

A FIRST LOOK AT CHEN (KONYAK) ARGUMENT AND CLAUSE STRUCTURES

Hoipo Konyak
Payap University
hoipokonyak@gmail.com

Abstract

Chen (Bodo-Konyak-Jingphaw, Tibeto-Burman) is an undocumented language of the Konyak ethnic group. It is spoken in northeast India and northwest Myanmar. This article provides a first description of the Chen simple argument and clause structures. Chen argument structures include both noun phrases and pronouns, which can both take case markers. Other noun phrase modifiers include demonstratives, possessors, adjectives, nouns, a plural marker, quantifiers, and gender markers. Chen adjectives are formed from attributive forms in combinations of *ʔa-V-pe*, *ʔa-V*, *V-pe*, and *ho-V*. The pronoun inventory includes personal, interrogative, and demonstrative pronouns. Simple clauses exhibit SOV word order and include intransitive, transitive, ditransitive, attributive, and copula constructions.

Keywords: Tibeto-Burman, Bodo-Konyak-Jingphaw, Konyak, Chen (Kyan)

ISO 639-3 codes: nqq

1 Introduction

Chen is an undocumented language natively spoken by the people in the Chen villages of Mon district, India. In Myanmar, Chen is spoken by the Chen people residing along the Indian border under Sagaing region of Lahe township. This paper provides a first description of the simple argument and clause structures of Chen.

The Chen people (called Kyan by the Myanmar government) are one minority group within the Konyak ethnic group. Burling (1983) places the language varieties of the Konyak ethnic group under the Bodo-Konyak-Jingphaw branch of Tibeto-Burman. According to Eberhard et al. (2020), there are approximately 9,000 Chen speakers in Myanmar who use the Chen language on a daily basis among multiple generations (i.e., its language status is ranked as vigorous (6a)). The Chen population in India is 18,000 (VillageInfo.in 2019).

The data in this paper comes from seven texts that were recorded by native Chen speakers in 2019. The speakers included four males and three females, all from Chen Hoyat village in Myanmar. Additional examples are provided by the author, a native Chen speaker.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 examines the structure of simple arguments, and Section 3 discusses simple clause constructions. Section 4 concludes with areas for further research.

2 Simple arguments

Chen argument constructions include noun phrases (Section 2.1) and pronouns (Section 2.2). These structures are then summarized (Section 2.3).

2.1 Simple noun phrase construction

The structure of the Chen simple noun phrase is diagrammed in (1).

- (1) Chen simple noun phrase
(Dem) + (Poss) + (Modifier(s)) + Noun + (Adjective(s)) + (Plural) + (Quantifier) + (Gender) + (Case)

As seen in (1), the noun head of the noun phrase can optionally be preceded by a demonstrative, possessor, and modifiers. These modifiers may be adjectives or other nouns. The positions of the demonstrative and the possessor are interchangeable. The head can optionally be followed by adjectives, a plural marker, a quantifier, a gender marker, and a case marker.

Further descriptions of noun phrase modifiers are provided in the following subsections, starting with demonstratives (Section 2.1.1), adjectives (Section 2.1.2), quantifiers (Section 2.1.3), and other modifiers (Section 2.1.4).

2.1.1 Demonstratives

The adnominal demonstratives of Chen are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Chen adnominal demonstratives*

Distance	Singular
Proximal	<i>ʔeŋa</i>
Medial	<i>ʔese</i>
Distal	<i>geŋa</i>

As shown in Table 1, Chen adnominal demonstratives distinguish three distances: proximal, medial, and distal. Furthermore, the Chen adnominal demonstratives only include singular forms.

An adnominal demonstrative (M1 SS 12a) is shown in (2).¹

- (2) \emptyset *ʔeŋa* *xa* *wat-laʔ-haʔ* *su*
 1.DUAL **this** **hole** dig-IMPER-HORT PRT
 ‘Let’s dig this hole.’

In (2), the predicate *wat* ‘dig’ takes the elided subject \emptyset ‘1.DUAL’ and the direct object noun phrase, which consists of the head *xa* ‘hole’, and the preceding demonstrative *ʔeŋa* ‘this’.

To summarize, Chen adnominal demonstratives precede the noun head and reflect a three-way distance distinction without plural counterparts. Adjectives, like demonstratives, can also occur before the noun head.

2.1.2 Adjectives

In Chen, adjectives are derived from attributive forms by affixes, including the attributive prefix *ʔa-*, the nominalizer suffix *-pe*, and the third-person pronoun prefix *ho-*. According to Genetti (2011:18), Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayan region nominalize verbs to create adjectives.

Chen attributive forms take different affixes depending on their semantic class. This also affects their position within the noun phrase. Dixon (2010:73) identifies three sets (A, B, and C) of adjectives based on their semantic categories. All the semantic categories in Sets A and B are expressed in Chen, which are illustrated in Table 2.

¹ Tones in Chen are represented by numbers: Low = [22], Mid = unmarked. All the abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: 1S = first person singular, 1P = first person plural, 2S = second person singular, 2P = second person plural, 3S = third person singular, 3P = third person plural, ABL1/2 = ablative, ADVP = adverbial phrase, ATT = attributive marker, CC = copula complement, COM = comitative, COMPL = completive, CONN = connector, CS = copula subject, DECL = declarative, DEM = demonstrative, ERG = ergative, EVID = evidential, ES = elicited sentence, F1 FT = Female 1 folktale, F2 F = Female 2 funny story, FEM = feminine, GEN = genitive, HORT = hortative, IMPER = imperative, IRR = Irrealis, LOC = locative, M1 SS = Male 1 scary story, M2 RCS = Male 2 raspberry collecting story, M3 StS = Male 3 struggling story, M4 VH = Male 4 village history, MASC = masculine, MC = main clause, NEG = negation, NEUT = neuter, NMLZ = nominalizer, PRT = particle, PD = Pig and dog story, PERF = perfective, Q = question particle, TEMP = temporal, TOP = topic, VCC = verbless clause complement, VCT = verbless clause topic.

Table 2: The semantic categories of Chen adjectives

Semantic class	Adjective modifiers
Physical Property	<i>ʔa-ke-pe</i> ‘ATT-hard-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-liʔ-pe</i> ‘ATT-heavy-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-dʒai-pe</i> ‘ATT-soft-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-dʒən²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-smooth-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-tɕok²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-light-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-to²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-hot-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-ti²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-sweet-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-si-pe</i> ‘ATT-sour-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-mei-pe</i> ‘ATT-good-NMLZ’, etc.
Color	<i>ʔa-xi-pe</i> ‘ATT-red-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-ii²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-white-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-hij-pe</i> ‘ATT-green-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-dʒək-pe</i> ‘ATT-black-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-jan²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-yellow-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-mon-pe</i> ‘ATT-grey-NMLZ’.
Dimension	<i>ʔa-soŋ-pe</i> ‘ATT-big.status-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-bək-pe</i> ‘ATT-big.physical-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-ki-pe</i> ‘ATT-small-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-lu-pe</i> ‘ATT-tall-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-lu-pe</i> ‘ATT-long-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-su²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-short-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa²²-tət²²-pe²²</i> ‘ATT-short-NMLZ’ <i>ʔa-tɕət²²-pe</i> ‘ATT-thick-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-xaɔ-pe</i> ‘ATT-wide-NMLZ’, <i>ʔa-jaŋ-pe</i> ‘ATT-longish-NMLZ’, etc.
Age	<i>ʔa-wu</i> ‘ATT-old.HUMAN’
Human Propensity	<i>boŋkən-pe</i> ‘love-NMLZ’, <i>sinsa-pe</i> ‘pity-NMLZ’, <i>jawmei-pe</i> ‘beautiful-NMLZ’, <i>boŋsaŋ-pe</i> ‘sad-NMLZ’, <i>boŋpək-pe</i> ‘angry-NMLZ’, <i>mikkak-pe</i> ‘jealous-NMLZ’, <i>boŋmei-pe</i> ‘happy-NMLZ’, <i>boŋkak-pe</i> ‘heart.pain-NMLZ’.
Speed	<i>lali-pe</i> ‘slow-NMLZ’, <i>nini-pe</i> ‘fast-NMLZ’
Value	<i>ho-laŋ</i> ‘3S-old’, <i>ho-lən</i> ‘3S-new’, <i>ho-tɕen</i> ‘3S-old.worn.out’, <i>ho-ba</i> ‘3S-bad’, <i>ho-mei</i> ‘3S-good’.

As shown in Table 2, three semantic categories: physical property, color, and dimension, take the prefix *ʔa-* ‘ATT’ and the nominalizing suffix *-pe*. The semantic category, age, takes only the prefix *ʔa-* ‘ATT’, while the human propensity and speed categories take only the nominalizer suffix *-pe*. Finally, value adjectives take the prefix *ho-* ‘3S’. A similar phenomenon is reported in the Kiranti language Limbu, also a Tibeto-Burman language (Michailovsky 2011), where adjectives are formed by attaching the third singular prefix *ku-* to stative verbs. As for positioning in the noun phrase, the semantic categories of age, human propensity, and speed can only occur before the noun head, while the other semantic classes can occur before or after the noun head.

A dimension adjective (M1 SS 10a) is shown in (3).

- (3) \emptyset *loŋdʒu* *ʔa-soŋ-pe* *te²²* *lam²²* *tak²²*
2.DUAL stone ATT-big-NMLZ one search find
‘(They two) searched (and) found a big stone.’

In (3), the direct object noun phrase consists of the noun head *loŋdʒu* ‘stone’, which is modified by the adjective *ʔa-soŋ-pe* ‘ATT-big-NMLZ’ and the numeral *te²²* ‘one’.

An age adjective (ES 65) is shown in (4).

- (4) *ʔa-wu* *dʒu*
ATT-old.HUMAN FEM
‘old lady’

In (4), the gender marker *dʒu* ‘FEM’ can function as a head and refers to a female person. The head is modified by the preceding adjective *ʔa-wu* ‘ATT-old.HUMAN’, which is only used as a modifier for human noun referents. Inanimate noun referents are modified by value adjectives to indicate age.

The attributive form *mei* ‘good’ can take two types of adjective marking: *ho-V* (value) and *ʔa-V-pe* (physical property). Its behaviour as a value adjective (ES 67) is shown in (5).

- (5) *him* *ho-mei*
house 3S-good
‘good houses’

In (5), the noun head *him* ‘house’ is modified by *ho-mei* ‘3S-good’, which describes the details of goodness including interior and exterior quality of the head noun referent.

The behaviour of *mei* ‘good’ as a physical property adjective is illustrated (ES 46) in (6).

- (6) *ʔa-mei-pe* *him* *bɔk* *ʔalim*
 ATT-good-NMLZ house big three
 ‘three big good houses’

In (6), the head noun *him* ‘house’ is preceded by the adjective *ʔa-mei-pe* ‘ATT-good-NMLZ’. It indicates that the house is well built and describes the outer appearance or general goodness of the house. The attributive form that occurs after the head noun, *bɔk* ‘big’, does not take any affixes. Instead, it forms a compound with the head noun, *him bɔk* ‘big house’. The postnominal quantifier *ʔalim* ‘three’ indicates the number of houses. Note that the goodness expressed in (5) is stronger than the goodness expressed in (6). Thus, *ho-mei* ‘3S-good’ is treated as better quality than *ʔa-mei-pe* ‘ATT-good-NMLZ’.

In summary, Chen exhibits seven semantic categories of adjectives: physical property, dimension, color, age, speed, human propensity, and value. Chen derives adjectives from attributive verbs using four affixal patterns: *ʔa-V-pe* (for physical property, dimension, and color), *ʔa-V* (age), *V-pe* (human propensity and speed), and *ho-V* (value). When a noun is modified by more than one adjective, the adjective that immediately follows the noun head does not take any affix. Instead, it forms a compound noun with the head. A similar phenomenon is observed in multiple adjective constructions in the Muklom Tangsa language, where the immediate attributive form following the head noun does not take the nominalizing prefix *ɬ-*, but forms a non-restrictive construction (Mulder 2020:202). In Chen, the human propensity, age, and speed adjectives only occur before the head. The other adjectives can either precede or follow the head noun. Unlike adjectives, quantifiers can occur only after the head noun.

2.1.3 Quantifiers

Quantifiers occur after the noun head and do not take any morphological marking. Some of the Chen quantifiers are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: *Quantifiers in Chen*

Gloss	Chen
one	<i>tɛa</i> ²²
two	<i>ʔaɲi</i> ²²
five	<i>ʔaga</i>
ten	<i>bən</i>
some	<i>hotam</i>
many	<i>boxɔ</i>

As seen in Table 3, the quantifiers include both numerals and quantifying words.

A Chen numeral quantifier (ES 50) is shown in (7).

- (7) *ʔeɲa* *pukaʔ* *ʔaga*
 this story **five**
 ‘these five stories’

In (7), the numeral *ʔaga* ‘five’ modifies the head *pukaʔ* ‘story’, along with the demonstrative *ʔeɲa* ‘this’.

A Chen quantifying word (ES 49) is shown in (8).

- (8) *nij* *hotam*
 money **some**
 ‘some money’

As seen in (8), the quantifying word *hotam* ‘some’ also follows the head noun *nij* ‘money’.

In summary, Chen quantifiers are postnominal and include both numerals and quantifying words. In addition to quantifiers, the head noun can be modified by another noun, plural marker, gender, and/or case.

2.1.4 Other modifiers

A noun modifier (M3 StS 26b) is shown in (9).

- (9) \emptyset *kolim* *tinwi* *teinjaj* *tea*²² =*me* *jao*²²
 1S 1P neighbour village one LOC arrive
 ‘(I) arrived at our neighboring village.’

In (9), the locative noun phrase is a possessive noun phrase consisting of a possessed noun head *teinjaj* ‘village’, which is modified by another noun *tinwi* ‘neighbour’ to specify the type of village. The pronoun *kolim* ‘3P’ expresses the possessor of the neighboring village. The possessive phrase is further modified by the numeral *tea*²² ‘one’. The whole locative argument is marked by the locative case marker =*me*.

An example of other noun head modifiers (M2 RCS 1a) is shown in (10).

- (10) $[[moi:mo$ *naɔ.ɔa*²² =*me*]_{ADVP} $[pemei$ *lim* *ʔaji*²² *pa* =*e*
 long.ago child LOC adult PL two MASC ERG
 huwilek=*te* *ka-ha*[?] *ʔi*]_{MC}
 raspberry=ALL descend-HORT say
 ‘In childhood, two male elders asked me to go (gather) raspberries.’

In (10), the subject of the main clause is headed by the noun *pemei* ‘adult’, which is modified by the plural particle *lim* ‘PL’, the quantifier *ʔaji*²² ‘two’, and the masculine gender marker *pa*. The entire subject noun phrase is marked by the ergative case marker =*e*.

The case markers of Chen are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Chen case markers

Semantic meaning	Vernacular	Gloss
Ergative	= <i>e</i>	‘ERG’
Location	= <i>me</i>	‘LOC’
Genitive	= <i>ku</i> [?]	‘GEN’
Goal	= <i>te</i>	‘GOAL’
Ablative	Transfer	= <i>mepe</i>
	Motion	= <i>xaje</i>
Comitative	= <i>fei</i> ²²	‘COM’

As seen in Table 4, the case markers in Chen are enclitics that occur as the final constituent of a noun phrase. Further discussion of case markers is presented in Hoipo (to appear).

In summary, a noun modifies a head noun to express a specific type of noun referent. The plural marker occurs along with numerals greater than one to indicate the plurality of the head noun referent. The gender marker is treated as separate constituent since it can also occur on its own as a noun head, as illustrated in (4). Finally, Chen case markers are enclitics that occur as the final constituent of a noun phrase. Aside from noun phrase arguments, Chen arguments can also be expressed by pronouns.

2.2 Pronouns

The Chen pronoun inventory includes personal pronouns (Section 2.2.1), interrogative pronouns (Section 2.2.2), and demonstrative pronouns (Section 2.2.3).

2.2.1 Personal pronouns

The Chen personal pronoun inventory is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Chen personal pronouns*

	Singular	Dual	Plural
First-person	<i>ko</i> ²²	<i>koŋi</i> ²²	<i>kolim</i>
Second-person	<i>naŋ</i> ²²	<i>naŋŋi</i> ²²	<i>naŋlim</i>
Third-person	<i>ho</i>	<i>hoŋi</i> ²²	<i>holim</i>

As seen in Table 5, the Chen personal pronouns include singular, dual, and plural pronouns. The dual set is formed by adding the numeral *ŋi*²² ‘two’ to the singular first, second, and third-person pronouns. Similarly, the plural pronouns are formed by the combination of plural marker *lim* and the singular pronoun forms.

An example of a pronoun argument (F2 F 2c) is shown in (14).

- (14) *ko*²² *ŋi-ə-hokowaŋ* *li*
 1S laugh-CONN-begin go
 ‘I began to laugh.’

In (14), the intransitive predicate *ŋi-ə-hokowaŋ* ‘laugh-CONN-begin’ takes the pronoun *ko*²² ‘1S’ in the subject position of the clause. Note that the verb *li* ‘go’ in (14) has an extended meaning of ‘already’.

Another pronoun example (M2 RCS 16b) is shown in (15).

- (15) \emptyset *hoŋi*²²=*te* *gəŋa* *tu?*
 1s 3.DUAL=GOAL that feed
 ‘(I) feed those (raspberries) to those two.’

In (15), the predicate *tu?* ‘feed’ takes an elided subject, an indirect object *hoŋi*²² ‘3.DUAL’, which takes the goal case marker =*te*, and a direct object, which is expressed by the demonstrative pronoun *gəŋa* ‘that’.

To summarize, the Chen personal pronoun inventory includes singular forms *ko*²², *naŋ*²², and *ho* for first, second, and third-person, respectively. These singular forms also function as a base to build both the dual and plural forms by adding the *ŋi*²² ‘two’ and the plural marker *lim*.

2.2.2 Interrogative pronouns

The interrogative pronouns of Chen are laid out in Table 6.

Table 6: *Chen interrogative pronouns*

Meaning	Chen
who	<i>ʔo</i>
what	<i>tem</i>
where	<i>ʔome</i>
which	<i>ʔopupu</i>

As seen in Table 6, the Chen interrogative pronouns have two bases: *ʔo* and *tem*.

An example of an interrogative pronoun (ES 5) is shown in (16).

- (16) *him* *ʔo=e* *liŋ*²² *dei*
 house who=ERG make PRT
 ‘Who made the house?’

In (16), the predicate *liŋ*²² ‘make’ takes the preceding interrogative pronoun subject *ʔo* ‘who’ with the ergative marker =*e* and the direct object *him* ‘house’. The *ʔo* ‘who’ occurs directly before the predicate instead of following the default SOV word order.

Another example of an interrogative pronoun (ES 6) is shown in (17).

- (17) *tem* *ɹaʔ* *pu*
what eat Q
 ‘What do (you) eat?’

Similarly, in (17), the interrogative pronoun *tem* ‘what’ occurs before the predicate *ɹaʔ* ‘eat’ with the final question particle *pu*.

In summary, in addition to interrogative pronoun *tem* ‘what’, Chen interrogative pronouns are built from a base *ʔo* and always occur before the predicate of the clause regardless of which argument they replace. Demonstrative pronouns can also be used to express the arguments of a clause.

2.2.3 Demonstrative pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns of Chen are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: *Chen demonstrative pronouns*

	Singular	Plural
Proximal	<i>ʔeŋa</i> ‘this’	<i>ʔelim</i> ‘these’
Medial	<i>ʔese</i> ‘that’	<i>ʔeselim</i> ‘those’
Distal	<i>gəŋa</i> ‘yonder’	<i>gəlim</i> ‘those.yonder’

As seen in Table 7, Chen demonstrative pronouns include singular and plural forms. The singular demonstrative pronouns are identical to the adnominal demonstratives. The proximal and distal plural forms are formed by adding the plural marker *lim* to the first syllable, *ʔe* and *gə*, of the singular form. The medial plural demonstrative is formed by adding the plural marker to the full medial singular form *ʔese*.

A demonstrative pronoun (M2 RCS 17) is shown in (18).

- (18) \emptyset *gəŋa* *ɹaʔ* *kim*
 3.DUAL **yonder** eat finish
 ‘(They) finished eating that.’

In (18), the predicate *ɹaʔ kim* ‘finish eating’ takes an elided subject argument and the direct object, which is expressed by *gəŋa* ‘yonder’. It refers to some raspberries already mentioned in the text.

A plural demonstrative pronoun (F1 FT 29a) is illustrated in (19).

- (19) \emptyset *gəlim=fei*²² *sət*²² *laʔoŋ*
 bat **those.yonder=COM** include ***
 ‘The (bat) was included with those (winged animals).’

In (19), the predicate *sət*²² ‘include’ takes an elided subject (bat) and an oblique object (winged animals), which is expressed by the plural demonstrative *gəlim* ‘those.yonder’ and marked with the comitative marker =*fei*²². It refers to the winged animals that the bat wants to be included with.

In summary, the singular forms and distance distinctions in both the adnominal and demonstrative pronouns are identical. However, unlike the adnominal demonstratives, the demonstrative pronouns include both singular and plural forms.

2.3 Summary of simple argument constructions

Chen arguments can be expressed by noun phrases or pronouns. In a noun phrase, the head noun can be modified optionally by a preceding demonstrative, possessor, and adjective or noun. It can also be optionally followed by adjectives, a quantifier, and plural, gender, and case markers.

The adnominal demonstratives include only singular forms with three distance distinctions: proximal, medial, and distal. The adjectives express seven semantic classes (Dixon (2010:73). The physical property, dimension, and color adjectives take the attributive prefix *ʔa-* and the nominalizer suffix *-pe*. The age semantic class takes only the prefix *ʔa-* ‘ATT’, while the human propensity and speed classes take only the suffix *-pe* ‘NMLZ’. Finally, the value semantic class takes the third person pronoun prefix *ho-* ‘3S’. The age, human propensity, and speed adjectives are prenominal while the other adjectives occur either before or after the head noun.

Quantifiers are postnominal and include both numerals and quantifying words. In addition, to demonstratives, adjectives, and quantifiers, a noun head can be modified by another noun (which indicates the type of noun referent), a plural marker, gender marker, and case marker. All the Chen case markers are enclitics.

The Chen pronouns include personal, interrogative, and demonstrative pronouns. The dual and plural personal pronouns are formed by adding the numeral *ni*²² ‘two’ and plural marker *lim* to the first, second, and third-person singular forms. Unlike the adnominal demonstratives, the demonstrative pronouns include plural forms. The interrogative pronouns always precede the predicate in a clause, while the position of the demonstrative pronoun occurs in the argument position it substitutes for.

3 Simple clause constructions

Chen exhibits verbal (intransitive, transitive, ditransitive) and attributive clauses, along with copula clauses. Each of these clauses are discussed in turn, starting with verbal clause constructions.

3.1 Verbal clause constructions

The Chen intransitive clause construction is diagrammed in (20).

- (20) Chen intransitive clause construction
 Subject + Intransitive predicate

As seen in (20), the intransitive clause in Chen consists of an intransitive predicate and a subject argument. A Chen intransitive clause (F1 FT 18) is shown in (21).

- (21) *holim woŋme ni*
 3P too.much laugh
 ‘They laugh a lot.’

In (21), the intransitive predicate *woŋme ni* ‘laugh a lot’ takes the preceding subject argument *holim* ‘3P’. The Chen transitive clause is diagrammed in (22).

- (22) Chen transitive clause construction
 Subject + Direct Object + Transitive predicate

As seen in (22), the transitive predicate of Chen takes both subject and direct object arguments. A Chen transitive clause (F1 FT 30) is shown in (23).

- (23) [*xəɖzak lim =e ko*²² *ŋən-to?*]_{CL1} [*∅ ni*⁵³]_{CL2}
 human pl ERG 1s see-COMPL human laugh
 ‘People saw me (and they) laughed.’

In (23), the transitive predicate *ŋən-to?* ‘see-COMPL’ in the first clause takes the subject noun phrase, which comprises the noun head *xəɖzak* ‘human’, along with the plural marker *lim* and the ergative marker *=e*. The direct object argument is expressed by the pronoun *ko*²² ‘1S’.

The Chen ditransitive clause is diagrammed in (24).

- (24) Chen ditransitive clause construction
 Subject + Direct object + Indirect object + Ditransitive predicate

As seen in (24), the Chen ditransitive clauses consists of a ditransitive predicate that takes a preceding subject, direct object, and indirect object arguments.

A Chen ditransitive clause (ES 55) is given in (25).

- (25) *ho=e ju²² xədʒak=te koʔ*
 3S=ERG liquor human=GOAL give
 ‘He/she gave liquor to the person.’

In (25), the predicate *koʔ* ‘give’ takes the subject *ho=e* ‘3S=ERG’, the direct object *ju²²* ‘liquor’, and the indirect object recipient *xədʒak* ‘human’, which takes the goal marker *=te*.

3.2 Attributive clause construction

In an attributive clause, the attributive predicate describes a property of the subject referent. The structure of a Chen attributive clause is diagrammed in (26).

- (26) Chen attributive clause construction
 Subject (*wei*) + Attributive predicate + (Evidential marker)

As seen in (26), the attributive predicate is preceded by an argument that can be optionally marked by the topic marker *wei*. It can also occur with an evidential marker.

An attributive clause (ES 56) is presented in (27).

- (27) *ʔeŋa manpoŋ .i(-toŋ) (ʔi)*
 this horse.male white(-DECL) (VISUAL.EVID)
 ‘This male horse is white.’

In (27), the attributive predicate *.i* ‘white’ expresses a property of the subject noun referent, *manpoŋ* ‘male horse’, which is modified by the demonstrative *ʔeŋa* ‘this’. In such a construction, the predicate can take the declarative suffix *-toŋ* if the speaker is making a statement, or the sentence may end with a visual evidential marker *ʔi* if the speaker is looking at the subject referent at the time of speech and explaining one of its properties.

Another attributive clause (F1 FT 20b) is shown in (28).

- (28) *wəŋledʒu.ɹa.ɹa wei boŋmei*
 winged.FEM.NEUT.NEUT TOP happy
 ‘The winged ones were happy.’

In (28), the attributive predicate *boŋmei* ‘happy’ takes the subject *wəŋledʒu.ɹa.ɹa* ‘winged ones’, which is marked by the topic marker *wei*.

In summary, the subject of the attributive clause can be optionally marked with a topic marker *wei* and the predicate can take a declarative marker or an evidential marker.

3.3 Copula clause constructions

Copula clauses consist of a copula that indicates the type of relationship between the copula subject or topic and the copula complement (Dixon 2010:184). This paper discusses the identity, existential, and verbless clause constructions.

The Chen identity clause construction is diagrammed in (29).

- (29) Chen identity clause construction
 Copula Subject *wei* + Copula Complement + *jaŋ*

In (29), the Chen identity construction consists of the copula *jaŋ* ‘is’, which takes the copula topic, which is always marked with topic marker *wei*, and the copula complement.

A Chen identity clause (ES 55) is shown in (30).

- (30) *[ho wei]_{CS} [meto]_{CC} jaŋ*
 3S TOP teacher is
 ‘S/he is a teacher.’

In (30), the copula *jaŋ* ‘is’ takes the copula subject *ho* ‘3s’ with the topic marker *wei* and the copula complement *meto* ‘teacher’.

A Chen existential clause is diagrammed in (31).

- (31) Chen existential clause construction
 Copula subject + *ja*

As Dixon (2010:184) states, “in some languages there is a further type of copula clause, with just a copula subject argument, indicating existence.” Similarly, in Chen, the existential clause consists of just a copula subject and the existential predicate *ja* ‘stay’.

An existential clause (PD 1) is shown in (32).

- (32) *[ni²² tɛa²² hanpak tɛa²² =me]_{TEMP} [[hidzu ʔija²² wakdzu*
 day one time one LOC dog.FEM and pig.FEM
ni²²]_{CS} ja]_{EXIST}
two stay
 ‘One day, at one time, (there was) a dog and a pig.’

In (32), the copula *ja* ‘stay’ takes the coordinated nouns *hidzu ʔija²² wakdzu* ‘pig and dog’, which are modified by the numeral *ni²²* ‘two’.

A Chen verbless clause is diagrammed in (33).

- (33) Chen verbless identity clause construction
 Verbless Clause Topic_{VCT} + Verbless Clause Complement_{VCC} + Evidential marker

A verbless clause consists of a verbless clause topic (VCT) and a verbless clause complement (VCC). This (ES 68) is illustrated in (34).

- (34) *[ho wei]_{VCT} [meto]_{VCC} ga*
 3S TOP teacher REPORT.EVID
 ‘S/he is a teacher.’

In (34), the evidential marker *ga* indicates that the speaker is reporting a fact about the identity, *meto* ‘teacher’, of the verbless clause topic *ho* ‘3S’.

4.6 Summary of Chen simple clause construction

The Chen simple clauses include intransitive, transitive, ditransitive, attributive, copula clauses, and verbless clause. The verbal clauses are verb final (i.e., SOV). The subject of an attributive clause is optionally marked with the topic marker *wei*, and its predicate can either occur with a declarative suffix or the clause ends with

an evidential marker, depending on the context of speech. In a copula construction, the identity clause consists of the copula *jay* 'is' and the copula complement. The existential clause of Chen consists of only the copula subject and the copula *ja* 'stay'. In a verbless clause construction, the verbless clause topic and verbless clause complement are juxtaposed with each other and the clause ends with an evidential marker. Aside from the existential copula clause, the copula subject or topic is marked by the topic marker *wei*.

5 Conclusion

The Chen noun phrase structure is similar to those of other Konyak group languages, such as Chang and Nocte, in which demonstratives precede the head noun, adjectives can occur before or after the noun, and quantifiers are postnominal. Like other Tibeto-Burman languages such as Mongsen Ao and Meitei, Chen also derives adjectives through affixation to attributive forms (Coupe 2007; Chelliah 1997). In clauses, Chen word order follows the SOV pattern like other Tibeto-Burman languages (Dryer 2003).

Since this paper focuses only on simple argument and clause constructions, the structure of complex arguments and clauses requires further investigation. Also, a deeper look into the Chen evidential markers and other clause-final particles is needed. The complexity of adjectives in Chen also requires further attention. Further research into copula constructions (locatives, possessive, and benefactives) is also required. Such studies will deepen the understanding of how Konyak group languages work and how languages within the Tibeto-Burman language family can vary from one another.

References

- Burling, Robbins. 1983. The Sal language. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 7.2:1–32.
- Chelliah, Shobhana Lakshmi. 1997. *A grammar of Meithei*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Coupe, Alexander R. 2007. *A grammar of Mongsen Ao* (Mouton Grammar Library [MGL] 39). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Dixon, R. M. W. 2010. *Basic linguistic theory: Grammatical topics*. Vol. 2. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dryer, Matthew S. 2003. Word order in Sino-Tibetan languages from a typological and geographical perspective. *The Sino-Tibetan languages* (Routledge Language Family Series), vol. 3:43–54. In Thurgood, Graham, and Randy J. LaPolla. New York: Routledge.
- Eberhard, David M. & Simons, Gary F. & Fennig, Charles D. 2020. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International.
- Genetti, C. 2011. Nominalization in Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayan area: A typological perspective. In Yap, Foong Ha & Grunow-Hårsta, Karen & Wrona, Janick (eds.), *Nominalization in Asian languages: Diachronic and typological perspectives*, 163–194. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hoipo, Hoipo. to appear. *A preliminary grammar of Chen, a Konyak language of India and Myanmar*. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Payap University.
- Michailovsky, Boyd. 2011. Pronominally marked noun determiners in Limbu. In Roland, Bielmeier & Haller, Felix (eds.), *Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs: Linguistics of the Himalayas and beyond*, 189–202. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Mulder, Mijke. 2020. *A descriptive grammar of Muklom Tangsa*. Victoria, Australia: La Trobe University.
- VillageInfo.in. 2019. Chen. *Indian Village Directory*. (<https://villageinfo.in/nagaland/mon/chen.html>)

Reviewed: Received 6 October 2020, revised text accepted 15 December 2020, published 1 February 2021

Editors: Editor-In-Chief Dr Mark Alves | Managing Eds. Dr Paul Sidwell, Dr Nathan Hill, Dr Sigrid Lew