

TIME EXPRESSIONS IN DAAI CHIN
 Helga Hartmann-So

The Daaï Chin people from the Southern Chin Hills of Burma [1, 2] continue to preserve a picturesque semantic categorization of temporal reference. Most of the Daaï speaking area remains without electricity and few people possess watches. Teachers, students, soldiers, and government servants may have watches and use the Burmese/Western system of dividing time among themselves, but by far the majority of the Daaï speaking people are both monolingual and use their traditional system of time expressions.

The traditional division of a twenty-four hour period (kho mhnüüp) [3] is a two-fold one, into mhnüüp 'daytime' and mthan 'night time'. Further subdivisions are shown in a general overview in Figure 1 below.

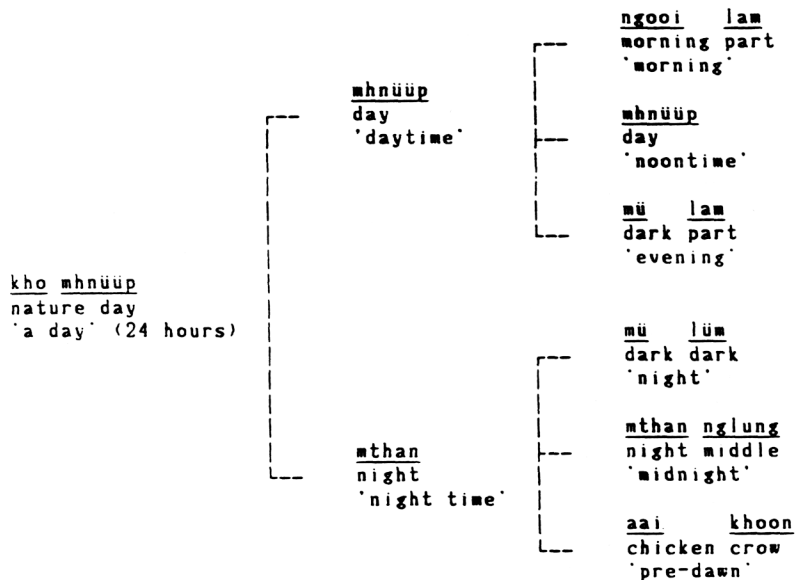


Figure 1.

Each major period of time is segmented into smaller, more specific areas of temporal reference. At each level, there may be some overlap between adjacent time periods. Figure 2 details the more specific divisions. The equivalent times shown for each expression are necessarily approximations: it should also be remembered that the location of the Daaï Chin villages -- in valleys of a mountainous area -- affects the times related to sunrise and sunset.

Time Expressions in Daai Chin

<u>mthan</u> night	<u>kpyook shuun</u> sleep deep 'the time when one sleeps most deeply' (2-3 AM)		
	<u>aai khoon pam</u> chicken crow near 'near the time of cock crowing' (3 AM)		
before sunrise	<u>aai khoon</u> chicken crow 'time of cock crowing' (3-4 AM)		
	<u>thaih nghmüp mshik</u> day-break dark dark 'morning light can be seen'	} 'dawn' (5 AM)	
	<u>thaih pam lam</u> day-break near part 'near the time of morning light'		
<u>ngooi lam</u> morning	<u>kho thaih</u> nature day-break 'day-break' (6 AM)		
	<u>kho mik ah luh lo jah</u> nature eye it come-out come immediately 'sunrise'	} 'sunrise' (6-7 AM)	
	<u>kho nghngi shou</u> nature sun shine 'sunrise'		
	time of sunrise	<u>shuk kkhe sãp lut lo hnuh kti</u> pestle as-far-as come-out come finally pres. 'the sun has risen as high as a pestle for rice pounding' (8 AM)	
		<u>she yüüi sãp lut lo hnuh kti</u> cow rope as-far-as come-out come finally pres. 'the sun has risen as high as the length of a cow's rope' (9 AM)	
		<u>kho pyaang</u> nature ready 'the sky has got ready' (10 AM)	
	after sunrise	<u>kho pyaang ngshãai</u> nature ready long-time 'the sky has been ready a long time' (10-11 AM)	

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mhnüüp noon	<u>mhnüüp</u> day 'noontime' (10-12 AM)	
	<u>mhnüüp ngshung</u> day middle 'middle of the day' (12 AM)	
	<u>kho ngleih</u> nature slanting 'the sun has passed the highest point' (1-2 PM)	
before sunset	<u>im kngam shoon ei ksüün</u> house resting-ones cooking time 'the time when people resting in the village cook' (2-3 PM)	
	<u>ngsheng shoon ei ksüün</u> quick cooking time 'the time when people coming home from the fields cook' (4 PM)	
mü lam evening	<u>she yüüi säp ve ham kti</u> cow rope as-far-as is still pres. 'the sun is still as high as the cow's rope' (5 PM)	
	<u>shuk kkhe säp ve ham kti</u> pestle as-far-as is still pres. 'the sun is still as high as a pestle for rice pounding' (5.30 PM)	
	<u>kho kyaak sho</u> nature fall very-near 'sunset' (5.30-6 PM)	
after sunset	<u>mü lüm</u> dark dark 'after sunset'] (after 6 PM)
	<u>aai kaai</u> chicken climb 'when the chickens climb up to sleep'	
still light	<u>mu hiin</u> dark quiet 'when the evening becomes quiet' (6.30 PM)	

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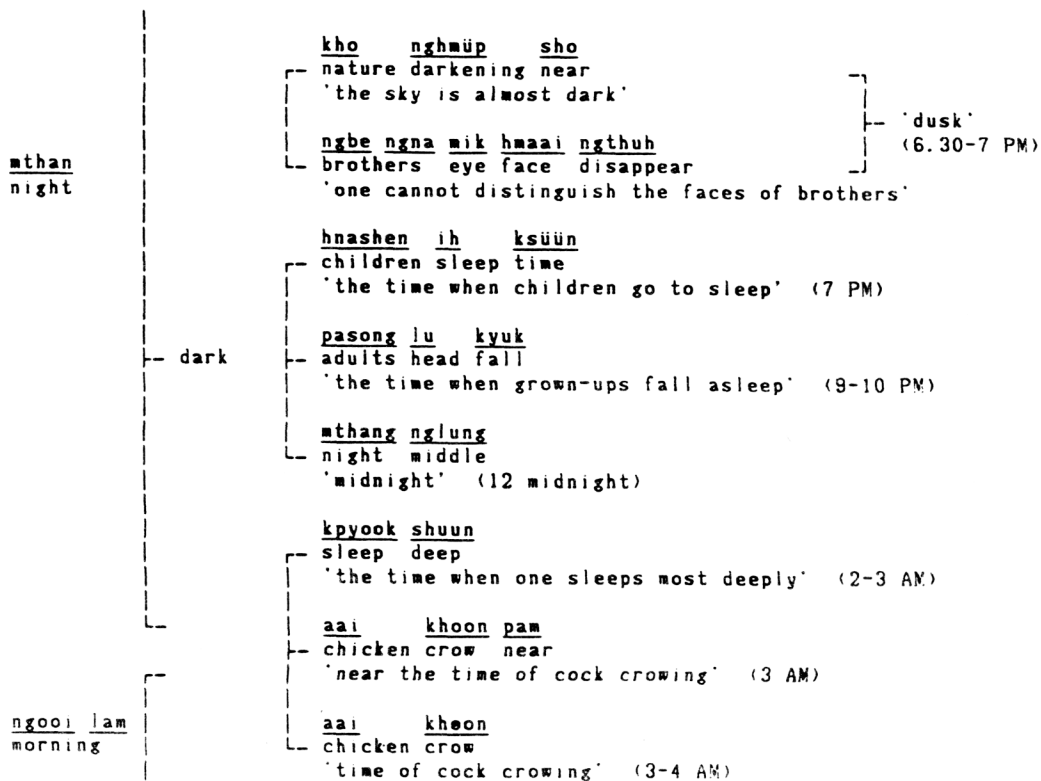


Figure 2.

Notes

[1] The Daai Chin language belongs to the Southern Branch of the Kukish Section of the Tibeto-Burman language family. It is spoken by approximately 30,000 people in the townships of Matupi, Mindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa in the Southern Chin Hills of Burma. Within the Chin language family Daai Chin is most closely related to Mön Chin (also called Mindat Chin), Chin Pon (also called Ut Pü) and Yatu Chin.

[2] My main informant for this study was Mr. Nääng Kuu from Nghmu Khim Mding village, a young man of about 24. The data was further checked with Mr. Ling Sho, aged 20, from Yang Msaai village. Both villages are about three days walk distant from Kanpetlet. I am indebted to Paulette Hopple who gave advice and help in the writing up of this paper.