A Brief History of Linguistic Science with special reference to the Bodo, Garo and Kokborok Languages of North-East India

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Abstract

The scientific enquiry of language in India is an ancient exercise which started with the interpretation and standardization of the correct recitation and pronunciation of the Vedic texts. It can be traced back to '*Prātiśākhyas*' (600–500 BCE) and later to Pāṇini's work '*Aṣṭādhyāyī'*, a text on Sanskrit Grammar belonging to the 5th century BCE. Further, the scientific study of the languages of the Indo-Aryan family spoken in north and north-western part of India was brought to light in the genealogical study of languages by Sir William Jones with his famous deliberation on 'comparative philology' in 1786. But the history of the science of language/s or in other words 'linguistic historiography' started drawing attention only in the twentieth century when history of science emerged as a separate organized field of study. The present paper traces the history and development of linguistic science in the Indian context with a focus on Tibeto-Burman languages like Bodo, Garo and Kokborok spoken in north-eastern region of India.

Key words: Colonial, Conscious, Genetic, Grammar, Identity, Morpho-syntactic, Philosophy, Phonetic, Sign, Social, Struggle, Supra-segmental, Voice, Zero.

1. The State of the Art

"The only subject of study in the history of science is *Homo sapiens*… and it is the *Homo sapiens* in a social context that is the sole object of the historian's study of science. Hence all history of science…is social history. The scientists study the things; the historians study the scientist" (Hunter, 1966, p. 869).

Linguistics or in other words the scientific study of languages in India is a traditional exercise which is about three thousand years old and occupied a central position of the scientific tradition from the very beginning. Staal (1974, p. 69) states,

> Grammar was considered the most scientific among the sciences in India. The other traditional sciences aspired to the ideal of linguistics as embodied in Pāṇini's grammar in a manner similar to that in which

Western sciences aspired to the ideal of mathematics as embodied in Euclid's *Elements*.

He also points out that the concept of zero in the linguistic tradition is a discovery of many centuries earlier than the discovery of the mathematical zero. Pāṇini's introduction to several kinds of *lopa* and the existence of the verbal form *lupya(n)te* 'disappear(s)' in the similar contexts of the ritual *sūtras* are referred in this connection. Attention was paid to the study of utterances and enumeration of phonetic rules and pronunciations. Therefore, the history of the science of language in India is ancient in its origin which dates back to 1200 BCE. It started with the interpretation and standardization of the correct recitation and pronunciation of the Vedic texts. Contributions in the science of language in India can be traced back to *Prātiśākhyas*[1] belonging to the period between

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[1] They collectively constitute four treatises dealing with phonetic aspects of the Sanskrit language used in the Vedas. These were the contributions of the grammarians pertaining to the euphonic permutation and combination of sounds/letters with special reference to their pronunciations as were prevalent in various schools of Vedic studies.

600 to 200 BCE and Pāṇini[2] in the later years belonging to the 5th century BCE.

This tradition of the scientific study of the languages of the Indo-Aryan language family which are mainly spoken in India's north and north-western part was brought to light with the emergence of the genealogical study of languages by Sir William Jones in the latter part of the 18th c. with his famous deliberation on 'comparative philology' in 1786. It is widespread that Jones was the first to record the structural similarities of Sanskrit with Greek, Latin, Persian, etc. and stated that all of these languages belong to a single language family, which came to be known as Indo-European. The theory of Aryan migration was established. He realized that the comparison of the related languages could become the subject matter of an independent science.

Masica (1991) provides us with a picture of the history of the scientific study of the Indo-Aryan languages by tracing its inception, earlier than Jones. In this connection it is pertinent to mention Masica (1991, pp. 2–3):

> It is almost a commonplace that modern Western linguistic science took its birth from the discovery that the classical language of India, Sanskrit, is related to the classical and modern languages of Europe. This discovery is usually credited to Sir William Jones. Although Jones was actually neither the first to postulate a common origin for the Indo-European languages nor the first to add Sanskrit to their company (the former honor seems to go to the seventeenth century Dutch scholar Marcus Zeurius Boxhorn, and the latter to the sixteenth –century English Jesuit Thomas Stevens), it may be claimed that it was Jones' publication of his discoveries, which seem to have largely been independent, in the form of his presidential address to the Asiatic Society… without which Indo-European philology would not have gotten very far.

The history of the science of language/s or in other words 'linguistic historiography' started drawing attention only in the twentieth century when history of science emerged as a separate organized field of study. The names of George Arton, Aldo Mieli, Lynn Thorndike, Pierre Brunet, Charles Singer, Alexander Koyré, E J Dijksterhuis are associated with the establishment of this area of investigation as an academic discipline. Robins (1967, p. 2) maintains,

> Historical thinking about science or about anything else in human affairs consists in the study of the temporal sequences of persons and events, and the causal connections, influences, and trends that may be discovered in them and may throw light on them.

Cooperation became evident among the scientists who started working with a historical orientation and the historians of the scientific disciplines. A change in orientation of the scientists interested in the history of their own discipline like anthropology, chemistry, geology, micro-biology, physics, paleontology, embryology along with linguistics started drawing much attention from the latter part of the nineteenth century. The emerging interest towards the historical orientation of linguistics (or the science of languages) was evident among the linguists in the conference on the history of linguistics at Burg Wartenstein in Austria in 1963. Controversy prevailed regarding the approach and scope of the history of science. Greene (1974, p. 490) states, "…historians of science seek to exhibit the conceptual development of particular sciences and groups of science as an intellectual activity possessing its own internal dynamic and increasingly insulated from the common affairs of mankind by the growing complexity and sophistication of its theoretical structure." On the other hand it was asserted by the critics that " … science is but one strand in the web of culture, influencing and influenced by such other strands as technology, economic life, educational practice, religion, politics, and government. The history of science should, therefore, display the institutional development of science, its national and religious peculiarities, its

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[2] Pāṇini is said to be the most notable Sanskrit grammarian, whose work '*Aṣṭādhyāyī*', a Sanskrit Grammar consisting of eight chapters where rules of Sanskrit morphology, syntax and semantics are formulated.

growing impact on human life and thought, its embodiment in particular individuals, societies, and elites, as well as the ways in which the evolution of scientific thought is shaped by economic, social and cultural change" (Greene, 1974, p. 491). Thus the interconnection of the history of science and the history of the philosophy becomes apparent.

Therefore, it is explicit from the above discussion that the history of linguistics (or the science of language) can manifest as an independent area of enquiry only by divulging the area of crossroads of the philosophy of language and the philosophy of science with the conceptual methods of the scientific approaches. The ideal object of the search being one's own self, every human act is considered as the representation of what it perceives within and manifests – the reality transformed into sign. The secret movements of human understanding are said to be manifested by his voice. Therefore, the physical manifesta-tions are nothing but the representation of the same conscious self – its transformation to objective reality. Language or utterance being 'closest to the self' is considered as that which "…construes the natural order – through the unconscious, cryptotypic patterns in the grammar, which create their own order of reality independently …" (Halliday, 1987, p. 142). As a result the compa-rative method of philology finds its reflection in the genealogical relationship and in the origin of the human races and the humankind. Proof of cognates and the phonological affinity became the key concepts to trace the divergence of the languages from a common source or origin. Cognitive science views the evolution of language with reference to cognition and consciousness in steps starting from primitive animal signalling which is considered as a crucial step for the evolution of an inner environment. This allows for iconic and symbolic references. Gestural communication using icons is believed to precede vocal languages. The first detached communi-cation is presumed to be one-word language. The primary instinctive emotional or social signals gradually changed to voluntary communicative symbols. This is believed to have developed into a proto language which is combinations of symbols. These combinations resulted in developing arbitrary vocal symbols and syntactic rules with a formed grammatical structure. 'That human language is a multi-layered or multi stranded phenomenon, each of whose layers or strands may be of different antiquity and of different origin' (Lyons, 1988, p. 156). But as a certain model for the establishment of linguistic connection, the presence of an inner environment i.e., a You-awareness and an I-awareness is being proposed. The search for conscious existence that remains ever ignited in human individuals makes itself "The logos of being. 'Thought obeying the Voice of Being', is the first and last resource of the sign, of the difference between *signans* and *signatum*. There has to be a transcendental signified for the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (Derrida, 1976, p. 20). However, because of its very nature, little could be achieved for a systematic conceptual framework in understanding phonetics at all levels, etymology, comparative grammar and the philosophy of language. Eighteenth century witnessed the development of historically oriented comparative philology based on vocabularies and etymological dictionaries. This led to the establishment of the language families (Stammbaum) in the later years by means of reconstructing the proto-languages depending upon the comparative morpho-phonological studies and the sound laws (with its exceptions) of the known languages at the synchronic level. This brings into light the theory of social evolution that took place during the period regarding the interrelationship between the natural history and the scientific enquiries of the languages. Eighteenth century is viewed as the time which fostered change in all the spheres of life— social, intellectual and spiritual, which was

marked by a transformation in all the fields of science, politics and culture. Later a counter paradigm to comparative philology became evident with the emergence of typological linguistics in the nineteenth century. In this connection it is pertinent to cite Greene (1974, pp. 496–497),

> … the aspect of change and development was more prominent in linguistic phenomena than in natural history. The idea of descent from common origins, which prevailed in natural history only after a long, hard intellectual struggle, was a natural starting point in the study of language, as it was in physical anthropology. …physical anthropology was more concerned with theories of the causes of variation than with classification, although relatively little progress was made in comprehending the processes of race formation before the advent of modern genetics.

2. History of Linguistic Science

The history of the science of language or in other words linguistic historiography is an interdisciplinary study which aims to deal with the evolution of the linguistic knowledge, the change of rationale behind such approaches of linguistic enquiry and the implementation of the knowledge. In this context, it is pertinent to mention Pierre Swigger's definition of linguistic historiography. He states, "Linguistic historiography is a discipline which lies at the intersection of *linguistics* (and its methodology), *history* (history of socio-cultural and institutional contexts), *philosophy* (ranging from history of ideas and *epistêmês* to the history of philosophical doctrines), and the *sociology of science*. To put it briefly: linguistic historiography offers a description and explanation of the history of contextualized linguistic ideas."

It has already been noticed from the earlier discussion that the motivation behind early Indian linguistic thought was to preserve the rules of pronunciation of the Vedic (religious) texts which used to be orally transmitted from one generation to another. It concentrated on the study of phonology, phonetics, semantics and grammar of the Sanskrit language which can be said to be descriptive in its viewpoint. Language was studied both from the literary and philosophical perspectives by the Indian linguists from early times. It was only in latter part of the eighteenth century when the genealogical relationship of Sanskrit with other European languages was established depending upon their resemblance at the morpho-phonological level. Thus the theoretical platform of comparative and historical linguistics was established in the early part of the nineteenth century. In this connection it is pertinent to mention Robins (1967, p. 159):

> What is noteworthy is that thinkers in different countries and with diverse backgrounds were drawn towards the history of language on the eve of a century wherein the history of languages, enlivened by a flash of light from the east, was to make unprecedented advances.

The significance of the study of the 'inner structure' of the languages in order to establish the genetic relationship between languages was established on firm ground. By and large it was the German scholarship (Jacob Grimm, 1785–1863; Rasmus Kristian Rask, 1787–1832; Franz Bopp, 1791–1867; Wilhelm von Humboldt, 1767–1835; and others) which took hold of linguistics during this period. The possibility of substitution of sounds across the languages was established ascertaining the conception of 'cognates'. This was based on the assumption of regularity of sound change. The practice of comparative philology and historical linguistics led to the establishment of Schleicher's (1821–1868) genealogical model, the *Stammbaumtheorie* which provides a tree diagram attesting the members of a linguistic family and its sub-family. Regarding Schleicher's '*Darwinian Theory and the Science of Language*' published in 1863 Robins (1967, p. 181) states, "He regarded himself as a natural scientist and his field, language, as one of the natural organisms of the world, to be treated by the methods of natural science, one moreover that independently of its

speakers' will or consciousness has its periods of growth, maturity, and decline." Nineteenth century witnessed the advances in linguistic thought as an 'exact science' by dealing with the data and laws in relation to physiology (in the study of phonetics) and psychology. Languages were also classified by Humboldt depending upon three types of dominant word structures as a grammatical unit — 'isolating', 'agglutinative' and 'flexional', widely known as 'linguistic typology'. Linguistic borrowing as a result of languages in contact and the tendency of analogy as universal features to explain the languages diachronically was propounded by the neo-grammarians. Change in the attitude of linguistic thought became evident in the latter part of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century. Taking cue from the studies of early Indian phonetic tradition, studies in phonetics made considerable advances. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) came into vogue in 1883 (revised in 1889) (the last revised edition took place in 2015) to transcribe the speech sounds of the languages, which was needed to understand and analyse the lesser known languages especially those which had no written form. With the publication of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de Linguistique Générale* in 1916, the four dichotomy to the study of language — *langue* and *parole*; *synchronic* and *diachronic*; *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic; form* and *substance* were formalized as indispensable dimensions of linguistic analysis. Thus descriptive linguistics started gaining ground with Saussure's structuralism. A major contention that 'analysis of both form (expression) and content (meaning) must be made free from extra-linguistic existential criteria' marked a change in the rationale of the scientific study of languages. External factors which can be social, psychological, economic, political, etc. were traced to be the influencing factors behind sound change. Influences of languages in contact and bilingualism, impact of superstratum/ substratum languages, genetic influence and influence of the writing system for

the languages having script were observed to be the factors behind the change of sound structure of languages. Robins (1967, p. 206) observes this change by stating, "At the same time certain trends in philosophical thought were bringing logicians into closer contact with the problems of linguistic analysis." Description of American Indian languages gained ground in the first half of the twentieth century with the contributions of the scholars like Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, Franz Boas amongst others. During this period the concentration was mainly on formal structure of the languages. Semantics was not paid due attention by the early American linguists. Sentence structures were viewed by means of immediate constituent analysis represented by tree diagrams. The rationale behind such syntactic analysis was basically that of traditional pedagogy. Phonemic analysis gained importance. This was followed by K L Pike's 'tagmemics'- the analysis of sentences in terms of 'strings of collateral constituents'. Simultaneously, the study of phonetics and phonology as an observational science were carried out in Europe in terms of prosodic features like stress, length, pitch and intonation patterns— identifying the shape of the sound waves. Explanatory inadequacy of the concept of 'phoneme'(which was mainly segmental) led experimental phonetics come into practice from the early part of the second half of the twentieth century with the initiative of the scholars like J R Firth, Daniel Jones and others. This marked the 'logical extension' of the concept of 'phoneme' to 'suprasegmental phonemes' — a study that links grammar and the actual utterance. Thus the introduction of acoustic phonetics, an approach to study the utterances from the listener's view point and not from the speaker's perception of articulation came into existence. This was led by Roman Jakobson of Prague school of linguistic thought. A radical change of direction from descriptive linguistics is marked by the period of transformational –generative linguistics proposed by Chomsky (*Syntactic Structure*, 1957 followed

by *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* 1965). With this the concepts of 'kernel sentences', 'deep structure' and 'surface structure' came into vogue and that each structure can be had by applying transformational rules which are necessarily to be ordered, was established. The generative aspect of linguistic science was established with the integration of syntax, morphology and phonology. It was realized that application of transformational rules is required for the sake of explanatory adequacy and economy of description. Thus the foundation for the use of mathematical and logical symbols was established for the application of computational methods in linguistic analysis. It is worthy to mention here that the phonetics, phonological theory and the grammatical analysis achieved during last two centuries across the nations are found to be treated explicitly and exhaustively in the Indian linguistic tradition long ago as evident in *Prātiśākhyas* (between 600 and 200 BCE), and Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (500 BCE) dealing with the phonetic aspects of the Sanskrit language used in the Vedas, euphonic permutation and combination of letters along with the characteristics of pronunciation attested in various schools of Vedic studies. In the context of rule formulation and rule ordering of transformational-generative approach it is pertinent to mention Robins (1967, p. 229): "Rules are ordered in the descriptive statement so that later rules take account of the results of prior rules. In this way an economy of descriptive apparatus, such as was a prime objective of Pāṇini, is achieved."

3. History of Linguistic Science in the Indian Context

In the previous section the discussion of the tradition of the scientific study of the languages in India concentrated on the study of the establishment of the Indo-Aryan language family (genealogical) by means of comparative method in linguistics. In this context the role of Indian Census needs to be mentioned (Dattamajumdar,

2017, pp. 420–421). Until 1881 census the need for recording the mother tongue of the citizens were not felt though in some provincial census like Bombay (1864), Madras Presidency (1871) and Bengal (1872) references can be had of some languages, their speakers' strength and location where they were spoken. In 1878 it was decided for the first time to record in the forthcoming census of the country, the mother tongue along with the place of birth in order to decide on the nationality of the individual/community. The requirement was felt primarily to solve the issues of migration and to determine the nationality. So in the general report of the 1881 census, list of languages along with the numerical strength of the speakers were listed (mostly from the secondary sources). By this time attention to the scientific enquiries of the languages of India was already in vogue, as evident in the philological works of Hodgson, Robinson, Maxmuller, Caldwell, Dalton, Beames, Campbell, Cust, Hoernle, Hunter, Skefsurd, and others. Therefore, the awareness to understand the linguistic situation more systematically and strictly on philological grounds became inevitable at the all India level. The importance of recording linguistic affiliation and a systematic understanding of the Indian languages took the shape of a resolution in the Oriental Congress held at Vienna in 1886, urging the Government of India for a systematic survey of the languages of India. Thus it took hundred years (after the discovery of the genetic relationship of Sanskrit with other classical European languages by William Jones) to arrive at such a resolution for an all India linguistic survey. The ground for G A Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India was prepared. By the time, 1891 census could form a basis for philological researches by collecting the information on mother tongue and comparing them with the nomenclature of the different languages and language fields/areas of the country. So in 1894 the question of Linguistic Survey of India surfaced and was finally initiated in 1896. The result of the survey was published in eleven

volumes from 1903–1928. Regarding the complementary roles of census report and the linguistic survey, Nigam (1961, p. cLxi) significantly observes, "…it is only reasonable that the results of the census should be made to feed a scientific survey while the conclusions of such a survey should help in the calibration of census results and be guided in future census operation." It is evident from the discussion that the major philological studies of the nineteenth century concentrated on the languages of the Indo-Aryan language family which are mainly spoken in India's north and north-western part, the socio-politically and socio-culturally dominant region of the subcontinent. But the linguistic study of the Tibeto-Burman languages of north-eastern part of India did not receive the attention of the philologists in such a magnitude. The scientific study of the languages of this part of the sub-continent which started receiving attention from the latter part of the 19th c. had its focus on grammatical and lexical studies. This was largely for the administrative purpose of the colonial administrators to understand the mother tongues and their filial network, rather than purely philological enquiry. The colonial masters in order to control their subjects, the indigenous people of the land felt the necessity to learn the languages of the lesser known communities of north-east India and therefore, formulated grammatical sketches, word books and dictionaries on their own or with the help of the Christian missionaries. Thus the objective of the linguistic science practised in the north-east region differed from those of the Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the north and north-western part of the country (Dattamajumdar, 2017, p. 421).

4. History of the Development of Linguistic Science in North-East India

Before delving into the discussion of the history of linguistic science of Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman languages, spoken in north- eastern states

of India, a glimpse at the history of the development of linguistic science in the region is felt to be necessary. North-east India's strategic location and the relatively less explored situation of the speech communities of the region and their linguistic profiles have made the socio-linguistic situation vulnerable. The Ahom rule in the Brahmaputra valley (which was divided into three parts— upper Assam, lower Assam and Sadiya), which began during 13th century and continued for long six hundred years attests the gradual abandonment of their indigenous beliefs, rituals and customs being influenced by Hinduism, the religion of the neighboring Indo-Aryan group of people. The region also came under the influence of Vaishnavism during 15th century which in a way gave rise to the Moamaria sect, "… the adherents of which were destined to play an important part in the downfall of Ahom rule. They were mainly persons of lower rank, such as *Doms*, *Morāns*, *Kachāris*, *Hāris* and *Chutiyas*; and, as they denied the supremacy of the Brāhmans, they were naturally the special aversion of the orthodox Hindu hierarchy" (Gait, 1905, p. 59). Apart from the believers of Hinduism there was a mass of indigenous people belonging to the communities like *Kachāri*, *Rabha*, *Lalung* (*Tiwa*), etc. who adhered to their traditional religion, belief and custom as it is found even today. These groups of indigenous people maintained their language as a part of their tradition. The fall of six hundred years' of Ahom monarchy along with the repeated Burmese invasion in the region during the latter part of the eighteenth century and finally the attack of the British territories of Goalpara, Sylhet and Chittagong, led the British Government to declare open war against the Burmese in 1824. The recurring defeats on the part of the Burmese resulted in the annexation of the Brahmaputra valley by the British from the Burmese, with the signing of the treaty of peace at Yandaboo on 24th of February, 1826. This marked the beginning of the colonial rule in the region. This played a significant role in the history of the linguistic

studies and the speech communities of north-east India. The study of the Sanskrit literature and language was patronized during the Ahom rule and education was confined to the priest class (as education was mainly religious in nature) and to the scribes (known as *Kakotis*). Illiteracy of such a population and corruption of the *Kakotis* made it difficult for the British to run their administration. Lack of qualified people to assist the Government in the administrative work in the Brahmaputra valley led to the inflow of the people from Bengal with some amount of basic education to get employment as clerks and assistants in the office of the colonial administrators. Civil and criminal courts were established in different parts of Assam by the British Government and so more literate people were required from Bengal. As a result Bengali language became functional, gained a dominant position and became the language of the court. Bengali was also introduced in the schools of Assam. As the objective of the British Government was the promotion of European knowledge which was essentially technical meant for better cultivation and production of marketable goods, education in English language was emphasized and funds were appropriated for the purpose. Oriental learning was discouraged and scientific and technical education was imparted for the economic enrichment of the region. Translation of the works of European knowledge /science into the Bengali language gained ground. History, Geography, Literature, Grammar and Arithmetic were introduced as subjects in the high school curriculum. Barkataki (1985, p. 50) said, "The aim of these subjects was to make the pupils to know the people around them, nature of the country and the logic of the language they had learned." In spite of many efforts stability of interest in the field of school education on the part of the people was a question which recurred from time to time. Keeping in view the policy of spreading education, suggestive measure was taken to publish elementary school books in the language of the tribes by the government, so that,

the crisis of linguistic identity can be handled and learning can be accomplished in their mother tongue. 'Adoption of the vernacular language at the secondary level' was one of the major contentions of Wood's Despatch of 1854. In order to overcome the resistance from the indigenous people especially from the tribal communities of the hilly tracts of the region, the colonial masters felt the necessity to learn the language/s of these people. Language being a sign of identity of a community attaches with it the sense of integrity and solidarity in the face of opposition or social crisis. Experience made the colonial administrators understand that knowledge of the language of these people will enable them to understand these communities and facilitate their control over these people by establishing communication and learning. The controversy between Bengali and Assamese as medium of instruction engulfed the field of education which was pronounced by the American Baptist missionaries. It was argued by the then British authority that if native language is necessarily to be made the official language of Assam, then *Kachāri* (Bodo) language should be given the status of the official language instead of Assamese, considering the rationale behind the historical status of the *Kachāri* (Bodo) language in the region. In this context, Baro (1990, p. 46) mentions the opinion of Suniti Kumar Chatterji by stating, "…Boro language had great prospect of becoming lingua franca of Assam in place of Assamese if the Boro kings and their people would have tried a millennium years ago to do it." However, missionary activities (of British Missionary Society and American Baptist Mission) gained momentum in the field of education from the earlier part of the nineteenth century by establishing printing press at Calcutta, learning local languages by writing them using Roman alphabets and publishing word books and translation of biblical literature in the local languages. Missionary schools were established and education was introduced in the hilly areas of the region. This resulted in the production of the

early grammatical works, dictionaries, book of spellings, primers of the lesser known tribal languages — all for the sake of learning, both for the British administrators and for the people of the tribal communities. Thus precisely for this reason, rendition of the equivalent words and sentences in the English language along with one of the major local indigenous languages like Assamese/ Khasi, etc. is evident in these early linguistic enquiries.

Thus the purpose of early linguistic enquiry especially in the colonial period was administrative in nature. Imperial control was the need for documentation of such linguistic enquiries. Later the purpose of the scientific enquiries of the languages became relatively subtle. It crossed the boundary of 'Nation State' and became an international issue. Understanding the genetic/areal relationship among the languages helps in establishing the social status of the speech varieties which feeds the notion of linguistic autonomy. This in turn shapes the socio-political setting with bearing in the realm of economy.

In the backdrop of the bigger canvas of the historical account of the linguistic studies of north-east India especially of the Tibeto-Burman group of languages, the present study concentrates on the historical development of the scientific study of three languages (out of nine) belonging to the Bodo-group of languages (one of the major Tibeto-Burman group of languages of north-east India)—Bodo, Garo and Kokborok. The historical account of these languages has been considered from the point of view of the theoretical development of the science of language/linguistics. That means, a historical account of the traditional-grammatical, comparative-philological, historical, descriptive, typological, transformational-generative appro-aches along with the development of dictionary/lexicon of each of these language/languages has been dealt with. The phonological studies from the functional view point (that is, the scientific study of the speech sounds of a language, which

are identified and classified on the basis of the place and manner of articulation), morpho-logical studies (that is, the scientific study of word/lexical structure), syntactic studies (that is, the scientific study of sentence structure) and semantic studies (that is, the scientific study of the structure of meaning) (where available) of the individual language/languages have been taken into account. This not only reveals the information regarding the chronological development of the scientific studies of the languages at different levels but also focuses on the change of dimensions of the enquiries across the time period.

5. BODO LANGUAGE

5.1 Bodo Speech Community

Bodo is the language spoken in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and West Bengal in India and also in Nepal and Bangladesh. They are the inhabi-tants of Darrang, Nagaon, Kamrup, Goalpara, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur districts of Assam; Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar districts of West Bengal; Chandel district of Manipur; West Garo Hills district and East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. According to Basumatary (2014) the largest concentration of the Bodo people are in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) areas (formed in 2003) which includes the districts like Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. The speaker strength of Bodo is 14,82,929 according to 2011 census. Bodo is the associate official language of Assam and is one of the scheduled languages of Indian constitution.

Before delving into the discussion on the historical development of the linguistic science of Bodo it is essential to understand the socio-political status of the speech community and the language and the milestones of its development. In the earlier literature, the term Bodo was equated with the term *Kachāri* which is actually a cover term for the different varieties of the language spoken in the Brahmaputra valley. Gait (1905, p.

248) mentions, "There are no written records of Kachāri rule… the Kachāris of North Cachar believe that they once ruled in Kāmarūpa, and their royal family traced its descent from Rājās of that country, of the line of Hā-tsung-tsā." Regarding the identity of the community Endle (1884) observes that this group of people who are the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley do not use the term *Kachāri* for themselves. "In Western Darrang and North Kāmrūpa, they very commonly speak of themselves as "Bårå" (Bådå, Boṛo, Boḍo) or "Bāṛāfisá" (= "children of the Bårå, and this title seems to be largely used by them in north-east Bengal. In Goalpara they are commonly known as Mêch (Mês) — a designation I have never known, applied to them in this district. In all likelihood this name was given in contempt by their Hindu neighbours — ("Mlêch," "Mlêchchha" = outcast, barbarian, &c.)" (Endle, 1884, pp. v–vi).

In the context of the domination of Assamese and Bengali speech communities in every sphere of life across the time period the upsurge for linguistic identity for the Bodo speech community proved inevitable. In the post-independence period the need for documentation of Bodo language was felt and so the necessity of script surfaced. Bodo had no standard form of writing system before the foundation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, a Bodo literary body in 1952. It is said that the Bodos had a script known as 'Deodhai Hangkho' which used to serve the purpose of the then Bodo royal court. Baro (1990, p. 40) says,

> The specimens of these scripts were available till now in the inscriptions of stone pillar wreckages and main gate of the Royal palace of the Boro (Kachāri) kings in Dimapur, now in Nagaland, a state of India.

However, under the influence of Christian missionaries Bodo was written in Roman script and later in Assamese/Bengali script also. With the initiation of mother tongue education at the primary level in 1960, the selection and standardization of a script became the need of the hour.

The demand for Roman script started in 1968 with the support of Bodo Sahitya Sabha. This was followed by struggle and many people lost their lives in this struggle of Roman script movement during 1974 to 1975. In spite of many advantages of the Roman script, ultimately with the interference of Central Government Devanagari script was accepted. In 1985 Bodo became the associate official language of Assam and is considered as one of the scheduled language from 2003. The language presently finds its place in the educational curriculum provided by the Government from the primary level to the university level.

5.2 Linguistic Enquiries of Bodo

The term Bodo was first used by Hodgson (1847) where the vocabulary of Bodo is compared with Koch and Dhimal languages along with a comparative grammatical account in order to establish the common origin of the languages of this region. Roman alphabets with necessary diacritical marks are used to represent the speech sounds of the Bodo language along with other languages which are considered to be related to each other in the earlier works of the nineteenth century. The scientific enquiries of the Bodo language in the latter part of the nineteenth century were essentially the contributions of the Christian missionaries. The purpose and objective of the grammatical sketch of the Bodo language as attested in Rev. Sidney Endle (1884) transparently enumerates that such an early scientific linguistic enquiry is more than simply a research work. The purpose of such a linguistic study was basically pedagogical meant for the colonial administrators to gain sufficient control over the people of north-east region. The student of such grammars is mentioned to be the colonial masters who were in need to learn the language of the employees—the indigenous people of the region for better administration. Regarding this, Endle (1884, pp. ii–iii) in his preface states, "A further reason for

at once publishing the following outline Grammar, in spite of its many shortcomings, is supplied by the desire to have a Manual of this kind for the use of managers of tea-factories, & c. The manager of any factory on which Kachāri labourers are employed in large numbers, will certainly find it to his interest to learn something of their language; for they are an intensely *clannish* people, and are not a little gratified by seeing their employer show some interest in their customs, language, and manner of life…. And undoubtedly one of the most powerful influences which their employer can bring to bear upon them, is to be found in a command of their national form of speech, to which (as to all else that is national or clannish) they are very strongly attached." Based on the linguistic study of 1884, Endle (1911) again provides us with a short grammatical account of the Bodo language (as spoken in Darrang district) along with Bodo texts and their translation. Though the work was done basically in the Latinate grammatical model, he made significant observation on the typological characteristics of the language. Although the grammatical study revealed the agglutinative structure of Bodo, the traces of inflexion as an influence of language contact with Assamese and Bengali did not escape his notice. J D Anderson while writing the introduction of Endle (1911, p. xix) mentions,

> Their picturesque agglutinative verb is plainly a survival of days when the language was as monosyllabic as Chinese. But the general structure of the language is now governed by inflections obviously borrowed from Bengali and Assamese.

Another early grammatical enquiry of the Bodo language based on the variety spoken in Goalpara district of Assam (known as Mech) was accomplished in Rev. L Skrefsrud (1889). Basic vocabulary items of the Bodo language can be had from Robinson (1849), Gurdon (1904) and Grierson (1903), which were listed for comparing the languages. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the grammatical sketch of the Bodo language from the point of view of morpho-

phonology and syntax based on vocabulary, sentences and a short discourse of the language. The study was comparative philological in approach. With a long gap of time a departure from the existing traditional grammatical model is evident in the linguistic enquiry by Bhattacharya (1977) in his grammatical study of the Bodo language (spoken in Goalpara and Kamrup districts) in the descriptive model. The language is analysed at the morpho-phonological and morpho-syntactic levels along with a short lexicon. Affixation has been dealt with in detail which involves semantic characterization of the inflectional affixes. Thus the inflections which were observed to be the case of borrowing from the Aryan language speaking neighbours in the earlier enquiries were found to be a part and parcel of this Tibeto-Burman language, as attested in the grammatical description carried out with a gap of only hundred years. The linguistic enquiry of Bodo was carried out both in the descriptive and structural viewpoints in the works of Bhat (1968) and Baro (1990).The other grammatical studies of Bodo were carried out with the initiative of Bodo Sahitya Sabha from 1952. In the second half of the twentieth century the grammatical studies were carried out keeping in view the pedagogical purpose of primary and secondary school education. Among them are *Kachāri Mātri Bhāṣā* (written in Assamese) by Birendra Narayan Bismith in 1951, *Bodo through English* by Daya Ram Wary in 1968, *Gonang Raokhanthi* (written in Bodo) by Kamal Kumar Brahma in 1972, *Boro Bhāṣā Siksha* (written in Assamese) by Chanakya Brahma in 1980, *Boro Bhashar Gathan* (written in Assamese) by M R Boro in 1995 and at a much later years *Jouga Boro Raokhanthi* (written in Bodo) by Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 2013 are some of the worthy publications. These works essentially followed the traditional English grammatical model and the grammar of other major Indian languages. A detailed and more subtle level of enquiry of the structure of the Bodo language has been carried out in the first decade

of the twenty first century. The Linguists like Basumatary (2014) studied the verb morphology of Bodo from the descriptive viewpoint keeping in view the pedagogical purpose. A significant contribution in the scientific enquiry of the language is evident with the fall of twenty-first century when Joseph and Burling (2001, pp. 44–55) reported Bodo as a tonal language and traced the finding by stating,

> Some words in that language ended in a glottal stop but Burling was surprised to find that when a suffix was added to such a word the stop disappeared while the suffix was pronounced with high pitch. When the same *suffix* was added to a word that did not end in glottal stop, the suffix had a distinctly lower pitch. It seemed that a feature of one syllable was expressed on the next.

Though the existence of two/three/four tones in Bodo was mentioned by the earlier scholars like Burton-Page (1955), Bhattacharya (1977) and Halvorsrud (1959) the relationship of glottal stop with tone was explicitly observed in Joseph and Burling (2001, p. 51) where "…tones spread to the right and where the glottal stop disappears before another syllable in the same word." Sarma (2012) carried out the enquiry of the supra-segmental structure of Bodo by studying the intonation pattern and prosodic structure of the language. Linguistic studies for compiling lexicon in the Bodo language is found in the latter part of the twentieth century. Bilingual dictionaries of Bodo with Assamese, Hindi and English were published by Bodo Sahiyta Sabha and also by the scholars like Rajendra Lal Narzary, Halvorsrud and Moshahari, Dharmadutt Tiwari, Heramba Narzary, Nil Kamal Brahma and others. All these dictionaries were compiled in the latter years of the twentieth century keeping in view the practical purpose of communication with the dominant languages like Assamese, English and Hindi. The rendition of Assamese and Hindi equivalents proves the socio-political impact of these dominant languages on Bodo. The English rendition stands as an evidence of the continued

colonial impact especially in respect to wider communication. System of spelling in Boro words using Devanagari scripts as illustrated in *Debanagari Lipit Boro Shabdar Banan Nirnay* by Ramdas Boro in 1975 can be said to be the manifestation of the historical struggle for script and acceptance of Devanagari for writing the language, a settlement with the interference of Central Government of India.

6. Garo Language

6.1 Garo Speech Community

Garo is the language spoken in the states of Meghalaya and Assam. The speaker strength of Garo in India according to 2011 census is 11,45,323. The Garos call themselves *Achik Mande* (meaning 'hill man'). Garo community is the bilingual speakers of mainly Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, English and Khasi.

The retrospective literatures on Garo reveal the story of migration of the community from Tibet.

> The Garo tradition states that they originally came from Tibet and settled down in Koch Behar for about four hundred years, from where they moved on to Dhubri…." (Sangma, 1983, p. 1).

They were settled for sometime in the plains of Brahmaputra valley. Incurring struggle at different points of time with the people of the plains and possibly due to some non-agreement amongst themselves a group of people left the plains of present-day Habraghat Pargana of Goalpara district of Assam (where they established their kingdom) and moved to the hills, their present abode which is called Garo Hills now-a-days. In course of their displacement the community became divided into different branches. Referring to a legend of Garo migration and settlement Playfair (1909, p.11) states, "One party, under the leadership of a chief named Abing-Noga, moved from place to place until it settled on Nokrek, the highest peak of the Tura range,…." Garos were divided into eleven groups depending upon their

cultural and linguistic differences though the differences are becoming less pronounced these days due to their progress in education and communication (Sangma, 1981).

6.2 Linguistic Enquiries of Garo

The earliest linguistic enquiry of the Garo language can be traced in Elliot (1794), a study which was carried out during his public deputation to investigate the duties collected on the Garo hills in the year 1788 and 1789. In course of his account of the geographical setting, social customs and the nature of the Garo people, Elliot provides a list of forty four basic vocabulary items in English along with their Garo equivalents. As the southern part of the habitat of these people is bounded by the Mymensing district (of present-day Bangladesh) it was from this direction the Garo Hills were accessed by the British and also by the Bengali speaking people. The migration and settlement of the Bengali people in the Garo Hill as Government servants impacted the Garo language with Bengali as a dominant language. This is observed by Elliot (1794, p. 34) by stating, "The language of the Garros is a little mixed with the Bengāli: a few words of it I annex." In the process of the initiative in imparting formal and more essentially Christian education to the Garo people, the American Baptist Missionaries took initiative in developing the writing system of the Garo language. Regarding the history of the Garo writing system Robinson (1849, p. 208) mentions,

> The Gáros make use of no written characters; and if they at any prior period had adopted the alphabetic symbols of the Bhotias, it is highly probable that their subsequent removal from all contact with them, together with all the hardships to which an emigrating tribe must naturally be subjected, have obliterated all traces of it.

It was in the last decade of the nineteenth century that the writing of the Garo language started by using the Roman script. Sangma (1983, p. 29) mentions, "Since the time of Rev. Keith 1872–76, all the Garo literature have been published in Bengali script but Revs. Phillips and Mason broke this tradition when in 1892, they published all the Garo Primers both in Bengali and Roman characters." In the later years also due to the influence of the Bengali language, Bengali script was found to be used in writing the Garo language along with Roman script. This is evident in the Garo Primer and Garo grammatical sketch by Reverend Miles Bronson in 1868 (American Baptist Missionary Reports, 1886-1950; Gauhati. Ref: Sangma, 1983) (Harding Theological College, Tura informs the Report to have been currently preserved at Harvard University). Linguistic enquiry of the Garo language in the earlier part of the nineteenth century was carried out by the missionaries and the British administrators. The works like Hamilton (1800), Brown (1837), Robinson (1849), Hodgson (1849), Chakravarty (1867), Williamson (1869), Campbell (1874) and Endle (1884) mainly concentrated at the basic vocabulary level in order to reveal the similarities and differences existing among the languages spoken in the region, where Garo was one of them along with English equivalents. Such an enquiry of the lesser known languages which started with the collection of the vocabulary items was an official instruction for the British administrators and for the Christian missionaries who were vested with the responsibility of education in the remote hilly tracts of north-east India. This is clearly stated in Brown (1837, p. 1023): "Considerable time has elapsed since a proposal was made through the *Christian Observer* for collecting short vocabularies of all the languages between India and China." Brown (1837) presents a matrix of sixty basic vocabulary items in Garo along with their equivalents in English, Aka, Abor, Mishmi, Burmese, Karen, Singpho, Jili, Manipuri, Songpli, Kapwi, Koreng, Maram, Champhung, Luhuppe, N.Tangkhul, C.Tangkhul, S.Tangkhul, Khoibu, Maring, Anamese, Japanese and Corean in order to show the number of similar and near –similar words existing among these languages. This was done

to accomplish an authority regarding the source or origin of these languages. A brief grammatical sketch of the Garo language in Robinson (1849) essentially followed the model of Latin grammar. The lexico-statistical approach is evident in the study of the vocabulary items of the Garo language with other languages like Bhotia, Changlo, Kachari, Abor and Miri along with English equivalents. The grammatical enquiries of Keith (1874) and Phillips (1904) were also carried out in the Latinate grammatical model with list of Garo sentences along with English equivalents. Nineteenth century also witnessed scientific enquiries of the lexical items in the bilingual dictionaries of the Garo language in Keith (1873) and Momin (1887). The purpose of such lexicons was to teach the Garo students the Bengali language which was considered a dominant language of the area. Momin (1887) was originally published in the Bengali script but later it was reprinted in Roman script. This is clearly mentioned in the preface of Momin (1887) by M C Mason. He states, "…as well as the fact that educated Garos should know Bengali, the language of their educated neighbours, it has been found necessary as well as wise to use Bengali text-books as a medium of instruction. To use these, a Bengali-Garo Dictionary seemed to be almost one of the first needs." The language was studied from the point of view of comparative philology in Grierson (1903) which mainly studied the morphological structure of Garo along with comments on the pronunciation of the speech sounds of the language.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed linguistic enquiries as grammar and dictionaries of Garo for the pedagogical purpose. As a by-product of the anthropological field work carried out during 1954 to 1956 Burling (1961) carried out a grammatical enquiry of the Garo language in the descriptive model. Much attention was paid to the meanings of the linguistic forms along with the word classes and the linguistic structure. In this regard it is pertinent to share Burling's observation,

> But my attention to semantics stems also from a conviction that the structure represents only half of the language and that an affix or construction is not adequately described unless the non-linguistic conditions under which it is used are presented along with the linguistic conditions (Burling, 1961, p. v).

In the post-independence period after the formation of linguistic state boundaries Assamese as a state official language gained ground. As a result the necessity of Assamese language for the pedagogical purpose (especially for middle and high schools) was felt. This is evident in the Garo-English-Assamese trilingual dictionary by Marak (1975) which consists of fourteen thousand seven hundred and seventy eight lexical items including the technical terms especially the name of the plants and their botanical names in English. Another missionary, Linnie M Holbrook completed the manuscript of a bilingual Garo-English dictionary in 1946, consisting of fourteen thousand two hundred and eighty seven lexical items. The work saw the light of the day at a much later period in 1998. An early Garo lexical work consisting of six thousand words with English equivalents is evident in Nengminza (1946). Importance of the Hindi language which gained ground in the post-independence period is evident in the Governmental endeavour to produce Hindi-Garo dictionary by Bhasha Parisad of Kohima, Nagaland in 1974. A departure in the existing practice is evident at the end of twentieth century in the phonological enquiry of the Garo language at a more subtle level. Burling finds juncture between syllables to be an important feature of the language but not tone or stress to be phonemically important in Garo. Burling (1981, p. 61) significantly observes, "Garo is rare among Tibeto-Burman languages in lacking contrastive tones." Burling (1992), Joseph and Burling (2001) observe the presence of glottal stops in Garo but absence of tone.

7. Kokborok (Tripuri) Language

7.1 Kokborok Speech Community

Kokborok (known as Tripuri in the census reports) is the language spoken mainly in the state of Tripura. It is also spoken in the states of Assam and Mizoram in India and also in Bangladesh and Myanmar (Burma). The speaker strength of Tripuri in India according to 2011 census is 10,11,294. Tripuri community is the bilingual speakers of mainly Bengali, Hindi, English, Lushai/Mizo and Tangkhul.

Retrospective literatures like Grierson (1903), Chatterji (1951) identify the language by the names 'Tipurā' and 'Tiprā'. The language is also found to be referred as 'Mrung' or 'Murung' in the context of Chittagong Hill tracts. The term 'Tipperah' is found to be used by C W Botton, the then British political agent of Hill Tipperah in the Educational Report on Hill Tipperah during 1876–1877. It was Thakur Radhamohan Debbarman who first used the name 'Kokborok' in his *Kakbarak-mā, a Grammar of the Traipur Language* (1900) published from Comilla, Bangladesh. The language has eight dialects. The influence of the Bengali language and culture on Kokborok speech community can be traced as early as fifteenth century. The connection of the Tripura people with Bengal is traced in the accession of throne in Tripura by Ratna-phā with the help of Mohammadan Shamsuddin of Bengal in 1350 CE. Chatterji (1951, p. 132) states,

> Ratna-phā is said to have settled thousands of Bengali families among the rude Tiprās and Kukis; and this led to the closer approximation of both the royal family and the rank and file of the Indo-Mongoloid people of Tripurā State to the Bengalis, in religion and culture; and it meant also the establishment of Bengali and Sanskrit as culture and religious languages of the Tiprā people.

A history of the Tiprā royal house is said to be instated by the Tripurā king Dharma-māṇikya in early Bengali in 1458, which is considered as the first version of the *Rāja-mālā*, a synthesis of Hindu Purāṇa legends and the early traditional oral history of the Bodos of the South. As an evidence of the Bodo origin of the Tripura royal house and as a contemporary account of the land *Tripurā-Buranji* written in Assamese in 1724 stands as document. Chatterji (1951, p. 131) observed the then current socio-linguistic situation of Kokborok (referred to as Bodo people) by stating, "Tripurā state is now the only area where the Bodo people still retain a good deal of their medieval political and cultural milieu, although Hinduisation has made rapid strides among them." Bengali became the dominant language, the language of documentation and education. The script adopted for the language was also Bengali. The desire for education in mother tongue started taking shape in the post-independence period. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century when the demand for education in Kokborok 'as medium of instruction' gained ground with the formation of Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) in 1967 followed by a series of volatile language movements. This led to the introduction of Kokborok in the primary education. But in the majority of schools Kokborok was not taught. In the hills apart from Kokborok, Bengali and English were found functioning. As one had to choose between Bengali and English after the completion of primary education in Kokborok, the educated people of the speech community was sharply divided, one favoured Bengali (being the neighbouring language, lingua franca and the language of trade) and the other expressed their views in favour of English for its privilege at the national and international levels. Two separate systems of education, one with Kokborok and Bengali and the other by the Christian missionaries with English created gap and social unrest. It was during 2005 with the recommendation of the first Education Commission the study of Kokborok was implemented at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels (Haobam, 2006). Presently Kokborok is taught up to the University level. A good deal of literary contribution is evident in the language.

7.2 Linguistic Enquiries of Kokborok

In the early linguistic enquiries the Kokborok language is called by the name 'Hill Tipperá' (Endle, 1884). It is observed that the Hill Tippera people are closely related to Kachāri (Bodo) both genetically and linguistically. For the sake of understanding the relation of Hill Tippera with that of Kachāri (Bodo) and Garo the phonetic resemblance has been studied from a list of basic vocabulary items, numerals and basic sentences of Hill Tippera, Kachāri and Garo in Endle (1884) along with their English equivalents. The study tried to establish the proximity of Hill Tippera and Garo by stating, "In some cases Gáro equivalent of word or phrase is also given, as this is one of the most important members of the Kachári family of languages, and the Gáro word sometimes apparently forms a link between Kachári of this district (Darrang) and the language of Hill Tipperá" (Endle, 1884, pp. i–ii). The earliest grammatical enquiry of the Kokborok language is evident in *Kokbormaong Tripura Byakaran* by Sri Cha Dhoulot Ahammad, M M Dahar and Sri Cha Mahammad Ummor which dates back to 1897. The sound structure of the language has been dealt with along with the word structure. Unlike other linguistic enquiries, the grammar is written solely in the Kokborok language and the word classes/grammatical categories are termed and defined on its own, that is, without the rendition of the traditional Bengali grammar. This stands as an evidence of self sufficiency of the language in defining its own structure. Of course the word list of the language provided at the end is found with the equivalents from the Bengali language. The manuscript (date unknown) of *Kakma Kalai*, A Kokborok Grammar written by Doulot Ahammad and M M Dahar, was discovered from his residence and was later edited by Naresh Chandra Dev Varma and was published in 2007. The grammar is believed to be written shortly after *Kokbormaong Tripura Byakaran* of 1897. As *Kakma Kalai* was written in the model of traditional Bengali grammar with Bengali equivalents it is guessed that probably in order to meet up a social demand for writing a grammar following the Bengali language, Doulot Ahammad, who was a lawyer by profession, took such an initiative. Words of Hill Tippera have also been studied in Phayre (1841), Lewin (1869), Campbell (1874) and Anderson (1885). The fall of the twentieth century witnessed the production of the Kokborok grammar, *Kakbarak-mā, a Grammar of the Traipur Language* (1900) by Thakur Radhamohan Debbarman. The grammatical work was done following the traditional model of the Sanskrit grammar. The Kokborok terms were used with rendition in Bengali. The focal point of the study is the morphological aspects of the language. The super-strate socio-cultural and political impact of the Bengali language is evident in the development of the script and in the spelling system of Kokborok. Keeping in view the word list available in Anderson (1885), Grierson (1903) studied the language in the name 'Tipura', from the morphological view point where he traced the grammatical categories by analyzing some simple sentences and a short discourse of the language. Other linguistic works of the early part of the twentieth century by Thakur Radhamohan Debbarman are *Traipur Bhashabidhan* and *Traipur Kathamala* available in Debbarman (1995) which dealt with the syntactic structures and short discourse of Kokborok. Two thousand six hundred and fifty lexical items of the language have been dealt with rendition in the Bengali and in the English languages. The influence of the Bengali language and script is evident also in the Kokborok-Bengali dictionary, *Kokborok Abhidhan* in Acharya (1917). At this juncture of time the absence of English rendition (English equivalents were part and parcel of the earlier works on the language belonging to the nineteenth century) is noteworthy. With the inception of Tripura Upajati Juba Samity (TUJS) in 1967 the demand for recognition of the Kokborok language in education and the adoption

of Roman script instead of Bengali came into vogue. Anti-Bengali movement surfaced with the declaration of Bengali as the official language in 1968 (Haobam, 2006). In the later years of the twentieth century, linguist like Chattopadhyay (1972) observes the nature of linguistic filiation of Kokborok with the other languages of the Bodo group. He (1972, p. 3) says, if the linguistic constituents of Kokborok is compared with Bodo, Garo and Koch languages it can be observed that comparatively the relation of Kokborok is more distant with Garo than it is with Koch and Bodo. A Kokborok grammar became the need of the hour for describing the language. Karapurkar (1972) carried out the study of Tripuri phonology, a phonetic reader especially meant for the pedagogical purpose. Karapurkar (1976) also studied Kokborok grammar from the descriptive viewpoint. Kokborok was recognized as the tribal representative language by the government in 1977. Chattopadhyay (1972) while enumerating the development of the writing system of the Kokborok language, describes the language from the phonological view point, viz, six vowel phonemes, twenty one consonant phonemes, 2-4 supra-segmental phonemes, absence of dental and cerebral sounds, etc. The phoneme-grapheme relationship, the morphophonemic changes and the rules of spelling have been objectively established in the study. The tonal character of Kokborok (as having four tones) has been studied and exemplified. Brief discussion on morphology and syntax can also be had from the study. A number of linguistic enquiries which described the structure of the language for pedagogical purpose were carried out in the latter part of the twentieth century. The contributions of Ajitbandu Debbarma, Nitai Acharya, Binoy Debbarma, Nagendra Debbarma, Monoranjan Majumdar, Jitendramohan Debbarma, Mahendra Debbarma, Sudhirkrishna Debbarma, Amarendra Debbarma, Santimoy Chakraborty, Prabhashchandra Dhar are worth mentioning in this regard. While discussing the SOV (subject-object-verb) structure of the

language it has also been observed that it is not a verb based language and that it is possible to construct a sentence without a verb. Kunduchowdhury (1999) tried to establish the relationship of Kokborok with the other languages of the Bodo group from the list of comparative vocabulary and finds it closer to Dimasa. Keeping in view the morpho-syntatic structure of the language the question of the typological nature of Kokborok as to whether it is isolating or agglutinating has also been raised by Kunduchowdhury. The fall of twenty first century witnessed the study of tone in Joseph and Burling (2001, 2006) by comparing the phonological phenomenon of the Bodo group of languages. Joseph and Burling (2001, p. 52) mentions, "… Kokborok differs in one respect from other languages, however: the high tones are not characterized by glottal stops. Indeed Kokborok lacks glottal stops entirely."

8. Conclusion

The account of linguistic historiography discussed so far reveals the development of the scientific enquiry of these Tibeto-Burman languages of north-east India as mentioned in the following:

(1) The enquiry of the languages of north-east India, which started in the latter part of the eighteenth century, was primarily for the pedagogical purpose meant for the British officials. It started with the collection of the vocabulary items of different languages and compared them with English equivalents. It is pertinent to share the observation of Hodgson (1847, p. 137), "There are however, some primitive vocables and the vocabulary, such as it is, has been taken, in order to preserve a living sample (soon to disappear) of that process whereby the Arian and exotic, are rapidly absorbing the Támulian and indigenous tongues of India-tongues (the latter) which, if we make a general inference from the state of things in the hilly and jungly districts, wherein alone they are now found,

must have been prodigiously numerous, when they prevailed over the whole face of the land–unless, indeed, the dispersion and segregation in holes and corners of the aboriginal population have given rise to that Babel of tongues which we now find." (2) The early enquiry aimed to access the indigenous people through expression. The endeavour for writing grammar started. The potentiality of linguistic enquiry of these languages has been noticed by Endle (1884, p. ix). He states, "But this very medley of tongues, which puts great difficulties at once in the path of the Magistrate, the Missionary, the Administrator, and the Planter, offers a promising field of labour to the student of language, whose privilege it may be to evolve something like order and harmony out of what has hitherto been little better than a philological chaos."(3)The linguistic enquiry undertaken by the Christian missionaries in these remote areas had also in its view, the education of the indigenous people in their mother tongue. (4) In the later years, that is, in the twentieth century, the need to find out the inter-connectedness among the languages of north-east India and the languages of south-east Asia was felt. Therefore, comparative philology gained ground and the filial linkage or the genealogical relationship of the languages spoken in the whole of South Asia was attempted. Thus the stepping stones were built for the future establishment of the Stammbaum. (5)With structural enquiry of the languages in the latter years of the twentieth century, the focus of the study shifted from morpho-syntactic to morpho-phonological. This was followed by the more objective phonological enquiry which started addressing the supra-segmental phonological structure of the languages in the closing years of the twentieth century.

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