

FURTHER NOTES ABOUT THE CHAUBUN, Etc.

BY

MAJOR E. SEIDENFADEN

OF THE

PROVINCIAL GENDARMERIE.

In Volume XII, part 3, of this Journal I published some notes concerning the Chaubun, or Nia-kuol people, living in Amphö Paktungchai (ปักทุงไชย), Changvad Nakon Rajasima, Southern Korat. I was not at the time aware that there were living other communities belonging to this people, at any rate not in any of the four north-eastern provinces (Korat, Ubon, Udorn, Roi-Ech) so well known to me. But in the month of March 1919, when on a tour of inspection to Changvad Chaiyapum (ไชยภูมิ), I came across several villages peopled entirely or partly by Chaubun. The Chaubun of this region are officially called Lavā in the census and under this name I had known these people for many years; this time, being brought in personal touch with them, I discovered soon by comparing their language with that of the Chaubun that these Lavā are identical with the Chaubun of Southern Korat. But while the Southern Chaubun are recognized as and claim for themselves to be the aborigines, not so the Northern Chaubun, who pretend to have immigrated from Petchabun, where, according to their statements, there still live a great number of their brethren. If the Chaubun really are identical with the Lavā I must of course give up any claim to have "discovered" a hitherto unknown people and language; but the fact remains interesting in showing that probably the whole of Western Korat formerly was peopled by Lavā, a people belonging to the same ethnical stock as the Lavā of Lopburi, Supan, Nakon Savan and Payab. As demonstrated in the list of Nia-kuol words and expressions published with my first paper on this subject, the Chaubun

language shows many likenesses to Mōn and Cambodian, and I suggested that the Chaubun language might represent the former common language out of which the later separate Mōn and Cambodian were shaped. Though, after mature reflection, I do not more dare to maintain that hypothesis I might perhaps be permitted to suggest another thing: according to the few and scarce data we possess concerning the Pre-Tai inhabitants of the Mēnām valley, these were of Mon-Kinēr stock and probably nearer Mōn than Kmēr. In support of this it may be mentioned that at Lopburi a stèle bearing an inscription from the VIth century has been found; the language of this inscription has not yet been translated in extenso but, as far as the experts can see, it is a language representing a link between Mōn and Cambodian. My suggestion is now that this language is Lavā. The primitive form of this language may differ from that of the inscription, but that can be explained by the influence of the Hindu or more correctly Indian colonists in the Mēnām valley. I have in vain tried to obtain any publications concerning the Lavā language; even in the National Library no such documents are to be found. [What an opportunity for a member of the Society living in a region peopled by Lavā to examine the question of the Chaubun and the Lavā language being identical or not]. The racial type, dwellings and manners of life of the Chaipyapum Chaubun are quite like those of the Southern Chaubun; only the Northern Chaubun practise rai cultivation more than their brethren in the South. The villages peopled by the Chaubun in North-Western Korat are to be found partly in Ampö Chaturat (จตุรัส) partly in Kingampö Bān Chūan (บ้านจวน), formerly called Kingampö Bamuetnarong (บ้านหนองจวน). Most of these villages are built in the forest stretching in a big half-circle from the Petchabun hills in the West and the Pukio hills in the North down towards Hoei Kanchu (a tributary of Lam Chi) and the upper reaches of the Lam Chi—a rather wild and inhospitable country outside the fertile valley of the Lam Chi. Over the Petchabun hills, here called Pu Kang Hōi, lead several passes down to Ampö Vichien one pass passing the old Mūang Si Tat. (*Vide* the archeological map made by Major Lunet de Lajonquière). The names of the villages

peopled by the Chaubun in Kingampö B. Chuan are: B. Talok, B. Luark B. Nā Yang Grak, B. Vangkōn, B. Pong Khun Pet, B. Chōm Kēo, B. Vang Kruk and B. Tarat all belonging to tambun Chūan and lying W. N. W. of this village. These Chaubun number 750 persons. In Amphö Chaturat the Chaubun are living in the three villages of B. Lahān Krai, B. Nong Boa Ravē and B. Hoei Yē, but here they are mixed up with Lāo people; these villages belong to tambun Nong Boa Bāl; and the Chaubun number here about 400 persons. Finally there are living 110 Chaubun in tambun Panchanā (พันชนะ), Amphö Dān Khun Tot (ด่านขุนทด), changvad Nakon Rajasima, in the village B. Boa Yai near the foothills of the Petchabun range. The number of Chaubun or Lavā should thus amount to about 1,260; add thereto the 700 living in Amphös Paktungchai and Kratok (กระต๊อ) and we get 1,960 or nearly 2,000 persons belonging to this people of which number about 1,700 should still be able to speak their proper language. While the southern branch both pays the poll-tax and are liable to do military service, not so the northern branch, which is exempt from conscription and the representatives of which are much more simple and primitive too than the southern one.

(II.) Some years ago when on tours of inspection in Udorn I was told about a mysterious Pigmy people called Bang But (บางบุตร) by the Lāo. According to the tales told me these mysterious people lived in the jungle on the top of the mountains, they hunted big game and cultivated rais and last but not least were endowed with power to make themselves invisible; as their abode there was pointed out Pu Ho Pu Hāng, a big mountain looming up most picturesquely on the French side of the Mékong to the north of Amphö Pongpisai and Pu Kradūng a 6,000 feet high hill lying to the North of the old crater-lake of Pu Vierng, changvad Konken. At the time when I was told these stories I didn't take them seriously (especially not the invisibility!), but in 1919 I met several hunters from Amphö Pu Kio (now called Pak Bang—ผักบัง) who told me that a tribe called *Khā Dong lüang* (the withered leaves' savages) or *Khā Tam Bang* (the savages who can make themselves invisible) lived in the jungle on the slopes of the big

Pu Kio mountain, which to the west separates Amphö Pak Bang from the Petchabun changvad. These Khā are under middle height, well built, but very darkhued; their hair is lank and straight as that of mongoloid races, not curly as that of negroids; both sexes go entirely naked; they do not construct houses but live under some hastily erected leafshelters like the Semang; and they leave these shelters, after some few days (hence the name Khā Dong lüang). Their only weapon is a sort of wooden javelin the point of which is hardened in fire; they are courageous and able hunters and chase and kill both the one-horned and the two-horned rhinoceros (Kasō), the sladang or Kating ox, deer and wild pigs and that rare animal Schomburgk's deer which is living just in this region. They do not cultivate anything but gather certain wild fruits such as wild bananas, li-chis, yams and eatable fungi. These people are of very unclean habits and as a result of their primitive life the rate of child mortality is very high. The Khā Dong Lüang are very shy and timid, afraid of meeting people not belonging to their own tribe, but as they want certain articles as tobacco, salt and perhaps a piece of cotton to swaddle a child in they are forced to make some barter. This they do in the following manner: in a certain place well-known by the Lāo they place different things which they know are appreciated by the Lāo traders such as rhinoceros horns, antlers, skins, etc.; the Lāo traders in turn give the Khā those things wanted by them; it is seldom that even these traders see anything of the Khā themselves who hide in the jungle close to the place of the barter.

The Khā Dong Lüang are to be met with in Tambun Kūt Lō at Bān Nong Boa and B. Būng Sipsi, also at B. Gēng, B. Gūk Pūng B. Pak Sang and B. Gēng Dat Sai, all the last named lying at Lam Prom at the foot of Pu Kio itself; they are also found sometimes in Tambun Nong Boa Dēng, which tambun is lying close to Pu Kio too. So far the information given me by those hunters, but Pra Yotsunthorn, at that time Governor of Changvad Chaiyapum (now Governor of Changvad Nakorn Chaisri), has kindly corroborated all the information given above as quite reliable. M. Petit-huguenin tells me that some years ago when in Müang Prae he heard about the same people living in the hills to the East of Prae-

In such a wild and thinly populated country as Petchabun it is of course quite conceivable that a savage tribe might roam along the slopes of that far-stretching mountain range, the Petchabun Range, from the extreme North down to Dung Praia Fai. According to the information given above these Khā must represent a very primitive stage of humanity; the Semang in Patalung and Patani can hardly be more savage and among their Khā brethren in French Indo-China they rank only with the Khā Harēm, a branch of which is living on the big Annamite cordillera in the district of Tā-Khēk. These Khā Harēm are, according to descriptions given by French authors, quite savage, go naked, have no houses and live by hunting and on the wild fruits in the big forest.

III. In my first paper written about the Chaubun I mentioned some other Khā living in a village in Amphō Paktungchai, and I said that these Khā probably were prisoners of war brought here from Attapō, and I hoped later on to write a paper about them. I have since vainly tried to gather some more information about them; the only people knowing a little about their history and language was an ancient pair, a man and woman, whom I met in 1916 under a halt in the village called Bān Tungchān (บ้านต๋องจันทน์), six kilometers south of Mīiang Paktungchai. These old folk were at that time between 80 and 90 years old, very deaf and rather senile and could scarcely remember thirty words of their mother-tongue. As far I could gather, these Khā are called *Khā Tang-Ong* and had their homes in the Attapō district of French Laos from which they were taken away under a slave raid by some Ubon Lāo and brought to Korat 80 years ago. Most of them were settled in B. Tungchān and some few in B. Sok (โศก), a small village bying close to the southern city wall of Korat. The descendants, a 100 or 150 in all, speak Tai and live like the Korat Tai whom they resemble very much (the reason for this being that the Tai in Korat really are Tai-ised Kmērs and rather dark of colour). I give below a list of the few words of the Khā Tang-Ong language which I was able to gather:—

<i>English.</i>	<i>Khā Tang-Ong.</i>
Father	Bök
Mother	Mē
child	koan
son, boy	koan klo
daughter, girl	koan drir
man, husband	klo
woman, wife	drir
to eat	dong
to go	dok
to lie	kūij
to sleep	hnān
rice	kcha
paddy	chē
water	dāk
fire	ūn
firewood	long ūn
house	sröm
buffalo	kabö
bullock	pakmē
horse	sā
dog	chō
elephant	rūij
tiger	klüa
field	müan
forest	kja
river	charā

Only five of the above cited words resemble Mōn-Kmēr, viz., the words for child, mother, water, horse and tiger, but according to information given me in 1916, when I was in Paksē in French Laos the Khā Tang Ong speak a language very much like the Khā Brao, a big tribe living in the Attapö district and a clan of which tribe is living in the old Müang Kam Kūan Kēo in King Amphö Chanumān (ᨧᩢ᩠ᨦᩉ᩠ᩅᩢᨯ᩠ᨦᩉ᩠ᩅ) in Monthon Ubon; the language of

the Brao was studied and compiled by M. Taupin and published in "Bulletin de la Société des études indochinoises", Saigon, 1888, 2^e semestre.—

E. SEIDENFADEN.

Bangkok, in March 1920.

