Ancient Thai Teases

Charles J. Algaier

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. *phōmpia* is hair worn in braided ponytails, or pigtails; *hūalōon* is a cleanly shaven head; *phōmcùg* 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; *phōm máa* 'horse hair' refers to bangs.

1. phōmpia
   maa lia khîkòb
   phrá? lâj tòb
   hūabîi hūabèen
   ponytail (braided hair)
   come-lick-wood-shavings
   monk-chase-slap
   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!

2. phōmpia
   maa lia bajtɔɔŋ
   phrá? tii kłɔɔŋ
   taluŋ tûŋ chɛɛ
   or (talûm tûm mɛŋ)
   ponytail (braided hair)
   come-lick-banana-leaf
   monk-hit-drum
   imitative sounds

---

1 This 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!

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

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

4. phômçùg
   khûg nâmplaa
   mên khîmãa
   nâñ cûngûng
   topknot hairstyle
   mix-fish sauce
   smell foully of-dog shit
   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!

5. phôm máa
   nâña mûyan meëw
   duu paj leëw
   nâña mûyan maa
   hair-horse
   face-like-cat
   look-go-already
   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.

* * * *

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

6. ?ûan tû?-tá?
   kin mará? cûm khî
tight (with intensifiers)
   eat-bitter melon-dip into-shit
   fat-not-good
   eat-shit-dip into-bitter melon

Hey fatso, eat melon dipped in shit! Being fat is no good; eat shit dipped in melon.
7. tûm têg  
    maa lêg tûm dîi  
    tûm sâj khîi  
    mâj mîi khôn ?aw  

    large clay jar-break  
    come-exchange-jar-good  
    jar-put in-shit  
    not-have-person-take

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

* * * *

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

8. khînêe  
    khaâaj dôogkheêe  
    khâaj mâj môd  
    rôcôhâaj nêeñêe  

    given to crying; crybaby  
    sell-"khêe" flower (an edible flower used in curries)  
    sell-not-completely  
    cry-imitative of crying

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

9. khùmáa sâam sôc  
    paj bôc mêcjaaj  
    mêcjaaj mâj jùu  
    càb ?ii nûu tênrabam  

    ride a horse-three-cubits  
    go-tell-mother-in-law  
    mother-in-law-not-be (in place)  
    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!

* * * *

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.

10. sôm nâmñâa  
    kalaa hûa cô?  
    lûugsâaw khraj mô?  
    jôg hàj paj lêej  

    as befits-face, looks  
    coconut shell-head-puncture  
    daughter-who-suitable, fitting  
    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!

* * * *

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

11. noon klaŋ    lie-middle
  kin raŋ māa nāw  eat-trough-dog-rotten
  noon rim       lie-edge
  kin thábthim thoon  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.

* * * *

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

12. mæw mâj jùu  cat-not-be (in place)
    nūu rāareeŋ  mouse-jovial, in high spirits
    mæw klàbmaa  cat-return
    lāŋkhāa pēeŋ  roof-blows off

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

* * * *

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 sāaw  want-have-wife-young girl
    thỳy májtháaw  carry-walking stick
    jágjɛɛ jágjan  hobble-hobble

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