CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the conclusions in this thesis. Each chapter is briefly summarized.

Chapter 1 introduced the Chin people, the languages and methods of investigation in this thesis. The Chin people are originally from the Yellow river or Manchu river valley of Southwest China and currently live in adjacent to the border of Myanmar, India and Bangladesh. The date of their arrival to the present region is estimated not earlier than the 13th century AD. There are possibly as many as 54 Chin languages spoken in Chin State. Most linguists consider Chin languages to be in three groups: Northern, Central and Southern Chin.

Chapter 2 involves about the selection of representative languages. Lexicostatistic methods are applied to twenty-one different Chin languages. Based on the lexicostatistic analysis, a preliminary subgrouping is proposed as shown in Table 129.

Preliminary Subgrouping of Chin languages				
A		**B**		
I	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**
A. Thado	E. Bualkhua	N. Matu	R. Lautu	U. Khumi
B. Zo	F. Zaniat	O. Kaang	S. Lakher	
C. Siyin	G. Mizo	P. Dai	T. Mara	
D. Tedim	H. Falam	Q. Asho		
	I. Taisun			
	J. Hakha			
	K. Thantlang			
	L. Khualsim			
	M. Senthang			

Table 129. Selected Chin languages

There are five subgroups of Chin languages. Representative languages are selected from each subgroup. Mizo and Hakha are selected from subgroup II. Thus, there are

six selected languages: Tedim, Mizo, Hakha, Mara, Khumi, and Kaang. Tedim represents group I, Mizo and Hakha represent group II, Kaang represents group III, Mara represents group IV and Khumi represents group V.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the six selected languages based on syllable canon, consonant inventory, vowel inventory, segment distribution and tones. Regarding initial consonants, all languages share the voiceless aspirated and unaspirated stop series. Khumi and Tedim have the voiced dosal stops whereas the other Chin languages do not. Tedim does not have the voiceless nasal series and coronal trill while the other Chin languages have voiceless and voiced sets. Mizo, Hakha and Mara have two affricates. Only Mizo, Hakha and Khumi have voiceless labial fricatives. Tedim does not have the voiceless lateral approximant while the other languages have voiced and voiceless lateral approximants. All languages share the voiced labial fricative and voiceless coronal fricative. Kaang and Khumi do not have the voiced coronal fricative but have the voiced palatal approximant which the other do not have. All languages have the glottal stop, at least phonetically, and glottal fricative [h].

For final consonants, Mara is different from the other languages as it does not have closed syllables. The remaining languages have stop and nasal series in finals. Khumi does not have the voiceless labial stop syllable final. Khumi and Kaang do not have liquid finals.

Five cardinal vowels are common in all languages. In addition, Kaang vowels tend to be central while Hakha, Mizo and Tedim mostly have diphthongs. Mizo and Hakha.

Chapter 4 provided the phonological reconstruction. This chapter solves the longstanding problem of the proto *g in Chin reconstruction. Arguments from symmetry are used to reconstruct more marginal elements in the data. It is noted that while there are some relationships between tonal correspondence in Tedim, Mizo and

Hakha, however there are no consistent correspondences in Mara, Kaang and Khumi. Thus, tone is not included in this reconstruction.

Chapter 5 described the Proto Chin and proposed the subgrouping. The Proto Chin consonant inventory is symmetrical. It has voiceless stop, voiced stop and voiceless aspirated stop series. Liquids and nasals have their voiceless counterparts. A voicing contrast for fricatives appears only at the coronal point of articulation. The vowel inventory is also symmetric with a typical five-vowel system. The syllable can be generalized as $(C_1)(C_2)V_1(V_2)(C_3)T$.

The subgrouping based on this phonological reconstruction as shown in Figure 19 (repeated from Figure 16) challenges the traditional subgrouping.
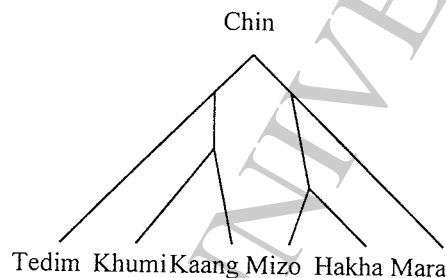
Chin

Tedim Khumi Kaang Mizo Hakha Mara

Figure 19. Subgrouping based on shared phonological rules
(repeated from Figure 16)

This subgrouping is different from traditional classifications and the preliminary subgrouping based on lexicostatistic analysis. Tedim is grouped together with Khumi and Kaang which shows that the traditional Northern Chin group is phonologically closer to the traditional Southern languages than are the Central languages. Again, Hakha and Mizo (traditional Central languages) are grouped together with Mara which is listed as "Other Chin Groups" by Bradley (1997). Mara is the most innovative and Hakha and Mizo are the most conservative languages phonologically.

There are only two main groups in Chin language family with the traditional Northern Chin and Southern Chin groups placed together in one group. This is similar to Peterson's (2000) proposed division of Chin languages with "Central" and "Peripheral" groups. In addition, the traditional Central Chin group is merged with Mara, which Bradley classifies among "Other Chin Groups".

The unfinished tonal analysis shows a clearer predictable tonal correspondence among the northern Chin languages (Mizo, Hakha and Tedim), but the tonal correspondences among the Southern Chin languages are more unpredictable. Therefore, if the tonal reconstruction is considered as criterion for subgrouping the Chin languages examined here, the two main divisions will likely remain the same, but the affiliation of Tedim will likely shift to the northern Chin group. Tedim has a very weak relationship with the southern languages based on shared phonological innovation, and the inclusion of tonal development is likely to shift the balance toward the northern languages. The northern and southern division is also consistent with Lehman's (1963) division of northern and southern Chin groups based on socio-cultural phenomena.

The thesis provides a thorough reconstruction of Chin languages based on phonological segmental aspects. The reconstruction could contribute a solution for recovering the longstanding unsolved problem of *g. It also identifies some key problems involved in tone.