NOTES

Ramkhamhaeng or Ramkamhaeng

(รามคำแหง หรือ รามก่ำแหง)

Upon having been familiar with writing system of Tai-speaking people in Southeast Asia and Southern China for some years, the writer has learned that the script of the Tai-speaking groups is much akin to one another. A good example of this claim will be found among Tai race in Lanna, Kentung, Yunnan, and Lan Xang, whose spoken language has common origin and reflects less Khmer influence.

As regards the central Thai, their language is more developed and more enriched by Khmer terms and another loanwords. Katanyoo Chuchuen (1982) said, “At least, there are about 2000 Khmer loanwords in both written and spoken language of the central Thai”.

The aforesaid terms are mostly found in literature and official usage. The main reason behind this fact is that central Thailand was adjacent to the then more-civilized Khmer kingdom and eventually more influenced by Khmer culture than other Tai groups. The writer is of opinion that the invention of Thai script in 1283 by Ramkhamhaeng the Great is more or less influenced by, or modelled on Khmer script. But other Tai-speaking people, who were quite isolated from Khmer influence, adopted Pali script which is used by the Sinhalese for transmission and propagation of Theravada Buddhism. Pali script was later introduced, with the advent of Buddhism, to other Buddhist kingdoms of the Mon, Burmese, Lanna Thai, and Lao, respectively.

For the central Thai Khmer script still exercised its influence in religious studies and magical practices for hundreds of years though the Thai have had their own writing system as mentioned earlier.

The writer does not know if philologists, who deciphered Sukhothai steles, are aware that the Tai-speaking and others in Southeast Asian countries pronounce the same consonants differently in spite that they are derived, or developed from the same origin. Consequently, their scripts are varied in sound and number. Some groups abolished the characters that do not fit their tongue. For example, the Burmese have no S (w) in their spoken language. When they adopted Pali terms with S initial, they replace it with Th as in “U Than” ( นายทัน ), the former Secretary-General of UNO. It is a loanword from Pali, “santi or santa”, meaning “peace or peaceful”.

In order to point up a mistake the philologist has made in transliteration of Sukhothai king’s name, “Ramkhamhaeng”, the writer would first show difference in sound of particular alphabets made by the aforesaid peoples although their script is derived from the same origin as follows:
The above characters in italic ឈ (G) as indicated in Khmer, Sinhalese, Mon, and Lanna middle-class script, has guttural sound produced by back of tongue and palate. It sounds like ຫ (K), but not គ (Khaw) in modern Thai script.

According to the above mentioned alphabets, the Khmer, Sinhalese, and Mon, unlike Central Thai and Lanna Thai, have no consonant Khaw Khuad and Khaw khon (ឈ ឈឈ និង ឈ ឈៗ), and they all pronounce Khaw Khwai (ក ក្នុង) like the sound of G as in “Go” or in “Gacchami” in Pali. But for the central Thai there is not any difference in sound of two Khaw (គ គៗ), and they retained both Khaw (គ) in their writing system until 1927 when Khaw Khon (including Khaw Khuad and some other letters) was abolished. After that, there was once a script reformation attempted by the government in 1942. For example, counterpart characters were cancelled. But reformed system did not last long; it was abolished in 1944.5 Otherwise, the Thai would have got their writing system as practiced in some neighboring countries today.

Northern Thai people pronounce both characters Khaw quite differently, that is, Khaw Khwai sounds like Ga as in “ហាងគៗហុនក្នុងប្រវត្តិ”。6 Khaw Khon (គ) is pronounced as common Khaw as in “ហាង ក្នុង ក្តីឈុត”。As regards Khaw Rakhang (អ), both central and northern Thai make no variance in sound from other Khaw, and it is rarely used in both writing system.

From above instance, it can be concluded that the sound made by central Thai of their own script is also influenced by Khmer system, that is, they do not say Ka, Kha etc. as other Thai groups do, but pronounce Kaw, Khaw (ឈ, ឈៗ) instead. It shows that the Thai of Sukhothai adopted both consonants and sound system. The imitation of Khmer sound started to decline in Ayuthya period. At last they made no difference between sound of Khaw (គ) and Khaw (អ).

The Sinhalese, the Mon, the Khmer, and the Yuan pronounce Khaw Khwai (េ) equivalent to Ka in modern Thai way. In other words, there is no Khaw (អ) sound in the script adopted from India as in central and northern Thailand. As a result, the Thai have to invent it to fulfill all the sound they needed in their writing system.
Somchai Duenpen, Sisachanalai Historical Park, Sukhothai province said that the tone of Sukhothai people is somewhat different from standard Thai or the Thai in capital city, that is, when they pronounce high-class consonants it sounds like having tone mark as in "Standard Thai" in Sukhothai stele. But for middle-class consonants they always carry (จำจำ) tone as Kin (กิน) for Kin (กิน) and so on. In northern Thailand they also have latent tonation, and in case they want not tone, ɔ or ɔ will be put with the initial as ɔ stands for ป and ɔ is substituted for ป; เมืองลำบ ɔ เมืองต , etc.; or some consonants in low class will be used instead. For instance, ป is substituted for ป; "กู่ศรีบุรี" for กู่ศรีบุรี; "พระราม" for พระราม, which is commonly found in both Lanna and Sukhothai archaic writing system.

Likewise, when Ramkhamhaeng the Great inscribed his name on Stele I, he might have met with the same problem and solved it by substituting ɔ in low class for แ in middle class in order to avoid (จำจำ) sound. Thus, it comes "พระรามคานแห่ง" because "คานแห่ง" is not Sukhothai dialect, but Khmer loanword "กานแห่ง" or "คานแห่ง" as in "พระกาจีนแห่งท้องพระรา рубคานแห่ง". "Ram" (ราม) is Sukhothai (also northern Thai), meaning small as in "มิพิหารัยในใหญ่ มีพิหารัยในราม" (There are big and small temples); "Gamhaeng" (กานแห่ง) is a loanword of Khmer origin which is equivalent to modern Thai "กานแห่ง" (Gamhaeng) for the reason as mentioned earlier. It means "the Bold". Consequently, "รามคานแห่ง" (Ramkhamhaeng) should be transliterated into "Ramkhamhaeng" meaning "the Small but Bold" or "ผลกรีกีวิ" in colloquial Thai, an honorific name which King Sri Indraditya conferred on his young, brave son who helped him fight against the Lord of Muang Chod. But "Ramkhamhaeng" (รามคานแห่ง) as, so far, transliterated by linguistic experts does not convey any meaning. The late Chit Bhumisakdi (2527) also said that this name was given to some Sukhothai princes. It was later transmitted down to Ayuthya period, which is found in the Order of Knighthood (ตั้งเปรากฎหมายให้แลกวิรัติการนิพนธ์พุทธราษฎร์ พ.ศ. 1997) as in "พระรามคานแห่ง จัดราษฎร์มากเอา". And in the Bangkok period the name of Phra Ramkamhaeng is also mentioned in Laos Chronicle saying, "ให้พระราษฎร์คาน พระรามคานแห่ง พระรามเมือง พระราษฎร์คาน ยกหามทางเมืองพระรามเมืองศรีนครคานเพิ่ม". So far as documents are concerned, the term "คานแห่ง" has been totally absent from modern Thai vocabulary.

Sommai Premchit
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50002
REFERENCES:

1. กลยุทธ์ สุชิน, ภาษาแม่ในภาษาไทย. กรุงเทพพานนคร : ไทยรัตนานาหนึ่ง, 2525, หน้า 24.
2. ศาลฎีการย์ก้าวร ศิริภู, ลายสือไทย 700 ปี. กรุงเทพพานนคร : ศิริภูษากาฬราชวัฒน์, 2526, หน้า 34.
4. ศาลฎีการย์ก้าวร ศิริภู, เรื่องเดียวกัน, หน้า 36.
5. ศาลฎีการย์ก้าวร ศิริภู, เรื่องเดียวกัน, หน้า 75-140.
6. ศาลฎีการย์ ดร.บุญ วุฒิวิทยารีย์, บรรณาภูธิธรรมล้านนา. หน่วยสังเสริมศิลปศิลปศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรมล้านนา คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่ (เอกสาขาวิทยาลัยมนุษยศาสตร์, 2526, หน้า 74.
7. จากการสังเกตการณ์ คุณสมบัติ เตือนเพียง ผู้สอนทางานประวัติศาสตร์ครีสต์เชื้อสายล้านนี เมื่อวันที่ 21 พฤศจิกายน 2530.
8. สำนักงาน 15 ราชวงศ์ สุก 7 (ไมโครพิมพ์ สถาบันวิจัยสังคม มช.), หน้า 7.
9. สำนักงาน 15 ราชวงศ์ สุกเดียวกัน, หน้า 75.
10. กลยุทธ์ สุชิน, อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 67.
11. ศิลานาฏิกสุโยทัย หลักที่ 1 สำนักที่ 1 บรรทัดที่ 10.
12. ศิลานาฏิกสุโยทัยเดียวกัน.
13. จากการสังเกตการณ์อาจารย์ วิทยา พุทธนิย์ (นักภาษาศาสตร์มีชื่อคุณหนึ่ง) มหาวิทยาลัยศาสตร์ คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่.