Tai Languages in Assam: Daughters or Ghosts?

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Professor William J. Gedney's work is a continuing source of guidance and inspiration to those studying comparative Tai linguistics, a field he did much to establish.[1] Although what follows is a brief programmatic note, far below the stature typical of Professor Gedney's contributions to the field, it is nonetheless offered to him in appreciation. There is also a propagandistic purpose: it is hoped that readers may become interested in Tai varieties mentioned below in time to obtain additional linguistic material before it becomes unavailable as living daughter languages die out and pass to "ghost" status.

It is well-known among comparative Tai linguists that the territory that is now the Indian State of Assam for some time has encompassed the extreme northwestern members of the Tai family. These have included the better-known Ahom and Khamti, but other Tai varieties are known (see Grierson 1903): Phake [p^{h}a:-ke:], Aiton, Turung, Khamyang, and Nora (the latter two are perhaps by now one) or their equivalents in different transcription systems.[2] In traditional accounts and oral histories, there are links between Assamese Tai varieties and "Northern Shan" areas associated with Tai-Mao and Tai-Nuea (Gedney 1976).

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[2] *Phake* is also transcribed as *Phakey*, *Fakey*; the Assamese form is *Phakial*; similarly, Aiton-Aitonia. *Khamyang* also occurs as *Khamjang*. *Nora-Nara* is mentioned below; the alternation perhaps relates to the Assamese orthographic "inherent vowel," regularly romanized as *-a-* but phonetically realized as a low back rounded vowel. Grierson (1903: 64) traces *Turung* to *Tai Long*, "great Tais," which he states also occurs as *Tai Rong*.

Below, we briefly survey these varieties and suggest that three are still viable, distinct "daughter" languages (Khamti, Phake, and Aiton) and that the rest are dying, dead, or—as in the case of Ahom—linger on in a post-mortal "ghostly" state. To establish contact with the Ahom "ghost" is now problematic. Although it is still conjured up by its few surviving priest-officiants, the Ahom *deodhai*, for them it is to remain recondite and beyond analysis; perhaps it can still be approached through surviving "daughter" languages—but not without a certain hermeneutic trepidation. That is, if only the "daughter" can lead us to the "ghost," then perhaps the spectre of "daughter-ghost" progeny will haunt us. As luck would have it, the Tai-Aiton people tell a ghost story that might well serve as a cautionary allegorical tale representing such trepidation. The story is given in the appendix ("Ghosts of the Jungle," henceforth GJ; it also illustrates more mundane linguistic issues mentioned below).[3]

Background

The historical background of the Tai varieties in Assam can be approached in two ways: along the lines of a "traditional" view or by raising the possibility of more "radical" viewpoints. The former rests on one particular assessment of local historical materials and sets Ahom off from the other Tai varieties of Assam quite sharply, while the latter raises other historical possibilities. However, before we turn to these views, a note on the terms Ahom, Khamti, and Shan is in order.

Ahom, as an ethnic term, has two associated but still somewhat distinct senses.[4] Ahom could refer to (1) the former Tai-speaking population who came to rule in the upper Brahmaputra valley, but by the 19th century had become assimilated with their subjects, Assamese-speaking Indo-Aryans; or (2) a modern Assamese-speaking subgroup presuming themselves to be descendants of the former; these modern Ahoms will be mentioned in a later section.

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[3] Needless to say, the Aiton people are not responsible for this allegorical reading! The story was told by a 60-year-old Aiton speaker of Bar Pather Bargaon, whose brother assisted in producing the transcription. Apart from editing out a few hesitations and "false-starts" the original oral syntax is retained. Citation-form tones are shown in the system introduced as Aiton_1 in table 2 below; "tone 1" is represented as unmarked. A hyphen indicates either a preclitic or postclitic form, or else (quite arbitrarily) a compound with a single English gloss (for example, "daughter" accounts for *luk-saaw*^{3}). It will be obvious that Lik-Tai spelling is not a normalized system.

[4] A third use of Ahom has been noticed for some Central-Thai-speaking circles where the term apparently is supposed to include Khamtis and other modern Tai-speaking (Buddhist) populations of Assam. Neither modern Ahoms nor Khamtis in Assam would use Ahom in this inclusive sense.

Khamti and Shan raise familiar problems of Tai subgrouping and what to call specific local varieties or larger dialect groupings (note also the term Lao). Grierson (1903) uses Shan to refer to the entire language family as it was then known to him (that is, to what most of us would now call Tai), but Shan is used by others to refer to specific varieties associated with Burma or perhaps with a Burmese-like writing system.[5] If, say, a high degree of shared lexicon and loose inter-intelligibility (and shared orthography) were taken as criterial, then Khamti would perhaps be a mere "dialect" of Shan and the lesser-known Assamese-Tai varieties, Phake and Aiton would not really be too distinct from Khamti. Note also that all three varieties largely share a common writing system—Lik-Tai (see section on phonology and the appendix).

Yet on important linguistic grounds mentioned below, it is certainly useful to distinguish Aiton and Phake from Khamti, and all of these current Tai varieties of Assam from the (Southern) "Shan Proper" of Cushing (1914), Egerod (1957), and others; although one might well wish to recognize a "Greater Shan" subgroup structure.[6] In any case, all Assamese Tais refer to themselves as Tai or, if need be, as Tai-Khamti, Tai-Aiton, and so forth, but apparently never as Shan; nor would Aitons refer to themselves as Khamtis. In fact, even Khamti, as a self-reference term, may be somewhat problematic (Wilaiwan Khanittanan, MS).

The traditional account of the history of Tai speakers in Assam is derived mainly from oral tradition and from indigenous written histories called *buranji*; some of these were written in Ahom, especially those covering earlier periods, and others in Assamese. Sir Edward Gait's 1905 *History of Assam* makes much use of these sources for the period prior to the mid-1820s, when the British terminated Burmese influence in the area, annexed it and brought formal Ahom rule to an end. Gait's observations (and similar summary comments of Grierson 1903, based on the same sources) have been slightly recast by subsequent writers (Acharyya 1966, Basu 1970, and others).

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[5] Young (1985) discusses Northern Shan subgrouping; see also Gedney (1976), Harris (1976). For the history of Shan subgrouping, compare also the introduction to Cushing (1914).

[6] If speakers' own impressions of mutual intelligibility should have any influence on subgrouping, it is worth noting the results of a survey of conversational interactions between Phake and Aiton speakers (who find each other's speech totally unproblematic) and those of other Tai varieties. Phake and Aiton speakers found Lashio Shan distinct but "quite easy" to understand (and vice versa); Chiangmai Lanna-Tai was said to be generally comprehensible but "more difficult" [however, see also Aroonrat Wichienkeo (1985)], as was a rural northern Lao dialect, while Standard Central Thai was "very difficult" to unintelligible, frustrating to the point that practical conversation frequently had to switch to English (undoubtedly due mainly to non-Tai vocabulary in Standard Central Thai); see also Terwiel (1980: 28). (Conversations were held in Australia in 1986.)

In this traditional account, Sukapha, a Tai-Mao chief, and a band of some ten thousand followers crossed the Patkai Hills and entered the Brahmaputra valley in 1228 A.D. Sukapha (that is, 'tiger—proceed—sky') and his descendants established themselves in the Sadiya area, using what was perhaps a traditional Tai form of polity. Gait presumes (although without material evidence) that these Tais brought the Ahom script with them into India, thus predating the traditional establishment of Sukhothai writing by the best part of a century. They became dominant over local tribes, although it was not until the mid-16th century that indigenous peoples like the Chutiyas and Kacharis were reduced to vassalage—at best a precarious position. From that time, invading Moghuls also had to be reckoned with, and for the next century strife was waged between Ahoms and Moghuls almost continuously. By this time, perhaps to survive, the Ahoms were intermarrying with local non-Tai-speaking people, adopting Hindu names, customs and often Brahmanical religious practices.[7] However, there appears to have remained a more conservative alternative, to some extent in competition with Brahmanical rites: a body of traditional Tai-Ahom rituals preserved by the *deodhai*, traditional Ahom priest-officiants. More and more, the Tai-Ahom language became limited to the special practices of this group.[8]

In the traditional account, it was not until about 1750, or nearly in the period which Gait called "the decay and fall" of the Ahom kingdom (1780-1826) that the later (Buddhist) Tai groups began crossing into Assam from Burma.[9] This coincided both with the ascendancy of British influence in the area and with a wider pattern of incursions from Burma into the Brahmaputra valley. In 1779, a Nora chief (apparently Tai-speaking) is said to have led a rebellion near Sadiya, and by 1790 Khamtis from the upper Irrawaddy (an area known as "Bor-Khamti") had arrived in the area. They gained control of Sadiya in 1794. In battles of 1800, the Ahoms attempted to oust them, together with Noras and Phakes, who also had appeared by then.[10] Khamtis kept arriving and as time went on they also had to contend with the British, who were consolidating control over upper Assam.[11] The latter forced the Khamtis to release their numerous slaves. After the massacre of a British resident in Sadiya in 1839, some four thousand Khamtis were subjugated and forcibly resettled apparently where their descendants mainly live today, for example, in Lakhimpur and in the Lohit district of the North East Frontier Agency.[12]

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[7] As there was a shift from Ahom to Assamese as the practical language of administration, Gait (1905) observes that the former contributed very few loanwords to the latter, save for a few toponyms and technical terms [see also B. Barua (1966); Kakati (1941)].

[8] Gait (1905: 99). For example, in the 1780s the *deodhai* held that current misfortunes of the Ahom kingdom had been caused by the following of Brahman astrological predictions rather than traditional Tai chicken-bone divination and numerological calculations for auspicious and inauspicious days based on the Tai *lak-ni* calendrical system.

[9] Grierson (1903: 64) may have been of the opinion that the Ahoms had once been Buddhists also, as he states that after they had become Hinduized they were "no longer Buddhists"—a comment repeated by later writers. *Buranji* evidence for this appears to be lacking.

As for Aitons, Khamyangs, and Turungs, in the traditional view they too are presumed to have immigrated from northern Burma, probably in the early 19th century, although details are unclear.[13] Grierson (1903: 64, 193) relates that Turungs had been Tai slaves of the Kachins and were released by the British in 1825, to be settled near Jorhat; also that Aitons had been Tais of Mu'ang Kang who escaped from Burma to avoid the community's duty of castrating their youth to supply eunuchs to the Burmese court (but might we not suspect folk-etymology—note Central Thai *ʔây-tɔɔn* ?). Current Aiton oral tradition fails to support this.

Somewhat different assessments of the Tai presence in the Brahmaputra valley might be made on the basis of certain comments in Gait's *History*, together with a critical study of surviving *buranji* material —although it is not our purpose to do more than raise some possibilities here. In particular, two sorts of questions might be raised:

1. the extent to which the Ahom printed text and English paraphrases of one particular published *buranji* recension (G. C. Borua 1930) should be taken at face value,
   a. particularly for pre-15th-century events lacking corroboratory evidence,
   b. while the original source manuscripts for the published text remain unstudied, and
   c. while other unpublished (and differing) *buranji* accounts and similar local materials remain disregarded;
2. the possibility that the alleged 18th-century (Buddhist) Tai immigrants—for example, Khamtis, Aitons, and so forth
   a. may have actually had some influence in the Ahom area prior to that time, or

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[10] Grierson (1902: 226, 344). Gait refers to "Naras," which we take to be equivalent to Grierson's 1903 "Noras." See also Terwiel (1980: 20-21). Grierson (1903: 64) was told that the Phakes left Mu'ang Kang in 1760 as a result of depredations by the Burmese king, Alaungpaya.

[11] Mackenzie (1884); reprinted in Gogoi (1971: 28). There appears to have been an additional Khamti influx from Burma into Assam in 1850 (*Census Report of India*, 1881, citing Colonel Dalton); reprinted in Gogoi (1971: 44).

[12] Gait (1905: 376).

[13] Terwiel (1980: 21).

b. may have played a role in the transmission of (or, perhaps, even in some cases in the creation of) certain Tai text materials written in Ahom script.

Gait, in constructing his 1905 *History*, admitted that it was under far from ideal conditions that the six particular Ahom *buranji* sources he depended on for the early Ahom era were translated for him—or rather, as it clearly turns out, loosely and often inaccurately paraphrased.[14] His approach to *buranji* sources was to attempt a categorical division into legendary folklore, which was "of course unreliable," and "historical records," which were "generally very trustworthy" (1905: xiii). Unfortunately, nowhere did he make explicit his criteria, and it is difficult to avoid the impression of arbitrariness for the date 1228 A.D.—the Tai arrival in Assam—taken as the beginning of his "trustworthy" *buranji* history.[15]

A firmer "reliable" beginning might be 1486, the date of a fortuitous partial solar eclipse noted in one *buranji*.[16] On the other hand, as additional *buranji* texts are edited and published, and parallel materials in Burma are compared, the important critical study of early Tai presence in the Brahmaputra area will be undertaken and perhaps "trustworthy" *buranji* history might even be pushed back before Gait's cut-off date. But until such studies are made, there is little safe to say about specific early Ahom events.

As for the arrival of the "later" Buddhist-Tai groups, one embarrassment for the "traditional" view following Gait is that even in the published *buranji* account they enter the scene far too early. In that account (G. C. Borua 1930: 50-51) the Aiton and Khamyang are each major tributary political units (note Central Thai *mʉaŋ*) before 1400, when the Nora (Nara) are also active in intrigues. It is uncertain whether a Khamti chief (*thaaw*

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[14] Gait (1905: xii-xiii). The paraphrases used by Gait are apparently those published in the *Ahom-Buranji* of G. C. Borua (1930), who had originally supplied them. G. C. Borua's preface mentions but does not identify "other Ahom Buranjis" as well as Bangsabalis or "family histories," which he was not able to consult. For Grierson's debt to G. C. Borua (and the related problem of Ahom SOV word order), see section on syntactic configuration.

[15] In fact, as Gait observes, Tai *lak-ni* dates extend in *buranji* accounts to (unreliable?) material going back as early as 568 A.D. "Trustworthy" evidences (coins, inscriptions, inscribed plates and parallel Moghul historical sources) hardly corroborate events before the sixteenth century. Gait also notes the existence of competing historical sources that fail to support the 1228 date for Tai arrival in the Brahmaputra valley; see also Acharyya (1966) for discussion. More disquietingly, Gait reports of the destruction of certain *buranji* manuscripts by kings whose dynastic legitimacy they failed to support. This latter activity suggests one function that a precise calendrical construction of the distant past might have had for the later Ahoms; a related interest might have been legitimation (by historical example) of a *lak-ni*-based system of auspicious and inauspicious times.

[16] For astronomical confirmation of the date, see Acharyya (1966: 128).

khamthi) is represented as usurping the Ahom throne in the late 14th century. If one follows Gait in accepting post-1228 *buranji* events as "trustworthy," then what grounds has one to reject these particular reports as later interpolations, and yet cling to other even earlier traditional material (for example, to the dates and even historicity of Sukapha) as "trustworthy"?

To make matters worse, in other local accounts (for example, those cited by Acharyya 1966) the Aiton, Phake, Nora, and Khamyang actually accompany Sukapha into Assam and would thus themselves be in some sense "original Ahoms."[17] Yet their (Burmese-linked) Buddhism and relative lack of Indo-Aryan assimilation would then remain to be explained.

Finally, if we turn to the more linguistic question of the origin of the Ahom writing system, we cannot at present completely escape the quandaries sketched above. The earliest dated examples of Ahom script are from coins of the reign of Suklengmuang (1539-1552), for example, the coin described by B. Barua (1966). (An undated stone inscription may be of about the same period, Dikshit [1927]). Whether or not one chooses to project the script backwards, say, even to the time of Sukapha (assuming him to be historical) or before, depends very much on one's historical preconceptions and approach.

More-or-less "internal" linguistic evidence is also difficult to assess. While Ahom script clearly must have had a Mon-like/Burmese-like prototype, details of provenance remain to be worked out.[18] Internally, the fact that no Ahom texts examined yet show any trace of distinguishing etymological correlates of "low series" from "mid" or "high series" consonants appears to indicate that the script was adopted *after* pan-Tai consonant mergers of the sort in which sounds of the "low series" consonants presumably fell together with certain of the others. But it remains unclear how to date that presumed change independently for Ahom. What, for example, prevents one from supposing that for Ahom the change had been completed considerably prior to when it had to the east? (Or might it be even conceivable that a more Sukhothai-like or Lanna-Tai-like Ahom spelling system had once been in early use but was subsequently modified to accord with the sound changes? Evidence of this, of course, has not appeared.)

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[17] Terwiel (1980: 19); Gait (1905: 78 ff.); but "Khamyang" or "Khamjang" seems first to have been a toponym. I am indebted to B. J. Terwiel, Y. Buragohain, and N. Shyam Palung for bringing to my attention relevant unpublished *buranji* manuscripts. Biswas (1966b) discusses the interpretation of *thaaw khamthi* and speculates that "the Khamti were probably one with the Ahoms at that time and emerged as a distinct dialect community" only later.

[18] J. N. Phukan (p.c.) has perceived similarities between Mon inscriptions at Pagan and Ahom script. It is interesting that Ahom is one of the few cases of Tai adoption of an Indic-style writing system that did not come with Buddhist conversion (note Black and White Tai).

Present Situation

Whether or not some historical reassessment of the Brahmaputra-valley Tai populations is in order, in Assam at present there is clearly to be distinguished a sizeable non-Buddhist, non-Tai-speaking population ("modern Ahoms") on the one hand, and on the other hand several very small Theravada (Burmese-linked) Buddhist communities using Tai languages for many daily-life purposes, but with Assamese bilingualism to high degree—if not now total. There is occasional intermarriage between "modern Ahoms" and Tais of the Buddhist groups.[19] There are then at present Assamese residents who refer to themselves as Ahom, Khamti, Khamyang, Phake, Aiton, and Turung—or they may prefix "Tai-" to these names. (The Nora are no longer an identifiable group of such type.)[20]

Present-day Assamese referring to themselves as "Ahom" constitute by far the largest of these groups. They may number as many as 1.8 million, living both in towns such as Jorhat, where they may be found in positions of prestige, and in outlying villages identifiable as specifically Ahom.[21] The extent to which they can be considered as properly Tai is problematic: there is no practical daily-life use of any Tai language at all among these modern Ahoms, but rather the Indo-Aryan language Assamese (grouped with Bengali and Oriya) is used. Hindu-Brahmanical practices are generally followed. However, some modern Ahoms may preserve, or be attempting to revive, some tokens of an ethnicity distinct from those of the dominant Indo-Aryan majority.[22]

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[19] The Buddhist Tais have an (somewhat derogatory) ethnic term *kulaa:* which they apply to Indo-Aryans. Among these Tais, Modern Ahoms appear to be a borderline case of *kulaa*: Note Burmese *kala*, 'Indian'.

[20] Aiton and Phake authorities have associated Nora with Khamyang; this accords with Grierson (1903: 64; 179) who reported that 751 Nora-Khamyang were counted in the census of 1891, but that only 300 could be identified by 1903 (all in Sibsagar, near Jorhat). The Nora were said to have come from Mu'ang Kang in Burma.

[21] For example, Akhoya and Patsaku in the Sibsagar area.

[22] Alternately: "At present there does not seem to be an Ahom people, instead there are a large number of Assamese who can trace Ahom descent." See Terwiel (1980: 18) for more detail. The population estimate is from J. N. Phukan (p.c.), as are the others below. The current Indian census does not enumerate Ahoms separately, although a 1931 figure of "almost 250,000" is given by Terwiel (1980), citing the official census. Terwiel (MS), gives a more conservative present-day estimate as well as extended discussions of the cultural and historical issues only mentioned here. The tracing of non-Indo-Aryan descent is not without contemporary political relevance: in 1967 Terwiel reports organized political agitation for a separate Ahom political unit in Assam, paralleling similar concessions made to Nagas, and so forth. The current local awareness of Ahom ethnicity is undoubtedly affected by the several millions of immigrants from Bangladesh who in recent decades have been crossing into Assam to settle (without "papers"), gaining economic and electoral power.

The few surviving contemporary *deodhai* play an important role here; they possess many of the extant Tai-Ahom texts, either materially or in memory, from which they are able to chant aloud for sacred ritual purposes —albeit in essentially Assamese phonology and perhaps with but a vague impression of content. Some have made a study of the published Ahom-Assamese-English dictionaries and rely heavily on the glosses therein. (Some are, incidentally, increasingly aware of and interested in modern Central Thai language and culture.) Members of the Buddhist Tai groups mentioned below can typically understand much more, if they hear chanted Ahom texts of this sort, or if they are among the very few who have learned to read Ahom script as well as Lik-Tai. They are thus in a good position to interpret Ahom materials. But even for these Tai speakers there is still considerable guesswork involved in interpreting Ahom, and it is the status of such guesswork that is behind the "daughter/ghost" figure suggested above.[23]

Khamtis are the next most populous surviving group, numbering perhaps 10,000-12,000, with centers as noted above.[24] Khamti varieties are alive and well and constitute the largest surviving group of the Tai "daughter" languages of Assam. Khamti (or varieties of it) is also the most extensively described by authors such as Needham (1894), Grierson (1903), Biswas (1966), Harris (1976), Weidert (1977), and Wilaiwan Khanittanan (MS).

Khamyangs have been counted at 5,000-6,000, but so few of them are now competent fluent Tai speakers that as a language Tai-Khamyang is heading rapidly toward extinction. The language appears to be unrecorded, save perhaps for the "Nora" entries of Grierson (1903).[25] The same can be said for Turung, the speakers of which Grierson put at only 150 in 1903—the rest of the community was reported to be Kachin-speaking because of a period of subservience in Kachin areas. However, from a recent visit to the Turung village of Tipomia (near Jorhat), Aroonrat Wichienkeo (1985) reported that Tai names for certain foods, ornaments, items of apparel, and so forth, were still used or recognized, although other communication had to proceed "through the language of gesture."

Phake and Aiton, on the other hand, although spoken by fewer than 5,000 each, are like Khamti in still being viable: they are used for daily-life

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[23] Speakers of other Tai varieties, for example, Lanna-Tai, would undoubtedly make valuable "guesses" as well. See also note 43.

[24] According to Needham (1894: i), in his day there were 2,000 Khamtis in Assam, mainly along the Tengapani River. Terwiel (1980: 19) cites the 1931 census: under 4,000 Khamtis were enumerated, mainly in the region around Sadiya and Lakhimpur. The same census counted 1,800 "Shan," who were perhaps the other Tai Buddhist groups.

[25] Terwiel (1980: 27) records a visit to the Khamyang village of Chalapatar, near Sibsagar. Phake speakers report that to them "terminal" Tai-Khamyang very closely resembles Phake.

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communication and are still acquired as the first language, with Assamese as second (but increasingly less so). The way of life in the small communities where they are spoken brings forth strong "identifiably Tai" associations for visitors from Thailand, as well as for Western specialists.[26] Phake is presently spoken in the following villages of Dibrugarh district, mainly along the Dihing River: Bor-phake, Nam-phake, Tipam-phake, Man-long, Man-po-mung, Pha-neng, Ning-gam, Nong-lai, Mung-lang (the last also having a number of Khamti speakers). There are reportedly a few additional Phake speakers in Arunachal. Aiton is spoken by somewhat fewer speakers living in villages in the Jorhat and Karbi Anglung districts: Doboroni, Ban-lung, Ahomoni, Balipathar, Kaliyani, Chakihula, Tengani, and Barhula.

Notes on Phonology

As mentioned above, Phake and Aiton have much in common with their "big sister" Khamti, including a shared writing system and a rather high proportion of shared lexicon. However, there are a few important differences that we outline in this section. (The transcription used, in view of some phonetic comments, may seem to some rather "Chao-Phraya-centric".)

Initial consonants. Phake shares with Khamti the same initial system, namely the 16 consonant contrasts reported by Harris (1976: 115), and after reinterpretation of Weidert (1977):[27]

p t c k ʔ ph th kh s h m n ŋ w l y

For Aiton, however, there is the important addition of initials *b-* and *d-*, and Aiton therefore (like Central Thai) has full sets of three-way contrasts; $d \neq l \neq n$ and $b \neq w \neq m$. This would appear to be unique among modern varieties in a putative "Northern Shan" group, although Ahom orthography may also distinguish at least the first set.[28] It is interesting that the initial system of Aiton is thus nearly equivalent to the orthographic initial inventory of Ahom; the latter also distinguishes a palatal nasal. There are at least eight patterns of correspondence involving the *d/l/n* set as shown in table 1.[29]

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[26] For example, Saranat (1954); Banchob Bandhumedha (1961); Aroonrat Wichienkeo (1985); Terwiel (1980).

[27] Bright (1979) has observed that Weidert's transcription might have been more "accessible." The status of glottal stop is, of course, a much-debated wider issue.

[28] For example, Barua and Phukan (1964) record Ahom with distinct *l-*, *n-* and *d-* initials, but the last two are close in shape and not distinguished consistently in some (many?) Ahom manuscripts. For the (comparative-etymological) distinction $b \neq w$ ([*w*], (*v*]), they report only one symbol, interpreted as *b-*, which in some texts may also be confused with *m-* (Padmeswar Gagoi 1955). In any case, the *Ahom Lexicons* (Barua and Phukan 1964) shows considerable confusion for these initials. 'Red', for example, is cited variously as *deng* and *ning*, the latter citation (36) undoubtedly mistranslated as 'tea', obviously from the compound *nam-deng* or *nam-ning/neng* 'red water', which appears as a separate entry.

Aiton also differs from the other varieties in having a sporadic initial *r-* (distinct from *h-*) and initial clusters *kr-*, *pr-*, *khr-*, *phr-*. Examples: *ram*^{1} 'rice polishings'; *ri*^{1} 'long'; *kɛ*^{1}*rɛ*^{2} 'armpit'; *prat*^{3} 'tree frog'; *krip*^{1} 'flower petal'; *khraa*^{2} 'kill'; *phraa*^{2} 'jungle knife', *maphruk*^{1} 'tomorrow'.[30]

Table 1. Comparisons with Initials n-, l-, and d-

	Khamti	Phake	Aiton	Ahom
'rat'	*nu*^{4}	*nu*^{4}	*nu*^{3}	*nu*
'water'	*nam*^{2}	*nam*^{2}	*nam*^{2}	*nam*
'like'	*naŋ*^{5}	*naŋ*^{5}	*naŋ*^{1}	*naŋ*
'uncle'	*luŋ*^{3}	*luŋ*^{3}	*luŋ*^{1}	*luŋ*
'large'	*loŋ*^{4}	*loŋ*^{4}	*loŋ*^{3}	*luŋ*
'one'	*lɯŋ*^{4}	*lɯŋ*^{5,1}	*lɯŋ*^{1}	*lúŋ*
'navel'	*pu*^{4}*-li*^{1}	*pu*^{6}*-li*^{3}	*pu*^{1}*-li*^{3}	—
'stairs'	*kaa*^{4}*-lay*^{1}	*ko*^{1}*-lay*^{3}	*ko*^{1}*-lay*^{1}	*khaday*
'handle'	*laam*^{5}	*namʔ*^{6}	*dam*^{2}	-
'extinguish'	*lap*^{4}	*nap*^{6}	*dap*^{1}	*dap*
'which one'	*laɯ*^{1}	*naɯ*^{4}	*daɯ*^{3}	—
'jungle'	*loŋ*^{1}	—	*doŋ*^{1}	—
'sunshine'	*nɛt*^{4}	*nɛt*^{6}	*dɛt*^{1}	*det*
'silk'	*naay*^{5}	*naay*^{5}	*daay*^{2}	*daay*
'dark'	*nap*^{4}*-siŋ*^{4}	*lap*^{6}*-siŋ*^{4}	*dap*^{1}*-siŋ*^{3}	*nap-seŋ*
'smell'	*nom*^{1}	*lom*^{3}	*dom*^{1}	*dum, num*
'finger'	*liw*^{2}	*niw*^{2}	*niw*^{2}	*niw*
'morning'	*-lay*^{4}	*-nay*^{4}	*-nay*^{3}	*neu-say*

(in: *kaaŋ*/A +...)

The other modern varieties have no regular clusters for Tai vocabulary.[31] Ahom orthography does not systematically represent clusters, although some manuscripts seem to indicate a few; but many clusters appear to be indicated in the 1795 bark-text Assamese transcriptions of then-Ahom, which form one source for the *Ahom Lexicons* (B. Barua and J. N. Phukan 1964); clusters in the romanization of that dictionary are based on such evidence, not on Ahom script directly.

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[29] Khamti here is from Harris (1976); for tones of Phake and Aiton$_{1}$, see table 2. Ahom here and elsewhere is from Barua and Phukan (1964) unless otherwise identified, although transcription follows closely suggestions of Terwiel (1983: 52).

[30] Note Kh. *ma*^{1}*huk*^{1} Ph. *maphuk*^{1}.

[31] *traa*^{3} 'rupee; legal suit' occurs as virtually the sole *tr-* (or [*tl-*]) item in Kh., Ph. and Ai.; note Mon *traa* 'seal'. Occasional loan items in *ky-*, *phy-*, and so forth, occur: Ai. *kyet*^{1} 'die'. But note also a few items like Ai. *khyɛŋ*^{1} 'shin', Ph. *kyet*^{6} or [*kiet*] 'fish scales', clearly of Tai provenance.

Phonetically, certain comments of Harris (1976) relating to Khamti have at least some application to Phake and Aiton. In particular, the aspirated stops transcribed *kh-* and *ph-* have common free affricate and fricative allophones *kh* [*kx*, *x*] and ph [*pF*, *f*]. In Aiton, *w-* is sometimes [*v*] or a voiced bilabial fricative (for example, *wu*^{1}, normally [*vu*:] 'cow'), and the manner of articulation for *s-* varies, perhaps freely, from grooved to slit.[32] In both Aiton and Phake *y-* has palatal glide and (more commonly) voiced fricative allophones.[33]

The Lik-Tai writing system more faithfully represents the initials of Khamti and Phake than it does Aiton, and Aiton writers must use single symbols for *n-*/*d-* and *m-*/*b-*, although in some texts a Burmese-borrowed *d-* is used. As for a reported initial *g-* in Aiton and Phake (Biswas 1966b: 174), an orthographic *g-* may occur in some manuscripts for non-Tai vocabulary, as may *bh-* (and in Ahom, *gh- dh- jh-*), but in modern spoken Aiton and Phake items in these initials would be unusual.

More seriously for historical-comparative studies, problems occur with the romanized transcriptions of Ahom in the available published sources. These should be approached with caution by comparative linguists, who would do well to consult the critique of Terwiel (1983: 50-53). Terwiel shows, for example, that the symbol *ch-* in Ahom romanization is a "Sanskritic" rendering of the Assamese transcription of an Ahom symbol that probably represented an alveolar [*s*-] sound rather than a palatal affricate.[34] (For Ph. and Ai., a marginal status for palatal *ch-* accords with what Harris [1976] has reported for Khamti.)

Final consonants. Khamti, Phake, and Aiton share the same system of final stops (*-p*, *-t*, *-k* and, with remarks on redundancy, *-ʔ*), nasals (*-m*, *-n*, *-ŋ*) and off-glides (*-w*, *-y*, *ɯ*, an alternative diphthong treatment being possible.) The latter pattern is in the familiar Tai manner: *-w* after front vowels and (*a*) *a-*, *-y* after back vowels and (*a*) *a-*, and *-ɯ* only in *-aɯ*. Some speakers of Phake pronounce final *-ŋ* with coarticulated *-m* (thus as [-*mŋ*]), especially after *o-* or with the diphthongized low back vowel (see below): *koŋ*^{3} [*komŋ*] 'carding wheel', *tɔŋ*^{1} [*taɔwmŋ*] 'memorize', *kɔŋ*^{3} [*kaɔwmŋ*] 'pile'.

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[32] Note Kh., Ph. *ŋo*^{3}.

[33] A similar pattern of allophony is found for Assamese *ph-* (but not for *kh-*/*x-*). A palatal nasal occurs non-contrastively as a prefixal negative variant. (But note also Ph. *ɲin*^{3} 'hear'; *ɲi*^{3} 'second month'; *ŋaɯ*^{1} 'pronominal quantifier': [*ɲ*-] is the most common pronunciation for these items.)

[34] Thus, for example, Ahom "*ch-*" has been quite routinely used at face value as evidence in discussing Tai linguistic history, for example, Li (1945: 338).

In terms of regular correspondence, Khamti, Phake, and Aiton show some variation of final stops: Kh. *sup*^{4} Ph. *sut*^{6} Ai. *sut*^{1} 'mosquito net'; Kh. *hek*^{4} Ph. *ma*^{1}*het*^{6} Ai. *hep*^{1} 'hail'.

In Lik-Tai (and probably in Ahom) writing, a final palatal nasal symbol may function to indicate a low front vowel.[35]

Vowels. Ten vowel contrasts common in many Tai varieties apply to Khamti and also to Phake and Aiton:[36]

i *ɯ* *u* *e* *ɤ* *o* *ɛ* *a* *aa* *ɔ*

Apart from the contrast *a/aa*, in citation form vowels are long (for example, to a Central Thai listener) if syllable-final, but before a final consonant usually short, although under stress or in careful citation they may be longer. The contrasts *ɯ/ɤ* and *u/o* depart somewhat phonetically from corresponding contrasts in Central Thai; the distinctions may pose some difficulty for speakers of the latter. In addition, they are not consistently distinguished in Lik-Tai orthography (nor is *i/e*), adding a potential "spelling-pronunciation" dimension: if a speaker is reading a text, he or she may actually *under*-differentiate what would be distinct vowels in the spoken register (see also below).

In Khamti and Phake (but only rarely in Aiton), non-final low vowels -*ɛ*- and -*ɔ*- may have diphthongized variants. In Phake, before velar nasals or stops -*ɛ*- is quite regularly [-*aɛy*-] and -*ɔ*- is [-*aɔw*-]:[37] *khek*^{6} [*kxaɛyk*] 'guest'; *nɛŋ*^{3} [*naɛyŋ*] 'red'; *sɛŋ*^{4} [*saɛyŋ*] 'gem'; *cɛŋ*^{1} [*caɛyŋ*] 'clearly understood', but *thɛm*^{4} [*thɛm*] 'add'; *lɛn*^{1} [*lɛn*] 'run'; see also above. In addition, frequently for Phake (and occasionally for Aiton), the vowel -*ɔ*- in other non-final environments shows the same [*uɔ*-] or [-*wɔ*-] variant noted by Harris for Khamti (1976: 120); there is most frequently a contiguous labial *p* or *m*: *kɔp*^{6} [*kwɔp*] 'scoop'; *pɔt*^{1} [*pwɔt*] 'to scrub'; *thɔm*^{6} [*thwɔm*] 'listen'; *hɔm*^{4} [*hwɔm*] 'fragrant'; *mɔn*^{4} [*mwɔn*] 'pillow'; *ŋɔm*^{4} [*ŋwɔm*] 'observe stealthily'; *kɔm*^{1} [*kwɔm*] 'bent'; *cɔt*^{1} [*cwɔt*] 'to strain'.

In both Aiton and Phake, syllabic nasals [*m*-] and [*ŋ*-] occur as negative prefixals (full form: Ph. *maw*^{3}); also the dative-accusative case-marking preposition Ph. *haŋ*^{3} is often realized as [*hŋ*-].

Lik-Tai (and one presumes Ahom) orthography is both phonemically underdetermined and overdetermined in terms of vowels: for syllables with final consonants, no regular distinction is shown between high and mid vowels; however, for high vowels an allophonic length distinction is represented (that is, phonetically long syllable-final vowel variants are differentiated from phonetically shorter medial preconsonantal ones).

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[35] For example, *sɛn* in appendix GJ 6.

[36] Harris (1976: 119); Weidert (1977: 29), with reanalysis.

[37] Diphthongization of this sort was reported by Wilaiwan Khanittanan (1983: 231).

A single five-tone system for Khamti has been reported (Harris 1976; Weidert 1977).[38] To facilitate comparison, this is represented in table 2 along with a Phake system[39] and two Aiton ones, including a system of only three contrastive tones for open syllables, rare for Tai languages. For the latter varieties, tones have been numbered to accord with Harris's Khamti insofar as systems agree.

Table 2. Tonal Systems

	Khamti				**Phake**			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
H	4h	4h	5mrsq	4h	4mrs	6m	5mflq	6m/h
M-G	1mfl	4h	5mrsq	4h	3hfl	6m	5mflq	6m/h
L	3hfl	1mfl	2lflq	1m	3hfl	1l	2mfl	1l

	Aiton$_1$				**Aiton$_2$**			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
H	3rs	3rs	2mfl	3m/h	4lrs	6mrs	5mflq	6m/h
M-G	1hfl	3rs	2mfl	3m/h	3hfl	6mrs	5mflq	6m/h
L	1hfl	1hfl	2mfl	1l	3hfl	1l	2mfl	1l

Abbreviations: h - high, m - mid, l - low, rs - rising, fl - falling (unspecified contour indicates relatively level), q - relatively salient constriction and/or creak and/or final glottal stop; H, M-G, L—correspondence groups associated with Thai orthographic High, Mid and Low classes (often numbered 1—4 elsewhere); A, B, C, D—Tai tone categories (for example, as in Li [1977]; elsewhere sometimes numbered 0, 1, 2, and so forth, as suggested by tone-marking in Thai orthography). Tone numbering in table 2 in some cases may represent a "non-unique" phonemicization decision: for example, it is somewhat arbitrary what to number the "D" items in Aiton$_1$.

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[38] Some tonal detail reported by Weidert (1977: 19) is slightly different: tone 1 - low even; 2 - creaky voice, very low; 5 - low rising "accompanied by slight nasalization and ending in a glottal stop."

[39] Wilaiwan Khanittanan (1983: 231) has reported a six-tone system for a somewhat different Phake variety. In particular, the contrasting C-categories distinguished by presence/absence of the "q-feature" in the dialect reported here are represented, in the variety she describes, by a single (mid-falling constricted) tone. On the other hand, the variety she describes distinguishes most A-class items with L initials (high-falling) from those with M-G initials (mid).

The three-tone system of Aiton$_1$ can be seen as a compression of the fuller and undoubtedly more conservative system Aiton$_2$, which in turn is rather similar to Phake.[40] Among the merged distinctions in Aiton$_1$ is the falling together of C-category items distinguished on the basis of a "laryngeal component" in Aiton$_2$ and Phake.[41] In the latter variety for C-category items with the "-q" feature in table 2, articulatory physiological examination showed a consistent reduction of airflow (P. J. Rose, p.c.), increasing non-modal laryngeal vibration (J. B. Millar, p.c.) and some tendency to shorten phonologically long vowels (that is, [-*aa*-]). Although there was little consistent perceived difference in pitch contour, for example, by Central Thai listeners, between the L-C syllables and the H/M/G–C ("q-" feature) ones, for the latter, acoustic fundamental frequency dropped more quickly over the first portion of the syllable (P. J. Rose, p.c.).

Tone is not normally indicated in the Lik-Tai writing system (nor in Ahom), but occasionally a visarga-like symbol occurs in items which have, or probably once had, the "-q" feature above.[42] (Compare spellings of 'dance' and 'go/[past]', for example, see appendix GJ 51, 52).[43]

In Phake, a morphophonemic tone sandhi rule, involving a rather spectacular contour reversal, regularly operates after the preclitic negative marker [*m*-] (but not with the full form *maw*^{3}) in the case of tone 3 verbs:

maa^3	to come	*m-maa*^{4}	not to come
yaŋ^3	to be	*m-yaŋ*^{4}	not to be
yaa^3	to treat	*m-yaa*^{4}	not to treat
mii^3	to have	*m-mii*^{4}	not to have

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[40] Aiton$_1$ and Aiton$_2$ were obtained from members of the same family, the former from a younger, urban-dwelling male and the latter from an older, village-dwelling female. The extent to which Aiton$_1$ is a personal aberration or is more generally representative remains to be investigated.

[41] See also note 39; Gedney (1976: 65) for discussion of C-category mergers in Tai Neua; also Young (1985).

[42] But note Grierson's (1903: 185) tantalizing mention of texts with "subscript hooks" he thought might relate to tone-marking. These texts have apparently not yet been located or studied.

[43] Underdifferentiation of tonal and segmental contrasts lead Lik-Tai readers regularly to spend time "puzzling out" texts; see Weidert (1979: 322) for the report of a Khamti man requiring two days to "decode" a letter from his father. (Further comments on the above work of Weidert, which boldly attempts to reconstruct a five-tone system for Ahom on the basis of comparisons only among Khamti, one Southern Shan variety and Central Thai, are beyond the scope of this paper).

Notes on Syntactic Configuration

If the four varieties Ahom, Aiton, Phake, and Khamti are ranked in this order, a loose progression from syntactically least-Assamese-like to most-Assamese-like can be discerned, although to say "Assamese-like" may be misleading, in that important areal syntactic features in the Brahmaputra region are not confined to the Indo-Aryan languages spoken there. Below, a few syntactic questions are briefly raised with the appendix text furnishing some Aiton illustrations. (It is hoped that these meagre observations will be followed by more detailed syntactic studies.)

For transitive clauses, a shifting from what was undoubtedly original Tai S-V-O word order to the "Brahmaputra areal" S-O-V order is of more than passing interest.[44] In Needham's 1894 grammar of Khamti—which does not indicate tone—sentences such as the following occur (format and transcription modified):

(1) *kaw nɤ to lɤŋ nay han kaa*
1PSg deer CLF one able/PAST see go/PAST
I saw one deer (only).

(2) *sɤ may maɯ yɤ kaa ke*
tiger CASE? 2PSg shoot go/PAST QUEST
Did you shoot the tiger?

(3) *khaw may ma- yaŋ*
3PPl CASE? NEG be
They are not (here).

(4) *silat maɯ kaw may ti ma- ci ke*
gun 2PSg 1PSg CASE? IRREALIS NEG point QUEST
Won't you show me your gun?

(5) *sɤ kap ŋo yaw*
tiger kill cow already/PAST
A tiger has killed a cow.

(6) *ŋɤn nay haŋ sɤ kay*
money this PURPOSE buy chicken
This money is for buying chickens.

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[44] Even the question of a viable characterization of SUBJECT for Tai languages is not above theoretical interest, but here we must be content with "pretheoretic" S, O, and so forth.

Given that the particle *may* is clearly postclitic, in effect we find configurations:

S	O		V		[transitive]
O+[MARKER]	S		V		[transitive]
S+[MARKER]			V		[intransitive]
O	S	DAT.+[MARK.]	V		[ditransitive]
S			V	O	[transitive]
S	[(zero copula)	(zero agent)	V	O]$^{\text{PURPOSE}}$	

Needham's examples indicate other orders as well: S V [intransitive], without marker, S O-[MARKER] V, and so forth. The general impression, especially from connected text, is of very "pragmatically" controlled configuration: issues such as topicality, specificness, and so forth, appear to play a crucial role on how sentence constituents are ordered. Indeed, the postclitic particle *may* appears to have a discourse function as well: although Needham considered *may* to be a marker of the "dative, accusative, and locative cases," it sometimes occurs with subjects as in (3), and need not be present to mark the other case relations.

In an important recent study, Wilaiwan Khanittanan (MS) has indicated that for present-day Khamti the order SOV is normal, with OSV used for topicalized O, and that "presently the word order SVO hardly occurs"; when it does, she reports that Khamti speakers may disagree as to acceptability.

As for the other varieties, all three of the following Phake versions of (1) were found acceptable,

(1a)	*kaw*^{3}	*kaaŋ*^{3}	*tu*^{3}	*luŋ*^{1}	*nay*^{5}	*han*^{4}	*kaa*^{6}
	1PSg	deer	CLF	one	able/PAST	see	go/PAST
(1b)	*kaaŋ*^{3}	*tu*^{3}	*luŋ*^{1}	*kaw*^{3}	*nay*^{5}	*han*^{4}	*kaa*^{6}
(1c)	*kaw*^{3}	*nay*^{5}	*han*^{4}	*kaa*^{6}	*kaaŋ*^{3}	*tu*^{3}	*luŋ*^{1}

That is, SOV, OSV, and SVO are all found, confirming results reported by Wilaiwan Khanittanan (MS). In the Phake oral story-narrative transcriptions examined, these orders were again found to be sensitive to discourse pragmatics. A particular tendency (but not rule) was for specific, old-information direct objects to occur preverbially in either SOV or OSV sentences.

For Aiton, equivalents of (1a), (1b) and (1c) were also judged acceptable, but in oral story narratives (1a) was very infrequent.[45] The only high-frequency SOV construction noted involved the verb *yaŋ* 'to be; to have', where, in the 'have' sense, the order was regularly POSSESSOR + POSSESSED + VERB. It is debatable (or dependent on definition) whether the order here is SUBJECT + OBJECT + VERB; it is perhaps just as much DATIVE + SUBJECT + VERB (note oblique-possessor 'have' constructions in Russian, and so forth). For examples, see appendix, GJ 4, 14, 49, 64; compare sense 'be': GJ 22, 26. For topicalized preceding O, see GJ 19, 23, 31, 45, 63.

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[45] Ai. *day*^{2} 'able/PAST'.

Neither Phake nor Aiton makes any use of the Khamti postposition *may*, but both have a somewhat similar use for a different preposition: Ph. *haŋ*^{3}, *hɯŋ*^{3}, *hŋ*-; Ai. *haŋ, hŋ* (undoubtedly cognate with the Kh. purpose marker in [6] above). This regularly marks a dative indirect object in a ditransitive predicate; with simple transitives, it occasionally also marks a human direct object, especially if topical. (Note also the Assamese case-ending *-k* with a similar pattern of distribution.) Examples: GJ 8, 11, 28, 32, 58, 59, 68; compare the causative use in 48 and resultative in 50.

Turning briefly to Ahom, we find the perplexing statement of Grierson (1903: 102) to the effect that the normal Ahom transitive configuration was SOV; the claim is supported by examples. However, if one turns to text materials a (more Central-Thai-like) SVO pattern dominates, with the possibility of O [topic] SV. J. N. Phukan (1966) noted that Grierson's syntactic conclusions "contain several peculiarities in form and structure not noticeable in ancient Tai-Ahom chronicles, inscriptions and copper-plates." Also, in one instance Grierson himself admits he is "inclined to suspect mistakes on the part of the translator" (1903: 92); the reference was, in this case, to noun phrases with the order POSSESSOR + NOUN.[46] Wilaiwan Khanittanan (1983) has collected examples of SVO order from the published Ahom-Buranji text; her results (and the writer's observations) accord with the opinion of J. N. Phukan above. She also raises the interesting possibility of a more recent type or genre of Ahom writing using configurations departing from the earlier (more authentically Tai) patterns.

In terms of comparative Tai (or Southeast Asian) "discourse syntax," it is worth noting that in all the Tai varieties of Assam examined, binary discourse structures are quite common (that is, parataxis with asyndeton). This is especially true in narrative (GJ 4, 25, 26, 30, 44, 52, 61; note in 8 the binary preclitic *ʔi-*). These structures may be iconic in indicating repeating or continuing actions or events.

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[46] The translator was G. C. Borua; see also note 14. In spite of not being a Tai speaker himself, he had nonetheless "taught himself" Ahom; the same also edited the 1920 *Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary* (the predecessor of Barua and Phukan 1964) and the 1930 *Ahom-Buranji*; he is, thus, in one way or another behind most published Ahom material presently available. (Grierson appears to have set him the formidable task of translating English sentences into Ahom, including paradigms with future perfects, and so forth.) Probably all of Grierson's 1903 examples of Ahom syntax should be read with J. N. Phukan's caveat in mind.

Notes on Appendix: "Ghosts of the Jungle"

Generally conservative Tai sentential syntax. As observed above, Aiton texts and (at least older) Ahom preserve what is undoubtedly original Tai sentence configurations, whereas conformity to other areal patterns characterizes Khamti and to a lesser extent Phake. But Aiton does show a few verb-final tendencies; for example, at least in storytelling, there may be a tendency for verbs of telling to follow their quotative complements (GJ 31, 32).

Relative clauses. The normal relative marker is *ʔan*^{1} (GJ 37), but as in other Tai varieties, unmarked relative-like clauses are also possible (GJ 52).

Nominals and Noun-phrase Components

Pronominals. Aiton operates with a basic six-member system based on person and number: *kaw*^{1} 'I'; *maɯ* 'you [sg.]'; *mɯn*^{1} 'he, she, it';[47] *haw*^{1} 'we'; *su*^{3} 'you [pl.]'; *khaw*^{3} 'they'. The latter form also acts very much as an optional plural marker, in which function it is noun-phrase final (GJ 8, 58), following even deictics (GJ 61); it may also occur with second-person vocatives (GJ 15). Pronouns, especially *mɯn*^{1}, are often resumptive (GJ 6, and so forth); also possessive (throughout). More honorific forms, some in *-caw*^{2}, are available.

Deictics. The full deictic forms occurring in the text are *nay*^{2} 'this, here' and *nan*^{2}, *han*^{2} 'that, there' (GJ 1, 21); however, there is also a common post-clitic form *-an*^{2} (unstressed, thus with tone perhaps neutral, although cited with tone 2; note that it is represented regularly in Lik-Tai writing, but as an independent word *ʔan*). It approaches a definite article in discourse function, and its scope may be overextended noun phrases (GJ 8, 20, 46, and so forth).[48] It may occur on pronominals (GJ 6), and to close topical temporal clauses, and in that case even be suffixed to verbs (GJ 53).

Classifiers. The most common Aiton classifiers are *kɔ*^{1} for persons, *tu*^{1} (also *to*^{1}) for animals, *ʔan*^{1} for inanimates, homophonous with the relative marker (GJ 5, 26, 31). In addition to items occurring in the text, some ten or fifteen other shape-based classifiers have been noted. Normal Southwestern Tai orders are used, including the order NOUN +

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[47] In Lik-Tai orthography, this is regularly spelled as though *man*.

[48] Note a similarly-functioning (definite-marking) postclitic in rural Southern Thai; also the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription, III: 9, where C-category spelling differentiates this form from the A-category relative marker (or "general classifier").

CLASSIFIER + “ONE” for a function approaching that of “indefinite article” (GJ 5, 31).

Verbs and Verb Phrase Components

Irrealis marker. The form *ta*^{1} appears to cover many of the auxiliary functions of Central Thai *ca:* irrealis or future marking, sometimes involving intention or volition (GJ 10,17, 28, 62, 69), normally without accomplishment (GJ 55). Other complement-marking functions were not noted. (A variant *tak*^{1} also occurs.)

Progressive-continuative marking. The verb forms *sɯ*^{3} 'to progress towards' and *ʔɯ*^{3} 'to stay' function postverbally to suggest progressive aspect (GJ 52), or both may be used (GJ 53). Repeating or process-like actions also may be described more iconically through binary parataxis; see section on syntactic configuration.

Past temporal and aspectual marking. As in other Tai varieties, verb serialization plays an important role in supplying temporal information. The verb *kaa*^{3} 'go, proceed' (probably cognate with Central Tai *kwàa* 'surpassing, more than') occasionally occurs as a main verb in Aiton, but more often it—or a homonym, if one prefers—occurs postverbally to indicate several time-related factors, most commonly past time or possibly perfective aspect (note GJ 7, where the semantics of motion is retained and 57, where it is not). In this function, articulation sometimes approaches postclitic status (GJ 23, 45, 47). Binary expressions of form X- *kaa*^{3}-Y- *kaa*^{3} are common, and here the semantics appears to involve not perfectivity but repeated actions (GJ 8, 25, 46, 52). The verb *maa*^{1} 'come' has a similar postverbal function, perhaps emphasizing event completion (GJ 21). (Both postverbal *kaa*^{3} and *maa*^{1} appear in commands where the effect is perhaps directional, GJ 10, 59). Temporal adverbials are also common, for example, *yaw*^{2} (also *yaw*^{1}, especially in citation) 'already' (GJ 22, 45, 47).

Modal marking. The form *day*^{2} 'get, obtain; be able' has serial functions closely paralleling those its cognate has in other Southwestern Tai languages (GJ 1, 4, 20, and so forth). (Unlike Central Thai, *day*^{2} also functions for 'should', for example, *maɯ*^{1} *tak*^{1} *day*^{2} *kaa*^{3} 'you should go'; *thuk*^{3} in serial constructions appears to have a similar deontic sense. Yet another deontic modal is *pe*^{1} 'can'.)

Purposive and benefactive constructions. In agreement with other Southwestern Tai varieties, the form *haɯ*^{2} 'give, allow' functions in benefactive and purposive constructions; in the latter, the sequence *haɯ*^{2} *pɔ*^{1} is commonly found (GJ 24, 34, 37, 41, 60, and so forth).

Causative constructions. The verb *ʔaw*^{1} 'take' is the main causative formative, for example, *ʔaw*^{1} *taay*^{1} 'kill'. The direct object (“causee”) may follow this group, in which construction it is often “case-marked” by preposition *haŋ*^{1} (GJ 48; see also section on syntactic configuration).

Particles and Discourse Connectives

Illocutionary-force particles. Common particles include the following, whose nuances—beyond what can be deduced from context—remain to be determined: *laa*^{1}, imperative (GJ 16); *nɔ*^{3}, yes-no question; *nɛ*^{3} strengthens, among other things, WH-question (GJ 35, 37, 43); *ʔɤ*^{1}, appellative (GJ 9, 15, 44); *ʔɔ*^{1}, *nay*^{3}, *nɔy*^{3}, si^1 assertion-marking (GJ 3, 26; 13; 24, 26, 27, 30, 57; 21, 28, 35, 45, 58, 63).

Discourse connectives. The particle *kɔ*^{1} links predicates and has syntax similar to its presumed cognate in other Tai varieties (GJ 5, 6, 19, 54, 55); *caŋ*^{3} has a similar function (GJ 48). There are a good number of formulaic storytelling connectives in the text. Temporal initiators ('at that time', 'after that', and so forth) often are sequences like *mɤ*^{1} *nan*^{2} (GJ 30, 31) or *mɤ*^{1} (NP) *nan*^{2} (lit., 'back-in NP that') where the NP may be a temporal item like *yaam*^{1} 'time' (GJ 14, 15, 18, 34, 52, 61); or *naŋ*^{3} 'like', may intervene before the closing deictic (GJ 4, 38, 59); also subordinate clauses of similar structure are possible (GJ 46, 53, 56). More consequential connectives include sequences like *laay*^{3}*-caaŋ*^{3} 'so then' and *laay*^{1}*-(kɔp*^{1}*)-pɤ*^{1}*-nay*^{2} 'for this reason, consequently' (GJ 3, 24, 37, 58, 68), but sometimes its use is less consequential (GJ 7). A similar connective is: *haŋ*^{1}*-anan*^{2} 'that‘s why'. The connective *kanay*^{2} (GJ 23) appears to mark a transition (note Central Thai *thîi-níi* in a similar function).

Transcription Note

The Lik-Tai orthographic text in the appendix was produced by a Tai-Aiton speaker (Mr. Nabin Shyam Phalung) on the basis of an oral tape recording. The phonemic transcription was also based on this tape. Mismatches, for example, in vowel length, would appear to be due to (non-phonemic) conventions in Lik-Tai writing, which is not, in any case, a completely standardized system.

APPENDIX:
Ghosts of the Jungle, a Tai-Aiton Story

ပုင်ၸီထႃၼ်·တႆႁႆတူၼ် *phuŋ phi^3 thɤn^3 thay-ʔaytɔn*

မႂ်ႁၢၼ်ဝႂ်ၼ်ၸုၵုၼ်ထဝ်ၶဝ်ႁဵတ်ႁႆႇလႆႈၵိၼ်·

1. *mɤ-han^2-wɤn-cu kon thaw^2 khaw^3 het hay day^2 kin.*
once-upon-a-time person old 3PPl do dry-field able eat
Once there were old people who lived by farming dry fields,

ၼႃးၵႂ်ႁဵတ်·

2. *naa ŋ-het*
wet-field not-do
not wet fields.

လၢႆပႂ်ၼႆၶဝ်ႁႂ်လႆႈၵိၼ်ယဵပ်လူင်ဢေႃ။

3. *laay-pɤ-nay^2 khaw^2 hauɯ^2 day^2 kin yɛp loŋ^3 ʔɔ.*
So/ LINK rice give able eat difficult much PCL
And so, as for rice, it was very difficult for them to have it to eat, you see.

မႂ်ယၢမ်ၼင်ၼၼ်ၶုတ်ၽိုၵ်ၶုတ်မၼ်လႆႈၵိၼ်·

4. *mɤ-yaam-naŋ^3-nan^2 khut^3 phɤk^3 khut^3 man day^2 kin.*
LINK dig taro dig yam able eat
Back then they dug taro and yams to eat.

လၢႆၸၢင်မေထဝ်ၵေႃလိုင်

5. *laay^3-caaŋ^3 mɛ thaw^2 kɔ luɯŋ*
LINK mother old LINK one
There was an old woman

လုၵ်သၢဝ် မိုၼ်ၵေႃလိုင်ယင်။

luk-saaw^3 muɯn kɔ luɯŋ yaŋ.
daughter 3PSg LINK one have/be
who had a daughter.

လုၵ်သၢဝ်မိုၼ်ဢၼ်ၵေႃသႅၼ်·

6. *luk-saaw^3 muɯn-an^2 kɔ sɛn.*
daughter 3PSg-DET LINK beautiful
Her daughter was beautiful.

လ်ꩫုပ်ပြ်ၯ်မုၯ်ပ်ၶႃမၯ်ꩫႃတိၯ်ုထြၯ်။

7. *laay-kɔp-pɤ-nay²* *mɯn* *pay* *khaa³* *man kaa³* *ti* *naɯ* *thɤn.*
LINK 3PSg go search yam PAST place in jungle
Now one time the old woman went out to search for yams in the jungle.

ဢိၶႃꩫႃဢိႁွင်ꩫႃႁင်ၽီ

8. *ʔi-khaa³* *kaa³,* *ʔi-hɔŋ²* *kaa³,* *haŋ* *phi³*
search go/PROG call go/PROG to ghost
She was looking and calling out to the ghosts

ထြၯ်ဢၯ်ၶဝ်။

thɤn³-an² *khaw³,*
jungle-DET 3PPl
of the jungle,

မုၯ်လဝ်ဢြ်ၽီထြၯ်။

9. *mɯn* *law,* *ʔɤ* *phi³* *thɤn³,*
3PSg tell PCL ghost jungle
saying, "Oh ghosts of the jungle,

ꩡြ်ၽီထြၯ်ꩡိထဝ်မၯ်မႃꩫဝ်တႃႁုဝ်မႝသိမ်ၽင်။

10. *ci²* *thaw³* *man* *maa,* *kaw* *ta* *haɯ²* *may²-sim-phaaŋ³.*
point vine yam come 1PSg FUT give digging-stick
point out a yam vine and I'll give you a digging stick."

ၽီထြၯ်ဢၯ်ꩡိထဝ်မၯ်ႁုဝ်ႁင်မုၯ်။

11. *phi³* *thɤn³-an²* *ci²* *thaw³* *man* *haɯ²* *haŋ* *mɯn.*
ghost jungle-DET point vine yam give to 3PSg
The ghosts pointed out a yam vine to her.

မုၯ်ႁုဝ်မႝသိမ်ၽင်။

12. *mɯn* *haɯ²* *may²-sim-phaaŋ³.*
3PSg give digging-stick
She gave them her digging stick.

ၶါၼ်ၵွၼ်မၼ်ၼ်ထွၼ်မၼ်ၼ်·

13. *khɯn³-kɔn³* *mɯn* *day²* *thaw³* *man* *nay³*
Beforehand 3PSg obtain vine yam PCL
She had already gotten a yam vine,

မါဝ်ယံၼၼ်မယ်သိမ်ၽင်ငါဝ်ယင်။

14. *mɤ-yaam-nan²* *may²-sim-phaaŋ³* *ŋ-yaŋ.*
LINK digging-stick not-be/have
At that time she had no digging stick.

မါဝ်ယံၼၼ်မၼ်·ဝါဢါဝ်ၽီထါၼ်ၶွဝ်·

15. *mɤ-yaam-nan²* *mɯn* *waa* *ʔɤ* *phi³* *thɤn³* *khaw³*
LINK 3PSg say PCL ghost jungle 3PPI
Then she said, "Oh ghosts of the jungle,

ၸီႁုဝ်မါလါမယ်သိမ်ၽင်ၵွဢၼ်·

16. *ci²* *haɯ²* *maa* *laa* *may²-sim-phaaŋ³* *kaw-an²,*
point give PAST PCL digging-stick 1PSg-DET
point out that digging stick of mine for me,

ၵွတါႁုဝ်လုၵ်သွ·

17. *kaw* *ta* *haɯ²* *luk-saaw³.*
1PSg FUT give daughter
and I'll give you my daughter."

မါဝ်ယံၼၼ်ၽီထါၼ်ၶွဝ်

18. *mɤ-yaam-nan²* *phi³* *thɤn²* *khaw³*
LINK ghost jungle 3PPl
Then the ghosts

ၸီႁုဝ်မါမယ်သိမ်ၽင်။

ci² *haɯ²* *maa* *may²-sim-phaaŋ³.*
point PAST digging-stick
pointed the digging stick out to her.

တီထွၼ်မၼ်ၵေႃၸီမယ်သိမ်ၽင်ၵေႃၸီ·

19. *ti* *thaw³* *man* *kɔ* *ci³,* *may²-sim-phaaŋ³* *kɔ* *ci².*
place vine yam LINK point digging-stick LINK point
They pointed out both the place of the yam vines and the digging stick.

[illegible]

20. *mɛ thaw^2-an^2 khut^3 man day^2 kɔŋ lɯŋ.*
mother old-DET dig yam get pile one
The old woman dug up a heap of yams.

[illegible]

21. *day^2 maa man nan^2 sɨ^3, ʔaw maa ti hɤn.*
get come yam DET LINK take come place house
Well now, when she'd gotten those yams she took them back to her house.

[illegible]

22. *maa thɤŋ^3 ti hɤn yaw^2, m-han^3*
come reach place house PAST not-see
When she reached the house,

[illegible]

luk-saaw^3 mɯŋ ŋ-yaŋ.
daughter 3PSg not-be/have
her daughter was nowhere in sight.

[illegible]

23. *kanay^{2}luk-saaw^3 mɯn phɨ^3 thɤŋ^3 ʔaw pay- ka.*
LINK daughter 3PSg ghost reach take go- PAST
Now her daughter—the ghosts had taken her away.

[illegible]

24. *laay-pɤ-nay^2 luk-saaw^3-an^2 haɯ^2 pɔ day^2 yay^3*
LINK daughter-DET give enough able restore
So the old woman said,

[illegible]

mɯn ta het naŋ-hɤ^3 waa nɔy^3.
3PSg FUT do how say PCL
"My daughter—to get her back, what shall I do?"—said she.

ၵႃၵႃတွၵႃၸင်ပႆ

25. *khaa³ kaa³ taw² kaa³ caŋ pay*
search go proceed go until go
She went searching and searching

ႁၼ်လုၵ်သဝ်ဢၼ်။

han³ luk-saaw³-an².
see daughter-DET
and finally found her daughter.

ၽီထိုၼ်ဢဝ်ၵႃၼွႆလုၵ်ၵေႃ

26. *phi³ thɤn³ ʔaw kaa³ nɔy³ luk kɔ*
ghost jungle take go LINK child LINK
A ghost of the jungle had taken her

လုင်ပေႃယင်ဢေႃ။

luŋ pɔ yaŋ ʔɔ².
one enough be PCL
to wife and they already had a child!

ဢုၼိုဝ်ၶႃမႆ။ဢုၼိုဝ်ၶႃမႆၼွႆ။

27. *ʔu³ nɤ³ khaa maay², ʔu³ nɤ³ khaa maay² nɔy³.*
stay above branch tree stay above branch tree PCL
They lived on a tree branch, up on a tree branch.

လုၵ်သဝ်ဢၼ်ဝႃႁင်ၽီထိုၼ်ဢၼ်။

28. *luk-saaw³-an² waa haŋ phi³ thɤn³-an²,*
daughter-DET say to ghost jungle-DET
The daughter said to the ghost,

ၵဝ်တၵႃတီႁိုၼ်ဝႃသီ။

kaw ta kaa³ ti hɤn waa si³.
1PSg FUT go place house say LINK
"I'm going to my mother's house now," said she.

လုင်မႃလုၵ်ၶႃမႆၼၼ်။

29. *luŋ maa luk khaa maay nan².*
descend come from branch tree DET
She came down from the tree branch.

မႂ်ၼၼ်ေမမၼ်ဢွ်မႃဢွ်မႃၼွ်မႃ

30. *mɤ-naŋ²* *mɛ* *mɯn* *ʔaw* *maa,* *ʔaw* *maa*
LINK mother 3PSg take come take come
Then her mother took her

ထႂ်တိႁႂၼ်။

nɔy³, *maa* *thɤŋ³* *ti* *hɤn*
PCL come reach place house
—took her back to the house.

မႂ်ၼၼ်မူတုလုင်ႁူဝ်ပႂ်

31. *mɤ-naŋ²,* *mu³* *tu* *luŋ* *haɯ²* *pay*
LINK pig CLF one give go
And then, "A pig—go

ဢွ်မႃလုၵ်သွ်ဢၼ်ဝႃ၊

ʔaw *maa* *luk-saaw³* *-aŋ²* *waa*
take come daughter DET say
get one," the daughter said.

ႁွ်တဢွ်ပႂ်တိႁႂၼ်ဝႃႁင်

32. *haw* *ta* *ʔaw* *pay* *ti* *hɤn,* *waa* *hang*
1PPl FUT take go place house say to
"We'll take it back home with us," said she

ပေႃမၼ်ၶႃေမမၼ်။

pɔ *mɯn* *khaa³* *mɛ* *mɯn.*
father 3PSg and mother 3PSg
to her father and mother.

လႂ်ၸင်ပေႃထွ်ၶႃေမထွ်

33. *laay³-caŋ³* *pɔ* *thaw²* *khaa³* *mɛ* *thaw²*
LINK father old and mother old
So the old man and old woman

ပႂ်သိုမႃမူတုလုင်။

pay *sɯ²* *maa* *mu³* *tu* *luŋ.*
go buy come pig CLF one
went and bought a pig.

မၼ်မါဝ်ယံၼၼ်ယၵ်လုၵ်ဢွၼ်မၼ်
34. *mɯn mɤ-yaam-nan² yak³ luk ʔɔn³ mɯn*
3PSg LINK pinch child young 3PSg
The daughter then pinched her baby

ၼၼ်ႁိူဝ်ပေါႁၢႆ·ယၵ်ႁွႆလုင်·
nan² haɯ² pɔ haay², yak³ hɔy lɯŋ.
DET give enough cry pinch time one
so it would cry. She pinched it one time.

ၵသင်ၼေႁၢင်ဝါသီမေမၼ်ထံ။
35. *kasaŋ³ nɛ³ haaŋ² waa si³ mɛ mɯn thaam³.*
what PCL need say PCL mother 3PSg ask
"What does it want?—tell me," the daughter's mother asked.

မေထဝ်ဢၼ်ၵေႃၸွၼ်လုင်လႅမ်။
36. *mɛ thaw²-an² kɔ cɔn lɯŋ lɛm³.*
mother old-DET LINK somewhat one clever
Now that old woman was rather clever.

လၢႆပိုၼႆတီၸွၵ်ၶႃဢၼ်တပါဢဝ်ပႆ
37. *laay-pɤ-nay² ti cɔkkhaa³ ʔan ta paa ʔaw pay*
LINK place basket REL FUT carry take go
Therefore, in the basket that her daughter was going to carry

မူဢၼ်ၵၼ်တႂ်ၸွၵ်ၶႃၼၼ်သႂ်ၵဵပ်ႁႂ်ဝႆ။
mu³-an², kan-taɯ² cɔkkhaa³ nan², sɯ³ kɛp³ haɯ² way².
pig- DET bottom basket DET put chaff give keep
the pig in—in the bottom of that basket, she put some chaff.

မိုယံၼင်ၼၼ်ႁွႆလုင်ၶိုၼ်ၵွၼ်ယၵ်ၵႃ·
38. *mɤ-yaam-naŋ-nan² hɔy lɯŋ khɯn³-kɔn³ yak³ -ka.*
LINK time one as-before pinch- PAST
Now about then the daughter pinched the baby once more.

မေမၼ်ထံ·ၵသင်ၼေႁၢင်·
39. *mɛ mɯn thaam³, kasaŋ³ nɛ³ haaŋ².*
mother 3PSg ask what give need
The daughter's mother asked, "What does it want?"

[illegible]

40. *ʔɤ, haaŋ^2 daŋ mɯn.*
PCL need nose 3PSg
"It wants the pig's nose."

[illegible]

41. *pat^3 haɯ^2 kaa^3 daŋ mu^3-an^2.*
cut give PAST nose pig-DET
The old woman cut off the pig's nose for her.

[illegible]

42. *yak^3 kaa^3 hɔy lɯŋ.*
pinch PAST time one
She pinched the baby one more time.

[illegible]

43. *kasaŋ^3 nɛ^3 haaŋ^2.*
what PCL need
"What does it want?"

[illegible]

44. *ʔɤ, haaŋ^2 hɔ^3 mɯn, haaŋ^2 tin mɯn.*
PCL need head 3PSg need feet 3PSg
"Ah. It wants the pig's head and feet."

[illegible]

45. *yaw^2 taŋ-loŋ^3 saɯ^3 cɔkkhaa^3*
PAST everything insert basket
Then the daughter put everything in the basket

[illegible]

si^3 paa si^3 ʔaw pay-ka.
PCL carry PCL take go-PAST
and took it away with her.

[illegible]

46. *mɤ-yaam mɯn pay ti hɤn pɔk-an^2,*
LINK 3PSg go place house return-DET
As she was going back to her home in the jungle,

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ၵႅပ်ၵၼ်တုဝ်ၵႃတုဝ်ၵႃဢွၵ်ၵႃ။
kεp³-an² *tɯ²* *kaa³* *tɯ²* *kaa³* *ʔɔk³* *kaa³*.
chaff-DET trickle go trickle go out PAST
the chaff kept trickling out.

ပႆထိုင်ၵႃယဝ်မုၼ်ပႆၶိုၼ်
47. *pay* *thɤŋ³-ka* *yaw²*, *mɯn* *pay* *khɯn²*
go reach-PAST PAST 3PSg go ascend
When she had reached there, she climbed

ၵႃတီမႆၵၼ်။
kaa² *ti* *maay³-an²*.
PAST place tree- DET
up into the tree.

ၸင်ပႆဢဝ်ၵႃႈႁင်လုၵ်မုၼ်ၵၼ်။
48. *caŋ³* *pay* *ʔaw* *kaa²* *haŋ* *luk* *mɯn-an²*.
LINK go take dance to child 3PSg–DET
Then she made her child dance.

လုၵ်မုၼ်ၵၼ်တိၼ်မုၼ်ငယင်ၵၼ်လိုင်။
49. *luk* *mɯn-an²* *tin* *mɯn* *ŋ-yaŋ* *kan* *lɯŋ*
child 3PSg-DET foot 3PSg not-be/have side one
This child of hers—one leg was missing.

ႁင်ၵၼၼ်လၢဝ်ၽီထိုၼ်တိၼ်တိဝ်။
50. *haŋ-anan²* *law* *phi³* *thɤn³* *tin* *diw.*
LINK tell ghost jungle foot single
And that’s why they speak of “one-legged ghosts of the jungle.”

ပႆဢဝ်ၵႃႈသုၼိုဝ်ၶမႆၵၼ်။
51. *pay* *ʔaw* *kaa²* *su³* *nɤ³* *khaa* *maay²-an²*.
go take dance PROG above branch tree-DET
She was making the child dance up on the tree branch.

မိုယမ်ၼၼ်မႄမုၼ်
52. *mɤ-yaam-nan²* *mε* *mɯn*
LINK mother 3PSg
Now at that time the daughter’s mother

ၸိပ်ၵႃၶႃၵႃလွင်ႁွႆၵပ်တုဝ်ၵႃၼၼ်ပႆ
cep^3 *kaa*^{3} *khaa*^{3} *kaa*^{3} *lɔŋ hɔy kɛp*^{3} *tuɯ*^{2} *kaa*^{3} *nan*^{2} *pay*
follow go search go path trace chaff trickle go there go
followed searching along the path where a trail of chaff had trickled,

ႁၼ်ၵလုၵ်သၢဝ်ဢၼ်ဢဝ်ၵႃး
han^3*-ka* *luk-saaw*^{3} *-an*^{2} *ʔaw* *kaa*^{2}.
see-PAST daughter -DET take dance
and she saw her daughter making her child dance

လုၵ်မၼ်သုဢုၼိုၶႃမႆဢၼ်·
luk *muɯn* *su*^{3} *ʔu*^{3} *nɤ*^{3} *khaa* *maay*^{2}*-an*^{2}
child 3PSg PROG stay above branch tree-DET
up on the tree branch.

မိုၵႃးဢၼ်မေမၼ်မေႃၶႃမ်ဝႃ
53. *mɤ* *kaa*^{2}*-an*^{2} *mɛ* *muɯn* *mɔ* *khaam* *waa*:
LINK dance-DET mother 3PSg sing text stay
While it was dancing, its mother sang a song:

ၻိင်ၻိင်ၻိင်ပုၼၢႆမၼ်တဢွမ်
54. *diŋ diŋ diŋ*, *pu*^{3}*-naay* *muɯn* *ta* *ʔom*^{2}
ding ding ding grandfather 3PSg FUT hold
"ding, ding, ding, grandpa wanted to hold you,

ၵေႃမေမၼ်ငႁဝ်ဢွမ်·
kɔ *mɛ* *muɯn* *ŋ-hauɯ*^{2} *ʔom*^{2}.
LINK mother 3PSg not-let hold
but your mother wouldn't let him.

ၻၢင်ၻၢင်ၻၢင်ၼၢႆမၼ်တဢွမ်ၵေႃမေ
55. *daaŋ daaŋ daaŋ*, *naay* *muɯn* *ta* *ʔom*^{2} *kɔ* *mɛ*
dong dong dong grandmother 3PSg FUT hold LINK mother
Dong, dong, dong, grandma wanted to hold you,

မၼ်ငႁဝ်ဢွမ်။
muɯn *ŋ-hauɯ*^{2} *ʔom*^{2}
3PSg not-let hold
but your mother wouldn't let her."

မါဝ်ယံမေမၼ်ႁၼ်ၵၢၼၼ်

56. *mɤ-yaam mɛ mɯn han³-ka nan²*
LINK mother 3PSg see-PAST DET
After her own mother had seen this,

ပါဝ်ၼႆမၼ်ဢႆၼွႆႁင်လုၵ်မၼ်

pɤ-nay² mɯn ʔaay nɔy³ haŋ luk mɯn
LINK 3PSg ashamed PCL to child 3PSg
the daughter felt ashamed of her child,

ၸါဝ်ၽီထါၼ်တီၼ်ၼီဝ်၊

57. *cɤ phi³ thɤn³ tin diw.*
name ghost jungle leg single
called a “one-footed ghost of the jungle.”

လႆၵွပ်ပါဝ်ၼႆႁင်ပုၼႆမၼ်ၼႆ

58. *laay-kɔp-pɤ-nay² haŋ pu³-naay mɯn naay*
LINK to grandfather 3PSg grandmother
That was why she had not let

မၼ်ၶွ်ဢါဝ်ႁွ်ဢုံသီ။

mɯn khaw³ ŋ-haɯ² ʔom² si³.
3PSg 3PPl not-let hold PCL
its grandpa and grandma hold it.

မါဝ်ယံၼင်ၼၼ်ႁင်မေမၼ်လွ်မၢ

59. *mɤ-yaam-naŋ-nan² haŋ mɛ mɯn law maa*
LINK to mother 3PSg tell come
Now at that time the daughter said to her mother, “Come

ဢူၵၢဢူၵၢ

ʔu³ kaa³ ʔu³ kaa³.
stay PAST stay PAST
here, come here.

ႁွ်တၢတင်ၶွဝ်ႁုင်ၽၵ်ႁွ်ၵိၼ်။

60. *haw ta taŋ² khaw² hoŋ³ phak³ haɯ² kin.*
1PPl FUT set rice cook vegetables give eat
We’ll cook rice and vegetables to eat.”

မိူဝ်ယံꩫꩫ်ပႝဢဝ်မႃႁိပ်ꩫုဢꩫ်ၶဝ်
61. *mɤ-yaam-nan^{2} pay ʔaw maa hep nu^{3}-an^{2} khaw^{3},*
LINK go take come louse rat-DET 3PPl
Then she went and got lice from rats

တၵ်ဢꩫ်ၶဝ်မႃတင်မႃႁုင်။
taak-an^{2} khaw^{3}, maa taŋ^{2} maa hoŋ^{3}.
leech-DET 3PPl come set come cook
and got leeches and brought them back and cooked them.

မေမုꩫ်ႁꩫ်သိုပႝပုၵ်မႃတီပꩫ်၊
62. *mɛ mɯn han^{3} sɨ^{3}, paay pok maa ti baan^{2}.*
mother 3PSg see PCL run return come place village
The daughter's mother saw this and rushed back to the village.

မႃဝႃလုၵ်သဝ်ႁဝ်ၽီထိုꩫ်ဢဝ်ပႝၵႃ၊
63. *maa waa, luk-saaw^{3} haw phi^{3} thɤn^{3} ʔaw pay kaa^{3}.*
come say daughter 1PPl ghost jungle take go PAST
She said, "Our daughter—a ghost of the jungle has taken her.

လꩫ်ႁဝ်ဢꩫ်တိꩫ်မုꩫ်ꩫ်ယင်
64. *laan^{3} haw-an^{2} tin mɯn ŋ-yaŋ.*
grandchild 1PPl-DET foot 3PSg not-be/have
Our grandchild is missing a leg.

ၽီထိုꩫ်တိꩫ်တိဝ်၊
65. *phi^{3} thɤn^{3} tin diw.*
ghost jungle foot single
A one-legged ghost of the jungle!

ၵဝ်ပႝႁꩫ်မႃ။
66. *kaw pay han^{3} maa.*
1PSg go see come
I saw it myself."

ႁင်ၵုꩫ်ဢꩫ်ၶဝ်ၶႝၵꩫ်၊
67. *haŋ kon-an^{2} khaw^{3} khaay kan.*
to person-DET 3PPl relate together
The people told each other about it.

လ်ပါၸ်ၯၥၔပါၸ်ၵါ၀်ၯၠ်လၠ်

68. *laay-pɤ-nay*^{2} *haŋ* *pɤn* *ŋ-haur*^{2} *law,*
LINK to neighbor not-let tell
Therefore, one should not say to someone else,

တၥၯၠ်လုေၵၥၔၠ်ႁ၀ိမၥ၊ၮၠ်မၸ်·

69. *ta* *haur*^{2} *luk-saaw*^{3}, *ci*^{2} *maa* *thaw*^{3} *man.*
FUT give daughter point come vine yam
"I'll give you my daughter if you show me a yam vine."

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