

ON THE STATUS OF THE SOUTHERN CHIN SUBGROUP*

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1. INTRODUCTION.

In this paper I propose a new subgrouping for Kuki-Chin languages based on both phonological and morphosyntactic considerations. The fundamental claim of the new subgrouping proposal is that Kuki-Chin languages mostly fit into two subgroups: *Central* (the traditional Central Chin, and probably also Old Kuki, but possibly not including Maraa) and *Peripheral* (including traditional Southern and Northern Chin, and probably not including Khumi). While our present state of knowledge regarding all but perhaps the Central Chin languages is too incomplete to allow proof of this hypothesis beyond the shadow of a doubt, the goal of this paper is to provide a framework in which subgrouping relations in Kuki-Chin may be better delineated as further information becomes available.

In what follows, I first discuss the traditional subgrouping scheme posited for the family. Then, I attempt to show that the traditional Southern Chin languages and the traditional Northern Chin languages share phonological innovations (the treatment of *r) and conservative morphosyntactic traits, as well as possible morphosyntactic innovations. The position of Khumi, regarded by most as a Southern Chin language, remains somewhat unclear; as of yet, there is certainly no morphosyntactic evidence that would definitively argue for its inclusion in either the Central or the Peripheral subgroups, but one interpretation of the phonological evidence is that it belongs to the Peripheral group, (though it is no more closely related to the former southern than to the northern languages on such an account). By the end, it will be clear that there is little evidence which would argue for a Southern Chin subgroup as it is traditionally conceived.

2. THE LANGUAGES AND THE TRADITIONAL SUBGROUPING SCHEME.

Kuki-Chin languages are traditionally subgrouped as in 1.

* This is an abbreviated form of a longer manuscript, which for reasons of space had to be shortened. The full, and (in terms of layout) somewhat more user-friendly version of the paper will be found via <http://www.eva.mpg.de/~peterson/index.html> sometime in the near future. I would like to express my gratitude to Ken Vanbik, Lorenz Löffler, and John Ohala for helpful discussion and comments on the issues considered here. Research on Khumi and Hyow in Bangladesh was supported by a Fulbright Fellowship

(1) Traditional Kuki-Chin subgrouping

- Old Kuki: Rangkhoh, Hallam, Purum, Hmar, Anāl, Kom, Lamgang (others)
- Northern Chin: Tiddim, Thadou, Sizang, Teizang, Rāltē, Paitē
- Central Chin: Lai, Bawm, Laizo, Mizo (Lushai), Maraa (Lakher)
- Southern Chin: Khumi/Khami, Sho/Hyow, Chinbok, Mindat, Sandoway (others)

This subgrouping stems essentially from the Linguistic Survey of India (Grierson/Konow 1903). It has more or less been assumed by just about everyone who has worked on large-scale Tibeto-Burman comparison (Shafer 1974 and Benedict 1972), and is taken for granted by many others (e.g. Stern 1962, Hartmann-So 1988, Matisoff forthcoming). An exception is Bradley's 1997 classification scheme, which proposes a very different subgrouping, but which, however, does not discuss supporting evidence for it.

From the evidence which is available (primarily the LSI), the Old Kuki languages should be grouped together, and they are probably most closely related to the Central Chin languages. The LSI makes both of these points quite clear, though it does not attempt to gauge to what extent the apparent similarity with Central Chin may be due to contact.

Similarly, the Northern Chin languages and the Central Chin languages both form relatively coherent groups with clear phonological and morphosyntactic innovations. In Northern Chin languages, the developments of **r* and **Cr-* and **Cl-* clusters, as well as an innovative instrumental case clitic argue for their close relationship to each other. Central Chin languages have a unique treatment of **r* and **Cr-* and **Cl-* clusters, and often have an innovative causative derivation and cognate negative markers. The Northern and Central groups would appear to share some features which have spread by diffusion: e.g. the shift of initial **y-* > *z-* and a widespread ergative case clitic; both of these appear to have a Central Chin origin, and have spread into the Northern languages. As we will see below, Maraa is somewhat divergent from the Central languages, and possibly fuller study of it would lead to a reclassification of it as non-Central Chin.

The Southern Chin languages, however, are not clearly related to each other to such a degree. We know very little about most of these languages, and further data may

from October 1999 to April 2000. Abbreviations for language names are L (Lai), Mz (Mizo), Td (Tiddim), Th (Thadou), Hy (Hyow), Md (Mindat), BKhu (Bangladesh Khumi), Kha (Khami), Khi (Khami).

eventually lead us to place some of them in a different group altogether, but a consideration of the data we do have leads to the observation that there are two types of traditional Southern Chin language: Khumi-like languages (Khumi/Khami) and Hyow-like languages (all the rest).

3. PHONOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR A CENTER/PERIPHERY SUBGROUPING.

Solnit 1979 observed that there are essentially two treatments of Tibeto-Burman **r* in Kuki-Chin languages, and concluded that there must have been both uvular and alveolar realizations of the phoneme at the level of Proto-Kuki-Chin; he also noted that there is evidence external to Kuki-Chin for such an assumption, such that this variation may be reconstructible back to the PTB level.¹ Solnit's study did not make use of much southern Chin data, although it noted that Chinbok has a treatment of initial **r* similar to that of more northerly languages like Tiddim. It turns out that while an alveolar *r* occurring initially and finally is usual in the inventories of Central and Old Kuki languages, it does not occur as an initial or final sound in both northern *and* southern Chin languages (excluding Khumi, where the words with initial *r* do not have easily identifiable cognates in the other languages).

To reiterate Solnit's major point, in northern Chin, the reflex of PTB initial **r* is *g*. Some Lai (representing Central Chin), Tiddim, and Thadou (representing northern Chin) forms which show the development of initial **r* include enemy: L *ra:l*, Td *ga:l*, Th *gal*; country: L *ram*, Td *gam*, Th *gəm* 'wild land'; bamboo: L *rua*, Td *gua*, Th *gu*; bone: L *ru?*, Td and Th *gu?*; snake L *rul*, Td and Th *gul*.² We know the proto-forms of these had **r*- in them from comparison with other Tibeto-Burman languages, e.g. bone **rus* > Tibetan *rus-pa*, Jingpo *nrut* (STC 6).

Next, some forms from the same languages to illustrate what happened to final **r* include nose: L *na:r*, Td *na:k*; sell: L *zuar*, Td *zuak*, Th *zu?-məng*; difficult: L *har*, Td

¹ This is not the only conclusion that may be drawn from this variation, however. The change *r* > *y* seems to be quite widely attested, and several instances of an uvular treatment of **r* alongside alveolar treatments of it may simply be due to parallel development. So another possible interpretation of the variation seen in Tibeto-Burman as a whole is that the sound originally had an alveolar treatment, but there have been independent developments of uvular/velar pronunciations of it.

² These languages all have phonemic tone distinctions, which I usually do not include here as they are for the most part still poorly described. In any event, they are not crucial to the argument as far as I can tell.

hak; return: L *ki:r*, Td *ki:k* 'be reversed'; close: L *kha:r*, Td *xa:k*, Th *xa?*; flower: L *pa:r*, Td *pa:k*, Th *pa?* 'bloom'; iron: L *thi:r*, Th *thi?*. Again, Kuki-Chin-external comparison shows that these ended with **r*, e.g. flower **ba:r* > Tibetan 'bar-ba, Mikir *pra*, Dhimal *bar*, Jingpo *pan*, Burmese *pàn* (STC 1); some of the others also have reasonably supported etymologies along these lines.

There are indications that developments of **r* like the ones seen in northern Chin, or at least the early stages of them, also occurred in the most southerly Chin languages.

In the case of initial **r*, in Hyow, it is difficult to see a similarity because initial **r* is weakened beyond recognition, as shown by the following forms with cognates again from Lai: bone: L *ru?*, Hy *yi?*; cord: L *hrui*, Hy *yiy*; bamboo: L *rua*; Hy *yi*; corpse: L *ruak*, Hy *yik*; hail: L *rial*; Hy *yelpelay*.

But a consideration of other southern Chin languages (clearly quite closely related to Hyow both in terms of structure and lexicon), shows that this weakening probably went through a series of changes which involved an intermediate uvular/velar stage. Most importantly, all of the relevant forms in Mindat have an initial *g* reflex, as seen in the following: enemy: L *ra:l*, Md *ga*; bamboo: L *rua*, Md *gɔ*; hail: L *rial*, Md *gäwi*; corpse: L *ruak*, Md *gɔk*; bone: L *ru?*, Md *gu?*; cord: L *hrui*, Md *gui*.³

In other southern Chin cognates, we find both velar fricatives and palatal glides as reflexes, though the data from these languages is quite sparse (So-Hartmann 1988); the best illustrations of this include bone: Daai *yu?*, Nghmoye *ju?*, Ngmüün *yu?*, Mkaang *yu?*, Chinpon *aju?*, Matu *nXu?*; hail: Daai *yeyɔ?*, Ngmüün *yɛ'*, Mkaang *ya'yɔ?*, Chinpon *jo?liŋ*, Matu *Xel*; cord: Daai *yɛ'*, Chimpon *jɛ' aχu'*

In most cases, final **r* is lost in Hyow, Mindat, and other southern Chin (this is almost always the case after *a* and *u*).⁴ This loss of **r* must have occurred when these instances

My own analysis of tone in Hyow and Bangladesh Khumi is still somewhat provisional, but I can provide tonal information with varying degrees of precision for anyone who is interested.

³ It must be admitted, however, that Jordan's description of this grapheme's phonetic value is somewhat ambiguous: "always like the hard English 'g', as in 'gang' 'go' 'gun'; it can be pronounced like 'r' in some places, or like French 'j' in others." (1969, grammar 4). Presumably he is describing geographically based variation here.

⁴ Löffler 1959 actually posits an intermediate stage for forms like these in which they had a final **k*, e.g. **par* > (*pak*) > *pa* 'flower' (263). His reasons for doing so are not made explicit, and actually I do not think

of *r were still something besides k, because final *k is generally retained, though sporadic instances of its loss are attested. However, there are a number of forms in southern Chin in which final k corresponds to Central Chin r. Those that I have identified so far in Hyow, along with Central (Lai or Mizo) and northern Chin (Tiddim or Thadou) cognates if available include: nose: Hy *ŋɔktɨ*, L *ŋa:r*, Td *na:k*; jump: Hy *pæk*, L *per*, ?Th *pe?* 'kick'; break: Hy *khrek*, Mz *thleer* 'tear, split, slit, rip up'; mat: Hy *phɔk*, L *pha?r*, prepare swidden: Hy *vuk*, L *vur*; dried: Hy *cak*,⁵ L *tse:r*; difficult: Hy *khɔk*, Lai *har*, Td *hak*, (cf. also the identical idioms for expensive: Hy *mɔn khɔk* and Bawm *man har*, with a commonly attested but sporadic weakening of kh or k to h in root initial position). Some more complicated examples involve the *s- causative prefix: cf. transitive Hy *mək* 'spread/even out' (<*s-mak 'to make even, spread out') and Mz *mar* 'be even, stretched tightly'; transitive Hy *phok* 'inflate' (<*s-pok 'make swell up'), L *puar* 'swell', and possibly Th *sung-po?* 'inflate'. Some further possible, but (on semantic grounds) problematic forms are: Hy *kho cek* 'be lame' and L *tse:r* 'jump around uncomfortably' (such that the Hyow idiom would mean something like 'leg jumps around'); Hy *duk* 'inside' and L *du:r* 'classifier for containers'.

Some of these are also attested in Mindat: *ngpek* 'jump off, leap'; *phak* 'mat'; ?*vɔk* 'prepare swidden'; *kak* 'be tiresome, laborious, physically hard'; possibly also *ngtɔk* 'hit with a pointed object' and Mizo *ta:r* 'to stick on a pole' are related.

Thus, the southern Chin languages, like the northern Chin languages, have a treatment of *r which must have arisen from its prior status as some kind of uvular or velar element. That the forms ending in -k preserved in Hyow and Mindat were a parallel development to that seen in northern Chin is possible, but it is also possible that the two groups were split when the change *-r > -k was in progress, and while it was generalized in northern languages, it had a more restricted future in the southern ones. Charting the development of initial *r in the southern Chin languages is even more complicated, but clearly it was also treated as an uvular or velar at some stage by these languages in order

there is any support for such a stage in the case of these items, but as we will see, there is evidence for such a shift in other cases, and in positing this intermediate stage Löffler was very much on the right track.

for it to develop into *g* in Mindat and into velar fricatives in other southern Chin languages.

Assuming that these changes in **r* are related, a possible historical scenario (there are others with slight variations) is something like:

- The ancestors of the northern and southern languages were all in one location. They had an uvular or velar realization of **r* (voiced initially, and presumably voiceless finally).
- **r* started to change to *k* finally, but only in certain contexts.⁶
- southern Chin (but not including Mindat) differentiated from the other languages.
- Hyow, and possibly Sandoway, Nghmoye, and Chinbok (which otherwise have a parallel shift of initial **r* > *y*), differentiated from the breakaway southern Chin group.
- Mindat and northern Chin had not split, and they shifted initial **r* to *g*; some of these languages also happen to share another odd feature: what's reconstructed as **s* in Proto-Tibeto-Burman is preserved as *s* before *i* in Mindat and at least Tiddim; elsewhere in Kuki-Chin it becomes *th-* in all environments (e.g. PTB **si* 'blood' becomes *si* in Mindat and Tiddim, but *thi* in Lai, Mizo, and Hyow); however, it is possible that this state of affairs is due to later independent developments.
- Eventually, Mindat and northern Chin split apart and northern Chin underwent its own internal differentiation.

The evidence for Khumi is difficult to judge. There is not evidence of a final **r* > *k* shift as non-nasal finals have been almost completely lost in all varieties of Khumi. Bangladesh Khumi has no clear evidence for the initial **r* > *g* shift; there are a variety of reflexes for **r-*, none of them *g*. However, some data of questionable provenance from Shafer 1944 (a translation of one gospel into a dialect he refers to as Khimi by a Mizo with Shafer's guesses as to pronunciation) provide fairly clear evidence for it. The relevant data includes (again with Lai cognates): bamboo: BKhu *hu*, Kha *khu*, L *rua*;

⁵ This form is found in Bernot and Bernot 1958. My own observations in the same village their study was based on show that the final *k* of this form has fallen out in the intervening forty-seven years.

⁶ A tentative hypothesis is that this change started to occur with roots ending in a glottalized *r*, but this is not possible to substantiate at this point.

bone: BKhu *hiw*, Kha *akhu*, L *ru?*; snake: BKhu *pvuy*; Khi *mägui*, Kha *mekhwi*, L *ru:l*;
cord: BKhu *lanvuy*, Khi *gui*, Kha *khunan*, L *hrui*; corpse: BKhu *?tiprewŋ*, Khi *go*, L
ruak; six: BKhu *təri*, Khi *taruk*, Kha *taru*, L *ɣuk*; seven: BKhu *səri*, Khi *säri*, Kha *sri*, L
sari?

I tend to believe that Shafer's data is of fairly high quality, given my familiarity with Bangladesh Khumi, and especially given the fact that the translator was a person who spoke a language which does not have initial *g* in its native lexicon. It is possible that he was simply imitating local non-Khumi Chin pronunciations of words which he realized had Central Chin cognates, but the other parts of the relevant words look sufficiently different from what they would be expected to look like in southern Chin, so that the words appear genuinely Khumi.

The Khumi forms (from Houghton 1895), perhaps allow a reinterpretation of some of the Bangladesh Khumi data. One could easily see a stage at which the Bangladesh Khumi forms had begun with a voiceless aspirated velar stop, which later became just *h* (a common development throughout the family, in fact, as already noted), but this would nevertheless not clearly indicate that Khumi had participated in the same change seen in northern and southern languages. But the last two forms (six and seven) present a problem for any account. Shafer 1966 recognized this problem and actually reconstructed two proto-*r* phonemes. There are a number of other plausible explanations, however. Perhaps these reflexes simply represent a stage at which there was variation in how the phoneme was pronounced, as there is no external evidence that I know of for reconstructing more than one proto-phoneme here. Alternatively, since these are both number words, there may be something about their status as number words which allows/causes them to resist normal change, or they could conceivably be loans. In addition, the forms in question both clearly have reconstructible prefixes, which perhaps protected *r* from changing into *g*.⁷

4. MORPHOSYNTACTIC CONSIDERATIONS.

There are also quite striking similarities between the traditional Northern and Southern Chin languages in the area of morphosyntax, both in terms of a number of conservative

features which they retain, and in terms of a number of possible innovations. While parallel change is of course possible (see Lapolla 1994), when languages share a large number of such changes, or if changes are sufficiently idiosyncratic, we may suspect that something besides simple parallel development is responsible. Khumi, on the other hand, has almost none of the features discussed in this section, patterning neither with the Central nor the Peripheral group; it really stands far apart from the remaining languages of the family in terms of its morphosyntax.

4.1. SHARED MORPHOSYNTACTIC RETENTIONS.

4.1.1. SUFFIXAL VERBAL AGREEMENT.

Most Kuki-Chin languages (including Khumi) have largely prefixal verbal agreement which arose transparently from procliticization of pronominal roots. Most languages (but not Khumi) have at least traces of a suffixal agreement system. The prefixal systems strike me as likely parallel developments, as they are all highly idiosyncratic and in some cases involve procliticization of pronominal morphology which is not itself reconstructible, although individual pieces of the morphology may be of Proto-Tibeto-Burman provenance (see DeLancey 1989). The suffixal system appears more likely to be a shared inheritance in languages which have it, (especially if DeLancey is correct in reconstructing such a system to Proto-Tibeto-Burman).

For instance, 2 gives the morphology used in the suffixal system as seen in Tiddim. Generalizations which should be clear from 2 are that *-ŋ* marks 'first person', *-tɛʔ* marks 'second person', and *-uʔ* marks 'plural' (Henderson 1965:109-111).

(2)	<i>-iŋ</i>	'1st singular'	<i>-uŋ</i>	'1st plural exclusive'	<i>-haŋ</i>	'1st plural inclusive'
	<i>-tɛʔ</i>	'2nd singular'	<i>-uʔtɛʔ</i>	'2nd plural'		
	<i>-(iʔ)</i>	'3rd singular'	<i>-uʔ</i>	'3rd plural'		

This morphology occurs in Tiddim's colloquial style, including, for instance, negative, future, and conditional clauses. Sizang has a formally and distributionally similar set of endings (Stern 1963:264).

A highly comparable system is also present in Hyow, as shown by a consideration of the Hyow negative paradigm (for *kap* 'cry') given in 3.

⁷ Saying that these forms actually had an *r* pronunciation, however, might indicate that alveolar *r* actually was the conservative pronunciation, either in Proto-Khumi/Khami or at the Proto-Kuki-Chin level.

(3)

	singular	dual	plural
1st person	kap- <u>na</u>	kap- <u>ni-na</u>	kap- <u>?u-na</u>
2nd person	kap- <u>ti</u>	kap- <u>ni-ti</u>	kap- <u>cu</u>
3rd person	kap- <u>a?</u>	kap- <u>hi?y</u>	kap- <u>?u</u>

As in the northern Chin languages, this morphology is not restricted to negatives, but is also found in some subordinate clause types. Anomalies reflecting this feature in Hyow/Sho were noted by the LSI (340-341), but there was not enough information at the time to recognize it for what it is. It is also clearly present, though it goes unnoticed, in earlier descriptions of the far southern Chin languages (e.g. Houghton 1895).

As DeLancey 1989 notes, at least one language which is normally considered to be a Central Chin language, Maraa, has this morphology as well, though parts of it have been altered substantially, as seen in 4 (Lorrain 1951:46-47).⁸

(4)	kho va <u>na</u> 'I do not want'	kho mapi 'we do not want'
	kho va <u>chi</u> 'thou dost not want'	kho vei <u>chi</u> 'you do not want'
	kho vei 'he does not want'	kho vei ie 'they do not want'

Other Central Chin languages have some comparable morphology in more restricted contexts. For instance, Mizo marks imperatives with the suffix *-te?* (Chhangte 1993:105), second person objects are marked by a postverbal element *cê*, and plurality of second person objects is marked by a postverbal particle *û* (Chhangte 1992:90).

4.1.2. CAUSATIVE MORPHOLOGY.

Productive causatives in northern and southern Chin languages are derived by cognate morphology, which presumably had the form **-sak*. An independent verbal root of approximately this phonological form meaning 'make' or 'construct' is still in use throughout the family. Some examples of the suffix in use in northern Chin languages include: Tiddim *-sak*: *dam-sak* 'heal' (from *dam* 'be well') (Henderson 1965:83); Sizang *-sak*: *tal-sak* 'break' (from *tal* 'break, intransitive' (Stern 1963:257); Thadou *-sa?*: *kap-sa?* 'cause to shoot' (from *kap* 'shoot') (Krishan 1980:61). The productive way to form causatives in Hyow is by use of clearly cognate morphology, seen in 5.

(5) Hyow –sok: key naŋ-a yikdün kini-bün-sok
 1s 2s-LOC pen 1s/2s-hold-CAUS
 ‘I made you hold the pen.’ (bün ‘hold’)

The same morphology occurs in Mindat, though here the phonological shape is not as similar (though still, an entirely normal-looking cognate), and also the semantics involves indirect causation, e.g. *siʔ-hlak-vai* ‘arrange for someone to die’ from *siʔ* ‘die’ (Jordan 1969:99); the productive way to form direct causatives in Mindat is an innovative prefixal marker.

This morphology is found in rare lexicalizations in Central Chin, seen in Lai *muʔsak* ‘show’ from *muʔ* ‘see’, *ʔiifaʔsak* ‘take something bitterly’ reflexive of *faʔ* ‘hurt’= ‘cause oneself to hurt’, and *hniksak* ‘to test’ from *hnik* ‘to be ready’= ‘to make something ready’. Maraa also has this causative marker (Lorrain 1951:45), and though its productivity is difficult to judge from Lorrain’s discussion, Lorenz Löffler tells me this is a productive part of the causative

Like the suffixal system of verbal agreement, the productive causative in –*sak* is presumably a retention from Proto-Kuki-Chin, since traces of it are certainly found in the remaining languages. Again, however, as in the case of suffixal agreement, Khumi shows no trace of this morphology, other than the verb that it presumably grammaticalized from.

4.1.3. ERGATIVE CASE CLITIC.

Most northern Chin languages have an ergative case clitic identical to that found in most Central Chin and Old Kuki languages: =*ʔin*. In Central Chin, it also marks instruments and ablatives, and it is presumably the same as the generalized oblique marker (used for instruments and some locatives) seen in Central and southern Chin (= *ɪŋ* in Hyow).

There are also some traces of a –*na*(:) ergative/instrumental marker in northern Chin. First, although it unquestionably has the =*ʔin* marker now, the description for Sizang Chin (under the name Siyin) in the LSI lists a suffix –*na*: as the marker of agents

⁸ It should be noted, however, that Mara occupies a geographic position near southern Chin languages which might indicate that this system (and indeed some other conservative traits noted below for Mara) could be contact-induced, and not evidence for the relative antiquity of the particular feature.

(presumably based on materials by Rundall, which at the time of writing I have been unable to access for further evaluation), and the texts in Stern 1984 also appear to have one example of this affix. 6 shows similar remnants of this as an instrumental case clitic found frozen in what must be a kind of cleft construction in Thadou (Krishan 1980:44).

- (6) xut=na kə-ne-diŋ ə-hi
 hand=INST 1S-eat-FUT 3S-be
 'I will eat by hand.'

These markers found in northern Chin are reminiscent of the Mindat ergative marker =*noʔ* (see 7, Jordan 1969:159) and Sandoway ergative *-na* (in the latter, the marker only occurs in conjunction with verbs of speech—at least this is claimed by Joorman 1906:11, and this restriction is consonant with the albeit scanty evidence in the LSI).

- (7) siŋ=noʔ a that
 tree=ERG 3S strike
 'The tree struck him.'

Hyow has a slightly different-looking ergative marker, seen in 8, and there does not appear to be any independent reason to say that this is just a normal variation in the character of the initial consonant (i.e. there is no initial *l~n* alternation in Hyow or any other of these languages).⁹

- (8) ʔey=la moŋ sel hleʔy-hyo-m
 3S DEM=ERG which cow buy-CONCL-INTERR
 'Which cow did that guy buy?'

These two different ergative markers must come from two earlier instrumental markers which probably both grammaticalized from a verb meaning 'take'. There is good evidence for this account in Hyow as the easily reconstructible root for 'take' in Kuki-Chin is **la-lak* (this is also approximately how 'take' is reconstructed in other Tibeto-Burman subgroups, as well, e.g. **lan* as reconstructed for Proto-Tani by Sun 1993).

There was another, and I would argue older element which meant 'take', which also has Kuki-Chin-external cognates: Hill Miri *na* 'take' (Simon 1976:45), Tagin *na* 'take'

(Das Gupta 1983:53), Dafla *nâ* 'take' and *nâg* 'take away' (Hamilton 1900:38). It is also found throughout Naga and in Meithei as an ergative or actor marker, and possibly occurs elsewhere in Kuki Chin as a marker of instrumental/locative relativizations and (especially instrumental) applicative constructions. An independent instrumental applicative using this morphology is found in Abor-Miri (Lorrain 1907, Peterson ms). Another place I have come across what is presumably cognate morphology, is in the Hyow idiom *piya nək* in 'to get married (of a man)', which on this account would mean literally, 'to take/get a wife'. It is this element which developed, probably via instrumental marking, into the ergative marking retained in Mindat, Sandoway, and in the few northern Chin traces.

One of the Central Chin languages, again Maraa, has an ergative allomorph which appears to be cognate with this, indicating that it is a shared retention rather than an innovation. In 9, the agent is marked by *-na* (Lorrain 1951:9):

- (9) chapaw-na laisa a-tu
 man-nom maid 3s-hit
 'The man hit the maid.'

This case marker is not, however, restricted to transitive subjects, but also occurs with intransitive subjects (1951:10).

There are no apparent traces of either of these ergative markers in Khumi.¹⁰ The frequently cited *=lɨ* particle in Khumi, which is similar in form to Hyow *=la*, is actually a topic marker which has a distribution approximating Japanese *=wa*,¹¹ and is probably related to a widespread element *=le* in Kuki-Chin which marks conditional clauses (cf. the well-known relationship between Japanese *=wa* and the morphology which marks Japanese conditional clauses).

These shared retentions can not be used to argue that the northern and southern languages should be subgrouped together; nonetheless, their retention in both the

⁹ In addition, this marker is not generalized to all agents in Hyow; it has a fairly typical person-based split-ergative distribution. Of course, except in a few cases, we really do not know whether most ergative markers in Chin languages have this or another type of distribution anyway.

¹⁰ At least Bangladesh Khumi is devoid of ergativity.

¹¹ Shafer 1944, though not in so many words, reaches essentially the same conclusion concerning the status of the cognate element in Khimi.

northern and the Southern languages and their marginalization in the Central and Old Kuki languages is noteworthy.

4.2. POSSIBLE SHARED MORPHOSYNTACTIC INNOVATIONS.

4.2.1. DUAL NUMBER DISTINCTION.

The northern and southern languages have a dual distinction which is not found in the Central (or, to my knowledge, Old Kuki) languages. I discuss this feature first, since it actually may be a shared retention, and also because of the possible innovations, it strikes me as the most likely to be due to parallel development. Consider the pronominal paradigms for Hyow, Mindat (Jordan 1969:33), and Thadou (Krishan 1980:40) in 10, 11, and 12, respectively.

(10)		1st person	2nd person	3rd person
	singular	key	naŋ	ʔiy
	dual	key-niʔ	naŋ-niʔ	ʔiy-hiʔy
	plural	key-ni	naŋ-ni	ʔiy-khol
(11)		1st person incl/excl	2nd person	3rd person
	singular	kei	naŋ	ani
	dual	ni/kei-ni	naŋ-ni	ŋa-ni
	plural	mi/kei-mi	naŋ-mi	ŋa-mi
(12)		1st person incl/excl	2nd person	3rd person
	singular	key	nəŋ	əma
	dual	ei-ni/key-ni	nəŋ-ni	əma-ni
	plural	ei-ho/kei-ho	nəŋ-ho	əma-ho

It is perhaps significant that Thadou has lost the distinction that Hyow maintains between voiced and voiceless nasals. Mindat has also lost the distinction for alveolar nasals. Thus, perhaps from a system which originally resembled that in Hyow, Thadou and Mindat have developed new plural markers in order to maintain the plural/dual distinction.

Central Chin languages like Mizo, on the other hand, do not have a dual pronominal series, as shown in 13 (Chhangte 1993:65).

(13)		1st person	2nd person	3rd person
	singular	kéy	náŋ	ani
	plural	key-ni	naŋ-ni	án-ni

The plural marker in these forms presumably does not come from a reanalysis of the dual marker seen in the other languages since Mizo retains the voiced/voiceless contrast, and an etymologically dual marker would undoubtedly contain a voiceless nasal.

Bangladesh Khumi does have a dual series, and the morphology indicating dual comes from the expected source (**g-nis* 'two'). The plural marker is not clearly related to anything in other Chin languages, however.

4.2.2. FORM AND USE OF THE INTERROGATIVE MARKER.

Almost all Kuki-Chin languages have a sentence final interrogative particle (*m*, or *mV* in form). In Central Chin languages, where it has the form *mV*, it is used exclusively with yes/no questions, as in Lai 14.

- (14) na-min thɔŋtsew ʔa-si:=ma:
 2S-name Thawngtsew 3S-be=INTERR
 'Is your name Thawngtsew?'

In both northern and southern languages, where it has the form *m*, this marker is found in content questions as well, and in some (e.g. Hyow) occurs exclusively in content questions, as in 15; the only instance of a question in Henderson's Tiddim (1965:135) is also such a question, seen in 16. Sizang (Stern 1963:239) exhibits a bit more variability, but the particle may also occur in such questions there, shown in 17.

- (15) mɔ-wa ne-cet-aʔy-hyɔ-m
 where-LOC 2S-go-FUT-CONCL-INTERR
 'Where are you going?'

- (16) baŋ thu: hi peuʔ-maʔ hiam
 what affair DEM actually CONCL.INTERR
 'What is really going on, I wonder?'

- (17) ka-sia baŋ haŋ hoŋ-puak-ŋɔl-ni-ziam
 1S-tax what reason DIR-send-NEG-XX-INTERR
 'Why did you not send my tax?'

Thus, both the formal and distributional characteristics of this marker clearly set the Central and Peripheral languages apart. Khumi does not have an interrogative marker of this sort.

4.2.3. PERFECT MARKER.

In both northern and southern languages, there is a perfect marker, which presumably grammaticalized from the verb 'finish', still found independently in Tiddim. The languages which have this feature are seen in 18 (Hyow), 19 (Mindat, Jordan 1969:88), and 20 (Tiddim, Henderson 1965:138).

- (18) ?iy lo-wa?y tij kə-yək-hüt
 3S come-FUT QUOT 1SS-hear-PERF
 'I have heard that he will come.'
- (19) a dai?-khüt=a? ka? ɲawn
 3S stab-PERF-LOC 1S kill
 'He having stabbed (someone), I killed him.'
- (20) ?a-tha?-xit-u? cian?=?in ?a-ɲoŋ ?a-tan-u?=?a:
 3-kill-PERF-PL time=OBL 3-neck 3-cut-PL=CONN
 ?a-ba:n=le? ?a-phei laŋ-khat zəŋ ?a-tan-u?=hi
 3-arm=CONJ 3-leg CL-one also 3-cut-PL=IND
 'After they had killed him, they cut off his head and arms and one of his legs.'

Neither the Central Chin or Old Kuki languages nor Khumi appear to have any markers resembling this one in either semantics or form.

4.2.4. CONSTRUCTIONS WITH A SHARED ELEMENT *hi*.

Finally, there is a set of constructions which contain in the northern and the southern languages an element *hi*; it is possible, though, that not all of these constructions contain the same *hi* element. The original nature of this element (or these elements) is not entirely clear, but perhaps it was an equational copula, as seen in Thadou *ahi* (Krishan 1980:63), preserved only in the negative third singular in Hyow: N *hya?* 'it is not N'. There is no relevant data in Henderson's treatment of Tiddim; Sizang apparently has this copular element (*ahi:bale* 'If it is not', Stern 1963:261), though its productivity is unclear. Tempting though it may be, it does not seem likely that this copula is related to the Central Chin equational copula *-si:*. If these are from a single source, then they demonstrate a highly idiosyncratic change shared by Hyow, Thadou, and Sizang, which can probably not be attributed to parallel development. The change *s > h* does not otherwise occur in these languages (cf. mithan: Mz *sial*, Td *sial*, Th *sil/seAl*, Hy *sel* 'cow').

An element *hi* occurs in conditionals in both Hyow and Thadou. Conditional clauses in Hyow are marked solely by *-hi*. In Thadou, they are marked by *-hile*, which contains what is presumably the same *-hi* element seen in Hyow, and an element *-le* (Krishan 1980:69), which is the sole marker of conditionals in Tiddim (Henderson 1965:111) and Sizang (Stern 1963:276). The prototypical Central Chin conditional constructions include neither the *hi* nor the *le* element. However, the Thadou (and to a lesser degree Hyow) conditional marker bears some resemblance to the frozen expression in Lai *?asi:ne:le:* 'if that's the case'. Note that this Lai expression consists of what is transparently the copula, the *-le:* element seen in northern Chin, and a *-ne:* possibly related to a nominalizer *na:~na:k* which is ubiquitous in Kuki-Chin. This might suggest that the *hi* element occurring in copulas and conditionals is the same thing, reflecting a common origin, but nonetheless, as already noted, also indicating a highly idiosyncratic development for both Hyow and Thadou.

However, another possibility is that it is related to a demonstrative element *hi* also found in Central Chin languages. At least in Lai, demonstrative elements (including *hi:*) sometimes occur enclitic to the verb in order to add temporal, spatial, or information-status connotations (Barnes 1998). This does not appear to be a characteristic of northern or southern Chin languages. However, both in Hyow and Tiddim, there is a curiously similar element which Henderson refers to as the 'conclusive' sentence particle. In Henderson's texts, the only form attested is *hi:*, but she also mentions a form *hia* (103, 108), possibly restricted to interrogatives (we have already seen this above in conjunction with the discussion of question formation: *-hiam* in Tiddim and *-ziam* in Sizang.¹² A particle with an almost identical distribution is found in Hyow: *hyɔ*. This conclusive element, and the ones seen in Tiddim and Sizang are most likely related to the postposed demonstratives seen in Lai. It would appear that the northern and southern languages have not only generalized one of them for use in almost all sentences, but in some contexts they also have added an element *-a* (>ɔ in Hyow), which is not present in the

¹² The shift from *hy-* and *y-* still present in southern Chin to *z-* is widespread in the rest of the family and, at least in the north, fairly recent: cf. the pronunciations of Sizang as *Sī-yāng*, Zahao as *Yahao* from approximately 100 years ago.

Central Chin use of the demonstrative element. This strikes me as a very likely shared innovation.

None of these *hi* elements are discernible in Khumi. Maraa's conditional contains either *-la* (probably related to *-le*) or *-khia* and (Lorrain 1951), which is possibly related to *-hi*, but it is difficult to be certain.

Thus, in addition to their conservative nature in terms of morphosyntax, the northern and southern languages display what may be shared innovations.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND IMPLICATIONS.

In considering the cause for the distribution of the features I have presented above, it is important to distinguish between two situations. On the one hand, the distribution may be due to common innovations in languages which are in a close genetic or areal relationship (the traditional Northern and Southern languages), followed by a subsequent division of those languages by another group (the traditional Central languages). On the other hand, the center-periphery type of distribution is one which we commonly see in areal diffusion of features (see Dahl, to appear).

I take the position that the distribution is not of the latter, areal type, but rather, involves closer genetic or areal ties between the northern and southern languages. The developments in final **r* in particular do not seem likely to be parallel developments; nor do most of what I judge to be morphosyntactic innovations seem likely to be parallel developments. Certainly more evidence must be adduced to buttress this argument, but I hope to have at least convinced my audience that looking for this evidence will be a worthwhile undertaking.

The basic implication for prehistory that the Center/Periphery subgrouping hypothesis poses, if my interpretation of the cause for the distribution is correct, is that the languages of the northern Chin Hills and the languages of the southern Chin Hills were at one time united, at least geographically if not genetically. Minimally, it would suggest that they underwent a period of significant contact; however, there has not been extensive contact between them recently.

There are many different scenarios which could place the northern and the southern languages in one location, and I would suggest just one speculative possibility. Perhaps earlier, either the Central or the Peripheral group was situated in the Chindwin River

valley east of the hills; this assumption is in line with what thirteenth century Burmese inscriptional sources and Chin traditions indicate (Lehman 1963:18). In the early 1300s, the Shans expanded into northern Burma all the way to the eastern side of the hills, and the Chins who were living east of the hills were driven up into them (Luce 1985:80-81).

There are thus two possibilities, if this is the source for the present distribution of languages:

- The group driven into the hills at that point represented the Central Chin languages, and they basically split the more western group into two halves and perhaps caused outmigration of groups further to the north and south.
- Or, the group living further east represents the Peripheral Chin languages, which spread north and south around an already occupied central hill region.

Khumi occupies one of three positions with respect to the other subgroups: either it branched off first from a branch containing the other two, it is a sister to both of the other groups, or it was part of the peripheral group and branched off before they underwent the changes outlined here. Additional evidence will have to be sought to ascertain which of these options is most feasible, though given its extreme dissimilarity in almost every way to the other languages in terms of morphosyntax, it seems likely that the first option is correct.

Maraa was shown to be morphosyntactically quite different from Central languages, and in reality, more evidence must be provided that it should be regarded as a member of the Central group, which will probably require further documentation. Lorenz Löffler, who is in possession of materials which provide tonal data for Maraa, informs me that tonal phenomena in Maraa seem to be highly similar to what is found in Tiddim, so it would not surprise me if Maraa, too, is ultimately judged to be a member of the Peripheral group.

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