

## Introduction

This special issue of the *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 28 No.2, is a tribute to Anthony Diller on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in November, 2010. The original idea for this festschrift came from Voravudhi Chirasombutti, with Yongxian Luo and Wilaiwan Khanittanan eagerly embracing the idea. Though the number of the papers for the occasion has been limited by the size of the *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, the content of the issue mirrors Tony's particular interests in historical and comparative linguistics and sociolinguistics.

The editors would like to thank the contributors for making this Festschrift possible and for producing papers with valuable new field data and impressive insights. Thanks to David Holm for the extensive survey of the Zhuang traditional script in 45 locations and the illuminating analysis of sound change in "Evidence for Historical Sound Change in Traditional Zhuang Texts". Thanks to Li Jinfang for his insightful analysis of Yi loanwords on Geyang. Thanks to Somsonge Burusphat and Qin Xiaohang for their revealing categorization and treatment of Zhuang proverbs. Thanks to Amara Prasithrathsint for her impressive clarification of the relationship between nouns and prepositions in Thai. We also hope that readers will find the editors' papers of interest: Yongxian Luo's detailed treatment of Sino-Tai lexical correspondence in the semantic field of 'to eat'; Voravudhi Chirasombutti's penetrating analysis of social and cultural factors conditioning language use in Japanese, completed despite an illness; and Wilaiwan Khanittanan's comprehensive explication of the provenance of vocabulary relating to the traditional Tai calendar.

For further studies on similar topics, readers can consult *The Tai-Kadai Languages* (Routledge 2008), a book recently edited by Tony along with Yongxian Luo and Jerold A. Edmondson. Included there is Tony's consideration of some 500 works in Tai and Thai linguistics, indicating his wide-ranging professional interests, along with a list of his own main publications. Thai readers may be familiar with a debate from about 1990 on the authenticity of the *Ram Khamhaeng Inscription*. Tony contributed to this through a linguistic argument for traditional dating based on comparative Tai data: "Consonant Mergers and Inscription One". Professor William J.

Gedney, the late eminent and revered scholar of Comparative Tai linguistics, sums it up:

*Diller's article is a model for its meticulous accuracy in detail, its thoroughness of research, and its soundness of method and assumptions. It is an important contribution to the field of comparative Tai linguistics. It seems safe to predict that decades from now, when most of what is now being written on both sides of the present controversy will have been forgotten, or at best read as amusing curiosities of antique scholarship, this Diller article will still be studied with admiration and profit....*

(Gedney, 1991)

Two prestigious Thai awards were granted to Tony: *Bua Luang* ('Regal Lotus') and *Phra Kiao Thongkham* ('Order of the Golden Crest'). Australian awards include the Governor-General's Centenary Medal (2001) and election to the Australian Academy of the Humanities. These awards relate to his work promoting Thai studies in Australia, including establishment of a National Thai Studies Centre at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Voravudhi Chirasombutti

Yongxian Luo

Wilaiwan Khanittanan

## References

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Diller, Antony. 2008. *Resources for Thai Language Research*. In, The Tai – Kadai Languages. Edited by Anthony V.N. Diller, Jerold A. Edmondson, and Yongxian Luo. London and New York: Routledge Language Family Series. pp. 31 – 82.

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