CHAPTER 2
CLASSIFICATION OF THE LANGUAGE
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2.1 Genetic Classification:

The history of the language classification is older one and it can be traced back to early thirteenth century attempts. Genetic classification is the classification of the languages assuming that the languages have a common ancestor from which they have diverged and belong to the same language family. A language family is a group of languages that are related to their descendents from a common proto-language. The evidence of relationship can be observed by those observable features and characteristics, which are common, as the biological relationship can be found by the genetic make up of the human. It has been observed that the families of phylogenetic unit have a common ancestor.

The relationship of the language families can be assumed from those systematic differences and similarities that are observable. The languages have grown over a period of time rather created suddenly. All natural languages of the world have historical base. The boundary of linguistic ancestry is always not clear as the languages come into contact with each other due to conquest or trade or through other means and they tend to borrow the features from the languages with which they do not have any historical relationship. The Creoles are one of the examples
of language contact situation. However, such cases are very rare when the languages cannot be classified into any family. The common ancestor of a language family can be identified by the comparative and re-construction methods. Since most of the languages have a relatively very short-recorded history, such methods are always handy in establishing the genetic relationship. The comparative and reconstruction methods were introduced by the 19th century linguist August Schleicher. On these linguistic parameters the Indian languages are grouped into four language families: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic.

2.1.1 Classification of Sino-Tibetan Language Family:

Tibeto-Burman is the sub-branch of Sino-Tibetan language family. The Sino-Tibetan language family is the most populous language family in the world. Sino-Tibetan language family consists of Chinese and Tibeto-Burman languages, including many languages of East-Asia. The Sino-Tibetan languages share similar features, as it is very common to have tones in these languages. At this point of time the comparative method is necessary to find the genetic relations of the languages. However, it goes without saying that such features also inter-mix in a close contact situation. The Sino-Tibetan languages are found in China, Nepal, and Myanmar, Northern parts of Thailand, Laos and Vietnam.
2.1.1.1 The classifications of Sino-Tibetan:

Benedict (1942) and Robert Shaffer (1955) made the classification of Sino-Tibetan in 40s and 50.

The classification of Benedict of Sino-Tibetan (1942)

- Sinitic
- Tibeto-Karen
  - Karen
  - Tibeto-Burman

Figure (ii)

Benedict classified the Sino-Tibetan languages into two branches i.e. Sinitic and Tibeto-Karen. He again classified the Tibeto-Karen into two branches Karen and Tibeto-Burman.
Shaffer classified the Sino-Tibetan family into five main branches: Karenic, Baric, Burmic, Bodic, Daic and Sinitic. The Karenic branch includes the areas of central and Southern Burma and Assam. Burmic branch includes the areas of Indo-Burma frontier, Burma Indo-China, East Tibet and South West china. Bodic branch includes the areas of Western Himalayas through, Nepal and into Assam, Tibet and Western China. The Daic branch includes the areas of Western China, Thailand and part of Burma.

2.1.1.2 **Classification of Tibeto-Burman Languages:**

Sino-Tibetan has two major language families. Tibeto-Burman is one of them and the other is the Sinitic (Chinese) languages. The Tibeto-Burman consists of
around 200-300 languages spoken in the following areas: (1) South East Asia and Myanmar, (2) Vietnam in the east, (3) northern Pakistan in the west and (4) a large group of population in the North Eastern part of India.

The classification of Benedict of Tibeto-Burman (1972)

- Tibetan
- Kanauri
- Abor-miri-dafla
- Burmase Lolo
- Baric
- Vayu Bahing
- Kuki Naga

Benedict classified the languages of Tibeto Burman into the following six groups, (1) Tibetan Kanauri, (2) Bahing Vayu, (3) Abor- miri- dafla, (4) Burmase Lolo, (5) Kuki Naga and (6) Baric.
The Classification of Tibeto-Burman by Needham, Robinson, (1855) from Paul. K. Benedict (1972)

Sino-Tibetan

Tibeto-Karen  Chinese

Tibeto-Burman  Karen

Lepcha  Bahing Yayu  Tibeto-Kanauri  Gyanrung  Burmese-Lolo

Newari  Kachin

Abor Miri Dafla  Bodo-Garo  Konyak

Kuki-Naga  Mikir  Meitei  Mru

Figure (v)

Sino-Tibetan, considered as the greater branch, is divided into Tibeto-Karen and Chinese. Tibeto-Karen is again divided into Tibeto-Burman and Karen. The
Tibeto-Burman is sub-divided into Tibeto-Kanauri. It has another branch called Kachin, which has many sub-branches: Kuki Naga (Mikir, Meitei and Mru), Lepcha, Bahing Vayu, Newari, Abor Miri Dafla, Bodo-Garo, Konyak, Gyanrung, Burmese-Lolo, Nung(ish), Luish, Trung, Taman.

**Bernard Comrie’s (1990) Classification based on suggestions of Shaffer (1966-73), Benedict (1972) and other scholars:**

![Higher-order Groupings within Tibeto-Burman](image)
Middle-Level relationships within Tibeto-Burman

Bodic

Bodish                      East Himalayan

Tibeto-Kanauri  Gurung  Newāri  Kham-Magar  Kiranti

Tamang
Takhalii

Baric

Kamarupan

Abor-Mikir  Kuki-Naga  Bodo-Konyak  Luish  Jingphlo  Kachinic

Miri-Dafla  Meitei

Kuki Chin  Naga  Konyak  Bodo-Garo  Andro-Kadu

etc.
According to Comrie (1990) the dotted line is the controversial relationship, or the relationship, which is not certain.
The classification of Tibeto-Burman of Scot De Lancy (1987)

Tibeto-Chinese

Tibeto-Burman

Tibeto-Himalayan  North Assam  Assam-Burmese

Bhotia  Himalayan  Adi

Balti  Kinauki  Nissi/Dafla

Ladakhi  Lepcha  Mishmi

Lahauli  Miri/Mishing

Monpa

Sikkim Bhutia

Burmese  Mogh

Bodo  Bodo/Boro

Lalung

Dimasa

Rabha

Mikir

Garo

Koch

Tripuri

Naga  Angami

Kuki-Chin  Manipuri

Laung

Sema

Kheza

Ao

Lotha

Chang

Konyak

Zeliang

Tangsang

Sangtam

Wancho

Yimchunger

Khiemnungan

Kabui

Mao

Tangkhul

Figure (vii)

Nocte

50
Phom being the Naga group of languages can be placed under the Naga languages along with Chang, Wancho, Nocte.

Another Genetic Classification of Tibeto-Burman language family of Scot De Lancy (1989)

Phom is a Naga language and can be placed under the Naga group of Languages in Bodo Konyak sub-group.
The Classification of Robbins Burling (1998)

Tibeto-Burman

- Eastern Area
  - Yacham-tengsa
    - Chungli-Ao
    - Mongsen-Ao
  - Lotha
  - Sangtam
    - Yinchunger

- Northern Area
  - Bodo
  - Konyak
  - Luish

- Central Area
  - Ntenyi
    - Meluri
    - Pochury
    - Angami
  - Sema
    - Rengma
    - Chokri
    - Kheza
  - Mao
    - Mzieme
    - Zeme
    - Liangmai

- Nrunghmei Rongmei
  - Purion
  - Maran
  - khoirao

- Tangkhul
  - Maring

- Kuki
  - Chin
  - Mizo

- Karbi
  - Meitei

Figure (ix)
According to Robbins Burling, (Linguistic of the Tibeto-Burman Area, Volume 21.2-Fall 1998),

The Tibeto-Burman languages that are often referred to as the Northern Naga or Konyak languages are spoken along the extreme north eastern border of India on both sides of the boundary that divides the Indian states of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. From North to South, this group of languages includes Tangsa, Nocte and wancho in Arunachal Pradesh, and Konyak, Phom and Chang just to the South West in Nagaland.

It appears that Robbins Burling’s definition is purely geographical.

There were many attempts to classify the Naga group of languages in the Tibeto-Burman language family. The first attempt to classify Naga languages was made by Nathan Brown, a Baptist missionary in Assam. He made a sincere effort to classify Naga languages in 1851. Sreedhar (1974) has highlighted rightly:

He classified the languages into three groups that are Nocte, Konyak and Ao. He found many differences between the languages of the North and Angami in the South. G.Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India is the exhaustive work on Naga languages and their classification. Marrison (1967) has classified the Naga languages in his work, Classification of Naga Languages in North East India. R.Shaffer (1953), has classified the Northern most Naga languages. Grierson (1903), has also made the claim that Naga languages have dialects which differ from each other. He also made the claim that the Naga dialects are connected with the Bodo and Kuki-Chin languages in the south and in the west, with the several dialects that they have are put together as the North Assam group.
Now, it is well established that Phom belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. According to the Census of India 1991, paper 1 of 1997- India and States (Table C-7), the Phom language has been placed under Tibeto-Burmese family of languages. G.A. Grierson has mentioned about the Phoms by the name TAMLU or CHINGMENGNU in the Linguistic Survey of India, vol. III, part II. He said:

Immediately to the east of the Aos, in the extreme north-east of the districts of the Naga Hills, where it meets the Sibsagar District we come upon two tribes living together, the Tamlu or Chingmengnu and Tableng or Angwankhu.

He places the language in the Eastern sub-group. According to Grierson, Chingmengnu called themselves as ‘Dikpā Kātā’ and the name Tamlu was given to the tribe by the English people. According to Grierson, “the languages and Tamlu was ceasing to be agglutinative and was becoming more synthetic.”

Grierson (1903) claimed:

Naga group of languages comprise a long series of dialects, which mutually differ much from each other. They are on the whole more closely related to the Tibetan than to the Burmese.

He further made the claim:

In the south and in the west, the Naga dialects are connected with the Bodo and Kuki-Chin languages by means of several dialects, which have been put together as the North Assam group.
Grierson’s Classification (1901):

Grierson (1901) has classified the Naga group of languages into three groups:

a) **Western Group**

b) **Central Group**

c) **Eastern Group**

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**Western Group**

- Angami
- Sema
- Rengma
- Kheza

**Central Group**

- Ao
- Lotha
- Yimchunger
- others

**Eastern Group**

- Angwänkhu or Tableng (Konyak)
- Chang or Mamjung
- Mutonia
- Tangsa (Shangge)
- Moshang (Mohangia)
- Tamlu or Tamlu (Phom)
- Banpara (Wancho)
- Mohangia (Nocte)
- Assiringia

Figure (x)

The **Western group** consists of Angami, Sema, Rengma and Kheza. The **Central group** consists of Ao, Lotha, Yimchunger and some other languages and the
Eastern group comprises the Angwankhu or Tableng (Konyak), Chingmengnu or Tamlu (Phom), Chang or Mamjung and some other spoken languages are spoken outside the Naga hills like Banpara (Wancho), Mohangia (Nocte), Mutonia, Assiringia, Moshang (Mohangia) and Tangsa (Shangge).

Classification of Shaffer (1953) of Naga group of languages:
According to Shaffer (1953) Konyak and other Naga languages including Chang, Phom, Wancho, Nocte, Tangsa, etc. can be grouped with Boro languages and Kachin. He has grouped all the other Naga languages under the Kuki group.

Marrison's Classification (1967):
According to Marrison (1967), the Naga group of languages can be classified on the basis of types that are the typological comparisons at the level of phonology, morphology and syntax. At the phonological level, the syllabic patterns are subdivided into the word-initial, word-medial and word-final positions. He grouped the Naga family into three and arranged them from north-east to south-west. Marrison has put Phom in Type A.2 along with Konyak and Chang. These divisions are stated under:

**TYPE A. 1** consists of Tangsen (yogli), Tangsa (Moshang) Nocte and Wancho. These languages are spoken in the Tirap sub-division of Arunachal Pradesh, the extreme north Tuensang district of Nagaland and contiguous parts of Lakhimpur district of Assam and also across Patkoi Range in Burma.
TYPE A.2 consists of Konyak, Phom, and Chang, spoken in the northern part of the Tuensang district of Nagaland.

TYPE B. 1 consists of Yacham- Tangsa, Ao (Chungli), Ao (Mongsen) and Sangtam spoken in the northern part of Mokokchung district and the central and the southern parts of Tuensang district.

TYPE B. 2 consists of Lotha, Yimchunger, Ntenyi and Meluri, spoken in the southern parts of Mokokchung and Tuensang districts and in the south- east part of Kohima district. The Sema who occupied the present territory in comparatively recent times separates Lotha and Ntneyi from Yimchunger and Meluri in the east.

TYPE B. 3 consists of Tangkhul and Marring, spoken in north and east Manipur and in the Somra tract in Burma.

TYPE C. 1 consists of Sema, Angami (Kohima), Angami (Khonoma) Chokri, Kezhama and Mao, spoken in the southern part of the Mokokchung district, Kohima district and the extreme north of Manipur.

TYPE C. 2 consists of Rengma, Maram, Khoirao, Mzieme, Zeme, Liangmai, Puiron and Nruanghmei. Rengma is spoken in the northern part of Kohima district. The remaining languages are spoken in one continuous tract in the Upper Barak Valley and in the Barail range in the eastern part of Kachar, south-west Kohima district and north-west Manipur (Sreedhar, 1974).
2.2 Typological Classification:

Here attempt has been made to identify the typological characteristic of Phom, based on the model suggested by K.V. Subbarao. It is interesting to note that his model is based on the study of thirty Tibeto-Burman languages. His work shows the common characteristics, which are present in almost all the languages of the Tibeto-Burman family. It provides a model on which the other languages of the Tibeto-Burman family can be tested for the absence and presence of features.

Phom, as one of the Tibeto-Burman languages, shows the typical characteristics as exhibited by other languages of the family.

2.2.1 Typological Characteristics of Phom Language:

1. Phom exhibits the SOV word order pattern, i.e. it is a verb final language as other Tibeto-Burman languages.

(i) ŋai niŋ e-pei

I you see Rm Past

'I saw you.'

(ii) ŋai ašoye haŋ

I mango eat Dec

'I eat mango.'
(iii) pi Ilaw Sam-ai leitei
she home-Poss went
'She went home.'

2. **Indirect object precedes direct object in the unmarked word order in Phom.**

(i) nai papà-kw lai ūu'-pei'
I him to book give- Rm Past
'I gave a book to him.'

(ii) nai lai haLta -lei tu² - pei'
I book table on keep-Rm Past
'I kept the book on the table.'

(iii) nai meri- kw cu ūu'-pei'
I Mary to rose give- Rm Past
'I gave a rose to Mary.'

3. **Phom has post-positions like other verb final languages.**

(i) haLta Šanjai
table on
'on the table.'
(ii) piu tʰUŋai

  tree under
  ‘under the tree.’

(iii) tUŋ monŋai

  room inside
  ‘inside the room.’

4. Genitive precedes the governing noun in Phom.

(i) jon-ai lai

  John- poss book
  ‘John’s book.’

(ii) na-lei atʰan

  I- poss cap
  ‘My cap.’

(iii) ja-lei lai

  sister-poss book
  ‘Sister’s book.’

5. The marker of comparison follows the standard of comparison in Phom like other Tibeto-Burman languages (see 6.1.1).
6. **Time adverbials (TA) precede Place Adverbials (PA) in Tibeto-Burman and also in Phom.**

(i) งาน ณ จันทร์ ณ ตลาด ณ ที่

'I shall meet you tomorrow in the market.'

(ii) ณ วัน ณ โรงเรียน

'She will go to school today.'

7. **Time Adverbials and Place Adverbials occur in descending order in Phom.**

(i) ณ นั้น ณ ตลาด ณ ที่

'At ten o'clock at night on the 14th October in the year 2007.'

-ma and -a are the markers of standard of comparison but it alternates when it is preceded by a nasal consonant.
8. Adjectives can follow or precede the head noun i.e. modified in Tibeto-Burman languages and also in Phom.

(i) nala maipa
    girl beautiful/good
    'Beautiful girl.'

or

    maipa nala
    beautiful/good girl
    'Beautiful girl.'

(ii) kUnko'pa paha
    clever boy
    'Clever boy.'

or

    paha kUnko'pa
    boy clever
    'clever boy.'

(iii) maipa pe
    beautiful/good garden
    'beautiful garden.'

Or
pe maipə

garden good/beautiful

‘Beautiful garden.’

9. In Phom, numerals follow the head noun like other Tibeto-Burman languages (see 6.1.5.2).

(i) pa An

man ten

‘ten men.’

(ii) pa hik

man one

‘one man.’

(ii) aŠoye Anpwni

mango twelve

‘twelve mangoes.’

The numerals can also precede the head nouns.

(i) Anpwni aŠoye

twelve mangoes

‘Twelve mangoes.’
10. Determiners follow the head noun in the unmarked word order. It may also precede the head noun as in Manipuri, Chang and Rongmei. In Phom determiners precede the head noun.

(i) hapa Šlŋak
    this man
    'This man.'

(ii) hà Šlŋak
    that man
    'That man.'

11. Tibeto-Burman languages have split determiner system, where the determiner precedes as well as follows the noun phrases.

(i) hapa Šlŋak hapa
    this man this
    'this man.'

(ii) ha’ Šlŋak ha
    that man that
    'that man.'
In Phom, the split determiners are identical as /hapa/ and /ha/ occur both at the beginning and also at the end.

12. The negative particles occur post-verbally in most of the Tibeto-Burman languages and in some languages, the negative particles occur pre-verbally. This characteristic is also found in Phom.

(i) papa-i aŞoye na-limju
    he- Nom mango not like
    'He does not like mangoes.'

(ii) qai nii na-limju
    I you not like
    'I do not like you.'

13. The question particles or wh- constituents occur pre-verbally in Phom.

language.

(i) nii-i manaŋ na-na
    you Nom what like do
    'What do you like?'

(ii) nii-i manaŋ šak-ña
    you Nom what buy do
    'What did you buy?'
The question word occurs in its place and it cannot be moved to other positions in the sentence.

14. In yes/no questions, the question particles or the helping verbs occur post-verbally.

(i) niŋ-i kofi limŋw-la
    you Nom coffee like - Q.P
    ‘Do you like Coffee?’

(ii) piŋw pʰai-yuŋsiŋai tai-la
    she price- selling place go - Q.P
    ‘Did she go to the market?’

(iii) papa -i pinw limŋw-la
    he Nom her like Q.P
    ‘Does he like her?’

15. Phom has relative clause but relative pronoun is absent and the determiners sometime serve the purpose of relative pronouns.

(i) antelai ipa-paha yonši mupa-paha ŋa-lai -cei
    there that boy standing place boy/man I-poss brother elder
    ‘The boy who is standing there is my elder brother.’
(ii) ḡaŋŋ hakla sari tʰu'/ši ɲwə haŋŋ ɲa-lai oŋ

dhat lady red sari wearing place that lady I-poss mother

'The lady who is wearing red sari is my mother.'

(iii) ha-pen antelei hiši ɲwə-yw ɲa-lai

dthat pen there lying place is I-poss

'The pen which is lying there is mine.'

The relative clause is external in Phom and it is pre-nominal.

16. There is polymorphemic anaphor in Phom and it has local binding.

(i) ṇai ṇai- niŋ e-pei'

I I - self see-Rm Past

'He saw himself.'

(ii) pəpə pəpə-niŋ e-pei'

he he - self see Rm Past

'He saw himself.'

(iii) cUmpʰon niŋ-i lin-pei'

they self nom make Rm Past

'They made themselves.'
17. Like most of the Tibeto-Burman languages, Phom has final complementizers.

(i) papa-i ņai-kw papa mUŋmonai kʰi šai e-peiʔ
   he Nom me to he sad Emp that (Comp) tell Rm Past
   ‘He told me that he was sad.’

(ii) jon-i meri mai关联ke šai e-tike
    john Nom meri acc good looking that (Comp) say Pr Perf
    ‘John said that Mary looks good.’

(iii) opa-lei ņai-kw monŋai kʰi šai e-peiʔ
    father Poss me to happy Emp that(Comp) tell RmPast
    ‘My father told me that he is happy.’

18. Indirect object precedes the direct object in the unmarked word order and sometimes it may also follow.

(i) ņai lai haLta-lei tuʔpeiʔ
    I book table on keep Rm Past
    ‘I kept the book on the table.’

(ii) nɨŋ-i meri-kw cu Șuʔpeiʔ
    You Nom Mary to flower give Rm Past
    ‘You give a flower to Mary.’
19. In Phom, there is externally headed relative clause. The head noun occurs to the left of the embedded clause.

(i) ḥaŋ hakla Šari tʰuʔŠi ʔuŋpə ḥaŋŋa ŋai-lei ơŋu
lady  red  sari  wearing  place  that  lady  I  Poss  mother
‘The lady who is wearing red sari is my mother.’

20. Phom is a pro-drop language as other verb-final languages.

(i) ŋai  haʔ-ħan
∅  haʔ-ħan
eat  FUT
‘will eat’

(ii) niŋ  e-peiʔ
you  see  Rm  Past
∅  epeiʔ
see  Rm  Past
‘Saw’

21. Verb subject agreement is absent in phom language.

(i) ŋai  aŚoye  haʔ-peiʔ
mango  eat  Rm  Past
‘I ate mango.’
(ii) papa aSoye ha'-pei'

he mango eat Rm past
‘He ate mango.’

(iii) pi,pw aSoye ha'-pei'

she mango eat Rm past
‘She ate mango.’

22. In Phom, adverbs can be re-duplicated as other South-Asian and Tibeto-Burman languages.

Re-duplication of Adverbs

(i) lomi lomi ‘quickly’

quickly quickly

(ii) nita nita ‘laughingly’

laughingly laughingly

23. Phom languages have echo-words like other Tibeto-Burman languages.

(i) wom yom ‘Stomach and the alike’

Stomach

(ii) ki?pə yipə ‘thief and the alike’

thief
2.3 **Morphological Classification:**

Morphologically languages can be classified into:

1. Isolating
2. Agglutinative
3. Synthetic or
4. Polysynthetic language.

Phom is an agglutinative language as other Tibeto-Burman languages; but at the same time, it is Isolating as some of the languages i.e. Liangmai, Phom is partly isolating and partly agglutinating.

In Agglutinating languages, one word contains more than one morpheme, which shows different morphological categories, but each morpheme can be segmented. The morphemes can be segmented from the adjacent morphemes and one morpheme can also represent one word. In Isolating type, each word consists of just one morpheme.

**(a) Agglutinative**

(i) \( p^b \Lambda kt^b u^b - t^b \omega \eta \)

shirt ear

\textquote{collar}
(ii) pʰei-lei ŠUŋai
cost in place
‘market’

(iii) ŋom-kw tUŋpu
stomach- to pain
‘stomachache’

(b) Isolating

(i) pa hik
man one
‘One man’

(ii) hakla pʰAktʰuʔ
red shirt
‘red shirt’

(iii) doktar An
doctor ten
‘ten doctors’

(iv) maipə pe
good garden
‘beautiful garden’