

The phonological systems of three Pwo Karen dialects

Atsuhiko Kato
Tokyo University

0. Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to describe the phonological systems of three of the dialects of Pwo Karen: the Kyonbyaw, Hpa-an and Tavoy dialects. The phonemic correspondences of these three dialects and texts of the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects are also presented.

Karenic languages are spoken in large areas of Burma and Thailand. In Burma, there are well over ten Karenic languages, of which the largest subgroups (in terms of population) are Sgaw Karen and Pwo Karen. The Burmese word /kayin_/ (Karen) is usually used in reference to these two subgroups. According to estimated population statistics published by the Burmese government in 1993, there are 2.86 million Karen in Burma, but this figure might be an underestimation, since many Karen live in areas which are not directly controlled by the government.

There are many Pwo Karen dialects, but they can be divided into two groups based on intelligibility: the Western dialects (spoken in the Irrawaddy Delta) and the Eastern dialects (spoken in the Karen State, the Mon State, the Tenasserim Division and western Thailand). The Western and Eastern dialects differ in many aspects, especially at the phonological and lexical levels. The author has had the opportunity to observe speakers of the two dialect groups attempt to understand each other's language, but it was hardly possible for them to converse except in speaking about extremely simple subjects.

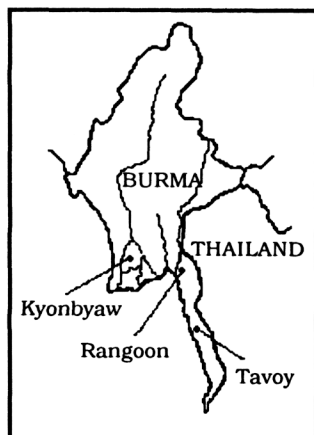
Several writing systems have been created for the Pwo Karen dialects. Of those, the Mission script and the Monastic script (cf. Stern 1968) are used more widely than the others in Burma. The Mission script was originally invented for one of the Eastern dialects, but is not in vogue in the eastern areas where Buddhists overwhelmingly outnumber Christians. It is, however, presently popular in the delta, where there are relatively more Christians. But the Mission script does not distinguish all of the phonemic distinctions of the Western dialects on the one hand; conversely it contains characters which make distinctions that they do not have. The Monastic script was also created for one of the Eastern dialects (perhaps Hpa-an dialect) and is mainly based on the Mon script. Its history is poorly understood, but its oldest surviving records date back to the middle of the 19th century. It is now coming into widespread use throughout the Karen State.

The dialects described in this paper are Kyonbyaw (one of the Western dialects), which is spoken in a small town of the delta, Kyonbyaw (/coun_byo_/ in Burmese); Hpa-an (one of the Eastern dialects), which is spoken in the

capital of the Karen State, Hpa-an (/pha'an_/ in Burmese), and the Tavoy dialect (also an Eastern dialect), spoken in Tavoy (/dawe_/ in Burmese), the capital of the Tenasserim Division of southern Burma (see map below). Since Pwo Karen (like other languages of the area) is a monosyllabic language, analysis of syllables has been the principal concern of works dealing with its phonological description.

Studies on the phonological system of Pwo Karen include Jones (1961) and Cooke, Hudspeth and Morris (1976). Jones (1961) is a brief description of the Bassein and Moulmein dialects. Since his main purpose is to produce a diachronic study of Karen, the phonological analysis is arranged in such a way as to be readily usable as a basis for comparison. It does not reflect all the aspects of the synchronic state. Therefore the Bassein dialect described in Jones (1961) might appear to be more different from the Kyonbyaw dialect described in this paper than it really is. Cooke et al. (1976) describes the dialect of Hot District in northwest Thailand. This dialect belongs to the group of Eastern dialects, and therefore it shares many characteristics with Hpa-an and Tavoy. There are, however, several important differences.

The author worked consecutively on both the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects from the latter half of 1993 to the first half of 1995. The work was carried out chiefly in Rangoon with some short-term fieldtrips to Kyonbyaw, Bassein and Hpa-an. The research on the Tavoy dialect was done sporadically whenever the informant visited Rangoon. Burmese was used as the language of elicitation in the surveys for all three dialects.



1. The Kyonbyaw Dialect

The Kyonbyaw dialect is one of the Western dialects of Pwo Karen and is very similar to the dialect of Bassein (/batxein_/ in Burmese). The main informant was Ms. Dahlia Win, a native speaker of the Kyonbyaw dialect, who was in her thirties.

1.1. Syllable Structure

The structure of Kyonbyaw syllables can be represented as follows: $C_1(C_2)V_1(V_2)(C_3)/T$, where C is a consonant, V is a vowel, and T is a tone. C_1 is the initial consonant, C_2 the medial and C_3 the final. The combination of $V_1(V_2)(C_3)$ is further referred to as the rhyme. (The elements in parentheses are not always present.)

1.2. Consonants

The Kyonbyaw dialect has 27 consonants as follows:

Stops	p ph ḃ b	θ ð	t th ṭ d	c	k kh	ʔ
Nasals	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
Fricatives			s sh z	ç	x ɣ	
Resonants	w		l r	j		

Note that /ph th kh sh/ represent aspirated consonants, not clusters. (This applies to all dialects described in this paper.) Below is a phonetic description of these consonants.

/p/ is a voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop [p].

/pŋnâ/ 'buffalo', /pŋčá/ 'person', /θèinpà/ 'plank'

/θ/ is a voiceless unaspirated interdental stop [t̪]. It is released more slowly than in Burmese /θ/, so it is often pronounced as an affricate [t̪θ].¹

/θì/ 'to die', /θḃʔ/ 'friend', /θè/ 'be capable of'

/t/ is a voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop [t].

/táin/ 'to create', /tîʔ/ 'building; to hit', /tŋwàn/ 'village'

/c/ is phonetically a voiceless unaspirated alveopalatal affricate [tʃ].

/cà/ 'a numeral classifier denoting number of times an action is undertaken', /cŋ/ 'to be lazy', /côuʔ/ 'to pull'

¹ Since there is no appropriate IPA symbol, I use [t̪] which is often used as a phonetic representation of Burmese /θ/. In the same way, I use [d̪] for /ð/.

This phoneme is sometimes pronounced as [dz] in the augmentative /cí/, but not elsewhere. Since this morpheme is perhaps a borrowing from Burmese (cf. Burmese /ci:/) and is of limited use, I do not propose a separate phoneme for [dz]:

/phâ? dō cí/ [phâ? dō tci ~ phâ? dō dzí] 'very big',

/phâ?/=('pure Karen) augmentative', /dō/= 'big'

/k/ is a voiceless unaspirated velar stop.

/kàin/ 'to be crooked', /kà/ 'to be difficult', /kô?/ 'to call'

/k/ is pronounced as [g] only in the three words below:

/mànkánèin/ [mànkánèin ~ manganèin] 'last year',

/mànkúnèin/ [mànkúnèin ~ manganèin] 'the year before last',

/kánká/ [kánká~ kángá] 'to discuss'

Since [g] occurs only in rough (and never in polite) speech, I do not propose a separate phoneme for it.

/ʔ/ is a glottal stop [ʔ].

/méʔáin/ 'glutinous rice', /ʔàin/ 'to be narrow', /ʔà/ 'many'

/ph/ is a voiceless aspirated bilabial stop [ph].

/phô?/ 'to read', /phô?/ 'to break off (as the edge of something)',

/phò/ 'child'

/th/ is a voiceless aspirated alveolar stop [th].

/thì/ 'water', /thê?/ 'to break off (as of strings)', /thâu/ 'be capable of containing'

/kh/ is a voiceless aspirated velar stop [kh].

/khâ/ 'to break (as of sticks)', /khàn/ 'leg, foot', /khê?/ 'to be dark'

/b/ is a bilabial implosive [ɓ]. It is a distinct phoneme vis-à-vis the voiced bilabial egressive stop /b/. (Hpa-an and Tavoy dialects do not have such an opposition.)²

/bá/ 'to worship', /bý/ 'quicklime', /bà/ 'to be right'

/d/ is an alveolar implosive [ɗ]. In contrast to /b/, there is no equivalent egressive stop phoneme /d/. But /d/ is never pronounced as an egressive stop.

/dà/ 'to see', /dèin/ 'sesame', /dô?/ 'to store (water)'

/b/ is a voiced bilabial egressive stop [b].

/bê/ 'sentence final particle: "you see", "you know" ',

/býjô/ 'like this',

/býnô/ 'like that',

/bý/ 'the inside' (combined form of /ýphý/),

/bá ~ báθi/ '1st pl. objective form'

² It is worthy of note that implosives are well preserved in the Western dialect which have much contact with Burmese (a language without implosives), but in Eastern dialects the implosives are quite weak or sometimes replaced with egressive stops, though they have much contact with Mon (which has implosives).

Of the above examples, the last two are sometimes pronounced [phý] and [pá], respectively, in polite speech. But in normal speech, they are usually pronounced [b].

[jèin bý] 'inside the house' (/jèin/= 'house')

polite pronunciation: [jèin phý]

[máshý bá] 'Help (us)!' (/máshý/= 'to help, aid')

polite pronunciation: [máshýn pá]

In the examples below, the opposition of /b/ : /b/ is utilized in distinguishing meaning:

A. (1)/ʔýjǒ bý/ 'inside this' (/ʔýjǒ/= 'this (one)')

(2)/ʔýjǒ bý/ 'This is thin.' (/bý/= 'thin')

B. (1)/bà bá/ '(Something) hit us.' (/bà/= 'to hit')

(2)/bà bá/ '(We) must pray.' (/bà/= 'must', /bá/= 'pray')

/ð/ is a voiced interdental egressive stop [ɖ]. This phoneme is very rare. Only two words containing it have appeared in my surveys to date:

/ðê/ 'sentence final particle: "right?", "all right?"',

/ðêi/ 'still, yet' (rough pronunciation of /dêi/)

/s/ is a voiceless unaspirated dental fricative [s].

/sù/ 'hand', /sàin/ 'to run', /sé/ 'silver'

/sh/ is a voiceless aspirated dental fricative [sh].

/shô/ 'to carry', /shý/ 'mortar', /shý/ 'to rain'

/z/ is a voiced dental fricative [z]. The occurrence of this phoneme is rare.

/zê/ 'market' (= /phjà/)

/jý- zý/ 'mine' (/jý-/= '1 sg. subject-possessive form', /zý/=thing; an allomorph of /shý/. /shý/ changes to /zý/ after a pronoun)

/ç/ is a voiceless alveopalatal fricative [ç].

/çá/ 'few', /çà/ 'star', /méincâ/ 'parents in law'

/x/ is a voiceless velar fricative [x].

/xê/ 'knife', /ʔànxwé/ 'to buy', /xàin/ 'to be dry'

/y/ is a voiced velar fricative [y].

/yâ?phâ/ 'to walk', /nâyý/ 'to hear', /yé/ 'good'

This phoneme is sometimes pronounced as a uvular fricative [ʁ] when it occurs as the initial of some bound forms.

/ʔýjǒ yà/ [ʔýjǒ ʁà] 'Is it this?' (/ʔýjǒ/= 'this one', /yà/= 'interrogative particle')

/wâisáu yý/ [wâisáu ʁý] 'Brother!' (/wâisáu/= 'elder brother', /yý/= 'particle of address')

In careful speech, the above examples are pronounced with [y]. In Hpa-an and Tavoy dialects, [ʁ] in the same position is never pronounced as [y].

/m/ is a voiced bilabial nasal [m].

/mà/ 'wife', /má/ 'to make, do', /mè/ 'fire'

/n/ is a voiced alveolar nasal [n].

/nèin/ 'year', /nái/ 'to believe', /nì/ 'two'

/ɲ/ is a voiced palatal nasal [ɲ]. Its occurrence is rare.

/ɲôʔθà/ 'the fruit of the morinda tree'

/ŋ/ is a voiced velar nasal [ŋ].

/ŋâŋjó/ 'crazy man', /mŋŋâ/ 'good, nice'

/w/ is a voiced bilabial semivowel [w].

/wâi/ 'elder sibling', /wà/ 'bamboo', /ʔŋwè/ '3 sg. pronoun'

/j/ is a voiced palatal semivowel [j] with a tendency to become slightly fricativized before front vowels.

/jèin/ 'house', /jà/ 'fish', /jâʔ/ 'to be torn', /jàu/ 'easy'

/l/ is a voiced lateral [l].

/lêiʔ/ 'book, writing', /lá/ 'the moon', /lân/ 'place'

/r/ is a voiced alveolar frictionless continuant [ɹ]. The tip of the tongue rises up against the back of the alveolar ridge, which causes a retroflex-like effect. It is not a trill like the /r/ of the eastern dialects.

/nàrì/ 'hour', /tŋràn/ 'door', /shŋrà/ 'teacher'

1.3. Consonant Clusters

The consonants which can occur medially are /w l r j/. There are seventeen initial consonants that can precede such medials. The distribution of the initials and medials is as below:

		C ₁																
		p	θ	t	k	ʔ	ph	th	kh	ḡ	ḡ	s	sh	x	m	n	j	l
C ₂	w	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	l	+		+	+		+	+		+						+		
	r	+			+													
	j	+			+		+			+						+		

Examples:

/pwí/ 'to be tired'	/phlâi/ 'disciple'	/shwì/ 'to castrate'
/pláu/ 'free of charge'	/phjà/ 'market'	/xwì káin/ 'numbed'
/prý/ 'to compete'	/thwì/ 'dog'	/mwê/ 'to be'
/pjôʔ/ 'to vomit'	/khwà/ 'male'	/mlôʔ/ 'cannon'
/θwí/ 'blood'	/khlàu/ 'mat'	/ʔáméinʔámjó/ 'variously'
/ʔŋtwâʔ/ 'problem'	/ḡwá/ 'white'	/nwì/ 'seven'
/lôʔkwé/ 'to play'	/ḡlò/ 'lightly seasoned'	/jwá/ 'to flow'
/klá/ 'to be accurate'	/ḡjá/ 'to be mild'	/lwî/ 'dove'
/krîʔ/ 'should'	/ʔŋḡwéphý/ 'content'	
/ʔwì/ 'to be delicious'	/swá/ 'to creep'	

1.4. Vowels

There are ten vowel phonemes in the Kyonbyaw dialect, as follows:

i	ĩ	u	u
e	ɣ	o	
ɛ	a	ɔ	

When they constitute rhymes, these vowels may occur singly or as diphthongs, and may or may not be followed by a final consonant. The combinations of these are grouped into three rhyme types: (1) plain rhymes, (2) rhymes with final /n/, (3) rhymes with final /ʔ/. The following is an exhaustive list of rhymes occurring in the Kyonbyaw dialect.

(1) Plain Rhymes:

i	ĩ	u	u	ai	au
e	ɣ	o			
ɛ	a	ɔ			

(2) Rhymes with Final /n/:

ɲn	ein	ɣun	oun
an	ain	aun	

(3) Rhymes with Final /ʔ/:

iʔ	eiʔ	ɣuʔ	ouʔ
eʔ			
oʔ			
aʔ			

The same vowel may change phonetically when followed by a final. Below is a phonetic description of the rhymes. Diphthongs are all falling, that is, the first vowel in a given diphthong is strong and the following vowel is weak.

(1) Plain Rhymes

/i/ is almost the same as cardinal [i].

/lí/ 'wind, air', /shì shà/ 'to urinate', /nî/ 'to smile'

/ĩ/ is a very high central unrounded vowel [ĩ] (higher than cardinal [i])

/phĩ/ 'to be short, low', /shĩ/ 'race'

/u/ is a back unrounded vowel [u] with slight lip protrusion.

/phù/ 'to jump', /mù/ 'female', /phû/ 'younger sibling'

/u/ is almost the same as cardinal [u].

/phù/ 'grandfather', /jú/ 'to fly', /jû/ 'rat'

/e/ is slightly higher than cardinal [e]: [ɛ].

/mế/ 'cooked rice', /nê/ 'to get', /lé/ 'to go'

/ɤ/ is a slightly centralized [ɤ]. This is the only vowel that can occur in an atonic syllable.

/lý/ 'at, in, on, to, from', /yáithý/ 'to get up',

/khý/ 'to be firm', /đãđý/ 'youngest child', /pýnâ/ 'buffalo'

/o/ is slightly higher than cardinal [o]: [ɔ].

/mô/ 'mother', /jô/ 'to look', /khò/ 'head'

/ɛ/ is almost the same as cardinal [ɛ].

/kàinkwê/ 'to be sly', /mwê/ 'to be', /lêlô/ 'to rock to and fro'

/a/ is a low central [a].

/mà/ 'alligator', /nâ/ 'ear', /wá/ 'wife'

/ɔ/ is almost the same as cardinal [ɔ].

/tɔ/ 'to be straight', /ʔánkò/ 'to criticize', /nô/ 'that'

/ai/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [i].

/jâi/ 'five', /ʔâi/ 'to love', /đýui/ 'to show'

/au/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to semi-high back rounded [u]. But the roundedness of the secondary vowel is sometimes quite weak.

/láu/ 'to tell', /ʔàu/ 'to exist, live', /thàu/ 'to be long, high'

(2) Rhymes with Final /n/

Final /n/ is an element which nasalizes preceding vowels. Nasalization affects only the very last portion of the vowel's articulation. Therefore, in the case of diphthongs, it is only the second vowel that is nasalized.

The phonetic symbol of nasalization [̃] is placed after the vowel so as to denote that nasalization occurs at the very last part of the vowel.

/ɤn/ is slightly lower than the plain /ɤ/: [ɤ̃].

/phýnθâ/ 'road'

/an/ is a nasalized low central [a]: [ã].

/ʔàn/ 'to eat', /lân/ 'to fall', /thàn/ 'to rise'

/ein/ begins at a cardinal [e] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [eĩ].

/mèin/ 'name', /shèin/ 'to be clean', /nèin/ 'year', /ʔànléin/ 'to lend'

/ɤun/ begins at a slightly centralized [ɤ] and glides to [u]: [ɤũ]. It is pronounced with slight labial protrusion. This rhyme is very rare. Only one example has been recorded so far.

/mátýun/ 'to threaten'

/oun/ begins at a cardinal [o] and glides to a cardinal [u]: [oũ].

/phôun/ 'to have a hole', /dóun/ 'town', /θòun/ 'to send'

/ain/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [aĩ].

/jâin/ 'to be far', /tháin/ 'to return', /khâin/ 'rear, back'

/aun/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a semi-high back rounded [u]: [aũ]. The roundedness of the secondary vowel is sometimes quite weak.

/khàun/ 'outside', /shàun/ 'to be strong', /tháun/ 'bridge'

(3) *Rhymes with Final /ʔ/*

Rhymes of this type can occur with only one toneme, the falling tone /[˥]/. The final /ʔ/ is often likely to be dropped, and some speakers cannot distinguish between /[˥]/ and /[˥]ʔ/, as pointed out in the Bassein Pho of Jones (1961:69). But even though the final /ʔ/ is dropped, two of the vowels (/e/ and /o/) tend to retain the characteristic that when pronounced with the final /ʔ/ they are lower than in the plain rhyme. It is possible that the oppositions between /e/:/eʔ/ and /o/:/oʔ/ will change to oppositions of vowel quality in the future.

/iʔ/ The vowel is a very high central unrounded vowel: [iʔ].

/krîʔ/ 'should', /tîʔ/ 'to collide; building (noun)'

/eʔ/ The vowel is lower than /e/ of the plain rhyme: [eʔ].

/mêʔ/ 'face', /shêʔ/ 'to stab', /lânthêʔ/ 'to fall down'

/oʔ/ The vowel is lower than /o/ of the plain rhyme: [oʔ].

/thôʔ/ 'pig', /kôʔ/ 'to call', /θimôʔ/ 'cigar'

/aʔ/ The vowel is low central: [aʔ].

/thâʔ/ 'iron, needle', /shâʔ/ 'to sew', /jâʔ/ 'to be torn'

/eiʔ/ begins at a cardinal [e] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [eiʔ].

/shêiʔ/ 'rice field', /bêiʔ/ 'be choked up', /jêiʔ/ 'to be long (time)'

/yuuʔ/ begins at a slightly centralized [y] and glides to [u]. It is pronounced with slight lip protrusion as in /yuuŋ/.

/dʔyuuʔ/ 'to fight', /mʔyuuʔ/ 'to be comfortable', /nʔyuuʔ/ 'to enter'

/ouʔ/ begins at a cardinal [o] and glides to a cardinal [u]: [ouʔ].

/dôuʔ/ 'room', /lôuʔ/ 'to be finished', /thôuʔ/ 'to brush'

1.5. *Tones*1.5.1. *Tonemes*

There are three tonemes in the Kyonbyaw dialect:

high-level	/˥/
low-level	/˨/
falling	/˥˩/

Of these three tones, the falling tone /^{˥˩}/ has different phonetic realizations depending on the presence or absence of final /ʔ/. High level and low level tones do not co-occur with final /ʔ/³. Below is a phonetic description of these tones.

/˥˩/: [ʔ⁵⁵] This tone is pronounced high and level. It corresponds to Jones' /˥˩/ of Bassein Pho. In Jones' diagram (1961:69) it is drawn as if it was

³ Alternatively one could consider [˥˩ʔ] to be a totally different tone from [˥˩]. (Cf. Lahu /˥˩/ vs. /˥˩ʔ/, /˥˩/ vs. /˥˩ʔ/. [Ed.].)

accompanied by a rising contour, but generally speaking, the equivalents of this tone in Western dialects do not have such a contour.

/yá/ 'numeral classifier for persons', /má/ 'to make, do', /ná/ 'night'

/ː/ [11] This tone is pronounced low and level.

/khà/ 'to be bitter', /mà/ 'wife', /shà/ 'to ache'

/ː/ (1) [51] With plain rhymes or rhymes with final /n/, this tone begins at a high pitch and suddenly falls to a low pitch.

/khâ/ 'to break (as of a stick)', /mô/ 'mother', /phâ/ 'father', /mê/ 'tail',

/jô/ 'to look', /θôun/ 'to send', /khên/ 'to be firm'

(2) [53] With rhymes with final /ʔ/, this tone begins falling from a high pitch, but its descent is arrested at a middle pitch by a glottal stop.

/thâʔ/ 'iron, needle', /mêʔ/ 'face', /shôʔ/ 'to carry', /jôʔ/ 'to lift'

Because final /ʔ/ tends to be dropped as mentioned in 1.4, the two contours of the falling tone, [51] and [53], tend to converge as [51].

Jones (1961:69) proposes /ː/ and /ːʔ/ for two of the tones of Bassein Pho corresponding to my /ː/ and /ːʔ/ respectively, and says that literate people may try to distinguish the two types of syllables but the distinction is artificial and inconsistent. In the case of the Kyonbyaw dialect, I found no direct correlation between literacy and the distinction between /ː/ and /ːʔ/.

Intonation sometimes changes the contour of the tone. For example, the interrogative particle /yà/ is sometimes pronounced with a pitch that rises at the beginning and falls later, as [131].

1.5.2. Alternation of Tones

Some words of the Kyonbyaw dialect have alternate tones. This phenomenon is especially common in the numerals. The numerals of the Kyonbyaw dialect are as listed below:

/lÿ/ 'one', /nì/ 'two', /θÿ/ 'three', /lí/ 'four', /jâi/ 'five', /xù/ 'six', /nwì/ 'seven', /xôʔ/ 'eight', /khwì/ 'nine', /shì/ 'ten'

Except for /lÿ/, numerals with the low-level tone are pronounced as /ː/ when they are followed by a numeral classifier or certain other numerals like 'ten', 'hundred' etc.

/ní nèn/ 'two years', /θý nèn/ 'three years', /xú nèn/ 'six years',
/nwí nèn/ 'seven years', /khwí nèn/ 'nine years', /shí nèn/ 'ten years',
/ní yá/ 'two people', /θý bâʔ/ 'three kyats', /ní shì lí nèn/ 'twenty-four years'

Note: /lÿ/ 'one', when it is followed by a numeral classifier, takes on the form /kÿ-/.
ex.: /kÿ-nèn/ 'one year'

Similar phenomena are observable in some additional words, as shown below. But in contrast to the numerals, the tonal change is not mandatory:

/mìkhèin~míkhèin/ 'to be sleepy, to nod',
 /nýmỳ~nýmỳ/ 'to be fragrant',
 /ʔỳphànhkò~ʔỳphánkhò/ 'above'

1.6. Atonic Syllables

The only vowel that can occur in an atonic syllable is /ʏ/. Atonic syllables are represented as /Cʏ/. They never occur in utterance final position. When they are followed by a word boundary (or morpheme boundary), they are represented as /Cʏ-/ so as to denote that they cannot occur singly.

/pʏlòuʔ/ 'shirt', /kʏshêiʔ/ 'a little', /thʏjâʔ/ 'to estimate',
 /nʏ- lêiʔʔòuʔ/ (2 sg. pronoun - book) 'your book',
 /shʏ- khláin/ (nominalizer - to speak) 'language'

1.7. Restriction of Co-occurrence

There is a restriction of co-occurrence between initials and tones. The initials /p t c k ʔ b d s/ do not co-occur with the falling tone /ʔ/ in syllables with plain or nasalized rhymes.

2. The Hpa-an Dialect

The Hpa-an dialect is one of the Eastern dialects of Pwo Karen and is quite close to the Kawkareik (Burmese /ko.karei/) or Hlaingbway (Burmese /hlain:bwe:/) dialects, but the details are significantly different. Most of the Pwo Karen dialects have quite a few loan words from Mon. Especially the Hpa-an dialect of Pwo has a notably large number of Mon loan words, perhaps because it has had more contact with Mon than the other dialects. The main informant was Mr. Saw Hla Chit, a native speaker of the Hpa-an dialect, who was in his forties.

2.1. Syllable Structure

The syllable structure of the Hpa-an dialect can be represented as C₁(C₂)V₁(V₂) (C₃)/T, where only /n/ can fill the C₃ position.

2.2. Consonants

There are 24 consonant phonemes, as follows:

Stops	p ph b	θ	t th d	c ch	k kh	ʔ
Nasals	m	n		ɲ		
Fricatives				ç	x ɣ	h ɸ
Resonants	w		l r	j		

A phonetic description of these consonants follows:

/p/ is a voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop [p].

/pŷnā/ 'buffalo', /pɔ̃/ 'to read' (cf. Mon /pòh/), /pàu/ 'to open'

/θ/ is a voiceless unaspirated interdental stop [t̪]. Since it is released slowly it often becomes an affricate [t̪ʃ].

/θî/ 'to die', /θò/ 'friend', /θí/ 'be capable of'

/t/ is a voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop [t].

/tài/ 'to create', /tàu/ 'building', /tŷwân/ 'village'

/c/ is phonetically a voiceless unaspirated alveopalatal affricate [tɕ]. It is in free variation with the voiceless unaspirated dental fricative [s]. [s] occurs in reading aloud, or in formal speech, for example, when speaking before an audience. But it is usually pronounced as [tɕ].⁴

/cú/ 'hand', /cáin/ 'to walk', /cì/ 'silver'

/k/ is a voiceless unaspirated velar stop [k].

/káin/ 'to be crooked', /ká/ 'to be difficult', /kò/ 'to call'

/ʔ/ is a glottal stop [ʔ].

/mìʔàin/ 'glutinous rice', /ʔéin/ 'to be narrow', /ʔá/ 'many'

/ph/ is a voiceless aspirated alveolar stop [ph].

/phó/ 'to break off (as the edge of something)', /phú/ 'child',

/phā/ 'father', /phjā/ 'monastery' (Cf. Mon /phèa/)

/th/ is a voiceless aspirated alveolar stop [th].

/thî/ 'water', /thé/ 'to break off (as of strings)', /thṣ/ 'to be capable of containing'

/ch/ is phonetically a voiceless aspirated alveopalatal affricate [tʃh]. As a free variant, the voiceless aspirated dental fricative [sh] occurs in reading or formal speech, as is the case with [s], the free variant of /c/.

/chó/ 'to carry', /chýun/ 'mortar', /chñn/ 'to rain'

/kh/ is a voiceless aspirated velar stop [kh].

/khā/ 'to break (as of sticks)', /khán/ 'foot, leg', /khài/ 'to be dark'

/b/ is a bilabial implosive [ɓ]. The laryngealization of this sound is somewhat weaker than the /β/ of the Kyonbyaw dialect, and is sometimes pronounced as an egressive [b]. In contrast to the Kyonbyaw dialect, the Hpa-an dialect does not have a /β/:/b/ opposition.

/bā/ 'to worship', /bñn/ 'quicklime', /bá/ 'to be right'

/d/ is an alveolar implosive [ɗ]. In careful pronunciation it is an implosive [ɗ], but in normal-speed speech, it is often pronounced as an egressive [d]. The frequency of being pronounced as an egressive is higher than that of /b/.

/dá/ 'to see', /déin/ 'sesame', /dò/ 'to store (water)'

⁴ In the Eastern dialects of the Mon state such as the Moulmein dialect, /c/ is often pronounced [s] even in normal speech.

/ç/ is a voiceless alveopalatal fricative [ç]. In some speakers' pronunciation the place of articulation is advanced almost to the point of [s].

/çà/ 'few', /çá/ 'star', /mèincā/ 'parents-in-law'

/x/ is a voiceless velar fricative [x].

/xé/ 'knife', /ʔánxwè/ 'to buy', /xâin/ 'to be dry'

/ɣ/ is a voiced velar fricative [ɣ].

/ɣéin/ 'house', /nāɣŷn/ 'to hear', /ɣì/ 'to be good'

/ɤ/ is a voiced uvular fricative [ɤ]. In the Kyonbyaw dialect, [ɤ] is a free variant of /ɣ/, i.e. [ɤ] can be replaced by [ɣ]. In the Hpa-an dialect, [ɤ] can never be replaced by [ɣ], so I propose a separate phoneme /ɤ/.⁵

/ɤâ/ 'interrogative particle', /ɤŷ/ 'particle of address'

/h/ is a voiceless glottal fricative [h]. There is no such sound in the Kyonbyaw and Tavoy dialects.

/hŷphlòun/ 'person', /hwéphŷn/ 'space under the floor', /hàidài/ 'toilet'

/m/ is a voiced bilabial nasal [m].

/mâ/ 'wife', /mà/ 'to make, do', /mí/ 'fire'

/n/ is a voiced alveolar nasal [n].

/néin/ 'year', /nè/ 'to believe', /nî/ 'two'

/ɲ/ is a voiced palatal nasal [ɲ].

/jāthŷɲā/ 'to pray' (cf. Mon /rèat nèa/),

/kŷɲā/ '(a monk) comes' (cf. Mon /kəɲaʔ/), /pŷɲān/ 'paddy dike'

/w/ is a voiced bilabial semivowel [w].

/wē/ 'elder sibling', /wá/ 'bamboo', /ʔŷwē/ '3 sg. pronoun'

/j/ is a voiced palatal semivowel [j] with a tendency to become slightly fricativized before front vowels.

/já/ 'fish; to be torn', /jō/ 'to be easy', /jē/ 'five'

/l/ is a voiced lateral [l].

/láí/ 'book, writing', /là/ 'the moon', /lān/ 'place'

/r/ is an alveolar trill [r] or flap [ɾ]. Some speakers often replace it with [l] in normal speech.

/pàitŷrān/ 'door', /thŷràì/ 'expenses', /thŷrē/ 'deer'

2.3. Consonant Clusters

The consonants which can occur medially are /w l r j/. There are eighteen initial consonants that can precede such medials. The distribution of the initials and medials are as follows:

⁵ Purser (1922:174) explains that the letter for this sound represents 'voiced H'. But the Pwo Karen dialects treated in this paper do not have a voiced [h]. Sgaw Karen does have a voiced [h]. Cf. Kato (1993).

		C ₁																	
		p	θ	t	c	k	ʔ	ph	th	ch	kh	b	d	x	h	m	n	j	l
C ₂	w	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	l	+				+		+			+	+					+		
	r	+				+													
	j	+						+				+					+		+

Examples

/pwài/ 'to be tired'	/ʔwí/ 'to be delicious'	/dwà/ 'to count'
/plà/ 'free of charge'	/phlĕ/ 'disciple'	/xwíkàin/ 'to be weary'
/prĕn/ 'to compete'	/phjâ/ 'market'	/hwéphĕn/ 'open space under the floor'
/pjò/ 'to vomit'	/thwí/ 'dog'	/mwĕ/ 'to be'
/θwí/ 'blood'	/chwí/ 'to castrate'	/kĕmlĕn/ 'well'
/ʔtĕwà/ 'problem'	/khwâ/ 'male'	/tĕmjân/ 'strange' (cf. Mon /təmeŋ/)
/cwà/ 'to creep'	/khló/ 'mat'	/nwĕ/ jackfruit
/lókwè/ 'to play'	/bwĕ/ 'to pile'	/jwà/ 'mirror'
/klà/ 'to be accurate'	/blà/ 'lightly seasoned'	/lwí/ 'dove'
/krĕ/ 'should'	/bjân/ 'to cure, repair'	/kĕljân/ 'to return' (cf. Mon /kəleŋ/)

2.4. Vowels

There are eleven vowel phonemes in the Hpa-an dialect, as follows:

i	ĩ	u
ɪ		ʊ
e	ɣ	o
ɛ	a	ɔ

In the Hpa-an dialect /ʔ/ does not occur as a final, so there are only two types of rhymes: (1) plain rhymes, (2) rhymes with final /n/:

(1) Plain Rhymes:

i	ĩ	u	ai	au
ɪ		ʊ		
e	ɣ	o		
ɛ	a	ɔ		

(2) Rhymes with Final /n/:

	yn	ein	yun	oun
an		on	ain	

Below is a phonetic description of the rhymes. The diphthongs are all falling—that is, the first vowel in a given diphthong is strong and the following vowel is weak.

(1) Plain Rhymes

/i/ has a centralized onglide except when preceded by /w/: [i:] or [i] (after /w/).

/lì/ 'air, wind', /chíchâ/ 'urinate', /nī/ 'to smile', /θwí/ 'blood'

/ɪ/ is a very high unrounded vowel [ɪ] (higher than cardinal [ɪ]).

/phí/ 'to be short, low', /chì/ 'race', /chǎkí/ 'quite'

/u/ has two allophones. In most cases, it is pronounced with slight lip protrusion, but after the bilabial consonants /p ph b m/, it is pronounced without such protrusion, and is similar to the cardinal [u].

/phû/ 'to jump; grandfather', /mû/ 'female', /phû/ 'younger sibling',

/jû/ 'to fly', /jû/ 'rat', /cûmâu/ 'peaceful'

/ɪ/ is a semi-high front unrounded vowel [ɪ]. It does not occur after /w/.

/nī/ 'to get', /lì/ 'to go', /mì/ 'cooked rice', /chì/ 'to stab', /bí/ 'goat'

/u/ is a semi-high back rounded vowel [u].

/mû/ 'mother', /jû/ 'to look', /khú/ 'head', /phú/ 'child'

/e/ is almost the same as cardinal [e].

/mé/ 'face', /xé/ 'knife', /dè/ 'and; with', /nwê/ 'seven'

/ɻ/ is a slightly centralized [ɻ]. This is the only vowel that can occur in an atonic syllable.

/lý/ 'at, in, on, to, from', /jý/ '1 sg. pronoun', /klý/ 'always', /pýnā/ 'buffalo'

/o/ is almost the same as cardinal [o].

/mó/ 'cigar', /thò/ 'pig'

Some words can be pronounced with either /u/ or /o/.

/kù ~ kò/ 'to call', /chú ~ chò/ 'to lift'

/ɛ/ is almost the same as cardinal [ɛ].

/jē/ 'five', /ʔé/ 'to love', /dàuné/ 'to show'

/mwē/ 'to be', /lèlɔ/ 'to look to and fro'

/a/ is a low central [a].

/má/ 'alligator', /nā/ 'ear', /wà/ 'wife'

/ɔ/ is almost the same as cardinal [ɔ].

/tò/ 'to be straight', /ʔánkɔ/ 'to criticize', /nɔ/ 'that'

/ai/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [i].

/chái/ 'rice field', /bài/ 'to be choked', /jái/ 'to be long (time)'

/au/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a semi-high back rounded [u]. The roundedness of the secondary vowel is sometimes quite weak.⁶

/dâu/ 'to fight; room', /máu/ 'comfortable', /náu/ 'to enter',
/láu/ 'to be finished', /thàu/ 'to brush'

(2) Rhymes with Final /n/

Final /n/ is an element which nasalizes preceding vowels. As was the case with the Kyonbyaw dialect, nasalization affects only the very last portion of the vowel, and it is only the second vowel in a diphthong that is nasalized.

The nasalization of three of the diphthongs /ein yun oun/ is so weak that it is sometimes barely audible.

/ɤn/ is a slightly centralized [ɤ] with nasalization: [ɤ̃].

/khɤn/ 'to be firm', /phɤnθà/ 'road', /nɤn/ 'to smell'

/an/ is phonetically a diphthong which begins at a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [ʌ]: [aʌ̃].

/ʔán/ 'to eat', /làn/ 'to fall off', /thán/ 'to rise'

/on/ is a slightly centralized [o] with nasalization: [õ].

/khôn/ 'outside', /chôn/ 'to be strong', /thôn/ 'bridge'

/ein/ begins at a cardinal [e] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [eĩ]. Its nasalization is very weak.

/mèin/ 'name', /chêin/ 'to be clean', /néin/ 'year', /ʔánlèin/ 'to lend'

/ɤun/ begins at a slightly centralized [ɤ] and glides to [u]: [ɤũ]. It is pronounced with slight lip protrusion and weak nasalization.

/thɤunlī/ 'to dance', /khɤun/ 'to dig', /θɤun/ 'to build'

/oun/ begins at a cardinal [o] and glides to [u]: [oũ]. Nasalization is very weak.

/phōun/ 'to have a hole', /dōun/ 'town', /θōun/ 'to send', /tōun/ 'Don Yein (Karen group dance)'

Some speakers from Hpa-an do not distinguish /ɤun/ and /oun/, having only [oũ]. It is not evident whether this variation is regional, individual, or generation-oriented.

/ain/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [aĩ]. In contrast to the other nasalized diphthongs, the nasalization is very clear. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that /ain/ has a homorganic plain rhyme /ai/.⁷

/jàin/ 'to be far', /thàin/ 'to return', /khâin/ 'rear, back'

⁶ According to the description of Cook et al. (1976:200), the Hot dialect has two rhymes /au?/ and /aɪ?/ historically corresponding to Hpa-an /au/. These Hot rhymes correspond to Kyonbyaw /ou?/ and /ɤu?/ respectively. In the Hpa-an and Tavoy dialects, there is no opposition corresponding to Hot /au?/:/aɪ?/.

⁷ The Hpa-an dialect /ain/ corresponds to /ai/ in the Hot dialect (Cook et al. 1976:200).

2.5. Tones

2.5.1. Tonemes

There are four tonemes in the Hpa-an dialect.

high-level	/ˊ/
mid-level	/ˊ̃/
low-level	/ˋ/
falling	/ˋ̃/

Below is a phonetic description of these tones.

/ˊ/: [55] This tone is pronounced high and level. It corresponds to /ˊ ʔ/ of Jones's Moulmein Pho (1961:69). According to his description, Moulmein /ˊ ʔ/ has a falling contour like /ˊ̃/ of Tavoy, but /ˊ̃/ of Hpa-an does not fall but is always level.

/khá/ 'to be bitter', /má/ 'to be false', /bá/ 'to be right'

/ˊ̃/: [33] This tone is pronounced mid and level. At the utterance final position, it sometimes has a slightly rising contour, but phonologically this is not relevant.

/khā/ 'to break (as of sticks)', /phā/ 'father', /mū/ 'mother'

/ˋ/: [11] This tone is pronounced low and level. It corresponds to /-/ (unmarked) of Jones's Moulmein Pho (1961:69). In his diagram, it is drawn as if it were pronounced at a middle pitch, but in all the Eastern dialects that I have ever observed, the corresponding tones were either low and level or low and falling.

/yà/ 'numeral classifier for people', /thà/ 'iron, needle', /mà/ 'to make, do', /nà/ 'night'

/ˋ̃/: [51] This tone begins at a high pitch and suddenly falls to a low pitch. It is accompanied by laryngealization, and is sometimes creaky.

/mâ/ 'wife', /châ/ 'to ache', /jô/ 'to be easy'

Intonation sometimes changes the contour of the tone, just as in the Kyonbyaw dialect. For example, the interrogative particle /kâ/ is sometimes pronounced with a pitch that rises at the beginning and falls later: [131]. This is very similar to the Kyonbyaw dialect contour.

2.5.2. Alternation of Tones

The Hpa-an dialect shows tonal alternations in the following morphemes:

(1) Alternation of tones occurs in the numerals. The numerals of the Hpa-an dialect are as below:

/lîn/ 'one', /nî/ 'two', /θîn/ 'three', /lî/ 'four', /jê/ 'five' /xû/ 'six',
/nwê/ 'seven', /xó/ 'eight', /khwî/ 'nine', /chî/ 'ten'

Except for /lîn/, numerals with the falling tone /ˋ̃/ are pronounced as

/ˊ/ when they are followed by a numeral classifier or certain other numerals like 'ten', 'hundred', etc.

/nī yà/ 'two people', /θŷn yà/ 'three people', /xū yà/ 'six people',
/nwē yà/ 'seven people', /khwī yà/ 'nine people', /ʔŷyà nī chī/
'twenty people' ('Ten people' is not /chī yà/, but /ʔŷyà lŷ- chī/.) /θŷn
néin/ 'three years', /nī nàjì/ 'two o'clock, two hours' /khwī chī xó
béin/ 'ninety-eight sheets'

Note: /lŷn/ 'one', when it is followed by a numeral classifier, appears in the unstressed form /lŷ-/ , e.g. /lŷ- yà/ 'one person'.

(2) When two falling tones are juxtaposed morphologically in a single word, the first falling tone /ˊ/ changes to the low-level tone /ˊ/. But this alternation is not mandatory.

/thì thī chà chà/ 'exactly' < /thī chà/ 'to be exact',
/nŷnmŷn/ 'to be fragrant' < /nŷn/ 'to smell' + /mŷn/ 'to be fragrant'

(3) When the interrogative particle /ka/ occurs in a sentence, the tone of the verb sometimes changes to the mid-level tone /ˊ/. This alternation is not mandatory.

/bā kâ/ 'Is it right?' < /bá/ 'to be right'
right RA

/nŷ- mŷn kâ/ 'Are you alive?' < /mŷn/ 'to be alive'
2sg alive RA

/nŷ- mŷ- thāin kâ/ 'Are you going home?' < /thāin/ 'to return'
2sg will return RA

/nŷ- thāi khú kâ/ 'Are you going to have your hair cut?' < /thái/ 'to cut'
2sg cut head RA

When the verb of an interrogative sentence is pronounced with the mid-level tone, the sentence seems to entail a certain special meaning (such as politeness).

When the perfective particle /jàu/ or the particle denoting an approaching event /lŷ/ occurs in a sentence, the tone of the verb often changes to the mid-level tone.

/yōn jàu/ 'It is over.' < /yōn/ 'to finish'
finish JAU

/thāu jàu/ 'It has stopped raining.' < /thāu/ 'to stop raining'
stop JAU

/chŷ- mŷ- chŷn lŷ/ 'It will rain soon!' < /chŷn/ 'to rain'
thing will rain LO

2.6. Atonic Syllables

The Hpa-an dialect has atonic syllables, in which /ɤ/ is the only permitted vowel, and which never occur in utterance final position.

- /lŷcè/ 'a little', /hŷmŷnī/ 'human being',
- /nŷ- láíʔàu/ (2 sg. pronoun - book) 'your book',
- /chŷ- khlàin/ (nominalizer - to speak) 'language',
- /chŷ- ʔàinlàn/ (nominalizer - to fight) 'boxing'

2.7. Co-occurrence Restrictions

The initials /p t c ʔ d b/ do not co-occur with the mid-level tone /˥/ in the same syllable, with the exception of a few loan words:

- /kânkôn/ 'fortunately' (cf. Burmese /kan_kaun:/ 'lucky'),
- /pjônjpân/ 'opposite' (cf. Burmese /byaun:byan_/ 'opposite')

These initials also do not co-occur with the falling tone, with a few exceptions:

- /pĩ/ 'to be small', /bê/ 'such as, so as to',
- /kwâ/ 'to differ' (cf. Burmese /kwa_/ 'to differ')

3. The Tavoy Dialect

The Tavoy dialect is also one of the eastern dialects of Pwo Karen. It differs quite a bit from the Hpa-an dialect especially on the phonological level, but they are mutually intelligible. Mon loanwords in this dialect are not as numerous as in the Hpa-an dialect. The description below is based on data from Ms. Deborah, a native speaker of the Tavoy dialect, who was in her thirties.

3.1. Syllable Structure

The syllable structure of the Tavoy dialect can be represented as C₁(C₂)V₁(V₂) (C₃)/T, where /n/ and /l/ can fill the C₃ position.

3.2. Consonants

There are 22 consonant phonemes as follows:

Stops	p ph b	θ	t th d	c ch	k kh	ʔ
Nasals	m	n				
Fricatives				ç	x	
					ɣ	ʁ
Resonants	w		l r	j		

Below is a phonetic description of the consonants:

/p/ is a voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop [p].

/pǎnā/ 'buffalo', /pō/ 'to read', /pǎʔòn/ 'white ant'

/θ/ is a voiceless unaspirated interdental stop [t̪].

/θêi/ 'to die', /θòʔ/ 'friend', /θí/ 'be capable of'

/t/ is a voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop [t].

/tàn/ 'to create', /tìʔ/ 'building', /tǎwân/ 'village'

/c/ is phonetically a voiceless unaspirated alveopalatal affricate [tʃ]. It is sometimes pronounced [s] (voiceless unaspirated dental fricative), as a free variant. The factors conditioning its occurrence are very similar to [s] in the Hpa-an dialect — that is, in formal speech or in reading aloud.

/côu/ 'hand', /cáin/ 'to walk', /cì/ 'silver'

/k/ is a voiceless unaspirated velar stop [k].

/káin/ 'to be crooked', /ká/ 'to be difficult', /kòʔ/ 'to call'

/ʔ/ is a glottal stop [ʔ].

/mìʔàin/ 'glutinous rice', /ʔáin/ 'to be narrow', /ʔá/ 'many'

/ph/ is a voiceless aspirated bilabial stop [ph].

/phòʔ/ 'to break off (as the edge of something)', /phú/ 'child',

/phā/ 'father'

/th/ is a voiceless aspirated alveolar stop [th].

/thêi/ 'water', /thêʔ/ 'to break off (as of a string)',

/thō/ 'to be capable of containing'

/ch/ is phonetically a voiceless aspirated alveopalatal affricate [tʃh]. It has a free variant [sh] (voiceless aspirated dental fricative); the factors conditioning its occurrence are the same as for the free variant of /c/. [s].

/chòʔ/ 'to carry', /chín/ 'mortar', /chǎn/ 'to rain'

/kh/ is a voiceless aspirated velar stop [kh].

/khā/ 'to break (as of a stick)', /khán/ 'leg, foot', /khàiʔ/ 'to be dark'

/b/ is a voiced bilabial egressive stop [b], and is never pronounced as an implosive.

/bà/ 'to worship', /bǎn/ 'quicklime', /bá/ 'to be right'

/d/ is a voiced dental egressive stop [d], and is never pronounced as an implosive.

/dá/ 'to see', /dáin/ 'sesame', /dòʔ/ 'to store (water)'

/ç/ is a voiceless alveopalatal fricative [ç].

/çà/ 'to be few in number', /çá/ 'star', /mèinçā/ 'parents-in-law'

/x/ is a voiceless velar fricative [x].

/xêʔ/ 'knife', /ʔánxwì/ 'to buy', /xâin/ 'to be dry'

/ɣ/ is a voiced velar fricative [ɣ].

/ɣáin/ 'house', /nāɣǎn/ 'to hear', /ɣì/ 'to be good', /ɣǎphlòun/ 'person'

/ɤ/ is a voiced uvular fricative [ɤ].

/ɤā/ 'interrogative particle', /ɤǎ/ 'particle of address'

/m/ is a voiced bilabial nasal [m].

/mâ/ 'wife', /mà/ 'to do, make', /mí/ 'fire'

/n/ is a voiced alveolar nasal [n].

/náin/ 'year', /nè/ 'to believe', /nêi/ 'two'

/w/ is a voiced bilabial semivowel [w].

/wē/ 'elder sibling', /wá/ 'bamboo', /ʔýwî/ '3 sg. pronoun'

/j/ is a voiced palatal semivowel [j] with a tendency to become slightly fricativized before front vowels.

/já/ 'fish', /jô/ 'easy', /jē/ 'five'

/l/ is a voiced lateral [l].

/lāiʔ/ 'book, writing', /là/ 'the moon', /lān/ 'place'

/r/ is a voiced alveolar trill [r].

/nàrêi/ 'clock, o'clock', /chýrâ/ 'teacher', /rýnsýn/ 'to be rude'

3.3. Consonant Clusters

The consonants which can occur medially are /w l r j/, as is the case with the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects. There are seventeen initial consonants that can precede such medials. The distribution of the initials and medials are as follows:

		C ₁																
		p	θ	t	c	k	ʔ	ph	th	ch	kh	b	d	x	m	n	j	l
C ₂	w	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	l	+				+		+			+	+			+			
	r	+				+												
	j	+						+				+						

Examples

/pwàiʔ/ 'to be tired'	/krìʔ/ 'should'	/blà/ 'lightly seasoned'
/plò/ 'free of charge'	/ʔwéi/ 'to be delicious'	/bjàn/ 'to cure, repair'
/prýn/ 'to compete'	/phlē/ 'disciple'	/dwàʔ/ 'to count'
/pjòʔ/ 'to vomit'	/phjá/ 'market'	/xwéikàin/ 'to be weary'
/θwéi/ 'blood'	/thwéi/ 'dog'	/mwē/ 'to be'
/ʔýtwàʔ/ 'problem'	/chwéi/ 'to castrate'	/mlōʔ/ 'cannon'
/cwà/ 'to creep'	/khwâ/ 'male'	/nwē/ 'jack-fruit'
/lōkwì/ 'to play'	/khló/ 'mat'	/jwà/ 'mirror'
/klà/ 'to be accurate'	/bwé/ 'to pile'	/lwēi/ 'dove'

3.4. Vowels

There are eight vowel phonemes in the Tavoy dialect, as follows:

i	i		u	u
e		y		o
		a		

In the Tavoy dialect both /n/ and /ʔ/ can occur as finals, with three resulting types of rhymes: (1) plain rhymes, (2) rhymes with final /n/, and (3) rhymes with final /ʔ/:

(1) Plain Rhymes:

i	i		u	u		ei		ou
e		y		o				
		a						

(2) Rhymes with final /n/:

	yn		ein		oun
an		on		ain	

(3) Rhymes with final /ʔ/:

	iʔ		aiʔ		auʔ
eʔ		oʔ			
	aʔ				

Below is a phonetic description of the rhymes. Diphthongs are all falling, as in the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects.

(1) Plain Rhymes

/i/ is almost the same as cardinal [i].

/nī/ 'to get', /lī/ 'to go', /mī/ 'cooked rice'

After /w/ (either initial or medial) this phoneme is pronounced [ɛ], which is slightly higher than cardinal [e].

/ʔwī/ '3 sg. pronoun', /xwī/ 'how many', /lōʔkwī/ 'to play'

/i/ is a very high central unrounded vowel [i̠]. (higher than cardinal [i])

/phī/ 'to be short, low', /chī/ 'race', /dābī/ 'youngest child'

/u/ is [u] with a lower onglide [y]: [vyu]. It is pronounced with slight lip protrusion.

/phū/ 'to jump', /mū/ 'female', /phū/ 'younger sibling'

/u/ is almost the same as cardinal [u].

/mū/ 'mother', /jū/ 'to look', /khū/ 'head'

/e/ is an intermediate sound between [e] and [ɛ]: [ɛ̞].

/jē/ 'five', /ʔé/ 'to love', /dāuʔné/ 'to show', /mwē/ 'to be'

/ɤ/ is a slightly centralized [ɤ]. This is the only vowel that can occur in an atonic syllable.

/lɤ/ 'at, in, on, to, from', /jɤ/ '1 sg. pronoun', /nɤ/ '2 sg. pronoun',
/pɲā/ 'buffalo'

/o/ is an intermediate sound between [o] and [ɔ]: [ɔ̌].

/tò/ 'to be straight', /lò/ 'to tell', /ʔò/ 'to exist, live',
/thò/ 'to be long, high'

/a/ is a low central [a].

/má/ 'alligator', /nā/ 'ear', /wà/ 'husband'

/ei/ begins at a cardinal [e] and glides to a cardinal [i].

/lèi/ 'air, wind', /chéichā/ 'to urinate', /nēi/ 'to smile'

/ou/ begins at a cardinal [o] and glides to a cardinal [u].

/jòu/ 'to fly', /jōu/ 'rat', /phōu/ 'grandfather'

(2) Rhymes with Final /n/

Final /n/ is an element which nasalizes preceding vowels, and nasalization occurs at the very last part of the vowel. In the Hpa-an dialect, which is also one of the Eastern dialects, the nasalization of some diphthongs is very weak, but in the Tavoy dialect nasalization is always clearly audible.

Of the nasalized vowels, /ɲn/, /on/ and /oun/ each have two allophones which are in complementary distribution in terms of tones.

/ɲn/ is a slightly centralized [ɲ̃] in combination with the mid-level tone /˥/ and low-level tone /˨/. But when it occurs with the high-falling tone /˥˥/ or low-falling tone /˨˨/, it begins as a not-fully-open central vowel [ɐ] and glides to a centralized [ɲ]: [ɐɲ̃].

/phɲnθà/ 'road', /chɲn/ 'to rain', /jɲn/ 'to bark',
/khɲn/ 'to be firm', /nɲn/ 'to smell', /khɲn/ 'to dig',
/bɲn/ 'to be brave'

/an/ is phonetically a diphthong which begins as a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [ʌ]: [aʌ̃].

/ʔán/ 'to eat', /làn/ 'to fall off', /thán/ 'to rise', /bán/ 'to be young'

/on/ is [ɔ̃] in combination with the mid-level tone /˥/ and low-level tone /˨/, but in combination with the high-falling tone /˥˥/ and low-falling tone /˨˨/, it begins as a low back unrounded vowel [ɔ] and glides to a cardinal [ɔ]: [ɔ̃].

/thòn/ 'bridge', /bádòn/ 'to be similar', /nòn/ 'to be hard, solid',
/khòn/ 'outside', /chón/ 'to be strong', /bón/ 'to be fat'

/ein/ begins as a cardinal [e] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [eĩ].

/mèin/ 'name', /chèin/ 'to be clean', /ʔánlèin/ 'to lend'

/oun/ is [oũ] in combination with the mid-level tone /˥/ and low-level tone /˨/, but in combination with the high-falling tone /˥˥/ and low-falling tone /˨˨/, it begins as a not-fully-open, central vowel [ɐ] and glides to a cardinal [o]: [ɐõ].

/phõun/ 'to have a hole', /dõun/ 'town', /lõun/ 'stone',
 /θõun/ 'to send', /thõun/ 'bag', /lõun/ 'maggot'
 /ain/ begins as a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [ai̯].
 /jàin/ 'to be far', /thàin/ 'to return', /khàin/ 'rear, back',
 /náin/ 'year'

The table below summarizes the distribution of the allophones of /ɤn/, /on/ and /oun/.

	/ɤn/	/on/	/oun/
1. in combination with the mid-level and low-level tones	[ɤ̃]	[ɔ̃]	[oũ]
2. in combination with the high-falling and low-falling tones	[əɤ̃]	[oɔ̃]	[əoũ]

(3) Rhymes with Final /ʔ/

There is a restriction on the co-occurrence of tones and rhymes with final /ʔ/. The tones which can co-occur with rhymes of this type are only the level tones: i.e. the mid-level and low-level tones.

/iʔ/ The vowel is a very high central unrounded vowel: [i̯ʔ].

/tɪʔ/ 'building', /kɪʔ/ 'should'

/eʔ/ The vowel is higher than the plain /e/, and is almost the same as cardinal [e]: [eʔ].

/mẽʔ/ 'face', /chẽʔ/ 'to stab', /xẽʔ/ 'knife'

/oʔ/ The vowel is higher than the plain /o/, and is almost the same as cardinal [o]: [oʔ].

/mõʔ/ 'cigar', /thõʔ/ 'pig', /kõʔ/ 'to call'

/aʔ/ The vowel is low central: [aʔ].

/thàʔ/ 'iron, needle', /chàʔ/ 'to sew', /jãʔ/ 'to be torn'

/aiʔ/ begins at a low central [a] and glides to a cardinal [i]: [ai̯ʔ].

/chāiʔ/ 'rice field', /bàiʔ/ 'to be choked', /jāiʔ/ 'to be long (time)'

/auʔ/ begins as a low central [a] and glides to a semi-high back rounded [u]: [au̯ʔ].

/dauʔ/ 'to fight; room', /māuʔ/ 'to be comfortable', /nāuʔ/ 'to enter',

/lāuʔ/ 'to be finished', /thauʔ/ 'to brush'

3.5. Tones

There are four tonemes in the Tavoy dialect:

mid-level	/̃/
low-level	/̌/
high-falling	/̎/
low-falling	/̍/

Of these tones, the mid-level and low-level tones have different phonetic realizations depending on the presence or absence of final /ʔ/⁸. The high falling and low falling tones do not co-occur with final /ʔ/. Below is a phonetic description of these tones:

/ˊ/: (1) [33] With plain rhymes or rhymes with final /n/, this tone is pronounced mid and level, and the phonation is normal.

/khā/ 'to break (as of a stick)', /phā/ 'father', /mū/ 'mother'

(2) [33] With rhymes with final /ʔ/, this tone is pronounced mid and level, but very short, and the phonation is often creaky under the influence of /ʔ/.

/nōʔ/ 'mouth', /jāʔ/ 'to be torn', /jōʔ/ 'to be deep'

/ˋ/: (1) [11] With plain rhymes or rhymes with final /n/, this tone is pronounced low and level, and the phonation is normal.

/yà/ 'numeral classifier for people', /mà/ 'to make, do', /nà/ 'night'

(2) [11] With rhymes with final /ʔ/, this tone is pronounced low and level, but very short, and the phonation is often creaky under the influence of /ʔ/.

/khàʔ/ 'to shoot', /thàʔ/ 'iron, needle', /jòʔ/ 'to lift'

/ˊ˥/: [553] This tone begins at a high pitch and slowly falls to a middle pitch, and is often accompanied by laryngealization, sometimes becoming creaky. The descent tends to be somewhat reduced in fluent passages of normal speech. This tone diachronically corresponds to the high-level tone of the Hpa-an dialect, and is indicated by the same phonetic symbol in this paper. The high-level tone of the Hpa-an dialect, however, is never accompanied by laryngealization or descent.

/khá/ 'to be bitter', /má/ 'to be false', /bá/ 'to be right'

/ˊ˥˥/: [51] This tone begins at a high pitch and suddenly falls to a low pitch, and as is the case with the high-falling tone, it is often accompanied by laryngealization and sometimes by creaky voice.

/mâ/ 'wife', /châ/ 'to ache', /jô/ 'to be easy'

Intonation sometimes changes the contour of the tone. Similarly to the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects, the interrogative particle /kã/ is often pronounced with a contour of [131].

At this stage of research, it is not apparent whether this dialect has tonal alternation in certain morphemes.

⁸ See note 3 above. [Ed.]

3.6. Atonic Syllables

The Tavoy dialect has atonic syllables, in which only /x/ can occur, and they never occur at the utterance final position.

/ʔʰwêi/ 'nest', /pʰdè/ 'rabbit',

/nʰ- lăiʔʰau/ (2 sg. pronoun - book) 'your book',

/chʰ- khlain/ (nominalizer - to speak) 'language'

3.7. Restriction of Co-occurrence

There is also a restriction of co-occurrence between the initials and the tones of this dialect. The initials /p t c k ʔ d b/ do not co-occur with the mid-level tone /ˊ/ in syllables with plain rhymes or rhymes with final /n/, although it is theoretically possible for this gap to be filled by borrowing or insertion of foreign (e.g. Burmese) words, as in the Hpa-an dialect.

The above initials seldom co-occur with the low-falling tone, or mid-level tone accompanied by final /ʔ/, with a few exceptions:

/pî/ 'to be small', /bê/ 'such as, so as to',

/ʔăi/ 'negative particle' (cf. Hpa-an /ʔé/, Kyonbyaw /ʔêʔ/)

4. Phonemic Correspondences

The purpose of this section is to establish the correspondences of consonants, rhymes, and tones among the three dialects described in this paper. The symbols Ky, Hp, T stand for the Kyonbyaw, Hpa-an and Tavoy dialects, respectively. In the tables below, hyphens denote that there is no corresponding form in the dialect concerned.

(1) Consonants

Ky:	p	θ	t	k	ʔ	ph	th	kh	ḃ	d	b	b	b	s	c	sh
Hp:	p	θ	t	k	ʔ	ph	th	kh	b	d	p	ph	b	c	c	ch
T:	p	θ	t	k	ʔ	ph	th	kh	b	d	p	ph	b	c	c	ch

Ky:	z	ç	ð	x	ɣ	m	n	ɲ	-	ŋ	w	j	l	r	-	ʏ
Hp:	-	ç	-	x	ɣ	m	n	-	ɲ	-	w	j	l	r	h	ʏ
T:	-	ç	-	x	ɣ	m	n	-	-	-	w	j	l	r	-	ʏ

Examples

Ky /p/: Hp /p/: T /p/

Ky /pʰnâ/ Hp /pʰnâ/ T /pʰnâ/ 'buffalo'

Ky /θ/: Hp /θ/: T /θ/

Ky /θè/ Hp /θi/ T /θi/ 'be capable of'

Ky /t/: Hp /t/: T /t/

Ky /táin/ Hp /tâin/ T /tâin/ 'to create'

- Ky /k/: Hp /k/: T /k/
Ky /kà/ Hp /ká/ T /ká/ 'to be difficult'
- Ky /ʔ/: Hp /ʔ/: T /ʔ/
Ky /ʔà/ Hp /ʔá/ T /ʔá/ 'many, much'
- Ky /ph/: Hp /ph/: T /ph/
Ky /phò/ Hp /phú/ T /phú/ 'child'
- Ky /th/: Hp /th/: T /th/
Ky /thì/ Hp /thî/ T /thî/ 'water'
- Ky /kh/: Hp /kh/: T /kh/
Ky /khâ/ Hp /khā/ T /khā/ 'to break (as of a stick)'
- Ky /ɓ/: Hp /b/: T /b/
Ky /bá/ Hp /bà/ T /bà/ 'to worship'
- Ky /ɗ/: Hp /d/: T /d/
Ky /ɗà/ Hp /dá/ T /dá/ 'to see'
- Ky /b/: Hp /p/: T /p/
Ky /bá/ Hp /pỳ/ T /pỳ/ '1 pl. pronoun'
- Ky /b/: Hp /ph/: T /ph/
Ky /bý/ Hp /phỳn/ T /phỳn/ 'inside'
- Ky /b/: Hp /b/: T /b/
Ky /bỳjò/ Hp /bêjò/ T /bêjò/ 'like this'
- Ky /s/: Hp /c/: T /c/
Ky /sù/ Hp /cúu/ T /cúu/ 'hand'
- Ky /c/: Hp /c/: T /c/
Ky /cỳ/ Hp /cýuun/ T /cýn/ 'to be lazy'
- Ky /sh/: Hp /ch/: T /ch/
Ky /shý/ Hp /chỳn/ T /chỳn/ 'to rain'
- Ky /c/: Hp /c/: T /c/
Ky /cā/ Hp /cā/ T /cā/ 'to be old (of a person)'
- Ky /x/: Hp /x/: T /x/
Ky /xêʔ/ Hp /xé/ T /xēʔ/ 'knife'
- Ky /ɣ/: Hp /ɣ/: T /ɣ/
Ky /ɣè/ Hp /ɣì/ T /ɣì/ 'to be good'
- Ky /m/: Hp /m/: T /m/
Ky /má/ Hp /mà/ T /mà/ 'to make, do'
- Ky /n/: Hp /n/: T /n/
Ky /nái/ Hp /nè/ T /nè/ 'to believe'
- Ky /w/: Hp /w/: T /w/
Ky /wá/ Hp /wà/ T /wà/ 'husband'

- Ky /j/: Hp /j/: T /j/
 Ky /já/ Hp /jǎ/ T /jǎ/ '1 sg. pronoun'
- Ky /l/: Hp /l/: T /l/
 Ky /lá/ Hp /là/ T /là/ 'the moon'
- Ky /r/: Hp /r/: T /r/
 Ky /krî?/ Hp /krî/ T /krî?/ 'should'
- Ky /ʏ/: Hp /ɛ/: T /ɛ/
 Ky /ʏâ/ Hp /ɛâ/ T /ɛâ/ 'interrogative particle'

(2) Rhymes

- Ky: i ĭ i? u u e e? o o? ʏ ɛ ai a a? ɔ au ei? ou? yw?
 Hp: i ĭ ĭ u u ɪ e ʊ o ʏ ɛ ɛ a a ɔ ɔ ai au au
 T: ei ĭ i? u ou i e? u o? ʏ e e a a? o o ai? au? au?
- Ky: yn an ein ain ein yun oun aun ʏ ʏ
 Hp: yn an ein ain ein oun oun on yun yn
 T: yn an ein ain ain oun oun on yn yn

Examples

- Ky /i/: Hp /i/: T /ei/
 Ky /lí/ Hp /lǐ/ T /lǐ/ 'air, wind'
- Ky /î/: Hp /î/: T /î/
 Ky /shî/ Hp /chî/ T /chî/ 'race'
- Ky /i?/: Hp /i/: T /i?/
 Ky /krî?/ Hp /krî/ T /krî?/ 'should'
- Ky /u/: Hp /u/: T /u/
 Ky /phû/ Hp /phû/ T /phû/ 'younger sibling'
- Ky /u/: Hp /u/: T /ou/
 Ky /jú/ Hp /jû/ T /jû/ 'to fly'
- Ky /e/: Hp /ɛ/: T /i/
 Ky /lé/ Hp /lǐ/ T /lǐ/ 'to go'
- Ky /e?/: Hp /e/: T /e?/
 Ky /mê?/ Hp /mǐ/ T /mǐ/ 'face'
- Ky /o/: Hp /u/: T /u/
 Ky /mō/ Hp /mū/ T /mū/ 'mother'
- Ky /o?/: Hp /o/: T /o?/
 Ky /phō?/ Hp /phó/ T /phō?/ 'break off (as the edge of something)'
- Ky /ʏ/: Hp /ʏ/: T /ʏ/
 Ky /lǎ/ Hp /lǎ/ T /lǎ/ 'preposition denoting place'

- Ky /ε/: Hp /ε/: T /e/
Ky /mwê/ Hp /mwē/ T /mwē/ 'copulative verb'
- Ky /ai/: Hp /ε/: T /e/
Ky /jâi/ Hp /jē/ T /jē/ 'five'
- Ky /a/: Hp /a/: T /a/
Ky /phâ/ Hp /phā/ T /phā/ 'father'
- Ky /aʔ/: Hp /a/: T /aʔ/
Ky /jâʔ/ Hp /já/ T /jāʔ/ 'to be torn'
- Ky /ɔ/: Hp /ɔ/: T /o/
Ky /nô/ Hp /nó/ T /nó/ 'that'
- Ky /au/: Hp /ɔ/: T /o/
Ky /ʔau/ Hp /ʔó/ T /ʔó/ 'to exist, to be, to live'
- Ky /eiʔ/: Hp /ai/: T /aiʔ/
Ky /shêiʔ/ Hp /chái/ T /chāiʔ/ 'rice field'
- Ky /ouʔ/: Hp /au/: T /auʔ/
Ky /lôuʔ/ Hp /láu/ T /lāuʔ/ 'to be finished'
- Ky /vuʔ/: Hp /au/: T /auʔ/
Ky /m̃vuʔ/ Hp /m̃áu/ T /m̃āuʔ/ 'to be comfortable, healthy, happy'
- Ky /vn/: Hp /vn/: T /vn/
Ky /ph̃vnθâʔ/ Hp /ph̃vnθà/ T /ph̃vnθàʔ/ 'road'
- Ky /an/: Hp /an/: T /an/
Ky /ʔàn/ Hp /ʔán/ T /ʔán/ 'to eat'
- Ky /ein/: Hp /ein/: T /ein/
Ky /méin/ Hp /mèin/ T /mèin/ 'name (noun)'
- Ky /ain/: Hp /ain/: T /ain/
Ky /tháin/ Hp /thàin/ T /thàin/ 'to return'
- Ky /ein/: Hp /ein/: T /ain/
Ky /jèin/ Hp /yéin/ T /yáin/ 'house'
- Ky /vuun/: Hp /oun/: T /oun/
Ky /mátvuun/ Hp /màtòun/ T /màtòun/ 'to threaten'
- Ky /oun/: Hp /oun/: T /oun/
Ky /phlóun/ Hp /phlòun/ T /phlòun/ 'Karen, person'
- Ky /aun/: Hp /on/: T /on/
Ky /tháun/ Hp /thòn/ T /thòn/ 'bridge'
- Ky /x/: Hp /vuun/: T /vn/
Ky /b̃x/ Hp /b̃vuun/ T /b̃vn/ 'to be brave'
- Ky /x/: Hp /vn/: T /vn/
Ky /θ̃x/ Hp /θ̃vn/ T /θ̃vn/ 'three'

(3) Tones

Ky:	ˆ	ˊ	ˋ	ˋ	ˆ?	ˆ?
Hp:	-	ˋ	ˊ	ˆ	ˊ	ˋ
T:	-	ˋ	ˊ	ˆ	-?	ˋ?

Examples

Ky /ˆ/: Hp /ˊ/: T /ˊ/	
Ky /phâ/ Hp /phā/ T /phā/	'father'
Ky /ˊ/: Hp /ˊ/: T /ˊ/	
Ky /ná/: Hp /nà/: T /nà/	'night'
Ky /ˋ/: Hp /ˋ/: T /ˋ/	
Ky /khà/: Hp /khá/: T /khá/	'to be bitter'
Ky /ˋ/: Hp /ˋ/: T /ˋ/	
Ky /mà/: Hp /mâ/: T /mâ/	'wife'
Ky /ˆ?/: Hp /ˊ/: T /ˋ?/	
Ky /jâ?/: Hp /já/: T /jā?/	'to be torn'
Ky /ˆ?/: Hp /ˋ/: T /ˋ?/	
Ky /thâ?/: Hp /thà/: T /thà?/	'iron, needle'

5. Pronoun System

Below is a table showing the pronoun system of the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects.

	SUBJ/POSS	OBJECT	EMPHATIC
<i>Kyonbyaw</i>			
1 sg	jŷ-	já	jáwè, jŷwédà
1 pl	pŷ-	bá, báθì	báwè, pŷwédà
2 sg	nŷ-	ná	náwè, nŷwédà
2 pl	nŷθì	nŷθì	nŷθìwè, nŷθìwédà
3 sg	ŷwè (SUBJ)	ŷwè	ŷwédà
	ŷ- (POSS)		
3 pl	ŷwéθì	ŷwéθì	ŷwéθì
<i>Hpa-an</i>			
1 sg	jŷ-	jŷ	jŷwè, jŷwédá
1 pl	pŷ-, hŷ-	pŷ, hŷ hŷwè, hŷwédá	pŷwè, pŷwédá
2 sg	nŷ-	nŷ	nŷwè, nŷwédá
2 pl	nŷθí	nŷθí	nŷθíwè, nŷθíwédá
3 sg	ŷwè (SUBJ)	ŷ, ŷwè	ŷwédá
	ŷ- (POSS)		
3 pl	ŷθí, ŷwéθí	ŷθí, ŷwéθí	ŷθíwè

Both dialects have three series of pronominal forms. Subject-possessive forms are used before a verb or noun. The subject form differs from the possessive form only in the third person. Object forms are used after a verb or preposition. Object forms are also used when pronouns are topicalized. Topicalized pronouns are often followed by /nɔ̃/(Kyonbyaw), /nɔ̃/(Hpa-an) 'that' or /jɔ̃/(Ky), /jɔ̃/(Hp) 'this'. Emphatic forms are used when one would like to place emphasis on a topicalized pronoun.

6. Texts

In this section we present some texts in the Kyonbyaw and Hpa-an dialects as reference materials. Two texts with similar contents are offered in each dialect. These texts are based on a Pwo Karen reader printed in Hpa-an. The Hpa-an texts have been revised by the author and the informant, while those of the Kyonbyaw dialect are translations by the author in co-operation with the informant. Differences between the Eastern dialects and the Western dialects can be seen to a certain extent in these texts.

6.1. Texts in the Kyonbyaw Dialect

VISITING FATHER'S RICE FIELD

- (0) "lé yâ?kwé lý phâ shêi? phý"
go play in father rice field inside
- (1) kŷnɨjɔ̃ mwê mûnɨ ʔýtʔu? nɔ̃ lɔ̃.
today COP day Sunday that POL
nânýeshèin lý ʔŷ- phúkhwà sŷθâ?ɔ̃wá ní yá
(name) and 3sg brother (name) 2 NCL
ɔ̃à lé málò leɨ? lý cáun ʔàu ʔê?
must go study book in school exist not
- (2) wâinân, pŷ- kŷ- lé yâ?kwé lý phâ ʔŷ- shêi? phý ʔó yà.
sister 1pl will go play in father 3sg rice field inside that QUE
- (3) pŷ- kŷ- lé, dâáɔ̃ pŷ- kŷ- lé lý khli nŷ- wâ khli θè yà.
1pl will go youngest child 1pl will go by boat 2sg row boat can QUE
- (4) ʔò, jŷ- wâ khli θè tó.
eh? 1sg row boat can of course
- (5) mánê khliwâ ní áaun, dâáɔ̃. ná, wâ khli lý ʔŷmê?jà
take paddle 2 NCL youngest child 2sg row boat in front
já, jŷ- kŷ- wâ lý ʔŷlânkhàin nê.
1sg 1sg will row in rear shall we?

- (6) thỳphûwâi ní yá thànthôu? khli yáun
sister and brother 2 NCL ride boat finish
lé wè lý ỹ- phâ cán 7ó lò.
go VS to 3sg father hut there POL
- (7) wâinân, phâ cán nò 7âu phâ? jáin cí yà.
sister father hut that exist very far very QUE
- (8) đầbó, cán 7âu 7ý phlòun nò nỹ- đầ yà.
youngest child hut exist 3 NCL that 2sg see QUE
lý 7ỹklá kỹ- phlòun nò phâ 7ỹ- cán lò.
from middle 1 NCL that father 3sg hut POL
- (9) thỳphûwâi ní yá lé wè lý phâ cán 7ó lò.
sister and brother 2 NCL go VS to father hut there POL
- (10) wé, phâ. wé, phâ.
hi! father hi! father
- (11) wé, nỹ7ì yài má mỹnò lài.
oh? 2pl come do what QUE
nỹ7ì lé jâ thì lý thìkhlo? phỹ lỹýc nê.
2pl go swim water in river inside don't SFP
nỹ7ì kỹ- lán?7uw?
2pl will drown
- (12) đầbó, yài. pỹ- kỹ- lé 7àankhwè lý tỹkhâkhlo? 7ó.
youngest child come 1pl will go fish in river there
- (13) pỹ- kỹ- lé, wâinân.
3pl will go sister
- (14) thỳphûwâi ní yá lé 7àankhwè lò.
sister and brother 2 NCL go fish POL
- (15) đầbó, ná, 7àankhwè lỹj, jỹ- kỹ- lé 7àankhwè lỹ7ó.
youngest brother 2sg fish here 1sg will go fish there
- (16) 7ó, wâinân, jỹ- kỹ- 7àankhwè thỹj lò.
yeah sister 1sg will fish around here POL
- (17) 7ỹshỹ?7ỹthô lỹ- jêi? 7bà, mûmê? xâinlân wè lò.
time not past not sun go down VS POL
- (18) wé, đầbó, nỹ- nê jà xwê bèin lài.
hey! youngest child 2sg get fish how many NCL QUE

- (19) jǎ- nê jàkò lî ðèin, wáinân.
1sg get (fish name) 4 NCL sister
- (20) bà jôu?. jǎ- nê jàlû lî ðèin lý jàphlêi? lî ðèin.
proper PER 1sg get (fish name) 4 NCL and (fish name) 4 NCL
- (21) tháun nô kǎ- cà ʔýwéθì ʔý- phâ kô? só ʔýwéθì lò.
reach that 1 NCL 3pl 3sg father call VS 3pl POL
- (22) wé, phòmìu phòkhwà θì, ʔýkhèin bà jou?, nǎθì kǎ- bà
hey! daughter son pl time proper PER 2pl will must
tháin. shǎ- kǎ- khêi? lán lò.
return thing will dark VS POL
- (23) ʔó, phâ, pǎ- kǎ- tháin lò.
oh! father 1pl will return POL
đăđó, mánê khliwâ, pǎ- kǎ- tháin.
youngest child take paddle 1pl will return
- (24) thǎphûwâi ní ýá thànthôu? khli ýáun tháin lý
sister and brother 2 NCL ride boat finish return to
ʔýwéθì ʔý- jèin lò.
3pl 3sg house POL

HEALTH

- (0) "shǎ- àushàun?àukhlàin ʔýýâin"
NOM healthy matter
- (1) pǎwédà bàθì lýphà jô pǎ- kǎ- bà ʔau shèinshèinphlèphlè
1pl 1pl pl this 1pl will must live cleanly
kô? ní đê? lò.
every day every POL
- (2) pǎ- mì ýâithý thàn lý ýáunànkhyu? nò, pǎ- bà phlá
1pl sleep get up VS in morning that 1pl must wash
pǎ- mê? shèinshèin lò.
1pl face cleanly POL
- (3) ʔè ýáun, pǎ- bà thýu? shèin pǎ- θwà lý thílà nò lò.
if finish 1pl must brush clean 1pl tooth with salt that POL
- (4) pǎ- bà ýùu pǎ- khò lý phláuθò ýáun, pǎ- bà
1pl must besmear 1pl head with coconut oil finish 1pl must

- khwì pǎ- khò yéyé lǎ.
comb 1pl head well POL
- (5) càn, pǎlǎu?, shǎkàunshǎthò? thǎyǎlou? nò mý, ʔǎkì lǎ- thàn
sarong shirt clothes all that also dirt not rise
bà ʔǎyân, pǎ- kǎ- bà ʔànshòwâ? kàunthò? lǎ.
not sake 1pl will must wash wear POL
- (6) shǎ- ʔàushàunʔàukhlàin kǎ- ʔàu ʔǎyân, pǎ- kǎ- bà ʔàn shǎ-
NOM healthy will exist sake 1pl will must eat NOM
ʔàn shǎ- ʔáu lǎphà lǎ kǎ- kài thàn pǎ- yân nò lǎ.
eat NOM drink pl REL will become VS 1pl power that POL
- (7) phòthà thì yá, báthì jò pǎ- ʔàn ʔǎkhèin pǎ- ʔàn, pǎ- kwé ʔǎkhèin
child pl SFP 1pl this 1pl eat time 1pl eat 1pl play time
pǎ- kwé nò, pǎ- thà? kǎ- xwì pǎ- kǎ- ʔàushàunʔàukhlàin lǎ.
1pl play that 1pl heart will light 1pl will healthy POL
- (8) báthì ʔè ʔàushàunʔàukhlàin nò, pǎ- thǎ pǎ- thà? xwì wè nò
1pl if healthy that 1pl liver 1pl heart light VS that
mwê nǎthì thèjà yà.
COP 2pl know QUE
- (9) ʔè yáun, pǎ- ʔàushàunʔàukhlàin nò, pǎ- málò lèiʔlái mý
if finish 1pl healthy that 1pl study book also
thè phlài lǎ.
can fast POL
- (10) bá jò pǎ- thè pǎ- bà lèiʔlái ʔǎyǎyǎwé tá, pǎ-
1pl this 1pl capable 1pl capable book enough and 1pl
thì pǎ- khân pǎ- tǎwàn ʔǎyân pǎ- shí pǎ- shá
country 1pl country 1pl village sake 1pl race 1pl race
ʔǎyân mý pǎ- máshǎ kǎ- kài thàn wè lǎ.
sake also 1pl help will become VS VS POL

6.2. Texts in the Hpa-an Dialect

VISITING FATHER'S RICE FIELD

- (0) "lì cáinkwè lǎ phā cháí phèn"
go play in father rice field inside

- (1) lǝnǝjò mwē ʔtáu mūnì nò lǝ
today COP Sunday day that POL
nānyichēin dè ʔ- phūkhwā cʔθàʔwà nī yà nò
(name) and 3sg brother (name) 2 NCL that
bá lì mǎlú láí lý phǎ ʔò ʔǝ lǝn ʔé
must go study book in school there exist anymore not
- (2) wēnān pǝ- lì cáinkwè lý phā ʔ- cháí phǝn ʔò kǎ.
sister 1pl go play in father 3sg rice field inside there QUE
- (3) lì dábì. pǝ- mǝ- lì dè khlí. nǝ- phlē khlí θí chī lǝ jǎ.
go youngest child 1pl will go by boat 2sg row boat can too POL QUE
- (4) ʔó, jǝ- phlē khlí θí, wēnān.
eh? 1sg row boat can sister
- (5) ʔānmānt mēinphlē nān nī béin, dábì. ʔè yòn, nǝ- phlē
take paddle about 2 NCL youngest child if finish 2sg row
khlí lý ʔyméjǎ nò, jǝ- mǝ- phlē lý ʔlānkhlān jò lǝ.
boat in front that 1sg will row in rear this POL
- (6) tǝphūwē nī yà tháu thán khlí yòn
sister and brother 2 NCL ride VS boat finish
lì wē lý ʔ- phā càn ʔò lǝ
go VS to 3sg father hut there POL
- (7) wēnān, phā càn nò ʔǝ phā jǎin chī kǎ.
sister father hut that exist very far too QUE
- (8) dábì, càn ʔǝ θǝn phlóun nò mwē nǝ- dá chī kǎ.
youngest child hut exist 3 NCL that COP 2sg see too QUE
lý ʔyklà lǝ- phlóun nò mwē wē dá phā ʔ- càn nò lǝ.
from middle 1 NCL that COP VS VS father 3sg hut that POL
- (9) tǝphūwē nī yà lì wē dá lý ʔ- phā càn ʔò lǝ.
sister and brother 2 NCL go VS VS to 3sg father hut there POL
- (10) wé, phā. wé phā.
hi! father hi! father
- (11) wé, nǝθí yē mà nò lē.
oh! 2pl come do what QUE
nǝθí lì jǎ klān bá thílý thī khló phǝn ʔó
2pl go swim VS VS water in river inside there

lǐxì jǐ. nǚθí mǚ- làn?àu
 don't SFP 2pl will drown

- (12) dábì, yē. pǚ- mǚ- lì ?ánkhwê lý thǐkhlò phǐn ?ó.
 youngest child come 1pl will go fish in river inside there

- (13) lì, wēnân.
 go sister

- (14) tǚphûwē nī yà lì ?ánkhwê wē dá lǒ.
 sister and brother 2 NCL go fish VS VS POL

- (15) dábì, nǚ- ?ánkhwê léjò, jǚ- mǚ- ?ánkhwê lé?ò.
 youngest child 2sg fish here 1sg will fish there

- (16) ?ò, wēnân, jǚ- mǚ- ?ánkhwê thōnjò lǒ.
 yeah sister 1sg will fish around here POL

- (17) chǚ?ǚchǚn?ǚthǒ lǚ- jái lǚ- mǒ bá nó tā,
 time not past not past not that and
 mǔmē xāinlàn wē dá lǒ.
 sun go down VS VS POL

- (18) wé, dábì, nǚ- nī já xwē bēin lē.
 hey! youngest child 2sg get fish how many NCL QUE

- (19) jǚ- nī jákú lī bēin, wēnân.
 1sg get (fish name) 4 NCL sister

- (20) bā jàu jǚ- nī jálū lī bēin dè jáphlái lī bēin jàu lǒ.
 proper PER 1sg get (fish name) 4 NCL and (fish name) 4 NCL PER POL

- (21) thòn nó thò tā, ?ǚθíwê phā kò cù ?ǚθí lǒ.
 reach that like and 3pl father call VS 3pl POL

- (22) wé, phúmú phúkhwâ θí, nǚθí bá ?ǚkhâ thàin jàu.
 hey! daughter son pl 2pl hit time return PER

chǚ- mǚ- khài làn lǒ.
 thing will dark VS POL

- (23) ?ò, phā, pǚ- mǚ- thàin lǒ.
 oh! father 1pl will return POL

dábì, ?ànmanī mēinphlē, pǚ- mǚ- thàin lǒ.
 youngest child take paddle 1pl will return POL

- (24) tǚphûwē nī yà tháu thán khǐ yòn thàin wē
 sister and brother 2 NCL ride VS boat finish return VS

lý ʔǎí ʔǎ- yéin ʔò lǎ.
to 3pl 3sg house there POL

HEALTH

- (0) "ʔóchónʔókhlain ʔǎyāin"
healthy matter
- (1) pǎ jò pǎ- bá ʔó ʔèphlǎi ʔèchêinpràn kô nî dè nó lǎ.
1pl this 1pl must live cleanly cleanly every day every that POL
- (2) pǎ- mî yêthŷuwn thán lý kèwò khâ nó, pǎ- bá phlà
1pl sleep get up VS in morning time that 1pl must wash
pǎ- mé ʔèchêin lǎ.
1pl face cleanly POL
- (3) ʔè yòn, bê mǎ- chêinphlǎ ʔò, pǎ- bá thau pǎ- mé
if finish sake will clean sake 1pl must brush 1pl tooth
dè thǎlâ nó lǎ.
with salt that POL
- (4) pǎ- yúu thán khú dè phlòááú ʔè yòn, bá khwî
1pl besmear VS head with coconut oil if finish must comb
thán khú nó ʔèyǎ chǐ lǎ.
VS head that good too POL
- (5) thǎdòn, chàncân, chǎkòndchǎò nó ʔí, bêòò ʔǎkǐ lǎ- ʔó
sarong shirt clothes that also sake dirt not exist
bá ʔò, pǎ- bá ʔánʔíjà kòndò wê dá lǎ.
not sake 1pl must wash wear VS VS POL
- (6) bêòò chǎ- ʔóchónʔókhlain mǎ- ʔó ʔò, pǎ- bá ʔán chá ʔán
sake NOM healthy will exist sake 1pl must eat bait eat
chá ʔó ʔí lǎphá lý ʔǎ- ké thán pǎ- yāin nó chǎ lǎ.
bait drink pl pl REL 3sg become VS 1pl power that too POL
- (7) phúá ʔí ké, pǎ jò bá ʔǎkhâ ʔán pǎ- ʔè ʔán, bá ʔǎkhâ lókwè
child pl SFP 1pl this hit time eat 1pl if eat hit time play
pǎ- ʔè lókwè chǎ tǎ, pǎnānchā ʔí mǎ- chónkhlain pǎ- ʔŷuwn
1pl if play too and ourselves also will healthy 1pl liver
pǎ- ʔà ʔí mǎ- xwê wê chǎ lǎ.
1pl heart also will light VS too POL

- (8) pŷnânchā ʔè chónkhlâin cài bò, pŷ- 0ýuun pŷ- 0à 0í mŷ-
 ourselves if healthy say if 1pl liver 1pl heart also will
 xwê wê chī nó, mwē nŷ0í 0íjâ chī kâ.
 light VS too that COP 2pl know too QUE
- (9) ʔè yòŋ, pŷ- ʔè ʔóchòŋʔókhâin nó pŷ- màlú láilē 0í
 if finish 1pl if healthy that 1pl study book also
 0í wê phlé chī lō.
 can VS fast too POL
- (10) pŷ jò chŷ0íchŷbá pòunjâ ʔè ʔó dàupàin wê chī tā, pŷ-
 1pl this knowledge wisdom if exist enough VS too and 1pl
 thīkhān pŷ- dòun tŷwān ʔŷŷān pŷ- chī pŷ- chà ʔŷŷān 0í
 country 1pl town village sake 1pl race 1pl race sake also
 pŷ- màbò màchŷn mŷ- ké thán wê chī nó lō.
 1pl help will become VS VS too that POL

6.3. English Translations

6.3.1. VISITING FATHER'S RICE FIELD

(0) "VISITING FATHER'S RICE FIELD"

- (1) It is Sunday today. nânŷéshèin/nânŷìchêin and her younger brother sŷ0âʔwá/cŷ0âʔwà do not have to go school to study.
- (2) (BROTHER): Shall we go to our father's rice field?
- (3) (SISTER): Yes, let's. Let's go by boat. Can you row a boat?
- (4) (B): Eh? Of course, I can.
- (5) (S): Bring two paddles. You row (there) in the front! I will row (here) in the back.
- (6) The sister and brother set out for their father's hut in the boat.
- (7) (B): You can see three huts there, can't you? The middle one is our father's.
- (9) They (two) go to the father's hut.
- (10) (B): Father! Father!
- (11) (FATHER): Oh? What are you here to do? Don't swim in the river, or you'll drown.

- (12) (S): Come! Let's go to fish in the river!
- (13) (B): Yes, let's.
- (14) They go to fish.
- (15) (S): You fish here, and I'll fish over there.
- (16) (B): Yes, I'll fish around here.
- (17) The sun is about to go down.
- (18) (S): How many fish did you get?
- (19) (B): I got four torpedos.
- (20) (S): Very good! I got four banded-snakeheads and four featherbacks.
- (21) At that time their father called them:
- (22) (F): Hey! It's time to go. Let's go!
- (23) (S): Yes, Father. Let's go. You (brother), bring the paddles. We'll go!
- (24) They rode on the boat, and went back home.

6.3.2. HEALTH

- (0) "HEALTH"
- (1) We must live cleanly every day.
- (2) When we get up in the morning, we must wash our face thoroughly (cleanly).
- (3) After that, we must brush our teeth with salt until they are clean.
- (4) After applying coconut oil to our hair, we must comb well.
- (5) As for sarongs, shirts, and other clothes, we must wash (and wear) them in such a way that they don't get dirty.
- (6) We must eat foods which make us strong, so that we can live healthy.
- (7) Children! If you eat when you must eat, and if you play when you must play, you will be healthy, and happy too.
- (8) Do you know that if you are healthy, you will feel happy?
- (9) And if you are healthy, you can learn fast.
- (10) And if we have sufficient knowledge, we can make contributions to our country, town, village and also to our race.

6.4 Notes to the Texts

(1) Abbreviations

COP = copulative verb

NCL = numeral classifier

NOM = nominalizer

PER = perfective

POL = particle denoting politeness

REL = relativizer

QUE = interrogative particle

SFP = sentence final particles denoting various modes

VS = verbal suffixes:

/klàn/(Hpa-an) means 'indiscriminately'

/wè/(Kyonbyaw) and /wê/(Hp) denote the third person

/bà/(Ky) and /bá/(Hp) denote opportunity or permission

/só/(Ky) and /cù/(Hp) denote a distance between the actor and patient

/thàn/(Ky) and /thán/(Hp) denote ascent or appearance

/làn/(Ky) and /làn/(Hp) denote descent or disappearance

/dà/(Ky) and /dá/(Hp) mean 'only' or 'just'

REFERENCES

- Benedict, Paul K. 1972. *Sino-Tibetan: a Conspectus*. Contributing editor, James A. Matisoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chappell, Hilary. 1992. "The benefactive construction in Moulmein Sgaw Karen." *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 15.1:11-30.
- Cooke, Joseph R., Edwin Hudspith, and James A. Morris. 1976. "Phlong (Pwo Karen of Hot district, Chiang Mai)." In William A. Smalley (ed.), *Phonemes and Orthography: Language Planning in Ten Minority Languages of Thailand*, pp.187-220. Pacific Linguistics Series C-No. 43, Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Jones, Robert B. Jr. 1961. *Karen Linguistic Studies*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Kato, Atsuhiko. 1991. "On three Karen particles di?, lì and ly : the Karen version of 'still' and 'anymore'." *Tokyo University Linguistics Papers* 12:97-117.

- _____. 1993. "Sugoo Karengo no doosi renzoku" (Verb serialization in Sgaw Karen). *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 45:177-204. (in Japanese)
- Purser, W.C.B. 1922. *A Comparative Dictionary of the Pwo-Karen Dialect*. Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press.
- Ratanakul, Suriya. 1981. *Phótcaanánúkrom Phaasǎa Thai-Kariaŋ Sakɔɔ* (Thai-Sgaw Karen Dictionary). Nakorn Pathom: Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University.
- Shafer, Robert. 1974. *Introduction to Sino-Tibetan*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Solnit, David B. 1986. *A Grammatical Sketch of Eastern Kayah (Red Karen)*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Stern, Theodore. 1968. "Three Pwo Karen scripts: a study of alphabet formation." *Anthropological Linguistics* 10.1:1-39.
- Yabu, Shiro. 1988. "Karengogun (Karenish)." *The Sanseido Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, pp.1312-1318. Tokyo: Sanseido.