A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE TAI DAM CHRONICLE

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Abstract

This paper is a discourse study of the Tai Dam chronicle *Kwam To Muang*. It focuses on rhetorical structure and information structure. The former includes rhyming structure, parallel structure, cyclical structure, and listing structure, which function to facilitate memorization and also provide a linkage to the text. The information structure is analyzed in terms of the bipartite discourse structure, i.e. storyline elements and Nonstoryline elements. The storyline material is signalled by the preverbal auxiliary $caŋ^2$ 'consequently, then' and verb types, namely, event proper, motion, and action verbs. Nonstoryline elements include supportive materials which are off the storyline. They include setting, background, collateral, and cohesion. The setting is characterized by descriptive and stative verbs. Background information is marked by non-punctiliar verbs. Collateral information is expressed by a negation having the negative marker baw^3 'not'. And cohesion is realized by rhetorical structure and repetitive clauses.

Key words: discourse, creation myth, Tai Dam

ISO 639-3 codes: blt

1. Introduction

The Tai Dam chronicle is called *Kwam To Muang* (/kwa:m² too¹ mɨaŋ²/)[1] in the Tai Dam, or Black Tai, language. The word *Kwam* means 'story' or 'history'; *To* means 'to tell'; *Muang* means 'country, kingdom, world.' This Tai Dam chronicle comes out of an ancient oral tradition in which the story was passed down by memory from one generation to the next.[2] The *Kwam To Muang* of the Tai Dam is well-known and significant among Tai people of northwestern Vietnam called *Sip Song Chou Tai* 'twelve local administrative units'.[3] It is a genre of text which contains the history of the Tai people of this region (Chamberlain 1992). There are various versions of the Tai Dam chronicle because it was composed by different groups of Tai Dam people from different locations. Historical events were detailed differently in each location depending on the narrators' viewpoints (Mukdawijitra 2014). At present, the Tai Dam chronicle has been translated and printed in different versions. Cầm Trọng (Đặng Nghiêm Vạn et. al. 1977) and Cầm Trọng and Cầm Quynh (1960) translated the ancient Tai Dam chronicle into Vietnamese. Chamberlain (1992) and Hartmann (2003) transcribed the part of the original myth and translated it into English. The Tai Studies Center (1986) founded by the Tai Dam refugees in Iowa in the U.S. printed a book entitled *The Tai Chronicle Book* in Tai Dam fonts. Swangpanyangkoon (2010a) translated the initial chapters of *The Tai Chronicle book* into Thai

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[1] The tones of the Tai Dam language are marked with numbers 1 to 6. In the papers of Swangpanyangkoon (2010a, b), the phonetic features of these tones are as follows: tone 1 = [33]; tone 2 = [55]; tone 3 = [35] tone 3; tone 4 = [44]; tone 5 = [31] tone 5; tone 6 = [42]. In the work of Hartmann (1981), the phonetic features of the six tones are lower mid-level for tone 1; high-rising for tone 2; low/low rising, glottalized for tone 3; high-level for tone 4; high mid-level for tone 5; and mid-falling, glottalized for tone 6.

[2] See *Tai Dam Origin Myth* at http://www.seasite.niu.edu/tai/TaiDam/TaiDamOrigin.htm.

[3] See a detailed history of *Sip Song Chou Tai* in Yimrewat (2001).

with an IPA transcription. Swangpanyangkoon (2010b) also translated the first section of the Tai Song[4] chronicle into Thai and Vietnamese and transcribed it with IPA.

The chronicle is very important to the history of Tai Dam people as it includes such important information as Tai Dam migration, settlement, and original cosmology. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation from ancient times and also recorded in Tai Dam script (Pitiphat 2002). As the chronicle contains a variety of information on Tai Dam history such as the creation myth, genealogy, the victory of the successive Tai Dam rulers and the battle of Tai Dam heroes for an establishment of new petty states (*muang*) and villages (*ban*), it has been studied by researchers from various fields. Kashinaga (2007) explains that *Quam To Muang*[5] is related to the Tai Dam funerals. He studies how the uses of *Quam To Muang* during a funeral have changed over the course of approximately one century. The focus is on the relation between the transition of *Quam To Muang* and the Tai Dam social life. Mukdawijitra (2014) pictures a political relationship of Tai Dam group in the northwestern Vietnam before the revolution period through the Tai Dam chronicle. Chamberlain (1992) explains the origin of the Tai Dam chronicle in a historical context. The text presented in his paper is a translation of the mythological section and proto-historical section of the *Kwam To Muang* from *Muang Mouay*, a Tai Dam center. Sayphan (2009) accounts for the settlement of Tai Dam people at *Muang Thaen*[6] through his fieldwork version of the Tai Dam chronicle and also the *Muang Mouay* version of Chamberlain (1986). A linguistic study of *Kwam To Muang* was carried out by Hartmann (1981). This study offers spoken and written versions of the Tai Dam original myth and studies sound shifts revealed in the differences between the written and spoken forms. It focuses on phonological changes between the older written forms and the innovated spoken forms. In other words, it studies an idiolect and compares it to an older stage of the dialect preserved in writing.

A review of previous studies on *Kwam To Muang* presented above discloses that most studies focus on a collection, transcription, and translation of this chronicle as well as its historical, political and socio-cultural aspects. The linguistic study focuses on variation and change in the phonological system of Tai Dam. No previous studies have been done on a discourse analysis of *Kwam To Muang*. So this study[7] attempts to analyze the discourse structure of *Kwam To Muang* focusing on the poetic structure and the narrative structure of the chronicle so that the aesthetic language of *Kwam To Muang* will be elucidated.

2. Tai Dam People

Linguistically, the Tai Dam language belongs to the Southwestern Branch of the Tai language family (Li 1960). Ethnically, the term "Tai Dam" or "Black Tai" is derived from the distinctive colour of their black costumes (Pitiphat 1980). The original hometown of Tai Dam people was in *Muang Thaen* in northwestern Vietnam. It was written in the chronicle *Kwam To Muang* that *Muang Thaen* was an important center of Tai Dam ethnic group within the twelve local administrative units called *Sip Song Chou Tai* bordered Laos at Pongsali, Luang Prabang, and Huaphan provinces (Pitiphat 2002). The royal court of Vietnam called this region *Điện Biên Phủ*, the original name of Dien Bien Phu at present. This place is well-known as an important battlefield against the French in 1953 (Sayphan 2011).

A number of Tai Dam people were forced to migrate from *Muang Thaen* to Thailand as prisoners of war during the reign of King Taksin (1767-1782) and during the reigns of Rama I, Rama II, and Rama III (1784-1851) (Baker and Phongpaichit 2005). This group of Tai Dam people was brought to settle in Phetchaburi province in the western region of Thailand. The later generations of Tai Dam moved to nearby provinces such as Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Suphanburi, Nakhon Pathom, Samut Sakhon, and Samut Songkhram. Because of common migration patterns and linguistic similarities between Tai Dam and other Lao groups, the Tai Dam people in Thailand believed they were the same group as the Laos and called themselves *Phu*

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[4] Tai Dam people in Thailand are called Tai Song or Lao Song.

[5] *Kwam To Muang* has various spellings in different works such as *Quam To Muang* and *Khwam Toe Muang*.

[6] *Muang Thaen* is also called *Muang Thaeng*. The former term will be used throughout this paper.

Laao 'Lao people' (Chakshuraksha 2003). Formerly, they were known as *Lao Song Dam* or *Lao Song*. At present, they are addressed by other names such as *Thai Song, Thai Song Dam*, and *Tai Dam*.

3. The Semantics of the Tai Dam Chronicle *Kwam To Muang*

It is uncertain when the Tai Dam chronicle *Kwam To Muang* was recorded. Mukdawijitra (2014) affirms that this chronicle was recorded not less than 200 years ago and not over 500 years. He reasons that the time of recording *Kwam To Muang* should not exceed the time when the Tai Dam script was devised, which was 500 years ago. The Tai Dam chronicle was written in the Tai Dam script. It has local variants[8], but the general outline of each is the same; that is, it consists of two sections. The first section is the world creation myth, which represents Tai Dam's original cosmology or understanding of the ordering of the universe. The second section is the longest part of *Kwam To Muang*. It accounts for a movement to establish new petty states and villages, governmental structure, and successions of rulers, particularly the rulers of the city where the chronicle was recorded (Mukdawijitra 2014). This section is tied to the Tai Dam ancestor and Tai Dam group that moved from *Muang Lou* in eastern Vietnam to *Muang Thaen* before the beginning of the 20th Buddhist era. At that time, *Muang Thaen* was located between two great political empires, the Luang Prabang group and Vietnam group. The movement was initiated by the Tai Dam hero named *Lan Cueng* or *Pu Cao Lan Cueng*, so he was regarded as the ancestor of Tai Dam people. He set up an administrative center at *Pom Lan Cueng* '*Lan Chueng* Hill' in *Muang Thaen*, which was the battlefield of Dien Bien Phu and later on became his graveyard (Sayphan 2011). *Kwam To Muang* was composed as a narration which is similar to a myth and historical legend. It narrates a movement of Tai people from *Muang Lou* to *Muang Thaen*. The historical events mentioned in the text occurred at the same period as the Tai Dam history, especially the names of important figures which were present in the histories of Vietnam and Luang Prabang since the 14th century (Sayphan 2009). Pitiphat (1980:34) gives a synopsis[9] of *Kwam To Muang* as follows:

> *Khwam Toe Muang* ("History of the *Muan*g") relates that in the beginning Earth (*Din*) and Heaven (*Muang Fa*) were joined by a mushroom-shaped structure, the bottom part of which was Earth, the top Heaven. The top was for *Taen*[10], the bottom for mankind. The two were so close originally that many conflicts broke out between men and *Taen*. This caused inconvenience to man's ancestor, *Pu Chao*, who cut the connection between Earth and Heaven so that the sky floated far above Earth, almost out of sight.

> Animals at this time were able to talk. This caused noise that could be heard even in Heaven. Angered, *Taen* dispatched a drought to kill both men and animals. Concerned about the drought, *Pu Chao* performed a ceremony asking for rain. With such abundance was his request granted that a great deluge ensued, taking many lives. Saddened, a sympathetic *Taen* placed men, animals and all their belongings on the great floating pumpkins, or bottle-gourds, so that they would not perish in the flood. After the floodwaters had receded *Taen* let *Tao Soung* and *Tao Ngern* again return to Earth. *Tao Soung* and *Tao Ngern* then took wives, becoming the progenitors of mankind. Further stories relating the migrations of men spanning time from antiquity to present fill out the historical manuscript.

Kwam To Muang is widely prevalent among Tai Dam people because it serves an important social function. Traditionally, this chronicle was recited when a family member died. Tai Dam people believe that "the recitation will guide the *kwan* or 'soul substance' of the deceased back to their ancestors who reside in *Muang Fa* or Land of the Heavens, along with *Thaen*. It is the duty of the eldest son-in-law, who has already established his own separate household, to recite the *Kwam To Muang* at the funeral rite. It is he who directs the dead to their final destination." (Tai Dam Myth). Moreover, he also led the way for the *kwan* to come back home as an ancestor spirit (Kashinaka 2007).

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[8] Chavalit Arayayutitham, a retired Tai Dam teacher at Donkhamin village, Dontoom Sub-District, Banglen District, Nakhon Pathom Province, Thailand, notes that *Kwam To Muang* has various versions having a similar plot but the names of Tai Dam rulers mentioned in the text are varied. Interview (11 November 2014.)

[9] Another synopsis of *Kwam To Muang* is provided by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of Northern Illinois University on the website article *Tai Dam Origin Myth* (Hartman 2003) as appears in the appendix of this paper.

[10] *Taen* or *phi fa* are spirits of the sky or Lords of the Heavens who inhabit their own special territories in the sky. "In their omnipotence the *Taen* control events both good and bad that befall all creatures living on earth" (Pitiphat 1980: 30).

4. Framework and Sources of Data

The Tai Dam chronicle aims to record facts and events seen from the chronicler's perspective. It develops along a chronological theme-line, i.e., a time-line. Longacre (1996) recounts that all possible discourse in all languages can be classified according to two basis etic parameters: contingent temporal succession and agent orientation. The former refers to a framework of temporal succession in which some of the events or actions are contingent on previous events or actions. The latter refers to orientation towards agents with an identity of agent reference running through the discourse. Narrative discourse possesses both parameters. Callow (1974:13) also explains a similar characteristic of a narrative discourse: "Narrative discourse recounts a series of events ordered more or less chronologically, usually in the past." Based on the typical features of narrative discourse mentioned so far, the Tai Dam chronicle is classified as a narrative discourse because attention is on chronological succession and identity of reference.

Different parts of a discourse communicate different kinds of information. In a narrative, a distinction should be made between events and non-events (Grimes 1975). Longacre (1990) proposes the terms "storyline" and "nonstoryline" to refer to event and non-event respectively. The discourse analysis of the Tai Dam chronicle focuses on this bipartite structure of information. It is based on the frameworks posited by Callow (1974), Grimes (1975) and Longacre (1983, 1996).

The data used in this study is based mainly on three versions of *Kwam To Muang* that are phonetically transcribed and translated into English or Thai. The first version is "*Kwam To Muang*: Black Tai Chronicle" (Swangpanyangkoon 2010a). This version translates the initial chapters of *the Tai Chronicle Book* (the Tai Studies Center 1986) into Thai. The second version is "*Kwam To Muang* Tai Song" (Swangpanyangkoon 2010b) which consists of a translation into Thai and Vietnamese of the first section of the Tai Song chronicle. The manuscript of this version was found at Nong So village, Khaw Yoi district, Phetchaburi province, Thailand where Tai Dam or Tai Song/Lao Song immigrants reside so it was called "*Kwam To Muang* Tai Song." Swangpanyangkoon (2010b) affirms that both versions are similar. Both translations were reviewed by Cầm Trọng, a Tai Dam ethnologist, Hoàng Lương, a Vietnamese scholar, and Chavalit Arayayutitham, a Tai Dam expert from Nakhon Pathom province, Thailand. The third version of the chronicle consists of the *Tai Dam Origin Myth*. It has 191 clauses. Each clause has a special transcription system (Hartmann et. al. 1979), English word-for-word translation and English free translation. Additional versions of *Kwam To Muang* are also used as supplementary data. They are *Kwam To Muang* of *Muang Mouay*, *Kwam To Muang* of *Muang La* (Mukdawijitra 2014) and "The black Tai chronicle of *Muang Mouay* Part I: Mythology" (Chamberlain 1992).

5. The Notion of Storyline and Nonstoryline

Longacre (1989) points out that every discourse has its main line of development which is the central feature of the discourse as well as supportive material which consists of elaborations and additions. Different types of discourse have differing main lines of development. Narrative discourse has a storyline. All materials other than the storyline are nonstoryline. Jones and Jones (1979:6) refer to the storyline as foreground and the nonstoryline as background. They mention that discourse information is generally viewed as "an essentially bipartite structure composed of more significant (often called backbone or foreground) and less significant information (background)." Grimes (1975) and Hopper (1979) use the terms 'events' to refer to the language of the actual storyline and 'nonevents' to the language of the supportive material.

Longacre (1990) uses the storyline as a generic term to include any happenings that push the story forward. These happenings are characterized as punctuality, sequentiality, and volition. Punctual happenings are actions and events that are well articulated as to inception, terminus, or both. They also include an event proper in which a happening takes place without planning, as in "A ball fell into a pond", as well as a cognitive experience, i.e., a psychological or emotional event in which the subject is experiencer, as in "He was shocked by the bad news."

Grimes (1975) classifies the semantic characteristics of Nonstoryline elements or nonevents as setting, background, evaluation, and collateral. Setting has to do with expository and descriptive materials which report the place, time, and circumstances under which actions take place. Background is secondary information that is used to clarify a narrative and does not advance the storyline but temporarily overlaps with storyline actions and events. Evaluation is intrusive material which includes the author's own evaluation and the opinions of any participant in a narrative. Collateral includes all possible events which might or might not happen and suggests possible alternatives, such as negation, questions, futures, imperatives, or

prediction. Longacre (1996) uses the term "irrealis" to refer to collateral and he adds flashback and cohesive materials to the nonstoryline materials.

6. Rhetorical Structure

Kashinaga (2007) stated that the Tai Dam chronicle was recited at the funerals of villagers. The greatest part of the chronicle was often memorized because the text was composed of a large number of refrains and rhymes. A discourse analysis of the chronicle supports this statement. It finds that most parts of the chronicle are repetitive, and verse is more prevalent than prose. The composer uses a variety of rhetoric devices to narrate the text so that it will be easy to memorize. Repetition[11] is evident in such rhetorical structure as rhyming structure, parallel structure, cyclical structure, and listing structure, which will be discussed in detail below.

Callow (1974) points out that repetition provides no new information and languages which use a great deal of repetition have a spread-out rather than a compact information structure, and there are various functions within discourse which repetition fulfills. Some of them are amplification, feature linking, preview/summary, and listing. With an extensive use of repetition, the chronicle has spread-out information, which made it easy for those who performed funeral ceremonies to memorize.

6.1 Rhyming Structure

Most parts of the chronicle consist of a rhyming structure in which two lines rhyme. Each line usually has five words but it can be as long as nine words. In a rhyming structure, vowels and final consonants in two words of different lines are either identical or similar. The last word of the first line rhymes with the first, second, or third word of the second line and thus this is called a tail rhyme. The regular use of this tail rhyme helps to mark off the ends of lines and clarifies the metrical structure for the listener. Example 1 illustrates a rhyming structure in which rhyming words are highlighted in bold letters.[12]

Example 1

fa:^{6}	tam^2	sɨaŋ^1	mɔ^3	**kha:ŋ^1**
sky	low	as, like	pan	a kind of iron

'The sky was as low as an iron pan.'

fa:^{6}	**ba:ŋ^1**	sɨaŋ^1	pɨʔ^2		thuaj^3
sky	thin	as, like	broken piece, skin	cup

'The sky was as thin as a piece of broken cup.'

ŋua^4	dam^1	paj^1	kuŋ^4		**nɔʔ^2**
ox	black	go	confine-free-movement	hump

'Black oxen went (and their) humps got stuck.'

mu^1	**fɔʔ^2**	paj^1	kuŋ^4		laŋ^1
pig	breeder	go	confine-free-movement	nose

'Pig breeders went (and their) noses got stuck.'

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010a:44-45)

In the first two lines, the last word of the first line rhymes with the second word of the second line, and in the last two lines, the last word of the first line also rhymes with the second word of the second line as seen in the rhyming pattern below.

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[11] Piyawan Sukkasem, a Tai Dam teacher at Phaihuchang School, Banglen District, Nakhon Pathom Province, Thailand, opines that a dominant feature of *Kwam To Muang* is repetitive and circular. Interview (11 November 2014.)

[12] The special transcription system devised by Hartmann et. al. (1979) is adjusted by using international phonetic alphabets.

Line 1	O	O	O	O	A (kha:ŋ¹)
Line 2	O	A (ba:ŋ¹)	O	O	O
Line 3	O	O	O	O	B (nɔʔ²)
Line 4	O	B (fɔʔ²)	O	O	O

In addition to rhyming, a lexical repetition is also found between two lines, that is, *fa:⁶.....siaŋ¹* in the first two lines and *paj¹ kuŋ⁴* in the last two lines. This repetition provides cohesion to the text and constitutes a parallel structure discussed in the following section.

6.2 Parallel Structure

Another rhetorical device which is frequently used along with rhyming is parallel structure. Parallel structure has similar patterns of words which also facilitate memorization. Example 2 exemplifies the parallel structure.

Example 2

kɔ³	pen¹	din¹	pen¹	**ɲa³**
beginning[13]	be	soil	be	grass

'In the beginning, there was soil and grass.'

kɔ³	pen¹	**fa:⁶**	tɔ⁶	thuaŋ¹	**het³**
beginning	be	sky	equal-to	CLF	mushroom

'In the beginning, the sky was as high as a mushroom.'

kɔ³	pen¹	din¹	**cet³**	**pu²**
beginning	be	soil	seven	mountain

'In the beginning, there were seven mountains.'

kɔ³	pen¹	**hu²**	na:m⁶	**bɔ³**
beginning	be	hole	water	well

'In the beginning, there was a wellspring.'

kɔ³	pen¹	hin¹	sa:m¹	**saw¹**
beginning	be	rock, stone	three	CLS

'In the beginning, there were three rocks.'

kɔ³	pen¹	na:m⁶	**kaw⁵**	**kwɛ²**
beginning	be	water	nine	branch-of-river

'In the beginning, there were nine rivers.'

kɔ³	pen¹	pa:ʔ³	**tɛ²**	ta:w⁴	ʔu¹	khɔŋ¹
beginning	be	mouth	black-river	red-river	ou-river	khong-river

'In the beginning, there was a mouth of the Black, Red, Ou, and Khong rivers.'

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010b:44-45)
The abbreviations include CLF for 'classifier', PV for 'preverbal', and RP for 'respected person'.

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[13] Swangpanyangkoon (2010b) affirms that *kɔ³* means 'in the beginning', not the particle *kɔ:³* (ก็ (in Thai which is written with different characters and neither the verb 'to build, to create.' On the other hand, Chavalit Arayayutitham notes that *kɔ³* means both 'in the beginning' and 'to create' as it cognates with the word *kɔ:²* (ก่อ (in Thai 'to build, to create, to construct.' Interview (11 November 2014.)

In this parallel structure, the same pattern of words $kɔ^3$ pen^1 is used along with rhyming of the six lines as seen in the following rhyming pattern.

Line 1	O	O	O	O	A ($ɲa^5$)		
Line 2	O	O	A ($faː^6$)	O	O	B (het^3)	
Line 3	O	O	O	B (cet^3)	C (pu^2)		
Line 4	O	O	C (hu^2)	O	D ($bɔ^3$)		
Line 5	D ($kɔ^3$)	O	O	O	E (saw^1)		
Line 6	O	O	O	E (kaw^5)	F ($kwɛ^2$)		
Line 7	O	O	O	F ($tɛ^2$)	O	O	O

In contrast to Example 1, in which there is no rhyming between the first two lines and the last two lines, all six lines in Example 2 rhyme as marked by bold letters. Both the parallel and rhyming structures have a repeating pattern that is desired by the composers. They function as a mnemonic device in aiding information retention and thus make memorization easier.

6.3 Cyclical Structure

A cyclical structure is also used as a rhetorical device to spread out information. Thomas (1978) defines cyclical structure as repetitions of similar facts with new information added each time. It involves going around and around in multiple cycles. The first cycle conveys new information while the following cycles consist of new situations with semantically similar activities. In cycles, it is different situations with similar actions by different participants (Thomas 1978). Example 3 consists of four cycles having a symmetrical pattern.

Example 3
Cycle 1
$caŋ^2$ $haɨ^3$ $ŋua^4$ $loŋ^1$ $kɔn^2$
then let cow down first
'They then let the cow down first.'

$ŋua^4$ $jaːn^3$
cow afraid
'The cow was afraid.'

$ŋua^4$ $caŋ^2$ $hɔŋ^6$ $ʔam^1$-$bɔ^4$($vɔ^4$)
cow then cry-out "Am-Bou!" ("Moo!")
'It then cried out. "Am-Bou!" ("Moo!").'

$khaw^1$ $ŋua^4$ $cɔ^1$ paj^1 $naː^3$
horn cow point go ahead
'The cow's horns pointed forward.'

Cycle 2
$caŋ^2$ $haɨ^3$ $kwaːj^4$ $loŋ^4$ $təm^1$
then let buffalo down next
'They then let the buffalo down next.'

$kwaːj^4$ $jaːn^3$
buffalo afraid
'The buffalo was afraid.'

kwa:j⁴ caŋ² hɔŋ⁶ ŋa:⁵-ʔaa¹
buffalo then cry-out ŋaa
'It cried out, "Ngaa-aa!"'

khaw¹ kwa:j⁴ ta:ʔ² (ta:k²) kin⁴ laŋ¹ (daŋ¹)
horn buffalo curve go-back back
'The buffalo' s horns pointed backward.'

Cycle 3
caŋ² hai³ ma:⁶ loŋ⁴
then let horse down
'They then let the horse down.'

ma:⁶ ja:n³
horse afraid
'The horse was afraid.'

ma:⁶ caŋ² hɔŋ⁶ hi⁴-hɛ⁵
horse then cry-out hee
It cried out, "Hee-hae."

khaw¹ ma:⁶ tok² lɛʔ² (dɛk²) sia¹
horn horse fall-down crush post-verb-complete
'The horse's horns fell off and were crushed.'

kwa:ŋ¹ loŋ⁴ laŋ¹ (daŋ¹) caŋ² laj³ (daj³)
deer go after then succeed, manage
'The deer went down and she managed alright.'
(This clause is out of Cycle 3.)

Cycle 4
caŋ² hai³ mu¹ loŋ⁴
then let pig down
'Then they let the pig down.'

mu¹ caŋ² ja:n³
pig then afraid
'The pig was afraid.'

mu¹ caŋ² hɔŋ⁶ ʔam¹-ʔut⁵
pig then call-out oink
'It cried out, "am-ute!" ("Oink-oink!").'

mu¹ caŋ² fut⁵ paj¹ na:³
pig then scurry go ahead
'The pig then scurried ahead.'

(Hartmann 1981:195-196)

Example 3 shows a cyclic pattern in which four different participants, i.e., the cow, the buffalo, the horse, and the pig, have similar actions. Note that after cycle 3, there is a clause *kwa:ŋ¹ loŋ⁴ laŋ¹ (daŋ¹) caŋ² laj³ (daj³)* 'The deer went down and she managed alright' which is not a part of any cycle. In each cycle, there are four lines, and the last two lines rhyme as indicated in bold letters. The cyclical structure in example 3 is used in this part of the text to slow down the rate or speed at which information is presented as well as to highlight details of important information. That is, after the big flood, all animals reached the earth.

6.4 Listing Structure

The chronicle is also presented in a listing structure which contains repetition used to spread out the information load. Callow (1974:79) mentions that "listings occur when a number of things (or propositions) stand in the same relationship to a given event." Example 4 illustrates a listing structure.

Example 4

ʔɔʔ² (ʔɔk²)   pen¹   caw³   la:j¹ (da:j¹)   mɨaŋ⁴
out   be   Lord   many   country-kingdom
'They came to be the rulers of many lands.'

pu²   ta:¹   lam¹ (dam¹)   kin¹   mɨaŋ⁴   kew¹ (kɛw¹)
grandfather   Taa (eye)   dam (black)   eat-rule country-kingdom   Vietnam
'Grandfather Taa Dam (Black Eyes) ruled Vietnam.'

pu²   ta:¹   khɛw¹   kin¹   mɨaŋ⁴   la:w⁴   ta:w⁵ ta:n⁵
grandfather   Taa (eye)   Khaew (green/blue)   eat-rule country   Laos   prince RP
'Grandfather Taa (eye) Khaew (Green Eyes) ruled Laos, gentlemen.'

pu²   ta:¹   lek²   ta:¹   tɔŋ⁴   kin¹   mɨaŋ⁴   hɔ⁶
grandfather   Taa (eye)   lek (iron, steel) Taa (eye)   Toung (brass) eat-rule country   Hou
'Grandfather Taa (eye) Lek (Iron Eyes) and Taa Toung (Brass Eyes) ruled the kingdom of the Chinese.'

mɨaŋ⁴   ha:n²   pua¹-ŋo¹
country-kingdom   Chinese-Han   Pua¹-Ngo¹
'and the kingdom of the Chinese Han Pua-Ngo.'

pu²   khun¹   lɨaŋ⁴   jet²   mɔ¹
grandfather   noble   leuaŋ (family-of-shamans)   do   shaman
'Grandfather Prince Leuaŋ was made Shaman.'

pu²   khun¹   lɔ⁴   pen¹   caw³
grandfather   noble   Lou   be   lord-ruler
'Grandfather Prince Lou was Ruler.'

(Hartmann 1981:197-198)

The listing structure depicts a major event in the chronicle that after the big flood, all of the world's people emerged from gourds and ruled many lands. It lists the ruler of each land. In this listing structure, a parallel structure using similar pattern of words (*kin¹ mɨaŋ¹*) as well as rhyming as marked by bold letters are also present.

All kinds of rhetorical structures presented above show not only an artistic use of Tai Dam language but also their significant discourse function as a linkage within the chronicle. They thus make the text cohesive and easy to memorize.

7. The Information Structure

Callow (1974:43) states that certain events will be on the theme-line or storyline. Others will not be, but will relate to them. She distinguishes thematic material from supporting material as follows:

> Thematic material and supporting material will be found to be expressed by typical grammatical constructions and to occur in specific patterns within the paragraph. Those events on the theme-line may either develop the material presented in a topic sentence or build up gradually to the conclusion presented in a terminator. Often supporting events, not on the theme-line, will strengthen the theme by providing contrasts, comparisons, explanations, alternatives.

Longacre (1996) affirms that the theme-line or storyline is characterized in varying ways in various languages. In languages with tense-aspect systems such as English, the verb systems facilitate discourse. In narrative discourse, simple past-tense forms report successive actions and events which advance a story, whereas past-progressive forms report concomitant activities or nonstoryline.

The default timeframe of the narrative is past time or accomplished time. Tai Dam is a language without verbal inflection. It has no specific markers of past versus present tense. Clauses are ambiguous as to time reference. Therefore, several grammatical devices work in conjunction with each other to imply time. The storyline and nonstoryline cannot be characterized on the basis of verb forms as in English. Consequently, other grammatical forms are used to indicate this bipartite information structure of narrative discourse as detailed below.

7.1 Surface Indicators of Storyline Elements

The storyline elements in *Kwam To Muang* are presented in all rhetorical structures except listing. They also occur in prose but are sporadic as seen in example 5. The most pivotal events which form the storyline of the text are reported in clauses which are marked by the preverbal auxiliary $caŋ^2$ 'consequently, then.' This preverbal auxiliary occurs with great frequency in those parts of text which are on the storyline. In the version (Hartmann 1981) that contains 191 clauses, there are fifty-one occurrences. A good abstract of the chronicle can be extracted by listing all the clauses introduced by this preverbal auxiliary. The major discourse function of this preverbal auxiliary is to signal temporal succession which is the prime characteristic of the storyline, i.e., foregrounding in narrative. As a temporal connective, $caŋ^2$ links main events in a chronological order and thus constitutes a storyline. It not only signals temporal sequence but also implies a consequence of the previous happenings. That is, when $caŋ^2$ occurs between foregrounded happenings, a happening does not just occur after the completion of a prior happening but rather they occur in a cause-effect relationship. When marking the storyline, the preverbal auxiliary $caŋ^2$ usually occurs with three categories of verbs, that is, event proper[14], motion, and action verbs as illustrated in example 6 for event proper and example 5 for motion and action verbs.

Example 5

to^{1}sat^2	naŋ^3	miaŋ^3	lum^5	caŋ^2	mia^4	ka:w^2	thɤŋ^1	thɛn^1
animal	in	city, kingdom	low	then	go	speak	reach	Lord-of-the-sky

'Animals from the low land went to speak to the Lord of the sky.'

thɛn^1	caŋ^3	tɛŋ^2	fɛp^3	kha^3	kon^4	miaŋ^3	lum^5	ta:j^1	met^2
Lord-of-the-sky	then	use	miracle	kill	people	city, kingdom	low	die	all

'The Lord of the sky then used a miracle to kill all people from the low land.'

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[14] According to Longacre, events proper are any happenings that take place without plan or volition. The subject of events proper is the patient. The term 'patient' is used here in the following sense: "The entity of which a state or location is predicated or which is represented as undergoing change of state or location; the entity may be inanimate or animate (but, in the latter case, the registering nervous system or the intentionality of the animate entity is not relevant to the predication)" (Longacre 1983:155-156).

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010a:8-9)

Example 6

fa:⁶	caŋ²	kum⁶	ma:⁴	**vot²** (bot²)
sky	then	dark	come	cloudy

'Then the sky became dark and cloudy.'

fa:⁶	caŋ²	**hit⁵**	ma:⁴	laŋ¹ (daŋ¹)
sky	then	begin	come	thunder

'The heavens began to thunder.'

fa:⁶	caŋ²	fɛ³
sky	then	thunder

'The heavens resounded with thunderclaps.'

fa:⁶	caŋ²	**fɛt³**
sky	then	thunderclap

'The heavens were pierced by thunderbolts and lighting.'

fa:⁶	caŋ²	**lɛt²** (dɛt²)	tiŋ⁴ (teŋ⁴)	kɨn⁴
sky	then	bright-sun	twelve-o'clock	night

'The heavens were bright with light at midnight.'

(Hartmann 1981:191)

The storyline in example 5 is presented in prose and signalled by the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²* as well as the motion verbs *mɨa⁴ ka:w²* 'to go to speak' and action verbs *teŋ²fɛp³ kha³* 'use a miracle to kill.'

Example 6 has five clauses encoding the pivotal events which form the storyline of the chronicle. All of these storyline clauses have the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²* followed by event proper verbs. Note also that this storyline part of the text is presented in parallel structure having the similar patterns of words *fa:⁶ caŋ²* 'sky then' and also rhyming structure as marked by bold letters.

In addition to the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²*, the postverbal auxiliary *lɛw⁶*, another storyline indicator is also present in the chronicle version of Swangpanyangkoon (2010b), but it occurs only once together with the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²* as in example 7. The postverbal auxiliary *lɛw⁶* functions to mark a temporal succession of storyline happenings in which a happening takes place after completion of the previous event. Therefore, it has a past or accomplished time implication.

Example 7

pu³	caw⁵	caŋ³	pan¹	maʔ³taw⁵puŋ⁵
grandfather	noble	then	distribute	gourd

'Grandfather (Suang) then distributed gourds'

su³	phɛn³din¹	mɨaŋ²	lum⁴
to	land	city, kingdom	low

'to the low land kingdom.'

caŋ³	ʔaw¹	paj¹	mɨaŋ²	kɛw¹	mɨaŋ²	la:w²	sɔŋ¹	nuaj³	maʔ³taw⁵puŋ⁵
then	take	go	city	Vietnam	city	Laos	two	CLF	gourd

'Then (he) sent two gourds to Vietnam and Laos.'

sɔŋ¹	saw¹	tɔŋ²	kam⁶	fa:⁶	ʔaw¹	paj¹	mɨaŋ²	wɔ²
two	pillar	gold	support	sky	take	go	city, kingdom	Woe

'(He) took two golden pillars supporting the sky to the kingdom of Woe.'

tɛ³	hok³	nuaj³	maʔ³taw⁵puŋ⁵	hok³	saw¹	tɔŋ²	kam⁶	faː⁶
but	six	CLF	gourd	six	pillar	gold	support	sky

'But six gourds and six golden pillars supporting the sky (were sent to the kingdom of Om and Ay).'

lɛw⁶	pu³	caw⁵	taːw⁶	suaŋ¹	caŋ³	kɨn²	mia²
then	grandfather	noble	honorific Suang	then	return	go

'Then Grandfather Suang returned'

su³	pu³	caw⁵	taːw⁶	ŋɤn²
to	grandfather	noble	honorific title	Ngern

'to live with Grandfather Ngern.'

naŋ⁵	mɨaŋ²	ʔom¹	mɨaŋ²	ʔaːj¹	ti⁴	kaw³
sit	city, kingdom	Om	city, kingdom	Ay	place	former, old

'(He) ruled the kingdom of Om and Ay, (his) former kingdom.'

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010b:48-49)

Example 7 shows that the postverbal auxiliary *lɛw⁶* marks a temporal succession between the previous storyline happening *pu³ caw⁵ caŋ³ pan¹ maʔ³ taw⁵ puŋ⁵ su³ phɛn³ din¹ mɨaŋ²lum⁴* 'Grandfather then distributed the gourds to the low land' and the following storyline clause *lɛw⁶ pu³ caw⁵ taːw⁶ suaŋ¹ caŋ³ kɨn² mia² su³ pu³ caw⁵ taːw⁶ ŋɤn²* 'And then Grandfather Suang came to live with Grandfather Ngern' marked by the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²*. Both *lɛw⁶* and *caŋ³* work in conjunction to mark a temporal sequence typical for the storyline.

In the same chronicle version, *law⁴*, another postverbal auxiliary occurs three times. This postverbal auxiliary has a similar discourse function as *lɛw⁶*. Chavalit Arayayutitham[15] suggests that *law⁴* and *lɛw⁶* are different words written with different Tai Dam characters. The former means 'finish and then' while the latter means 'and then.' This means that *law⁴* emphasizes a completion of the previous event and marks a chronological sequence between two events whereas *lɛw⁶* focuses on a temporal succession of two happenings. Chavalit Arayayutitham also notes that use of the postverbal *law⁴* is a rare occurrence. In this version of the chronicle (Swangpanyangkoon 2010a), the postverbal auxiliary *law⁴* occurs by itself without the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²* as seen in example 8. It should be noted that both *lɛw⁶* and *law⁴* are absent in the chronicle versions of Hartmann (1981) and Swangpanyangkoon (2010a).

Example 8

pu³	caw⁵	taːw⁶	lɔ²	jet⁴	baːn⁴	jet⁴	mɨaŋ²
grandfather	noble	honorific title	Lou	make	house	make	city, kingdom

'Grandfather Lou settled a kingdom.'

law⁴	ʔaw¹	mia²	khɨn⁵	cɔŋ²	kɛn¹	ten⁴	suŋ¹
then	take	wife	go up	litter, stretcher	kernel	raised platform	tall, high

'Then (he) married a wife and came to the throne.'

law⁴	ɲaŋ²	saj⁵	pen¹	hen¹	na⁵	pu³	caw⁵	taːw⁶	cɨaŋ²
then	also	egg	be	see	face	grandfather	noble	honorific title	Ceuang

'Then (his wife) also gave birth to a son named Grandfather Ceuang.'

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[15] Interview (11 November 2014

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010b:49-50)

Weera Ostapirat (p.c.) remarks that a phonetic similarity of *law⁴* and *lɛw⁶* might be hypothesized to be variants of the same word which have been borrowed from Chinese at different periods of time and thus their meanings are slightly differentiated. In contrast, in Thai[16], only *lɛːw⁴* is found in narratives and its discourse function is the same as *law⁴*. That is, it marks a completion of the previous happening and signals a beginning of a new happening.

7.2 Surface Indicators of Nonstoryline Elements

Nonstoryline elements include tributary materials which are off the storyline. The nonstoryline elements which are pervasive in the chronicle are setting, background, collateral, and cohesion. They are presented in all kinds of rhetorical structures. Example 2 depicts a setting of the chronicle describing a scene in the former time. The setting is realized by the stative verb *pen¹* 'to be.' In other parts of the text, the setting is expressed by other stative verbs such as *mi²* 'to have' and descriptive verbs such as *tam² ti⁴ tiaŋ⁴* 'low, short' and *ʔɔn²-ʔɛn³* 'soft, not solid.' Example 4 illustrates background information listing the names of the rulers and their kingdoms. Background information is marked by non-punctiliar verbs such as *kin¹ (miaŋ⁴)* 'rule (a kingdom).'

Example 9 shows collateral information in which an event did not actually happen. It is realized by a negation having the negative marker *baw³* 'not'.

Example 9

miaŋ²	faː⁶	mi²	pu³	caw⁵	thɛn¹	luaŋ¹
city, kingdom	sky	there is	grandfather	prince	Lord-of-the-sky	noble

'In the sky kingdom, there was Lord of the sky.'

kɔ⁴	baw³	paːʔ³	phɛn³din¹	miaŋ²	lum⁴
PV	not	desert, leave	land	city, kingdom	low

'(He) did not desert the low land.'

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010b:45)

Cohesion is another important nonstoryline element which helps to unify the text. In addition to the rhetorical structure that provides a linkage to the text, the chronicle is also tied cohesively by numerous repetitive clauses. Example 10 illustrates an exact repetition of collateral information (negation), and example 11 shows a repetitive clause marking an end of episodes.

Example 10

caŋ²	ʔaw¹	sip²	kɔŋ¹	daːj³	tɔ⁵	mɛ⁵	mu¹
then	take	ten	pile	thread	equal	mother	pig

'Then, (someone) used ten piles of thread as large as a mother pig'

ma⁴	sip²	taːm⁴	kan¹	khin³	kɔ³	bɔw²	hɔt⁵
come	climb	follow	together	go up	PV	not	arrive

'to climb up (to the sky); s/he would not reach it.'

caŋ²	ʔaw¹	saw⁴	kɔŋ¹	waːj¹	tɔ⁵	mɛ⁵	caːŋ⁶
then	take	twenty	pile	rattan	equal	mother	elephant

'Then, (someone) used twenty piles of rattan as large as a mother elephant'

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[16] Tai Dam and Thai languages belong to the same branch of the Tai language family, i.e., Southwestern branch (Li 1960).

ma⁴	sɨp²	ta:m⁴	kan¹	khɨn³	kɔ³	bɔw²	hɔt⁵
come	climb	follow	together	go up	PV	not	arrive

'to climb up (to the sky); s/he would not reach it.'

(Swangpanyangkoon 2010a:7)

Example 10 shows an exact repetition of the collateral information *ma⁴ sɨp² ta:m⁴ kan¹ khɨn³ kɔ³ bɔw² hɔt⁵* 'to climb up (to the sky); s/he would not reach it.' The function of this repetition is to highlight the storyline marked by the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ²* 'then.' Note also that example 10 shows a parallel structure in which lines 1 and 3 have a similar structure, that is, *caŋ²…ʔaw¹…kɔŋ¹…tɔ⁵ mɛ⁵*.

Example 11

fa:⁶	ɲaŋ⁴	tam²	ti⁴ (lit⁴)	**tiaŋ⁴** (liaŋ⁴)
sky	still	low	short	low

'The sky still hung low.'

fa:⁶	ɲaŋ⁴	**piaŋ⁴**	ʔɔn²-ʔɛn³
sky	still	horizontal, place	soft, not-solid

'The sky was as yet a soft, unformed place.'

tam¹	khaw³	va:⁵	kuŋ⁴	**sa:ʔ²** (sa:k)
pound	rice	say	confine-free-movement	pestle

'There was no room to raise up the arm of the rice pounder.'

la:ʔ⁵ (la:k⁵)	la:j³ (da:j³)	va:⁵	kuŋ⁴	pia¹
pull	silk-thread	say, because	confine-free- movement	spin-thread/yarn

'There was no room to draw out thread in spinning.'

ŋua⁴	luaŋ¹ (duaŋ)	paj¹	kuŋ⁴	**nɔʔ²** (nɔk²)
ox	big	go	confine-free-movement	hump-shoulders

'The ox had his hump caught against the low sky.'

mu¹	**fɔʔ²** (fɔk²)	paj¹	kuŋ⁴	neŋ¹ (nɛŋ¹)
pig	male, boar	go	confine-free-movement	tusk

'The wild boar caught his tusks against the low sky.'

pa:ŋ¹	nan⁶	pen¹	siaŋ⁴	nan⁶
time	that	be	so	that

'At that time, it was like that.'

caŋ²	mi⁴	pu²	ca:¹ (coŋ¹)-koŋ¹	**fa:⁶**
then	there-was	grandfather	bent-over	sky

'Old, bent-over Grandfather Sky,'

kap²	**ja:⁵**	ca:¹ (coŋ¹)-koŋ¹	din¹
and	grandmother	bent-over	earth

'and old, bent-over Grandmother Earth.'

caŋ²	tat²	sa:j¹	bon¹	hai³	hot²	mɨ⁴ (mɨa⁴)	**na:³**
then	cut	cord	atmosphere	to	elevate	go-up	front

'then cut a cord to raise things up ahead.

tat^2	sa:j^1	**fa:^{6}**	hai^3	kha:t^2	mɨ^4 (mɨa^4)		nɨa^1
cut	cord	sky	to	tear, rip	go-up		above

'They cut through the cord to the sky above.'

caŋ^2	pen^1	fa:^{6}	tem^1		**bɛn^1**
then	be	sky	completely, full		elevated, lifted-up, raised

'Then the sky was completely raised up.'

caŋ^2	pen^1	**thɛn^1**	tem^1		fɔ^2
then	be	Lord-of- the-sky	completely		see-very-far

'Then the Lord of the sky saw far and wide.'

pa:ŋ^1	nan^6	pen^1	sɨaŋ^4	nan^6
time	that	be	so	that

'At that time, it was like that.'

(Hartmann 1981:188-189)

Example 11 presents two episodes of the text. Each episode ends with the clause *paŋ^1 nan^6 pen^1 sɨaŋ^4 nan^6* 'At that time, it was like that.' This episode marker repeats throughout the chronicle and thus ties all parts of the text cohesively. In addition to this cohesive device, example 11 also has a rhyming structure and parallel structure which help to unite the text. The rhyming structure occurs between two lines as highlighted by bold letters. The first two lines form a parallel structure sharing the same words *fa:^{6} ɲaŋ^4*. The two lines before the last line also share the words *caŋ^2 pen^1*.

8 Conclusion and Discussion

This paper presents a linguistic aspect of the Tai Dam chronicle *Kwam To Muang* which used to be recited at funerary ceremonies. It analyses the discourse structure of this chronicle in respect to rhetorical and information structure. The frameworks of Callow (1974), Grimes (1975) and Longacre (1983, 1996) have been used as a guideline of this study.

The discourse analysis of this chronicle reveals that the chronicle is a quality piece of literary work as it was composed in an artistic style. The rhetorical and information structure of the chronicle consists of the elements listed in table 1.

Table 1: *The rhetorical and information structure of the chronicle*

Rhetorical structure	Information structure
rhyming structure	Storyline
parallel structure	preverbal auxiliary *caŋ^2* 'and verb types
cyclical structure	nonstoryline
listing structure	setting, background, collateral, and cohesion

The rhetorical structure is prevalent in the text. It not only facilitates memorization but also provides a linkage to the text. The information structure consists of storyline elements and nonstoryline elements. The material on the storyline is realized by the preverbal auxiliary *caŋ^2* 'consequently, then' and verb types, namely, event proper, motion, and action verbs. The pervasive use of *caŋ^2* to signal the major events forming the storyline is typical for this chronicle. Comparing to the narrative discourse in the Thai language, the preserial verb *kɔ:^{3}* 'then' and the postserial verb *lɛ:w^4* play an important role in characterizing the storyline of a narrative discourse (Burusphat 1991). The preverbal auxiliary *cɨŋ^1* 'consequently, then', a cognate of *caŋ^2*, is also found but is not as dominant as *kɔ:^{3}* and *lɛ:w^4*. Its discourse function is the same as *caŋ^2*. The preserial verb *kɔ^3* 'then' and the postserial verb *lɛw^6* are not found in the chronicle version of Hartmann (1981) but have sporadic occurrences in the version of Swangpanyangkoon (2010b). The preverbal verb *kɔ^3* in this chronicle version does not characterize the storyline but functions as an adversative marker as presented in

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examples 9 and 10.[17] Nonstoryline elements include supportive materials which are off the storyline. They include setting, background, collateral, and cohesion. The setting is characterized by descriptive and stative verbs. Background information is marked by non-punctiliar verbs. Collateral information is expressed by a negation having the negative marker *baw³* 'not'. Cohesion is evident in the rhetorical structure and repetitive clauses.

Wongthes (2014) notes that a typical feature of Thai-Lao language family are rhyming words which are embedded in the speech of everyday life, for example, *tham¹ raj³ tham¹ na:¹* 'do paddy farming' and *tham¹ ma:¹ ha:⁵ kin¹* 'make a living.' He asserts that rhyming words are present in the Tai Dam chronicle when particular parts of the story are highlighted as important events or marked as sacred or holy. Rhyming functions to move the listeners' feelings and also serves as a powerful mnemonic device. Later on, the role of rhyming increases because a shaman must recite the local history of his ethnic group to villagers at least once a year in an ancestor worship ceremony. This ritual is a special occasion, so an aesthetic language is needed to distinguish the ritual language from the everyday life language. Wongthes also points out that rhyming language, instead of ordinary language, is used to communicate with spirits and Lord of the Sky, and it has been developed into a poem among Thai people in the areas of the Mekong and Chao Praya rivers.

The chronicle *Kwam To Muang* is an important literary work of the Tai Dam people as it pictures Tai Dam belief through the myth of creation and narrates the Tai Dam history. As pointed out by Hartmann (1981:187), the chronicle is "a text within multiple dimly remembered texts of both the mythological and historical world of the Tai Dam." Kashinaga (2007) mentioned that the custom of reading this chronicle in Vietnam was gradually withdrawn from the funerary process because Tai Dam people were obliged to simplify the funerary ceremony during the war against the United States and few people could read and write the Tai Dam scripts. He affirms that it would not be difficult to revive the custom of reading the chronicle since it includes many refrains and repetitive sentences which are relatively easy to memorize. This paper supports his affirmation. This discourse analysis of the chronicle could be useful for those who are involved with the Tai Dam linguistic and cultural revitalization programs. It is hoped that this study may be used as a guideline to revive the custom of reading *Kwam To Muang*.

Appendix

Tai Dam Origin Myth
The telling of this story begins by depicting the original state of the creation of the cosmos as one where the Earth /din¹/ and the Heavens or Skies /fa:⁶/ were joined by a chord that held both so close together that daily activities like pounding rice were impeded. The sky was so low that the upward-pointing horns of the buffalo got entangled whenever it tried to walk. To bring an end to this intolerable state, an ancestral pair, the first grandparents, Pu Kong Fa, "Bent-Over Grandfather of the Sky," and Ya Kong Din "Bent-Over Grandmother of the Earth" cut the connecting chord, permitting freedom of movement and activity in a single, dramatic instrumental act, a kind of iconic declaration that humans do have some control over the environment. The sky then floated well above the earth so that the *Thaen* could see far and wide. There were rice fields, but there were no irrigation canals; there were petty states but no rulers to govern them. People fought and killed each other off. A devastating drought came, turning the sky bright orange and the sun black. All plants and animals died. Once again the ancestral Grandfather and Grandmother interceded, this time engaging in elaborate magical rituals with rare birds, snakes, vegetation and twigs, causing the skies to darken and then to blaze forth with so much lightening that the sky was brightly lit up even during the middle of the night. Rains fell incessantly, completely covering the mountains. No dry land could be seen for three months. All the animal life on earth had died, with the exception of a single duck - and a lone chicken, who rode on the duck's back. Once the waters receded, the chicken, out of gratitude, sat on the newly-laid eggs of the duck until they hatched. In the heavens, four gourds as big as a house were readied and placed on the receding waters. In them were placed 550 clans of Tai, 330 clans of hill peoples, 330 varieties of rice, 310 kinds of fishes, and every kind of animal, bird and serpent was stocked as well. In addition, there were books to read for pleasure; books for shamans, astrologers, and fortune tellers; and books detailing customs, festivals, and laws. After three months, the waters had receded, and the gourds settled on dry land in different Muang:

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[17] See a multi-function of *kɔ:³* 'then' in Chuwicha (1985). Also, compare the functions of the preverbal *kɔ³* 'then' in Tai Dam and *kɔ:³* 'then' in Thai in Burusphat (2008).

Vietnam, Laos, China. The animals were released first from the gourds; the people then followed, knowing it was safe once the animals had found their way over the land. Over time, people multiplied and moved to establish new petty states (muang) and villages (ban). Society was governed by wise rulers, shamans, priests and police who established and upheld customs and laws, traditions and ceremonies. They kept the rivers clean and the kingdom peaceful, and so will their descendants. The Tai Dam story of the creation ends with the following declaration:

pen^1 sam^1-niang^4 kwam^4 vaw^6	It is our distinct language which is
haw^3 ha:ʔ^5 saat^5 tay^4	the root and fiber of the Tai Dam nation.
cang^5 day^3 dan^1 koung^6	Our fame, like a loud drum,
toung^1 faen^2 din^1 meuang^4 lum^5	will resound all over the world.

(*Tai Dam Origin Myth*)

Hartmann (1981:187) points out that the semantics of the text above reveals both its simplicity and obscurity as follows:

> Certain themes were felt to be Chinese influences, e.g. the region where the earth moves like the teeth of a cow chewing its cud is a motif supposedly borrowed from a Chinese fable. The gourd was an emblem of fertility going as far back as the Ming dynasty. And the (brass) pillars supporting the sky appear in Chinese mythology as well (Christie 1968). Political terms which appear throughout the last section were very difficult to get a hold on.

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