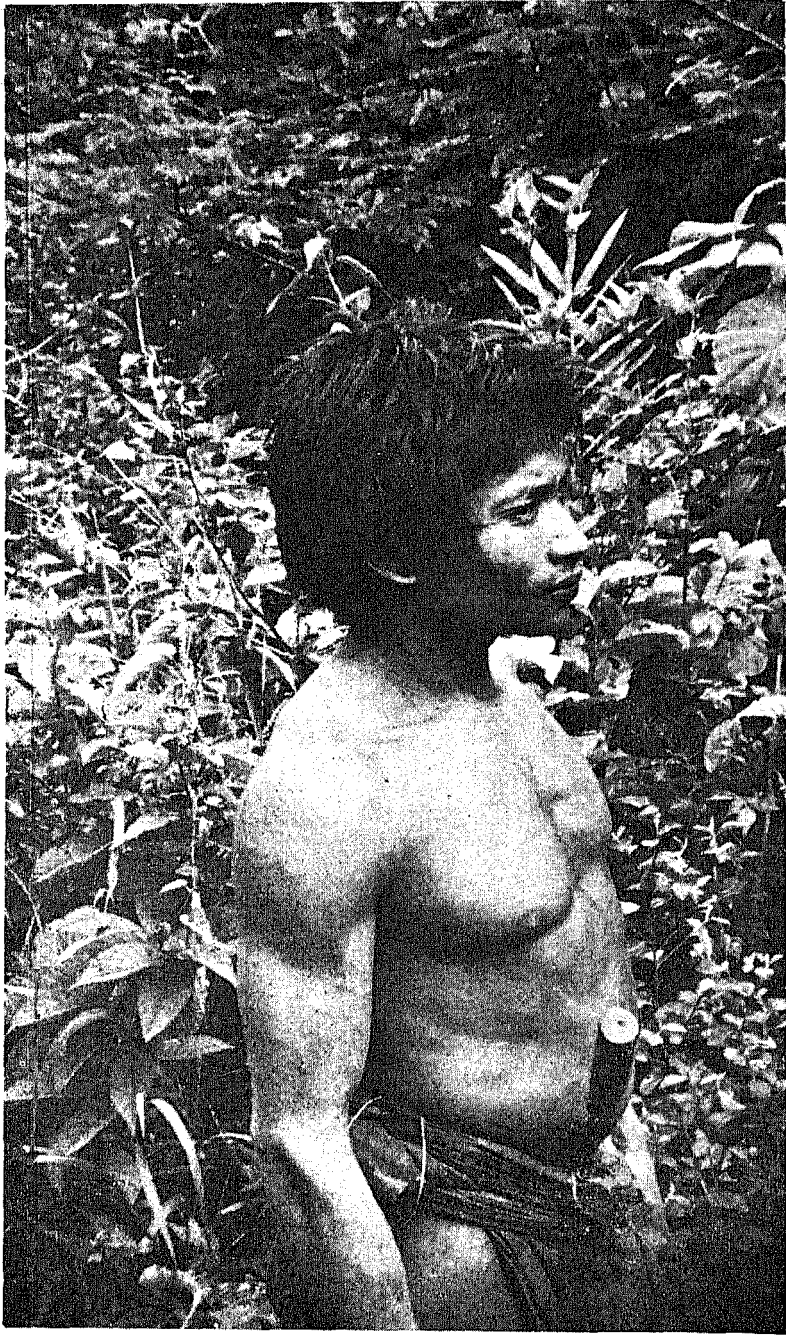
As far as their diet is concerned much of our evidence is second-hand by way of our indefatigable Thai guides. Although, as mentioned, they did not appear to be undernourished, almost their first request to us was for food. This the Thais said was habitual with them and they always went through an elaborate begging patter for food when they arrived at a village. We put before them meat, fish, tinned sardines and glutinous rice--all of which they ate readily. They used their fingers throughout and were certainly hungry. They ate cleanly and seemed familiar with the type of food, working the rice into a ball with their fingers and using it to pick up the

pieces of fish or meat in the normal northern Thai fashion. We also gave them some coffee to wash it down with. This they treated with great suspicion but in the end most of them drank it, under the impression, playfully fostered by the Thai bearers, that it was a rare new form of aphrodisiac. From oblique references of their own, confirmed later by our guides, their main diet at that time of year was a small nut called 'makhom', *Pittosporopsis Kerrii Craib*, which grows profusely in the area and is ripe during the months of July to September. To our taste it was bitter and rather unpleasant. This they supplement with wild mango, various roots, fruit, wild honey which they extract from the combs by pressing them through their vine bags, and small animals such as porcupines, bamboo-rats and snakes. The *Khon Pa* said that they also occasionally organised hunting parties accompanied by their dogs and killed barking deer, pigs and even bears. They had no knowledge of traps and never used them, nor did they make any attempt to store food but simply lived from day to day. They had no cultivation and appeared to dislike the idea of it acutely; when we asked if they would like to be like us and have all the things which we had, they rejected the idea with great distaste saying that it would entail tilling fields and this they would hate. All that they wanted in this line was tobacco and this they could obtain in plenty by helping themselves from the plots of deserted villages. When they mentioned their hunting trips with their dogs we began to question them further about the latter since we still had no clue as to where they were kept and hoped that this might give us a line on the most tantalising question of all—where the *Khon Pa* lived. Now in a matter of fact way, they replied that they kept their dogs behind permanently in their villages.

Here, indeed, was the most significant departure from *Phi Tong Luang* mythology. But when we began to cross-question the group for details the curtain descended again. Apart from saying that it was situated up on the ridge behind, above the pine line and that there were five or six houses they prevaricated. When we asked to be taken to it they hedged, saying, that the trail crossed many



Young Khon Pa showing tattoo marks—also a cast
in the right eye from a hornet sting



Study of one of the group of Khon Pa, showing the well developed pectoral muscles and good physique.

streams, was difficult to navigate and would take too long. Finally they put us off by saying that they would take us to it if we returned in the dry season. The only other fact we gathered from them was that their women and children remained there permanently and would flee into the surrounding trees on the approach of a stranger, warned by the dogs who were kept there for that purpose. No stranger was ever allowed to see or meet them. Three of the Thais in Ban Pa Hung later told us that they had on several occasions been allowed to visit the village and supplied us with a variety of details. We record them here although none of it could be varified of course. They estimated the total number living there at about fifty although the number of houses was no more than five or six. The houses were simply and crudely made: an earth floor covered with bark; two sloping roofs going up to the middle but not meeting, leaving a gap for the smoke of a centrally placed fire to go out through; the roof is made of palm leaves laid flat and held there by tree branches; and each house surrounded by a small enclosure made of further piled branches. This was their only defence against tigers which were their greatest enemy and of which they were terrified. They had lived in this particular village for just over a month and had moved there from a previous village at the source of the Huay Tha where they had lived for about four months. In fact this group had a long history of having lived and traded in the Sa valley for a period of over thirty years. The only exception was a disastrous move three years ago over the ridge into Changwat Phrae. They stayed there a year despite hostile treatment from occasional police patrols until they were finally driven out by a particularly brutal attack by some Thai villagers who raided their village and burnt it to the ground together with all their stocks of rattan. They moved their village normally when they had stripped the surrounding area of food. As for the famous leaf shelters; certainly they made them, but only when they were on a trading or hunting expedition down in the valleys. Several more of the villagers confirmed having seen these shelters themselves when hunting, but unfortunately we ourselves never came across one throughout the trip. Our attempts to get details of their

tribal organisation, social customs or taboos proved almost completely barren—whether because so little of a real social structure existed (as we think) or simply because of their obvious difficulty to express or communicate ideas of this nature, we never discovered. The group, during the time we observed it, showed little sign of cohesion or organisation, although they told us that the eldest of them was their leader. They did, however, go into a brief, vague description of the spirits whom they believed ruled their lives and whom they worshipped after a fashion. There were two main manifestations: one a general tutelary deity and the other a more specific spirit whose particular province was to protect the eyes and give them keen sight. They sacrificed to both, pigs to the former and ducks to the latter. A curious and perhaps significant feature of this was that both pigs and ducks had to be domesticated ones and not wild, and these pigs and ducks were the main things which they approached the Thai villagers for. This might indicate a survival from a time when they were in a more civilized state and reared their own stock.

Quite the most interesting feature of the group was their language and singing. At first our questioning proceeded slowly and with some difficulty, although they spoke to us in Thai Yuan. The Thai Yuan, Thai Yon or Thai Yonok are the people who live in the northern provinces of Thailand today, i.e. Chiangmai, Lam-poon, Lampang, Chiengrai, Phrae and Nan, which are also referred to as Lanna Thai. Their language is also sometimes called Phasa Muang (the language of the townspeople). Our group spoke this quite well but with a strong Khamuk accent. When asked about this they then said that they were in fact Khamuk themselves (the Khamuk are a hill tribe of whom there are large numbers in the Nan area). Khun Kraisri, happening to know a few words of Khamuk, shot them a few more questions in Khamuk and they promptly replied in it. One of our servants, who was a local Khamuk, told us that they were indeed speaking Khamuk, but with a pronounced accent and later one of our guides, Kamnan Ka Srikampha, confirmed that he had heard some Khamuk villagers living at Ban Nam Mae or Ban Pae (village No. 4, tambol Yap Hua Na) say that this group of Khon Pa

had visited their village frequently. They used to speak Khamuk to them just as they used Thai Yuan when they visited Thai villages. The Khamuk villagers had added, however, that their accent was certainly a strange one and made it clear that the *Khon Pa* were not in fact Khamuk. We returned to our questioning and the *Khon Pa* now, quite suddenly, said that they were Thai Yuan. Again we had to go through laborious cross-checks, such as asking them what language the Thai Yuan spoke; to which they replied 'Kham Muang'. Even their names they carefully rehearsed to us in Thai Yuan (and in fact appeared to have no others). These names appeared quite random coinings and were almost as if they had been bestowed on them in fun by the Thais:— Pan, Paeng, Muang, Ouan, Mun, Pa, Ta, Kham and La.¹ With all these contradictions, it was quite obvious that they were not telling the truth. Further tedious and frustrating questioning followed and we were on the point of giving up when suddenly one of the *Khon Pa* admitted that they had a language of their own. This language, he said, was old, never used, and he could barely remember it. Armed with this new information we called the nine *Khon Pa* in to us one by one. If two agreed on a word we accepted this as sufficient evidence of its probable correctness; if only vouched for by one of them we disregarded it. Unfortunately our time with them was too limited; they had come at 11 a.m. and left us at 6 p.m. that evening, and we had too many other questions to ask them apart from those dealing with their language. On the basis of the evidence gathered Khun Kraisi was able to prepare a list of words said to be 'their own' language (Appendix I).

There are several interesting features about this vocabulary, all too brief though it is. All but four of the words have the prefix 'tok' or 'to' for which they could give neither reason or exact meaning. This prefix is applied both to the names of animals and to the various parts of the body and it may be possible that it is linked with the Thai word 'tua' (ตัว) which is used as a classifier or numerator for animals and some parts of the body. Out of the

1. These can be loosely translated as:— give, expensive, mango, bamboo rat, hoard, fish, eye, gold and youngest.

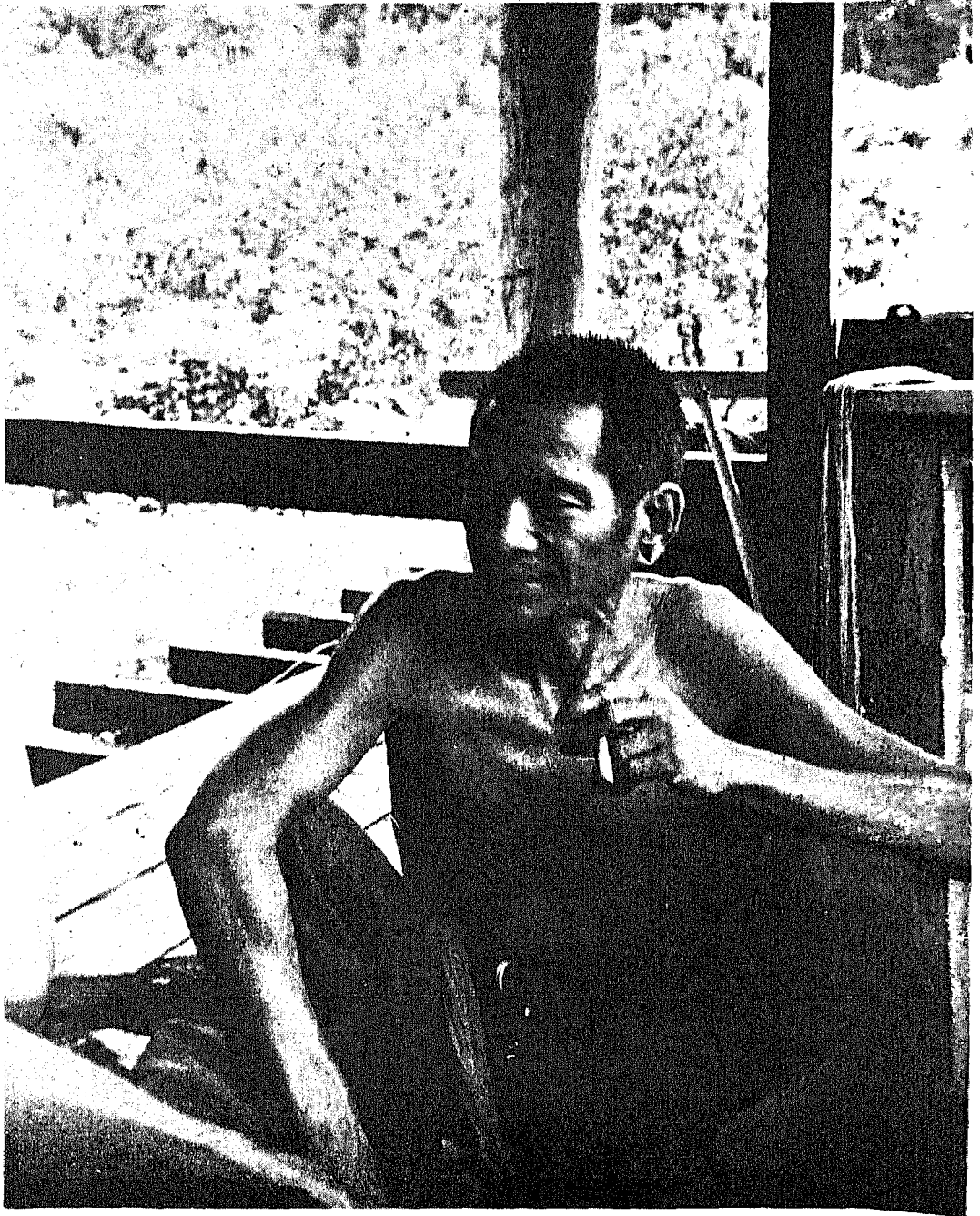
forty-eight words noted, three are quite close to their Khamuk equivalents: dog, elephant and land-leech. A comparison of this list with Bernatzik's¹ reveals no obvious similarities. Certain of the *Yumbri* words are readily identifiable with Khamuk words and their language, as far as one can judge, is probably of the Mon-Khmer group, despite the addition of a certain number of Laotian loan-words. But the *Khon Pa's* vocabulary, apart from a similar number of Thai loan-words, shows no apparent link with any other known Southeast Asian language. It is certainly too soon to decide whether it is directly related to either the Mon-Khmer group of languages or the T'ai. They themselves were clearly in some difficulty trying to recall a language which they normally never used. Their repeated self-contradictions and disagreements between themselves during our questioning also made the task of elucidating it more difficult and diminished the value of the words we did note down. Definitive results can only come after a lengthy analysis of the recorded tapes and in a later study. On the other hand the *Khon Pa* showed a remarkable ability in the use of flowery and poetic Thai Yuan, despite their Khamuk accent. Many of the words and phrases which they used are now obsolete in modern conversation and literature, such as ป่ห่อนเคยหัน (ไม่เคยเห็น), Furthermore there is a notable incidence of paired words. Some examples are: ชุผู้ชุกน (ทุกผู้ทุกคน), ทรรงคัพพะ (ทรงครรภ์), แต้่มหนังสือ (เขียนหนังสือ), ทางภูทางตอย สักผู้สักคน เข้าป่าเข้าตง เอียะไฮไสสวน (ทำไร่ทำสวน) โละเต่า-โละแลน (หาเต่าหาตะกวด), คนทุกขัคนยาก, คนเจ้าคนนาย, สะเล็กสะน้อย, กินข้าวกินน้ำ

If they were not born with Thai as their first language, it is certainly remarkable that they should have reached such a high level of accomplishment in it. This was even more remarkable when we discovered that they seemed unable to count at all above the number three, could not reckon their own ages and showed a complete inability to grasp any question involving a simple hypothesis. Yet they were using a language of poets and learned monks which even the Thai villagers whom they visited could no longer use or fully understand.

1. The *Yumbri* vocabulary is published only in the original German edition on pp. 237-240



Khon Pa ready for travelling. Over his shoulder are his vine string-bag and a short digging implement or spear, behind is one of the rattan mat used as their principal trading items.



A study of the oldest of the group who appeared to be the leader, taken inside a deserted house during questioning. The trousers were a gift, but the cigarette is one of his own making.

Their expertise in singing and chanting was little less extraordinary. All nine of the men could sing, chant and dance most skilfully. Their songs can be divided into two types: the 'soh' (ซอ) corresponding to a real song and the 'joi' (จ้อย) corresponding to a simple chant. Of the 'soh' which we recorded there are four song-tunes which can be identified as being related to the songs of the Thai in north-eastern Thailand and Laos, although none can be definitely named. Local experts in this subject who listened to the recordings were of the firm opinion that although these links with the north-eastern songs exist, they are nevertheless quite separate and not directly derived from them. Nor do they have any close relationship with the 'khab' (ขับ) of the Thai Lue of Sipsong Panna, (the *Khon Pa* are at this moment living among villagers who are Thai Yuan or Thai Lue migrants from Sipsong Panna). It has not yet been possible to compare the *Khon Pa's* songs with Lao songs of the Saiyaburi and Luang Prabang districts—the other area which some of the *Khon Pa* hinted at having come from.—but it is hoped to do this later. A transcription of two of these 'soh' accompanied by a free verse translation is given in Appendix II.

The origins of the *Khon Pa's* 'joi' are immediately clear. It is definitely Thai Yuan and the air is called 'the old Chiangmai air' (จ้อยทำนองเชียงใหม่โบราณ) which is still chanted in the countryside around Chiangmai as well as in many other parts of the north. The 'joi' is a chant which is always associated with a story told in verse, called in the North 'Lao Khao' (เล่าข่าว), and derived from the Paññāsajataka (ปัญญาชาดก) which originated in Chiangmai about four hundred years ago. The 'joi' is also used as a vehicle for emotional themes such as love, joy or melancholy. The standard metrical pattern of the old Chiangmai 'joi' is given in Appendix III. Our first impression was that both the 'soh' and the 'joi' were traditional forms handed down to the *Khon Pa* by their ancestors, or else simply learnt by heart from other groups of people with whom they had come into contact. It was soon evident that this

might not be the case when we heard their final song (No. 2 in Appendix II) which was indubitably extemporised, yet in perfect form. In it is mentioned our main guide, the *Phu Yai* of Ban Pa Hung, Ka Rangphai, and it was composed by way of a parting tribute to us as they left. Nevertheless it is hard to escape the conclusion that most of these songs were either learnt from people more sophisticated than themselves with whom they had come into contact, or were some sort of a legacy from a previous period of more civilised life. In most of the songs occurred many words which were quite foreign to the jungle culture of the *Khon Pa* in their present state—gold, silver, books—and such abstract words as poverty, friendship, gratitude and commerce. It was impossible to determine whether they understood the meaning of these words.

Their own accounts of their past were almost equally baffling. They had never, they said, heard of the *Yumbri* and the only part of the name which they could understand was the second syllable *bri*, which they said, correctly, was the Khamuk word for forest.¹ They gave only one account of their origin in the form of a legend: "there were once two brothers living near the edge of the jungle. The younger brother grew rice and vegetables—he became the ancestor of the Khamuk; the elder brother went deep into the jungle and lived on fruit, roots, yams, insects and small wild animals—he became the ancestor of the *Khon Pa*." Three of them, at one stage, however, mentioned the names of several towns and districts in Saiyaburi and western Laos. They said they knew about these places even though they had never been there. Later they asserted that they were born somewhere in the deep jungle near the source of the Mae Sa.

A final curiosity remains. Among the people living around Phrae and Nan there is a strong legend still current about the *Phi Tong Luang*. "Once upon a time, one of the ruling princes of Nan, wishing to gain merit, released a group of his slaves composed of a

1. Professor Condominas also notes the word 'bri' meaning forest in use among the Muong Gay tribe in South Vietnam in his book 'Nous avons mangé la forêt' (Mercure de France, 1957).

hundred men and a hundred women. They were sent deep into the jungle, cursed to remain there and never return to civilisation. They were to get their livelihood only from what they could find in the jungle; if they started any form of 'agriculture, their plants would wither and dry up. They would have to beg for whatever they needed from the villages. "We asked the *Khon Pa* about this and they quickly agreed that they were indeed cursed people. This and tradition forbade them from carrying on any form of agriculture. Their curse had been laid upon them thus: "ปลูกข้าวสารี ห้อได้กินแต่แค้น ปลูกมะแตง ห้อได้กินแต่ก้าน" meaning 'if they plant corn they will reap only empty husks, if they plant cucumbers they will gather only the fruitless vines'.

The encounter was fundamentally a tantalising affair. It provided us with a host of new details, yet simultaneously destroyed the mass of our preconceptions. We had started with a well-documented myth, we were left with the fragments of a dozen improbable theories, each supported by its own slender contradictory piece of evidence. The only certainties appear to be that the *Khon Pa*, or *Phi Tong Luang*, are not a homogeneous ethnic group and that they are numerically fast on the decline. (Only a month after our expedition ended came the news that two of our group had been caught raiding fields, shot at and at least one seriously wounded). All the rest is still in doubt.

APPENDIX I
Comparative words

No.	English	Thai Yuan	ไทย ยวน	Khamu ขมุ	Khon Pa คนป่า	Remarks
1	bird	nok	นก	sim	ซิม	โต๊ก กา
2	hen	kai	ไก่	hi-eer	ฮีเอียร์	โต๊ก ทาน
3	dog	hma	หมา	soh	เซาะ	โต๊ก ขอ
4	pig	hmu	หมู	suang	เซื่อง	โต๊ก ชู
5	wild goat	yuang	เขื่อง			โต๊ก ชิว
6	rat	hnu	หนู	keneh	กะเนะ	โต๊ก เจื่อ
7	elephant	chang	ช้าง	sajang	สะจาง	โต๊ก ขาง
8	cow	ngua	งัว	lampoh	ลำโป๊ะ	โต๊ก ชะ
9	buffalo	kwai	ควาย	thrak	ทร่าก	โต๊ก ดิน
10	tiger	sua	เสือ	rawai	ระวาย	โต๊ก เซื่อะ
11	deer	kwang	กวาง	tayak	ตะย้าก	ตะร่าก
12	bear	hmi	หมี	hual	ฮัวล	โต๊ก ดี

Continue

No.	English	Thai Yuan	ไทย ยวน	Khamu	ขมุ	Khon Pa	คนป่า	Remarks
13	monkey	ling	ลิง	wah	วะ	tok hork	โต๊ก ฮอก	
14	tortoise	tao	เต่า			tok thao	โต๊ก เทา	
15	lizard	laen	แลน	trakod	ตระกอด	tok thang	โต๊ก ทาง	see fish
16	lizard	jakka	จักกา	tangjala	ตางจะหละ	tok tih	โต๊ก ตี	
17	large snake	ngoo	งูใหญ่	mal	มัด	tok sin	โต๊ก ซิน	
18	small snake	ngoo	งูเล็ก	mal	มัด	tok soo	โต๊ก ซู	
19	large ant	mod	มดใหญ่	mooich	มุษซ์	tok hok	โต๊ก ฮก	
20	small ant	mod	มดเล็ก	mooich	มุษซ์	tok huak	โต๊ก ฮวก	
21	hornet	toh	ต่อ	ong	ออง	toong	ตุง	
22	wasp	taen	แตน	jung-oor	จิงอูร์	teed	ตีด	
23	bee	pung	ผึ้ง	trahai	ตระฮาย	tok hang	โต๊ก ฮาง	
24	spider	kampoong	ก่าปุง	sangwah	ซังวะ	tok poo	โต๊ก ปู	
25	land leech	tak	ทาก	pruam	เปร้อม	tok peen	โต๊ก ปั้น	
26	earth worm	kheeduan	ขี้เดือน	wak	วัก	khee tang	ขี้ท่าง	

(Cont)

No.	English	Thai Yuan	ไทย ยวน	Khamu	ขมุ	Khon Pa	คนป่า	Remarks
27	fish	pa	ป่า	kah	กะ	tok thang	โต๊ก ทาง	see lizard
28	snail	hoi	หอย	rwech	ว๊ช	tok hong	โต๊ก ฮอง	
29	frog	kob	กบ	treek	ตริ๊ก	tok song	โต๊ก ซง	
30	crab	poo	ปู	katam	กะตาม	tok thung	โต๊ก ทุง	
31	face	hna	หน้า	rom poh	รมโป๊ะ	tok thang	โต๊กทาง	see fish
32	eye	ta	ตา	mad	มัด	tok tang	โต๊กตาง	
33	nose	hoodang	ฮูดัง	mooh	มู่	tok tang	โต๊กตัง	
34	mouth	pak	ปาก	tanoh	ตะนอร์	tok kin	โต๊กกิน	
35	tongue	lin	ลิ้น	antak	อันต๊าก	tok lin	โต๊กลิน	
36	tooth	kheo	เขี้ยว	rang	วาง	tok keo	โต๊กเคี้ยว	
37	ear	hoo	หู	ramei	ระเมย	tok hoo	โต๊ก ฮู	
38	hair	phom	ผม	kroeh	เกร้อะ	tok kon	โต๊ก คน	(ขน)
39	head	hua	หัว	kampong	กำปง	tok hwer	โต๊ก ฮเวอ	
40	neck	ko	คอ	kantuar	กันตัวร์	tok ko	โต๊ก คอ	

(Cont)

No.	English	Thai Yuan	ไทย ยวน	Khamu	ขมุ	Khon Pa	คนป่า	Remarks
41	arm	khaen	แขน	katohtih	กะเตาะตี	tok kaeng	โตก แคง	(แขน)
42	hand	mue	มือ	tih	ตี	tok mue	โตก มือ	
43	chest	hna ok	หน้าอก	ok	ออก	tok ok	โตก ออก	
44	belley	tong	ท้อง	lui	ลุย	tok som	โตก ซม	
45	penis	kwey	ควย	lok	เลิก	tok san	โตก ซัน	
46	vagina	hee	หี	kae	แกะ	tok heed	โตก ฮีด	
47	thigh	kha	ขา	bruh	บรู	tok thad	โตก ทาด	
48	foot	teen	ตีน	lueng	เลื่อง	tok teen	โตก ตีน	

EXPEDITION TO THE KHON PA

APPENDIX II

ขอบทที่ ๑

อันจะนอนก่อนไฟ ขอเตอะนายเท่าตัว อ้ายพันไฮ้ เข้าบ่ห่อน
เคยคนเคยคำ ชับป่าดามเมือง ตวยงคนเจาคนนาย เตอะหน่อไท้

อันชอยตนเทานกคอดต่างบาน หน้ค้อยทักชอด้านเป็นมิตร ร่วม
คิดเป็นหน้อย มีเตะชนทางคอยทางภู ค้อยอยู่ค้อยฟัง นอย นอย
นอยแท้ นอยแท้ ไฮ้

โปรตจูงป่าทางยังคนทุกชคนยาก แม่หญิงกับพ่อหลาย นับ
เป็นชายกับพอนัก นับบ่าพักกับพอกเก้อ อันแม่เถาทเป็นคนเยอ (ใหญ่)
เชาหงสองคน.

ขอบทที่ ๒

ผู้ใหญ่หยังได้กินปลา ชาวป่าดามเมือง คนทุกชคนยาก ชอมา
กินท่านเป็นบุญ เป็นคุณดักเด็กดักนอย กูบมีเป็นเจาเป็นนาย เป็น
คนทุกชคนยาก

อันต่อนอย่าไปตะเหยียดักผู้ กับพวกชากนชอ ได้หมูแล้วก็ไป
ด้านดาด ขอพังกาหมัน อันผู้ใดพันไฮ้ได้ดวน นับมีเงินมีคำ ไปช้อ
ไปหา ขอเจ้าชอนาย.

APPENDIX II

English Metrical Version of Kon Pa's Songs

by

W.A.R. Wood, Chiangmai

Song No. I

Which of us is to go to sleep,
 Passing before the other?
 Sing a song of the forest deep,
 Sing of the wilds, my brother.
 We know nought of the tricks of trade,
 We know nought of the city.
 Fighting the forest, deep in the glade,
 My Lord, we crave your pity!
 Please, my Lord, wild men are we,
 We are ready your slaves to be.

Where I can set my two feet down,
 That is my real home.
 You, who hail from the distant town,
 Pray be my friend, pray come!
 Talk to me now, teach me to think;
 That path leads to the hill;
 Sit with me by the streamlet's brink,
 Stay and hark to me still.
 Stay and listen, for night is nigh,
 Noi, noi, noitac, noitae, hai!

We forest folk ask for help from you,
 Few are our women, our men are few,
 Our pumpkins still are hard and green;
 There our grandmothers may be seen;
 There they sit together, behold!
 All our grandmothers, grand and old.

Song No. II

Why does the Phu Yai feed so well,
 Far away in the city,
 While we poor forest-men starving dwell?
 Master, we crave your pity.

Give us food, or a rag or two;
 Thankful to you we'll be;
 We seek not to be great like you,
 Poor and humble are we,

Now we beggars must take our leave;
 Give us a pig, we pray;
 Then we'll go home our mats to weave,
 Wishing you luck. Good-day!

You grow padi and fruit to sell,
 Give what you can afford;
 We poor folk in the forest dwell;
 Don't forget us, my Lord.

APPENDIX III**METRICAL PATTERN OF OLD CHIENGMAI CHANT**