

Ancient Thai Teases

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The following is a short list of active Thai teases which have been handed down orally from generation to generation. The teases are primarily used with children, although in some cases they can be used with adults. Rhyme is a common feature, with reduplication and onomatopoeia occasionally occurring to fill them out.

The phonemic rendition shows the pronunciation of the words according to the system used by Mary R. Haas in her *Thai-English Student's Dictionary*. The teases were collected with the assistance of Thai acquaintances including my four-year-old nephew. Variations will occur.

The first five concern hairstyles. *phǒmpia* is hair worn in braided ponytails, or pigtails; *hǔalóon* is a cleanly shaven head; *phǒmcùg* is the topknot style of long ago, with the hair long and knotted on the top of the head, and the sides and back of the head cleanly shaven; *phǒm máa* 'horse hair' refers to bangs.

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| 1. <i>phǒmpia</i> | ponytail (braided hair) |
| <i>maa lia khîikòb</i> | come-lick-wood-shavings |
| <i>phrá? lâj tòb</i> | monk-chase-slap |
| <i>hǔabîi hǔabeen</i> | head-crush-head-flat |

Hey, you with the braids! Come and lick wood shavings! The monk will chase you, and slap you till your head is crushed flat!

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| 2. <i>phǒmpia</i> | ponytail (braided hair) |
| <i>maa lia bajtɔŋ</i> | come-lick-banana-leaf |
| <i>phrá? tii klɔŋ</i> | monk-hit-drum |
| <i>talun tũŋ chee</i> | imitative sounds |
| or (<i>talum tũm mén</i>) | (imitative sounds) |

¹This manuscript was sent to us by Don Goral from Thailand in April 1981. Mr. Algaier, who got to know Don in Bangkok, was a Peace Corps volunteer in Micronesia and Thailand, and subsequently taught English in Japan. He and his wife collected these taunts in their spare time.

Hey, you with the braids! Come and lick the banana leaf! The monk beats the drum, boom, boom, cha-boom!

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| 3. hũalóon | bald head |
| koon màjmàj | shave-new-new |
| khwág khîikàj | scoop up-chicken shit |
| sàj hũalóon | put on-bald head |

Bald head, your head is freshly shaven! Pick up chicken shit, and put it on your head!

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| 4. phǒmcùg | topknot hairstyle |
| khíúg námplaa | mix-fish sauce |
| mễn khîimăa | smell foully of-dog shit |
| nân cǎngnòn | sit-cowardly, quietly, looking dumb |

Hey, topknot! You mix fish sauce with your hair! You smell like dog shit, and you sit quietly like a coward!

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| 5. phǒm máa | hair-horse |
| nâa mỷan mếew | face-like-cat |
| duu paj lếew | look-go-already |
| nâa mỷan mảa | face-like-dog |

With your hair cut in bangs, your face is like a cat, but the longer I look, your face is like a dog.

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The next two teases, or insults, are usually said fat girls. *tùm*, in the second example, means fatso or fatty.

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| 6. ?ûan tú?-tá? | fat (with intensifiers) |
| kin mará? cîm khîi | eat-bitter melon-dip into-shit |
| ?ûan mậj dii | fat-not-good |
| kin khîi cîm mará? | eat-shit-dip into-bitter melon |

Hey fatso, eat melon dipped in shit! Being fat is no good; eat shit dipped in melon.

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| 7. tùm tèeg | large clay jar-break |
| maa lêeg tùm dii | come-exchange-jar-good |
| tùm sàj khîi | jar-put in-shit |
| mâj mii khon ʔaw | not-have-person-take |

The big jar is broken, trade it in for a better one; no one will take the jar containing shit.

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The next two teases are used with children who are crybabies and tattletales, respectively.

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| 8. khîiŋɛɛ | given to crying; crybaby |
| khăaj dồgkhɛɛ | sell-"khɛɛ" flower (an edible flower used in curries) |
| khăaj mâj mòd | sell-not-completely |
| rồŋhâaj ɲɛɲɛɛ | cry-imitative of crying |

Crybaby! You try to sell flowers; when you can't sell them all, you cry like a baby!

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| 9. khîimáa sǎam sồg | ride a horse-three-cubits |
| paj bồg mêɛjaaj | go-tell-mother-in-law |
| mêɛjaaj mâj jùu | mother-in-law-not-be (in place) |
| càb ʔii nũu tẽnrabam | grab-derog.-you (child)-dance |

You ride a horse three measures to go and tell your mother-in-law; if she isn't there, you grab the girls and dance!

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Though you don't often hear the following tease in its entirety, the first line is common enough. It's said in situations where "it serves you right" is appropriate, and is used with both children and adults.

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| 10. sỏm námnaa | as befits-face, looks |
| kalaa hũa cồ? | coconut shell-head-puncture |
| lũugsǎaw khraj mò? | daughter-who-suitable, fitting |
| jóg hâj paj lỏəj | lift, raise-give-go-utterly |

It serves you right; your skull is cracked! If you can find a girl that will accept you, take her away!

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This tease is said by parents to children when their children try to sleep between them in bed.

11. noon klaan	lie-middle
kin raan mǎa nâw	eat-trough-dog-rotten
noon rim	lie-edge
kin thábtim thoŋ	eat-pomegranate-gold

If you sleep between us, you eat from the trough of a rotten dog; if you sleep beside us, you eat golden pomegranates.

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The following can be said either to children, as when unattended by adults, or to adults, as when unattended by spouses.

12. mɛɛw mâj jùu	cat-not-be (in place)
nũu r̃aarəŋ	mouse-jovial, in high spirits
mɛɛw klàbmaa	cat-return
lǎŋkhaa pəŋ	roof-blows off

When the cat's away, the mice make merry; when the cat comes back, off blows the roof.

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The final insult is said to older men that have married young girls. It is used by scamps and scalawags who will earn a fair beating if caught.

13. taa kɛɛ	maternal grandfather-old
jàag mii mia sǎaw	want-have-wife-young girl
thỹy májtháaw	carry-walking stick
jágjêɛ jágjan	hobble-hobble

The old man wants a young wife, yet he hobbles with a cane!