CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO THADOU

The focus of research is on Thadou language. Hence, a thorough outline of the language is imperative. This chapter initiates the process by giving an overview of the people and language followed by a review of the existing literatures on the language and then a detailed description of Thadou phonology.

2.1 Thadou: People and Language

Thadou refers to an ethnic group, belonging to certain parts of North-East India, Chin state and Sagaing Division in Burma (Myanmar) and eastern Bangladesh. Among the North-Eastern states of India, they have a considerable population in Manipur, where they are mostly found in Churachandpur district, Senapati district, Ukhrul district, South-Western Hills and Sadar Hills, Chandel district and Jiribam. The Thadous belong to the Mongoloid race, and formerly lived in the Lushai and Chin Hills. Later when they were expelled from there, they settled in Manipur, in the Naga Hills and in South Cachar.

Thadou language is spoken mainly in Manipur Hills. However a sizeable population who speaks Thadou and other closely related speech varieties is found in the adjoining states of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, parts of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, and across the Indo-Myanmar border (Thirumalai, 2007).

As per the 2011 census, the total Thadou population in Manipur is 1,90,595. The Thadous are the second largest tribe in Manipur only second to the Meiteis or Manipuris. Thadous have a language distinct from other tribal languages. The Government of India
has recognized Thadou as a tribe as well as a language. Thadou was the second language in the Manipur state after Meiteilon (Manipuri) during British Colonial Period. In the state of Manipur, Thadou is now recognized as one of the five languages (in addition to Meiteilon, the official language) used as a medium of instruction in schools up to class V. The other four dialects/ languages are Tangkhul, Hmar, Paite and Lushai. The Thadous use Roman script for orthography.

A majority of the Thadou speakers are bilinguals and can speak Meiteilon and one or more of other Kuki-Chin languages. Most of the Kuki-Chin languages are mutually intelligible to some degree. The Kuki-Chin languages spoken in Manipur include Thadou, Vaiphei, Aimol, Tarao, Anal, Monsang, Moyon, Chiru, Koireng, Chothe, Tidimchin, Hmar, Paite, Simte, Gangte, Zou, Vaiphei, Hmar, Mizo and many more. There are 33 recognized Scheduled Tribe communities in Manipur (based on 2001 census) and almost all of them have a language of their own.

As has already been discussed, Thadou is a Tibeto-Burman language, which falls in the geographically determined group Kamarupan. This group is further sub grouped into Kuki-Chin-Naga, Abor-Miri-Dafla and Bodo-Garo subgroups. Thadou belongs to the Northern Kuki-Chin sub group.

Although early literatures on the tribes of Manipur classify Thadou as an Old Kuki group, Lieut. R. Stewart (1857) considers Thadou as the representative of the New Kuki group on the basis of their time of arrival. Interestingly, William Shaw (1929) finds many similarities among the languages. Linguistically, both Old Kuki (Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Kairao, Koireng, Kom, Lamgang, Paite, Purum, Simte, Vaiphei,
Zou, Hmar) and New Kuki tribes (Thadous and their kin groups such as Doungel, Lupheng, Lupho, Ngoilu, Lamhao, Thangeo, Touthang, etc.) bear similarities among themselves and with the Lushai (Mizo), Chin and Poi. According to Shaw, all these tribes were the residents of the same region. However, Sir George Abraham Grierson, in his work *Linguistic survey of India. Vol. III. Parts III* (1904), includes Thadou in the northern group of Chin languages along with Sokte, Siyim, Ralte, Paite.

With around 200,000 speakers, Thadou is not, strictly speaking, an acutely endangered language, but intergenerational transmission is declining under pressure from neighboring major languages like Meiteilon, Hindi, Burmese and, of course, English. There are other sociolinguistic influences such as language contact between multiple similar languages. These influences on multiple levels result in extensive borrowing and code-switching as well as in more subtle socio-phonetic effects on the realization of vowels, consonants and tones. A brief look at the nomenclature adds to the picture.

### 2.2 Thadou Nomenclature

Thadou is the name of their original progenitor, but is also used by the Chins of Myanmar to denote the tribe itself (Grierson, 1904). They are known by different names in different regions. In Assam and Bengal they are known as Kukis. They are known as Lusuong by the Lushais/Mizos, as Khongchai/Khachami by the Tangkhuls, as Kusamei by the Maos, as Makheng by the Anals, Thangkumsa by the Kacharis and as New Kuki by the Britishers. In Manipur they are called Khongjai/Khongsai by the Meiteis. Also various spellings exist: Thado, Thadou, Thadow, Thaadow, Thaadou. The name also
occurs in combination with names for groups of closely related languages, Kuki (in India) and Chin (in Myanmar), such as Thadou-Kuki, Kuki-Thadou, Chin-Thado, etc.

The term ‘Thadou’ used to refer the language is still a matter of controversy among the speakers of the language. Thadou was recognized as the name of the language in Manipur in 1956. But many sections of the community were not happy with the term, as ‘Thadou’ was one of the names of the clans among the tribe. There was a long tussle between the Thadou protagonists and the Kuki protagonists when Rev. Dr. T. Lunkim translated the bible into what he called the Kuki language. Since then, many efforts to resolve the controversy surrounding the nomenclature of the language were initiated, especially from intellectual class. The government of Manipur, knowing the fact that these two groups are one and the same, issued a compromising order renaming the language as ‘Thadou-Kuki’. However, the terminology used in this dissertation is ‘Thadou’ based on the inferences from majority of existing literatures on the language and more importantly also because my informants refers to their language as such. A brief overview of the work done on Thadou language explicated henceforth adds to the relevance of my research.

2.3 Existing Literatures on Thadou Language

The earliest article on Thadou was published in 1800s by R. Stewart, who was a lieutenant in the British India Army.

Sir George Abraham Grierson was the first to record and document the language through his famous work on Indian languages *Linguistic Survey of India*, 1904. The description on Thadou falls in Vol. III, Part III of the series. Grierson gives a detailed
description of the history of the Thadou tribe- their origin, settlements, conventions followed etc. He also provides a sketch of Thadou pronunciation- both vowels and consonants, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs in the language. However, he has mentioned nothing in regard to tones.

Other important works include T. C. Hodson's *Thado Grammar* (1905), J. Shakespeare's *Lushai Kuki Clans* (1912) and *Notes on Thado Kukis* (1929) by William Shaw.

*ThadouPhonetic Reader* (1972) by M.S.Thirumalai describes the phonology of Thadou in some detail. The segmental as well as suprasegmental properties of the language are discussed in the book. Thadou grammar has been researched by Shree Krishnan in his book *Thadou: A Grammatical Sketch* (Anthropological Survey of India, 1980) and also by Anvita Abbi in *Reduplication in Tibeto Burman Languages of South Asia* (1990).

However the major path-breaking work came much later with Larry Hyman’s article *Kuki-Thaadow: An African tone system in Southeast Asia* (2007). Hyman’s investigations on Thadou revealed that Thadou is packed full of properties that is typically associated with the African tone systems. Most of the characteristics usually associated with the African tone system like the two level tones- high (H) and low (L), downstep, floating tones as well as polar tones are found in this language spoken in the South-East of Asia. His work became a major break-through as it documented for the first time a bonafide African-type tone system in Southeast Asia. His unpublished

Some significant research contributions in recent years have been made by the native speakers themselves. While Pauthang Haokip detailed the phonology of the language, E. L Haokip explained the word formation processes in Thadou.


Elizabeth Lamkhovah Haokip in her PhD dissertation titled *Word Formation in Thadou* (2013) describes different types of derivation processes in Thadou. She also discusses the nominal and verbal morphology of the language.

There are many other fundamental contributions to the language by James A. Matisoff (2003), Yuni Kim (2005), Marc Ettlinger (2006), Dafydd Gibbon, Pramod Pandey, D. Mary Kim Haokip and Jolanta Bachan (2009), and Rebecca T. Cover (2010).

Even though research on various aspects of the language has been undertaken by these researchers, the lexical and post-lexical tonology needs more study. A basic overview of Thadou phonology is initiated towards that end.
2.4 An overview of Thadou Phonology

In this section an outline of the segmental inventory followed by the syllable typology of the language is given.

2.4.1 Segmental Inventory

2.4.1.1 Consonants

Thadou has 20 consonant sounds out of which ten are plosives, three nasals, four fricatives, one affricate and two laterals. The language does not attest voiced aspirated sounds. The language does not allow all the consonants in syllable coda position. /p,t,ʔ,m,n,ŋ,l/ are the only consonants that are attested in syllable final position.

Table 1

Consonant Chart of Thadou (Vijayakrishnan & Temsunungsang, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p pʰ</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t tʰ</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>ts (ʧ)</td>
<td>(dz)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>(x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>η</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the chart above, the bracketed segments /ʧ/, /dz/ and /x/ occur in free variation to other segments. /ʧ/ and /ts/ are always in free variation with each other. Also, /x/ is in free variation with /kʰ/ and /dz/ is in free variation with /z/. 
2.4.1.2 Vowels

There are many linguists who have detailed the vowel system in Thadou. However, Larry Hyman’s and Pauthang Haokip’s vowel inventories are given below. Hyman (2004) postulates five basic vowels /i,e,u,o,a/ in Thadou and two diphthongs /ie/ and /uo/. Thadou also has long vowels /i:, e:, u:, o:, a:/.

Table 2

*Vowel inventory of Thadou (Hyman, 2004)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unrounded Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Rounded Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, Pauthang Haokip (2008) postulates eight vowels in Thadou—two high vowels, two mid-high, two mid-low, one central and one central-low as opposed to Hymans five vowel system.

Table 3

*Vowel Chart proposed by Haokip (2008)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unrounded Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Rounded Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>i</td>
<td></td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-Mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this study, however, the five vowel system proposed by Larry Hyman has been followed.

### 2.4.2 Syllable Typology

In Thadou words are mostly monosyllabic. Syllables can be open or close. The basic syllabic structure is CV(C), where C is the consonant and V is the vowel. Hyman (2004) has categorized the syllables according to their rime as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable</th>
<th>Reduced</th>
<th>Full</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smooth</td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>CVV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CVD</td>
<td>CVVT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CVVD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(C= consonant, V= vowel, D= sonorant, ?= glottal stop, T= /p/ or /t/)

*Figure 5. Thadou syllable structure as postulated by Hyman (2004)*

The distinguishing feature of Thadou lies in its being a tone language. The implications of this is discussed in the next section under different heads: grammatical tone, tonal inventory and tonal alternations.
2.5 Tone in Thadou

Thadou is a tonal language of Southeast Asia which is supposed to have “contour tone systems” but behaves mostly like the African languages which have “register tone systems”. In this regard, Hyman (2007) states:

Kuki-Thadou, a member of the Kuki-Chin subgroup of Tibeto-Burman, spoken in Northeast India and neighbouring Myanmar, is packed full of properties that we typically associate with African tone systems: two levels, H- and L-tone spreading, downstep, floating tones, polar tones—in short, the very phenomena which we know so well from the study of tone in African languages.

Hyman classifies the characteristics of Thadou based on Kenneth L. Pike’s (1948) distinction of tonal languages. He assumes Chinese to be prototypical of “contour tone systems” (A) and African languages such as Bambara, Yoruba, Igbo and Luganda (to mention only a few) as representative of “register tone systems” (B). The following table shows that Thadou confirms much with properties of African tone languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. “Contour tone systems”</th>
<th>B. “Register tone systems”</th>
<th>Thadou</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer level tones than contours</td>
<td>More level tones than contours</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contour tones = units</td>
<td>Contour tones = sequences (clusters)</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contour tones have free distribution within the utterance</td>
<td>Contour tones (clusters) are often limited to the last syllable</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissimilation of contour + contour</td>
<td>Dissimilation of contour tones = rare</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metathesis of features within a contour</td>
<td>Metathesis of contour tones = rare</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No downstep</td>
<td>Downstep</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floating tones = rare</td>
<td>Floating tones = frequent</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone spreading = rare</td>
<td>Tone spreading = frequent</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function of tone = lexical</td>
<td>Function = lexical and/or grammatical</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words are monosyllabic</td>
<td>Words come in various sizes</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tones are restricted by syllable type</td>
<td>Tones may occur on any syllable type</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.5.1 Grammatical Tone

Even though tones imply differences in meaning, they are also used in a systematic way to express grammatical distinctions in many of the world’s languages. Thus tone languages can be defined as languages which uses tone in a systematic fashion to express either lexical or grammatical distinctions. Usually, Southeast Asian tone languages do not make use of tone for grammatical properties. It is generally a property of the African tone systems. This peculiar feature is detailed out by Larry M. Hyman (2007) and consequently he cites three areas in the grammar of Thadou where it again sides with African languages in using tone for morphological purposes: pronominal proclitic tone, tonal morphemes and stem2 tone. These features are pertinent in understanding the present study. Hence a brief description of each of these features are undertaken below.

#### i) Pronominal Proclitic Tone:

There are four proclitics in Thadou whose underlying tone varies between /L/ and /HL/ according to the tone of the following word:

- before /HL, H/  
  /kà/  
- before /L/  
  /kâ/  
  first person (excl)
According to Hyman (2007), /ka/, /na/, /a/, and /i/ exhibit the same tonal allomorphy independently of whether they are used as subject or as possessive pronoun.

As subject As possessive pronoun
kà núuy êe ‘I laugh’ kà zòoŋ gûup ‘my six monkeys’
ká kàp êe ‘I cry’ ká kèel gîet ‘my eight goats’

However, when occurring as subject before the past tense proclitic /ná/, the four pronominal proclitics have H tone.

ká ná múu !ëe ‘I saw it’

ii) *Tonal Morphemes*:

In Thadou during the concatenation of words, an additional H tone occurs unexpectedly. This H is treated as the tonal morpheme.

zòol + hòo + bùu → zòol hòo bùu ‘friend’s food’

The tonal morpheme effect is also seen in instances of nominalization (Hyman, 2007).

kèel pèe ‘biting of/by the goat’ → kèel pêe ‘goat biting’

iii) *Stem2 tones*:

Thadou verbs have two forms: stem1 and stem2 in different syntactic environments. The process is generally referred to as verb-stem alternation. Detailed description of verb-stem alternation can be seen in section 2.7.
2.5.2 Tonal inventory

Languages may have a range of tonal contrasts. There are languages with two tones (the most widespread system) like Igbo (Clark, 1990), and Haya (Byarushengo & Hyman, 1977), with three tones such as Yoruba (Harrison, 1998) and Ao (Temsunungsang, 2009), with four tones as in Mambila (Connell, 1999) and Mizo (Fanai, 1989 & Priyankoo, 2010), with five tones in Tenyidie (Burling, 1960 & Meyase, 2013) or even six as in the Chori languages of Nigeria.

Tone is an important feature in distinguishing words in Thadou. In isolation, the words in Thadou take any of the three underlying tones which are realized as high to low falling (HL), low to high rising (LH) and a low (L). However, LH tone is considered as high (H) underlyingly.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tonal Minimal Pairs in Thadou (Hyman, 2004)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saa ‘animal’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muu ‘seed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low ‘field’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lei ‘earth’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above mentioned minimal pairs are analysed using Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2007). It is a software designed for the phonetic analysis of speech. Figure 6 illustrates
Praat pictures showing individual pronunciations of the words /saa/ and /lei/ with HL, LH and L tone.

**Figure 6.** Praat diagrams showing pitch contours for different tones in Thadou. All words are recorded in isolation.
However, within sentences LH and HL contour tones simplify to either L or H. LH contour sometimes simplify as L, sometimes as H, and in the latter case, the resulting floating L never triggers downstep. LH is henceforth analysed as H (Hyman, 2004). HL contour simplify as H, and the resulting floating L triggers downstep on the following HL tone.

*Figure 7 a.* /lèi/ ‘bridge’, /lěi/ ‘tongue’ and /lêi/ ‘earth’ in isolation.

*Figure 7 b.* /lèi/ ‘bridge’, /lěi/ ‘tongue’ and /lêi/ ‘earth’ in the sentence format /_____ ka sei/ meaning ‘I say ______’
Figure 7 c. /mùu/ ‘see’, /mǔu/ ‘hawk’ and /mûu/ ‘seed’ in isolation.

Figure 7 d. /mùu/ ‘see’, /mǔu/ ‘hawk’ and /mûu/ ‘seed’ in the sentence format

/_____ ka sei/ meaning ‘I say _____’

Figures 7(a) and 7(b) shows the pitch traces of /lei/ with three different tone patterns pronounced in isolation and in sentences respectively. Figures 7(c) and 7(d) illustrates the pitch contours of /muu/ with different tones both in isolation and in sentences. The word are put in the format ‘____________ ka sei’ meaning ‘I say ______________’ in order to produce the sentences.
2.5.3 Tonal Alternations

Languages may change tone in context. Yip (2007) identifies two main types of environments in which such changes take place: 1) change caused by a specific local tonal context, as in many Bantu languages, Mandarin, Yoruba and Chinantec. 2) change caused by positional and/or prosodic factors as in Shangai, Chizigula, Trique and Min, where tones may migrate to prominent positions.

In Thadou, tones are modified in a specific tonal context. Even though words carry HL, LH and L tones in isolation, they tend to change in connected speech.

Thadou allows HL and LH contour tones only in utterance-final position (Hyman, 2004). In all the other positions they are simplified to either H or L through process of contour simplification and tone spreading. The processes of contour simplification and tone spreading as given by Hyman (2007) are summarised below.

a. Contour Simplification

Contour Simplification is the delinking of the second tone of a contour (in non-final position) when it is followed by another syllable.

\[
\sigma \sigma \\
H \quad L
\]

b. H tone spreading

H tone spreading converts an underlying /H-L/ sequence into H-HL.

\[
\sigma \sigma \\
H \quad L
\]  
\[/H - L/ \rightarrow H - HL\]
c. *L tone spreading*

L tone spreading (applies only phrase-finally or when the 3rd syllable is L)

\[ \sigma \rightarrow \text{L} \quad \text{(σ)} \rightarrow \text{L-LH} \]

\[ \text{L} \quad \text{H} \rightarrow \text{L-L-HL} \]

d. *Downstep*

Downstep is a pitch lowering phenomenon in which a following H tone or an HL tone is realised at a lower pitch when preceded by an HL tone.

\[ /\text{HL} - \text{HL}/ \rightarrow \text{H} - \!\text{HL} \]

A detailed discussion on downstep can be seen in chapter 3, section 3.4.2 of this thesis.

Tonal alternations in a sequence of two syllables can be summarised as follows:

I.

a) \( \text{HL} + \text{HL} \rightarrow \text{H} - \!\text{HL} \) \( \text{úy} \!\text{gîet} \) ‘eight dogs’

b) \( \text{HL} + \text{LH} \rightarrow \text{H} - \text{LH} \) \( \text{úy thǔm} \) ‘three dogs’

c) \( \text{HL} + \text{L} \rightarrow \text{H} - \text{L} \) \( \text{úy gùup} \) ‘six dogs’

As seen in I (a-c), when a syllable with an HL tone is followed by any other syllable, the L tone delinks from the syllable and it gets reduced to an H tone due to the process ‘Contour Simplification’. If this HL tone is followed by another HL tone, as in I (a), then the delinked L tone acts on the following syllable inducing a ‘downstep’ on them. The downstepped syllable is represented with an exclamation mark (!) preceding it.

II.

a) \( \text{LH} + \text{HL} \rightarrow \text{H} - \text{HL} \) \( \text{zóoŋ gîet} \) ‘eight monkeys’

b) \( \text{LH} + \text{LH} \rightarrow \text{H} - \text{H} \) \( \text{zóoŋ thǔm} \) ‘three monkeys’
c) $LH + L \rightarrow L - HL$  

$zòoŋ gûup$ ‘six monkeys’

II (a-c) show that, LH tones, when followed by any other syllable simplify to either L or H. However the resulting floating L, which is left after LH turns to an H tone, does not induce a downstep. Hence Hyman (2007) prefers to consider the LH tone as underlyingly an H tone. Moreover LH tones behave more like H tones in tonal combinations.

III.

a) $L + HL \rightarrow L - HL$  

$kèel gîet$ ‘eight goats’

b) $L + LH \rightarrow L - LH$  

$kèel thǔm$ ‘three goats’

c) $L + L \rightarrow L - L$  

$kèel gùup$ ‘six goats’

When preceded by an L tone, as in III (a-c), the tones of all the syllables are realized as such, without any modification.

So far the features of Thadou which shows affinity to tonal properties of African languages has been reviewed and analysed. However, features pertinent to Asian tonal languages in Thadou should not be overlooked. The Kuki-Chin properties present in Thadou are discussed in the next section.

2.6 Kuki-Chin properties in Thadou

Even though Thadou shares most of the properties of African tone languages, it is not devoid of properties that belong to the Kuki-Chin languages belonging to the Asian sub-continent. The two common characteristics of Kuki-Chin languages that are shared by Thadou are agreement and verb-stem alternation (Haokip, 2012).

i) Agreement
Thadou is characterised by a system of agreement between the finite verb and its subject and object. The subject and object may be left out but the agreement particles are obligatory.

1) kēi Lamka àʔ kâ tsêŋ êe  
   1SG Lamka LOC 1PRO live1 DECL  
   ‘I live in Lamka’

2) nâŋ Lamka àʔ nâ tsêŋ êe  
   2SG Lamka LOC 2PRO live1 DECL  
   ‘You live in Lamka’

3) amâ Lamka àʔ â tsêŋ êe  
   3SG Lamka LOC 3PRO live1 DECL  
   ‘He/She lives in Lamka’

Haokip (2012)

ii) Verb-stem Alternations

One of the characteristics of verbs in Kuki-Chin languages are their alternating verb stem forms. The discussion on stem alternation in the Kuki-Chin languages has been taken up by many linguists and many works have come up on the following Chin languages: Central Chin languages- Mizo/ Lushai/ Lushei (Bright, 1964; Hillard, 1975; Chhangte, 1986), Lai (Lehman, 1982; Melnik, 1997; Kathol & VanBik, 2001; Kathol, 2003), Zahau (Osbourne, 1975; Yip, 2003) and Bawn (Loffler, 1973& 2002); Northern Chin languages- Tiddim (Henderson, 1965) and Sizang (Stern, 1963); Southern Chin languages- Daai (Hartman, 2002) and K’Cho (Nolan, 2003).

As verb-stem alternation brings about tonal modifications, it is obligatory to have an exhaustive understanding of the phenomenon in the language. Hence a detailed discussion on the process has been initiated in the following section.
2.7 Verb-stem alternations

It is a well-known fact that the Kuki-Chin languages of North-East India attest verb stem alternations. The major phonological characteristic of stem alternation of verbs in Kuki-Chin languages are the existence of two allomorphic variants popularly known as stem 1 and stem 2 in the literature. Of the two forms, stem 1 is considered to be more basic or underlying. It is not necessary that all verbs exhibit overt stem alternation. In some cases the changes are predictable while in others they are not. The changes may be segmental or tonal or both. Generally the stem change occurs with a closure of the open syllable through coda insertion or through the modification of the final consonant. The modification may be in the form of a velar changing to an alveolar nasal, an oral stop or a final nasal to a glottal stop. It may also result in lengthening or shortening of the vowel. Tone neutralization is another major tendency seen in relation with the stem change.

According to Deborah King (2009), it is a morpho-syntactic feature characteristic of Kuki-Chin languages (in fully developed or trace forms) which:

- is manifested as two (or more) distinct and unpredictable variations in the verb stem (suppletive): Stem1 & Stem2
- is formed by the addition or alternation of a single final morpheme and/or by tonal change.

It is this morpho-syntactic innovation in the finite verb that distinguishes Kuki-Chin languages from the rest of the family.

This feature of the Kuki-Chin family is exhibited in Thadou. It has alternating verbs categorised here as stem1 and stem2. These alternations are a lexico-phono-
morphosyntactico-intonational phenomenon because of their unpredictable lexical classes, phonological changes induced by strict syllable structure requirements, unpredictable syntactic environments as well as their function of intonational grouping (Vijayakrishnan & Temsunungsang, 2012). Table 5 gives some instances of stem 1 and stem 2 alternating verbs in Thadou.

Table 5

*Examples for Stem1 and Stem2 of verbs in Thadou (Data extracted from Hyman (2004))*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem1</th>
<th>Stem2</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bèʔ</td>
<td>bèe</td>
<td>attach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sàa</td>
<td>sàʔ</td>
<td>build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>báa</td>
<td>bàt</td>
<td>dry, withered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>náa</td>
<td>nàt</td>
<td>ache, sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khâʔ</td>
<td>khàa</td>
<td>close, shut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lûoʔ</td>
<td>lûo</td>
<td>scoop, pick up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7.1 Syntactic Distribution of Stem1 and stem2 forms

Larry M. Hyman (2007) distinguishes three sets of contexts to predict the occurrence of stem1 and stem2 in Thadou: main clauses, subordinate clauses and historical cleft sentences.
i) **Main clauses**: stem1 are used in main clauses that are marked by declarative /êe/. In sentences ending with the declarative suffix /à hîi/ stem 2 forms are used. Some examples are stated below:

(1)

a. kà tsôo êe  
   I buy1 DECL  
   ‘I buy’

b. kà tsôʔ à hîi  
   I buy2 DECL  
   ‘I buy’

(2)

a. kà khûu êe  
   I cough1 DECL  
   ‘I cough’

b. kà khûut à hîi  
   I cough2 DECL  
   ‘I cough’

(3)

a. kà hlûŋ êe  
   I arrive1 DECL  
   ‘I arrive’

b. kà hlûn à hîi  
   I arrive2 DECL  
   ‘I arrive’

Figures (8a) and (8b) shows Praat pictures of the pitch of the two verb forms in (3) as they are pronounced in different syntactic context.

ii) **Subordinate clauses**: stem2 are used in subordinate clauses

In conditional clauses

a. nà tsôʔ lèʔ kà tsôo êe  
   2 buy2 COND 1 buy1 DECL  
   ‘If you buy, I buy’
b. nà nēʔ lēʔ kà nēe ēe
   2  eat2 COND 1  eat1 DECL
   ‘If you eat, I eat’

c. nà hlûʔ lēʔ kà hlûu ēe
   2  fall2 COND 1  fall1 DECL
   ‘If you fall, I fall’

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure9.png}
\caption{nà hlûʔ lēʔ kà hlûu ēe ‘If you fall, I fall’}
\end{figure}

Figure 9 gives the picture of a sentence with conditional clause. As seen, it is the stem 2 form that is occurring within the subordinate clause and stem 1 in the main clause. In the figure both the verb forms have H tone, though the pitch of the stem 2 is not as high as that of stem 1. This could be because of the intervening L tones which cause the H tone on stem 2 to downdrift. More discussions on downdrift can be seen in Chapter 3, section 3.2.

iii) Historical cleft sentences (marked by the copula ‘hii’): stem1 or stem2 can be used depending on the transitivity of the verb and the nature of its subject. If the verb is intransitive, stem1 will be used with a third person subject and stem2 is used with first and second person subjects. If the verb is transitive, stem2 is used independent of the choice of the subject. (Examples adopted from Hyman, 2004)
(1) Sentences with intransitive verb (nűuy/nüy ‘laugh’)
   a. ká nüy á hii êê ‘I laughed’
   b. á nüuy á hii ‘He laughed’

(2) Sentences with transitive verb (pêt/pêe ‘bite’)
   a. ká pêe hii êê ‘I bit him’
   b. á pêe hii êê ‘He bit him’

Vijayakrishnan & Temsunangsang (2012) details the occurrences of Stem 1 and Stem 2 in Thadou as follows.

Stem1 occurs in the following environments:
   o In declarative sentences with /êe/
     eg. kà tsóo êê
        1   buy1 DECL
        ‘I buy’
   o In imperatives
     eg. bóol êîn
        do1   IMP
        ‘do it’
   o In sentences with conjunction /în/
     eg. kà tsóo êîn kà née êê
        1   buy1 CONJ 1   eat1 DECL
        ‘I buy and I eat’

Stem2 on the contrary occurs:
   o In declarative sentences with / á hii/
     eg. kà tsó? á hii
        1   buy2 DECL
        ‘I buy’
o In sentences with conjunctive marker /âa/

eg. kà tsóʔ !âá kà néʔ á hîi
1 buy2 CONJ 1 eat2 DECL
‘I buy and I eat’

o In the ‘if’ clause of conditional sentences

eg. nà tsóʔ lèʔ kà tsóo !êe
2 buy2 COND 1 buy1 DECL
‘If you buy, I buy’

o In passive voice

eg. thàŋbói in mí khât á thât êe
thangboi NOM man one AGR kill1 DECL
‘Thangboi killed a man’

2.7.2 Verb forms and tonal changes

The formation of stem 2 verb forms from stem 1 has some tonal implications. Allomorphic variants of some of the verbs in their stem 1 and stem 2 forms are given below (as extracted from Hyman, 2004):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stem1/ stem2</th>
<th>stem1/ stem2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HL → L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hlûn/hlûn ‘arrive’</td>
<td>hûon/hûon ‘cook’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsôw/ tsôo ‘dig’</td>
<td>sêi/sêi ‘speak’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nûom/nûop ‘agree’</td>
<td>tâaw/tâaw ‘pray’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vâ/vâa ‘wander’</td>
<td>nâʔ/nâa ‘wait’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lie/lie ‘lick’</td>
<td>lûut/lûut ‘enter’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures (10a) and (10b) show the pitch difference in the two verb forms /sêi/ and /sèi/ both meaning ‘speak’. In (10a) stem1 with an HL tone is used and hence the preceding proclitic /ka/ has a low tone. While in (10b) the verb used has a stem2 form with an L tone and hence the preceding pronominal proclitic has a high tone.

\[
H \rightarrow L \quad \text{vée/vèt} \; \text{‘watch’} \quad \text{thíi/thi} \; \text{‘die’}
\]

\[
\text{hlëŋ/hlèn} \; \text{‘choose’} \quad \text{kål/kàl} \; \text{‘climb’}
\]

\[
\text{vúuy/vùy} \; \text{‘bury’} \quad \text{làam/làam} \; \text{‘dance’}
\]

\[
\text{ké/kèe} \; \text{‘burst’} \quad \text{vá/và} \; \text{‘feed’}
\]

\[
\text{hló/hlòo} \; \text{‘soft’} \quad \text{zèep/zèep} \; \text{‘whip’}
\]
Figure (11a) plots the pitch tract of a declarative sentence having stem 1 verb with a level high tone. Figure (11b) has stem 2 verb with a stooping L tone.

L → L  

\[ \text{sùu/ sù ‘pound’} \quad \text{mùu /mùu ‘see’} \]
\[ \text{tòn/ tò ‘work’} \quad \text{kòl /kòl ‘hug’} \]
\[ \text{sòon/ sòt ‘push’} \quad \text{hàaw/ hàaw ‘yawn’} \]
\[ \text{kàp/ kàa ‘cry’} \quad \text{zèp/ zèp ‘swim’} \]
\[ \text{pèt/ pèe ‘bite’} \quad \text{thòt/ thòt ‘send’} \]

Figures (12a) and (12b) illustrate stem 1 and stem 2 of the verb /muu/ ‘see’ respectively. Both forms have L tone.

HL → HL  

\[ \text{hèe/hèet ‘know’} \quad \text{bùo/bùo? ‘spill’} \]
\[ \text{tsôo/tsô? ‘buy’} \quad \text{zâa/zâ? ‘hear, smell’} \]
\[ \text{gùu/gû? ‘steal’} \quad \text{zâa/zâat ‘feel’} \]
\[ \text{gûo/gûot ‘try’} \quad \text{hâa/hâat ‘freeze’} \]
\[ \text{nèe/nè? ‘eat’} \quad \text{khâa/khâat ‘bitter’} \]
Fig 13a. kànée êe ‘I eat’

Fig 13b. kâ né? â hîi ‘I eat’

Pitch tract for the verb forms /nee/ and /neʔ/ meaning ‘to eat’ are given in figures (13a) and (13b) respectively. As seen both have HL tones.

Hyman (2004) also lists six verbs having L tone on stem 1 to have HL tone on stem 2.

L→ HL

hlàa/hlâʔ ‘fall from height’

hlûu/hlûʔ ‘fall’

khìe/khîeʔ ‘fall’

hlûu/hlûʔ ‘fall’

zûu/zûʔ ‘rain’

However, my reanalysis of the above data with my informants give a slightly different picture. My results show these verbs to have HL tone on stem1 as well. This difference could be because of dialectical variations within the language.

HL→ HL

hlàa/hlâʔ ‘fall from height’

hlûu/hlûʔ ‘fall’

khìe/khîeʔ ‘fall’

tsûu/tsûʔ ‘pick’

zûu/zûʔ ‘rain’

tsòo/tsòot ‘blind’
Figures (14a) and (14b) shows illustrations of the verb /hlûu/ and /hlûʔ/ meaning ‘to fall’. As seen from the figures both the verb forms have high pitch on them. In (14a), because of HL tone on /hlûu/ the following declarative marker /ee/, also with an HL tone, is downstepped. More discussions on downstep can be seen in section 3.4.2.

As can be seen from the above discussions, in Thadou, most of the stem 2 forms neutralizes to a low tone even if their counterparts in form 1 have any other tone. Still there are some exceptions to the fact that stem 2 forms are generally reduced to an L tone. These exceptions have HL tone in isolation. Stem 2 verbs never have H tones underlyingly. Verbs with an L tone in stem1 would retain the tone in stem 2 while those with an H tone would take on an L tone in stem2. Only verbs having HL tone on stem 1 could have HL tone on stem 2, all other verbs have L tone in their stem 2. In whichever case, we can conclude that stem2 forms always end in a low tone.

Talking about tone and tonal alternation in Thadou, it must be noted that these tonal alternations are independent of the syntactic distribution of the utterances. Be it
within a noun phrase (NP) or within a verb phrase (VP) or across the NP-VP boundary, 
tonal alternations take place as long as it is within an intonational phrase (IP).

The following table (extracted from Hyman, 2007) shows realizations of tones in 
sequences of three syllables:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{HL-HL-HL} \rightarrow \text{H-HL} \\
&\text{HL-HL-H} \rightarrow \text{H-LH} \\
&\text{HL-HL-L} \rightarrow \text{H-HL} \\
&\text{HL-H-HL} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-H-H} \rightarrow \text{H-HH} \\
&\text{HL-H-L} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-L-HL} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-L-H} \rightarrow \text{H-HL} \\
&\text{HL-L-L} \rightarrow \text{H-HL} \\
&\text{HL-HL} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-HL-H} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-HL-L} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-H-L} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-L-HL} \rightarrow \text{H-HHL} \\
&\text{HL-L-H} \rightarrow \text{H-HL} \\
&\text{HL-L-L} \rightarrow \text{H-HL}
\end{align*}
\]

Hyman (2007)

Whenever the indicated tones are inputted, they are realized as indicated 
regardless of the syntactic relation (Hyman, 2007).

So far we have engaged with different aspects of the Thadou language. The 
segmental as well as syllabic properties have been delineated. Tone and its alternations 
which is crucial to my research has also been outlined. In the next chapter these aspects 
are taken forward to another level where the post-lexical properties of Thadou are 
discussed.