CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This thesis attempts to provide a descriptive study of some linguistic aspects of Maram, a dialect of Khasi, which is a Mon-Khmer branch of Austro-Asiatic language family.

1.1. Location

Meghalaya, commonly known as ‘the abode of clouds’¹ was inaugurated as an autonomous state within Assam on 2nd April 1970. It was declared a state of Indian Union on 21st January 1972. Meghalaya lies between 20.1⁰N and 26.5⁰N latitude and 85.49⁰E and 92.52⁰E longitude.² It is bounded in the north and east by Assam and in the south and west by Bangladesh. The total area of the state is 22,429 sq. km. According to 2011 Census, the total population of Meghalaya is 2,964,007.³

Administratively, Meghalaya consists of eleven districts namely, East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, West Jaintia Hills, West Garo Hills, East Garo Hills, Ri-Bhoi District, South Garo Hills, South West Khasi Hills, East Jaintia Hills, South West Garo Hills and North Garo Hills. Within these districts, there are again a number of Sub-Divisions and blocks.

This research is based on Maram, a dialect spoken in Mawkyrwat which falls under the South-West Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya.

1.2. The Maram

The people residing in Mawkyrwat area which falls under the jurisdiction of the Maharam Syiemship are commonly referred to as ‘Maram’. Maram is a term which refers to the people as well as to the dialect. Previously, the Maram prefer to call themselves as ‘Nongmawkyrwat’ meaning an inhabitant of Mawkyrwat rather than Maram. This is due to inferiority feelings as they found themselves backward in every spheres of life. However, at present, they are proud to refer themselves as

¹ Joshi 2004
² www.megipr.nic.in
³ Census of India, 2011
Maram. In recent years, there has been a tremendous growth in this region in many areas- education, economic, social, etc.

Mawkyrwat is the district headquarters of South-West Khasi Hills District which was created on 3rd August 2012. Mawkyrwat has an area of 1341sq km approximately. It is bounded by Nongstoin in the North, Garo Hills in the West and Bangladesh in the South.

1.2.1. Maram, a Sub-tribe of Khasi

According to Mawrie (2009:8), there are seven sub-tribes among the Khasis- the Nongphlangs in the central plateau, the Pnarbs in the east, the Bhois in the north, the Wars in the south, the Marams in the west, the Lyngngams in the far west and the Dikos in extreme western region. He further adds, ‘among the Khasis themselves, those who live in the western hills are commonly called the Marams, belonging to the age-old Maharam kingdom’.

1.2.2. Traditional Administration

Traditionally, the ‘Syiem’ is the head of Maharam Syiemship. U Kohryngap was the first Syiem/head of Maharam Syiemship. The head or Syiem was elected by Lyngdoh and Myntri or headmen of villages. The Lyngdoh are the electors from the following clans: i) The Lyngdoh Sakwang ii) The Lyngdoh Nonglang, iii) The Lyngdoh Marshallong iv) The Lyngdoh Nonglynkien, v) The Lyngdoh Nongsynrih and vi) The Lyngdoh or Basan Dom Mawlein. At present, there are 120 Lyngdoh and Myntri who are electors and members of the Dorbar Hima. Till today, contestants for the headship of the traditional administration must be from the clan of Syiemiong Saw Kpoh Nonglang and Jakrem or Syiemlieh Sawkphoh Maharam.

1.2.3. Cultural and Social Life

Maram is rich in cultural heritage. There are many festivals which are related with agricultural activities, social activities and religious activities. Some of the festival dances are ‘Chat Knia Sngei’ which is performed in all happy occasions

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4 http://tntmagazine.in
5 Information provided by Ready Syiemiong, sister of Pa-im Niandrowell Syiemiong who is the present Syiem of Maharam, who works in the office of the Maharam Syiemship in Mawkyrwat.
(performed mainly after harvesting) and the ‘Chat Phor’ which is performed during funeral\textsuperscript{6}.

Maram is rich in oral traditions and these are handed down from one generation to another generation by word of mouth. In the words of Nongkynrih (2007: vii),

“The Khasis, by which I mean all the seven sub-tribes- Khyriem, Pnar, Bhoi, Maram, Lyngngam and the now never-heard-of Diko- of the Khasi tribe of the North-east India, are a great storytelling people: ‘telling’, because their alphabet is of recent history, no older than when Thomas Jones, the Welsh Presbyterian missionary, introduced the Roman script in 1842, to form the essentials of the Khasi written word”.

Maram live a nomadic life. Majority of the people depend on agriculture as their means of livelihood. The main food crops grown in these areas are rice and maize. The other agricultural products are potato, ginger, turmeric, black pepper, areca nut, etc. Some of the horticulture crops grown in the areas are orange, pineapple, banana, lemon, jack-fruits, plums, pear, peach etc. Besides agriculture, piggery, poultry, dairy farming etc. are other means of livelihood of the people. In addition to the above, some of the people are engaged in government service and business.

Earlier, most of the people followed the traditional religion or the ‘\textit{niam Khasi}’. With the advent of Christianity, majority of the people have now embraced Christianity, though, a few of them still follow the traditional religion.

Mawkyrwat is the centre of trade for the people of the south-west Khasi hills. Market is held once every four days. It is one of the largest rural markets in the west khasi hills.

1.2.4. Population

The number of Maram speakers has increased over the decades. Many speakers of Maram have migrated to different parts of East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills and and Ri-Bhoi district either for commercial or agricultural purposes. According to 2001 census, the population of Mawkyrwat is 51,383\textsuperscript{7}. According to

\textsuperscript{6} Shri Nestarland Wanniang from Mawlangwir provided information regarding the festival dances of Maram.
\textsuperscript{7} Census India 2001.
2011 Census, the population of South West Khasi Hills District, where Maram is mainly spoken is 98583.

1.2.5. Maram Dialect

Maram is a dialect or regional variety of Khasi spoken mainly in the South West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. There are 216 villages within the district where Maram is spoken. Within these villages, there is a linguistic variation which shows variants mainly at the phonological level.

The Maram dialect was not reflected in Grierson’s (1904) identification of the four major dialects of Khasi. However, Bareh (1977:41) identifies the following as dialects of Khasi which highlighted Maram as one of them:

i) Amwi spoken in the southern Jaintia Hills
ii) Shella in the southern Khasi Hills
iii) Warding in the south of Khasi Hills
iv) Myriaw, Nongkhlaw, Nongspung, Maram, Mawiang spoken in the mid-western part of Khasi Hills.

v) Cherra in the mid-southern Hills
vi) Nongkrem, Mylliem, Laitlyngkot, Lyniong-Khasi spoken in central parts
vii) Jowai in the central part of Jaintia hills
viii) Bhoi in north-east Khasi Hills
ix) Manar, Nongwah, Jirang in the north Khasi Hills
x) Khatarblang (Mawpran) spoken in mid-southern
xi) Nongstoin and Langrin in West Khasi Hills.

Considering the fact that a variety spoken in Mawkyrwat town has assimilated to Standard Khasi, the Maram variety spoken in Mawten village is taken into consideration for the present study which is also a native dialect of the researcher.

1.3. Linguistic Classification

Languages can be classified based on genetic classification and typological classification. Typologically, languages can further be classified into i) word order typology and ii) morphological classification.

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8 The Telegraph dated 4 August 2012
1.3.1. Genetic Classification

This method of classification of languages which is based on the assumption that languages have diverged from a common ancestor, falls under the historical classification. Evidence has been noted that many of the languages of Europe and Asia are inter-related. Genetic classification was admirably suited to determine the inter-relationships of languages such as the Indo-European for which we have many records from several millennia. This method has been widely used since its introduction in the end of the 18th Century. Ethnologue Report (2007) identifies 168 Austro-Asiatic languages. The Austro-Asiatic languages are well known for having a "sesquisyllabic" pattern, with basic nouns and verbs consisting of a reduced minor syllable plus a full syllable. Many of them also have infixes.

The Austro - Asiatic family has approximately 150 languages and 56 million speakers unequally divided into two important sub-families:

1. Munda is spoken in North East and Central India by 6 million people. There are two groups – (a) Santali which has the maximum number of speaker which is spoken by 4 million and Munda by 2 million speakers.

2. Monkhmer spoken in South East Asia and Khasi spoken in India.

With reference to Austro Asiatic languages spoken in India like Khasi, a Monkhmer branch of Austro Asiatic and Munda languages another branch of Austro Asiatic spoken in central India do not have tone. Khasi does not have tone but it is very rich in intonation. Intonation plays a very important role in the grammatical structure of the Khasi language e.g. in interrogatives sentences and tag questions.

establishing cognates. The following family tree is the latest classification of the Austro-Asiatic family by Diffloth:

**Diffloth 2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.D 1,000</th>
<th>AD 0</th>
<th>1,000 B.C</th>
<th>2,000 B.C</th>
<th>3,000 B.C</th>
<th>4,000 B.C</th>
<th>5,000 B.C</th>
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<tr>
<td>B.C</td>
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</table>

- Korku
- Kherwarian
- Kharia-Juang
- Koraput
- Khasian
- Pakanic
- Eastern Paluангic
- Western Palu英格兰c
- Khuic
- Vietic
- Eastern katuic
- Western katuic
- Vietic
- Western Bahnaric
- Northwestern Bahnaric
- Northern Bahnaric
- Central Bahnaric
- Southern Bahnaric
- Khmeric
- Monic
- Northern Asli
- Senoic
- Southern Asli
- Nicobarese
- Khasian-Khmuic
- Eastern katuic-Vieto-Katuic
- Khmero-Bahnaric
- Asli-Monic
- Nico-Monic

*Fig1.1: Austro-Asiatic Language Family Tree Diagram*
As shown in the above tree diagram, Diffloth classifies Khasi as Khasian under the Khasi-khmuic branch of Austro-Asiatic language family. Maram, being a dialect of Khasi, therefore falls under the Khasian branch.

1.3.2. Typological Classification

1.3.2.1 Morphological Classification:

Morphologically, languages can be classified into isolating, agglutinating, fusional and polysynthetic types. Morphological classification of Khasi language in general and Maram dialect in particular is not clear cut. War (2011) is of the opinion that Khasi is an agglutinating language. She states

“Nalor ki kyntien kiba don artylli ki hab-kyntien, ka ktien Khasi ka ailad ruh ia ka jinpyndait kyntien kum ‘pyn-’ bad ‘long’ ban ioh ia ka kyntien ‘pynlong’, ‘jing-’ bad ‘ieit’ ban ioh ia ka kyntien ‘jingieit’. Te namarkatta, ka shongnia ban ong ba ka ktien Khasi ka hap ha ka thup jait ktien kaba ar kaba shah ia ka jingpyndait kyntien”.

The above statement in Khasi can be translated as:

“In addition to bi-syllabic words, Khasi allows the joining of prefix ‘pyn-’ with root ‘long’ to derive the word ‘pynlong’ meaning ‘cause to make’, prefix ‘jing-’ with root ‘ieit’ to derive the word ‘jingieit’ meaning ‘love’. Therefore, it can be rightly said that Khasi falls under the agglutinating language’ (War:2011,p 15).

Maram, being a dialect of Khasi, is found to be morphologically similar with the Standard Khasi. However, in this present study, Maram is classified to be more isolating than agglutinating type because there are many mono-morphemic words/roots than polymorphemic words. It has also been observed that polymorphemic words are found mainly when affixation is involved, and the occurrences are very rare. This observation of Maram morphology is in accordance with War (2005) views on Khasi morphology. She states ‘Khasi words are mostly mono-morphemic which a property of most isolating languages’.9

This can be illustrated with the following examples from Maram:

9 See War, J. (2005), entitled Khasi Language Submitted to CIIL
1. ṇa  bəm  sɔ?  
i  eat  fruit  
‘I eat fruit’

2. u  en  ṭəŋ-  səwə  ja?  pʰi  
he  have  NOMZ  feel  ACC  you  
‘He has feeling for you’

Sentence 1 above showed mono-morphemic words while sentence 2 included a word ‘ṭəŋ-səwə’ which is formed by prefixing a nominalizer ‘ṭəŋ-’ to a verb ‘səwə’ meaning ‘feel’.

There are, however portmanteau morphs in Maram which display fusional features, in that the morphemes do not have clear cut boundaries. For examples:

3. u  siɛn  ja  bani  
he  love  ACC.F  bani  
‘He loves Bani’

4. u  siɛn  jaw  ban  
he  love  ACC.M  ban  
‘He loves Ban’

In sentence (3), ‘ja’ functions as a portmanteau morph because it consists of two grammatical features, that is, it functions as an accusative marker and it also marks feminine gender. Similarly, in sentence (4), ‘jaw’ functions as an accusative marker and it also marks masculine gender. The detailed discussion on the case marker is given in Chapter V, Section 5.1.5.

1.3.2.2. Word-Order Typology of Maram

Maram, a dialect of Khasi exhibits the Subject Verb Object word order pattern. The following are some of the typological characteristics of Maram dialect:

i)  Word Order

Maram is verb medial, its basic word-order is Subject-Verb-Object as in 5.
5. $u$ dan $u$ sa $\mathfrak{ja}$
   3MSg dan 3MSg eat rice
   ‘Dan eats rice’

ii) **Preposition**
6. $h\.p\mathfrak{ɔ}ʔ$ cuŋ
   LOC house
   ‘Inside the house’

iii) **Direct and Indirect Object**
   Regarding the order of the direct and indirect objects, the dialect allows the following options in the unmarked word order:
   
   a) In the case of the ‘to-dative’, the indirect object follows the direct object as in 7 and it precedes the direct object as in 8:

   7. $k\.b$ $k\.t\.a$ $a$ $\mathfrak{ja}$ $\mathfrak{ja}$ $\mathfrak{sa}$ $\mathfrak{p}t\mathfrak{e}$ $\mathfrak{h}$ $\mathfrak{s}$ $\mathfrak{a}$
   3FSg ban 3FSg PST give ACC dress DAT Sara
   ‘Bani gave the dress to Sara’

   8. $k\.b$ $k\.t\.a$ $k\.t\.a$ $a$ $\mathfrak{h}$ $\mathfrak{s}$ $\mathfrak{a}$ $\mathfrak{p}t\mathfrak{e}$ $\mathfrak{h}$ $\mathfrak{s}$ $\mathfrak{a}$
   3FSg ban 3FSg PST give DAT Sara ACC dress
   ‘Bani gave the dress to Sara’

   b) In the case of the ‘for-dative’, the dialect allows only the direct object to precede the indirect object in the unmarked word order as in 9:

   9. $n\.t\.a$ $t\.\mathfrak{b}$ $k\.t\.a$ $\mathfrak{j}$ $\mathfrak{s}$ $\mathfrak{e}$ $\mathfrak{m}$ $j$ $\mathfrak{s}$ $\mathfrak{a}$ $\mathfrak{n}$ $\mathfrak{s}$ $\mathfrak{m}$ $\mathfrak{b}$ $\mathfrak{n}$
   1Sg PST buy 3FSg jāνSEM ACC bani
   ‘I bought a jainsem for Bani.’

iv) **Genitive**
   The genitive follows the governing noun. However, the genitive marker in Maram is optional. This is shown in 10 (a) and 10 (b).
9.a. \( u \ k^b\omega n \ u \ ηa \)  
3MSg child GEN 1Sg  
‘My son’

9.b. \( u \ k^b\omega n \ φ \ ηa \)  
3MSg child GEN 1Sg  
‘My son’

v) **Time and Place Adverbials**
In the unmarked word order, time adverbials follow place adverbials as in 11.

11. \( ηa-n \ sa? \ di? \ ha? \ cjew \ laminstẹp \)  
1Sg-Fut Fut go LOC market tomorrow  
‘I will go to market tomorrow’.

Time and place adverbials occur in ascending order as in 12 and 13.

12. \( ha \ k^batar \ tarik \ bne \ nɔ?pra? \ ar- \ haʒar- \ k^bat \ we \)  
LOC twelve date month december two-thousand-teen one  
‘On 12\(^{th}\) December 2011’.

13. \( ha? \ cuŋ \ u \ kinsai \ ha? \ Mawblej \ ha? \ laban \)  
LOC house 3MSg kynsai LOC mawblei LOC laban  
‘In Kynsai’s house in Mawblei in Laban (Shillong)’.

vii) **Standard of Comparison – Marker of comparison**
In Maram, the standard of comparison follows the marker of comparison as in 14.

14. \( u \ sam \ u \ maj \ u \ ηa \ bun \ jaw \ manbʰa \)  
3MSg sam 3MSg more tall than ACC manbha  
‘Sam is taller than Manbha’.
viii) Left-Peripheral Complementizer

Maram has left Peripheral complementizer, that is, the complementizer precedes the embedded sentence. This is shown in example 15.

15. u lari u ɔŋ bu u-n saʔ e taʔdiaŋ
   3MSg lari 3MSg say COMP 3MSg-Fut Fut come later
   ‘Lari said that he will come later’.

ix) Verbal Negation

In Maram, the negative marker has two forms: ‘cʰem’ and ‘re’. ‘re’ occurs after the verb and negate all sentences. ‘cʰem’ precedes the verb and it can only occur in past tense sentences. This is shown in 16 and 17.

16. ɳa diʔ re
    1Sg go NEG
    ‘I am not going’

17. ɳa cʰem diʔ re
    1Sg NEG go NEG
    ‘I did not go’.

x) Adjectives

The adjectives always follow the head noun in Maram as shown in sentence 18.

18. ka bru mənbʰa
    3FSg person good
    ‘Good woman’

xi) Numerals

In Maram, the numerals precede the head noun as in 19.

19. san ta ji cʰnɔŋ
    five CLS 3Pl village
    ‘Five villages’
Interrogatives

Question words can either move or occur in situ and both these forms are unmarked. This is illustrated in 20 and 21.

20. haʔno ka bani
   where 3FSg bani
   ‘Where is Bani?’

21. ka bani haʔno
    3FSg bani where
    ‘Where is Bani?’

Yes/No questions do not have a marker but is expressed by using a rising intonation as in 22.

22. pʰi laʔ sa ja laʔ
    2Sg Pst eat rice finish
    ‘Have you eaten your food?’

Tag question markers occur post verbally as in 23.

23. pʰi laʔ sa ja laʔ de-re
    2Sg Pst eat rice finish Q-tag
    ‘You have eaten your food. Haven’t you?’

1.4. Methodology

The linguistic fieldwork methodology was employed for this research study. This includes:

1. Informants: Data was collected from the native speakers of the dialect. The informants selected include both male and female which are of different age groups. Educated as well as illiterate informants are interviewed for elicitation of data. The data collected is present in the form of word-lists and sentence list. In addition, interviews with scholars and writers who have worked on Khasi is also included.

2. Tools: The tools used include interviews, questionnaires and audio recorder.

3. Procedure: Data was collected from primary sources. Secondary sources include textbooks, articles, journals are also included.
4. Presentation of data: Description and standard procedure of presenting field data was presented. Some of the data collected was presented in the forms of charts and tables.

1.5. Framework of Description: This research work adopts an eclectic and descriptive approach to the analysis of some of the linguistic aspects of Maram.

1.6. Organisation of the Thesis

The present work has six chapters and each of them is divided according to nature of the content.

Chapter one presents a brief introduction of the Maram dialect, location, population, genetic classification of Khasi under the Austro-Asiatic language family methodology and organization of thesis.

Chapter two is the general introduction on different linguistic structures and review of earlier works done in Khasi with reference to Maram.

Chapter three provides the definition of terms used in the description and analysis of the data.

Chapter four focuses on the description of the phonology of Maram which includes phonemic inventory, distribution of sounds, consonant clusters and syllable structure.

Chapter four provides a description on some aspects of Maram morphology.

Chapter five focuses on the analysis of the types of sentences of Maram.

Chapter six is a discussion on the findings and conclusion.