

Directional Prefixes in Tiddim Chin*

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Summary

This paper aims to explore how directional prefixes work in Tiddim Chin (ISO639-3: ctd), a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the hilly border areas of Myanmar and India. In terms of form, Tiddim Chin has four verbal prefixes that are used to modify the direction or location of an event: a prefix *ma'*- 'in front,' a cislocative or venitive marker *hoŋ'*-/*oŋ'*- 'hither' (motion toward a deictic center), a translocative or andative marker *va'*- 'thither' (motion away from a deictic center), and a prefix *na'*-/*na'(na²)*- 'in one's absence' (action without a personal deictic center or speech act participant). Each verbal prefix generally indicates the direction or location of an event in relation to a deictic center. Among them, the cislocative prefix *hoŋ'*-/*oŋ'*- plays an especially vital role in Tiddim Chin grammar, as it not only expresses deictic spatial direction or change of state but also functions as an inverse marker. In a transitive clause, for example, *hoŋ'*-/*oŋ'*- is always attached to a main verb if the object outranks the subject in the person hierarchy of "speech act participant > non-speech act participant" (1/2 > 3) or if both the subject and the object are speech act participants. This extended function of the cislocative marker is also attested in other Kuki-Chin languages. The latter part of this paper demonstrates the linguistic diversity across the Kuki-Chin languages by characterizing Tiddim Chin's directional affixes through a comparative study with neighboring languages.

Key words: Kuki-Chin, speech act participant, translocative, cislocative, inverse

关键词：库基-钦语支、言语行为参与者、去方向、来方向、逆向

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1. Introduction

Tiddim Chin belongs to the Kuki-Chin branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. It is mainly spoken in Chin State and the Sagaing region, in Myanmar, and in the states of Manipur and Mizoram, in India (see Fig. 1). In recent years, the Tiddim Chin-speaking diaspora has increasingly spread from Myanmar and India to other countries, including Malaysia, Japan, and the United States. The total population of Tiddim Chin speakers is estimated to be 411,000 (Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig 2019).

During the early part of the twentieth century, American missionaries introduced a Roman alphabet-based orthography for Tiddim Chin, which is widely used by native speakers to publish books and website content in their own language. The current orthography, however, does not reflect two significant phonological features of the language: vowel length and tone. Orthographic notation may thus not be desirable for detailed linguistic analysis; therefore, the transcription used in this paper is phonemic.¹

The modern Tiddim Chin language has two different speaking and writing styles: the colloquial style and narrative style (Henderson 1965: 2). The former is generally used for speaking in casual conversations, while the latter is appropriate for writing in formal contexts. In this paper, the colloquial style is the main subject of investigation.

From a typological perspective, Tiddim Chin is a predicate-final language. Its unmarked word order in intransitive clauses is SV, while in transitive clauses, it is AOV. Tiddim Chin is an ergative-absolutive language with an agglutinative nature, in which grammatical relations are indicated by various affixes and clitics.

Below is a figure outlining the verbal complex in Tiddim Chin, in which a pronominal clitic (person), a directional prefix, and a middle voice or reflexive/reciprocal prefix *ki*³ (Henderson 1965: 99) may appear as preverbals, in that order.

(person)=(directional)-(middle)-**verb**-(auxiliary)-(number/mood/person)

Tiddim Chin may have at least four kinds of directional prefixes that are relevant to the direction or location of motion: *ma*¹- (§2.1), *va*³- (§2.2), *na*¹- (§2.3) and *hoŋ*¹-/*oŋ*¹- (§2.4).

¹ Consonant phonemes are / *p, b, ph* [p^h], *v, m, t, d, th* [t^h], *s, c* [tɕ], *z, l, l', n, k, g, kh* [x], *ŋ, h, ʔ, (ch* [tɕ^h], *j* [dʒ], *f*)/. The bracketed consonants may only occur in loan words or onomatopoeia. Monophthongs are denoted by the following symbols: / *a, a:, e* [e~ɛ], *e:* [ɛ:], *i, i:, o* [o~ɔ], *o:* [ɔ:], *u, u:* /, where /*e/* and /*o/* are realized as [ɛ] and [ɔ] before a final glottal stop /ʔ/. Tiddim Chin has three lexical tones with various tone sandhi processes. Monosyllabic words distinguish three tones in isolation as follows: / ¹ / (low-rising or high), / ² / (mid-level), and / ³ / (high-falling, low-falling, or low).

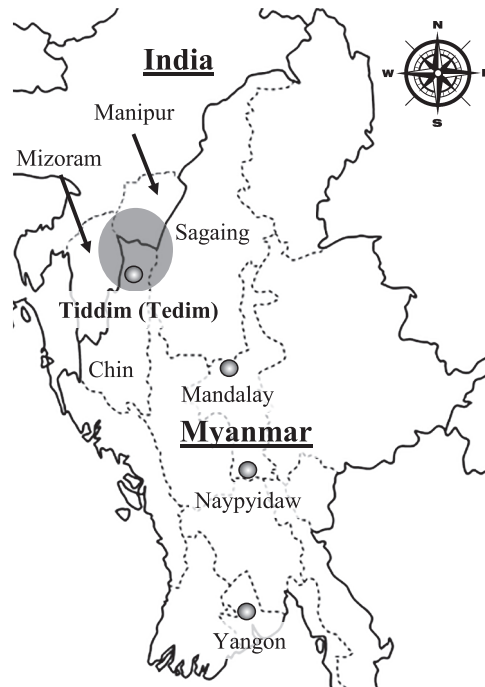


Fig. 1 Tiddim Chin speaking area

2. Directional prefixes

2.1 *ma'*- 'in front'

Henderson (1965) describes *ma'*- as a verbal prefix; it may have come from the adverbial conjunction *ma:1* or *ma:2* 'before' (Henderson 1965: 153). *ma'* refers to motion that may best be translated as 'in front,' as shown in example (1) (Henderson 1965: 97). Note that *ma'*- is no longer productive in modern Tiddim Chin, and some words resulting from this prefix, including *ma'-ka:i3* 'to lead,' *ma'-sa:3* 'go in front,' and *ma'-suan3* 'walk in front along the path' (Henderson 1965: 154), can be regarded as fossilized or lexicalized.

- (1) *ma'-ka:i3* (Henderson 1965: 97)
 in.front-pull^l
 'to lead'

2.2 *va*³- ‘thither’

*va*³- is a translocative or andative marker that indicates motion away from a deictic center. The following example in (2) describes the subject as moving away from the speech act situation in order to perform the action in a different place.

- (2) *tut*³*na*:² *va*³-*la*¹-*pak*¹-*niη*¹=*ei*³
 seat TRNS-take¹-immediately-1SG.IRR=FP

‘I will go and take a seat immediately.’

2.3 *na*¹-/*na*¹*na*²- ‘in one’s absence’

The two sentences in (3) have nearly the same meaning. The reduplicated form *na*¹*na*²- in (3)b is an allomorph or emphatic variant of *na*¹- in (3)a. Both indicate an action in the absence of a personal deictic center or speech act participant. Unlike the other directional prefixes, *na*¹-/*na*¹*na*²- may not be truly directional, as it does not indicate the actual direction of the motion described by the verb.

- (3) a. *na*¹-*pai*²-*niη*¹
 NA-go¹-1SG.IRR

‘I will go without you.’

- b. *na*¹*na*²-*pai*²-*niη*¹
 NA-go¹-1SG.IRR

‘I will go, even without you.’

Henderson (1965) notes that *va*³- (§2.2) and *na*¹- require careful distinction. In (4) and (5), the speaker commands the listener to move away to a different place from the location of the speech act. The key point to observe here is that the example in (4) implies that the speaker will not be going himself, while the one in (5), on the contrary, implies that the speaker will follow later. The examples in (3) and (5) show that a verb with *na*¹- indicates that the action takes place in the absence of a speech act participant (speaker or addressee).

- (4) *va*³-*pai*²-*in*³ (Henderson 1965: 98)
 TRNS-go¹-IMP

‘Be off with you!’

- (5) ***na¹-pai²-in³*** (Henderson 1965: 98)
 NA-go¹-IMP

‘You go on ahead.’ or ‘You go on without me’.

2.4 *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* ‘hither’

The prefix *hoŋ¹-* or *oŋ¹-*, which conveys the notion of ‘direction toward,’ is very common in colloquial Tiddim Chin (Otsuka 2009, Henderson 1965: 113). It is a cislocative marker, which indicates movement toward a deictic center or speech act participant, as shown in (6). *oŋ¹-* can be regarded as a variant of *hoŋ¹-* here. Interestingly, my informant prefers *hoŋ¹-* to *oŋ¹-* in the narrative style but frequently uses *oŋ¹-* in the colloquial style as in (6)b.

- (6) a. ***hoŋ¹-pai²-niŋ¹*** (Henderson 1965: 113)
 CIS-go¹-1SG.IRR

‘I shall be coming.’

- b. ***oŋ¹-pai²-niŋ¹***
 CIS-go¹-1SG.IRR

‘I shall be coming.’

Note that a cislocative *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* may be ‘fused’ with a preceding pronominal clitic to form another prefix (Henderson 1965: 113). The prefix *koŋ¹-* (1.CIS-) in (7) is a fused form of the first-person pronominal clitic *ka³=* (1=) and *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* (CIS-). Likewise, *noŋ¹-* (2.CIS-) in (8) is a combination of the second-person pronominal clitic *na³=* (2=) and *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* (CIS-). In addition, *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* can also be combined with the third-person pronominal clitic *a³=*, but its form does not change.

- (7) ***koŋ¹-mat³-sak³ hi³*** (Henderson 1965: 113)
 1.CIS-catch^{II}-APL COP

‘I’ve caught it for you.’

- (8) ***za:n²=a² noŋ¹-sia²-zuak³*** (Henderson 1965: 113)
 yesterday=CNJ 2.CIS-mithan-sell^{III}

‘the mithan you sold me yesterday’

The affixation of *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* is obligatory to depict motion toward a deictic center or speech act participant, as illustrated in (9).

- (9) *hoŋ¹-pai²-in³*
 CIS-go¹-IMP

‘Come over here!’

The cislocative *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* also encodes a change of state in a metaphorically motional context, as in (10).

- (10) *tua² ha:i²=pe:n² dam²dam²=in² oŋ¹-na:i²-ta:3*
 DEM mango=TOP slowly=CNJ CIS-yellow¹-PRF

‘The mango is getting yellow.’

In addition, *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* is always attached to transitive or ditransitive verbs with first-person and/or second-person objects. The coding of transitive clauses in Tiddim Chin reflects a person-referencing hierarchy, SAP>non-SAP; when a lower-ranking person acts on a higher-ranking one, the verb is marked as inverse with *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-*. DeLancey (1980) also recognizes this SAP>non-SAP (or 3) hierarchy and suggests that *hoŋ¹-* in Tiddim Chin marks both proximal directive and inverse direction contexts.

Examples are given as follows:

- (11) a. *a¹man³ kei¹ oŋ¹-thei³*
 3SG.ERG 1SG CIS-know¹

‘He knows me.’

- b. *a¹man³ nan¹ oŋ¹-thei³*
 3SG.ERG 2SG CIS-know¹

‘He knows you.’

- c. *kei¹ oŋ¹-thei³-ni¹te²3*
 1SG CIS-know¹-2SG.IRR

‘You may know me.’

- d.* *kei¹ thei³-ni¹te²3*
 1SG know¹-2SG.IRR

- e. *naŋ¹* *oŋ¹-thei³-iŋ³*
 2SG CIS-know¹-1SG.REAL

‘I know you.’

- f.* *naŋ¹* *thei³-iŋ³*
 2SG know¹-1SG.REAL

- g. *a¹ma²ʔ³* *thei³-ni¹te²ʔ³*
 3SG know¹-2SG.IRR

‘You may know him.’

- h. *a¹ma²ʔ³* *thei³-iŋ³*
 3SG know¹-1SG.REAL

‘I know him.’

The sentences in (11)a–h demonstrate how *hoŋ¹-oŋ¹-* is attached to a transitive verb as an inverse marker. Affixation of *hoŋ¹-oŋ¹-* is required if the patient is a speech act participant; thus, (11)d and (11)f are ungrammatical.

Similarly, *hoŋ¹-oŋ¹-* is attached to a ditransitive verb if a theme or a recipient is a speech act participant, as illustrated in (12) below.

- (12) (*naŋ¹*) *zou²-la:i³* *oŋ¹-hil²ʔ³-niŋ¹*
 2SG Chin-letter CIS-teach¹-1SG.IRR

‘I will teach you the Chin language.’

Additionally, *hoŋ¹-oŋ¹-* is attached to a causativized verb if the causee is a speech act participant, as shown in (13).

- (13) *a¹man³* (*kei¹*) *me²ʔ³* *oŋ¹-huan¹-sak³*
 3SG.ERG 1SG curry CIS-cook¹-CAUS

‘He made me cook the curry.’

Interestingly, the example in (14) can be interpreted in two ways. In a deictic use, it simply means ‘Come and eat it!’ Alternatively, it could also mean ‘Come and eat me!’ for example in a fictional story, interpreted as an inverse context.

(14) *oŋ^l-ne:^l-in³*

CIS-eat^l-IMP

‘Come and eat it!’ or ‘Come and eat me!’

The inverse is also applied to applicative constructions.² Tiddim Chin has three kinds of applicative suffixes: the comitative *-pi²*, the relinquitive³ *-san³*, and the substitutive or benefactive *-sak³*. In all cases, the inverse marker *hoŋ^l-/oŋ^l-* must be attached to a verb if the added object is a speech act participant.

The comitative applicative suffix *-pi²* licenses an additional object argument. Compare (15)b–c with (15)a. If the comitative object is a speech act participant, the inverse is used, as in (15)c.

(15) a. *lian³ va:k^l*

Lian walk^l

‘Lian walked around.’

b. *lian³=in³ kim³ va:k³-pi²*

Lian=ERG Kim walk^{II}-APL

‘Lian walked around along with Kim.’

c. *lian³=in³ (kei^l) oŋ^l-va:k³-pi²*

Lian=ERG 1SG CIS-walk^{II}-APL

‘Lian walked around along with me.’

A relinquitive applicative construction with *-san³* indicates that the subject performs an activity while leaving the object behind or performs an activity without the object. Compare (16)b–c with (16)a. If the relinquitive object is a speech act participant, *hoŋ^l-/oŋ^l-* is used as an inverse marker, as in (16)c. It is also notable here that a verb with *hoŋ^l-/oŋ^l-* can co-occur with *na^l-* in certain contexts, despite the oddity that *hoŋ^l-/oŋ^l-* in its deictic use would indicate an action toward a speech act participant, whereas *na^l-* indicates one in the absence of a speech act participant.

²In the applicative construction, what would usually appear as an oblique argument is instead treated as a direct object in morphosyntactic terms. Like in many other Kuki-Chin languages, most of the Tiddim Chin verbs have two forms, referred to as Form I and Form II, which occur in different morphological and syntactic environments. Applicative affixes in Tiddim Chin are always attached to a ‘Form II’ type of verb stem, which is glossed with a superscript ^{II} in this paper.

³See Peterson (1998: 101) and So-Hartmann (2009: 199) for details.

- (16) a. *nu¹-ciŋ²* *na¹-ta:i²khia³=mo:³*
 aunt-Cing NA-run.away^I=FP

‘Nu Cing ran away, didn’t she?’

- b. *nu¹-ciŋ²=in³* *lian³* *ta:i³khia¹-san³=mo:³*
 aunt-Cing=ERG Lian run.away^{II}-APL=FP

‘Nu Cing ran away, leaving Lian behind, didn’t she?’

- c. *nu¹-ciŋ²=in³* *naŋ¹* *oŋ¹-na¹-ta:i³khia¹-san³=mo:³*
 aunt-Cing=ERG 2SG CIS-NA-run.away^{II}-APL=FP

‘Nu Cing ran away, leaving you behind, didn’t she?’

Another applicative suffix is the substitutive/benefactive *-sak³*, indicating that the subject performs the action in place of the object, as shown in (17)b–c. In many cases, the use of *-sak³* after a verb in Form II indicates the addition of an applicative object that is, semantically, a substitute or beneficiary of the action described by the verb.

- (17) a. *tua²* *ui¹* *va³-ho:l²khia³-iŋ³=ei³*
 DEM dog TRNS-drive.away^I-1SG.REAL=FP

‘I drove away the dog.’

- b. *tua²* *ui¹* *lian³* *va³-ho:l³khia¹-sak³-iŋ³=ei³*
 DEM dog Lian TRNS-drive.away^{II}-APL-1SG.REAL=FP

‘I drove away the dog for Lian.’

- c. *tua²* *ui¹* *(naŋ¹)* *oŋ¹-va³-ho:l³khia¹-sak³-iŋ³=ei³*
 DEM dog 2SG CIS-TRNS-drive.away^{II}-APL-1SG.REAL=FP

‘I drove away the dog for you.’

What is interesting in (17)c is that *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-*, which would deictically indicate a cislocative motion, co-occurs with the translocative *va³-* in the same verbal complex. It should also be noted that *hoŋ¹-/oŋ¹-* appears only once in the complex and never reduplicates itself, marking both proximal directive and inverse direction contexts.

3. Comparison with neighboring languages

We now compare the directional prefixes in Tiddim Chin with their counterparts in other Kuki-Chin languages. Translocative markers morphologically similar to the Tiddim Chin *va*^{3,4} can be found in many other Kuki-Chin languages, and *va*³- possibly corresponds to Proto-Kuki-Chin **wa* ‘(distal)’ (DeLancey 1980) or even further to Proto-Tibeto-Burman **s-wa* ‘GO’ (Matisoff 2003). The source of cislocative *oŋ-/hoŋ-* in Tiddim Chin is the Proto-Kuki-Chin **huŋ* ‘COME’ (VanBik 2009) or **hwang* ‘(proximal)’ (DeLancey 1980).

A translocative *va*³- in Tiddim Chin simply indicates motion away from the deictic center. However, in Mizo, a central Chin language, if the cognate translocative *vá-* is attached to a stative verb, the sense of the whole exclamatory sentence becomes an excessive change of state, as illustrated in (18). Such a derivation is not attested in Tiddim Chin.

(18) à *vá* *thá:u* *vè:* (Mizo, Chhangte 1986: 112)
 3 TRNS fat EXCL

‘It’s too fat!’

Cislocative markers formally and functionally similar to *hoŋ*¹-/*oŋ*¹- can be found in other northern Kuki-Chin languages, such as Sizang (Stern 1963) and Paite (DeLancy 1980). Henderson’s informant points out that *hoŋ*¹- is used as an independent verb meaning ‘to come’ in the Valvum dialect spoken near Tiddim (Henderson 1965: 113). However, neither *hoŋ*¹- nor *oŋ*¹- can be used as independent verbs in modern Tiddim Chin. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that *hoŋ*¹-/*oŋ*¹- derives from the motion verb ‘to come,’ which is now obsolete in Tiddim Chin, as some central Chin languages preserve an independent verb that is similar in form to *hoŋ*¹-/*oŋ*¹- in Tiddim Chin; *hawng* (phonetically realized as [həŋ]) ‘to come’ in Bawm, a central Chin language, can function as a main verb, while *va-* cannot (Reichle 1981: 55).

In Bawm, the motion verb *hawng* ‘to come’ in (19) has also become grammaticalized as the cislocative marker ‘hither’ (Reichle 1981: 55), as shown in (20). Intriguingly, *hawng* in Bawm—even though optional—tends to precede a first-person object clitic, as shown in (21).

⁴In Bawm, another Kuki-Chin language, the main verb *vak* ‘wander, prowl’ corresponds to the translocative prefix *va-* (Reichle 1981: 55). From the evidence, we can infer that *va*³- may also have something to do with the independent verb *va:k*¹ ‘walk, wander’ in Tiddim Chin.

- (19) *Duhmang leh Dardîn an hawng.* (Bawm, Reichle 1981: 51)
 Duhmang and Dardîn 3PL come

‘Duhmang and Dardîn come.’

- (20) *ka hawng kal.* (Bawm, Reichle 1981: 55)
 1 cis come

‘I came.’

- (21) *a (hawng) ka simh.* (Bawm, Reichle, 1981: 148)
 3 cis 1 tell

‘He tells me.’

In Ralte, which, like Tiddim Chin, belongs to the northern Chin language group, there is a similar cislocative marker, *hoŋ-*, which indicates motion toward a deictic center (Otsuka 2016). However, as shown in (22)a and b, the functional shift from cislocative to inverse is not attested in the language.

- (22) a. *hoŋ-keŋ=o?* (Ralte, Otsuka 2016: 26)
 CIS-go^l=IMP

‘Come here!’

- b. *lal=in a:i=tei* (Ralte, Otsuka 2016: 24)
 master=ERG 1.OBJ=scold^l

‘The master scolded me.’

- c. *(nay) a=tei=ci?* (Ralte, Otsuka 2016: 26).
 2SG 3=scold^l=2.OBJ

‘Someone scolded you.’

The inverse marking system itself is not uncommon in Kuki-Chin languages. In some southern Chin languages, such as Asho (Otsuka 2015) and Hyow (Zakaria 2018), a non-directional affix may have evolved into an inverse marker, where an inverse marker and a plural marker⁵ share the same form, as shown in (23).

⁵In Hyow, the inverse marker *ni-* and the plural marker *ni-* share the same forms, but their functions are different and are discernible by situation types (Zakaria 2018: 325).

- (23) a. *mǎ=pòhái=há?* (Asho, Otsuka 2015: 133)
 PL=surprise=REAL

‘They surprised (someone).’

- b. *mǎ-bóhái=há?* (Asho, Otsuka 2015: 134)
 INV-INV:surprise=REAL

‘{ I was / You were } surprised.’ (cf. *pòhái* ‘to be surprised’)

4. Conclusion

The present study has addressed various directional prefixes in Tiddim Chin, with a focus on the cislocative prefix *hoŋʼ-/oŋʼ-*. In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that not only does *hoŋʼ-/oŋʼ-* express deictic spatial direction and change of state, as a pure cislocative marker, it is also used as an inverse marker. It must be attached to a transitive verb if the object is a speech act participant, reflecting a person-referencing hierarchy, SAP>non-SAP. This is consistent with DeLancey’s claim that a simple inverse-marking system in several languages of the Kuki-Chin branch has developed from the marking of deictic orientation on motion verbs (DeLancey 1980). Givón (2001: 165–166) states that such a drift suggests a natural diachronic pathway for the grammaticalization of semantic inverse systems from erstwhile deictic-directional markers.

Comparison with other closely related languages, such as the Valvum dialect spoken near Tiddim (Henderson 1965: 113) and Bawm (Reichle 1981), reveals that *hoŋʼ-/oŋʼ-* derives from the independent motion verb ‘to come.’ Therefore, today’s inverse system in Tiddim Chin may have arisen from a deictic serial-verb-like construction.

Such inverse marking systems, as well as cislocative markers similar to *hoŋʼ-/oŋʼ-*, are attested in other Kuki-Chin languages; however, they differ from language to language in terms of form and function, showing the linguistic diversity of Kuki-Chin languages. Further studies are needed to grasp a broader picture of various directional prefixes in Kuki-Chin languages, as many other languages in this group, such as Mizo (Chhange 1993: 102–104) and Hakha Lai (VanBik, Kenneth and Thlasui Tluangneh 2017), have more complex systems of locational and directional morphemes.

Abbreviations

-	morphological boundary	EXCL	exclamation
=	clitic boundary	FP	final particle
1	first person	IMP	imperative
2	second person	INV	inverse
3	third person	IRR	interrogative
I	verb stem form I	NA	directional prefix <i>na</i> ¹ -
II	verb stem form II	OBJ	object
APL	applicative	PL	plural
CAUS	causative	PRF	perfect
CIS	cislocative	REAL	realis
CNJ	conjunction	SAP	speech act participant
DEM	demonstrative	SG	singular
COP	copula	TOP	topic
DIR	directional	TRNS	translocative
ERG	ergative		

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