

THE YAW DIALECT OF BURMESE

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1. Introduction

It was no doubt his admitted lack of information which made Forbes (1881:56) think that the Yaw dialect of Burmese was 'certainly unintelligible to any Burman. In fact, as Houghton (1897:456) and Taylor (1921:91) observe, Yaw had few differences from Standard Burmese. A British Settlement Officer reported that, 'at first, the dialect is difficult to understand, but after a few days one finds oneself speaking it and it presents no difficulty' (Abigail 1932:6).

Few and unspectacular though the differences are, they are important, as they place Yaw (YW*) several steps closer than Standard Burmese (SB*) -- or any of the recognised dialects -- to Written Burmese (WB*), and this feature makes it a valuable ingredient in comparative studies.

Despite its importance in this respect, Yaw has not been described in any detail till relatively recently (Kya Htùn 1969:; Yabu Shiro 1980). Ono (1969) allows just over a page to Yaw, and earlier studies went no further than noting a few forms in comparative lists (Buchanan 1799; Houghton 1897; Grierson 1928; Taylor 1921). A description in English, and a comparison with Standard Burmese and Written Burmese has been lacking. I was fortunate in being able to record two texts of spoken Yaw in Burma, and to have the assistance of the speakers in transcribing them. These texts, supplemented by my informants' answers to queries, provide the material for the outline description presented here.¹

1.1 Features of particular interest

For many, the most spectacular feature of Yaw is its rhymes /ak/ and /aŋ/, corresponding to Standard Burmese /εʔ/ and /in/. (For systems of transliteration and transcription see Okell 1971.) Yaw not only reflects more closely the ak and aŋ of Written Burmese, but also -- with occasional lapses -- has velar closure for both. It also has velar closure in its YW /auk/, WB ok, SB /auʔ/, though not, curiously, in its YW /aun/,

* These are the abbreviations used in tables and examples. ((Ed.))

WB oñ, SB /aun/. For the standard array of eight final consonants in Written Burmese, none of the other major dialects now has anything more than glottal stop (for Written Burmese obstruents) or nasalised vowel (for Written Burmese nasals). In these circumstances, Yaw's velar closure is a remarkable relic.

Yaw has also not yet allowed initial, or medial /w/ to alter the quality of the following vowel.

For WB	<u>at</u>	<u>an</u>	<u>wat</u>	<u>wan</u>
and	<u>ap</u>	<u>am</u>	<u>wap</u>	<u>wam</u>
where SB has	/aʔ	an	wuʔ	wun/
Yaw stoutly preserves	/ɛʔ	ɛn	wɛʔ	wɛn/

One other point worth mentioning here is the consistency of the Yaw rhyme /ɛ/ (rarely /e/) for Written Burmese aññ. Like the reflexes of this rhyme in other dialects, Yaw's consistency shows how eclectic Standard Burmese has been with its /i/, /e/ and /ɛ/ realizations.

1.2 Location and numbers of the Yaw

My informants said the main town centres of the Yaw are at Yaw itself, and at Htì-lìn and Gán-gàw, which places them at the head of the Myit-thà valley, with the Chin Hills on the west, and the Pon-daung and Pon-nya ranges on the east -- a geographical setting that might be expected to isolate them somewhat. This location is confirmed by Kya Htùn (1969:142) and by the *Swe-zon kyàn* (1970:2). *The Linguistic survey of Burma* (LSB, Webb 1917), however, records the majority on the plains side of the watershed, 'between Saw and Seikpyu', with a few outliers further north on the western edge of the plain, reaching as far as Kani on the Chìn-dwìn river.

It is difficult to reconcile this discrepancy without a further survey. Some of the more obvious possibilities are that respondents to the LSB questionnaire in the valley, which the survey did cover, did not fully understand what was being asked; or my informants, being valley men, may have been unaware of the numbers of Yaw on the plains side; or there may have been appreciable population movements in the sixty years since the survey itself. There is also mention in the literature of a group of Yaw who fled to the upper Mù valley in the Katha District (Harvey 1925:262) and of two Yaw villages way up near Myit-kyì-nà (Webb 1917:33).

The present number of Yaw speakers is unknown. The LSB (Webb 1917:55) recorded over 24,000. This stands in marked contrast to the *Census* (1933) figures, but these can hardly claim serious consideration anyway, in view of their incredible fluctuations: in the five decades from 1891 to 1931 they give

370, 5, 0, 2 and 877 respectively! The low response to the *Census* (1933) is presumably due partly to uncertainty over the criteria that qualify one as a Yaw, and partly to a reluctance to identify oneself as a Yaw anyway (Scott 1900:569; Hardiman 1912:29).

1.3 Background

The antecedents of the Yaw are obscure, and have attracted some divergent speculations:

Dr Mason classes the Yaw as a Burmese tribe. In this he is followed by Dr Cushing. Mr Houghton is inclined to doubt the accuracy of this classification. The Shan chronicles of Mōng Kawng (Mogaung) seem to claim them as Shans, though perhaps they may be the Nora spoken of as earlier owners of the land. They themselves have a legend that they are descended from a clan of the Palaungs called Parawga or Payawga. This in time was shortened through Yawga to Yaw. There are still to be found Parawga sayas among them, oracles or mages, who make their divinations on the Tai cycle tables, which is significant. The common folk say that the reason why their dialect differs from Burmese is that they drink the water of the mountain streams. ... The dialect is a hybrid, nearest to Burmese now; possibly it was at one time nearer to Shan or to some of the Chin dialects (Scott 1900:569)

Other writers choose one or other of the alternatives offered here: primitive Burmans (Forbes 1881:56), from the Irrawaddy valley (Houghton 1897:456), captive Shans sent from Mogaung (Owens 1913:16), Burmese-speaking Chins (Taylor 1921:91), or Chin-tainted Burmans (Saw Shwe Boh 1973:18) -- all indicative of a notable absence of hard facts. Equally fanciful is the identification with Tavoyan (Symes 1800:2, 235), and the attempt to derive Yaw from Standard Burmese /Yð-naká/ 'Shan' (Saw Shwe Boh 1973:16).

The only real evidence one has for the origins of the Yaw is the dialect, and the closeness of this to Standard Burmese and Written Burmese indicates fairly strongly that as Kya Htùn (1969:141) suggests, the Yaw are nothing more exotic than a group of plains Burmans cut off from the mainstream of Standard Burmese development comparatively recently by a degree of geographical isolation.

The 'Payawga' derivation sounds like a folk etymology, based on the fact that the Yaw have a reputation for skill in the magical arts, one form of which -- by no means a Yaw monopoly -- is called /pəyð-gá/ in Standard Burmese, from Pāli *payoga*. Among the many varieties of Palaung listed in the LSB, none has a name resembling this word. Again, the idea that the

Yaw once spoke some more distant or unrelated language (Chin, Palaung, Shan) and subsequently adopted Burmese is an implausible explanation of the peculiarities of their dialect. Such differences as there are between Yaw and Standard Burmese in phonology, grammar and lexicon are not of a kind that can be considered vestiges of an unrelated language. Nor are alleged resemblances to Tavoyan persuasive.

In better documented times, there are records of a kind of Yaw autonomy. There was at one stage a Yâw-lei-myó-wun, with jurisdiction over the four towns of Pauk, Htì-lìn, Sâw and Laing-shei, and each of these towns was governed by a *saw-bwà* (shades of the alleged Shan connection). The Saw-bwà were replaced by *myó-thaggyi* after a rebellion in the reign of Naung-daw-gyi (1763-65) (Owens 1913:15f.), and at the turn of the century the Yaw were still described as 'governed by chiefs of their own, but tributary to the Burmans' (Buchanan 1799:224) -- perhaps not wholly inconsistent with Symes' (1800:1, 235) information that 'the Yoos are subjects of the Birman state, and observe the same religious worship'. Their relative remoteness from central government at this stage is perhaps indicated by the attitude of the clerk who told Symes that they were 'exceedingly ugly, having protuberant bellies and white teeth'. My informants were, in fact, quite good-looking.

1.4 Source of material

I did not go to the Yaw area, but made some recordings in Rangoon of unprepared speech by some students from Gân-gâw who had arrived in Rangoon for the first time only a few days previously. One recording describes some distinctive features of the Yaw area and its people, and the second, by a different speaker, is a folktale.

2. Outline phonology

2.1 Phoneme inventory

2.1.1 *Tones:*

low	/+/
high plain	/ṵ/
high creaky	/ṵ̣/
high stop	/+ʔ/ or /+k/
weak	/ə/

2.1.2 *Rhymes:*

open syllables

weak:				ə			
full:	i	e	ɛ	a	ɔ	o	u

closed syllables

nasal:	ain	ein	ɛn	aŋ	in	oun	aun
stop:	aiʔ	eiʔ	ɛʔ	ak	iʔ	ouʔ	auk

2.1.3 *Heads:*

					<i>with</i>	<i>with</i>
					med /y/	med /w/
						all but
g	d	b	j	z	by	w
k	t	p	c	s	py	ʔ (= /w- /
kh	th	ph	ch	sh	phy	h (= /hw- /)
ŋ	n	m̥n			my	
hŋ	hn	hm	h̥n		hmy	
ʔ	l	w	y	r	(ly)	
h	hl	hw	f		(hly)	

2.2 Phoneme description

As in Standard Burmese, except for:

/ɛn, ɛʔ/: vowel lower than in SB /ɛʔ/

/aŋ, ak, auk/: final velar consonants -- the stop not released -- clearly audible in slow speech, but sometimes realized by nasalization and glottal stop respectively. The vowel in /aŋ, ak/ is more open and back than in SB /an, aʔ/, and close to the SB /a/ of open syllables. Given /auk/ one would expect /aʊŋ/ to match, but it is not attested in my material.

/(ly, hly)/: rare variants for /y, f/, used in formal styles.

2.3 Comparison with Written Burmese

2.3.1 *Tones*: as for Standard Burmese

2.3.2 *Rhymes*:

open

WB	<u>i</u>	<u>e</u>	<u>ai</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>o</u>	<u>ui</u>	<u>u</u>	-
YW	/i	e	ε	a	ɔ	o	u	ə/

closed nasal

WB	<u>in</u>	<u>im</u>	<u>aññ</u>	<u>añ</u>	<u>an</u>	<u>am</u>	<u>añ</u>	<u>on</u>	<u>uin</u>	<u>un</u>	<u>um</u>
YB	/ein			in	ɛn		aŋ	aun	ain	oun/	

closed stop

WB	<u>it</u>	<u>ip</u>	<u>ac</u>	<u>at</u>	<u>ap</u>	<u>ak</u>	<u>ok</u>	<u>uik</u>	<u>ut</u>	<u>up</u>
YW	/ei?		i?	ɛ?		ak	auk	ai?	ou?/	

2.3.3 *Heads*: as for Standard Burmese

3. Notes

3.1 Phonemes

3.1.1 WB aññ corresponds regularly to Yaw /ε/, but not also to /i/ or /e/ as in SB, e.g.

<u>WB</u>	<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
<u>lhaññ</u> :	hlè	hlè	'cart'
<u>saññ</u>	θε	ði, di	'this'
<u>khyaññ</u>	che	chi	'cotton (thread)'
<u>mraññ</u> :	myè	myi	'taste'
<u>kraññ</u> .	cé	cí	'look'
<u>tañ-mrak-caññ</u> :	tabyak-sè	təbye?-sì	'broom'
<u>tacaññ</u> :	təzè	təzì	'a bundle'
<u>kraññ</u>	cε	ci	'be clear'
<u>naññ</u> :	nè	nì	'way'
<u>caññ</u>	sε	si	'be crowded'
<u>praññ</u>	pyε	pyi	' <u>pyi</u> (measure)'
<u>praññ</u> .	pyé	pyé	'be full'

I did encounter a few words with Yaw /e/:

<u>paccaññ:</u>	pyiʔ-sè	pyiʔ-sì	'thing'
<u>man-kyaññ:</u>	məjè	məjì	'tamarind'
<u>caññ:-we:</u>	sè-wè	sì-wè	'meet'
<u>tuin:-praññ</u>	taìn-pye	taìn-pye	'country'

There seems to be no environment feature corresponding to the use of Yaw /e/ rather than /ɛ/; in the list above the heads pr-, c-, and ky/khy- occur with both rhymes.

3.1.2 Initial and medial w do not affect the pronunciation of the rhymes WB an, am and at, ap, as they do in SB, e.g.

<u>WB</u>	<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
<u>wam:</u>	wèn	wùn	'stomach'
<u>kam:</u>	kèn	kàn	'bank'
<u>lwat</u>	lwɛʔ	luʔ	'be free'
<u>tat</u>	tɛʔ	taʔ	'know'

3.1.3 Yaw has only /θ/ where Standard Burmese has /θ/ and /ð/, e.g.

<u>sum:soñ:</u>	θoùn-θaùn	θoùn-ðàùn	'thirty thousand'
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3.1.4 The continuant series has some examples of aspiration in words not aspirated in Standard Burmese, e.g.

<u>mya:</u>	hmyà	myà	'be many'
<u>'anam</u>	əhnɛn	ənan	'side'
<u>nañ</u>	hɲin	ɲin	'draw'
<u>lwam:</u>	hlwèn	lùn	'too much'

3.1.5 Loanwords from Standard Burmese occasionally cut across the general pattern, e.g.

YW & SB /pyi-θú pyiʔ-sì kɔ-po-rè-jìn/
for *YW /pyɛ-θú pyiʔ-sè kɔ-po-rè-jàn/ 'People's Trade Corporation'

3.2 Morphophonemics

3.2.1 Voicing occurs, as in Arakanese, only with plain initials, not with both plain and aspirate as in Standard Burmese, nor with /θ/, e.g.

<u>WB</u>	<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
<u>ne-tā-ka</u>	ne-da-gá	ne-da-gá	'staying'
<u>ta-khu-khu</u>	təkhú-khú	təkhú-gú	'something'
<u>thā:tay</u>	thā-dε	thā-dε	'(they) place'
<u>yokyā:thak</u>	yauk-cā-thak	yau?-cā-dε?	'more than men'
<u>lū-pyui</u>	lu-byo	lu-byo	'bachelor'
<u>twe.phū:</u>	twé-phù	twé-bù	'ever see'
<u>lū-kri:</u>	lu-jî	lu-jî	'elder'
<u>pro-khyañ</u>	pyð-chañ	pyð-jin	'want to say'
<u>nhac-nañ-cap</u>	hnəhnɛn-zε?	hnənan-za?	'sewn together'
<u>'apo-chuñ</u>	əpð-shoùn	əpð-zoùn	'most abundant'
<u>hañ:sī:</u>	hāñ-θî	hīn-ðî	'vegetable'

This feature reveals some aspirates that one would not expect from Written Burmese and Standard Burmese:

<u>laññ-pañ:</u>	ləphāñ	lε-bīn	'neck'
<u>wam:puik</u>	wèn-phai?	wùn-bai?	'stomach'
<u>rañ-pat</u>	yañ-pha?	yin-ba?	'chest'

Possibly Written Burmese spelling has been altered from a more etymologically correct form.

Some words in Standard Burmese have voiced initials even when they are not in close juncture. Their counterparts in Yaw often have voiced initials in the same way, but a number have aspirate initials, e.g.

Voiced initial in Yaw:

<u>WB</u>	<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
<u>gwam:</u>	gwèn	gùn	'cotton'
<u>gui:</u>	gò	gò	'goal'
<u>khwa</u>	gwá	gwá	'fork'
<u>dhāt</u>	dε?	da?	'relic'
<u>byuiñ:</u>	byaìn	byaìn	'paddy bird, egret'
<u>khye:</u>	jè	jî	'dirt'
<u>jhe:</u>	zè	zè	'market'
<u>chak-kruì:</u>	zak-cò	zε?-cò	'reins'

Aspirate initial in Yaw:

<u>khoñ:</u>	khaùn	gaùn	'head'
dhā:	thà	dà	'knife'
bhā, bhay	pha, phe	ba, be	'what? which?'
bhoñ:bhi	phaùn-phí (sic)	baùn-bi	'trousers'
bhu-rañ	phəyaŋ	bəyin	'king'
bū:	phù	bù	'gourd'
bhī:	phī	bī	'comb'
khyit	chei?	jei?	'hook'
khruì	cho	jo	'horn'
khyok	chau?	jau?	'chasm'
jhī:sī:	shì-θì	zì-ðì	'wild plum'

There is hardly enough evidence here to sort out the various factors involved. Some of the Yaw voiced initials can be accounted for by being loans, e.g.

/gò/ from English goal

/dɛ?/ from Pāli dhātu

others may have been voiced in Standard Burmese by the formative voicing and then borrowed in this form into Yaw (e.g. /gwá/) -- assuming, on the evidence of words such as Yaw /chei?, chau?/, that the voicing formative does not operate in Yaw. Others again have probably been voiced in Standard Burmese by close juncture and later lost the first syllable but retained the voicing (cf. e.g., the older forms, Written Burmese: ū:khoñ; ū:khruì). In Yaw the first syllable may have been dropped in the same way, but no voicing remains as aspirate initials would not have been voiced in this position.

Forms like Yaw /thà, phù, phe, shì/ are the most interesting. They could well be survivals of a hypothetical period when Burmese had no voiced obstruents. By this theory, voicing has supervened in Standard Burmese while Yaw holds out against this development. Such words also suggest an explanation for the otherwise bizarre spellings of Written Burmese.

3.2.2 Weakening and induced creaky tone occur much as in Standard Burmese. (See the texts for examples.)

3.3 Grammar

3.3.1 Particles seem to match those of Standard Burmese closely. Two with not quite regular reflexes occur in the recordings.

In Written Burmese and Standard Burmese both have different forms for colloquial and formal styles.

<u>WB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
<u>coll.</u>	<u>form.</u>		<u>coll.</u>	<u>form.</u>	
<u>nai.</u>	<u>nhañ.</u>	ná	né	hnín	'with'
<u>lā:</u>	<u>lo</u>	lò	là	lò	(interrog.)

Yaw /ná/ corresponds to Arakanese, Tavoyan, and In-tha /ná/; Standard Burmese is the odd man out here. Yaw preserves the older form /lò/ which is not used in colloquial Standard Burmese and even in formal Standard Burmese is being ousted by the colloquial /là/.

3.3.2 Some selectives show different forms from Standard Burmese:

<u>WB</u>	<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
<u>saññ</u>	θe	ði, di	'this'
<u>bhay</u> , <u>bha</u>	phɛ, pha	bɛ, ba	'which?', 'what?'
<u>dā</u>	tha	da	'that (thing)'
<u>sañ</u>	θaŋ	θin	'that (year)'

Of these, the first two show regular correspondences, with Yaw voicelessness for Standard Burmese voicing. The last item is rare in Standard Burmese; it is not used in colloquial, but occurs in older literature, and then only with the noun nhac 'year'. Yaw preserves it in speech.

3.4 Vocabulary

There were a few items that differed from Standard Burmese.

3.4.1 Forms which appear not to have cognates in Standard Burmese:

<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
ʃè-dāŋ	poun-byin	'story'
kəzauk-kəzak	əmyà-jì	'much, a lot'

3.4.2 Forms with different meaning or use in Standard Burmese:

<u>YW</u>	<u>SB</u>	<i>gloss</i>
eìn-hmú	é khan	'greet, welcome'
	<u>cf.</u> é, hmú	'visit, do'
loun-gwàŋ	loun-ji	' <u>lon-gyi</u> '
	<u>cf.</u> kwìn	'circle'
si-shaŋ	si-zin	'arrange'
	<u>cf.</u> shin	'set up, set out'

Other vocabulary items are listed in Kya Htùn (1969: 152f.) and Yabu Shiro (1980:169f.)

4. Recordings

The following two texts are extracts from the recordings mentioned in the introduction, the lower line showing the Standard Burmese equivalents. In the transcription of the Yaw version, the rhymes /auk, ak, aŋ/ are written /au?, a?, an/ where this seems closer to the actual pronunciation on the recording. Irregularities such as the occasional voicing of aspirate initials, presumably the result of Standard Burmese influence, are marked with a (B) and shown as they are spoken. False starts, where the speaker corrects himself, are enclosed in square brackets. Sentences are numbered to facilitate reference to the translation.

4.1 Texts

4.1.1 Yaw customs: courting and hospitality

- (1) (B) Gú pyó-chaŋ-da-gá [Gén-gò-nε-ma fí-dé o]
 (1) Gú-pyò-jin-da-gá [Gán-gò-nε-ma fí-dé o]

Yò-nε-ma fí-dé lu-byo hlé-dé dǎlé-lè phyi?-pa-dε
 Yò-nε-ma fí-dé lu-byo hlé-dé dǎlé-lè phyi?-pa-dε

- (2) Lu-byo hlé-dé dǎlé-gá phe-lo-lè sho-dó cənc-dó
 (2) Lu-byo hlé-dé dǎlé-gá be-lo-lè sho-dó cənc-dó

Yò-nε-ma fí-dé ka-lá-θà-de - ka-lá-θà sho-da-gá
 Yò-nε-ma fí-dé ka-lá-ðà-de - ka-lá-ðà sho-da-gá

[əywe yauk-té əchein o -] əywe yau?-té əchein əθak she-jə
 [əywe yau?-té əchein o -] əywe yau?-té əchein əθε? she-jə

hnəshe pε?-wèn-jaŋ-ma fí-dé lu-byo-de-ha - ka-lá-θà-de-ha
 hnəshe pa?-wùn-jin-ma fí-dé lu-byo-de-ha - ka-lá-ðà-de-ha

əpyo lε-dé əlé fí-já-dε.
 əpyo lε-dé əlé fí-já-dε.

(3) [əpyo lɛ-dɛ ɛlɛ fɪ-da-gá è -]

(3) [əpyo lɛ-dɛ ɛlɛ fɪ-da-gá è -]

əpyo lɛ-θwà-ló fɪ-yaŋ, əpyo ein tak-tɛ.

əpyo lɛ-ðwà-ló fɪ-yin, əpyo ein tɛʔ-tɛ.

(4) əpyo ein tak-ló fɪ-yaŋ, əpyo-ná sɛgà pyð-yá-dɛ.

(4) əpyo ein tɛʔ-ló fɪ-yin, əpyo-nɛ sɛgà pyð-yá-dɛ.

(5) əpyo-ha la-dɛ lu-byo-daɪn-go, ka-lá-θà-daɪn-go,

(5) əpyo-ha la-dɛ lu-byo-daɪn-go, ka-lá-ðà-daɪn-go,

ɛ-hkɛn-bì sɛgà pyð-dɛ.

ɛ-hkan-bì sɛgà pyð-dɛ.

(6) è-lo ɛ-khɛn-bì sɛgà pyð-dɛ əkha-ma

(6) è-lo ɛ-khan-bì sɛgà pyð-dɛ əkha-hma

ləphaʔ-ye-jɛn-dó - əthù-θəphyáŋ pɛ-hlɔ,

ləphɛʔ-ye-jàn-dó - əthù-ðəphyín pɛ-hlɔ,

Yð-nɛ-ma thwak-tɛ pɛ-jɛn-hlɔ,

Yð-nɛ-hma thwɛʔ-tɛ pɛ-jàn-hlɔ,

nauʔ-pì-dó-má thənak-ko, (B) əmyà-shoùn tɛ-dɛ.

nauʔ-pì-dó-hmá thənɛʔ-ko, əmyà-zoùn tɛ-dɛ.

(7) Nauʔ-pì-dó-má è-lo ɛ-khɛn sɛgà pyð-dɛ əkha-ma-lè

(7) Nauʔ-pì-dó-hmá è-lo ɛ-khan sɛgà pyð-dɛ əkha-ma-lè

θu-dó-ha lak-ná əlouʔ-ná pyɛʔ-tɛ əchein-yɛ-ló məfɪ-phu.

θu-dó-ha lɛʔ-nɛ əlouʔ-nɛ pyaʔ-tɛ əchein-yɛ-ló məfɪ-bu.

(8) Sɛgà pyð-dɛ əkha-ma, baɪn-go hŋaŋ-ló-θɔ-ləgaùn,

(8) Sɛgà pyð-dɛ əkha-hma, baɪn-go ŋin-ló-ðɔ-ləgaùn,

nauʔ təkhuʔ-(B)gú əlouʔ-ko louʔ-pì-má ɛ-khɛn-dɛ ɛlɛ fɪ-dɛ.

nauʔ təkhuʔ-gú əlouʔ-ko louʔ-pì-hmá ɛ-khan-dɛ ɛlɛ fɪ-dɛ.

(9) è-tha-má θu-dó-ma-lè sɛgà pyð-yá-da lɔɛ-ku-dɛ.

(9) è-da-hmá θu-dó-ma-lè sɛgà pyð-yá-da lɔɛ-ku-dɛ.

(10) Nauʔ-pì-dó baɪn hŋaŋ chɛ-chá-pì-dó-má ɛ-khɛn-dɛ

(10) Nauʔ-pì-dó baɪn ŋin chi-chá-pì-dó-má ɛ-khan-dɛ

ɛlɛ fɪ-dɛ.

ɛlɛ fɪ-dɛ.

(11) è ləphaʔ-ye-de pha-de θauk-pì ɛ-khɛn-dɛ, phɔ-ywe-dɛ

(11) è ləphɛʔ-ye-de ba-de θauʔ-pì ɛ-khan-dɛ, phɔ-ywe-dɛ

(12) Təchà-nε-gá la-dé lu-daïn-go-lè Ɔu-dó-gá [θε ne-ma

(12) Təchà-nε-gá la-dé lu-daïn-go-lè Ɔu-dó-gá [di ne-ma

ʃí-dé -] təkha-gá, əyaŋ təkha twé-phù-dé-ətaïn, twé-phu-θəlo

ʃí-dé -] təkha-gá, əyin təkha twé-bù-dé-ətaïn, twé-bù- θəlo

coun-(B)bù-θəlo shak-shen-dε, pho-ywe-dε.

coun-bù-θəlo sheʔ-shan-dε, pho-ywe-dε.

(13) è-θé əlé-ha Yð-nε-ma sho-ló ʃí-yaŋ

(13) è-di əlé-ha Yð-nε-ma sho-ló ʃí-yin

chiʔ-səya kaùn-dé əlé təkhú phyiʔ-tε-ló sho-chaŋ-dε.

chiʔ-səya kaùn-dé əlé təkhú phyiʔ-tε-ló sho-jin-dε.

(14) Nauʔ-pì əphe-əme-ha sho-ló ʃí-yaŋ-lè

(14) Nauʔ-pì əphe-əme-ha sho-ló ʃí-yin-lè

è-lo ka-lá-θà-de əle la-dé əchein-ma, Ɔu-dó-gá

è-lo ka-lá-ðà-de əle la-dé əchein-ma, Ɔu-dó-gá

θəbð cá-dε: Yð dəlé əne-ná sho-ló ʃí-yaŋ wèn myauk-cá-dε.

θəbð cá-dε: Yð dəlé əne-né sho-ló ʃí-yin wùn myauʔ-cá-dε.

(15) è-lo ka-lá-θà-de əle la-dé əchein-ma Ɔu-dó-ha sð-zð sì-zì

(15) è-lo ka-lá-ðà-de əle la-dé əchein-ma Ɔu-dó-ha sð-zð sì-zì

eiʔ-ya waŋ-dεʔ-té əlé ʃí-dε.

eiʔ-ya win-daʔ-té əlé ʃí-dε.

(16) Ka-lá-θà-de əle la-dé əchein-ma

(16) Ka-lá-ðà-de əle la-dé əchein-ma

ka-lá-θà-de-ná [θəbð-gá o -] θəbð cá-dε sho-ló ʃí-yaŋ,

ka-lá-ðà-de-né [θəbð-gá o -] θəbð cá-dε sho-ló ʃí-yin,

Ɔu-dó-go pyo-byo ʃwaŋ-ʃwaŋ ne-ze-chaŋ-dε,

Ɔu-dó-go pyo-byo ʃwin-ʃwin ne-ze-jin-dε,

lweʔ-lweʔ leʔ-leʔ ne-ze-chaŋ-dé θəbð.

luʔ-luʔ laʔ-laʔ ne-ze-jin-dé θəbð.

(17) Hta-jaún-hmó-ló è-θε əphe-əme-de-ha

(17) Da-jaún-hmó-ló è-di əphe-əme-de-ha

sho-ló ʃí-yaŋ-lè Ɔu-dó-ha-ná Ɔu-dó

sho-ló ʃí-yin-lè Ɔu-dó-ha-né Ɔu-dó

wàin-phwé-ló-θo-ləgaùn, lu-jì-chàŋ

wàin-phwé-ló-ðo-ləgaùn, lu-jì-jìn

wàin-phwé-ló-θo-ləgaùn, tha-hmá məhouʔ sð-zð sì-zì

wàin-phwé-ló-ðo-ləgaùn, da-hmá məhouʔ sð-zð sì-zì

eiʔ-ya waŋ-dé əne-ná-θo-ləgaùn,

eiʔ-ya win-dé əne-né-ðo-ləgaùn,

0u-dó-ha lwe?-lwe? le?-le? [0ú 0à e -] 0ú 0ə̀mì-de-go
 0u-dó-ha lu?-lu? la?-la? [0ú 0à e -] 0ú 0ə̀mì-de-go

pyò-khwāŋ pè-thà-dε.

pyò-gwín pè-thà-dε.

(18) è-tha sho-ló jí-yaŋ Yɔ-ne-yé lu-byo hlé-dé dəlɛ́

(18) è-da sho-ló jí-yin Yɔ-ne-yé lu-byo hlé-dé dəlɛ́

phyi?-pa-dε.

phyi?-pa-dε.

4.1.2 The tale of the tiger and the elephant

(1) jè-doùn-gá cà-ná shaŋ-gá jí-dε kwé.

(1) jè-doùn-gá cà-né shin-gá jí-dε kwé.

(2) è-tha 0u-dó twé-já-dó, tэгò pyain-yá-aun sho-pì-má

(2) è-da 0u-dó twé-já-dó, tэгò pyain-yá-aun sho-pì-má

cà-gá pyò-pyá-dε.

cà-gá pyò-pyá-dε.

(3) è cá 'phe-lo pyain-já-məlè' sho-dó

(3) è cá 'be-lo pyain-já-məlè' sho-dó

[ho -] lak-pen-baŋ-bɔ-ma [lak -] shəyak-tei

[ho -] le?-pan-bin-bɔ-ma [le? -] zəye?-tei

(B) əmyà-jì nà-ne-dε kwá.

əmyà-jì nà-ne-dε kwá.

(4) è-tha-go - ho shəyak-tei-go [0ú -]

(4) è-da-go - ho zəye?-tei-go [0ú -]

'Māŋ əθen-gá kaùn-lò - māŋ-gá pyen-hnain-aun

'Mín əθan-gá kaùn-là - mín-gá pyan-hnain-aun

lou?-hnain-məlò, ŋa-gá pyen-hnain-aun lou?-hnain-məlò'

lou?-hnain-məlà, ŋa-gá pyan-hnain-aun lou?-hnain-məlà'

sho-bì lou?-cá-dó,

sho-bì lou?-cá-dó,

(5) [həwa -] 'Māŋ-gá əyaŋ ɔ kwé' ló pyò-dε - shaŋ-go.

(5) [həwa -] 'Mín-gá əyin ɔ kwé' ló pyò-dε - shin-go.

(6) è-tha cá shaŋ-gá ɔ-yò.

(6) è-da cá shin-gá ɔ-yò.

(7) Təkha ɔ-dó [ho -] shəyak-te-gá ənəŋ-kən

(7) Təkha ɔ-dó [ho -] zəye?-te-gá ənìn-kan

shu-ne-ya-gá-ne-pì-dó-má tei?-0wà-dε.

shu-ne-ya-gá-ne-pì-dó-má tei?-0wà-dε.

(8) Nau?-təkha ɔ-lai?-tɔ [ho -] tɛgaun hnəkaun
(8) Nau?-təkha ɔ-lai?-tɔ [ho -] tɛgaun hnəkaun

thá-pyɛn-(B)ɔwà-dɛ.
thá-pyan-ɔwà-dɛ.

(9) Nau?-təkha ɔ-lai?-tɔ ʈoùn-lè-gaun, lè-ŋà-shɛ-kò-gaun
(9) Nau?-təkha ɔ-lai?-tɔ ʈoùn-lè-gaun, lè-ŋà-shɛ-kò-gaun

pyɛn-ʈwà-dɛ-le.
pyan-ɔwà-dɛ-le.

(10) è-nau? cá-dɔ [ho -] shəyak-te-gá əhmyà-jì-ha-gò:
(10) è-nau? cá-dɔ [ho -] zəyɛ?-te-gá əmyà-jì-ha-gò:

əkoun məpyɛn-(B)bù-le.
əkoun məpyan-bù-le.

(11) è cá 'Ne-oùn kwá: mən ɔ-da ʈoùn-kha sí-ʈwà-bi.
(11) è cá 'Ne-oùn kwá: mìn ɔ-da ʈoùn-ga sí-ɔwà-bi.

ŋa ɔ-phələ́ yau?-pi' sho-pì-dɔ-má, cà-gá-ne-pì-dɔ-má
ŋa ɔ-bó əhlé́ yau?-pi' sho-pì-dɔ-hmá, cà-gá-ne-pì-dɔ-ma
təkha-dè-ná ɔ-pəlai?-ta.
təkha-dè-né ɔ-pəlai?-ta.

(12) [Shəyak-oun-ma ho -] lak-pən-baŋ-ma shəyak-ha
(12) [Zəyɛ?-oun-ma ho -] lɛ?-pan-bin-ma zəyɛ?-ha

tɛgaun-má məcɛn-(B)bù: pyɛn-(B)ɔwà-dɛ.
tɛgaun-má məcan-bù: pyan-ɔwà-dɛ.

(13) è cá-dɔ ʈu-dó əsá-shoùn kədí thà-da-gà [həwa -]
(13) è cá-dɔ ʈu-dó əsá-zoùn kədí thà-da-gà [həwa -]

'Mən-gá ʈoùn-ló fí-yaŋ, mən-go ŋa sà-mɛ;
'Mìn-gá ʈoùn-ló fí-yin, mìn-go ŋa sà-mɛ;

ŋa-gá ʈoùn-ló fí-yaŋ, mən-gá ŋá-go sà' sho-pì-má
ŋa-gá ʈoùn-ló fí-yin, mìn-gá ŋá-go sà' sho-pì-má

è-tha-myò [həwa -] lou?-thà-da-le.
è-da-myò [həwa -] lou?-thà-da-le.

(14) [è cá-dɔ həwa -] nau? cá-dɔ
(14) [è cá-dɔ həwa -] nau? cá-dɔ

'Phɛ-né-gá-ne-bì sà-hma-lè' sho-dɔ
'Bɛ-né-gá-ne-bì sà-hma-lè' sho-dɔ

'[Khun-nəyak əməŋ-go həwa - chən-ʈa -]
'[Khun-nəyɛ? mìn-go həwa - chən-ʈa -]

khun-nəyak-ko mən-go pè-mɛ kwe: əyak-shaìn
khun-nəyɛ?-ko mìn-go pè-mɛ kwe: əyɛ?-shaìn

khun-nəyak pè-mɛ' sho-pì-dɔ-má lou?-cá-dɔ,
khun-nəyɛ? pè-mɛ' sho-pì-dɔ-má lou?-cá-dɔ,

(15) è - shaŋ-gá-lè cən-ya-məyá-ná ʔu-gá thaŋ-ya-de

(15) è - shin-gá-lè can-ya-məyá-né ʔu-gá thin-ya-de

ʃauk-ʔwà-pì-má [khun-nəyak sí-kha-lè -] khun-nəyak

ʃau?-ʔwà-pì-má [khun-nəyɛ? sí-ga-lè -] khun-nəyɛ?

sí-mé yak-ko-lè ʔu-gá hmyɔ-ne-yá-dɛ.

sí-mé yɛ?-ko-lè ʔu-gá hmyɔ-ne-yá-dɛ.

(16) 'ŋa-dó ʔe-dó-hma - cà-de sà-pì-kha-má' sho-pì-má,

(16) 'ŋa-dó ʔe-dó-hma - cà-de sà-pì-ga-má' sho-pì-má,

è-ma, [cà-gá -] shaŋ-gá-lè ŋo-ne-dɛ.

è-ma, [cà-gá -] shin-gá-lè ŋo-ne-dɛ.

4.2 Translations

4.2.1 Yaw customs: courting and hospitality

(1) What I would like to talk about now is the way courting is done in the Yaw region.

(2) Now, these courtship customs are that the young men in our Yaw region -- by young men I mean boys who have come of age, boys in their teens -- these young men have a custom of visiting the girl.

(3) When they visit her they go into her house.

(4) and when they're inside they talk to her.

(5) The girl greets everyone that comes, and talks to him.

(6) While she is receiving him, mostly she will offer plain tea, and always roasted beans -- the roasted butter beans that grow in the Yaw region -- and jaggery.

(7) Then, when she is receiving him in this way, there is hardly any time when she lays down her work.

(8) While talking, she will be spinning or doing some kind of work -- that's the custom when receiving visitors,

(9) and it makes it easier for them to make conversation.

(10) They have this custom of spinning and preparing yarn while they receive visitors.

(11) At the same time they drink tea and so on, and are very friendly.

(12) Anyone who comes from outside the region too is treated in this friendly way, just as if they had met and known him before.

- (13) This Yaw custom strikes me as very attractive.
- (14) Then, the parents too are pleased when the young men come visiting -- it makes them happy, according to Yaw custom,
- (15) They usually go to bed early when the young men come visiting.
- (16) The idea is that when the young men come visiting they want them, if they approve of them, to have a good time, to be at ease.
- (17) That's why the parents either sit by themselves -- just the older people together -- or go to bed early, allowing their daughters freedom to talk without constraint.
- (18) That's the way courting is conducted in the Yaw region.

4.2.2 The tale of the tiger and the elephant

- (1) Long ago there was a tiger and an elephant.
- (2) When they met the tiger suggested they should have a contest.
- (3) The contest was like this: there were a lot of mynahs in a silk-cotton tree.
- (4) They were to see which of the two had the strongest voice, which one could make the mynahs fly away.
- (5) So the tiger said 'You shout first' to the elephant.
- (6) So the elephant shouted.
- (7) The first time he shouted, the mynahs, who had been making a terrible noise, all went quiet.
- (8) The next time he shouted one or two of them flew away.
- (9) And the next time several more flew away.
- (10) So then -- there were lots of mynahs, you see, and they hadn't all flown off --
- (11) So then the tiger said 'Hold it now: you've had three shouts. Now it's my turn to shout', and he let out one terrific shout.
- (12) There wasn't a single mynah left in the silk-cotton tree -- they all flew off.

(13) So then -- they'd made this agreement at the very beginning -- 'If you lose I'll eat you; if I lose you eat me' -- that's how they'd fixed it.

(14) Then, when the elephant asked when he was to be eaten, the tiger said he would give him seven days -- he'd give him seven days' grace.

(15) The elephant couldn't think what to do and just wandered aimlessly about waiting for when the seven days were up.

(16) 'Soon I shall die, when the tigers eat me up', the elephant thought, and he stood where he was and wept.

NOTE

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