



THE HISTORY OF POSTVERBAL AGREEMENT IN KUKI-CHIN

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Abstract

In the Kuki-Chin branch of Tibeto-Burman we find both a widespread prefixal verb agreement paradigm and, in many languages, a distinct, competing postverbal agreement system. It is clear, and generally acknowledged, that the prefixal system is a KC innovation, while the postverbal system traces back to Proto-Tibeto-Burman. This paper assembles the evidence for the postverbal paradigm from the conservative Northern Chin, Old Kuki, and Southern Chin subbranches, and makes some suggestions toward a preliminary reconstruction of the paradigm in Proto-Kuki-Chin. The older paradigm has been lost in the Central Chin (e.g. Mizo) and Mara languages, but the older 2nd person index has been incorporated into the modern paradigms.

Key words: Tibeto-Burman, Kuki-Chin, verb agreement.

ISO 639-3 language codes: bap, cnh, csh, ctd, dao, hra, jya, kac, lus, mrh, mwq, nkd, puz, rab, suz, tro.

1. The Kuki-Chin branch

Kuki-Chin (or Mizo-Kuki-Chin) is a close-knit branch of Tibeto-Burman; the languages are spoken primarily in Chin State in Myanmar, Mizoram and Manipur in India, and the Chittagong Hills area of Bangladesh. KC is generally classified with the much more disparate “Naga” languages, but these two groups have little in common in terms of morphological structure beyond what is common to the broad Tibeto-Burman stereotype. Kuki-Chin is characterized by certain morphosyntactic innovations, in particular the morphologized stem alternation and the innovative prefixal agreement paradigm, in which the possessive proclitics are used with finite verbs as argument indices. The more conservative branches, Northern Chin, Old Kuki, and Southern Chin, also preserve an older postverbal conjugation, a few elements of which have been integrated into the newer paradigm in the languages of the Central and Maraic branches, where the older paradigm has otherwise disappeared.

1.1 *The modern Kuki-Chin verb*

Two morphosyntactic innovations in the finite verb starkly distinguish the Kuki-Chin languages from the rest of the family. The first, which at least for now has no evident relevance to the main purpose of this paper, is that the KC verb has two phonologically distinct stems, referred to as Stem I and II, whose distribution is morphosyntactically determined. The other distinguishing feature of KC morphosyntax, which is closely related to our central question, is the innovative preverbal agreement paradigm in which the pronominal possessives are prefixed or proclitic to the finite verb, agreeing with the subject and sometimes a 1st or 2nd person object (Tarao (Old Kuki) examples from C. Singh 2002):

Table 1: Proclitic possessives and subject indices in Tarao

	Possessive	Subject
1SG	<i>ki-pa</i>	<i>ki-sak</i>
	1-father	1-eat
	‘my father’	‘I eat’

2SG	<i>ni-pa</i> 2-father 'your.sg father'	<i>ni-sak</i> 2-eat 'you.sg. eat'
3SG	<i>a-pa</i> 3-father 'his/her father'	<i>a-sak</i> 3-eat 's/he eats'

I have argued (DeLancey 2010, 2011b) that this construction arose as a nominalized clause construction, which is why the finite verb governs possessive forms.

The forms used in Tarao are typical, except for the vowel; in most KC languages we find /a/ or /ə/ rather than /i/ in the 1st and 2nd person forms. But a few languages, show some variation:

Table 2: Agreement proclitics in Kuki-Chin languages

	Tarao	Mara	Mizo
1	<i>ki</i>	<i>ei</i>	<i>ka</i>
2	<i>ni</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>i</i>
3	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>

The heterogeneity of the prefixal paradigms is a comparative puzzle, but is explainable once we understand the history of the system. The anomalous Mara 1st and Mizo 2nd person prefixes both appear to reflect the PTB 1PL form **i*. As we will see, a version of the archaic finite agreement paradigm was retained in Proto-Kuki-Chin and beyond. Thus the nascent prefixal system coexisted for some time with a preexisting finite system. The use of a nominalized clause construction as a stylistic alternative to the more pedestrian finite construction is a very common phenomenon in Tibeto-Burman (Noonan 1997, Bickel 1999, DeLancey 2011b, Genetti 2011), and that was the situation in PKC. Thus any alternate means of pronominal reference could be used in the nominalized construction. The prefixal paradigm only finally grammaticalized into a fixed paradigmatic system with the decay of the older finite system. The differential preservation of the archaic system in the different KC branches implies that the preverbal agreement construction was still a nominalized construction in PKC, and its shift to a fully-finite system occurred independently in the various branches. Then it is not difficult to imagine how different forms could have finally grammaticalized in different branches and languages.

The story of the odd 1st and 2nd forms in Mara and Mizo, then, is that very far back – well before PKC – the language used the INC form for some kind of polite 2nd person reference. It is not that Mizo stopped using *na*- and started using *i*-, rather that both were in use, and the form which was not marked as polite eventually fell out of use in favor of the more polite one. The Mara data suggest that the Inclusive form also had a use where *i*- had 1SG reference. Both extensions of 1PL marking are very common across languages, and can easily co-occur in the same language. (In English both can be used in the same discourse by the same speaker – e.g. a nurse visiting a hospital patient: *How are we (=2SG) feeling this morning? How about we (=1SG) open the curtains and let some light in?*).

1.2 Classification

The KC languages fall into five groups: Northern Chin (Tedim, Paite, Sizang, Zahao, etc.), Old Kuki¹ (Aimol, Anal, Tarao, Koirang, etc.), Central Chin (Mizo or “Lushai”, Lai, Bawm), Maraic (Mara or “Lakher”), and Southern Chin (Daai, Hyow, etc.). Scholars differ on the higher-order organization of these groups. In examining the postverbal agreement systems, we will see a clear distinction between the conservative Northern, Old Kuki, and Southern groups and the more innovative Central and Maraic languages. This is consistent with Peterson’s (2000) suggested grouping of Northern and Southern Chin in a

¹ The Old Kuki languages are not well documented, and the exact constituency of this branch is not clear (see Mortensen 2011).

“Peripheral” branch of the family, also endorsed by VanBik (2009). Both Peterson and VanBik provide phonological evidence for this grouping, but the morphological correspondences among these and the Old Kuki languages which we will examine in this paper are shared retentions, not shared innovations, and thus do not constitute strong evidence for a Peripheral clade. The position of the Old Kuki languages is likewise unsettled: VanBik places this group close to Northern Chin and Peterson to Central Chin, while Bradley (1997) suggests a primary split between Old Kuki and the rest of KC. The data which we will examine here are most consistent with VanBik’s classification, but, again, the close NC-OK correlations which we will see are shared retentions, and thus not necessarily probative of close genetic relationship.

In this paper I will treat each of the five groups separately. I will deal with Northern Chin, Old Kuki, and Southern Chin under the rubric “Conservative” languages, and the Central and Maraic languages as “Innovative”. As we will see, morphological correspondences between Central and Maraic support the traditional classification in which these two groups form a genetic unit. With respect to the conservative branches, the forms and constructions which they share are shared retentions rather than innovations, and thus do not provide strong support for one higher-order classification scheme rather than another.

2. The postverbal paradigm in the conservative branches

The postverbal paradigm is best preserved in the Northern Chin, Old Kuki, and Southern Chin groups. Postverbal agreement paradigms in the Kuki-Chin branch were first reported by Henderson (1957, 1965) and Stern (1963), both of whom noted the significance of their data for the question of the provenance and antiquity of verb agreement, or “pronominalization”, in Tibeto-Burman. Recently Peterson (2000, 2003a) has reported a clearly cognate paradigm from Southern Chin. In even more recent data from Old Kuki languages we see the most conservative version of the original paradigm yet attested.

2.1 Northern Chin

The argument for the PTB provenance of verb agreement begins with Northern Chin:

As Konow has indicated ... Kuki-Chin ... share[s] the feature of postposed personal particles with Hodgson’s “pronominalized” group within the Tibeto-Himalayan branch of Tibeto-Burman. The same feature is also to be found in such Burmese languages as Nung ... while Gordon H. Luce ... notes its presence in Trung, in Northwest Yunnan. The distribution of this feature should be carefully reconsidered and compared with other morphological and syntactic features. In this connection, it seems to me significant that while the /**khi**/-series in Sizang evinces phonetic resemblance to the personal nouns, the enclitic /**in**/-series does not. (Stern 1963: 265)

It appears not unlikely that improved knowledge of the Chin languages and of others equally remote geographically from the so-called pronominalized groups will bring further similarities to light. In this event linguists may be obliged to conclude that, contrary to what has often been supposed, pronominalization is after all a genuine Tibeto-Burman family trait. (Henderson 1957:327)

One could wish that in the half century since Henderson wrote our knowledge of the Chin languages might have improved more than it has, but nevertheless we do now have sufficient data to bring to light further morphological connections between KC and the well-known conservative branches, and, as I have argued elsewhere, we are indeed obliged to conclude that these features do trace back to Proto-Tibeto-Burman (DeLancey 2010, to appear).

Henderson (1965) and Stern (1963) describe a series of what I will call AGREEMENT WORDS, which index the subject but occur not as affixes but as phonologically independent words following the verb (Henderson 1965: 109):

Table 3: Tedim “general” conjugation

	Singular	Plural
1	$\Sigma \text{ } i\eta$	$\Sigma \text{ } u\eta$ EXC $\Sigma \text{ } ha\eta$ INC
2	$\Sigma \text{ } t\epsilon?$	$\Sigma \text{ } u? \text{ } t\epsilon?$
3	Σ	$\Sigma \text{ } u? \sim u?$

These occur also with certain grammatical forms, in which case the 1SG morpheme combines with the other morpheme into a single syllable:

- (1) *pài* *ní-η*
go FUT-1SG
‘I will go.’
- (2) *pài* *ní* *tε?*
go FUT 2SG
‘You will go.’

The forms which take the postverbal agreement include various tense/aspect/modality markers, as well as a conditional morpheme which we will see again in Southern Chin (Henderson 1965: 111):

Table 4: Tedim conditional conjugation

	Singular	Plural
1	$\Sigma \text{ } l\grave{e}-\eta$	$\Sigma \text{ } l\grave{e}-: \eta$
2	$\Sigma \text{ } l\epsilon \text{ } t\epsilon?$ $\Sigma \text{ } l\epsilon \text{ } cín$	$\Sigma \text{ } l\epsilon \text{ } u? \text{ } t\epsilon?$ $\Sigma \text{ } l\epsilon \text{ } u? \text{ } cín$
3	$\Sigma \text{ } l\epsilon?$	$\Sigma \text{ } u? \text{ } l\epsilon?$

Henderson reports the use of *cín* as an alternant to 2nd person *tε?* only in the conditional conjugation. As we will see below, 2nd person forms in both /c/ and /t/ are attested throughout KC, and the relation between them is a important problem.

2.2 Old Kuki

The postverbal paradigm is found in a number of the Old Kuki languages, always in the negative paradigm, and often other functions as well (DeLancey to appear). The phenomenon is not noted in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, but it shows up in the sample texts. The Parable of the Prodigal Son, which was used as a standard text for comparative purposes, has negative sentences with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person subjects, and in several languages, such as Rangkhól, Hallām, and Purum, we see retentions of the PTB 1st person suffix (Grierson 1904):

Table 5: Person marking in negative forms from the *Linguistic Survey of India*

	Rāngkhōl	Hallām	Pūrūm
1 st	Σ - <i>māüing</i>	Σ - <i>māing</i>	Σ - <i>nong</i>
2 nd	<i>nē</i> - Σ - <i>māk</i>	<i>nā</i> - Σ - <i>māk-chei</i>	Σ - <i>no</i>
3 rd	Σ - <i>māk</i>	Σ - <i>māk-ngāi</i>	Σ - <i>ni-yo</i>

In Rangkhól and Hallām we see an alternation in the final consonant of the negative forms, with 1st person subject governing a final velar nasal while with 2nd and 3rd person the form is stop-final *māk*. In Pūrūm there is a newer negative morpheme *no*, but it also shows 1st person inflection in *-η*.

2.2.1 Old Kuki paradigms

Recent work on Old Kuki languages by linguists at Manipur University has documented the phenomenon more extensively. Most authors record the postverbal forms as suffixes, rather than independent words, but the paradigm is virtually identical to what we have seen in Northern Chin. Consider the Koireng negative paradigm (C. Y. Singh 2010:113-4):

Table 6: Koireng realized negative paradigm

	Singular	Plural
1	Σ - <i>mək-iŋ</i>	Σ - <i>mək-uŋ</i>
2	Σ - <i>mək-ci</i>	Σ - <i>mək-ci-u</i>
3	Σ - <i>mək-e</i>	Σ - <i>mək-u</i>

Abstracting out the negative *-mək* we have:

Table 7: Koireng agreement words

	Singular	Plural
1	<i>iŋ</i>	<i>uŋ</i>
2	<i>ci</i>	<i>ci-u</i>
3	<i>e</i>	<i>u</i>

This differs from the Northern Chin paradigm in the presence of an overt 3rd person form, the reversed order of person and number markers in the 2nd person plural, and the fact that we find only the palatalized *ci*, but no *t-* form, for 2nd person.

However, the *t-* form does occur in Old Kuki; it is clearly attested in Koireng (C. Y. Singh 2010) and Moyon (Kongkham 2010). In these two languages we find tense-based variation in the paradigm which permits some internal reconstruction. Both languages have a very conservative set of agreement indices in the unrealized or future negative paradigm (C. Y. Singh 2010:114-5):

Table 8: Koireng unrealized negative paradigm

	Singular	Plural
1	Σ - <i>no-ni-ŋ</i>	Σ - <i>no-mə-ni</i>
2	Σ - <i>no-ti-ni</i> ²	Σ - <i>no-ti-ni-u</i>
3	Σ - <i>no-ni</i>	Σ - <i>no-ni-u</i>

The *-no* suffix is the negative morpheme, as in Purum. The other element present in all the forms of the unrealized paradigm, *-ni*, is identical to the copula *ni*, which is widespread in KC. In Koireng this conjugates regularly with the prefixal paradigm when it functions as a copula:

Table 9: Modern conjugation of Koireng independent copula *ni*

	Singular	Plural
1	<i>ki-ni</i>	<i>kin-ni</i>
2	<i>ni-ni</i>	<i>nin-ni</i>
3	<i>ə-ni</i>	<i>ən-ni</i>

But buried in the negative future paradigm we find a frozen version of an ancient agreement system quite different from the innovative proclitic paradigm:

² The *Koireng Grammar* has a misprint in example 24, p. 114, *-niti* should be *-tini*. The correct form is given in the text above on p. 114.

Table 10: Old conjugation of Koireng copula *ni*

	Singular	Plural
1	<i>ni-ŋ</i>	<i>mə-ni</i>
2	<i>ti-ni</i>	<i>ti-ni-u</i>
3	<i>ni</i>	<i>ni-u</i>

The personal indices 1st *-ŋ* and 2nd *tV-* are recognizable from the verbal systems in other TB branches (DeLancey 2010, 2011a, b). The *mə-* plural element is found also in Kiranti and Jinghpaw (DeLancey 2011c). So each of these, and thus the paradigm as a whole, represent inheritance from PTB into PKC. The plural *u* is found throughout KC, but has no evident corresponding forms outside the branch; it appears to be a KC innovation.³

2.2.2 Internal reconstruction in Old Kuki

Thus there are two somewhat different paradigms in Koireng and Moyon, as we see in the non-future and future (or realized and unrealized) negative paradigms. The two are evidently related, but correlating them requires some internal reconstruction. If we compare the forms in the realized negative paradigm (Table 6) with those in the unrealized negative paradigm based on *-ni-*, we see that, except for the 1PL, they appear to be formed by the same affixes added to a stem consisting of a front vowel:

Table 11: Koireng conjugations compared

	Singular	Plural
1	<i>ni-ŋ</i> <i>i-ŋ</i>	<i>mə-ni</i> <i>u-ŋ</i>
2	<i>ti-ni</i> <i>ci-</i>	<i>ti-ni-u</i> <i>ci-X-u</i>
3	<i>ni</i> <i>e</i>	<i>ni-u</i> <i>-u</i>

On the basis of the Koireng data alone, it seems that the palatalization of the 2nd person form was conditioned by an organic following [i], but not by the harmonic [i] in *-ti-ni* (Kongkham reports *tə-* in Moyon). But the story of palatalization is more complex than this, as we will see (Section 5.2). I provisionally reconstruct the paradigm as follows:

Table 12: Reconstructed Koireng agreement words

	Singular	Plural
1	<i>i-ŋ</i>	<i>u-ŋ</i> < <i>i-u-ŋ</i>
2	<i>ci</i> < <i>t-i</i>	<i>ci-u</i> < <i>t-i-u</i>
3	<i>e</i>	<i>u</i> < <i>e/i-u</i>

The *i/e* element must, like *-ni*, be an old auxiliary, probably also a copula. Indeed, though they apparently no longer have that function in Koireng, in some Old Kuki languages the agreement words function as equational copulas, as in Tarao (Lakshmi 1992, C. Y. Singh 2002):

³ Cp. Henderson on Tedim:

The use of a pronominal suffix almost always precludes the use of a pronominal prefix ... An exception is the pluralizing suffix ‘uh’, which must therefore be classed apart from the other pronominal suffixes. (1965: 109)

- (3) *əma daktər*
s/he doctor
'He is a doctor.'
- 4) *kəy daktə əŋ*
I doctor 1SG
'I am a doctor.'
- (5) *nəŋ daktər ce*
you.sg doctor 2
'You sg. are a doctor.'

2.3 The nature and origin of agreement words

The Northern Chin and Old Kuki agreement word system is typologically odd, in that inflection for person and number does not occur directly on the verb, but either as in independent syllable, or combined with a tense/aspect or other verbal operator to form a distinct syllable. These phenomena are difficult to describe in existing terminology. Dai and Diehl (2003) use the label "sentence-final word" (a translation of Chinese 句尾词) for the equivalent phenomenon in Jinghpaw (see DeLancey 2011c), but this is not sufficiently specific. They are reminiscent of the "tense-marked pronouns" described by Anderson (2006:289-301), but since in the KC languages the agreement morphemes in these forms are not pronouns, the term is not appropriate. Arden adopts Dryer's "pronominal word" for the phenomenon in Mara. There it works, as we will see below, since the agreement morphemes are not bound to anything else, but this will not do for Northern Chin or Old Kuki, where the syllable often carries other information besides person indexation. For the time being I will call them agreement words. The same or very similar phenomena are found in Jinghpaw-Konyak (Dai and Xu 1992, Dai and Diehl 2003, DeLancey 2010, 2011c), and Meyor-Zakhring (Jaquesson 2001, Li and Jiang 2001, Landi 2005).

The obvious origin for this construction is in old conjugated auxiliaries. We have already seen that the simple agreement words are old inflected copulas. The other morphemes which combine with the agreement indices must have the same origin (cf. DeLancey 2011c). The most widely attested of these is a future/unrealized *n(i)-*, with likely cognates in Jinghpaw and elsewhere:

Table 13: 1st singular and plural forms of Koireng and Jinghpaw auxiliary *ni*

	Singular	Plural
Koireng	<i>ni-ŋ</i>	<i>mə-ni</i>
Jinghpaw	<i>niʔ ai</i>	<i>mə-niʔ ai</i>

The development of the Jinghpaw conjugation is outside of our topic here (see DeLancey 2010, 2011c), but the alternation in the 1st singular and plural forms confirms the pre-PKC provenience of one more element of the Koireng-Moyon relict paradigm. (Jinghpaw *niʔ* < **nik*, a paradigmatic alternant of *niŋ* (DeLancey 2011c)).

The two person indices in these paradigms, 1st *-ŋ* and 2nd *#tV-*, are elements of the Proto-Tibeto-Burman agreement paradigm (DeLancey 2010, 2011a, Jacques 2012); we find them in essentially this form in the rGyalrongic (J. Sun 2003, Jacques 2004) and Southern Kiranti (Ebert 2003, Rai 1985) languages, as in Bantawa (Rai 1985: 96):

- (6) *ims-a-ŋ*
sleep-PST-1SG
'I slept'

- (7) *tuu-ims-a*
2-go-PST
'you.sg slept'

Comparing the 1sg and 2sg forms from the relict Old Kuki paradigm with the corresponding forms in rGyalrong and Southern Kiranti establishes the pre-PKC provenance of the conjugation:

Table 14: 1st and 2nd person forms in Kiranti, rGyalrongic, and Kuki-Chin

	1sg	2sg
Camling (Kiranti)	Σ - <i>uŋa</i>	<i>ta</i> - Σ
Bantawa (Kiranti)	Σ - <i>ŋ(a)</i>	<i>tuu</i> - Σ
Caodeng (rGyalrongic)	Σ - <i>aŋ</i>	<i>tə</i> - Σ
lCogtse (rGyalrongic)	Σ - <i>ŋ</i>	<i>tə</i> - Σ
Koireng (Old Kuki)	AUX- <i>ŋ</i>	<i>tV</i> -AUX

The origin of agreement words is the same as the origin of new verbal suffixes in other branches, except that in KC the grammaticalized AUX+AGR bundle remains phonologically separate rather than agglutinating to the verb stem. Compare the innovative nonpast conjugation in the Kiranti language Sunwar (DeLancey 1992) with the future tense agreement word construction in Tedim:

Sunwar

- (8) *p̃i-n-uŋ*
come-NONPAST-1SG
'I am coming'

Tedim

- (9) *p̃ai n-iŋ*
go FUT-1SG
'I will go'

Sunwar nonpast *n-* is a grammaticalization of the inflected copula *nɔ*, as the Tedim future *n-* is a grammaticalization of the inflected copula *ni*. These look very much like independent grammaticalizations of the same source construction; the difference is that in Sunwar the erstwhile auxiliary has become phonologically bound to the stem, while in Tedim it has not.

2.4 Southern Chin

Peterson (2000, 2003a) describes a postverbal agreement paradigm in Southern Chin (see also Jordan 1969) and notes its close correspondence to that of Northern Chin. For Hyow (Cho, Sho), Peterson gives the following negative paradigm (Peterson 2003a):

Table 15: Negative paradigm in Hyow Chin

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1	Σ - <i>ŋa</i>	Σ - <i>hniʔ-ŋa</i>	Σ - <i>ʔu-ŋa</i>
2	Σ - <i>ti</i>	Σ - <i>hniʔ-ti</i>	Σ - <i>cu</i>
3	Σ - <i>aʔ</i>	Σ - <i>huʔy</i>	Σ - <i>ʔu</i>

The 1st and 2nd singular forms look very much like the reconstructed PTB affixes, but, on paradigmatic grounds, they cannot be direct reflexes of them. 2nd person *#tV-* was a prefix (DeLancey 2011a, Jacques 2012), while 1st person *-ŋ(a)* was a suffix, as we see in the conservative Koireng paradigm. So the only way to get both into the same paradigmatic slot is as paradigmatic forms of a postverbal auxiliary, as we have

seen in Northern Chin and Old Kuki. One peculiarity of this paradigm is that the 2nd person form retains the alveolar in the singular, but the palatalized *c-* in the plural; we will return to this problem in Section 5.2.

These forms also occur, without the negative morpheme, in different-subject non-final clauses (Jordan 1969:48-51). Final or independent finite clauses always index subject with the proclitic paradigm. In same-subject clause chains, a non-final clause may include a number index following the verb:

- (10) *ngaw u neh kah mi bi ci*
 sit PL NF.SIMUL 1 PL work FINAL
 ‘(We) sitting, we do (our) work’

Plural *u* and dual *ni* are used in all three persons, but in same-subject non-final clauses there is no indexation for person (which is recoverable from the proclitic inflection of the final verb).

In the non-final clause of a different-subject clause chain, the lexical verb is followed by number and person agreement, prefixed to the NonFinal marker *tah*:

- (11) *chü u ah-tah, law ci*
 call PL 1-NF come FIN
 ‘We having called, he came.’

The paradigm is (Jordan 1969):

Table 16: Mindat Chin different-subject non-final agreement

	singular	dual	plural
1 st	<i>(ng)ah-tah</i>	<i>ni (ng)ah-tah</i>	<i>u (ng)ah-tah</i>
2 nd	<i>ci-tah</i>	<i>ni ci-tah</i>	<i>u ci-tah</i>
3 rd	<i>khü-tah</i>	<i>ni khü-tah</i>	<i>u khü-tah</i>

The variation in the 1st person forms is dialectal; Jordan reports *ngah-*, *nah-*, and *ah-* dialects. In the 1st and 2nd person this is identical to the Hyow paradigm, except that where Hyow has the *t-* 2nd person form in the singular and *c-* in the plural, Mindat has the palatalized form throughout. Note also that the order of person and number in the 2PL form is reversed in the two languages, just as we have seen in the comparison of Northern Chin and Old Kuki: Mindat *u ci*, Hyow-*cu < -ci-2u*.

In Daai Chin (So-Hartmann 2009) we find the 1st person form in negated main clauses (So-Hartmann 2009:244-52):

- (12) *am sit be khoh=ngü*
 NEG go back able=1
 ‘I am/was not able to go back.’ (So-Hartmann 2009:252)

- (13) *am pye:n vaai xa=ngü*
 NEG speak go definitely-1
 ‘I definitely will not go and speak.’

In contemporary Daai, this occurs only in negative sentences, but in an older form of the language preserved in oral texts, it can occur in some assertive clauses as well:

- (14) *tuh=ngooi: ta ni:ng hmu lo veeng(=ngü)*
 today FOCUS 2SG.OBJ see ASPECT certainly(=1)
 ‘Today I will certainly see you.’

As in Hyow and Mindat, this can be preceded by number indices:

- (15) *am hmuh=ni=ngü*
 NEG see=DUAL=1
 ‘We2 did not see [him].’

The postverbal 2nd person form appears to have disappeared.

2.5 The postverbal paradigm in the conservative languages

The simple agreement words (i.e. not attached to other grammatical marking) in the three conservative branches of KC are summarized below (see DeLancey to appear for additional data supporting the reconstructed NC and OK forms):

Table 17: Postverbal indices in the conservative languages

	1SG	1PL	2SG	2PL	3SG	3PL
NC	*i(-)ŋ	*u-ŋ	*te?	*u te?	(*a)	*u
OK	*i(-)ŋ	*u-ŋ	*ce	*ce-u	(*ə)	*u ~ *əi
SC	-ŋa	- ʔu-ŋa	-ti	-cu/-u-ci	-a?	-ʔu

At present I have no explanation for the difference in syllable shape of the 1st person form between NC/OK on the one hand and SC on the other. The alternation in the order of number and person in the 2nd person forms between NC and OK, and within SC, suggests that the ordering of these two morphemes was not fixed in PKC. Unlike all the rest of the morphological material in this table, the plural *-(?)u has no evident cognates outside of KC, and can thus be identified as a KC innovation (pace an erroneous suggestion in DeLancey to appear). It occurs in several other constructions in various KC languages.

Aside from these differences, and the problematic variation between 2nd person forms in *t-* and *c-*, the paradigms are identical, and must reflect common inheritance from PKC.

3. Remnants of the postverbal paradigm in Central and Maraic languages

Except for a striking archaic retention in the hortative paradigm in Hakha Lai, the Central and Maraic languages for which we have descriptions have not preserved the full postverbal paradigm. There is an apparent remnant 1st person form in one Mara (Lakher) paradigm, but it tells us nothing that we do not already know from the peripheral branches. But in both Mizo and Mara we find retentions of the 2nd person form in paradigms which do help to expand our understanding of the PKC situation and how the subbranches have developed from there.

3.1 Hakha Lai

Hakha Lai preserves particularly ancient forms in the “cohortative” (‘Let’s!’) paradigm (Peterson 2003: 414-5); compare the corresponding 1→2 request forms in Trung (Dulong, Sun 1982: 108-10):

Table 18: Hakha Lai and Trung hortative paradigms

	singular	dual	plural
Hakha cohortative	-niŋ	-ʔu-si?	-hnaa-ʔu-si?
Trung 1→2 request	-níŋ	-ɛín	-nuu

This is the only evidence I have found for the survival into Kuki-Chin of the PTB dual **si* (LaPolla 2003:30). This does not bear directly on our main project, except insofar as it demonstrates the preservation of much archaic morphological material into PKC, at least in relict paradigms such as this one.

3.2 Mizo

In Mizo (Central Chin) the secondary prefixal paradigm has completely won out, and is the only verbal paradigm. The archaic 1st person marking has completely disappeared, but several reflexes of the old 2nd person form are found in the transitive paradigm, certain imperatives, and certain other relict constructions.

Chhangte (1993) and Peterson (2000) have noted the evident connection between the Mizo familiar imperative particle *teʔ* and the Northern Chin 2nd person form:

- (16) *thû-teʔ*
sit-IMPERATIVE
'Sit!'

But this is only the beginning of the story. This form, which is only one of several different Mizo imperative constructions, also occurs in a "less formal hortative":

- (17) *i-kâl-teʔ-áy*
DU-go-IMPERATIVE-FUT
'Let's go (it's time)!'

There is also a weak imperative *-ta=cèè*, which is similar in form to the *c-* 2nd person forms which we have seen in Old Kuki and Southern Chin.

Even more interesting is another 2nd person particle, *cê*, which matches the Old Kuki 2nd person index in form, and both the OK and the Northern Chin in syntagmatic position. This occurs productively as an index of 2nd person object, which has been incorporated into the innovative, otherwise prefixal transitive paradigm (Chhangte 1993: 91-2):

Table 19: Agreement indices with singular arguments in Mizo

		Subject		
Object	\	1	2	3
1			<i>ka-Σ cê</i>	<i>ka-Σ</i>
2		<i>mi-Σ</i>		<i>i-Σ</i>
3		<i>mi-Σ</i>	<i>a-Σ cê</i>	<i>a-Σ</i>

This form has no connection with the possessive proclitic system which forms the core of the prefixal paradigm, so it must have a different origin. After we have seen the development of 2nd person *teʔ* to *-ce* in Old Kuki, the source of the Mizo suffix is obvious. From its syntagmatic behavior we can see its origin in the Northern Chin pattern. The *cê* morpheme, as in Northern Chin, is a distinct word, as it does not trigger vowel reduction in a preceding stem. It follows all verbal suffixes, consistent with its origin as an inflected copular auxiliary. Thus it remains outside the phonological scope of continuative reduplication:

- (18) *mî-sik* *mî-sik*
1OBJ-pinch 1OBJ-pinch
'[S/he] pinches me again and again.'
- (19) *â-sik* *â-sik cê* *mòò*
3sg-pinch 3sg-pinch-2OBJ INTERROGATIVE
'Does [s/he] pinch you again and again?'

The order of person and number marking in Mizo is *cê û* (Chhangte 1993:90, Bedell 2004:53), just as in Old Kuki.

The 2nd person *cê* also occurs as a subject index in one formal, archaic request construction, when the 1st person object prefix is present:

(20) *mín-chââg* *ag* *cê*
 1OBJ-answer HORT 2
 ‘you [please] answer me’

(21) *mín-rhê-reŋ-áŋ* *cê*
 1OBJ-know-always-FUT 2
 ‘Please remember me!’

3.3 Mara

Our data come from several different reports on Mara, in earlier literature often called “Lakher” (Savidge 1908, Lorrain 1951, Weidert 1985, Arden 2010). Mara shares the innovative prefixal agreement paradigm characteristic of Kuki-Chin, except that its 1st person index is *ei* where other branches have *ka*. The agreement indices show considerable phonological independence from the verb; Arden (2010) is reluctant even to call them clitics.

In Mara, as in Mizo, the 2nd person agreement word is preserved in several constructions. Unlike Mizo, Mara also retains the 1st person form, but only marginally. (And perhaps no longer, since this construction is attested in Lorrain and Savidge’s work of a century ago, but not reported in more recent work). There is a reflex of the 1st person agreement word **iŋ*, in a subjunctive conjugation recorded by Lorrain (1951: 18):

Table 20: Mara subjunctive conjugation

	Singular	Plural
1	<i>shi aw sha-la</i>	<i>shi i sha-la</i>
2	<i>shi la</i>	<i>shi u-la</i>
3	<i>shi sha-la</i>	<i>shi sha-la</i>

The *aw* which occurs uniquely in the 1sg construction, and alternates with 1PL *i*, is a regular reflex of PKC **iŋ* (VanBik 2009: 371). The *-la* element can be compared with the conditional *le-* which we have seen in other branches, where it also requires the postverbal conjugation, but it is not clear why it follows the agreement words in Mara, but precedes them in Northern Chin. (I also have no explanation for the *sha* which occurs in the 1st and 3rd but not 2nd person forms). Aside from this there is no apparent trace of the 1st person form in the available data on Mara.

The 2nd person agreement word occurs in three different forms in Mara. Like Mizo, Mara has *te* as an imperative marker. As in Mizo, the more interesting pattern is the distribution of the palatalized form in the transitive paradigm. It does not occur in the intransitive conjugation, but in the transitive paradigm it occurs preverbally as a 2OBJ index *cha*, and postverbally in the 2→1 form as *chi* (after Arden 2010; cp. Weidert 1985:929):

Table 21: Mara person agreement

		Object			
Subject	\	1	2	3	Intr
1			<i>ei cha</i> Σ	<i>ei</i> Σ	<i>ei</i> Σ
2		<i>ei na</i> Σ <i>chi</i>	<i>na cha</i> Σ	<i>na</i> Σ	<i>na</i> Σ
3		<i>e na</i> Σ	<i>a cha</i> Σ	<i>a</i> Σ	<i>a</i> Σ

The 2→1SG configuration is the only construction in Mara in which a personal index (as opposed to a plural morpheme) follows the verb (Arden 2010).

There are many interesting aspects to this paradigm. The hierarchical distribution of 1st person *ei* and the apparent anomalous spread of 2nd person *na* into the 3→1 form are of great interest, but not for our present pursuit (see DeLancey 1989, 2010). Our concern is with the two other 2nd person indices, 2OBJ *cha* and 2SUBJ *chi*. Together, these two morphemes have the same distribution as Mizo postverbal 2nd person *cê*, which occurs everywhere that Mara has *cha-*, and in archaic forms also in the 2→1 form where Mara has *chi*.

The *cha-* is the only part of the prefixal paradigm which does not have an evident synchronic origin. The others are all possessive proclitics, reflecting the origin of the innovative prefixal paradigm in a clausal nominalization (DeLancey 2010, and below Sec. 4.1). The simplest hypothesis is that the 2nd person postverbal particle *#ce* was shifted to preverbal position as the proclitic paradigm began to crystallize. (The KC proclitics are unstressed and subject to phonological reduction, hence the reduction of the vowel in the preverbal but not the postverbal form is to be expected).

It cannot be that this is a retention of the *#tV-* prefix from PTB. There is no other evidence of *#tV-* prefixation on the main verb in PKC; as in Mara, so throughout the branch agreement proclitics and prefixes have evident and relatively shallow origins. Mara 2OBJ *cha* seems to be the sole exception,⁴ and this points to its exceptional origin. The other preverbal indices originate as possessives, *cha* as an originally postverbal particle secondarily incorporated into the preverbal pronominal word construction in the new paradigm.

3.3 Reorganization of the paradigm in Mizo and Mara

The shared pattern of retention of the 2nd person agreement word in Mara and Mizo reflects a period of common development after their separation from PKC; these two groups are related to one another as a Central-Maraic subbranch within KC. If the 1SG subjunctive *aw* in Mara is in fact **iŋ*, then the 1SG agreement word also survived into the common ancestor of Mara and Mizo, but from its complete disappearance in Mizo and very marginal existence in Mara we can infer that already by that stage it had little remaining function, presumably because the prefixal conjugation had largely taken over the finite domain.

Proto-Central-Maraic had lost the postverbal paradigm as such, but had incorporated the 2nd person agreement word into the new finite verb, where it occurred in all SAP object forms with a 2nd person argument, i.e. 1→2, 3→2, 2→1:

Mara

- (22) eina ly chi
1SG.OBJ thank 2
'You sg. thank me.' (Arden 2010:115)

Mizo

- (23) *mín-rhê-reŋ-áŋ* *cê*
1OBJ-know-always-FUT 2
'Please remember me!' (Chhange 1993: 92)

In Mizo, it is retained in its original postverbal position in all functions:

Mizo

- (24) *kâ-ron-tlhààk-zéél-áŋ* *cê*
1-come-drop-keep.on-fut 2OBJ
'I will keep on dropping them to you' (Chhange 1993: 180)

But Mara separated the 2SU and 2OBJ functions by moving the agreement word to a preverbal position consistent with both the preverbal position of the new agreement indices and the SOV constituent order of the clause:

⁴ In DeLancey 1989 I suggested that Mara 1st person *ei* was another. As noted above, I now interpret it as an extension of 1pl **i*, which is well attested in KC.

Mara

- (25) *ei cha ly*
 1 2OBJ thank
 ‘I thank you sg.’ (Arden 2010: 114)

Both languages retain the 2nd person agreement word as an imperative form. This is not reported in the available data on the conservative branches, so it too appears to be a shared Central-Maraic innovation.

4. The History of Agreement in Kuki-Chin

The PTB origins of the postverbal agreement indices in KC is clear (see also DeLancey 2010, to appear). The postverbal agreement words are old auxiliaries inflected for person, in a paradigm which included the PTB affixes 1SG *-ŋ*, 1PL *-i*, and 2nd *tV-*. In this section we will conclude the discussion of what we can infer about the history of this construction from PKC on. We have briefly looked at the incorporation of the 2nd person postverbal agreement word into the new paradigm in the Central-Maraic languages, but have not directly addressed the question of how and why the new paradigm arose and replaced the older one. We will consider this question in Section 5.1. The other problem which has been deferred until this point is the split of the original 2nd person form into *t-* and *c-* versions; I will offer some speculation on this question in Section 5.2.

4.1 Ancient and innovative paradigms in PKC

The preverbal agreement paradigms have shallow, transparent origins. The postverbal paradigm, in contrast, is opaque and mysterious in KC context, but immediately recognizable in a broader comparative Tibeto-Burman framework. Since the basic elements of the preverbal paradigm are shared across the branch, while the postverbal paradigm is still active in Northern Chin and Old Kuki, both must have been in productive use in PKC⁵. We must therefore reconstruct PKC with competing main clause constructions, an older finite form derived from the original PTB inflected verb, and a newer prefixal construction derived from a recent nominalized clause construction (DeLancey 2011d). This raises three questions: why were there two competing paradigms? What was the function of the innovative construction? And what led to the fading and ultimate extinction of the original paradigm?

Two characteristics of the innovative preverbal paradigm in the KC languages argue for its origin in a clausal nominalization. The first is the fact that the preverbal agreement morphemes are, for the most part, simply the possessive proclitics or prefixes pressed into service as verb agreement. The second is the syntax of the sentence final particle in the Northern languages. Such “indicative” or “affirmative” final particles are widespread among KC languages, as elsewhere in the family. I have suggested that such final particle constructions in Tibeto-Burman usually originate in the copula or nominalizer in a clausal nominalization construction (DeLancey 2010, 2011b). In Northern Chin, where the two paradigms are still in competition, the evidence is particularly clear. The final particle, *hî*, is identical to the copula, and is obligatory with the preverbal construction, and impossible after postverbal agreement (Henderson 1965: 109-11):

- (26) *pài: ke-ŋ*
 go NEG-1SG
 ‘I don’t go.’
- (27) *ká pài: kei hî:*
 1st go NEG FINAL
 ‘idem.’

⁵ Cp. Peterson 2002: 99-100, who suggests that the prefixal paradigm was less well-developed in PKC, and that the paradigms in the various subbranches developed more independently, than I am suggesting here.

Thus the two features which suggest nominalization – possessive clitics as argument indices and a final particle which is transparently a grammaticalized copula – obligatorily occur together in one construction, and are both impossible in the other.

The nominalized paradigm must have still been formally a nominalization until after the divergence of the branches, since each language uses its own possessive proclitics, with Mizo substituting 1PL **i* for 2nd person, and Mara extending it to 1SG. If the prefixal paradigm were already completely reanalyzed as a finite verb construction by PKC, it should presumably no longer be responsive to changes in the nominal paradigm. As long as the verbal paradigm remains in lockstep with the nominal, the verb is still being treated as a noun, as Konow long ago remarked (Konow 1902, Grierson 1904).

In most of KC the postverbal paradigm has mostly disappeared, as in Mizo and Mara, or been confined to specific constructions, as seems to be the case in Old Kuki and Southern Chin. But in the Northern languages Tedim and Sizang the two paradigms are still to some degree in competition. Henderson (1965) describes this as a register distinction, with the prefixal paradigm used in more formal, and the postverbal more informal or colloquial contexts. Sarangthem (2010) reports the same for Sizang.

4.2 Palatalization of #tV-

On phonological grounds the identification of the *cV* 2nd person forms with the demonstrably ancient #*tV* forms is shaky, as there is no regular phonological process which can explain the alternation. But on morphological grounds the identification is inescapable, as the two forms occur in exactly the same paradigmatic and syntagmatic slots.

In Northern Chin and Old Kuki, the OK palatal and NC alveolar forms correspond perfectly in meaning and paradigmatic and syntagmatic position. In Moyon and Koireng, they are in complementary distribution, apparently phonologically conditioned. In Hyow they are apparently arbitrarily distributed, nonpalatalized in singular and palatalized in plural. Finally, in Mizo, the two imperative forms are in functional contrast in (at least roughly) the same syntagmatic position. It is perhaps possible to imagine two different etyma becoming entwined in a network like this, but much easier to imagine an irregular phonological process producing two allomorphs which can later split.

Sources on Northern Chin are very limited, so claims about what may be absent there should be taken as provisional. In the available data, we find only *te*, and only as a postverbal agreement word. In Old Kuki we find *ce* as a postverbal agreement word. In Koireng and Moyon we also find the original #*tV*- prefix on *ni* in the negative paradigm, and thus an alternation between *ti* in the negative future and *ci* in the negative non-future. In Southern Chin we find the 2nd person agreement word as *ti* in the singular but *ci* in the plural. In Central-Maraic both forms occur as imperatives, but the palatalized version in indicative verb constructions.

The change *t > c* is not regular anywhere in KC,⁶ so there is no purely phonological explanation for the variation. It may be that the KC 2nd person agreement word originated in a j-initial form with a prefix *tə-*, probably **tə-jik > *tijk*, and that the palatalization was conditioned by the following glide. (This would be a unique development, since we have no other etyma with that initial cluster to show what the “regular” development would be). But since the palatalization is sporadic even with a single language, and is not consistently associated with a particular morphological position or syntactic function, the explanation cannot be simply phonological – we need to identify another factor. I suggest that the explanation is sociolinguistic, having to do with the marked character of 2nd person utterances in general. Note particularly the opposition in Mizo between the “familiar” imperative *te?* and the “weak” imperative *cèè*, where the opposition codes affective content.

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⁶ There is some alternation between /t/ and /ts/ in Tedim (VanBik 2009: 27-30), but nothing that could explain the distribution of #*tV* reflexes across the branch.

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