

The Black Tai Chronicle of Muang Mouay

Part I: Mythology¹

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Introduction

The Kwaam To Muang (/Kwaam Too muang/)² 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 /chuu²/ 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.³ The Chous or Muangs were not limited to the

¹ This is a revision of a paper first prepared and submitted to *Mon-Khmer Studies* in 1984 and presented to the Siam Society in 1985, subsequently summarized in the *Siam Society Newsletter* 1986, II.1:5-6. The text was translated into Thai and published in *รวมบทความประวัติศาสตร์*, 1985.8:71-109.

² In an effort to regularize the marking of tones, throughout this paper phonemes represented by upper case initial consonants are derived from the entire Proto-Tai voiceless series plus the Proto-Tai voiced series stops, while lower case consonants are used for all others. An absence of tone marker denotes PT *A tone; 1 = PT *B tone; 2 = PT *C tone.

³ According to the excellent work of Lao scholar Panh Phomsombath on the Black Tai system (1975), the original twelve Chou were:

1. Chou Lo /ໂລ/ (Nghĩa Lộ) (Văn Chân)
2. Chou Mouay /Muay²/ (Thuận Châu)
3. Chou Lai /lay/ (Lai Châu)
4. Chou Theng /Then/ (Điện Biên Phủ)
5. Chou La /laa/ (1) (Sơn La)
6. Chou La /laa/ (2) (?)
7. Chou Sang /Saang/ (Mộc Châu)
8. Chou So /Soov/ (Phong Thổ)
9. Chou Toek /tyk/ (Văn Yên) (Phú Yên)
10. Chou Vat /Vaat/ (Yên Châu)
11. Chou Chian /cian/ (Quỳnh Nhai)
12. Chou Thane /Thaan/ (Than Uyên)

[...]

Black Tai but included White Tai /Tay dɔn¹/, Red Tai /Tay dɛŋ/, and others as well. For example, the city of Sam Neua in Houa Phan 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 Tɛŋ/ ‘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 /lɔɔ 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 Phủ 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 /Khwa/ (Bình Du)
14. Chou Kwai /Kwaay/ (Tuần Giáo)
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:

1. Muang Mouay, 2. Muang La, 3. Muang Moua (Mai Son), 4. Muang Vat, 5. Muang Khoa, 6. Muang Sang, 7. Muang Toek, 8. Muang Lo, 9. Muang Lai, 10. Muang So, 11. Muang Theng, 12. Muang Sop Phop, 13. Muang Chanh, 14. Muang Bang, 15. Muang Khoai (Tuần Giáo), 16. Muang Ang.

(1950), and the multiple text compilation in Vietnamese by *Đặng Nghiễm Van et.al.* (1977), available to me only in a draft French translation.⁴

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 /puu¹/ ‘grandfather’. The following section, which might be labeled the proto–historical section, begins with the story of Chau Ngou Hau /chaw² ɲuu Haw¹/, 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 Văn–lang. This kingdom is said to have been governed by kings named Hùng and feudal lords named Lặc (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 Thục ruling family. Through an alliance with the Lặc (Lo) he established the kingdom of Âu–Lặc (Ngâu–Lo) and erected the famous citadel at

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). Sumitr 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 /Khvy kok/.

Cô-loa in Tây-vu. At a date after 180 B.C., Âu-Lặc was defeated by Nan-Yüeh under the emperor Chau To and was incorporated into that kingdom. Âu-Lặc was divided into two prefectures, Giao-chi in the territory surrounding the mouth of the Red River and Cưu-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 overlordship of the Lặc ruling class until the coming of Ma Yüan in 40 A.D.

At this point the term Lặc 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 Chou 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 Tĩnh) in Vietnam, all of Laos and Thailand, southern Yünnan, 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 Vĩnh Phú, 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 Yünnan, 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-Muong (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 Arousseau'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 Borikhamxay Province in Laos (formerly assigned to Khammouan Province). After an initial split of the Thaveung sub-group, the secondary locus was probably Nghệ Tĩnh (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 Nghệ 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

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) *lâk, Cantonese /lok/, for our Lo characters of 冬隼 and 馬久, with a note that these forms are derived from an earlier velar cluster initial, either /*kĭ-/ or /*gl-/ . In GSR 776q he gives *glâk ~ *glâk for the Archaic form. The Vietnamese form usually given as Lăc is thus roughly equivalent in time to the Cantonese.

Karlgren's gloss for 冬隼 is 'a kind of bird,' and for 馬久 it is 'white horse with a black mane.' His Middle Chinese graph for /*'tieu/' 'bird' occurs in the form 鳥冬 equivalent to GSR 766t 'an aquatic bird,' with the same phonology as the other two. Karlgren's MC (no. 1240) is also /*'tieu/ [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 /*glâk/. 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 /gók/ 'sea eagle,' probably *Haliaetus leucogaster*, the white-bellied sea eagle, all white with black wings, perhaps the source of the enigmatic 'white horse with black mane' (馬久) Lo from *glâk, used for the ethnonym 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 /*glâk/, corresponding to Vietnamese Lăc, the initial cluster having been dropped.⁶

The cormorant, especially Temminck's cormorant (*Phalacrocorax capillatus*), is

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 /khlúk kɔɔk/ 'pheasant,' and /khlúk/ 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' /loɔ/).

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 Cùu Châ, later the provinces of Ai and Yê, now Thanh Hoá and Nghệ An (Nghệ Tĩnh). 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, Arousseau has pointed out the old Chinese claim that all of the races of the South belonged to the same clan, Mi, from /*'mj^wi/ (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.

‘SHEEP / GOAT’ [ordinary]

KADAI:

<i>Gelao</i>	mpi	(Hè 1982)
<i>Kelao</i>	mà'miè	(Bonifacy 1905)
<i>Li (Hli)</i>	zuai	(Wang–li 1952)

KAM–SUI:

<i>Lakkia</i>	jwie'	(Mao 1981)
<i>Mulao</i>	cwa ²	(Wáng 1979)
<i>Kam</i>	peu ²	(Liang 1979)
<i>T'en</i>	ne mee	(Li 1968)
<i>Mak</i>	ty 3wa	(Li 1943)
<i>Sui (LN)</i>	pyaa ⁴	(Benedict 1976)

TAI:

<i>Proto–Tai</i>	*ʔbe C	
<i>Bê</i>	me	(Savina 1965)

DUODECIMAL CYCLE ‘sheep/goat’

with final semivowel

<i>Nùng Bắc Giang</i>	mi	(EFEO I.5)
<i>Thổ Loc Giang</i> (<i>Cao Bằng</i>)	mùi	(EFEO III.1)
<i>Saek</i>	muy ⁴	(Gedney 1982)
<i>Vietnamese</i>	mùi	

with final stop:

<i>Nùng Hà Giang</i>	mat	(EFEO IV.1)
<i>Thổ Hà Giang</i>	môt	(EFEO IV.7)
<i>Nùng Lao Kay</i>	maat	(EFEO VIII.8)
<i>Black Tai Sơn La</i>	môt	(EFEO XIV.1–2)
<i>Black Tai Yên Bái</i>	muôt	(EFEO XIX.5)
<i>Yay Lao Cai</i>	fat ¹	(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, Borikhan, 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 /*bʔ–beeʔ/ for Proto–Mon–Khmer, and that a similar form for goat occurs in White Hmong *mias 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 Cru–chân. 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. Maspero (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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APPENDIX

The Kwaam Ta Muang Text

The Black Tai Text
(*phonemic transcription*)

Pap So
Soŋ Saan Teŋ
To muan̄ Tay dam muan̄ Muay²

cu¹ !
kɔ pen din pen N̄aa²
kɔ pen faa² Tɔ¹ (d)Thuan̄ Het
kɔ pen din cet kɔn²
kɔ pen nam² kaw² Kwe paak Te Taaw

faa² tam¹ swan̄¹ Mɔ khaan̄
faa² baan̄ ʔyuan̄¹ puak Thuay²
tam Khaw² ŋan̄ Kuŋ² Saak
taak Khaw² ŋan̄ Kuŋ² Pyn
ŋua dam pay Kuŋ Nɔk
Mu Phɔk pay Kuŋ dan̄

The Kwaam To Muang Text^a

Let us remember.

There was the earth and the grass;
 There was the Sky, like a mushroom;^b
 There were seven lands;
 There was the branching of the nine rivers
 At the mouth of the Tè and the Tao.^c

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.

^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:

tam Khaw² ɲaŋ Kung² Saak
 taak Khaw² ɲaŋ Kung² Pɻn

or the oft repeated

muaŋ lek pu¹ baw¹ ʔɔy¹
 muaŋ nɔy² pu¹ baw¹ kin

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 /Tɛɛ/. Their etymology remains a mystery.

naam nan² pu¹ caw² Co Kom² faa²
 caŋ¹ tat Saay bon Hai² Maa²
 tat Saay faa² Hai² Khaat
 faa² caŋ¹ hwaat mua Nua
 caŋ pen faa² tem Hen
 pen Then tem Pho¹

caŋ¹ ?aw Sip koŋ daay² To¹ me¹ Nu
 maa Suup taam kan Khuun²
 ko baw¹ hot

caŋ¹ ?aw saaw koŋ (V)baay To¹ me¹ caaŋ²
 maa Suup taam kan Khuun²
 ko baw¹ hot

caŋ¹ ?aw Sip taaw Naa² Haa² taaw ?ong
 ben¹ taam kan Khuun²
 ko baw¹ hot
 caŋ¹ ?aw Sip Siaŋ doŋ² kap kaw² Siaŋ koŋ
 maa Tap taam kan Khuun²
 ko baw¹ hot

naam nan² to Sat Nan¹ 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 caŋ¹ mua kaaw¹ Thëŋ Then
 Then caŋ¹ 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 Thèn,
 And the Thèn devised a plan to kill all humans
 On the earth below.^c

^a The enigmatic character who cuts the Sky–cord, here called /pu² caw¹ Co Kom² faa²/ 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:

/pu² caa¹ (coŋ¹) – koŋ¹ faa⁶ kap² yaa⁵ caa¹
 (coŋ¹) – koŋ¹ din¹/ [his tones]

in his computerized text (1981). However, his Black Tai original reads:

/pu¹ caa koŋ faa² kap pu¹ naa² co koŋ 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 caŋ¹ læŋ² Si Set det Si Saaw
 ŋua Kwaay caŋ¹ taay ?yaak N̄aa²
 baaw¹ Kaa² taay Haan¹ Taan
 Khaw² ?yu¹ hay¹ taay Phoy
 Høy ?yu¹ naa taay læŋ²
 peŋ ?yu¹ Saa Kuan hom
 man ?yu¹ Khum taay ?aw²
 paw² ?yu¹ paa¹ taay Khwen
 baaw¹ hua taay ?yaak nam²

naam nan² pu¹ caw² Co kom² faa²
 ?aw ngu maa ?yiat
 ?aw Khiat maa døy
 ?aw Høy maa ?yet vaan¹ (L)daw²
 mæng ŋuan maa ?yet Caan¹ paat
 paa Laat maa ?yet baaw¹ Cua
 nok Thua maa ?yet naan¹ laam¹

naam nan² faa² caŋ¹ Kum² maa muut
 huut maa dang
 mu² diaw, Kam¹ ven diaw
 caŋ¹ mi (f)Phon sen Haa¹

mit (f)Phon To¹ mit Maak ŋwaa¹
 Haa¹ (f)Phon To¹ Maak Muay²
 Cu¹ Huay² nam² Cu¹ Nøy
 Cu¹ døn din døn saay
 Cu¹ Thuam² nam² pin ?aw mua bon
 saay¹ pin bon mua faa²
 naam nan² nam² caŋ¹ Thum Thuam² Thën Then
 Kon Nan¹ muaŋ lum¹ caŋ¹ taay Met

faa² caŋ¹ fok Pan Kon ?un¹ long muaŋ lum¹ Maÿ¹
 caŋ¹ tən¹ Saÿ¹ kuaŋ Nuay¹ Maak taw² Pun¹
 Met Cu¹ to Cu¹ ?yuaŋ¹
 mi Tən So mot So Mō
 So Mō So ?yuaŋ¹
 mi Saam høy² Saam Sip Pan Kon
 mi Saam høy² Saam Sip Siŋ¹ Khaw² naÿ naa
 Saam høy² Saam Sip Siŋ¹ paa naÿ nam²
 tən¹ Saÿ¹ kuaŋ Nuay¹ Maak taw² Pun¹ 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 Thèn.
 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 Phan speak of a “Kingdom of the Pungs” (cf. Robequain 1929; Macey 1907; Plunian 1905) and the name is preserved in Phong–Thô, Phôngsaly,

Then caŋ¹ Hai² pu¹ Taaw² Suaŋ Taaw² ɲən
 ?aw Maak taw² Puŋ¹ long maa pet Nuay¹
 pet Saw Tɔŋ Kam² faa²
 ?aw maa hət muan¹ ?om muan¹ ?aay
 Haak nam² pray¹ Heng² pray¹ loŋ
 caŋ¹ day² Haan¹ Sɔk Haan¹ Taan¹
 day² Saam buan nam² caŋ¹ tok
 day² Hok buan nam² caŋ¹ Hen²
 caŋ¹ mua hət

faa² Kew² ?uan² Thi Thop
 faa² Khop ?uan² Thi Thuak

caŋ¹ ?aw Saam Sip mot mɛ¹ paa² maa Haam²
 faa² kɔ baw¹ ɲaa
 maa vaa¹ faa² kɔ baw¹ faŋ

caŋ¹ ?aw Saam Sip Haap Maak Puk ɲaa Khwen
 Saam Sip Haap Maak fen ɲaa ?yɔy
 maa Thim² Saŋ¹
 faa² caŋ¹ ɲin Som² ɲin Pet Siaŋ huun
 faa² caŋ¹ ?yan (ɲaŋ² ?) caŋ¹ Kaay¹

caŋ¹ Hai² Kwaay loŋ kɔn¹
 Khaw Kwaay caŋ¹ taak Kuun (L)daŋ
 Kwaay caŋ¹ hɔŋ² ɲaa ɲaa

caŋ¹ ?aw ɲua long Maŋ¹
 ɲua ?yaan², ɲua caŋ¹ pin kon long kɔn¹
 Khaw ɲua caŋ¹ Co pay Naa²
 ɲua caŋ¹ hɔŋ² ?aa vo

caŋ¹ Hai² Mu Sə dit (sa–dit) long
 Mu caŋ¹ hɔŋ² ?it ?it

^b The territory of Ai, south of Giao and Trưong is usually considered to have the approximate boundaries of Thanh Hoá. I presume this is true for all but the western frontier, which may have included parts of Houa Phan and the ancient kingdom of the Ai–lao at Xieng Kho (Robequain 1929; Chamberlain 1972). I have never been able to determine the location of Muang Ôm, 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 Thèn 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 fên 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–Chou (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.


caŋ¹ Hai² maa² long tēm¹
 maa² caŋ¹ (L)don² Khaw Sia
 kwaan long (L)dan kwaan day²

naam nan² caŋ¹ long maa hot muan ?om muan ?aay
 caŋ¹ pan Maak taw² Puŋ¹ mua muan Haan Hok Nuay¹
 Hok Saw Tōŋ Kam² faa²

caŋ¹ pan pay muan maan muan luu² muan kew muan laaw
 muan koy muan ɲɔ² (?y-) muan (V ?)baan Sōŋ Nuay¹
 Sōŋ Saw Tōŋ Kam² faa²

pu¹ taaw² Suan Taaw² n̄en caŋ¹ maa hot muan lo
 Taaw² n̄en Kuun pay muan ?om muan ?aay
 Taaw² Suan kin muan lo
 caŋ¹ ?aw mia mi luk Cui¹ Taaw² Khun lo
 Khun lo ?aw mia mi luk Cui¹ taa Luk taa Law
 pu¹ taa Luk mi luk Sōŋ kaw²
 pu¹ taa Law mi luk saaw Caay
 lian Sun caŋ¹ N̄ay¹
 luk Taaw² caŋ¹ ?yaay² Say¹ naa
 Laan Pia ?yaay² Say¹ baan²
 pu¹ lop li kin muan Caa
 li lon kin muan ?yaa
 Khun ?uan kin muan luŋ
 pu¹ laan n̄aan kin muan min
 laan kwaan kin muan Puk muan M̄en
 kaay hui mua kin Taan nam² Taaw nam² deŋ Met

naam nan² caŋ² mi pu¹ laan Cuan
 Phu² pen luk Laa² luk Jun
 [...]

^d The Black Tai spelling is actually , that is with a low class consonant, the equivalent of ເຊີອງ in Lao, and เข็อง 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 /laan swan²/ (ລານ ເຊີອງ). In Lao and Phouan the name is spelled ເຈີອງ 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 /*, gi^wang/ 'mad, furious, violent,' comprised of the graphs for *dog+king* (狗王), 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,^a and Muang
Baang.^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.^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,^d
The one who was the last child,
The one who came after.
[...]

^a Muang Kôy is probably Phu Qui in Nghê An where there is said to be a Tai–speaking group called /Tay Kooy/. Muang Nho is probably in Thanh Hoá.

^b Muang Baang is unidentified, in Black Tai writing it could also be /Vaang/. 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?).

^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 naaluk Laa² baw¹ mi muancaŋ¹ ?aw Puŋ Pi nɔŋ²

Khun lo Khun luŋ Khun Kwaan Khun Tɔŋ Khun lɛw

Khun Saaw Tɔ¹ muan

?aw biŋ kon maa hɔt muan cian

Haak muan lek pu¹ baw¹ ?ɔy¹muan nɔy² pu¹ baw¹ som caŋcaŋ¹ ?aw biŋ kon Khun² maa hɔt ?it ?ɔŋ Cian Tɛcaŋ¹ Hai² baaw¹ Cai² fan Pɛ (V)baay khaam² nam² Tɛ

maa hɔt muan bu

muan lek pu¹ baw¹ ?ɔy¹muan nɔy² pu¹ baw¹ kincaŋ¹ top tin Khun² Khaw Phaa maa muan laamaa hɔt nam² bɔ¹ kaa Cian nɛnpu¹ ciŋ Hai² Khun Kwaan kin muan laapeŋ baan² Saan² muanpu¹ caŋ¹ Khun² maa hɔt muan Cian pɛkmuan lek pu¹ baw¹ ?ɔy¹muan nɔy² 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 *Deodhais*. There, also, Cheuang is seen as the original Sky, the first god, referred to as *Pha tüw chüŋ*, that is, /faa² tua chuan/ (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 Tè.

Here rafts of rattan were constructed by his servants

To cross the River Tè.

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.

^a Cheuang is always the last child of seven, or of two. The second child title, Thao Nhi, found in Khmu 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 /dɔk 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 cuan/ 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 /theeparak maHeeSak, Lak muan, Huu muan, taa muan, Sua² muan, tharong muan/ (Mahasila 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 geneological problem may lie in the fact that the kin term /ʔaay²/ means ‘father’ in Black Tai but ‘elder brother,’ in Lao.

In the epic, Khun Lo has become the godling Thèn 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

caN¹ kaay maa hət muan² Muay²
 caŋ¹ Më² day² pu¹ caw² ʔam Pɔy
 muan² Muay² muan² di (L)daay muan² hi haay liap nam
 muan² mi Tham² ʔyaa mɔm ʔaa vaay

muan² Pɔŋ kwaan² kiw¹ kaan
 muan² lek pu¹ baw¹ ʔɔy¹ pu¹ baw¹ kin
 caŋ¹ Hay² Khun lo kin muan² Muay²

pu¹ laan² Cuan² caŋ¹ ʔaw biŋ kon Khun² maa kaay muan² ʔek
 muan² ʔek tip ʔyuan¹ hap Kap ʔyuan¹ Song
 caŋ¹ kaay maa hət muan² Kway
 muan² Kway mi Saam Khaa paan² ŋaan
 mi Pu Khaw Paan² paan lom
 Pu Khaw kom muan² Cu²
 mi Khaw Tu Khaw kut muŋ muan²
 Haak vaa¹ muan² lek pu¹ baw¹ ʔɔy¹
 muan² nɔy² pu¹ baw¹ kin

caŋ¹ maa hət muan² Huak
 pu¹ caŋ¹ day² ŋin tiaŋ kap Sian Khaaw¹
 hiak vaa¹ mi muan² num¹ kwaan² loŋ (k)ʔoŋ
 mi Toŋ kwaan² pit pɔŋ muan² di kwaan²
 mi naa Sɔŋ Paak muan² maak Su² kon Sen kon Pan pu¹ day²
 pu¹ caŋ¹ day² ŋin muan
 pu¹ caŋ¹ Hay² kon Mun¹ ɲɔ² Pen
 kon Sen ɲɔ² daan²
 Khaam² kɛw Sɔy hɔŋ sɔk maa hət muan² ʔaŋ²
 muan² ʔaŋ² nɔy² 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 Đang Nghiễm Van, *et. al.* 1972) Am Poi put up strong resistance against the attack of Lang [*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 hət mwan̄ faŋ
 mwan̄ faŋ Can nam² Kay haak
 mwan̄ paak faa² Naaw (L)daay mwan̄ di (L)daay
 Haak Pay¹ Tai baw¹ Su² (?)
 non̄ tun¹ Caw² ?aw hək Ten̄ (L)dua
 pu¹ caŋ¹ Hay² kon̄ Mun¹ ɲɔ² Pen̄
 kon̄ Sen̄ ɲɔ² daaŋ² top tin̄ loŋ Pu faa²
 baw¹ Ken̄ kway Khen̄ loŋ Pu faa²
 baw¹ Nuay¹ duay² Sua²

loŋ tok mwan̄ Then̄
 mwan̄ Then̄ mwan̄ mon̄ ?ywan̄¹ kɔp̄ doŋ²
 mwan̄ koŋ Koŋ² Khaw Kwaay
 mwan̄ di mwan̄ kwaan̄ mi naā Soŋ faak
 mwan̄ maak Su² kon̄ Sen̄ kon̄ Dan pu¹ day²
 pu¹ caw² caŋ¹ ten̄¹ Phen̄¹ din̄ mwan̄ Then̄
 caŋ¹ taŋ² huan̄ Nan̄¹ baan² Pē
 pu¹ caŋ¹ ?aw mia Nan¹ baan² Pē
 mi luk̄ Caay nuŋ¹ Cu¹ Khun̄ Pē

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.^a

^a 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 (Điện Biên Phủ).

The first thing I noticed
 when I stepped out of the
 plane was the fresh air. It
 felt like I had been in a
 cocoon for weeks. The
 humidity was just what I
 needed. I had been told
 that the weather was
 perfect. It was. The
 sun was shining, and the
 breeze was just what I
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