

**1. Proto-Kuki-Chin: A Reconstructed Ancestor of the Kuki-Chin Languages**

As demonstrated in VanBik’s paper, tracing the historical origins of a language and developing a prototypical ancestral language is no easy matter. Various researchers postulate one theory or another, and that theory is called into question—and sometimes, put to rest—by additional research. VanBik touches briefly on some of the previous groupings of Kuki-Chin:

Konow (1909)	Places Kuki-Chin under “Naga-Kuki-Chin” branch of a <u>Tibeto-Burman</u> family tree
Shafer (1974)	Attempts to sub-group <u>Sino-Tibetan</u> and includes a “Burmic” branch that encompasses “Kukish”
Benedict (1972)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u> family tree (similar to Konow’s grouping, which places Kuki-Chin under Kuki-Naga group), but also has broad distinction between Tibeto-Karen and Chinese
Matisoff (1991, 2003)	<u>Sino-Tibetan</u> family tree that postulates Karenic languages as a sub-family of Tibeto-Burman (and not the other way around, as in Benedict’s schema). Matisoff also introduces a new branch, Kamarupan, based on a geographical location (see map below) which facilitates organizing language sub-groups by region.

VanBik’s research “follows Matisoff’s schema and further proves that Kuki-Chin constitutes a separate branch of the Tibeto-Burman family.”



**SHARED INNOVATIONS**

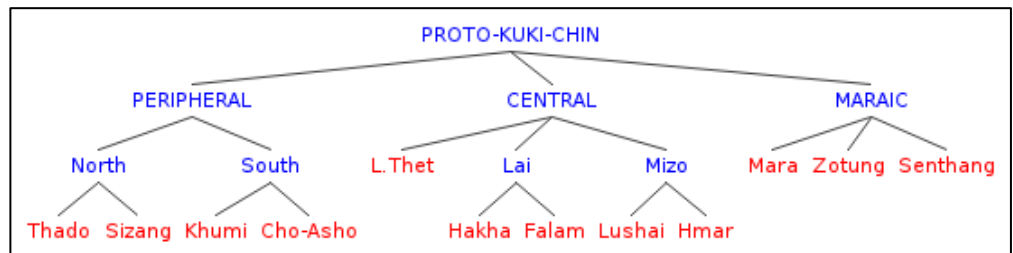
Kuki-Chin languages can be separated from the other Tibeto-Burman languages based on two shared innovations, specifically:

- 1) Alternation of the “Form I” and “Form II” verb stems, in which Form I is used in main clauses and Form II is used in subordinate clauses (referred to simply as “verbal-stem alternation.”)
- 2) A phonological change from the Proto-Tibeto-Burman initial \*s/sy to \*th in Proto-Kuki-Chin.

**INTERNAL SUBDIVISION OF KUKI-CHIN LANGUAGES**

According to VanBik, the Kuki-Chin languages that branched from Proto-Kuki-Chin can be organized into three main groups that share phonological innovations “as they branched off from Proto-Kuki-Chin.” The three major branches are:

- Peripheral
- Central
- Maraic



As shown in the figure, each of these groups is further subdivided according to more specific sound changes (innovations) that are particular to the group.

The table summarizes the innovations with respect to just the main sub-groupings, that is, Peripheral, Central, and Maraic, and what distinguishes these three sub-groups from each other. The languages that comprise each of these sub-groups also have numerous additional distinguishing features (innovations), which are beyond the scope of this report.

**PROTO-KUKI-CHIN LANGUAGES, SUBGROUPINGS, AND INNOVATIONS SUMMARY**

Subgroup	Shared innovation		PKC	P	C	M
<b>Peripheral</b>	<b>Fortition</b> , in which a “weaker” consonant (in this case, the alveolar continuant /*r/) becomes a “stronger” consonant (in this case, the velar stop /g/). This type of sound change is not common, and in conjunction with the fact that the Northern and Southern branches of the Peripheral subgroup share this feature despite their geographical distance from each other, it supports the grouping.		*r- →	g-	*r-	*r-
	<b>Example:</b>	“bamboo”	*rua	gaw/gua <sup>1</sup>	rûa	ra-maw
<b>Central</b>	<b>Homorganic assimilation</b> , in which one sound is influenced by the adjacent sound, either preceding or following. In the case of Proto-Kuki-Chin to Central Chin, this occurs in several initial cluster combinations, such as *kr- became *tr- in the reconstructed prototype of Central Chin, while it remained		*kr- → *kl- *pl- *khr-		*tr- *tl- *tl- *thr	
	<b>Example:</b>	“weep”	*krap	kàp, kàà	*trap	tsa
<b>Maraic</b>	<b>Sound loss</b> , in which the final stops became glottal stop (?), and final glottal stop disappeared.		*-p → *-t *-k *.-? →			*-? *.-∅
	<b>Examples:</b>	“cry, weep”	*krap			*tsa?
		“one”	*khat			*(θs-)kha?
		“pig”	*wak			*vo?
		“thick”	*tsha?			*a-tsha

\* represents re-constructed proto-language

<sup>1</sup> “gaw” in Southern Peripheral, “gua” in Northern Peripheral