

## SOME NOTES ABOUT THE CHAUBUN.

A DISAPPEARING TRIBE IN THE KORAT PROVINCE.

BY

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When on a tour of inspection to the Ampheu district of Paktung-chai (ปทุมไชย) in the month of March this year (1918) I had the opportunity of meeting some members of the above named tribe and from long conversations with two of their village elders I gathered the following information which might be of interest both to ethnologists and philologists:—

The Chaubun, or as they call themselves *Nia-kuol*, lived until some 60 years ago mostly as hunters and nomads roaming in the big virgin forests on the northern slopes of the Dungrek hills, which form the boundary between the Korat and the Pachin provinces. The limits of their roamings were to the west the ill-famed Dung Phya Fai, and to the east the sources of the Lam Plai Māt, a tributary to the Mūn river. This part of the Dungrek chain, generally called Pu Khao Kāmpēng Mūang, represents the highest and wildest part of the whole chain and is clothed in luxuriant virgin forests. Some mountain passes, only practicable for pedestrians and pack animals, lead down to the Pachin plains from the Korat plateau, the best known of these passes being Chōng Sakaerat, due south of Paktung-chai. In former days before the construction of the Korat railway, heavy traffic passed through this last pass, untold numbers of pack bullocks bringing down produce from Korat and returning with merchandise from Muangs Krabin or Pachin, the nearest river ports to Bangkok. Nowadays all this has been altered, the passes are rarely visited by man with the exception of some few cattle thieves or gendarmerie patrols. In the big mysterious forest all sorts of game abound. The tiger and the wild elephant are common, sambur, buck and barking deer abound, even the terrible kating ox is met with here, and sometimes if you are lucky, as I was once, you may have a glimpse of that rare animal the rhinoceros,

Among the trees you will find the valuable rosewood (ไม้ พะยูง), and others producing the Mai Luk Put, Mai Tom and Mai Jum Nām used for the fabrication of the fragrant tōbs and joss-sticks. Among the clinging lianas the rattan and rubber-liana, and then all sorts of beautiful orchids, abound too. Down the mountain slopes between towering moss-clad rocks roll and twist myriads of crystal-pure brooklets, which all go to feed the waters of Mun far away in the plains. In these surroundings lived and hunted the Nia-kūols, planting their rais with rice, Indian corn, tobacco and gourds and dwelling under primitive leaf shelters until some 60 years ago, when they were induced to come down from their mountain fastnesses to the plain and settle in orderly built villages like other people. They are now mainly to be found in the *tambon* of Dakrup, about 15 miles S. W. of Paktung-chai, forming here 5 villages numbering about 500 Nia-kuol-speaking souls. There are also to be found Nia-kuols in Bān Dalingchan, *tambon* Konburi, S. E. of Paktung-chai, and in Bān Mābkrāt, *tambon* Chae (๒๕) Amphēu Kratok (๑๗๕๗๗). In B. Dalingchan they number at most 20, in B. Mābkrāt the number given to me was about 200 persons. According to this the whole tribe should number about 700 individuals, but the number of *Nia-kuol-speaking* is not more than 500 to 600, as these people are rapidly becoming assimilated by the surrounding Tai and losing their characteristic peculiarities. The children in some villages are already ignorant of the language of their parents, and for the rest most of the members of the tribe prefer now to be called Tai for fear of being termed "savage". [Exactly the same thing is met within the Ubon-province, where the Sui or Kui like to call themselves Lāo or Khmēr instead of their proper names.] Aymonier in his book "Voyage dans le Laos" (1883-84) cites several other names of villages besides B. Mābkrāt in *tambon* Chae as peopled by Nia-kuols. I have not been able to identify these names and doubt if this author was correctly informed. The purest Nia-kuol tongue is spoken in *tambon* Dakrup; in other places the language is getting mixed up with Tai-icisms. The name Chau-bun (๒๑๗ ๒๒) given to these people by the Tai people signifies of course "people from the upper parts" on Hill people, the significance of the name given by themselves, Nia-kuol, being the same, the term "kūol" standing for mountain, Nia for people.

I shall now try to cast some light on the origin of this interesting tribe, and I beg beforehand the pardon of those learned in the antiquities of Indo-China for my perhaps too daring hypotheses. But as the field, as far as I can gather, is yet untilled my conclusions might be of interest. In appearance the Niakuols are dark skinned of a chocolate brown, some even darker, with generally broad features much resembling the Kamēn-deum or Kūi-nūa in Ubon. In some of them the features are distinctly negroid with heavy mouths, dilated nostrils and somewhat curly hair. Their stature is of middle height and as their language, as will be seen from the list of words attached to this article, partly resembles Mohn, partly Khmer and partly Kui or Khā, it may safely be inferred that they belong to the great Mohn-Khmer family. In his huge work "Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia" the lamented Colonel Gerini, in speaking about the legendary Ho-ton, the black simian-like aborigines of Champa and the Ho-ton-like Khā-ut in the Annamese cordillera, tells us that he has rediscovered this legendary people in a tribe living on the southern slopes of the Korat plateau (vide pages 252, 257 and 785 of the above cited work). Regarding the correctness of this statement I am not qualified to express an opinion, but the name Ho-ton or Khā-ut is certainly unknown in these regions. Besides the Chaubuns, one finds in the territory of Ampeus Paktung-chai and Kratok exiled Mohns, Lāos from Wieng-chan, Tai, and a single village peoples by Khās, former prisoners of war (from the Attapeu region I believe), who have all forgotten their language with the exception of one ancient pair. The name of these Khā is, as far I understand, Katang. [About these people I intend before long to write another paper.] By reason of the negroid strains in the Niakuols one might be tempted to affiliate them to the Chōngs in Chantaburi, about one-twentieth of the last named tribe being said to be negroid. And looking on the great amount of Mohn-Khmēr words and expressions, another idea (not necessarily in conflict with the first one) forces itself on one's mind. We hear very often that before the advent of the conquering Tai from the North, the lower valley of the Mēnam Chāo Phya was peopled by Mohn-Khmērs, the river partly forming the barrier between them, if a barrier it can be called, because the language spoken by these Mohn-Khmērs was a common one. The question is now: Does the Nia-kuol tongue not represent this former common language out of which the later separate Mohn and Khmēr languages were shaped? Not being a philologist

myself I do not pretend to solve this question, but would only suggest that there might be something in the above stated hypothesis.

About the life and manners of the Nia-kuols, and their mode of gaining a livelihood there is not much to be said. They till the ground, rear cattle and buffaloes, live in pile buildings like the surrounding Tai and Lāos, the religion of whom they have embraced too. Their women differ a little, especially those in B. Dakrup, wearing yet a peculiar kind of clothing called *N'nik* consisting of a single very long piece of homespun cotton which is wrapped round the waist several times and finally tied in a knot over the right hip. When travelling the women carry a basket on their back for putting food and things in. Small children are borne in a scarf riding on the hip of the mother. For carrying water the Nia-kuol girl formerly used bamboos like the *Khās*; now the common *klu* or watertight basket is used instead. Some of the Nia-kuol girls are quite good looking, and are generally in great demand among the youths of the neighbouring Tai villages. This intermarrying makes for the rapid assimilation of the whole tribe. Indeed the disappearance of the Nia-kuols, or at any rate of their language, is now only a question of time, a very short time too. The study of the language undertaken by a trained philologist as soon as possible to preserve it for posterity, seems, therefore, to be a matter of urgent importance.



## A LIST OF NIA-KUOL WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS.

English	Nia-kuol	Talaing	Remarks
one	mūi	mōa	
two	barl	bā	
three	bī	boy	
four	ban	born	
five	sōn	basong	
six	trau	barau	
seven	dambo	habu	
eight	danjām	hajām	
nine	njīt	hajīt	
ten	jat	jo	
eleven	jat mūi	jo moa	
twelve	jat barl	jo bā	
twenty	barl sui	bā ju	
twenty-one	barl sui mūi	bā ju moa	
thirty	bī sui	boy ju	
one hundred	mūi chōk	klom	
one thousand	mūi pan	nīm	
ten thousand	jat pan	lāk	
I	Voy	{ Oa { Oa dōich	
We	Bōy	Boy	} Pè in the Wah tongue
* You	Pè	Bé	
of me (my)	dak voy	mak oa	
of you (your)	dak pè	mak bé	
right	sdōm	S, K pabeung	
left	své	K pabay	
below	kantrom	K lakhamō	
over	kandūl	K lakhadao	
before	nang jamo	hadamök	
behind	sang krau	toarau	
far	cha ngöy	K hūa	
near	ngen	klob	
* they	yin	nir	
inside	kāngnow	lakhatūa	
outside	kāngnok (Tai)	lakha-ngě	
east	ta-ngai dūn	hamok	
west	ta-ngai jé	alot	
north	kāng blai dīn	haleung jia	
south	kāng hua non	hamo jia	
sun	ta-ngai	K ngōa	
moon	kandō	hadāb	
stars	pagay	K k'ngong	

English	Nia-kuol	Talaing	Remarks
sky	rangay	akă	
cloud	mok (Tai)	mot prōar	
rain	pröy S	proar	
wind	kayall S-K	jā	
thunder	köol plo	hakeu hareuin	
lightning	mat chalow	chaleu bok	
day	ta-ngai K	angoa	
night	badam	hadom	
to-day	hai o	vōa no	
to-morrow	muol	yé	
yesterday	asā-ngai	ngoa-nè	
morning	lauūr	noa ha yè	
midday	téang (Tai)	noa ngoa	
afternoon	bai ( „ )	bai	
evening	plo	noa jānsok ngoa	
head	kathöb	dāp	
hair	sok S	sok	
nose	sungmo S	jamũ	
ear	katuol S	ado	
eye	mat K-S	mot	
mouth	bāng	bāin	
tooth	ñier	nir	
tongue	handāk S	adach	
skin	sanām	nām	
hand	döy S-K	toa	
arm	kēn (Tai)		
breast	déré	so	
breasts of a woman }	do S	do	
beard	sok mè	asok bāin	
leg	thöl	jān	
fool	chong K	dajān	
stomach	phōng (Tai) S	bong	
back	kasing	dutcha	
bone	chalot	jot	
blood	sim	chim	
heart	ñom	kōnjot	
soul	lopsong	bōnghamao	
god	?	jematao	
spirit	kantrok	kalok	
life	?	ayon	
mankind	mané	n'ni	
man	pitruai	n'nikrow	
woman	prau	n'ni brer	
child	koan S-K	kōn	

English	Nia-kuol		Talaing	Remarks
son	koan trui		kon krow	
daughter	koan prau		kon brer	
father	pa	S	apā	
mother	ōng		mē	
elder brother	bong	K	kau	
younger brother	kanjé		dé	
elder sister	l'lo		boa	
younger sister	kanjé prau		dé	
elder uncle	tawai		anai	
younger uncle	mām		adé	
aunt	chamom		énai	
nephew-niece	kamūn	K	kon jao	
husband	māng		krau	
wife	prau		brēr	
coat	po		alo	
trousers	gonggeng		gang göng	
skirt	nik		ning halach	
sandal	wakthüng		hanok	
earring	träng		kawoin	
good	janap		kvo	
bad	ku-janap		hu-kvo	
false	n'deu		kānj	
true—honest	tiov	K	lānj	
pretty	sakon		jē	
pretty girl	lahōt tamhik		n'ni brer jē	
ugly	ta-eum		hu-jē	
meagre	traï		sāch	
fat	oan (Tai)		kro	
thick	sdöm		dam	
thin	triū		kroy	
clean	tamtrik		a	
dirty	ku-tamtrik		hu-a	
high	salōng		plong	
low	sel		sō	
wide	kuang (Tai)		ploa	
narrow	kēb (,,)		dōn	
cheap	tok (,,)		dai	
rich	nōm		sach	
dear	pèng		dāng	
poor	jon		dāk	
young	plāy	K	plāy	
old	pachō		yu	
big	ado		nok	
small—little	kandik		dot	
close to	tong ñen		klob	

English	Nia-kuol	Talaing	Remarks
pleasant	sanuk (Tai)	méb	
painful	chöy	ké	
kind	ñum janap	jot ko	
evil	ñum kutè	hu fo	
light	cheng (Tai)	ama	
dark	kathün	klu	
cold	la-ngeum	kök	
hot	katao	} ātāo	
warm	ngeum		
many	klöng	num klānj	
few	ñöt	num ngi	
round	klum (Tai)	hādōm	
flat	bèn (Tai)	hābe	
strong	krīng	tot	
weak	yōm	hu-tot	
red	palhèng	haket	
white	sōng	bu	
black	pliet	ājok	
blue	} laichok	—	
green		sé saniet	
yellow	prajün	sé dakmit	
paddyfield	srē	ne	
rai	kmā	ku	
paddy	srōw	so	
rice	langkòw	hau	
cultivator	manī ba sre	ro ne	
hunter	prān	lēmē	
water	đāk	dach	
fire	kamat	amot	
firewood	oey	o	
house	sangki	hoi	
village	dong	kwānj	
roof	kamul	āmoijening	
floor	kadal	hādo	
ladder	tanun	anēn	
wall	bangmang	hadēng	
rice cooking pot	tambāy	hamai böng	
pail	} use of Taiwords	—	
basket		—	
net		noich	
hatchet	suang	mòi	
needle	kanchul	aneuin	
bow	kasun (Tai)	nu (nu)	
arrow	ta-nga	nu	
spear	changkrom	no	

English	Nia-kuol	Talaing	Remarks
sword	dao	seing	
gold	tongkom (Tai)	tō	
silver	pra (k)	sōn	
iron	pasōy	asōa	
stone	tamo	mo	
earth	dé	doi	
salt	pa-ùol	beu	
sugar	dāk dān	hākṛē	
medecine	asrob	hau	
poison	kanni	ùichi	
tobacco	asrob	hau seing	
horse	sé	chè	
stallion	se do kma	che mak	
mare	se do chul	che beu	
bullock	song	krēr	
buffalo	prieng	prieng	
dog	suol	klō	
cat	mias	hakoa	
fowl	sāng	jānj	
cock	sāng do kma	janj mak	
hen	sāng do chul	janj beu	
hen's egg	vei sathüm	hamai janj	
elephant	jīng	jeuing	
sambur	tabung	krāi	
lamang	chidok	pāng	
barking deer	bai		
wild ox	song kröh	aleuin kröb	
monkey	kanüi	noi	
tiger	yung bèng	kla	
bird	kanjiem	hajēm	
crocodile	kayān	kiām	
serpent	klék	sum	
fish	ka	ka	
flea	jay	rāi	
fly	dui	rui	
milk	dāk do	dach do	
tree	dam so	nom chu	
cocoa palm	dam sék dōng	nom habṛē	
diptherocarpus	dam kayāng	nom yē	
cotton	đuol	dō	
silk	mai (Tai)	soch	
grass	kampat	chüa	
flower	gāo	gāo	} The identical word in many Khā dialects.

English	Nia-kuol	Talaing	Remarks
leaf	sala so	āna chu	
fruit	sèk so	sot chu	
forest	panom	kleub	
plain	tung (Tai)	kōk	
mountain	kuol	dō	
hill	tènom	doit plōng	
valley	hōb kuol	akrā dō	
river	dāk	dach bī	K
rivulet	krōng	dach kreung	
eans	rūa (Tai)	kleueng	
chief-king	kalā péndé	kala doi	K
to take	jiet	ket	
go	arl	ā	
have	nom	num	
not to have	ku-nom	lu-mūa	
come	lōng	kleung	
to be present	tong tōm	num	
boil water	lōk dāk	bo dach	
kindle a fire	jong kmat	hado amot	
to extinguish	plōt kmat	alot amol	K
to live, to be	tong	mong duhāme	no
die	kajēk	chot	
run	tariēp	krip	
stop	yim	deuv	
sit down	tong	hajow	
lie down	buin	doit	
sleep	sangkui	h'leuin	K
dream	bo	ābo	
awaken	dōl (tōl)	ngu	
eat	jia bong	jir bōng	S
drink	sung dāk	seung dach	
bite	kōt	ket	
stool	pēng	bōn	K
stand	yōn (Tai ?)	hadāo	S
strike	tub boy	hadōa	
see	kamai	ngāt, cheu	
call	yeu	kuk	
throw	kavieng	kavieng to	
drop	ché	ché	
fight	rob, skō	dak nir ko	
lift	yuk (Tai)	yāch hādōn	
do, work	ba	ba to	
do evil	ba lōt	ba halam bāb	
dance	ram (Tai)	le	

English	Nia-kuol	Talaing	Remark
pull	kathüng	dōng	
love	tré	chān	
hate	tamoan	thu	
get up	dō	hā lachador	
ride a horse	dun ché sè	dach chè	
fly ( a bird )	phāl	bōr	
this	kongo	no	
Where are you going?	Arl pè nōw	Bi ā lor	
Where do you come from?	Pè lung yang hān	Kleung nu lor	
What is your name?	Pè chü yang hān	Amu ha lor rao	
How old are you?	Ayū pè tau mo	Bi ā yok mma chi	
How far is it?	Cha ngöy tau mo	Hua mua chi halonch	
What do you call this?	Ko pè cha mo	E no mubi kuk rāo	
Have you got eggs?	Vei sathüm pè nom go	Binum hūmai chanj hā	
Is the village head man present?	Pujai dōng tong go	Hayai hān num hā	

The above list of words is of course not at all complete, nor do I claim absolute correctness of spelling as this is my first attempt at such a philological essay. The reader will easily be able to pick out the words resembling Mohn; words resembling Kmēr are designated with a K and those resembling Kui or Sui with an S. Concerning the cardinal numbers these are nearly identical in Mohn, Kui, Nia Kuol, Kmēr and a great number of Khā languages.

Korat, Sept. the 4th, 1918.

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