



An Overview On Kokborok Language Origin

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Abstract

The most common form of human communication, comprising of structured and conventionally used words delivered through speech, writing or gesture are called language. A language is a device that establishes sound- meaning correlation, pairing meaning with signals to enable people to exchange ideas through observable sequences of sounds”[Ronald W. Langacker, language & its structure, 1967]. The sweetness of any language can be understood from the way it is spoken. The language of the Indigenous of Tripura theirs is known as Kokborok. The origin of the word Kokborok is derived from the combination of two words ‘Kok’ and ‘Borok’. Literally, Kokborok means, “Language of the people or community” so the word Kokborok stands for humans language. Kokborok is spoken in the Indian state of Tripura. It belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese wide group of language and more precisely to the Bodo- Garo Subgroup. This Language has several dialects and sub- dialects. At the time various British Political Agents, District Officers, Sub- Division Officers were known as linguists – they called this language as Tipperh, Tipura, Tipra Language. So far, the term Kokborok is known first occurred as ‘Kok- boro’ in 1897/98 in an early primer on the language, Daulat Ahmed ‘Kokboroma. In 1900, Thakur Radhamohan Debbarma spelt ‘Kokborok’ in a published grammar of the Language.

Keywords: Sino- Tibetan, Tipperah, Tipura, Kokborok

Introduction: All the people of the world have own language. People express their feelings through their languages. Language is the system of sounds and writing that human beings use to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Language is a way to communication. Language is important to maintain the system of communication through individual, social and cultural development etc. Kokborok is spoken in the Indian state of Tripura. It belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese wide group of language and more precisely to the Bodo-Garo Sub-group. Kokborok is the mother tongue of nine groups out of 19 communities living in Tripura state. There are the nine Kokborok clan: i) Tripura, ii) Debbarma, iii) Jamatia, iv) Noatia, v)

Murasing, vi) Reang, vii) Kalai, viii) Rupini, ix) Uchoi. Article 342 of the Constitution of India has included the Indigenous of Tripura in Scheduled Tribes. In 2011 Scheduled Tribes Population Census Report of India, the Kokborok language speaking peoples are Approximate 89 5,562 nos.

Definitions of Language:

- “A verbal systematic symbolism a means of transmitting information a form of social behaviour (with a) high degree of convention” [J. Whatmough, Language]
- “Language is an innate capacity of native speakers to understand and form grammatical sentences”. [Noam Chomsky]
- “ Expression of thought by means of speech – sounds” Henry sweet, “ The history of language

Objectives:

- Known briefly about Kokborok Language.
- It is known how the Kokborok language originated.
- It is known that genealogies suggested by various linguistics and political agents.
- Known about Kokborok language dialects or clan.
- Originating from the Sino- Tibetan Language group, the indigenous language of Tripura known today as kokborok is known to how far spread.

Origin of the term kokborok:

Searching for the origin of the word Kokborok, we find the word Kokborok is derived from the combination of two words ‘Kok’ and ‘Borok’. The word Kok means Language and Borok means humans. Literally, Kokborok means, “Language of the people or community” so the word Kokborok stands for humans language. Now a question arise that whose human is meant here. Here humans, means the people of Indigenous of Tripura. The also known as Tripura, Tripuri, Tipperh or Twiprasa/ Tiprasa. So far, the term Kokborok is known to first occur as ‘Kok- boro’ in 1897/98 in an early primer on the language, Daulat Ahmed ‘Kokboroma. In 1900, Thakur Radhamohan Debbarma spelt ‘Kokborok’ in a published grammar of the language. In older British records the language is referred to as “Tipperah” ~ “Tippera”.

Kokborok Language:

Kokborok language is a tonal language. There are two tones in Kokborok: high tone and low tone. To mark the high tone, the letter ‘h’ is written after the vowel with the high tone. [Cha- To right, Chah-To eat]. Like other language this language also has word formation. The syntax of this language is of SOV, [Subject- Object- Verb]. Grammatically, this Language haven phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and also study how to use translation, transliteration, transcription. Discussing and knowing this language is very important for the development of the peoples of this language.

Discussion:

Kokborok was formerly known as Tipra, Tipperah and Twipra Language with its name being changed in the 20th century. The names also refer to the inhabitants of the former Twipra kingdom, as well as the ethnicity of its speakers. Kókborok has been attested since at least the 1st century AD, when the historical record of Tripuri kings began to be written down. The script of Kókborok was called "Koloma". The Chronicle of the Tripuri kings were written in a book called the Rajratnakar. This book was originally written down in Kókborok using the Koloma script by Durlobendra Chontai. Later, two Brahmins, Sukreswar and Vaneswar translated it into Sanskrit and then again translated the chronicle into Bengali in the 19th century. The chronicle of Tipra in Kókborok and Rajratnakar are no longer available. Kokborok was relegated to a common people's dialect during the rule of the Tripuri kings in the Kingdom of Tipra from the 19th century till the 20th century.

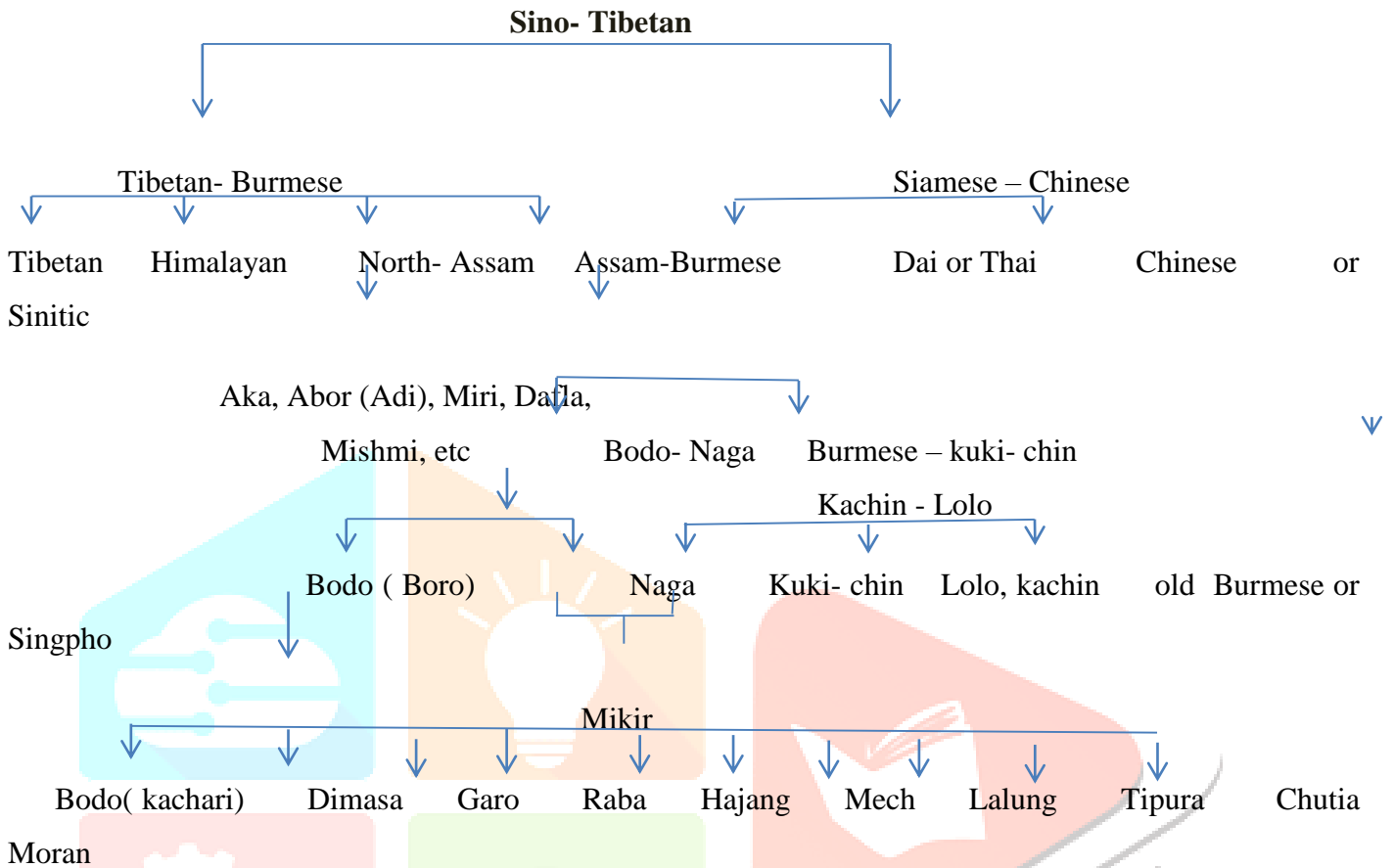
World renowned linguists have opined that the Kokborok Language of Tripura is derived from the Tebeto- Burman branch of the Tebeto –Chinese Language group. Linguist Sunithikumar Chattopadhyay on page-99 of his “Introduction to Bengali Linguistics” and another book “ The origin and Development of the Bengali language, volume- 1, on the third page of the book’s introduction shows that the Kokborok and its sisters language belong to the branches of Bodo Language. Therefore, these languages are derived from Bodo. “The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Volume -1,” – To the north-east and east, Bengali meet dialects of the Bodo group: Bodo (bara) or Kacari (also known as Koc , Mec, and Rabha), Garo, and Dimasa as well as Mrung or Tripura.”

Sir G. A. Grierson in his edited book “The Linguistic Survey of India” mention Bodo, Rabha, Lalung, Dimasa, Garo, Tipra, Chutiya etc as language of bodo group. His opinion, “ The Bara Group, then comprises the language spoken by the Bara- fisa(ie the Mech and kachari’s) and the cognate language spoken by the other tribes shown in the following table:

Sl. No.	The cognate language spoken by the other tribes
1	Rabha
2	Lalung
3	Dimasa(hills kachari)
4	Garo (or Mande)
5	Tipura
6	Chutiya

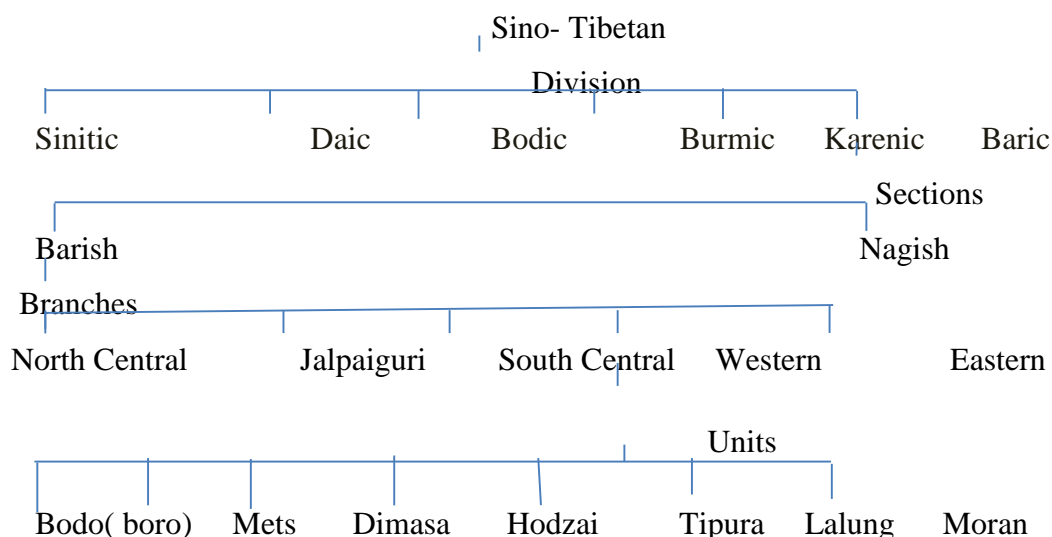
To this list must be added one more name, Moran. This was the language of tribe now completely Hinduised, living in Sibsagar and Lakhimpur.

According to Sir G. A. Grierson, as mentioned in book of “The Linguistic Survey of India”, there are more or less 179 languages having 544 different dialects in India. Out of 179 languages, 116 languages belong to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic group which are mostly found in North Eastern India. A Pyramid of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic group may be drawn for the better understanding of this language.



(Classification of Sino-Tibetan Language Family, George Abraham Grierson, (1903-1928).

R. Shafer (1939-41, 1966/67), who conceived of it as a tripartite linguistic stock comprising Chinese, Tibeto-Burman (TB) and Tai (= "Daic") (<https://stedt.berkeley.edu/about-st>). He has given a whole life time to Sino-Tibetan studies. In his book “Introduction of Sino-Tibetan,” while classifying the Sino-Tibetan language, mentioned that Tipura is a language of Indigenous people of Tripura.



(Classification of the Sino- Tibetan Language Familya , Robert Shafer, 1966-174)

The genealogies suggested by various linguists show that Kokborok (Tipura, Tipra, Tipperh) languages are derived from the Sino Tibetan language group. Dr. Satyendranarayan Goswami of modern Indian Language, Guwahati University, on the position of kokborok and its sister language can be called state –of –art. In his ‘Studies in Sino- Tibetan Language’ he states that two branches. 1) Tibetan- Burmese and 2) Shyama- Chinese language arose from the Tibetan- Burmese language family and also ten dialects arose out of four sub-branches of the Tibetan –Burmese branch including Assam- Burmese to Bodo- Naga and it sub- branch bodo to Kokborok.

Nomenclature of the kokborok language: At the time various British Political Agents, District Officers, Sub- Division Officers were known as linguists – they called this language as Tipperh, Tipura, Tipra Language.

1. Sir A. Phayre: In the history of Kokborok written, the first person to written Kokborok in roman script is Sir A Phayre. “An Account of Arakan, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Vol. X, 1841 A.D, Part-II, P.711 Vocabulary” - **Tipperah.**
2. Henry Chales Sutherland (Calcutta Review, vol. XXXV, No. 70, 1860 A.D) - **Tipperah .**
3. Captain T. H. Lewin (The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and The Dwellers therein .Calcutta 1869 A.D, Re-printed in selection from the records of the Govt. of Bengal. No. 43, 1869 A.D, Contains Vocabulary of Tipperah and of the Lushai or Kuki language) –**Tipperah.**
4. W.W Hunter (A Statistica Account of Bengal, on pp. 489 and 490 of Vol. VI, There is Vocabulary of Tipperah by Captain T. H. Lewin; ‘ Survey report of hill Tripurah’, 1874- 75) – **Tipperah.**
5. Sir G. Campbell (Specimens of the language of India. Incolding those of the aboriginal Tribes of Bengal, the central provinces and the Eastern Frontier. Culcatta, 1874 A.D, on pp.188 and ff. and 204 and ff. There are Vocabularies on hill Tipperah) -**Tipperah.**
6. Reveren S. Endle (Outline Grammar of the Kachari (boro) Language as Spoken in District Darang, Assam. The introduction contains a note one the relation of the kachari (boro) to that of hill Tippera . Including a comparative vocabulary of kachari, Garo and hill Tipperah) – **Tipperah.**
7. Dr. J. D. Aderson (A short list of words of the hill Tipperah Language with their English equipment. also of words of the language spoken by the Lushai of the Sylehet Fortier. Shillong, 1885 A.D) **Tipperah**

8. Sir George Abraham Grierson – In discussing ‘Tipura’ Language in his “Linguistic Survey of India” (1903-1928), Vol.III, part.II. He quoted the works and specimens of the Tipperah Vocabulary of the above – mentioned seven English scholars (Sir. A. Phayere, Henry Chales Sutherland, Captain T. H.Lewin, Sir W.W. Hunter, Sir. G. Campbell, Sir Reveren, S. Endle, Dr. J.D. Aderson)- Tipura

9. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee- In Discussing ‘Tripura’ language in his – “ The Origin and Development of the Bengali” and he also discussing “ Tipra” Language in his “ Kirata –Jana- Kriti”

The nomenclature data mentioned suggests that the mother tongue of the Tiplasa was Tipperh, Tipura, Tripura. But exceptionally in 1900Ad, Thakur Radhamohan Debbarma wrote a kokborok grammar book called ‘Kok- borok-ma’. Through this, now Tiplasa mother tongue is called Kokborok. But the term Kokborok is known to first occur as ‘kok- boro’ in 1897/98 in an early primer on the language, Daulat Ahmed and his assistant Mahammed Umor wrote book “Kokboroma. Ong Tripura Bekoron”.

CONCLUSION

The language has several dialects and sub-dialects. The most divergent of which being Reang, also called ‘Bru’. These dialects differ in many respects, specially phonetics. Kokborok means the language (kok) of the human beings (borok) the people are called borok. Kokborok is closely related to Dimasa and Boro and to the other language of this Tibetan-Burmese sub- group which is commonly known ‘Bodo- Garo’. It is one of the state language of Tripura notified on January 19, 1997. The TTAADC has declared the Kokborok as official language of TTAADC on April 20, 1999. The language has been taught in schools of Tripura from the primary level to the higher secondary stage since the 1980s. A certificate course in Kokborok started from 1994 at Tripura University and a post graduate diploma in Kokborok was started in 2001 by the Tripura University. Kokborok was introduced in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in the colleges affiliated to the Tripura University from the year 2012, and a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Kokborok was started by Tripura University from the year 2015. As per NEP measures have been taken to impart education to Kokborok subject

The language of rural areas, where shifting cultivation is still alive, and of the traditional songs linked with it is markedly different from the speech of Town areas. The Kokborok spoken people are inhabited not only in Tripura state but also in North- Eastern states, Pithoragarh of Uttaranchal and neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan comprising about 1.5 million in numbers.

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