CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

In writing “A DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR OF SADU KOIRENG”, it is required to give the origin, habitation, growth and traditional cultures of the people to identify them among other tribes of Manipur. They are one of the groups of Koireng family. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman family who migrated from Eastern Burma. Their original home was KOLRAM which is also believed by some Koirengs to be the Karen state of Eastern Burma.

British writers like T.C. Hodson, John Shakespeare, G.A. Grierson and Mr. Damant gave different names of the Koirengs. T.C. Hodson (1911) referred to them as Quoireng, John Shakespeare (1913) called them Kolhen. G.A. Grierson stated them kolrengs or koirengs as a small tribe in the state of Manipur. According to Mr. Damant they dwelt in eight small villages on the hills north of the Imphal valley.

Sadu Koireng is one of the smallest tribes of India’s North Eastern Region (Kabui, 1987). At present the tribe of Sadu Koireng made their
permanent settlement at the valley of *Kholui Hill*. It is bounded by Iril river both in the West and South, by the *Kholui Hill* in the East and by the paddy field in the North. It is about 30 km from the capital city of Imphal and the population is about 330. The people of Sadu Koireng became Christian from February 1963.

The people are very honest and hard working. They love each other and live happily with a very great sense of mutual co-operation and mutual understanding in the region endowed with exceptional natural beauty. A very interesting story of their coming from Burma to Manipur will be worth presenting here. The Koirengs wanted peaceful life free from warfare among the migrating groups. It may be possible reason why they moved from *Kolram* to *Semrojoul* and at *khomichum, khomilai, khotatlu* and *Lungsut*. Then they settled down at *Lungrel* in Manipur South District. From there again they moved to *Kailaam*. As they kept on migrating from one place to another.

They migrated to *Tuolchieng*, then to *Mihoibung* and *Kholaipiel*. Then they came to *Erelon* and *Dumdoksuk*. As they were disturbed by another migrating groups, they had to move to *Thalkhangtang*. Even there
also they could not live long. They had to go to other villages like Lingsielbung, Sielbu, Shamrai, Thuokhuojoul, Ngaite+bung and Tongkhuo. They had to fight against unidentified enemies at Chiepi and they had again to move to other places like Khunte, Khapeibung, Umtar, Murting, Kangkapphei, Mongka and finally they arrived at Thangching near Loktak lake.

Thus facing untold miseries and sufferings here and there the Sadu Koireng people arrived at Thangching hill, a place in south-western part of Manipur from Burma. At Thangching they lived happily. There they came into contact with the Meiteis of Moirang and at first they defeated the Moirang king several times. It is said that later on the Moirang king defeated them with the help of a magical sword stolen from the koirengs. At Thangching, there was a great fire and they shifted to Laimanai village which was the point of dispersal of all koirengs in different parts of Manipur. From Laimanai the koirengs went to different villages. At present according to Kabui (1987) they are found in eleven places namely :-(1) Utonglok, (2) Sadu Koireng (3) Nurathel (4) Iril Mapal (5) Ekpan (6) Tarung (7) Kamu Koireng (8) Longa Koireng (9) Awang Longa Koireng in
Senapati District (10) *Tarung* in Thangmeiband and Lamphel in Imphal West District and (11) *Ngairong* near *Kwakta* in Churachandpur District.

1.1 MARRIAGE

Marriage is regarded a normal duty of a koireng man or woman in life. There are three important types of marriage namely (1) *Moiruoi* ‘negotiated marriage’ (2) *Tan* ‘elopement’ and (3) *Keitout* ‘kidnapping’.

The koireng tradition relates that the first marriage was solemnised by a God called *Nipu phirchak lapa* (Kabui, 1987). The man sat in the right side and the woman in the left side. During the marriage there is a ring exchanged between the bride and the bridegroom. The custom is based on this tradition of divine solemnisation of the marriage between a man or a woman. The most preferred marriage among the koirengs is to marry the mother’s brother’s daughters. But when one fails to get one’s mother’s brother’s daughters, the next preference is for other clans and the third preference is among other sub-clans. No marriage is allowed within the same families or sub-clans. Those who break this rule is said to have committed a social crime. Traditionally, in case of a koireng marrying a
non-koireng girl, he is expected to convert his wife into a koireng. In case he fails, she is not given social recognition. The negotiated marriage is called Moiruoi and this is the most popular form of marriage. This marriage has to go through different stages. The koireng marriage negotiation is a very protracted process which requires patience skill, persuasion power and etiquette for winning over the parents of the bride.

The parents of the prospective bridegroom with their son-in-law, Maakcha and other relatives will take a gourd of rice beer three times to the house of the bride’s parents. Usually prior verbal information is to be sent to the girl’s parents of their visit. The girl’s parents will call all their relatives for the occasion. Meanwhile accidentally, the girl elopes with another boy, the village authority will fine the girl with a pig of five hands and two jars of rice beer. In case, the boy also elopes another girl he will be punished with the same fine. In case of kidnapping of the girl against her consent, the parties of the boy and girl may attack the kidnapper boy who may even be killed in the process. The kidnapper will be fined with a pig of five hands and two jars of wine. The original boy to whom the girl is betrothed usually marries the girl though she is kidnapped. On the marriage day, the parents of the boy will present two jars of rice beer to the parents
of the girl. The second type of marriage prevalent among the koirengs like any other communities in Manipur is elopement. Growing popularity are both economic and procedural simplicity. It has therefore, become a popular form of marriage.

1.2 COSTUMES AND DRESS

1.2.1 Traditional Clothes of men

There are various koireng dresses for male. The male costume consists of the following.

i) *Morker* ‘a koireng shawl worn by men’

ii) *Puonrisai* ‘a kind of shawl worn only by old man’

iii) *Aipiriko* ‘a black shawl worn only by men’

iv) *Ponthal* ‘a shawl worn by chief ‘kʰulakpa’ or ‘luplakpa’’

v) *Mulpi* ‘a cloth worn and hung from the left of shoulder diagonally covering a part of the chest’

vi) *Arsep* ‘a knee deep cloth worn by men’

vii) *Thaite* ‘a small cloth worn around the head’

viii) *Dierchal* ‘a koireng apron’
Puonthal, Mulpi and Arsep are worn during the festival and village ceremonial functions.

1.2.2 Traditional Clothes of women

The names of the traditional clothes worn by women are given below.

a) Lungum ‘a sarong worn by unmarried Koireng girls’
b) Khamtang ‘a sarong worn by unmarried Koireng women’
c) Shaipikhup ‘a sarong worn by married Koireng women’
d) Puonlang ‘a Koireng shawl worn by Koireng women’
e) Puonlang Kertang ‘a Koireng shawl’
f) Koram ‘a small clothe used as a belt on the waist of women’
g) Puonsen ‘a red coloured shawl’
h) Puon chiel ‘a type of chaddar for carrying a child on the back’
The unmarried females use Lungum, the married female will use Khamtang and Shaipikhup, both married and unmarried females can wear Puonchiel, and Puonsen (Kabui, 1987).

The koireng ornaments are rings like banrial made of bronze one in each ankle. An armlet called har made of lead is worn at arm and yakseir made of bronze is worn in each arm. The necklaces are rikarui, theiseprui, khoinurrui, sidumrui and changkel rui.

The banrial ‘arm ring’ and har ‘arm ring’ are used only by the unmarried girls whereas yaksier ‘ring’ can be worn by women of all ages. The above type of necklaces are made of tree seeds fastened by a thread. Women wear them around their necks.

1.3 FESTIVAL

The festivals are the best occasions in which the koireng culture is presented in the best form. The koireng festivals have multiple purposes; religion, economic and aesthetic. The festivals are performed almost every month of the year with the changing cycle or seasons of the agricultural years. The following chart gives the name, purpose and time of the performance of the various festivals. The festivals of the Koirengs are
celebrated for rich agricultural yields, prosperity, health and safety of the village.

1.4 KOIRENG FESTIVALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Bedal</strong></td>
<td>‘Worship for the plentiful growth of crops’</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Palchoi</strong></td>
<td>‘Protection against external aggression and disease’</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Kangrai Mindai</strong></td>
<td>‘Protection against fire and health of the village’</td>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4. Chachuonlei</strong></td>
<td>‘Propitiating of the spirits of paddy and other crops’</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Tuikuong khuor</strong></td>
<td>‘Repair of the water springs and ponds’</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Charaikhei</strong></td>
<td>‘Good harvest’</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Lamkir Lei</strong></td>
<td>‘Cleaning of dancing place’</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Chamer Seir</strong></td>
<td>‘Drive away of evil spirits &amp; Health of the village’</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Lamthel Lei</strong></td>
<td>‘Village cleaning &amp; repairing village roads’</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Chathar Lei</strong></td>
<td>‘Tasting of new crops’</td>
<td>November/December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Lengyu choi</strong></td>
<td>‘Entertainment of the brothers marking the end of harvesting’</td>
<td>December</td>
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1.5 BEDAL
This festival is a religious worship, performed in the month of March. On an appointed day, every household will contribute small quantity of paddy and seeds of other eatable plants. All these articles are brought to the house of the chief of the village and cooked there. And people come to partake the meals and worship the supreme God at a small stream. Muds taken from the stream are made into potteries, each one of which is distributed to every household in the village. Only after the performance of this festival, the cultivation operation may be started. The festival is only one day affair.

1.6 PALCHOI

_Palchoi_ ceremony cum festival is performed to ensure safety of the village from enemy’s attack, success in war and protection from disease. During the festival, the village gate is repaired and rites are performed to protect the village gate from the evil spirits and enemies. The village priest performs the ceremony for worshipping the diety called _Pathian_.

1.7 KANGRAI MINDAI
This festival is performed for protection against fire and health of the village in the month of May for two days. A pig, a dog, one hen are sacrificed to the God at the village gate and the priest is the chief of the village.

The cooked meat will be shared by the whole village in the feast. Next day, a tug of war between two groups of village households, in most cases, the northern group and southern group is arranged. This has a mutual value. It is commonly believed that if the northern group wins it is the sign of good fortune.

1.8 CHACHUONLEI

This is one day festivals in the month of June propitiating the spirits for the safety and plentiful growth of paddy and other crops. Every household will contribute rice and wine and the village will contribute a pig, a dog and a cock, which are sacrificed to the diety Pathian. The whole village will join the feast.

1.9 TUI KUONG KHUOR
Tui-kuong-khuor means digging of the water ponds and springs. This festival is performed in the month of August for repairing of the water ponds and springs of the village and the male-folks would start the repairing works.

1.10 CHARAIKEI

Charaikei is also held in August by performing a ceremony for good harvest when the paddy plants have reached a certain height. One egg and one pig are sacrificed to diety Pathian, the yolk of the egg is sprinkled over the standing paddy plants.

1.11 LAMKIR LEI

Lamkir lei is held for the cleaning of the dancing place and is performed in the month of August.

1.12 CHAMER SEIR

Chamer Seir is held in October in order to drive away the evil spirits ‘khopu’ from the village and ensure good health and good harvest.

1.13 LAMTHEL LEI
Lamthel Lei, the festival of village cleaning is held in November and it lasts just one day only.

1.14 CHATHAR LEI

Chathar Lei, the festival of tasting new crops is performed usually in November. The first paddy from the respective fields is offered to God. Each household will sacrifice a red cock for the plentiful harvest.

1.15 LENGYU Choi

Lengyu choi is a festival held for the entertainment of the sister’s son in the month of December.

1.16 CHALAM LEI

The harvest festival called Chalam Lei is held in December. The village community led by the chief will perform a sacrifice at the village gate for good harvest. A pig, a dog and a cock will be offered to God and the villagers will join the feast.

1.17 RUICHUM
It is the closing ceremony of the community festival. Here both community worship and individual worship take place. The chief will perform the sacrifice of a pig and a cock in the field and the individual families also perform the same ceremony. It is a thanks giving ceremony to God for grant of good harvest and a prayer for good harvest in the next year also.

1.18 CULTURAL DANCES AND THEIR MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The koirengs believe that their dances and songs are of divine origin as men learn them from God. Their love for beauty, life and colour is expressed through their various dances and songs. Their dances have both religious and recreation aspects; but mostly their dances are regarded as a form of worship and can be classified according to forms and occasions. There are ten dance forms of the koirengs.

i) Kalamchi

ii) Waipho chengrut

iii) Lamchom/Lamplek

iv) Wailam
v)  *Wakol Lam*

vi)  *Khochunglam*

vii)  *Ker sim lam*

viii)  *Nisolam*

ix)  *Chayar Lam*

x)  *Lampak*

*Kalamchi* and *Waipho Chengrut* are male dances with shield or *phau* and sword or *Chemkoul*. Musical instruments used are the drums or *khuong*, *Dingkidi* or small short drum and a horn *orsekhi*. These dances are performed during *Sadel* and *Raldel* or a war festival after a successful tiger killing and head hunting expedition. *Lamchoum* is duet dance one male and one female. If the pace is quickened, it is called *Lamplek*. A female will beat the drum and a man will play the *Rusem* (a koireng bag pipe). This is performed during the festival *wakoul lam* or the dance of the *wakoul* bird is performed during *kuhongthak* (Inaugural ceremony of a new drum). *Khochunglam* is also almost the same with *kalamchi* and *Waipho chengrut* which is performed during celebration of hunting ceremony. Musical instruments used are a drum or *khuong*, a gong or *sum* and they sing the song called *khochungla*. The more popular form is the *kersim Lam*,

performed in any festival or ceremony. Both man and women dance in a circle even old men and old women may participate. This dance is held in remembrance of hunger and death due to famine and head hunting war. 

*Nisolam* is a dance of male group. The dancers hold spear and move in a fighting postures against the rival *Chayar lam* is also a male dance in the form in which a king is served by his servants. Some other dances are *Lampak* (a mixed dance of male and female), *Mithei Lam* is a housefly dance which is performed by two male dancers performed during the *khuongthak* ceremony. *Kichoum* dance is performed by boys and girls standing alternately in a row touching his/her shoulders.

1.19 **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS**

The musical instruments used by the koirengs are not numerous but they serve their musical needs. The instruments are *khuong* or drum, *Rusem* or bag pipe type, *sekihi* or horn, *sum/gong*, *Daar* or small type of sum, *Dingkidi* and *serangdar* or a violin like instrument.

1.20 **TRADITIONAL GAMES AND SPORTS**
The koirengs play their games and sports on different occasions, they have enumerated fifteen items of games and sports, played by boys and girls. Most of the games mentioned below have already died or they are dying out as this is evident from the fact that new generation children do not play them anymore. Some of the games which we could gather from the older people are given below.

i) *Kerbuon* ‘Wrestling’

ii) *Charel-kho* ‘throwing of wooden mortar’

iii) *Charelrut* ‘lifting wooden mortar’

iv) *Lung –dom* ‘Lifting stone’

v) *Uchok Naipel* ‘Imitation of frog’

vi) *Waakpa thing rithak* ‘a kind of game where players keep Jumping (like a crow) and search for something’

vii) *Arkekek* ‘cock fighting’

viii) *Humpi Sarut* ‘Pick up tiger’

ix) *Chomtan* ‘Long jump’

x) *Chom-phit* ‘Broad jump’

xi) *Chom tanrel* ‘High jump’
1.21 BIRTH

The koireng believes that, Birth, Growth and Death of men is in the will of God. As given in the history of creation, man was created by God. Birth of a child is an act of God and a gift of God.

When a woman gives birth to a child, the priest of the church will help her. During this period she is restricted to have oil, chilli etc. she may have only boiled simple food. If the baby is a boy, the village church council will recognize him within thirty days. If the baby is a girl, the village church council will recognize her after thirty days.
1.22 DEATH

There are many types of death. They are Natural death, one who dies at home in a natural way due to illness etc, unnatural death (*Sarrathi*), Bad death like death at child birth, small pox, murder, death by a boil, death due to tiger bite, snake bite, suicide (hanging), drowning.

When a person is dies, the old people of the village will send message to his/her relatives and the dead body will be buried at the gate of the southern gate of the village and put across on the grave inscribing the name and date of expiry of the deceased person. In case of suicide, the dead body will be buried outside the village gate without any cross or inscription because they consider that the person is a ghost or demon. The dead body will be kept in the coffin and taken to the grave and buried. In case of unnatural death there is no such elaborate ceremonies. They are buried outside the village. And purification ceremonies are performed so that such death may no recur in the family.
1.23 REASONS FOR TAKING UP THIS WORK

In Manipur there are 38 (thirty eight) recognized tribes spreading over the breadth and length of Manipur including those who migrated from different parts of Eastern Burma. They are all speakers of different Tibeto Burman languages and most of them have their outstanding work written records and periodical publications. But in the case of Sadu Koireng there is hardly any work done except the works done by Yashwanta on “Koireng Grammar” (2003) and Kabui’s work on “The Koirengs of Manipur” (1987).

The thesis is important from two angles: this work will help in developing the grammar of the language. As the language is spoken by numerically very weak people, it is very important that the language needs to be documented.

1.24 NAMING PRACTICE

In koireng society the naming practice is very interesting. If the first born child is a male his name must take the last syllable of his granfather’s name and if the child is a female she must take the last syllable of her
grandmother’s name. Suppose, the name of the grandfather’s name is Sanluoshei, the last syllable that is shei is obligatorily taken to name the first grandson, thus, the name of the grandson could be Shei-chung ‘a name’. Similarly, the name of the grandmother is Yangnei, since the last syllable is to be taken for naming the first grand daughter, then the name could be Nei-sowar ‘a name of a girl’.

1.25 ECONOMY

The primary source of income is mainly come from agriculture and forest products other small scale industries like weaving basket making, cattle rearing etc. are also being taken up to boost their earning.

1.26 RELIGION

Before the advent of Christianity, they worshiped their local deity known as the supreme God (Pathian). They offered wine while worshipping the God but consumption of wine is strictly prohibited after the adoption of Christianity. They used to attend to the church four times a week. On every Wednesday all females have to attend the church and
Friday for married women and man also Saturday for unmarried youths and Sunday everyone attends the church in morning and evening.

1.27 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

First, I tried to acquaint myself with the Sadu Koireng people. Then I become familiar with the language to some extent. I collected the basic core vocabulary of the language. The method for collection of data is through a set of questionnaires and interview. I recorded conversations, story-telling sessions, narratives and people’s singing songs. I listened to the recorded texts with native speakers and together I transcribed and translated them. In addition to this method of collecting data, I participated in activities of Sadu Koireng community. I attended marriage, death ceremonies and some other traditional ceremonies. While participating in cultural events I recorded natural speech whenever I was permitted to record them.

1.28 SCOPE OF THE THESIS

The dissertation is presented in six chapters. The first chapter begins with a basic introduction to the Sadu koireng language and people. Their
origin and settlement are also briefly discussed. The methods of data collection adopted has also been included in this chapter.

Chapter two describes the phonological system. Vowels, consonants, tones, phonemic distribution, contrast of phonemes, clusters, sequences, syllable patterns and tones of the language are discussed in this chapter.

In the third chapter the morphological system, root and affixes and word formation are discussed.

The fourth chapter examines the lexical and grammatical categories of the language. In this chapter nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, case, mood, gender, number, connectives, numerals and aspect are discussed.

In the fifth chapter types of sentences which includes the declarative sentences, negative, imperative, interrogative, optative, exclamatory and reduplication are discussed.

Chapter VI provides a conclusion and summary of the analysis.
1.29 ABOUT THE SADU KOIRENG LANGUAGE

Not much printed materials are available in Sadu Koireng. Therefore, no literatures are available which can be used to analyse for the description of Sadu Koireng Grammar. Sadu Koireng does not have a script of its own. The Roman alphabet is used for writing Sadu Koireng language i.e., for writing story, songs, journals etc. Sadu Koireng language has not been introduced yet for teaching in any Government Educational Institutions. All the Sadu Koireng Speakers can understand and speak Meiteiron properly. In communication between the hill peoples who speak different dialects, Meiteiron serves as a Lingua Franca.

1.30 CLASSIFICATION OF THE LANGUAGE

Sadu Koireng is one of the Kuki-Chin languages descended from Sino-Tibetan (ST). It is seen from the table below that this language is placed in the name of Kolren in the old Kuki sub division of Kuki-Chin classified by Grierson (1904). Linguists have classified the Tibeto-Burman language family in various ways, at higher levels as well as at lower levels. Among the Tibeto-Burman language Kuki-Chin language is relatively cohesive
both geographically and linguistically. Safer (1955) has investigated it intensively and classifies it as a part of Burmic as shown in the figure 2. Benedict similarly links it to Burmese-Lolo. However, Bradley’s suggestion is that the Kuki-Chin language group may be more appropriate to include as a part of adjacent SAL or North-East India group by looking at their substantial lexical and morpho-syntactic similarities. The SAL group has been linked geographically to Matisoff’s Kamarupan group (1991) as shown in the figure 5. The Kuki-Chin languages are characterized by the presence of tones, extensive verb morphology, intensive suffixing with less prefixes. The basic word order is SOV.
1.31 LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATIONS OF KUKI CHIN

Grierson have classified KUKI CHIN into four groups. They are:
1. Old Kuki,
2. Southern Chin,
3. Central Chin and

Koireng Language falls into old Kuki chin sub group.

Figure 1. Classification of Kukichin Languages (Grierson 1904).
Figure 2. Shafer’s classification of Luish within Tibeto-Burman

Figure 3. Benedict’s Sino-Tibetan grouping
Figure 4. Main tree of Kuki-Chin-Naga including sub-groups of Chin (Bradley, David 1997:28).
Figure 5. Sub-Groups of Tibeto-Burman (Matisoff, James A. 1991:481)