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 hên duay lêk la lês khráp nâ nô?./ 'So you
   1  2  3
don't agree with this, huh?'
   1   2,3

2) /jaacaan nâ lês khâ khamooy naalikaa./ 'You mean
   1  2  3
it was the professor 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 investigation, 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 boiled 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 forms meant; nor could I make sense out of the complexities of 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 told 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 /Sì/ 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 often 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 have 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 may 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 focused directly upon the probl
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 unsupported by any of the particulars on which those generalizations 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 /sí/, 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 conclusions; for the labor of sorting out basic meanings is extraordinarily difficult. But one result of her failure 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 [/lâ?/, /lâʔ/, /nâʔ/, /râk/, and /nâ/], and five that occur in the context of surprise [/lâʔ/, /nâʔ/, /nây/, /nâi/, and /châw/]. 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 interchangeably.

Another scholar, Nass, 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, Nass has dealt briefly with the second part of the SP puzzle--the problem of intonational variability (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 phonemic variants of a given particle and to account for the phonological or semantic contexts in which each is used. Thus he speaks (1965:112) of a particle /ná/ that is said to have the variants /näa/ urging acceptance, /nä/ more insistent, /näa!/ emphatic, /nä/ weak question or request for confirmation, and /näin/ emphatic variant /nä/. 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 accounting for the variations that occur. And, like Noss, she for the most part says little about the patterns of SP variation. She does, however, describe one intonational process in some detail: a process which she identifies as reduction. This is a process which is said to involve changes such as 'vowel shortening, deletion of initial or final consonant, and tone neutralization' (1981:226). It takes place in contexts where the particle in question receives weak stress, and it is evidently a function of rapidity of speech and perhaps also of casualness or personal style. Thus, for example, /ldá?/ may be reduced to á or a?, and /r3:k/ to r3k, á or a?

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 given form or whether they be phonemically unvarying) in terms 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 informativeness as to the particular phonological and semantic facts upon which they need to be based. Also, in Henderson's case, many of these generalizations are easily falsified. Chuenkongchoo's, on the other hand, do come closer to the mark; but they are often somewhat vague.

Another scholar, Rudaravanija (1965), has likewise 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 terms of tone and vowel length. Forms then acquire 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] /lâ˥/ (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 Chuenkongchao, 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 nà and its primary variants:

This form is said to signal the fact that the speaker wants or expects some response from the addressee. (By way of contrast, sì, for example, signals that a given response is expectable under the circumstances, while thà 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: /nà/ 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; /nâa/ warning or persuading, but with reduced or withheld personal involvement; /nàa/ somewhat negative or pessimistic. Note that /nà/ and /nâa/ are never used with questions, whereas the other variants are. However in the case of /nâa/, /nâa/, and /nàa/, the questions are always self-directed, whereas with /nâ/ they need not be.

a. Basic meanings of SPs. Note that in my handling of the form nà, I have suggested a basic meaning that I believe covers pretty well the whole range of occurrences 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 contexts. 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 nà?, 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 variations. 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., hé, há?, kháp, mét, ná, and ní. 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 thá?, lòk, and lâ?, and lâ? 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 pre pause position [e.g., cå, hâ, hé, khâ, lâ, lò, ná, nê, ná, ní, sì, wâ, and yâ], and others which always do [hao?, lò?, lâ?, lâ?, and nîâ?]. Indeed there is even one case of minimal contrast—as seen in the forms /hâ/ [informal polite form for young female speakers] and /há?/ [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/, /nâa/, /nâa/, /nâa/, and /nâa/, 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 intonation 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 idiosyncratic 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., /cå/ and /cå/, /hâ/, and /há/, /khâ/ and khá/, /yâ/ and /yá/); and two of these [cå and khâ] have long, rising-tone variants that signal an intimate call or
response to such a call. Note, however, that the forms ḥâ? and khâ? do not reflect this pattern, for they occur only with high tone. And note also that the form /wâ/, the high-tone primary variant of the non-restraint SARP form wâ, may signal a command, whereas the high-tone forms /câ/, /há/, /khá/, and /yá/ never do. Further more, wâ has other primary variants (/wá/, /wa/, /wâ/, and /wâ/) 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?, lâ?, lâk, and thâ?. 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. Furthermore, there is another form la? 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, sî/. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERLYING FORM</th>
<th>BASIC MEANING</th>
<th>SHORT FALLING</th>
<th>SHORT HIGH</th>
<th>LONG FALLING</th>
<th>LONG HIGH</th>
<th>LONG MID</th>
<th>LONG LOW</th>
<th>LONG RISING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ná</td>
<td>desired response called for</td>
<td>momentary urgency (st, weak com)</td>
<td>neutral or demanding (Q, st-Q, com, other AIU)</td>
<td>persuasion (st, AIU)</td>
<td>sustained desire (st-Q, self-Q, AIU)</td>
<td>emotional distance (st-Q, AIU, especially warnings)</td>
<td>negativity, dismay, discouragement</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sī</td>
<td>expectable response called for or given</td>
<td>neutral or definite (st, com, other AIU)</td>
<td>personal need or wish (com, other AIU)</td>
<td>persuasion (st, AIU)</td>
<td>emotional distance (st, AIU)</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wā</td>
<td>male non-restraint (SARP)</td>
<td>(st, flat com or demand)</td>
<td>(Q, urging AIU)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>sustained desire (excl) (self-Q, AIU)</td>
<td>dismay (excl) (self-Q, AIU, excl)</td>
<td>jocular dismay or bafflement (self-Q, AIU, excl)</td>
<td>jocular dismay or bafflement (self-Q, AIU, excl)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure C:** A comparison of the primary variants of ná, sī and wā

**Key to Abbreviations in Figure C**

- **AIU** action-induction 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/, nî?, nà?, and nà?/. As for short, high-tone forms, we find that several signal questions or are compatible with the same [/nà, l ô, m à, m ày]/; other short, high-tone forms signal action-inducement utterances or are compatible with the same [/wá, s í, n ã]/; still others signal light assertiveness [/lô?, iê?, lôk, thô?/]; and still others signal an immediate emotional response to some situation [/hê, n ô, nî/]. Also, it turns out that most long-vowel forms convey some sense of ongoing reaction, attitude, feeling: /náa, naa, nàa, nàa, nòc, sîi, wàa, wa, 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. Simplification or Reduction. 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 thà? khrâp/ 'Let's go' becomes /pay kan thà khrâp/, and /klàp lâ? nô/ 'I'm going home' becomes /klàp la nô/.

2) In a sequence of two or more short falling-tone or 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 bân nà 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 phonological changes that occur in the context of rapid or casual speech. In such contexts, a form may simplify or lose its initial consonant (e.g., /rôk/ becomes /ôk/; /lô/ becomes /ô/; /thô?/ becomes /hô?/); or a vowel may become centralized (e.g. /râu/ becomes /aû/, /lâu/ becomes /a?/); or final /k/ becomes /7/ (e.g., again, /lôk/ becomes /ô?/).

f/ Other intonational processes. 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) **Normal and high voice registers.** 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) **Lowered and raised terminal contour.** 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, feminity; 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 lengthened 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 māoxu and wǎxu. If this occurs in the context of stress, unaccompanied by raised contour or special lengthening, it conveys impatience, hostility, 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?, lè?, làk, and thà?, there is a question as to why one should choose the low-tone forms rather than the mid-ase the underlying ones? And why should one choose shì rather than sì, or mān rather than mān?

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 phonetic 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 intona- tional features on the other. Thus, for example, high tone variants of 1a?, 1b?, 1c, and th? 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 intona- tional 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.

cā (SARP)  
intimate and affectionate, used by or to women and children. Variants: /cā/, /cā/, /cāa/.

dōok  
correction of misapprehension (written lang.; cf. lōk).

hā (SARP)  

hā? (SARP)  
informal and friendly, male speaking.

hé  
light, assertive or cavalier response.

kramaŋ  
tentative statement or guess (written lang.; cf. lamaŋ, maŋ).

khrāp (SARP)  
polite and somewhat formal, male speaking.

lâ  
shift of focus to new but related concern.

la?  
critical point now or already reached. Variants: /la?/, /lā/.

lā?  
sole alternative. Variants: /lā?/, /lā?/, /lā?/.

lamaŋ, maŋ  
tentative statement or guess. Variants: /lamaŋ/, maŋ/, /lamaŋ/, /maŋ/.

lāw  
shift of focus to new but related concern (written lang.; cf. lā).

lē?  
sole alternative (slightly formal or definite; cf. lā?). Variants: /lē?/, /lē/.

lō  
clue-derived yes/no question. Variants: /lō/, /lā/, /lāə/.

lōk  
correction of misapprehension. Variants: /lōk/, /lōk/, /lōk/.

maŋ  
tentative statement or guess (free variant of lamaŋ). Variants: /maŋ/.

māy  
simple yes/no question.

māy  
simple yes/no question (written lang.; cf. māy).

nā  
response desired. Variants: /nā/, /nāa/, /naa/, /nāa/, /nā/, /nāa/.

nā? (1)  
matter of minor or passing importance.

nā? (2)  
non-proximate topic

nē  
particular relevance to addressee.

nōnī  
involvement in shared experience.

nī? (1)  
matter of striking or critical relevance.

nīa?, nī? (2)  

nōo  
self-directed 'I wonder' question.

nōo  
self-directed 'I wonder' question (written lang.; cf. nōo).

nā  
known or remembered referent.

rō  
clue-derived yes/no question ('correct' speech; cf. lō).

rōk  
correction of misapprehension ('correct' speech; cf. lōk).

rūn  
clue-derived yes/no question (written lang.; cf. lā).

sī  

thā?  

thāot  
desirable response (written lang.; cf. thā?).

wā, wōoy, wōy (SARP)  
unrestrained and familiar or coarse, especially male speaking tone. Variants: /wā/, /wā/, /wā/, /wā/, /wā/, /wōy/, /wōy/.

yā (SARP)  
moderately unrestrained and teasing or derogatory, chiefly female speaking. Variants: /yā/, /yā/.
REFERENCES


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