

## HISTORY OF MUONG LUANG NAMTHA

The history of Muong Luang Namtha was inscribed on stones since 986 of the Chulla Era, (the Chulla Era started 1,181 years after the Buddhist Era, according to a Lao-French dictionary) 2167 years after the death of Buddha, i. e., 347 years ago (counting back from 1973), that is from 1626 of the Christian Era. It was recorded as follows: In 2167 Buddhist Era, a king named Phagna Southothammikarath who was the ruler of Xieng Sene, marched an army to invade Muong Xieng Khong in 2168 Buddhist Era in the 12th month and on the 9th day of the lunar month. Then he started down to invade Muong Nane. After he acquired Muong Nane he returned to Xieng Sene. Then he marched his army to invade Muong Xieng Houng and Sibsong Phanna.

Then in 2170 Buddhist Era, that is in 1629, the king marched his army from Sibsong Phanna to Muong Luang Namtha before heading for Muong Xay. On his way to invade Muong Xay he encountered the troops of a king named Chao Nared Tafay who came from Luang Prabang. The purpose of marching his troops was to attack

Muong Xay also. When the two armies met, they meant to fight each other in order to gain this part of the land as their protectorate. But when they met, the two kings negotiated that they should not fight each other, but should compete on their fate. One who was richly gifted would be successful and the land of Muong Xay and Muong Luang Namtha would fall to the hand of the victor.

After their negotiation and agreement, the two kings competed in building temples; each would construct a temple. The sizes of the two temples would be the same, the woods and bricks used would be of the same size, shape, and length. Chao Southoammikarath constructed Wat Ko Yai on the west side. Chao Nared Tafay constructed Wat Ko Noi on the east side. The construction started on the same day and at the same time. The result was that they had equal fate because the construction of the two temples was completed on the same day and at the same time. So the two kings tried to understand the situation and decided not to fight with each other in order to acquire more land.

They divided the land and fenced off their properties. They celebrated the newly constructed temples and then planted a banyan or bo tree as a commemoration by putting the end into the ground instead of the roots. (The writer had asked about the planting of the banyan tree with the top of the tree down, and the answer from people who used to come and go between Muong Xay was that the story was true. That this banyan tree sends its branches and figs to the surface of the ground and sends the trunk upwards.)

After that the two kings assigned the work of guarding the land boundaries to their courtiers. Those in charge of guarding the territory of Muong Luang Namtha were: Hmun Luang, Hmun Keo, Hmun Tepkhua, and Hmun Chayasongkham. Pha Narèd Tafay assigned the responsibility of guarding Muong Xay to Phagna Nhut. The two kings ordered their designees to protect their temples so that they would not be deteriorated, even though Muong Luang Namtha or Muong Xay were to be attacked by enemies. If the enemy outnumbered them they should combine forces



and help each other in resisting the enemies. They should be generous and kind to each other. After giving orders they moved their troops from Muong Xay to a tree called Loung Samsoum, located between Muong Xay and Muong Luang Namtha, in order to divide the territory. The boundary of Muong Luang Namtha began from Pak Phieng Xieng Hinh on the east side of Namtha river down to Sob Khone Luang, along the Nam Khone river to Phou Lay, Ban Tao, Chom Vanh, Phou Rang, Phou Khoi, Phou Lao, Ban Phakhay, Ban Salo, Ban Tad, along the mountainous line of Phou Kong Nok, Phou Mone, Phou Long, Phou Xang down to Nam Pone river, Phou Troun, Phou Tang, Nam On, Nam Se, Tared up to Pha Ngeun, Pha Deua, Ban O, Ban An, Phou Sing, Phou Kun down to Ban Poug, along the Nam Thalo Luang, Nam Ko, Thong Chark, Ban Kagnong, Ban Katang Dong Kok, Keo Kho Ma, Thong Mark Muang Khai (mango field), Ban Keo Hieng, Nam La, along the Nam La river to Ban Mark Kheua, Ban Khong Leng, Ban Khong Luang, Hat Ta Gnak, Ban Ta Cheng,



Phou Thene Deng, Namtha, Vang Sing, up to Nam Sadeua, Nam Khang, Thalong, Namtha and along Namtha to Kieo Kalang Lang Lok along Lanong river to Kieo Hene, Kieo Lom, Nam Samsob, Ban Tong Ha, Phou Long, Phou Lai, Kieo Hane, Houa Nam Ngene, Ban Ko, Phou Toun, Pang Sao, Nam Hak, Nam On Noi and Nam On Luang, along Namtha to Sene Khanh, Houei Heng to Pak Phieng Xieng Hinh. All of these places made up the territory of Muong Luang Namtha. Then the two kings moved their troops from the Sam Soum Tree down to Muong Luang Namtha in the 2nd month, 2172 Buddhist Era, corresponded to 1630. When they arrived at Muong Luang Namtha they started building two stupas. Chao Southoammikarath constructed a stupa on the west side and Chao Nared Tafay constructed another one on the east side. When the construction of the two stupas were completed, they offered the stupas by draining off water, drop by drop on the ground, as a conveyance of the offering. It was also celebrated as a memorial of their relationships.

On the 3rd month, 13th day of the waning moon, Buddhist Era 2173, corresponded to 1631, the two kings set out from Muong Luang Namtha to go to Xieng Sene by taking Hmun Hane, Hmun Keo, and Hmun Teb Khoua with them. When they arrived at Xieng Sene, Chao southothammikarath assigned the courtiers from Xieng Sene to govern the new territory, that is, Muong Luang Namtha whose borderland on the east was situated close to the land of Lane Xang Xieng Thong; on the west it was situated close to the land of Sibsong Phanna Leu. The administrators consisted of nine lords divided into nine groups. In each group there should be ten people, so the total number of administrative personnel was 90. These 90 people were assigned with the building and maintaining of Muong Luang Namtha and Muong Phoukha. After handing the administrative responsibilities over to the courtiers, the kings promoted Hmun Hane to Phagna Luang Hane, Hmun Keo to Sene Sai, Hmun Teb to Sene Khoua and gave a goldren hat, one pair of golden shoes, one gold-plated sword, one golden

glass, a gun with a double barrel, one spear, two strands of string to Phagna Luang Hane so that he could take these things and led the 90 lords to Muong Luang Namtha in 2174 Buddhist Era, corresponded to 1632. On that same day Chao Nared Tafay returned to Muong Xay. Phagna Luang Hane ruled Muong Luang Namtha for seven years and died in that city.

After the death of Phagna Luang Hane, Chao Southothammikarath sent his son, named Chao Xang Pheuak (white elephant) to reign in Muong Luang Namtha. Chao Southothammikarath had seven children: (1) Chao Xang Pheuak, (2) Chao Hark Muong, (3) Thao Khamphou, (4) Thao Khamfong, (5) Thao Khamla, (6) Nang Khankham (female), (7) Nang Southamma. The sons of Chao Southothammikarath reigned in Muong Luang Namtha succeedingly until all five sons died and they had no one from their family to succeed them, except Nang Khankham and Nang Southamma. So the courtiers coronated the two ladies as successors to the throne. While the city was ruled by these two sisters it was hit by a flood every year. This flood



believed to be caused by a kind of vine known as the Kheua Khao Kat. This vine was supposed to have stopped the water. So the people had to suffer from a great loss of properties, domestic animals, and death. So the two ladies decided that they should sacrifice their lives in order to protect the people. They called a meeting of courtiers and administrators in order to find ways to remedy the flood situation. The two ladies decided to go and cut the vine Kheua Khao Kat by themselves and ordered the courtiers that if they both should die, the courtiers ought to make a funeral ceremony and give alms to them. Every year they should worship one cow and one buffalo to their five brothers. The buffalo should be black and the cow should be black and pregnant. After their orders were given and had been accepted by their subordinates, they went into a boat heading for the cutting of Kheua Khao Kat at once. As the Kheua Khao Kat was cut the water current was so strong that it drowned the boat including the two sisters. When the water dried up the courtiers went looking

for their corpses in order to have a funeral ceremony and a worship as they asked. Since then the people had been worshipping each and every year that it is believed to be a custom until today, and it is called "the worshipping of the city God."

After the death of these two sisters, there was no one from the royal family to reign the country, so the courtiers called a meeting and then came down to Xieng Sene to ask Chao Mom Luang who was a relative of Chao Southothammikarath to go and rule Muong Luang Namtha. While ruling in Muong Luang Namtha, the nephew of Chao Mom Luang ran away to live with the Ho army and the Ho changed his name to Ta Fou Gne. Then Ta Fou Gne led the Ho troops to attack Chao Mom Luang. When defeated, Chao Mom Luang ordered his subordinates and population to evacuate to Muong Nane. Chao Mom Luang requested the establishment of a large city as a protectorate of Muong Nane called Muong Koutsavady, that is Muong Ngeun of the present day. Through the reign of Chao Mom Luang in Muong Koutsavady, the people lived

peacefully and happily until his death in the city.

After that the courtiers crowned the following to the throne succeedingly: Maha Vong, Maha Noi, Maha Thammalangka, Chao Mom Heb, Phanasay Phomninh.

The king Phanasay Phomninh reigned for one year and died at Pang Sao while travelling to Muong Nane to accept an official assignment from the King of Muong Nane. So the courtiers crowned Chao Souvanh as King. After Chao Souvanh it was Chao Nasai.

From that time on Muong Koutsavady was without a ruler for sometime. So the courtiers decided to ask the King of Muong Nane to have Chao Sitthisane come and rule Muong Koutsavady. Chao Sitthisane ruled for three years, when the King of Muong Nane promoted him and changed his name to Chao Luang Khoummachang Sitthisane Souvannalangsy

Rattanaphouthone Oudonebane. In that same year, that is 2432 Buddhist Era, corresponded to 1890, the King of Muong Nane ordered Chao Luang Koummachang Sitthisane to come and build (develop) Muong Luang Namtha. Chao Luang Sitthisane,



including his subordinates and some public works people, came to build Muong Luang Namtha in 2433 Buddhist Era, corresponded to May 2, 1891. Before leaving Muong Koutsavady, Chao Luang Sitthisane assigned the city to the care of Chao Luang Khalay.

Chao Luang Koummachang Sitthisane led his subordinates and public works people to settle down in Ban Vieng Kao (Vieng Tay of the present time). In that year Chao Luang Koummachang Sitthisane went back to Muong Koutsavady and brought some more people to Muong Luang Namtha. The important courtiers under Chao Luang Sitthisane at the time were: (1) Chao Say, (2) Chao Kouan Sourinh, (3) Chao Southa, (4) Sene Luang Mangkhalavouthi, (5) Phagna Rasvong, (6) Nai Hoi Gna, (7) Nai Hoi Teb, (8) Nai Hoi Thi, (9) Sene Luang Chayavouthi, (10) Sene Luang Inta, (11) Sene Gnok, (12) Nai Phom, (13) Sene Kantha, (14) Sene Sakay, (15) Sene Nai Lang, (16) an official of Muong Nane named Phaphom Sourinh. The King of Muong Nane arranged for the transportation of Chao Luang Koummachang Sitthisane

and his staff along Muong Ngao, crossing Thong Sammone, Ban Ta, Phou Khene, Xieng Khouang, and then crossing the Mekong River, Houei Sai, along the road of Ban Kha (Lao Theung) arrived Phoukha, and then Luang Namtha. Chao Luang Sitthisane and his staff arrived in Muong Luang Namtha in 2434 Buddhist Era, corresponded to 1892, on the 4th day of the 5th lunar month, and they remained overnight along the bank of the river Ngene, on the east side of the city (today it is being used as a crossing point to Phoukha). Five days later the public works people went clearing the land and set up a small dormitory building (in Wat Ban Luang Khob of today) for two Buddhist novices named Néne Nantha and Néne Chayaphagna including one laity named Aie Teb. Chao Luang Sitthisane ordered the people to disperse and settle down around Muong Luang Namtha. Sene Kane Muong, of the Leu race, who came from Ban Phao Kout (Thailand) was ordered to settle down along the bank of Nam Thoung river (Ban Namthoung of today). Sene Luang Mankhalavouthi

was ordered to lead the villagers of Ban Luang and Ban Khone to go and settle next to each other (Ban Luang and Ban Khone were the names of the villages of Muong Koutsavady) called Ban Luang Khone. Chao Kuansourinh was to lead his subordinates to establish a village in Pak Nam Bone (Ban Bone of today). Chao Luang Sitthisane led the royal families to settle in Ban Vieng Kao (Ban Vieng Tay of today). Sene Gnok was from Ban Phieng Ngam so he was permitted by Chao Luang Koummachang Sitthisane to settle along the plain, at the foot of the mountain Xang Phou Mone.

In 2434 Buddhist Era, corresponded to the 10th of July, 1893, a group of Thai Dam emigrated from Muong Theng; these were: Phya Souvanna Bouakham, Phya Khammy, Sene Pong and Thao Boua. They asked permission to live in Muong Luang Namtha with Chao Luang Sitthisane. They settled down in Ban Thong Onh. Then more Thai Dam continued to arrive in Namtha and established new villages such as: Ban Thong Chai, Ban Thong Dy, Ban Pa Hong, Ban Thong Kang, Ban Nam Ngene, Ban Pong.



The Thai Dam expanded greatly and rapidly; the last village to be established by the Thai Dam was called Ban Phè.

In 2435 Buddhist Era, corresponded to September, 1894, three foreigners came into Muong Luang Namtha. They were: (1) Mr. Pavie (French), (2) no name was given in history (French), (3) Phaphomsourinh (Thai). The three men stayed along the bank of Nam Ngene, on the west side of the city (the way to Muong Sing). The next day the three men went into the city to negotiate with Chao Luang Sitthisane on the matter of dividing boundaries. By the result of the negotiation, it was agreed that the land on the east of the Mekong river would belong to the French, and the land on the west of the Mekong river would belong to the Thai. Therefore Mr. Pavie gave the French national flag to Chao Luang Sitthisane as an evidence. When everything was settled, Mr. Pavie and his party left Muong Luang Namtha. Next year, that is, in 2436 Buddhist Era, corresponded to September 12, 1895, Muong Luang Namtha became a French protectorate

because each and every king of administration depended absolutely on the French. Mr. Malone was charged with the establishment of a camp at Ban Luang Khone (the big camp of today).

Later when there were many villages and they were greatly prospered, Chao Luang Sitthisane acquired permission from the French to go to the King in Luang Prabang to ask the King's permission to set up a law court in Muong Luang Namtha. When permission was granted by the King in Luang Prabang, Chao Luang Sitthisane set up a law court and selected the following judges: Chao Noi Phommuong was the head of the judges, Phagna Mouny was an administrator, Sene Luang Lakhana was a clerk of court, Sene Phouthone Rasvong was a judge. Besides, Chao Luang Sitthisane arranged for the training of Nai Ban, Tasseng and Nai Kong in order to help in developing the country and in disseminating their religion. Chao Luang Sitthisane governed Muong Luang Namtha for 16 years; under his leadership the city progressed greatly and the population lived peacefully and happily

with their trading business. Chao Luang Sitthisane died in 2449 Buddhist Era, corresponded to 1907. The following year the courtiers crowned his son, Chao Luang Boutsarotrath Kheunphet, to be king. Chao Luang Boutsarotrath Kheunphet thought that Ban Vieng Kao, which his father had constructed was too small with the everyday expansion of the villages and because it was hit by flood every year, Chao Luang Boutsarot Kheunphet agreed with the courtiers that the villages of Ban Vieng Kao were to be moved to Ban Vieng May, next to Thong Vieng Sam Hmun, (Vieng Neua of the present day) and Chao Luang Boutsaroth arranged for a ceremony in which prayers were chanted in chorus for continuous prosperity and long life to the country, and changed the name of the city to Vieng Rattanadonkeo. Chao Luang Boutsarorath died in Ban Vieng May. The courtiers crowned Chao Phaphommavongsa, the son of Chao Luang Boutsarotrath Kheunphet to the throne to succeed his father. Chao Phaphommavongsa reigned for about 5-6 years and resigned from the Chao



Luang Title and claimed that he was very old and had no ability to perform his duties effectively. So the French ordered the abolition of the law court in Namtha, that it should be affiliated with the court in Muong Sing. From that time on Muong Luang Namtha had no Chao Luang to rule it. The French promoted Thao Bounma to Nai Kong, and Sene Pane to Tasseng. Then Nai Kong Bounma and Phagna Rasvong committed an official offend and the French judged that they be imprisoned for 25 years.

The administration of Muong Luang Namtha in 1629, that is from its birth or since the reign of Chao Fa Southothammikarath, there was a monarch-type of administration by having a Chao Luang as the administrator for more than 300 years, that is, until the reign of Phaphommavongsa. At this time the administration was under the French. After the resignation of Phaphommavongsa from the title of Chao Luang, the French ordered the abolition of the law court from Muong Luang Namtha and affiliated it with the court in Muong Sing. So every kind of

administration was under the French and the French allowed them the authority of Nai Kong, Tasseng, and Nai Ban only. The administration with Nai Kong as full authority was carried on for five generations - until the time of Nai Kong Hom Sundara. He was the first Nai Kong to be assigned by a royal decree from King Sisavangvong in which he was ordered to be Nai Kong in Muong Luang Namtha. At this time, 1944, the Second World War broke out, and the Japanese army came to chase the French away from Muong Luang Namtha. Some of the administrative staff went along with the French and took refuge with the Ho. Four Tassengs stayed behind; these were: (1) Tasseng Ban Luangkhone, named Chao Noi Silangka Chayavong, (2) Tasseng Ban Pong, (3) Tasseng Ban Nam Thong, and (4) Tasseng Ban Thong Om. When the Japanese was powerful in Muong Luang Namtha they assigned Chao Noi Silangka Chayavong to act as Nai Ban. Chao Noi Silangka called a meeting of Nai Ban and Tasseng in order to discuss the guarding of boundaries in Muong Luang Namtha. At the meeting

it was agreed to establish a people's military unit in order to guard the roads leading in and out of Muong Luang Namtha. In late 1945, the Japanese left Muong Luang Namtha. After the Japanese had left, a Ho army, consisted of 1,500 men, came in and organized an armed force in Muong Sing. The commander of this force was called Phu Su Chang and his assistant was called Lothong Chang. Phu Su Chang wrote a letter to Chao Noi Silangka Chayavong requesting him to come to Muong Sing in order to promote him to Sene Chang (Grade Chao Muong). Chao Noi Silangka accepted his title from the Ho army and returned to Muong Luang Namtha and that group of Ho soldiers passed into Muong Luang Namtha easily.

The 1,500 Ho soldiers were divided into two groups: one group was commanded by Phu Su Chang. He led his troop down along the Namtha on a punt (boat). Another group was commanded by Lothong Chang. This group went by way of Ban Na Mo. Then the country returned to normal again and there was a Royal Decree ordering Nai Kong Douangkham,



who was Nai Kong in Muong Sing, to come and be the Nai Kong in Muong Luang Namtha in 1946. In the following year the King Sisavangvong gladly established Muong Luang Namtha as an office of Khoueng Houa Khong by assigning Mr. Pane Sisouphanthong as Chao Khoueng Houa Khong from 1947-1948. The next Chao Khoueng who hold office from 1948-1952 was Mr. Khamsene Bounyaseng. Then from 1952-1954, it was Tiao Somsanith. Then it was Mr. Vantanouan Ouparavanh, who served from 1954-1956. Then it was Mr. Khoragnok Souvannavong, who served from 1956-1957. While Mr. Khoragnok Souvannavong was Chao Khoueng in Houa Khong, a Ho came in to cause a riot in Muong Luang Namtha. This Ho was shot to death by a Yao at Ban Phin Ho while he was having a meal in a house. From 1957 it was his Highness Tiao Bovone Vatthana who became Chao Khoueng until today.



