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Noun Morphology in Kuki-Chin languages

Pauthang Haokip, Ph.D.

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1. Introduction

For the purpose of the present study, six languages, namely, Thadou, Vaiphei, Gangte, Paite, Simte and Zou are presented. All the six languages are spoken in Churachandpur district of Manipur where the present study had been conducted.

According to Grierson LSI. Vol. III. Part III and Bradley 1997, they belong to northern Kuki-Chin subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman family. All these languages are mutually intelligible to one another and communication is carried out in their respective languages without any problem.

Linguistically, they constitute the dialects of the northern Kuki-Chin. But political, unlike the Nagas, they regarded themselves, as belonging separate tribes having separate languages of their own. The census of India too has classified them under separate languages. Of course there are other sociolinguistic factors responsible for the split among them which I am not going to deal with here.

Among them, Thadou is by far the largest and the most widely distributed compared to the rest.

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The transcription used in this paper is broad.

Lists of abbreviations

ABL	Ablative	INST	instrumental
ASERT	Asserative	LOC	Locative
BEF	Benefective	V.REF	Verbal Reflexive
COM	Comitaive	SG	Singular
DAT	Dative	1	First person
DEF	Definitive	2	Second person
GEN	Genitive	3	Third person
L	Voicelss Alveolar Fricative		

Apart from Churachandpur, others districts of Manipur where the Kuki-Chin speakers are distributed are: Senapati, Tengnoupal, Tamenglong, and Ziribam. These languages are also spoken in the adjoining Indian states of Nagaland, Assam and Mizoram. Outside of Northeast India, they are also spoken in Chin Hills of Myanmar (Burma) along with other cognate Kuki-Chin languages. The population of these languages according Census of India 2001 is as follows:

Thadou	Vaiphei	Gangte	Paite	Simte	Zou
1,90,595.	39,673.	14,500.	64,100.	10,225.	20,857

In terms of research, most of these languages except Thadou, have not been described by the linguistic researchers. The only source of knowledge is that of Grierson LSI (1904), which contained some information on consonants and vowels of these languages. There are very few natives trained in theoretical linguistics to carry out research on these languages.

2. Noun morphology

Noun in Kuki-Chin languages may be defined as a word which is capable of taking gender marker, number marker, case marker/postpositions and/or which can be followed by noun attributes like adjectives, numerals, quantifiers, etc. Thus, nouns in Kuki-Chin languages are, structurally, either mono-morphemic or multi-morphemic.

Noun in these languages falls into two classes- (a) non-derived nouns and (2) derived nouns.

2.1. Non-derived nouns

Non-derived nouns are morphologically simple nouns and comprise forms for animate (human), animate (non-human) or inanimate entities. Example of each language is provided below.

Gloss	stone	food	crab	fish	water	rain
Thadou	soŋ	bu	ai	ŋa	tui	go
Vaiphei	suaŋ	bu	ai	ŋa	tui	go
Gangte	suaŋ	bu?	ai	ŋa	tui	go?
Paite	suaŋ	bu	ai	ŋa	tui	go
Simte	suaŋ	bu?	ai	ŋa	tui	gua?
Zou	suoŋ	bu	ai	ŋa	tui	go

2.2. Derived nouns

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Derived nouns are morphologically complex nouns and are composed of polysyllabic words. Though derived nouns form one phonological word, where the second morpheme is some sort of modifier of the first morpheme. In few instances the meaning of the individual morphemes, particularly the second morpheme is opaque.

Gloss	baby	bachelor	tiger	tortoise
Thadou	naosen	golLəŋ	sakei	sumkoŋ
Vaiphei	nausen	təŋval	sakei	sumkuoŋ
Gangte	nausen	təŋval	sakei	sumkuoŋ
Paite	nauŋeʔ	təŋval	sakei	sumkuaŋ
Simte	nauŋeʔ	təŋval	sakei	sumkuaŋ
Zou	nauŋeʔ	təŋval	kamkei	sumkuoŋ

2.3. Nominalised nouns

Nouns are mostly derived by nominalising verbs or adjectives.

gloss	cry+na=grief	sit+na=chair	good+na=goodness	trouble+na=problem
Thadou	ka+na=kana	tou+na=touna	phat+na=phatna	bui+na=buina
Vaiphei	ka+na=kana	cut+na=cutna	phat+na=phatna	bui+na= buina
Gangte	kaʔ+na=kana	cut+na=cutna	phat+na=phatna	buiʔ+na= buina
Paite	ka+na=kana	tut+na=tutna	phat+na=phatna	bui+na= buina
Simte	kaʔ+na=kaʔna	tou+na=touna	phat+na=phatna	boi+na= boina
Zou	ka+na=kana	tut+na=tutna	phat+na=phatna	bui+na= buina

2.4. Pronouns

Pronoun in Kuki-Chin languages can be defined as a word which substitutes noun and function as subject, topic and attribute, but never fills a head position in noun phrase.

A pronoun comes in two forms: free form and clitic form. The free forms are those forms which are used alone to denote the pronoun in its exclusive sense. The clitic forms on the other hand are used as agreement clitic marker before the verb. The foregoing general observations are based on the facts noticeable across the Kuki-Chin language.

Free form

person	singular	plural
1	kei	keiho/keiuʔ

2	nəŋ	nəŋho/nəŋuʔ
3	əma	əmahə/əmauʔ

The plural marker for Thadou is *-ho* and *-uʔ* for the rest of the languages.

Clitic form

person	singular	Plural
1	ka	ka
2	na	na
3	a	a

The clitic forms are used before the noun to indicate possession.

Thadou	ka	aʔca	‘my chicken’
Vaiphei	i	loipi	‘our buffalo’
Gangte	na	pheika	‘your pant’
Paite	ama	kolza	‘his/her bag’
Simte	na	niliap	‘your umbrella’
Zou	ka	vatot	‘my duck’

Apart from free and clitic forms, pronouns in Kuki-Chin languages can have the following types:

2. 4.1. Possessive pronouns

The possessor precedes the possessed item.

Thadou	Boipu	te	aʔca	mu	in	a	ne
Vaiphei	Boipu	te	aʔca	mu	in	a	ne
Gangte	Boipu	te	aʔ	mu	in	a	ne
Paite	Boipu	te	aʔca	mu	in	a	ne
Simte	Boipu	te	aʔ	mu	in	a	neʔ
Zou	Boipu	te	aʔca	mu	in	a	ne
	Boipu	PL	hen	eagle	ERG	3SG	eat

‘The hen of Boipu’s family was eaten by eagle’
The *-te* in Boipute is used to denote family name.

2. 4.2. Interrogative pronoun

The interrogative pronouns do not decline or change according to the gender (human, non human) but can be followed by the interrogative, quantitative, locative, possessive

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markers, etc. Unlike Hindi and English they serve only as interrogatives and not as relatives.

Gloss	‘what’	‘who’	‘how’	‘how much’	‘why’	‘where’	‘which’	‘whose’
Thadou	ipihðm	koihðm	iti	izat	ipizi?	huilai	huici	koi a
Vaiphei	bðŋmo	koihɛm	bðŋti	bðŋzat	bðŋzi?	huilai	huici	ku a
Gangte	bðŋŋe	kou e	bðŋti	bðŋzat	bðŋzik	hui a?	hoi	ku a
Paite	bðŋŋa	kua a	bðŋti	bðŋzat	bðŋzi?	huilai	huici	ku a
Simte	bðŋŋe	koi e	bðŋti	bðŋzat	bðŋzia?	khuai	huipen	koi a
Zou	bðŋmo	koi e	bðŋti	bðŋzat	bðŋzi?	huilai	huici	koi a

2. 4.3. Reflexive pronoun

These pronouns are formed addition of *-le* ‘and’ between the two personal pronouns.

kei	le	kei	‘myself’
naŋ	le	nðŋ	‘yourself’
ðma	le	ðma	‘himself/herself’
ei	le	ei	‘ourselves’

Some examples of reflexive pronouns are given below:

Thadou	ðma	le?	ðma	a	ki	mu
Vaiphei	ðma	le?	ðma	a	ki	mu
Gangte	ðma?	le?	ðma	a	ki	mu
Paite	ðma?	le?	ðma?	a	ki	mu
Simte	ðma?	le?	ðma?	a	ki	mu
Zou	ðma?	le?	ðma?	a	ki	mu

‘He/she saw himself/herself’

2. 5. Gender

Gender in Kuki-Chin languages is based on meaning. The concept of animacy is very crucial in the classification of entities (noun), wherein there are variations across languages in that the criterion is rather ethno-centric (to a linguistic group) rather than functional or formal.

On a semantico-morphological basis, nouns in these languages may be broadly divided into animate and inanimate classes. Animate class is further divided into human and non-human. The animate and inanimate classes in their turn fall into three way system based on sex: masculine-feminine and common gender. Here common gender is taken to denote a class of animate nouns which are neutral to sex.

2. 5.1. The human class

In the human class, masculine gender is marked by *-pa* and the feminine gender is marked by *-nu*.

gloss	‘elder brother’	‘elder sister’	‘younger brother’	younger sister son’	‘son’	‘daughter’
Thadou	upa	unu	naopa	naonu	capa	canu
Vaiphei	upa	unu	naupa	naunu	capa	canu
Gangte	upa	unu	naupa	naunu	capa	canu
Paite	upa	unu	naupa	naunu	tapa	tanu
Simte	upa	unu	naupa	naunu	tapa	tanu
Zou	upa	unu	naupa	naunu	tapa	tanu

There are certain classes of human nouns do not take *-pa* and *-nu* as their gender marker.

gloss	husband	wife	male youth	female youth	father’s fister’s husband	father’s sisiter	widower	widow
Thadou			golLɔŋ	nuŋaʔ	gɔŋ	ni	paŋŋ	meithai
Vaiphei	pasɔl	zi	tɔŋval	nuŋaʔ	gɔŋ	ni		
Gangte	pasɔl	zi	tɔŋval	nuŋaʔ	gɔŋ	ni		
Paite	pasɔl	zi	tɔŋval	nuŋaʔ	gɔŋ	ni		
Simte	pasɔl	zi	tɔŋval	nuŋaʔ	gɔŋ	ni	meiŋŋ	meithai
Zou	pasɔl	zi	tɔŋval	nuŋaʔ	gɔŋ	ni	meiŋŋ	meithai

Another class of human nouns, such as grand parents and reverential person in a society take separate gender for masculine and feminine gender. The masculine gender for grandparent is *-pu* and masculine gender is *-pi*. This is the same for all these languages.

pu	‘grandfather’	pi	‘grandmother’
lamkaipu	‘male leader’	lamkaipi	‘female leader’
housapu	‘chief’	housapi	‘queen’
ineipu	‘male head of the family’	ineipi	‘female head of the family’

Few loan words from English and Manipuri also take the *-pi* and *-pu* gender suffix. But in such cases the feminine *-pi* is used refer to the wife or female colleague.

pastorpu	‘male pastor’	pastorpi	‘wife of pastor’
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evangelistpu ‘male evangelist’ evangelistpi ‘wife of evangelist’
 ojapu ‘male teacher’ ojapi ‘female teacher’

The feminine gender suffix *-pi* is the same as the magnitude suffix *-pi*.

gloss	path+pi=road	voice+pi =male voice	hill+pi=mountain
Thadou	l̥m+pi = l̥mpi	o+pi = ɔpi	mol+pi = molpi
Vaiphei	l̥mpi+pi = lampi	ɔ+pi = ɔpi	mol+pi = molpi
Gangte	l̥m+pi = l̥mpi	ɔ+pi = ɔpi	mol+pi = molpi
Paite	l̥m+pi = l̥mpi	ɔ+pi = ɔpi	mol+pi = molpi
Simte	l̥m+pi = l̥mpi	ɔ+pi = ɔpi	mol+pi = molpi
Zou	l̥m+pi = l̥mpi	ɔ+pi = ɔpi	mol+pi = molpi

The word for *vompi* ‘bear’ in certain languages such as Thadou and Zou also take the *-pi* suffix.

2. 5.2. Non-human class

In the non-human class the masculine gender is marked by *-cɔ̃* (for Thadou, Vaiphei and Gangte) and *tɔ̃* (for Paite, Simte and Zou). But the feminine gender is marked by *-pi* for all the languages.

gloss	masculine	feminine	masculine	feminine
Thadou	boŋcɔ̃l	boŋpi	uicɔ̃l	uipi
Vaiphei	boŋcɔ̃l	boŋpi	uicɔ̃l	uipi
Gangte	boŋcɔ̃l	boŋpi	uicɔ̃l	uipi
Paite	boŋtɔ̃l	boŋpi	uitɔ̃l	uipi
Simte	boŋtɔ̃l	boŋpi	uitɔ̃l	uipi
Zou	boŋtɔ̃l	boŋpi	uitɔ̃l	uipi

In case of pronoun, gender distinction takes place in the third person.

gloss	third person	masculine	feminine
Thadou	ɔ̃ma	ɔ̃mapa	ɔ̃manu
Vaiphei	ɔ̃ma	ɔ̃mapa	ɔ̃manu
Gangte	ɔ̃ma?	ɔ̃mapa	ɔ̃manu
Paite	ɔ̃ma	ɔ̃mapa	ɔ̃manu
Simte	ɔ̃ma?	ɔ̃mapa	ɔ̃manu
Zou	ɔ̃ma	ɔ̃mapa	ɔ̃manu

The glottal stop in Gangte disappears when followed by another syllable.

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2. 6. Number

The Kuki-Chin languages have three ways number system: singular, dual and plural. The singular is mostly unmarked on the nouns and pronouns. Dual number is formed by suffixing the numeral two to the nouns or pronoun. The plural noun is formed by suffixing the plural marker *-ho* (for Thadou) and *-te* (for the rest).

	singular	dual	plural
gloss	man	two man	plural
Thadou	mi	mini	miho
Vaiphei	mi	mipani?	mite
Gangte	mi	mini?	mipite
Paite	mi	mini?	mite
Simte	mi	mini?	mipite
Zou	mi	mini?	mite

The plural marker for nouns and pronouns is the same for Thadou. But the pronouns of the rest of the languages take a separate marker *-u?*. Consider the following examples.

gloss	singular	plural (Thadou)	(for the rest)
First person	kei	kei ho	kei u?
Second person	nɔŋ	nɔŋ ho	naŋ u?
Third person	ɔma	ɔma ho	ɔma u?

2. 7. Case

Case relations are expressed by postpositions which are attached to a noun or noun phrase as the last element.

2.7.1 Ergative/Absolutive

With regards to the case marking of the subject and object is concerned, like other Kuki-Chin languages, these languages, also exhibit ergative/absolutive type. Thus, the subject of intransitive verb and the object of the transitive verb are marked by the absence of overt case marker in the noun/pronoun (NP). But the subject of transitive subject is marked by *-in* which is in the ergative case.

2.7.1.1. Absolutive case

When a sentence has a single noun phrase, it will be in absolutive case. In such situation absence of any overt case marker in the noun/pronoun (NP), will be construed to be in absolutive case.

Thadou	capɔŋ	xat	a	tou	e
Vaiphei	naupɔŋ	khat	a	cu	i
Gangte	naupɔŋ	khat	a	cu	i
Paite	naupɔŋ	khat	a	tu	hi
Simte	naupɔŋ	khat	a	tou	hi
Zou	naupaŋ	khat	a	tou	hi
	child	one	3SG	sit	ASSERT
	'A child sits'				

2.7.1.2. Ergative case

The ergative case is marked by *-in* which is the the instrumental case marker.

Thadou	capɔŋ	xat	in	nau an	a	ne	e
Vaiphei	naupɔŋ	pakhat	in	nau an	a	ne	hi
Gangte	naupɔŋ	khat	in	nau an	a	ne	i
Paite	naupɔŋ	khat	in	nau an	a	ne	hi
Simte	naupɔŋ	khat	nin	nau an	a	ne	hi
Zou	naupaŋ	khat	nin	nau an	a	ne	hi
	child	one	ERG	baby food	3SG	eat	ASSERT
	'A child eats/takes baby food'						

As can be seen in the examples above the ergative marker *-in* occur with the agent of the transitive verb.

2.7.2. Instrumental case

As stated above, the instrumental case is also marked by *-in*.

	ɔma	-n	kot	cu	thi?	in	a	hoŋ	e
Thadou									
Vaiphei	ɔma	-n	kot	cu	thik	in	a	hoŋ	hi
Gangte	ɔma	-n	kot	cu	thik	in	a	hoŋ	hi
Paite	ɔma	-n	koŋkha?	cu	sik	in	a	hoŋ	hi
Simte	ɔma	-n	kotkha	cu	sik	in	a	hoŋ	hi

Zou əma -n kot cu sik in a hoŋ hi
 3SG ERG door DEF iron INST 3SG open ASSERT
 ‘He/she broke the door by a metal’

2.7.3. Locative case

The locative case is marked by *aʔ*. It has three allomorphs.

1. *aʔ* occur if the preceding word end in vowels.
2. *naʔ/laʔ* occur if the preceding word end in alveolar.

Thadou kei in naʔ ka ceŋ e
 Vaiphei kei in naʔ ka ceŋ hi
 Gangte kei in naʔ ka ceŋ hi
 Paite kei in naʔ ka teŋ hi
 Simte kei in naʔ ka teŋ hi
 Zou kei in naʔ ka teŋ hi
 i house LOC 1SG live ASSERT
 ‘I live in the house’

2.7.4. Genitive case

The genitive case is expressed by *a*.

Thadou hici soŋkhol hi ka pa a ahi
 Vaiphei zi soŋkhol hi ka pa a ahi
 Gangte zi ponaʔ hi ka pa a ahi
 Paite hia soŋkhol hi ka pa a ahi
 Simte hia soŋkhol hi ka pa a ahi
 Zou hi ponaʔ hi ka pa a ahi
 this shirt DET 1SG father GEN ASSERT
 ‘This is my father’s shirt’

The genitive marker also occurs even when the possessed item is not specified.

Thadou ka pa a
 Vaiphei ka pa a
 Gangte ka pa a
 Paite ka pa a
 Simte ka pa a
 Zou ka pa a
 1SG father GEN
 ‘my father’s own’

2.7.5. Ablative case

The ablative case is marked by *pətnin*.

Thadou	kei	in	na	pətnin	ka	poʔ	doʔ	e
Vaiphei	kei	in	na	pətnin	ka	poʔ	doʔ	hi
Gangte	kei	in	na	pətnin	ka	poʔ	doʔ	hi
Paite	kei	in	na	pətnin	ka	pei	khia	hi
Simte	kei	in	na	pətnin	ka	poʔ	doʔ	hi
Zou	kei	in	na	pətnin	ka	poʔ	doʔ	hi
	i	house	LOC	ABL	1SG	go	out	ASSERT
‘I went away from house’								

2.7.6. Dative case

The dative marker is 0 (zero).

Thadou	ki	-n	əma	sum	ka	pe
Vaiphei	ki	-n	əma	sum	ka	pe
Gangte	ke	-n	əmaʔ	sum	ka	pe
Paite	ki	-n	əma	sum	ka	pia
Simte	ki	-n	əma	sum	ka	pia
Zou	ki	-n	əma	sum	ka	pia
	i	ERG	3SG	money	1SG	give
‘I gave him money’						

2.7.7. Benefactive case

The benefactive case is marked by *diŋ*.

Thadou	ki	-	ka	zinu	adiŋ	khi	ka	coʔ	piʔ	e
		n								
Vaiphei	ki	-	ka	zinu	adiŋ	khi	ka	coʔ	pik	hi
		n								
Gangte	ke	-	ka	zinu	adiŋ	khi	ka	coʔ	sak	hi
		n								
Paite	ki	-	ka	zinu	adiŋ	khi	ka	coʔ	piʔ	hi
		n								
Simte	ke	-	ka	zi	adiŋ	khi	ka	lei	sak	hi
		n								

Zou	ki	-	ka	zinu	adiŋ	khi	ka	lei	pia?	hi
		n								
	i		1SG	wife	BEF	necklace	1SG	buy		ASSERT

‘I bought a necklace for my wife’

2.7.8. Comitative case

The commutative case is marked by *pi*.

Thadou	ka	ki	Lon	pi	nu	cu	ka	loi	nu	ahi
Vaiphei	ka	ki	ton	pi	nu	cu	ka	loi	nu	ahi
Gangte	ka	ki	ton	pi	nu	cu	ka	loi	nu	ahi
Paite	ka	ki	ton	pi	nu	cu	ka	loi	nu	ahi
Simte	ka	ki	ton	pi	nu	cu	ka	loi	nu	ahi
Zou	ka	ki	ton	pi	nu	cu	ka	loi	nu	ahi
	i	V.REF	go	COM	girl	DEF	1SG	friend	FEM	ASERT

‘The girl I went with is my friend’

3. Pronoun and verbal Agreement

Kuki-Chin languages are unique in exhibiting a basic characteristic pronominal incorporation in verbal morphology. In terms of grammatical relations, the nominals whose features are manifested on the verb include subject, direct object and indirect object. For the purpose of agreement features, pronouns are the source while the predicate or other constituents only copy them through affixation (prefixing). Verb shows subject agreement for all persons (first, second, third) and numbers (singular, dual, plural). The following example illustrate only first person.

Verb agreement with first person

Thadou	ki _i	-n	an	ka _i	ne
Vaiphei	ki _i	-n	an	ka _i	ne
Gangte	ke _i	-n	an	ka _i	ne
Paite	ke _i	-n	an	ka _i	ne
Simte	ke _i	-n	an	ka _i	ne
Zou	ki _i	-n	an	ka _i	ne
	i	ERG	food	1SG	eat

‘I am eating food’

The first person form kin/ken in the above examples shows the obligatory coalescence of kei+in. This coalescence rule is observed when two vowels in adjacent morphemes/words are joined together.

Verb agreement with the second person

Thadou	naŋ _i	in	an	na _i	ne
Vaiphei	naŋ _i	in	an	na _i	ne
Gangte	naŋ _i	in	an	na _i	ne
Paite	naŋ _i	in	an	na _i	ne
Simte	naŋ _i	in	an	na _i	ne
Zou	naŋ _i	in	an	na _i	ne
	you	ERG	food	2 SG	eat
	‘you are eating food’				

Verb agreement with third person

Thadou	ama _i	in	ama _j	a _i	mu
Vaiphei	ama _i	in	ama _j	a _i	mui
Gangte	ama _i	in	ama _j	a _i	mui
Paite	ama _i	in	ama _j	a _i	mu
Simte	ama _i	in	ama _j	a _i	mu
Zou	ama _i	in	ama _j	a _i	mu
	He/she	ERG	3SG	1SG	see
	‘he/she saw him/her’				

4. Noun classifier

Kuki-Chin languages have a reasonably large set of classifiers referring to special semantic fields which include round or oblong items, drops of liquid, elongated flap items, thin items etc. As can be seen in the examples below, the classifiers follow the noun in these languages.

4.1. Round or oblong items

Thadou komla/mai/alu/hai/cŋmai pom khat

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Vaiphei	komla/mai/alu/hai/cɔŋmai	pom	khat
Gangte	komla/mai/alu/hai/cɔŋmai	pom	khat
Paite	komla/mai/alu/hai/tɔŋmai	pom	khat
Simte	komla/mai/alu/hai/tɔŋmai	pom	khat
Zou	komla/mai/alu/hai/tɔŋmai	pom	khat
	orange/pumpkin/potato/ mango/cucumber	classifier	one

‘A round shape of orange/pumpkin/potato/mango/
cucumber’

Solid and rough edge item take the classifier *cɔŋ/tɔŋ*.

Thadou	soŋ	cɔŋ	khat
The rest	suaŋ	tɔŋ	khat
	stone	classifier	one

‘A rough piece of stone’

4.2. Drops of liquid

Thadou	tui	vat	khat
Vaiphei	tui	vat	khat
Gangte	tui	vat	khat
Paite	tu	vat	khat
Simte	tui	vat	khat
Zou	tui	vat	khat
	water	classifier	one

‘A drop of water’

4.3. Flat items

Thadou	thiŋ/lekha/caŋLaʔ	peʔ/phen	khat
Vaiphei	thiŋ/lekha/vaithum	pek	khat
Gangte	thiŋ/lekha/caŋthaʔ	pek	khat
Paite	siŋ/lekha/tɔŋhou	pek	khat
Simte	siŋ/lekha/tɔŋhou	pek	khat
Zou	siŋ/lekha/tɔŋhou	pek	khat
	wood/book/bread	classifier	‘one’

‘A plank/sheet/slice of wood/paper/bread’

There is another classifier *pai* which is used particularly for beam and the like as in.

beloi	pai	khat
beam	classifier	one

‘One beam’

4.4. Thin and elongated items

Thadou	pət/hiu/səm/notkai	zəŋ	khat
Vaiphei	pət/pin/səm/notkai	zəŋ	khat
Gangte	pət/pin/səm/meikheit	zəŋ	khat
Paite	pət/pin/səm/notkuaŋ	zəŋ	khat
Simte	pət/pin/səm/notkoŋ	zəŋ	khat
Zou	pət/p ^h in/səm/notkuaŋ	zəŋ	khat
	thread/needle/ hair/matchstick	classifier	one

‘A string/piece/a stick of thread/needle/hair/matchstick’

Another classifier which do not fall in the above list is *ke*. This is used for sprouted vegetables such as arum, potato and ginger.

Thadou	bal/thiiŋ/alu	ke	khat
Vaiphei	bal/thiiŋ/alu	ke	khat
Gangte	bal/thiiŋ/alu	ke	khat
Paite	bal/siiŋ/alu	ke	khat
Simte	bal/siiŋ/alu	ke	khat
Zou	bal/siiŋ/alu	ke	khat
	Arum/ginger/potato	classifier	one

‘One arum/ginger/potato’

5. Noun reduplication

Like other Tibeto-Burman languages, the Kuki-Chin languages also reduplicate the nouns for distributive or exclusive meaning.

Thadou	ama	in	in	na?	khutdon	a	ci	e
Vaiphei	ama	in	in	na?	khutdon	a	ci	hi
Gangte	ama?	in	in	na?	khutdon	a	cie?	hi
	3SG	house	house	LOC	beg	3SG	go	ASSERT

Paite, Simte and Zou reduplicate the plural marker instead of the noun *in* ‘house’

Paite	ama	in	teŋ	teŋ	a?	khutdon	a	pei	hi
Simte	ama?	in	teŋ	teŋ	a	khutdon	a	pei	hi
Zou	ama	in	teŋ	teŋ	a?	khutdon	a	cie?	hi
	3SG	house	teŋ	teŋ	LOC	beg	3SG	go	ASERT

‘He went house to house begging’

6. Noun compound

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The Kuki-Chin languages are rich in noun compounds. The compounds formed by the combination of two nouns are mainly endocentric compound.

Thadou	Vaiphei	Gangte	Paite	Simte	Zou	Gloss
keŋ+ŋoŋ	keŋ+ŋoŋ	keŋ+ŋoŋ	xe+ŋoŋ	keŋ+ŋoŋ	keŋ+ŋoŋ	‘ankle’
nap+tui	nap+tui	nap+tui	nap+tui	nap+tui	nap+tui	‘nose
mucus+water	mucus+water	mucus+water	mucus+water	mucus+water	mucus+water	running’
tui+lung	tui+luŋ	ceŋ+kol	tui+luŋ	teŋ+kol	tui+luŋ	‘snail’
water+worm	water+worm	water+worm	water+worm	water+worm	water+worm	
ting+gu	tiŋ+gu	tiŋ+gu	tiŋ+gu	siŋ+gu	tiŋ+gu	‘spine’
spine+bone	spine+bone	spine+bone	spine+bone	spine+bone	spine+bone	
khut+tin	khut+tin	khut+tin	khut+tin	khut+tin	khut+tin	‘nail’
hand+nail	hand+nail	hand+nail	hand+nail	hand+nail	hand+nail	
keŋ+zuŋ	keŋ+zuŋ	keŋ+zuŋ	xe+zuŋ	keŋ+zuŋ	keŋ+zuŋ	‘toe’
leg+root	leg+root	leg+root	leg+root	leg+root	leg+root	
mit+mul	mit+mul	mit+mul	mit+mul	mit+mul	mit+mul	‘eyebrow’
eye+feather	eye+feather	eye+feather	eye+feather	eye+feather	eye+feather	
mit+lhi	mit+lhi	mit+tui	mit+tui	mit+tui	mit+tui	‘tear’
sap+thei	sap+thei	sap+thei	sap+thei	sap+thei	sap+thei	‘passion
english+fruit	english+fruit	english+fruit	english+fruit	english+fruit	english+fruit	fruit’
mei+hol	mei+hol	mei+hol	mei+hol	mei+hol	mei+hol	‘charcoal’
fire+charcoal	fire+charcoal	fire+charcoal	fire+charcoal	fire+charcoal	fire+charcoal	
zun+bu?	zun+bu?	zun+bu?	zun+bu?	zun+bu?	zun+bu?	‘urinal’
urine+hut	urine+hut	urine+hut	urine+hut	urine+hut	urine+hut	
nah+ko	nah+ko	na?+hom	na?+ko	na?+kua	na?+ko	‘nose’
nose+hole	nose+hole	nose+hole	nose+hole	nose+hole	nose+hole	
bil+ləm	bil+ləm	bil+e?	bil+khem	bil+ləm	bil+khem	‘earwax’
ear+wax	ear+wax	ear+dung	ear+wax	ear+wax	ear+wax	

7. Noun modifiers

Like majority of the verb final languages in Asia, the Kuki-Chin languages, too put most of its modifiers after the noun. In this section, I will limit my focus on 4 word order parameter involving the order between the noun and various modifiers of the noun, namely, adjective, demonstrative, numeral and relative clause, in which there is a considerable variation among the OV languages of Tibeto-Burman. Furthermore, except for the order of relative clause and noun, the rest are word order characteristics which do not correlate to the order of object and verb. (Dryer 1988, 1992a, 205h).

7.1. Adjective

The term adjective is used here in purely semantic sense. Grammatical the adjective like in many other Tibeto-Burman languages behaves as verb. There is a variation

among of the OV Tibeto-Burman languages with regard to the order of adjective and noun. The Kuki-Chin languages under consideration have a fix order in that the adjective comes after the noun.

Gloss	‘small man’	‘small river’	‘good friend’	‘good season’	‘strong person’
Thadou	mi neo	lui neo	loi pha	phat pha	mi hat
Vaiphei	mi neu	lui neo	loi pha	hun pha	mi hat
Gangte	mi neu	lui neo	loi pha	hun pha	mi hat
Paite	mi neu	lui neo	loi pha	hun pha	mi hat
Simte	mi neu	lui neo	loi pha	hun pha	mi hat
Zou	mi neu	lui neo	loi pha	hun pha	mi hat
	man small	small river	friend good	time good	man strong

7.2. Determiner

Like Manipuri, Mizo and Hmar, the languages discussed here have split determiner. The determiner in these languages distinguishes for two kinds of spatial distances (1) proximate and (2) remote. The determiners of these Kuki-Chin languages which precede and follow the noun are illustrated in the example below.

	proximate		Remote	
Thadou	hici pa hi this man this	‘this man’	khuci pa khu that man that	‘that man’
Vaiphei	zi naupaŋ hi this boy this	‘this boy’	zi naupaŋ khu that man that	‘that boy’
Gangte	zi ui hi this dog this	‘this dog’	zi ui khu that man that	‘that dog’
Paite	hiai nauŋeh hi this baby this	‘this baby’	huai nauŋeh khu that baby that	‘that baby’
Simte	hiai lekhabu hi this book this	‘this book’	huai lekhu khu that man that	‘that book’
Zou	tami pahta hi this flower this	‘this flower’	tami pahta khu that man that	‘that flower’

7.3. Numeral

The Kuki-Chin languages have monomorphemic number words for 1 to 10 and the compound formation starts only after 10. For example 11 is decomposable structurally as 1+1 and 21 is 2+1. The only language among this group which has numeral classifier is Vaiphei. As can be seen in the following examples the numeral classifier *-pa* in Vaiphei precedes the numeral.

Thadou Vaiphei Gangte Paite Simte Zou gloss

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khat	pakhat	khat	khat	khat	khat	‘one’
ni	Pani	ni?	ni?	ni?	ni	‘two’
thum	pathum	thum	thum	thum	thum	‘three’
li	Pali	li	li	li	li	‘four’
ɲa	Paɲa	ɲa	ɲa	ɲa	ɲa	‘five’
gup	pagup	gup	guk	gup	gup	‘six’
sagi	pasagi	sagi?	sagi?	sagi?	sahi	‘seven’
giat	pagiat	giat	giat	giat	giet	‘eight’
ko	Pako	kuo	kua	kua	kuo	‘nine’
som	pasom	som	som	som	som	‘ten’

The numerals from eleven to nineteen are formed by compounding, the numeral expressing ten and the second member would be the basic number from 1 to nine. In between the first member and second *le* ‘and’ is inserted.

Thadou	Vaiphei	Gangte	Paite	Simte	Zou	gloss
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘eleven’
khat	khat	khat	khat	khat	khat	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som-le-	‘twelve’
ni	ni	ni?	ni?	ni?	ni	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘thirteen’
thum	thum	thum	thum	thum	thum	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘fourteen’
li	li	li	li	li	li	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘fifteen’
ɲa	ɲa	ɲa	ɲa	ɲa	ɲa	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘sixteen’
gup	gup	guk	guk	gup	gup	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘seventeen’
sagi	sagi	sagi?	sagi	sagi?	sagi	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘eighteen’
giat	giat	giat	giat	giat	giet	
som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	som le	‘nineteen’
ko	kua	kua	kua	kua	kuo	

The number from 20-90 are formed by compounding *som* ‘ten’ and with the number from 1-7 with inserting *le/le?*.

Thadou	Vaiphei	Gangte	Paite	Simte	Zou	gloss
somni	somni	somni?	somni?	somni?	somni	‘twenty’
somthum	somthum	somthum	somthum	somthum	somthum	‘thirty’
somli	somli	somli	somli	somli	somli	‘fourty’
somṅa	somṅa	somṅa	somṅa	somṅa	somṅa	‘fifty’
somgup	somgup	somgup	somguk	somgup	somgu	‘sixty’
somsagi	somsagi	somsagi	somsagi	somsagi?	somsagi	‘seventy’
somgiet	somgiet	somgiet	somgiet	somgiet	somgiet	‘eighty’
somko	somko	somko	somko	somkua	somko	‘ninety’

The higher number for hundred and thousand are also monomorphemic except for Thadou. The word for hundred in Thadou is *za khat* or simply *za*.

Like the order of adjective and noun, the numeral follows the noun. It should be further noted here that, Vaiphei placed the numeral classifier *pa* before the numeral except for counting things, object or person.

combine	‘one man’	‘four	‘seven boys’	‘two couple’	‘ten guns’
gloss		cows’			
Thadou	mi khat	boṅli	pasəl sagi	nupa ni	meithal som
Vaiphei	mi pakhat	boṅli	pasəl sagi	nupa ni	meithal som
Gangte	mi khat	boṅli	pasəl sagi?	nupa ni	meithal som
Paite	mi khat	boṅli	pasəl sagi	nupa ni	thau som
Simte	mi khat	boṅli	pasəl sagi?	nupa ni	meithal som
Zou	mi khat	boṅli	pasəl sagi	nupa ni	thau som

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