

THE ANCIENT CULTURE OF THE TAI PEOPLE

The Impact Of The Hua Xia Culture On It And Its Implications

The Tai people in this paper refers, in general, to nationalities of the Thai-Tai family, who are Thai people in Thailand, Laotians in Laos, Tai people in Vietnam, Shan people in Burma, Tai people in Assam, India, Dai people in Yunnan, China, and others, while Hua Xia refers to the Han people in ancient China. Nationalities of the Thai-Tai family had a common ancient culture prior to their acceptance of Theravada Buddhism, the main characteristic of which was that there were relatively evident influences of the Hua Xia culture on it.

We are to deal with in the following the impact of the Hua Xia culture on Tai people's beliefs, calendar, place names, administrative divisions, regimes, etc.

Ser Muang (พระเสื้อเมือง)

The Tai people believed in ancestor worship since ancient times and kept this belief even after the introduction of Buddhism. They believed that their ancestors would, after death, become spirits to protect them, like patron saints. In a Tai community, there was a family god (Thevada Hern) in a family, a village god (Thevada Ban) in a village, and an administrative division god (Thevada Muang)¹ in an administrative division. They named patron saints as Ser. Therefore, village patron saints and division patron saints were named as Ser Ban and Ser Muang. This was indeed a very old belief. As early as in the Sukhothai Kingdom's inscriptions on tablets in the 13th and 14th centuries, Ser is mentioned.

The earliest document in Thai in the world was King Ram Khamhaeng Tablet No. 1 dedicated in A.D. 1292. It was carved in lines from 21 to 24 on the first side that "When any commoner or man of rank dies, his estate and Ser of family — his elephants, wives, children, granaries, rice, retainers and groves of areca and betel — is left in its entirety to his son". The "Ser of family" in the inscribed text on the tablet means to refer to the ancestors who had become the family's patron saints.

Carved on Tablet No. 45 dedicated in A.D. 1392 was "The Joint Pledge Between Grandfather and Grandson". It was inscribed in lines from 12 to 18 on the first side that "It who were to be not loyal to others between grandfather and grandson, would you, Great Sers of Mt. Phu-ka, Mt. Pha-dan and Mt. Pha-daeng, Gods of Phra Sak and Phra So, please invoke Grandpa Cha-ra-mern of numerous

streams and forests, Gods on the peaks of Mt. Yan-yong, Ghosts of Phra Sri and Phra Sak, and all patron saints to take care of making them, grandfather and grandson, love each other. If anyone were to be still disloyal to others, may these ghosts and goblins break his neck.³ The "Ser" and "Great Sers" in the inscribed text on the table refer to Ser of Division (or Muang).

In the Thai-Tai groups, not only the Thai people of the period of the Sukhothai Kingdom had worshipped Ser since ancient times, but also other groups, such as the Laotians, believed in Ser. According to the Laotian historical legend about Khun Borom, In "Na Noi Oi Nu" ("the land with only a few fields and small sugarcanes", referring to Dien Bien Phu), the place of origin of Khun Borom, there were two married couples of Laotian ancestors, one couple was "Tao Yer" (grandpa Yer) and "Mae Ya Ngam" (grannie Ngam), the other was "Tao Lai" (grandpa Lai) and "Mae Mod" (mother Mod), all of whom became "Ser Muang" (patron saints of division) after their deaths.⁴

According to A Chronicle of Muang Lu translated and compiled by Li Fuyi, the tenth Chao Paendin Tao Gaen Muang was hanged in Muang Khon (now a town of Muang Ram District in Chiang Rung County) in Chula Sukkaraj Calendar 777 (A.D. 1415) and later became Ser Muang.⁵

The above-mentioned Ser in ancient Sukhothai and in ancient Laos and Muang Lu is sure to stem from the "Ser" in China's Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.). Ser in Hua Xia refers to a local god of the land Shuo Wen Jie Zi, China's earliest dictionary, written in A.D. 121, defined Ser as "... is the landowner.... Spring and Autumn Annals says the Jilong, son of Gonggong, was the god of the land". The latter definition is cited from the Chapter on Lu State in 'Guo-Yi' (part I), a book which records speeches made by the aristocracy in Zhou State, Lu State and others in the last years of Western Zhuo (around 11th century — 770 B.C.) and in the time of the Spring and Autumn Period. The Book says that "when Gonggong became the most powerful chief in Jiuzhou (China in the time of Former Qin, also a poetic name for China), his son Houtu (another name for Jilong), who conquered Jiuzhou, was offered sacrifices to as Ser". All this proves that Ser has had a long history in China.

Emperors of kings of dynasties in China's history established sacrificial altars for offering sacrifices to gods or ancestors. According to the Chapter on Records of Guangwu in 'History of the Later Han Dynasty', in the second year after the establishment of the Eastern Han Dynasty, Emperor Guuang Wu ordered the erection of a Ser Ji Alter, and alter for offering sacrifices to the god of the land and the god of grain in Luo Yang, which was then the capital of China. As to Ji, the god of grain, we will deal with him in detail in the next section. The Ser Ji Alter in Beijing was erected in A.D. 1421, the nineteenth year under the reign of emperor Yong Le or Cheng Zu, of the Ming Dynasty, the year when he shifted his capital from Nanjins to Beijing. Thus it can be seen what great important dynasties in China's history attached to offering sacrifices

to the god of the land and the god of grain.

Up to the present time, the Dai people in Yunnan, the Shan people in the Shan State in Burma, the Laotians, the Khon Muang people in Northern Thailand, the Tai people in Northern Vietnam and the Tai people in Assam, India, still believe in Ser Ban and Ser Muang (village god and division god). Even in modern Bangkok, a grand memorial ceremony for Phra Ser Muang (national patron saint) is still held, while the royal family of Thailand conducted grand celebrations on the two hundredth anniversary of its founding. The word Ser is very close to the word for "clothes" in Thai-Tai language family, yet it doesn't mean "clothes", for it isn't Thai, but a direct transliteration of Ser (社) from Chinese. The Ser in Sipsongphanna, Yunnan, is always transliterated in Chinese as "舍" or "蛇", but it is never transliterated as "社", for so far no one has realized that the Thai-Tai people's "Ser" is the Hua Xia's "社". And in "A Chronicle of Muang Lü", translated and compiled by Li Fuyi, Ser Muang is transliterated into "奢鬼".

Mae Phosop (แม่โพสพ)

The Yau (越) people in ancient times, who were the ancestors of the Zhuang Dong language family (or the Tai language family), were the earliest paddy growers in China. The age of the rice discovered in the Neolithic Age site in Homutu, Yuyao County, Zhejiang Province, China, which was the place of origin of the Yue people, must have been 7,000 years or so ago. And the Tai people were good at growing paddy-rice in very early times as well, so the branch families of the Tai people all kept the custom of offering sacrifices to the god of grain. The Thai people in central Thailand named the god of Grain as Mae Phosop. Khon Muang in Northern Thailand and the Tai people in Sipsongphanna, Yunnan, named the god of grain as Mae Kwuan Kao or Ya Kwuan Kao (Grannie Spirit of Grain), to whom they offered sacrifices in both the cultivating and harvesting seasons. It was in ancient China that there was a legend about the god of grain who was worshipped by the people: Ji (稷), who was esteemed by the people at one and the same time as Ser.

There is a long history to Ji, or Houji. According to a myth, Qiang Yuan, daughter of Youshaoshi, who was made pregnant by stepping on a giant's footsteps, gave birth to a boy. For this very reason, the boy was abandoned and named Qi, which meant "abandoned". It was said that he eventually took office as minister for agricultural affairs and taught the people how to cultivate in the periods of Yao and Shun. Then, Qi became the first ancestor of the Zhou Tribe in ancient China and was thus named Zhou Qi. The Zhou Tribe held that he was the first man who began growing Ji (or millet) and wheat. According to Chapter on Fan Lun Xun in 'Huai Nan Zi' with Liu An in Western Han (179-122 B.C.) as editor in chief, "Zhou Qi, who died of being exhausted from excessive work in sowing and reaping, was to be Ji". Ji, or millet, refers, in general, to the five cereals (rice, two kinds of millet, wheat and beans)

so that Hou Ji was “king” of the five cereals. Upon his death, Hou Ji was named as the god of grain by the people.

During the whole period of feudal dynasties in China, Ji and Ser were juxtaposed and special attention was paid to them by royal courts, which erected Ser Ji Altars for solemn sacrifices to them every year. As a result, Ser Ji became another name for nation. For example, it is said in Li Ji which deals with the rites in the time of Kong Zi (551-479 B.C.) that Kong Zi said “Take up arms to defend Ser Ji”. Here is another example. It is said in Chapter on Wen di Ben Ji in “Records of the Historians” that the writer Si Ma Qian said “Be concerned with the security of Ser Ji”. The “Ser Ji” mentioned in these two books refers to nation. Since Ser Ji is a unity which cannot be taken apart, ancestors of the Tai people must have received Ji as they received Ser from the Hua Xia culture.

Suphamas Mahajak (ศุภามาส มหาจักร์)

Su-pha-mas Mahajak is the Pali name for the sexagenary cycle⁸ of years or months or days or hours period which consists of permutations of the Decimal Cycle and the Duodecimal Cycle. In China, the sexagenary cycle is named Gan Zhi (干支). Gan represents the Heavenly Stems, while Zhi represents the Earthly Branches. Gan Zhi, otherwise known as the Jiazi system, was a method used in ancient China to designate the sequence of years or months or days or hour periods. In Gan Zhi, ten characters known as “heavenly stems” are jia, yi, bing, ding, wu, ji, geng, xin, ren, gui and twelve others known as “earthly branches” are zi, chou, yin, mao, chen, si, wu, wei, shen, you, xu, hai. These two sets of signs, with one being taken from each, combine to form 60 pairs, such as Jia Zi, Yi Chou, Bing Yin, Ding Mao — and so on and so forth. Jia Zi, Yi Chou, Bing Yin, Ding Mao — were pronounced as Kap Jai, Dap P๒๕, Rawai Yi, Merng Mao — in the ancient Tai language. Initially, in China, Gan Zhi was only used to designate days. According to the Oracle-bone inscriptions in the Shang Dynasty (around 16th-11th century B.C.), at that time, Gan Zhi was used to designate days. So the time of beginning to use Gan Zhi must have been earlier than that. But it is generally known that the time of using Gan Zhi to designate year might have begun from the later period of the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 24).⁹

The Khon Muang in Northern Thailand, the Dai people in Yunnan, the Shan people in Burma, the Tai people in Assam, the Laotians and the Tai people in Northern Vietnam have been universally using Suphamas Mahajak to designate years or days,¹⁰ but few people know that the Thai people who founded the Sukhothai Kingdom had, prior to the 15th century, used Suphamas Mahajak to designate years and days.¹¹

The grounds for saying that Suphamas Mahajak was being used in the period of the Sukhothai Kingdom are inscriptions on tablets. There were tens of tablets during the period. The writer has found that among the twenty tablets (the inscriptions of which have been recognized, straightened out and published by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand),¹² there are seven which have used Suphamas Mahajak to designate years

and dates. They are:

1. Tablet No. 3 in Kampheng Phet Nakhon Chum, erected in A.D. 1357, on which the date in line 1 side 1 is "the 5th day in the first half of the 8th month, Kat Lao in Tai style"; in line 31, "Wednesday, Tao Yi Mao in Tai style"; and in line 47, "Full Moon Day, the 6th month, Saturday, Rawai San in Tai Style".

2. Tablet No. 5 in Watpamamong Changwat Sukhothai Slab (1), erected in A.D. 1361, on which the date in line 23 side 3 in Suphamas Mahajak in use, that is "Wednesday, Luang Pao in Tai style".

3. Tablet No. 7 in Watpamamong Changwat Sukhothai Slab (2), erected in A.D. 1361, on which the date in lines 10-17 side 4 is Suphamas Mahajak in use, that is "counting from Rat year, or Luang Pao year in Tai style, to 427,539 years, or Hare year, or Kat Mao year in Tai style".

4. Tablet No. 10 in Changwat Sukhothai, erected in Chula Sakkaraj 766 (A.D. 1404), on which the date in lines 2-3 side 1 is Suphamas Mahajak in use, that is "Full Moon Day, Friday, Kap San Day".

5. Law of Stealing Tablet No. 38, erected between A.D. 1313-1433, on which the date in line 1 side 1 Suphamas Mahajak in use, that is "Friday, Luang Mao in Tai style".

6. Tablet No. 45, erected in Chula Sakkaraj 754 (A.D. 1392), on which the year and date in lines 27-30 side 1 is Suphamas Mahajak in use, that is "in Chula Sakkaraj 754, Maha Sakkaraj 1314, Khom Monkey year, Tai Tao San year, the 4th month, Full Moon Day, Khom Thursday, Tai Tao Met day". But after checking against the Sexagenary cycle or the Jiazi system, there is no such permutation pair as Tao Met, so, evidently, it must have been carved mistakenly.

7. Tablet no. 102 by Krailas Hill in the left garden of the Palace erected in A.D. 1379, on which the date in lines 29-30 is Suphamas Mahajak in use, that is "the 2nd day in the latter half of the 11th month, Wednesday in Khom style, Poek San in Tai style".

In addition to these, on many tablets of the Tai people in Lanna, Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand Suphamas Mahajak is also in use.

For example, Suphamas Mahajak is used to designate the date in lines 11-12 on Tablet No. 62 in Wat Phra Yun Changwat Lumphun, erected in A.D. 1370, that is "the 3rd day in the first half of the 2nd month, Kap Set day in the Tai's day, Friday in the Meng's day", also in line 17, "the 4th day in the latter half of the 3rd month, Kat Lao day in the Tai's day, Friday in the meng's day". Another example, Suphamas Mahajak is used to designate the year in lines 1-2 on Tablet No. 63 in Phrar Phiriyalai school, erected in A.D. 1456, that is "in Sakkaraj 818, Rat years, Rawai Jai in Tai year".

These Kat Lao, Tao Yi, Rawai San, Luang Pao, Kat Mao, Kap San, Luang Mao, Tao San, Kap Set and Rawai Jai used in the inscriptions on the above-mentioned

tablets are indeed China's Gan Zhi, only they are transliterated into Suphamas Mahajak in the ancient Tai language. In view of the fact that Gan Zhi or Suphamas Mahajak are used on these tablets, the Tai people must have received Gan Zhi in a very early time. It is really a long history, so that nobody knows how many generations have passed before the Thai people in the period of Sukhothai took it as their own method of designating years and dates. (Even now, many of the Tai peoples are still holding that it is their own calendar). The Tai people in Lanna, Northern Thailand, call Tian Gan or the Heavenly Stems as "mother" (Mae), Di Zhi or the Earthly Branches as "children" (Luk),¹³ while in China, in the period of Western Han, Tian Gan was called "mother" and Di Zhi "children". According to Chapter on Book of Law in 'Records of the Historians' by Sima Qian, 10 Gan and 12 Zhi are called 10 "mother" and 12 "children". Besides, according to Chapter on Tian Wen Xun in 'Huai Nan Zi', "numbers begin with Jiazi system which consists of permutation of 10 mothers and 12 children". But since Eastern Han (A.D. 25-220), no such thing has been seen. Therefore, it is very likely that ancestors of the Tai people received Gan Zhi or Suphamas Mahajak somewhere in the period of the two Han dynasties (206 B.C.-A.D. 220).¹⁴

Chiang (เชียง)

It is well known that "Muang" (division or state) and "Ban" (village) are purely administrative divisions of the Thai-Tai people, but "Chiang" (town) was not originally a word used to precede a place name by them. From the end of the 12th century to the beginning of the 14th century, the Tai people in the early period built up in succession in Sipsongphanna and Lanna quite a number of dominant centres with their names preceded by 'Chiang'. For example, in A.D. 1180, Chiang Rung was built ; in A.D. 1262, Chiang Tung ; in A.D. 1268, Chiang Rai ; in A.D. 1296, Chiang Mai ; in A.D. 1327, Chiang Sen.

Those Chiang are "town" in meaning in Chinese. "Chiang" is called "cheng" (城) in China's putonghua (Mandarin Chinese), "Shing" in Guangdong speech, "Xiang" in Laotian, "Jiang" in Tai Lü speech.

Why did the Thai-Tai people use China's "Chiang" to name their newly established towns in this period? Maybe it was influenced by the people in Southern China who named their towns Chiang. Let's refer to *The Atlas of China's History*.¹⁵ According to it, in the present areas in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces on which the Zhuang Dong language family dispersed before the 13th century, there are many place names ending with Chiang. They are :

Towns set up in Eastern Han (A.D. 25-220) :

Zeng Cheng, now near Guangzhou.

Towns set up in Southern Qi (A.D. 479-502) :

Sui Cheng, now belonging to Suixi county in western Guangdong,

Du Cheng, now in eastern Guangxi,

Wei Cheng, now in western Guangdong,
 Yue Cheng, now in western Guangdong,
 Le Cheng, now in western Guangdong,
 Jin Cheng, now to the west of Nanning city.

Town set up in Southern Liang (A.D. 502-557) :

Long Cheng, now on the north side of central Guangxi,
 An Cheng, now in the west of Binyang County in Guangxi.

Town set up in the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) :

Sin Cheng, now in central Guangxi,
 Gong Cheng, now in northeastern Guangxi,
 Rong Cheng, now in eastern Guangxi,
 Shi Cheng, now in northern Leizhou peninsula in Guangxi,
 Zhi Cheng, now in central Guangxi.

Town set up in the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1280) :

Liu Cheng, the former Long Cheng, now in north side of central
 Guangxi,
 Luo Cheng, now in northern Guangxi,
 Si Cheng, now in southwestern Ling Yun County in Guangxi,
 Jin Cheng, now in He Chi County in Guangxi.

If we put the above-mentioned town names' second name before the first names, according to the grammar of the Zhuang Dong language family, then, we get Cheng Zeng, Cheng Sui, Cheng Du, Cheng Wei, Cheng Le, Cheng Jin,... and so on and so forth. If we go further to change the pronunciation of Cheng into that of Chiang, then, we get Chiang Zeng, Chiang Sui, Chiang Du, Chiang Wei, Chiang Le, Chiang Jin, ... and so on and so forth. Thus, there is no difference shown between them and the Tai people's Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chiang Rung and others.

It is worth pointing out further that all the Tai people's two-word place names with Chiang going first are monosyllabic words, such as Mai, Rai, Rung and so on, without exception (including as far as Chiang Taeng in Cambodia, Xieng Khuouang in Laos and others), while all the two-word place names ending with Cheng, named before the 13th century, now in Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, are monosyllabic words as well, such as Zeng, Sui, Du and so on, without exception too. This can also be evidence to prove that place names with Chiang are likely to have been influenced by China's "cheng"

Kwaen (แคว้น)

The Thai-Tai people have an ancient administrative division named Kwaen which is used for a prefecture in a country, or for a state in an ancient vassal enfeoffment. In Sipsongphanna, in the past, they divided all Muang in flatland into twelve phanna as units to pay tribute and taxes to the imperial court. At the same time, they divided the mountain areas where minority nationalities lived in compact

communities into twelve Kwaen, the full name of which was Sipsong Huo Kwaen (Huo here means "one", used as classifier "one"). Chiefs of all Kwaen in mountain areas were granted the title Chao Kwaen at the Pha-ya Luang level directly under the Jurisdiction of Chao Phaendin. These twelve Sipsong Huo Kwaen are Kwaen Khoang, Kwaen Luod, Kwaen Mang Pha, Kwaen Sisa, Kwaen Gee Gan, Kwaen Ru Rang, Kwaen Muo, Kwaen Rai, Kwaen Kae, Kwaen Nonang and Kwaen Dai.¹⁶

To the west of Sipsongphanna is Muang Laem County, which, in the past, was also a Tai "Ho Kham" (kingdom) in Yunnan, under the rule of king "Chao Ho Kham Muang Laem", and which, in its history, formed a "three-brothers-alliance" with Chiang Rung (Muang Lü) and Chiang Tung (Muang Khuen). All the editions of *A Chronicle of Muang Laem* have mentioned the establishment of Kwaen administrative divisions in Muang Laem and have also mentioned that in the government office of Chao Ho Kham Muang Laem there were official positions like Chao Kwaen. One of the editions says that there were 13 Muang and 9 Kwaen in A.D. 1665 ; another says that there were 12 Muang and 9 Kwaen ; and the third says that in the government office of Chao Ho Kham Muang Laem there were 8 Chao Kwaen.¹⁸

To the north of Muang Laem is Muang Geng Ma County, which, in the past was also another Tai people's "Ho Kham" (kingdom) in Yunnan. According to historical records, Chao Ho Kham Geng Ma claimed to have 9 Muang and 13 Kwaen under its jurisdiction.¹⁹

The writer believes that the Tai people's rulers in Shan State in Burma, in Lanna in Thailand and in Luang Phrabang in Laos must very likely have granted the title Chao Kwaen to mountain men : the Blang (Khamon) people in Shan State, Burma ; the Lawa people in Lanna, Thailand ; the Khamu people in Luang Phrabang, Laos. As to Kwaen, there is no other literal meaning except 'region', because it stemmed from ancient Chinese administrative divisions Jun (郡) or prefecture. For a long time this interpretation had not been realized. In *A Chronicle of Muang Lü* by Li Fuyi, Kwaen is mistaken as "Chian" (縣), so that Sipsong Huo Kwaen is mistranslated as "Sipsong Hua Chian", and at the same time chian (Kwaen) is mistaken as a manor.²⁰ In *An Investigation of the Social History of the Dai People in Sipsongphanna*, published after 1949, the mistranslation of Kwaen is carried on as before, being mistaken as Chian or Huo Chian.²¹ What is more the Chinese translation of *A Chronicle of Muang Laem* even mistranslates Kwaen into "Gen" (根).²² When the writer was travelling from Pu Er to Lan Cang more than twenty years ago, he happened to pass Chian Nuo, also named Chian Liu, but he didn't know what it was at that time. Now he knows that it turned out to be a local Chinese transliteration of Chian Nuo, whose correct place name is Kwaen Luod (yet according to Chinese grammar, it should be Luod Kwaen). According to Muang Laem historical records, Chao Ho Kham Muang Laem, who had rendered meritorious service in helping Muang Lu to fight in a war against Laotians, got Kwaen Luod ceded by, and also as a gift from,

Chao Phaendin of Muang Lü.²³ Now, Kwaen Luod is Chian Nuo District of Lancang County.

In the period from the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) to Sui-Tang dynasties (A.D. 581-907), Chian instituted the system of prefectures and counties (縣郡制). In the last years of the Spring and Autumn Period, the states in Central Plains (comprising the middle and lower reaches of the Huanghe River) began, in border districts, to set up prefectures (郡) which were larger than counties in area. In the time of the Warring States Period, they went further to set up counties in border prefectures. Then, a two-level system with the county under the prefecture gradually came into being. After unifying China, Qin Shi Huang (259-210 B.C.) divided the whole of China into 36 prefectures, which increased to more than 40. The number of prefectures grew larger and larger. In the period of Western Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 24), there were 83. Later on, more and more prefectures were instituted. In the period of the Sui Dynasty (A.D. 581-618), there were more than 190 prefectures in China.²⁴

In south and southwest China, there were prefectures established in ancient times as well. After going on an expedition for several years, Qin Shi Huang unified South China by force of arms. Then, he set up the following three prefectures :

Nanghai, now Guangzhou City,

Guilin, now Guilin City in Guangxi,

Xiang, now northern Guangxi and northern and central Vietnam.

After he conquered Nan Yue kingdom (with its centre in what is now Guangzhou) in 111 B.C., Han Wu Di set up the following nine prefectures :

Nanghai, now Guangzhou City,

Cangwu, now Wuzhou city in Guangxi,

Yulin, now Guiping County in Guangxi,

Hepu, now Hepu County in Guangxi,

Jiaozhi, now somewhere around Hanoi in Vietnam,

Jiuzhen, now northern Vietnam,

Rinan, the former region of Xiang Prefecture,

Zhuya, now northern Hainan Island,

Dan-er, now western Hainan Island.

In Southwest China, during the Warring States Period, the Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) established Pa Prefecture and Shu Prefecture in place of the two old states Pa and Shu. In 109 B.C., the Western Han set up Yizhou Prefecture in Yunnan. In A.D. 225, Shu of Three Kingdoms Period went further to set up Jianning Prefecture in eastern Yunnan.

It is because they were influenced by the establishment of the prefectures of Chinese feudal dynasties of past ages that ancestors of the Tai people instituted the administrative division Kwaen. Both the pronunciation and meaning of Kwaen are quite like those of Kwaeng, which the Lao call it provinces, but the writer has not yet

found grounds for connecting Kwaen and Kwaeng.

Pholam (พ่อลำน)

Formerly, in Sipsongphanna, they instituted a special "Pholam" system, which was Chao Phaendin's saenwi government office. Chao Phaendin appointed his ministers to assume, respectively, the post of a certain Muang's Pholam, designated as Pholam Muang.²⁵ The Pholam's duties were to represent the supreme leader, Chao Phaendin, in supervising the Muang in his charge and to be the deputy of the leader in the Saenwi government office of the Muang, charged to protect the interests of the Muang. The Chao Muang had the right to recommend a person selected for Pholam Muang, but he had to submit to Chao Phaendin a written pledge to guarantee the person selected to obey Chao Phaendin's leadership.²⁶ According to Sipsongphanna's feudal system, all Chao Muang at the Muang under the Jurisdiction of Chao Phaendin were supposed to go to Saenwi government office in the three great festivals, i.e., in every Tai people's Sunggran festival (New Year), Buddhist Kao Phansa and Buddhist Ok Phansa, to pay respect to Chao Phaendin and to attend the Ner Sanam (government office) conference called by Chao Phaendin to discuss the important items of the appointments and removals of Chao Muang and court ministers. A former minister named Chao Luong Prasat, now still living and in good health, told the writer that, due to lack of transport facilities at that time, it would take the Chao Muang in remote areas several days by horse to reach Chiang Rung. For this reason, it would take too much time for holding the three conferences each year (besides, these a special conference was to be called in case of need), causing the Chao Muang concerned to complain of such a hardship. As a result, later on, they worked out a solution that a court minister was appointed as Chao Phaendin's deputy (or Pholam) for the Muang. This is, of course, one of the explanations for the Pholam system, but the emergence of this system has its historical origins.

Pho is "father", meaning "government officials being like parents", which, in China, the head of a county, by way of analogy, is traditionally being designated as, while lam is "fastening", meaning yoking domestic animals. Why was the official who supervised the Muang and did the political affairs there for Chao Phaendin designated as a father who was under the yoke like a domestic animal? Evidently, it stemmed from the Ji-mi Prefecture (羁糜州) system of the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907) in China, though how long a history the Pholam system being carried out in Sipsongphanna had remains to be verified. "Ji" is bridle, meaning putting restraint on, and "Mi" is reins, meaning haltering. To combine these two words Ji and Mi together, we obtain Ji-mi, meaning keeping under control. If we contrast the two, Pho-lam and Ji-mi, then, we can reach the conclusion that Lam is Ji-mi, since the literal meaning is just the same. So, Pho-lam may originate from the Ji-mi Prefecture system.

The implication of Ji-mi doesn't only mean keeping under control in general terms, but more than that, it means "winning somebody over by any means, not letting

him engender disloyalty".²⁷ The essence of the institution of the Ji-mi Prefecture system in the Tang Dynasty is not to keep the chief of the prefecture under control, but to win him over. After he unified all the border areas, in order to pursue a policy of making a show of conciliation to and winning over minority nationalities, the founder of the Tang dynasty, Emperor Gao Zu (A.D. 566-635), instituted, on the basis of the domains under the jurisdiction of chiefs of the minority nationalities concerned, 846 prefectures and counties in the style of Ji-mi prefectures,²⁸ and appointed the chiefs local commissioners such as military governors and prefecture governors. The emperor declared that he would not interfere in their internal political affairs, laying on them only a small amount of tribute and taxes and asking them to submit to the authority of the central imperial court and to garrison the frontiers. Among the first prefectures in the style of Ji-mi Prefecture set up by the Tang Dynasty, was Nanning Zhou (also the seat of the military governor's office),²⁹ now Qujing County, Yunnan. In the mountain area of western Ling-nan Xi-Dao in the present-day Guangxi, there were, then, more than fifty counties in the style of the Ji-mi Prefecture.³⁰ As a result of instituting the Ji-mi Prefecture system, the relations between the Han nationality and minority nationalities were improved and the central plains' control over border areas was strengthened. The Song Dynasty followed the Ji-mi Prefecture system.

Although the Pholam system in Sipsongphanna was intended to keep the Muang under control, yet its essential purpose was also to make a show of conciliation and win over the Muang. Besides, "Lam", as it were, implied that it played the role of "linkage" between Chao Phaendin or Chao Muang and the people under their rule. In all the mountain areas in Sipsongphanna, Chiang Rung and the rulers (from the Tai people) in all the Muang appointed as officials Pholam of the minority nationalities under their Jurisdiction.

The Pholam system wasn't confined to Sipsongphanna ; the official rank Lam is also carved on tablets in Lanna in Northern Thailand. For example, in line 24 side 1 Talbet No. 76 erected in A.D. 1581 in Chiang Man temple in Chiang Mai, "Lam Wat", or the Pholam of a Buddhist temple, is mentioned.³¹

A Chronical of Chiang Tung says that among the ministers appointed by Chao Ho Kham Chao Jed Phan Pradoo at the time of his ascending the throne were included two "Lam Muang".³² This shows that in ancient Lanna and Chiang Tung, there may have been the Pho Lam system. In modern Thailand, the Thai language in Bangkok designates an interpreter as "Lam". This also shows that ancestors of the Thai people have put into effect or got in touch with the Pholam system.

As to why they use this not very refined word Lam (to tie a domestical animal to something) for an interpreter, it is a very interesting but still unresolved question. The writer believes that we can get a fairly satisfactory answer through a comparative study of these two systems—the Pholam system and the Ji-mi Prefecture system. The reasonable conclusion should be that as a liaison officer between the imperial

government office and minority areas, owing to there being no common language between the two sides, either the commissioner of the Chinese Ji-mi Prefecture or the Pholam of the Dai people had to act as an interpreter between the two sides. Thus, in fact, "Lam" was actually an interpreter. Later on, though the Pholam system disappeared in Central Thailand, the implication of Lam being interpreter has been handed down to this day. Therefore, this answer, in turn, has proved the argument that the Pholam system really stems from the Ji-mi Prefecture system.

In the light of the above-mentioned facts, it is sure that the Thai-Tai people's Ser Muang (division patron saint), Mae Phosop (the god of grain), Suphamas Mahajak (the Sexagenary Cycle), Chiang (town), Kwaen (prefecture) and Pholam (a deputy acting for his superior) have, respectively, stemmed from the ancient Han people's or Hua Xia's Ser, Ji, Gan Zhi, Cheng, Jun and Ji-mi. Their correspondence with each other and historical origins are clear and definite. These series of historical and cultural phenomena are of great significance, because if we could find out the relationship between ancestors of the Thai-Tai people and the Hua Xia through a study of the ancient culture of the Tai people, it would probably be a great help in exploring the origins of the Thai-Tai people.

Culture is a historical phenomenon, the development of which possesses a historical continuity. Every nationality has its own culture which corresponds with its historical development. For this reason, the origins of a nationality's traditional culture can reflect certain contours of the nationality's history. The numerous facts mentioned in this essay prove that in many aspects of the ancient Thai-Tai people's culture, such as their beliefs, calendar, place names, administrative divisions, political system and others, there exist distinctive influences from the Hua Xia culture, which shows that there were a great many close ties between the Thai-Tai people's ancestors and Hua Xia. In ancient times, they must have been nurtured by the Hua Xia culture and the nurture must have been a protracted, systematic and direct one, otherwise, the result of the nurture wouldn't be embodied in so many aspects. Any given culture is a reflection of a given social history. The writer believes that the reason why the ancient culture of the Tai people was possessed of such pronounced Hua Xia colour might be because ancestors of the Tai people had once lived within China's domain. In as much as they were under the direct rule of Chinese feudal dynasties, they believed in the god of the land and the god of grain, modelled their institutions after Hua Xia, followed the almanac promulgated by Chinese feudal dynasties. If ancestors of the Tai people had lived outside of China's domain, the spread and impact of the Hua Xia culture to and on the ancient culture of the Tai people only through paying tribute, coming and going of diplomatic envoys and the economic and cultural exchange across border among the people wouldn't have been so systematic and penetrating.

The god of the land and the god of grain received by ancestors of the Tai people were the outcome of the Spring and Autumn Period, but little is known about when and how they were spread to ancestors of the Tai people. In the ancient social economy of the Tai people, however, there were some institutions which were similar and corresponding with those of Hua Xia's ancient feudal society. For instance, before an agrarian reform was carried out in Sipsongphanna in 1956, the land there was collectively owned by the rural commune. Although the land was distributed to villagers to occupy according to the number of households and the total population, yet they were supposed not to sell and buy it, but to provide the feudal lord with corresponding corvee, articles of tribute and taxes. This was just like the feudal "nine squares" system of land ownership in the period of Western Zhou in China's History. The famous Yunnanese scholar Ma Yao and the late Professor Miu Luanhe have made a deep study of this problem and published special treatises on it.³³ The writer believes that many things which can be used to make a comparative study with the Hua Xia culture could be explored in the following border areas where the development of social economy has been relatively slow, such as Sipsong Chu Tai (now Dien Bien Fu, Lai Chou and others in Northern Vietnam), Northern Laos, Northern and Northeastern Thailand, the Shan States of Burma, Assam in India and the Yunnanese border areas where the Tai people live. For example, in the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya Periods, the Thai people took "Mern" (ten thousand) and "Phan" (thousand) as official titles.³⁴ Could we determine whether or not this official title was influenced by the Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) Dynasty's official title "Wan Hu Hou", (a marquis possessing a fief with ten thousand households on it) or the Kin (A.D. 1115-1234) and Yuan (A.D. 1271-1368) dynasties' "Wan Hu" (an official in charge of ten thousand households) and "Qian Hu" (an official in charge of one thousand households)? And so on and so forth.

The realm of culture is very wide, including ideology and way of life formed in the course of human social and historical practice, such as literature, arts, education, language, science and corresponding institutions and organizations. The various problems dealt with in this paper are only a very small portion of the ancient culture of the Thai-Tai people. There are more problems which are worth studying. For instance, in the linguistic field we should make a systematic and deep comparative study of the ancient Tai language and the ancient Chinese language. The writer has made such a comparative study in the course of his writing this paper, from which he was enlightened very much and has achieved a great many results. The ancient Tai language really keeps a certain number of ancient Chinese words. For example, in line 1 side 1 Tablet no. 45 carved in the period of Sukhothai and in A.D. 1392, there is mention of the 5th king Phraya Ngua Namtom.³⁵ Phraya is the title, Namtom is the name, Ngua is five (don't mistake it as an ox, ox is Wua), meaning the 5th, also a part of the full

name. In the modern Thai-Tai language, five is "Ha", but in ancient Thai language, five is "Nguá". Why is it so? It's because it was borrowed from the ancient Chinese language. Examples similar to this are many. They remain to be deeply and systematically investigated and studied by linguists concerned.

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APPENDIX

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| An Cheng | 安城 |
| Binyang | 賓陽 |
| Cangwu | 蒼梧 |
| Chao Ho Kham Geng Ma | 耿馬宣撫司 |
| Chao Ho Kham Muang Laem | 孟連宣撫司 |
| Chao Phaendin Chiang Rung | 卑里宣慰司 |
| Chapter on Book of Law in
'Records of the Historians' | 《史記·律書》 |
| Chapter on Fan Lun Xun in
'Huai Nan Zi' | 《淮南子·泛論訓》 |
| Chapter on Lu State in
'Guo-Yi' (part 1) | 《國語·魯語(上)》 |
| Chapter on Records of Guangwu in
'History of the Later Han Dynasty' | 《后漢書·光武紀》 |
| Chapter on Tian Wen Xun in
'Huai Nan Zi' | 《淮南子·天文訓》 |
| Chapter on Wen Di Ben Ji in
'Records of the Historians' | 《史記·文帝本紀》 |
| Cheng | 城 |
| Chian | 園 |
| Chian Liu | 諫六 |
| Chian Nuo | 諫糯 |
| A Chronicle of Muang Laem | 《孟連土司史》 |
| A Chronicle of Muang Lu | 《泐史》 |
| Dan-er | 儋耳 |
| Dap Pao (Yi Chou) | 乙丑 |
| Di Zhi | 地支 |
| Du Cheng | 都城 |
| Gan Zhi | 干支 |
| Gen | 根 |
| Geographical Records (7, Part 2) in
'Xin Tang Shu' Vol. 43 Part 2 | 《新唐書卷四十三(下)
·地理志(七)下》 |
| Gong Cheng | 恭城 |
| Gonggong | 共工 |
| Guilin | 桂林 |
| Guiping | 桂平 |
| Hepu | 合浦 |
| Homutu | 河姆波 |
| Hua Xia | 華夏 |
| Houji | 后稷 |
| Houtu | 后土 |
| Ji | 履 |
| Jianning Prefecture | 建寧郡 |

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Jimi	鷓鴣
Jimi Prefecture	鷓鴣州
Jin Cheng	金城
Jin Cheng	晉城
Jiuzhen	九真
Jiuzhou	九州
Jun	郡
Kap Jai (Jia Zi)	甲子
Kap San (Jia Shen)	甲申
Kap Set (Jia Xu)	甲戌
Kat Lao (Ji You)	己酉
Kin	金
Lan Cang	瀾滄
Le Cheng	樂城
Lei Zhou	雷州
Li Ji	《禮記》
Lingnan XiDao	嶺南西道
Ling Yun	凌云
Liu An	劉安
Liu Cheng	柳城
Luang Mao (Xin Mao)	辛卯
Luang Pao (Xin Chou)	辛丑
Luo Cheng	羅城
Luo Yang	洛陽
Merng Mao (Ding Mao)	丁卯
Nanning Zhou	南寧州
Nan Yue Kingdom	南越國
Nine square system	井田制
Pa Prefecture	巴郡
Poek San (Wu Shen)	戊申
Pu-er	普洱
Qi	棄
Qian Hu	千戶
Qiang Yuan	羌原
Qujing	曲靖
Rawai Jai (Bing Zi)	丙子
Rawai San (Bing Shen)	丙申
Rawai Yi (Bing Yin)	丙寅
Rinan	日南
Rong Cheng	戎城
Ser	社
Ser Ji Alter	社稷壇
Ser Muang	賽猛
Shang	商
Shi Cheng	石城

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 Yizhou Prefecture
 Youshaoshi
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 Yuyao
 Zeng Cheng
 Zhi Cheng
 Zhou Qi
 Zhou Tribe
 Zhuang Dong
 Zhuya

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 蜀郡
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 天干
 萬戶
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 威城
 梧州
 象郡
 忻城
 益州郡
 有邵氏
 越
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 郁林
 余姚
 增城
 智城
 周景
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