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## Note from Editorial Committee

The central concern of this special issue is to challenge the state-centered paradigm and to reconsider the place of people in the geographical margins of continental Southeast Asia in history. Much recent literature on the region has dealt with borderlands and the role and position of upland minorities. The long-held view of upland vs. lowland—with the former being viewed as stateless and the latter as holding state power—has been re-examined in the interest of seeking alternatives to the statist perspective. Our regular readers may notice that some of the authors in the previous issue (Vol. 1, No. 3) overlap with those of the present issue. Both issues tackle the statist paradigm and focus on the margins. Both were triggered by these recent concerns. However, the two issues diverge in their purposes and key questions. In the previous issue on “De-institutionalizing Religion,” the primary question was how those in the margins may challenge the definition and institutionalization of religion, primarily by the state, in continental Southeast Asia, thereby questioning the construction and contours of “religion.” The present issue, on the other hand, deals more directly with the making of the state itself and “its” region by re-considering the upland-lowland relationships through governance, polity-making, religion, and the market. It addresses directly the upland-lowland relationship and the recent publication by James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009).



# Introduction:

## Upland Peoples in the Making of History in Northern Continental Southeast Asia

Christian Daniels\*

### I Purpose

Scholars are beginning to recognize that upland peoples matter profoundly to the history of continental Southeast Asia. But exactly what role upland peoples played in the making of this region remains a largely neglected issue. Though historians acknowledge the wide spatial distribution of upland ethnic groups, they often try to squeeze them into the frameworks of nation-states. The idea of the nation-state endorses the views of single, or dominant, ethnic groups; and this naturally leads to heavy reliance on interlocking concepts such as borders, state space, non-state space, and transnationality. But the arrival of globalization in upland continental Southeast Asia has spotlighted factors other than space, whether it be state or regional space, as crucial for understanding upland peoples. Global capitalism is undermining the old hierarchies of space, particularly those between areas within nation-states; global economic ties can even enhance the status of constituent parts vis-à-vis the nation-state itself. Such shifts draw attention to the importance of non-space related topics, namely cultural and social fluidity between regions, and political and economic linkages that transcend nation-states. Though globalization promotes homogenization and conformity, thereby seemingly eroding differences between regional space units, it is equally true that some upland peoples have formulated strategies for maintaining their own cultures and societies in the face of increasing outside contact over time. They constantly alter tactics to meet ever-changing circumstances, and an enquiry into such strategies can render a perspective for plotting the position of upland peoples in the past as well as in the present.

This set of research papers seeks to probe the role of upland peoples in the making of history in the lowland polities of upper continental Southeast Asia from the eighteenth

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until the twentieth centuries. Infused by a desire to move beyond scholarship's still dominant paradigms of nation-state and development, which downplay upland history, the papers focus on investigating upland strategies for interaction with lowland polities and societies, and the extent to which upland peoples contributed to the foundation of lowland Tai (Tay)<sup>1</sup> polities. The authors, four anthropologists and one historian, were either members of, or associated with, the five-year joint research project titled "History of the Hill Peoples in the Tay (Tai) Cultural Area," which I coordinated at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, between 2006 and 2010. This multidisciplinary project aimed to augment histories of northern continental Southeast Asia by rethinking the roles played by upland peoples, and the papers here build on the debates conducted at project meetings. They explore the realities of upland-lowland relationships on the basis of empirical data gathered either from extensive fieldwork or from deep reading of indigenous, Chinese, and Western historical sources. Two of the papers deal with case studies from the area west of the Salween River, a part of the Tai world on which little research has been done since the days of Edmund Leach.

One central issue addressed is: Was the upland-lowland relationship essentially as antagonistic as James Scott has claimed in his highly controversial book *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009)? According to Scott, upland peoples deliberately chose a material lifestyle (residential location, agricultural techniques, rejection of written scripts) and ideology and a flexible social organization in order to fend off the encroachments of lowlanders and to protect themselves from incorporation into the administrative systems of padi states (Scott's term for lowland states). Upland peoples embraced the ideals and aspirations of egalitarianism, freedom, and independence, and it was only by designing and securing a mode of living and a social structure of "escape" that they succeeded in maintaining their autonomous lifestyles. Scott proposes state evasion and state prevention as key concepts for rethinking past and present discourse on state formation in particular and civilization theories in general. Anxious to overcome nation-state based interpretations of history, he argues that intentional statelessness was the reverse side to state formation by classical kingdoms and their successor modern states in Southeast Asia.

The clarity of Scott's prose, the erudition of his writing, his provocativeness, as well as his reputation for standing on the side of marginal social groups have no doubt facili-

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1) In this special issue the Tai (Tay)/Shan languages used in Yunnan and areas west of the Salween River are Romanized according to the Shintani system (see appendix to Daniels's paper in this issue), but in the introduction I mostly use "Tai" rather than "Tay" and "muang" rather than "mäng," as is common in Thai and Lao studies.

tated the circulation of his ideas. But does his central hypothesis of antagonism stand up to scrutiny? Trenchant criticism from reviewers has demonstrated that many of Scott's key concepts, particularly manpower and large refugee flows from the lowlands to the uplands, are not grounded in empirical evidence (Lieberman 2010). Another obvious shortcoming is that while purporting to narrate history, Scott fails to document the chronological changes that took place in the societies of individual or multiple upland ethnic groups; in other words, there is remarkably little "history." His synthesis relies largely on scattered secondary sources and references to studies of maroon societies in America and Africa, the relevance of which is often unclear, and frequently questionable, to upland peoples in Southeast Asia (Daniels 2010).

One vital matter, not fully discussed by previous reviewers, is whether the concept of a comprehensive history of all upland societies in Zomia is viable or not. Scott's justification for it rests on the presumption that upland societies in Zomia share a common upland political and social culture that transcends differences in ethnicity and lowland political power. He identifies antagonism as the common factor in upland history. To be sure, oppression by lowland regimes is embedded in the historical memories of some upland ethnic groups (for instance, see Kataoka's paper in this issue), yet there is no empirical evidence to substantiate its role as a key concept in a universal history of upland peoples. Lowland political power is far more intricate than Scott admits. The sheer size and sophistication of Chinese and Burmese dynasties meant that they could muster greater resources than lowland polities administered by Tai and ethnic groups. In fact, most Tai polities owed fealty to either one of these two supreme outside powers, while simultaneously claiming authority over the upland peoples in their domains. A complex hierarchy of supremacy based on military might and political power molded relations between Tai polities and Chinese/Burmese dynasties, as well as associations between larger and smaller Tai regimes. Therefore, it is difficult to conceptualize all lowland political regimes as uniform entities; the term "lowland" denotes an array of political organizations of vastly different size and nature. By blanket categorization, Scott misses the role of lowland power hierarchies in upland history.

Scott's argument is seriously flawed by a lack of relevant empirical evidence, and his claim to be writing a comprehensive history of upland societies can only be described as dubious. But this is not to say that the writing of the histories of upland peoples is impossible, or senseless. On the contrary, I contend that such histories are meaningful because they offer new interpretations of lowland history. Empirical evidence that some upland peoples actually played roles in the making of lowland history can aid us in formulating histories of continental Southeast Asian polities that encompass both the upland as well as the lowland. The major task that we face in writing such histories is the con-

firmation of the realities of various hill societies. A host of topics awaiting clarification readily comes to mind. What cultural and social institutions did upland peoples deploy in their relationships with lowland polities? What did upland peoples aim to achieve by polity building? What notions of authority and government did upland peoples embrace? Was upland peoples' adoption of outside religions such as Buddhism and Christianity an expedient way of consolidating their own societies in times of immense threat? What was the significance of mobility in their relations with different ethnic groups? Why did upland-lowland conflict arise in the first place? How was it resolved? The range of issues is far too broad for full coverage in this issue, and contributors have been able to address only a fraction of them.

## II Symbiotic Relationships between Upland and Lowland

Though this set of papers aims to critique Scott's notion that upland societies are deliberately formed in opposition to lowland societies, it should be made clear from the outset that the authors do not share his belief in the generic nature of upland societies in continental Southeast Asia and southwest China. I should reiterate that precious little evidence has been furnished to substantiate Scott's claim of a common political and social culture in upland societies; the intense diversity of political and social organization among upland ethnic groups makes the postulation of a universal upland society impractical and renders the writing of a general history of Zomia next to impossible. Nevertheless, given the multitude of upland ethnic groups living in distinct societies, it is possible to clarify the actualities of upland-lowland relationships in particular areas. By investigating individual case histories of circumscribed upland-lowland contexts, the authors attempt to reveal the roles played by upland peoples in specific lowland and upland polities, and provide benchmarks for rethinking the intricacy of the uplands in the Tai world.

Two actualities that emerge strongly from the case studies are (1) the symbiotic nature of upland-lowland relations, and (2) the dynamism inherent in upland societies and cultures. Scott, and indeed many others before him—particularly Leach (1954)—have stressed the opposition inherent in the upland-lowland dichotomy, but the evidence marshaled by contributors illuminates the interdependent nature of the relationship. As confirmed in the papers by Kataoka Tatsuki and Christian Daniels, hostilities, in some cases prolonged struggles, definitely did arise. Conflict festered, and sometimes came to a bloody end, when traditional institutions for mediation collapsed. It is abundantly clear that lord-vassal relationships proved progressively inadequate for managing upland peoples in Tai polities under the new political, social, and economic conditions that



emerged from the eighteenth century (discussed below). Though violence broke out at times of stress and strain, it did not constitute the essential nature of the relationship. Interdependence and collaboration were enduring features, as demonstrated in the papers by Nishitani Masaru and Nathan Badenoch, Nathan Badenoch and Tomita Shinsuke, and Kojima Takahiro and Nathan Badenoch. For instance, in their analysis of the case histories of Lanten leaders, Badenoch and Tomita identify upland peoples as network builders, both on the valley plains as well as in the hills, who contributed to the foundation of the lowland polity in Luang Namtha. Daniels substantiates that upland Ta'aang and Jingpo (Kachin) participated in the administration of a tiny Tay polity in southwest Yunnan as officials and mercenaries respectively. Nishitani and Badenoch reveal how periodic markets located at contact points between upland and lowland societies benefit both parties. It is only by building up an inventory of cultural, historical, and social criteria that we can begin to construct a framework for understanding the individual histories of upland ethnic groups. The papers here intend to contribute to this enterprise.

Though Scott mentions the notion of symbiosis on occasion, he does not invoke it as a key analytical concept. He comments on "a kind of cultural symbiosis in which the hill allies, or some of them, came to more closely to resemble their valley partners" (Scott 2009, 273), but he does not discuss it as a fundamental part of upland-lowland relations. This is curiously odd in view of the fact that a growing body of empirical research has already identified interdependence as an undeniable component. Historians of the Tai (Tay/Shan) and the Thai have drawn attention to the important ritual functions performed by the original inhabitants, Luwa or Wa groups, in Chiangtung and Chiang Mai for centuries after conquest by the Tai (Mangrai 1981, 201–204, 230; Aroonrut 2000, 138–140). Volker Grabowsky has cited indigenous sources, the *Chiang Khaeng Chronicle* and other texts, to demonstrate that diverse upland ethnic groups collectively known as the kha (subject/slave) possessed ritual functions as lords of the territorial guardian spirits and commanded a strong economic position in the polity of Chiang Khaen, in northwestern Laos.<sup>2)</sup> The close relationship between the kha and the Tay has been substantiated for the formation of the Sipsong Panna polity in southern Yunnan (Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012, 15–18). Goran Aijmer (1979) has demonstrated that myth and ritual create and endorse

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2) He cites a wide array of hard evidence. For instance, the cawfaa secured access to valuable upland resources such as forest products, iron, and copper mines by matrimony to an upland leader's daughter during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The cawfaa of Chiang Khaen utilized the manpower of upland peoples; he organized 100 females and 100 males presented by upland peoples as a token of their submission in 1792–93 into tribute- and tax-paying villages. Tay commoners in Müang Sing, the capital of the Chiang Khaen polity since the late nineteenth century, depended heavily on Akha, Yao, Hmong, Lanten, Kui, and Lahu for harvesting their rice (Grabowsky 2003, 113–117; Grabowsky and Renoo 2008, 11–12).

a sort of kin relationship between the Tai and the diverse upland ethnic groups (kha) in Laos. Such cases attest to the pivotal role played by upland groups in the power structure of Tai polities as providers of ritual services as well as economic and manpower resources. Likewise, despite the practice of slave trading, there is little evidence to substantiate Scott's claim that lowland regimes depended on widespread large-scale slave raiding for supplies of manpower.

### III Turbulent Change in the Uplands

Anyone attempting to trace the long-term history of upland ethno-scape cannot ignore the huge demographic, political, social, economic, and ideological changes that swept over the uplands of northern continental Southeast Asia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These changes disrupted upland life, forced reconfiguration of the ethno-scape, and sometimes even led to serious conflicts with lowland polities. Upland societies have not stood still over time; they have continuously adapted themselves to meet fresh challenges, no matter whether compelled to migrate or choosing to stay put. Clashes inevitably arose as upland societies strove to adjust to new circumstances. Reports by colonial officials and anthropologists have been the principal source of information so far, but since these documents describe the post-eighteenth century period, a time of turbulent change for upland societies, scholars should be wary of accepting them at face value. Inadequate attention to historical context can impair the creditability of arguments founded on them, as seems to have been the case with Scott.

Since the contributors write about upland peoples at specific points in time, to appreciate the particularity of their case studies from the historical perspective it is insightful to elucidate the turbulent change and situate it in a synchronic context. All the case studies deal with the southern Yunnan/Upper Myanmar/northern Laos zone, which falls within what the Japanese linguist Shintani Tadahiko has dubbed the Tai (Tay) Cultural Area (TCA). The TCA extends from western Vietnam in the west to Assam (India) in the east, and includes Yunnan as well as parts of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. Viewed from the perspective of a common script, that part of it which lies east of the Salween River equates with Hans Penth's "Culture of the Region of the Dhamma Letters." Most ethnic groups in the TCA came under the political and cultural influence of Tai polities and Theravada Buddhism.<sup>3)</sup>

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3) Shintani first advocated the concept of the TCA (1998). For a collection of articles on the TCA part of northern Laos, see Shintani *et al.* (2009). For a major collection of articles on Buddhism and Islam in northern continental Southeast Asia, see Hayashi (2009).

The eighteenth century undoubtedly constituted a pivotal point in the history of northern continental Southeast Asia. It was marked by the weakening of the political authority of indigenous regimes, a sharp increase in upland population, the advent of new patterns of long-distance trade, and the expansion of commercial crop cultivation. Waves of political, demographic, and economic change flowed through southwest China and spilled over into northern continental Southeast Asia.

The Tai occupied a different political and sociological plane from upland ethnic groups. The Tai dwelt in villages that were subordinate to the rulers of polities (also known as states or statelets), whereas many upland ethnic groups generally did not generate regimes capable of exercising cohesive, long-term political authority (some exceptions are discussed below). The possession of polities determined the way in which the Tai interacted with Chinese and Burmese dynasties. Since Tai polities were organized on the lord-vassal principle, their rulers easily acquiesced to subordinate relations with dominant outside political powers, recognizing themselves as vassals of Burmese and Chinese dynasties. Tai rulers pledged allegiance to the Burman monarchy, submitted tribute to him as proof of their fealty, and sent their sons to stay at the Burmese court as hostages for their good behavior. The Chinese court exacted loyalty by incorporating them into the Chinese bureaucratic system as ranked officials, known as either *tusi* 土司 (military native officials) or *tuguan* 土官 (civilian native officials), which I translate as native officials.<sup>4)</sup> Though this brought Tai rulers under the indirect rule of the emperor, Chinese control did not extend to internal affairs and these rulers continued to administer their own subjects as before.

Some historians of the Tai refer to polities run by *tusi* and *tuguan* as tribal domains, and their leaders as chieftains (for instance, Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012, 38). I have chosen to avoid the word “chieftain” and favor the term “native official” in order to avoid unnecessary confusion with leaders of upland ethnic groups, such as the Akha, Jingpo (Kachin), or Yao, who are sometimes known as chieftains in English. In upland societies with an egalitarian bent for decision making by consensus, chieftains were not hereditary rulers but merely representatives elected to negotiate with outsiders (Leach 1954; Daniels 1999). Their authority was limited, and they lacked the ability to coerce individual members of their societies to abide by agreements. The Tai occupied distinct conceptual space and maintained polities that ran on different principles from the political organizations of upland ethnic groups.

Since the late fourteenth century, Chinese dynasties administered the non-Han

4) The *tusi* 土司, or military native officials, came under the supervision of the Ministry of War (*bingbu* 兵部), while the *tuguan* 土官, or civilian native officials, were supervised by the Ministry of Personnel (*libu* 吏部).

polities on the southwest frontier through the native official system of indirect rule. During the Yongzheng (1723–36) era, the Qing Dynasty stepped up its policy of incorporating non-Han native officials in Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan Provinces into regular administrative units through the policy of *gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流 (literally, “abolish native officials in order to inaugurate direct governance by [imperial officials]”). In Guangxi, this resulted in the elimination of Zhuang native officials of large polities, leaving only small-sized native official polities on the border with Vietnam. During the fifteenth century powerful Naxi native officials at Lijiang 麗江, in Yunnan, used military force to acquire extensive territories in southeast Tibet (in Sichuan), and their successors continued to administrate them until the seventeenth century. Secular rule over these territories by Naxi native officials was realized by their role as sponsors and protectors of the Karma-pa sect, the dominant sect among the Tibetans there. The Ming Dynasty acquiesced to such aggression as a means of preventing incursions from Tibetan forces, but the Qing eradicated this Naxi polity in 1723 (Yamada 2011). Native officials of relatively large polities in Yunnan, such as Sipsong Panna (Chinese ranked title; Cheli Xuanweishi [車里宣慰使 or Cheli Pacification Commissioner]), survived along the long frontier facing Burma, but only under uneasy circumstances. Native officials everywhere suffered loss of prestige and authority as the Qing Dynasty tightened its control over the non-Han populations in the Southwest.

Despite the Qing failure to dismember the Sipsong Panna polity in 1728–29, Kato Kumiko argues that it did succeed in undermining the authority of the paramount leader (the native official) at Ceng Hung by issuing lower-rank native official titles to the hereditary princes (*caw mǎng*) who owed him allegiance. This measure elevated the position of Mǎng Cě, the largest and most influential constituent domain (*mǎng*) on the west bank of the Mekong, and made him a potential rival to the paramount leader. Kato substantiated that Qing officials paid Mǎng Cě a 16 silver *tael* (*liang* 兩) annuity for assistance rendered in the suppression of the 1728 “revolt” of Mǎng Ham, and showed that they granted the hereditary prince of Mǎng Cě the highest-ranking native official title among all the domains on the west bank (Kato 2000, 45–47). Even though Qing bureaucrats were able to exert only nominal control over the Tai populace, administrative changes put the polity under closer imperial surveillance. For the Sipsong Panna polity, the 1720s constituted a turbulent decade during which external threats from the Qing exacerbated existing rifts among the contending hereditary princes of the polity.

What further eroded the political power and authority of native officials was the population explosion of eighteenth-century China, which spawned large-scale Han migration to all provinces in the Southwest. As valley basin populations in parts of Yunnan under Qing administration reached saturation levels, Han migrants began to infiltrate

native official territory on the Yunnan frontier, and many eventually passed over into Upper Burma and northern Laos (Nomoto and Nishikawa 2008, 15–34). As Han migrants settled in the mountains, upland peoples unable to adapt to, or unwilling to accept, the new social and economic environment moved farther south into the hills of Burma, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand in search of land and game. During the eighteenth century, hordes of Han males flocked to the Munai 募乃, Maolong 茂隆, and Bawdwin (Chinese: Bolong 波龍) silver mines in the territory of native officials (Giersch 2006), as well as to the tin mines at Gejiu 箇舊 (Takeuchi 2003, 4–7). Reportedly over 10,000 miners worked at Munai during the 1730s; 70 percent to 80 percent of the miners on the frontier were Han migrants from Jiangxi 江西 and Huguang 湖廣, while the rest hailed from Yunnan and Guizhou (Giersch 2006, 133–135). Swelling hill populations put pressure on land and food resources. Needless to say, large numbers of single Han males living in transient upland societies could be a recipe for social unrest.

New trading patterns emerged almost concurrently with these political and demographic changes. According to C. Patterson Giersch, the shipment of copper to the China market and the import of continental Southeast Asian cotton from the late eighteenth century incorporated the Yunnan-Southeast Asia trade chain into the regional trade system of China for the first time, despite trade connections since ancient times (Giersch 2011, 52). Giersch explains this phenomenon as circulation, which he defines as something “more than mobility or trade, for circulation implies long-term relations of repeated flows that transform society” (*ibid.*, 39). He shows that the circulation of copper and cotton resulted in indigenes throughout Yunnan and northern continental Southeast Asia (“borderlands” in Giersch terminology) producing “goods for sale in China or Burma” (*ibid.*, 52). He contends that this gave rise to new patterns of circulation after the fall of Du Wenxiu 杜文秀 and his Dali Sultanate, which marked the end of the Panthay Rebellion (1856–73). He concludes that these patterns emerged in response to British and French colonialism, steamship technology, and the Qing internal tax system. The characteristic features of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the shift in major exports from copper to tin and opium, and the economic decline of western Yunnan. One important commodity for upland peoples not emphasized by Giersch was tea (Nishikawa 2011).

Tea and opium remained the principal cash crops well into the twentieth century. Han migrants promoted the cultivation of tea and opium poppies as well as cotton, thereby expanding the commercial economy into the uplands in response to the demands of long-distance markets (Takeuchi 2010, 117–143). Han traders traveled around the mountains purchasing tea and transported it to Pu’er 普洱 by mule caravan for processing. The tea gardens lay in the mountains east of the Mekong River, within the Sipsong Panna polity.

Han traders procured tea from indigenous growers as collateral on usurious money loans, but heavy burdens led to the outbreak of a major revolt by upland Woni 窩泥 (now classified as Hani) subordinate to Mǎng Ham as early as 1728 (Daniels 2004). Takeuchi Fusaji has documented mid-eighteenth century cases of Han migrants purchasing hill land from Woni villagers to plant tea themselves at Yiwu 易武, a Tai domain on the east bank of the Mekong River subordinate to Sipsong Panna that was responsible for producing tribute tea (*gongcha* 貢茶) for submission to the Qing court (Takeuchi 2010, 122–124).

Han involvement in the growing and processing of tea at Yiwu and Mǎng Haay deepened as tea gardens passed over to Han ownership. Ann Maxwell Hill pointed out that Han tea companies exercised strong control over tea processing by the early twentieth century (Hill 1998, 79–86). Nishikawa Kazutaka, who traced the expansion of Pu'er tea exports to Hong Kong via Saigon between 1889 and 1928, substantiated that exports escalated considerably after 1912 and peaked in 1925; the construction of the Hanoi–Kunming railway by the French in 1910 expedited the shipment of tea, and the establishment of Fudian Bank 富滇銀行 branches, set up by the Yunnan provincial government after 1912 in the treaty ports of Mengzi 蒙自 and Simao 思茅—which opened to foreign trade in 1887 and 1897 respectively—facilitated the financing of its trade. Nishikawa demonstrated that Han migrants from a single place in Yunnan, namely Shiping County 石屏縣, controlled tea production at the main growing centers of Yiwu and Mǎng Haay, and that by the early twentieth century Han had transferred high-quality tea processing skills to some Tai and other ethnic groups in order to satisfy increased market demand. Railways, new financing facilities, and the spread of technical skills linked tea production in the remote polity of Sipsong Panna to the huge markets of urban south China (Nishikawa 2011, 41–48).

Long-distance trade chains that stretched from China in the north to Myanmar and Thailand in the south drew the uplands into closer contact with the outside world. Faced with increasing commercialization from the eighteenth century onward, native officials were sometimes compelled by circumstances to sell their land to Han settlers to obtain money. Since native officials depended on the revenue from this land for local administration and private income, the transfer of indigenous land to the Han had extremely adverse effects on upland society as well as contributing to environmental degradation. Takeuchi revealed how land alienation and forest clearance for exploitative commercial agriculture by Han immigrants deprived some non-Han swidden cultivators in upland northern Yunnan of their livelihoods, and drove them to revolt in 1821 (Takeuchi 1992; Daniels 1994). Sources record 70 or more disturbances and uprisings involving non-Han and Chinese Muslims (Hui 回) between 1796 and 1856 in Yunnan (Atwill 2005, 54–63). The deterioration of the political authority and economic foundations of native officials

exacerbated violence. The ineptitude of Chinese and Burmese dynasties, and Tai polities as well, to serve as what Victor Lieberman has described as supra-local regulatory authorities in the mediation of disputes (Lieberman 2010, 344–345) was a factor behind the high incidence of violence in upland northern continental Southeast Asia, a truth that has been downplayed by Giersch (2006) in his otherwise excellent book.

Northern continental Southeast Asia and southwestern China were interconnected regions that experienced similar demographic and economic influences during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The demarcation of borderlines since the late nineteenth century has not shattered the north-south links. The emergence of a politically strong and economically powerful China since the late 1990s has once again drawn northern continental Southeast Asia into the orbit of the China market. Present-day Chinese investment in natural resources as well as rubber cultivation in northern Laos and northern Myanmar can be seen as a revitalized extension of post-eighteenth century trading patterns, albeit under extremely dissimilar political and economic conditions. Since the tightening of administration by modern nation-states, especially in Yunnan, Laos, and Thailand, upland societies have experienced profound changes. Permanent settlement, transfer to non-opium commercial crops, the prohibition of swidden agriculture, and other factors that have compelled young people to migrate to work in cities have profoundly altered upland life.

## IV Main Themes

Broadly speaking, this set of research papers addresses the subjects of polity building by upland peoples and the patterns of interaction between upland peoples and lowland polities/societies.

### *Polity Building*

Most histories of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos choose to ignore, or to moderate, the role of minority peoples in the making of their history. Historians seem to be reluctant to assess objectively the parts played by non-mainstream peoples in the formation of modern states. Needless to say, their disinclination is closely related to contemporary politics, and any serious reassessment entails scrutinizing “official state history” accounts of minority peoples.

One refreshing exception is *A Short History of Laos: The Land in Between* by Grant Evans, which devotes a lengthy nine pages to the historical experience of the Hmong (classified as Miao in China) in Lao national history, a remarkably brave and unique

undertaking. Evans elucidates the role played by Vang Pao, the Hmong officer who rose to the top of the Royal Lao Government army, as the commander of an ethnically mixed military force (Evans 2002, 136–144). By accurately relating the participation by upland leaders in twentieth-century Laotian politics, Evans shows how the traditionally taboo topic of upland experience can be synthesized to form a broad, accurate multi-ethnic national history. In his reassessment, Evans argues that the contribution by upland peoples to the Laotian revolutionary movement has been overestimated (*ibid.*, 134–136). The integration of upland into lowland mainstream history clearly involves impartial reevaluation, and Evans's efforts set an example for historians of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar.

Though none of the articles tackle the thorny subject of writing national history, they do address the topic of pre-modern polity-building activities. Scott asserts that upland peoples did not aspire to state formation, but a growing body of empirical evidence indicates that the reality of the situation is far less simple and much more intricate than he makes out. The Hani/Akha claim to have maintained a short-lived shamanic chieftdom at a fortified city in Yunnan called Tm-lang (Talang 他郎, present-day Mojiang 墨江), which was reputedly eliminated by lowland Tai (Geusau 2000, 137–142). The Ta'aang definitely embraced polity-building aspirations, for they founded Tawng-Peng—a Tai-style polity in northern Burma—sometime during the late eighteenth century, which relied for revenue on the sale of tea (Kojima and Badenoch's paper in this issue). Though we know that some upland peoples did set up various forms of polities, scholars have interpreted their behavior in different ways.

Kataoka argues that the Lahu did not negate outright the notion of states, or the idea of founding their own state; it was their desire to maintain political independence from the Qing Dynasty and Tay polities that inspired the formation of a multi-village polity in the mountains of southern Yunnan (Kataoka 2007, 93–96; Kataoka's paper in this issue). Leo Alting von Geusau construes the failure of the Hani/Akha to unify their clans at Tm-lang as marking “the beginning of a new stage in the centuries old process of marginalisation,” and as providing justification for the non-state based Akha alliance system (Geusau 2000, 139–140). The study by Daniels, which is based on indigenous sources, examines the Ta'aang attempt to usurp political power in Mäng Khôn, a tiny Tai polity in Dehong, southwest Yunnan, and concludes that cultural and religious proximity to the Tay enabled the Ta'aang to participate in lowland administration. So the issue, then, is not one of state evasion or even state prevention, but what sort of independent polities, or social organizations, upland peoples aspired to. Their motives are an important aspect awaiting clarification as well. At the same time, it cannot be denied that some upland peoples evinced a readiness to participate in lowland polities, and by doing so



resigned themselves to coping with the demands of administration and taxation.

In the past, historians of the Tai, whether in northern Thailand, Laos, or Yunnan, have emphasized Tai political dominance over the non-Tai (for instance, Stuart-Fox 1998), but the findings of the papers in this issue indicate that this simple scenario is far from clear-cut. This point comes through strongly from Badenoch and Tomita, who have combined oral history with reports by Western observers to elucidate how three upland ethnic groups—the Lanten, Sida, and Bit—pioneered the settling of the Luang Namtha basin and were subordinated to Tai political control only later. Their evidence reveals an overall theme of upland peoples directly participating in nurturing and shaping the political and economic development of the Luang Namtha basin. Therefore, they reject the notion of a core Tai culture in the foundation of *muang*, and instead emphasize the diversity of ethnicities, “worldviews and belief systems” involved in *muang* creation. These conclusions, however, leave many issues unresolved. For instance, after the death of charismatic leaders (Dang Yon Hak in the case of the Lanten), why were upland ethnic groups unable to manage multi-ethnic paddy rice-based lowland polities by themselves? They clearly failed in the case of Luang Namtha and Măng Khôn. Clans and lineages swiftly united to form temporary confederations under charismatic upland leaders, but easily splintered on their demise. Are upland social structures inherently incapable of supporting even small multi-ethnic basin polities? These are just a few of the questions left unanswered in this special issue, but it is hoped that they may serve as starting points for further research.

Upland polity building counteracted the power of dynastic states and lowland Tay polities. Kataoka argues that turbulent changes in the uplands after the eighteenth century gave rise to a new ideology for the articulation of ethnic consciousness among the Lahu, namely the ideology of a stateless people; the notion of statelessness arose in response to their incorporation into the Chinese state. He cites contact with Han migrants, and the tightening of administrative control by the Qing as it attempted to demarcate its borders with British and French colonial powers, as factors that stimulated a surge in Lahu aspirations for a state of their own. Viewed from this perspective, Kataoka concludes that the notion of statelessness as manifested in messianic movements constituted an ideology of convenience rather than an expression of true Lahu ambitions.

The papers by Kataoka, Daniels, and Badenoch and Tomita represent an effort to grapple with the multifaceted hill experience of polity building that is reflected in the complexity of actual Tai-non Tai relations, and compel us to engage in new ways of looking at their intricacy.

*Periodic Markets*

Periodic markets have functioned as one of the most common interfaces between upland and lowland peoples in the past as well as present. They boast a long history, for Chinese officials verified their existence among the Tai west of the Salween River as early as 1303–4. The *Yunnan Zhilue* 雲南志略 (An Account of Yunnan) by Li Jing 李京 reported: “Trade gatherings are held every five days; women hold markets in the morning and men hold markets during the day” (Fang 1998, Vol. 3, 129). Some markets facilitated the exchange of upland and lowland produce, while others specialized in the sale of upland commodities for long-distance trade. Despite this early record and the fact that money circulated here from early times, surprisingly little analysis has been done of these markets.

On the basis of extensive fieldwork in Jinping County, Yunnan, Nishitani and Badenoch substantiate that periodic markets are located at points where the conveyance of local produce down mountains intersects with places convenient for the horizontal transportation of manufactured goods along valley floors. They identify the market’s primary role as providing villagers from surrounding areas with a venue to sell their produce in order to obtain cash to purchase basic daily necessities, and confirm that there were uplander-uplander as well as uplander-lowlander exchanges. They emphasize links between the upland sphere of socio-economic interactions and the lowland spheres. They also point out that the foundation of periodic markets presupposes the existence of a market network and the participation of traveling traders, and in some cases specialist brokers with connections to outside markets. This in itself is not a surprising finding, but the authors’ conclusion that periodic markets while serving as sites for economic transactions also contribute to the creation of a sense of identity and reinforce awareness of ethnic uniqueness is certainly novel. The originality lies in its potent implication that trade, and by extension contact with the outside world, does not erode the differences between lowland and upland ethnicity, or even intra-upland ethnicity for that matter. Rather than becoming a great leveler, or unifier of ethnic groups, trade at periodic markets creates diversity, and as such it underpins the gap between lowland and upland and even reinforces differences between individual upland ethnic groups. Nishitani and Badenoch conclude that such marketplaces, which are “based on decentralized interactions between diverse actors,” may “suggest the existence of local strategies for negotiating increasingly complex currents of regulation and liberalization.”

*Theravāda Buddhism*

Theravāda Buddhism served as an interface, especially among Mon-Khmer speakers such as the Lua, Wa, Ta’aang, and Bulang. These upland communities adopted Buddhism from

the Tai, but we have little data about the chronology of its introduction. The best-known literary evidence appears in *The Padaeng Chronicle*, which describes the area east of the Salween River; this source records upland peoples coming down to Kengtung to study Buddhism during the mid-fifteenth century (Mangrai 1981, 122). There can be no doubt that upland peoples have a long association with lowland Buddhism.

The paper by Kojima and Badenoch analyzes the role of Buddhism in the networks of interaction between upland Ta'aang and lowland Tai (Shan) west of the Salween River. In this area the Tai practice Burmese-style Buddhism, though the now largely defunct Yon (Thai/Lao: Yuan) sect from Lanna was popular in the past. Kojima and Badenoch document how Ta'aang monks from upland villages in northern Myanmar serve as monks in Tai village temples in the Mäng Maaw (Ruili) basin, Dehong, in Chinese territory, which suffer from a chronic shortage of ordained clergy. This sort of exchange is facilitated by the cultural proximity of the Ta'aang and the Tai; the monks of both ethnic groups share a language and script, and Badenoch and Kojima note that belonging to the same sect expedites interaction as well.

Traditionally low levels of ordination have led to a heavy reliance on lay ritual specialists in the exchange of offerings and merit in Dehong. Kojima and Badenoch identify such lay ritual specialists as an important mechanism for interaction between Ta'aang and Tai people due to their high mobility. They demonstrate that by providing services to lowland Buddhist communities in the Mäng Maaw basin, upland Ta'aang practitioners have fashioned networks that "bridge the rural-urban divide and cross international boundaries." Here the Tai do not dominate the upland-lowland relationship. Kojima and Badenoch argue that the motivation for Ta'aang embracement of Tai culture derives from a symbiotic relationship, one in which the Ta'aang actually "contribute to the continuity of Tai Buddhism," and is not an "inevitable outcome of unequal power relations." While not denying the existence of differences in social position, they stress mutual benefit as a driving force in the upland-lowland relationship.

### *Multilingual Oral and Written Skills*

Scott claims that upland peoples deliberately choose not to adopt literacy as a strategy to facilitate their interactions with lowland text-based states. He reasons that the oral tradition suited the needs of mobile upland societies much better than the written one, and that possessing writing constituted a disadvantage (Scott 2009, 226–237). This assertion has little foundation in fact. For a start, the Yao/Mien have been long renowned for their extensive use of Chinese texts in secular and religious rituals, and some have even maintained Chinese literary skills until recent years. Badenoch and Tomita contest Scott's notion of literacy as a liability for upland peoples on the basis of evidence from

Luang Namtha. They demonstrate how the Lanten and the Mun clearly utilized their proficiency in oral and written Chinese to great advantage in negotiating with lowland regimes, and argue that multilingualism can enhance the position of upland peoples in their interactions with lowland states.

Language and script functioned as an interface in the practicalities of upland-lowland associations. Upland peoples often knew an assortment of languages and scripts. Lanten, Sida, and Bit used Chinese (Yunnanese) amongst themselves and Lue with lowlanders as lingua franca respectively in Luang Namtha. Daniels points out that it was their proficiency in the Tai language and script that enabled the Ta'aang to serve as officials in the Măng Khôn polity. There can be little doubt that language and script have enormous instrumental value as "social capital" for upland peoples when dealing with lowland polities as suggested by Badenoch and Tomita.

What role did individual upland peoples perform in the making of history in northern continental Southeast Asia? They may not have been star actors in the theater of national histories, but they did play cameo roles during some periods. As many of these papers attest, their involvement in the foundation and functioning of lowland Tai regimes was much deeper than scholars have previously thought. Though they did not construct large polities that evolved into modern states after the demise of colonialism, some of them did contribute to the foundation and administration of pre-modern Tay polities. Upland peoples maintained networks that stretched far beyond the confines of their own villages, and strategically engaged with other ethnic groups in the uplands as well as in the lowlands. Past scholarship has identified forest product trade and labor supply as contributions to lowland economies, but Kojima and Badenoch demonstrate that upland assistance extended to the realm of Buddhism and ritual practice as well. Though historical reality may reveal similar trends in upland strategies, it does not indicate blanket uniformity but rather compels us to consider the singularity and multiplicity of forms that their strategies might take.

### *Yunnanese Migrants and Their Regimes*

Historical evidence demonstrates that while engagements with state authority led some upland groups to participate in lowland state administration, at the same time they stimulated others to aspire for autonomy by constructing their own polities or regimes. Registers of these political organizations have yet to be drawn up, but they may number more than we imagine. Charismatic leaders generated short-lived organizations, while some Ta'aang, Lahu, and Han (Yunnanese or Haw) leaders set up longer-lasting regimes distinct from those of the Tai. Though not fully treated in this set of papers, I should like to briefly discuss upland Yunnanese regimes because they have been one of the actors

in the theater of history since the nineteenth century. The major group of Han Chinese in upper continental Southeast Asia came from Yunnan. The Yunnanese, generally known as Haw, included non-Muslim Chinese (Han) and Muslim Chinese. In the past, scholars have emphasized their role as merchants, especially as controlling trade networks, securing access to markets, procuring important products (Hill 1998; Forbes and Henley 1997), and being the bearers of technological change (Daniels 1996, 411–446; 2000; Nishikawa 2011); but here I propose the notion of them as creators of their own political organizations.

Upland regimes controlled by single-surname Yunnanese groups, for instance the Yang 楊姓 family of Kokang (Maliba 麻栗壩) and the Zhang 張姓 family of Löy Mō (Chinese: Laimo 萊萊山) located in the mountains on the west bank of the Salween, emerged during the eighteenth century, if not earlier (Shi 2010, 189). In recent times, they turned out such figures as Jimmy and Olive Yang (of Kokang) and the drug lord and Shan (Tai) separatist military leader Khunsa (Zhang family member, Chinese name Zhang Qifu 張啓富), to mention just a few. The Chinese Muslim (Panthay) settlement at Panglong (Chinese: Bannong 班弄/Banglong 邦籠) in the Wa states, founded in 1875, two years after the fall of Du Wenxiu's Dali Sultanate, expanded control over the surrounding Wa people after the arrival of the British during the 1890s and "established themselves as the direct military and commercial overlords" of a large tract of land lying between British-ruled Burma and Yunnan after the Wa-Panthay War of 1926–27; they engaged in long-distance caravan trade with Indochina, southern Burma, and China until the Japanese invasion. It was the wealth of the Panglong Chinese Muslims, mostly derived from the opium trade, that enabled them to equip themselves with modern arms and to exercise authority in the Wa states (Forbes and Henley 1997, 132). These upland regimes emerged as organizations independent of Chinese state power, and in the case of the Chinese Muslims their move to Panglong was motivated by the need to escape from oppression by the Qing in the first place.

People from tiny upland Yunnanese regimes have played substantial, if sometimes notorious, roles in the post-1950 history of minority peoples in northern Burma by deploying trading and militia networks to serve their own political and economic interests. They have been deeply involved in the drug trade and ethnic insurgency movements in parts of upper continental Southeast Asia, where the authority of remote central governments has remained weak, but their influence has been disproportionately large in comparison to the size of their organizations.<sup>5)</sup>

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5) The most comprehensive and detailed account of the main Han people involved in the drug trade and ethnic insurgency movements in the region during the second half of the twentieth century can be found in Lintner (1999).

Little in-depth research has been done on upland Yunnanese regimes, and indeed the term “regime” is used only tentatively. Nevertheless, available evidence allows us to attempt some basic conceptualization. First, these regimes were headed by influential Yunnanese families or individuals whose dominance derived from economic activities such as trade; they were not founded on a lord-vassal relationship as in Tai societies. Second, Yunnanese leaders forged close relations with outside political powers, which bolstered their authority and enabled them to maintain some measure of semi-independence. Their villages and regimes had military organizations and possessed the ability to field fighting men. Daniels’s paper presents the case of an upland Yunnanese (Han) village providing mercenaries for lowland Tai for 40 years.

Recognition by outside political powers and trade constituted common features of upland Yunnanese regimes. The Yunnanese of Kokang maintained a measure of autonomy by cooperating with the Tai polity of Sēn<sup>5</sup> wii<sup>1</sup>, (Burmese Theinni; Chinese Mubang 木邦) in the precolonial era, the British during the colonial period, and the Burmese government after 1947. Legitimization from outside stands prominent in the case of the Yunnanese family surnamed Fu 傅, who administered the hill-dwelling Haw, Phunoy, Akha, Yao, and Miao ethnic groups in Phongsaly, Laos, from the nineteenth century until the 1950s. The authority of this family derived from official appointments made by Lao royalty; successive monarchs issued family heads with Phanyā titles. The titles of the last three appointees were Phanyā Somphū (Fu Zhaoqing 傅兆清 [d. 1933]), Phanyā Sai (Fu Yuanlin 傅元林), and Phanyā Chāfū (Fu Yuanzhang 傅元璋 [1911–88]). The economic foundation of the Fu family regime essentially rested on trade with the upland peoples under their administration as well as adjacent Yunnan (Daniels 2009, 75–82, 90–106). Yunnanese regimes seem to have striven to create environments that facilitated their commercial and technological activities, probably out of the realization that without power they would not be able to protect and advance their economic interests. In this sense, their regimes aspired to ideals different from those of the Lahu, as described in Kataoka’s paper.

Lowland and upland societies in northern continental Southeast Asia have assimilated large numbers of Han immigrants since the sixteenth century, if not earlier. A Chinese source of 1584 stated:

There are several 10,000 people from Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangxi, and Sichuan who engage in trade and crafts at the Great Ming Market (*Da Ming Jie* 大明街) outside the city of Katha. A further 10,000 have been captured by the Three and Six Pacification Commissioners (*sanxuan liuwei* 三宣六慰). (Anonymous, *juan* 14, 60a)

Surprisingly large numbers of Han resided at the Great Ming Market located outside

Katha, a major trading point on the Ayeyarwaddy River, while equally enormous numbers of Han artisans and craftsmen were in the service of the rulers of Tai polities in continental Southeast Asia (*sanxuan liuwei* 三宣六慰).<sup>6)</sup> Tai rulers incorporated captive Han with skills beneficial to them into the labor service systems of their polities. Tai rulers procured the bearers of Chinese skills and technology by military force and coercion and settled them within their polities. Han artisans supplied Tai aristocrats with vital skills and technologies necessary for the formation and maintenance of their polities (Daniels 2000, 82–88). Most of these early migrants did not form long-lasting Han communities but were absorbed into lowland Tai society, their descendants retaining few traces of their ethnic heritage.

Prior to the eighteenth century the Han population of Yunnan was relatively small, so there were few incentives for the Yunnanese to migrate *en masse*. Indeed, empirical evidence for the existence of upland Yunnanese regimes emanates mainly from the post-eighteenth century period. Such regimes emerged with the sudden burgeoning in numbers of Yunnanese and other Han settling in the uplands, which in turn resulted from contemporary population explosion in China. Yunnanese societies in the uplands provided an alternative to absorption into lowland society, which seems to have been the norm during earlier periods. Trade was evidently a mainstay of these regimes and even semi-independent villages in the upland tracts of Tai polities, yet many Yunnanese cultivated hill land, sometimes practicing swidden agriculture. Nevertheless, Yunnanese societies seem to have been too fluid and unstable to permit the formation of polities and remained small in comparison with Tai polities.

The recent rise in the political and economic power of the People's Republic of China reminds us of the importance of the Chinese state for Yunnanese and other Han communities in contiguous continental Southeast Asia. Since the 1990s, the ever-growing influence of China has invigorated many Han in the uplands there to utilize their cultural affiliation as well as their linguistic and literary skills to advance their own economic interests; proficiency in Mandarin brings opportunities to work in Taiwan or to engage in business with China. A Han Chinese heritage has now become a distinct advantage to upland Han people in northern Burma, Thailand, and Laos. This hints that Han absorption into lowland society may be connected to the association of the Chinese state with

6) The term *sanxuan liuwei* 三宣六慰 refers to the three *xuanfusi* 宣撫司 of Nandian 南甸 (Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ti<sup>3</sup>), Gan'ai 干崖 (Mäng<sup>2</sup> Naa<sup>3</sup>), and Longchuan 隴川 (Mäng<sup>2</sup> Wan<sup>2</sup>) and the six *xuanweisi* 宣慰司 of Mengyang 孟養, Mubang 木邦 (Sën<sup>5</sup> wii<sup>1</sup>), Miandian 緬甸 (Tounggoo Dynasty Burma), Cheli 車里 (Sipsong Panna), Babai 八百 (Lan Na), and Laowo 老撾 (Lan Sang). The titles *xuanfusi* and *xuanweisi* are usually both rendered into English as Pacification Commissions, and in this instance they refer to the polities in the Tay Cultural Area.

northern continental Southeast Asia at different times over history. In the past, Han immigrants found it expedient to integrate with lowland Tai and Burmese societies when Chinese dynastic power weakened and imperial interest in northern continental Southeast Asia waned. But full integration was not necessary, and it proved easier for them to maintain their own semi-independent regimes when the Chinese state deepened its involvement in the area.

Many aspects of upland polity-building endeavors remain unexplained. Since Leach, scholars have occasionally invoked the notion of Tai/Shan polities as models for polity-building activities by upland groups such as the Kachin, Palaung, and Karen, and Lieberman has classified their political organizations as “proto-statelets” (Lieberman 2003, 208–209). Nonetheless, as Kataoka points out in his paper, our lack of a framework for understanding upland concepts of state, kingship, and power severely constricts the potency of our analytical powers. It remains unclear exactly what type of autonomous societies upland peoples aspired to create, so it is still too early to conclude whether they were simply imitating Tai models or striving to establish something different.

It is with topics of this sort that the following papers attempt to grapple. They provide some firm and generalized conclusions grounded in empirical evidence and herald, I hope, the beginning of a new age of consensus around the importance of the upland peoples in the making of history in northern continental Southeast Asia.

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# Mountain People in the *Muang*: Creation and Governance of a Tai Polity in Northern Laos

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This paper traces the history of Luang Namtha, an intermontane valley basin in northern Laos, based on the narratives of non-Tai ethnic groups that collectively constitute a majority in the region. The narratives demonstrate the possibility of alternative histories of *muang* polities, which are a core part of our understanding of Tai social and political organization. These narratives describe a central role for mountain people in the *muang*, including the formation, population, and development of what appears to be a Tai polity. This analysis suggests the need to open up our understanding of “traditional” Tai political spaces to accommodate an expanded historical agency for upland groups conventionally circumscribed within their own upland setting. This paper argues that the first step towards a more nuanced understanding of *muang* is recognizing them as cosmopolitan areas in which many sources of power, innovation, and transformation intersect.

**Keywords:** Laos, *muang*, ethnic minorities, local history, Lanten

## I Layers of Locality: Digging for Historical Narratives

The Lanten, Sida, and Bit people living in the foothills surrounding the town of Luang Namtha in northern Laos tell of how the valley was empty when their forefathers migrated to the area at the end of the nineteenth century. Some even assert that they were the ones who established the current valley settlement and have played a central role in its governance. These claims go against our assumptions about the expected historical development of a small urban center in northern Laos. Indeed, as the plane clears the mountains and descends into the valley, one sees a town surrounded by wet rice fields that cover an area of 100 square kilometers and two Buddhist stupas on the hills overlooking the city. The village next to the airport has an old Buddhist temple, and the

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irrigation system extends across the valley bottom. In town, the people speak Lao and several other related Tai languages. Any student of mainland Southeast Asia would assume that they are entering the world of a typical Tai<sup>1)</sup> *muang*—the hierarchically organized but decentralized socio-political structures that are believed to be the backbone of cultural continuity<sup>2)</sup> running throughout the concept of Laos in history (Stuart-Fox 2002).

### *Towards “Indigenous Histories” in Northwestern Laos*

There is no official written history of Luang Namtha. However, “official narratives” found in statements of local government offices and officers, emphasize the *muang* characteristics of Luang Namtha. *Muang* is an ambiguous term referring to the political and social organization of the Tai, but has a wide range of meaning in terms of geographic, social, and political scope (Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012). The conventional understanding of the history of the Luang Namtha basin encapsulates many of the assumptions that exist regarding the *muang*—that it was founded in the sixteenth century by a group of Tai-speaking Buddhists who set up a small polity attached to a more powerful Tai *muang*, supporting themselves economically by wet rice cultivation and providing a socio-political center for other latecomer ethnic groups that live on the fringe of the Tai world. Government offices often reiterate such a view on the regional social history. For example, the Lao National Tourism Authority has the following history of the Namtha valley on its website:<sup>3)</sup>

In 1890, the Tai-Yuan returned to the Nam Tha Valley under the aegis of Chao Luangsitthisan to re-establish Muang Houa Tha. Vat Luang Korn, one of Luang Namtha’s largest, was constructed shortly thereafter in 1892. However, the newly resettled Muang Houa Tha was to enjoy its independence for only two years. In 1894, following a meeting between the French, British and Siamese colonists, it was agreed that Muang Houa Tha would be administered by the French and the Mekong from the northern reaches of Muang Sing to Chiang Saen would serve as the border between French Indochina and British-ruled Burma. Not long after this divide took place the first group of Tai-Dam arrived from Sip Song Chou Tai in north western Viet Nam and established Tong Jai Village on the east bank of the Nam Tha River. At about the same time the Tai-Dam arrived, migrations of Tai-Neua, Tai-Kao, Akha, Lanten, Yao and Lahu originating in Sipsong Panna, Burma and northwest Viet Nam began to migrate to the area’s fertile valleys and the forested mountains surrounding them.

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- 1) We use the term “Tai” in referring to a large group of peoples speaking related Tai-Kadai languages and sharing certain cultural heritage such as a *muang* model of political organization. In the Lao case, this refers to Lao, Lue, Phuan, Tai Dam, and other related groups. In the Luang Namtha story, the key Tai groups are Nyuan, Lue, and Tai Dam. The point of using this term is to characterize them as lowlanders, in contrast to the other people we refer to as uplanders.
  - 2) Writers such as Archaimbault (1964) and Aijmer (1979) have contributed to the idea that the hierarchical relations represented by the *muang* are a factor of proto-Tai culture.
  - 3) [http://www.tourismlaos.org/web/show\\_content.php?contID=42](http://www.tourismlaos.org/web/show_content.php?contID=42), accessed March 2, 2012.

The arrival of non-Tai people is peripheral to the establishment of the *Muang*. It is this disconnect between the conventional discourse and the oral traditions of the non-Tai people that suggests the need to unravel the history of the *muang* and question some of the basic assumptions that underpin it.

Grabowsky's (2003) articulation of an "indigenous" history of northwestern Laos has helped move us away from the simplicity of dominant historical discourses of nation-state formation. Grabowsky has worked to peel away the Western colonial narrative to free up a different level of historical storytelling. In his analysis of the Chiang Khaeng Chronicle, the local records of a Tai Lue principality on the northern reaches of the Mekong, not far from Luang Namtha, Grabowsky brings the dilemmas and decisions of the Tai Lue rulers of the *muang* to the forefront, giving agency to the local political players in the theatre of struggle between the French and British in the late nineteenth century. In doing so, he demonstrates that these local figures "were by no means exclusively ignorant victims" of the negotiations dominated by the colonial powers, but rather they "tried hard to manipulate the contradictions between the two main European colonial powers to secure the very survival of that state" (*ibid.*, 62). His exploration of the Tai Lue leaders' strategies is an attempt to understand what the process of bringing an area under the colonial blanket meant for the life of the local population, giving voice to an important alternative narrative of the colonial experience.

Working with the same Chiang Khaeng Chronicles, Grabowsky and Renoo (2008) uncover a wealth of information about the Tai Lue, their socio-economic situation and their political strategies. There is valuable detail about the relations between the Tai Lue and the other groups living on the outskirts of the *muang*. The power structure of the Chiang Khaeng polity was determined by symbiotic relations between the politically dominant Tai Lue, who settled in the valley of the Mekong and its tributaries, and the autochthonous hill tribes that provided valuable forest products, precious metals, and agricultural labor. Importantly the Chronicle mentions that the Tai Lue were often a minority in the region they ruled. For example, the composition of the Tai Lue leader Chao Fa Dek Noi's young followers—five Tai and seven Kha (non-Tai autochthonous people, usually referring to speakers of Mon-Khmer languages)—illustrates demographic balance of the Chiang Khaeng polity (Grabowsky 2003).

The Chiang Khaeng Chronicles are written by the Tai Lue, the local Tai elite of the *muang*, and Grabowsky correctly recognizes this fact without hesitation. While he undertakes to highlight the impacts of policy on people in the marginal areas of the would-be colony, there is still a large sector of society that remains voiceless. Our knowledge of these other ethnic groups comes primarily through the observations and interpretations of outsiders, Tai and Western, who bring their own frameworks, biases, and objectives

to the writing of history. The Tai Lue understandably write history to make it their own, and that places non-Tai peoples in a certain position within the Tai political and social imagination. While this analysis is of high value, it still leaves us wondering what the marginal majority of non-Tai groups in the *muang* experienced in this process and how they acted on other contemporary social forces.

### *Further Layers of Autochthonous Historical Narrative*

It is well established in the historical records of the Tai Lue and other Tai groups in the area that relations between Luang Prabang, Chiang Mai, Kengtung, and Chiang Hung during the period of the sixteenth–twentieth centuries were dynamic, dramatic, and often tumultuous. Trade routes crisscrossed the area of northern Laos while armies struggled to secure political power over local people. The Namtha river provided access from the Sipsong Panna territories to the Mekong and down to Luang Prabang, but river travel was difficult on account of rapids and seasonal fluctuation in water levels. Another more convenient overland trading route from Chiang Khong to Chiang Hung passed through Muang Luang Phukha, as Luang Namtha was previously known, and Viang Phukha, over the mountains and down to the Mekong. Lue and Shan (Tai) *muang* established on the northern reaches of the Mekong were key intermediary actors in the local politics and trade between the larger Tai *muang* of the region. Not far to the north-east of Muang Luang Phukha is a chain of salt fields which provided an important economic commodity traded widely across the region until the 1980s. Discussing these historical dynamics in detail, Walker has made a major contribution by dispelling the myth of isolation in this area of the upper Mekong (1999).

Évrard (2006) has described the historical and social background of northwestern Laos from the perspective of the Khmu. The Khmu of the right bank of the Namtha were integrated into the trade routes that passed through their territory, while the Khmu of the left bank were more isolated from this traffic. The river was also a border among the Khmu, with the right bank Khmu associated with the kingdom of Nan, and the left bank with Luang Prabang. One group of Khmu, known as Khmu Yuan, were concentrated around the *muang* of Vieng Phukha, and as the ethnonym suggests, have a close historical relationship with the Yuan (Nyuan) (*ibid.*). This area prospered in the seventeenth century and was an area of Tai political influence, as attested by the Buddhist structures that date from this period. The Khmu-Nyuan relationship in this period may have been of the classic *muang* model, with the Tai wielding power from the narrow valley area, but incorporating the Khmu in their upland landscapes through ceremonial and economic relationships (Grabowsky 2003). The local Khmu-Nyuan relationship was further reinforced by the Muang Vieng Phukha's relationship with the principality of Nan, a larger



center of Nyuan political power.

The Tai records also note that the majority of the population in the area was Mon-Khmer. People speaking Khmuic and Palaungic languages inhabited the mountainous regions, but they came into increasingly intense contact with Tai cultures as the Tai *muang* expanded. Linguistic evidence from Khmu suggests that Mon-Khmer groups began borrowing from Tai languages at an early time, a phenomenon that indicates high levels of bilingualism among mountain people (Downer 1989–90) across the mountainous areas. The implications of this cultural contact are evident in the Khmu, Rmeet, Samtao, and Bit languages still spoken in the area, which contain a high level of Tai lexical material. It is difficult to put a date on the start of this interaction, but it is likely that the linguistic contact became significant with the founding of small Tai *muang* in what are now the northern areas of Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. A somewhat more recent development is the evolution of tones in Samtao and several varieties of Khmu, which were originally not tonal but developed tones partially as a result of contact with local Tai languages that have tones. This deep cultural influence requires the presence of social networks that were much denser than those implied by simply symbolic roles in ritual or occasional trading relations.

Évrard states that the ritual formalization of the relations between Tai and Mon-Khmer groups determines the “structure interethnique” that provides the basic framework for considering the *muang* and its relations with the margins (Évrard 2006, 77). Indeed, it is this ceremonial relationship—the precarious balance of appropriation and integration, denial and recognition—that has captured the analytic attention of many scholars of the region. However, Évrard shows in his own study that the micro-dynamics, such as the practical details of livelihoods, soldiering and river trade, of the Tai Lue-Khmu relationship require a rethinking of the assumptions about dependence and dominance that are implied in models based on structure. Furthermore, insights on the cultural processes associated with the appearance of villages that are mixed Tai-Khmu—or even Tai villages that became Khmu call for a finer resolution of analysis. Particularly interesting is his assertion that when looking at this level of interaction, the ethnic group often loses its usefulness as an analytical tool, because here the subgroupings<sup>4)</sup> within society play a more important part in determining the outcome of power struggles and development dilemmas.

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4) This is an analysis of the *tmooy* subgroupings in Khmu society. See also Évrard (2011) for a compelling analysis of these social dynamics in the contemporary context.

*Re-examining the Formation and Transformation of a Muang*

Condominas (1990) made the important observation that the structure of the *muang* has typically been the overwhelming concern for scholars interested in the history of Tai people and their neighbors. Reflecting on his own fieldwork on the interethnic and interclass relationships between the Tai Dam, Laha, and Khang in a *muang* of north-western Vietnam, he expresses frustration with the standard approaches.

Though this picture conveys, it seems to us, the structure of a muong [*muang*] in the modern period, it cannot convey the internal dynamics that move this society. In this region, as elsewhere, ethnographic descriptions give an impression of a static society which, paradoxically, reinforce the same picture given by accounts of conquests that historians provide. The interpretations of these two types of data, although throwing light on each other, allow only a vague suggestion of the internal dynamics of a present-day muong. (*ibid.*, 69)

Okada (2012) has further challenged the scholarship on *muang* in northern Vietnam, drawing on texts written in Han Nom and old Tai scripts dating from before the colonial period. He uncovers detail about *muang* in Thai Bac, described as having two centers of power—one Tai Dam (Black Tai) and one Tai Khao (White Tai)—that interacted with each other. The governance of the *muang* was based on several sources of authority. Rather than a center-periphery model for the *muang*, he proposes a more dynamic and networked system of relations among many different peoples. Furthermore, the area is high in “cultural hybridity,” given the multiple ethnic groups living in close proximity. He concludes that ecological conditions, influxes of immigrants, and linkages to the regional economy were critical in creating the structures that were subsequently identified by scholars such as Condominas in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In other words, the *muang* political structure was embedded in the local geography and ecology and situated within a particular historical context, and was not the product of any one ethnic group. Moreover, the “Tai Dam” model was shown to be a mix of Tai Dam and Tai Khao, while the basic decentralized structure contradicts the notion of concentrated power. However, the reliance on written records means that the non-Tai people fade out of sight quickly, and we are left wondering again how relations with and among autochthonous peoples were created and recreated over time, and what their role may have been in matters of the *muang*.

The heritage of ethnolinguistic diversity characterizing Luang Namtha, in which the Tai speakers have always been a decisive minority, begs the question of how a Tai-style *muang* was formed amid such situations of extreme diversity. What we know from the Tai and other records suggests that this ethnic complexity was probably the norm in the region. The data presented here illustrate how uplanders created niches within the

development and governance of the Luang Namtha *muang*, shaping the political, economic, and cultural landscapes that overlay the area today. The need for recognition of uplanders' agency in history has been mentioned with increasing frequency (for example, *Journal of Global History* 2010), but local narratives demonstrating the historical dynamism of this agency are still critical for unloading the baggage of state-written history. The oral traditions discussed here tie together the founding and expansion of the *muang* with the recent socio-economic development of Luang Namtha. Remembering themselves as founders of the *muang*, the non-Tai people see continuity in their political and economic engagement with the local center of governance within a local society that is dominated by Tai narratives.

### *Luang Namtha Demographics: Dynamic Complexity*

Now a growing urban center of some 45,000 people, the expansion of Luang Namtha's economy is driven by ever increasing levels of trade and investment. The city, which is the provincial capital of Luang Namtha province within the Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic, lies less than an hour's drive from the Chinese border, along the national road R3, which was upgraded in 2004 as part of the Asian Development Bank's Greater Mekong Sub-region Program to increase transport links among the countries in the region. Across the border is Sipsong Panna, China's rubber production area. Rapid growth in demand for latex in China has drawn Luang Namtha and Lao national agricultural policy solidly into transboundary product chains, transforming the landscapes and livelihood strategies of the local people. Despite the widespread conversion of forest fallow to rubber trees, visitors to Luang Namtha, numbering almost 250,000 in 2009 (Lao PDR, Government of Laos 2009), enjoy trekking in the Nam Ha National Protected Area and visiting villages of the many local ethnic minority groups.

The town of Luang Namtha shows great ethnolinguistic diversity, and the population of the town itself reflects the influx of diverse people since the early 1900s. Of the total provincial population of approximately 145,000 people (2005), nearly 45,000 live in Luang Namtha town. Luang Namtha provincial census data from 2005 is broken down by ethnicity in Table 1.

At the provincial level, the population breaks down into roughly 30 percent each for Tibeto-Burman, Mon-Khmer, and Tai-Kadai. Hmong-Mien and other small groups constitute the last 10 percent, while ethnic Lao account for only 3 percent of the population. These figures roughly reflect the ethnolinguistic situation documented by Izikowitz ([1951] 2001) in the 1930s, and by Halpern in the 1950s (quoted in Pholsena 2010).

The data and analysis presented here draw on narratives given by non-Tai people around the town of Luang Namtha. The data comes from extended interviews with and

**Table 1** Population of Luang Namtha Province by Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	Linguistic Family	% of Total
Akha	Tibeto-Burman	25
Khmu	Mon-Khmer	25
Tai Lue	Tai-Kadai	12
Tai Dam	Tai-Kadai	10
Hmong	Hmong-Mien	5
Lahu	Tibeto-Burman	4
Lamet	Mon-Khmer	3
Lao	Tai-Kadai	3
Nyuan	Tai-Kadai	3
Iu-Mien	Hmong-Mien	3
Singsili	Tibeto-Burman	2
Samtao	Mon-Khmer	1
Tai Nua	Tai-Kadai	1

Source: Lao PDR, Government of Laos (2005)

**Table 2** Ethnic Groups Appearing in the Paper

Tai	Non-Tai			
	<u>Mon-Khmer</u>	<u>Hmong-Mien</u>	<u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	<u>Sinitic</u>
Nyuan	Bit	Lanten	Sida	Ho
Tai Lue	Khmu	Mien	Pana	
Tai Dam		Hmong	Phunoy	
Lao				
Lue				

narratives given by local people in the Lao, Mun, Sida, Bit, Khmu, Hmong, Pana, and Chinese languages. Table 2 summarizes the main ethnic groups involved in the paper.

The events discussed in the following section are summarized in Table 3. First, we discuss the settling and opening of the *muang*, focusing on the role of a local leader of the Lanten ethnic group. Next we explore description of the governance of the *muang* after its founding, with an eye to uncovering some sense of the economic and political interactions between the *muang* peoples. This is followed by a look at the role of the *muang* and its people in the establishment of the current political order, including border demarcation and the Communist revolution. Finally, the analysis is brought into the current socio-economic development context. The presentation of this data is concluded with discussion of how identities are being redefined based on this alternative historical narrative, even as it is colored by the current Lao national political discourse. We make reference to analysis of local written Tai historical texts and other Western documents for the purpose of triangulation and contextualization.

**Table 3** Historical Events in Luang Namtha

Year	Event
1587	Nyuan depart Doi Tung in Chiang Rai
1600s	Nyuan enter Luang Namtha area
1733	Nyuan relocate to Nan
1880s	Lanten (Dang Yon Hak group) enter Luang Namtha area from China Sida enter Luang Namtha from Phongsaly Lanten (Li clan) enter Namtha from Muang Ay area (Oudomxay) Bit enter Luang Namtha from Muang Ay area Dang Yon Hak rules as “ <i>hua na khét</i> ”
1891	Nyuan return to Luang Namtha
1893	Lao territories become French colony Boten border incident
1894	Chao Luang Sitthisane ruling Luang Namtha as <i>chao muang</i>
1895	Tai Dam migrants arrive from Dien Bien Phu
1911	Qing forces defeated, KMT disruption starts
1914	Revolt of Muang Sing
1960	Lanten and others take to the forest to escape fighting between Communist and Royalist forces
1962	Luang Namtha town liberated by Communist forces Villagers return from the forest
1968	Tai Dam, Nyuan, Bit, and other groups siding with Royalists flee to Bokeo province
1974	Tai Dam and other ex-Royalist forces return to Luang Namtha
1975	Lao People’s Democratic Republic proclaimed
1976	Nyuan return to Luang Namtha

## II Settling the *Muang*: Dang Yon Hak and the Arrival of the Lanten

*When our ancestors arrived here, there was no one living in the valley basin.*

Common narrative of Lanten, Sida, and Bit elders of Luang Namtha

We often conceive of “minority” groups in mainland Southeast Asia as a substratum (autochthonous) or an overlay (late immigrants). The Lanten, Sida, and Bit communities living in Luang Namtha<sup>5)</sup> claim that they arrived in the area in the late 1800s. There are no specific dates, but genealogies given by village elders confirm this general timeframe. What is clear from all of them is that their ancestors migrated from different directions in search of safe and productive land. Fig. 1 shows key villages in the Namtha valley. Namdii, founded in the 1960s by the Lanten but originally the location of a Bit settlement, is a village in which Lanten and Sida currently live together. This village is where the majority of this paper’s narrators live. Ban Sida has a larger Sida population, and is the

5) The information presented here was gathered from Lanten, Sida, and Bit elders living in villages around the town of Luang Namtha.

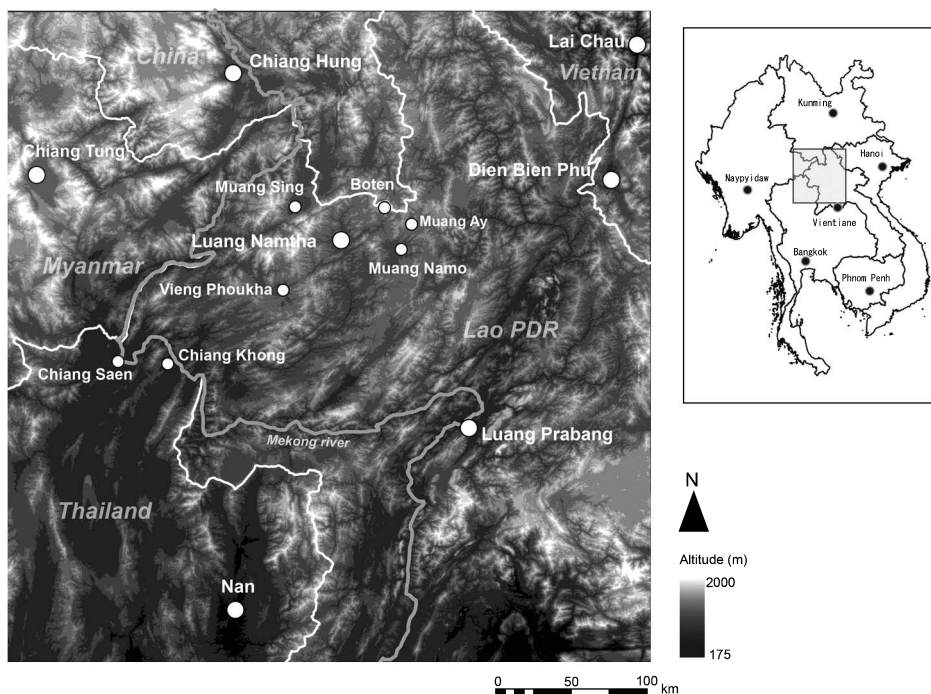


Fig. 1 Northern Laos

last of many moves the Sida have made since arriving in the area in the late 1800s. Elders in this village have provided supplementary information as well. Thong Om is the site of the original Lanten settlement discussed here.

Since at least the early 1800s,<sup>6)</sup> a group of Lanten<sup>7)</sup> had been living in the Sipsong Panna area of the Sino-Lao border, farming and hunting. The Lanten currently live in Laos, Vietnam, and China, and speak a Hmong-Mien language called Mun, which is closely related to the better-known Mien (Yao) language. Also, like the Mien, the Lanten have been practicing Daoism since perhaps the eleventh century (Pourret 2002). Their rituals are performed with the assistance of books written in Chinese characters. Chinese literacy remains an important, but increasingly threatened, aspect of Lanten culture, linked not only to rituals but to traditional singing and other forms of cultural knowledge

6) It is generally believed that the uplanders inhabiting the region are relatively recent arrivals. Dates are often put at around 1890 or thereafter, but conservative estimates based on oral genealogies date the arrival of the Sida and Lanten in the region to the 1860s.

7) We have chosen to use the ethnonym “Lanten” over other options because that is how they are known in the literature. We refer to their language as Mun, which is what they themselves call their language.

as well. The spoken Mun language has also been heavily influenced by generations of contact with Chinese. Nevertheless, the Lanten are known in contemporary Luang Namtha as one of the most culturally conservative groups, preserving their homespun cotton and indigo-dyed clothing, patrilineal clan-based society, and written language. The exonym “Lanten” comes from the Chinese word for indigo (*landian* 蓝靛), and this product has been so important to them that it has been suggested that they are called Lanten not only because they wear the indigo-dyed clothes, but also because they had a monopoly on the indigo market long ago in China (Takemura 1981).

One day this group of Lanten followed their game over the mountains into the area between Muang Sing and Muang Luang Phukha. Pleased with the environmental setting and encouraged by the low population density in the region, they moved into the Namtha valley, which they found to be empty. The Lanten took up residence as a large village along the eastern bank of the Namtha river and began to clear the vegetation for swidden farming and livestock. The thick forest was home to many animals and hunting continued to be an important element of their livelihoods. The Lanten leader, Dang Yon Hak 鄧玄亨, oversaw the establishment of several Lanten villages in the lowland area, but the main settlement was at a village called Thong Om, located just south of the present-day airport. At around the same time, a small group of Sida<sup>8)</sup> people arrived and started a settlement across the river, farming swidden fields and raising livestock. The Sida and the Lanten “built a road between their villages” and traded rice and cloth. It is interesting to note that the motivation for the migration is rather different between the Lanten and Sida. The Lanten insist that they were not persecuted in Chinese lands and were not fleeing from war; rather, they made conscious decisions based on consideration of their economic needs and potential for self-governance in daily matters. The Sida, on the other hand, tell that they were suffering an unbearable tax burden, which they paid in non-timber forest products such as lac, edible insects, and other special herbs and spices.<sup>9)</sup>

At around the same time, another group of Lanten was leaving the confluence of the Mekong and Khan rivers just outside Luang Prabang. This group also tells a story of entering into Lao territory, in this case from Lai Chau in Vietnam, during one of their hunting trips. Fleeing from turmoil and disease in the Sipsong Chu Tai, they made their way down into the Mekong basin by way of southwestern flowing tributaries. But life near the Lao royal capital was not agreeable, largely because of the shortage of land for swidden cultivation. The group then moved northwards to Muang Ay, in the current-day

8) The Sida speak a Tibeto-Burman language belonging to the Southern-Loloish branch of Lolo-Burmese.

9) We are preparing a separate analysis of Sida oral history that traces their departure from China and subsequent journey through Phongsaly to Luang Namtha.

Namo district of Oudomxay province. The Li clan was the dominant force in this Lanten community and oversaw the establishment of a more permanent settlement in their new home. The Lanten settlement fell within the political influence of a small Tai *muang* centered around Muang Ay, but which also included a large Khmu population, several villages of Bit and Mien, and a small population of Tibeto-Burman groups. Lanten textile production, important in trade among local groups, had made them an important factor in the local economy.

The leader of the Li clan asserted himself as a figure of power among these upland groups, providing an interface between the non-Tai upland people and the Tai rulers in the *muang*. With the death of the Li leader, his two sons—Li Yon Siu 李玄照 and Li Yon Sang 李玄璋—traveled to Luang Prabang with an entourage to consult with the Lao king and the French authorities on how to handle the succession of the *hua na khet* (Lao: subdistrict chief) position. It was decided that Yon Siu, the elder brother, would assume the position of upland leader. In recognition of his local economic and political influence, he received the title of *saen luang* (Lao: leader of 100,000) and returned to Muang Ay as “the administrator of the mountain people.”<sup>10)</sup>

The Namu Lanten also built relations with the Bit, who had arrived recently as refugees from the Cheuang Wars of the 1880s.<sup>11)</sup> The Bit were spinners of high-quality thread from the Lanten cotton but apparently did not grow their own cotton. The Lanten recall how as many as 10 Bit households could be “attached” to a Lanten family, providing dedicated spinning services. Most Bit families had members who spoke Mun (Lanten), and many of the influential Lanten were conversant in Bit. The Luang Namtha Bit also recall their relationship with the Lanten, and confirm the importance of cotton in the exchange between the two groups. They also confirm widespread bilingualism. Bit oral narrative remembers their weak position in relationships with other larger, more powerful groups. For the Mon-Khmer groups of northern Laos, this would usually be assumed to refer to their position of subjugation to the local Tai rulers, but in this case there is some more recent evidence for some form of indentureship with the Lanten. In any case, it seems clear that the Lanten had established a position in the administration of the Ban Ay-Ban Khouang *muang* and carved out a niche for themselves in the local economy.

10) In Sino-Mun, 得種官名管山人.

11) Proschan (1998) provides useful information about the Cheuang Wars but does not mention the Bit specifically. The Bit themselves tell of fleeing the Phongsaly-Vietnam border area during this time, and their narrative puts them in Namu directly after that. It is likely that a group of Bit continued on from Namu to Namtha, as a British traveler has them well established in the upper area of the Namtha river watershed in 1891 (Anonymous 1982).



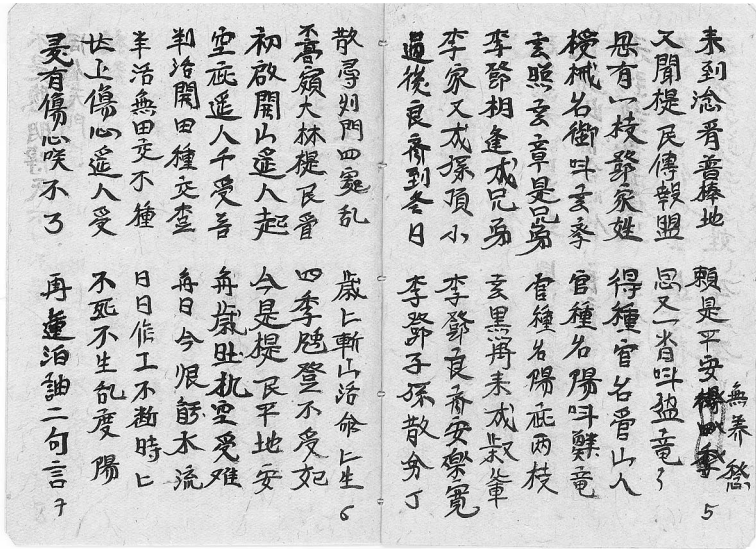


Fig. 2 Excerpt from *Short History of the Lanten in Luang Namtha*, written in Sino-Mun (泰戔遙人 *Thek Tjek Iu Mun*)

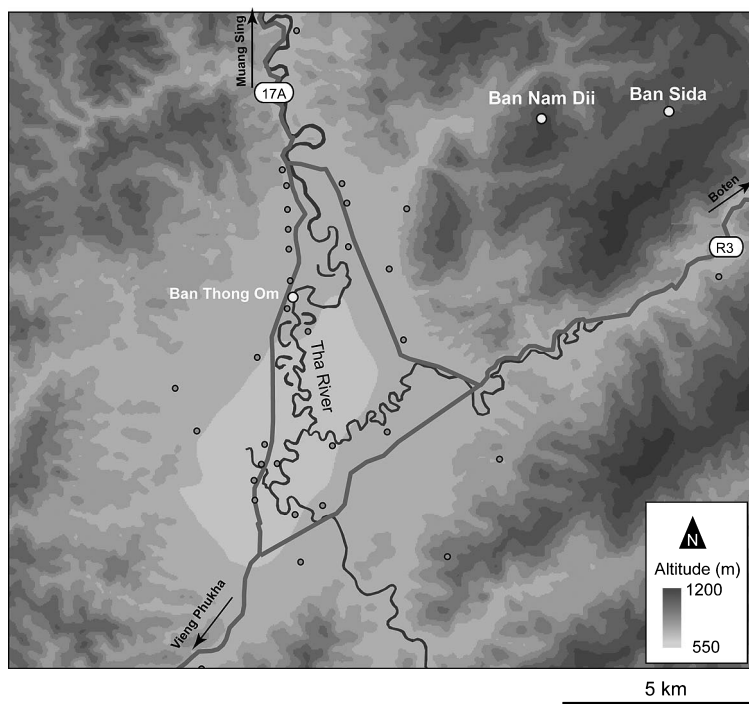
When Yon Siu died, the order maintained by the Lanten in the Muang Ay mountains was significantly weakened. By this time, Dang Yon Hak, the Lanten leader in Luang Namtha, had also established relations with the French in Luang Prabang and received the title *saen luang*. He made frequent trips to pay tribute and collect budgetary resources for administering the Luang Namtha area, passing through Muang Ay. Seeing that the Muang Ay Lanten had fallen into some disarray, he invited the Li clan to lead the Lanten to Luang Namtha and join them in the valley region. With the low population density and lack of manpower, Dang Yon Hak needed the Muang Ay Li clan to help him develop the basin. The prospect of having an influential leader in the form of Dang Yon Hak, in addition to the abundance of land, led the Li clan to accept the invitation and migrate to the Luang Namtha basin. Now there were several Lanten villages along the river, and the cultivation of upland rice, cotton, and other upland crops, along with raising cattle and buffalo, became the mainstay of the basin economy.

The Lanten oral history discussed here has also been written down in a traditional song format. Fig. 2 is one page from a song composed in 2011 by a Lanten elder, describing the arrival of his people in Luang Namtha. The Mun title of the song is *Thek Tjek Iu Mun* 泰戔遙人, but the author also gave it a Lao title meaning “Short History of the Lanten in Luang Namtha.” As a member of the Li clan, the writer focuses on the position of Yon Siu and Yon Sang, and the Li clan’s decision to join Yon Hak in Namtha. His emphasis is

Yon Hak's role in bringing the Lanten together to assert themselves in Luang Namtha, an event of importance remembered by elders from both the local Li and Dang clans.

### III Opening the *Muang*: Return of the Tai Refugees

The most powerful event in the Lanten accounts of their history in Luang Namtha concerns the role of Dang Yon Hak in transforming the Namtha basin from *pa* to *muang*. As introduced above, the Namtha basin was covered in dense forest when the Lanten and other groups arrived. Although traces of previous settlement were readily observable, establishing the new settlements required a portfolio of upland livelihood technologies including rice production in swidden fields, diversified cropping of food and fiber crops, hunting and gathering, and large livestock husbandry. Using these time-tested methods, the Lanten and Sida transposed their mountain livelihood systems onto the lowland ecology. Fig. 3 shows the current Luang Namtha basin, showing the location of the main research villages, and the original Lanten settlement of Thong Om.



**Fig. 3** Luang Namtha Valley

Source: MekongGIS

The uplanders who viewed this valley were long-time shifting cultivators, and describe the Namtha valley in terms that in Tai cultural frameworks signify *pa* or wild forest areas, as opposed to civilized, *muang* valley areas. The lowland areas on both sides of the Namtha river were covered in forest. Large trees known in Lao as *kok hai* (a type of *Ficus*) were numerous in the landscape, making it an inhospitable setting. The physical labor needed to clear large areas of land was not available, given the size of the migrant groups, and it was widely believed that *kok hai* are inhabited by wild spirits. The presence of *kok hai* trees holds special importance for the spiritual aspect of the human-nature relationships that were formed there. In the Sida telling of their arrival, the *kok hai* plays a central role (Sida elder, male, age 62):

In the times of our ancestors, there was no heaven and no earth. There was one *kok hai* tree that grew up to the heavens, so high that it blocked out the sun. In the shadow of this tree, crops could not be grown and people could not make their lives. So they tried to cut the tree down. We hired 30 and 300 Akha<sup>12)</sup> to come chop the tree. We chopped and chopped, but each morning we woke to find the tree had grown back. On the tree was a large vine. We decided to cut the vine. When we had chopped through the vine, the tree fell over, killing the Akha and forming a depression. The two leaders Ca Lo and Ca Sa made the pond into a fishing area, and we had plenty to eat. We stayed at the pond and it became our home.

In this story, there is clearly an intertwining of an older creation myth common across the region, and a more recent founding of the *muang*. It is interesting that there is no mention of agriculture but rather fishing. The identity of Ca Lo and Ca Sa is not clear. At first, we were told that these brothers were the original Sida descendants from their first ancestor, the mythical mother Go Gue. In subsequent tellings, it became clear that they were probably Tai but are still considered to be the ancestors of the local Sida. Interestingly, the Rmeet, a Mon-Khmer group living further to the south, have a similar but more detailed myth.<sup>13)</sup> In the Rmeet telling, the falling tree kills the two brothers but lands in Thailand, which explains how the original wealth of the Rmeet was lost to the Thai (Sprenger 2006). The Sida telling is more focused on the first step of transforming the inhospitable Luang Namtha area to a settlement with direct forward links to their current lives. It also indirectly recognizes the same assertion as the Lanten story: that the mountain people were the first people to open the valley.

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12) It is possible that the narrator has confused Akha with “Kha,” as might be suggested by the Rmeet story referred to below. However, in other stories told in conjunction with this, the Sida recognize the large population of Akha in the area. There is also a tendency to sanitize ethnonyms in present day storytelling, so as to avoid offending the national discourse of “harmony among all ethnic groups.”

13) There are many examples of cross-ethnic transfer in oral traditions in Luang Namtha.

Faced with the practical obstacles of developing the Namtha valley plain, Dang Yon Hak took advantage of his political connections. Yon Hak paid tribute to both Luang Prabang and Nan, a logical strategy for a leader aspiring to establish his own power locally. The trip to Luang Prabang to pay taxes and collect an administration budget was relatively easy and likely facilitated by the Li clan, who had closer relations and more local experience given their previous residence near the Lao royal capital. Yon Hak also made trips to the principality of Nan, which was under the suzerainty of Bangkok. One year, returning from a large tribute mission to the Siamese king in Bangkok with a sizable administration budget, Yon Hak stopped in Nan.<sup>14)</sup> Here he encountered a community of Nyuan who claimed to have come from Muang Luang Phukha and were willing to return to the Namtha valley with him. Arriving finally in Namtha with 10 Nyuan households, they were allowed to live near their old wet-rice fields and told to rebuild their paddy fields.

The Mun phrase used for this event *bu mun in dou dai taai an wa gjang*, “we Lanten brought the Tai here and put them in the village” is centered around the idea of inserting outsiders into the *muang*. This is reminiscent of the well-known Tai phrase referring to the practice of moving people to strengthen a polity—*kep phak sai sa, kep kha sai muang*, “collect vegetables and put them in the basket, collect Kha and put them in the *muang*”<sup>15)</sup>—but with a complete reversal of roles. Moreover, the Lanten elders often use the Lao phrase *phattana baan muang* (“develop the polity”), a live expression in the socio-political discourse of the modern Lao state, to describe Yon Hak’s intent to use the Nyuan to open the valley up to more intensive cultivation. This is in contrast with the Lanten description of their own role, *saang baan saang muang* (Lao: build-village-build-*muang*, “establish the polity”).

The resettlement of the Nyuan was followed in 1895 by a wave of Tai Dam refugees fleeing social upheaval in Dien Bien Phu. With the valley plain gradually returning to agriculture, the abundance of land and other resources made the Namtha basin attractive to these new arrivals. Soon the Lanten found themselves competing for resources with the Tai. In particular, Lanten livestock and Tai wet rice cultivation proved to be a difficult mix, with cattle damaging crops and expanding fields encroaching on forests where cattle were grazed. Furthermore, Lanten dry agriculture was carried out in areas that were

14) The Nan chronicle (Wyatt 1994) mentions a tributary mission from Nan to Bangkok in 1856, which included a “local chief” from Muang Luang Phukha. This date does not match the documented timing of the Nyuan return. It is also significantly earlier than the supposed arrival of the Lanten. The mission included local chiefs from a number of areas, and perhaps Yon Hak or a similar figure was part of it. If it was indeed Yon Hak, this reference greatly reinforces the Lanten clans to a significant role in the governance of Muang Luang Phukha.

15) This phrase is used particularly in reference to King Kawila’s attempts to reestablish Chiang Mai’s political control over northern Thailand after Burmese rule in the eighteenth century.

most easily returned to wet rice cultivation, and they made way for the Tai so that the valley could be developed. No doubt other social and political pressures figured into their decision as well.

#### IV Governing the *Muang*: Cultural Resources and Economic Interdependence

Scholarly concern with the governance of Tai *muang*, particularly with regards to the relationships between Tai and non-Tai peoples, tends to focus on structures involved in defining the hierarchy of unbalanced power relations. Insights into the modalities of interaction are harder to come by, but illustrate a multitude of relationships.

##### *Literacy, Bilingualism, and the Creation of a Political Niche*

Li Lao Da's song stresses the fraternal relations established between the two Lanten clans. Without the joining of the Dang and Li groups, it would have been impossible to assert any sort of authority in the Namtha area. But Dang Yon Hak continued to play the role of founder, tax collector, and payer of tribute. The Lanten use a number of different terms to describe the position of Yon Hak, focusing on the broad geographic scope of his authority and his high position within the political hierarchy. The two commonly used Lao terms emphasize that he was a regional leader, ostensibly exerting some kind of authority over a large and diverse number of people:

- *hua na khet* (Lao), "subdistrict chief"
- *chao khwaeng* (Lao), "provincial governor"

Not surprisingly, both Lao terms have direct semantic links to the modern Lao administrative system. The *hua na khet* position was also part of the French administrative structure, although it is used more informally in local oral histories. It should be noted that these Lao terms are frequently used even when the narrative is in Mun.

There is another set of Sino-Mun terms that related to Chinese administrative concepts:

- *gwen tjou* 県主 (Mun), "chief of district"
- *ai tjou ai gwan* 做主做官 (Mun), "to be lord, to be the administrator"
- *ai lu ai gwan* 做大做官 (Mun), "to be boss, to be the administrator"

These terms highlight the Chinese influence on Lanten ideas of authority and administration, most directly from their own experience as a peripheral group to the areas of Han power. The spiritual world of Daoist deities is a highly structured, complex system of hierarchical political relations. In their rituals, the Lanten are continuously dealing with the bureaucracy and power politics of the other world.

Another common phrase incorporates Tai and Chinese terminology into a Mun construction:

- *ai taao ai tjou* (Mun), “to be the *tao*,<sup>16)</sup> to be the master/owner”

These demonstrate the Lanten capacity to integrate different conceptions of power into their own discourse of political organization. The use of Lao terms shows the Lanten effort to describe their participation in a Tai administrative context. Thus Lanten oral history describes the rare situation of a non-Tai ruler, himself a migrant from the mountains, manipulating his political allegiances to increase his own local power by moving people into his *muang*. With a hostile natural environment, shaky demographics, and the wrong agricultural technology, Yon Hak had no other choice but to control his land by controlling the movement of people.

But Yon Hak was not in control of the stronger demographic force, the migration of the Tai Dam. The large Lanten villages had to move to the foothills on the fringe of the plains. After Yon Hak’s death, it is said that his son Dang Wan Nyan took over the position of leadership, but this was not passed on to the next generation. The Dang clan’s hold on local matters started to waver, as traditional Chinese education weakened and the Li clan began to assert itself. From this point the Lanten describe themselves as assuming a second layer of administration within a political structure headed by a Tai leader. Despite the loss of executive authority, the Lanten retained administrative power within the local governance system.

Governing the *muang* required communication with a diverse local population, the vast majority of which was illiterate. The orders and notifications of the *chao muang* could easily be written down by the Lanten in Chinese and carried to upland villages, where they could be read directly in Chinese to the Tibeto-Burman and other Hmong-Mien groups (all of whom used Chinese as a common language), or translated on the spot into Lue or Khmu for the Mon-Khmer speakers. In Namtha, the Lanten leaders had a cohort of assistants, comprised of *thin theng* 先生 and *thung thou nyan* 送書人. The former would write out messages, the latter would deliver, read, or translate the mes-

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16) *Tao* is a Tai term referring to an elite class of leaders in a *muang*.

sages. Details of these individuals survive in the collective memory and household records; we were told of Li Kyam Nyui, one of Yon Hak's well-known *thin theng*, separated by five generations and recorded in the family genealogy book of the Li clan elder who composed the song presented above.

Having maintained close relations with the Nyuan, however, the Li clan descendants continued to play the role of public relations officer for the Nyuan *chao muang*, providing an interface between the ruler and the ruled. In a typical *muang* situation, a lowland broker (Lao: *laam*) would have provided the economic and administrative (tax collecting) linkage between the uplands and lowlands (Walker 1999). The *laam* role was usually played by a Lao, often an individual of economic and political power, and oriented towards transactions with Khmu communities (Yokoyama 2010). Other uplanders, such as Hmong, were oriented to trading with the Haw caravans, and were thus often outside of the *laam* system (Halpern 1964). The Lanten do not use the word *laam* to describe their role in the *muang*; they focus on their role in facilitating communication and representing the *chao muang* through literacy. Lanten control of written communications indicates that they occupied a position of some power in the local political structure; their position was founded on a combination of their own linguistic and administrative skills, and their ability to maintain relations in both the upland and the lowland worlds.

But in daily life, relationships in the uplands largely depended upon oral communication. Contemporary narratives give some sense of the patterns of multilingualism that may have existed at around the turn of the nineteenth century. The Lanten, Sida, and Bit all give prominence to proficiency in many languages as a characteristic of a successful and influential leader. They themselves have typically been multilingual communities through past generations. Generally speaking, Haw (Yunnanese Chinese) and Lue were the lingua franca. Uplanders tended to use Haw with each other, while they would use Lue with lowlanders. The cultural and linguistic influence of Haw on both Hmong-Mien and Tibeto-Burman languages is evident in the current lexicons and ritual practices of those groups. But multilingualism among upland groups was also common.<sup>17)</sup>

For example, the Lanten have typically been proficient in Mien, and the Lamet and

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17) It should perhaps not be assumed that Haw influence is an upland-lowland phenomenon. In terms of worldviews and belief systems, this may be the case, but the Haw themselves have been referred to as upland Chinese and it is likely that a significant portion of these interactions may have happened in the mountains. As Daniels (2009) shows, generations of a Haw family surnamed Fu in Phongsaly province were issued with titles from the monarchy in Luang Prabang during the nineteenth century, and from the French colonial regime thereafter, which gave them authority to administrate and collect taxes from various Tibeto-Burman speaking upland peoples. The Fu family, and indeed other upland Haw too, were traders who maintained close relationships (including intermarriage) with, and exerted cultural and linguistic influence on, other highland ethnic groups.

Bit have spoken Khmu. As mentioned above, relations between the Lanten and Bit were conducted not only in Lue, which would be the standard lingua franca, but in their own languages as well. Artifacts of these patterns are still visible in Namtha today, although the patterns are undergoing change.

The telling of the Dang and Li clans establishing power over the newly settled areas in northern Laos harkens back to the ancient days of their relations with the Chinese emperor in the thirteenth century. The Lanten were provided with documents by the emperor giving them permission to migrate through the mountains as they pleased, conducting their upland agriculture. The mythic origins of this special privilege originate with the Lanten descent from Pang Hu 盤古, the first ancestor, a dog, who asked them to establish and maintain stability in the mountain areas.<sup>18)</sup> During those times, the Chinese emperor was eager to settle farmers in the mountains to quell the social unrest and banditry that was prevalent, and provided official documentation authorizing the Iu-Ngin (referring to the historical ancestors of the Mien, Lanten, and other related groups) to carry on their economic activities.

The documents that were held by the Iu-Ngin were called *Shan Guan Bo* 山關簿 and authorized them to conduct shifting cultivation.<sup>19)</sup> These papers also freed them from tax and corvée requirements. These documents are known to exist among the Mien, and one copy of the *Lu Cheng Tu Shan Guan Zhuan* 路程圖山關傳 (A Record of Mountain Passes on the Route Map) was recently found at the house of a Lanten ritual performer in neighboring Namo district (Tomita and Badenoch 2011). Pourret (2002) describes how the Iu-Ngin's relationship with the emperor condemned them to a life of mobility, but at the same time recognizes the utility of the documents in helping the Iu-Ngin retain their freedom and preserve their identity. Importantly, since these were official documents issued by the Chinese court, other administrations were likely to recognize their authority. Lemoine (1982, 12) has stated that by maintaining this mythic history, "the Yao [Mien] (and related groups) gave themselves, as it were, a bargaining counter in negotiations with the Chinese Empire." In fact, Lemoine suggests that the "history" that is written down in these documents may be the result of a negotiated solution to a spate of Iu-Ngin rebellions.

If there is some foundation in the assertion that written language was one of the mechanisms of control used by lowland polities on upland people (Scott 2009), the Iu-Ngin are seen to have appropriated this technology of control in order to legitimize their

18) The earliest date for the King Ping Charter, in which this descent is codified, is 1261. This is believed to be the original version that was copied and distributed widely in Thailand, Laos, and Yunnan.

19) In contemporary Lao society, documentation in support of uplanders' livelihoods consists of land allocation papers, which are designed to limit cultivation in the name of eradicating shifting cultivation.



residence in mountain areas, their shifting cultivation-based livelihoods, and their migrations. Furthermore, the possession of written language helped them to assert political power over other upland groups and make alliances with literate lowland groups. While the historical veracity of these stories is debatable, the salient point here is that the Lanten see themselves as playing a historical role mandated by the highest imperial authority. In case of Luang Namtha, there is no suggestion that Dang Yon Hak was ruling on behalf of a Chinese political force. However, the concept of ruling the mountains is clearly extended from the old mythical texts into the present, and they are very clear about the literacy.

The Lanten speak of very close relations with the Mien and Haw in this period, and Chinese literacy was a special aspect of this relationship. While many upland groups had people who could speak Chinese, proficiency in the written language was limited mostly to the Mien and Lanten. Economically, the Mien are reported to be the richest, as they were large producers of opium. Mien leaders have also been known to assert control over a wide area composed of many ethnic groups (Kandre 1967). The Haw controlled the trade networks, securing access to markets and important goods. Having established themselves as pioneers in the region, the Lanten maintained their position as a bridge into the *muang* administration, positioning themselves between the Tai, Kha, and Chinese worlds. Thus the commercial and cultural bonds between the Lanten, Mien, and Haw could have been a powerful force challenging the authority of the Nyuan.

### *Livelihoods, the Regional Economy, and Power Relations*

The Nyuan quickly found themselves to be just one of three Tai groups vying for power in Luang Namtha. As late as 1936, Izikowitz ([1951] 2001) describes Luang Namtha as consisting of three villages, one each of Nyuan, Tai Dam, and Tai Lue. The Sida tell of the Nyuan migrants' struggle to assert themselves. The narrator, a 62-year-old Sida elder from Ban Namdii, uses the pejorative ethnonym "Kalom" to refer to the Nyuan, and the term "Venyu," which is how the Sida refer to themselves in their own language.

After we built the road to the Lanten, we met the Kalom [Nyuan]. The Kalom had just arrived in Luang Namtha and they had no food. When we saw the Kalom, they said "You, Venyu [Sida]! Do you have any rice?" We responded, "Yes, we have rice, we have more rice than we can eat." And the Venyu said to the Kalom, "Do you have any cloth?" The Kalom responded, "We have plenty of cloth, we have more cloth than we can use for our clothes." We said, "In that case, bring cloth and we will trade with you for our rice." After that, we built a road between the Venyu and the Kalom. After that, a Kalom couple brought a bolt of cloth to the Venyu village and they traded for our rice. They tried to carry the rice back, but they got so much that they couldn't carry it all. And we got the cloth we needed. The couple went back and told the Kalom villagers about it, and after that the Kalom population began to expand.

This narrative stresses the poverty, vulnerability, and lack of good judgement the Sida saw in the Nyuan. The Nyuan shortage of rice is not surprising, given the description of the overgrown valley that they found when they arrived. The Sida and Lanten were skilled swidden farmers and had no problems with food security. To this day, the Sida are known for their high rice yields. In the Sida telling of this exchange, the Nyuan population was dependent on the Sida to meet their food needs, at least in the early period after their arrival. The exchange of rice and cloth creates a mutually beneficial relationship, even as the Sida story asserts some sort of authority through their superior survival skills. But his story continues in a different direction.

Then one day, a Venyu man was boiling maize to make feed for his pigs. A Kalom man came to the village to trade and saw the maize being boiled for pig feed. The Kalom man, he grabbed the maize and started eating it. "Don't eat that stuff, it will make you sick!" the Venyu man said. "Son, I will cook some proper food with rice for you," he said. The Kalom man responded, "Never mind, I'm happy to eat this maize, it won't kill me!" And he kept eating. But the Venyu man boiled rice anyway and made the Kalom man eat this good food. After finishing, the Kalom man returned to his village, but got sick and died. After that, the Kalom did not trust us Venyu anymore. They will not let us sleep in their houses any more.

Despite the Sidas' assistance with surplus rice, the Nyuan still lacked rice and came to the Sida for help. But the Nyuan would not listen to the Sida, and a tragedy opens a rift between the two. The story is again told in the terms of economic well-being, but the fate of the maize-eating Nyuan man hints at the larger difficulties the Nyuan were facing, with the Sida being blamed for the Nyuan's mistake.

### *The Muang in Local Geopolitics*

These oral histories clash sharply with the Nyuans' own representation of their return to Luang Namtha in the late eighteenth century.<sup>20)</sup> According to records written in the *tham* script kept at Nyuan temples, the Nyuan had fled Doi Tung in the current Thai province of Chiang Rai in 1587 to escape pressure from the Burmese. At the time, the Burmese king placed onerous tax and corvée requirements on the Lanna *muang* (Sarassawadee 2005). The Nyuan probably reached the Namtha valley in the early 1600s, and set up a modest *muang* under the direction of Panya Luang Kaansulin. The Nyuan would have established close relations with the local Khmu population who were the main demographic force in the region.

However, in 1733 they fled to the principality of Nan, caught again in the geopoliti-

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20) This information was gathered in interviews with Nyuan elders in Ban Luang, Luang Namtha province.

cal turmoil of the region. After an absence of 158 years, they claim to have returned to Namtha in 1891, a group of 500 led by Chao Luang Kommachang Sitthisane. In their party were also two *samanen*, Chua Channha and Chua Nanta. They repaired the *that* overlooking the valley, which had been originally completed in 1628, and the *wat* at Ban Khone. In 1893 Laos was formally incorporated into French Indochina. The Franco-British project to maintain a buffer zone in the unpopulated areas of Muang Luang had failed (Grabowsky 2003). The Nyuan claim that they took over the rulership of Luang Namtha, which they kept only until 1918, at which time a Lao administrator was dispatched from Luang Prabang to rule on behalf of the French. When Lefèvre-Pontalis traveled through the region in 1894, the town of Muang Luang Phukha was reportedly under the control of Chao Sitthisane. He describes how Chao Sitthisane had established good relations with the Tai Lue of Muang Sing, in order to strengthen his position against the Lue of Sipsong Panna, who had tried to gain territory by moving the border marker southwards in 1893.

Reading other accounts of the region at this time, it seems that Sitthisane had difficulty with the mountain people to the north and south. The Khmu leaders in Vieng Phukha, to the south of Muang Luang Phukha, had taken advantage of the long absence of Tai rulers to strengthen their position, and resisted yielding control of land to the Nyuan (Lefèvre-Pontalis [1902] 2000). In the foothills north of Muang Luang Phukha, the Lanten and Mien were also successful in remaining outside of the direct control of the Nyuan. Lefèvre-Pontalis mentions meeting with three of their leaders, welcoming them and other migrants from their group to settle in the area, but requiring that they submit to French rule. Chao Sitthisane had complained that the Mien and Lanten maintained relations with the Tai Lue of Sipsong Panna, which made them suspicious, especially given the Tai Lue border marker power play in 1893.

The French were at this time in search of a local elite, a critical layer of local society that had to be won over in order to establish legitimacy for the colonial project. In particular, there was a perceived need to unify the diverse people of the *muang*. Lefèvre-Pontalis was sympathetic to Chao Sitthisane's desire to request the ruler of Nan to release more Nyuan refugees and allow them to come to Muang Luang Phukha. But this did not come to pass, even as Tai Dam continued to arrive from the Lao-Vietnam border area. Although there were several candidates for a local leader they could support, the French were faced with the reality that there was no solid political structure that could be easily appropriated (Walker 2008). One such candidate for a local elite ally mentioned in an 1898 Report on Vieng Phukha (referenced in Walker 2008) was an "intelligent and active chief" who had been appointed by the Siamese some time before the treaty of 1893. Based on the documentation, one would assume that this refers to Sitthisane. As pres-

ented above, the Lanten narrative raises the possibility that this chief was Dang Yon Hak.

These interweaving, yet contradictory, narratives pose interesting questions. What sort of *muang* was evolving in the early twentieth century and who were the main individuals driving it? Lanten and Sida claim to have been the first settlers, catalyzing the resettlement of Nyuan. Perhaps, embracing dreams of restoring the glory of a past *muang*, the Nyuan struggled to assert themselves. In the meantime, they were displaced demographically by Tai Dam refugees, and their hopes of building a power base were eclipsed by the political reality of becoming a French colony.

## V Protecting the *Muang*: Border Demarcation and Securing the Salt

The Lanten direct political influence declined with the death of Dang Yon Hak, although they adjusted and kept a role in the governance of the *muang*. However protecting Namtha from the Chinese is an important theme in the Lanten telling of their role in the *muang*. The most enthusiastically told story of Lanten efforts to secure Lao territory from the designs of the Chinese concerns a border demarcation. From the colonial historical record, we know that in 1893 the Tai Lue of Sipsong Panna moved a border marker into the territory of Muang Luang Phukha in order to gain control of the salt fields at Boten (Walker 2008). The Chinese were generally believed to be behind this bold move on the part of the Lue, but in the Lanten telling, it was the Chinese (Qing dynasty officials) who were directly responsible for the affront on Lao (French colonial) territory (Lanten elder, male, age 58, Ban Namdii).

In those days, the Chinese moved the border down, just above the old Sida village. The people were not happy with this. So the Chinese came to negotiate again, and there was a large feast. But the French and Chinese could not agree on the border. The Chinese would not move the border back. The salt fields of Boten were on the Chinese side of the border. So Dang Yon Hak negotiated and agreed with the Chinese like this. The Chinese would return to their territory, and the next day both sides would send a delegation. Each would lead a pig and wherever the two delegations met, that would be the site of the border. The pigs would be prepared, and it would be decided. The next morning, the Lao side woke up late and were worried that they would arrive late and the Chinese would get control of the salt. So the Lao side carried their pig on their backs, and ran up the hill. Once they passed the Boten salt fields, they sat down and waited for the Chinese to arrive. That is how we kept the border on the other side of the salt.

This story relates how the Lanten outsmarted Chinese officials, but touches on the amusing possibility that the Lao side almost missed the opportunity to secure their salt because of a late start. The story also tells of the importance of the Boten salt fields for the Lao.

We first heard this story from the Sida, who claimed that they were the ones who carried the pig up the hill. The Lanten storytellers assert that they were the ones in the lead, because Dang Yon Hak was the figure of authority and the Sida were a small group without any influential leaders in the *muang*.

In a later episode, the Lanten save Lao territory from the Chinese yet again. After the defeat of the Qing forces by the Republicans in 1911, defeated Qing soldiers flooded into Lao territory and the security situation deteriorated quickly. There was much theft of food and livestock, as the French had withdrawn to Namong district in Oudomxay province, leaving a political vacuum. Again, in the 1940s, the Lanten helped repel marauding Guomintang soldiers, as described by a Lanten ex-soldier (male, 66 years old):

The Haw of Chiang Kai-shek's army were numerous. The people were suffering but there was nothing to be done. Finally we decided to go get help from the French garrison in Namong district. Three hundred French soldiers came back with us, but when they got to Dong Ving, the French did not see any Chinese soldiers and got very upset with us. They said that if they didn't see the Chinese soldiers the next day, they would eat Lanten liver for dinner. They continued down into the Namtha valley and arrived at Ban Pasak on the Namtha river. The Chinese soldiers were camped on the other side of the river. The French crossed the river and chased the Chinese back to Muang Sing and over the border back into China. Because of this, the French stayed in Namtha, and there were no more security problems.

These episodes portray a central role for the Lanten in key defenses of Lao territory. In the first story, the Lanten were able to renegotiate another chance for a beneficial outcome to the border demarcation with Chinese officials because of their intimate knowledge of Chinese culture and skills in the Chinese language. In the second story, because of their previous position within the French administration, the Lanten were able to convince the French to return to Namtha and restore stability to the region. These stories also highlight some ambiguity in the Lanten relationship with the Chinese. They are proud of their association with the Chinese culture of literacy, but at the same time they make reference to an ever-present threat not only to their own existence, but also to the well-being of their area of residence. It is worth noting that in both, the Chinese are made out to be the enemy, when in fact both the Tai Lue and Chinese contributed to the social disturbances. This is likely a manifestation of the present national discourse of borders and nations working retrospectively on the historical memory of the Lanten. Repelling a Chinese enemy allows them to retain the protection of Lao territory as the theme, while at the same time increasing the import of the actual defense by enlarging the size of the enemy.

## VI Liberating the *Muang*: Minorities and the Communist Victory

*"Together with the Khmu, the Lanten brought the revolution to Luang Namtha."*

Lanten ex-soldier describing the mountain peoples' contribution to the Liberation effort.

The town of Luang Namtha was "liberated" in 1962, an important victory in the Communist struggle against the Royalists. Fighting over the rural and mountainous areas continued until 1986.

Lanten elders tell of their satisfaction when the French returned after World War II, as the familiar regime reestablished stability to their lives. However, they were well aware that the French had returned on different terms. The Lanten were sympathetic to the pro-independence Lao Issara message that the French would not be able to maintain their presence for much longer, and that it was better in the long run for the Lanten to participate in the establishment of a new Lao regime. A sizable number of Lanten joined the Communist *Ay Nong*<sup>21</sup> forces. Many of the Lanten soldiers were young men who just had a sense that something was changing and felt that they should be a part of it. In 1964, a Lanten unit was set up in Namtha, composed of approximately 80 people, but was broken up and integrated into other units in 1968. For those who remained in the village, it was a period of hardship, as described by a Lanten ex-soldier (male, age 61, Ban Namdii).

In 1960, the Lanten of the Namdii area fled to the forest because the fighting was getting bad. Villages and rice barns were burnt, mostly by Yao [Mien] soldiers who fought for the French. We dug tubers in the forest to eat. Their leaders were Chao La and Chao Mai, and they were very strong. The Yao were stronger than the Lanten because their leaders had good relations with the KMT [Kuomintang]. They collected opium from all households and then made big sales to the KMT. We Lanten only produced opium for our own use, and we never knew how to sell it. Before, we traded our cloth for Yao paper. My father, Tan Lao San, went over to Namo to get weapons to fight the Yao. In 1962, we came out of the forest because Namtha was liberated. But there were still attacks by Yao who hadn't fled. The Yao burned our houses. My grandfather's official regalia were all burned. The shoes were beautiful and shiny, but they were burned. After two or three big battles, the Vietnamese soldiers finally swept out the remaining Yao.

The Lanten relationship with the Mien was for most intents and purposes destroyed by the war period. However, when the Lanten ex-soldiers speak of their time in the war, they frequently mention their close relationship with the Khmu. The main *Ay Nong* base

21) In the post-1975 historical discourse, the Communist forces are known as *Ay Nong* (the brothers) and the Royalists as *Satu* (the enemy). This narrative is by the Lanten who were on the *Ay Nong* side.

in Namtha was in Vieng Phukha district, an area to the south of Luang Namtha town that is mainly Khmu. Li Lao Da recalled how Lanten soldiers, many of whom had grown up near Khmu villages and understood basic Khmu, quickly becoming proficient in the language. They tell of long periods of time in which they were alone with the Khmu, receiving little support and having very little contact with Lao soldiers.

The last of the Lanten *thin theng* were important in the new regime's post-liberation political work of establishing control over the rural areas. Three of these individuals traveled around the northern part of the Namtha valley conducting public relations for the *Ay Nong*. The immediate objective of these efforts was to "raise awareness," and their tasks consisted of taking messages from the *Ay Nong*, written in Chinese, and reading them in mountain villages, in the same manner as they had done previously for the Nyuan *chao muang*. In the village, the *thin theng* would assess who could speak and read Lao well enough to understand the message and establish a point of contact for on-going propaganda activities. The Lanten seem to have been particularly well equipped for this role, again because of their fluency and literacy in Chinese. Moreover, each spoke Lue and could read basic Lao. All could communicate in Mien and Khmu, as well. But the Lanten did not have a monopoly on the mountain propaganda work. One man of Sida-Pana parentage was another active propagandist, speaking Haw, Sida, Pana, Lue, and Khmu. Without these multilingual message-bearers, the *Ay Nong* were limited in their access to mountain communities. Such a combination of linguistic capacity and ethnic minority identity seem to have been key factors in convincing upland people to support the *Ay Nong* forces.

The role of ethnic minorities in the Communist struggle has been debated. There is some sentiment that the minority groups were crucial to the liberation of the country at the local levels (Pholsena 2006). In this interpretation, the Lao avoided much of the actual fighting and took orders from an elite that was either Vietnamese or heavily influenced by the Vietnamese. Evans (2003) has argued that the role of the minorities has been overestimated, and that the Lao were much more engaged on the ground than is commonly believed. It is interesting that the Lanten account of the liberation of Luang Namtha places the Lanten in close quarters with the Khmu, who formed the vast majority of field revolutionaries. The Lanten are proud of their role in the liberation of Namtha, and by stressing their close collaboration with the Khmu revolutionaries, are able to distance themselves from those who did not side with the *Ay Nong*, particularly the Mien.

## VII Developing the *Muang*: Rice, Rubber, and the Road to China

After the Tai Dam villages that had sided with the *Satu* (“enemy,” Royalist forces) fled to Bokeo in 1968, a number of Lanten and Sida farmers moved into the plains to cultivate wet rice in the abandoned fields. The new government was keen to increase rice production as quickly as possible, and they encouraged the Lanten and Sida. Technical assistance was provided by the few remaining Tai Dam households. Over the next five years, more farmers from the hill villages joined. In this way, the Lanten took up the task of feeding the newly liberated *muang*, producing irrigated rice and participating in caravans to deliver food and supplies to the soldiers still fighting to the south of Namtha until the Tai Dam began to return in 1974. Despite their revolutionary contributions, the Lanten had no choice but to retreat to the foothills again, where they applied the newly learned technology to open paddy fields along the streams running through the village.

Luang Namtha now leads northern Laos in rubber planting (Lao PDR, Government of Laos 2011). A rubber boom has swept much of the country, and rubber is now a national economic development priority for the government. A Hmong village on the edge of Namtha town has established itself as a leader in rubber planting (Chantavong *et al.* 2009). The Lanten, Bit, and many Sida have also decided to make the shift to rubber production as their main livelihood activity. Namdii village was the first to make the investment among the Lanten. Their first requests for assistance from the local government were denied, but they soon established a relationship with Lanten in China and gained access to the information, technology, and planting materials they needed. What is interesting about the start-up of the Lanten rubber operations is that it was catalyzed by the participation of several village leaders in a joint Mien-Lanten cultural festival in China, not influence for their Hmong neighbors. The Namdii elders traveled to China to take part in a traditional singing event and became acquainted with Lanten of the same clan. The Chinese Lanten were workers on rubber estates and were invited by the Namdii village headman to travel to Laos to help them start planting. Not only did the Lanten obtain critical information and technology from China, but their kin in Yunnan came to invest in their operations as well.

The Bit have also begun planting rubber in their fallow fields along the road to the Chinese border. The roadside areas were first planted by provincial officials who had their own contacts with buyers in China, but the Bit were able to make contacts with Chinese technicians who were stationed next to their village during the building of a rubber processing factory. Four individuals from the Bit village were trained at the factory, and one enterprising man struck up a friendship with a Chinese foreman who had a range of small business operations in Luang Namtha. After doing small jobs for the



Chinese man, he formed his own informal contracting operation and began to supply technical support to rubber planting operations in Muang Sing. From there he expanded to providing technical support to the establishment of other cash crops such as bananas and sugar cane, both of which are extremely popular in the northern areas of Luang Namtha province. All of these activities are geared towards the Chinese market, and he even takes his crews to do jobs in China.

These are just two cases of local development initiatives by upland people who live on the edge of Namtha town. Although the scale of their operations is small, they are shouldering much of the risk of investing in the cross-border market linkages that drive the Namtha economic boom, dealing with an uncertain market, difficult price negotiations, and unfamiliar techniques. It is still too early to say what the outcomes will be, but first indications are that rubber is generating income for local people, thus contributing to the most important development objective of the country. There are no statistics summarizing rubber by ethnicity, but our surveys along the main transport artery R3 show that rubber has become the dominant element of livelihoods in many ethnic minority villages. Cross-border economic activity at this small scale has been a major factor in the local economies of northern Laos, and is often driven by ethnicity, clan, and other kin relations.

### VIII Redefining *Muang* Identities: Ethnonyms, Solidarity, and Social Hierarchies

All ethnic groups are officially placed on an equal footing in the 1991 Constitution that defines Laos as a multi-ethnic nation. In this scheme, the Lao themselves are included as an ethnic group, and reference to the ethnic diversity of the country is made through the term *bandaa phao* (all ethnic groups). The central ideology of this thinking is solidarity among all groups, and there is no concept of “minority” or “indigenous” groups in the country. A three-way system of ethnic classification—*Lao Lum* (lowland Lao), *Lao Theung* (hill Lao), and *Lao Sung* (highland Lao)—which had existed since French colonial times was abandoned and replaced with a more nuanced classification based on ethno-linguistic characteristics in 1985. *Lao Sung* and *Lao Theung* are now considered to be politically inappropriate, with the official policy being to call ethnic groups by specific names, prefixed with the term *phao*. This is, however, not an easy solution because groups are known by many different names. It is interesting to note that in everyday conversation in Luang Namtha, *Lao Sung* has come to mean Hmong, while *Lao Theung* refers to Khmu. One can consider this as coming full circle to something resembling the old, now unacceptable terms *Kha* (Khmu) and *Meo* (Hmong), only with less social stigma

attached. In Luang Namtha, the revision of ethnonyms has been an interesting undertaking reflecting the positions of different groups in the historical social landscape.

The Lanten, previously *Lao Sung*, are now known by the names *Lanten* and *Lao Huay*. The former is from a Chinese word meaning “indigo,” a reference to their traditional dyeing. In everyday conversation, *Lao Huay* is commonly heard. This name was given to the Lanten after the Communist victory in Luang Namtha, as recognition of their preference for living along the streams at the edge of the town. When using their own language, the Lanten call themselves *Mun* (person) in the spoken language, or *Iu-Ngin* in the literary language. All of these names are heard in the village, but the use of *Lanten* at the 2012 Lunar New Year’s celebration, an official event at which provincial officials were present, suggests a preference for this name when dealing with others.

The Bit were originally known in Laos as *Khabit* or *Khabet*, which contains the unacceptable *Kha* element. After the liberation of Luang Namtha, the Bit were also given a new name, *Lao Bit*, which tried to bring them more comfortably into the Lao polity. Currently, Lao Bit is the common official self-reference, although *Khabet* is heard regularly in the village. In their own language, the Bit call themselves *Psiing*, *Psiing Bit*, or even *Psiing Khabet*. *Psiing* means “person” in the Bit language. In interactions with other ethnic groups, the Bit prefer to be known as Lao Bit, as it emphasizes their identity as separate from Khmu. This is because the Bit were officially grouped with the Khmu as *Lao Theung* until 1985.

But the most interesting ethnonym dynamics in Namtha are demonstrated by the Nyuan. Despite being a Tai-speaking group that “should” be at the top of the *muang* social hierarchy, they are in the process of asserting a new name for themselves. The Nyuan have typically referred to themselves as *Nyuan*, *Tai Nyuan*, or *Khon Muang* (people of the *muang*). In official policy, they have always been known as *Nyuan* or *Yuan* (Lao PDR, Institute of Ethnicity and Religion 2009). In their own historical documents one finds *Yuan*, and this is also the name used by Europeans visiting the region at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, the Nyuan are known as *Kalom* among the non-Tai groups, as well as among the Tai Lue, Tai Dam, and Tai Daeng. To the Nyuan this name is disparaging, although the etymology of the word is not clear, and they now prefer *Lao Nyuan*. The addition of “Lao” in front of a local ethnonym legitimizes a specific ethnic identity within the larger social landscape of the Lao nation. It is somewhat remarkable that the Tai group that is supposed to have founded the settlement would need to make a specific assertion of their Lao-ness, much in the same way that non-Tai groups have done in recent years.

The renaming project is part of a larger effort of the Nyuan aimed at overcoming the stigma of having sided with the Royalists during the struggle years. In 1968, after the

**Table 4** Contested Ethnonyms

Traditional Self-Reference	Historical Exonyms	Early Official Reference	<i>Ay Nong</i> Reference	Current Public Self-Reference
Nyuan, Khon Muang	Kalom	Lao Lum	n/a	Lao Nyuan
Mun, Iu-Ngin	Lanten	Lao Sung	Lao Huay	Lanten
Psiing, Psiing Khabit	Khabit, Khabet	Lao Theung	Lao Bit	Lao Bit
Venyu, Go Gu a Yae	Ko, Ko Sida, Kha Sida	Lao Sung	Sida	Sida

final “sweeping” of resistance forces from the Namtha area, there were only five Nyuan households remaining. The rest had fled to the Thai border at Bokeo. In 1976, a proportion of the Nyuan were sent back to Namtha town, returning as part of the defeated enemy. While the official policy was to reintegrate them back into local society, the post-liberation years were filled with a significant amount of distrust for all of those who had escaped to Bokeo. In 2007, the Nyuan submitted a codification of their social institutions to the province for approval. The document is called “Establishment of the Traditions of the Lao Nyuan.” In the Lao title, the ethnonym is *phao Lao Nyuan*. It includes the word *phao*, which is used before ethnonyms in official references. The document spells out Nyuan practices on marriage and management of other social relations in the community including specifications on sanctions for individuals who do not conform. These traditional aspects of Nyuan culture are, of course, written to be in line with Lao law, demonstrating the legitimacy of their traditions and their contribution to the cultural fabric of the nation state. There is a 10-person Committee for the Management and Promotion of Lao Nyuan Culture, responsible for implementing the document in the Nyuan community. Thus the Nyuan have re-named themselves, placing themselves within the official system and distancing themselves from an old exonym associated with unacceptable local history.<sup>22)</sup>

The statements of ethnic and political affiliation seen in the shifting landscape of ethnonyms highlights the complexity of intergroup relations in Luang Namtha. Table 4 summarizes the contestation of ethnonyms in Luang Namtha.

Pholsena has argued against the “the apparent immutability of these two oppositional figures, the Majority and the ethnic minorities” (Pholsena 2006, 219). The four groups discussed in this paper employ differing identification strategies. The Nyuan and the Bit have taken up the “Lao” identifier to emphasize their commitment to being good Lao citizens, perhaps in an effort to discard the political baggage of having been on the wrong side of the revolutionary struggle. The Sida and the Lanten, both of whom remember themselves as founders of Luang Namtha, have not taken a Lao prefix before their

22) The Tai Dam have produced a similar document and organizational structure.

ethnonym. Although the contestation of ethnonyms is clearly done in the immediate context of post-1975 nationalism, the longer history of interethnic relations in the early days of the *muang* have clear bearing on the directions of these efforts of expression.

## IX Discussion: Re-exploring the Wide World beyond Structure

These local narratives leave us with questions about how to interpret the Lanten assertion of power and its place within the historical development of the *muang* of Luang Namtha. Did Dang Yon Hak's efforts to assert Lanten authority result in a *muang* that was fundamentally different from others? It is the modern-day *muang* and its link to the *muang* of the past that concerns us here. Stuart-Fox (2002, 11) has stated: "the discontinuity of central political structures was overcome by the continuity of political culture based firmly at the village level, anchored in the socio-religious Lao worldview." He goes on to remind us that the major polity building (and rebuilding) efforts of the Lao kings was to align the *muang* with the Lao *mandala*. Our look at the formation and transformation of Luang Namtha highlights some difficulties in generalizing a *muang* model, both in terms of the centrality of the Lao cultural element and the continuity that is needed to support it. Table 5 below considers some of the differences between the "classic" *muang*, the early (first) *muang*, and the later (second) *muang*. This summary table shows that there are significant differences between the first and second *muang*.

Discussion of the classic *muang* places central importance on a political contract between the Tai and the Kha, where myth and ritual create and confirm a kin relation between the exploiter and the exploited (Aijmer 1979). In the *muang* created in the late nineteenth century, there is little available evidence of rituals or ceremonies to provide the basic frame of reference that would normally legitimize the Tai group's rule and subjugate the peripheral groups in an unbalanced power structure. The lack of data on ceremonial and ritual displays of the "traditional" power relations—for Aijmer, "the ideal model"—has allowed us to look at some of the more mundane areas of *muang* formation. The display of cohesion has always been critical in the maintenance of *muang* even as conflict played out (Condominas 1990). Likewise, the cultural continuity of Lao *muang* is taken to be a sign of the possibility of "Lao" history (Stuart-Fox 2002). In reality, the strategies of different groups, none of which had an overwhelming demographic majority, compelling moral mandate, or coercive political authority, played out against the backdrop of the French colonial project. The striking continuity one observes here is not of a Lao (Tai) cultural core encoded in the *muang*, but rather of a cosmopolitan space of cultural contention.

**Table 5** Comparison of *Muang* Dynamics

	Classical <i>Muang</i>	18 <sup>th</sup> -century Namtha	20 <sup>th</sup> -century Namtha
Settlement	Pioneer Tai appropriate land from Kha	Nyuan settlers from Doi Tung-Chiang Saen settle on edges of Khmu territory	Lanten and Sida arrive in abandoned, overgrown plains and continue upland livelihood technology; Nyuan arrive after
Power	Political dominance of Tai over Kha	Exert political and cultural influence over Khmu, “creation” of Khmu Nyuan	Lanten assert control first, but Nyuan gain control with assistance of French
Interethnic relations	Hierarchical relations maintained with Kha, including trading	Khmu and other Mon-Khmer groups in the mountains are trading partners	No clear hierarchy emerges, Lanten maintain position of intermediary
Legitimization	Symbolic rituals involving Kha	?	None in local memory
Cosmology	Buddhist cosmology to reinforce Tai power	Remains of religious structures suggest Buddhism flourishing	Low profile of Buddhist influence, majority of <i>muang</i> remains non-Buddhist, including other Tai groups
Hierarchy	Submit to authority of larger <i>muang</i>	Superiority of Nan and Siamese	Local rulers rely on French for support, incorporation into colonial administration
Population	Increase agricultural production through acquisition of population	Wet rice fields found by non-Tai groups suggesting large-scale production	Lanten claim to have controlled population for agricultural development, Nyuan unable to control population, inflow of Tai Dam
Interface	Tai <i>laam</i> as broker in upland-lowland relations	?	Lanten <i>thin theng</i> messengers delivery, Haw economic brokers

One of the most important outcomes of these re-examinations is the understanding of ethnic relations over history. The *muang* framework is vulnerable because it is dependent on a certain type of relationships within a social space. For example, it has been claimed that “the traditional Lao *muang* also integrated the non-Tai populace without significantly affecting their own traditional community-structure,” and that the Lao *chao* “paid much attention to peaceful ‘ethnic management’” (Raendchen 2004, 417). At the same time, it is widely believed that the establishment of *muang* required violent appropriation of land and eviction of autochthonous people (Archaimbault 1964). Clearly, these need to be reconciled based on a broader base of ethnography that examines the details of interethnic relations (see Kojima and Badenoch, this issue).

The stories that make up the Lanten and Sida narratives share the common theme of niche creation. Both groups, understanding their own history of migration and adapta-

tion, recognize the necessity of defining and redefining their role in broader society, rather than falling into a predetermined hierarchy. For the Lanten, they are privileged by their literacy, which they use not only to assert themselves over other uplanders but more importantly, as an interface between the many groups of the *muang*—an advantage that the Nyuan do not possess. For the Lanten, literacy has brought not only access to the world of Chinese culture, it also means bureaucratic capacity within the *muang* and the potential to turn that into influence and maybe even authority. As for the Sida, they describe their high rice yields as a way to position themselves in the local economy, and therefore make themselves indispensable to the more powerful groups around them. The fact that one of their main clients is the lowland, wet-rice producing Nyuan strengthens their feeling of integration during those times. These niches, however, are not solely defined in terms of subjugation by the Tai; in fact, in many of them, the relationship with the Tai is only peripheral to larger cultural, economic, and political streams.

We have also observed that the significance of the multilingual nature of these social landscapes is common to all upland groups in this area. Scott (2009) has suggested that Zomians find literacy to be a liability, and while there is no doubt that written language can be used as a method of control by the state, it does not have a monopoly on the strategic use of written language. The orality factor, especially the seemingly cacophonous diversity of languages, may seem to be a convenient Zomian escape route. While the use of many languages may give uplanders an upper hand in keeping the lowlanders confused, the descriptions of multilingualism in the history of the region point to strategies for enhancing uplanders' position to engage with the state. It would be more useful to consider the complex network of linguistic relations in the uplands as a form of social capital used in engaging strategically with states and markets. More specifically, our story has shown how this social capital is actively managed and used to influence the local political situation.

Thus, the objective of this presentation of local narratives about peoples' position in the *muang* is not so much an effort to recreate the history of Luang Namtha. Whether or not Dang Yon Hak actually brought the Nyuan back from Nan after a trip to Bangkok is perhaps not the main concern, as interesting as that possibility may be. Rather, following narratives that commemorate highland leaders throughout the history of fringe areas may help to highlight the complex nature of power relations (Jonsson 2010). As Jonsson has shown in the case of the Mien, these upland leaders may have received formal titles, but they do not appear in chronicles or other historical records. Giving voice to these leaders' lives uncovers alternative perspectives on "chiefly control and lowland connections" (2002, 74). Most interesting is the accounts of how local leaders and normal people related to each other within the *muang*.

The *muang* history elaborated here also shows how upland people influenced the larger political directions that are assumed to be the domain of Tai, Lao, or Chinese. Once we shift our analysis to the marginalized storytellers, it becomes clear that there is indeed no convincing hegemony of the majority; neither can the minority be represented solely as “the other” (Pholsena 2006). While modern, nationalist motifs figure prominently in local narratives, the alternative versions show that the “imagined community” may not be as stable or clear as it is often made out to be. In presenting such an alternative local history, we do not suggest that Luang Namtha is an upland polity constructed in a lowland area. Neither do we conclude that the Lanten created a Tai look-alike polity. Rather, we underscore the complex interactions and exchanges between different groups, multiple centers of power and political influence, and the possibility that the *muang* should be understood as more of a regional phenomenon than a purely Tai social construct.

## X Conclusion

In painting an alternative view on a local history, we have tried to peel back layers of mainstream discourse to transform the “anonymity” that hides marginal actors (Forsyth and Michaud 2011) in history, picking up on the claim of an upland group in northern Laos that they laid the foundations for the establishment of a Tai *muang*. In exploring the different memories of how the *muang* was established and developed, we challenge the common assumptions about political organization in the Tai hinterlands and add nuance to the complex and poorly understood relations between ethnic groups in these areas. In our examination of the Luang Namtha case, we are faced with a narrative in which the “marginal” people played a central role in establishing a local polity. At the same time, the original Tai founders are consistently portrayed in a passive and vulnerable role. The political ambiguity of the *muang* social space is presented in ways that give new voice to actors whose agency is frequently denied, ignored, played down, or appropriated by conventional historical perspectives. Moreover, we find efforts to cast history in a different light, one that is strongly influenced by the political ideology of the modern Lao nation state, but one that, in its own way, seeks to reclaim the right to authorship of history, in order to redefine the multiethnic social landscape of a rapidly developing economic center. We believe that this type of study demonstrates the importance of following local articulations of history, in an attempt to challenge our assumptions about historical relations. Key to this is moving beyond social structures to focus on the interactions between ethnic groups, looking to social phenomena such as multilingualism as a window on local strategies. In doing this we follow efforts to “carve out spaces from which to speak that

keep sliding away from centers of elite power” (Sears 1993, 18)

We propose that the value-added content of this study is in the rethinking of a history, rather than its rewriting (Reynolds 2006). Having explored the possibility of a *muang* founded by uplanders, the control of Tai by uplanders, the absence of Buddhist cosmology and rituals to define and confirm power relations, and the efficiency of local economic initiative over state policy, we create for ourselves a space to consider how a history might be rewritten. For example, writing about the Tai people of Nan Province in Thailand, Davis tempers the common understanding of the assimilation of Mon-Khmer people into the Tai *muangs*, remarking that “acculturation has not been a one-way process” (1984, 35). But such a “seditious history,” to use Reynold’s term, is one that not only challenges the assumptions encoded in the “documentation of specificity,” as is the task of historians, but one that gives thought to “where this body of knowledge has come from, what holds it together, and how it might be liberated for wider use” (*ibid.*, 29).

This paper has taken up Stuart-Fox’s call for alternative historiographies drawing on traditions of minority groups (2002), which he suggested should be written and integrated into a more diverse and nuanced Lao historiography. With pressures mounting on minority languages, oral traditions, ritual songs, and other potential sources of “alternative” history, this must be given the highest priority. Only then will a history emerge that is commensurate with the rich human diversity that defines Laos, and further enhance our understanding of the region and its immense complexity.

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# Becoming Stateless: Historical Experience and Its Reflection on the Concept of State among the Lahu in Yunnan and Mainland Southeast Asian Massif

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This paper aims to contribute to James Scott's discussion of statelessness in "Zomia" by examining the realities of political autonomy and the concepts of state and kingship of the Lahu. During the nineteenth century, "kings" appeared among the Lahu in parts of southwest Yunnan. Indeed, the Lahu enjoyed political autonomy under their own kings before these were eliminated in the process of modern state formation and border demarcation in China and Burma. Messianic movements emerged among the Lahu after they became stateless. These movements stressed the need to redeem the lost states and kings throughout the course of the Lahu's modern history. In this respect, statelessness is not a timeless, quintessential attribute of the Lahu. Rather, they only became conscious of statelessness during the modern period. What this demonstrates is that the Lahu have never been conscious anarchists who chose to avoid kings and states. They possess their own original concepts of state and kingship, even though these differ from our conventional understanding, and the main theme of their historical experience and mythical accounts centers around their search for their own state and king.

**Keywords:** statelessness, Yunnan-Southeast Asian borderlands, Lahu, kingship, millenarianism

## I Introduction

James Scott's recent work *The Art of Not Being Governed* (J. C. Scott 2009) is an excellent contribution to studies on the massif of mainland Southeast Asia and southwest China ("Zomia" in his terminology). Scott upholds that every aspect of social life of highlanders in this area can be seen as a conscious strategy to maintain distance from state power. He argues that their first priority was to avoid control from lowland states and that their

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social organization, shifting cultivation, illiteracy, and origin myths were designed to justify statelessness in order to meet their ultimate goal of anarchy.

His argument is a part of the recent trend in this field to present a non-state-centered perspective. Studies of this sort have appeared as opportunities for fieldwork have increased since China, Vietnam, and Laos (partly) opened their doors to foreign scholars.<sup>1)</sup> Such studies have led to a re-evaluation of certain social dynamics that hitherto remained hidden from the modern state perspective. James Scott's book has made advances in this respect.

The Lahu, a Tibeto-Burman speaking group, are distributed over a wide area that covers Upper Burma, northern Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, as well as their original land Yunnan. According to James Scott, they are one of the typically stateless peoples of "Zomia." Indeed, their consciousness of being stateless is both an important motif in their origin myth and a main driving force behind a series of messianic movements. However, whether statelessness reflects their consciousness is questionable. In this paper, I will present an alternative interpretation of their historical consciousness. I first discuss the Lahu's political autonomy in southwest Yunnan during the nineteenth century (Section II) and follow up by discussing arguments concerning the elimination of political autonomy in the course of China's building of a modern nation-state (Section III). Next I examine indigenous concepts of state and king, the origin myth that justifies stateless, as well as the messianic movements that search for "the lost book" of the Lahu (Section IV). Finally, in the concluding section, I present possibilities for viewing "Zomia" from an alternative perspective, which may open up ways of discussing the realities of states run by highlanders and their original concept of statehood.

## II The "Lahu Age"

### *Emergence of the Lahu Autonomous Polities*

After a long period of "missing links" in their ethno-history,<sup>2)</sup> the Lahu (then known as Luohei 猓黑 or Kucong 苦葱 in Chinese documents) emerged in Chinese official records of the Yongzheng 雍正 period.<sup>3)</sup> Qing officials promoted an image of the Luohei or Kucong as "unruly rebels," and the "Luohei rebels" appeared again in the Jiaqing 嘉慶 period

1) For example, see Giersch (2006) and Horstmann and Wadley (2006).

2) For the history of the Lahu before Qing, see "Lahuzu Jianshi" Bianxiezu (1986), Wang and He (1999), Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui (2003).

3) *Dianyun Linianchuan*, Vol. 12, 621–624. See also *Gongzhongdang Yongzhengchao Zouzhe*, Vol. 7, 453–454, Vol. 20, 98 for details of the activities of the Luohei and Kucong.

when they were accused of disobedience to the lowland Tay (Shan) cawfaa or military native officials (*tusi* 土司) owing allegiance to the Qing emperor.

Demographic, economic, and religious factors contributed to the appearance of the “rebels.”<sup>4)</sup> The first factor to consider is the expansion of the Han migrant population in southwest Yunnan and Upper Burma during the eighteenth century. According to the *Draft Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan*, the population of Yongchang 永昌府 and Shunning 順寧府 Prefectures, where the majority of the Lahu resided, increased from 166,962 in 1736 to 660,452 in 1830<sup>5)</sup> due to the huge influx of Han migrants. Highlanders were thus exposed to Han cultural influence. The spread of Mahayana Buddhism over the Lahu hills is a typical example (discussed below).

Rapid opening of mines in the Yunnan-Burma borderlands also attracted Han migrants. Reid (2004, 24) summarizes the migration of Han Chinese miners:

[M]inners migrated in large numbers into Yunnan, where there were reported to be 500,000 miners by 1800. The desire for further mining sites was not halted by any notional boundary of Chinese imperial control. The hills in the north of what are today Burma, Laos, and Vietnam held similar resources of copper, lead, iron, and silver as those of Yunnan. Chinese miners became far more numerous on all these frontiers in the eighteenth century, making deals as necessary with local or state power-holders.

Han mine owners maintained private armies and actively participated in local politics. The most prominent figures were Wu Shangxian 吳尚賢 of Maolong 茂隆 silver mine and Gong Li-yan 宮里雁 of Bolong (Bawdwin) 波龍 silver mine. The “Mian Kao 緬考” included in the *Dian Xi* of 1808 comments that these two mine owners were “most feared by surrounding barbarians” along the Yunnan-Burma borderlands during the eighteenth century. Another silver mine, Munai 募乃, was located in the center of the Lahu hills in today’s Lancang County 瀾滄縣, and was also managed by Han Chinese.<sup>6)</sup>

At the same time, the Qing dynasty introduced *gaitu guiliu* 改土歸流 policies, direct administration by imperial officials to replace indirect rule by military native officials (*tusi*) in the eighteenth century. This was actively implemented on the east bank of the Mekong (Lancang) river during the Yongzheng period under the initiative of Ertai 鄂爾泰, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou. The abolition of Tay native military officials in Weiyuan 威遠 (present-day Jinggu 景谷) and Zhenyuan 鎮沅 during the 1720s was

4) See Ma (2004; 2007) and Takeuchi (2010) for details of Han immigrants to the Lahu hills, their impact on the local economy, and the transformation of ethnic relations, which eventually led to the creation of the Lahu semi-independent polities led by Han monks.

5) See *Yunnan Tongzhi Gao*, Vol. 56.

6) For details of the Chinese miners’ role in ethnic relations in the eighteenth-century Yunnan-Burma borderlands (including Munai), see Giersch (2006, 127–135).

followed by a series of uprisings by displaced Tay former aristocrats in coalition with other highlanders including the Lahu. The influx of Han Chinese migrants and the growing pressure of Qing's direct administration by the Qing created a "middle ground" (Giersch 2006), or a field of competition over political power and economic resources among the Han immigrants, lowland Tay, and surrounding highlanders in southwest Yunnan.

The second factor behind the emergence of the "Lahu rebels" was political unrest in Yunnan-upper mainland Southeast Asia during the eighteenth century. Mine owners, Han migrants, as well as local Tay cawfaa (Sën.Wii, Keng Tung, Mäng: Lēm 孟連, Sipsong Panna, Chiang Mai, etc.) actively participated in local politics along the Yunnan-Burma frontiers at the time of dynasty change in Burma and Siam. The new Siamese dynasty, Thongburi-Bangkok, ousted Burmese troops from Chiang Mai and made a vassal state of it. The newly appointed Chiang Mai king, Kawila, mounted military expeditions to Keng Tung and Sipsong Panna to bring back war captives to repopulate the Chiang Mai valley. The recently founded Burmese Konbaung dynasty also quickly reverted to an expansionist policy that targeted the Tay Shan polities in the northeast. It led to a triangular struggle among Burmese troops, Tay polities, and the leaders of the Han Chinese immigrants. All of this occurred in the aftermath of the 1766–69 Qing-Konbaung War.

The Tay polities were the main battlefields in all of these conflicts. In the course of such political turmoil, Tay cawfaa sometimes fought each other and sometimes banded together in accordance with complex marriage alliances. The Tay polities split into small factions and their political prestige in the region was severely damaged (*ibid.*, 97–124). Highlanders served at the frontline as spies, guides, or (un)reliable support forces for lowland cawfaa in inter-valley-state warfare. Their service strengthened the highlanders' powers of negotiation with lowland polities. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Lahu, who had formerly been subjects of the Tay cawfaa of Mäng: Lēm, Mäng Mäng 猛猛, etc., had already prepared to reject their suzerainty.<sup>7)</sup>

The third factor was Buddhism. Reportedly some Kucong who revered a Theravada monk<sup>8)</sup> rebelled against Qing officials at Simao 思茅 during the early eighteenth century. However, it was Mahayana Buddhism that became dominant among the Lahu on the

7) The Lahu were no exception. Sir J. George Scott points out that the slow decline of the Tay valley states in regional politics is due to heavy demands from neighboring superpowers (Burma and China) and endless fighting among valley states or factions, as well as to "the advances of the Kachins" (J. G. Scott 1900, 281).

8) It was mentioned that this monk was a *mian seng* 緬僧 (*Gongzhongdang Yongzhengchao Zouzhe*, Vol. 20, 98). *Mian* literally means "Burmese" but in many cases this term simply serves as a synonym for the Theravada school of Buddhism. In this context, it is likely that he was a Tay.



western bank of the Mekong. According to Chinese publications on the Lahu, Mahayana Buddhism was initially brought into the Lahu hills during the eighteenth century by a Han Chinese monk from Dali 大理. Before that, the Lahu were organized under a religious-political leadership in which village priests were responsible for village administration. Under the influence of Buddhism, this system was transformed into integrated multi-village units headed by a *foye* 佛爺 or monk. The Lahu translated the Chinese term *fo* (fu) 佛, which literally means the Buddha (or Buddha images), as *G'ui sha*, meaning the supreme creator god. As Buddhism spread throughout the hills, the existing priest-centered village leadership was modified to worship *foye* as living Buddhas or man-gods (Yunnansheng Xingzheng Gongshu Minwei 1990, 344–346). A *Dafoye* (Ta Fu Ye) 大佛爺, or senior *foye*, appointed junior monks in each village under his control. This multi-village theocracy inspired by Mahayana Buddhism enabled the Lahu to claim equal status with the Theravada Buddhist polities in the lowlands.

#### *The Heyday of the “Lahu Age”*

The people of Dong Zhu (Tong Chu) 東主, where the Lahu Mahayana Buddhist tradition flourished in the nineteenth century, divide their history into two periods: the *Lahu co-e* (“Lahu Age”) and the *Heh pa co-e* (“Chinese Age”). The “Lahu Age” refers to the period up to the 1890s when their *fu* were active and enjoyed autonomy. The “Chinese Age” commenced with the introduction of direct administration by the Qing government in 1888.

Leading Lahu monks were known as *fu jaw maw* or “Buddha kings.”<sup>9)</sup> The existence of such “kings” provides the basis for present-day Lahu claims that they once possessed their own king and state. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sir J. George Scott (then superintendent of the Shan States) reported the existence of an independent Lahu kingdom governed by a living Buddha, which he named the “Nan Cha Tong Chu Kingdom” after the location names of prominent monasteries (J. G. Scott 1900, 583). He wrote: “In the Nan Cha Tong Chu Kingdom of the La’hus there were thirty-six of these *Fu* and over them were set *Ta Fu Ye* or great Buddhas.” This kingdom was established by a mythical leader named Kyan Sit Fu, who “appeared mysteriously and ordered the construction of thirty-six *Fu-fang* or sacred (Buddhistic) houses.” George Scott also noted that “when they were built he disappeared as suddenly as he came” (*ibid.*, 583–584). This mythical account matches the data from surveys conducted by the Communist government of China during the 1950s. Chinese government reports mention that the Lahu were once governed by a coalition of monks and monasteries called “36 *zun fo* 三

9) See below for the meaning of the term *jaw maw*.

十六尊佛 (respectful Buddhas)” (“Minzu Wenti Wuzhong Congshu,” Yunnansheng Bianji Weiyuanhui 1982, 14).<sup>10)</sup> The coalition of monasteries was also known as the *wu fo* 五佛 (five Buddhas). The exact composition of the *wu fo* varies according to ethnographical authors,<sup>11)</sup> but most of them agree that Nan Zha (Nan Cha) 南柵 and Dong Zhu (Tong Chu) were central figures.

The first “Buddha king” to appear in Chinese historical sources is Tong Jin 銅金 (Buddhist name) or Zhang Fuguo 張輔國 (lay name), who was supposed to be the first Nan Zha Fo 南柵佛 (Nan Zha Buddha), in other words, the founder of the Nan Zha monastery. He was the son of a Han immigrant living in Mǎng: Lēm (Giersch 2006, 113), who taught martial arts and propagated Mahayana Buddhism in the Lahu hills (Yunnansheng Shuangjiang Lahuzu Wazu Bulangzu Daizu Zizhixian Difangzhi Biancan Weiyuanhui 1995, 857). He became notorious when he successfully instigated a Lahu rebellion against the lowland Tay polities of Mǎng Mǎng (Shuangjiang 雙江) and Mǎng: Lēm in 1799. This rebellion was eventually suppressed by Qing military intervention, though Tong Jin himself was released on the grounds that he was a monk with no political aspirations.<sup>12)</sup>

Tong Jin and his Lahu followers renewed hostilities against the Tay valley states in 1803 when they refused to pay tribute to the cawfaa of Mǎng: Lēm. The governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou sent officials to mediate the dispute between the Lahu and the cawfaa. Qing officials finally settled the issue by obliging Tong Jin to return to secular life and by giving him a rank and title as a native official under the jurisdiction of Mǎng: Lēm, responsible for collecting tax on behalf of the cawfaa.<sup>13)</sup> However, the problem was far from resolved since Zhang Fuguo (Tong Jin’s secular name), with the support

10) Details of the beginnings of the 36 monasteries differ a little from J.G. Scott’s version. According to this survey report, Wang Foye 王佛爺 came to the Lahu mountains to spread Buddhism in the last years of the Daoguang 道光 period (1821–51). Subsequently 36 monasteries were constructed as the community of followers grew.

11) For example, *Lahuzu Shehui Lishi Diaocha* lists Nan Zha Fo, Dong Zu (Dong Zhu) Fo 東祖佛, Wei Pan Fo 委盼佛, Guang Ming Fo 廣明佛, and Meng Ka (Mong Hka) Fo 勛卡佛 (“Minzu Wenti Wuzhong Congshu” Yunnansheng Bianji Weiyuanhui 1982, 72). The *Lahuzu Jianshi* version includes Ba Ka 坝卡, Nan Zha, Dong Lang 東朗, Dong Zhu, and Bang Zang 邦藏 (“Lahuzu Jianshi” Bianxiezhu 1986, 35). According to *Simao Shaosu Minzu*, the *wu fo* consisted of Nan Zha Fo, Man Da Fo 蠻大佛, Dong Zhu Fo, Wei Pan Fo, and Guang Ming Fo (Yunnansheng Xingzheng Gongshu Minwei 1990, 344). *Lahuzu Wenhushi* lists Nan Zha Fo, Wang Foye Fo 王佛爺佛, Man Da Fo, Dong Zhu Fo, and Meng Ka (Mong Hka) Fo (Wang and He 1999, 200). *Lahuzushi* provides yet another version of the *wu fo*, comprising Nan Zha Fo, Wang Foye Fo, Meng Nuo Fo 勛糯佛, Dong Zhu Fo, and Wei Pa Fo 尾帕佛 (Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui 2003, 76). Fang Guoyu 方國瑜, a Chinese historian and ethnologist, who travelled in the Lahu hills in 1930, published a list of former *wu fo* that included Dang Jiao Fo 當角佛, Xian Guan Fo 賢官佛, Yong Pa Fo 永怕佛, Qing Zhang Fo 慶章佛, and Dong Zhu Fo (Fang 2008, 111).

12) *Qing Renzong Shilu*, Vol. 65, 4–5.

13) *Xincuan Yunnan Tongzhi*, Vol. 176, 13–14.

of his Lahu followers, remained disobedient to Mǎng: Lēm and even continued to expand their territory by secretly collecting *hanjian* 漢奸 (Han traitor) troops<sup>14</sup> and attacking nearby Tay valley states. In the end the governor-general decided that he could tolerate their behavior no longer and ordered the Tay cawfaa of southwest Yunnan to deploy troops to attack them.<sup>15</sup> The Lahu “Buddha Kingdom” was destroyed in 1813; however this was only the beginning of the history of autonomy of the Lahu hills.

Yong Bao 永保 and Wu Dajing 烏大經, Qing officials dispatched to settle the Lahu-Mǎng: Lēm dispute in 1803, described how the Lahu found demands from the cawfaa so unreasonable and arbitrary that they wished to be governed by Tong Jin instead of the cawfaa, or else to pay taxes directly to the governor-general. They commented that the Lahu’s attitude toward Tong Jin was “extremely obedient” and that “Tong Jin claims that he is a monk, but, as seen by the reverence shown to him by the people, in reality he is nothing less than a Tibetan Lama in yellow robe.”<sup>16</sup> These passages prove that he reigned over the Lahu as an absolute monarch. A British colonial official made a similar observation about the nature of the Lahu *fu jaw maw* in the twentieth century (see below).

After the defeat of Tong Jin and his Nan Zha monastery, the center of the Lahu Buddhists moved southward to Dong Zhu,<sup>17</sup> where Wang Foye 王佛爺 and his disciple San Fo Zu (Sha Fu cu, A sha Fu cu, A teh Pu cu) 三佛祖 served as the *fu jaw maw*. Wang Foye was a Han Chinese monk fluent in the Tay, Wa, and Lahu languages (Wang and He 1999, 196–197). He emerged as a prominent figure among the Lahu after the decline of Nan Zha’s power. He claimed to be a *huo fo* 活佛 (living Buddha) and appointed 12 monks as headmen, who each administered the multiple villages under his jurisdiction (“Minzu Wenti Wuzhong Congshu” Yunnansheng Bianji Weiyuanhui 1982, 95–98). Since Wang Foye is also said to have been a founder of the “36 monasteries,”<sup>18</sup> so Kyan Sit Fu, who appears in J.G. Scott’s historical description above, might be another name for him.

After the death of Wang Foye around 1850 (Wang and He 1999, 197), his disciple San Fo Zu succeeded him as the most influential monk among the Lahu. Residing in Dong Zhu, San Fo Zu preached round Xia Gaixin 下改心 (in present-day Lancang). Later, in 1874, he moved his base to Mǎng Ka (Ximeng 西盟) where he gradually gained a strong following among the indigenous Wa people after having conquered them (Yunnansheng

14) These Han troops were probably recruited from among the coolies working at the Munai silver mine (located at the center of the Lahu hills in present-day Lancang), which was closed in 1815.

15) The background to this military operation is well described and analyzed by Giersch (2006, 113–115).

16) *Xincuan Yunnan Tongzhi*, Vol. 176, 13–14.

17) A series of local monks succeeded Tong Jin as abbots of the Nan Zha monastery but none had his charisma (Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui 2003, 265).

18) See footnote 10).

Ximeng Wazu Zizhixianzhi Biancan Weiyuanhui 1997, 261, 395; Yunnansheng Xingzheng Gongshu Minwei 1990, 344).

The *Lahu Cultural History* relates that the Dong Zhu monastery was destroyed in 1874 during the Panthay rebellion (Wang and He 1999, 198). However it seems that Dong Zhu recovered quickly. During the 1880s, Dong Zhu Da Fofang 東主大佛房 (Dong Zhu Great Monastery) was listed among the “*tucheng* 土城 (native fortifications)” by Cen Yuying 岑毓英, the incumbent governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou (Cen 2005, 375).

Li Tongming (Mäng Hka Fu/Meng Ka Fo) 李通明, the husband of San Fo Zu's daughter, succeeded to the position of Mäng Hka Fu (Meng Ka Fo or Ximeng Fo) when his father-in-law San Fo Zu died in 1888.<sup>19)</sup> At the turn of the century, Li Tongming was the sole remaining “Buddha king” in the Yunnan-Burma borderlands. Li Tongming appears in J. G. Scott's *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* as the *Ta Fu Ye* of Mäng Hka who inherited the tradition of the Nan Cha Tong Chu Kingdom. He observes that “[t]he name *Ta Fu Ye* and the sacred character of its bearer, as has been said, suggest the *Lamas* of Tibet, or rather the *Dalai Lama*, for the ordinary *Lama* is nothing more than a Buddhist monk” (J. G. Scott 1900, 584). However, this tradition did not last long. After Li Tongming's death in 1901, Ca sheh 扎謝 served as regent to Li's young son. Promoted from the position of a private servant in the Li family, Ca sheh had never been ordained as a monk and, naturally enough, had not received a Buddhist education. Reportedly the tradition of Buddhism in Ximeng (Mäng Hka) declined during his period (Yunnansheng Ximeng Wazu Zizhixianzhi Biancan Weiyuanhui 1997, 396).

Ca bo *taiye* 扎布太爺 was a contemporary of San Fo Zu. After an apprenticeship in Nan Zha, he established a monastery in his village Meng Nuo 勐糯 and served as the abbot or *foye*. His prestige grew as the number of his followers swelled. He then returned to secular life to marry the daughter of a village headman and ruled 16 subordinate villages. The headmen of the villages under his control paid tribute to him annually. He had formed alliances with San Fo Zu and Nan Zha Fo, and together they were known as the “*san fo* 三佛” (three Buddha [kings]) in the late nineteenth century (Yunnansheng Xingzheng Gongshu Minwei 1990, 350–351).

Wei Xiang 魏相, a founder of Man Da Fu 蠻大佛, was also listed as one of the five *wu fo* of the Lahu even though he was a Wa. Wei Xiang received training from Nan Zha Fo before he went to Dali for further Buddhist education. Returning to Man Da, he established a monastery and, by virtue of his position as the *Ta Fu Ye*, had 20 subordinate

19) This indicates that both monks San Fo Zu and Li Tongming were married. The fact that this apparent violation of the Buddhist precept did not undermine their religious charisma reflects some degree of transformation of original Buddhism (see Du 2003).

abbots and 360 lesser monks under his jurisdiction (Yunnansheng Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixianzhi Biancan Weiuyanhui 1996, 152). The *Newly Compiled Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan (Xincan Yunnan Tongzhi)* commented that he was one of the three outstanding leaders of southwest Yunnan during the nineteenth century, the other two being the Wa Gourd King (*Huluwang* 葫蘆王) and the cawfaa of Mäng: Lëm.<sup>20)</sup> The emergence of the authority of Man Da Fu among the local Lahu and Wa made them reject submission to Shang Yun 上允, a vassal Tay state of Mäng: Lëm (Wang and He 1999, 197–198).

Apart from the “Buddha kings” mentioned above, there were more secular native leaders active in the Lahu hills during the later half of the nineteenth century. The *Newly Compiled Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan (Xincan Yunnan Tongzhi)* mentioned the emergence of a galaxy of native forces in the Lahu hills during the Guangxu 光緒 period (1875–1909). This group comprised Zhang Dengfa 張登發 (Zhang *taiye* 張太爺), the son of a Han migrant; Shi Zhaolong 石朝龍, Shi Zhaofeng 石朝鳳, Shi Tingzi 石廷子, Li Zhilong 李芝隆—all of whom were immigrants from Weiyuan 威遠 on the east bank of the Mekong; and Li Zhaolong 李朝龍, a migrant from Pu’er 普洱.<sup>21)</sup> Later Zhang Dengfa became the target of a military expedition by the Qing army, while the other emerging native leaders were given titles as military native officials by the Qing government.

Zhang Dengfa succeeded his father Zhang Bingquan 張秉權, who established himself as a semi-independent ruler of Shang Gaixin 上改心 (today’s Shuangjiang County) (Yunnansheng Shuangjiang Lahuzu Wazu Bulangzu Daizu Zizhixian Difangzhi Biancan Weiuyanhui 1995, 857–858).<sup>22)</sup> Zhang Bingquan is reported to have been the son of Zhang Fuguo (Tong Jin) (*ibid.*, 806).<sup>23)</sup> Ensnared in the Shang Gaixin hills, Zhang Bingquan and Zhang Dengfa rejected the overlordship of the cawfaa of Mäng Mäng and continuously occupied villages from the territories of Mäng Mäng and other surrounding Tay valley states. They established a centralized hierarchy of administration with the *jaw maw* at the top. The *jaw maw* divided his territory into tax-collecting zones and appointed a *changye* 掌爺 to supervise each village cluster (Shuangjiang Lahuzu Wazu Bulangzu Daizu Zizhixian Minzu Shiwu Weiuyanhui 1995, 40–41, 264–265). Zhang’s hill dynasty overwhelmed the Mäng Mäng cawfaa and encroached on his territory despite repeated warnings from Qing officials in 1883–84.<sup>24)</sup>

20) *Xincuan Yunnan Tongzhi*, Vol. 176, 24.

21) *ibid.*

22) According to *Lahuzu Shi*, Zhang Bingquan was a younger brother of Zhang Dengfa’s father (Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiuyanhui 2003, 69).

23) *Lahuzu Shi* remains silent on this point. It mentions nothing about the relationship between Zhang Fuguo and Zhang Bingquan.

24) *Fu Dian Zouyi*, Vol. 1.

Among other native leaders of the Guangxu period, Li Zhilong and the Shi brothers (Zhaolong and Zhaofeng) are credited in the *Draft of the Continued Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan* (*Xu Yunnan Tongzhi Gao*) with rendering military assistance to the Qing during the Panthay rebellion.<sup>25)</sup> This corresponds to the fact that Simao was recovered by Qing troops in 1865 with military assistance from local reinforcements from the Lahu hills (Yunnansheng Simao Xian Difangzhi Biancan Weiyuanhui 1993, 371). They may have been serving as pro-Qing militia even before being granted official titles as native military officials.

### III Decline of the “Lahu Age” and the Aftermath

#### *Collapse of Autonomy*

The period of flourishing semi-independent “Buddha kings” and other secular leaders came to a close at the end of the nineteenth century during the course of the transformation of the Qing Empire into a modern state.

The sudden elimination of the kingdom of Burma in 1885 and the British annexation of Upper Burma in the following year caused serious problems for Qing officials. They had to defend Yunnan from the British, but nobody knew exactly where Yunnan ended and Upper Burma began. Tay (Shan) valley states lay between China and Burma, and the question of sovereignty over these states was an extremely complex one. Some of these states were vassal states of Burma, others were ruled by military native officials (*tusi*) appointed by China, and some states paid tribute to both.<sup>26)</sup> As a result, the British claimed territorial rights over some of the Tay military native officials in Yunnan. Indeed, in the demarcation of the territory of British Burma, the British set extreme eastern limits to Burma’s tributary states and “claimed the following eastern tributary states as falling within Ava’s domains and having paid tribute to her: Hsenwi (Sĕn.Wii), Kokang, Kungma (Mäng: Küng), Monglem (Mäng: Lĕm), Kenghung and the Lahu hills between the last two” (Saimong 1965, 275). Thus, for the Qing it was of vital importance to prove that the valley states in question were in fact “Chinese” local administrative units.

Here lay another serious problem. The administrative power of Tay cawfaas was confined to the small valleys scattered throughout southwest Yunnan, and their sovereignty over the hills surrounding such valleys was at most nominal. Indeed, as we have seen, some of the Lahu leaders were even hostile to the valley cawfaas. In short, the

25) *Xu Yunnan Tongzhi Gao*, Vol. 98.

26) See Saimong (1965) for an analysis of this complex situation.

system of indirect administration in which native officials ruled over feudal territory on behalf of the Qing court had failed.

The Qing policy of securing sovereignty over territory on the Yunnan-Burma frontier was to encroach on the domains of weakened Tay valley states and grant native official (*tusi*) titles to nominally subordinate upland leaders. This policy was originally intended to target the Kachin (Jingpo), but was also applied to the Lahu.<sup>27)</sup> Pro-Qing figures among the Xia Gaixin (present-day Lancang) Lahu such as Li Zhilong, Shi Zhaolong, Shi Zhaofeng, etc., were given titles of lower rank such as native lieutenants (*tugianzong* 土千總), native second lieutenants (*tubazong* 土把總), native second captains (*tushoubei* 土守備), and native brigade vice-commanders (*tudusi* 土都司), in 1886 (Fang 1987, 882). This measure was aimed at isolating Zhang Dengfa, who was most hostile to Qing authority. In the following year, Cen Yuying, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, sent troops to attack the stronghold of Zhang Dengfa, with newly appointed Lahu native officials assisting in the operation. The Qing army eventually killed Zhang Dengfa and occupied his territory. After the completion of this operation, the Qing established Zhenbian sub-prefecture (*ting*) 鎮邊直隸廳 as an organ to administer directly the new territory in the Lahu hills in 1888.<sup>28)</sup>

In a report of the victory of the military expedition submitted to the emperor, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, Cen Yuying (2005, 403), summarized the political development of the Lahu hills throughout the nineteenth century very simply as “endless rebellion (*lushi panluan* 屢世叛亂).” This reveals a huge gap between the statements by Qing officials and Lahu perceptions of themselves. From the viewpoint of Qing officials, the “Lahu Age,” in which the Lahu resisted submission to the Qing, was simply a rebellion against a legitimate state power.

The forces of the five “Buddha kings” (*wu fo*) led by Dong Zhu and Mǎng Hka continued to resist surrendering to the Zhenbian sub-prefecture. San Fo Zu of Mǎng Hka died in 1888, the same year as the Qing started to directly administer the Lahu hills (Yunnansheng Ximeng Wazu Zizhixianzhi Biancan Weiyuanhui 1997, 261). Three years later, the forces of the “barbarians of the five monasteries (*Wu Fofang Yi* 五佛房夷)” attacked the Zhenbian army.<sup>29)</sup> Since this movement was centered around Dong Zhu and Mǎng Hka, Qing troops destroyed the Dong Zhu *Fofang*. Meanwhile Li Tongming surrendered to the Qing and was appointed as the Ximeng *tumu* 西盟土目, a low-ranking native official (*ibid.*, 395–396; Yunnansheng Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixianzhi Biancan

27) *Yunnan Tongzhi*, Vol. 114.

28) *Xincuan Yunnan Tongzhi*, Vol. 176, 25.

29) *Xu Yunnan Tongzhi Gao*, Vol. 84.

Weiyuanhui 1996, 462). The entire Lahu hills in Yunnan then came under the control of the Qing and thus ended the “Lahu Age.”

However, the Lahu polities should not be understood in the modern sense of international relations, which are based on the notion of sovereign states. The Lahu polities were nominally under the suzerainty of the Tay valley states; hence, they were vassals from the official viewpoint of Chinese emperors and Burmese kings. In addition, some Lahu “Buddha kings” were subordinate to the Wa chiefs as well. Ca bo *taiye* is reported to have refused to pay tax to a neighboring Wa chief and to have established an alliance with the Wa on equal terms. This indicates that the Lahu in that area paid tax to the Wa and therefore were subordinate to them before the time of Ca bo (Yunnansheng Xingzheng Gongshu Minwei 1990, 350–351). San Fo Zu (and his successor Li Tongming) conquered Mǎng Hka (Ximeng) and ruled over the Wa living there. However, San Fo Zu and Li Tongming’s “kingdom” still remained subordinate to a neighboring Wa chief named Sung Ramang, paying annual tribute to him (J. G. Scott 1901, 360). This is an important point for understanding the local concepts of state and kingship, which are different from present-day notions of modern nation states (discussed below).

Zhenbian sub-prefecture was proof that the Lahu hills were under Qing administration, so the British abandoned the annexation of Zhenbian as well as Mǎng: Lēm and Sipsong Panna.<sup>30)</sup> Finally both Qing China and British India agreed on the demarcation of the Yunnan-Burma border in 1894, with the exception of some parts of the Wa area.<sup>31)</sup> The transformation of the pre-modern regional order into a world governed by the principles of modern international relations eliminated any possibility of the Lahu surviving with their own country. Nonetheless, their concept of state and kingship persisted and was expressed in the repeated religious movements and rebellions that arose thereafter.

### *Emerging Messianic Movements*

Studies on Lahu religious history agree that the messianic movements, which started at the end of the nineteenth century, originated from a prophecy by San Fo Zu. According to Gordon Young, the prophetic tradition can be traced to a message that San Fo Zu left on his deathbed in 1888 in which he instructed the Lahu to “burn the beeswax candles and joss-sticks, that the day might soon come when the Lahu people will receive their enlightenment from God” (G. Young 1962, 11).

30) Actually the British government sent a series of delegations to Mǎng: Lēm, Sipsong Panna, and Mǎng Hka (Ximeng) to ask for their submission (Saimong 1965, 200–288; Mitton 1936, 187–189).

31) Mǎng Hka (Ximeng) was included in these unsettled areas. For details of border demarcation, and debates between China and British India over the legal status of Mǎng: Lēm and Sipsong Panna, see Saimong (1965, 275–291).



Paul Lewis, a Baptist missionary and anthropologist, argues that San Fo Zu was also the founder of Lahu millenarianism: “Messianic movements among Lahus in Burma have been going on for many years. The Lahus say it really started with Sha fu cu, and the power has been handed down from one to the other” (Lewis 1970, 88).

Indeed, the unsuccessful rebellion of the “barbarians of the five monasteries” against Zhenbian sub-prefecture in 1891, in which San Fo Zu’s son-in-law played a central role in the alliance with the Dong Zhu Fo, was a direct result of this prophecy.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the longing for a messiah became widespread among the Lahu in Yunnan and even among those in the Shan States, Burma. Antidel, another Baptist missionary at Keng Tung, wrote of such enthusiasm. The Lahu there widely believed that:

God, Himself, was to appear and reinstate them supernaturally. A false leader has here and there appeared claiming to be God and urging the people to abandon the “old” and take up the “new,” to obey him and when the time comes he would “manifest” himself and exert his supernatural powers, when all manner of blessings—chiefly temporal—should be heaped upon the people with no effort on their part; they would rule over their present oppressors, sickness and, of course, death, would be no more. Several of these false prophets have had a considerable following. (Antidel 1911, 35)

Prophetic uprisings by the Lahu arose continuously in Yunnan, the Shan States, and eventually in Thailand.

In 1903, a group of the Lahu of Mǎng Mǎng (Shuangjiang) led by “*yaoren* 妖人” (a miraculous person) and “*xianren* 仙人” (probably an immortal, unworldly person) revolted against the cawfaa of Mǎng Mǎng, but was suppressed by Qing forces.<sup>32</sup> During the rebellion, the people gathered at a *Fo-fang* (monastery) for New Year dancing, and “magical water” was distributed by the leaders before the uprising.

Two years later, *The News* (a monthly journal of the American Baptists) reported that among the Lahu of Keng Tung, “one man claims to be a messianic king, that he is to give immortality to all, and that there will be no more wars” (W. M. Young 1905a, 11).

In 1918, the Lahu brothers Li Long 李龍 and Li Hu 李虎 of Yunnan instigated their brethren to rise up against usurious practices and government officials (Yunnansheng Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixianzhi Biancan Weiyuanhui 1996, 560–561). One Lahu leader, who joined the insurrection after visiting Dong Zhu and other *Fo-fang*, then claimed to be God (Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui 2003, 85). The people revolted

32) *Shunning Fuzhi*, Vol. 17. For details, see Shuangjiang Lahuzu Wazu Bulangzu Daizu Zizhixian Minzu Shiwu Weiyuanhui (1995, 45–48).

with the slogan “Our lord has appeared!” This rebellion spread all over the Lahu hills in Yunnan before being suppressed by Yunnan provincial troops (“Minzu Wenti Wuzhong Congshu” Yunnansheng Bianji Weiyuanhui 1982, 80–81).

Messianic movements have also arisen among the Lahu in Burma and Thailand.<sup>33)</sup> Lewis described one instance as follows:

In 1934 the Lahu “prophet” named Ma heh G’ui sha raised an army to fight the British. The latest leader of significance to Lahus in Thailand is Maw na pa, or sometimes called Paw ku lon, living just across the border from Thailand. In 1958 he sent word that no Lahu was to live any further south in Thailand than Fang. Those who would come up to live in Burma, he said, would have “everlasting food and drink,” and thus many villages went up there. Many of them have become discouraged and returned to Thailand. (Lewis 1970, 88)

Another example is that of Maw na to bo, or Maw na pa, who was one of the warlords in the ethnic insurgency in Burma. He purportedly established his army by collecting money from ordination ceremonies for religious specialists under his rule, and proclaimed his territory a Lahu *mvuh mi* (state). His claim attracted the Lahu in Burma, who were under strong pressure from the government army, Shan separatist armies, and Burmese Communist Party guerrillas, as well as his brethren who suffered oppression under the military rule of the ex-KMT troops in the hills of northern Thailand (Sombat 2002).

Till today the Lahus’ quest for a new charismatic leader has not ended. Once a powerful man with mysterious power appears, rumors spread across national boundaries immediately. A good example is Khruba Bunchum, a Thai charismatic monk living near the Golden Triangle (Thai-Lao-Burmese border).<sup>34)</sup> His Lahu followers consider him to be a reincarnation of San Fo Zu and Maw na to bo (Kataoka 2007).

All these cases indicate that the messianic movements of the Lahu should be viewed as a reaction to serious deprivations suffered after the demise of the “Lahu Age” and incorporation into modern nation states, rather than as an everlasting essential feature of highlanders’ identity.

#### IV The Making of “Statelessness”

##### *State and Kingship*

The Lahus’ claim that they once had kings and countries of their own actually has some

33) See Walker (1974) for a brief summary of such movements up to the 1970s.

34) Cohen (2000) mentions Bunchum’s movement, which crosses national and ethnic boundaries, and the Lahu’s involvement in it.

grounds. If so, what are the indigenous concepts that correspond to the notion of country (or state) and king? The Lahu words *mvuh mi* and *jaw maw* refer to “country” and “king” respectively.

Lewis, in his *Lahu-English-Thai Dictionary*, defines *mvuh mi* as “a country, a nation” (Lewis 1986, 232).<sup>35</sup> However, this term sometimes denotes territories other than modern nation states. For example, Lancang Lahu Autonomous County in present-day Yunnan is called Lancang Lahu Mvuh mi. The Shan States within Burma and the Wa substate in the Shan States are called Pi chaw (Shan) Mvuh mi and A va (Wa) Mvuh mi respectively. Village clusters can also be called *mvuh mi*.<sup>36</sup> Regardless of the issue of sovereignty, the term *mvuh mi* can be used to denote almost all geographical territories; however, while it is true that *mvuh mi* does refer to a country or state, it should be noted that it has a wider range of meaning than these English terms.

*Jaw maw* appears as a translation for “lord” and “ruler” in Lewis’ dictionary (*ibid.*, 154). Heads of state, monarchs, and presidents are all referred to as *jaw maw*. Like *mvuh mi*, the term *jaw maw* also carries a much broader meaning than the simple notion of conventional kings of independent states. Rulers subordinate to higher authority such as the cawfaa of Mäng: Lēm and Keng Tung are known as *jaw maw*. Some heads of local administrative units are also referred to as *jaw maw*. This term is used for the head of Lancang Lahu Autonomous County, district heads under his jurisdiction, and some district heads and warlords in Burma and Thailand.

In Chinese, *jaw maw* (*jao mo*) is translated as *taiye* 太爺, supreme ruler of the Lahu. One example of a Lahu leader who held the *taiye* title is Zhang Dengfa (Yunnansheng Shuangjiang Lahuzu Wazu Bulangzu Daizu Zizhixian Difangzhi Biancan Wei yuanhui 1995, 806). A close reading of materials mentioning former Lahu leaders reveals other instances. Li Zhilong, a pro-Qing native leader and contemporary of Zhang Dengfa, “proclaimed himself a king and was called San Lao *taiye* 三老太爺 or San Laohu 三老虎” (Yunnansheng Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixianzhi Biancan Wei yuanhui 1996, 461). Ca bo *taiye* in Meng Nuo (see above) was another *jaw maw* among the Lahu Buddhists during the nineteenth century.

Apart from Ca bo himself, as already mentioned above, *fu* in the nineteenth century were generally called *fu jaw maw* or “Buddha kings.” One such king was “*Ta Fu Ye* (*Dafoye*)” of “Nan Cha Tong Chu (Nan Zha Dong Zhu) Kingdom” described in George Scott’s report. Actually, Wang Foye and San Fo Zu were accorded the *taiye* title as well

35) Literally, the term means “heaven (*mvuh*) and earth (*mi*).”

36) Meh na hko, a village cluster in Thailand (Chiang Rai province, Mae Suai district), where I conducted fieldwork for three years, is called Meh na hko Mvuh mi.

(Wang and He 1999, 195–200; Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui 2003, 269).

There is evidence that even bandit leaders can be enthroned as kings in the people's memory. Ca na 扎那, a bandit leader on the east bank of the Mekong who fought against direct administration by the Qing at the end of the eighteenth century, was posthumously given the title of "Lahu King (*Luohei Wang* 猓黑王)" (Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui 2003, 54–56).

In the tradition of messianic movements after San Fo Zu (that is after the end of the "Lahu Age"), we still come across many kings or *jaw maw* in early twentieth-century accounts. In 1904 a mass conversion to Christianity occurred in Keng Tung when the arrival of a Christian missionary was interpreted as a fulfillment of San Fo Zu's prophecy (see below). The American Baptist missionary was granted the "Squatter Sovereignty right to the territory" by the Lahu.<sup>37</sup> Although the Lahu term for the English translation "Squatter Sovereignty" was unfortunately not given in the missionary correspondence, it is quite likely that the term originally used was *jaw maw*. At the same time as the mass conversion in Keng Tung, the appearance of another "messianic king" was reported (W. M. Young 1905a, 11). The slogan of the 1918 rebellion in Yunnan, "Our lord has appeared (*Women de zhuzi chulaile* 我們的主子出來了!)", is no doubt a direct translation of *jaw maw*. Later, in Burma in the 1970s, a Lahu man-god Maw na G'ui sha (Maw na pa, Maw na to bo) was reported to have been called *jaw maw* by his followers (Walker 1974, 704).

What these cases demonstrate is that the Lahu have never been conscious anarchists who chose to avoid kings and states. On the contrary, their subjective history abounds in stories of kings. They have had concepts of state and kingship of their own, and such notions are by no means alien to them. Indeed, in the broadest sense of the terms, sometimes they actually ran states and had kings of their own in the past.

### *The Lahu Myths of Statelessness Reconsidered*

The fact that the subjective history of the Lahu overflows with stories of kings may seem inconsistent with another subjective history that focuses on their statelessness. Like other highlanders of Southeast Asia, the origin myth of the Lahu contains very rich texts that rationalize their statelessness. However, this manifestation of statelessness requires close scrutiny. Let us start by looking at this myth.

It relates that the god created heaven and earth and then created humans beside the lake of Naw sheh Naw law (or Naw law Naw sheh). The god gave the Lahu a seal of office

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37) This will be discussed in the following subsection.

to rule the world and other ethnic groups became servants of the Lahu. The envious Tay (Shan) sent a beautiful servant girl to tempt the Lahu *jaw maw* with her costume and gestures.<sup>38)</sup> The *jaw maw* accidentally touched her breast and, as plotted, the Tay servant girl cried out and asked for the god's seal as compensation. Because she would accept nothing else, the Lahu *jaw maw* finally gave it to her. From that time onwards the Lahu lost their title and became subjects and servants of the Tay (Pun and Lewis 2002, 29–31; Kya leh 1994, 5).

According to the Lahu origin myth, the Lahu formerly ruled the entire world from their capital at Beijing/Nanjing.<sup>39)</sup> These cities were surrounded by walls. The Han Chinese were one of the subject ethnic groups ruled by Lahu *jaw maw*. At that time, the Lahu, armed with crossbows, possessed the strongest army. The Chinese had never been able to defeat them in battle, so they played a trick on the Lahu women. Attracted by the sound of Jew's harps, the Lahu women gave all the triggers of the crossbows to the Chinese while their husbands were away farming and hunting. Thus fully armed, the Chinese soldiers attacked the city. The Lahu men tried to fight back but found that their crossbows could not work. After losing the war, the Lahu left the capital city and took to the forest in search of a new country. They chased the tracks of a deer and eventually found a new place beside the lake of Naw sheh Naw law (Kya leh 1994, 10–11; Pun and Lewis 2002, 32–34).

They lived in harmony in the country of Naw sheh Naw law. Later, however, two groups among the Lahu quarrelled over the distribution of game. This quarrel divided the Lahu and 99 dissatisfied families left the country and moved south. The remaining 33 families tried to pursue the 99 families but could not catch up with them. Giving up the chase, the 33 families settled in a new country, Mvuh meh Mi meh (Kya leh 1994, 11–12; Pun and Lewis 2002, 34–36; Antisdell 1911, 33).<sup>40)</sup>

The Han Chinese attacked Mvuh meh Mi meh. Eventually the Lahu lost their new

38) In the English version translated by Pun and Lewis (2002), "*jaw maw*" is translated as "ruler."

39) Peke Naje (Pun and Lewis 2002, 31) or Peu Cin Na Cin (Kya leh 1994, 10). Pun and Lewis comment that perhaps these terms refer to Beijing and Nanjing respectively. Kya leh's spelling looks closer to the original Chinese pronunciation (with Lahu accent) of Beijing-Nanjing. This interpretation contradicts an implicit assumption among Chinese ethnologists that these terms do not refer to Beijing and Nanjing but to old place names in Qinghai (Beiji 北基 and Nanji 南基) (Zhengxie Lancang Lahuzu Zizhixian Weiyuanhui 2003, 21). However, given their claim that the Lahu were once rulers of China, it would be meaningless if their capital were located in small villages in isolated Qinghai. It is most plausible that such views constitute a kind of "political decision" designed to minimize ethnic conflict in contemporary China. Ma (2008; 2009) also makes similar criticisms of this unrealistic political discourse that pinpoints Qinghai as the Lahu homeland.

40) Mvuh meh Mi meh is supposed to be an old Lahu name for present-day Lincang 臨滄 ("Lahuzu Jianshi" Bianxiezhu 1986, 26).

country and were forced to move further south. Some of them founded the Sha K'ai Shi country (Shang Gaixin, a former name for the hills of Shuangjiang county where Zhang Dengfa was based), but it was eliminated by Chinese troops when the British colonized Burma. Since then there have been no more Lahu *jaw maw* (Pun and Lewis 2002, 36–37). At first sight, these narratives seem to relate the prehistory of the Lahu. However, in reality, it is likely that these myths reflect the relatively recent political situation after the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Humans were first created at Naw sheh Naw law; later they also founded Naw sheh Naw law as a new country after having lost the war with the Chinese at Beijing/Nanjing. One possible interpretation is that the passages concerning Beijing/Nanjing area were later interpolated to the original version so that Naw sheh Naw law could be mentioned in the myth as a new country. The claim that Beijing/Nanjing was once the capital of the Lahu makes no sense until the incorporation of the Lahu hills into Chinese territory after the 1880–90s. Since the Lahu originally regarded themselves as non-subjects of the Chinese empire, there should have been no need for them to assert sovereignty over the Chinese capital.

Second, the concept of superior rulers granting seals of office to local chiefs as proof of their investiture reflects a formality associated with the Chinese empire's appointment of native officials (*tusi*). Chinese dynasties always issued seals of office to local indigenous leaders whom they appointed to administrate areas that the dynasty was incapable of ruling directly in pre-modern China. The Tay cawfaa of Mäng: Lam 猛朗 (present-day Lancang Ba 澜沧坝) where the Lahu live was incorporated into the native official system of the Qing dynasty during the late eighteenth century. The legend of the “lost seal” could be an imitation of administrative changes in the early modern period.

Third, in the former Lahu country, Mvuh meh Mi meh (present-day Lincang), direct administration by Qing dynasty was introduced during the middle of the eighteenth century, after which many Han Chinese migrated to southwest Yunnan (see above). Without the presence of Han immigrants, Han Chinese would never have been portrayed in the myth as rivals who threatened Lahu political autonomy. It is possible that the “loss of Mvuh meh Mi meh” corresponded to changes in the ethnoscape during the eighteenth century.

Consideration of these issues leads us to an alternative interpretation of the myths. According to their own accounts, the Lahu started to rationalize their notions of statelessness in relation to the Tay valley states and the Chinese bureaucracy no earlier than the eighteenth century. Their concepts of state, sovereignty, and power seem to have been inspired by the influx of migrant Han Chinese in the early modern period. Consciousness of “statelessness” itself emerged after the Lahu came under the administration of the

Chinese state.<sup>41)</sup> Statelessness as an active ideology for the articulation of ethnic consciousness cannot predate the formation of a modern state with demarcated borderlines. If our understanding is correct, the Lahu were made stateless by the modern state itself.

*“The Lost Book” and Political Power*

If statelessness is not a timeless, quintessential attribute of the Lahu, then James Scott’s argument that their narratives of illiteracy served as “weapons of the weak”<sup>42)</sup> to avoid the state also becomes questionable. He argues that illiteracy (or “non-literacy” as he terms it) and myths of “the lost book” of the “Zomia” highlanders reflected a conscious strategy to keep their distance from lowland states (J. C. Scott 2009, 220–237). However, the Lahu case offers possibilities for a different interpretation of the myths.

The Lahu myth relates that the creator god once summoned representatives from all ethnic groups to receive books of his teachings. He gave the Lahu delegation rice cakes on which his teachings were inscribed. However, on their way home, the Lahu got hungry and ate all the rice cakes. That is why the Lahu, unlike the Tay and the Han Chinese who did not lose their books, do not possess their own writings (Antisdel 1911, 34; Pun and Lewis 2002, 24–25).

Some Lahu interpreted the myth to mean that they did not need to learn how to write. “Because the Lahu people had eaten God’s rice cakes, they have God’s word in their hearts. Just as the Lahu said then, even though they do not have writing, to this day God’s customs and words are in their hearts” (Pun and Lewis 2002, 25). In this interpretation, the Lahu are congenitally literate while the Tay and Chinese acquire literacy only through learning. Here the hierarchical order of literacy-illiteracy between valley dwellers and highlanders is reversed. Highlanders can use the myth of “the lost book” as an antithesis to the established authority of lowland states.

However, in another interpretation, the myth of “the lost book” provides a strong basis for messianic prophecy. Antisdel (1911, 34) reported:

There is a prophecy among the Lahoos (Lahu) that their brethren of the ninety-nine families will some day return to them and when they do will bring the written precepts of God which the Lahoos once had. Tradition says God wrote his precepts on rice cakes and gave them to the people, but they became very hungry and ate the rice cakes. The Akhas and Was (Karens also)

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41) Ma (2004; 2008; 2009) also argues that the Lahu ethnic consciousness has been formulated in the process of modern state formation, and that their narrative of their own countries in former days has been reinterpreted via the reconstruction and manipulation of origin myths.

42) “Weapons of the weak” is a keyword of his previous work (1985), and this theme is latently repeated in *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009).

have similar traditions except that the writings were on buffalo skins, but when the people were hungry these were cooked and eaten.

They, as well as the Lahoos, expect a return of lost brethren, who will not only bring back the lost writings, but will restore them to political supremacy.

As founder of the Lahu messianic movements, San Fo Zu is thought to have been the man who uttered the prophecy mentioned above. According to the history of the Lahu Christian church, San Fo Zu is reported to have made the following prediction:

[W]hen the time is fulfilled, God will search for us and will enter our homes. There is a sign and when it appears, we will know that God is coming. The sign is that white people on white horses will bring us the Scripture of God. (Saw Aung Din and Sowards 1963, 409)

The Lahu church historian Yo han refers to this prophecy in his version of Lahu church history. His version offers the terms “*chaw hpu*” and “*mvuh hpu* (white book)” as the Lahu translation of “white people” and “the Scripture of God” (Yo han 1976, 5). Here the term *hpu* (white) is an adjective that stresses sacredness, so it is questionable whether “white men” and “white book” originally denoted Westerners and the Bible.

When the American Baptist missionary William M. Young started his evangelical work in Keng Tung in 1901, the Lahu regarded him as the “white man” of the prophecy who was bringing God’s precepts (“white book”) back to them. His arrival started a mass conversion movement in 1904 in Keng Tung, and the movement soon spread across the border into China at an increasingly fast pace (Saw Aung Din and Sowards 1963, 410–411). William Young noted that the belief in “the lost book” underlay the enthusiasm for the messianic movement at that time: “[t]he belief seems well-nigh universal among them that the foreigner would bring them the knowledge of the true God, and there is an intense longing on the part of many for such a revelation” (W.M. Young 1905b). The word “foreigner” here was most probably a translation (somewhat exaggerated) of the Lahu term for white people—*chaw hpu*.

William Young was originally trained for missionary work amongst the Tay (Shan). He was fluent in the Tay (Shan) language and, quite naturally, he knew no Lahu. In missionary correspondences he repeatedly complained that he had some difficulty in communicating with the Lahu, for every time he received delegations of the Lahu he had to find somebody who could translate his Tay into Lahu. Of course, “the white books” that he brought were not written in Lahu but Tay translations of gospels and tracts. Christian missionaries developed romanized Lahu script for Bible translation later. In 1907, Tilbe, a Baptist missionary, invented a romanization system for Lahu, which was used in some pamphlets, catechism, and hymns (Anonymous 1907, 5). Later, in 1932, Po Tun and



Telford completed a translation of the New Testament (Saw Aung Din and Sowards 1963, 414). The invention of a romanization system and the translation of the Bible into Lahu started only after the mass conversions of 1904. Therefore the Lahu could not have had a writing system during the initial period of mass conversion.

Nicholas Tapp (1989) generalized that messianic mass conversion to Christianity was inspired by the widely shared myth of “the lost book” among the highlanders (Miao, Karen, etc.) of mainland Southeast Asia, and hypothesized that conversions were motivated by a “desire for literacy.” Literacy in this context refers to translations of the Bible and other texts written in scripts of their own languages. However, his hypothesis cannot be sustained when we consider the fact that in each case, mass conversion occurred before the translation of the Bible.<sup>43)</sup> Actually, the Bibles distributed by the missionaries were not written in the languages of the highlanders, but in the scripts of dominant lowlanders—Chinese for the Miao and Burmese for the Karen. Nevertheless, these Bibles were regarded as evidence that the prophecies concerning the return of “the lost book” had been fulfilled. The Lahu case was by no means an exception. The Bible that they received was not written in Lahu but in the Tay language.

What then was the real motivation behind their desire to redeem “the lost book”? William Young mentions some interesting attitudes that the Lahu displayed toward written texts. In a correspondence dated November 5, 1904, he wrote of Lahu “teachers (or travelling evangelists)”:

These Muhso (Lahu) teachers have a wonderful influence over the people. They cannot read, they carry certain papers covered with Heiroglyphic<sup>44)</sup> marks that they do not understand the meaning of themselves. I think it quite probable that some of their head teachers in China could interpret these peculiar papers and give some meaning to everything.<sup>45)</sup>

Apparently “teacher” in this context denotes prophets of the cult of San Fo Zu’s messianic movement. It is quite probable that the term “Heiroglyphic” refers to Chinese characters. These illiterate religious specialists carried mysterious texts written in the language of another ethnic group around with them. These texts seem to have been highly valued even though the owners could not read them. In another correspondence William Young commented:

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43) The first Miao and Karen scripts were developed by the missionaries in 1917 (Pollard 1919, 173) and 1832 (U Zan and Sowards 1963, 312) respectively. In both cases the conversion movements preceded the invention of the scripts.

44) This should be “Hieroglyphic.”

45) W.M. Young to T.S. Barbour, Nov. 5, 1904.

The Muhso tradition regarding the lost Book and their longing for the Foreigner to bring them the true Law makes it possible for us to use tracts and Gospels to great advantage even where the people cannot read. Many Muhso believe that their language was a written language. Some claim that there are books still extant. They brought me a book some time ago that they hoped might be such a book but it turned out to be a Chinese book on Astrology and evil spirit worship . . . .<sup>46)</sup>

Again, “foreigner” in his context corresponds to the “white people (*chaw hpu*)” mentioned in the original prophecy. He goes on to say:

We send out tracts and Gospels to the Villagers and they receive them at once as the fulfillment of their traditions. I have sent out hundreds of Gospels and some thousands of tracts. It is somewhat amusing to see a group coming in 15 or 20 days journey and unfold a tract or Gospel that has been guarded with scrupulous care. Wherever they receive those tracts and Gospels they are anxious to come to us at once. The literature has reached far over into China. Wherever they have received the literature it gives us a sort of “Squatter sovereignty right to the territory.”<sup>47)</sup>

William Young clearly stated that the tracts and gospels in Tay were not read by the receivers. Rather, written scriptures themselves were revered as objects of worship, and the receivers of such texts treated them as if they were some kind of amulet. As already noted above, “squatter sovereignty” could be a translation of *jaw maw* or king. This demonstrates that the Lahu conceived of the texts as objectifications of supernatural power, and that they regarded people with such power as entitled to be invested as kings. Messianic movements to redeem “the lost book” are not an anarchist’s antithesis to the state but a unique manifestation of state and power, especially charismatic kingship. In other words, we can interpret Lahu mythical accounts as articulating a deep-felt longing to possess their own state and king, rather than indicating a desire to reject them.

## V Conclusion

As documented by Qing officials in the early nineteenth century, the Lahu were once notorious for their refusal to submit to imperial rule. This does not, however, mean that they enjoyed complete freedom from state control. Their struggle since the eighteenth century shows their efforts to establish their own state, and indeed they sometimes succeeded in their endeavors. Nonetheless, their polities or states were ultimately eliminated and incorporated into modern nation states with demarcated borderlines. In this sense, the Lahu became stateless and conscious of the loss of their own state only after

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46) W.M. Young to T.S. Barbour, Apr. 4, 1905.

47) *ibid.*

the process of modern state formation began.

Actually the Lahu had formulated their unique concepts of state and kingship over the course of their history. These concepts have not been considered seriously by scholars because they are so radically different from conventional understanding of state and kingship.<sup>48)</sup> Invisibility of Lahu states and kings in previous academic works is due to our inability to identify them, rather than because the Lahu rejected such notions themselves.

Ironically James Scott's argument, which is clearly on the side of anti-state anarchism, echoes the assessment by Cen Yuying, the late nineteenth-century governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou. Both men view the history of the Lahu as one of "endless rebellion," and both fail to recognize the concept of state and kingship that underpinned "rebellions" by highlanders.

The Lahu oral tradition has extremely rich texts that justify their statelessness. The lost kings, the lost countries, and "the lost book" are different versions of the same theme. Nevertheless, what these narratives stress is that in the past, the Lahu owned their states, and that by no means do they negate the notion of a state or want to avoid living in their own state. "The lost book" narrated in their messianic movements has been interpreted as a manifestation of their anarchist tendencies. On the contrary, the reality of their behavior at the time of the mass conversions clearly demonstrates their original concept of, and longing for, an ideal king.

At first glance the history of the Lahu seems to be that of a typically stateless people in the James Scott's sense of the term. However, a close reading of the narrative of their history and mythical accounts leads us to quite a different conclusion:<sup>49)</sup> what is really missing is an adequate framework for the understanding of their indigenous concepts of state, kingship, and power. The Lahu appear to be an essentially stateless people simply because our conceptual tools for the comprehension of the "inside view" of marginalized ethnic groups are far from adequate at present.

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48) In his argument on early state formation in Southeast Asia, Wolters (1982, 12–14) criticizes the tendency of previous scholars to overlook small-scale native state formation because of a bias toward Western or Chinese state models. Unfortunately, however, he omits the mainland Southeast Asian massif from his hypothesis (*ibid.*, 32).

49) Although J. Scott has exaggerated the statelessness of the "Zomia" people in his book, I agree with some points in his argument, namely that: 1) "Zomia" peoples' religious belief and mythical accounts reflect the theodicy of their history of deprivation; and 2) the ultimate goal of millenarianism of the "Zomia" people could be the total negation of any form of state-like social hierarchy, rather than their own state-building. For details of my argument on this point, see Kataoka (2007).

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# From Tea to Temples and Texts: Transformation of the Interfaces of Upland-Lowland Interaction on the China-Myanmar Border

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The nature of upland-lowland relations has been a productive preoccupation for students of Southeast Asia. This paper looks at relations between the Ta'aang and Tay Maaw people of Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, in southwestern China, re-examining the upland-lowland interaction through the lens of Buddhist practice. The role of lay ritual specialists in maintaining daily religious life and the use of upland minority language in ritual practice are central to the analysis. Special attention is given to the Ta'aang, as the changes underway in their society present us with an opportunity to reassess some of the basic assumptions about upland-lowland relations, in both present and past contexts, from the lesser-known upland point of view.

**Keywords:** Ta'aang (Palaung), Tay (Shan), upland-lowland interaction, Buddhist practice, China-Myanmar border

## I Introduction

In 2006, Aay Kham began reciting Buddhist texts at a temple in Maan Faai village, located in Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province, near the Chinese border with Myanmar.<sup>1)</sup> In this locality of the Theravada Buddhist world, most temples are not inhabited by monks, and lay practitioners play many of the roles that are usually played by ordained clergy. So it is nothing unusual for a lay ritual specialist like him to give the teachings of the Buddha and read Buddhist texts to the village lay people. What was remarkable about his preaching is that it was done in Ta'aang, his native language, rather than Tay, the common language of Buddhism in Dehong, to the Ta'aang lay people

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1) As a rule, we use "Burma/Burmese" when referring to a language and an ethnic group in Myanmar, and "Myanmar" when referring to the country.



**Fig. 1** Yunnan, China

assembled in the temple.

The Ta'aang generally live in the mountains and speak a Mon-Khmer language, but have practiced Buddhism for generations. They have a long and close relationship with the Tay Maaw, who are the traditional rulers of the valley bottoms of this area. The Buddhism practiced by the Ta'aang is Dehong Buddhism, and the language used in their ritual practice has typically been a mix of Tay, the language of the Tay Maaw, and Pali, the liturgical language of Theravada Buddhism. Texts are written in the Tay language, while chanting and other rituals are performed in Tay Maaw style. Not only did Aay Kham switch to Ta'aang for his sermons using texts created on the Myanmar side, but he also started translating the Buddhist texts used in the daily rituals from Tay into the Ta'aang language, using a Burmese-based script developed on the Myanmar side of the border. Since then the use of spoken and written Ta'aang in Ta'aang Buddhist practice has gained popularity. What should we make of Aay Kham's choice to use Ta'aang? What can we learn of Ta'aang thinking regarding their historically close relationship with the Tay? What do these developments tell us about how upland-lowland relations are evolving in the present, and what are the implications for a rethinking of these relationships in the past?



Although he has become a ritual practitioner in this village on the Chinese side of the border, Aay Kham himself was born in Myanmar, where he learned the Ta'aang script. His residence on the Chinese side and the innovations he has introduced into the local Buddhist practice are just one part of a larger set of dynamics in the long relationship between the Ta'aang and Tay Maaw people. This interethnic relationship is multifaceted, demonstrating elements of symbiosis, dependence, and contestation. The presence of the border is also key to the contemporary developments in the relationship. Ta'aang and Tay Maaw live on both sides of this border, and although both maintain fluid interactions across the border, the line drawn on the map does represent significant disconnects between and among the groups.

Like others in Dehong, the temple in the village where Aay Kham lives was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, as part of the larger crisis that affected Buddhist communities throughout China. In 1983, the temple was rebuilt, as the central control of religious life was relaxed and people moved to reconstruct their spiritual and ritual lives. The daily activities of the temple were restarted, with sermons, chanting, and other rituals being carried out in both Pali and Tay, using texts written in Tay. This was a return to the previous style of Buddhist practice, but socio-economic change in the region has since then introduced a new set of forces driving people's choices and preferences, bringing a new set of nuances to the ways in which upland and lowland people interact.

In this paper we examine the relationship between the Ta'aang and Tay Maaw people along this area of the China-Myanmar border, taking the role of Buddhism as an interface between the two as the main analytical angle. We believe this is justified given the central position that Buddhism typically has been given in defining the differences between uplanders and lowlanders. First, the historical Ta'aang-Tay Maaw relationship is introduced briefly, drawing selectively on theoretical material that has shaped the understanding of upland-lowland interactions in Southeast Asia. Next, the paper moves to a discussion of the unique Buddhist practices of Dehong, particularly the role of lay people in sustaining the religious life of the community. This section highlights the movement of people, between villages of different ethnicities and across the border, as an important social mechanism. From there the analysis moves on to explore recent developments in Ta'aang literacy. These are relevant here because they have sprung from Ta'aang efforts to establish their own religious practices as separate from, yet still closely related to, those of the Tay Maaw. These efforts are further reinforced by a perceived crisis in Ta'aang identity as young people are taking on influence from Han Chinese culture at a rapid pace. The last analytical section discusses these developments, placing the ethnographic description back into the theoretical frameworks of upland-lowland

relations. This discussion also attempts to describe some of the dynamics involved in the exercise of Ta'aang agency and their articulation of cultural adaptation in a rapidly changing world.

The ethnographic data presented was collected during several stages of fieldwork. The first author conducted intensive and extended fieldwork in a Tay village outside Ruili city in Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture between 2006 and 2007. He made five supplementary trips to Ruili over the period of 2009–12, when interviews and surveys were carried out in 118 Buddhist institutions (temples, stupas, and other facilities housing Buddha relics), including both Ta'aang and Tay Maaw temples (Kojima 2010; 2011). In-depth interviews were conducted in the Ta'aang village of Maan Faai, and more detailed surveys were administered in seven temples. Interviews with Ta'aang monks and women lay practitioners resident at Tay Maaw temples were also carried out. Finally, interviews were held in four Ta'aang temples in Mu Ce (Burmese: Mu Hse) and Nam Kham (Burmese: Nan Hkan) on the Myanmar side, as well as discussions with Ta'aang in Yangon. Drawing on this ethnographic material, the paper makes use of the narratives of the local people to highlight the perspectives on interethnic relations in the study area. This research is the first intensive, long-term field-based examination of Buddhist practice in Ruili of its kind.

As introduced above, the main actors in this story are the Ta'aang and Tay Maaw. The Ta'aang are known as uplanders, while the Tay Maaw are lowlanders. Both are transboundary ethnic groups, with sizable populations located in Myanmar as well as China. Because of political and other historical and linguistic reasons, the Ta'aang are known as Palaung in Myanmar, while the Tay Maaw are called Shan. The Shan and Tay Maaw spoken languages are very close. Traditionally they use different scripts, although in Ruili both scripts are used, often together. Local Palaung and Ta'aang speak the Rumi language, with only slight dialect differences. In the following analysis, all four of these ethnonyms are used. Although this may cause some initial confusion, these ethnonyms are used to specify not only ethnicity but also geographic location of the people.

## II An Exception to the Model of Upland-Lowland Relations

Academic interest in the relationship between upland and lowland peoples in Southeast Asia has produced structural models that have been debated widely. While generally regarded as uplanders, the Ta'aang, known as Palaung in Myanmar, where they were first studied, have been noted as not conforming to some of the norms ascribed to upland society. This section provides a brief introduction to the theoretical discussion that has

developed to explain upland-lowland relations. The historical background of the Ta'aang people is presented, followed by an introduction to the local context of the study site. Much of the contextual material presented in this section is from accounts in the early twentieth century in Myanmar.

### *Leach Typology and the Palaung Exception*

The Palaung derive their economic prosperity from tea cultivation instead of wet paddy; they are Buddhists and have a Shan type of social system, but they live in the mountains. (Leach [1954] 1964, 30)

Our frameworks for understanding upland-lowland relations have been colored by the influential works of Leach (*ibid.*; 1960). His typology of Southeast Asian social organization constructs two model systems in mutual opposition. The lowland model is characterized as governed by hierarchical political structures, supported by high-productivity wet-rice cultivation, organized by non-unitary descent, dedicated to Buddhism, and displaying a modest level of bilingualism. The contrasting upland model has egalitarian governance, shifting cultivation, unitary descent, animism, and high levels of multilingualism as its defining characteristics. Regardless of the rigid, dichotomous framework he conceived, Leach's greatest contribution is his conclusion that in reality ethnicity is a fluid and changing social phenomenon. His fieldwork with the Kachin showed that people could and did switch between upland and lowland systems—Kachin became Shan, and Shan became Kachin, depending upon the circumstances of the times. Leach's contributions have been discussed thoroughly throughout the academic literature, and there is no need to rehash the arguments in detail here.

Although he does not provide much detail, Leach felt that the Palaung people of the northern Shan States (known as Ta'aang across the border in our study area in China), uplanders in most senses, showed some rather different traits that made them stick out within his typology of opposing systems. The fact that the Palaung were Buddhists, and the related point that their economy was strong enough to support the necessary physical infrastructure and social institutions in the uplands, put the Palaung outside his framework. J. G. Scott observes that "thanks to their very pronounced hills, they have formed a distinct tribe with a chief of their own for very many years," stressing their upland setting, and perhaps a sense of isolation, as the facilitating factor for their social organization (1932, 136). Leach went as far as to say that the Palaung were organized "in exact imitation of the political model provided by their Shan neighbors" (1960, 53). Milne recognized the presence of strong influence from the Shan in the cultural, linguistic, and political life of the Palaung, but she does not equate this situation of cultural exchange as

“becoming Shan” ([1924] 2004). Rather than engaging in the historical patterns of social oscillation between hierarchical and egalitarian social structures, it seems that the Palaung and Shan had established a more stable relationship of mutual dependence.

If, as Leach (1960) asserts, “only the true Valley People” were able to become “civilized and Buddhist,” what can we make of Palaung social organization? According to his way of thinking, a hill person who converts to Buddhism has entered a world of civilization that will result in assimilation to a valley person. More importantly, we argue in this paper, how can we interpret the relationship between the Palaung and the Shan in order to understand the flows of influence and adaptation that seem to have existed between these people? The ecology-economy explanation provided by Leach leaves us asking for more detail from the daily interactions. Here, we leave aside the approach of assessing cultural instability based on idealized models, choosing rather to examine the dynamics of interaction between the two in daily life.

*Palaung Tea and Shan Rice: Bridging the Upland-Lowland Divide*

Since the time of colonial records, the Palaung have been known for their relative economic prosperity among the mountain people of northern Myanmar and southwestern China. The source of their wealth has been tea, and this has been documented in some detail (e.g. Milne [1924] 2004). The agriculture of the Palaung has consisted mainly of tea and upland rice. Palaung pick and cure their tea before sending it to sellers through networks that reach from Nam San (Burmese: Nam Hsan) to Mandalay and Yangon, and from Nam Kham into China, demonstrating two different economic orientations of the Palaung in the northern Shan States. Buyers include Shan, Chinese, and Burmese. At times livestock were sold to lowlanders, but this was typically done in conjunction with the shipment of tea. Income derived from tea was used to purchase rice and manufactured goods such as textiles from the Shan (Leach [1954] 1964). Some tea planters even placed advance orders for manufactured goods from Mandalay on credit, and payment was made directly in tea at harvest time. Milne cites this as an example of the high levels of trust that existed between the Palaung and their lowland neighbors.

Milne ([1924] 2004), writing about the situation in 1907 Burma, conjectured that tea was a relatively recent adaptation, partly because there were not many rituals involved with tea planting or harvesting. Unlike the cultivation of upland rice, which involved rituals mediating between the human and natural worlds, and is an integral part of the Palaung worldview, tea has always been a commercial undertaking. However, tea planting and curing were so deeply inscribed in the Palaung way of life that they created a legend to explain its importance, and tea is still the mainstay of rural Palaung livelihoods in Myanmar. Within Chinese territory, there are many areas that are believed to be old

Ta'aang tea plantations even though there are no Ta'aang living there presently (Sang 1999). On both sides of the border, it seems safe to say, the Palaung/Ta'aang's access to cash from tea sales enabled them to invest in other areas of life, including social and physical facilities to support Buddhism. Moreover, they were able to attain a level of economic standing that differentiated them from the other upland groups and put them on more of an equal footing with the lowlanders living around them. Leach (1960) went as far as to declare the economic success of Palaung tea to be the conditioning factor that enabled their conversion to Buddhism and active support of monastic structures.

*Mountain Temples: Palaung Buddhism and Its Ties to the Shan*

While the Palaung's deep integration into regional commercial markets is noteworthy, the aspect of Palaung society that has been given the most attention is probably the fact that they are Buddhists. *Races of Burma* says comparatively little about the Palaung, but does mention that they are "peaceable Buddhists, and . . . better Buddhists than their neighbors, the Shans" (Enriquez 1933, 38). Milne ([1924] 2004) states that King Bodawpaya of Burma sent a monk to the Palaung to teach them about Buddhism in 1782, but suspects that there was already significant Buddhist influence among the Palaung since the sixteenth or seventeenth century, as this is the time that Buddhism was introduced into the surrounding Shan society.

In fact this might not have been so strange. According to the Pa Daeng Chronicle,

many hill people came down to take the Sasana back to every hill and mountain. Some of them came down to study and learn correctly and thoroughly the Dhamma, its meaning, the letters of the alphabet, the canon and the grammar and returned home to teach pupils and disciples. (Veidlinger 2006, 80)

This record, describing the Tai of Kengtung in the fifteenth century, portrays uplanders actively seeking out knowledge and technology, exercising substantial agency in acquiring and spreading Buddhist teachings during this early period of literate culture. In fact, some Palaung intellectuals deny that Palaung Buddhism was received from the Shan. They refer to a folk story in which the Palaung receive Buddhist teachings directly from India, from a disciple of the Buddha who was one of the original Palaung ancestors. This shows the strong feeling among Palaung that their Buddhism is more legitimate than that of the lowland Buddhist around them.

Nevertheless, a scenario put forward by scholars is the introduction of Buddhism to the Palaung from the Shan kingdom of Sēn Wī (Burmese: Thein Ni). Shan rulers used Buddhism as one way to increase their influence over the Palaung, who resisted tax and corvée requirements ("De'angzu Jianshi" Xiudingben Bianxiezhu 2008), and it spread as

a result of the Burmese kingdom's effort to introduce Buddhism among the Palaung (Milne [1924] 2004).

Palaung temples, built on the highest part of the mountain ridge on which a village is situated, are reported to have had image-houses and a school (Milne [1924] 2004). Monks gave discourses in the morning, and stories of the Buddha's life were frequently read aloud by anyone who was literate. In the Nam San area of Myanmar, it used to be the tradition that parents encouraged all boys to enter the temple for some periods of time. In the early twentieth century, it seems that each temple had a head monk, but the ordained clergy consisted mainly of novices and nuns. The Chinese literature has also made reference to a tradition of ordination in Dehong (Dang and Zhou 2010), but the fieldwork upon which this paper is based found that this was in fact not the case (Kojima 2011; 2010).

Palaung Buddhism has been heavily influenced by Shan Buddhism, and to a lesser, yet still important, degree, Burmese Buddhism (Ashley 2005). The teachings, texts, institutions, and ritual practices are basically the same as those of their Shan neighbors (Yang 1987a; 1987b). In Dehong, there are clear influences from Shan sects, particularly the Yon (Thai/Lao: Yuan) sect from northern Thailand and the Pöy Cöng (Burmese: Pwe Kyaung) sect from Myanmar, as well as others from Myanmar such as To Le (Burmese: Taw Nei) and Co Ti (Burmese: Zaw Ti) ("De'angzu Jianshi" Xiudingben Bianxiezhu 2008). The close relation between Shan/Tay and Palaung/Ta'aang Buddhism is seen at many levels of practice, and the depth of this influence is clear from the detail of sect differences found within the local Buddhist communities.

The literature has focused on the Shan/Tay Buddhism of the region, and hardly any detailed treatment has been given to Palaung/Ta'aang Buddhist practices, or to how ritual is transmitted from lowland to upland peoples more broadly (Ashley 2005).

### *Tawngpeng: The Palaung Shan State*

It is not well known that one of the Shan States was in fact a Palaung principality within the larger Shan system of regional governance. Tawngpeng, centered around the Nam San plateau, is a fine example of an upland kingdom, suggesting that the Palaung have not thought like Zomians (J.C. Scott 2009) for some time. In form it resembled very closely its Shan model, but its predominantly Palaung population was ruled by a Palaung *sawbwa*. The *sawbwa* of Tawngpeng styled themselves as Shan rulers, adopting much of the apparatus of governance used by the Shan. Fig. 2 shows Hkun Pan Tsing, the last of the Palaung *sawbwa* in Myanmar, and his consort in formal attire.

But the Palaung *sawbwa* made a point of maintaining relations with sources of power outside of the Shan political world. At one point, rather than submitting to the head of



**Fig. 2** Hkun Pan Tsing, Last Palaung *Sawbwa* in Myanmar, and His Consort

Source: Palaung calendar for 2009.

the Shan States, the Palaung insisted on paying tribute directly to the Burmese king in Ava (Milne [1924] 2004). In this way, the Palaung were integrated into the Shan polity, but they used their status—not to mention their Buddhist beliefs and literacy in the Shan language—in refusing to submit fully to the Shan. While the Tawngpeng Palaung were able to continue a flexible policy of avoiding the conflicts of their more powerful and ambitious lowland neighbors, they also isolated themselves from other Palaung communities across the Shan States and into China. The other Palaung, living in smaller, more dispersed groups, accepted more direct Shan/Tay control. This situation continued until 1947, when Aung San called the ethnic groups to Pin Lon (Tay: Pang Long) to discuss the details of a post-colonial Burmese federation. Hkun Pan Tsing was the head of the Executive Committee of the First Frontier Areas Conference in 1946, and represented the Shan states at the Second Pin Lon meeting in 1947 (Sai Aung Tun 2009). Although it may seem remarkable that the Palaung head of one of the more remote Shan States would be their representative at this momentous gathering, this in fact reflects that important role that Hkun Pan Tsing played in interethnic regional politics of the time. The political strategies of the Tawngpeng *sawbwa* have not been analyzed in his-

torical detail, but what we know of the Palaung's relations with the Shan suggests a complex set of nuanced interactions involving both demonstrations of conformity and also acts of resistance to the larger Shan political structures.

### *Uplanders in the Tay Polity*

The Palaung state is a surprising development that shines light on another angle of upland-lowland relations. As part of the larger Tay cultural complex, the Shan/Tay Maaw world is colored by their style of governance centered on *muang* polities (e.g. Condominas 1990). The creation of a *muang* usually starts with a Tay group migrating to an inter-montane valley, displacing the autochthonous, usually Mon-Khmer-speaking people, and then incorporating them into the *muang* through symbolic relations that recognize the original people's relationship with the land and the spirits inhabiting it (Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012). Economic and social relationships are formed in a way that reinforces an imbalance in social status and political power in favor of the Tay.

This interaction probably had several possible outcomes, most of which are not well understood. One is a process of "becoming," in which one group assimilates to the other. Historically it would seem that the main model would be Mon-Khmer assimilating to Tay. Leach (1960) proposed this as the main mechanism for the growth of the Tay *muang* across the region, rather than Tay migration. Davis (1984) proposed a more nuanced view, in which the period before the Tay groups began to document their history was characterized by intense and sustained cultural interaction resulting in the gradual assimilation of many Mon-Khmer groups together with a significant level of cultural transfer from Mon-Khmer to Tay. One main area of transfer seems to have been the world of rituals related to the local spirits.

Another outcome of cultural contact in the *muang* system involves transmission of Tay cultural material to non-Tay groups. Across mainland Southeast Asia, there are many such *muang*-based relationships between Tay and Mon-Khmer, such as Muang (Yuan)-Lawa (Davis 1984), Lao-Khmu (Archaimbault 1964), Tay Dam-K'sing Mul (Evans 2000), Lue-Plang (Hasegawa and Kojima 2011), and Phou Thay-Brou (Chamberlain 2011). These often developed into feudal systems in which the Mon-Khmer assumed a position of subjugation to the Tay. Academics tend to try to fit these relationships into frameworks, more often than not inspired by Leach's structuralism, rather than examining the daily micro-level interactions between them (*ibid.*). Re-examination of the historical dynamics may be constrained by the biases inscribed in written records, but local oral traditions may provide hints as to how these relationships really unfolded (e.g. Badenoch and Tomita; Kataoka, this issue). It has been proposed recently that the relationships between the Tay and the Mon-Khmer groups attached to the Tay *muang* can be under-



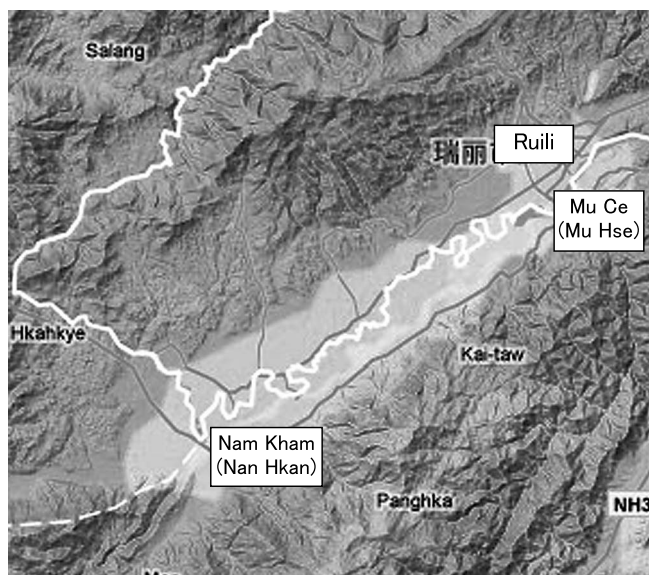
stood as a form of “social symbiosis” (Liew-Herres *et al.* 2012), where the Mon-Khmer come under Tay patronage. Chamberlain makes the case for an even more flexible view, an “interethnic symbiosis” (2011) in which the unequal relationships are manipulated and used by each group for their own benefit. The trade of high-value forest products is one familiar example. Symbiosis entails complementary relationships, located somewhere between hierarchy and equality.

The Tay Maaw-Ta’aang relationship examined in this paper, within the larger geographic and socio-historical context of the Shan-Palaung relationship, suggests that the symbiosis perspective, where unequal relations provide space for complementary interactions of mutual benefit, is a useful framework.

### III Mäng Maaw: The Multiple Dimensions of a Borderland

The geographic setting for this paper is an area known locally as Mäng Maaw (Chinese: Meng Mao), an inter-montane river valley through which the China-Myanmar border runs. The Tay word *mäng* is cognate with *muang*, the unit of socio-political and economic relations introduced above. Historically, the *muang* would have functioned as one social unit interwoven with different threads of interethnic relations. Now, Mäng Maaw is bisected by the border, and Ruili forms the center of economic gravity on the Chinese side. On the Myanmar side, the southwestern end of the valley is oriented towards Nam Kham, while the northeastern region gravitates towards Mu Ce. The lowland valley area has typically been inhabited by Tay Maaw/Shan, while upland groups such as Ta’aang/Palaung, Jinghpaw, and Han Chinese have lived in the surrounding foothills and highland areas. Burmese and Chinese presence has been a factor, but before the 1960s this was less so (Fig. 3).

The border between China and Myanmar only started to be consolidated in the modern sense after the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949, although the last Tay Maaw *cawfaa* (Burmese: *sawbwa*) remained in office until 1955. With the establishment of the authority of the nation-state, the Palaung/Ta’aang experienced different socio-economic and political settings as they were split by the border. Two main historical threads are relevant to the consideration of local society in the Ruili border area. The first is the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. These mega-policies caused disruption to the economic, social, and spiritual life of the local people. The second is the long history of insurgency in Myanmar, pitting ethnic minority militias against the army of the military regime. Both of these have been treated in detail elsewhere, and the discussion here will be limited to the important milestones affecting the com-



**Fig. 3** Map of Mäng Maaw

Source: Adaptation of image downloaded from Google Maps.

munities in the research site. The Great Leap Forward was initiated in 1958, and many people opted to take refuge in Myanmar, including lay people, monks, and others involved in temple ritual practices. This outflow continued until 1960. In 1966, the Cultural Revolution occurred, and another wave of people crossed the border into Myanmar. The Red Guards destroyed stupas and temples. Land that was abandoned by fleeing lowlanders was reallocated to Ta'aang, and movement of Ta'aang from the mountains to the valley basin increased through the 1970s. During this period on the Myanmar side, the economic situation of the Shan was deteriorating because the Chinese border trade had been stopped. Many Shan migrated to Hpa Hkan in Kachin State to work in jade mines. The Palaung, on the other hand, were still making money from their tea production. In fact, they were in a better economic position than the Shan, and during the tea-picking seasons, they would hire Shan as wage laborers. In the 1980s, Shan stopped going to Palaung villages to pick tea as improvements in rice productivity stimulated agriculture in the lowland areas. Tea prices began to drop, and the Palaung ended up in a worse economic position than the Shan. On the Chinese side, the Cultural Revolution came to an end in 1976, and reconstruction of temples began in the 1980s. From the 1990s, border trade began to pick up again, and the Mäng Maaw area has become an area of economic prosperity, increasing the importance of transboundary networks and pulling more and more Burmese and Han influence into the social landscape of the local people.

**Table 1** The Population Growth in Ruili, 1951–2000

Ethnic Group	1951	1958	1978	1988	1990	1996	2000
Dai (Tay)	17,668 (61.45)*	9,228 (49.56)	25,886 (41.66)	35,161 (45.25)	37,005 (45.33)	41,493 (45.51)	47,343 (43.19)
Han Chinese	2,406 (8.37)	4,660 (25.03)	27,027 (43.50)	30,527 (39.28)	31,797 (38.95)	36,169 (39.67)	46,135 (42.09)
Jingpo (Jinghpaw)	8,250 (28.69)	4,368 (23.46)	7,656 (12.32)	9,764 (12.56)	10,272 (12.58)	10,761 (11.80)	12,010 (10.96)
De'ang (Ta'aang)	391 (1.36)	300 (1.61)	646 (1.04)	950 (1.22)	1,039 (1.27)	1,080 (1.18)	1,499 (1.37)
Lisu	36 (0.13)	62 (0.33)	139 (0.22)	268 (0.35)	378 (0.46)	329 (0.36)	438 (0.40)
Others			779 (1.25)	1,041 (1.34)	1,148 (1.41)	1,344 (1.47)	2,195 (2.00)
Total	28,751	18,618	62,133	77,711	81,639	91,176	109,620

Source: Zheng *et al.* (2006, 9); Ruili Shizhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui (1996, 101), with adjustments by Kojima Takahiro.

Note: \* Figure shows the population of the ethnic group as a proportion of the total population (%).

This area on the China-Myanmar border has long been an area of complex, multi-directional cultural forces, and the trends have intensified with rapid growth (Kojima 2011). Table 1 shows population growth in Ruili city between 1951 and 2000, disaggregated by ethnicity.

Most ethnic groups living in the area are found on both sides of the border. There are close linguistic ties among the Palaung and Ta'aang in this area—the Rumai language is shared by most of them—although the valley area is dominated linguistically by Tay. Since the 1960s, the influence of the policies of national language has begun to make its presence felt among communities on both sides of the border. On the China side, the Cultural Revolution marked the first institutionalized introduction of the Chinese language into local society. This came with the increased attention of government policy towards the governance of the border area, but was also driven by the influx of Han settlers. In Myanmar, Ne Win's policy of Burmanization had a similar effect of dramatically increasing the influence of the Burmese language locally, despite a tradition of minority language education that had flourished previously.

The Palaung-Shan/Ta'aang-Tay relationship in the Mäng Maaw basin, often characterized as upland-lowland, is situated in this paper within other frameworks of cross-boundary and interethnic relations. Each of these is relevant to the research and is mentioned in the following analysis.

#### IV Lay People in the Temple: Dehong Buddhist Practice

Dehong Buddhist practices differ from the well-known Southeast Asian Theravada norms, particularly with regard to the low number of ordained clergy found. In Dehong Lay ritual specialists play the main role in mediating the exchange of offerings and merit that form the core of daily Buddhist life for the communities. These ritual specialists are highly mobile and represent an important mechanism for interaction between Ta'aang and Tay people.

##### *Theravada Buddhism: Local Variation on the Model*

In the Theravada tradition of Southeast Asia, the norm is for ordained clergy (monks and novices) to lead the community in individual pursuit of enlightenment (Ishii 1975; 1991). For monks, this involves strict following of the 227 Precepts, and for novices, the 10 Precepts. Ideally lay people will observe the Five or Eight Precepts. Thus the distinction between lay and ordained is clearly maintained, with the social and religious roles clearly defined. The practice is guided by the Pali Canon, scriptures in the Pali language. These scriptures are written in different local scripts, and pronunciation in recital is heavily influenced by the phonology of the local language, but the content is fairly constant across the region.

While the practical distinction between lay and clergy is clearly maintained in daily practice, as social categories, the two are not fixed. That is to say, moving between lay and clergy status is relatively easy. This means that it is common for people to be ordained and then return to lay life. In addition, an individual may be ordained for life or choose to practice as a lay person. The relationship between lay and clergy is key to the Buddhist community. As monks are prohibited by their precepts from working, the lay community must support the Sangha, the community of ordained clergy. The lay people gain merit through their acts of charity. The accumulation of merit will ensure they are reborn into a better life, as a result of their support of the clergy's more intense pursuit of enlightenment. Lay people and ordained clergy participate together in rituals. The first concern of the lay people is that accumulated merit will bring improvements in this life.

As a part of the Southeast Asian Theravada tradition, the Buddhism of Dehong shares many common elements with this generalized model. For example, the Pali Canon is the central source of knowledge and norms for practitioners, and the Dehong Tay and Shan scripts are used for ritual texts. Many of the rituals are performed in similar style as well. However, there are several fundamental and important variations that set it apart. The most striking difference in Dehong Buddhism is the small number of ordained

**Table 2** The Number of Clergy and Temples in Theravada Buddhist Societies

	Temples	Monks	Monks per Temple	Novices	Novices per Temple	Year
Myanmar	56,839	242,891	4.3	305,875	5.4	2007
Thailand	35,244	258,163	7.3	70,081	2.0	2007
Laos	4,140	8,055	1.9	11,740	2.8	2007
Cambodia	4,237	24,929	5.9	32,421	7.7	2007
Xishuangbanna	577	828	1.4	3,998	6.9	2005
Dehong	602	90	0.1	101	0.2	2007

Source: (Kojima 2012, 399). The data for Myanmar was collected by Kuramoto Ryosuke, Thailand by Hayashi Yukio, Laos by Yoshida Kayoko, and Cambodia by Kobayashi Satoru. Data for Xishuangbanna and Dehong is from Kojima Takahiro's interviews with the Buddhist association in each prefecture.

clergy (Kojima 2011). The average number of monks and novices resident at temples in Dehong is significantly lower than in other parts of Southeast Asia (Table 2).

Of the 118 Buddhist facilities surveyed in Ruili, only 29 had people resident, meaning that 75 percent of the facilities were “empty.” There were seven Ta’aang temples, and none of them had ordained clergy resident. Of the people residing at the inhabited facilities (including monks, novices, women lay practitioners, and temple boys), only 25 percent were from China, with the rest originating from Myanmar, as shown in Table 3.

The Cultural Revolution had deleterious impacts on local Buddhist infrastructure and practice, but even compared with Xishuangbanna (Sipsong Panna), where Buddhism is practiced by people speaking the Tay language related to Tay Maaw, the number of ordained clergy is low. In Xishuangbanna, the number of monks and novices has returned to levels similar to pre-Cultural Revolution days. In contrast to other areas of Southeast Asia, in Dehong it is not standard practice for a young man to be ordained as a monk or novice as part of the normal coming of age. These factors suggest low levels of ordination are the norm in Dehong Buddhism, and this was confirmed by local people:

In Xishuangbanna, there is a belief that every boy should be ordained once in his lifetime. That means that there are many novices. However, that type of belief does not exist in Dehong. Because we believe that only men who have the desire to be ordained should do so, the number of monks and novices has been comparatively small even before the Cultural Revolution. (Tay local historian, aged 68)

In Dehong, ordained clergy are required at several types of ritual. For example, in villages where there are monks or novices resident, they will travel to the homes of lay people to perform funeral rites or preside over house-construction celebrations. Monks and novices will also perform village-wide rituals to exorcise evil spirits.

**Table 3** Buddhist Facilities Inhabited by Monks, Novices, Temple Boys, and *Laay Khaaw* in Ruili City (August 2010)

Village	Type	Sect	Monks Total	From China	From Myanmar	Novices Total	From China	From Myanmar	Temple Boys Total	From China	From Myanmar	<i>Laay Khaaw</i> Total	From China	From Myanmar
VO	Temple	Pöy Cöng	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
VT	Temple	Pöy Cöng	2	1	1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
PT	Temple	To Le	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
ML	Lay house	Pöy Cöng	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
TL	Temple	To Le	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
TL	Stupa		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
VM	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
TK	Temple	To Le	4	1	3	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
TN	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LA	Temple	To Le	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
LN	Temple	To Le	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
LH	Temple	To Le	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
LH	Stupa		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
TH	Temple	Pöy Cöng	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
VL	Temple		5	4	1	30	5	25	33	13	20	0	0	0
HS	Temple	To Le	6	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TT	Temple	Pöy Cöng	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LS	Temple	To Le	5	0	5	5	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	1
TX	Temple	To Le	2	2	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
TO	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
OL	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
LX	Temple	To Le	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TS	Temple	Pöy Cöng	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
NT	Temple	To Le	3	0	3	15	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
MA	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	4	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	1
LT	Temple	Pöy Cöng	2	1	1	6	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TS	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
LM	Temple	To Le	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TT	Footprint of the Buddha		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total			42	12	30	83	16	67	35	13	22	18	4	14

Source: Surveys conducted by Kojima Takahiro.

Notes: 1) The encircled cells indicate Palaung residents.

2) The temple of VT village was formerly affiliated with the Yon sect. Now the abbot belongs to the Pöy Cöng sect.

3) The *laay khaaw* of ML village doesn't live in the temple but in her son's house.

4) The stupas and footprint of the Buddha don't belong to any sect. The temple of VL village doesn't belong to a sect because it was built by the Buddhist association.

In villages where no monks or novices are resident, they may be invited from another village to come perform the necessary rituals, such as large-scale offerings. Other rituals are performed by lay ritual specialists, allowing the community to function with very few monks and novices.

With rising levels of prosperity, many Tay and Ta'aang villagers in Dehong express

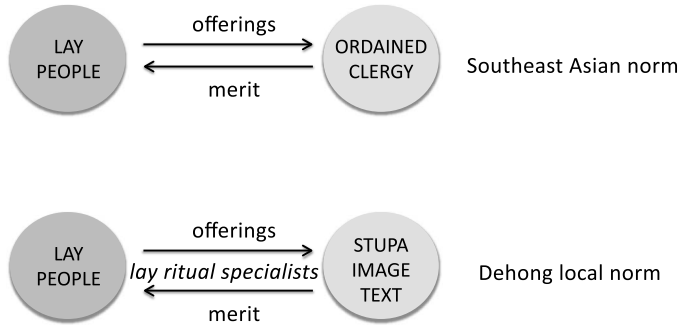


Fig. 4 Characteristics of Buddhism in Dehong

a general desire to build temples, particularly in rebuilding those lost in the Cultural Revolution. But in subsequent discussion, they often say that it is too much of a burden to support the monks. Thus, the traditionally low levels of ordination and the cost of maintaining resident clergy explain why so many temples are “empty” in Dehong. In other words, we see a mix of cultural preferences and economic realities that are seemingly contradictory. But the standard practices centered on “empty temples” are interesting in light of Leach’s economic explanation of Palaung Buddhism. While we do see a good economic situation contributing to the growth of Buddhism, the relative affluence has not meant a major shift in the patterns of residence in temples. The general schematics of the common Southeast Asia norm and the Dehong norm are compared in Fig. 4.

The absence of monks and novices has implications for the accumulation of merit within the local community. Whereas the norm for Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism is a direct relationship of exchange of offerings and merit between the lay community and the ordained clergy, the offering-merit transaction is mediated by lay ritual specialists who interact with symbols of the Buddha such as stupas, Buddha images, and Buddhist texts.

#### *Roles Played by Lay Ritual Specialists*

As introduced above, lay ritual specialists make up for the lack of ordained clergy resident at temples in Dehong. None of the seven Ta’aang villages have ordained clergy resident at their temple. The most important of these specialists are responsible for reciting and reading texts during rituals. These individuals are known as *ta’cong* in Ta’aang (*ta’*, “old man, grandfather,” and *cong*, “temple,” originally from Burmese *kyaung*) and *ho lu* in Tay (*ho*, “head,” and *lu*, “donation,” from Burmese *hlu*, “donation”). The *ho lu* is central to all the functions of the temple, and every village in Ruili has at least one *ho lu*. It is interesting to note that 86 percent of the Tay *ho lu* are not from the villages where their



**Fig. 5** Text Altar in Tay House

Source: Photo by Kojima Takahiro.

temples are located, while all but one of the seven Ta'aang *ta'cong* are also from other villages.

The *ta'cong/ho lu* provides access to Buddhist texts through his role in reciting at rituals. As the Tay name indicates, he manages offerings from the lay community, thereby facilitating access to merit. His duties cover rituals at several levels, including:

- Reciting scriptures and making offerings in front of the “text altar” (Fig. 5) of each household at weddings, celebrations of house construction, and funerals;
- Making offerings and leading the community in reciting scriptures in front of the Buddha image at village-wide rituals; and
- Reciting the Buddhist texts (*taa laa*) at the temple during large rituals such as the annual rainy season retreat (*wa*), water festival (*sang tsen*), and donation of robes (*kan thin*) festival.

In each, the lay participants gain merit through the *ta'cong/ho lu*'s recitals, and in the case of the *taa laa* recital the lay community receives Buddhist teachings for application in daily life.

In addition to the *ta'cong/ho lu*, Dehong Buddhist practices are supported by female lay renunciants (referred to in this paper as “women lay practitioners”) known as *yaa khaaw* or *laay khaaw* (*yaa*, “grandmother,” *laay*, “elderly woman,” and *khaaw*, “white,





**Fig. 6** Ta'aang *Yaa Khaaw* Reciting Scriptures at a Funeral  
Source: Photo by Kojima Takahiro.

pure”) in Tay. *Yaa khaaw* are not considered to be Buddhist nuns in this analysis. They do shave their heads, wear pink robes, and take part in the “ordained” realm of Buddhist practice, but generally speaking their role is much less than that of the *ta’cong/ho lu* with regard to actual ritual practice. Therefore, a *yaa khaaw* has two main duties. The first is to take care of the temple or stupa facilities and grounds, including cleaning and making daily offerings to the Buddha image. The second duty involves participation in funerals, and reciting scriptures in the daytime (Fig. 6), while the *ta’cong/ho lu* recites at night.

For the broader community, groups of lay people participate in certain rituals, particularly during the three-month *wa* period. These people are known as *ta’ sin yaa sin* (elderly men and women of the precepts) in Ta’aang, and *khing laay* (elderly men, elderly women) in Tay. During the *wa*, they are in the temple on holy days (*wan sin*) to observe the Five and Eight Precepts. They are also invited to participate at the many rituals held throughout the year. The *khing laay* activities during the *wa* period demonstrate the relationship between lay practitioners, specialist practitioners, and symbols of the Buddha. There are 13 *wan sin* during this period. For each *wan sin*, the Tay *khing laay* stay two nights at the temple, while the Ta’aang *ta’ sin yaa sin* do not. On the evening before a holy day, the Tay *ho lu* leads the *khing laay* in taking the Five Precepts, which are received in front of the Buddha image, not from a monk, which is the more common Theravada practice. After offering flowers to the image, the people go to sleep. The next morning, the Tay *khing laay* receive the Eight Precepts, and the Ta’aang *ta’ sin yaa sin* receive the Five Precepts. They then offer a meal to the Buddha image and do meditation. In the afternoon, both the Ta’aang and Tay listen to the *ta’cong/ho lu*’s recitation of

Buddhist texts and make another offering to the Buddha image. The next morning, the Tay *khing laay* take the Five Precepts and then return to their homes.

While there are slight differences between the Tay and Ta'aang in the roles and practices of the elderly lay people, in general the Dehong Buddhist community accumulates merit through the intermediary role of the *ta'cong/ho lu*. Recitation of Buddhist texts accompanies offerings in this fundamental core practice led by laymen. This situation is the norm throughout the broader Ta'aang community, and much of the Tay community as well.

### *Movement of People*

As suggested above, individual mobility is important to the functioning of Buddhist practice in Dehong, as witnessed by the accounts of *ho lu* and *ta'cong* originating from outside their village of current residence. Results of a survey in 2010 of people residing at 29 Buddhist facilities in Ruili city confirm this observation.

The majority of clergy resident at the Ruili temples surveyed are from Myanmar, as shown in Table 3 presented above. For example, 71 percent of the monks were from Myanmar, including both Shan and Palaung, while 81 percent of novices had crossed the border to take up residence on the Chinese side. Women also have high mobility, with 78 percent of women lay practitioners originating from Myanmar. The total number of people from Myanmar in these temples is 75 percent.

The relationship between the villages of Ten Long (lowland, Tay, China) and Maan Om (upland, Palaung, Myanmar) illustrates some of the important dynamics behind the movement of people. Ten Long is a large village, comprised of approximately 250 households. Between funerals, house-construction celebrations, and other regular rituals, there is a large demand for a resident monk. The normal practice in the village had been to invite a monk from another village temple to perform the rituals. Eventually, in 1997, the lay community decided that it would be better to invite a monk to reside permanently at the temple. The temple of this village belongs to the Minzo sect, and there are other Tay Minzo temples in the vicinity, but the community expressed concern about the morality of Tay monks. There was a general sense that some Tay monks reflected an unacceptable laxity in adherence to the precepts. The conclusion was that it would be better to invite a Palaung monk because they observe the precepts more strictly and in general have good practice. Furthermore, the Palaung monks speak fluent Tay, and there is no problem with giving sermons. For these reasons, the community decided to make a request to the elders of the Minzo sect in Maan Om that a monk be sent to their village as the abbot.

Maan Om is located in the mountains in Myanmar, where the economic situation

has deteriorated over the past years. The village used to be prosperous enough to support four temples, but the community is having a hard time providing for them now. The birth rate is high, while at the same time divorce and death have created many single-parent situations. Poor families often send their boys to the temple to become a novice, and many girls decide to become *yaa khaaw*. There is not enough rice or oil to support the high population at the Maan Om temples. Ten Long, however, is a prosperous village with only one temple. Because of the one-child policy, children are not so numerous, and the parents do not want their children to be ordained. Moreover, because the village is wealthy, there are many donations, making the conditions for residence attractive to monks from Myanmar, where the security situation has been threatened by sustained armed conflict.

This case shows the push-pull forces working in the relationship between the Palaung and Tay temples. From the Palaung point of view, there are economic factors that make it more sensible to send monks down to take up residence in the Tay temple. From the Tay point of view, the option of inviting a Palaung monk from an upland village provides a solution to social problems that are affecting the local Buddhist practices. For both, the shared language and script, not to mention the fact that they belong to the same sect, make it possible for this exchange to take place.

Another type of movement that has special value for the Buddhists of Dehong is traveling to pay respects and offering a meal to the monks during the rainy season retreat (*wa*). In Tay this is called *song pen*. In fact, lay people visit the temples to pay respects even if there are no monks resident. The *wa* period is a time of meditation, intensified practice, and strict adherence to the precepts, for both the ordained clergy and the lay community. Members of the lay community make special trips to other villages with offerings during the *wa* period in order to make merit. Two cases of interest are presented below, illustrating the merit-making relations and social interactions between temple communities.

The first case involves an upland Ta'aang village (Loi Mon) and a lowland Tay village (Taa Pe), both on the Chinese side of the border (Fig. 7). When the Cultural Revolution began, the Tay villagers were concerned about the safety of the Buddha images in their temple. In order to avoid the risk of them being destroyed by the Red Guards, the villagers smuggled the images across the border and hid them at a Shan temple on the Myanmar side. After the Cultural Revolution, the images were returned to Taa Pe. The villagers agreed to give one of the images to the temple at the Ta'aang village of Loi Mon. In appreciation of the sharing of Buddha images, the Loi Mon temple community performed *song pen* at Taa Pe. This case can be considered as an exchange of merit-making opportunities, the Buddha image representing a long-term source of merit, and the *song*

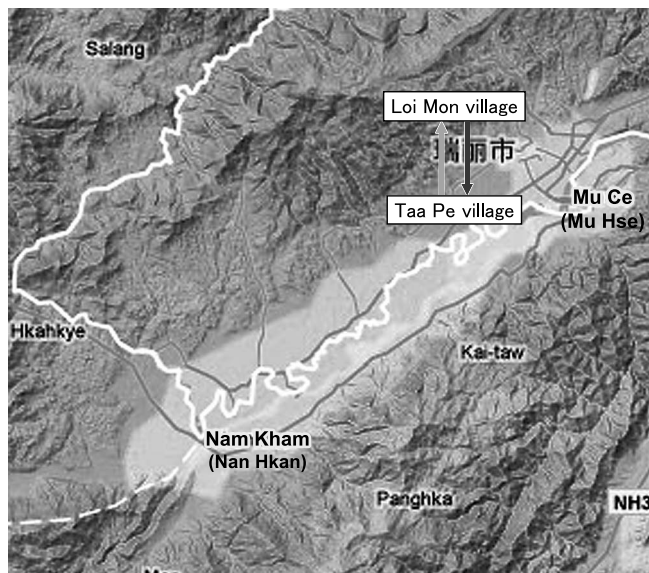


Fig. 7 *Song Pen* between Loi Mon Village and Taa Pe Village

Source: Adaptation of image downloaded from Google Maps.

*pen* an immediate source of merit. Loi Mon also allows people from a neighboring Tay village to collect firewood from the village forest, and in return the other village performs *song pen* at Loi Mon.

In the second case, involving Ten Long and Maan Om (Fig. 8), the temple community of Ten Long performs *song pen* to the Maan Om temple. The relationship between these two temples, introduced above, is slightly more involved than the first case. Before the Cultural Revolution, the Tay community of Ten Long had invited a Palaung monk from Maan Om, in Myanmar. During the tumult of the Cultural Revolution years, the abbot of Ten Long took refuge at Maan Om. Then in 1997, as mentioned, Maan Om sent a Palaung monk to reside at Ten Long. Tay villagers from Ten Long in China travel to perform *song pen* at the Palaung temple in Maan Om on the Myanmar side to express their appreciation. This case also illustrates one strategy used by the Buddhist clergy to deal with the disruptions caused by the Cultural Revolution. This phenomenon is part of the larger relationship between the two groups.

As Table 3 shows, the cross-border movement of *yaa khaaw* is significant. Of the 14 women from Myanmar staying in Tay temples, 11 are Palaung. One of these women, aged 49, explained the situation as follows:

On the Myanmar side there are too many *yaa khaaw*. Since there are not enough donations to



Fig. 8 *Song Pen* between Ten Long Village and Maan Om Village

Source: Adaptation of image downloaded from Google Maps.

support them, they have to go to Tay villages on the Chinese side to get rice. This is called *khaam khaw* and is done between November and December each year. One year I traveled on a *khaam khaw* and the people asked me to stay, so I did.

Another woman, aged 54, says:

I traveled to Mu Ce from Nam San, collecting donations. I also took the opportunity to buy some Chinese-made goods. In Mu Ce, I became acquainted with a lay person from Ton Hong Village on the Chinese side, and they invited me to stay at their temple. The lay people provide me with anything I need. They are very thoughtful, and it is a good place to live.

With the women, it is clear that their minds are open to opportunities to improve their living standards, first increasing their mobility to secure needed food. From there, personal relationships developed during the *khaam khaw* often lead to invitations to stay at temples in China. The reasons for this development are discussed in the following section.

## V Reclaiming Buddhist Texts: Changes in Ta'aang Literacy

The Ta'aang community's relation to their Buddhist texts is especially important given the absence of ordained clergy to provide teachings directly and receive offerings. For these reasons, literacy has long been important for the Ta'aang Buddhist practices led by the lay people. This section describes the social setting for Ta'aang literacy, highlighting how written language is part of a Ta'aang effort to redefine their Buddhist practices in Ta'aang terms, thereby differentiating themselves from the Tay, while at the same time responding to a perceived cultural crisis arising from the influence of Han Chinese.

### *Interacting with Texts: Reading and Recitation*

One of the central aspects of Buddhism linking Ta'aang and Tay practice is language use, and it can be said that use of the Tay/Shan language has been an important foundation in this interethnic relationship. As a rule, the Tay language and Tay writing (*lik Tay*) are used for scriptures recited in the annual rituals. Scriptures in the Pali language are usually written in the Shan script, connecting it with a Buddhist canonical tradition that spans an area wider than the Shan States. It is probable that the Ta'aang have been using the Tay script since they adopted Buddhism, although it is possible that some Ta'aang were familiar with the script before then. Milne ([1924] 2004) mentions that an elite Palaung literati would have used the Shan script for commercial transactions and other communications with their Shan neighbors for many generations. This would not be surprising, given the wide use beyond the world of Buddhist texts that the Tay script had in Tay Maaw society (Daniels 2012). Sang sums up the situation:

The Ta'aang have no writing to represent their native language, but they have been using the Tay script for a long time. They and the Tay are followers of Theravada Buddhism, and use ritual texts written in Tay in the temple. Ta'aang novices get instruction in the Tay script, which means that some of the boys are able to learn the script from a young age. Because of this, Ta'aang intellectuals (lay people who have the experience of being ordained as a monk or novice) have for hundreds of years used the Tay script for reciting Buddhist texts, keeping public records, and exchange of correspondence. (1999, 41–42)

The importance of reciting ritual texts in Dehong has already been mentioned. However, in Southeast Asia the style of recitation differs by locality, and the Ta'aang recite their texts using Tay intonation, rhythm, and stylistics. The style of recitation is a marker of identification, and even within Dehong there are slight variations according to locality. But within the Ta'aang community, the main distinction made is between Ruili (Tay: *seng thung maaw*, “sound of Mäng Maaw region”) and Mu Ce/Nam Kham on

the Myanmar side (Tay: *seng kalong pen*, “sound of the Garuda flying”). According to local informants, the difference between these recitation styles is enough to cause problems in intelligibility. Accordingly, when *ho lu* or *ta’cong* from Myanmar are invited to perform rituals in Ruili, they usually make the effort to learn the local style of recitation.

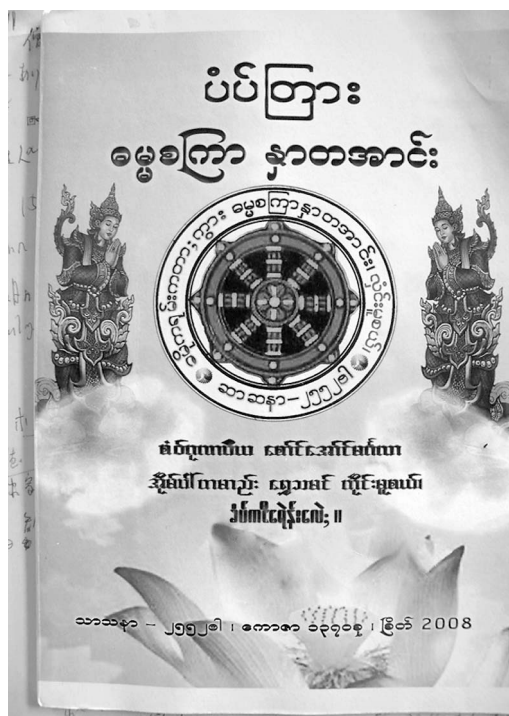
With the increase in *ho lu* and *ta’cong* coming to Ruili from Myanmar, some texts (*taa laa*) have traveled across the border. As mentioned earlier, the Shan use a different script from the Tay Maaw, but texts written in Shan have become increasingly common in Ruili as well. Historically, the Dehong Tay script was also used widely on the Myanmar side of Mäng Maaw, but with the movement to unite Shan scripts led by Shan elites after the 1960s, the influence of the Shan script grew in Myanmar, while the Dehong Tay script continued to dominate on the Chinese side. Now, with the increased cross-border interaction and influx of Shan from Myanmar, the Shan script enjoys some popularity in Ruili alongside the Dehong script.

### *Importing a New Literacy*

Aay Kham’s decision to recite texts in the Ta’aang language was followed by a personal commitment to translate Tay language texts into Ta’aang. Ta’aang informants in Ruili report that their overall level of fluency in the Tay language has dropped in recent years with the growth in Han Chinese influence. One direct implication of this development is that Ta’aang lay people’s understanding of sermons and recitations in Tay is decreasing, and comprehension of the material used in rituals is falling as well. The head of the Committee for Research on the Ta’aang People, Ruili Branch, summed up the issue:

On the Chinese side, the number of Ta’aang is rather small, so if we do not protect our linguistic culture, we will be assimilated into the Tay or Han. It is also embarrassing when someone of another ethnic group asks us if we Ta’aang have our own writing system. (Ta Seng, aged 47)

This statement links the issue of language use in Buddhism to larger trends within Ta’aang society in Dehong. For people like Ta Seng, the initiative to translate Buddhist texts into Ta’aang and write them in a Ta’aang script is an opportunity to address the challenges of maintaining their cultural integrity. On Aay Kham’s part, the motivation for starting to speak and write in Ta’aang derives from the difficulty he initially faced in reciting the local Tay texts in a way that was intelligible to the Dehong Ta’aang lay people. The local people initially preferred recitation using the *seng thung maaw* style, but his thinking was that it would be better to shift to Ta’aang rather than to try to adopt the local style of recitation. The narratives of the local people show that aesthetic preferences and real issues of comprehension intertwined are behind Aay Kham’s decision to start using Ta’aang language and script.



**Fig. 9** Palaung/Ta'aang Buddhist Text from Myanmar  
Source: Photo by Kojima Takahiro.

The Palaung script was first created during the English colonial period, based on adaptations of the Burmese, Shan, and Yuan (Yon) scripts. The Palaung script currently in use was developed in 1955 by U Paw San, a highly educated Palaung from Nam San. U Paw San was sent to study in Sri Lanka during his primary school days by his father, who financed his son's travels with income from tea sales. Revisions to the orthography were made in 1972 at a nationwide Palaung conference. Standards for spelling were also decided at this meeting. The Palaung script is based on Burmese, with one additional consonant and three additional vowels. Fig. 9 shows a Buddhist text written in Palaung/Ta'aang, brought from the Myanmar side.

In 2010 and 2011, courses in Ta'aang/Palaung literacy were given in Ruili. In the first year, 10 students joined the 16-day course. In the second year, the number of students jumped to 55, and the course lasted for 19 days. The courses were held during the summer vacation in elementary schools near Ta'aang villages. The instructors used a textbook developed in 2006 by the Palaung Literacy and Culture Association, which is based in Nam Kham on the Myanmar side. Ta'aang people interviewed about the literacy





Fig. 10 Palaung/Ta'aang Primer Text from Myanmar  
Source: Photo by Kojima Takahiro.

classes mentioned that it was quite difficult for the Chinese Ta'aang to learn the script quickly because it is based on Burmese script. For Palaung on the Myanmar side only small adjustments are necessary to learn the script, as most people are literate in Burmese already. Moreover, the Chinese government has not offered to provide support for the Ta'aang literacy efforts, meaning that the community must generate its own support internally. The promotion of Ta'aang literacy has just begun, and although the results to date are modest, it is unclear how popular the Burmese-based script will become. From the policy perspective, in China it is standard for Roman (Pinyin)-based orthographies to be developed for minority languages without their own written tradition (Shoji 2003). Fig. 10 shows a primer developed in Myanmar and used in Ta'aang language instruction in Ruili.

In the meantime, texts are being translated in Nam Kham on the Myanmar side, and some of these make their way to Dehong. The standard Palaung texts for use in rituals were completed in 1991, after a process of consultation among senior monks. Previously they were written in Shan or Burmese script. The ongoing work of translation is carried out by *ta'cong* and monks.

*Institutionalization of a Nascent Literacy Movement*

The Yunnan Province Ethnic Groups Academic Association Committee for Research on the Ta'aang People (Yunnansheng Minzu Xuehui De'angzu Yanjiu Weiyuanhui) was established in 1998 as a non-governmental organization with the objective of preserving and developing Ta'aang culture. Although the committee is not a governmental organization, most of the approximately 200 members are civil servants or village headmen. The establishment of the committee mirrors similar organizations, for example, the Tay Research Committee (Daixue Yanjiu Weiyuanhui). Early inspiration for the Ta'aang committee probably came from the example of the Tay group. The government provides no financial support for these committees, and the organization is run with contributions made by Ta'aang people. The headquarters are located in Mangshi in the administrative center of Dehong, and branch field offices are maintained in cities and counties of Dehong, in addition to Kunming, Baoshan, and Lancang. At the annual meeting in 2010, the committee decided to begin instruction in Ta'aang literacy. Interestingly, the first person to introduce Ta'aang literacy was an individual from Myanmar who happened to be a ritual specialist (*ta'cong*), and the committee decided to start more organized activities afterwards.

The institutionalization of concern for Ta'aang culture in China followed a similar development on the Myanmar side. In 1972 the Palaung Literature and Culture Association was established with offices in 19 districts. Once a year in August, the association holds courses in Palaung literacy in many places, including Yangon, Mandalay, and Nam San as well as smaller towns around the northern Shan States after the 1990s. Courses for primary school students run for one month, while those for secondary school students last for 20 days. The courses are taught by monks, school teachers, and other volunteers and are financed by donations from the students and the public. An annual meeting is held every August at the district level. Once every four years a nationwide meeting is convened, the venue rotating each time. Chinese Ta'aang delegations also attend this general meeting. The representatives typically report the situation of education for literacy. The Chinese Ta'aang also attend the award ceremony for the examinations following the literacy course at Nam Kham.

The Myanmar Palaung's motivation for initiating their literacy program was described by one of the previous secretaries of the association's Nam Kham branch:

During the British colonial period, the Palaung were the seventh largest ethnic group in Myanmar, in terms of population. But now our numbers are falling and we are only ninth. Because Palaung do not live together all concentrated in one place, the Palaung scattered over a wide area tend to assimilate to the other ethnic groups around them. If a village headman gets married to a woman from another ethnic group, the entire village is likely to assimilate to that group. What's more, we

didn't have our own writing, which means that we need education to make sure that our ethnic group does not disappear.

In his narrative, there is a clear link between assimilation, cultural integrity, and writing. This man, 49 years old, was born in Nam Kham, but educated in Lashio and Mandalay University. At the age of 21, he became a middle-school teacher in Nam Kham, but then joined the Palaung State Revolutionary Army, an armed insurgency group operating as part of the ethnic minorities' struggle against the oppressive policies of the Myanmar military regime. He retired from the army in 2005, at the age of 43, and became involved with the association. As an educated elite leader of the Palaung, he is looking to use his experience and knowledge to raise awareness of the Palaung cultural predicament.

Thus, despite policy constraints on both sides of the border, a local literacy movement has been born and has started to spread. With the new script, the Palaung/Ta'aang have seen an opportunity to open a new chapter in their own Buddhist practice.

## VI Discussion

Following the narration of some of the changes underway among the Mäng Maaw Buddhist community, this section expands upon three themes—changes in multilingualism, mobility, and the question of identity—that are relevant for the consideration of Tay-Ta'aang relations. The analysis supplements synthesis of the data already presented with some additional ethnographic material.

### *Shift in Multilingualism*

Bilingualism, and often multilingualism, has been one of the defining cultural traits of the Ta'aang people. The basic pattern of multilingualism has shifted significantly in the past decades.

There has been a change in the second language of Ta'aang people in China. In the older generation, Tay was the primary second language. Other languages that might be learned depending upon the individual's upbringing were primarily Jinghpaw, followed by other more minor languages spoken in the locality. Tay was the lingua franca, as the Tay Maaw made up the majority of people in the lowland area. Formal education was not widespread. The younger generations have undergone a shift in second language from Tay to Chinese. From the 1950s, Chinese-medium education spread in the area, and there was a rapid influx of Han Chinese after the Cultural Revolution, tipping the lingua franca towards Chinese. Since this period, all official meetings are held in Chinese, and

most Ta'aang are now conversant with Chinese. In the Ta'aang lexicon, the predominant source of loan words used to be Tay, but now the strongest influence on Ta'aang comes from Chinese (Sang 1999).

A similar phenomenon has occurred in Myanmar, where speakers over 60 years old are usually fluent in Tay/Shan as their second language but the younger generation speaks Burmese as their second language. For some teenagers, knowledge of Tay/Shan has been reduced to very basic words and simple phrases. For others, Tay/Shan is still spoken, but the levels of proficiency are not as high as their parents'. The situation is still very context driven. The introduction of the national Burmese-language education curriculum is the major driver of this change. Change in lifestyle, particularly in the urban areas, is a secondary factor in both Myanmar and China.

### *Social Mobility within Buddhist Society*

From the narratives presented regarding choices to settle in temples on the China side, it would appear that the Palaung see China as an area of opportunity. There is a perception that economic life in China is better. At the same time, Palaung are generally welcomed warmly into Tay temples, as the Tay generally perceive the Palaung role as being valuable to the local community. This is especially the case with women lay practitioners. Thus, the gaps in socio-economic wellbeing, taken together with the large number of vacant temples, create push-pull forces drawing Palaung across the border. This movement can be considered a path to upward social mobility for Palaung on the Myanmar side.

Supporting this trend further is a set of perceptions about Palaung ordained clergy among the Tay. When considering perceptions, at the basic level there is still an undercurrent of old stereotypes concerning the differences between upland and lowland communities, and more specifically between Tay and Palaung. First, there is a perception that the Palaung monks are much more conscientious and honest than Tay monks. In general, the Palaung are recognized for their competence in the Tay language and recitation. A similar good reputation precedes the women lay practitioners as well. Palaung *yaa khaaw* are perceived as being organized and thorough in the upkeep of temples. In addition, they handle money and other valuables, including donations, with care and honesty, and there are few cases of improprieties involving possessions at the temples. At the same time, there are also comments that reflect stereotypic views of the uplanders—for example, that Palaung women are used to living on the mountains and therefore do not get bored with the manual labor needed to maintain the temples.

In most cases, the change in place of residence has resulted in improved economic standing for individuals who move across the border to China. For Palaung *yaa khaaw* it

seems that their shift in residence is the by-product of their social networks rather than driven by a desire to search for a better economic life. Concurrent to this is the reality that there is a shortage of suitable people in Tay communities, and the Palaung's ability to perform in rituals in a way that is acceptable to the Tay means that they are recognized as skilled practitioners.

*Becoming Tay? Becoming Chinese? Becoming Ta'aang?*

Today, the local people describe Ta'aang-Tay relations to be limited to certain areas of social life. The networks observed are interesting in what they tell us about interethnic relations, but at the same time it should be recognized that the Ta'aang and Tay retain their own spheres of cultural life. The most intense areas of interaction are defined by specific needs, primarily within the realm of Buddhist practice. The cases presented above exemplify these dynamics. Thus, when there was a shortage of Buddha images after the Cultural Revolution, lack of individuals to manage the upkeep of uninhabited temples, or shortages in donations, the two groups formed bonds of exchange that were formalized to varying degrees within the institutions of Buddhism.

The types of cultural influence the Ta'aang presently receive from their Tay neighbors are somewhat different from those in the past. However, the implications are fundamentally the same for the Ta'aang—they are concerned for the cultural integrity of the coming generations. There are examples of the classic pattern of Ta'aang "becoming Tay" (*pien pen tay*) in Ruili. These villages are recognized by both Tay and Ta'aang as having become Tay: Phaa Sä village and Maan Lim village (1960s); Maan Kham village (1970s); and Paang Yaang village (1980s).

A case in point is Paang Yaang village, which used to be a Ta'aang village. Now there is only one Ta'aang person left. The rest have either become Tay, or are Tay who have married into the village. The prevalence of intermarriage is a major contributor to loss of Ta'aang-ness. The "last Ta'aang" of this village is Ta Mang, aged 82. Ta Mang is married to a Tay woman, and has seven children. His wife speaks only Tay, and the children speak Chinese and Tay. He is the only one who still speaks Ta'aang. According to Ta Mang, "if the children do not speak Ta'aang, they are not Ta'aang." Looking further back into the history of the village, we can see a process of assimilation that must not be uncommon. In the 1940s, there were about 10 Ta'aang households living together with approximately 30 Tay households. Intermarriage became common, and in the 1990s, the Ta'aang had for the most part stopped wearing Ta'aang clothes, choosing to dress like Tay instead. In 2000 a government school was built, and Ta'aang, Tay, and Jinghpaw children attend the school together. In recent years, intermarriage between the three ethnic groups has increased rapidly. These changes have influenced their interaction

with outside villages as well. In the pre-Cultural Revolution days, there were many more Ta'aang. In the area, there were three Tay villages and two Ta'aang villages, and all participated in *song pen* together, visiting all of the other neighboring villages. Now, since there is only one Ta'aang left, the people in Paang Yaang only visit the Tay villages for *song pen*, and they have completely stopped visiting the Ta'aang villages.

Another strong trend is the increase of influence from the Han Chinese on the Ta'aang. Ta Men, 60 years old, from Nam San village, relates that becoming Tay is not a concern in his village. The nearest Tay villages are more than two kilometers away, and even though there is some intermarriage, the children speak Ta'aang. The village has already abandoned Ta'aang clothing, but the language is solid. "People who speak Ta'aang are Ta'aang," he insists. What they are concerned with is that many village girls are marrying men from other provinces in China, including places as far away as Shandong, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hunan. Intermarriage is the first step towards loss of Ta'aang culture, as seen in the historical process of "becoming Tay," and is already evident in the increase in marriage with Han Chinese.

Nonetheless, the recent efforts of the Ta'aang to use their own language in Buddhist rituals, including both spoken Ta'aang and the orthography brought by Myanmar Palaung, take on special meaning given the pressure felt from intermarriage with Han Chinese. The Buddhist texts and recitals show that the Tay influence over Ta'aang culture may be waning, just as the Han Chinese influence over secular life is waxing. The loosening of Tay influence in Ta'aang life has opened up a window to strengthening the contemporary articulation of being Ta'aang. Although the Chinese side is economically more dynamic, the Myanmar side has made important advances in promoting literacy in the Palaung/Ta'aang language, and it is likely that the future of Ta'aang culture will be increasingly intertwined with that of the Palaung.

Administratively, the official ethnicity of a child born to parents of different ethnicities is chosen by the parents. At the age of 18, the child can make a final decision about which of the parents' ethnicities will be taken (Wakabayashi 1991). Thus, even if a village has "become Tay," if one's parents are both Ta'aang, one remains administratively Ta'aang. However, in these villages it is very common to find mixed Tay-Ta'aang marriages. It is often the case that a Tay-Ta'aang couple with more than one child will initially register one child as Ta'aang and one as Tay. It is noteworthy that with Ta'aang-Han couples, the children are almost always registered as Ta'aang. Although the child may grow up speaking only Chinese, living in Han style, the special benefits available to minority groups are attractive to the parents. The administrative angle on "becoming Tay" provides a view on how daily practices and official ethnicity often do not coincide.

## VII Conclusions

This paper has examined the relationship between the Tay Maaw and Ta'aang of Mäng Maaw, highlighting how Buddhism mediates a complementary relationship between the two. The analysis has tried to avoid the dominant fascination with setting up structural categories in favor of concern for the dynamics of local practice and the insights to be gained from local narratives. Focus on the Ta'aang has highlighted important detail regarding local practices otherwise hidden by the assumption that an upland group is simply mimicking the Buddhism of a lowland group. Furthermore, close investigation reveals that there is significant variation, not to mention contestation, within the politically dominant lowland majority as well.

The role of specialist ritual performers in Dehong Buddhism has provided an avenue of cultural reconfirmation for the Ta'aang. The Ta'aang have established a role in maintaining two aspects of local Buddhist practice. First, the specialist ritual performers contribute to the mechanisms of merit-making that drive the practice of Buddhism by lay people. Second, women lay practitioners contribute to the upkeep of "empty" temples of Tay. Part of this confirmation is the Tay recognition of Ta'aang performance, contributing to the Ta'aang search for a legitimacy in the role they are redefining.

At the same time, the Ta'aang have begun to assert some control over the cultural aspects of Buddhist practice. The use of the Ta'aang language in ritual texts and recitals has been met with enthusiasm from the local Ta'aang community, even as Ta'aang practitioners' traditional fluency in the Tay language has made it possible for them to provide services to the local Tay community. Networks of mobility are critical to their ability to do this. Ta'aang networks bridge the rural-urban divide and cross international boundaries. Moreover, they strengthen their own cultural networks, at the same time cementing relations with the Tay in times of need within the realm of Buddhist practice.

These multi-directional dynamic interactions demonstrate that the Ta'aang-Tay Maaw relationship is much more than an upland-lowland relationship defined by clear-cut social categories. Leach ([1954] 1964) asserted that the tea economy enabled the Palaung to achieve and maintain Shan standards of life, noting that the Palaung-Shan relationship was something different from the Kachin-Shan relationship he was trying to describe. Looking at the contemporary situation, we see a relationship that resembles a situation of symbiosis, where "becoming Tay" is not an inevitable outcome of the unequal power relations, where the Ta'aang contribute to the continuity of Tay Buddhism, and where the Ta'aang language may be undergoing an expansion of the social domains in which it is used. Symbiosis in this sense entails an unequal relationship, mutual dependence, and benefit, as proposed by Chamberlain (2011). Importantly, interethnic symbiosis also

opens up the possibility of multiple flows of cultural material and influence.

The Palaung-Shan relationship has been considered an anomaly, an exception to the convenient categories that have been constructed. But there are examples of “upland people” becoming Buddhists—particularly within Mon-Khmer groups such as the Plang, Lawa, Khmu, and Wa—that have not received sufficient attention. On one hand, each of these groups has distinct historical, cultural, and linguistic characteristics, suggesting the need for more detailed examination of their specific relationships with neighboring Tai groups. On the other hand, as Mon-Khmer groups, they share elements of an ethno-linguistic heritage and local regional history, which signals the potential for refining our knowledge of cultural contact on a broader scale. More detailed studies of the “upland” Buddhism of the region, focusing on the transfer of knowledge, practices, and institutions, could offer valuable insight into the socio-economic and political aspects of inter-ethnic relations in the region, from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

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# Blocking the Path of Feral Pigs with Rotten Bamboo: The Role of Upland Peoples in the Crisis of a Tay Polity in Southwest Yunnan, 1792 to 1836

Christian Daniels\*

This paper challenges James Scott's thesis of state evasion and state prevention as the basic features of lowland-upland relationships. It scrutinizes the validity of Scott's assumptions by examining the case of prolonged violent conflict in a tiny Tay polity feudatory to China during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Civil war broke out in the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup> polity (Mangshi, Dehong Autonomous Region in southwest Yunnan, China) due to mismanagement by the monarch of two upland peoples, the Jingpo and the Ta'aang. The analysis of the hostilities furnishes no evidence to validate Scott's thesis of mountain areas as refuge zones for migrants from lowland oppression. What it does expose, however, is the symbiotic side to upland-lowland relationships.

It concludes that symbiosis of upland and lowland was a central issue for the maintenance of political and social stability. Rather than viewing diametric opposition as the main characteristic of upland-lowland relations as Scott does, this study demonstrates the role of interdependence and cooperation, and reveals that relationships between upland peoples and Tay polities shifted according to changing politico-social circumstances. It also identifies the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a tumultuous period for upland and lowland, when the migration of new ethnic groups forced basin polities to readjust their strategies.

**Keywords:** upland-lowland, Jingpo (Kachin), Ta'aang (Palaung), governance, power abuse, Han native militia, raiders, mercenaries

## I Introduction<sup>1)</sup>

Photo 1 shows two young Jingpo and Tay women clasping hands and chatting cheerfully sometime during the 1950s. The caption reads: "In the past, the conflict between the

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1) The Romanization of Tay words follows the Shintani system (see Appendix), but for the sake of ↗



**Photo 1** Two Women Chatting: Jingpo (Right) and Tay (Left)

Source: Photograph from Yunnan Provincial Government Committee for Nationality Affairs 雲南省人民政府民族事務委員會圖片 album, 1950s to early 1960s (private collection).

Note: The caption in Chinese on the reverse side of the photograph reads: “Conversation: They altered their way of thinking during the symposium, and understood that in the past non-unity and non-cooperation constituted the greatest contradiction between the Jingpo and Tay ethnic groups, and that the discord was sown and created by the reactionary clique. They now cordially practice mutual self-criticism and cooperate closely together.” 交談。他們討論會中，打動了思想，認識到了過去不團結不合作，是反動派挑撥造成的山頭族和傣族過去矛盾最大。現在一塊親切的互相檢討親密的合作。

The caption cited in the first paragraph of the paper was written on the album itself.

Jingpo and the Tay ethnic groups was excessive, but now they cordially practice mutual self-criticism and cooperate closely together.” The words eulogize the triumph of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in putting an end to over 150 years of intermittent conflict between these two ethnic groups in the Dehong Dai and Jingpo Nationality Autonomous Region 德宏傣族景頗族自治州 (hereafter Dehong) in Yunnan, China. The caption is significant because it confirms widespread clashes between upland and lowland peoples before the 1950s, a historical fact often underplayed since the eradication of ethnic disharmony. Needless to say, conflict between upland peoples and lowland polities is a persistent theme in the history of pre-modern continental Southeast Asia. In his recent book *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (2009), James Scott argues that upland peoples deliberately attempted to evade conflict

↘ clarity I have changed some initial consonants for ease of comparison with standard Tay (Shan) in Myanmar. For instance, present-day Dehong Tay does not distinguish between the initial consonants “n” and “l,” and uses “l” to indicate this sound, but I use *nam*<sup>6</sup> (water) instead of *lam*<sup>6</sup> and *na*<sup>2</sup> (wet-rice field) instead of *la*<sup>2</sup>, etc.

by choosing a material lifestyle (residential location, agricultural techniques, and even rejection of written scripts) and ideology, and a flexible social organization that protected them from incorporation into the administrative systems of lowland polities. He asserts that upland peoples aspired for statelessness, adopting state evasion and state prevention as political strategies for dealing with lowland polities; the sheer immensity of lowland political and military power compelled upland peoples to choose non-contact and non-participation as survival strategies.<sup>2)</sup> This paper, based on empirical research, challenges Scott's thesis of state evasion and state prevention as the basic feature of lowland-upland relationships. It scrutinizes the validity of Scott's assumptions by examining the historical evidence of prolonged violent conflict in a Tay polity feudatory to the Qing during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It specifically tries to ascertain whether upland-lowland relationships were as confrontational and incongruent as Scott claims, or whether they encompassed more symbiotic features such as interdependence and cooperation. The purpose is to try to broaden our perspective on the complexity of the history of upland peoples, in order to redress the simplistic view espoused by Scott.

The empirical evidence comes from the case of the tiny polity of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>, which experienced intense political turmoil and civil unrest from 1792 to 1836. According to the chronicle of the polity, previous Tay monarchs sponsored Buddhism and their subjects both on the mountains and in the basins had been relatively contented and law-abiding prior to this period, but suddenly the incumbent ruler could not ensure social and political order in the realm anymore. Civil war broke out and left the country rudderless for many years; the basin was burnt and inhabitants harried from end to end by warriors of three different ethnic groups. The cause of the strife was mismanagement by the monarch of two upland peoples, the Jingpo (Tay: Khaang<sup>1</sup>) and the Ta'aang (Tay: Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>/Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>, Chinese: De'ang 德昂). The monarch brought the curse on himself by first bringing in the Ta'aang (rotten bamboo) to fight the rampant Jingpo (feral pigs). For this small realm, the four-decade war was of epic proportions: it divided the country into two factions pitted against each other, caused havoc and destruction, and brought normal administration to a halt. First a Tay group vied with a joint Ta'aang/Tay group, and later, after the fall of the Ta'aang, violent conflict broke out between two Tay cliques, one of which relied heavily on Jingpo mercenaries. This paper analyzes the roles of upland peoples in this four-decade conflict in order to clarify the exact nature of their connections with the Tay polity.<sup>3)</sup>

2) J. C. Scott (2009). See reviews by Lieberman (2010) and Daniels (2010).

3) For another case study of a Tay regime whose stability and territorial integrity was threatened by unrest in the uplands, see Daniels (2004).

The history of the relationships between upland ethnic groups and Tay polities is marred by scanty and scattered information. Chronicles tell us something of Tay polities but almost nothing about upland peoples. This has encouraged historians to ignore the latter and to portray history from the Tay perspective. Needless to say, partial and selective histories can be tolerated no longer, and we need to make greater efforts to capture the whole picture. Upland peoples, mostly illiterate, left few records of their own, but the chronicle cited as the main source occupies a most unusual position in Tay literature because it offers detailed evidence concerning lowland-upland conflict; the account occupies roughly half of the entire work (150 pages out of a total of 298 printed pages). It is known as the *Khă<sup>2</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup>* (*KMMK*, A history of the pedigree of the realm of Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup>, hereafter the Chronicle).<sup>4</sup> Apart from this version, only one other version has been identified, a manuscript that carries the puzzling title *Lik<sup>6</sup> Öng<sup>3</sup> Kyaam<sup>3</sup> Sin<sup>3</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup>* (*LÖKSMK*, The text of Öng<sup>3</sup> Kyaam<sup>3</sup> Sin<sup>3</sup> of Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup>). A search has revealed no Chinese sources, so we have no alternative but to rely on the account in the Chronicle to uncover the realities of upland-lowland relations. Though constrained by reliance on a single indigenous source, this paper is a modest attempt to try to understand the past in its own terms and establish some benchmarks for understanding the history of upland peoples.

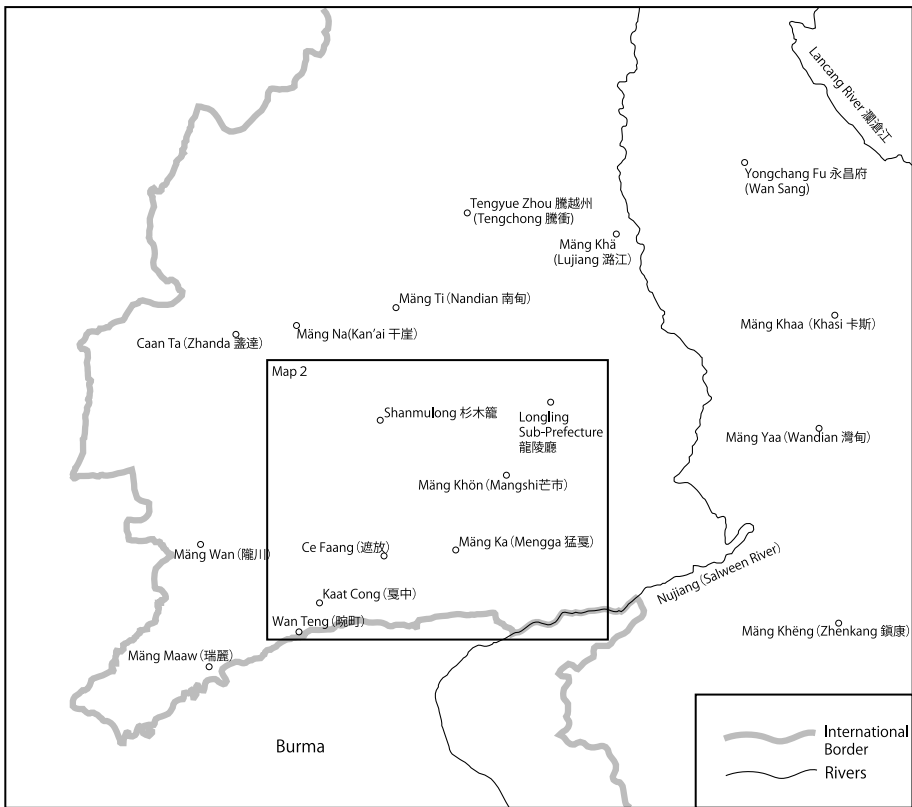
As background, I will first of all elucidate the political environment surrounding the polity of Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup> and then provide a detailed summary of the four-decade civil war according to the Chronicle, before analyzing the role of the Ta'aang and Jingpo in the upland-lowland conflict.

## II The Qing Army and the Polity of Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup>

Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup> (Chinese: Mangshi 芒市) is a small basin located in Dehong in southwest Yunnan, China. The basin ranges from 860 to 900 meters in elevation, and it measures 26.5 kilometers from north to south and 6–10 kilometers from east to west. The total area amounts to approximately 141 square kilometers (Luxi Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 1993, 53; Yunnan Shifan Daxue Dilixi *et al.* 1998, Vol. 1, 232). The territory of the polity included the surrounding mountains as well as the basin itself, but we have no data

4) The old script version of the *Khă<sup>2</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup>* (hereafter *KMMK*) is reputed to be held at the Dehong Autonomous Region Archives, in Mangshi, but the archives do not permit consultation. Gong Suzheng 龔肅政, the doyen of Tay studies in Dehong, recalls seeing a Republican period date on it, but the printed new script version provides no data concerning either the date of composition or the identity of the author.





**Map 1** Southwestern Yunnan in the Nineteenth Century

concerning its population during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A recent government gazetteer estimated the combined average population of the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup> and the Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> (Chinese: Zhefang 遮放) basins and adjacent mountain areas during the 1919–47 period as roughly 50,000 people.<sup>5)</sup> Another source reported the total non-Han population of the same area in 1935 and 1946 as 39,618 and 29,716 respectively (Yang 1946, 74–75). The 1946 figures were probably lower than the 1919–47 period average due to the ravages of World War II, but the breakdown in Table 1 shows that over 50 percent of the population (Tay) resided in the basin while the other three ethnic groups—the Jingpo, Ta’aang, and Lisu—lived scattered over the mountains. Based on the above figures and allowing for the Han Chinese who resided on the mountains, we may specu-

5) The total population in 1947 was estimated at 50,832 people (Luxi Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 1993, 40).

**Table 1** Non-Han Population of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> Luxi Shezhi Ju (潞西設治局) in 1946

Ethnic Group	Number of People	Place of Residence
Tay	19,809	All plains within the Shezhi Ju
Jingpo	5,945	Mountains within the domain of the Ce <sup>4</sup> faang <sup>1</sup> polity 遮放土司
Ta'aang	2,377	Mountains within the Shezhi Ju
Lisu	1,585	Mountains within the Shezhi Ju

Source: Yang (1946, 74–75).

late that the population of the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> polity in the first half of the nineteenth century did not exceed 50,000. In terms of population and territorial size it was, indeed, a tiny polity.

### *Qing Troops Garrisoned at Longling*

Chinese and Burmese dynasties exerted progressively stronger influence on Tay polities after the Mongol conquest of Yunnan in 1253. Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> (hereafter the polity) came under indirect control of the Ming Dynasty in 1443. As a polity that swore fidelity to China, it was designated by the Ming court as a Chief's Office (*Zhangguansi* 長官司), headed by a leader of rank 6a who held an appointment as a civilian native official (*tuguan* 土官) under the supervision of the Ministry of Personnel (Li Bu 吏部). In the eighteenth century the monarch bore the title Mangshi Anfushi 芒市安撫使, or the Mangshi Pacification Commissioner (rank 5b), and successive rulers held this position until the abolition of the commissionership by the PRC in the early 1950s. Chinese control over the polity changed markedly in the aftermath of the 1766–69 Qing-Konbaung War. Though the Qianlong emperor (reigned 1736–95) dispatched four expeditionary forces to fight the Konbaung army, the Qing failed to attain a decisive victory. Qing relations with the Burmese Kingdom remained tense following the truce of 1769 due to dissatisfaction over the postwar settlement, particularly the failure of the Burmese to pay tribute. On high alert against incursions on the Yunnan border, the Qing army halted trade with Tay polities owing fealty to the Konbaung monarchy and prevented civilians from traveling back and forth until 1788, when relations between the two dynasties were finally normalized.<sup>6)</sup> In order to enforce the embargo, the Qing established a new administrative unit known as Longling Sub-prefecture 龍陵廳, contiguous to Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>, in 1770.

The polity occupied a strategic point on the thoroughfare from Tay polities in northern Myanmar to Dali Prefecture in Yunnan. Traveling northeast from the Sino-Myanmar border, the road passed through the basins of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Maaw<sup>2</sup> (Chinese: Ruili 瑞麗), Wan<sup>2</sup> Teng<sup>4</sup> (Chinese: Wanding 畹町), Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup>, and Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> before crossing the

6) See Giersch (2006, 106–109) for the trade embargo.

Table 2 Shift in the Number of Qing Troops Garrisoned at Longling, 1770–1876

Year	Name of Unit	Commanding Officers	Quota (Troop Numbers)	Remarks
1770 (Qianlong 35)	Longling Brigade	Brigade commander ( <i>youti</i> 遊擊)	600	No data
1776 (Qianlong 41)	Longling Xie 協 (the brigade was reorganized as a Xie)	1 regional vice commander ( <i>fuyang</i> 副將), 1 brigade vice commander ( <i>dusi</i> 都司), 1 assistant commander ( <i>shoubei</i> 守備), 2 company commanders ( <i>qianzong</i> 千總), 6 squad leaders ( <i>bazong</i> 把總), 8 detached company commanders ( <i>waiwei</i> 外委)	1,500	1 squad leader ( <i>bazong</i> ) and 50 troops stationed at Longling Pass 龍陵關 and 1 squad leader and 50 troops at Xiangda 象達
1783 (Qianlong 48)	No data	No data	1,343	No data
1849 (Daoguang 29)	Longling Brigade (Xie was reorganized as a brigade)	Assistant regional commander ( <i>cangjiang</i> 參將)	No data	No data
1873 (Tongzhi 12)	Longling Brigade	A non-quota detached company commander ( <i>waiwei</i> ) was established.	Outside quota 900 army troops ( <i>mabu zhanshou bing</i> 馬步戰守兵)	No data
1875 (Guangxu 1, 10 <sup>th</sup> Month)	3 Cheng 程 of troops established	No data	No data	No data
1876 (Guangxu 2)	5 Cheng of troops established	A non-quota detached company commander ( <i>waiwei</i> ) was established.	Outside quota 435 army troops ( <i>mabu zhanshou bing</i> )	No data

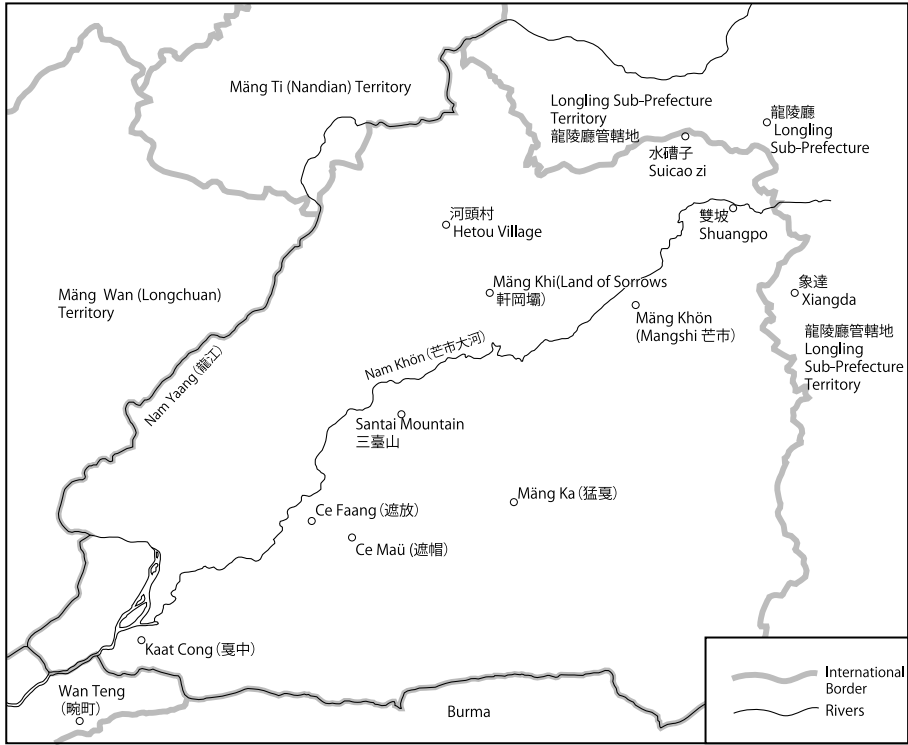
Sources: (1) *DQGCHS* (14764)  
(2) *Tengyue Zhouzhi* (10: 3b–4a)  
(3) Zhang and Cun (1917, 253–254)

Salween River at Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khä<sup>2</sup> (Chinese: Lujiang 潞江). Due to Longling Sub-district's location in the mountains on the road between Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and the ferry at Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khä<sup>2</sup>, the Qing made it responsible for both Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> after its establishment (*DQGCHS*, 12175; Zhang and Cun 1917, 138). This measure afforded Qing officials tighter control over traffic on the roads from northern Myanmar and strengthened Qing supervision over the two adjacent Tay polities.

The aftermath of the Qing-Konbaung war marked a profound reversal of fortune for the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> polity. While the polity had been spared from ravages by the Konbaung army, after hostilities ceased it had to endure the presence of large numbers of Qing troops garrisoned within the basin and on the surrounding mountains. Table 2 indicates that in 1776 the Qing suddenly enlarged the Green Standards (*lüying* 綠營) quota for the Longling Brigade (*ying* 營) to 1,500, which amounted to an increase of 900 since 1770. The escalation reflected growing Qing anxiety over civilian contact with Tay polities feudatory to the Konbaung monarch. The Longling Brigade came under the Tengyue Garrison 騰越鎮, which supervised 16 native officials over a broad area that stretched from Dehong and Baoshan 保山 in the west to present-day Lincang 臨滄 and Pu'er 普洱 in the east. The fact that the Longling Brigade occupied 20 percent of the Tengyue Garrison quota of 7,500 soldiers at the height of the alert in 1775–76 bespeaks its importance (*Tengyue Zhouzhi*, 10, 4a–4b). As imperial suspicions about the Burmans abated, Qing officials lowered the troop quota for the Longling Brigade to 1,343 soldiers in 1783. Though sources provide figures only for rises in 1873 and 1876, we may infer that the 1783 quota remained in effect until the second half of the nineteenth century.

### *Qing Troops within the Polity*

During the 1770s, Qing officials began to station troops within Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> territory on narrow paths and trails that ran over the mountains leading to Tay polities feudatory to the Konbaung Dynasty in neighboring northern Myanmar. The troops manned check-points (*guanka* 關卡) set up to regulate the movement of people and goods. The reform of the Longling Brigade in 1776 included the posting of 50 troops under the command of squad leaders (*bazong* 把總) at Longling Pass 龍陵關, the southern gateway to the sub-prefecture, and at Xiangda 象達, on another route up from the capital of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> (*DQGCHS*, 14764; Zhang and Cun 1917, 146). Qing officials stationed Green Standard troops at outposts (*xun* 汛) in the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> basins from 1770 until 1838. The Green Standards assigned to the Mangshi Outpost 芒市汛 and Zhefang Outpost 遮放汛 were quartered there seasonally: they went down on guard duty to these outposts in the autumn and winter and returned to the high ground in Longling to escape malaria during the spring and summer. Even the thousand Green Standards posted at



Map 2 Mäng² Khön¹ and Ce⁴ Faang¹ in the Nineteenth Century

Santai Mountain 三臺山 (Tay: Löy⁴ Paang⁴ Təng⁴), a strategic point on the thoroughfare from the Mäng² Khön¹ to the Ce⁴ Faang¹ basin, under the command of Regional Commander (*zongbing* 總兵) Kamčibu 喀木齊布, during the alert years of 1773 and 1774 did not remain in garrison the whole year round (Daniels 2011).<sup>7</sup> The governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, Li Shiyao 李侍堯, memorialized the throne in 1778 requesting that 100 troops be assigned to Santai Mountain, “50 of whom were to be allotted to Kaat³ Cong⁴ [Chinese: Kazhong 戛中], Nongchou 弄臭 [Tay name unknown], Ce⁴ Maü³ [Chinese: Zhemao 遮帽], Mäng² Ka⁴ [Mengga 猛戛], and other places in order to lead the native militia (*tulian* 土練) in strictly inspecting people’s coming and going” (*DQGCHS*, 15537). Mäng² Ka⁴, which lay in the mountains of Mäng² Khön¹, played a vital role in the four-decade war, while the other three places lay in Ce⁴ Faang¹ territory with Kaat³ Cong⁴ occupying a strategic position on the route south to Wan² Teng⁴. Gioro Tusedei 覺羅圖

7) For the stationing of a thousand Green Standards at Santai Mountain under the command of Kamčibu, see *GZDQZ* (Vol. 37, 63).

**Table 3** Checkpoints (*Guanka*) Set up in the Mountains of Mǎng<sup>2</sup> Khǒn<sup>1</sup>, 1815–20

No.	Name of Checkpoint	Number of Troops	Grain Supply
1	Hetou Village Checkpoint 河頭村卡 (now Jiangdong 江東)	300 militiamen ( <i>lianding</i> 練丁) under the command of 2 militia headmen ( <i>lianmu</i> 練目)	From over 13,600 <i>luo</i> 籬 of rent rice collected from tenants in “seven large and small villages” in the Land of Sorrows (Mǎng <sup>2</sup> Khǐ <sup>1</sup> ) every year
2	Bang Checkpoint 邦卡	50 militiamen under the command of 1 militia headman	Allocated the mountains on both sides of the Mangu River 蠻古河 to cultivate their own grain crops
3	Shuangpo Checkpoint 雙坂卡	Unspecified	Allocated the wet and dry fields at Menkong Mountain 門空山 to cultivate their own grain crops
4	Suicaozi Checkpoint 水槽子卡	Unspecified	Allocated the wet and dry fields at Menkong Mountain 門空山 to cultivate their own grain crops
5	Luoshui Keng Checkpoint 落水坑卡	Unspecified	Allocated the wet and dry fields at Menkong Mountain 門空山 to cultivate their own grain crops
6	Huatao Forest Checkpoint 化桃林卡	Unspecified	Allocated wet fields and mountains around the Baman River 壩蠻河 to cultivate their own grain crops
7	Bangwu Mountain Checkpoint 邦武山卡	Unspecified	Allocated wet fields and mountains around the Baman River 壩蠻河 to cultivate their own grain crops
8	Tianxin Village Checkpoint 天心寨卡	Unspecified	Allocated wet fields and mountains around the Baman River 壩蠻河 to cultivate their own grain crops
9	Mǎng <sup>2</sup> Ka <sup>4</sup> Checkpoint 猛戛卡	Unspecified	No record
10	Meng Wen Checkpoint 猛穩卡	Unspecified	No record
11	Meng Wang Checkpoint 猛旺卡	Unspecified	No record

Source: Zhang and Cun (1917, 256–257).

思德, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, informed the emperor in 1774 that the principal duty of the troops at the checkpoints was the “inspection of merchants and peddlers” (*GZDQZ*, Vol. 37, 62) for the purpose of ensuring that prohibited goods such as “silk cloth, needles, pieces of felt” were not exported (*ibid.*, Vol. 33, 849).

Table 3 lists the names of 11 checkpoints set up in the mountain tracts of the polity between 1815 and 1820. The magistrate of Longling Sub-prefecture established Nos. 1 and 2 in 1815 for the purpose of handling disturbances by the Jingpo, and built Nos. 3, 4, and 5 to control bandits in 1820 (Zhang and Cun 1917, 256–257). The militia men (*lianding* 練丁) at these checkpoints either relied on rent rice collected from tenants in the

basin (No. 1) for their grain supplies, or were allocated land in the mountains to cultivate their own grain crops (Nos. 2–8). Qing officials founded the checkpoints to maintain law and order on the mountains during these tumultuous years (details in next section), and the Qing army ended up encircling the polity.

#### *Han Native Militia from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup>*

The native militia mentioned in Li Shiyao's memorial provided the Qing army with essential support. On duty the whole year round, they conducted most of the inspection and guard work. Native officials originally bore the expenses for the native militia, but the Qing footed the bill for them until 1789, by which time the tense relations with the Konbaung Dynasty had ended (*GZDQZ*, Vol. 72, 773–774). The Tay ruler of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> relied heavily on the Han native militia from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup> (*thu<sup>2</sup> lën<sup>3</sup> luk<sup>6</sup> khe<sup>3</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup>*) as mercenaries during the four-decade civil war. He hired these upland Han to fight the Jingpo when they began raiding in 1792 (Qianlong 57).

The Tay referred to the Han and other ethnic groups resident in Yunnan as well as Han native-born to Tay Land (Mäng<sup>2</sup> Tay<sup>2</sup>) as the *khe<sup>3</sup>*. By the eighteenth century the Han had established villages in the mountains of the polity.<sup>8)</sup> Tay rulers generally welcomed Han immigrants, whether merchants, craftsmen, or economic refugees, long-standing or recent, because of their practical utility.<sup>9)</sup> The largest concentration during the late eighteenth century was at Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup> in the mountains south of the basin facing Tay polities owing fealty to the Konbaung. Over the years, the upland Han of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup> had forged a close relationship with the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> monarch as vassals (*kha<sup>5</sup>*) as well as native militia on his payroll who generally acquitted themselves well. The Tay regarded them as quick-witted and cunning; the Chronicle abounds in phrases such as “clever people, the Han troops from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup> (*ko<sup>6</sup> phu<sup>3</sup> kat<sup>6</sup> säk<sup>3</sup> khe<sup>3</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup>*).”<sup>10)</sup>

8) There were no Han villages in the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> basin prior to the 1950s.

9) For the role of Han immigrants in the Tay World, see Daniels (2000, 87–90). The Chronicle mentions the *khe<sup>3</sup>* working as carpenters and stone bridge builders in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> during the eighteenth century, but it gives no detailed information about which ethnic groups were included under the rubric of *khe<sup>3</sup>*. The term *khe<sup>3</sup>* could denote craftsmen of Han, Bai, or other ethnicities. *khe<sup>3</sup>* carpenters completed the construction of the Kyöng<sup>2</sup> Kham<sup>2</sup> Temple in 1172 BE (1810–11 CE) (*KMMK*, 88, lines 13–20).

10) *KMMK*, 129, lines 22–25 states: “When the clever quick-witted *khe<sup>3</sup>* troops from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup> and the Khaang<sup>1</sup> warriors arrived at Köng<sup>2</sup> Long<sup>1</sup> (Big Ridge) and Saay<sup>2</sup> Sëng<sup>1</sup> after trekking through the thick forest and undergrowth in the ravines, they torched all the houses.”

### III The Four-Decade Civil War (1792–1836)

Providentially spared the anguish of occupation by the Konbaung army during the hostilities between 1766 and 1769, and enjoying protection from the Qing army, the polity encountered trouble from an unexpected quarter: the mountain tracts. In 1792 the ever-unruly Jingpo began to raid villages in the west of the basin, and their plundering continued until c.1796 (Jiaqing 1). The initial disturbances, and indeed most of the later rivalry as well, occurred at a place known as Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khi<sup>1</sup> (Chinese: Xuangang Ba 軒崗壩), literally “Land of Sorrows,” reportedly because the Tay regularly suffered from the depredations of roving Jingpo. It lay in undulating country adjacent to the high mountains, and many a Tay lost his property, cattle, or family members to marauding Jingpo up to the 1950s. Checkpoint No. 1 (Table 3) was established at a position with easy access to this locality. The Jingpo moved into these mountains from the direction of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Wan<sup>2</sup> sometime in the second half of the eighteenth century. The attacks greatly damaged the Tay polity but were overshadowed by a conflict of deeper significance for the administration of the country—the contest of wills between a pro-Ta’aang ruler and anti-Ta’aang Tay, which aroused deep passions and unsettled life in the polity down to the first settlement of 1817–18.

Here below, tortuous as they will seem, are the events from 1792 to 1836 that hurled the polity into chaos. The ruler at the time of the first raids was Faang<sup>1</sup> Song<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> (Chinese: Fang Yuzhu 放愈著). The Chronicle records how the situation compelled him to fall back on the Han native militia from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup>:

The evil and destructive Khaang<sup>1</sup> from the jungle destroyed and occupied all places in the western part of the basin. They robbed travelers everywhere from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Na<sup>5</sup>, Caan<sup>2</sup> Ta<sup>4</sup>, and Mäng<sup>2</sup> Wan<sup>2</sup> to Mäng<sup>2</sup> Maaw<sup>2</sup> and Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup>, and it became difficult to raise an army in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>. They devastated tribute-paying villages (*cum<sup>2</sup> haay<sup>2</sup>*) in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>; plundered property, cattle, and water buffaloes; and burned villages as well. This distressed the military commanders and Tay commoners of the realm, and worried the raja of the Faang<sup>1</sup> family. At that time, only the old Saw<sup>1</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup>, a great leader and official of the royal lineage (*su<sup>5</sup> kön<sup>4</sup>*), spoke boldly; he issued orders to all members of the royal pedigree, the six *ho<sup>1</sup> kaang<sup>6</sup>*, as well as the *heng<sup>1</sup>* and the *ke<sup>3</sup>* of tribute-paying villages, instructing them to hire 100 *khe<sup>3</sup>* [Han] native militia from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup>. He had them dig broad trenches (*tap<sup>6</sup>*) at Pha<sup>1</sup> Te<sup>2</sup> [village] to guard against the hordes of wild and destructive Khaang<sup>1</sup>. (*KMMK*, 65, lines 4–15)

Faang<sup>1</sup> Song<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> turned to the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup> native militia out of desperation for he could not muster an adequate force from among his own Tay subjects. Indeed, the harm inflicted by the Jingpo proved so immense that he found the initial 100 insufficient and had to supplement them with “another team of 100 gallant native militia troops,” which





**Photo 2** A Jingpo Warrior Armed with a Long Sword and Shield

Source: Photographed by Fang Wenlong 方文龍 2.20.1959. Yunnan Provincial Government Committee for Nationality Affairs 雲南省人民政府民族事務委員會圖片 album, 1950s to early 1960s (private collection).

Note: The caption in Chinese on the reverse side of the photograph reads: “Long sword for chasing away spirits (*nian gui*) and shield of wild boar skin for sending off spirits (*songgui*) as well as for fighting. Jingpo Nationality, Bangwa.” 照片背後文字：幫瓦景頗族在械鬥或送鬼時專用的盾牌（野豬皮）和長刀（唸鬼）。

the Chronicle describes as “valiant, competent, capable of enduring hardship, and having withstood [the Jingpo] on several occasions” (*ibid.*, 66, lines 10–12).

Plundering by the Jingpo persisted until sometime after the new monarch, Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> (official name Tay: Faang<sup>1</sup> Sä<sup>1</sup> Cung<sup>3</sup>, Chinese: Fang Zezhong 放澤重), ascended the throne on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the second lunar month of 1796 with support from the Qing Dynasty (*ibid.*, 73, line 10–74, line 2). The succession struggle that arose following the demise of Faang<sup>1</sup> Song<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> in the eighth lunar month of 1795 (Qianlong 60) unsettled society, but the new ruler soon restored order. His policies proved so effective that apparently the Jingpo stopped pillaging of their own accord and presented lavish tribute of tiger skins and ivory as a token of capitulation. Peace lasted for over 10 years, but raiding resumed in 1807–8 (1169 BE, a water buffalo [hong<sup>6</sup> paw<sup>5</sup>] year), when a large Jingpo force burned down a part of the capital. As the Chronicle puts it: “regretfully the wild Khaang<sup>1</sup> torched the Buddha images, the scriptures, and the *Wi<sup>6</sup> Ha<sup>3</sup>* of the Kyöng<sup>2</sup> Sëng<sup>1</sup> temple, completely devastating and reducing it to ashes” (*ibid.*, 85, lines 4–6).

Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> came up with the idea of utilizing the Ta'aang as bulwarks against the Jingpo. He invoked the metaphor of a home garden in which "vegetables grow well if securely enclosed by a fence." He reasoned that a sturdy enclosure would check the advance of animals (i.e., the Jingpo) into the basin to feed on the seedlings. He announced his plan as follows:

We should pacify the gallant Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> subjects (*kha*<sup>5</sup>) who dwell in the jungle. They have fought the Khaang<sup>1</sup> wild bandits several times and have never been weak. We should get them to build forts (*tap*<sup>6</sup>) and garrison them permanently in the mountains as obstacles against the destructive and wild Khaang<sup>1</sup>. This method is what people call "using rotten bamboo to block the trails of feral pigs." I will order them to guard the narrow paths everywhere on the mountains. (*ibid.*, 92, lines 20–25)

Thereby the monarch promoted influential Ta'aang to office and issued them with vermilion-letter seals of office (*cum*<sup>5</sup> *laay*<sup>2</sup> *lëng*<sup>4</sup>) as a sign of their authority (*aa*<sup>4</sup> *se*<sup>3</sup>) and exempted them from paying taxes (*ibid.*, 93, lines 10–12). The data concerning the Ta'aang officials assembled in Table 4 indicates that four out of the total of seven were military appointments (Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 6). Furthermore, the holders of the two key posts of *Sëng*<sup>1</sup> *Yöt*<sup>6</sup> *Mäng*<sup>2</sup> (No. 4) and *Süng*<sup>3</sup> *Kaang*<sup>4</sup> *Mäng*<sup>2</sup> (No. 5) were, in effect, put in charge of the entire western part of the basin, particularly the Land of Sorrows. The Chronicle refers to the Ta'aang as "rotten bamboo" because political power corrupted them and eventually embroiled the polity in a civil war that saw the basin overrun and considerable damage wrought. The author/s therefore regard the Ta'aang as basically similar to the destructive "feral pigs" (the Jingpo) whom the Tay ruler recruited to keep the Jingpo out in the first place.

By elevation to military positions that defended the polity against despoliation from the dreaded intruders, Ta'aang officials assumed an authority that outranked that of hereditary Tay nobles and administrators in the countryside. Though effective as bulwarks, they brought catastrophe to Tay villagers:<sup>11)</sup>

Let us narrate the age after Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> appointed the Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> as gallant warriors (*hö*<sup>1</sup> *haan*<sup>1</sup>). Why after some time did the Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> gradually become increasingly bold, daring to insult and abuse the people? In considering matters, they still pretended to respect [the ruler], but they took whatever they saw without asking. They drew their swords, and waving them chased and slaughtered any pigs, horses, cattle, water buffaloes that they happened to come across. No one dared say anything, and had to grin and bear, because they were terrified of offending them and frightened of being fined in silver. They seized and slept with any attractive woman whom they fancied, no matter whether she was married, unmarried, or widowed. If they really liked a woman, they took

11) LÖKSMK, 48, line 12–49, line 8. KMMK, 95, lines 7–22 gives a slightly different version.

**Table 4** Ta'aang Men Promoted to High Official Positions by Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup>

No.	Appellation in Chronicle	Official Position	Official Duty
1	Thaak <sup>6</sup> Kaang <sup>4</sup> Wa <sup>3</sup>	<i>Səng<sup>1</sup> Nga<sup>2</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup></i> (commander)	No record
2	Man from Weng <sup>2</sup> Sung <sup>1</sup>	<i>Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kham<sup>2</sup></i>	Military commander ( <i>po<sup>3</sup></i> )
3	A man	No record	Head of the large military fort ( <i>tap<sup>6</sup></i> ) at Weng <sup>2</sup> Long <sup>1</sup> , and most powerful man in Kōng <sup>2</sup> Khaa <sup>2</sup> and Kōng <sup>2</sup> Yä <sup>2</sup> villages
4	Man from Weng <sup>2</sup> Laa <sup>2</sup>	<i>Səng<sup>1</sup> Yöt<sup>6</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup></i>	He was “granted the management of the expansive forest which produces bamboo sprouts, and with this fine official title he [administered] the top, bottom, and middle parts of the Land of Sorrows as well as the boundary with the Jingpo.”
5	A Ta'aang named Səng <sup>1</sup> Yöt <sup>6</sup>	<i>Süng<sup>1</sup> Kaang<sup>4</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup></i> (administrator)	Administered from the top of the basin down to Khən <sup>4</sup> pung <sup>3</sup> in the Land of Sorrows. “ <i>Səng<sup>1</sup> yöt<sup>6</sup></i> asked the <i>kaang<sup>5</sup></i> and <i>ke<sup>3</sup></i> to assist in handling the affairs of office, and to provide aid if necessary.”
6	A man	<i>Ing<sup>3</sup> kaap<sup>3</sup></i> or <i>Səng<sup>1</sup> Kaap<sup>3</sup></i>	Administered Weng <sup>2</sup> Kōng <sup>4</sup> and Maan <sup>5</sup> Ngōn <sup>4</sup> (Lōn <sup>4</sup> ) to defend the boundary with the Jingpo.
7	Pō <sup>4</sup> Cō <sup>2</sup>	No record	Pō <sup>4</sup> Cō <sup>2</sup> headed the administration of both Maan <sup>5</sup> Paang <sup>3</sup> Täu <sup>5</sup> and Hō <sup>1</sup> Na <sup>2</sup> villages. <sup>1</sup>

Source: *KMMK* (94, lines 6, 17–95); *LÖKSMK* (189).

Note: The new Tay script version in the *KMMK* gives Pō<sup>4</sup> Cō<sup>2</sup>, which literally means “the father of Cō<sup>2</sup>” (Cō<sup>2</sup> is a girl's name). The old Tay script has no tone markers, so another possible reading would be Pō<sup>3</sup> (commander), which would make it “Commander Co<sup>2</sup>”—but since Co<sup>2</sup> is usually a girl's name in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khōn<sup>1</sup>, I follow the reading in the *KMMK*. The text gives no indication of the ethnicity of the villages of Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup> Täu<sup>5</sup> and Hō<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup>.

her away to use, and did not listen to any yells of protest. They dragged her away despite remonstrations from her father. Her mother was unable to say anything, and there was no way of pulling her back.

They were vainglorious, and boasting of their abilities claimed that they could wreak havoc on the ill-tempered animals with matted hair that dwelt among the *kha<sup>2</sup>* grass of the forest [i.e., the Jingpo]. They seized and appropriated any suitably located dry fields (*hay<sup>4</sup>*) or wet fields (*na<sup>2</sup>*) that they coveted. The stationing of [Ta'aang] men who had been appointed to office<sup>12)</sup> brought about the deterioration of forts (*weng<sup>2</sup>*) that were already undergoing hardship. This resulted in the appropriation of land plots by one of their men and incessant attempts at their seizure by another.

12) *KMMK*, 95, line 22 has the term *po<sup>3</sup>* (military officer). So this text reads “had been appointed to office as military officers.”

The Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> capriciously chose dry fields and wet fields and took them for inheritance (*süb*<sup>6</sup>) on many occasions.

This passage enumerates such arbitrary behavior as confiscation of cattle, women, and land as the reasons for galling and offending Tay commoners. Abuses of power multiplied and intensified as the careers of the Ta'aang flourished. Then dissatisfaction over the incumbent rulers' adjudication of a quarrel between two implacable enemies, the Ta'aang stronghold of Weng<sup>2</sup> Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>3</sup> and the pro-Tay fort at Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>/Weng<sup>2</sup> Ho<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup>, erupted into a rebellion that occasioned the sacking of the monarch's palace by a motley Ta'aang and Jingpo army. This created wide insecurity; Tay society was unsettled by the ascendance of the Ta'aang to power and apprehensive about how things were going to turn out under them.

The main figure in the toppling of the Ta'aang was a man named Pö<sup>4</sup> Cö<sup>2</sup> (literally, "the father of Cö<sup>2</sup>"), the leader of all the groups of people associated with Weng<sup>2</sup> Ho<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup>. Judging from data given in Table 4, his ethnicity appears to have been Ta'aang, suggesting that the leader of the anti-Ta'aang faction was not Tay but, in fact, a pro-Tay Ta'aang. The Chronicle furnishes no other information except that he was also known as Po<sup>3</sup> Um<sup>3</sup> (Commander Um<sup>3</sup>)<sup>13</sup> and that he bore the title Commander Maang<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>6</sup> La<sup>6</sup> (*maang<sup>2</sup> ka<sup>6</sup> la<sup>6</sup> po<sup>3</sup>*).<sup>14</sup> Realizing that he had no chance of winning the war for mastery of the basin straight away, Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> left and hid with his followers in a village in the Jingpo mountains. While sheltering there, he contacted the deputy ruler (*huyin* 護印) of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Yaang<sup>2</sup>, the father-in-law of Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup>, requesting assistance in his proposed campaign to recover the polity. Some Tay in the basin rallied to his cause after soldiers from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Yaang<sup>2</sup> and Caan<sup>2</sup> Ta<sup>4</sup> eventually turned up.<sup>15</sup>

Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> managed to secure combat troops from Jingpo leaders known as the 10 *caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup>* commanders of the country (*caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup> sip<sup>1</sup> po<sup>4</sup> mäng<sup>2</sup>*) for his campaign against the

13) *KMMK*, 111, last line.

14) Maang<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>6</sup> La<sup>6</sup> seems to have been the title for an administrative head of an area within a polity. Other known examples appear in letters written in Tay by Wa leaders, where it is used as a supplementary title for a *Tha<sup>2</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup>* (head of a circle of villages in the Wa polity of Ngek Let), see LL8.81 and LL8.82 held in the Scott Collection, Cambridge University Library. There are two references to this title in the Chronicle—(1) *KMMK*, 126, lines 4–6 has "At that time the warrior Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> Maang<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>6</sup> La<sup>6</sup> Po<sup>3</sup> felt worried, and was not at all pleased with the Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>," and (2) *LÖKSMK*, 64, lines 2–3 has "At that time the gallant Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> Maang<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>6</sup> La<sup>6</sup> Pho<sup>3</sup> was enraged at the disobedience of the Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>." The *Pho<sup>3</sup>* in (2) is a mistake for Po<sup>3</sup>.

15) *KMMK*, 113, lines 18–19 records: "The numerous soldiers that came down from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Yaang<sup>2</sup> and Caan<sup>2</sup> Ta<sup>4</sup> streamed into all places from the upper part of Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> to the middle of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Maaw<sup>2</sup>." In addition, troops from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Na<sup>5</sup> also participated in the final stages of the offensive. See *KMMK*, 128, lines 6–8, which states: "The Mäng<sup>2</sup> Yaang<sup>2</sup> troops rode caparisoned horses, and the numerous troops from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Na<sup>5</sup> and Caan<sup>2</sup> Ta<sup>4</sup> came up marching in line."

Ta'aang mountain strongholds.<sup>16)</sup> The allied Tay and Jingpo offensive on the 10<sup>th</sup> day, the third month of the Tay calendar, 1177 BE (1815–16 CE) succeeded in expelling some of them. Later, a Ta'aang man with the title *Kin*<sup>4</sup> *Mäng*<sup>2</sup>, the *Pu*<sup>3</sup> *Kaang*<sup>6</sup> of Kōng<sup>2</sup> Long<sup>1</sup> village, dispatched a letter to the monarch tendering his allegiance together with 14 *taels* (Tay: *hōng*<sup>4</sup> [Chinese: *liang* 兩]) of good-quality silver as a token of submission. But the Tay at Fa<sup>6</sup> Pha<sup>3</sup> prevented the Ta'aang messengers from delivering the letter and silver. This caused a renewal of hostilities, but the Ta'aang routed the Tay in the ensuing battle and the victors burned many villages in the basin and completely destroyed most of the temples and the Buddha images in the realm. According to the Chronicle, “only two temples, the Kyōng<sup>2</sup> Sēng<sup>1</sup> and the Kyōng<sup>2</sup> Kham<sup>2</sup>, remained intact, being spared from the conflagration” (*KMMK*, 119, lines 1–2). Tay fled in large numbers, and the Ta'aang, together with their Tay brethren, plundered the “gold, silver, cattle, water buffaloes, rice, belongings, and property” that they left (*ibid.*, 117, lines 13–14). The Chronicle describes it as the “ruin, downfall, and emptying (*haam*<sup>2</sup> *laay*<sup>4</sup>) of the country” (*ibid.*, 117, line 18), and lists the names of Tay polities on the east side of the Salween River (Nam<sup>5</sup> Khong<sup>2</sup>) where the Tay took refuge:

Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khōn<sup>1</sup> was entirely empty (*paw*<sup>3</sup> *laap*<sup>6</sup> *laay*<sup>4</sup> *laay*<sup>4</sup>). People left the country in great numbers and fled up to Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khā<sup>2</sup>, where they noisily swarmed everywhere.<sup>17)</sup> Some groups climbed the high mountains to the east and went up to the territory of Laang<sup>2</sup> Saay<sup>2</sup> in Xiangda 象達. Some found their way down to the banks of the Nam<sup>5</sup> Khong<sup>2</sup>, and crossing this beautiful river proceeded forward to Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kha<sup>2</sup>,<sup>18)</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ya<sup>2</sup>,<sup>19)</sup> and Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khēng<sup>1</sup>.<sup>20)</sup> (*ibid.*, 119, lines 3–8)

16) *KMMK*, 113, lines 11–16 states: “Therefore they decided to go ahead with their plan to use the hordes of Khaang<sup>1</sup> from the savage forest, so they promptly prepared the diction of the directive for issue. Word soon spread abroad with noise and excitement to the *caw*<sup>5</sup> *fa*<sup>6</sup> *sip*<sup>1</sup> *po*<sup>4</sup> *mäng*<sup>2</sup> at their respective places. How terrifying were the Khaang<sup>1</sup> warriors, the men from the wild jungle, who came down from each mountain and ravine armed with spears, and bearing swords suspended over their shoulders; they also carried rattan bags with long straps decorated with flowers strung over their shoulders as well.”

17) Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khā<sup>2</sup> (Chinese name: Lujiang 潞江): *khā*<sup>2</sup> means vine, creeper, race, lineage, topic 藤. According to Fletcher (1927, 132), Lujiang 潞江壩 refers to the Salween Valley between Hemushu 禾木樹 and Zhen'an suo 鎮安所, and he gave the Tay name as Namhkō.

18) Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kha<sup>2</sup> (Chinese: Khasi cun in Changning County 昌寧県卡斯村): *kha*<sup>2</sup> means “*mao* grass 茅草.” Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kha<sup>2</sup> is also known as Kha<sup>2</sup> Se:<sup>2</sup> Wa<sup>3</sup>, which means “Fine *Mao* Grass 茅草 Village.” According to Meng Zunxian (2007, 1347), it refers to Kejie 柯街 in Changning County 昌寧県.

19) Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ya<sup>2</sup> (Chinese name: Wandian 灣甸 in present-day Changning County 昌寧県 Wandian Rural Township 灣甸鄉). The term Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ya<sup>2</sup> is identified as Wandian zhou 灣甸州 in the *Baiyiguan Laiwen* 百夷館來文 No. 8 (see Izui 1949, 263–264). The meaning of *ya*<sup>2</sup> is unknown.

20) Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khēng<sup>1</sup> (Chinese name: Zhenkang 鎮康): *khēng*<sup>1</sup> means “firm, hard.” The *Baiyiguan Laiwen* 百夷館來文 No. 1 and No. 6 gives the Chinese equivalent as Zhenkang zhou 鎮康州 (see Izui 1949, 247, 258).

Hearing of the disturbances, Bolin 伯麟, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, summoned Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> to the Yunnan provincial capital (present-day Kunming) for questioning in the third lunar month of 1815 (Jiaqing 嘉慶 20). In the meantime, Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> persuaded the deputy ruler to gather a force of Tay and Jingpo troops, which he led in the attack on the Ta'aang on the seventh day in the sixth month of the Buddhist calendar (*laii<sup>2</sup> tham<sup>2</sup>*) in the year 1178 BE (1816–17 CE) (*ibid.*, 130, lines 14–17). This time the victory proved decisive. The Ta'aang leader Thaak<sup>6</sup> Kaang<sup>4</sup> Wa<sup>3</sup> (Table 4, No. 1) finally succumbed to wounds from musket balls shot by a roving band of Tay when he was attempting to escape.<sup>21</sup> This time it was the turn of the Ta'aang to go into exile; they fled from their mountain abodes together with their brethren, who included “groups of Tay monks (*khui<sup>2</sup> ma<sup>2</sup> si<sup>3</sup> la<sup>3</sup>*).”<sup>22</sup>

The hostilities left a trail of destruction across the basin. Villages lay “empty and deserted of people (*paw<sup>3</sup> haam<sup>2</sup> kon<sup>2</sup>*)” (*ibid.*, 141, line 4) once again, and “only places north of the Nam<sup>5</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> River remained intact, while the top, middle, and tail ends as well as the south of the basin lay in waste (*paw<sup>3</sup> laap<sup>6</sup>*)” (*ibid.*, 143, lines 22–24). Depleted cultivated land acreage and loss of food reserves led to widespread famine, causing many people to die in the ensuing epidemic (*taay<sup>4</sup> ha<sup>4</sup>*)” (*ibid.*, 145, line 23). Some people “dug up devil’s tongue (*Amorphophallus Konjac* K. KOCH) and yams to eat in place of rice,” while others had to forage for wild vegetables, creepers, sprouts of gourds, and the roots of wild plantains (*ibid.*, 146, lines 8–9). In 1179 BE (1817–18 CE) food deficiency became even more acute:

The price of rice became expensive in the country. One *taang<sup>4</sup>* [approximately 15 kg] of rice reached two *taels* (*höng<sup>4</sup>*), and one *pe<sup>3</sup>* [approximately 1 kg] was two *the<sup>5</sup>* [one-tenth of a *tael*]. All places experienced starvation, destitution, and hardship. People were apprehensive that the country was

21) *KMMK*, 132, lines 3–9 records: “After the pulverization and utter destruction of Köng<sup>2</sup> Long<sup>1</sup> (Big Ridge) the *Nga<sup>2</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup>* fled far away, taking only about five people. After reaching the road at Na<sup>2</sup> Law<sup>2</sup> that led to the cave in the crags, this small party came across a band of soldiers armed with muskets (*köng<sup>5</sup>*) who recognized him as the Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> commander from Paang<sup>4</sup> Way<sup>5</sup>, the *Nga<sup>2</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup>* named Thaak<sup>6</sup> Kaang<sup>4</sup> Wa<sup>3</sup>. These soldiers hastily lit their muskets (*köng<sup>5</sup>*) and instantly shot dead the Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> commander, the *Nga<sup>5</sup> Mäng<sup>5</sup>*.” The prefix *thaak<sup>6</sup>* indicates that the Ta'aang leader had formerly been ordained as a monk but had now returned to secular life.

22) *KMMK*, 130, lines 18–23 records: “The houses of the Kon<sup>2</sup> Löy<sup>4</sup> along the mountain ridges from Köng<sup>2</sup> Long<sup>1</sup> (Big Ridge), Köng<sup>2</sup> Kha<sup>2</sup> (Kha: Grass Ridge), Hoy<sup>5</sup> Hëng<sup>5</sup> (Chinese: Huixian 回賢 Returned Virtuosity), and Phin<sup>5</sup> Saan<sup>4</sup> (Chinese: Ping shan 平山 Flat Mountain) to Paang<sup>4</sup> Wo<sup>2</sup> (Bullock Camp), Ko<sup>4</sup> Kaay<sup>3</sup> Sü<sup>5</sup> (Chinese: Guogai shi 鍋蓋石 Pot Lid Rock), and Yi<sup>5</sup> Waan<sup>2</sup> Suy<sup>2</sup> (Chinese: Yiwansui 一碗水 One Bowl of Water) lay completely derelict, and the people had absconded. Groups of Tay monks (*khui<sup>2</sup> ma<sup>2</sup> si<sup>3</sup> la<sup>3</sup>*) scattered out and escaped by themselves. They fled in great numbers from the villages on the beautiful, large mountains. Some of them went far away, crossing the Khe<sup>2</sup> Khong<sup>2</sup> (Salween River) and going farther beyond.”

about to encounter further suffering. The monarch (*khun<sup>1</sup> mǎng<sup>2</sup>*), his wives (*naang<sup>2</sup> mǎng<sup>2</sup>*), and the monks (*khur<sup>2</sup> ma<sup>2</sup> si<sup>3</sup> la<sup>3</sup>*) went hungry, lacking rice and food. (*ibid.*, 146, lines 14–19)

With rice prices rising sharply, and outraged at the onerous taxes imposed by the deputy ruler—the uncle of Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup>—the Tay sacked his residence on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the second month in the Tay calendar in CS 1180 BE (1818 CE) (*ibid.*, 148, line 6–149, line 11).

Jingpo warriors remained a decisive factor in intra-Tay conflict until 1836 (Daoguang 16) despite the eradication of Ta’aang political power. The Tay split into two groups allied with the two villages in the Land of Sorrows mentioned earlier. The struggle between these implacable enemies originated in a quarrel over an arched stone bridge (Tay: *kho<sup>1</sup> göng<sup>3</sup>*; Chinese: *gongqiao* 拱橋) sometime around 1177 BE (1815–16 CE). Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup> pitted itself against Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>/Hö<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup>, and “later fighting broke out because both sides arrogantly refused to yield to the other,” despite attempts by the ruler to calm both sides down.<sup>23)</sup> Conflict came to a head when the monarch allocated wet-rice fields belonging to Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup> to Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>/Hö<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup> without arranging compensation. The outraged Ta’aang retaliated by pillaging his palace.<sup>24)</sup>

The Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>/Hö<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup> group depended heavily on Jingpo warriors when waging war against Maan<sup>5</sup> Po<sup>4</sup> and their allies in 1185 BE (1823–24 CE).<sup>25)</sup> The Chronicle bluntly states, “Na<sup>2</sup> Yön<sup>3</sup>, Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>, and Weng<sup>2</sup> Mon<sup>2</sup> relied on the wild Khaang<sup>1</sup> from the mountaintops, taking them as models” (*ibid.*, 181, lines 18–20). The eventual triumph

23) *KMMK*, 96, lines 2–5 records: “At first no one said much about the quarrel between Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup> and Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup> and Hö<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup> over the arched stone bridge (*kho<sup>1</sup> göng<sup>3</sup>*; Chinese: *gongqiao* 拱橋), but later fighting broke out because both sides arrogantly refused to yield to the other. The Khun<sup>1</sup> Mǎng<sup>2</sup> instructed both parties to make amends, but they did not obey him, which was an omen that misfortune was about to befall the country.”

24) Regarding the Ta’aang, *LÖKSMK*, 197, lines 10–16 writes: “they arrogantly said that they would only be satisfied by making the country empty (*haii<sup>5</sup> mǎng<sup>2</sup> haam<sup>2</sup>*). They claimed that the ruler (*khun<sup>1</sup> mǎng<sup>2</sup>*) lacked even a semblance of justice (*taa<sup>2</sup> laa<sup>2</sup>*) and had ordered that the wet-rice fields of our Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup> be taken away from the Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>, the vassals (*kha<sup>5</sup>*) from the trees of the jungle, and cheerfully handed them over to the vassal (*kha<sup>5</sup>*) Pö<sup>4</sup> Cö<sup>2</sup>, the wicked man at Hö<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup>.” *KMMK*, 105, lines 14–22 records: “In the second month [of the Tay calendar], people still had their minds set on taking up spears and swords in order to fight. The warriors of both Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup> Ho<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup> and Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup> intended to steadfastly rebel against us. It was said that the ruler (*caw<sup>5</sup>*) had granted Maan<sup>5</sup> Kho<sup>1</sup> Köng<sup>3</sup> (Arched Bridge Village) and a mountain in Mǎng<sup>2</sup> Khi<sup>1</sup> [named] Thun<sup>2</sup> Khaang<sup>3</sup> Cöng<sup>1</sup> to Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>; [Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup> people] went to make a request to the ruler (Khun<sup>1</sup> Mǎng<sup>2</sup>), and that he had handed the wet-rice fields over to them. The Ta’aang vassals said that the ruler had ignored custom and had treated them with indifference. So they rallied to attack his shining palace, and after plundering it returned with large numbers of horses, cattle, water buffaloes, gold, and silver.”

25) *KMMK*, 177, lines 12–14 records: “Hö<sup>1</sup> Na<sup>2</sup> devised an important strategy of becoming more independent by hiring Khaang<sup>1</sup> warriors.”

of the armies of Maan<sup>5</sup> Po<sup>4</sup> and their allies over the Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup> group put an end to Jingpo participation in military affairs and restored peace and order to the polity. The Chronicle summarizes the reaction of people living in the uplands: “All the wild Khaang<sup>1</sup> on the mountaintops in Ce<sup>3</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup>, the Kon<sup>2</sup> Löy<sup>4</sup> Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>, as well as various sorts of Ė<sup>3</sup> ä<sup>3</sup> and the La<sup>6</sup> who dwell in the forested ravines and on the plains, all surrendered to his majesty the deputy ruler.”<sup>26</sup> Later, a Jingpo mountain headman (Table 6, No. 1) named Lön<sup>4</sup> Mo<sup>3</sup> from Ho<sup>1</sup> Keng<sup>2</sup> came to present tribute of ivory, tiger skins, and other produce as a token of submission. Qing officials bestowed silver, hats, and other paraphernalia on the Jingpo in return (*ibid.*, 235, line 20–238, line 5). With peace established, the incumbent ruler, Faang<sup>1</sup> Thet<sup>6</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup>, went back to his capital in 1836. This is the gist of the account told by the Chronicle.

#### IV Upland Peoples as Portrayed in the Chronicle

The above outline makes abundantly clear that governance relied on subtle negotiation. It highlights an often-underemphasized fact: many Tay polities were, in reality, multi-ethnic regimes whose stability depended on the successful management of upland as well as lowland subjects.

The train of events reveals the different roles played by the Ta’aang, Jingpo, and Han Chinese in the four-decade civil war. Each ethnic group had its own motives for participation, and these motives were related to its position within the Tay political order. The relationship of each ethnic group to the monarch, no matter whether friend or foe, is a crucial factor in ascertaining their aspirations for what Scott has termed statelessness. Refusal to take part in basin politics would indicate rejection of state control, thus confirming Scott’s claim. Here we will analyze the cases of the Ta’aang and Jingpo independently in order to determine their connection with the Tay polity. Let us commence by clarifying the suitability of the Chronicle as a source for upland peoples.

The Chronicle was written to uphold the integrity and sovereignty of the dynasty, as well as to authenticate the succession line of monarchs. The text is often tempered by criticism disguised as sermons of Buddhist morality, so the account manifests many layers of meaning. The author/s reproach any monarch who misgoverned or embroiled the polity in dynastic strife. Though subtle in their censure, for after all he was of divine pedigree, they regard as unacceptable any regal behavior that threatened the survival of

26) *KMMK*, 215, lines 18–22. The ethnic affiliation of the Ė<sup>3</sup>ä<sup>3</sup> is unknown. The La<sup>6</sup> refers to the tame Wa (kha<sup>5</sup> La<sup>6</sup>) (see J. G. Scott 1890, 23).



the royal line. For this reason, mismanagement of upland peoples was intolerable, and, indeed, the Chronicle gives a negative appraisal of the reign of Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> for partiality toward the Ta'aang, which was regarded as a fatal error because it eventually led to a ruinous civil war that left no part of the polity unscathed. The Chronicle account centers on the Tay monarch, so its disparagement of the Ta'aang and Jingpo is not essentially based on ethnic criteria but on their degree of allegiance to him, and therefore by extension to the dynasty itself. The fact that both the Ta'aang and the Tay drew supporters and sympathizers from the ranks of the other side demonstrates that the political and military upheavals of the four-decade war were not conflicts in which one ethnic group pitted itself against another. The two opposing camps were ethnically mixed, and the divisions between them were based on political stance.

Sometimes the Chronicle conflates the monarch with the Tay ethnic group, making the account appear pro-Tay. But it categorizes anti-regal Tay as "evil," "wicked," and "of bad disposition" in the same way as it disparages Ta'aang and Jingpo who opposed him. Therefore, loyalty to the monarch, not ethnicity, constituted the principal criterion for chroniclers in the ever-shifting alliances between ethnic groups and the endless intra-Tay feuds. This relative absence of serious ethnic bias makes the Chronicle a suitable source for analyzing the role of hill peoples.

### *The Ta'aang as Arrogant Abusers of Political Power*

The main direction of migration by the Ta'aang, the autonym of these Mon Khmer language speakers, seems to have been from north to south, from western Yunnan into the Tay polities of northern Myanmar on both sides of the Salween River.<sup>27)</sup> We know

27) The Japanese linguist Shintani Tadahiko divides the Ta'aang language into northern and southern dialects. On the basis of his extensive linguistic surveys, he identifies the main difference between them as the preservation of ancient voiced stops in the northern dialects and the tendency for these voiced stops to de-voice in the southern dialects. The vocabulary data published in his lexicon (Shintani 2008) was collected from fieldwork with seven speakers of the southern dialect: three in the Kengtung basin area and one each from Mäng<sup>4</sup> Peng (east of the Salween on the road to Ho<sup>1</sup> Paang<sup>2</sup>), Mäng<sup>4</sup> Küng<sup>1</sup> (north of Laay<sup>4</sup> Khaa<sup>4</sup>), Yassaw (Lö<sup>5</sup> Cök<sup>2</sup>, north of Taunggyi), and Kalaw (near Taunggyi). In a personal communication on February 21, 2011 Shintani informed the author that the autonym differs in the north and south. In the north (southwest Yunnan and Nam<sup>5</sup> San<sup>2</sup>) people generally refer to themselves as Ta'aang, while in the south (southern part of the Shan State) they call themselves Dara'aang. Apparently, this difference is due to a change in the original voiceless plosive initial consonant "t," which has become an implosive initial consonant "d" in the south. One notable exception is the Liang dialect 梁方言 spoken in Baoshan 保山 in southwest Yunnan, where the autonym is now Na'aang. Shintani hypothesizes that Na'aang has evolved from Da'aang with an implosive "D-." He also reports the following examples: the autonym at Pha<sup>1</sup> Min<sup>5</sup> (east of Salween) is Dara'aang, and the autonym at Kalaw (west of Salween) is Da'aak, while the autonym at Nam<sup>5</sup> san<sup>2</sup> is Ta'aang.

nothing about their early history in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>, but the Chronicle reports them as culturally close to the Tay from the late eighteenth century. By this time they had converted to Theravada Buddhism and submitted to the ruler. The exonym Tay<sup>2</sup> Löy<sup>4</sup> (mountain Tay) bespoke the affinity that the Tay felt for them. Other terms used in the Chronicle include Pe<sup>2</sup> Le<sup>2</sup> (name of subgroup) and Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup>/Pö<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> (from the Burmese exonym Palaung). Table 5 lists 25 Ta'aang villages, which confirms that they resided mainly in the mountains during the period of turmoil. Only No. 12, Khën<sup>4</sup> Pung<sup>3</sup>, No. 13, Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup>, and perhaps a few other villages were located in the Land of Sorrows.

The Ta'aang were the only upland people to be escalated to high rank in the bureaucracy (Table 4). Such promotions were possible because of their cultural proximity to the Tay; unlike the Jingpo, they were co-religionists, Theravada Buddhists, familiar with Tay society, language, and customs. It was probably for this reason that the monarch presumed that they could be trusted, but he had not foreseen the dangers of their overweening ambitions. It was in the absence of order, and under the constant threat of anarchy created by the Ta'aang abuse of power, that the desire to evict the Ta'aang from office became so strong among the Tay. Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup>, the leader of all Tay warriors opposing the Ta'aang, himself probably a Ta'aang, articulated the reasons for Tay dissatisfaction in his call to arms speech:

We ought to fight and kill the Ta'aang who are of bad disposition, and drive them out. We should force them into destitution and expel them from our realm, so that our ruler (*caw*<sup>5</sup>) can dwell in happiness and enjoy peace of mind. It said that a person unable to feel gratitude for the favors and benefits conferred on them (*kung*<sup>3</sup> *ke*<sup>2</sup> *cir*<sup>2</sup>) cannot be saved even if a multitude of *phi*<sup>1</sup> come to their assistance. The ruler (*khun*<sup>1</sup> *mäng*<sup>2</sup>) bestowed wet-rice fields on them for their well-being (*khyaam*<sup>2</sup> *khya*<sup>3</sup>), and stopped the allocation of various sorts of levies (*sä*<sup>1</sup> *phaay*<sup>3</sup> [Chinese: shoupai 收派]) on them. He did not collect the stipulated taxes (*suy*<sup>3</sup> *khön*<sup>5</sup> *khäng*<sup>1</sup> *kün*<sup>4</sup>), or take anything from them thereafter. Despite this they persisted in showing disrespect to the ruler (*caw*<sup>5</sup>), arrogantly maltreated him, broke into and destroyed his palace. They deceived us, appropriating more and more until they claimed that the whole country belonged to them. This is unacceptable, so we should drive the Ta'aang vassals (*kha*<sup>5</sup>) out of the country. (KMMK, 106, lines 8–19)

The orator gives three reasons for his discontent. First, the Ta'aang were ungrateful for the special favors (granting them wet-rice fields, etc.) and privileges (waiving tax and labor services) that the monarch had bestowed on them. Second, they displayed contempt for him by devastating his palace. Third, they appropriated cattle, women, and land and even had the temerity to claim that they owned the polity. This was intolerable to Tay senses of propriety since as “lord of water and land (*nam*<sup>6</sup> *caw*<sup>5</sup> *lin*<sup>4</sup> *khun*<sup>1</sup> ၁၈၁၈၁၈၁၈၁၈ *အရှင်*)” the monarch owned everything in the realm.

Divided over policy, and politically weakened by his inability to exercise leadership

**Table 5** Ta'aang Villages in the Mountains of Măng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup> Mentioned in the Chronicle

No.	Name of Village	Remarks	Source
1	Weng <sup>2</sup> Khēm <sup>1</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 114, line 15
2	Paang <sup>4</sup> Way <sup>2</sup> (Fast Camp)	Seat of <i>Seng<sup>1</sup> Nga<sup>2</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup></i> of Paang <sup>4</sup> Way <sup>2</sup>	<i>KMMK</i> , 113, line 4; 114, line 15; 115, line 7
3	Weng <sup>2</sup> Sung <sup>1</sup> (High Weng:)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 114, line 16
4	Weng <sup>2</sup> La <sup>2</sup> (Wet-rice Field Weng:)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 114, line 16
5	Măng <sup>2</sup> Tan <sup>4</sup> (meaning unknown)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 114, line 16
6	Weng <sup>2</sup> Thăn <sup>3</sup> (Weng: in the Jungle)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 114, line 16
7	Kōng <sup>2</sup> Long <sup>1</sup> (Big Ridge)	Seat of the <i>Pu<sup>3</sup> Kaang<sup>6</sup></i> of Kōng <sup>2</sup> Long <sup>1</sup> who bears the title <i>Kin<sup>4</sup> Măng<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>KMMK</i> , 113, line 6; 114, line 15; 115, line 6; 116, line 13; 130, line 18
8	Kōng <sup>2</sup> Kha <sup>2</sup> (Kha: Grass Ridge)	Under control of Weng <sup>2</sup> Long <sup>1</sup>	<i>LÖKSMK</i> , 188; <i>KMMK</i> , 94–95, line 20; <i>KMMK</i> , 130, line 18
9	Kōng <sup>2</sup> Yă <sup>2</sup> (Yă <sup>2</sup> is a Ta'aang word)	Under control of Weng <sup>2</sup> Long <sup>1</sup>	<i>LÖKSMK</i> , 188; <i>KMMK</i> , 94–95, line 20
10	Taa <sup>4</sup> Lēw <sup>1</sup> (meaning unknown)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 113, line 4
11	Thang <sup>6</sup> Kaang: <sup>2</sup> Waa <sup>3</sup> (meaning unknown)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 113, line 5
12	Khēn <sup>4</sup> Pung <sup>3</sup> (Khēn <sup>4</sup> Spa)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 113, line 5
13	Maan <sup>5</sup> Yak <sup>6</sup> (meaning unknown)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 113, line 5
14	Ton <sup>5</sup> Cong <sup>4</sup> (meaning unknown)	This village claimed to have burned the ruler's palace.	<i>KMMK</i> , 116, line 6
15	Taang <sup>2</sup> Lēng <sup>1</sup> (Red Road)	This village claimed to have burned the ruler's palace.	<i>KMMK</i> , 116, line 6
16	Hu <sup>2</sup> Maay <sup>2</sup> (Ta'aang language name, meaning unknown)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 127, line 24
17	Hay <sup>2</sup> Lāng <sup>1</sup> (Yellow Subordinate Area)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 127, lines 24–25
18	Paang <sup>4</sup> Tōng <sup>2</sup> (Copper or Remember Camp)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 127, line 25
19	Măng <sup>2</sup> Kaang <sup>4</sup> (Middle Măng)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 127, line 25
20	Yaang <sup>4</sup> Tay <sup>1</sup> (Walk and Go)	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 127, line 25
21	Hoy <sup>5</sup> Hēng <sup>5</sup> (Dry Ravine)	Now a Khe <sup>3</sup> (Han) village called Huixian 回賢 (literally, Returned Virtuosity)	<i>KMMK</i> , 130, line 18
22	Phin <sup>5</sup> Saan <sup>4</sup> (Flat Mountain; Chinese: Ping Shan 平山)	May have been a mixed settlement of Khe <sup>3</sup> and Ta'aang.	<i>KMMK</i> , 130, line 19
23	Paang <sup>4</sup> Wo <sup>2</sup> (Bullock Grazing Ground)	May have been a mixed settlement of Ta'aang and other ethnic groups.	<i>KMMK</i> , 130, line 19
24	Ko <sup>4</sup> Kaay <sup>3</sup> Su <sup>5</sup> (Si.) (Pot Lid Rock; Chinese: Guogai shi 鍋蓋石)	According to oral tradition originally a Tay village but later occupied by Ta'aang	<i>KMMK</i> , 130, line 19
25	Yi <sup>5</sup> Waan <sup>2</sup> Suy <sup>2</sup> (One Bowl of Water; Chinese: Yiwansui 一碗水)	May have been a mixed settlement of Khe <sup>3</sup> and Ta'aang.	<i>KMMK</i> , 130, lines 19–20

and the growing necessity to make concessions to the Ta'aang on the one hand and to Tay sentiment on the other, the monarch suffered further loss of power and prestige when his palace was razed to the ground. He was forced to flee to exile in Qing-controlled Longling. As a *caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup>* (Lord of the Sky), the monarch was supposed to be a sacred person, toward whom all subjects were expected to behave with restraint and decorum. The destruction of his palace was an insult to the royal dignity as much as it was a threat to his very life. The anti-regal message was there for those who wanted to see it. This event turned the monarchy into a largely discredited and ineffectual institution until the restoration of Tay power in 1817–18. The anti-Ta'aang movement arose due to deep-seated anti-regal sentiments as well as dissatisfaction with the Ta'aang corruption and misgovernment rather than out of deeply ingrained ethnic hatred.

The Chronicle tempers the trenchant criticism of anti-regal behavior voiced by Po<sup>4</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> with the observation that some Ta'aang remained loyal to the ruler and respected Buddhism. For instance, it reports that the anti-Tay Ta'aang followers of the *Pu<sup>3</sup> Kaang<sup>6</sup>* of Köng<sup>2</sup> Long<sup>1</sup> (Big Ridge) village (Table 5, No. 7) announced: "We do not care about the Tay of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> now, but we pity the ruler (*khun<sup>1</sup> mäng<sup>2</sup>*) and the monks, so we should go down to kneel before them and pay obeisance" (*KMMK*, 115, lines 9–11). The Chronicle records the Ta'aang as adherents of the Taw Nei (Tö<sup>2</sup> Ne<sup>3</sup>) Buddhist sect, and also mentions some of their high officials as devotees of the Zawti (Cö<sup>2</sup> Ti<sup>6</sup>) reformist sect (*ibid.*, 92, line 3; *LÖKSMK*, 185, line 5). But it accuses the Ta'aang leader named Thaak<sup>6</sup> Kaang<sup>4</sup> Wa<sup>3</sup>, a former monk<sup>28</sup>) holding the high rank of *Nga<sup>2</sup> Mäng<sup>2</sup>* (Table 4, No. 1), of exploiting Buddhism to enhance his reputation as a respectable official:

People say that he relied on the Zawti sect and loved the precepts of the Taw Nei sect in order to appear as smooth-tongued and white, but this was only for external appearances. He covertly enjoyed numerous gifts (*tan<sup>2</sup> so<sup>2</sup>*) from people and even connived to murder the ruler (*caw<sup>5</sup>*), which shows that he was white on the outside and black on the inside. His body was left on an open plain for the crows to peck at because he failed to show gratitude (*ke<sup>2</sup> cu<sup>2</sup>*) for the favors (*kung<sup>3</sup>*) that the ruler (*caw<sup>5</sup>*) bestowed on him. (*KMMK*, 132, lines 15–18)

The turncoat Thaak<sup>6</sup> Kaang<sup>4</sup> Wa<sup>3</sup> turned against the monarch who had given him power and privilege in the first place. For this reason the Chronicle severely criticizes all aspects of his intolerable behavior, especially his posing as a devout Buddhist in order to conceal his dishonesty.

In fact, sectarian differences may have been one cause of friction between the Ta'aang and the monarch. The Chronicle depicts Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> as a dedicated benefactor of the Pwe Kyaung (Pöy<sup>2</sup> Kyöng<sup>2</sup>) sect but hostile toward other groups:

28) The term *thaak<sup>6</sup>* denotes a former monk.

The great sect named the *gāṃavāsī* [village-dwelling] has been passed down from generation to generation since the reign of Caw<sup>5</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> Wöt<sup>6</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup>. The ruler (*khun<sup>1</sup> māng<sup>2</sup>*) reproached sects like the Aa<sup>4</sup>ning<sup>3</sup> sa<sup>3</sup> ya<sup>3</sup> si<sup>3</sup>, the Zawti, the Taw Nei, and the Käng<sup>2</sup> Yon<sup>2</sup> and did not include them within the [great sect]. He was only concerned with supporting the Pwe Kyaung, that is the *gāṃavāsī* sect, and this brought about improvement to all parts of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>. (*ibid.*, 92, lines 1–5)

Royalty sponsored the Pwe Kyaung sect and loathed the Taw Nei and Zawti sects. The monarch also spurned the Käng<sup>2</sup> Yon<sup>2</sup> (northern Thai Yuan) sect, which Lanna monks had reportedly introduced to the polity in the seventeenth century. The ascendancy of the Pwe Kyaung sect patently deprived minor sects of royal patronage. The destruction of temples and Buddha images by the Ta'aang arose in such a religious climate. Royal neglect, or perhaps even perceived sectarian persecution, may have been a factor behind their discontent with the ruler.

That the Ta'aang were not inherently anti-Tay is corroborated by the presence of Tay brethren. The Chronicle furnishes few facts about these followers, probably because the author/s condemned their association with the despised anti-regal faction. It, however, documents the hardships they experienced in their piteous flight into hiding after their eventual defeat in 1817–18:

Those of our Tay who sympathized with the Pa<sup>4</sup> löng<sup>4</sup> went into the jungle together with them. After about 10 days they stealthily climbed up into the steep mountains out of terror of death. When the supplies of rice in their bags were completely exhausted, they became dizzy and had to forage for food. But they could only find sprouts, leaves, and fruits, and some of them even died from eating them. Enraged and irritated fathers hacked to death small children who wept and wailed for fear of succumbing to the numerous warriors trailing them. Some people, petrified of dying under the sharp sword blades of the Khaang<sup>1</sup>, regrettably had to abandon their cattle, water buffaloes, horses, and belongings. Parents and relatives became separated from each other when escaping to faraway places, and many people urged each other to run away. Some of them reached Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kha<sup>1</sup> and Mäng<sup>2</sup> Yaa<sup>2</sup>, and crossing the Salween River went farther beyond, even arriving at Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kha<sup>2</sup>, Mäng<sup>2</sup> Kheng<sup>1</sup>, Mäng<sup>2</sup> Phung<sup>2</sup>, Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ting<sup>4</sup>, and Küng<sup>4</sup> Ma<sup>6</sup>. Others could not elude their pursuers and were either robbed or slain. (*ibid.*, 130, line 23–131, line 11)

This passage testifies first that Tay brethren did exist, and second that their collaboration with the Ta'aang made it impossible for them to reside in the polity after the fall of the Ta'aang. It is easy to speculate that, in a situation where ever-mutating patterns of alliances persisted, dissident Tay could have readily blended back into mainstream society. But the deep enmity against the anti-regal group compelled Tay sympathizers to take refuge in distant Tay polities east of the Salween River. Tay collaborators clearly feared revenge.

*The Jingpo as Raiders and Mercenaries*

The Chronicle labels the Jingpo who migrated to the mountains on the western sides of the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and the Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> basins during the late eighteenth century as wild Jingpo or uncivilized Jingpo (Khaang<sup>1</sup> he<sup>1</sup>). Occasionally it used the Tay exonym for the zaiwa subgroup, Khaang<sup>1</sup> leng<sup>4</sup> (red Jingpo).<sup>29)</sup> They were the most recent migrants, and as adamant animists with no deep affection for Buddhism they were culturally and religiously far removed from the Tay and the Ta'aang.

The Chronicle refers to the part of the polity occupied by the Jingpo and Ta'aang as the löy<sup>4</sup> ko<sup>3</sup> fa<sup>6</sup> and löy<sup>4</sup> lum<sup>5</sup> fa<sup>6</sup>.<sup>30)</sup> Such terms, which translate as “mountain country,” reveal that the Tay monarch regarded these tracts as requiring separate governance from the basin area (*tong<sup>4</sup> mäng<sup>2</sup>*) on account of differences in topography and ethnic composition. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these mountain tracts comprised territories administered by *du*, Jingpo leaders of noble birth descended from the five original clans. The Tay referred to them as Jingpo lords (*khun<sup>1</sup> khaang<sup>1</sup>*), and the Han called them mountain headmen (Chinese: *shanguan* 山官). The position of *du* was hereditary, and their authority rested on recognition from within Jingpo society alone; Tay monarchs and Qing officials had no right to appoint them to office, dismiss them, or issue them with orders. It is estimated that prior to 1950 a total of 96 large and small *du* lay scattered over the mountain tracts of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and Ce<sup>4</sup> Faang<sup>1</sup> (Dehong Zhou Zhengxie Wenshi Wei 2001, 1–16, 183–195). Table 6 lists the names of 12 Jingpo villages mentioned in the Chronicle, and No. 10 suggests that the number may have exceeded that figure. It identifies one mountain headman named Lön<sup>4</sup> Mo<sup>3</sup> (Table 6, No. 1) and the Ho<sup>1</sup> Pöng<sup>1</sup> clan (Table 6, No. 4), which confirms that the Tay negotiated with Jingpo clans and lineages through headmen.

The Chronicle records the Jingpo leaders (*du*) with whom the Tay negotiated for military aid as “the leaders of the 10 commanders of the realm” (*caw<sup>5</sup> fa<sup>6</sup> sip<sup>1</sup> po<sup>4</sup> mäng<sup>2</sup>*) and “the nine leaders” (*kaw<sup>5</sup> caw<sup>5</sup> fa<sup>6</sup>*).<sup>31)</sup> The numerals 9 and 10 seem to have borne significance for the Tay. Late nineteenth century Tay documents designate the mountain villages around Löy<sup>4</sup> Län<sup>4</sup> in the Wa states as “the Wa<sup>2</sup> of the nine valleys and 10 mountains (*Wa<sup>2</sup> kaw<sup>5</sup> hoy<sup>5</sup> sip<sup>1</sup> Löy<sup>4</sup>*).”<sup>32)</sup> Unfortunately we have no information concerning the implications of these numerals, so it is impossible to speculate on the actual number of Jingpo leaders in the mountains of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> at this time. Nor do we know anything

29) *KMMK*, 234, line 22. Khang<sup>1</sup> is a mistake for Khaang<sup>1</sup>.

30) The term löy<sup>4</sup> ko<sup>3</sup> fa<sup>6</sup> appears in *KMMK*, 114, line 14, and löy<sup>4</sup> lum<sup>5</sup> fa<sup>6</sup> in *KMMK*, 115, line 8.

31) These two titles appear in *KMMK*, 113, line 12 and *KMMK*, 126, lines 1–12 respectively.

32) This phrase appears in an undated letter from the Caw<sup>3</sup>pha<sup>5</sup> of Ngek Htin to the Caw<sup>3</sup>pha<sup>5</sup> of Löy<sup>3</sup> Län<sup>3</sup> (Scott Collection, Cambridge University Library, LL8.35, lines 9–10).

**Table 6** Jingpo Villages in the Mountains of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khôn<sup>1</sup> Mentioned in the Chronicle

No.	Name of Village	Remarks	Source
1	Ho <sup>1</sup> Kêng <sup>2</sup> or Ho <sup>1</sup> Keng <sup>2</sup>	Residence of mountain headman (Chinese: <i>Shanguan</i> Tay: <i>Khun<sup>1</sup> Khaang<sup>1</sup></i> ) known as Lôn <sup>4</sup> Mo <sup>3</sup> . He was given lavish gifts by Qing officials in CS 1185.	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, lines 7–8; 234, line 25; 235, lines 5–12.
2	Paang <sup>4</sup> Kay <sup>3</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 8
3	Khuy <sup>6</sup> Lung <sup>6</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 8
4	Laay <sup>3</sup> O <sup>5</sup>	Jingpo of the Ho <sup>1</sup> Pöng <sup>1</sup> clan	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 8; 234, line 24; 235, line 13; 241, line 3
5	Pung <sup>3</sup> Ko <sup>5</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 8
6	Wan <sup>2</sup> Teng <sup>4</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, lines 8–9
7	Paang <sup>4</sup> Wa <sup>2</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 9
8	Caaw <sup>2</sup> Sêng <sup>2</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 9
9	Waan <sup>4</sup> Taan <sup>4</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 9
10	Name unknown	Unspecified number of villages on a large mountain known as Kung <sup>2</sup> Tum <sup>2</sup>	<i>KMMK</i> , 126, line 10
11	Mäng <sup>2</sup> Aay <sup>3</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 234, line 25
12	Paang <sup>3</sup> Ca <sup>6</sup>	None	<i>KMMK</i> , 241, line 3

about the degree of control that Jingpo leaders exercised over the people whom they represented. What is noteworthy is that Jingpo society here, the closest equivalent to the acephalous communities of Scott, definitely communicated with polities through numerous leaders.

The Jingpo were raiders and mercenaries during the four decades of political and military upheaval. After ceasing sporadic marauding sometime after their attack on the ruler's capital and firing of the Kyöng<sup>1</sup> Sêng<sup>1</sup> Temple in 1169 BE (1808–9 CE) (*KMMK*, 86, lines 1–11), they fought for all sides: first with the Ta'aang, then with Po<sup>3</sup> Co<sup>2</sup> against the Ta'aang, and finally for the Tay in intra-Tay conflicts. They served their employers faithfully, and the Chronicle does not charge them with duplicity. They were deeply involved in the struggles, switching sides to their own advantage, until the monarch Faang<sup>1</sup> Thet<sup>6</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> returned to the polity in 1836. This demonstrated that Jingpo leaders had the ability to organize warriors from their territories for mercenary work, and indicated that Jingpo political organization, no matter how minuscule and fragile, was capable of responding to the changed circumstances of lowland polities.

Unlike the other mercenary group, the Han native militia from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>4</sup>, the Jingpo do not seem to have sought payment in silver; the Tay simply guaranteed them plunder as compensation. In the final battle with the Ta'aang sometime in 1817–18, the nine

leaders (*caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup>*) of the Jingpo “pledged (*səng<sup>1</sup> kan<sup>4</sup>*) to truthfully accept the terms of the pact” after assurance from the deputy *caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup>* that “you can seize, at will, all belongings and property that you set eyes on, as well as all of their cattle, water buffaloes, horses, and wet-rice fields.”<sup>33)</sup> The Chronicle describes the sacking of a Ta’aang highland recess by Jingpo warriors: they “pillaged all the belongings, cattle, and water buffaloes, and led them away along the tracks that pass through the ravines and chasms, in order to avoid walking on the roads” (*ibid.*, 114, lines 20–23), where they would have been seen by Tay soldiers.

While looting spoils could distract Jingpo warriors on the battlefield, the prospect of free food and feasts also appealed to them. The Chronicle details vividly the demands made by the Jingpo who turned up to fight for the Tay faction at Na<sup>2</sup> Yön<sup>3</sup>/Maan<sup>5</sup> Paang<sup>3</sup>/Weng<sup>2</sup> Mon<sup>5</sup>:

The wild Khaang<sup>1</sup> from the jungle arrived at Na<sup>2</sup> Yön<sup>3</sup> and Weng<sup>2</sup> Mon<sup>5</sup>. They came in bands, and the lines of them stretched so long that it was difficult to tell the exact number. But there were many, and they swarmed all over and jam-packed the villages in a disorderly fashion. The *süing<sup>1</sup>* named Caang<sup>6</sup> from Mäng<sup>2</sup> Wan<sup>2</sup>, together with 20-odd Tay<sup>2</sup> Yaang<sup>2</sup>, were billeted at the same place [among the Khaang<sup>1</sup>]. The fort (*weng<sup>2</sup>*) and temple teemed with Khaang<sup>1</sup>, but not all of them could be accommodated. No one could say how many hundreds or thousands came, but the whole fort (*weng<sup>2</sup>*) rang with the clamor of their voices.

On arrival one band said that they wanted to invite the *phi<sup>1</sup>* to sit in a chair and offer him a sacrifice, and created a commotion in their enthusiasm. On coming, another band announced that they would placate the *phi<sup>1</sup>* (*me<sup>2</sup> phi<sup>1</sup>*), and a sorcerer (*mö<sup>1</sup> phi<sup>1</sup>*) said that he would slaughter a cow. Some said that they wanted fowls. The khaang<sup>1</sup> from the jungle distorted things and inveigled. Though served rice, rice wine, and meat three times a day in quantities more than sufficient, they still asked for more. Some emaciated ones with hair already gray, so [old] that they could barely walk, came without resting, and even children who could speak sweet words came [to feast]. At every meal they stretched out their hands saying, “I want some rice wine.” Nothing mattered to them as long as they got three meals a day. (*ibid.*, 183, lines 6–20)

The description of the old and the decrepit, as well as the underage, rushing to feast on meat and rice wine reflects differences in upland and lowland agricultural output; the

33) The event is described in *KMMK*, 126, line 19–127, line 1. *KMMK*, 126, lines 11–18 records the wording of the letter that the deputy ruler sent to request aid from the Jingpo leaders as follows:

“We want you, the nine leaders (*kaw<sup>5</sup> caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup>*), to come to aid us in driving out the terribly malicious Paa<sup>4</sup> Lōng<sup>4</sup> Kon<sup>2</sup> Löy<sup>4</sup>. We want to expel these destructive and ill-tempered subjects (*kha<sup>5</sup>*) with striped stomachs [refers to their striped clothes], force them to move away to distant places. Just get them out and far away, even if it costs the lives of several thousand of you. Do not worry about our debt for your deaths, as payment you Khaang<sup>1</sup>, who live among the trees of the jungle, can seize, at will, any belongings and property that you set eyes on, as well as all of their cattle, water buffaloes, horses and wet-rice fields.”



latter produced more food than the former. Yet, at the same time, this passage reinforces the image of the Jingpo as ever greedy for food and always craving for loot. The text portrays their insistence that the spirits be placated by the sacrifice of cattle before they could go on to the battlefield as a ploy to feast on beef.

The Chronicle does not elucidate why the Jingpo raided, and merely attributes their mercenary activities to the prospect of plunder. Such an explanation simply manifests the typecast Tay view of the Jingpo articulated in the passage above. In order to deepen our understanding, we will make a comparison with the Kachin (Jingpo) rebellion against the ruler of the northern Sēn<sup>5</sup> wii<sup>1</sup> (Chinese: Mubang 木邦, Burmese: Theinni) polity. The rebellion began with an attack on his capital on December 12, 1892, a century after the Jingpo commenced raiding in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>. The British administrator James George Scott, superintendent for the Northern Shan States who handled the case, reported that an *aa<sup>4</sup> maat<sup>5</sup>* (member of the ruler's council) with the title *Süing<sup>3</sup> Yöt<sup>6</sup>* (*Hsüing Yawt*) led the first Kachin attack, and pointed out that this Tay official immediately terminated his association with them after it finished. In subsequent attacks, the Kachin campaigned by themselves without the *aa<sup>4</sup> maat<sup>5</sup>*, and it took the British until the end of February 1893 to quell the insurgece. Scott identified the factors that led the Kachin to rebel. First, Tay officials instigated the Kachin to take up arms, utilizing their warriors to settle scores with other Tay. Second, Kachin dissatisfaction with the Tay monarch derived from (1) petty extortion by his men (the Kachin regarded oppression and extortion of fines by any of the ruler's followers as having been conducted by his direct order), (2) broken promises by the monarch, (3) the blocking of Kachin from entering marketplaces, and (4) partiality shown by Tay officials in dealing with cases between Kachin and Tay. The Kachin stated, "When a quarrel takes place between a Shan [Tay] and a Kachin, the latter has to die whether the Shan or the Kachin be the first to pick the quarrel."<sup>34</sup>

Three similar features immediately emerge from a comparison of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> and northern Sēn<sup>5</sup> wii<sup>1</sup>. First, in both cases the Jingpo/Kachin attacked the rulers in their capital cities, and second, Tay officials orchestrated the assaults in each case. They targeted monarchs in order to demonstrate their discontent with regal administration but inadvertently became entangled in intra-Tay conflicts. Third, both groups regarded the monarchs as having broken their promises. The Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> Chronicle records this last feature as the cause for the Jingpo attack on the ruler's capital in 1808–9. According to the text, the Jingpo stated their grievances in the following fashion: "Faang<sup>1</sup> Kō<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>6</sup> has been appointed as ruler due to our grace (*ke<sup>2</sup> cu<sup>2</sup>*). This has enabled him to adminis-

34) For (1) and (2) see J. G. Scott (1893, 10, Appendix XXIV); and for (3) and (4) see J. G. Scott (*ibid.*, Appendix XXIII).

ter Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup>, and he has not forgotten the favors that we did for him (*ke<sup>2</sup> cu<sup>2</sup>*).<sup>35</sup> But he has ignored the terms of the pact (*kaa<sup>4</sup> ti<sup>6</sup> sēt<sup>6</sup> kyaa<sup>3</sup>*).” The Chronicle continues:

The wild Khaang<sup>1</sup> spoke recklessly in such a manner, and ceased their submission of tribute gifts. They did not show up for an audience at the beginning of the year, and none of them came to pay their respects at the end of the year, thereby terminating intercourse. They said that the ruler (*Fa<sup>6</sup> Cam<sup>2</sup> pu<sup>1</sup>*) of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> neglected the words of the oath (*sēt<sup>6</sup> kyaa<sup>3</sup>*) that he had previously made. [Their leader proclaimed,]

“The Tay of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> treat very coarsely all of our caw<sup>5</sup>fa<sup>6</sup> of the savage Khaang<sup>1</sup> of the jungle and wild mountains, including the Commander/s of the Realm of the sixteen villages (*sip<sup>1</sup> hok<sup>3</sup> maan<sup>6</sup> bo<sup>3</sup> mǎng<sup>2</sup>*).<sup>36</sup> We will not be satisfied until we have destroyed their capital (*ce<sup>4</sup>*).” (KMMK, 83, line 21–84, line 6)

Jingpo leaders expected to be treated with kindness in return for their perceived sponsorship of the monarch’s accession to the throne, and were incensed that he had not shown them goodwill. In their eyes the monarch had reneged; by ignoring the covenant (details not given), he had shown contempt for them. It was the personal animosity of Jingpo leaders toward the monarch that had caused the breakdown of the lord-vassal relationship, and they felt that his repudiation of the pact justified their cessation of tribute and retributory attacks on him.

Due to the political, social, and cultural distance between Tay and Jingpo societies, the monarch could not, and indeed had no reason to, incorporate Jingpo leaders into his bureaucracy as high-ranking officials, as he had done with the Ta’aang. He regarded them as his most geographically and culturally distant vassals and patronized them in a flexible manner. Jingpo headmen viewed the relationship in a different way. In their eyes, they negotiated agreements with the monarch as equals. They did not acknowledge “royal will,” so in their view the monarch needed their consent to alter the terms of the covenant, and his breach of this unwritten contract justified squaring the debt by punitive action. But it was the prerogative of the monarch to issue royal injunctions and alter accords as he pleased, so to him there were no “broken promises”: failure of the Jingpo to comply with his orders simply amounted to insubordination, a serious transgression of the lord-vassal relationship.

Jingpo grievances about broken promises and ill treatment at the hands of the monarch, no matter whether fancied or real, facilitated manipulation of the Jingpo by Tay officials in times of political strife. This is exactly what happened in Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> when

35) The Jingpo claimed to have shown gratitude (*ke<sup>2</sup> cu<sup>2</sup>*) to Faang<sup>1</sup> Ko<sup>3</sup> Fa<sup>5</sup> by withdrawing after they attacked and occupied the city of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> earlier, thereby averting further destruction.

36) The term *bo<sup>3</sup> mǎng<sup>2</sup>*, literally the military leader of the country [of the Jingpo], probably refers to a mountain headman (*shangguan*).

Tay factions and even the deputy ruler had to negotiate with the Jingpo for military assistance. Sometimes the collapse of the bond between lord and vassal turned the tables in favor of the Jingpo. They could now take advantage of circumstances to negotiate with Tay factions for prospective plunder. In short, they became mercenaries due to the breakdown of monarchical power and the rise of Tay factionalism, a situation different from the Han militia of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>3</sup>, who loyally served the legitimate monarch for monetary compensation. The legitimacy of the Tay monarch was founded on recognition from within Tay society and authorization by Chinese dynastic power. The loyalty of Han militia revealed a sophisticated understanding of the internal and external factors that constrained Tay politics; the Han militia were careful to uphold Chinese dynastic policy. But the Jingpo who had not yet been incorporated into indirect rule by Chinese dynastic power felt autonomous enough to act for their own benefit alone.

## V Conclusion

This case study furnishes no evidence to validate Scott's thesis of mountain areas as refuge zones for migrants from lowland oppression, or even that these areas served as reservoirs for supplying lowland regimes with tax-paying subjects through either conquest or slave raiding. What it does expose, however, is the symbiotic side to upland-lowland relationships: political and social stability in the lowlands was contingent on cooperation from upland peoples. It discloses upland peoples as deeply involved in lowland political struggles. Among them the situation of the Ta'aang was exceptionally intricate. Due to their cultural proximity to the Tay as Theravada Buddhists, the monarch felt confident enough to promote Ta'aang leaders to high-ranking positions in the bureaucracy and entrust them with the administration of strategic areas. The Jingpo, once foes but now friends, served as auxiliary military forces for various Tay factions as mercenaries. The historical facts reveal a reality far more complex than the oversimplistic one envisaged by Scott: upland peoples were flexible enough to actively participate in the machinations of Tay politics for their own purposes, a far cry from the stratagems of state evasion and state prevention.

If this was so, then what were the central issues in upland-lowland relationships? The intense strife first between the Tay and Ta'aang, and then among the Tay themselves, exposed Tay rulers as failed manipulators of upland and lowland peoples. The consequences of misgoverning mountain tracts were grave. Disgruntled upland peoples ruined basin life by raiding, and their political intrigues unsettled Tay societies. Failure to conciliate them resulted in the inversion of the political and the ethnic order; Ta'aang

officials abused Tay commoners, and Jingpo raiders even had the audacity to claim that the monarch owed his throne to them. In short, upland peoples turned Tay society upside down, and the monarchy survived a succession of trials and tribulations with the assistance of mercenary Han Chinese and Jingpo. This testifies that symbiosis of upland and lowland was a central issue in multi-ethnic Tay polities for the maintenance of political and social stability. Though violent conflict flared up when upland-lowland relationships, especially the bonds binding vassal to lord, became strained and stressed, interdependence still remained an essential element.

Interdependence was influenced by the degree of affinity forged between upland and lowland ethnic groups. Conflict unfolded according to political, and possibly sectarian, religious differences, but not on the basis of deep-seated ethnic hatred. Ultimately the Ta'aang and Tay did not unify as ethnic groups and instead split into multi-ethnic factions that shifted alliances at will; some Ta'aang defended the monarch's supremacy, while others opposed it. The Chronicle implies, but does not explicitly state, that the Ta'aang usurped regal power but maintains silence about the exact reasons for their antagonism toward the monarch. Regal condemnation of Buddhist sects followed by the Ta'aang may have been a factor. Nevertheless, it is clear that common cultural and religious features enabled Ta'aang and Tay to band together into cliques, while a lack of consanguinity distanced the Jingpo and the Han native militia of Mäng<sup>2</sup> Ka<sup>3</sup> from the Tay. But the absence of such features did not prevent the Han and Jingpo from becoming entangled in basin politics both as vassals and as mercenaries. Unswerving in their loyalty to the Tay monarch, the Han did not raid or aspire to high official positions within the polity. Negotiation between upland and lowland leaders, as well as the need to trade in goods and services, worked to bind upland to lowland politically and economically.

Rather than seeing diametrical opposition as the main characteristic of upland-lowland relations as Scott does, this study demonstrates the close connection between the two and reveals that the relationship between upland peoples and Tay polities shifted with changing politico-social circumstances. It also identifies the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a tumultuous period for upland and lowland; migration of new ethnic groups (for instance the Jingpo) forced basin polities to readjust their strategies.

These findings have implications for the history of northern continental Southeast Asia. Upland and lowland symbiosis in Tay polities is not unique to this case study; it resonates with historical evidence from other areas of the Tay world. Misgovernment of upland peoples by the Sipsong Panna polity led to the annexation of mountain tracts east of the Mekong River by the Qing in 1729 (Daniels 2004). The Sën<sup>5</sup> wii<sup>1</sup> polity in northern Myanmar also suffered from Jingpo depredations during the nineteenth century. Widespread strife with upland peoples indicates that Tay political systems progressively

became incapable of balancing the interests of all ethnic vassals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a time of turbulent change for upland societies in the region. The population explosion in China during the eighteenth century spawned large-scale Han Chinese migration to the highlands of southern Yunnan. Burgeoning upland populations together with the expansion of commercial cotton and tea cultivation in the mountains of southern Yunnan and northern Myanmar propelled migration. Increased settlement of Han Chinese in the mountains caused indigenous upland groups to relocate farther south to the hills of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.<sup>37)</sup> In addition to the perennial encroachments of Chinese dynasties, lowland polities, and later colonial regimes, upland peoples now faced intensified commercialization and greater pressure on land use. Changing politico-economic conditions in the region exacerbated conflicts between upland and lowland peoples.

The mention of conflict brings us to another theme, the prevalence of violence. C. Patterson Giersch has drawn on the work of Richard White to argue that society on the frontier in southern Yunnan from the eighteenth century was characterized by a “middle ground.” By invoking this concept Giersch has succeeded in revealing the mixing of Han and indigenous cultures in some parts of the Yunnan frontier, but it has led him to downplay the role of violence (Giersch 2006, 3–4). The evidence presented here demonstrates that violence was a fact of life for lowland and upland peoples alike in a Tay polity feudatory to the Qing. Its frequency is epitomized by the fortification of villages all over the Mäng<sup>2</sup> Khön<sup>1</sup> basin. The Chronicle documents the Ta’aang enclosing their villages in the Land of Sorrows and on the adjacent mountains for defense against the Jingpo: “At that time, they dug ditches, erected high reinforced earthworks (*tên<sup>4</sup>*), and surrounded all of the *weng<sup>2</sup>* with thick lines of spikes to make them more impregnable” (*KMMK*, 95, lines 5–6). Here *weng<sup>2</sup>* are not walled cities but stockaded or fortified villages, as can be seen from names such as Weng<sup>2</sup> Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup>.<sup>38)</sup> The waning of monarchical power and prestige

37) For commercial crops see Takeuchi (2010); for population movements see Nomoto and Nishikawa (2008); for changes in trade see Giersch (2011).

38) *KMMK*, 107, lines 11–15 describes the fortifications of Weng<sup>2</sup> Maan<sup>5</sup> Yak<sup>6</sup>, a major Ta’aang stronghold in the following terms:

Since the great *weng<sup>2</sup>* was constructed when the civil and military Khe<sup>3</sup> official, Si<sup>5</sup> Taaw<sup>3</sup>, came down, it was sturdy as if it had been built with stone (*pha<sup>1</sup>*). It was thickly encircled by three moats, and in addition each moat (*maang<sup>4</sup> ta<sup>4</sup>*) had been surrounded with a barrier of intermeshed bamboo spikes. Our Tay warriors attacked but could not overcome it.

This passage reveals that the walls were either constructed with mud or palisaded with timber. Moats surrounded the walls, and an outer layer of sharpened bamboo spikes was added for further security. Sometimes groups of villages shared a walled fort (*tap<sup>6</sup> weng<sup>2</sup>*) for protection, as in the case of Na<sup>2</sup> Yön<sup>3</sup>. *KMMK*, 118, lines 17–19 writes: “Na<sup>2</sup> Ya<sup>6</sup> and Maan<sup>5</sup> Hük<sup>1</sup> feared (*söng<sup>3</sup>*) Nöng<sup>1</sup> Sëng<sup>1</sup> [village] because the latter showed no sign of weakness, boldly speaking in an arrogant tone as it could rely on the large walled fort (*tap<sup>6</sup> weng<sup>2</sup> long<sup>1</sup>*) at Na<sup>2</sup> Yön<sup>3</sup>, which had abundant supplies of rice.”

spawned conflict and compelled villagers to defend themselves. The 11 checkpoints established by the Qing between 1815 and 1820 (see Table 3) failed to prevent the outbreak of civil war within the feudatory polity. Past research has documented the multiplication and intensification of armed conflict from the late eighteenth century in Yunnan as social and economic circumstances changed rapidly (Atwill 2005, 54–63). This study confirms that violence was far more widespread and destructive than can be captured in the notion of a middle ground.

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## Appendix

Throughout this paper, the Shintani system as outlined in Shintani (2000) is used to Romanize Tay words. It possesses the following advantages:

- (1) It is applicable for transcribing and/or transliterating all the languages in the Tay Cultural Area (Tay languages, Tibeto-Burman languages including Burmese, Mon-Khmer languages, etc.).
- (2) It is designed to avoid digraph of vowels. It distinguishes diphthongs and records long and short vowels in a terse form.
- (3) It can be inputted with conventional fonts.
- (4) The use of -y and -w as a syllable final is designed to avoid triptongue.

## Transcription of Vowels

Shintani System	Thai Romanization	Examples
i	i	
e	e	
ě	ae	sěng versus saeng
a	a	
ō	ò	hō versus hò, Thai: หอ
o	o	
u	u	
ä	oe or œ	mäng versus moeng, Thai: เมือง/เมือง
ü	ue or y (by Mary Haas)	thü versus thue
ay	ai	pay versus pai
aw	ao	khaw versus khao
aü	ai (aue does not exist in Thai)	taü versus tai (taue)



### Transcription of Consonant Clusters

Note that the consonant clusters -w- (pw-, tw-, thw-, sw-, lw-), -y- (py-, phy-, my-), and -r- (mr-, sr-, cr-) are not included in the Thai system.

Consonant clusters are Romanized as follows:

Shintani System	Thai System
pw-	none
tw-	none
thw-	none
sw-	none
lw-	none
kw-	kw-
khw-	khw-
py-	none (-y- of py- is transcribed as a part of the diphthong -ia- as pia-)
phy-	none (-y- of phy- is transcribed as a part of the diphthong -ia- as phia-)
my-	none (-y- of my- is transcribed as a part of the diphthong -ia- as mia-)
pr-	pr-
phr-	phr-
mr-	none
tr-	tr-
sr-	none
cr-	none
kr-	kr-
khr-	khr-

### Tones

The tones of Dehong Tay and their relationship to Proto-Tay are given in the following table.

Proto-Tay Initial Consonant \ Proto-Tay Tone	Proto-Tay Tone			D1 (Short Vowel)	D2 (Long Vowel)
	A	B	C		
High class (voiceless consonant)	1 35	3 11	5 31	1 35	3 11
Low class (voiced consonant)	2 55	4 33	6 53	6 53 (54)	4 33

Key: 1. The upper column of the high and low class divisions (e.g., 1, 2, etc.) indicates tone categories of present-day Dehong Tay tones.

2. The lower column (e.g., 35, 55) of the high and low class divisions indicates the levels of the tones.

3. A, B, C correspond to the ping 平, qu 去, and shang 上 tones of ancient Chinese.

4. D1 (for short vowels) and D2 (for long vowels) refer to syllables with -p, -t, -k finals. The tones of present-day Dehong Tay are indicated in the paper by numbers given in superscript, e.g., māng<sup>2</sup>, Sǎ<sup>1</sup>, etc.

For reference, the tones of Tay (Shan) in Burma and their relationship to Proto-Tay are given in the following table.

Proto-Tay Initial Consonant \ Proto-Tay Tone	A	B	C	D <sub>1</sub> (Short Vowel)	D <sub>2</sub> (Long Vowel)
High class (voiceless consonant)	1 13	2 11	3 33	4 55	2 11
Low class (voiced consonant)	4 55	3 33	5 53	5 53	3 33

Note: The numbers indicating the tones of Dehong Tay do not correspond to the tone numbers for Tay (Shan) in Burma. The Shintani system allocates odd numbers for voiceless initial consonants and even numbers for voiced initial consonants in representing the tones of Dehong Tay, but retains the traditional tone numbers for Tay (Shan) because the latter has undergone tone fusion. To avoid confusion regarding the relationship of the two languages to proto-Tay, the Shintani system does not use the same tone numbers for Dehong Tay and Tay (Shan).

# Why Periodic Markets Are Held: Considering Products, People, and Place in the Yunnan-Vietnam Border Area

Nishitani Masaru\* and Nathan Badenoch\*\*

This paper probes the mechanism of present-day periodic markets and how they operate through a detailed case study of periodic markets frequented by different ethnic groups in Jinping county, Yunnan, China. It sets out to identify the defining characteristics of periodic markets and considers the question of why they arise and why they continue to survive today. Past research has demonstrated that a key feature of periodic markets in traditional China was their accessibility and the freedom that they afforded local residents in buying and selling commodities. Fieldwork confirms that six-day-cycle markets, based on the 12-day Chinese zodiac, in Jinping county do give producers of all ethnicities the freedom to sell their produce, but also points out that the market environment encourages the spontaneous specialization of production skills and provides an important place for social interaction and expression of the local cultures.

**Keywords:** periodic markets, marketplaces, Yunnan, ethnic diversity

## I Introduction

Analysis of the nature, function, and role of marketplaces has a long history within the social sciences, and it is widely believed that human society's inclination to exchange is one of its defining characteristics. Contextualizing marketplaces within the history of a region is critical for understanding the local society. In mainland Southeast Asia, an area where markets and trade networks have always been vibrant, creative, and dynamic, there is a renewed interest in how people interact in marketplaces as the region continues its rapid economic development. Recent transformation of national economies towards more liberal models of market-driven growth, along with the integration of economies to

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form a dynamic regional market that includes southern China, brings the focus back to questions of how local people conduct trade. In the contemporary setting, while liberalized markets and freer trade have meant new opportunities for many people, these opportunities are accompanied by significant risks—many of which involve the interface between producers and consumers. While this interface may be undergoing rapid transitions—with increases in access to information and technology, and improving infrastructure—for much of the population living in rural areas the primary access route to larger markets often takes the form of a periodic marketplace.

The influence of Chinese markets and traders on the economic life of people in Southeast Asia has taken on “new” meanings in recent years, as borders are opened and regulations gradually relaxed after a long period of tension. But the economic influence of China is hardly a new phenomenon, and contemporary markets and marketplaces must be understood within their historical context. Japanese scholars began to conduct research on markets in China during the pre-World War II period. Studies by the economic historian of China Kato Shigeshi emphasized the role of periodic markets as a key focal point for economic activities, while the historian of Chinese agriculture Amano Motonosuke and another historian of China Masui Tsuneo also closely examined the role of markets in local society (Kato 1936; Amano 1940; Masui 1941). These studies all assumed that markets played an important role in the maintenance of everyday life of local communities in traditional China. They showed that market spheres had centers that varied considerably in size, from small day-worker markets encompassing just a few villages through to major livestock markets that serviced an entire county. Moreover, these markets intersected and overlapped at various levels. They also pointed out that periodic markets in China provided a highly open and accessible venue for local people to buy and sell goods, operating autonomously without interference from government authorities or specific interest groups.

G. William Skinner, in his study of markets in Sichuan province, expanded on the research of pre-war Japanese scholars. He found markets to be both hierarchically and spatially distributed according to size, and argued that life in Chinese villages was determined by the coverage of the market sphere (1979). Recently, Kuroda Akinobu, an economic historian of Asia, has refuted Skinner’s theory (2003). Focusing on the role of markets in the collection and distribution of goods, Kuroda argues that markets are just one of many different nodes or junctions in the distribution chain, and says that “market spheres” do not exist as economic spaces. He regards markets in traditional China as freely created by individual proprietors as a means of engaging in free and unhindered trade without intervention from the state or regulation by closed groups, in contrast to the model of centralized administration. His idea is very close to that of the pre-war

Japanese scholars.

Western anthropologists have seen marketplaces as a window on the intersection of the economic and social spheres for local people (Michaud and Turner 2000). Central to this overlapping of spheres is the idea of exchange, and in the Southeast Asian context, marketplaces are where people from different communities come together to meet, communicate, and trade. Long-standing traditions of interaction and exchange between upland and lowland people are a strong argument against positing rigid social structures that conceive of upland areas as isolated and monolithic.<sup>1)</sup> As will be discussed below, exchange occurs along two important axes—uplander-uplander and uplander-lowlander. Thus, we can conceptualize concurrent forces driving the confirmation of an upland sphere of socio-economic interactions and the linking of these interactions with lowland spheres. As such it is useful to recall again that the “exchange” is often more than a straightforward trade of goods and services for cash.

This paper probes the mechanisms of present-day periodic markets and how they operate, through a case study of periodic markets operating in Jinping county, Yunnan, China. In order to elucidate the issue of why periodic markets arise, this paper sets out to identify the defining characteristics of periodic markets and considers the question of why they continue to survive today. There is an assumption implicit in much of the discussion surrounding rural markets that they are constantly moving towards greater integration with larger urban markets—in other words that they are a vehicle for modernization. This is driven largely by a historical perspective that attributes the consolidation of political power and the subsequent emergence of nation states in Southeast Asia to the expansion of trade networks. There is a counter-argument asserting that local, or traditional trading systems may show surprising resilience in face of it all, demonstrating their relative autonomy (Evers 1988). In fact, Sarah Turner (2010) has described how cross-border traders on the Sino-Vietnamese border continue to avoid the view of the state, asserting their agency locally just as state-centered socio-economic development proceeds all around them. Moreover, the relationship between social diversity and the role of local markets remains a gap in the literature (Pottie-Sherman 2011). This paper is an attempt to step back from this macro-scale analysis to consider the workings of temporary markets in an ethnically diverse mountainous area surrounded by rapid socio-economic change, and consider how and why these marketplaces continue to thrive as they do.

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1) See, for example, the special issue of the *Journal of Global History* (2010) responding to James Scott's discussion of Zomia.

## II Markets in the Ethno-history of Jinping County

### *Ethnic Diversity*

The Jinping Miao, Yao, and Dai Autonomous County (hereafter referred to as Jinping) of the Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture (hereafter referred to as Honghe) is located close to the border with Vietnam, about 250 kilometers south of the Yunnan provincial capital city of Kunming (Fig. 1). It covers an area of 3,686 square kilometers, of which 99.78 percent is occupied by mountains. Towns and villages are strung along the scant flat land available in the river valleys and also located on the mountain ridges where the slopes are not too steep. The county is home to eight ethnic groups (Dai, Hani, Yao, Kucong, Alu, Miao, Zhuang, and Han) and two other groups known as the Habei and the Man, whose ethnic affiliation has not been established yet.

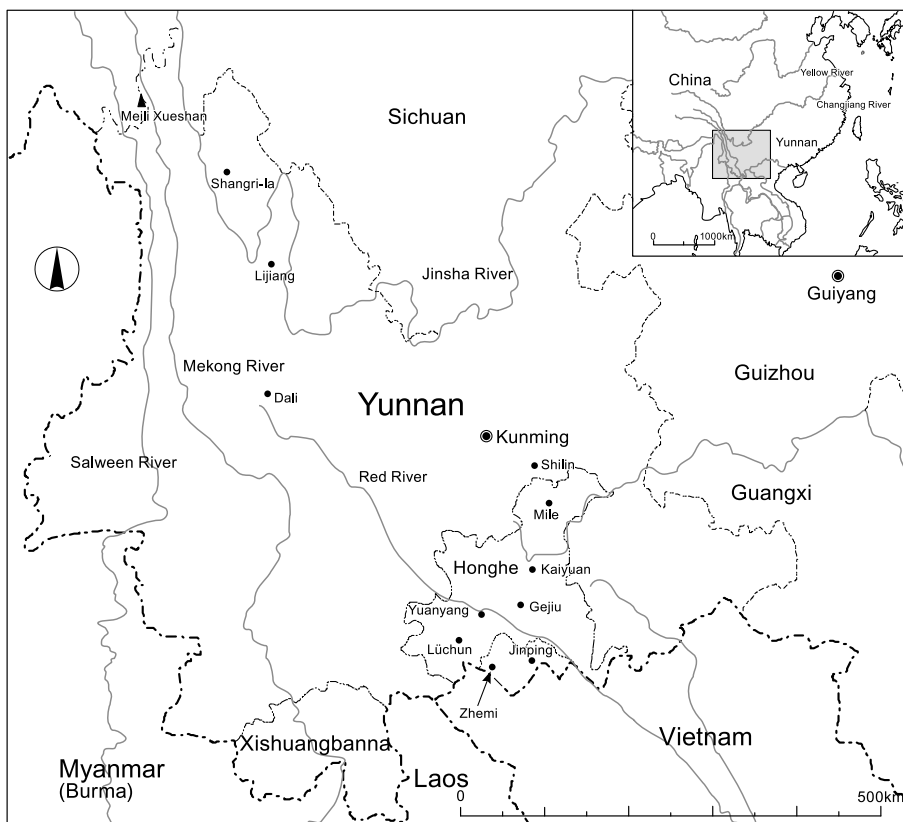


Fig. 1 Survey Region

The lowland Dai live at altitudes ranging from 300 to 500 meters above sea level. Traditionally they have been involved primarily in rice farming, building paddies on flat land in the river valleys, where they cultivate two crops per year. More recently, the Dai have begun specializing in cash crops such as bananas and Para rubber. The Miao, Hani, Alu, Yao, and Kucong, meanwhile, are upland peoples who live at altitudes of 800 to 1,300 meters, on sloping land and along the mountain ridges. In the past they have grown rice on terraced rice paddies, but in recent years they have started to cultivate other crops, such as cassava, maize, vegetables, and lemon grass, on the slopes. Traditional slash-and-burn farming as well as hunting and gathering practices are now prohibited by the government. Thus, Jinping represents an area where a multitude of ethnic groups reside in a complex topography of river valleys surrounded by mountains.

### *Markets as a Form of Inter-ethnic Negotiation*

The form and role of markets in the history of rural China has received significant attention in the literature. Periodic markets are said to have been the predominant form of markets, so it is not surprising that the determination of market days has been a prime issue of interest. In this paper we are interested in the question of how periodic markets are managed in an area of high cultural diversity, where there are several vernacular calendars employed in different areas.

There are Chinese language references to periodic markets in Yunnan from the Yuan dynasty, and these increased in detail in the Ming dynasty. For example, a record from the fifteenth century notes that periodic markets were held on days containing the number seven in Puning, east of Lake Dian. This same reference also mentions markets being held at 3-, 5- and 10-day intervals, as well as areas that set market days according to the 12-day Chinese zodiac. Thus, by the Ming period there were at least three common patterns for establishing market days. It is difficult to establish exactly when periodic markets were first held in the current study area, but according to the *Jinping Xianzhi* (Jinping County Gazetteer), by the end of the Qing period, markets were held in nine places, including Mengla, Zhemi, and Dingqing, at a six-day interval according to the Chinese zodiac. A report from 1934 (Yunnansheng Jinping Maizu Yaozu Daizu Zizhixian Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 1994) mentions there were still no fixed markets, and that local periodic markets were small, not usually exceeding 200–300 people. Bartering was the main mode of exchange in these markets. Lüchun county, which borders on Jinping, has also typically used the Chinese zodiac to determine market days.

The predominance of the Chinese zodiac to fix the date for periodic markets in the study area is noteworthy. The ethnic diversity of Yunnan means that as a rule several

different calendars have been in operation across the mountainous areas. For example, the Dai calendar divides a year into 12 months of 30 and 29 days, including a month in which extra days are added to adjust to their 354-day year. The Yi have a 360-day year, which they divide into 18 months, each of 20 days, while the 360-day Hani year is divided into 12 months. In an area like this, the use of the Chinese zodiac, which is not related to the reckoning of monthly cycles, allows the groups to operate on their own calendar while maintaining a common system for determining market dates. Because of the importance of these markets, it is essential that a shared reckoning be possible across the many cultures present in the region. It could be argued that without this system, periodic markets in this area of difficult transport and communications would not have been possible.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the fate of markets has been heavily influenced by the political currents of the times. In Jinping there were 14 markets in 1952, but the number increased to 19 in 1956 with the policy on free markets in liberated areas (Yunnansheng Yuanyang Xianzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 1988). However, in 1958, the Great Leap Forward stimulated the formation of cooperatives and free markets were abolished. In the early 1960s, with the national economy on the brink of collapse, the prohibition on free markets was reversed and 19 markets reappeared in Jinping. However, the Cultural Revolution years (1966–76) saw yet another swing away from free markets, with a standard “Sunday market” being imposed. Finally, in the 1980s, with the relaxation of policy controls on agricultural production, six-day rotation markets were restored and the flow of goods in the mountainous areas improved greatly.

Use of the Chinese zodiac to determine market days has been a key factor allowing diverse ethnic groups to establish and maintain the periodic markets. This system of reckoning has proven remarkably resilient in the years after 1949, when policy changed frequently and often severely limited farmers' ability to engage in free transactions.

### III Structure of Periodic Markets

#### *Market Days and Their Locations*

Lowland and upland peoples meet at periodic markets which are held every six days at towns along the main highway passing through Jinping county. At these markets, upland farmers buy and sell among themselves, in addition to engaging in transactions with lowland traders. The data used in this paper was collected from fieldwork conducted at



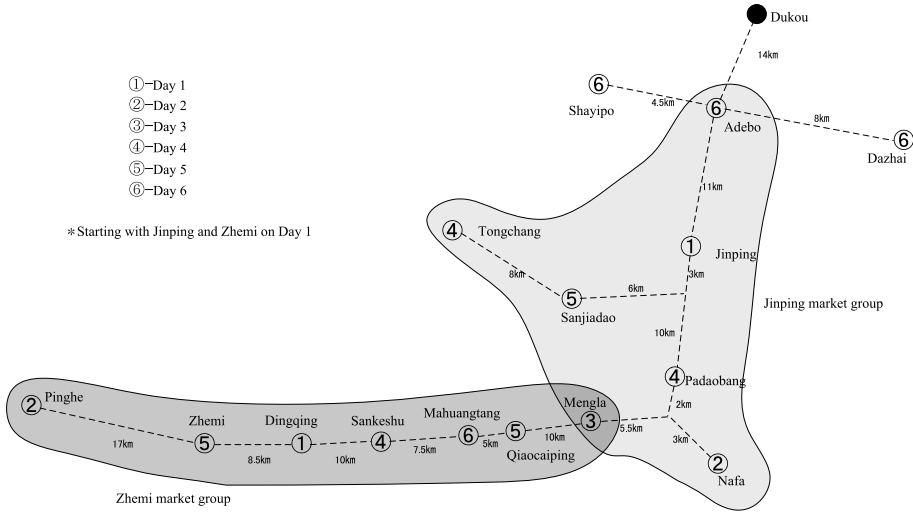


Fig. 2 Market Days in Jinping Prefecture

these markets between 2003 and 2006.<sup>2)</sup>

Eighteen markets lie on the road from Dukou to Zhemi and the surrounding areas within Jinping county. Dukou holds a market every Sunday, while markets in other towns are held once every six days. Market days are fixed according to the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac instead of the solar calendar. Here markets are held every six days on the day of the Rat and the day of the Horse. Markets based on the 12-animal system are known to have been held in neighboring Lüchun and Yuanyang counties during the late Qing period. Use of the Chinese zodiac is common among many upland groups in this region. It is interesting to note that periodic markets where non-timber forest products are traded in the upland areas of Laos are held according to a 10-day calendar used by the Khmu (Yokoyama 2010).

Starting at Jinping on Day 1, the markets are held along the main highway in the following sequence: Nafa on Day 2, Mengla on Day 3, Padoabang and Tongchang on Day 4 (as both are very small markets, the merchants split up on this day), Sanjiadao on Day 5, and Adebo on Day 6 (Fig. 2). Adebo and Mengla lie about 30 kilometers apart in a

2) Field surveys of the periodic markets in Jinping county were conducted with support from a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Basic B15401037, FY2003–FY2006, “Ethno-science in Reality and Sustainability of Environmental Usage: Slash-and-Burn Farming Practices in Modern China,” head Shinohara Toru). Seven studies were conducted: March 11–19, 2003; August 25–September 12, 2003; November 5–December 25, 2003; May 18–June 15, 2004; November 15–22, 2004; July 11–September 15, 2005; and January 23–February 24, 2006.

straight line, and market days are arranged to ensure that they do not open on the same day. This set has been named the Jinping market group.

Another market group, the Zhemi group, starts at Dingqing on Day 1 and moves in sequence to Pinghe, Mengla, Sankeshu, Zhemi, and finally Mahuangtang. Zhemi and Mengla are about 40 kilometers apart. The days of the markets held at the towns in between, namely Dingqing, Sankeshu, Mahuangtang, and Pinghe are organized so that they do not clash. The market at Mengla is also included in the Jinping market group, and the Pinghe market is located in Lüchun county, west of Jinping county. Thus it is clear that this market system is not confined to administrative boundaries. There are markets along the road going southwest of Pinghe, at Apu, Xingsai, and Banpo. The Apu and Banpo markets are held every 12 days rather than every 6 days. The market at Qiaocaiping is currently not operating, although it is part of the Zhemi group.

Villagers access the markets by two methods. The first is by walking. The Alu people from villages north of Zhemi, for instance, carry their vegetables on foot along the mountain roads, a journey of three to four hours each way, within a radius of about eight kilometers around Zhemi. The second method is to get rides on vehicles traveling along the road. Vehicle transportation allows people from villages located up to about 20 kilometers either side (east and west) of Zhemi to attend the market, thus extending the range of access. There are many Kucong villages scattered on the mountains south of Zhemi, and those within eight kilometers of Zhemi travel to the market there. Therefore the Zhemi market serves as a focal point that draws local people from all directions, either down the mountain roads, or along the main highway, but most villagers travel to the market on foot.

Next, let us consider the distance between towns that have markets. The second market in the Zhemi group is at Pinghe, which is 17 kilometers from Zhemi. Dingqing is 8.5 kilometers from Zhemi and 10 kilometers from Sankeshu. Sankeshu is 7.5 kilometers from Mahuangtang, which in turn lies 15 kilometers from Mengla. The average distance between towns that have markets is 10.5 kilometers. If we draw circles with a radius of eight kilometers on a map that shows Zhemi, Dingqing, and Sankeshu, we see from the overlap of the circles that virtually all of the villages in the Zhemi valley fall within at least one of the circles. Thus, markets in the six-day cycle are spaced at relatively fixed intervals along the main highway and are positioned within walking distance of all the surrounding villages.

### *Outdoor Stalls versus Permanent Structures*

Outdoor stalls at the markets can be classified into three patterns. The first pattern occurs at Zhemi and Mahuangtang. At Zhemi, the stalls are clustered into groups, start-

ing with livestock stalls near the intersection with the main highway, then fruit and vegetable, and meat and fish stalls on the side street, miscellaneous goods for a 200-meter stretch along the major thoroughfare, and clothing along another 100 meters on the major thoroughfare (Fig. 3). Likewise at Mahuangtang, the stalls are grouped with fruit and vegetables first (near the main highway), followed by meat and fish, miscellaneous goods, foodstuffs, and clothing on the side street. In this pattern, food stalls dealing in products such as meat and fish, and fruit and vegetables are concentrated in the area near the main highway.

The second pattern can be observed at Dingqing and Pinghe. At Dingqing, meat and fish stalls are clustered near the main highway, with miscellaneous goods coming next, followed by fruit and vegetables (Fig. 4). The Pinghe market has two sections: parallel to the main highway there is the eastern market road with fruit and livestock and the western market road with food and miscellaneous goods. Further north there is an open area which has cooked food and clothing stalls on the western side and pork stalls at the far western end. In this pattern, meat and fish stalls are separated from those vending fruit and vegetables.

The third pattern is found at Sankeshu, where the market begins with miscellaneous goods and clothing near the main highway, followed by fruit and vegetables, then meat and fish (Fig. 5). Here, stalls vending meat and fish, and fruit and vegetables, rather than being closest to the market entrance, are situated the furthest away.

With the exception of the third pattern, it can be seen that food stalls, particularly meat and fish, and fruit and vegetables, are generally concentrated at the entrance of the market near the main highway, where the largest number of people congregate. Regardless of some minor variations, we can say that the grouping of stalls according to commodity categories is a feature common to all periodic markets.

Next, let us examine the correlation between attendance at a market and the number and type of outdoor stalls and permanent shops. Zhemi has the largest number of outdoor stalls at 293, followed by Pinghe (228), Sankeshu (146), Mahuangtang (94), and Dingqing (93). Zhemi also has the highest attendance at peak periods (around 1,200 people), followed by Sankeshu (587), Mahuangtang (386), and Dingqing (194). These figures equate to 4.1 visitors per stall at Zhemi, 4.0 at Sankeshu, 4.1 at Mahuangtang, and 2.1 at Dingqing. Apart from Dingqing, the data indicates an average of around four visitors per stall at peak times, suggesting a strong correlation between the overall attendance and the number of stalls.

Zhemi once again has the greatest number of permanent shops (80), followed by Dingqing and Mahuangtang (10 each), and Sankeshu (7). Permanent eating establishments are present at every market. Zhemi has many more permanent shops than other

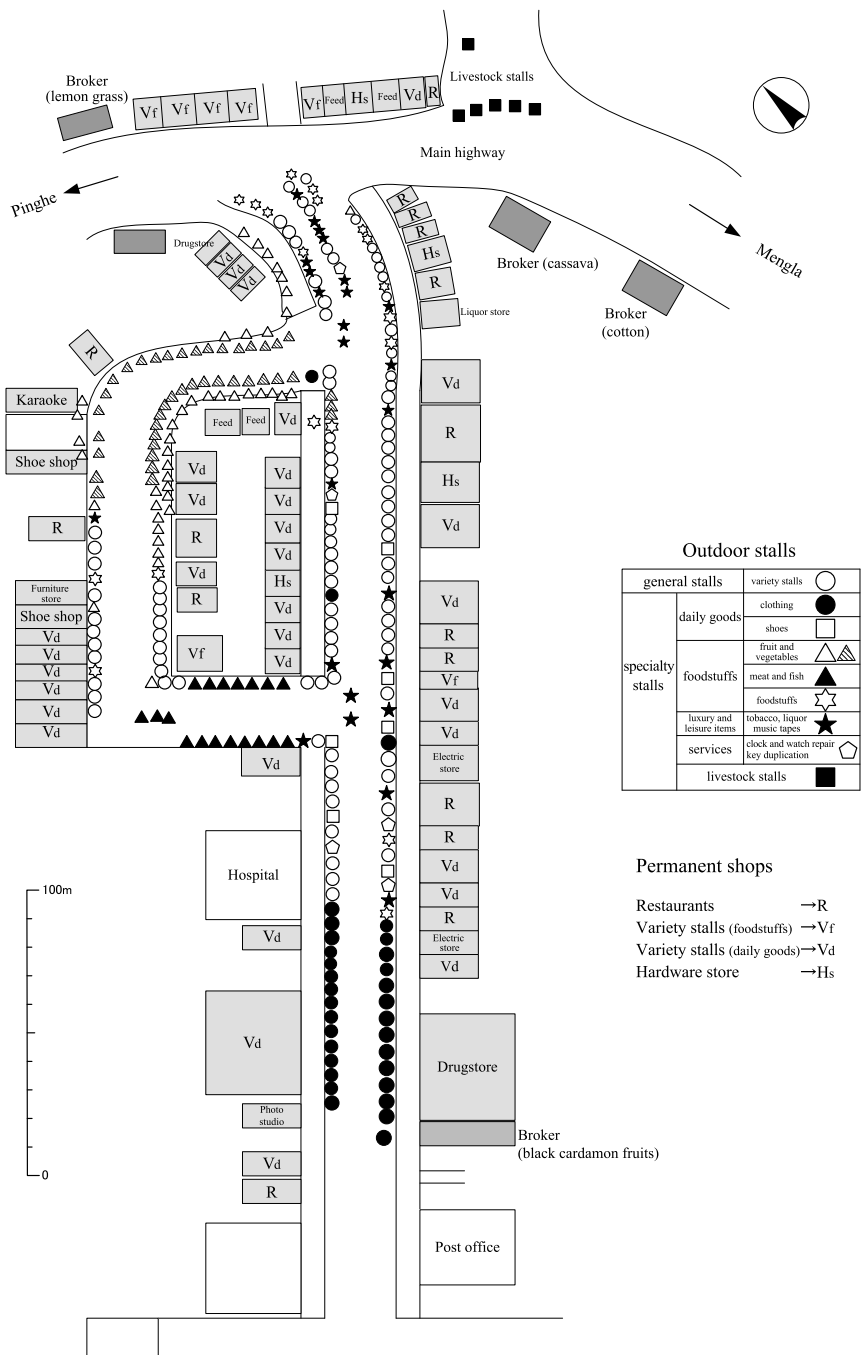


Fig. 3 Periodic Market at Zhemi

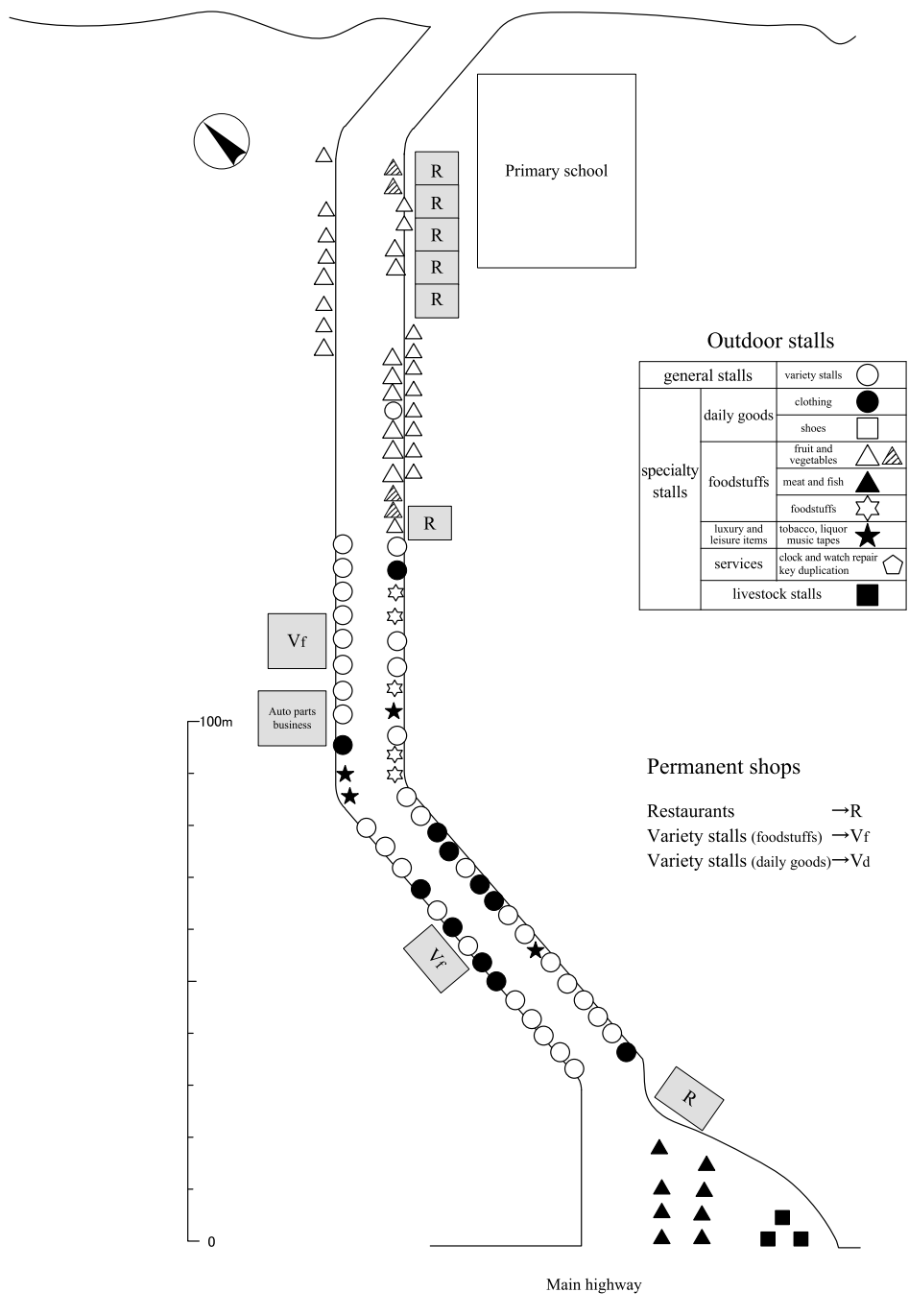


Fig. 4 Periodic Market at Dingqing

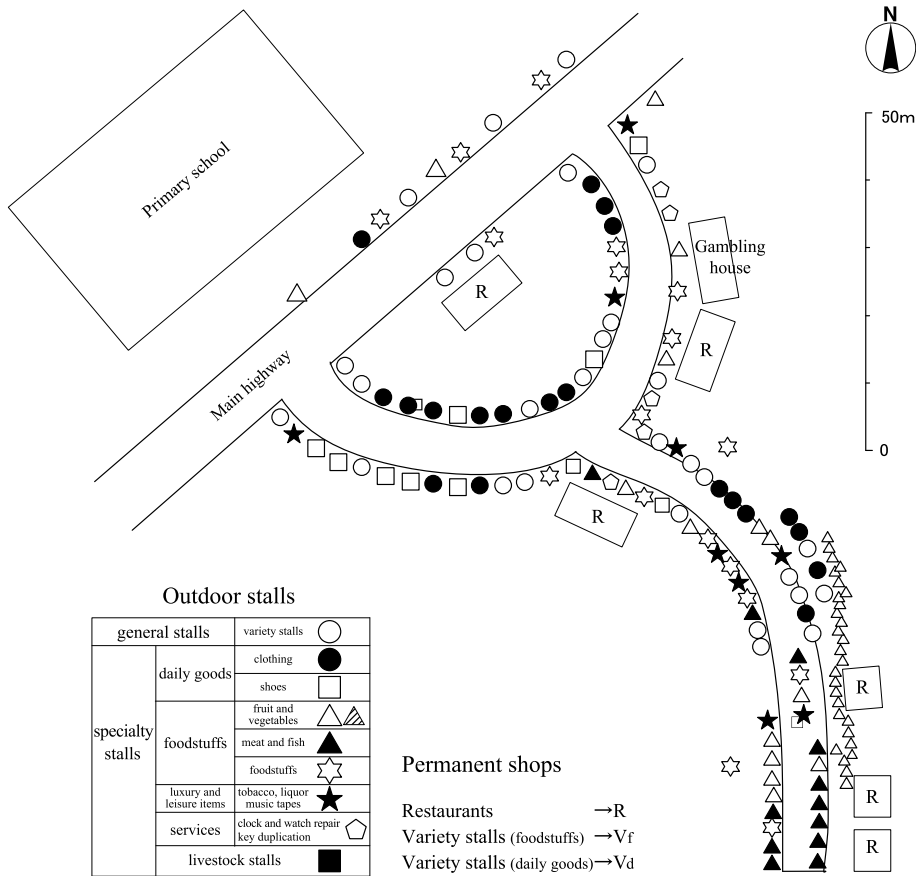


Fig. 5 Periodic Market at Sankeshu

towns with markets. Many of these are run by brokers who deal in valuable cash crops such as black cardamom (*Amomum tsao-ko* Crevost *et* Lem.), cotton, cassava, and lemon grass. Mahuangtang has only one broker who buys cassava, while Sankeshu and Dingqing have none. Thus, Zhemi is more heavily involved than other markets in purchasing cash crops.

Outdoor stalls can be broadly classified into two groups: specialty stalls that trade in commodities of a particular category or provide specific services, and general stalls. Specialty stalls can be further divided into five categories: daily goods, foodstuffs, leisure items, clothing, and services. All the markets have specialty and general stalls that sell clothing, fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, cooking ingredients such as bean curd, tobacco, liquor, and leisure items (music tapes, CDs, and VCDs). Stalls vending foodstuffs account for nearly half of the total (45–50 percent), which indicates the importance of

food as a commodity, regardless of the size or type of market.

Many of the markets do not provide a full range of commodities and services. The types of permanent shops and outdoor stalls at a market will vary depending on the number of people who assemble. The market at Zhemi is both the largest in size and the most comprehensive in terms of the range of commodities and services on offer. A ratio of around four customers per outdoor stall at peak times is thought to be the result of vendors adjusting the number of outdoor stalls to match customer numbers, which as noted earlier, are inherently limited at each market.

Regulation of periodic markets is done by the commerce office of the local government. Tax is levied according to the space used by vendors—floor-space vendors pay RMB 2 per day, collected on each market day; table vendors and suspended shelf vendors pay RMB 30 quarterly in addition to RMB 3 per day at the market. The fees cover sanitation and security.

#### *Periodic Markets as Seen from Types of Vegetables Vended*

In order to ascertain the market characteristics from the types of vegetables sold at different times, let us consider the vegetables on offer at the market in Zhemi during the rainy season (May and June) and the dry season (October and November). Fieldwork conducted during the rainy season revealed that 38 different types of vegetables were vended at markets in Zhemi. In order of importance, they were Chinese leeks, followed by chillies, kidney beans, onions, eggplants, potatoes, and cucumbers. Vendors at Sankeshu offered 20 types of vegetables during the rainy season. Here the most common vegetables were cucumbers, followed by chillies, kidney beans, various leafy greens, pumpkins, eggplants, potatoes, and Chinese cabbage. The Dingqing market had 27 types of vegetable in the rainy season, with Chinese leeks being most popular.

Vegetables vended at Pinghe during the dry season were chillies, followed by various leafy greens, bean sprouts, ginger, *dokudami* (*Houttuynia cordata* Thunb.), onions, Chinese leeks, and buckwheat leaves, in order of popularity. Mahuangtang offered 27 types of vegetables during the dry season, with Chinese cabbage topping the list. Vendors at Zhemi sold 51 different types of vegetables during the dry season.

Next, we shall consider the relationship between buyers and sellers of vegetables. As mentioned above, Zhemi is home to at least eight different ethnic groups, who are distributed unevenly throughout the valley. Hani are numerous around Pinghe in Lüchun county to the west, while Kucong mostly live around Zhemi and Dingqing in the mountains to the south. Many Alu and Hani people dwell in the mountains to the north. Miao are concentrated in the nearby mountains which stretch from Sankeshu to Mengla, while Dai and Zhuang live on the Pinghe plains.

The overwhelming majority of the vegetable stalls at Pinghe is run by Hani (83 percent), with Han (16 percent) featuring as the only other significant ethnic group. At the Zhemi market on November 15, 2003, Dai ran nearly all of the fruit stalls (94 percent), while Alu (71 percent) dominated the vegetable stalls, with Dai (24 percent), Yao (3 percent), and Han (2 percent) following far behind. At the Zhemi market a year later on June 6, 2004, Dai vendors ran all the fruit stalls, while vegetable vending was shared by Alu (54 percent), Dai (35 percent), and Kucong (11 percent). While the numbers for Alu and Dai vendors were similar to those observed the previous November, it was interesting to note the appearance of Kucong vendors as they had been absent the year before.

Hani (43 percent of the stalls) were the most common vendors at the Dingqing market, followed by Dai (13 percent), Alu (7 percent), and Yao (6 percent). Miao vendors (82 percent) dominated vegetable stalls at Sankeshu, with Hani and Miao together accounting for a mere 6 percent.

This data indicates that the ethnic breakdown of stall operators in each market reflects the ethnic composition of the local area, and that markets provide villagers with opportunities not only to purchase their daily necessities, but also to sell produce such as vegetables.

Let us examine the commercial behavior of villagers who visit the markets to sell their vegetables. For the purpose of analysis, we shall look at attendance numbers at the Zhemi market and the commercial behavior of Alu at that market. An hourly analysis of crowd figures indicates that people start arriving at the market from around eight o'clock in the morning. Visitor numbers grow steadily and peak at 11 o'clock, declining thereafter until about 2 o'clock, when the market essentially finishes.

About one-third of the stalls at the Dingqing, Sankeshu, Mahuangtang, and Pinghe markets sell fruit and vegetables. The vendors are generally from ethnic groups living in the surrounding areas. The trading pattern is similar to that observed at Zhemi: vendors sell fruit and vegetables for income, which they then use to purchase daily necessities before returning home in the afternoon. In this way, the market functions as a site for conducting small trade which enables local ethnic peoples to convert their produce into cash. Furthermore, periodic markets are differentiated by the types of vegetables and other commodities vended.

#### **IV Key Requirements of a Periodic Market**

##### *Conversion of Produce into Cash for the Purchase of Daily Necessities*

The primary role of periodic markets is to provide villagers from the surrounding areas



with an opportunity to sell their vegetables and other produce in order to obtain cash for the purchase of basic daily necessities. The markets represent an important and reliable venue for trading by local villagers, and this fact allows us to conclude that the most important role of the periodic market is as a place to generate cash for the purchase of daily necessities. This characteristic has been pointed out in the aforementioned pre-war Japanese studies of Chinese markets, and also constitutes a universal truth that applies to periodic markets all over the world.<sup>3)</sup> Villagers seek to gain profit at periodic markets by offering different agricultural produce; to this end, they constantly have to devise livelihood strategies different from those of other producers.

### *Location within Walking Distance*

Markets in the six-day cycle are spaced at regular intervals along the main highway, an arrangement which is designed to compensate for the lack of transportation in the Zhemi valley. Due to the complex topography of river valleys surrounded by mountains, markets must be located within eight kilometers of villages, a distance of three to four hours of walking one way, which allows villagers to return home on the same day. As noted earlier, virtually all of the villages in the Zhemi valley fall within at least one of the overlapping circles with an eight-kilometer radius drawn around the periodic markets at Zhemi, Dingqing, and Sankeshu. Therefore, we may say that the second key requirement of a market is location within walking distance.

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- 3) Based on studies of markets in Shandong and Henan provinces during the 1930s, Amano Motonosuke claims that “farmers lived and worked within a radius of approximately six kilometers centered around markets. Their limited scale of production and/or consumption is too small to warrant moving out of this economic sphere to deal directly with larger trading centers. Given their size, it is not worth the time or cost involved in transporting any surplus produce out of the region. They can manage little more than to take their goods to markets within walking distance and sell their produce there in exchange for the goods they need” (1953).

B. Malinowski and J. de la Fuente describe the market in functional terms as a place where “many people can bring their produce on a weekly basis and sell it to obtain income. For producers, the market represents their best source of purchasing power and a place to obtain profit. The market is like a bank that is always nearby and always accessible” (1987).

Ishihara Hiroshi has studied markets in the context of world history. He claims that “vendors at regular markets are mainly dedicated small-scale farmers and vendors doubling as traders, as well as craftsmen, based on reports from around the world. Purchasers, based on examples from around the world, are mostly small-scale farmers, with the exception of traders who bring in goods from other regions. A significant proportion of purchasers come to markets both for selling and purchasing” (1987).

The first requirement of the market—converting produce to cash for purchasing daily necessities—can be seen as a universal principle that applies to regular markets around the world, not just to those in Jinping county and traditional China.

*Traveling Traders and the Market Network*

Access to multiple markets is extremely important for traders who exclusively run outdoor stalls. Of the 321 categories of commodities sold at the periodic market at Zhemi, 43 categories (including vegetables, pork, and fish) were produced and consumed within the Zhemi valley. Most of the vegetables vended at the Zhemi market on November 15, 2004, were grown by Alu people on their own land. The remaining 278 categories of commodities (equivalent to 87 percent) came from outside the Zhemi valley area. Traveling traders bring in commodities not produced in the valley in order to profit from the price differential. The vast majority of these traders are ethnic Han Chinese.

Traders travel to periodic markets each time they are held. Having a market at the foot of the mountain provides a convenient way for villagers to sell agricultural produce and obtain manufactured goods that are not produced in the valley. The six-day market cycle allows traveling traders to rotate around several different markets, thus ensuring that they are able to satisfy the demands of villagers throughout the whole valley. For them to be able to do this, markets must be held at places accessible to traders. Therefore, we can conclude that periodic markets form at intersections of vertical and horizontal transportation—that is, at points that connect vertical conveyance of local produce up and down mountain sides with horizontal transportation of manufactured goods from outside and along the valley floors by traveling traders.

The six-day cycle ensures that market days along the highway do not overlap. This makes it possible for both traveling traders and villagers to access multiple markets. Outdoor stall traders do not obtain fresh fruit and vegetables and miscellaneous everyday items for sale at periodic markets direct from major cities such as Kunming, but rather from closer towns, such as Jinping and Mengla, to which these commodities circulate through the market network. The market network stretches all the way from Dukou at the northern tip of Jinping county to Pinghe in Lüchun county along the main highway, as if linked together in a chain. Traveling traders do not live dispersed in all the different towns and villages. Instead, they form groups which are based in towns like Jinping, Mengla, and Zhemi. The traders attend markets held on days that do not clash, moving their stalls from one market to the next. In other words, traveling traders utilize the variation in market days to their own advantage.

The mobility of the traders helps to boost the number of stalls and the range of commodities on offer, which in turn enlarges the scale of the market by attracting more people. While periodic markets function first and foremost as a place for local villagers to trade their produce, traveling traders also play an important role in them. Thus, the third key requirement of a periodic market is the existence of a marketing network and traveling traders who service it.

*Brokers and Cash Crops*

Nearly all the Miao people around Mahuangtang cultivate cassava in their gardens. Simply by selling some cassava at market mornings, they can earn good money for purchasing other goods. The cassava is not consumed in the Zhemi valley, but is transported by brokers to factories outside Jinping county and processed into starch.

For example, a broker at the Zhemi market purchases cassava in bulk along with other important cash crops from the valley such as black cardamom, lemon grass, and cotton. This gives villagers another option apart from selling small quantities of cassava at their vegetable stalls: they can also sell larger quantities directly to a broker. Zhemi has the greatest number of brokers dealing in cash crops, and consequently attracts the largest number of villagers in the valley. In this way, some markets play a bigger role than others in allowing villagers to dispose of cash crops on a regular basis. The presence of traders such as brokers dealing in cash crops who are connected with the outside market network constitutes the fourth requirement of a periodic market.

*Assembly of Small Traders, Diversity of Choice, and Greater Commodity Range*

The characteristics that distinguish the various markets in the six-day cycle are more than just differences in the types of fruits and vegetables offered. All the markets do not provide the same range of commodities and services, so villagers may choose which one to attend in accordance with their particular needs. Normally they will make use of several different markets rather than restrict themselves to just one.

At first glance, market stalls appear to sell a similar range of goods in each category. Of the 321 different commodity categories on offer at the Zhemi market on November 15, 2003, 37 percent were available at only one stall, another 18 percent were available at only two stalls, 9 percent were available at only three stalls, and 5 percent were available at only four stalls. Thus, more than half of the 321 commodities on offer could only be purchased from one or two stalls at the market. The number of different commodities available at any given stall, meanwhile, ranged from 6 to 15. Thus, the stalls generally offer a fairly limited range of goods. However, this is precisely what enables them to differentiate themselves from others selling different types of goods.

The market brings together stalls vending the same categories of goods because having a large number of stalls makes up for the fact that most stalls are small and only stock a limited range of commodities. The stalls can differentiate themselves by selling specific types of goods, while the market as a whole can provide a wide range of goods by bringing together the various types of stalls. Thus, the market provides diversity of choice and a larger range of commodities by bringing together a variety of small traders.

## V Discussion: The Level of Freedom in Periodic Markets

Writing about the trans-Mekong trade in northern Laos and northern Thailand, Andrew Walker (1999) has suggested that the dichotomy between regulation and liberalization does not hold when looking into the micro-level dynamics of local trade networks. He challenges the common assumption that the past was a period of regulation, while the present and future are heading towards liberalization. It could be argued that his conclusion that the current situation is one of interwoven practices of regulation and liberalization, drawn from analysis of border trade, can be applied to smaller marketplaces. While the states of the region seem to be moving towards more liberalized market-driven economies, improved road access and information technology extend the possibility of state encroachment into local matters.

Past research has demonstrated that a key feature of periodic markets in traditional China was their accessibility and the freedom that they afforded local residents in buying and selling commodities. Can these features be found in the markets in Jinping county? Fruit and vegetable stalls at Zhemi market were the exclusive domain of Alu and Dai during the dry season, but Kucong vegetable vendors joined them during the wet season. At Nafa, meanwhile, some stalls were manned by traders from Vietnam who crossed over into China to attend the market. At markets in Jinping county, stallholders are free to sell whatever they like once they have paid the required fees. Thus, markets in the Zhemi valley are not monopolized by goods sold by specific organizations or particular ethnic groups. Anyone can sell their products at periodic markets provided that they can produce commodities of saleable value and pay the charges levied by the local government.

The openness and freedom of markets in Jinping county exerts a strong influence on commercial relations among ethnic groups. Producing items such as indigo dyed clothing and baskets for carrying loads on the back, for instance, involves several different ethnic groups. In the case of dyed clothing, Hani, Yao, and Dai peoples each contribute specialized skills to tasks such as making thread from cotton, spinning thread into cloth, and dyeing cloth. No one trader takes responsibility for the overall production process. It is the market environment that makes this form of specialization possible, in particular the situation which permits participation by anyone and allows vendors to bring in goods that help them to differentiate themselves from others. The market enables any producer to sell their produce, and encourages spontaneous specialization of tasks within the production process. Periodic markets in Jinping therefore fulfill an important role in ensuring producers the freedom to sell their produce while at the same time encouraging specialization of production skills.

Spontaneous specialization of manufacturing and processing tasks come about not because different ethnic groups are inherently skilled at particular tasks, but because by bringing different peoples together the market environment encourages better understanding and awareness of different skills and abilities. In other words, the market encourages natural specialization through better awareness of differences. This function of the market helps to differentiate production processes and also boosts awareness among the various groups of their own ethnic uniqueness. By doing so it contributes to the creation and recreation of cultural identities.

The freedom afforded by the market environment can be seen as related to the steady increase in the number of markets in Jinping county. In 1989 there was only one periodic market in the Zhemi valley, the one held at Zhemi itself; today there are six. There can be no doubt that this is due to the fact that Jinping is a remote outlying region of Yunnan province where "transport is inconvenient." Even within this context, periodic markets may be considered relatively free and unregulated, and suited to conditions in the area. The revival of the periodic market can be traced to the introduction of production subcontracting in the early 1980s, which effectively removed much of the regulation on the economic activities of villagers and traders.

It is also interesting to note that in other places, this freedom has taken the form of "freedom to disengage" when the participants perceive that the space of exchange has ceased to serve its purpose. In the market of Sa Pa, in northern Vietnam, where ethnic Vietnamese traders have come to monopolize the most profitable areas of trade, the uplanders have refused to compete in what they see as a losing battle (Michaud and Turner 2000). These findings support the assertion that for upland people marketplaces are about more than economic transactions. This also reconfirms the importance of the finding in Jinping that no particular group or product dominates the market, and may be a significant explanation for the resilience of these markets. Importantly, the "divide" between upland and lowland is crossed with regularity and ease. In fact, it could be suggested that the lack of upland and lowland tension in the periodic markets is one of their most important characteristics.

Traveling merchants from the lowlands, primarily ethnic Han Chinese, and upland producers and sellers are able to ensure that the periodic market days do not overlap through the use of a shared calendar. From the uplanders' point of view, this calendar is a useful bridge between cultural differences that might otherwise confuse the functioning of the market. At the same time, the market provides space for economically defined niche products, display and trade in traditional handicrafts, and an important place for social life outside the village. As mentioned by Kuroda (2003), there are many non-economic aspects of life that are visible at markets. In Jinping, the coming together of

diverse peoples at periodic markets is an opportunity to renew relationships, enjoy special foods, and exchange information. The marketplace as an arena of social interaction is often overlooked by research that is preoccupied with their economic functions. This is probably even more so in the current period of rapid socio-economic transition, and further detail of the dynamic interactions at markets in areas such as Jinping may provide valuable information on how local communities adapt to the social transformations that are sweeping the region.

## VI Conclusion

The periodic markets of Jinping enjoy continued popularity and are an important pillar in the local economy. The previous analysis has emphasized how autonomy of the local economy—by which we mean the freedom, flexibility, and dynamism of the periodic markets—has encouraged its growth. Located in a border region at the forefront of regional economic integration, these marketplaces accommodate both traditional and cash crops, catering to a wide selection of consumers. The periodic markets function with a high degree of spatial fluidity, and are sustained by the flow of products facilitated by the diverse range of actors involved in the operation of the marketplaces. The cultural diversity that characterizes the markets is facilitated by the shared use of the Chinese zodiac to determine market days among groups using different calendars and, at the same time, allow the traveling merchants to avoid overlap in the multiple markets. This paper has suggested that these marketplaces are important in ethnically diverse areas as they enable interaction between people, encourage specialization and development of niche products, and contribute to the complex fabric of social life that characterizes the upland areas. They also suggest the existence of local strategies for negotiating increasingly complex currents of regulation and liberalization. That these markets operate on a regional scale, based on decentralized interactions between diverse actors, attests to social mechanisms that thrive on diversity and are not hindered by the perceived upland-lowland divide.

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***Moving Mountains: Ethnicity and Livelihoods in Highland China, Vietnam, and Laos***

JEAN MICHAUD and TIM FORSYTH, eds.

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011, xvi+235p.

**“When the Government is Asleep”**

*Moving Mountains* is a nicely edited collection of papers relating to diverse situations in the uplands of three countries that fell under communist regimes: China (the portion south of the Yangtze), Vietnam, and Laos. The book regards this territory as the eastern portion of the Southeast Asian Massif or “Zomia” to use the term made current by Scott (2009), a mountainous land peopled by a wide variety of minorities from five ethnolinguistic families estimated to speak more than 1,500 languages. Regardless of one’s assessment of Scott, the term is useful, though the inclusion here, like in Scott, of the Tai groups of southern China and northern Vietnam as Zomians is debatable, since the upland (or formerly upland) groups, despite their linguistic diversity, and despite being scattered over thousands of kilometers, share more in common with each other than with lowland groups who, in some cases, may live only a few meters away. Indeed, Zomia might more productively be considered a state of mind rather than a geographic territory.

Also like Scott, the work focuses mainly on the bilateral relationship between the ethnic group and the abstract state (or markets, or global trends), as opposed say, to the multilateral interactions of groups with each other and the state. And while change emerges as a focus of the papers, what does not change appears as the main point in each instance, framed throughout the volume as *agency*. The governments involved all share the institutionalized hypocrisy of lauding ethnic diversity while at the same time insisting on sameness. What differs perhaps is the efficiency with which they are able to enact and maintain programs that support this pretense.

The subtitle, *Ethnicity and Livelihoods . . .*, immediately casts the work into the realm of economic development and establishes its purpose as essentially didactic; cautionary tales to development organizations on what takes place beneath the surface when the civilizing project arrives in the mountains, or more to the point, when the mountains are brought to the state for

assessment and sentencing, hence the title, *Moving Mountains*. The spirit of the volume is best captured by the words of a Hmong woman cited by Tugault-Lafleur and Turner, as what happens “when the government is asleep.”

The editors view this movement through the lens of three main themes. First is the idea that identities of peoples marginal to the nations under consideration are molded by states and markets in addition to their own *agency*—though precisely how this latter works is not made clear and seems to be an explanation not unlike Molière’s *dormitive principle* in “Le Malade Imaginaire.” The second theme set forth is that of *transnationalism* as exemplified by cross-border trade and *historic social networks across state borders*. This theme would perhaps be more compelling if it were more prominent in the papers included in the collection. In most of the contributions it is mentioned only in passing or in some cases not at all. Trans-ethnic would have been more relevant given the high levels of ethnic diversity in each location though that would have required an additional area of focus. The third theme concerns provision of a more nuanced ground-up view of conditions in particular locales as opposed to the more generalized stateless assumption made by Scott and others. This is commendable, though in the end, the conclusion might be restated to infer that through camouflage and subterfuge the groups under consideration have managed to retain their statelessness despite intrusions from governments and markets.

The inclusion of Tais as Zomians in the papers by Sturgeon and Mellac perplexes. Throughout Southeast Asia, including Yunnan, Kwangsi, and Kweichow, Tai speaking people inhabit lowlands, whether open flatlands or narrow valleys, and practice wet rice paddy cultivation. Even the more distant Kam-Sui family are mostly paddy farmers with the exception of T'en (Li 1968) who were said to practice upland rice cultivation as did the even more distant Hlai groups on Hainan (Stübel and Meriggi 1937) and small enclaves of Kadai (Kra) on the mainland (Bonifacy 1906). Thus, since whatever time depth might be assigned to Proto-Tai-Kam-Sui (2,500–3,000 BP?) they have always been lowlanders, juxtaposed to uplanders by language and by the type of rice cultivation (*dry* vs *wet*). Simplistic as this may seem, for members of the same ethnolinguistic family to have sustained this distinctive trait over the large area stretching from Guangxi in the east to Assam in the west, and from Guizhou in the north to southern Thailand, cannot be ignored. So, even though Tai populations may be considered minorities in the various states such as Vietnam and China, in relation to the upland peoples, they behave more like states, a notion that is lost in *Moving Mountains* as inter-ethnic relationships are largely overlooked. A good example are the Tai (known cryptically as Thái and Tày) in northwestern Vietnam represented in this volume whose feudal systems are well known vis-à-vis the Khmou (Sa < \*khra) and Ksing Mul (Puak < \*buak) in the west, or the Nung and Kadai (Lachi, Laqua) further east. It is no accident that the Chinese since the Han have classified the Tai and Chuang as “halter and bridle” mini-states with relative autonomy under the *Tusi* system, proxies for the Han as it were. So why then, are they considered here as Zomians? The Thái in Mellac’s chapter, judging from the location, appear to be White Tai (Tai

Done) whose identity should have been mentioned because culturally and linguistically they are distinct from the Black Tai (Tai Dam). The Tày of Sa Pa in the same paper are probably Yay (aka Giay or Nhang) originally from Guizhou (that is, Pu-Yi) (Haudricourt 1960),<sup>1</sup> though here again this is not specified. These are a northern branch group similar to what nowadays are referred to as Northern Chuang in Guangxi and Pu-Yi in Guizhou. The Yay appear to have migrated from Guizhou south into Vietnam some 300 years ago (Edmondson 1998), that is, they are more closely related to Pu-Yi and do not descend directly from the Guangxi Northern Chuang population. These distinctions are important by the very criteria that this volume sets forth. Sturgeon's linking of the Tai-speaking Lue with the Tibeto-Burman Akha raises the question as to how two ethnic groups with such highly divergent modes of social organization interact with each other, but the issue is never mentioned, let alone explained.

This kind of criticism might be construed as too overly fussy or intricate, but then we come to the chapter on Khmu by Évrard where it may be seen just how meaningful such attention to detail becomes. From the point of view of ethnolinguistic classification, the term Tai (used in the Mellac paper discussed above) is of the same logical type as Mon-Khmer; Southwestern Tai (equal to Thái or Tày) would be equivalent to Khmuic; Black Tai would be equivalent to Khmu; and the various subgroups of Black Tai (Tai Vat, Tai Mouay, etc.) would be equivalent to the Khmu subgroups or *tmoos* (Rok, Lue, Nyouan, and Kwène). The *tmoos* described by Évrard represent the Khmu indigenous classification, and has been overlooked by developers, along with the relevance of history and ethnicity in the understanding of livelihoods. To the peoples who are the subject of this volume, such distinctions are of momentous importance, as Évrard ably demonstrates; their recognition marking the critical difference between insider and outsider knowledge.

McKinnon emphasizes the same point in his contribution on the Hani and their tortuous recent history. "Developers [and we could add, States]," he writes, "think that they know what is best for a local population; yet, what outsiders consider best may not be what the people for whom the assistance is intended really want" (p. 142).

Tugault-Lafleur and Turner's article on the Hmong in Vietnam indeed demonstrates the high value placed on non-economic aspects of livelihoods and the ability of this group to avoid falling into the traps of state and donor defined development dogmas such as *poverty*.

Daviau's contribution on the Tarieng of Xekong Province in Laos provides a stark illustration of the micro-level communist social engineering to which this ethnic group has been subjected and yet has managed to evade, even in the face of physical relocation. The point is made that such coercion may indeed strengthen ethnic resolve and covert resistance to government plans. As Daviau observes, this is no doubt the case with many other upland groups who face similar attempts

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1) One of the two Nhang [Nhắng] dialects from the 1939 "l'enquête linguistique" is from Chapa (ME 207, VIII, 5, by M. Dao-quang-Hièn).

by the government to trivialize traditional livelihoods and cultures.

Sadly, this discourse is largely invisible to donors who view development entirely in terms of superficial economic indicators created to further their own agendas. Thus *Moving Mountains* represents an important resource for the development enterprise as well as a fine collection of academic papers all of which serve to remind the reader of the importance of the micro viewpoint in assessing what changes and what does not.

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## *Spirits of the Place: Buddhism and Lao Religious Culture*

JOHN CLIFFORD HOLT

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, 368p.

Current studies on the religious culture of Lao ethnic groups began with S.J. Tambiah's structural-functionalistic analysis (1970) and have progressed mainly through Tiyananich's biographical study on the traditions of forest monks (1997) and Hayashi's historio-sociological ethnography of practical Buddhism (2003). While these studies were conducted on the right bank of the Mekong River in the part of northeastern Thailand, generally known as Isan, Lao religious studies on the other side of the Mekong river, in the present Lao PDR, have been very limited until recently. In fact, *Spirits of the Place: Buddhism and Lao Religious Culture* is the first book to focus on Lao religion by bringing together a wide range of previous studies concerning Lao history, politics, and cultures.

*Spirits of the Place* primarily provides a thorough analysis of *phi* (spirit) veneration and its relation to Buddhism in Laos. The author, John Holt, has studied Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka for a long time, and a notable feature of this book is its comparative use of Sinhalese Buddhism in order to understand Buddhism and spirit cults in Laos.

Before embarking on an inquiry regarding the circumstances in Lao, the title words “spirits of the place” are explained through the introduction of Paul Mus’s term “territorial sacred power.” Mus, a French scholar of Southeast Asian studies, points out that the “religions of monsoon Asia” are characterized by belief in spiritual power associated with a given locality, such as the paddy field, family compound, or village. The practice of such beliefs requires that there be a social group which worships their ancestors, and focuses on the “spirits of the place” in order to clarify linkages between both spiritual and human realms, the past and present. By setting it as a key concept, Holt explores the basic social unit of Lao, *ban* (village), and its relation to the headman, human authority, and supernatural *phi ban* (village deity), or to *muang*, a cluster of *ban*, which includes *chao muang* (a *muang* chieftain) and *phi muang*. Holt finds here double hierarchical orders both in the real politic and in the supernatural, and he explains that spirit veneration is related not only to the religious realm but also to the social order as the bedrock of Lao religious culture.

On the basis of this concept of “the spirits of the place,” the first three chapters of the book develop the relationship between Buddhism and spirit cults and provide a diachronic description of Lao history. The first chapter illuminates the era of the Lan Xang kingdom (fourteenth–nineteenth centuries). The Kingdom did not support Buddhism in early times, but when it started to sponsor the Buddhist *sangha* from the fifteenth century, the worship of spirit cults still continued in many areas despite attempts by the state to suppress them. For instance, the veneration of stupas and *Phraban* (a Buddha statue as the axis mundi) had Buddhist-like forms but symbolized the power of the past.

The period prior to the revolution in 1975 is described in chapter 2. With intervention by Siam, France, and the United States in succession, national identification with Buddhism has undergone ceaseless changes. Under French colonial rule, the religion was excluded from Laotian national identity, and since the 1950s, aid from the United States has exacerbated the economic gap between the urban elite and the rural poor, an act that has been strongly criticized by the *sangha*, the support of which derives from the rural regions. Under these circumstances, the *sangha* has identified itself as a protector of Lao traditions and has sympathized with the communist Pathet Lao’s humanitarian agenda.

Chapter 3 depicts the revolutionary era when Marxist policy began to criticize Buddhism as otherworldly, and tried to change Buddhism as a means to sustain socialism and eradicate spirit veneration. However, the government’s misunderstanding of Buddhism provoked much criticism, while in Lao villages, traditional Buddhist monks were often expected to engage in manual labor. Despite this misunderstanding, Buddhism was almost commensurate with the Pathet Lao’s inten-

tion to sustain and serve socialism. According to Marxist orthodoxy, to be rational and scientific, the Pathet Lao tried to prohibit spirit worship after 1975. This prohibition is another reason the *phi* cult was associated with the pre-revolutionary social order, as *phi* was a supernatural embodiment of the “powers of the place,” and such powers could threaten the existing order of the government. Therefore, the Pathet Lao attempted to eliminate *phi*. But this attempt failed.

In chapter 4, tourism in Luang Prabang is discussed through interviews conducted with novices and observation of annual rituals. Since UNESCO’s appreciation of the “authenticity” of cultural tradition in Luang Prabang and the listing of the city as a World Heritage site in 1995, many tourists have flown into the ancient capital, where various changes in religious culture have taken place. Nowadays, novices interact intimately with foreigners, and the Pi Mai festival (New Year) includes a beauty pageant to attract more tourists. While some rituals such as Boun Phravet still retain their fundamental religious ethos, emphasizing the creation of merit, religious culture in Luang Prabang has been commoditized for tourist consumption.

In the last chapter, the author raises a question regarding the difference between Isan and Laos: while the *phi* cult in Isan seems to have undergone transformation in a Buddhist-dominated religious culture, why has this kind of Buddhacization not occurred in Laos? A number of explanations are possible: it could have been brought about by an absence of royal support for Buddhism throughout the nation’s history, or a lack of penetration of Marxist dogma into rural areas. But Holt emphasizes the characteristics of Lao religious culture and argues that *phi* cults are naturally out of ethical control, and remain outside the Buddhist cosmology. This nature enables one to view Buddhism or other religions such as Christianity through the lens of spirit veneration. The author uses the term “inspiring Buddhism” to describe the situation in Laos. The cult itself has not changed much, but the way of interpreting Buddhism has been changed by “inspiring” Buddhism into the cult. It can be said that spirit cult remains the bedrock of the Laotian worldview.

The originality of this book lies in its manifold comparisons of various viewpoints. Lao religious culture is juxtaposed with that of Sri Lanka for a comparison of Theravada orthodoxy. Thailand is used for comparison of royal support for Buddhism. Cambodia and Vietnam are compared with other countries of ex-French Indochina, and with Isan for insights into how the same ethnic group lives under different circumstances. The author’s specialization in Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism enables him to make complicated cross-country comparisons that render the locus of Lao religious culture very understandable.

The idea of “inspiring Buddhism” seems applicable to areas in Southeast Asia other than Laos. The outstanding studies of Tambiah and Hayashi on the Lao religious cultures of Isan, have depicted Buddhism as predominating over the spirit cults. However, Holt’s viewpoint emphasizes the persistence of spirit veneration, and its discussion of the ways in which the spirit cults are located outside the ethical control of Buddhism is particularly important. For example, there is a famous ghost story concerning a late nineteenth-century village near Bangkok. Nang Nak, a female

ghost who died during childbirth, frightened and annoyed the villagers, but was finally appeased by a celebrated monk from Bangkok. While this can ostensibly be interpreted as a story of control over a spirit cult by Buddhism, or the Buddhacization of rural spirit cults at a time when Thailand was modernizing, we can also see this ghost story as a case of “inspiring Buddhism.” Nowadays the female ghost is enshrined within the temple of the village and attracts many worshippers praying for an easy delivery or simply for a good luck. Though the ghost had been suppressed by Buddhism, Nang Nak seems to survive and conversely to support and strengthen Buddhism by occupying a corner of the temple. Despite the differences of historical process between Laos and Thailand, “inspiring Buddhism” can be used not only for the case of Laos but also for other situations.

One flaw of this volume is that it does not give accounts of religious reality in rural Lao that are based on the author’s own research. Except for chapter 4, which elaborates on novices’ views on religious life and two annual rituals, other chapters lack descriptions of the situation in rural villages, where the author stresses the importance of the substratum of the religion. Moreover, the spirit veneration mentioned in this book is too exclusively limited to types of guardian deities. A consideration of other kinds of spirits, such as *phi pop* or *phi phrai*, which are usually classified as evil spirits, would have enriched the analysis of the village situation. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, Holt’s approach to spirit veneration has the potential to shed light on the under-explored and overlooked aspects of religious life in Southeast Asia.

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## *Tai Lands and Thailand: Community and State in Southeast Asia*

ANDREW WALKER, ed.

Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009, 261p.

In the current period of intensified globalization, reconstructing community is one of the most

important issues for the study of society in the modern world. Andrew Walker's most recent edited publication argues this through reviewing the ideal of community, which has been critically discussed among Thai intellectuals, and examines the reality of communities that exist in the Tai Land or the Tai world, beyond Thailand itself.

As summarized on the back cover, this book aims to provide an alternative view of the rapid social and economic changes taking place in the Tai world that differs from the conventional discussion about community, which concludes that the traditional community is undermined "by the modern forces of state incorporation and market penetration." The authors describe modern forms of community, which they refer to as "modern Tai community" or "modern community," emphasizing how state power intersects with the market, livelihoods, and aspirations, using both thematic and ethnographic studies from Thailand, Laos, Burma, and southern China.

Within an anthropological framework, the editor, Walker, connects ethnographic data gathered in the Tai world, and conducts a theoretical review of Tai community and the political situation in Thailand. This publication, as such, offers a timely, stimulating, and unique study on the theme of community.

In pursuing this theme, the writers in this volume criticize concepts deployed by Thai intellectuals such as "community culture," because the school that employs this concept has insisted on the importance of community against state power and market economy threats, and tried to find authentic Tai communities outside Thailand.

In Chapter 2, Reynolds examines the development of the Tai concept of *chumchon* (community) and lucidly demonstrates how it is a comparatively new term, appearing in Sarit's policy of *Pattana Chumchon* (Community Development) in the 1950s. The idea of "community culture" (*wattanatham chumchon*) appeared in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and has been embraced by public intellectuals, academics working in development, and NGOs. The meaning of community (*chumchon*) is shown to be an alternative to "modernity," which was against state policy for development in Sarit's period, during the 1950s and 1960s.

As such, ethnographic data in this book describes communities as been created by negotiation with market economy and state power, and not in juxtaposition to the threat they offered. In Chapter 3, Haughton mentions that the community culture vision of local communities that operate within a moral, rather than self-interested economy (a self-sufficient one) is unrealistic and historically false. He reports cases of community organizations such as a rice bank in a village in Roi Et province of Northeastern Thailand which tries maintain itself by gaining profits through negotiation with the market economy. What Haughton shows is that traditional modes of behavior have already been systematically refashioned to fit the imperatives of the capitalist economy. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 report on communities which are formed through negotiations with state power.

In Chapter 7, Singh describes the dormitory community whereby low-ranking forestry officials reside together, concluding that "recognition of these modern bureaucratic communities challenges



simplified state-society dichotomies” (p. 165). In Chapter 8, Mayes reports on marginalized groups that are seeking forms of belonging which have been denied to them in the official imagery of the nation-state.

The case of Tai Lue in Sipsong Panna, Yunnan which Dianna describes in Chapter 9, reveals that the orientation of Dai youth within a new political and economic context of globalization is informed more by a sense of belonging to a modern Chinese national community than by a sense of transnational ethnic commonality. As such, Chapters 4 and 9 refer to trans-national communities in the Tai world.

The Tai Study Project is rooted in the school of community culture and has accorded attention to the Tai community outside Thailand by seeking authentic communities as a model of collective, harmonious, and primordial life. However, the Project ignores the reality of the Tai world. In Chapter 4, Farrelly criticizes the notion of “community culture” and states that “the authentic communities prescribed in Thai interpretations do not help to legitimize Shan claims for work, citizenship and human rights precisely because so much effort has been devoted to rediscovering an essence of T(h)ai-ness for the Thai” (p. 85).

In Chapter 9, Dianna mentions that many scholars propose that the increase in cross-border movement and exchange since the 1990s has enabled the Lue to develop creative ways to bypass state nationalist practice and discourses and to revitalize an imagined pan-Tai community united by a sentiment of “shared ethnic oppression” (p. 206). This privileging of the transnational over the national ignores the quotidian engagement with the nation that marks Tai Lue people’s lives in China.

What both the cases of Tai Lue and Shan show is that past arguments have tended to pay attention to an imagined ideal, but to the detriment of the actualities of complicated political and economic situations and their day-to-day lives in cross-border areas.

In this book, “modern Tai community” is described with particular reference to the “symbolic construction of community” (Anthony Cohen’s term) and “realizing community” (Vered Amit’s term) — community realized through a pattern of day-to-day interaction and communication (Cohen 1985; Amit 2002).

Yet, the chapters in this book explore the symbolic and social construction of community in the context of modern society in three different ways, and they are divided into three parts along these lines. The first part (Chapters 2–4), *Critical Engagement*, argues that the common imagery of Tai community (*chumchon*) can be seen as a form of contemporary symbolic simplification; the second (Chapters 5–6), *Local Network*, focuses on the dynamics of “doing community” in a local ritual context; and the final part (Chapters 7–9), *Negotiated States*, focuses on community being created as a result of dialogue with state power.

The image of “Community,” particularly of “community culture” described in the first part, is a selective and simplified imagery of traditional communal livelihood and is described as “a

boundary-making symbol—it sets them off from what they see as an undesirable mainstream preoccupation with national integration, economic development and rampant consumerism” (p. 22).

Yet, contrary to this, many chapters, especially in the second part, dwell on contemporary communities which are not territorially bounded units.

For example, as the editor points out, spirit propitiation and Buddhist ceremonies are often associated with stereotypical images of Tai communities, but Chapters 5 and 6 propose that forms of communities that are created are partial, personal, idiosyncratic, and often extra-local in orientation (p. 23).

In Chapter 6, the editor, Walker, demonstrates that symbolic simplification lies at the heart of the creation of community but village solidarity disaggregates into unbounded networks of personalized practice. He points out that recognizing this complexity does not eliminate the importance of a sense of belonging, but it does encourage greater attention to the ongoing project of community creation. Therefore it can be said that “community comes to be seen as a work in progress” (p. 23). Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the dynamics of this process, which is called “doing community.”

As the editor states, the sentiment of community often focuses on cultural and social components that do not necessarily serve boundary-making functions. The key components can often be seen as a symbol for creating a sense of belonging in the community which is not a bounded unit. Examples are described both in part two and part three. The offering of the Puta spirit ritual (Chapter 5) and scooter (Chapter 8) are symbolic goods for creating a sense of belonging; “Suan huam” (common or collective) which denote a morally desirable domain of common endeavor (Chapter 6) and “Suzhi” (human quality) in the agenda of modern China (Chapter 9) are symbolic morals for creating a sense of belonging. However, the editor points out that there are risks in overstating the symbolic dimensions of community, so the ways in which symbols gain salience through forms of day-to-day social interaction need to be spelled out.

The main theme of the chapters in part three is community formation as the result of negotiating with the state. These examples are also salient in the process of “doing community” as the editor explains that “they often intersect creatively with individual aspirations for prosperity, education, mobility and security. New modes of communal belonging are framed at these modern intersections between official policy and personal orientation” (p. 23).

Dormitory community (Chapter 7) and Puta ritual community (Chapter 5) are good examples of such new modes of communal belonging. These communities are based on this personal orientation which has an unbounded network that intersects with the artificial community created by the Lao government for development as a bounded territorial unit.

The last chapter, by Walker, focuses especially on the retirement drama of ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and concludes the discussion of communities in the Tai world. Walker shows how voters agree with Thaksin’s vision of market-oriented economic diversity, thereby revealing

that both state and market economy are inseparable from community and that Thai intellectuals have committed the error of putting ideals before reality. Thai intellectuals have also been mistaken in insisting that the ideal of a local Tai community that stretches across borders ignores people's grounded realities as seen in both the Shan and Tai Lue cases. Walker states that the present-day Tai communities challenge the framework that is preoccupied with the rise and fall of traditional Tai communities. It is clear that Walker takes up Thaksin's drama to reveal an intellectual misunderstanding.

However this book does not only criticize the factitious elements of Thai intellectuals' ideas represented in "Community culture" but also affirms its strategic effect. "Modern community" warns that overstating this strategic effect might lead to the suppression of reality.

In Chapter 10, Walker mentions that "our concept of 'modern Tai community' represents an alternative framework for both analysis and empowerment. It points to the diverse ways in which people create new means of belonging in contexts of social transformation" (p. 220). Although the vision for empowerment is not clearly shown, the need of community to maintain the commons is suggested based on reality as mentioned in Chapter 3: "communities may also be recursively defined and created by reference to their commons rather than to the increasingly anachronistic 'traditions' which the rural people of Thailand are leaving behind, along with the NGOs that cling to them" (p. 65).

Houghton argues for contemporary "communities of common interest" based on achieving access to affordable capital or the shared experience of urban employment (Chapter 3). This concept redefines traditional community as only limited to natural resources. It is a key point of strategic aspect of "modern Tai community."

"Modern Tai community" is not a bounded territorial unit but rather an unbounded network that has communal sentiment, which is not opposed to state power and market economy. The editor summarizes that "there is a risk that moralistic exhortations about the importance of village solidarity will overlook the extent to which livelihood security is achieved via personalized and dispersed networks of family, friends and kin" (p. 220). It has been pointed out in the Southeast Asian studies that the organizational principle of Southeast Asian society is not the "group" but, rather, the "network" (e.g. Tsubouchi and Maeda 1977). How is this related to the concept of a "modern Tai community"? As a conceptual framework, how might it be effective in modern Southeast Asian Societies? It might be said that it is rather easier for Tai society to adapt to an unstable modern society by creating a "modern community" as an unbounded network.

A final departure point may be to clarify the concept of "modern Tai community" in order to answer some of the questions raised in this thought-provoking volume.

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## *Merchants of Madness: The Methamphetamine Explosion in the Golden Triangle*

BERTIL LINTNER and MICHAEL BLACK

Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009, xii + 180p.

In recent years, amphetamine type substances (ATS) have become the most widely used illegal narcotic drugs in Mainland Southeast Asia. These substances contain the medicinal alkaloid ephedrine which is amply found in Asiatic species of the Ephedra Family. Ephedra is known in Chinese as *ma huang* (麻黄), “Yellow Cannabis.” The plants themselves are mostly deciduous shrubs growing in arid areas in the middle and north of China and points westward.

As Bertil Lintner and Michael Black show clearly in *Merchants of Madness*, production and use of ATS in the region has exploded in recent years, far surpassing the total number of opiate users. Because ATS in this region is essentially a local phenomena with little exported to Europe or North America, much less is known about it outside Southeast Asia.

However, within Thailand and Burma as well as its neighbors, ATS has become a serious problem. As long ago as 1996, UNDCP officials (the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, forerunner of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC) were becoming aware that ATS production in the region was accelerating even as opium poppy cultivation and use was stagnating if not actually declining. In its 2010 *Situation Assessment on Amphetamine-Type Stimulants* (UNODC Global SMART Programme 2010), UNODC noted that 50–80 percent of the world’s ATS users are in East and Southeast Asia, that almost 100 million tablets were seized in 2009, and that production is increasing mostly in border areas in North and East Shan State.

As with opium, ephedrine has both positive and negative properties. It stimulates the brain, increases the heart rate, and expands the bronchial tubes. It also increases the metabolism. Ephedrine has long been used in China to treat asthma and other ailments. In the United States ephedrine is the active ingredient in pharmaceutical preparations such as Benzedrine which was an inhalant for the treatment of asthma. However, when it was learned that ephedrine had a euphoric effect, people began removing the paper strip inside the inhaler and swallowed it. “Bennies” grew so popular that Ian Fleming had 007 using them in three of his novels. There are

websites that claim that ephedra “is a plant with a PR problem,” has a reputation as a “troublesome” herb, and can contribute to weight loss and other benefits (i.e. <http://www.diagnose-me.com/treat/T327930.html>).

The Asiatic ephedra plants are not native to the countries of Southeast Asia but to Mongolia and the north of China, where the substance was formerly known as *ma huang*. In Thailand it was called *ya ma*. Probably *ma* originally was derived from the Chinese *ma huang* but when used in Thai it came to be pronounced with the same tone as *ma*, meaning horse. As Lintner and Black well explain, this horse medicine became widely known after World War II among long distance truckers as useful for staying awake on long drives with an estimated 300,000 users in Thailand.

As for negative side-effects, Lintner and Black, as well as the Thai Government, UNODC, and other involved agencies point out that the drug can cause aggressive behavior leading to murder, kidnappings, and other violent crime. Unlike opiates which generally sedate the user, ATS can lead to conflicts and much harm to innocent bystanders.

*Ya ma* remained something of a niche drug for decades until the 1990s when groups in the northeast of Burma, such as the United Wa State Army and other breakaway groups from the Communist Party of Burma, began producing large quantities of ATS.

It was at this time, and through a marketing process not fully understood (but discussed in depth by Chouvy and Meissonnier [2004, 81–103]), ATS use spread rapidly and particularly among school children—mostly boys in their second year of secondary school (grade 8 in the 12 year Thai pre-university educational system). At that time, teachers throughout the country remember seeing pieces of foil from cigarette packs scattered around the more remote areas of secondary school campuses as the sign of a problem they did not understand. The students were “smoking the dragon” with ATS pills, that is grinding the pills up and burning the powder on the foils which they then inhaled.

Subsequent studies revealed that these young students, beginning to grow confident in secondary school and as very young adults associated *ya ma* with having more fun in group activities. The very name, *ya ma* (horse medicine) which associated the pills with strength and medicine, made them all the more appealing. By 1996, the number of users had increased to over one million (Chayan 1996, 102) and had become the most abused substance in the country.

In that year, the Thai Government decided to change the name from *ya ma* to *ya ba*, i.e. crazy or madness medicine in order to reduce the allure of the name to would-be users. From then on the Thai Government would carry out a heightened campaign against the production, trafficking, and use of ATS that peaked in Prime Minister Thaksin’s War on Drugs in 2003. Although that lapsed and he is no longer in power, the country has continued efforts to reduce the use of the drug that is now by far the most widely used narcotic substance in the country.

Lintner and Black focus attention on the merchants who sell the drug, especially at the beginning of the marketing chain. Their study starts with the 1989 mutiny by which three groups in

northeastern Shan State, broke with the Communist Party of Burma to take control of their respective regions. The first is Kokang, whose rulers are descended from refugees loyal to the Ming Dynasty in China in the 1600s. Besides Kokangese, there are also Palaung and other groups. Second are the Wa, actually, a diverse group of peoples speaking sometimes mutually unintelligible dialects. They were united politically during the CPB era during which time the area under Wa authority expanded southwards from Pang Kham<sup>1)</sup> to Mong Pawk, Hotao, and Mong Phen where the people are mostly Lahu and Akha. The third group is based in Mong La and comprises three main groups, Tai Lu (often locally called Shan), Akha, and Tai Loi, a Mon-Khmer speaking group also known as Bulang. Following the collapse of the CPB, these three areas were given autonomy (in the case of the Wa, considerable) over their areas, known to the government as Kokang Special Region 1, Wa Special Region 2, and Special Region 4 (based in Mong La).

On page 66, there are photos of 16 individuals identified as the main “players.” Almost all of them are connected with the Wa Region either as leaders, such as Bao Youxiang, or as financiers, such as Wei Xuegang. The remainder are Chinese or Shan associated with Shan rebel groups, such as Yawt Serk.

Lintner and Black devote most of the book to the background of these individuals and their organizations who they indicate are those most responsible for the recent spread of ATS. They explain how ATS production came to be prominent and how use spread to Thailand. They do not discuss the merchants on the Thai side except for a few who were arrested. They add that the Thai police know who they are but are constrained from taking action due to corruption and protection afforded the big bosses. They paint a picture of organized crime, human rights abuse, smuggling, and money laundering.

They describe the financial empires created by the ATS merchants such as in a massive casino complex being built at the Boten border crossing between Luang Namtha in Laos and Mong La across the border in Yunnan. They detail how the Hong Pang Company, a conglomerate involved in gems and jewelry, construction, and agriculture grew. The authors contend that these and other concerns have grown immensely wealthy from ATS production and sales that they are growing indiscriminately in wealth and influence.

The authors blame the confused politics and ethnic conflicts in Burma for the explosion of ATS production. They chide “global hypocrisy” by which the “West likes to posture itself as a champion in the ‘war on drugs’” but in fact is implicated for having pushed opium into China and elsewhere in the nineteenth century. There are “no angels or devils in the Golden Triangle; they are often one and the same” (pp. 143–144).

However, demonizing the Wa they say is counterproductive because it will not lead to any

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1) Lintner and Black refer to this city as Panghsang, but the Wa no longer use this term which they claim is inauspicious.

solution of the amphetamine trade (p. 144). “Engaging them may be the only way forward.” They lament that “the world insisted on working only through the UN and ‘recognized governments’” (p. 144) rather than taking the opportunity of acting on a proposal by a Wa leader named Saw Lu. He had written an open letter entitled “The Bondage of Opium: The Agony of the Wa People, a Proposal and a Plea” stating that the Wa wanted to end opium poppy cultivation in exchange for certain political concessions including a “separate state for the Was within a federal union” (p. 108). However, no action was taken according to the authors because “The DEA and the UN’s various agencies said they were not able to provide any direct assistance to the Was” and that aid would have to go through “the Burmese government” (p. 110).

While we can be sure that Saw Lu told this to one of the authors (p. 171), this was not the end of the story to UN providing development assistance to the Wa. Two years earlier, UNDCP Executive Director, Giorgio Giacomelli had finalized a drug control MOU between the six Mekong countries. By late-1992, all six, including Myanmar, had signed an action plan that included law enforcement, demand reduction, and alternative development projects. This plan was based both the region’s needs as well as the funding realities of UNDCP which require it to depend on contributions for many activities from countries such as in Europe, Scandinavia, Australasia, and North America. Since none were willing to fund law enforcement work in Myanmar (although some regional projects were supported in which Myanmar participated), work in Myanmar was in alternative development and drug treatment. When Giacomelli went to Myanmar in May 1993, he visited Lashio, Kengtung, and Tachilek in Shan State where he discussed the small development projects that were soon started in Hopong, a government-controlled area with many Wa, Nam Tit which was in the Wa Region, and Silu District of Special Region 4.

It is likely that the government of Myanmar had already decided on this course of action prior to Saw Lu’s discussion with one of the authors. How much the Wa were involved is unclear but they were in agreement with the basic idea of the UNDCP project early on. In 2006, while managing the UNODC Wa Project, I was told by a former UNDCP representative to Myanmar, that Wa leaders in about 1993 had asked UNDCP staff in Silu for help with their plan to stop growing poppy which they had included in their first five-year development plan in 1990. They (who were in agreement with Saw Lu on the advisability of banning opium) told UNDCP that their effort to eliminate opium comprised three five-year development plans, culminating in a ban in 2005.

UNDCP referred the matter in 1993 to the government which initially objected to the idea. But after negotiations, Hotao was decided on by all as the best site because of its proximity to Silu and also Mong Yang which was under government control and it had road access both to Kengtung and an all-weather road to the China border seven miles to the east.

This led to the formulation of the UNDCP/UNODC Wa Project, that ran from 1998 to 2008 and was designed to provide assistance, through community development, agricultural extension,

and drug treatment, to poppy farmers so as to ease their transition to new livelihoods following the opium ban in 2005. The Wa, who had not fully been involved in the formulation process, however, were expecting grants of funds by which they could develop the region, beginning with infrastructure, in its own way. After several years of negotiations, some run-ins, and trials and errors on all sides, a methodology acceptable to the Wa, the Government, and UNODC was reached.

This entailed providing high yield open pollinated rice to poppy growers, small-scale irrigation projects to provide water for newly-developed or expanded paddy fields, drug treatment, vocational training (i.e. carpentry, tailoring, livestock raising), and small infrastructure development such as for feeder roads. The aim was to enable the farmers to grow more (if not always enough) rice on lowland fields which (in the absence of secure land title deeds) was the most certain way the farmers could hold their land and protect it from sometimes avaricious Wa officials who otherwise would appropriate the land to grow rubber or tea. By the end of 2007, the project had grown quite effective in providing this assistance, as shown in Table 1.

By this time the approach the project had taken had encouraged many other organizations to participate, all with the approval of the Wa Authority (and the Government). These included UN agencies such as the World Food Programme, FAO, UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA, as well as international NGOs including Malteser International, Aid Médicale Internationale, CARE, and German Agro-Action. They followed the approach pioneered by UNODC as well as helping to control malaria, address the small but growing incidence of HIV in the Wa towns, and providing support to the educational system (with Chinese and Myanmar curricula).

By this time, though, the war on drugs had caught up with the Wa and the UNODC Wa Project. In January 2005, a Federal Court in New York handed down indictments on eight Wa leaders for trading heroin and methamphetamines. As Lintner and Black note (p. 91), this led to the temporary removal of the staff (actually only the international staff) from the Wa Region. But what they do not mention is that the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon concluded that death threats had been made against the three DEA agents in the country. This led directly to the United States cancelling its funding of the Wa Project (approximately three-quarters of the total at that

**Table 1** One Month and One Year of UNODC Work in the Wa Region

Activity	September 2007	January–December 2007
Irrigation Canals	45 km	200 km
Rice Fields Developed	60 ha	260 ha
Feeder Roads	30 km	500 km
Fish Ponds	90	606
Villagers Trained	350	1,850

Source: UNODC Wa Project records (compiled by the author who was the Project Manager at the time).



time).<sup>2)</sup> Although funding from Australia was received to extend the life of the project for another year (until 2007), the project was obliged to cease operations before all the people who could benefit from UNODC inputs could be reached. Nonetheless, many other agencies had their own funding and alternative development went on although drug treatment was reduced.

None of this later information is in *Merchants of Madness*. Lintner and Black disparage UN leaders as misinformed (pp. 101–102), make a very brief reference to the UN as envisioning the problem as “agricultural” (p. 111), and refer to the “December 2005 Myanmar Country Profile.” However, there are no references in the “Notes on Sources” to any interviews of any UN official (UNODC or otherwise) or to any UNDCP or UNODC project reports or documents and nothing on UNODC after 2005.

This is significant because the activities carried out in the Wa Region provide an alternative approach to dealing with Myanmar than what Lintner and Black propose. They suggest that, quoting an address by Aung San Suu Kyi in 1989, a “lasting solution to the problems of the ethnic minorities [including drug production] . . . [is] to secure the highest degree of autonomy [for those minorities] ” (p. 146).

While one cannot dispute this, it is also indisputable that minority groups have faced serious problems since the 1960s. Many international agencies, including INGOs, believe that no action can be taken for the overall good before any resolution to the problems are forthcoming. But if they were asked, the Wa villagers who are growing more rice, have water supplies in the village, and who have stopped using opium would agree that the interventions were useful regardless of continued ATS production.

Though not mentioned by the authors UNODC’s work in the Wa Region achieved the following results: 1) Preventing a humanitarian crisis after the ban; 2) Providing support for the peace process; and 3) Setting an example for working in other ceasefire areas. This has been the longest and biggest such internationally-supported project in Myanmar since independence in 1948. No other such project has involved so many partners and so many beneficiaries. Nor has there ever been any project of this scale and scope in a ceasefire area. The approach pioneered here can be productively utilized in other such areas in Myanmar. Technically the book is sound in terms of formatting and proofreading except for the index which has some errors. Despite their misunderstanding of UNODC’s work in the Wa Region, the authors make a useful contribution by describing the seriousness of the ATS problem in Thailand and in neighboring areas.

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2) See “Memorandum of Justification for Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Illicit Drug Producing Countries for FY 2008,” affirming this action (which was not communicated to UNODC in Myanmar) at the time (<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/80441611/UnitedStatesDepartmentofStateBureauforInternational>).

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### ***Cashing in across the Golden Triangle: Thailand's Northern Border Trade with China, Laos, and Myanmar***

THEIN SWE and PAUL CHAMBERS

Chiang Mai: Mekong Press, 2011, xx+192p.

This book is an interim report on the Thailand-China border trade and particularly on two roads constructed under the Greater Mekong Subregion project.

The first of these roads, R3B, was completed in 2004. It runs from the Thai border at Mae Sai through the Shan States of Burma to the China border at Mongla. It's not doing very well. Traffic is occasionally disrupted by ethnic insurgents. The Burmese government repeatedly closes the border crossing to display political pique. The road surface is already falling part. The daily value of goods passing the Mae Sai checkpoint is only half the daily take of one of the three casinos on the Tachilek side.

The second road, R3A, running from the Thai border at Chiang Khong across Laos to the China border at Boten, was completed in 2008. Its utility will increase when a new bridge is built across the Mekong at Chiang Khong, now scheduled to open in June 2013. Even then, Chiang Khong is remote from Thailand's main road or rail network so the ultimate value of the route is still uncertain.

At present more traffic is still carried on the river route down the Mekong to Chiang Saen which is slower but cheaper and viewed (at least until recent shooting incidents) as safer and more reliable. On all three routes, most of the traffic is typical border trade, food and consumer goods. There is a little resource extraction to China, mostly rubber and refined oil, which now passes

along the Laos road. None of these routes yet offers a serious path from inland China to the sea.

Chinese economic influence is seeping down these routes. This is most in evidence at the border towns of Boten in Laos and Mongla in Burma, which the authors describe as basically Chinese towns. But there are also big plans to expand Chinese investment in Thailand around Chiang Khong and Chiang Saen. These plans have provoked mixed reactions in the localities.

Thein Swe and Paul Chambers repeat allegations about China's manipulation of Mekong water flows to favor Chinese shipping, and about the unequal gains from the Thailand-China Free Trade Agreement, but offer no deep analysis. They suggest that decentralization has shifted policy-making on border matters more to the local arena, but the evidence is thin. They constantly predict greater trade and economic contact in the future, but such reports always have this optimism.

By focusing closely on these two routes, the book seems to miss the big story of this border region. By 2015 China will complete a pipeline and high-speed railway from Kunming through Ruili to a deep-sea port on Burma's Arakan coast.

The authors have collected a great deal of valuable data on the border trade. Their account describes how high-flown ideas of "subregional economic cooperation" come down to earth among the wild and woolly affairs of ex-drug lords, casino operators, frontier mining entrepreneurs, and ethnic insurgents.

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