

CHAPTER 2

TAI LUE

IN NAN PROVINCE

2.1 Background Information of Nan province

Nan, a 627 year old town which used to be part of the Lanna Kingdom is located in a portion of northern Thailand. It is approximately 668 kilometers from Bangkok (Laxmi Worachai 1989:4). Today it is a province of the Kingdom of Thailand. The north and the eastern parts of the province connect to Laos. The highest mountain of Nan is “Phukha Mountain” which is on the frontier separating the two countries of Thailand and Laos (Siwaporn Chotecheun 1986:9). The south of Nan province borders on Uttaradit province and the west borders on Payao province and Phrae province. Phrae and Nan are separated by the “Pechang mountain”. The area of Nan is around 12,280 km² or 7,674,950 rais (Laxmi Worachai 1989:4). It constitutes nine districts and three branch districts. They are the districts of Muang, Wiang Sa, Na Noi, Tha Wang Pha, Pua, Chiang Klang, Tung Chang, Mae Charim, Borkuea, and branch districts of Ban Luang, Na Muen, and Santi Suk. There are 87 Tambon (sub districts) and 712 villages (Laxmi Worachai 1989:10). Nan is governed by a public

official from the Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior. The officers are appointed from Bangkok. The majority of Nan residents are Yuan or northern Thai, among whom live many Tai Lue people. The hilltribes include Hmong, Yao, Htin, Khamu, Akha, Lua, and Mrabri or Phi Tong Leung. They reside in isolated rural areas. The largest groups are, respectively, the Htin, Hmong, and Yao (Laxmi Worachai 1989:4).

Most of the population of Nan province work in the fields. Their income depends on agricultural produce. A chief economic crop is oranges. Other important products are peanuts, soybean, cotton, tobacco, chilis, garlic, and cassava.

Although the population of Nan is highly varied, they live together tranquilly. They are industrious, generous, and helpful.

2.2 Tai Lue in Nan

The Tai Lue are the group of Tai people who have inhabited for several hundred years in the Xishuangbanna district which is situated in the south of Yunnan province, the People's Republic of China. Chiang Rung, literally "city of the dawn" is established as the old Lue capital. It is located on the west bank of the Mekhong River. Outside of Xishuangbanna, there are many Tai Lue groups in Muang Yong in Burma, in Muang Sing and Luang Prabang in northern Laos. In the north of Vietnam, Lue reside in the area of Binh and along the border of China just west of the Black River (J.F. Hartmann, 1976:10-11). The Lue people of Thailand are found in the Lanna re-

gion or northern Thailand including the provinces of Lampang, Lamphun, Phayao, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Phrae and Nan. Presently, the Lue people in Thailand are descendants of prisoners of war when a Thai army raided Xishuangbanna (Songsak Prangwattanakul 1986:65).

Formerly, Lanna had a close relationship with Xishuangbanna through intermarriage between the ruling families of both regions in the period of the fourth King of Chiang Rung. The Prince Lao Maeng of Chiang Rai arranged a marriage with the Princess O-ming-khai-pha, a daughter of King Rung Kaency of Chiang Rung, as part of forming an alliance. When Burma occupied and ruled Lanna region, the relationship between Xishuangbanna and Lanna was not good. During the late eighteenth century, the period of King Kawila, Chiang Mai achieved leadership among the Lanna states by divesting Burmese rule (Citraphorn Sudhawat 1986:36). Then it came to the period of rehabilitation of the Lanna region. In 1788, King Kawila had a policy “เก็บผักใส่ซ้า เก็บข้าใส่เมือง”, literally “putting vegetable in baskets and putting prisoner of war in towns”. Lanna supported that policy by warfare with neighboring states and forcibly moving the inhabitants of their towns to Lanna. These captives were Tai Lue, Tai Khuen and Tai Yai who took an important role in reconstructing the infrastructure, temples, palaces, roads etc. .In addition, groups of the ethnic minorities mentioned above migrated to Lanna willingly as they encountered starvation, plundering, enslavement by their nobles, and civil war in China (Rattanaporn Sethakul 1994:5).

According to the Nan Chronicle, an ancient history book dating from 1812, the chief of Nan Chaw, Luang Sumonthawarat, defeated Chiangkhaeng, Muang Phong, Muang La and Muang-luang Phu-Kha. In 1805, an army of Nan captured about 6,000 people of these towns and returned to Nan. In 1822, there occurred a civil war between Chaw Mom-noy and Chao Mahawang in Xishuangbanna. This caused the Tai Lue of Muang La to take refuge willingly in Nan territory (Phacheon Cinasit 1984:10). Then in 1855, King Suriyaphongphridet raided Chiang Rung. He arrested King Luang Bangkhom as well as a large number of Lue people in order to bring them back to Nan. A year latter, in 1856, Nan sent an army to attack Muang Phong which at that time was under the Haw tribe's authority. This Tai Lue group came to settle down in Chiangmuan and Chiangkham (Citraphorn Sudhawat 1986:38). At that time, both of these states belonged to Nan (Fine Arts Department 1986:42). The culture of the Tai Lue is somewhat similar to those of other Nan peoples. It is conceivable that Tai Lue culture influenced Nan people in general. The style of Lue temples in Nan is like that of the Buddhist temple in Chiang Tung which is as vehicle for the above statement (Songsak Prangwatanakul 1986:67). In addition, Rattanaporn Sethakul (1994:8-9) proposes that the great deal of communication between these two peoples and their both being under the Lanna Kingdom suzerainty result in the similarity mentioned above.

All of the old Lue people at Donchai Village, where this research was conducted, claim to have been born in that very village.

2.3 Linguistic information of Tai Lue

2.3.1 Language family

In his dissertation, *The linguistic and memory structure of Tai Lue oral narrative*, Hartmann (1976:10) states that Lue is one of the dialects of the Tai language family. This language family extends throughout the north of Vietnam, southern China particularly in Kwangsi, Kweichow and Yunnan, through the northern boundary of Thailand, northern Burma, Lao and Assam in India.

Ruangdet (1982:18-19) mentions the study of Fang Kuei Li (1954:15-21) in saying that the Proto language of the Tai is the Proto-Tai-Kam-Kadai which includes the Kadai language branch and the Tai Kam language branch. The sub-dialects of the Proto Tai-Kam language are the Kam-Sui language and the Tai language.

F. K. Li (1959) divides the Proto Tai family based on comparative lexicon into three branches; Northern, Central, and Southwestern. The Northern branch of dialects is spoken in the Kwangsi Kweichow region. The dialects of the Central branch are found around the border between China and the north of Vietnam. The southwestern branch covers the Tai speaking area including Lue and the related languages of Lao, Shan, Khuen, Northern Thai, Siamese, White Tai, Black Tai and Red Tai.

Returning to a methodology of comparative lexicon, Li considers cognates, the distribution of voiceless, voiced, aspirated initial and unaspirated initial as principal conditions. The schematic chart of the Tai language family categorized by Dr. Ruengdet is illustrated as follows.

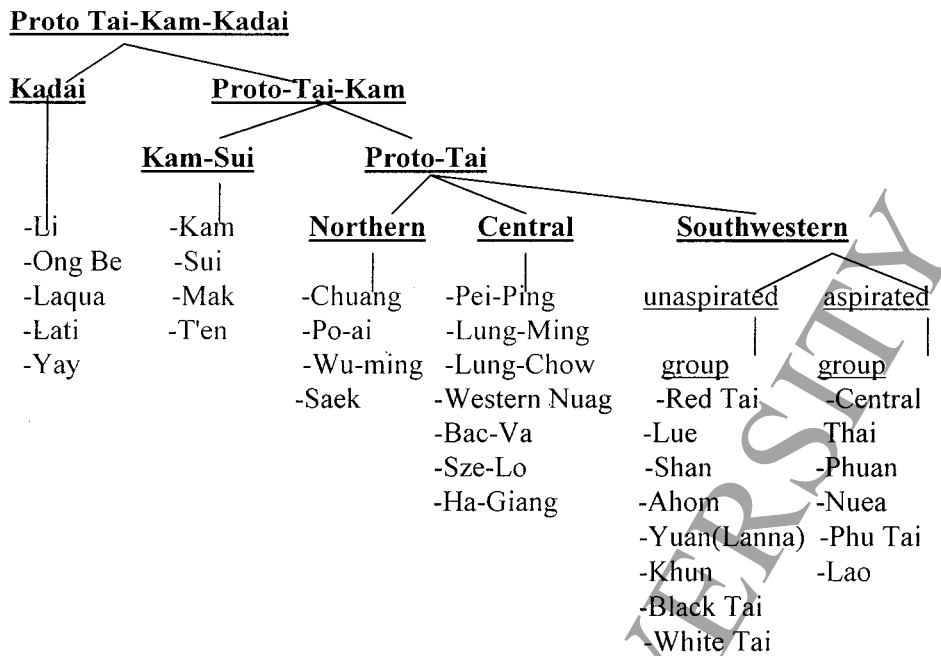


Figure 1. Tai language family according to Dr. Ruengdet (1988:66)

2.3.2 Phonological overview

The following is a very brief overview of phonemic system of the Tai Lue in Donchai village. This is based on a preliminary analysis, done for the purpose of analyzing the final particles. This should not be considered as a comprehensive account of the phonology.

The existence of certain tones in Lue at Donchai village, Pua district is similar to the northern Thai dialect. One might assume that this resulted from contact between

Lue people and Northern Thai people, including broadcasts in Northern Thai, as well as the prestige of Northern Thai.

Although the villagers call themselves Lue, the existence of certain phonemes in Lue at Donchai indicate that the village is partly Tai Lue and partly Northern Thai. Several phonological features are like Lue. There is no diphthongs at all. Comparing the words that are cognate with northern Thai words containing the diphthongs.

Northern Thai	Lue	
<i>/kua/</i>	<i>/kə:/</i>	= salt
<i>/mia/</i>	<i>/me:/</i>	= wife
<i>/hua/</i>	<i>/ho:/</i>	≠ head

Another interesting feature is that short and mid vowels become high vowels before the nasal consonants */m, n, ŋ/*. For example:

Northern Thai	Lue	
<i>/pen/</i>	<i>/pin/</i>	= be
<i>/ŋən/</i>	<i>/ŋum/</i>	= money, silver
<i>/phom/</i>	<i>/phum/</i>	= hair

These are like standard Lue phonemes. In this village the features that are like northern Thai are the use of the palatal nasal */ɲ/*, and having northern Thai tone shapes and northern Thai tone splits. The consonant phonemes are as follows:

Places of Articulation

Manners of Articulation	Bilabial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops vl unaspirated	p	t	c	k	ʔ
vl aspirated	ph	th			
vd unaspirated	b	d		kh	
Fricative vl unaspirated	f	s		h	
Nasals voiced	m, m̥	n	ɲ	ŋ	
Lateral voiced		l			
Semi vowels voiced	w			j	

Figure 2. The consonant system of Tai Lue in Donchai village

From the observations in the field-notes, the Lue language in this village is not rich in consonant clusters. Only two consonant clusters /kw-/ and /khw-/ are found.

Another notable feature is the syllabic *m̥* in Tai Lue as documented by Hartmann (1976). He mentioned that the *m̥* not only occurs in Tai Lue, but also in Shan, Cantonese, and Cambodian. The appearance of syllabic *m̥* in the last three languages is in negation only whereas, in Tai Lue, it is far more conspicuous. It is a result of the reduction of unstressed morphemes. The examples of the *m̥* he gave are as the classifier

for fruit with circle shapes, a prefix to the kin terms, and a prefix of the day before or after, e.g. yesterday or the day after tomorrow. The occurrence of the *m̄* has no semantic relevance except in the case of negation. Hartmann (1976:45) states the negative form is “a function word which is in a grammatical weak position e.g. unstressed”.

The nine vowels in Tai Lue are illustrated in the following figure.

	Front	Central	Back
High	i i:	ɯ ɯ:	u u:
Mid	e e:	ə ə:	o o:
Low	æ æ:	a a:	ɔ ɔ:

Figure 3. The vowel system of Tai Lue in Donchai village

From the field-notes it appears that there are no diphthongs. The general shape of the tones which occur in Donchai village are illustrated in the following diagram using a number system along with the description. A pitch level 1 is low, 3 is mid, and 5 is high. They are:

1. The mid high tone (35)
2. The mid rising tone (34)
3. The falling tone (41)

4. The rising level tone (44)

5. The low level tone (22)

6. The low falling tone (21)

	DS		DL	
1	sa:w ¹ (gift)	tha:n ² (charcoal)	tham ³ (cave)	pa:k ¹ (to embroider)
2				
3				
4	khwa:j ⁴ (buffalo)	mæ: ⁵ (mother)	nam ⁶ (water)	la:k ⁵ (drag)

Figure 4. The tone system of Tai Lue in Donchai village