

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Somdal

Somdal (a dialect of Tangkhul), is a Tibeto-Burman language found spoken in the Ukhrul District of Manipur and in adjoining area of Burma. According to the Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India Volume III part II. (1904), Tangkhul belongs to the Kuki-Chin Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman family. But Benedict and Shafer (1940-1) clubbed it under the Kukish section which includes Central-Kuki, Northern-Kuki, Old-Kuki, Southern-Kuki, Northern-Naga, and Lushai. Tangkhul is also known as Luhuppa in old literatures (see Grierson's L.S.I Vol. III, part-II). It is a language which is mainly specific to the Somdal village. It is one of the numerous sub-tribes of Tangkhul. The present work is mainly concentrated on the data collected from the inhabitants of the Somdal village, which is located in the Ukhrul District which is about 40 miles from Imphal (the capital town) of Manipur.

Like many other dialects of Northeast India, Somdal is a hitherto undescribed, unexplored and undocumented dialect. They don't have their own indigenous script and proper literature. Roman script is used for their writing purpose. Some of the written works done on Tangkhul are 'Tangkhul Naga Grammar and Dictionary (Ukhrul dialect) With Illustrative Sentences' by William Pettigrew (1918), 'Tankhur Naga Vocabulary' by D.N.S.Bhatt (1969), 'Tangkhul Naga Grammar' by S. Arokianathan (1987), 'Tangkhul Naga and Comparative Tibeto-Burman' by James A. Matisoff and 'Comparative Tangkhul' by David Mortensen (2003).

The proposed research work will be confined to describing the phonological and morphological structure of Somdal for which no attempt has been made by any

Tibeto-Burmanist. Hence, there is a wide scope to study the phonological and morphological structure of this dialect in the light of modern linguistic approach.

1.1. People, Area and Land.

Somdal is a village in Lungchong Meiphai Tehsil in Ukhrul District of Manipur State, India. It is located 9 km towards north from District headquarters Ukhrul, 6km from Lungchong Meiphai 65km from state capital Imphal. Somdal pin code is 795144 and postal office is Somdal.

Ngaimu (3km), Phalee (6km), Tuinem (6 km), Huining (Halang) (7 km), Kachai (7 km) are the nearby villages to Somdal. Somdalis surrounded by Ukhrul Tehsil towards North, Paomata Tehsil towards North.

Imphal, Kohima, Lilong, Thoubal are the nearby cities to Somdal. As per constitution of India and Panchyati Raaj Act, Somdal village is administrated by Sarpanch (Head of Village) who is elected as a representative of the village. According to 2011 census, some particulars recorded about Somdal village are given in the table below:

Particulars	Total	Male	Female
Total Number of Houses	468	--	-
Population	2,375	1,209	1,166
Child (0-6)	312	177	135
Schedule Caste	0	0	0
Schedule Tribe	2,313	1,173	1,140
Literacy	92.39%	95.64%	89.14%
Total Workers	1,170	608	562
Main Worker	1,001	0	0
Marginal Worker	169	92	77

Somdal is one of the Tangkhul villages that embraced Christianity very early. For this, the villagers got access to western education right from the coming of Christian

missionaries to Ukhrul district. Some notable public figures from the village are Rungsung Suisa Ruichumhao Rungsun Ruichumhao was one of the earliest Tangkhuls who converted to Christianity by William Pettigrew, the first Christian Missionary to set foot in the Tangkhul hills. When the Second World War broke out, Ruichumhao served as the main interpreter for the Britishers and was sent to France as a leader of the abour Corp. Rungsung Suisa was a patriot who fought for the liberation of the Nagas from Indian occupation first as a politician and later as a rebel leader under NNC (Naga National Council). According to 2011 census, the literacy rate of the village was 92.39% which is higher than the state's average of 76.94%. The village is home to the people of Somdal ethnic group. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the inhabitants. Somdal also called as Shongran is a village located west of Ukhrul in Ukhrul District, Manipur state in India. As per 2011 census, the village has a total 468 families of 2375 persons of which 1209 are male while 1166 are female of the total population, 13.14% are in the age group of 0-6 years. The average sex ratio of the village is 964 female per 1000 male literacy rate of the village is 92.39%.

1.2.Methods of Data Collection

While collecting data, tape recorders or sound recorders and questionnaires were used, more than three thousand vocabularies were collected from the native speakers. The responses of the informants were transcribed and recorded in tapes. I used IPA (International Phonetic Alphabets) for exact pronunciation. So, I take up this work to study the language scientifically. This study will be made in the modern trends in linguistics.

I have also collected some information about their history, origin, migration etc. for the reference of my thesis or data from Assam University, Manipur University, Tribal Research Institute etc.

1.3.Scope of the Thesis

This thesis would show the phonological and morphological structure of Somdal specially spoken in Somdal Village of Ukhrul District, Manipur.

This study would have made useful to researchers particularly to the Tibeto-Burman scholars. It would give very useful information and help to the second language learners as well as the first language for the comparisons of various Tangkhul (language of the dialect Somdal) languages speaking in different villages and for the comparison or rectification to their works.

This study would give a taste of scientific studies when in reading. In this study, there are many aspects to be described in detailed. It will be very helpful to the learners in the field of phonology, morphology, a comparative study with Manipuri and any other languages.

1.4. Contribution of the Thesis

This work is not the primers, but it studied the language scientifically. This study will be made in the modern trends of linguistics. It would have made useful to researchers particularly to the Tibeto-Burman scholars and to researchers in different language families of the worlds. Further, this study would give very useful information and help to the second language learners as well as to the first language itself for the comparison or rectification to their works. This will be a great contribution in the study of Somdal phonology, morphology, Tangkhul Grammar as well as for the people of Somdal village.

1.5. Occupation

The Somdal speakers are agriculturists, but they do not run small-scale industries in the village level. Industry consist of weaving, pottery, blacksmith, wood and stone works, leather works, carving, wine brewing, basket making and other handicrafts. The Somdal villagers employ three methods of paddy cultivation namely; terracing and wet cultivation. Rice is the main food. Other crops and vegetables are chilli, cotton, tobacco, corn, oranges, lemons, plums, brinjals, fruits. hunting, fishing, trapping birds are also practiced.

1.6. Social and Cultural Life

The culture of the Somdal revolves around 1) Traditional beliefs and custom exercises being passed down, and 2) Ancient tools, materials, like: spears, swords, shields, bows, axes and spades. People of Somdal are fond of singing, dancing and festivities. For every

season, there is a festival that last almost a week. Their artistic creativity is manifested in their handicrafts and wood carvings. The Somdal culture influences to many younger, which is totally accepted egalitarian ethos, there was no caste or classes in the society and the society follows patriarchal system.

The life and the art of Somdal people are attractive and captivating. Their different costumes and wears, utensils, architecture, monumental erections and memorial setups depict their dexterity in art, which also speak of their sense of beauty and finesse. Though there are common costumes and wears, both for male and female, some of the traditional clothes and wears Clothes/Shawls, Man's woman's 1. Haora (mostly for man's) 1. Malao 1. Phangyai 2. Chonkhom (mostly for woman's) 2. Laokha 2. Kahang Kashan 3. Tangkang (for man and woman) 3. Kahang Malao 3. Seichang Kashan 4. Luirim (for man) 4. Thangkang 4. Thangkang Kashan 5. Khuilang Kashan 6. Khuilang Kachon (for woman) 6. Kongrah Kashan 7. Phingui Kachon (common) 7. Shanphaila 8. Phaphir (common) 8. Kuiying Muka (upper cover) 9. Phorei Kachon (for man) 9. Zingtai Kashan 10. Luingamla Kashan. The Somdals celebrated many festivals, namely Luir, Yarra, Mangkhap, Dharreo, Chumpa, Longrakhamang and Thisham. Among them, Luir Phanit is the major festival. They are describe one by one below-

Luir

Luir phanit is a seed sowing festival. Etymologically the word "luir" derived from two Tangkhul words i.e. 'lui' meaning field and 'marra' meaning dig. Therefore, Luir means digging of the field. Luir festival is celebrated every year since time immemorial. Luir festival is a festival of invoking divine blessing of God for the crops to be cultivated during the year and for bountiful harvest. A date is fixed according to the convenience of each village. Majority of the Tangkhul villages celebrates Luir festival in the month of February. Traditionally, the celebration continues for 10-15 days. It is also the New Year celebration, the beginning of a new cycle of agriculture activities and the grandest of festival. During Luir festival, the village chief or headman commence the seed sowing, after the chief of the village had first sown the seeds and then the common people follow. The village chief sacrifices chicken and pork on the first day and pray to God for good harvest. He would then give the seeds and other cultivable crops to the villagers to reap a

good harvest in the village. If any body violates the rules and sow ahead of the chief/king, heavy punishment is made out to the violator because it is considered that such violation will bring famine to the village the old practice of “harkhokhayang” and “kapakhayang” was practiced during luira festival therefore luira festival is celebrated with great concern. Details of daily activities during the festivals vary according to villages and regions. However, the essential elements are equally present in all forms of celebrations. In the past, it was customary that every one, wherever he might be, must come home for the festival. Relatives from other villages also came during this festival. They used to send meat killed during this festival to their respective daughters or sisters, who were married to another village as their share. In this festival, they were in their best and colourful traditional customs. Their traditional games and sports such as wrestling, rope pulling (tug-of-war) and others were held. The village elders (warriors) taught or demonstrated publicly the arts and tactics of war in this festival.

Yarra

Yarra is youth festival for young people. It is celebrated on April, when the month is adorned with colourful flowers and fresh green leaves. Usually the festival is celebrated in groups and young folks organized grand feast in the house of their respective ‘beauty queen’ selected during the festival.

It is the month of merry making and jubilation , many songs are sung during this festival by the youth in praise of the beauty of nature.

Many songs are also composed and as such this is a season of poetry, songs and dance. when the festival arrives, animals are killed for meat and vegetables are collected from the fields. Fish , crabs, etc are caught and collected for the feast.

During the festival, each group would make sticky rice cake. This special boiled rice cake is called ‘Khamuidalu’. Even now, the great festival is observed with great festive mood and gaiety.

Mankhap

It is a major agricultural festival of the Somdal, which falls in the month of June and July. This festival marks the completion of the works of rice trans-plantation and is the days of complete rest from the long hard work. In the past this festival was featured mainly by feasting, singing, dancing and other merry-making. Domestic animals such as buffaloes, cow, pig, chicken were killed for consumption during the festival. One of the unique and attractive features of this festival is that at the first night of the festival, every family of the village light up pinewood, previously collected for the purpose at their respective courtyards (kayang).

In this festival, on the next day after killing of animals, all the families, in the past, went to their respective paddy fields and offered sacrifices to their respective paddy fields and offered animal sacrifices to their gods for blessing and protection to the crops they had grown, not to be damaged by natural calamities like hailstorm, drought, pest etc. In the pre-Christian times, the departed soul, if someone remembered by the concerned family of this festival.

Dharreo

It is celebrated as the harvest festival of the Somdal. This festival is gaining wide importance; many people from different places and even outside Manipur take part in Dharreo festival celebrations. Dharreo is a pre-harvest festival celebrations. Dharreo is a pre-harvest festival 'dhar' means 'new' and 'reo' means 'cut' or 'pluck'. Therefore, dharreo means plucking of the new crop. Dharreo is celebrated in the month of tataraha (October). Dharreo is a festival specially celebrated for one day, in which the village chief goes to the field for one day ahead of the people and brings a basketful of paddy and rites and ceremonies. On this day, the first crops, fishes, livestock' and other items are brought out for sale in the village market. Dharreo festival is well known for hornet and bake bread with sticky rice called "mangatai". The whole activity of Dharreo is confined to the exhibition of arts, crafts, lottery, buying and selling.

Chumpha

This festival was the opening ceremony of the granaries in which the last harvested rice was stored was untouched. So it was usually observed after the completion of harvest, and it marked the beginning of the new rice. This festival lasted for four days. In this festival, all the homemakers alone performed the rites of opening the granary. According to their belief, no one could see woman while performing the rites. Therefore, all males of the village slept outside the village gate on the first night of the festival when the homemakers performed the rites. During their stay outside the village, the male folks spent their time in hunting, catching birds, fishing and when they returned home in the evening of the next day, all they joined together with their family members, including the housewives or mothers of the family and now they ate the new rice of the year for the first time with the new curry collected by the male members during their stay outside the village gate. This new rice for the first meal was cooked only with the water conserved in a thoroughly cleaned pond for the purpose.

The Christian Somdal, however, has discarded this festival, and no Tangkhul village today observes this festival. Now it has completely gone into oblivion.

Longra Khamang

This festival is not general in nature but the family, which had a rich harvest, celebrates this festival inviting the group of the son's or daughter's party who had worked in groups rotation-wise. This is a festival for giving special treatments to the sons and daughters.

Thisham

Thisham is a festival in commemoration of the dead. It is on this occasion that the dance of the Dead is performed. This is the final rite performed by the family for the dead. It falls around the month of January. According to the old Somdal religious belief, the soul of dead did not leave the house, but stayed on in it until Kathi Kasham or 'Thisham' festival was observed. Hence, this festival was observed to lay finally the souls of dead to rest.

Birth

The birth of a child is followed by ritual or events. The parents pray to God for their children. He/She is brought to church after some days. A prayer is also observed in home of the parents. The parents or the grandfather and grandmother give cloths and other things to the new borned child

Death

The normal ritual is held in the burial of the death body. The body can be buried in the village, outside the village, or inside the homestead. Those who are aboard and death and no one can witness, are regarded as unholy. Those death bodies are not allowed to bring inside the house, it kept outside the gate or outside the village gate and those are buried in the same place. But today such death are regarded lightly. The death due to illness, falling from the top of the house and falling from the trees are performed or taken as usual and buried with respect along with usual ritual in homestead.

1.7. Place of Data Collection

We have seen that Tangkhul have many villages speaking different dialects and each dialect is differing from village to village. Each dialects are called after their village name, out of 220 villages, I choose only one village i.e. Somdal Village, so I named this thesis as 'Phonology and Morphology of Somdal' for my convenience. Therefore, for my further explanation, I will use the name 'Phonology and Morphology of Somdal'.

I chose this particular village for the study to know the phonological and morphological structure of Somdal which is 9 Km away from Northern Ukhrul main town. More and less I stayed two or three months every year, so I have a homely feeling staying there.

I selected some informants those are well known different words and terminology of Somdal, not only this, they know Manipuri and English. The names of the informants are given below:

SL.	NAME	AGE	QUALIFICATION
1.	Mr.Pamching Muinao	55	Graduate
2.	Ms. Pamthingchon	40	M.A
3.	Ms.Shinmila Muinao	19	Undergraduate
4.	Ms.Shontim Muinao	22	Graduate
5.	Mr.Worthing Muivah	48	Graduate