

# Chrau Intonation<sup>1</sup>

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1. **Introduction.** Chrau, a Mon-Khmer language spoken by about 15,000 people living E.N.E. of Saigon, has resisted the trend to lexical one in Southeast Asia, but does have significant sentence intonation. Kôho, a neighboring Mon-Khmer language to the north,<sup>2</sup> has a complex of length plus tone; and Cham, a Malayo-Polynesian language to the northeast, has one phonemic tone contrast.<sup>3</sup> Although there has been some work done on sentence intonation in tonal languages of Southeast Asia,<sup>4</sup> little investigation on non-tonal languages has been done, apart from merely stating that intonation is phonemic.<sup>5</sup>

1 I am indebted to Richard Watson and Jean Donaldson for many helpful suggestions during the writing of this paper, and to my informant Thô Săng for his patience in repeating sentences over many times. The dialect studied here is that of the Xuân Lộc area, which seems to be fairly central both geographically and in prestige. Other dialects have different intonation patterns.

2 For Kôho tones see W.A. Smalley, 'Sre Phonemes and Syllables', *JAOS* 74: 217-222 (1955), and also Helen Evans and Peggy Bowen, *Kôho Language Course*, Dalat, 1963, mime.

3 'Phonological Units in Cham', a thesis submitted for a master's degree to the Graduate School of the University of Indiana by David L. Blood, 1963.

4 See E.J.A. Henderson, 'Prosodies in Siamese', *Asia Major* 1: 204-212 (1949). Also R.B. Jones and Huyên Sanh Thônng, *Introduction to Spoken Vietnamese*, pp. 5-7; Washington, 1957.

5 See W.A. Smalley, *Outline of Khmu Structure*, p. 2; New Haven, 1961. He recognizes four intonational pitch levels in Khmu, a Mon-Khmer language of Laos.

Many of the Chrau people are bilingual, speaking both Vietnamese and Chrau, and many Vietnamese words have been borrowed into Chrau. But fully assimilated Vietnamese words lose their lexical tone and fit into the intonational patterns of the Chrau sentence.

The Chrau word *bánh* 'bread' is a good example of a Vietnamese word in the process of assimilation. The following variations have been heard on *bánh* in one Chrau conversation :

<u>ăn</u> sa bánh	'I eat bread' 'I'm eating bread.'
păch <u>bánh</u> mải sa	'what bread you eat' 'What kind of bread are
<u>ăn</u> sa bánh <u>mi</u>	you eating?'
	'I eat bread wheat' 'I'm eating wheat bread.'

In the first example, *bánh* begins on a high pitch and falls to the lowest pitch in the sentence, the normal sentence-final intonation. In the second example, it is on low mid pitch, the normal sentence level for mid-sentence. In the third example, however, *bánh* is on a high pitch and *mi*, a Vietnamese word, follows with a low tone. Only the last example could be interpreted as carrying the Vietnamese lexical tone (the Vietnamese word has a high rising tone); in this instance *bánh* follows Vietnamese presumably because the following morpheme is also Vietnamese.

In this paper, only sentences of the first two types, where it is obvious that the Vietnamese tone is not operative, have been used to analyze Chrau intonation.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Basic Patterns.

2.1 Neutral Intonation. The neutral, or basic, intonation pattern in Chrau is composed of a sustained low-mid level tone over most of the sentence, followed by a slight rise or a rise plus down-glide on the last syllable,

6 My informant, who is adept at carrying on two-way conversations with himself, taped a number of such conversations on various topics. After I had transcribed them, he read them over quite patiently for me so that I could compare his reading intonation with his natural speech. He varied very little in his overall intonational patterns in these repeated productions. The variations did give me important clues to non-obligatory categories. Some data necessarily was caught in ordinary conversation with him and could not be taped after the situation had passed, especially in the case of elliptical sentences.

as determined by the structure of the syllable. ( \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ )

This neutral pattern occurs with simple declarative sentences.

If the last syllable has both a short vowel and a voiceless final consonant (p, t, ch, c, q, h), the pitch remains high (cf. sec. 4). This intonation pattern is relatively infrequent, though the simplest to describe.

mǎi	gǔt	'you know'	'You know.'		
nēh	sǒq	'it dirty'	'It's dirty.'		
tamun	chǐt	'person dead'	'A person is dead.'		
ǎnh	saq	sǐq	'I go return'	'I'm going home.'	
cō	ndōh	sǐq	'grandfather not-yet return'		
			'Grandfather hasn't returned yet.'		
mǎi	hôm	gǔq	u nǒq	'you still stay at there.'	
				'You still live there.'	
vu	nǒq	nhai	chwǒp	'person there speak much'	'He talks a lot.'
cōp	iēt			'wait now'	'Wait!'

All other syllables, i.e. all long vowels, open syllables, or voiced final consonants, glide down after the rise.<sup>7</sup> The syllable is slightly stressed and is lengthened (if the vowel is short, the consonant is lengthened). The following examples are all glided. The first two have final nasals, the third has an open syllable, the fourth has a long vowel, and the last has a voiced final consonant.

7 The consonants of Chrau, as represented in this paper, are voiceless stops *p, t, ch* (alveopalatal), *c/k* (velar); lenis voiced stops *v* [b-v], *d, j, g*; preglottalized voiced stops *b* [ʔ b], *ɖ* [ʔ d]; nasals *m, n, nh* [n̄], *ng* [ŋ]; others *r, l, w, y, s, h, q* (glottal stop). The vowels are high, mid and low: front *i, ê, e*; central *ɨ, ɔ, a*; back *u, ô, o*. The sequence *n'h* [nh], is in contrast with *nh* [n̄]. For a fuller discussion of the phonemes, see David Thomas, 'Remarques sur la phonologie du Chrau' *B. S. L. P.* 57: 175-197 (1962). In this paper, all phonetically short vowels are marked ˘.

anh sa bảnh	' I eat bread ' ' I 'm eating bread. '
anh saq lêng	' I go play ' ' I 'm going for a walk. '
anh saq ôp canji	' I go do weed ' ' I 'm going to weed. '
chêq anh viq u heq	' Let me sleep at here ' ' Let me sleep here. '
lop nêh tôh tở	, thunder it makes thunder ' ' It 's thundering'.

These basic patterns show up in counting. Each of the numbers up to ten has a neutral contour, those with short vowels and voiceless final consonants being on a higher pitch than the others.

mũi) var) pe) puôn) prăm) prău) pởh) pham) sữn) mốt

This could be summarized by saying that syllables with only one mora of voicing in the coda (vowel plus final) do not glide down; syllables with more than one mora of voicing in the coda do glide down.<sup>8</sup> (Note that semivocalic onglides, as in *chwöp*, function in the onset, not in the coda.)

These are the normal intonation patterns when not modified by other factors.

**2.2 General Modifications.** Other discourse styles, emphasis, or de-emphasis all alter the basic pattern by shifting the high point of the intonation contour to other positions in the sentence or by adding an additional contour. They also break up the contour into distinct levels.

If there is a high pitch on any non-final syllable, there is no final rise, but there is a gradual drop to low across the length of the sentence.

anh gữt lữh sữn gữt mải dôh ' I know why not know you you '  
' Of course I know, why wouldn't I? '

Finals which do not have an upglide but have more than one mora of voicing usually trail off in a non-distinctive down-glide.

<sup>8</sup> Defining a mora as being the length of a short vowel.

As the example above shows, there can be four distinct levels in a sentence, but there are never more levels than there are words. The second level from the bottom, or low-mid, is the normal neutral level, as in English. On which ever level they occur, usually the subject and verb are on the same level, and usually a noun and its modifier are on the same level.

päch n'hya mǎi ðp nar heq 'thing what you do day this'  
'What are you doing today ?'

päch n'hya mǎi ðp 'thing what you do'  
'What are you doing?'

This should not be taken to mean that there are four contrastive levels in Chrau. There is an emic peak (sec. 2, 4) emic drop (sec. 5), and emic final rise (sec. 3). But there are never more than four general etic levels in a single contour.

3. **Discourse Modifications.** Content questions, elliptical yes-or-no questions, terms of address, and commands have typical patterns of their own.

3.1 **Content Questions.** The highest pitch in a content question occurs on the question word,<sup>9</sup> with the exception of *lǎy* 'who, which?', which fills a different slot in the sentence than the other content question words. There is usually no other high pitch in the sentence, with the exception of a negative which begins another clause, or an intensifier.

lǎh mǎi panh êq nhim 'why you say not cry'  
'Why do you say, 'Don't cry' ?'

lǎh mǎi gǎq ngai qua ɔr 'why you live far very very'  
'Why do you live so very far away ?'

Content question words which occur with high pitch are *lǎh* 'why?', *vi* 'where?', *gǎq*, *vagǎq* 'how much?' *mǎq* 'how, why?', *vu*

9 Richard Phillips notes this same feature in Central Mnong, a Mon-Khmer language to the northwest, in his *Mnong Language Course*; Dalat, 1963, typed.

'who?', *tom* 'why?' and *päch n'hya* 'what?'. *päch n'hya* acts as one word morphologically, but is two words phonologically. Occasionally *päch* occurs alone as a question word with the same meaning. The high pitch occurs on *päch*, not on *n'hya*.

lũh mãi nôp mãi dõh 'why you no you you'  
'Why don't you want to?'

vi mãi saq 'where you go' 'Where are you going?'  
vagõq jên nděh 'how-much money car' 'What's the fare?'  
mõq õp 'how do' 'what's to be done?'  
vu ji 'who sick' 'who's sick?'

(Contrast this example with a neutral statement:  
vu ji 'who sick' 'Whoever is sick.')

tõm ũnh mãi lo 'why fire your thus'  
'What's wrong with your light?'  
päch n'hya saq gon 'thing what go hunting'  
'Go hunting for what?'

3. 2. Elliptical <sup>10</sup> Yes-or-No Questions. In elliptical style, a final glide to high pitch indicates a yes-or-no question. This style occurs frequently in conversations, but is not usually recognized out of context. In more formal speech, yes-or-no questions have a final question particle, which takes a de-emphasis contour (sec. 5.2).

mãi gũt õp be 'you know do lumber?'  
'Do you know how to lumber?'

In the following example, a word which normally would have the de-emphasis low level pitch has an additional question glide added.

õp yang va võh 'do spirit rice (friendly particle)?'  
'Are you doing the rice ceremony?'

In contrast, the normal contour for these words is :

10 cf. Richard Gunter, 'Elliptical Sentences in English', *Lingua* 12: 137-150 (1963),

ôp yang va voh , Do the rice ceremony ! '

The final particle *hông* can optionally have either a yes-or-no glide or de-emphasis intonation. This is because *hông* already marks a sentence as a yes-or-no question.

mãi gũt ôp be hông / ' you know do lumber huh? .'  
' Do you know how to lumber? '

When a hearer has not understood a word, he repeats it with a question glide. The glide apparently adds the meaning ' Did you say... ? ' or ' How's that again? '

3.3 Terms of Address. Terms of address, whether pronouns or names, usually have an up-glide, although they can optionally occur on a low level pitch with no apparent difference in meaning. There may be a slightly questioning attitude reflected in the glide, as ' O.K. ? ' or ' Are you with me ? ' Terms of address usually occur after the sentence, but occasionally precede the sentence.

päch n'hya con a voh tĩq mãi / ' thing what animal at ahead there you '  
' What animal is that ahead there ? '

If there are two different terms of address, they each have a glide from low to high.

vi mãi saq nõq mãi / pôp / ' where you go there you brother '  
' Where are you going there, Brother ? '

(The reverse sequence, *pôp mãi*, does not have address intonation at all, but fits into the sentence contour. The reason for this has not been ascertained.)

A repetition of the same term of address has an up-glide on the first occurrence, a down-glide on the second.

saq gon tu nggõ tĩq mãi mãi / ' go hunting to forest there you you '  
' Go hunting in the forest. '

*Von*, a term which includes the speaker, does not act as other

terms of address. It takes the sentence-final de-emphasis intonation (sec. 5.2) rather than the post-sentence address intonation.

ôp pam	von mai	‘make fish-trap self you’ ‘Let’s make a fish trap.’	
σ mǎi	saq nggô	von	‘oh you go forest self’ ‘Let’s go to the forest.’

If there is a compound term of address, the first part is on a low level pitch, the second part is on an up-glide.

mǎi gũt	ôp be	pôp pe	‘you know do lumber ? Brother Pe’ ‘Do you know how to lumber, Brother Pe?’
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3.4 Commands After the sentence contour there may be an additional fall. This fall occurs with the imperative particle  $\sigma$  and it goes from high to low. (The response is  $\sigma$ , with either a glide from mid to low or with a slight rise from mid.)

command :

reply :

gaprăm gũq u nhi saq pǎh glau	prăm	$\sigma$	$\sigma$	(or)	$\sigma$
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‘Pram stay at home go cut bamboo Pram (imper.)’ ‘ O.K.’

‘Pram, you stay at home and go cut the bamboo !’ ‘ O.K.’

mǎi gũq mǒq a lư	$\sigma$
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‘you stay quietly at behind (imperative)’

‘You stay back there quietly !’

4. Emphasis Modifications. Certain types of words in a Chrau sentence frequently have a higher pitch than the rest of the sentence, for emphasis. The emphasized word is stressed, and unless it has both a short vowel and a voiceless final consonant, it is lengthened (cf. sec. 2.1). If a two-syllable word is emphasized, only the main (final) syllable is on the higher pitch. The following answers to questions illustrate the use of this category :



- Q. päch heq vu de 'thing this who belong-to'  
'Whose thing is this?'
- A. päch un de 'thing you (grandmother)' 'Your thing.'
- Q. päch mǎi ha päch ǎnh 'thing you or thing my'  
'Your thing or mine?'
- A. päch un de 'thing you (grandmother) belong-to'  
'Your thing.'

The first answer had the normal, neutral intonation. The second, because a choice was required, emphasized the person to whom the thing belonged.

Categories which are frequently emphasized are contrast (as illustrated above), directional words, negatives, numbers, and in tensifiers. Directional words and negatives are usually de-emphasized when not emphasized (cf. sec. 5.1).

4.1 Directional Words, *tu* 'to', *a* 'from, at', and *u* 'in, at' are usually emphasized. The alternative is de-emphasis, as they are only on the neutral level in reading or didactic style. In the following examples, the directional words are emphasized in the first three sentences, de-emphasized in the last one. *Emphasis increases distance for a*

- simböng u nhi nǎq 'soap in house fire'  
'The soap is in the kitchen.'
- pe nar ǎnh gēh sǐq tu nhi 'three days I have return to home'  
'In three days I'll go home'.
- ǎnh gǔq a re a rǎm tǐq 'I live away-at field away-at field there'  
,I live away<sup>off</sup> there at the fields.'
- ǎnh saq du a ji 'I went ran-off from sickness'  
'I ran away from sickness'.

4.2 Negatives. The negatives *êq*, *sǐn*, and *n-* 'not' and *vǒng* 'don't' are frequently emphasized. The final example shows a de-emphasized negative.

- ǎnh êq vlām si-ur mǎi tǒq 'I not meet wife your there'  
'I'll not meet your wife there.'
- ǎnh n'gǐt 'I not know' 'I don't know.'
- vǎng huch alǎc vanhǔl pe 'don't drink wine drunk Pe'  
'Don't get drunk, Pe.'

yăh hǒng ănh n' huch a lac nhũl mǎi mǎi 'good no.

I *not* drink wine drunk you you'  
'Oh no, I wouldn't get drunk.'

It is also possible to negativize a verb by using a high pitch and extra heavy stress on the verb. This is an elliptical form not used in precise speech. The word *conh* 'want' is the word most frequently used in this way.

conh uinh silăng khǎi ,not-want fire. light moon'  
,I don't want a light, there's moonlight.'

**4.3 Numbers.** Numbers are usually emphasized, but sometimes are not if a preceding word in the sentence has already been emphasized.

pham nđeh va vǒh 'eight carts rice indeed'  
'eight carts of rice'

lẻq năc nǎng en đon 'gone half night already'  
'It's midnight already.'

saq êq gẽh đư lam gǒng chhwǒy 'go not have one piece meat  
(exclamation).'

'Went and didn't get a single piece of meat.'

In the last example, the negative and post final particle are emphasized, not the number.

**4.4 Intensifiers.** Intensifiers *qua* and *lũng* 'very' and *trôq* 'sky' are almost invariably emphasized. It might be argued that *qua* is a Vietnamese word still, as the word *quá* in Vietnamese also has a high tone, but the Chrau word can have a down-glide when it occurs sentence finally.

ji qua 'sore very' 'very sore'  
qua jǒq lũng gơi 'very long-time very very' 'a very long time.  
takat qua trôq 'cold very sky' 'extremely cold'  
huch alăc qua trôq qua ntêh 'drink wine very sky very earth'  
'Drink exceedingly.'

In the expression *qua troq qua ntêh* 'very sky very earth', usually only the first word is emphasized.

5. De-emphasis Modifications. Occasionally some words can occur on a slightly lower than low-mid pitch in mid-sentence, or on low pitch finally. They are de-stressed and the vowel quality tends to be indistinct. Function words usually fit into this category, especially sentence finally. Pronouns in the possessive slot are also usually de-emphasized

5.1 Mid-sentence De-emphasis. Function words and pronouns in the possessive slot are usually de-emphasized, but may be emphasized or be on a neutral pitch.

anh gôm daq di khũh

'I boil water to bubble'  
,I, I bring the water to a rolling boil.'

valai vap mai u nõq

leave father your at there'  
IForget about your father.'

saq õp be bai vap anh du mva

go do lumber with father my one years  
I went to lumber with my father for  
one year.'

When the following word is emphasized, the function word often occurs on the neutral pitch, but otherwise would normally be on the neutral pitch only in a didactic style.

huch di tõt daq ca nõq

'drink to arrive water like that'  
'Drink till you turn into water.'

The pre-syllable of a two syllable word is very frequently on low pitch. As this syllable is inherently de-stressed, there is no change in the amount of stress.

anh n'huch alac va nhũl

'I not drink wine drunk'

anh n' huch a lac va nhũl mai mai

'I not drink wine drunk  
you you'

In the first example, the negative *n* of *n'huch* is emphasized, the *a* of *alac* is neither emphasized nor de-emphasized, and the *va* of *vanhũl* is de-emphasized. In the second example, all three pre-syllables are de-emphasized.

5.2 Final De-emphasis. Certain function words or closely knit noun phrases occur in a low pitch sentence finally instead of with the basic sentence down-glide. The preceding word carries the sentence rise if no

other word in the sentence has been on a high pitch.

saq sǐq vɔn 'go return self' 'Let's go home.'

When one of these de-emphasis words occurs penultimately in the sentence, both it and the last word are low, whether the final word is a de-emphasis type word or not. The sentence rise is then on the antepenultimate word.

saq pǎh glau sǐq en nǒq 'go cut bamboo return already that'

mǎi padau hǒng voh 'you teach (question particle) (polite particle)'

Function words which occur with this sentence final de-emphasis are *en* 'already', *něh* '?', *vɔn* 'self', *hǒng* and *dǎng* '(question particles)' *voh*, '(a polite particle)', *ǒm* '(an emphasis particle), *vǒh* 'indeed' *lo* 'so', and *toq* 'there'. With the exception of *en*, these words have not been heard emphasized. *en*, *něh*, *vɔn*, and the question particles have also been heard in the penultimate de-emphasis position :

ǎnh vanhũt qua en đon 'I drunk very already already'  
'I'm already very drunk.'

saq saq něh voh 'go go that (particle)'

huch sǎh mǎng heq voh de 'Go ahead and go.'

'drink wine night this self of'  
'Drink my wine tonight.'

saq vɔn 'go self' 'Let's go.'

mǎi padau hǒng voh 'you teach question polite'

'Will you teach please?'

va yǎh sǎq hǒng 'rice good full-headed question'

'Is your rice good and full?'

mǎi saq dǎng 'you go question' 'Are you going?'

The words *voh*; *ǒm*, *vǒh*, *lo*, and *toq* have not been heard in the

penultimate low position, but they do occur consistently in the final low position.

nhũp su au pĩh vòh 'take cloth clothes launder *polite*'  
'Take the clothes and wash them.'

gèh ǝm 'have *emphatic*' 'Sure I have.'

pham ndèh va vòh 'eight carts rice *indeed*'  
'There were eight carts of rice.'

gĩt lo 'know *so*' 'I don't know.'

ǎnh ẽq vlãm si-ur mǎi tɔq 'I not meet wife your there'  
'I won't meet your wife there.'

In certain closely knit noun phrases at the end of a sentence frequently both elements of the phrase take the de-emphasis low pitch. These phrases may be composed of two commonly co-occurring nouns, or a noun and its normal adjective, or two pronominal elements.

pǎch n'hya mǎi ɔp nar heq 'thing what you do *day this*'  
'What are you doing today?'

var riyẽng prǎu jòt ndõh 'two hundred six *ten papers*'  
'260 piastres'

vagõq jên ndèh 'how-much *money car*'  
'What is the fare?'

simbõng u nhi nǎq 'soap at house *fire*'  
'The soap is in the kitchen.'

ǎnh gĩt lũh sĩn gĩt mǎi dõh 'I know why not know you you'  
'Of course I know, why wouldn't I?'

