

Verbal morphology and negative constructions in Nocte

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Abstract

This study explores the verbal morphology and negative construction mechanisms in Nocte, a language belonging to the Northern Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman family, spoken by the Nocte community in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Based on data from the Haꞑwa variety of Nocte, the research provides an in-depth analysis of the Nocte verbal morphology, with a focus on hierarchical agreement, inverse marking and cislocative. Unlike prior analyses that categorized tense and agreement markers as verbal suffixes, this study identifies agreement words as independent entities that carry tense, aspect, mood, and negation functions. The paper also highlights the complexity of negative constructions in Nocte, identifying multiple negative markers and structures that vary according to tense, context, and sentence structure. This work advances the understanding of Nocte's post-verbal morphology and situates its linguistic characteristics within the broader context of Tibeto-Burman languages.

Keywords: Nocte; Tibeto-Burman; hierarchical agreement; inverse; cislocative

ISO codes: 639:3 njb Naga Nocte

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to present the verbal morphology and different ways of constructing negatives in Nocte. Nocte belongs to the Northern Naga subgroup within the Tibeto-Burman family with the code ISO 639:3 njb Naga Nocte. Ethnologue records the population of the Nocte community to be 33,000 (2001 census) and the language status as 6a (vigorous). Burling (2003) categorizes Nocte together with Bodo-Garo, Koch, Konyak and Jingphaw languages into the Sal subgroup of Tibeto-Burman languages. Similar subgrouping of Tibeto-Burman languages is also proposed by linguists such as Bradley (1997) and Thurgood (2003).

My paper is mainly based on the data collected from Borduria village in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, India. The Borduria people speak the Haꞑwa variety of Nocte. Hindi is their second language. However, the old generation can speak Assamese very fluently as Assamese was once the medium of instruction in schools. Now, Hindi and English are widely used in schools. The neighboring Nocte villages are Kaimai, Paniduria, Khonsa, Polung, Laptang, and Pansumthong. In Nocte, *nok* means ‘village’ and *te* stands for the people, so Nocte refers to the people living in the village. According to a 1971 census, there were 58 Nocte villages with a population of 21,853. And according to a 2001 census the population is about 33,000. There are approximately 29 Nocte villages under the Khonsa division, the district headquarters of Tirap district. The Nocte villages I have visited so far are, Borduria, Kheti, Paltan, Dadam, Thinsa, Polung, New Tupi, Deomali, Hoka and Khonsa.

Tirap shares a district border with Changlang and Longding, a state border with Nagaland and Assam, and an international border with Myanmar. There is one Nocte village in the Tinsukia district of Assam called the Paltan Basti or Dihing Kinar Nocte Gaon.

Section 1 in my paper presents the Nocte literature review and data collection methodology, Section 2 talks about the verbal morphology in the language and Section 3 explains the complex negation marking system.

1. Nocte Literature review

Very little linguistic description is available on Nocte. However, wider research allowed me to explore a few linguistic descriptions available on Nocte. One such description is the ‘Tibeto-Burman family’ by Grierson (1903). This is one of the earliest documentations of the language and one of the first writings on Nocte available to me. It can be safely argued that Grierson was inspired by Robinson (1849), a predecessor who wrote a grammar sketch of the Namsangia variety of Nocte. These works briefly describe the lexical categories like nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs and conjunctions. There are no descriptions about the verbal morphology, verbal agreement system or agreements in extended constructions like negatives, which is the focus of my paper in these writings. ‘An Introduction to the Nocte language’ by K. Das Gupta (1971) came after a long gap. Although this volume introduces the verbal agreement marking in Nocte, it is still far from describing any of the post-verbal complexities like the hierarchy in the agreement marking or the inverse marking present in the language. Linguistically, a lesser relevant work ‘The Noctes’ by Parul Dutta (1978) enabled me to have a glance at the socio-political and religious life of the Noctes. Although these books do not meet modern linguistic standards, they are nonetheless a reliable source of the socio-economical background of the Noctes and provide geographical information about the Nocte inhabited areas.

The second phase of linguistic research on Nocte began with the works of linguists like Alfons Weidert and Scott Delancey. Alfons Weidert gave his unpublished notes on Nocte to Scott DeLancey and through him I had the opportunity to study them. Weidert can be said

to be the first linguist who studied Nocte in more depth in comparison to his predecessors. Weidert's notes gave an outline of the agreement paradigm present in Nocte, but they seemed to be based on limited data as he mostly collected sentences presented as examples in K. Das Gupta's book 'An Introduction to the Nocte language'. Moreover, the source of his data is not known. Then came a more concrete work on Nocte that is 'Nocte and Jinghpaw: Morphological correspondences' by Scott DeLancey (2011). This paper is an attempt by DeLancey to do a comparative study of Jinghpaw and Nocte morphology to show the close relationship between the two languages and thus to confirm Burling's (2003) hypothesis which suggests a special relationship between Bodo-Garo, the Konyak Naga languages and Jinghpaw.

The approach of linguists like Alfons Weidert and Scott DeLancey is more relatable to the topic of this paper than any other works available. They set the outline for my research. The understanding of the complex concepts like the hierarchical agreement and inverse marking system opened new horizons. DeLancey's paper was immensely helpful in understanding the complex post-verbal auxiliaries present in Nocte. I started my research with a basic understanding of the agreement system in Nocte. It cannot be denied that DeLancey's paper threw light on the agreement particles and complexities of the hierarchical agreement system present in Nocte. In addition to this, he also discussed the grammatical inverse system present in the language.

Before moving on to describing the negative constructions in Nocte that reflects the complex post verbal morphology of Nocte, it is worth describing the grammatical aspects of the language such as the hierarchical agreement system, inverse marking and cislocative.

Unlike K. Das Gupta's (1971) analysis of Nocte tense and agreement markers as verbal suffixes, this paper works in alignment with DeLancey (2011, 2014) which considers auxiliaries carrying information about TAM, negation and agreement particles as separate words from the main verb, more specifically as sentence final words (SFWs).

The Nocte agreement system is based firstly on person hierarchy and secondly on the grammatical roles of the agent and patient. In other words, in a transitive verb construction in Nocte, the verb agrees with a person that is higher in the person hierarchy. In Nocte person hierarchy, first person is higher than second person and both first person and second person are higher than third person i.e. $1 > 2 > 3$. On the other hand, inverse marking shows whether an object (O) argument outranks the agent (A) argument or not. According to DeLancey (2011, 2014), with hierarchical agreement marking, the presence of the inverse marker confirms that the agreement is with the object and not with the agent.

At this stage there is a lot more work to do on collecting conversational data and more narratives or natural texts which might produce examples contrary to my statement. In other words, after detailed study there may arise some examples defying my analysis of hierarchical agreement. For now, I can say that Nocte does have person hierarchy in the agreement marking and potentially it also has deviations in the agreement hierarchy as discussed in section 2.2.

1.1 Data collection

All the data collected during the research for this paper are from Borduria village in Tirap district and Dihing Kinar Nocte village in Assam. A total of 10 speakers from the older age group (between 40-70 years) were consulted. These speakers speak Nocte as their first language and can speak Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language, as their second language, which they learned in schools or as a lingua franca to do trade with the neighboring state of Assam. A large proportion of the people can also speak Hindi, another major Indo-Aryan language spoken in India. The data collection process involved multiple visits to the villages to establish rapport with the speakers and gain their trust. A structured elicitation process was used, where

participants were asked to translate predefined sentences from Assamese and Hindi into Nocte. Special care was taken to include sentences that would elicit a range of linguistic features such as tense, aspect, mood, and agreement patterns. To ensure consistency, the same set of sentences was used with all participants. In addition to elicited sentences, open-ended interviews were conducted to gather natural speech data. This method allowed the researchers to observe the language in its organic context, revealing patterns that might not surface during elicitation. Folk tales and traditional stories were recorded and translated to examine narrative structures and the use of morphology in storytelling. Audio recordings were made for all sessions, and meticulous field notes were taken to document the context of the data collection. The recordings were later transcribed and analyzed using linguistic software to identify phonological, morphological, and syntactic patterns. Fieldwork ethics were strictly maintained, with participants providing informed consent for their contributions. Additionally, steps were taken to involve the community in the research process, such as sharing preliminary findings and seeking feedback on interpretations. The combination of elicited and spontaneous data ensured a comprehensive understanding of the Nocte language variety in these regions.

2. Introduction to the verbal morphology

According to DeLancey (2014), in languages in northern Myanmar and Northeast India, agreement markers do not attach to the verb stem but occur as phonologically independent words which he refers to as the agreement words. These agreement markers can also get attached to certain morphemes carrying information about tense, aspect and other verbal categories. It is in this sense as suggested by DeLancey that these agreement words can be referred to as verbal operators. This section of the paper gives an overview of how the verbal operators work in Nocte.

Morey (2011) recorded some of the Tangsa varieties having agreement as verbal suffixes. Das Gupta (1971) records Nocte as having verbal suffixes to mark tense and aspect. However, in Nocte I have recorded agreement words together with verbal operators as separate phonological words. A phonological word is defined in terms of a variety of phenomena, namely, prosodic specifications like stress, segmental specifications like assimilation sandhi, phonotactics etc. and one grammatical word may consist of more than one phonological word (Post 2007). It is also evident that consonants and vowel harmony occur within a word and not across word boundaries whereas in Nocte, there seems to be no assimilation between the verb root and the agreement word or particle that follows. For example, *saŋ-tak* ‘sell-PAST-1SG’ ‘sold’ is realized as *saŋ tak* as two separate words. Also, Alfons Weidert in his unpublished notes on Nocte records agreement, TAM, and negation as separate words. However, deeper studies need to be done to understand the agreement words in Nocte.

Nocte has a very complicated post-verbal morphology. DeLancey (2011) discusses the complex SFWs (Sentence Final Word, coined by Dai and Diehl, 2003) in Jingphaw and Nocte. Another important paper by DeLancey (2014) talks about the presence of similar SFW in archaic Kuki-Chin language varieties which he quotes as ‘transparently grammaticalized auxiliary verbs’.

The agreement markers in Nocte can also get attached to certain morphemes carrying information about tense, aspect and other verbal categories. It is in this sense as suggested by DeLancey that these agreement words can be referred to as verbal operators. In Nocte verbal operators give additional information to the main verb like tense, aspect, mood, negation etc.

The verb is always followed by an uninflected operator or an agreement word. Verbal operators give additional information to the main verb like tense, aspect, mood, negation etc.

Some verbal operators always take agreement (“inflected operators”) as in example (1), some cannot take agreement (“uninflected operators”), as in example (2)

- (1) ŋa pit-naŋ ka r-aŋ
 1SG field-LOC go CIS-1SG
 ‘I am coming to the field’

- (2) ŋa pit-naŋ ka min
 1SG field-LOC go FUT
 ‘I will go to the field’

An agreement word consists of the agreement morpheme, with an inflected operator, as in (1), or without, as in (3):

- (3) ŋa pit-naŋ ka aŋ
 1SG field-LOC go FUT.1SG
 ‘I will go to the field’

In Nocte, I have recorded agreement words together with verbal operators as separate phonological words.

2.1 Hierarchical agreement

Hierarchical agreement is a kind of special agreement system, where the transitive verb agrees with a person that is higher in the hierarchy irrespective of its semantic and grammatical role. In Nocte person hierarchy, first person is higher than the second person and both first person and the second person are higher than the third person i.e. 1>2>3.

“Another striking trait which Nocte shares with Jingphaw is hierarchical agreement: the verb agrees with a 1st person or 2nd person in preference to a 3rd, regardless of which is subject or object.” DeLancey (2011)

From the above quotation it is clear that hierarchical agreement is a kind of special agreement system, where the transitive verb agrees with a person that is higher in the hierarchy irrespective of its semantic and grammatical role. Similar evidence of hierarchical agreement system is also found in language varieties like Muklom Tangsa (Morey, 2011) and Rawang (LaPolla, 2010). In the Nocte person hierarchy, first person is higher than the second person and both first person and the second person are higher than the third person i.e. 1P>2P & 1P, 2P>3P. The following table shows the person hierarchy in Haʔwa verbal agreement:

Table 1 Hierarchical agreement and inverse marking

		Patient					
Agent		1SG	1PL	2SG	2PL	3SG	3PL
	1SG			ε	$A\eta$	$a\eta$	$A\eta$
	1PL			ε	ε	ε	ε
	2SG	$h-a\eta$	$h-i$			ɔ	ɔ
	2PL	$h-a\eta$	$h-i$			εn	εn
	3SG	$h-a\eta$	$h-i$	$h-\text{ɔ}$	$h-\varepsilon n$	a	A
	3PL	$h-a\eta$	$h-i$	$h-\text{ɔ}$	$h-\varepsilon n$	a	A

Some good examples showing hierarchical agreement are as follows:

(4) [elicited]

ate-me di η ja η nja-na η ko a
3SG-ERG girl-ABS give FUT-3SG
'He will give to the girl'

Example (4) does not show any hierarchy in the agreement marking as both the agent and the recipient are 3SG. Whereas, in example (5) below the recipient 1SG is higher in the hierarchy than 3SG therefore, the verb agrees with the 1SG.

(5) [elicited]

ate-me ɲa-na η ko h-a η
3SG-ERG 1SG-ABS give INV-FUT-1SG
'He will give to me'

2.2 Agreement in focus

In elicitation, we always get the hierarchy in the agreement system where the verb agrees with the argument that is higher in the hierarchy. However, a transitive sentence can be marked for either of the arguments to mark focus. In other words, it is also possible that apart from tense, person and aspectual information, the agreement markings can also carry some pragmatic and contextual information. This inference is required for the understanding of the

apparently irregular agreement marking of the subject and objects in Nocte. Two such situations are described below.

Firstly, in Nocte there is a special agreement marking between 1SG subject and 2SG object, where the verb instead of agreeing with the 1SG subject and 2SG object rather is marked with 1PL agreement. One example is in (6).

- (6) *ŋa-ma naŋ-naŋ ko εʔ*
1SG-ERG 2SG-ABS give FUT-1PL
'I will give to you.'

Here in (6), the verb, instead of being marked for 1SG or 2SG, is marked for 1PL which suggests that the action of giving is seen as a process that involves both the giver *ŋa* (1SG) and the receiver *naŋ* (2SG) achieving the meaning of we *ni* (1PL).

Secondly, the agreement marking can also suggest whether the subject or the object is marked. For example, in the following two sentences, the pragmatics and context will help the listener to understand the speaker's selective use of 3rd person agreement marking over the 1st person agreement or vice versa.

- (7) *ate-ma ŋa-naŋ ko t-a*
3SG-ERG 1SG-ABS give PAST-3SG
'He gave it to me.'

- (8) *ate-ma ŋa-naŋ ko t-h-aŋ*
3SG-ERG 1SG-ABS give PAST-INV-1SG
'He gave it to **me**.'

In example (7), the verb agrees with the 3SG and thus emphasizes the 3rd person. Pragmatically this sentence answers the question 'Who gave it to me?', whereas in sentence (8) the verb agrees with the 1SG object and thus emphasizes 1SG, answering the question, 'Whom did he give it to?'. Presumably, the presence of the inverse marker *-h-* helps the listener or the addressee to confirm that the emphasis is on the 1SG recipient. Apparently, the presence of the inverse marker looks redundant as the verb already agrees to the 1SG which is higher in the person hierarchy and thus is already emphasizing the 1SG recipient, but the inverse marker still co-occurs with the agreement marker in Nocte. One more example showing the presence of both the inverse marker and the hierarchical agreement marking is given in (9).

- (9) *Peter-ma ŋa-naŋ vεt t-h-aŋ*
3SG-ERG 1SG-ABS hit PAST-INV-1SG
'Peter hit **me**.'

2.3 Inverse marking

“An inverse-marking system is one in which there is a ranking of person in which SAP's outrank all 3rd persons, and a transitive verb is marked to reflect whether or not the O argument outranks the A on the hierarchy. The configuration in which the O outranks the A is called inverse, and that in which the A outranks the O is direct.” DeLancey (1981a)

Apart from hierarchy in the agreement system, Nocte also has inverse marking that functions similar to the person indexation system as it also concentrates on marking the hierarchy of a person in a speech event. However, its main function is to show whether the object argument outranks the agent or not. Nocte has an inverse marker /-h-/ that occurs after the main verb. But since Nocte has already a hierarchical agreement system to depict the person hierarchy, the overt inverse marking merely serves to make the understanding of the agreement unambiguous.

Table 1 from section 2.1 above shows hierarchical agreement and inverse marking that will help the readers to comprehend the examples that follow. I leave it to readers to observe how inverse marking works together with the hierarchical agreement in examples (9) to (29). Notice that the inverse marker appears when the hierarchy forces the agreement with the P argument instead of the A argument.

(10) [1SG>2SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

ɲame	naɲnaɲ	vet	ɛ
ɲa	-mɛ naɲ	-naɲ	vet ɛ
I	ERG you	ABS	hit FUT-1PL

'I will hit you (SG)'

(11) [1SG>2PL, no inverse marking, elicited]

ɲame	nenan	vet	aɲ
ɲa	-mɛ ne	-naɲ	vet aɲ
I	ERG 2PL	ABS	hit FUT-1SG

'I will hit you (PL)'

(12) [1SG>3SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

ɲame	atenan	vet	aɲ
ɲa	-mɛ ate	-naɲ	vet aɲ
I	ERG 3SG	ABS	hit FUT-1SG

'I will hit him'

(13) [1PL>2SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

nime	naɲnaɲ	vet	ɛ
ni	-mɛ naɲ	-naɲ	vet ɛ
1PL	ERG you	ABS	hit FUT-1PL

'we will hit you'

(14) [1PL>2PL, no inverse marking, elicited]

nime		nenan		vet	ε
ni	-mε	ne	-nan	vet	ε
1PL	ERG	2PL	ABS	hit	FUT-1PL

'we will hit you (PL)'

(15) [1PL>3SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

nime		atenan		vet	ε
ni	-mε	ate	-nan	vet	ε
1PL	ERG	3SG	ABS	hit	FUT-1PL

'we will hit him'

(16) [1PL>3PL, no inverse marking, elicited]

nime		ətʃinnan		vet	ε
ni	-mε	ətʃin	-nan	vet	ε
1PL	ERG	they	ABS	hit	FUT-1PL

'we will hit them'

(17) [2SG>1SG, inverse marking, elicited]

nanmε		ɲanan		vet	han
nan	-mε	ɲa-	nan	vet	h- an
you	ERG	1SG	ABS	hit	INV FUT-1SG

'you (SG) will hit me'

(18) [2SG>1PL inverse marking, elicited]

nanmε		ninan		vet	hi
nan	-mε	ni-	nan	vet	h- i
you	ERG	we	ABS	hit	INV- FUT-1PL

'you (SG) will hit us'

(19) [2SG>3SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

nanmε		atenan		vet	ɔ
nan	-mε	ate	-nan	vet	ɔ
you	ERG	3SG	ABS	hit	FUT-2SG

'you (SG) will hit him'

(20) [2SG>3PL, no inverse marking, elicited]

naŋme		ətʃinnan		vət	ɔ
naŋ	-mɛ	ətʃin	-nan	vət	ɔ
you	ERG	they	ABS	hit	FUT.2SG

'you (SG) will hit them'

(21) [2PL>1SG, inverse marking, elicited]

neme		ŋanan		vət	haŋ
ne	-mɛ	ŋa-	naŋ	vət	h- aŋ
2PL	ERG	1SG	ABS	hit	INV FUT-1SG

'you (PL) will hit me'

(22) [2PL>1PL, inverse marking, elicited]

neme		ninan		vət	hi
ne	-mɛ	ni-	naŋ	vət	h- i
2PL	ERG	we	ABS	hit	INV FUT-1PL

'you (PL) will hit us'

(23) [2PL>3SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

neme		atenan		vət	ɛn
ne	-mɛ	ate	-nan	vət	ɛn
2PL	ERG	3SG	ABS	hit	FUT-2PL

'you (PL) will hit him'

(24) [2PL>3PL, no inverse marking, elicited]

neme		ətʃinnan		vət	ɛn
ne	-mɛ	ətʃin	-nan	vət	ɛn
2PL	ERG	they	ABS	hit	2PL

'you (PL) will hit them'

(25) [3SG>1SG, inverse marking, elicited]

ateme		ŋanan		vət	haŋ
ate	-mɛ	ŋa-	naŋ	vət	h- aŋ
3SG	ERG	1SG	ABS	hit	INV FUT-1SG

'he will hit me'

(26) [3SG>1PL, inverse marking, elicited]

ateme		ninaŋ		vet	hi	
ate	-mɛ	ni-	naŋ	vet	h-	i
3SG	ERG	we	ABS	hit	INV	FUT-1PL

'he will hit us'

(27) [3SG>2SG, inverse marking, elicited]

ateme		naŋnaŋ		vet	ho	
ate	-mɛ	naŋ	-naŋ	vet	h-	o
3SG	ERG	you	ABS	hit	INV	FUT.2SG

'he will hit you (SG)'

(28) [3SG>2PL, inverse marking, elicited]

ateme		nenan		vet	hen	
ate	-mɛ	ne	-naŋ	vet	h-	ɛn
3SG	ERG	2PL	ABS	hit	INV	2PL

'he will hit you (PL)'

(29) [3SG>3SG, no inverse marking, elicited]

ateme		atenan		vet	a	
ate	-mɛ	ate	-naŋ	vet	a	
3SG	ERG	3SG	ABS	hit	FUT-3	

'he will hit him'

(30) [3SG>3PL, no inverse marking, elicited]

ateme		ətʃinnaŋ		vet	a	
ate	-mɛ	ətʃin	-naŋ	vet	a	
3SG	ERG	they	ABS	hit	FUT-3	

'he will hit them'

2.4 Cislocative

Nocte has a cislocative marker /ɹ-/ that gets prefixed to the agreement morpheme. It occurs only with motion verbs to show that the motion is towards the deictic centre. DeLancey (NEILS vol. 3) describes cislocative marker and gives a comparison between Nocte and Jingphaw. DeLancey also refers to Weidert's claim that cislocative marker is possible only in the present tense. Table 2 below presents the Nocte cislocative paradigm from DeLancey (2011)

Table 2 Cislocative paradigm (DeLancey 2011)

Person	Singular	Plural
1	ɿ-ʌŋ	ɿ-iʔ
2	ɿ-ɔʔ	ɿ-ʌn
3	ɿa (non-past) ɿaʔ (past)	

Similar evidence of cislocative marker was elicited in the Haʔwa variety of Nocte and one good example is provided in (31):

(31) [elicited]

naŋme ŋaŋ kɔlɔm wən ɿ a ?
 naŋ -me ŋa- ɿaŋ kɔlɔm wən ɿ -ɔ a
 you ERG 1SG for pen take CIS FUT.2SG QP

LT 'will you take a pen for me?'

FT 'will you bring a pen for me?'

In (31), the usual meaning for the verb *wən* is 'take' but when cislocative /ɿ-/ occurs the meaning changes to 'bring' that is the motion of the action is towards the deictic centre or the speaker.

The following table shows the complete paradigm of cislocative marker with the future agreement markers.

Table 3 Example sentences showing cislocative marking

Nocte	English
<i>ŋa ka ɿaŋ</i>	I will come
<i>ni ka ɿ-iʔ</i>	we will come
<i>naŋ ka ɿ-ɔʔ</i>	you will come
<i>ne ka ɿ-ʌn</i>	you (PL) will come
<i>ate ka ɿ-a</i>	he/she will come
<i>ətʃin ka ɿ-a</i>	they will come

Therefore, it is clear that cislocative marking is not restricted to the present tense only as suggested by Weidert.

3. Negative constructions

The negative morphemes are the uninflected operator *ho*, the verb prefix *la-*, and the negative particle *ma-*. Negative *ma-* is the basic negator. It can be prefixed either to the verb, as in example (32), or to the agreement word, as in (32) and (33). In the first type of negative construction, negator *ma-* occurs as a prefix to the main verb.

- (32) nime tʃam matʃaʔ ki
 ni -mɛ tʃam ma- tʃaʔ k -i
 1PL ERG rice NEG eat PROG 1PL

 'we are not eating rice'

In (32), *ma-* occurs as a prefix to the verb *tʃaʔ* 'eat'.

- (33) ətʃinmɛ ninan k^{he} mathⁱ
 ətʃin -mɛ ni- nan k^{he} ma- t -^h -i
 they ERG we ABS see NEG PAST INV 1PL

 'they did not see us'

In (33), the negator *ma-* occurs as a prefix to the agreement word.

- (34) nan tʃam tʃaʔ mɔʔ
 nan tʃam tʃaʔ m- ɔʔ
 you rice eat NEG 2SG

 'you do not eat rice'

Similarly, in (34) the negator prefix *m-* is prefixed to the agreement particle.

The following examples illustrate the use of uninflected negative operator *ho* and uninflected verb prefix *la-*:

- (35) nan ket ho
 nan ket ho
 you go have not

 'you do not have to go'

Here in (35), uninflected negative operator *ho* 'have not' occurs sentence finally after the verb *ket* 'go'.

Similarly, in (36) below, uninflected verb prefix *la-* occurs as a prefix to the verb *tʃam* 'eat' and the future tense is marked by the invariant future tense marker *min*.

- (36) ate tʃam latʃaʔ min
 ate tʃam la- tʃaʔ min
 3SG rice NEG eat FUT

 'he will not eat rice'

Negation with *ma-* may be combined with other operators, as in examples (37) and (38) below.

- (37) ꤁a football luamte danmak
 ꤁a football luam -te dan -m -ak
 I football play NOM do NEG 1SG
 'I don't do football playing'

In example (37), the verb *luam* 'play' is nominalized by *-te* and the negator *-m* occurs as an infix between the auxiliary verb *dan* 'do' and the agreement particle.

In the 'not-yet' constructions, negator *ma-* occurs between *t^{hu}he* 'yet' and the main verb. Here is an example:

- (38) atea t^{hu}he ma hu k^{hu}əm kɛ
 ate -a t^{hu}he ma hu k^{hu}əm kɛ
 3SG ABS yet NEG reach walk PERF
 'she has not reached it yet'

The following chart summarizes the possible negative constructions in Nocte.

Table 4 Schemas of negatives in Nocte

<i>Schema</i>	<i>comments</i>
1a. <i>ma</i> - 'NEG' +V + agreement	Shows speaker's intention.
1b. <i>ma</i> - 'NEG' + V+ <i>dan</i> 'do'+- <i>wa</i> 'invariant past tense marker'	This construction is used to negate actions in simple past tense.
1c. <i>t^{hu}he</i> 'yet'+ <i>ma</i> - (NEG) + V + (-k- (PROG)) + Agreement	Used to show that the action is not completed yet.
2a. V + <i>ma</i> - 'NEG' + agreement	It shows a kind of certainty in speaker's speech.
2b. V+m- 'NEG'+agreement	It reflects speakers comment on some habitual present events.
2c. V+NZ <i>-te</i> + <i>dan</i> 'do'+- <i>m</i> - 'NEG'+agreement	This type of construction reflects speaker's dislike or disability or attitude toward certain kind of activity.
3. V (stem 2)+ <i>ho</i> 'invariant negative copula'	This type of construction portrays speaker's suggestion or conception about some event.
4. <i>la</i> - 'NEG'+V+ <i>min</i> 'invariant future marker'	It used to negate some action in the future.

3.1 Prohibitive *nak*

nak ‘prohibitive’+V+agreement

In Nocte, there is a prohibitive particle *nak* that occurs before the verb. The addressee is mostly covered. The following examples illustrate this:

- (39) .ɛnko nak ka ɔʔ
 .ɛn -kɔ nak ka ɔʔ
 there LOC PRH go 2SG
 'don't go there!'
- (40) mot^ho nak t^ho ɛn
 mo- t^ho nak t^ho ɛn
 lie tell PRH tell FUT-2PL
 'don't tell a lie'

In example (39), *nak* occurs before the verb *ka* ‘go’ and in (40) occurs before the verb *t^ho* ‘tell’.

3.2 Comparing Nocte with other Tangsa/Tangshang varieties

Stephen Morey identifies two negative constructions found in Tangsa/Tangshang varieties. The table below presents the possible schemas of negative constructions in Tangsa/Tangshang Naga taken from Morey (2011). Schema of Nocte negative constructions is also included in the table to give the readers a comparative view.

Table 5 Schemas of Negatives

Language variety	schemas of Negatives
Cholim	V + NEG
Hakhun	V + NEG
Rera	NEG + V
Shangthi	NEG + V
Nocte	V + NEG
Nocte	NEG + V

Conclusion

Nocte post-verbal morphology is very complex with the presence of phonologically independent agreement words that can also get attached with other verbal categories like tense, aspect, mood and negation. Nocte negative constructions are more complex in comparison to the Tangsa varieties as they have only one of the two types of possible negative construction one, where the negator precedes the verb and agreement particle (NEG+V+Agreement) and two, negator occurring in between the verb and agreement particle (V+Negator+Agreement). Nocte has both of these two types of constructions as well as others whereas, other Tangsa varieties have one or the other. In addition, Nocte has other fascinating features like the hierarchy in the agreement marking system or the presence of the inverse marker etc. Further studies will allow us to explain the complexity of the Nocte verbal morphology in greater detail.

Abbreviations

SG	Singular
PL	Plural
ERG	Ergative
ABS	Absolutive
CIS	Cislocative
INV	Inverse
QP	Question particle
LOC	Locative
PROG	Progressive
FUT	Future
HAB	Habitual
1P	1st person
2P	2 nd person
3P	3 rd person
PRS	Present

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