

## SIAMESE VERSE FORMS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### 1. Introduction

The corpus of Siamese<sup>1</sup> poetry, encompassing a period of six or seven centuries, exhibits a wide variety in theme and form, and attains in many works a level of quality hardly surpassed in any other culture. Poetic artistry in Siamese verse finds expression mainly in the skillful manipulation of language within the constraints imposed by the various verse patterns. So much of the value of Siamese poetry lies in the form, as opposed to the semantic content, that translations into Western languages are notoriously disappointing. The paramount importance of form is reminiscent of eighteenth-century Western music; in both cases, in Siamese poetry as well as, say, in minuets by Haydn and Mozart, one feels that the main purpose was not so much to produce something basically new and different as to exploit existing patterns in elegant and graceful ways.

The traditional<sup>2</sup> verse forms of Siamese are described in detail in a well-known textbook called

*chǎnthálák*. The *chǎnthálák* textbook is part of a series of traditional grammatical works, named after Pali texts of similar content.

ʔàkkhàràwíthii (orthography and phonology)

wáciiwíphâak (parts of speech)

wâakkàyásămphān (syntax)

chǎnthálák (versification)

(As indicated by the underlining, the four titles are linked by rhyme.) Each of these four textbooks has gone through a number of versions, editions, and printings, most of them published by the Thai Ministry of Education. The best versions are those by the late Phya Uppakit Silpasarn (born 1879, died 1941), who taught Thai language at Chulalongkorn University.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays versification (*chǎnthálák*) is usually included as a chapter or section in the various textbooks, by many different authors, entitled *lāk phaasăa* ('principles of language'), with pretty much the same content as the older separate *chǎnthálák* textbooks.

Westerners who write on Siamese versification invariably follow the *chǎnthálák* model. In fact, it may be said in general that the more accurately the Western work reproduces the *chǎnthálák* description, the better it is.<sup>4</sup>

The *chǎnthálák* tradition is one of high quality. The classifications it makes of the various types of Siamese verse forms are unexceptionable. Its statements of the rules, for example, of rhyme or syllable count, are highly accurate. Various versions of the

*chǎnthálák* tend to differ mainly in their choice of illustrative examples (sometimes original compositions for this purpose), and these examples are almost always good ones. Various versions differ also as to how detailed a treatment they give to each category.

There are, however, two criticisms that one may make of the *chǎnthálák* textbooks, both the Siamese and the foreign versions. The first, perhaps less serious than the second, is that one frequently finds that a particular poetic work, especially if it is one of the older classics, deviates significantly from the models described in the textbooks. The deviations may be in either direction: sometimes the actual poem is found to disobey the rules in ways not mentioned in the textbook. On the other hand, a particular work is sometimes found to obey various constraints not mentioned in the textbook. One has the feeling that this lack of perfect agreement between the textbook rules and the actual practice of the poets is due to an ambiguity of purpose in the textbooks; they are intended to be not only descriptive (and it is in this aspect that one occasionally finds imperfections), but also prescriptive. Thai students are required to compose original poems in the various forms, and the *chǎnthálák* textbooks are intended to tell them how to do it.

The other criticism that one feels compelled to make of the *chǎnthálák* tradition is its tendency to make too little of the relationship of each of the various forms to the linguistic or cultural period in Siamese history during which it arose. This is

probably due to the fact that each of the forms, once it was established, continued to be used through successive periods, and all of them are in current use today, equally available to contemporary poets. One gets the impression from many of the textbooks that all these forms are coeval and eternal, with only occasionally a reference to chronological matters (sometimes, as we shall see, right, and sometimes wrong). Some of the best versions, Siamese and foreign, are especially irritating in this respect; for an ancient form they will often cite an illustrative example composed by a twentieth-century poet, who may impose upon himself either more or less stringent constraints than did those who first used the form in earlier times in works that have become literary classics.

It is the purpose of this paper to attempt to place in correct perspective with respect to linguistic and cultural history each of the major types of verse. This enterprise will be found at times to correct or clarify the statements found in the traditional textbooks. At other times our findings will turn out to require no significant changes or additions to the statements found in the textbooks, but to add a historical dimension, or in some cases to suggest worthwhile topics for further research.

To put it another way, and I must beg forgiveness for speaking here in a personal and not very modest vein, after some thirty-odd years of studying and thinking about these matters I believe that there are a number of basic points on which the traditional account is incorrect or incomplete, and my purpose



here is to set things straight. We will concentrate on basic points relating to each of the major categories of verse forms. Each of the categories deserves more detailed treatment, which must be deferred to another time.

The basic categories are *khloong* (together with *râay*), *kàap*, *chăn*, and *kloon*. This is the order in which they are often treated in the textbooks, and it is the historically correct order, that is, *khloong* and *râay* are the oldest forms, and *kloon* the most recent.

## 2. *khloong* and *râay*

Verse forms belonging to the category called *khloong*, together with the associated form called *râay*, are the oldest of all Siamese poetic patterns. They originated when the language had a three-tone system rather than the present five-tone system.

In this earlier period the language had three contrasting tones on syllables ending in a voiced sound, that is, a vowel, semivowel, or nasal; such syllables are called *kham pen*, or 'live syllables', in Siamese grammar. Following Professor Fang-kuei Li's usage, most scholars designate these tones as A, B, and C. The A tone was by far the most common, and was apparently the unmarked, or normal, or neutral tone. Words having the B or C tone were much less numerous in the language. In addition, there were syllables ending in voiceless sounds (*p*, *t*, *k*, and, after short vowels only, glottal stop). The tone of these is designated D, but actually these checked syllables at this earlier stage of the language

simply showed no tonal differentiation at all. In Siamese grammar such syllables are called *kham taay* or 'dead syllables'.

This three-tone system prevailed in earlier times throughout all languages and dialects of the Tai language family, which covers a large part of Southeast Asia, and students of the comparative phonology of this language family have demonstrated that it was also the tone system of Proto-Tai, the prehistoric language reconstructed by scholars, of which all languages of the family are different and divergent continuations. Curiously, earlier stages of some other linguistic families of the area such as Chinese and the Miao-Yao group have been shown to have had similar three-tone systems.

Although all languages and dialects of the Tai family had this three-tone system in earlier times, it is quite possible that there were differences in how the tones were pronounced from place to place. Although theories have been advanced as to how these three tones were pronounced in earlier stages of Siamese,<sup>5</sup> there is not enough certainty about this for anyone to venture to attempt to read the verse composed in those days in a manner supposed to be imitative of the earlier pronunciation. But this need not prevent us from analyzing the structure of the verse forms belonging to this earlier stage of the language. We may not know how the tones sounded, but we can tell which were the same and which were different.

All varieties of *khlooy* consist of lines of five syllables each, grouped in stanzas of two lines

(*khloog sǝŋ*), three lines (*khloog sǝam*), or four lines (*khloog sǝi*). To certain lines of the stanza were added, obligatorily or optionally depending upon the type of *khloog*, one or two groups of two or four syllables each. Sometimes such optional two-syllable phrases are called *sǝŋ* (literally, 'ornament').

Within these stanzas there were important constraints of two kinds: (1) certain syllables were required to rhyme with certain other syllables, and (2) certain specific syllables in certain lines were required to have the B tone or the C tone. D-tone syllables were allowed to substitute for the B tone, suggesting the interesting possibility that the B and D tones were somehow similar in pronunciation (perhaps both low, or the like).

The following examples are taken from the famous early classic *Phrá? Loo*. The modern tones are indicated by diacritics in the usual notation. Syllables that had, as required, the B or the C tone at that time, are so marked. B and C tones occur elsewhere, on syllables in which there was no constraint regarding tones; these we have not marked. Syllables that rhyme are underlined. Throughout this essay we cite single stanzas as illustrations. Actually one ought always to cite two or more consecutive stanzas to show how they are linked by cross-stanza rhymes. All categories of Siamese verse have such stanza-linking rhymes. The various versions of the *chǎnthálák* are usually good about giving the rules for these, but often cite single-stanza examples, just as we are doing, so that one has to look at the actual texts to see how the cross-stanza rhymes work. [Editor's

note: In the *khloog sǒɔŋ* example given below (stanza 11), the last line should properly be printed on the same line as the second. In the *khloog sǎam* example (stanza 577), the last line should be printed on the same line as the third. This has not been done here due to constraints on line length.]

Example of *khloog sǒɔŋ* (stanza 11):<sup>6</sup>

rooy      rûup      ʔin      yàat<sup>D</sup>      fáa<sup>C</sup>  
Perhaps figure Indra drop sky

maa      ʔaa<sup>B</sup>      ʔoŋ      nay      lâa<sup>C</sup>  
come display self in earth

lèeŋ<sup>B</sup>      hây<sup>C</sup>      khon      chom      lee      rii  
place for people admire (particle) not so?

Perhaps the figure of Indra descended from heaven and displayed itself on the earth for people to admire, is it not so?

Example of *khloog sǎam* (stanza 577):

thǎŋ      tháwaan      nay      rian      lǔaŋ  
arrive door in house royal

khláay      thǎŋ      khluang      sǒɔŋ      tháaw<sup>C</sup>  
like arrive palace two princess

chəən      râat      sàdèt      khin      yâaw<sup>C</sup>  
invite prince go ascend house

yùu<sup>B</sup>      rén<sup>C</sup>      rian      rooy  
remain hide house (name)

They arrived at the door of the royal palace of the two princesses, and invited the prince to ascend into the house and remain hidden in the residence of Rooy.

The textbooks specify the B tone on the fourth syllable of the second line; the word *sǎɔŋ*, with the A tone, does not conform.

Example of *khloong sǎi* (stanza 22):

<i>lâw</i>	<i>lîi</i>	<i>chǎom</i>	<i>tháaw</i> <sup>C</sup>	<i>thûa</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>miang</i>	<i>sǎɔŋ</i>	
tell	famous	figure	prince	every- where	city	(name)	
<i>khàccoon</i>	<i>khàaw</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>thǎŋ</i>	<i>hǔu</i>	<i>sǎɔŋ</i>	<i>phîi</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>nóɔŋ</i> <sup>C</sup>	
spread	news	reach	ear	two	older sibling	younger sibling	
<i>ráthuay</i>	<i>dùt</i> <sup>D</sup>	<i>wan</i>	<i>thoɔŋ</i>	<i>khruan</i>	<i>khây</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>hǎn</i>	<i>naa</i>
weak	like	vine	gold	moan	desire	see	(particle)
<i>hǎoy</i>	<i>láhǎoy</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>nay</i>	<i>hòɔŋ</i> <sup>C</sup>	<i>yùu</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>yâm</i> <sup>C</sup>	<i>faj</i>	<i>sǎan</i>
weak	droop	in	room	remain	look out	listen	mes- sage

The fame of the prince's beauty pervaded the city of *Sǎɔŋ*, and the news reached the ears of the two sisters. They drooped like a golden vine, moaning with desire to see him. Repining in their room, they remained, watching and listening for word.

The words *sǎɔŋ* ('name of a city', *sǎɔŋ* 'two', and *thoɔŋ* 'gold' form one rhyming set, all with the A tone. The words *nóɔŋ* 'younger sibling' and *hòɔŋ* 'room' form another, with the C tone. It is an accident that as a result of the later sound changes these two sets rhyme in modern Siamese, where tonal agreement in rhyme is not required.

In older texts *khloong sǎi* is much more frequent than either *khloong sǎɔŋ* or *khloong sǎam*. (In *Phrá? Loo* some of the stanzas labeled *khloong sǎɔŋ* by modern editors look suspiciously like *khloong sǎam*; this matter remains to be investigated.) Some earlier works

are composed entirely in *khloog s̄i* (sometimes intermingled with *r̄ay* passages), and the same is true of some modern *khloog* compositions. In addition to *khloog s̄oŋ*, *khloog s̄am*, and *khloog s̄i*, there was another early form, which the textbooks call *khloog h̄a*, found in only one classical Siamese text, the famous Water Oath (*ʔoŋkaan ch̄eŋ n̄am*) used in an ancient ceremony in which the loyalty of soldiers and officials to the king was reaffirmed periodically.<sup>7</sup> While the numbers *s̄oŋ* 'two', *s̄am* 'three', and *s̄i* 'four' in the names for the other types of *khloog* refer to the number of full five-syllable lines per stanza, not counting extra two- and four-syllable phrases (an elementary fact, which few of the *ch̄anthálák* textbooks state, so that most students of Siamese versification are at a loss if asked the reason for these names), this cannot be the explanation for the word *h̄a* 'five' in the name for *khloog h̄a*. The Water Oath text is obscure in the extreme, partly, no doubt, because of its antiquity, but probably also because of an intentional effort to make it mysterious and frightening. This obscurity has caused scholars great difficulty in analyzing the structure of the verse form. Some Thai scholars have even wondered if the arrangement of the lines might have become garbled during the centuries of copying from one manuscript to another. Phya Uppakit, in his version of *ch̄anthálák*, made considerable headway in analyzing the structure of *khloog h̄a*, but it remained for the late Jit Phumisak to work it out in detail, with new insights provided by comparison with verse forms found in Lao literature.<sup>8</sup>

Why are all these forms called *khloog*? Besides the noun *khloog*, referring to verse forms of this category, Siamese has a verb *khloog* 'to rock', intransitive (of a boat), or transitive 'to rock (a boat)'. It seems not impossible that the name of the verse form is derived from this verb, since the basic and characteristic feature of this form is the requirement that at certain syllables the B tone (perhaps low?) be used, and at others the C tone (perhaps high?), suggesting a tilt, so to speak, now to one side and now to the other. I believe I have suggested elsewhere that originally these might have been boating songs, with a playful rock to one side at the B tones and to the other at the C tones, but this is somewhat implausible because frequently the B and C tones are immediately consecutive. And what of the other B- and C-tone syllables that occur at points where there is no specification regarding the tone of the syllable? That is, the boating-song idea would perhaps be more credible if all syllables had the A tone except those specified as B or C, but this is not the case. But, even if the boating-song hypothesis is rejected, the possibility that *khloog* 'to rock' is the source of *khloog* as a name for these verse forms seems strong. The idea that these were originally "rocking verses," whatever that meant specifically, is perhaps strengthened by the rule that, where the pattern calls for B and C tones in consecutive syllables, the order may be reversed. If "rocking" was the idea, then apparently it did not matter which way one rocked first.

Although these are undoubtedly native verse forms, *khloog* is apparently not a native word. Siamese words with the long vowel *oo*, as well as the long vowel *ee*, are normally not native inherited words; these two long vowels came into the language at an early stage, before the introduction of the writing system, through foreign loanwords. This difficulty would not totally preclude native origin for the word, since a few other words with this long vowel are known to be native because cognates for them are found in other languages of the Tai family, with Siamese having apparently lengthened the vowel secondarily before the final nasal. For example, *sîa khrôog* 'big tiger' has an exact cognate in White Tai. This word is found spelled *khrôg*, with a short vowel, in old Siamese texts. *Khloog*, on the other hand, has always been spelled with a long vowel. In any case, no cognate for the word *khloog* in any meaning has been found in any other language of the Tai family. It seems likely that Siamese somehow acquired the word *khloog* 'to rock' locally, perhaps by borrowing from a non-Tai language, and then extended the meaning to these verse forms.

With *khloog* is frequently associated a kind of rhymed prose, or verse without divisions into stanzas, called *rây*. *Rây* usually consists of a series, indefinite in number, of five-syllable lines, each linked to the next by rhyme. A passage of *rây* is supposed always to end in a stanza of *khloog sǒg*.

Rhymes in both *khloog* and *rây* are in older texts required to show (like all Siamese rhymes) agreement in vowel and consonant, but also in tone



(A, B, C, or D). The *chǎnthá-lák* textbooks do not always point this out.

Example of a *râay* passage from *Phrá? Loo* (stanza 207):

léew trát sàŋ khǔn phon<sup>A</sup>  
then speak order leader soldiers

phûak pháhǒn<sup>A</sup> hîam hǎan<sup>A</sup>  
group soldiers fierce brave

rêŋ triam kaan<sup>A</sup> pháyúhàbàat<sup>D</sup>  
hurry prepare action military movement

càttùroŋ râat<sup>D</sup> riãŋ róp<sup>D</sup>  
fourfold army king glorious fight

khróp<sup>D</sup> thúk mùu thúk mùat<sup>D</sup>  
complete every group every unit

truat<sup>D</sup> hây sàp dooy khàbèt<sup>D</sup>  
inspect for all with sharp

càt hây sèt<sup>D</sup> dooy khàbuan<sup>A</sup>  
arrange for finish according to model

kuu càk yuan<sup>A</sup> yâat<sup>D</sup> tâw<sup>C</sup>  
I will go go

nay wan rûŋ<sup>B</sup> phrûŋ cháv<sup>C</sup>  
in day dawn tomorrow morning

tèeŋ<sup>B</sup> tâŋ<sup>C</sup> triam phlan  
prepare set up prepare quickly

Then he spoke, ordering the leader of the troops, the groups of brave soldiers, to make haste to prepare for movement, the fourfold royal (or able) army, glorious in war, every unit, to make a thorough inspection, sharply, to make all arrangements in accordance with correct procedure. "I will set out tomorrow morning at dawn. Make all preparations promptly."

In the fourth line of this passage some editions have ʔàat 'able' instead of rāat. The rāay passage ends, as it is supposed to do, with a *khloog sǒog* stanza in the last two lines. In the last line the rules call for a B tone on the second syllable; here the B tone falls irregularly on the third syllable.

At some point in the history of Siamese, apparently some time during the earlier centuries of the Ayutthaya period (Ayutthaya was founded in 1350 A.D. and was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767), the language underwent a drastic series of sound changes involving a splitting of each of the earlier tones into two or more, with some coalescences among the resulting tones. All languages and dialects of the Tai family underwent such a splitting of the tones, with the details differing from place to place, so that one finds an enormous variety of tonal systems in the modern languages and dialects. These tonal splits were conditioned by the phonetic nature of the initial consonants. For example, in many dialects certain tones split into two, depending upon whether the initial consonant was voiced or voiceless at the time of the split. At some points, and for some of the tones, other phonetic features of the initial consonants conditioned the tonal splits. Subsequently, drastic changes occurred in the pronunciation of some sets of consonants, the details again differing from place to place, obscuring the original phonetic features that had conditioned the tonal changes. Apparently a great wave of such changes swept over much of Southeast Asia and the Far East, affecting

not only Tai languages but also languages of other families.

The tonal changes that occurred in Siamese are shown in chart 1, with the resulting modern tones indicated in the boxes. The vertical columns represent the original tones as indicated along the top of the chart. The horizontal rows represent the phonetic classes of consonants at the time of the tonal splits, as indicated at the left.

Chart 1

		A	B	C	D Short	D Long
Voiceless friction sounds: <i>h, ph, hm,</i> etc.	rising					
	mid		low	falling	low	low
Voiceless unaspirated sounds: <i>p, ?,</i> etc.						
Voiced sounds: <i>b, m,</i> etc.			falling	high	high	falling

Chart 1 also illuminates the history of the notoriously complicated Siamese writing system. When first devised as a modification of Cambodian cursive script, about 1300 A.D., the writing system was simple and rational, and was based on the early Siamese tone system. Syllables pronounced with the A tone were unmarked. Those with the B tone were given the

'first tone mark' (*máay ʔèek*), and those with the C tone were given the 'second tone mark' (*máay thoo*). In modern times two more tone marks were added to mark syllables with high or rising tones and initial consonants of the category indicated in the middle horizontal row of the chart. Such syllables (for example, *cée* with high tone or *păa* with rising tone) cannot, as the chart demonstrates, have been inherited from earlier stages of the language; there is no source from which they could have come. They must all be modern innovations or loanwords from other languages.

Poets did not cease to use the *khloog* and *râay* forms after these sound changes had destroyed or obscured the rationale on which they were originally based. Indeed, these forms are used, sometimes with great success, by poets nowadays. But ever since these sound changes occurred the rules for composing verse in these forms have had to be stated in terms of the writing system. As chart 1 shows, syllables with the old B tone, written with the first tone mark, are now pronounced with either low or falling tone, depending upon the original consonant. And syllables with the old C tone, written with the second tone mark, are now pronounced with either falling or high tone, again depending upon the original initial consonant. Conversely, there are two sources in the older language for syllables with the falling tone, and two ways of spelling such syllables in the archaic Siamese writing system. In modern times only the highly literate can compose, or properly appreciate, poetry in the *khloog* and *râay* forms.

This matter is of considerable sociological interest; one feels that the highly educated have used their understanding of *khlooj* and *râay* as a kind of shibboleth, as upper classes have elsewhere used such special talents as table manners, or prestigious dialect, or the like to distinguish themselves from the uneducated masses. That this interesting subject has not been studied is no doubt due primarily to the fact that the basic facts of Siamese linguistic history set forth above are understood by few, if any, students and teachers of Siamese language and literature.

One result of this ignorance is that analysis in textbooks and in the classroom of older Siamese texts composed in these meters is sprinkled with errors. Many words now pronounced with the falling tone have had their spelling altered in modern times. Sometimes such a word originally had the B tone, in the bottom box of the B column of our chart, but has come to be spelled as if it had originally had the C tone, in the top box of the C column of our chart, or, perhaps more often, vice-versa. Comparison with other Tai dialects in which this particular tonal coalescence has not occurred tells us which tone, B or C, the word had in older stages of Siamese. One finds constantly in earlier poetic texts instances where the poet used the correct form, but alterations in spelling in modern Siamese make him look wrong. Teachers and authors of textbooks and editors of annotated editions usually regard these as deliberate errors enforced by the requirements of the verse form, and have even coined terms, *ʔèek thòot* 'wrong

first tone mark' and *thoo thòot* 'wrong second tone mark', to apply to these cases. Actually all this is backwards. The poet in such cases knew what he was doing, and composed correctly. The errors were introduced later by nonhistorical spellings that make him look wrong.

To cite just one example, the word *lên* 'to play' is nowadays spelled with the first tone mark, as if it originally had had the B tone and a voiced *l* initial. In older *khloog* works this word consistently occurs in places where the C tone is required. Comparison of the pronunciation of this word in other Tai languages that have made different tonal splits shows that it did indeed originally have the C tone, and a voiceless *hl* initial.

There are similar instances of another phenomenon, where a word occurs with a particular vowel length, long or short, indicated by the words with which it rhymes, but modern pronunciation has made a change. Teachers and textbook authors explain such discrepancies, again, as distortions enforced by the constraints of the verse form.

There is, for example, an old Tai word, *yaaw*, with originally the C tone and a voiceless *hy* initial. In other Tai languages it usually means 'granary'. In Siamese it is now pronounced *yâw*, with a short diphthong, and is used in the phrase *yâw rian*, meaning something like 'house and home'. In older *khloog* texts the form of the word is correctly *yaaw*<sup>C</sup>, rhyming with other *-aaw* words. The usual explanation that this is a deliberate error induced by the rhyme simply puts matters backwards.

All of this means that the older poetic texts are an unexploited gold mine for information on the pronunciation of particular words in earlier Siamese. Someone ought to undertake the task of collecting all this information. Ironically, the erroneous notes and comments of modern scholars will turn out to be useful in such an investigation, as they will save time in locating the words of interest.

Study of the older *khloog* and *râay* texts in terms of the older tonal system upon which they were based will surely increase our admiration of the skill of these early poets. They were not, after all, highly literate pedants playing with the writing system, but singers, so to speak, of melodies, which had a reality in the structure of their language. One is forced to infer that poets did not even have to be literate; one could compose orally, since all the rules depended upon the sounds of the language.

It is difficult to see what avenues of investigation might throw light on the question as to just when the drastic sound changes in tones and in initial consonants occurred that separate the earlier variety of Siamese with three tones from the modern language with its five tones. That the earlier three-tone system prevailed up to the founding of Ayutthaya in 1350 A.D., and for some centuries afterward, seems certain; the early poetic works of the Ayutthaya period undoubtedly were composed in the earlier three-tone language. That the sound changes had been completed by the time of King Narai in the late seventeenth century is indicated by what Western travelers of that period have to say about the

language and the writing system. If we had impeccably accurate texts of all the poetic compositions, exactly as originally written, it might be possible by close study to date the sound changes, but there have been, apparently, a great many alterations and additions to all these texts in later times. Critical editions, if someday undertaken, will eliminate some of these, but probably not all.

A more hopeful question that cries out for study is: in how large a geographical area in the Tai-speaking domain during earlier times was the ABCD tonal pattern used in poetic composition? Lao versions of the *chǎnthálák* textbooks, and Lao poetic works, have been reported<sup>9</sup> as including verse forms of the *khloog* type, involving specification of B (or *máay ʔèek*) words at certain points in the stanza and C (or *máay thoo*) words at others. Poetry in other languages and dialects of the Tai family, where available, ought to be investigated along these lines. Since no indigenous textbooks of the *chǎnthálák* are known to exist outside Thailand and Laos, this study will have to be totally inductive. The procedure would be to mark the earlier tones, A, B, C, or D, on all words in a poetic text, and then to compare stanzas to see whether there are certain points at which a particular earlier tone always occurs, and therefore was presumably required. Fortunately more and more dialect material is becoming available nowadays, awaiting investigation along these lines.



### 3. *kàap*

The verse forms belonging to the category called *kàap* involve syllable count and rhyme. Each variety has a certain number of lines per stanza, in some patterns unequal in length, consisting of a specified number of syllables. Compositions in *kàap* are found in considerable numbers from the Ayutthaya period as well as from later times. The most frequent types, the textbooks all tell us, are *yaanii*, with eleven syllables per stanza, *chàbaŋ* with sixteen, and *sùraaŋ-khánaaŋ* with twenty-eight.

The only constraint on tones is that the final syllable of the stanza, in every type of *kàap*, must be one that is written without tone mark, that is, a syllable having in modern pronunciation the rising tone or the mid tone. These are the modern tones that have developed from the earlier A tone, and so this requirement suggests that *kàap* forms were first used in Siamese, and that the pattern was established during that earlier period. The requirement that the stanza end on a syllable having the A tone is reminiscent of the final return to the tonic in Western musical compositions.

There are two respects in which the textbook treatment of *kàap* is unsatisfactory. The first, less serious than the other, is that one finds in the earliest examples of *kàap* many discrepancies when one compares these with the textbook descriptions. If, for example, one studies the examples of *kàap* in the old sections of the celebrated *Máhăachâat kham lŭaŋ*, the earliest Siamese version of the Vessantara Jataka (skipping those sections which were added later to replace lost parts), one finds hardly any that

conform exactly to the textbook descriptions; there is almost always deviation in the rhyme scheme or in the number of syllables per line.

The varieties of *kàap* described in the textbooks are those that finally became popular, in which most of the well-known *kàap* works of late Ayutthaya times and of the Bnagkok period were composed. The examples we will cite are from such later works. There is need here for a detailed study of the structure of all Siamese *kàap* compositions, especially the earlier ones, to find out which patterns were used in various periods, and how and when the very few popular varieties became the norms.

The *kàap* form called *yaanii* is described as having eleven syllables per stanza, divided into two lines of five and six syllables respectively. Actually it takes two such eleven-syllable units to complete the rhyme pattern (shown by underlining in the example below), and so to constitute a stanza. The example is from a famous collection of boating songs called *Kàap hèo rĩa*.

tèe      cháv      thâw      thǎ̃      yen  
since morning until reach evening

klâm      kliin      khěn      pen      ʔaacin  
swallow swallow hardship be always

chaay day      nay      phèen      din  
man      which in      flat surface      earth

mây      mǎn      phii      thii      troom      cay  
not like older sibling      which grieve heart

From morning till evening I endure distress constantly. No man on earth is like me in my grief.

The *chàbag* form is the most commonly used of all *kàap* meters, especially in narrative. The sixteen syllables of the stanza are arranged in the three lines of six, four, and six syllables, respectively, with the last syllables of the first two lines rhyming. The example was chosen at random from part 8 of the *Kham phâak raammákian*.

cìŋ sàŋ sěenaa yáksĩi  
then order general giant

hây triam yoothii  
for prepare army

coŋ than ʔàrun weelaa  
(imperative) in time dawn time

Then he ordered the giant generals to prepare the army: "Let them be ready by dawn."

*Sùraaŋkhánaag* is a rapid meter, with seven lines of four syllables each and a rather complicated rhyme scheme, as indicated by the underlining in the example, which is taken from *Bunnoowâat kham chẵn*.

síi hăa kràyaahăan  
buy seek food

sèep sùk sǎmraan  
enjoy happy happy

ʔòoʔàa khlaa khlay  
elegant walk

thûup thian bùpphăa  
incense stick candle flower

khanthaa maalay  
fragrant garland

cỏn phrá? laan nay  
go royal court yardin

nóp phút baathaa  
bow Buddha foot

They bought food and were happy. Dressed elegantly, they walked with incense sticks, candles, and fragrant garlands of flowers. They entered the royal inner courtyard and made obeisance at the feet of the Buddha.

The second problem in the textbook treatment of *kàap* is more spectacular. None of the textbooks, and apparently no teacher or student of Siamese language and literature, has recognized that these *kàap* forms were borrowed *in toto* from Cambodian. Anyone familiar with Siamese poetry who undertakes the study of Cambodian literature will have his eyes opened in this regard. These meters have a vigor and beauty there that they seldom achieve in Siamese. The failure of everyone to discover the Cambodian origin of *kàap* is due to the unfortunate insularity of Siamese scholarship, including Siamese studies as pursued by foreign scholars. Those *chǎnthálák* textbooks which undertake to say something about the origins of *kàap* have a labored, and totally erroneous, explanation of *kàap* as a Siamese adaptation of Indic verse forms.

All the verse forms found in traditional Cambodian poetry have precisely the same general characteristics as Siamese *kàap*, that is, various patterns of lines of specified numbers of syllables, with prescribed rhyme schemes. Each of the three favorite Siamese *kàap* patterns has its exact counterpart, agreeing in every detail, in Cambodian.<sup>10</sup> Further study is needed to see if, among the many other

varieties found in Cambodian counterparts, can be found some of the unusual *kàap* patterns that occur in early Siamese texts.

The importance of Cambodian contributions to the cultures of Thailand, Laos, and certain adjacent areas is, of course, universally recognized, but it seems likely that further study will show that this influence was even deeper, stronger, and more all-pervasive than has been realized. Detailed comparison of Siamese poetic texts in *kàap* forms with traditional Cambodian poetic texts (insofar as they have survived) will, no doubt, when worked out by future scholars, add greatly to our understanding and appreciation of this influence.

The Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya accomplished the final conquest of Angkor, the magnificent capital of the great Cambodian empire, in 1431 A.D. What happened then seems to have been very much like what happened when Rome conquered Greece. The less highly cultured but militarily superior conquerors in each case fell completely under the sway, in intellectual and artistic and literary matters, of the culturally superior people whom they had conquered. Military expeditions and conquests in traditional Southeast Asia seem always to have had this kind of booty as one of their chief objectives. One still finds something of this in the attitude friends take toward returning travelers; one is often asked what one got by way of knowledge, or books, or interesting objects, rather than asked simply whether one had a good time.

It seems likely that the Thai conquerors of the Cambodian imperial capital city brought back both teachers and books. Manuscript collections in Thailand abound in technical treatises in a great many fields, practical as well as theoretical, many of which seem likely to be translations or adaptations of Cambodian originals. One feels that many of the older *tamraa*, or textbooks (*tamraa* is a Cambodian word!), that have been published by the National Library in Bangkok fall into this category. Occasionally one encounters Cambodian manuscripts in Thai collections. Material of this kind was, of course, decimated by the destruction of the city of Ayutthaya in 1767, and in Cambodia itself much precious material has been lost during the tumultuous history of that country, which has included several moves of the capital city.

But enough survives to furnish material for the kind of study suggested. Perhaps the main reason that this subject has been neglected is that, although in earlier times the influence was clearly from Cambodia upon Thailand, in the last century or so the influence has been entirely in the other direction. During the nineteenth century a number of Cambodian princes grew up in Bangkok, and King Norodom was so much under Thai influence that he required his children to learn the Siamese language. The Cambodian Temple of the Crystal Buddha in Phnom Penh, a replica of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok, has murals depicting the Rama story, in imitation of the famous Bangkok temple, with the paintings signed by Thai artists. In our own times

leading scholars in the Buddhist monkhood in Cambodia have received their training in Bangkok, and speak fluent Siamese. The modern Cambodian language is replete with loanwords from Siamese.

This cultural subservience of Cambodia to Thailand in recent times has led both Thai and Cambodian scholars to underestimate the extent of the reverse influences in earlier times. Nowadays it is hard to find anyone in Thailand able to recognize the extent of the earlier Cambodian influence. How could a country which is now so much smaller and weaker, and clearly under Thai cultural domination, have been the chief source of civilization and culture for Thailand in former times? This bias is sure to hamper the kind of research into the earlier Cambodian influence that is needed.

The Rama epic, called *Reamker* in modern Cambodian and *Raammákian* in Siamese, will surely prove one of the most rewarding bodies of material for comparative study. On the Cambodian side, a considerable part of this long text is extant, published in a dozen or so small volumes. The verse is entirely in the various forms that Siamese calls *kàap*. Scholars are uncertain regarding the date of this text. Judith Jacob includes it in a list of which she says, "A large group of poems seems to fit into the eighteenth century."<sup>11</sup> Saveros Pou says that it goes back to the seventeenth or even the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> One cannot help wondering if it is not even older, or at least based upon earlier texts going back perhaps even to the great days of Angkor, when episodes from the Rama epic were popular themes in sculpture.

In this Cambodian version of the Rama story, loanwords from Siamese are few and far between. By contrast, Siamese poetic compositions in *kàap* meters, especially the early Siamese versions of the Rama story, are sprinkled with loanwords from Cambodian. In these Siamese texts it is possible to find entire lines consisting exclusively of loanwords from Cambodian.

The Cambodian language has at some time since the composition of this text (and many others among the extant Cambodian literary classics), and since the period when Siamese borrowed a great many words from Cambodian, undergone a drastic set of sound changes by which each of the older vowels has split into two, depending upon the phonetic nature of the preceding consonant at the time. For example, the long vowel *aa* remains *aa* after originally voiceless consonants, but has become a diphthong *iə* or *eə* (depending upon the dialect) after originally voiced consonants. The vowel *ii* remains unchanged after originally voiced consonants, but has changed to a diphthong *əy* after originally voiceless consonants. This is all reminiscent of the great tone splits that occurred in Siamese and other languages and dialects of the Tai family, and, as in Siamese, there has been in Cambodian a subsequent set of changes in the pronunciation of consonants. Other nontonal languages related to Cambodian such as Mon (which has had no contact with Cambodian for a very long time) have made similar vowel changes. These vowel splits must have been a part, or a consequence, of the same wave of changes as the tone splits that affected Tai and



other groups of tone languages in Southeast Asia and the Far East.

The result of this set of vowel changes is that older Cambodian poetic texts such as the Rama epic, when read aloud in modern Cambodian, no longer rhyme. The writing system still shows the earlier pronunciation, and some Cambodian scholars have been known to acquire as a kind of tour de force the ability to read these older texts in what is believed to be an approximation of the earlier pronunciation, much as scholars in the field of English can at least attempt to imitate the pronunciation of the Middle English of Chaucer or the Old English of Beowulf.

On the Siamese side, the material to be compared directly with the Cambodian *Reamker* is the group of texts known as *Kham phâak raammákian*. These are compositions in *kàap* that were sung or chanted as accompaniment to performances of the shadow play. Many parts of this work have been published, and the prefaces to these published volumes tell us which sections are believed to be old, dating from the Ayutthaya period, and which are known to be later additions. Much more of this material is reported to exist in manuscripts in the National Library. One episode in Cambodian, transliterated into Siamese letters, also has been published as a curiosity, and it seems not unreasonable to hope that more such material may exist in the Thai archives, perhaps filling gaps in the extant texts from Cambodia.

People who gaze in wonder at the stupendous physical ruins of the Angkor empire, with its overwhelming evidence of very high achievement in such

fields as architecture, sculpture, city planning, and the like, are often heard to lament that nothing is known of the more perishable aspects of old Cambodian culture. The great French scholar Georges Coedès, who found that study of how old Cambodian loanwords are used in Siamese was helpful in interpreting old Cambodian epigraphic materials, once remarked that Siamese is a thesaurus for the old Cambodian lexicon.

It seems clear that Siamese borrowed much more than individual words from Cambodian. And it is not unreasonable to imagine that the poetry of Angkor exists in the verse forms that are now called *kàap* in Siamese, and that at least some of the actual textual material from that great age survives, no doubt considerably altered, in the extant fragments of the *Reamker* in modern Cambodian, and in the Siamese *Kham phâak raammákian*. Perhaps others among the older Siamese *kàap* texts also derive from Cambodian originals, now lost, which belonged to that ancient period of Cambodian glory. Someday, perhaps, scholars competent in the literary languages on both sides will sort out all the bits and pieces of evidence, trace all the connections, and reconstruct the literary culture of the old Cambodian empire. Older Siamese *kàap* texts will furnish a large, perhaps the largest, part of the evidence.

#### 4. *chăn*

Siamese verse forms of the category called *chăn* are, as all the textbooks correctly state, of Indic origin; each variety is a direct imitation of a meter found in either Sanskrit, or Pali, or both.

Indic meters were based on a distinction between long, or "heavy," syllables (Sanskrit *guru*, Pali *garu*) and short, or "light," syllables (Sanskrit *laghu*, Pali *lahu*). Long or heavy syllables were those containing a long vowel, or any vowel (long or short) followed by two or more consonants. Short or light syllables were those containing a short vowel, followed by not more than one consonant. The various meters employed different patterns of syllables of these two types to make up a line.

The Siamese *chǎn* meters utilize a similar distinction between heavy (*kháru?*) and light (*láhù?*) syllables, with a somewhat similar definition as to what constitutes a syllable of each type. The difference in the way the two terms are defined is due to the basic difference in phonological structure. Whereas in Indic languages one counts the number of consonants following a vowel, disregarding syllable and word boundaries, in Siamese one considers the ending of the syllable, disregarding the initial of the following syllable. Heavy syllables in Siamese are defined as those containing a long vowel, or having a final consonant (including the final semi-vowels *y* and *w*). Light syllables are those having a short vowel and no final consonant. Final glottal stop, when not written in the orthography, is supposed to be disregarded, so that a word like *tì?* 'to criticize' is regarded as a light syllable.

One of the favorite Siamese *chǎn* forms is called *?intháráwíchian* (also pronounced *?inthoóráwíchian*). This corresponds to the Sanskrit meter called *indravajra*, both meaning literally 'Indra's

thunderbolt'. In both languages a line consists of alternating light and heavy syllables in this pattern.



In Sanskrit four such lines make up a stanza, without rhyme. A Sanskrit textbook model of *indravajra* meter begins with the line

gōṣṭhe girim̐ savyakareṇa dhṛtvā

meaning, literally, 'carrying the mountain with the left hand in the cowshed' (with the sentence completed in the succeeding lines of the stanza).

In Siamese *ṭinthārāwīchian* a line consists similarly of eleven syllables, with the same alternating pattern of heavy and light syllables. Each eleven-syllable line is broken into two hemistichs of five and six syllables, respectively, and it requires two of these eleven-syllable lines to make a stanza, with rhyme between the final syllables of the second and third hemistichs of the stanza, so that in effect a stanza has four lines of five, six, five, and six syllables, respectively.

muay plām tràbōŋ tii  
boxing wrestle cudgel beat

pràtè? tòoy tàlum kan  
kick punch fight each other

yùt yók kô raanwan  
stop round then prize

cháná? puun bamnèt nōŋ  
win distribute reward copious

They wrestled and fought with cudgels. They kicked and punched and fought each other. When the round ended then prizes were distributed in abundance to the winners.

Light syllables are as prescribed: *trà* in the first line, both syllables of *pràtè?* in the second, *kô* in the third, and, curiously, *bam* in the fourth. Syllables ending in *-am* (for example, *kam*, *cam*, *tam*, and *bam*) occurring as the prior syllable in a disyllabic word (words of this shape are very common in Siamese, most of them loanwords from Cambodian) are often, perhaps regularly, treated as light in older *chǎn* compositions, and in other varieties of earlier Siamese verse such syllables frequently do not count at all, behaving just like such weak-stressed syllables as word-initial *kà*, *sà*, *tà*, and the like. In many older manuscripts these *-am* syllables are regularly marked with the first tone mark, which ought to indicate low tone but may have some other significance here. Another piece of evidence that these *-am* syllables were formerly somehow less than a full syllable is found in the tonal structure of words like *kamnèet* 'birth', *tamrùat* 'police', and *sǎmràp* 'for', in which the tone of the second syllable is determined by the initial consonant of the word, as if there were no intervening *-am* at all. (Words not behaving in this way, such as *sǎmráp* 'set' or *?amnâat* 'power', may have been later innovations.) Herein lies a problem for scholars interested in the history of Siamese phonology, and most of the evidence for study of this curious phenomenon is to be found in older Siamese verse.

The above example of Siamese *?intháráwíchian*, taken from *Bunnoowâat kham chǎn*, is in some ways atypical of Siamese *chǎn*. The content is usually more elevated, more elegant, and there is a tendency to make much use of learned Indic words in order to get the needed light syllables. The pronunciation of a word is sometimes distorted; for example, the word *dùt* (a literary word, meaning 'like', borrowed from Cambodian) occurs frequently at the beginning of the second hemistich, where it must be read, unnaturally, as *dùcà?*. Our rather down-to-earth example was chosen precisely because it contains no such sophisticated verbal trickery, but instead fulfills all the requirements of the pattern using plain language with natural pronunciation.

*Chǎn* meters in Siamese have apparently always been used by sophisticated poets for a sophisticated audience. This is probably due to the complexity of the patterns, and also to the need to draw copiously upon the learned vocabulary in order to obtain the proper syllable sequences.

Verse forms of the *chǎn* category were first used in Siamese in the Ayutthaya period, usually intermingled with *kàap*. Indeed, poetic works of that period, which consist mostly of *kàap*, are often called *kham chǎn*; they may or may not include occasional passages in *chǎn* form. Meters of the *chǎn* variety have been much used in modern times, often, one feels, to display the linguistic virtuosity of the poet. Some very fine *chǎn* poetry was composed by the late Prince Bidyalankarana (*Phíttháyaalongkooṅ*), who was probably

Thailand's most gifted man of letters of the twentieth century.

Catalogues of Cambodian verse forms include nothing that is like Siamese *chǎn*. This is perhaps surprising in view of the very strong Indic influence on older Cambodian culture. On the other hand, it is easy to see that the linguistic structure of Cambodian provides relatively few syllables that might serve in the "light" positions.

One is forced to infer that Siamese borrowed the *chǎn* forms directly from Indic, not through any Cambodian intermediary as is the case with so many other elements of traditional culture. Siamese scholars who may be distressed at the news that the entire *kàap* category has to be credited to Cambodian influence may find consolation in the fact that the *chǎn* category apparently owes nothing to Cambodia.

In his version of the *chǎntháák*, Phya Uppakit tells us that the models for Siamese *chǎn* meters were taken from the Pali textbook *Vuttadaya*, popularly called *múttoo* or *môo too* (literally 'big pot') in Siamese. Only those meters suitable for Siamese use were selected, and to each rhyme was added. He tells us also that the great nineteenth-century scholar and poet, Prince Paramanuchit, a son of King Rama I, went to the trouble of composing a Siamese example for every one of the meters contained in the Pali textbook.

This account of the origin of Siamese *chǎn* is undoubtedly correct. The forms of the terms for "light" and "heavy," as well as such names of particular meters as *?intháráwíchian*, are basically Pali

rather than Sanskrit. Pali studies in Thailand, especially at centers such as Chiangmai, are known to have attained a high level in the past; a number of original Pali works were written in Thailand by learned Thai monks. So, for traditional *chǎn* meters in Siamese it is probably wrong to refer to a Sanskrit origin or model, as we have done, and as Siamese textbooks and teachers invariably do.

A careful historical study is needed to determine just which varieties of *chǎn* were used in earlier Siamese poetry, and to compare these with the Pali models found not only in Pali textbooks but also in actual Pali texts known to have been studied in Thailand.

The resemblance between the variety of *chǎn* called *ʔintháráwíchian* and the variety of *kàap* called *yaanii* seems too close to be fortuitous. However, this is probably a problem for Cambodian rather than Siamese studies; it seems not unlikely that the Cambodian prototype of the *kàap* meter called *yaanii* in Siamese originated as an imitation of the Sanskrit *indravajra* meter, with the constraints on light and heavy syllables simply ignored.

In modern times something new has been added to the Siamese *chǎn* repertoire. Siamese poets exposed in the course of studies abroad to Sanskrit as taught in the West (King Vajiravudh, for example) have used Sanskrit models thus encountered to add new *chǎn* meters to those used traditionally. In the historical investigation proposed here, these modern innovations will, of course, have to be sorted out and separated from the traditional *chǎn* meters, which had



their origin in older local Pali scholarship. This will not be difficult, as the modern poets who have engaged in this kind of thing have usually explained what they were doing.

## 5. *kloón*

We come finally to the patterns called *kloón*, which have been a source of great pleasure to the Siamese during the last couple of centuries.

The first three reigns of the Bangkok period (1792-1849 A.D.) constituted the great age of *kloón* verse. During this period were composed such great narrative works in *kloón* as the *Raammákian* (a complete version in the first reign, running to over 24,000 stanzas, and a revision of many parts in the second); *ʔInǎw* (some parts in the first reign, and a complete version in the second); another version of the same story called *Daalǎŋ* (first reign); the famous Thai folk-epic *Khǔn cháaŋ khǔn phǎen* (of which the published edition is a composite of many sections composed by various authors, some anonymous but some belonging to the second reign); *Phráʔ ʔaphaymánii* (a narrative of epic length by the poet Sǔnthoón Phûu, who was the greatest master of the *kloón* form); and a number of other long narrative works, as well as many shorter *kloón* compositions, for example, the famous *lákhoón nǎok* plays composed by King Rama II, and *níráat* poems by Sǔnthoón Phûu.

Poetic works in *kloón* form also are known from the Thonburi kingdom immediately preceding the founding of Bangkok, for example, parts of the *Raammákian* attributed to the king of Thonburi. It seems likely

that there were compositions in *kloon* in the last decades of the Ayutthaya period (it used to be said that *Daalǎŋ* belonged to this period, but the preface to the new edition attributes it to the first reign of the Bangkok period). It is, however, difficult to identify any extant *kloon* work as belonging for certain to the Ayutthaya period.

The enormous volume of *kloon* verse, as compared with poetry in other forms, is undoubtedly due to the facility with which *kloon* can be composed, and the ease with which it can be read, listened to, or memorized. A theory will presently be proposed as to why *kloon* is so easy to write and read. There is another interesting possible aspect of this matter: it is commonly said in Thailand that the destruction of Ayutthaya by the Burmese invaders in 1767 resulted in the loss of most of the earlier literature. But poetic works of the Ayutthaya period, so far as we know, were all in *khloong*, *kàap*, and *chǎn* meters. These all tend to be much more compact than the later *kloon* works; published editions seldom run to more than forty or fifty small pages. It seems possible that in days of Ayutthaya there were none of the huge poetic works produced in later times, and that the best of these earlier shorter compositions survived because copies existed at places outside the capital. No doubt the destruction of Ayutthaya resulted in the loss of a great deal of prose material, such as official records, but it may well be that we have had an exaggerated idea of the extent of the loss of poetic material, and that the not inconsiderable extant corpus of shorter works composed in the

earlier verse forms constitute pretty much the whole literary product of the Ayutthaya period. There also may have been another factor involved. In all cultures there are periods during which a great deal of literature is produced, and periods in which other activities, such as warfare, consumed the attention and energies of the country and its leaders. Bangkok, especially during the earlier reigns, was intensely literary, so much so that students have been reminded of Elizabethan England. Perhaps much of the Ayutthaya period was dominated by other interests.

A line of *kloon*, as all the textbooks tell us, usually has from six to eight syllables, occasionally more. When all or most of the lines have six syllables, the form is called *kloon hòk*. When all or most of the lines have eight syllables, the form is called *kloon pèet*.

The real structure of a line of *kloon* (and most textbooks do not tell us this) is a series of three phrases, each consisting of two or three, and occasionally more, syllables. These are phrases in the phonological sense, consisting of a group of syllables bounded by open junctures; often they are also phrases in the syntactic sense (nominal constructions, prepositional phrases, verb phrases, or the like). The form called *kloon hòk* has three two-syllable phrases per line. The form called *kloon pèet* has lines beginning and ending with three-syllable phrases, with a two-syllable phrase in the middle. Much *kloon* poetry shows great variety in the number of syllables (two or three, occasionally

more) per phrase, and so does not fit neatly into either the *kloon hòk* or *kloon pèet* model.

Successive phrases within the line may optionally be linked by internal rhyme. In the following example the first and second phrases are so linked, but not the second and third.

khrán	<u>thĩŋ</u>	<u>cĩŋ</u>	cêeŋ	kìtcaa
when	arrive	then	inform	matter

When they arrived, they informed him of the matter.

In the next example the second and third phrases are linked by rhyme, but not the first and second.

maa	hẻn sòp	thôot	<u>thĩŋ</u>	<u>kĩŋ</u>	yùu
come	see	corpse	throw	discard	roll be

They came and saw the corpse lying abandoned.

And in the following example there are internal rhymes at both places.

wâa	mây	<u>rúu</u>	<u>kuu</u>	kô	<u>bòok</u>	<u>?òok</u>	hây
say	not	know	I	so	tell	go	out for

You said you didn't know, so I told you.

It is also possible to have a whole line of *kloon* without any such internal rhymes linking the phrases.

khog	cà?	maa	plùuk	rian	yùu	thĩi	nĩi
undoubt- edly	will	come	build	house	live	place	this

I would undoubtedly come and take up my residence here.

(All the foregoing examples were selected at random from the ?Ìnăw of the second reign.)

Study of these internal rhymes in the great *kloon* works of the early part of the Bangkok period is hampered by a pernicious practice that is usual, perhaps universal, in the editing of published editions of these works. Since the days of Prince Damrong, under whose direction many of them were first edited for publication, it has been customary to modernize the spelling. Often this procedure entails modernization of the pronunciation, with destruction of intended internal rhymes. A favorite example of mine is the frequent expression *yùu ?èek nay sàwèekkhàchàt* 'exited alone under the white umbrella', used when speaking of kings. In the manuscripts this expression is always spelled as indicated, with rhyme of the syllables *?èek* and *wèek*.

Modern editions invariably alter the word for 'white umbrella' to the etymologically correct *sàwèet-tràchàt*, destroying the rhyme. The usual defense offered for this appalling butchery is that modern editors must present the text as it would have been written if the poets had had the advantages of modern education.

It is believed that Thailand was first afflicted by the so-called doctrine of correctness in the middle of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Western missionary teachers. Before the introduction of this attitude toward language, which in the West was involved with the rise of the bourgeoisie, who went to extremes in their search for ways to act

and speak properly, royalty and aristocrats in Thailand seem to have spoken (and to have written poetry) in a kind of language much closer to folk speech than is the case nowadays, just as dukes and other noblemen in the old days in Europe spoke more like farmers than do modern upper-class people.

The next step in building up a stanza of *klóon* is to compose a couplet consisting of two of the three-phrase lines described above. Each such couplet has a rhyme-link between the last syllable of the first line and an early syllable (often, but not necessarily, the last syllable of the first phrase) of the second line. Unlike the optional internal rhyme between phrases within a line, this external rhyme is obligatory. Below is another example from *ʔínăw*.

ʔôo wâa	lûuk rák	khǒɔŋ	mêe	ʔǎey
Oh say	child love	possession	mother	Oh

mây hěn <u>lœy</u>	wâa càʔ	pen	chên ní	dây
not see at all	that will	be	like this	can

Oh, my dear child, I did not foresee at all that it could turn out like this.

Then a second couplet is added, structured just like the first, but with the requirement that the first line of this couplet (the third line of the stanza) must end with a syllable rhyming with the last syllable of the second line of the first couplet (the second line of the stanza), so that in the finished four-line stanza the two middle lines have rhyming final syllables.

The rhyme scheme of *klooon* bears some resemblance to that of *yaanii*, suggesting that *klooon* may have originated as an elaboration of the *yaanii* pattern.

For an example of a complete stanza we turn to *Phrá? ?àphaymánii*, by Sũnthoôn Phũu, the sweetest singer in all of Siamese poetry. He tended to incorporate in his *klooon* compositions the maximum number of internal rhymes, as in this example.

duu    bon <u>thĩi</u> look on place	<u>mii</u> năgs <u>ĩi</u> there letter is	yìp <u>thĩi</u> ?àan pick hold read up
dây    sâap <u>săan</u> get know mes- sage	sěen    wítòk hundred alarmed thousand	phiang    ?òk <u>hàk</u> like chest break
cà?    sèek <u>lũuk</u> will marry child	<u>plũuk</u> fǎŋ plant bury	kamlan <u>rák</u> (progres- love sive)
maa    láp <u>phák</u> come disap- face pear	nĩi <u>hăay</u> flee vanish	pay <u>lăay</u> wan go many day

She looked, and in the seat there was a letter. She picked it up and read it and learned the news. She was as distressed as if her heart would break. "I was going to marry off my beloved daughter and establish her. Here she has fled and vanished from my sight many days ago."

The textbooks specify certain constraints on the tones that can occur on the final syllables of each line of the *klooon* stanza, as follows.

1. Last syllable of the first line (the word *?àan* in the preceding example): any of the five tones permitted, but first (mid) tone not much used.

2. Last syllable of the second line (*hàk* in the example): first (mid) tone forbidden; fifth (rising) tone is most often used here. This word rhymes with the last word of the preceding stanza, but cannot have the same tone.

3. Last syllable of the third line (*rák* in the example): fifth (rising) tone supposed to be forbidden, but is occasionally used; first (mid) tone is most often used here; cannot have the same tone as the last word of the preceding line, with which it rhymes.

4. Last syllable of the fourth line (*wan* in the example): fifth (rising) tone forbidden; first (mid) tone is most often used.

It is noteworthy that these tonal requirements are meaningful only with reference to the modern five-tone system, not at all to the earlier three-tone system, and so bear out the statement that *kloon* is a modern form, belonging to the Bangkok period, the preceding Thonburi reign, and perhaps the last decades of the Ayutthaya period. Although all *kloon* works for which the authorship or history is known belong to this modern period, one sometimes hears even very learned Thai scholars allege that a particular *kloon* work of unknown origin dates from the earliest periods of Siamese history, usually because the subject matter seems old. This cannot be. The structure of *kloon* shows that it cannot have been invented before the language acquired its modern five-tone system.

A statistical study ought to be made of the tones occurring in the various line-final syllables



in actual *klooon* texts, in order to find out how closely the above rules cited from the *chǎnthálák* textbooks are followed, and what differences, if any, occur in the usage of different poets or different periods.

The basic importance of the stanza (called *bòt* in Siamese), not only in *klooon* but also in other forms, is often obscured by conventions of writing and printing, in which the saving of space is a consideration. The lines are sometimes strung out across the page like prose, with no punctuation to indicate ends of stanzas. More often, two lines of verse are printed as one line of type, with a space in the middle of the page, and the third and fourth lines of the stanza are printed immediately below, resulting in two columns of text running down the page, again with no punctuation and no special spacing to mark stanza ends. The importance of the stanza as the basic structural unit in *klooon* and other types of Siamese verse, whether marked by printing conventions or left to the reader to discern for himself, may be stated in homely language as follows. A stanza is what you've got when you have fulfilled all the formal requirements of the pattern and now must start over.

Stanzas of *klooon* are linked by a requirement that the last syllable of a stanza rhyme with the final syllables of the second and third lines of the next stanza, and this rhyme is necessarily repeated a fourth time internally in the fourth line of the stanza. Published *klooon* texts, even those running to thousands of stanzas, normally have these

stanza-linking rhymes from beginning to end, with no break. Comparison of published editions of the classics with the manuscripts shows that editors frequently have patched together such stanza-linking rhymes when they are using different sources that show no such connection. There is a horrible example of such high-handed doctoring in the standard edition of the *Raammákian* of the first reign. By inadvertence the typist who prepared the copy omitted a stanza from the original. An editor afterward came along and, without checking the original and without restoring the lost stanza, simply fixed things up by making a verbal alteration to produce a satisfactory linking rhyme.

The alterations that modern editors have allowed themselves to make in the texts of the classic works of the early decades of the Bangkok period are so extensive that it is unthinkable that anyone might hope to write an accurate history of the Siamese language using published materials. The situation is not so bad for earlier texts from the Ayutthaya period, where it is apparently recognized that the language is so different from modern speech that it is better to try to print exactly what the poet wrote, or at least what the manuscripts say. Some editions of these earlier works preserve the original archaic spelling intact. More often the spelling is modernized except where rhyme or another requirement is involved. For example, modern editions of earlier poetic works frequently spell *khâaw* 'rice' as it is today pronounced and written, with a long diphthong, but use the older spelling *khâw* (as the word was

formerly pronounced) when there is a rhyme with another -aw word.

But editors of classical *kloṃn* texts, as compared with the more ancient works, have been much more carefree about altering the spelling, and so sometimes the pronunciation, and even occasionally the wording, of these texts. One feels that literary and philological studies in Thailand will not get onto a sound basis until there is a complete reformation in methods of editing texts for publication. Departments of Thai language in the universities have yet to show any concern regarding, or even awareness of, this basic problem.

The great popularity of *kloṃn*, and the ease with which it is composed and read, are due, I believe, to the fact that *kloṃn* is in some important respects close to the structure of ordinary Siamese speech. One of these resemblances of *kloṃn* to speech is found in the internal rhymes, which link phrases within a line of verse. Ordinary speech is full of such internally rhyming expressions, sometimes called by Western scholars elegant or elaborate expressions. Descriptions of such phrases always speak of internal rhyme. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that they are composed of two phrases in which the last syllable of the first rhymes with the first, or an early, syllable of the second. Most students of Siamese have their own collections of these expressions. Only a few examples will be cited here. 'Weather' or 'climate' is called

fǒn fáa  
rain sky

?aakàat  
air

Five dogs and six cats are supposed to be unlucky.

meew hâa  
cat five

măa hòk  
dog six

To go picnicking or camping is called sleeping on the ground and eating on the sand.

noon kàp din  
sleep with ground

kin kàp saay  
eat with sand

Expressions of this kind containing internal linking rhyme are very widespread among languages of the Tai family. They would seem, therefore, to represent an old inherited structural feature in languages of this group.<sup>13</sup> Whether they are found also in non-Tai languages of Southeast Asia is not known; if so, then they would represent an areal feature. In any case, they are a lively characteristic of present-day Siamese speech. Speakers vary in the extent to which they use them, and this variation seems to show no correlation with education or social class. Individuals in whose speech such rhyming

expressions are frequent are as often found among uneducated peasants as among the highly literate elite.

So, the internal rhymes linking phrases in a line of *kloon* poetry have a close connection with the realities of actual speech, and would seem therefore to be part of the reason for the facility and the popularity of this verse form. *Kloon* takes a verbal trick of effective speech and turns it into a basic feature of the verse.

Another similarity between *kloon* and natural speech is perhaps even more fundamental. This is the succession of phrases of two or three syllables. One has the impression, although no careful statistical study has been undertaken, that much of the flow of Siamese speech consists of such two- and three-syllable phrases. Of course, in speech, unlike *kloon*, the rhythm is broken by other phrases, shorter or longer. The following are ordinary Siamese sentences in which the grouping of syllables into phrases agrees exactly with the structure of a line of *kloon*, though there is, of course, a total lack of rhyme or of literary quality.

phǒm mây chǎp I not like	pay duu nǎŋ go look movie	thîi rooŋ nán place hall that
pay síi náa go buy meat	maa keeŋ kin come make eat curry	yen níi evening this
wan níi day this	fǒn cà tòk rain will fall	rǐi plàaw or not
phǎo chǎn father I	sǎa léew lose finish	tée mée yaŋ but mother not yet

wan ʔaathít  
day sun

pay thîaw  
go go out  
for  
pleasure

tàlàat nát  
market make date

môo hăy  
pot jug

thûay chaam  
bowl dish

tèek mòt  
break all

I don't like to go to see a movie at that theatre.  
Go and buy some meat to make curry to eat this  
evening.

Is it going to rain today?

My father is dead, but my mother is still living.

On Sundays we go to the Sunday morning market.

All the crockery is broken.

The resemblance between *kloon* and speech in this matter of phrasing, as a reason for the popularity and success of the *kloon* form, is reminiscent of the proposition, often advanced, that iambic meter, especially iambic pentameter, has been so widely and successfully used in English because much of ordinary English speech conforms to this pattern. It is easy to retrieve metrically impeccable, if not very poetic, examples of iambic pentameter from ordinary English talk.

I wonder if it's going to rain today.  
You'd better cook the stew a little more.  
The apple crop is very good this year.  
Those kids had better mind their p's and q's.  
The television sound is turned too high.  
The climate didn't used to be so bad.

College students of literature have been known to play a game requiring that all utterances consist of such iambic pentameter sentences. Similarly, there are verbally gifted Siamese speakers who are able to compose *kloon* stanzas extemporaneously. Sometimes each member of a group will add a line in turn, as a kind of parlor game.

Those who immerse themselves in reading *kloon* for long periods report an intoxicating effect. A lady in the royal palace in the nineteenth century appears to have actually gone mad over *kloon*, and composed orally a delightful *kloon* narrative in jabberwocky-like nonsense language, which young people wrote down, and which has enjoyed great popularity in published form.

Although the term *kloon* as used nowadays is the name for the kind of modern verse we have been discussing, the word is used in earlier Siamese texts as one of a number of terms for poetry in general. I wish to venture a theory as to how this word came to be used in this meaning.

Another meaning for the Siamese word *kloon* is 'a bolt or latch for a door or window'. In many other languages of the Tai family *kloon* (in whatever form the sound changes in the particular language have given it) is a verb meaning 'to close (a door or window)'. There is another meaning encountered in the folk speech of a good many dialects of the Tai family; the word refers to a flat piece of roof thatching, which is hooked to the piece next to it in thatching a roof, with some variation from place to place as to just which part of the roofing is

referred to. Perhaps one can extract a kind of semantic common denominator here, which may suggest the original meaning: (verb) 'to latch or hook something to something next to it', or (noun) 'something that latches or hooks to something next to it'. Then perhaps the word came to be used in Siamese for poetry, because all forms of Siamese verse (not only the modern *klōon* form) involve the linking of phrases or lines by a rhyme connecting the final syllable of the first unit (phrase or line) with an early syllable of the next unit, so that verse consists of phrases or lines hooked or latched together by rhyme.

The modern *klōon* pattern is used in such an abundant quantity of poetic literature that it would seem worthwhile to make an investigation of the rise and decline of this form during the last two centuries or so, studying changes from one generation of poets to the next. I plan to undertake such a study on another occasion.

To sum up, in the case of *khloog* we have found the traditional treatment basically wrong-headed and in need of complete reworking. The traditional treatment of *kàap* is more satisfactory in its description of the forms, but has completely missed out on the origins of this type. For *chăn* and *klōon* we found less to criticize in the usual treatment, but pointed out some gaps, indicating the need for further study. Siamese literary scholarship is in need of help from other fields, such as linguistics, and from the study of other literary traditions, such as the Cambodian. There is also a need for a more respectful attitude toward the integrity of the actual literary texts,



and for critical editions of the older classics. It would be unfair to blame our teachers and textbooks of the past too severely for the shortcomings we have found; it was not entirely their fault that the circumstances of their times left some of these doors unopened for them. But for the modern generation of Siamese scholars there is no excuse for continuing in the old narrow pathways. Many have been pleased to see a fresh new spirit of inquiry in the field of Thai historiography in the past decade or two. It is time for Siamese literary studies to undergo a similar reawakening.

### Notes

1. The term "Siamese" is intended to include the literary tradition in the standard dialect of the capital cities (Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Bangkok) of central Thailand, often called Standard Thai, but to exclude local and regional dialects, which are often found to have verse forms different from those treated in the *chǎn-thálák* textbooks.
2. The term *traditional* is intended here to exclude only contemporary compositions in various kinds of free verse, imitative of Western models, and also certain types of songs which deviate from traditional patterns. With these exceptions, the traditional forms are those found in virtually all poetic compositions of the past and present.

3. The edition of Phya Uppakit's version of the *chǎn-thá-lák* textbook, which happened to come to hand for the present study, is the one included (pp. 350-498) in a commercial reprinting of his versions of the four grammatical textbooks listed above, called *Làk phaasǎa thay*, published in 1968 by the firm *Thay wátthánaa phaaní*.
4. Examples of such Western versions are James N. Mosel, *A Survey of Classical Thai Poetry* (Bangkok, 1959); and Klaus Wenk, *Die Metrik in der thailändischen Dichtung* (Hamburg, 1961). P. Schweisguth has a summary in his *Étude sur la littérature siamoise* (Paris, 1951), 18-25. R. B. Jones includes a condensed version of the *chǎn-thá-lák* textbook in his *Introduction to Thai Literature* (Ithaca, 1970), 187-252.
5. For example, by J. Marvin Brown in his 1962 Cornell University doctoral dissertation, published under the title *From Ancient Thai to Modern Dialects* (Bangkok, 1965).
6. Earlier editions of this work do not number the stanzas. Examples are cited from a 1934 Ministry of Education edition in which the stanzas are numbered.
7. Not a "curse upon the flood waters," as stated in G. Coedès, *The Making of South East Asia*, translated by H. M. Wright (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), 147.

8. In two articles, *ʔoongkaan chêej náam* [The Water Oath], and *khloog hâa, mɔɔráðòk thaaj wannákhádii thay* [*Khloog hâa*, a Thai literary legacy], reprinted in the volume *Bòt wíkhroʔ wannákam yúk sàkdînaa* [Critical essays on the literature of the feudal period], under the pen name *Thiipàkɔɔn* (Bangkok, 3d printing, 1976).
  
9. By Jit Phumisak in the articles cited above (note 8), and by Carol Compton in her 1977 University of Michigan doctoral dissertation, *Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of Lam: The Song of the Lao Mohlam*.
  
10. M. Roeske, in "Metrique khmère: *Bat et Kalabat*," *Anthropos* 8 (1913):670-87, 1026-43, gives a detailed description of traditional Cambodian verse forms, with examples from Cambodian poetic texts. The Cambodian counterpart of Siamese *yaanii* is found on page 682 of this article, of *chàbaŋ* on page 680, and of *sùraaŋkhánaaŋ* on page 675. Although the patterns agree exactly, the modern Cambodian and the modern Siamese names for these meters are entirely different.
  
11. "Some Features of Khmer Versification," in *In Memory of J. R. Firth*, edited by C. E. Bazell (London, 1966), 232.
  
12. "Deux extraits du Rāmakerti," in *Mon-Khmer Studies VI*, edited by Philip N. Jenner (Hawaii, 1977), 217.

13. Without this evidence from other Tai languages, some of them remote geographically from Thailand, one might have imagined that the poets invented them first, and that they later passed into ordinary speech. It seems clear that the reverse happened; they were in the language first, and later came to be exploited by poets as an artistic device.

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