CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Tai-Ahom is least known and almost an extinct language as it is no more a spoken language. Tai-Ahom language is actually found in manuscript form called Buranji (a kind of prosaic literature, chronicle). The language has a written form and some priests can still read and understand. It is used for ritual and cultural purposes, like birth, marriage, ancestor worship and other social ceremonies. However, recently some people are motivated to even speak it in restricted domains. Tai-Ahom people are found in some parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in India.

1.1 The Tai language and people

The term “Tai” refers to groups of people and languages spoken over a large area of South East Asia, which are as diverse as the Indo-Aryan languages of India. In this research work the word “Tai” is used to refer to a group of languages including “Thai” language, Tai-Ahom, Tai-Khamti, Tai-Phake, etc. Therefore, it should be noted that the word “Thai” in this research refers to the standard language of Thailand and not to a group of languages.

Tai people are scattered widely over a large area. This area has its northern extreme in southeastern China, its southern in the Malaysian peninsula, and reaches from Hainan Island in the east to Assam State and Arunachal in India, in the west.
The Tai languages are spoken in Thailand, Laos, North Vietnam, Myanmar, Assam, and China (Southwestern Provinces of Yunnan, Kweichow, and Kuangsi).

Although some dialects of Tai have their own scripts yet, they are mostly mutually intelligible. All the Tai scripts are written in the same way i.e, horizontally from left to right. Tai languages are basically monosyllabic and have distinctive tones.

The script used for Tai is phonetic, systematic and consistent with regard to letters and their pronunciations. The vowels, consonants have distinct pronunciation. In Thai language tones are marked with symbols but in Tai-Ahom texts that we studied has no symbols for tones.

The Tai groups of people, under several local tribal names are one and the same people, who occupied a far wider geographical space than any other groups in the Indo-Chinese peninsula. In Assam and Arunachal they are known as Tai-Ahom or Ahom, along the borders of Burma and China. They are divided into numerous semi-independent clans.

Regarding the origin of the Tai people there are a number of theories popular in the form of legends and folk tales. It is believed that at first the Tai people settled in numerous small upland and river valleys in the portion of Yunnan in southwestern China, the area of the Shan state of Myanmar, Laos, and northern part of Thailand. Their movement was along the major rivers and their tributaries, of Maekhong into Thailand and Laos, Salwin and Irawadi into Myanmar and the Black and Red rivers into Vietnam.

The other theory states that original homeland of the Tai people was Southwestern China and from that area, they moved into the upper part of Myanmar.
Probably the first swarms were small and the migrations were due to the restlessness of their character rather than the exterior force. Later swarms were larger and the migrations were due to the pressure of Chinese invasions. In the sixth century, the great wave of Tai descended from Southern Yunnan flowed into the Nam-Mao or Shweli Valley and this area became the centre of Shan political power that was called Mung-Mao-Lung. The Shan then spread southeastward over the present Shan State and finally they moved further to conquer some area of Assam.

The process of migration was very slow and it was not until the fourteenth century when the Siamese Tai (the Tai in present Thailand) established their present homeland.

1.2 History of Tai-Ahom

According the legends and oral folk literature there was the kingdom of Tai, called “Mung-Mao” or “Mung-Mao-Lung” in Yun-Nan, province of China. There were four princes of Mung-Mao. Chao Suakapha was the eldest, Suakhanpha was the second, Suapatpha the third and Suachatpha the youngest.

These four princes wanted to expand their kingdom and desired to have a kingdom of their own. They set out on a journey taking along with them a group of nobles, soldiers and a large group of people. The eldest prince Suakapha proceeded westwards, the second prince Suakhanpha moved to the north and the third prince Suapatpha went forward to the east, from Yun-Nan. The youngest prince Chao Suachatpha established his rich and prosperous kingdom of Yun-Nan itself.
For the prince Suakapha, the eldest prince, who crossed the Patkai ranges and came down to Mung-Dun-Chun-Kham, the golden land (the magnificent kingdom of Assam) in 1228 A.D. (13th century) and established a great Tai Kingdom in Assam.

From this narrative, the kingdom established by king Suakapha is supposed to be the first kingdom of the Tai-Ahom in Assam.

The Ahom are members of the Great Tai (Tai-Yai) group of people. Culturally and traditionally, Tai-Ahom is a rich branch of the Great Tai people who lived in Assam. They have their siblings in Burma, Yunnan, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand.

The Tai-Ahom were the earliest Tai group who migrated into Assam. They are the descendants of those Shans who crossed the Patkai hills and entered the upper portion of the state, to which they have given their name. This area was called Mung-dun-chun-kham which is now known as Assam, perhaps derived from the Tai word Ha-sham - the land of the Shams. These Tai-Mao people are also called Shams from Burmese Shans, eventually the local people called this Tai group who came to rule in this area as “Ahom”.

In 1251 A.D. the Tai-Ahoms established their first capital at “Che-Rai-Doi” (che=city, rai=shine, doi=hill), the shining city on the hill, which is now in Sibsagar district of Assam state. The Ahoms called their country as “Mung-Tai” (mung= city, land) the land of the Tai people.

As early as the 17th century A.D. the Ahom began to adopt Hinduism. Though the Ahom were converted, they refused to give up all their cultural heritages and further more they still believe in their own religion. They still adhere to their own
customs such as marriage customs in which the rituals are different from those of the Hindus.

The territory, which they occupied primarily, was a small one, mainly confined to a portion of Eastern part of Assam. Over time, the Ahom kingdom gradually extended westward and by the 16th century it had grown in size after the conquest of the indigenous communities. During the period of the Mogul wars in 1682, they extended their kingdom up to the Manaha river. This limit of the kingdom remained unaltered until the end of Ahom rule in the year 1826 A.D. The Ahom ruled Assam around six hundred years (from 1228-1826 A.D.), when the kingdom was passed into the hands of the East India Company.

The establishment of the Ahom kingdom in Brahmaputra valley brought a new element into the Assam history that is, the system of administration. The government system under the Tai-Ahom rule could be called as the monarchical system. It is said that, the coming of Ahom has left at least two important legacies in Assam, i.e., the sense of the importance of history and the system of administration.

The Ahom themselves were not prejudiced to the caste system, even though, a large number of people in Assam were Hindus and it seems that the Ahom religious cult was a different feature altogether from the indigenous people. However, the Ahom gradually adopted Hindu customs and manners into their life, although a large number of Ahom themselves still believe in their original belief system.

The Ahom had even identified themselves with the Assamese as they made formidable contribution in the consolidation of composite Assamese society and were
virtually absorbed into the Hindu social structure. Therefore some scholars call the “Ahom” as the “Assamese Tai”.

1.3 The Tai Ahom Population in Assam

According to Terwiel, B.J. (2002), after gaining a foothold in Upper Assam in 1228, the Ahom extended their control over a number of indigenous people and came to dominate the valley area south of the River Brahmaputra and east of the River Dikho. This is a region which at present comprises all of Dibrugarh district and parts of Sibsagar district in the Indian State of Assam. During the sixteenth century, and more so during the seventeenth century, the Ahom people, in a series of spectacular expansionist moves, gained dominance over virtually the entire Brahmaputra Valley. The story of how Ahom-led armies fought against Muslim invaders has gained them a place in Indian history.

Until 1931 the Ahom were classified in the Indian Census as a special sub-caste. The first Census figures for the Assamese population, those of 1872 (revised by C.S. Magrath in his District Census Compilation), included some 148,000 Ahom. Further specifications of this Census give an indication of the proportion of Ahom and non-Ahom. In the upper districts, Ahom people constituted between 32 and 36 percent of the population (Hunter, 1975), while in the remainder of Assam, including the region containing the present capital, they came to less than half a percent of the population (Beverly, 1872). While these nineteenth-century figures should not be taken as an unequivocal reflection of the situation in the seventeenth century or earlier,
they illustrate the general point that, while conquering the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley, the Ahom people came to be overwhelmingly outnumbered.

Not withstanding their own formal request to be recognized as a ‘Scheduled Caste’, the classification ‘Ahom’ is no longer used in the modern Indian Census. We therefore lack an accurate count of the people who now a days style themselves Ahom. Surmising that the Ahom population has experienced a fairly modest growth since 1931, Terwiel once estimated their number in 1980 to have been somewhere around 500,000 (out of more than 18 million Assamese). Buragohain and Taher (1993:5), assuming a higher growth rate, arrived at a figure of just over a million Ahom in 1989.

The fact that Ahom is no longer a category recognized in the Indian Census reflects the official point of view, namely that the Ahom are, for all practical purposes, lowland Hindu Assamese. Such a view has been hotly contested by various Ahom spokesmen (Terwiel, 2005).

1.4 The Tai-Ahom Language

The Tai Mao people from Mung-Mao, were called “Tai-Ahom” by the local people. When they first came to Brahmaputra valley they brought with them their own language and manuscripts. Tai-Ahom have their own language, script, literature, culture, religion and the chronicle, which is called Buranji (one kind of prosaic literature), the large-scale historical work (Buranji written during the Ahom rule were royal chronicles containing records of activities of the reigning kings and other important events).
According to J.N. Phukan (2004), the Tai Mao had adopted their script probably from the Mons before the 13th century.

Tai-Ahom, a language of Tai group of languages, was spoken by a small group of Tai-Ahom people in a region which at present comprises of Dibrugarh and Sibsagar districts of the state of Assam and some area of Arunachal Pradesh in India. Tai-Ahom language is related to Thai language as we found in our description.

The descriptive studies of Tai-Ahom are not attempted so far. The language in its written form is found only in manuscripts limited to chronicles only. These manuscripts are available with some priests as their valuable heritage. Tai-Ahom who spoke their language in the past have adopted Assamese. But some priests can read their written language and use it for ritual purposes. It was also used on some copper plates and coins but the use of Ahom as spoken language gradually become obsolete in Assam. Perhaps, it was convenient to use the local language Assamese as the medium of daily communication. In the past, some princes and nobles produced works, in Assamese even.

The use of the Assamese language as the medium of social communication with the local inhabitants made them feel that the rulers were not others but they were one with them.

The greatest contribution of the Ahom to the culture of the Assamese was the compiling of chronicles, which were first written in the Ahom language and after that in both Ahom and Assamese. All of the important political events were recorded in the chronicles of Buranjis.
During the British rule and after the Burmese invasion, the Ahom and the later groups of Tais were affected by the expansions of the kingdom. The non-Tai subjects of the kingdom outnumbered the Tais. Even though, the Tai language did not totally or suddenly die out, it continued to be used until the 19th century but only in limited areas. The Ahom priests or “sang bun” /saŋ-bun/ were one keeping the Tai-Ahom language alive. However, because these priests lost their influence in the royal courts, the Tai language was gradually neglected and was no longer used in society. The Ahom leaned more towards Hinduism and the Assamese language. From the style of the Tai language used in Ahom historical chronicles and other traditions Tai Ahom manuscripts, it can be assumed that for at least two hundred years after the arrival of Ahom in the Brahmaputra valley, no major changes took place in the Ahom language. Later, however, the language started to evolve as it adjusted to different political and sociological factors. This process continued until the last days of the Ahom kingdom.

1.5 Sociolinguistic background of Tai-Ahom

The Tai-Ahom language remained in close contact with Assamese therefore, we need to look at the changes that may have taken place in Tai-Ahom. Tai-Ahom became bilinguals in due course and easily adopted Assamese for day to day discourse. At first stage perhaps the sentence structure of Ahom language was simple SVO. In the second stage, a definite grammar was to be seen and sentence pattern has been changed. This change may have happened due to the contact of Assamese language and some sentences of Assamese form have been seen in this stage. The third stage, around the middle of eighteenth century to the last part of Ahom rule in the first
period of nineteenth century, the use of Assamese words and sentences have been seen widely in historical literature, hymns, medicinal treatise, even in the procedures of worship.

In case of Ahom people, the change in their language was not due to only the process of language contact but there had been other factors, namely the political and social factors. These factors were due to the rulers who came from out side with different culture and language. The best way to govern the local people peacefully was learning their language and customs so that the subject population becomes friendlier.

In the early period of Ahom rule in this area, the purpose of using Assamese language by the Ahoms was to make friends with the local people. It was however, necessary to make the local inhabitants feel like that the rulers were not the others but they were one with them.

The Ahoms assimilated with the existing culture of the local people in many aspects. The conqueror accepted the culture, religion and language of the conquered people. The Tai language, the Ahom religion, rituals, dress, food habits and socio-cultural institutions gradually passed into oblivion. The Hindu religion, culture, lifestyle and Assamese language were imbibed replacing the ones of original Tai.

During the reign of Ahom king, Rudra Singh (1696-1714), Hinduism became the dominant religion. At that time the Ahom who did not accept Hinduism were looked upon as a degraded class. The influence of the \textbf{Deodhais} (Assamese word) the priests of the old Ahom religion, revived for a time about 1775. Similarly, Assamese, as a language, began to oust Ahom about the beginning of the eighteenth century and
from about 1720 it was no longer necessary for Hindu office-seekers to learn the latter language.

The historical records that show changes in the names of the Ahom kings provide further information about the evolution of the Ahom language. It is clear trace of the change of the Ahom speaking language into Assamese language by observing the change of their inscriptions. Initially the inscriptions of Ahom were in Ahom language. Later they appear in a bigot form, and finally in Assamese or Sanskrit. After adopting Hinduism by the king, the official language which was used in the Ahom court at first continued to be Ahom. The use of Ahom language was gradually supplanted by Assamese and slowly the Ahom language was known to only a few priests.

The present situation of Tai-Ahom language in Assam, is somewhat interesting as it is not used in day-to-day discourse. But written records continue to be read and preserved by some priests. Today, there is a movement among Tai-Ahom people for reviving the old Ahom language. They are now seriously learning about their own history and language for the purpose of maintaining their identity. Some of them are trying to use Tai-Ahom language in their day-to-day communication as a spoken form.

1.6 Socio-cultural background of Tai-Ahom

The Tai-Ahoms introduced an administrative system which had a number of features quite new to the people of this land. It was a form of hereditary monarchy with a Council of Ministers and a Great Council of chief nobles and officers of the state. The king was all in all in matters of major importance of the State.
The Ahom King is called Chao-Pha, the word Chao in Tai is simply a term of honour attached to a person or noble means ‘great’ or ‘god’, Pha means ‘heaven, sky’, which here simply a king or a ruler. For being of divine origin the king’s person was to be sacred and perfect, free from any blemish or mark of injury, whether from disease or accident. A prince having such a mark or defect was to be debarred from ascending the throne. It logically led to a novel device of mutilating rival princes in order to disqualify them for being kings.

The Ahom rulers did not originally claim to be heavenly and attached any divinity to themselves, though in their legends they are said to have originally descended from heaven. Even heaven had a different meaning to them. It was as early as the earth itself and their ancestors physically marched down from that high region to the low areas.

In the Ahom society there was no caste system to refer to the social groups but the groups were known depending upon their administrative system. The social distinctions were made between the aristocracy and the common people. According to their administration, the Chao-Pha (king) was the head of the land and the master of his subjects in the Ahom kingdom. The king was assisted by the ministers, namely, Chao Phong Mung (Buragohain), Thao Mung Lung (Borgohain), and Chao Sung Lung (Borpatragohain) who offered him their counsel. The Ahom people were broadly divided into two classes, the Paik and the Chamua. The labourers and soldiers were drawn from the Paik and the officers from the Chamua.
1.6.1 Kinship of Tai-Ahom

“... kinship is used in anthropology in both narrow and broad senses. In the
narrow sense, kinship refers to connections between parents and children and the
relations of affinity created by marriage. In the broad sense, it refers to the whole
conceptual and social field related to kinship, marriage and descent...”
(Keesing:1975)

Kinship system is important to understand any social system and hierarchy in a
family and extended families that make up clans, marriage rules and other network of
social relations.

Among Ahom elderly family bears a higher position. The position of the
family of elder brother is higher than the family of younger brother. A younger person
of the elder family is to be addressed as elder brother by the elder person of younger
family. For example, the son of younger brother addresses the son of elder brother as
“Pi kai” – ‘elder brother’.

A family attains higher position due to marriage and birth. Any man or woman
of older age does not earn higher position if he or she does not belong to “elderly
family”. The person who attains the higher position is honoured in any social function
or on special occasions by the family members and their relatives. For example, the
clothes are offered to elder in the Bihu festival on 14th April.

In the previous times, the Ahom used the Ahom word in addressing the
relative. But nowadays a few Ahom words are used for the purpose of addressing
relation.
The system of kinship in Tai-Ahom and Thai appears to be similar. The following examples show how the two kinship terms are used. A single term is used for a number of kins in both Tai-Ahom and Thai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tai Ahom</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meaning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ni-c’haw</td>
<td>Mother’s elder sister’s husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s elder sister’s husband</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Standard-Thai</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meaning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luŋ</td>
<td>Mother’s elder sister’s husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother’s elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s elder sister’s husband</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Any male person who is (a bit) elder than the addresser’s parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tai-Ahom</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meaning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apa:</td>
<td>Mother’s elder sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father’s elder sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wife of mother’s elder brother</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wife of father’s elder brother</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Standard-Thai</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meaning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pâ:</td>
<td>Mother’s elder sister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Father’s elder sister

Wife of mother’s elder brother

Wife of father’s elder brother

Any woman who is (a bit) elder than the addresser’s parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tai-Ahom</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me-tₕaaw</td>
<td>grandmother, any old woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baj-cₕaaw</td>
<td>“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ja-tₕaaw</td>
<td>“</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard-Thai</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaːj</td>
<td>grandmother (mother’s mother), any old woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jáː</td>
<td>grandmother (father’s mother)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tai-Ahom</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pu-tₕaaw</td>
<td>Old man</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard-Thai</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pùː</td>
<td>grandfather (father’s father), any old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taː</td>
<td>grandfather (mother’s father), any old man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6.2 Tai-Ahom Clans

Tai-Ahom people used to identify themselves to differentiate from other communities with their Ahom titles.

During the Suakapha period (in 13th century), there were only eight clans of the Ahom. During the six hundred years of their rule in the Brahmaputra valley, various classes were formed due to different posts of administration. The titles are used by Ahom according to their posts in the Ahom kingdom.

Most of the Ahom titles from different classes have been translated into Assamese and nowadays Assamese translated titles are popularly used by the Ahom themselves. Only some of Ahom clan titles had remained unchanged and have been used till today. These original titles of clans are: Ciring Phukan, Phukan, Ciring, Bailung Phukan, Tai rai, Cao kham.

Other clan titles which have already been changed are given below with their Assamese equivalents used by Ahom these days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Ahom</th>
<th>Changed clan names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thaw-munj</td>
<td>Buragohain (Thaw &gt; Bura = old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caw-thaw-lunj</td>
<td>Borgohain (lunj &gt; Bor = big)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phu-kon-lunj</td>
<td>Borphukan (lunj &gt; Bor = big)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caw-siuj-lunj</td>
<td>Borpatragohain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phu-kin-munj</td>
<td>Raj Kowar (munj &gt; raj = place, city/ kin &gt; kowar = eat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru-ring</td>
<td>Hazarika (ring &gt; Hazar = thousand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other clan titles which are commonly used by Ahom are as follows:
Gogoi (ko-koi), Bora (Rucau), Chetia (Cau sung), etc.

1.6.3 Ahom Religion

Basically there is no codified religion of Ahom. When Ahom first came to Brahmaputra valley in the 13th century, they were the group of people who believed in supernatural spirits. It is said that the Ahom have a religion of their own. All available evidences point to the idea that the Ahom religion is regarded as a branch of the old Tai religion. The Tai-Ahom religion is based on certain fundamental beliefs in supernatural powers, basically, the worship of the ancestor spirit and beneficial spirits of the hills, forests and water.

Undoubtedly, Ahom have come in contact with Hinduism at several times in their long history. After adopting Hinduism they did not abandon their original belief or traditional religion totally and immediately. Both Hindu elements and Ahom had been generally practiced by Ahom populace in the kingdom.

1.6.4 Beliefs of Ahom

Ahom people have some kind of worship of ancestors and spirits. It is interesting to make a note of the similarity between the traditional beliefs of Ahom and Thais before adopting Hinduism and Buddhism. The traditional rites related to agriculture both in Thai and Ahom societies are quite similar. Their purposes of performing rites are also the same, i.e. in order to bestow upon gods, sacred things, including ancestor souls and implore them to protect the performer and all community
members against all hazards to their life and properties as well as to beg for blessing, good things, and confidence in living their life all the year round.

1.6.5 Ahom Cosmogony

According to the belief of the Tai-Ahom in supernatural powers, there are many kinds of gods and spirits in their faith. They believe in an omnipotent God and the hierarchy of gods that owe their origin to the great god. The great god named Lengdon was said to be the principal god of the Ahom. The worship of Lengdon along with other gods called Umphra Puja (Um- to offer, Phra- gods). In the past it was performed annually as a state ceremony with sacrifices of a variety of animals.

The Ahom have the theory of creation of the world from their ancestors which is recorded in their literature. The theory states that in the beginning there was nothing, there was only one omnipotent being, the great god. The god himself created the whole universe. A great god created a deity, and then created a goddess as his wife.

The god resided in the highest heaven, only his descendants came down to rule the world. There were four sons of god, the youngest son named “Ngi-ngau-kham” or another name was “Phra” who helped the god to create the world. Phra worship with great illumination is in vogue among the Ahom till today.

It is narrated that the second son of god, after death became a household deity, who look after the welfare of the household and has been worshipped to this day as a benign household god. The Ahom worship their household god by making a post at a corner of the house for the centre of worship.
### 1.6.6 Ahom Deities

The Tai-Ahom worship a number of gods or spirits in order to propitiate for the welfare and protection from all evils and illnesses. They believed that all visible objects in this human world have invisible spirits or gods presiding over them. Hence, the Ahom oblate the surroundings; forests, rivers, hills, paddy fields including their households since, according to their belief, all these objects have protecting deities.

The Tai-Ahom is different from the other Buddhist-Tais who worship the Buddha image, especially for the Thai people in Thailand where the country is fully a Buddhist and worship the image of lord Budhha. Since the Tai-Ahom people were not image-worshippers. There was no evidence of the image worship in any ritual of Ahom. They created art and architecture but without the icon of god for the purpose of worship. The icon of god and goddess has never been named in their sacred books.

Somehow, only two idols called Chum and Seng (Chum phra rung muang – Seng maung) which were possessed by Ahom royal family, were preserved as the deities of the king. Chum and Seng were considered as deities (phra) in bright colour (rung) presiding over the kingdom (maung).

In Ahom literature Chumphra bears a great important role. Chumphra is supposed to have certain mystic power. The rulers of the Ahom dynasty believed that by virtue of this precious possession they were able to rule the kingdom with success and glory.

Every year on two auspicious occasions in the month of January-February (Din-Sam = month-three means the 3rd month of the year), and the month of March-April (Din-Ha = month-five means the 5th month of the year), especially on the last
day of “din-ha”, special worship was performed. The Ahom invoked their formless supernatural powers, spirits, with rice, eggs, flowers and sometimes with animal sacrifices.

For the two deities of the royal family, they were also taken out of the casket by the king and washed with milk, scents and Gathian (a kind of fragrant root). The sanctified water of ceremonial performance then was sprinkled over the persons assembled. After worshipping the deities with appropriate offerings then the king himself put them back into the casket. In the time of Ahom rule, the Chum and Seng used to be installed by the Ahom monarchs in a specially made house or temple, which is called “run Chumseng”.

1.6.7 Ancestor Worship

The Ahom worship not only a variety of gods with elaborate ceremony, but also worship their ancestors with great devotion.

Obviously, ancestor worship is another feature of the Ahom religion. The Ahom believe that after death the ancestors become gods in Heaven and they will look after their living descendants.

According to the belief of Ahom, there is the hierarchy of the spirit after death i.e. Dam and Phi. After death a man becomes a “Dam”, he continues to exist and protect the living family members from all evils. In this period he is called “god of the home”. After a period of time when the duty as Dam is over then he rises above Dam to be a “Phi”. The Phi has a duty as a god of the society. He is now “a society god”
and cuts off all relations with his family. When the deity as a Phi is over then he gets reconciled into “Kung Ing Ka Phra” (Creator God).

The Ancestor worship of Ahom is held annually on 31st January on the festival called Me-Dam-Me-Phi festival.

1.6.8 Phi-Sua-Mung worship

The Phi-Sua-Mung is worshipped among the Ahom and it is regarded as protecting deity of the country. This worship is performed on the 5th month (Din Ha).

In the previous times of Ahom, this worship was held in full grandeur. To perform this rite, a hut, a cow, a pig, two fowls, two pigeons, eight baskets of rice, two ducks, fried rice, banana, sugarcane, areca nut and betel leaves, salt, ginger, oil, citrus fruits, milk, etc. will be offered to the deity by the Ahom priests.

Phi-Sua-Mung worship is held by all groups of the Tais. Though there is a little variance in the process, but the inner aim is similar. In Thailand, there is a “Sao-Lak-Muang” /sāw-lāk-muāŋ/ (the main pillar of the city) in central Bangkok and the Thai people also believe in presiding deity of the city called “Phi-sua-muang” /phpī-suāː-muāŋ/ which is regarded as the “city’s guardian deity”. Everyday the Thai people come with a branch of flower together with joss stick and candle to worship the “Sao-Lak-Muang” and the protecting deity.
1.7 Ahoms Customs and Festivals

1.7.1 Me-Dam-Me-Phi Festival

Me-Dam-Me-Phi is the Tai-Ahom traditional ancestor worship. It is said that, this worship has been performed from the immemorial past. This festival is the festival of community, all the Ahom families observe the worship to all their ancestors simultaneously on 31st of January every year.

The meaning of the word “Me” is “worship”, “Dam” means “the dead person” and “Phi” is referred to the higher level of “Dam”. The Dam worshipping is observed by the sons of the Dam at their house. This ritual is called “Lu Dam” means “the annual worship to the Dam”, hence it is to be held annually. After the sons of the Dam die, then the Dam worship comes to the end and the Phi worship begins from thence.

1.7.2 Rik-Khwan Ceremony

In the Tai-Ahom society, there is another ceremony called Rik-Khwan (Rik means, to call, Khwan refers to the vitality). The Ahom believe that “khwan” of a human being starts at the same minute that he gets the place in his mother’s womb and remains till the time of his death. The body and mind of a human being are governed by the “khwans” if the quantity of “khwan” is lost or decreased the human body becomes weak and will be attacked by diseases. It is, however, believed that the “khwan” can be relieved if the ritual of “Rik-Khwan” is observed.

For instance, when a man falls down from the tree, but somehow saved, in this situation Rik-Khwan ritual will be held at his house. The procedure of the ritual starts
from stretching the raw thread from his house to the tree along with the fishing implements to pick the lost “Khwan” of the man up and bring back to his body.

Similarly to the human being, when the country is attacked by enemy or faced with abnormal situation, the quantity of the country’s khwan is also diminished. The Ahom then perform the religious ceremony “**Rik Khwan Mung Khwan**” to invoke the presiding God to increase the volume of “khwan”. In the previous time, this ceremony was organized by the king of Ahom kingdom after a battle fight in order to get release from sin by killing a number of men and for long life of the king including welfare of the kingdom and its people.

Rik-Khwan ceremony is similar to a kind of ritual which is called in Standard-Thai as “**Riak-Khwan**” /rìâ:k-khwar/, “riak” in Thai language also means “to call” and the meaning of “khwan” is not much different from the word “khwan” in Ahom language, it means “the power of life”. In Thailand “Riak-Khwan” ceremony is performed in order to make the person being secure and confident after having sickness, shock, or fright.

### 1.7.3 Birth Ceremony

The Ahom give very much attention to the birth of a baby, hence there are many rituals and ceremonies related to birth. All the rituals and ceremonies start from the first minute of the baby’s life until nearly one month of age.

In order to welcome and signify the new born baby that things are full in this world to live his life, the sound from a variety of things is made at the first minute of his birth. The umbilical cord of baby will be cut by a sharp dried bamboo sliver, and
portion of the cord will be kept dried and preserved. The baby will be rubbed with the egg of duck or hen. Before feeding first milk to her baby, the mother will let some of the milk fall on the ground and chants the hymn or utters the name of god for three times.

The placenta of the baby is wrapped with banana leaf before being buried deep at the back side of the house. It is believed by the Ahom that if the baby keeps the towel, which smeared blood of his mother at the birth time with him, he will be immune to the enemy and save from the danger of thunder bolt.

After giving birth to the child, the mother will be confined in the room. The fire will be lit near her bed in order to heal the womb and give her strength. After three days, there will be the ceremony for the mother and child. The special curry will be served to her on the banana leaf along with a betel nut wrapped in a betel leaf and an earthen lamp placing on the bamboo mat which is used to separate the husked rice from the un-husked one. In the ceremony the fish will be given to the female participants and the living fish will be freed into the river or stream after the ritual. The mother’s left food will be put near the tree along with some fruits. For the child, a book, pen, and ink will be placed near his head at the night time.

After 5 to 9 days from dropping off the umbilical cord, the households will be cleaned and the taking out the child ritual will be held. Many kinds of things such as ripen banana, husked rice grain in water, one egg of duck, betel nut, betel leaf, flower etc. will be prepared along with the two earthen lamps for this ritual. The bow and arrow are placed in case of a boy, and the cotton, thread, spinning shuttle are added in case of a girl. The baby will be taken out and sprinkled with holy water by his
grandmother (mother’s mother). Then the women who participate in this ritual sit on banana leaf, bless the child and tie a raw thread on the left hand of the girl and right hand for the boy, after that the baby will be shown to the sun.

After 9 to 21 days of giving birth, a ceremony performed for the sanctification of the mother is held. The various things such as gold, silver, copper, bell-metal alloy (made of tin and copper) will be put in an earthen pitcher tied with raw thread. There will be five earthen lamps lit in banana trunk stand. Along with these, there will be five ripen banana and five pots of grams, rice, fruits etc. put in special pot made of banana sheath (Dung). All these things will be performed accompanied with blessing (jan ming khwan ming) of the invited guests.

1.7.4 The Ahom marriage custom

The Ahom marriage as formal ceremony is called Cak-lang, that is performed by all Ahom as a social custom. Normally, the marriage system of the Ahom is monogamy, but polygamy is also not socially banned. Many of Ahom nobles had more than one wives and this practice had been continued till the British days.

It is said, that the Ahom marriage system is exogamous as between the clans, nobody can marry within the clan. It is permissible only from another different clan in their community. But some exceptions may be found in some cases where a marriage may take place within a clan. Marriages were also taking place even outside the Ahom people and that was not considered a serious transgression by the members of the Ahom community.
After Ahom adopted the Hindu religion in the 17th century, they had to act more and more in conformity with the Hindu caste rules and taboos in many vital respects in the socio-religious field. The intermarriages with the other races was consequently banned by the Hindu priesthood.

The Ahom marriage in general is a negotiated marriage. The parents and guardians will select the match for their son or daughter, then they will negotiate for marriage. After marriage the girl will live in her husband’s houses.

The marriage is performed with the ceremony of Cak-lang, which has continued to this day as a time-honoured custom though in many other aspects the Ahom have adopted the Hindu way of life.

1.7.5 The Burial Custom

After the death, the Ahom traditionally preserve the corpse in a tomb. The things used by the dead-one during his life will be kept in the tomb along with some food and a burning oil-lamp beside the corpse. This tomb is called in Ahom language as “Moi-Dam” (Moi-to rest, Dam-dead body), the traditional burial mound of Tai Ahom.

Originally Ahom buried the dead in “Moidam” which is constructed with soil and brick or stone. Ahom both Hindu and traditional believers, perform death ceremony after 11 days, by giving feast to guests who participate in the ceremony. The family of the dead person will be presented the food by relatives and fiends up to the day of holding the death ceremony.
In the ceremony, the gongs and drums are beaten accompanied with dancing. The ritual includes reciting religious books, offering banana, rice, gram, sugarcane, sweets, fruits, betel nut etc. It is believed that by observing this ritual, the soul of the dead would be free and would never become ghost.

The burial custom of the Tai-Ahom in previous days had been affected and changed after adopting Hinduism, Vaishnava sect, towards the 17th century, they started burning the dead, but some Ahom after burning, the remains were buried in “Moidam”.

1.7.6 The New Year Festivals

I found that the cultural background of the Tai-Ahom and the Thais is similar to each other. It is an agrarian based society and various festivals give significance to agriculture. Some of the festivals are as follows.

Changkien and Songkran are originated from the Sanskrit word “Sankranti” This festival is starts from 12th of April and ends on 15th of April every year.

For the Ahom, Poi-Changkien is a New Year festival, which, is called by other name as Bihu, the word “Bihu” is equivalent to “Poi Pi Hu” (festival-year-head) means “the beginning of the year festival”. It is the time for paying best regards to the elders in the society and their ancestors by the traditional way of rituals including thanks giving for all of their cattle for their help in agricultural activities by sprinkling holy water on them. Nowadays Bihu festival is considered as Assamese national festival.
Praphenie Songkran or Songkran Festival is the most important festival of the year for the Thai people. It's a special time for new year ritual and paying best regards to the respected persons. Further more, it is the important element in the agricultural culture of Thailand. During this festival the members of the community come together to celebrate various social activities related to cultivation and harvesting.

Songkran has its origins in ancient astrology and the position of the sun. The word “Songkran” means, “pass or move into” it is referred to “the moving of the sun’s position from Aries to Taurus”. In Thai tradition, there is the celebration for ending of the previous year and beginning of the coming year.

The “Song-kran festival”, the water festival in Thailand and “Poi-Changkien” or “Bihu” in Assam are the manifestations of the agricultural culture of these two groups of Tai people.

1.8 Ahoms Living and Lifestyle

Most of the Ahom people live in villages. They live their life peacefully in the villages. It is said that the Ahom’s habits and customs are based on agriculture and their traditional belief system. Agriculture is the main source from the beginning till the end of their life. The traditional ritual related to agriculture is reflected in their belief and way of life.

Ahom and Thais are the people who consume various kinds of animals, fish, birds, ants, etc. Especially for Ahom, they eat many kinds of fish including mud eel which is prohibited by the Hindus, hence the high caste Assamese Hindus will never
eat this kind of fish. However, there are still a number of Ahom who continue to eat this kind of fish till today.

The Ahom have their own way of catching the fish. They use the different kinds of implements made by themselves from bamboo and cane. It is interesting to note that the Ahom and Thais use bamboo extensively in their day-to-day life for making their houses, fences, fishing equipments, music instruments and for eating as well.

It is noticed that, the traditional plough instruments used by Ahom and Thai cultivators are quite similar to each other. During the ploughing season, most of the Ahom men go to their paddy field in the early morning. Whatever they are, the school boys, teachers, or even government officers, they have to go to the field before going to their respective duties.

Actually, women are not allowed to plough in the field, occasionally they carry rice seedling during the ploughing season. They, however, play the prominent role in other ways such as preparing home made liquor (lau) and cooking for their family members. Before the beginning of cultivation, women in the village collectively prayed for a week in order to expect good cultivation, good health of their cattle and members of the village.

Out of the season of plantation, men produce the household products most of which made of bamboo and cane. All the products will be sold in the weekly market by men themselves, whereas the women weave at home and do house works.

Textile making is especially a feminine craft of all the Tai groups including Ahom. In the Ahom village, there is a loom in all Ahom families, and no doubt that all
Ahom girls must know how to weave. A girl without knowledge of the art weaving will face difficulty in arranging her marriage.

During harvesting season, after cooking in the early morning and finish packing the food for the members in the field, the women then go to join the others in the paddy field and come back home together in the evening before sunset. After the harvesting season, their cattle will be freed to graze in the open paddy fields.

After getting their rice product from their field, the rice grains will be separated from thatch by human feet stepping or letting cattle walk over the thatch. The rice then will be dried on the bamboo mat before keeping in the thatch house. Then, it is the woman’s duty to pound the husked rice by the big paddle mortar in the early morning. The thatch without the rice grains will be fed to the cattle during scarcity of grass.

The people of Ahom community in general give much importance to the unity or harmony in their society, hence there is the community feast to strengthen the relationship among the people in their community. The feast is held in the month of January to April, the representatives will collect the rice, vegetables, fowls, etc. from every family in their society for the feast. The old man in the village will be the person who observes the ritual for all the village members.

According to the Ahom custom, when someone is going to build the new house, the other members will come collectively to help him. The owner of the house will thank them by serving the food and home made liquor (lau, or luklau when mixed with some water) along with the betel leaf and betel nut.
Eating betel leaf, betel nut with tobacco and lime is the habit of Ahom, there is a betel nut tree or garden in all the Ahom houses and they have it several times a day. This kind of betel leaf accompanied with other condiments is also used to welcome the guest.

Other than eating betel leaf, the Ahom are also fond of drinking tea, they drink tea as often as eating betel leaf. Whenever there are the honoured guests in the house, they will welcome them by serving the special meal on the high stands plates together with betel leaf and betel nut.

Traditionally, the Ahom woman will not sit at equal height of man and she will not go to bed before her husband. The Ahom people do not sleep by pointing their head toward north and west. The same custom is also found among the Thai people, since they believe that only dead body lie down and point the head towards north and west.

1.8.1 Ahom Costumes

Ahom women mostly wear a lower garment called “Mekhela” (pha-chin), elongated scarf called “chadar” (pha-bai), the scarf worn over the buttock called “Riha” (langwat) which is worn specially on special occasion, and “belaos” (pha chuo).

Most of the Ahom women keep their hair long and tie the knot slightly over the head. This hair style is common among the Ahom women. On their wrists, the Ahom style bangles called “Kharu” are worn as the ornaments. Due to Hindu influence, after
married the woman has to cover her head with chadar to respect elders in-laws, and she also has to put vermilion daily on her fore head.

Nowadays, girls in Ahom community like to wear dresses like other people around including western dresses. Western style dress is now almost universally worn in Thailand, at the same time wearing traditional type of dress is also equally apparent, particularly at ceremonial occasions.

1.9 The Origin of the Thais

Thailand, previously known as Siam, has been populated ever since the dawn of civilization in Asia. There are different theories and conflicting opinions of the origins of the Thais. It is presumed that about 4,500 years, the Thais originated in northwestern Szechuan in China and later migrated down to Thailand, their present homeland, along the southern part of China. They split into two main groups. One settled down in the North and became the kingdom of “Lan Na” and the other one is in further south, which afterward was defeated by the Khmers and became the kingdom of “Sukhothai”.

Up to this day, Tai languages and other related languages are spoken in parts of southern China. The classical view is that Thai people migrated southwards to the area of present day Thailand, possibly over a long time period, and possibly in a more pronounced way during the 13th century with the rise of the Mongols in China. Whatever may be the nature of the dispute, by the 13th century, the Thais had already settled down within the Southeast Asia mainland.
However, Thai history has been changed by the archaeological excavations in the village of Ban Chiang in Nong Han District of Udonthani province in the Northeastern part. From the evidence of bronze metallurgy, it now appears that the Thais might have originated here in Thailand and later scattered to various parts of Asia, including China.

Srisak Vallibhodom, a well-known Thai archaeologist, once bluntly stated that he never believed that the Thai people in Thailand were from the same ancestors, who were, generally assumed, from the south of China. He further stated that the ancestors of the present-day Thai were from many ethnic groups, a consequence of the mix among races, and their homeland could not be pinpointed.

The controversy over the origin of the Thais shows that no definite conclusion can be drawn. Some scholars even go further to say that Thais were originally of Austronesian stock rather than Mongoloid.

1.10 The Thais in Thailand

The Thai is another section of the Tai people who lives in the Chao Phra-ya valley. They have their own language, “Thai”, as an official language of their country. They transformed much of their old tradition from the Khmer influence.

Thailand in the past was constitutionally a monarchy. Since 1932 A.D., after 700 years of monarchical rule, a constitutional democracy was enacted. Thai kings including the present monarch, the Chakri dynasty, with H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej the great (Rama 9) have exercised their legislative powers through a
national assembly. The king exercises executive powers through a cabinet, headed by a Prime Minister and the judicial powers through the law courts.

In 1939 A.D. the name Siam was officially dropped in favour of the name Thailand, meaning The Land of Freedom. Thailand is situated in the centre of the South East Asian mainland, with the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic from the North to the North-East, the Socialist Republic of the Union of Myanmar from the north to the West, the Democratic Republic of Cambodia to the East, and Malaysia to the South. Thailand is the only nation in Southeast Asia which has never been colonized by any European colonists.

More than 95 percent of the Thai ethnic groups are adherents of Theravada sect of Buddhism. The people inhabiting Thailand today share rich ethnic diversity namely Thai, Mon Khmer, Laotian, Chinese, Malay, Persian and some people of Indian origin. According to the census conducted in 2004 A.D. the total population of Thailand was 66 million people.

The present day of Thailand, a country where the two different worlds meet i.e. the world of traditional Thai culture and the world of modern global culture. Although, Thailand has never been under the rule of westerners but nowadays there has been a lot of influence of the industrialized western culture on the younger generation of the country. Today, many aspects of the traditional Thai culture have been heavily influenced by interaction with global culture. Modern Thai country is being fashioned. The small trading post of Bangkok becomes one of the major cities in South East Asia.

Despite such influences, there is still a distinctive traditional Thai culture on much of the country’s culture. Most of the Thais either living in city or rural area
continue to maintain traditional Thai values, ideas and morals to make sense of the rapidly changing circumstances that effect the setting of their everyday lives. Above all, the Thais have their beloved king who teaches them to know how to live the life sufficiently. The Thais are now learning how to live their life and how to handle the invasion of global culture by the wealth of their own culture and the richness of their traditional values.

1.11 Place of Tai-Ahom and Thai in Tai family

There are many different classifications of languages of Tai group. Though, Tai-Ahom and Standard-Thai language belong to the same group of languages i.e. Tai group, but scholars have given different classifications.

According to Sten Konow in Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India (1904) the language of Tai-Ahom and standard-Thai are grouped under Siamese-Chinese sub-family of Tibeto-Chinese family of languages. The family tree can be represented as below:

**Diagram 1: Language family tree**

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Tibeto-Chinese Family

Siamese-Chinese Sub-family       Tibeto-Burman Sub-family

Tai group

Southwestern    Central       Northern

Thai           S. Zhuang     N. Zhuang
Lao             Tho           Saek
Shan            Nung          Bouyei
Black, White & Red Tai
Ahom             Yay           Mene
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Shafer Robert (1955) used the family name as Sino-Tibetan and used Daic division for the same languages and included somewhat different names as follows: W. China, Tonkin, Kingdom of Laos, Siam (now Thailand) Shan state of Burma (Mynmar), South Siamese, North Tai, Noir, Tai blanc, Tho, Dioi, Ahom, Northwest Shan, Khamti etc.

Lanyon Orgill (1955) Classified the Tai languages into six groups.

1. Northern, including Tai-Khamti, Tai-Turung, Tai-Phake, Tai-Kham-yang
2. Central, including Tho spoken in Tong-king and Yunnan, Nung, Chung-kia
3. Southern, including Thai of central and southern Thailand, White Thai and Black Thai, Divi of Tongking
4. Ahom, including Aiton
5. Klai, including Li, Lakia, Loi
6. Liao spoken in the area between Yunnan and Kwaichow.

Li Fang-Kuei (1992) classified the languages of Tai group into the following three groups:

1. The Southwestern group; Siamese (Standard-Thai), Lao, Shan, Ahom etc.
2. The Central group; Northern Vietnam and Western Kuangsi
3. The Northern group; languages in Kweichow, Northern Kuangsi and Eastern Yunnan

This classification of Li treats Standard-Thai (Siamese) and Tai-Ahom under the same group (Southwestern group) of the Siamese-Chinese branch of the Tibeto-Chinese family of languages.

1.12 Aims and objectives and scope of the study

This is a synchronic descriptive study of the language systems of Tai-Ahom based on written manuscripts and its comparison with Standard-Thai. The present research work is aimed at the detailed descriptive-comparative study of Tai-Ahom and Standard-Thai languages. This brings out the structural features of both languages and throws light on the similarities and differences. The present study does not aim at the complex question of classification of both these languages under study.

The study aims at phonological, morphological and syntactic description of Tai-Ahom language and its comparison with Standard-Thai.

The scope of the present study is limited to the specific text, i.e. chronicles called Buranji. It is surely a particular type of texts that narrates the events related to the kings and their rules, therefore, some linguistic features may have been left out in our study. For example, the study of case and some types of sentences could not be found in the text. Tones are not marked in Tai-Ahom script and were left from our study.
The typological differences and similarities between the two languages are described and stated in detail. Only those structural features of Tai-Ahom are compared with Thai that were found in our text analysis.

1.13 Field work in Assam

For the present study I made two trips to the valley of Assam during May-June and November–December 2005. I made contact with the villages named Maniki village, Moranchan village, Simaluguli village, Moranhat sub-district of Sibsagar district in Assam. I contacted the priests of the villages who could read and understand Tai-Ahom manuscripts. I also consulted Institute of Tai studies and research in Moranhat and Dibrugarh University library in Dibrugarh, where some general books on Ahom were available in English.

1.14 Research Methodology

Standard descriptive-structural methods are used to describe the two languages involved in this study.

1.14.1 The primary data

The primary data for Tai-Ahom were recorded in the actual field by conducting extended linguistic fieldwork in Assam. Tai-Ahom is written in Ahom script that is very much similar to the Shan script in Mynmar. First I have learnt the Shan and Ahom script with my Thai professor who is an expert in Shan and Tais, including Ahom language.
The selected text was read to me by the priest and the same was recorded and transcribed in IPA symbols. It was further cross checked with the readings of other priests. It was found that some priests could read but could not provide meanings of the words. The texts called Ahom Buranji manuscript was limited in scope. The manuscripts were chronicles narrating the history of kings. These manuscripts are available with some priests which are written on the bark of some tree. Some printed Ahom text along with Thai translation related to chronicles is also available in Thailand (cf. bibliography). I showed this book to the priests and they were able to read and provided some meanings. Since the script does have any symbols for tonal distinctions, I have not been able to analyze the tones.

1.14.2 The secondary data

The secondary information on Tai-Ahom is taken from published sources. But it does not related to linguistic data as such.

The linguistic description of Standard-Thai is taken from standard works already available in the linguistic literature both in Thai and English languages. The opinions and previous works of the scholars whose works are related to these languages are also taken into account.

1.15 Organization of the thesis.

The present research is divided into four chapters, followed by conclusions, appendices, vocabulary and bibliography.
The first chapter is an introduction providing the historical and sociolinguistic background of the Tai people, Tai-Ahom and Thai people who use these languages. It is followed by linguistic position of the languages under study. It also includes research methodology and the aims, objectives and scope of the present study.

Chapter two provides a description of phonological system of Tai-Ahom and compares it with that of standard Thai.

Chapter three provides morphological description of Tai-Ahom and compares it with standard Thai.

Chapter four is an outline of Tai-Ahom syntax and it is compared with the syntactic structure of Thai.

Conclusions of the present study are hereby provided.

Appendix 1 includes photographs depicting socio-culture life of Tai-Ahom people, their monuments and other related activities of their daily life.

Appendix 2 includes text of Tai-Ahom Buranji along with English translation.

Appendix 3 contains vocabulary, organized according to semantic fields like body parts, kinship terms and other semantic domains.

The bibliography includes the books and articles consulted and referred to during the present study.
Map of India showing Assam where the Ahom people live.

Ahom language was spoken in Dibrugarh and Sibsagar districts of Assam and some area of Arunachal Pradesh.

Figure 1: Map of India and Assam
Figure 2: Map of Thailand, the country of Thai people
Figure 3: Tai groups and their spoken areas