If you have a daughter the dogs bark at your house,
If you have a son the dogs bark at the house of your friend.

One of the sad aspects of progress and technological innovation is the loss of folk customs which were intimately connected with the old technology. I believe it would be very difficult today to see such a scene as depicted in the accompanying re-production. The spinning wheel and the rice-pounder appear to have been an integral part of courtship in Northern Thailand—today they are fast disappearing. In the Chiengmai district of Mae Taeng, or at least in the parts of it which I know, the spinning wheels and rice pounders lie unused and discarded, the first made superfluous by the advent of imported printed cottons and synthetic fibres, the second by the small diesel driven rice mill. Of course there are other factors responsible for the death of traditional northern courtship as well,—but spinning

1) Field work in North Thailand was financed by the Australian National University, where the author currently holds a research fellowship in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology.

2) The reproduction is from a painting by Vichit Viangthong (วิชิต วิ่งทอง) and is reproduced by permission of the Editor of Nitayasan Chiengmai (นิตายสาสน์ เชียงใหม่). The reproduction was done by the Visual Aids Unit of the Australian National University.

3) There is no rice pounder in the picture,—but it is well-known that rice-pounding was a favourite occasion for courtship. See สราวุฒิ โชติสุขสกุล (Sanguan Chotesukharat) ประเพณีและวัฒนธรรมของเมืองเหนือ (Customs and Culture of the North) Bangkok 1962 p. 79.
and weaving, and the pounding of rice appear to have provided the conditions under which young girls could remain outside while their parents were in bed at the same time maintaining propriety; for as long as the long as the sounds of the spinning wheel, the weaving loom and the rice pounder continued the parents could be sure their daughter was behaving as a young lady should.

There are other changes and other causes. The hair styles, the clothes, and even the houses are different. The blouses of the girls are cut differently, and their hair, most likely short and permed and I have yet to see in real life the boy's hair style so clearly shown in the picture. The guitar (syng)4 is still played and enjoyed, but rarely now in courting. The only uncovered verandah, of the style so prominent in the picture, that I have seen is the one attached to the house that now stands in the compound of the Siam Society. The greatest loss however is in the language, the poetry of courtship. The compliments, the self-deprecation still occur, but the idea that courtship entailed the learning of a linguistic art is fast going, if not

4) The system used for the transliteration of Thai words is essentially the Mary Haas system 1956. The Northern Thai sounds not found in Central Thai are represented as follows: The nasal which replaces the Central Thai sound ' j ' in initial position in many words is written ' y ' , and is pronounced like ' gn ' in English; The high falling tone is represented by a bar over the vowel, thus: ' ña '. What for convenience may be called a mid tone on a dead syllable is written without a tonal marker.

The Northern Thai written in Central Thai script follows more or less the system proposed by Nai Ratanapratisit (Mate 1962 and Purnell 1962), and McFarland, G.B., *Thai-English Dictionary* Stanford 1944. In the main body of the article tonal markers and the glottal stop are ignored, and ' ño ' is written ' au ' , and ' ëu ' is written ' ae '. I apologize to readers for any mistakes in transliteration.
lost already. Khun Thaworn Khatiphibul, from whom the fragment recorded here was collected, speaks with nostalgia of the time before the war, when, as a young man he paid to learn the art, performing the ritual of tang khan (ต่างถ่าน) as any pupil does for any teacher, as any client does for any expert. All that he remembers now is this fragment.

Courting was, and is, not restricted by season, but summer months when the nights are warm and the roads and fields dry, and particularly on full moon nights, when not only is there light to see by, but many old folks are safely out of the way spending the night in the แwat, youths still wander far afield looking for a quick conquest, a wife, or at least a pleasant evening’s entertainment. There are rules and conventions which dictate the progress of the courtship, though rather surprisingly it seems little control was exercised over the girl’s choice of suitors. In the few cases I know where parents have objected to a match, the objection has occurred much too late to be of any use. When the suitor has been invited up, with or without enthusiasm (see text), the girl is expected to continue with her work, and the young man to talk or sing, but not to touch. Any physical contact is ‘an offence against the spirits’ (ผิดผี) and must be compensated for. If no propitiation is made to the domestic spirits (ผีหัว) sickness will befall some member of the family. Usually, but not always, ผีหัว leads to marriage. People say that in the old days if the boy picked up a handkerchief the girl happened to drop, or if they sat on the same plank the spirits were offended. The text suggests that this prohibition was not always taken very seriously.

The prohibition on touching is part of the general prohibition of any intimacy in public, even between husband and wife, but apparently unlike Central Thailand, the objection to public intimacy and physical contact without the placation of spirits is not merely a matter of propriety. There is very real apprehension of the supernatural dangers of contact between men and women. One of the standard diagnoses of diviners in case of illness, is that somebody has ‘offended the spirits’, and this does not necessarily mean adultery.
One story which I believe to be authentic, is of a young girl selling illegal lottery tickets, who tried to escape a police raid by screaming that the police were offending the spirits by grabbing her. The policeman's answer was that he was not interested in catching spirits, only sellers of the illegal lottery.

Courting language appears to be of two kinds. The first, of which the text is an example, is in the style of formalized conversation, the second is a style of poetry or song used in other contexts as well. Both sorts are popularly spoken of as *ham uu sau*; Sanguan calls the first type *kham khrya* (*คำขวัญ*). This is presumably a transference of the Northern Thai form into Central Thai, and should, I believe, be written *ham khrya* (*คำขวัญ*). The other type is known as *khaaw* (*คำขาว*) and is today also used in advertising and for political and other types of comment. One of the weekly newspapers in Chiangmai, Siang Chiangmai, has a regular column in the *khaaw* or *khaaw sau* style. This is the only column in the newspaper which uses Northern Thai, perhaps the only column in any Chiangmai newspaper. *Khaaw sau* is to be distinguished from *sau* proper, which today at least, seems much more popular. The two forms have different rhythms. *Sau* may be used to celebrate almost any occasion - in fact no celebration is really complete without the presence of a *sau* troupe. The subject matter presented in this form covers the full range from the religious to the obscene, though troupe specializing in the obscene do not appear to operate any more within the city or in the more accessible areas. The two types of *sau*, and to some extent the *kam khrya*, involve the learning of themes, techniques and rhythms; improvisations are then made to fit the particular circumstance.

This fragmentary text is the only example of *kam khrya* of which I know, except the even briefer fragment in Sanguan. Because of this it would be foolish to attempt any detailed analysis but it may be worth while setting out the few hints this one text provides. The fourteen statements fall into five sections which may be interpreted as representing different stages of the conversation. 1, 2a and 2b the arrival

5) Sanguan *op. cit.* p. 80.
6) *I.e.* *cit.*
and invitation to the suitor—with 2a and 2b as alternative responses. 3 and 4 represent an opening gambit in the conversation. 5, 6 and 7 do not follow from 3 and 4. It would appear that this type of sequence could follow from one of many types of exchange—most probably from a statement of the girl expressing her virtue or her constancy. 8, 9 and 10 take up a theme common in ordinary conversation—the polygamous propensities of the male. I would interpret it as being the closest to a direct proposition as the form will allow, and that the outcome of this type of sequence will show whether the girl is willing to take the suitor as a lover or not. 11, 12 and 13 are a conclusion to the conversation, and have the cleverest bit of word play of the entire fragment. This will be taken up in a moment.

The first section indicates on the one hand that the form provides a number of different choices for differing circumstances, and on the other, the use of insult. Clearly implied insult, I would suspect, is a female prerogative. It is also likely that the response 2b is by far the commoner, and would not in itself deter a prospective suitor. 2a could only be used if the girl and her suitor had already reached an understanding with each other—if they called each other tua pau-tua mae (ทูบาน-ทูบ้าน). 3 and 4 fall into a pattern of compliment by the boy and self-deprecation by the girl. This is also seen in the fragment given by Sanguan and also in a hypothetical modern conversation given by the same author. I would venture the hypothesis that pattern of compliment and self-deprecation is always from male to female. The set 5-7 is the most difficult to say anything about. In the first place there is some puzzle as to why the formal pronouns khaa-caw are used rather than the more usual aaj-naung. One answer may be that this set represents a stage in the courtship where the two are not yet familiar with each other, but where the girl is trying to indicate the possibility of a more serious relationship by insisting on her constancy or some other virtue. The metaphor in 6 is clear enough, but why dauk kae (ท้าวนาว) should imply teasing or lack of seriousness is not clear. It could be that this exists

7) *Loc. cit.*

8) Sanguan, ผู้พูดเหนือ (*Speak Northern Thai*) Bangkok 1965.
merely to rhyme with *laule* (330120). *Kae* is *khae* in Central Thai which McFarland identifies as *Sesbania Grandiflora*\(^9\). Perhaps this set falls into a pattern of self-justification and denial, a pattern which is reversed in 12 and 13, and found in a slightly different form in 8, 9 and 10. *Dauj* in 8 is *taan khamaaj* in Central Thai.\(^10\) Mate identifies it merely as an infantile disease, whereas McFarland says 'a common chronic ailment of Siamese children characterized by thin arms and legs, but enlarged abdomen (usually due to intestinal worms).\(^11\) The term probably covers a number of quite distinct diseases, but I would have thought that kwashiorkor would be one of them. It is therefore interesting that in Northern Thailand at least it is thought of as being caused by eating fish or meat without rice. In 9 *aem thaew* is an inversion (*kham klaab* *k*) a form of word play common in both Northern and Central Thai. The phrase stands for *aw thaem* (10\(^9\)) meaning 'to take more' or 'to increase'. The metaphor in 10 does not present any problems. The interesting feature of the final set is the pair of inversions, *kham klaab*. In 12 the girl is supposedly saying 'The cock is crowing on the roof (of the shed)', and the boy replies 'No, the cock is crowing in the fields (*rai* *k*). But *khan haan* when reversed becomes *khaan han*, (6\(^9\)) which means 'tired of seeing you'. *Khan haaj* when reversed becomes *khaaj han* meaning 'wish to see you'.  So that in fact the girl is saying 'I am fed up of looking at you', and the boy replies 'But I wish to look at you'.

A comment on terms of address used between courting couples. The usual form is for the pair to call each other 'elder brother' and 'younger sister', i.e. *aaj* and *naung*. It should however be mentioned that though *aaj* is also the term used by a woman for her elder brother, a man will not address his younger sister as *naung* but as *ii*’s name, e.g. *iidaeng*, *iipan*. However, when a girl accepts a suitor as a husband, as a lover or as a potential lover the terms *tua pau-tua mae* are used.\(^12\) I suspect that this latter usage is becoming rarer. The term

\(^9\) McFarland *op. cit.*, gives two other botanical names as well, but *Sesbania Grandiflora* appears to be the one intended in the text.

\(^10\) Mate *op. cit.* p. 105.


\(^12\) Sanguan 1962 *op. cit.* p. 81.
pii (Central Thai ʔi) is usually used only for the elder sister, but in 9 tua pii is used synonymously with aaj.

What is interesting about this fragment is not so much its colourful language, but the possibility that the form worked as a kind of code using varying conventions, some of which I have called 'patterns' in the fore-going, to communicate the intentions of the wooer and the wooed. It is possible that this code was highly formalized, and that the girl, particularly, could indicate her intentions by her responses, with propriety, within the conventional compliment, insult and banter. The boy's task would be partly to present the stimulus so that the girl could indicate her intentions through the response, but also partly to elicit the desired response through his own skill. Admittedly the evidence is at the moment quite insufficient, but the structure of ham khya is, I think, worth investigating whatever the conclusions arrived at. For this reason I shall be extremely grateful for many more examples from anyone who has them. Besides this, it is worthwhile trying to preserve one of the more colourful features of what Hope and Purnell have called 'a colourful colloquial'.13

13) Hope and Purnell op. cit.
1.

ชาย ขอ น้า หน่อย เติบ

Man: ขอ น้า หน่อย ต่อ

may sit a little please
May I sit down for a little while?

2a.

หูขี: น้า เติบๆ น้า เมอสอง กัน ไม่ ท่าน จ้า ถาม

Woman: น้า เติบ (repeat) น้า เมอสอง ท่าน จ้า ถาม

sit! sit close together who sees can it right can
Come on sit down. Sit close by me, it does not matter
if anyone sees us.

2b.

อยู่: น้า เติบๆ บ้านี้ คี ท่าน ห้า ซายไม่คี

Woman: น้า เติบ (repeat) บ้านี้ ท่าน ห้า ซายไม่คี

sit! not place anyone place head stairs place stays dog
spotted
Sit down. The place at the head of the stairs only belongs
to the spotted dog.

14) The text was collected from Khun Thaworn Khatiphibil of Mae Taeng, Chiangmai. I owe Khun Thaworn a deep debt of gratitude not only for his help, but also for the unfailing friendship he showed my family and myself.

15) This is often written 'ไทย', but Khun Thaworn prefers 'ไทย'. In normal speech one hears 'ba' or 'บ้า'. 
3.

ช่: บ้าน นิ บ้าน ซุ่บ บ้าน แซ่ บ้าน เทม บ้าน กึก

Man: บ้าน นิ บ้าน ซุ่บ บ้าน แซ่ บ้าน เทม บ้าน กึก
class: house this house fresh house cool house civet not eat chicken
This house is fresh and cool, and the civet does not steal
chickens = The house is quiet and peaceful.

4.

ญ: บ้าเจ้ บ้าน นิ บ้าน ฮือน บ้าน ไทม บ้าน กึก ตัวน

Woman: บ้าเจ้ บ้าน นิ บ้าน ฮือน บ้าน ไทม บ้าน กึก ตัวน

No! house this house hot house burns house near sun
No! This is a house of fire and heat = No! This is a house
full of trouble.

5.

ข: ถ้า ถ้า

Man: ถ้า ก้า

Lies!

6.

ญ: บ้าเจ้ ปาก ขา ว่า แต่ แผล กาย แผล ฟิ้ง ไร้ บ้านวาง

สุก ฟิ้ง หน่วย ฟิ้ง ขาน

Woman: บ้าเจ้ คุ้ม ผัก ข้าว ว่า แต่ แผล กาย แผล ฟิ้ง ไร้ บ้านวาง

สุก ฟิ้ง หน่วย ฟิ้ง ขาน

not lies mouth my says true already already to heart mango
ripe both seed and stem
It's not a lie. My mouth speaks only what is in my heart.
Like the mango that is ripe from stem to seed.

16) In the original text Khun Thaworn wrote 'ใจล'.
7.

ช: ปาก ว่า แต่ ไม่ไป หลอยแหล่ง เขา สด ค่อย แกว แต่ แกม เกลิ่น

Man: prak waa te caw sai dook kee waa tre kep len
mouth says true spirit fickle you colour flower (?) says true mix play
You may speak truly, but your spirit is fickle. You are like the colour of the khae flower, you speak the truth mixed with jest.

8.

หญ: มี แล้ว จะ เอา หัวใจ หลาย กิน ไป ปากแหวก ปากกี้
เป็น ด้วย ก่า

Woman: mii leew ca' aw Tung laaj kin pua baadaj baakua pen d3aj kaa
have already will take why many eat fish alone not afraid become (sick)?
If you have a wife already, why do you want some more? Aren't you afraid that you will become sick by eating fish without rice?

9.

ช: ถ้า ไม่ แล้ว ที่ ไอ้ แอม เขา (แอมแอม) ตัว ยิ้ม ไอ้ เอา
ก็ น้อย บ้าง

Man: 'maj mii leew khaj 'eem thaw ('aw th'em) tua pii khaj 'aw
kua noo baaasuu
E. Brother has already wish take more E. Brother wish take afraid Y. sister not willing

I have a wife already, but I wish to have more. I want a wife, but am afraid you will not be willing.

10.

ปุ่: น่า อาจารย์ มี แล้ว แอม แอม สอง ฯ เชื่อ น่านอน

Woman: ท่าน อาจารย์ มี เลือก หรือจะ มีเพื่อนขึ้นไม่

if E.B. has already increase two paddles boat flood can capsize

If you add a wife to the one you have the boat may capsize in the flood while trying to use two paddles.

11.

ปุ่: เต็ย แม่ มีอยู่อย่า น้ำผึ้ง ป้ายแป่น ไปใจ ข้น แผล

Woman: ดัก มามัก มี Nguyễn น้ำผึ้ง ป้ายแป่น ไปใจ ข้น ขัน อาน (ก้านหนัก)

แผล น้อย

dark comes everywhere dew gutter cock crows cock-a-doodle-doo almost wish sunrise cock ready crow roof (don’t wish see) already isn’t it so?

It is dark everywhere, there is dew in the gutter, and the cock crows cock-a-doodle-doo. It is almost dawn and the cock is ready to crow on the roof (or I am tired of seeing your face).

17) In the original text Khun Thaworn wrote ‘ดัก’. 
12.

ซ: น่าให้ ไม่ มั่น ซิน ใช้ (ไม่ตั้ง)

Man: บ้าครึ่ง ก้าว man หัน ห่าง (ก้าวหัน)

No! cock it crows fields (wish see)

No, the cock is crowing in the fields (or I wish to see you).