The Daai Chin people from the Southern Chin Hills of Burma continue to preserve a picturesque semantic categorization of temporal reference. Most of the Daai 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 Daai speaking people are both monolingual and use their traditional system of time expressions.

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

```
    ngooi lam
    morning part
    'morning'

---
    mhñüüp
day
    'daytime'

---
    mhñüüp
day
    'noontime'

---
    mü lam
dark part
    'evening'

---
    mü lüm
dark dark
    'night'

---
    mthan nglung
    night middle
    'midnight'

---
    aai khoon
    chicken crow
    'pre-dawn'

kho mhñüüp
nature day
'a day' (24 hours)
```

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 Daai Chin villages -- in valleys of a mountainous area -- affects the times related to sunrise and sunset.
Time Expressions in Daai Chin

**Night**

- kpyook shuun
  - sleep deep
  - 'the time when one sleeps most deeply' (2-3 AM)

- aai khoon pam
  - chicken crow near
  - 'near the time of cock crowing' (3 AM)

- aai khoon
  - chicken crow
  - 'time of cock crowing' (3-4 AM)

- thaih nghmup mshik
  - day-break dark dark
  - 'morning light can be seen'

**Before sunrise**

- thaih pam lam
  - day-break near part
  - 'near the time of morning light'

**Morning**

- kho thaih
  - nature day-break
  - 'day-break' (6 AM)

- ngooi lam

- kho mik ah luh lo jah
  - nature eye it come-out come immediately
  - 'sunset'

- kho nghngi shou
  - nature sun shine
  - 'sunset'

**Time of sunrise**

- shuk kkhe sáp lut lo hnuh kti
  - pestle as-far-as come-out come finally pres.
  - 'the sun has risen as high as a pestle for rice pounding' (8 AM)

- she yuui sáp lut lo hnuh kti
  - 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)

- kho pyaang
  - after nature ready
  - 'the sky has got ready' (10 AM)

- kho pyaang ngshaa
  - nature ready long-time
  - 'the sky has been ready a long time' (10-11 AM)
Time Expressions in Daai Chin

noon

\[mhnuup\]
- day
  - 'noontime' (10-12 AM)

\[mhnuup ngshung\]
- day middle
  - 'middle of the day' (12 AM)

\[kho ngleih\]
- nature slanting
  - 'the sun has passed the highest point' (1-2 PM)

\[im kngam shoon ei ksün\]
- house resting-ones cooking time
  - 'the time when people resting in the village cook' (2-3 PM)

\[ngsheng shoon ei ksün\]
- quick cooking time
  - 'the time when people coming home from the fields cook' (4 PM)

\[she yüüi şap ve ham kti\]
- cow rope as-far-as is still pres.
  - 'the sun is still as high as the cow's rope' (5 PM)

\[shuk kkhe şap ve ham kti\]
- pestle as-far-as is still pres.
  - 'the sun is still as high as a pestle for rice pounding' (5.30 PM)

\[kho kyaak sho\]
- nature fall very-near
  - 'sunset' (5.30-6 PM)

evening

\[mu lüm\]
- dark dark
  - 'after sunset' (after sunset 6 PM)

\[aai kaai\]
- chicken climb

\[still light\]
- 'when the chickens climb up to sleep'

\[mu hiin\]
- dark quiet
  - 'when the evening becomes quiet' (6.30 PM)
Time Expressions in Daai Chin

- kho nghmup sho  
  nature darkening near  
  'the sky is almost dark'  
  'dusk'

- ngbe ngnma mik hmaai nghtuh  
  brothers eye face disappear  
  'one cannot distinguish the faces of brothers'

- mthan  
  night

- hnashen ih ksüun  
  children sleep time  
  'the time when children go to sleep' (7 PM)

- pasong lu kyuk  
  adults head fall  
  'the time when grown-ups fall asleep' (9-10 PM)

- mthang nglung  
  night middle  
  'midnight' (12 midnight)

- kpyook shuun  
  sleep deep  
  'the time when one sleeps most deeply' (2-3 AM)

- aai khoon pam  
  chicken crow near  
  'near the time of cock crowing' (3 AM)

- ngoor lam  
  morning

- aai khoon  
  chicken crow  
  'time of cock crowing' (3-4 AM)

Figure 2.

Notes

11. 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 Yatupi, Yindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa in the Southern Chin Hills of Burma. Within the Chin language family Daai Chin is most closely related to Mun Chin (also called Yindat Chin), Chin Pon (also called Ut Pu) and Yatu Chin.

12. My main informant for this study was Mr. Naang Kuui from Nghmu Khim Yding village, a young man of about 24. The data was further checked with Mr. Ling Sho, aged 20, from Yang Nsaai 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.
Time Expressions in Daai Chin

13) Key to the orthography:

- ph. th. kh. sh represent aspirates [pʰ, th, kʰ, sh]
- syllable-final h represent glottal stop [ʔ]
- hm, hn, hng represent voiceless nasals [M, N, Ñ]
- hl represent voiceless lateral [L]
- x represent voiceless velar fricative [X]
- y, j, v represent semivowels [ɣ, y, w]
- kC, k'c, k'v represent preglottalized [tʰC, ñv]
- ngC, ng'V, mC, m'V represent prenasalized [nC, nV, mC, mV]
- Cy represent palatalized [C᷉]
- i, u, u represent high vowels [i, u, ʊ]
- e, æ, o represent mid vowels [ɛ, æ, ə]
- a represent low central vowel [a]
- VV represent long vowel
- Vu, Vi represent VC [Vw, Vy]

Tone: there are two contrastive tones throughout the dialect area, a plain level tone and a tense high falling tone. But there is much variation between villages as to which words take which tone. So tone is not marked in practical orthography.