The Black Tai Chronicle of Muang Mouay
Part I: Mythology

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Introduction

The Kwaam To Muang (/Kwaam Too muay/) of the Black Tai, also known as the Tai Dam, is a genre of text which contains the history of the Tai people of a particular Chou /chau/ or Muang. These local administrative units were originally considered to be twelve in number, hence the name Sip Song Chou Tai applied to the region of northwestern Vietnam. There are, however, differences of opinion as to the names of the original twelve, and most Tais say that the number was increased to sixteen after the arrival of the French. According to the excellent work of Lao scholar Panh Phomsombath on the Black Tai system (1975), the original twelve Chou were:

1. Chou Lo /lɔɔ/(Nghĩa Lộ) (Văn Chấn)
2. Chou Mouay /Muay/ (Thuần Châu)
3. Chou Lai /lay/ (Lai Châu)
4. Chou Theng /Thêng/ (Diên Biên Phu)
5. Chou La /lāa/ (1) (Sơn La)
6. Chou La /lāa/ (2) (?)
7. Chou Sang /Saang/ (Mộc Châu)
8. Chou So /Sơ/ (Phong Thổ)
9. Chou Toek /tręk/ (Văn Yên) (Phú Yên)
10. Chou Vat /Vaaat/ (Yên Châu)
11. Chou Chian /chian/ (Quỳnh Nhai)
12. Chou Thane /Thañ/ (Than Uyên)

[...]
Black Tai but included White Tai /Tay don¹/, Red Tai /Tay der/, and others as well. For example, the city of Sam Neua in Houa Phanh province of Laos was alternatively called Chou Sam.

Kwaam To Muang texts begin with the creation and continue through a mythological period, a proto-historical period, and a historical period which includes the present. Such texts form only one portion of a larger funeral text known collectively as /Pap Soo Son¹ Saan Ter¹/ ‘sacred book for sending the words’, which is recited only during funeral rites, and thus the purpose of the Kwaam To Muang is to show souls the way back to heaven, from which they originated. To this end, in theory at least, each Black Tai man maintains his own personal copy in which he records all of the places he travels during his lifetime so that his soul can retrace his travels on its journey back to heaven. The second part of the larger text, called /Kwaam Saan Son¹/ contains the as yet unstudied rites for funeral sacrifices and repeats the first part of the creation myth. To my knowledge this textual tradition exists only among the Black Tai and perhaps among the White Tai where the two groups reside in adjacent areas. It has not been recorded as occurring elsewhere among the many other Tai groups living in northern Vietnam.

The text presented here is a translation of the mythological section of the Kwaam To Muang from Muang Mouay, a Black Tai center which at the end of the 18th century, according to Maspero (1950), was the “seigneurie fondamentale” or /mian kok/ from which emanated all of the hereditary nobility or Tao /Taaw²/ of the Black Tai. The text is the personal copy of Baccam Bing, an elder of the Lo–Kam /Lo Kam/ lineage who was kind enough to read it onto a tape at his home in Nong Boua Thong, Vientiane in 1973. The text was also photocopied at that time. His version was the result of a collective effort by several Black Tai elders from Muang Mouay, who, as refugees after the fall of Điện Biên Phu in 1954, sat together and reconstructed the text from memory since no one had escaped with a complete copy. So far as I can determine the reconstruction is complete, its obscurities being those shared with the Muang Theng version of Roux (1934), Maspero’s brief rendition from Muang Lo

After the arrival of the French four Chou were added:

13. Chou Khoa /Khwaa/ (Binh Du)
14. Chou Kwai /Kwaay/ (Tuân Giảo)
15. Chou Chanh /can/ (?)
16. Chou Nam Ma /nam maa²/ (?)

However, a list of 16 Chou provided by a Tai from Muang Vat shows the following:

The portion translated in the present study covers what I have designated the mythological section, which includes the creation and the exploits of Pou Laan Cheuang, the last of the "ancestors" proper, that is, those whose names are preceded by the title /pûu/ ‘grandfather’. The following section, which might be labeled the proto–historical section, begins with the story of Chau Ngou Hau /chau 2 ngou Hau 1/, the Cobra Prince, a contemporary of the Lao king Souvanna Khamphong, grandfather of Fa Ngoum, first king of Lane Xang. In this section the titles may be Khun, Chau, Tao (‘prince, lord’) or even Pou Chau (‘king’), but never Pou alone.

The Legacy of Lo

According to Chinese history (cf. Schafer 1967), in 1122 B.C. Zhou replaced Shang as rulers of the Yellow River basin in the north of China and remained in power for nearly one thousand years until 221 B.C. During this time three other states emerged to the south in the basin of the Yangtze: Shu in Szechuan along the upper portion of the river; Chu along the middle Yangtze and Tong T’ing Lake region; and Yüeh in the vicinity of the delta. In 333 B.C., Chu conquered Yüeh and shortly thereafter, in 315 B.C., Zhou overran Shu. These two events triggered an exodus to the south by ruling classes of Shu and Yüeh into the area subsequently known as the land of the hundred Yüeh. In 207 B.C., a Qin official named Chao To with greater sympathies for the southern peoples founded the independent kingdom of Nan–Yüeh with its capital at Canton. This was eventually returned to Chinese control a hundred years later by Han Wu–ti.

To the south, in the delta of the Red River, the Dongsonian bronze age culture flourished from the 7th century B.C. until the first century A.D., known in Vietnamese history as the kingdom of Vän–lang. This kingdom is said to have been governed by kings named Hùng and feudal lords named Làc (Lo), lineages whose antecedents will be discussed below. We read in Taylor (1983) that in the late 3rd century B.C. the Hùng line was brought to an end by King An Dương who ruled a kingdom called Nam Cương in the vicinity of Cao Bang, which seems to have been inhabited by Ou (Ngâu) refugees from the Qin onslaught against the Yüeh in Chu which began in 222 B.C. and in fact formed the southern border of Qin occupied Kwangsi. An Dương’s real name was Phán of the Thúc ruling family. Through an alliance with the Làc (Lo) he established the kingdom of Âu–Lác (Ngâu–Lo) and erected the famous citadel at

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4 In their presentation the Vietnamese translations aspire to the rank of critical edition by combining some thirty texts. This is an admirable effort and the variants, so far as we know, are cited as they occur. The main weakness is that everything is translated into Vietnamese with absolutely none of the original Tai language included. This renders the text useless for linguistic, etymological, philological, and literary purposes, and eliminates any potential value as a primary historical source.

Several others have also contributed to the study of Black Tai creation myths, including Hartmann (1981), a version that contains many interesting recent additions, Lafont (1955), and Condominas (1980). Sumit Pitiphat of Thammasat University et.al. (1978) has provided the best description so far of the ceremonial context of the Black Tai funeral rites for the Lao Song in Thailand, especially the function of the /Khry kok/.
Cô-loa in Tày-vu. At a date after 180 B.C., Âu-Lạc was defeated by Nan-Yüeh under the emperor Chau To and was incorporated into that kingdom. Âu-Lạc was divided into two prefectures, Giao-chi in the territory surrounding the mouth of the Red River and Cửu-chân in the plain of the Ma River to the south. Even though Nan-Yüeh fell to Han in 111 B.C., the area remained under the lordship of the Lạc ruling class until the coming of Ma Yuan in 40 A.D.

At this point the term Lạc or Lo vanishes from the historical record. However, we shall attempt to show that it did not disappear entirely, but was preserved as a lineage by their descendants, the Tais of the Sip Song Chau Tai in northwestern Vietnam and perhaps elsewhere. A brief look at the ethnolinguistic distribution of Tai groups proves useful. Tai languages have been divided into three branches: Southwestern, which ranges over Lai Châu, Sơn La, Thanh Hoá, and Nghệ An (Nghệ Tinh) in Vietnam, all of Laos and Thailand, southern Yunnan, northern Burma, and Assam; Central, which is confined to the eastern Kwangsi—Vietnam border area, including Hà Tuyên, Cao Bằng, Lạng Sơn, Bắc Thái, Hà Bắc, Hoàng Liên Sơn, and parts of Quảng Ninh and Vinh Phúc, as well as the southern portion of Kwangsi; Northern, which includes the northern portion of Kwangsi, the eastern half of Guizhou, a substantial population in the vicinity of Lào Cai and adjacent parts of Yunnan, and then a surprising distribution, separate from the rest, in Thanh Hoá and Nghệ An in Vietnam, and Kham Keut District in Laos. Some scholars prefer to link the first two into a common group, called Southern (Gedney 1989) or South Central (Chamberlain 1975) on the basis of phonological similarity. It is significant that the general north—south axis of Northern Tai distribution is interrupted by the intrusion of Central Tai dialects to the north of the Red River delta, and Viet—Mường (Mon—Khmer) in the delta itself and adjacent areas to the south. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the Saek language found in Kham Keut may best be interpreted as a language which broke away prior to the unity of Proto—Tai (Gedney 1989). The next most closely related language family is Kam—Sui, located in the tri—border area of Kwangsi, Guizhou, and Hunan. And the most distantly related languages belong to the as yet ill—defined Kadai group which includes Hli on Hainan, Laha in Sơn La, Gelao in western Guizhou and many dialects of Lachi and Laqua along the northern frontier of Vietnam and adjacent China.

As regards dating and likely points of origin, Gedney (1989) has estimated that the Tai languages display approximately the same degree of differentiation as Romance languages in Europe, where good written evidence exists of the Latin mother language originating about 2,000 years ago. Gedney (1965) has also ventured to place the homeland of Proto—Tai in the Central Tai speaking area of the eastern Kwangsi—Vietnam border where the greatest linguistic diversity occurs. My own studies on zoogeographical distribution and comparative zoological taxonomies (1977ff.) place the Proto—Tai—Kam—Sui point of origin around the lower Yangtze in about 750—500 B.C. This remains somewhat tentative due to the paucity of zootaxonomic data from Kam—Sui, but the general patterns are clear: animals with the greatest north to south distribution have taxa reconstructable in Proto—Tai, whereas animals found only south of the Tropic of Cancer do not. With this general linguistic picture in mind some of the historical data will perhaps make more sense, particularly Aurousseau's (1923:245ff.) hypothesis concerning Yüeh migrations. Vietnamese has been classified by Diffloth (1991) as belonging to the Vietic branch of Mon—Khmer, which had as its point of origin inland in Kham Keut District in what is now Borikhampoxay Province in Laos (formerly assigned to Khammouan Province). After an initial split of the Thaveung sub—group, the secondary locus was probably Nghệ Tinh (Nghệ An). The area of greatest diversity of Vietnamese proper is even further
Tinh (Nghệ An). The area of greatest diversity of Vietnamese proper is even further to the south in central Vietnam. I would also point out that this branch’s conspicuous lack of a pelagic habitat is born out by the absence of an Indic–based writing system such as that in use by the immediately adjacent Chams since the 3rd century A.D. Diffloth dates the first split in Proto–Vietic to sometime in the 1st millennium B.C. and I would estimate the diversity of the Vietic branch to be roughly equivalent to that of the Tai family.

Aurousseau, citing Chu history, notes that in the 9th century B.C. a Chu king subdued Yang Yüeh, the location of the later Eastern Ou (Ngeou) Yüeh kingdom of Chekiang. This is taken to be the first division between the Chu and the Ngeou — one of the evidences that they were descended from the same stock is that the Chu and Ngeou had in common the clan name “Mi.” Chu later attacked the Yüeh kingdom in 333 B.C. setting off a chain of migrations south.

Although Aurousseau’s theory of the Yüeh migrations was rejected by Maspero and others, Taylor (1983:314–5) defends him, noting not only his meticulous scholarship, but also the fact that he was the only historian to view Vietnamese origins in the light of political events to the north in southeastern China. He also carefully separated terms occurring in the sources as ethnonyms, clan names, or toponyms and presented reasons for his interpretation of these terms. Taylor mentions the fact that the migrations might more realistically be seen as movements of smaller groups of militarily superior ruling classes as opposed to entire populations, and the existence of this type of migration is implied by the Kwaam To Muang text as well.

Now, with the linguistic evidence taken into account, by simply substituting Tai for Aurousseau’s “Annamites”, we arrive at what I feel is a fairly accurate description of the Tai arrival in the delta of the Red River. We may equate the Western Ngeou with the Southwestern plus Central Tai (Southern) branch of Tai, and the Eastern Ngeou with the Northern Tai branch. Both had the Lo designation as well (Aurousseau 1923:257). Furthermore, the splitting off of the Yüeh element from Chu in the 9th century B.C. referred to above fits not only the approximate date of separation of Kam–Sui from Tai but also the geographical location suggested by the zootaxonomic evidence.5

One residual problem is the existence of the southern part of the Northern Tai branch to the south of the delta in Nghê An and Thanh Hoá and in Kham Keut, Laos. The possibly correct solution here is suggested by Madrolle (1937:313–4) who posits an arrival by water of Hok–lo boatmen from Min Yüeh in Fukien to establish the Lo in the Red River delta in the 6th century B.C. This would coincide with the beginning of the late Bronze Age and account for a Tai presence in the delta who would have been

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5 In 1977 I mentioned a date of 250 B.C. for the period of Kam-Sui-Tai unity. In the meantime much new information on the Kam-Sui languages has come to light, especially from Chinese linguists, showing a greater diversity and implying an earlier date for this period than I had assumed. I also now think that Gedney’s estimate of 2,000 years for the age of Proto-Tai is somewhat conservative. My thinking on this is due in part to the relatively slight degree of differentiation which occurred between Western Nung (spoken at Lao Cai) and the rest of the Central branch, based on the time of the defeat of Nung Tri Cao approximately 1,000 years ago, one of the few such instances which can be dated with accuracy.
pushed south following the rise to power of the Vietnamese in the T’ang period. It would also explain the otherwise anomalous pre–Proto–Tai nature of Saek in Laos, and Bê on Hainan.

These arguments are strengthened when the common cultural characteristics of the modern–day Tai groups are considered. All are wet rice agriculturists and all have similar highly organized political systems, traits which we must then assume to have been characteristic of Proto–Tai and probably Proto–Tai–Kam–Sui. No other ethnolinguistic family in the region can reconstruct this type of culture at the proto level.

On closer inspection we note that Lo, as applied by the Chinese sources to the ruling class of Chekiang, Fukien, and the Red River plain, had a noticeably different linguistic guise. Karlgren (1923) in his reconstruction of Middle Chinese (6–7th centuries A.D.) gives (no. 411) *lāk, Cantonese /lok/, for our Lo characters of ㄌ and ㄌ, with a note that these forms are derived from an earlier velar cluster initial, either /*kI–/ or /*gl–/. In GSR 776q he gives *glāk ~ *glāk for the Archaic form. The Vietnamese form usually given as Lâc is thus roughly equivalent in time to the Cantonese.

Karlsgren’s gloss for ㄌ is ‘a kind of bird,’ and for ㄌ it is ‘white horse with a black mane.’ His Middle Chinese graph for */t’iu/ ‘bird’ occurs in the form ㄌ, equivalent to GSR 766t ‘an aquatic bird,’ with the same phonology as the other two. Karlsgren’s MC (no. 1240) is also */t’iu/ [different tone] glossed ‘sea eagle’. This leaves us with two possibilities. First, the Amoy and Cantonese form /lo/ (apparently a coastal form) is a homonym of the later Chinese /lo/ which came from */glāk/. It has the meaning ‘cormorant’, (Phalacrocorax), the large bird used for fishing along the Chinese coast, a bird of obvious economic importance to estuarine or pelagic peoples, conceivably of totemic importance. Second, Amoy also has the form /gōk/ ‘sea eagle,’ probably Haliastus leucogaster, the white–bellied sea eagle, all white with black wings, perhaps the source of the enigmatic ‘white horse with black mane’ (ㄌ) Lo from *glāk, used for the ethonym in Chekiang and Fukien. (The Sino–Vietnamese word câu–các also refers to a large fishing bird but I am not sure which one; the first syllable means ‘fishing.’)

This line of reasoning is not without substance, as the totemic bird of the Lo lineage among the Black Tai happens to be the /nok/ kok/ or /(nok) kok kam/, the greater hornbill (Buceros) and I suggest that /kok/ here is the reflex of */glāk/, corresponding to Vietnamese Lâc, the initial cluster having been dropped.6

The cormorant, especially Temminck’s cormorant (Phalacrocorax capillatus), is

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6 There is a possible further extension of the bird emblem in Nyah Kur/Monic (Theraphan 1984), this time in the guise of pheasants, both /khlûk kook/ ‘pheasant,’ and /khlûk/ by itself, ‘Siamese fireback pheasant,’ all of which I would dismiss as look-alikes it were not for the Siamese gloss, ‘Phagna Lo’ (Lord Lo’ /lô/).
renowned for its fishing skills and has long been trained for this purpose in Fukien. The Caldwells (1931), ornithologists who resided in Foochow, wrote:

We at one time saw fifteen fishing rafts all in a day on the Min River one hundred miles above Foochow. fifteen piles of fish were being sorted on the shore, each pile containing several piles of fish. Many fish in these piles weighed several times the weight of any bird in the fleet. One cannot but wonder at the power of these birds to bring to the surface a fish weighing more than the bird.

As for the sea eagle, it could easily have been the totemic bird of the Hùng kings noted by Taylor (306) since the SWT languages have the taxon /hung C/ for 'eagle'. Furthermore, this word, which occurs in the Tai languages with different phonological shapes, such as /rung, ruang, hung, huang, huang/ etc., that is, from an original voiced consonant initial (as it does in Chinese [Karlgren 1923:#468]) carries with it the meaning of 'king' and frequently the name of a specific king, such as /lung/ in Shan, Phra Ruang in Siamese, and Thao Hung in Lao.

But, if the Lo emblem of the cormorant or the sea eagle was good along the coast, it would not have served well inland in the mountainous jungles. Here the greater hornbill, a denizen of the upper canopies, is more outstanding. Large, mating in pairs (a trait shared with the cormorant), it is said by the Tai to never set its feet upon the ground. Perhaps the hornbill was adopted from even earlier inhabitants and thus its substitution for the cormorant or sea eagle would have been facilitated. It would seem to be a likely candidate for the bird frequently depicted on the Dongsonian bronze drums, although the most conspicuous aspect of its morphology, the large casque on the bill, is not discernible on the drum illustrations that I have seen, perhaps implying a cormorant instead.

According to the linguistic evidence, the Western Ou or South–Central Tais pre-dated the Vietnamese in the delta, carrying with them the Lo lineage and the emblem. As we have seen, there must have been other Tais there before them from the Northern branch, the Eastern Ou, ancestors of the Nyo or Yo (< Ngeou, Âu) and the Yooy, Yay, or Dioi (< I, Ngie). The former were pushed into the valleys of the Ma, the Chu, and the Ca in Cư Chân, later the provinces of Ai and Yên, now Thanh Hoá and Nghệ An (Nghệ Tinh). It is probable that most were subsequently "southwesternized" except for Saek and a few others like Mène and Pao. However this area remains the least known part of the Tai–speaking world, and other Northern Tai type languages may yet be found there (cf. Chamberlain 1984a, 1991).

Lacking any other method at this time, if we draw lines connecting the outer perimeter of the Kadai languages, from Hli in southern Hainan to Laha in Sơn La, then to Gelao in western Kweichow and back to Hainan (thereby encompassing Laqua, Lachi and newly discovered languages along the Yünnan–Vietnam frontier), we may tentatively assume this to be the former range of the Kadai family, placing them firmly over much of northern Vietnam. If this approach is even roughly correct, then they were in all probability the predominant ethnolinguistic group replaced by the Tais. The Kam–Sui peoples of the Kwangsi–Hunan border area seem not to have extended further south.
With respect to these two groups, Aurousseau has pointed out the old Chinese claim that all of the races of the South belonged to the same clan, Mi, from /*mjw*i/ (Karlgren, #211), said to mean the bleating of a sheep/goat, but descended from the old graph for sheep. In support of the Mi thesis, the Kadai, Kam–Sui, and Tai families do have a word for sheep or goat which is phonologically similar to the Chinese form. Interestingly, some of the cognates are found in the duodenary cycle in a different tone class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHEEP / GOAT</th>
<th>[ordinary]</th>
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**KADAI:**

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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gelao</td>
<td>mpi</td>
<td>(Hè 1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelao</td>
<td>mà'miè</td>
<td>(Bonifacy 1905)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li (Hli)</td>
<td>3uai</td>
<td>(Wang–li 1952)</td>
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**KAM–SUI:**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lakkia</td>
<td>jwie'</td>
<td>(Mao 1981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulao</td>
<td>cwa²</td>
<td>(Wáng 1979)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kam</td>
<td>peu²</td>
<td>(Liang 1979)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T'en</td>
<td>ne mee</td>
<td>(Li 1968)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mak</td>
<td>tr 3wa</td>
<td>(Li 1943)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sui (LN)</td>
<td>pyaa⁴</td>
<td>(Benedict 1976)</td>
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**TAI:**

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<th>Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proto–Tai</td>
<td>*ʔbe C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bè</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>(Savina 1965)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DUODECIMAL CYCLE ‘sheep/goat’

with final semivowel

Nùng Bắc Giang mi (EFEO I.5)
Thổ Lộc Giang mủi (EFEO III.1)
(Cao Bằng)

Saek muy⁴ (Gedney 1982)

Vietnamese mủi

with final stop:

Nùng Hà Giang mat (EFEO IV.1)
Thổ Hà Giang mốt (EFEO IV.7)
Nùng Lao Kay maat (EFEO VIII.8)
Black Tai Sơn La mốt (EFEO XIV.1-2)
Black Tai Yên Bay muôt (EFEO XIX.5)
Yay Lao Cai fat¹ (Gedney 1982)

The name does not appear to survive among the lineages, clans or phratries of the Tais, but may be preserved in the pejorative term Mọi in Vietnamese, and the ethnonym Mry, a SW Tai language spoken in Nghệ An, Bòrkhan, and Kham–mouan provinces in Vietnam and Laos. Both of these have the Proto–Tai C tone or equivalent, as does the Chinese reconstructed form. In the Duodecimal Cycle forms presented above, Saek and Vietnamese agree in having the A tone. Beyond this, however, it is difficult to speculate other than that the word occurs at the level of Proto Tai–Kadai. It should also be mentioned that Diffloth (1980) reconstructs */bə?-bee/* for Proto–Mon–Khmer, and that a similar form for goat occurs in White Hmong mais ias or mes es.

It is not difficult to envision circumstances where the Tais, in fact at least two branches of Tais, entered the delta and wrested it from an older Kadai population. And it must be remembered that such a situation entails the creation of a mutual dependence or symbiosis to appease the spirits of the land (as opposed to the ancestral spirits who may be imported). In the words of mythographer Robert Graves:

Conquering gods their titles take
From the foes they captive make

This may indeed be the key to the problem of “Hung kings” co–existing with “Lac lords”. Perhaps the Western Ou Tais, under An Dương, conquered the delta from the Eastern Ou Tais, splitting them into two groups, one of which was pushed south into Cầu-chânh. Later, the Sinicized Vietnamese, probably during the T'ang dynasty, drove the Tais out of the delta, where they began their march to the hinterlands. This is the beginning of the Kwaam To Muang, at the “junction of the nine rivers, the mouth
of the Red and the Black."

The myths of the Tais to the south in Thanh Hoá and Nghệ An preserve in astonishing detail some of the myths of the Shang dynasty (Chamberlain 1989) in China. Masperó (1924) first pointed this out but did not explain how this might have happened. I believe they were preserved, as suggested by Allen (1981), by the state of Chu, our hypothetical home of the Proto–Tai–Kam–Sui, and transferred via the Eastern Ou to where Maspero found them in Phu Qui. They are quite distinct from the Black Tai myths presented here, although, as is to be expected, some linkages may be found.
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lications.


Jahja Khammanh: Wiekgiatiene. Phuakhaowakam mehuwum

Nong Phomsombath. Nakawatkhuethake


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APPENDIX

The Kwaam Ta Muang Text
The Black Tai Text
(phonemic transcription)

Pap So
Son Saan Tæñ
To mwañ Tay dam mwañ Muay²

cui¹!
ko pen din pen Ñaa²
ko pen faa² Tæ¹ (d)Thuañ Het
ko pen din cet koń²
ko pen nam² kaw² Kwe paak Te Taaw

faa² tam¹ swañ¹ Mo khaañ
faa² baañ ṭywañ¹ pwak Thuay²
tam Khaw² nañ Kun² Saak
taak Khaw² nañ Kun² Pyñ
ña dañ pay Kun Nok
Mu Phök pay Kun dañ
Let us remember.
There was the earth and the grass;
There was the Sky, like a mushroom;
There were seven lands;
There was the branching of the nine rivers
At the mouth of the Tê and the Tao.

The Sky was as low as an iron skillet;
The Sky was as thin as a potsherd.
When pounding rice it reached the pestle;
When drying rice it reached the mat.
It reached the hump of the black ox;
It reached the boar’s snout.

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a Although there is no consistent pattern of rhymes, I regard the text as essentially poetic because of the rhythm adopted when it is read, undoubtedly a mnemonic style. There are however, at certain places in the text, couplets which are rhymed in a khloong form though not with prescribed tones. For examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tam Khaw}^2 & \text{ nəŋ Kung}^2 \text{ Saak} \\
\text{taak Khaw}^2 & \text{ nəŋ Kung}^2 \text{ Pyn}
\end{align*}
\]

or the oft repeated

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{muuan lek pu}^1 & \text{ baw}^1 \text{ ?oy}^1 \\
\text{muuan noy}^2 & \text{ pu}^1 \text{ baw}^1 \text{ kin}
\end{align*}
\]

I have not attempted to imitate the rhyme pattern in the translation, but the lines in the translation do follow the breath groups of Mr. Baccam Bing reading the text into the tape.

b The Sky is treated in the text, and by speakers of Black Tai, as a living, god-like being and is therefore capitalized throughout the translation. The image of the mushroom, of heaven being attached to the earth (like the tree in Bourlet’s 1907 versions) is an old one repeated in many variants in Tai creation myths. (cf. Chamberlain 1984a, 1989).

c In Tai languages, the Red River is called /Taaw/ and the Black River is called /Têe/. Their etymology remains a mystery.
naam nan² pu¹ caw² Co Kom² faa²
cañ¹ tat Saay bon Haï² Maa²
tat Saay faa² Haï² Khaat
faa² cañ¹ hwaat mua Nua
cañ pen faa² tem Ḥen
pen Then tem Pho¹

cañ¹ ?aw Sip kɔŋ daay² Tɔ¹ me¹ Ñu
maa Sup taam kan Khun²
ko baw¹ hot

cañ¹ ?aw saaw kɔŋ (V)baay Tɔ¹ me¹ caan²
maa Sup taam kan Khun²
ko baw¹ hot

cañ¹ ?aw Sip taaw Naa² Haa² taaw ñong
ben¹ taam kan Khun²
ko baw¹ hot
cañ¹ ?aw Sip Sian dɔŋ² kap kaw² Sian kɔŋ
maa Tap taam kan Khun²
ko baw¹ hot

naam nan² to Sat Nang¹ muaŋ lum¹
Cu¹ to Cu¹ hu² paak
Cu¹ to Taak hu² caa
Cu¹ to Mu to Maa
Cu¹ hu² vaw² hu² vaa¹
to Sat Nang¹ muaŋ lum¹ cañ¹ mua kaaw¹ Thën Then
Then cañ¹ teŋ¹ Phep Khaa² Kon muaŋ lum¹ Sia Met

b Although the word /then/ (< Chinese T'ien) is used sometimes as a synonym for /faa²/ 'sky, heaven', it is usually kept separate, the latter being greater and more all-encompassing than /Then/
"heavenly spirit." Interestingly, /faa²/ (*vaa C) occurs only in the South-Central Tai languages, the
Northern Tai languages use a separate word cognate with Siamese /bon/ "above." But Gelao has /vlei/
which appears closer to the reconstructed Tai form. This in turn may be related to AN, e.g. Tagalog
diwa, Indonesian djiwa etc. 'spirit.' Far to the south, Saek has /phaa³/ with the wrong tone.

c In the version translated here, there is no rationale provided for killing off the humans. Roux'
version from Muang Theng, however, is quite explicit in citing the motive of revenge against humans
who hunt and kill animals.
Then came the king named Chô—Who—Protects—The—Sky.a
He cut the heavenly cord and let it rise;
Cut the Sky—cord until it parted.
The Sky went surging upwards
Until as far as the eye could see, all was Sky,
All was Heavenly Spirit.b

Ten bales of yarn, each the size of a sow,  
Stretched out end—to—end,  
Could not reach the Sky.

Twenty rolls of cane, each the size of a cow elephant,  
Stretched out end—to—end,  
Could not reach the Sky.

Ten arrows and five bullets,  
Shot one after the other,  
Could not reach the Sky.

Ten strokes on the giant log drum,  
Nine strokes on the giant leather drum,  
One after the other,  
Could not reach the Sky;  
The Sky could not hear them.

In those days animals dwelt in the lower realm.  
Each one knew speech,  
Every leech knew how to talk,  
Each pig could prattle and converse.

These animals of the lower realm  
Traveled upwards and spoke with the Thên,  
And the Thên devised a plan to kill all humans  
On the earth below.c

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a The enigmatic character who cuts the Sky—cord, here called /pueworthy2 caw1 Co Kom2 faaw2/is referred to as "Pu Chô Kung Fa" in Roux (although he does no cutting in that version.) But in Hartmann's text there are two characters:

/\pu\textsubscript{2} caw\textsuperscript{1} (con\textsuperscript{1}) - kon\textsuperscript{1} faa\textsuperscript{6} kap\textsuperscript{2} yaa\textsuperscript{4} caw\textsuperscript{1}
(con\textsuperscript{1}) - kon\textsuperscript{1} din\textsuperscript{1} [his tones]
in his computerized text (1981). However, his Black Tai original reads:

/\textsuperscript{pu} caa kon faaw2 kap pu\textsuperscript{1} paa\textsuperscript{2} ko kon din/
(I am uncertain whether the discrepancy is human or computerized). Here /co/ is spelled with a high class rather than a low class initial. Also his /co/ is female, reminiscent of the widow in Maspero's (1950) version.

But the confusion between two and one is almost identical to the case of Sho in Hmong (Lemoine 1983:88ff), and given the primordial and ancestral role in both Black Tai and Hmong the phonetic similarity cannot be accidental. Once again, examination of additional texts would prove useful.
 naam nan² faa² can¹ leŋ² Si Set det Si Saaw
jua Kwaay can¹ taay ?yaak Naa²
baaw¹ Kaa² taay Haar¹ Taar
Khaw² ?yu¹ hay¹ taay Phoy
Høy ?yu¹ naa taay leŋ²
peŋ ?yu¹ Saa Kuan hom
man ?yu¹ Khum taay ?aw²
paw² ?yu¹ paa¹ taay Khweṇ
baaw¹ huə taay ?yaak nam²

 naam nan² pu¹ caw² Co kom² faa²
?aw ngu maa ?yiat
?aw Khiat maa doy
?aw Høy maa ?yet vaan¹ (L)daw²
meng quan maa ?yet Caan¹ paa
paa Laat maa ?yet baaw¹ Cua
nok Thua maa ?yet naaŋ laam¹

 naam nan² faa² can¹ Kum² maa mut
hut maa dang
mu² diaw, Kam¹ ven diaw
can¹ mi (f)Phon sen Haa¹

mit (f)Phon Tœ¹ mit Maak jwaa¹
Haa¹ (f)Phon Tœ¹ Maak Muay²
Cu¹ Huay² nam² Cu¹ Naŋ
Cu¹ don din don saay
Cu¹ Thuam² nam² pin ?aw muə bon
saay¹ pin bon muə faa²
naam nan² nam² can¹ Thum Thuam² Thẹŋ Then
Kon Naŋ¹ muauŋ lum¹ can¹ taay Met

 faa² can¹ fok Pan Kon ?un¹ long muauŋ lum¹ Maŋ¹
can¹ ten¹ Say¹ kuanŋ Nuay¹ Maak taw² Puŋ¹
Met Cu¹ to Cu¹ ?yuəŋ¹
mi Teŋ So mot So Mō
So Mō So ?yuəŋ¹
mi Saam høy² Saam Sip Pan Kon
mi Saam høy² Saam Sip Siŋ¹ Khaw² naŋ naa
Saam høy² Saam Sip Siŋ¹ paa naŋ nam²
teng¹ Say¹ kuanŋ Nuay¹ Maak taw² Puŋ¹ Met

Tai Pong, Kha Pong, the Khaphong spirit of the Ram Khamhaeng Inscription. Also the Ahoms say they came originally from the Kingdom of “Pong” (Gait 1933). Pung is not used as a botanical name outside of this context.
At that time, the Sky turned dry and orange.
The sun created waves of heat.
Oxen and buffalos died for want of grass;
Traders died along the roads;
Rice in the fields died in shreds;
Snails in the paddies died for lack of water;
Spirit–grains on the fire–shelf were covered with soot;
Tubers in ditches died from the heat;
Yams in the forest died on the vine;
Men of the boats died from thirst.

King Chô–Who–Protects–The–Sky
Took a snake and stretched it out,
Took a Khiat–frog and wrapped it like a corpse,
Took snails to make wine in jars,
Took a fly to make a sweeper,
A spiny eel to make a cook,
A thrush to make a hostess.

The Sky became dark,
Thunder resounded for a day and a night
Until the storm began.

The raindrops were as big as figs,
As large as Muay–berries.
All the streams and lakes,
Every islet of earth and sand,
All the flood waters,
Were caught up in a giant whirlwind
Which spun round and round until it reached the abode of the Thôn.
The humans of the lower realm were dead.

Now the Sky dropped a thousand new people,
Placed them in Pung–gourds,a
Every kind of person,
Together with the sacred books of priests and sorcerers,
The books of prophecy, and all else.

Three–hundred thirty races of people,
Three–hundred thirty kinds of rice for the fields,
Three hundred thirty kinds of fish for the waters,
Placed into the Pung–gourds.

---

a The ancient name for the territory of the Sip Song Chou Tai was P’yong in Middle Chinese (Schafer 1967). This was not a Chinese name, but a Chinese rendering of a local name, a very old one which still survives in the myths and place names of the area. Exactly how far west this territory reached is not known, but the legends of Luang Prabang and Houa Phanh speak of a “Kingdom of the Pungs” (cf. Robequain 1929; Macey 1907; Plunian 1905) and the name is preserved in Phong–Thô, Phôngsaly,
Then can¹ Hay² pu¹ Taaw² Suan Taaw² nen
?aw Maak taw² Pun¹ long maa pet Nuay¹
pet Saw Tœn Kam² faa²
?aw maa hot muan² ?om muan² ?aay
Haak nam² pray¹ Heng² pray¹ loŋ
can¹ day² Haan¹ Sok Haan¹ Taan
day² Saam buan nam² can¹ tok
day² Hok buan nam² can¹ Hen²
can¹ mua hot
faa² Kew² ?uan² Thi Thop
faa² Khop ?uan² Thi Thuaak
can¹ ?aw Saam Sip mot me¹ paa² maa Haam²
faa² ko baw¹ nää
maa vaa¹ faa² ko baw¹ faŋ
can¹ ?aw Saam Sip Haap Maak Puk nää Khwen
Saam Sip Haap Maak fen nää ?yoy
maa Thim² Säŋ¹
faa² can¹ nìn Som² nìn Pet Sian hun
faa² can¹ ?yän (nän² ?) can¹ Kaay¹
can¹ Hay² Kwaay loŋ kon¹
Khaw Kwaay can¹ taak Kun (L)dan
Kwaay can¹ hon² nää nää
can¹ ?aw nua long Maï¹
nua ?yaan², nua can¹ pin kon long kon¹
Khaw nua can¹ Co pay Naa²
nua can¹ hon² ?aa vo

can¹ Hay² Mu Së dit (sa–dit) long
Mu can¹ hon² ?it ?it

---

b The territory of Ai, south of Giao and Truong is usually considered to have the approximate boundaries of Thanh Hoa. I presume this is true for all but the western frontier, which may have included parts of Hoa Phanh and the ancient kingdom of the Ai–lao at Xien Kho (Robequain 1929; Chamberlain 1972). I have never been able to determine the location of Muang Om, but I do not believe that it is in Yunnan as many would like to believe since the text starts out at the mouth of the Red and the Black rivers in the delta.

c As in most Tai cultures, it is the role of the female sorceress to be the medium when communicating with heavenly spirits. For a discussion of Black Tai priests and priestesses see Sumitr Pitiphat (1975) and Sisaveuy Souvanny (1975).

d /Maak fen/ Protium serratum, an antidote for poisons (Vidal 1959).

e This entire passage is unusual in its violent alliterations. What is described would seem to be the birth pangs of the Sky, for what follows is indeed the birth of the animals.
The Thê̤n allowed the ancestors Tao Souang and Tao Ngoen
To descend with eight Pung-gourds,
Eight bronze pillars to support the Sky.\(^a\)
They brought them to the lands of Muang Ôm and Muang Ai.\(^b\)
But the flood had not yet receded,
So they were delayed,
In three months the water began to fall away,
In six months it was dry,
And they arrived.

Then the Sky began to roar and bellow,
Like mountains of glass grinding together,
Like jaws snapping and cracking.

And so thirty elder sorceresses tried to stop this noise.\(^c\)
But the Sky would not obey, would not listen.

And so thirty loads of pomelos
And thirty loads of fê̤n fruit\(^d\)
Were brandished and thrown to the Sky.
The Sky was hot and sour, bitter and astringent.
And then the Sky was calm.\(^e\)

The buffalo descended head first,
For the buffalo was not afraid;
Thus its horns are bent backward.
The buffalo cried, "ngah, ngah!"

The ox went down next
But the ox was afraid and went rear end first;
Thus its horns are curved to the front.
The ox cried, "ah voh!"

And then the pig descended.
It scurried about and cried, "eet, eet!"

---

\(^{a}\) The first bronze stelae were supposed to have been erected by Ma Yuan in Annam (Eberhard 1968:369). During the T'ang period bronze stelae were purportedly set up in Yunnan, Hunan, Yung-Chhou (Kwangsi), and elsewhere in southern China. It is of interest that a bronze stela erected by Ma Yuan in Ai-chou (Muang Ai) was "worshipped" by the aborigines (ibid.). They were said to be covered with magic inscriptions and were considered to be boundary markers by the Chinese, but so far as I can tell only in the south. (Eberhard points out the necessity of maintaining a distinction between these and the bronze columns of the north which were purely for decorative purposes.) Thus it is not difficult to see how they came to be synonymous with the Pung-gourds which are said to have given birth to the various peoples.
cañ¹ Hañ² maa² long têm¹
maa² cañ¹ (L)dôn² Khaw Sia
kwaañ long (L)dân kwaañ day²

ñaam nan² cañ¹ long maa hot muañ ?om muañ ?aay
cañ¹ pan Maak taw² Puñ¹ mua muañ Haan Hok Nuay¹
Hok Saw Tôñ Kam² fma²

cañ¹ pan pay muañ maan muañ lua² muañ kew muañ laaw
muñaj koy muñaj no² (?y-) muñaj (V ?)bañ Sôñ Nuay¹
Sôñ Saw Tôñ Kam² fma²

pu¹ taw² Suan Tawan² ñên cañ¹ maa hot muñaj lo
Tawan² ñên Kun pay muañ ?om muañ ?aay
Tawan² Suan kin muñaj lo
cañ¹ ?aw mia mi luk Cui¹ Tawan² Khun lo
Khun lo ?aw mia mi luk Cui¹ taa Luk taa Law
pu¹ taa Luk mi luk Sôñ kaw²
pu¹ taa Law mi luk saaw Caay
liñ Sûj cañ¹ Ñay¹
luk Tawan² cañ¹ ?yaay² Sañ¹ naa
Laan Pia ?yaay² Sañ¹ bañ²
pu¹ lop li kin muñaj Caa
li lon kin muñaj ?aay
Khun ?uan kin muñaj luañ
pu¹ laañ naañ kin muñaj min
laañ kwaañ kin muñaj Puk muñaj Mèñ
kaay hu muñaj kin Tañ nam² Taaw nam² ñèñ Mèñ

ñaam nan² cañ² mi pu¹ laañ Cuan
Phu² pen luk Laa² luk jun
[...]

d The Black Tai spelling is actually ☞, that is with a low class consonant, the equivalent of ɾ in Lao, and ɓ in Thai. Hartmann has recorded the tone on this syllable as C class. If he is correct, this would support a suggestion I once made that the name of the Lao Kingdom of Lan Xang was once /laañ suan²/ (ーム รง). In Lao and Phouan the name is spelled ງ with a middle class consonant, implying an oral transmission some time after the devoicing sound shift. Thus it would appear that the initial was originally voiced, which fits well with the theory that Cheuang is related to Karlgren's (1923#1298) reconstruction /*gĩwæŋ/ 'mad, furious, violent,' comprised of the graphs for dog+king (keleton ), the dog king (Cheuang has many dog associations which I will not discuss here), the king of revenge, the essence of the Cheuang cycle.
The horse came next but lost its horns;  
The deer followed and received the horse’s horns.

At that time they all arrived at Muang Ôm and Muang Ai.  
Six Pung–gourds were sent to Muang Haan,  
Six bronze pillars to support the Sky.

The last two were divided and sent to Muang Maan, Muang Lue,  
Muang Keo, Muang Lao, Muang Kôy, Muang Nho,\textsuperscript{a} and Muang Baang.\textsuperscript{b}

Two Pung–gourds,  
Two bronze pillars to support the Sky.

The ancestors Tao Souang and Tao Ngoen arrived at Muang Lo.  
Tao Ngoen returned to Muang Ôm and Muang Ai.  
Tao Souang remained to govern Muang Lo.  
He took a wife and had a son named Tao Khun Lo.\textsuperscript{c}

Khun Lo took a wife and had sons named Ta Louk  
and Ta Lau.  
Ancestor Ta Louk had twice nine children,  
Ancestor Ta Lau had twenty sons.

When they were fully grown the ruler’s offspring were dispersed to govern;  
Ancestor Lop Ly went to Muang Cha;  
Ancestor Ly Lon went to Muang Ya;  
Prince Ouan went to Muang Lung;  
Ancestor Lang Ngang went to Muang Min;  
Lang Kwang went to Muang Pouk and Muang Meng;  
Kai Heu Meua looked after the Tao, the Red River;

Yet there remained the ancestor Laan Cheuang,\textsuperscript{d}  
The one who was the last child,  
The one who came after.  
[...]

\textsuperscript{a} Muang Kôy is probably Phu Qui in Nghiê An where there is said to be a Tai–speaking group called \textit{/Tay Koo}/. Muang Nho is probably in Thanh Hoá.

\textsuperscript{b} Muang Baang is unidentified, in Black Tai writing it could also be \textit{/Vaan/}. Of equal importance, however, is the number seven. The list of names varies greatly among the various versions. A shaman from Muang Vat interviewed in Vientiane had already re–written his account to include France and America, but the number seven remained unchanged. The Vietnamese translation, said to be a compilation of texts from six locations, gives only a single list: the Kinh, the Moi, the Lao, Muang Don (probably the Tai Don or White Tai), Muang Tôi (probably a misreading of Kôy since the Tai characters are similar), and Muang Tao (possibly some place on the Red River?).

\textsuperscript{c} Note that the Lo lineage is not descended from the Pung–gourd like other mortals. It seems likely that the various Tai lineages had their origin in ethnonyms. Names like Kwaang (from Ghwang), Leuang (from Hwaang), and Vi (from Wei), are commonly referred to as ethnic groups in the history of southeastern China (cf. e.g. Schafer 1967).
luk lun baw¹ mi naa
luk Laa² baw¹ mi muanj
caŋ¹ ?aw Puŋ Pi nœn²
Khun lo Khun luanj Khun Kwaarj Khun Tœn Khun lew
Khun Saaw Tœ¹ muanj

?aw bœn kon maa hœt muanj cian
Haak muanj lek pu¹ baw¹ ?œj¹
muanj nœj² pu¹ baw¹ som caŋ

can¹ ?aw bœn kon Khun² hœt ?it ?œn Cian Tœ
can¹ Haœj² baw¹ Caœj² fan Pe (V)baay khaam² nam² Te
maa hœt muanj bu
muanj lek pu¹ baw¹ ?œj¹
muanj nœj² pu¹ baw¹ kin
can¹ top tin Khun² Khaw Phaa maa muanj laa
maa hœt nam² bo¹ kaa Cian nœn
pu¹ cœn Haœj² Khun Kwaarj kin muanj laa
per baan² Saan² muanj

pu¹ can¹ Khun² maa hœt muanj Cian pœk
muanj lek pu¹ baw¹ ?œj¹
muanj nœj² pu¹ baw¹ kin

son of Tao Lo who has the alternate appellation of Lo Kam Lo.

c In the Lao epic, Ai Khwang is the companion or chief general of Cheuang. After the defeat of
Thao Kwa, Ai Kwang is rewarded with the rule of Muang Pakan, just as in the Black Tai version Khun
Kwang is given Muang La (a principal city), also known as Chiang Ngoen. The Kwang lineage is one
of three, along with Ka and Leuang, from which priests or sorcerers may be selected. Every leader had
his chief priest, and Ai Khwang/Khun Kwang may have filled this role. The Deo (Leo) clan assumed
this priestly status among the Ahoms, as Dœodhais. There, also, Cheuang is seen as the original Sky,
the first god, referred to as Phœ tœw chœŋ, that is, /fœa² tua chuaŋ/ (Grierson 1904).
[...] This last child had no ricefield, This latter child had no Muang.a And so, accompanied by his family, Khun Lo, Khun Leuang, Khun Kwang, Khun Tong, and Khun Leo, He set forth to establish a territory of his own.b

He led his army first to Muang Chian, But it was too small, The ancestor would not accept it, was not interested.

He led them to It Ong Chiang Tê. Here rafts of rattan were constructed by his servants To cross the River Tê. On the opposite shore was Muang Bou, But it was too small, The ancestor would not take it, was not interested.

They climbed mountains and cliffs Until they arrived at Muang La And the Nam Bo Ka Chiang Ngoen. He conferred this city on Khun Kwang to establish and govern.c He proceeded to Chiang Poek But it was too small, The ancestor would not accept it.

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a Cheuang is always the last child of seven, or of two. The second child title, Thao Nhi, found in Khuu legends and the Lao epic, may be related to the old practice of firstling sacrifice. As seventh child there are many precedents. In a Phou Thay myth from Kalasin, the ancestor Khamdeng has seven sons, and the last son, named Dok Lau /doc Law2/, marries a Kha princess and unites the two peoples. Furthermore, the term /cet/“seven” is used in titles of rulers, especially from the Phouan kingdom of Xieng Khwang, where the first rulers’ names are preceded by /cet/, for example /cet cuay/ or /cet Hay/. For a complete list of rulers with this title see Archambault (1967).

In yet another context, recalling that the two Pung—gourds are divided among seven places, Eberhard notes that festivals in south China included a gourd festival on the seventh day of the seventh month, and a river sacrifice to the spirits of the dead. This would seem to be associated with the Black Tai funeral rites, the ritual context for the Kwaam To Muang, and the river sacrifice performed by the Bao Khoey made prior to the reading of the creation myth. In Laos the seventh month is the time of sacrifice to the /Phii baan3 Phii muan/ or the /theepharak maHeeSak, Lak muan, Huu muan, taa muan, Sua2 muan, tharong muan/ (Mahasil 1974).

b This section is not without its difficulties. From the text it is difficult to determine whether Lan Cheuang is the son or the grandson of Khun Lo, and Khun Lo accompanies Lan Cheuang on his marches. In Lao and Phuan historical texts, Cheuang is the brother of Khun Lo. Part of the genealogical problem may lie in the fact that the kin term /tay2/ means ‘father’ in Black Tai but ‘elder brother,’ in Lao.

In the epic, Khun Lo has become the godling Thênn Lo invoked by the king Fa Houan to fight against Cheuang. In yet another version reported by Lafont (1955) Lang [sic] Cheuang is the seventh
cañ¹ kaay maa hot muañ Muay²
cañ¹ Me² day² pu¹ caw² ?am Pøy
muañ Muay² muañ di (L)daay muañ hi haay liap nam
muañ mi Tham² ?yaa môm ÿaa vaay

muañ Poñ kwaan² kiw¹ kaan
muañ lek pu¹ baw¹ ?o'y¹ pu¹ baw¹ kin
cañ¹ Hay² Khun lo kin muañ Muay²

pu¹ laañ² Cuñan cañ¹ ?aw biñ kon Khun² maa kaay muañ ?ek
muañ ?ek tip ?yuan¹ hap Kap ?yuan¹ Song
cañ¹ kaay maa hot muañ Kway
muañ Kway mi Saam Khaa paañ naañ
mi Pu Khaw Paañ paan lom
Pu Khaw kon muañ Cu²
mi Khaw Tu Khaw kut muñ muañ
Haak vaal¹ muañ lek pu¹ baw¹ ?o'y¹
muañ nøy² pu¹ baw¹ kin

cañ¹ muñ ha hot muañ Huak
pu¹ cañ¹ day² ŋìn tíañ kap Sian Khaaw¹
hiak vaa¹ mi muañ nùñ¹ kwaan² loñ (k)?oñ
mi Toñ kwaan² pit poñ muañ di kwaan²
mi naa Soñ Paak muañ maak Su² kon Señ kon Pan pu¹ day²
pu¹ cañ¹ day² ŋìn muañ
pu¹ cañ¹ Hay² kon Muñ¹ nò² Pen
kon Señ nò² daañ²
Khaam² kew Soñ hòñ sok muañ hot muañ ?añ²
muañ ?añ² nøy² pu¹ baw¹ kin

* could not hold out and were forced to evacuate to different places."

The stammering of the girl fits nicely with Roux’ Muang Theng Version where Am Poi is called
Uk Ak Am Poi since Uk Ak means ‘to stammer.’

According to this same Vietnamese source, a xên cha ceremony was held every four years in the
four phia of Muang Mouay to commemorate Lang Cheuang’s victory over the Xa Cha or Laha people.
But during this ceremony, the spirits of the Laha ancestors Khoun Cha and Khoun Uông had to be
appeased.

b The names of the spirits begin with ‘paternal grandmother,’ and they are said to inhabit the cave.
Caves are a meeting place for lovers during the spring rites when sexual licence is permitted. See
Maspero (1950) and Roux (1954).

c In other words, Khoun Lo becomes the ancestor of Muang Mouay, the administrative center of
the Sip Song Chou Tai.
They advanced on Muang Mouay
And there defeated King Am Poi.\(^a\)
Muang Mouay was a propitious place,
Long and fine like a thread,
With the sacred caves of spirits Ya Mom and Ya Vai;\(^b\)
Wide at each end and narrow at the center.
But it was too small,
The ancestor bestowed it upon Khoun Lo.\(^c\)

Ancestor Lan Cheuang took his soldiers to Muang Ek.
But it was small, tight and bundled,
So they passed by and continued to Muang Kway.

Muang Kway had three branches;
And there was Mt. Pang protecting it from the wind,
And Mt. "Courting Lovers Overhang;"
There was Mt. Tou and Mt. Kout,
All shielding the city.
But it was too small,
The ancestor would not accept it.

They continued on to Muang Houak
And there heard tell of a wide and spacious valley,
With great fields all adjacent,
A good place, with fertile paddies on either side,
So all soldiers of the ancestor could reside there.
The ancestor was pleased.
He ordered ten thousand people to take up their spades,
A hundred thousand to take up their heritage.
And they crossed the mountain pass to Muang Ang.
Muang Ang was too small,
The ancestor would not accept it.

\(^a\) According to the Kadai-speaking Laha (as recorded by Dang Nghiem Van, \textit{et al.} 1972) Am Poi put up strong resistance against the attack of Lang \textit{[sic]} Cheuang at Muang Mouay. (Am Poi’s real name was said to be Khoun Piên.)

"Lang Cheuang fought for a long time but he could not take Muang Mouay. Finally, he had to take his troops to Muang Sai, ask for peace, and request to marry Am Poi’s daughter whose name was Hao. Am Poi thought that this was an honest offer and accepted. Lang Cheuang invited Am Poi to a wedding feast. When Am Poi came to the feast he brought with him 50 soldiers to act as his bodyguard. Lang Cheuang requested that each of them place their weapons in a rack and invited them to sit down at the table. Not knowing Lang Cheuang’s trick, Am Poi let his soldiers hang their weapons in the rack. When Am Poi was drunk, Lang Cheuang sent one of his soldiers to pull the weapons rack high into the air and then killed Am Poi. The girl Hao was so indignant at her husband for killing her father that she became speechless and could only mumble "urr...urr." Thereafter people called her the "Ur Hang girl."

After he had killed Am Poi, Lang Cheuang took Muang Mouay. The people resisted fiercely but
caN¹ kaay maa hot muañ fañ
muañ fañ Can nam² Kay haak
muañ paak faa² Naaw (L)daay muañ di (L)daay
Haak Pay¹ Tai baw¹ Su² (?)
non tun¹ Caw² ?aw hok Teñ (L)dua
pu¹ can¹ Hañ² kon Muñ¹ no² Pen
kon Sen no² daañ² top tin loñ Pu faa²
baw¹ Ken kway Khen loñ Pu faa²
baw¹ Nuay¹ duay² Sua²

loñ tok muañ Thiñ
muañ Thiñ muañ mon ?yuan¹ kop diñ²
muñ kon Kon² Khaw Kwaay
muñ di muañ kwañ mi naa Son faak
muñ maak Su² kon Sen kon Dan pu¹ day²
pu¹ cañ² can¹ Teñ¹ Phen¹ din muñ Thiñ
can¹ tan² huan Nan¹ bañ² Pe
pu¹ can¹ ?aw mia Nan¹ bañ² Pe
mi luk Caay nun¹ Cui¹ Khun Pe
They progressed to Muang Fang.
Muang Fang was on a slope
And the water had a baneful residue.
It was very high and cold,
A good place, but not for Tais.
The mornings are so cold one impales firewood on a spear through the window
Rather than brave the outside.
The ancestor ordered ten thousand soldiers
To lift up their spades,
One hundred thousand to take up their heritage
And descend Fa Mountain.
They were not tired,
And marched down Fa Mountain
Swinging their arms.
They were not yet tired
And their destination was near.
They descended on Muang Theng.

Muang Theng was round like a winnowing basket,
A valley gently curved as a buffalo horn.
It was a good place, wide, with ricefields on either side,
A desirable place where thousands could live.

The Ancestor founded Muang Theng.
The seat of his rule was established at Ban Pè.
The Ancestor took a wife at Ban Pè, and had a son named Khoun Pè.\footnote{At this point, Lan Cheuang has moved from the extreme east of the Black Tai region at Muang Lo, to the extreme west in Muang Theng (Diên Biên Phu).}