

The Lia and Taang Issue (03)

The Use of Taang as an Honorific Prefix for All Age-Brackets of Zomi Males

By Taang Zomi

According to Sing Khaw Khai (1935-1996), “Taang” is a poetic word meaning mountain, might, strength, gentleman, voting male member of the community.

According to Ngulh Khai (1915?-19xx?) (father of Sing Khaw Khai), he (Ngulh Khai) was a “Taang” (mighty man).

According to Suann Pum, elder brother of Rev. Vial Nang, “Taang” is a poetic word that he used to refer to his married younger brothers, Khawl Cin and Rev. Vial Nang. Or more correctly, “Taang” is a poetic word that he used to refer to himself (who was a married man) when he mentioned his younger married brothers.

Contrary to popular belief, “Taang” is a poetic word used to refer not only to unmarried young men but also to all age-brackets of Zomi males: new-born babies, children, lads, single men, married men, childless married men, fathers, divorced men, widowers, elderly men. The word “Taang” could be used as an honorific prefix for all categories of males, regardless of age or marital status or whether one has sons and daughters.

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Turabian Style - Sample Footnotes and Bibliographic Entries (6th edition)

Bibliography:

Khai, Sing Khaw. *Zo People and Their Culture: A historical, cultural study and critical analysis of Zo and its ethnic tribes*. New Lamka-G, Churachandpur 795 128, Manipur, India: Khampu Hatzaw, 1995

Footnote:

Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture: A historical, cultural study and critical analysis of Zo and its ethnic tribes* (New Lamka-G, Churachandpur 795 128, Manipur, India: Khampu Hatzaw, 1995), 92

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According to the Tedim pattern of Zo language, *taang* (*tlang*, *taung*), essentially refers to mountain ridge or mountain range. This term is taken by the Tedims for one's self-address usually in poem with reference to the dignity of men. When a man says "*Taang* hi ing" meaning "I am *taang*", he is asserting his own manhood with the sense of dignity likened to the physical image of mountain.¹ To put it in the style of Dr. Stein's phrase, it is the self-assertion 'at the center of his world and has a warlike victorious air frequently expressed by the idea of height, loftiness or elevation and might',² which is symbolized by mountain; he himself is likened to mountain. Relating to this culture, an anonymous writer writes in honour of the Taungpulu Kaba-Aye Sayadaw on the event of the Sayadaw's death, saying, "When a man of might and magnitude, especially one who is held in immense affection and esteem by his dependants or followers, passes away, the usual saying in Burmese is 'the Great Golden Mountain has dropped and fallen.'"³ In short, *taang* is thus used as somewhat like **gentleman**. Pum Za Kham, a well-known poet

1 The footnote number in the original was 68.

Ngulh Khai of Suangpi in Tedim township composed a song in which he depicts his indignant feeling. The song sings thus:

Sangmang ka kap tun tom ci e,
Gual in a lel cingsak e.
Ka pham zonga *taang* hi ve'ng e.
Lungtup tun siang ka tutsa aw,
Zua mun ka hil ding hi e.

[People are speaking ill of the king beast
that I shot as being deformed.
But I, being the *mountain*,
would tell my dead father of what I had
brought to my mother in great delight.]

2 The footnote number in the original was 69.

Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, 204

3 The footnote number in the original was 70.

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in Tedim area, was once awarded a double-barrel gun. He was so pleased and so^a happy with the award that he composed a song in which he compares the doublebarrel gun with *lia* and *taang* meaning somewhat like a couple of two lovers or of a maid and a lad or of a **lady** and a **gentleman**. Corresponding to one's identification of himself with mountain, the individual members of the tribal society are likened to and identified as the individual mountains. Thus the public of the society is referred to as *Taangpi-Taangta* in Tedim, representing the individual members^b of the tribe^c as a whole exclusive of the *lia*, the female members who had no say in the public affairs. In the political sense, the term **Taangpi-Taangta** represents the voting members of the community in general. The same term is also used to denote millet, a traditional crop which can be grown only in a mountainous region. The crop is traditionally considered and treated like a sacred thing. There are prescribed taboos and restrictions to be strictly observed in the deal with it. The title given to Hou Chi, 'Lord of Millet' may be equivalent to *Taang Mang* in Tedim. It lies beyond one's comprehension to give opinion as to why *taang*, the word for mountain, is homologous with that of millet.

a The word "so" is what I (Taang Zomi) substitute for "too", which was in the original.

b The word "members" is what I substitute for "member", which was in the original.

c The word "tribe" is what I substitute for "tribes", which was in the original.