

Tai Dam Poetics and Proto-Tai Tone Categories

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Recent works on the structures of Thai and Lao poetry by Compton (1977), Bofman (1978), Gedney (1978), Cooke (1980), Hudak (1981), and Bickner (1981), among others, have greatly contributed to an understanding of the history of Thai and Lao verse forms. In particular, the re-analysis of Siamese verse forms by reconstructing proto-Tai tone categories from modern tones, as set forth in the seminal work by Gedney, has resulted in significant findings and implications for comparative-historical Tai linguistics and literature.¹

At the same time, the comparative-historical approach, of which the cited works are an endorsement, naturally leads to a comparison of verse forms across dialect boundaries beyond Central Thai (Siamese) and Lao. The handful of studies on verse forms in other Tai dialects shows a rich variety of structures, contents, and functions that further relate one dialect area to another in the Tai language family. F. K. Li has given us the "Native Songs of Wuming" (1956) and "The Songs of T'ien-Pao" (1970). Nguyễn Văn Huyền (1941) has produced *Receuil des chants de mariage Thô de Langson et Cao-bang*. Wijeyewardene (1968), Egerod (1971), and Purnell (1967) have looked at Northern Thai (Chiang Mai) versification. Hartmann (1984) has studied some aspects of verse forms in Tai-Lue of Sipsongpanna. Compton (1977) has analyzed Lao *mohlam* in depth. In this paper we add to these dialect studies and apply some of the findings from the works cited for Central Thai in analyzing a specimen of Tai Dam (Black Tai) poetry.

¹ This paper is a revision of a presentation given at the International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, University of Washington (Seattle), October 1983. The phonological description of the oral performance of the Tai Dam Origin Myth was based on the speech of a middle-aged male informant from *muaj4 mua25*, in or near Mai Son, Vietnam. Later work on translating the text was done with the assistance of another Tai Dam male in his 60s. The latter was Baccam Don, former Chief of *muaj4 moy3*, the main district of *muaj4 laa4*, (Son La in Vietnamese). *Muaj4 moy3* is northwest of Son La and just off the road up to Lai Chau, the center of the White Tai dialect area.

This particular Tai Dam text comes from a version of the Tai Dam Origin Myth (Hartmann 1981). The original was both a written and sung version of the myth provided to me by a former Tai Dam shaman from the Black Tai region of northern Vietnam. The written version had no tone symbols owing to the fact that, unlike Central Thai (Siamese), diacritics for indicating tones are not part of the traditional orthography. Written evidence of tonal rhymes were not to be found in the original text, nor could they be detected in the chanted version. Both versions were originally collected by the author in 1976. Since then, Gedney (1978: 19) has provided a technique for discovering possible underlying tonal rhyme based on proto-Tai categories, especially in older, more obscure texts, such as the one at hand:

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 where a particular earlier tone always occurs, and therefore was presumably required.

In order to fully appreciate the phenomenon of tonal changes in Tai Dam as they have affected verse forms in that dialect, we provide the following chart.

Earlier/Proto-Tai Tones				
	*A	*B	*C	*D (checked syllables)
*Initials:				
*Voiceless	1	2	3	2
*Voiced	4	5	6	5

To recapitulate the history of the changes from the four proto-Tai tone categories to their bifurcation into six modern Tai Dam tones, the original tones underwent a simple splitting along the lines of proto-voiceless and proto-voiced initial consonants. An identical two-way split affected neighboring White Tai (Tai Don) and Tai Lue. Haudricourt (1961) has shown how the two-way splitting of tones has affected a number of languages in the area.

- The six modern Tai Dam tones have been described as follows:
1. lower mid-level
 2. high-rising
 3. low/low rising, glottalized
 4. high-level

5. high mid-level
6. mid-falling, glottalized

In the system we have adopted for numbering modern Tai Dam tones, 1 and 4 = *A; 2 and 5 = *B; 3 and 6 = *C. The D category (tones 2 and 5) turns out to be similar to the B (2 and 5). By reconstructing the proto-Tai tone categories for each syllable in the poetic line, marked by a pause in the chanted form, we should be able to confirm or deny the existence of an older underlying rhyme pattern in our Tai Dam text and say something of its antiquity.

According to the argument presented by Gedney (1978), verse forms that originally had tonal rhymes utilizing the earlier tones A, B, C, and D would predate the tonal splits in a particular Tai dialect. The Siamese forms known as the *rāay* and the *khloong* are the oldest Central Thai poetic structures, and both employ the earlier A, B, C tone categories in versification. Historically, they and other verse forms that can be shown to utilize a similar scheme for placement of A, B, and C tones in rhyming patterns lie on the other side of the great divide known as the "tonal split." For Central Thai (Siamese), the three-tone systems prevailed up until about sometime between the 14th and 16th centuries A.D. Mosel (1959: 6-7) claims that the oldest *khloong* date from the 14th century while *rāay* predates the Sukhothai period, the 13th century. He states that *Lilit Phra Law* is traditionally believed to have been composed during the reign of King Boromatrailokanart, who ruled Ayuthaya during the 15th century, but that there is reason to accept a later date, somewhere between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. Bickner (1981: 26) assumes that *Lilit Phra Law* was composed during the latter half of the 17th century (the reign of King Narai), the same period that, according to Gedney (1978: 18), saw the completion of sound changes away from the earlier three-tone system. Gedney also states in the same article that in older texts "*khloong sii* is much more frequent than either *khloong sōng* or *khloong sām*." A count of the stanzaic structure of *Lilit Phra Law* shows that *khloong sii* is indeed the predominant form, which would be evidence for the early Ayuthaya period dating favored by Wibha (1982: 3) and Thai scholars in general.²

Cooke (1980: 424) relates, "The Khloong Five Water-Curse Pronouncement" is the earliest *khloong* and dates from the reign of Ramathibodi (1350-1369 A.D.). Cooke says further, "The term *khloong ha*, 'khloong five', in the title reflects the fact that many of the lines of the poem (about half the total) consist of five syllables....The poem alternates between *rai*, /*rāay*/, a simple verse form often used for narrative, and

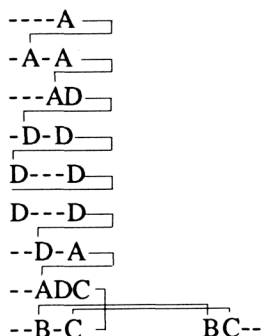
² The entire text of *Phra Law* contains approximately 40,000 words of 110 stanzas of *rāay*, 294 of *khloong sii*, 10 of *khloong sām*, and 246 of *khloong sōng*. (See Hartmann, Henry, and Kongananda 1989).

another verse form which bears a somewhat distant resemblance to other and later *khloong*." Cooke finds it difficult to classify the "Water-Curse" ["Water Oath"] as *khloong* because of its "rather different form." He finally puts it aside as "this primitive *khloong*."

Of the two forms, then, the *râay* is assumed to be older and simpler than the *khloong*. Because both share the common feature of an ideal or underlying five-syllable line in Thai (Siamese) canonical form and the feature of rhyming syllables according to their membership in the earlier A, B, and C tone categories, it makes sense to view the *râay* and the *khloong* as intimately related. The historical picture might well be viewed as one where the "primitive" *râay* of an earlier oral tradition became the polished *khloong* of a more self-conscious written tradition.

Mosel (1959) refers to four types of *râay*, among which is *râay yaaw*, "the easiest and most free of all Thai classical verse," where the only requirement is that "the last word of each line need rhyme with any word in the next line." (Mosel appears to be referring to syllable, not tonal, rhyme here.) In general terms, Mosel refers to *râay* as "poetic prose," where "rhyme patterns are so simple that from the Thai point of view *rai* barely qualifies as poetry."

Gedney (1978: 11) states, "With *khloong* is frequently associated a kind of rhymed prose, or verse without divisions into stanzas, called *râay*. *Râay* usually consists of a series of five-syllable lines that are indefinite in number, each linked to the next by rhyme. A passage of *râay* is supposed always to end in a stanza of *khloong sǎwǎn*. Rhymes in both *khloong* and *râay* 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 segment used by Gedney to illustrate the *râay* has the syllable + tone rhyme pattern summarized below.



The last line, as Gedney points out, is irregular. The B rhyme should be on the second syllable, not the first, to meet the rules for a canonically correct final *khloong sǝŋ*. Carried a step further, another irregularity is found in the second line, where, strictly speaking, there are only four syllables, the short, unstressed *-a-* of the second word, *phahǝn*, not being a fully stressed syllable. Bickner (1981: 22) notes too that the oldest poetic works have *rāay* of irregular line length, longer or shorter than five syllables. Others (Simmonds 1963, Purnell 1976) have pointed out the same wide variation in line length of other Thai verse forms. Nevertheless, the underlying form of the *rāay* appears to be the couplet with five syllables per line and an external rhyme linking the last or external syllable of the first line with the first, second, or third syllable of the next. The rhyme should include tonal rhyme or rhyme placement as part of the syllable rhyme pattern. Jones and Mendiones (1970: 237) in their rules for *rāay* state that, in general, rhymed syllables should have the same tone mark. However, for *rāay booran*, they claim that 1) a stanza can end on any line and 2) there are no rules for tone placement. Yet in the example they give for *rāay booran* all rhyming syllables include strict tonal placement. Bickner (1981: 22), citing the work of Phrayaa Uppakit, states that the *rāay booran* has the single stipulation that a stanza "end in a syllable that does not have a tone mark." What this seems to mean is that the *booran* or 'ancient' form marks the end of a stanza with an A-tone syllable. The second form, the *rāay suphāap*, follows the rule previously quoted from Gedney, namely that a stanza ends in a *khloong sǝŋ*. A third form, the *rāay dân*, concludes a stanza with the last four *wák* of the same form as *bàat* three and *bàat* four in *khloong sù dân* (for details see Hudak 1981: 20.)

The fourth and final traditional poetic structure appearing in scholarly works is the form previously mentioned by Mosel as *rāay yaaw*, in which the number of syllables per line is not set, and the last syllable of a *wák* or line can rhyme with any syllable of the consecutive line. It is this form that is used in narrative and religious poetry. Royal decrees, the preamble to laws, and traditional religious sermons were rendered in *rāay* in older times. In my study of Tai Lue narrative structures, the form is also *rāay*, and tonal rhymes are obligatory in the written form. Line length varies between what appears to be a typical seven-syllable line to an eleven- or thirteen-syllable maximum. In the example of written narrative given on the next page (from my field notes), the first stanza ends after ten lines on the proto-A tone. It might be concluded that there is a preference for lines that have odd numbers of syllables: seven-, nine-, eleven-, an extension of the basic five-syllable line of other types of *rāay* and *khloong*. The fact that the text is from written Lue Jatakas means that the writer has potential control of the rules for syllable and tone rhyme, with consecutive lines rhyming as they should. (See Hartmann 1984: 169 for more details.)

(Title) *bool hoom1 pan4 kaap2*
thousand-petaled fragrant lotus

1. *tə4 ni6 pii5 caal law5 nak5 ka5-raʔ5*
at this time, I will tell about a city
2. *həŋ6 tɔon1 taaw6 məŋ4 yay2 thaə4-nii4/A*
part of the story of the ruler of the kingdom
3. *lek5 cəu5 vaa5 məŋ4 phaa4-laa4-na5-sii1/A*
by the name of Pharanasii (Benares)
4. *kwaŋ3 3 say1 ləŋ 4 hok1-sip1 yoot5/D*
whose dimensions clearly measured 60 *yot*
5. *veeŋ4 yay2 kwaŋ3 lot5/D law4 yaaw4 yoot5 pin1 traal/A*
the kingdom was big even when measured in *yot*
6. *paʔ1-can1-taa1/A baan3 ni-6 kum4 ŋaam4 cut1 thii2/B*
the villagers were beautiful
7. *kun4 baw2 luu6 ki2/B tɕu3 pan4 laan6/C*
nobody knows how many millions there were
8. *nay4 nɔok5 can6/C khɔŋ1 tem1 məŋ4/A*
the kingdom was abundant in resources,
9. *luŋ5 ləŋ4/A doy3 than4-yaa4 laay1 laak2/D*
food in great quantity,
10. *khɔŋ1 haak2/D saan3 mii4 phɔom6 məŋ4 caw3 seen1 sir2*
everything, including a lord ruler,
ŋun4 kham4/A
silver, and gold
11. *mii4 tɕŋ4 hat1-thii1 ʔaal-saal caaŋ6 paŋ4 paay1 leʔ5*
there were both male and female elephants and
12. *maa6 khii2 lot5 laaʔ5 ki3 mii4 phɔom6 laay1 mɕun2 naa4 naa4*
riding horses and all kinds of royal carriages

By contrast, data from *khəp lúu* (Lue chanted narrative) shows evidence of a relationship to the *rāay yaaw* form of Lue written narrative. However, there is a much greater irregularity in line length. In general, the line length is shorter for the oral forms than for the written, ranging from

a low frequency of four-syllable lines to a preferred maximum of seven or eight syllables. There is much less continuity in the external rhyme pattern, which links the final syllable of one line to one of the early syllables in the next line, as shown in the preceding example of written *rāay yaaw*. In the segment of Lue oral narrative shown below (from Hartmann 1984: 104), there are ideal external rhymes in lines 14-15, 15-16, and 19-20, the only clear evidence of *rāay* structure. In the remaining lines, one can see internal rhyming, and even rhyming cutting across lines in an unorthodox fashion in lines 22-23 (*sang1/A* and *fang4/A*). Here the label “poetic prose” seems justified. Still the chief element that is used to define *rāay* is present: the externally rhymed couplet.

13. *say1* *mən1* *nam6* *ʔaər2* *kew3*
 clear like water jar glass
 AS CLEAR AS WATER IN A GLASS JAR

14. *mən1* *ven5* *yɛər4* *taal/A* —————
 like mirror shine eye
 LIKE A MIRROR SHINING INTO THE EYE

15. *pii5* *maa4/A* *phit5-caʔ1-raʔ5-naa4/A*
 older sibling come investigate
 I HAVE STUDIED THE STORY

16. *cen1-caal/A* *pin1* *tii5* *cut5-aa5*
 speak be place set
 I WILL TELL IT IN PARTS

17. *man3* *kur4* *tɛɛ6* *taam1/A* *ʔɔk2* *nay4* *tham4/A*
 firm solid really follow out in Dharma
 ITS RELIABILITY FOLLOWS FROM THE DHARMA

18. *pii5* *diʔ1* *xay1* *law5*
 elder sibling will open tell
 I WILL TELL THE STORY

19. *lam4* *tun3* *lon1* *phɛɛ5* *por4* *paay1* *kwaan3/C* —————
 core beginning big spread thick end wide
 FROM THE BEGINNING IT WILL EXPAND AND ENLARGE
 TO THE END

20. *ʔan1* *vaa5* *look5* *diʔ1* *kɔɔ2* *saan3/C* *kap1* *niɪ6*
 that say world will build build era this
 IT IS SAID THAT THE WORLD WAS BUILT IN THIS ERA

21. *pin1 kaan1/A haaw1 kwaan3/C ?aa1-naa4 ?aa1-kaa2*
 be middle atmosphere wide border air
 AN EMPTY ATMOSPHERE WAS THE ONLY SHAPE
22. *san1/A baw2 xaw3 maa4 kaan6/C moo2 vay6*
 what not enter come remain unit put
 NOTHING WHOLE EXISTED
23. *dew1 ?əy2 kun4 fan4/A*
 at all Pt. person listen
 AT ALL, YOU WHO LISTEN
24. *cin2 mi4 lum4 tip5*
 so have wind magic
 THEN THERE WAS A MAGIC WIND

Having examined the Siamese written *rāay* form and Tai Lue written and oral *rāay yaaw*, several generalizations can be made up to this point.

1. The *rāay* is possibly the oldest Thai, or even the oldest Southwestern Tai elevated verse form.
2. Line length can vary; in ideal written form it should be five syllables, especially where it co-exists with *lilit*, a mixture of *rāay* and *khlooj*. Oral, narrative *rāay* has short lines; written *rāay* has long lines, as long as eleven to thirteen syllables.
3. The rhyming feature unique to *rāay* is a simple external rhymed couplet linking the final syllable of the first line to one of the early syllables of the second line. Continuous linking rhyme is more easily sustained in written *rāay*, making possible longer stanzas.

In working back to the origins of Tai verse form, a legitimate question would be: Is there any verse form that might be older yet than the idealized five-syllable *rāay*? One place to look would be the poetic structure(s) found in proverbs, courtship rhyming, festival songs, and lullabies in various Tai dialects.

In Siamese, the best known proverb or old saying comes from the King Ram Khamhaeng inscription of 1283 A.D. (see Bradley 1909). It has the form:

nayA namC miiA plaaA
In the water there are fish.

nayA naaA miiA khawC³
In the padi fields there is rice.

cawC mɯaŋA ɓɔɓB ʔawA
The lord of the realm takes them not.

caʔD kɔɔpD nayA phrayB
He would invest them in his people.

The line length is four syllables, and it has external rhyme linking the last syllable of the first line with the second syllable of the second line, typical of *râay*.

A similar proverb is found in Tai Dam. It has a five-syllable line.

miiA namC ɓɔC miiA paaA (fr. *plaaA* 'fish')
Where there is water there are fish.

miiA naaA ɓɔC miiA khawC
Where there are paddy fields there is rice.

A recently published volume of several hundred Tai Dam proverbs by Ha Văn Năm (1978) shows that the majority of them have the form of the rhymed couplet shown above. The line length varies between three to seven syllables. The preferred rhyme is the last syllable of the first line with the second syllable of the second line as in both the Siamese and Tai Dam examples given above. A comparative study of proverbs across more dialect lines might prove to shed additional light on the question of earlier verse structures for the entire Tai family and the geographical boundaries of verse forms. Up to this point it appears safe to say that the *râay* is common to all of Southwestern Tai, considering the data from Siamese, Lao, Lue, and now Tai Dam.

We next move to an examination of a segment of Tai Dam text previously translated from oral and written sources but, heretofore, not looked at in terms of verse form. Using the approach of the preceding discussion of *khloorŋ* and *râay*, a study of line length and rhyme patterns

³ Vowel length in the the words *namC* 'water' and *khawC* 'rice' are written short in the Ram Khamhaeng inscription. The absence of a long-short vowel contrast in the Sukhothai writings has led Nantana (1981) to suggest that vowel length was not phonemic in Proto-Tai, a supposition appearing in Hartmann (1976) and in Li (1977).

of A, B, C, and D tone categories was carried out. The line lengths and rhyme links—excluding ABCD tone placement up to this point—had the following pattern.

Tai Dam Poetics: Rhyme Structure of an Origin Myth

Shown here are syllables per line of the Black Tai narrative poem and points where external rhymes exist. More than half the lines have five syllables.

Line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Feet	5	— 5	5	— 7	6	— 5	5	7	4/
Line	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
Feet	5	— 5	5	— 5	5	— 5	/5		
Line	17	18	19	20	21	22	23		
Feet	6	— 5	8	— 7	5	— 5	/5		
Line	24	25	26	27	28	29			
Feet	5	— 5	— 5	— 7	— 6	— 6	*		
Line	30	31	32	33	34	35			
Feet	5	— 5	7	— 7	7	5	*		
Line	36	37	38	39	40	41			
Feet	5	— 5	5	— 7	— 5	— /5	---		
Line	42	43	44	45	46	47			
Feet	---	6	— 5	— 5	5	— 7	7		
Line	48	49	50	51	52	53			
Feet	7	— 7	— 8	— 6	6	5			
Line	54	55	56	57	58	59			
Feet	5	— 3	— 3	5	5	5	---		
Line	60	61	62	63	64	65			
Feet	---	7	7	— 5	— 7	7	— 5		
Line	66	67	68	69	70	71			
Feet	5	5	7	5	5	7			

Finally, we examine the external rhyme scheme of the same Tai Dam origin myth by reconstructing the earlier tone categories A, B, C, and D. As the following extract of the first few pages of the text shows, the typical pattern of *rāay* structure is evident throughout. With this analysis complete, it can be said with certainty that the Tai Dam Origin Myth, in the form it has come to us, is of considerable antiquity, possibly going back to the Sukhothai period (13th century A.D.) or earlier. In addition to the evidence provided by the presence of the A, B, C, and D rhyme pattern, the

written text preserves earlier contrastive sounds that have undergone change, most notably the loss of final *-k* in certain environments and the change of *d* to *l*. (For a complete description of phonological changes in Tai Dam, see Hartmann 1981.) In the Diguët (1895) wordlist of Tai Dam published nearly a century ago, these same phonological changes had already been completed. With that in mind, the older forms preserved in the written text of the origin myth go back many centuries. In the following segment of the opening of the Tai Dam Origin Myth (Hartmann 1981), items that have undergone phonological change are put in parenthesis (the older forms).

Tai Dam Origin Myth: Introduction⁴

?AN1 NI2 KWAAM2 TO4 MEUANG4

This is the story of our land.

TAE2 MEUA5 LAAY1 (DAAY1) PAANG1 CAW6

In the beginning,

FAA6 FOK2 LONG4 THONG1 YOUN2

the heavens lowered a place and suspended it.

FAA6 CANG 2 KOU2 PEN1 DIN1 PEN1 NYAA3/C

The heavens then made the soil and grass,

KOU2 PEN1 FAA6/C TOU5 THUANG1 HET2/D

made mushroom-shaped objects,

KOU2 PEN1 HIN1 CET2/D KOUN3

which were seven in number,

KOU2 PEN1 NAM6 (3) KAW3 KAE4 (KWAE4)/A

made the nine rivers,

KOU2 PEN1 PAA?2 (PAAK2) TAE4/A TAAW1 ?U1 KHOUNG1

made the mouths of the Black, Red, Ou and Mekong rivers.

PAANG1 NAN6 PEN1 SEUANG4 NAN6

At that time it was like that.

FAA6 NYANG4 TAM2 TI4 (LIT4) (4) TIANG4 (LIANG4)/A

The heavens still hung low.

⁴ Phonemic transcription is computer-adapted (see Hartmann 1981).

FAA6 NYANG4 PIANG4/A ?OUN2-?AEN3
The heavens were as yet a soft, unformed plane.

TAM1 KHAW3 VAA5 KUNG4 SAA?2(SAAK)/D
There was no room to raise up the arm of the rice pounder.

LAA?5(LAAK5)/D LAAY3(DAAY3) VAA5 KUNG4 PIA1 (5)
There was no room to draw out thread in spinning.

NGUA4 LUANG1 (DUANG1) PAY1 KUNG4 NOU? 2(NOUK2)/D
The ox had his hump caught against the low sky.

MU1 FOU?2/D(FOUK2) PAY1 KUNG4 NENG1(NAENG1)
The wild boar caught his tusks against the low sky.

PAANG1 NAN6 PEN1 SEUANG4 NAN6
At that time it was like that.

CANG2 MI4 PU2 CAA1(CONG1)-KONG1 FAA6/C (6) —
Old, bent-over Grandfather Sky

KAP2 YAA5/B CAA1(CONG1)-KONG1 DIN1
and old, bent-over Grandmother Earth

CANG2 (7) TAT2 SAAY1 BON1 HAY+3 HOT2 MEU5(MEUA5) NAA3/C
then cut a cord to raise things up.

TAT2 SAAY1 FAA6/C HAY+3 KHAAT2 MEU4(MEUA4) NEUA1
They cut through the cord connected to the sky above.

CANG2 PEN1 FAA6 TEM1 BAEN1/A
Then the sky was completely raised up.

CANG2 PEN1 THAEN1/A (8) TEM1 FOU2
Then the Lord of the sky saw far and wide.

PAANG1 NAN6 PEN1 SEUANG4 NAN6
At that time it was like that.

YET2 NAA4 BAW2 MI4 MEUANG1/A
There were rice fields but no canals and dams.

YET2 MEUANG4/A BAW2 MI4 CAW3/C
There were kingdoms but no rulers.

SAA-3-KAW3/C LAAN5 FAN4 KAN1

The hill people slaughtered each other in chaos,

TAAY1 KUAY1 (KHUAY1)KOUNG1 BUT2 KHAAW4
THEUNG1(THERNG1) FAA6/C

dying in piles that stunk to the heavens.

FAA6/C CANG2 YET2 LENG6(LAENG6) SI1 SAET2/D

The sky then became dry and bright orange in color.

FAA6 CANG2 YET2 LAET2/D(DAET2) SI1 SAEN1

Then the bright sky turned dark.

NGUA4 KWAAY4 TAAY1 YAA?2(YAAK2) NYAA3/C

Cattle died for want of grass.

CAANG6 MAA6/C TAAY1 HOUT2 LOM4/A

Elephants and horses died for want of air.

KING4 KOM1/A FAAY3 LAEN1(DAEN1) MEUANG4 CAAN6
NYAANG5/B

The robust walked around listlessly.

?AAY3 BAAW2 KAA6 TAAY1 HAANG2/B KAANG1 TAANG4/A

Young men died along the roads.

NOK5 THUA1-LAANG4/A YU2 LONG1(DONG1) TAAY1 LENG6/C
(LAENG6)

The white-headed sparrows of the forest withered and died.

PENG3/C(PAENG3) YU2 SAA2 HOM4 KOAN4(KUAN4)

Flour that stood on the shelf turned into smoky vapor.

MAN4 YU2 KHUM1 TAAY1 ?AW6/C

Yams growing deep in the ground died from the stifling heat.

PAW3/C YU2 PAA2 TAAY1 KHAEN1

Gourds growing in the forest died on the vine.

KHAW3 YU2 HAY5 TAAY1 FOUY1/A

Rice growing on the slopes died completely.

HOUY1/A YU2 NOUNG1 YU2 NAA4 TAAY1 LENG6(LAENG6)

Shellfish living in the marshes and rice fields dried up and died.

BAAW2 HEUA4 TAAY1 YAA?2(YAAK2) NAM6

Boatmen died for want of water.

In comparing Tai Lue and Tai Dam verse with Siamese, it can be seen from the limited data of remote dialect areas that *rāay* forms have been preserved in those two areas. While the *rāay* forms in this northern geographical part of Southwestern Tai do not exhibit the neat regularities of form shown in Siamese textbooks of versification, they do nevertheless demonstrate both the continuity and variation in linguistic form that Tai linguists might expect. Analysis of the Tai Dam Origin Myth in terms of proto-Tai tone categories has conclusively demonstrated that the verse is of the *rāay* genre and that the beginnings of the text itself go back many centuries. What was previously surmised has been verified by the historical-comparative method.

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