0. INTRODUCTION

0.1. Genetic affiliation: Meiteiron is the local name of Manipuri Language. It is a compound, that is, the combination of Meitei and lon. Meitei is the name of the people while lon means 'language'. In other words, Meiteiron means 'the language of the Meitei people'.

Meiteiron is an important member of the ramified group of Kuki-Chin\(^+\) branch of the vast Tibeto-Burman Family, which comprises hundreds of languages spoken all over south, south-central, and southeast Asia. The Tibeto-Burman family is only a part of a larger linguistic stock, Sino-Tibetan, which includes Karen and Chinese. The Sino-Tibetan has the largest number of languages.

The Kuki-Chin subgroup of languages spoken in the north eastern region of India, has not shown much difference from the Naga languages. Meiteiron has shown relationships with both the Naga and Kuki languages. In early times there were seven principalities which have become one under the Mangangs(Meiteis), so the Meitei language has all the different forms embedded in it. This has made Meiteiron different from most of the Tibeto-Burman languages in its archaic forms.

\(^+\) This name although used by many is not authentic. More investigation is to be done before we posit a suitable name.
0.2. The Meitei people: The Meiteis live in Manipur, although they are found living in Burma, Thailand, Bangladesh, Assam, and Tripura in compact groups. The number of Meitei people living in the five places is quite large. The number of speakers in Manipur is about eight lakhs (hundred thousand). The Meiteis are well built, short, and they are known for their bravery.

The major crop of Manipur is rice. Apart from rice, chilli-peppers, maize, etc. are also cultivated but they are of minor importance. Due to the influx of Bengali, Muslim, and Nepali refugees, various other crops have also been cultivated. The Meiteis are not nomadic tribes, since there are no records of Meiteis being nomads. However, it is still believed that Meiteis were nomads before they came to Manipur.

Meiteis are still animistic in their religious beliefs, believing in a variety of good, neutral and evil spirits. However, the younger generation seems to discard their beliefs, although they still believe in God and they are attending various religious ceremonies. From the religious points of view, the Meiteis can be divided into three groups. They are - the Vaisnab Hindus, the Meitei Marup (Sanamahi cult), and the Meitei Christians. There is
also another section of people who claim that they do not believe in religion, although they participate in religious ceremonies either at home or outside.

The Meiteis were not originally Vaisnab Hindus. They were converted to Vaisnabism sometime around 1775. Even after their conversion, the Meiteis continue to worship their ancestral Gods and Goddesses along with the Hindu Gods.

The Meitei Marup or Sanamahi cult are revivalists. They are trying their best to revive the old religion, script, and other ceremonies of the Meiteis.

The Christians are mainly outcastes, (Lois - Sekmai, Andro, Phayeng, etc.) and their number is negligible. As regards the other section of people who claims that they do not believe in religion - they are mainly educated young people.

0.3 Dialects and cultural subdivisions: The Meiteis are under seven clans, each clan having various surnames. The clans are: (a) Mangang or Ningthouja, (b) Angom, (c) Luwang, (d) Khuman, (e) Moirang, (f) Khaba-Nganba, and (g) Chenglei or Sarang-Leisangthem. The various surnames coming under each of the clans are:
(a) Mangang - Sapam, Lourembam, Thoudam, Waikhom, Khwairakpam, Yengkhom, Khoirom, etc.

(b) Angom - Angom, Longjam, Lairellakpam, Wehengbam, Akoijam, Ningombam, etc.

(c) Luwang - Khumukcham, Longkhumukcham, Asangbam, Mayengbam, Abujam, etc.

(d) Khuman - Laisram, Yurenjam, Pangambam, Tokpam, Sanjenbam, Chingtham, etc.

(e) Moirang - Moirangthem, Thangjam, Chongtham, Kabrambam, Wayenbam, etc.

(f) Khaba-Khaba - Khuraijam, Khumujam, Longjengbam, Khaidem, Tekcham, Thongam, etc.

(g) Chenglei - Leishangthem, Chengleibam, Tongbram, Soraisam, Loitam, etc.

These clans although they are now united under the Meiteis, originally the Mangangs, were different kingdoms, and they were engaged in frequent wars among themselves. Although, these divisions have very little to do from the linguistic points of view, have certain amount of psychological and cultural validity. Till to-day, intermarriage within the
same clan, even though they have different surnames, is not permissible. Apart from this, except the Mangangs or Ningthoujas, intermarriage among the clans are restricted, that is, the Mangang or Ningthouja can intermarry with all the six clans, while a Khuman or Luwang or Angom or Moirang can not marry with all the clans. The clan here does not mean dialects. The language described in this analysis is spoken in Imphal, which is regarded as the standard dialect of the language. There are various local differences in this language spoken at different places. The spoken forms from Kakching, Thanga, Phayeng, Nongmaikhong, Ngaikhong, etc. which are different from the standard form were not mentioned at all in earlier works, while the dialects of this language, like - Andro, Sekmai, Chairel, etc. are regarded as languages. Again, the varieties used by the people of Assam, Bangladesh, Burma, etc. are considered dialects of this language.

Culturally, Meiteis have close relationship and similarities with the various Tibeto-Burman speaking tribal people in the region. This cultural attachment, which has been established through contacts and intermarriages, etc. is age old. In other words, the Meiteis have a mixed culture because of the merger of the different groups and by the influence of the neighbouring tribal cultures. With the conversion to Hinduism, the Aryan culture also diffused in the Meitei culture.
The present analysis: The present analysis is first of its kind for Meiteiron. No significant work has been done on this language. The earlier works on this language are not adequate, because they lack systematic approach. The present data may as well be employed for some other analytical method and the interpretations in the present analysis may also be interpreted in a different way. This is one of the possible ways of putting things from amongst the numerous ways.

This analysis is based on the structural model. Every effort has been made to maintain the uniformity in the analysis. This also has put a limit on the completeness of the analysis, as no analysis can ever be complete.

In the Chapter on Phonology, not much has been done on the various phonetic features. Only the phonemic norms are indicated, because it has been considered that the phonetic differences are not enough to posit separate entities. With regard to Suprasegmentals, the tones are not fully and phonetically analyzed because of limitations, such as, testing with the various instruments.

An attempt has been made to deal with various problems in the chapter on Morphophonemics. Morphophonemic variation in the language necessitates careful handling of the data. Most of the problems coming up at various levels
of analysis have been dealt with in this chapter. The complex phonological, morphological and syntactic problems are also discussed and rules have been framed for various exceptions to generalized statements, wherever necessary.

In the chapter on Morphology the various types of morphemes are identified. As most bound roots can not show the class of forms to which they belong, the prefixes and suffixes play an important role in word formation. So, sets of prefixes and suffixes are to be identified and they are to be labelled as noun affixes, verb affixes, etc. The interrogatives and negatives are formed at the morphological level. The interrogatives are formed with nouns while the negatives are formed with verbs by the help of affixes. There are instances of inalienable possessions in the case of kin terms and body parts. Numerals are also incorporated in this chapter. The respect forms of address are also dealt with in this chapter.

In the chapter on Syntax, the constituent structure of the sentence and various types of sentences are analyzed. The Noun and Verb phrases, types of constructions, are also discussed. Coordination or conjunctions have also been discussed in this chapter.

A list of vocabulary and bibliography are appended as appendix.
Abbreviations and Symbols

A  Aspect of verb.
As  Aspirated
C  Coordinator
Det  Determiner
H  Head
M  Modality
Mod  Modifiers
N  Noun
NP  Noun Phrase
NPs  Noun Phrases
Ns  Noun Substitute
O  Object (syntax)
R  Root
S  Sentence
s  Subject (syntax)
STC  Sino-Tibetan- a Conspectus
UCPL  University of California Publications in Linguistics
Una  Unaspirated
V  Verb/vowel
v  Copula
VP  Verb Phrase
VPs  Verb Phrases.
X  Semivowels
/ /  Phonemic
\ -  Phonetic xvi
\{ \} Morphemes (if it enclosed phonemic symbols)
> becomes/changes to
# Phrase boundary juncture
## Sentence boundary juncture
+ Internal juncture
/`/ Falling tone
/' Pause (non-distinctive)
/ .*/ Syllable boundary
* Unacceptable/Extinct/Non-meaningful/Non-grammatical.
--- Subject (sentence) deleted/dropped.