



ON THE ORIGIN OF HYOW

Muhammad Zakaria

East West University, Dhaka
<rehman.zakaria@gmail.com>

Abstract

The origin of Hyow, one of the Kuki-Chin languages, in the current study of the language family is not a conclusive one. This study aims to compare the previous findings and the research data of Hyow that is collected from Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. Based on the shared innovations of the Kuki-Chin languages and the findings of my research, I have tried to draw a conclusive origin of Hyow in the Southern Kuki-Chin branch. The comparative study reveals that Hyow should be aligned with Khumi and Cho-Asho rather than be kept under Asho of the Southern-Plains-Chin group.

Key words: Proto Kuki-Chin, Southern-Plains-Chin, Hyow.

ISO 639-3 language codes: rmz, cfm, csh, cnk.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to give a description of the origin of Hyow. Hyow belongs to Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto-Burman branch. Kuki-Chin is divided into different sub-groups according to the shared proto features of the languages. We can find different sub groupings of Kuki-Chin, but the recent one by Kenneth VanBink (2009) is more convincing and correct. Due to the unavailability of enough data Kenneth could not provide with enough information on Hyow. In this paper, I will try to restate the position of David A. Peterson (2000) on Hyow in the group through detail examples and comparative discussion. The data used in this article are taken from my field notes that I have been intermittently collecting for last six years under the supervision of David A. Peterson. I have worked with three consultants, but my main consultant is Hla Kroy Prue who is the first woman to complete BSS among the Gungrupara Hyows. I have also consulted with Hla Kroy's husband, Nio Jai, Assistant Headmaster of a primary school in Banderban, for several occasions. I owe a great deal to this couple for making themselves available whenever I requested them to. I really want to thank David A. Peterson for his continuous support through the fund of NSF and by mentoring me to do my research work on Hyow for a long period of time.

2. The name Hyow

The speakers of this language call themselves 'Hyow' and are called 'Khyang' by other indigenous people and the Bangalees. The history indicates that 'Khyang' form was first used by the Burmese to call the Asho-Chin people. As the Marmas live in a great number around the Hyows, it can be assumed that the Burmese group started to call them 'Khyang' first and later on started to be used by others. According to Luce (1959:25) the name 'Khyang' is the archaic form of the term 'Chin' which means 'friends' in modern Burmese. Kenneth VanBik (2009:4) states that the origin of this name can be traced in the languages of Asho-hin. According to Joorman (1906:12), the word for 'person' in Asho-Chin is 'hklaung' (sometimes *khlaan* or *khloy*). VanBik (2009:4) says that when the Burmese met the Asho Chin people, they used to call them by this name. But, as the Burmese had already lost the *khl-* cluster and the closest approximation was *khy-*, the word 'Khyang' denoted any Chin Group.

The word 'hyow' has cognates in other Kuki-Chin languages like 'zaw (Mizo) and 'zaw (Lai). Amy Campbell (2007:4) identifies 'zaw' as human constituent question marker in Falam as in example (1) and (2).

- (1) *zaw* *ni* *zaw* *a-ŋam*
 who ERG who 3sgS-kiss
 ‘Who kissed whom?’
- (2) *zaw* *ni* *ziang* *kha* *zaw* *si:* *a-pe:k*
 who ERG what PAT who FOC 3sgS-give
 ‘Who gave what to whom?’

So, I would say that ‘zaw’ is convincing basic form for all these cognates in Kuki-Chin languages. The PKC palatal ‘y’ is retained in Southern Plains languages with some exceptions in Hyow. It has free variations ‘y’ and ‘z’ in Northern Chin languages and in Central Chin languages it is ‘z’. For the sonorant final words in Hyow this palatal ‘y’ has become voiceless. In some places PKC *y is retained in Hyow (see section 5.2.3).

2.1 PKC *y > SPKC y > Hyow hy

From the following table it is quite evident that PKC ‘y’ is retained in SPKC languages other than Hyow. In Hyow it has become voiceless. So, Hyow has its own innovation of the voiceless palatal ‘j’ and evidently the name ‘Hyow’ means ‘person’ which has cognates ‘zaw’ or ‘zo’ in Central Kuki Chin languages.

Table 1: PKC *y in SPKC and Hyow

PKC	NKC	CKC	SPKC	Hyow	Gloss
*yuu	zûu (Thado Kuki)	zûu (H.Lai)		hyu	mouse
*yuun		zuun (H.Lai)	yún (Asho)	hyun	creeper
*yiing	khua zing (Tedim)			hyung	dark
*yaang-X *yaan-Y	zâang-X zaan-Y	zaang-X zaan-Y (H.Lai)	yang (Asho)	hyong	light (weight)
*yuul	zuuy-X zuy-Y (Thado Kuki)	zuul-X zulh-Y (Mizo)	yun (M.Cho)	hyul	follow
*yuum	zum (Tedim)	zum ² (Mizo)	m-yum	hyum	Pointed (sharp)
*yaa-X *yaat-Y	zaa-X zaat-Y	za-X za-Y	ya	hyo	itch
*yun	zun ³ (Tedim)	zún (H.Lai)	pyun-dúì (Asho)	hyun	urine

3. Early observations

In Linguistic survey of India Sten Konow put Kuki-Chin under Naga-Kuki-Chin and Robert Shafer (1974) called it Kukish putting it in the second level of his schema. The schema of Paul K. Benedict shows Kuki-Chin under Kuki-Naga group. The recent schema of James A. Matisoff (2003) considers Kuki-Chin under Kamarupan of Tibeto-Burman branch. Kenneth VanBik (2009) followed Matisoff’s schema and went on further sub grouping of the Kuki-Chin group. According to VanBik, “There are two shared innovations that separate Kuki-Chin languages from the rest of the Tibeto-Burman family: a thorough going verbal stem alternation and a phonological change of the PTB initials *s/sy to PKC *th.” He also emphasizes the study of David A. Peterson (2001) who proposed the idea of peripheral subgroup. The schema of VanBik is shown below.

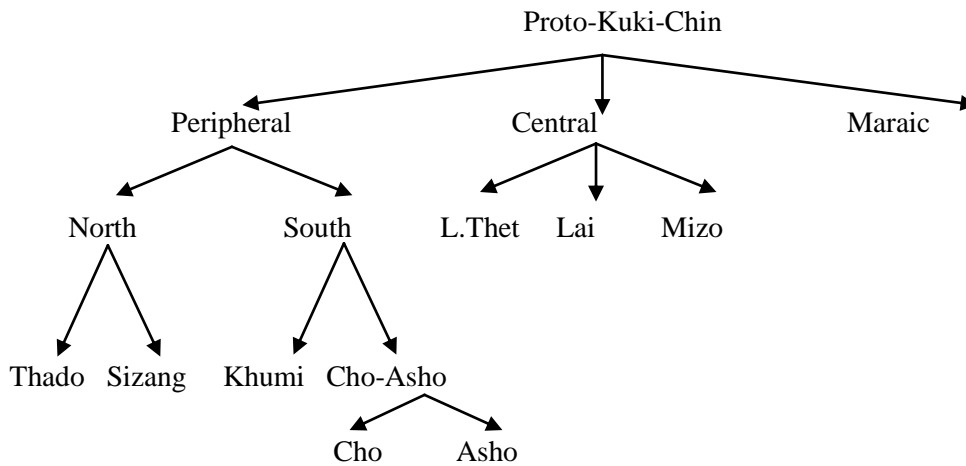


Figure 1: Kenneth VanBik's Sub-grouping

4. Status of Hyow in PKC

Other than the verb stem alternation (see 4.1), another phonological innovation PTB *s/sy > PKC *th makes the group separated from the others in the PTB branch.

Table 2: PTB *s/sy > PKC *th > Hyow th

PTB	PKC	Maraic (Mara)	Central (H.Lai)	Southern (Hyow)	Northern		Gloss
					(Tedim)	T.Kuki	
*m-sin (34) WB: s̄n̄	*thin	pa-thī	th̄n̄	thin	sin3	th̄n̄	liver
*sey (129)WB: s̄i	*thay	théy	th̄ày	they		th̄éy	fruit
*sat (136) WB: sat	*that	that-X tha?-Y		ʃɔt	that3	th̄at-X th̄àa-Y	kill
*g-sum (36) WB: s̄um	*thum	pa-thò	th̄um		thum3	th̄um	liver

5. Place of Hyow in the subgroup

The identical characteristics of Hyow to be a Southern-Kuki-Chin language will be discussed in this section. Further discussion will be done to determine the place of Hyow within the subgroup.

5.1. Stem alternation

One of the main common features of Kuki-Chin languages is that there are two forms of verb stems. This stem alternation is also found in Hyow. And there are many linguistic environments which show the verb stem alternations.

5.1.1. Affirmative-Negative

In Hyow verb shows Form X in Affirmatives and Form Y in Negatives as in the following examples.

(3) ʃakrɔy la hɔ luak tuk kʰɔ (Form Y)
 Hlakroy ERG bird CLS¹ kill AUX
 ‘Hlakroy killed a bird’

(4) ʃakrɔy la hɔ luak tu a hɔ (Form X)
 Hlakroy ERG bird CLS kill NM TM

¹ ‘luak’ is glossed as CLS (numeral classifier).

‘Hlakroy did not kill a bird’

- (5) *kei naŋ koŋ kɔ ɭɔy* (Form Y)
 I you for VMP try
 ‘I will try for you’

- (6) *kei naŋ koŋ lɔ ŋa* (Form X)
 I you for try NM
 ‘I will not try for you’

- (7) *p^höl la döʔ hɔ* (Form Y)
 snake ERG strike TM
 ‘The snake is striking’

- (8) *p^höl la dö a hɔ* (Form X)
 snake ERG strike NM TM
 ‘The snake is not striking’

5.1.2. Clause

In main clause, Form X can be found in Hyow as in example (10).

- (9) *naŋ ei k^hrak boi* (Form Y)
 you him harm TM
 ‘You will harm him’

- (10) *kei kɔ mɔt k^hö naŋ ei na k^hra ai hjɔ* (Form X)
 I VMP know TM you him that harm TM AUX
 ‘I know that you will harm him’

5.1.3. Tense

Form Y can be found in present tense and Form X in future as in example (11) and (12).

- (11) *ei k^hol ʃel le a ini ʃet t^hɔ* (Form X)
 they (PL) cow buy DIR VMP go TM
 ‘They are going to buy cow’

- (12) *ei la ʃel hat e ɭey ei hjɔ* (Form Y)
 he ERG cow one VMP buy TM AUX
 ‘He will buy a cow’

5.1.4. Transitivity

In Kuki-Chin languages except Hyow, valence changing operations take place at the final position of a stem as in example (13) and (14) from Falam Chin (Deborah King, 2010). On the other hand, Hyow valence increasing is done by devoicing the initial consonant of the verb as in the examples (15), (16), (17) and (18).

- (13) *A zir* (Form X)
 he learn
 ‘He learned’

- (14) *Ka lo zirh* (Form Y)
I you teach
'I teach you'
- (15) *kei ke nek* (Form X)
I VMP sink
'I sink'
- (16) *kei ani ke nek* (Form Y)
I him VMP sink (transitivization)
'I make him sink'
- (17) *kei kɔ lom* (Form X)
I VMP dance
'I dance'
- (18) *kei ani kɔ lom* (Form Y)
I him VMP dance (transitivization)
'I make him dance'

Table 3: Stem alternation in Hyow

Parameters	Form X	Form Y	Gloss
Affirmative-Negative	tu	tuk	kill
	ɭɔ	ɭɔy	try
	dɔ	dɔʔ	strike
Tense	ɭe	ɭey	buy
Clause	k ^h ra	k ^h rak	harm
Valence increasing (causative)	nek	nek	sink
	lom	lom	dance

5.2. Sound change

5.2.1. PKC Prefix

“The Southern-plain group comprise of languages of the Khumi-Cho-Asho type that have prefixes...”
VanBik (2012)

Hyow does not have mentionable prefixes like other Khumi-Cho-Asho type languages possess. There might be some clitics (used as pronouns) in some sentences as in example (19).

- (19) *ei i= t^hin ɔ= tʃɔp ei -ti -tʃɛ ɔ=*
that CLIT liver CLIT lung eat who TPM CLIT
nui -hi -tʃɛ k^hei bo -ai -hjɔ a= miak
laugh COND TPM flower fall TM AUX CLIT dream
bo -ai -hjɔ
fall TM AUX
'he (son of constable) saw in dream, he who will eat that (hen's) liver, (hen's) lung if he laughs, flower will fall on him.'

A further study is required to draw a conclusive statement regarding prefixes and clitic in Hyow. From the examples given in the following table, it can be stated that Khumi-Cho-Asho type languages' prefixes are not found in Hyow.

Table 4: Prefixes in Southern-Plains-Chin Languages

PKC	Southern Kuki Chin				Gloss
	Khumi	M.Cho	Asho	Hyow	
*looy	alawy			lo	return
*laa-X *laak-Y	laa	la-X laak-Y	lö	low	to take
*lay	plaáy	m-lei		ley	tongue
*li	plúue		m'lí	li	four

5.2.2. PKC *khl- > PSPC *khl- > Hyow kh/l/khl

PKC *khl- is retained in some places of Hyow and in some places they have lost either /l/ or /kh/.

Table 5: PKC *khl- in SKC and Hyow

PKC	PSPC	Southern Kuki Chin				Gloss
		Khumi	M.Cho	Asho	Hyow	
*khlaa	*khlaa	lo	cha	k'ló	khə	moon
*khlaa	*khlaa				loy	wing
*khlii	*khlii	alii	chi	k'lí	khli	wind
*khluu-X, *khluuk-Y	*khluu-X, *khluuk-Y		chuk		khlu	fall over
*khlu(u)ng	*khlu(u)ng	sliiwng	chung		klung	top
*khleng	*khleng	plúue		m'lí	khlong	arrive
*khlan	*khlan			a k'lawǎ	khlong	sweat

5.2.3. PKC *y- > PSPC *y- > Hyow y

PKC *y- is retained everywhere in PSPC and also in Hyow.

Table 6: PKC *y- in SKC

PKC	PSPC	Southern Kuki Chin				Gloss
		Khumi	M.Cho	Asho	Hyow	
*yan	*yan		yan	a-yan	yən	night
*yu	*yu		yu	a-ú	yu	rice beer
*yong	*yong		yawng	yón	yong	monkey
*yum	*yum		yum	yón-é	yum	believe
*yuuk	*yuuk			yük	yök	pull out
*yuar	*yuar	jó	yawi	yí	yæ	sell

5.2.4. PKC final *-r > PSPC final *-y > Hyow final ø

Hyow retains the PKC initials of words ending with 'r' but drops the final 'r'.

Table 7: PKC final *-r in SKC

PKC	PSPC	Southern Kuki Chin				Gloss
		Khumi	M.Cho	Asho	Hyow	
*paar	*pay	paw	pai	pa'a	paa	flower
*ʔaar	*ʔaay		ai		a	fowl
*thar	*thay	kthaá	ak-thai	t'a	tha	new
*baar	*bay		bai		ba	feed with palms of hand
*khur	*khuy	khoó	khui	konk'ó	k'hö	hole
*tsaar	*caay	ajaá	cui	sá	tʃa	to dry

5.2.5. PKC *r > PSPC *g > Hyow y

In some cases PSPC *g became k^h in Hyow as in ‘rain’.

Table 8: PKC *r in SKC

PKC	PSPC	Southern Kuki Chin				Gloss
		Khumi	M.Cho	Asho	Hyow	
*rii	*gii		ng-gu		yæ ¹	border
*rii	*gii		ng- gi		yæ ²	banyan tree
*ruak	*guak	tlángveew	gawk	aǒ	yok	corpse
*rua	*go		gaw	yó	yo	bamboo
¹ *ruung-X *ruu ² -Y					yǒng	scoop up
*ruy	*guy	vuuy	gui		yõi	rope

5.2.6. PKC *w > PSPC *w/v > Hyow h

PKC *w becomes ‘h’ at the initial position of a word in Hyow. In some words PKC *w is retained in Hyow showing the conservative feature and some distinctive innovations of the language.

Table 9: PKC *w in SKC

PKC	Southern Kuki Chin				Gloss
	Khumi	M.Cho	Asho	Hyow	
*wut				hi	dust
*wom	tvóeeng			hom	bear
*waa	tvoo	va ‘a	waǎ- k‘o	hǒ	bird
*wua-X *wuak-Y		m-vawk	wó-é	wüt	strike
*wat	tvaw			wöt	leech (land)
*wok	ew	vawk	wǒ	wok	pig
*wun		vun	u-ün´	wun	skin

5.3. Southern Plains Chin

VanBik (2012) mentions that his interview with U Ba Thuang Ti, an Asho Chin from Sandaway , indicates there are about six different dialects of Asho Chin, most of them mutually intelligible. Among the dialects, Laitu and Kaitu draw my attention as I have found two dialects called Laitu and Kantu of Hyow in CHT, Bangladesh. And, this almost convinces me that Hyow is nothing but a dialect of Asho. Before doing so, let’s look at VanBik’s schema of Proto Southern Plains Chin.

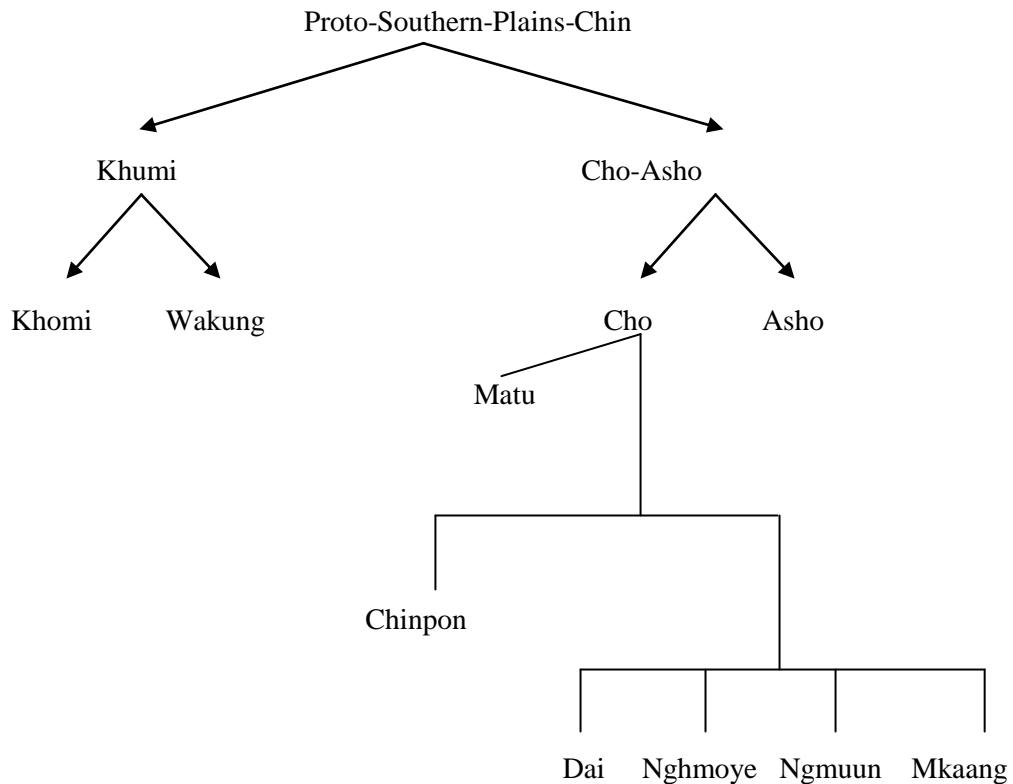


Figure 2: Ken VanBik's schema for the Southern-Plains group

Even though, data analysis in the above sections puts Hyow closer to Asho, for few of the features I would like to place Hyow distinctively rather than putting it under Cho-Asho. First of all, in **Table 5**, it is quite visible that other than Hyow in all the other Southern Chin languages there are prefixes such as consonant (m) or vowel (a) at the beginning of the Proto forms whereas Hyow has retained the Proto form. Secondly, PKC *khl- is retained in some places of Hyow and in some places they have lost either /l/ or /kh/ whereas other languages of PSPC have lost the Proto *khl. Thirdly, PSPC *y- is intact in Hyow even in the final nasals and vowels as in PSPC *yu> Hyow /yu/ (rice beer), PSPC *yum> Hyow /yum/ (believe), etc. Fourthly, for valance changing operations Hyow does have its own innovation of making the initial sound of the Form X devoiced. And, most interestingly, Hyow has its own innovation for the palatal 'y' which is also considered in this article to explain the name 'Hyow' itself. PKC palatal *y has become voiceless in words like 'hyul' (follow), hyum (pointed), etc. in Hyow. Fourthly, PKC *w has become 'h' in some Hyow words and in other words it is retained whereas in other SPKC languages this has become either 'v' or 'u'. And finally, Hyow has a very distinct way of forming its causatives. So, it is quite visible that Hyow is more conservative in its nature of retaining Proto features than the other languages in the subgroup and shows quite a number of own innovations.

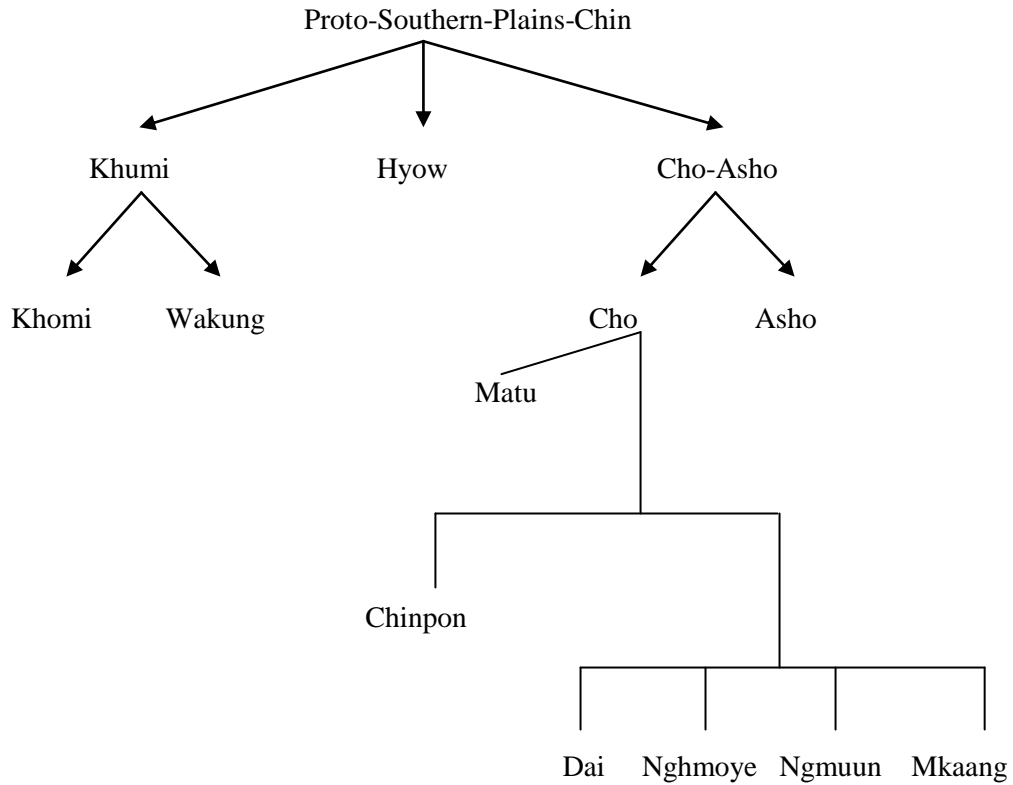


Figure 3: Zakaria's schema for the Southern-Plains group

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be restated that Hyow has some own innovations which it doesn't share with other Southern Kuki-Chin languages. Hyow is not a dialect of Asho neither it can be put under Chin-Asho as it has quite a number of innovations which are distinctive in nature. Hence, Hyow fits best as a separate language within the Southern Plain languages.

References

- Campbel, Amy. 2007. *Question and Answer in Falam*. Papers from Field Method Class, Department of Linguistics, UC Berkeley.
- DeLancey, Scott. 2012. The History of Postverbal Agreement in Kuki-Chin. JSEALS.
- Joorman, H. 1906. *Chin Grammar*. Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press.
- King, Deborah. 2010. Syntactic and Pragmatic Functions of Kuki-Chin Verbal Stem Alternations and the Agentive and Nonagentive Voice. JSEALS
- Luce, Gordon. H. 1959. *Chin Hills-Linguistic Tour (Dec.1954)-University Project*. Journal of the Burma Research Society.
- Matisoff, A. James. 2003. *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman*. University of California Press.
- Payne, E. Thomas. 2006. *Describing morphosyntax*. Cambridge University Press.
- Peterson, A. David. 2002. *On Khumi Verbal Pronominal Morphology*. Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.
- Peterson, A. David. 2000. *On the Status of Southern Chin Subgroup*. The 33rd International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Thurgood, Graham & Lapolla, J. Randy. 2006. *The Sino-Tibetan Languages*. Routledge.
- VanBik, Kenneth. 2009. *Proto-Kuki-Chin*. STEDT (<http://stedt.berkeley.edu>).