


Santirojprapai, V. *Etude contrastive : groupe accentual en Français et en Thai Standard*. Thèse pour le Doctorat de 3ème Cycle Présenté à l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III.
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1. Air and assumption

In spite of the fact that Gedney\(^1\) already in 1967 pointed out that 'the whole subject of versification has immense relevance to the historical study of the Thai language' few modern linguists have taken interest in this field. I will in this paper take a few fumbling steps into the wilderness of Thai versification, focusing on the components and patterns of some of the metrical concepts, rules and verseforms, and ask questions, discuss possible answers, and sometimes also suggest solutions.

My study rests on a fundamental assumption which - even if it is evident to most people - I would like to make explicit: metrical rules have an acoustic purpose - the ear is meant to hear them. There are modifications to this assumption: even if metrical rules were audible at the time when they were invented, changes in the language may later have transformed audible rules into inaudible ones. One would expect inaudible rules to be discarded as useless, but in languages with writing systems, it is possible to retain inaudible rules in written form as visual rules. Furthermore, in languages with writing system, visual, written rules, which never were meant to be heard, may be invented or borrowed. Poetic rules of this type must naturally be limited to an educated class which writes down the poetry and reads it. Evidently, a person who neither reads nor writes, cannot hear these visual rules, and is thus not in a position to appreciate them.

\(^1\) Gedney 1967: 794-795
A brief recapitulation of some basic concepts and rules in Thai metrics may be appropriate before we proceed.

2. Basic concepts in Thai versification

A. THE UNITS.

2.1 /phájaan/ syllable. From a versification point of view the syllable can be divided into three parts: a) the initial part, consisting of initial consonant or consonant cluster; b) the final part, consisting of the rest of the syllable, except for the tone. In other words: the vowel and a possible final consonant; and c) the tone.

2.2 /sian wannájúg/ tone, of which there are 5 in modern Bangkok Thai, namely: /sian saaman/ mid tone; /sian сосег/ lowtone; /sian thoo/ falling tone; /sian trii/ high tone; /sian càátawaa/ rising tone.

2.3 /kham taaj/ dead syllables; ending in -b, d, -g. -?. /kham pen/ live syllables; all syllables that are not dead syllables, i.e. syllables ending in long vowels, nasals (-n, -m, -n) or semivowels (-j, -w).

2.4 /kham сосег/ swords written with tonemark one ('), or any dead syllable.
/kham thoo/ words written with tonemark two ( )
/kham sùphàab/ live syllables, with no tonemark (tone-mark 'zero').

2.5 /kham khrú/ heavy syllables; syllables ending in long vowels or any of the finals, except glottal stop (?). /kham lâhú/ light syllables; all syllables that are not heavy syllables, namely those ending in glottal stop. These two concepts are relevant for the chan verseform only, which we borrowed directly form Sanskrit metrical.

B. COMBINATORY RULES.

2.6 /bòd/ verse, stanza composed of /bàad verselines, composed of /wàg/ hemistichs, composed of /phájaan/ syllables.
Within the /bòd/ is found the totality of rules pertinent to one verseform (although there are some rhyme rules linking the verses together as well).

2.7 /sàmphàd/ rhyme; sound identity.