

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF YONG AND STANDARD THAI<sup>1</sup>

Somchit Davies

## 1. Historical and geographical background

The Yong are a minority group of the Tai people living in the Lam Phun and Chiang Mai provinces of Thailand who call themselves and their language 'Yong'. They were brought down there from Sip Song Panna about two hundred years ago.<sup>2</sup> At the present time the Yong are usually found in villages fairly close to Khuen or Lue<sup>3</sup> villages in these provinces. The Yong are distributed along the narrow Mae Tha river Valley<sup>4</sup> which runs southwest to northeast in the mountain chain that separates the main Chiang Mai and Lampang valleys in northern Thailand, and in Doi Saket and San Kamphaeng in the main Chiang Mai valley. They are widespread in Lam Phun province in the south of the main Chiang Mai valley, where the Mae Tha valley enters the Chiang Mai valley.

## 2. Social and linguistic background

My main information on the Yong dialect comes from Baan Don Chai village which is situated inside the Mae Tha valley in a rather isolated position. Mrs. Lun Kanthada, my informant there, has told me that in her youth there were only about a dozen or more houses clustered along the only road that passes along the valley through the village at that site. Communication with the outside world was by walking half a day over the hills to San Kamphaeng district or two to three hours down the valley to Tha Chomphu railway station. (The railway line was constructed along the lower end of the valley in 1932 as part of the line connecting Bangkok with Chiang Mai.) However, during heavy rainy seasons travelling to the station was always very difficult and sometimes impossible.

In 1975 a dirt road was built along the old track that ran up the valley and this is now said to be usable in every season. Also nowadays there are seven primary schools in villages in this part of the valley. Their teachers speak northern Thai as well as Yong and Standard Thai in school. In the community, both between themselves and sometimes even with outsiders, the people use their own Yong dialect.

Strangers are still regarded as something interesting. At the time Professor Henderson visited the village about ten people gathered around to watch the visitors.

### 3. Aim, arrangement and scope of the study

The word list of Yong has been collected by me: since 1974 from Pa Sang district, Lam Phun province, in the main Chiang Mai valley, and since 1975 from Baan Don Chai village.

The informants in Pa Sang are Miss Comcaj Kaewchan, aged 20-25, a graduate of Chaing Mai University, and her grandfather, aged 60-70, who received education from a monastery in his village. The informants from Baan Don Chai are Mrs. Kanthada, aged 60-70, and her daughter, Mrs. Bua-Kaew Kanthada, aged 35-40. The mother received no school education at all but the daughter went to school up to age 15.

From my observation of the usage of vocabulary as well as pronunciation the Yong dialect of Pa Sang shows more merging with Northern Thai than the one in Baan Don Chai. For this reason I chose the dialect of Baan Don Chai to represent Yong.

In the paper only the comparison between the Yong dialect of the 60 to 70 year old generation and standard Thai will be presented, the study being done at the word level.<sup>5</sup> Firstly a phonological study of Yong at the word level uttered in isolation is given, followed by a brief note on Standard Thai. Secondly the comparison of the two dialects based on the Standard Thai letters and writing system, as well as Gedney's Proto-Tai tone chart, is given. Finally, in the conclusion, the process of change taking place in Yong is suggested.

In analysing Yong I used my own kinaesthetic feeling. For the tones, I afterwards checked them with the fieldnotes of D. Strecker of Michigan University. For the brief note on Standard Thai I relied on Henderson's "Prosodies in Siamese" (1949), but used the tone marks as in Haas's "Thai-English Students' Dictionary" (1964).

### 4. The Yong dialect

Yong has 20 consonantal phonemes, of which 19 phonemes can function as initial consonants:

ᵐ pa:	'aunt (parental older sibling)'
ᵐ pha:	'cloth'
ᵐ ba:	'crazy'
ᵐ tɛ:	'true, real'
ᵐ tha:	'to wait for'
ᵐ daj	'to gain'
ᵐ cɪm	'to dip in'
ᵐ ka:	'rice seedlings'
ᵐ ʔa:	'to open'
ᵐ fa:	'mold'
ᵐ saj	'intestine'

ʌ	xa:	'to kill'
ʌ	ha:	'five'
ʌ	ma:	'horse'
ʌ	na:	'aunt (maternal younger sibling)'
ʌ	ŋwɪn	'silver'
ʌ	waj	'to keep'
ʌ	law	'alcoholic drink'
ʌ	pa:	'medicine'

The phoneme /s/ is phonetically a voiceless post-alveolar fricative [ɣ]

There are 3 consonant clusters /kw/, /xw/ and /ŋw/,

e.g.	ʌ	kwa:n	'elephant driver and tamer'
	ʌ	xwat	'to dip out by hand'

/ŋw/ is found only in the onomatopoeic word /ʌŋwa?/ 'crying (water-buffalo)'.

There are 9 final consonants:

ʌ	dip	'unripe, raw'
ʌ	dɛ:t	'sunshine'
ʌ	dɔ:k	'flower'
ʌ	pɪ?	'mud'
ʌ	bo:m	'to get swollen'
ʌ	bɪn	'to fly'
ʌ	pɛ:ŋ	'song'
ʌ	xaw	'rice'
ʌ	haj	'dry field'

Yong has 18 simple vowels:

ʌ	pin	'to be'
ʌ	pi:	'older sibling'
ʌ	bet	'fish hook'
ʌ	me:	'wife'
ʌ	pɛ?	'goat'
ʌ	pɛ:ŋ	'expensive'
ʌ	ŋwɪn	'silver'
ʌ	mw:	'hand'
ʌ	thɪn	'jungle'
ʌ	ŋɪ:k	'gum'
ʌ	xan	'to imprison'
ʌ	xa:ŋ	'cast iron'

ɿ	suk	'ripe, cooked'
ɿ	lu:k	'one's child'
ɿ	nok	'bird'
ɿ	ŋo:ŋ	'elephant trunk'
ɿ	kɔʔ	'to seize'
ɿ	nɔ:ŋ	'younger sibling'

There are closing diphthongs which may be interpreted phonemically as simple vowels followed by /j/ or /w/, e.g.

ɿ	ŋiʷ	'kepok'
ɿ	kew	'to chew'
ɿ	le:w	'to turn'
L	ʔew	'going out to enjoy one's self'
ɿ	ʔɛ:w	'waist'
ɿ	taw	'ash'
ɿ	la:w	as in /ɿ xun    ɿla:w/ 'Northern Thai people apart from Yong, Khuen, Lue'

L	kaj	'chicken'
ɿ	pa:j	'top (as in the top of the tree)'
L	phɔj	'crispy'
ɿ	lɔ:j	'a hundred'
ɿ	koj	'banana'
ɿ	tho:j	'bowl, cup'
ɿ	muj	as in /ɿ muj    ɿka:ŋ/ 'beard'

Yong has 6 tones on live syllables, 4 tones on dead syllables, and a neutral tone on syllabic m and b.

### Live Syllables

1. Mid Level Tone. This tone starts at the mid pitch and stays at that level until the end of the syllable, e.g.

ɿ	ha:	'mold, fungus'
ɿ	na:	'rice-field'

2. Mid Falling Tone. This tone starts with a pitch that sounds slightly lower than mid pitch and then falls with glottal constriction, especially in open syllables, e.g.

ɿ	ha:	'five'
ɿ	na:	'face'



3. High Falling Tone. This tone starts with a pitch that sounds slightly higher than mid pitch, but not as high as the high pitch, and then falls. In an open syllable the glottal constriction can be heard at the end, but is not so strong as that of the Mid Falling Tone, e.g.

↑ ha:	'fish preserved with salt'
↑ na:	'aunt (maternal younger sibling)'
↑ pha:	'knife'

4. Lower Low Level Tone, e.g.

└ ba:	'shoulder'
└ pi:	'aboe, a kind of wind instrument'
└ ha:	'classifier for heavy rainfall'

5. Higher Low Level Tone, e.g.

└ pi:	'older sibling'
└ ha:	'chicken plague'

Both Lower Low Level Tone and Higher Low Level Tone start at a pitch that is lower than the Mid Level Tone and stay at that level until the end of the syllable. These tones sound rather similar in rapid combinative style of speech.<sup>6</sup>

6. Rising Tone. This tone starts at a low pitch and rises to a higher level pitch, e.g.

↗ pi:	'year'
↗ ha:	'to come, to see'

#### Dead Syllables

1. Mid Level Tone. This tone has a lower pitch than the Mid Level Tone of live syllables, but not as low as the Higher Low Level Tone of live Syllables, e.g.

└ mat	'to tie up'
└ sat	'distinctly'
└ lak	'to steal'

2. Lower Low Level Tone. This tone has the same pitch as the Lower Low Level Tone of live syllables.

└ ɲɤ:k	'gum'
└ pi:k	'wing'
└ po:k	'the stalk of a banana tree'

3. Higher Low Level Tone. This tone has the same pitch as the Higher Low Level Tone of live syllables, e.g.

└ pɤ?	'to carry on or by one's body (in the same manner as the hill-tribemen carry their belongings or the rickshaw men pull their passengers)'
└ la:k	'to pull along'
└ lɤ:t	'blood'

4. High Level Tone. This tone has the highest pitch of any of the level-pitch tones. Sometimes a slight rise at the end of a syllable can be heard, e.g.

└ pɤ?	'mud'
└ lak	'clever'
└ mat	'flea'
└ kop	'frog'

The last tone is the Neutral Tone for syllabic *m* or *b* and it tends to vary, sometimes having low pitch, sometimes high pitch, and sometimes other pitches depending on the syllables that come after:

/m└ ne:/	'not certain'
/m└ ma:/	'not coming'
/m└ pa:w/	'coconut'
/b└ pha:/	'cliff'
/b└ caj/	'is not'

Yong words are mostly monosyllabic, although there are also disyllables and syllabic *m* and *b*, e.g.

/Lte:└ wɛ:/	'yesterday'
/Lmɤ:└ xw:n/	'last night'
/m└ mi:/	'not having'
/b└ pha:/	'cliff'
/└pha└ lɤ:t/	'to slip (when walking)'

## 5. Standard Thai

Standard Thai is the official language of Thailand. All Thai children throughout the country have to learn this language, the writing system as well as the spoken tongue. In this paper it will be referred to as Siamese and considered as one dialect of the Tai language.

Siamese has 21 consonantal phonemes, all of which can function as simple initial consonants:

pà:	'forest'
phà:	'to cut in between'
bà:	'shoulder'
ta:	'eyes'
tha:	'to paint'
dà:	'to scold'
cà:	'chief'
cha:	'tea'
ka:	'crow'
kha:	'to dangle in between'
pâ:	'aunt, parent's female older sibling'
fâ:	'sky'
sâ:	'spots caused by fever'
hâ:	'classifier for rainfall'
ma:	'to come'
na:	'rice field'
ṇa:	'ivory'
la:	'donkey'
ra:	'fungus'
ja:	'medicine'
wa:	'a unit of measurement'

Also there are 11 initial clusters:

pla:	'fish'
phla:j	'male elephant'
kla:j	'to change'
khla:j	'to release'
prâp	'to fine'
phrâ?	'monk'
krô?	'armour'
kh râ:p	'cast off skin (as of snake)'
tra:	'mark, emblem'
kwâ:ŋ	'wide'
khwâ:ŋ	'to throw'

And there are 9 final consonants:

kâp	'together'
kât	'to bite'
kâk	'to imprison, to block'
kâ?	'to estimate'
kam	'to hold in one hand'
kan	'to prevent'
ko:ŋ	'to cheat'
ko:j	'to sweep in a pile'
kaw	'to scratch'

For the vowels there are 18 simple vowels, short and long, and three diphthongs, e.g.

krɪt	'a malay knife'
krɪ:t	'to score with a knife'
dət	'to pluck a flower from a tree'
dè:t	'power'
khɛŋ	'tough, hard (as for wood)'
hê:ŋ	'dry'
ʔút	'to endure (onomatopoeic word)'
ʔú:t	'to be swollen like a dead body'
ŋɤn	'silver'
dɤ:n	'to walk'
pan	'to give'
pa:n	'birthmark'
khun	'you (2 nd person, personal pronoun)'
khu:n	'to multiply'
sòt	'fresh'
sò:t	'single'
cò?	'to make a hole'
pho:	'enough'
kja?	'a kind of fir tree'
siaŋ	'to risk'
ʔwak	'onomatopoeic word for swallowing saliva'
rûaŋ	'story'
phua?	'onomatopoeic word for the sound of beating'
rûaŋ/	'to fall from the top'

Siamese has five tones on live syllables:

Mid Level Tone	kha:	'to dangle in between'
Low Level Tone	khà:	'a kind of plant'
Falling Tone	khâ:	'price'
High Tone	khá:	'to trade'
Rising Tone	khǎ:	'leg'

and three tones on dead syllables:

Low Level Tone	kàp	'together'
	kà:p	'a husk of banana or coconut'
High Level Tone	kháp	'tight'
Falling Tone	khâ:p	'to hold in between the jaws'

## 6. A comparison of Yong and Standard Thai

In comparing Yong and Siamese it may provide a clearer picture to take the Siamese letters into account, since Yong consonantal phonemes and tones seem to appear in a systematic relationship with them. In the following, Siamese and Yong words are compared according to the Siamese writing system.

### Consonants

Siamese has three classes of consonants, e.g. high class consonants, mid class consonants and low class consonants.

#### High class consonants

There are two types of Siamese high class consonants.

The first type are voiceless aspirated plosives and voiceless fricatives:

Siamese High Class (SHC)			Yong	English Gloss
ผ, ฝ	ph	phàk	┐ phak	'vegetable'
		phuǎ	└ pho:	'husband'
		phâ:	└ pha:	'cloth'
ถ, ฐ	th	thǔŋ	└ thwŋ	'to arrive at'
		thuâj	└ tho:j	'cup, bowl'
		thâw	└ taw	'ash'
ช, ฌ	kh	khàw	└ xaw	'knee'
		khěŋ	└ xε:ŋ	'tough (cotton thread)'
		khâ:w	└ xaw	'rice'
ฉ	ch	châ:p	└ sa:p	'to glaze'
		chj:k	└ si:k	'to tear off'
		chì:t	└ si:t	'to inject'
ฝ	f	fǒn	└ fun	'rain'
		fâ:j	└ fa:j	'cotton'
		fà:t	└ fa:t	'astringent in taste'
ศ, ษ, ส	s	sǐp	┐ sip	'ten'
		sǎ:w	└ sa:w	'young lady'
		sì:	└ si:	'four'
ห	h	hâ:	└ ha:	'five'
		huǎ	└ ho:	'head'
		hà:	└ ha:	'classifier for heavy rain fall'

The second type of high class consonants are according to the writing system, composed of the voiceless glottal fricative /h/, and the second type of low class consonants. hm, hn<sup>7</sup>, etc., are transliterations from หม, หน, etc.

Siamese High Class (SHC)			Yong	English Gloss
หม	hm	mă:	↳ ma:	'dog'
		măj	↳ maj	'to burn'
หน	hn	nă:	↳ na:	'thick'
		năa	↳ nɤ:	'north'
หง	hq	ŋwàk	↳ ŋɤ:k	'gum'
		ŋɔ:k	↳ ŋɔ:k	'grey hair'
หล	hl	lăw	↳ law	'alcoholic drink'
		lă:j	↳ la:j	'a lot of'
หญ	hj	jăj	↳ ɲaj	'big'
		jă:	↳ ɲa:	'grass'
หย	hj	juàk	↳ ɲo:k	'banana stalk'
		jă:ŋ	↳ ɲaŋ	'type'
หว	hw	nók wì:t	↳ luk L wi:t	'whistle'
		wà:n	↳ wa:n	'to scatter seed'
หฺร	hr	raŋ (in fa-ràŋ)	↳ fa L laŋ	'foreigner'
		rò:ŋ (in sa-rò:ŋ)	↳ sa L lo:ŋ	'a garment worn by men'

It is noticeable that if the consonantal phonemes in Siamese are of the first type of high class consonants, that is voiceless aspirated plosive and voiceless fricative, then in Yong they will be the same; that is the corresponding Yong consonantal phonemes will be voiceless aspirated plosive and voiceless fricative. However, in some exceptional cases, where the Siamese phoneme is a voiceless aspirated velar plosive, the corresponding Yong phoneme turns out to be the voiceless velar fricative. Or, sometimes, when Siamese has an aspirated plosive the Yong phoneme is unaspirated, e.g.

thâw                      ↳    taw                      'ash'

In this latter case the tone of the word is also exceptional, that is, instead of having the Lower Low Level tone like all words for which the corresponding Siamese initials are high class consonants, it has the Higher Low Level tone which normally goes with the words for which the corresponding Siamese initials are low class consonants.

For the second type of high class consonants the corresponding consonantal phonemes of Siamese and Yong are the same except that the Siamese palatal semivowel turns out to be a palatal nasal in Yong.

## Mid class consonants

Siamese Mid Class (SMC)			Yong	English Gloss
ป	p	pà:	└ pa:	'forest'
		paj	└ paj	'to go'
		pi:	└ pi:	'year'
ต, ถ	t	tì:n	└ ti:n	'foot'
		tôm	└ tum	'to boil'
		ta:j	└ ta:j	'to die'
ก	k	kin	└ kin	'to eat'
		kò:n	└ kxn (in k tha: └ kxn)	'in a minute'
		kôm	└ kum	'to bend down'
จ	c	cèp	└ cep	'to feel hurt'
		cik	└ cik	'to peck'
		câ:ŋ	└ ca:ŋ	'to hire'
ข	b	bûaŋ	└ bɜ:ŋ	'side'
		bà:	└ ba:	'shoulder'
		baj	└ baj	'leaf'
ด, ถ	d	da:w	└ da:w	'star'
		dà:	└ da:	'to scold'
		dɛ:ŋ	└ dɛ:ŋ	'red'
อ	ʔ	ʔà:	└ ʔa:	'to open (mouth)'
		ʔò:k	└ ʔɔ:k	'to come out'
		ʔaw	└ ʔaw	'to take'

For this class of consonants Siamese has four words which are exceptional because they have อย ʔj as their initial consonants.

อย	ʔj	jà	└ pa:	'do not'
		jù	└ pu:	'to be'
		jà:ŋ	└ paŋ	'classifier for things'
		jà:k	└ pa:k	'to be hungry or thirsty'

Also it is noticeable that if the consonantal phonemes in Siamese are of the mid class consonants, which are voiceless unaspirated plosives or voiced plosives, then in Yong they will be the same; that is the consonantal phonemes will be voiceless unaspirated plosives or voiced plosives.

In the case of the four exceptional Siamese words, the corresponding forms in Yong still have the palatal nasal. It is only their tones that conform to this group.

## Low class consonants

There are two groups of Siamese low class consonants. The first group are the voiceless aspirated plosives and the voiceless fricatives. The second group are the nasals, the semi-vowels, the lateral, and the frictionless continuant.

Siamese Low Class (SLC), First Type			Yor	English Gloss	
พ,ภ	ph	phô:	└	pɔ:	'father'
		phî:	└	pi:	'elder sibling'
		phɛ:ŋ	└	pɛ:ŋ	'expensive'
ท,ฐ,ฒ,ฑ	th	thɔ:	└	tɔ:	'to weave'
		thɔ́:ŋ	└	tɔ́:ŋ	'tummy'
		thaj	└	thaj	'Thai people who are not Northern Thai'
ค,ฅ,ฆ	kh	kháw	└	kaw	'origin'
		khâm	└	xam	'night fall'
		khw:n	└	xw:n	'night'
ช,ฌ	ch	chát	└	sat	'distinctly (to speak)'
		chá:ŋ	└	ca:ŋ	'craftsman'
		cha:j	└	ca:j	'male'
ฟ	f	fá	└	fa	'sky'
		fw:m	└	fw:m	'comb-like part of a loom'
		faj	└	faj	'fire'
ซ	s	sá:j	└	sa:j	'left'
		sáj	└	saj	'to select, to screen'
		sɛ:ŋ	└	sɛ:ŋ	'interposed, inserted (as weaving in a new pattern on a cloth)'
ฮ	h	/hú:k/	└	nok └ kaw	'owl'

Siamese Low Class (SLC), Second Type			Yong	English Gloss
ม	m	mĕ:	└ mɛ:	'mother'
		má:	└ ma:	'horse'
		mĕn	└ mɛ:n	'certain'
ณ, น	n	nó:ŋ	└ nɔ:ŋ	'younger sibling'
		ná:m	└ nam	'water'
		nâŋ	└ naŋ	'to sit'
ง	ŋ	ŋɔn	└ ŋwn	'silver'
		ŋuaŋ	└ ŋo:ŋ	'elephant trunk'
		ŋâ:j	└ ŋa:j	'easy'
ฬ, ล	l	lom	└ lum	'fainting'
		lĕ:w	└ lɛ:w	'already'
		lĕn	└ len	'to play'



r	r	rót	┐	hot	'to pour water on'
		rûan	┐	lɜ:ŋ	'story'
		râ:	┐	ha:	'fish preserved with salt'
w	w	wâ:	┐	wa:	'to say'
		wan	┐	wan	'day'
		wáj	┐	waj	'to keep'
j	j	ja:w	┐	na:w	'long'
		jiâw	┐	nɛw	'to urinate'
		ján	┐	nan	'to stop'

With the first group of Siamese low class consonants, apart from the voiceless fricatives, which are the same in both languages, If the Siamese Consonantal phonemes are voiceless aspirated plosives then the Yong phonemes will be either voiceless unaspirated plosives, or voiceless aspirated plosives, or voiceless fricatives.

If the Siamese consonantal phonemes are of the second group the Yong phonemes will be the same as their corresponding Siamese phonemes, except that Yong does not have the frictionless continuant /r/, but has the palatal nasal /ɲ/ as an initial consonant and the palatal semi-vowel /j/ as a final instead.

Another phenomenon about the Siamese /r/ that should be pointed out is that there are two groups of corresponding words in Yong, one group beginning with /h/ and the other beginning with /l/. For instance:

Siamese Low Class	Yong	English Gloss
rót	┐ hot	'to pour water on'
ra:	┐ ha:	'fungus'
râj	┐ haj	'dry field'
ra: or raw	┐ ha:	'very intimate form of 1st person'
rót	┐ lot	'car, automobile'
ró:j	┐ lɔ:j	'hundred'
rwân	┐ lɜ:ŋ	'story'
ra:j	┐ la:j	'classifier for case'

As already stated, Yong has only three clusters. Thus most clusters in Siamese correspond to simple initial consonants in Yong, except where Yong has a corresponding cluster.

Siamese Cluster	Yong	English Gloss
pr	┐ pap	'to fine'
pl	┐ pa:j	'top (as in tree-top)'
phr	┐ phɔ:m	'alreacy'
phl	┐ pe:ŋ	'song'
phlâ:t	pha ┐ lɜ:t	'to slip when walking'

kr	krà:p	└	ka:p	'to prostrate oneself'
kl	klua	└	ko:	'to be afraid of'
kw	kwaj	└	kwaj	'to swing'
chr	chrà:p	└	xa:p	'dead skin (like old snake skin)'
	chrô:p	└	kɔ:p	'to cover'
khI	khla:n	└	ka:n	'to crawl'
	khIam	└	kam	'to grope'
	khIwâp	└	xɜ:p	'to glaze, to coat'
khw	khwě:n	└	xwɛ:n	'to hang'
	khwâ:ŋ	└	xwa:ŋ	'to throw down'
	khwa:n	└	kwa:n	'elephant driver or tamer'

### Vowels

Siamese and Yong vowels are quite similar, but the Yong close back rounded vowel/u/ is not as close as the Siamese one. Therefore Yong/u/phonetically should be [u<sup>+</sup>].

Siamese		Yong	English Gloss
kin	└	kin	'to eat'
din	└	din	'earth'
rim	└	him	'edge'
phrik	└	phik	'chilli'
pi:	└	pi:	'year'
ti:n	└	ti:n	'foot'
lèk	└	lek	'iron'
bèt	└	bet	'fish hook'
phle:ŋ	└	pe:ŋ	'song'
phé?	└	pe?	'goat'
pè:t	└	pe:t	'eight'
phrê:	└	pe:	'Phrae (name of a province in Thailand)'
mê:n	└	me:n	'certain'
plè:k	└	pe:k	'strange'
lé:w	└	le:w	'already'
lúk	└	lɜk	'deep'
khûn	└	xwn	'to ascend'
tû:n	└	tw:n	'shallow'
sú:	└	sw:	'to buy'
phú:n	└	pw:n	'floor'
swm	└	swm	'to percolate'
		└ sw:m	

ŋɤn	└ ɲwn	'silver'
dɤ:n	└ kɤ:n	'to walk'
wǎŋ	└ wɔŋ	'to expect'
nák	└ nak	'excessive'
phan	└ phan	'seed'
pàn	└ pan	'to spin'
phan	└ pan	'to wind'
bâ:n	└ ba:n	'house'
ɲa:n	└ ɲa:n	'work'
khùt	└ xut	'to dig'
plù:k	└ pu:k	'to plant'
phlu:	└ pu:	'betel vine'
pǔj	└ pu:j	'fertilizer'
lú:k	└ lu:k	'one's child'
nók	└ nok	'bird'
rót	└ hot	'to pour water on'
lom	└ lum	'to faint'
sôm	└ sum	'orange'
ro:ŋ	└ ho:ŋ	'a hall, a shed as in ho:ŋ ɲa:n factory'
kò?	└ kɔ?	'to lay hold of'
jó:m	└ ɲɔ:m	'to dye'
kò:n	└ kɔ:n	'before'

It is noticeable that in some words Yong and Siamese vowels seem to interchange the positions of the tongue height, that is sometimes for the Siamese close back unrounded vowel/ɯ/Yong shows the mid back unrounded vowel/ɤ/, e.g.

lúk	└ lɤk	'deep'
-----	-------	--------

But sometimes for the Siamese mid vowels/e ɤ o/ Yong has the close vowels/i ɯ u/, e.g.

pen	└ pɪn	'to be'
ŋɤn	└ ɲwn	'silver'
lom	└ lum	'to faint'

And for the Yong diphthong/aj/the starting point is closer than the Siamese one. Thus phonetically it should be [əi] but this phenomenon happens in the case of short vowels only.

For the long ones it does not work in that way, e.g.

sâj	↳ saj	'intestine'
râj	↳ haj	'dry field'
baj	↳ baj	'leaf'
dâj	↳ daj	'to receive'
ta:j	↳ ta:j	'to die'
chă:j	↳ sa:j	'to shine'
fâ:j	↳ fa:j	'cotton'
la:j	↳ la:j	'spotted (like the ground after a few drops of rain)'

Yong has no centering diphthong. Therefore Siamese/ia wa ua/turn out to be Yong/e ɤ o/ respectively, in that order, e.g.

Siamese	Yong	English Gloss
khǎw	↳ xew	'green'
mia	↳ me:	'wife'
piàk	↳ pe:k	'wet'
thiân	↳ pe?	'noon'
	↳ te:ŋ	
thwân	↳ thɤn	'jungle'
mwan	↳ mɤ:n	'alike, similar'
rwan	↳ lɤ:ŋ	'story'
swa	↳ sɤ:	'tiger'
phũa	↳ pho:	'husband'
thũa	↳ tho:	'pea (as in peanut)'
thũaj	↳ tho:j	'cup, bowl'
hũaj	↳ ho:j	'stream'
sũa	↳ so:n	'orchard'
quan	↳ ɲo:ŋ	'elephant trunk'

### Tones

Yong tones are very interesting in comparison to Siamese tones. Perhaps it would give a clearer picture if I fit the Siamese tones and the Yong tones into Gedney's Proto-Tai Tone Chart.

Proto-Tai Tones

	A	B	C	D-short	D-long
SHC Voiceless friction sounds, *s, hm, ph, etc.	S-R Y-R 1	S-L Y-LL 5	S-F Y-MF 9	S-L Y-H 13	S-L Y-LL 17
SMC Voiceless unaspirated stops, *p, etc.	S-M Y-R 2	S-L Y-LL 6	S-F Y-MF 10	S-L Y-H 14	S-L Y-LL 18
SMC Glottal, *ʔ, ʔb, etc.	S-M Y-M 3	S-L Y-LL 7	S-F Y-MF 11	S-L Y-H 15	S-L Y-LL 19
SLC Voiced, *b, m, l, z, etc.	S-M Y-M 4	S-F Y-HL 8	S-H Y-HF 12	S-H Y-M 16	S-F Y-HL 20
	Smooth Syllables			Checked Syllables	

Initials  
at time of  
tonal splits

For smooth syllables, in box 1, where the Siamese high class consonants (SHC) have rising tone (S-R), Yong also has rising tone (Y-R).

In box 2, where the Siamese mid class consonants (SMC) have mid tone (S-M), Yong has rising tone (Y-R).

In box 3 and 4, where the Siamese mid class and low class consonants (SMC and SLC) have mid tone (S-M), Yong also has mid tone (Y-M).

In box 5, 6 and 7, where the Siamese high class and mid class consonants have low tone (S-L), Yong has the lower low level tone (Y-LL).

In box 8, where the Siamese low class consonants (SLC) have falling tone (S-F), Yong has the higher low level tone (Y-HL).

In box 9, 10 and 11, where the Siamese high class and mid class consonants (SHC and SMC) have falling tone, Yong has mid falling tone (Y-MF).

In box 12, where the Siamese low class consonants have high tone (S-H), Yong has high falling tone (Y-HF).

For checked syllables, in box 13, 14 and 15, where Siamese high class and mid class consonants (SHC and SMC) have low tone (S-L), Yong has high level tone (Y-H).

But, in box 16, where Siamese with low class consonants (SLC) has high tone (S-H), Yong has mid tone (Y-M).

In box 17, 18 and 19, where Siamese with high class and mid class consonants (SHC and SMC) has low tone (S-L), Yong has the lower low level tone (Y-LL), but, in box 20, where Siamese with low class consonants (SLC) has falling tone (S-F), Yong has the higher low level tone (Y-HL).

It is noticeable that Siamese and Yong behave in nearly the same fashion in regard to tones, with only some slight opposition.

That is, in column A, apart from box 2 where Siamese has mid and Yong has rising, Yong has rising where Siamese has rising and mid where Siamese has mid.

For columns B and D-long, boxes 5, 6, 7 and 17, 18 and 19, Siamese and Yong both have low level tones. Only in boxes 8 and 20 does Siamese have falling and Yong have the higher low level.

For column C, boxes 9, 10 and 11, where Siamese has falling tone Yong also has falling, and only in box 12 does Siamese have high tone and Yong have high falling tone.

For column D-short Siamese and Yong tones work in opposite directions, for in boxes 13, 14 and 15 Siamese has low tone while Yong has high, and in box 16 Siamese has high tone while Yong has mid.

In Yong it is noticeable that the tone in box 8 has higher pitch than those in boxes 5, 6 and 7, that the tone in box 12 has higher pitch than those in boxes 9, 10 and 11, and that the tone in box 20 has higher pitch than those in boxes 17, 18 and 19. If we look at their initials we see that for boxes 8, 12 and 20 the corresponding Siamese phonemes are of the low class consonant group, which are voiced and voiceless, the Yong initials of these boxes also being voiced as well as voiceless. However, the tones of words with voiceless initials still conform to those of the voiced group, mid level tone, higher low level tone and high falling tone.

	Box 5	Box 8	
'classifier for rainfall'	└ ha	└ ha:	'chicken plague'
		└ haj	'dry field'
	Box 6	└ mɛ:	'mother'
'oboe'	└ pi:	└ pi:	'older sibling'
		└ lɛ:ŋ	'story'
	Box 9	Box 12	
'cloth'	└ pha:	└ pha:	'knife'
		└ nɔ:ŋ	'younger sibling'
	Box 10	└ ma:	'horse'
'nine'	└ kaw	└ kaw	'origin'
		└ lɔ:j	'hundred'
	Box 17	Box 20	
'to be hungry'	└ na:k	└ na:k	'difficult'
	Box 18		
'to plant'	└ pu:k		

Thus the tones in columns B, C and D-long indicate a Y-H tendency for the Yong dialect. At the same time the tones in columns A and D-short indicate a Y-L tendency for Yong.

## 7. Conclusion

The phonological systems of Yong and Siamese are to me surprisingly similar. Only minor points keep them apart, e.g. in the consonantal system Yong having /ɾ/ as opposed to the Siamese /j/ in the initial position, and Siamese having /r/ which is not present in Yong. (This raises the question in my mind: how and when did Siamese acquire /r/ ?) Yong has only two to three clusters but Siamese has eleven.

For the vowel system, Siamese and Yong do not differ much apart from the phenomenon of the interchanging of the tongue height already mentioned. Also, only in one case each have I heard the Siamese open back rounded long vowel /ɔ:/ in Yong as mid back unrounded short vowel /ɤ/, and the Siamese close front unrounded short vowel /i/ in Yong as a close back unrounded short vowel /ʊ/, i.e.

/thâ: kɔ:n/	/t̪ha: ɭkɤn/	'wait a minute'
/khít/	/t̪kwít/	'to think'

Apart from Siamese having three centering diphthongs and Yong having none, Yong seems to have the quality of palatalization and labialization occurring before vowels in words that have Siamese corresponding words with those diphthongs, e.g.

/diaw/	/t̪dew/ or [t̪djew]	'single'
/hûaj/	/t̪ho:j/ or [t̪hwo:j]	'small stream'

The other phonetic quality which prominently occurs in Yong is nasality, especially with open vowels, e.g.

/ʔɔ:k/	/ɭʔɔ:k/ or [ɭʔɔ̃:k]	'to come out'
/ʔew/	/t̪ʔɛ:w/ or [t̪ʔɛ̃:w]	'waist'

The tones might be the only phonemes that play an important role in causing the two dialects to sound far apart at the first impression but on studying them carefully one can see that they are systematically similar. Only in the case of column D-short do they really work in opposite directions.

This phonological comparison gives conformation to Gedney's opinion that Yong is "a recent offshoot of the original Lue dialect of Muong Yong in Burma"<sup>8</sup>, especially since when the tone system<sup>9</sup> of Yong is fitted into Gedney's Proto-Tai Tone Chart, it giving the same pattern as Lue Chiang Hung and Lue Muang Yong<sup>1</sup> (Chamberlain 1975). However the comparison I have made between Yong and Siamese does not match up completely with that made by Li (1964) for Lue Ceng Tong and Siamese, etc.



As a matter of fact the Yong dialect of Pa Sang is in the process of great change. The speech of my (younger generation) informants indicates changes in the consonantal phonemes, e.g. the voiceless post-alveolar fricative [ɟ] which still exists in Baan Don Chai has been completely changed to the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, and the palatal nasal /ɲ/ which still persists prominently in Baan Don Chai is only used in a few words at Pa Sang, all the remainder using the palatal semi-vowel /j/. In the case of the voiceless velar fricative /x/, which still occurs predominantly in Baan Don Chai, the Pa Sang dialect not only retains it discreetly but also has acquired the voiceless aspirated velar plosive /kh/.

The voiceless aspirated alveolar plosive /tʰ/ still remains unchanged at Baan Don Chai whereas at Pa Sang it has the quality of the voiceless aspirated alveolar retroflex [ɬʰ] when occurring before the back vowels.

For the tones, Baan Don Chai still retains the difference between boxes 16 and 20 whereas with some informants at Pa Sang and other Lam Phun districts they collapse together to those of box 16.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This study is an offering of affection and gratitude to Professor E.J.A. Henderson, my supervisor at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

In 1975 Professor Henderson visited Thailand as a visiting Professor to the Central Institute of English Language. Afterwards she visited Chiang Mai where she made a field trip to Baan Don Chai, a Yong village in San Kamphaeng diatricht, Chiang Mai province.

- <sup>2</sup> According to the Phongsawadanyonok, the younger brother of King Kawila of Chiang Mai, Phra Maha Upparat, went up with his troops to the Chieng Rung territories of Sip Song Panna (Prachakitkoracak, 1899 Chottisukkkharat, 1969, Nimmanheminda, n.e.). He collected the people and their leaders from Muang Yong and all the other cities there and brought them back to Chiang Mai. The leaders were later brought before King Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty who ordered the enforced migrants to settle down in Lam Phun. In fact the cities of Sip Song Panna were conquered many times and those Tai people brought down to present day Northern Thailand. This history has been noted by the Yong people themselves as, literally:

/ɾkep	ɾphak	ɿsaj	ɿsa:	/ɾkep	ɿxa:	ɿsaj	ɿmɿ:ŋ/
gather	vegetables	put	basket, gather	slaves	put	city.	

("Gather vegetables into a basket, gather slaves into a city.")

My older informant in Pa Sang, Lam Phun province, said that, according to his ancestor, the Yong had asked King Kawila to rescue them from the Burmese. Therefore the Yong did not resist the Chiang Mai troops. However, when they were settled in Lam Phun they had to work without wages as slaves for the princes of Lam Phun. He recited the expression, literally:

/ ɬtham    ɬna:    ɬca:w    /    ɬhɔ:    ɬxaw    ɬkin    ɬʔe:ŋ/  
       work    ricefield    prince's,    wrap    cooked rice to eat oneself,

("Working in the prince's ricefield, bringing along one's own food.")

- <sup>3</sup> In spite of what many scholars, both Thais and Westerners, in various fields, say about the Yong, the people themselves never admit that they are Lue or that Yong and Lue are the same language. Out of respect for this opinion I have separated the peoples and their languages in this paper.
- <sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Donald Gibson, former British Consul in Chiang Mai, for acquainting me with the Yong people in the valley and introducing me to informants there.
- <sup>5</sup> In order to check the changing of tones and other phonemes in connected speech, I have asked the old people to talk about their interests, such as weaving cloth, delivering a baby, working in the plantation, and so on.
- <sup>6</sup> This term was taken from Henderson (1949).
- <sup>7</sup> Here the transcriptions hm, hn, etc., do not represent real phonemes but are just transliterations of the corresponding Thai letters.
- <sup>8</sup> Personal communication from Professor Gedney (1975).
- <sup>9</sup> Weroha (1975) has made an experimental analysis of the tones of the Tai Lue of Chiang Kham district, Chiang Rai province.

#### REFERENCES

- Chamberlain, J. R. 1975. "A new look at the history and classification of the Tai languages." *Studies in Tai Linguistics in Honor of William J. Gedney*, ed. by Jimmy G. Harris and James R. Chamberlain. Bangkok: Central Institute of English Language.

- Chottisukkkharat, S. 1969. *Thai Yuan-Khon Muong* (in Thai). Bangkok: Odeon Store.
- Haas, M. R. et al. 1964. *Thai-English Student's Dictionary*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Henderson, E. J.A. 1949. "Prosodies in Siamese: a study in synthesis." *Asia Major* (New Series) 1. (Reprinted, 1970, in *Prosodic Analysis*, ed. by F. R. Palmer. London.)
- Li, F.-K. 1964. "The phonemic system of the Tai Lue language." *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 35: 7-14.
- Nimmanheminda, K., n.d. "Put vegetables into baskets, and people into towns." *Ethnographic notes on Northern Thailand*, ed. by L.M. Hanks, J.R. Hanks and Lauriston Sharp. Data paper number 8, S.E. Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University.
- Prachakitkaracak, Phraya. 1899. *Phongsawadanyonok* (in Thai, last printing 1972). Bangkok: Phrae Phitthaya.
- Weroha, S. 1975. "Tones in Tai Lue." *Studies in Tai Linguistics in Honor of William J. Gedney*, ed. by Jimmy G. Harris and James R. Chamberlain. Bangkok: Central Institute of English Language.