



A Comparative Study Of The Kamrup Variety Of Garo And The Standard A·We Language (Garo)

Dr. Dokatchi Ch. Marak

Asst. Prof. NEHU Tura Campus, Meghalaya

Mr. Thonobirth G. Momin

Research Scholar (M.Phil)

Dept. of Garo NEHU Tura Campus, Meghalaya

Abstract

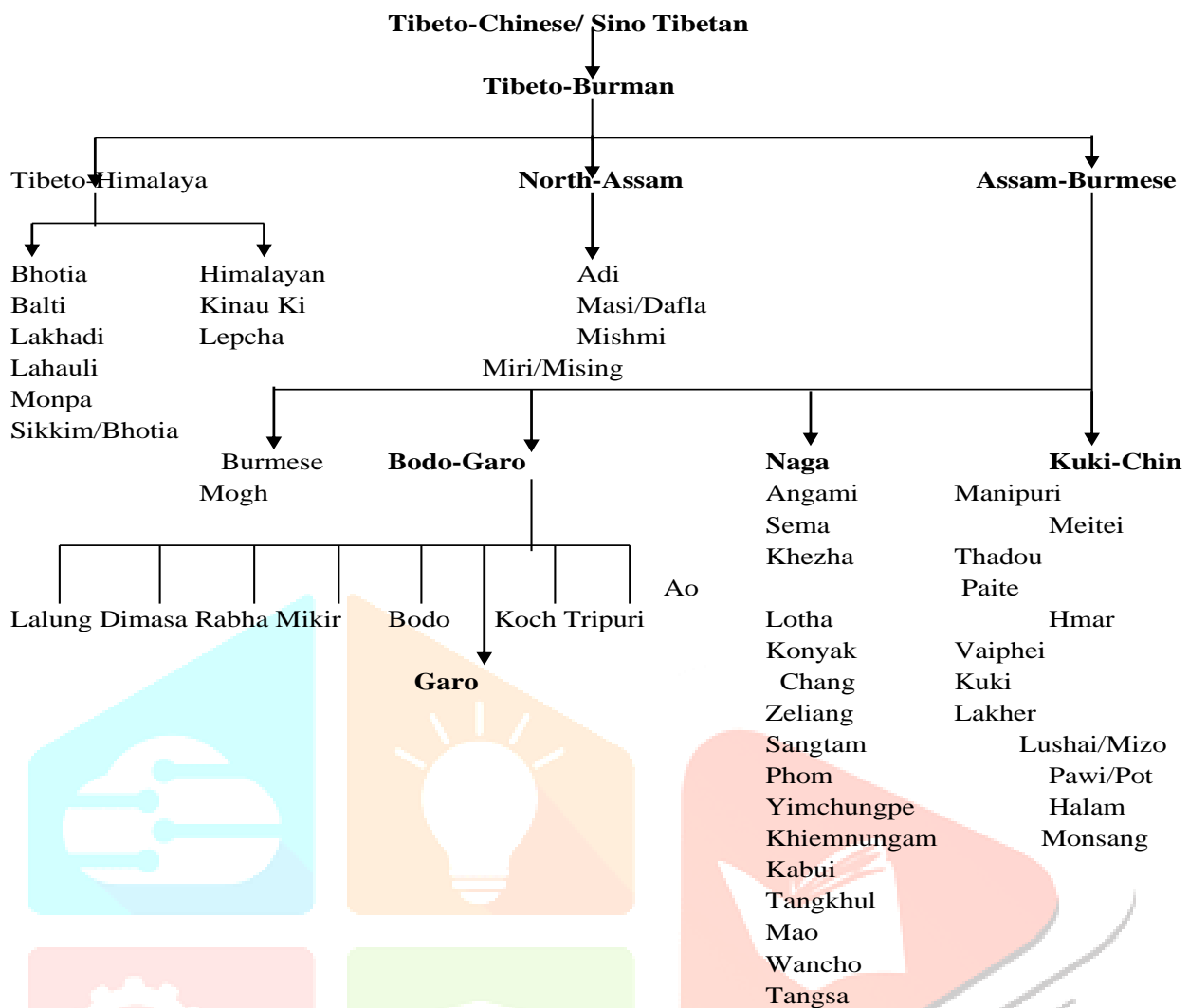
This study aims to provide a distinguished between two variety of the Garo language spoken in northeastern part of India. India is vast in terms of linguistic diversity as well as in culture. The people of northeast region are mainly from the Tibeto-Burman race. Garo language comes under the Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Due to geographical variation their language and culture is slightly different from one another.

Keyword:- Oral narration, variety, proliferation, phonemes and vowel change

The study of human language has been the interest not only of linguists, but since ancient times the speculation on the origin of languages was the concern of philosophers and social thinkers. The linguistic study of the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in north eastern part of India has started in the last decade of the 18th century and started receiving attention from the later part of the 19th century. The north eastern Indian states, widely known as seven sisters (Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura) and at present eight including Sikkim are strategically important from the point of view of society, politics, economy, language, culture and history. In comparison to the other states of India, the north eastern states of the country are linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous. The indigenous people of north east region are mainly the speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

GENETIC CLASSIFICATION OF TIBETO-BURMAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Tibeto-Burman languages are part of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The Sino-Tibetan language family is stated to be the second largest language family in the world after the Indo-European language family. Tibeto-Burman languages are primarily spoken in Tibet, Western China, in the north and east of South Asia, Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, North-Western Vietnam). It is also spoken in the Indian subcontinent (Baltistan, an area of North Pakistan colonized by the Tibetans in the 7th century), Ladakh, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and in the North Eastern states of India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim).

Figure 1: Genetic classification of Garo based on Delancey (1987).

As can be seen in Fig.1 above, the Garo language comes under the Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family. Other languages belonging to this group are; BoroKachari, Rabha, Mech, Tiwa (Lalung), Koch, Kokborok (Tripuri), Dimasa etc. The tribes speaking these languages are found in the North and South banks of the Brahmaputra valley i.e. Lakhimpur, Darrang, Kamrup, Goalpara, Cachar and other districts of Assam, Nagaland and Tripura. They are also found in the Northern parts of Bengal and in the Mymensingh and Chittagong areas of Bangladesh (Burlings 2004).

Linguists like Robinson (1855), Shafer (1955), Benedict (1972), Matisoff (1978 & 2003), Burlings (1983 & 2003), De Lancey (1987 & 1988), Bradley (1997 & 2002) and others have classified Garo language as a part of the Tibeto-Burman family. A family tree diagram given by Benedict (1972) has divided the Tibeto-Burman family into seven sub-branches.

Chatterji (1974) placed the Garo language under the Bodo-Naga sub-group in his classification of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family. In a book entitled *The Sino Tibetan Languages* edited by Graham Thurgood and Randy J.LaPolla, Robbins Burling has written an article on “The Tibeto Burman Languages of North Eastern India” where he has called the sub-group of the northeast of the Sino-Tibetan language family the ‘Sal’ languages. However, in his latest writing on ‘The Tibeto-Burman Languages of

Northeastern India', he called this sub-group as 'Bodo-Konyak-Jinghpaw'. He presented a plausible stambaum based on the classification of the major sub-group of Tibeto-Burman by Benedict with some modifications. Benedict in his classification represented Garo and Jinghpaw, and divides Bodo-Konyak-Jinghpaw from everything else.

Historical Background of the Garos:

a) Migrated from Tibet (Oral narrations)

b) First, they settled in the plains of North Bengal in a place called Rangamati near Rangpur. From there they moved on to Dhubri and settled in Koch Behar for nearly 400 years.

c) In the course of their journey, they broke up into different branches. Some groups settled in West Bengal, Koch Behar, Mymensingh, Chittagong and some entered the hills under the leadership of AbongNogaSilmeDo·ka

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE GARO VARIETIES:

G.A Grierson (1903) listed 11 varieties of the Garo Language in the *Linguistic Survey of India* –A·we, Am·beng/A·beng, Matchi, Matabeng, Gara-Gan·ching, Chibok, Dual, Chisak, Atong, Ruga, Me·gam/Lyngam.

A·we Variety: The speakers of this dialect inhabit the northern and northeastern fringes of the hills, and the lower hills adjacent to the plains in the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara.

Proliferation of A·we

A) *British officials and Missionaries first came in contact with the Awe speakers.*

B) *Establishment of Schools- Damra, Goalpara and Tura*

Historical narratives: The Garos kept alive their history of migration from Tibet, their settlements in the Brahmaputra valley and entry into Garo Hills through oral narrations have been preserved by the forefathers for generations.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE GARO VARIETIES:

The most widespread type of dialectal differentiation is geographic. The speech of one area differs at least slightly from the other. Differences between neighbouring local dialects are usually small, but in traveling further in the same direction, differences accumulate. The Garos living in different parts of the Northeastern region had very little contact with each other in the early days. Due to difficult mountainous terrain, dense forests and rivers, the people could not keep in touch with each other. Dense forests were

cleared only for jhumming purposes and small streams become big during the monsoon season. Therefore, though they belonged to the same family, each group developed their own dialect. Each dialect bears strong resemblances to others, except with slight variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, stress and intonation. The different dialects of the Garo Language are: A•we, Am•beng/A•beng, Matabeng, Chisak, Chibok, Dual, Gara-Gan•ching, Atong, Ruga and Matchi. Playfair listed the Me•gam in his description of the Garo dialects in his book 'The Garos'. The Me•gams live along the border of the Khasi and Garo Hills district, from Kamrup in the north to Mymensingh in the south. They closely resemble the Garos in appearance and customs, but G. A. Grierson in his book "*Linguistic survey of India*" states that they speak a variety of Khasi.

The Garos of Kamrup:-

Kamrup is one of the districts of Assam. This district is surrounded by Bhutan in the North, East and West Khasi Hills in the South, Nowgong and Darrang districts in the east and East Garo Hills and Goalpara districts in the west. This district is inhabited by different language speaking communities such as Assamese, Bengali, Santhals, Boros, Rabhas, Khasis, Karbis and Garos are also found among them.

The Garos occupy the southern borders of the Kamrup district of Assam. The total population of the Garos settled in this district comes to around 29,184 (Twenty nine thousand one hundred and eighty four) (undocumented statistical report). The Garo inhabited areas have been identified as five centres namely, 1. Joypur centre, 2. Hahim centre, 3. Gohalkona centre, 4. Santipur centre and 5. Ukiam centre.

Both the varieties possesses 24 phonemes-

6 vowels

/i, e/ Front unrounded vowel

/i, a/, Central vowel

/o,u/ Back vowel

18 consonants

/p^h/, /b/, /t^h/, /d/, /k^h/, /g/, /ʔ/, /c^h/, /dʒ/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /ɳ/, /r/, /l/, /j/, /w/, /s/,

/p^h/, /b/, /t^h/, /d/, /k^h/, /g/, /ʔ/-stops

/c^h/, /dʒ/-affricates

/s/, /h/-fricatives

/m/, /n/, /ɳ/-nasal

/r/-alveolar

/l/-lateral

/w/, /j/- semi vowel

Syllable Initial Consonant Phonemes

/p^h/, /b/, /t^h/, /d/, /k^h/, /g/, /c^h/, /dʒ/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /l/, /j/, /w/, /s/,

Syllable Medial Consonant Phonemes

/p^h/, /t^h/, /k^h/, /m/, /n/

Syllable Final Consonant Phonemes

/p/, /t/, /k/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/

Syllable Structure: The canonical syllable structure is (C)V(C) in roots, suffixes and enclitics.

The minimum syllable consists of only a vowel. Except for the bound forms *and of the demonstratives ua ~ u 'distal demonstrative' and ia ~ i 'proximal demonstrative' and the interjections o 'expression of understanding/acknowledgment' and a 'strong attention seeking interjection', there are no roots that consist exclusively of a vowel.*

The majority of the predicate head suffixes, other than event specifiers, and the majority of enclitics are monosyllabic with a CV structure, fewer suffixes and enclitics have a CVC or VC structure and other syllabic patterns occur even less frequently. Most event specifiers and NP suffixes have a CVC or CVCV syllable structure. In word initial syllables consonant clusters are not allowed.

Consonant Clusters:

Clusters always comes in the syllable initial position

/br/ eg. /braŋ-a/

/sr/ - /sraŋ-a/

/kr/ - /kraŋ-a/

/mr/ - /mraŋ-mraŋ/

/kn/ - /kna/

/sn/-sna/

/pl/ -pleŋ/

/sl/ -/slaŋ/

Variation:

Vowel change:

K.(Garo)

/k^hi⁷ -c^ha/ 'kitcha'

/aŋ-c^ho/ 'angcho'

/soŋ-c^ho/ 'song-cho'

/delʔ-del-a/ 'del'dela'

Awe

/k^he⁷ -c^ha/ 'ketcha'

/aŋ-c^hi/ 'ang-chi'

/soŋ-c^hi/ 'song-chi'

/dalʔdal-a/ 'dal'dala'

Onset /h/ consonant in the Kamrup variety of Garo:

K.Garo

/hoʔ-on/ 'ho·ong'

/honʔ-a/ 'hon·a'

/haʔ-a/ 'ha·a'

/haʔ-jri/ 'ha·jri'

/hai-wa/ haiwa

/hol-a/ 'hola'

Awe

/o-e/'oe'

/onʔ-a/ 'ona'

/aʔ-a/ 'aa'

/aʔ-jri/ 'ajri'

/ai-wa/ 'aiwa'

/ol-a/ 'ola'

/h/ comes before the vowel /o/ and /a/

Variation in Tense Suffixes

	Kamrup Garo	Awe
Present (neutral)	-a	-a
Present Progressive Continuous	-e-don	-en-a/
Simple Past	-om/	-ha/jok/
Simple Future	-nim/	-gen/ .
Immediate Cont.Future	-ge-don/	-na-si-a/

Variation in Personal Pronouns:

- In the Kamrup variety of Garo the same word is used for both exclusive and inclusive we (1st person plural). In A·we and other varieties, ‘chinga’ means ‘we’ exclusive and ‘an·ching’ ‘inclusive’.
- 3rd person plural marker in Kamrup variety of Garo is ‘-tim’ but ‘-mang’ in A·we as in the following: u-tim ‘they’ (human) – ua-mang/bi-smang
- **Negative marker** –na changes to –ja in the Kamrup variety of Garo Eg. Dakjabe/Daknabe
- **Instrumental marker** ‘-chi’ becomes ‘-cho’ in the Kamrup variety of Garo Eg. Ang-cho/ ang-chi “by me”

