

Pacoh Names¹

RICHARD L. WATSON

0. Introduction
1. Givenname — child status
2. Nick namè — adolescent status
3. Teknonymy — adult status
4. Lineal name — affinal status
5. Totem name — totem taboo

0. That naming systems have been considered to have important social correlates can be seen in their consideration as far back as 1864 in *La Cité Antique* by NamaDenys Fustel de Coulanges². In learning the Pacoh naming system, one is immediately impressed by the linguistic patterns which the names employ. In studying the social correlate of the system, one is impressed by the social system which begins to emerge. The purpose of this paper is to present to the reader both the linguistic forms and the social correlates of the Pacoh naming system.

Through the years there has been a false belief among the Vietnamese and other investigators that the Pacoh were very ignorant primitives having only given names and no family names. An investigator would first ask for a Pacoh person's *tên* « given name ». The Pacoh would respond with a name, but he was never sure whether to be literal and give his given name, by which he should be called only if he were a child or to give the nickname or teknonym by which he should be called. Whatever name he gave, it was usually spelled and pronounced atrociously and thereafter became his legal name to be used on all documents. If the investigator asked for the person's *họ* « family name », the Pacoh would reply that he had none, either because he had mistaken *họ* for the more common homophonous form in Vietnamese meaning « they », or because he did not feel that his totem oriented name was comparable.

The first three kinds of names are both referential and vocati-

ve. The latter two kinds are only referential and are used only on rare occasions. The first three kinds of names are more or less age-graded, though the third does require parenthood as well. These terms are in contrast to the strictly generation-graded kin terms which can also be used as vocatives or referents³.

1. Given names. A Pacoh child is not named until it is several months old. During the first several months it is believed that a child's soul is very tender and can be easily carried away by those spirits which carry away the souls of people. The infant mortality rate is very high so that parents will not even contemplate a name for the infant, possibly because they are afraid to set their hopes and affections on the child prematurely, or because names cannot be used over again and would be wasted if the child were to die. A further reason in the case of the first child is that the parents will be called by the name of the first child and it would not be appropriate to be called by the name of a child which died in infancy (see § 2.). When the child is old enough to be named, parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts can suggest names. The one which is liked best will stick while the others drop off.

The Pacoh are very careful not to duplicate the names of anyone living or dead. Though the Pacoh are very widely scattered throughout the mountains, they assure me that there are never two persons living at the same time with same name. However, this may be more imagined than true. They admit that the same name may have been used in the distant past, but too far distant for anyone to remember. They say that they are afraid that if two persons had the same name, their personal spirits or family spirits might become confused or jealous.

The given names are always one syllable and conform to the normal rules of word structure CV (C)⁴. They do not carry any meanings, but they do carry alliteration between siblings. The names of our informant and his siblings were: *Hút* [hut], *Huan* [huənh] *Haoq* [haw ?], *Hoab* [hoəʔ], *Hêq* [he.ʔ]. *Hâyq* [həyʔ]. Note that each name in the group begins with *h*. There is a less obvious pattern of rhyming in that each succeeding pair of names rhymes in its vowel, or vowel and semivowel contrasts. The last four names rhyme in their word-final glottal stops. Another pair of sibling names are ; *dõnh*.

[də·ñ] and *Dõn* [də·n], Here again there is more similarity than just first letters. There does not appear to be any distinction between masculine and feminine. Of the above examples, *Huan*, *Hâyq*, and *Dõn* are boys. In other sets there is no rhyming : *Dâq* [də?], *Děi* [de·l]. *Dáng* [daŋ].

A social correlate for the alliteration and occasional rhyming of names can be found in reference to tekonomy (see 2). Since the parents are called by the name of the eldest child, the younger children can also be recognized as belonging to the same family by the rhyming of their names. That the given names are not distinguished by sex correlates with the fact that young children are not distinguished by dress or by sleeping place as the older children are (see § 3.). In the same way the terms for child (*acay*) and for younger sibling (*a-em*) are not distinguished by sex.

2. Nicknames. As Pacoh children begin to reach adolescence (generally defined by the Pacoh as the age when they begin to enjoy the company of the opposite sex), playmates will begin nicknaming each other. Nicknaming is apparently done informally in the course of play, but it is always done according to special roles. The Pacoh terms used are : *ranóng* « to nickname », and *rnóng* « a nickname ». The terms for unmarried adolescents are : *lalâu* « young man » *cumõr* « young woman ».

The nicknaming is begun by choosing a common sequence of two words, the second of which rhymes with the given name. The Pacoh use the term *tarbëng* « to rhyme, harmonize. » Most of the two word sequences chosen are verb-noun combinations which occur with high frequency, but there are also cases of noun-noun combinations which are so common in their usage together as to be considered as common collocations. Examples are :

pënh búl Thúl « throw rocks Thúl »

buat atuan Huan « wash-face soap Huan »

tur canxíng Kíng « cobra's back Kíng »

láh nco Pro « « split bamboo Pro »

dyung ati Yi « feet hands Yi »

The sequence of words chosen are usually such a common collocation that a Pacoh can almost always reconstruct the entire form and so discover a person's given name, in spite of the fact that only the first part of the nickname is normally used after the novelty of the rhyme has worn off.

Having chosen a pair of words which sound good with the person's given name the first word of the pair will be prefaced by *Cu-* for boys and *Cán* for girls. *A-* is occasionally used instead of *Cu-* when it is felt that it sounds better. I have so few examples with *A-* I am not able to analyze the difference or even be sure that there is an analyzable difference. *Cán* generally means « female, woman », but as described under their teknomony (3. 2), it can also mean « mother ». The nickname usage may be meant as « woman » or as a diminutive of « mother. » This *Cán* is never mistaken for the teknonymous term, or parent-title, because it is followed by a meaningful verb or noun and not by a given name. *Cu-* may be a diminutive [form of] *cõnh* « male, man » which is used in the father-title (§ 3. 2). *A-* might possibly be a diminutive form of the kin term *a-ám* « father. »

Though the Pacoh tease each other about the meanings of their nicknames, there does not appear to be any feeling that the nicknames are chosen to represent characteristics of individuals. At the time of nicknaming there is sometimes more than one choice. Other choices are gradually dropped in [favor of] just one. Several months before I left Hue, a boy was brought down from the mountains still having two nicknames. Because of the lack of organization in the resettlement situation, the boy was still being called by both nicknames when I left, though one seemed to be winning out. A different case was that of a young man named Yi. Because of his age the young people in the resettlement village were sure that the name Yi, used by his Vietnamese captors, must be his nick-name ; so they began to call him *Avi*, automatically adding the *A-* prefix. Later they found that he had a family and should be called by his father-title, though the Vietnamese had found out and used his given name.

Examples of nicknames are listed below with double underlining under the part which is used. Neither the given name or the

hyming word are used, and to call a young man by his given name is *a-eq* «taboo».

Cupěnh bál Thúl	‘Cu- throw rocks Thúl’
Cubuat atuan Huan	‘Cu- wash-face soap Huan’
Culáh nco Pro	‘Cu- split bamboo Pro’
Cudying ati Yi	‘Cu- feet hands Yi’
Cán Xêl tarla Pa	‘Cán peel potatoes pa’
Cán Pung con Don	‘Cán wear headband Don’
Cán dêr arâm Crâm	‘Cán make torches Crâm’

The last name on the list is a girl's name which has become somewhat legendary. A young man composed a piece to play on his *khên* «reeded pipes» to this girl whom he loved. The composition became very popular throughout the Pacoh region and is given the title of the full nickname of the girl, *Cán dêr arâm Crâm*. The girl is thought of by each generation as being a very beautiful girl who lived just beyond the next range of mountains, but, of course, no one has ever seen her. This is the only case I know of where the entire nickname is used.

The social correlates of nicknaming can be found in more areas than just the psychological-physiological change of adolescence. At the time of early adolescence when the nicknaming is begun, the children have begun to learn the «facts of life» and to be moved into a new society. They must learn to observe the customs of proper dress and other related mores. The boys must take their sleeping mats and move to the men's room at the center of the longhouse. The girls stay in the family room, but if the father is able, he will build a small guesthouse a short distance from the longhouse, where the girls have slumber parties among themselves or can entertain the boys in informal get-togethers or more formal parties and dates.

3. Teknonymy. When parents have finally named their first child, they will be called by a parent-title. The name of the eldest child is usually used whether the child is a boy or a girl. In cases of death or marriage of the older children, it is common for the parents

to be called by the name of a younger child. Both parents are called by the name of the same child. For the male parent, the child's name is prefaced by *cõnh* « male, man », for the female parent, the child's name is prefaced by *cán* « female, woman ». e. g. *Cõnh Mua* and *Cán Mua*.

The terms *cõnh* and *cán* involve a semantic problem. Though these terms generally carry the meanings given above and not the meanings « father » and « mother », these latter meanings are intended in the parent-titles.. The generic meanings of *cõnh* and *cán* are always « male » and « female » respectively, and can be used of persons or animals regardless of their ages. The meanings « man » and « woman » are more specific in that they require a phrase structure which excludes animals and non-adult humans : *ape cõnh* « the men » *ape cán* « the women », *ncõnh* « a man », *ncán* « a woman. »

The generic terms for « father » and « mother » are *a-ám* and *a-i*, respectively. In the Pahi dialect of Pacoh these terms are used for the parent-titles. The *a-* « kin term marker » is dropped leaving the title forms *Ám* and *I*, e.g. *Ám Dep* «Dep's father», *I Dep* «Dep's mother.»

The Pacoh have a possessive prefix *i-* which must be prefixed to all kin terms when they are followed by a possessor or the interrogative *nnau* «who?», but this prefix has been lost in the Pahi dialect.. Examples of the Pacoh are : *inhi Cubuat* «Cubuat's uncle», *inhi cu* «my uncle», *inhi nnau* «whose uncle?». But the possessed forms of « father » and « mother » are not *i-ám* and *i-i*, but rather *icõnh* and *icán*. A further development of this dual system is a social one. A Pacoh boy or girl will be asked, « *Tôq nmo icán. may?* » « Where is your mother? ». But the boy or girl, to be proper, must answer with the kin terms using, *a-ám cu* « my father », or *a-i cu* « my mother. »

Since *icõnh* and *icán* are used as possessed forms of « father » and « mother », it is reasonable to assume that *cõnh* and *cán* when followed by a child's name, are title forms of « father » and « mother ». The Pacoh terms for using the parent-titles are : *doq parcõnh* « to call father title », and *doq parcán* « to call mother-title ».

Some of the social correlates of the parent-titles are : the new

social status of parents and the responsibility of parents for their children. Marriage alone does not make a difference in social status because the children of wealthy families are sometimes married before childbearing is possible, and because it is felt that the souls of barren parents are too weak to bear children. But the birth of a child raises the parents' status. Though the young couple will build their own family room to the end of the long house, the bride must spend her time with the mother-in-law as a virtual servant. Once she has a child of her own, though, she can enjoy some independence in her own room and can then look forward to the time when she will be « queen » in her own household. The new father also has a new position in his house and in the village. Izikowitz states that among the Lamet, a related tribe, marriage status is not achieved until the birth of a child at which time a girl's kin term gets a compounded term of respect⁵.

3. 2. Grandparents are called by grandparent-titles. The title forms of the kin terms *avöq* « grandfather » and *acáq* « grandmother » are used to preface the name of the eldest grandchild, e. g. *Vöq Mua* « Mua's Grandfather », and *Cáq Mua* « Mua's grandmother ». There are a few cases in which a prefix form *U-* is used in place of *Vöq*, e. g. *Unon* « Non's grandfather ». It might be speculated that this *U-* prefix adds weight to the argument that *Cu-* is a diminutive form of *Cõnh* (§ 2.)

The Pacoh terms for the grandparent-titles are: *parvöq* « grandfather-title » and *parcáq* « grandmother-title ». To call by a grandparent title is *doq parvöq* and *doq parcáq*.

The use of the grandparent titles marks a new position of social respect. In the vocative system *avöq* and *acáq* are extended to terms of respect for persons of wealth, wisdom or official position as well as age. The title of a man to whom the people turn to be judge in their disputes is *Avöq Parchën* « the reconciler ».

4. Lineage names. The Pacoh term for family lineage is *ntóng*. It is traced patrilineally. Among the Pacoh there are approximately fourteen *ntóng* names. According to legend, the first mother divided her children into two *ntóng* groups, the four sons were *Mpong* and

the four daughters were *Prúng*. However, according to the marriage system, I suspect that another story teller might relate that there were originally four *ntóng* groups formed from the given names of the four sons. The taboo of sibling incest was relaxed for the first four couples. One storyteller suggested that the brothers and sisters had been nomadic wanderers for several years before they again met and could marry because they no longer recognized each other as siblings. Since that beginning, marriage is not allowed between any persons having the same family name.

Not only is marriage lineage exogamous but the men of ego's *ntóng* can only take wives from an *ntóng* which has not already taken wives from ego's *ntóng*. For ego to take a wife from an *ntóng* which has taken wives from his *ntóng* would be like marrying his own sister. Since this is the case, all of the Pacoh *ntóng* groups are divided between *khơi* « husband's family » and *cuya* « wife's family » groups. This kind of a system would be possible with three families since A could take wives from B, B could take wives from C, and C could complete the circle by taking wives from A (X in the chart below indicates possible groups participating in marriage relationships):

		Wife Groups		
		A	B	C
Husband Groups	A		X	
	B			X
	C	X		

In the legend of the original four families, three of the four could take wives from either of two families, but one could take wives from only one family: For example:

		Wife groups			
		A	B	C	D
Husband groups	A		X	X	
	B			X	X
	C				X
	D	X	X		

This division did not always produce the best selection for everyone so it became necessary through the years for the families to divide and add new family names in order to make more marriages possible.

Since families continue to give daughters to certain families and to take daughters from certain other families, family solidarity is added to the separate families. Before a bride is taken into her new home a sacrifice must be observed for her adoption by the groom's ancestor spirits. When there is sickness or trouble, the in-law groups will help to provide food, put in crops or supply other needs. when there is a celebration in a village, the *khoi* and *cuya* relatives are usually invited to share. At least once a year the *cuya* group will go to visit their daughters in the *khoi* group and will take food items to give to the family. The *khoi* group in turn will give manufactured items, which have been bought or made at home, to the *cuya* group. This is somewhat of a « Christmas exchange » and since every family is both a *cuya* and a *khoi* to at least two other families, the economy has an opportunity to circulate.

In the old days parents almost always chose a cross-cousin or a daughter of wife's brothers to be their son's wife. Now more men choose their own wives, but continue to make the same preferential choice because they feel very close ties to their *cuya* and have confidence that the wife will be a good one and that the in-laws will uphold them in any troubles. Furthermore, the *khoi-cuya* relation

ship is partly based upon economic equality, so retaining the same groups enables the gift exchange to be kept on an equal basis, and bride prices can be met.

There are a number of important factors which need to be brought out concerning the special status which women hold in this society in spite of the fact that lineage is patrilineal and that the girls are bought by the parents of the husband-to-be. The mother of the family is the predominant person in production of rice and in serving of meals. The «main» things are often called *cán* «female» e. g. the stock of the crossbow, the spirit of rice, etc. This can be correlated to the fact, according to legend, the first human ancestor of the Pacoh was a woman. (See §5.), and that the spirit of rice is considered to be female. This may also correlate to the fact that parents take food products, including rice, to their married daughters each year.

5. Totem names. The Pacoh all accept the legend of their origin which tells that following a great flood of the whole earth by the breaking up of the sky which holds the water back, only a woman and a dog were left alive as a result of having been put into a drum. After some time, because of loneliness and the need to repopulate the earth, the spirits permitted the woman and the dog to have the eight children mentioned above (§4.). Because of the dog parent, the Pacoh observed the totem taboo of avoiding killing or eating dogs.

Whereas the dog taboo was general among all the Pacoh, the totem names and taboos for each family appear to be a later innovation. Because of the problem of incest and the need for more marriage groups the *ntóng* groups were divided and consequently the need was felt for separate totems as well. Furthermore, as separate totems arose, some of the families have in recent years begun to eat dogs occasionally.

The Pacoh term for totem is *yaq*. The *yaq* name is sometimes the same as the *ntóng* and sometimes separate from it. The totems have no apparent relationship with origin or ancestry, but seem to have been chosen as family jinxes and therefore to be avoided. Following are two *yaq* stories with translations. (For similar stories from a

related language in Laos see Izikowitz, 1951).

Yaq Abèh inò ntra ngai tông inèh : Ngai bôn llám abèh. Ngai táq, ngai hõr tóq hóng nco abúng. Cõh ma tóq ngai lách inh cha, cõh ngai nhõng yòl aham, láyq yõh chẽn. Cõh ngai hõr aliah loi, Cõh ma doi yol aham. Bar pe chu hõr ma doi yòl aham. Cõh tông inèh, « Oi yaq, láyq udyõn cha. Tư nnèh he acáp cha nnáng ; nghe yaq » Cõh láyq dách cha abèh tignõi tóq aki nnèh.

Cõh ma ngai cõ láyq chom, cõh tông yaq. Cõ abèh doi cuxo ma ngai láyq hõm te adúp ; tông. « Ihõr è nco ma doi láyq chẽn u-át. yòl aham. Icõh do ân láyq cha abèh, ntóng áh.

« This is what they say about the red-chested squirrel totem a long time ago : They got a red-chested squirrel. They cleaned it and cooked it inside a bamboo section. But when they split the bamboo to eat the squirrel, they saw that there was still blood, it was not yet done. So they cooked it more. But there was still blood. Two, then three times they cooked it and still there was blood. So they said, « Oi totem, it does not let us eat it. From this time we must not ever again eat it, it is our totem. » So they do not dare eat the red-chested squirrel to this day. But they said « totem » because they did not know, because the red-chested squirrel is always red but they had not seen the front of it. They said, « We cooked in in many bamboo sections, but it remained uncooked, there was still blood. » So is the family which does not eat red-chested squirrel.»

Yay car-ay la yaq tupál, cõh inèh : Tông Car-ay cardóc lu táq tupál. Cõh ma nám láyq bôn tupál cõh póc tõi q nngai. Damo ma icõh tóq ngai chóm tõi q nco h tõi q, limmo pit tupál. Tóq dyé lu aleq, ngai táq limmo ma doi pit, cõh ngai táq tupál tán, ân láyq hoi idõng, yòl ca tòm. Cõh tóq nco h ma doi ape póc tõi q. Hõm tupál nco h, cõh ape atar cui. Cui ma lu láyq chám; cui ma lu láyq chám. Cõh rngih inèh, « Inò ntra bẽnh icui, ma cõh vaih láyq chám icui. » Cõh tông. « Oi' nghe yaq tupál, tư nnèh he acáp táq tupál nnáng, khoiq dyé.

Cõh vaih láyq hoi táq tupál tingõi tóq aki nnèh.

« The car-ay totem is the pounding stick totem. It happened like this : The Car-ay family was very lazy about making pestles (poun-

ding poles for rice), So if they did not have a pestle they went and stole from others. It always happened like that until everyone knew that it was that family that stole however many pestles were missing. No matter how many pestles people made, they were always missing until they became very tired of it. So they made an immovable pestle out of a standing tree, with the trunk still held by the roots, The Car-ay people still went to steal, so they saw that pestle and tried to carry it home. They tried and tried but they could not carry it away. So they thought like this : « In the past we were strong to carry pestles, but now we cannot carry them, » So they said, « Oi, this is our totem, from now on we must not make pestles anymore, that's all, » So it happened that the Car-ay people cannot make pestles to this day.»

Note : There is a question as to whether the older or the new totem names are identical to the lineage names or different from them. More investigation will have to be made before this question can be answered for certain, but it appears that the two names which are allegedly the oldest, *prúng* and *mpóng*, observe the *acho* « dog » taboo ; which may indicate that the older *yaq* are different from the *ntóng* « lineage names »,

At least one name, *canxǒiq* « a kind of bird » may have a more extensive use in the Katu tribe to the South. This leads to the question for further investigation if maybe such names which are identical for both *yaq* and *ntóng* are innovations from the Katu.

Footnotes

¹ This paper was originally prepared for a course taught by Dr. Howard Law at the Hartford Seminary Foundation, I wish to express my appreciation for the stimulus received from Dr. Law.

This paper is based on field work among the Pacoh during the four years from 1961 to 1965, under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Pacoh is a Mon-Khmer language of the mountainous region of Viet Nam and Laos west of the city of Hue. I am especially indebted to Avu and Cubuat who were my principal informants.

² As cited by Robert H. *The History of Ethnological Theory*. (Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1937).

³ For age-grading compare, Searle S. Hoogshagen and William R. Merrifield, «Coatlan mixe Kinship». *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 17.3.219-227 (1961), Howard W. Law, *Mecayapan, Veracruz An Ethnographic Sketch*. Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Texas Aug. 1960. p.115.

⁴ Richard L. Watson, « Pacoh Phonemes ». *Mon-Khmer Studies I*, Linguistic Circle of Saigon and Summer Institute of Linguistics, Saigon, 1964.

⁵ Karl Gustav Izikowitz, *Lamet : Hill Peasants in French Indochina*. (Coteborg 1951).