

The Status of Ngawn in South Central (Kuki-Chin)

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- <https://tinyurl.com/TDNgawnSL>

- **Updated abstract**

- <https://tinyurl.com/TDNgawnAB>

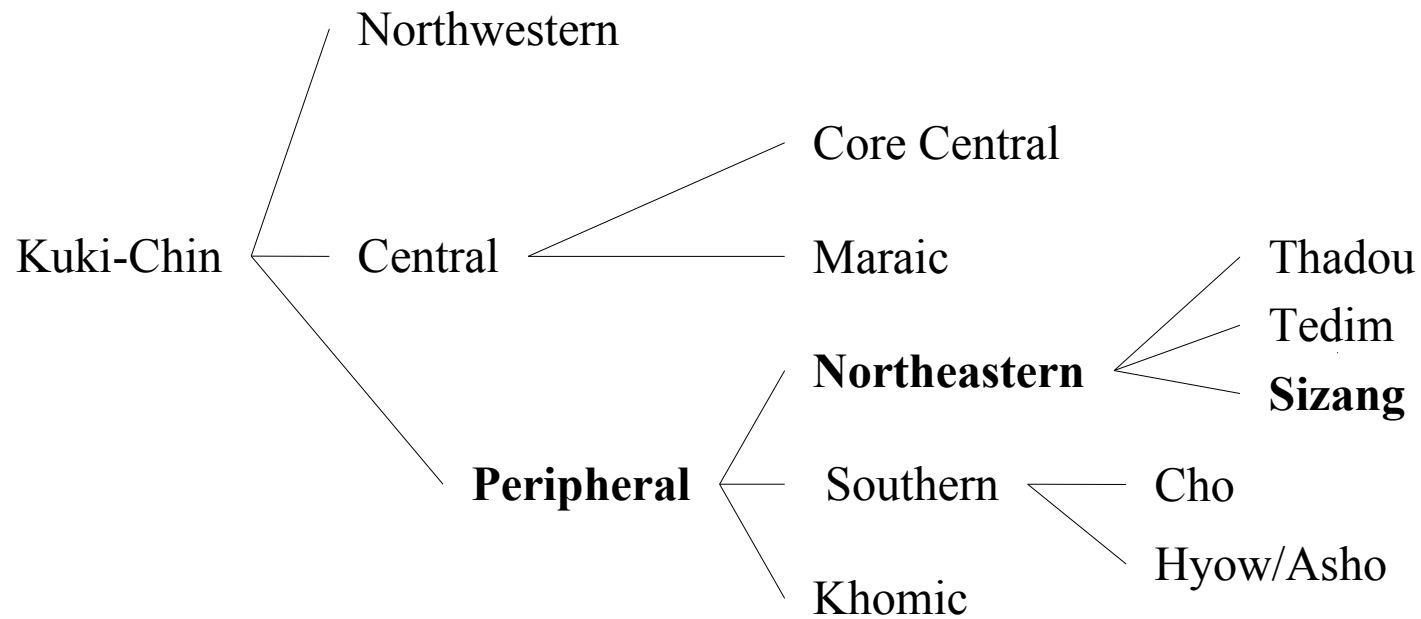


Aims

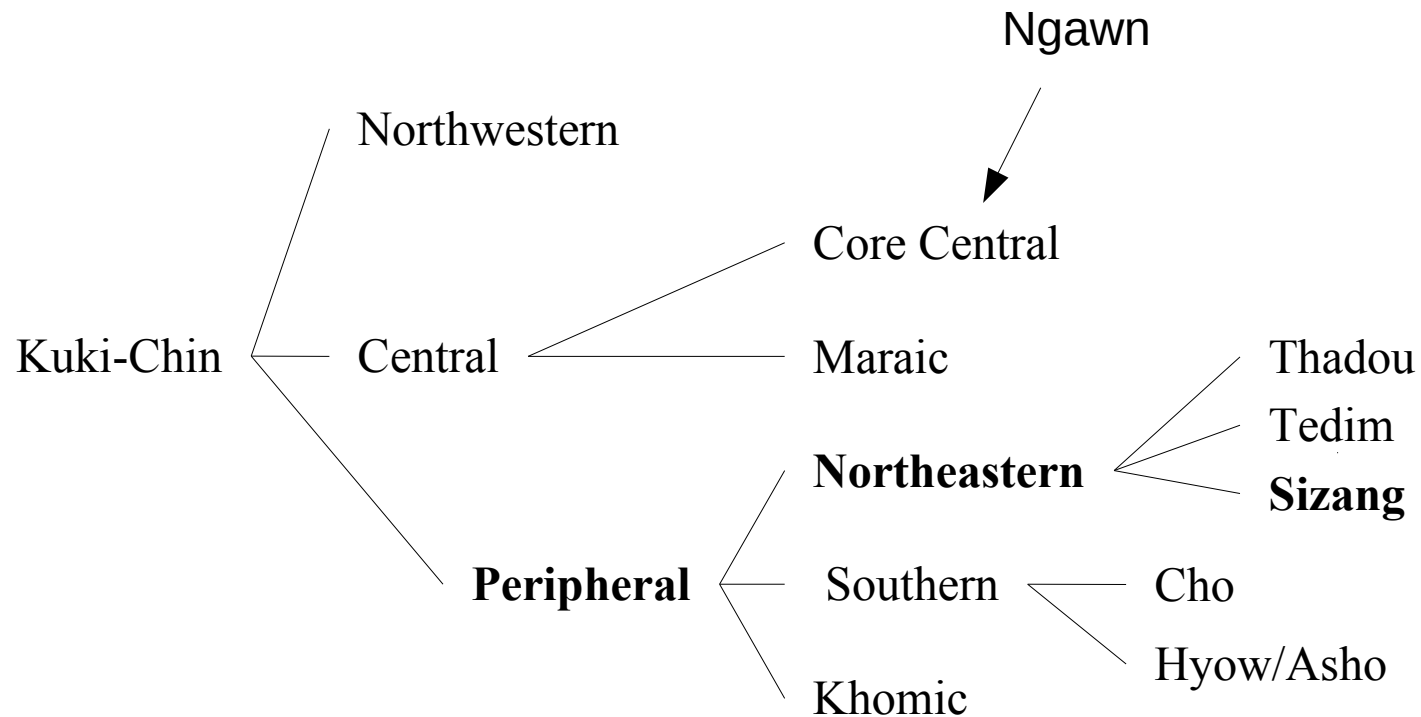
- **Introduce the Ngawn language**
- **Demonstrate that Ngawn should be classified as “Northern Kuki-Chin” and not “Central”**
- **Bonus - Tell you how to get a free Ethnologue subscription and why you should.**



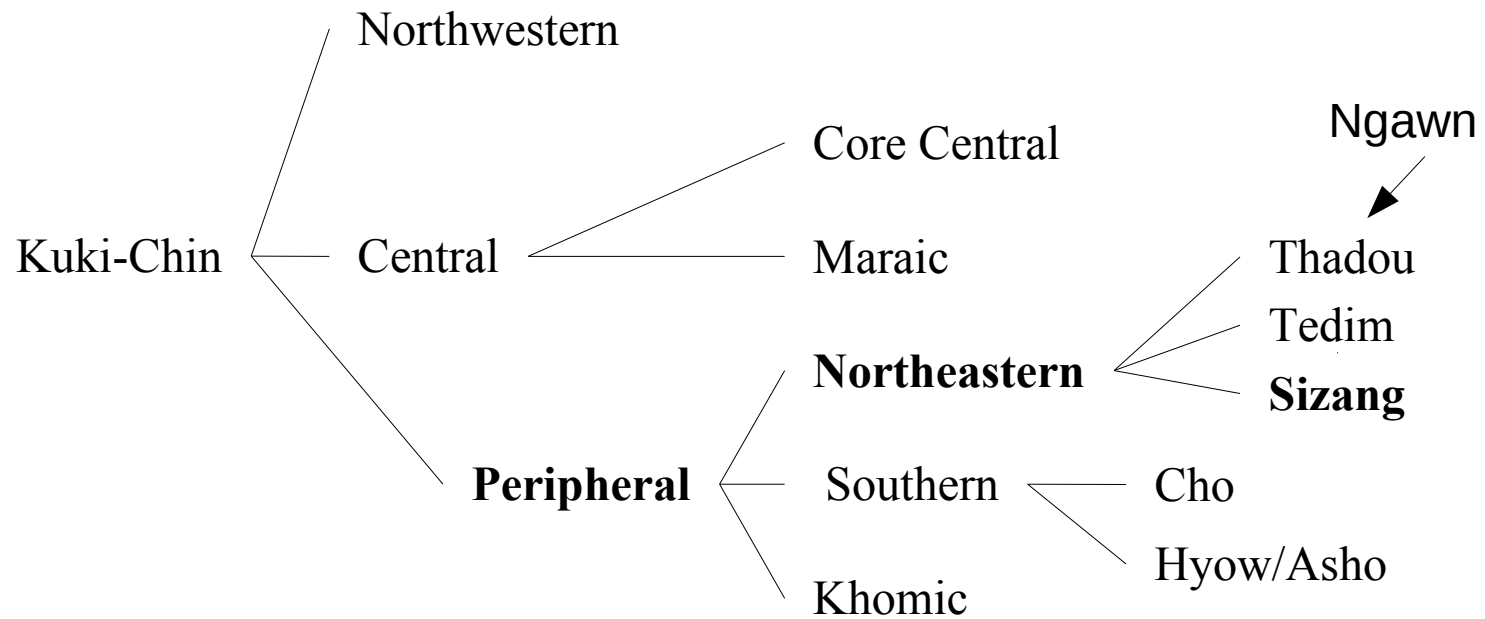
South Central Sub-Grouping



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Ngawn

- **ṅh̄n (ISO-693: cnw)**
- **Northern Falam Township of Chin State, Myanmar**
- **No. of speakers 18,600 (Leclerc 2017d in Eberhard et.al. 2020)**
- **Speakers are mostly bilingual in Ngawn and Falam (Laizo) (cfm)**
 - Some also speak Sizang (csy)
 - Some also speak Tedim (ctd)
 - Many fluent in Burmese
- **Very little information is available about Ngawn**
 - Some Ngawn Facebook groups → “Ngawn Thuthang” (Ngawn History)
 - OT & NT Christian Bible Translation in 2015 (with Myanmar Bible Society)



Map

Main Languages of Chin State, Published by Language and Social Development Organization (LSDO), Yangon, Myanmar. Last updated 29 October 2019.



First Ngawn encounter

- **Travelling down from Voklaak (Sizang Village)**
- **Valung (ပါးလုံရွာ)**
 - Not listed in the English-language MIMU census of Falam Township
 - Only on one Burmese map



Map (with Valung)

Main Languages of Chin State, Published by Language and Social Development Organization (LSDO), Yangon, Myanmar. Last updated 29 October 2019.



Data

- **Chiang Mai, Thailand - 3 August 2016**
- **Male Ngawn speaker (30s) from Valung village**
 - Lived in Kalaymyo
 - Now lives in Yangon
 - Speaker of Ngawn, Falam, Tedim, Burmese and Mizo
 - Works as a Christian Pastor
- **50 word list for Kuki-Chin tonal comparison (based off of VanBik 2009)**
- **SIL MSEAG 462 Wordlist**
- **Spontaneous elicitation of a “Chhura” story**
 - Speaker read the story in Mizo
 - Retold a version in Ngawn



Problem

Chin, Ngawn

LANGUAGE	MAP	CONTRIBUTE
A language of <u>Myanmar</u>		
ISO 639-3	cnw	
Alternate Names	Ngawn, Ngon, Ngorn	
User Population	18,600 (Leclerc 2017d).	
Location	Chin state: north Falam township.	
Language Status	5 (Developing).	
Classification	Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Kuki-Chin, Central	



Why is it “Central”?

- **The only classification of Ngawn to-date is that of Fr. André Bareigts, as discussed in VanBik (2009:18-20).**
 - Division into “North” and “South” Chin
 - Classified Ngawn as “N. Central” along with Zahau, Lushai (Mizo), and Hakha
- **It makes sense, because they live in the same area and (at least now) are bilingual in Falam, but not linguistically sound**



What makes a language “Central Kuki Chin”?

- ***r- retention**
- **Peterson (2017:196, emphasis mine)**
In essence, what on Kuki-Chin external grounds presumably was an original rhotic sound has been fully retained in Central languages and, based on available evidence, in Northwestern [Bareigt’s “Old Kuki”] languages.



Ngawn and “Shafer’s Law”

- **Hill (2014:24) coined the term “Shafer’s Law” to refer to the sound change of *r → /g/**
 - This innovation takes place in Northern and Southern Kuki-Chin languages (Peterson’s “Peripheral” – amalgamation of Northern and Southern)
 - Except in two Northern languages
 - Sizang (csy)
 - Ngawn (csy)



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$*r- \rightarrow /ŋ/$

$*-r \rightarrow /k/$



Methodology

- **Took my Ngawn dataset (from 2016)**
- **Compared proto-phonemes realizations between**
 - Falam – Khar Thuan (2007)
 - Sizang – Tyler Davis (unpublished)
 - Tedim – Khoi Lam Thang (2001)




*r initial sample

No.	gloss	Ngawn	Falam	Siz	Ted
355	to steal	ŋu ³⁴	fiir ⁴⁴ / ruu ⁵²	ŋu ³⁴	gu:ʌ
		ŋ-	r-	ŋ-	g-



*r initial sample

No.	gloss	Ngawn	Falam	Siz	Ted
355	to steal	ηu^{34}	$fiir^{44}/ruu^{52}$	ηu^{34}	$gu:\updownarrow$
		$\eta-$	$r-$	$\eta-$	$g-$



How does Ethnologue classify Sizang?

Autonym	Sizang
User Population	10,700 (Leclerc 2017d).
Location	Chin state: south Tedim township.
Language Status	5 (Developing).
Classification	<u>Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Kuki-Chin, Peripheral Northern Sizang</u>



Ngawn *r examples

*Correspondences of *r- in Ngawn*

Ngawn	Gloss	Proto Lexeme	Source
ŋuaʔ ²¹	'rain'	*ruaʔ	VB 964
t ^h in ³⁴ .ŋaʔ ²¹ (.mu ³⁴)	'fruit (tree)'	*raʔ	VB [941]
ŋua ³³	'bamboo plant (large)'	*rua	VB [919]
ŋam ³³ .sa ³⁴	'(wild) animal'	*ram	VB [953]
ŋul ³³	'snake'	*ruul	VB [975]



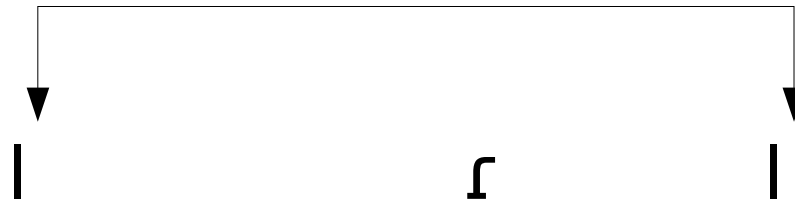
Peterson on *r → ŋ

Sizang is different from other traditional Northeastern languages in two intriguing respects. First, the normal reflex for initial *r in Sizang is ŋ (e.g., *ngūl* 'snake', *ngūl* 'entrails'). This might seem problematic, but if we keep in mind the variation between prenasalized and non-prenasalized forms found in Luce's citations for these forms in Tedim, an explanation seems readily at hand: there was variation between prenasalized and non-prenasalized sounds in the pronunciation of the reflex for *r at least as far back as the Proto-Northeastern Chin stage; Sizang simply showed preference for the prenasalized version rather than the non-prenasalized version, and the sound developed further into a velar nasal.⁵

Peterson (2017: 198)



*r → //



No	Gloss	Ngawn	Falam	Sizang	Tedim
362	six (persons)	mi ³⁴ .pa ³³ .luk ²¹	pa ²¹ .ɾuk ²¹	luk ⁴²	gukɿ
363	seven (persons)	mi ³⁴ .pa ³³ .sa ³⁴ .li ²¹	pa ²¹ .sa ²¹ .ɾiʔ ²¹	sa ⁴² .li ³⁴	saɿgiʔɿ
364	eight (persons)	mi ³⁴ .pa ³³ .liɛt ³⁴	pa ²¹ .ɾiat ⁵²	liat ³⁴	giatɿ



Final *-r

M462 Eng	Ngawn	Falam	Sizang (Tyler Dra	Tedim (KLT)
mud	tsin ³⁴ .tsiak ³³	tsiar ²¹ .bæɛk ⁴⁴	buan ³³	buanɬ
iron	t ^h ik ³⁴	t ^h iir ⁴⁴	tɕ ^h ik ³⁴	sikɬ
flower	pak ³³	paŋ ⁴⁴ .paɾ ²¹	pa:k ³³	pa:kɬ
chicken	ak ³³	aaɾ ²³	ak ³³	akɬ
nose	naɪ ²¹	naaɾ ²¹	na:k ³³	na:kɬ
mat	-	pher ²³	-	p ^h ekɬ
to count	sial ³³	siaɾ ²³	sim ^ɬ	simɬ
to return	pin ³⁴ (.let ²¹)	kiir ⁴⁴	tɕia ⁴² .kik ³⁴	ki:leɬɬ
to sell	zuak ³³	juar ²³	zuak ³³	zuakɬ
to be new (things)	t ^h ak ³³	t ^h ar ²³	-	t ^h akɬ
to be sour	t ^h uk ³⁴	t ^h uur ⁴⁴	-	t ^h ukɬ



To reiterate and conclude

- **Ngawn fits the definition of a Northern/Peripheral language**
(*r → /ŋ/)
 - Falam: r- -r
 - Sizang: ŋ- -k
 - Ngawn: ŋ- -k
 - Tedim: g- -k
- **It should not be classified as “Central” anywhere**
 - That classification was based upon geography
 - Not upon sound innovations



Call to action!

Ngawn should be classified as Northern Chin (along with Tedim and Sizang)

Tyler Davis, Sun, 2020-10-04 00:41

Regarding: Classification

ISO 639-3: cnw

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Future Plans

- **Write a phonological sketch**
- **Collect more etyma and write a full phonology**
- **Finish glossing and analyzing the “Chhura” text**
- **Make grammar sketch**



Works Cited

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