

## ETHNOLOGIC NOTES.

BY DR. A. F. G. KERR.

**The Lawā of the Baw Lūang Plateau.**

In the article on the Wā in the Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States (Part 1, Vol. I) it is stated that the Burmese and Lāo name for the Wā is Lawā and the author goes on to say: "The fact that the Lawa and the Wa are the same and that they are of the same race as the Rumai or Palaungs and the Riang tribes seems to be conclusively proved by comparative vocabularies." The Lawā of the Baw Lūang Plateau are no exception, the vocabulary\* collected from them, though very meagre, agrees fairly well with the Wā vocabulary given in the above mentioned work. On the other hand, if language is to be the test, the so-called Lawā of Petchabūn must be excluded from the Wā races. The very full vocabulary given for the Petchabun Lawā in Phra Petchabūnburī's paper, with a translation by Major Seidenfaden, in this Journal (Vol. XIV, Part 1), when compared with the Wā vocabulary in the Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States shows that the two languages are very different.

I have not been able to find much information recorded about the Lawā of the Baw Lūang Plateau. Holt S. Hallett in his "Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States" gives some account of the Lawā villages there, chiefly notes on their disposal of the dead and on the dress of the women with a somewhat fuller account of their iron smelting. Hallett also gives one or two legends connected with the Lawā. Apart from this very little information concerning this particular community seems available, though their villages must frequently have been visited as they are on one of the best known routes between Chiengmai and Moulmein. The picturesque account of the Lawā in Mr. Graham's "Siam" does not specifically concern the Baw Lūang Lawā. The same remark applies to Major Seidenfaden's note on Phra Petchabūnburī's paper, where, however, a very interesting historical *résumé* of the Lawā in Siam is given.

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\* This vocabulary will be published later.

In July 1922 I passed through two of the villages on the plateau, Bān Nā Fawn (บ้านนาฟ่อน) and Baw Lūang (บ่อหลวม). As only a few hours were spent in these villages and even that time was partly occupied with other work, not much information could be collected concerning these Lawā and what was gathered must be accepted with some reserve. One cannot expect these, or any other people, to unbosom themselves at once to an utter stranger.

There are seven Lawā villages on the Baw Lūang Plateau, which lies westward of Mūang Hawt on the watershed between the Mē Ping and the Salween. Of these seven villages Baw Lūang, with about 80 houses, is the largest; another fairly large village is Baw Sali. This undulating plateau lies at an altitude of 1000 to 1100 metres above sea level; much of it has been cleared by the Karen and Lawā but there still remain tracts of the original forest, composed chiefly of oaks and pines. The nights are always cool on the plateau and in December, January and February may be extremely cold, hoar frosts sometimes occurring. I myself woke up one morning, on my first visit to the plateau some twenty years ago, to find my tent frozen hard and the surrounding grass white with rime.

Besides these seven villages there are other Lawā villages in the surrounding districts. In the district of Chāng Kōng (ช่างเค็ง), to the Northwest of Mūang Hawt, there are five Lawā villages, their names being: Bān Haw, Bān Kawng, Bān Kawknoi (three headmen), Bān Pēkao (two headmen) and Bān Pēmai. In the Mē Sarieng (เม่สีเรียง) district to the West there are more villages but how many I was not able to ascertain, the Baw Lūang villagers thought these western people very wild indeed as they had no temples. In the district of Chawm Tawng (จอมทอง), to the Northeast, most of the inhabitants, as I was informed by the District Officer, are of Lawā descent but they have now taken up Lāo customs and assimilated themselves with Lāos to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish the two races. Away to the S. S. E., nearly 100 kilometres as the crow flies from Baw Lūang, is Kēng Soi on the top of the cliffs to the East of which, according to the legends of the Lao boatmen, Mūang Soi stood. The conspicu-

ous ruins which Major Gerini says are still left of the Lawā capital are no longer to be seen, at least on the reputed site of M̄tiang Soi. In 1867 the late Dr. McGilvary, as he relates in his book "A Half Century among the Siamese and the Lao," climbed to the top of these cliffs but could find no evidence of any human settlement. On the smaller hills of the west bank and at the foot of the cliff on the east bank there are, however, prachedis in various states of preservation; some of these are known to be quite modern but others may be old. The oldest seems to be one on the east bank, now completely covered with vegetation and not visible from the river. This may be the Lawā temple mentioned by McCarthy in his "Surveying and Exploring in Siam."

The villages on the Baw Lūang Plateau are still distinctively Lawā but, no doubt, they are slowly approximating to the Lāo type. Though Lawā villages are often within a few miles of those of the Karens the two races do not seem to mix in the slightest degree, in fact some Karen carriers we had were very unwilling to enter a Lawā village. Though a certain amount of trading goes on between these two peoples there is no social intercourse. With the Lāos, however, it is different as every now and then a Lāo marries a Lawā girl and settles in her village. The people of Baw Lūang indeed call themselves Lawā Nam Pā (ละว้าน้ำป่า) or half-bred Lawās. Here it may be mentioned that the word these Lawā use in speaking of themselves sounds more like Luwā than Lawā. The inhabitants of this group of villages have adopted Buddhism and the larger villages have wats, though often without priests.

In physical appearance the Lawās of Baw Lūang are considerably darker than the Lāo and perhaps a little smaller. There are no marked differences in facial features. The men dress exactly as the Lāos. The women wear a kind of loose jumper, like that worn by a Karen married woman, and a Lāo sin; most of them have silver bracelets. The hair of the men is cut short while the women keep theirs long, doing it up in a knot at the back of the head and wearing a kind of loose turban round it. The men tattoo on the hips and thighs in the same way as the Lāos.

The Lawā houses are substantially built of wood, mai, têng-rang being used for the posts and lower parts of the house while pine planks are used above. Each house has a well fenced garden in which is grown a varied assortment of vegetables and fruit trees. In short, these villages have a decidedly prosperous appearance and contrast strikingly with the miserable villages of their Karen neighbours.

The chief cultivation is rice and it is grown in fields situated in the small valleys of the plateau, sometimes at a little distance from the villages which are always, apparently, on the ridges. The grain is not sown directly in the fields but in clearings on the hill side, whence it is transplanted to the fields when of sufficient size. Here we seem to have a transition stage between rai (clearing) and nā (field) cultivation.

Equally important with rice cultivation is the smelting of iron ore. This ore is brought from diggings or 'wells' at a considerable distance from the village and is smelted in small furnaces, bamboo bellows supplying the draught. The iron is principally wrought into spades, knives and chains. At the time of my visit, early in July, the people were busy in their rice fields and no smelting was going on. A smaller industry is the breeding of buffaloes, pigs and cattle which are sold to Lāos who come up from the plain, often bringing cloth to sell in exchange. The silver bracelets worn by the women are made locally but are not sold. No cloth is woven at these villages, which may account for the hybrid costume of the women. At other Lawā villages, however, where there is no iron smelting, the women weave cloth; the iron smelting seems to be confined to the Baw Lūang group of villages.

In the few hours spent at these villages very little could be found out concerning the Lawā customs and such customs as they described were mostly derived from the Lāos. Evidently they are far prouder of an adopted Lāo custom than of one of their own. A wife is usually bought, the price given by my informant as an average one was 55 rupees, which seems unusually high compared

with other jungle tribes and indicates the prosperity of the Lawā. The wife goes to live at the husband's house, two or three days later a feast is held. Polygamy and divorce are unknown. If either husband or wife die the other party is at liberty to marry again. Burial is confined to children and those who die suddenly, others are cremated. After cremation the ashes and bones are taken up and buried in a graveyard in the forest at some distance from the village, there bodies are also buried. A long stake of *mai hak* (ไม้ซีก) is driven through the ground down to the ashes or body. It is not clear whether this *mai hak* (Siamese *mai rak*) is the tree, *Melanorrhoea usitata*, which goes under under the name of *hak* among the Lāo, or whether the expression simply mean a stake to denote affection for the deceased. The body is burnt or buried at once after death.

The language sounds very different from that of any of the surrounding races but Nai Noê Isarangura who was with me at the time and who had been brought up as a child among the Mon, at once remarked that it reminded him of Mon. The words for religious ceremonies and customs borrowed from the Lāo are Lāo. To take an instance: the ordinary expression for the whole marriage ceremony in Lao is *kin kek* (กินหมาก), derived from the feast which is given on these occasions, the Lawās use the same expression for the feast given some days after the marriage but for the actual marriage they have a word of their own. The names of many cultivated plants are the same as, or merely corruptions of, those used by the Lāo and no doubt such plants were obtained through the agency of the Lāos. On the other hand most indigenous trees seem to have pure Lawā names, though there are exceptions to this as where the Lawās use names like *yom hin* (ยมหิน) and *bāhok fā* (ป่าชกฟ้า) which seem to be genuine Lāo words. In some cases where the names are similar it is not unlikely find that the Lāos have borrowed them from the Lawā. In agriculture we words used in the cultivation of fields, such as plough (ไถ) and harrow (เสียม), are derived from the Lāo, while words relating to forest clearings, undoubtedly the older method of culti-

vation, are purely Lawā, for example the word for forest clearing itself and the word for hatchet.

These villagers have very little knowledge of their history and denied that there were any legends handed down concerning their origin. All that I could get out of them was that they had always been in the same villages and that once upon a time they had a king named Kun Lūang Wilangka (คุณหลวงวิลังคะ).

I will conclude these notes with the distinctive characteristics of the Lawā as given me by the District Officer of Chāng Kōng, an official who knows these people well and to whom I am indebted for the names given above of the Lawā villages of his district:—The Lawā differ from the Lāo in being dirtier, they do not comb their hair or wash their clothes. The women wear their sins shorter than the Lāos. They eat dogs. They are very dark in colour. Finally, they are not hospitable; in a Karen or Lāo village food is always offered to the visitor but not so in a Lawā village.

### The Chāobon to the South of Kōrāt.

Major Seidenfaden has given a very interesting account of the Chāobon in Vol. XII, Part 3, and Vol. XIII, Part 3, of this Journal. The following are a few supplementary notes gathered on a recent brief visit to one of their villages, Bān Chōt (บ้านจอต), in the southwest corner of the. Kratōk district.

As Major Seidenfaden states, these people are rapidly becoming assimilated with their Siamese neighbours, intermarrying with them and adopting their language and customs, so it is worth while recording any fragments of information about them. Bān Chōt consists of six or seven houses only and is fairly typical of the surrounding Siamese villages.

The people of Bān Chōt are well up to the average height of their neighbours and are not noticeably darker, but the probable admixture of foreign blood and the smallness of the numbers concerned forbids the drawing of any conclusions from these facts. They

clothe themselves, both men and women, as the Siamese do, in fact it would not be possible to detect them as a distinct race from their appearance alone.

In many of their houses they even talk Siamese among themselves. One man, however, was met with, Nāi Pim, about 56 years of age, whose father and mother were Chāobons, who was married to a Chāobon and who spoke only Chāobon in his own house. Nāi Pim stated that the Chāobon knew very little of their history, his parents had told him that long ago the Chāobon were settled in permanent villages near Wieng Chan but in the time of Lūang Anu they were so harried by robbers that they had to flee and take to the forests to the South of Kōrāt. They remained in the forests for many generations, sowing their grain in forest clearings, which were changed from year to year in the usual manner of such cultivators. Some three or four generations ago the then officials of that district, promising them their protection, persuaded the Chāobon to leave the forest and settle in villages, where they have remained ever since. For many years the Chāobon paid tax in the form of lacquer from the rak tree but now they pay the ordinary poll-tax. Apart from the ordinary means of livelihood their only industry seems to be the weaving of rattan mats.

The remains of old forest clearings, some of them very extensive, can still be seen in the wide stretching evergreen forests south of Ban Chōt, while mango, jack and lime trees mark the site of their former settlements.

One surprising statement made by Nāi Pim was that the Chāobon were Lawā; on asking him how he knew this he replied that the 'Chao Nāi' had told him so. This indicates how careful one must be not to make suggestions to these people. Perhaps in another generation or so the Chāobon, if they then maintain any separate existence, will definitely assert that they are Lawā, having forgotten by that time that it was the 'Chao Nāi' who told them so. Nāi Pim also gave some account of the customs of the Chāobon, but such as he related were evidently adopted from the Siamese and are too well known to need repeating.

Kā Tawng Lūang brought honey with them and this they were anxious to exchange for maize, rice they refused. They also wanted to know where there was another high mountain as they wished to leave Pū Kading; they were recommended to try Pū Lūang, a large mountain some days journey off to the Northwest, towards Dānsai. On being asked where they would go on leaving Pū Lūang they stated they would have to go and see their 'Nai' who lived near Lūang Prabāng. Asked where their women were they replied that the women were ashamed to come to the village as they had no clothes. They said they had no children as babies when born were left for the tigers to eat.

The informant stated these men were about the size of an average Lao villager but they were very black, their backs were bent, a great deal of the white of their eye was showing and their hair was curly.

While much of the above account was obtained by cross examining the informant at the same time care was taken to avoid putting leading questions. It must be remembered that the informant was speaking of events that had happened some ten years previously and may not have remembered all he saw and heard very accurately: for instance it seems unlikely that the flaps worn by the men were of cloth, though the fact that two or three of them could speak some Lāo shows that they must have had considerable intercourse with Lāos, or a Lāo, at some previous time. Possibly the language was learnt from some one who found it convenient to hide in the mountains for a time. In this connection it is strange that they should not have learnt the use of a fire from the same source as they learnt their Lao. The fact that they asked for maize and did not want rice is interesting for maize is more palatable uncooked than rice, particularly in the way it is stored by the Lāo, wrapped in its own leaves. The story about their children may have been prompted by the fear of having them seized as slaves. Soon after making this visit the Kā Tawng Lūang disappeared from Pū Kading.

One of the most interesting differences between the above narrative and that of Major Seidenfaden is the appearance of the hair, which Major Seidenfaden's informants stated was straight. The

## The Kā Tawng Luang (ชาตอหฬ็อง).

In Volume XIII, part 3 (pp. 49-51), of this Journal Major Seidenfaden gives some information, gathered from hunters, about a jungle tribe known as Khā Dong Luang living on Pu Kio, a mountain between Pak Bang and Petchabun.

The writer of the present note had often heard of the Pi Tawng Luang, or Kā Tawng Luang, in the Northern Circles but, till recently, had never met anyone who had actually seen them. Last March when in the province of Lôi, Udawn Circle, he camped at Bān Sītān, a village which had been visited by the Kā Tawng Luang, and was able to get some account of them from the villagers. The greater part of the information was given by one person, an exceptionally intelligent man, but what he said was corroborated by other villagers. It may be worth while putting this account on record as it confirms Major Seidenfaden's notes in some particulars, though differing in others. Also it is hoped that it will stimulate those who may have come into more intimate contact with these strange people to give their experiences.

The village of Sītān lies at the foot of a large sandstone mountain, Pū Kading (ภู กะดิง), the top of which is a pine plateau, some 6 or 7 kilometres long by 2 broad, at a height of about 1200 metres, on the boundary between Mûang Lôi and Mûang Lom. The informant stated that the Kā Tawng Luang were living for some years on Pū Kading where their leaf shelters were often encountered, though the people themselves were not seen, nor were remains of cooking fires noticed. Some ten years ago a party of 30 men belonging to this tribe suddenly appeared at Bān Sītān. These men were naked with the exception of a flap of cloth hanging over the privates in front and a similar one behind. Two or three of them could speak a few words of Lao. They carried spears but no other weapons, these spears had a blade about two spans in length by three fingers in breadth, the handle was a wa or more in length; they were used both for thrusting and throwing and by their means they could kill such large and dangerous game as kating. The

question of the hair is naturally a very important one from an ethnological point of view. If the Kā Tawng Lûang really have curly hair they are probably of the same stock as the Semang of the Malay Peninsula, a people whom they resemble in their mode of life. Later on the writer met another man, not from the village of Sītān and whose information was probably second hand, who said that the Kā Tawng Lûang had straight hair, he also stated they often killed elephants with poisoned spears and brought the tusks down to the villages.

All the informants agreed that the Kā Tawng Lûang were much more plentiful to the East of the Mē Kōng. It is quite possible they are well known there, perhaps under some other name.

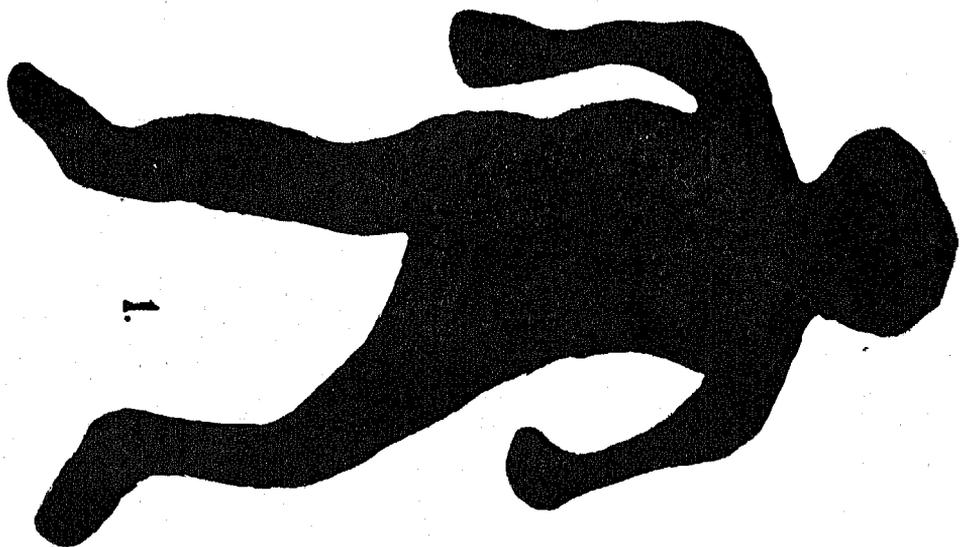
### **Note on some Rock Paintings in Eastern Siam.**

When the writer of this note was recently travelling in Eastern Siam he had occasion to visit a sandstone hill called Kao Chawm Nāng (เขาจอมนาง), some three or four kilometres to the West of the Mē Kōng in the district of Mukdāhān (มุกดาหาร), Nakawn Panom Province.

On reaching a height of about 300 metres the guide suggested a visit to Red Hand Cliff (เขามือแดง) which, he said, was close by. He led the way to the top of a precipice down which a descent was made by the aid of the roots of a large fig tree. Before arriving at the foot a cleft in the rock, forming a long cave, was reached. This cave, which ran in for a distance of some twenty metres, was entered, but, with matches as the only illuminant, very little could be seen in the dark interior; all the other senses, however, testified to the presence of bats. Coming out of the cave the rest of the descent was made by a short slope leading to the foot of the precipice which is some 10 to 42 metres high and overhangs above.

On this cliff are several representations of hands and human figures. Towards the western end, within a couple of metres of the ground, there is a large irregular red stain on the rock and on this stain there are two clearly marked darker red hands in a horizontal





line, a third hand in the same line is just perceptible. Below this row of red hands is a row of four gray hands, showing the natural colour of the gray rock with the red stain as background. Just to the East of this stain, and at about the same level, is a human figure (Fig. 1) in red monochrome. This figure is 33 cm. high and 18 cm. in breadth at its widest part, i.e., from hand to hand. Close to this is another figure (Fig. 2) about 30 cm. high, also in red monochrome, as indeed are all the figures and hands with the exception of the gray hands noted above. This latter figure, it will be noticed, has what appears to be some kind of head-dress. Unfortunately the anterior portion of the head is partially obliterated, as are the feet and one of the hands. The attitude is reminiscent of a well known dance. A little further to the East are four more figures, something like Fig. 1 but with straight arms and legs. Three of these are high up on the cliff, some five metres above ground level. Further still to the East, about fifty metres beyond the last figures, is another row of three, rather indistinct, red hands. All the hands have the thumbs to the left, as if the right hand had been placed with its palm to the face of the rock, its outline traced and then filled in with red, or, in the case of the gray hands, the hand left blank while the background was stained. The writer's hand when placed thus on the rock fitted these hands remarkably well. There are some other red markings on the cliff but they are too indistinct to allow of any definite shape being made out.

The guide, a local villager, said there was no legend concerning these paintings; all the people knew was what their fathers and mothers had told them, that the paintings had always been there and that the cliff was a good place to shelter from rain. These figures were not, apparently, held in any reverence.

Some way further up the hill, beneath a small overhanging rock, there is an impression in the sandstone strongly resembling the human eye. This eye appears to have been cut into the rock to a depth of about 0.5 cm., its length being 17 cm. It is possible, however, that this is a natural marking.

No attempt was made to disturb the earth at the foot of the cliff, or in the cave, as it was hoped that some day a properly equipped expedition might take up this investigation. There are on this hill a number of other rock shelters which might be worth exploring.

Nothing can be said at present about the age of the paintings. It is not improbable that prehistoric man found a home in these hills of the Mè Kōng valley and it may be that the paintings are a relic of his presence there, but, pending further information, this must not be regarded as anything more than a suggestion.

Other rock paintings have been recorded for the Far East. In 'Man' for last December Dr. Mersh Strong describes some paintings on a rock in Papua, British New Guinea. These paintings are also in red monochrome and include a man, a cassowary, various fantastic designs and one figure of a man's hand. Dr. Strong states that similar paintings have been recorded from other parts of New Guinea and from the Marshall - Bennet Islands. To come still nearer home: Professor Cœdès drew the writer's attention to a description of some paintings in Commt. L. de Lajonquière's "Essai d'Inventaire Archéologique du Siam" (Bulletin de la Commission Archéologique de l'Indochine. 1912). These paintings were found on undercut rocks at three different places in the bay of Panga, Puket Circle. Various animals are represented, some in outline only, others completely filled in in monochrome, either in red or brown. There are also geometrical designs; no hands, however, are mentioned. Commt. de Lajonquière thinks these paintings have no particular significance and may be the work of some idle fisherman, though the local people assert they are very ancient and appeared on the rocks at the command of a demon.