# FUNCTIONS OF NAAK/NA IN DAAI CHIN WITH EXAMPLES FROM OTHER CHIN LANGUAGES\*

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#### INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the different uses of *naak/na* in Daai Chin1. The analysis, at least for Daai, is mainly based on findings in a large collection of texts, rather than on elicited data. No claim is made that this paper is an exhaustive account or analysis of every possible usage of *naak*.

Though in Daai Chin *naak* is in the process of becoming grammaticalized, it has not completed this process, unlike in other Chin languages. As a free verb *naak* is highly restricted in its occurrence with nouns (as can be seen in section 2).

In Daai *naak/na* occurs as a free verb, as an auxiliary (showing verb stem alternation) and as a nominaliser (realized as *naak* only and showing no alternation).

## 1. PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE VERB PHRASE IN DAAI

# 1.1. The auxiliary verb system

Eight preverbal auxiliaries have been found in Daai. They are all directional and mutually exclusive. Two of them also occur as main verbs (see

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Daai is a Southern Chin language, spoken by approximately 45,000 people in the townships of Matupi, Mindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa in the Southern Chin Hills of Myanmar. The data for this paper is based on the speech of a subgroup called "Yang", who live in the Kanpetlet township along the Pilong river. The Daai Chin data used for this analysis has been collected since 1975. It mainly consists of a large corpus of texts that had been recorded and transcribed first by my late husband U Chaing So, then by U Ling So and U Nääng Küüi. A compilation of write-up's about the Daai Chin Agricultural and Ceremonial Cycle, that is still in the process of being edited by U Nääng Küüi, has proved to be a valuable additional resource. Many of the examples used are taken from original texts and have been simplified for the purpose of this paper. They are complemented by data elicited from U Nääng Küüi. All of the examples used in this paper have also been re-checked with U Nääng Küüi in the last few months. I am very much indebted to him and want to acknowledge his patience and enthusiasm with gratitude.

Hartmann-So:1989). The postverbal auxiliary system is much more complicated. There are more than fifty postverbal auxiliaries; they can be divided into several sets according to their position, function and meaning. As auxiliary, *naak* occurs immediately after the main verb. The only exception is the co-occurrence of *naak* with the reflective marker *ei*. In that case *naak* takes the second position after the main verb. Other auxiliaries closest to the verb tend to be directionals, followed by causatives, attitudinals, phases, speech act indicators, and the like.

#### 1.2. Verb stem alternation

Daai Chin verbs can be categorized into three classes. The verbs of class I are non-alternating. Verbs of class II and class III have alternating forms that I have labeled stem A and stem B. Stem A is realized in condition I, stem B in condition II. The terms 'condition I' and 'condition II' are preliminary and since they are not really relevant for the purpose of this paper, they will not be explained here.

The verbs showing stem alternation have been subdivided into class II and class III for two reasons:

- a) their patterns of stem alternation are different;
- b) for verbs of class II the more basic or complete form of the verb is realized under condition I, whereas for verbs of class III the complete form of the verb is realized under condition II.

Class II and class III could be further divided into subgroups, according to the syllabic pattern of the verb roots.

In the subgroup of class II we are concerned with, stem A has a long vowel, an optional high falling tone (which is not marked in the Daai orthography) and an unreleased stop (p, t, k). Verb Stem B is reduced to a short vowel with level tone, the stop ending is lost, and the syllable becomes a bound morpheme.

If *naak* occurs as part of a verb phrase, it alternates according to the same pattern.

# **Examples:**

Stem A	Stem B	gloss
táák	ta	'put, keep'
péét	p <u>e</u>	'give'
sheet	she	'bad'
náák	nạ	?

#### 2. NAAK AS A FREE VERB

As a free verb **naak** may co-occurs with a highly restricted set of object nouns. They are of three types: relationship nouns, important cultural events (customs, naming, funerals, planting), and with 'heart'.

## 2.1 Relationship nouns and naak

Relationship nouns all refer to human beings. In combination with *naak* a new kinship relationship is created, or the relationship changes into an action. However, this does not work for all nouns that might be considered potential 'relationship nouns'. So far only the following group of nouns have been identified as relationship nouns:

'wife' kkhyu 'husband' khong pa 'child' sa 'younger sibling' na 'uncle, father-in-law' pu tu 'nephew, son-in-law' hlüh püi 'lover' 'leader' khong

- (1) Nghnumi sa jah kpami sa ah jah sa naak.

  Woman child and man child AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S AGR<sub>obj</sub>:1/3D/PL child give\_birtl

  'She gave birth to a baby girl and a baby boy.'
- (2) Kah ning kkhyu naak vai ni.

  AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S AGR<sub>obj</sub>:2S wife take FUT.IRR EMP

  'I must indeed take you as my wife.'
- Yok Ui Yok (3) Asunüng ta mat noh sun khong pa DEM husband Then as for one ERG Yok Ui Yok na-lii mat noh joongtang ah khongpa naak mjoh. ERG monkey AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S husband take RPS take and one

'Then one took Yok Ui Yok for her husband and one took a monkey, it is told.'

It is interesting to note that these constructions do not work with *nghnumi* 'woman' or *kpami* 'man'. Both are generic terms that in recent years have been adopted for the usage as 'wife' and 'husband'; the older forms *kkhyu* and *khong pa* are now considered to be rude.

## 2.2. Key cultural events and naak

ning sho	'custom'	ning sho naak	'practice a custom'
ngming	'name'	ngming naak	'give (a) name/to name'
yook	'corpse'	yook naak	'make a funeral feast'
lou	'mtn rice	lou naak	'plant mtn rice/
	field'		use as mtn field'

- (4) Asun kba nih ning sho na -khoi kti-e.

  This like AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1IN.PL custom practice AUX-habit S.FIN-PLM

  'Like this we used to practice our customs.'
- (5) Yook na-lo ma-a.
  corpse VBL-AUX-come go\_ahead-IMP
  'Go ahead and give the funeral feast!'
- (6) Shih Sa Ngjung kah nih jah lou na-kti-e. Shih Sa Ngjung AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1PL AGR<sub>obj</sub>:3PL mtn\_field plant -S.FIN-PLM 'We planted our mountain fields on Shih Sa Ngjung (name of mountain).'

This sentence could also be translated as 'We used the Shih Sa Ngjung ranges as mountain fields.'

#### 2.3 'Heart' and naak

to me.'

mlung 'heart' / mlung naak 'take to heart' (can be positive or negative)

- (7) Ahshe kah mshun ah nah nu POSS:3S cow female AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S AGR<sub>obi</sub>:1S hurt mlung naak ta kah veei-a lo she. heart take if AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S LOC-GR come let. 'If he has a grudge against me, because I have hurt his cow, let him come
- (8) Ngkoi amkah pyen nah Wife arranged AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S AGR<sub>obj</sub>:1S not speak mlung na-lü ah nah ngvook püi. heart\_take-and AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S AGR<sub>obi</sub>:1S AUX-together quarrel

'Because I did not ask for the wife that was arranged for me, he has a grudge against me and quarrels with me.'

(9) Mlung nalü poh-a.
Heart take-and do-IMP
'Regard it as important and do it!'

In (7) and (8) **mlung** 'heart' + **naak** has developed the meaning 'take to heart, have a grudge, hate'. In (9) it is used to mean 'take to heart', in the sense of 'consider as important'. In  $Cho^2$  the same combination **nglung** 'heart' + **naak** has developed the meaning 'do with united hearts'.

#### 3. NAAK AS AN AUXILIARY

When *naak/na* occurs as an auxiliary, it is not followed by any case markers like location, purpose, instrument etc.

## 3.1. Occurring with 'transitivized' verbs

With certain transitive verbs the usage of 'naak' as postverbal auxiliary is compulsory. Most of these verbs are clearly recognizable derivations. The following examples are intransitive, descriptive verbs that are changed into transitive verbs through prefixed k- [?] or prefixed ng- ng

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phyah/phya 'pleasant' > kphya 'love'
hnge 'low, humble' > nghne 'suppress'
sang 'true, right' > ksang 'believe/take one's part/obey'
sheet/she 'bad' > kshe 'scold/curse'
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(10) Ve soh na-phya- kti-a thoon lo- be kti.
live stay in\_order\_to pleasant REL-GR happen AUX-come- AUX-again S.FIN
'It again became pleasant to live.'

Example (10) shows *phya* as a descriptive, intransitive verb. Though *na*-occurs in this sentence, it belongs to the preceding verb phrase. *Ve sho na-phya* 'live a pleasant life' is a set, idiomatic expression.

- (11) Ah nih piii ta kphya na-lo mjoh kti xooi.
  AGR:3D/PL friend as\_for love\_AUX-AUX-come RSP.S.FIN DUAL
  'They came to love each other.'
- (12) Shang phuhlang-a sa nghnu kah kphya naak ni.
  King-POSS.M child daughter AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S love\_AUX EMP
  'I love the king's daughter indeed.'

Examples (11) and (12) show stem alternation of naak/na.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cho is a language closely related to Daai with about 85% lexical similarity. The Cho people live in the townships of Mindat, Kanpetlet and Matupi. They call themselves Cho, but are called 'Ngmüün' or 'Mun' by other Chin groups (see Hartmann-So 1988).

(13) Nang vok, nah sang kti. 2S pig AGR<sub>sub</sub>:2S true S.FIN

'You pig, you are right.'

(14) *U* ah ksang naak vai phi am kshing. who AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S believe\_AUX FUT.IRR also not know 'He did not know whom he should believe.'

Example (13) shows the usage of sang as an intransitive verb, contrasting with (14) where ksang + naak functions as a transitive verb.

Example (15) is from Cho:

(15) A-uphi kä k'cang na-ne, a-u ah ng'thu Nobody obey AUX-and nobody AGR:3S word also not phi kä ngai. listen. also not

'He does not obey anybody and he does not listen to anybody's word.'

Daai ksang and Cho k'cang are cognates and we see that also in Cho k'cang requires the postverbal auxiliary na/naak.

Some verbs cannot be proved to be derivations, yet never occur without naak, as for example xat 'grab, snatch' and üm 'trust'.

(16) Msi Msääi noh kpami sa sun xa na-lü t Msi Msääi mother ERG male child DEM grab\_AUX-and mlik-a ve-a joong-in mjoh kti. other\_side-LOC\_fly-INT S.FIN river-GR RSP

'The Msi Msääi mother grabbed her son and flew to the other side of the river, it is told.'

# 3.2. Functioning as an instrument referent

(17) Sa kah yuk ei naak ni.
Letter AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S write RFL AUX-instr EMP

'I use/used (it) to write a letter.' (can refer to paper, pencil etc.)

(18) Nah lü ei naak mä. AGR<sub>sub</sub>:2S play RFL AUX-instr QM

'You play/played with (it)?' (You used it to play with?)

As instrumental reference marker naak refers to the instrument object. In examples (17) and (18) there are no objects complementing the transitive verbs, so the instrumental phrase may actually have to be interpreted as a nominalization: 'the thing I use to V'.

(19) Ahin-a lipok hin mpyäüh kah kaah naak ni.

DEM-GR gun DEM tiger AGR<sub>sub</sub>:IS shot AUX-instr EMP

'This is the gun I shot the tiger with.' (can also be translated as: 'This is the gun I used to shoot the tiger.')

In this sentence the instrument is brought into special focus, *naak* refers to the instrument, and the instrumental marker, usually following the instrument, is omitted (see Peterson 1998:144).

- (20) Ahin-a lipok üng mpyäüh kah kaah ni.

  DEM-GR gun INSTR tiger AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S shot EMP

  'I shot the tiger with this gun.'
- (20) is an example of the same sentence, with the indirective instrumental object marked by the instrumental marker **üng**, following the instrumental object. But **üng**, when functioning as instrumental marker, cannot co-occur with *naak* used as instrument reference.

## Example (21) is from Maram:

-cha. (21) Hie afie hie cavau еi cho nah afie DEM spear DEM 1S stab AUX-instr spear AGR:3S is. bear 'This spear is the spear I used to stab the bear.'

The function of instrument can also be extended to include purpose:

- (22) Tui kah ook naak ni.
  water AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S drink AUX-purpose EMP
  'I used (it) to drink water.'
  ('I used it for the purpose, or as the means to, drink water.')
- (23) Kah ih naak hlü ni.
  AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S sleep AUX-purpose AUX-want EMP
  'I want (it) to sleep.'
  (The implied 'it' or could be a sleeping mat, a blanket or just a place in the house.)

# 3.3. Functioning as a reason-result referent

(24) Kah piii-o, kah ning pyen ti kong.

POSS:1S friend-ADR AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S AGR<sub>obj</sub>:2S scold anymore of course

'My beloved, of course I will not scold you anymore.'

(25)Amah khiiiii thei ah noh nu pven not AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S work able POSS:3S mother ERG scold na-lii ah ngsuh nüi. AUX-reason-and AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S quarrel AUX-together.

'Because she did not work skillfully, her mother scolded her and quarreled with her.'

This sentence can be literally translated as 'her mother used her not-working-skillfully as reason to scold her'. Examples (24) and (25) show the contrast between usage and omission of 'naak'. In (24) naak is omitted and there is no reference to any reason for the scolding.

- (26) Mo-a ah seh ah thih naak-a thoon kti.

  Jungle-LOC AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S go AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S die AUX-reason-GR happen S.FIN

  'It happened, that because he went into the jungle, he died.'
- (27)Kah khüüi khom ah naak jе ni. AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S AGR:1S work work glad AUX-reason **EMP** 'He was glad because of my work.'

In (25), (26) and (27) *naak/na* occurs in the clause stating the result, yet is a reference marker for the reason given in the preceding clause.

(28) Tui kah ook naak kah kkhon tet kti.

Water AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1S drink AUX-reason POSS:1S stomach full S.FIN.

'Because I drank water, my stomach is full.'

Here we find *naak* in the clause stating the reason. Though Daai has a reason-result connecting conjunction *phäh* 'because' or *phäh-a* 'because of', it does not co-occur with *naak*.

Example (29) is from Mro:<sup>3</sup>

(29)Nang mthoe ji gan na nu gan. PI. **OBJM** AUX-reason indeed praise see not 'I do not see any reason to praise you.'

Note that Mro does not use a clause-connecting conjunction.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> For the Mro data I am indebted to my co-worker U Kyaw Tha Aung, from Arakan State, who has recorded and transcribed a large number of Mro texts and with whom I am currently working on an analysis of his language.

Example (30) is from Ngawn:<sup>4</sup>

(30)	Lawn	a-ngaih	nak	hang-in	
	beloved	AGR:3S-remember	AUX-reason	CONJ-because	
	ai-mah	dek	thei	ma	hi.
	nothing	work	able	not	S.FIN

<sup>&#</sup>x27;Because he remembered his beloved, he was not able to work at anything.'

# Example (31) is from Maram:<sup>5</sup>

(31) A-ca nah vata a- mei athlei.
AGR:3S-weep AUX-reason CONJ-because POSS:3S-eye swollen.
'Because she wept, her eyes are swollen.'

#### 4. NAAK AS A NOMINALISER

When functioning as nominaliser, form A (naak) is always used in Daai:

## 4.1. Functioning in locative clauses

As a nominaliser, *naak* occurs frequently in locative clauses, changing actions, happenings, and states into locations where the verbal event takes place.

- kti. hlüh püi-a thih naak nha vaai mioh (32) AhSU S.FIN POSS:1S beloved-GR die NOM LOC arrive AUX-go RSP 'He went and arrived at the place where his beloved had died, it is told.'
- (33) Nghmaak Ye Shaak-a ve naak-a ta meh am ve.
  Brother\_in\_law Ye Shaak-GR live NOM-LOC as\_for meat not is.

  'At the brother-in-law Ye Shaak's place (where he lives) there is no meat.'
- (34) Buh ei naak, ju ook naak-a phi ayüma am ve ni.
  Rice eat NOM, rice-wine drink NOM-LOC also together not stay EMP
  'They also did not stay together at the place where they ate rice and drank rice-wine.' (which means 'at the place of a feast')

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ngawn is a central Chin language and was formerly considered as a subgroup of Falam Chin. The Ngawn people live along the Falam and Teddim areas, in the Sagaing division and around Kalemyo and Tahan. For the examples from Ngawn I am indebted to my friend James Mang Khen Thang.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For the data from Maram I am indebted to U Khay Kyaing.

(35) Anghmüp naak su ni kah nih yü khü.

Dark NOM LOC EMP AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1EX.PL like AUX-certainly

'We indeed like the dark places.'

See Barnes (1998: 61), who shows *naak* in similar constructions, and refers to it as a relativizer.

Note that in locative clauses *naak* co-occurs with LOC case markers, except in Mro.

## Example (36) is from Mro:

(36) *Ing* ne la ke ji iwn ja. on na SV DEM **SUBM** 1PL.EX POSS EMP House live NOM true 'This house is indeed our living place.'

## Example (37) is from Ngawn:

(37) Tangval pai hawh nuam nak ah hawh bok tuk hung hi..
Young man go want NOM LOC go together PL S.FIN
'Young men go together to places they like to go.'

## Example (38) is from Maram:

(38) Lao tlao nah liata pari a- hmo.
rice field weed NOM LOC snake AGR:3S see

'He saw a snake at the place where he weeded the rice field.'

# 4.2. Functioning in purpose clauses

In purpose clauses naak co-occurs with a PUR case marker.

(39) Nih nih mhluum naak kkhyäi-paai sa vai POSS:1D AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1D comfort NOM PUR child flower khyan san san jäng ma. DEM DEM DIR.AUX-up pluck go-ahead

'Go ahead, climb up and pluck that flower for us to use to comfort our child with it.'

(40)Imkah nih shak naak vai mdek kah nih soh. House POSS:1EX.PL build NOM PUR soil AGR<sub>sub</sub>:1EX.PL dig. 'For our building of the house, we dig the soil.'

# Example (41) is from Ngawn:

(41) Laksawng a-ngah nak tuk-in zuam hi.
Present AGR:3S-get NOM PUR try\_hard S.FIN
'He tried hard to get the present.'

Examples (42) and (43) are from Mro:

- Naudie (42)ii mah menan xana na tone on v. child PLLOC NOM also play what is not 'Here the children have nothing play with.'
- (43)Ing menan thoen by. me na on įа fire/light lighten NOM **EMP** QM House LOC is 'Is there something in the house for making a light?'

Again, in Mro the absence of a PUR case marker can be noticed. In these two examples from Mro, *na* functions in a similar way as in Daai, above (22)-(23). In (42) it is not the verb 'play' that is nominalized through *na*, but it is changed into 'play-thing' and in (43) 'lighten' into 'a thing to make light with', which could be a candle, kerosene lamp or light bulb.

Henderson (1965:100) briefly mentions the functioning of '*na*' in the noun phrase of Tiddim Chin:

"The nominal suffix 'na' -na:, which is perhaps to be regarded as in origin the oblique form of 'na' -na: thing, object...".

#### 4.3. Abstract nouns

Naak also functions to create abstract nouns from verbs.

# 4.3.1. Abstract nouns as new concepts

Most of these abstract nouns are relatively new concepts and were not previously used in the oral traditions of the Daai.

(44)	ngthei	'learn'	ngthei naak	'lesson'
(45)	kthäh	'ask'	kthäh naak	'question'
(46)	ngthäh ngkhyah	'question each other'	ngthäh ngkhyah	'discussion'
			naak	

Examples (47)-(49) are from Mro:

(47)	katu	'learn'	katu na	'lesson'
(48)	diwn	'ask'	diwn niw	'question'

(49)Buisha menan tone diwn naon jo mei. LOC AUX-polite Wise man what ask NOM is QM.

'What is there to ask the wise man about?'

Since Mro also has another nominaliser, *niw*, that is used for the nominalization of verbs, we can observe the contrast between *diwn niw* 'question' and *diwn na* 'the thing to ask'.

## 4.3.2. Abstract nouns in Christian vocabulary

In Christian vocabulary *naak* is used very frequently to form abstract nouns.

(50)	diim	'be quiet'	diim deih naak	'peace'
(51)	thih	'die'	thih naak	'death'
(52)	xün	'live'	xün naak	'life'
(53)	do kya	'be good'	do kya naak	'blessing'
(54)	je kyai	'be glad'	je kyai naak	'joy'

(55) Pangsiim noh thih naak-a kkhyüh ah jah God ERG die NOM-GR from AGR<sub>sub</sub>:3S AGR<sub>obi</sub>:1/3PL thoh shak he. **CAUS** get up again.

'God raised them up again from death.' (Matth. 27:52)

- (56) Ah nih-a am khyaih ei hin thih naak vai am ni.
  3S POSS.M not well RFL DEM die AUX-reason FUT.IRR not EMP
  'His sickness will not be a reason to die.' (John 11:4)
- (55) and (56) show the contrastive usage of *thih naak* as nominalized form and as reason-result referent.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

# 5.1. Summary:

The verb *naak/na* has grammaticalized to different extents in different Chin languages. Daai and Cho Chin appear to be the most conservative, allowing the full verb to occur with a limited set of nouns.

- 1. Although grammatical uses of *naak* can easily be found in presumably all Chin languages, its occurrence as a free verb seems to be restricted to Daai and Cho.
- 2. For the usage of naak as compulsory postverbal auxiliary, evidence can be found in Daai and Cho, but not in any other Chin language I have looked at.
- 3. The occurrence of **naak** as instrumental referent is of special interest, because, while being a constituent of the verb phrase, it refers to the instrumental object.
- 4. As nominaliser, *naak* functions in locative and purpose/instrumental clauses. In the latter usage it does not really nominalize the verb, but rather changes it into 'the thing used for V-ing'
- 5. In the formation of abstract nouns, *naak* functions as a nominaliser in the traditional sense.

# 5.2. A suggested reconstruction of the verb naak

Considering the examples (especially from Daai) presented in this paper, a reconstruction of the original verb meaning of *naak* as 'to use, to take, to have' seems to me a viable option. This is supported by the fact that Daai seems to have no 'original' verb for 'use', but only the loanword from Burmese *shum ei*.

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

1/3 D/PL	First or third person, dual or plural	FUT	Future
1D	First person dual	FUT.IRR	Future irrealis
1PL	First person plural	GR	General relater
1PL.EX	First person plural exclusive	IMP	Imperative
1PL.IN	First person plural inclusive	IN	Inclusive
1S	First person singular	INSTR	Instrumental
2P	Second person pronoun	INT	Intensifier
2S	Second person singular	LOC	Locative
3PL	Third person plural	NOM	Nominaliser
3S	Third person singular	OBJM	Object marker
ADR	Addressive particle	PL	Plural
$AGR_{obj}$	Object Agreement	PLM	Plural marker
AGR <sub>sub</sub>	Subject Agreement	POSS	Possessive
AUX	Auxiliary	POSS.M	Possessive marker
CAUS	Causative	PUR	Purpose
CONJ	Conjunction	QM	Question marker
D	Dual	REL	Relativizer
DEM	Demonstrative	RFL	Reflexive
DIR.AUX	Directional auxiliary	RSP	Reported speech marker
DUAL	Dual marker	S	Singular
EMP	Emphasis	S.FIN	Sentence final particle
ERG	Ergative	SUBJM	Subject marker
EX	Exclusive	VBL	Verbalizer

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