3 Verbal category I: Agreement

3.1. Preview

The purpose of this chapter is to present a discussion of the agreement categories for verbs. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the verb is considered as a central element in a clause. It occurs in most basic kinds of clause and functions as the ultimate head. Based on its role in a clause, the simple verb construction of MKR will be first discussed in this chapter. The simple verb construction may be extended into a two-verb sequence, containing a non-finite form and a finite form. This sequence is termed a complex verb form. In departing from the usual tradition of giving precedence to the non-finite forms in a linguistic description, the discussion of these forms will be provided later in a separate chapter due to the following reasons:

1. Non-finite forms always occur in complex verb constructions. Most simple kind of sentences contain only one verbal element and that is a finite verb, not a non-finite one.
2. They do not have ability to take any grammatical inflection.
3. Most importantly, they cannot express the complete meaning denoted by the action itself. They always occur with a finite element and is then able to complete meaning of the sentence.

Out of three points mentioned above, the second point is the most relevant to our present discussion. In the sequence of non-finite and finite verbal elements, the finite verb can take certain grammatical inflections whereas the non-finite verb cannot. These grammatical inflections play a pivotal role in any language of the world, including the finite verb construction in MKR, and hence, these inflections are taken up for discussion first.

The verbs in MKR exhibit certain grammatico-semantic categories\(^1\) such as person, tense, aspect, and mood which are identifiable in terms of affixation, concord, and some

---

\(^1\) The term is adopted from Ferguson (1964: 882). It is used to refer to categories which are identified from both a grammatical and a semantic point of view.
special types of selection. From the discussion in §2.4, it is evident that the category of person, among the others mentioned above, is an agreement category while the others are distinguished as inherent categories. As an agreement category, person in MKR exhibits the syntactic link between the verb and the subject. This syntactic link is expressed by the use of personal suffixes to the verb and by the use of different stems called personal pronouns. This chapter will deal with the agreement category of the verb in MKR. The inherent category will be discussed in the next chapter.

A question may arise at this point as to why it has been decided to deal with the agreement category before the inherent category and not *vice versa*. Such a preferred order reflects in part an ease of description and in part the relative importance of the categories judged on the basis of their pervasiveness in the grammar, their semantic distinctiveness, as well as the degree to which other categories presuppose them (Ferguson 1964: 882). From the viewpoint of these three properties, the category of person will be given first preference since the simple basic verb in MKR is a combination of the verbal root along with the personal suffix, as illustrated in (1).

**First person**

(1)  

a. \[ \text{mai} \quad \text{karo/ karoho} \]  
\[ \text{mai} \quad \text{kar-o kar-o} \]  
I do-1 do-1  
'\text{I do.}'

**Second person inferior**

b. \[ \text{tai} \quad \text{kara/ karaha} \]  
\[ \text{tai} \quad \text{kar-a kar-a} \]  
\text{you.INF do-2INF do-2INF}  
'\text{You do.}'

**Second person familiar**

c. \[ \text{tumi} \quad \text{karā/ karāhā} \]  
\[ \text{tumi} \quad \text{kar-ā kar-āhā} \]  
\text{you.FAM do-2FAM do-2FAM}  
'\text{You do.}'}
Third person neutral for inferior and honorific

d.  
\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{si} & \quad \text{kare} \\
  \text{si} & \quad \text{kar-e} \\
  \text{he.INF.DST} & \quad \text{do-3NEUT}
\end{align*}
\]

'He does.'

Third person honorific

e.  
\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{teho} & \quad \text{karanta} \\
  \text{teho} & \quad \text{kar-anta} \\
  \text{he.HON.DST} & \quad \text{do-3HON}
\end{align*}
\]

'He does.'

Moreover, we find the structure of verbal root with tense markers preceding the personal suffixes as shown in (2).

Present tense

(2)  
\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{a. mai} & \quad \text{karo/ karoho} \\
  \text{mai} & \quad \text{kar-o} \quad \text{kar-ohe} \\
  \text{I} & \quad \text{do-1} \quad \text{do-1}
\end{align*}
\]

'I do.'

Past tense

b.  
\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{mai} & \quad \text{karilo/ kariloho} \\
  \text{mai} & \quad \text{kar-il-o} \quad \text{kar-il-ohe} \\
  \text{I} & \quad \text{do-PST-1} \quad \text{do-PST-1}
\end{align*}
\]

'I did.'

Future tense

c.  
\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{mai} & \quad \text{karibo/ kariboho} \\
  \text{mai} & \quad \text{kar-ib-o} \quad \text{kar-ib-ohe} \\
  \text{I} & \quad \text{do-FUT-1} \quad \text{do-FUT-1}
\end{align*}
\]

'I will do.'

Aspect markers are found to occur to the right of the lexical base preceding the tense and personal suffixes, as illustrated in (3).
Perfective

(3) a.  
\[ \text{mai karilo} \]
\[ \text{mai kar-il-o} \]
I do-PST-1

'I have done.'

Imperfective

b.  
\[ \text{mai karicho} \]
\[ \text{mai kar-ich-o} \]
I do-IPFV-1

'I am doing.'

Thus, the structure of the simple verb in MKR can be expressed by the following formula:

Verb stem – Aspect marker – Tense/Mood marker – Personal suffixes

This structure can be summarized with the help of Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\text{kar}</td>
<td></td>
<td>-\text{o/-oho}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\text{kar}</td>
<td>-il/-1</td>
<td>-\text{o/-oho}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\text{kar}</td>
<td>-ich</td>
<td>-\text{o}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>IPFV</td>
<td>PST</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the finite verb in MKR takes another class of suffixes which occurs in the position immediately following the verbal root. These suffixes are known as causative suffixes. With these suffixes, the finite verb in MKR is structured in the following order:


If this ordering for the verb is followed, the discussion of causativity should come first. However, rather than following the order of (causative suffix > aspect > tense > person) for discussion, the order of (person > tense > aspect) will be followed, for the following reasons:

(a) Causativization is a derivational process rather than an inflectional one.
(b) In terms of frequency, the simple verb with the order of the categories of person, tense, and aspect is more basic and frequent than the order of causative, aspect, tense, and person.

(c) Verbs of all kinds cannot be causativized in language; nor does causativization exist in all languages. However, almost all languages of the world contain verb forms with tense and/or aspect morphology along with verbal agreement markers such as the personal suffix.

(d) Causative verbs present a more complex situation than the simple verb. It is related to the valence of a verb.

Hence, from this point of view, it is clear that the grammatical category of person, tense, and aspect is more basic and simple than the category of causativity. However, in order to describe the construction of finite verbs, the importance of causative suffixes cannot be denied. By using these suffixes a language can change the valence of verbs from the status of intransitive to transitive, and from transitive into ditransitive. A full inventory of causative suffixes will be discussed in next chapter during the discussion of inherent categories (§4.5).

The present chapter is divided into six sections including this overview section. The next section (§3.2) will introduce person as a grammatical category of the verb in general terms and then examine it in the context of MKR. In order to facilitate the discussion of the category of person in MKR, the verbal personal suffixes will be discussed first in next three sections (§3.3, §3.4, and §3.5) on the basis of their ability to occur in the verbal paradigm. Here, the high variability of forms and the complex nature of form-function alignment found in the case of the verbal personal suffixes will be highlighted along with their functions. The discussion of personal pronouns and how they mark the category of person, will be taken up in §3.6.

### 3.2. Person

The category of person serves to express the notion of participant-roles. For instance, the first person refers to the speaker, the second person to the hearer, and the third person to other referents. Different languages have different means of expressing the discourse roles of speaker, addressee and third party. The vast majority of the languages
of the world have a closed set of expressions for the identification of the three discourse roles embracing the category of person. Other languages have a set of affixes which are associated to the verb and show an agreement relation between the verb and its arguments, i.e. the subject and object. However, there are some other languages where both the strategies are used to express the grammatical category of person, and MKR certainly falls into this third type. As mentioned in the first section, MKR exhibits the category of person through verbal agreement and by the use of different stems. The verbal agreement is limited to concord with the subject, not with the object.

MKR exhibits a verbal paradigm of three persons: first, second, and third. The second and the third person express a two-way distinction in terms of the nature of role-relationship between the speaker and the hearer: (i) Inferior and familiar in the second person, and (ii) Inferior and honorific in the third person. However, the distinction found in the third person is not reflected in the verbal paradigm. It exists only in the personal pronouns. The verbal paradigm for the third person expresses the neutralisation of the inferior-honorific distinction. The next section (§3.3) will be chiefly concerned with the personal suffixes found in MKR.

3.3. Personal suffixes: multiple forms and alignments

Before proceeding any further, it is necessary to highlight two features of person agreement in MKR: (a) the number of variants of the same form (b) the inconsistency in form-function alignment. Both of these features are evident in the personal suffixes to a large extent. In the following section, an attempt will be made to find different personal suffixes in MKR along with their different variations.

MKR exhibits seven markers for the first person: -o, -ō, -ōho, -ōho, -ōhō, and -wo; five markers for the second person inferior: -a, -asa, -wasa, -aha, -i, -ihi, and -e; and eight markers for the second person familiar: -ā, -āa, -āhā, -āhō, -iyoka and -e. For the third person, nine forms are added to the verbal stem. Some of

---

2 For encoding the nasalization following ə, we have used the symbol ə.
them are neutral with regard to the inferior-honorific distinction: -e, -we, -ye, -aya, and -waya; others occur as third person honorific: -anta, -anta and -wanta.

Most of the forms indicated here are not functionally distinct, but occur as variants of the same form. Possible reasons of such variations are given below:

(1) The personal suffixes are found as orthographic variations of the same form. Depending on the ending of the verb, the person agreement markers assume different orthographic shapes.

(2) It is likely that the different variants are due to scribal error.

(3) The different variants might have arisen due to differences in the pronunciation of specific forms used by different groups of people of that time.

(4) The lack of reliability of the source of the data has a likely effect on the selection of the variations.

(5) Finally, there may be some historical reasons behind the use of these variants.

It may be noted that the factors (1) and (3) mentioned above are reasonable surmises that are based on situations often found across the languages. Sometimes it appears that the same form is pronounced in different ways by speakers of the same variety or some other related varieties of a specific language. For example, mo\(i\) 'I' in modern Assamese pronounced as mo\(i\) as well as mu\(i\) by the speakers of same variety or some related varieties, as in the Goalparia dialect of Assamese. This kind of pronunciation may be reflected in the written form of the concerned language. It can be reasonably assumed that this same thing might have happened in case of MKR. The author might be influenced by the different pronunciations of the same form used in different areas. We do not have strong evidence to prove this assumption due to unavailability of spoken evidence of that time. The matter of variation of the personal suffixes is an area of investigation that is broad enough to merit a separate treatment. Nor is it a central concern of the present study. Hence, no further discussion on the issue will be attempted here.

As stated earlier, MKR does not show form-function alignments clearly. The same form is often found to be used to express multiple functions and several forms used to express one function. This complexity in form-function alignment can be attributed to
stylistic or historical reasons. The five reasons for variability of forms discussed in the previous paragraph are further possible reasons, though it has to be admitted that these are not empirically confirmed. To describe the multiple functions of a form, the terms *syncretism* and *homographemic* will be used in this work wherever necessary. The following section will survey the different variants of the personal suffixes mentioned in this section.

### 3.4. Personal suffixes: orthographic variation and function

The purpose of this section is to outline the different variants of same form along with their places of occurrences. The section is divided into three main sections: §3.4.1 will discuss the variants of the first person. The variants of the second person will be dealt with in §3.4.2. The third person variants will be surveyed in §3.4.3.

#### 3.4.1. Variants of the first person

Among the six forms of the first person pronoun mentioned in the previous section, -ā, and -aho are found as two distinct markers. Of the rest, -ā occurs as a variant of -o; -ohō, -oho, and -ōhō occur as variants of -oho. Of the two variants -o and -ā, the latter variant is more frequent in use. This marker is also found in Modern Assamese to express the same function.

#### 3.4.2. Variants of the second person

As mentioned in §3.3, two sets of forms are found to occur as second person agreement markers: second person inferior and second person familiar. Each of these sets has some orthographic variants. These variations that were earlier dealt with in general terms in §3.3 will be discussed specifically and broadly in the next section.

---

*3 The term is used here to indicate the relation between words which have different functions but are identical in form or have different forms but are identical in function.*

*4 This term refers to forms which are homonyms orthographically.*
3.4.2.1. Second person inferior forms

Of the second person inferior forms -a, -asa, -aha, -i, -ihi, and -ca are found as five distinct markers. -wasa is found as an orthographic variant of -asa. This marker is found to occur after vowel letters while -asa is found to occur after consonants. The distribution of these five forms is different according to the three tenses: -a, -asa, and -aha co-occur only with the present tense while -i, and -ihi occur with verb forms of the past and future tenses. A notable feature of -a, -asa, and -aha is that -asa occurs as an agreement marker of second person inferior subjects only. As against this, both -aha, and -a occur as second person inferior subject markers in the imperative mood.

3.4.2.2. Second person familiar forms

The four forms -ā, -āhā, -iyo, and -iyoka are used as distinct verbal agreement markers for second person familiar subjects. -ā is a variant of -a, -āhā, and -āhā are variants of -āhā. All these markers appear to occur as joint exponents of the category of person and mood. Apart from person, -ā, and -āhā are used to refer to the imperative mood. -iyo, and -iyoka additionally refer to the optative mood as well as the imperative mood. The choice of their occurrence as imperative or as optative is determined by the context, as exemplified in (4-7).

-īyo

As imperative

(4)  
dhanusāra niyā mora thāīyo etikṣapa.
dhanusāra ni-ya mo-ra thā-īyo etikṣapa
bow and arrow take away-NF I-GEN keep-2FAM.IMP this moment
'Take away my bow and arrow and keep (there) this moment.'
(Su, Ch. 40, V. 105)
As optative

(5) ṛṣiye bolanta sabe haiyo
cirāṇjīwa
śi-ye bol-anta sab-e ha-ya ciraṇjīwa
'sage-ERG say-3H0N all-ERG be-OPT live ling'
'The sage said, 'may all live long'.'

(Ay, Ch. 33, V. 32)

-iyoka

As imperative

(6) sitāye sahite cāhīyoka anuṣṭhāna
cab-iyoka
'sita-INS with watch-2FAM_IMP programme'

‘Watch the programme with Sita.’

(Ay, Ch. 3, V. 41)

As optative

(7) ārśībbāda kariyoka calī yāō bana
ārśībbāda kar-iyoka cal-i yā-ō bana
'blessing do-OPT go-1 forest'

‘Give me your blessing. (I) am going to the forest.’

(Ay, Ch. 8, V. 16)

In (4), Ram orders his younger brother Lakshmana to put away his bow and arrows.
Hence, the form -iyo seems to occur here as an imperative. However, in (5), the same form is used by the honourable sage Bharadwaj for giving blessings to Prince Bharata and his relatives (mothers and brothers). Therefore, it seems to have an optative function here. (6) is addressed by King Dasaratha to his son Rama while in (7), it is Rama who asks the king for his blessings for himself (and for his wife and younger brother Lakshmana) on the eve of their banishment to the forest. Their contexts make it evident that (6) and (7) are expressing imperative and optative functions, respectively. The distribution of these forms is different according to the three tenses. -ā, and -āhā occur with verbs in all the three tenses, while the occurrences of -iyo, and -iyoka are limited to the present tense verb forms only, as shown in Table 3.2.
Table 3.2 The distribution of second person familiar forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ā</td>
<td>kar</td>
<td>-ā</td>
<td>kar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-FAM</td>
<td>-PST</td>
<td>-FAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-āhā</td>
<td>kar</td>
<td>-āhā</td>
<td>kar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-FAM</td>
<td>-PST</td>
<td>-FAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iyo</td>
<td>kar</td>
<td>-iyo</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-FAM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-iyoka</td>
<td>kar</td>
<td>-iyoka</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-FAM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>-2FAM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.3. Variants of the third person

For the third person, two sets of forms are used in MKR: (1) the neutralized inferior-honorific suffixes, and (2) the honorific suffix. These are indicated in Table 3.3 below.

The former set consists of -we and -waya, considered to be orthographic variants of -e, and -aya. The form -we occurs only with vowel ending verbal forms while the -e marker occurs with forms ending in consonant. Similarly, -waya occurs after vowel ending verb forms and -aya occurs after consonant ending verb forms. Of the set of honorifics, -anta, and -wanta are orthographic variants of -anta. -anta occurs after verbs ending in the a-vowel, -anta after all consonants, and -wanta occurs after the ā-vowel. All the personal suffixes added to the verb forms are summarized in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 The personal suffixes in MKR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First person</th>
<th>Second person</th>
<th>Third person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>Familiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-o, -ō, -oho,</td>
<td>-a, -asa, -aha,</td>
<td>-ā, -ā, -āhā, -āhā,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ohō, -ōho,</td>
<td>-wasa, -i, -ihi,</td>
<td>-āhā, -iyoka, -iyo,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ōhō</td>
<td>-e</td>
<td>-iyoka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from the markers indicated in Table 3.3, another set of markers occurs in the verbal paradigm of MKR. These are -oka/-ōka/-uka, -nto/-anto, and -antoka. In terms of their paradigmatic use, these forms occur as agreement markers of third person subjects. More importantly, these markers serve to express the optative mood, as illustrated in (8)-(10).

- **uka/-oka**

(8) rāmara kalyāṇa hauka maroka rāwaṇa
   rām-ara kalyaṇa ha-uka mar-oka rāwaṇa
   Ram-GEN happiness be-OPT die-OPT Rawana

   ‘(I) wish that Ram be happy and Rawana be killed.’

   (Laṅ, Ch. 48, V. 196)

- **anto**

(9) sakāle māranto āka sumitrā tanaẏa
   sakal-e mār-anto ā-ka sumitrā tanaẏa
   morning-AVZR kill-OPT he.PRX-DAT Sumitra son

   ‘May the son of Sumitra kill him in the morning.’

   (Laṅ, Ch. 35, V. 129)

- **antoka**

(10) rakṣā karantoka pathe dewa nirantara
    rakṣā kar-antoka path-e dewa nirantara
    rescue do-OPT road-LOC deity always

   ‘May the deities always rescue you on your way.

   (Ay, Ch. 10, V. 144)

The difference between -oka, and -antoka or -anto is obscure. According to Kakati (1941: 352), the form -oka is used in early Assamese as an agreement marker of the third person singular, while the -ntoka and -nto forms serve as third person plural agreement markers. However in MKR, these forms appear to be used to mark the third person verbal agreement as well as to mark the optative mood, irrespective of the distinction of number. All these three forms seem to agree with both singular and plural subjects.
Moreover, it was observed in §3.4.2 that the optative mood is not only expressed by the three markers mentioned above, but by the agreement markers of the second person familiar (*-iyo and -iyoka*), as shown in Examples (5) and (7). If these five markers are examined closely, it can be seen that *-oka/-uka, -antoka/-ntoka*, and *-iyoka* share *-oka* as a common element. This suggests the following hypotheses.

(i) *-oka* might have been derived from proto-Assamese without changing the form and function of the optative.

(ii) It might have been derived from other forms with slight phonological and functional differences.

(iii) It might have emerged in MKR as an optative, but had expressed different functions as a proto-form.

(iv) It might have been a new innovation of Early Assamese.

However, without proper historical investigation of the language, we are hardly in a position to draw any definite conclusions. (iii) and (iv) suggests that *-oka* might not be an inherited form, but an innovation of Early Assamese. A possible clue in support of this assumption can be looked for in the language of Caryāpada. If the language of Caryāpada can be regarded as immediate preceding the language of MKR, then there was a strong likelihood for the appearance of this form in this text. However, it has to be admitted this form is not found in Caryāpada: not a single one of those five forms mentioned above occurs there.

As an alternative possibility it may be noted that the suffixes *-iyo* and *-anta* are extensively used in MKR as second person familiar and third person honorific markers. Hence, if *-k-* is predicted as an innovative suffix for the optative, then it be hypothesized that *-k-* occurs with the preceding second person familiar and third person honorific agreement markers *-iyo* and *-ant* to indicate the optative mood in MKR. *-k-* can thus be considered as an innovation of the MKR period, since it is absent in Caryāpada. It is considered as optative as this form is still found in modern Assamese in an optative sense, as (11) illustrates.
The co-occurrence of -k- with second person familiar and third person honorific agreement suffixes can be explained in terms of sociolinguistic features. Generally, the distinction of imperative-optative is based on the social status of the participants. The primary roles of the imperative and the optative are command and making wishes. These two roles are determined by the extralinguistic factors. For instance, command is given only to people of lower classes by their superiors, to junior people by their seniors and to intimate friends – but not the other way about. No language is found in the world where juniors give commands to the seniors. Instead of using commands in that situation, people resort to the strategy of using an indirect speech act to express the same meaning in a polite way.

After this general overview of the personal suffixes, the next section (§3.5) will deal with the complex nature of the relationship between the forms of the personal suffixes and the functions expressed by them. This section will also attempt to find out on the basis of the individual functions of the personal suffixes whether there is any regularity in their use.

3.5. Personal suffixes: some issues

Two important points (cf. Siewierska 2004) need to be kept in mind while discussing person agreement in any language. First, is there any grammatical category or pragmatic function involving a specific person in terms of which the person paradigm can show variation? Cross-linguistically it is very rare to mark the person by the person markers alone. Grammatical categories most closely connected with the category of person are those of number, gender, case, definiteness, tense, aspect, mood and polarity. Thus, in modern Assamese, the category of person and tense are jointly expressed in the present and future reference. The absence of overt markers to encode the information of present reference in (12a) and future reference in (12c) is an evidence of the joint exponency of person and tense.
Additionally, person markers also encode information of referents such as the social status of the referent and the speaker and their location relative to the speaker or addressee.

Secondly, is there any specific property of the controller\(^6\) which impinges upon the target\(^7\) for the selection of different markers? The person paradigm may differ in regard to the grammatical categories of person, number, and gender of the controllers. It may also differ due to the pragmatic behaviour of the controllers, such as animacy, referential features of the controllers, focus of the controllers (i.e. the presence or absence of person agreement), which may be determined by the information status of the controllers in the utterance. The following sections will examine these two points.

### 3.5.1. The complexity of form-function alignment

The relevance of the two points mentioned in §3.5 in the discussion of person agreement in MKR is obvious. There, some assumptions were made in order to find out if there is any reason for the use of different variants of same form, and for the irregularities found in form-function alignment. It was also mentioned that these

---

\(^6\) The term is taken from Siewierska (2004: 120) and used here to refer to the subject, because the subject is the only argument in MKR which determines agreement.

\(^7\) It is also adopted from Siewierska (2004) to refer to the verb because the verb is the only element whose form is determined by agreement.
assumptions are based on guesswork rather than empirical evidence. In the present section, the data will be examined in the light of the two points which are found to have influence upon the person paradigm across languages. After that, an attempt will be made to find out the reason behind the irregularities of form-function alignment in MKR based on the results of the foregoing discussion. If those two points fail to suggest any pattern regarding the form-function irregularities in MKR, then there would be strong grounds to accept the assumptions made earlier in support of the irregularities. The forms will be examined in the following terms: the category of tense in §3.5.1.1; the category of mood in §3.5.1.2; the categories of number and gender in §3.5.1.3 and finally, according to other factors such as location relative to the referents, animacy, definiteness or specificity of the controllers, and transitivity etc. in §3.5.1.4.

3.5.1.1. Tense
MKR seems to express the category of person and tense together, but in a different way than modern Assamese. For instance, the first person markers -o, and -oho exhibit the categories of person and tense together in present tense. However, these two markers also occur with the markers of past and future tense without changing the form, unlike in the future tense of modern Assamese (cf. example (13)). As evidence, the examples given in (2) above can be considered. The absence of an overt marker for the present tense indicates that its temporal reference is jointly expressed by the person markers. However, the same markers are also found to occur with the past and future tenses without any change in form. The point being made is that the choice of different markers to encode the same person does not depend on whatever grammatical category is co-expressed with that person.

3.5.1.2. Mood
Like tense, the mood is also jointly expressed with the second person. Two sets of markers are used to simultaneously indicate mood and person in MKR: -a, and -aha for the second person inferior imperative, and -ā, -āhā for the second person familiar
imperative (§3.4.2). But the variations between the -a and -aha pair or the -ā and -āhā pair are not due to mood but some other factors. All these markers are used to express the imperative mood as in (13).

(13) a. toi kara/ karasa/ karaha
    toi kar-a kar-asa kar-aha
    you-INF do-2INF.IMP do-2INF.IMP do-2INF.IMP
    ‘You do.’

   b. tumi karā/ karāha
    tumi kar-ā kar-āha
    you.FAM do-2FAM.IMP do-2FAM.IMP
    ‘You do.’

In (13a), all three markers -a, -asa, and -aha are used as second person inferior agreement markers and also express the imperative mood. The choice of using any of these three forms is not based on the distinction of mood. The same situation can be seen in (13b) as well.

3.5.1.3. Number and gender

Unlike many Indo-European languages, the verbal paradigm of person in MKR does not differ in regard to the number and gender. The same person marker is added to the verb to refer to both singular and plural subjects. Therefore, the use of different markers for the same function is not due to the category of number. For instance, -o, and -oho are used to refer to first person subjects irrespective of whether the subject is singular or plural as (14)-(17) illustrate.

(14) mai brdha bhailō tora yubata sarīra.
    mai bṛddha bha-il-ō to-ra yubata sarīra
    I old be-PST-1 you.INF-GEN young body
    ‘I became old and you are young.’

(Ar, Ch. 15, V. 23)
prathama prabase āmi bhailō upasthita
first sojourn-LOC we be-PST-1 arrive

'(We arrived at our first sojourn.)

Ay, Ch. 17, V. 12

alapate sukāi yāibi jānilohō mai
alap-at-e sukāi yā-ib-i jān (janā)-il-ohō mai
few-LOC-EMPH dry go-FUT-2INF know-PST-1 I

'I know you will be dry shortly.'

Ay, Ch. 4, V. 26

dewara āgata āmi nobolohō michā
dew-ara āgata āmi no-bol-ohō michā
deity-GEN before we NEG-tell-1 lie

'We never tell a lie in front of deities.'

Ay, Ch. 2, V. 16

In (14) and (15), the maker -ōi used as agreement maker for both the first person singular subject mai and the first person plural subject āmi. Similarly, in (16) and (17), the marker -oho agrees with both the first person singular subject mai and the plural subject āmi.

As with number, the distinction of gender is also not reflected in the verbal paradigm of person. It is reflected only in the third person pronouns (§3.6.3.). The personal suffixes in MKR do not vary in terms of the category of gender as exemplified in (18-19). Hence, the phenomenon of multiple forms expressing the same function cannot be explained by the criterion of gender agreement.

tapara prabhāwe siṭo duṣkara sādhila
tapa-ra prabhāw-e si-ṭo duṣkara sādh-il-a
penance-GEN influence-AVZR he-CLF impracticable accomplish-PST-3

'Because of the influence of penance, he accomplished an impracticable task.'

Ar, Ch. 8, V. 238

8 The locative -at functions as a temporal marker here. The word alapate is a reduce form of noun phrase alap samayate. In the absence of head noun samay, -at is found to be added with quantifier alap.
In both (18) and (19), the verbal ending remains the same irrespective of whether the subject is masculine or feminine. Thus, in both instances, the categories of tense and person are expressed cumulatively.

3.5.1.4. Other factors

This section explores the reason for the existence of different variants of the personal suffixes in terms of information on referents, such as location relative to the referents, animacy, specificity of the controllers etc.

The person paradigm does not vary according to the degree of remoteness of the controllers. The degree of remoteness is expressed only in the third person in MKR and that too, only in the case of independent pronouns, not in the verbal paradigm involving the agreement markers. The same verbal agreement marker is used for both distal and proximal subject pronouns in MKR.

The other criterion for examining variation in the use of the person markers is the distinction of animacy. As in the case of the degree of remoteness, the distinction of animacy also involves only the third person referents. But in MKR, this distinction does not seem to be maintained either in the case of the paradigm of personal pronouns or in the case of the personal suffixes. The same third person form and suffix are used to refer to both human and non-human referents as shown in (20).

(20)  

sacakita man-e si aṭāra pāṇi khāi.  
sacakita man-e si aṭāra pāṇi khāi.  
fearful mind-AVZR he.INF.DST food water eat-3  
‘He eats food and water with a fearful mind.’  

(Ay, Ch. 35, V. 34)

In (20), the pronoun si is used to refer to a bird. This form is also used to refer to human nouns in MKR.
Sometimes, the referential interpretation of controllers seems to influence the verbal paradigm of person in that person markers seem to be sensitive to the feature of definiteness or specificity of the controller. As in the case of animacy and degree of remoteness, this criterion also relates to third person pronouns. However, the person paradigm of MKR does not appear to vary in terms of definiteness or the property of specificity of the controller.

Sometimes the presence vs. absence or variations in person agreement may be determined by the information status of the controllers in the utterance. The two kinds of information status that may be borne by the elements of an utterance are topic and focus. However, the person paradigm of MKR does not exhibit the distinction of topic and focus.

Finally, the category of transitivity also does not seem to impinge on the selection of personal suffixes in MKR. Both transitive and intransitive verbs take the same personal suffix, as illustrated in (21-22).

(21) \begin{tabular}{lllll}
\emph{parama} & \emph{hari\v{s}e} & \emph{gail\v{a}} & \emph{dak\v{\i}par} & \emph{di\v{s}a} \\
\emph{parama} & \emph{hari\v{s}-e} & \emph{ga-il-\v{a}} & \emph{dak\v{\i}par-ara} & \emph{di\v{s}a} \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{itemize}
\item much \\
\item delight-AVZR \\
\item go-PST-3 \\
\item south-GEN \\
\end{itemize}

功德主 in (21) is intransitive and \emph{karila} in (22) is transitive. However, both take the same second person familiar agreement marker -\text当时的 in spite of the transitive-intransitive distinction.

From the above discussion it is clear that inconsistencies in form-function alignment found in the grammatical categories of MKR considered in this study are not due to the cross-linguistic factors discussed above. The reason behind the use of two distinctive
markers to refer to the same function cannot be explained in terms of these properties. The next section explores the possible role of historical change in this regard.

3.5.2. The role of historical change

The purpose of this section is to provide arguments in support of the assumption that historical factors play a role in the complex nature of form-function alignment seen in the case of personal suffixes in MKR. These arguments should be considered tentative until the assumptions are tested on a broader sampling of data from this stage of the language along with a systematic study of this area.

The process of change in language often involves a conflict between the older forms and the new forms where the former give way to the latter. This situation can be described in another way. For instance, it may happen that the two forms began to be used simultaneously from some point of time in the development of the language. At some stage of the development, a conflict between these two forms might lead one of them to be used more frequently than the other in writing by the users of the language, forcing the other form to gradually disappear. If the data of MKR is considered in the light of these arguments, it is possible to assume that a similar situation happened. For example, the first person suffixes -o, and -oho; the second person inferior suffixes for the present tense -a, -asa, and -aha; for past tense -i, and -ih; and the second person familiar suffixes -ā, and -āha can be considered. In each case, two markers are used to express the same function. The second member of each pair has one thing in common — namely, the consonant h which is not found in modern Assamese, at least in the standard dialect. However, in some dialects of the language, such as in the dialect of Nalbari, this form seems to be present. From this point of view, MKR exhibits a pattern in the use of two distinctive markers to indicate one function. It can be assumed that -oho, -asa, -aha, -ih, and -āha evolved in the language of the time of MKR or earlier, as a result of historical change. Alternatively, these forms might have been in simultaneous use along with the forms -o (first person), -i (second person inferior), and -ā (second person familiar) from some point of time in the development of Assamese. This would
seem to explain why both types of forms are found in MKR. This assertion is supported by the following evidence:

(i) Both sets of forms are found in all texts of Assamese of the 14th and 15th century. However, after that time, the use of -oho, -asa, -aha, -ihi, and -ahā started to lose out and the use of -o, -a, -i, and -a became prominent in the language. In modern Assamese we have the -ō (represented by the phonetic symbol ə) marker for the first person, the -a, and -i markers for the second person inferior used in the present and past tenses, and the -a marker for the second person familiar as illustrated in (23-25).

**First person in the present tense**

(23) a. moi kara
moi kor-u
I do-1

'I do.'

**First person in the past tense**

b. moi korilu
moi kor-il-u
I do-PST-1

'I did.'

**First person in the future tense**

c. moi korim
moi kor-im
I do-FUT.1

'I will do.'

**Second person inferior in the present tense**

(24) a. toi kor
toi kor-o
you.INF do-2INF

'You do.'
Second person inferior in the past tense

b.  
   toi  korili
   toi  kor-il-i
   you.INF  do-PST-2INF
   'You did.'

Second person inferior in the future tense

c.  
   toi  koribi.
   toi  kor-ib-i
   you.INF  do-FUT-2INF
   'You will do.'

Second person familiar in the present tense

(25) a.  
   tumi  kor.a.
   tumi  kor-a
   you.FAM  do-2FAM
   'You do.'

Second person familiar in the past tense

b.  
   tumi  korila.
   tumi  kor-il-a
   you.FAM  do-PST-2FAM
   'You do.'

Second person familiar in the future tense

c.  
   tumi  koriba.
   tumi  kor-ib-a
   you.FAM  do-FUT-2FAM
   'You will do.'

(ii) The use of the -aha, and -āḥā forms is still found in some dialects of Assamese

   as in (26), though with a slight difference in pronunciation.

(26)  
   tumi  take  ekbar  zabāḥa
   tumi  take  ek-bar  za-b-āḥa
   you.FAM  there  one-time  go-FUT-2FAM
   'You will go there once.'
(iii) The -aha, and -asa forms are found in Bengali, a closely related cognate of Assamese. The former one is used in both old and early middle Bengali (eMB) to refer to the second person (Chatterji 1926: 903). According to Chatterji, -aha of old Bengali (OB) was inherited from second and late MIA -adha > first MIA -atha (indicative second plural) together with the OIA second person imperative plural suffix -ata. ("the imperative 2nd plural affix in OIA was <-ata>. This fell together with the indicative 2nd plural <-atha> as early as the first MIA period, and <-atha> became in second and Late MIA <-adha, -aha>. OB inherited this as <-aha>, and this <-aha> continued down to eMB"
(Chatterji 1926: 906)). The form -asa exists in modern Bengali with a slight difference as in (27).

**Second person inferior**

(27) tui bolis
tui bol-is
you speak-2INF
‘you say’
(Ferguson 1962: 881-890)

(iv) Apart from -aha, -a also occurs in old and early modern Bengali. According to Chatterji (ibid.: 904), this form is inherited from OIA second person singular imperative -a, and was continued through MIA, and OB. down to eMB. There were, of course slight adjustments in pronunciation in eMB as in OIA cal-a > MIA cal-a > NIA cal-a > OB cal-a > eMB cal-a. In the process of this change, -a lost the meaning of old singular and is used in Bengali to express the imperative inferior in both the singular and the plural.

On the basis of (iii) and (iv) it can be reasonably assumed that -a, and -aha forms of MKR and the -a, -aha forms of Bengali share the same origin and underwent the same process of development. They were two distinct forms from the OIA period to the NIA
period from where Assamese and other cognates like Bengali started to evolve as
distinct languages. As stated above, MKR is a text of that period when the NIA
languages started to take distinctive form. Hence, both the -a, and -aha forms are found
to appear in this text. However, in MKR these two forms indicate the ordinary second
person inferior along with the second person inferior imperative without the number
distinction. It is likely that at a subsequent stage, the form -aha might have given way
to the form -a which came to express the ordinary second person inferior in modern
Assamese, without the associated function of the imperative; in Bengali, the form -a is
used to refer to the second person inferior as well as the familiar. As illustrated in (28)
and (29) below, -a is dropped in both modern Assamese and in Bengali when the
imperative function is expressed:

Imperative of the second person inferior in modern Assamese
(28) toi kor
    toi kor
    you.INF do.2INF.IMP
    ‘You do.’

Imperative of the second person inferior in Bengali
(29) tui kor
    tui kor
    you do.2INF.IMP
    ‘You do.’

However, the lack of spoken or written evidence from Assamese before the MKR or
spoken evidence from the language of the time of MKR prevents us from drawing any
definite conclusions with regard to the actual forms.

3.5.3. Syncretism and homography in the personal suffixes of MKR

The irregularities in form-function alignment in MKR can be viewed from other
perspectives. There are several forms in MKR which have dual functions. The forms -e
and -a can be taken as examples. The -e form is used to mark the third person as well as
the second person inferior. The occurrence of this form in the second person is restricted with regard to tense. It can only occur in the future tense in the second person, as illustrated in (30). However, in the third person, it occurs in all the tenses as exemplified in (31)-(33).

(30) abilambe tai pāibe
    abilambe tai pā-ib-e
    shortly you.INF get-FUT-2INF
    ‘You will get shortly.’
    (Su, Ch. 15, V. 13)

(31) bāpekata kahe indrajita birabare
    bāp-ek-ata kah-e indrajita birabar-e
    father-3(N)-LOC tell-3 Indrajit hero-ERG
    ‘The hero, Indrajit, tells his father.’
    (Lañ, Ch. 9, V. 201)

(32) daibajāne ganjyā mora kahile sakale.
    daibajā-e gan-jyā mo-ra kah-il-e sakal-e
    astrologer-ERG calculate-NF I-GEN tell-PST-3 all-EMPH
    ‘The astrologer told everything about me by calculating.’
    (Ay, Ch. 3, V. 36)

(33) kona jane kahibe mohora jāti dharmma.
    kona jan-e kah-ib-e moho-ra jāti dharmma
    which person-CLF-ERG tell-FUT-3 I-GEN nationality religion
    ‘Which person will tell about my nationality and religion.’
    (Su, Ch. 2, V. 50)

As shown in (30), the -e marker is found with the verb form pā when it occurs with the future tense marker -ib and its subject is the second person inferior form tai.

However, Examples (31), (32) and (33) show that the marker -e agrees with the third person subject but is preceded by the covert present and the overt past and future tense markers.
The -a form is basically used to mark the second person familiar subject. It is also occurs with the third person, as in (34).

(34) māribā rāme rāwapa.
mār-ib-ā rām-e rāwapa
kill-FUT-3 Ram-ERG Rawan
‘Ram will kill Rawan.’

(Ar, Ch. 3, V. 16)

There can be two ways of explaining the dual functions of these forms: (i) the first function of each form can be considered as its primary function and the second one as its secondary function. In such a situation, the form may be said to exhibit syncretism i.e., the property of the same form having two different functions. We can consider the use of the -ka marker as an instance that involves this property of syncretism. This marker is used to mark the core arguments, i.e., the objects of transitive and ditransitive constructions as well as adverbial functions such as oblique arguments, adjuncts etc. In such situations, the functions in which the marker is used to mark the core arguments are considered as the primary function of the marker. The remaining functions (i.e., adverbial functions) are considered as its secondary function (cf. §7.1), (ii) a second way of explaining the same form being associated with two functions would be to view the single form as representing homography. According to this second perspective, two instances of -e would have to be recognized – one to mark the third person and the other to mark the second person inferior; similarly, there would be two instances of -ā, one to mark the second person and the other to mark the third person. -e and -ā would thus be considered as homographemic forms.

The present section has been concerned with the overall structure of the personal suffixes of MKR. The next section will briefly deal with the personal suffixes of modern Assamese in order to be able to show the changes in the language between the two stages i.e., old Assamese and modern Assamese.
3.5.4. The personal suffixes in modern Assamese

The verb in modern Assamese agrees with subject pronouns with regard to the three persons: first, second, and third. The second person pronouns exhibit a three-way deictic distinction and the third person pronouns exhibit a two-way deictic distinction according to the nature of the role-relationship between the speaker and the addressee. In addition, the third person pronouns display the two-way distinction of location relative to the speaker and the addressee. However, the verbal paradigm of person does not reflect all the distinctions exhibited by the personal pronouns. It only varies according to the three-way deictic distinction of the second person. The distinction of third person, whether it is social status oriented or distance oriented, is not reflected in the verbal paradigm of person.

The person paradigm of modern Assamese is quite similar to the person paradigm of MKR except that the distinction of honorific for the second person is found only in modern Assamese (§3.4). Among the first person agreement markers -o, -ē, and -oho in MKR, only -ē is found; among the second person inferior agreement markers, -a, -asa, and -aha, -a are found; of the markers for the second person familiar -a and -āhā, only -ā occurs in modern Assamese. Out of all the markers found in MKR, modern Assamese retains only the -e marker of the third person. The various personal suffixes of modern Assamese are summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Personal suffixes in modern Assamese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>kor-ō</td>
<td>kor-il-ō</td>
<td>kor-im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do -1</td>
<td>do-PST-1</td>
<td>do-FUT-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2INF</td>
<td>kor-ā</td>
<td>kor-il-ā</td>
<td>kor-ib-ā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do-2INF</td>
<td>do-PST-2INF</td>
<td>do-FUT-2INF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2FAM</td>
<td>kor-a</td>
<td>kor-il-a</td>
<td>kor-ib-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do-2FAM</td>
<td>do-PST-2FAM</td>
<td>do-FUT-2FAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2HON</td>
<td>kor-e</td>
<td>kor-il-e</td>
<td>kor-ib-ō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do-2HON</td>
<td>do-PST-2HON</td>
<td>do-FUT-2HON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3INF &amp; HON</td>
<td>kor-e</td>
<td>kor-il-e</td>
<td>kor-ib-ō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do-3</td>
<td>do-PST-3</td>
<td>do-FUT-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like MKR, the personal suffixes are the rightmost elements to the verb in modern Assamese. Two important features of modern Assamese can be seen from the above Table. First, the verb of modern Assamese does not agree with the distinction of third person inferior and honorific. Both inferior and honorific subjects take same agreement marker, and second, the distinction between second person honorific and third person is neutralized in all the tenses.

Apart from these markers, the verb of modern Assamese takes another set of suffixes to mark mood, as in MKR. These suffixes are -a, and -ak/-uk. Of these, -a is marks the second person familiar subject expresses the imperative mood. -ak/-uk expresses the imperative and optative moods along with the neutralization of the distinction between second person honorific and third person subjects. The marker -ak/-uk appears to have been inherited from the optative marker of MKR -oka, and -ntoka (§3.4.3.). The meaning of the imperative in the second person inferior is covertly expressed by the stem itself in modern Assamese as shown in Table 3.5. However, in MKR, this function is overtly marked by -a (cf. §3.4.2.).

Table 3.5 The contrast of mood in modern Assamese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kor</th>
<th>kor-a</th>
<th>kor-ok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do.2INF.IMP</td>
<td>do-2FAM.IMP</td>
<td>do-IMP/OPT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.5. Personal suffixes: a summary

In sum, we have found three sets of personal suffixes in the verbal paradigm of MKR along with a two-way deictic distinction in the second person and third person. Although several forms are used to indicate the category of person, most of these forms turn out to be orthographic variants of the same form. Apart from the distinction of inferior-familiar and inferior-honorific, no other grammatical factors such as number, gender, proximity, or transitivity play a role in the selection of the different variants of these forms. There are restrictions in the occurrence of the personal suffixes with the
tenses. Some of these suffixes can occur with the tense of present reference, some with the tense of past reference, some with only the tense of future reference and still others with all the tenses. Moreover, the distinction of person is neutralized in the case of some forms. For instance, as indicated in Table 3.2 and Table 3.3, the forms -a and -e are used both as second person and third person markers.

After the detailed survey of the personal suffixes in the present section in terms of their orthographic variants, functions and complex nature, the next section will deal with the other major component of the category of person in MKR, namely, the personal pronouns.

### 3.6. Personal pronouns

This section will examine the personal pronouns in MKR and their correlations with grammatical category of person as well as their distributional behaviour.

The personal pronouns distinguish all the three persons in deictic terms. The first person is expressed by the two separate pronouns mai 'I' and ami 'we', the first of which is singular and the second is plural. However, this distinction of number is not reflected in the verbal form since the verbs take the same suffix for both the singular and the plural form (cf. §3.5.1.3). It may be noted here that number is distinguished only in the first person by means of independent lexemes, not in the second person and the third person. The number distinction is expressed by adding suffixes to the pronominal base in the second and third persons. There are two second person singular pronouns, tai 'you (inferior)' and tumi 'you (familiar)', categorized with regard to a sociolinguistic scale of respect. tai is generally used for younger relatives and people of lower social status while tumi is used for older relatives and people of higher social status. This distinction is clearly carried by the verbal form in MKR with two distinct suffixes. The third person pronouns exhibit a two-way distinction in terms of familiarity/honorificity along the same lines as the second person pronouns. However, in the case of the third person pronouns, the honorific/non-honorific distinction is not strictly carried by the verbal paradigm of person, even though suffixes like -nta, -anta
on the verb are used to refer only to honorific subjects. Apart from these suffixes, all other third person suffixes express a neutralization of the inferior-honorific distinction. The third person pronouns are further subdivided into proximal and distal according to the parameter of relative distance from the speaker, though this distinction is not reflected in the verbal forms of MKR.

Further, the personal pronouns are marked for gender, but only in the third person. As with the familiarity/honorificity distinction, the gender distinction is not reflected in the person paradigm of the verbal form. Both kinds of subjects referring to masculine and feminine referents take same verbal agreement marker. The various features found in the personal pronouns with regard to the category of person are indicated in Table 3.6 and Table 3.7. The next section deals with the personal pronouns in individual terms.

**Table 3.6 Personal pronouns in MKR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>mai, mai</em></td>
<td><em>śmi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I’ ‘I’</td>
<td>‘we’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>INF</td>
<td>INF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>tai, tai</em></td>
<td>‘you’ ‘you’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAM</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>tumi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘you’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>INF</td>
<td>INF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRX</td>
<td>PRX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>i</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘he’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DST</td>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>MASC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>si</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘he’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>tāi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘she’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON</td>
<td>PRX</td>
<td>PRX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DST</td>
<td>DST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>teho, tehō</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘he’ ‘he’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>tehe, tehē</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘he’ ‘he’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pronouns and their corresponding verb forms can be seen in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Personal pronouns and their verbal forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>we</th>
<th>do-PST-1/1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mai/mai</td>
<td>mai/mai</td>
<td>ämi/ämi</td>
<td>karilo/karilô</td>
<td>kar-il-ô/-ô</td>
<td>karilihi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2INF</td>
<td>tai/tai</td>
<td>tai/tai</td>
<td>karilo/karilo</td>
<td>kar-il-i</td>
<td>kar-il-î</td>
<td>karilâhâ/ahâ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2FAM</td>
<td>tumi</td>
<td>tumi</td>
<td>karilo/karilo</td>
<td>kar-il-î</td>
<td>kar-il-î</td>
<td>karilâhâ/ahâ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3NEUT</td>
<td>si/si</td>
<td>tâi/tâi</td>
<td>tehe/teho</td>
<td>karila/</td>
<td>kar-il-â/â</td>
<td>karileka/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3HON</td>
<td>tehe/tehê</td>
<td>tehe/tehê</td>
<td>karilanta/</td>
<td>karilante</td>
<td>kar-il-ânta/-ante</td>
<td>kar-il-ânta/-ante</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The paradigm clearly shows that though the third person inferior and third person honorific pronouns have the same personal ending, the suffixes -ante, -nta, and -ante occurs only as third person honorific but not as third person inferior. Other suffixes such as -ila, -ilik, and -ileka show neutralization between the third person inferior and the third person honorific.

Table 3.6 and 3.7 also shows two forms each for the first person singular pronoun and the second person inferior pronoun. The reason will be discussed in a later section.

An important aspect of the treatment of human and non-human reference in MKR should be mentioned at this point. In general, the first person and second persons refer to human beings. However, in MKR, animals are also personified in linguistic terms. The rationale for this personification is that the story of Râmâyana is based on several legends or (myths) relating to Ramchandra (the main hero of Râmâyana). According to these legends, animals and demons can talk and behave as human beings. Hence, there are several instances in MKR where in certain situations, animals such as monkeys and bears express the same participant role as human beings.
The general discussion of personal pronouns in the present section will now be taken up individually in the following sections.

### 3.6.1. First person pronouns

Even though three markers for the first person were listed in Table 3.7, functionally only two distinct markers are in use in MKR, as mentioned earlier. One has singular reference, while the other has plural reference. \textit{mai} is just a variant of \textit{mai}, though it has significance from a historical point of view. This point will be considered here first. After that the role of the two functionally distinct markers, \textit{mai} and \textit{äm}, will be discussed.

With regard to the form \textit{mai}, Kakati (1941: 311) claims that the first person singular pronoun \textit{mai} is derived from MIA.INSTR.SG \textit{mae}, \textit{mai}, (Ap) \textit{mai}. According to him, it does not affiliate with MIA.NOM.SG \textit{aham}, \textit{hair}, \textit{hage}, \textit{hagge}, or (Ap) \textit{hau} -- a view that is supported by Medhi (1936: 212). According to Kakati, \textit{mai} is a nasalized form of \textit{mai}. The nasalization in \textit{i} is inherited from the Ap, and seems due to the influence of the instrumental affix -\textit{ena}, for the nominative: \textit{mai} < *\textit{may-ena} (1941: 312). Hornle\footnote{Cited in Medhi (1936: 212, 213)}, on the other hand, argues that \textit{mai} is not inherited from the MIA.INSTR. SG, but from the Prakrit GEN.SG \textit{mai}, \textit{mah}, or \textit{mahu}. He offers his own argument in support of this claim. According to him, in Maharastri Prakrit, \textit{mai} was used as a GEN.SG, DAT.SG, INSTR.SG, and LOC.SG, and was used as a singular of ACC, INSTR, and LOC in Ap. Prakrit. In all the instances mentioned above, \textit{mai} expresses a singular reference. Hornle suggests that \textit{mai} is a reduced form of \textit{mah} and an extension of Ap. Prakrit GEN.SG -\textit{hi}, -\textit{hu}, and -\textit{ha}. Sometimes it appears to use the oblique genitive plural suffixes of Ap. Prakrit, i.e., -\textit{hiti}, -\textit{huti}, and -\textit{hau} in singular reference, and this is the process through which \textit{mai} seems to be derived (Medhi 1936: 212, 213). It is assumed that due to the historical reasons discussed above, both \textit{mai} and \textit{mai} forms are found in MKR or in other texts of
that time or in the language immediately after that period to express the same function. Gradually, however, the form *mai* seems to have gone out of use, and as a consequence, this form is not found to be used in modern Assamese.

Both the observations made by Kakati and Homle are relevant to the discussion of the origins of *mai*. Homle’s claim is of help in explaining the derivation process of *mai* from the genitive of Prakrit for the reason discussed below.

The grammatical process of nominalization involves the use of genitive-like phrases that are marked by either a genitive postposition or the genitive case, to express the subject or the object of the nominalized verb. Of these two, the first is more common in languages than the second one (Givon 1990: 504, cited in Blake 1994: 114). Thus, nominalization involves the use of the the genitive case to encode the subject of nominalized verb. In the present instance, there is reason to assume that the pronoun *mai* is an inheritance of Prakrit GEN.SG *mai, mah, or mahu* or the Ap.Prakrit genitive suffix *-hi, -hu, and -ha*.

On the other hand, in support of Kakati’s observation, it can be said that the case suffixes used to mark the subject function and the instrumental function seem to have merged from the Pali and Prakrit period (Bubenik: 2003). Since that time, the same suffix *-e* seems to have been used to mark both the subject and the instrument. *mai* is regularly used in the subject position in present day Assamese, and it is formally similar to the MIA instrumental singular *mae* and *mai* mentioned above. From this perspective, it is likely that *mai* originated from MIA instrumental singular *mae*. The forms *mae/mai* might have been used as an instrumental earlier and then began to be used as a subject from some later stage of the development of the language. Moreover, the case marking pattern of MKR also helps to support Kakati’s claims. The case marking pattern of MKR exhibits a split ergative morphology (§ 7) where the subject marker *-e* is also used to mark the instrumental – a prototypical feature of ergative languages. Thus, if it is reasonable to assume that *-e* was used in the instrumental function first and later in the subject function, then we can hypothesize that *mai* might
have been originally used as an instrumental and then as a subject. However, this is no more than a logical possibility which needs to be checked through empirical research.

The pronoun *āmi* ‘we’ has both an inherent plural function as well as a singular reference. The singular use of *āmi* is illustrated in (35).

(35)  

*āmi* haibo yubarāja  
*āmi* ha-ib-o yubarāja  
we become-FUT-1 crown prince  

‘We will become the crown prince.’  

(Ay, Ch. 6, V. 1)

There are two possible explanations for the singular reference of *āmi*: (a) From the historical point of view and (b) From the point of social relations obtaining between the speech-act participants and the third parties that they invoke.

(a)  

According to Hornle (as cited in Medhi 1936: 215), four kinds of oblique base of first person pronouns are used in Prakrit: (i) amha, amhi, or *amhe*. (ii) *amhānaḥ*. (iii) *amhabani*, and (iv) *amha-hii* or *amhaii* or *ambhaai* (Hems: 4/412). Among them, the first kind is inherited from the oblique base -asme of Pre-vedic. *amha* and *amhe* are used in the GEN, ACC, INSTR, and NOM in Prakrit (Hems: 3/114, 110, 108, 106) whereas *amhe* is used in NOM and ACC in Ap (Hems: 4/376). The oblique base of Prakrit *amhi* or *asmi* is inherited from the plural base *amhe* or *asme*. However, during the period of Prakrit, it is used in singular reference (Hems: 3/105/107). In the NIA period, *amhi* became *āmi* and its singular usage extended to the plural. MKR is a text of the period when the NIA languages started to develop from Ap. This appears to be the reason why both the singular and plural uses of *āmi* are found in the text.

(b)  

The number distinction found in first person plural may have the function of expressing social deixis. This assumption is supported by evidence from general linguistics (Siewierska 2004).
(i) Number is considered as the most common way to indicate social deixis in the person system of languages across the world. It is revealed from the cross-linguistic investigation carried out by Head (1978) that number is the most common way to encode the semantic distinctions in person paradigm to indicate social deixis.

(ii) Oppositions in the grammatical category of number to signal social deixis have the effect of associating the non-singular number with greater social distance, status, or respect than the singular number. This is found in Tamil, a Dravidian language and Bengali, an Indo-European language. Examples (36) and (37) illustrate.

Tamil (Asher 1982:143-5) cited from (Siewierska ibid.:216):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Honorific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1INCL</td>
<td>naampa/naam</td>
<td>naam (royal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1EXCL</td>
<td>Naan</td>
<td>Naanga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nii</td>
<td>Niinga</td>
<td>Niinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PRX.MASC</td>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>Ivanga</td>
<td>Ivaru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PRX.FEM</td>
<td>Iva</td>
<td>Ivanga</td>
<td>Ivanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PRX.NEUT</td>
<td>Idu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3DST.MASC</td>
<td>Avan</td>
<td>Avanga</td>
<td>Avaru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3DST.FEM</td>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>Avanga</td>
<td>Avanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3DST.NEUT</td>
<td>Adu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bengali

(37) amra ei bifoje ki bolbo  
amra ei bifoj-e ki bol-b-o  
we this matter-LOC what speak-FUT-1  
'What can we say on this matter?'

(iii) The variation in number to indicate social deixis is mostly used with the second and the third person but it is also often used across languages for self-reference.
The use of the first person plural for self-reference is restricted to the plural of majesty or royal we and the plural of modesty editorial we. This is well-attested in Indo-European languages as illustrated in (38) and (39).


(38) *Vi alene vide* (attributed to King Fredrick VI)
we alone know
‘We alone know........’

**French** cited from (Siewierska 2004: 218)

(39) *C’est encore une étude que nous présenter-ons ici*
it is another a study that we present-1PL here
‘This is yet another study that we present here......’

The plural of majesty has the effect of creating the maximum distance between the speaker and hearer. This is because the speaker seeks to rule out the possibility of a normal reciprocal relationship by making himself plural. Similarly, the desire to draw attention away from oneself and to imply joint effort/achievement is likely to have led to the plural of modesty (Siewierska 2004: 218).

Instances such as (i-iii) illustrate that the number distinction in the person system is closely associated with social deixis and it can also be seen that the social status of a superior person plays an important role in number distinctions in a person system. In the Tamil example (36), the honorific forms of the independent person markers are in fact just plural forms. The honorific function of the plural form is not limited to languages of the Indo-European or Dravidian families, but are also found in a wide variety of genetically and areally unrelated languages. For example, in most Mixtecan languages, of the familiarity/respect distinction expressed by person, the respect form is claimed to have originated from the plural number. Hence, in these languages, the first person respect forms are used to convey respect to the addressee (Siewierska 2004: 219).

The evidence from MKR relating to historical reasons and social factors for the behaviour of *ām/ām* 'we' is outlined below.
(I) The number distinction is carried by an independent lexeme only in the first person pronoun. The non-singular number is mostly used for respectful singular reference rather than plural reference, as in (35).

(II) The social relations between the speech-act participants and the third parties are more prominent than number reference in the person system of MKR. Two separate forms for the second person are used in MKR: inferior and familiar. There is no distinct marker for the second person honorific. For the third person too, there are two separate forms: inferior and honorific based on the role-relationship of the speaker and hearer. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the first person pronouns also express the distinction of respect along with the second and third person pronouns. However, the data from MKR does not support this assumption: āmi 'we' is used both by people of superior status such as King Dasaratha, Prince Rama and Prince Laksmana, as well as by and people of inferior status. Secondly, āmi 'we' and mai 'I' occur in same context. Although āmi seems to occur as a form of respect or modesty in all its occurrences in entire Rāmāyana, mai is also used in the same context for self reference. āmi, on the other hand, encodes both a singular and a plural reference. Hence, it cannot be considered as expressing only respect or modesty in its singular reference.

From these observations, it is clear that the distinction of number in MKR is not similar to the number distinction in languages like Tamil and Bengali. In these languages, the plural form clearly functions as honorific while in MKR it does not. Hence, the use of the non-singular first person form for singular reference in MKR cannot be attributed to the influence of social deixis but is possibly due to some historical reasons mentioned in point (a) above. In support of this latter claim, another piece of evidence is provided here. This evidence suggests that the use of the first person plural pronoun āmi 'we' in singular reference may be part of the linguistic history of the area where MKR was written, for some time. The reason for this assumption is that the inherited plural form for referring to high honour singular is not just a feature of MKR alone, but also of some Kamata-Rajbangshi lects (Toulmin 2006:
192), such as the Rajbangshi lect spoken in Rangeli (RL) and other areas of the Morang district of Nepal as well as the Surjapuri lect spoken in Kishanganj (KS) of Bihar State. However, the Rajbangshi lect of Rangeli has a separate system of honour marking from the lect of Kishanganj. In RL, the personal pronouns clearly express three number distinctions: low singular, high honour singular and plural. The high singular is marked by the general inherited plural pronoun and the new plural pronoun is formed by suffixing a new plural marker \-la\ to the inherited plural pronoun. On the other hand, the two numbers are distinguished in KS. In addition, the inherited plural form may be used for the high honour singular function in this lect. RL clearly shows a kind of shift in meaning of the inherited plural > high singular whereas neither KS nor MKR show it clearly, but the system exists in both. In this regard, Toulmin (ibid.: 192) states that the shift in meaning of the inherited plural to high honour singular in RL is not an inherited feature of Proto-Kamata, but a recent innovation. As evidence, he points out to the language contact between the RL and the languages of Hindi and Bihari, where in the place of the inherited /mɔi/ 'I', the old plural /hɔnd/ 'we' is used to express the singular reference. The new plural is marked by a separate plural formative /log/ in some varieties of those languages. But the evidence from MKR suggests that it may not be an innovation of RL or KS but an inherited feature of Proto-Kamata, because the time of the innovations of Proto-Kamata is similar to the time when MKR was written. Therefore, it is likely that the singular reference of ămi in MKR was influenced by Kamata or vice versa, Kamata might have been influenced by the language of early Assamese. MKR represents similarities with Kamata or KS in other areas, as in the use of the pronominal system for referring to person (cf. §5).

3.6.2. Second person pronouns

As mentioned earlier, there are three forms for second person pronouns in MKR: tai ‘you.INF’, tairo ‘you.INF’, and tumi ‘you.FAM’. Of these, the first two are not functionally distinct. Like mai, the occurrence of tai is linked to historical reasons. According to Kakati, tai is a parallel form of mai and is derived from MIA INSTR. tae, tai, (Ap.) tai. It
may be assumed that the nasalization in \( i \) is due to the same process as in the case of the first person pronoun \( ma'i \). The distinction between \( tai \) and \( tumi \) is based on the nature of role-relationship between the speaker and hearer. The inferior form \( tai \) is used to refer to younger relatives, junior siblings, and people of lower social status while the familiar form \( tumi \) refers to older relatives and people of higher social status. In addition, these pronouns have other functions as well. Examples (40-46) serve to illustrate the various functions of the second person inferior pronoun \( tai \).

The use of \( tai \)

(i) While addressing \( rākṣasa \) (demons)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(40) } & \text{sinha-}rā \text{ bharyy-}ē\text{ka } \text{tai } \text{ṣgyāle } \text{bāńchasā} \\
& \text{sinha-ra bharyyā-ka tai ṣgāl-e bāńch-asa} \\
& \text{lion-GEN wife-DAT you.INF fox-ERG desire-2INF} \\
& \text{‘You fox, desire for the wife of a lion.’} \\
& \text{(Ar, Ch. 2, V. 61)}
\end{align*}
\]

(ii) While addressing a son

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(41) } \text{āti sucari}ṭa \text{ rā}ṃa \text{ bana yāībi } \text{tai.} \\
& \text{āti sucarita rāma bana yā-ib-i tai} \\
& \text{very good character Rama forest go-PST-2INF you.INF} \\
& \text{‘You Ram, the owner of a very good character, will go to forest.’} \\
& \text{(Ay, Ch. 5, V. 75)}
\end{align*}
\]

(iii) Used by people of the higher classes of society to address the mother and wife in moments of anger

(a) Used by son to refer to mother

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(42) } & \text{ka}uśalīyā \text{ māwaka } \text{tai } \text{dili } \text{bara } \text{soka.} \\
& \text{kauśalyā māw-aka tai dī-l-i } \text{bara } \text{soka} \\
& \text{Kausalya mother-DAT you.INF give-PST-2INF much sadness} \\
& \text{‘You gave much sadness to your mother Kausalya.’} \\
& \text{(Ay, Ch. 26, V. 69)}
\end{align*}
\]
(b) Used by husband to refer to his wife

(43) anātha karili tai ayodhya nagari.

You made an orphan of Ayodhya city.

(Ay, Ch. 14, V. 8)

(iv) Used by people from the higher classes of society to address an animal in moments of anger; otherwise, the form tumi is used.

(45) ghora ghora pāpa tai yata ācarili.

‘All the dreadful sins you committed…’

(Kis, Ch. 14, V. 57)

(v) Used by a demon to refer to siblings in moments of anger; otherwise, tumi was more commonly used.

(46) garbbatā thākīyā tai nedekhaha diśa.

‘Being vain, you do not see the (right) direction.’

(Laṅ, Ch. 7, V. 39)

The use of tumi

In contrast to tai, tumi is mostly used to address people from the upper classes of society. But it has some other functions, as (47-53) illustrate.
(i) To address senior siblings

(47) tumi rājā haibāka yāḥāra nāhi mana.
tumi rājā ha-ibāka yāḥā-ra . nāhi mana
you.FAM king be-NF who-GEN not mind

'Who does not want you to be the king.'
(Ay, Ch. 10, V. 50)

(48) tumi eri gaile mai yāibō desāntara
tumi er-i ga-ile mai yā-ib-ō desāntara
you.FAM leave-NF go-NF I go-FUT-1 exile

'If you leave me, I will go on exile.'
(Ay, Ch. 10, V. 88)

(ii) To address a son

(49) tumi rājā haibāhā janara anurāga.
tumi rājā ha-ib-āhā jan-ara anurāga
you.FAM king be-FUT-2FAM people-GEN wish

'The people want you to be a king.'
(Ay, Ch. 3, V. 32)

(iii) To address a mother and a wife

(a) To address a mother

(50) dasaratha bāpa mora tumi niya māwa.
dasaratha bāpa mo-ra tumi niya māwa
Dasarath father I-GEN you.FAM own mother

'Dasarath is my father, you are my own mother.'
(Ay, Ch. 10, V. 128)

(b) To address a wife

(51) āmāra bacana tumi dṛ̥tha kari dharā.
āmā-ra bacana tumi dṛ̥tha kar-i dharā
we-GEN speech you.FAM serious do-NF catch

'Do take our advice seriously.'
(Ay, Ch. 12, V. 32)
(iv) To address a father

(52) hā mora pīṛ tumī kene gailā yame.

Alas I-GEN father you.FAM why go-PST-2FAM Yam-ERG

'Alas, my father! Why did you go to (the house of) Yama?'

(Ay, Ch. 26, V. 21)

(v) To address a husband

(53) rāmata sampratī tumī haiyoka nairāśa.

Ram-LOC now you.FAM be-2FAM disappointment

'At the moment, you are disappointed with Ram.'

(Ay, Ch. 5, V. 54)

The second person honorific form does not occur in MKR either as an independent form, or as a verbal agreement marker. In the absence of any spoken evidence or prose text of the time, it is difficult to determine the precise reason for this absence. However, the following assumptions may be reasonably made:

(i) The religious nature of MKR might have led the poet to choose the relatively more intimate second person familiar form instead of the honorific one.

(ii) The use of the second person familiar form was a norm of the poetic texts of that time, a characteristic that is reflected in MKR also.

(iii) It is likely that the familiar and honorific forms of the second person pronouns were not formally distinguished during that period, but was a later development in the history of the language.

While Saikia (Bora) (1993: 80) has listed the form āpuni as a second person honorific form, it occurs as a reflexive rather than as a second person honorific form in MKR. This is supported by (54) and (55).

(54) tiniyo diśata āmi căhilo āpuni.

three-EMPH direction-LOC we look-PST-1 self

'We ourselves, looked in all three directions.'

(Kis, Ch. 21, V. 115)
(55) hanumanta  hāte  diyā  pathāilā  āpunī.
hanumanta  hāt-e  di-ŷā  pathā-il-ā  āpunī
Hanumanta hand-LOC give-NF send-PST-3 self

‘(She) herself sent (it) in the hands of Hanumanta.’

(Lāṅ, Ch. 6, V. 49)

In Example (54), āmi is used as a subject pronoun, with the verbal suffix -o marking agreement with it. In this sentence, āpunī is a reflexive anaphor, functioning as an antecedent of the subject āmi. Similarly, in (55), the subject of the verb pathāilā ‘sent’ is clearly sitā rather than āpunī which is being used as a reflexive anaphor. It is reasonable to assume that the reflexive usage of āpunī ceased during the subsequent stages of development of the language, and evolved as the second person honorific form in modern Assamese, as illustrated in (56).

(56) āpunī  kaliloi  majuliloī  zabonē?
āpunī  kaliloi  majuli-loi  za-bo-ne
you.HON tomorrow Majuli-DIRT go-FUT-QUES

‘Will you go to Majuli tomorrow?’

The use of reflexives as honorifics is a very common feature of the Dravidian languages and, to a lesser extent, of the Indo-Aryan languages. In Kannada, for example, the reflexive tāvu is used as a second person ultra-honorific (Shridhar, cited in Siewierska: 225). Wali (2000: 515) reports that in Marathi too, the reflexive āpan is used as a more polite and deferential form than the second person plural form tumhī. Further, according to Jhaa (1958: 398) Maithili, āpāne has a stronger sense of honorificity than the normal honorific aha. The ordinary reflexive āp in Punjabi expresses honorificity together with the honorific particle -jī (as cited in Siewierska 2004: 225). Such evidences support our claim that the reflexive form āpunī in MKR later developed into the second person honorific in modern Assamese. Masica also observes that the honorific pronoun of modern Assamese is traced etymologically to an erstwhile reflexive pronoun /ap-/ whose use in the honorific sense ‘is quite recent,
unknown to Middle or older New Indo-Aryan ... It ... appears to radiate from Delhi and to be associated with urban/Muslim “Hindustani” influence ... probably in imitation in turn of “elegant” Persian usage” (1992: 41; cited in Toulmin (2006: 200-201)). The reflexive use of ḍapuni is still occasionally found in modern Assamese, as in (57).

\[
\text{(57) } \text{teu} \quad \text{kor\textsuperscript{a}-tu} \quad \text{huni} \quad \text{apuni} \quad \text{apuni} \quad \text{ba\textsuperscript{hi}} \quad \text{ut\textsuperscript{b}-il}. \\
\text{he.HON.DST event-CLF hear-NF self self laugh-NF rise-PST}
\]

‘Hearing about the event, he laughed to himself.’

Instead of ḍapuni, the new form nij has developed as a reflexive anaphor in modern Assamese, as in (58).

\[
\text{(58) } \text{teu} \quad \text{nijei} \quad \text{kamtu} \quad \text{koribo} \quad \text{pare}. \\
\text{he.HON.DST self-EMPH work-CLF do-NF can-3}
\]

‘He can do the work himself.’

3.6.3. Third person pronouns

As stated earlier, the third person pronouns are categorized as inferior and honorific according to the social status and degree of familiarity of the referents in relation to the speaker/writer. In terms of the parameter of proximity and remoteness, they are further distinguished as proximal and distal. The inferior proximal and distal forms are mostly used as demonstrative modifiers than as personal pronouns, a point that will be taken up later in this section. The third person distal forms are again distinguished as si and tāi on the basis of male-female reference.

The third person inferior proximal form i ‘he’ occurs in two contexts in the entire text: (a) on its own and (b) with the classifier -to. When it occurs on its own, i always functions as the demonstrative modifier of a noun. In its occurrence with the classifier -to, i functions both as a demonstrative modifier and as a personal pronoun. Example (59) illustrates the use of i as personal pronoun.
In (59), the classifier -to has a definitive sense.

The other third person inferior proximal form si occurs mostly as a demonstrative modifier than as a subject pronoun in the entire text. Two kinds of contexts of occurrence of si are attested: (a) on its own and (b) with other suffixes. The occurrence of this pronoun on its own in the text is very rare. There is only one occurrence of si as a personal pronoun. In the rest of its occurrences, it functions as a demonstrative modifier. As a personal pronoun, si refers to non-human nouns, as shown in (60).

In contrast to its occurrence on its own, the occurrence of si with other suffixes is very frequent in the text. The suffixes added to this form serve to mark definiteness and emphasis.

The demonstrative use of the third person pronouns can be described in terms of the process of historical development. The sources of the person markers generally fall into two types: lexical and grammatical. The major grammatical source of independent person markers is the demonstratives. Demonstratives have been found to serve as the origins of all the three persons: first, second, and third. However, Siewierska (2004: 249) and Campbell (1998: 241) state that they are more usually found as sources for third person pronouns. It is reasonable to assume on the basis of such evidence that the third person inferior proximal form l and the distal inferior form si in MKR were originally used as demonstratives. Subsequently, from period of MKR or before, these two forms began to be used both as pronouns and as demonstratives, with the latter functions being
eventually replaced by the former in modern Assamese. Examples (61) and (62) illustrate this eventual situation.

(61) \( i \) \( \hat{b}a t \) \( k^a l e \)\( n e ? \)
\( i \) \( \hat{b}a t \) \( k^a l-e-ne \)
he.INF.PRX rice eat-PST-3-QUES
‘Did he eat have his meal?’

(62) \( s i \) \( h u l-e \)
\( s i \) \( h u-l-e \)
he.INF.DST sleep-PST-3
‘He slept.’

\( t\tilde{a}i \) is used as a third person distal pronoun used for female reference. It is always used by members from the upper class of society to refer to demons as shown in (63). It is also used by demons to refer to members of the upper class in moments of anger.

(63) \( r\tilde{a}m-a r-a \) \( b\tilde{h}\tilde{a}r-y\tilde{a}-k-a \) \( t\tilde{a}i \) \( b\tilde{h}u\tilde{f}-jib\tilde{a}k-a \) \( m-a n-e \).
\( r\tilde{a}m-a r-a \) \( b\tilde{h}\tilde{a}r-y\tilde{a}-k-a \) \( t\tilde{a}i \) \( b\tilde{h}u\tilde{f}-j-ib\tilde{a}k-a \) \( m-a n-e \)
Ram-GEN wife-DAT she.INF.DST devour-NF mind-AVZR
‘With the intention of devour Ram’s wife, she…..’

(Ar, Ch. 6, V. 91)

The pronouns \( ehe \), \( e\tilde{h}e \), and \( e\tilde{h}\tilde{o} \) occur very rarely. All three are honorific forms, used to refer to members of the upper class. Example (64) illustrates.

(64) \( m-o r-a \) \( b-a r-a \) \( b\tilde{h}\tilde{a}i \) \( e\tilde{h}\tilde{o} \) \( b-a r-a \) \( d\tilde{h}a-nu-rd\tilde{h}\tilde{a}r-i \).
\( m-o r-a \) \( b-a r-a \) \( b\tilde{h}\tilde{a}i \) \( e\tilde{h}\tilde{o} \) \( b-a r-a \) \( d\tilde{h}a-nu-rd\tilde{h}\tilde{a}r-i \)
I-GEN elder brother he.HON.PRX great archer
‘He is my elder brother and a great archer.’

(La\(\text{u}, Ch. 54, V. 67)

The pronouns \( t\tilde{e}h-o \), \( t\tilde{e}h\tilde{o} \), \( t\tilde{e}h-e \), and \( t\tilde{e}h\tilde{e} \) are used in distal reference in the text. In addition, these forms occur as honorific pronouns. \( t\tilde{e}h\tilde{o} \) and \( t\tilde{e}h-e \) occur more frequently than \( t\tilde{e}h\tilde{o} \) and \( t\tilde{e}h\tilde{e} \) respectively.

Apart from \( i \), \( s-i \) and \( t\tilde{a}i \), the other pronouns do not have any male/female reference. They are used to refer to both kinds of referents. Their context of occurrence indicates
the nature of the reference. Multiple references of *tehē* 'he' are clearly illustrated in (65) and (66). In (65), *tehē* occurs as a male referent while in (66), it occurs as a female referent.

(65) ārādh-ilō brahmā-ka di-l-anta tehē bara. 
pray-PST-1 Brahma-DAT give-PST-3HON he.HON.DST boon

'I prayed to Brahma and he gave me a boon.

(Ar, Ch. 2, V. 32)

(66) nām-ata bainata tehē duhītā daksāra. 
name-LOC Bainata he.HON.DST daughter Daksha-GEN

'Her name is Bainata and she is the daughter of King Daksha.

(Ar, Ch. 6, V. 5)

In addition to these independent pronouns, MKR has a set of oblique pronominal stems. In Indo-Aryan studies, the term *oblique* is used to refer to any case-marked NP (Masica 1991; as cited in Toulmin 2006: 154). According to such a usage, this term is used to refer to core arguments with overt case markers as well, not just to refer to NPs in adjunctive arguments of a clause. The same convention will be used in the present study. Thus, any kind of pronominal stems that can occur with case markers will be considered as oblique stems. The next section provides a brief description of the oblique pronominal stems in MKR.

3.6.4. Oblique pronouns in MKR

There is no commonly available marker for oblique arguments in MKR. The oblique stems, to which case markers are attached, are found only in the case of the personal pronouns. No overt case marker is used for the subject function, as stated earlier. On the other hand, case markers are used for all other grammatical relations apart from the subject. Table 3.8 shows the oblique stems used in MKR.
Table 3.8 Oblique pronouns in MKR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>SG.NOM</th>
<th>SG.OBL</th>
<th>PL.NOM</th>
<th>PL.OBL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mai</td>
<td>mo-</td>
<td>āmi</td>
<td>āmā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moho-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2INF</td>
<td>tai</td>
<td>to-</td>
<td>torā</td>
<td>tomāsā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you.PL</td>
<td>we.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>toho-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2FAM</td>
<td>tumī</td>
<td>tomā-</td>
<td>tomrā</td>
<td>tomāsā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you.PL</td>
<td>you.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3INF,PRX. MASC</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>iha-</td>
<td></td>
<td>esambā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he</td>
<td>he</td>
<td></td>
<td>he.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3HON,PRX. MASC</td>
<td>eho, ehe</td>
<td>ehante, ehanto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3INF,DST. MASC</td>
<td>si</td>
<td>tā-</td>
<td></td>
<td>tāsambā-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he</td>
<td>he</td>
<td></td>
<td>he.PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tāhā-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3HON,DST. MASC</td>
<td>tehe, teho</td>
<td>tehante, tehanto</td>
<td></td>
<td>tesambe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3INF,DST.FEM</td>
<td>tāi</td>
<td>tāi-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>she</td>
<td>she</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obliqueness in the plural pronouns in MKR is signalled by the morpheme -sā occurring with the first and second person pronouns, and a morpheme -sambā which appears in the third person pronouns. However, MKR does not show regularity in the use of these two oblique suffixes as Table 3.8 shows. For the first person plural oblique pronouns, the two oblique plural forms āmā-, and āmāsā- are used. The morpheme -sā occurs with the second person pronoun tomā-. -sambā is used only with tā-, and e-, but not used with tāhā-, i-, or tāi-. The -sā and -sambā type of oblique plural suffix marking pattern is not only seen in MKR but also in KS. The occurrence of the form -sā occurs
in these languages is similar to the way it occur in MKR, while -sambā occurs with a little phonological difference in the form indicated in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9 The use of -sā and -sambā suffixes in the language of Kishanganj

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>SG.NOM</th>
<th>SG.OBL</th>
<th>PL.NOM</th>
<th>PL.OBL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>mui' '</td>
<td>mo-</td>
<td>hamra</td>
<td>ham(s,t)f a-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ti' i</td>
<td>jo-</td>
<td>tumra</td>
<td>tumsa-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.PRX</td>
<td>je'haj</td>
<td>jaha</td>
<td>eru; emra</td>
<td>is(m)a-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.DST</td>
<td>woha'j</td>
<td>woha</td>
<td>wora; Amra</td>
<td>us(m)a-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to KS, -sā is used in Bengali (siripuria11, purneā) as hams-ar ‘our’, tums-ar ‘your’ (L.S.I., vol 1 p. 354; cited in Kakati 1941.: 294). For the discussion of -sā and -sambā, please see Chapter 6.

The foregoing discussion, examined the personal pronouns of MKR as a component of the category of person. An attempt was made to focus on the complex nature of some of the forms along with their distributions in cognate languages and in other languages to understand the reason for this complexity in form-function alignment. The next section takes a brief look at the personal pronouns of modern Assamese so that a comparison can be made between these forms and those that are found in MKR. It is hoped that such an attempt will help to provide a partial picture of the nature of development of some forms between the stage of the language when MKR was written and the stage of modern Assamese.

3.6.5. Personal pronouns in modern Assamese

The personal pronouns of modern Assamese distinguish all the persons marked in the verb. Two distinct forms for first person pronouns are found: moi ‘I’ and ami ‘we’.

They have singular and plural reference, respectively. Unlike MKR, modern Assamese

---

10 This data is taken from Toulmin (2006: 184).
11 The term ‘siripuria’ refers to the ‘surjapuri’ lect of today. Its classification as Bengali is from the LSI. However, present speakers do not recognize themselves as ‘siripuria’ (Toulmin 2006: 194).
12 Some of the material in this section is based on Goswami and Tamuli (2003:420-421).
retains only the form *moi* for the first person singular. *mai* no longer exists in modern Assamese. For the second person, modern Assamese exhibits three distinct forms: *toi* 'you', *tumi* 'you' and *apuni* 'you'. These three forms are distinguished according to a set of sociolinguistic norms such as age, social and educational status, role-relationship nature between speaker and hearer as inferior, familiar, and honorific. The different functions of these three forms are given below.

**The function of *toi***

(I) This form is used with those who are relatively lower in status than the speaker.
(II) It is also used between intimates.
(III) It is used with servants as well as childhood friends.

**The use of *tumi***

(i) Used to refer to God
(ii) It is reciprocally used between spouses in a less formal relationship, and non-reciprocally by the husband in a formal relationship where he is addressed as *apuni*.
(iii) It is used when the hearer is lower in status even though older in age (e.g. peons, labourers on daily wage, rickshaw pullers, etc.)
(iv) It is also used reciprocally among friends at college and university.
(v) It is used with juniors at college and university.

**The use of *apuni***

Interaction with people who are older in age and of equal or higher status invariably requires the non-reciprocal use, with the person in the relatively junior position using *apuni*. It is also used reciprocally between colleagues at the place of work who are equal in status.

Six distinct forms are found for third person in modern Assamese. These six forms are distinguished further as inferior and honorific, according to the social status of the speaker and third party; masculine and feminine, according to gender; and two-way deictic distinction of proximal and distal in terms of proximity. All these personal pronouns found in modern Assamese are summarized in Table 3.10.
Table 3.10 The personal pronouns of modern Assamese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>moi</td>
<td>ami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 INF</td>
<td>toi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAM</td>
<td>tumi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON</td>
<td>apuni</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 INF</td>
<td>MASC PRX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DST</td>
<td>hi</td>
<td>he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEM PRX</td>
<td>et</td>
<td>she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DST</td>
<td>tai</td>
<td>she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON</td>
<td>PRX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cū, ek⁸et</td>
<td>he/she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DST</td>
<td>teu, tek⁸et</td>
<td>he/she</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The full correspondence of the verb forms and the pronouns is indicated in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 The pronouns and their corresponding verb forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>moi/ami</td>
<td>lik⁹u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>moi/ami</td>
<td>lik⁹-u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I/we</td>
<td>write-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 INF</td>
<td>toi</td>
<td>lik⁹-o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tai</td>
<td>lik⁹-ɔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>write-2 INF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
In verbal agreement, the verbs for the second and third person share the same person agreement marker, as shown in the table above.

### 3.6.6. Summary

The foregoing sections have shown that the category of person is expressed by three sets of personal pronouns in MKR: first person pronouns, second person pronouns, and third person pronouns. The first person pronoun distinguishes three forms as opposed to two forms in modern Assamese. Three forms are used for the second person pronoun in both MKR and modern Assamese. MKR has *tai, tai, tumi,* while modern Assamese has *tai, tumi,* and *apuni.* These forms are distinguished as inferior, familiar, and honorific on the basis of the social status of the speaker and hearer. However, these two sets of forms occurring in MKR and modern Assamese are not similar in function.

Furthermore, MKR does not have a second person honorific form. The formally identical second person honorific form of modern Assamese found in MKR is a reflexive. There are three distinct second person pronominal forms in modern Assamese: inferior *toi,* familiar *tumi* and honorific *apuni.* There are nine forms for the third person pronouns, as against eight for modern Assamese. These forms are further categorized as inferior and honorific according to the nature of role-relationship of the speaker and the
third person referent; as masculine and feminine according to male/female reference; and proximal and distal based on proximity. The third person inferior proximal and distal forms in MKR share the same form as demonstratives, while the demonstratives of modern Assamese are clearly different from the third person pronouns.

As far as verbal agreement is concerned, MKR has five different sets of agreement markers to distinguish the subject of the first person, the second person inferior and familiar, the third person neutral for the inferior-honorific distinction, and the third person honorific. Modern Assamese has three different agreement markers for the first person, the second person inferior and familiar and third person subject. The contrast between the second person honorific, third person inferior and the third person honorific is neutralized in modern Assamese.