THAI SENTENCE PARTICLES: PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER

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1. A Brief Introduction to Thai Sentence Particles.
Thai sentence particles (hereafter referred to as
SPs) are postposition morphemes that modify the sentence
as a whole. Most often they appear in sentence final
position, either singly or in sequences of up to six in
succession (see example 1); but they may also occur in
sentence medial position, where they follow the focal
word or phrase of the utterance in question (example 2).

    1) /mây hěn dûay lɔ̀k la lɜ̌ khráp nî nâ?./   'So you
         1   2   3
    don't agree with this, huh?'
         1   2,3

    2) /ʔaacaan nâ lɜ̌ khá khamooy naalikaa./   'You mean
          1   2   3
    it was the <u>professor</u> who stole the watch?'
                    1   2   3

Semantically, SPs are forms that convey information
about the grammatical or situational context within
which a given sentence occurs. Some signal information
about speaker-addressee relationships; some signal
various types of commands, invitations, requests,
questions, statements, and responses; and some signal
various types of verbal or situational context.
Also SPs may be said to stand as the focus of
sentence intonation; and indeed, certain SP forms are
characterized by a much greater intonational variability
than other forms in the language.
For an inventory of SP forms, see Appendix A.

2. The Puzzle of the SP System.
Some twenty or more years ago, I received a summer
salary award from the University of Washington, Seattle,
to do research on Thai SPs. And as I started my invest-
igation, I naively thought that by the end of the summer
I would be well on my way to sorting the particle system
out.
How wrong I was! For I soon found myself in a

bewildering maze of problems. And these problems boile
down to two basic ones that, for a long time, resisted
all attempts at explanation: the problem of assigning
meanings or functions to the various particles, and the
problem of intonational variation. No matter what I
did, I simply couldn't figure out what many of the form
meant; nor could I make sense out of the complexities o
pitch and vowel-length variation. Often, as I wrestled
with these problems, I would give up the whole project
in despair. But then, after I had licked my wounds for
a while, I would try again--only to give up in
despair again. And this exasperating struggle went on
for many years.

And, of course, there was little or no help to be
found from grammars and dictionaries. These mostly tol
me what I already knew [for example, that /khráp/ is a
polite particle used by male speakers]; or else they
gave me misleading information [e.g., that /sî/ conveys
emphasis or command--an explanation that ignores many
aspects of usage and misses the central meaning of the
form entirely]; or sometimes these texts would simply
leave me in the dark.

Nor did it help to consult native speakers--not
even linguistically sophisticated ones. Such speakers,
to be sure, knew how to use the various SP forms [just
as all native speakers do], but for the most part they
couldn't explain why; and when they did explain, I ofte
found it quite easy to come up with examples that prove
their explanations wrong. So the puzzles of the
particle system long remained a mystery to me despite
all my efforts.

More recently, however, after nearly twenty years
of struggle, I believe I have been able to put most of
the pieces of the puzzle together. And my findings hav
been set forth rather fully in a monograph published in
1989 by Pacific Linguistics as the first piece in a
volume entitled, Thai Sentence Particles and Other
Topics. In this present paper, I draw on the
information in my monograph in an attempt to describe
some of the devices I have used to sort out the pieces
of the puzzle.

3. Other Approaches to the Puzzle.

Before I go on to describe what I have done, it ma
help to say something first about how others have dealt
with the two basic problems of particle meanings and of
intonational variability.

Concerning the problem of particle meanings, some
scholars [notably Henderson and Chuenkongchoo] have
bypassed the problem of individual particle meanings
altogether and simply focussed directly upon the proble

of intonational variability. Thus Henderson [1949]
tells us, for example, that sentence tone C [a prosodic
complex characterized by a long, falling tone] conveys
'assertion or assent' of a formal nature; and other
combinations of tone and length [long or short] convey
other intonational meanings. However, we are never told
what a given particle or any of its variants means; so
we are provided with generalizations completely unsup-
ported by any of the particulars on which those general-
izations must necessarily be based. And, as it turns
out, the generalizations are often very easy to falsify.
Thus, for example, we find that the long, falling tone
form /sîi/, is actually used not only for 'assertion' or
'assent' but also for commands and invitations, and not
only in formal contexts but also informal.

    By way of contrast, other scholars [notably
Bandhumedha and Peyasantiwong] have dealt with the
semantic problem by assigning meanings to certain
contextually-grouped occurrences of given SPs, without
ever attempting to assign any basic or over-all meaning
or function to a given particle. In fact Peyasantiwong
suggests [1981:15] that 'one cannot identify a specific
meaning independent of context' because 'each particle
has more than one implication'. In other words, she has
concluded that it is hopeless to try to identify the
underlying meanings of many of the particles.

    Indeed, one can hardly blame her for her conclu-
sions; for the labor of sorting out basic meanings is
extraordinarily difficult. But one result of her fail-
ure to do this is her failure to distinguish different
particles that occur in similar contexts. Thus, for
example [at various points in her presentation] she
informs us of five different particles that all occur in
the context of annoyance [/láʔ/, /lâʔ/, /nâʔ/, /rɔ̀k/,
and /ná/], and five that occur in the context of sur-
prise [/lâʔ/, /nâʔ/, /ŋay/, /nîi/, and /chiaw/]. And we
are never told why one form might be used rather than
another in a given context of annoyance or surprise--
despite the fact that the varying forms are by no means
used interchangably.

    Another scholar, Noss, has made a more serious
attempt to assign general meanings to each of the
particles. But his treatment is very brief; and I would
say [perhaps he himself would agree] that his attempts
were only partially successful. Nevertheless, the task
was certainly worth attempting.

    Also, Noss has dealt briefly with the second part
of the SP puzzle--the problem of intonational variabil-
ity [though I am not sure how far he would have gone in
identifying the problem as intonational]. And in doing
so he has followed what we may call the structural-

phonemic approach by attempting to list all the phonem
variants of a given particle and to account for the
phonological or semantic contexts in which each is use
Thus he speaks [1965:112] of a particle /ná/ that is
said to have the variants /naa/ urging acceptance, /nâ/
more insistent, /nâa!/ emphatic, /nã̌/ weak question or
request for confirmation, and /!nɨ́ɔ/ emphatic variant
/ná/. However, he makes no attempt to set up any
underlying forms from which other variants are derived
and he makes no systematic attempt to account for the
patterns of SP variation.

Peyasantiwong [1979, 1981] follows a somewhat
similar approach, listing variant forms, and accountin
for the variations that occur. And, like Noss, she fo
the most part says little about the patterns of SP var
ation. She does, however, describe one intonational
process in some detail: a process which she identifie
as reduction. This is a process which is said to
involve changes such as 'vowel shortening, deletion of
initial or final consonanat, and tone neutralization'
[1981:226]. It takes place in contexts where the part
icle in question receives weak stress, and it is evi-
dently a function of rapidity of speech and perhaps al
of casualness or personal style. Thus, for example,
/láʔ/ may be reduced to á̱ʔ or a̱ʔ, and /rɔ̀ɔk/ to ṟɔ̀k, a̱
or a̱ʔ.

By way of contrast, Henderson and Chuenkongchoo
make no attempt to describe individual variants of a
given particle. Instead, they attempt to account for
all particle forms [whether they be variants of a give
form or whether they be phonemically unvarying] in ter
of general intonational or prosodic phenomena. This
they do by setting up sentence tones or prosodic
complexes, with long-falling tone signalling one thing
short-high tone another, etc., etc. But [as I have
suggested above], these generalizations lack informati
as to the particular phonological and semantic facts
upon which they need to be based. Also, in Henderson'
case, many of these generalizations are easily falsi-
fied. Chuenkongchoo's, on the other hand, do come
closer to the mark; but they are often somewhat vague.

Another scholar, Rudaravanija [1965], has likewis
focussed almost exclusively on intonational phenomena,
and she has proposed underlying forms for each of the
particles, such forms being phonemically specified in
terms of consonantal and vowel quality but not in ter
of tone and vowel length. Forms then aquire values of
tone and length as a result of occurrence with one or
another of three terminal contours: falling, rising,
and sustained. Thus, for example, falling contour
signals 'statements, commands, requests, strong

emphasis' (p. 88); and when this contour occurs, the
preceding particle may be assigned mid, low, or falling
tone (see p. 94). High terminal contour, then, signals
'surprise, incredulity, mild emphasis, politeness,
tentativeness' (p. 88); and it may condition the
occurrence of either high or rising tone (p.94).

Once again, unfortunately, the above statements can
be falsified even on the basis of the author's own data.
Thus (on pp. 95, 96, for example) /lá↑/ (with rising
contour) is said to signal statements, whereas /lâ↓/
(falling contour) signals a 'wh ' question--the very
opposite of what she has led us to expect from her
earlier generalizations as summarized above. But note
that she has made an attempt to deal with the intona-
tional problem in terms of underlying forms, and she has
alerted us to the necessity of considering terminal con-
tours as an important element in the puzzle. Also, like
Henderson and Chuenkongchoo, she has made an attempt to
deal with certain intonational patterns that seem to
apply through more than one part of the SP system.

We can say, therefore, that Noss, following the
structural-phonemic approach, focusses on particular
forms and their variants but tends to ignore larger
variational patterns peculiar to SPs, while the others
focus on wider intonational patterns and largely ignore
the particulars upon which their generalizations need to
be based. Obviously, if we are to put the pieces of the
puzzle together, we need to pay attention to both the
particulars and the wider patterns.

4. A Proposed Solution to the Puzzles of the SP System.
      I propose what I trust is a more comprehensive and
workable solution to the puzzles of the SP system as
follows:
      First, I assume that each particle possesses some
kind of a semantic unity throughout all its contextual
and intonational variations. In other words, each SP,
however much it may vary in context or usage, does have
some underlying meaning or function that distinguishes
it from other SPs. And although a given particle may
vary in pronunciation, whether intonationally or
otherwise, it may usefully be described in terms of an
underlying form and its specified prosodic or
intonational variants.
      These prosodic or intonational variants may then be
described in terms of three types of processes (to be
explained below): first a process that I call primary
variation (where a given SP may have alternate forms
that vary in terms of tone, vowel length, and terminal
glottal stop); then phonological simplification or
reduction (obligatory or optional): and finally general

features of voice register (normal or high), terminal
contour (falling or raised), special vowel lengthening,
stress, and addition of terminal /h/.
Let us now take a closer look at some of the
features of the approach I have outlined above; and let
me begin by showing what I have done with the particle
ná and its primary variants:
This form is said to signal the fact that the
speaker wants or expects some response from the addres-
see. (By way of contrast, sî, for example, signals that
a given response is expectable under the circumstances,
while thĵ? signals that a given response is good or
desirable.) And this particle, with its message of
'response desired', may accompany commands, suggestions,
requests, invitations, instruction-giving utterances,
statements, questions, and vocative expressions. Its
primary variants are as follows: /ná/ neutral form (in
some contexts), or demanding (in other contexts,
especially in commands); /nâ/ momentary urging or
persuasion, sometimes implying mild impatience; /náa/
begging, pleading, sustained desire for response; /nâa/
coaxing, persuading, applying sustained pressure; /naa/
warning or persuading, but with reduced or withheld
personal involvement; /nàa/ somewhat negative or
pessimistic. Note that /nâ/ and /nâa/ are never used
with questions, whereas the other variants are. How-
ever in the case of /náa/, /naa/, and /nàa/, the
questions are always self-directed, whereas with /ná/
they need not be.
a. Basic meanings of SPs. Note that in my handling
of the form ná, I have suggested a basic meaning that I
believe covers pretty well the whole range of occur-
rences of the particle and all its primary variants. I
have also suggested a variety of contexts in which this
SP occurs, but the basic meaning remains in all con-
texts. And I have handled other SP forms in the same
way. Furthermore, if I have found I could not thus pull
together the meanings of a given form, I have assumed
that more than one particle is involved. For this
reason, I have proposed that there are two particles
having the form nâ?, and two having the form nî?. (See
Appendix A.) But these are the only cases of
underlying-form homonymy that I have found.
b. Underlying forms of SPs. I have found that by
postulating these, I have greatly simplified the process
of describing morphophonemic and intonational varia-
tions. Furthermore, in postulating such forms, I have
found it necessary to specify them not only in terms of
consonant and vowel quality but also in terms of tone,
vowel length, and presence or absence of terminal
glottal. One reason for my so specifying them is the

fact that a number of forms [in colloquial speech at any rate] occur only with one given tone and vowel length; e.g., hέ, háʔ, khráp, máy, nə̂, and ni. Another reason is the fact that certain forms are obviously intonationally-modified variants of other semantically more simple forms. Thus, for example, the high-tone variants of thə̀ʔ, lɔ̀k, and làʔ, and lὲʔ occur with high tone only when they convey a sort of light-hearted familiarity or assertiveness--an obvious intonational modification of lower-tone forms that convey no such message. As for the terminal glottal, there is a very obvious contrast between certain forms which never have the glottal in prepause position [e.g., câ, hâ, hέ, khâ, lâ, lɔ̌, ná, nê, nə̀, ni, si, wâ, and yâ], and others which always do [haʔ, làʔ, làʔ, lὲʔ, and niaʔ]. Indeed there is even one case of minimal contrast--as seen in the forms /há/ [informal polite form for young female speakers] and /hâ/ [for male speakers].

    c. Primary variants. A number of SPs [but not all] occur with two or more of what I call primary variants. We have seen, for example, that the form ná has the variants /ná/, /nâ/, /náa/, /nâa/, /naa/, and /nàa/, with each variant signalling some intonational modification of the basic meaning of the particle. And clearly we are talking about some kind of intonational process here; but it seems to me that this process differs from other intonational processes in that it brings about change in the ordinary phonemic values of the forms it affects--changes in the phonemic values of tone or vowel length that in turn signal concomitant semantic modifications of the basic meanings.

    By way of contrast, other types of intonation may modify a given tone without actually changing it into another one; or they may add to the length of a vowel that is already phonemically long, or to a short vowel making it only half long. Also, other types of intona-tion tend to have a more general affect on the SP system, whereas primary variation will affect only a few forms; and it will tend to be somewhat more idiosyn-cratic and restricted in its semantic effect.

    d. Patterns of primary variation. However, there are certain restricted patterns to be observed in the primary-variation system. For example, as is well-known, a number of speaker-addressee-relationship particles [hereafter identified by the acronym SARP] have falling-tone primary variants that signal statements, commands, and the like, whereas their high-tone counterparts signal questions or calling attention [e.g., /câ/ and /cá/, /hâ/, and /há/, /khâ/ and khá/, /yâ/ and /yá/]; and two of these [câ and khâ] have long, rising-tone variants that signal an intimate call or

response to such a call. Note, however, that the forms
hǎ? and khrǎp do not reflect this pattern, for they
occur only with high tone. And note also that the form
/wǎ/, the high-tone primary variant of the non-restraint
SARP form wâ, may signal a command, whereas the high-
tone forms /cá/, /há/, /khá/, and /yá/ never do. Fur-
thermore, wâ has other primary variants [/wáa/, /waa/,
/wàa/, and /wǎa/] that have no counterparts among
variants of other SARP forms. We can conclude,
therefore, that there are not only remarkable parallel
patterns among the SARP primary variants but also some
remarkable exceptions to those parallels.

Another set of parallel patterns may be observed
among low-tone SPs that end in a stop: the forms lâ?,
lɛ̀? , lɔ̀k, and thà?. All such forms have a low tone
variant that is somewhat formal, a mid-tone variant that
is relaxed and informal, and a high [or extra high] tone
variant that is jovial or lightly self-assertive. Fur-
thermore, there is another form lá? that has a similar
pattern of lower-to-higher tonal variation [with similar
semantic implications], except that the range of
variation starts from the mid tone at the bottom and
goes on to extra-high high tone at the top. Obviously,
then, we have a pattern of intonational variation that
operates consistently within the limits of this sub-
group of forms.

A third set of parallel patterns may be observed in
the case of the forms ná, sî, and wâ, all of which [in
their underlying form] terminate in a short vowel, and
all of which reflect a wider range of intonational
variation than any other SPs. All have short falling-
tone variants that may occur with statements, and short
high-tone variants that may occur with commands and
questions. Also ná and sî have long falling-tone
variants that are used to express urging, persuading.

The general picture is here summarized in Figure C
[which is here reproduced from my 1989 monograph on
SPs]. A careful examination of this figure will reveal
the fact that there are remarkable parallels between the
variants of these three SPs; but it will also show that
there are many points of difference in the way each of
them behaves. In other words, the intonational patterns
are somewhat idiosyncratic and not nearly as consistent
across the board as one might expect.

Then, in addition to the patterns observable in the
three SP sub-groups described above, there are certain
other partial patterns that seem to apply almost across
the board within the SP system. For example, a large
number of falling-tone forms [though not all] are
restricted to use in statements or action-inducement
utterances: /câ, khâ, hâ, wâ, yâ, nâ, nâa, sî, sîi/.

UNDERLYING FORM	BASIC MEANING	PRIMARY VARIANTS, THEIR MEANINGS AND CONTEXTS OF OCCURRENCE						
		SHORT FALLING	SHORT HIGH	LONG FALLING	LONG HIGH	LONG MID	LONG LOW	LONG RISING
ná	desired response called for	momentary urging (st, weak com)	neutral or demanding (Q, st-Q, com, other AIU)	persuasion (st, AIU)	sustained desire (st-Q, self-Q, AIU)	emotional distance (st-Q, AIU, especially warnings)	negativity, dismay, discouragement (st, AIU)	--
sí	expectable response called for or given	neutral or definite (st, com, other AIU)	personal need or wish (com, other AIU)	persuasion (st, AIU)	--	emotional distance (st, AIU)	--	--
wâ	male non-restraint (SARP)	(st, flat com or demand)	(Q, urging AIU)	--	sustained desire (self-Q, AIU)	dismay (excl)	jocular dismay or bafflement (self-Q, AIU, excl)	jocular dismay or bafflement (self-Q, AIU, excl)

FIGURE C: A COMPARISON OF THE PRIMARY VARIANTS OF *ná*, *sí* AND *wâ*

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS IN FIGURE C

AIU   action-inducement utterance (i.e. the form in question occurs with such utterances)
com   command (i.e. form occurs with commands)
excl   exclamative (i.e. form occurs as part of an exclamative expression)
Q   question (i.e. form occurs with questions)
SARP   speaker-addressee-relationship particle (i.e. the form in question is such a particle)
self-Q   self-directed question (i.e. form occurs with such questions)
st   statement (i.e. form occurs with statements)
st-Q   statement that is turned into a question by the addition of the form in question

Note, however, that a few falling-tone forms do indeed
occur with questions: /lâ, nîʔ, nîaʔ, and nâʔ/. As for
short, high-tone forms, we find that several signal
questions or are compatible with the same [/ná, lá, mán,
máy/]; other short, high-tone forms signal action-
inducement utterances or are compatible with the same
[/wá, sí, ná/]; still others signal light assertiveness
[/láʔ, léʔ, lók, thê?/]; and still others signal an
immediate emotional response to some situation [/hé, ní,
ní/]. Also, it turns out that most long-vowel forms
convey some sense of ongoing reaction, attitude,
feeling: /náa, naa, nàa, nâa, nɔɔ, sii, wáa, waa, wàa/.
And, finally, many long, level-tone forms may be used in
self-directed 'I-wonder' questions.

Correlations such as the above must obviously be
considered significant. But it should be noted, again,
that there are gaps and exceptions. Some particles vary
and some do not. And the patterns are nowhere near as
general or consistent as one might expect.

e. <u>Simplification</u> <u>or</u> <u>Reduction</u>. This phenomenon
includes two types of process that may affect a given
SP. One type comprises morphophonemic changes that
occur obligatorily whenever the phonological conditions
are met; and these obligatory changes may be expressed
in terms of two simple rules:

1] In non-pause position, all level-tone forms
ending in a glottal stop change to mid tone, and the
glottal stop is lost. For example, /pay kan thâʔ khráp/
'Let's go' becomes /pay kan thə khráp/, and /klàp láʔ
ná/ 'I'm going home' becomes /klàp la ná/.

2] In a sequence of two or more short falling-tone
SPs, or of a falling tone non-SP followed by one or more
short falling-tone SPs, the successive falling-tone
syllables will be pronounced as a single falling-pitch
intonation unit. For example, the three syllables of
/klàp bâan nâ sî/ 'He's going home, of course' will be
pronounced as if the last three syllables comprised a
single falling tone, not three of them.

Another type of simplification comprises phono-
logical changes that occur in the context of rapid or
casual speech. In such contexts, a form may simplify (
lose its initial consonant [e.g., /rɔ̀k/ becomes /lɔ̀k/,
/lɔ̀/ becomes /ɔ̀/, /thəʔ/ becomes /haʔ/]; or a vowel may
become centralized [e.g. /rɯ́ɯ/ becomes /lə̀ə/, /lɔ̀k/
becomes /à?/]; or final /k/ becomes /ʔ/ [e.g., again,
/lɔ̀k/ becomes /à?/].

f/ <u>Other</u> <u>intonational</u> <u>processes</u>. After the
processes of primary variation and simplification or
reduction have had their effect, SPs may be subject to
additional, and more general processes effecting various
types of intonational change. These include the

following:
    1) <u>Normal</u> <u>and</u> <u>high</u> <u>voice</u> <u>registers</u>. Voice
register, whether normal or high, is linked with the
intonation of the sentence as a whole. Most sentences,
with or without SPs, are pronounced with normal voice
register. High register utterances, as the name
implies, are pronounced with a higher pitch than normal,
and the pitch carries throughout a given sentence. It
may occur in all types of sentences (statements,
questions, commands, exclamatives, again with or without
accompanying SPs; and it signals such things as
surprise, special-concern questioning, disagreement,
complaint, dismay, pleasure, solicitude, emphasis.
    2) <u>Lowered</u> <u>and</u> <u>raised</u> <u>terminal</u> <u>contour</u>. Terminal
contour is a phenomenon which primarily affects the end
of a given sentence, whether or not it terminates in an
SP. But when there is a final SP, as there often is,
that SP will be the focal point of a given contour. In
the case of lowered terminal contour, then, the tone of
a given SP will be pronounced with a lower pitch than
that of a form with the same tone earlier in the
sentence. And this terminal pitch lowering is
particularly apparent in the case of falling and low
tones. Thus a falling-tone SP or variant will usually
be pronounced with the pitch drop starting noticeably
below the mid-tone level and then falling on down still
lower. And a low-tone SP will ordinarily be pronounced
quite low and with a somewhat dropping pitch.
    Then, depending on the particle used, the utterance
may carry any of several semantic values: neutrality or
unexpressiveness; abruptness, flatness, annoyance,
hostility; ego negativity, passivity, resigned and
perhaps humorous bafflement; formality.
    SPs with raised terminal contour will ordinarily be
pronounced with a higher pitch than those with lowered
contour. High tone will be pronounced rather high and
will often trail off higher still. Falling tone will be
pronounced with the drop-off beginning at the mid-tone
level or higher. Rising tone will trail off just a bit
higher than with lowered contour. And mid tone
(somewhat rarely raised) will be pronounced mid but
without the usual terminal drop-off. Low tone,
however, never occurs with raised contour.
    Then (again depending on the particle used) this
contour may carry the following semantic values:
increased emotional concern or involvement; heightened
and positive personal expressiveness, enthusiasm, good
spirits, light assertiveness, archness, cuteness,
femininity; intensified assertiveness, dismay, or
bafflement in the face of resistance, delay or contrary
behavior; surprise; informality.

Special particle lengthening. Almost all SPs and variants may undergo various degrees of lengthening, usually with the effect of softening an utterance or making it less abrupt. However, a long-vowel form that has been specially lenthened will have a semantic value only slightly different from one which has not. And if a given SP happens to have both short-and long-vowel primary variants, a specially-lengthened short vowel form will tend to merge semantically with its long vowel counterpart.

SPs and the phenomenon of stress. Short-vowel SPs and variants are usually unstressed, whereas long-vowel forms should probably be considered as stressed. Also, all cases of raising or special lengthening will be characterized by syllabic stress. However, forms may be stressed [i.e., pronounced with increased volume and emphasis] without being either raised or lengthened. In such cases stress will signal such things as impatience, annoyance, hostility, peremptoriness.

SPs and terminal /h/. SPs or variants which end in a short vowel [but not those whose underlying form ends in glottal stop] may, in prepause position, terminate in a puff of air or /h/ sound; and the same is true of the forms wóou and wóu. If this occurs in the context of stress, unaccompanied by raised contour or special lengthening, it conveys impatience, hostiliy, and the like. Otherwise it seems to have some sort of softening effect--conveying such things as affection, gentleness, personal interest, special concern for the reaction or response of the addressee.

5. The Validity of the Present Approach to SP Variation
      There are three problems that might cast doubt upon the validity of the present approach to SP variation. The first is the problem of certain points of arbitrariness in the setting up of underlying forms that are specified not only in terms of consonant and vowel quality but also of tone and vowel length. For example, in the case of lâ?, lɛ̂?, lɔ̀k, and thâ?, there is a question as to why one should choose the low-tone forms rather than the mid as the underlying ones? And why should one choose sî rather than si, or maŋ rather than máŋ?
      Despite such cases of arbitrariness, however, there are two reasons why I feel it would be a mistake to abandon the expedient of setting up fully-specified underlying forms. One is the clear evidence of phonemic tonal and vowel-length contrast. The other is the obvious contrast between simple and developed meanings of variants of a given SP. In other words, one variant [presumably the underlying one] will have a simple and

rather general meaning; and another variant will have that simple meaning plus something else: persuasion, light assertiveness, or whatever. This suggests that there is indeed a basic or underlying form that has changed phonologically in order to add some modification to the original meaning.

Another problem is the fact that there are a number of form-meaning correlations that may be seen in various parts of the primary-variation system: the use of falling tone for statements and of high tone for questions, the use of high tone for light assertiveness, the use of vowel length to convey sustained desire, etc.

And a third problem is the existence of overlap between the phonological and semantic values of primary variants on the one hand, and those of other intonational features on the other. Thus, for example, high tone variants of la?, li?, lɔk, and thǝ? all convey light assertiveness. And so do other SP forms when they occur with raised contour. Isn't it obvious, then, that the same process is going on in both cases? And to this question one can only answer yes.

Certainly, then, one has to recognize the existence of intonational parallels both within the primary-variant system itself, and between primary and other types of variation. Nevertheless, it does seem clear that primary variation is more unpredictable and idiosyncratic than other kinds of intonational change. Besides, these other kinds of change are much more readily described by taking the primary variants as the starting points for the additional processes that then come into play and exert their effect upon them.

6. Conclusion.

As we look at the SP system as a whole, we can perhaps say that SPs provide the focal point for intonational expressiveness in the language. And in doing so, they take certain liberties with the ordinary phonemic system by using certain phonemic contrasts-- especially those involving tone and vowel length--to signal intonational rather than lexical information. But they do this in a highly inconsistent and variable manner, some SPs behaving in one way and others in another. Then they interact with the general intonational system by exploiting and expanding it, and also by making use of a number of special intonational features peculiar to SP occurrence [e.g., special lengthening and the use of terminal /h/]. All of these factors together produce the kind of variability in form and meaning that I have been trying to describe.

APPENDIX A
Abbreviated Glossary of SP Forms

This glossary [reproduced from my 1989 monograph]
provides very abbreviated definitions of each SP but
does not give the meanings of primary variants. Note
that the acronym SARP identifies the form in question
a speaker-addressee-relationship particle.

câ (SARP)	intimate and affectionate, used by or to women and children. V: /câ/, /cá/, /cǎa/.
dɔ̀ɔk	correction of misapprehension (written lang.; cf. lɔ̀k).
hâ (SARP)	informal and friendly, female speaking. Variants: /hâ/, /há/.
háʔ (SARP)	informal and friendly, male speaking.
hέ	light, assertive or cavalier response.
kramaŋ	tentative statement or guess (written lang.; cf. lamaŋ, maŋ).
khráp (SARP)	polite and somewhat formal, male speaking.
lâ	shift of focus to new but related concern.
laʔ	critical point now or already reached. Variants: /laʔ/, /láʔ/.
làʔ	sole alternative. Variants: /làʔ/, /laʔ/, /láʔ/.
lamaŋ,maŋ	tentative statement or guess. Variants: /lamaŋ/, maŋ/, /lamáŋ/, /máŋ
lâw	shift of focus to new but related concern (written lang.; cf. lâ).
lὲʔ	sole alternative (slightly formal or definite; cf. làʔ). Variants: /lὲʔ/,
lə̌	clue-derived yes/no question. Variants: /lə̌/, lə́/, /lə̌ə/.
lɔ̀k	correction of misapprehension. Variants: /lɔ̀k/, /lɔk/, /lɔ́k/.
maŋ	tentative statement or guess (free variant of lamaŋ). Variants: /maŋ/
máy	simple yes/no question.
mǎy	simple yes/no question (written lang.; cf. máy).
ná	response desired. Variants: /ná/, /náa/, /naa/, /nàa/, /nâ/, /nâa/.
nâʔ (1)	matter of minor or passing importance.
nâʔ (2)	non-proximate topic.
nê	particular relevance to addressee.
nə́ní	involvement in shared experience.
níʔ (1)	matter of striking or critical relevance.
nîaʔ, nîʔ (2)	proximate topic. Variants: /nîaʔ/, /nîʔ/, /nii/.
nɔ́ɔ	self-directed 'I wonder' question.
nɔ̌ɔ	self-directed 'I wonder' question (written lang.; cf. nɔ́ɔ).
ŋay	known or rememberable referent.
rə̌	clue-derived yes/no question ('correct' speech; cf. lə̌).
rɔ̀k	correction of misapprehension ('correct' speech; cf. lɔ̀k).
rŭɯ	clue-derived yes/no question (written lang.; cf. lə̌).
sî	expectable response. Variants: /sî/, /sîi/, /si/, /sii/, /sí/.
thə̀ʔ	desirable response. Variants: /thə̀ʔ/, /thəʔ/, /thə́ʔ/.
thə̀ət	desirable response (written lang.; cf. thə̀ʔ).
wâ, wóoy, wə́əy (SARP)	unrestrained and familiar or coarse, especially male speaking to Variants: /wâ/, /wá/, /wáa/, /waa/, /wàa/, /wǎa/, /wóoy/, /wə́əy/.
yâ (SARP)	moderately unrestrained and teasing or derogatory, chiefly f speaking. Variants: /yâ/, /yá/.

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