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I, Mai Douang Seng, shall take this opportunity to explain about the background and history of Muong Vieng Phookha as has been told by words of elders. The Lao Theung who lived in the area of Muong Vieng Phookha were the immigrants from Muong Nong Se , the Land of the Ho. Before they were evacuated from Muong Nong Se there was a war between Ho Thoung Dam and Ho Thoung Deng, and they were ill-treated, so they left the Ho land and settled down in Muong Vieng Phookha, which was then a deserted city. At the same time the Cham race came into the area. Then the area was attacked and defeated by the Khmer. More Lao kept on coming in from Muong Ho and chased away the Khmer and settled down themselves. At the time this place was not called Phookha; it had no name at all.

Once upon a time the King of Muong Ou had a babygirl whose hair was fragrant; so she was called Nang Phom Hom. When she grown up her name was heard through 101 cities and the ruler of each city wanted her as his wife and each came to ask for her hand in marriage; but her father did not accept anyone of them. When she was 16 years old
she had 500 maids. One day her maids and she went to take a bath and wash her hair at the riverbank. Then one strand of her hair fell off and she was embarrassed so she wound that strand of hair around a coconut chaff and a kind of fruit known as "Mak Sane" and let it float down along Nam Ou River. That "Mak Sane" had been floated downstream passing through large and small cities emitting its scent wherever it went. It reached Pak Ou and passed into the Mekong. As it passed through a city the population of that city would wonder what kind of scent that was so sweet. But nobody knew what it was and where it came from. It went down to the south towards Muong Champassack and Attopeu, and then to "Lhi Phi" (The Spirit Gorge) where there was a very deep waterfall of about 700-800 m. high. To the north of that waterfall there was a hermit cave where he taught about 500 students. One day that "Mak Sane" clung to the river bank beside the hermitage. The hermit's students went down to the bank to take their bath and to carry some water home, and they could smell the scent of her hair. They went about looking for the thing that had such a scent;
but they could not find anything except that "Mak Sane". So they took it to the hermit and told him that it was peculiar that "Mak Sane" should have such a sweet scent. When they opened up "Mak Sane" they found a strand of hair that had such a wonderful smell. They realized that it was not "Mak Sane" that smelt so sweetly but it was the hair. The hermit sat down to meditate and pray in order to find the origin of the thing, and he discovered that it was the hair of Nang Phom Hom of Muong Ou Neua. The story then spread throughout Muong Champassack. They also heard about Nang Phom Hom's many suitors. And the ruler of Muong Champassack, a bachelor, also wanted Nang Phom Hom as his wife. So he planned to play a trick on Muong Ou Neua. He sent 500 of his vassals to be trained as entertainers in folk fancing, traditional theater, all kinds of musical players, etc. Each person could entertain for seven days and seven nights without stopping. After three years of training they were sent up the stream to present their show to any town or village that they were passing through, and they became very popular. When the cities in the north heard about this free
entertainment, some invited them to make their presentation to the public. The entertainers went up as far as Muong Ou Tai where its ruler sent some one to welcome them and ask them to make their presentation. They played in Muong Ou Tai for three days and three nights when Phagna Muong Ou Neua and his daughter, Nang Phom Hom heard about it and were very interested in seeing it. So they invited the players to Muong Ou Neua. The players were very happy to come as they would be able to have a good look at Nang Phom Hom. Nang Phom Hom and her father welcomed them warmly with a banquet, killing cattle, ducks and chickens for the occasion. After the feast the entertainers presented their show to the people of Muong Ou Neua for seven days and seven nights without stopping. As the entertainment was carrying on without stopping the onlookers were very tired and fell asleep including Nang Phom Hom, her father, and their body guards. So the actors of the show went to carry Nang Phom Hom away in their arms. They went downstream on a raft day and night as they were in a hurry to reach Muong Champassack. At the time when the players reached Pak Ou, Nang Phom

Hom's father and his courtiers were awaken from their sleep and could not find Nang Phom Hom. So they gathered a troop to follow her and her abductors. They overtook the entertainers at Pak Ou. Here they fought vigorously and everyone was dispersed in different directions. Nang Phom Hom were so frightened that she went upstream all alone, giving off the sweet scent from her hair wherever she went. She lost her way and had to drink from the brooks or streams and eat wild fruits. She kept on going until she reached Pak Nam Fa. From there she went further to Nam Vong, at the end of which there was a cave, but she found nobody there except the thick forests. In this jungle there were tigers, bears, wild animals, roes, etc. Here there was nothing to eat and her clothes were all torn off and she had to stay naked ? in that cave known as Tham Nam Vong.

One day a hunter from Ban Phou Lan went hunting in the neighboring area of Tham Nam Vong when he smelt the fragrance of her hair. He thought it was the scent of some kind of flower and he followed the scent until he saw her naked in front of the cave. When Nang Phom Hom
saw the hunter carrying a gun she was very happy that she joined her hands and greeted him respectfully and asked him to spare her life. She told him that she was a human being, that she had suffered a lot through lack of food, clothing, and friends. The hunter was not sure that she was a human being, he was afraid that she might be some kind of spirit and asked her if she was real. He asked her why she was naked and was it her body that smelt so sweetly. She told him that it was her hair that smelt and because of the fragrant hair she had to leave her home in Muong Ou Neua. She also told him that she was the daughter of the ruler of Muong Ou Neua and was abducted by some entertainers. When her father discovered that she was being kidnapped, he followed her with his troop and they fought with the abductors at Pak Nam Ou. She was so frightened that she slipped away from the others and came up this way. That day was the lucky day for her and she asked the hunter to adopt her as his daughter. The hunter gave her some food to eat and some clothes to cover her body; he then took her with him to Ban Phou Lan. The villagers of Ban Phou Lan also smelt the scent of her
hair when she came into the village. The hunter told them that he had picked her up from a cave in the deep forest. When he reached his home the hunter called the village chief and other leading men in the village to discuss about Nang Phom Hom. It was agreed at the meeting that the hunter should adopt her as his daughter.

Nang Phom Hom had been living in Ban Phou Lan for three years when she felt homesick. She told her adopted parents that she was a Leu from Muong Ou Neua and that she was not used to dry-field farming. So they gave her a small plot of land to do paddy farming and they assigned some workers to help her. One day while they were digging the dike a golden deer came passing by the dike. When Nang Phom Hom saw that golden deer she wished to have it as it was so extraordinary; so the workers and Nang Phom Hom tried to catch it. They lured it with some food and followed it for several days towards the north-west until they reached the area of Muong Nang and Doi Dang He (Dang He Hill). While they were resting at the top of this hill they heard the cry of a bird saying that the golden deer had gone into the pen. So they
realized that they could not follow it anymore as it might belong to a Spirit. When they looked around from atop of this hill towards Muong Nang they saw a vast field; when they looked towards Muong Phieng (later called Phookha) they also saw a vast field. Nang Phom Hom suggested that they looked around to see if there might be a possibility of settling down there. So they walked about along the foot of Phookha. There was no one living in this part, only wild animals. Among these there were three very ferocious animals: 1) a tiger; 2) a snake;
3) an elephant that ate people. Anyone passing through this area would be killed by one of these animals. Then Nang Phom Hom and her group went back to Ban Phou Lan. She announced that any man who could kill the se three ferocious animals would be her husband or he would get a reward from her. There were three men who volunteered to go; they were: Sene Phoun Koun, Meun Kok Kok, and Thong. They went together to Pha Houak where the three animals lived. They took with them different kinds of weapons such as axes, guns, cross and bows, spears, and swords. They planned to kill the snake first. They
bored holes at the middle of the bamboo clump and set up a fire near the clump. About five o'clock in the evening the snake came out and wound itself around the thorn bamboo. So the three men used their spears, swords and guns to kill the snake by shooting it then cutting through its body. That day they spent the night on top of a tree. About five or six o'clock in the evening the tiger transformed itself into an old man. He came out with his bedding and sat down under the tree looking up at the three men. Each man prepared two oxen with magical incantations to fight against the tiger; so altogether they had six oxen. Now and then the old man under the tree would call to the three men on top of the tree to find out if they were asleep. When he did not get an answer he transformed himself back into a tiger in order to kill them. They men sent their oxen out to fight with the tiger. When the tiger was dead they found that one of their oxen was blind, one had his horn broken, one had his ear injured, and the other three had disappeared. Now they had only to kill the elephant. Every morning the elephant would go to eat grass in Houei Nam Fa and returned to Muong

Phieng (later called Vieng Phookha) in the evening. Here they set up a trap and killed the elephant. After completing their task the three men returned home happily. Sene Krone Kreun had a goiter as large as a coconut. He told Nang Phom Hom that he wanted a golden necklace to cover around his goiter three times. Nang Phom Hom awarded him with what he needed. She also gave an elephant to Meun Krao Krao. Among the three men Nang Phom Hom planned to marry anyone who could eat about 12 kg or more meat. She killed an elephant, a buffalo, and an ox for them to eat as a means of competition. Meun Sin ate some and pushed some into the fire until he finished all his part. The other two men set up a stall covered with straws and sat on the stall to eat the meat. While eating they put some under the stall. When they finished their parts the people went to look under the stall and found some meat there. But when they looked where Meun Sin sat, they found nothing. So they declared him to be the winner of Nang Phom Hom's hand. When Nang Phom Hom married Meun Sin she changed her name to Nang Ouat Am and together they went to build Vieng Phookha.

As has been told by elders, the people living in Vieng Phookha believed in the Spirits of their parents as the Guardians of the City, that is the Spirits of Chao Me un Sin and Nang Ouat Am. In a later period there was a man in the area of Ban Poung, Ban Tao named Nane Vong who was very powerful. At the time Laos was under the rule of Tiao Muong Nane in Thailand. Now and then Nane Vong would go into Muong Nane to sell beehives, cotton, birds, chickens, etc., and later on the King of Muong Nane gave him the title of Khoun Patthavy and named him the ruler of Vieng Phookha. When the French troops came into Laos Khoun Patthavy did not get along too well with them and he died at the age of 50 . He was succeeded by his brother, Phagna Bout, and Vieng Phookha became a colony of the French. Now the population had to pay taxes to the French. Those who could not pay had to work hard such as cutting woods, and digging and building roads. When Phagna Bout died he had no relative to succeed him except his assistant, Chao Muong Vandy; so Chao Muong Vandy was assigned as the ruler of Vieng Phookha after Phagna Bout. When Chao Muong Vandy was transferred to Muong Sing he was
replaced by Chao Muong Khamphoui. Under the French protectorate the people were badly ill-treated. They were being conscripted to work for the public; sometimes they had to give away their chickens, pigs, cattle, etc. The French did not do a nything by way of developing Vieng Phookha, except building a road to Muong Sing. The people were conscripted to make bricks, to build military camp and high fences around the camp.

We were under the French protectorate until the year 1945 when the Japanese came into Laos and our leaders went into Muong Ho with the French.

