

## CENTRAL MEKONG RIVER GROUPS

## NÜA

Synonyms. *Nö, Nü*

**ORIENTATION. Identification and location.** The term Tai Nö was used by Davies (1909: 380) for those Tai speakers living in southwestern Yunnan between the Mekong and the Salween, and extending generally from 22° to 25° N. Davies used the term for the literate Buddhist Tai in Yunnan other than the Lü of the Sip Song Panna; according to him the term means northern Tai and is used by these people to distinguish themselves from the Tai of the Burmese Shan States area, whom they call Tai Tai, or Southern Tai. Tai Nö (Nü, Nüa) is also used by both Dodd (1923: 78, 171) and Seidenfaden (1958: 24), but in a somewhat more restricted sense. Whereas for Davies the Tai Nö, whom he also called Chinese Shans, include the Tai of the Chinese Shan States, for Dodd and Seidenfaden the term excludes the latter, whom Seidenfaden calls Tayok. • The hill tribes in this area are mostly Lahu and Wa, the latter mainly concentrated along the Yunnan-Burma border. **Linguistic affiliation.** Tai speakers, closely related to Lü. **Geography and demography.** The Nüa country, as defined by Dodd and Seidenfaden, extends over some 22,000 square miles and includes a Tai population estimated at 600,000.

**SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION.** The indigenous sociopolitical organization was much the same as that in the Chinese Shan States and the Sip Song Panna, i.e. some 28 quasi-feudal domains, *muong*, centered in low-lying wet-rice basins along streams and rivers. By the mid-1920s, however, most of these *muong* areas were integrated into the local Chinese administrative and economic system, and showed little evidence of ever having been incorporated into a native Tai state of the kind that still existed, in remnant form, in the Sip Song Panna. The indigenous cultural features of the Nüa landscape are probably similar in most respects to those of the Lü.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Davies 1909; Dodd 1923; Seidenfaden 1958.

## LÜ

Synonyms. *Lu, Lue, Pai-i, Shui Pai-i*

**ORIENTATION. Identification.** The people call themselves Lü (Lue, Lu). The term is used by other Tai speakers to refer to the Tai of southern Yunnan—specifically those in the territory of the Sip Song Panna—as well as those who have emigrated into nearby areas of Burma, Thailand, and Laos. The Chinese use *Pai-i* to refer at times to almost any Tai-

speaking group, but most often to the Tai of southwestern Yunnan. The Chinese also refer to the Lü as *Shui* (Water) *Pai-i*. **Location.** The Lü homeland, an area traditionally known as the Sip Song Panna (in Chinese, *Shih-êrh-pan-na*), occupies more than 6,000 square miles in extreme southern Yunnan. Centering on the Mekong, it extends from about 100° to 101° 30' E. and from about 21° 30' to 22° 30' N. Lü are found also in Kengtung state in Burma, and in Chiengrai and Nan provinces in Thailand. In Laos they are numerous in western Phong Saly and also in northern and western Haut Mekong; there are in addition Lü villages along the *Nam Tha* and *Nam Beng* as well as in the vicinity of Luang Prabang. Groupings of Lü occur in northern Vietnam, in the area of Binh Lu and along the China border just west of the Black river. [Scott and Hardiman 1900: 205-07; Abadie 1924: 98; Lafont 1962b.] **Geography.** The mountains in the Tai Lü area of Yunnan are relatively smooth and low, and there are numerous small plains along the river valleys. The largest, up to 20 miles in length, have become the sites of the various *muong* domains which make up the Sip Song Panna. The climate is in general warm and humid. There is a wet, rainy season from April to October, and a relatively dry season from November through March. Fauna include elephants, leopards, tigers, bears, and deer. Bamboo flourishes in the valley bottoms and is of prime economic importance. Fish are plentiful in the rivers, which are navigable throughout most of the area. [Chiang 1950: 75-80.] **Linguistic affiliation.** The Lü dialect is most closely affiliated with those of other Tai speakers (Yuan, Khün, Nüa) in northern Thailand, Burma, northwestern Laos, and southwestern Yunnan between the Mekong and Salween rivers. Here, in an area roughly 600 miles N-S and 300 miles E-W, is located a relatively homogeneous speech area characterized by common religious terms and a common religious script, the latter based on the ancient Khmer alphabet which Rama Khamheng revised to form the basis for modern Siamese (Dodd 1923: 76; Clarke 1911: 91). The missionaries Dodd and Freeman, working out of the Chiengmai area about the turn of the century, found that outside of this "Yuan cult" area of literate Tai, the most easily understood dialects were those of the illiterate Black and White Tai of Tonkin (although they lacked the abstract religious terms associated with Buddhism and Pali). The Siamese to the south of Chiengmai spoke a dialect "not easily understood by our people . . . [while] west of the Salween [were] the western Shans whose speech differs also through Burman [Buddhist] influence" (Freeman, quoted in Clarke 1911: 91). **Demography.** The Chinese 1953 census gives 17,470,000 as the total population of Yunnan. Halpern (1961b: 53), using post-1953 Russian and Chinese sources, arrives at a non-Han population of about 5,000,000 in Yunnan, or roughly 30 per cent of the total. This figure contrasts with Wiss-

mann's estimate, based on 1935 census figures, of roughly 60 per cent non-Han population (cited in Wiens 1954: 294). Even allowing for discrepancies in reporting, the relative percentages indicate a decrease in the ethnically identifiable non-Han portion of the population over the past two decades, a phenomenon due probably to at least two causes: assimilation by Han Chinese and the emigration south out of Yunnan of such groups as the Tai, Wa, Miao, and Lahu. • Dodd (1923: 185) estimated 350,000 Lü in Yunnan and an additional 50,000 in Kengtung and Laos. By contrast, Chiang (1950: 70), after several years' residence in the Ch'eli area and a sample household survey, arrived at a total Tai population of 71,600, or 62 per cent of the Sip Song Panna population. The Han, he said, made up 7 per cent, and the hill tribes and other non-Han peoples the remaining 31 per cent. It is probable that Chiang somewhat underestimated these totals. Chen (1949: 2), citing a 1935 survey, gives 550,000 Pai-i in southern Yunnan, and says that the Pai-i [Lü] in the Sip Song Panna account for 50 to 85 per cent of the population. The Lü in Laos, according to Lafont (1962a: 370), total 16,000, while those in northern Vietnam number somewhat over 1,000 (NNCDDT 1959: 242). **History.** The ruling families of the Sip Song Panna maintain traditional histories written in Tai. According to Chiang (1950: 35 ff.), the Ch'eli (Chiengrung or Kenghung) ruling family traces its origin to an ancestor-founder, Patseng, who in 1180 A.D. conquered the kingdom of Lê (Meengle, probably Muong Le) and founded the kingdom of Aloi, which was considerably larger than the present Sip Song Panna, reaching north to the Red river and west to the Salween. • Although Han penetration of this area predates the Christian era, the southwestern frontier continued to be largely independent until the Mongol conquest of Nanchao in 1253 A.D. The Chinese then established the Ch'eli Pacification Chieftaincy, instituting what was later known as the *t'u-ssu* system of indirect rule. The *t'u-ssu* system continued in effect, with minor changes in number and composition of administrative units, until the period of the Manchus. [See Chen (1949: 8-16) for a summary of pre-nineteenth-century Chinese-Lü relations.] Under Nationalist Chinese control, the Sip Song Panna remained one of the few quasi-independent "tribal" areas in southwestern China. Although under the ultimate control of a Chinese resident magistrate, the local nobility, in the personage of the Ch'eli Hsuan-wei (Tai, *chao fa*), members of his family, and the families of *muong* chieftains, continued to wield considerable authority—largely at the expense of the peasant-farmers within their domains. Chinese peasants, long deterred from entering the area in any number by the low-lying (malarious) plains and river valleys, were apparently just beginning effective penetration prior to the Communist seizure in 1949. Since 1949 the Sip Song Panna has been reorganized as the Hsi-

shuang Pan-na Thai Autonomous Chou, with administrative headquarters in Ch'eli. • Successive Han dynasties have exacted tribute from Chiengrung, but beyond this tribute and the sending of occasional military expeditions, it is doubtful that Chinese claims to suzerainty are any more firmly based than those of Burma or Thailand, both of whom have for brief periods (particularly during the later nineteenth century) exercised nominal or actual authority in the area. Han Chinese civil officials, for example, were apparently unknown in the Sip Song Panna until the 1890s (Carey 1899: 381). **Cultural relations.** Despite exposure to Han Chinese cultural influences, the Sip Song Panna remains one of the least acculturated Tai areas in China, according to Chiang. Although much of the material culture shows Chinese influence, housing and women's clothing are still characteristically Tai. Political organization, especially, and social structure to a somewhat lesser extent, still conform to earlier patterns. Religious behavior reflects the influence of Hinayana (Theravada) Buddhism, and in this respect the Yunnan Lü can be classed with the Tai of Burma, Siam, and Laos rather than those of Kweichow, Kwangsi, and Kwangtung. The Yunnan Lü maintain their closest cultural relations—including intermarriage among noble families—with the closely related Tai of neighboring areas. They are not known as traders or merchants, and do not normally venture far outside their own territory. The Sip Song Panna is known to the Tai as far north in Yunnan as the Yangtze, where it is spoken of as the "glutinous rice country," and regarded as a Tai homeland with which these northerners seek to identify (Dodd 1923: 46). • The Lü live in the plains, communicate easily, and are politically organized. Contact with hill tribes is chiefly for purposes of trade. Tai Lü, Han Chinese, and hill peoples come together at weekly markets in the larger towns. Hill tribes in the Sip Song Panna, estimated by Chiang (1950: 70) to make up 31 per cent of the population, are chiefly Akha inhabiting the lower mountain slopes—looking down on the lowland Tai clustered in villages along the valley bottoms. Above the Akha are a few Yao tribesmen, and on the highest ranges occasional Lahu villages. Scattered Wa villages are inhabited by Mon-Khmer speakers related to the "wild" Wa farther west in Burma. These Wa, whom the Lü call Tai Loi, are Buddhists, speak Tai in addition to their own language, and practice wet-rice agriculture alongside the Lü. As observed by Dodd in 1910 (1923: 61), they were, except for the factor of linguistic conservatism, practically indistinguishable from Tai Lü, and it is probable that they represent a case of Wa "becoming Tai." • The hill tribes in Yunnan and Laos are incorporated within the traditional Lü sociopolitical organization through the institution of *lam*. The *po lam*, "father" or "patron," is a member of a chiefly family or some other local notable who receives as appanage the dependency

of a number of hill villages. He serves as intermediary between the latter and Lü officialdom, receiving in return a portion of the taxes and tribute passing through his hands. In Laos, Akha villages are virtually under Lü control, each Lü personage being *po lam* to several Akha villages. Important Lü villages, such as Muong Sing, Muong Nang, and Bun Tay, organize markets every five days, and by this means maintain contact with the hill tribes. [Chiang 1950: 103; Rispaud 1937: 119; Lafont 1962b.]

**SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND HOUSING.** **Settlement pattern.** Chen (1949: 39) gives an average for the Sip Song Panna of 30 houses per village, based on a survey of 44 villages. This is in accord with a figure for Laos of 20 houses per village (Lafont 1962b). Lafont adds that villages may be as large as 80 houses. Chiang (1950: 164) says, however, that in Yunnan Lü villages range in size from fewer than 10 to over 300 houses. Moerman (1962) reports a population of about 600 in a Lue village in Chiengrai, northern Thailand, and Carey (1899: 382) says that Lü villages in Yunnan average 500 inhabitants. The more important centers, such as Chiengrung, have historically been walled towns, designed and located for defensive purposes. **Housing.** The house is normally built on piles about seven or eight feet above the ground. A ladder leads up to a single room, with a gable roof coming down on both sides directly onto the flooring. The room is frequently divided by a partition into living and sleeping quarters. A fire basin is placed in the center and a covered veranda constructed at one end. Cattle are tied to the posts underneath the house at night. In Yunnan the *chao* (rulers) and members of their immediate families live in houses which tend to be larger and made of planks rather than bamboo, with tiled rather than thatched roofs. [Chiang 1950: 165 ff.; Lafont 1962b.] Lue emigrants in Chiengrai province in northern Thailand lived until quite recently in multifamily longhouses, possibly a response to a pioneering situation (Moerman 1963).

**ECONOMY.** Primarily wet-rice farmers. Domestic animals are economically important, and contribute a major portion of the diet, along with rice, beans, and vegetables. Fish are present in rivers and canals and are eaten whenever available. Hunting is of less importance. Insects, maggots, grubs, greens, and wild fruits are gathered, and contribute a minor but highly regarded portion of the diet. **Agriculture.** Cultivable valley plains in the Sip Song Panna are estimated by Wissmann (1943: 22) at about 30,000 acres, only one-half of which are in use. According to Chen (1949: 45), 26 per cent of the cultivable land in Ch'eli district has never been cultivated. Land, therefore, is apparently not a problem. Glutinous rice, grown in irrigated fields, is the main crop. Some dry rice is grown on valley sides and slopes; about one-half of the villages surveyed by Chen (1949: 28) sup-

plemented their irrigated rice in this manner. Double cropping, although feasible, is generally not practiced. Field rotation and fallowing take the place of fertilizer. Field implements, of iron, resemble those of the Chinese. Fields are irrigated for rice by diverting the rivers into side canals and, where necessary, lifting the water to the level of the fields by means of basket water wheels. Buffalo and sometimes cattle are used to draw the plow. Paddy is cut and dried in the field, threshed with a stick on a flat piece of ground, and winnowed by tossing in the air. Rice is plentiful and may on occasion be fed to domestic animals. Rice liquor is popular and is consumed in quantity on festive occasions. • Other field crops include beans, peppers, maize, vegetables, sugar cane, and tobacco. Fruits are grown near the houses in the villages. Cotton is grown in small amounts by most families and sold to Chinese traders. P'u-erh tea is an economically important and widely-known product of the area, and is grown both by the Lü and by the hill tribes. Haw merchant caravans, and also horse caravans from as far away as Tibet, come annually to collect this tea. Opium is not grown by the Lü, nor are they widely addicted to its use. They do, however, traffic to some extent in opium, acting as middlemen between Chinese merchants and the hill people who grow it. Betel chewing is popular and for this the nut of the areca palm is important. Camphor, shellac, and bamboo are other important forest products. [Chiang 1950: 137-45.] **Fishing and hunting.** The products of rivers and canals—including fish, turtles, eels, snails, mussels, and shrimp—are eagerly sought, and contribute greatly to the diet. Elaborate organization of communal fishing enterprises is reported for the Lue of northern Thailand. [Chiang 1950: 168; Moerman 1963.] **Domestic animals.** Cattle, buffalo, horses, chickens, pigs, ducks, dogs, and cats. Pork is the most popular meat, followed by beef, chicken, and duck. Oxen are used for transport. Elephants were formerly associated with a *chao fa's* court paraphernalia, and were important in warfare. [Chiang 1950: 84.] **Industrial arts.** Economic pursuits are not highly specialized in Lü society. The people are not known as traders or merchants, and there is relatively little craft specialization. Home handicrafts for family consumption include work in bamboo, weaving, embroidery, and pottery making. Chiang (1950: 149) says that iron working is limited to crude farm implements; Seidenfaden (1958: 26), however, speaks of the "famous Lü swords with excellent blades." Jewelry, much of it showing Indian influence, is fabricated locally by silversmiths. Bamboo is used extensively in the construction of houses, utensils, furniture, roads, and bridges. Chiang mentions that paper is made by native methods from the pulp of a wild plant, *Broussonetia papyrifera*. **Trade.** Markets are held weekly in the larger towns and are usually rotated among four or five villages. The Yunnan Tai do not, however, trade on as large a

scale as the Shan Tai in Burma. Women are active traders in the village markets, exchanging food products and bamboo, salt, fuel, herbs, fruits, and opium. Itinerant Chinese traders deal in cloth, cosmetics, and medicines. [Chiang 1950: 150-51.] **Division of labor.** Persons without land hire themselves out as agricultural workers under a variety of arrangements. Some may be hired to serve in place of a family member when a labor levy is imposed by the *chao muong* (Chiang 1950: 144). Women help in the fields, but their status in Lü society is relatively high. A married woman is economically independent of her husband, and is free to make her own living if she wants to. Men help with the children at home, and a man may be found at home baby-sitting while his wife is off trading at a nearby village market. **Land tenure.** According to Chiang (1950: 129 ff.), land is considered to belong ultimately to the state, with its year-to-year management in the hands of village chiefs and above them, the *muong* chiefs. The Lü peasant farmer therefore does not own the land he tills in the sense of being able to sell or lease it. Commoner families do, however, have usufruct rights which are handed down from generation to generation and which cannot be arbitrarily terminated. Traditional usage defines firmly the respective rights of the various parties. The *chao* receive taxes and produce from the villagers within their districts, tribute which is in part based on the size of land holdings. Within the Sip Song Panna, according to Chiang, this relationship is not as marked as it is among the Tai of the Chinese Shan States, where the people have fewer traditional rights with respect to land, and where taxes and other obligations to the *muong* chiefs are based directly on the land factor. • Chen (1949: 29-31) describes four different categories of land ownership among the Yunnan Lü: (1) village-owned land subject to periodic redistribution; (2) official-owned land worked by whole villages or individual peasant families, on which labor, produce, and taxes are due the owner, who is usually a member of one of the ruling families; (3) unclaimed lands and newly-opened lands to which peasants have usufruct rights approaching a permanent leasehold; and (4) temple-owned lands. Chen found that in the Ch'eli area 60 per cent of all cultivated land was in the official-owned category.

**KIN GROUPS.** The nobility among the Lü are characterized by patrilineal surname groups (common descent groups) similar to those found among the Chinese, and presumably the result of Chinese influence (Chiang 1950: 208-20). Only among the more sinicized ruling families, however, is a common surname regarded as evidence of actual kinship and marriage prohibited between persons of the same surname. Ruling families maintain genealogies, but only for individuals in the direct line of succession to the position of *chao* (ruler). There is no evidence

of an ancestor cult at any level of Lü society; the Lü (except for the sinicized nobility) place little emphasis on remembering their ancestors, and pay little attention to kinship ties beyond those of the immediate family and kindred. • At the commoner level, the only kin group recognized, aside from the immediate household group, is what appears to be the bilateral kindred. As phrased by Chiang (1950: 222), "their idea of relatives includes the father's family, the mother's family, and the wife's family." These are the kinsmen who come together at crisis periods in the life cycle, such as marriage and death. • Moerman found no evidence of unilinear descent among the Lue of northern Thailand. Property inheritance and kin terminology are bilateral, marriage is permitted—and is not infrequent—between first cousins, and there are no behavioral or terminological distinctions between parallel and cross cousins (Moerman 1963). **Kin terminology.** Lü kinship terms given by Chiang (1950: 222-23) are characterized by lineal terminology for the first ascending generation and Hawaiian terminology for cousins. Age distinctions are important, and appear in both sibling and parents' sibling terms. Terms for consanguineal relatives are extended to include members of Ego's wife's family.

**MARRIAGE AND FAMILY.** According to Chiang (1950: 179), marriage among the Yunnan Lü is strictly within hereditary class lines, i.e. the members of chiefly families marry only among themselves, and commoners marry only commoners. These Lü do not intermarry with the various hill peoples within their domain, with the possible exception of the Buddhist Wa. They have for some time, however, intermarried with Han Chinese. Moerman (1962) reports Lue endogamy in Thailand with respect to their Tai-speaking neighbors, the Yuan. **Mode.** Within chiefly families marriage customs are heavily sinicized. Marriage is by parental arrangement and includes a go-between and a sizable bride price. A woman's prestige is judged by the size of the latter. According to Chiang (1950: 179), a member of the hereditary nobility must marry outside his *muong*, since noble families within a *muong* usually belong to the same patrilineal surname group. Noble marriages usually occur within the Sip Song Panna area, although some chiefly families have relations through marriage with those in neighboring Tai states in Kengtung and Chiengmai. • Among commoners, marriage is more in accord with traditional Tai custom (Chiang 1950: 182 ff.). The preliminaries are initiated by the young people themselves, and relative freedom is allowed during courtship. Religious festivals and evening gatherings at the village rice mill afford traditional opportunities for courting and for young couples to slip off by themselves with the tacit approval of their elders. Sisawat (1952: 205) reports the existence of courting platforms. Musical ability plays a prominent role in courtship; mastery of the reed organ and cleverness

in singing and extemporaneous composition are greatly admired. When a couple reach the point of marriage, the boy's family arranges for a go-between who negotiates the bride price. A marriage ceremony takes place in the bride's house, and may be solemnized by a monk. If the families cannot agree on the amount of the bride price, they may resort by mutual agreement to a mock kidnap wedding and later renegotiation of the bride price, thus saving face all around; or the couple may elope to another *muong*, living there long enough to accumulate the required bride price. **Form.** Polygyny is a common practice among chieftains. In the past the royal Chiengrung household included numerous wives and concubines (Chiang 1950: 180). Lafont (1962b) reports polygyny among well-to-do families in Laos. Marriage among Lü commoners is normally monogamous. **Extension of incest taboos.** Long ago the Chinese bestowed honorific titles and surnames on the *muong* chiefs in the Sip Song Panna area. Today these families are organized as patrilineal surname groups along Chinese lines, although the surname does not appear to carry quite the degree of relatedness that it does among the Chinese, nor does the principle of surname group exogamy appear to be observed as strictly. Among the Lü of Muong Sing (Laos), cross-cousin marriage is recognized but not preferred (Lafont 1962b). **Residence.** In conformity with the patrilineal orientation of the Lü nobility, residence after marriage within this group is strictly patrilocal (Chiang 1950: 181). Among commoners, residence is more variable, but there is an apparent pattern whereby the couple may live alternately with (or near) the parents of both the bride and groom for a time, before establishing an independent household. A family lacking a son may adopt a son-in-law, who then resides matrilocally and inherits his adopted parents' property on their death. [Chiang 1950: 188; Lafont 1962b; Sisawat 1952: 194 ff.] **Domestic unit.** Patrilineal extended (or large polygynous) families characterize the Lü nobility. Commoner households in Yunnan are of the independent nuclear type, averaging four members, according to Chinese *hsien* census figures. [Chiang 1950: 181, 188.] **Inheritance.** It is customary for a couple to make provision for the division of their property before their death. The eldest son inherits the family homestead, and the rest of the property is equally divided among all the sons. [Chiang 1950: 225-26.] Among the Lue of northern Thailand, Moerman (1963) found all children inheriting equally regardless of sex or seniority, with the exception that the house and its compound goes to the oldest married child still residing with the parents at the time of their death. In practice this is often a younger child, thus giving the appearance of ultimogeniture. **Divorce.** Divorce is relatively easy, although apparently not common, with laziness and unchastity the two most frequent causes. A woman simply returns to her parental home and stays there;

a man wishing to terminate a marriage hands his wife a piece of wood with symbolic marks cut on it. Women are relatively independent economically and thus usually do not object to a divorce, nor is there any prejudice against a divorced woman. Children usually go with the mother. [Chiang 1950: 186-88.]

**SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION.** **The Sip Song Panna.** The exact nature of the indigenous political structure within the Sip Song Panna area is largely a matter of conjecture; Tai historical records are fragmentary and the long period of Chinese penetration has blurred the original picture. Furthermore the documentary evidence that is available, being largely Chinese, is likely to result in a somewhat skewed understanding of native political concepts and relationships. It is probable that the kingdom of Aloi—which according to Lü histories was founded by Patseng in 1180 A.D.—was made up of a number of chiefdoms (semifeudal fiefs or principalities) loosely controlled by a paramount chief or "king," himself possibly a vassal of the Han Chinese. Political control may have been concentrated within a single family or related families—possibly descendants of Patseng—whose members occupied the positions of paramount chief and chiefs of the various fiefdoms within the kingdom. Political control may have been solidified and sanctioned by a cult of the spirit of the soil (with an accompanying myth), as among the Black Tai, where only members of a ruling family (or families) are empowered to conduct annual sacrifices for the welfare of the *muong* and its inhabitants. Among the Lü in Laos, at the present time, the *chao fa* of Muong Sing annually sacrifices to the *phi muong* on behalf of the people (Lafont 1962b). • The Lü territory in southern Yunnan is known today by the Tai term Sip Song Panna or (in older Western language sources) as the kingdom or state of Kenghung (Chiengrung, Xieng Hong). The name Sip Song Panna is variously translated "Twelve Thousand Rice Fields" or "Twelve Farming Areas." According to Rispaud (1937: 78), the literal meaning is more correctly "Twelve Principalities," or "Twelve Fiefdoms." According to Garnier (1873: 407), the term refers to the number of registered inhabitants in each of a number of territorial units. Scott and Hardiman (1900: 329) say that, as in the Southern Shan States, the term probably refers to the number of baskets of rice (a thousand) paid to the overlord of each of 12 (or more) territorial units. Petty political domains are mentioned historically throughout the area of the southwestern Tai peoples; this propensity for establishing semifeudal principalities plays a considerable role in the history of such modern states as Thailand, Assam, Laos, and Burma. The usual Tai term for such entities is *muong* (*mong*, *mang*, *meng*) and for the "prince" or chief of same, *chao fa* (*saohpa*). Much of the history of this area is concerned with the combinations of *muong* domains into petty kingdoms

and their subsequent dissolution and recombination under the vicissitudes of inter-*muong* warfare, political intrigue, and attack from neighboring states. The Sip Song Panna represents still another example of this more generalized Tai pattern. For the past 150 years, at least, it has been traditionally composed of 12 *pannas* (*muongs*), although one, Muong Sing, has been situated in northern Laos since the period of French intervention. It is probable that the actual number has varied as larger *muong* domains have segmented into lesser ones. Chiang (1950: 68) reports that at a Chinese-sponsored council of all *chao muong* in 1780 some 20 *muong* areas were assigned to one or another of 12 *pannas*. In 1950 Chiang reported "over 30" *muong* areas in the Sip Song Panna, each ruled by a *t'u-ssu*. The question of the number of *muong* areas is difficult to deal with precisely because the Tai, as pointed out by Leach for Burma (1954: 122), are not themselves precise in their use of the term; using it at times to mean a village or town, and at other times to mean a larger political domain. According to Rispaud (1937: 105), the number "twelve" in the designation Sip Song Panna should not be taken too literally, representing as it does a Tai convention of preceding the name of a territory with a number, e.g. the Hok Chao or Six Kingdoms of Nanchao and the Sip Song Chao Tai or Twelve Tai Principalities in Tonkin. A Lü *muong* may be as much as 200 square miles or more in extent; one, considered "quite large" by Dodd, was some 20 miles in length, and contained 70 Lü villages and about 30 villages belonging to various hill tribes. **Political organization.** The political structure of the Sip Song Panna, as observed by Chiang in the 1940s, was not unlike that of a nineteenth-century Burmese Shan State (Chiang 1950: 89-126). Political power is concentrated in the person of the *chao fa* of Chiengrung (Chinese title Hsuan-wei-shih). Although exercising a good deal of authority, the *chao fa* is responsible to the local Chinese magistrate, particularly in matters of taxation and military levies. Succession to the position is strictly patrilineal and by primogeniture. In the absence of a son, a brother or brother's son may succeed. [In 1942 Tao (Chao) Shih-hsun succeeded his uncle, Tao Tung-liang, who died without a male heir.] If the royal heir is under age a regent may be appointed, usually a brother of the deceased *chao fa*. Under such circumstances the "Queen Mother," if she is still alive, may exercise considerable authority, even over the regent. • The court at Chiengrung consists of some 50 titled and graded officials, with responsibility for such things as the royal food supply, the royal horses, and particular kinds of economic pursuits, e.g. markets and trade fairs. According to Chao (1953: 16), two of these high officials are specifically charged with responsibility for irrigation works throughout the kingdom. Chen (1949: 41-42) says, however, that groups of villages characteristically control their water supply

through elected officials whose position is confirmed at the *muong* level. A position equal to that of the *chao fa* may be held by one of his brothers, in a sort of "second government," although the status is rather vaguely defined. The *chao fa* is assisted by a premier and a council of high court officials and *muong* representatives. The council, which meets irregularly, serves to some extent to check the absolute power of the *chao fa*. According to Chen (1949: 19), the council is mainly concerned with the appointment of lesser *muong* officials. • The higher court positions are hereditary (Chao 1953: 15), and together with the chieftaincies of the larger *muongs* are occupied by members of the nobility—those related to the family line of the *chao fa*. This aspect of Lü culture, including the granting of lands as virtual fiefdoms, is well documented by Chen (1949: 16 ff.). Land-owning officials "live off the people" by exercising traditional rights to levies of labor, economic goods, and taxes. • Chen (1949: 16 ff.) mentions five grades of *chao muong*, 24 of whom maintained some degree of political liaison with the court at Chiengrung. Although the *chao muong* are theoretically under the control of the *chao fa*, in practice they have considerable freedom in the administration and exploitation of their own domains. The *chao muong's* village or town tends to be the political capital of his *muong*, and duplicates on a smaller scale the court and its bureaucracy as found in Chiengrung. At the bottom of this administrative hierarchy are various grades of village headmen. • Some at least of this administrative elaboration is probably the result of Chinese acculturative influence. The administrative structure of the Sip Song Panna must have been influenced by the *t'u-ssu* system, whereby local chieftains were granted hereditary titles as rulers of their territories, which in effect became feudatories of the imperial court. On the other hand, the Lü system bears many similarities to indigenous Tai administrative bureaucracies found farther west and south in non-Chinese areas. **Social stratification.** Lü society is divided into two hereditary classes, nobility and commoners. In Yunnan the nobility, who make up about a tenth of the population, are the landowners, receiving rent from commoner-peasants who work the lands within their domains, but exempting themselves from taxes and rentals based on landownership. The nobility also furnish the higher grades of officials who staff the administrative bureaucracy. Whether there is, or was, a class of slaves (either debt slaves or captives in warfare) is not clear. Chen in 1940 found no trace of slavery (1949: 34). The ruling families are relatively highly sinicized, and this, plus their higher standard of living and class endogamy, tends to set them apart from commoners. The higher nobility speak Chinese, and the *muong* courts usually maintain a Han teacher. Travel to visit relatives in Burma and northern Thailand is not infrequent, and a few have traveled and studied in China. Although comparative-

ly wealthy, the nobility in the Sip Song Panna do not live as ostentatiously as do their counterparts in neighboring Kengtung state or the Chinese Shan States. • A variety of traditional economic obligations are placed on commoners vis-à-vis nobility. These include an annual monetary tax collected from every household for support of the *chao fa* and other high officials and their families; an annual grain rent determined in part by the amount of land tilled; labor service, which includes furnishing servants for noble households; supplies, such as food, charcoal, and opium; and special levies on occasions such as births, festivals, or the marriage of a noblewoman (Chiang 1950: 133 ff.). Differences in social status and rank are expressed in a number of ways. Because yellow is the traditional color of the nobility, commoners are prohibited from wearing it on many occasions. In greeting a superior, a commoner must kneel and knock his forehead on the ground. In approaching a *chao*, he moves forward on his knees, saluting every three steps, and repeats this procedure when departing from an audience. Status is indicated also by names (Chiang 1950: 215-16). Acculturated nobility have Chinese surnames, which is not true of the less sinicized Lü. Given names are, however, a status indicator in all cases. Generally speaking, an individual has at least five given names, which change at various stages of life: his pet name, monk name, secular name, parent name, and official name. The parent name is given after the birth of a child and follows the rules of tekonymy. The first word in a name indicates class membership, e.g. the first word in the pet name of a male commoner must be Yai. The second word indicates order of birth. Thus the first two words in the name of an eldest son of a commoner must be Yai-wei. Within the nobility finer distinctions in social rank are indicated by changes in a man's official name as he moves upward in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Children of the nobility are ranked according to the rank of their parents, e.g. children within the direct line of descent of a *chao muong* rank above their cousins. **Warfare.** Dodd (1923: 66) mentions the "petty [inter-muong] wars for which the Sip Song Panna is famed," but the literature contains little information on this. It is probable that warfare, once an important aspect of Lü culture, has declined in importance during the past 50 years.

**RELIGION. Major religions.** The Lü are Theravada Buddhists, with many similarities in text and ritual language to those of the neighboring Buddhist states of Siam and Laos. Old men among the emigrants to northern Thailand tell legends, however, of the days before Buddhism came to the Sip Song Panna (Moerman 1963). Christian missionaries have been at work in the area since about the turn of the century, but have made little headway. Larger villages have at

least one Buddhist temple; in Yunnan these are imposing structures with red tiled roofs. Boys are expected to enter a monastery for at least a brief period, and the Lü are relatively strict about this and other Buddhist observances. There are various grades of monkhood, with the highest that of abbot of a village temple. There is no over-all organization of the monkhood within a *muong* or within the Sip Song Panna as a whole. The Buddhist New Year in April and the period of Lent, during the rainy season, are both widely observed. [Chiang 1950: 227-50.] **Indigenous religion.** Along with Buddhist beliefs and practices the Lü believe in a variety of spirits, some of which appear to be analogous to the *phi* of Thailand and Laos. Many are held to be malevolent, and women in particular may be possessed by evil spirits, or may gain control over them in order to harm other persons. **Supernaturals.** The Lü of Laos believe in good and bad *phi*, multiple souls, major spirits or genii, and a house spirit invoked by the head of the family; they do not, however, have a developed ancestor cult. Each village possesses a *lak ban*, a post stuck in the earth symbolizing the god of the local soil. *Muong* capitals have a *lak muong*, symbolizing the god of the feudal soil, *phi muong*. The cult of the *phi muong* is celebrated at Muong Sing annually by the *chao muong* assisted by a priest. [Lafont 1962b; Izikowitz 1962: 76-78.] **Practitioners.** Belief in malevolent spirits and sorcery enters heavily into Lü concepts of sickness and disease, according to Chinese sources. Chiang (1950: 190) says that according to Tai belief, malaria is caused by a gas discharged from the bodies of poisonous or loathsome creatures such as snakes, toads, centipedes, and scorpions, who become evil spirits when hidden underground for a time. This belief appears to be related to what Chiang (1950: 255 ff.) reports as *fang-ku*, or insect poisoning, among the Lü. Women in particular are adept at this practice, whereby a variety of poisonous insects are buried in a jar and left to feed on one another until only one is left—this is the *ku*, the spirit or essence of all the poisons of all the creatures in the jar. The sorcerer swears to live and die by the *ku*, which can be released to harm others. If the *ku* dies, the sorcerer will also sicken and die. Similar beliefs and practices relating to *ku* poisoning are found among Miao groups in Kweichow and Szechwan. It is evidently an old and widespread belief among both Miao and Tai peoples in southern and southwestern China (Feng and Shryock 1935; Wiens 1954: 49 ff. in trait lists taken from Eberhard). Women are thought to cause illness and to work magic in still other ways: by incantations they can cause an object to shrink and enter the most solid of objects, or cause poison to be introduced into food. A woman is said to use these methods, or the threat of them, to keep a man near her (Chiang 1950: 253-54). Belief in the ability of some individuals to transform themselves into ani-

mals is also reported by Chiang, as well as a belief in spirit possession, whereby the soul of the person possessed is commanded to enter into the body of another. The symptoms of this and other kinds of magical afflictions are stomach cramps, dizziness, fainting, speech abnormalities, and bizarre behavior. • Chiang (1950: 259-60) makes little mention of the role of medicine men or shamans in exorcising evil spirits or counteracting the magic of sorcery. In such cases, he says, the Lü have recourse to Buddhist monks, who use incantations, massage, charms, and talismans as counteractive measures. Lafont (1962b) mentions priests or sorcerers (*mwod phi*), and diviner-healers (*mwod mod*), for the Lü of Laos. **Tattooing.** Tattooing is mentioned in early Chinese records as a characteristic Tai trait, and it is still practiced by the Lü. Performed on males only, the designs extend generally from knee to navel. Tattooing is done between the ages of 11 and 20, and is said by the Lü to constitute a sign of manhood without which no man could successfully court a Lü girl. [Chiang 1950: 176.] **Teeth blackening.** Today the women of the Chinese Shan States area in Yunnan blacken the teeth with a kind of vegetable juice as a sign of marriageability. According to Chinese records, this custom was formerly present among all the Tai people of southern Yunnan. [Chiang 1950: 176.] **Soul, death, and afterlife.** Among the Lü of Laos the soul remains with the corpse after death. If it is not given sufficient offerings, it torments living members of the deceased's family (Lafont 1962b). According to Moerman (1963), the Lue of northern Thailand inter only those who die "bad deaths;" others are cremated. Chiang, on the other hand, says that among the Yunnan Lü, commoners and nobility alike are interred in rough wooden coffins. Buddhist monks and honored old men are cremated. The Lü pay relatively little attention to ancestors or to an ancestor cult. Aside from the most sinicized of the nobility, they do not keep genealogies, nor do they tend the grave after burial. There are no formally kept cemeteries. The corpse is laid out in a coffin in the home, but with little ritual other than some chanting on the part of monks on the day of burial. The Yunnan Lü reportedly at one time conducted a family sacrifice ceremony at home while the corpse lay in state, apparently an occasion for eating, drinking, and dancing, i.e. "entertaining the corpse." [Chiang 1950: 192 ff.]

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## KHÜN

Synonyms. *Hkün, Kün*

**ORIENTATION. Identification and location.** The term Khün (Hkün, Kün) refers to the Tai-speaking population in and around the old walled town of Kengtung (Chiengtung) in the Burmese Shan State of the same name. Formerly the Khün were distinguished from neighboring Tai populations by slight differences in dialect and by peculiarities of women's dress. The Khün are limited largely to the main Kengtung valley in the center of the State, whereas a major portion of the population as a whole consists of closely-related Tai Lü from across the border in southern Yunnan. Wa, Lahu, and Akha swidden agriculturists occupy the hills, particularly in the east. **Linguistic affiliation.** Tai speakers, closely related to the Lü. **History and cultural relations.** The history of Kengtung is associated with that of other thirteenth-century Tai principalities along the middle Mekong. Mangray, the traditional founder of Chiengmai, is also regarded as the legendary founder of Kengtung. Seidenfaden (1958: 49) thinks that the Kengtung valley area was settled by Tai emigrants from Nanchao, who imposed their rule on a Mon-Khmer population called Khüns. Until recently Wa tribesmen played a traditional role in major state ceremonies. • Prior to British annexation, the Burmese claimed suzerainty over Kengtung and beyond to the Lü country, and the British attempted to keep Kengtung within the political sphere of the Burmese Shan States. Culturally, historically, and by virtue of prevailing trade relationships, however, Kengtung has been oriented to China and Thailand rather than to Burma. In the 1920s Chinese caravans entered Kengtung town almost daily during the dry season. The Khün dialect and religious script are on the whole similar to those of the Yuan, Lü, and Lao.

**ECONOMY.** The Khün are predominantly wet-rice growers and cattle breeders. They are more active in trade than their relatives the Burmese Shans.

**SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION.** As observed by Western missionaries and administrators in the late nineteenth century, the state of Kengtung, with a total population of around 300,000, was ruled by a Tai prince or *chao fa* (*saohpa*), with his court, *haw*, at Kengtung town. The *chao fa* and members of his own and related families constituted the ruling elite. The royal court, maintained with pomp and ceremony reminiscent of the Burmese court, included a council of ministers, *hpaya*. The countryside was divided into districts, *muong*, ruled by *chao muong*, who annually took an oath of allegiance to the *chao fa*. The Kengtung ruling families have traditionally been active in the opium trade, adding considerably to their income thereby.