

# *Thao Hung or Cheuang: A Tai Epic Poem*

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## Introduction

The most respected and authoritative scholar of Lao history and culture, Mahasila Viravong, wrote in 1953 that there are three masterpieces of Lao literature. The first was *Vetsantrasadok*, the story of the Buddha's life immediately preceding his life as the Buddha, a work he was no doubt obliged to include because of its importance to the national religion; second, the unfinished poem of *Sang Sin Xay* written by the poet Pang Kham in the 16th century; and third, *Thao Hung or Cheuang*, a mysterious work, known in northern Laos and northeastern Thailand from oral tradition but with only a single extant written source (so far as we know), a palm-leaf manuscript taken from Xieng Khwang by the Thai army in 1883 and placed in the National Library in Bangkok. It lay there, largely unknown, until 1943 when Mahasila copied the text into Thai characters and published the work in an edition of 1,000 copies on the occasion of the funeral of his teacher in Nakhon Phanom. Today, due in part no doubt to its highly difficult vocabulary and style, the text remains obscure and its value unrecognized. Yet, the epic of *Thao Hung or Cheuang* is perhaps the most important piece of literature from the Southeast Asian mainland, as monumental to the study of Southeast Asian civilization as the *Ramayana* is to India or the *Iliad* is to the West.

The *Cheuang* epic is valuable to many divergent disciplines. To students of Southeast Asian literature, it represents a truly indigenous poetic epic, outstanding for its grand literary style and content, its poetic forms not found elsewhere in Thai or Lao literature, and its sheer size. For students of history, the work represents a detailed account of a place and period in Southeast Asian history that is a virtual vacuum in our knowledge, but a place and period that was undoubtedly the site of great upheavals as the pre-Buddhist Tais migrated westward from northern Vietnam through northern Laos, to northern Thailand, Burma, Yunnan, and Assam, conquering the older Austroasiatic populations as they went. To students of comparative Tai linguistics, *Cheuang* is outstanding for its sparse use of Indic vocabulary, representing a source of unusually diverse pre-Buddhist Tai lexical items as well as providing an excellent example of poetic rhymes indicating composition prior to the devoicing sound shift that spread over East and Southeast Asia.

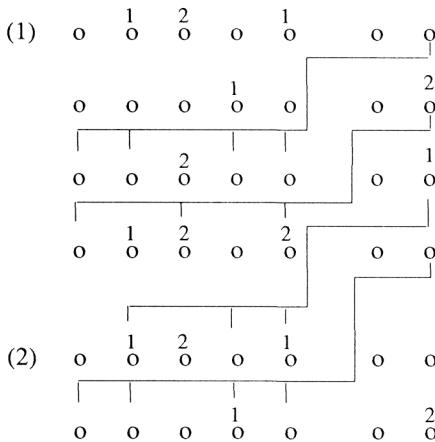
To students of anthropology, archaeology and art history, *Cheuang* contains a seemingly endless array of pre-Buddhist religious information, and includes ceremonies to call down the celestial spirits to earth, cremation, and even an elephant sacrifice.

In essence, *Cheuang* is the most comprehensive account available of ancient Tai civilization, and as such it is a wealth of information, not only for the comparatively small region of northern Laos, but for the entire Tai-speaking world, which

stretches from eastern China, Hainan and northern Vietnam, to Laos, Thailand, Burma, Yunnan and Assam.

## Poetic Form

The main body of the poem is composed in the *kɔɔn ɻaan<sup>1</sup> vitsumaalii* style, according to Mahasila's analysis. This is in fact a *khoong* (Thai: *khloong*) form by Tai definition, characterized by a fixed number of syllables per line, and special rules for rhyme and tone placement, as follows:



The last syllable of the first line must rhyme with the first, second, fourth or fifth syllable of the third line, and the last syllable of the second line must rhyme with the first, third, or fifth syllable of the fourth line. There are four lines to a stanza. The last syllable of the third line of the first stanza must rhyme with the second, fourth or fifth syllable of the first line of the second stanza, and the last syllable of the fourth line of the first stanza must rhyme with the first, second, fourth or fifth syllable of the second line of the second stanza. Thus, every stanza is linked to the following one by this intricate rhyme pattern. In addition to the compulsory seven syllables per line, an optional two syllables (*kham sɔɔy<sup>2</sup>*) may be added at the beginning or the end of any line in the stanza.

As evident in the above schema, in every line, certain syllables must belong to a particular tone category, either Proto-Tai tone B (*ɻeek* in the writing system) or Proto-Tai tone C (*thoo* in the writing system). For Tone B, syllables ending in final stop consonants may be substituted (dead syllables). These ancient tone categories must be adhered to in the rhyme of syllables as well, thus *caw<sup>2[C]</sup>* can rhyme with *kaw<sup>2[C]</sup>* but not with *kaw<sup>1[B]</sup>*.

To my knowledge, this particular poetic form does not occur elsewhere in Thai or Lao written literature. However, I have observed this style in longer oral poetry which I taped in 1966 in Vientiane. Since the style lends itself so well to spoken

performance I assume that Mahasila's classification of *kɔɔn ?aan*<sup>1</sup> [?aan<sup>2</sup> = 'read, recite'] has something to do with the fact that it is meant to be recited as opposed to being sung (*kɔɔn lam*).

In addition to the main verse form, two others occur in the text at the point where the heavenly spirits descend to the earth. The so-called *khoog haa*<sup>2</sup> forms occur here in 26 four-line stanzas. This rare form is difficult to interpret and appears to represent a much older poetic tradition. In structure it resembles both Thai *khloog haa*<sup>2</sup> in the famous *Water Oath* and several passages from the Black Tai Chronicle where the mythological beginnings of the Tai race are discussed. Much more research needs to be done before these forms can be adequately defined, one of the benefits to be derived from the translation. Finally, there are several short passages of *khoog mahaasinthumaalii* or what would in Siamese terms be referred to as *khloog siil suphaap*. This form is identical in every respect to the description in Thai versions of *Chanthalak*.

## Theme and Genre

Unlike much of the extant literature of Thailand and Laos which consists of Indic themes, stories, or even whole works (such as the *Ramayana*) transferred to fit into an acceptable Southeast Asian frame of reference, *Thao Hung or Cheuang* represents a wholly Southeast Asian tradition. It is not a historical chronicle, it does not concern the life of a Bodhisattva, and its poetic form is not borrowed from Pali. It has no parallels in Thai or Lao literature. In fact, the poem cannot be understood without reference to more than one ethnolinguistic family, most particularly the relationships between Tai and Austroasiatic.

To the Austroasiatic Khmu peoples, Cheuang is a culture hero, a legend who is still very much alive today in northern Laos. Smalley 1965 notes that Khmu people still believe that Cheuang is a messiah, biding his time in a cave in northern Laos, who will eventually appear and save the Austroasiatic (Kha) peoples from their domination by lowlanders.

Whatever the case may be, his origins are shrouded in the myth and mystery of more than one ethnolinguistic family and he is always found in close association with the birth of races.

The sharing of myths between Austroasiatic and Tai is not uncommon and is reinforced by a ritual interdependence. In the pumpkin myths of the Lao and the Khmer (cf. Ferlus 1970) both races are accounted for, although the pumpkin myth of the Black Tai makes no mention of the Austroasiatic peoples. Royal ceremonies involving the guardian spirits in all parts of Laos must involve Austroasiatic peoples as well as Lao, for the obvious reason that the older population has more control over local spirits.

There is no doubt that the hero of the poem, Thao Hung, is an Austroasiatic or Khom, and that the people he is warring against, the Keo and the Maen, are Tai. And although towards the end of the story Thao Hung is killed, only through the

combined strength of Then Lo, ruler of heaven (*lian phaan*) and ancestor of the Tai race, and the magical spirit-like *meen taa-thoɔk-cet-hay*, the hero is reborn as a spirit complete with his spirit army and marches boldly through heaven, a Tai heaven, and conquers the entire place with the quivering consent of Phra In (Indra). What more heroic deed or more fitting revenge for a people subjugated on the earth below.<sup>1</sup>

## History

Evidence from a variety of historical documents indicates that the Cheuang or Thao Hung legends, like the Tai speakers themselves, spread from east to west. In so doing, place names have changed a great deal, but the basic directional orientation of the hero fighting off invaders from the east is contained in all versions except that of the Black Tai. Beginning then with the Black Tai history from Muang Muoi, these Tai versions of the Cheuang myth are presented in east to west order.

In the Black Tai creation myth from Muang Muoi, (from personal translation) the first humans (after the flood) to be sent to the earth were Pu Tao Suang and Pu Tao Ngoen. They arrived first at Muang Om and Muang Ai. Tao Suang proceeded to Muang Lo and Tao Ngoen returned to Muang Om and Ai. Tao Suang took a wife and had a son named Tao Khun Lo. Khun Lo had many sons who went to administer various places to the west of Muang Lo. There remained the last son, Pu Lan Cheuang:

*luk lun baw<sup>1</sup> mii maa<sup>2</sup>  
luk laa<sup>2</sup> baw<sup>1</sup> mii miaŋ*

the later child had no horse  
the last child had no city

<sup>1</sup>The question of who or what are the Maen is not a new one, for the name occurs in other Tai literature (e.g. Phra Lo). What is most curious is its use in connection with the spirit world. Here, for instance, the word is used synonymously with 'heaven' or 'the afterlife' and the various Maen characters in the text are often referred to as Phii or spirits.

As the Tais recorded their history, the most distant places of origin within the cultural memory came to be associated with heaven. In fact the Tai (and perhaps other) concept of heaven may have evolved in precisely this way, from the memory of an increasingly distant past (Chamberlain unpub.). Thus the Maen probably represent a people or a place somewhere in the distant Tai past.

Interestingly enough, I worked with several speakers of a Tai dialect from Khammouan in 1974 who called themselves Tai Maen. They came from the village of Chom Thong in the north of that province and one speaker noted that his grandparents were originally from Xieng Mi much further north. This language was peculiar in the extreme in possessing lexical items normally associated with the Northern branch of the Tai family, that is those Tai languages found in Guizhou and Guangxi provinces in China. The nearest cognate for one word, *keɛŋ<sup>DL4</sup>* 'to hurt' is to be found only in the T'en language of the Kam-Sui-Mak family in northern Guizhou (the nearest relatives to Tai). These Maen, then, were apparently an intrusive group from China, separate linguistically from the Southwestern Tai, and perhaps, therefore, associated with the original homeland.

With a group of his relatives he set out with soldiers to find a Muang to rule. After a long series of travels which took him to Muang Cian, It Ong Ciang Tae, Muang Bu, Muang La, Ciang Poek, Muang Muay, Muang Ek, Muang Kway, Muang Huak, Muang Ang, Muang Fang and Muang Can, Pu Lan Cheuang arrived at Muang Theng and Muang Mon (Dien Bien Phu). He found this place the most beautiful and settled down to administer at Ban Pae. Then he took a wife and had a son named Khun Pae. After the death of Pu Lan Cheuang, Khun Pae replaced him.

In one version of the annals of Xieng Khwang (Archaimbault 1967) Caw Cet Cheuang is the brother of Caw Khun Lo, not the son as in the Black Tai version. They were both sons of the original ancestor Khun Burom. Khun Lo was sent to reign over Muang Swa (Luang Prabang) and Cet Cheuang was sent to administer Muang Phuan or Xieng Khwang. There is little detail concerning Cet Cheuang other than that in cooperation with his brother Khun Lo, he established the boundary between Muang Swa and Muang Phuan. However, several motifs associated with other personages from the Xieng Khwang chronicles may prove to be of importance at a later time.

The two primary historical works of Laos, the *Nithan Khun Burom* and the *Phongsavadan Muang Lao*, both of which exist in more than one version, do not at first reading shed much light on the Cheuang legend except to verify what is said in the Xieng Khwang chronicles. A Lao history written by Chao Khamman Vonkottrattana (B.E. 2516) gives the following interesting detail for the 27th King of Lan Xang:

Upon the death of Khun Kham, Khun Hung replaced him on the throne in C.S. 445. He took his army and made war against the Lao Kwak at Ngoen Yang or Xiang Sen for three years and was victorious. He had two children, one was named Prince Then Mo.

Boulenger (n.d.) writes of the same king:

. . . Khoun Houng, qui fut un mauvais roi, ‘sans respect pour les rites ni les coutumes’, et qui par trois fois leva des armées pour les mener à la défaite.

According to the *Nithan Khun Burom* Khun Burom had two wives, Nang Nhammaphala and Nang Et Kheng. Cet Cheuang was the son of Nang Et Kheng while Khun Lo was the son of Nang Nhammaphala. As in the Xieng Khwang Chronicle, certain motifs from all of these various versions will prove important.

Finot 1917 mentions a Lao manuscript from Luang Prabang called *Nithan Praya Cúon Lun*, supposedly a Lao language version of a Pali text entitled *Vamsāmalinī* composed by Buddhaghosa. From his short synopsis this version is very close to the Chiang Sen Chronicle version of the Cheuang story, contaminated with much Buddhist interpretation of events and Indic place names. Finot also notes that there are two at E.F.E.O. in Luang Prabang (manuscript number 1). It is not known at this time whether or not these manuscripts are extant or accessible, and this must be investigated further.

The text is described by Finot as a chronicle of the western principalities of Laos during the last three quarters of the 12th century.

From his short summary it seems to resemble closely the descriptions in the Chiang Saen Chronicles, and contains many Indic names, both for places and for people. It is however a very long text, eleven fascicles, and should therefore be examined if possible.

One of the most significant contributions of *Thao Hung or Cheuang* are the insights into the separation of myth from history in the proto-historical period, a problem constantly plaguing interpreters of the stone inscriptions and historical chronicles of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Assam. Michael Vickery (1978), who has made a good deal of progress in this way of thinking, has suggested that the Phra Ruong legends are remnants of the common Tai mythology, pieces of which are found in the Ahom Buranji from Assam and in the Sukhothai inscriptions, as well as elsewhere. His thinking is based on the linguistic connection of *rung* ~ *rung<sup>l</sup>* ~ *riang* ~ *rryyŋ* and *luŋ*. The phonological cognate of *r* in Laos and elsewhere is, of course, *h*, thus including all references to /*hung<sup>l</sup>*/ in Laos in his list of cognate names for the mythological ancestor. Common elements such as the special sword, perhaps the invincible elephant, the conflict between Austroasiatics and Tais, all need to be thoroughly researched, the sources compared, and the comparative method applied to shed more light on the early history of the Southeast Asian mainland.

The Northern Thai Chronicles contain many versions of the Cheuang story, far too numerous to mention here. PP no. 61, the Chronicle of Muang Ngoen Nhang Chiang Sen contains two versions of the episode. The first, written in Standard Thai, mentions the names of Thao Kwa (spelled without the *may<sup>2</sup>* ʔeek tone) and Eng Ka, and spells the hero's name as Chiang throughout. The second, called Singhanavatikuman (Tamnan) is written in Northern Thai (Kam Muang) and does not give the names of the invaders, saying only that one was a Prince from Chantaburi (Vientiane) and that the other, his older brother, was a Keo. Both versions were composed after the introduction of Buddhism and the two texts are filled with stories of early Buddhist religion and relics. The parts concerning Cheuang consist of only a few short pages, and nowhere is the name of Thao Hung mentioned (cf. Vickery 1976).

Finally, in the Ahom history from Assam, the original settlers of earth, that is the original ancestors, were named Khun Lung and Khun Lai, both sons of Then Kham. Lung may be cognate with our *hung<sup>l</sup>* since ultimately Hung or Cheuang is closely associated with the original ancestors of the Tai.

## Cosmology

The cosmological value of the *Cheuang* text is manifested on several different levels. Most important, perhaps, is the insight it gives us into pre-Buddhist ideas which are visible among Buddhist Tai groups today as a substratum heavily obscured by overlays of Indic myth and religion. On a more concrete level, there are descriptions of spirit ceremonies, sacrifices, funerals, and even the geography

of heaven. In still another realm we can observe relations between various ethnic groups, relations between various principalities, relationships between kings and common people, relationships between trusted friends, relationships between lovers, relationships between husbands and wives, and relationships between men and spirits.

As textual examples, two passages come immediately to mind. The first deals with the ceremony called *taw<sup>2</sup> khuan<sup>1</sup>* or the combining of spiritual strength to invite the heavenly spirits to earth. This was in former times the festival of the first month (*dian ciag*) or the sacrifice to the heavenly spirits (*liaŋ<sup>2</sup> phii faa<sup>2</sup> phii theen*) no longer extant in Thailand or Laos. After the proper invocations have been made, we witness the following procession coming out of the sky:

The highest Then prince Laan Kaap Kham Vaa  
 Presented himself and spoke before his father,  
 Then Luang, who afterwards gave orders  
 To bedeck the mightiest elephants with trappings of gold.

There came streams of horses, with sparkling bits and golden saddles  
 Bodies resplendent in decorous adornment  
 Never ending entrancing flesh of the celestial people  
 Behold their arm joints exquisitely pointed.

To the vibrous music of the Phin and the flute,  
 The two wondrous ones descended taking leave of the sky,  
 Scintillating pachyderms, both cow and bull,  
 Swaying gracefully, with a million slaves, spirits' children.

Dropping from the sky to the terraced city  
 Amidst the mountain forests fragrant with sandalwood and cinnamon,  
 They wound their way to Xieng Kheua  
 Where they arrived together thundrously, the heavenly folk.

The second textual example is a passage from the point in the story where Cheuang hands over the administration of Muang Nakhon Pakan to his advisor general Ai Khwang and delivers a sixty stanza lecture on the attributes of a good ruler. The first few lines are as follows:

When all was stable and orderly in the palace,  
 Cheuang bestowed his teaching on his trusted friend Ai Khwang:  
 Prepare yourself to receive my words  
 From this moment you are a prince and a ruler.

Do not speak strange words or think desirous thoughts  
 Be courageous in governing this muang in place of the King  
 Through good and bad guard carefully  
 Do not be lax or speak the braggart's petty sarcasm.

Nurture your relatives, friends, sick people  
 And your father's brothers remember well  
 Take care of the poor in their humble dwellings, for that is good  
 Like a rock wall barrier surrounding precious jade.

## Language

The manuscript of *Cheuang* originated in Xieng Khwang Province, actually to the north of that province in the city of Ban Ban. The Tai languages spoken in the area are of the Neua-Phuan subgroup of Southwestern Tai, and include the Neua dialects of Sam Neua or Hua Phanh province and portions of Son La and Thanh Hoa, the Phuan dialects of Xieng Khwang and adjacent areas of Luang Prabang and Vang Vieng provinces, and the Yo or Nho dialects originating in the Muang Sen region of Laos and Nghe-an, Vietnam, which includes the Phu Tai dialects as well. For Phuan of Xieng Khwang there is the 1912 dictionary of Guignard, but for the rest of the region there is a distinct lack of lexical material. That the region was settled at an early time by Tai speakers is attested to by the great diversity of Tai dialects spoken there which can be found now in Khammouan where they fled southwards during the Kha uprisings and the Ho invasions which took place in that area between 1875 and 1886. (The region was next occupied by the Thai army from 1886 to the treaty of Bangkok on October 3, 1893, and it was during this occupation that the manuscript was evidently taken.)

The epic of *Thao Hung or Cheuang* speaks of a time in Southeast Asia concerning which little is known, a time long before current political boundaries were drawn, a time of great ethnic and political rivalry among would-be nations and peoples, a time previous to the introduction of Buddhism when Indic influence was slight, an age whose only surviving contemporaries appear to be those most ancient of Southeast Asian rituals, the festival of rockets and the racing of boats. We are fortunate indeed that such an elegant account survives to enhance our knowledge.

Prince Cheuang, guardian of our destiny  
 The earth below surrenders to your greatness.  
 (From an invocation at a Baci or calling of the spirits in Laos.)

## APPENDIX

### Translation of Lao critical material on the Epic of Cheuang.

*Note:*

What follows is a translation of the material written by Mahasila Viravong concerning the epic of *Thao Hung or Cheuang*. The synopsis of the poem is taken from his introduction to the Thai transliteration entitled *Thao Hung or Cheuang* produced in an edition of 1,000 copies in Ubol in 1943. The rest of the material is taken from an article, 'Lao Literature: *Thao Hung or Cheuang*', which appeared in the Lao literary journal *Vannakhadysan*, Volume 1, Number 2, October, 1953, pp. 41-56.

It is apparent from my investigations that of all the Lao Poems only three are worthy of consideration as literary masterpieces: (1) *Sin Xay*; (2) *Vetsantrasadok*; (3) *Thao Hung*. Aside from these three, other works, while they can still be considered as literature, are not masterpieces, they are merely ordinary literature.

The poetry of *Thao Hung* is enjoyable, harmonious, and full of depth like that of *Sin Xay*, all that is lacking is the author's name (which we know for *Sin Xay*). As for the poetic style, that is the creating of the poetry in the correct manner according to the rules of versification, it surpasses even *Sin Xay*. But *Thao Hung* is not so well dispersed, not many people know it or have read it. One might ask, if *Thao Hung* is such a masterpiece, why is it not well-known like *Sin Xay* or *Vetsantra*? The answer, as I see it, is that *Thao Hung* is an historical epic, not a religious one. The hero, *Thao Hung* himself, is an ordinary mortal, not a Bodhisattva. As for the heroes *Sin Xay* and *Pra Vet*, they are respected as being Bodhisattvas, that is Buddha in one of his previous lives. Therefore, *Sin Xay* and *Vetsantra* are well-known because of their dependence on religious influence. That this influence had such a powerful hold over the people, as in such things as architecture, crafts, education, writing, medicine, indeed throughout the arts and knowledge of all kinds, is due to the fact that it came from the monks in the temples. Because the temple in ancient times was the general college of the nation, teachers, authors, as well as kings and scholars all entered the priesthood to study, much like the people of today who believe that all knowledge must be gotten from French, and that writings, and sayings and expressions that are French have great value. This is because of political influence encouraged by the French themselves.

Writings in ancient times which did not concern one of the previous lives of the Buddha or his teachings, even though it be beautifully written, had no value whatsoever. *Thao Hung* is a good example. The ancient people would not even allow it to be written on latania leaf because that was reserved for writing the teachings of Buddha. *Thao Hung* could only be scratched on green bamboo and could not be kept in the temple. Neither could it be read on festival days, with the exception of the rocket festival because the rocket festival is a festival of Phagna Man (evil). In this festival there is much drinking and drunkenness, the same as in *Thao Hung*, hence it can only be read during this holiday for the entertainment of the drinkers.

Some written works have no essence at all, some are historical works, but if the author claims to be teaching the words of the Buddha or writing about the life of a Bodhisattva, that work will immediately receive popularity. For instance, the *Visuthigna* or the story of *Thao Khun Theung*. The story of *Thao Khun Theung*, according to history, concerns the paternal grandfather of *Thao Hung*, but the author writes that *Khun Theung* is a Bodhisattva, thus *Thao Khun Theung* became popular (a description of the *Thao Khun Theung* story will appear in future volumes of this journal).

We have seen that religious influence was very important. Now we shall continue to discuss the epic of *Thao Hung* and the poetry contained therein:

### **The Author of *Thao Hung***

Who the author of *Thao Hung* was, in what year was it written, and where, we do not know. I have seen only one copy in the National Library in Bangkok. It is a latania leaf manuscript of some 200 leaves, written in Lao characters. At the end is written, 'Chane Keo Ban Vang Ban is the person who wrote this wide manuscript of *Cheuang* for the honourable Oupharat.' Ban Vang Ban we understand to be Ban

Ban in the province of Xieng Khouang. The King of Thailand, Rama V, ordered the national library to copy this manuscript of *Cheuang* into Thai characters for the ancient manuscripts section but it was never completed. It is my understanding that Thailand obtained this manuscript from Xieng Khouang during the time Thai soldiers were sent to fight in the Ho war of 1883. I have published a version in Thai characters, a large book of 395 pages, in an edition of 1,000 copies for the funeral of Chao Khun Somdet Phramaha Viravong Vat Boromnivat, my teacher. But aside from this it is not well-known.

### **Analysis of the Story of *Thao Hung***

We have already established that *Thao Hung* is a historical work, thus Thao Hung was a real person, not a fictional character.

In the *Singhnavattikuman*, that is the Chronicle of Chiang Saen, it is written that Thao Hung was born in C.S. 461 (A.D. 1098), but the *Thao Hung* story describes how he fought with Khun Lo, the first King of Lan Xang. In Lao history it is written that Khun Lo conquered Muang Swa, that is Luang Prabang, in A.D. 757, which means more than 300 years discrepancy. Whatever the case, both versions agree that Thao Hung really did come to conquer Muang Nakhon Pakan. Muang Pakan is Xieng Khouang Province today. The stone jars which still lie scattered on the Xieng Khouang plain are called Cheuang's wine jars, which agrees with the legend that Thao Hung or Thao Cheuang did in fact have a victory celebration at Xieng Khouang.

### **Thao Hung is of the Khom Race**

Many Thai histories say that Thao Hung or Thao Cheuang was a king of ancient Thailand because Thao Hung is descended from Phra Chao Lawachakarat, the beginning of the Thai in the kingdom of Ngoen Nhang, that is, Nakhon Chiang Saen. Phra Chao Lawachakarat was born in the first year of Chulasakarat (A.D. 637). It is written in the *Singhnavattikuman* that at one time Phra Chao Anourout-mahasat, a Burmese king, was going to establish a new era, the Chulasakarat, and therefore invited many kings to a meeting. At that time there was no king in Ngoen Nhang and the heavenly spirits invited Lawachakthevabut to descend and be reborn as the king of Ngoen Nhang, as an adult with no father or mother. We may suppose that at that time the populace of Ngoen Nhang had no important leader to send to the meeting of Phragna Anourout and thus set up Thao Lawa or Laochak to be their leader.

In actuality, Thao Hung or Thao Cheuang who was descended from Phragna Lawachakarat was not a Thai or Lao, he was of the Khom race. There are many reasons for this:

- (1) The area of northern Thailand from Xieng Mai and Xieng Saen to Xieng Tung extending eastward to Laos was formerly the land of the Khom.

(2) The name Hung (*hun<sup>B4</sup>*) was a popular name of the ancient Khom which was pronounced *ruf<sup>B4</sup>* or *ruar<sup>B4</sup>*, for example Phra Ruang (*ruar<sup>B4</sup>*) of Sukhothai, Phra Ruang the husband of Nang Chamthevi, Phra Ruang who was the friend of Phra Chao Meng Rai. The words *ruf<sup>B4</sup>* or *ruar<sup>B4</sup>* in the Thai language have the same meaning, that is, ‘bright’ (*savaar<sup>B1</sup>*), ‘sun’ (*taa<sup>A2</sup> ven<sup>A4</sup>*), ‘sky’ (*faa<sup>C4</sup>*), or, ‘the highest’ (*sur<sup>A1</sup> sut<sup>DS1</sup>*). Thus the name Thao Hung is also called Thao Cheuang (*ciaar<sup>A2</sup>*) or Cheuang (*ciaar<sup>B2</sup>*). *Ciaar<sup>A2</sup> ~ ciaar<sup>B2</sup> ~ caw<sup>C2</sup>*. These three words all mean ‘the highest’ or ‘the pinnacle’, and because of this popular practice, we Lao call the names of our kings Chao Fa (*caw<sup>C2</sup> faa<sup>C4</sup>*), for example Chao Fa Ngum.

(3) Thao Hung was a king of the Khom of the north. These are the Khom Xava (*savaa<sup>A4</sup>*) or the Xava people. The Xava, Khom, Mon, Meng, Khmer, Kha and Khmu are all of the same family. Our own Luang Prabang used to be called Muang Xava because it belonged originally to the Xava people. The Mekhong, which is called Mae Nam Khong was changed from the original Mae Nam Khom, that is, the people of northern India used the *nikkhahit* symbol to signify the sound *m*, thus it would be read Khom, but we follow the usage of southern India where the *nikkhahit* symbol is pronounced *ŋ*, thus we read Khong. The Mekhong in Chinese is called Kiulung (*kiw lug*), we Lao changed this to Kalong (*kaa<sup>A2</sup> loŋ<sup>A1</sup>*) and in Sin Xay it is called Nam Kalong.

Further evidence which allows us to see that Luang Prabang once belonged to the Khom Xava and the Lao Thoeng (Kha) concerns the musical instrument of the Lao Thoeng called *kry<sup>B2</sup>* which is the same as the Indonesian instrument from the island of Java (=Xava) which the head of the Lao delegation saw during an economic meeting in Indonesia in 1953 (see the picture of this instrument in the *Free World* magazine, Vol. 2, no. 5 (1953) p.6).

There is a great deal of other evidence to show that Thao Hung was a Khom of the Lao Thoeng. For instance, the tradition of drinking rice-wine made in jars, the tradition of sacrificing a buffalo to the spirits (*phii<sup>A1</sup>*), the tradition of feasting (*haw<sup>C4</sup>*) during the first and second months, the tradition of ancestor worship (*thii<sup>A1</sup> phii<sup>A1</sup> dam<sup>C3</sup>*), the tradition of divination (*sar<sup>B4</sup> neen<sup>A4</sup>, siar<sup>B1</sup> thwaay<sup>A4</sup>*), all of which the Lao Thoeng practice today, and which are found throughout the story of Thao Hung.

(4) The Lao Thoeng believe in Thao Cheuang or Thao Hung as a religion. They believe that Thao Cheuang will be reborn to lead the Lao Thoeng people and bring civilization to them. The sacred sword of Thao Cheuang they say is still kept by the Lao Thoeng (that is, the Kha Jarai near the Vietnamese border).

(5) In the poem of *Thao Hung* itself it is written that the mother of Nang Ngom, who is the aunt of Thao Hung, is named Nang Meng (*mer<sup>A4</sup>*), and one passage describes the beauty of Nang Ngom like this:

<i>khii<sup>A4</sup> dan<sup>B3</sup></i>	<i>yaat<sup>DL3</sup> tee<sup>B2</sup> faa<sup>C4</sup> sadeet<sup>DL3</sup> thoɔŋ<sup>B4</sup></i>	<i>thɔɔ<sup>A4</sup> rənii<sup>A4</sup></i>
<i>soom<sup>A1</sup> khaan<sup>A4</sup> khuan<sup>A4</sup> khaat<sup>DL4</sup></i>	<i>cian<sup>A2</sup> thiam<sup>A4</sup> thaaw<sup>C4</sup></i>	
<i>nak<sup>DS4</sup> sanom<sup>A1</sup> nia<sup>C4</sup> naa<sup>A4</sup> rii<sup>A4</sup></i>		<i>hian<sup>A4</sup> hoɔp<sup>DL4</sup></i>
<i>kaa kɔɔŋ<sup>B2</sup> kaaw<sup>C2</sup> ɲaam<sup>A4</sup> lam<sup>C4</sup></i>		<i>luuk<sup>DL4</sup> khoɔm<sup>A1</sup></i>

As if she had descended to this earth from the sky  
 The beauty of her form fitting for Prince Cheuang  
 Surrounded by her serving girls  
 The most beautiful of the children of Khom

The expression *ŋaam lam luuk khɔɔm* in this verse means that Nang Ngom is more beautiful than all others of the Khom race.

For all these reasons we see that Thao Hung was actually of the Khom people and that he made war against the Lao people as it is written in Lao history.

### **The Poetry of *Thao Hung***

The poetry of *Thao Hung* is the variety called *vitsumali*, that is, *kɔɔn liip faa* or *saay faa* using the every-other-line rhyme scheme like *liip faa* with inner and outer rhymes. Some places have the five foot *khoong* style. Other places have the *khoong mahasinthumali* form (*mahasinthumali* means *saay nam lay* or *nam tɔɔŋ taat*). These verse forms are not found elsewhere.

The vocabulary of *Thao Hung* uses the ordinary Lao language without much Pali, but the language is old Lao, and there are some words we do not understand, so before the interested person undertakes to read *Thao Hung* he should understand the basic story and the names of the important characters:

Thao Hung or Cheuang was the second son of Khun Chone Tham (cɔɔn<sup>A2</sup> tham<sup>A4</sup>) the Chao Muang of Muang Suan Tane (suan<sup>A1</sup> taan<sup>A2</sup>), also known as Na Khong (naa<sup>A4</sup> khɔɔŋ<sup>A4</sup>), the city called Phayao in northern Thailand today. He was the grandson of Khun Theung(*thiŋ*<sup>A4</sup>). Khun Chone Tham was also the younger brother of Khun Seum (*suum*<sup>A4</sup>), the chief of the city of Ngoen Nhang (the city known today as Xieng Saen). (In the Xieng Saen Chronicle he is called Khun Sin (*sin*<sup>A4</sup>).) Thao Hung was born in the 5th month on the full moon on Tuesday in the year of the Tiger in the early morning (between 3:00 and 4:30 AM) while the moon was in the asterism or lunar mansion called Visakha. At the time of his birth the Kha Phang Dam (*phaar*<sup>A4</sup> *dam*<sup>A3</sup>) came to offer a gift to the child of a sword and a pair of silver tambours. Soon after this he received a white elephant named Phane Kham (*phaan*<sup>A4</sup> *kham*<sup>A4</sup>) which came from the cloudy forests of the Himalayas. Not too much later his father died.

Following the death of his father Thao Hung endeavoured to build up the military capabilities of the city. Every day was spent training elephants. It was during this time that he met and fell in love with Nang Ngom (ŋɔɔm<sup>C4</sup>) or Ngom Mane (*maan*<sup>B4</sup>), the daughter of the Chao Muang of Xieng Kheua (*khia*<sup>A4</sup>). He sent Eng Khone (ʔeeŋ<sup>A3</sup> khɔɔn<sup>A4</sup>) to ask for her hand in marriage. The mother of Nang Ngom was the aunt (*paa*<sup>C2</sup>) of Thao Hung, that is, his mother's older sister. Because of this relationship Thao Hung addresses Nang Ngom as *phi*<sup>B4</sup> (older sister), and calls his aunt a Meng (*meer*<sup>A4</sup>) or a Khom. But Nang Ngom's mother asked for a price that was far too high, 10,000 each of buffalo, oxen, and plows;

3,000 serving girls, and much gold. Thao Hung did not have the means to pay such a price because he had spent too much in building up the defences of the city. So he became the lover of Nang Nagom during the time he was away training elephants.

Meanwhile, Thao Eng Ka (*ʔeeŋ<sup>A3</sup> kaa<sup>A2</sup>*) (a keo) who ruled Muang Kham Vang (*kham<sup>A4</sup> var<sup>A2</sup>*) (the nephew of Thao Kwa [*kwaan<sup>A2</sup>*] the ruler of Muang Pakan [*pakan<sup>A2</sup>*]) had taken over following the death of his father and desired a wife. Accordingly, his advisors told him to choose a queen from among the following names:

- (1) Nang Nakhon Xieng In (*?in<sup>A3</sup>*) (said to be a close relative of Eng Ka)
- (2) Nang, the daughter of Thao Chom Chang (*cɔɔm<sup>A2</sup> car<sup>A2</sup>*) (she was said to be too far away and Eng Ka did not like her)
- (3) Nang Pheng Mat (*pheeŋ<sup>A4</sup> maat<sup>DL4</sup>*) (Eng Ka felt her father would not agree)
- (4) Nang Euay En (*ʔiay<sup>C3</sup> ʔeen<sup>B3</sup>*) (we do not know from where, and Eng Ka did not like her)
- (5) Nang Muang Chin (*ciin<sup>A2</sup>*) or Nang Maen (*meen<sup>A4</sup>*) from Xieng Ka (*kaa<sup>A2</sup>*) (in this case Eng Ka had heard that Thao Leuam Kham (*liam<sup>A4</sup> kham<sup>A4</sup>*) was already in love with her)
- (6) Nang Nay Nakhon Et Kong (*nay<sup>A4</sup> nakhɔɔn<sup>A4</sup> ʔet<sup>DS3</sup> kɔɔŋ<sup>A2</sup>*) (Eng Ka did not like this one because she was too far away)
- (7) Nang Oua of Nakhon Ngoen Nhang (this Nang Oua was the child of Khun Seum (*khun<sup>A1</sup> sim<sup>B4</sup>*) the ruler of Nakhon Ngoen Nhang. Khun Seum was the older brother of Khun Chon Tham, the father of Thao Hung.)

This latter girl Eng Ka loved so he sent Nai Seng (*naay<sup>A4</sup> səŋ<sup>A1</sup>*) to tell his uncle (*naa<sup>C4</sup>*), Thao Kwa at Muang Pakan. Thao Kwa had Nai Seng act as emissary with a letter to go to Nakhon Ngoen Nhang. Khun Seum received him and questioned his daughter Nang Oua if she would consent to marry Eng Ka. Nang Oua replied that she would not, because it would mean a loss of honour. Khun Seum then replied with a letter stating that Nang Oua was promised to his nephew Thao Hung. At the same time Nang Oua wrote to Eng Ka saying that she desired him but she could not go against her father's wishes. When Nai Seng had received the letters he hurried back to Muang Kham Vang which took only 10 days. He entered and waited while Eng Ka read the letters. Eng Ka then sent the letters to his uncle Thao Kwa. Thao Kwa was angry saying, 'We were the ones who did the asking, yet he decided to give her to someone else.' He therefore told Nai Seng to go back and negotiate further, but with strict orders that if Nang Oua was not given to Eng Ka they should be warned to prepare to defend their city. So Nai Seng returned to Ngoen Nhang and said what Thao Kwa had instructed him to say. Thao Seum replied as follows:

kuu<sup>A2</sup> yuu<sup>B3</sup> saaŋ<sup>C1</sup> koŋ<sup>B2</sup> thaaw<sup>C4</sup> svvyy<sup>A1</sup> raat<sup>DL4</sup> ɲvn<sup>A4</sup> naan<sup>A4</sup>  
 phay<sup>A1</sup> pay<sup>B2</sup>caa<sup>A2</sup> kham<sup>A4</sup> lɔɔn<sup>A1</sup> dan<sup>B3</sup> suu<sup>A1</sup>fuuŋ<sup>A1</sup> mɔɔy<sup>C4</sup>  
 ʔoom<sup>A3</sup> naan<sup>A4</sup> huu<sup>C4</sup> caa<sup>A2</sup> phuan<sup>A1</sup>taan<sup>C2</sup> tƿp<sup>DS2</sup> san<sup>A1</sup> nii<sup>C4</sup>  
 bɔɔ<sup>B3</sup> say<sup>B4</sup> sia<sup>C4</sup> luuk<sup>DL4</sup> khɔɔy<sup>C1</sup> ciŋ<sup>A2</sup> thee<sup>C4</sup> klaaw<sup>B2</sup> khuan<sup>A4</sup>

I am the ruler of Ngoen Yang  
 Nobody comes to deceive like you of the Moi race

After saying this he chased Nai Seng back to where he came from. After Nai Seng had reported to Eng Ka and Thao Kwa they prepared to attack Ngoen Nhang. They set out and arrived at Muang Ban (*baan*<sup>A3</sup>) where they spent one night. The important commanders of Thao Kwa's army were: Hun Bang (*hun*<sup>A1</sup> *ban*<sup>A3</sup>); Kwan Kae (*kwaan*<sup>A2</sup> *kee*<sup>A2</sup>); Ai Kam (*?aay*<sup>C3</sup> *kam*<sup>B2</sup>); Maen Fong (*meen*<sup>A4</sup> *fɔɔŋ*<sup>A4</sup>) from Xieng Ngone (*ŋɔɔn*<sup>A4</sup>); Kuae Thong (*kwee*<sup>A2</sup> *thɔɔŋ*<sup>A4</sup>) from Xieng Hang (*haŋ*<sup>A4</sup>); Maen Som (*som*<sup>A1</sup>); Ngot Pong (*ŋɔɔt*<sup>DL4</sup> *pɔɔŋ*<sup>B2</sup>); Xieng Pha (*siaŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *phaa*<sup>A1</sup>); Thao Daet (*deet*<sup>DL3</sup>) from Pha Then (*phaa*<sup>A1</sup> *then*<sup>B4</sup>); Keo Kong (*kew*<sup>A2</sup> *kɔɔŋ*<sup>B2</sup>); Ai Hing (*?aay*<sup>C3</sup> *hing*<sup>A1</sup>).

At this time Thao Kwa told Nai Mat (*naay*<sup>A4</sup> *maat*<sup>DL4</sup>) to go and ask directions of the Kha people and to ask them to assist in the battle. Nai Mat went to see Ai Hat (*?aay*<sup>C3</sup> *haat*<sup>DL1</sup>) (the leader of the Kha Pha Lot (*phaa*<sup>A1</sup> *lɔɔp*<sup>DL1</sup>)) and Sam Maheng (*saam*<sup>A1</sup> *mäheeŋ*<sup>A1</sup>) (the leader of the Kha Phu Thum (*phuu*<sup>A4</sup> *thum*<sup>B4</sup>)). Ai Hat and Sam Maheng had brought their soldiers halfway when they stopped and consulted with each other, saying, 'We are of the same people as Khun Seum, we depend on each other, we should hurry to warn Khun Seum to prepare his soldiers for the defence of Ngoen Nhang'. They told Nai Phuang Lan (*phuar*<sup>A4</sup> *laan*<sup>B4</sup>) to break the news to Khun Seum. Khun Seum then took his soldiers to meet the Keo army with the following commanders: Ngu Vat (*qua*<sup>A4</sup> *vaat*<sup>DL4</sup>), Kha Nhuang (*khaa*<sup>A4</sup> *nuap*<sup>A4</sup>), Sam Mahiaw (*saam*<sup>A1</sup> *mähiaw*<sup>A4</sup>), Nai Chan (*can*<sup>A2</sup>) the Chao of Nong Tang (*nɔɔŋ*<sup>A1</sup> *tang*<sup>A2</sup>), Ai Hat and Sam Maheng.

The army of Ngoen Nhang could not withstand the Keo army and was forced to retreat to within the city. Khun Seum then sent Nai Phuang with a message to Thao Hung to come to his aid and assist in the defence of Ngoen Nhang. Thao Hung received this message and immediately put together his troops under the leadership of: Ai Khwang (*?aay*<sup>C3</sup> *khwaŋ*<sup>B4</sup>), Eng Khone (*?eeŋ*<sup>A3</sup> *khoɔn*<sup>A4</sup>), Heng Phan (*heeg*<sup>A1</sup> *phan*<sup>A4</sup>), Han Phai (*haan*<sup>A1</sup> *phaay*<sup>A4</sup>), Khun Khane (*khaan*<sup>A4</sup>), Khone Xai (*khoɔn*<sup>A4</sup> *saay*<sup>A4</sup>), Cha Sone (*caa*<sup>B2</sup> *ssɔɔŋ*<sup>C4</sup>). Nang Ngom (his lover) arranged twenty elephants in addition to the following commanders: Khun Keuan (*kian*<sup>B2</sup>), Khun Pheng (*pheeŋ*<sup>A4</sup>), Khun Nhi (*pii*<sup>A4</sup>), Nhiat Kham (*niat*<sup>DL4</sup> *kham*<sup>A4</sup>), Xay Lue (*say*<sup>A4</sup> *li*<sup>A4</sup>), Eng Phai (*?eeŋ*<sup>A3</sup> *phaay*<sup>A1</sup>), Ai Phong (*?aay*<sup>C3</sup> *phiɔɔŋ*<sup>B1</sup>), Khun Khone (*khoɔn*<sup>A4</sup>), Thao Soi (*soɔj*<sup>C4</sup>). Thao Hung with his army also picked up the Kha Phang Dam (*phaŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *dam*<sup>A3</sup>) army to assist him as well before leaving for Ngoen Nhang where he battled his way through the Keo army that surrounded that city and entered the city with his army. The next morning, he went out and fought with the Keo army until they scattered. Thao Kwa died on the field of battle. Khun Nhiat captured Eng Ka. The Keo commanders who died were: Keo Kam (*kam*<sup>B2</sup>), Maen Hiaw (*hiaw*<sup>A4</sup>), Keo Pheuak (*phiak*<sup>DL1</sup>), Maen Piao (*piaw*<sup>B2</sup>), Maen Heuang (*hiar*<sup>A4</sup>), Maen Pha (*phaa*<sup>A1</sup>), Pheuak Leuang (*phiak*<sup>DL1</sup> *liaŋ*<sup>A1</sup>). Those who fled and avoided capture were: Kwan Kae, Maen Fong, Thao Pong (*por*<sup>B2</sup>), Hun Bang, Keo Thong, Maen Lai (*laay*<sup>A4</sup>), Xieng Hang. The side of Thao Hung lost 3,000 men but captured 30,000 prisoners.

Then Thao Hung took his army and followed the fleeing Keo soldiers. He took 13,000 elephants and 300,000 horses with the armies of three cities, Suan Tane (*suan*<sup>A1</sup> *taan*<sup>A2</sup>), Xieng Khena, and Ngoen Nhang. There were 27 commanders:

- (1) Khone Xai who rode the elephant Khun Muang (*khun*<sup>A4</sup> *miaŋ*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (2) Khun Fong who rode the elephant Si Da (*sii*<sup>A1</sup> *daa*<sup>A3</sup>)
- (3) Ai Khwang who rode the elephant Rang Si (*rap*<sup>A4</sup> *sii*<sup>A1</sup>)
- (4) Ai Hat who rode the elephant Khanan Muang (*khănan*<sup>A1</sup> *miaŋ*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (5) Khun Phiang who rode the elephant Khua Saphane (*khua*<sup>A1</sup> *săphaan*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (6) Hane Phai who rode the elephant Samoe Chay (*sămyr*<sup>A1</sup> *cay*<sup>A2</sup>)
- (7) Sam Maheng who rode the elephant Pheo Phen Fa (*phee*<sup>w</sup><sup>C1</sup> *pheeŋ*<sup>B1</sup> *faa*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (8) Eng Khone who rode the elephant Si Muang Phan (*sii*<sup>A1</sup> *miaŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *phan*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (9) Kham Nhuang who rode the elephant Fay Luap Pheun (*fay*<sup>A4</sup> *luap*<sup>DL4</sup> *phin*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (10) Nai Chan who rode the elephant Lom Nhan (*lom*<sup>A4</sup> *nan*<sup>B1</sup>)
- (11) Nai Chan Nong Tang who rode the elephant Chatthan (*cha*<sup>t</sup><sup>DS1</sup> *than*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (12) Ngua Vat who rode the elephant Thin Kone (*thin*<sup>A4</sup> *kɔɔn*<sup>A2</sup>)
- (13) Nai Phuang who rode the elephant Fa Lang (*faa*<sup>C4</sup> *laŋ*<sup>B1</sup>)
- (14) Phon Svai (*phon*<sup>A4</sup> *săvaay*<sup>B1</sup>) who rode the elephant Then Khun (*theen*<sup>A1</sup> *khuun*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (15) Khun Khane who rode the elephant Pheng Kwa Xu (*pheeŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *kwa*<sup>B2</sup> *suu*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (16) Khun Pheng (*pheeŋ*<sup>A4</sup>) who rode the elephant Phi Mane (*phi*<sup>h</sup>*maan*<sup>A4</sup>)
- (17) Ai Khay (*khay*<sup>B4</sup>) who rode the elephant Khay Phen Fa (*khay*<sup>B4</sup> *pheeŋ*<sup>B1</sup> *faa*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (18) Ai Keuan (*kian*<sup>B2</sup>) who rode the elephant Fay May Ba Dane (*fay*<sup>A4</sup> *may*<sup>C1</sup> *baa*<sup>A3</sup> *daan*<sup>A3</sup>)
- (19) Cha Sone who rode the elephant Fay Luap (*fay*<sup>A4</sup> *luap*<sup>DL4</sup>)
- (20) Khun Nhon (*non*<sup>A4</sup>) who rode the elephant Thong Lum Fa (*thɔɔŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *lum*<sup>B4</sup> *faa*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (21) Sam Mahiao who rode the elephant Phen Kheuan Khan (*pheeŋ*<sup>A1</sup> *khian*<sup>B1</sup> *khan*<sup>C1</sup>)
- (22) Khun Nhia who rode the elephant Phrom Da (*phrom*<sup>A4</sup> *daa*<sup>A3</sup>)
- (23) Ai Ngam who rode the elephant Puay Khao (*puay*<sup>B2</sup> *khaw*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (24) Ai Phong (*phɔɔŋ*<sup>B1</sup>) who rode the elephant Ngao Thanim Keo (*ŋaaw*<sup>C4</sup> *thănim*<sup>A1</sup> *keew*<sup>C2</sup>)
- (25) Phimmaban (*phim*<sup>A4</sup> *măbaan*<sup>A3</sup>) who rode the elephant Luang Siu Fa (*luar*<sup>A4</sup> *siw*<sup>B1</sup> *faa*<sup>C4</sup>)
- (26) Khun Soi (*sɔɔy*<sup>C4</sup>) who rode the elephant Fay Muy Ba Dan
- (27) Xay Lue who rode the elephant Thong Kue (*thɔɔŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *kiʔ*<sup>DS2</sup>)

Thao Hung then appointed Ai Khwang as his commander-in-chief, Xay Lue to be his right flank commander and Nai Phuang and Phon Savai in charge of the left flank. The expedition departed from Ngoen Nhang in the 5th month. Nang Oua rode the elephant Phang Hoen Kheu Mat (*phat*<sup>A4</sup> *hyŋ*<sup>A1</sup> *khi*<sup>A4</sup> *maat*<sup>DL4</sup>), Nang Am Khai (*ŋaam*<sup>A3</sup> *khaay*<sup>A4</sup>) rode the elephant In Kong (*ŋin*<sup>A3</sup> *kɔɔŋ*<sup>A2</sup>) and followed until they reached the border of Ngoen Yang, at a place called Xieng Khwan (*khwan*<sup>A1</sup>). There Thao Seum built a resting place for the season of the 5th month. They travelled from Xieng Khwan to Tha Nhong Pha Lot (*tha*<sup>a</sup><sup>B4</sup> *ŋuŋ*<sup>A4</sup> *phaa*<sup>A1</sup> *loɔt*<sup>DL1</sup>) and there they found many horses and elephants that Hun Bang had left behind as he fled. From there they proceeded to Phu Thum, the home of the Kha Phang Dam, only one day's travel from Muang Pakan. The Kha gave directions to

Thao Hung in this passage:

khaw<sup>A1</sup> kɔɔ<sup>B2</sup>nap<sup>DS4</sup> duu<sup>A3</sup> duay<sup>C3</sup> kăbuan<sup>A3</sup> thaŋ<sup>A4</sup>  
 thuun<sup>A4</sup> raat<sup>DL4</sup>  
 phi<sup>DS1</sup> cat<sup>DS2</sup>taŋ<sup>C2</sup> teŋ<sup>B2</sup> say<sup>C4</sup> khaaw<sup>A4</sup> mii<sup>C4</sup> hɔɔt<sup>DL4</sup> păkan<sup>A2</sup>  
 jaam<sup>A4</sup> phuk<sup>DS4</sup> day<sup>C3</sup> thee<sup>A4</sup> naat<sup>DL4</sup>sian<sup>A4</sup> baan<sup>A3</sup> nii<sup>C4</sup> leew<sup>C4</sup>  
 khaw<sup>A1</sup> kɔɔ<sup>B2</sup>muan<sup>A4</sup> phon<sup>A4</sup> khan<sup>A1</sup> tɔɔ<sup>B2</sup> tii<sup>A2</sup>daa<sup>A3</sup> dɔɔn<sup>C3</sup>

He explained the way for the ruler  
 That it would take one day to reach Pakan  
 The next morning they took Xieng Ban  
 Advancing all at once in a single body

Thus, the following morning Thao Hung took Xieng Ban which had 1,000 elephants and 100,000 soldiers. The district of Xieng Ban was next to Si Thon (*sii<sup>A1</sup> thon<sup>A4</sup>*), Khem (*kheem<sup>A1</sup>*) and Ho (*hɔɔ<sup>C1</sup>*). Xieng Ban was defeated and Thao Hung captured Keo Phoeng (*phvŋ<sup>A1</sup>*), Thao Daet, Maen Heuan. Keo Heuak (*hiak<sup>DL4</sup>*) escaped on an elephant and hurried to tell the queen of Thao Kwa at Muang Pakan. Nang Kwa made ready to lead the army into battle herself. The following morning Thao Hung went into Muang Pakan. During this time the Kha Phang Dam explained the region of Pakan to Thao Hung:

- (1) Eng Ka (the nephew of Thao Kwa) was at Prasath Manorom (*praat<sup>A2</sup> saat<sup>DL1</sup> mānoo<sup>A4</sup> rom<sup>A4</sup>*) on the side of the orchard.
- (2) Keo Kong was at Xieng Kong (*kɔɔ<sup>A2</sup>*) on the side of the fields.
- (3) Hun Bang was at Xieng Som (*som<sup>A1</sup>*).
- (4) Fa Leuan was at Pha Vang (*phaa<sup>A1</sup> var<sup>A4</sup>*) to the north.
- (5) Nai Chuang (*cuaŋ<sup>A2</sup>*) was at Xieng Khane on the side where the elephants were tied.
- (6) Keo Thong was at Xieng Hang.
- (7) Xi Vat was at Muang Phane (*phaan<sup>A4</sup>*).
- (8) Nai Chan was at Xieng Thet Suang Thong administering the land up to the Thai Thu (*thaay<sup>A4</sup> thuu<sup>C4</sup>*) border.
- (9) Kwan Kae was at Xieng Thong.
- (10) Keo Heua (*hia<sup>A4</sup>*) was at Xieng Kang (*kaaŋ<sup>A2</sup>*).
- (11) Kang Kwa (*kaaŋ<sup>A2</sup> kwaa<sup>B2</sup>*) the wife of Thao Kwa was at Muang Pakan.

Nang Kwa commanded her soldiers into battle with great skill but by mid-day Thao Hung had won the battle. Nang Kwa died on the field of battle and Thao Hung set up the new administration for Muang Pakan as follows:

- (1) Khun Nhia to govern Na Khwang (*naa<sup>A4</sup> khwaiŋ<sup>A1</sup>*) and the elephant keepers.
- (2) Eng Khone to govern Na Di (*naa<sup>A4</sup> diŋ<sup>A3</sup>*) at Xieng Ban. At this place one can collect a great deal of tribute because it was a trading center with many markets.
- (3) Khone Xai to govern Na Pay Kong Thun (*naa<sup>A4</sup> pay<sup>B2</sup> kɔɔŋ<sup>A2</sup> thuun<sup>A4</sup>*) an area with much rice.

- (4) Na Patchim (*pat<sup>DS2</sup> chim<sup>A1</sup>*) which bordered with Pha Lot was given to Nang Meng (Nang Ngom)
- (5) Na Kham (*kham<sup>A4</sup>*), the territory of Keo Kam, was given to Xay Lue.
- (6) Na Phiang Pha Tham (*phiang<sup>A4</sup> phaa<sup>A1</sup> thaam<sup>A4</sup>*) was assigned to Eng Phai.
- (7) The ricefields of Maen Leuan were kept as little ricefields.
- (8) The ricefields of Maen Fay came under the administration of Ngoen Nhang.
- (9) Na Di Xieng Khwan along with the fruit orchards and coconut groves, were given to Nang Oua.
- (10) Na Dong Chan (*doy<sup>A3</sup> can<sup>A2</sup>*) was given to Nang Am Khai.
- (11) Na Kham Vang was given to Ai Keuan.
- (12) The ricefields of Keo Heuak, in the east which bordered on China, were given to Phon Savai.
- (13) The paddies on the edge of Tha Bang Bin (*thaab<sup>B4</sup> baay<sup>A3</sup> bin<sup>A3</sup>*) were given to Ao Phuang (*?aaw<sup>A3</sup> phuang<sup>A4</sup>*).
- (14) The outer Na Phieng was given to Cha Sone.

At this time also, Thao Hung captured eight Keo girls: Nang Khwan (*khwan<sup>A1</sup>*); Nang Koet (*kvet<sup>DS2</sup>*); Nang Vian (*vian<sup>A4</sup>*); Nang Lau or Lao (*law<sup>A4</sup> or laaw<sup>A4</sup>*); Nang Phrom (*phrom<sup>A4</sup>*); Nang Ou Keo (*?uu<sup>B3</sup> kEEw<sup>C2</sup>*); Nang Som (*som<sup>A1</sup>*); and Nang Mun (*mun<sup>A4</sup>*).

The influence of Thao Hung was spread to the following cities:

- (1) Muang Pha Thai, Vo Dae (Ho Tae) (*phaa<sup>A1</sup> thaay<sup>A4</sup>, vɔɔ<sup>A4</sup> dEE<sup>A3</sup>*).
- (2) On the left side to Xieng Nhai Phom Feua (*nay<sup>B1</sup> phom<sup>A1</sup> fia<sup>A1</sup>*).
- (3) In the north to Ho Hua Daeng (*hɔɔ<sup>C1</sup> hua<sup>A1</sup> deer<sup>A3</sup>*).
- (4) In the south to the foreign country of Chin Cham (*ciiin<sup>A2</sup> caam<sup>A2</sup>*).
- (5) In the central part to Nhai Nhong (*naay<sup>B4</sup> nɔɔŋ<sup>A4</sup>*) and the Ngeo (*ŋEEw<sup>C4</sup>*) people all over until it reached the Khem (*kheem<sup>A1</sup>*), Khom (*khoɔm<sup>A1</sup>*) and Man (*maan<sup>B4</sup>*), it says:

bian<sup>C3</sup> faay<sup>B1</sup> tay<sup>C2</sup> sian<sup>A4</sup> theet<sup>DL4</sup> ciin<sup>A2</sup> caam<sup>A2</sup> kɔɔ<sup>B2</sup> thvŋ<sup>A1</sup>  
 phaay<sup>A4</sup> kaan<sup>A2</sup> thvŋ<sup>A1</sup> naay<sup>B4</sup> nɔɔŋ<sup>A4</sup> fuuŋ<sup>A1</sup> ŋEEw<sup>C4</sup>  
 naam<sup>A4</sup> kɔɔn<sup>A2</sup> kam<sup>C2</sup> kheem<sup>A1</sup> khɔɔm<sup>A1</sup> mian<sup>A4</sup> maan<sup>B4</sup> kɔɔ<sup>B2</sup> thvŋ<sup>A1</sup>

To the south it reached the country of the Chin and the Cham  
 In the center it reached Nhai Nhong and the Ngeo  
 It was established among the Khem and the Khom, and reached the Man as well.

- (6) To the south to Muang Ming (*mij<sup>B4</sup>*) of the Maen Hiao.
- (7) To the Maen Hua Khiao (*hua<sup>A1</sup> khiao<sup>A1</sup>*) and the Maen Oek Pong (*?yk<sup>DS3</sup> pɔɔŋ<sup>B2</sup>*).
- (8) Hum Bang and Maen Fay came to pay tribute as did the Kha Khang Lai (*khaaŋ<sup>A4</sup> laay<sup>A4</sup>*).

Thao Hung placed Ai Khwang in charge of all the Muang Keo, and then returned to Ngoen Nhang passing through Xieng Ban and Pha Lot taking 10 days before he reached the city. On arrival he appointed Hane Phai to be the Muang Saen

(seen<sup>A1</sup>), Eng Khone the Muang Khwa (*khwa*<sup>A1</sup>), Ai Phong the Muang Sai (*saay*<sup>C4</sup>), Ai Ngam (*gam*<sup>B4</sup>) the Saen Na (*seen*<sup>A1</sup> *naa*<sup>A4</sup>). When this was accomplished Thao Hung sent an intermediary to arrange a marriage with Nang Ngom while at the same time he invited his mother Nang Chom (*cɔɔm*<sup>A2</sup>) to govern Muang Xieng Thong in the territory of Muang Pakan. Thao Hung ruled Muang Nhang for 17 years. He had a son by Nang Ngom called Thao Kham Hung.

One time, when Thao Hung was out hunting, guests came to Ngoen Nhang. Eng Khone acted as the interpreter and received them. They were:

- (1) Ho Yay Nong Sae (*hɔɔc*<sup>C1</sup> *yay*<sup>C1</sup> *nɔɔcɔj*<sup>A1</sup> *see*<sup>A1</sup>).
- (2) Phragna Fa Huan (*faa*<sup>C4</sup> *huan*<sup>B4</sup>) from Muang Tum Vang (*tum*<sup>A2</sup> *vaaj*<sup>A4</sup>).
- (3) Muang Chin.
- (4) Muang Phakho (*pha*<sup>D<sub>S</sub>4</sup> *khoo*<sup>A4</sup>), Muang Man, Muang Xava (*sāvaa*<sup>A4</sup>).
- (5) Muang Pha Nhi (*phaa*<sup>A1</sup> *jii*<sup>A4</sup>), Muang Khem and the Lue (*li*<sup>C4</sup>).

In the background, the queens were not getting along. Nang Oua annoyed Nang Ngom until Nang Ngom left to return to Xieng Kheua along with her son Kham Hung. When Thao Hung heard he followed after Nang Ngom and at the same time sent for his mother in Xieng Thong and all of the other commanders except for Ai Khwang who stayed to look after the affairs of the Muang. Hun Bang and Ai Hing who had taken refuge in Tum Vang with Phagna Fa Huan decided to use the opportunity to attack Muang Pakan. Ai Khwang sent word to Thao Hung who immediately readied his soldiers to attack Hun Bang and Ai Hing. As he travelled through Xieng Xoei (*svyy*<sup>A4</sup>) the Chao there surrendered and gave him Nang Pheng Mat (*phee*<sup>A4</sup> *maa*<sup>D<sub>L</sub>4</sup>). Thao Hung then went to Tum Vang where he sent Khun Khone in to negotiate for the delivery of Hun Bang and Ai Hing. But Fa Huan would not surrender them and he threatened that if Thao Hung would not desist he would send for the armies of the Maen Ta Nheun (*taa*<sup>A2</sup> *jiiñ*<sup>A4</sup>), Maen Oek Pong, Maen Luang (*luaj*<sup>A1</sup>), to assist him in defending the city. (According to the story of *Thao Hung* these Maen are called the Phi (*phi*<sup>A1</sup>), the Maen Ta Thok Chet Hay (*taa*<sup>A2</sup> *thɔɔk*<sup>D<sub>L</sub>4</sup> *cet*<sup>D<sub>S</sub>2</sup> *hay*<sup>A1</sup>), or the people of Nong Sae, as in:

baaw<sup>B3</sup> jii<sup>A4</sup> day<sup>C2</sup> meen<sup>A4</sup> piik<sup>DL2</sup> tat<sup>D<sub>S</sub>2</sup> khɔɔ<sup>A4</sup>  
saaw<sup>A4</sup> nɔɔŋ<sup>A1</sup> see<sup>A1</sup> piik<sup>DL2</sup> nii<sup>A1</sup> van<sup>A4</sup> dan<sup>C3</sup>

Bao Nhi captured one Maen and cut off his head  
The people of Nong Sae fled throwing down their swords

Thao Hung heard this and was angered. He sent his troops to attack. The Maen of Tum Vang came out to do fierce battle, but they were no match for the army of Thao Hung and so many died that the field stank of dead bodies, and when the stench reached Fa Huan he retreated into the city. He sent Maen Som out to call a truce. He offered Thao Hung the city of Muang Lae (*lee*<sup>A4</sup>) and his own younger sister Nang Kham Nhat (*kham*<sup>A4</sup> *naat*<sup>DL1</sup>). Thao Hung consulted with his commanders whether or not he should accept the offer. Ai Khang said they should not accept because they were too boastful. So again Thao Hung asked for the surrender of Hun Bang and Ai Hing. Fa Huan did not know what to do next so he sent two soldiers to invite Then Lo (*theen*<sup>A1</sup> *loo*<sup>A4</sup>) to come down and assist them.

Then Lo lived in Muang Kalong (*kaa<sup>A2</sup> loŋ<sup>A1</sup>*), like it is written:

tham <sup>A4</sup> jnam <sup>A4</sup>	phrä <sup>DS4</sup> baat <sup>DL3</sup> caaw <sup>C2</sup> laan <sup>C4</sup> look <sup>DL4</sup>	theεn <sup>A1</sup> loɔ̄ <sup>A4</sup>
	kin <sup>A2</sup> kaa <sup>A2</sup> loŋ <sup>A1</sup> yuu <sup>B3</sup> käsyym	juu <sup>A4</sup> saanj <sup>C1</sup>
	thuk <sup>DS4</sup> thay <sup>A4</sup> phoom <sup>C4</sup> khun <sup>A1</sup> theεn <sup>A1</sup>	lyy <sup>A4</sup> klaaw <sup>B2</sup>
	vcoo <sup>A4</sup> phrä <sup>DS4</sup> naaw <sup>C4</sup> cay <sup>A2</sup> ceeŋ <sup>C2</sup>	scoy <sup>B4</sup> phon <sup>A4</sup>

The King of the earth, Then Lo  
 Who ruled justly the civilization of Kalong  
 Over all the Thai and Then  
 Desired to aid the soldiers

The two soldiers went to the seven crossroads where the ladder to Muang Then was placed. They went up and told the Then what was happening. Then Lo prepared his army and descended following the road. Then Lo himself rode in a chariot to Kha Khiao (*khaa<sup>A4</sup> khiaw<sup>A1</sup>*) where he was attended by Maen Fong. From there they went down to Nakhon Luang (*luarŋ<sup>A1</sup>*) said to be the home of the Maen Pha Lai (*phaa<sup>C1</sup> laay<sup>A4</sup>*) or the Nhang Kao (*naar<sup>A4</sup> kaaw<sup>A2</sup>*). From there they proceeded to Tum Vang. Then Lo went into battle with Thao Hung as follows: Thaen Lem (*lem<sup>A1</sup>*) led the right flank, Thaen Vi (*vii<sup>A4</sup>*) the left flank, and Fa Huan the central column. Thaen Lo rode the chariot. Both sides lost heavily, but Thao Hung's army was almost all dead so he retreated to Muang Pakan where he sent for help from Khun Seum and Ai Cheuang (his elder brother). At this time Nai Phuang suggested that since they all might die soon the children should be moved to Ngoen Nhang to which Thao Hung agreed. Nai Phuang took Thao Kham Kheuang (*kham<sup>A4</sup> khiaŋ<sup>B4</sup>*), Thao Kham Hung and Nang Chom along with Nang Mun (*mun<sup>A4</sup>*), Nang Pheng Mat, and rushed back towards Ngoen Nhang. Thao Hung fought the Maen and died on the field of battle. Afterwards, Fa Huan sent Nai Vien (*vian<sup>A4</sup>*) after Nang Chom and the children to ask them to return and rule Muang Pakan. He caught up with them in the forest but they refused and continued on their way. Thao Hung was reborn as a spirit along with his spirit army. He started out for Muang Thaen stopping first at Muang Kha Khiao. Eng Khone went in to ask directions to heaven (*miaŋ<sup>A4</sup> faa<sup>C4</sup>*) from the Thai Eng (*thaay<sup>A4</sup> ?eeŋ<sup>A3</sup>*). From there they proceeded to the ladder Ling (*liŋ<sup>A4</sup>*), and from there to Lin Kham (*lin<sup>A4</sup> kham<sup>A4</sup>*) River near Liane Phane (*lian<sup>A4</sup> phaan<sup>A4</sup>*). Khun Khone entered to tell Thaen Xang (*sarŋ<sup>B4</sup>*), the ruler of Liane Phane, to surrender. He refused so Thao Hung defeated him and took over Liane Phane. Next he had Khun Khone go up to tell Phra In. Phra In was afraid and he gave Muang Suang (*suaŋ<sup>A1</sup>*) to Thao Hung to rule over, and made Thao Hung ruler over all of the Thaen. Thao Hung went to Muang Kong Thun (*kɔɔŋ<sup>A2</sup> thuun<sup>A4</sup>*), where Thaen Lom (*lom<sup>A4</sup>*), the chief, came out to pay his respect. From Kong Thun he went to Muang Kam Ma (*kam<sup>A2</sup> maa<sup>A4</sup>*) and rested there, and Thaen Nguang (*ŋjuang<sup>A4</sup>*) came to welcome him. He next proceeded to Muang Suang where he began his rule. All of the Thaen came to surrender to him there, including Thaen Nguang, Thaen Meng (*meŋ<sup>A4</sup>*), Thaen Ming (*miŋ<sup>B4</sup> ?*), Thaen Ko Kay Theo Thao (*koo<sup>A2</sup> kay<sup>A2</sup> theew<sup>A1</sup> thaaw<sup>B1</sup>*), Thaen Feuang (*fiaŋ<sup>B4</sup>*), Thaen Mok (*mɔɔk<sup>DL1</sup>*), Thaen Taa Kaa Pin (*taa<sup>A2</sup> kaa<sup>A2</sup> piin<sup>A2</sup>*), Thaen Ling (*liŋ<sup>A4</sup>*), Thaen Lom (*lom<sup>A4</sup>*), and Thaen Song (*scoŋ<sup>B1</sup>*).

As for Ai Cheuang, Kham Kheuang, and Kham Hung, and Khun Seum, they were very angry and commanded their forces back to do battle with Fa Huan. They also brought along the forces of Muang Thwai (*thwaay<sup>A4</sup>*) and Ho Tae. On the way they passed through the cities of Xieng Khane (*khaan<sup>A4</sup>*) and Xieng Xoei until they arrived at Tum Vang. They did furious battle there and defeated Fa Huan who was killed on the field of battle. The army of Ngoen Yang entered the city of Muang Tum Vang.

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