

TIME EXPRESSIONS IN DAAI CHIN
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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.

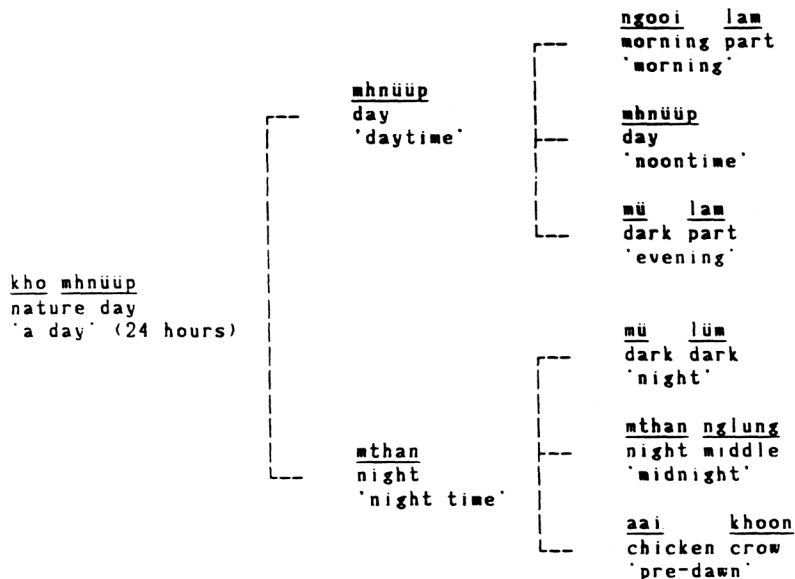


Figure 1.

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)	
		<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'	
	before sunrise	<u>thaih pam lam</u> day-break near part 'near the time of morning light'	} 'dawn' (5 AM)
		<u>kho thaih</u> nature day-break 'day-break' (6 AM)	
<u>ngooi lam</u> morning		<u>kho mik ah luh lo jah</u> nature eye it come-out come immediately 'sunrise'	
		<u>kho nghngi shou</u> nature sun shine 'sunrise'	} 'sunrise' (6-7 AM)
	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)	
	after sunrise	<u>kho pyaang</u> nature ready 'the sky has got ready' (10 AM)	
		<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'
		<u>aaí kaaí</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)

(after
6 PM)

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<u>mthan</u> night	[	<u>kho</u> <u>ngmüp</u> <u>sho</u> nature darkening near 'the sky is almost dark'	] - 'dusk' (6.30-7 PM)
		<u>ngbe</u> <u>ngna</u> <u>wik</u> <u>hmaai</u> <u>ngthuh</u> brothers eye face disappear 'one cannot distinguish the faces of brothers'	
		<u>hnashen</u> <u>ih</u> <u>ksüün</u> children sleep time 'the time when children go to sleep' (7 PM)	
dark	[	<u>pasong</u> <u>lu</u> <u>kyuk</u> adults head fall 'the time when grown-ups fall asleep' (9-10 PM)	
		<u>mthang</u> <u>nglung</u> night middle 'midnight' (12 midnight)	
		<u>kpyook</u> <u>shuun</u> sleep deep 'the time when one sleeps most deeply' (2-3 AM)	
<u>ngooi</u> <u>lam</u> morning	[	<u>aa</u> <u>khoon</u> <u>pam</u> chicken crow near 'near the time of cock crowing' (3 AM)	
		<u>aa</u> <u>kheon</u> chicken crow 'time of cock crowing' (3-4 AM)	

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 Yatupi, 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 Kuui 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.

Time Expressions in Daaï Chin

13) Key to the orthography:

ph. th. kh. sh	represent aspirates [p ^h , t ^h , k ^h , s ^h]
syllable-final h	glottal stop [ʔ]
hm. hn. hng	voiceless nasals [M. N. ŋ]
hl	voiceless lateral [l̥]
x	voiceless velar fricative [χ]
y. j. v	semivowels [ɣ, y, w]
kC. k'C. k'V	preglottalized [ʔC. ʔV]
ngC. ng'V. mC. m'V	prenasalized [ŋC. ŋV. mC. mV]
Cy	palatalized [Cʲ]
i. ü. u	high vowels [i, ʏ, u]
e. ä. o	mid vowels [e, ø, ɔ]
a	low central vowel [a]
VV	long vowel
Vu, Vi	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.