

DYING TO BE THAI UGONG IN WESTERN THAILAND

David Bradley

On three occasions, in 1977, 1979-80 and 1988, I have carried out fieldwork on the Ugong language. This is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Burmese-Lob subgroup, spoken by about 200 active speakers and an unknown but small number of former speakers scattered in western central Thailand, mostly now in Suphanburi and Uthai Thani Provinces, but formerly more numerous in Kanchanaburi Province, where the language has now almost completely disappeared.

In 1977 I found the two main villages where the language is still actively spoken, one in Suphanburi Province and the other in Uthai Thani Province, and visited two other areas in Kanchanaburi Province where it was formerly spoken. In all four locations I carried out preliminary survey work, and determined for the first time that this group calls itself Ugong (u 'person', gong 'name of the group'), and provided data to show that the language is a Tibeto-Burman language related to Burmese and to Lahu, Lisu and Akha. It is thus not related to some other groups called Lawa in Thai and Lua in Northern Thai, most of which are Mon-Khmer languages. Preliminary results of the 1977 survey are reported in Bradley (1978, 1979) and in Theraphan and Gainey (1977), and in McKinnon and Wanat (Bradley 1983; written 1977).

In 1979-80 I undertook intensive fieldwork on one village dialect, at Kok Chiang (village 10, then in Tambon Huai Khamin, Dan Chang Subdistrict; now reclassified as Tambon Wang Khan, Dan Chang District). Results are discussed in Bradley (1981, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989). Between 1977 and 1980 there were major changes in this village, leading to the decline of the language but the development of the village. These included a road and regular (Buddha day) truck services to the subdistrict town, cash crops transported by the trucks, cash wages from logging companies working in the area, informal shops in one or two homes and a major influx of Thai settlers. For more details of the social aspects of language decline see especially Bradley (1988).

Again in 1988 I undertook three months fieldwork on the speech of this same village; in this discussion I concentrate on the results of this fieldwork, and on the development of this village since 1980.¹ The economic and social changes in the village have again been rapid; the road has been improved, daily bus services reach the village during most of the year, a school was opened three years ago and will extend to Prathom 4 in 1989, electricity reached the village in 1987 and thus television and loudspeaker music and official announcements, and even larger numbers of Thai and local Lao people have moved in. Several full-time shops have been established, including one Chinese shop. The village now has about 400 people, of whom about 200 live in the central village area. Among this core group about 100 people can speak Ugong. Most of the fluent speakers are over 25 years old; some younger people down to the age of 10 or less, especially elder children in all-Ugong households, can speak Ugong

¹ I take this opportunity to thank the National Research Council of Thailand for permission to carry out research and for their introductory letters to the local authorities of the provinces where I carried out fieldwork. I also thank my colleagues at Mahidol University's Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, especially Dr Suwilai Premsrirat; and also many Thai friends in Bangkok and Suphanburi, especially Yupha Dantrakul and Anurat Khongmalay, and my wife, Maya Bradley, who accompanied me and was always very encouraging. I also thank Dr B.J. Terwiel of the Australian National University for providing bibliographical help including relevant sections of Bradley 1835-73. My greatest thanks are due to the Ugong, who once again welcomed me to their villages and very enthusiastically helped me with their language

to some degree. Most Ugong now choose to speak Lao or Thai in most situations; this has been made easier by extensive intermarriage over the last forty years, especially in the last twenty.

I undertook several activities to assist the Ugong during my 1988 stay. My Ugong helpers and I continued to develop a writing system for Ugong, based on Thai. These men are now trained and enthusiastic language workers, with a desire to go looking for Ugong vestiges in other locations. I had extensive discussions with the head teacher in the Kok Chiang school, and developed his enthusiasm for our writing system; he is now using this writing system in the school. Also, I made extensive photographic and geneological records of the speakers, which will enable them to keep better records of their background in the future; as it is at present only people and events known by those now living are remembered, so part of the group's history disappears every time someone dies. Also, I contributed to the economy of the village by employing five different speakers as language helpers, and by establishing personal connections between my Thai friends in the provincial town, Suphanburi, and the people in the village whom I brought there.

The linguistic changes from 1977 to 1989 have resulted in what is called 'tip' in the linguistic literature: an abrupt shift from use of one language to use of another. This seems to have been initiated as a conscious policy by Thonglak, the last Ugong headman of the village, whose two daughters were among the first in the village to marry non-Ugong. They married Lao men from nearby villages, and the more able of these sons-in-law, Amkha, was chosen by Thonglak to succeed him in 1973. The earliest Lao arrivals about forty years ago, including Amkha, were in a virtually monolingual Ugong-speaking village; thus they learned to speak Ugong, and can still do so. Those Lao and Thai-speaking husbands who moved in more recently have not found it necessary to learn Ugong, as the Ugong have become bilingual, first in Lao and over the last ten or fifteen years also in Thai. Increasingly, village authority figures are Lao or Thai husbands of Ugong ladies.

1. History of the Ugong

The source of the name 'Lawa' is uncertain; it is also applied to many different Mon-Khmer groups in northern Thailand, as discussed in Bradley (1983). One possibility is that the Thai name comes from the autonym of the Ugong, through a series of phonetic adjustments. In Khwae Noy and Khwae Yay Ugong, the word for 'person' [ʔlu] starts with preglottalised 'l'; compare Burmese [Lu]; in Khwae Yay Ugong, the group's name starts with [w]: [wɔŋ]; and in Khwae Noy Ugong the [ɔŋ] rhyme is replaced by [ãi]. Given the absence of preglottalised 'l' and of contrastively nasalised vowels in Thai, and the certainty that other dialects of Ugong with different phonetic characteristics existed, from [ʔluw ãi] to Lawa is not too far for possibility. So perhaps, rather than 'Lawa' having been generalised from referring to various small Mon-Khmer groups to be used for Ugong, perhaps the process went the other way.

The likely etymology of this name provides an interesting phonological connection between the Burmish and Loloish branches of Burmese-Lob in its first syllable, and reflects the same autonym as that used by the Burmans for themselves in its second. /ʔlu/ or now /ʔu/ in the active dialects, as noted above, is the word for 'person'; it can be linked to the Burmese flu! person'. As Ugong /ʔl/ is the regular reflex of *s among other things, it can also be related to Proto-Loloish *su¹, a nominalising suffix 'the person or people who' found in many ethnonyms such as Lisu, Bisu and so on; further, this latter etymon is also used as a third person nonproximal pronoun in some Loloish languages such as Lahu, and as the general third person pronoun in its Burmese form, modern /θu/, written *su*. It is almost tempting to

suggest an *sl initial, with a doublet outcome in Burmese; with more parallel examples this would become more convincing. The second syllable is less contentious, and also shows a phonetically interesting shift in Ugong: *mr to /g/. The older form of the autonym for the Burmans is written *mranma*, now pronounced /mjəma/; this and other words such as ‘horse’ *mrang* /mjɪn/ and ‘high’ *mrang* /mjìn/ have initial /g/ in Ugong ‘horse’ /gɔŋ/, ‘high’ /gɔ̀ŋ/, and the autonym /gɔ̀ŋ/. The development of *an to Ugong /ɔ̀ŋ/ is also regular.

Ugong has ceased to be spoken in many villages; this gradual process of disappearance will soon be complete, and the Ugong will simply be Thai. The former distribution of the Ugong covered the upper Mae Kiong watershed, especially upriver from Kanchanaburi: from west to east, the Khwae Noy, Khwae Yay and Bo Phloi branches. Early records suggest that they were a substantial minority group in this area when it was a major invasion route between Thailand and Burma several centuries ago. In the early nineteenth century, Crawford reported that the Ugong worked a lead mine near Kanchanaburi (cited in Terwiel 1989: 116); in 1856 the missionary Bradley encountered ‘Lawa’ along the river (Bradley 1856); in the 1920s a railroad survey party encountered them on the upper Khwae Noy and Khwae Yay (Kerr 1927). The anthropologist Stern encountered them during his fieldwork on the Karen of the upper Khwae Noy in the 1960s (Stern 1979: 73).

According to the group’s own personal recollections collected in my surveys and discussions from 1977 to 1988, many villages in Kanchanaburi Province were Ugong until fairly recently. Such central locations as Lat Ya just to the northwest of Kanchanaburi town are claimed, as well as various locations along the Khwae Noy such as Thongpaphum and Ban Lawa, the latter located a couple of kilometres downriver from the former location of Sangkhlaburi near the Three Pagodas Pass. Before this village was relocated for a dam in the early 1980s there was only one old fluent speaker left, and he in fact was born on the Khwae Yay and came from there about 1935. Other old former speakers could then be found among the Karen and Mon with whom they had intermarried and into whom they have now disappeared. This dialect, now dead, is quite different from the others; it was already moribund in the 1920s and probably not actively spoken or acquired by children since the mid-1930s when a school opened in the village. By the time the Thailand-Burma railroad reached the village in the early 1940s, most of the people in it spoke Karen as their first language and Thai as a second language; but Stern was able to find some fluent older speakers in the 1960s, including the local Thai-trained teacher.

Along the upper Khwae Yay, the main centre was Talao or Hin Hak, now submerged by another dam. In 1977 it was just possible to find a couple of very old former speakers in this area; interestingly, the language was vigorous enough there to provide the last speaker along the Khwae Noy who came about 1935; in 1977 he was surprised that the Language had died there, as when he left it was more lively than it was on the Khwae Noy when he arrived. Parties of Ugong-speaking bachelors came courting from Talao/Hin Hak to the Ugong villages in Suphanburi Province up to the 1940s, but the language must have ceased to be learned by children about then, and has now totally disappeared; descendants mostly assert that they are Thai, and deny any Lawa ancestry.

The easternmost branch of the river has also virtually lost the language over the last hundred years, starting from the south nearest to Kanchanaburi. In Sao Hong, ten kilometres south of Bo Phloi, old people over 80 could not recall the language being used actively; one person could remember one sentence which her stepmother used, but the language has probably disappeared since 1910. Interestingly, this person reported that when her mother died she and her father had come from a ‘Lawa’ village further east, in Phanom Thuan District - the furthest east and south reported this century. Moving north, in Bo Phloi, Nong Pling, Lam

Iso, Nong Li and Nong Plue, the language was spoken within living memory but is not now; visitors from Kok Chiang report that old speakers could be found in most of these places up to twenty years ago.

The relic area for Ugong is at the northern fringes of this watershed. The township of Tumakok, now Karen and rapidly becoming Thai, at the northwestern extremity of Dan Chang District of Suphanburi Province, was an Ugong village which gradually mingled with surrounding Karen from the 1920s; it is also sometimes known as Kao Kong after its former headman, an Ugong who came originally from Khok Khway to the north about 1930. This man, now 80, still recalls some Ugong, but actively uses Karen and Thai; no other speakers are left in the township. It appears that this village was settled from Talao/Hin Hak during the nineteenth century, and itself provided the settlers for the two Ugong villages to the east: first Wang Khway, and about 1925 from there Kok Chiang. To the south of Tumakok, Sanakphai is also said to have formerly been Ugong. These three villages are also at various stages in becoming Lao; in Sanakphai, the process is complete; in Wang Khway (known in Ugong as Kabe and in Lao as Kapheun) only a few old speakers are left, as most of those who spoke Ugong moved to Kok Chiang as it filled up with Ugong under Thonglak's leadership in the 1930s and 1940s.

The other focus of Ugong survival is in the headwaters of the Khwae Yay in Uthai Thani Province. Former villages, where Ugong was spoken within living memory, include Ban Bung near the Ban Rai district town and Thong Lang, in the new Huai Khot Subdistrict recently separated from Ban Rai District to the northeast of the district. Other village names recalled include Iphung, Cawat and Huai Haeng (in Thai, 'dry creek'); locations for these are uncertain. An offshoot from these areas eventually reached Khok Khway village early this century, and Khok Khway is the second location where Ugong is spoken in daily life today. It is divided into three subvillages: Khok Khway (the original site; Thai 'buffalo stockade'), Neunglang ('two houses'; also referred to in Thai as Songlang) near the Thai settlement in the village, and Gongsungphye ('middle village'; also referred to in Thai as Baan Kiang) between the two. Up to seven years ago there was fairly frequent visiting between Khok Khway and Kok Chiang, mostly by bachelors for courting; several Kok Chiang wives were brought back to Gongsungphye and so the speech of that subvillage shows some Kok Chiang features: *IdJ* for /i/ and so on. Conversely, a few Khok Khway spouses have moved to Kok Chiang; most recently two siblings whose deceased mother in fact had come from Kok Chiang to Gongsungphye.

There are fewer than 100 Ugong speakers left in the three subvillages of Khok Khway, and the language death process is far advanced there. When I first visited, there had been a school and a good road for several years, and the headmen had been Thai for nearly a decade. Since then, especially since 1980, even more Thai people have moved in, and the area has been extensively cleared and planted with cash crops, notably pineapples. Ugong provide a labour force for the Thais, and are gradually intermarrying with them as well. Again, the first Thai husbands, who came forty or more years ago, can speak some Ugong; but more recently all the Ugong have become bilingual, and those under about 25 are more likely to be monolingual in Thai.

2. Structure of Ugong Language

Due to the rapid process of language shift, Ugong is very unstable; the two main dialects now spoken are those of Kok Chiang and Khok Khway, with blended versions spoken by Gongsungphye subvillage people in Khok Khway and those originally from Khok Khway now living in Kok Chiang. Individual lexical differences abound; these probably derive from the composite nature of Kok Chiang, with speakers coming mainly from Wang Khway but

also a few directly from TalaofHin Hak or villages to the south and more recently also from Khok Khway. There are also personal varieties showing differing degrees of Lao influence, and varieties spoken by those under forty which older fluent speakers condemn as incorrect. Some of the semispeaker varieties spoken by those between 25 and 40 are structurally nearly intact, while others, especially those of semispeakers under 20, range all the way to virtual total assimilation to the phonological structure of Lao or Thai. All speakers use very extensive Lao/Thai lexical material, and there are no monolingual speakers left - unlike thirty or more years ago. Conversely, some of the oldest speakers only speak Lao relatively badly.

The vowel allophones are particularly spectacular; a surface inventory of seventeen monophthongal vowels as below can be observed in fluent Kok Chiang speech:

	Front Unrounded	Central/Front Rounded	Central/Back Unrounded	Back Rounded
High	i	ɨ	ɯ	u
High/Mid	i̥	ɨ̥	ɯ̥	ɯ̥
Mid	e	ɐ	ɤ	o
Low/Mid	ɛ	ɛ̃	ʌ	ɔ
Low			ɑ	

Figure 1 shows the youngest fully fluent speaker, Aran Saengeun, saying the low/mid central/front rounded vowel; even more extreme mouth opening with rounding can be observed with some older speakers. This formidable array of vowels does not imply that there are seventeen contrasting monophthongal vowels. In the intact system, the high, high/mid, mid and low vowels occur in syllables ending in vowels, glottal stop or /k/; high/mid, mid, low/mid and low vowels occur in syllables ending in the velar nasal /ŋ/. So there is complementary distribution with the lower allophones high/mid, mid and mid/low before nasals; phonetically of course these overlap with the non-nasal final allophones of the next lower vowels, e.g. /i/ is [i], /iŋ/ is [iŋ], /e/ is [ɛ], /eŋ/ is [eŋ], /ɛ/ is [ɛ] and /ɛŋ/ is [ɛŋ].



FIGURE 1

Similarly, the preceding initial conditions whether the non-low central vowels are rounded or unrounded. Thus the phonemic system contains only ten vowels: /i e ɛ ɨ ʌ ɑ u o ɔ/. This pattern breaks down once Thai loans are integrated into the system. For younger fluent speakers, there is a certain amount of variation between the high and high/mid vowels /i/ versus /i̥/, /ɨ/ versus /ɨ̥/, /ɯ/ versus /ɯ̥/ and /u/ versus /ɯ̥/; the resulting system, described in my previous investigations of Ugong, has converged towards Thai but still contains the additional /ʌ/ versus /ɑ/ contrast; in the speech of the youngest semispeakers this contrast too has disappeared. Thai loanwords also confound the distribution of rounded and unrounded central vowels, with numerous additional unrounded vowels after consonants that do not

normally allow them. There are also earlier, more assimilated Thai loans which do reflect the vowel height and lip position patterns found in native vocabulary. As an example of the substantial dialect differences, the Khok Khway dialect, even Gongsungphyue with Kok Chiang influence, does not have the rounded allophones of central vowels, and the pattern of vowel height distribution differs; more investigation of Khok Khway vowel phonology is required. In general these two dialects pattern similarly to the vestigial TalaofHin Hak data for vowels, and quite differently from the somewhat more complete Ban Lawa (Khwaey Noy) data.

Kok Chiang Ugong diphthongal vowels also occur; these consist of one of the high vowels as an onglide followed by the low vowel nucleus, or of the high back rounded vowel onglide followed by the low/mid back rounded vowel nucleus. Surface long vowels [e: a: a:] occur; these are a conflation of verbs with final *le* a **0**/ plus the final particle PcV in which the particle has lost its glottal stop and assimilated to the position of the preceding vowel; these long vowels carry two tones due to their two-syllable origin.

The consonants of Ugong are also in a state of flux, but not quite as comprehensively as the vowels. In Kok Chiang native words, syllables may begin with one of the following consonants:

bilabial	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal/cavity
p	t	c	k	ʔ
p ^h	t ^h		k ^h	
b	d	j	g	
m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
	s			h
w	l	j		

The only syllable-final consonants in native words are /k ʔ ŋ/. Kok Chiang is unusual among Ugong dialects in that it has merged its aspirated palatal stop to /s/; this may perhaps be attributed to Lao influence, which preceded Thai influence on this dialect. Also unlike the Kanchanaburi dialects, it has completely merged /ʔl/ into /ʔ/,² thus eliminating one non-Thai segment from the inventory. The remaining non-Thai segments are also variably on the way out; /ʃ/ varies with /ɲ/ and/or /j/ in the few words where it still occurs; /ɲ/ is firmer, perhaps because it is also present in Lao though not in Thai, but also sometimes is replaced by /j/. Only /g/ shows signs of persistence despite its absence from Lao and Thai; though in one of the Kanchanaburi dialects it had been replaced by /w/ prior to the death of those dialects.

Various Thai consonant segments occur in loanwords. Firstly, the range of possible syllable-finals is increased to /p t k ʔ m n ŋ w j/ as in Thai; secondly, /c^h/ and /f/ come in with loans. For some younger speakers, native words with the sequence /p^hia/ become /fa/; for example 'flower' / p^hiaŋʔ/ or recently /faʔ/; these are speakers whose Lao is their better language. As to the rhotic [ɾ] of standard Thai, it is absent from Lao and from informal spoken Thai in the area. In Kok Chiang Ugong the flap is an infrequent allophone of the /l/ intervocalically, and definitely not a separate phoneme.

Another relatively complex area of Ugong phonology which is changing in response to contact with Thai is the tone system, which apparently contained only four tones: a high level tone, a high rising tone, a mid level tone, and a falling tone with a high allotone word-finally in words with two or more syllables and a low allotone elsewhere: in one-syllable words or

² One old speaker who died in 1981 variably had preglottalised laterals in some words; another, still alive in 1988, can recall which words used to have this segment but does not use it himself.

not word-final. For more details see Bradley (1989). This has been adjusted to the Thai system, in which the high falling and low falling tones contrast, by lexicalising the alternations and making them progressively less productive for less fluent speakers.

In a tone sandhi process which applies only to verbs, the four tones have quite different phonetic forms in different environments. There are hints that the environment used to be semantic, based on a realis/irrealis distinction; but for older fluent speakers it appears easier to describe in terms of a sandhi process triggered by the presence of one or more of a variety of elements in the medals preceding and following the verb. The most frequent moths triggering the process are the negative, /ma/ + Verb, and the desiderative, Verb + /dú/. Any verb in this environment has the ‘B’ form of its tone, while any verb not in this environment has the ‘A’ form.

‘A’	‘B’
high level	high rising
high rising	high level
(low) falling	low rising

That is, two of the four tones neutralise to a phonetic value similar to a third, while that tone shifts to the value of one of the first two. The fourth tone acquires a phonetic value which only occurs in the ‘B’ environment, and which is absent from the tone system of standard Central Thai. In the speech of younger fluent speakers, the tone which has the falling ‘A’ form instead tends to be high rising in the ‘B’ environment; this eliminates the non-Thai low rising patten but neutralises all but one of the verb tones to high rising, thus leading to even more ambiguity. Conversely semispeakers tend not to have these tonal alternations at all, using only the ‘A’ forms throughout. There is a small number of native verbs, like other form classes, with surface high falling tones, which again appear to occur where the syllable is final in a two or more syllable word, but this process is much less frequently observed than for nouns where it could almost be argued to be productive for older fluent speakers; of course it is worth noting that there are very many polysyllabic nouns, but almost no polysyllabic verbs; so the environment does not arise as often. Some older speakers have lexicalised the contrast between high and low falling tones in verbs as well, and have a high rather than low rising ‘B’ form for the high falling; the number of verbs with high falling tone for these speakers is small. For fluent speakers, even Thai loanword verbs show this ‘A’/‘B’ tonal alternation, though these are more likely to keep their ‘A’ form throughout in the speech of less fluent speakers who still have the alternation for most native verbs.

Another morphological process used by some speakers is a productive or semiproductive replacement process whereby elaborate emphatic doublers of verbs are created in environments where four syllables can then result from two; especially, for example, when negated; less frequently with other modal elements. For example, /ʔaŋ/ ‘good’, /maʔǎŋ/ ‘not good/bad’, doubled / maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ, maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ, maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ ‘very bad’: the vowel is replaced by /ε Λ ə/; naturally this applies only to verbs which do not already contain /ε Λ ə/. Another replaces the vowel and final with a high vowel plus final, /uŋ uk uʔ iŋ ik jʔ/, keeping the verb’s initial and tone; doublers of this type with the same final if the verb has a non-na final or a high vowel tend to be avoided; for ‘very bad’, / maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ, maʔǎŋmaʔuk, maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ, maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ, maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋk, maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ. A third replaces the entire rhyme with /ɛʔ əʔ/, e.g. maʔǎŋmaʔɛʔ, maʔǎŋmaʔəʔ/. All of these doublers may also occur first in the pair, and those with /ʔuŋ ʔiŋ/ more frequently do so: /maʔǎŋmaʔǎŋ/ and so on. A fourth less productive doubling replaces the vowel with /ε ə ə/; these are especially frequent instead /ε Λ

o/ doublers with verbs containing high or mid vowels, and may reflect some vestiges vowel harmony in this process. Thus any one verb may have up to fourteen doublers occurring before or after it, giving twenty-eight possible doubled emphatic forms; however the most frequently encountered, universally productive emphatic doubler form is from the verb ‘break /sɛʔ/, which always comes second and does not imply actual breakage or lack of it, as in /maʔəŋmasɛʔ/ ‘very bad’.

In general Ugong morphosyntax is entirely typical of the Tibeto-Burman languages in that it is verb-final (typically but not rigidly SOV) with postpositions for most noun and verb affixes, genitives and relative clauses preceding their head nouns, most modals preceding the verb, and so on. In this it shows no influence from SVO, preposing, NG, N + REL Thai. By borrowing a small number of Thai modals which come after the verb and leaving them in their Thai position Ugong has recently increased its inventory of postverbal modals, but the native pattern still preponderates.

Lexical borrowings from Thai are truly massive; these include a very large number of nouns, substantial numbers of verbs and even some additions to smaller form classes such as modals, classifiers, numbers and so on. For example, a Thai number followed by an Ugong classifier or with a Thai classifier as well is an alternative for any number, and no Ugong number above 100 has survived. Compounding processes allow Ugong native lexical material to be used for numbers up to 9,999 but this is unusual and involves using /sɛ+ ca/ ‘ten-hundred’ for ‘thousand’, e.g. /ŋɔsɛhɛʔcaʔŋsɛŋɔjók/ ‘5,635 people’, literally ‘fifty-six hundred thirty-five people’. Compounding is also used with Thai stems to create new Ugong words: ‘gold’ is /ŋəŋbǒŋ/, literally ‘yellow silver’, /ŋəŋ/ ‘silver’ (from Thai /ŋən/) plus /bǒŋ/ ‘yellow’

3. Conclusion

In forthcoming studies I will quantify the processes of language death to trace the stages of phonological and morphological attrition. As has frequently been observed, the intermediate stages of language loss paradoxically often result in more complex systems as stable patterns are made less productive and regular alternations become sporadic and are gradually levelled. Another fascinating but complex process for future study is dialect convergence and divergence during language death. On the one hand, with rapid and less constrained changes in the system, each village or even each speaker develops dialect features; on the other hand, mobile speakers show an ability to learn another dialect over a fairly short period. For example, in 1977 and 1979-80 there was one speaker from Khok Khway who had been living in Kok Chiang with her husband for some years, and who showed some puzzling features in her speech. In 1981 her younger brother moved to Kok Chiang to marry a Kok Chiang girl, and I collected extensive data on the effects of seven years in a different dialect environment on his speech. Their father, in Khok Khway, has been used as an informant by two MA students at Mahidol University, Pusit (1986) and Mayuree (1989); their mother, long deceased, had originally come from Kok Chiang. The results show that adult speakers can adapt fairly thoroughly to a different dialect, leaving residual phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical differences.³

Ugong is an interesting group on several grounds. Firstly, it held a substantial place in the history of western central Thailand for many centuries; secondly, it provides an example of the way a minority group changes into part of the Thai majority over the centuries. From a

³ This is also encouraging because it suggests that the most fluent Ban Lawa speaker whom I recorded, originally from Talao/Hin Hak, is likely to have adapted to Ban Lawa Ugong in his forty years there.

linguistic point of view, the language is very interesting because it is a newly-recognised separate branch of the Burmese-Lob languages, and its vocabulary is in many ways archaic. Moreover, documenting the present terminal stages of the process of language shift with all its consequences for the linguistic structure of Ugong is important for linguistic theory. It is also important to assist such groups in their development as well as cultural and linguistic maintenance, and I will continue to do so.

REFERENCES⁴

- Bradley, D. 1978. Identity, dialect and sound change in mBisu and Nig5. *Working Papers in Linguistics, University of Melbourne* 4: 37-46.
- Bradley, D. 1979. *Proto-Loloish*. Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series No. 39. London and Malmo: Curzon Press.
- Bradley, D. 1981. Majority-minority linguistic interfaces in Thailand. *Working Papers in Linguistics, University of Melbourne* 7: 79-86.
- Bradley, D. 1983. Identity: the persistence of minority groups. In McKinnon, J. & Wanat Bhruksasri (eds). *Highlanders of Thailand*, 46-55. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Bradley, D. 1985. Traditional minorities and language education in Thailand. In Bradley, D. (ed.) *Language Policy, Language Planning and Sociolinguistics in Southeast Asia*. Pacific Linguistics A-67: 87-102.
- Bradley, D. 1986. Phonological convergence in a minority language: Ugong in Thailand. Pre-session on Southeast Asia as a linguistic area, Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Bradley, D. 1988. The disappearance of the Ugong in Thailand. In Dorian, N.C. (ed.) *Investigating Obsolescence*, 33-40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bradley, D. 1989. Tone alternations in Ugong. In Compton, C. & Hartman, S. (eds). *William J. Gedney's Seventh Cycle*. De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University.
- Bradley, D.B. 1835-73. *Diaries*. ms.
- Crawford, J. 1967. *Journal of an Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*. Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Kerr, A.F.G. 1927. Two Lawa vocabularies. *Journal of the Siam Society* 2 1/1: 53-63.
- Mayuree Puapunsuddee. 1989. *The Verb of Ugong in Uthai Thani Province*. MA thesis, Mahidol University.
- Pusit Rujjanavet 1986. *The Phonology of Ugong in Uthai Thani Province*. MA thesis, Mahidol University.
- Stern, T. 1979. A people between: the Pwo Karen of Western Thailand. In Keyes, C.F. (ed.) *Ethnic Adaptation and Identity*, 63-80. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Terwiel, B.J. 1989. *Through Travellers Eyes: an approach to early nineteenth century Thai History*. Bangkok: Editions Duang Kamol.
- Theraphan L. Thongkum & Gainey, J.C. 1977. *Language Map of Thailand Handbook*. Bangkok: Indigenous Languages of Thailand Project.

⁴ Thai names are usually alphabetised by first name as done here.