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全球化背景下的 中国及东南亚 傣泰民族文化

THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF
DAI - TAI ETHNIC GROUP OF CHINA AND
SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE GLOBALIZATION

郑晓云 著

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段炳昌

Summary

DAI-TAI CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE GLOBALIZATION: ITS HISTORY AND PROS- PECTS

The Dai-Tai ^① is a larger ethnic group living in Yunnan province of China and in Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and India. The issue of the root of the Dai-Tai group has been debated for more than a hundred years. Among many questions about its root, the relation between the Dai-Tai and the Yue people was a crucial one. Many people believed that the Yue people were the ancestors of today's Dai-Tai people, and through ages of development, the Yue people become today's Dai-Tai people. After more than ten trips to Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos for study, I found that the Thai people were not originated from the Yue people, and there was not a Yue ethnic group even existed in history. The Dai-Tai people's history is so old that it is

① In this research project, the meaning of the Dai-Tai ethnic group is the peoples has common root of ethnic origination and has the ethnic linkage with the Dai people in Yunnan of China, it is different with the idea Tai-Kadai

impossible to trace it back beyond the Han Dynasty of China. But its history since the Han dynasty was more and more clear. The root of the Dai-Tai people was located in the central part of Yunnan Province. My theory has aroused concerns of Thai scholars.^① This book shall talk about the root of the Dai-Tai people, the migration of the Dai-Tai people from Yunnan to Southeast Asia and South Asia, and the formation of the Dai-Tai Cultural Zone, the cultural diversity of Dai-Tai and its change under the background of the globalization.

I. New Probes into the Root of the Dai-Tai Ethnic Group

I negate the viewpoint that the Yue people were an ancient ethnic group and at the same time I negate the viewpoint that the Yue people were the ancestors of the Dai-Tai people. After the negation, we may take a look at the mystery of the root of the Dai-Tai people from a completely new viewpoint and can give a new explanation to this issue.

Where did the Dai-Tai ethnic group come from?

^① Thai Roots. An interview to professor Zheng Xiaoyun, BANGKOK POST, February 9th 2002

Due to lack of historical evidence, we cannot possibly trace the Dai-Tai people beyond the Han dynasty of China. But historical records indicated that the ancestors of the Dai-Tai people inhabited in Yunnan during the Han Dynasty. If we don't know anything for sure about the root of the Dai-Tai people before the Han Dynasty, we can give a fairly detailed description of its history after that time. Therefore, I say that the Han Dynasty was the most important period for search the root of the Dai-Tai people, for that the history since then was clear: The root of today's Dai-Tai people was in Yunnan.

Dependent on long research of mine, the Dian kingdom was the homeland of the ancient Dai-Tai people. The principal parts of the people of the Dian kingdom were the ancestors of today's Dai-Tai people.

During the Han Dynasty, there was a kingdom called Dian. The Chapter of Southwest Aborigines in the famous Historical Records^① has one of the earliest words about the Dian kingdom: "There were more than a dozen aboriginal kingdoms in the Southwest, and Yelang was the largest one. To the west of the Yelang, Dian was the largest kingdom, which had tens of thousands of people." In the second year of Yuanfeng Reign of the Han Dynasty, the Han

① A famous historical book written by Si Ma Qian in Han dynasty

army conquered the Lake Dianchi area, the homeland of the Dian people, and the king of Dian surrendered to the emperor of Han. Han Dynasty established the Yizhou Prefecture at the area. The center of Dian kingdom was located in today's Jincheng. The flat land around Jincheng near Lake Dianchi was the center of the Dian civilization. At neighboring places like Shizaishan and Lijiashan, many Han tombs were found and many Han bronze wares were unearthed. The recorded history of the Dai-Tai people should have been started from this time and this area. It has been widely accepted that there existed a kingdom named Dian. But which ethnic groups lived in the Dian kingdom? What was the relationship between the ethnic groups in Dian Kingdom and the Dai-Tai people?

Firstly, let's study about the meaning of the word "Dian". There were two popular interpretations: One was that it meant the back flow of the water of Lake Dianchi, and the other was that it meant high mountains.^① Both interpretations tried to explain the meaning from its geographical characteristics. Some scholars tried to explain by consulting dictionaries.

The fact was, when Mr. Si Ma Qian was composing his famous Historical Records, he noted down the names by

① Wang Xianqian: Notes To The Book Of Han

speaking sound of the aboriginal. For many places and tribes, there were no proper names and character at that time. So the place names and tribe names in Historical Records were all sound representations. Therefore it was not reliable to interpret the meaning of "Dian" by its geographical characteristics, nor was it reliable to interpret its meaning by the surface meaning of the word.

In Historical Records, Mr. Si Ma Qian noted clearly that "Dian" was the name of a tribe instead of being a place name. Of course, we can arrive at the conclusion that "Dian" was also the territory of the kingdom. But Dian, in the first place, was the name of a tribe, which was the name of an ethnic group. Therefore, Dian was the dominant ethnic group in the Dian Kingdom and Dian accounted a large percentage of population in the kingdom.

Many scholars have studied about the ethnic group of Dian. One of the conclusions was that the principal parts of Dian people were a branch of Yue people, and they were the ancestors of Dai-Tai people. (Zhang zengqi, 1997) Although there was not any record saying that the main populations of the Dian Kingdom were Yue people. But many archaeological discoveries indicated that there were many similarities between the culture of Dian and that Dai-Tai. And the discoveries were also supported by the historical traditions of the Dai-Tai people. Therefore, we are safe to

say that the Dian people were directly linked to the Dai-Tai people.

The cultural relics of Dian Kingdom unearthed at Shizaishan and Lijiashan tombs showed us a general picture of the Dian culture, and provided us with direct evidence to tell who the Dian people were. A lot of bronze wares were unearthed: farming tools, daily utensils, drums, and boxes of shell stored. Carved on these wares were images of animals, buildings, religious activities, wars and family life. Through the carvings and the sculptures, we can imagine the life of the Dian people.^① Many unearthed articles gave hints about today's Dai-Tai group: the stilted house, bronze drum, tattoo, and rice cultivation. There was a most striking piece of evidence: the worship of peacock, which ruled that the Dian people were the ancestors of the Dai-Tai people. Peacock is highly respected among the Dai. For the Dai, it is the symbol of kindness, beauty and bravery. Many legendary heroes were the incarnation of peacock. Peacock has an important status in the Dai culture. Peacocks were carved in the bronze wares unearthed, and many tools shaped like peacocks. It should be pointed out that serpent was popularly worshiped by the Hundred-Yue of the Southeast China. This could also tell us that the ancestors

① Zhang Zengqi: *The Dian Kingdom And The Dian Culture*.

of the Dai-Tai people were originated from the Hundred-Yue. The peacock culture of Dian was one of direct evidences for the link between Dian people and Dai-Tai people.

Another evidence for the link between Dian and Dai-Tai is rice cultivation. 95% of Yunnan is mountainous. The Lake Dianchi area is the largest watershed in Yunnan and it is ideal for rice cultivation. Archeological studies indicated that the principal crop in the Lake Dianchi area is rice.^① It was also proven that rice cultivation in Yunnan dated back to as early as the Neolithic period. Yunnan is one of the earliest places of rice cultivation.^② The ancestor of Dai people are one of the earliest ethnic group that know how to cultivate rice and have the longest history of rice cultivation.^③ Rice is the staple for Dai people. The migration of the Dai has been unexceptionally along the rivers, for it is easier to grow rice near a river. There are two ways of rice farming in Yunnan; dry land farming and paddy field farming. Some ethnic groups in Yunnan grow rice in dry land. However, their history of paddy field farming is no longer than a thousand years. For example, Hani and Yi

① Zhang Zengqi: *The Dian Kingdom And The Dian Culture*, p. 60.

② Li Kunsheng: *Yunnan's Place In The Study Of The Root Of Rice Cultivation*.

③ Editors: *Short History of The Dai*, and also Gao Lishi: *Traditional Irrigation And Environmental Protection In Xishuang Banna*.

People living in the Red River Watershed grow paddy rice, but we can be sure that they learnt it from other people and it was most likely from the Dai-Tai People. Their history of paddy-field farming was shorter than that of the Dai-Tai People. The paddy rice farming of Dian People was another evidence for its link to the Dai-Tai People.

The Dai story of Kunming is also an important evidence of Dai's existence in Central Yunnan. In the Dai language, Kunming is called Mengxie, which means, "Lost territory". Meng is a special Dai concept which means "state, city, feoffed land". According to Dai's historical literatures and Dai's legendary stories, in the remote years, the Dai People lived in Lake Dianchi (Dai people Called Noongxie) area. They were defeated in a war and were forced to give up their homeland and migrate to today's Xishuang Banna and Dehong. That's why Kunming is called the "lost territory" in the Dai language.

We must also discuss about the relationships between Dian and Dian-Yue. In my opinion, Dian is today's Dai. Because when Mr. Si Ma Qian noted the name of the Dian Tribe, he used a Chinese word. We cannot tell how accurate he was at recording the sound with his Chinese words. As for the Dai-Tai, Dai is the oldest way they called themselves. The pronunciations of Dian and Dai are quite close. This makes us more doubtful about Si Ma Qian's accuracy.

This is also why the meaning of the word “Dian” cannot possibly be interpreted reasonably, when it was used as the name of an ancient ethnic group. For an ethnic group, many changes might have taken place in their long history. But what is more likely to be memorized is their name. This has been proved by history. As the main ethnic group of the Dian Kingdom, the Dai-Tai People naturally handed down their own name. Therefore, it is reliable to say that Dian is Dai.

The relationship between Dian and Dai is also indicated by the information carried in the term of Dian-Yue. Historical Records recorded that “the Kunming tribes were uncivilized. They were thieves and robbers, and they killed Han messengers for no reason. It was said that a thousand li^① west forward of these tribes, there was a kingdom called Dian-Yue, where people traveled by riding elephants.” The Dian-Yue Kingdom in this quotation was widely accepted as being located at today’s Baoshan and Dehong of Yunnan. This is true to the geographical distribution of the Dai-Tai. This piece is the earliest record of Dai in Chinese historical literatures. It is accepted that Dian-Yue People were the ancestors of Dai-Tai People. What is the most significant about this piece is that it provided a pronunciation link be-

① a unit of distance measure in Chinese history.

tween Dian-Yue and Dai-Tai .

It also gave out that the Dai-Tai was called Dian in ancient Chinese historical literatures. Here is the point: In the term Dian-Yue, which one referred to people, Dian or Yue? Now it is generally taken that the Yue refers to people, and therefore, Yue was taken as the ancestors of Dai-Tai People. But this is wrong! It does not hold water to conclude only by the surface meaning of the word Dian-Yue that Yue people were the ancestors of Dai-Tai People. Dian-Yue was the area where the early Dai-Tai lived. However, what referred to people was not Yue but Dian. As I have mentioned above, Dian is Dai, while Yue was used by ancient Chinese to signify "remote land". Therefore, Dian-Yue meant "Dai people living at remote places". Furthermore, neither "Elephant Kingdom" nor "Yue" was the name that ethnic group called themselves. It is a name that other ethnic groups referred to this ethnic group. Ancient Chinese called this remote land inhabited with Dai people "Dian-Yue". This solved the puzzle why Kunming area was called "Dian". Since Dian appeared a thousand li away, we have more reason to believe that the Dian Kingdom was established by early Dai-Tai People, and the word "Dian" evolved from the word that became today's "Dai".

I have noticed the studies of the linking issue of Thai and Zhuang People. In recent years, many achievements

have been made in this area. There are many cultural similarities between the two ethnic groups, and the central part of Yunnan in ancient times was also inhabited with the ancestors of Zhuang People. However, neither Thai nor Zhuang People has ever identified themselves as associated with the counterpart. This is also true with the Kemu ethnic group and the Bulang ethnic group, who share similar cultures with Dai-Tai People, but belong to different language family. This Was a result of cultural dissemination and cultural assimilation. ^①

The ancestors of Dai-Tai People developed into an ethnic group in Yunnan at the Qin Dynasty or the Han Dynasty. They scattered over the central and southwestern parts of the province. We can confirm that it is one of the native ethnic groups in Yunnan. ^② It started melting with other cultures very early. Lake Dianchi area of Yunnan was the birthplace of Dai-Tai People. The Dian Kingdom was a small state established by Dai-Tai People's ancestor. With the elapse of time, Dai-Tai People grew and migrated southward and southwestward along the rivers of Jinsha, Nujiang, Yuanjiang and Lancang. Down to Tang and Song dynasties, Dai-Tai settled widely over the province. Many

① Zheng Xiaoyun: Cultural identity And Cultural Changes, China Social Sciences Press House, Beijing, 1991.

② Major Erik Seidenfaden: The Siam Society, The Thai peoples.

places inhabited with other people were also inhabited with Dai-Tai People. Chuxiong Prefecture is an example: many of its place names are linked to Dai-Tai inhabitants, but there are no longer Dai-Tai communities anymore.^① The ancestor of Dai-Tai People had been migrating southward for many different reasons. There are reliable historical materials to prove that the Thai-Tai People living in Myanmar, Laos, Viet Nam, Thailand and India are linked to Dai People in Yunnan. They moved out of Yunnan,^② and formed a Dai-Tai cultural zone with Yunnan as its root.

II. The Formation of “Dai-Tai Cultural Zone” and Its Characteristics

After Han dynasty, The ancestor of Tai People moved along Honghe River (Red River), Lancang River and Ruili River to Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar and further down to Thailand and India.^③

① Ma Kuangyuan: *On The Culture Of Central Yunnan*.

② Nel Adams alias Sao Noanoo: *The Tai Ethnic Migration And Settlement In Myanmar*.

③ Zheng Xiaoyun: *The Migration of the Dai-Tai from Yunnan to Southeast Asia and the Formation of “The Dai-Tai Culture Zone”*, form PAPER COLLECTION OF ORIGINATION TAI ETHNIC GROUP AND NANCHAO KINGDOM STUDIES, China Book Press House, Beijing, 2005.

To settle down in new homelands and grow bigger, the Tai ancestor had three weapons: rice cultivation, Muang Ban social system, and cultural duplication. Yunnan was a starting place of rice cultivation, and Dai-Tai was one of the earliest rice-cultivating ethnic groups. Rice cultivation has been Dai-Tai People's traditional way of life. Before the arrival of Dai-Tai ancestor, Southeast Asia was inhabited mainly with Mon-Khmer groups. The Mon-Khmers lived by slash-and-burn agriculture, which could not afford the growth of population and could not support a senior civilization. When Dai-Tai People ancestor came, rice civilization took the place of local civilization, and Dai-Tai ancestor grew and pushed other people out. This was recorded in the history of many Thai communities.

The Muang Ban social system was also a key driving force for Dai-Tai People to grow. It was a typical political system in ancient Southwest China and Southeast Asia. "Muang" was a feudal administrative level, including towns and villages. "Ban" means a village. Both Meng and Ban were relatively independent as political-economic-military bodies. Muang, with its feoffed administrative head and its full-fledged governmental administration, was a local political power in essence. In Yunnan and Southeast Asia, there are many place names beginning with "Meng". It indicated that they were created by Dai-Tai People. Both